

ANCIENT HISTORY of SUDAN

(In blue, the periods of strong interactions between Egypt and the Land of Kush (Nubia) from 1750 B.C. to 591 B.C.)

- At the beginning of the third millenium, between 3000 and 2400 B.C., a culture known as Pre-Kerma developped between the second and the fourth cataract but these populations must abandon their villages at the rhythm of progression of aridity in order to set closer to the Nile.
- 2400-1450 B.C. : Development and apogee of the kingdom of Kerma which spread his influence from the third cataract as far as the Atbara river and perhaps well beyond, as far as Tibesti at west, the Red sea at east and the Land of Shilluk at south. Benefitting of a great cultivated plain, this kingdom was a crossroads where passed in transit the gold of the Red Sea mountains, the incense and the spices of the Land of Punt. On either sides of Nile, some savannas were still at that times convenient for livestock.
- 2400-2050 B.C. : Ancient-Kerma succeeded to Pre-Kerma and preceeded Mean-Kerma, identified from 2050 to 1750 B.C. The tombs of men revealed rich funeral deposits containing personal objects mainly weapons of bronze.
- **1750-1450 B.C. : Period known as Classic Kerma, contemporary of the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt. The Hyksos invaders of Egypt tried to make an alliance with the Nubians of Kerma to encircle the frail kingdom of Thebes.** At this time the ceramics of Kerma reached to its perfection. But this culture practiced widespread human sacrifices at the death of rulers.
- **At the beginning of XVth century B.C. pharaoh Thoutmose Ist undertook the conquest of the Land of Kush already begun by Amenhotep Ist, and advanced as far as Kurgus, beyond the fifth cataract of the Nile.** The city of Kerma was maybe destroyed at the time of another Egyptian expedition by Thoutmose II. **Egypt of New Kingdom thus dominated the major part of Nubia.**
- **Xth century B.C. :** While the XXIIth dynasty reigned on Egypt, the authority of pharaohs did no more extend beyond of Aswan (Syena) and the first cataract. A Kushite group originating from the Djebel Barkal, downstream the fourth cataract, opened a new era of the history of Nubia which could be divided in two phases :
 - **the Kushite Period** from which will issue the XXVth dynasty of Egypt (900 to 650 B.C.) known as “the dynasty of black pharaohs” ;
 - **the kingdom of Napata** (650-270 B.C.).The new royal family was closely related to the religious center of Djebel Barkal and its kings and queens were buried in the neighboring necropoles such El-Kurru, fifteen kilometers from the “sacred mountain” Their intervention in Egypt was maybe legitimized by the clergy of Amon who fled from Thebes in order to escape political troubles at this time and found a refuge in Napata. (From 270 B.C. until 250 A.D., the kingdom of Meroe will appear in this continuity).
- 785-760 B.C. : Reign of king Alara "beloved of Amun." He reactivated the cult of this god in Nubia.

- 760-747 B.C.: Reign of Kashta the Koushite. He spread his kingdom as far as Lower Nuba as testified by his stele in the island of Elephantine.
- 747-716 B.C. : Reign of Piye (or Piankhi) who made his authority recognized as far as Middle Egypt. He pushed then to Memphis but could not establish for a long time his authority on the Delta.
- 716-702 B.C. : Chabaqa, brother of Piye, succeeded to him. He had to carefully preserve the unity of Egypt in order to face the growing threat of Assyria.
- 702-690 B.C.: Reign of Chabataqa, son of Piye and nephew of Chabaqa. He remained on the defensive facing the Assyrians.
- 690-664 B.C. : Reign of Taharqa, brother of the previous king. He controlled a territory from the Delta of Egypt as far as the confluence of White Nile and Blue Nile.
- From 690 to 676 B.C. the reign of Taharqa (unique king of this dynasty to be cited in the Bible) was very auspicious. This pharaoh multiplied the constructions, mainly at the sanctuary of Kawa in front of Dongola, and in Djebel Barkal. Then the imprudence of the rulers of Saïs who sustained the revolts of Phenician cities against the Nubian pharaoh led Assyrians to attack Egypt. The armies of Taharqa were defeated circa 671. Memphis was taken. and Thebes in 669.
- 664-656 B.C. : Reign of Tanutamani. He came to submit the rulers of Lower Egypt who have accepted the Assyrian domination. But the intervention of the armies of Assurbanipal obliged the Nubian king to come back to Thebes which was taken again and wrecked by the invaders. This sacke determined an irreversible decline of the cult of god Amun in Egypt. Mentouemhat, the governor of Thebes accepted the Assyrian domination compromising any tentative of reconquest.
- The death of Tanutamani marked the end of the XXVth dynasty in Egypt but the kingdom of Napata continued with the reigns of rulers like Aspelta (593-568), Harsiyotef (404-369) and Nastasen (335-310). We can remark that the Napatean civilization put back in honor the pyramids in the funeral architecture.
- **593-591 B.C. : The Saite pharaoh Psametik II pushes a raid as far as Napata and burnt the temples of Djebel Barkal. This event caused the transfer of the royal administration to Meroe where perhaps already resided king Aspelta . The kingdom of Meroe, delimited by the Atbara river, the White Nile and the Blue Nile, corresponds therefore to a displacement toward the southeast of the Napatean civilization . Besides the royal residence," the island of Meroe" included the big holy city of Mussawwarat.**
- During the IIIrd century B.C., king Arkamani of Meroe (Ergamenes for Greeks) maintained regular contacts with the Lagides of Alexandria. The Meroe royal necropolis of this time provides today the most impressive testimony of the strength of this ancient kingdom. In April 1821, the French explorer Frederic Cailliaud expressed in these terms his emotion seeing the site of Meroe: " Ever my joy was no more extreme and so deep than in discovering the tops of a lot of pyramids illuminated by the sun, little elevated on the horizon, gilding them majestically..." Thirty kings, eight

queens and three princes were identified in this imposing necropolis where Amun was honored together with some local divinities as the lion god Apedemak. The main temple of this god was constructed in Mussaouwarat by king Arnekhmani at the end of the IIIrd century B.C. It became a place of very frequent pilgrimage during several centuries, the whole site including seven sanctuaries and a royal palace.

- Circa 21 B.C. : Victorious expedition of the Roman general Caius Petronius against the kingdom of Meroe. The Romans advanced as far as Napata and the peace which followed gave to Romans the Lower Nubia baptized Dodecashene, with some mines of gold which have been the main objective of the expedition.
- At the beginning of the Christian era, the rulers of Meroe had to count with the danger of the Blemmyes, pillagers coming from the east deserts who frequently attacked the city. But the location of the kingdom contributed to its prosperity until the Hellenistic and Roman times, as Soterias Limen, present Sudan Harbor, allowed it to dispose of an aperture on the Red sea. It is necessary to mention the emporion of Ptolemaïs of the Huntings, center for dealing ivory, and the harbor of Adoulis (Massaoua). The proximity of Panchrysia, the golden Berenice, permitted also Meroe to play a role of intermediary favorable to its interests in dealing gold.
- 61-63 A.D. : Roman expedition under the reign of Nero researching the sources of Nile. It advanced as far as the swamps of South.
- 298 A.D. : Diocletian abandoned Lower Nubia because of the insecurity due to the raids of the Blemmyes.
- In the middle of IVth century A.D., the Ethiopian king of Axum, Ezana, invaded the kingdom of Meroe.
- In the middle of VIth century A.D. began the evangelism of Nubia from Egypt. Conversion of the three Nubian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria and Aloa which adopted the Coptic writing whereas the Greek became the liturgical language. These independent kingdoms were constituted on the ruins of the kingdom of Meroe. Four bishoprics are attested in Nubia which seats were Kasr Ibrim, Faras, Saï and Dongola.
- 639-642 A.D. : An Arab army led by Amr ibn al Has invaded Egypt and achieved its conquest, facilitated by the hostility of the country against Byzance domination and by the religious opposition between the monophysite Christians of Egypt and the orthodox Church of Constantinople.