

# **African Civilisation from the earliest Times to 1500 AD**

**HDS101**



University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre  
Open and Distance Learning Course Series Development



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## Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfilment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



**Prof. Abel Idowu Olayinka**

Vice-Chancellor

## Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

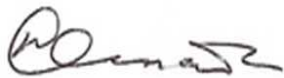
The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your

computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre's provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bayo Okunade', written in a cursive style.

**Professor Bayo Okunade**

Director

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# About this course manual

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African Civilisation from the earliest Times to 1500 ADHDS101 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. All course manuals produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre are structured in the same way, as outlined below.

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## How this course manual is structured

### The course content

The course is broken down into Study Sessions. Each Study Session comprises:

- An introduction to the Study Session content.
- Study Session outcomes.
- Core content of the Study Session with a variety of learning activities.
- A Study Session summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.
- Bibliography is provided while starting the course.

### Your comments

After completing African Civilisation from the earliest Times to 1500 AD we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assignments.
- Course assessments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.)

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.

# General Introduction

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African civilization up to 1500 AD is intended to provide reading materials for undergraduate students and all scholars interested in acquiring knowledge on the early man and his activities leading development of early centres of civilisation in Africa.

The course leads students to explore the various proportions on the origin of man and the stages of his early development in Africa. It shows that from the Ape-man to the Homo sapiens, the early man in Africa had demonstrated his ability to modify his environment to suit his purpose. Thus, he made tools of varying types and styles that enable researchers to identify the different cultures associated with succeeding stone ages. In addition, he also made significant discoveries where utilizations were germane to the origin and grouse of early centres of civilisation in Africa.

It is written in a very simple style for the comprehension of students in the initial stages of their study. It is especially recommended for history students and also for those of cognate disciplines such as archaeology political science and anthropology. Students and researchers in the Institute of African studies will find the course useful.



# Getting around this course manual

## Margin icons

While working through this course manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to “signpost” a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this course manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the icons and their meaning before starting your study.

			
Activity	Assessment	Assignment	Case study
			
Discussion	Group Activity	Help	Outcomes
			
Note	Reflection	Reading	Study skills
			
Summary	Terminology	Time	Tip



# Study Session 1

## Africa and Her Environment

### Introduction

In this study session, we will take an overview of Africa. We will also examine the structure of Africa.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

- 1.1 highlight the nature of Africa
- 1.2 examine structure of Africa environment

### 1.1 Overview of Africa

Africa is the second largest continent in the world. It is next in size and population to Asia, and more than three times the size of the United States. With 54 independent countries (more countries than other regions of the world), Africa is extraordinarily diverse. Africa supports approximately 12 percent of the world's population, with over 770 million people. The people are of different ethnic groups. They speak hundreds of languages and practise three main religions, namely, traditional religion, Christianity and Islam

#### ITQ

##### Question

Name two natures of Africa?

Feedback

1. Africa is the second largest continent in the world.
2. They speak hundreds of languages and practise three main religions, namely, traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

## 1.2 Structure of Africa Environment

The environment had influenced the people's way of life as they struggled to adapt. Majority of the population were and are still farmers and herders. Their survival is thus tied to the land. Indeed, majority of Africans are farmers, growing food crops including sorghum, millet, yams, bananas, maize and other cereals in the savannah and forest regions. Herding livestock such as cattle, goats and camels is the major livelihood in the drier savannah areas and in semi-arid regions like the Sahel. Hunting and gathering, now almost extinct, is still practised in two of Africa's most challenging ecological regions, by the San people of the Kalahari Desert and by the Mbuti people of the Congo's rain forest. These three occupations are primarily based on subsistence economy thus the farmers, herders and hunters (foragers) are directly dependent on the land for survival.

Indeed, Africa is a region of great extremes. It contains some of the earth's driest land, and some of its wettest. It has the world's longest river the River Nile, the largest desert, the Sahara; and endowed with abundant natural resources. It is the most central continent in the world, with most of its land mass in the tropics. In terms of vegetation, it is divided into the forest, grassland, savannah and the desert zones. Hence, its history has been a constant struggle between man and his environment. The topography of the region facilitate easy movement of man from one zone to the other except the forest zone where thick forest, entangle vegetation and lianas impede movement over a wide area. As indicated above, the continent is also watered by different rivers and streams. These not only serve as sources of drinking water, but also as means of transportation and communication. Such rivers include Rivers Niger and Benue, among others.

In view of the fact that there had been a constant struggle between man and his environment, the African had tried to master the environment and transform its negative forces to positive values. Today, the earth's surface continues to move, with long-term implications for the African continent. In the east of Africa, the earth's crust continues to separate along the Great Rift Valley. This long and wide depression harbours Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika and Malawi. Moving inland from the narrow plains and escarpment, much of Africa is a series of plateau and highlands that have a number of significant basins, valleys and river systems. On the northwest corner of Africa lies the Maghreb (Arabic name for west) where the soil has been fertile since antiquity. The northern plateau features the largest desert in the world, that is, the Sahara, which covers 30 percent of Africa, and is the size of the United States. The Sahel, a dry semi-arid scrubland, stretches across the continent south of the Sahara. In spite of its harsh climate, the Sahel has long been the home to nomadic herdsman. South of the Sahel lies tropical Savannah, which forms a band around Africa's rain forests, from West Africa to East Africa's Serengeti Plain and then back to southern Africa's Atlantic coast? These woodlands and vast grasslands have an annual rainfall of 20 to 60in. per year. In the Savannah, wild life such as antelopes, zebras, giraffes, buffaloes, elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, cheetahs, and leopards abound.

The African rain forest forms one of the largest tropical forests in the world, stretching with only a few gaps from West Africa through the DR Congo. The area receives about 70in. of rain per year and has an average temperature above 80° Fahrenheit. With prolific vegetation, gorillas, monkeys, snakes, flying squirrels, and other wild life can be found in the rain forest. To the east of the continent, on the Horn of Africa, are the highlands of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. Because of the ample rainfall, cool climate and rich soil, the ancient Greeks regarded the highlands of Ethiopia as the “favourite earthly residence of the gods”. South and east of the Ethiopian highlands are found dry hot plains and deserts.

Southern Africa is a vast plateau surrounded by a coastal strip that varies in width. The plateau is generally dry, open Savannah country with grass or bush. However, the Kalahari and Namib Deserts are also in the south, and like the Sahara and the deserts of the Horn, they get less than Sin, of rain a year. Southern Africa can be quite cold during its winter months of May, June and July. Vegetation ranges from forests and grasslands through bush and scrublands. Wild life includes hyenas, leopards, antelopes, cheetahs, and crocodiles.

Africa’s rivers have historically served as important channels of communication and trade. Africa has three major river basins. The Nile River in northeast Africa starts from two sources, the Blue Nile in the highlands of Ethiopia and the White Nile in the Great Lakes region. Its 6,560km mile course earns the Nile the distinction of being the world’s longest river. The Nile River basin supports a dense population and gives rise to one of the world’s most ancient and complex civilisations. The Niger River constitutes the second major river basin. The Upper Niger basin feeds the Niger River, which runs 4,160km. It flows through rain forests and plateaus in West Africa, a region that has historically supported a dense population. The Niger Valley was the centre of some of West Africa’s most ancient and powerful kingdoms. Further south, the Congo River basin, feeding the 4,800km long Congo River, is located in the large interior tropical forest area of Central Africa. The Congo River runs through the DR Congo and forms part of the border between the Republic of Congo and the DRC, and Angola and the DRC. The continent’s other important resources include the Zambesi River, Africa’s Great Lakes and Lake Chad. African river systems account for 40 percent of the world’s potential hydropower.

Significantly, Africa has some of the world’s largest deposits of energy and mineral resources. Some countries have the potential to be prosperous on the basis of their natural resources alone. This is true of Algeria, Angola, Gabon, Libya and Nigeria, which have large oil reserves and South Africa, where over 40 percent of the world’s gold and platinum are mined. Angola, Botswana, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Ghana, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tanzania have diamond mines. Coupled with Russia, these countries produce most of the world’s diamonds. Beyond oil, gold, platinum and diamonds, Africa has rich deposits of other minerals. Botswana, the DRC, South Africa, and Zambia have large copper deposits. The DRC also has 90 percent of the world’s known cobalt reserves and the world’s largest supply of radium. The DRC, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Namibia, Niger and

South Africa have, with Russia, most of the world's uranium. Several states in Southern Africa and West Africa, especially Guinea, have large bauxite deposits. Iron ore is found throughout the continent. Indeed, Africa has an abundance of natural resources, giving many of its countries the potential to become quite prosperous, but why so few are economically strong and so many economically weak or poor is a complex issue beyond the scope of this study.

From the foregoing, therefore, it is worth concluding that Africa, which is the birthplace of mankind is indeed a continent of great extremes, filled up with life and struggles, such as the dramatic extremes of drought and flood or heat and cold that could be deadly to both animals and humanity. However, Africa's people have met these innovations over the years. Significantly, too, the ecological adjustments to the landscape can be traced all the way back to the human species, which archaeologists have traced to East Africa, well over one million years ago, and learned to survive by hunting and gathering. This is the focus of the next chapter. However, within the myriad challenges of studying the continent, there are wonderful stories to be told about each nation and the variety of people contained within it. What stands out about Africa and its heritage is its antiquity, and how this antiquity might rest peacefully inside a rapidly changing world. From Egypt to South Africa, the African countries present the oldest known civilisation and the origin of humanity itself, but each nation is also uniquely modern, facing the struggles of today and searching for a way to bring about development and improve the quality of life for the people. But in this study we are basically concerned about examining the past of Africa and thus the question: What has happened in the last millennium to this great continent a continent that holds the key to the evolution of humanity, a continent that developed the first language skills that allow us to communicate and evolve complex social structures? This work, in its entirety, examines the history of the African from the earliest times to 1500 A.D. in an effort to understand how it continues to struggle to develop. This is because, regardless of the glories of the past, Africa is a continent hungry for development, and looking for a renaissance.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we made an overview of Africa. We also examined the structure of Africa.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 1.1 (testing learning outcomes 1.1)

1.1 Highlight the nature of Africa?

#### SAQ 1.2 (testing learning outcomes 1.2)

1.2 Examine structure of Africa environment?.

## Study Session 2

# Africa and the Origin of Man

## Introduction

In this study session, we will discuss postulations on how man originated. In doing so, we will examine the biblical theories on man's origin; we will also explain the discovery of Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

- 2.1 discuss the biblical theories on origin of man
- 2.2 explain the discovery of Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey

## 2.1 The Origin of Man

The origin of man has been a subject of controversy over the years. In fact, several postulations have been made before the scientific era. Some of these will be examined below. However, given the importance of this chapter, especially as it focuses on Africa and the origin of humanity, there is the need to ask the question, When exactly does history begin? Put differently, when does it become the business of historians to talk about the past? For a long time, until the emergence of African historians and the acceptance of oral sources or evidence for law the reconstruction of historical events, historians only dealt with societies that left a written record. Indeed, the reconstruction of periods and places without written records were left to archaeologists, that is, scholars who specialise in retrieving and analyzing the physical remains of men, animals, artefacts, etc. left behind by human groups and societies. Another group of scholars, namely, paleontologists, examines the actual remains of living organisms in the form of fossils.

It is significant that African historians take pride in interdisciplinary approach to history. This is to say that we are willing to use any form of evidence that tells us about what happened in the African past. However, for the subject of this chapter, studies carried out by archaeologists and paleontologists are not only germane, but also critical, for we are dealing with a historical scope that covers millions of years, long before anything was documented. There is no gainsaying that Africa is that part of the world in which most or even all of the critical stages of evolution took place. Hence, in this chapter and the next we will examine all the postulations or theories and the stages by which the human species

evolved, both in terms of physical changes and also the development of culture. In fact, it is what man does and what he is that makes him different from other living things. Besides, we shall also discover that there are significant debates over the interpretation of the evidence found in the fossil and archaeological records, and that these debates centre on the place of Africa in the final stages of the origin and the evolution of man. Attempt will now be made to discuss the various theories sequentially.

### 2.1.1 Origin of Man: The Biblical Theories

Before the 18th century, man's knowledge of his origin and the origin of the world in which he lived has been greatly influenced by the biblical story of creation enunciated in the book of Genesis chapters 1 and 2. According to the book of Genesis, God created the world and all the things there in six days. He rested on the seventh day. Man happened to be the last to be created on the sixth day. The first set of human beings, Adam and Eve, were created and placed in the Garden of Eden.

However, in 1593, one Archbishop James Usher propounded a thesis that the world was created on October 23, 4004 B.C. at 9 o'clock in the morning. But by the 18th century, discoveries of man-made tools and fossils of animals and human beings that had lived in the very ancient past had begun to generate controversies about the nature and origin of man. The Church suppressed scientific findings. Hence, at the same time, scientists' opinions were still much influenced by the biblical theory of creation. Thus, church-influenced scientists explaining the origin of the fossils advanced two theories.

#### Deluvial Theory

The first was the **Deluvial Theory**. The theory emerged from the biblical story of the great deluge in the days of Noah. The exponents maintained that all creatures, except those saved by Noah at God's command, had perished during the great flood that destroyed the world. The fossils that had been discovered were therefore the remains of those who had perished in the flood and buried under the debris that covered the earth after the water had subsided.

#### Catastrophic Theory

The second theory was the **Catastrophic Theory**. This theory was advanced when different fossils of animals were found in successive geological strata, which indicated that the animals must have lived at different geological periods. Baron George Cuvier, a French palaeontologist, who explained that there had been successive creations and catastrophies, propounded the theory. He opined that God's first creation consisted of marine creatures; the second consisted of reptiles and the third, mammals. All these were destroyed successively. The fourth creation was also destroyed with the exception of Noah and those in his Ark. Thus, according to this theory, fossils of human beings could only be found around the valley of the Euphrates where the Garden of Eden was located and where Noah had placed his Ark. The theory infers that no contemporary fossil of the remains of different species of animal or man could be found *in situ*.

However, in the 19th century a number of discoveries provided evidence that disproved the Deluvial and Catastrophic theories and indicated that man had existed before the so-called deluge. Some of these discoveries are as follows:

- (1) In 1823, Dean Buckland, a clergyman and Reader in Geology in the University of Oxford discovered a human skeleton along with tools made from ivory and bones of extinct animals in a limestone cave in Paviland, South Wales. Buckland, however, believed that the skeleton was that of a pre-deluvial man, while those of the animals were those of deluvial mammals that must have been washed into the cave by flood waters.
- (2) In 1833, Schmerling, a Belgian anatomist, discovered two skulls (in the Grotted'Engis) along with the remains of extinct animals near Liege. He declared that his discoveries were conclusive proof that man had been living in Europe long before the deluge.
- (3) Other discoveries of skulls were made in Gilbrats in 1848; at Neanderthal cave (Germany) in 1856; and at Spy in Belgium in 1886.

These discoveries did not only show the contemporaneity of man and extinct animals whose remains were found together, but also disproved the belief in a single universal deluge throughout the world.

By the mid-19th century, the Deluvial theory had been discredited. Scientists had doubted the universality of the deluge. It has been speculated that if the deluge ever took place, it must have been limited to the valley of the Euphrates where Adam and all his descendants had lived. Indeed, scientists doubted Noah's ability to collect species from all over the world before the Flood and redistribute them after. By this time, all theories and ideas that had been hitherto suppressed by religious prejudices had started to feature.

One of these was the theory of organic evolution, which stipulated that one living form could arise out of another ancestral form instead of being a result of a separate creation. By the late 18th century some of the scientists who belonged to his school of thought were Carl Linnaeus - a famous Swedish naturalist, Erasmus Darwin of England (father of Charles Darwin), and Larmack of France. Among them also was Charles Darwin, the man whose work created great sensation in Europe in the 19th century. In 1859, he published a book entitled *The Origin of the Species* in which he advanced the view that all species are mutable and can trace their ancestry back to the lowliest forms of life. In 1871, he published another one entitled *The Descent of Man* in which he applied the theory of evolution to the origin of man. Darwin maintained in this book that although man had "risen to the summit of the organic scale, and had developed a god-like intellect, he still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin". He stated further that man descended from the same stock as the Old World monkeys, which had 32 teeth like human beings. He pointed out that the living mammals of any area were closely related to the fossilised remains of extinct species, which had been discovered there. He postulated therefore that since chimpanzee and the gorilla - two primates resembling man - can be found in Africa, it



would be reasonable to suppose that man's birthplace would eventually be discovered on the African continent. Charles Darwin was therefore the first man to profess a suggestion that Africa might be the place of origin of man.

During the time, Charles Darwin was ridiculed, mocked and termed a confusionist. However, various discoveries from 1925 onwards, brought Charles Darwin's assertion nearer the truth. For instance, archaeologists and geologists subsequently discovered material remains such as tools, bones, fossils/skeletons, etc. dating back to millions of years in various parts of Africa.

Archaeologists have disclosed the number of years of such fossils through the use of radio carbon dating or Carbon 14 as well as other different scientific techniques. Such fossils were dated back to about 60 million years in some cases, indicating that man must have been existing in Africa for a long time. Thus, evidently, Africa had supported human habitation for millions of years before the birth of Christ.

Meanwhile, the publication of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* astounded the people who hitherto believed in the creation of man. It was a definite break away from the belief itself, it provided direction for contemporary and future scientists concerned with the study of the evolution of man. From henceforth, enquiries were directed towards (a) finding the missing link between Homo Sapiens and the ape in the lineal evolution from ape (Pongid) to man (Hominid); (b) confirming Darwin's position that the birthplace of man would be found on the African continent.

Before considering the missing link, it is important to point out that man belongs to a primate group known as the hominids. Hominid is a biological term, which refers to the creatures with the ability to stand erect and walk on their two legs. In this group, we can find other hominids such as lemurs, gorilla, apes, etc. These creatures have been asserted as having been of the same ancestral origin with man. For millions of years, the hominids have traversed the whole of Africa. Their existence have been dated back to more than 60 million years. Man especially was regarded as branching off from a set of Apes known as the Pongids. The evolutionary stages of man followed millions of years while the other Ape-like creatures were unable to progress as the specie that later became man.

The missing link was christened Pithecanthropus (Ape-man) by Ernst Hackel, a German evolutionist in 1866. In 1891, Eugene Dubois, a young army Doctor and an apostle of Darwin believed that the precursor of a modern man could be found in the tropics. After a hard work in Java, he found the skull, the molar and a femur of an upright walking creature whose features were more human than any known ape and more ape-like than any known man. It was halfway between man and gorilla. The find was called Pithecanthropus. Dubois' discovery tends to strengthen the belief that man was cradled in Asia and not in Africa as speculated by Darwin.

However, by the early 20th century new evidence in Africa began to show that Darwin's prediction might be correct. Discoveries in South Africa between 1923 and 1940 focussed attention on Africa. In 1924,

Professor Raymond Dart of the University of Witwaterstrand discovered at a stone quarry at Taung in South Africa the skull and some facial bones of a hominid, which he christened *Australopithecus Africanus*. Unlike *Pithecanthropus*, *Australopithecus* was not an ape-man, but the skull was evidently not that of a true man. Dart and his adherents regarded this discovery as an important evidence to support Darwin's prophecy that Africa was probably the birthplace of man.

In the same year, *Pithecanthropus erectus* (the Java man) was re-examined and the earliest opinion that it represented the "Missing link" was reconsidered. Scientists now believed that it was more human than *Australopithecus*. It was subsequently renamed *Homo erectus*.

In 1936, the remains of an adult *Australopithecine* was discovered in a stone cave at Sterkfontein near Johannesburg. This was named *Pleisianthropus transvaalensis*. In 1938, the bones of another *Australopithecine* were found at Kromdraai and it was called *Paranthropus robustus*. After the World War II, two other discoveries - *Australopithecus prometheus* and *Paranthropus crassidens* have been added to the list of *Australopithecines* found in South Africa. By 1953, the number had risen to 40. Dart's discoveries had re-awakened the speculation that Africa was the probable birthplace of man. It has been possible to trace a conceivable evolution of man from *Australopithecus Africanus* through *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*.

### ITQ

#### Question

Name the theory which used to influence scientists in explaining the origin of man?

Feedback

1. Deluvial Theory
2. Catastrophic Theory

## 2.2 Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey's Discovery

The man who actually confirms Darwin's proposition was Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey. He was born in Kenya to an English Missionary in 1903. After completing his doctorate degree in Modern Languages, Archaeology and Anthropology, he devoted himself to unravelling the mystery of human origin in Africa. In 1931, he discovered a piece of jaw-bone at Kanam on the shores of Kavirondo Gulf in Lake Victoria. He claimed that the jaw had features of *Homo sapiens* and he named it *Homo kanamensis*. He regarded it as ancestor to *Homo sapiens*. His claims were not, however, taken seriously by fellow scientists until about four years later when similar skull bones were discovered at Swanscombe in Germany in 1933 and South England in 1935.

In 1959, Leakey discovered at the Olduvai Gorge in northern Tanzania in East Africa, a skull that he named *Zinjanthropus* (man of zinj) popularly known as the "Nutcracker Man" because of its huge molar teeth. This

finding was publicised as *Australopithecus* (*Zinjanthropus*) *boisei*. Along with this discovery were stone tools and bones of extinct animals. Leakey at first believed that *Zinjanthropus* was the maker of the tools. However at Bed I of the Gorge (and at a slightly lower level) he found fossil remains of a skull different from that of *Australopithecus Zinjanthropus* and slightly bigger than that of *Australopithecus Africanus*. The hand bones were closer to modern man and the foot indicates a habitually upright walking man. Leakey claims that it belongs to the genus of *Homo* and he called it *Homo Habilis*. He concluded that *Homohabilis* was the tool maker.

In 1962, Leakey discovered another form of hominid belonging to neither *Australopithecus* nor *Homo habilis*. He named it *proto-Homo erectus*. At this time, Leakey's discoveries at Bed II of the Gorge had proved that three contemporary co-developing lines of hominid evolution existed in the Olduvai Gorge. These are (1) *proto-Homo erectus*, leading to *Homo erectus* (2) *Homo habilis* leading to *Homo sapiens* (3) *Australopithecus* leading to extinction. In 1967, his finding was authenticated by the discovery of the fossils of co-existing *Homo Habilis* and *Australopithecus* north of Lake Rudolf by an international expedition of scientists from France, the US, Kenya and Ethiopia.

In addition to these finds, Leakey was able to show by means of potassium/argon dating method that the Olduvai *Australopithecines* go back to the lower Pleistocene period about 1.7 million years. He deduced from a combination of evidence from Olduvai and Rudolf discoveries that man had already existed in Africa 2.6 million years ago. He also found at a site (Koobifora) east of Lake Rudolf that at this period, man in Africa had been associated with stone tools. Since there was no evidence of any earlier tool using hominid elsewhere, man in Africa was therefore regarded as the earliest tool maker in the world.

Another major concern of Leakey was to prove that man did not evolve in a lineal form from Ape. In 1915, Sir Arthur Keith had said, "The gorilla of today is not a human ancestor, but retains, we suppose, in much higher degree than man does, the stock from which both arose". Keith had suggested that the point where the Ape family and the Hominid family separated from the common ancestor might be found in the Miocene period.

Leakey's investigation In the Miocene beds (dated 45-25 million years) of Rusinga Island, in Lake Victoria revealed that a fossil *Proconsul*, which had already evolved in ape form existed side by side with *Kenyapithecus Africanus*, that had also already evolved in the Hominid form. Thus, Leakey had proved, by his work in East and Central Africa, that a separation of the "pongidae" (apes) from the "Hominidae" (men) had already taken place in Africa in the Miocene period. He posited that the point of separation would have to be sought in earlier Oligocene periods in the Fayoum region of Egypt. His researches consequently confirm Darwin's view that Africa was probably the birthplace (origin) of man.

In conclusion, however, it is significant to note that explaining the origin of man is as complex as man himself. Hence, the attempt at religious and scientific explanations as enunciated above. Yet it is worth mentioning

that the scientific world has found it very difficult to accept the religious and mythical explanations of the origin of man because they are not verifiable scientifically. The scientific explanation is objective and logical. It is based principally on the works of evolutionary theorists who established the position that all forms of life are derived by gradual modification from earlier and simpler forms or from one rudimentary form. They postulated a process of evolution in which a complex phenomenon develops gradually from a simple beginning. In essence, man in his present form has evolved from a lower form. Little wonder the evolutionary theorists submit to the fact that man was originally living like other members of the primate family that include monkey, ape, gorilla and chimpanzee. All these possess digit fingers; toes with flatten or slightly rounded nails. In the course of evolution, there is a tendency to walk upright, but only man has actually taken to a positive erect position.

Another point to note is the stage of development of man in Africa. As shown above the stages include, man-like ape (Nutcracker Man), *Homo habilis* (the man with ability to make tools), *Homo erectus* (the upright man - in terms of structure) and *Homo sapiens* (the thinking or wise man), which is the last stage of evolution.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we discussed postulations on how man originated. In doing so, we examined the biblical theories on man's origin; we explained the discovery of Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 2.1 (testing learning outcomes 2.1)

Discuss the biblical theories on origin of man?

#### SAQ 2.2 (testing learning outcomes 2.2)

Explain the discovery of Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey?

## Study Session 3

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# The Stone Age

## Introduction

In this study session, we will explore the era of Stone Age. Stone age is the earliest period of human history, in which tools and weapons were made of stone rather than metal. We will examine the early Stone Age, the middle Stone Age and the later Stone Age.

## Learning Outcomes



### Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

3.1 describe the periods in the era of stone age:

- Early stone age
- Middle stone age
- Later stone age

We have seen how Leakey and other archaeologists traced human evolution to the time when man became distinguishable from ape and the other primates. In fact, one of the things that distinguished man from animals is his ability to make simple tools. Investigations at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, Lake Rudolf in Kenya and Omo Valley in Ethiopia have revealed that about 2.6 million years ago, hominids about 4.5ft were living in groups on, Lake shores using crude stone tools (choppers) to kill and cut their animal preys into pieces. This period of human evolution in which man depended predominantly on stone tools of various kinds is known as the Stone Age.

The Stone Age can be described as the period of the Lithic Culture in Africa. This was the period before the discovery of iron in the western parts of Asia and in the Sinai about 6000 B.C. Stones were used as tools and implements to kill animals or as domestic utensils. It was also during this age that the use of fire was discovered. Man has left sufficient stone tools behind to allow historians and scientists to trace the evolution, growth and development of the lithic culture in Africa. It is significant that the Stone Age has been divided into the following distinct periods:

- (a) The early Stone Age
- (b) The middle Stone Age
- (c) The later Stone Age.

### **3.1.1 The Early Stone Age**

The characteristic tools of the early Stone Age are stone pebbles, flakes, hand axes. As a result of variation and different levels of development, three cultural types have been identified in this period. The first is the Oldoway Culture. This is characterised by “pebble tools” and it is associated with Olduvai Gorge where the tools were first discovered. It is believed that these types of stone tools were used in the earliest period throughout the world. The tools have been associated with *Homo erectus*. Potassium or argon dates from Olduvai Gorge showed that the Oldowan culture must have lasted from 2,000,000 years to about 500,000 years. The second is the Acheulian Culture, which derived its name from St Acheul in France where it was first sited. The characteristic tools are handaxe, round stone balls and cleaver. Tools associated with this culture are more refined than those of the Oldowan Culture. Handaxes are found throughout Africa. Prominent examples are Nok and Mai Toro dated 500,000-55,000 years in the plateaux area of Nigeria. The third is the Sangoara Culture, which takes its name from Sango bay in Lake Victoria in present-day Uganda. The tools are heavier and cruder than those of the Oldowan and Acheulian Cultures. A typical example is the pick. Makers of this kind of tools were probably *Homo sapiens*. The culture seems to have existed between 55,000-40,000 years.

### **3.1.2 The Middle Stone Age**

Stone tools used at this period are small, very finely trimmed, flat and thin. They are shaped like leaves or spear heads. A number of other small tools like flake tools such as chisels and blades (long rectangular flakes) also existed. Like in the early Stone Age, a number of cultures are identified in this culture. These include the Lupembian in Congo and North Central Africa, the Still Bay in southern Central Africa and Petersburg in South Africa. Cave dwelling seems to be a general feature of the Middle Stone Age. Tools were grafted unto sticks as handles to make spears.

### **3.1.3 The Late Stone Age**

This is the age before the coming of agriculture and domestication of animals. Typical tools of this period are microliths - very small flake tools sharp on one edge and blunt on the other. Examples are found in Congo, North-Central Africa, East and South Asia. It is dated 5,000-6,000 B.C. Prominent examples of the survivals of the late Stone Age today are the Khoisan peoples of Kalahari Desert area of South Africa.

Dwelling places at this period were rock shelters, cave mouths, open sites beside rivers or springs. Hunting and gathering were predominant as modes of life. Hunting seemed to be exclusively the work of men, while gathering was the responsibility of the women. Hunting weapons were bows and arrows. Examples of Stone Age sites are common in Africa, especially in Nigeria. These include: Mejiro cave near Old Oyo, Rop Rock shelter on the Jos Plateau, Iwo Eleru near Akure (in Ondo State), the Wilton stone culture typified by the Gwisho camp near Kafue river in Zambia.

The late Stone Age people developed the techniques of hunting and gathering to a high level of expertise. Much of our knowledge of this people comes from extensive archaeological research and anthropological studies, but even more important was the dramatic and vivid evidence left behind in the paintings and engravings by the people themselves on the rock wall of their caves and shelters. These paintings, usually in red, yellow, orange, and white revealed scenes of living creatures - animal and humans. Many of them portrayed events such as hunting, fishing and dancing, while others appeared to have been inspired by religious beliefs about life, death and the spirit world.

Careful studies of the animal bones and stone artefacts recovered have revealed much about the hunting habit of the late Stone Age man. In the savannah area, he hunted a wide range of animals - large and small. His weapon consisted mainly of specially shaped microliths glued or bound to wooden shaft to form multi-barbed spears and poisoned arrows. The poisoned arrows became handy in eventually wearing down, even the large animals such as antelopes and buffalos that inhabited the extensive plains of Africa. In the densely wooded regions, snares, traps, pits, spears and axes of Middle Stone Age style were used. The hunted animals supplied meat for their diet, bones for tools or ornaments, skins for clothing, shelter, leather gathering bags, water jugs and strings for hunting and for carrying babies.

Apart from hunting, gathering was also very important to the late Stone Age man. Recent studies show that gathering accounted for up to three quarters of the normal daily diet. Women who used digging sticks and carrying leather bags probably did gathering. They collected a variety of small and large nuts, fruits, edible roots and tubers, termites, locusts and other edible insects.

For those who lived near big rivers, fishing, as revealed by excavations at Ishango on Lake Albert (later called Lake Mobutu) and Beringo on Lake Turkana in Congo, developed to become a major pre-occupation and source of protein. Aquatic animals were caught by the use of bone-hooks, tidal traps, baskets and nets. Available evidence shows that the most thriving or flourishing communities of the period were located around the lakes and rivers of the now dry southern regions of Sahara Desert. But it should be noted that the Sahara has not always been a desert. Africa's climate has witnessed considerable variations over the past 20,000 years. The period 9,000-3,000 BC was a major wet period for the Sahara. The vegetation was savannah grassland and woodland caught by numerous and sizeable rivers and streams. There were also many lakes and Lake Chad at the peak of the wet phase in 7,000 B.C. rose to cover a huge area, many times its present size.



## ITQ

### Question

**Explain stone age?**

### Feedback

**The Stone Age can be described as the period of the Lithic Culture in Africa. This was the period before the discovery of iron in the western parts of Asia and in the Sinai about 6000 B.C. Stones were used as tools and implements to kill animals or as domestic utensils.**

## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explored the era of Stone Age. Stone age is the earliest period of human history, in which tools and weapons were made of stone rather than metal. We examined the early Stone Age, the middle Stone Age and the later Stone Age.

## Assessment



### Assessment

### SAQ 3.1 (testing learning outcomes 3.1)

Describe the periods in the era of stone age:

- Early stone age
- Middle stone age
- Later stone age



# Study Session 4

## The Neolithic Age

### Introduction

In this study session, we will focus on the revolution of Neolithic.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

4.1 discuss the revolution of Neolithic

### 4.1 The Neolithic Revolution

The last phase of the Stone Age witnessed radical alteration in the mode of production and of living of the early man. The phase is referred to as the Neolithic Age, which means the new Stone Age. It is so called because of the change in stone tools that occurred during the period. There merged a series of much more sophisticated stone tools which were ground, well polished in place of chipped or flaked ones that characterised the pre-Neolithic era. The revolution that occurred included that of food production - the domestication of plants and animals. The late Stone Age period terminated with the Neolithic revolutions, occurring about 10,000 years ago. It was characterised by the change from food gathering to food production, namely, the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals. Crop cultivation probably began with the gathering of grains and the awareness of the need to leave some seeds behind for the following year's crop. Hoeing and ploughing also followed. Animal domestication also began when people started to control the movement and breeding of particular animals considered most useful to the community and protecting them from predators.

Considerable opinion expressed by scholars of this period of human history indicates that domestication of plants and animals started in the Middle East (precisely in Anatolia). From there, it spread first into Lower Egypt and from thence along the Coast of the Atlantic Ocean and the Sahara. Philip Curtin et. al. have indicated that by 5,500 B.C., cattle were domesticated and kept in Fezzan, southern Libya and probably all over north-eastern Africa. At the same time, cereals such as barley and wheat were cultivated. That the Sahara shared in this domestication of plants and animals at this period is demonstrated by the rock painting, which featured herding, milking and other forms of social life (Bovidian

pastoral style). Examples of areas characterised by this type of cultivation were Tassili in Central Sahara, Fezzan, Ennedi and traces in Algeria. However, from about 2500-2000 B.C., the Sahara was said to have begun to dry. Between 2500 B.C. and 2350 B.C., the rivers stopped flowing and lakes dried up gradually.

The inhabitants of the Sahara who were both pastoralists and agriculturalists migrated northwards and southwards. A large group went to the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia) where they settled by 2000 B.C. Those who moved southwards settled in the Sahel region of West Africa from the Niger bend to Lake Chad. Many went westwards to Mauritania. All these carried with them their knowledge of food production wherever they went. In this way, the knowledge of food production spread into the Sudan and into Ethiopia. From Ethiopia, it diffused southwards along the Rift Valley of Kenya and Tanzania in about 1,500 B.C. The above are the Diffusionist views about the spread of food production technology.

The Diffusionists argue that when the cereal growers from the desiccating Sahara met the population in the forest regions to the south where the indigenous people had evolved a technique of growing food called *vegiculture*, stimulus diffusion took place. The forest people began to pay more attention to planting root crops and domesticating sheep and goats.

Apart from the Middle East, south-east Asia was another centre of diffusion. Certain root and tree crops such as cocoyam, sugarcane, banana, and coconut were said to have spread to East Africa from south-east Asia. All these crops did not reach Africa at the same time. For example, banana was first introduced about 2000 years ago. It spread from the coast to the interior in the area of Buganda and Bunyoro where it provided staple food.

Botanists, particularly Murdock, maintained that Africa experienced food production revolution independently. This is the Evolutionist view claiming that food production did not spread from anywhere. It is argued that wheat and barley, which were first domesticated in south-west Asia, are crops of temperate zone, which cannot be grown in the tropics. Consequently, cereal growth in Africa south of the Sahara arose from the domestication of wild African grasses. Murdock has suggested that the Mande area around the Niger bend was a centre for an indigenous African domestication of plants. Here, indigenous African rice called *Oryza glaberrima* was domesticated. From here, rice cultivation probably spread to the forest zone of West Africa.

It is also argued that root crops and plants such as yams, all sorts of gourds and calabashes; oil and raffia palms were domesticated locally in the forest regions of Africa. The process began with the discovery by the hunters and gatherers as well as the fishermen who inhabited this area that certain roots, fruits and trees could grow again in the same spot when planted. Although the protagonists of diffusion have referred to this process as *vegiculture*, there is no doubt that it is an evidence of indigenous invention of agriculture in Africa.

### Question

Neolithic Revolution is characterised by what?

### Feedback

It was characterised by the change from food gathering to food production, namely, the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals. Crop cultivation probably began with the gathering of grains and the awareness of the need to leave some seeds behind for the following year's crop. Hoeing and ploughing also followed.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we examined the Neolithic revolution.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

SAQ 4.1 (testing learning outcomes 4.1)

Discuss the revolution of Neolithic ?

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# Study Session 5

# Consequences of Food Production or Agricultural Revolution in Africa

## Introduction

In this study session, we will explain the revolution of food production. We will also examine the introduction of iron during the Neolithic period.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

- 5.1 explain the revolution of food production
- 5.2 examine the introduction of iron during the Neolithic period

## 5.1 Food Production Revolution

Beginning from about 10,000 years ago, some important changes resulting from food production or agricultural revolution began to occur - first probably in south-west Asia and later in other parts of the world including Africa. The Neolithic Revolution transformed many people's from food collectors to food producers by means of the domestication of plants and animals. The domestication of plants and the practice of agriculture especially, had important repercussions both for culture and for the environment and, indeed, for man and the human generation.

In fact, agriculture became a more efficient means of providing food than hunting and gathering. It radically changed man's mode of getting his food. Man's dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits gave way to crop raising and domestication of animals (stock keeping). This meant that produce from agriculture could support far higher population densities than their hunting and gathering counterparts. Besides, people who practised agriculture preferred to stay in one place to tend their crops rather than roam about in search of wild animals and vegetables. This led to a new form of human settlement in villages that eventually developed to towns and cities. Food production therefore made sedentary life possible. Man was no longer a scavenger or a forager for food. He no longer wandered about for food or changed his abode in response to ecological changes. He could produce, store and preserve food that could last for a season. More importantly, man's capability for controlling his environment was increased. Food production also further led to division of labour, social stratification and change in social and political organisations. People could devote time to specialised pursuits like pot-making, basketry production of weapons and many other occupations. It is worth mentioning that social stratification is a phenomenon, which is not usually found in hunting and gathering societies. Increased efficiency in agriculture brought wealth to those people practising it.

The agricultural economy introduced during the period of the Neolithic Revolution not only resulted in greater cultural elaboration, it also had a greater effect on the natural environment than was the case with the hunting and gathering mode of existence. In areas of cultivation, the natural vegetation was replaced not only by crops, but also by weeds. Those societies which practised irrigation, also affected the environment by changing the courses of waterways. In agricultural societies with especially high population densities, serious soil depletion and the destruction of forests were negative examples of the food production

revolution. However, practices such as shifting cultivation and crop rotation have served to lessen this destructive effect. Agricultural societies that realised that they must get a sustained yield of crops year after year in order to survive, tended to use shifting cultivation, crop rotation and other means in order to retain soil fertility. On the whole, it can be surmised that the impact of agricultural societies on their environment has been significantly greater than was the case for the hunting and gathering societies.

### ITQ

#### Question

**The importance of food Production Revolution?**

#### Feedback

- 1. It radically changed man's mode of getting his food. Man's dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits gave way to crop raising and domestication of animals (stock keeping).**
- 2. People who practised agriculture preferred to stay in one place to tend their crops rather than roam about in search of wild animals and vegetables. This led to a new form of human settlement in villages that eventually developed to towns and cities.**
- 3. Food production therefore made sedentary life possible. Man was no longer a scavenger or a forager for food. He no longer wandered about for food or changed his abode in response to ecological changes. He could produce, store and preserve food that could last for a season.**

## 5.2 The Introduction of Iron

The next development in the Neolithic period was the use of iron implements and weapons to replace or supplement the earlier tools made of stone, wood and bone. Like the food production revolution, iron technology started in south-west Asia, specifically in eastern Anatolia about 1500 B.C. From here, it spread to North Africa through the Phoenicians who established colonies along the Mediterranean coast. A prominent example of such colonies was Carthage. The diffusion southwards from North Africa was accelerated in the 7th century B.C. when the iron using Assyrians invaded and conquered Egypt. Following the conquest of Egypt, the Assyrians introduced iron-working technique to Nubia, which had large deposit of iron ore and wood for fuel. Hence, Nubia became a major centre of iron working.

From Nubia, particularly Meroe, iron technology spread southwards along the Nile Valley to the Great Lakes by about 250 B.C.. By 200 B.C., it had reached the east coast of East Africa. From the area of the Great Lakes, iron-working technology spread southwards to Central and southern Africa reaching the Transvaal area about 400 A.D. Also, from Meroe, the knowledge of iron working spread in a westerly direction to the Lake Chad region and hence southwards to the Equatorial forest.

It has also been suggested by Graham Connah that iron working was introduced to West Africa from North Africa. Iron working technique in the Nok Culture area of Nigeria must have been introduced from Carthage by about 250 B.C. In the same vein, it is also suggested by Phillip Curtin et. al, that by about 400 B.C., the Phoenician outpost at Cerne was not far from the Senegal river. It is possible that iron working must have spread from this area to Senegal. From Senegal and Nigeria therefore, iron working must have spread all over West Africa.

### 5.2.1 Consequences of the introduction of iron

The introduction of iron into Africa led to the production of farming implements such as hoes and cutlasses, which improved the practice of agriculture. Bushes could be cleared easily and land easily tilled and cultivated. Improvement in agricultural practice meant increase in food production and the emergence of many more settled communities and so on. Hunting and defensive weapons were made of iron. They became stronger, more reliable, and more durable than stone, bone and wooden tools. Man was able to hunt and kill bigger animals and defend himself against the danger of wild beasts. Significantly, the introduction of iron led to the emergence of blacksmiths specialised on the production of various implements. More importantly, it aided the rise of kingdoms and empires in Africa. Such was the relevance of the introduction of iron that areas where it first emerged became the earliest centres of civilisation in Africa.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explained the revolution of food production. We also examined the introduction of iron during the Neolithic period.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

**SAQ 5.1 (testing learning outcomes 5.1)**

**Explain the revolution of food production?**

**SAQ 5.2 (testing learning outcomes 5.2)**

**Examine the introduction of iron during the Neolithic period?**

# Study Session 6

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## The Bantu Expansion

### Introduction

In this study session, we will discuss the development of Bantu.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

6.1 discuss bantu development

### 6.1 Bantu Development

Bantu is a linguistic term used to refer to the dark-skinned Negroes found south of a line drawn from Northern Cameroon to Southern Somalia. It is a linguistic term applied to a host of languages and dialects spoken by dark-skinned Negroes throughout Central and southern Africa, south of a line running from the Atlantic Coast (about 5°N) across to Uganda and then south-eastwards to the India Ocean.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the origin of the Bantu. For many years, it was believed that the parent language - the proto-Bantu - developed north of the area of the Great Lakes and that the languages themselves formed an autonomous linguistic family. However, recent researches have led to a change in this view. For instance, Joseph Greenberg, a linguist, has postulated that the Bantu does not form an autonomous language family; rather it was one of the subgroups of the Niger-Congo family of languages spoken in the Sudan and West Africa. According to this view, the Bantu language dispersed in a south-eastern direction from its nuclear area - south-east of the mid-Benue area of Nigeria. It is therefore suggested here that the ancestors of the Bantu (the speakers of the ancestral language called proto-Bantu) must have originated from the region between the Benue area in Nigeria and the Cameroons, namely, the Benue-Cameroon border.

However, a more recent view held by Guthrie, another linguist, suggests that though the Bantu speakers might have originated from the Benue area of Nigeria, the main expansion of the Bantu took place in the centre of Africa. Linguists have suggested that the spread of the Bantu language over wide areas in Africa was associated with population movement. They suggested that the migration of the Bantu speakers began in Nigeria



somewhere around the Jos Plateau area. They migrated first to Cameroon and Gabon. They spread gradually eastwards to north of the forest. They penetrated the forest southwards through the River Congo. Their movement in Central and southern Africa must have been faster than in the Cameroon-Gabon area. This is because the languages associated with the Bantu in these areas were more closely related than those in the Cameroon-Gabon area. However, it is now known that the initial spread of the early Bantu speakers was small in number. It took the form of new omission areas and gradual absorption of local communities through inter-marriages for a long period.

Linguists cannot say precisely when the Bantu began to spread from their centre of dispersal. They do provide, however, some information on their occupation and social organisation. It is said that in the proto-Bantu area, the Bantu were fishermen, hunters and agriculturists. They used canoes, nets and fish-hooks. They also hunted big and small animals. They planted yams, palm trees and sorghums. They crushed their grains into flour, which they prepared and ate as porridge. They made pottery; used bark cloth to cover themselves. They were also said to have known how to weave raffia fibres on a wide loom. They bred animals like goats, sheep and some cattle. They did not take their cattle with them when they migrated.

Their social organisation was based on kinship. Polygamy was practised. A council of elders under a headman called 'leader' governed their settlement or village. It is said that the ancestral Bantu feared witches. They recognised and employed the services of religious specialists such as diviners and medicinemen. They probably believed in natural spirits and the power of the ancestors.

Scholars do not agree on how the Bantu were able to penetrate the forest and dominate all the people they met and impose their language on them. Some have suggested that the Bantu knew how to smelt iron in their nuclear area and that it was their use of iron implements that enabled them to cut their way through the forest, conquer and dominate the non-iron using people they came across in East, Central and southern Africa. Others, however, countered this suggestion by saying that since there was no wood for iron or the technology associated with it in the proto-Bantu language, the Bantu probably did not use iron. They argued that the Bantu would have burned the forest. Yet, others have ascribed the Bantu's spread to their adoption of the cultivation of food crops.

Indeed, Murdock had suggested from his analysis of linguistic evidence that the Bantu expansion had begun as one of the movements of pre-Iron Age fishermen and cultivators, who later acquired the knowledge of iron working. Archaeological evidence would seem to support this. As a matter of fact, the coming of iron need not have involved any great migration of people. It could have taken the form of the swift adoption of a valuable new technology by well-established and progressive farming peoples. The knowledge of iron working may therefore not be a primary factor in the Bantu expansion. In fact, the Bantu-speaking migrants from the Congo basin forests did not just move into an uninhabited land.

It can be summarised from the various shades of scholarly opinion that, aided by the knowledge of food production and iron technology, the



Bantu might have penetrated gradually into territories already inhabited by people whom they later acculturated.

### ITQ

#### Question

Explain Joseph Greenberg view about the bantu?

#### Feedback

Joseph Greenberg, a linguist, has postulated that the Bantu does not form an autonomous language family; rather it was one of the subgroups of the Niger-Congo family of languages spoken in the Sudan and West Africa. According to this view, the Bantu language dispersed in a south-eastern direction from its nuclear area - south-east of the mid-Benue area of Nigeria. It is therefore suggested here that the ancestors of the Bantu (the speakers of the ancestral language called proto-Bantu) must have originated from the region between the Benue area in Nigeria and the Cameroons, namely, the Benue-Cameroon border.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we discussed the development of bantu.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

SAQ 6.1 (testing learning outcomes 6.1)

Discuss bantu development?

# Study Session 7

## Egypt

### Introduction

In this study session, we will discuss the history of Egypt.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

7.1 discuss the history of Egypt

### 7.1 History of Egypt

Three ancient kingdoms, namely, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia stand out as the main centres of early African civilisation in North Africa. Of these great civilisations, Egypt was the earliest. Its growth was due to a number of factors.

Egypt was located at a point north-east of Africa where it was open to external influences from Asia, where the food production and early technological revolution took place. By 5,000 B.C., immigrants from south-west Asia had introduced food production techniques to Egypt. The consequence of this was the development of food producing communities in Middle Egypt. The first of these were the Tasians and Badarians who moved down the flood plains into the Nile Valley where they lived in fortified villages such as El-Amra and Nagada. Hitherto, the Paleolithic hunters had avoided the Nile Valley and Delta, which were jungle swamps. With the cultivation of cereals and domestication of animals, settled communities (one of the indices of civilisation) began to emerge.

The River Nile aided the growth of the agricultural communities. Its annual floods replenished its narrow valley with silts. This enriched the soil by making it fertile and suitable for agriculture. The farmers who had moved from the flood plains to the valley were able to produce surplus food and their population grew phenomenally. By 5,000 B.C., the population of Egypt estimated to be less than 20,000 had by 3,500 B.C., risen to 3 million. The growth in population was concomitant with the specialisation and improvement in the culture of the people. Farming communities grew into villages and villages into towns with elaborate political organisation. Apart from providing silts for soil rejuvenation, the Nile provided a line of communication for the Egyptians. As the Egyptian

population grew and specialisation increased, the people were no longer self-sufficient. The River Nile was one of the important means by which they made contact with their southern neighbours for the provision of their needs such as gold, wood, ivory, and so on.

Also, Egypt developed an elaborate system of monarchy at the head of which was a divine king called Pharaoh. In theory he had absolute power of life and death over his subjects. Officials, priests, and army officers surrounded him. The kingdom was divided into 40 local districts, each supervised by a governor appointed by the Pharaoh. A bureaucracy of well-educated civil servants such as scribes, tax collectors and other officials carried on the day-to-day administration. The Pharaohs were able to maintain strong control because their position as divine kings gave them power and authority.

Besides, Egypt developed one of the oldest forms of writing, namely, Hieroglyphics, which was a unique combination of pictures and sounds. In the same vein, Egyptians developed the art of irrigation, mathematics and astronomy. They studied the moon and the stars in order to understand the seasons and calculate the timing of the flood. In the process, they developed the first twelve-month calendar of 365 days as well as the Nilometer for recording the rise and fall of the Nile and water clock for measuring the time of the day.

In the sphere of religion, Egyptians believed in many gods. Each god had its shrine and temple. For example, Ra (the sun god) and Amun (the god of the wind) had separate shrines. Other gods were related to the worship of animals such as the hawk, crocodile, snake and jackal. Egyptians also believed in life after death. The bodies of the wealthy were mummified, that is wrapped in linen cloth and placed in tombs filled with personal possessions of food and drinks considered as grave goods. Worthy of mention too is the fact that the Pharaohs were buried in pyramids.

Egyptians had high standard of architecture. This was manifested in the building of pyramids. According to Herodotus, the greatest of these was the pyramid of Gizeh which was 48ft high and consisted of about 2,000,300 stone blocks of an average weight of 2½ tons costing the labour of about 100,000 people for 20 years. The Egyptians were stone builders; they built their temples, statues and pyramids with stones. Besides the Pharaohs also employed craftsmen and artisans who helped in building their houses with mud walls, strong wooden doors and windows.

Economically, in the early Dynastic Period, Egypt had established extensive trade links with the outside world. It imported silver from the Aegian Islands, Obsidian from Ethiopia, gold and copper from the Red Sea hills. Hence, while it could be said that agriculture was the pillar of the Egyptian economy, trade was one of the superstructures. Egyptian influence spread through the Nile Valley region. As they found their expansion towards Asia threatened by the Hittites, the Egyptians turned attention southwards. Their colonies grew along the Nile Valley. Egyptian motives for territorial expansion southwards were the search for security and gold. Hence by 1500 B.C. they had conquered and annexed all the territories along the Nile Valley as far as the 4th cataract and made themselves master of Kush.

Majority of Egyptian were peasant farmers who produced agricultural surplus on which the wealth, power and fame of Egyptian civilisation was built. The peasants lived in small mud houses and are bread, onions and fish. Their main crops were wheat barley and flax. They also grew figs and grapes. They kept cattle, goats, geese and hunted wild birds. They harvested large surplus from their crops, but these were taken by Pharaohs' tax-masters leaving them with just enough to feed themselves. Peasant farmers were heavily taxed. Taxes were assessed according to the level of the Nile. Peasant labour was used for large irrigation works, digging of canals and building large stone palace.

From the aforesaid, it can be seen that Egypt was a very prosperous and powerful empire that extended from the Sudan in Africa to western Asia as far north as Syria. During this period, however imperial power enabled Egypt to become greatly cosmopolitan, and some of the foreign influences that entered its culture eventually began to work negatively on the state. The first foreign invasion of Egypt occurred in 1670 B.C., when the Hyksos invaded the Delta from western Asia, using bronze weapons superior to the copper types used by the Egyptians. They rode horse-drawn chariots, but were later driven out by the Thebean kings (1570-1085 B.C). However, after 1100 B.C., the empire was attacked from across the desert in the west and in the Mediterranean in the north. By 1050 B.C., Persia and Nubia had broken free. There followed invasions from Nubia, Assyria and Persia.

In 666 B.C., Egypt was invaded by the Assyrians, whose culture included iron metallurgy. Its capital was sacked and it was despoiled of its wealth and magnificence. After this invasion, Pharaonic Egypt was never to recover its earlier grandeur. Today, what remains of that great African culture or civilisation are, the archaeological relics. Egypt's most lasting influence, can be seen from the successor-civilisation which emerged to the south-east, up the Nile Valley and around the Ilorin of Africa.

## ITQ

### Question

**Explain Egypt monarchy system?**

### Feedback

**Egypt developed an elaborate system of monarchy at the head of which was a divine king called Pharaoh. In theory he had absolute power of life and death over his subjects. Officials, priests, and army officers surrounded him. The kingdom was divided into 40 local districts, each supervised by a governor appointed by the Pharaoh. A bureaucracy of well-educated civil servants such as scribes, tax collectors and other officials carried on the day-to-day administration. The Pharaohs were able to maintain strong control because their position as divine kings gave them power and authority.**

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we discussed the history of Egypt.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

**SAQ 7.1 (testing learning outcomes 7.1)**

Discuss the history of Egypt?

## Study Session 8

# SUDAN

## Introduction

In this study session, we will explore the origin of Kush kingdom.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

8.1 trace the origin of Kush kingdom

## 8.1 The kingdom of Kush

The kingdom of Kush emerged after the decline of Egypt. It spread over present-day Republic of Sudan and lay to the south. Like Egypt, Kush depended on River Nile for its life.

From about 2000 B.C., the Nile Valley up to the 4th Cataract was under Egyptian influence. However, with the decline of Egypt as from about 1100 B.C., its political control of Nubia (Northern Sudan) became tenuous. Thereafter, the local rulers of Nubia built a kingdom known as Kush. Kush seized the opportunity of the decline to assert its independence. In 700 B.C., the Kushite king called Kashta rebelled against Egyptian authority and declared Kush an independent kingdom. He also invaded and conquered Egypt and ruled over her as far as Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt. His son, Piankhy, completed the conquest of Egypt. The Kushite kings established the 25th dynasty in Egypt. Taharqa, Piankhy's son and successor ruled at a time when the Assyrians threatened Egypt. Consequently, he moved his capital to the Egyptian Delta so as to keep watch over external aggression from Asia Minor. However, in 671 B.C., Egypt was attacked by Assyria and Taharqa was driven to Memphis. In 669 B.C., he drove out the Assyrians, but did not succeed in eliminating their threat. They eventually drove him out of Egypt in 666 B.C., and he died in 663 B.C. The Kushites were finally ousted from Egypt in the reign of his successor, Tanwetamani. Having been finally flushed out of Egypt, the Kushite kings returned to Napata, their ancient capital, as kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. Their kingdom extended as far south as Sennar and as far north as Kalabsha in Egyptian Nubia. The kingdom of Kush was ruled from Napata until the 6th century B.C.

In 591 B.C., an Egyptian expedition led by Amasis and Potasimto captured Napata. Consequently, Kush's capital was transferred to Meroe. Meroe lay at the northern end of the tropical rainfall belt. It had great expanse of land under cultivation during the rainy season. It stands within the region of annual rainfall - the broad valleys of the Butana, the WadiAwateib and the WadiHawad - which produced an abundance of crops and pasture for animals (advantages lacking in the Napata region) to support an urban civilisation.

In addition, Meroe benefited from the annual floods of the River Nile and River Atbara, its tributary. As a result of all these ecological advantages, crops could be grown in the plains and in the river valley. Cattle rearing were also done.

Furthermore, Meroe lay on a trade route along the River Atbara into the Abyssinian hills and thence to India. The city was therefore well placed for trade being located on a navigable stretch of river at the end of easy caravan routes from the Red Sea.

Besides, Meroe was a centre of iron mining. There was an abundance of iron ore as well as timber for iron smelting and it is very significant that iron technology in Kush (as in Egypt) dates from after this time. The production of iron weapons there greatly contributed to the military superiority of Kush over its neighbours and enabled it to control the trade routes leading to Egypt and the Red Sea coast. All these economic advantages made Meroe more attractive as a capital than Napata. From their capital at Meroe, the Kushites traded with the people of the Sudanic belt of Africa, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Abyssinia (Ethiopian highlands). Its export included ivory, slaves, animal skins, ostrich feather, ebony and gold.

The Kushites were the first African people to achieve a position of importance, winning the respect of the early civilized world. The structure of the Kushite houses was essentially African. Their houses consisted of open courtyards surrounded by a series of rooms all open into the courtyards and their huts were like elongated beehives with arch doorways.

As former Egyptian colonial subjects, the Kushites were culturally influenced in Egypt. Their temples, which bore inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphics, were dedicated to the Egyptian gods. Their kings led the priestly lives of Egyptian Pharaohs and styled themselves as kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. They inherited the idea of divine monarchy from Egypt. The office of the king was hereditary in the royal lineage. He was selected after consulting the oracles. After being pronounced king at Meroe, he proceeded to Napata, the religious capital for coronation.

In spite of the Egyptian influences, the Kushites developed an indigenous culture known as the Meroitic culture. A local language - the Meroitic language came to replace Egyptian as the spoken court language. A distinctive Meroitic alphabet and script were developed. They added their own local gods and shrines to the Egyptian ones. Prominent among these was the lion god (Apedemek). They also built pyramids, but these were distinct from those of Egypt. Theirs were small, rectangular in size and shape and they were flat-topped.

Economically, Meroe was distinct from Egypt. The economy was not based primarily on irrigation as in Egypt. The people of Meroe received rains in the summer and could grow crops extensively far away from the valleys. As a result, their population spread over wide areas. They lived in small rural villages ruled by chiefs and family heads. They were less politically controlled than their Egyptian counterparts who lived in the flood plains of the Nile. They paid taxes in form of annual dues. The herdsmen were semi-nomadic, less controlled by the central government provided they paid dues in livestock.

The rulers, government officials and craftsmen lived in towns. Although the ruler was theoretically absolute, an unpopular ruler could be removed. The king derived wealth from the control of trade. Exports came from the products of mining and hunting. The king controlled these. Hunters formed the nucleus of the army. Elephants were used in war. Trained elephants from Meroe were exported to Egypt for military purpose.

Iron smelting was their principal industry. Farming tools and weapons were made from the availability of iron implements. Soldiers, hunters and farmers used superior iron tools and weapons. It is significant that iron was responsible for the growth and wealth of the kingdom. Consequently, iron smelting spread widely in the Meroitic kingdom. The coming of this technology to sub-Saharan Africa was an event of very great importance for the development of the continent, and it caused a dramatic change in the ways of life as well as the social and political organisation of the African peoples. Most of ancient African kingdoms developed directly from a predominantly stone-using economy to one incorporating the use of iron in the manufacture of tools and weapons. But the introduction of this technology must have been gradual. Stone tools and weapons continued long in use alongside their iron counterparts.

How the technology of iron smelting emerged in Africa is still a much-debated issue. Decisive evidence as to the source or sources of the knowledge of iron technology, the routes by which it came, and the dates of its arrival in various parts of the continent south of the Sahara would be of extremely great value for our understanding of a critical period in the history of the continent. It is, however, very probable that East and Central Africa acquired this knowledge through diffusion from Meroe. In West Africa, the proof is more difficult to ascertain. As indicated above, some scholars suggest diffusion from North Africa, with Carthage as the probable source from where it came to West Africa.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, who visited Egypt in 430 B.C., when Meroe was flourishing, explained that Greek culture borrowed a great deal from the culture of the Northern Nile Valley, especially in the area of religion. Many other ancient Greek intellectuals shared this view. The importance of Meroe for the history of Africa cannot therefore be confined to its putative role as a centre for the diffusion of technological ideas in the continent.

The kingdom of Meroe rose and expanded as far as the Second Cataract, and in 23 B.C., its army attacked Syrene, a border town between it and Roman ruled Egypt. A number of statues were taken away including the bronze head of Augustus, the Roman emperor. This invasion, led to a counter-attack by Roman soldiers who raided Meroe as far as Napata,



causing destruction. Meroe, however, recovered under Netekaniani (12 B.C. - 12 A.D.) and the kingdom expanded from the Ethiopian hills in the south to the First Cataract in the north.

However, the kingdom collapsed after 300 AD. due to a number of factors. The economy of the kingdom declined as a result of the over-exploitation of land. Excessive felling of trees for fuel in the smelting industries led to deforestation, erosion and loss of top soil. The land lost its fertility and became unproductive agriculturally. As its trade was also closely tied to the wealth of Egypt, a decline in the wealth of the latter resulted in less demand for Meroe's luxury goods. Consequently, Meroe lost its Red Sea trade to Axum (Ethiopia). Finally, in c.350 A.D. an Axumite army invaded the kingdom. Meroe fell and yielded place to the rising kingdom of Axum.

### ITQ

#### Question

**The kingdom of kush emerged from which country?**

#### Feedback

**The kingdom of Kush emerged after the decline of Egypt**

## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explored the origin of Kush kingdom.

## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 8.1 (testing learning outcomes 8.1)

Discuss the history of kush kingdom?

## Study Session 9

# ETHIOPIA

## Introduction

In this study session, we will explain the being of Axum kingdom.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

9.1 write short note on Axum kingdom

## 9.1 The Axum kingdom

Axum was another ancient African centre of civilisation. In its heydays, it was known as the Axumite kingdom in the land now called Ethiopia. Axum was for a long time a rival of the kingdom of Meroe. Iron-smelting technology reached Axum at about the same time as it came to Kush and Egypt, about the 6th century B.C. However, the immense expansion of Axumite power was contemporaneous with the decline of Meroe.

The kingdom of Axum covered an area, which was about 300km by 160km. It was a rich agricultural kingdom. The crops planted included wheat and other cereals. The people of Axum used ploughs drawn by oxen to till their soil. They raised live stocks, which included sheep, cattle and goat. They were also able to domesticate elephants. Like the Kushites, they were artisans and craftsmen - blacksmiths, metal workers, potters, builders and carvers. The kingdom was also noted for commerce. Axum has been described as the main commercial centre between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Its hinterland provided ivory, shells and gold. Her major port was Adulis and this attracted traders from Greece, Persia and India. Apart from the items mentioned above, others include olive oil from Italy, slaves, wine, cereals and grape juice from Egypt.

A projected Axumite alliance with the Roman Byzantine Empire in 531 A.D. with the objective of destroying the Persian monopoly of the silk trade with Sri Lanka failed to materialise. But Axum maintained immense commercial transactions with many other nations from the first century onwards. Axumite commercial relations were obviously aided by the kingdoms employment of three languages for communication. These

were Ge'ez (Ethiopic), Greek (also used occasionally in public documents), and Sabaeen, the language of the Yemen.

The kingdom of Axum was the first state in Africa to introduce its own coin. It minted its own gold, silver and copper coins. The names of its kings as well as motto were inscribed on their coins. The first king of Axum to put coin into circulation was called Edybis and this took place in the second half of the 3rd century A.D.

Axum also had a great army with which it embarked on impressive military campaigns. For example, the king of Axum campaigned northwards as far as the River Nile and under its king Ezana it conquered Meroe in 350 A.D. Southwards, it went as far as the Ethiopian mountains and eastward across the Straits of Yemen. In the reign of King Ezana, Axum controlled the maritime and caravan trade routes of north-east Africa and southern Arabia. Indeed, in the latter part of the 3rd century A.D., Axum was ranked third among the great powers of contemporary world - after Rome and Persia.

In the early 4th century A.D., Axum became an independent Christian kingdom, though its church acknowledged the general authority of the monophysite patriarchs of Alexandria in Egypt. However, before the introduction of Christianity by the Greeks and Assyrians in the 4th century A.D., the people of Axum worshipped many gods, that is, they were polytheists. Such gods included Astar, Venus and Beher, which was known as the god of the earth. They also worshipped the god of war called Mahrem. They made atonements, that is, sacrifices of domestic animals to these gods. They also believed in life after death. To confirm this, their kings were buried with wealth and property which the deceased were expected to enjoy in the life beyond. They also engaged in ancestral worship and the graves of their kings were regarded as holy sites.

Very little is known about the political organisation of the Axumites. However, we do know that divine kings ruled them. They believed that their kingdom was entrusted to the kings by the gods. The office of the king was hereditary in the royal family. The king entrusted his relatives or close relations with power and authority. He exercised direct control in the capital and its environs, while regional rulers administered areas far away from the capital. The Axumite regional rulers paid tribute to the kings, but this could be withheld whenever the capital was weak and, ipso facto, assert their independence. Therefore, the authority of the king depended on his ability to control the regional rulers militarily. Apart from tributes, the king derived revenue from his control of trade at the port of Adulis where his officials charged taxes on all imported goods as well as exports.

The people of Axum were reputed to be good in the art of stone building. They built temples, houses, palaces and tombs for their kings and wealthy aristocrats. They were also literate and they developed schools called Geeds as well as a language called Ge'ez.

It was on the basis of the ancient Axumite achievements that the late Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, assumed the praise name of "the Lion of Judah", recalling the manner in which his distant Axumite predecessor, Ezana, had described his subjugation and sovereignty over

the South Arabian territories of Himyar, Raidan, Saba, and Sahlem as well as Siyambo to the south, the Blemmye peoples in the desert region to the north, and the Island of Meroe, Ezana had published a record of these exploits in two inscriptions, the first a trilingual document in Greek Ethiopic and Sabacan, and the second In Ethiopic.

Unfortunately, the kingdom started to decline from the 6th century A.D., due to a number of factors, having reached the height of its power in this period. The decline was brought about by the Persian conquest of Yemen and the Arab conquest of Egypt, which disrupted commerce in the Red Sea. By 700 A., its trade links with India and Eastern Mediterranean had been disconnected. At this period, groups of Axumites began to migrate into the Interior of Ethiopia mixing with the Indigenous people. The products of this admixture were the people of Amhara Tigre and Gojam who were the nucleus of present day Ethiopia. Hence, it could be argued that the rise of Islam and Its spread across northern Africa in the 6th and 7th century A.D, caused much of the trade of Axum to be diverted away from the Red Sea from where came the bulk of Axumite commerce. The trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean now passed through the Persian Gulf. Besides, environmental deterioration just as it hit Meroe also affected the fortunes of Axum. The felling of trees and the over-exploitation of soil led to soil infertility and erosion. By 800 A.D., Axum had become depleted and the capital had been moved to the interior central Island of Ethiopia where there could be found -a more distinctive African Christian culture.

Such were the great ancient civilisations in northern and north-eastern Africa. Other contemporary or subsequent significant early centres of African civilisation were Great Zimbabwe, typified by the Monomatapa Empire, the Swahili culture, the western Sudanese empires of Old Ghana, Mali and Songhni as well as the civilisations of Nok, Ife and Benin in the ancient areas of present-day Nigeria.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explained the being of Axum kingdom

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 9.1 (testing learning outcomes 9.1)

Write short note on Axum kingdom?

## Study Session 10

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# Swahili Civilisation of the East African Coast

## Introduction

In this study session, we will focus on the civilisation of Swahili.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

10.1 explain the civilisation of Swahili

## 10.1 Civilisation of Swahili

The Greek and Roman traders who had early contacts with the East coast of Africa referred to the region as Azania. Our source of early information on the East African coast was the first century Greek sailors' guide called "The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea" which had to do with the voyage on the Indian Ocean written in Alexandria in 100 A.D. Periplus referred to a series of market towns in this area where traders could obtain ivory rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell and coconut oil. The peoples of Azania were described as fishermen. By the first century A.D., a few Arabs had been living among the Azanians. They intermarried with the local people and adopted their language but their influence was not yet significant.

By the middle of the 8th century A.D., when Baghdad in the Persian Gulf became an Islamic capital, Muslim Arabs were drawn more than hitherto into the India Ocean trade network. During this period, a number of Muslim Arab refugees settled in the northern half of the East African coastline. They intermarried with the Azanians. Their presence facilitated increasing trade contact between the Arabs and the people of the East African coast.

The monsoon winds blowing towards East Africa from Western Indian Ocean between November and March and towards India and the Persian Gulf between April and October made commercial contacts possible between the East coast of Africa, the Arabs, Indians and other parts of the Muslim world. The Arabs came with their goods between November and

March and returned with goods purchased from the coastal people in April. Their ports of call were Mogadishu, Barawa and the islands of Lamu. As the demands for African ivory rose, more Arabs settled in the east coastal towns to organise trade. These Arab traders intermarried with local African ruling families. The coastal towns were mainly exporters of raw materials and importers of luxury goods such as oriental pottery, glassware, Indian silk and cotton. The main African commodities sought for by Arab traders were ivory, ambergris (used for making scent), slaves, mangrove poles for the salt mining centre in Basra and the farming plantation in the Persian Gulf. By 868 A.D., the population of African slaves in Basra rose to the extent that they were able to revolt (the Zanj Revolt of 868 A.D.). Other articles were gold, beads and cotton cloth.

The outcome of the Arab settlement among the people of the East coast of Africa was the emergence of the Swahili culture. Swahili is a language widely spoken along the coast of East Africa and in many parts of the interior of East Africa. It is the official language of Tanzania. The word Swahili is derived from the Arabic word “Sahil” meaning “coast”. Thus, Swahili literally means “the people of the coast”. At first, Swahili was an unwritten language of daily use, while Arabic, the written language, was used in commercial transactions.

Between the 10th and the 14th centuries, Swahili emerged as a distinct culture with Islamic base along the East coast. Swahili later developed as a written language using an Arabic script. It is worth mentioning that during our period, the indigenous coastal Bantu peoples had their culture largely influenced by Arabic civilisation. The Bantu on the coast were Islamised. The wave of Islamic expansion, which had spread to India, Malaya, Java and Sumatra, penetrated into the East coast of Africa. The 13th century witnessed the first incorporation of the coastal region into the Islamic world. Before this period, Muslim settlements had been few and communication with the rest of the Islamic world had been so difficult that their descendants lost their faith. Therefore, with an influx of Arab traders and settlers in the 13th century Islam was revived and coastal communities came to be administered by Sultans. From this time onward, religious monuments such as mosques, Quranic schools and tombs could be found along the coast. Consequently, Arab traders and settlers as well as the Islamised Bantu population began to find solidarity within the Islamic faith. The product of this new civilisation was the evolution of the Swahili culture and civilisation. Hence, the Swahili language is a mixture of Arabic and Bantu languages, which developed from the 13th century onward and today it has superseded Arabic as the official language of the coastal communities. By the 16th century, folk literature had started to be written in Swahili and there also emerged a homogenous urban centre or culture on the coast with the inhabitants of the merchant coastal cities living in luxury.

It is significant that wealth in the coastal states derived from the exploitation of the rich resources along the coast. These included the gold deposits along the Zambesi Valley. Malindi and Mombassa were renowned for iron-ore, which was exported to India for the manufacture of steel sword and dagger. The weaving industry in Mogadishu produced textile materials for the Egyptian market. All along the coast, ivory and slaves were stable exports. All these economic resources were tapped for

the exclusive use of the Arabs. The resources also accounted for the material wealth of the East African coast. There were 40 Swahili towns between Mogadishu and Sofala. Many of these towns were small. They contained a few stone houses, a mosque and a Muslim ruling family. Larger towns were Mogadishu, Pate, Mombasa, Malindi, Zanzibar and Kilwa. These towns contained coral stone houses and exhibited great wealth. Most of these towns were independent under their Muslim sultans, but before the 14th century some of them, like Kilwa, claimed control over their smaller neighbours.

The Swahili society was socially stratified, that is, there were social disparities or inequalities. They were divided into three viz: first, there existed a distinct and isolated elite, which was rich and enjoyed the influence stemming from the discharge of traditional functions. This included the Arabic and Swahili ruling family, for example, sultans and members of their family, government officials and wealthy merchants. The ruling class lived well, very wealthy, lived in stone ornate palaces, etc. Second, there were other people outside the elite who were rich and whose wealth was derived from trading. Hence, below the merchants were artisans, craftsmen, clerks, minor court officials and captains of ships. This class consisted of Africans with little or no claim to Arab ancestry. The third class consisted of non-Muslim slaves drawn from the mainland. The commoners, that is, the ordinary free members, formed the majority and the main body of the Swahili people. This group did most of the work on the farms, estates, and industries.

The economy of Swahili was based primarily on farming, fishing, gathering seafood and trading. Ordinary people carried on farming. Al-Masudi lists some of the local crops grown as bananas, dura, yams, coconuts, and sugar cane. Coconut palm was an important agricultural item of the inhabitants of the East African island and coast. Arab authors who frequently referred to the local consumption of fish and marine animals mentioned the existence and importance of fishing and the gathering of seafood. Fish was also offered for sale. Pearls, turtle shells, and ambers were also gathered and sold. Domestic animals including cattle, sheep and goat were kept. There were many trading centres. These included Kilwa, Kisiwani, Manda, Gedi, Kisimanimafia, and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. The imports included Chinese porcelain, celadon, black and yellow pottery and glassware. The main export items were ivory, gold, slaves, rhinoceros horn, ambergris, pearls, shells, and leopard skins. The medium of exchange was the cowry shell. Later, beads, China coins came to be used in Kilwa and Mogadishu, where commercial activities were most intense. The trade of the East African coast was profitable and it was the basis of the wealth of the Swahili people. It forms the bedrock of the social and cultural development of the Swahili society.

The Swahili people had lucrative commercial contacts with the Arabs, Persians and Indians. The effect of these trading contacts and the wealth derived from commerce was the transformation of the originally small coastal settlements into large towns. Another important result of such development was the appearance of an influential group in the Swahili society, competing or struggling for power with the old aristocracy, whose sway and influence was based on the discharge or performance of



various kinds of traditional functions. The rise of this new influential group and its attempt to consolidate its position called for a new ideology. This was provided by Islam, which had become known through contacts with the Arabs and Persians. The penetration of Islam seems to have begun at the end of the 7th or 8th century. In the course of time, Islam's influence grew and deepened and the number of adherents increased. A manifestation of this phenomenal change was the rise in the number of mosques built in the coastal cities.

However, the consequences of the development and spread of Islam among the Swahili was not only the construction of mosques, but also the construction of stone buildings. The archaeological work of Kirkman and Chittick provides a general picture of the development of building and architecture on the islands and coasts of East Africa. Their beginnings dated back to the 12th century in Gedi, Zanzibar and Kilwa. This initial period had its own building methods, which consisted simply of laying coral blocks on red clay. The only edifice of that period to have survived to this day is the Great Mosque of Kilwa, but it was rebuilt a number of times and is now a completely different building. According to Portuguese sources, the narrow streets of mud-walled houses in Kilwa were covered with protruding palm leaves, which formed the roof of the houses. The wall of the houses where there were stone benches narrowed the streets with stone houses. The palace was an important edifice, which probably had two or three floors. The buildings had wooden doors and probably other details in woods, which were richly adorned with carvings. The high level of the development of the Swahili civilisation also seems to be indicated by the ceramic lamps, found in excavations, which must have been used for lighting the dark rooms and suggests that the inhabitants probably engaged in reading, writing, keeping accounts, and so forth. The furniture consisted of carpets and mats and sometimes stools and luxurious beds inlaid with ivory, silver and gold. Cooking was done with local earthenware pots, which were also used for other purposes by the poor sections of the community. The rich made everyday use of imported pottery from Iran, Iraq and China.

We do not know much about the traditional political system of the Swahili people prior to the advent of Islam. But V.M. Misiugin carried out a research titled "Chronicle of the town of Pate". He showed that before the Nabkhani dynasty, that is, the Muslim dynasty in Pate, there was a state governed by an old African aristocratic clan called "WAPATE", which had the privilege of royal power and bore the title of "Mfalme". He observed that during this period that Pate had a system known as "Ndugu rule" in which the title of Mfalme was not bestowed for life, but transferred, within a lineage, from one Nduguman to another. This means that in former times the Wapate clan on the strength of its superiority over other clans hindered or deprived the latter of the right to occupy the supreme office of Mfalme.

It is therefore significant that the East African Swahili towns were not only centres of trade and Islamisation, but also administrative centres. The capitals of the small states were ruled by the local Muslim dynasties. The clearest example of such a centre is Kilwa. It is known through the two versions of its chronicles that its ruling families were of non-African origin. One source claimed that the dynasty whose inhabitants were



Persians, not Africans, came from Shiraz, while the other advocated that the ruling dynasty in the towns were dynasties which traced the evolution of a solid culture and civilisation to people that came from outside Africa. This Hamitic hypothesis-influenced traditions seem to show that the civilisation established on the East African coast was the work of Persians and Arabs who either built towns, introduced Islam and spread their own culture which was superior to that of the Africans.

What seems plausible is that the indigenous African aristocracy of these states must have, through interaction and inter-marriages with Muslim traders and clerics, been influenced by Islamic religion and culture, which they used to strengthen their authority. Hence, their claim of descent from Arab and Persian families is prominent in the history of Islam. Such legends claiming foreign origin are by no means unique. For example, A.H.J. Prins has given examples of many ethnic groups claiming Arab or Shiraz ancestry, despite their undoubtedly African origin.

From the foregoing, it seems clear that the East African Swahili civilisation was the fruit of commercial development. It was through the stimulation of trade on a substantial scale that the Swahili people started producing in greater dimensions than the level of production in the traditional pre-Islamic society not only for local consumption but also for sale and export.

The Swahili civilisation, however, declined as a result of a combination of factors. First the Zimba invasion caused considerable destruction of Swahili towns. Second, change in climatic condition resulting in decrease in rainfall caused decline in agriculture, decline in maritime trade, which consequently stalled the development of the coastal towns. The third and most significant factor was Portuguese invasion in the 17th century. The constant attack on the coastal towns by Portuguese warships equipped with sophisticated weapons under the command of one RuyRavascoLorenso proved invincible and formidable. Not only were the coastal towns plundered and destroyed by the Portuguese, Zanzibar, the most important Swahili city-state was also defeated and its large fleet of light craft was captured. The East African maritime trade never recovered from Portuguese devastation.

## ITQ

### Question

**What is the literal meaning of Swahili?**

### Feedback

**Swahili literally means “the people of the coast”.**

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explained the civilisation of Swahili.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

**SAQ 10.1 (testing learning outcomes 10.1)**

Explain the civilisation of Swahili?

# Study Session 11

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## The Great Zimbabwe

### Introduction

In this study session, we will examine the origin of Zimbabwe.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

11.1 trace the origin of Zimbabwe

### 11.1 The Origin of Zimbabwe

Great Zimbabwe was the name given to the ruins of stone enclosures abandoned more than 500 years ago by the Shona people of Central Africa. The enclosures were built between 1200 and 1450 A.D. It was the capital of an early Shona State and a specimen of Shona culture and civilisation. The word Zimbabwe means 'stone buildings'. Great Zimbabwe lies about 27km south-east of the modern town of Fort Victoria in Zimbabwe. It is the most impressive monument of African culture south of the Nile Valley. It covers more than 60 acres of land. It consists of two complex dry stone buildings, which Europeans have erroneously referred to as the Acropolis and the Temple. The first is a series of enclosures on top of a hill, while the second includes a large number of buildings in a valley (about 1km away from the first). The enclosures were built first on hilltops and later in the valley. The valley enclosure is 10m high and shows the finest state of ancient Shona masonry.

The great edifice was built either for the purpose of defence or to enhance the mystery of the king's power. Many of the buildings were encircled by massive circular walls (32ft high and 17ft thick at its maximum). The wall is estimated to have incorporated 900,000 large granite blocks. The ruin of this great monument was discovered in September, 1871 by Carl Mauch, a German explorer-pro prospector based in the Transvaal, Europeans have insisted in their early published accounts that such an exotic culture was non-African in origin. They said that some whitemen inspired by Jewish or Arabian architectural models must have constructed the great physical edifices. Through the works of archaeologists like David Randall, Mac Iver and Gertrude Caton-Thompson in the first and second decades of the 20th century and those of the members of the Rhodesian

Historical Monuments Commission, this wrong notion has been corrected. Supported by Carbon 14 dates, written records by the Portuguese who visited the Zambesi Valley in the 16th and 17th centuries and oral tradition collected from the Shona peoples have shown that Great Zimbabwe was the headquarters of an indigenous African state, which flourished for many years.

This state rose from the building of population in the Zambesi-Limpopo region between 100 and 150 A.D. This population build-up owed its origin to the introduction and spread of crop cultivation, domestication of animals and the development of metallurgy in this area. Hence, the emergent civilisation was a result of cultural diffusion among the Shona peoples. Another factor was the presence of alluvial gold deposit in a broad belt running from the Mazoe River in the Northeast to beyond the Limpopo River in the south-east. There was also the alluvial gold deposit in the tributaries of the River Zambesi. Great Zimbabwe lies a few distances south and east of this gold belt. Iron age peoples occupied the hill where Great Zimbabwe was located for a while in the 1st century A.D. There is therefore a possibility that Zimbabwe civilisation was a product of gold trade and iron technology. The inhabitants of Zimbabwe were said to have been washing alluvial gold and working iron-ore by the 10th century A.D. They split the rock cover of the ore by heating and cooling it. They cut out the ore with iron picks and took it to the nearest stream where they crushed and washed it in the running water.

Great Zimbabwe's location on the south-eastern edge of Zimbabwe plateau enabled it to utilise the plateau's rich resources to develop and support a rich culture and civilisation. The plateau possessed wide upland and lowland grazing area for cattle, which were important to the state's economy. It was a well-watered fertile area suitable for agriculture. Its forests supplied plenty of timber for building and firewood. It also had plenty of games such as elephants, which supplied ivory. The location was ideal for trade. At the head of the Sabi River, Great Zimbabwe was located at a point where it could exploit longdistance trade between the gold fields of the western plateau and the Swahili of the Sofala coast.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, much of the long-distance trade between the interior and the coast passed through Great Zimbabwe capital. The king derived revenue from trade and tributes paid in ivory, gold and food. The wealth of Great Zimbabwe must have been derived from its location on the long-distance trade route between the gold producing reefs in the region to its north and west and the Muslim trading port of Sofala on the Indian Ocean. Archaeologists had recovered material remains of the wealth. These included local pottery of good quality and design, ornaments made of copper, bronze and gold, remarkable figures of birds carved from soapstone, ceramics of Asian origin, a piece of 13th century glazed Persian porcelain and several Chinese celadon dishes of about the 14th century A.D. Great Zimbabwe was also a religious centre. The inhabitants enclosed the hilltop which contained a sacred shrine with dry stone walls. From the 13th century onwards, they improved their building methods and completed the great enclosures below the hill, which was probably their royal palace. The king lived in the stone enclosures in great luxury; surrounded by gold, copper ornaments and jewellery. He ate in plates made in Persia and

China. His courtiers lived within the enclosures too. In the capital also lived craftsmen who worked gold and copper into jewelleries and forged imported iron into tools. Weaving was done from locally grown cotton. In the provinces, smaller stone enclosures were built probably to house provincial rulers. Thus, contrary to some foreign authors, Zimbabwe did not owe its origin to external influence. By 1450, the resources of Great Zimbabwe site had been exhausted. The resources could not support the population, which was about 11,000. Salt was in short supply. Trade shifted to the north towards the Zambesi Valley. As a result of the above, the site was abandoned. Most of its inhabitants quit the area either because it has been over-exploited or because of famine due to population explosion. Some of the migrants moved to the Mazoe, a tributary to the river Zambesi, where there was gold deposit. They formed the nucleus of an empire known as the NweneMutapa or Monomotapa.

### ITQ

#### Question

**What is the meaning of the word Zimbabwe?**

#### Feedback

**The word Zimbabwe means 'stone buildings.'**

## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we examined Zimbabwe development.

## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 11.1 (testing learning outcomes 11.1)

Trace the origin of Zimbabwe?

## Study Session 12

# The Founder of Monomotapa Empire

## Introduction

In this study session, we will discuss the development of Monomotapa kingdom.

## Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

12.1 discuss the development of Monomotapa kingdom

## 12.1 The Monomotapa Kingdom

The founder of Monomotapa kingdom was a Rozwi chief called Mutota. In c.1445 A.D., he marched towards the Zambesi River where he established his kingdom. His appellation was Nwenemutapa - the master-pillager - and this became his title and that of his successors and also of the kingdom which he founded. Mutota subjected most of southern Rhodesia to his political authority before his death in 1450 A.D. His son, Mutope who continued his father's conquest for over 70 years, succeeded him. Under him, the empire reached its height. Like Great Zimbabwe Empire, the Nwenemutapa dynasty benefited from the gold trade. The Nwenemutapas controlled the alluvial gold supplies and the northern section of the gold bearing mountains. They also claimed dominion over the region south of the Zambesi River to the sea including the trading ports on the Zambesi. The revenue they derived from trade enhanced their political power. Enjoying economic buoyancy at home, the Nwenemutapas were able to build a strong army, which they employed for territorial expansion. Tributes from conquered states further augmented Nwenemutapa's earning from trade.

The population of the empire was stratified into aristocracy and the peasants. Majority of the people were peasants living on the land. They were also miners mining gold for the king and members of the aristocracy. They were also engaged in military service. The empire remained prosperous until the death of Mutope in 1480 A.D. At the height of its power, the centre of the empire was firmly controlled by Mutope. Thus, by 1480 A.D., Monomotapa Empire had been extended to the Zambesi River from the Kariba Gorge to the Indian Ocean and some areas of the coast, south of the Zambesi delta.

The centre of the kingdom also moved to the north. The leading city was Ra Mutota, located on a tributary stream to the Zambesi approximately 180km above Tete. The kingdom was organised into provinces, each under the rule of an appointed governor, who was usually a son or close relative of the king. The territory nearest the king's town was administered directly by the ruler and his central bureaucracy. The great distances between the Monomotapa's court and the outlying portion/district of the empire made it difficult to maintain authority. The lack of ethnic homogeneity also caused the king many problems. Even before the death of Mutope, the empire had begun to break apart.

The area of original habitation near Great Zimbabwe, called Guniuswa was ruled after 1480 A.D., by a grandson of Mutota named Changa, who was quick to take advantage of the division within the empire to carve out his own kingdom. Perhaps, encouraged by Arab traders, Changa declared the southern part independent and gave his name to the new kingdom of Changamire. By the time the Portuguese became well established at Sofala, Monomotapa had lost to the Changamire over one half of the area controlled by the first two rulers of the empire.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we discussed the development of monomotapa kingdom.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 12.1 (testing learning outcomes 12.1)

Discuss the development of Monomotapa kingdom?

# Study Session 13

## South Africa

### Introduction

In this study session, we will generally view the nature of South Africa. We will also examine the groups of people in South Africa.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

after studying this session, you should be able to:

- 5.3 highlight the nature of South Africa
- 5.4 examine the groups of people in South Africa

### 13.1 Overview of South Africa

South Africa is the southern end of the African continent, the southward prolongation of an immense plateau, which stretched northwards to the Sahara. Although majority of the peoples of the area speak either the Bantu or the Khoisan languages, South Africa is a melting pot of races. The intermingling of the Negro, the Bushmen and Hottentots over a thousand or more years has created a variety of subracial types. However, of the main groups of people in South Africa, the Bushmen and the Hottentots were the indigenous groups. The Bantu, which constituted the third group, were an expanding group who later settled and dominated the area.

#### ITQ

##### Question

List the main groups of people in south Africa?

##### Feedback

The bushman  
The Hottentots  
The Bantu



## **13.2 The Groups of People in South Africa**

### **13.2.1 The Bushmen**

As indicated earlier, the Bushmen were among the early inhabitants of South Africa. They lived in some parts of Botswana and South-west Africa, the Kalahari Desert and the northern parts of Namibia. In the 16th and 17th centuries, they inhabited a much larger area. They were small in stature (about 1.5m in height and were a little taller than the pygmies). They had delicate bone structure, light skin and they lacked body hair.

The Bushmen had no permanent village. Rather, they organised themselves in small hunting bands under leaders who were elderly men. A band was at most made up of few hundred people of fairly close relatives.

The Bushmen had very simple political and social structure, with no formal system of government. Everyone was equal to the other. That is, no one had a feeling of subordination to the other. Every successful hunter shared his skills with the other members of the group and the feeling of unity within each group was very high. Within each group also, decisions were taken through discussion amongst adult members.

The Bushmen were sub-divided into the following groups: The Saan, who lived in parts of the Namib Desert and in the mountains of Namaland. They adopted the language and, to a large extent, the religion, law and customs of their immediate Hottentot Nama neighbours. The other groups were the Heikum, Kung and Auen of the Kalahari. These were smaller groups who retained more of their own customs than the Saan. The colour of their skin was light yellow.

As hunters, the Bushmen were experts in the use of the small bow and poison-tipped arrow. Because of their occupation, they were nomadic moving from place to place in search of games. As nomads, they did not practise any kind of agriculture. Their hunting and gathering mode of existence enabled them to survive in the 18th century, when they were forced into an inhospitable environment. They survived by gathering wild vegetables, melons, shrubs, snakes and mice.

The Bushmen were religious. They prayed to the moon and the stars; they had rainmaking gods. In their social life, they were very cheerful and merry. They were fond of dancing. They had great artistic talent. They painted pictures of animals and men on the walls of their caves. Some of them built temporary houses of grain. Before the 18th century, cattle-rearing Hottentots had forced the Bushmen into the interior areas of South Africa.

### **13.2.2 The Hottentots**

Closely related to the Bushmen, both in race and language, were the Hottentots. According to the linguist Joseph Greenberg the Hottentots were probably of the same racial stock as the Bushmen and simply developed differently due to better diet and different gene pools. Their language was akin to each other and exhibited several racial

characteristics in common. However, they differed very considerably in culture. Apart from a small group who lived along the coast, subsisting by fishing and gathering shell-fish (the strand loopers whose kitchen rubbish dumps of sea shells can still be seen on South African beaches), the Hottentots were a pastoral people.

The Hottentots were slightly taller than the Bushmen. They were yellowish in complexion and of peppercorn hair, etc. While the Bushmen were gatherers and hunters, the Hottentots were mainly stock-keepers. That is, they were herdsmen wandering from a water pool to another with their cattle. They placed high value on their sheep and cattle, which were their mainstay. They lived in more permanent camps than the Bushmen and they had more varied skills. Like the Bushmen, they practised no agriculture, but had private property in cattle, which made some to be richer than the others.

The Hottentots were the result of a mixture of Bushmen and Hamitic races. This may have happened in East Africa's Lakes Region. The Hottentots moved southwards from their original home and settled in the whole south-western part of Africa. Only a few Hottentots now survive. In fact, the Hottentots were not so widespread in South Africa as the Bushmen. They were generally to be found near the coasts, in South-west Africa, at the Cape itself and up the east coast at least as far as the Transkei. Their relations with the Bushmen were often hostile. The Bushmen resented the intrusion of Hottentots' cattle on their hunting grounds and retaliated by stealing the animals or killing the herdsmen, and the Hottentots in return tried to destroy the Bushmen communities. But sometimes, peaceful agreements were made and occasionally Bushmen bands lived in association with Hottentot ethnic group acting as herdsmen and hunters.

The Hottentots smelted iron to make spears and arrowheads. They made wooden bowls, baskets and leather bags. Their chief food was milk. They did catch animals with traps. Their women were treated with respect and had an independent position within the group. However, the basic Hottentot political unit was the clan. This was normally a smaller unit ruled by a Chief whose authority within the band was considerable. It is worth noting that conflicts between clans were settled by warfare. Such conflicts invariably led to the creation of larger political units. The Chiefs ruled purely by consent of the other clan heads and, if there was a serious disagreement, a group frequently broke up. Any clan head could always break away, becoming an independent chief, and this inevitably happened whenever the population of a group grew large. The sparse vegetation of most of South Africa meant that a relatively few cattle required extensive grazing lands, so when herds grew too large to be grazed together separation was the obvious answer.

It was therefore not surprising that the inability of the Hottentots in the Cape area to co-operate with one another against a common enemy was one major reason for the quick success of the Dutch in dominating the immediate hinterland.

### **13.2.3 The Bantu**

The third of the earliest inhabitants of South Africa were the Bantu. Significantly, the group of Bantu who settled in South Africa belonged to a branch of the Bantu peoples known as the Southern Bantu. They had much in common with the peoples of Monomotapa Empire and they shared a common culture with one another. When they first began to enter South Africa is not known with any degree of accuracy, but it was certainly several hundreds of years before the 19th century. They can be divided into a number of groups by reference to their languages, namely, the Nguni, Sotho, Herero and Ovambo.

The Nguni-speaking Bantu inhabited the fertile east coastal strip of South Africa. They advanced farther southward than any other Bantu people in South Africa. The languages of the Nguni group were sufficiently similar for different peoples to understand one another though there were some important differences in vocabulary and dialect. They were particularly in close contact with the Bushmen and Hottentots and hence used more of the click sounds in their languages than other South African Bantu.

The Sotho-speaking Bantu occupied the central plateau from the escarpment to the fringes of the Kalahari. Some of the earliest of this group to enter South Africa were the ethnic groups who are generally known as the Tswana (Bechuana). Their dialect differed slightly from the others, and they lived on the western part of the plateau near the Kalahari in the area now known as Tswanaland. The rest of the Sotho group spread into the Transvaal and the northern parts of modern Orange Free State, and are sometimes divided into northern and southern Sotho.

To the west of the Kalahari, a third group, the Herero and the Ovambo occupied South-west Africa where they made much less progress than the other groups. Besides, the Namaqua Hottentots and the Bushmen occupied most part of the country.

Significantly, all the South African Bantu, apart from the Herero whose way of life was very similar to the Hottentots, were mixed farmers. Furthermore, they kept cattle, which were their most prized possession and the essence of their existence. However, they also practised agriculture. As a result of this, they maintained much larger populations on the same area of land than either the Hottentots or the Bushmen and lived in larger communities in more permanent dwellings with less need for frequent migration. Generally, their houses were round huts sometimes built of mud with thatched roofs and attractive designs painted ill-coloured clay on the walls, and sometimes simply woven of grass.

The people were organised in ethnic groups, each of which consisted of one central clan. It might, however, contain members from other clans as well. The Chief or head came from the central clan and was the head of the community in every sense. He had the final say in all political matters and the final judge in all legal disputes. He was the link between the community and its ancestors, and took the lead in all important ceremonies, controlling the activities of the magicians who summoned rain and the witch doctors who detected persons guilty of black magic and communion with evil spirits. However, despite this wide-ranging authority, the chief could not rule as a despot. He was surrounded by a

number of personal officers, called Indunas, to help him enforce his commands. The Indunas were chosen from families with no claim to royalty so that they would not be tempted to seize the throne.

The most important cultural institution of the southern Bantu was the system of initiation to manhood. For when a boy reached an age when he was matured enough to marry and take on the responsibilities of adult life, he went through the ceremony of circumcision followed by a prolonged period of living apart from the group, during which he would receive instruction on the customs of his people and the duties expected of an adult man. These ceremonies made a profound impression on the minds of the young men and imbued them with respect for the traditional culture of the community. So important was the experience that men only counted the years of their lives after initiation, boyhood being considered too insignificant to be worth recording. In all the groups, these initiation ceremonies created a sense of fellow feeling amongst men who were initiated about the same time. Among the Sotho groups, this feeling was particularly strong. In the Sotho situation, initiation ceremonies were conducted under the authority of Chiefs or district heads. All the youths of appropriate age in a given area were initiated together in an initiation school, which was generally held when the Chief or sub-Chief had a son of age for initiation. After the ritual period was ended, the boys who had participated in an initiation school retained a sense of corporate identity. In times of war, they fought as a group under the leadership of their agemate prince, and at other times, they assembled to perform special services for the ruler such as building him a new homestead.

Finally, it is worthy of mention that warfare between groups was not uncommon. For as the population increased and grazing land became scarce, disputes often occurred between neighbours. Also, when a Chief died, squabbles over the succession often involved fighting and when, as so often, these troubles led to the division of the group the different sections might continue to nourish feelings of hostility for one another. Moreover, given the importance of cattle to the people, wars were organised to capture a few cattle or force a neighbouring group to abandon a grazing ground, not at destroying the enemy completely. Thus, a war usually ended after a single battle when one side admitted defeat; non-combatants were usually respected and prisoners returned for a ransom. The southern Bantu groups had no standing armies and no special war Chiefs.

From the forgoing, it can be seen that three main groups, the Bushmen, the Hottentots and the Bantu dominated the affairs of South Africa until the emergence, in 1652, of the immigrants, especially when the Dutch East Indian Company finally established a permanent post at the Cape, which had been used as a stopping point for ships travelling to and from the Indies for over a century. From that period, a new element was added to the pattern of South African peoples, foreshadowing the beginning of apartheid in South Africa.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we will generally view the nature of South Africa. We will also examine the groups of people in South Africa.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 13.1 (testing learning outcomes 13.1)

Highlight the nature of South Africa?

#### SAQ 13.2 (testing learning outcomes 13.2)

Examine the groups of people in South Africa?

# Study Session 14

## West Africa

### Introduction

In this study session, we will explore the origin of old Ghana Empire. We will narrate the history of Almoravid Empire. Thereafter, we will discuss about Mali Empire. Finally, we will trace the origin of Songhai Empire.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

- 5.5 trace the origin of old Ghana Empire
- 5.6 write short note on the Almoravid Empire
- 5.7 discuss about Mali Empire
- 5.8 trace the origin of Songhai Empire

### 14.1 Old Ghana Empire

We cannot say when the Berbers began to move down from North Africa, but there are stories of a settlement of white people in the Aukar district (some 480km west of Timbuktu) in the 2nd century A.D. Perhaps, they were Jews who left the Roman province of Cyrenaica, settled near Timbuktu and later moved westwards to Aukar. Little is known about these white strangers except that after some 200 years they became rulers of the Mandingo peoples among whom they lived. Their kingdom, which was called Ghana, lasted for 400 years before other Negro peoples from Wagadugu overthrew it. A black king then took over the throne of this ancient kingdom.

The Moslem Arabs conquered the Maghreb at the end of the 7th century A.D. and Arab merchants began to visit the western Sudan. They found Ghana to be a rich Negro kingdom. It was at its best in the 9th century A.D. On the east of it was the River Niger and on the west was the Lemtuna kingdom at Audaghost.

Al-Bakr, an Arab historian who lived in Spain, wrote a description of Ghana as he heard of it from merchants who visited it when it was most wealthy. The capital (KumbiSaleh) consisted of two separate towns, 10km apart. One was the Muslim town where the Arab merchants from North Africa lived and where there were some buildings of stone. The other was the pagan town of El Gaba where the houses were clay huts with thatched roofs. Around it, there were pagan groves where the priests

sacrificed to their gods. The Muslims held most of the important posts in the government of the kingdom. They had six mosques and several schools in their town, which was also the commercial centre of the kingdom.

What impressed visitors most was the amount of gold ornaments used when the king showed himself in public. He had a gold headdress, 10 horses with gold equipment, 10 boys standing behind him holding gold swords and shields. Dogs wearing collars and bells of gold guarded the doors of his house. At the gate there was a ball of gold, weighing 14kg, to which his horse was tied.

When a king of Ghana died, his body was placed on rugs and cushions in a round, wooden hut. Near his body his people placed his robes, his weapons and supplies of food and drink. Lastly, his wives and servants were put into the hut before it was closed. The whole hut was then covered with earth until it formed a great mound with a ditch around it.

The wealth of Ghana was based on the ability to supply slaves for its market and on the trade in gold. Gold was obtained from other pagans who lived far away in Wangara, a name of mystery for many centuries. There was so much gold there that the amount coming into the market had to be controlled to prevent the price from falling too low. Merchants came from all parts of western Maghreb bringing jewellery, beads, cloth and salt to trade for slaves and gold.

In Ghana, the Arab merchants met their Negro agents and with them they travelled for 20 days over large desert till they reached the Senegal River. There they beat big drums to call the local people. These were the gold miners. They were very shy and would not come out to the riverbank when the foreign merchants were there. The Arabs, therefore, used to put their goods in piles and go out of sight. The local people then came out and placed a heap of gold dust beside each pile and then went away. If the Arab merchants were satisfied, they took the gold, beat their drums again to show that the market was over and went away.

This silent trade (sometimes called 'dumb barter') was also practised in other parts of the world. It usually started in places where the people did not trust each other, but where they needed each other's goods, as in the case of Wangara, where the gold miners had no other way of getting salt.

The Arab merchants, who made the long and painful two months march from the Maghreb to Ghana, came to buy slaves as well as gold. There was always a good sale for Negro slaves in North Africa. So, the slave market was kept supplied by constant raids on the primitive ethnic groups who lived in the forestlands to the south.

The king of Ghana collected taxes on everything which passed through his market: gold, salt, slaves, and many other things. These taxes augmented the wealth of Ghana.

Ghana could not expand towards the sea, for there was always the Lemtuna kingdom in the way. Early in the 9th century, Ghana was very alarmed by the warlike activities of Tilutane, the Berber Chief of Audaghost, who with 100,000 horsemen had conquered all the Berber ethnic groups of the West. Ghana did not dare to fight such a powerful



kingdom and Tilutane did not attack Ghana. There was, however, much rivalry between the two kingdoms over the trade across the desert and each often raided the caravans going to the markets of the other kingdoms.

### ITQ

#### Question

Name the Arab historian from Spain who wrote the description of Ghana?

#### Feedback

Al-Bakr, an Arab historian who lived in Spain, wrote a description of Ghana as he heard of it from merchants

## 14.2 The Almoravid Empire

Audaghost, the capital of the Lemtuna kingdom, was 15 days' march westwards from Ghana and one month's march to the coast. It was a large town with many fine buildings and it was surrounded by date palms beyond which were the desert sands. Its inhabitants were Berbers who owned large numbers of pagan Negro slaves. There were also many Arab merchants who looked after the caravan trade. In the town, there was plenty of water for such crops as millet and wheat. There were large herds of cattle and sheep. Audaghost was a city of great commercial prosperity and carried on much trade with the Maghreb; particularly with Sijilmasa. The inhabitants were very wealthy and lived in civilised comfort. Among the traders on the desert routes, Audaghost was famous for the skill of its cooks and the beauty of its women.

In the 11th century A.D., one of the leaders of the Lemtuna went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but on the way he was so ashamed of his ignorance of the Muslim faith that he asked a pious teacher, IbnYacid, to come and teach his people. However, they found his teaching too hard and they burned his house and drove him out of their town. So, with two faithful Lemtuna followers he went to live on an island in the Senegal River. There he collected around him about a thousand true Muslims and set out with them to convert the "world". There was some setback at first, but before long all the ethnic groups of the Atlantic coast had accepted his teaching and were united under him. He called his followers "Marabouts" or holy men: they are known as the Almoravids.

IbnYacid then collected an army of 30,000 men, all inspired with the religious fire of their leader. Africa had never seen such a well-trained force. He defeated all the ethnic groups of the western desert. Then he led his army to the north and conquered Sijilmasa. But he himself was killed in battle in 1057 A.D. He was one of the most notable men in African history. He not only began a great religious movement, but also united all the peoples on the Atlantic coast, west of the desert.

After his death, the leadership of the Almoravid State passed to two great men, Abu Bakr and Yusuf IbnTashfin. Yusuf led the desert army over the



Atlas Mountains. He built the city of Marrakesh in 1062 A.D. and by 1082 A.D. the Almoravid Empire extended as far east as Algiers.

About that time, the Muslims in Spain were being strongly attacked by the Christian armies. Their only hope seemed to be to get help from Africa. But the Spanish Muslims feared that the wild Almoravids might be worse than the Christians. They were uncertain about what to do. Then they heard that Yusuf and his army from the desert were on board 100 ships off the Spanish port of Algeciras and were demanding that it should be surrendered to them. The army landed and shortly afterwards defeated a much larger Christian army at the Battle of Zallagah in 1068 A.D. By 1102 A.D., the whole of Muslim Spain was in the hands of Almoravids Emirs. As long as Yusuf lived, their rule brought peace and good government to the Almoravid Empire both in Spain and in Africa, but civilisation soon ruined them. Coming from the hard life of the desert to positions of ease and power, they soon forgot the commands of the Qur'an. Even their followers in Africa rose against them. In North Africa, a new Berber sect, the Almohads under the leadership of Abdul el Mumen, drove them out and set up a new kingdom from Tunis to the Atlantic in which peace, prosperity and learning flourished for 100 years.

Abu Bakr, who took over the leadership of the southern wing of the Almoravid army on the death of IbnYacid, spent some years converting the Negroes by force to his reformed religion. After 14 years, he felt strong enough to attack Ghana, which <sup>1</sup> had remained pagan. In 1076 A.D., he captured Ghana. Many of its people were killed and the rest were forced to become Muslim or were driven out into the desert. Although the king was allowed to keep his throne, Ghana never regained its former importance as a centre of trade and it was completely destroyed 1240 A.D. There are some ruins at KumbiSaleh, about 320km north of Bamako, the capital of the modern Mali Republic, which may mark the site of the capital of Old Ghana.

## 14.3 Mali Empire

This state was perhaps the largest and richest of the Sudanese kingdoms and was best known throughout Europe and Africa. It was rightly called the Empire of Mali. Its rulers regularly made the pilgrimage to Mecca and so attracted many foreign merchants, both Muslim and Christian, to the capital.

Mali developed from a very small Mandingo kingdom of Kangaba, on the west side of the River Bakoy (a tributary of River Senegal). Its capital was at Jeriba (between River Niger and River Sankaram). At the beginning of the 13th century, A.D., however, it was large enough to be noticed by another Mandingo chief called Sumanguru who had just destroyed Ghana. He seized and killed 11 sons of the king of Mali, but spared the twelfth, a cripple boy called Sundiata. This boy grew up to be strong both in mind and body and he began the Mali Empire. To this day, he is praised as the national hero of the Mandingo people.

When he came to the throne, he collected a bodyguard of hunters whom he could trust. With them he went south, crossed River Tinkisso, and conquered the neighbouring kingdom of Sangaran. Then, with the

Sangaran army, he went west and conquered the Futa Jallon. In this way he gained another army. Turning east, he crossed Sankaram River and defeated some Bambara rebels. With an army growing larger and larger, he went round the borders of his kingdom to make sure that all its peoples were loyal to him. He returned to Jeriba in 1234 A.D.

He was now the equal of Sumanguru, who decided that he must stop the young Sundiata before he became too powerful. Their armies met at Kirina just north of the modern town of Kulikoro) in 1235 A.D. The result was a complete victory for Sundiata. Sumanguru was killed and his kingdom became part of the growing Mali State.

Sundiata now built his capital on a new site at Niani about 30km from Jeriba and spent the rest of his life developing the country around. He never again led his soldiers in battle, although his armies continued to enlarge his lands. He died in 1255 A.D. In 25 years, he had turned an unknown little kingdom into a powerful empire.

This empire continued to grow, and in 1307 A.D., Sundiata's grandson, Mansa Kanka Musa, came to the throne. He ruled in Mali for another 25 years and became the most famous of the Mandingo kings.

The Mali Empire had controlled the goldfields of Wangara for 70 years, when Mansa Musa went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He set out across the desert to Cairo in 1324 A.D. He rode on horseback with 500 slaves in front of him, each carrying a bar of gold, which weighed about 3kg. His camels were said to have carried more than 11,000kg of gold. He showered gold wherever he went and it was said that he paid for a mosque to be built at every place where he stopped on a Friday. He brought so much gold to Egypt that its value there fell and did not recover for some years. He demonstrated that he had come on a truly religious pilgrimage and his piety and generosity were spoken of in Cairo for years after his return from Mecca.

On his homeward journey, he took with him two Arab scholars, El Saheli and El Mamer, whom he had met in Mecca. While he was still in the desert, he learned that one of his generals, Sagmandia, had captured Gao, the capital of another larger kingdom, Songhai, which lay to the east of his empire. So, he turned his caravan and went to visit this new part of his empire. Before he left Gao he gave El Saheli the task of building a nobler mosque than the simple building of mud and thatch, which had been good enough for the Songhai rulers.

He went along River Niger to the Songhai city of Timbuktu and there too he set El Saheli the task of building a large mosque and a palace for himself. Timbuktu was already an important market. It was the place where several caravan routes from North Africa met the great Niger waterway to east and west Sudan. Under Mansa Musa, it became a great centre of trade and learning. For with the caravans came rich and educated men from many lands. Its great mosque became famous for the wisdom of its teachers.

Mansa Musa died in 1332 A.D. He left an empire larger and wealthier than any other African state of those days. Its borders, from Tekrur on the Atlantic to Dendi on River Niger, were more than 1,600km apart; and

from Walata and Tadmekket in the deserts of the North, the Mali Empire extended into the forests and mountains of Futa Jallon in the South.

After his death, however, the empire declined gradually. Ibn Battutah, the well-known Arab traveller and writer, visited Niani in 1352 A.D. He disliked the rude manner of some of the Mali officials whom he met, also the cannibalism which he saw and the people's habit of pouring dust on their heads when coming before the king. But he wrote:

the Negroes possess some admirable qualities. They are seldom unjust and have a greater hatred of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant has anything to fear from robbers or man of violence. They do not take the property of any white man who dies in their country. On the contrary, they give it in charge of some trustworthy person among the whites until the rightful heir is found.

Ibn Battutah wrote also of the flourishing agriculture of the empire and of the wealth of its markets. He noted the widespread use of slaves captured from the neighbouring pagan ethnic groups. Slaves and gold were the chief exports from Mali along the caravan routes of the Sahara. The Mali people were good Muslims and regularly practised the rules of Islam.

By the middle of the 17th century, however, Mali had declined considerably. Its territory had diminished. Its sovereignty had been limited to the province of Kangaba from which the empire originally grew.

## 14.4 Songhai Empire

Before Mali became an empire, there were the Songhai people whose territory spread along River Niger from Bussa to Timbuktu. The Songhai were Negroes who originally lived in the Dendi district, west of Argungu, in the angle formed by the Niger and Kebbi rivers. More than 1,000 years ago, the Songhai had spread along the banks of River Niger. Zaghawa Berbers conquered them at an early date. Za Aliamen, the Zaghawa ruler settled in the Songhai capital, Kukia, and so became the first of many Berber kings of the Songhai people.

At the beginning of the 11th century A.D., the capital was moved from Kukia to Gao and the king became a Muslim. Gao was at the southern end of the caravan routes to North Africa and it had a large Muslim community.

Al Bakr, writing a description of Gao in the 11th century, said that (like Ghana) it has two parts, one inhabited by Muslim foreigners, and the other by the pagan Songhai. Salt (from Taotek, six days' march in the desert beyond Tadmekket) was used as money in the market. As indicated earlier, a Mali army conquered Gao in 1235 A.D., but it regained its independence 10 years after.

Ibn Battutah, on his way to Morocco from Niani in 1335 A.D., spent a month in Gao. He wrote that it was

a large city on the Nile (sic) and one of the finest towns in the Negro lands. It is also one of their biggest and best-provisioned towns with rice in plenty milk and fish... the buying and selling by its inhabitants is done with cowrie shells.

In 1468 A.D., the Songhai ruler in Gao was Sonni Ali, an ambitious man. He was asked by the Mandingo ruler of Timbuktu to help him free that city from its Zaghawa-Tuareg overlords. Although he was himself of Berber origin, Sonni Ali, like all the Songhai, hated the Tuareg horsemen who used to gallop in from the desert and attack the villages of the river peoples. So, Ali set out with a large army. His arrival on the south bank opposite Timbuktu took the entire Muslim population, including the learned men of the university, by surprise. They all fled across the desert to Walata. Although Ali entered Timbuktu without fighting, he killed many of its inhabitants.

Five years later, after a siege lasting many months, Sonni Ali conquered Jenne, which, according to tradition, had been attacked 99 times by the armies of Mali without success. Jenne, which was built in 1250 A.D., was the major town near the region of lakes and marshes through which the waters of River Niger flow above Timbuktu. Surrounded by creeks, Jenne was easily reached by merchants from the Maghreb and was also easily defended against attack from Mali in the south and from the Tuareg in the north. For 200 years, Jenne had been one of the most important centres of commerce and learning in the western Sudan. Raiders from the desert were always troubling Timbuktu, but Jenne was an undisturbed island of peace.

In 26 years, Sonni Ali had changed a string of riverside villages into a powerful kingdom, but he did little to increase the prosperity and peace of the Sudan.

The next ruler of the Songhai kingdom was a Mandingo Muslim called MuhammedToure, who gave himself the title of Askia. He had been prime minister and was a man of outstanding political ability. He always asked for the advice of older men, more learned and more experienced in government than himself. He began a form of government which was new in the western Sudan, but which was widely copied far outside the boundaries of Songhai. He divided his kingdom into provinces with a Governor in charge of each; the provinces were divided into districts. He put Mayors in charge of the important cities and he appointed other important officers. There were strict rules about the importance and the duties of each post and about the number of drums to be used in saluting each officer.

He developed trade and began a system of weights and measures to encourage honest business. Dishonesty was treated as a very serious offence.

AskiaMuhammed encouraged learning and employed tutors for the education of his own children. Under him, the Sankore University at Timbuktu prospered and was well known among the learned men of Europe. Centres of higher education were built in Katsina and Jenne. Many new schools were built and teachers were brought to work in them.

Muhammed fought many battles using an army of paid soldiers, so that the farmers and traders could carry on with their work without being constantly called away to fight. He conquered the Hausa States, but they soon regained their independence. The Tuaregs had been constantly raiding the farmers on the borders of his kingdom. So, in 1515 A.D. he drove them out of Agades and set up a colony of Songhai Negroes whose descendants are still living there today.

Askia Muhammed went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1495 A.D. with even more horsemen, more foot soldiers and more gold than Mansa Musa had taken when he went to Mecca 170 years before.

Under Askia Muhammed, the Songhai Empire reached its greatest extent. His rule stretched almost to the Atlantic coast in the west and to Agades in the east. For a short time the people in it enjoyed peace and they all prospered as never before. Because of his immense contribution to good governance and the greatness of the empire, Askia Mohammed was rightly called "Askia the Great".

Unfortunately, his sons who rebelled against him and forced him to give up the throne in 1528 A.D. upset the peace and order of the kingdom. He was blind and over 80 years old when his sons forced him to live miserably on an island in River Niger. He died, an unhappy man, in 1541 A.D.

## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we explored the origin of old Ghana Empire. We narrated the history of Almoravid Empire. Thereafter, we discussed about Mali Empire. Finally, we traced the origin of Songhai Empire.

## Assessment



### Assessment

#### SAQ 14.1 (testing learning outcomes 14.1)

Trace the origin of old Ghana Empire?

#### SAQ 14.2 (testing learning outcomes 14.2)

Write short note on the Almoravid Empire?

#### SAQ 14.3 (testing learning outcomes 14.3)

Discuss about Mali Empire?

#### SAQ 14.4 (testing learning outcomes 14.4)

Examine the origin of Songhai Empire?

# Study Session 15

## Nigeria

### Introduction

In this study session, we will narrate the history of Nigeria. We will also discuss the culture and civilisation of Nigerians.

### Learning Outcomes



Outcomes

After studying this session, you should be able to:

5.9 write short note on the history of Nigeria

5.10 discuss the culture and civilisation of Nigerians

### 15.1 The History of Nigeria

Although Nigeria as a political and geographical entity was the creation of European ambition and rivalry in West Africa, it would be an error to assume that its peoples had little history before Britain, France, and Germany negotiated its final boundaries at the turn of the 20th century. For, Nigeria contained not only a multiplicity of ethnic groups but also a number of great kingdoms and many states that had evolved complex systems of government independent of contacts with the Arabs and Europeans. In this chapter, we shall focus on the origins of these people and their civilisation. We shall examine in particular, the legends of the seven Hausa states, the Ife legend on the origin of the Yoruba and the Nok culture. We shall also discuss the Benin and Igbo Ukwu peoples, especially their myths, historical origins, cultures and contribution to the making of the early history of Nigeria.

However, it is significant that many scholars in the past had argued that there was no sense in talking of the history of Nigeria before 1914. The argument had been that the entity now called Nigeria neither existed before 1914 nor assumed any internationally recognised and independent stature until 1960. These scholars argued that it is more sensible to talk in terms of the separate histories of the different peoples who later constituted the unity in the diversity now called Nigeria. This was so they argued, because a large part of the histories of these peoples lies outside the geographical area of present-day Nigeria. But to concede the above idea would amount not only to succumbing to the much discredited Hamitic hypothesis but also failing to take cognisance of continuity and change in Nigerian history. It is important to have knowledge of the history of the peoples, kingdoms and states, which constituted the

country. This knowledge is germane to the understanding of the socio-economic and political situations in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. This is one of the objectives of this chapter. The necessity to delve into the past (before 1914) has been emphasised by Professor Thomas Hodgkin who stated that there existed a number of interactions and relationships among the different peoples of present-day Nigeria long before the dawn of the colonial era. These interactions and relationships were not exclusively political, but also economic and social. Thus, there were long established socio-political contacts between the Igbo and the Ijo, Igbo and Ibibio, Bini and Yoruba, Bini and Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, Hausa and Fulani, etc. before the introduction of Islam in the north and the advent of the colonial opportunities in the south. Professor Hodgkin also observed that not only did states and peoples of Nigeria interact amongst themselves, they also come at different times and in varying degrees and also had a number of foreign influences from Mali, Gao, Egypt, western Europe, etc.

Our preoccupation here is to explore the early centres of civilisation, which provided basic conducive atmosphere for early socioeconomic and political interaction among the various peoples, communities, states, and kingdoms that metamorphosed into modern Nigeria. We will do this by looking at the origin of some Nigerian peoples, their culture and their early centres of civilisation

### ITQ

#### Question

Name Nigeria historical origins?

#### Feedback

The Hausa

The Yoruba

The Nok culture

The Benin

Igbo Ukwu

## 15.2 Origin, Culture and Civilisation of Nigerians

### 15.2.1 Hausa States

The Hausa states were supposed to have been founded at different times during the period 1200 A.D. The legend of Bayajidda (Abu Yazid Khaided Al-Zanati (884-947 A.D.J) is presented as the origin of the Hausa states, though there appeared to have been a system of administration in some areas especially Daura, headed by a queen before Bayajidda came into the scene. The legend confirmed the constant reference to oriental influences on Hausaland and beyond, for Bayajidda was said to have reached Daura through Borno. He arrived on a horse and dramatically got rid of the menace of a bothersome snake in the



community's well. The huge and terrifying snake would allow the citizens fetch water from the well only on Fridays. Bayajidda married the queen for his reward and the seven sons of that relationship became the founding rulers of the seven Hausa states (Hausa Bakwai), that is, Daura, Kano, Rano, Zazzau, Gobir, Katsina, and GarunGabas.

It is significant that in addition to these original so-called legitimate seven states, there were others that were pejoratively referred to as "Banza-Bakwai", that is, not so legitimate ones, which included Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Kwararrafa, and Yoruba (Ilorin). They were said to have been so named because they were founded by the sons of the slave girl married to Bayajidda by the queen of Daura.

It should be noted, however, that the Bayajidda legend does not adequately explain the origin of the Hausa people and the whole process of the emergence of states among them. Rather, it represents an unscientific way of explaining similarities in language, culture, political organisation and developments among the Hausa states. It is also used to explain the spread of Hausa culture to neighbouring non-Hausa people without taking cognisance of proximity, the influence of environment and interaction among the Hausa and their immediate and distant neighbours over a period of more than a century.

It seems that the development of state-like organisations in Hausaland pre-dated the advent of Bayajidda; The process involved a gradual evolution of small community settlements into hamlets and from the latter into states. The first stage was the emergence of settlements (communities), which grew into nucleated hamlets. At this level, each hamlet had strong kinship ties. Authority resides in the head of each family. As time went, there emerged in each of the hamlets leaders whose authority transcended or cut across family group. Such leader exercised authority over agriculture and some other economic activities. The second stage was the emergence of larger communities than the hamlets as a result of the convergence of related groups of families or lineages on strategic locations to form towns or gwari. At this level, a central authority was developed to look after the affairs of the town.

The third stage was the emergence of cities (birni). A birni could develop into a capital of a state whose ruler exercised authority over many hamlets or some other birnis. For the purpose of administering such large areas, each Hausa state developed a hierarchical system of authority.

### **15.2.2 Ile-Ife**

Ile-Ife is the fountain-head of Yoruba civilisation. The origin of this ancient centre of civilisation is encapsulated in the origin of the Yoruba. In explaining the rich culture and civilisation of the Yoruba, some scholars have engaged in controversies on the provenance of the Yoruba. For instance, Amoury Talbot, an anthropologist, has suggested that the Yoruba came from the north-east, specifically Egypt. Similarly, Olumide Lucas, a well-known Egyptologist stated that the Yoruba migrated from Egypt through Sudan. Saburi Biobakuseem to agree with Amoury Talbot and Olumide Lucas. He suggested eastern Sudan as the place of origin of the Yoruba. Samuel Johnson who based his opinion on oral sources



collected in some parts of Yorubaland opined that the Yoruba migrated to Ile-Ife after being driven from Arabia as a result of religious crises.

Oral sources popular among the Yoruba support the belief that Ile-Ife is the origin of their culture and civilisation. There are two stories, which seem to give credence to this belief. The first is that of creation. The Yoruba believe that Ile-Ife was the centre of human creation, the place where human beings were first created. This myth of origin stated that Olodumare (God) sent Obatala to create the solid earth at a period when the whole earth was full of water. He was given a hen with five toes, a piece of earth in a snail shell. He was to sprinkle the piece of earth on the primordial water and release the hen to scatter it. However, Obatala could not perform the task having been drunk of palm wine on his journey. The assignment was consequently given to Oduduwa who successfully, created the solid earth and descended with sixteen elders with a chain at Ile-Ife.

A second explanation for the origin of Ile-Ife and of the Yoruba was contained in a story of migration. Oduduwa was said to have migrated from Mecca to Ile-Ife. He was the son of Lamurudu (Nimrod), king of Mecca. As a consequence of religious clash between the adherents of traditional religion and those of Islam, Oduduwa and his people were forced to flee Mecca travelling for 90 days passing through Gobir in Hausaland before reaching Ile-Ife.

Although these two stories centred around a single personage, it shows that the events referred to took place at two different historical periods. The story of migration is said to have taken place in the 7th century A.D., while those referred to in the story of creation seem to have taken place many centuries before the birth and death of Prophet Mohammed, the founder of the Islamic religion. It would therefore appear that the Yoruba consist of two elements, those who had been living in Yorubaland before the 7th century A.D. and those who migrated there in that century under the leadership of Oduduwa. However, as the two stories converge on Ile-Ife, the latter therefore takes a centre stage in Yoruba history.

Scholars have revealed that Ile-Ife was an important early centre of Yoruba civilisation. It has been revealed that there were 13 mini-states in the Ile-Ife area before the advent of Oduduwa and his group. A priest-king with semi-divine characteristics headed each of these villages. The 13 mini-states were organised as a confederacy under Obatala, but each ruler of a mini-state had semi-autonomous status. Oduduwa came into the scene at a time of crisis. He became the leader of the anti-Obatala group, which seized power from Obatala. Having seized power, Oduduwa re-organised the 13 mini-states into a kingdom and thus began a dynastic period in Ile-Ife. Oduduwa's children and grandchildren were said to have spread the revolution at Ile-Ife to other parts of Yorubaland by establishing kingdoms elsewhere. Thus, today, Obas (kings) in Yorubaland claim origin from Ile-Ife where they derive authority to wear beaded crown.

Archaeological research has confirmed the primacy of Ile-Ife in Yorubaland. It has been revealed that, indeed, Ile-Ife was the cradle of Yoruba civilisation. Attention was first drawn to the ancient art works of Ile-Ife by Leo Frobenius, a German ethnographer in 1910-1911. Since

then, archaeological works by Thurstan Shaw and other archaeologists have revealed brass objects, terracotta and bronze heads, which are naturalistic in form. Other findings include carved figures, monoliths, stools in granite and quartz. A unique example of Ife artistic work is the "OpaOranyan" a six-metre high granite column believed to have marked the grave of Oranmiyan, regarded in Yoruba Oral history as the youngest son of Oduduwa.

All the archaeological discoveries show the highly sophisticated Yoruba artistic work and the high standard of ancient Yoruba civilisation, which has been found to be favourably comparable to those of ancient Egypt, classical Greece, Rome and Europe during the Renaissance.

### **15.2.3 Nok**

Unlike the Hausa and Yoruba discussed above, the Nok culture is unveiled by the archaeological excavations and factual discoveries at the Nok village near Kafanchan in the Jos Plateau area extending to Abuja, Niger State, and all of the Middle Belt zones of Nigeria from KatsinaAla, south of Benue River to Kagara, 160km west of Kaduna State. Altogether, it covers an area of some 480km long and 160km wide (76,800 sq. km).

It is said to represent one of the earliest cultures in the Nigerian region and dates back to some 2,000 years, approximately from about 900 B.C. and reached its peak at about 200 A.D. The culture became known through excavated terracotta sculptures, stool tools and jewellery. According to Flint, "these show that the Nok people built a society of considerable complexity, in which specialist crafts and wealth had made their appearance. Beads of tin and quartz were manufactured for adornment, and all artistic activities had reached a high level of attainment". Flint further notes the religious significance of the Nok sculptures and the light they shed on the daily activities of the people, their agricultural, artistic craftsmanship that included iron smelting. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that the culture was very familiar with iron tools hundreds of years before Christ implying that it may have been both economically and militarily dominant, using iron weapons.

Nok culture was discovered through tin mining on the Jos Plateau and environs. Many of the archaeological findings in this area show that the Nok people grew crops such as maize, millet, guinea corn and root crops. It is believed that they first used simple tools, but as they advanced later, they used iron tools. It is also believed that they kept cattle and other grassland domestic animals. Agriculture, animal rearing, and iron ore smelting were their main occupations.

They were found to have used ornaments made from beads and smooth stones. The Nok culture achieved a level of material development not represented in the West African sub-region for nearly 1,000 years. Their terracotta sculpture, abstractly stylised and geometric in conception, is admired both for its artistic expression and for the high technical standards of its production.

Several features of the Nok culture, particularly its art, are found in later cultures elsewhere in West Africa. It is difficult not to believe that the

Nok culture, as we know it, presents the ancestral stock from which much of the sculptural tradition of West Africa derives. There were certainly many similarities between the Nok and the Ife arts.

### **15.2.4 Benin**

The word Benin (Bini) was used broadly to cover the capital city and to describe the kingdom, the language and the people. Benin embraced both the Edo-speaking people or the Bini proper and a large non-Edo-speaking population. Benin incorporated the Bini, Esan, Kukuruku, Oria, Akoko, Isoko, and Urhobo peoples.

There are various traditions of the origin of Benin, but two main categories of the tradition can be distinguished. These are the Edo people themselves and the dynasty. One tradition claimed that the Edo people originated from Egypt and that the people stopped in the Sudan before they arrived at the present site. Another version of the legend claimed that the Edo people had always lived in Benin and were descendants of the youngest son of Osanobua, the Supreme Being. The son is said to have come with a snail and some sand, which he spread on an area of water. This gave him the piece of land he required which is now called Benin.

The dynastic tradition refers to the period of the rule of the Ogoiso when there were political crises. In response to the crises, the people approached Oduduwa at Ile-Ife who sent his son Prince Oranmiyan to Benin. On reaching Benin, Oranmiyan married Eriwinde, a Bini princess, through whom he had a son, named Eweka. Tradition further stated that the struggle in Benin continued and Oranmiyan withdrew from the place in frustration and anger. He also called the place Ile-Ibinu (the land of vexation) which was later converted to Ubini by Oba Ewedo and later became transformed to Benin.

Another version tries to reconcile the origin of the people and that of the dynasty and provided a comprehensive account. This tradition explains that the Edo were descendants of Idu who was said to have been the grandson of Oghene (God). Idu was also said to have lived at Uhe (Ife) with his brother, Olukuni, but was expelled. Idu, thereafter proceeded to a "land of peace and plenty" which in Idu language is Ubini. Thus, Ubini is described as a "fertile and open land between or amidst flowing waters". Thus, there is some confusion regarding where the Benin (Edo) people came from, whether from Egypt, Ife, the sky or the ground. Controversy continued to surround the traditions, but from all available evidence, it seems clear that there were a people who lived in Benin before an invitation was sent to Ile-Ife for advice on good governance.

### **15.2.5 Igbo-Ukwu**

The Igbo cultural area includes all those areas and "people that speak the various dialects of Igbo language and share typical and significant common culture traits and patterns. Awka, Nri, Ihiala and Owerri are in the culture's centre, while Agbor and Ebu (west Niger Igbo), and Enugu Eziko, Afikpo and Azumimi and Ikwerre (east Igbo) are in the culture margin". Our definition of this cultural area has taken into consideration linguistic, socio-political, economic, and religious (ritual) factors.

One of the first to write on Igbo culture and its origin was the Igbo ex-slave, Olaudah Equiano (or Gustavus Vassa) who suggested that the Igbo were the lost tribes of Israel who, like the Jews, practised circumcision, confined their women for a specific period after child-birth after which they were purified, named their children after specific events and experiences, and so on.

There had been no agreement among the Igbo-Ukwu people on where their ancestors came from. Some believe that they had always lived where they now are and did not come from anywhere else. Others, however, believe that their forefathers came from Egypt, Israel, or some other place. But by the 1930s, the myth of an origin had been abandoned in the absence of any useful evidence. Professor Robert Armstrong turned to linguistic research to show that the members of this Kwa linguistic sub-family started separating from the ancestral group between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago. Yoruba, Edo and Idoma also belong to this sub-group, which is known to have existed for more than six thousand years. There is also the tradition that says that the Igbo first lived in the area known as the "Nri" complex and that later some of their forefathers moved away from the complex to other areas. This view is acceptable to some historians.

It is believed that the first settlement in Igboland was located in the Nri-Awka-Orlu region. Here, the Igbo were engaged in fruit gathering and hunting. Later, they proceeded to search for wider space. Disputes amongst them also led to their dispersion. In the course of migration, the Igbo ensured that contacts were maintained. Various villages also amalgamated informally to form confederations and to work out common lines of defence and other cooperative ventures.

Nri civilisation was believed to have prospered from about the 9th to the 16th centuries A.D. The bronzes excavated in the Igbo-Ukwu area were of excellent quality and date back to the 9th century. During this period, the Nri were greatly respected and acknowledged as special people, revered as priests and advisers. Based on excavation at Igbo-Ukwu, Professor Thurstan Shaw also revealed that at this period, Igboland was already engaged in long- and short-range exchange of businesses. The former brought in such items as horses, bronze, and carnelian beads from markets in the Sudan and beyond.

Nri was also filled with rituals and religious activities. It also became the centre of a cult connected with the installation of Chiefs, purification and title making. This is the explanation for the sculptures now found at Igbo-Ukwu, located in the heartland of Nri.

In the south-east, both iron and brass working reached a very high pitch of excellence by the 9th century A.D. as the Igbo-Ukwu excavations show clearly. Igbo civilisation seemed to have moved to Awka, Nkwere, and Abiriba. Blacksmith experts made a living as itinerant smiths. According to Isichei, "Awka obtained their iron from Agulu-Umana in the Udi area" and the people in the Awka region excelled as blacksmiths. Iron also enabled them to control the woods and forests by the use of new and stronger tools made of iron. The result of this development was that blacksmiths and master craftsmen dominated the social, political and economic life of Igboland during this phase of Igbo history.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this study session, we narrated the history of Nigeria. We also discussed about the culture and civilisation of Nigerians.

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## Assessment



### Assessment

#### **SAQ 15.1 (testing learning outcomes 15.1)**

Write short note on the history of Nigeria?

#### **SAQ 15.2 (testing learning outcomes 15.2)**

Discuss the culture and civilisation of Nigerians?



### Reading

## **Note on Self-Assessment Question**

### **SAQ1.1**

Africa is the second largest continent in the world. It is next in size and population to Asia, and more than three times the size of the United States.

With 54 independent countries (more countries than other regions of the world), Africa is extraordinarily diverse. Africa supports approximately 12 percent of the world's population, with over 770 million people.

The people are of different ethnic groups. They speak hundreds of languages and practise three main religions, namely, traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

### **SAQ 1.2**

The environment had influenced the people's way of life as they struggled to adapt. Majority of the population were and are still farmers and herders. Their survival is thus tied to the land. Indeed, majority of Africans are farmers, growing food crops including sorghum, millet, yams, bananas, maize and other cereals in the savannah and forest regions. Herding livestock such as cattle, goats and camels is the major livelihood in the drier savannah areas and in semi-arid regions like the Sahel. Hunting and gathering, now almost extinct, is still practised in two of Africa's most challenging ecological regions,

These three occupations are primarily based on subsistence economy thus the farmers, herders and hunters (foragers) are directly dependent on the land for survival.

Africa is a region of great extremes. It contains some of the earth's driest land, and some of its wettest. It has the world's longest river the River Nile, the largest desert, the Sahara; and endowed with abundant natural resources. It is the most central continent in the world, with most of its land mass in the tropics. In terms of vegetation, it is divided into the forest, grassland, savannah and the desert zones. The topography of the region facilitate easy movement of man from one zone to the other except the forest zone where thick forest, entangle vegetation and lianas impede movement over a wide area. As indicated above, the continent is also watered by different rivers and streams.

These not only serve as sources of drinking water, but also as means of transportation and communication. Such rivers include Rivers Niger and Benue, among others.

The African rain forest forms one of the largest tropical forests in the world, stretching with only a few gaps from West Africa through the DR Congo. The area receives about 70in. of rain per year and has an average temperature above 80° Fahrenheit.

Africa has three major river basins. The Nile River in northeast Africa starts from two sources, the Blue Nile in the highlands of Ethiopia and the White Nile in the Great Lakes region.

### **SAQ 2.1**

According to the book of Genesis, God created the world and all the things there in six days. He rested on the seventh day. Man happened to be the last to be created on the sixth day. The first set of human beings, Adam and Eve, were created and placed in the Garden of Eden.

church-influenced scientists explaining the origin of the fossils advanced two theories.

#### **Deluvial Theory**

The first was the Deluvial Theory. The theory emerged from the biblical story of the great deluge in the days of Noah. The exponents maintained that all creatures, except those saved by Noah at God's command, had perished during the great flood that destroyed the world. The fossils that had been discovered were therefore the remains of those who had perished in the flood and buried under the debris that covered the earth after the water had subsided.

#### **Catastrophic Theory**

The second theory was the Catastrophic Theory. This theory was advanced when different fossils of animals were found in successive geological strata, which indicated that the animals must have lived at different geological periods. Baron George Cuvier, a French palaeontologist, who explained that there had



been successive creations and catastrophies, propounded the theory. He opined that God's first creation consisted of marine creatures; the second consisted of reptiles and the third, mammals. All these were destroyed successively. The fourth creation was also destroyed with the exception of Noah and those in his Ark. Thus, according to this theory, fossils of human beings could only be found around the valley of the Euphrates where the Garden of Eden was located and where Noah had placed his Ark. The theory infers that no contemporary fossil of the remains of different species of animal or man could be found in situ.

### **SAQ 2.2**

He discovered a piece of jaw-bone at Kanam on the shores of Kavirondo Gulf in Lake Victoria. He claimed that the jaw had features of *Homo sapiens* and he named it *Homo kanamensis*. He regarded it as ancestor to *Homosapiens*. His claims were not, however, taken seriously by fellow scientists until about four years later when similar skull bones were discovered at Swanscombe in Germany in 1933 and South England in 1935.

In 1959, Leakey discovered at the Olduvai Gorge in northern Tanzania in East Africa, a skull that he named *Zinjanthropus* (man of zinj) popularly known as the "Nutcracker Man" because of its huge molar teeth. This finding was publicised as *Australopithecus* (*Zinjanthropus*) *boisei*. Along with this discovery were stone tools and bones of extinct animals. Leakey at first believed that *Zinjanthropus* was the maker of the tools. However at Bed I of the Gorge (and at a slightly lower level) he found fossil remains of a skull different from that of *Australopithecus Zinjanthropus* and slightly bigger than that of *Australopithecus Africanus*. The hand bones were closer to modern man and the foot indicates a habitually upright walking man. Leakey claims that it belongs to the genus of *Homo* and he called it *Homo Habilis*. He concluded that *Homohabilis* was the tool maker.

In 1962, Leakey discovered another form of hominid belonging to neither *Australopithecus* nor *Homo habilis*. He named it *proto-Homo erectus*. At this time, Leakey's discoveries at Bed II of the Gorge had proved that three contemporary co-developing lines of hominid evolution existed in the Olduvai Gorge. These are (1) *proto-Homo erectus*, leading to *Homo erectus* (2) *Homo habilis* leading to *Homo sapiens* (3) *Australopithecus* leading to extinction. In 1967, his finding was authenticated by the discovery of the fossils of co-existing *Homo Habilis* and *Australopithecus* north of Lake Rudolf by an international expedition of scientists from France, the US, Kenya and Ethiopia.



In addition to these finds, Leakey was able to show by means of potassium/argon dating method that the Olduvai Australopithecines go back to the lower Pleistocene period about 1.7 million years. He deduced from a combination of evidence from Olduvai and Rudolf discoveries that man had already existed in Africa 2.6 million years ago. He also found at a site (Koobifora) east of Lake Rudolf that at this period, man in Africa had been associated with stone tools. Since there was no evidence of any earlier tool using hominid elsewhere, man in Africa was therefore regarded as the earliest tool maker in the world.

Another major concern of Leakey was to prove that man did not evolve in a lineal form from Ape. In 1915, Sir Arthur Keith had said, “The gorilla of today is not a human ancestor, but retains, we suppose, in much higher degree than man does, the stock from which both arose”. Keith had suggested that the point where the Ape family and the Hominid family separated from the common ancestor might be found in the Miocene period.

Leakey’s investigation in the Miocene beds (dated 45-25 million years) of Rusinga Island, in Lake Victoria revealed that a fossil Proconsul, which had already evolved in ape form existed side by side with Kenyapithecus Africanus, that had also already evolved in the Hominid form. Thus, Leakey had proved, by his work in East and Central Africa, that a separation of the “pongidae” (apes) from the “Hominidae” (men) had already taken place in Africa in the Miocene period. He posited that the point of separation would have to be sought in earlier Oligocene periods in the Fayoum region of Egypt. His researches consequently confirm Darwin’s view that Africa was probably the birthplace (origin) of man.

### SAQ3.1

#### The Early Stone Age

The characteristic tools of the early Stone Age are stone pebbles, flakes, hand axes. As a result of variation and different levels of development, three cultural types have been identified in this period. The first is the Oldoway Culture. This is characterised by “pebble tools” and it is associated with Olduvai Gorge where the tools were first discovered. It is believed that these types of stone tools were used in the earliest period throughout the world. The tools have been associated with *Homo erectus*. Potassium or argon dates from Olduvai Gorge showed that the Oldowan culture must have lasted from 2,000,000 years to about 500,000 years. The second is the Acheulian Culture, which derived its name from St Acheul in France where it was first sited. The characteristic tools are handaxe, round stone balls and cleaver. Tools associated with this culture are more refined than those of the Oldowan Culture. Handaxes are found

throughout Africa. Prominent examples are Nok and Mai Toro dated 500,000-55,000 years in the plateaux area of Nigeria. The third is the Sangoara Culture, which takes its name from Sango bay in Lake Victoria in present-day Uganda. The tools are heavier and cruder than those of the Oldowan and Acheulian Cultures.

#### The Middle Stone Age

Stone tools used at this period are small, very finely trimmed, flat and thin. They are shaped like leaves or spear heads. A number of other small tools like flake tools such as chisels and blades (long rectangular flakes) also existed. Like in the early Stone Age, a number of cultures are identified in this culture. These include the Lupemban in Congo and North Central Africa, the Still bay in southern Central Africa and Petersburg in South Africa. Cave dwelling seems to be a general feature of the Middle Stone Age. Tools were grafted unto sticks as handles to make spears.

#### The Late Stone Age

This is the age before the coming of agriculture and domestication of animals. Typical tools of this period are microliths - very small flake tools sharp on one edge and blunt on the other. Examples are found in Congo, North-Central Africa, East and South Asia. It is dated 5,000-6,000 B.C. Prominent examples of the survivals of the late Stone Age today are the Khoisan peoples of Kalahari Desert area of South Africa.

Dwelling places at this period were rock shelters, cave mouths, open sites beside rivers or springs. Hunting and gathering were predominant as modes of life. Hunting seemed to be exclusively the work of men, while gathering was the responsibility of the women. Hunting weapons were bows and arrows. Examples of Stone Age sites are common in Africa, especially in Nigeria. These include: Mejiro cave near Old Oyo, Rop Rock shelter on the Jos Plateau, Iwo Eleru near Akure (in Ondo State), the Wilton stone culture typified by the Gwisho camp near Kafue river in Zambia.

The late Stone Age people developed the techniques of hunting and gathering to a high level of expertise. Much of our knowledge of this people comes from extensive archaeological research and

anthropological studies, but even more important was the dramatic and vivid evidence left behind in the paintings and engravings by the people themselves on the rock wall of their caves and shelters. These paintings, usually in red, yellow, orange, and white revealed scenes of living creatures - animal and humans. Many of them portrayed events such as hunting, fishing and dancing, while others appeared to have been inspired by religious beliefs about life, death and the spirit world.

Careful studies of the animal bones and stone artefacts recovered have revealed much about the hunting habit of the late Stone Age man. In the savannah area, he hunted a wide range of animals - large and small. His weapon consisted mainly of specially shaped microliths glued or bound to wooden shaft to form multi-barbed spears and poisoned arrows. The poisoned arrows became handy in eventually wearing down, even the large animals such as antelopes and buffalos that inhabited the extensive plains of Africa. In the densely wooded regions, snares, traps, pits, spears and axes of Middle Stone Age style were used. The hunted animals supplied meat for their diet, bones for tools or ornaments, skins for clothing, shelter, leather gathering bags, water jugs and strings for hunting and for carrying babies.

Apart from hunting, gathering was also very important to the late Stone Age man. Recent studies show that gathering accounted for up to three quarters of the normal daily diet. Women who used digging sticks and carrying leather bags probably did gathering. They collected a variety of small and large nuts, fruits, edible roots and tubers, termites, locusts and other edible insects.

For those who lived near big rivers, fishing, as revealed by excavations at Ishango on Lake Albert (later called Lake Mobutu) and Beringo on Lake Turkana in Congo, developed to become a major pre-occupation and source of protein. Aquatic animals were caught by the use of bone-hooks, tidal traps, baskets and nets. Available evidence shows that the most thriving or flourishing communities of the period were located around the lakes and rivers of the now dry southern regions of Sahara Desert. But it should be noted

that the Sahara has not always been a desert. Africa's climate has witnessed considerable variations over the past 20,000 years. The period 9,000-3,000 BC was a major wet period for the Sahara. The vegetation was savannah grassland and woodland caught by numerous and sizeable rivers and streams. There were also many lakes and Lake Chad at the peak of the wet phase in 7,000 B.C. rose to cover a huge area, many times its present size.

#### **SAQ4.1**

The last phase of the Stone Age witnessed radical alteration in the mode of production and of living of the early man. The phase is referred to as the Neolithic Age, which means the new Stone Age. It is so called because of the change in stone tools that occurred during the period. There merged a series of much more sophisticated stone tools which were ground, well polished in place of chipped or flaked ones that characterised the pre-Neolithic era. The revolution that occurred included that of food production - the domestication of plants and animals. It was characterised by the change from food gathering to food production, namely, the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals. Crop cultivation probably began with the gathering of grains and the awareness of the need to leave some seeds behind for the following year's crop. Hoeing and ploughing also followed.

At the same time, cereals such as barley and wheat were cultivated. That the Sahara shared in this domestication of plants and animals at this period is demonstrated by the rock painting, which featured herding, milking and other forms of social life (Bovidian pastoral style). Examples of areas characterised by this type of cultivation were Tassili in Central Sahara, Fezzan, Ennedi and traces in Algeria.

Apart from the Middle East, south-east Asia was another centre of diffusion. Certain root and tree crops such as cocoyam, sugarcane, banana, and coconut were said to have spread to East Africa from south-east Asia.

It is also argued that root crops and plants such as yams, all sorts of gourds and calabashes; oil and raffia palms were domesticated locally in the forest regions of Africa. The process began with the discovery by the hunters and gatherers as well as the fishermen who inhabited this area that certain roots, fruits and trees could grow again in the same spot when planted.

#### **SAQ 5.1**

The Neolithic Revolution transformed many people's from food collectors to food producers by means of the domestication of plants and animals. The domestication of plants and the practice of agriculture especially, had important repercussions both for culture

and for the environment and, indeed, for man and the human generation.

It radically changed man's mode of getting his food. Man's dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits gave way to crop raising and domestication of animals (stock keeping). This meant that produce from agriculture could support far higher population densities than their hunting and gathering counterparts. Besides, people who practised agriculture preferred to stay in one place to tend their crops rather than roam about in search of wild animals and vegetables.

Food production therefore made sedentary life possible. Man was no longer a scavenger or a forager for food. He no longer wandered about for food or changed his abode in response to ecological changes. He could produce, store and preserve food that could last for a season. More importantly, man's capability for controlling his environment was increased. Food production also further led to division of labour, social stratification and change in social and political organisations. People could devote time to specialised pursuits like pot-making, basketry production of weapons and many other occupations. The agricultural economy introduced during the period of the Neolithic Revolution not only resulted in greater cultural elaboration, it also had a greater effect on the natural environment than was the case with the hunting and gathering mode of existence. In areas of cultivation, the natural vegetation was replaced not only by crops, but also by weeds. Those societies which practised irrigation, also affected the environment by changing the courses of waterways.

### **SAQ 5.2**

Iron technology started in south-west Asia, specifically in eastern Anatolia about 1500 B.C. From here, it spread to North Africa through the Phoenicians who established colonies along the Mediterranean coast. A prominent example of such colonies was Carthage. The diffusion southwards from North Africa was accelerated in the 7th century B.C. when the iron using Assyrians invaded and conquered Egypt. Following the conquest of Egypt, the Assyrians introduced iron-working technique to Nubia, which had large deposit of iron ore and wood for fuel. Hence, Nubia became a major centre of iron working.

From Nubia, particularly Meroe, iron technology spread southwards along the Nile Valley to the Great Lakes by about 250 B.C.. By 200 B.C., it had reached the east coast of East Africa. From the area of the Great Lakes, iron-working technology spread southwards to Central and southern Africa reaching the Transvaal area about 400 A.D. Also, from Meroe, the knowledge of iron working spread in a westerly direction to the Lake Chad region and hence southwards to the Equatorial forest.

It has also been suggested by Graham Connah that iron working was introduced to West Africa from North Africa. Iron working technique in the Nok Culture area of Nigeria must have been introduced from Carthage by about 250 B.C.

### **SAQ 6.1**

Bantu is a linguistic term used to refer to the dark-skinned Negroes found south of a line drawn from Northern Cameroon to Southern Somalia. It is a linguistic term applied to a host of languages and dialects spoken by dark-skinned Negroes throughout Central and southern Africa, south of a line running from the Atlantic Coast (about 5°N) across to Uganda and then south-eastwards to the India Ocean.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the origin of the Bantu. For many years, it was believed that the parent language - the proto-Bantu - developed north of the area of the Great Lakes and that the languages themselves formed an autonomous linguistic family. However, recent researches have led to a change in this view. For instance, Joseph Greenberg, a linguist, has postulated that the Bantu does not form an autonomous language family; rather it was one of the subgroups of the Niger-Congo family of languages spoken in the Sudan and West Africa. According to this view, the Bantu language dispersed in a south-eastern direction from its nuclear area - south-east of the mid-Benue area of Nigeria. It is therefore suggested here that the ancestors of the Bantu (the speakers of the ancestral language called proto-Bantu) must have originated from the region between the Benue area in Nigeria and the Cameroons, namely, the Benue-Cameroon border.

However, a more recent view held by Guthrie, another linguist, suggests that though the Bantu speakers might have originated from the Benue area of Nigeria, the main expansion of the Bantu took place in the centre of Africa. Linguists have suggested that the spread of the Bantu language over wide areas in Africa was associated with population movement. They suggested that the migration of the Bantu speakers began in Nigeria somewhere around the Jos Plateau area. They migrated first to Cameroon and Gabon. They spread gradually eastwards to north of the forest. They penetrated the forest southwards through the River Congo. Their movement in Central and southern Africa must have been faster than in the Cameroon-Gabon area. This is because the languages associated with the Bantu in these areas were more closely related than those in the Cameroon-Gabon area. However, it is now known that the initial spread of the early Bantu speakers was small in number. It took the form of new omission areas and gradual absorption of local communities through inter-marriages for a long period.

They do provide, however, some information on their occupation and social organisation. It is said that in the proto-Bantu area, the Bantu were fishermen, hunters and agriculturists. They used canoes, nets and fish-hooks. They also hunted big and small animals. They planted yams, palm trees and sorghums. They crushed their grains into flour, which they prepared and ate as porridge. They made pottery; used bark cloth to cover themselves. They were also said to have known how to weave raffia fibres on a wide loom. They bred animals like goats, sheep and some cattle. They did not take their cattle with them when they migrated.

Their social organisation was based on kinship. Polygamy was practised. A council of elders under a headman called 'leader' governed their settlement or village. It is said that the ancestral Bantu feared witches. They recognised and employed the services of religious specialists such as diviners and medicinemen. They probably believed in natural spirits and the power of the ancestors.

Indeed, Murdock had suggested from his analysis of linguistic evidence that the Bantu expansion had begun as one of the movements of pre-Iron Age fishermen and cultivators, who later acquired the knowledge of iron working.

### **SAQ 7.1**

Egypt was located at a point north-east of Africa where it was open to external influences from Asia, where the food production and early technological revolution took place. By 5,000 B.C., immigrants from south-west Asia had introduced food production techniques to Egypt. The first of these were the Tasians and Badarians who moved down the flood plains into the Nile Valley where they lived in fortified villages such as El-Amra and Nagada. Hitherto, the Paleolithic hunters had avoided the Nile Valley and Delta, which were jungle swamps. With the cultivation of cereals and domestication of animals, settled communities (one of the indices of civilisation) began to emerge.

By 5,000 B.C., the population of Egypt estimated to be less than 20,000 had by 3,500 B.C., risen to 3 million. The growth in population was concomitant with the specialisation and improvement in the culture of the people. Farming communities grew into villages and villages into towns with elaborate political organisation. Apart from providing silts for soil rejuvenation, the Nile provided a line of communication for the Egyptians.

Also, Egypt developed an elaborate system of monarchy at the head of which was a divine king called Pharaoh. In theory he had absolute power of life and death over his subjects. Officials, priests, and army officers surrounded him. The kingdom was divided into 40 local districts, each supervised by a governor appointed by the Pharaoh. A bureaucracy of well-educated civil servants such as scribes, tax collectors and other officials carried on the day-to-day administration. The Pharaohs were able to maintain strong control because their position as divine kings gave them power and authority.

Besides, Egypt developed one of the oldest forms of writing, namely, Hieroglyphics, which was a unique combination of pictures and sounds. In the same vein, Egyptians developed the art of irrigation, mathematics



and astronomy. They studied the moon and the stars in order to understand the seasons and calculate the timing of the flood. In the process, they developed the first twelve-month calendar of 365 days as well as the Nilornetre for recording the rise and fall of the Nile and water clock for measuring the time of the day.

In the sphere of religion, Egyptians believed in many gods. Each god had its shrine and temple. For example, Ra (the sun god) and Amun (the god of the wind) had separate shrines. Other gods were related to the worship of animals such as the hawk, crocodile, snake and jackal. Egyptians also believed in life after death. The bodies of the wealthy were mummified, that is wrapped in linen cloth and placed in tombs filled with personal possessions of food and drinks considered as grave goods. Worthy of mention too is the fact that the Pharaohs were buried in pyramids.

Egyptians had high standard of architecture. This was manifested in the building of pyramids. According to Herodotus, the greatest of these was the pyramid of Gizeh which was 48ft high and consisted of about 2,000,300 stone blocks of an average weight of 2½ tons costing the labour of about 100,000 people for 20 years. The Egyptians were stone builders; they built their temples, statues and pyramids with stones

Economically, in the early Dynastic Period, Egypt had established extensive trade links with the outside world. It imported silver from the Aegen Islands Obsidian from Ethiopia, gold and copper from the Red Sea hills. Hence, while it could be said that agriculture was the pillar of the Egyptian economy, trade was one of the superstructures. Egyptian influence spread through the Nile Valley region. As they found their expansion towards Asia threatened by the Hittites, the Egyptians turned attention southwards. Their colonies grew along the Nile Valley

Majority of Egyptian were peasant farmers who produced agricultural surplus on which the wealth, power and fame of Egyptian civilisation was built. The peasants lived in small mud houses and are bread, onions and fish. Their main crops were wheat barley and flax. They also grew figs and grapes. They kept cattle, goats, geese and hunted wild birds. They harvested large surplus from their crops, but these were taken by Pharaohs' tax-masters leaving them with just enough to feed themselves. Peasant farmers were heavily taxed.

The first foreign invasion of Egypt occurred in 1670 B.C., when the Hyksos invaded the Delta from western Asia, using bronze weapons superior to the copper types used by the Egyptians. They rode horse-drawn chariots, but were later driven out by the Thebean kings (1570-1085 B.C). However, after 1100 B.C., the empire was attacked from across the desert in the west and in the Mediterranean in the north. By 1050 B.C., Persia and Nubia had broken free. There followed invasions from Nubia, Assyria and Persia.

In 666 B.C., Egypt was invaded by the Assyrians, whose culture included iron metallurgy. Its capital was sacked and it was despoiled of its wealth and magnificence. After this invasion, Pharaonic Egypt was never to recover its earlier grandeur. Today, what remains of that great African culture or civilisation are, the archaeological relics. Egypt's most lasting



influence, can be seen from the successor-civilisation which emerged to the south-east, up the Nile Valley and around the Ilorin of Africa.

### **SAQ 8.1**

The kingdom of Kush emerged after the decline of Egypt. It spread over present-day Republic of Sudan and lay to the south. Like Egypt, Kush depended on River Nile for its life.

From about 2000 B.C., the Nile Valley up to the 4th Cataract was under Egyptian influence. However, with the decline of Egypt as from about 1100 B.C., its political control of Nubia (Northern Sudan) became tenuous. Thereafter, the local rulers of Nubia built a kingdom known as Kush. Kush seized the opportunity of the decline to assert its independence. In 700 B.C., the Kushite king called Kashta rebelled against Egyptian authority and declared Kush an independent kingdom. The Kushite kings established the 25th dynasty in Egypt. Taharqa, Piankhy's son and successor ruled at a time when the Assyrians threatened Egypt. The Kushites were finally ousted from Egypt in the reign of his successor, Tanwetamani. Having been finally flushed out of Egypt, the Kushite kings returned to Napata, their ancient capital, as kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. Their kingdom extended as far south as Sennar and as far north as Kalabsha in Egyptian Nubia. The kingdom of Kush was ruled from Napata until the 6th century B.C.

Kush's capital was transferred to Meroe. Meroe lay at the northern end of the tropical rainfall belt. It had great expanse of land under cultivation during the rainy season. It stands within the region of annual rainfall - the broad valleys of the Butana, the WadiAwateib and the WadiHawad - which produced an abundance of crops and pasture for animals (advantages lacking in the Napata region) to support an urban civilisation.

Furthermore, Meroe lay on a trade route along the River Atbara into the Abyssinian hills and thence to India. The city was therefore well placed for trade being located on a navigable stretch of river at the end of easy caravan routes from the Red Sea.

Besides, Meroe was a centre of iron mining. There was an abundance of iron ore as well as timber for iron smelting and it is very significant that iron technology in Kush (as in Egypt) dates from after this time. The production of iron weapons there greatly contributed to the military superiority of Kush over its neighbours and enabled it to control the trade routes leading to Egypt and the Red Sea coast. All these economic advantages made Meroe more attractive as a capital than Napata. From their capital at Meroe, the Kushites traded with the people of the Sudanic belt of Africa, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Abyssinia (Ethiopian highlands). Its export included ivory, slaves, animal skins, ostrich feather, ebony and gold.

The Kushites were the first African people to achieve a position of importance, winning the respect of the early civilized world. The structure of the Kushite houses was essentially African. Their houses consisted of open courtyards surrounded by a series of rooms all open into the courtyards and their huts were like elongated beehives with arch doorways.

As former Egyptian colonial subjects, the Kushites were culturally influenced in Egypt. Their temples, which bore inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphics, were dedicated to the Egyptian gods. Their kings led the priestly lives of Egyptian Pharaohs and styled themselves as kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. They inherited the idea of divine monarchy from Egypt. The office of the king was hereditary in the royal lineage. He was selected after consulting the oracles. After being pronounced king at Meroe, he proceeded to Napata, the religious capital for coronation.

In spite of the Egyptian influences, the Kushites developed an indigenous culture known as the Meroitic culture. A local language - the Meroitic language came to replace Egyptian as the spoken court language. They also built pyramids, but these were distinct from those of Egypt. Theirs were small, rectangular in size and shape and they were flat-topped.

Economically, Meroe was distinct from Egypt. The economy was not based primarily on irrigation as in Egypt. The people of Meroe received rains in the summer and could grow crops extensively far away from the valleys. As a result, their population spread over wide areas. They lived in small rural villages ruled by chiefs and family heads. They were less politically controlled than their Egyptian counterparts who lived in the flood plains of the Nile. They paid taxes in form of annual dues. The herdsmen were semi-nomadic, less controlled by the central government provided they paid dues in livestock.

The rulers, government officials and craftsmen lived in towns. Although the ruler was theoretically absolute, an unpopular ruler could be removed. The king derived wealth from the control of trade. Exports came from the products of mining and hunting. The king controlled these.

Iron smelting was their principal industry. Farming tools and weapons were made from the availability of iron implements. Soldiers, hunters and farmers used superior iron tools and weapons. It is significant that iron was responsible for the growth and wealth of the kingdom.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, who visited Egypt in 430 B.C., when Meroe was flourishing, explained that Greek culture borrowed a great deal from the culture of the Northern Nile Valley, especially in the area of religion. Many other ancient Greek intellectuals shared this view. The importance of Meroe for the history of Africa cannot therefore be confined to its putative role as a centre for the diffusion of technological ideas in the continent.

The kingdom of Meroe rose and expanded as far as the Second Cataract, and in 23 B.C., its army attacked Syrene, a border town between it and Roman ruled Egypt. A number of statues were taken away including the bronze head of Augustus, the Roman emperor. This invasion, led to a counter-attack by Roman soldiers who raided Meroe as far as Napata, causing destruction. Meroe, however, recovered under Netekani (12 B.C. - 12 A.D.) and the kingdom expanded from the Ethiopian hills in the south to the First Cataract in the north.

However, the kingdom collapsed after 300 AD. due to a number of factors. The economy of the kingdom declined as a result of the over-exploitation of land. Excessive felling of trees for fuel in the smelting industries led to deforestation, erosion and loss of top soil. The land lost

its fertility and became unproductive agriculturally. As its trade was also closely tied to the wealth of Egypt, a decline in the wealth of the latter resulted in less demand for Meroe's luxury goods. Consequently, Meroe lost its Red Sea trade to Axum (Ethiopia). Finally, in c.350 A.D. an Axumite army invaded the kingdom. Meroe fell and yielded place to the rising kingdom of Axum.

### **SAQ 9.1**

Axum was another ancient African centre of civilisation. In its heydays, it was known as the Axumite kingdom in the land now called Ethiopia. Axum was for a long time a rival of the kingdom of Meroe. Iron-smelting technology reached Axum at about the same time as it came to Kush and Egypt, about the 6th century B.C. However, the immense expansion of Axumite power was contemporaneous with the decline of Meroe.

The kingdom of Axum covered an area, which was about 300km by 160km. It was a rich agricultural kingdom. The crops planted included wheat and other cereals. The people of Axum used ploughs drawn by oxen to till their soil. They raised live stocks, which included sheep, cattle and goat. They were also able to domesticate elephants. Like the Kushites, they were artisans and craftsmen - blacksmiths, metal workers, potters, builders and carvers. The kingdom was also noted for commerce. Axum has been described as the main commercial centre between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Its hinterland provided ivory, shells and gold. Her major port was Adulis and this attracted traders from Greece, Persia and India. Apart from the items mentioned above, others include olive oil from Italy, slaves, wine, cereals and grape juice from Egypt.

A projected Axumite alliance with the Roman Byzantine Empire in 531 A.D. with the objective of destroying the Persian monopoly of the silk trade with Sri Lanka failed to materialise. But Axum maintained immense commercial transactions with many other nations from the first century onwards. Axumite commercial relations were obviously aided by the kingdoms employment of three languages for communication. These were Ge'ez (Ethiopic), Greek (also used occasionally in public documents), and Sabaeen, the language of the Yemen.

The kingdom of Axum was the first state in Africa to introduce its own coin. It minted its own gold, silver and copper coins. The names of its kings as well as motto were inscribed on their coins. The first king of Axum to put coin into circulation was called Edybis and this took place in the second half of the 3rd century A.D.

Axum also had a great army with which it embarked on impressive military campaigns. For example, the king of Axum campaigned northwards as far as the River Nile and under its king Ezana it conquered Meroe in 350 A.D. Southwards, it went as far as the Ethiopian mountains and eastward across the Straits of Yemen.

In the early 4th century A.D., Axum became an independent Christian kingdom, though its church acknowledged the general authority of the monophysite patriarchs of Alexandria in Egypt. However, before the introduction of Christianity by the Greeks and Assyrians in the 4th

century A.D., the people of Axum worshipped many gods, that is, they were polytheists. Such gods included Astar, Venus and Beher, which was known as the god of the earth. They also worshipped the god of war called Mahrem. They also believed in life after death. They also engaged in ancestral worship and the graves of their kings were regarded as holy sites.

Very little is known about the political organisation of the Axumites. However, we do know that divine kings ruled them. They believed that their kingdom was entrusted to the kings by the gods. The office of the king was hereditary in the royal family. The king entrusted his relatives or close relations with power and authority. He exercised direct control in the capital and its environs, while regional rulers administered areas far away from the capital. The Axumite regional rulers paid tribute to the kings, but this could be withheld whenever the capital was weak and, ipso facto, assert their independence. Therefore, the authority of the king depended on his ability to control the regional rulers militarily. Apart from tributes, the king derived revenue from his control of trade at the port of Adulis where his officials charged taxes on all imported goods as well as exports.

The people of Axum were reputed to be good in the art of stone building. They built temples, houses, palaces and tombs for their kings and wealthy aristocrats. They were also literate and they developed schools called Geeds as well as a language called Ge'ez.

Unfortunately, the kingdom started to decline from the 6th century A.D., due to a number of factors, having reached the height of its power in this period. The decline was brought about by the Persian conquest of Yemen and the Arab conquest of Egypt, which disrupted commerce in the Red Sea. By 700 A., its trade links with India and Eastern Mediterranean had been disconnected. At this period, groups of Axumites began to migrate into the Interior of Ethiopia mixing with the Indigenous people. The products of this admixture were the people of Amhara Tigre and Gojam who were the nucleus of present day Ethiopia.

### **SAQ10.1**

The outcome of the Arab settlement among the people of the East coast of Africa was the emergence of the Swahili culture. Swahili is a language widely spoken along the coast of East Africa and in many parts of the interior of East Africa. It is the official language of Tanzania. The word Swahili is derived from the Arabic word "Sahil" meaning "coast". Thus, Swahili literally means "the people of the coast". At first, Swahili was an unwritten language of daily use, while Arabic, the written language, was used in commercial transactions.

Between the 10th and the 14th centuries, Swahili emerged as a distinct culture with Islamic base along the East coast. Swahili later developed as a written language using an Arabic script. It is worth mentioning that during our period, the indigenous coastal Bantu peoples had their culture largely influenced by Arabic civilisation. The Bantu on the coast were Islamised. The product of this new civilisation was the evolution of the Swahili culture and civilisation. Hence, the Swahili language is a mixture of Arabic and Bantu languages, which developed from the 13th century

onward and today it has superseded Arabic as the official language of the coastal communities. By the 16th century, folk literature had started to be written in Swahili and there also emerged a homogenous urban centre or culture on the coast with the inhabitants of the merchant coastal cities living in luxury.

The Swahili society was socially stratified, that is, there were social disparities or inequalities. They were divided into three viz: first, there existed a distinct and isolated elite, which was rich and enjoyed the influence stemming from the discharge of traditional functions. This included the Arabic and Swahili ruling family, for example, sultans and members of their family, government officials and wealthy merchants. The ruling class lived well, very wealthy, lived in stone ornate palaces, etc. Second, there were other people outside the elite who were rich and whose wealth was derived from trading. Hence, below the merchants were artisans, craftsmen, clerks, minor court officials and captains of ships. This class consisted of Africans with little or no claim to Arab ancestry. The third class consisted of non-Muslim slaves drawn from the mainland. The commoners, that is, the ordinary free members, formed the majority and the main body of the Swahili people. This group did most of the work on the farms, estates, and industries.

The economy of Swahili was based primarily on farming, fishing, gathering seafood and trading. Ordinary people carried on farming. Al-Masudi lists some of the local crops grown as bananas, dura, yams, coconuts, and sugar cane. Coconut palm was an important agricultural item of the inhabitants of the East African island and coast. The trade of the East African coast was profitable and it was the basis of the wealth of the Swahili people. It forms the bedrock of the social and cultural development of the Swahili society.

The Swahili people had lucrative commercial contacts with the Arabs, Persians and Indians. The effect of these trading contacts and the wealth derived from commerce was the transformation of the originally small coastal settlements into large towns. Another important result of such development was the appearance of an influential group in the Swahili society, competing or struggling for power with the old aristocracy, whose sway and influence was based on the discharge or performance of various kinds of traditional functions.

However, the consequences of the development and spread of Islam among the Swahili was not only the construction of mosques, but also the construction of stone buildings. The high level of the development of the Swahili civilisation also seems to be indicated by the ceramic lamps, found in excavations, which must have been used for lighting the dark rooms and suggests that the inhabitants probably engaged in reading, writing, keeping accounts, and so forth. The furniture consisted of carpets and mats and sometimes stools and luxurious beds in-laid with ivory, silver and gold. Cooking was done with local earthenware pots, which were also used for other purposes by the poor sections of the community.

We do not know much about the traditional political system of the Swahili people prior to the advent of Islam. It is therefore significant that the East African Swahili towns were not only centres of trade and

Islamisation, but also administrative centres. The capitals of the small states were ruled by the local Muslim dynasties.

From the foregoing, it seems clear that the East African Swahili civilisation was the fruit of commercial development. It was through the stimulation of trade on a substantial scale that the Swahili people started producing in greater dimensions than the level of production in the traditional pre-Islamic society not only for local consumption but also for sale and export.

The Swahili civilisation, however, declined as a result of a combination of factors. First the Zimba invasion caused considerable destruction of Swahili towns. Second, change in climatic condition resulting in decrease in rainfall caused decline in agriculture, decline in maritime trade, which consequently stalled the development of the coastal towns. The third and most significant factor was Portuguese invasion in the 17th century. The constant attack on the coastal towns by Portuguese warships equipped with sophisticated weapons under the command of one RuyRavascoLorenzo proved invincible and formidable. Not only were the coastal towns plundered and destroyed by the Portuguese, Zanzibar, the most important Swahili city-state was also defeated and its large fleet of light craft was captured. The East African maritime trade never recovered from Portuguese devastation.

#### SAQ 11.1

Great Zimbabwe was the name given to the ruins of stone enclosures abandoned more than 500 years ago by the Shona people of Central Africa. The enclosures were built between 1200 and 1450 A.D. It was the capital of an early Shona State and a specimen of Shona culture and civilisation. The word Zimbabwe means 'stone buildings'. Great Zimbabwe lies about 27km south-east of the modern town of Fort Victoria in Zimbabwe. It is the most impressive monument of African culture south of the Nile Valley. It covers more than 60 acres of land. It consists of two complex dry stone buildings, which Europeans have erroneously referred to as the Acropolis and the Temple. The first is a series of enclosures on top of a hill, while the second includes a large number of buildings in a valley (about 1km away from the first). The enclosures were built first on hilltops and later in the valley. The valley enclosure is 10m high and shows the finest state of ancient Shona masonry.

The great edifice was built either for the purpose of defence or to enhance the mystery of the king's power. Many of the buildings were encircled by massive circular walls (32ft high and 17ft thick at its maximum). The wall is estimated to have incorporated 900,000 large granite blocks. This state rose from the building of population in the Zambesi-Limpopo region between 100 and 150 A.D. This population build-up owed its origin to the introduction and spread of crop cultivation, domestication of animals and the development of metallurgy in this area. Hence, the emergent civilisation was a result of cultural diffusion among the Shona peoples. Another factor was the presence of alluvial gold deposit in a broad belt running from the Mazoe River in the Northeast to beyond the Limpopo River in the south-east. There was also the alluvial gold deposit in the



tributaries of the River Zambesi. Great Zimbabwe lies a few distances south and east of this gold belt. Iron age peoples occupied the hill where Great Zimbabwe was located for a while in the 1st century A.D. There is therefore a possibility that Zimbabwe civilisation was a product of gold trade and iron technology. Great Zimbabwe's location on the south-eastern edge of Zimbabwe plateau enabled it to utilise the plateau's rich resources to develop and support a rich culture and civilisation. The plateau possessed wide upland and lowland grazing area for cattle, which were important to the state's economy. It was a well-watered fertile area suitable for agriculture. Its forests supplied plenty of timber for building and firewood. It also had plenty of games such as elephants, which supplied ivory. The location was ideal for trade. At the head of the Sabi River, Great Zimbabwe was located at a point where it could exploit long distance trade between the gold fields of the western plateau and the Swahili of the Sofala coast.

The wealth of Great Zimbabwe must have been derived from its location on the long-distance trade route between the gold producing reefs in the region to its north and west and the Muslim trading port of Sofala on the Indian Ocean. Great Zimbabwe was also a religious centre. The inhabitants enclosed the hilltop which contained a sacred shrine with dry stone walls. From the 13th century onwards, they improved their building methods and completed the great enclosures below the hill, which was probably their royal palace. The king lived in the stone enclosures in great luxury; surrounded by gold, copper ornaments and jewellery. He ate in plates made in Persia and China. His courtiers lived within the enclosures too. In the capital also lived craftsmen who worked gold and copper into jewelleries and forged imported iron into tools. Weaving was done from locally grown cotton. In the provinces, smaller stone enclosures were built probably to house provincial rulers. Thus, contrary to some foreign authors, Zimbabwe did not owe its origin to external influence. By 1450, the resources of Great Zimbabwe site had been exhausted. The resources could not support the population, which was about 11,000. Salt was in short supply. Trade shifted to the north towards the Zambesi Valley. As a result of the above, the site was abandoned. Most of its inhabitants quit the area either because it has been over-exploited or because of famine due to population explosion. Some of the migrants moved to the Mazoe, a tributary to the river Zambesi, where there was gold deposit. They formed the nucleus of an empire known as the NweneMutapa or Monomotapa.

### **SAQ 12.1**

The founder of Monomotapa kingdom was a Rozwi chief called Mutota. In c.1445 A.D., he marched towards the Zambesi River where he established his kingdom. His appellation was Nwenemutapa - the master-pillager - and this became his title and that of his successors and also of the kingdom which he founded. Mutota subjected most of southern Rhodesia to his political authority before his death in 1450 A.D. His son, Mutope who continued his father's conquest for over 70 years, succeeded him. Under him, the empire reached its height. Like Great Zimbabwe Empire, the Nwenemutapa dynasty benefited from the gold trade. The Nwenemutapas controlled the alluvial gold supplies and the northern

section of the gold bearing mountains. They also claimed dominion over the region south of the Zambesi River to the sea including the trading ports on the Zambesi. The revenue they derived from trade enhanced their political power. Enjoying economic buoyancy at home, the Nwenemutapas were able to build a strong army, which they employed for territorial expansion. Tributes from conquered states further augmented Nwenemutapa's earning from trade.

The population of the empire was stratified into aristocracy and the peasants. Majority of the people were peasants living on the land. They were also miners mining gold for the king and members of the aristocracy. They were also engaged in military service. The empire remained prosperous until the death of Mutope in 1480 A.D. At the height of its power, the centre of the empire was firmly controlled by Mutope. Thus, by 1480 A.D., Monomotapa Empire had been extended to the Zambesi River from the Kariba Gorge to the Indian Ocean and some areas of the coast, south of the Zambesi delta.

The centre of the kingdom also moved to the north. The leading city was Ra Mutota, located on a tributary stream to the Zambesi approximately 180km above Tete. The kingdom was organised into provinces, each under the rule of an appointed governor, who was usually a son or close relative of the king. The territory nearest the king's town was administered directly by the ruler and his central bureaucracy. The great distances between the Monomotapa's court and the outlying portion/district of the empire made it difficult to maintain authority. The lack of ethnic homogeneity also caused the king many problems. Even before the death of Mutope, the empire had begun to break apart.

The area of original habitation near Great Zimbabwe, called Guniuswa was ruled after 1480 A.D., by a grandson of Mutota named Changa, who was quick to take advantage of the division within the empire to carve out his own kingdom. Perhaps, encouraged by Arab traders, Changa declared the southern part independent and gave his name to the new kingdom of Changamire. By the time the Portuguese became well established at Sofala, Monomotapa had lost to the Changamire over one half of the area controlled by the first two rulers of the empire.

### **SAQ13.1**

South Africa is the southern end of the African continent, the southward prolongation of an immense plateau, which stretched northwards to the Sahara. Although majority of the peoples of the area speak either the Bantu or the Khoisan languages, South Africa is a melting pot of races. The intermingling of the Negro, the Bushmen and Hottentots over a thousand or more years has created a variety of subracial types. However, of the main groups of people in South Africa, the Bushmen and the Hottentots were the indigenous groups. The Bantu, which constituted the third group, were an expanding group who later settled and dominated the area.



## **SAQ 13.2**

### **The Bushmen**

The Bushmen were among the early inhabitants of South Africa. They lived in some parts of Botswana and South-west Africa, the Kalahari Desert and the northern parts of Namibia. In the 16th and 17th centuries, they inhabited a much larger area. They were small in stature (about 1.5m in height and were a little taller than the pygmies). They had delicate bone structure, light skin and they lacked body hair.

The Bushmen had no permanent village. Rather, they organised themselves in small hunting bands under leaders who were elderly men. A band was at most made up of few hundred people of fairly close relatives.

The Bushmen had very simple political and social structure, with no formal system of government. Everyone was equal to the other. That is, no one had a feeling of subordination to the other. Every successful hunter shared his skills with the other members of the group and the feeling of unity within each group was very high. Within each group also, decisions were taken through discussion amongst adult members.

The Bushmen were sub-divided into the following groups: The Saan, who lived in parts of the Namib Desert and in the mountains of Namaland. They adopted the language and, to a large extent, the religion, law and customs of their immediate Hottentot Nama neighbours. The other groups were the Heikum, Kung and Auen of the Kalahari. These were smaller groups who retained more of their own customs than the Saan. The colour of their skin was light yellow.

The Bushmen were religious. They prayed to the moon and the stars; they had rainmaking gods. In their social life, they were very cheerful and merry. They were fond of dancing. They had great artistic talent. They painted pictures of animals and men on the walls of their caves. Some of them built temporary houses of grain. Before the 18th century, cattle-rearing Hottentots had forced the Bushmen into the interior areas of South Africa.

### **The Hottentots**

Closely related to the Bushmen, both in race and language, were the Hottentots. According to the linguist Joseph Greenberg the Hottentots were probably of the same racial stock as the Bushmen and simply developed differently due to better diet and different gene pools. Their language was akin to each other and exhibited several racial characteristics in common. However, they differed very considerably in culture. Apart from a small group who lived along the coast, subsisting by fishing and gathering shell-fish (the strand loopers whose kitchen rubbish dumps of sea shells can still be seen on South African beaches), the Hottentots were a pastoral people.

The Hottentots were slightly taller than the Bushmen. They were yellowish in complexion and of peppercorn hair, etc. While the Bushmen were gatherers and hunters, the Hottentots were mainly stock-keepers.

That is, they were herdsmen wandering from a water pool to another with their cattle. They placed high value on their sheep and cattle, which were their mainstay. They lived in more permanent camps than the Bushmen and they had more varied skills. Like the Bushmen, they practised no agriculture, but had private property in cattle, which made some to be richer than the others.

The Hottentots were the result of a mixture of Bushmen and Hamitic races. The Hottentots moved southwards from their original home and settled in the whole south-western part of Africa. Only a few Hottentots now survive. In fact, the Hottentots were not so widespread in South Africa as the Bushmen. They were generally to be found near the coasts, in South-west Africa, at the Cape itself and up the east coast at least as far as the Transkei. Their relations with the Bushmen were often hostile. The Bushmen resented the intrusion of Hottentots' cattle on their hunting grounds and retaliated by stealing the animals or killing the herdsmen, and the Hottentots in return tried to destroy the Bushmen communities. But sometimes, peaceful agreements were made and occasionally Bushmen bands lived in association with Hottentot ethnic group acting as herdsmen and hunters.

The Hottentots smelted iron to make spears and arrowheads. They made wooden bowls, baskets and leather bags. Their chief food was milk. They did catch animals with traps. Their women were treated with respect and had an independent position within the group. However, the basic Hottentot political unit was the clan. This was normally a smaller unit ruled by a Chief whose authority within the band was considerable. It is worth noting that conflicts between clans were settled by warfare. Such conflicts invariably led to the creation of larger political units. The Chiefs ruled purely by consent of the other clan heads and, if there was a serious disagreement, a group frequently broke up. Any clan head could always break away, becoming an independent chief, and this inevitably happened whenever the population of a group grew large.

## **The Bantu**

The third of the earliest inhabitants of South Africa were the Bantu. Significantly, the group of Bantu who settled in South Africa belonged to a branch of the Bantu peoples known as the Southern Bantu. They had much in common with the peoples of Monomotapa Empire and they shared a common culture with one another. They can be divided into a number of groups by reference to their languages, namely, the Nguni, Sotho, Herero and Ovambo.

The Nguni-speaking Bantu inhabited the fertile east coastal strip of South Africa. They advanced farther southward than any other Bantu people in South Africa. The languages of the Nguni group were sufficiently similar for different peoples to understand one another though there were some important differences in vocabulary and dialect. They were particularly in close contact with the Bushmen and Hottentots and hence used more of the click sounds in their languages than other South African Bantu.

The Sotho-speaking Bantu occupied the central plateau from the escarpment to the fringes of the Kalahari. Some of the earliest of this group to enter South Africa were the ethnic groups who are generally

known as the Tswana (Bechuana). Their dialect differed slightly from the others, and they lived on the western part of the plateau near the Kalahari in the area now known as Tswanaaland. The rest of the Sotho group spread into the Transvaal and the northern parts of modern Orange Free State, and are sometimes divided into northern and southern Sotho.

To the west of the Kalahari, a third group, the Herero and the Ovambo occupied South-west Africa where they made much less progress than the other groups. Besides, the Namaqua Hottentots and the Bushmen occupied most part of the country.

Significantly, all the South African Bantu, apart from the Herero whose way of life was very similar to the Hottentots, were mixed farmers. Furthermore, they kept cattle, which were their most prized possession and the essence of their existence. However, they also practised agriculture. As a result of this, they maintained much larger populations on the same area of land than either the Hottentots or the Bushmen and lived in larger communities in more permanent dwellings with less need for frequent migration. Generally, their houses were round huts sometimes built of mud with thatched roofs and attractive designs painted ill-coloured clay on the walls, and sometimes simply woven of grass.

The people were organised in ethnic groups, each of which consisted of one central clan. It might, however, contain members from other clans as well. The Chief or head came from the central clan and was the head of the community in every sense. He had the final say in all political matters and the final judge in all legal disputes. He was the link between the community and its ancestors, and took the lead in all important ceremonies, controlling the activities of the magicians who summoned rain and the witch doctors who detected persons guilty of black magic and communion with evil spirits. He was surrounded by a number of personal officers, called Indunas, to help him enforce his commands. The Indunas were chosen from families with no claim to royalty so that they would not be tempted to seize the throne.

The most important cultural institution of the southern Bantu was the system of initiation to manhood. For when a boy reached an age when he was matured enough to marry and take on the responsibilities of adult life, he went through the ceremony of circumcision followed by a prolonged period of living apart from the group, during which he would receive instruction on the customs of his people and the duties expected of an adult man. These ceremonies made a profound impression on the minds of the young men and imbued them with respect for the traditional culture of the community. So important was the experience that men only counted the years of their lives after initiation, boyhood being considered too insignificant to be worth recording. In all the groups, these initiation ceremonies created a sense of fellow feeling amongst men who were initiated about the same time. Among the Sotho groups, this feeling was particularly strong. In the Sotho situation, initiation ceremonies were conducted under the authority of Chiefs or district heads. All the youths of appropriate age in a given area were initiated together in an initiation school, which was generally held when the Chief or sub-Chief had a son of age for initiation. After the ritual period was ended, the boys who had participated in an initiation school retained a sense of corporate identity.

In times of war, they fought as a group under the leadership of their agemate prince, and at other times, they assembled to perform special services for the ruler such as building him a new homestead.

For as the population increased and grazing land became scarce, disputes often occurred between neighbours. Also, when a Chief died, squabbles over the succession often involved fighting and when, as so often, these troubles led to the division of the group the different sections might continue to nourish feelings of hostility for one another. Moreover, given the importance of cattle to the people, wars were organised to capture a few cattle or force a neighbouring group to abandon a grazing ground, not at destroying the enemy completely. Thus, a war usually ended after a single battle when one side admitted defeat; non-combatants were usually respected and prisoners returned for a ransom. The southern Bantu groups had no standing armies and no special war chief.

### **SAQ 14.1**

We cannot say when the Berbers began to move down from North Africa, but there are stories of a settlement of white people in the Aukar district (some 480km west of Timbuktu) in the 2nd century A.D. Perhaps, they were Jews who left the Roman province of Cyrenaica, settled near Timbuktu and later moved westwards to Aukar. The kingdom, which was called Ghana, lasted for 400 years before other Negro peoples from Wagadugu overthrew it. A black king then took over the throne of this ancient kingdom.

The Moslem Arabs conquered the Maghreb at the end of the 7th century A.D. and Arab merchants began to visit the western Sudan. They found Ghana to be a rich Negro kingdom. It was at its best in the 9th century A.D. On the east of it was the River Niger and on the west was the Lemtuna kingdom at Audaghost.

Al-Bakr, an Arab historian who lived in Spain, wrote a description of Ghana as he heard of it from merchants who visited it when it was most wealthy. The capital (KumbiSaleh) consisted of two separate towns, 10km apart. One was the Muslim town where the Arab merchants from North Africa lived and where there were some buildings of stone. The other was the pagan town of El Gaba where the houses were clay huts with thatched roofs. Around it, there were pagan groves where the priests sacrificed to their gods. The Muslims held most of the important posts in the government of the kingdom. The wealth of Ghana was based on the ability to supply slaves for its market and on the trade in gold. Gold was obtained from other pagans who lived far away in Wangara, a name of mystery for many centuries. There was so much gold there that the amount coming into the market had to be controlled to prevent the price from falling too low. Merchants came from all parts of western Maghreb bringing jewellery, beads, cloth and salt to trade for slaves and gold.

In Ghana, the Arab merchants met their Negro agents and with them they travelled for 20 days over large desert till they reached the Senegal River. There they beat big drums to call the local people. These were the gold miners. The Arabs, therefore, used to put their goods in piles and go out of sight. The local people then came out and placed a heap of gold dust beside each pile and then went away. The king of Ghana collected taxes on everything which passed through his market: gold, salt, slaves, and many other things. These taxes augmented the wealth of Ghana.

Ghana could not expand towards the sea, for there was always the Lemtuna kingdom in the way. Early in the 9th century, Ghana was very alarmed by the warlike activities of Tilutane, the Berber Chief of Audaghost, who with 100,000 horsemen had conquered all the Berber ethnic groups of the West. Ghana did not dare to fight such a powerful kingdom and Tilutane did not attack Ghana.

### SAQ 14.2

Audaghost, the capital of the Lemtuna kingdom, was 15 days' march westwards from Ghana and one month's march to the coast. It was a large town with many fine buildings and it was surrounded by date palms beyond which were the desert sands. Its inhabitants were Berbers who owned large numbers of pagan Negro slaves. There were also many Arab merchants who looked after the caravan trade. In the town, there was plenty of water for such crops as millet and wheat. There were large herds of cattle and sheep. Audaghost was a city of great commercial prosperity and carried on much trade with the Maghreb; particularly with Sijilmasa. The inhabitants were very wealthy and lived in civilised comfort. Among the traders on the desert routes, Audaghost was famous for the skill of its cooks and the beauty of its women.

Yusuf IbnTashfin built the city of Marrakesh in 1062 A.D. and by 1082 A.D. the Almoravid Empire extended as far east as Algiers. By 1102 A.D., the whole of Muslim Spain was in the hands of Almoravids Emirs. As long as Yusuf lived, their rule brought peace and good government to the Almoravid Empire both in Spain and in Africa, but civilisation soon ruined them. Abu Bakr, who took over the leadership of the southern wing of the Almoravid army on the death of IbnYacid, spent some years converting the Negroes by force to his reformed religion. After 14 years, he felt strong enough to attack Ghana, which <sup>1</sup> had remained pagan. There are some ruins at KumbiSaleh, about 320km north of Bamako, the capital of the modern Mali Republic, which may mark the site of the capital of Old Ghana.

### SAQ 14.3

It was rightly called the Empire of Mali. Its rulers regularly made the pilgrimage to Mecca and so attracted many foreign merchants, both Muslim and Christian, to the capital.

Mali developed from a very small Mandingo kingdom of Kangaba, on the west side of the River Bakoy (a tributary of River Senegal). Its capital was at Jeriba (between River Niger and River Sankaram). At the beginning of the 13th century, A.D., however, it was large enough to be noticed by another Mandingo chief called Sumanguru who had just

destroyed Ghana. He seized and killed 11 sons of the king of Mali, but spared the twelfth, a cripple boy called Sundiata. This boy grew up to be strong both in mind and body and he began the Mali Empire. To this day, he is praised as the national hero of the Mandingo people.

When he came to the throne, he collected a bodyguard of hunters whom he could trust. With them he went south, crossed River Tinkisso, and conquered the neighbouring kingdom of Sangaran. Then, with the Sangaran army, he went west and conquered the Futa Jallon. In this way he gained another army. Turning east, he crossed Sankaram River and defeated some Bambara rebels. With an army growing larger and larger, he went round the borders of his kingdom to make sure that all its peoples were loyal to him. He returned to Jeriba in 1234 A.D.

He was now the equal of Sumanguru, who decided that he must stop the young Sundiata before he became too powerful. Their armies met at Kirina just north of the modern town of Kulikoro) in 1235 A.D. The result was a complete victory for Sundiata. Sumanguru was killed and his kingdom became part of the growing Mali State.

Sundiata now built his capital on a new site at Niani about 30km from Jeriba and spent the rest of his life developing the country around. He never again led his soldiers in battle, although his armies continued to enlarge his lands. He died in 1255 A.D. In 25 years, he had turned an unknown little kingdom into a powerful empire.

This empire continued to grow, and in 1307 A.D., Sundiata's grandson, Mansa Kanka Musa, came to the throne. He ruled in Mali for another 25 years and became the most famous of the Mandingo kings.

The Mali Empire had controlled the goldfields of Wangara for 70 years, when Mansa Musa went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He set out across the desert to Cairo in 1324 A.D. He rode on horseback with 500 slaves in front of him, each carrying a bar of gold, which weighed about 3kg. On his homeward journey, he took with him two Arab scholars, El Saheli and El Mamer, whom he had met in Mecca. While he was still in the desert, he learned that one of his generals, Sagmandia, had captured Gao, the capital of another larger kingdom, Songhai, which lay to the east of his empire. So, he turned his caravan and went to visit this new part of his empire. Before he left Gao he gave El Saheli the task of building a nobler mosque than the simple building of mud and thatch, which had been good enough for the Songhai rulers.

He went along River Niger to the Songhai city of Timbuktu and there too he set El Saheli the task of building a large mosque and a palace for himself. Timbuktu was already an important market. It was the place where several caravan routes from North Africa met the great Niger waterway to east and west Sudan. Under Mansa Musa, it became a great centre of trade and learning. Mansa Musa died in 1332 A.D. He left an empire larger and wealthier than any other African state of those days. Its borders, from Tekrur on the Atlantic to Dendi on River Niger, were more than 1,600km apart; and from Walata and Tadmekket in the deserts of the North, the Mali Empire extended into the forests and mountains of Futa Jallon in the South.



After his death, however, the empire declined gradually. IbnBattutah, the well-known Arab traveller and writer, visited Niani in 1352 A.D. IbnBattutah wrote also of the flourishing agriculture of the empire and of the wealth of its markets. He noted the widespread use of slaves captured from the neighbouring pagan ethnic groups. Slaves and gold were the chief exports from Mali along the caravan routes of the Sahara. The Mali people were good Muslims and regularly practised the rules of Islam.

By the middle of the 17th century, however, Mali had declined considerably. Its territory had diminished. It's sovereignty had been limited to the province of Kangaba from which the empire originally grew.

#### **SAQ 14.4**

Before Mali became an empire, there were the Songhai people whose territory spread along River Niger from Bussa to Timbuktu. The Songhai were Negroes who originally lived in the Dendi district, west of Argungu, in the angle formed by the Niger and Kebbi rivers. More than 1,000 years ago, the Songhai had spread along the banks of River Niger. Zaghawa Berbers conquered them at an early date. ZaAliamen, the Zaghawa ruler settled in the Songhai capital, Kukia, and so became the first of many Berber kings of the Songhai people.

At the beginning of the 11th century A.D., the capital was moved from Kukia to Gao and the king became a Muslim. Gao was at the southern end of the caravan routes to North Africa and it had a large Muslim community.

Al Bakr, writing a description of Gao in the 11th century, said that (like Ghana) it has two parts, one inhabited by Muslim foreigners, and the other by the pagan Songhai. Salt (from Taotek, six days' march in the desert beyond Tadmekket) was used as money in the market. As indicated earlier, a Mali army conquered Gao in 1235 A.D., but it regained its independence 10 years after. In 1468 A.D., the Songhai ruler in Gao was Sonni Ali, an ambitious man. He was asked by the Mandingo ruler of Timbuktu to help him free that city from its Zaghawa-Tuareg overlords. Although he was himself of Berber origin, Sonni Ali, like all the Songhai, hated the Tuareg horsemen who used to gallop in from the desert and attack the villages of the river peoples. So, Ali set out with a large army. His arrival on the south bank opposite Timbuktu took the entire Muslim population, including the learned men of the university, by surprise. They all fled across the desert to Walata. Although Ali entered Timbuktu without fighting, he killed many of its inhabitants.

Five years later, after a siege lasting many months, Sonni Ali conquered Jenne, which, according to tradition, had been attacked 99 times by the armies of Mali without success. Jenne, which was built in 1250 A.D., was the major town near the region of lakes and marshes through which the waters of River Niger flow above Timbuktu. Surrounded by creeks, Jenne was easily reached by merchants from the Maghreb and was also easily defended against attack from Mali in the south and from the Tuareg in the north. For 200 years, Jenne had been one of the most important centres of commerce and learning in the western Sudan. Raiders from the desert

were always troubling Timbuktu, but Jenne was an undisturbed island of peace.

In 26 years, Sonni Ali had changed a string of riverside villages into a powerful kingdom, but he did little to increase the prosperity and peace of the Sudan.

The next ruler of the Songhai kingdom was a Mandingo Muslim called MuhammedToure, who gave himself the title of Askia. He had been prime minister and was a man of outstanding political ability. He always asked for the advice of older men, more learned and more experienced in government than himself. He began a form of government which was new in the western Sudan, but which was widely copied far outside the boundaries of Songhai. He divided his kingdom into provinces with a Governor in charge of each; the provinces were divided into districts. He put Mayors in charge of the important cities and he appointed other important officers. There were strict rules about the importance and the duties of each post and about the number of drums to be used in saluting each officer.

He developed trade and began a system of weights and measures to encourage honest business. Dishonesty was treated as a very serious offence.

AskiaMuhammed encouraged learning and employed tutors for the education of his own children. Under him, the Sankore University at Timbuktu prospered and was well known among the learned men of Europe. Centres of higher education were built in Katsina and Jenne. Many new schools were built and teachers were brought to work in them.

Muhammed fought many battles using an army of paid soldiers, so that the farmers and traders could carry on with their work without being constantly called away to fight. He conquered the Hausa States, but they soon regained their independence. The Tuaregs had been constantly raiding the farmers on the borders of his kingdom. So, in 1515 A.D. he drove them out of Agades and set up a colony of Songhai Negroes whose descendants are still living there today.

Under AskiaMuhammed, the Songhai Empire reached its greatest extent. His rule stretched almost to the Atlantic coast in the west and to Agades in the east. For a short time the people in it enjoyed peace and they all prospered as never before. Because of his immense contribution to good governance and the greatness of the empire, Askia Mohammed was rightly called "Askia the Great".

Unfortunately, his sons who rebelled against him and forced him to give up the throne in 1528 A.D. upset the peace and order of the kingdom. He was blind and over 80 years old when his sons forced him to live miserably on an island in River Niger. He died, an unhappy man, in 1541 A.D.

### **SAQ 15.1**

The legends of the seven Hausa states, the Ife legend on the origin of the Yoruba and the Nok culture, also the Benin and Igbo Ukwu peoples, especially their myths, historical origins of Nigeria.



## Hausa States

The Hausa states were supposed to have been founded at different times during the period 1200 A.D. The legend of Bayajidda (Abu Yazid Khaided Al-Zanati (884-947 A.D.J) is presented as the origin of the Hausa states, though there appeared to have been a system of administration in some areas especially Daura, headed by a queen before Bayajidda came into the scene. The legend confirmed the constant reference to oriental influences on Hausaland and beyond, for Bayajidda was said to have reached Daura through Borno. He arrived on a horse and dramatically got rid of the menace of a bothersome snake in the community's well. Bayajidda married the queen for his reward and the seven sons of that relationship became the founding rulers of the seven Hausa states (Hausa Bakwai), that is, Daura, Kano, Rano, Zazzau, Gobir, Katsina, and Garun Gabas.

It is significant that in addition to these original so-called legitimate seven states, there were others that were pejoratively referred to as "Banza-Bakwai", that is, not so legitimate ones, which included Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Kwararafa, and Yoruba (Ilorin). They were said to have been so named because they were founded by the sons of the slave girl married to Bayajidda by the queen of Daura.

## Ile-Ife

Ile-Ife is the fountain-head of Yoruba civilisation. The origin of this ancient centre of civilisation is encapsulated in the origin of the Yoruba. In explaining the rich culture and civilisation of the Yoruba, some scholars have engaged in controversies on the provenance of the Yoruba. For instance, Amoury Talbot, an anthropologist, has suggested that the Yoruba came from the north-east, specifically Egypt. Similarly, Olumide Lucas, a well-known Egyptologist stated that the Yoruba migrated from Egypt through Sudan. Saburi Biobakuseem to agree with Amoury Talbot and Olumide Lucas. He suggested eastern Sudan as the place of origin of the Yoruba. Samuel Johnson who based his opinion on oral sources collected in some parts of Yorubaland opined that the Yoruba migrated to Ile-Ife after being driven from Arabia as a result of religious crises.

Oral sources popular among the Yoruba support the belief that Ile-Ife is the origin of their culture and civilisation. There are two stories, which seem to give credence to this belief. The first is that of creation. The Yoruba believe that Ile-Ife was the centre of human creation, the place where human beings were first created. This myth of origin stated that Olodumare (God) sent Obatala to create the solid earth at a period when the whole earth was full of water. He was given a hen with five toes, a piece of earth in a snail shell. He was to sprinkle the piece of earth on the primordial water and release the hen to scatter it. However, Obatala could not perform the task having been drunk of palm wine on his journey. The assignment was consequently given to Oduduwa who successfully, created the solid earth and descended with sixteen elders with a chain at Ile-Ife.

A second explanation for the origin of Ile-Ife and of the Yoruba was contained in a story of migration. Oduduwa was said to have migrated

from Mecca to Ile-Ife. He was the son of Lamurudu (Nimrod), king of Mecca. As a consequence of religious clash between the adherents of traditional religion and those of Islam, Oduduwa and his people were forced to flee Mecca travelling for 90 days passing through Gobir in Hausaland before reaching Ile-Ife.

## **Nok**

Unlike the Hausa and Yoruba discussed above, the Nok culture is unveiled by the archaeological excavations and factual discoveries at the Nok village near Kafanchan in the Jos Plateau area extending to Abuja, Niger State, and all of the Middle Belt zones of Nigeria from KatsinaAla, south of Benue River to Kagara, 160km west of Kaduna State. Altogether, it covers an area of some 480km long and 160km wide (76,800 sq. km).

## **Benin**

The word Benin (Bini) was used broadly to cover the capital city and to describe the kingdom, the language and the people. Benin embraced both the Edo-speaking people or the Bini proper and a large non-Edo-speaking population. Benin incorporated the Bini, Esan, Kukuruku, Oria, Akoko, Isoko, and Urhobo peoples.

There are various traditions of the origin of Benin, but two main categories of the tradition can be distinguished. These are the Edo people themselves and the dynasty. One tradition claimed that the Edo people originated from Egypt and that the people stopped in the Sudan before they arrived at the present site. Another version of the legend claimed that the Edo people had always lived in Benin and were descendants of the youngest son of Osanobua, the Supreme Being. The son is said to have come with a snail and some sand, which he spread on an area of water. This gave him the piece of land he required which is now called Benin.

The dynastic tradition refers to the period of the rule of the Ogoiso when there were political crises. In response to the crises, the people approached Oduduwa at Ile-Ife who sent his son Prince Oranmiyan to Benin. On reaching Benin, Oranmiyan married Eriwinde, a Bini princess, through whom he had a son, named Eweka. Tradition further stated that the struggle in Benin continued and Oranmiyan withdrew from the place in frustration and anger. He also called the place Ile-Ibinu (the land of vexation) which was later converted to Ubini by Oba Ewedo and later became transformed to Benin.

Another version tries to reconcile the origin of the people and that of the dynasty and provided a comprehensive account. This tradition explains that the Edo were descendants of Idu who was said to have been the grandson of Oghene (God). Idu was also said to have lived at Uhe (Ife) with his brother, Olukuni, but was expelled. Idu, thereafter proceeded to a "land of peace and plenty" which in Idu language is Ubini. Thus, Ubini is described as a "fertile and open land between or amidst flowing waters". Thus, there is some confusion regarding where the Benin (Edo) people came from, whether from Egypt, Ife, the sky or the ground. Controversy continued to surround the traditions, but from all available evidence, it

seems clear that there were a people who lived in Benin before an invitation was sent to Ile-Ife for advice on good governance.

## **Igbo-Ukwu**

The Igbo cultural area includes all those areas and "people that speak the various dialects of Igbo language and share typical and significant common culture traits and patterns. Awka, Nri, Ihiala and Owerri are in the culture's centre, while Agbor and Ebu (west Niger Igbo), and Enugu Eziko, Afikpo and Azumimi and Ikwerre (east Igbo) are in the culture margin". Our definition of this cultural area has taken into consideration linguistic, socio-political, economic, and religious (ritual) factors.

One of the first to write on Igbo culture and its origin was the Igbo ex-slave, Olaudah Equiano (or Gustavus Vassa) who suggested that the Igbo were the lost tribes of Israel who, like the Jews, practised circumcision, confined their women for a specific period after child-birth after which they were purified, named their children after specific events and experiences, and so on.

There had been no agreement among the Igbo-Ukwu people on where their ancestors came from. Some believe that they had always lived where they now are and did not come from anywhere else. Others, however, believe that their forefathers came from Egypt, Israel, or some other place. But by the 1930s, the myth of an origin had been abandoned in the absence of any useful evidence.

It is believed that the first settlement in Igboland was located in the Nri-Awka-Orlu region. Here, the Igbo were engaged in fruit gathering and hunting. Later, they proceeded to search for wider space. Disputes amongst them also led to their dispersion. In the course of migration, the Igbo ensured that contacts were maintained. Various villages also amalgamated informally to form confederations and to work out common lines of defence and other cooperative ventures.

Nri civilisation was believed to have prospered from about the 9th to the 16th centuries A.D. The bronzes excavated in the Igbo-Ukwu area were of excellent quality and date back to the 9th century. During this period, the Nri were greatly respected and acknowledged as special people, revered as priests and advisers. Based on excavation at Igbo-Ukwu, Professor Thurstan Shaw also revealed that at this period, Igboland was already engaged in long- and short-range exchange of businesses. The former brought in such items as horses, bronze, and carnelian beads from markets in the Sudan and beyond.

Nri was also filled with rituals and religious activities. It also became the centre of a cult connected with the installation of Chiefs, purification and title making. This is the explanation for the sculptures now found at Igbo-Ukwu, located in the heartland of Nri.

## **SAQ 15.2**

### **Hausa States**

The process of developing a state like organization involved a gradual evolution of small community settlements into hamlets and from the latter into states. The first stage was the emergence of settlements (communities), which grew into nucleated hamlets. At this level, each hamlet had strong kinship ties. Authority resides in the head of each family. As time went, there emerged in each of the hamlets leaders whose authority transcended or cut across family group. Such leader exercised authority over agriculture and some other economic activities. The second stage was the emergence of larger communities than the hamlets as a result of the convergence of related groups of families or lineages on strategic locations to form towns or gwari. At this level, a central authority was developed to look after the affairs of the town.

The third stage was the emergence of cities (birni). A birni could develop into a capital of a state whose ruler exercised authority over many hamlets or some other birnis. For the purpose of administering such large areas, each Hausa state developed a hierarchical system of authority.

### **Ile-Ife**

Scholars have revealed that Ile-Ife was an important early centre of Yoruba civilisation. It has been revealed that there were 13 mini-states in the Ile-Ife area before the advent of Oduduwa and his group. A priest-king with semi-divine characteristics headed each of these villages. The 13 mini-states were organised as a confederacy under Obatala, but each ruler of a mini-state had semi-autonomous status. Oduduwa came into the scene at a time of crisis. He became the leader of the anti-Obatala group, which seized power from Obatala. Having seized power, Oduduwa reorganised the 13 mini-states into a kingdom and thus began a dynastic period in Ile-Ife. Oduduwa's children and grandchildren were said to have spread the revolution at Ile-Ife to other parts of Yorubaland by establishing kingdoms elsewhere. Thus, today, Obas (kings) in Yorubaland claim origin from Ile-Ife where they derive authority to wear beaded crown.

Archaeological research has confirmed the primacy of Ile-Ife in Yorubaland. It has been revealed that, indeed, Ile-Ife was the cradle of Yoruba civilisation. Attention was first drawn to the ancient art works of Ile-Ife by Leo Frobenius, a German ethnographer in 1910-1911. Since then, archaeological works by Thurstan Shaw and other archaeologists have revealed brass objects, terracotta and bronze heads, which are naturalistic in form. Other findings include carved figures, monoliths, stools in granite and quartz. A unique example of Ife artistic work is the "OpaOranyan" a six-metre high granite column believed to have marked the grave of Oranmiyan, regarded in Yoruba Oral history as the youngest son of Oduduwa.

All the archaeological discoveries show the highly sophisticated Yoruba artistic work and the high standard of ancient Yoruba civilisation, which

has been found to be favourably comparable to those of ancient Egypt, classical Greece, Rome and Europe during the Renaissance.

## **Nok**

It is said to represent one of the earliest cultures in the Nigerian region and dates back to some 2,000 years, approximately from about 900 B.C. and reached its peak at about 200 A.D. The culture became known through excavated terracotta sculptures, stool tools and jewellery. According to Flint, "these show that the Nok people built a society of considerable complexity, in which specialist crafts and wealth had made their appearance. Beads of tin and quartz were manufactured for adornment, and all artistic activities had reached a high level of attainment". Flint further notes the religious significance of the Nok sculptures and the light they shed on the daily activities of the people, their agricultural, artistic craftsmanship that included iron smelting. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that the culture was very familiar with iron tools hundreds of years before Christ implying that it may have been both economically and militarily dominant, using iron weapons.

Nok culture was discovered through tin mining on the Jos Plateau and environs. Many of the archaeological findings in this area show that the Nok people grew crops such as maize, millet, guinea corn and root crops. It is believed that they first used simple tools, but as they advanced later, they used iron tools. It is also believed that they kept cattle and other grassland domestic animals. Agriculture, animal rearing, and iron ore smelting were their main occupations.

They were found to have used ornaments made from beads and smooth stones. The Nok culture achieved a level of material development not represented in the West African sub-region for nearly 1,000 years. Their terracotta sculpture, abstractly stylised and geometric in conception, is admired both for its artistic expression and for the high technical standards of its production.

Several features of the Nok culture, particularly its art, are found in later cultures elsewhere in West Africa. It is difficult not to believe that the Nok culture, as we know it, presents the ancestral stock from which much of the sculptural tradition of West Africa derives. There were certainly many similarities between the Nok and the Ife arts.

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In the south-east, both iron and brass working reached a very high pitch of excellence by the 9th century A.D. as the Igbo-Ukwu excavations show clearly. Igbo civilisation seemed to have moved to Awka, Nkwerre, and Abiriba. Blacksmith experts made a living as itinerant smiths. According to Isichei, "Awka obtained their iron from Agulu-Umana in the Udi area" and the people in the Awka region excelled as blacksmiths. Iron also enabled them to control the woods and forests by the use of new and stronger tools made of iron. The result of this development was that blacksmiths and master craftsmen dominated the social, political and economic life of Igboland during this phase of Igbo history.

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