

Daily Life in Aksum

Aksum was a powerful and wealthy ancient kingdom. Located in East Africa, it was very influential between A.D. 50 and 600. During this time, goods from all over the ancient world were traded in Aksum. Immense wealth moved through Adulis, Aksum's main port. In this thriving kingdom, the daily life of its people varied depending on a person's work and religious beliefs.

By using primary and secondary sources, historians have been able to figure out what many Aksumites, or people from Aksum, did for a living. The importance of trade allowed many people to gain wealth by working as merchants. These businesspeople exported gold, ivory, and spices to Arabia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In exchange for these goods, merchants received cloth, jewelry, metals, and steel for weapons. The merchants came in contact with people from many different areas. As a result, they were aware of news and ideas from cultures as far away as India.

Some people in Aksum worked as farmers. They brought mountain water to the fields by building dams and digging canals and ponds to hold water. However, Aksum's land had many hills so it didn't hold moisture very well. To solve this problem, farmers built level areas of land on the hillsides. These were called terraces and they helped hold water, which improved farming.

Other Aksumites worked as builders and architects. Archaeologists have found several monuments, palaces, thrones, and stone pillars that were built by the people of Aksum. The rulers of Aksum had the stories of their military conquests carved onto thrones and pillars. The following account was carved onto a throne for King Ezana to honor his victory:

And I set up a throne here in Shado [Aksum] by the might of the Lord of Heaven who has helped me and given me supremacy. May the Lord of Heaven reinforce my reign. And, as he has now defeated my enemies for me, may he continue to do so wherever I go.

The text of King Ezana's victory contains a clue to another important aspect of people's lives in Aksum—religion. For many years, the Aksumites worshiped many gods. Then, around A.D. 330, King Ezana converted to Christianity. He soon made Christianity the official religion of Aksum.

Eventually, Christianity spread throughout the region. Monks brought the Christian message to the interior of Aksum. They also replaced local temples and shrines with Christian churches and monasteries.

Learning was also important in the lives of some Aksumites. The written language of Aksum was called Ge'ez. It is a form of Arabic that has been modified by the Greek and Kushitic languages. Part of why we know so much about Aksum is because the Aksumites preserved their rulers' written documents.

The daily lives of Aksumites varied depending on their work. Aksumites worked as merchants, farmers, builders, architects, and monks. The Christian religion became important in many of their lives, starting with the conversion of King Ezana around A.D. 330. The Aksumites also emphasized learning by preserving their history through written documents.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ezana. "DAE 11." in Stuart Munro-Hay. An African Civilization of Late Antiquity. ed. Alan Light. 1991. May 27, 2005. <<http://users.vnet.net/alight/aksum/mhak4.html#c11-5-dae11>>.

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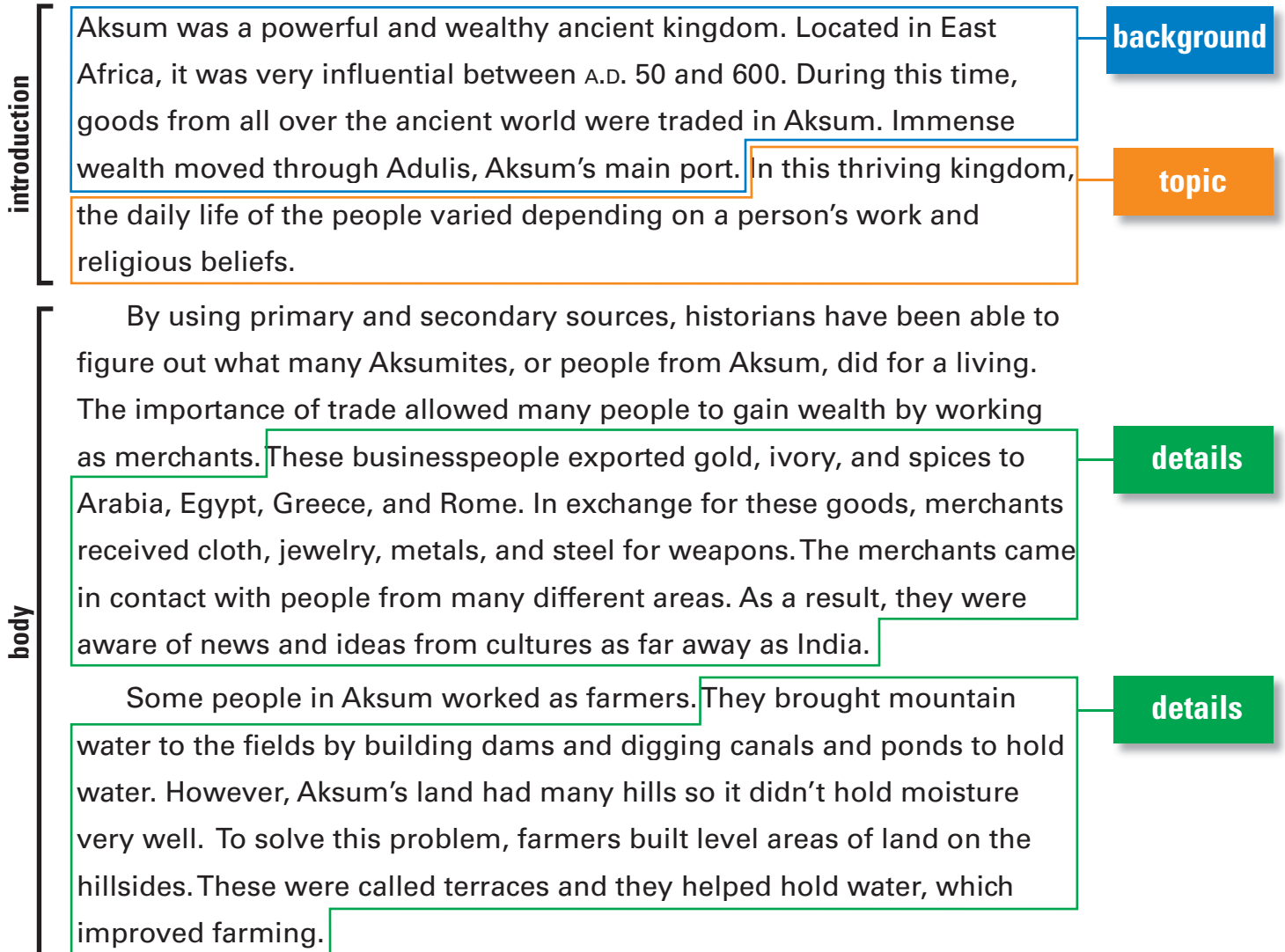
Books

McDougal Littell. World History: Ancient Civilizations. Evanston: McDougal Littell, a division of Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. 197–200.

Organization

A research report has three basic parts: the **introduction**, the **body**, and the **conclusion**. The introduction gives **background** and states the **topic**. The body provides engaging **details** on the topic and the conclusion **summarizes** the information. What aspect of daily life in Egypt or Kush will you write about?

Daily Life in Aksum



Daily Life in Aksum (continued)

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summary

body

conclusion

Engaging Details

Details can provide a deeper understanding of the history of a particular time period and make your research report more interesting to the reader. Research reports can use engaging details about the **objects**, the **activities** and **behaviors**, and the **laws, rules, or rituals** of a culture. What details will you provide to describe daily life in Egypt or Kush?

The importance of trade allowed many people to gain wealth by working as merchants. These businesspeople exported gold, ivory, and spices to Arabia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In exchange for these goods, merchants received cloth, jewelry, metals, and steel for weapons.

objects

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activities

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behaviors

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laws, rules
or rituals

Bibliography

A bibliography lists the sources used for writing a research report. Remember, your bibliography for this assignment should contain a primary source, a Web site, an encyclopedia article, and a book. If possible, each citation should include the title, author, publisher, date, page number, or Web address. When you have more than one source in a category you should list them alphabetically. Use the format below for your bibliography.

Primary Sources

Ezana. "DAE 11." in Stuart Munro-Hay. An African Civilization of Late Antiquity. ed. Alan Light. 1991. May 27, 2005. <<http://users.vnet.net/alight/aksum/mhak4.html#c11-5-dae11>>.

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