

# Relationship between nubia and egypt



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Art 327: Egyptian Art

Dr. Sara Orel November 20, 2014

Throughout the history of ancient Egypt, Egypt had been in contact with numerous cultures near and far from their home. Each of those cultures provided some sort of contact and relationship; whether that was political or economic or even as an enemy. One culture in particular, Nubia (later known as the Kushites with the development of the Kingdom of Kush) had been in contact and had a relationship with Egypt since as early as the first century B. C. The term ' Nubia' is defined as a geographic region located in the northeast corner of Africa. It straddles the Nile River and is sometimes referred to in two parts, according to the flow of the river, Lower Nubia in the North and Upper Nubia in the South.[1]For upper Nubia, the most common term was Kush.

Kush was located in what is now known as Nubia, near the third cataract in ancient times. The relationship between Egypt and Nubia as stated in the beginning was mainly trade and at times dealt with military aspects. However, as time progressed the relationship became more complex. It had changed depending on the political and economic climate of the time. To the Egyptians, the Nubians represented a trading partner, an enemy, a military asset, a conquered colony, and at times a conqueror. The beginning contact or relationship was not as complex as the end. The Nubians relied on their northern neighbor for some time. However towards the twentieth century that relationship soon changed.

Egypt had control over Nubia for nearly five-hundred years. However, towards the twentieth century Egypt lost control due to the decline of the Egyptian government at the end of Ramses II. That lost control would be devastating to Egypt due to the gold deposits found in Nubia and opened up the door for Libyans to take control. However, it would give chance to Nubia to make a stance and take control themselves.

The relationship between Egypt and Nubia changed drastically in the years from 750-730 BC when the Kingdom of Kush and the Nubian prince, Piankhy (also known as Piye) pushed northward to capture Egypt from Libyan control and establish their capital at Thebes. Just as a note, King Piankhy of Dynasty XXV reigned in Nubia for nearly thirty-one years (747-716 BC). We have archaeological evidence pointing to this through a large granite stela known as the ' Victory Stela of Piy' found in 1862 at Gebel Barkal in the Temple of Amun at Napata.[2]The stela measures 1. 80 meters by 1. 84 meters. It is inscribed on all four sides, with a total of 159 lines of hieroglyphs.[3]It now currently resides in the Cairo Museum.

The relief at the top shows Amun enthroned on the left with Mut standing behind him and Piankhy before him. It is a narration of Piye's conquest of all of Egypt.[4]It is much like the New Kingdom Annals of Thutmosis III in factualness but is much more vivid. It paints the portrait of a Nubian king who was " forceful, shrewd, and generous".[5]

" Hear what I did, exceeding the ancestors,

I the King, image of god,

Living likeness of Atum!

Who left the womb marked as ruler,

Feared by those greater than he!

His father knew, he mother perceived:

He would be ruler from the egg,

The Good God, beloved of gods,

The son of Re, who acts with his arms,

Piye beloved-of-Amun.”[6]

Piye always meant to rule Egypt but he had preferred treaties over warfare, unlike his later adversary the Assyrians. It states that he was extremely pious and especially devoted to Amun. Egyptians rather welcomed the Nubian prince, preferring him over the Libyans, scholars attest this to the cultural similarities between Egypt and Nubia and also the physical similarities as well. The Nubians ruled from Nubia to as far as the Delta, they portrayed themselves not with the Egyptian crown with one cobra uraeus but with two cobras.

Nubian rule over Egypt was short lived, lasting less than a hundred years. The end came with an attack by the Assyrians, pushing them further south and relocating their capital from Thebes to Meroe. The Nubian rule was succeeded by a vigorous Egyptian dynasty coming from Sais in the XXVI

dynasty. During this time the Egypt was rebuilt as a strong centralized and prosperous state.[7]

The relations with Nubia at this time were at first peaceful, but in 592 BC, Psamtik II attacked Nubia and claimed a victory. However, he did not gain control. What prompted this attack is still not known, but is recorded on the 'Victory Stela of King Psamtik II' and is viewed by many as an act of revenge when Nubia controlled Egypt.

“ The troops your majesty sent to Nubia have reached the hill-country of Nubia. It is a land lacking a battlefield, a place lacking horses. The Nubians of every hill-country rose up against him, their hearts full of rage against him. His attack took place, and it was misery for the rebels. His majesty has done a fighter's work.”[8]

The relationship between Nubia and Egypt remained strained with the Saite power in Egypt but improved in the Ptolemaic period with the Meroitic Kingdom.

There were, as usual, times of trouble between the two nations during this period. There was one occasion where the Meroites invaded Egypt in the upper kingdom. However, trade between Egypt and Nubia appeared to have increased considerably.[9]The wealth and stimulation from this trade helped initiate a cultural renaissance in the Meroitic heartland with the border remaining near Maharraqa in the middle of Lower Nubia.[10]The cooperation between the two is symbolized in the temples at Dakka and Philae. As time went on, the relationship between the two continued until around 350 AD

when the Axumite Kingdom attacked and completely destroyed the Meroe Kingdom. After this time Nubia became a Christian nation.

From the beginning contact to the end, the relationship between Nubia and Egypt was very complex. The contact and relationship between the two always seemed to go back and forth from a peaceful relationship to one with hostility. However complex their relationship was, Egypt and Nubia both developed through political, economic, and cultural means depending on who held power at the time. It is no secret that Nubia played an important, however brief, in Egyptian history. What we know of them largely comes from the texts and inscriptions from Egyptians. However, with excavations still being pursued in Nubia there is still much to be discovered.

## **Works Cited**

BBC. The Story of Africa: Nile Valley. 2014. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index\\_section3.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index_section3.shtml) accessed November 15, 2014.

Harkless, Necia Desiree. Nubian Pharaohs and Meroitic Kings: The Kingdom of Kush. Bloomington: Author House, 2006

Lacovara, Majorie Fisher and Peter. Ancient Nubia: African Kingdom on the Nile. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012.

Lichtheim, Miriam. Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Late Period. Vol. 3. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980.

Redford, Donald B. From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

<https://assignbuster.com/relationship-between-nubia-and-egypt/>

Shubert, Steven Blake. *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient*. Edited by Kathryn A. Bard. London: Routledge, 2005.

Smith, Stuart Tyson. *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Trigger, Bruce G. "New Light on the History of Lower Nubia."

*Anthropologica*(Canadian Anthropology Society) 10, no. 1 (1968): 81-106.

Accessed 13 November 2014. url<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25604760>.

---

[1]Majorie Fisher and Peter Lacovara, *Ancient Nubia: African Kingdoms on the Nile*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press) 5.

[2]Donald B. Redford, *From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press) 101.

[3]Ibid, 101.

[4]Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, v. 3, (Los Angeles: University of California Press) 66.

[5]Ibid, 66.

[6]Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, v. 3, (Los Angeles: University of California Press) 68.

[7]Ibid, 66.

[8]Ibid, 85.

[9]Bruce G. Trigger, " New Light on the History of Lower Nubia",  
Anthropologica(1968): 95, access 15 November 2014, url: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25604760>.

[10]Ibid, 95.