

BLACK PHARAOKHS

RULERS OF ANCIENT NUBIA



by Thomas Kummert
www.ancient-cultures.info

Everybody has heard of and many even visited the massive pyramids and incredible royal tombs of the legendary Egyptian Pharaoh's. But who has ever heard of Black Pharaohs? Well ... possibly only a few ancient history aficionados.

But of those who read about these intriguing pharaohs, did they really take the trouble to travel along the five Nile cataracts to visit the numerous necropolis of the ancient Nubian Kingdoms with over 300 pyramids? And let me tell you, there are many more pyramids across Nubia or Kush as the Egyptians called it.

Those few who really will venture into Sudan, will find themselves travelling rather alone a thousand kilometers all the way down the Nile from the confluence of the White and Blue Nile at Khartoum towards the Egyptian border.

And the unquestioned acceptance of low comfort travel will definitely be highly rewarded. Yes you will be really stunned and completely surprised. Because you will find out, that there are many more pyramids in modern day Sudan, than in the famous ancient Egyptian Empire.



Amun Re temple at Soleb in northern Sudan

Yes these Nubian pyramids are much smaller, but nevertheless really worth visiting, due to their amazing set-up. They were erected in long lines and groups in vast sandy fields close to the various ancient Nubian capitals along the Nile.

Soleb Temple

This ancient site is one of the most northern Temple sites in modern day Sudan. Here Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep III. built during the Armana Period of the 18th Dynasty a temple consecrated to sun god Amun Re. This most southern temple in the Egyptian Empire was erected by his son Hapu.

At Sedeinga he also constructed a companion temple for Queen Tiye, which unfortunately is very much destroyed. Of the Soleb Temple only a few columns are still standing or have been re-erected to give visitors a bit of an impression, how the temple must have looked like.

First Pre-historic Traces

It is not surprising that in the vicinity of Nubia's first capital Kerma, the first human traces were discovered. These date back to over 1,6 million years ago and belong to our ancestor *homo habilis*.

Also close to Kerma in Wadi El Arab a pre-historic settlement was found and dated to 8,300 BC. Another ancient neolithic settlement site called El Barga could be dated to 7,500 BC. It was inhabited for over 2,000 years scientists could establish by studying the two adjacent cemeteries they discovered.



built by pharaoh Amenhotep III in Nubia

Egypt-Nubian History

There are only a few references in Egyptian annals, which mention the existence of ancient Nubian kingdoms. About 5,000 years ago Pharaoh Djer, ruler of the First Egyptian Dynasty, is reported to have conquered the southern Kush Kingdom. Kush was the Egyptian name for Nubia, which is the regional name for northern Sudan and the dark skinned population living there. Egyptians called Nubians *nehasi* in their language.

And about 500 years later famous Pharaoh Snofru attacked Kush again and it is reported meticulously, that he took 7.000 prisoners men and women plus 200.000 heads of cattle and sheep.

Snofru was the only pharaoh, who built three huge pyramids. One of the famous two at Giza and two further south at Dahshur. He also started to build numerous mini pyramids across his vast empire to demonstrate his power.

Egyptian Records

We know that Egyptian's were famous for keeping very detailed records. But what does this tell us? Certainly that the Kushite rulers in the south became a threat to the mighty Egyptian Empire and started to attack it.

One discovery is very interesting. Just consider this remarkable symbolism. Tutanchamun sandals found in his tomb were decorated with two dark



papyrus bundle columns at Soleb

skinned figures believed to be Kushite rulers. This is a clear sign of Egyptian superiority. Treating your enemies with your feet and showing them your soles, is a huge insult and sign of ultimate submission.

Was it a love hate relationship with Nubia? Possibly both depending on changing luck of each other's military campaigns. Certainly it was also a great portion of wishful thinking. As we later find out, Nubians conquered and ruled Egypt for over 100 years.

Ongoing Military Campaigns

Another 500 years later about 1,500 BC Pharaoh Thutmosis I. passed with his army and ships the third cataract, which until then, was a natural defense line for Nubians. Now he could conquer the Kushite capital Kerma and the surrounding fertile Dongola area. The Egyptian Empire herewith controlled Nubia up to forth cataract.

Then again in 591 BC Pharaoh Psammettich II. attacked Nubia and the capital Napata was moved 500 km further south and up the Nile to Meroe. Egyptians had no name for the Nile and just called it river iteru, as there was only one river in the whole world.

At that time Greek historian Herodot named black Nubians as Ethiopians or "sun burned" and described them as rich, beautiful, strong, long living in a land full of wonders. And he was right with his description of the Nubian people, their way of life and culture.

Egyptian Influence

Let's take a step back and investigate how the Nubian Culture could develop to such a sophisticated level. Definitely they learned and copied a lot if not everything from the Egyptians. Recent research is telling us, that Kushite art was influenced by Egyptian Culture. But it had its own identity with a very specific Nubian character and originality.

They produced a fine ceramic, not by wheel like in Egypt, but by hand. Actually all jewelry and art was locally produced. So Nubia took advantage of Egyptian technology and advancement and adopted it, but gave it their own style.

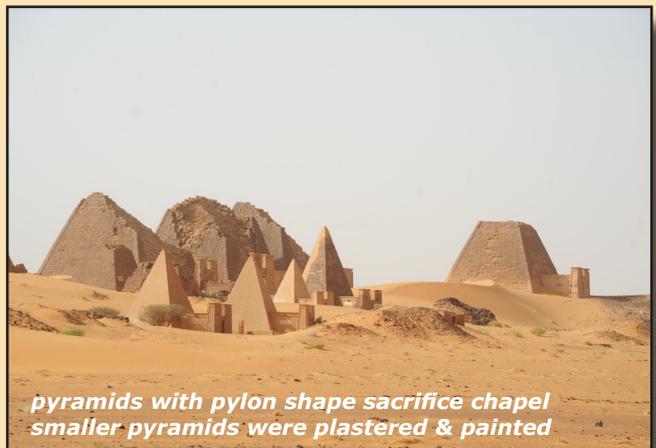
How did Egyptian influence work and was accepted? Wealthy and fertile Egypt either drew immigrants as workers, and or the powerful empire took prisoners as slaves. We further know that Nubians like Libyans made up a huge part of the ever growing Egyptian army.



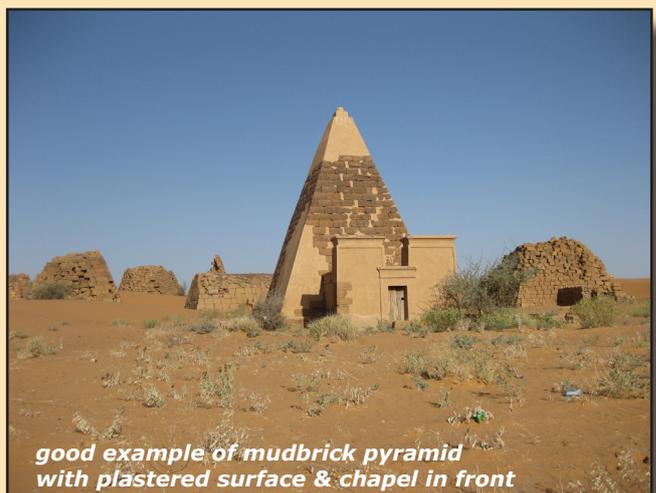
partly sand covered Meroe pyramid



had larger pyramids a flat top? scientists are not certain about that



pyramids with pylon shape sacrifice chapel smaller pyramids were plastered & painted



good example of mudbrick pyramid with plastered surface & chapel in front

Libyans had no life supporting river, but Nubians were much more closely linked through the Nile with Egypt. As we later see, this had an enormous effect on Nubian architecture, religion and their culture as a whole.

One should not speak about the Egyptian influence, but better of the totally entwined cultures, even if their character and nature were so different. Nubians were much more African, a nature which really was absent from Egyptian thinking and culture.

Economic Success

Nubia actually gained influence and wealth as important intermediary of significant Egyptian trade with Africa. This trade included vast amounts of valuable timber, specific stones for huge sculptured statues, various oils, important frankincense, ostrich feathers and elephant ivory.

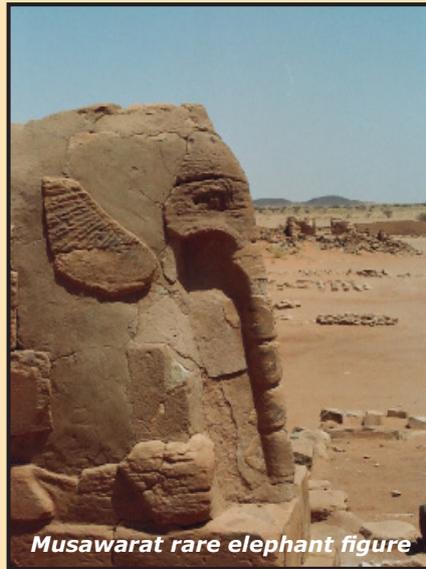
Gold and precious stone were also on the trading list. Wild animals such as lions, apes and later elephants, plus a large variety of wild hides. Not to forget the important slave trade already existing at that time. But surprisingly Nubia had no own coinage.

Egyptian Inspiration

Therefore it is not surprising, that despite having their independent culture, Nubia got inspired by Egyptian life style and religion including the typical pyramid burials.

Interestingly though, that Nubians started to build pyramids, when Egyptians had stopped around 2.000 BC and changed to underground burials with complex chamber systems.

Nubians also believed strongly in a life after death and therefore copied nearly all Egyptian burial



Musawarat rare elephant figure

rituals. It is also no wonder, that Nubians worshipped certain Egyptian gods more than Egyptians did themselves.

That made them fully accepted by Egyptians, very much so, that Nubians were even appointed Egyptian vice-kings in Nubia. They resided in Aniba between the first and second cataract close to the famous Abu Simbel site.

Rise of Nubia

Finally in 780 BC Nubia became independent, when Egypt struggled with wide spread internal conflict. This weakened Egypt so much, that Nubian



ram sphinx lined alley at Naqa

King Kashta took advantage and successfully conquered Egypt.

The new Nubian empire now stretched from Thebes to the sixth cataract at the confluence of the White and Blue Nile, where today the Sudanese capital Khartoum lies.

Another important indication of Nubian rule in Upper Egypt is, that the High Priestess of Thebes carrying the god like title of "Amun's wife" made Kashta's daughter Amenerdis her successor. Now Nubia also controlled the powerful priesthood, which often stood in competition with the royal court.

Black Pharaohs

Six black pharaohs ruled Egypt for 125 years until 655 BC. Their rule is today classified as the 25th Egyptian Dynasty during the so-called Third Interim Period in Egyptian history. Even if they had themselves depicted on temple walls in full Egyptian ornate, they were proud enough to show distinctive Nubian attributes.

First they carried two golden *uraeus* snakes on their fore head to demonstrate they were rulers of Egypt and Nubia. Then there was the distinctive Nubian cap, ear rings and a neck band decorated with a ram head. One item they did never wear, it was the Egyptian ceremonial beard.

The last black pharaoh Tanwetamani, a nephew of famous Nubian King Tarhaqa, escaped Assyrian attack on Egypt and fled back to Nubia.

Other Foreign Rulers

But Nubians were not the only foreign rulers in 4,000 years of the mighty Egyptian Empire's history. The provenance of the Hykos rulers is still not fully certain. It is assumed they came from Palestine or Syria.



first Nubian capital Kerma with rests of ruined temple defuffa

Thereafter followed Libyans and Nubians as rulers of Egypt, than twice Persians conquered the Egyptian Empire. Finally the Greek established their Ptolemaic rule, so-called after the general of Alexander the Great. During this period the famed Cleopatra made history and Romans finally dominated the Near East from 30 BC onwards.

Nubian Beginnings

The pre-historic capital of Kerma is the most northern and closest to Egypt. It was the center of the ancient Kushite Culture. Archaeologists today have established five different periods.

So we are looking at 2,000 years of human settlement at this important site. That time horizon also means, that its beginnings coincide exactly with the start of Egyptian history the so-called Old Kingdom Period.

Kerma was the royal seat from 2,500 to 1,500 BC. Recently archaeologists excavated close by a settlement they called Pre-Kerma, which was dated back to 3,500 BC.

But let's look more closely at Kerma. This Nubian capital was still small, but nevertheless

had four residential areas with around 200 small houses and 2,000 inhabitants. There were also larger houses for an elite and a royal palace with a round audience hall measuring 14 meters.

Royal Power & Priesthood

Different to Egyptian practice, where the temple served as administration and storage center, at Kerma the royal palace had this function. This is an important difference indicating the clear domination of king over priesthood.

But then the priests could decide, when the king had to give up power and die. A unique rule the kings in change seemed

to have accepted and followed.

But the big surprise for excavators at Kerma was a unique mudbrick tower called Western Defuffa. This immense structure had no rooms inside only a staircase outside leading to the top.

It is believed to be have used for religious purposes, like the ziggurats in Mesopotamia. It measured 45 meters in length and was over 18 meters high. In addition the city was surrounded by a ten meters high protection wall with four gated entries.

Kerma Necropolis

No royal city without a necropolis. But the one at Kerma was in various ways special. On about 90 hectares it houses up to 40,000 graves many of them huge round burial mounds. But as a surprise 16 tombs were discovered with mass side burials.

Here US archaeologist George Reisner made a gruel some discovery in 1912. The entire royal court was buried alive with their ruler. One of these tumuli measures 90 meters and the respective king was buried with over 400 persons of his court here. These mounds are dated between 1.800 to 1.700 BC.



Amun temple at jebel Barkal

Classic Period

During its Classic Period from 1.700 to 1.550 BC Kerma was at its cultural and economic heights. The typical red brownish Kerma pottery was produced in numbers on pottery wheels and could easily be distinguished by its black painted rims and décor.



group of pyramids at Meroe north field

The Kawa Temple situated near Dongola is also part of this period. With increasing Egyptian pressure, Nubians moved their capitals step by step further south and up the Nile.

Napata Period

On the Kerma Period followed the Napata Period, which lasted from 900 to 300 BC. With the first move of the royal court, Napata as new capital was erected near modern day town of Karima. Here at the foot of Jebel Barkal a large royal necropolis with various pyramids was created and kings up to Arqamani were buried here.

The religious precinct includes an important Amun Temple. This temple like many in Nubia is very much destroyed and has not yet been rebuilt by archaeologists. The temple has an ally of ram

sphinxes in front like the Egyptian temples in Karnak.

Its granite altar was made during the rule of Taharqa and is decorated with the typical relief engraving of the unification of Upper Egypt ta-shema and Lower Egypt ta-mehu as Egyptians named it. A clear manifestation that Nubians ruled Egypt at the time.

Local guides love to point out, that possibly four enormous statues were cut out of the rock face of Jebel Barkal, similar to the famous Abu Simbel statues, but much larger. It looks intriguingly possible and every one's imagination is left to play with the idea if true or not.

But the rock face today is so degraded, that this

assumption could not yet been proved by archaeologists.

From the time line it might be possible, because Ramses II. created the Abu Simbel Grotto Temples 700 years earlier. And Taharqa was powerful enough to have this immense work done and even bigger to demonstrate his dominance. He also undertook numerous building project all across his empire.

Important Meroe Site

The Meroitic Period was the last Nubian period, which lasted for 650 years until 350 AD. Its start and the move of the capital further south to Meroe coincided with the arrival of the Greek with Alexander the Great.

This move brought about many changes. The Nubian Kingdom became more African and less Egyptian. One of the most important changes was, that women now came into power and dominated the kingdom.

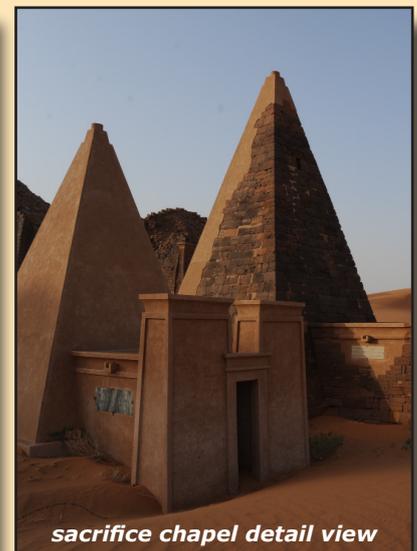
Various strong queens are documented as rulers and it



pylons are rather large



example of plastered surface



sacrifice chapel detail view



incredible large Meroe necropolis



treasure hunters destroyed many pyramids

is possible, that a matriarchate existed at the time, whereby daughter inherited from their mothers. The list of powerful queens includes names such as Shanakdakheto, Malagaye, Nawidemak, Amanirenas, Amanishakheto, Amanitore and Amanikhatashan. This era of female rulers was also called the Kandake Period.

Meroe Kingdom

German archaeologist Karl Richard Lepsius excavated in Meroe between 1842 to 1845 and drafted the first plan of the necropolis and sketched most of the pyramids. The Meroe site was recently declared UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Meroe capital consists of four areas, including the walled royal city with palaces and a Roman type bath, the significant Amun Temple precinct and the residential areas. The main

economic activity was iron smelting, which was the basis of Meroe success.

The necropolis area is the last and is subdivided into three groups of pyramids in the north, south and west. Here archaeologists have identified over 900 pyramids and tombs. The first ruler buried in Meroe about 280 BC was Arqamani.

Egyptian Goddess Isis became the main deity and was depicted to touch the queen at her elbow as sign of her divine representation on earth. As prove of female rule and matriarchate it is interpreted, that men were depicted at the side of queens, but without royal insignia. They were simple touching the queens crown as sign of support or submission.

Nubian Pyramids

The Meroe necropolis is the

most important and amazing. With more pyramids than at any site in Egypt it stands really out amongst all Nubian sites. The northern necropolis consists of 44 pyramids, the south area has 16 and the west field only 9 pyramids. There might have been more, as many were destroyed in the search for treasures and might still lie hidden beneath the sands.

Pyramids were first built from sandstone and later bricks were used. As said all Nubian pyramids are small and their heights only range from a minimum of 10 meters to a maximum of 30 meters.

But they have a rather steep angle with 70 degrees, which gives them a much taller look. Pyramids were covered with plaster and were painted in earthen colors like ochre and beige.



visible traces treasure hunters



various sacrifice chapels



large pyramids at Meroe



line of mudbrick built pyramids at extensive Meroe necropolis

It is not certain, if all pyramids were fully built up. Some are missing its top. So the theory is, that they might have been constructed with the aim of a platform on top. Possibly to have a space to perform certain annual rituals. Future investigations might shed more light on this theory.

It has to be pointed out, that there are no rooms inside any pyramid, like in Egypt. They have been purely constructed as monument on top of the burial chambers below ground level.

Meroe Pyramids

The pyramids in Meroe can be divided into two periods, which is determined by their size. From the time of King Arqamani to Queen Amanishakheto larger pyramids with a side length of 18 meters were erected. After 50 AD with the rule of Natakamani the pyramid side lengths reduced to one third or 6.6 meters.

Unique is also the sacrifice chapel attached to the pyramids here. They have normally two rooms to place the food plates for the deceased as sacrifice. The walls were covered with the typical standardized relief scenes.

Relief Scenes

These depictions have been classified in three periods. The first feature typical Egyptian scenes with hieroglyphs and ruler names in cartouche style. The second period shows the death tribunal in front of God Osiris. This ceremony included the weighing of the deceased heart against a feather. It also included the typical death book scenes.

The last period starting after the rule of Natakamani is showing the deceased with his wife and gods in a more realistic approach.

In Egypt sacrifice chapels or temples were always a separate

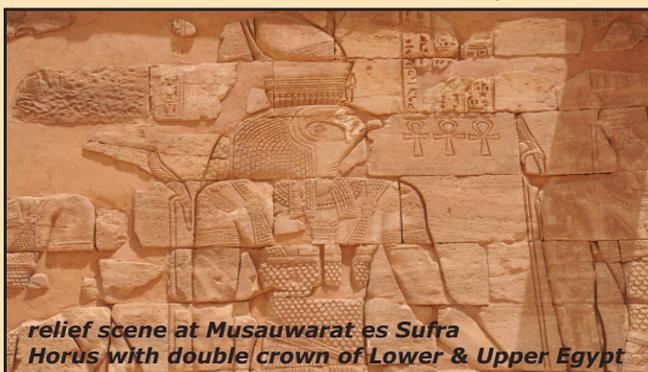
building erected close to the pyramid. German archaeologist Friedrich Hinkel recently found a building plan engraved on the outside wall of a Meroe sacrifice chapel, which confirms the findings and some further assumptions.

Another unique feature here is the front wall of the sacrifice chapel, which has been constructed as a typical Egyptian pylon gate. Pylons in Egypt are huge entrance gates to temple areas.

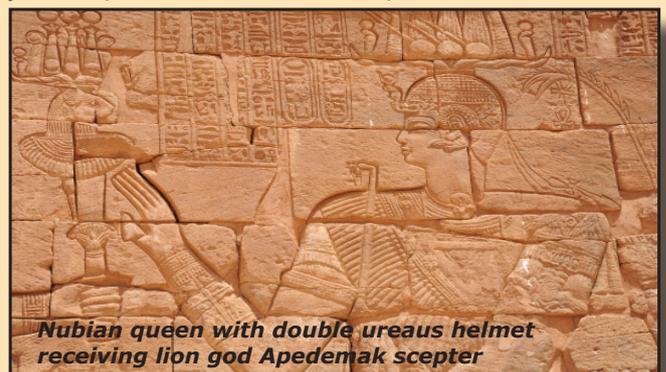
Similar to Egypt they are decorated with the typically large "beating of enemies" deep relief scenes executed by the ruler to show his strength and dominance.

Burial Chambers

As mentioned the burial chambers are not inside the pyramid, but under their ground level. And surprisingly their entrance tunnels lie in front of the sacrifice chapel.



*relief scene at Musauwarat es Sufra
Horus with double crown of Lower & Upper Egypt*



*Nubian queen with double ureaus helmet
receiving lion god Apedemak scepter*

For kings three burial chambers were carved out. Queens only had two, but later all rulers were buried in two chambers. The underground tomb chamber walls were painted with death book scenes like in the Egyptian royal tombs in the famous Valley of Kings and Queens.

All tombs have already been plundered in antiquity. There was only one untouched tomb of Queen Mernua dated around 600 BC. It was a typical Egyptian style burial with proper mummy bundle, death mask, amulets and multiple stacked coffins.

Various ushebti and many grave gifts were added. These were unused items especially produced for this burial. Later the burials were done without coffins and often multiple burials were found in the same chamber. And burial gifts were used items from the household of the deceased.

Italian adventurer Guiseppe Ferlini visited Meroe in 1821 and destroyed many pyramids in the search for treasures. He found the untouched burial chamber of Queen Amanishakheto with 155 pieces of jewelry. He tried to sell these, but at the time he was unsuccessful, as no one believed, that such a sophisticated culture existed in Africa. Finally some of the pieces ended up in museums in Munich and Berlin.

Musauwarat es-Sufra

In the south and close to Meroe a huge temple precinct is situated with over 4,000 relief scenes on its long walls. This

structure is called the Great Enclosure. The various temples on terraces are connected via



corridors and long ramps. A similar feature does not exist in Egypt, despite the presence of huge temple precincts.

Ancient Graffiti

These filigree graffiti are different from Egyptian style relief scenes. They were first believed to be of more recent date, but the Humboldt University in Berlin has proven their historic age. These images include lion god Apedemak, horse and horse rider depictions, camel and fish figures and a dog hare chase.

They also include two human figures today called the "beer



drinkers", horned altar depiction, boat image and many different geometric forms including property marks or religious signs. All these were dated

during King Arnakhamani's reign 235 -218 BC.

Ancient records talk about the famous annual holy marriage festival practiced here. But it has little if nothing to do with the Egyptian sed festival to renew the powers of the pharaoh.

Lion Temple

The fascinating Lion Temple was erected in 220 BC for the local lion god Apedemak. It is interesting to note that local gods are rare, but Apedemak became one of the most important gods in Meroe.

In addition many elephant sculptures were found here. It is assumed, that the site may have been an elephant training center. This assumption is supported by the fact, that Nubians were the first to domesticate African elephants.

Please remember that Indian elephants were easy to domesticate, but the African subspecies proved to be less able to be trained. It is also known that Nubians used and traded them as war elephants.

Naqa Ruins

This site is the largest and youngest ruin field in Sudan. It is also the closest to its modern day capital Khartoum only about 100 km north of it. So it is possibly the latest Nubian capital with various palaces and temples.

It's time line coincides with the Ptolemaic rule in Egypt and upcoming Roman Influence. Naqa belonged to the Meroe

Kingdom Period. Temples were built here for sun god Amun, Egyptian goddess Hathor and local god Apedemak, the latter two temples erected by King Natakamani.

Here a unique painted altar was discovered, which has no parallel in Nubia as well as in Egypt.

And a second Amun Temple was constructed by Amanichareqerem. Later in 135 BC Queen Shanakdakheto erected a temple for the Theben divine trilogy of gods Amun, Mut and Chons. She also dedicated it to the only local divinity lion god Apedemak.

Meroe Script

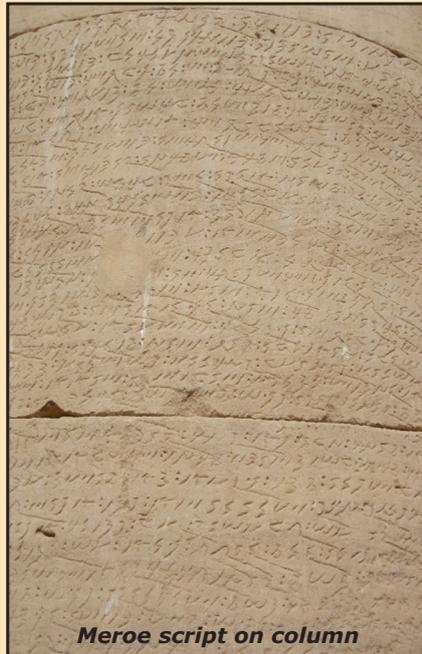
Meroe writing was developed rather late in 150 BC, but unfortunately still has not yet been deciphered. It also has to be said, that the names of local rulers and their chronology is still rather unclear. Only for those Nubian rulers, who reigned over Egypt detailed records exist in Egyptian annals.

These details I have added to this article for your information, as it gives an interesting insight into Nubian history.

Meroe ceramic was produced on site. It was a very thin, beautifully painted and stamped pottery ware.

Nubian Rulers

For a better understanding of Nubian history, their rulers and culture I have summarized below all available details about them from Egyptian annals. But these only cover the seven Nubian kings, who ruled over Egypt for 125 years.



Meroe script on column

Alara 780-760 BC

He was a Nubian ruler, but was not documented as ruler in Egypt and therefore was not part of 25th dynasty. German archaeologist Jürgen von Beckerath published the first conclusive Egyptian chronology about 50 years ago. Alara was not mentioned therein, but he is seen as the founder of the new Nubian Kingdom. One reason could be, that he did not use the typical Egyptian royal titles yet.

Kashta 760-747 BC

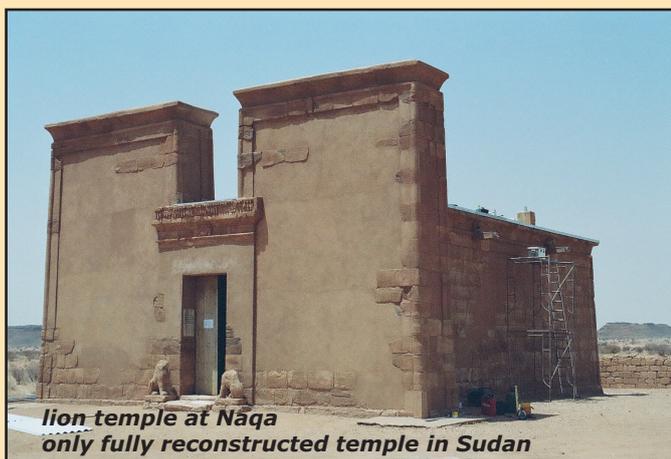
He was king of Nubia in Napata and the first documented joint ruler also in Egypt. He conquered Lower Nubia and Upper Egypt up to the first cataract at Aswan. He installed a stele in the Chnum Temple on Elephantine Island at Aswan and established close religious ties to Egypt.

Piankhi 747-716 BC

He was a son of Kashta. From his many titles one can see that Nubian rulers from now on used the full adoption of Egyptian Culture to show their determination to rule Egypt. After controlling the capital of Upper Egypt Thebes and being the de facto ruler over the entire Egypt, he was challenged by Tefnakhte a local ruler at Sais in the Nile delta.

Piankhi was eager to extend his territory further south and up the Nile. Tefnakhte was supported by various local leaders as Lower Egypt during the Third Interim Period was divided into many small city states. So Piankhi's generals besieged Herakleopolis and Hermopolis to gain total control.

Thereafter three other cities gave up and only Memphis had to be taken in battle. Finally four other cities Leontopolis, Sebennytos, Athribis/Heliopolis and Tanis/Bubastis surrendered. Now local leader Tefnakhte followed and this resulted in the re-unification of Upper and Lower Egypt in 727 BC.



*lion temple at Naqa
only fully reconstructed temple in Sudan*



ruins at Naqa



vast pyramid field at Meroe



partly sand covered pyramids with burial chambers dug below ground level

These descriptions are a perfect example of the enormous struggle to keep such a huge and diverse Empire together. All this is documented on the important victory stele found in the Amun Temple in Napata at Jebel Barkal.

This important stele is situated today in the Cairo National Museum. The text has 159 lines on all four sides and is one of the most important documents of this period giving a good insight into Nubian history. Piankhi is buried in a small steep pyramid in el-Kurru and his horses were buried nearby.

Shabaka 716-702 BC

He was another son of Kashta and brother of Piankhi, who ruled before him. He is the first Kushite ruler over the entire Egyptian territory after he conquered and killed local leader Bakenrenef in Lower Egypt.

He moved to Memphis and adopted the full pharaoh attire, titles and also cartouche names. His Egyptian throne name Neferkare is the same as used by Pharaohs Pepi II. as well as Neferkare and later Ramses IX.

He started many smaller building activities in over 14 important Egyptian cities including the royal cities of

Memphis and Luxor. In Nubia he only completed two projects in Kawa and Dongola.

He erected an Abydos tomb, but his burial site remained Nubian in el-Kurru, where he was buried again in a small steep pyramid including his horses like his predecessor Piankhi.

Shebitku 702-690 BC

He was the son of Piankhi and was only documented on a Nilometer in Karnak on a stele of governor of Pharbaitos. His building activities in Karnak, Memphis and Saqqara were rather limited. Shebitku is reported to have lost a battle in Palestine against Assyrians. His small steep pyramid is situated also in Nubia in the el-Kurru necropolis.

Taharqa 690-664 BC

He was another son of Piankhi, who undertook various military campaigns defending Egypt against powerful Assyrian ruler Asarhaddon. But in 667 BC Assyrians under Assurbanipal conquered Lower Egypt up to Thebes.

Thereafter followed a period of ongoing local rebellions with many leaders being captured and executed. His son Atlanersa remained in Nubia and was crowned king ruling in Napata.

Taharqa's building activities in Nubia included projects in Napata a big Amun Temple, colossal stone statues, at Sanam an Amun-Re Temple, at Kawa completion of Tutankhamun Temple plus the new Amun Temple with sphinxed procession alley, hypostyle hall and chapel, at Tabo a temple on Argo Island, at Semna the East Temple to worship Sesostris III., at Buhen various reliefs, columns and chapel at the South Temple, at Qasr the Ibrahim Temple, plus buildings at Gezira Dabarosa, Faras, Kalabsha, Philae Island, el-Kab and Hefat/Asfun Matana.

His building activities in Egypt were focused on Karnak and included new temples and many additions to existing structures.

Taharqa's burial site was now erected at the new Nuri necropolis on the other Nile side opposite Jebel Barkal. In his small steep pyramid 1,070 ushebti figures were found. This gives us an indication of his importance, because these figures represent servants helping him during his life after death.

Tanutamun 664 - 655 BC

He was the son of Shabaka. Possibly he was co-regent for a short time with his nephew Taharqa. But he was crowned at Napata not in Thebes or

Memphis. By killing local ruler Necho an Assyrian supporter in Sais, he was able to gain short lived control again over Lower Egypt.

663 BC Assyrians attacked again and he had to withdraw to Nubia. After this lost battle Egypt was ruled de facto by Thebes mayor Montuemhat and high priestess Shepenupet II. But for whatever reason Tanutamun was still officially pharaoh until 656 BC. His burial site is in Nubia in el-Kurri at a small steep pyramid, which today is totally destroyed.

Summary

It is unfortunate that excavations by archaeologists have been done on a very limited basis so far. Sudan has such a fascinating history and could like Egypt draw a lot of tourists. This could generate many jobs and much needed income.

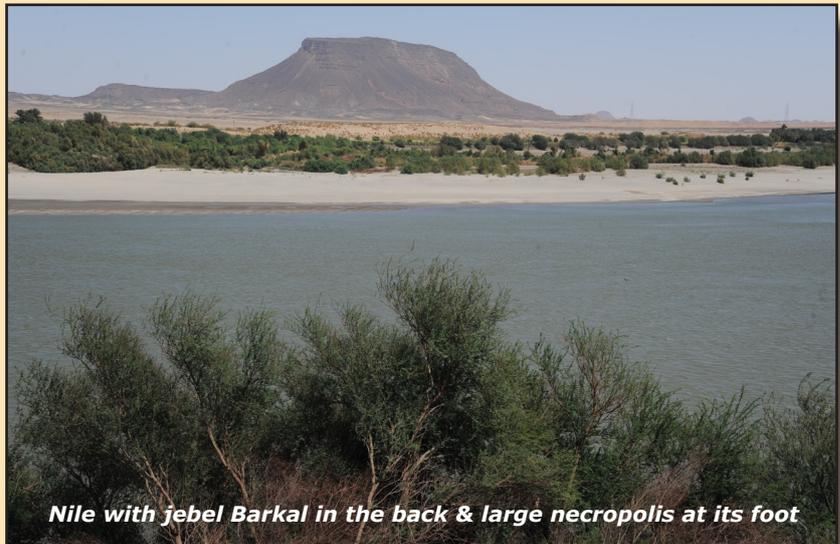
The Nubian people are very friendly and again compared with its northern neighbor, one can say they are more authentic, open and welcoming to strangers. This is a typical Bedouin nature and explains this difference.

The archaeological sites are really amazing and are proof of the sophisticated culture, which started here about 5,000 years ago. And the Nubian Kingdoms do not stand back to the Egyptian Empire. It actually competed at the same level, despite copying their life style and religion.

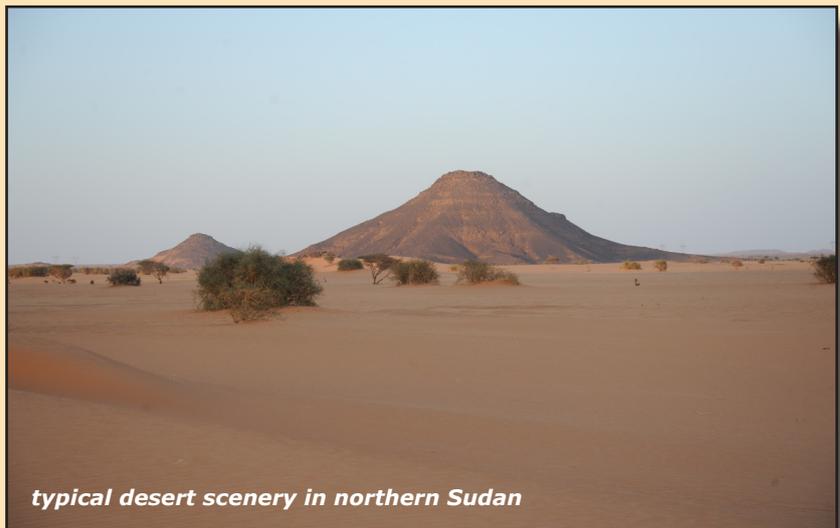
One thing is certain, Sudan will go on to surprise us. I wonder what secrets still lie underneath the sands to be discovered in future excavations.



northern Sudan landscape



Nile with jebel Barkal in the back & large necropolis at its foot



typical desert scenery in northern Sudan

Travel Tips

There are enough simple hotels and Nubian guesthouses along the Nile. So it is not necessary to book one of the various 100% tented tours offered. Nevertheless it is a special treat to use the tented camps in the Meroe pyramid field with the benefit of sunset and sunrise right next to these amazing pyramids. Nubians are very friendly and open to strangers. In 2015 there was no security risk to travel in that area. But please check prior to departure.

Photos: courtesy of A Krause & S Kampmann