

Blog Post

‘We who forgot Africa’s past glory, must now remember ...’

By N.K. Read, author of ‘Children of Saba’

Herodotus (Greek historian c. 484–425 BC) called them the ‘wise men occupying the Upper Nile, men of long life, whose manners and customs pertain to the Golden Age, those virtuous mortals whose feasts and banquets are honoured by Jupiter himself’.

Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC), borrowed it from Thrasyalces the Thasian (one of the ancient writers on physics), and he from Homer, when he called them ‘heaven –descended’.

Stephanus of Byzantium (author of ‘Ethnica’, a 6th century AD ancient geographical dictionary), voiced the universal testimony of antiquity wrote, ‘It was the first established country on earth and (its peoples) were the first to set up the worship of the gods and to establish laws’.

An old poem ‘Phrygia’, a history of Dionysus, celebrated one of their greatest.

Some even say that Aesop, the ancient storyteller credited with ‘Aesop's Fables’ was one of them.

But who were they?

Ancient writers state that ‘they’ were a civilisation that predated the Greeks, the early Romans and the Egyptians.

When the curtain of history was lifted, the civilisation of Egypt was hoary with age, rich languages, complex systems of religion, and astounding architectural achievement - proof that the earth is older than we perceive. The story of what lay behind Egypt fascinated the whole ancient world for it was clear to all ancient philosophers that their culture did not originate upon the Lower Nile. Who then was her teacher?

The Egyptians of old themselves claimed that their ancestors were strangers who in very remote times settled on the bank of the Nile, bringing with themselves the civilisation of their mother country, the art of writing and a polished language. They came from the direction of the setting sun and were known as the most ancient of men.

Sonchis of Sais (circa 594 BC, an Egyptian priest mentioned in Greek writings as relating the account of Atlantis) said to Solon (Athenian poet and statesman 638 BC – 558 BC), ‘You Greeks are novices in all the knowledge of antiquity. You are ignorant of what passed here or among yourselves in the days of old. The history of eight thousand years is deposited in our sacred books, but we can ascend to much higher antiquity and tell you what our fathers have done for nine thousand years. I mean their institutions, their laws, and their brilliant accomplishments.’

The fathers of whom he spoke, established themselves where modern Ethiopia lies today, and their empire’s origins even predated the Meroë of antiquity, already a very ancient Kingdom in itself.

In most writings, this pre-history Kingdom was called the 'Meru' and its citizens, the 'First Men', were also referenced as 'The Æthiops'. French Assyriologist and archaeologist, François Lenormant (1837–1883) confirms that these first men of the ancient world were known as the 'Men of Meru'.

According to these ancient philosophers, this empire was vast; its reach ranging from modern India all the way to South America yet their central seat was 'Aprica' – a term meaning 'sunny' (Isidore of Seville in *Etymologiae* XIV.5.2) to mean the great, sprawling continent of modern Africa. Also known as 'Aphrike' and 'Af-rui-ka', a name given by the ancient Egyptians which meant 'to turn toward the opening of the Ka' referring to a womb or birthplace, this land would be, for the primordial Egyptians, 'their birthplace'. (Massey, 1881).

'They were a black or dark coloured race and the pioneers of our civilisation. They were emphatically the monument builders on the plains of Shinar and the valley of the Nile from Meroë to Memphis. In southern Arabia they erected wonderful edifices. They were responsible for the monuments that dot southern Siberia and in America along the valley of the Mississippi down to Mexico and in Peru their images and monuments stand as "voiceless witnesses.'" (Philosophy of Ancient History, Bunsen, p. 51)

What's interesting to note here is that the same word 'Meru' is referenced in many modern religions and belief systems.

Sanskrit writers called Indra, chief god of the Hindu, the 'king of the Meru'. He was deified and became the chief representative of the Supreme Being. In his voluminous research on the origins of languages, nations and religion (*Anacalypsis*), Godfrey Higgins writes that the mysterious Mount Moriah of the Hebrew Abraham is actually Meru of the Hindu and Olympus to the Greeks. In Japanese Buddhist philosophy, a giant mountain called Mount Sumeru (Shumisen) was believed to stand at the centre of the world. According to Thai cosmology, Sumeru Mountain is considered the pillar of the world as well as the centre of the universe.

Could it be one civilisation gave birth to a single stream of consciousness that spread out throughout the world of antiquity?

Drusilla Dunjee Houston, (1876-1941 - a teacher, journalist and self-taught historian who undertook a life-long quest to discover African history) states in her seminal work 'Wonderful Ethiopians' (1926) that the excavations of Petrie revealed in Egypt the remains of a distinct race that the ancients called this the pioneer race which lit the torch of art and science. These people were 'the founders of primeval cities and civilised life'.

'The wonders of India, to which Europe sought a passage in the age of Columbus, the costly products and coveted merchandise of Babylon, and the amazing prehistoric civilization of Asia Minor, sprang from this little recognized source. Their skilful hands raised Cyclopean walls dug out mighty lakes and laid imperishable roads that have endured throughout the ages. This was the uniform testimony of ancient records.'

Some say the gods and goddesses of the Greeks and Romans were but the borrowed kings and queens of this Cushite empire of Meru. So marvellous had been their achievements in primitive ages, that in later days, they were worshipped as immortals by the people of India, Egypt, old Ethiopia, Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world.

Rawlinson, after his exhaustive research into the life of ancient nations, says, "For the last three thousand years the world has been mainly indebted to the Semitic and Indo-European races for its advancement, but it was otherwise in the first ages. Egypt and Babylon, Mizraim and Nimrod, both descendants of Ham, led the way and acted as the pioneers of mankind in the various untrodden fields of art, science and literature. Alphabetical writings, astronomy, history, chronology, architecture, plastic art, sculpture, navigation, agriculture and textile industries seem to have had their origin in one or the other of these countries." (Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies, Vol. I.)

These ancients built mighty cities and purportedly the first to give the world ideas of government. The later ages gained from this ancient empire, the fundamental principles upon which republican governments are founded. The basic stones of that wonderful dominion were equality, temperance, industry, intelligence and justice.

This brings us to my interest in this ancient race:

It all started over 35 years ago when I was born in Kenya in a small tribe that clings to the slopes of Mount Kenya, coincidentally called the 'Meru', the only tribe on earth with this weighty name.

A few years ago, I grew curious about my background. While my grandparents had passed but my father kept their stories and songs alive through taped recordings and listening to those ancient, haunting melodies and words stirred a longing in me to find out who I truly was.

I explored the origins of the Meru and found an intriguing tale – a fantastic fable of an escape hundreds of years ago.

In brief, it recounts that the Meru of Kenya were once enslaved by the 'Red People'. They eventually escaped, and in their exodus came across a large body of water called Mbwaa or Mbwa, which they crossed by magical means.

The details of the tradition are replete with parallels to the Old Testament, and also contain references to events described in the New Testament. This has led many to speculate that the Meru are perhaps the descendants of one of the Lost Tribes of Israel, or that they were once Jewish, or had been in profound cultural contact with a people that certainly were (such as the Falashim of Ethiopia).

Yet the modern Meru story goes back further. In another version of their history, this one more academically-inspired, it has been convincingly argued by Alfred M. M'Imanyara*, if not beyond doubt, that today's Meru came originally from the ancient Nilotic empire of Meroë (circa 300BC - AD100), an ancient civilisation that lived where modern Ethiopia is now situated. Their empire was bounded by both the White and Blue Niles, and swamps in the south.

The linguistic similarity between the words 'Meru' and 'Meroë' is certainly tempting, as is other linguistic evidence, which - although far from conclusive - does suggest at least that the Meru were at some point in contact with civilisations from further north. Indeed, some Meru elders refer to their early origins as being a place called Misiri, which is identical to the Arab and Berber name for Egypt still used today. The idea that the Meru came from the north is in any case common enough among Meru elders today.

The Meroë ruled a flourishing kingdom whose wealth was due to a strong iron industry, and international trade involving India and China. They were the remnants of the original Meru who preceded the historic Egyptians and their Kingdom '... was higher than that of the later dynasties. Its purer art represents an 'Old Race' that fills all the background of the pre-historic ages. It colonised the first civilised centres of the primitive world.' (Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature).

We read in Prehistoric Nations, '(The Meru) brought to development astronomy and the other sciences, which have come down to us. The vast commercial system by which they joined together the 'ends of the earth' was created and manufacturing skill established'. (Prehistoric Nations, pp. 95, 96).

These 'First Men' maintained supremacy almost to modern times; but their ancient glory faded with the rise of Assyria after which the Sabean Ethiopians above Egypt became the central representatives of that power that had exercised World Empire for thousands of years.

Heeren, whose researches furnish invaluable information to the later historians says, 'From the remotest times to the present, the (First Men) have been the most celebrated and yet the most mysterious of nations. In the earliest traditions of the more civilised nations of antiquity, the name of this most distant people is found. The annals of the Egyptian priests were full of them, and the nations of inner Asia on the Euphrates and the Tigris have woven the fictions of the (First Men) with their own traditions of the wars and conquests of their heroes; and at a period equally remote they glimmer in Greek mythology.'

These (First Men) were the object of worship of all the nations that appear civilised at the dawn of history. The literature and music of Greece and Rome was permeated by their strain.

'Dionysus, Hercules, Saturn, Osiris, Zeus and Apollo were Cushite kings of the prehistoric ages. They are the realistic reminders of a people who deeply impressed and coloured the life, art and literature of the ancient world.'

Heeren continues, 'When the Greeks scarcely knew Italy and Sicily by name the (First Men) were celebrated in the poems of their bards. They were the remotest nation, the most just of men, the favourites of the gods. The lofty inhabitants of Olympus journey to them and take part in their feasts. Their sacrifices are the most agreeable that mortals can offer and when the faint beams of tradition give way to the clear light of history, the lustre of the (First Men) is not diminished. They still continue to be objects of curiosity and admiration; and the pens of cautious and clear sighted historians often place them in the highest rank of knowledge and civilisation.'

The 'Epic of Aphrike' series recreates the glory and majesty of this great race, the untold story that reimagines the influence of this great, vast ancient African race that threw such 'giant shadows upon time's dawn'.

'CHILDREN OF SABA' the first book in the 'Epic of Aphrike' series is now available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).