

Unit 3: The Nile Valley

The longevity and extensive remains of ancient Egypt – a Hellenized (Greek) name for the region of Kemet – make the area crucial to the understanding of many world cultures, including those of Africa south of the Sahara, which was not always the vast desert that it is today and so did not always necessarily impede trade with regions to the south. This unit will discuss how Egyptian art emphasized the notion of the king as an extension of the divine. Egyptian religion was polytheistic, and focused on a pantheon that included composite human/animal deities. While these two Egyptian notions (divine kingship and polytheism) would prove common in later cultures throughout Africa, the ancient Egyptians' quest for monumental permanence did not. The seat of power in Egypt shifted over time. Starting in the Northern delta, royal complexes gradually moved South into Nubia, in the modern nation of Sudan, which Egyptians settled by the end of the Dynastic period in the late first millennium BCE. From there, power shifted eastward to Abyssinia – modern Ethiopia – into the Christian period.

Unit 3 Time Advisory

This unit should take you approximately 18.5 hours to complete.

Subunit 3.1: 10 hours

Subunit 3.2: 3.5 hours

Subunit 3.3: 5 hours

Unit 3 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the basic chronology of ancient Nile Valley civilizations;
- analyze the basic aesthetics and subject matter of ancient Egyptian art using stylistic and technical terms;

- analyze the importance of materials in relation to religious beliefs in Egyptian Art;
- examine the legacy of Christianity in the region.