

Lesson 2 The Kingdom of Aksum

MAIN IDEAS

Government A new power, Aksum, rises south of Egypt.

Culture Ezana expands Aksum's influence and converts to Christianity.

Culture Aksum's cultural and technical achievements were long lasting.

The Rise of Aksum

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Why did trade become important to Aksum?

Perfect Trade Location

- Meroë destroyed, Kush conquered by king of **Aksum**
- Aksum was located in **Horn of Africa**—modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea
 - had trade access to Red Sea, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Nile
- Arab traders built colonies, trading posts in area
 - Aksum became meeting place for African, Arabian, other peoples
- Legend has Aksum founded by Menelik, son of Solomon, Queen of Sheba

An International Trading Hub

- Aksum became a trading hub
 - traders from Egypt, Africa, Arabia, Mediterranean, Persia, India
- **Adulis**—city on the Red Sea; main trading port for Aksum
 - traded salt, ivory, cloth, brass, iron, gold, glass, olive oil, wine
 - animal traders bought giraffes and elephants

REVIEW QUESTION

What made Aksum's location ideal for trade?

King Ezana Expands Aksum

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What was the effect of King Ezana on religion?

A Trading Nation

- **Ezana**—strong Aksum king who rose to power in A.D. 325
 - took over Arabian peninsula trading colony and Kush, burned Meroë
- Aksum Empire expanded inland and along Red Sea; controlled trade
- Ezana learned about Christianity, made it Aksum's official religion
 - Aksum's Christian church was linked to Alexandria, Egypt, not Rome

REVIEW QUESTION

How did Ezana influence the culture of Aksum?

Aksum's Achievements

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What were some of Aksum's achievements?

Architecture

- Aksum culture blended influences from Horn of Africa, southern Arabia
- Pillars of Aksum, 60 to over 100 feet tall, were placed around country
 - stories carved on pillars celebrated victories, achievements
 - carved from single stone slabs, included false doors and windows
- Large temples were replaced by richly decorated Christian churches

A Written Language

- Written language Ge'ez brought to Aksum by Arabian migrants
 - basis for modern languages of Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre
 - Ge'ez still used in Ethiopian Church

Terraced Farming

- On hilly terrain, farmers built **terraces**—leveled-off areas of land
 - flat terraces hold moisture better, increase amount of farmland
- Also built canals, dams, holding ponds to bring water to fields

REVIEW QUESTION

How did Aksum farmers increase productivity?

Lesson Summary

- Aksum became a powerful trading center.
- King Ezana expanded Aksum's empire.
- Aksum's unique culture had long-lasting effects.

Why It Matters Now...

Many Ethiopians today are Christians, the religion of King Ezana.