



# Sudanese Cultural Heritage Sites

Including sites recognized as the World Heritage and those selected for being promoted for nomination

Dr. Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed



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# **Sudanese Cultural Heritage Sites**

**Including sites recognized as the World  
Heritage and those selected for being  
promoted for nomination**

### **Forewords**

This booklet is about the Sudanese Heritage, a cultural part of it. In September-December of 2015, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) of the Sudanese Ministry of Tourism, Antiquities and Wildlife, National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, and UNESCO Khartoum office organized a set of expert consultations to review the Sudanese list of monuments, buildings, archaeological places, and other landmarks with outstanding cultural value, which the country recognizes as of being on a level of requirements of the World Heritage Center of UNESCO (WHC). Due to this effort the list of Sudanese Heritage had been extended by four items, and, together with two already nominated as World Heritage Sites (Jebel Barkal and Meroe Island), it currently consists of nine items.

This booklet contains short descriptions of these “official” Sudanese Heritage Sites, complemented by an overview of the Sudanese History. The majority of the text was compiled by Dr. Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed, the General Director of the NCAM. Dr. Vincent Francigny, the Director of French Section in the NCAM, kindly contributed by the description of the sites of Sai Island. Dr. Julie Anderson from the British Museum kindly revised the text. Dr. Pavel Kroupkine, the Head of UNESCO

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Khartoum office, selected the majority of photos, and the maps. Mr. Dirar Mustafa, UNESCO Khartoum office, designed the publication. The UNESCO Khartoum office supported the work in general, with very kind assistance of the Embassy of Switzerland to Sudan and Eritrea.

The NCAM and UNESCO Khartoum office hope, that this booklet will find its readers – those ones, whose curiosity requires more information about the Sudanese Heritage landmarks. We also hope, that this first step in direction to open informationally the Sudanese values for the public worldwide will be continued by the next ones, elaborating presence of Sudan in the global information ocean, making this presence in it wider and deeper.

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## Introduction

### Sudan's Ancient History

Sudan is a culturally diverse country with a remarkable history and a rich archaeological heritage. Throughout the millennia, Sudan has served as a zone of contact among the peoples of sub-Saharan and central Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Arab world. From the earliest times, the river Nile and its tributaries served as a corridor through which people, goods and ideas circulated between the south and north.



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Sudan was known to the ancient world as Ta-sety, ‘the land of Bow’, and Kush, both names given by the ancient Egyptians. Kush (Cush) is also mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible in reference to the lands south of Egypt. The Greeks similarly designated these regions as *Aethiopia*, though this term did not apply to a specific ethnic group or to a well-defined geographical location. Archaeological discoveries made over the last two centuries and continuing up to the present day have enabled the ancient history of Sudan to be defined into the following periods:

### **Prehistoric Period (1,600,000-3500 BC)**

#### **Hunters, gatherers and early farmers**

Traces of early inhabitants have been found in northern Sudan at Kaddanarti, situated near Kerma, about 60km north of Dongola. This prehistoric culture, identified by a lithic industry and faunal remains, was dated to 1.6 million to half a million years ago, though the region may have been inhabited even earlier. Further north, between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nile cataracts, a well-preserved settlement dating 300,000 to 200,000 years ago, was discovered on Sai Island. It provided evidence for early human occupation in the Nile Valley. This included possible grinding and processing of plant foods, and the exploitation and production of pigments from red and yellow ochres, along with perhaps some of the earliest evidence for art in the world.

Further south, the Singa skull found on the upper Blue Nile in 1924, is amongst the oldest Middle Palaeolithic human



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remains discovered in Sudan. This was the skull of a Homo sapiens individual and dated to between 150,000 and 120,000 years ago, thus further testifying to the importance role and place of Sudan in the evolution of the earliest stages of human history. Recent discoveries made in the western periphery of the Red Sea basin north of the Danakil Depression, additionally have confirmed that makers of the Acheulean technocomplex lived on the coastal plains adjacent to the Red Sea Hills.

During the Mesolithic period (8500-5500 BC) the populations engaged in hunting and gathering, and developed semi-sedentary societies. They collected foodstuffs, intensively exploited the river Nile's resources, created microlithic and bone tools such as harpoons, and made pottery. Sudanese Mesolithic pottery is one of the earliest produced in the world and was well fired and finely decorated with impressed motifs.

The Neolithic period that followed (4900-3000 BC) was characterized by animal husbandry, with the herding of cattle, sheep and goats in particular, and by the adoption of food production and harvesting of wild grains.

### **Pre-Kerma (3500-2500 BC)**

#### **The rise of the first urban civilization**

By 3000 BC the first evidence for urbanization appears at Kerma in the form of a large fortified town, consisting of massive earth and timber defenses, circular huts, rectangular buildings, animal pens and extensive storage facilities. This large urban settlement predates the

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development of urbanism elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **The First Kingdom of Kush (2500-1500 BC)**

This new town at Kerma grew to become one of the most powerful states in the history of Sudan. It was known as the Kingdom of Kush and it flourished for around 1000 years with its rulers rapidly assuming control of the middle Nile valley. The culture of Kerma resonates spiritually, culturally and nationally among the present generation of Sudanese.



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Kerma began as a small town that developed into a remarkably wealthy fortified metropolis, and like its predecessor had elaborate defenses, in addition to numerous domestic, administrative and industrial buildings. It was centered around an important religious district with monumental temples. The culture of this kingdom, known by the name of its type site, Kerma, is very distinctive and has been divided into three main phases, *Kerma Ancien* (2500-2050 BC), *Kerma Moyen* (2050-1750 BC) and *Kerma Classique* (1750-1450 BC). Its cultural assemblage is typified by extremely fine handmade pottery, amongst the finest ever made in the Nile Valley. These are largely black-topped red wares with a metallic sheen on the black interior.

At its zenith, the Kerma kings ruled a region that extended from at least the 1<sup>st</sup> Nile cataract to possibly as far upstream as the 5<sup>th</sup> cataract. The Kingdom of Kush was a major trading partner of the ancient Egyptians, as it was in the middle of the route between Egypt and the Mediterranean world, and Central Africa. A port was located south of the town. Its trading networks were extensive and may have included regions far to the southeast near Kassala on the Eritrean border, perhaps one of the regions known to the ancient Egyptians as Punt. The trade items passing through Kerma included ivory, animal skins, hard woods, gold and slaves, and these brought the kingdom great wealth that is displayed in its royal tombs. The main cemetery, on the site of the pre-Kerma settlement, covers an area of nearly 90ha and is estimated to contain between 30,000 and 40,000 burials. Many of

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these have been excavated and among them is a burial, perhaps of a *Kerma Moyen* king. He was placed in a grave 11.7m in diameter and 2m deep, covered by a tumulus 25m across. Around the south side of the tumulus over 4000 animal bucrania, had been arranged in a crescent. The tombs of the later Kerma kings were even more impressive. Buried under tumuli up to 90m in diameter, they were accompanied to their deaths by as many as 400 sacrificed humans, amongst whom may have been members of the king's family, retainers and prisoners of war.

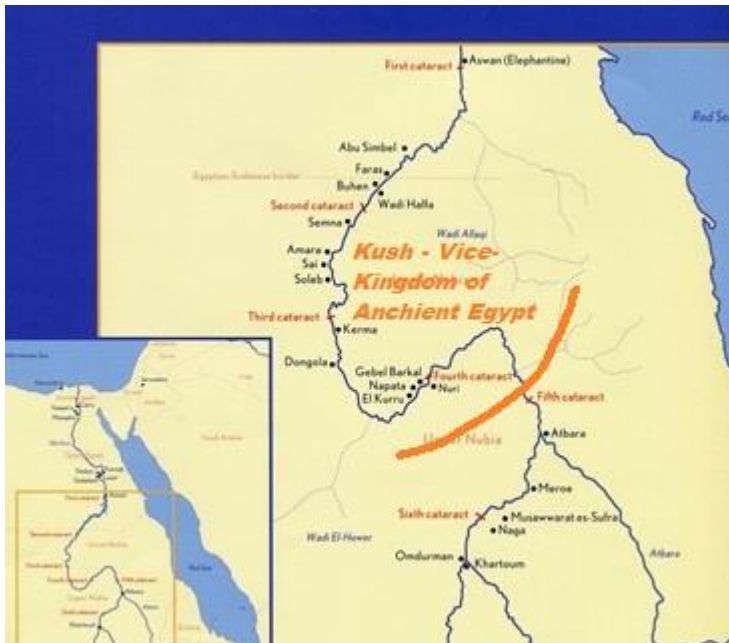
The respect shown for the military prowess of the Kushites by the Egyptians is demonstrated on the one hand by the units of archers drawn from this region in the Egyptian army and, on the other by the massive fortifications the Egyptians built during Dynasty 12 (1850-1795 BC) to protect their southern border. These fortresses had names such as 'Warding off the bows' and 'Repelling the *Inw*'. Between 1750 and 1650 BC, Egypt's power was in decline. In the north, the Hyksos who had invaded from Palestine occupied the Egyptian delta, while Kush occupied all the territory up to the 1<sup>st</sup> cataract and raided with impunity deep into Egypt.

### **Egypt in Nubia - The New Kingdom (1500- 900 BC)**

Kush was too powerful a neighbour for the Egyptians to bear and with the resurgence of Egypt early in Dynasty 18, a revitalized Egypt invaded Kush. Beginning under the Egyptian ruler Kamose and continuing under his successor Ahmose, after ousting the Hyksos from the Egyptian delta,

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Egypt turned its attention southward and Egypt and Kush engaged in a struggle for power. By 1500 BC, the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose I had vanquished the Kushite king in a major battle by the 3<sup>rd</sup> cataract and set up his boundary stela far upstream at Kurgus, near the 5<sup>th</sup> cataract. Evidence from Kerma suggests that despite its massive defenses, the town was violently destroyed.



Egyptian priests and officials settled in Sudan and built numerous temples, the most impressive of these that of Soleb, was built under Amenhotep III (1378-1348 BC). This temple was dedicated to the King's chief wife and was associated with Jubilee festivals. This contact between

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pharaonic Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa saw an important exchange of exchange cultural ideas and values. Egyptian control lasted until the early 11<sup>th</sup> century BC and is evidenced on the ground by a string of major fortified towns extending as far upstream as Jebel Barkal; a mountain they believed to be the southern ancestral home of their state god Amun.

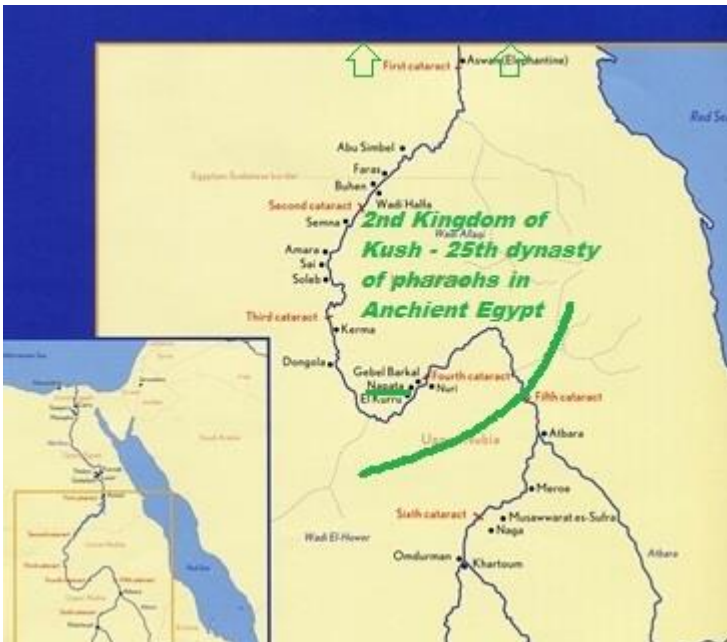
Although Egyptian domination is evident in the urban centres, its impact on the bulk of the population within its territory may have been much less significant. It appears that when Egypt abandoned its conquests south of the 1<sup>st</sup> cataract, the indigenous culture once again came to the fore as is indicated by funerary customs, ceramic production and also in architecture.

### **The Second Kingdom of Kush (9<sup>th</sup> century BC – 4<sup>th</sup> century AD)**

The situation in the few centuries after the Egyptian withdrawal is unclear but the withdrawal of the Egyptians left a power vacuum that gave rise to a second Kushite kingdom based downstream of the 4<sup>th</sup> cataract in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. There are hints of an important powerbase at Qasr Ibrim near the 1<sup>st</sup> cataract where there was an impressive fortified stronghold, but it is at el-Kurru, 12km downstream from Jebel Barkal, that a new state arose which was destined to dominate the Nile valley from the confluence of the Niles to the Mediterranean. These new rulers can be first identified in the royal burial ground at el-Kurru where initially they followed local funerary customs. Rapidly however, they adopted Egyptian religion

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and practices, worshipping Egyptian gods, particularly Amun, who was believed to reside in the mountain of Jebel Barkal. A large religious complex developed at the foot of the mountain. The el-Kurru cemetery was excavated extensively by George Reisner in 1919. Here he found a clear development of graves, tomb superstructures and funerary customs from the indigenous pit grave with its crouched inhumation covered by a tumulus to extended mummified burials in elaborately decorated rock-cut tombs crowned by dressed-stone pyramids. This development was presumably mirrored by an equally rapid expansion of the state, its leaders rising from local chieftains to become kings of a vast empire. Unfortunately we know little of how this transformation was achieved.



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It was, as champions of the Egyptian, now also the Kushite, state god Amun, that the Kushite King Kashta in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century BC took control of southern Egypt. His successor Piankhy (Piye) went on to conquer the whole of Egypt and to rule the largest empire on the Nile, only surpassed by that of Mohammed Ali in the 1820s, over 2500 years later. For more than fifty years, Piankhy's successors, known in Egypt as Dynasty 25, ruled the two lands both as kings of Kush and as pharaohs of Upper and Lower Egypt. King Taharqo (690-664 BC), who is mentioned in the Bible, was known for the construction of many monumental buildings, including shrines and temples mostly to the god Amun, all over the kingdom. The Kushites brought about a renaissance in art and architecture in Egypt, and also created a new artistic idiom in Sudan.

As Kush arose, from the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards the Assyrian empire also expanded, controlling areas of present-day Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. These two new superpowers were destined to clash, first in the Levant, then Egypt; their battles are known from contemporary accounts and the Bible. The conflict lasted for three generations. The Assyrians finally broke Kushite rule in Egypt with the sacking of Thebes in 663 BC. Although forced to retire to the south, the Kushite kingdom remained powerful and flourished in Sudan for another thousand years. They maintained control over a vast tract of the Nile valley to well upstream of modern-day Khartoum. How far their control extended to the east and west of the Nile is unclear but Kushite sites are known



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deep in the Bayuda, 110km up the Wadi Howar in the Libyan Desert and in the Butana.

A major Kushite centre was in existence at Meroe, about 200km north of modern Khartoum, where at least from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the main residence of the Kushite king was located. The importance of Meroe was further enhanced when the royal burial ground was relocated there in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The burial ground has over 200 pyramids and members of the royal family along with the elite of society could have a pyramid and chapel constructed for them.



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The Kushites maintained close contacts with Egypt and Kushite culture displays a rich combination of Pharaonic, Hellenistic and Roman influences merged with indigenous sub-Saharan African traditions. This is particularly notable in their art, religion and in the language, known as Meroitic. Although the Kushites had presumably always had their own language, it was only around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC that a writing system was developed and thereafter increasingly inscriptions, from the monumental to graffiti, were written in this as yet little understood language. Meroe was a centre of metalworking, fine pottery and glass making. The richness of Meroitic burials and cultural artefacts show contacts with Graeco-Roman Egypt and the Mediterranean. Workshops and kilns were located to the northeast and southeast of the Royal City and heaps of iron slag found there are indicative of the iron-working industry.

Within the religious pantheon, the god Amun, under his Meroitic name Amani, remained the god of kingship and in his Meroitic form was depicted as a man with a ram's head. He was joined by several indigenous gods notably Apedemak the lion god of war, with the lion symbolizing the power of the king. There are also a large number of powerful ruling queens, known as *Kandake*, documented during this period. Among them were Amanirenas and Amanishakheto, one of whom made a treaty with Emperor Caesar Augustus after warring against the Roman Empire.

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### **Post Meroitic (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD)**

#### **Cultural Change in the Nile Valley**

The Kushite state was in decline and collapsed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. The exact causes are uncertain but there may have been a number of contributory factors, among them decline in trade. It was eventually transformed into three medieval Christian kingdoms. Much evidence for this transitional period, known to archaeologists as the Post Meroitic, comes from burials of the elite. Temples and palaces are rare and the Royal City at Meroe becomes depopulated and the central authority seems to be replaced by several smaller states. Royal and elite pyramid burials at Meroe came to an end. Huge tumuli replaced the pyramid. These likely belonged to local kings, such as those at Ballana, situated to the north downstream of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cataract, or to the successors of the Meroitic royal house as perhaps found in the tombs at el-Hobagi, close to Meroe.

### **Medieval Period (AD 550-1500)**

Historical sources record that by the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century AD there were three Nubian successor states, Nobadia in the north with its capital at Faras, Makuria in the centre with its capital at Old Dongola and Alwa (Alodia) in the south with its capital at Soba East, (though Nobatia soon joined Makuria). Missionaries sent from Byzantine Egypt and Constantinople converted these states to Christianity. This marked a pivotal moment in the cultural history of the middle Nile valley; the arrival and possibly rapid adoption of the new religion wiped away millennia of Egyptian and indigenous religious traditions. By embracing the

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Christian, and later Islamic, view of the afterlife, the provision of grave goods became unnecessary, and grand tombs were replaced by simple burials.

In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, Arab armies, emerging from what is now Saudi Arabia dealt a crushing blow to both the Byzantium and Sassanian Empires and the Arab invasion of Egypt in AD 639 changed forever the politics of the region. The new rulers of Egypt immediately advanced into Nubia under Abdullahi bin el-Sarh but met a hostile landscape and an enemy whose prowess with the bow made a deep impression on the would-be conquerors.



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After this brief period of conflict with their neighbours to the north, a peace accord, the Baqt, was signed guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Nubian states and stipulating a regular exchange of trade goods between the parties. This agreement was honoured for over 600 years and formed the corner stone of interstate relations between Nubia and the Arabs. This allowed the medieval kingdoms to flourish and they developed a vibrant, rich culture with distinctive architecture, and sophisticated arts and crafts. A greater proportion of the population was literate than in previous periods with written evidence for Greek, Coptic, Arabic and Old Nubian. The growth of the Nubian-speaking population was supported by an efficient agricultural system based on the widespread adoption of the waterwheel (*saqiya*). The introduction of the camel as a widely used means of transport expanded and enhanced the desert routes, and an extensive trade network developed.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, following on from the Mameluke takeover of Egypt, relations with their northern neighbours became strained and the next two centuries saw an incessant round of invasions many reaching the Makurian capital, often hastened by calls from rival pretenders to the Makurian throne for assistance from the north. In 1317 what may have been the throne hall of the Makurian kings was converted into a mosque, as is indicated by the extant inscription and six years later the ruler of the Christian kingdom of Makuria was a Muslim. Old Dongola seems to have been abandoned around 1365 with a small splinter

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state, the Kingdom of Dotawo, surviving further north up to the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Funj Sultanate of Sennar (AD 1504- 1821)**

Arab settlers began to arrive first along the Red Sea coast by way of Egypt and then westwards to the Nile and beyond. However, contact between Arabia and the Sudan had existed long before Islam. Islamic tombstones from Khor Nubt in the Eastern Desert dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century provide early evidence for Arab penetration. Later migrations of Arab groups from the Arabian Peninsula to Sudan contributed a great deal to its Islamic culture, and led to the building of ports and towns at Badi, Aidhab, Suakin, Sennar and el-Fasher. In the succeeding centuries there is evidence for the presence of Muslims within the Christian communities, a large Muslim community presumably of traders, is recorded on the banks of the Blue Nile within the Alwan capital in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, for example.

Unlike the fall of Makuria, the decline of the medieval kingdom of Alwa largely is undocumented. The large fired-brick churches excavated in the capital seem to have been occupied by squatters as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A very late source, the Funj Chronicle, reports that the Alwan capital Soba was overthrown in AD 1504. This was said to be due to a confederation made between the Arab and the Funj leaders, Abdallah Gamaa and Omarah Dongus, which resulted in the establishment of the Funj State with its capital at Sennar. Ceramics, pipes, drums, swords and a large number of documents pertaining to all

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aspects of life, along with castles, palaces, mosques and Quranic schools document this period. The sultanate occupied the Gezira between the Blue and the White Niles and the upper reaches of the Blue Nile, as well as extending their control into Kordofan and to the Red Sea in the region of Suakin. This unity of federated states facilitated the emergence of Islamic kingdoms in other parts of the Sudan, such as the Fur and el-Masabaat kingdom in Western Sudan, the Sheikhdom of el-Abdalab, with its capital firstly in Gerri and later at Halfaya near Khartoum, and the Sheikhdom of the Red Sea and Fazougli.

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### **General list of Sudanese Cultural Heritage**

#### **Properties inscribed on the World Heritage list**

1. Jebel Barkal and the sites of the Napatan Region
2. Monuments and sites of the Island of Meroe

#### **Cultural sites proposed for inclusion to the World Heritage**

1. Monuments of the Kingdom of Kerma
2. Monuments and sites of Sai Island
3. Ancient Egyptian pharaonic sites
4. Monuments of the medieval Christian Kingdoms of Nubia
5. Islamic Monuments of al-Khandaq and Wad Nimeiri
6. The port of Suakin
7. Monuments of Greater Khartoum

### **Description of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List**

#### **Jebel Barkal and the monuments of the Napatan region**

Jebel Barkal and the monuments of the Napatan region are situated about 325km north of Khartoum in Northern State, Sudan in the region of Karima. They were inscribed



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on the World Heritage List in 2003 and include the monuments of Jebel Barkal, El-Kurru, Nuri, Sanam and Zuma.

### **Jebel Barkal**

The area of Jebel Barkal comprises the site of the ancient city of Napata whose ruins are scattered around it. Napata was the primary sanctuary and coronation centre of the Kushite kingdom.

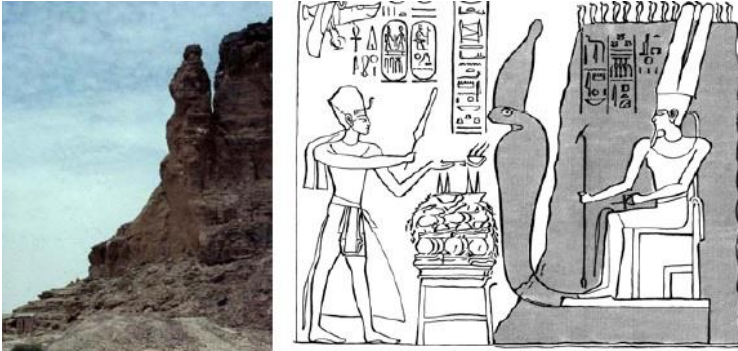


©NCAM: Jebel Barkal mound: view from the Amun Temple side.

Jebel Barkal was known as the ‘Pure Mountain’ and was the southern residence of the god Amun, an Egyptian state god and the Kushite god of kingship. The site is best known for its Kushite architecture and monuments, and for over a thousand years, Jebel Barkal was the chief cult

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centre of the Kingdom of Kush.<sup>1</sup> It was of great religious and political importance particularly between the 9<sup>th</sup> century and 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.



©NCAM: Jebel Barkal's pinnacle and Egyptian fresco from Abu Simbel with the god Amun enthroned inside the mound (drawing by Peter D. Manuelian).

The earliest known architecture at Napata dates the Egyptian New Kingdom Dynasty 18 (1550-1069 BC) and many of the structures built by the Egyptian pharaohs were later restored by the Kushite kings. The Barkal stele of Thutmose III, the site's earliest known inscription, refers

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<sup>1</sup> There is a view, which links Jebel Barkal with Ancient Egypt's myths of the creation of the Universe. In beliefs of those Egyptians, before the times, there existed just the lifeless waters of chaos, called Nu. One time, deciding to make something to play with, Nu extracted from itself a piece of space, which was a mound (called *Benben*) with a god Amun on top of it. Then, Amun continued further freeing space of chaos / Nu and ordering it, receiving in the end the Nile Valley with the Nile, skies, lands, gods, people, etc. The mentioned view states that Jebel Barkal is exactly that initial mound Benben.

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to an existing native settlement and to a local Egyptian fort. It also describes Jebel Barkal as ‘the throne of the two lands’. The mountain has a pinnacle at one side that was viewed as a giant, natural statue of a rearing cobra (*uraeus*) wearing the white crown. An elaborate temple complex evolved on the south and southeastern sides of the mountain’s base. The principal architectural feature in the area is an Amun temple originally built by Amenhotep II. This is the largest and most important temple in Nubia, measuring c. 150m long. Almost every Egyptian New Kingdom pharaoh from Thutmose III to Ramses II is represented at Jebel Barkal. Following Ramses II, Egyptian building activities ceased at Jebel Barkal.



©UNESCO: Jebel Barkal and Kushite pyramids of Napata period.

Beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, a new ruling family emerged in the region and Napata became an important Kushite religious and political center. These Kushite kings conquered and ruled Egypt where they are known as

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Dynasty 25 (747-656 BC). Napata became the capital of the Kushite Empire, and it was here that the coronation ceremony of the Kushite kings was celebrated. The Kushite rulers, particularly Piankhy and Taharqo, engaged in extensive building activities here enlarging the Great Amun Temple, restoring religious structures that had been build by the Egyptian pharaohs, and building new temples and palaces not infrequently on top of New Kingdom foundations. The Barkal temple complex was in use for nearly 1500 years, from the early Egyptian New Kingdom through to the end of the Kushite period in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. A royal pyramid cemetery, used by Kushite rulers between the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC is situated to the west of the mountain.



©UNESCO: Jebel Barkal and remains of the Great Amun Temple.

### **El-Kurru**

El-Kurru is located south of Jebel Barkal, 20km south of modern Kareima. It is the northernmost of the early Kushite royal burial grounds containing over 20 royal

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burials. The earliest known are ancestral tombs that predate the Kushite kingdom. Through time, the tomb structures developed from simple mounds with rounded enclosure walls to rectangular tomb structures with rectangular walls and small mortuary chapels. Some of the later tombs were covered with pyramids and belong to the rulers Piankhy (747-716 BC), Shabaqo (716-702 BC), and Tanwetamani (664-653 BC). Their burial chambers were dug deeply in the sandstone substratum and accessed by stairways.



©NCAM: El Kurru: a burial camera under a Kushite pyramid.

### Nuri

Nuri is a pyramid cemetery site located on the right bank of the Nile *c.* 10km north of modern Merowe. It contains more than 60 pyramids made for Kushite kings and queens, and remains of several mortuary chapels. The pyramids and chapels were built from local Nubian sandstone. The site of Nuri was chosen by Taharqo after

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his return from Egypt in 690 BC, and his is the earliest pyramid present. The cemetery was in use until the reign of Nastasen (c. 315 BC) and was occupied again later during the medieval Christian period. The largest and best-preserved pyramid is that of Taharqo, measuring c. 51.75m<sup>2</sup>, with a height of 67m and an angle of inclination of 69 degrees. Beneath the pyramid is a burial chamber with six columns and arched ceilings.



©UNESCO: Nuri: remains of Kushite pyramids.

## Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe

The archaeological sites of the Island of Meroe were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2011. The area includes Meroe and the nearby settlements and religious centers at Naga and Musawwarat es-Sufra. Meroe itself comprises a walled Kushite royal city, non-royal habitations and industrial areas, temples both within and

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outside the walled town, as well as three royal necropolises (Begrawiya).

### **Meroe**

#### ***Royal Necropolises***



©UNESCO: Kushite pyramids in Begrawiya.

The three royal necropolises at Meroe are divided into the Western, Southern and Northern cemeteries. These cemeteries contain over 200 pyramids. Unlike Egyptian pyramids, the Kushite pyramid was a solid monument lacking any internal chambers. It was erected over top of the deceased's burial chamber or chambers to serve as a memorial monument, but the two were structurally independent. Its sides are steeper than those of Egyptian pyramids, usually constructed at an angle between 60-70 degrees. The pyramids themselves had a sandstone exterior built over a rubble core. Most have the remains of sandstone offering chapels abutting on the east side.

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©UNESCO: Kushite pyramids in Begrawiya: a green ray of the sunset.

The Western and Southern Cemeteries were in use from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Western Cemetery contained the burials of common persons, as well as royal dependents and members of the elite. It contains more than 500 graves and has a full range of funerary architecture from pit graves and mounds to mastabas and pyramids. The Southern Cemetery, containing more than 200 graves, was also in use from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, and like the Western Cemetery, pyramids and mortuary chapels were constructed over many of the sepulchres. Many of the tombs here are those of Kushite royalty. The Northern Cemetery was established after the Southern and Western Cemeteries were fully occupied. It was used exclusively for royal burials and contains the burial chambers, situated beneath pyramids, and associated mortuary chapels, of rulers and crown princes.



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The view on pyramids of Begrawiya is one of the best images of the Sudanese antiquities.

### ***Meroe Royal City***

Although settlement is present at Meroe from c. 1000 BC, the city gradually grew in importance over time becoming a large urban area. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC the Kushite royal burial ground was transferred from Napata to Meroe and it later became the capital of the Kushite kingdom. Meroe flourished until the 4th century AD and the kingdom stretched along the Nile from south of modern Khartoum to the edge of the Roman Province of Egypt in the north. Late Kushite culture itself consisted of a mixture of Egyptian pharaonic, Graeco-Roman and indigenous African traditions and these influences are visible in Meroitic art, architecture and material culture. Situated in Meroe's centre was the Royal City (400 x 200m). It was surrounded by a high wall of sandstone blocks and contained numerous palaces, temples and magazines. Two large palaces occupy the southern sector of the royal enclosure to the west of which is the so-called 'Royal Baths', a possible water sanctuary or nyphaeum founded in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Settlement areas, workshops and kilns were located to the northeast and southeast of the Royal City on the north and south mounds, and huge heaps of iron slag, particularly on the eastern outskirts of the city, are indicative of the iron-working industry which was a major activity in Meroe and the wider region.

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### ***Temple of Amun***

The largest structure in the Royal City, and in the Island of Meroe itself, is the temple dedicated to the god Amun. It was constructed during the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and is c. 135m long, oriented east–west with the main entrance in the east facing away from the Nile. It consists of an outer peristyle hall with a kiosk in the centre, a hypostyle hall, several ancillary rooms, and a sanctuary. Smaller ancillary temples, and an avenue of pairs of ram statues, were situated on either side of the processional way leading to the temple's entrance and were added in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

### ***Lion Temple***

Dedicated to the cult of Apedemak, the Kushite lion god of war, the Lion Temple is located on a heap of iron slag immediately to the east of the Royal City. It is a double-chambered temple built of sandstone and decorated with reliefs. The entrance to the building is approached by a flight of steps that was originally flanked by two lion statues.

### ***Sun Temple***

The so-called 'Sun Temple', a structure misidentified as the 'Sun Temple' referred to by the Greek historian Herodotus, is located c. 1km to the east of the town. It consisted of a room surrounded by an ambulatory situated in the centre of a peristyle court, all of which was elevated on a 2m high podium accessed by a ramp on the east side. The entire complex was enclosed by a temenos wall. The structure dates from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Older

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foundations in the temenos were associated with fragments of an inscription of Aspelta (593-568 BC) perhaps suggesting the presence of an earlier installation.

Queen Amanishakheto in the company of Prince Akinidad was represented on the northern inner sanctuary wall. The decoration on the east face of the pylon entrance consists of sunken relief representations of bound captives whose bodies are covered by large cartouches bearing the names of rulers. On the southern half of the pylon, the cartouches were inscribed with Meroitic hieroglyphs, while on the north half the cartouches were left blank. Various war scenes were recorded on the north side. From east to west these are: soldiers wounding the hind legs of horses with daggers and fighting infantrymen; infantrymen fighting; soldiers marching and a chariot; a fortress; village with dwellings and trees.

### **Naga**

Naga is situated approximately 170km north of Khartoum in the Butana region, and is one of the most important royal centres of the late Kushite period. The site covers roughly 1km<sup>2</sup>. Naga is an impressive town containing a numerous monuments notably, the Amun Temple, Lion Temple, Roman Kiosk/Hathor Temple, Temple F (Naga 500) and Temple G. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC Kushite civilization was primarily sub-Saharan in character but also retained links with Egypt and the Mediterranean to the north. The buildings at Naga exhibit a mixture of architectural styles, indigenous, Egyptian and Graeco-Roman.

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©UNESCO: The Amun Temple in Naga.

### *The Amun Temple of Naga*

The Amun Temple at Naga is among the best-preserved examples of a complete late Kushite temple. The temple's design reveals a combination of local and Egyptian features. Like the other temples at Meroe and Jebel Barkal, it has a pylon entrance, hypostyle hall, offering hall and sanctuary. Natakamani and Amanitore constructed the structure during the second half of the 1st century AD. The temple is approached through an avenue of six ram-headed sphinxes that protect small figures of King Natakamani between their front legs. A small ritual chapel is situated between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> set of sphinxes. The relief on the pylons shows the royal couple Natakamani and Amanitore smiting traditional enemies of the state. A ram-headed sphinx dedicated to Amun of Napata is situated behind the temple in a counter-temple.

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©UNESCO: The Amun Temple in Naga.

### *The Lion Temple*

A one-room temple situated on a podium on the western side of the site was dedicated to the indigenous lion-headed god Apedemak. The exterior of the pylon entrance shows King Natakamani on the south and Queen Amanitore on the north, smiting prisoners, thus demonstrating their ability to protect the kingship from the traditional enemies. The relief scenes carved on the exterior walls show the king and the queen in the presence of Egyptian and Kushite gods. Images of Apedemak depicted with a snake's tail rising from a lotus flower adorn the ends of the pylon. The king, the queen and the crown prince stand before a row of five female goddesses, Isis, Mut, Amesemi, Hathor and Saitis on the north exterior wall and in front of five male gods, Apedemak, Horus, Amun of Napata, Khonsu and Amun of Pnubs on the south one. On the pylon a lion-headed snake emerges from an acanthus base. On the rear wall a three-headed,

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four-armed lion headed Apedemak is the expression of multiple simultaneous actions by the god who gives offerings and legitimates the rule of the queen on his right and of the king on his left.



©UNESCO: The Lion (Apedemak) Temple in Naga.

### *The 'Roman Kiosk' / Hathor Temple*

Dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, this small rectangular sandstone temple is well preserved and depicts a combination of Graeco-Roman, Pharaonic Egyptian and local elements and motifs in its decoration and architecture. The excavators have proposed that this structure was dedicated to the goddess Hathor.

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©UNESCO: The Hator Temple in Naga.

### **Musawwarat es-Sufra**

Musawwarat es-Sufra is situated 180km northeast of Khartoum and 70km southwest of Meroe. It is in the Butana and covers an area of about 3.5km by 1.0km. The site is unique having no parallels in the Nile valley and dates from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century AD and encompasses numerous archaeological remains, the main monuments of which are the ‘Great Enclosure’, the ‘Small Enclosure’, the Lion Temple and the Great *Hafir*. There are also quarries, several small temples and two other *hafirs* in the area.

### ***The Great Enclosure***

The Great Enclosure is the most prominent feature at Musawwarat es-Sufra. It consists of several building complexes some constructed on artificial terraces and connected by ramps, along with corridors and passages all

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enclosed within large walled courtyard. Eight different building phases have been discerned thus far.



©UNESCO: The Great Enclosure in Musawwarat.

The function of the Great Enclosure is unknown and several ideas have been proposed. It has been suggested that it was a religious site and pilgrimage center whose central temple (Temple 100) was dedicated to Amun-Re, while its courtyard served as a gathering place and shelter for people coming from the Nile valley for religious festivals. Other proposals suggested include that the function of the Great Enclosure was as a national shrine; or it was the main place of worship of the god Apedemak; or possibly a place of investiture of the late Kushite kings; or it was even an elephant-training camp. Recent investigations have revealed a large garden with plantation pits, water basins and a subterranean water reservoir in the courtyards east of Temple 100, along with a pottery workshop and dump.



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### *The Lion Temple*



©UNESCO: The Lion (Apedemak) Temple in Musawwarat.

The Lion Temple at Musawwarat is situated about 600m southeast of the Great Enclosure. It is a typical late Kushite one-room temple, dedicated to the lion god Apedemak. It was constructed under King Arnakhamani (c. 235–218 BC) and is about 200 years older than the Lion Temple at Naga, which seems to have been modeled after its predecessor in Musawwarat. The reliefs on the outer sidewalls of the temple depict Arnakhamani and a prince, protected by the goddess Isis, venerating a succession of deities. There are six gods on the southern wall, and four divine couples on the northern wall. The exterior back wall shows Arnakhamani in front of the gods Apedemak and Sebiumeke. Inscriptions giving the names of the royal personages and deities along with short hymns to the latter accompany the representation. The reliefs on the interior

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of the temple are smaller-scale scenes related to the cult practices in the temple.



©UNESCO: The Lion (Apedemak) Temple in Musawwarat – the restoration inside.

### *The Great Hafir*



©UNESCO: The remains of Great Hafir in Musawwarat.

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The Great *Hafir* is situated about 0.5km east of the Great Enclosure and it is unknown exactly when it was constructed. It is the largest water reservoir in Sudan and the only monument of its type that has been archaeologically investigated thus far. It consists of two main components: a reservoir basin surrounded by an embankment 250m high, and a series of inlets designed to channel and direct incoming water. Its construction reflects a deep knowledge of the geomorphology and hydrology of the area along with the presence of a large work force and complex logistical organization in antiquity.

### Description of cultural properties proposed for inclusion to the World Heritage

#### Monuments of the Kingdom of Kerma

Kerma was the capital of the first Kingdom of Kush and its culture, holds spiritual, national and political significance that continues to resonate with the present generation of Sudanese. Around 2500BC, one of the earliest urban centres in sub-Saharan Africa developed there and it was capital of a kingdom referred to in Egyptian hieroglyphic texts as the Kingdom of Kush. The kingdom flourished between 2500 and 1500 BC and encompassed the area from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> cataracts at its height. Kerma is located 45km north of the modern city of Dongola, the capital of the Northern State near the 3<sup>rd</sup> cataract. The town of Kerma is characterized by well-developed architecture which included elaborate defenses, an important religious quarter located at its heart, and countless domestic buildings, storage magazines, administrative and industrial complexes. The remains of the capital city surround the Western Deffufa. It is a large mudbrick temple, currently standing 18m high, which surrounded by the religious quarter dominates the site. It was continuously transformed over time. (Deffufa is a Nubian word meaning, a large mudbrick, man-made structure). The settlement also contains a royal audience hall, palace and was partly fortified. The audience hall was a large round mud structure, which had been rebuilt

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several times in the same location and likely had a conical roof supported by three or four rows of wooden columns. Kerma had a rich material culture typified by extremely fine handmade pottery; a thin-walled red-polished ware with a black-topped rim as well as bronzes, ivories and faïences. Products were traded from Egypt, Central Africa and shores of the Red Sea and seals and seal impressions testify to these exchanges.



©UNESCO: The remains of Deffufa in Kerma.

An extensive cemetery lies to the east of the town and contains royal burial tumuli, funerary chapels and temples, notably that of the Eastern Deffufa. The monuments of the Eastern and the Western Deffufas represent unique and outstanding examples of massive mudbrick buildings, which reflect the traditional architecture and technology at a significant stage in the history of Sudan in antiquity. Wealth and power were displayed in the royal tombs of the Kerma kings and in those of the nobility as may be demonstrated by the large number of associated cattle

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sacrifices. One tomb, perhaps of a king of the Middle Kerma period (2050–1750BC) consisted of a grave 11.7m in diameter and 2m deep, covered by a mound that reached 25m across. More than 4,000 cattle bucrania were arranged in a crescent shape on the south side of the mound. The tombs of the later Kerma kings were even more impressive. From 1700BC, the Kingdom of Kush was the most powerful state in the Nile Valley. Buried under mounds up to 90m in diameter, these rulers were accompanied to their deaths by as many as 400 sacrificed humans, amongst whom may have been members of the king's family, retainers and prisoners of war, though their identities remain uncertain.



©UNESCO: The remains of buildings around Deffufa in Kerma.

To the north of Kerma lies the city of Dukki Gel, which was founded by Egyptian pharaohs of Dynasty 18 after the destruction of Kerma. It was occupied from 1450 BC to 400 AD and contains several temples and structures of both Egyptian and indigenous design. A cache containing

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7 royal statues of 5 early Kushite kings was discovered associated with one of the temples.

### **Monuments and sites of Sai Island**

Sai is a Nile island located between the 2nd and 3rd cataracts of the Nile River in the Northern state of Sudan. Naturally protected from the dangers of development, the island hosts a unique set of archaeological sites ranging from prehistory to the modern era.

The most ancient artifact on Sai predates the arrival of human species. Towards the center of the island, at the bottom of the Gebel Adou, a giant fossil tree of about 30 meters long lies on the ground. It reminds us that once the region was covered with swamps and forests – about 100 million years ago – at a time when Madagascar and India just started their slow drift apart from the African continent.

Human history on the Sai island already existed about 300,000 years ago: archaeologists found prehistoric sites, which has delivered an incredible industry of Acheulean tools made of sandstone and quartz, buried deep and well preserved from erosion.

Later on, during the prehistoric period, Sai became the regional center of a large community belonging to the Kerma / First Kushite Kingdom – an ancient civilization hidden in a shadow of Ancient Kingdom of Egypt, with which it quite successfully competed. From that period

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(3,500-1,600 BC) remains an enormous cemetery covered with about 3,000 tumuli, the largest measured of about 40 m wide.



©UNESCO: The remains of pharaonic town in Sai Island.

At the beginning of the period of the expansion of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt to Nubia / Kush (1590 BC), Sai was conquered by Egyptian Pharaohs (probably, by Ahmose), and became a bridgehead for the troops and a strategic supply base during the Egyptian occupation and governance of Kush. Under the reign of Thutmose III, a fortified city was built from which quite impressive walls up to 6 m high can still be seen nowadays.

During the Second Kushite Kingdom of Napata and Meroe (800 BC – 400 AD), Sai remained a key location to control the traffic on the Nile River not far from the border with Egypt. Communities spread along its banks creating several settlements and cemeteries including pyramid fields for elite groups of Sai inhabitants.



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©UNESCO: The remains of Christian church in Sai Island.

At the dawn of Christianity in the region, the Sai turned into an important production center of ceramics, and soon it became a siege of a bishopric with its own cathedral. Medieval ruins are scattered all over the island, including churches, attesting the wealth of the place until the Ottoman conquest.

### **Pharaonic Monuments in Sudan**

The pharaoh monuments in Sudan represent an important exchange of culture and values between the Egyptian and Kushite civilizations that occurred during the Egyptian New Kingdom (1550-1070 BC). The nominated monuments include the temples of Soleb, Sedeinga, and Sesebi and the town and quarries of Tombos. These well-preserved remains of pharaoh civilization in Sudan illustrate a significant range of architectural forms

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testifying to the contact between pharaoh Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa Kush. The integrity of these structures and their locations within the natural landscape has been preserved without significance changes since their abandonment. The temples at Soleb and Sedeinga, constructed by the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep III, served as a model for those later constructed by Ramses II at Abu Simbel in Egypt.



©UNESCO: The view on the remains of Amun-Ra Temple in Soleb.

### *The temple of Soleb*

The temple of Soleb is a pharaonic temple located 50km south of Amara West, between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cataracts on the west bank of the Nile. The temple was built of sandstone its plan is Egyptian in style, with a peristyle court and hypostyle hall leading to the sanctuaries. The temple was dedicated to the cult of Amun-Re who resided in Soleb, and to the deified image of Pharaoh Amenhotep III (1378-1348 BC). The walls of the first court display

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scenes of the Sed-Festival, or Jubilee, which was intended to renew the king's royal powers and to re-affirm his divine nature.



©UNESCO: The remains of Amun-Ra Temple in Soleb.

The temple was dedicated to the king's Chief Wife. This was a significant unprecedented act related directly to Amenhotep III's development of the royal cult particularly the aspects associated with his jubilee festivals. Soleb is considered to be one of the major expressions of Egyptian presence in Nubia during Dynasty 18, a time when the region was integrated into the Egyptian kingdom. The region was governed by the Viceroy of Nubia, the King's son of Kush and was an area of high economic value due to its access to sub-Saharan products and to gold. The combination of Egyptian and Nubian gods and goddesses portrayed on the temple walls demonstrates a co-existence of belief and harmony of relations with the Nubians.

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### *The temple of Sedeinga*



©UNESCO: The remains of Tiye Temple in Sedeinga.

Sedeinga is located on west bank of the Nile between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cataracts about 45km south of Amara West. The site encompasses a New Kingdom Egyptian temple and town, and a late Kushite necropolis with numerous small pyramids. The principle standing monument is a companion temple to that at Soleb, constructed during the reign of Amenhotep III and dedicated to his chief wife Tiye, as a manifestation of the Eye of Re. Currently a standing column surrounded by fallen blocks is preserved. Numerous blocks have been repositioned in an open-air site museum. The column is of a nearly fluted type, crowned with the head of Hathor and naos sistrum. It was one of eight in the hypostyle hall that stood between a courtyard and the sanctuary. The most notable is a large lintel from a doorway with panels containing cobras and full-faced images of the goddess Hathor. It also depicted

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full-faced images of Tiye as a human-head lioness wearing a flat-topped headdress often associated with the later Egyptian queen, Nefertiti. Amenhotep III was depicted on the temple's relieves receiving life from Isis and offering incense to the god Amun.

### *The temple of Sesebi*



©UNESCO: The remains of Amun Temple in Sesebi.

Sesebi lies on the west bank of the Nile, to the south of Jebel Sesi, opposite Delgo. Three standing stone columns from an Egyptian New Kingdom temple dominate the site. The site comprises a large rectangular walled enclosure, measuring approximately 270 by 200m. The buttressed walls are 4.6m thick with several gateways, lined with stone and drains. The site was divided into two sectors. The northern sector contains the temple and storage area, and the southern was the settlement. Cemeteries are located to the west of the site and date to the New

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Kingdom and to the Ballana Period (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). The town was founded during the Egyptian New Kingdom with substantial construction occurring reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (1351–1334 BC), prior to his adoption of the name Akhenaten. The temple was founded on a platform containing several reused column drums, in the town's northwest corner. The temple's tripartite sanctuary was dedicated to Amun, Mut and Khonsu and preceded by a columned hall containing eight massive, palm columns of which three remain standing. The columns have two zones of decoration. Above the base, a series of captives is depicted in raised relief their bodies emerging from cartouche-shaped rings enclosing the names of foreign enemy lands subjugated either symbolically or in actuality. This forms part of the temple's original decoration. Above this band, the main part of each column has been altered. Decoration in shallow raised relief was added during the reigns of Seti I and Rameses II, however, remains of the earlier deeply cut sunk relief depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti worshipping the sun disc may still be seen beneath.

### ***Tombos***

Tombos is located at 3<sup>rd</sup> cataract of the Nile. The cataract represented an important internal colonial boundary after Egypt conquered the region in c. 1550 BC. Tombos was an important Nubian-Egyptian town that was established during the Egyptian New Kingdom and remained occupied into the early Kushite period (6<sup>th</sup> century BC). The archaeological site contains numerous rock inscriptions, a cemetery and granite quarry from which

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numerous stelae and statues were quarried and in which an abandoned colossal royal statue remains. Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions may be found on the granite boulders close to the Nile, with the inscription of Pharaoh Thutmose I (c. 1504 BC) representing the first evidence of for the Egyptian New Kingdom in Sudan. Later Kushite kings added their own inscriptions to the rocks at Tombos. The associated cemetery is the southernmost Egyptian colonial cemetery in Nubia and the only one discovered thus far in the Dongola Reach. It contains both Egyptian and Nubian tombs and as such may shed light on the influence of the colonial experience on Nubian civilization.



©UNESCO: An Ancient Egyptian custom mark in Tombos.

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### Monuments of the medieval Christian Kingdoms of Nubia

The medieval period (6<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) is represented by several sites in Sudan from which Old Dongola, Banganarti and Ghazali, have been proposed. All are situated in northern Sudan.

#### *Old Dongola*

Old Dongola was one of the most important towns along the middle Nile during the medieval period and was the capital of the kingdom of Makuria between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, though occupation continued there afterward. The site contains remarkable monumental architecture including an impressive fortified citadel, churches, cathedrals, monasteries, tombs, palaces, official buildings, as well as houses.



©UNESCO: Old Dongola: The Throne Hall / the first stone mosque in Sudan.



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The first churches build at Old Dongola in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD share much architecturally in common with Byzantine religious architecture reflecting the origin of the missionaries who converted the population to Christianity.



©C. Eikeland: Old Dongola: Mural frescos.

Many buildings were adorned with colourful wall paintings some of which remain substantially preserved,

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notably those in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity. Numerous inscriptions, primarily written in Greek and Old Nubian have also been discovered here. A building thought to be the throne hall of the Makurian kings is preserved and was converted in AD 1317 into the first mosque in Sudan. Numerous Islamic beehive-shaped tombs (qubba) of holy sheikhs are situated along the eastern edge of the site.

### ***Banganarti***

Banganarti is located on the right bank of the Nile in the Dongola Reach, about 10km upstream from Old Dongola. It is a fortified settlement surrounding a sequence of superimposed churches dedicated to St. Raphael the Archangel. The latest of which became a centre for pilgrimage. This upper church was uniquely decorated with wall paintings of medieval Nubian rulers and dignitaries and there are numerous inscriptions and graffiti written in Old Nubian and Greek. The church was a royal foundation. The first structure was erected in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, while the latest, the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century. The church has a unique symmetrical layout, two staircases and 18 square rooms arranged around a central tetrapylon.

### ***Selib***

Selib is located on the right bank of the Nile about 9km upstream from Banganarti. The site was a pilgrimage centre and contains a sequence of five churches dedicated to *St. Menas* situated within a rectangular defensive enclosure. It also has a waterwheel (saqia) installation.

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### *Ghazali Monastery*



©UNESCO: Remains of the Al Ghazali Monastery.

Ghazali is located 20km from modern Karima, at the entrance to Wadi Abu Dom. It is situated on part of an ancient track that crosses the Bayuda desert. The core of the site is a Christian monastery possibly founded by King Merkurios at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Massive stone walls encompass an area of *c.* 5000 m<sup>2</sup>, in the centre of which stand the remains of two churches. The North Church is a rectangular sandstone basilica oriented east-west. It is associated on the south side with a smaller mudbrick church. Numerous inscriptions and graffiti, particularly in Greek, were found on the walls of the North Church, on funerary stelae and ceramics, some left by pilgrims visiting the site. Well-preserved, domed refectories are found in the western part of the site and mud-brick dormitories are situated in the centre of the complex. Installations for the production of oil and flour

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are also present and there are three extensive cemeteries and a neighbouring settlement. The presence of large heaps of slag testifies to the production of iron in the area.

### **Islamic Monuments of al-Khandaq and Wad Nimeiri**



©UNESCO: Remains of the Al Khandaq castle.

Al-Khandaq is situated about 423km north of Khartoum on the left bank of the Nile. The town and its environs, Wad Nimeiri, Magasir Island, Kabtod and Hannek-Koya, include houses, palaces, qubbas, cemeteries and khawas of Islamic date. Al-Khandag was a primary port on the river between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries connecting western Sudan with the river. It was described by the early travellers as one of the best-built towns in Nubia and was the residence of several rich merchants who resided in unique two-storey mud brick houses. The village was constructed on top of a medieval Christian fortress, but

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rapidly expanded beyond it. The site began to decline during the 1940s as the port faced increasing competition from the railway and road traffic as goods carriers.

### The port of Suakin



©NCAM: The Port of Suakin: Medieval remains.

Suakin is a historic port on the Red Sea known for its coral buildings. Though possibly Limen Evangelis, a Ptolemaic and Roman port mentioned by Pliny, Suakin is first mentioned by name in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. It reached the heights of prosperity in the 15<sup>th</sup> century following the demise of Aydhab, a port on the Red Sea located to the north, and remained an access point for the trade to the East until it began to decline in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as new trade routes developed. It served as a port for Mecca and Medina via Jeddah for African Muslims participating in the Haj, and for pilgrims to Jerusalem from Ethiopia and

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from the Christian kingdoms of Sudan prior to the rise of the Funj kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The coral mansions of Suakin can be several stories high and have distinctive decorative and architectural features including elaborate wooden windows (roshan) created to provide ventilation from the sea into the building interiors. The main Red Sea port was moved to Port Sudan in 1920. Following this, Suakin largely was abandoned and many structures collapsed due to various environmental stresses.

### **The Monuments of the Greater Khartoum**



©UNESCO: The Old President (Governor) Palace in Khartoum.

The Greater Khartoum consists of three cities, namely Khartoum, Bahri / Khartoum North, and Omdurman. These three cities host various monuments and buildings dated from the Funj Kingdom with the capital in Sennar to the modern times. From the Funj Kingdom, it remain mosques, khalwas and tombs of the religious leaders

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known as Suffi. Two remarkable authentic tombs can represent this period: the tomb of Idris Wad el Arbab in Eliaphoon area located 20 km to the east of Khartoum, and the tomb of Ageeb ibn Elsheikh Abdelzazig Jamma known as Ageeb El Manjuluk, which is in the Qarri village in 50 km from Khartoum – former important center of the Funj Kingdom in the area.



©NCAM: The Funj sultanat remains:  
the tomb of scheikh in Eliaphoon

Few monuments from the Ottoman period remain in Khartoum including three tombs of Turkish Bashas and Army Officers, the Khartoum Greater Mosque, and the Arbab El Arael (Farouq) Mosque.

The remarkable buildings of the British period (1881-1955) are the Gordon Memorial College (now the Library of the University of Khartoum), the Governor's Palace (now the Old President Palace), the Old Post Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Judiciary, etc.

The Mahdi's period (1885-89) mainly represented by buildings / monuments of Omdurman. Among them we

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can mention the Mahdi's tomb, Khalifa<sup>2</sup>'s House, etc. We can mention also the remains of old Omdurman known as Mulazimeen Sur, and a series of defensive forts built with mud bricks on both banks of the Nile River between Omdurman and Sabaloga / sixth cataract.



©UNESCO: The Khalifa's House in Omdurman.

In principle, the Old Souq (Market) of Omdurman dated back to the Ottoman and Mahdi periods, which is organized like the traditional Arab town in accordance with activities (different hand crafts, tannery, carpentry, etc.) and nationalities (Moroccan, Indian, Yemeni, Judith, etc.) can be also mentioned here. This Souq had an important forming impact in cultural and educational development of nearby communities of old Omdurman.

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<sup>2</sup> Khalifa – Abdullah Ibn-Mohammed Al-Khalifa, the follower and successor of Mahdi, ruled Sudan in 1885-98.





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