

A Note on Ancient Infrastructure

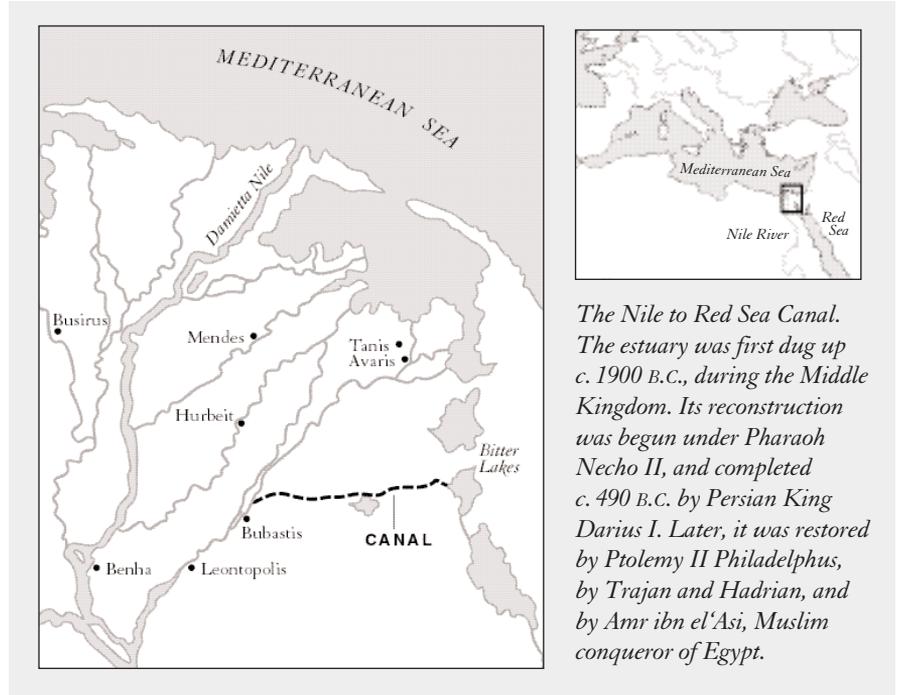
The accompanying corrected map and explanation, incorporating an extract from the historian Herodotus, were submitted by Eli Santiago, in response to an error in a figure supplied to illustrate Lyndon LaRouche's "On Eratosthenes, Maui's Voyage of Discovery, and Reviving the Principle of Discovery Today," which appeared in the Spring 1999 issue of *Fidelity*. LaRouche's text described the "flotilla of ships which went down the Nile River and out to the Red Sea through a famous canal, which at that time connected the Nile River to the Red Sea," at the start of Maui's extraordinary voyage from Cyrenaica (modern Libya) to the Pacific coast of South America. The figure, which appeared on page 19, mis-located the precise position of this ancient canal. Mr. Santiago's explanation follows.

Lyndon LaRouche's account of history is always inspiring, including that of the ancient Nile River to Red Sea canal in Egypt, which he has recently brought to public attention.

The accompanying map shows the canal of antiquity, running from the Delta of the Nile River eastward to the Bitter Lakes; then southward, as an estuary governed by the tides, where it flowed into the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez), along the same general pathway as today's Mediterranean-Red Sea Suez Canal.

It was during the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1700 B.C.), in answer to the Great Famine and ensuing chaos which overthrew the Old Kingdom of Great Pyramid building (c. 5000-2000 B.C.), that two great canals were built at approximately the same time, both being finished by 1900 B.C. One was to improve food supplies (both through irrigation, and flood control of the Nile); the other for *inter-oceanic trade*. Both canals were dug on dried-up river beds.

The first response to the break-up of the Old Kingdom, was a 27-mile-long canal aimed westward from the Nile into the Faiyûm natural depression, replenishing the dying Lake Moeris, such that the lake doubled its size once a



year [SEE Figure 1, page 84]. This created Lake Moeris as a man-made reservoir, which fed a vast irrigation-ditch complex over 27,000 acres of farmland, as well as allowing waters to be channeled back into the Nile, thus maintaining the river at a managed level.

The second intervention, was the digging up of the 45-mile-long river bed from Bubastis on the Nile River to Patumos on the Red Sea (at approximately 30° of latitude in the Nile Delta region). This was finished by approximately 1900 B.C. also.

The opening of these two vital infrastructure (physical-economic) canals at the start of the Middle Kingdom, made possible a renaissance along the Nile River, including the recording of reports of long-distance travel as early as c. 1790 B.C.

The following excerpt from *The Histories* of Herodotus describes the restoration of the canal, begun c. 600 B.C., in the reign of Pharaoh Necho II:

"It was Necos [Necho] who began the construction of the canal to the Arabian gulf, a work afterwards completed by Darius the Persian. The length of the

canal is four days' journey by boat, and its breadth sufficient to allow two triremes to be rowed abreast. The water is supplied from the Nile, and the canal leaves the river at a point a little south of Bubastis and runs past the Arabian town of Patumos, and then on to the Arabian gulf. The first part of its course is along the Arabian side of the Egyptian plain, a little to the northward of the chain of hills by Memphis, where the stone-quarries are; it skirts the base of these hills from west to east, and then enters a narrow gorge, after which it trends in a southerly direction until it enters the Arabian gulf. The shortest distance from the Mediterranean, or Northern Sea, to the Southern Sea—or Indian Ocean—namely, from Mt. Casius between Egypt and Syria to the Arabian gulf, is just a thousand *stades*, or about 125 miles. This is the most direct route—by the canal, which does not keep at all a straight course, the journey is much longer. The construction of the canal in the time of King Necos cost the lives of 120,000 Egyptians. Necos did not complete the work, but broke it off in deference to an oracle"