

## **Herodotus**

Greek Historian

Excerpts from his writings “The Histories,” c. 430 BCE

I went as far as Elephantine [Aswan] to see what I could with my own eyes, but for the country still further south I had to be content with what I was told in answer to my questions. South of Elephantine the country is inhabited by Ethiopians<sup>1</sup>... After forty days journey on land along the river, one takes another boat and in twelve days reaches a big city named Meroë, said to be the capital city of the Ethiopians. The inhabitants worship Zeus and Dionysus alone of the Gods, holding them in great honor.

The Ethiopians ... are said to be the tallest and handsomest men in the whole world. In their customs they differ greatly from the rest of mankind, and particularly in the way they choose their kings; for they find out the man who is the tallest of all the citizens, and of strength equal to his height, and appoint him to rule over them...

... Ethiopians copper is of all metals the most scarce and valuable...Where the south declines towards the setting sun lies the country called Ethiopia, the last inhabited land in that direction. There gold is obtained in great plenty, huge elephants abound, with wild trees of all sorts, and ebony; and the men are taller, handsomer, and longer lived than anywhere else. The Ethiopians were clothed in the skins of leopards and lions, and had long bows made of the stem of the palm-leaf, not less than four cubits in length. On these they laid short arrows made of reed, and armed at the tip, not with iron, but with a piece of stone, sharpened to a point... They carried likewise spears, the head of which was the sharpened horn of an antelope; and in addition they had knotted clubs...

<sup>1</sup>The Greek and Romans referred to the people of Nubia as Ethiopians.

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