

Ethiopian culture and history

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Ethiopia - The Oldest Civilization The Great Blacks in Wax Museum

The culture I decided to experience was the ancient culture of Ethiopia. The Great Blacks in Wax Museum introduced me to this most ancient but formally organized culture that still influences governing systems today. An intriguing fact about Ethiopia is that it is world's oldest civilization and the founder of Egypt another old and great civilization. Ethiopian, also originally known as Sheba, history begins its existence around 10th century B. C. y Solomon's first son, Melenik I, who the Queen of Sheba was the supposed to have mothered. Its documented history begins in the ancient city of Askum in about 2nd century AD, thus making it one of oldest independent African nations and one of the most ancient cultures in the entire world. The exhibit provided an excellent array of facts about Ethiopian life, history, culture, tradition and government. The display also showed a number of ancient Ethiopian artifacts as well as lifelike wax figures of some of Ethiopian rulers and leaders.

The Ethiopian exhibit at the Great Blacks in Wax Museum displayed how this country and its culture is the world's oldest civilization and it is responsible for many systems and values that are still continued throughout the world today. The artifacts in this exhibit were interesting and varied greatly in purpose and practical use. There were no artist or artisans noted in the exhibit. All the artifacts date back to the age of the history of the Ethiopians around 10th century B. C. Understanding the ancient history helps explained some of the artifacts in the exhibit.

The spear was shown in many different areas of the display. The spear was an essential part of the history from the earliest historical days especially

since there were many tribal wars within and from external opposition. It was used for a variety of uses including as a weapon in wartime as well as a tool to kill animals for consumption. It was individually handcrafted of a two-part tool/weapon with a spear head (arrow-like from sharpen rock) and a shaft kept together with a sturdy vine to hold the parts together. It often had etchings, paint from berry dyes, or adornment of some kind.

The spear is often shown and was used by the males in the villages and was proudly displayed in rituals including war dance, tribal dances to denote power and virility. It was a daily part of the Ethiopian life. Another artifact that was prevalent in the display was masks of a variety of materials, expressions, and sizes. The mask was an important part of the Ethiopian traditional and cultural rites and rituals. The masks were often used during celebrations including religious ones and part of medical rituals. The masks were handcrafted from fine wood and painted with paints made from dyes of berries and fruits.

The masks were also used in wartime in confrontation with enemy warriors. The masks were used to celebrate joyous events also. The masks is still crafted and used in traditional celebrations in Ethiopia today. There were many ancient instruments displayed in the exhibit. The instruments include an ancient guitar like instrument made form handcrafted wood, animal with vines for strumming. There were many different types of drums and bongo type instruments. These drums were made from handcrafted fine wood with animal skins pulled across the open wood tube and tied with vine or rope.

These drums were used for a variety of uses included celebratory traditions, communicating across distance of danger, need, or information. Musicand

ceremonial dance were an everyday part of ancient Ethiopian and this musical tradition is still greatly part of Ethiopian culture. The Ethiopian cultures appreciation for intricate color, design and hand-dyed fabrics is prevalent in their ancient culture and their instruments were decorated and adorned as well. The original cultural attire today differ not much from their ancient ancestors and may still be seen in Ethiopia's heritage rich attire today.

The Ethiopian exhibit provided an eye-opening insight into how its ancient systems, values, traditions, rituals and dress have shaped the current Ethiopia and many other world cultures. Egypt was a city founded by Askum (ancient Ethiopia). These ancient and great civilizations laid the cornerstone of many other past and current governments. The ancient Kemet, now Egypt was ruled by the Queen of Sheba. Her prosperity and governing were the foundation of the Greek, Roman, Hebrew, Phoenician and Indian civilization.

One of Ethiopia's most important contributions was that it had a systematic form of government and rule. Another famous woman ruler of the culture was Egypt's Cleopatra. Though there was a period of Roman history where few women ruled with any true power, the strong Ethiopian women rulers help to set a pattern of women in government that has return to culture today. Ethiopian culture was responsible for many advancements in communication, commercial and architectural contributions that have affected all cultures throughout history.

They were responsible for communication achievements such as being credited with the first alphabet system, the first use of chronology and history recording, and a development of a language that was more widely

used than the Semitic and Aryan languages of ancient times. The ancient Ethiopians were commerce and industry masters in the art of navigation, the world's first and most vast commercial trading system that did business with India, Persia, Arabia and Chaldea. It has been evidenced that Ethiopians sailors explores the Americas 2, 000 years before Columbus. There artisans and developers of textile trade and smelting iron.

They were early miners of silver, copper, gold and other raw minerals. The architectural achievements are legendary which include expert use of sandstone, limestone and granite in building construction. They are credited with the method of carving buildings and pyramids out of solid rock. They forged extensions over mountains and made the first arches, aqueducts and bridges long before the founding and rise of Rome or Greece. A wax figure of Imhotep, ca 2980 B. C. , a revolutionary architect, was the noted designer of the great step pyramid of Egypt was part of this exhibit.

The advancements of this society in these areas are very much still part of Ethiopia's history and culture but even more astounding critical to the development of multi-cultures and cross-cultures all over the world throughout mankind's history and development. The ancient Ethiopian culture made some significant values and ideas in the area of philosophy and religion. The ancient Ethiopian culture was one of the foremost cultures that worshipped a Supreme being. They were mentioned in the Bible because they provided a place of refuge for Moses and Jesus Christ.

Ethiopian (Askum) was one of the first African nations to adopt the then new religion of Christianity. This adoption of Christianity was significant in Christianity's early history and a source of war confrontations with
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neighboring Islamic nations. In its history, Ethiopia is also noted for their protection of Christianity during the African invasion of Islamic Arabia. The wide spread popularity and acceptance of Christianity crosses multi-cultural lines and significantly affects the religious belief and lifestyle of millions of Christians even today.

The Ethiopian exhibit at the Great Blacks in Wax museum was just a starting point of a long continuing rich and thriving history of African culture. The other exhibits were a direct link to this most ancient of civilizations. By observing the history of African and Black American culture and history, I reviewed many other cultures as well. Reviewing Ethiopia's history and observing its artifacts made the rest of the museum experience more understandable. The ties of the Ethiopian culture - life, traditions, costumes, dress, government, architecture, commerce and industry are seen in most cultures history and present day life.

The museum went on to show exhibits in the following areas of African-American and Black History: • Slavery Emancipation Slave Revolts • The Underground Railroad Journey to freedom Sharecropping Life • Western Frontier Civil War Contributions Abolition & Women's Rights • Black Reconstruction Educators, Scientist Arctic Exploration • Black Labor Movement Military Leaders Father of Black Nationalism • Black Renaissance Man African Freedom Fighters Rastafarians • Modern Civil Rights Jim Crow Era Segregation Lynching Black Women Legends Athletes • Space Exploration Blvd. of Broken Dreams Writers and Poets Having observed all the exhibits the affects of the ancient Ethiopian value system, traditions were very evident in the development of multi-cultures especially in Africa,

European and American history. The exhibits often made my heart heavy and even brought tears to my eyes, but I noted, that though struggle has always been part of Ethiopian and its ancestral history and current minority life and all cultural life; there is always hope and significant contributions throughout every culture. Through the exhibits, I observed that though much of man's culture and history is hard to view and acknowledge, that there is a determination and drive to survive from that most ancient civilization that has carried through to this today in every culture.

Struggle brings about significant change and adaptation in all cultures. It showed me that every culture is co-linked through history and shares many significant cultural anthropologic relationships despite what appears to be insurmountable differences when it is all said and done we are all the same and want what is good and right for our survival just as ancient Ethiopia wanted. ----- [pic] Page 2 Page 3