

ANCIENT NUBIA PRESS KIT

THE MUSEUM OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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All programs are free and no pre-registration is required.

For additional information, call (773) 702-9507.

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE MUSEUM IS LOCATED ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AT 1155 EAST 58TH STREET, CHICAGO. MUSEUM HOURS ARE: TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY, 10:00 AM-6:00 PM, WEDNESDAY UNTIL 8:30 PM, SUNDAY NOON TO 6:00 PM, CLOSED ON MONDAY. SUGGESTED DONATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE MUSEUM IS \$5.00 FOR ADULTS AND \$2.00 FOR CHILDREN.

TELEPHONE FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION: (773) 702-9514, OR WWW.OI.UCHICAGO.EDU.

ANCIENT NUBIA AT THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE MUSEUM OPENS WITH WEEKEND OF EVENTS

A full weekend of exciting events for families and adults will be presented Saturday, February 25 and Sunday, February 26 at the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago in conjunction with the opening of two exhibits: "Ancient Nubia" and "Lost Nubia: Photographs of Egypt and Sudan 1905-07." All events are free and pre-registration is not required.

On Saturday, "Celebrating Ancient Nubia" will be presented from 10 am to 6 pm. Docents will lead tours of the new Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery that presents a selection of more than 600 objects that document 4000 years of Nubian history and culture. Films on ancient Nubia will be shown continuously in Breasted Hall at the Oriental Institute.

From 1 pm to 5 pm, local artists will recreate ancient processes. Leather worker Carol Jackson will demonstrate the techniques ancient Nubian artisans used to create intricate designs on objects such as quivers, saddles, and sandals. Ceramic artist Gwendolyn Pruitt of the Little Black Pearl Art and Design Center, will show how the ancient Nubians created the exquisite pottery that is a hallmark of Nubian art. Graduate students of the Oriental Institute will write museum visitors' names in Meroitic, the hieroglyphic script of ancient Nubia.

At 1:30 pm, John Larson, Oriental Institute Archivist and curator of the exhibit "Lost Nubia: Photographs of Egypt and Sudan 1905-07," will discuss the exhibit that consists of 50 historic images of temples and tombs, and now vanished village life.

At 2:30 pm, Geoff Emberling, Director of the Oriental Institute Museum, will discuss the art and historic artifacts on view in the new Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery.

K-12 educators have the opportunity to receive 3 CPDUs of recertification credit from the Illinois State Board of Education for attending Saturday's event that will provide them with teaching and learning resources on this ancient African culture. Field trip information and free curriculum materials will be available throughout the day.

On Sunday, February 26, from noon to 6 pm, the Oriental Institute presents "Awesome Ancient African Arts: A Celebration for Families." The day will be filled with story telling, hands-on arts, and special presentations. Docents will lead tours of the new galleries throughout the day, and graduate students from the Oriental Institute will write museum visitors' names in Meroitic, the hieroglyphic script of ancient Nubia.

At 2 pm, Awad Abdelgadir will present "Life on the Nile," a fascinating journey to today's Nubia. This interactive program introduces daily life and the people of modern Nubia, including

the color and excitement of a village wedding, and a safari. Mr. Abdelgadir is a professional educator who has engaged audiences of all ages at museums across the country. Throughout the afternoon, he will show objects of daily life and demonstrate crafts from his Nubian homeland.

NUBIA: A FACT SHEET

What and where is Nubia? Nubia, the homeland of several ancient African kingdoms, is a vast region in the area of today's northern Sudan and southern Egypt. The word "Nubia" may be derived from "Nobatia," a kingdom that flourished in that region from the 4th to 6th centuries A.D., or it may be a variant of the ancient Egyptian word for "gold."

When did Nubia flourish? Distinct cultures in Nubia can be traced from about 5000 B.C. Nubian history includes a period of Egyptian domination (1460-1050 B.C.); the Napatan period, when Nubia ruled Egypt (about 860-656 B.C.); the Meroitic Period (about 250 B.C.-A.D. 350), when the land was in contact with Rome; and the Medieval era (about A.D. 580-1500).

Why is Nubia important? Nubia was an important force in the ancient Nile Valley. Its history paralleled Egypt's, both being early and well-documented African civilizations. Nubia was a trading partner with Egypt. It provided gold, ebony, ivory, skins and feathers that were fashioned into the famous treasures recovered from the tombs of kings including that of Tutankhamun. It was the homeland of kings who were buried in enormous round tombs surrounded by hundreds of sacrificed retainers, and in different periods, of kings buried in pyramids. There are several hundred more pyramids in Nubia than in Egypt, and although smaller than their Egyptian counterparts, they provide much information about Nubian religion and funerary beliefs. In the 7th century B.C., Nubian armies marched northward to reunify Egypt, stimulating a renaissance in art and learning. During the Roman period, Nubia was in contact with the classical world and was the conduit through which Rome learned about northeast Africa and the upper Nile. Many features of the culture of the Egyptian pharaohs were preserved in Nubia, where the ancient gods, as well as art and architectural styles, were retained for hundred of years after they vanished in Egypt. At various periods, Nubia served as a vital point of contact for central Africa, the Nile Valley and the Mediterranean worlds.

The Oriental Institute and Nubia. The University of Chicago first worked in Nubia in 1905 when James Henry Breasted, who later founded The Oriental Institute, undertook a project to copy and publish the hieroglyphic inscriptions on Nubian monuments. Although the project was curtailed in 1907, the more than a thousand photographic negatives produced by Breasted's team still serve as a vital source of information concerning Nubian monuments.

From 1960-1968 The Oriental Institute, led by John A. Wilson and Keith Seele, returned to Nubia in response to a United Nations appeal to save the endangered monuments of Nubia. The construction of the Aswan Dam, was about to doom the temples, tombs and villages of northern Nubia to the waters of Lake Nasser. The Oriental Institute undertook excavations at Qustul, Ballana, Semna, Adindan, Kasr el Wizz and the forts at Dorginarti and Serra East. Today, The Oriental Institute Museum is the repository for a major collection of Nubian artifacts that provide a comprehensive view of many facets of little-known African history and culture. The opening of the Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery, the Oriental Institute Museum becomes a major resource for learning about one of Africa's most ancient civilizations.

NUBIA: A QUICK HISTORY

The history of ancient Nubia is divided into the following periods:

A GROUP: 3800-3100 B.C.

Remains of the culture known as “A Group” are found in northern Nubia between Aswan and the 2nd cataract (in far southern Egypt up to the modern Sudanese border). An A Group incense burner from Qustul is decorated with the figures of a falcon and a cloaked man wearing a tall crown. These images suggest there was a line of kings in Nubia contemporary with the Egyptian kings of so-called Dynasty 0 (about 3000 B.C.), and that “civilization” and history began in Egypt and Nubia at about the same time.

The A Group people were buried in simple oval or round pits, their bodies accompanied by shell and stone jewelry, pots, and stone palettes for the grinding of cosmetics. In this early period, the Egyptians referred to Nubia as “Ta-Seti” (“The Land of the Bow”) and conducted repeated military campaigns in the south to secure its borders and its trade in raw materials for such luxury goods as gold, skins, ivory and ebony, all of which were prized by Egyptian nobility.

C GROUP: 2300-1550 B.C.

The term “C Group” is used to refer to the people who lived in northern Nubia from 2300-1500 B.C. This culture was located in southern Egypt, southward to the modern Sudanese border, in approximately the same region as the earlier A Group. Cattle were extremely important to the C Group people, as they are today to other African cultures. Not only were large herds maintained, but cattle held a ritual significance as well, possibly as a sign of wealth or for religious reasons associated with nurturing the deceased in the afterlife. Heads of sacrificed cattle, slabs of stone decorated with cows, and pottery vessels painted with bovines were placed in and near C Group tombs. The people of this time wore elaborate ornaments in their hair, as well as bracelets of alabaster, and made fine black pottery with incised decoration.

There was extensive contact between Egypt and Nubia (known to the Egyptians as “The Land of Wawat”) during this time, and many Nubians migrated to Egypt where they were administrators, police and soldiers. By the end of the 16th century B.C., the C Group culture had either disappeared or had become indistinguishable from that of the Egyptians who had settled in the same area.

THE KERMA CULTURE: 2000-1550 B.C.

The Kerma culture, located about 300 miles south of the Egyptian-Sudanese border, represents the first imperial stage of Nubian history in central-southern Nubia. By the 18th century B.C., Egyptian records refer to a powerful “Kingdom of Kush.” The remains at Kerma document a highly sophisticated civilization. Two monumental mud-brick buildings (called *defuffa* in modern Arabic) still dominate the town. Their function is unclear, for one is surrounded not only by chapels and tombs, but also by secular structures and metal workshops. The kings of Kerma, wrapped in ram skins, were buried on beds inlaid with ivory and placed in tombs covered by mounds of earth, some of which are 300 feet across. Hundreds of retainers, dressed in caps ornamented with mica figures, were buried alive to accompany their master to the afterlife. Skulls of slain oxen were placed around the edges of the tumuli.

EGYPTIAN DOMINATION: 1460-1050 B.C.

For 400 years, the pharaohs of Egypt dominated Nubia. Trade in precious gold, skins, ebony and ivory were the main interests of the northerners. The land of Nubia was administered by an Egyptian official who bore the title “King’s Son of Kush,” and who was responsible directly to the king. Great stone temples in the Egyptian style were built throughout Nubia, and many Nubians adopted the worship of the Egyptian god Amun.

THE KINGDOMS OF KUSH: 1100-200 B.C.

THE NAPATAN PHASE

Beginning in about 1100 B.C., Egypt’s domination of Nubia became more indirect as the northern land experienced political fragmentation. By 747 B.C., Thebes, one of the greatest cities in Egypt, called upon the Nubian monarch to save it from attack by northern Egyptian rivals. Nubian king Piankhy led his armies from Napata (near the 5th cataract) and made a triumphant entry into Thebes. He continued his march northwards, taking the ancient capital city of Memphis and uniting Egypt and Nubia under his rule. Although few of Piankhy’s successors resided in Egypt, the Nubian kings of Napata were considered to be pharaohs of both Egypt and Nubia – a time that is known as the 25th Dynasty (728-656 B.C.).

In 656 B.C., the Assyrians invaded Egypt and drove the Nubians southward. Although they were no longer masters of Egypt, the kings of Napata continued to rule and flourish in Upper Nubia, where, freed from Egyptian domination, they developed a culture with both Nubian and Egyptian aspects. These kings were buried in steep-sided pyramid tombs equipped with gold

jewelry, stone statues and other elaborate funerary equipment. The tradition of burying Nubian kings in pyramids started nearly 800 years after the last royal pyramid was built in Egypt. Although the Nubian pyramids are far smaller than their Egyptian counterparts, there are hundreds of Nubian structures built for Nubian kings and queens as opposed to the thirty or so major examples from Egypt.

MEROITIC NUBIA: 200 B.C.-A.D. 300

The site of Meroe, situated far south between the 5th and 6th cataracts, approximately 150 miles north of today's Khartoum, became the center of Nubian culture in the 2nd century B.C. During this era, Nubia was in close contact with the non-African world of the Greeks and Romans, and provided the corridor by which Africa and the classical world met.

The kings of Meroe were buried in pyramid tombs. Other Nubians were buried in vaulted mud-brick tombs equipped with offering tables, painted pottery, weapons (spears, bows and arrows stored in elaborate leather quivers), cosmetic vessels, clothing and jewelry. One of the glories of Meroitic culture is its pottery, which is painted with colorful animal, plant and geometric motifs. Meroe was also a metal working center, and fine lamps, cosmetic bowls and spear points have been recovered from the site.

"X GROUP": ca. A.D. 250-550

During the third to sixth centuries A.D., several rival groups occupied Nubia, including the Noubadians (who lived in the Nile Valley) and the Blemmyes (who originated in the eastern desert and later settled in the Nile Valley). X Group culture is an intriguing mixture of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Nubian traditions.

The kings of the Noubadians were buried in huge tumulus tombs and accompanied by sacrificed horses and camels equipped with silver trappings. Tombs of the kings at Qustul and Ballana yielded silver crowns decorated with ancient pharaonic motifs.

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD: A.D. 550-1500

By 570, most of Nubia had been converted to Christianity by missionaries sent from Byzantium. The Nubians ward off direct invasion of Arabs from Egypt by signing a treaty in 652 which ensured their independence in exchange for tribute. Under this arrangement, Christianity flourished in Nubia and the upper Nile. The eastern African kingdom of Axum became a center of early Christianity.

THE REDISCOVERY OF NUBIA

How do we know about the ancient African kingdoms of Nubia? Our main sources include objects and monuments excavated in the Sudan and in southern Egypt. Another important source of information is ancient Egyptian art that preserves scenes of Nubia and its people thousands of years ago. Written records are less numerous and consist mainly of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman accounts, for Nubians did not develop their own system of writing until the 2nd century B.C., and even today it is not entirely understood.

The richness of Nubian civilization had largely been forgotten by both Africans and non-Africans until the early years of the 19th century when explorers and military expeditions entered the Upper Nile Valley. By the middle of that century, interest in ancient Nubia had been created by the publication of views of sites and monuments in scholarly publications and in exotic travel accounts. At the turn of the century, British colonial expeditions that traveled into Sudan undertook excavations at Gebel Barkal and Meroe and returned with new information about the richness of ancient Nubian culture.

The Sudanese Antiquities Service was established in 1904 in response to uncontrolled and undocumented excavations in Nubia. The following year, regulations were drafted which stipulated the terms under which archaeologists could work in Sudan and what objects could be removed from the country. American efforts were led by George Andrew Reisner who excavated Kerma, Gebel Barkal and the royal pyramids at el Kurru, Nuri and Meroe on behalf of Harvard and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in the first thirty years of this century. The basic chronology of Nubia and the knowledge of the succession of the Kushite kings are due to Reisner's research.

The next golden age of Nubian exploration resulted from the 1959 UNESCO (United Nations) appeal to save the monuments of Nubia. Sudan and Egypt jointly welcomed excavators from several dozen countries, who were entrusted to excavate designated sites as rapidly as possible. An incentive was provided by the then-unusual promise to give the excavators a share of the recovered antiquities. Most of the Nubian artifacts in The Oriental Institute Museum of The University of Chicago were recovered during that time. The best-known feat of this international undertaking was the dismantling and reconstruction of the temple of king Ramesses II at Abu Simbel.

The National Museum in Khartoum, which was established in 1972, houses antiquities from all periods of Nubia's history as well as whole temples which were removed from the threat of the rising waters of Lake Nasser. Its Egyptian counterpart, the Nubia Museum of Aswan, opened in

1997. Although the discipline of Nubian studies is still relatively new and is shared by only a few specialists, scholars from throughout the world continue to reconstruct the history and culture of this ancient African world.

"LOST NUBIA: PHOTOGRAPHS OF EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1905-07"

"Lost Nubia: Photographs of Egypt and the Sudan 1905-07," will be shown at the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago from Saturday, February 25 to Sunday May 7, 2006.

The exhibit is composed of more than 50 historic black and white photographs taken by the first Egyptian Expedition of the University of Chicago in the course of two seasons, 1905-6 and 1906-07. Those years saw a small team from Chicago set out for Nubia, in today's southern Egypt and northern Sudan, to document the inscriptions that covered the walls of temples.

The expedition, led by James Henry Breasted, who in 1919 founded the Oriental Institute, traveled in incredible hardship and danger in small leaky boats, by trains across the desert, and by camel caravans, to what were then, and largely still are, remote monuments. The team was laden with heavy large-format view cameras and crates of glass plate negatives that were developed along the way.

The photographers, Friedrich Koch (1905-06) and Horst Schiephack (1906-07) developed ingenious ways to illuminate the carved walls with magnesium flares and mirrors. Although the goal of the expedition was the documentation of the temples, the team also captured images of people in the region and lifestyles that have since disappeared. Other images are striking artistic compositions that transcend their original documentary function.

The views of ancient temples are particularly valuable today for they record monuments that have since been damaged by erosion or other forces. Some of the structures were relocated in conjunction with the building of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s, and the historic photographs provide documentation of their original appearance.

Most of the images in the exhibit were printed from the original 8" x 10" glass plate negatives that are archived at the Oriental Institute.

The exhibit was curated by John A. Larson, Oriental Institute Museum Archivist. Larson is also responsible for the fully-illustrated catalogue *Lost Nubia: A Centennial Exhibit of Photographs from the 1905-1907 Egyptian Expedition of the University of Chicago*. In that work, each image is described by Larson's commentary and by passages from Breasted's travel notes.

The exhibit is presented in conjunction with the centennial of the expedition, and also with the opening of the Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery, a permanent display of more than 600 objects that document Nubian history and culture from the Neolithic through the medieval era.

“Lost Nubia” inaugurates The Marshall and Doris Holleb Family Gallery for Special Exhibits, a space in which rotating exhibits originated by the Oriental Institute, or borrowed from other museums, will be presented. Following Lost Nubia, “Wonderful Things: The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, the Harry Burton Photographs” will be shown from May 26 to October 8, 2006. These dramatic black and white images document the discovery and clearance of the tomb. They also address how photography is used in archaeology, and specifically how Burton's work was used to fuel interest in the tomb.

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE AND NUBIA

In 1905, University of Chicago professor James Henry Breasted set off to record the architecture and inscriptions of Nubia from Abu Simbel to Wadi Halfa nearly 200 miles south. During this first season of The Epigraphic Survey (November 1905 to April 1906), the expedition devoted forty days to documenting the Egyptian temple of Abu Simbel. In the second season (October 1906 to March 1907), “The University of Chicago caravan” traveled from Meroe, to Khartoum 150 miles south and then northward again to the third cataract, recording the great temples of Nubia.

These two seasons were great successes. The photographs of the Nubian temples provide nearly complete documentation of these little-known monuments, and the hand copies of the hieroglyphic texts made by expedition members were among the first records of the ancient inscriptions of Nubia.

The second phase of Oriental Institute involvement in Nubia began as a result of the 1954 decision to build a high dam at Aswan in southern Egypt. The completion of the dam was destined to create a vast lake which would flood 300 miles of southern Egypt and northern Sudan, permanently submerging the most important temples and archaeological sites. More than 100,000 Nubians would lose their ancestral homelands.

In 1960, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) coordinated the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. Under agreements with the Egyptian and Sudanese governments, foreign expeditions were invited to excavate many sites. As added incentive, the excavators were allowed to retain most of their finds.

The UNESCO appeal opened a new era in Nubian studies. Teams from twenty countries excavated in the region, attempting to salvage as much information as possible before the sites were lost forever.

The Oriental Institute sent more excavators and scholars into Nubia than any other American institution. In 1960, Oriental Institute professor Keith Seele made an initial survey to select sites for excavation. Work continued until 1968 with excavations at Qustul, Ballana, Adindan, Kasr el Wizz and the forts at Dorginarti, Semna South and Serra East. For its work, The Oriental Institute was granted over five thousand artifacts that reflect all periods of ancient Nubia. These objects are the subject of six volumes of Nubian excavation reports authored by Dr. Bruce Williams. Although the sites themselves are now lost under the waters of Lake Nasser, the field of Nubian studies is more active than ever before.