



African Civilizations

World History

For Africa to me... is more than a glamorous fact. It is a historical truth. No man can know where he is going unless he knows exactly where he has been and exactly how he arrived at his present place.

-Maya Angelou



Geography:

- Second Largest continent in the world
- 1/5 of the earth's land
- Has few harbors, ports, inlets
- Made up of everything from sand dunes to rain forests
- 40% = desert (hard to migrate and travel)
- 136°F in the summer
- Sahara Desert is the size of the United States
- Largest number of people live in the savannahs or grassy plains
- Major crops = grains, millet, rice, wheat and corn
- Each year the desert takes over more and more of the continent. This steady drying of the soil is called desertification.



Earliest People

Appeared in the Great Rift Valley

They were nomadic people: San and BaMbuti continue in hunter-gathering societies to this day.

Learned to domesticate animals

More food = More population



Families:

African cultures are very much centered around extended families.

Ties often expand to the clan—a group that shares common ancestors

Lineage is also important.

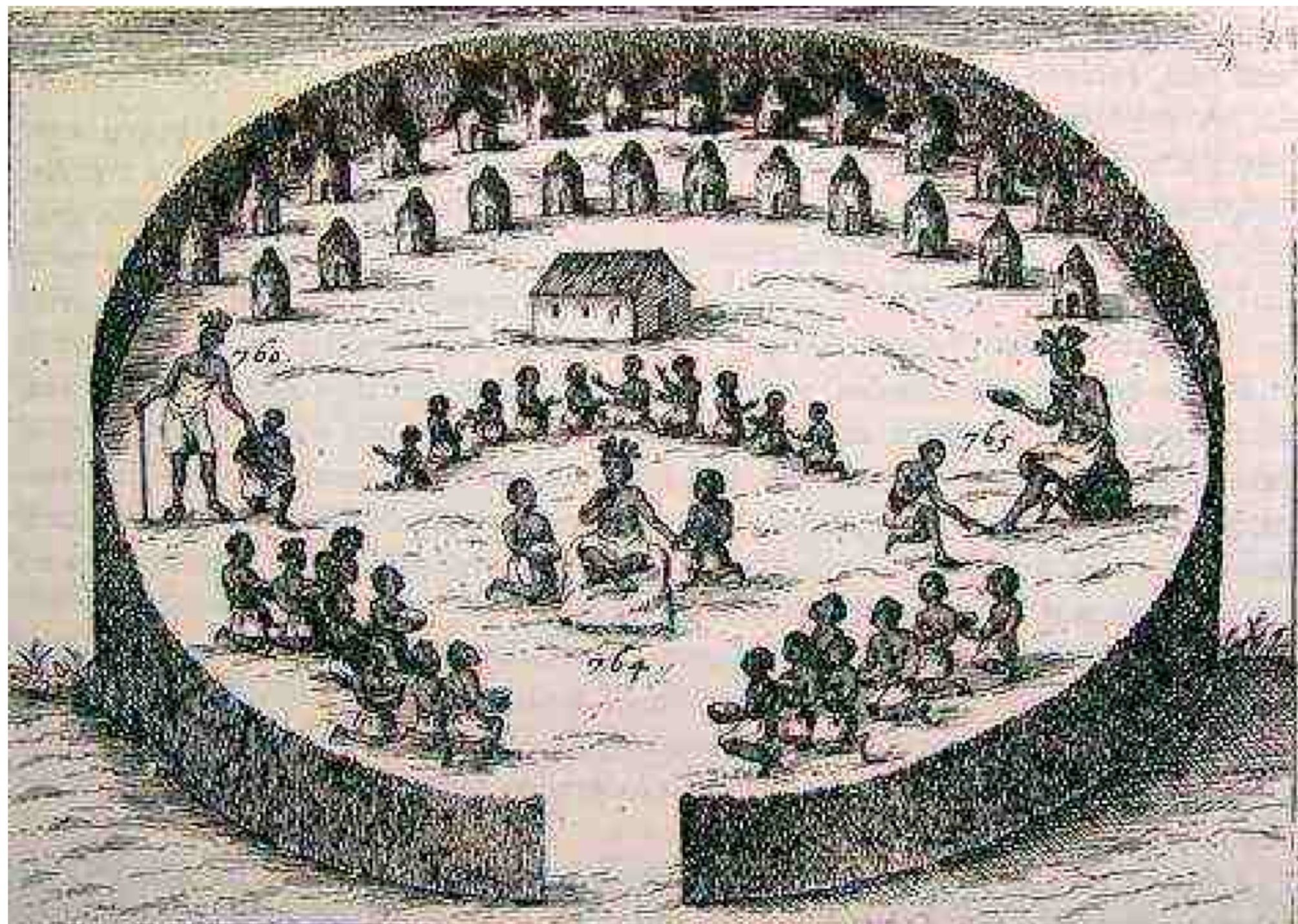
Includes: spirits of ancestors, those living, those who are not yet born

Religion:

Nearly all religions in Africa are based on a single creator.

Most also include the concept of animism—belief that spirits play a constant role in everyday life.





Language:

Although all African societies had a language, most were not written languages. History and culture was shared orally by storytellers called griots.

Government:

Usually based on lineage.

No central power base. Power was balanced among families. This is known as a stateless society

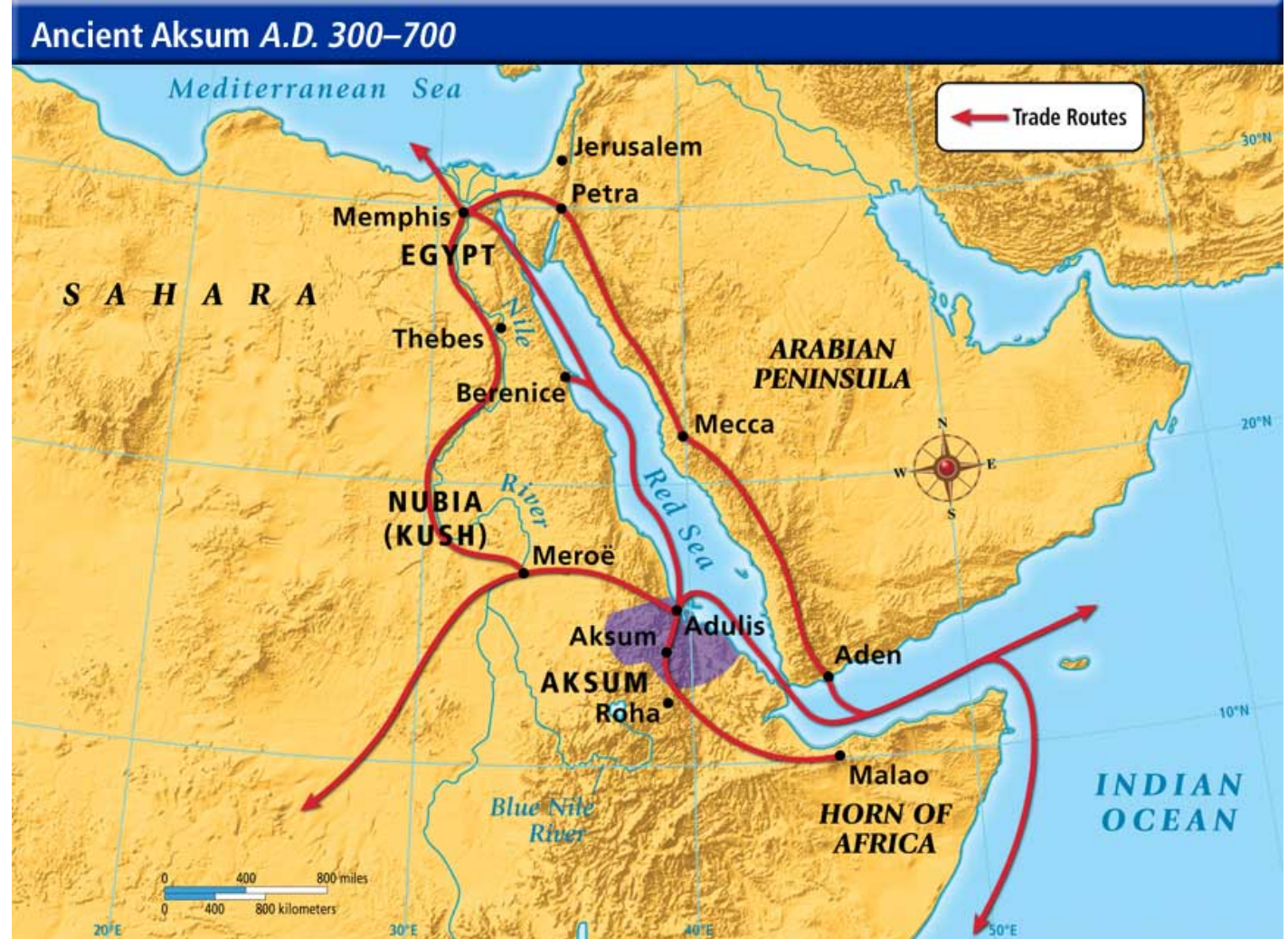


Aksum:

Civilization south of Egypt strongest between 325-600AD.

Believed in one god

Traded salt and gold with those around them





African Gold Mining in
Modern Times

Merchants brought them the message of Jesus Christ

King of the Aksumites, Ezana, converts—most of the people do too

Dispute happens over the nature of Christ (spirit vs. flesh)

Divide into Egypt and Ethiopia

Will lose their power when they are invaded by Islamic peoples





Ghana

Egypt

Aksum

Kush

**Cultures of
Ancient Africa**

Zimbabwe

Massive Migrations:

Language is an issue of division in Africa.

The Niger-Congo group of languages includes over 900 dialects.

The second family of languages is the Proto-Bantu.

People who speak a form of Proto-Bantu are called the Bantu Peoples.





Had to migrate due to geographic and defensive reasons.

As they migrated they came into contact with other African cultures

Followed the Congo river, then traveled all the way to the southern coast



The Bantus often fought territorial wars as they migrated

There are 60 million Bantu speaking people in Africa today.



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