Chapter 9

The Spread of Civilizations and the Movement of Peoples

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

By the end of the second millennium B.C.E., civilizations based on livestock domestication and sedentary agriculture had emerged in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Despite the accomplishments of civilized cultures, civilizations actually occupied only a small portion of the earth. Most of the inhabited earth was populated by small groups of peoples who practiced pastoral nomadism, shifting cultivation, or hunting and gathering. Classical civilizations had widespread influences over such cultures. Many of the most important aspects of civilization may have been exported from the cores rather than reinvented by different cultures at different times. Migratory peoples served as links between civilized cores, absorbing and transmitting elements from one area to another. The methods by which culture was exported varied. In Roman civilization, conquest provided a means of transporting Mediterranean ideas, languages, and institutions. When Rome fell, the Germanic peoples who invaded and settled within the boundaries of the former empire absorbed the Mediterranean civilization. The chapter examines cultural diffusion in four areas of the world: sub-Saharan Africa, northern Europe, Japan, and the Pacific islands.

II. The Spread of Civilization in Africa

A. Introduction

Much of Africa lies within tropical zones, although less than 10 percent is covered with rain forests. Much of Africa is comprised of savannas, open grassland, arid plains, and deserts. Great river systems have permitted communications between the interior and the coast. The earliest hominid finds have occurred in Africa. In addition, the Nile River valley was the site of one of the earliest civilizations. The spread of civilization in Africa was precipitated by a series of climatic changes. The region of the modern Sahara Desert was originally well watered. By 3000 B.C.E., progressive desiccation of the region caused populations to move northward to the Mediterranean coast and southward into grass savannas stretching from the mouth of the Senegal River to the Nile River valley.

B. Agriculture, Livestock, and Iron

Agriculture probably was exported from the Middle East to the peoples who had migrated to the savanna regions south of the Sahara. There is evidence of agriculture prior to 3000 B.C.E. Africans added to the Middle Eastern crops (millets and sorghums) with indigenous rice and later bananas. In the 16th century C.E., American crops were added to the complex. Cattle, sheep, goats, and horses were introduced from Asia as early as 1500 B.C.E. The camel entered Africa from Asia around the first century C.E. The addition of livestock permitted passage across the deserts and allowed a form of pastoral livelihood in the more arid areas of the continent. Iron
metallurgy penetrated Africa from Asia by means of Phoenician colonies in the Mediterranean or down the Nile River valley. Iron penetrated the savanna region south of the Sahara in the last millennium B.C.E. Iron technology improved both military and economic activity south of the Sahara. Iron metallurgy and sedentary agriculture tended to appear simultaneously in southern Africa.

C. The Bantu Dispersal

The Bantu migration spread iron metallurgy and agricultural techniques throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Whether the Bantu peoples spread through southern Africa as a result of overpopulation in their home regions or whether the desiccation of the Sahara drove them southwards is not known. By the 13th century C.E., Bantu speakers had migrated as far as South Africa. Early Bantu societies were agricultural and organized in kin-based villages. Religion was animistic. The Bantu migration covered much of Africa with iron-using, herding societies that spoke varieties of Bantu languages, although there were isolated areas in which hunting-gathering societies continued to exist.

D. Africa, Civilization, and the Wider World

Many cultural aspects of Egyptian civilization, such as divine monarchy, ruling rituals, and marriage endogamy among elites, may have been drawn from other African societies. Egypt certainly had contact with other African societies.

1. Axum: A Christian Kingdom.

As discussed above, the rulers of Kush ruled Egypt in the seventh century B.C.E. The kingdom of Axum in the Ethiopian highlands surpassed Kush as a regional power in the first century C.E. Axum was heavily influenced by the peoples of the Arabian peninsula. The language and writing system of Axum were derived from West Asia. Axum was a major participant in the commercial system of the Indian Ocean. Around 350 C.E., the king of Axum converted to Christianity, and the religion was established throughout the region. Conversion to Christianity increased ties to Byzantium and the eastern Mediterranean. Axum defined the civilization of later Christian Ethiopia.


The peoples who resided in the savannas set up trading systems joining the Mediterranean coast with the gold-producing areas of the forests along the Niger and Senegal Rivers. States developed with the wealth established from the trade routes. Takur, Ghana, Gao, and Kanem were all trade intermediaries. The first empire established among the savanna states was that of Ghana. Established long before the emergence of Islam, Ghana’s influence increased with its conversion in 985 C.E. Ghana controlled the trans-Sahara trade in salt, cloth, manufactured goods, and gold. Control of trade routes gave Ghana influence over subject states and provinces that depended on the exchange of goods. Ghana’s capital city of Kumbi Saleh was extraordinarily wealthy. Divided into halves, one part was reserved for the ruling family and indigenous residents, the other for Islamic scholars and merchants. Taxation of trade allowed the rulers of Ghana to militarize. The kingdom’s influence eventually extended into the Sahara to control towns along the trade routes. Ghana fell in 1076 C.E. to a group of Muslim revolutionaries, the Almoravids. Ghana’s control over its empire waned, and political fragmentation led to the development of new African states in the region. Mali emerged as the most powerful of the new political units.
III. Nomadic Societies and Indo-European Migrations

A. Introduction

Indo-European herders pushed into Europe during the classical age. In northern Europe, the Slavs, Celts, and Germans produced agricultural societies but lagged behind the Sub-Saharan kingdoms. Pastoral nomads inhabited the vast steppes and plains of central Asia and traversed the Sahara, tending their herds. Wealth depended on the size of the herd and military power. The nomads were organized in clans, with kinship ties central and women playing varied roles. While they raided and sometimes conquered settled civilizations, they often had to adapt themselves to the advances of sedentary peoples. The Indo-Europeans are the earliest nomads we know about, who both raided and settled Europe, Asia Minor, and the Indian subcontinent.

B. The Celts and the Germans

The Celtic peoples, who were Indo-Europeans, once inhabited much of Western Europe, organized in small regional kingdoms based on agriculture and hunting. Most fell under Roman rule. Much of northwestern Europe was populated by Germans, whose cultures resembled that of the Celts. The Germans formed warrior societies dedicated to individual chiefs. Women were responsible for agricultural and household tasks. Marriage required a bride-price paid to the bride, and matrilineal relationships were particularly strong. The cultural influence of the Romans resulted in improvements in agricultural techniques and cloth manufacturing. During much of their history, the Germans were loosely organized into tribes governed by a king or tribal council. After 200 C.E., some Germanic tribes began to join into larger confederations, again under the influence of their contacts with the Romans. The power of kings began to increase. Germanic religion was animistic and featured animal sacrifice. The Germanic invasions of the Roman Empire brought these northern peoples into historical prominence. The growing political consolidation of Germanic tribes prepared northern Europe for the development of civilization after the fall of Rome.

C. The Slavs in Eastern Europe

Agriculture and metallurgy were well established in eastern Europe by 1000 B.C.E. A loosely organized Scythian state controlled much of the region between the seventh and third centuries B.C.E. The Scythians were succeeded by the Sarmatians as masters of the region. Under both groups, Greek and Persian cultural influences predominated. In the final centuries of the classical period, Slavic peoples began to migrate into Russia and other parts of eastern Europe. The Slavs formed small regional kingdoms. Early Slavic political organization was disrupted by invasions from Asia.

IV. The Spread of Chinese Civilization to Japan

A. Introduction

The Japanese created a unique civilization based on a combination of indigenous culture with significant ideas imported from China. The cultural amalgamation was the work of traveling merchants and monks, not armies. Cultural exchange was often filtered through Korea, a region itself characterized by Chinese cultural adaptation. Unlike other populations of Asia, who were directly governed by the Chinese empire, Japan retained its political independence and controlled the extent of cultural importation.
B. Natural Setting and the Peopling of the Islands

The four Japanese islands are dominated by mountains and hills, leaving scant acreage for the cultivation of rice, the staple crop of Japan. Most settlement occurred on the plains, where agriculture was possible. Military elites have governed Japan during much of its history. Migration to Japan, primarily from Korea and Manchuria, began as early as 5000 B.C.E. One of the most important of the early cultures was Jomon, dating to the third millennium B.C.E. By 1000 B.C.E., a relatively homogeneous culture was created.

C. Indigenous Culture and Society

During the Yayoi period of the last centuries B.C.E., the migrants to Japan introduced wet-rice agriculture and iron metallurgy. Until the fifth century C.E., Japanese society was divided into clans dominated by a warrior elite. Social hierarchy was rigidly observed. Early Japanese households may have been matriarchal, and women served as shamans for the family deities that were worshiped by each clan. The central position of women in early Japanese culture is also indicated by the creation myth in which the sun goddess Amaterasu played a critical role. Amaterasu became the central element in the Shinto religion, an animistic devotion to deities and spirits often associated with objects in the natural world. In the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., one of the clans, the Yamato, gained increasing dominance within Japan. The head of the Yamato claimed descent from the sun goddess and used religious authority to legitimize the clan’s military conquest of much of the southern lowlands. Overseas extension of the Yamato brought them into contact with Chinese culture, which began the period of cultural importation into Japan.

D. The Chinese Model and the Remaking of Japan

The introduction of Chinese script permitted the formation of the first Japanese bureaucracy under the Yamato. Literacy in Chinese also created opportunities for further adaptation. Works and scholars of science, religion, art, and philosophy were imported. Buddhism was one of the cultural importations. Adopted in China following the fall of the Han, the religion spread to Japan in the sixth century C.E. It was adopted as the official religion of the Yamato in the 580s C.E. From that time, Buddhism and Shinto developed as the twin pillars of state authority and popular devotion.

E. Political and Social Change

Under the influence of Chinese examples, the Yamato rulers attempted to create an absolute empire supported by a full-scale bureaucracy. Capitals at Nara, and later at Heian, imitated Chinese urban design. The Yamato emperors strove to create a conscript army, legal codes, and a Chinese-style system of landholding. Buddhist monks and scholars achieved growing influence at the imperial court. A commercial class based on trade with China developed. The introduction of Chinese examples enforced by Chinese law codes undermined the position of women within the Japanese households. Female members of the imperial family were excluded from the succession.
F. Chinese Influence and Japanese Resistance

Because both Buddhism and Chinese examples tended to increase the power of the state, the Japanese political elite drove the pace of cultural importation. The government argued that because it remained independent, it could regulate the extent of change. Attempts to emulate the Chinese were not all successful because the Japanese rulers lacked the peasant base and material wealth of China. As some attempts to introduce Chinese reform began to fail, resistance to wholesale importation of Chinese culture grew. Eventually the issue of foreign influence within Japan led to factional struggles among aristocratic families in the mid-seventh century C.E.

V. The Scattered Societies of Polynesia

A. Introduction

Peoples from Asia migrated throughout the islands of the Pacific, where they established new societies based on the environments of the ocean world. These migrants were little affected by the civilizations of India or China. They brought with them the culture of Neolithic Asia and developed their societies in relative isolation. Between 1500 B.C.E. and 1000 C.E., most of the major island groups were populated. Many of the peoples who settled in the islands of the Pacific spoke a related language, Austronesian.

B. The Great Migration

Groups of Austronesians spread eastward from Melanesia to Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. The migrants were agricultural and had domesticated animals. Their food was supplemented by fishing. From the initial settlements, these people spread into Polynesia. Another group may have populated Madagascar off the western coast of Africa. Once settled, island groups developed distinctive cultures. There was a common linguistic base and some similarities of social and economic organization. Societies tended to be stratified with political control exercised by powerful chieftains.

C. The Voyagers of the Pacific

Sophisticated double canoes, the pahi were used for long-distance travel. These ships permitted the migration of peoples from one island group to another. Navigation was accomplished by the observation of stars and wave patterns. Voyaging seems to have been sporadic in response to specific need.

D. Ancient Hawaii

Hawaii was probably settled around 300 C.E. Although the islands of Hawaii supported a large population, urbanization was absent. Political divisions were wedge-shaped, extending from broader areas along the coasts into the less inhabitable interior. After European contact, King Kamehameha I united all of the political units under his control. Hawaiian society was strongly stratified with chiefs, or ali‘i, claiming divine descent. Lesser nobility and subchiefs aided the rule of the ali‘i. Commoners practiced agriculture and fished and were viewed as lacking lineage. Social limitations were established by taboo. Hawaiian religion was polytheistic. Religious ceremonies featured dancing, feasting, and sacrifice. Even with a neolithic technology, Hawaiian society achieved a complex culture.
E. The New Zealand Landfall and the Development of Maori Culture

New Zealand was probably discovered by the eighth century C.E. The New Zealand climate was colder and harsher than Polynesian islands. Despite the ecological challenge, the Maori population grew to perhaps as many as 200,000 at the time of European contact. Lack of edible plants or game animals forced the Maori to establish other food supplies. Sweet potato, yams, and taro were introduced. Settlers ate dogs, rats, and human flesh. The northern island was more moderate, thus it was the site of numerous wars. Maori society was divided into tribes, which were in turn subdivided into hapu. Within hapu villages, the Maori lived in extended family households. Hapu village councils allocated all land to households. Hapus were commanded by powerful warrior chiefs, but their power was limited by a council of males. Males dominated society economically, ritually, and militarily. Although economic specialization was not achieved, Maori society did support special shamans. Maori society was dedicated to war. Social distinction depended on military prowess. Prisoners taken in combat were enslaved. Although metallurgy was not practiced among the Maori, the material culture included sophisticated woodworking and an extensive oral tradition. Technological crudity and vulnerability to disease made the Maori susceptible to European conquest.

VI. Global Connections: The Emerging Cultures

Societies on the fringes of ancient civilizations shared two characteristics. As they imported agriculture, they were able to develop more structure, political units and greater social stratification. Fringe societies participated in a wide range of contacts through migrations, nomadism, or the deliberate imitation of settled civilizations. Each society, however, maintained strong ties to its past. Of the four fringe areas, only Polynesia was isolated from its source of population in Asia. Interaction with civilized cores had powerful implications for the other regions.
TIMELINE

Insert the following events into the timeline. This should help you to compare important historical events chronologically.

New Zealand settled kingdom of Ghana at its height
rise of Axum Bantu migrations begin
Buddhism accepted in Japan migrations to Hawaii begin

TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS

The following terms, people, and events are important to your understanding of the chapter. Define each one.

Sahara Desert \hspace{1cm} tsetse fly \hspace{1cm} savannas
Sudan \hspace{1cm} Axum \hspace{1cm} Ghana
Kumbi Saleh \hspace{1cm} Almoravids \hspace{1cm} Celts
Germans \hspace{1cm} Slavs \hspace{1cm} Jomon culture
Yayoi epoch \hspace{1cm} Shinto \hspace{1cm} Yamato
Austronesian \hspace{1cm} Polynesia \hspace{1cm} pahi
King Kamehameha I \hspace{1cm} ali’i \hspace{1cm} kapu
Maoris \hspace{1cm} moa \hspace{1cm} hapu
transhumant \hspace{1cm} Bantu \hspace{1cm} Pygmies
pastoral nomads \hspace{1cm} Amaterasau
MAP EXERCISE

The following exercise is intended to clarify the geophysical environment and the spatial relationships among the important objects and places mentioned in the chapter. Locate the following places on the map.

The civilized cores: Roman civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization

Developing cultures: Ghana, Axum, Japan, German, Celtic, and Slavic

Looking at the map of all of Eurasia, how are the developing cultures spatially related to the civilized cores? Which of the civilized cores was most likely to affect each of the developing cultures?
MAKING CONNECTIONS

The following questions are intended to emphasize important ideas within the chapter.

1. How does the diffusion of agriculture and iron metallurgy in Africa demonstrate relationships to core civilizations?

2. What was the scope and nature of the Bantu migration?

3. How did the kingdom of Ghana rise to prominence?

4. How are the Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic cultures of northern Europe similar?

5. What was the nature of the indigenous culture of Japan prior to the fifth century C.E.?

6. How did Japanese society change in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E.?

7. How are the Hawaiian and New Zealand cultures of Polynesia similar?

8. How did Polynesian culture differ from that of other developing societies?

PUTTING LARGER CONCEPTS TOGETHER

The following questions test your ability to summarize the major conclusions of the chapter.

1. Compare and contrast the developing societies of Africa, northern Europe, Japan, and Polynesia to the classical cultures of the core civilizations.

2. To what extent were the developing societies dependent on the core civilizations for important social and political developments?
SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. The progressive desiccation of the African climate resulted in
   a. the spread of irrigation systems throughout the continent.
   b. the destruction of rain forests throughout the continent.
   c. the creation of the Sahara Desert in northern Africa.
   d. the absence of sedentary agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Where did the domesticated plants and technology associated with sedentary agriculture in Africa come from?
   a. the western Mediterranean
   b. European exploration during the 19th century
   c. western Asia and the Middle East
   d. Africa

3. What region exerted the greatest influence on the development of the kingdom of Axum?
   a. Carthage
   b. Arabia
   c. Rome
   d. Greece

4. The growth of Ghana was based on
   a. the control of the slave trade between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa.
   b. its role as a military colony of Carthage.
   c. its conversion to Christianity.
   d. its control of the gold trade between the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa.

5. Which of the following was NOT a feature of the Celtic social and economic organization?
   a. mixed agricultural and hunting economies
   b. the lack of cities
   c. the writing system based on early Indo-European languages
   d. organization into small regional kingdoms

6. How did the Slavs differ from the Germans?
   a. They were in some ways less well organized politically.
   b. They had a poorer material culture.
   c. They were monotheistic.
   d. They were urbanized.
7. The transmission of Chinese culture to Japan was mediated by what people?
   a. Koreans
   b. Ainu
   c. Vietnamese
   d. Hsiung-nu

8. Prior to the fifth century C.E., Japan was
   a. divided into hundreds of clans dominated by a small warrior aristocracy.
   b. dominated by a single clan.
   c. organized into a unified empire under an autocratic monarch.
   d. conquered by China.

9. Under what Japanese dynasty was Buddhism accepted as the official state religion?
   a. Jomon
   b. Shinto
   c. Yamato
   d. Yayoi

10. Which of the following was the most hierarchic of the Polynesian societies?
    a. Hawaii
    b. New Zealand
    c. Jomon
    d. the Society Islands