

CHAPTER 4

THE NILOTIC SUDAN AND ETHIOPIA, c. 660 BC TO c. AD 600

THE ORIGINS OF MEROITIC CIVILIZATION

The ancient Egyptians had entered what is now the northern Sudan, known to them as Kush (perhaps the native name), in about 1500 BC and had rapidly occupied it as far upstream as Kurgus, near to the modern Abu Hamed. During the five hundred or so years of their rule, they had effected a transformation in the life of the country by forming an effective structure of Egyptian administration and by the building of towns and temples. What influence this had on indigenous village life is not certain, since archaeological investigation has as yet thrown no light on this interesting question; but there seems little doubt that chiefly families were much influenced, and it is likely that numbers of richer Kushites had moved into the towns and adopted many Egyptian customs and ways of life.

The nature of the end of Egyptian rule in Kush is extremely obscure, but by the latter part of Dynasty XX Egyptian troops and administrators were gone, and by c. 750 BC the beginnings of an independent Kushite state can be seen. The evidence for this and for the subsequent invasion of Egypt by Piankhy (or Piy as he should perhaps be called) and Taharqa, who, with their successors, are known in Egyptian history as Dynasty XXV, as well as some indication of Kushite influence in Egypt and the origins of the royal family, is given in Volume 1, chapter 12 of this *History* and need not be repeated here. The period of Kushite rule in Egypt ended when in 654 BC King Tanwetamani withdrew from Egypt, in face of military invasion by the Assyrians, and returned to his own country, from which he and his successors never again emerged.

It has usually been assumed that these first independent Kushite rulers lived at Napata, near to the temples built beside the conspicuous sandstone hill known today as Jebel Barkal. Originally an Egyptian foundation, Napata and its temples became the religious and, perhaps, the political centre of an important indigenous state which, owing much of its culture to Egypt, developed on its own independently of Egypt, and, with its centre either at Napata or at Meroe, lasted for a thousand years or more. Evidence for the first Kushite rulers and for the culture

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of their people is scanty, but royal burials at Kurru and Nuri provide some information and enable a king-list to be compiled. Those buried at Kurru, with their dates and place of burial, are:

1 Kashta	Ku. 8	<i>c.</i> 760-751 BC
2 Piankhy	Ku. 17	751-716 BC
3 Shabako	Ku. 15	716-701 BC
4 Shebitku	Ku. 18	701-690 BC
5 Taharqa	Nu. 1	690-664 BC
6 Tanwetamani	Ku. 16	664-653 BC

(NOTE: The royal Kushite tombs are numbered and designated as Ku. (Kurru), Nu. (Nuri), Bar. (Barkal) and Beg. for Begarawiya (Meroe). This numbering, now universally used, was designed by Reisner.)

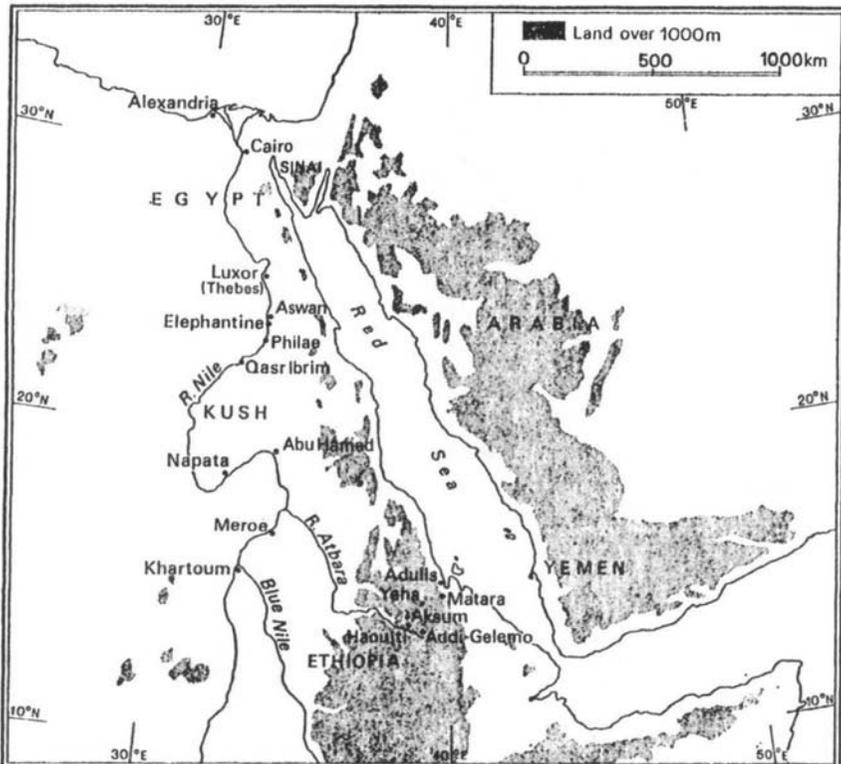
Excavations of temples and of a large non-royal cemetery at Sanam, consisting of over 1,500 graves, provide further material. The sites of the town of Napata, where those buried in the cemetery presumably lived, and of the royal residence have not been identified. They may be under the present-day town of Merowe, or on the opposite side of the river close to the temples of Jebel Barkal and the modern town of Karima. Although the royal burials are good evidence for at least the religious significance of Napata, it is not certain that it was an administrative centre or that the kings lived there, and it may be that Meroe was the centre from which the royal family of Piankhy and his successors emerged. There is plenty of evidence for royal activity at Meroe from the middle of the seventh century BC, and that town may have been the royal residence from considerably earlier. On the other hand, the use of royal cemeteries at Kurru and Nuri, close to Napata, for some 450 years suggests some very close identification of royalty with that area. In spite of the similarity in name, unlikely to be coincidence, modern Merowe should not be confused with ancient Meroe; the latter lay considerably further south and will be described later.

Failure to find Napata or to identify any other contemporary dwelling-site north of Meroe causes a serious gap in our knowledge of the culture of the time, and this knowledge is almost entirely restricted to grave goods and temple ruins. Study of the material objects show them to be in no significant way different from Egyptian material of the same period, and indicates how profoundly Egyptian techniques and taste had permeated the country. That there was still an indigenous element is shown only by the finding of a few pots of non-Egyptian style in the Sanam cemetery. These pots, of black fabric with impressed decoration,

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though few in number, show the persistence of a pottery tradition which stretches as far back as 2000 BC and forward to Meroitic times in the first few centuries AD.

The withdrawal of Tanwetamani from Egypt was decisive for the history of Kush, for from this date the resources of the royal and religious power were concentrated in their own country, and it is possible to see, though dimly, a line of development which became increasingly indigenous as separation from Egypt was prolonged. But Egyptian cultural influence remained important for several hundred years until the end of Meroitic times and, even when pharaonic canons of art and religious observances decayed, the subsequent Coptic and Byzantine elements in Egypt were reflected in the south. In spite of the strong Egyptian influence which can be seen in Kush at this time, there are also indications of a quite different, and presumably indigenous, element, particularly in social matters. The invitation by Taharqa to come from Kush to visit him in Egypt, and the quite



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un-Egyptian succession system, in which the crown passed not, as in Egypt, from father to son, but to brothers of the late ruler, are good examples of this, and even more striking is the indication that maternal descent was important to claimants to the throne.

Tanwetamani was the last of the kings of Kush to be buried in the ancestral cemetery at Kurru. Already his predecessor Taharqa had had a pyramid tomb, perhaps the first Kushite royal pyramid, erected at Nuri, on the left bank of the Nile and upstream of Jebel Barkal. There is some mystery about Taharqa's tomb; the pyramid (Nu. 1) seems to have been built in two stages, an original comparatively small one having been subsequently encased in another much larger, as though the king had decided that the first attempt was not sufficiently grandiose for one whose reputation, from the evidence of the large number of occurrences of his name from buildings stretching from Karnak to Sanam, must have been great. A further complication has been the finding of his name on the door jamb of a modest brick pyramid much further north, at Sadenga, where in recent years a cemetery of such pyramids has been investigated. First examination of this tomb suggested that perhaps Taharqa had been buried there, and that the Nuri pyramid was a cenotaph: this view was strengthened by the absence of any body in the burial-chamber at Nuri, though this may well be the result of later robbing, since all the Nuri pyramids had been ransacked, largely in medieval times. But it seems most probable that the Sadenga block with Taharqa's name on it had been removed from an otherwise unknown temple in the vicinity. From the reign of Tanwetamani's successor, Atlanersa, twenty rulers were buried at the Nuri cemetery, covering the period from c. 640 BC to c. 300 BC. During this period of nearly 350 years, we have the names of the kings, and know with reasonable certainty under which pyramids they were buried, and from a study of the grave-goods and of architectural features of the pyramids and burial-chambers dug into the rock beneath them, it seems likely that the conventional order for these rulers is correct.

The kings known from this cemetery, together with their suggested dates and burial-places, are as follows:

5 Taharqa	Nu. 1	690-664 BC
6 Tanwetamani	Ku. 16	664-653 BC
7 Atlanersa	Nu. 20	653-643 BC
8 Senkamanisken	Nu. 3	643-623 BC
9 Anlamani	Nu. 6	623-593 BC

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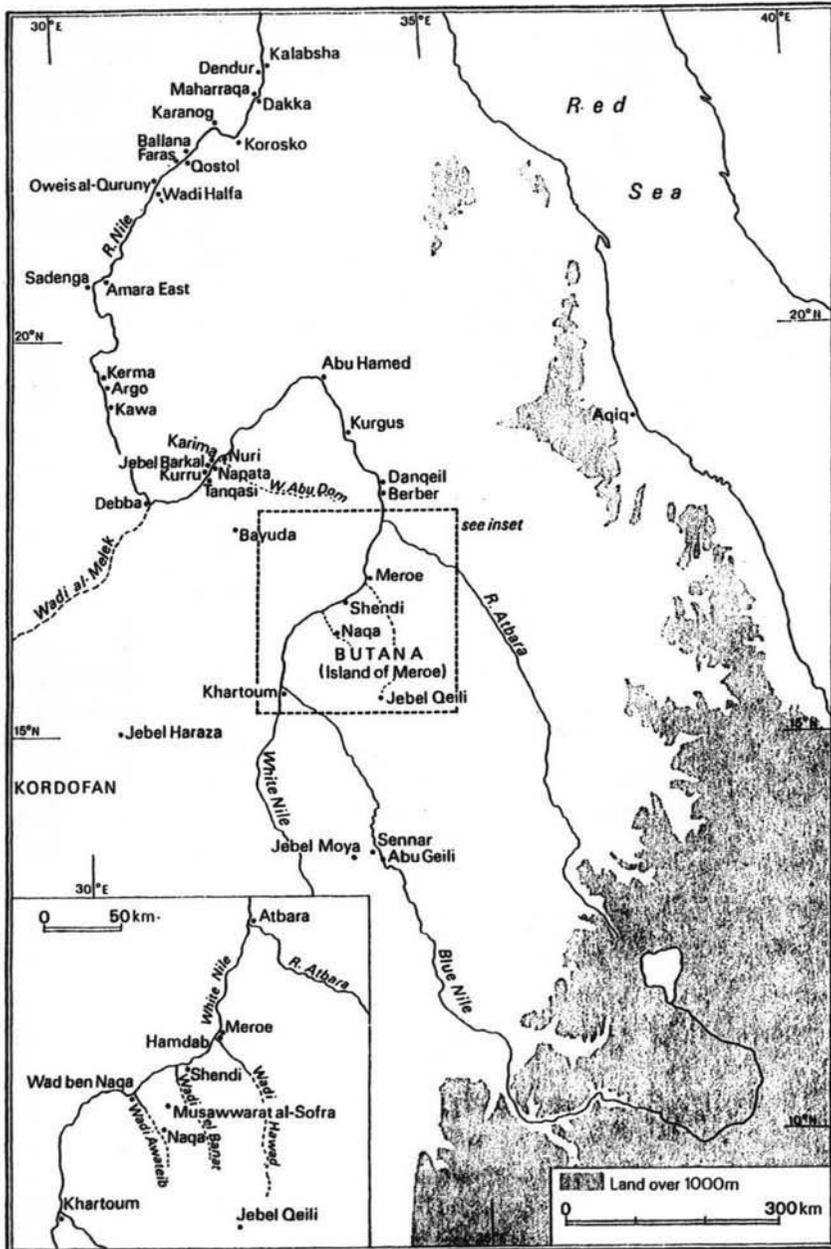
10	Aspelta	Nu. 8	593-568 BC
11	Amtalqa	Nu. 9	568-555 BC
12	Malenaqen	Nu. 5	555-542 BC
13	Analmaye	Nu. 18	542-538 BC
14	Amani-nataki-lebte	Nu. 10	538-519 BC
15	Karkamani	Nu. 7	519-510 BC
16	Amaniastabarqa	Nu. 2	510-487 BC
17	Siaspiqa	Nu. 4	487-468 BC
18	Nasakhma	Nu. 19	468-463 BC
19	Malewiebamani	Nu. 11	463-435 BC
20	Talakhamani	Nu. 16	435-431 BC
21	Amani-nete-yerike	Nu. 12	431-405 BC
22	Baskakeren	Nu. 17	405-404 BC
23	Harsiotef	Nu. 13	404-369 BC
24	Unknown?	Ku. 1	369-350 BC
25	Akhratan	Nu. 14	350-335 BC
26	Nastasen	Nu. 15	335-310 BC
27	Amanibakhi?	Nu. ?	310-295 BC

The dates given are those of F. Hintze,¹ and it should be appreciated that these are not to be taken as firm dates but rather as approximations to give a relative chronology. Dates for the early kings, those buried at Kurru, can be established from the knowledge that we have of the dating of events in Egypt, and there are sufficient written documents to make these dates accurate within narrow limits. Later rulers have been put in order as indicated, but the dates are calculated by taking an assumed average length of reign and making adjustments according to the size of the pyramid and the richness of the grave contents. There are a few fixed dates in the whole period up to the end of the Meroitic state and they will be referred to in their proper places. But for this early period, Aspelta's reign must be fairly accurately dated, since it seems that he was reigning at the time of Psamtek II's invasion of Napata, which we know took place in 593 BC.

Our knowledge of the history of the time is scanty. Senkamanisken built a temple at Napata, and his name is also known at Meroe. He is the first king who is known for certain to have built there, though it is possible that the reference in an inscription of Tanwetamani to his having come 'from the place where he had been' may indicate that he too had a residence in the southern city. Anlamani is known from his

¹ F. Hintze, *Studien zur Meroitischen Chronologie und zu den Opfertafeln aus den Pyramiden von Meroe* (Berlin, 1959), 23-4.

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stele at Kawa to have endowed a prophetship and to have presented his sisters to be priestesses in various leading temples, as well as to have brought his mother there to see him on the throne. But apart from these ritual acts, we have no further information on him. From the time of Aspelta, perhaps brother of Anlamani, we are somewhat better informed, and we have in his 'Election' stele a fascinating account of how he succeeded to the throne. The completely un-Egyptian method of succession is described in some detail, and we are told how the people were summoned to Jebel Barkal to elect their king, but decided that he should be chosen by Amun-Re', the chief, and perhaps the official state god, of Napata. All the royal brothers appeared before the god, and, after they had been rejected, Aspelta went in to the sanctuary himself and the god gave his approval. This certainly looks like a ritual performance, probably put on to maintain an old tradition, and it is likely that the original choice had been made by the leading people of Napata, by the common African method of prior discussion, before the matter was put to the god.

There are other documents from the time of this king. The so-called 'Banishment' stele describes how the king foiled a plot, perhaps by the priests of the Jebel Barkal temple, and killed the plotters; the 'Dedication' stele is concerned with ensuring that the temple at Sanam provided maintenance for the lady Madiqen, who may have been a wife of Aspelta. The Khaliut stele perhaps made later in his reign, may be, as Haycock suggests,¹ an attempt to rehabilitate Aspelta in the eyes of his people after the damaging attack by the Egyptians in 593 BC. It shows Khaliut, who was a son of the earlier ruler Piankhy, and who thus must surely have been dead by the time the stele was erected, as praying for Aspelta to the gods Osiris and Re-Harakhte

as a worthy and religious king who built temples, provided for their offerings, and cared for the cult of the dead and provided tombs for those who had none, and respected priestly rights to inherit the posts of their fathers.

The Egyptian invasion of 593 BC seems to have been an event of considerable importance for the history of Kush. The evidence for it is contained in an inscription, which shows that in the third year of his reign the Egyptian King Psamtek II invaded Kush and reached as far as Napata. This seems to be confirmed by Herodotus's statement that the Egyptians attacked Ethiopia at this time; while soldiers of the Egyptian army, including foreign mercenaries from Greece and Caria, left graffiti

¹ B. G. Haycock, 'Towards a better understanding of the kingdom of Cush (Napata-Meroe)', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1968, 49, 14.

at Abu Simbel and Buhen. The principal graffito, at Abu Simbel, gives the names of two leaders of the expedition: Potasimto, who led the foreigners, and Amasis, who led the Egyptians, and adds that they went as far as Kerkis. This place cannot be identified with certainty, but if, as has been suggested,¹ it is the same as modern Kurgus, upstream from Abu Hamed, then a deep penetration of the Kushite homeland had been made. Possible evidence for a sack of Napata is to be seen in the number of fragments of statues of Napatan rulers found in the Jebel Barkal temples. Of these fragments, it is probably not without significance that the latest in date is that of Aspelta.

This is perhaps the place to discuss the apparent shift in importance from Napata to Meroe as centres of Kushite administration and culture. This has been much argued, and a number of different dates have been suggested for the transfer of the royal residence from Napata to the southern centre. It has also been argued that no such transfer took place, and that Meroe was both the residence of royalty and the centre of administration from the very beginning of the dynasty. There is little to support this view as yet, though there certainly seems to have been a town at Meroe before about 700 BC, and some burials in the west cemetery there may well be of this early date. Wherever the earlier kings were living, there is no doubt that they were buried at Kurru and Nuri, but from about 300 BC the royal cemetery was established at Meroe, at first under the group of pyramids known as the south cemetery and later in the north cemetery. What is uncertain is whether or not Meroe had become the main royal residence at an earlier period.

There is no doubt that there were buildings, temples and perhaps a palace at Meroe from early Napatan times. As already mentioned, the name of Sekamanisken has been found there, as have also those of Aspelta, Malenaqen and Analmaye. In the west cemetery, some of the graves seem from their contents to date back to the time of Piankhy, and one object bearing the name of Kashta has been found there. Specifically, the evidence of the pottery found in recent excavations by the present writer strongly suggests domestic occupation as early as the seventh century BC if not earlier. None of this, though, would suffice to prove a move of the royal residence, and royal burials at Nuri continued to at least the reign of Nastasen at the end of the fourth century.

It seems probable that the move was not as sudden and dramatic as previous writers have suggested, and there may be some truth in the

¹ S. Sauneron and J. Yoyotte, 'La campagne nubienne de Psammetique II et sa signification historique', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français de L'Archéologie Orientale*, 1952, 50, 189.

view expressed years ago by Reisner that in the time of Piankhy a branch of the royal family had gone south to hold southern Kush. However this may be, we know, as has already been said, that a number of early kings built temples at least at Meroe, and Tanwetamani may have been living there. Firm evidence for royal residence at Meroe can be seen in the inscription of Amani-nete-yerike from Kawa, in which he says he was living at Meroe and that his predecessor, Talakhamani, died (c. 430 BC) there. This is the first mention of the town by the name for which it is now famous. Although Talakhamani died at Meroe, he was certainly buried at Nuri, in Nu. 16, so burial at Nuri does not exclude the possibility of residence at Meroe. It may well be that for a while the kings used both towns as a residence, though it seems highly likely that Meroe came to dominate at least by the time of Harsiotef, for in the thirty-fifth year of his reign the palace at Napata is described as being sanded up, and it was therefore presumably not suitable for occupation. It is worth noting that Herodotus, writing in about 430 BC, refers to Meroe, and gives some details, but does not mention Napata.

If we are to look for a time at which there was a major switch of emphasis from one centre to another, the reign of Aspelta would seem to be likely. Such a suggestion seems to fit the evidence so far as it goes, but, failing discovery of a royal residence at Napata, there can be no certainty. The military success of the Egyptian invasion would certainly be a compelling reason for shifting the main centre of the state to somewhere further south.

Whatever the date of the change, it had very important results for the development of Kushite civilization, and it was only after the move to Meroe – and some time after the initial move, if the date of around 590 BC suggested here is correct – that indigenous elements in the culture begin to emerge, so that one can begin to speak of a specifically Meroitic civilization. In this chapter, the term 'Meroitic' is used to describe the period from Aspelta onwards.

The site of Meroe was well chosen and had many advantages over Napata in addition to military security. Whatever it may have been that led to the foundation of a town on the sandy ridge between two small wadis, the founders had a good eye for a strategic position. Excavation suggests that there was a village of huts at this place before the establishment of a town, and the new elements that are seen in Meroitic culture in later centuries may reflect the influence of people different from those of the Napata region (even perhaps with a different language) – the inhabitants of the area between the Nile and the Atbara, which is now

called Butana, but which the ancient writers knew as 'the Island of Meroe'.

Meroe lies far enough south of Napata to fall within an area that today gets summer rainfall nearly every year and, if the present writer's view that rainfall was slightly heavier and its furthest limit further north in the first millennium BC is correct, the region of Meroe would have been markedly more fertile than that of Napata. Today the contrast between the two areas is very clear: downstream from the bend of the river below the Fourth Cataract, the country is mainly desert away from the irrigated areas along the river banks, and it is only in this narrow strip that, with considerable effort, water can be raised to irrigate the land for cultivation. There are small areas, known today as *seluka* land, where, as soon as the annual Nile flood has subsided, it is possible to plant grain and other crops, since the necessary moisture is contained in the freshly deposited and fertile river silt. It is likely that ancient cultivation was the same as that of today, in which, with the special *seluka* stick from which the soil takes its name, a series of holes is made in the mud and the seeds dropped into the holes. For the higher land, it is essential to raise water from the river to pour onto the soil and to water the crops, and until some time after 300 BC this could only be done by the simple and effective, but laborious, method of the *shaduf*, a large pivoted pole with counter-weight at one end and a bucket at the other. Even if kept working day and night by relays of men, the area that could be irrigated by this means was severely limited. Even after the introduction from Ptolemaic Egypt of the ox-driven water-wheel, the *sagia* (which, as will be seen later, had very important results in the populating of Lower Nubia), there were still severe restrictions on the amount of foodstuffs that could be grown, and it is known from recent experience that the oxen required to drive the wheel themselves constitute a heavy drain on the food resources of the land. All this meant considerable restraint on population expansion in the north, especially since Napata, backed up against the Fourth Cataract, was not in a good position to act as a trading centre and so to attract foodstuffs in exchange for other products. It had virtually no products of its own other than the limited food resources already mentioned, and though it stood at the river end of several large wadis running south and west – the Wadi Abu Dom, leading into the Bayuda, and the Wadi el-Melik, serving as a route to the west – all goods directed towards Egypt, which must always have been the main customer for the luxury products of the south, would have had to go by the river route northwards, with

all the problems involved in getting past the cataracts, particularly the difficult transit of the Second Cataract.

A word should be said about these products; though most of our information about them comes from earlier times, it seems highly probable that the goods valued by the Egyptians of the Middle and New Kingdoms and known from many tomb-paintings were still the main items of commerce. These were ivory, skins (especially of the leopard), ostrich feathers, ebony and, above all, gold. This range of goods suggest that sources of supply were tapped lying a considerable distance south of the main areas of Egyptian or even Napatan influence, though, except perhaps for ebony, they are likely all to have been available close to Meroe, where there is good evidence for the presence of the elephant. Lions were to be found there only 150 years ago, so the presence of the leopard is not improbable, and the author himself has seen ostriches within 100 km of Meroe within the last twenty years. Gold is rather a different matter, and though the main sources of supply are known to have been in the Red Sea Hills, it was worked anciently at several places along the Nile, particularly near the Second Cataract.

Meroe was also well placed both for trading activities and for agriculture. So far as trade is concerned, it controlled routes eastwards towards the Red Sea and northwards to Egypt. The routes that led east to the Red Sea became increasingly important after the development of Ptolemaic trade by sea and of the equally important land routes that led up the Arabian side of the Red Sea to the merchant centres of Syria, of which Palmyra was the most important. The route northwards to Egypt ran along the river to the bend by the modern town of Abu Hamed, and from there ran north again through the desert to come to the river once more near Korosko. As a result of this desert route, which remained in use well into the nineteenth century, Meroe, though further away from Egyptian markets, was in fact in easier contact with them than Napata had been, at least after the introduction of the camel.

From the point of view of agriculture, Meroe's superiority was even more marked. In addition to the riverain land, both *seluka* and *sagia*, there were, as there are today, wide areas in the beds of wadis such as the Hawad and the Awateib which could grow large quantities of grain, mostly sorghum, during the rains. After the flash floods caused by rain have subsided, these wadi beds absorb sufficient moisture to make possible the growing of grain, and in them there was sufficient agricultural land to support such towns as Meroe, and the towns that are assumed to have been at Naqa and Wad ben Naqa. In addition to the

grain-growing possibilities of the wadi beds, there was also, after the rains, plenty of pasture for the cattle. There are sufficient representations of cattle in Meroitic art, particularly in the reliefs on the walls of pyramid chapels, to make it clear that they played a large part in Meroitic life, and the present writer's discovery that a large percentage of the animal bones from domestic refuse in the town at Meroe were of cattle confirms their importance in Meroitic life and diet. Analogy with many of the modern peoples of the Sudan suggests that cattle may have been one of the main sources of power and wealth, and, if this was so, the possibility of maintaining large herds in the Island of Meroe would certainly have recommended such a region to rulers who may already have been the owners of herds before permanently moving their place of residence.

The immediate successors of Aspelta left no details of the events of their reigns, and it is not until the time of Amani-nete-yerike in the latter part of the fifth century BC that there is any information from written sources. There are four inscriptions of this king on the walls of Taharqa's temple at Kawa, and they provide much interesting detail. The language in which they are written, though Ancient Egyptian (as were all Kushite texts for many centuries), shows a loss of knowledge of that language, and the influence of an indigenous language causes an erratic use of it. There is some difference in the knowledge of Egyptian shown in different texts, presumably a reflection of varying scholarship by different scribes. This suggests that Egyptian was no longer in ordinary colloquial use, even if it had been in earlier times. The main inscription of this king, known as Kawa IX, is of particular importance since, as noted above, it gives the first mention of Meroe and also the information that the king was living there. It also shows that Talakhmani was Amani-nete-yerike's predecessor, thus confirming Reisner's deductions made on purely archaeological evidence before the inscription was known, and therefore strengthening reliance on his ordering of the kings buried at Nuri. Malewiebamani is also mentioned, though his relationship to Amani-nete-yerike is not clear; he may have been either father or brother.

The details of activities by the king as described in this inscription are of much interest since they show that, though now dwelling at Meroe, the king still needed to go to Napata to be accepted by the god Amun-Re' in the Jebel Barkal temple in the same way as Aspelta had been. The inscription, after saying that he was forty-one years old and dwelling at Meroe, tells how, after the death of Talakhmani at Meroe,

the new ruler first put down a revolt by a people called the *Rebrebs*, probably near to the confluence of the Nile and the Atbara. After that he went overland, across the Bayuda to Napata, taking nine days for the journey. Did he perhaps take the body of Talakhamani with him in mummified form for burial below Nuri pyramid 16? At Napata he went through various ceremonies both in the palace and in the Temple of Amun-Re', where the god spoke to him and gave him the kingdom. After this traditional acceptance as king, he went on what must be considered an inspection tour, perhaps required of all kings, to some of the most sacred places in the kingdom. But first he fought an action downstream from Napata against a people called the *Meded* and described as desert-dwellers; the site of this battle was *Krtn*, which it has not been possible to identify. After this, visits were made to the important temples at Kawa and at Argo (*Pnubs*); at Argo a donation of land was made to the temple, and at Kawa the approach to Taharqa's temple, apparently sanded up for forty-two years, was cleared and building repairs were undertaken. While at Kawa, the king also received a visit from the queen mother and this, like Taharqa's earlier invitation to his mother, shows that such events were of sufficient importance to be entered in official records, and thus emphasizes the role of women in the royal family. One of the other Kawa inscriptions gives a regnal year of twenty-five for Amani-nete-yerike, so he must have reigned for at least that number of years.

The earliest foreign description of Meroe, that of the Greek writer Herodotus, dates from this time. Herodotus was in Egypt in about 450 BC, and therefore perhaps during the reign of Malewiebamani. He did not go further south than Elephantine (Aswan), but he presumably met Meroites there and gathered his information from them. His descriptions are rather diffuse, and some of the geographical information cannot easily be reconciled with the facts, but there is no doubt that he had some first-hand informants, and it is of importance that he knew of Meroe, and that it lay upstream of the Fourth Cataract, whilst Napata is not mentioned. He knew of Psamtek's campaign, and describes how some of the Egyptian troops had deserted and had settled south of Meroe. It is not clear how much credence can be given to this story, which may be entirely fanciful, but it has been suggested by Wainwright that it is substantially correct, and that the deserters sailed up the White Nile and settled in southern Kordofan.¹ There is no archaeo-

¹ G. A. Wainwright, 'Some ancient records of Kordofan', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1947, 28, 11-24.

logical evidence for such a settlement, but the region is virtually unexamined.

Herodotus also described activities by the Persian King Cambyses, who, he says, attempted an invasion in about 525 BC, a period for which native documents are lacking, but which was possibly during the time of Amani-nataki-lebte. The Persian campaign came to grief in the desert, but prior to that Cambyses had sent spies to Meroe to see, according to Herodotus, if the 'Table of the Sun' was in the land of Ethiopia.¹ This 'Table' was said to be in a meadow near the city of the Ethiopians (presumably Meroe), and it was filled with meat by the priests every night so that all who came might eat. The spies were shown the 'Table' and other wonders and then returned. If the story is true, then the aim of the spies would have been to advise Cambyses on the feasibility of his projected invasion. It is difficult to relate these, perhaps mythological, stories to known facts, but it has been suggested that a temple which was excavated by Garstang in 1910 and which lies less than 2 km east of Meroe town should be identified with the 'Table',² and it is now normally, though without warrant, known as the Sun Temple; it is more likely to be a temple to the lion-god, Apedemek. Apart from this, Herodotus's information is of little value; he says that the spies took presents to the King of Meroe, who countered by giving them a bow which he suggested Cambyses would not be able to draw; they were shown various wonders and returned home. Cambyses's abortive invasion is said to have followed their return. There is little to be got from this for the history of Meroe, though the reference to the bow may be authentic in view of the long-standing association of Kush, known originally to the Egyptians as the 'Nine Bows', with archery. There are many examples of arrowheads; in temple and chapel reliefs there are a number of representations of kings and gods holding bows of considerable length; and stone thumb-rings, very probably used in archery, are common.

Of the last few kings to be buried at Nuri, we have inscriptions of Harsiotef and Nastasen. That of Harsiotef is very similar in subject matter to that of Amani-nete-yerike; it describes the king's journey to Napata to get the god's approval, as well as military campaigns against the *Meded* and the *Rehrebs*. It also records the king's many gifts to temples, and is particularly full of gratitude to the gods for the help

¹ The ancient writers normally use 'Ethiopia' to indicate the region of the Nile south of Egypt. It was so used also by Reisner to cover what we now call Kush (Napata/Meroe), but since Abyssinia took over the name as its official designation, it is no longer appropriate.

² A. H. Sayce in J. Garstang, *Meroe - the city of the Ethiopians* (Oxford, 1911), 27.

they had given him; before one of his campaigns Harsiotef asked Amun of Napata for his opinion and guidance before going into the field. The inscription is particularly interesting in showing, as Haycock says,¹ that Napata 'was a town full of aged buildings crumbling into ruin', and the imminent transfer, perhaps three generations later, of the royal burial-place from Nuri to Meroe shows that the glory of Napata had largely departed, even though the king still required the formal support of Amun-Re', an authority no doubt controlled by the priesthood.

Harsiotef's burial under Nuri pyramid no. 13 is the first one in which the model tools which are normally buried with a king, are made of iron rather than bronze. Though this is not the first appearance of iron, some having been found in the tomb of Taharqa, it is the first time that this metal is found in any quantity, and this is presumably an indication of its increasing commonness. In the same tomb were found fragments of a human skull, a rather rare event, since in the robbing of these tombs all the skeletons had been very badly damaged. This skull was sufficiently complete, and has been claimed to be that of a man in his middle twenties. If this is so, it cannot be of Harsiotef, since his inscription states clearly that it was written in the thirty-fifth year of his reign.

The inscription of Nastasen, the last king to be buried at Nuri, was written in the eighth year of his reign, but describes events happening some years earlier. It is concerned mainly with the ceremonies of his coronation. He describes how he was living at Meroe when he was summoned north, ostensibly by the god Amun of Napata, to undertake the traditional ceremonies which were necessary for accession to the kingship. He does not refer to his predecessor, but it is made quite clear that the journey to the north was made for the purpose of being formally accepted by Amun in the Temple at Jebel Barkal. Haycock has argued interestingly that the choice of successor was by this time being made at Meroe, and that the northern visit was merely to give notification of a *fait accompli*.² The words of the inscription are:

He [Nastasen] says 'While I was the good young man in Meroe, my good father Amun of Napata called to me saying "Go and summon the king's brothers who are in Meroe". I told them saying "Come let us go and enquire together about our [future] Lord", but they said "We will not come with you - it is you he wants for the good young man [i.e. the new king] because Amun of Napata your good father loves you."'

¹ Haycock, 'Towards a better understanding', 15.

² B. G. Haycock, 'The kingship of Kush in the Sudan', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1965, 7, 472.

This certainly strongly suggests that Nastasen had been chosen by a consensus. The journey to Napata is described, and this is followed by a description of the very elaborate ceremonial in which the new king had to participate, which included sacrifices and dances, and was followed by visits to other major religious centres in the region as far north as Kawa. On his way back for the final ceremonies at Napata, Nastasen stopped at Argo (where recently a large Meroitic temple has been found), and at each of these places was given ceremonial gifts. After returning to Napata, he stayed there five days, and then went to *Tore* (still not identified; Haycock suggests Sanam Abu Dom).¹ Ten days later Nastasen was once more at Napata, where the god gave him 'all the heaven, all peace, all the river and all men, and I went up and sat on the throne'. In return the king gave the god a number of gifts: four gardens with thirty-six men to maintain them, as well as many vessels of silver and copper, gold statues and cattle.

The remainder of the text is concerned with military affairs, written in the normal bombastic style. It is not clear whether the campaigns came some time after the coronation ceremonies, though this surely must have been so. The places where the military victories were gained cannot be identified; most of the enemies appear to have been desert tribes, and one of them is reported to have sacked temples at Kawa and *Tore* and to have stolen gold vessels originally presented by *Aspelta* and which were replaced by Nastasen.

More important, because of its chronological implications, is the account of a campaign against an enemy with boats. This enemy, whose name perhaps should be read as *Kambasuten* or something similar, was at one time taken to be Cambyses. But his invasion, if it took place, would have been c. 525 BC, far too early for Nastasen, unless the whole chronology of the kings has gone seriously astray. Hintze's reasonable suggestion that the name represents a variation of *Khabbash*, known from Egyptian sources to have been a local ruler of the region to the north of the Second Cataract c. 338-336 BC who campaigned against the Persians in Egypt, makes more sense, and if right gives a valuable check on the assumed date for Nastasen.²

The name of *Amanibakhi* is normally inserted in the king-list at this point, though there is no tomb which can be identified as his. The evidence for him is the existence of a stele and of an offering-table bearing his name, both found in the ruins of a church which was built in medieval times amongst the pyramids at *Nuri* as part of a Christian

¹ Haycock, 'The kingship of Kush', 473.

² Hintze, *Studien*, 17-20.

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community which lived in and amongst the royal graves, and was responsible for much of the grave-robbing. On stylistic grounds the two pieces belong here, but Amanibakhi could as well have come before Nastasen as after him. In any case Nastasen's death would seem to have been about 300 BC.

MEROE FROM C. 300 BC TO THE ROMAN INVASION

The death of Nastasen marks the end of royal burials at Nuri, and though there is no way of knowing what was happening at this time, there may have been events of considerable importance for the royal line. There are various elements of confusion: the first king to be buried at Meroe seems to have been Arakakamani, in the south cemetery under Beg. S. 6., but there is also a group of pyramids at Jebel Barkal which stylistically belong to the end of the fourth century. There has been much discussion as to the significance of this group and as to those who are buried there.

In his original historic scheme, Reisner assumed that these pyramids represented an independent line of rulers who had re-established the importance of Napata free from Meroe. When a group of royal names, of about this date, was found at Kawa, it was suggested that these might be some of those in the Barkal tombs. These names were:

Aryamani
Piankh-yerike-qa
Sabrakamani
Arnekhmani

These inscriptions, particularly that of Aryamani, are almost unintelligible. They are written in a form of Egyptian, presumably by scribes whose own language was Meroitic and who knew very little Egyptian. So far as they can be read, they seem to deal with records of gifts to temples and of festivals held in them. Arnekhmani's name was also found on a bronze head from the same site.

The identification of these kings with the Jebel Barkal pyramids, and the suggestion of a separate kingdom, had to be reconsidered when the name of Arnekhmani was found with good-quality Egyptian inscriptions on the walls of the Lion Temple at Musawwarat es-Sofra, which is further south even than Meroe, thus making it clear that Arnekhmani controlled that area and was likely to have been living at Meroe. Whatever the truth may be, and whatever the significance of the

pyramids at Barkal, the shift of the main royal cemetery from Nuri to Meroe seems to have taken place at a date not far removed from 300 BC. It may be of significance that this is close to the date of Alexander's conquest of Egypt in 332 BC, though no direct causal effect of that event can be seen. Further doubt about the existence of an independent line of rulers at Barkal comes from the writing of the name of Amanislo, perhaps the successor of Arakakamani, on two granite lions – the Prudhoe lions, found at Barkal. These lions, which were originally made in the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenophis III (1405–1370 BC), were at some time moved to Barkal, where Amanislo had his name carved on them. Since he was buried at Meroe (Pyramid S. 5), it again seems likely that rulers living at Meroe were controlling the north. It has however been suggested again recently that there was a brief period after the death of Nastasen before royal burials started at Meroe, and Wenig has suggested that the three, otherwise unknown, kings whose names were found at Kawa were buried at Barkal before burials started at Meroe.¹ His reconstruction of the succession and chronology of this period is as follows:

Aryamani	Bar. 11	315–290 BC
Piankh-yerike-qa	Bar. 14	298–280 BC
Sabarakamani	Bar. 15	280–270 BC

It is from about this time that elements of Meroitic art which are quite distinct from Egyptian art begin to appear, and the style of chapel reliefs in many cases takes on an increasingly indigenous appearance. (This was not always so: the reliefs and inscriptions on the walls of the Lion Temple at Musawwarat have a very close resemblance to those current at this time in Ptolemaic Egypt.) Hintze has used this stylistic evidence, together with the titles used in the royal titulary, to suggest that Arnekhmani, the builder of the temple, was in part a contemporary of Ptolemy IV (211–205 BC).² However, Haycock has criticized this view, suggesting that the king and the temple be dated somewhat earlier, perhaps c. 250 BC, in the reign of Ptolemy II.³ All attempts at establishing a precise chronology for Meroitic rulers are highly hypothetical, but some help is given by the Greek writer Diodorus Siculus, who tells us that Ergamenes, King of Meroe, was a contemporary of

¹ S. Wenig, 'Bemerkungen zur Chronologie des Reiches von Meroe', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1967, 13, 9–14.

² F. Hintze, 'Preliminary report on the excavations at Musawwarat es Sufra, 1960–1', *Kush*, 1962, 10, 177–8.

³ B. G. Haycock, 'Towards a date for King Ergamenes', *Kush*, 1965, 13, 264–6.

both Ptolemy II and Ptolemy IV. Ergamenes is usually taken to be the Meroitic Arqamani, who is known from inscriptions to have had a hand in temple-building in the far north at Philae and at Dakka. Parts of these same buildings bear the name of Ptolemy IV, so the equation of Ergamenes with Arqamani seems not implausible. On the other hand, it is not impossible that names as similar as Arakakamani, Arnekhmani and Arqamani may all have been rendered 'Ergamenes' by the Greeks. It certainly seems both that at this time there was closer contact with Egypt than at any other period of Meroitic history and that Arqamani's temple-building in Lower Nubia was an unusual event. Since the name of another Meroitic king, Adikhalamani, is also found on the temple at Dabod, there may have been some Meroitic occupation of the area, though no dwelling-sites or cemeteries of the period have been found. This was a time of rebellion against the Ptolemies in Upper Egypt, which persisted from *c.* 207 to *c.* 186 BC, and it is possible that the Meroites may have given aid to the Egyptian rebels. At some time after 180 BC, Ptolemy VI (180/1-145 BC) enlarged the Dabod temple, so Ptolemaic control must have been re-established by then, but perhaps not until after the Seleukid invasion of Egypt in 169 BC. There is no certainty that the king at Meroe had political control of this northern region, and evidence of Meroitic domestic occupation on any scale only appears considerably later.

The close contact with Ptolemaic Egypt was probably the reason for the very Egyptian style of the reliefs on the walls of Arqamani's pyramid chapel and on the walls of the Lion Temple at Musawwarat. On the other hand, there are also some very non-Egyptian representations in this temple, such as those of elephants and cattle, the regalia of the king, and of the god, Apedemek, to whom the temple is dedicated.

It seems unwise to press the evidence too far in an attempt to get precise dates, and it is safer to say that Arakakamani was buried at Meroe in about 300 BC and that amongst his immediate successors were Arnekhmani and Arqamani. These spanned the period from about 250 to 200 BC, during which the Musawwarat Lion Temple was built. Though Diodorus may have conflated several rulers in his description of Ergamenes, his account is extremely interesting in what it tells us about the choice of the king. This closely parallels the account given in the inscriptions of Nastasen and others, and therefore suggests that his other information may well be accurate. The best-known section of his account is that in which he describes Ergamenes's ending of the tradition by which the kings committed suicide on the instructions of the

priests. Since this account has been used many times in recent histories, it may be useful to give a translation of the whole passage:

Of all their customs the most astonishing is that which obtains in connection with the death of their kings. For the priests at Meroe who spend their time in the worship of the gods and the rites which do them honour, being the greatest and most powerful order, whenever the idea comes to them, despatch a messenger to the king with orders that he die. For the gods, they add, have revealed this to them, and it must be that the command of the immortals should in no wise be disregarded by one of mortal frame. And this order they accompany with other arguments, such as are accepted by a simple-minded nature, which has been bred in a custom that is both ancient and difficult to eradicate and which knows no argument that can be set in opposition to commands enforced by no compulsion. Now in former times the kings would obey the priests, having been overcome, not by arms nor by force, but because their reasoning powers had been put under a constraint by their very superstition; but during the reign of the second Ptolemy, the king of the Ethiopians, Ergamenes, who had had a Greek education and had studied philosophy, was the first to have the courage to disdain the command. For, assuming a spirit which became the position of a king, he entered with his soldiers into the unapproachable place where stood, as it turned out, the golden shrine of the Ethiopians, put the priests to the sword, and after abolishing this custom thereafter ordered affairs after his own will.

As for the custom touching the friends of the king, strange as it is, it persists, they said, down to our own time. For the Ethiopians have the custom, they say, that if their king has been maimed in some part of his body through any cause whatever, all his companions suffer the same loss of their own choice; because they consider that it would be a disgraceful thing if, when the king had been maimed in his leg, his friends should be sound of limb, and if in their goings forth from the palace they should not all follow the king limping as he did; for it would be strange that steadfast friendship should share sorrow and grief and bear equally all other things both good and evil, but should have no part in the suffering of the body. They say also that it is customary for the comrades of the kings even to die with them of their own accord, and that such a death is an honourable one and a proof of true friendship. And it is for this reason, they add, that a conspiracy against the king is not easily raised among the Ethiopians, all his friends being equally concerned both for his safety and their own. These, then, are the customs which prevail among the Ethiopians who dwell in their capital and those who inhabit both the island of Meroe and the land adjoining Egypt.

It may be useful at this point to list the rulers and their tombs at Meroe together with the dates which Hintze allocates to them. It will be seen that many of the identifications are uncertain, and that the list contains many more guesses than does that of the earlier rulers buried at Kurru and Nuri; this makes the dates as given even more uncertain, and they must be used with the greatest caution. This is not the place

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to give detailed arguments for the ordering of these rulers or for their allocation to individual tombs; the reader who wishes to pursue this matter should refer to Hintze's book. Detailed arguments concerning the list will continue for a long time – for example, Wenig has proposed a considerable number of changes, as can be seen by the list of rulers which he gives from Nastasen on.¹

List of kings buried at Begarawiya (Meroe), with tombs and dates according to Hintze:

28 Arakakamani	Beg. S. 6	295–275 BC
29 Amanislo	Beg. S. 5	275–260
30 Queen Bartare	Beg. S. 10	260–250
31 Amani . . . tekha ? ^a	Beg. N. 4	250–235
32 (Arnekhamani) ^b	Beg. N. 53	235–218
33 Arqamani	Beg. N. 7	218–200
34 Tabirqa ?	Beg. N. 9	200–185
35 . . . iwal ?	Beg. N. 8	185–170
36 Queen Shanakdakhete	Beg. N. 11	170–160
37 Unknown king	Beg. N. 12	160–145
38 (Naqrinsan) ? ? ^c	Beg. N. 13	145–120
39 ((Tanyidamani)) ^d	Beg. N. 20	120–100
40 ((. . . Khale))	Beg. N. 21	100–80
41 ((. . . amani)) ? ?	Beg. N. 14	80–65
42 (Amanikhabale)	Beg. N. 2	65–41
43 Queen Amanishakhete	Beg. N. 6	41–12
44 Netekamani	Beg. N. 22	12 BC – AD 12
45 Queen Amanitare	Beg. N. 1	12 BC – AD 12
46 (Sherkarer)	Beg. N. 10	AD 12–17
47 ((Pisakar))	Beg. N. 15	17–35
48 Amanitaraqide	Beg. N. 16	35–45
49 Amanitenmemide	Beg. N. 17	45–62
50 Queen Amanikhatashan	Beg. N. 18	62–85
51 Tarekeniwal	Beg. N. 19	85–103
52 ((Amanikhalika))	Beg. N. 32	103–108
53 (Aritenyebekhe)	Beg. N. 34	108–132
54 ((Aqrakamani))	Beg. N. 40	132–137
55 ((Adeqetali))	Beg. N. 41	137–146
56 Takideamani	Beg. N. 29	146–165
57 ((. . . reqerem)) ?	Beg. N. 30	165–184

¹ Hintze, *Studien, passim*; Wenig, 'Bemerkungen zur Chronologie', 42–4.

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58 . . .	Beg. N. 37	187-194
59 ((Teritedakhatey))	Beg. N. 38	194-209
60 Aryesbekhe	Beg. N. 36	209-228
61 Teritnide	Beg. N. 51	228-246
62 Aretnide	Beg. N. 35	246
63 Tegerideamani	Beg. N. 28	246-266
64 ((Tamelerdeamani))?	Beg. N. 27	266-283
65 ((Yesbekheamani))?	Beg. N. 24	283-300
66 ((Lakhideamani))??	Beg. N. 26	300-308
67 ((Maleqerebar))?	Beg. N. 25	308-320

a, b ? and ?? mean reading of name uncertain

c () means identification with a tomb uncertain but probable

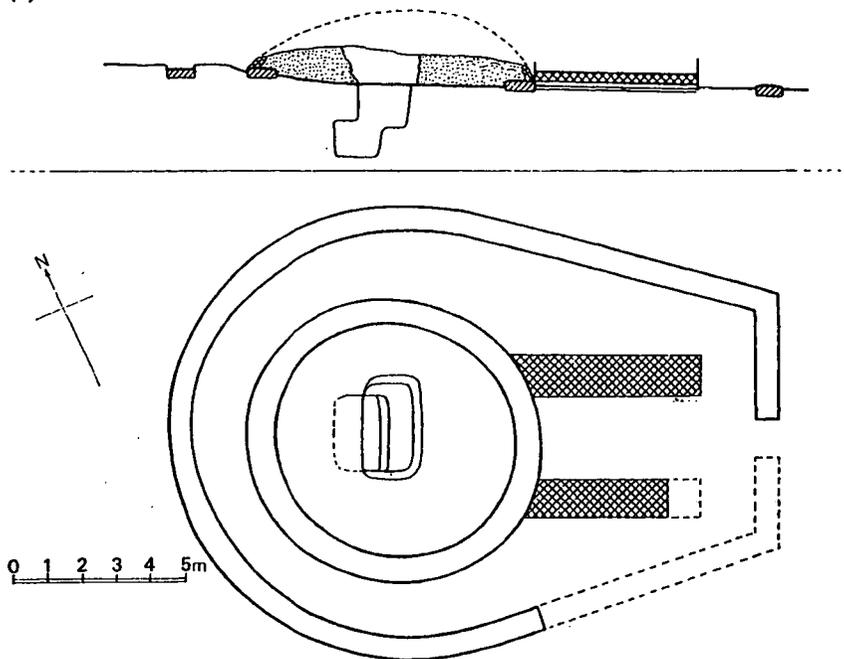
d (()) means identification with a tomb is only a guess

The listing of the rulers, their burial-places and approximate dates as given by Hintze does not imply that this list has greater authority than those of other scholars, but it is convenient and uncomplicated and gives some notion of order and date. The arguments given by Wenig in support of his alterations are substantial.

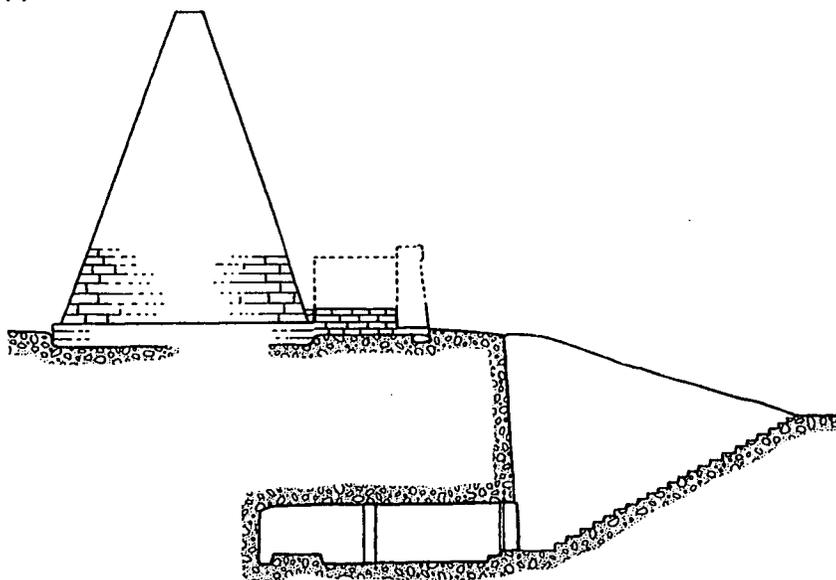
The change in the place of royal burials from Nuri to Meroe suggests some political events of which we know nothing, and it presumably also indicates a loss of influence by the priesthood of Napata. Perhaps the important religious role of the god Amun at Napata was now transferred to Meroe and exercised from the Amun Temple at that place. This date, of around 300 BC, also sees the beginning of a change in the culture, and it is from this time on that objects in the style usually described as Meroitic are found. The changes go much further than just reflecting changes in Egyptian styles brought about by Ptolemaic influence, and the most noticeable aspect is the increasingly indigenous style which is now found. Material for description is not plentiful but there are sufficient monuments, other than the pyramids, to allow a general assessment to be made.

By far the most important, as well as the most plentiful, information is to be found in the royal burials, and, as already indicated, it is this series of burials, first excavated and studied by Reisner some fifty years ago, that has provided the evidence on which a chronological and historical framework has been based. From the beginning of the use of the cemetery at Nuri, all the rulers of Kush appear to have been buried under pyramids, thus marking a radical change from the practice in the earlier cemetery at Kurru. At Kurru the earliest graves were surmounted

(1)



(2)



30 Meroitic royal burials: (1) Tumulus at Kurru; (2) Section through a typical pyramid and burial-chamber.
(No. 1 after D. Dunham, *El Kurru*, 1950, p. 21; no. 2 after Shinnie, *Meroe*, 1967, fig. 17.)

by mounds or tumuli, and the later ones probably by the truncated pyramidal structures known in Egyptian archaeology as 'mastabas'. It has been suggested that the tomb of Piankhy at Kurru, at least, was covered by a pyramid, but such of the superstructure as remains suggests that its interpretation as a mastaba is more likely.

What cultural influences, or changes in local fashion, led to the introduction of the pyramid for Taharka's burial cannot now be known. It may be that the idea of pyramid-burial was derived from Egypt, where, although use of pyramids for royal burials had long ceased, private individuals had been buried in or under pyramids to at least a little before 1000 BC. These late Egyptian burials, as at Deir el-Medina, though separated in time by 300 years from the appearance of the first Meroitic (Kushite) ones, resemble them by their pointed shape, which differs considerably from the Egyptian royal ones of earlier times. At least one private pyramid-burial is known from the Sudan: that of Amenemhat, a local chief, at Oweis el Quruny, a little north of where Wadi Halfa once stood. The style of chapel associated with the Egyptian burials is different from those at Nuri and Barkal, and in Kush this feature, at least, may be indigenous. The first appearance, in a rather simple form, of what was to become the normal Meroitic funerary chapel is at Kurru, where Tumulus no. 6 has a small chapel consisting of two parallel mud brick walls built on to the east side of the mound. From that time on it became normal to build such chapels against the east side of the tomb superstructure, whether tumulus or pyramid, progressing from the undecorated walls of Kurru and Nuri to the elaborately sculptured ones at Meroe.

Apart from the royal burials, our information was until very recently confined to the large non-royal cemetery at Sanam Abu Döm, across the river from the temples of Jebel Barkal and a few kilometres downstream from Nuri, and the non-royal burials (the great majority) in the South Cemetery at Meroe and those in the West Cemetery at the same place. In all these cemeteries there are burials dating certainly from the eighth century BC and, in the case of the Meroe West Cemetery, continuing in use for many centuries.

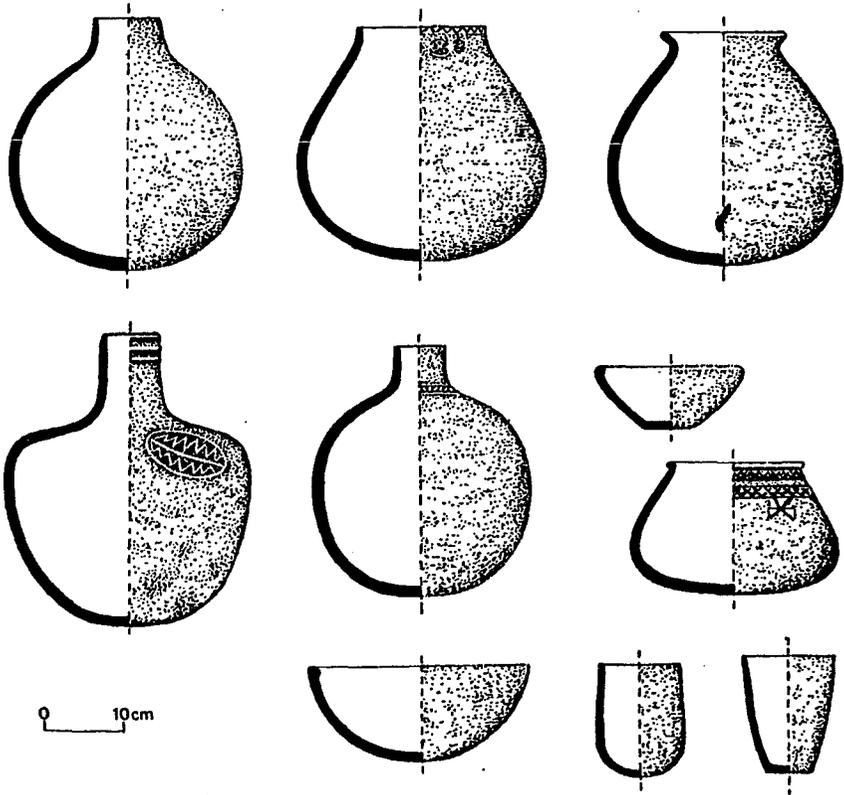
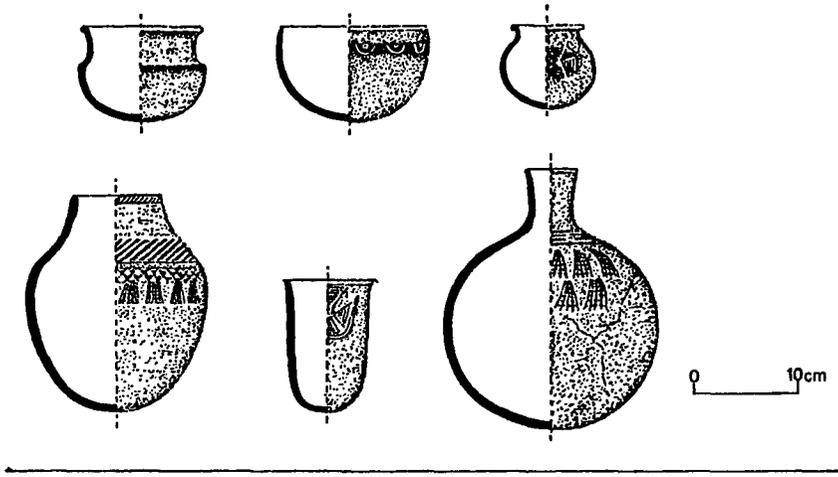
These cemeteries show a variety of burial customs, and the interpretation of the significance of the variations has been the subject of much discussion. At Meroe two types are observable, one consisting of a rectangular grave in which the body was laid on a bed, a burial method known from Kurru and certainly indigenous, and the other much closer to Egyptian custom, in which the bodies, in this case mummified, were

placed in wooden coffins and frequently covered with a bead net in a manner similar to contemporary burials in Egypt. Whether this difference in burial customs reflects the presence of two communities, or possibly social classes, living contemporaneously, or whether it reflects a chronological difference, is not clear. At Sanam Abu Dom the burials show some variation from this, and several different types of grave have been found, the two main types being, first, a rectangular chamber either dug into the rock or built up of brick within a pit, and secondly, simple rectangular or oval pits. In the more elaborate graves, the bodies were usually mummified, but there were also a number of simpler burials in which the bodies were either laid on their backs in an extended attitude, or were contracted with the knees tightly bent. This cemetery was dated by the excavator from c. 750 to 425 BC.¹

It is again not clear what the real significance of these differences is, although we are certainly in the presence of two separate cultural traditions, one Egyptian, representing perhaps a section of the native population influenced by Egyptian ideas rather than actual Egyptians, and the other maintaining a burial custom which was entirely indigenous. The material from the graves is much of it of Egyptian style: it consists in the main of pottery, beads, faience amulets in considerable variety, and a small number of metal objects both of copper and iron. Amongst the pottery however are a certain number of vessels of non-Egyptian type. These, unlike the wheel-made pottery of Egyptian style, are made by hand and are in a very old Sudanese tradition of pottery, with incised decoration going back to 'C-Group' times of about 2000 BC, and which became once more rather popular after about 300 BC. This, together with the non-Egyptian style of burial, is our only information for the persistence of a native tradition, which presumably continued to affect a large proportion, perhaps the majority, of the population away from the main centres where Egyptian cultural influence was at its strongest. Further evidence for this indigenous culture will probably only be obtained when dwelling-sites, and particularly non-urban ones, in the region of Napata have been identified and investigated.

The only place where information is now available about the living rather than the dead at this time is from the recent excavations by the present writer at Meroe. Here it seems that there was occupation from some time well before 500 BC, perhaps going back earlier than c. 750 BC.

¹ F. Ll. Griffith, 'Oxford excavations in Nubia', *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, 1923, 10, 73.



31 Meroitic domestic pottery of non-Egyptian styles.
 (After Shinnie, *Meroe*, fig. 41, and plates 56-9, the latter courtesy
 The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.)

The evidence from the site is still inconclusive, but it can be said that there was a considerable settlement from soon after the earliest date. The very earliest occupation is known only from a rather small area of the main town mound where the finding of post-holes is evidence for a hut, probably similar to those used in the region today by the non-agricultural section of the population. This hut was shortly followed by the erection of buildings of sun-dried brick, and houses of this type of construction, presumably flat-roofed, continued to be built until the final abandonment of the site, and are characteristic of the modern villages of the area.

Information about public and royal buildings as well as temples is rather inconclusive, but from a number of stone blocks from the excavations by Garstang at Meroe (1909-14) which were recently refound, we now know that a building, perhaps a temple, was erected there as early as the reign of Senkamanisken, though the presence of objects in graves of the West Cemetery bearing names of earlier kings as far back as Kashta may be evidence for much earlier occupation, and the results of recent excavation would not be inconsistent with this.

The picture of the culture given by the investigation of dwellings at Meroe is not very different from that to be derived from a study of the contents of the graves. The picture is a very partial one, since a large amount of the material objects would have been of organic materials, wood, leather and basketry; these have all perished, largely as a result of the activities of white ants, and it becomes necessary to reconstruct a picture of past life on extremely incomplete evidence, consisting in the main of pottery, stone and faience, with a small amount of metal.

Many of the objects found are not substantially different from those known from Egypt at the time, and the large number of beads and amulets of faience very closely resemble Egyptian ones. Pottery too in many cases shows types known from Egypt during the XXVth and subsequent dynasties, though, with a few exceptions, the pottery at Meroe was certainly locally made. There are some wares which are distinct from Egyptian types and represent the indigenous element in the culture. Stone objects are common; they consist mainly of a variety of pounders and hammer-stones, as well as upper and lower grindstones of the type known as saddle querns. These have a long history throughout the world and are still in use today, including in the region round Meroe, for grinding grain as well as other substances such as spices, cosmetics and various types of incense.

The picture we get of the culture of the time is that of an organized

state with a ruling house, which in the tradition of ancient Oriental monarchies may have had considerable powers, but whose claim to the throne appears to have been based on choice by a consensus of opinion, rather than by direct right of succession. Succession, where we have evidence for it from inscriptions – and this means only from early times – was from brother to brother, and the mother of the king, to be known in later times as Candace, was of considerable importance. Of the nature of Meroitic administration we know little, but to maintain rule over such a long stretch of river valley must have called for some form of organization able to carry the king's instructions through the country. Temple priesthoods certainly played an important part, even in the selection of the ruler, and, if the story about Ergamenes is correct, they had the power to remove the king, at least until about the middle of the third century BC. Much of the wealth of the country was probably in their hands.

Most of the population was probably living in villages in huts of wood and straw which have left virtually no trace, and many of the inhabitants away from the river are likely to have been nomads, or at least semi-nomads, practising transhumance like many of the dwellers in the Butana today. These people, who during the dry season dwell close to the river, move away from it as soon as the rain begins to fall in June or July, and travel eastwards along a number of large wadis in whose beds they plant sorghum as soon as sufficient rain has fallen. They also take herds of cattle up to the grazing grounds, and the same may well have been the practice in Meroitic times.

The urban population lived in buildings of sun-dried brick as already described, and it seems likely that there were a number of large towns in existence before 500 BC. Evidence from Meroe, where blocks from a Temple of Malenaqen (c. 550 BC) have been found, makes it certain that there was a town of considerable size there by that date; there may have been one at Napata, even if it has not been found, and it is highly likely that the large mound at Kawa, only superficially examined so far, covers another town beginning far back in early Napatan times. We know of other towns – Danqeil, north of Berber, and Wad ben Naqa, south of Meroe – while several large mounds which probably cover other towns lie close to the river between Meroe and Wad ben Naqa. There may also have been a town associated with the several temples at Naqa, though until that site has been investigated we cannot say how early was the first occupation there. A date of 500 BC is conservative, and it may well be that there were flourishing towns as early as the time of Taharqa. The

remarkable and unique complex of temples at Musawwarat es-Sofra appears to go back at least to the fifth century BC, and there may have been buildings even earlier. Since several of these towns lie upstream of Napata, the view that Kushite civilization began at Napata, as a provincial copy of Egyptian culture of the time, and spread south only at some time in the fourth century, requires revision: the southern province of Kush was certainly of importance by 500 BC.

The discovery that there was a considerable urban settlement at Meroe well before 500 BC, and perhaps as early as the eighth or ninth centuries, may therefore be an indication that Meroe was of equal importance to, perhaps of even greater importance than, Napata in the first centuries of Kush. Such a view would help to explain some of the indigenous elements in the life of the country. It is not, however, an essential prerequisite for explaining non-Egyptian elements, since there had been a long-standing independent tradition certainly since the time, *c.* 2000 BC, when Sudanese chiefs had ruled at Kerma and traded with Egypt.

The only certain fact about a transfer of authority from Napata to Meroe, if such ever happened, is that by about 300 BC the place of royal burial had been moved from Nuri to Meroe, where the cemetery was to remain for as long as there was an organized Meroitic kingdom. Since, as has been seen, the royal residence had been at Meroe for a century or more before this, the assumption is that this marked some important change in the religious centre. Napata, whether or not it had been a royal residence and administrative centre, was certainly of great religious importance, and the implication of the ceremonies that kings underwent there is that the Temple of Amun at Barkal enshrined the centre of the royal cult. The later history of this temple is somewhat obscure, but though it was not abandoned, and some restoration and even new building was carried out there in the first century BC and early first century AD, its importance had probably considerably decreased.

There are pyramids at Barkal which on stylistic grounds should date from the first century BC, so the area had not lost all its former importance, and Reisner suggested that during this time there was an independent state centred at Napata.¹ In assessing the significance of Napata, it is perhaps noteworthy that although Herodotus mentions Meroe as the metropolis, Strabo, writing in about 7 BC, clearly thought that Napata was the royal residence and says so in the unambiguous words: 'Napata,

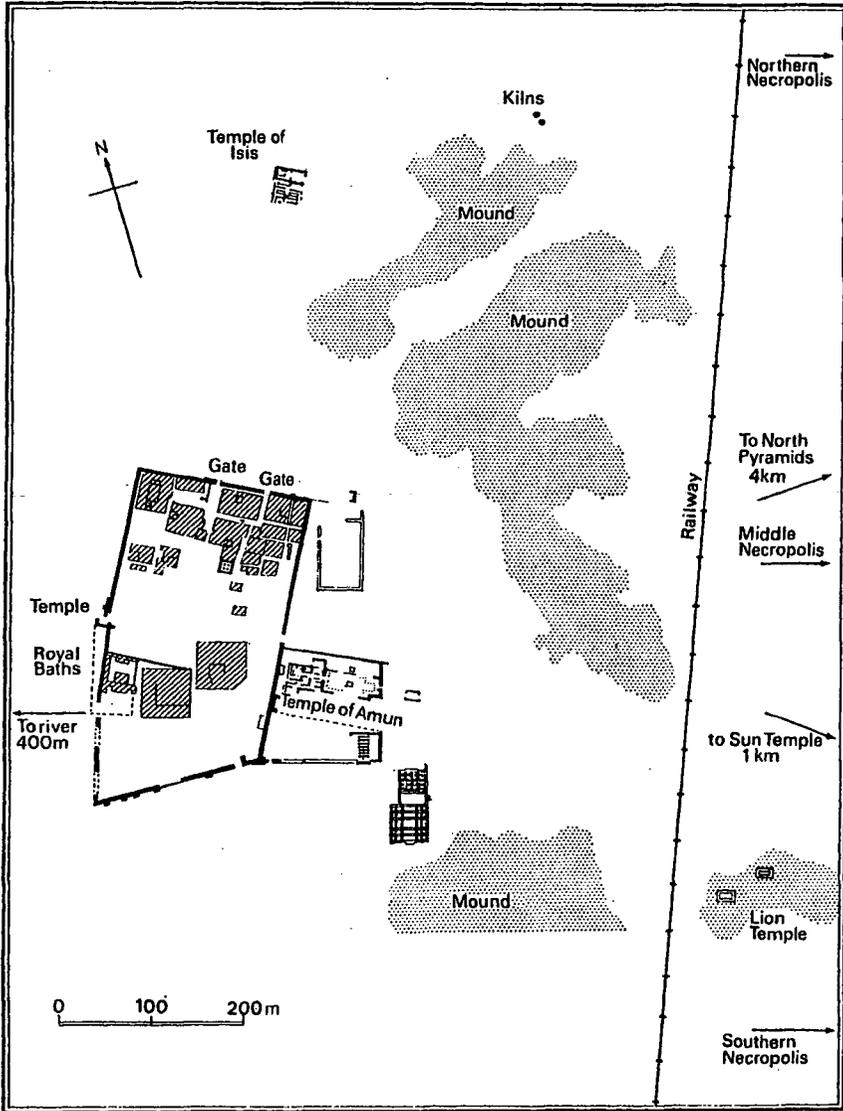
¹ G. A. Reisner, 'The Meroitic Kingdom of Ethiopia', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 1923, 9, 59-62.

this was the royal residence of Candace', having already stated a little earlier that Candace was ruler of the Ethiopians. Although the Amun Temple at Meroe in the form now known does not seem to be earlier than the first century BC, no investigation has been carried out to see if there was an earlier building there. But this is extremely likely, and it may be, as already suggested, that this temple took the place of that at Barkal and became the centre of the Amun cult. Perhaps it was here, rather than, as is usually supposed, at Napata, that Ergamenes carried out his coup against the Amun priesthood.

Whatever the reality may be, from about 300 BC Meroe became both royal residence and royal cemetery and the site of a large temple dedicated to Amun, who maintained the position of official state god, a notion originally derived from Egypt, although from this time onwards several local deities begin to be known and have temples built for their worship.

Fortunately, unlike Napata, the town of Meroe is known and identified, and many facets of Meroitic life and funeral customs can be studied here. Descriptions of the site can be found elsewhere, and all that need be said here is that the town, standing about 500 m from the present east river bank, consists of a large complex containing both a walled area – conventionally, and probably rightly, known as the Royal City – containing large public buildings – some perhaps being the royal residence – together with a very remarkable bath and several small temples, the large Temple of Amun outside the wall to the east, and two large mounds which cover the buildings of the non-royal town, one of which has been investigated during the last few years (fig. 32). Small temples discovered during 1974–6 suggest a ceremonial way running east from the Amun Temple towards the Sun Temple. The town complex is bounded on the east by a number of mounds of slag, the debris from iron-working activities (pl. 1). Within this area are the remains of several small shrines, two of which are built on top of an artificially made mound constructed of iron slag. Further east lies another temple, that conventionally known as the 'Sun Temple' (pl. 2), close beside an artificially made reservoir, and the cemeteries. These cemeteries fall into several groups. Nearest to the town are a large number of simple mound graves, investigated by Garstang and grouped by him into three: South (graves 1–99), Middle (300–99), and North (500–99); these cemeteries are all rather late in the history of the town, do not appear to be earlier than the first century BC, and continued in use until AD 300 or later. Beyond them to the east lie the better-known three groups of pyramids which contain the royal burials. Of these

THE NILOTIC SUDAN AND ETHIOPIA



32 Plan of the town of Meroe.
(After Shinnie, *Meroe*, fig. 19.)

three cemeteries, the south one appears to be the oldest, with graves going back well into the eighth century BC. It was only towards the end of the use of this cemetery that rulers were buried in it, and the pyramid of Arakakamani, the first ruler to be buried at Meroe, is here. Only two other rulers' burial-places are known from this cemetery: those of

Amanislo, already mentioned as moving the Prudhoe lions, and of Queen Bartare, both assumed to be direct successors of Arakakamani (though Wenig would remove Bartare's name from the list of rulers, together with several other queens usually so listed, on the grounds that though they have the title Candace, they do not carry the title *gere* which seems normal for rulers).¹ After this the cemetery was abandoned, presumably because there was no convenient space left, and all later rulers seem to have been buried under pyramids erected along the ridge a short way further north. The third group of burials, the West Cemetery, lies between those two and the town, and, although it contains a number of pyramids, it does not appear that any rulers were buried there. This cemetery covers a long time-span, and it is usually assumed that many of those buried there were related to the royal family.

Since there are no detailed inscriptions in Egyptian, other than ones of a purely religious nature, it is impossible to give any account of events during the time of the first rulers to be buried at Meroe. Even the restoration of the list of rulers and identification of their burial-places is fraught with difficulty. For example, no pyramid can certainly be identified with Arnekhmani, though he is well known from his inscription at Musawwarat es-Sofra. Pyramid N. 53 is attributed to him, but this is only a guess, since no name has been found on the pyramid itself. The argument for the attribution is that, from its location, this pyramid should belong in the later third century BC, and that the burial-chamber is the only three-roomed one, that is of the type associated with kings, in the period immediately before Arqamani.

There seems little doubt that Arakakamani was the first to be buried at Meroe in the South Cemetery, and that pyramid N. 4 was the first to be erected on the north ridge. The name of the ruler buried there is damaged in the chapel inscription, but what is left can be read as 'Amani . . . tekha'. Arqamani, presumably to be identified with Ergamenes, came soon after, perhaps succeeding Arnekhmani. The problems concerning his identification and date have already been discussed, as have his temple-building activities in Lower Nubia (p. 228), which perhaps suggest a Meroitic invasion and occupation of the region during his reign. This, implying closer contact with Egypt, whether friendly or hostile, may account for the good Egyptian style of his chapel reliefs.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the names of the next few rulers. A Queen Shanakdakhete is known from an inscription in a

¹ Wenig, 'Bemerkungen zur Chronologie', 3-4. See also p. 248.

temple at Naqa – it is the first in Meroitic hieroglyphs to be approximately dated, the conventional date for this queen being 170–160 BC. She may have been buried under Beg. N. 11. The chronological order of the pyramids is entirely dependent on a study, originally made by Reisner, of the architectural styles and the tomb contents, and though later study may change it in detail, the over-all arrangement is likely to be right. Another ruler from about this time is Tanyidamani, whose name occurs twice at Barkal, once on a stele, and on a votive tablet from the Lion Temple at Meroe as well as in a graffito at Musawwarat. It is guessed that he was buried under pyramid Beg. N. 20, which is of a style which marks something of a change from what went before: it is smaller than earlier ones, and the burial-chamber consists of only two rooms instead of the three which were previously used.

Since there are pyramids at Barkal which, architecturally, seem to belong to this time, Reisner assumed that there had been another independent line of rulers at that place. But the finding of Tanyidamani's name at Meroe, and the wide geographical distribution of the names of some of his successors, make this unlikely. The list of rulers drawn up by Hintze also allows for a separate group, whom he assumes to have been buried at Barkal and therefore to have ruled from there; this includes Akinidad, Teriteqas and a Queen Amanirenas, whose names have been found in the north, at Dakka and at Kawa, but are also known from Meroe. Since there is a large inscription from the temple at Hamdab, close to Meroe, bearing the name of Akinidad, it seems most improbable that he was ruling from Napata.

This period, at the end of the first century BC and the beginning of the first century AD, is of considerable complexity and importance. It marks a flowering of Meroitic culture and is the time when most of the artistic attributes normally described as Meroitic were developed. There are more buildings and inscriptions known from this period than from any other, and the reliefs on pyramid chapels, which comprise the greater part of Meroitic art, mainly date from this time, as do most of the pieces of sculpture in the round. The pyramid chapel reliefs are perhaps the most important for the study of artistic change and development, since some attempt can be made to date them. These reliefs, which span nearly six hundred years, provide a mass of valuable information for the study of Meroitic art, iconography and religious ideas, and show a development from the Hellenistic Egyptian style of such chapels as that of Arqamani at the very end of the third century, to those like Beg. N. 11, perhaps of Queen Shanakdakhete, where more

distinctive Meroitic elements are seen in a procession of small figures, representing priests bearing palm branches (a scene which was to persist in these depictions down to the end of the Meroitic state; the last one is at pyramid Beg. N. 26 of about AD 300), as well as in the completely non-Egyptian style of representation of royalty. The chapel of Queen Amanishakhete (Beg. N. 6) of the very end of the first century BC is a good example of this; the depiction of the queen as a very plump woman, with neck wrinkles and face scars is distinctively Meroitic. So also are the details of clothing and personal adornment, the fringed garment worn over the right shoulder, the tassels hanging from the shoulders and the large beads.

In the art of this period we see a distinctive Meroitic culture – certainly owing much to Egypt, but also with a marked flavour and character of its own. It can be assumed that this art developed first at Meroe, and that the main centre of artistic activity was there close to the royal court. Certainly the chapel reliefs are there, and probably more examples of the art have been found at Meroe than anywhere else. There may have been other influences from outside in some aspects of Meroitic art, and there are hints of eastern and Syrian elements but, however this may have been, native genius was the most important element in creating a distinctive art style which continued in being for several hundred years and contributed something to succeeding civilizations. Perhaps the most distinctive Meroitic contribution was in its pottery (pl. 3). Indeed, pottery, by virtue of the quantity in which it has been found as well as by the high artistic quality of some of it, is the best known of all the products of Meroitic culture. The fine painted wares, such as the famous ‘egg-shell’ pottery with its range of painted decoration, have been much admired, and so too has much of the rather larger and thicker wares grouped by Adams into his group II, ‘Meroitic Utility’, where the larger surface areas allowed the artist to develop more elaborate anthropomorphic and zoomorphic designs. The smaller and finer pots tend to have more conventional designs, in many cases of Egyptian origin, such as the *ankh*, the lotus and the Uraeus, but they also at times carry zoomorphic designs which are surely based on local observation, as in one sherd recently found at Meroe showing a guinea-fowl, giraffes etc. This particular pottery style and ware does not have a very long time-range – it may not go back earlier than the beginning of the first century AD and it lasted perhaps for two hundred years. But its importance as a fresh, new artistic form of considerable merit cannot be overestimated.

This was also the period of Meroe's closest contact with the world of the Mediterranean, when it was best known to that world, and could be regarded as an extension of it. Certainly some travellers, perhaps merchants and scholars, from the classical world visited Meroe, and the names of several are given by Pliny, amongst them Simonides, who is said to have resided at Meroe for five years. A little later, in the third century AD, Meroe was the setting for the literary work, the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, in which the heroine was daughter of the King of Meroe. This shows that the town and kingdom were well known at that time. It is presumably to an event in the first century AD that the story in the Acts of the Apostles about the eunuch of Candace who was baptized by Philip refers.

A number of objects of Mediterranean origin, both Hellenistic and Roman, have been found in the royal burials and amongst the ruins of the town of Meroe. One of these pieces is an Attic rhyton, a pottery vessel for the pouring of libations, bearing the signature of the well-known Athenian potter Sotades (c. 400 BC). This remarkable object was found in tomb Beg. S. 24, and is good evidence for dating the tomb later than the beginning of the fourth century BC, though no greater precision can be given on the evidence of the rhyton alone, since there is no way of knowing how long such a piece might have been kept – perhaps as an heirloom – before being placed in a burial. Beg. S. 24 is regarded as being dated approximately to 350 BC. Apart from this, a fine gilded silver goblet of Roman work dating from the first century AD was discovered amongst the fallen blocks of Beg. N. 2, and other pieces of artistic merit have been found.

The finding of these pieces suggests that trade between the eastern Mediterranean, principally Alexandria, and Meroe was considerable. It can be presumed that the goods sent in exchange were the precious natural products of the country which had been exchanged for manufactured objects since early pharaonic times (see p. 220). Although a scattering of Ptolemaic and Roman coins has been found at Meroe and other places, the Meroites themselves never developed a coinage.

We know very little about the routes by which Meroitic trade was carried on, but it seems likely that two main lines of traffic were in use. It is improbable that the river carried much trade, and such trade as went directly north to Egypt from Meroe is more likely to have left the river at Abu Hamed and gone across the desert to Korosko, from where goods could have been loaded on boats for Egypt with only the First Cataract to negotiate. Certainly after the introduction of the camel,

this desert route, which continued in use until recent times, would have presented no great difficulty. The other route, which may have been the most important, would have gone eastwards across the Butana (Island of Meroe) to the Red Sea, and then either northwards to one of the Egyptian Red Sea ports, such as Berenice, or across to Arabia and then northwards to Syria. This route had been in use for centuries, as is shown by the famous voyage to Punt in the reign of Hatshepsut (c. 1500 BC), since whatever the precise location of Punt, it was certainly at the southern end of the Red Sea. No trace of routes across the Butana to the sea have yet been found, but since these would have been mere caravan trails they would have left little trace. However, we know that the Ptolemys, and after them the Romans, were trading along the coast, and after the Roman trade to India began in the second century AD, there must have been watering-stations at the very least. There is good information for the time of the Ptolemies, and it is known that in the search for war-elephants, with which to oppose the Indian elephants of their Seleukid rivals, many expeditions were sent to the east coast of Africa and the harbour of Ptolemais Theron was established. Strabo, though writing somewhat after the event, describes the establishment of what was a trading post rather than a formal harbour by Eumedes, who had been sent by Ptolemy II. It continued in use into the first century AD (or, if new ideas on the dating of the *Periplus* are right, somewhat later), when it was described by the writer of *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* as a small trading town without harbour installations. The trade in elephants had ceased by then, the African elephant having been found inferior to the Indian one for war purposes, but the *Periplus* says that ivory was obtained. The site of Ptolemais has not been identified with certainty, but Crowfoot, basing himself on the rather tenuous topographical indications given by classical writers and on the finding of one stone block with Hellenistic-style mouldings, proposed that it was at the site of the modern settlement of Aqiq.¹

MEROE AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Meroe came fully into the classical world with the invasion of its northern region by the Roman governor of Egypt, Publius Petronius, in the year 23 BC. This campaign was the first serious Roman incursion into Meroitic territory, though an inscription at Philae of Gaius

¹ J. W. Crowfoot, 'Some Red Sea ports in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan', *Geographical Journal*, 1911, 37, 330-4.

Cornelius Gallus, the first Roman prefect of Egypt, describes his taking an army south of the First Cataract, where he received envoys from the King of Meroe, perhaps Amanikhabale, and took him into Roman protection in 29 BC. We have no other evidence for this event and it may in part be Roman boasting. If the date is right, then Hintze's date for Amanikhabale needs adjusting, since he has Queen Amanishakhete reigning at this time.

By the time of Petronius, who became governor in 28 BC, there had been considerable contact between Roman Egypt and the Meroites, mostly at Philae, where an annual pilgrimage to the Temple of Isis was an important event in the life of Lower Nubia until it was prohibited by Justinian in the sixth century AD. The frontier seems at this time to have been just south of Syene (modern Aswan) and relations were in the main friendly, but, apparently taking advantage of the absence of part of the Roman garrison in Egypt, the Meroites attacked Syene, Philae and Elephantine; the account by Strabo implies that Dakka (Pselchis) lay within the area of Meroitic rule. The military events were recorded by Strabo, Pliny and Dio Cassius. Strabo's account (Bk XVII, Pt 1, Secs. 53, 54) is the fullest and says:

Now Egypt was generally inclined to peace from the outset, because of the self-sufficiency of the country, and of the difficulty of invasion by outsiders, being protected on the north by a harbourless coast, and by the Egyptian sea, and on the east and west by the desert mountains of Libya and Arabia, as I have said; and the remaining parts, those towards the south, are inhabited by Troglodytes, Blemmyes, Nubae, and Megabari, those Ethiopians who live above Syene. These are nomads, and not numerous, or warlike either, though they were thought to be so by the ancients, because often, like brigands, they would attack defenceless persons. As for those Ethiopians who extend towards the south of Meroe, they are not numerous either, nor do they collect in one mass, inasmuch as they inhabit a long, narrow and winding stretch of river-land, such as I have described before; neither are they well equipped for warfare or for any other kind of life. And now, too, the whole of the country is similarly disposed to peace. And the following is a sign of the fact; the country is sufficiently guarded by the Romans with only three cohorts, and even these are not complete, and when the Ethiopians dared to make an attack upon them, they imperilled their own country. The remaining Roman forces in Egypt are hardly as large as these . . .

But the Ethiopians, emboldened by the fact that a part of the Roman force in Egypt had been drawn away with Aelius Gallus when he was carrying on war against the Arabians, attacked the Thebais and the garrison of the three cohorts at Syene and by an unexpected onset took Syene and Elephantine and Philae, and enslaved the inhabitants, and also pulled down the statues of Caesar. But Petronius, setting out with less than 10,000 infantry and 800

cavalry against 30,000 men, first forced them to flee back to Pselchis, an Ethiopian city, and sent ambassadors to demand what they had taken, as also to ask the reasons why they had begun war; and when they said that they had been wronged by the Monarchs, he replied that these were not rulers of the country but Caesar; and when they had requested three days for deliberation, but did nothing they should have done, he made an attack and forced them to come forth to battle; and he quickly turned them to flight. since they were badly marshalled and badly armed; for they had large shields, and those too made of raw oxhide, and as weapons some had only axes, others pikes, and others swords. Now some were driven together into the city, others fled into the desert, and others found refuge on a neighbouring island, having waded into the channel, for on account of the current the crocodiles were not numerous there. Among these fugitives were the generals of Queen Candace, who was a ruler of the Ethiopians in my time – a masculine sort of woman, and blind in one eye. These, one and all, he captured alive, having sailed after them in both rafts and ships, and he sent them forthwith down to Alexandria; and he also attacked Pselchis and captured it; and if the multitude of those who fell in the battle be added to the number of the captives, those who escaped must have been altogether few in number. From Pselchis he went to Premnis, a fortified city, after passing through the sand-dunes, where the army of Cambyses was overwhelmed when a wind-storm struck them; and having made an attack, he took the fortress at the first onset. After this he set out for Napata. This was the royal residence of Candace; and her son was there, and she herself was residing at a place near by. But though she sent ambassadors to treat for friendship and offered to give back the captives and the statues brought from Syene, Petronius attacked and captured Napata too, from which her son had fled, and razed it to the ground; and having enslaved its inhabitants, he turned back again with the booty, having decided that the regions farther on would be hard to traverse. But he fortified Premnis better, threw in a garrison and food for four hundred men for two years, and set out for Alexandria. As for the captives, he sold some of them as booty, and sent one thousand to Caesar, who had recently returned from Cantabria; and the others died of diseases. Meantime Candace marched against the garrison with many thousands of men, but Petronius set out to its assistance and arrived at the fortress first; and when he had made the place thoroughly secure by sundry devices, ambassadors came, but he bade them to go to Caesar; and when they asserted that they did not know who Caesar was or where they should have to go to find him, he gave them escorts; and they went to Samos, since Caesar was there and intended to proceed to Syria from there, after despatching Tiberius to Armenia. And when the ambassadors had obtained everything they pled for, he even remitted the tributes which he had imposed.

From this account it is clear that the Meroitic attack is to be considered as a raid for booty rather than as an invasion, and the famous bronze head of the Emperor Augustus, now in the British Museum, which was found during the earlier excavations at Meroe (1909-14),

may have been part of such booty and was perhaps from one of the statues which Strabo says were pulled down. It should be noted that Strabo, as well as the other classical writers, claims that the capital of the Meroites was at Napata, and that this was the residence of Queen Candace. This has been used as an argument to support the view that at this time there was an independent line of rulers at Napata who were buried at Barkal. In view of the discovery of the head of the statue of Augustus at Meroe, and of the occurrence of the names of approximately contemporary Meroitic rulers both at Meroe and in the north, it seems more likely that Strabo and Pliny were misinformed, though the persistence of a tradition that Napata was a royal residence suggests that it was still of importance, and there is no reason why royalty should not have resided there from time to time. Many African rulers, both ancient and modern, have been peripatetic, and even if Meroe were the main centre, the rulers may well have had other centres where they stayed on occasion. If a large military force with the ruler in command had been formed to oppose the Romans, it is only reasonable to suppose that the commander would not have stayed back at Meroe.

The mention of Candace (*Kandake*) by both Strabo and Dio Cassius is interesting, as is also the mention of her in the Acts of the Apostles, even though Strabo misunderstood what we now know to be a title as a personal name. The title is known from a number of examples, of which the earliest is that of Bartare, buried under pyramid Beg. S. 10 in c. 250 BC, and although the exact significance is not clear, it is likely to be a high title meaning 'queen', 'queen mother' or something very similar. Recently it has been suggested (cf. p. 241) that the title does not mean that the bearer of it was a ruler, the Meroitic word for which was *gere*, but that it designated some important female royal or administrative function in Meroitic society; unless the title *gere* is also given, the Candace was not a ruler. If this is correct, 'queen mother' may be the best translation.

There are four Meroitic royal personages known from about this time. The names are found in widely scattered places and in various arrangements and associations. The names are of two women, Amanirenas and Amanishakhete, both of whom bear the title *gere* as well as Candace, and were therefore presumably ruling queens, and two men, Akinidad and Teriteqas. The burial-place of only one of these four is known – that of Amanishakhete, who was buried under pyramid Beg. N. 6, the pyramid in which, it is alleged, was found the magnificent find of jewellery taken away by an Italian adventurer, Ferlini, in 1834.

No certain burial-place is known for the others, but close contemporaneity is shown by the occurrence of Amanishakhete's name with that of Akinidad on a stele recently found at Qasr Ibrim, whilst Akinidad is associated with Teriteqas and Amanirenas in an inscription on the temple at Dakka, and also at Meroe.

Occurrences of the names of these rulers are widely enough scattered for it to be assumed that they controlled the whole area of Meroitic culture. The following list shows where they appear:

Teriteqas:	Dakka, Meroe
Amanirenas:	Dakka, Meroe, Hamdab, Kawa
Akinidad:	Qasr Ibrim, Dakka, Kawa, Meroe, Hamdab
Amanishakhete:	Qasr Ibrim, Meroe, Kawa

It is not possible with any certainty to determine their relationships and to know which of them opposed the Romans, but an examination of how the names are grouped may help.

(1) Teriteqas as king, Amanirenas (his consort?), and Akinidad occur together at Dakka; Teriteqas also occurs on a small stele from the Isis Temple at Meroe, with the name of Amanirenas associated.

(2) Amanirenas, in addition to the two occurrences already mentioned, also has her name coupled with that of Akinidad at Kawa and at Hamdab, a suburb of Meroe.

(3) Akinidad is known additionally to the above from a separate inscription at Dakka, on a block from Kawa, and in association with Amanishakhete at Qasr Ibrim.

(4) Amanishakhete is known from her pyramid (Beg. N. 6.), on a block from Kawa which is stylistically very similar to that of Akinidad, on an obelisk in the Amun temple at Meroe, and at Qasr Ibrim.

So Teriteqas, Amanirenas and Akinidad are associated in different arrangements, all three together, Teriteqas and Amanirenas, and Akinidad and Amanirenas. The situation is further complicated by the Qasr Ibrim stele which bears the names of Akinidad and Amanishakhete, a combination not previously known.

The two large stelae from the Hamdab temple have been assumed to contain a record of the campaign against the Romans, and it has usually been considered that Amanirenas was Strabo's Candace. A neat scheme was suggested by Hintze,¹ in which the Dakka inscription of three royalties is taken to mean that all three went there at the beginning of the campaign, that Teriteqas died and was succeeded by Akinidad (his son?)

¹ Hintze, *Studien*, 24-9.

who, together with his mother Amanirenas, continued the war, attacking Philae and Syene, and carrying off the bronze statue of the emperor. Perhaps the Hamdab stele was set up to celebrate the victory, short-lived though it was. The Roman counter-attack was quickly successful against a Meroitic army led, according to Strabo, by the son of Candace (Akinidad?), and the Romans then withdrew, leaving a garrison at Premnis (Qasr Ibrim). The Meroites failed in an attack on this fortress, and then agreed to peace terms and sent their ambassadors to the emperor, who was at Samos. If Amanishakhete were not mentioned until later, she could be assumed to have been a successor of Akinidad, but the finding of the two names in one inscription at Qasr Ibrim which, on the conventional view, must have been in Roman hands, throws doubt on the whole reconstruction, since she and Akinidad must have been associated in some way before the Romans advanced to Napata. Until the large inscriptions of Hamdab and Qasr Ibrim and the obelisk of Amanishakhete at Meroe can be translated, it is unlikely that our knowledge of the history of the period can advance very much.

But there can be no doubt that there was a serious clash between Meroites and Romans in which the Romans were ultimately victorious, and the official Roman inscription, the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, at Ankara, makes it certain that Roman troops reached Napata. The early Meroitic victory and the capture of the statue at Syene may be commemorated by the small temple, known as no. 292, at Meroe. The bronze head of Augustus was found, by Garstang in 1912, just in front of the temple, and the curious nature of the rebuilding on top of an earlier shrine of an identically sized building with a large pedestal of reused blocks in the centre may mean that this was erected as a base for a statue of which the head is all that is now known. The unusual painted scenes, which can be seen on the mud brick wall of the temple in one of Garstang's photographs, show prisoners beneath the king's feet, and nearby a human skull can be seen to have been placed in the wall. This appearance of a skull, unique in Meroitic buildings, together with the picture of prisoners, strongly suggests that the temple may have been put up, or rebuilt, to celebrate the victory and accommodate a statue of Augustus.

Shortly after this time we have evidence of considerable building activity by King Netekamani. More buildings are known bearing his name than that of any other Meroitic ruler, and they are also more widespread. His name has been found on the now destroyed temple at Amara East, well to the north; at Jebel Barkal; several times at Meroe,

where also his pyramid is firmly identified; on two temples at Naqa; and at Wad ben Naqa. In most cases his name is given in association with a lady named Amanitare, and she has normally been assumed to have been his consort. This is nowhere stated in unambiguous terms, and it is possible that she was in fact the queen mother. She carried the title of Candace, but not of *gere*.

The depiction of these two personalities together, as in the pylons of the Lion Temple at Naqa, where they face each other on opposite sides of the doorway, is unique in Meroitic art, and whatever the relationship between the two it was certainly one that impressed their contemporaries. Another unusual feature is that on several occasions a younger figure, who can be termed a prince, is shown with them. There are three of these young men, and they are likely to be either children of Netekamani and Amanitare or, if the couple were not consorts, perhaps younger brothers of Netekamani. The three young men include Arikankharer, who is shown with Netekamani and Amanitare at the Lion Temple at Naqa, in the Amun temple at Meroe, and by himself in a remarkable stone plaque from Meroe (where he is shown in garments



33 King Sorkharer smiting his enemies.

Based on a rock-carving from Jebel Qeili.

(Shinnie, *Meroe*, fig. 7; by permission of Thames and Hudson.)

which suggest he was king and with his name written in a cartouche), and also on his pyramid, Beg. N. 5. Sherkarer is shown associated with his parents (?) at Amara East and by himself at Jebel Qeili, in what is the most southerly Meroitic royal representation. Finally, Arikakhatani is shown on the Amun Temple at Naqa with Netekamani and Amanitare. Of these, only Sherkarer is given in the conventional king-lists, and the Jebel Qeili carving where his name is shown in cartouches makes it certain that he should be so included. This carving is of exceptional interest since it shows the king standing with captured prisoners, before a depiction of the sun-god, who is unusually shown full face and with the sun's disk with rays behind his head, and holding in his hand what appear to be several heads of sorghum (fig. 33). This king's burial-place has not been found with certainty, but pyramid Beg. N. 10 is tentatively associated with him since, on stylistic grounds, it appears to follow immediately after that of Netekamani.

The Meroe plaque also strongly suggests that Arikankharer was king, but whether before or after Sherkarer it is not possible to say. His tomb, Beg. N. 5, is identified with certainty. It contained a number of unusual objects, one of which, a small bronze figure of a kneeling camel, is the only evidence for the existence of this animal in the Sudan at this time. Two human heads in bronze of Hellenistic style, presumably originally from statuettes, were also found here; unfortunately they are not of much help in dating, as pieces of this type have a wide time-span – from the fourth century BC to the middle of the first century AD.

THE LATER CULTURE OF MEROE

Although we lack historical detail for the period immediately following the Roman campaign, Meroitic power seems to have maintained itself, and it was a time of considerable cultural achievement. The building activities of Netekamani are good evidence for this, and the group of temples at Naqa is perhaps the clearest expression of the Meroitic achievement that we have. At this place, on the north side of the Wadi Awater and some 30 km east of the Nile, there lay a town of considerable size. No excavation has yet been carried out there, so nothing can be said of the nature of the domestic occupation or of the large number of mounds, which seem to be of temples or public buildings. Three temples, however, still stand in a remarkable state of preservation and show different aspects of Meroitic culture and religious belief.

These three are commonly known as the Lion Temple, the Kiosk,

and the Amun temple. All are different in style. The Lion Temple, dedicated to the indigenous lion-god Apedemek, is of a type that we know as distinctively Meroitic and of which several other examples exist, though none of them is as well preserved. The reconstruction of the Lion Temple of Arnekhmani at Musawwarat es-Sofra now provides another example of a still standing temple of this type. The building at Naqa consists of a simple rectangle with pylons on either side of an east-facing doorway, bearing sculptured reliefs showing Netekamani and Amanitare defeating their enemies, in a scene derived from Egyptian prototypes. The walls of the temple carry scenes of king and queen (or queen mother) together with Arikankharer worshipping a variety of gods, most of whom are from the Egyptian pantheon and who, together with the royalties, are shown in the conventional style, derived from Egypt, which shows their faces in profile. On an inside wall one god, perhaps Jupiter Sarapis, is shown full face and with a heavy beard in Roman style.

The sculptures on the outside of the back wall are perhaps the best known of all Meroitic temple reliefs and show a three-headed and four-armed Apedemek standing in the middle with Netekamani and Arikankharer on one side of him, and Amanitare and the prince once more on the other. The multi-headed and armed depiction of the lion-god has been used to argue Indian influence, but this is unlikely, since such representations in India are not known before *c.* AD 500.

Close to the Lion Temple, with its unambiguous Meroitic style, stands the small building known as the Kiosk (pl. 4), in a quite different tradition. This temple has usually been assumed to be contemporary with the Lion Temple, but there are no real grounds for this. The axes of the two buildings are not the same, and it is improbable that the Kiosk was built to form part of the Lion Temple complex, or that it was used as part of a processional way. A recent study shows that it is probably somewhat later in date, and the third century AD has been suggested.¹ It resembles a number of kiosks known from Egypt, of which the most famous is that at Philae built in the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117); it shows very strong Alexandrine influence in many of its architectural features, and may even have been designed by an Alexandrian architect, though some elements suggest indigenous influence.

The third major building at Naqa was certainly, like the Lion Temple, built in the time of Netekamani. It was a temple dedicated to the god Amun and, like the temple of the same god at Meroe, its layout is

¹ T. Kraus, 'Der Kiosk von Naga', *Archäologische Anzeiger*, 1964, 834-68.

essentially of Egyptian style, approached along an avenue lined with stone rams. The entrance, flanked by pylons, leads into a pillared court, and there then follow a series of rooms leading to the shrine where originally stood the statue of the god. Although of Egyptian plan, the temple is covered with scenes of distinctively Meroitic style showing Netekamani, Amanitare, and this time the third young man, Arikakhatani, and with inscriptions in Meroitic hieroglyphs. Thus Naqa provides architectural examples of the main strands of Meroitic culture, and shows how the Meroites borrowed from Egypt and the Mediterranean to produce a distinctive artistic tradition of a new kind which, though drawing on models from outside, turned them into something quite different. Evidence for earlier buildings at Naqa is to be seen in another temple, which bears the name of Queen Shanakdakhete of early in the second century BC.

Since it was the discovery (at the site of Wad ben Naqa, at the mouth of the Wadi Awateib on the Nile) of the names of Netekamani and Amanitare written in both Egyptian and Meroitic hieroglyphs that made possible the decipherment of the Meroitic writing, this is perhaps an appropriate place to discuss the problem of the Meroitic language and inscriptions. All known inscriptions up to the early second century BC are in the ancient Egyptian language. Though they show widely different levels of understanding of that language, it is probable that Egyptian was the official language. Many of them, in particular those of the earlier kings from Piankhy to Aspelta, show complete control of the language and are linguistically no different from equivalent documents from Egypt itself. But as time went on knowledge of Egyptian decreased, and some of the later documents, such as those of Harsiotef and Nastasen in the fourth century BC, show extremely little knowledge of standard Egyptian grammar. The local language, which we can call Meroitic, seems to have influenced the writing, and the inscriptions strongly suggest that they had been translated into Egyptian by scribes whose knowledge of that language was limited. There were still to be some periods in which correct Egyptian was written, and the Lion Temple of Arnekhamani at Musawwarat es-Sofra contains such inscriptions; even as late as the time of Netekamani, writing in Egyptian is found. So the development of a system for writing the indigenous language does not necessarily mean that it was so developed only because Egyptian was no longer known, and it may well be that the development of a feeling of cultural independence, which one can

assume to have increased from the time of the first royal burials at Meroe, caused the Meroites to wish to write in their own language. Whatever the reason, by the early part of the second century BC a writing system had been developed, and it is first known from the inscription of Queen Shanakdakhete (c. 170-160 BC) in temple F at Naqa, already referred to.

Although Meroitic used Egyptian signs, or modifications of them, for its writing, it made a fundamental change in the way in which they were used by selecting only twenty-three of them and using them as an alphabet or a simple syllabary. Two separate systems were developed, one using Egyptian hieroglyphs (it is with these signs that Shankdakhete's inscription is written), and another, usually rather unsuitably known as 'cursive', in which much-abbreviated equivalents are used. There is an exact correlation between the two systems and many, if not all, the 'cursive' signs seem to be based on the late Egyptian writing known as hieratic. It is not possible to be sure when the 'cursive' writing was introduced, though it was presumably also in the second century BC. The two systems continued to be used concurrently, though hieroglyphs were used only for more formal inscriptions and became rare after the first century AD.

The finding of a stone base for a sacred boat at Wad ben Naqa with the names of Netekamani and Amanitare written on them in both Egyptian and Merotic hieroglyphs made it possible to obtain phonetic values for eight signs, and subsequently the British scholar Griffith was able to establish such values for all twenty-three signs in both writing systems.¹ Understanding of the phonetic values made possible the reading of names, and showed that a previously unknown language was in use by the Meroites. Although a considerable number of texts are now known, the great majority of them funerary monuments, very little progress has been made in understanding the meaning of these documents, and the language itself still remains something of a mystery. Attempts have been made to suggest that the Meroitic language is related to either Beja or Nubian, the two main non-Arabic languages spoken in the northern Sudan today, but none of these has been very convincing and certainly none has helped in the translation of the texts. There are some hints that Meroitic might be related, though not very closely, to Nubian, and that it may belong to the very large family of Eastern Sudanic languages. But if so, it is still linguistically too far

¹ The first account of the determination of the phonetic values is by F. Ll. Griffith in D. Randall MacIver and C. L. Woolley, *Areika* (Oxford, 1909), 43-54.

apart from any of those that have been studied to enable translations to be made.¹

The Meroitic language, whatever its relationship to other tongues of the area, was in use for several centuries and over a considerable territory. It was certainly the official language of the state from at least the beginning of the second century BC, and the latest inscriptions we have in it date from the fifth century AD. How it arose and how it came to an end we do not know, but we can assume that it was the spoken language of part, at least, of the Meroitic state from long before it was first written until it was replaced by Nubian, after the fifth or sixth centuries AD. (The problem of its replacement by Nubian will be further discussed below.) It is possible that in origin Meroitic was the language of the Island of Meroe, and that its importance grew at the expense of Egyptian as a result of the domination of that southern region from the fourth century BC onwards.

After the time of Netekamani, we have very little information other than the names of a number of rulers, some of whose burial-places are identified. The town of Meroe continued to flourish, and though no buildings at Musawwarat es-Sofra can be shown to be later than Netekamani, the place seems to have continued in use as a religious centre and perhaps as a place of pilgrimage. Contacts with Rome were maintained, and Pliny and Seneca describe Roman exploration as far as Meroe and perhaps beyond in the reign of Nero and about AD 61. Whether the two accounts refer to the same expedition or to different ones is not certain. They have been regarded by most scholars as different versions of the same story, but there are sufficient variations to suggest that they may record two independent military groups that penetrated up the Nile at about the same time. The version given by Seneca says that the aim of the expedition was to find the source of the Nile, and that with the aid of the king of Meroe the explorers penetrated far to the south until they came to an area of marshes and thick vegetation in the river.

The third century AD work of fiction, the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, though rather weak on local colour, is also evidence for knowledge of Meroe in the classical world, while finds of Roman objects in the

¹ The main proponent of the Beja theory is E. Zyhlarz. His views are to be found in E. Zyhlarz, 'Das Meroitische Sprachproblem', *Anthropos*, 1930, 25, 409-63. This has been strongly criticized by Hintze, *Die Sprachliche Stellung des Meroitischen* (Berlin, 1955). Many scholars have tried to see a link between Meroitic and Nubian; this question is best summed up in B. Trigger, 'The languages of the northern Sudan: an historical perspective', *Journal of African History*, 1966, 7, 19-25.

cemeteries, and of coins and sherds of *terra sigillata* at the town of Meroe, show that contact with Roman Egypt was considerable. The objects found imply that a trading connection continued, though perhaps with breaks, from Ptolemaic times. Written evidence for this contact is not to be found in the south, except for one mysterious inscription in Latin from Musawwarat es-Sofra, but in the north graffiti in the Dodecaschoenus provide records of Meroitic embassies to Rome, or at least to Roman Egypt. One of these at Philae, written in Egyptian demotic, describes the journey of Abratoi, an ambassador of the king of Meroe to the Romans. It contains the name of the Meroitic King Tegerideamani, whose burial-place (Beg. N. 28) is known and whose name is on a statue base from the Lion Temple at Meroe, and gives the date of the graffito as being in the third year of the Roman Emperor Trebonianus Gallus. This is equivalent to AD 253 and it thus provides one of the few fixed dates for a Meroitic ruler. The only other Meroitic ruler whose name occurs both in Lower Nubia and at Meroe is Yesbekheamani, who is known from a graffito at Philae, a stone lion recently found at Qasr Ibrim, and from an inscription from the Lion Temple at Meroe. The inscription on the Qasr Ibrim lion is of special interest since it is written in hieroglyphs, and thus considerably extends the time-range for this writing, of which it is the latest approximately dated example.

Material from the north is comparatively plentiful during the first few centuries AD, and the marked contrast of considerable Meroitic occupation of Lower Nubia after the early first century BC compared with sparse material for earlier periods suggests that there was a move by Meroitic settlers into territory that had previously been almost uninhabited since the end of the Egyptian New Kingdom. The existence of pyramids at Sedenga (Meroitic *Ateye*) of the third century BC implies a settlement of some size and importance at that place, but with the exception of a few small villages, Lower Nubia further north seems to have been uninhabited.

The occupation of Lower Nubia by people of Meroitic culture and whose written language, at least, was Meroitic, seems to have started in the first century BC. One of the factors that made this possible was the introduction of the *sagia*, the ox-driven water-wheel, which, coming from the Near East, had already in Ptolemaic times transformed much of Egyptian agriculture. Its manifest advantage over hand methods of raising water for irrigation, such as the *shaduf*, caused it to be very rapidly adopted, and evidence for its use can be found in the special

type of pottery vessel, the *qadus*, which was tied to the wheel and in which the water was raised. Although body fragments of these pots would not necessarily be recognizable, the characteristic knobs on the bottom to which the rope by which they were tied to the wheel was fixed are unmistakable – and from the first century BC onwards they are found in large numbers in all settlements. They are not found at Meroe or in any other southern site, and this suggests that here only *seluka* and wadi bed areas were used for growing crops, flood and rainfall making irrigation unnecessary.

By the end of the first century BC the Meroites had settled in numbers throughout Lower Nubia, and many sites are known. The battles with the Romans, already described, may well have been due to conflicts over the area known as the Triakontaschoenus, stretching for thirty *schoeni*¹ south of the First Cataract.

The agreement made between the two sides at the termination of the campaign may have led to some withdrawal by the Romans, or at least to abandonment of claims to sovereignty, and the frontier was established at Maharraqa (Hierasykaminos) at the southern end of the smaller area known as the Dodecaschoenus. It is noteworthy that the temples built in the time of Augustus, such as those at Kalabsha and Dendur, lie within it. There are some reasons even for thinking that the Dodecaschoenus was subject to joint rule and was not a purely Roman dependency.² (See also chapter 3, pp. 193–4.) Some of the inscriptions and graffiti at Philae and other parts of the Dodecaschoenus refer to ‘kings’, as for example one at Dendur of about 10 BC, where an important official of the area speaks of remission of dues to the temple at Philae for the sake of the ‘kings’; other documents make it clear that even if the Romans had military forces there, many important people were Meroites and owed allegiance to their own king. It has been suggested that the Meroitic settlement of this area precedes that of southern Lower Nubia, and that it was an isolated enclave at the end of desert caravan routes and not a northern extension of the settlement that we know from places like Faras and Karanog, which only began in the first century BC and only became considerable later.

South of the Dodecaschoenus, Meroitic authority was firmly established; it is likely that power was exercised through local governors, and names and titles of some of these are known from the large number

¹ The *schoenus*, from the Greek word for rope, was a measure of length of varying size. Here it must have been equivalent to about 10.5 km.

² Arguments for this view are presented by N. B. Millett in his unpublished 1968 doctoral thesis for Yale University, ‘Meroitic Nubia’.

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of grave inscriptions that have been found. The region became thickly populated by the third and fourth centuries AD, and the population would seem to have been prosperous and able to afford a considerable number of luxury goods imported from Egypt and other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Evidence from both cemeteries and villages indicates a marked increase in population and there are all the signs of a well-developed agricultural village life, not markedly different from that of contemporary rural communities in other parts of the ancient world.

We have virtually no information about political events in any part of the area in which Meroitic culture was spread. It reached from immediately south of the First Cataract to Sennar on the Blue Nile, where the nearby village of Abu Geili has produced typical material. Other sites along the Blue Nile have not been found, but they can be assumed, and the strange assemblage from Jebel Moya suggests that there were people there with a separate culture but closely influenced by Meroitic traditions. The situation on the White Nile is not known and, until the many mounds which lie along it have been investigated, nothing can be said of the spread of Meroitic civilization into this region. Whether the whole region from Aswan to Sennar was subject to the central authority of the king at Meroe cannot be known at present, but the existence close to the First Cataract of graffiti containing royal names as well as references to Meroe town implies that there was control of at least this northern area.

Relations between Meroe and other neighbouring peoples are unknown, but the persistent theme in Meroitic art of the captured prisoner, shown either being smitten by the king or in friezes of prisoners with their arms tied at the elbows, together with the remarkable sculptured relief scene on the Sun Temple at Meroe (where on the south wall it seems that the victorious Meroitic soldiers are massacring their prisoners, whilst the north-wall frieze shows captured women, children and cattle), suggest a constant state of war with other peoples (pl. 2). The Sun Temple, which also bears the names of captured towns on the east wall, may well have been put up to celebrate some major victory under the auspices of the war-god, Apedemek. But as yet there is no evidence of a material sort for whatever military activities may have been carried on.

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The final end of the Meroitic state is still a matter of considerable discussion. The royal burials seem to finish at some time in the early

part of the fourth century AD, though this does not mean the end of occupation of Meroe town. The archaeological evidence from there is very difficult to interpret owing to the surface erosion that has taken place, but it seems likely that occupation continued very much later – even if the centralized administration associated with royalty may have come to an end. The conventional view has been that the Meroitic state was dealt its final blow by an expedition of King Ezana (Aezanes in Greek) of Aksum at some time close to AD 350. The evidence for this expedition is to be found in an inscription at Aksum written in Ge'ez, which describes an Aksumite campaign in the Island of Meroe, though there are a number of varying interpretations as to the nature of the campaign and the situation at Meroe at the time.

The text itself begins with the protocol normal in Aksumite inscriptions of this period. Ezana states the countries over which he claimed to rule, including some in South Arabia, such as Himyar and Saba, and some in the neighbourhood of Aksum, such as Bega and Kasa (presumably Kush or Meroe), thus implying that he already controlled it. The inscription then describes the campaign and says that Ezana 'took the field against the Noba, when the people of the Noba revolted', and 'when they boasted, "he will not cross the Takazze"', and when they made attacks on unidentified neighbouring peoples – the Mangurto, Hana and Barya – and plundered envoys sent by Ezana. The Takazze is the river Atbara, and the text certainly implies that the Noba were a people previously subject to Aksumite rule and that the campaign was a punitive one. The text goes on to describe how he defeated the Noba at the crossing of the Atbara, burnt their towns and seized much material including stocks of cotton, and killed many of his enemy, among whom were several chiefs whose names are given. Two of these are described as riding on camels, and a priest from whom a silver crown and a gold ring were taken was also killed. The troops of Ezana then attacked both up and down the Nile from a point near the junction of the Nile and the Atbara, and at this junction Ezana erected a throne, presumably similar to stone platforms known from the neighbourhood of Aksum.¹

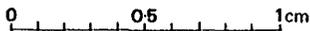
If this document is to be taken at face value, always a difficult matter with boastful royal inscriptions of this type, we must assume that Aksum had established an authority over Meroe sufficient to warrant a campaign to maintain its authority. Possible evidence for earlier

¹ For an English version of this text, see L. P. Kirwan, 'The decline and fall of Meroe', *Kush*, 1960, 8, 163–5.

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Aksumite activity at Meroe may be seen in a fragmentary inscription in Greek, certainly of Aksumite origin and, from its mention of Ares, a pagan god, probably to be dated prior to the Christianization of Ezana in about AD 350. Unfortunately the exact conditions of discovery of this inscription are not known, but Sayce, who published the piece, says it was brought to him at Meroe, and it probably came from there.¹ The only other Aksumite object from Meroe is one copper coin found in the excavations of 1969-70; this coin, though it does not bear the name of Ezana, is of about his time and, since it bears the symbol of a cross, cannot be earlier than *c.* AD 350. Since there were two levels of building above the spot at which the coin was found, it provides some evidence for occupation into at least the later fourth century. There is also a graffito on the wall of the chapel of pyramid N. 2 at Meroe which is thought to be in Ge'ez, the language of Aksum, but no satisfactory translation has ever been established; it has been suggested that it is evidence for the presence of one of Ezana's soldiers.

There has been considerable discussion as to the interpretation of the Ezana text and its relevance as evidence for the end of the Meroitic kingdom. There is no reference to Meroitic royalty in it, an implication that the area was already in some way subject to Aksum, and a clear statement that it was the Noba who were the main enemy. This suggests that the Meroitic royal house and the administration associated with it had already disappeared, and it is tempting to see the Noba as the agents of final Meroitic collapse. The problem of the identity of the Noba and



34 Aksumite coin found at Meroe.

¹ A. H. Sayce, 'A Greek inscription of a king (?) of Axum found at Meroe', *Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology*, 1909, 31, 189-203.

the archaeological material that perhaps can be identified with them will be discussed further below, but it is now necessary to look to the Ethiopian highlands and to say something of the origins and history of the kingdom which so suddenly and dramatically irrupted into the Nile Valley.

The origins of the Aksumite kingdom go back well into the first millennium BC, when settlers from South Arabia and the Yemen introduced Semitic languages, building in stone, and literacy. They may also have been the first to introduce agriculture into the area, though the small amount of investigation carried out so far makes this a hazardous hypothesis – the only dates known to the present writer for cultivated grain from northern Ethiopia are of the sixth century AD, from the caves in Begemder province investigated by Dombrowski.¹ The period from the fifth century BC, which is about as early a date as can be established with confidence, to the end of Aksumite times in the tenth century AD can conveniently be divided into three, the evidence for which is primarily archaeological, since inscriptions are few and it is not yet possible to write a connected history. The first period, which can be called 'South Arabian', dates from the fifth century BC or perhaps somewhat earlier. The material remains as shown by sites at Yeha, Haoulti and Matara show very clearly their South Arabian origin. The impressive architecture of the temples at Yeha, and of the newly discovered one near by at Grat-Beal-Guebri, which employed, in typical South Arabian style, both wood and stone in their construction, are good evidence for this, and for the introduction of South Arabian religious practices. Grat-Beal-Guebri appears to be built above the massive foundations of an earlier building, going back perhaps to the time of the first settlers. There is little information on domestic dwellings, but they seem mostly to have been rectangular in shape and built of stone with mud mortar.

The second period, lasting from about the beginning of the third century BC to the first century AD, shows the earlier South Arabian cultural influences being assimilated to local conditions and the development of the first distinctively Ethiopian styles. The writing system was modified, and changes are to be seen in the pottery and metal work. No historical events or personages can be identified with either of these first two periods, and inscriptions are all of a religious or funerary nature. However, the archaeological material makes it possible to see the material base on which the later Aksumite culture was developed.

¹ J. Dombrowski, *Excavations in Ethiopia: Lalibela and Natschebiet Caves, Begemeder Province*, unpublished doctoral thesis (Boston University, 1971).

By the first century AD the development of the town of Aksum begins the third period, known as 'Aksumite', which continued until the tenth century. The evidence suggests that many of the earlier sites were abandoned and new towns founded. Of these, Aksum, perhaps by reason of its sheltered situation, plentiful water supply and adequacy of agricultural land, became the most important, and the seat of a long line of rulers. This Aksumite period is marked by a number of important changes in the styles of architecture, as well as of pottery and other manufactured articles. A coinage was developed by the third century AD, and from the representations of royalty, often with their names, on the coins, a list of kings can be established. There was certainly an increase in prosperity, largely as a result of trading activities. Many more sites are known than from pre-Aksumite times, and there is a greater richness in the material culture, together with a considerable import of objects from the eastern Mediterranean.

During this period Aksum became a town of some size and contained numerous temples and palaces, as well as the large monolithic stelae for which it is best known (pls. 5-7). The purpose and exact dating of these stelae is not certain and they carry no inscriptions, but they were presumably to commemorate people or events, and the recent excavations of H. N. Chittick may enable us to date them with greater precision. A considerable part of ancient Aksum is under the moderate town, but some idea of the nature of the richer, perhaps royal, buildings can be got from the large 'chateau' (as the excavator has described it) of Dongour on the western outskirts of the town.¹ This complex building is an irregular rectangle with each side about 57 m long. Some walls still stand to a height of 5 m, and it contains over forty rooms ranged round a central pavillion reached by a monumental stone staircase. It is a massive and splendid construction bearing witness to the wealth and technical competence of the Aksumite kingdom. Dating - as of all Aksumite buildings at present - is difficult, but the pottery and the coins found suggest it belongs late in Aksumite history, perhaps to the seventh century AD.

The town of Adulis, on the coast, became the port through which trade flowed. It seems to predate Aksum, and may have been in existence as early as the time of Ptolemy III (246-221 BC), perhaps replacing Ptolemais Theron as the main emporium for Ptolemaic trade. By the date at which *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* was written, perhaps about AD 100, it was certainly the main port on the south-western coast of the

¹ F. Anfray, 'L'Archéologie d'Axoum en 1972', *Paideuma*, 1972, 18, 69-70.

Red Sea, and was an important centre for the trade in ivory from the interior.

Our main source of information for this period comes from the *Periplus*, which mentions Aksum as lying eight days' journey inland from the coast and as being ruled by a king whose name in Greek was Zoscales, who is thus the first Aksumite ruler whose name is known. Zoscales is said by the unknown author of the *Periplus*, in a phrase which has a ring of that used by Diodorus Siculus for Ergamenes, to have had some Greek education. Certainly contacts with Hellenistic Egypt were close and Greek influence was of significance. This can be seen in the number of Aksumite inscriptions which were written in Greek, and it is probable that it was Hellenistic Greek influence that led to the development of a coinage. The use of coins would have given Aksum an advantage over Meroe, which never adopted this commercial convenience.

Another important document for the period comes from Cosmas Indicopleustes, a mid-sixth-century AD merchant from Alexandria, who recounts how, when on a voyage that took him to Adulis, he copied two Greek inscriptions from that place; one dealt with events in the time of Ptolemy III, and the other with the military exploits of a king who campaigned widely on both sides of the Red Sea. Unfortunately neither the date nor the name of this king is given, but the inscription has been assumed to be of the third century AD and of a king of Aksum, and it is possible that the king referred to is Aphilas, who is known from coins of about this period. A recent paper suggests that the geographical details indicate that the royal author of the inscription was ruling from south-west Arabia and not from Aksum.¹ If this is correct, there must have been an Arabian conquest leading to a new dynasty at Aksum, and this may have been the cause of the resurgence in the fortunes of that place. Cosmas also visited Aksum, and though his description of the town is brief, he refers to a palace with four towers.

By the middle of the fourth century, Aksum had become a considerable power and the court of the king had been Christianized. The main bringer of Christianity was Frumentius, who, according to the account by the Roman historian Rufinus, was captured on the coast by agents of the king of Aksum. By reason of his ability and education, Frumentius rose to a position of importance at the court of King Ella Amida, and on that king's death became virtual ruler of the country during the

¹ L. P. Kirwan, 'The *Christian Topography* and the Kingdom of Axum', *Geographical Journal*, 1972, 138, 166-77.

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minority of Ezana, son of Ella Amida. This power enabled Frumentius to strengthen the position of Christianity. After a visit to Alexandria, he returned to Aksum with the title of bishop, and was successful in spreading his religion widely and in winning the king for the new faith.

The inscriptions from the reign of Ezana make it clear that he adopted Christianity during the course of his reign, since earlier ones show him as a worshipper of the traditional gods, of whom Ares, presumably an indigenous deity identified with the Greek god, is perhaps the main one. Later inscriptions, including the famous one describing the campaign on the Nile, while dropping the names of pagan gods, are not unambiguously Christian. However coins of this king's reign carry the cross, and there can be little doubt that Christianity had become the court religion by about AD 350, and it is from this time that there began the close connection between Christianity and what was to become the Ethiopian nation.

The inscriptions of Ezana, both in Greek and Ge'ez, the indigenous language and the forerunner of Amharic and Tigrinya, the main Semitic tongues of modern Ethiopia, are the main sources for knowledge of contact between Aksum and Meroe. The few Aksumite objects from Meroe have been mentioned; Meroitic objects in Ethiopia are equally few. Two bronze bowls, certainly of Meroitic manufacture, have been found at Addi-Gelemo in the eastern part of Tigre, and two faience figures, one of the Egyptian god Bes and one of a human figure with a sun disk, were found at Haoulti in a level dated to the fifth or sixth century BC. This is very scanty evidence on which to base any suggestion of contact between the two cultures, but it seems unlikely that these well-developed states could have remained in close proximity for several centuries without such contact.

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It has usually been assumed that there was a decline in the power and wealth of Meroe after the first century AD. Pyramids certainly became smaller and funeral furniture poorer, and though this may reflect changed attitudes rather than poverty, it is noteworthy that no monumental buildings later than the reign of Netekamani can be identified. On the other hand the fine painted pottery, which suggests prosperity and some sophistication, belongs to this period. At Meroe town, buildings are not noticeably poorer except in the very topmost level,

where roughly made walls patched together with reused material have been found. No date can yet be given to this latest building, other than that it appears to be considerably later than the coin of Ezana whose discovery has already been referred to. If there were an absolute impoverishment of the Meroitic kingdom, an important part may have been played by declining Meroitic participation in the Red Sea trade. The use of the port of Adulis during the early centuries AD may have drawn trade away from further north and have helped to enrich Aksum at the expense of Meroe.

Although it is clear enough that the royal line, at least as revealed by their burials, came to an end at some time in the fourth century AD, perhaps as a result of Aksumite pressure, information on the date of the end of Meroitic culture as a whole and the reasons for it is much more difficult to determine, and the archaeological evidence difficult to interpret. In the far north, close to Egypt, cultural changes after the fourth century AD can be identified, and a sequence running through to at least the fourteenth century AD can be discerned. At Meroe itself, and in the surrounding country, this cannot be done: with the end of a distinctive Meroitic culture, whenever that may have been, there is a gap in the archaeological record until virtually modern times.

A large number of mound graves of about the fourth and fifth centuries AD are known on both sides of the Nile, stretching from south of the confluence of the Blue and White Niles to at least as far north as the junction with the river Atbara and across the Bayuda desert to Tanqasi, where a cemetery of such mounds has been excavated. These mounds represent a change in burial custom, and from those that have been excavated, at Meroe, Ushara and Tanqasi, material of a new and distinctive type has been recovered. Most of it is pottery, in the main large vessels of the shape usually described as 'beer pots'. These vessels, which have a large bulbous body and a long narrow neck, were not made on the wheel, as was most Meroitic pottery, and they are frequently characterized by markings on the lower part of the body conveying the impress of the mat on which the pot was rolled. They are sufficiently distinctive to be easily identified and, though common in the cemeteries, do not appear in the ruins of the town, although it is possible that some of the featureless hand-made sherds found there come from vessels of this type.

The dating of these graves is far from certain and nothing can be said of their earliest occurrence, though it is unlikely to be before c. AD 300. The very large number may suggest that they were in use for a con-

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siderable period of time. The only objects from the graves which are datable are foreign imports, but in fact there are only two such pieces, which, as it happens, cannot be dated with any precision. These are, from grave 300 at Meroe, a glass vessel of Alexandrian type which dates between AD 200 and AD 400, and, from grave 361 at the same site, an amphora which should date to the fifth or sixth century AD. All that can be said, then, is that it would not be unreasonable to assume that the new burial custom which these mounds illustrate was introduced at some time not too distant from Ezana's campaign and the supposed end of Meroe.

In view of Ezana's reference to the Noba as being the people in occupation of the Island of Meroe, it is tempting to see in them the introducers of mound burial as well as of a new pottery type. But whether this is to be interpreted as the influx of a new people, or of the resurgence of social groups whose culture had been swamped by that of the Meroitic aristocracy, is impossible to determine. Some aspects of the burials, such as the laying of the bodies on beds, hark back to much earlier practices along the Sudanese Nile. Evidence for the end of Meroitic culture in this area is far from clear; there is no gradual change of the material remains under outside influences as in the north, and such information as there is points to a rather sudden collapse. Whether this was due to attacks by enemy peoples such as the Noba, or to internal decay, or to a combination of the two, cannot at present be known.

A further problem, which may be related to the question of the end of Meroe, is that of a change in the language of the country. Meroitic was the written language of the whole stretch of river over which the Meroitic kings ruled from at least as early as 200 BC until the fourth century AD. After that there is a span of over 300 years from which there is no written material in an indigenous language. When writing once more appears, it is in Old Nubian and written with a modified Greek alphabet.

There are two ways of explaining this situation, firstly that Meroitic was the spoken as well as the written language throughout Meroitic territory, and that it was supplanted by Nubian in about the fifth century; this has until recently been the standard view of the linguistic history. An alternative possibility is that Meroitic, whilst being the written and official language, was only used colloquially in the Island of Meroe, the part of the country where power resided, and that Nubian was already present in the Nile Valley and was being spoken along the northern stretch of the river between the First and Fourth Cataracts.

The occurrence of such written materials as ostraca and funerary monuments in Meroitic in this area does not necessarily disprove the hypothesis, since a similar situation exists today in those parts where Nubian is still spoken but Arabic always used for written purposes.

If Nubian came to the Nile Valley only in the fifth century, the question of its original home is of some importance, and the present distribution of Nubian languages may provide a clue. At the present day Nubian is spoken – or was until the disruption caused by resettlement as a result of the building of the new Aswan dam and the resultant flooding of much of Nubia – along the Nile from a little north of Aswan to Debba, and there is good evidence from place names for its further extension upriver, perhaps to the neighbourhood of Khartoum, in medieval times. Related languages are spoken in the Nuba hills to the south-west, where a group of dialects usually known as ‘Hill Nubian’ are spoken by a people very different physically and culturally from the speakers of ‘River Nubian’. A little north of this group, at Jebel Haraza, evidence for a closely related language has recently come to light, and, in northern Darfur, Meidob and Birged are also related.

This distribution suggests that in the past there may have been a wide area of the northern Sudan over which Nubian was spoken, and that it was one of the main language groups of the ancient Sudan. The modern distribution of related languages suggests that the original home of the ancestral language lay to the west, and that it spread from there to the Nile Valley. It is therefore tempting to identify the people buried in the mound graves at Meroe and elsewhere in the area with the Noba of Ezana and with the bringers of Nubian language to the Nile. The name Noba, and the subsequent use of this or a very similar name by medieval Arab writers for the inhabitants of the northern Sudan, from which the modern use of the word Nubian is derived, is unlikely to be coincidence.

While these obscure events concerned with the collapse of the Meroitic state were going on in the Island of Meroe, a somewhat different situation can be seen in the north, and it is not easy to see if any correlations existed between historical developments in the two areas.

As already suggested, the northern regions of the Meroitic state enjoyed a period of reasonable prosperity in the first few centuries of the Christian era, and, far from Aksum, did not suffer either from trade rivalry nor from military attack from that region, although raids by the Blemmyes, presumed to be the ancestors of the Beja of the Red Sea hills, are recorded from as early as the middle of the third century AD. Although the effect of the Blemmye raids is not discernible in the

archaeological material, they were a cause of considerable anxiety to the Roman rulers of Egypt, and the aid they gave to the Egyptian rebel Firmus at the time of the Palmyrene invasion of AD 272, together with other raids, must have contributed to Diocletian's decision in AD 297 to withdraw Roman garrisons, to abandon Lower Nubia, and to establish the southern frontier of the Roman Empire at the First Cataract (cf. chapter 2, pp. 206-9).

This withdrawal of Roman troops from the Dodecaschoenus did not have any immediate effect on the Meroitic settlements. These lay somewhat further south and they certainly flourished through much of the fourth century until the appearance of new elements at the very end of that century or early in the next. This new culture element in the area is that commonly known until recently as the X-Group, a term coined by Reisner when carrying out the first archaeological survey of Nubia, which began in 1907 as a consequence of the building of the first Aswan dam. Faced with the discovery of a great deal of new archaeological material whose identity could not be accommodated by the traditional divisions of Ancient Egyptian history, Reisner gave designations by letters of the alphabet, thus giving rise to the well-known archaeological entities, the A-Group and the C-Group. Finding material of much later date, he used the term X-Group to identify an immediately post-Meroitic culture. The increase of knowledge in recent years has made the need for this anonymous type of terminology superfluous, and here the term 'Ballana' culture, as proposed by Trigger,¹ will be used. It has the advantage that it follows normal archaeological tradition by naming the culture after the most spectacular of the sites where it has been found.

This new element in the history of Lower Nubia, which lasted at most from *c.* AD 400 to 600, is attested by the finding of archaeological material which, though showing resemblances, also has some marked differences from that of late Meroitic times. This Ballana culture, which is sufficiently distinctive to be readily identified, is known from cemeteries and villages stretching from the First Cataract to Sesibi, a short way north of the Third Cataract. It has not yet been found further south. There is no sudden break with Meroitic tradition, but the pottery, the best-known material because of its vast quantity, shows new shapes, in the main derived from the north, and a considerable simplification in painted design. No monumental buildings are known, except perhaps at Faras, where the rulers of the time may have had their residence, and the

¹ B. G. Trigger, *History and settlement in Lower Nubia* (New Haven, 1965), 132.

evidence on the whole suggests that village life was somewhat poorer than in Meroitic times. But the spectacular remains of the period found in the large burial-mounds of Ballana and Qostol, with their rich funeral furnishings, show that this was a period of wealth and power, at least for the rulers. These burials, surely of powerful chiefs, contain a surprising number of luxury objects imported from the eastern Mediterranean, including silver vessels and jewellery, a wide range of bronze objects, and wooden boxes inlaid with ivory, as well as a range of locally made weapons and other war-like equipment. These were powerful and rich princes, and many scholars have assumed that there must have been an incursion of a new people into the river valley at this time.

Since two exotic groups are known from classical writers to have been in the area at the appropriate time, the Nobatae and the Blemmyes, there has been much argument as to which of these two peoples was responsible for the changes, and which of them is represented not only in the rich burials of Ballana and in the rather less elaborate ones at Qasr Ibrim, Gemai and Firka (perhaps the burial places of local chiefly families), but also in the large number of commoners' graves throughout Lower Nubia. The Blemmyes seem to have been firmly identified as ancestors of the Beja; the origin of the Nobatae is less clear. Procopius, writing in the sixth century AD, says that they came from the western oases, and were invited by Diocletian to fill the gap left by his withdrawal of the Roman garrison and to act as a buffer between the Blemmyes and the frontier of Egypt.

The great deal of extra information from skeletal analysis now available makes it certain that there was no large-scale movement by a people of different physical type.¹ Whether the same is true of their rulers it is not possible to say, since the skeletal remains were not well preserved nor studied in detail. Today the majority view is that there was no massive immigration, and not only the skeletons but also cultural material argue strongly in favour of such a view. It is possible that small, well-armed horse and camel-riding military groups from outside established leadership over the indigenous population. If this were so, then these are presumably the Nobatae, and Procopius's story could well imply that this was the nature of the Nobataean immigration.

¹ O. V. Nielson, *Human remains*, Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia, 9 (Stockholm, 1970), and D. L. Greene and G. Armelagos, *The Wadi Halfa Mesolithic population*, Research Report No. 11, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts (Amherst, 1972), are the two main reports so far published. A number of preliminary reports have appeared.

The name and its close resemblance to the name Noba may suggest that they were speakers of 'river Nubian', and the later medieval kingdom of Nobatia continued to use the name. There is the striking apparent coincidence of similarity with the name of the old royal and religious centre Napata, and it could also be reasonably argued that the Nubian speakers, and hence the Nobatae, were the indigenous Nubian riverain population who had been subjected to Meroitic rule and acquired the characteristic Meroitic culture. Even if the Nubian language had already been spoken along the Nile for a long period, it does not mean that the warriors of the Ballana tombs were not a new people from elsewhere. If, as is suggested above, they were a small military group, perhaps brought in as an unofficial garrison, they may have come without women, and would have taken wives from the local population; in that case, as many other examples from Africa show, their children would have adopted the local language.

With the disappearance of Meroitic as a written language towards the end of the fourth century AD, we are left with no written documents in an indigenous language, though Roman writers continue to tell of Nobatae and Blemmyes. Such writing as there was appears to have been in Greek, and letters by Blemmye chiefs in that language which have been found in Egypt attest to deep penetration into Upper Egypt. They were presumably written for illiterate masters by Egyptian secretaries with some knowledge of Greek. The scanty written evidence suggests conflicts between Nobatae and Blemmyes continuing into the sixth century, when the Greek inscription on the temple at Kalabsha of Silko, who calls himself 'kinglet' (*basiliskos*) of the Nobatae, describes a major defeat of the Blemmyes. It has been suggested that Silko, whose inscription says 'God gave me the victory', was a Christian, but the representation of him that accompanies the inscription shows him riding a horse and wearing a crown with the emblems of various Egyptian gods. The use of the word 'god' is no greater evidence of Silko's attachment to Christianity, completely belied by the details of his dress, than are the lamps and pots bearing Christian emblems from the chiefs' graves at Ballana and Qostol. But this is the last stage of the long story of the kingdom of Kush from its beginnings before 700 BC to the last pagan kings still retaining some elements of Kushite culture into the sixth century AD. The culture of Nubia was about to change again under the impact of Eastern Christianity, which, coming from Egypt, was to influence it for the next 800 years.

4. THE NILOTIC SUDAN AND ETHIOPIA

The history of North-West Africa during the Roman period is based primarily on local epigraphic and archaeological evidence. The best general history is Romanelli (1959). The general studies by Albertini (1949) and Charles-Picard (1959) are less substantial, but also of value. The recent general study in English by Raven (1969) is readable and well illustrated, but otherwise undistinguished. Useful studies of particular provinces are Merighi (1940) on Tripolitania and Broughton (1929) on Africa Proconsularis; while there is some interesting material on Roman Mauretania in Carcopino (1943). The military organization of the Roman provinces in North-West Africa is studied by Cagnat (1913); for the organization of frontier defence in the hinterland of Tripolitania see also Goodchild and Ward-Perkins (1949) and Goodchild (1950, 1954); and for the organization of the frontier further west, see Baradez (1949). A useful survey of Roman administrative practice is given by Ilevbare (1974); while Roman colonization and municipal organization are studied by Teutsch (1962), and more briefly and more accessibly by Thompson (1969). The religion of Roman Africa is discussed by Charles-Picard (1954), and its literary culture by Bouchier (1913). A biography of Septimius Severus, the most distinguished of the Roman emperors of North African origin, is provided by Birley (1971). The controversial problem of the survival of Punic culture and language under Roman rule has been treated by Frend (1942), Courtois (1950), Gautier (1952) and Millar (1968); the equally controversial history of the introduction of the camel by Gautier (1952), Brogan (1954) and Bovill (1956). For Roman involvement in the trans-Saharan trade, see Aurigemma (1940) and Law (1967).

The history of the North African elephant during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, including its use in war by Egypt, Carthage and Numidia and its ultimate extinction, is documented by Scullard (1974). The question of Greek and Roman perceptions of black Africans during the same period is the subject of Snowden (1970).

4. THE NILOTIC SUDAN AND ETHIOPIA

A virtually complete bibliography up to 1963 is given in Gadallah (1963). Meroitic studies are still very heavily dependent on the basic excavation reports and descriptions of standing monuments and few attempts have been made to produce a synthetic statement. In the absence of readable Meroitic texts, all writers must rely on archaeological evidence, except for the period when historical inscriptions in

the Egyptian language were still being written. Basic publications of these texts are listed by Gadallah (1963) and useful commentaries are embodied in the mainly historical surveys by Haycock (1965a, 1968, 1972). Of special importance are some of the inscriptions from Kawa published by Macadam (1955).

Shinnie (1967) is the only over-all survey of history and material culture so far published, but in view of the ever-increasing research is now somewhat out of date, and by using largely material from the northern fringes of the Meroitic state to illustrate the culture as a whole gives a distorted view. Arkell (1955, reprinted 1973) gives the history as known in the mid 1950s within the general historical framework of the ancient Sudan, but some of the book, in particular suggestions as to widespread Meroitic influence in Africa, is highly imaginative. Adams, *Nubia: corridor to Africa* (1977) gives the most up-to-date account. Much of it is based on the author's own fieldwork.

Of excavation reports the most important are the volumes I, II, IV and V of *Royal Cemeteries of Kush* by Dunham (1950, 1955, 1957, 1963). These give details of the excavation of the royal and other burials by Reisner from 1916 to 1923 and were published many years after his death. Although extremely useful as catalogues of tomb contents and descriptions of the architecture of the tombs, the books are difficult to use and suffer from some lack of detail and rather summary drawings, and have no commentary. In spite of this they provide essential raw material for Meroitic history, chronology and material culture. A volume on the tomb chapel reliefs was published as Chapman (1952) and is Volume III of the series. Garstang (1911) is a brief and inadequate account of the first season of his 1909-14 campaign at Meroe, but there is nothing else. Subsequent seasons were even more summarily published as Garstang (1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914). Griffith's work at Sanam Abu Dom is published as Griffith (1922, 1923), and at Faras as Griffith (1924, 1925). These reports, often no more than a list of grave contents, are selective. Details of the contents of all the graves are available in typescript in the Griffith Institute, Oxford.

On the linguistic side, Griffith in Randall MacIver and Woolley (1909) and in Griffith (1911) describes his successful attempts to determine the phonetic values of the Meroitic writing. The most up-to-date statement on the linguistic situation is Trigger in Hintze (1973), which gives references to all other major contributions in this difficult field. Hintze in *Meroitica III - Beiträge zur meroitischen Grammatik*, now in press, takes the analytical study of the language much farther.

5. TRANS-SAHARAN CONTACTS AND WEST AFRICA

Meroitica I – Sudan im Altertum (1973), which publishes papers given at the first international congress of Meroitic studies held in Berlin in 1972, provides the most up-to-date views on such topics as chronology, language, ceramics, methods of field investigations and others. A further conference was held in Paris in 1973 and the report is now in the press. A refreshingly iconoclastic view of the Meroitic civilization in Lower Nubia was given by Adams (1964, 1965), and the ideas expressed there have been repeated in further detail and with some modifications by the same author in a number of papers – his latest views and detailed bibliographical references will be found in *Nubia: corridor to Africa*, referred to above.

The descriptions of early travellers are useful in showing the state of the major monuments before more settled conditions and increase in population caused greater destruction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than in the previous thousand years or more. Of these travellers Linant de Bellefonds, *Journal d'un voyage à Méroé dans les années 1821 et 1822* (1958) and F. Caillaud, *Voyage à Méroé, au Fleuve Blanc, au-delà de Fazogl* (1826, reprinted 1972) are the earliest. A number of other nineteenth-century travellers made less substantial, but useful, contributions, and in 1843–4 the Royal Prussian Expedition led by C. R. Lepsius made a detailed study of monuments and collected many inscriptions published as *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (1849–59, reprinted, in a reduced format, 1973).

Of recent years there have been a number of articles published either dealing with small specific points or again and again going over the scanty material. The journal *Kush*, the official journal of the Sudan Antiquities Service, has now reached Volume xv (though there is a ten-year gap between volumes xiv and xv); the results of recent fieldwork are published there. The *Meroitic News Letter* [*Bulletin d'Informations Méroïtiques*] is published at irregular intervals alternately from Paris and Montreal. Number 14 appeared in February 1974. It acts as an exchange of views between people working on the subject and carries short accounts of recent research.

5. TRANS-SAHARAN CONTACTS AND WEST AFRICA

The question of contacts across the Sahara during Neolithic times has been raised by many writers; the most recent are J. D. Clark, *The prehistory of Africa* (1970), Camps, *Les Civilisations préhistoriques de l'Afrique du Nord et du Sahara* (1974) and Hugot, *Le Sahara avant le désert*

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Plate 1 Iron-smelting furnace at Meroe. [ch. 4]
(Photo: P. L. Shinnie.)

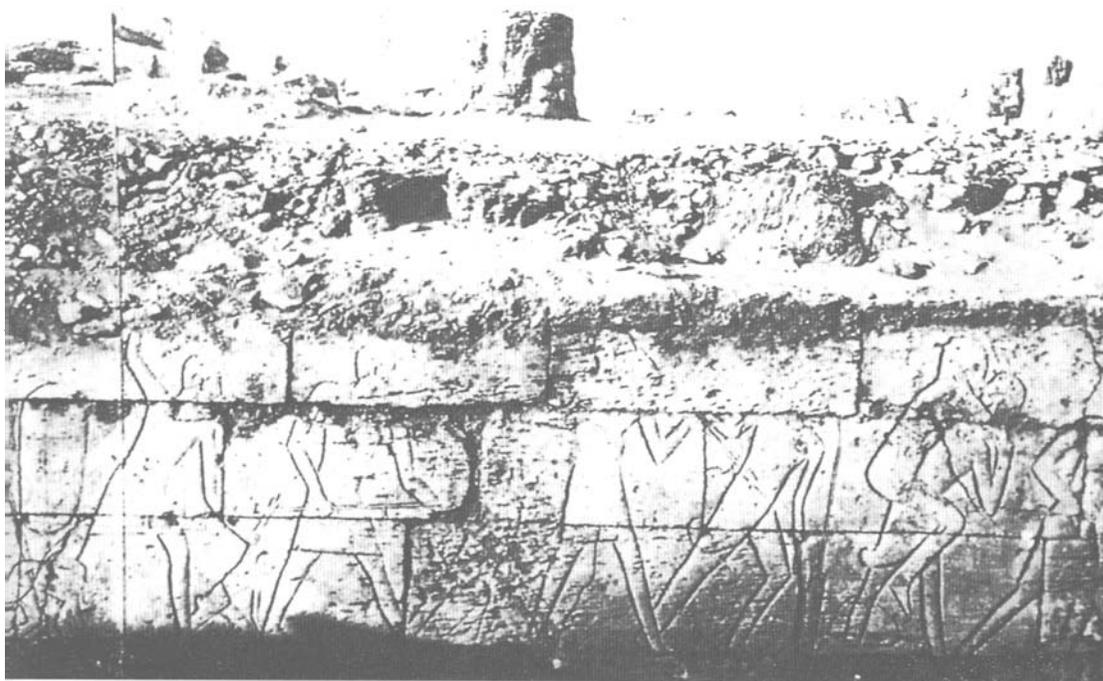


Plate 2 Scenes on the Sun Temple at Meroe. [ch. 4]
(Photo: J. Garstang; courtesy School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies,
University of Liverpool.)



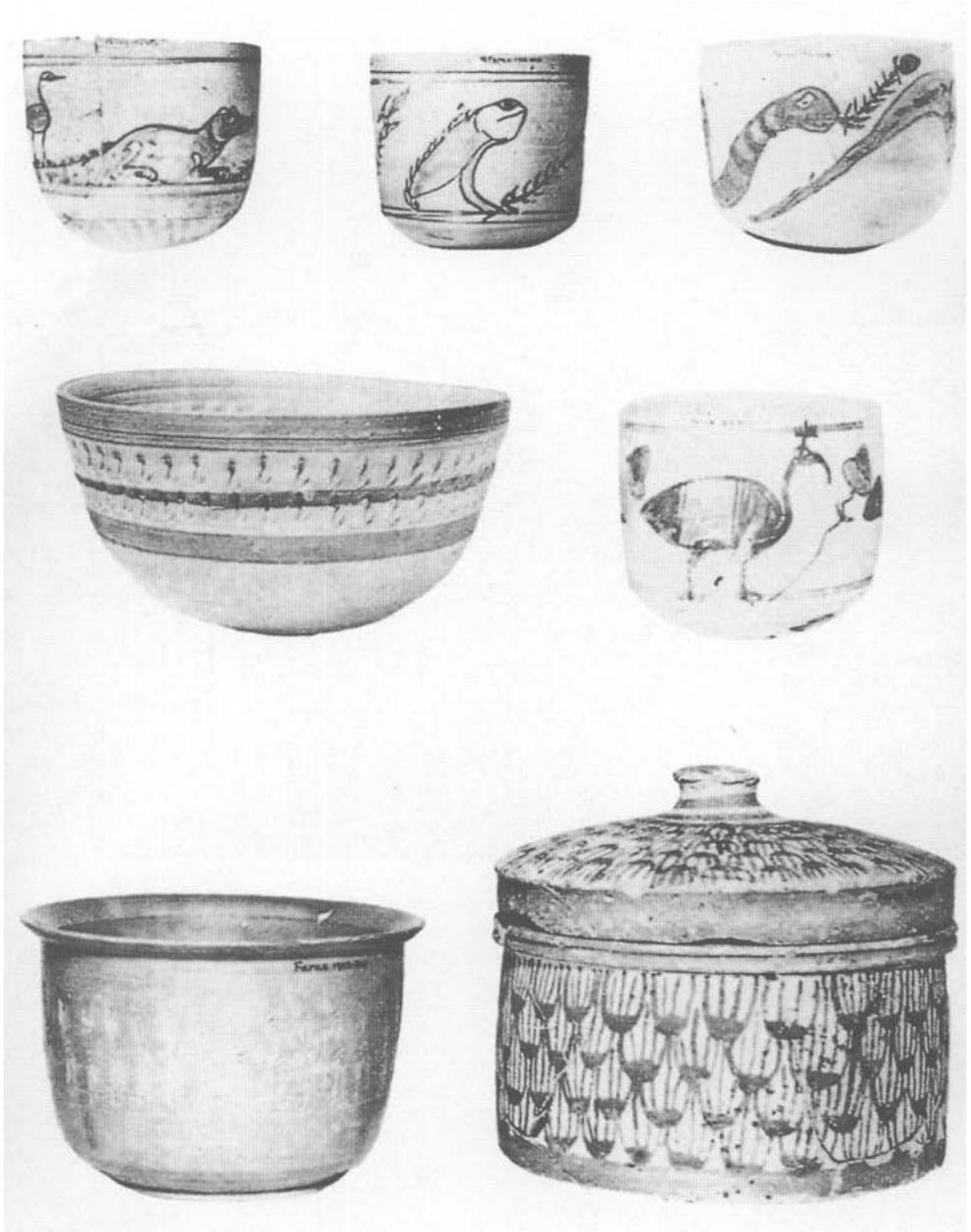


Plate 3 Meroitic pottery.
Actual sizes, from top left: 8.7 cm, 7.4 cm, 6.8 cm, 7.5 cm, 7.6 cm,
9.0 cm, 15.0 cm. [ch. 4]
(Photos courtesy Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.)



Plate 4 The Kiosk at Naqa. [ch. 4]
(Photo: P. L. Shinnie.)

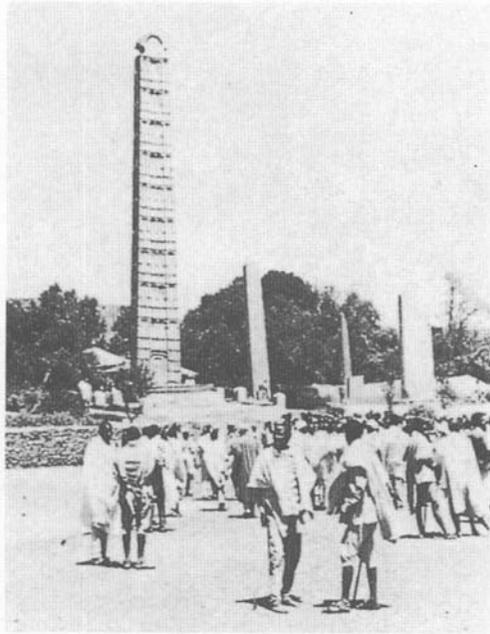


Plate 5 Aksum: standing stelae. [ch. 4]
(Photo courtesy British Institute
in Eastern Africa [B.I.E.A.])

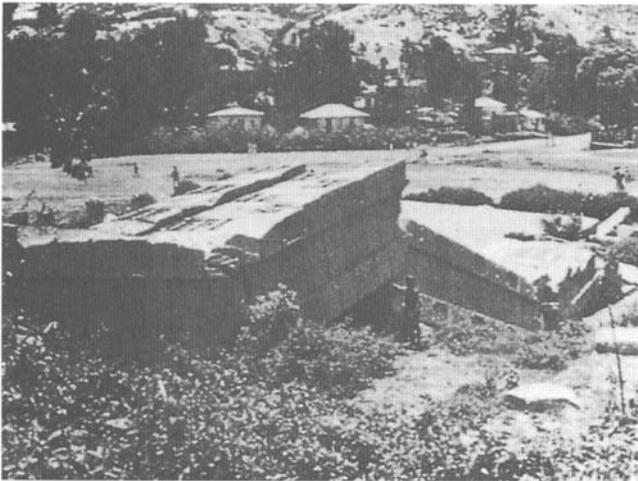


Plate 6 Aksum: fallen stele. [ch. 4]
(Photo: B.I.E.A.)

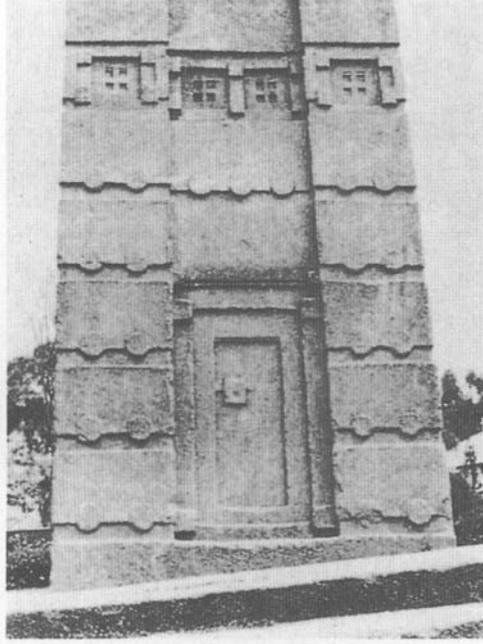


Plate 7 Aksum, Stele Park: detail on
main stele. [ch. 4]
(Photo: B.I.E.A.)

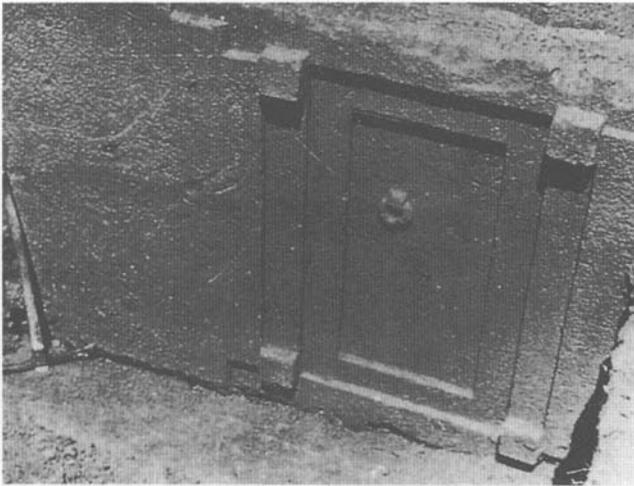


Plate 8 Aksum: 'Tomb of the False Door'. [ch. 4]
(Photo: B.I.E.A.)

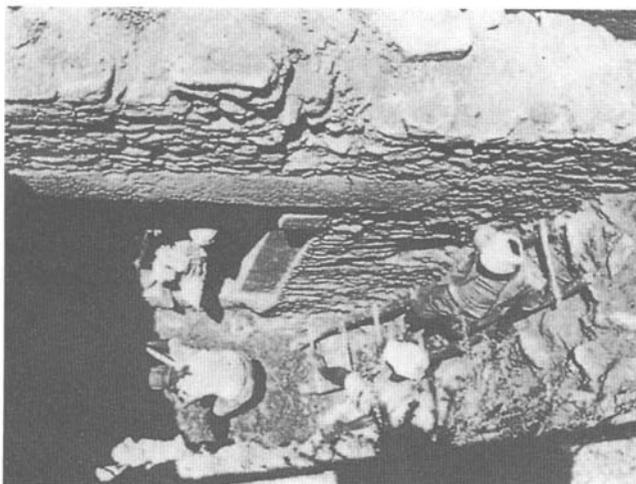


Plate 9 Aksum: entrance to the Mausoleum. [ch. 4]
(Photo: B.I.E.A.)

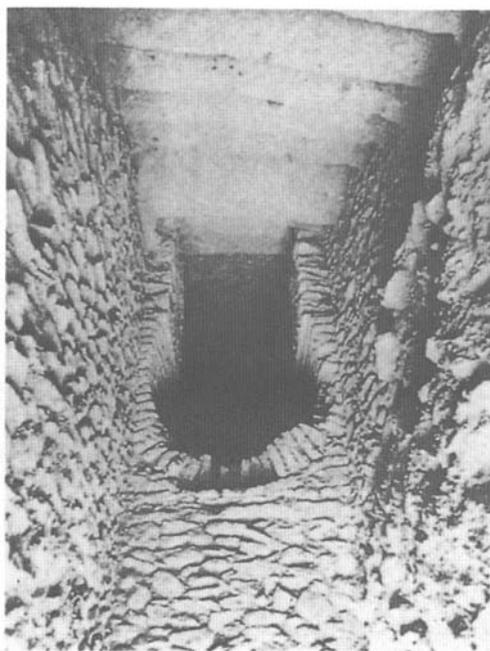


Plate 10 Aksum: 'Tomb of the Brick Arches'
(entrance archway, showing brickwork). [ch. 4]
(Photo: B.I.E.A.)