



GREAT CITIES OF AFRICA

THE CITY OF MEROE



The Nubian Empire was established in 4800 BC by the Nubians who were Africans located in north-eastern Africa in the area which is today known as Sudan. Later, the capital cities of the Nubian Empire would be Kerma, Napata and Meroe. The last capital of the Nubian Empire was Meroe and was formally established in 300 BC and flourished until 300 AD. The city of Meroe was located on the east bank of the Nile River near modern-day Shendi in Sudan in eastern Africa. Meroe is also the location of the majority of the pyramids constructed by the Nubians and includes burials for over 40 kings and queens. The Nubians originally began the construction of their pyramids from 747 BC until around to 300 AD.

From a strategic perspective the region of Meroe provided some protection from foreign invaders because of the Nile and Atbara rivers near it. This region of Africa also had an abundance of iron ore and hardwood. Meroe eventually became a major trading center in the region for gold, ivory, animal skins, ostrich feathers, slaves and iron. Iron smelting

in Meroe became a very large industry so much so that the British researcher Archibald Sayce upon publishing his report after completing his excavation of Meroe in the early 1900's remarked the following:

“MEROE IN FACT, MUST HAVE BEEN THE BIRMINGHAM OF ANCIENT AFRICA; THE SMOKE OF ITS IRON-SMELTING FURNACE'S MUST HAS BEEN CONTINUALLY GOING UP TO HEAVEN, AND THE WHOLE OF NORTHERN AFRICA MIGHT HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED BY IT WITH IMPLEMENTS OF IRON”.

Based on excavations at Meroe which took into account the smelting process, iron technologies and the furnace sizes, it is now understood that about 10 tons of iron metal were produced each year. The strengthening of trade was also supported by the unique geographical position which provided a route to the Red Sea and access to Arabia and Eastern Asia. The Nubians were as a consequence able to sell their iron products into India.