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LESSON 1: The Horn of Africa

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world—at least 2,000 years (it may be traced to Aksum). It is the only country in Africa that was not colonized by foreigners, although it was briefly occupied by Italy from 1936-1941.
- Somalia has no permanent national government. Although a transitional government was created in 2004, other regional and local governing bodies continue to control various regions of the country. Two of these are the Republic of Somaliland and the semi-autonomous State of Puntland.
- Piracy is a problem in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. As of July 2012, Somali pirates were holding 11 vessels and 174 hostages.
- The equator runs through Somalia.

AKSUM

Aksum (also spelled Axum) was an African kingdom that emerged around the 1st century and flourished for the next six or seven centuries. Its core area lay in the highlands of what is today southern Eritrea. At the kingdom's height, its rulers held sway over the Red Sea and inland as far as the Nile Valley in modern Sudan. At times, Aksum controlled the coast of Arabia and much of the interior of modern Yemen.

The title of Aksumite kings was "negusa nagast" (king of kings). King Zoskales, who ruled at the end of the second century A.D., is mentioned by name in an ancient Greek shipping guide. The guide says he promoted commerce with Rome, Arabia, and India. Among the African commodities that Aksum exported were gold, rhinoceros horn, ivory, incense, and obsidian.

The people of Aksum created a civilization of considerable distinction. They devised an original architectural style and employed it in stone palaces and other public buildings. They also erected a series of carved stone stelae at

ETHIOPIA

Capital City	Addis Ababa
Languages	Amharic, English, Arabic
Population	93.8 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	high plateau & mountains

SOMALIA

Capital City	Mogadishu
Languages	Somali
Population	10.1 million (July 2012 est.)
Terrain	mostly plateau rising to hills in north



Lake Assal, Djibouti.

Aksum as monuments to their deceased rulers. Some of these stelae are among the largest known from the ancient world.

GEOGRAPHY

- **Look at this lesson's map.** Notice the large piece of land jutting out into the Indian Ocean. It is called the Horn of Africa.
- **Lake Tana** (Ethiopia) is the source of the Blue Nile, which merges with the White Nile in Sudan. Together they form the Nile, the world's longest river.
- **Lake Assal** is the lowest point in Africa (about 508 ft. below sea level). Can you imagine being that far below sea level in a country so close to the ocean?

