



Axum

Yuri M. Kobishchanov

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Since its publication in the Soviet Union this work has been highly praised by historians and archaeologists around the world. This English translation now makes it available to a wider audience. The author worked closely with the editor and translator, adding much new material, to make this an expanded and revised edition, not just a translation. It is now the most up-to-date and authoritative work available in any language on the history and culture of the Axumite civilization of highland Ethiopia. The Axumites played a major role in trade between the classical world of the Mediterranean and countries bordering the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. With its origins in the civilization of South Arabia, the Axumite Kingdom evolved by the fourth century AD, into one of the most powerful states in contact with the classical world. It took a thousand years for the Axumite Kingdom to run its course. Although it collapsed with the onset of the Medieval period, it profoundly affected the more recent history of Ethiopia. Kobishchanov covers such major topics as political history, political and economic organization, ideology, and the social system. The section on political history reveals unexpected and fascinating details regarding relations between Axum and such major powers as Rome, Byzantium, and Persia. He vividly reports the military expeditions which enabled Axum to carve out an empire extending from Nubia to Somalia, and South Arabia to southern Ethiopia - by which Axum secured total hegemony over the southern half of the Red Sea. With a broad anthropological perspective, the author reconstructs from ancient historical texts the structure and functioning of Axumite culture. In addition to adding new material to various parts of the book, the author has prepared a special appendix which critically discusses the documentary sources available to Axumite scholars. A special feature of the volume is Michels' introductory essay on Axumite archaeology which not only summarizes 75 years of excavations but also reports the recent efforts at archaeological interpretation. This book will prove to be of major interest to all concerned with Ancient and Near Eastern History, African history, African archaeology, and Black studies.

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