Ancient Civilizations of Africa

in order to control traffic along the Nile and eradicate any threat to their country from Kush.

The defensive nature of the Egyptian occupation of Nubia during the Middle Kingdom period is clearly manifested by the number and the strength of the fortresses the kings of the twelfth dynasty were compelled to build in the occupied territory. A late Middle Kingdom papyrus discovered in a tomb near the Ramesseum at Luxor\(^47\) names seventeen Nubian forts between Semna in the south and Shellal in the north. They fall into two groups, those to the north of the Second Cataract intended to maintain a strong grip on the native population,\(^48\) namely, the C-Group people, and those built on eminences between the Second Cataract and Semna to protect boats in trouble in the shoals and defend the frontier.\(^49\) That these forts were clearly built for defence is even shown by the names assigned to them, such as ‘Repelling the Tribes’, ‘Repressing ...’, ‘Curbing the Deserts’, ‘Repelling the Inu’ and ‘Repelling the Mazaiu’.\(^50\)

The strength of these forts and the effort made to render them impregnable can be seen from the fortress at Buhen, which was one of the best-preserved forts in Nubia before it was flooded by the waters of the new Aswan High Dam. This formidable Middle Kingdom fortress consisted of an elaborate series of fortifications within fortifications built on a rectangular plan measuring 172 by 160 metres.\(^51\) The defence system consisted of a brick wall 4.8 metres thick and at least 10 metres high with towers at regular intervals. At the bottom of this main wall was a brick-paved rampart, protected by a series of round bastions with double rows of loopholes. The whole fort was surrounded by a dry ditch cut into the bedrock 6.5 metres deep. The ditch was 8.4 metres wide and the other scarp was heightened by brickwork. There were two gates on the east side facing the Nile, and a third, heavily fortified, on the west side facing the desert.

Following the collapse of the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos (Asiatic tribes) invasion, the Egyptians lost their control over Nubia. The forts were ransacked and burnt by the natives, who seem to have seized the opportunity of the collapse of the central government in Egypt to regain their independence.

Kerma (—1730 to —1580)

We have already noticed that the southern boundary of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom was unquestionably fixed at Semna by Senusret III. But the important excavations carried out by the American archaeologist

Nubia before Napata (−3100 to −750)

G. A. Reisner between 1913 and 1916 at Kerma, a short distance above the Third Cataract and 150 miles south of Semna as the crow flies, revealed what has come to be known as the Kerma culture. This culture has since been the subject of conflicting interpretations from scholars.

The ancient site of Kerma comprises two remarkable edifices locally known as the Western Dufufa and the Eastern Dufufa. The former is a solid mass of sun-dried brick and the latter is a funerary chapel, also in mud-brick, surrounded by a large cemetery of mound graves. Both buildings are typical of Middle Kingdom construction. In the Western Dufufa, Reisner found fragments of broken alabaster vases with the cartouches of Pepi I and II of the sixth dynasty together with those of Amenemhet I and Senusret I. Beside the Eastern Dufufa was unearthed an inscribed stone relating that the king’s sole companion Antef had been dispatched to repair a building in Inebu, using the word Amenemhet maa kheru which means the walls of Amenemhet the Justified. In a burial mound near this funerary chapel were found the lower part of a statue of Hepzefia (prince of Asyut in Egypt, whose tomb has been found there), a statue of his wife Sennuwy and fragments of other statues of officials and kings. In the light of these discoveries, Reisner concluded that: (a) the walls underneath the Western Dufufa are those of an Old Kingdom trading post; (b) the Western Dufufa was, in the Middle Kingdom, the southernmost stronghold in the chain of forts built by the Egyptians, between Aswan and Kerma, to safeguard their interests in Nubia; (c) Kerma was the headquarters of Egyptian Governors-General, the first of whom might have been Hapidjefa; (d) the Egyptian Governors-General were buried in the cemetery near the Eastern Dufufa in an Egyptian fashion; and (e) when the Hyksos invaded Egypt the fortified outpost at Kerma was destroyed by the Nubians.

Reisner’s interpretation of the archaeological evidence discovered at Kerma was first questioned by Junker. The Western Dufufa was too small for a fort and was also dangerously isolated, being situated 400 kilometres away from the nearest Egyptian fort at Semna. Moreover, the raw materials, such as graphite, copper oxide, hematite, mica, resin, rock crystal, carnelian, ostrich egg-shell, discovered in the various rooms indicate that the Western Dufufa was a fortified trading post rather than an administrative centre.

As for the cemetery, Reisner’s view, that it was the burial place of Egyptian Governors, was based solely on the discovery of the statues of Hapidjefa and his wife in one of the large burial mounds. The mode of burial in these large graves of Kerma was entirely Nubian. Here mummification was not practised and the dead man was buried on a bed with his wives, children and attendants in the same grave. Now, bearing

52. G. A. Reisner, 1923a.
53. H. Junker, 1921.
in mind that these graves are Egyptian neither in their construction nor in their method of burial, and knowing that the Egyptians dreaded being buried abroad mainly because they might lose the appropriate burial rites, it becomes peculiarly difficult to believe that a person of Hapidjefa’s social and political status would have been buried in a foreign land in a fashion utterly alien to Egyptian religious beliefs. Moreover, among the things found in the supposed tumulus of Hapidjefa were numerous grave-goods unquestionably dating from the Second Intermediate Period or the Hyksos period.\textsuperscript{54} From this, Säve-Söderbergh and Arkell\textsuperscript{55} concluded that the statues found in this mound grave had been exchanged by Egyptian traders for Nubian commodities from the local princes of Kerma during the Second Intermediate Period.

Thus Reisner’s theory concerning the Western Dufufa and the cemetery around the Eastern Dufufa has been generally rejected. Instead most scholars advocated the view that the Western Dufufa was only an Egyptian trading post, while the cemetery was the burial ground of the native princes.

Hintze, re-examining the different theories put forward regarding the Kerma problem, sees that they ‘contained inner contradictions making their correctness dubious’.\textsuperscript{56} In the first place he notes that the arguments raised by Junker, rejecting Reisner’s interpretation, hold good also to refute Junker’s own assumption that the Western Dufufa was a fortified trading post. Hintze also considers it unlikely that an Egyptian fortified trading post would have existed in this part of Nubia at this time, particularly if Kerma is taken as the political seat of Kush (as some of Reisner’s opposers hold),\textsuperscript{57} which was the traditional enemy of Egypt during the Middle Kingdom. And as all the scholars whose views he has re-examined agree that the cemetery is a Nubian cemetery and that the Eastern Dufufa is a funerary chapel attached to it, Hintze points out the improbability of the Pharaoh sending an Egyptian official to ‘vile Kush’ in order to repair a chapel to a Nubian cemetery. Lastly, Hintze stresses what has already been shown by Säve-Söderbergh, namely, that the cemetery belongs to the Second Intermediate Period; that is to say, that it is later than the Western Dufufa and therefore the supposed Governors of the Western Dufufa in the Middle Kingdom could not be buried there.

All these considerations led Hintze to abandon once and for all the ‘conception of an Egyptian trading post’ at Kerma. To him Kerma is simply the ‘centre of a native Nubian culture and the residence of a native dynasty’. The Western Dufufa was the residence of the native ruler of Kush and it was destroyed by the Egyptian troops at the beginning of the New Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{54} T. Säve-Söderbergh, 1941.  
\textsuperscript{55} A. J. Arkell, 1961, p. 71.  
\textsuperscript{56} F. Hintze, 1964.  
\textsuperscript{57} A. J. Arkell, 1961, p. 72.
Nubia before Napata (— 3100 to — 750)

This is a simple theory which sounds nearer to the truth especially as regards the evidence from the cemetery. The date of the objects found in the graves and the mode of their construction and burial rites clearly show that they were not built for the Middle Kingdom Egyptian Governors-General. But substantial evidence is still needed to prove that the Western Dufufa was the residence of the native ruler of Kush. The existence of an ordinary Egyptian trading post at Kerma during the Middle Kingdom cannot be ruled out as easily as Hintze contends. The site dug by Reisner is the only site so far excavated in the Dongola region, and even this single site is not yet fully excavated. The Dongola area is rich in Kerma sites, and until systematic archaeological research is carried out there, a great deal will remain unknown regarding the Kerma culture.

The Kingdom of Kush

As the geographical name Kush is connected with Kerma and as the tumuli at Kerma clearly show that they were the burials of strong native rulers who had commercial and diplomatic relations with the Hyksos kings in Egypt, it seems more likely that Kerma was the capital of the kingdom of Kush. This kingdom flourished during what is known in Egyptian history as the Second Intermediate Period (— 1730 to — 1580). The existence of this kingdom, whose ruler was called the Prince of Kush, is now known from a variety of documentary evidence. The first stele of Kamose, the last king of the Egyptian seventeenth dynasty and probably the first king who raised the banner of organized struggle against the Hyksos, depicts the political situation in the Nile valley at that time. This stele shows the existence of an independent kingdom in Kush, with its northern frontier fixed at Elephantine, an Egyptian state in Upper Egypt, situated between Elephantine in the south and Cusae in the north and finally the Hyksos kingdom in Lower Egypt. Another stele tells us that Kamose captured on the oasis route a message sent by Apophis, the Hyksos king, to the ruler of Kush seeking his aid against the Egyptian king. Moreover, two stelae discovered at Buhen show that two officials by the names of Sepedher and Ka served under the ruler of Kush. The kingdom of Kush, which controlled the whole of Nubia south of Elephantine after the collapse of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt following the Hyksos invasion, came to an end when Tuthmose I conquered Nubia beyond the Fourth Cataract.

FIG. 9.8 Types of Kerma pottery
Kerma culture

Typical sites of the Kerma culture have been discovered in Nubia only as far north as Mirgissa, indicating that the Second Cataract was the boundary between the Kerma and C-Group cultures. The characteristic features of the Kerma culture were a thin highly polished black-topped red ware that was made on a potter's wheel; animal-shaped vessels and others decorated with animal motifs; special copper daggers, woodwork decorated with patterns of inlaid ivory figures and mica figures and ornaments sewn on leather caps. Although many of the wares discovered at Kerma undoubtedly manifest a native cultural tradition, the influence of Egyptian techniques of craftsmanship and design cannot be overlooked. It has been suggested that a great deal of the material in question was actually manufactured by Egyptian craftsmen, but it could equally be said that it was produced to meet local taste by native craftsmen who had acquired Egyptian techniques.

Regarding the religious aspect, the characteristic feature of the Kerma culture is the burial rites. A Kerma grave is marked by a dome-shaped tumulus of earth outlined by a ring of black stones sprinkled over with white pebbles. One of the big tumuli at Kerma Cemetery (K III) consisted of circular brick walls, 90 metres in diameter. Two parallel walls running across the middle of the mound from east to west formed a central corridor which divided the mound into two sections. Other parallel walls ran out at right angles from the two sides of this corridor to the circumference of the circle to the north and south. In the middle of the southern wall of the corridor a doorway opened into a vestibule leading to the

FIG. 9.9 Kerma burial

64. B. G. Trigger, 1965, p. 103.
FIG. 9.10 Nubia during the New Kingdom
main burial chamber to the east side of it. At Kerma the main burial lay on a bed on the right side. On this bed were put a wooden headrest, an ostrich-feather fan, and a pair of sandals. A large number of pottery vessels were placed beside the bed and round the walls of the chamber. The most striking burial custom at Kerma was the use of human sacrifices. The owner of the grave was accompanied by 200 to 300 persons, the majority being women and children. They were buried alive in the central corridor.

The New Kingdom (−1580 to −1050)

When the Egyptians had re-established themselves after the liberation of their country from the Hyksos, they once again began to turn their attention to their southern frontier and this led to the largest conquest of Nubia ever achieved by Egypt throughout its ancient history.

The first stele of Kamose, already referred to, describes how he was situated between a king in Lower Egypt and another in Kush. It also states that his courtiers were satisfied with the state of affairs on Egypt's southern frontier as Elephantine was strongly held. But a passage in the second stele shows that Kamose waged war against the Nubians before attacking the Hyksos. In view of the courtiers' statement that the frontier at Elephantine was safe and strong, it is likely that Kamose had just mounted a punitive expedition against the Nubians and this may explain the existence of the royal names of Kamose near Toshka in Lower Nubia.

The occupation of Nubia was accomplished by Amosis, successor of Kamose and founder of the Egyptian eighteenth dynasty. The main source of our information on his military activities in Nubia and also those of his immediate followers is the autobiography of the Admiral Ahmose, a simple shipmaster-captain, son of Ebana, inscribed on the walls of his tomb at El Kab in Egypt. Here we are told that 'His Majesty went up to Khent Hennefer [an unidentified region in Nubia] to overthrow the Nubians after he had destroyed the Asiatics'. Amosis was able to rebuild and enlarge the fortress of Buhen and erect a temple there. He may even have advanced to Sai Island, 190 kilometres upstream from Buhen, for a statue of him was found there together with inscriptions relating to himself and his wife.

However, it was Tuthmosis I (−1530 to −1520) who accomplished the conquest of the northern Sudan; thus bringing the independence of the kingdom of Kush to an end. On his arrival at Tumbus, the southern end of the Third Cataract, he set up his great inscription. From there he continued his push southwards, effectively occupying the whole reach between Kerma and Kurgus, 50 miles south of Abu Hamed, where he