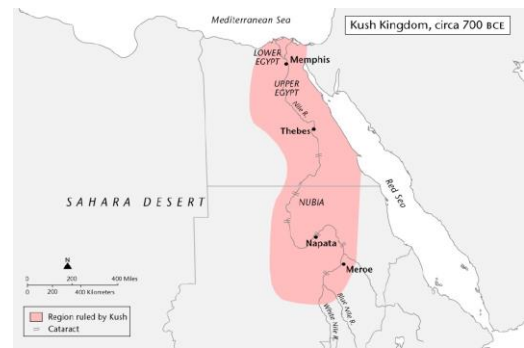


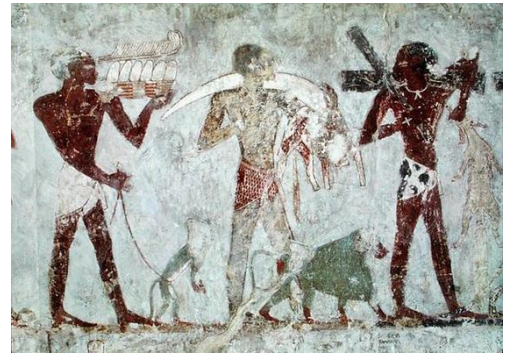
## The Kush in Ancient Nubia and Egypt

Around 5000 BCE, people began to migrate to the Nile River Valley and develop agricultural communities. Over time, these communities became the civilizations of ancient Egypt and Nubia. Lower and Upper Egypt lay to the north, from the First Cataract of the Nile to its mouth. Nubia comprised the lands between the First and the Second Cataract. Both cultures thrived along the banks of the Nile River due to the rich agriculture and trade routes of the Nile River Valley. The Nubians benefited from the production of mineral wealth, including gold, which was much coveted in trade.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the Egyptian Pharaoh Mentuhotep II first referred to the region of Nubia as Cush, or Kush. Later, around 1915 BCE, Pharaoh Sesotris I invaded Nubia and dubbed the region south of the second cataract as Kush.



**Caption:** Nubia occupied the lands along the Nile River to the south, in what is now Sudan. Kushite rulers of Nubia first made their capital at Napata but later moved it to Meroe.



*Kushites carrying tributes of gold, ivory and animal skins, from the Tomb of Rekhmire, vizier of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep II, New Kingdom | Valley of the Nobles, Thebes, Egypt | Giraudon | Photographic Rights held by The Bridgeman Art Library.*

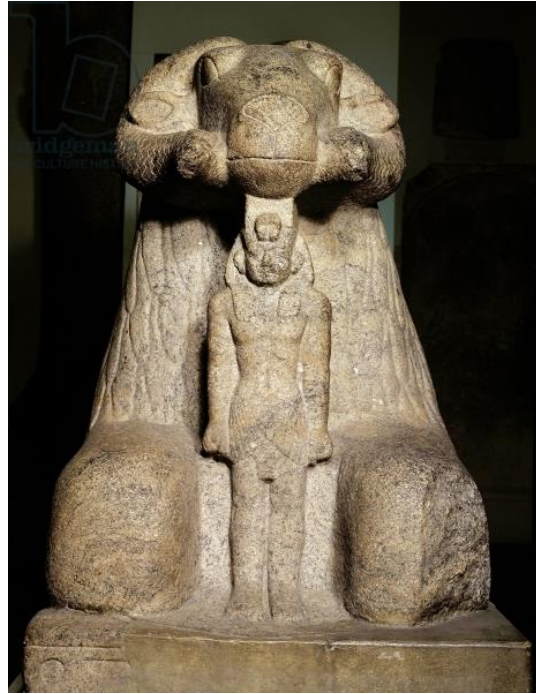
**Caption:** During the Egyptian New Kingdom, Kush and greater Nubia remained a colony of Egypt. Nubians paid tributes of gold, ivory and animal skins above to their Egyptian rulers.

## The First Kingdom of Kush

In the centuries that followed, the Kingdom of Kush emerged, and soon came to dominate Nubia. In the 17th century BCE, Kushites invaded Upper Egypt, reaching as far as Aswan. But the reign of the Kush in the north did not last long. In the late 16th century BCE, the Egyptian ruler Amenhotep I led a conquest of Nubia that crushed the kingdom of Kush. Egypt ruled Kush and greater Nubia as a colony for centuries. During that time, the Kushites adopted many aspects of Egyptian culture, including elements of their religion, art and architecture, and language.

## From Colony to Empire

By the 11th century BCE, the New Kingdom of Egypt went into decline, and Nubia reasserted its independence. Over time, the Kushites rebuilt their kingdom, making their capital at Napata. Kushites continued to worship Egyptian deities, particularly Amon/Amun and Isis. They built pyramids, temples, and burial mounds similar to those used in Egypt. Like Egyptian pharaohs, Kushite kings adopted aspects of divinity and ruled as both political and religious heads. However, Kushites also maintained their own mass burial practices and continued to worship some of their old gods. Though they adopted the written hieroglyphics of Egypt, they also began to develop their own system of writing, known as Meroitic.



*Statue of Amun in the form of a ram protecting King Taharqa, 690–664 BC | British Museum, London, UK | Photographic Rights held by The Bridgeman Art Library*

**Caption:** Kushite King Taharqa (690–664 B.C.E.) ruled both Nubia and Egypt in the pharaonic tradition. This sculpture shows Taharqa under the protection of the ram-headed god Amun, an Egyptian sky god

Throughout this period, Egypt continued to weaken. Around 800 BCE, Kushite King Kashta invaded Upper Egypt. Kashta's son and successor, Piye (also Piankhi), extended Kushite rule over Lower Egypt and established the Kushite kings as the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egyptian Pharaohs. Subsequent Kushite Kings—Shabaka, Shebiktu, Taharqa and Tanutamoni—ruled Egypt as well as Nubia until about 656 BCE. At that time, the Assyrians permanently expelled the Kushites from Egypt.

### **Expelled from Egypt**

After the conquest by Assyria, the Kush retreated to their traditional lands to the south, in Nubia. For a time, Kushite kings ruled from Napata, but they moved their capital to the prosperous trade city of Meroe around 592 BCE after an attack by the Egyptians. The Kingdom of Kush continued under a long line of kings for nine centuries. However, ties with Egypt grew weak and the cultural exchange between Nubia and Egypt lessened. Gradually, the Kush began to interact more with African cultures to the east and south. In 350 CE, the neighboring kingdom of Aksum conquered Kush, and the Nubian kingdom never recovered.

### **Instructions**

In this activity, you will read about the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Kush and study several visual resources, including a map of the kingdom at its height. As you read, take notes on the graphic organizer below. Then, use your notes to answer the essay question that follows.

### **Reading Analysis**

Use the graphic organizer below to record notes about the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Kush and the influence of ancient Egyptian civilization.



<b>What significant events contributed to the rise and decline of Kush?</b>
<b>In what ways did the civilizations of Egypt and Kush interact?</b>
<b>What evidence is there that Egyptian culture influenced Kushite culture?</b>
<b>In what ways did Kushite culture retain its own identity, independent of Egypt?</b>



## Apply and Elaborate

On a separate piece of paper, write a three-paragraph essay that explains how the proximity of the Kush to ancient Egypt encouraged and influenced the growth of Kush culture. Be sure to cite specific examples from the reading as well as your own understanding of African history to speculate on things not discussed in the reading.

