

**JTroche. Response: Adams. Post-Pharaonic Nubia in Light of Archaeology I. JEA 50 (1964)**

Adams begins with the enlightened proclamation we now begin to expect of him: "Since the dawn of history Nubia has been connecting bridges between the civilized lands of the Mediterranean basin and the primitive world of trans-Saharan Africa" (102). If we can wade through the inherent racism and ignorance of this opening sentence (actually the entire paragraph) Adams does offer some productive points.

He comments on the largely philological nature of interest in Nubia until the Aswan dam really pushed archaeology in Nubia to the fore. Taking this new evidence into consideration, Adams takes a closer look at Nubia during five stages of historical development he identifies as: The New Kingdom, Napatan, Meroitic, the x-group, and Christian. He begins each section with a summary of the current, traditional interpretations of the period, and ends with an updated summary that takes into account the archaeology he details in the body section of each period. For the sake of our topic of discussion this week in class, I will focus my commentary on the Napatan and Meroitic sections of Adams' article.

*Napatan*

Adams concludes that at the end of the New Kingdom, roughly near the end of dynasty 20, the Nubians once colonized by the Egyptians lost contact with the civilized world and 'retreated to the wilderness of Upper Egypt' (109) where they were embittered and strategized their vengeance. This vengeance would erupt in the form of a powerful series of kings, centered at Napata near the fourth cataract, who would eventually rule over Egypt as Pharaohs of the Twenty-fifth dynasty. Adams is convinced that the origins of this kingdom will be found in the south, in Upper Nubia, once proper archaeological investigation is presented in this region - which he critically claims will not occur until the next dam project is projected for the third cataract. He rightfully warns that the study of this period, thus, remains largely royal in the nature of evidence.

Adams breaks up the Napata period into three sub-periods: (1) before the conquest of Egypt - Kings through rule of Piankhy, (2) Twenty-fifth dynasty and the immediately following century - Piankhy to Aspelta, and (3) the period during which Meroe was a ruling capital but Kings continued to be buried at Napata - reigns after Aspelta through Nastasen (110). Adams laments on the lack of archaeological evidence for this first subset period - depending largely on the royal tombs of el-Kurru to reconstruct this early rise of the Napata power system.

Somehow Adams is able to undermine the local power and intellect of Nubia even for those periods during which Egypt was under their rule. He describes Nubian rule under Napatan Kings as empty and silent before the conquest of Egypt; wherein, unable to build their own monuments, the Napatan kings hired Egyptian artisans and architects to construct their temples and bring culture to them. Adams sees the Nubians as actively 'Egyptianizing' themselves "with diligence and thoroughness" (115). We have already talked about this briefly in class - what do you all think about this notion of active egyptianization on behalf of the Napatan rulers? Even if this is the case, what are the motivations and means through which this is achieved?

## Meroitic

The transition between Napatan and Meroitic has been described as arbitrary and as a direct continuation (115). Adams, however, argues against this. He declares that there is no precise archaeological evidence linking the Napatan and Meroitic kingdoms to each other. This debate sits, partly, on the lack of a solid, universally agreed upon chronology for this transitional period. Some, like Reisner, want to reconstruct a direct link between the two, with a single line of ruling kings. Adams' biggest criticism, perhaps, is of the interpretation that the Meroitic period was nothing more than a continuation of a period of cultural decline that began at the end of the Napatan period. The Meroitic culture exhibited numerous adaptations, developments and new constructions and designs that were unique from the Napatan culture.

The rest of Adams' discussion of the Meroitic period begins to delve into the issues apparent to the Greco-Roman period of Egyptian history to which we will discuss in the following week.