



# The Egyptian and Nubian Empires

## MAIN IDEA

**CULTURAL INTERACTION** Two empires along the Nile, Egypt and Nubia, forged commercial, cultural, and political connections.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Neighboring civilizations today participate in cultural exchange as well as conflict.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Hyksos
- New Kingdom
- Hatshepsut
- Thutmose III
- Nubia
- Ramses II
- Kush
- Piankhi
- Meroë

**SETTING THE STAGE** As you learned in Chapter 2, Egyptian civilization developed along the Nile River and united into a kingdom around 3100 B.C. During the Middle Kingdom (about 2080–1640 B.C.), trade with Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley enriched Egypt. Meanwhile, up the Nile River, less than 600 miles south of the Egyptian city of Thebes, a major kingdom had developed in the region of Nubia. For centuries, the Nubian kingdom of Kush traded with Egypt. The two kingdoms particularly influenced each other culturally.

## Nomadic Invaders Rule Egypt

After the prosperity of the Middle Kingdom, Egypt descended into war and violence. This was caused by a succession of weak pharaohs and power struggles among rival nobles. The weakened country fell to invaders who swept across the Isthmus of Suez in chariots, a weapon of war unknown to the Egyptians. These Asiatic invaders, called **Hyksos** (HIHK•sohs), ruled Egypt from about 1640 to 1570 B.C. The Hyksos invasion shook the Egyptians’ confidence in the desert barriers that had protected their kingdom.

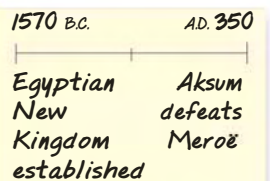
**Hebrews Migrate to Egypt** During the Hyksos rule, some historians believe that another Asiatic group, the Hebrews, settled in Egypt. According to the Bible, Abraham and his family first crossed the Euphrates River and came to Canaan around 1800 B.C. Then, around 1650 B.C., the descendants of Abraham moved again—this time to Egypt. Some historians believe that the Hyksos encouraged the Hebrews to settle there because the two groups were racially similar. The Egyptians resented the presence of the Hyksos in their land but were powerless to remove them.

**Expulsion and Slavery** Around 1600 B.C., a series of warlike rulers began to restore Egypt’s power. Among those who helped drive out the Hyksos was Queen Ahhotep (ah•HOH•tehp). She took over when her husband was killed in battle. The next pharaoh, Kamose (KAH•mohs), won a great victory over the hated Hyksos. His successors drove the Hyksos completely out of Egypt and pursued them across the Sinai Peninsula into Palestine. According to some Biblical scholars, the Hebrews remained in Egypt and were enslaved and forced into hard labor. They would not leave Egypt until sometime between 1500 and 1200 B.C., the time of the Exodus.

## TAKING NOTES

### Following Chronological Order

Use a time line to identify important events in the history of Egypt and Nubia.



## The New Kingdom of Egypt

After overthrowing the Hyksos, the pharaohs of the **New Kingdom** (about 1570–1075 B.C.) sought to strengthen Egypt by building an empire. As you may recall, an empire brings together several peoples or states under the control of one ruler. Egypt entered its third period of glory during the New Kingdom era. During this time, it was wealthier and more powerful than ever before.

Equipped with bronze weapons and two-wheeled chariots, the Egyptians became conquerors. The pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty (about 1570–1365 B.C.) set up an army including archers, charioteers, and infantry, or foot soldiers.

**Hatshepsut's Prosperous Rule** Among the rulers of the New Kingdom, **Hatshepsut** (hat•SHEHP•SOOT), who declared herself pharaoh around 1472 B.C., was unique. She took over because her stepson, the male heir to the throne, was a

young child at the time. Unlike other New Kingdom rulers, Hatshepsut spent her reign encouraging trade rather than just waging war.

The trading expedition Hatshepsut ordered to the Land of Punt (poont), near present-day Somalia, was particularly successful. Hatshepsut sent a fleet of five ships down the Red Sea to Punt in search of myrrh, frankincense, and fragrant ointments used for religious ceremonies and in cosmetics. In addition to these goods, Hatshepsut's fleet brought back gold, ivory, and unusual plants and animals.

**Thutmose the Empire Builder** Hatshepsut's stepson, **Thutmose III** (thoot•MOH•suh), proved to be a much more warlike ruler. In his eagerness to ascend to the throne, Thutmose III may even have murdered Hatshepsut. Between the time he took power and his death around 1425 B.C., Thutmose III led a number of victorious invasions eastward into Palestine and Syria. His armies also pushed farther south into **Nubia**, a region of Africa that straddled the upper Nile River. Egypt had traded with Nubia and influenced the region since the time of the Middle Kingdom.

Egypt was now a mighty empire. It controlled lands around the Nile and far beyond. In addition, it drew boundless wealth from them. Contact with other cultures brought Egypt new ideas as well as material goods. Egypt had never before—nor has it since—commanded such power and wealth as during the reigns of the New Kingdom pharaohs.

**The Egyptians and the Hittites** The Egyptians' conquest of parts of Syria and Palestine around 1400 B.C. brought them into conflict with the Hittites. The Hittites had moved into Asia Minor around 1900 B.C. and later expanded southward into Palestine.

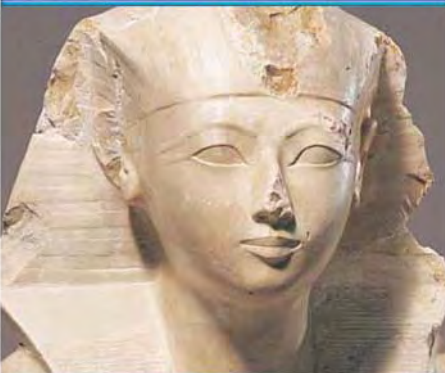
After several smaller battles, the Egyptians and Hittites clashed at Kadesh around 1285 B.C. The pharaoh **Ramses II** (RAM•SEEZ) and a Hittite king later made a treaty that promised “peace and brotherhood between us forever.” Their alliance lasted for the rest of the century. **A**

**An Age of Builders** Like the rulers of the Old Kingdom, who built the towering pyramids, rulers of the New Kingdom

### Vocabulary

A *dynasty* is a series of rulers from a single family.

### History Makers



#### Hatshepsut reigned 1472–1458 B.C.

Hatshepsut was an excellent ruler of outstanding achievement who made Egypt more prosperous. As male pharaohs had done, Hatshepsut planned a tomb for herself in the Valley of the Kings. Carved reliefs on the walls of the temple reveal the glories of her reign.

The inscription from Hatshepsut's obelisk at Karnak trumpets her glory and her feelings about herself:

*I swear as Re loves me, as my father Amon favors me, as my nostrils are filled with satisfying life, as I wear the white crown, as I appear in the red crown, . . . as I rule this land like the son of Isis.*

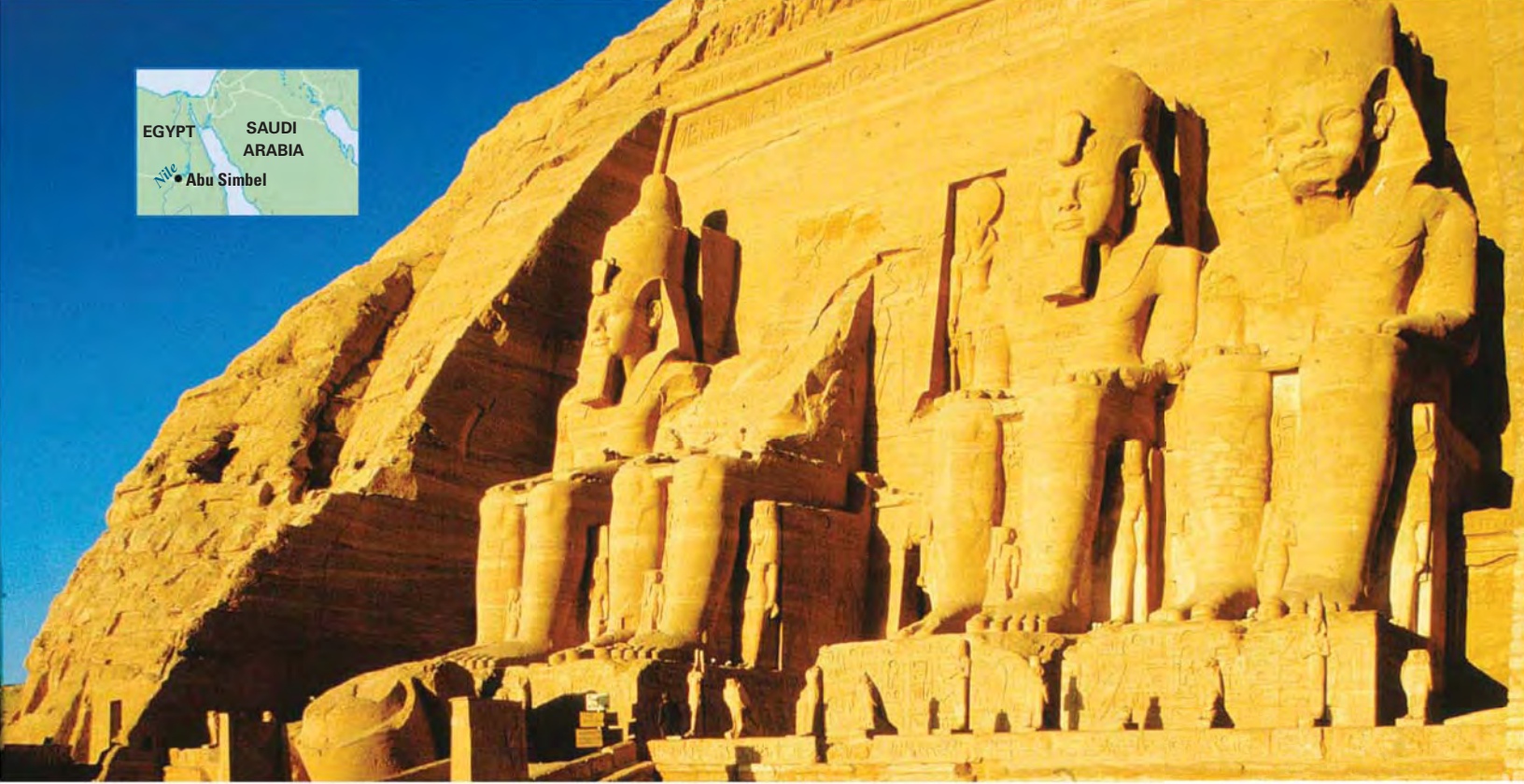
#### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

**INTERNET ACTIVITY** Create a photo exhibit on the trading expeditions to Punt ordered by Hatshepsut. Include pictures of murals of goods collected. Go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com) for your research.

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Recognizing Effects

**A** What were some of the political and economic effects of Egypt's conquests?



erected grand buildings. In search of security in the afterlife—and protection from grave robbers—they hid their splendid tombs beneath desert cliffs. The site they chose was the remote Valley of the Kings near Thebes. Besides royal tombs, the pharaohs of this period also built great palaces and magnificent temples. Indeed, the royal title *pharaoh* means “great house” and comes from this time period.

Ramses II, whose reign extended from approximately 1290 to 1224 B.C., stood out among the great builders of the New Kingdom. At Karnak, he added to a monumental temple to Amon-Re (AH•muhn•RAY), Egypt’s chief god. Ramses also ordered a temple to be carved into the red sandstone cliffs above the Nile River at Abu Simbel (AH•boo SIHM•buhl). He had these temples decorated with enormous statues of himself. The ears of these statues alone measured more than three feet.

▲ Four statues of Ramses II guarded the entrance to the Great Temple at Abu Simbel.

## The Empire Declines

The empire that Thutmose III had built and Ramses II had ruled slowly came apart after 1200 B.C. as other strong civilizations rose to challenge Egypt’s power. Shortly after Ramses died, the entire eastern Mediterranean suffered a wave of invasions.

**Invasions by Land and Sea** Both the Egyptian empire and the Hittite kingdom were attacked by invaders called the “Sea Peoples” in Egyptian texts. These invaders may have included the Philistines, who are often mentioned in the Bible. Whoever they were, the Sea Peoples caused great destruction.

The Egyptians faced other attacks. In the east, the tribes of Palestine often rebelled against their Egyptian overlords. In the west, the vast desert no longer served as a barrier against Libyan raids on Egyptian villages.

**Egypt’s Empire Fades** After these invasions, Egypt never recovered its previous power. The Egyptian empire broke apart into regional units, and numerous small kingdoms arose. Each was eager to protect its independence.

Almost powerless, Egypt soon fell to its neighbors’ invasions. Libyans crossed the desert to the Nile Delta. There they established independent dynasties. From around 950 to 730 B.C., Libyan pharaohs ruled Egypt and erected cities. But instead

of imposing their own culture, the Libyans adopted the Egyptian way of life. When the Nubians came north to seize power, they too adopted Egyptian culture.

## The Kushites Conquer the Nile Region

For centuries, Egypt dominated Nubia and the Nubian kingdom of **Kush**, which lasted for about a thousand years, between 2000 and 1000 B.C. During this time, Egyptian armies raided and even occupied Kush for a brief period. But as Egypt fell into decline during the Hyksos period, Kush began to emerge as a regional power. Nubia now established its own Kushite dynasty on the throne of Egypt.

**The People of Nubia** Nubia lay south of Egypt between the first cataract of the Nile, an area of churning rapids, and the division of the river into the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Despite several cataracts around which boats had to be carried, the Nile provided the best north-south trade route. Several Nubian kingdoms, including Kush, served as a trade corridor. They linked Egypt and the Mediterranean world to the interior of Africa and to the Red Sea. Goods and ideas flowed back and forth along the river for centuries. The first Nubian kingdom, Kerma, arose shortly after 2000 B.C.

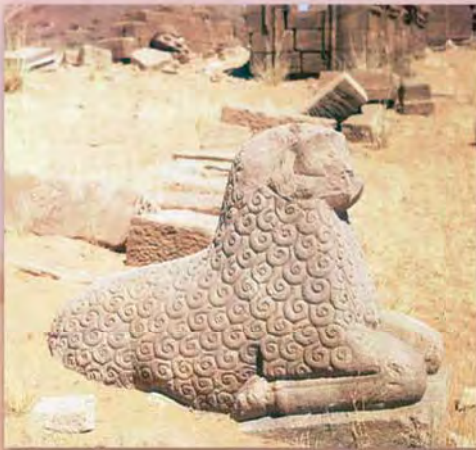
**The Interaction of Egypt and Nubia** With Egypt's revival during the New Kingdom, pharaohs forced Egyptian rule on Kush. Egyptian governors, priests, soldiers, and artists strongly influenced the Nubians. Indeed, Kush's capital, Napata, became the center for the spread of Egyptian culture to Kush's other African trading partners.

### History *in* Depth

## Egyptian Influence on Nubian Culture

Nubia was heavily influenced by Egypt. This influence is particularly apparent in Nubian religious practices and burial traditions. But even though the Nubians adopted Egyptian ways, they didn't abandon their cultural identity. In many of these religious and funeral practices, the Nubians blended Egyptian customs with their own traditions.

**Pyramids** Unlike the Egyptian pyramids, the pyramids of Nubia had steeply sloping sides and were probably designed with a flat top.



**Temples** This stone ram, representing the Egyptian god Amen, lay at the entrance to a Nubian temple dedicated to that god. Although the Nubians worshiped many Egyptian gods, Amen's temple was located near another dedicated to Apedemak, a Nubian god.



Kushite princes went to Egypt. They learned the Egyptian language and worshiped Egyptian gods. They adopted the customs and clothing styles of the Egyptian upper class. When they returned home, the Kushite nobles brought back royal rituals and hieroglyphic writing.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Making Inferences**

**B** Why might the Kushites have viewed themselves as guardians of Egyptian values?

With Egypt's decline, beginning about 1200 B.C., Kush regained its independence. The Kushites viewed themselves as more suitable guardians of Egyptian values than the Libyans. They sought to guard these values by conquering Egypt and ousting its Libyan rulers. **B**

**Piankhi Captures the Egyptian Throne** In 751 B.C., a Kushite king named **Piankhi** overthrew the Libyan dynasty that had ruled Egypt for over 200 years. He united the entire Nile Valley from the delta in the north to Napata in the south. Piankhi and his descendants became Egypt's 25th Dynasty. After his victory, Piankhi erected a monument in his homeland of Kush. On the monument, he had words inscribed that celebrated his victory. The inscription provided a catalog of the riches of the north:

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

Then the ships were laden with silver, gold, copper, clothing, and everything of the Northland, every product of Syria and all sweet woods of God's-Land. His Majesty sailed upstream [south], with glad heart, the shores on his either side were jubilating. West and east were jubilating in the presence of His Majesty.

**PIANKHI**, monument in Cairo Museum

**Statues** These figurines represented Nubian slaves. They were buried with Nubian kings and meant to serve them in death. The figurines reflect traditional Egyptian style. The human faces, however, reveal Nubian features.



**SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Visual Sources**  
**Forming Opinions** Why did the Nubians combine Egyptian culture with elements of their own culture?

However, Piankhi's dynasty proved short-lived. In 671 B.C., the Assyrians, a warlike people from Southwest Asia, conquered Egypt. The Kushites fought bravely, but they were forced to retreat south along the Nile. There the Kushites would experience a golden age, despite their loss of Egypt.

▼ This ring, bearing the head of a Kushite guardian god, was found inside a Meroë queen's pyramid. It dates from the late first century B.C.



## The Golden Age of Meroë

After their defeat by the Assyrians, the Kushite royal family eventually moved south to **Meroë** (MEHR•oh•EE). Meroë lay closer to the Red Sea than Napata did, and so became active in the flourishing trade among Africa, Arabia, and India. (See the map on page 93.)

**The Wealth of Kush** Kush used the natural resources around Meroë and thrived for several hundred years. Unlike Egyptian cities along the Nile, Meroë enjoyed significant rainfall. And, unlike Egypt, Meroë boasted abundant supplies of iron ore. As a result, Meroë became a major center for the manufacture of iron weapons and tools.

In Meroë, ambitious merchants loaded iron bars, tools, and spearheads onto their donkeys. They then transported the goods to the Red Sea, where they exchanged these goods for jewelry, fine cotton cloth, silver lamps, and glass bottles. As the mineral wealth of the central Nile Valley flowed out of Meroë, luxury goods from India and Arabia flowed in.

**The Decline of Meroë** After four centuries of prosperity, from about 250 B.C. to A.D. 150, Meroë began to decline. Aksum, another kingdom located 400 miles to the southeast, contributed to Meroë's fall. With a seaport on the Red Sea, Aksum came to dominate North African trade. Aksum defeated Meroë around A.D. 350.

Centuries earlier, around the time the Kushite pharaoh sat on the Egyptian throne, a new empire—Assyria—had risen in the north. Like Kush, Assyria came to dominate Egypt.

### SECTION

### 1

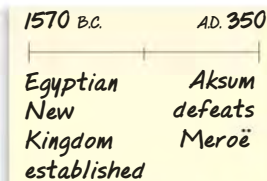
### ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Hyksos
- New Kingdom
- Hatshepsut
- Thutmose III
- Nubia
- Ramses II
- Kush
- Piankhi
- Meroë

#### USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which empire was invaded more often? Why?



#### MAIN IDEAS

3. How did the New Kingdom of Egypt become so powerful and wealthy?
4. What cultural aspects of Egyptian civilization did the Kushites adopt?
5. Why was Kush able to thrive after losing Egypt to the Assyrians?

#### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** What role did geography play in Egypt's rise and fall?
7. **MAKING INFERENCES** How did trade help both Egypt and Nubia maintain their dominance in the Nile region?
8. **HYPOTHESIZING** What might have happened if the Kushites had imposed their own culture on Egypt?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** How did Egypt and Nubia strengthen each other at various times in their histories? Support your ideas in a one-paragraph analysis.

#### CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A TIME LINE

Research to learn about the collapse of the Soviet Union—a modern-day empire—in 1991. Create a **time line** of the events that led to the collapse.