

Compare and
contrast early social
system of egypt,
aksum and inland
niger delta e...



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In the discussion of early social system in Egypt, Aksum and inland Niger, specific focus would be made in the social systems of each of these and showing the similarities and differences that existed between them and drawing a conclusion based on the comparisons made (Caneva I. 217).

The Egypt social system can be drawn from the social pyramid that shows how the Egyptian society was stratified based on political, economical and religious positions they held. Pharaoh appeared at the top of the pyramid (Caneva I. 218).

He was supreme in the Egyptian society, almost comparable to god. Under him were his appointees, high priests and the noble men (doctors and engineers), who were his assistants, generals and administrators (Caneva I. 217). this group formed the epitome of Egyptian government.

The engineers were expert architects and mathematicians took the responsibility of the planning and construction of various artifacts like monuments, temples and pyramids (Caneva I. 218).

Ascribes came after the priests and the noblemen. Their role was to write letters for the town people, recording harvests, and records of the army (Caneva I. 220). Priests on the other hand were devoted to their religious duties in the temples. They visited the temples atleast three times a year and also acted as judges and teachers (Caneva I 218).

Soldiers, farmers and tomb builders occupied the lowest level of the pyramid (Caneva I. 218). They lived in cramped houses made of bricks and situated near farmlands and tomb sites. The medical profession had its hierarchy

with the top position occupied by superintendents and inspectors of physicians and beneath them were physicians (Caneva I. 225).

Light linen clothing was preferred due to the hot Saharan desert weather. Egyptians adorned themselves with jewellery with wealthy people wearing broad collard necklace made of gold and precious stones (Caneva I 225).

Agriculture thrived well along the Nile valleys from where a variety of crops were grown. Wheat and barley were the major crops grown as well as fruits like figs, dates and pomegranate (Caneva I. 226).

Aksum on the other hand is the ancient Ethiopian civilization. It was located in the urban centers. It developed Africa's only indigenous written scripts called ' Ge'ez' (Caneva I. 221). There was well developed trading system with Aksum trading in gold, silver and bronze.

They constructed multistoried building of distinctive architectural styles (Caneva I 214). They practices quarrying and engineering work as demonstrated in the spectacular monumental works, tombs, temples, the early churches and other structures (Caneva I 213). They used fired bricks alongside timber and the building stones.

Aksum people practiced extensive agriculture where crops like cereals, wheat, barley, sorghum, and millet were cultivated (Caneva I 216). Besides these crops, vegetables, medicinal plants, industrial crops were grown and livestock were also reared.

The skills of using ox drawn plough, terracing and irrigation were employed.

The remains of churches and temples indicate the religious nature of the
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Aksum people (Caneva I. 219). These factors have contributed to development of social complexity in the Aksum society.

In Niger delta, beginning of occupation can be traced back to 200BCE, during which time gold was quarried and transported by camel caravans and transshipped by canoes to Timbuktu (Caneva I. 217). Boarder trades in the Middle Niger involved cereals and fish.

Mud architectural designs were also used in the regions (Caneva I. 220). There were complex social organizations in the urban settlement and development of long distance trade before the arrival of the Arabs in North Africa (Caneva I 216).

Iron working, metal work, jewellery and tool making were some of the industries that developed as well as painting and pottery work (Caneva I 225).

Architectural work was used mainly when tauf houses were replaced by cylindrical brick architecture (Caneva I. 221). The same technology was employed in the construction of the famous city wall.

From the outlined social systems of the societies, a number of common features were outstanding. In all the regions, agriculture was practiced which formed the mainstay of the societies (Caneva I. 218).

Architectural designs also featured prominently in different areas of usage ranging from monuments, pyramids, temples and other structures (Caneva I. 223). The three societies are outstandingly religious with the existence of

temples and churches. It is evident that quarrying was a widespread
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economic activity because of the presence of gold and other minerals (Caneva I. 224).

On the contrary, while Egyptian society having a well stratified social system, Aksum and Niger Delta's systems were not well defined (Caneva I. 222). Fishing and trade were more pronounced in the Niger delta unlike the other societies (Caneva I. 220).

In conclusion, the presence of architectural expertise in the different forms if merged can produce a good blend of better value. Irrigation, terracing and use of better ploughing technologies could also have a good impact in Egypt as it was in Aksum.

Work Cited

Caneva, I.: Predynastic Cultures of Lower Egypt: The Desert and the Nile in Van den Brink (ed), The Nile Delta In Transition: 4th-3rd Millennium BC. 1992. pp211-227.