

## Lesson

# 2

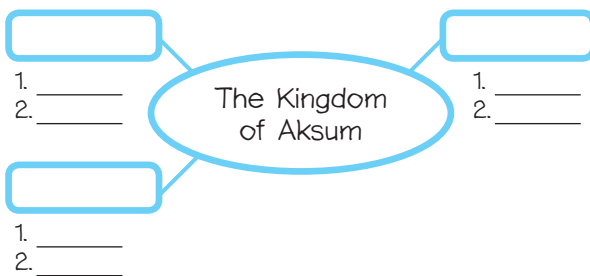
### MAIN IDEAS


- 1 Government** A new power, Aksum, rises south of Egypt.
- 2 Culture** Ezana expands Aksum's influence and converts to Christianity.
- 3 Culture** Aksum's cultural and technical achievements were long lasting.

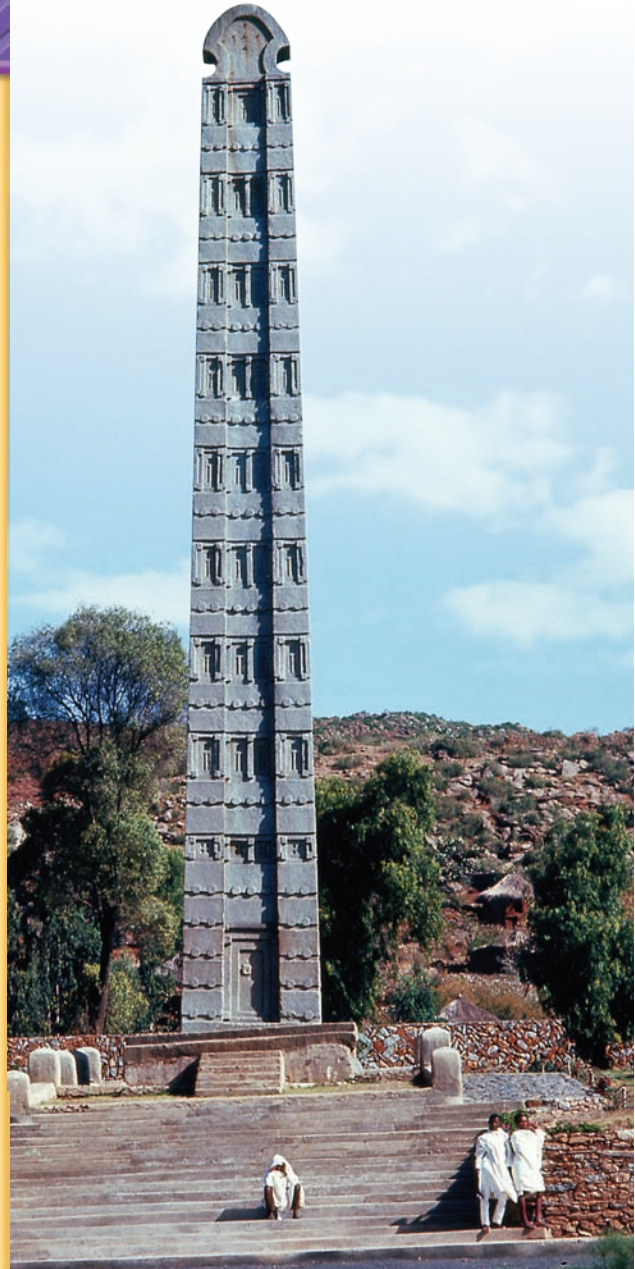
### TAKING NOTES

#### Reading Skill: Finding Main Ideas

A main idea sums up the most important point of a paragraph or passage. Main ideas are supported by details and examples. Identify the main ideas and important details in Lesson 2 about Aksum's achievements. Then put them into your own words and write them in a diagram like the one below.



 Skillbuilder Handbook, page R2



▲ **Pillar** This towering stone pillar was built around A.D. 400 to celebrate Aksum's achievements.

#### CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

**6.2.8** Identify the location of the Kush civilization and describe its political, commercial, and cultural relations with Egypt.

**HI 1** Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.

**CST 3** Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems.

# The Kingdom of Aksum

## TERMS & NAMES

Aksum  
Horn of Africa  
Adulis  
Ezana  
terrace

**Build on What You Know** In Lesson 1 you learned about the kingdom of Kush. South of Kush, a new African kingdom arose as a leading center of political and economic power.

## The Rise of Aksum

**1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Why did trade become important to Aksum?

The kingdom of Kush fell when Meroë was destroyed by a king of **Aksum** (AHK•SOOM). Kush was conquered by Aksum. Aksum was located in modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea.

**Perfect Trade Location** Aksum arose in the **Horn of Africa**, an area shaped like a rhinoceros horn. (See map below.) This location gave Aksum access to trade to the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean, and the Nile valley.

Arab traders built colonies and trading posts there. They found the location ideal for exchanging goods from the Indian Ocean trade, Persia, and Africa. Aksum was a meeting place for African, Arabian, and other peoples.

A legend traces the founding of the Ethiopian dynasty of Aksum to Menelik, son of King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba.

**Ethiopia** This photograph shows present-day Ethiopia (highlighted on map), where the ancient kingdom of Aksum was located. ▼





**An International Trading Hub** Like Kush, Aksum became a trading hub, or center, from which trade spread out in many directions. Traders came from Egypt, other parts of Africa, Arabia, the eastern Mediterranean, Persia, and India.

**Adulis** (ah•DOO•lihs), a city on the Red Sea, was the main trading port of Aksum. There traders exchanged salt, ivory, cloth, brass, iron, gold, glass, olive oil, and wine. Animal traders purchased animals such as giraffes and elephants.

**REVIEW** What made Aksum's location ideal for trade?

## King Ezana Expands Aksum

**2 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What was the effect of King Ezana on religion?

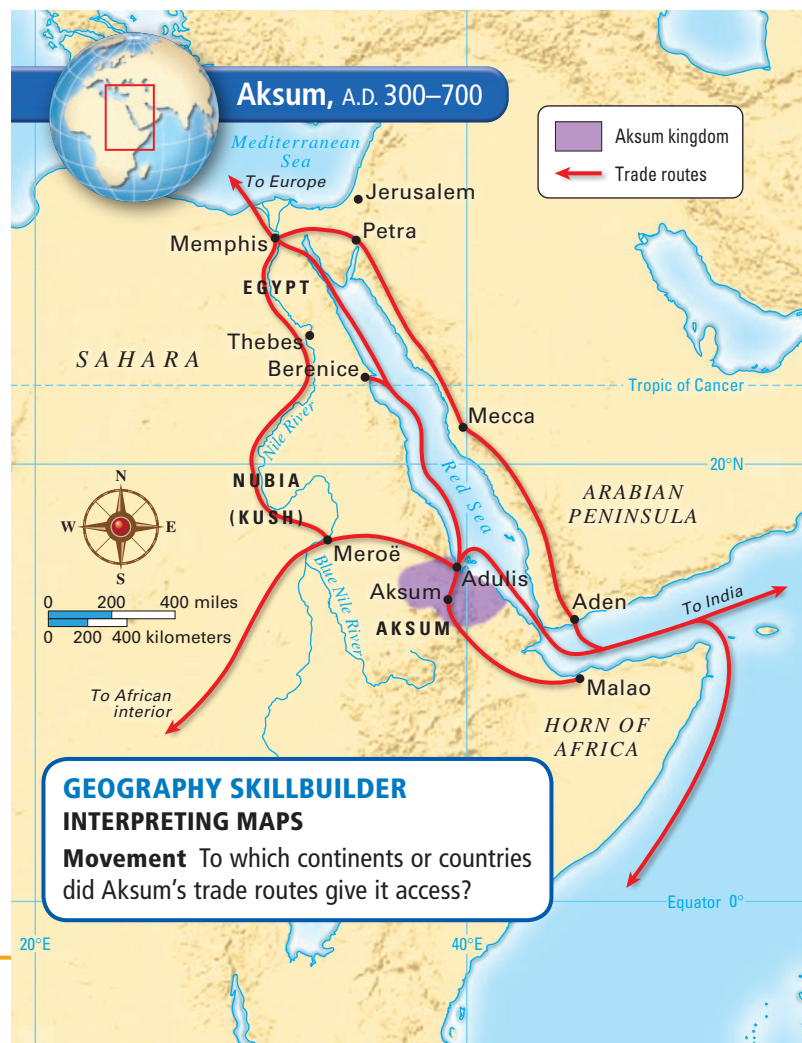
At the beginning, Aksum was small. Then, in the A.D. 300s, a bold king added territory and built a powerful nation.

**A Trading Nation Ezana** (AY•zah•nah) was a strong king who rose to power in Aksum in A.D. 325. First he took control of a trading colony on the coast of the Arabian peninsula. Then, in 350, he conquered Kush and burned Meroë to the ground.

Around this time, the empire of Aksum expanded inland and along the coast of the Red Sea. As a result, the kingdom controlled a large trading network.

Ezana had become king as an infant. While he was being educated, Ezana's mother ruled on his behalf. One of Ezana's teachers taught him about Christianity. When Ezana began to rule he converted to Christianity. He also made Christianity the official religion of Aksum. The Christian church in Aksum was linked to Alexandria, in Egypt, rather than to Rome.

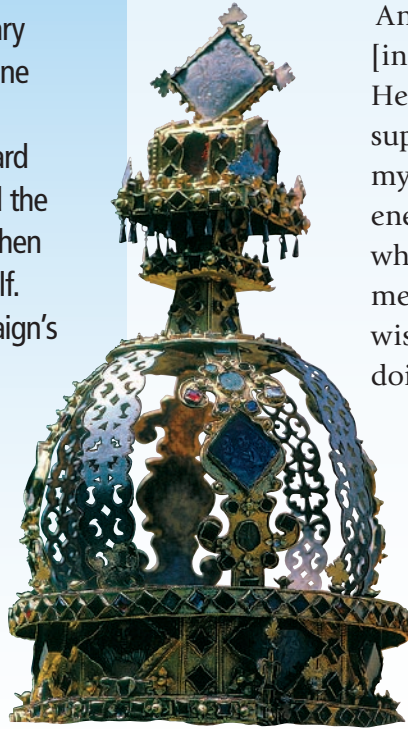
**REVIEW** How did Ezana influence the culture of Aksum?



## Primary Source

**Background:** African rulers in Egypt, Kush, and Aksum had accounts of their military campaigns carved onto stone pillars and thrones.

They followed a standard format. First they described the reasons for going to war. Then they described the war itself. Next they noted the campaign's results. Finally, they gave thanks to the gods or God for victory. The passage quoted on the right was carved onto a throne for King Ezana to celebrate his victory.



### from *Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity*

By Stuart Munro-Hay

And I set up a throne here in Shado [in Aksum] by the might of the Lord of Heaven who has helped me and given me supremacy. May the Lord of Heaven reinforce my reign. And, as he has now defeated my enemies for me, may he continue to do so wherever I go. As he has now conquered for me, and has submitted my enemies to me, I wish to reign in justice and equity, without doing any injustice to my peoples.

◀ Aksum Crown This is an early crown from the Christian kingdom of Aksum.

#### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Whom is King Ezana thanking? What are his goals for ruling?

## Aksum's Achievements

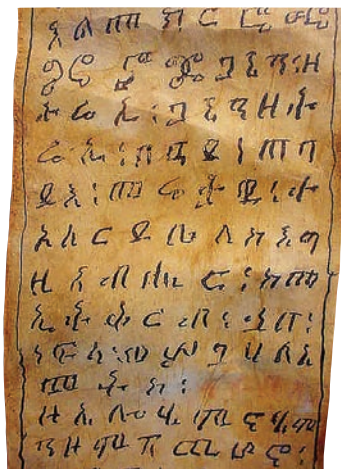
**3 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What were some of Aksum's achievements?

A unique culture rose in Aksum. Just as the people of Kush blended Nubian and Egyptian influences, so Aksum saw a coming together of cultural influences from the Horn of Africa and southern Arabia.

**Architecture** Among the most impressive of these achievements were the pillars of Aksum, which builders placed around the country. Some were 60 to more than 100 feet tall. Writing carved on the pillars celebrated great victories or achievements. Builders in Egypt and Kush had used pillars in a similar fashion.

Builders constructed Aksum's tall pillars without mortar. They were carved from single stone slabs. Features included false doors and windows. Builders and architects also built large temples. Later, richly decorated Christian churches replaced the temples.

**A Written Language** Aksum had a written language called Ge'ez (gee•EHZ). Arabian migrants brought the language to Aksum. Ge'ez became the basis for three languages that are used in Ethiopia and Eritrea today—Amharic, Tigrinya, and Tigre. Ge'ez is still used in the Ethiopian Church.



▲ Scroll Text written in the Ge'ez language

**Terraced Farming** The landscape of Aksum was rugged and hilly. To adapt the land for farming, farmers built terraces. A **terrace** is a leveled-off area of land. Being flat, terraces hold moisture better than hilly land does. Terraced farming increased the amount of land that could be cultivated. Aksum's farmers also built canals, dams, and holding ponds to bring mountain water to the fields.

**REVIEW** How did Aksum farmers increase productivity?

### Lesson Summary

- Aksum became a powerful trading center.
- King Ezana expanded Aksum's empire.
- Aksum's unique culture had long-lasting effects.

### Why It Matters Now . . .

Many Ethiopians today are Christians, the religion of King Ezana.

## 2 Lesson Review

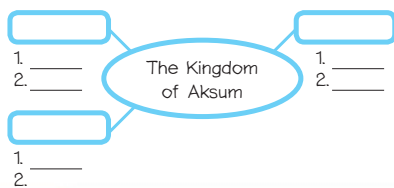
### Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of Aksum, Adulis, terrace, Horn of Africa, Ezana.

### Using Your Notes

**Finding Main Ideas** Use your completed diagram to answer the following question:

2. What were some of Aksum's major achievements? (CST 3)



### Main Ideas

3. What factors led to the rise of Aksum? (6.2.8)
4. How did Ezana expand Aksum's power? (CST 3)
5. What kinds of structures were built in Aksum, and what purpose did they serve? (CST 3)

### Critical Thinking

6. **Drawing Conclusions** What did the pillars of Aksum reveal about the culture? (CST 3)
7. **Making Inferences** In what ways did the adoption of Christianity as the official religion affect the culture of Aksum? (HI 1)

### Activity

**Designing a Coin** Write a short motto for King Ezana. The motto should say something memorable about him or his reign. Draw a coin showing the motto and sketch Ezana. (HI 1)