

Chapter 13- African Empires

Lesson 3- East, Central, and Southern Africa

I. East Africa

- A. In about 350, the trade center of Meroë was invaded by forces from Axum in the Ethiopian highlands.
- B. Axum exported ivory, frankincense and myrrh to Greece and Rome, along with luxury goods made of brass, copper and crystal.
- C. Christian kingdoms had existed in northeastern Africa since 330 when Ezana, the ruler of Axum converted to Christianity.
- D. Arab invaders did not destroy Axum, but climate change did force people to move inland, away from Axum.

II. Ethiopia replaced the Axum civilization.

- A. The Zagwe dynasty took control in 1150 and firmly established Christianity in Ethiopia.
 1. The capital was also moved to Adefa in the central highlands.
- B. Lalibela (r. 1185-1225) during his rule he had 11 stone churches built in the capital to show his strong faith and to gain respect.
 1. The largest of the eleven was called Savior of the World.
- C. In 1270 the Zagwe dynasty was taken over by the Solomonid dynasty who ruled until 1974.
 1. They claimed to be the descents of the original Axum rulers.
 2. The Solomonid rulers moved away from large churches and began living in more modest structures.
 - a) As a result there was no permanent capital.
 3. The king and his court would move to different regions of the empire every two to three years, which resulted in the people having more respect and loyalty for the king.
 - a) But because the king and his court had so many people, they would use up all the resources in the region.

III. Kilwa

- A. As Islam spread in the seventh and eighth centuries, more African cities along the coast became involved in Indian Ocean trade.
 1. By the ninth century cities like Sofala and Kilwa, were becoming more involved in the gold and ivory trade.
- B. The Indian Ocean trade network included East Africa, India, China and Arabia
 1. Arabs began to settle on the eastern coast of Africa, which resulted in a mix of Muslim and East African cultures, creating the Swahili culture and language.
 - a) Swahili and Arabic were used as trading languages.

IV. Great Zimbabwe

- A. The Shona people built the stone enclosure of Great Zimbabwe from 1200 to 1450.
 1. *Zimbabwe* means “house of stone”
 2. It was built to show the great power of the king, not as a defense of the city.
- B. Great Zimbabwe reached its height in 1400 and was a part of the ivory and gold trade with Kilwa.
 1. Gold was not mined in this region, but the taxes in trade goods provided wealth for the city.

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- C. By the fifteenth century there were about 11,000 people living in and around the Great Zimbabwe.
 - 1. By 1450 Great Zimbabwe was abandoned because the population had exhausted all the resources in the region.
- D. In the late 1600's the Portuguese invaded and conquered the region.
- V. Benin kingdom was located near the delta of the Niger River.
 - A. Obas were the rulers of Benin and control in about 1300.
 - B. By the late 1400's Benin was trading ivory, animal skins and paper for coral beads and cloth with the Portuguese.
 - 1. By 1500 Benin was a powerful trading empire, trading ivory, cloth, spices and slaves.
 - C. People grew crops, such as yams and cotton, because of the fertile soil and abundant precipitation.
 - D. The people lived in Benin City, the capital and the country surrounding it, in mud houses.
 - 1. Except of the oba's palace which was made with metal doors with detailed designs.
 - E. Benin was also known for their great art work.
 - 1. Craftsmen would use bronze, ivory, and wood to make sculptures and carvings.
 - a) These would sculptures and carving would decorate the oba's palace which were protected by high wooden walls.