

23. Africa – Before the Colonial period

Sub-Saharan Africa

Before the 1600s – no written history (no written records) of Africa. *Writing* was introduced with Islam and Christianity => codes of law or written contracts were unknown.

Egypt

= different situation ⇔ pictorial records, hieroglyphics on monuments, laws, obituaries => political and social history over a period of 5,000 yrs., i.e. nowhere else in the world, except of China.

Prehistory

Homo sapiens sapiens (100 000 yrs. ago) spread to Middle East and mixed with Neanderthal predecessors.

- 15,000 yrs. ago: Sahara was wet, i.e. people were hunting and grazing cattle in today's very arid areas
- 3,000 yrs ago: lot of copper was mined in S part of Sahara, rock paintings of chariots with horses

Ancient history

- ❖ Egypt = 5,000 yrs. ago was unified, in the time of Sahara dessication. Settlements were built along river Nile => *pyramids* of Giza (+Valley of the Kings). Nubians in Nubian desert. Egyptians were conquest by Assyrians (700 BC). Phoenicians (nowadays Lebanon) occupied also Maghreb and founded Carthage => Carthaginians.
- ❖ *Trade* of African people and civilisations of the Mediterranean basin and Mesopotamia was made by *sea* ⇔ Greeks and Arabs sailed down the Red Sea to east African ports (Mozambique channel/strait) => plenty of Chinese porcelain beads (corals/pearls) from India.
- ❖ Indonesians to Madagascar => miscegenation of Asian and African population = *Malagasies*.

Medieval times

- ❖ 700 AD: Arabs and Berbers (Morocco) = traders between Mediterranean civilizations and African nations (ethnics). Arab controlled N-S *trade route* of gold, salt, Mediterranean metals and slaves. Ghana = 1 of the oldest states in western Sudan zone. Another = Mali empire.
- ❖ 1100s AD: 2nd incursion of Arabs to the south. Maghreb = civilization growth – mixture of Byzantine and Persian technologies (irrigation) and knowledge.
- ❖ 1200s AD: Norman pirates destroyed coastal towns.
- ❖ 1500s AD: discovering of America + Portuguese found the sea route to East Indies => Islamic countries of N Africa declined, their population diminished and what's the worst, they failed to benefit from the cultural and technical developments of medieval times. European view focused on new, richer regions in America.

Expansion of Europeans into Africa

Portuguese = wanted to reach gold and find a sea route to Orient (1498 – Vasco da Gama). In 10 yrs. the Portuguese had conquered the Arabs => domination in *trade of the Arabian Sea*. Portugal settled along the W and E coast of Africa.

Slave trade

- Trade between Europeans and Africans: gold, ivory and pepper vs. knives, rum and mirrors.
- First slaves in America (1530 AD) = Africans working on sugar plantations in Brazil.
- 1701-1810 AD = >2 mil. slaves were carried by British ships => great profits for merchants.

Keywords

code of law, hieroglyphics, obituary, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, predecessor, beads, trade route, incursion