

I.

AFRICA'S HISTORY

General

Historians who are accustomed to reconstruct history from written documents or from tablets or papyri do not find a fruitful field of research in Negroid Africa outside the sphere of the Egyptian civilization. In Africa, documented history does not begin before the arrival of the Europeans in the fifteenth century A.D., although in some parts of the continent, notably in North and East Africa, recorded history may be said to begin with the advent of the Arabs in the centuries immediately following Mohammed's death in A.D. 632. It is true that Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and others have left a few documents concerning the continent, but these, although important and instructive, are only episodic in character. Thus the reference to Hanno's Phoenician expedition to the Cape Verde region of Africa's West Coast (*ca.* 500 B.C.) or "The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea" referring to Africa's East Coast (*ca.* A.D. 80) are too isolated in their import to contribute to any serious historical reconstruction. Even the early Arabian and European periods of Africa are insufficiently known. With the exception of a few coastal regions of East, West, and South Africa, the interior of the continent remained historically unknown until the middle, or even the end, of the last century.

So far, archaeology has been unable to assist substantially in rounding out the picture of Africa's past. At the present time archaeological evidence is not only sporadic, but for many sections of the continent almost completely lacking. Even where, as in northern, eastern, and southern Africa, comparatively large numbers of archaeological sites have been investigated, the correlation of their cultures has only begun, and many of the theories which have been established are still ill-founded.

Little can be said about the early cultures of the continent which manifest themselves here as elsewhere in different types of stone artifacts. There is still a great deal of uncertainty concerning the

human races which might be associated with these prehistoric cultures, but there exists the probability that the later phases of Africa's Stone Ages may be connected with such races as the so-called Boskop and Strandloopers, which may be regarded as the progenitors of the small-statured Bushmen of present-day South Africa.

Bushmen and Pygmies

It appears rather certain that the Bushmen as well as the Pygmies, who now survive only in the uninviting desert lands of the Kalahari and in the dense forests of the Equatorial region, were once the sole masters over wider territories in East, South, and Central, and perhaps even in West, Africa. Gradually, however, the expansion of the technically more advanced Negro greatly restricted the original habitat of these groups. This expansion of the Negro into both Bushman and Pygmy territory continued up to the time of European penetration into the Dark Continent. For our purposes here we are therefore justified in referring to the shy and dwarf-like Pygmies as well as to the Bushmen as the original inhabitants of large areas of what today we call Negro Africa. We may also be certain that many of the archaeological sites, as far as they do not reveal Negro culture, are to be associated with these peoples or their antecedents.

Most noteworthy among the relics of Africa's early periods are the rock-paintings (petrographs) and rock-engravings (petroglyphs) which have been discovered in many parts of the continent (Fig. 2). Scattered over the Saharan north, from the Atlas Mountains of Morocco to the *djebels* and *wadis* of Nubia and Kordofan, in the rocky regions of southern Africa, from the Cape to the Zambesi River, evidence of this prehistoric art has been reported. In recent years a few locations with rock-paintings have been discovered in the East African territory of Tanganyika. The absence of the rock-paintings and engravings in the forest regions of central and western Africa is striking.

The petrographs and petroglyphs of Africa belong to no specific period. While there can be little doubt that many of the paintings and engravings go back to times which suggest an age corresponding to that of the European Stone Age, it is equally certain that others are only a few hundred years old. This is not surprising if we realize

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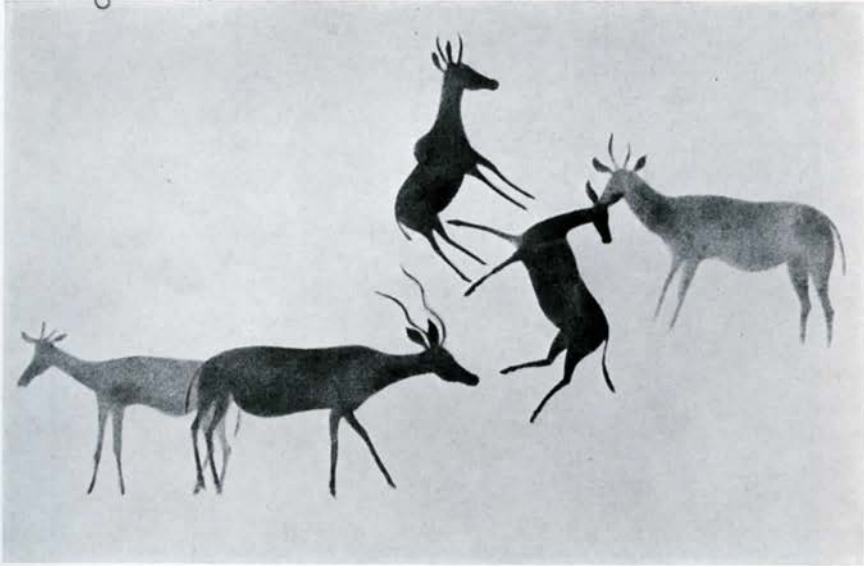


Fig. 2. Rock-painting from Southern Rhodesia.
(after Frobenius, L.: *Erythräa*)

that such people as the Bushmen, who are doubtless responsible for a great deal of this art in southern Africa, continue to preserve through millennia a culture which has many of the characteristics of Stone Age days.

No reliable chronology for Africa's rock-art has been established as yet, nor have the sequences of the various styles been analyzed in any serious or convincing manner. In view of the fact that both petroglyphs and petrographs of southern Europe belong to specific periods of the Old and New Stone Ages there, several investigators of the African rock-art have been inclined to draw parallels between Europe and Africa not only in style but also in chronology. Serious students of African archaeology no longer follow such practices, and content themselves in finding in Africa only the evidence that would produce a stratigraphy and would permit the establishment of a reliable chronology for this remarkable African art.

Necklace

31-2-182

Bracelets

31-2-159

156 157

Exp. 5006

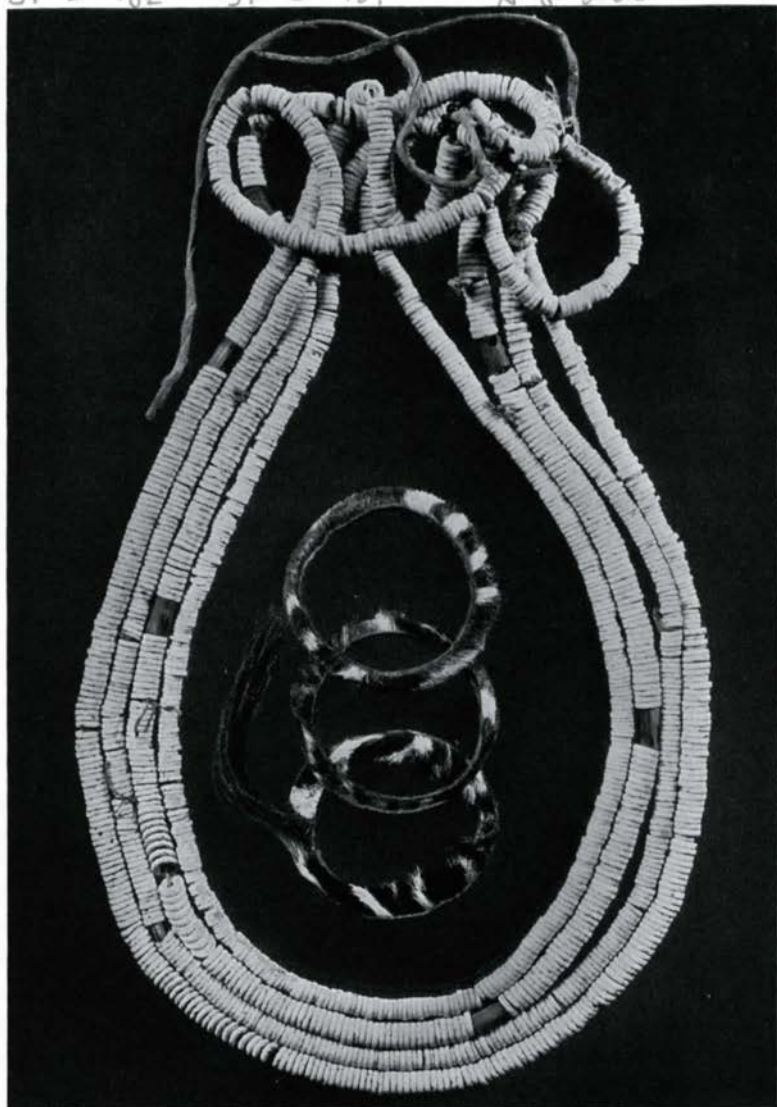


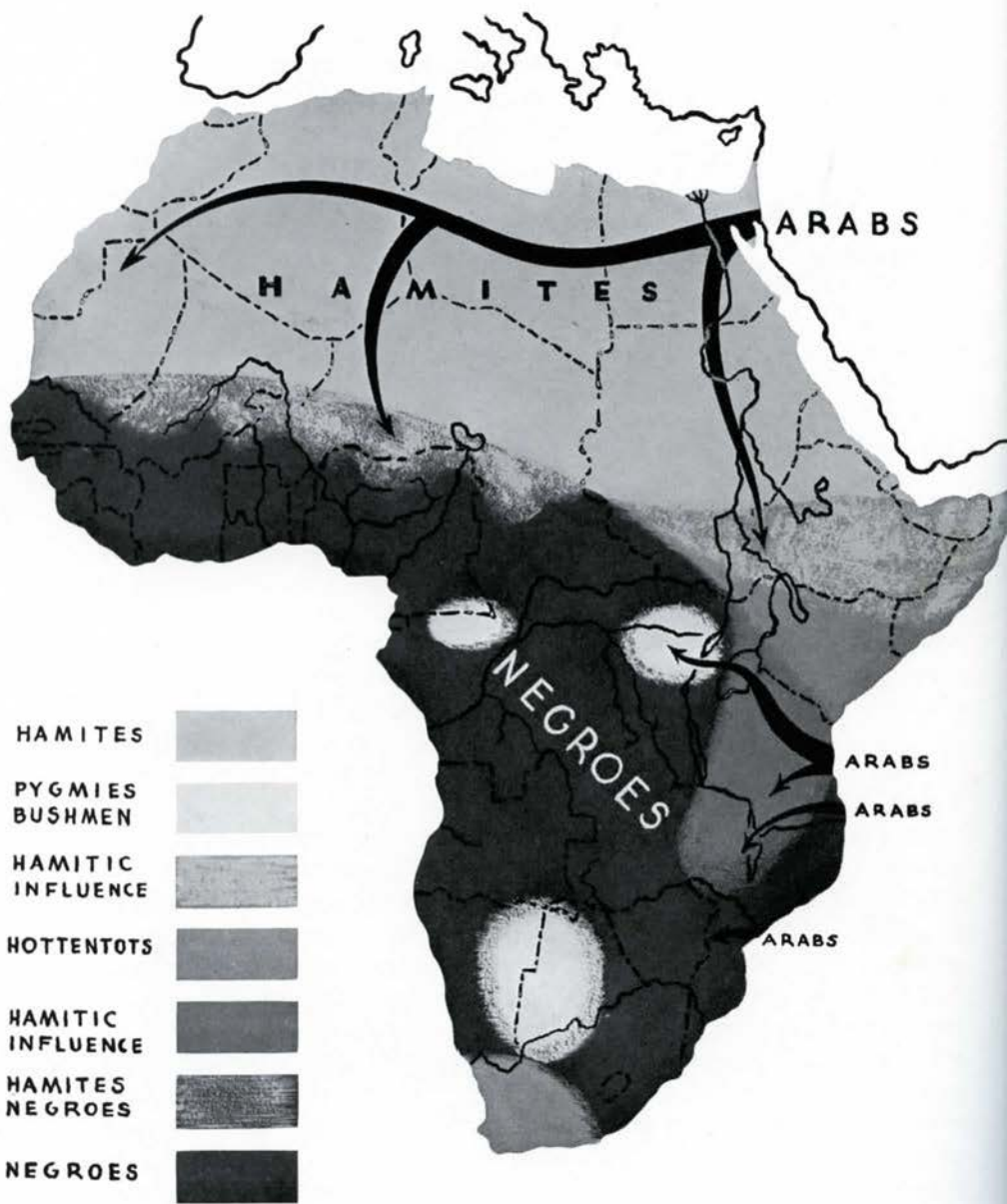
Fig. 3. Bushman ornaments. Necklace made of ostrich egg shell discs (170 cm. long) and bracelets cut from the hide of a zebra. (diameter ca. 6 cm.)

While there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to associate the Bushmen (as well as their cultural predecessors) with the rock-art of South and perhaps East Africa, these people cannot easily be connected with the petroglyphs of North Africa. There is, however, a school of thought which maintains that during the Late Stone Age periods a Bushman-like hunting culture extended from southern Europe to southern Africa. But in view of the fact that many of the North African rock-paintings and rock-engravings belong definitely to later periods—pictures of domesticated camels can hardly antedate the introduction of camels into North Africa around 200 B.C.—it must be assumed that the Hamites who have inhabited this region since 5000 B.C., if not before, must be connected with the rock-art of these northern zones.

Evaluating, then, the scanty facts of archaeology and interrelating them with still scantier linguistic and ethnological interpretations, one might conclude that during the Late Stone Age periods Africa south of the Sudan was inhabited by Bushmanoid and Pygmoid peoples, while the northern parts of the continent were occupied by the so-called Hamites. These latter, the light-skinned Libyans to whom Herodotus refers, are normally regarded as members of the white races and related to the Mediterranean peoples, who as Berbers now control large sections of the Mediterranean littoral as well as many of the oases of the Sahara.

Negroes

How long the Negroes, those "typical" Africans, have inhabited this continent, it is difficult to say. It has been conjectured that it was only about 6000 or 7000 B.C. when the first Negro crossed the straits of Aden, and that from there the Negroes began their gradual expansion into the grasslands and forests, pushing aside Pygmies and Bushmen. Whatever the date of this Negro invasion may have been, the theory cannot be lightly dismissed that these people whom we associate so intimately with this continent may very well have had their original home somewhere in the southern parts of Asia. It is true, however, that this assumption is based on little more than scant circumstantial evidence. Wherever the Negro may have originated, it is certain that he only gradually expanded into those vast



SCHMATIC MAP OF AFRICA'S MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS

territories south of the Sahara which he occupies today. On their movement toward southern Africa, it is believed that the Negroes did not cross the Zambesi River before the beginning of our era, and that this southward migration was still continuing when the first Dutch settlers began their northward treks from the Cape of Good Hope.

The Chief Ethnic Groups

Irrespective of the ancient history of African peoples, it may suffice generally to regard Bushmen (and Pygmies), Negroes, and Hamites as the original inhabitants of the continent. Such a statement needs, however, immediate explanation. Laymen and scholars alike desire specific definition of the racial and cultural characteristics of those human groups to which the attribute "aborigines" has been given. The modern anthropologist realizes that these so-called aboriginal groups are racially and culturally composite groups in themselves, and that they exist only as hypothetical reconstructions. All statements regarding these groups must consequently be taken as generalities which in themselves are only interpretations based upon a limited amount of factual data.

Thus it seems likely that originally the Hamites were members of the White Caucasian race and that they had a culture centered around animal breeding. The Negroes, on the other hand, are part of the dark races (perhaps physically related to the Melanesians) and are basically agriculturists, while Bushmen and Pygmies (assuming that they may be grouped together) are often regarded as members of a racial stock of small-statured peoples, the vestiges of which survived in a few remote corners of the south Asiatic island world, e.g., Negritos of the Philippines. The culture of these people is economically based on hunting and food gathering. The known facts do not contradict such theories, neither do they fully support them.

All that safely may be said is that these three main African groups do not form a homogeneous racial or cultural group. Interrelations between them have been great, since, as the Negroes have penetrated the desert lands of the Hamites far to the north, so the Hamites have invaded Negroland to the south. These contacts, which at times have been very intimate, have left their physical as well as their cultural impacts upon the people thus encountered.

Nevertheless certain distinctions between the groups remain. In general the Hamites are lighter in complexion than the Negroes. Among the former, animal breeding is more frequent than among the latter, and conversely the Hamites appear less interested in agricultural pursuits than do the Negroes. The list of such comparisons between Hamites and Negroes, as well as between Negroes and Bushmen, could easily be extended. It might be well, however, to point out that there are environmental factors which cannot be ignored in any evaluation of the cultures of the different ethnic groups of Africa.

The Pygmies live in the dense forests of central Africa where both agriculture and animal breeding are difficult, if not impossible. Thus their economy, based on food gathering and hunting, has been determined by the habitat into which they were required to move by the expanding Negroes. And so it is also with the Bushmen. Whatever their aboriginal culture may have been, once they were driven into the Kalahari desert of South Africa they were forced to abandon it and had to survive by hunting and food gathering in a region which hardly afforded more than the bare necessities for survival.

The great majority of the Negroes, whether by choice or force of circumstances, live in the forest or forested zones of the continent where agriculture is rather easy and animal breeding somewhat difficult. Only in east and southeast Africa where, as we shall learn later, Hamitic influence is strong and the environment is suitable, have Negroes taken to cattle breeding to any appreciable extent.

The Hamites, on the other hand, occupy predominantly those regions, such as the Sudan or northeast Africa, which are arid or semi-arid, and where the average rainfall is insufficient for agricultural activities but sufficient to guarantee a normal growth of grass for cattle or camels. That Hamites have taken to agriculture wherever possible goes without saying.

The historical interpretation of the culture of the three ethnic groups of Africa does not preclude an interpretation based on environmental factors or the reverse. As long as the archaeological evidence is as inadequate as it is now, many questions about early African cultures must remain unanswered, and as long as the lack of historical evidence is so prominent, no conclusive solutions can be offered, thus opening a wide field of speculations, of which there have been many.

af 5121 Negs. 4985-8



Fig. 4. Wooden stool of the Warua, Southeastern parts of the Belgian Congo. (height 41.5 cm.)

af 5120 Neg. 4983-4



Fig. 5. Wooden figurine of the Baluba, Southeastern section of the Belgian Congo. (height 33 cm.)

Arab and Moslem Influences

Several events during our present era have had a lasting effect upon Africa, its peoples, and its cultures. Beginning in the seventh century, Moslems first conquered North Africa and then began their southward penetration both along Africa's East Coast and into the Sudan regions of the interior. This conquest not only introduced a new ethnic element—the Arab—but brought with it a new religion and philosophy as well as new institutions. Directly and indirectly this Moslem invasion influenced the political organizations and social structures of many African regions. Arab traders linked these regions with the world markets of those days. Some African towns such as Timbuktu, founded in 1150, became centers of trade, and as such were centers of learning of the then civilized world. The empires of the Mandingo and Songhai, not to mention the ancient kingdom of Ghana, reflect in culture and organization all those attributes which we associate with the feudal institutions of the European Middle Ages.

In East Africa the sultanate of Kilwa, extending along the major portion of Africa's East Coast, was a center of political and commercial power. From the tenth century onward it carried on a very profitable trade with Arabia and India, a trade which probably dated from a considerably earlier period than the actual settlement by the Arabs. Even far-off China was within the area covered by these enterprising East Coast merchants. Thus, long before the European penetration into Africa, large sections of the continent were in actual contact with the then dominating Eastern world.

But Arabs influenced the life of Africans beyond the boundaries of their conquests. Mohammedan ascetics, the *almovarides* or *marabuts*, spread their creed among millions of non-Moslems, and Arab traders traveling far into the interior and often settling among the Africans, although outwardly adjusting themselves easily to the life of the natives, deeply affected Negro institutions. New techniques in weaving and leather working, new types of furniture such as elevated beds, new styles of architecture and architectural details, new garments, ornaments, food, all these found their way into many of those sections of the continent which fell into the commercial orbit of the Arabs.

Perhaps more important than the introduction of material objects was the change in the economic and political structure of many African societies. In East Africa, Arab traders were primarily interested in securing slaves and ivory and, to a lesser degree, gold. Although slavery had not been unknown in pre-Arab days, large-scale exploitation of slaves gave it a new aspect. More than ever before, human beings became a commodity which could be bartered for other commodities. Similarly ivory and gold, which in aboriginal days had had little if any value, suddenly, because of the demand, became prized possessions. Political leaders of African communities were quick to recognize the importance of these changes in value and attempted not infrequently to capitalize on them. Where, according to African tradition, chiefs had at least a nominal title to the country under their jurisdiction, they often declared monopolies over such articles as were in demand with the Arabs. Thus in many sections of the continent, elephants became royal game, making it obligatory for anyone killing an animal to deliver the valuable tusks to the chief, who retained for himself the exclusive right to deal with the traders. The Arabs, in turn, liked and probably favored this development, which greatly simplified their trade, since readily available storehouses were awaiting them.

The monopoly system which came into existence for many articles gave to the chief not only an elevated economic position but a superior political position as well. This position was utilized not only for the further strengthening of their political and economic influence within their own tribal group, but appears to have been frequently exploited in attacks on neighboring tribes, both for the purpose of extending their influence and of securing slaves and other loot to be traded to the Arabs.

While such a development was far from being the normal occurrence, this indirect result of Arab intrusion had a marked effect upon substantial sections of Africa and appears to have been deepened as Arab influence extended over the course of centuries. This Arabian impact was keenly felt by the early European travelers in Africa.

In the Sudan region, Arab, or better, Moslem influence upon the political and cultural structure was much more direct. Here, under the impetus of religious fervor, Moslems began to conquer and to convert large areas. This movement which began towards the end

29-94-14 Negs 4971-2



Fig. 6. Wooden cup in form of a human head of the Bakongo, Kasi district of the Belgian Congo. (height 15.3 cm.)

of the seventh century and continued throughout the present millennium, only came to an end, as far as territorial conquest is concerned, at the turn of this century, when European penetration brought these advances to a halt. Islam, as a religion, continued to expand, in spite of the opposition on the part of Christian missionaries. These Moslem expansions, which originally appear to have been carried on by Arabs, in later years became ethnically dissociated from them. Arabs, who everywhere in Africa intermarried freely with the native population, were frequently physically assimilated by the Africans, but attempted to preserve the religion, culture, and often the language of their Arab ancestors. Those claiming Arabian descent, however fictitious their claim might be in reality, regarded themselves as superior to the local population, thus creating socially and ethnically stratified societies which are so typical of most of the political structures of the Sudan. The powerful emirates of Northern Nigeria, the sultanates of Bornu, Wadai, and Baghirmi in the Lake Chad region, or those of Kordofan and Dar Fur in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, were such strongholds of Africanized Islam. All these states are essentially conquest states in which several culturally diverse tribes of Africans were forced into one political unit by Moslem conquerors who established themselves as an aristocracy and held sway over their subject peoples.

The Hamitic Invasions of Equatorial Africa

Although a great deal of evidence regarding the Arab and Moslem penetration exists, there is almost none concerning a similar expansion by the North African Hamites. These people, who appear to have inhabited large parts of North Africa, are believed to be responsible for several migrations to the south. It is impossible to state with any appreciable degree of certainty when these movements began in the various regions or what their chronology was. Some of these Hamitic migrations no doubt antedated the arrival of the Arabs; others may have been caused by them. It is fairly certain that long before our era some of the Hamites forced their way into northeast Africa, into the areas of southern Abyssinia and the Somalilands, where their descendants survive in the present-day Galla and Somali.

Hottentots

A possibly earlier, in any case a more consequential Hamitic migration must have been that of the Hottentots who, at the time of the European occupation of the southern Cape, inhabited large areas of what became later the Cape Colony and South West Africa. In connecting the Hottentots with the Hamites of North Africa one moves on rather hypothetical grounds, in spite of the fact that some physical and linguistic evidence lends support to such an assumption. It is, however, not too unreasonable to regard the rather light-skinned Hottentots as an early wave of Hamites who gradually, perhaps in the course of millennia, made their way from the north to the very south of the continent, where they lived in close proximity with the Bushmen and were subjected to many Bushman influences.

Hamites in East Africa

Later Hamitic migrations are better substantiated, not, to be sure, by conclusive historical evidence, but by inferences of a cultural, a linguistic, and a somatological character. In East Africa two major Hamitic invasions are discernible. The first, which may have originated among the Galla of northwest Africa, probably began around A.D. 1000. It affected primarily the so-called Lake Region, that is, the territories of present-day Uganda, Ruanda-Urundi, and north-western Tanganyika. Here the Hamitic invaders are known as Bahima who, not unlike the Arabs of the Sudan, created states in which the invaders established the ruling classes. The kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Ruanda, Urundi—to mention only a few of the many which have survived to this very day—were founded during that period. For the most part these Bahima can even today be distinguished from the people they rule as well as from other tribes of this region by both their physical appearance and their culture which, like that of the Hamites proper, is strongly influenced by cattle breeding. In their appearance they are "Hamitic," which means that their skin color is lighter and their lips and noses are smaller than those of the Negro of this region. As a rule they maintain the fiction of racial superiority and are theoretically careful to avoid inter-marriage with the Negro.

29-94-12 Neg. 4973-5



Fig. 7. Upper part of a chief's baton used by the Lunda tribes of the Kasai district, Belgian Congo. (baton is 60 cm. long)

Hamites of this wave extended their conquest still farther to the south. According to tradition, the ruling class of the Wafipa on the southeastern shore of Lake Tanganyika belongs to this Bahima dynasty. Also the ruling classes of the Wahehe and Wabena of the northern Nyasa area appear to be related to the Hamites, and finally we may point to the well-known Zimbabwe culture of Southern Rhodesia, which flourished there between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and may owe its origin to Hamitic invaders.

Not all the Hamites of this first wave of expansion established themselves as the political overlords of Negro people; some seem to have retained a great deal of their original culture and to have merely settled within Negro territory, particularly in those areas which were most suitable for their pastoral pursuits. The most prominent of these Hamites are the tall Watussi (or Batutsi) who now inhabit the high plateaus of Ruanda and Urundi. In spite of the fact that they, as some of the Bahima, retain the fiction of superiority over the Negro, they are now little different in skin color from the Negro—the Bahutu, as they are called locally—with whom they have intermarried.

It may be well to point out that the occupation of territory by Hamites did not necessarily involve especial hardships for the indigenous population. The latter were almost exclusively agriculturists who were cultivating the lowland regions where rainfall is more abundant; the invading Hamites, on the other hand, preferred highlands with a sufficient supply of grass for their cattle. Both types of economy supplemented each other rather well and were even beneficial to both aboriginals and invaders.

The second invasion of Hamites extended into the region east of Lake Victoria. This is the invasion of the so-called Niloto-Hamites, of which the Masai and Nandi are perhaps the best-known representatives. It is generally assumed that these people had their origin in regions of the Upper Nile and moved southward, perhaps in the twelfth or the thirteenth century. Like the Watussi, the Masai and their ethnic relatives conquered territories for their exclusive settlement, and as cattle breeders they were interested in such land as Negroes may have regarded as useless. It is very probable that much of the area now occupied by Masai and Nandi was formerly, as now, only very thinly populated. It would be wrong, however, to believe that these expansions proceeded without bloody struggles. If the few

reports of the nineteenth century are any indication, we may well assume that the wars between Masai and the powerful Negro tribes such as the Akamba and Akikuyu were a rather permanent feature of their intertribal relations.

Hamites in West Africa

Several invasions from northern Africa have had great effect upon the ethnic and political structure of West Africa, where at various times large and powerful states came into existence. As a result of the close proximity between Negroes and Hamites, physical and cultural interrelation must always have been intimate, so that many ethnic and cultural waves into West Africa are no longer discernible, nor will it be possible to measure the extent of West African influences upon the north.

One of the earliest of these invasions resulted in the creation of the various states which we commonly associate with the Mandingo or Mande, now, as throughout the Middle Ages, one of the most important people of the French Sudan. As in East Africa, so here Hamitic elements conquered the native Negroes and ruled them while establishing themselves as the aristocracy. But whatever physical or racial distinctions may have existed, in the course of time interrelations between these groups resulted in a leveling out of racial differences, so that in most cases the reference to the Hamitic origin of groups, cultures, or states may appear ill substantiated. A few of the Mandingo states should be mentioned: The earliest was the empire of Ghana between the Senegal and the Niger, which was in existence during the period of the late Roman Empire. The most prominent was perhaps that of Melle, which was founded in the Upper Niger area during the twelfth century. Also of North African origin was the empire of Songhai, which was established during the Middle Ages and had the famous town of Timbuktu as its center.

Further to the east, in the region of present-day Northern Nigeria, there are several states founded by the Hausa. Although now typically Negro in appearance, it is more than likely that the Hausa absorbed a great many Hamitic and Arabic elements and became the forgers of many empires. Such well-known states as Sokoto and Kano evolved during the Hausa rule, which reached the zenith of

its development during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

All these states of the western Sudan had a social and political structure which was in many respects analogous to the European feudal institutions of the Middle Ages. They had the character of oriental despotism, in which the authority of the ruler or of the aristocracy which surrounded him was the only law. Feudal lords who owed allegiance to the sultan or emir were appointed by him and were required to supply fixed contingents of armed forces. As was customary in Europe, so here feudal lords often attempted to gain their independence or submitted to the rulers of adjacent states, a fact which accounts for much of the fluctuating history of these Sudan states, which at times covered wide regions and again fell almost into oblivion.

The backbone of all of these states was not the ruling aristocrats who lived from the labor of those they ruled, or the large number of peasants who, unaffected by the splendor of these states, continued to cultivate their crops or to attend to their cattle, but the middle class of merchants and artisans. These came together in the large towns of the Sudan where the sultans had their seats. It was a prosperous class which benefited from the trade which flourished from town to town and from state to state throughout West Africa, the trade routes connecting the Mediterranean with the Sudan and the Sudan with Africa's West Coast. The towns which often had tens of thousands of inhabitants and were protected by walls and moats were the centers of commercial activities. In the organized and regularized markets local merchants as well as those from distant countries would meet the peasants of the surrounding regions. Timbuktu, Kano, and Garua are some of the hundreds of towns which were well known throughout West and North Africa, and most of them survived as important commercial centers to this very day.

The highly developed states and towns of the West Sudan strongly attracted the Hamitic desert tribes, who must have looked upon the cultures of the Sudan as the Germanic tribes viewed the splendor of Rome. Time and again new invading groups seem to have made their appearance in the Sudan. In more recent times we note two major invasions, that of the desert folk known as Tuareg, and that of the ubiquitous Fulani. Driven by lust of conquest as well as by religious zeal—both tribes were ardent Moslems—they frequently

attacked the sultanates and emirates of the Sudan. The Tuareg limited their field of operations to the area around the Niger bend, where, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for instance, we find them struggling with the Songhai for the possession and control of Timbuktu.

The Fulani or Pheul, as they are called in French possessions, have had a greater and more far-reaching effect upon West Africa. They spread over Western and Central Sudan, where they seem to have been located since the thirteenth century. Essentially a pastoral folk, they infiltrated into all sections of the country. As peaceful shepherds we find them in Senegal far to the west, and in the northern regions of Cameroon; some Fulani may even be encountered in Kordofan and Dar Fur far to the east. Occasionally, however, they would abandon their traditional life of animal tending and would exhibit politically aggressive tendencies. Thus they established in the mountains of Futa Jallon a theocratic state which is known under that name. Better known, however, is the attack of the Fulani upon the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria at the beginning of the last century when, under the Fulani Sheik, Othman dan Fodio, the dynasties of such states as Sokoto, Gando, and Adamawa changed from Hausa to Fulani. It is perhaps pertinent to point out that, from a cultural point of view, most of these later invasions were less consequential than the earlier ones. Although new ruling families appeared in the sultanates of the Sudan and an intensification of Islam is noticeable, the aggressors quickly adopted the culture of those they conquered. Today the Fulani emirs of Northern Nigeria have little in common with the "Cattle Fulani" who continue their traditional life—not even the common bond of language. The Fulani aristocrats were quick to adopt the life and culture of their Hausa predecessors in almost everything but tradition. The "Cattle Fulani," although now frequently despised by their former racial brethren, in turn despise and ignore those who lead lives of comparative luxury in the settled towns and, by intermarriage with non-Fulani, are gradually losing the racial identity of which the pastoral Fulani are so proud.

Not all the large states of western and central Africa owe their origin to the direct invasions of Hamites. The desire to defend themselves against the onslaught from the north appears to have given a strong impetus to the creation of Negro states. The Mossi and Gurma

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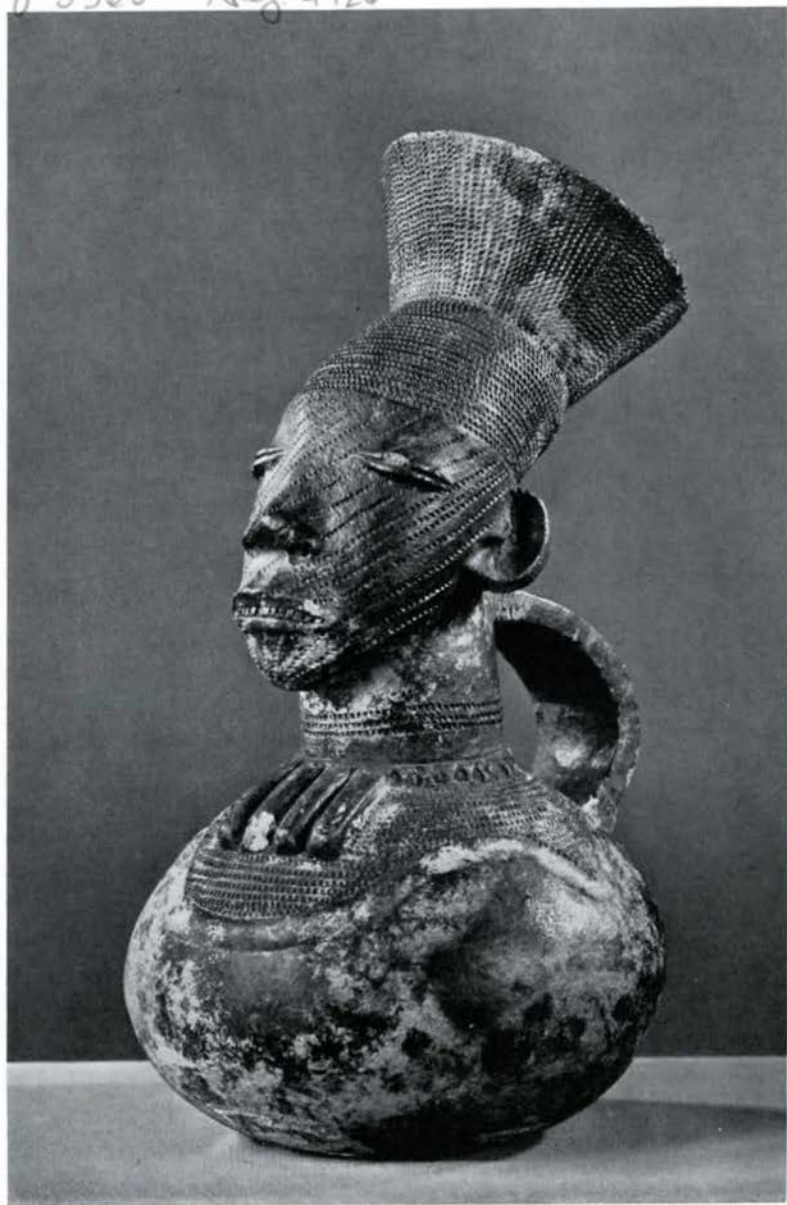


Fig. 8. Earthenware vessel of the Mangbetu, northeastern section of the Belgian Congo. Vessel shows the hair dressing typical for these people. (height 29 cm.)

of the Volta River region fall into this category. During the tenth century the former established four powerful kingdoms, of which that of Wagadugu, which has survived into our day, was the most important. The Mossi kingdom, organized along feudal lines like other West African states, was strongly anti-Moslem in its ideological orientation and always remained a bulwark against the forward-driving forces of Islam. At times the Mossi of Wagadugu extended their empire far beyond their ethnic limits; thus we know that in 1333 they drew Timbuktu within the confines of their state, and in 1480 even conquered the Mandingo state of Walata far to the west.

Early European Influences Upon Africa's Political Development

It is doubtful that the well-known kingdoms of the West African Coast have had a very long history. The states of Ashanti, of Dahomey, of the Yoruba, or of Benin, to mention a few of the better-known political groupings, may well have been the result of European contact with Africa. According to historical evidence it is likely that none of these states existed before the end of the fifteenth century and that they began to command political respect and prestige only during the eighteenth century. It was at the end of the fourteenth century that European traders first came in contact with the West coast, and at that time the coastal lowlands, which for climatic reasons had been uninviting even to Africans, suddenly became a source of wealth for the native population and thus attractive to the tribes of the hinterland, who attempted to extend their influence to reach the European trading posts. This struggle for the control of the European markets determined a great deal of the political strife in the area. Smaller tribal states fell victim to the aggression of larger ones, and these, developing monopolies in the trade between coast and hinterland, increased their political power. Aside from the fact that many of the West Coast states had similar origins, few likenesses existed between them. Here the unifying bond of Islam was absent, and they consequently developed along traditional lines. Social and political institutions in Ashanti are different from those among the Yoruba. While the former developed a strong monarchistic and centralized organization, the Yoruba were divided into several

states which followed oligarchic patterns. The different kingdoms retained independent features in their family organization and in their religious orientation as well. But similarities exist in their economic structures. Although basically agricultural, their favorable geographical and climatic location, combined with a proximity to European trade centers, created societies with a slight surplus economy which in turn permitted the development of specialized professions, analogous to that of the Sudan states. Basket and pottery makers, blacksmiths, copper workers, wood carvers, and weavers, dyers and specialists of various kinds, they all were part of most settlements, and in the markets characteristic for this area traded the works of their crafts against the produce of the peasants.

Moreover, once these crafts were established, competition between the artisans arose which contributed toward the perfection of their work and, since the possession of objects of value became a tribute to the social prestige of the owner, in some areas certain crafts were protected by the king or by other aristocrats, as in Benin, for example, where the casting of bronze objects was a monopoly held by the king. It may be noteworthy to mention that most of Africa's art objects which now adorn our museums come from these regions. For the benefit of those visiting the University Museum, it might be added that many of the Museum's holdings, which by quality are the best in the United States, were obtained from collections of early travelers.

European influence was felt in other parts of Africa as well. The kingdom of Kongo, which covered the area around the mouth of the Congo River and reached back into pre-European periods, came under Portuguese sway as early as the end of the fifteenth century. After the king of Kongo had been baptized in 1491 and had been recognized by the Pope, he and his aristocratic followers made strong efforts to organize their country along the feudal lines which were the usual social pattern of Western Europe. In later centuries the political prominence of Kongo declined and the kingdom fell into oblivion, so that it was with surprise that explorers of the nineteenth century encountered ruined churches, buried bells and other cult objects, as well as many examples of European motifs in the living art of the Congo Natives. The extent of European impact upon African culture in this region can now only be guessed.

Indirect European influence may also be responsible for the creation of the short-lived Zulu empire in South Africa. Here, at the beginning of the last century, the Zulu chief Chaka, reorganizing his tribesmen in European military patterns, created a fighting force which succeeded in conquering wide regions of the southern sub-continent. Although this empire decayed quickly after the assassination of the "Black Napoleon" by his brother Dingaan, its influence upon South Africa has been considerable. Chaka's armies as well as those of rebellious generals, succeeded in influencing many other tribes and in causing whole tribes to leave their traditional confines, thus causing a far-reaching ethnic dislocation which affected not only South Africa but even territories as far north as the Upper Zambesi Valley and the regions around Lake Nyasa.

Negro Developments in Central Africa

Up to this point we have paid particular attention to those historical developments which were caused by other peoples within the Negro regions. It would be fallacious to assume that all the larger political states have been founded by such external influences. When Europeans first penetrated Equatorial Africa they became acquainted with such states as the kingdom of Loango or Brama along the Loango coast, the kingdom of Anzika or Anzikana in the hinterland, the kingdom of Angola and those of Lunda and Baluba in the interior of what is today the Belgian Congo and, above all, the kingdom of Kongo, referred to above. The earliest history of all these states is completely unknown to us, and we have little information about them in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in spite of their existence having been noted much earlier by the Portuguese.

None of these states appears to have reached that political complexity characteristic of the political groupings of West Africa. Although technically and economically less advanced than the Yoruba or the Hausa states, these Equatorial kingdoms were nevertheless powerful political aggregates which exercised a considerable influence upon the surrounding, but politically less centralized, tribes. In contrast to the conquest states, the political structure in Equatorial Africa was more religious and theocratic in character.

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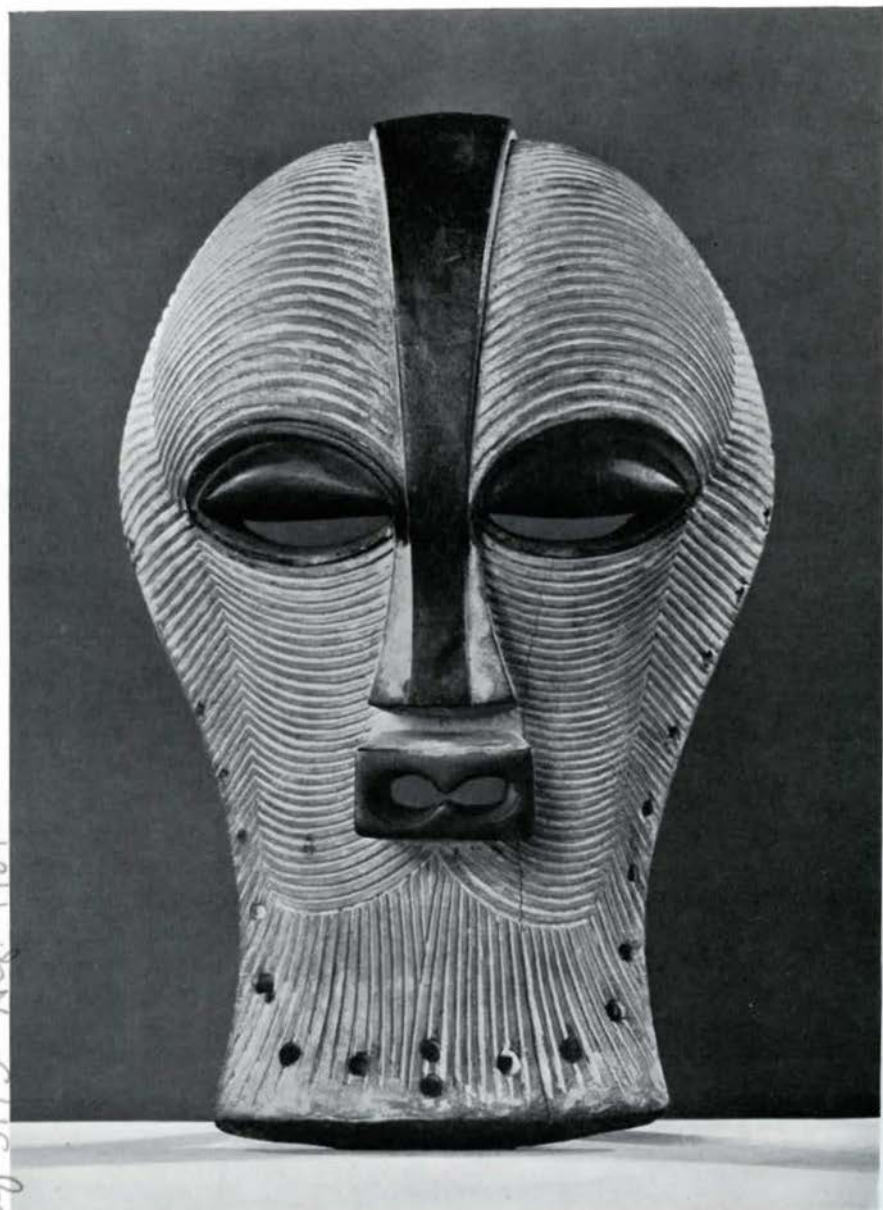


Fig. 9. Wooden mask of the Basonge, Kasai District of the Belgian Congo. (height 38 cm.)

The rulers, irrespective of the stimulus which carried them into power, were symbols of divine power; they were intermediaries between the spiritual and material worlds. The states were religious in their sanctions as well as in character. Although European penetration may have altered their structure and weakened their political cohesiveness and influence, the death blow was not dealt to them by the Portuguese *conquistadores* but by African tribes. During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries Central Africa was in a state of upheaval. During this period many tribes whose names have been insufficiently recorded broke into the interior, causing widespread dislocation of existing ethnic conditions: East African elements crossed the continent, finally settling in Angola, South African tribes appeared in the southern Congo region, groups leaving their previous homes in the Sudan pressed into the Congo Basin. Conquest followed conquest, until once powerful kingdoms were reduced to shadow existences. Thus the famous kingdom of Kongo was destroyed by Lunda conquerors in the sixteenth century, and after a short revival disappeared again at the end of the seventeenth century. The last king of this dynasty, when visited by Bastian in the middle of the last century, was hardly more than an insignificant village chief, although the traditions of the former offices, titles, and dignities were still alive. The expanding European penetration did not permit a recovery. Europe determined Africa's history and the political development of its people during the second half of the last century and the present one.