

THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM

# Sudan

past and present



# Sudan past and present

In recent months, the eyes of the world have been on Sudan.

It has never been more important to understand the different civilisations and the complex history of this, the largest country in Africa, for millennia the point of contact between central Africa and the Mediterranean world.

The British Museum has had a long engagement in Sudan. A hundred years ago it played a part in the foundation of Sudan's first museum. More recently it has been working with Sudanese and international teams to plan vital rescue archaeology before the damming of the fourth Nile Cataract and the subsequent flooding in 2008. The Sudanese collection in the galleries of the British Museum is among the most important and comprehensive outside Africa. It is a collection that allows many insights into the country's diversity of people and culture.

To mark its long-term relationship with Sudan, the British Museum has planned a series of exhibitions, gallery highlights and events that explore Sudan's past and present. Stunning ancient artefacts, fascinating material culture and the challenging work of contemporary artists all help to reveal the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Sudan.

**The British Museum asks all visitors to make a donation towards the work of Oxfam and Save the Children in Sudan.**

The Arabic word, *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God', created in the shape of an ostrich by Sudanese artist Hassan Musa (see page 9). Courtesy of Grandir Editions.



# **Sudan** past and present

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# Sudan ancient treasures

## Room 5

### Special exhibition

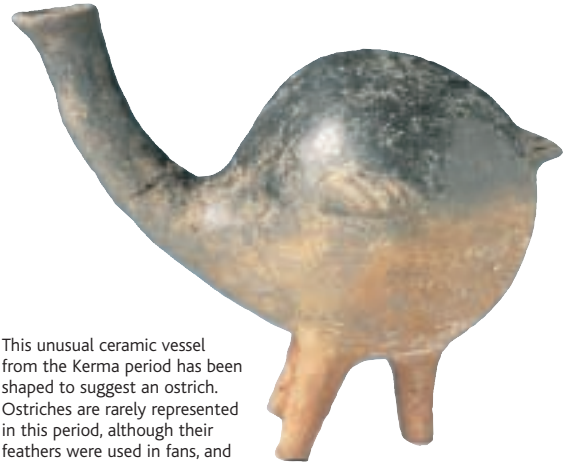
9 September 2004 – 9 January 2005

The ancient sites of Sudan are among the great monuments of Africa, and were home to the most powerful state in the Nile Valley, which briefly overwhelmed the Egypt of the Pharaohs.

Using the fruits of recent archaeological research, this major exhibition leads the visitor through the fascinating history of the country from the early Stone Age to the nineteenth century AD, including the medieval Christian and the Islamic periods. Many great objects have been lent by the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum, some never before seen outside Sudan.



Neolithic beaker of a distinctive and unusual shape known as caliciform. Such beakers are usually found in graves, suggesting that they were used for funerary rituals. 3610–3392 BC  
*Photo: Rocco Ricci © The Sudan National Museum*



This unusual ceramic vessel from the Kerma period has been shaped to suggest an ostrich. Ostriches are rarely represented in this period, although their feathers were used in fans, and vessels and beads were made from the eggshells. 1750–1500 BC  
*Photo: Rocco Ricci © The Sudan National Museum*



Statue of Amenhotep II. The Egyptian pharaohs of the mid-18th Dynasty (about 1420 BC) carried out an extensive building programme throughout Nubia. The Kemma temple was enlarged by Amenhotep II, and this statue of him is one of several he had placed there.  
*Photo: Rocco Ricci © The British Museum*



left: The royal pyramids at Jebel Barkal.  
Pyramids were the most common burial monuments of Kushite royalty and nobles, reflecting Egyptian influence.  
1st century BC

below left: The tomb of Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi, religious, military and political leader in Sudan (died AD 1885)



The 12th-century AD wall paintings at Faras cathedral include this image of a Christian Nubian queen protected by the Holy Virgin and Child.

*Photo: Rocco Ricci © The British Museum*

# Sudan ancient treasures

## Archaeology in Sudan

Western interest in the ancient monuments of Sudan dates back to the early nineteenth century when travellers first ventured far to the south of Aswan, Egypt. They were amazed at the superbly preserved buildings and undertook detailed drawings and measurements of all they saw. Serious archaeological investigations began a century later. Stimulated by the dams built at Aswan, northern Nubia is one of the best known areas archaeologically in the world. Further south much remains to be done.

This year the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum, one of Africa's first museums, celebrates its centenary. Housing one of the finest collections of archaeological material from the Nile Valley it is the source of all the objects featured in this exhibition.

Today more than thirty archaeological teams from around the world work in conjunction with the Sudan's National Corporation for Antiquities. By 2008 the completed Merowe dam will have created a reservoir of 170 kilometres in length. The British Museum is making a significant contribution to work on the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project. It is also involved in important excavations near Dongola.



View over the fourth Nile cataract. The current construction of the Merowe dam has led to a major international effort to study this little-known area.

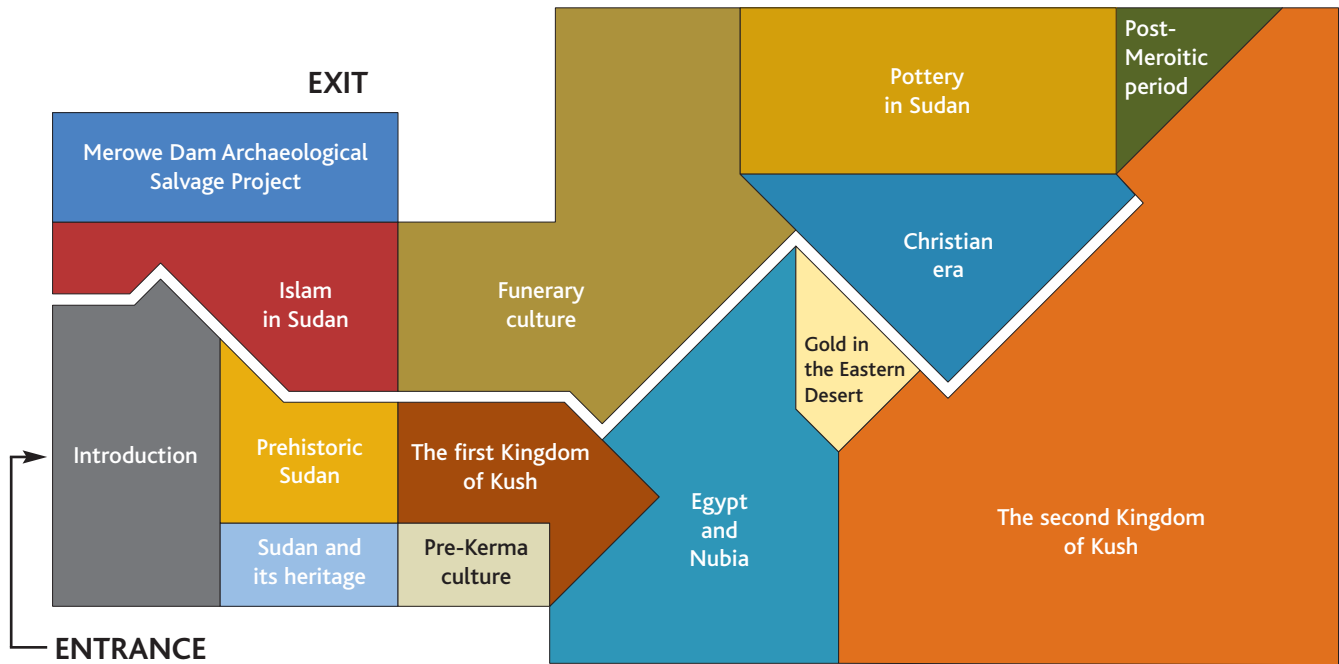
An exhibition catalogue, *Sudan: Ancient Treasures* edited by Derek A. Welsby and Julie R. Anderson, published by The British Museum Press, £35, is available from the British Museum bookshop.

**Entry to this exhibition is free.**

**The British Museum asks all visitors to make a donation towards the work of Oxfam and Save the Children in Sudan. Further details on how you can help are available at the end of the exhibition.**

# Sudan ancient treasures

## Exhibition plan





# Southern and western Sudan

## Reading Room

9 September 2004 – 9 January 2005

Sudan is host to a fascinating diversity of cultures and peoples. Drawn from the collections of the British Museum, this special display highlights southern and western Sudan through objects from the Dinka and Bari people and the Darfur region.

### Southern Sudan

For the pastoralist Dinka and Bari people of southern Sudan, personal adornment is a key form of aesthetic expression. Included in the display are a neck ornament and an ivory armlet. The wooden headrest bound with reptile skin would be carried by Bari herdsman and includes a special compartment in which to keep chewing tobacco.

The Dinka people have a vast oral literature of songs and folktales, many of them devoted to their cattle and other creatures. Mohamed Bushara, an artist from Sudan currently resident in the UK, has created a remarkable series of drawings that have been recently published. The book on display includes the Dinka folktale *Atong*, in which a young woman marries a lion against her brothers' better advice.



Neck ornament, Dinka, early 20th century AD



Illustration from *Atong* by Mohamed Bushara, 2003



## Western Sudan

The objects on display from western Sudan were all made in the province of Darfur. They include a storage basket and an ostrich feather fan. There is little representational art among the pastoral peoples of Sudan – the small clay cow and camel figures are toys made by children who dream of the large herds they will tend when they grow up.

The book in this section contains the Sufi story from Sudan, *Inchallah* (Arabic for 'God willing'), which tells of how the ostrich ignored the will of Allah and remained flightless while all the other birds took to the air. The story is illustrated by Hassan Musa, an artist from Sudan, currently living in France. For the front cover, Hassan Musa has used calligraphy to create the Arabic word *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God', in the shape of a beautiful ostrich. In this context the calligraphy ostrich represents the fusion of Islam and Africa in Sudan.



Illustration from *Inchallah* by Hassan Musa, 1996



Pottery camel, Darfur, late 20th century AD

# Modernism in Sudanese Art

## Montague Place entrance

9 September 2004 – 3 April 2005

The artists whose work is presented in this display are all connected with the College of Fine and Applied Art, Khartoum.

The 'Khartoum School', under the leadership of Ibrahim El Salahi, began to be recognised in the 1960s as an emergent modernist movement that was both pan-African and international in its influence.

The lasting legacy of the College and its artists has been to produce a distinctive means of expression known as *Sudanawiyya* – a synthesis of Western styles of art and art education with other traditions. It reflects the remarkable ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Africa's largest country. Artists from the College have settled all over the world, though all but one of those presented here live in Sudan.

The artists represented in this display are:  
Ibrahim El Salahi, Bakri Bilal, Issam Ahmed Abdel Hafiez, Mohammed Abdella Oteibi, Salah Kamal Eldin Elmur, Osman Shibir, Ahmed Ibrahim Abdel Aal and Hussein Gamaan.



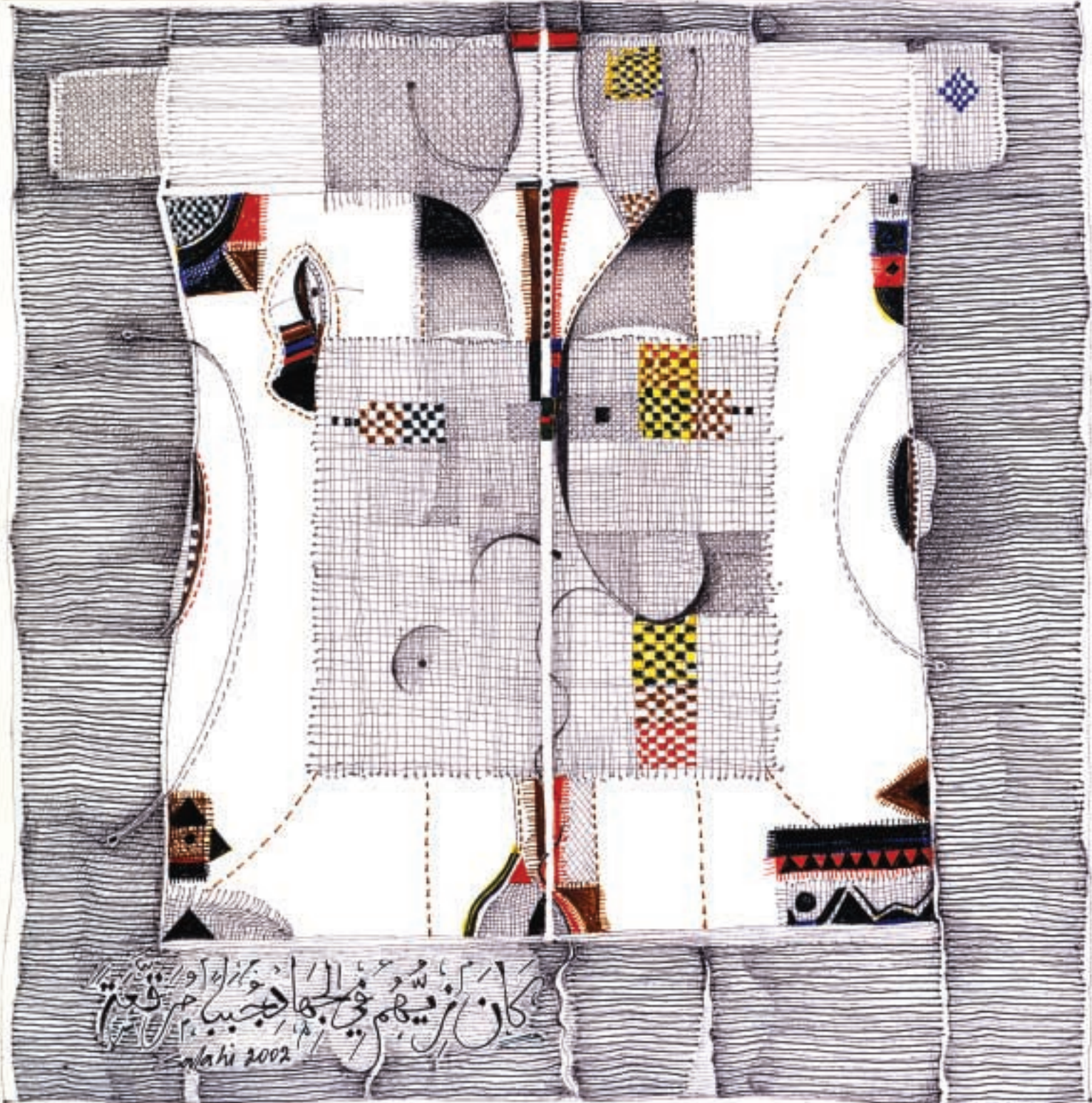
Student in a sculpture exam, College of Fine and Applied Art, Khartoum



Artists of the 'Khartoum School' at a reunion to celebrate the homecoming of Ibrahim El Salahi, November 2000

opposite: *Jubba*, by Ibrahim El Salahi, 2002





# Sudan past and present

## Gallery highlights (see plans on pages 15–17)

The British Museum has been collecting artefacts related to Sudan for over 100 years.

The following tour aims to highlight the diversity of the collections from Sudan and to help visitors build a picture of the history, culture and creativity of Sudanese people.

Room  
25

### Sainsbury African galleries (case 10, no. 2)

Cotton tunic (*jibba*), late 19th century AD.

Baqqara Arabs, Mahdist state, Sudan



Room  
25

### Sainsbury African galleries (case 23)

Bowls of sundried clay and dung, 20th century AD.

Nuba peoples, Sudan



Room  
34

### John Addis Islamic gallery (next to case 7)

Calligraphy by Osman Waqialla, 20th century AD.

Born in Rufa'a in Sudan, Waqialla studied art in Britain and Sudan and trained as a calligrapher (*khattat*) in Egypt.

He has lived and worked in Britain since 1967.





Room  
**34**

## John Addis Islamic gallery (case 6)

Sudanese artist Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla Abbaro was educated in Sudan and Britain. He works with a range of ceramic forms. The animals are cast and modelled, bowls are thrown on the wheel, other vessels are hand-built.



Room  
**65**

## Egypt and Africa gallery (case 10)

Sphinx of Taharqo (Taharqa), about 680 BC.  
From Temple T at Kawa, Sudan

Room  
**65**

## Egypt and Africa gallery (case 17)

Sandstone frieze, early 7th century AD.  
From the first Christian cathedral at Faras, Sudan





Room  
70

## Rome: City and Empire (case 1)

Bronze head of Emperor Augustus, Roman, about 27–25 BC.  
From Meroe, Sudan

Room  
42

## Medieval gallery (case 17, no. 8)

Bascinet (helmet), medieval, about AD 1430–40.  
Found in Kordofan, Sudan



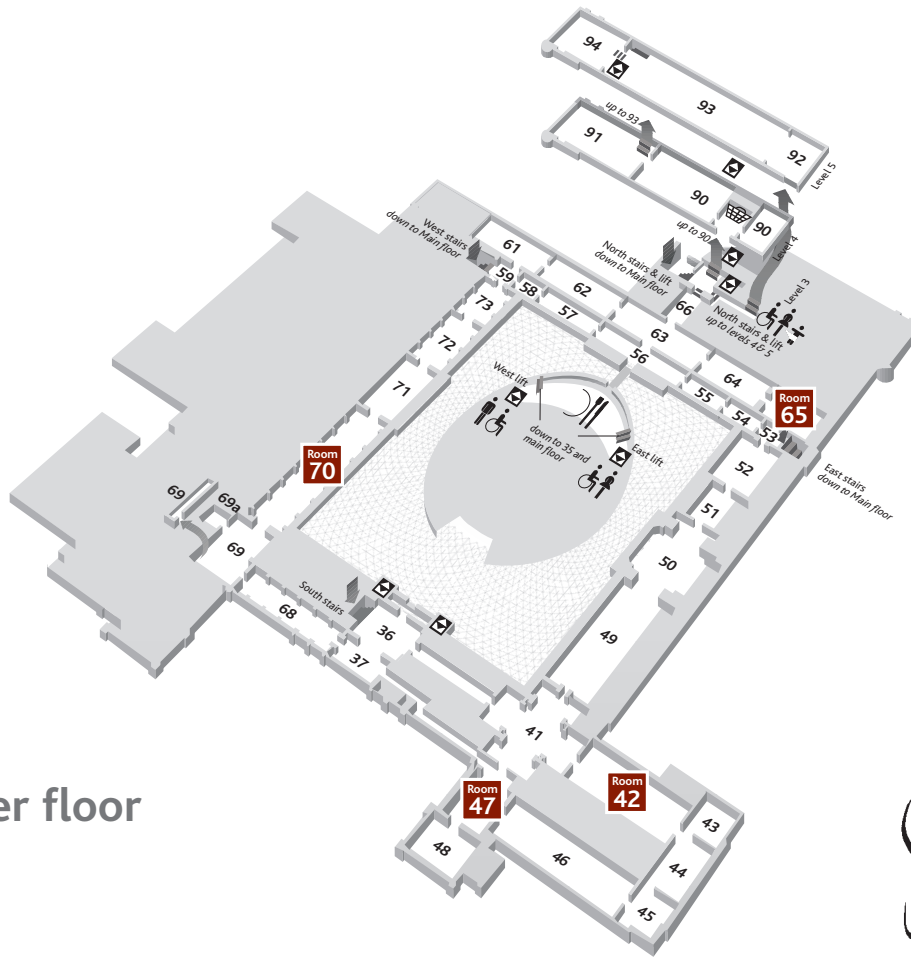
Room  
47

## Europe 19th century gallery (case 13, no. 32)

White metal medal commemorating Major-General  
Charles Gordon, Governor-General of Sudan, AD 1877–1880  
and 1884–85. From Britain

# Sudan past and present

## Gallery highlights



## Upper floor

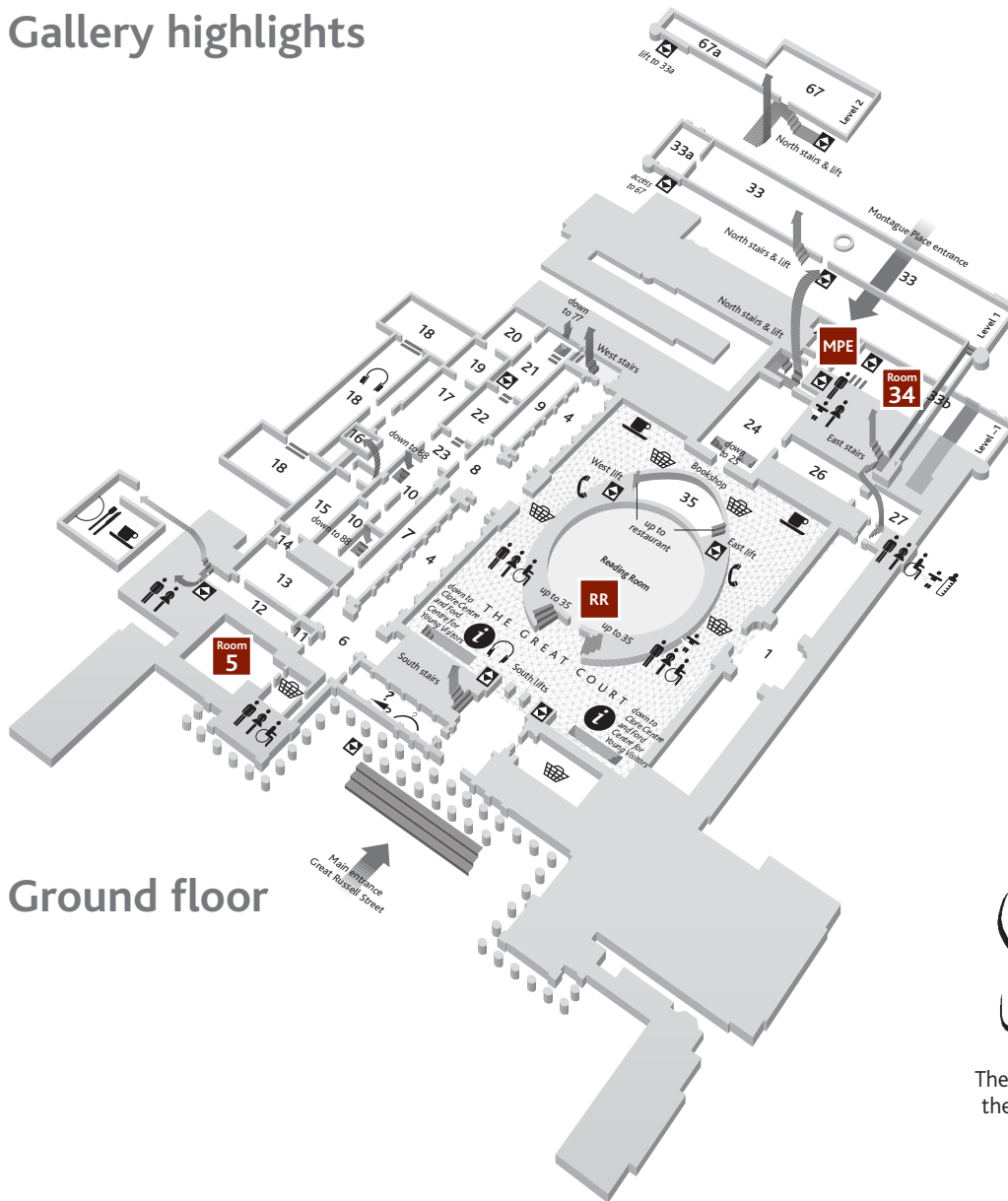


The *Bismillah* symbol highlights the displays and objects in the Museum that are part of Sudan: past and present



# Sudan past and present

## Gallery highlights



The Bismillah symbol highlights the displays and objects in the Museum that are part of Sudan: past and present

# Sudan past and present

## Gallery highlights



## Lower floor



The *Bismillah* symbol highlights the displays and objects in the Museum that are part of Sudan: past and present

# Sudan

## Programme of events

### Free gallery talks

These gallery talks last approximately 50 minutes.  
Please meet in the room specified.

20 September 13.15

**Archaeology in Sudan**

D Welsby, Room 5

27 September 13.15

**Treasures of Sudan (Arabic/English)**

O El Daly, Room 5

6 October 13.15

**The arts of Sudanic Africa**

N Badcott, Room 25

11 October 13.15

**The Kingdoms of Kush**

D Welsby, Room 5

13 October 13.15

**Mahdist history in the African Galleries**

C Spring, Room 25

2 November 13.15

**Nubia: land of gold**

J Taylor, Room 65

5 November 13.15

**Conquest and ritual: New Kingdom temples in Nubia**

N Spencer, Room 65

16 November 13.15

**The Meroe Head and the representation of Augustus**

S Moorhead, Room 70

25 November 13.15

**Treasures of Sudan (Arabic/English)**

O El Daly, Room 5

30 November 13.15

**Darfur, Equatoria and the Mahdiya: Sudan present and past**  
C Spring, RR

8 December 13.15

**Khartoum modernism: a personal attempt to bridge a gap**  
I El Salahi, MPE

9 December 13.15 

**Egypt and the coming of Kush**

V Davies, Room 5

15 December 13.15

**Sudanese contemporary art: Khartoum modernism**  
E Court, MPE

### Free lunchtime lectures

14 September 13.15

**Medieval Nubia: Christian kingdoms along the Middle Nile**  
J Anderson, CEC

16 September 13.15

**Islam and Mahdist culture in Sudan**  
C Spring, CEC

23 September 13.15

**The Khartoum modern art movement:  
a personal attempt to bridge a gap**  
I El Salahi, CEC

8 October 13.15

**People and cultures of southern Sudan**  
J Mack, CEC

## Family events

### The Big Draw

Saturday 16 October 10.30 – 16.30

A free event for all ages and abilities. A great opportunity to draw inspiration from the British Museum. Come and work alongside celebrity artists, exploring the themes of the Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile, the Natural World and Archaeology. Join workshops and have a go at archaeological illustration, hieroglyphs, prehistoric painting, drawing architecture and dance. All materials provided.

For further details from early October contact: Education and Information Department on 020 7323 8511/8854 or [education@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:education@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

### The Miracle of the Nile

25–31 October 11.00 –16.30 daily

Join us every day for a free and changing half-term programme of activities based on the civilisations of the River Nile: build a pyramid, make a crown for a Nubian king, listen to the stories of the ancient Egyptians, learn to play *senet* and sail the Nile with our new Hamlyn family trails.

On 30 and 31 October come and meet some ancient Egyptians including the Pharaoh himself! Pick up a programme in the Great Court or Reading Room during October.

## Lectures

**Fifth Kirwan Memorial Lecture: Sudan's Archaeological Treasures**  
Dr Salah Mohammed Ahmed, National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan

Wednesday 8 September 18.00

BP Lecture Theatre £5

Tickets available from: The Honorary Secretary, SARS, c/o Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG

Telephone 020 7323 8500/8306

Facsimile 020 7323 8303

[SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

### The Pyramids of Sudan

Derek Welsby

Thursday 30 September 18.30

Although the pyramid is the archetypal funerary monument of Egypt, there are many more in Sudan: almost 300 are known and new discoveries are common. The earliest pyramids date to the New Kingdom occupation of the northern part of the country. In the 8th century BC the use of pyramids was revived by the Kushites and continued for over 1000 years. The Kushite pyramids are some of the most impressive ancient monuments in the Nile Valley.

Derek Welsby is a curator in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, the British Museum.

### The Arabs of Sudan and the Forty Days Road

Michael Asher

Thursday 28 October 18.30

Distinguished writer and explorer Michael Asher became fascinated with the Kababish nomads living on the fringe of the Libyan Desert while working in Sudan in the 1980s. He travelled thousands of miles by camel with them, learning their customs and language on the way. These experiences formed the basis for his books *In Search of the Forty Days Road* and *A Desert Dies*, which he brings to life for this event, following the course of the *Darb al-Arba'in* route and revealing the changing lives of the desert Arabs of Sudan.

### The Mahdi and Gordon in myth and reality

Fergus Nicoll

Thursday 2 December 18.30

On 25 January 1885, a Sudanese Islamic revolutionary army led by Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi, entered Khartoum. In the events that ensued General Gordon was killed. Fergus Nicoll will explore the Mahdi's role as the charismatic leader of a movement seeking to free Sudan from foreign control. Fergus Nicoll has been a current affairs journalist for the BBC since 1988. His book *The Sword of the Prophet* was published in May this year.

BP Lecture Theatre £5, concessions £3

Tickets available from the British Museum Box Office on 020 7323 8181 or online at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

## Special evening presentations

**Sudan across the ages: readings, images, music**

Wednesday 29 September 18.30

Reading Room, 100 places

An evening inspired by the exhibition *Sudan: ancient treasures*, in the unique and beautiful surroundings of the British Museum's Reading Room. Readings from the annals of ancient kings and the evocative words of modern day explorers will be accompanied by stunning visual images and indigenous music to capture the diversity and allure of Sudan.

**Crocodiles and Kings: the making of the BBC's *Nile* series**

Thursday 9 December 18.30

BP Lecture Theatre, 300 places

Award-winning producer Dr Martha Holmes of the BBC Natural History Unit reveals the fascinating story behind the making of the *Nile* series. Impressive film footage of the African landscape from Egypt to Sudan to Uganda will illustrate her dramatic presentation of the complexities involved in the producing of this major series for the BBC.

£5, concessions £3

Tickets available from the British Museum Box Office on 020 7323 8181 or online at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

## Films

4 November & 13 December 13.00

***The Black Pharaohs***

BBC

2004, UK, 50 mins

CEC, Free

11 November & 3 December 13.00

***Nubia: the forgotten kingdom***

Discovery Channel Inc.

2003, USA, 52 mins

CEC, Free

## Study days

**Sudan: from the Stone Age to the Mahdi**

*In association with the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS)*

Thursday 9 September 11.00 – 17.00

BP Lecture Theatre

**Speakers include:** Vivian Davies, Hassan Hussein Idriss, Philip van Peer, Derek Welsby, Stuart Tyson Smith, Tim Kendall, Julie Anderson, Ali Osman Salih, William Y Adams.

Admission free, by ticket only from: The Honorary Secretary, SARS, c/o Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG

Telephone 020 7323 8500/8306

Facsimile 020 7323 8303

[SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

Postal applicants should enclose a stamped addressed envelope

**People of the Red Sea**

*In association with the Society for Arabian Studies*

Saturday 30 October 10.00 – 17.00

BP Lecture Theatre

In a series of talks by international speakers, the Red Sea study day will explore the archaeology and history of the people of the region. Papers will focus on Roman and Troglydyte interaction, Aksumite and post-Aksumite Ethiopia, Islam and Christianity, Crusaders in the late 12th century AD, al-Qusayr and the French expedition to Egypt, magical practices, and travellers on the Red Sea.

£28, BM Friends and Society for Arabian Studies £25, concessions £18.

Tickets are available from the British Museum Box Office on 020 7323 8181 or online at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

 sign interpreted

**CEC** Clore Education Centre **RR** Reading Room

**MPE** Montague Place entrance **Numbers** refer to room numbers

# Sudan further sources of information

Find out more about Sudan on COMPASS, the British Museum's collections online. A specially prepared tour charts the country's history, from prehistoric times to the present day, through a wide variety of ancient and modern objects.

It can be found at:

**[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass)**

**The Sudan Archaeological Research Society** (SARS) provides a focus for anyone interested in the archaeology of Sudan. Through special events and publications, the Society aims to promote interest in Sudan's cultural heritage and raise awareness of its place in world history.

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society,  
c/o The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan,  
British Museum, Great Russell Street,  
London WC1B 3DG

Telephone 020 7323 8500

[SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:SARS@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

**[www.sudarchrs.org.uk](http://www.sudarchrs.org.uk)**

**The Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom** (SSSUK) was established in 1987 to encourage and promote the study of Sudan, to provide a forum for discussion and to encourage co-operation among all those interested in Sudan.

SSSUK Secretary, Flat 2/2, 56 Ashley Street,  
Glasgow G3 6HW

[secretary@sssuk.org](mailto:secretary@sssuk.org)

**[www.sssuk.org](http://www.sssuk.org)**

**The Sudan Archive** at Durham was founded in 1957 and is a collection of papers, maps, photographs and cinefilms which document the Sudan under Mahdist and Anglo-Egyptian rule from 1883-1955.

Sudan Archive, Archives & Special Collections,  
Durham University Library, Palace Green,  
Durham DH1 3RN

Telephone 0191 334 2972 (or 42972)

[pg.library@durham.ac.uk](mailto:pg.library@durham.ac.uk)

**[www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/misc/sudan-resources.htm](http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/misc/sudan-resources.htm)**

**The Africa Centre** aims to promote positive awareness about Africa, to empower the African diaspora in the UK, and to support Africa's development aspirations.

The Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden,  
London WC2E

Telephone 020 7836 1973

[info@africacentre.org.uk](mailto:info@africacentre.org.uk)

**[www.africacentre.org.uk](http://www.africacentre.org.uk)**

You can follow current affairs in Sudan and Africa at the following websites:

**[www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)**

**[www.channel4.com/news](http://www.channel4.com/news)**

**[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)**

**[www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk)**

**[www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)**

**[www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)**

# Oxfam and Save the Children

Recent extensive media coverage has brought the crisis in Darfur to wide public attention. Oxfam and Save the Children are working in the area now, and have done so for many years.

They work with war-displaced children or pastoralist communities whose daily life is a struggle just to survive. By making a donation you will be helping families to provide their children with enough to eat, to avoid disease, and to provide an education for children who may otherwise go without.

It is essential that we offer immediate help to those whose lives have been devastated by the current crisis, and that we continue to do so in future. To ensure sustainable health and dignity, Oxfam and Save the Children share a commitment to long term work in Sudan.

Please help. There are many different ways you can donate. Pick up a leaflet for details.

Thank you.





# Sudan past and present



# THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3DG  
Telephone 020 7323 8000  
[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

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Jebel Barkal pyramids, 1st century BC

Statuette of a Kushite king, from the  
exhibition *Sudan: ancient treasures*.  
Second half of 1st millennium BC

Photo: Rocco Ricci © The Sudan National Museum