Chapter 19

States and Societies in Sub-Saharan Africa
Effects of Early African Migrations

- Bantu-speaking peoples settle south of Equator
- Agriculture, herding spreads with Bantu migrations
- Iron metallurgy
Cultivation of Bananas

- Domesticated in south-east Asia
- Malay sailors colonize Madagascar, 300-500 CE
  - Introduce bananas, yams, chickens
- Well-adapted to African climate
- Food supply increases with this key crop
Population Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Millions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400 BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>800 CE</td>
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<td>1000 CE</td>
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(Bar chart showing population growth from 400 BCE to 1000 CE in millions.)
Kin-Based Societies

- Stateless, segmented societies
- No elaborate hierarchies, bureaucracies
- Average population of village: 100
- Ruled by elders
- Network of villages resolve disputes in ad hoc manner
- Higher government authorities rare
Chiefdoms

- Population pressures after 1000 increase competition, disputes
- Small chiefdoms appear, overrule kin-based groups
- Small kingdoms form
  - Ife, Benin
Kingdoms and empires of sub-Saharan Africa, 800-1500 CE
Kingdom of Kongo

- Basin of the Congo (Zaire) river
- Conglomeration of several village alliances
- Participated actively in trade networks
- Most centralized rule of the early Bantu kingdoms
- Royal currency: cowries
- Ruled 14th-17th century until undermined by Portuguese slave traders
Islamic Kingdoms and Empires

- Islam spreads to West Africa
  - Trans-Saharan caravans
  - Coastal east Africa through maritime trade
- Profound influence after 8th century
Trans-Saharan Trade and Islamic States in West Africa

- Desiccation of Sahara begins c. 5000 BCE
- Introduction of Arabian camels revolutionizes trade
  - 70-90 days to cross Sahara
- Arabs establish trading communities
  - Gao
The Kingdom of Ghana

- Not related to modern State of Ghana
- Developed 4th-5th c. CE
- Protection against camel-driving raiders
- Center of African gold trade
  - Imported from south to Ghana
- Also sold ivory, slaves
Koumbi-Saleh

- Capital of Kingdom of Ghana
- Principal trading center
- High point 9th-12th centuries
  - Population 15,000-20,000
- Military, cultural center
Islam in West Africa

- Kings of Ghana convert 10th c.
- Positive impact on trade, relations with north Africa
- Synthesized Islam with local traditions
  - Nearby Takrur aggressive missionaries
Sundiata (r. 1230-1255)

- Empire of Mali extends over Kingdom of Ghana
  - Neighboring kingdoms as well
- Took greater advantage of trans-Saharan trade
- Nominally Muslim, but did not force conversions
Mansa Musa (r. 1312-1337)

- Grandson of Sundiata
- Fervent Muslim
- Performed Hajj in 1324-25
  - Constructed numerous mosques
  - Supported Muslim scholars
- Empire declines after his rule
Mansa Musa

A West African king holding gold.
The Indian Ocean Trade and Islamic States in East Africa

- East coast maritime trade weak until 2\textsuperscript{nd} century
- Bantu peoples populate coast
- Swahili ("coasters") engage in trade with Arabs
  - Language a form of Bantu, influenced by Arabic
- 10\textsuperscript{th} century trade increases
The Swahili City-States

- Great wealth, 11\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} centuries CE
- Development of city-states
- Architecture moved from wood/mud to coral, stone
- Chinese silk, porcelain imported
Nok Sculpture
Kilwa

- City-state on east African coast
- Fishing, limited trade, 800-1000 CE
- Turn to agriculture, increased trade in pottery and stoneware
- Major trading center by 14th century
  - Exporting over a ton of gold per year by 15th century CE
Zimbabwe

- “dwelling of the chief”
- Stone complex called “Great Zimbabwe” built early 13th century CE, capital
- Population 18,000 in late 15th century
- Managed trade between internal and coastal regions
Islam in East Africa

- Ruling elites in east Africa accept Islam without forcing general population to convert
- Often retained pagan religious traditions and practices
- Islam serves as social glue with other merchants, states
Arabian Society and Cultural Development

- Some kingdoms, empires, city-states with well-defined classes
  - Ruling elites
  - Merchant class
  - Peasant class

- Other areas in sub-Saharan Africa continue to use traditional kin-based groups
Kinship Groups

- Extended families, clans
- Idea of private property less prevalent
- Land held communally
- Harvests distributed by elders
Sex and Gender Relations

- Men work with specialized skills
  - Tanning, iron work
  - Heavy labor
- Both sexes work in agriculture
- Male rule more common, but some expanded roles for women
  - Merchants, some military activity
- Islamic norms slow to penetrate African society
Age grades

- From early agricultural period, Sudan
- Peer groups of single age cohort
- Crosses lines of family and kinship
Slavery

- Practiced since ancient times
- Most slaves captives of war
  - Debtors
  - Suspected witches
  - Criminals
- Used principally in agricultural labor
- Slave possession a status symbol
Slave Trading

- Increased trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean trade stimulates slave trade, 9th c. CE
- Africa replaces eastern Europe as principal source of slaves
- Creates internal African slave trade
  - More powerful states attack smaller kinship-based groups
  - 10,000-20,000 slaves per year
Arabian Swahili Slave Trade
The Zanj Revolt

- Slaves from Swahili coast exported to work in Mesopotamia
  - Sugarcane plantations
  - Salt deposits
- 869 CE, slave Ali bin Muhamad mounts revolt of 15,000 slaves
- Captures Basra
- Later crushed by Abbasids
African Religion

- Great diversity of religious belief
- Common element: single, male creator god
  - Lesser deities associated with natural phenomena
- Ancestor worship
- Diviners
  - Religious specialists, principally men
  - Oracle reading, spells, other rituals
- Limited emphasis on theology
- Morality, balance of nature important
Early Christianity in North Africa

- **1st century: popular in Egypt, north Africa**
  - Initially weak in sub-Saharan Africa

- **The Christian Kingdom of Axum, 4th c. CE**
  - Ethiopia
  - Merchants, then kings convert
  - Bible translated into Ethiopian
  - Isolated during Islamic period, renaissance during 12th century CE
  - Massive churches carved out of solid rock
The Obelisk at Axum
Ethiopian Christianity

- Isolation from other Christian areas until 16th century
- Independent development
- Strong African influence
  - Spirit world
  - Amulets