Ancient Nubia

Was it truly a civilization?
DEDICATION

This presentation is dedicated to all of the humane, caring, and joyful Africans and African-Americans I have known through the years.
Purpose of Discussion

- This presentation aims to show that Africa indeed had an ancient civilization with many distinct features and various stages of historical and cultural development. This civilization had a complex, historical relationship with Egypt which included trade, wars, and conquest. This civilization also had the oldest known city in sub-Saharan Africa, the city of Kerma.
Why is this important?

- The ancient civilization of Nubia has long been overlooked and overshadowed until recently.
- The region is so remote and rugged, archeologists postponed projects and excavations.
- Curator Timothy Kendall said “Scholars didn’t believe black Africa was capable of producing a high civilization.”
Located south of Egypt in what is now Sudan, the civilization lasted for 2,600 years.
Geography played a major role in Nubia’s development.
Six cataracts on the Nile made trade difficult.
Because Nubia was at the edge of the unknown in the ancient world, it always shimmered with legend.
There were 4 main stages of Nubia’s historical development:

- Neolithic
- Kingdom of Kerma
- Kingdom of Kush
- Kingdom of Meroe
Neolithic Era 3,000 -2,000 B.C.

- The people of Nubia lived in small villages and produced crops while continuing to hunt and gather as they had done during the Paleolithic Era.
Beginnings of trade with Egypt

- Contact and trade with Egypt began when Nubia provided gold, ivory, ebony, giraffes, leopards, oils, perfumes, and incense.
Kingdom of Kerma
2,000 - 1700 B.C.

- Nubia’s earliest kingdom saw Kings living in palaces and claiming divine descent.
Kerma had magnificent pottery.

- The early Kingdom of Kerma was known for exquisite red and black pottery.
Kerma had elaborate burial rites.

- In the Kingdom of Kerma kings were buried with gold, bronze, ivory, and pottery.
Gold was discovered in Kerma in a dry river bed
Gold from Kerma was sought after by Egyptian pharaohs and merchants.
Men from Kerma became mercenaries in Egyptian armies.
Kingdom of Kush
1700 - 600 B.C.

- Kerma was destroyed around 1700 B.C. The city was burned and temples and tombs were plundered.
- The next kingdom was the Kingdom of Kush which lasted about 1,000 years.
Kush Palace Ruins At Sufra
Kushite King Aspelta
Rule by Kushites interrupted by Egyptian invasion.

After the Kushites had ruled 200 years, the Egyptians invaded and conquered Nubia. They dominated Nubia for 400 years introducing Egyptian gods, temples, hieroglyphics, and pyramids.
Egyptian Rule 1500 - 1100 B.C.

- Kushite burial rites resembled Egyptians’.
Nubians placed Egyptian-like statues in their tombs.
Amulet of winged goddess placed in Kushite Queen’s tomb
Kush Regains Independence

1100 - 600 B.C.

- Egyptian goddess Hathor still adorns this enamel and gold-inlaid bracelet.
Kushite King Taharqo
A figurine (called a 'shawabti') representing the dead person was often buried with the elite. This image is of the Pharaoh Taharka (690-664 BC), one of the Nubian rulers of a unified Nubian-Egyptian state.
Jewelry Distinctly Kushite in Style
Kingdom of Meroe 600 B.C. - 400 A.D.

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The Meroitic hieroglyphic and cursive alphabets.
Numerous Pyramids were built at Meroe
Ba-statues placed in pyramids depicted deceased as part human, part bird with folded wings.
Ba-statue of a woman placed in grave
Wood and Ivory Jewel box placed in grave
Ceramic jar placed in grave
Meroitic-era potters paid more attention to naturalistic representation of animals, like this antelope, than to the human figure. (Karanog, 100 BC).
Lion decoration on pottery
Lion Temple at Naga
Lion God Apademak on Wall of Temple
Temple of Amun at Naga
What does this mean?

- Africa had a distinctive ancient civilization
- Nubia’s manifestations of civilization were: monumental architecture, written language, social classes, metallurgy, cities, and complex religious beliefs.
- The beauty of the objects created by Nubians opens a window on the ancient African world and enhances our appreciation of that world.