

Nubian History in Brief

The lifetime of Nubia spanned from 3500 BC to about the fourth century AD. The kingdom comprised the territory between the southern portion of Egypt into the northern part of modern day Sudan. The name, Nubia, is believed to be a derivative of the word 'nub', meaning gold. To date it is not clear if this word is Egyptian or Nubian in origin. Sometimes referred to as Kush (Cush), Nubia existed within a tumultuous history of power shifts of being conquered as well as being the conqueror.

Its earliest power structure consisted of chiefdoms warring among themselves and with their northern neighbor. Although conquered by Egypt, Nubia maintained a rich culture, lucrative trade, religion, and military skill. Trade items consisted of gold, copper, giraffes, baboons, pelts, feathers, incense trees, elephant ivory and ebony wood.

Their military skill was unrivaled leading Egypt to refer to Nubia as Ta-Seti, land of the bow. Such was Nubia's skill that it conquered Egypt and seated Nubian pharaohs on the throne throughout Egypt's twenty-fifth dynasty.

Following the end of Nubia's rule of Egypt, pharaohs continued to utilize units of Nubian archers, hiring them to assist in their revolts in southern Egypt against rulers from Persia, the Macedonian Ptolemies, and the Romans. During Egypt's peaceful times Nubian warriors were hired to police Egypt's streets and maintain order.

Nubia's greatest empire flourished during its later period with its capitol established in the southern portion of the territory at Meroe. This society maintained a strong industrial complex most known for its iron, temples, and even an observatory. Its trade continued to prosper attracting attention from the ancient Greeks, as well as ancient Rome.

Unlike its neighbor, Egypt, men and women ruled Nubia, but more often it was a matriarchal society. Its powerful queens have been noted in Roman treaties under the title Kandake. One such queen met and turned away the famous Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. It is said that when Alexander entered the battlefield from a lower ridge and saw the strategic placement of the Kandake's armies with herself leading them seated upon a war elephant, he turned his army away from Nubia and toward a successful campaign in Egypt.

Another such example of Nubia's powerful Kandakes is Kandake Amanirenas. In 24BC she is said to have held off three cohorts of Roman soldiers sent by Augustus Caesar who ruled Egypt at that time. During the conflict she took several prisoners and statues of Augustus. It is said that she buried the head of one of these statues beneath the threshold of a public building. This was done so that Nubian citizens could trample the head of Augustus Caesar daily.

The story 'Nubian Princess' takes place during this later period in Nubia's history. The story itself is fiction, but the characters' names, the settings, and culture have been drawn from the history of Nubia.

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