PERIOD 3: REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL INTERACTIONS, 600 – 1450

# States & Societies of Sub Saharan Africa

1. Effects of Early African Migration - by 1000 C.E., Bantu speaking peoples had settled in most parts of Africa south of the equator, while Kushite, Sudanese, Mande, and other peoples had established communities in lands far from their original homes.
   1. Agriculture and Population Growth - The Bantu peoples spread agriculture and herding cross Africa, displacing hunter gatherers and mastering iron metallurgy. Yams, sorghum, and millet were dietary staples of South Africa, where cattle were raised even by the Khoi people's before the Kushite herders came.
      1. Bananas - Bananas were introduced by way of the Indian Ocean sea lanes during the late centuries B.C.E. by Malay seafarers. Colonizing Madagascar, the Malay people quickly spread bananas to Africa, where they were nutritious dietary supplements for Bantu peoples, fueling population growth.
      2. Population Growth - Before the introduction of bananas and iron metallurgy in 400 B.C.E., Subsaharan Africa had a population of 3.5 million, but at the turn of the millennium, supported 11 million people. By 1000 C.E., this number had doubled.
      3. Bantu and Forest Peoples - growing populations slowly suppressed populations of foraging “forest peoples” once referred to as “pygmies.” Originally considered guides and aides, they were often displaced but soon retreated to the forests where they provided animal skins in exchange for iron tools
   2. African Political Organization
      1. Kin-based societies - Bantu peoples governed themselves through kinship groups, and did not build elaborate hierarchical societies. Villages averaged 100 people, with male heads of families serving on the village council. Sometimes, these villages and kin-based societies numbered in the hundreds of thousands, made up of networks of villages. The social structure lends itself best to small populations, however.
      2. Early Cities: Jenne-jeno - this was a city that had grown quite large by 400 C.E. As a crossroads and center of iron production and trade.an extensive trade network centered on this city, with resources and goods arriving from the Mediterranean and North Africa. By the 8th Century C.E., the city was the principal crossroads, but would soon be displaced by Timbuktu and other cities.
      3. Chiefdoms - after ca. 1000, conflicts led to the establishment of more organized societies as Chiefs began to overrun kinship networks and impose their authority.
      4. Kingdom of Kongo - economic activity along the Congo river promoted population growth had led to the development of large villages and by 1200 even small states, the biggest and most prosperous being the kingdom of Kongo. They traded copper, raffia cloth, nzimbu shells.
         1. Political Organization: King and officials over military, judicial, and financial affairs. Villages ruled by Chiefs provided local governance. Govt officials maintained royal currency of seashells and cowries
2. Islamic Kingdoms and Empires
   1. *Trans-saharan Trade and Islamic States in West Africa* - nomads have always lived in and crossed the desert, bringing goods across it. Mediterranean trade was always more lucrative, but a transsaharan trade has always existed anyway.
      1. *Camels* - the arrival of the camel from Arabia quickened trade across the Sahara. It takes a caravan 70-90 days to cross the Sahara, and so the camel was a prerequisite. With the spread of Islam into North Africa by the 7th and 8th centuries, and Muslims arrived in Subsaharan West Africa and found cities like Gao, which was a flourishing market for copper, iron ware, cotton textiles, salt, grains,and carnelian beads.
      2. *The Kingdom of Ghana* - This state probably developed during the 4th and 5th centuries,when settled agriculturalists sought to protect themselves from nomadic camel riders. As trade and traffic across the Sahara increased, Ghana was the center for gold trade. Ghana did not produce gold, but procured gold nuggets from the south. Ghana controlled and taxed the trade of gold, enriching the kingdom. In exchange for gold and ivory, they bartered for horses, cloth, manufactured wares, and salt.
      3. *Koumbi-Saleh* - This was a trading town that was the kingdom of Ghana’s capital, with a population between 15,000 and 20,000 at the height of the Kingdom between the 800s and 1100s. A Spanish Muslim traveler named Al-Bakari wrote in the middle of the eleventh centurz that Koumbi-Saleh was flourishing with buildings of stone and more than a dozen mosques, including fabulous wealth. Taxes levied on goods passing through Ghana funded a large army, that protected sources of gold.
      4. *Islam in West Africa* - Kings of Ghana converted to Islam around the tenth century, improving their relations with Muslim merchants from north Africa as well as Muslim nomads from the desert with whom they traded. Islam was not imposed forcibly, nor was it exclusive. Native practitioners maintained local customs of magic and idol worshiping.
      5. *Ghana’s Fall and Decline* - Ghana encountered nomadic peoples from the Sahara who raided the kingdom and caused its political collapse. It was succeeded by the Mali empire, which emerged just as the kingdom of Ghana dissolved.
      6. *Sundiata* - The lion prince Sundiata who reigned from 1230 until 1255 built the Mali empire during the 13th century. By making alliances with local rulers, he gained a reputation for courage in battle and had a large army with cavalry.
      7. *The Mali Empire and Trade* - Mali benefitted from trade greater even than that of Ghana. Enormous caravans with 25,000 camels linked Mali and north Africa, with the capital city of Niani attracting merchants seeking to enter the gold trade and market cities on caravan routes such as Timbuktu, Gao, and Jenne becoming prosperous centers. Mali was also Islamic, although they did not force worship.
      8. *Mansa Musa* - Sundiata’s grand-nephew Mansa Musa ruled from 1312 to 1337, observing Islamic tradition by making his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324-1325. His party formed an enormous caravan with thousands of soldiers, attendants, subjects, slaves, and a hundred camels carrying gold. The metal’s value declined by as much as 25% on the markets of Cairo, where he spent so much of it. Mansa Musa built mosques, sent promising students to study with Islamic scholars in North Africa, and established religious schools. Mali soon crumbled, but the tradition of centralized rule in West Africa ensured that Songhai would soon rise and ensure that islam had a prominent place in west African society.
   2. The Indian Ocean Trade and Islamic States in East Africa - Merchant-mariners sailing the sea lanes of the Indian ocean traded along the Eastern coast of Africa. Indian and Persian sailors had traded here as early as 500 B.C.E. The earliest Bantu peoples to found settlements on the coast of east Africa and supplement their agricultural production with ocean fishing and maritime trade were the builders of Swahili society.
      1. The Swahili - Arabic word meaning “coasters.” Dominated from Mogadishu to Kilwa and Sofala in the south. These peoples spoke Swahili, a Bantu language with several different dialects. By the 10th Century, Islamic merchants increased their gold, slave, ivory, and exotic tortoise shell and leopard skin trade. They brought pottery, glass, and textiles to Africa from Persia, India and China.
      2. The Swahili City-States - By the 11th and 12th centuries, trade brought tremendous wealth to east Africa, with several important cities like Mogadishu, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilwa, Mozambique, and Sofala enjoying enormous trade. The cities underwent transformations, as villages made of wood and dried mud turned into large buildings of coral, before eventually hosting stone mosques and public buildings.
      3. Kilwa - One of the busiest cities of East Africa between 800 and 1000 C.E. was Kilwa, which was prosperous enough to erect multi-story stone buildings. With a population of 12,000, Kilwa was a thriving city to which merchants flocked. By the 15th century, it exported about one ton of gold per year.
      4. Islam in East Africa - In east Africa, trade brought cultural as well s political changes. Like their counterparts in west Africa, the ruling elites and the wealthy merchants of east Africa converted to the Islamic faith. Islam served as a point of cooperation with Muslim merchants from the east, and as a source of legitimacy for the rule of local kings.