

Ethiopia - Encyclopedia

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GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES



ETHIOPIA, or Aethiopia (Gr. Αἰθιοπία), the ancient classical name of a district of north-eastern Africa, bounded on the N. by Egypt and on the E. by the Red Sea.' The application of the name has varied considerably at different times. In the Homeric poems the *Aethiopes* are the furthest of mankind both eastward and westward; the gods go to their banquets and probably the Sun sets in their country. With the growth of scientific geography they came to be located somewhat less vaguely, and indeed their name was employed as the equivalent of the Assyrian and Hebrew Cush, the Kesh or Ekosh of the Hieroglyphics (first found in Stele of Senwosri I.), *i.e.* a country extending from about the 24th to the 10th degree of N. lat., while its limits to the E. and W. were doubtful. The etymology of the name, which to a Greek ear meant "swarthy-faced," is unknown, nor can we say why in official inscriptions of the Axumite dynasty the word is used as the equivalent of Habashat (whence the 1 For the topography and later history see Sudan and Abyssinia.

modern Abyssinia), which, from the context would appear to denote a tribe located in S. Arabia, whose name was rendered by the Greek geographers as *Abaseni* and *Abissa*. The inhabitants of Ethiopia, partly perhaps owing to their honourable mention in the Homeric poems, attracted the attention of many Greek researchers, from Democritus onwards. Herodotus divides them into two main groups, a straight-haired race and a woolly-haired race, dwelling respectively to the East and West, and this distinction is confirmed by the Egyptian monuments. From his time onwards various names of tribes are enumerated, and to some extent geographically located, most of these appellations being Greek words, applied to the tribes by strangers in virtue of what seemed to be their leading characteristics, *e.g.* "Long-lived," "Fish-eaters," "Troglodytes," &c. The bulk of our information is derived from Egyptian monuments, whence it appears that, originally occupied by independent tribes, who were raided (first by Seneferu or Snefru, first king of the IVth or last of the IIIrd Dynasty) and gradually subjected by Egyptian kings (the steps in this process are traced by E. W. Budge, *The Egyptian Sudan*, 1907, i. 505 sqq.), under the XVIIIth Dynasty it became an Egyptian province, administered by a viceroy (at first the Egyptian king's son), called prince of Kesh, and paying tributes in negroes, oxen, gold, ivory, rare beads, hides and household utensils. The inhabitants frequently rebelled and were as often subdued; records of these repeated conquests were set up by the Egyptian kings in the shape of steles and temples; of the latter the temple of Amenhotep (Amenophis) III. at Soleb or Sulb seems to have been the most magnificent. Ethiopia became independent towards the 11th century B.C., when the XXIst Dynasty was reigning in Egypt. A state was founded, having for its capital Napata (mod. *Merawi*) at the foot of

Jebel Barkal, "the sacred mountain," which in time became formidable, and in the middle of the 8th century conquered Egypt; an Egyptian campaign is recorded in the famous stele of King Pankhi. The fortunes of the Ethiopian (XXVth) Dynasty belong to the history of Egypt. After the Ethiopian yoke had been shaken off by Egypt, about 660 B.C., Ethiopia continued independent, under kings of whom not a few are known from inscriptions. Besides a number whose names have been discovered in cartouches at Jebel Barkal, the following, of whom all but the third have left important steles, can be roughly dated: Tandamane, son of Tirhaka (667-650), Asperta (630-600), Pankharer (600-560), Harsiotf (560-525), Nastasen (525-500). From the evidence of the stele of the second (the Coronation Stele) and that of the fifth it has been inferred that the sovereignty early in this period became elective, a deputation of the various orders in the realm being (as Diodorus states), when a vacancy occurred, sent to Napata, where the chief god Amen selected out of the members of the royal family the person who was to succeed, and who became officially the god's son; and it seems certain that the priestly caste was more influential in Ethiopia than in Egypt both before and after this period. Another stele (called the Stele of Excommunication) records the expulsion of a priestly family guilty of murder (H. Schafer, *Klio*, vi. 287): the name of the sovereign who expelled them has been obliterated. The stele of Harsiotf contains the record of nine expeditions, in the course of which the king subdued various tribes south of Meroo and built a number of temples. The stele of the last of these sovereigns, now in the Berlin Museum, and edited by H. Schafer (Leipzig, 1901), contains valuable information concerning the state of the Ethiopian kingdom in its author's time. Shortly after his accession he was threatened with invasion by Cambyses, the Persian conqueror of Egypt, but (according to his own account) destroyed the fleet sent by the invader up the Nile, while (as we learn from Herodotus) the land-force succumbed to famine (see Cambyses). It further appears that in his time and that of his immediate predecessors the capital of the kingdom had been removed from Napata, where in the time of Harsiotf the temples and palaces were already in ruins, to Meroe at a distance of 60 camel-hours to the south-east. But Napata retained its importance as the religious metropolis; it was thither that the king went to be crowned, and there too the chief god delivered his oracles, which were (it is said) implicitly obeyed. The local names in Nastasen's inscription, describing his royal circuit, are in many cases obscure. A city named Pnups (Hierogl. Pa-Nebes) appears to have constituted the most northerly point in the empire. These Ethiopian kings seem to have made no attempt to reconquer Egypt, though they were often engaged in wars with the wild tribes of the Sudan. For the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. the history of the country is a blank. A fresh epoch was, however, inaugurated by Ergamenes, a contemporary of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who is said to have massacred the priests at Napata, and destroyed sacerdotal influence, till then so great that the king might at the priests' order be compelled to destroy himself; Diodorus attributes this measure to Ergamenes' acquaintance with Greek culture, which he introduced into his country. A temple was built by this king at Pselcis (Dakka) to Thoth. Probably the sovereignty again became hereditary. Occasional notices of Ethiopia occur from this time onwards in Greek and Latin authors, though the special treatises by Agatharchides and others are lost. According to these the country came to be ruled by queens named Candace. One of them was involved in war with the Romans in 24 and 23 B.C.; the land was invaded by C.

Petronius, who took the fortress Premis or Ibrim, and sacked the capital (then Napata); the emperor Augustus, however, ordered the evacuation of the country without even demanding tribute. The stretch of land between Assuan (Syene) and Maharraka (Hiera Sycaminus) was, however, regarded as belonging to the Roman empire, and Roman cohorts were stationed at the latter place. To judge by the monuments it is possible that there were queens who reigned alone. Pyramids were erected for queens as well as for kings, and the position of the queens was little inferior to that of their consorts, though, so far as monumental representations go, they always yielded precedence to the latter. Candace appears to be found as the name of a queen for whom a pyramid was built at Meroe. A great builder was Netekamane, who is represented with his queen Amanetari on temples of Egyptian style at many points up the Nile - at Amara just above the second cataract, and at Napata, as well as at Meroe, Benaga and Naga in the distant Isle of Meroe. He belongs, probably, to the Ptolemaic age. Later, in the Roman period, the type in sculpture changed from the Egyptian. The figures are obese, especially the women, and have pronounced negro features, and the royal person is loaded with bulging gold ornaments. Of this period also there is a royal pair, Netekamane and Amanetari, imitating the names of their conspicuous predecessors. In the 4th century A.D. the state of Meroe was ravaged by the Nubas (?) and the Abyssinians, and in the 6th century its place was taken by the Christian state of Nubia (see Dongola).

Contrary to the opinion of the Greeks, the Ethiopians appear to have derived their religion and civilization from the Egyptians. The royal inscriptions are written in the hieroglyphic character and the Egyptian language, which, however, in the opinion of experts, steadily deteriorate after the separation of Ethiopia from Egypt. About the time of Ergamenes, or (according to some authorities) before, a vernacular came to be employed in inscriptions, written in a special alphabet of 23 signs in parallel hieroglyphic and cursive forms. The cursive is to be read from right to left, the hieroglyphic, contrary to the Egyptian method, in the direction in which the figures face. The Egyptian equivalents of six characters have been made out by the aid of bilingual cartouches. Words are divided from each other by pairs of dots, and it is clear that the forms and values of the signs are largely based on Egyptian writing; but as yet decipherment has not been attained, nor can it yet be stated to what group the language should be assigned (F. Ll. Griffith in D. R. MacIver's *Areika*, Oxford, 1909, and later researches).

Notices in Greek authors are collected by P. Paulitschke, *Die geographische Erforschung des afrikanischen Continents* (Vienna, 1880); the inscriptions were edited and interpreted by G. Maspero, *Revue archeol.* xxii., xxv.; *Mélanges d'Assyriologie et d'Égyptologie*, ii., iii.; *Records of the Past*, vi.; *T.S.B.A.* iv.; Schafer, l.c., and *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, xxxiii. See also J. H. Breasted, "The Monuments of Sudanese Nubia," in *American Journal of Semitic Languages* (October 1908), and the work of E. W. Budge cited above. A description of the chief ruins and the results of Dr D. R. MacIver's researches in northern Nubia, begun in 1907, will be found under Sudan: *Anglo-Egyptian. The Axumite Kingdom.* - About the 1st century of the Christian era a new kingdom grew up at Axum, of which a king Zoscales is mentioned in the *Periplus Marls Erythraei*. Fragments of the history of this kingdom, of which there is no authentic chronicle, have been made out chiefly by the aid of inscriptions, of which the following is a

list: - (1) Greek inscription of Adulis, copied by Cosmas Indicopleustes in 545, the beginning, with the king's name, lost. (2) Sabaean inscription of Ela Amida in two halves, discovered by J. Theodore Bent at Axum in 1893, and completed by E. Littmann in 1906. (3) Ethiopic inscription probably of the same king, imperfect (Littmann). (4) Trilingual inscription of Aeizanes, the Greek version discovered by Henry Salt in 1805, the Sabaean by Bent, and the Ethiopic (Geez) by Littmann. (5) Ethiopic inscription of Aeizanes (so Littmann), son of Ela Amida, discovered by Eduard Riippell in 1833. (6) Ethiopic inscriptions of HetanaDan'el, son of Dabra Efrem. These are all long inscriptions giving details of wars, &c. The sixth is later than the rest, which are to be attributed to the most flourishing period of the kingdom, the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. The fourth is pagan, the fifth Christian, Aeizanes having in the interval embraced Christianity. It was to this king that the emperor Constantius addressed a letter in 356 A.D.

Aeizanes and his successors style themselves kings of the Axumites, Homerites (Himyar), Raidan, the Ethiopians (Habasat), the Sabaeans, Silee, Tiamo, the Bugaites (Bega) and Kasu. This style implies considerable conquests in South Arabia, which, however, must have been lost to the Axumites by A.D. 378. They claim to rule the Kasu'or Meroitic Ethiopians; and the fifth inscription records an expedition along the Atbara and the Nile to punish the Nuba and Kasu, and a fragment of a Greek inscription from Meroe was recognized by Sayce as commemorating a king of Axum. Except for these inscriptions Axumite history is a blank until in the 6th century we find the Axumite king sending an expedition to wreck the Jewish state then existing in S. Arabia, and reducing that country to a state of vassalage: the king is styled in Ethiopian chronicles Caleb (Kaleb), in Greek and Arabic documents El-Esbaha. In the 7th century a successor to this king, named Abraha or Abraham, gave refuge to the persecuted followers of Mahomet at the beginning of his career (see Arabia: *History, ad init.*). A few more names of kings occur on coins, which were struck in Greek characters till about A.D. 700, after which time that language seems definitely to have been displaced in favour of Ethiopic or Geez: the condition of the script and the coins renders them all difficult to identify with the names preserved in the native lists, which are too fanciful and mutually contradictory to furnish of themselves even a vestige of history. For the period between the rise of Islam and the beginning of the modern history of Abyssinia there are a few notices in Arabic writers; so we have a notice of a war between Ethiopia and Nubia about 687 (C. C. Rossini in *Giorn. Soc. Asiat. Ital.* x. 141), and of a letter to George king of Nubia from the king of Abyssinia some time between 978 and 1003, when a Jewish queen Judith was oppressing the Christian population (I. Guidi, *ibid.* iii. 176, 7).

The Abyssinian chronicles, it may be noted, attribute the foundation of the kingdom to Menelek (or Ibn el-Hakim), son of Solomon and the queen of Sheba. The Axumite or Menelek dynasty was driven from northern Abyssinia by Judith, but soon after another Christian dynasty, that of the Zagues, obtained power. In 1268 the reigning prince abdicated in favour of Yekuno Amlak, king of Shoa, a descendant of the monarch overthrown by Judith (see Abyssinia).

See A. Dillman, *Die Anfänge des axumitischen Reiches* (Berlin, 1879); E. Drouin, *Revue archeol.* xlv. (1882); T. Mommsen, *Geschichte der römischen Provinzen*, chap. xiii.; W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones selectae*, Nos. 199, 200; Littmann u. Kroncker, *Vorbericht der deutschen Aksum-Expedition* (Berlin, 1906), and Littman's subsequent researches.

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