Before the Assyrian Conquest in 671 B.C.E.: Relations between Egypt, Kush and Assyria*

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INTRODUCTION

In 701 B.C.E., the Neo-Assyrian king Sennacherib (r. 704–681 B.C.E.) fought a battle against an anti-Assyrian coalition of Philistine city-states[1] and their allies at Eltekeh, probably located north of the city of Ashdod (Kitchen 1986[2]: 385 n. 815). The coalition was supported by Egyptian and Kushite forces, dispatched by the Kushite ruler Shebitku as a response to Philistia's plea for help. An inscription of Sennacherib describes the encounter as follows:

"They (i.e. Ekron and its allies) got help from the kings of Egypt, troops, archers, chariots and cavalry of the king of Nubia, a force without number... In the vicinity of Eltekeh, battle lines were drawn in front of me... With the help of Aššur, my lord, I fought with them and brought about their defeat. The charioteers and princes of Egypt, together with the charioteers of the king of Nubia, my hands took alive in the midst of battle..." (Melville 2006: 346)

While the exact nature of the battle's outcome is a matter of debate,[2] it marked an important watershed in the relations between Assyria and Egypt/Kush. Egyptian involvement in Philistine affairs was not without precedent, but Shebitku's open and unambiguous opposition to Assyria was new, as was as his ability to subjugate the Delta chieftains (the "kings of Egypt" referred to by Sennacherib) and thus create a relatively united political front (Redford 2004: 91). The confrontation at Eltekeh signalled openly hostile relations (Kitchen 1986[2]: 155, §126) which would eventually culminate in Egypt's conquest, and temporary integration into Assyria's impressive empire, by Sennacherib's successor Esarhaddon (r. 680–669 B.C.E.) in 671 B.C.E. This paper aims to examine the developments which preceded the battle of Eltekeh, particularly the interaction between Assyria, Egypt and Kush which was played out in the buffer zone of the southern Levant, away

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[1] The territory of Philistia comprised the coastal region of modern Israel, and included the cities of Ashkelon, Jaffa, Ekron, Gath, Ashdod and Gaza (Tadmor 1966: 87). See also the map at Figure 2.

[2] It is generally agreed that the battle did not result in the overwhelming Assyrian victory claimed by Sennacherib (see e.g. Tadmor 1966: 97).

from their respective power centres. Although there existed a long history of contact between the peoples of the Nile Valley and the Mesopotamian plain, I propose to concentrate on the late 8th century B.C.E. as a period which saw a growing awareness of the two regions in the political – as opposed to cultural or economic – arena. This is manifested in the increasing prominence accorded to Assyro-Egyptian and Kushite interaction in historical sources, which will provide the focal point of this study. The topic has not received the in-depth treatment which it deserves, partly as a result of the tendency of scholars to follow either an Egypto- or Assyrocentric approach, rather than placing the struggle in a wider Near Eastern context (although there are notable exceptions, e.g. Morkot 2000).

Historical background

To avoid any confusion arising from the fact that the political identity of what we might refer to as "Egypt" and "Kush" was constantly shifting during the late 8th century B.C.E., references to the two states will generally be used in the traditional geographical sense as opposed to reflecting political homogeneity. Thus "Egypt" covers the territory from the Nile Delta to the 1st cataract at Aswan in the south, while "Kush" comprises the territory stretching southward from the 1st Nile cataract, whose heartland probably lay between the 3rd and 6th cataracts and centred on Napata (Morkot 2000: 2–5 and Kuhrt 1995: 632). This is, naturally, a somewhat artificial division but the historical context should minimise any ambiguity. Similarly, while the boundaries of the Neo-Assyrian empire (934–610 B.C.E.) shifted significantly in the course of the 8th century B.C.E., "Assyria" is used here to refer to the core of the Neo-Assyrian empire, i.e. the area covering modern-day Iraq.

At the time of the conquest by Kushite kings (the 25th Dynasty in Egyptian chronology), starting with Piye (r. 747–716 B.C.E.) perhaps around 728 B.C.E., political power in Egypt was fragmented among a number of Delta dynasts, including a number of Libyan tribal chiefs. Parts of Lower Egypt had been absorbed into territory controlled from the Delta, while the area south of Hermopolis was under the control of Thebes, itself subject to Kushite rulers as a result of their initial expansion around 750 B.C.E. (Kuhrt 1995: 629). Piye extended Kushite control into Lower Egypt, but had been content to leave the local rulers in place, and it was left to his successor Shabako to consolidate Kushite control throughout Egypt, including the Delta (Kuhrt 1995: 631). At the same time, Assyria expanded its borders under the able leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III (r. 744–727 B.C.E.), putting the two powers within each other's sphere of influence and dramatically increasing the likelihood of direct conflict.

The sources

The Egyptian and Kushite evidence presents a particular difficulty when attempting to reconstruct the events of the late 8th century B.C.E. The corpus of sur-

viving contemporary sources relating to Kushite political history comprises royal monuments from both Kush (e.g. Gebel Barkal, el-Kurru and Napata) and Egypt (e.g. Karnak and Memphis) (Török 1997: 132–139); in addition, funerary and other texts from Egypt (notably Thebes) help illuminate the Kushite rulers' strategies for political control and administration (Kuhrt 1995: 625). The sparse nature of the corpus, which at times makes Egyptian and Kushite chronology highly uncertain, is probably the result of the random survival of evidence. Perishable materials such as papyrus, used for correspondence and administration, generally survive only in the dry conditions of the desert, with the result that texts on durable materials dominate the record.

In addition, the sources' tendency to focus almost exclusively on internal Egyptian and Kushite matters (such as enthronements, coronation journeys, and military and religious activities; Török 1997: 59) renders them singularly unhelpful for understanding contemporary international politics, for which we must rely instead on sources from Assyria and the Levant. The rare references to events outside Egypt are often tantalisingly vague; for example, a commemorative scarab of the Kushite king Shabako (r. c.721–707/706 B.C.E.) mentions "the Sand-Dwellers" (probably the people north of the Sinai peninsula), a reference which may or may not include Egypt's opponent at the battle of Eltekeh (Eide *et al.* 1994: 124 and Redford 2004: 91 and n. 34).[3] Furthermore, official inscriptions tend to highlight successes and gloss over failures; if, as the record from outside Egypt suggests, Egypt and Kush were in a weakened position vis-à-vis their opponents in western Asia, they would surely not choose to advertise the fact.[4]

Military expeditions are mentioned in Kushite sources (most famously in Piye's Victory Stele, which describes his campaign against northern Egypt; see Wente 2009: 465–492) but they tell us almost nothing of the events outside Egyptian borders. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Kush's hold over Egypt was still recent enough to make consolidating its power internally an absolute priority; accordingly, many of the measures taken by the Kushites (such as the revival of the religious office of the God's Wife of Amun) sought to affirm their rightful place in the Egyptian ideology of kingship as well as tighten their political control.[5] Furthermore, the Kushites were arguably not well placed geographically for direct involvement in west Asian affairs: the Delta, which provided access to Egypt's neighbours, remained politically fragmented following Piye's campaign and was not under Kushite control until Shabako's re-conquest (Kitchen 1986^2: 378, §340).

[3] Cf. Kitchen (1986^2: 379, §340), who suggests that it may refer to the restoration of border security in the Sinai or even unrest in Philistia and beyond.

[4] Introspection was not an inherent feature of Egyptian royal inscriptions (on which the Kushite kings modelled their own), as evident e.g. from Ramesse II's celebration of the battle of Qadesh in the 13th century B.C.E. (Kuhrt 1995: 207).

[5] For a detailed treatment of the Kushite rulers' revival of concepts and forms from previous periods of Egyptian history, see Török (1997: 189–341).

Only after Shabako subjugated the Delta dynasts was he able to muster the combined forces of Kush and Egypt, and thereby play a strategically significant role in the anti-Assyrian coalition.

By contrast, even though Assyria was by no means free from internal struggles,[6] its political identity – the result of native rule rather than foreign conquest – was well established, leaving the Assyrian king in a better position to direct his energies (and royal rhetoric) outwards. Assyrian royal inscriptions (and other sources such as correspondence and administrative documents) represent a particularly invaluable resource. The inscriptions fall within two general types. The so-called annals record the principal events of a king's reign in chronological order by regnal year or annual military campaign; the so-called summary inscriptions, on the other hand, group events according to their geographical location or political significance (Tadmor 1994: 18, 22). Unlike their Kushite counterparts, which are almost invariably located in the sacred setting of temples (see Török 1997: 136–139),[7] a number of the Assyrian royal inscriptions originally decorated the walls and floors of royal palaces such as that of Tiglath-Pileser III at Kalhu (modern Nimrud) or Sargon II at Dur-Šarrukin (modern Khorsabad) (Tadmor 1994: 23). Others were hidden out of view, for example as foundation deposits, i.e. texts inscribed on special objects, including clay prisms and cylinders, and deposited in the foundations or walls of important buildings to commemorate their construction and preserve the account of the builder-king's reign for posterity (Kuhrt 1995: 474).

These differences in context undoubtedly informed the inscriptions' contents. While Assyrian rulers stressed their military achievements and their ability to protect and expand Assyrian interests, Kushite royal inscriptions placed a much greater emphasis on piety and the relationship with the divine, unsurprisingly so given the texts' location. However, the ideological basis of the texts was very similar: Egyptian (and, by extension, Kushite) royal inscriptions sought to emphasise the king's role as maintainer of the cosmic order and protector of his people (Török 1997: 59), as did Assyrian texts which depicted the king as a perfect instrument of the gods.

The uneven distribution of sources and their dominance by Assyrian documents makes it almost impossible to avoid an Assyrocentric approach, although this study aims to provide a "global" examination of the historical developments as much as possible. Since official texts such as royal inscriptions

[6] The succession of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II appears to have been irregular and accompanied by internal struggles. Tiglath-Pileser became king as a result of a coup d'état in which he may or may not have participated (Zawadski 1994: 53); while the traditional view of Sargon as a usurper is subject to doubt (Vera Chamaza 1992: 32–33), his accession was certainly accompanied by civil unrest (evidenced e.g. by the Borowski stele which speaks of an Assyrian rebellion on Sargon's accession; see Lawson Younger 2000: 294 and n. 2–3).

[7] It is possible that such texts were also set up elsewhere, for instance in private residences or public spaces, but, if this was the case, they have not survived.

are inherently selective in their choice and presentation of historical events, it is vital to supplement them with sources from other spheres, for example administration. In addition, the Bible provides an alternative perspective, although its focus is necessarily on matters of direct interest to Israel, and its portrayal of Assyria in particular almost invariably hostile. Of particular relevance to the late 8th century B.C.E. are the Old Testament books of 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles and Isaiah, which deal with Assyrian and Egyptian intervention in Israel and the surrounding regions.

THE SINAI: A BUFFER ZONE

The Brook of Egypt

The accession of Tiglath-Pileser III in 744 B.C.E. marked a turning point in the history of the Neo-Assyrian empire, initiating a phase of significant expansion which resulted in Assyria dominating much of the Near East (Kuhrt 1995: 473). Building on the tradition and ideology of the Assyrian king as warrior (Kuhrt 1995: 508), Tiglath-Pileser reformed the Assyrian military machine and campaigned for all but one of his eighteen years on the throne (Morkot 2000: 123). Following his conquests on Assyria's frontiers in the south, north-west and west (against Babylonia, Urartu and Syria, respectively), Tiglath-Pileser turned his attention to the southern Levant, extending Assyrian control to the region north of Egypt's frontier (including Judah, Israel and Gaza) (Kuhrt 1995: 496). Given the important role which they played in the relations between Assyria and Egypt/Kush, the kingdom of Gaza and its king, Hanunu, are the subject of a separate discussion below. However, Tiglath-Pileser's initial conquest of Gaza is of interest here insofar as it provided him with an opportunity to establish a tangible presence on Egypt's border, bringing the two states within the same physical sphere for the first time.

Tiglath-Pileser's Summary Inscription 8 from Kalhu concludes the description of the subjugation of Gaza and Hanunu in 734 B.C.E. as follows:

"My royal stele [I set up] in the City of the Brook of Egypt, a river[-bed... from... x+100 talents] of silver I carried off and [brought] to Assyria. [...] Siruatti the Me'unite, whose [territory is] 'below' Egypt, [...] exalted [...], my own extensive conquest he he[ard, and fear overwhelmed him] ... [As for Samsi the queen of the Arabs,] 9,400 (of her people) I defeated at Mount Saqurri [...] her [gods,] arms (and) staffs of her goddess, [her property, I seized.] [And she, in order to save her life, ... to a desert, an arid place,] made off [like an on]ager. The res[t of her possessions (and) her tents, her people's safeguard,] [within her camp, I set on fire. Samsi (or: and she) was startled by my mighty weapons; camels], she-camels with [their young]..." (Tadmor 1994: 179, Summ.8:18–27)

The Brook of Egypt, or Nahal Muṣur to the Assyrians, has been identified with modern Nahal Besor, a wadi (a dry riverbed) in the Negev, the desert region in southern Israel.[8] The site was presumably selected by Tiglath-Pileser because of its strategic importance, both military and economic. A text which celebrates Esarhaddon's successful invasion of Egypt in 671 B.C.E. provides a vivid description of the local terrain and is worth quoting:

"(For a distance of) thirty 'miles' of land, from Apqu which is situated in the border region of Samerīna to Rapihu on the bank of the Brook of Egypt where there is no river, I let the troops drink buckets of water drawn from wells with ropes and chains... I mobilised the camels of all the kings of Arabia and loaded them with [water skins and water containers]. Twenty 'miles' of land, a journey of 15 days, I marched through [mighty sand] dunes. Four 'miles' of land I travelled over alum, *muṣû* stones [*and other stones*]; four 'miles' of land, a journey of two days, I stepped repeatedly on two-headed snakes [… whose *touch*] is deadly, but continued..." (Radner 2008: 306–307)

The Sinai desert was (and remains) a barren, inhospitable place, arduous to traverse without proper resources. The co-operation of local peoples was crucial in order to obtain food and water (importing them from Assyria would hardly have been feasible), transport (camels, as opposed to the horses or donkeys usually used by the Assyrians) and local manpower, particularly guides with knowledge of the terrain (Radner 2008: 310). The buffer zone of the Sinai desert thus formed an excellent, though not insurmountable, natural defence for Egypt against anyone approaching by land from the east. However, the erection of Tiglath-Pileser's stele at the Brook of Egypt, along the *via maris* (a 200 km route through the coastal plain which linked the Gaza region with the Isthmus of Suez), effectively positioned Assyria as a potential threat to Egypt. The subjugation of neighbouring peoples – namely Siruatti the Me'unite, whose territory "below Egypt" is thought to have been in northern Sinai or Rapihu (modern Raphia, approximately 15 km south of Gaza) (Tadmor 1994: 179 n. 22 and Eph'al 1982: 9), and Samsi the queen of the Arabs, probably based in northern Transjordan, in 733 B.C.E.[9] – ensured the co-operation which any expedition through the desert would require. It also gave Assyria a degree of control over local trade routes, particularly the so-called Frankincense (or Spice) Route which led to the Gaza/Rapihu region from the Arabian Peninsula (Radner 2008: 309–311). Nevertheless, Tiglath-Pileser

[8] This identification supersedes the long accepted, but less likely, location of the Brook of Egypt at the Wadi el-Arish, some 30 km further south along the coast. This more northern location is consistent with a text describing Esarhaddon's expedition against Egypt, which refers to "Rapihu on the bank of the Brook of Egypt". See Radner (2008: 306–307).

[9] Annal 23, which recounts the Samsi episode, dates to 733 B.C.E. (see Tadmor 1994: 78–81, Ann.23).

did not, as far as we know, capitalise on his presence in the Sinai by attempting to invade Egypt, either because the time was not right or (as seems more likely) because political unrest elsewhere forced him to direct his attention to other parts of his realm (Redford 1992: 343).

In addition to the *via maris* (and other desert routes[10]), Egypt could be approached by sea, from harbours along the Levantine coast. The Egyptian navy had a long history, as evidenced by the tomb inscription from the 16th century B.C.E. of the soldier and sailor Ahmose, son of Ibana (Kuhrt 1995: 189), or the inscription of Udjahorresnet who served as a commander of the royal navy in the 6th century B.C.E. (see Lichtheim 1980: 36–41). Since wood was a rare natural resource in Egypt, timber for ship building had to be imported. A letter to Tiglath-Pileser from an Assyrian official in Phoenicia, dated to c. 734 B.C.E., records the king's orders prohibiting the export of timber from the Phoenician city of Tyre to Philistia and Egypt (Saggs 2001: 157). While the control of trade appears to have been at least partly motivated by economic factors (Ehrlich 1991: 52, 54), it seems likely that the desire to weaken Egypt, and especially its timber-dependent navy, also played a part. It has similarly been suggested that Tiglath-Pileser's son and short-lived successor, Shalmaneser V (r. 726–722 B.C.E.), took action against Tyre in order to put a stop to Egyptian maritime activity along the Phoenician coast (Redford 1992: 345 n. 122). Since Assyria was not a naval power, its access to the maritime sphere depended entirely on its control of, or co-operation with, coastal entities such as the Phoenician city-states (Elat 1978: 21).

The exact nature of the monument erected by Tiglath-Pileser is unclear since the Akkadian word used, *ṣalmu*, can mean a statue, relief or drawing, as well as stele (CAD Ṣ: 78, *s.v. ṣalmu* and 83, mng. b3'). A surviving stele which was set up in similar circumstances in western Iran suggests that it probably contained an inscription celebrating Tiglath-Pileser's conquests accompanied by an image of the king (Tadmor 1994: 90–92). The setting up of monuments as symbols of Assyrian control was an established practice; Tiglath-Pileser's campaign in the Zagros region (modern Iran) was commemorated in the same fashion (Tadmor 1994: 75, Ann.16:8–9). The Hanunu episode appears – with variations – in a total of three Summary Inscriptions from Kalhu, of which only one mentions the setting up of a monument at the Brook of Egypt (Tadmor 1994: 225).[11] The omission seems odd, but perhaps Tiglath-Pileser (or, more likely, his scribes) deemed Assyria's defeat of Gaza, and the setting up of the king's statue in its royal palace, sufficient symbols of Assyrian control in the region.

[10] Alternative desert routes, particularly suitable for a surprise attack, are discussed in Radner (2008).

[11] The reference to the Brook of Egypt is omitted in Summary Inscriptions 4 and 9.

Egypt's response

The extant sources do not document the reaction of the Egyptians or their Kushite overlords to Assyria's presence in the Sinai, although there can be little doubt that the developments would have been a matter for concern. Nevertheless, diplomatic contacts between the two lands appear to have continued. The so-called Nimrud Wine Lists, records of wine ration distributions, attest to the presence of Egyptian scribes and Nubians (possibly horse experts) at the Assyrian court around 732 B.C.E. (Dalley 2004: 44); similarly, a legal tablet from the city of Nineveh records a high-ranking Egyptian scribe acquiring property, witnessed by "Šusanqu (Akkadianised version of Shoshenq, a Libyan name), the king's brother-in-law" (SAA 6 142:r.12) – clear evidence that established diplomatic practices and other forms of contact were alive and well in the reign of Sennacherib (Dalley 2004: 390), and almost certainly in his predecessors' reigns as well, and that they continued despite power struggles between Egypt and Assyria.

The Shabako scarab, dated to his second regnal year (perhaps around 715 B.C.E.), mentions that "the Sand-Dwellers who rebelled against him (i.e. Shabako) are fallen down through fear of him" (Eide *et al.* 1994: 123–125). While the identity of the "Sand-Dwellers" remains uncertain (see above), if they are indeed people of the Sinai region, it would suggest that Shabako acted to reclaim the Sinai and was vying to re-establish control[12] there himself. Perhaps this was a reaction to Sargon II's activities in the Brook of Egypt. In 716 B.C.E., Sargon settled deportees "on the border of the City of the Brook of Egypt" and appointed the sheikh of Laban, a nomad chief, over them, establishing what may have amounted to an Assyrian military outpost in close proximity to Egypt itself (Tadmor 1958b: 78 and Eph'al 1982: 91–93). Describing the activities of his 1st regnal year (721–720 B.C.E.), Sargon stated, "[I opened the sealed] har[bour[13] of Egypt]. [The Assyrians and the Egyptians] I mingled together and I made them trade with each other" (Lawson Younger 2000: 293). What is meant by "sealed harbour" is unclear; Sargon's aim must have been to increase Assyria's access to trade materials from Egypt[14] and along the important Sinai trade routes, but whether the trading station controlled land or sea routes (i.e. whether it was a harbour or a land trading station) is uncertain (Elat 1978: 27), as are the reasons for this institution's sealed status – was Sargon removing economic obstacles imposed by his predecessors or by developments in the region, or physical obstacles which had rendered the harbour or trading station unusable?

[12] The kings of Gaza had a history of acting as Egyptian vassals, and Gaza itself had in the past served as an Egyptian garrison (Morkot 2000: 124).

[13] An alternative restoration of *kisurrû*, "border, boundary" (CAD K: 433, *s.v. kisurrû*) has been suggested by Borger but not followed by Fuchs who prefers to restore *kāru*, "harbour, trading station" (CAD K: 231, *s.v. kāru* A) (see Fuchs 1994: 88, Anm. 17:n.1).

[14] Notably the "large Egyptian" and "Kush" breeds of horses, a valued resource imported for the Assyrian army from Egypt, the latter presumably via Kush (Dalley 2004: 43 and 45 46; Tadmor 1994: 188 n. 8).

The "gatekeeper" of Egypt

Two years after setting up his triumphant stele at the Brook of Egypt, Tiglath-Pileser followed up his defeat of Damascus and Samaria (Tadmor 1966: 89) in the Levant with a reinforcement of Assyrian presence in the Sinai. Two inscriptions from Kalhu record the fact that, in 732 B.C.E., the king "appointed Idibi'ilu as the 'gatekeeper' (lit. to the office of 'gatekeepership' [*atûtu*]) facing Egypt (*ina muḫḫi Muṣri*)" (Tadmor 1994: 169, Summ.7:r.6, and 203, Summ.13:16). Idibi'ilu is first attested in a broken passage of Tiglath-Pileser's annals in the context of his campaign in the previous year (Tadmor 1994: 83, Ann.18:13). This individual has been connected with the similarly-named Idiba'ilāyu (the biblical Adbeel), a nomad group from North Arabia, probably between Gaza and el-Arish (Elat 1978: 28), and it may be that the duties were assumed by the tribe, with their leader officially in charge (Eph'al 1982: 93 and 215–216).

The nature of Idibi'ilu's mandate is not clear. *Atûtu*, as the abstract form of *atû* ("gatekeeper"), was frequently used in the context of remuneration but is more likely here to refer to the nature of Idibi'ilu's duties (see Eph'al 1982: 93 n.297 and CAD A/II: 522, *s.v. atûtu*). The term suggests more than passive observation and reporting of the local developments; the implication is that, as the "gatekeeper", Idibi'ilu was responsible for regulating the traffic of people and goods through the border region, and perhaps also along the coast. The emphasis seems to be on controlling traffic coming from Egypt as opposed to traffic in the region as a whole: *ina muḫḫi Muṣri* can be interpreted as "facing Egypt" (Idibi'ilu's physical location) as well as "over/with regard to Egypt" (specifying the purpose of the appointment).

It is possible that the function of "gatekeeper" has its origins in the bureaucracy of the Egyptian New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 B.C.E.). A number of preserved titles include a "doorkeeper" element, for instance "doorkeeper (*iry-ꜥ3*) of the treasury" or "doorkeeper of the granary of the temple of Amun" (al-Ayedi 2006: nos.543 and 548), which appear to be connected with the administration of goods and hence bear a resemblance to Idibi'ilu's function as overseer of trade. If there is a link between Akkadian *atûtu* and Egyptian bureaucracy, it begs the question of how an Egyptian administrative title from the second millennium B.C.E. came to be employed by a Neo-Assyrian king. The most logical solution is that the function of "doorkeeper" came to be used outside of Egypt in order to administer resources from neighbouring regions then under Egyptian control, such as the Philistine cities, and that Sargon was simply following (or perhaps reviving) an existing function.

In any event, Tiglath-Pileser's integration of Idibi'ilu into Assyria's administration (Eph'al 1982: 94) tightened Assyrian control over, or at least presence on, the boundary with Egypt; while its importance for trade dictated that it remain permeable, unhindered access was a potential threat to Assyrian interests in the

region and was thus undesirable. We do not know the reasons behind Idibi'ilu's selection. The appointment of a native group[15] may have been deemed less aggressive than putting Assyrian officials in charge;[16] Idibi'ilu's local knowledge and familiarity with the terrain probably made him particularly suitable for the new role of gatekeeper, and the Egyptians' historical disdain for Arabian tribes ensured that his loyalty would be directed towards the Assyrians responsible for his tribe's new elevation (Redford 1992: 350).

GAZA

Hanunu's flight to Egypt

The episode involving Tiglath-Pileser III's defeat of Gaza and its king, Hanunu, is narrated in some detail in three Summary Inscriptions from Kalhu. The most elaborate version appears in the passage quoted below:

"[...Han]unu of Gaza feared my powerful weapons and [escaped to Egypt]. [The city of Gaza... I conquered/entered. x talents] of gold, 800 talents of silver, people together with their possessions, his (i.e. Hanunu's) wife, [his] sons, [his daughters... his property (and) his gods I despoiled/seized]. A (statue) bearing the image of the great gods my lords and my (own) royal image out of gold [I fashioned]. [In the palace of Gaza I set it up (and) I counted (it) among the gods of their land. The]ir [...] I established. As for him (i.e. Hanunu), like a bird [he flew (back)] from Egypt. [...I returned him to his position. His...] I turned (into an) Assyrian [emporium (*bīt kāri*)]. My royal stele [I set up] in the City of the Brook of Egypt, a river[-bed... from...x+100 talents] of silver I carried off and [brought] to Assyria. [...] had not submitted [to the kings], my predecessors and who had not sent (them) any message, [heard about] the conquest of the land of ... [...the terrifying radiance of Aššur, my lord, overwhelmed him,] and fear seized him. [He sent me] his envoys to do obeisance [...]" (Tadmor 1994: 177–179, Summ.8:14–21).

The episode provides a rare glimpse into Egypt's international policy, particularly invaluable given the lack of Egyptian documentary evidence, although the sketchy nature of the narrative makes it almost impossible to reconstruct the events in any detail. What is certain is that in 734 B.C.E., faced with the advance of the Assyrian army, Hanunu fled to Egypt, probably along the *via maris*. Historically, Gaza and Egypt enjoyed a close relationship,[17] and Hanunu may have been

[15] Followed by Sargon II when he put a nomad chief in charge of resettled deportees (see above).
[16] Cf. Tiglath-Pileser's appointment of a representative or administrator (*qēpu*) (not necessarily an Assyrian, see Elat 1978: 30) over the defeated Arabian queen Samsi (Tadmor 1994: 143, Summ.4:26).
[17] Gaza's rulers had in the past acted as Egyptian vassals, and the city as an Egyptian garrison (Morkot 2004: 124).

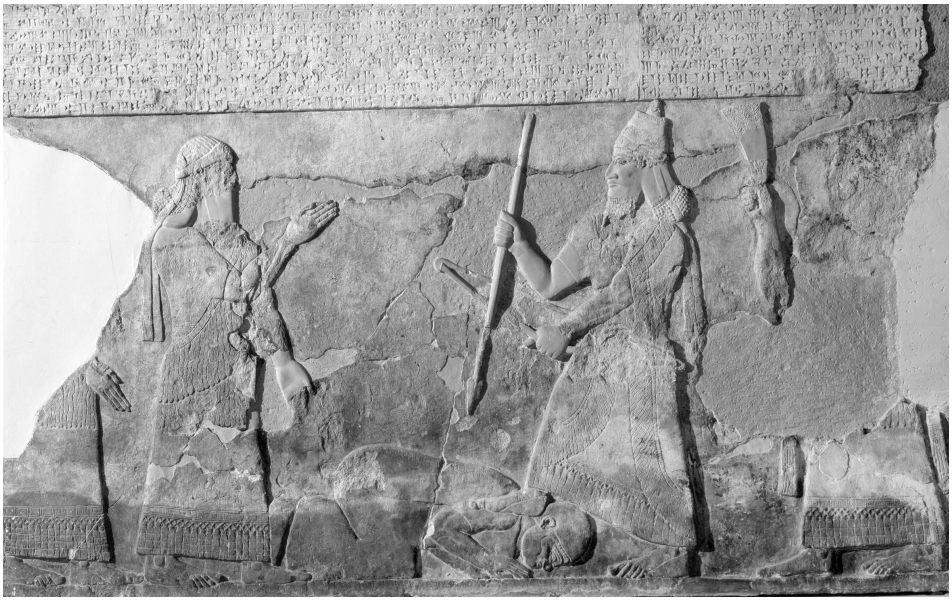


Fig. 1
Wall relief from Tiglath-Pileser III's palace at Kalhu, showing the submission of a foreign king, probably Hanunu of Gaza (see Uehlinger 2002: 125). British Museum, WA 118933. © Trustees of the British Museum.

seeking help against Tiglath-Pileser from the Delta rulers (as suggested by the fact that he did not bring his family with him, nor sent them into safety elsewhere). However, it is possible that Hanunu was simply seeking an exile outside the Assyrian sphere of influence, with Egypt the logical destination. In any event, assistance was not forthcoming, and Tiglath-Pileser plundered Gaza, seized the royal family and erected symbols of Assyrian supremacy in Hanunu's palace.

The episode concludes with Hanunu's return from Egypt ("like a bird", a simile used frequently in Assyrian royal inscriptions to evoke the weakness of defeated enemies[18]), his reinstatement on the throne of Gaza, and the transformation of Gaza into an Assyrian trading station (*bīt kāri*). In the Neo-Assyrian period, these *bīt karrāni*[19] represented economical or fiscal institutions set up in harbours or trading stations in order to conduct trade. In particular, they seem to have been set up in areas which could not be exploited through administrative means such as tribute, and accorded special trading privileges to the king and his merchants (Elat 1978: 26–27).

Tiglath-Pileser's conduct towards Hanunu seems curious given his tendency to replace insubmissive rulers with Assyrian governors.[20] Although Hanunu had not openly defied Assyria, choosing flight instead of an armed confrontation,

[18] See e.g. Sennacherib's description of Hezekiah as "a caged bird" and, elsewhere, of fleeing soldiers with "hearts fluttering like a pursued hatchling dove" (Melville 2006: 346 and 348).
[19] See Tadmor (1994: 104 n.13) for this plural form.
[20] An administrative innovation of Tiglath-Pileser's (Radner 2006a: 43) which tightened Assyrian control over subjugated territories. For examples, see Tadmor (1994: 43, Ann.9:8; 47, Ann.11:6; and 63, Ann.19:9–11).

Tiglath-Pileser must at the very least have suspected Hanunu of attempting to muster Egyptian support. What was the motivation behind Tiglath-Pileser's unusual leniency? One possibility is that Hanunu's reinstatement was connected with the *bīt kāri*, set up to take advantage of converging trade from Egypt and Arabia (Redford 1992: 345):[21] changing the status quo, and incorporating the region into the Assyrian administrative system, may have been regarded as potentially harmful to trade in the region.

It is noteworthy that Tiglath-Pileser did not pursue Hanunu into Egypt, even though the episode might have provided a convenient opportunity for invasion. One can only assume that he did not feel ready to confront Egypt, and that Egypt's political fragmentation had not seriously dented its reputation abroad. Instead, Tiglath-Pileser concentrated on strengthening Assyrian presence in neighbouring territories; shortly after his conquest of Gaza, he subjugated Ashkelon, Philistia's only port capital, acquiring control over maritime trade routes between Egypt and Philistia in addition to those over land (Elat 1978: 32). We do not know what preceded Hanunu's return to Gaza. It seems unlikely that he was delivered to Tiglath-Pileser by the Egyptians (such a co-operative gesture would surely have received a mention, as it did under Sargon II[22]). Nevertheless, the possibility of Egyptian expulsion or intervention should not be discounted. Hanunu's return was almost certainly preceded by negotiations with Tiglath-Pileser, perhaps through the Delta ruler(s) as intermediaries.

The inscription quoted above mentions an embassy from a king whose name has unfortunately not survived. If, as has been proposed (see e.g. Tadmor 1994: 190–191, Summ.9:r.23–25 and n. 23–25), that king is indeed Shoshenq V or Osorkon IV (Libyan rulers at Tanis and Bubastis in the Delta; Kitchen 1986[2]: 349, §308 and 372, §333), it is possible that Hanunu's flight provided the impetus for diplomatic overtures aimed at appeasing the Assyrian threat – particularly pressing given their location in the north-easternmost part of the Delta (Kitchen 1986[2]: 372, §333) – and perhaps attempting to gain an ally on the precarious political stage of Lower Egypt, whether against other local dynasts or the Kushites who would in due course begin their victorious march northward.[23]

Alternatively, is it possible that the unknown ruler was the Kushite king Piye, then in control of Kush and parts of Upper Egypt including the cultically-significant city of Thebes (Kuhrt 1995: 629)? The text makes a specific reference to the lack of prior diplomatic contact ("who had not sent any message") but an identical claim is made by Sargon II about the Kushite king who extradited Iamani of Ash-

[21] Tiglath-Pileser's actions anticipated Sargon II's opening of the "sealed harbour" (see "The Sinai: a buffer zone" above).

[22] See "Co-operation: the calm before the storm" below for the Kushite extradition of Iamani of Ashdod.

[23] Among the subjected rulers depicted on Piye's Victory Stele is Osorkon IV (Kuhrt 1995: 628–629).

dod to Assyria (see "Co-operation: the calm before the storm" below). Evidence from the Nimrud Wine lists, which records the presence of Nubians at the Assyrian court, implies that diplomatic and/or trade links between Assyria and Kush were in existence as early as the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III; since the tablets have been dated to c. 732 B.C.E. (Dalley 2004: 44), could these links be the result of contact initiated by Piye and established after Tiglath-Pileser's defeat of Hanunu? Unfortunately, as tempting as such hypothesis may be, it remains mere speculation due to the fragmentary nature of the passage, lack of complementary evidence from Egypt and Kush, and the uncertainty surrounding the internal arrangements of events in Tiglath-Pileser's Summary Inscriptions.

Hanunu's alliance with Egypt

Hanunu's rule outlasted that of Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser V, but events early in the reign of Sargon II led to his downfall. In 721 B.C.E., perhaps still smarting from Tiglath-Pileser's plunder of Gaza and the deportation of his family and personal gods[24], Hanunu took advantage of the political instability which accompanied Sargon's accession and joined an anti-Assyrian coalition led by Yau-bi'di of Hamath (Tadmor 1966: 91). The rebellion, its culmination at Qarqar in Syria and its relationship with events at Gaza are discussed in greater detail in the section on Hamath below. However, since Hanunu's confrontation of Sargon forms a geographically discrete episode, it seems logical to discuss it in the context of Hanunu's previous dealings with Assyria and Egypt in order to discern how these relationships may have evolved.

The narrative of Sargon's second regnal year in the Great Summary Inscription from Khorsabad describes the events. After smashing the Hamath-led coalition at Qarqar, Sargon marched against Hanunu, defeating him and his Egyptian allies at the city of Rapihu:

"Hanunu, the king of Gaza, along with Re'e, the commander-in-chief (*ṭurtānu*) of Egypt, marched against me to do war and battle at Rapihu. I inflicted a decisive defeat on them. Re'e became afraid at the noise of my weapons, and he fled, and his place was not found. I captured with my own hand Hanunu, the king of Gaza." (Lawson Younger 2000: 296)

The Great Summary Inscription is almost certainly an abbreviated version of the description originally provided by the Annals from Khorsabad, now sadly broken, which include the following passage:

[24] See Summary Inscription 8 above. However, it is possible that Tiglath-Pileser's account of the sack of Gaza was exaggerated; in particular, Uehlinger has argued that it is highly unlikely that the Assyrians ever deported a vassal king's cult statues (Uehlinger 2002: 111).

"[...] *he placed*; he gave Re'e, his *turtānu*, to him (i.e. Hanunu) as his support, and he set out against me in order to wage war and battle (on me). At the command of Aššur, my lord, I inflicted a defeat on them, whereupon Re'e fled alone, like a shepherd whose flock has been stolen, and disappeared. I captured Hanunu and led him away to Assur, my city, in shackles. I razed, destroyed and torched Rapihu. 9,033 inhabitants, together with their numerous possessions, I carried off." (Fuchs 1994: 315, Ann.53–54) [25]

Re'e is an Akkadian rendering of Raia, an Egyptian name going back at least as far as the New Kingdom.[26] This military commander was apparently dispatched to Hanunu's side by an unnamed Egyptian ruler, generally identified as Tefnakhte (Tadmor 1966: 91 and Redford 1992: 347),[27] ruler of Saïs in the western Delta. Tefnakhte's expansion from the Delta and Lower Egypt south into Upper Egypt, towards the territory controlled by the Kushites, helped spur Piye's campaign against Lower Egypt in c. 728 B.C.E. (see Introduction). When Piye returned to Kush without appointing his own officials, leaving a power vacuum in the Delta, Tefnakhte seized the opportunity to reclaim control, assuming the formal title of Pharaoh in the process. His successor Bakenranef (c. 720–715 B.C.E.) was eventually supplanted by Shabako during his re-conquest of Egypt (Kitchen 1986[2]: 362–365, §324–325; 371–372, §332 and 376–377, §337–338).

What led to the alliance between Hanunu and Tefnakhte? The historical ties shared by Egypt and Gaza (Morkot 2004: 124) and a shared interest in minimising Assyrian influence made Egypt a natural choice for Hanunu. Unlike some other, largely inconsequential, Delta dynasts, Tefnakhte had proven himself a resourceful ruler with significant military means, as evidenced by the impressive expansion of his Saïs-based domain. In turn, the motivation behind Tefnakhte's involvement in Philistine and Syrian politics is likely to have been two-fold: to counter Assyrian expansion and control, particularly desirable given the trade-critical nature of the Levant and Philistia;[28] and to gain potential allies on the volatile Egyptian political stage, either to protect his position from outside threat (namely from Kush in the south) or to aid future expansion.

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[25] Cf. Lawson Younger (2000: 293), who translates "Re'e... came to his assistance", omitting the reference to the unnamed Egyptian ruler.

[26] See e.g. the 18th Dynasty tomb of Raia uncovered at Saqqara in Lower Egypt (Raven 2005); see also Ranke (1935, I: 216, no. 23).

[27] Other suggestions have been put forward, including the recent identification of Re'e's overlord with the Kushite king Shabako, based on new evidence from the Tang-i Var stele (discussed in "Co-operation: the calm before the storm" below) and images of foes with Nubian features on reliefs depicting Sargon's 720 B.C.E. campaign (Kahn 2001: 11–12).

[28] It has been suggested that Egypt may have been supplying military aid to Philistine cities before the coalition of 720 B.C.E. (Redford 1992: 347–348). If this is the case, perhaps it was the result of links forged during Hanunu's Egyptian exile in 734 B.C.E., or relationships already in place at the time on which Hanunu had sought to capitalise.

Sargon's specific reference to Re'e/Raia must surely mean that Tefnakhte himself did not lead his forces at Gaza,[29] in striking contrast to Assyrian kings of this period[30] who tended to be personally involved in their campaigns. Although this may simply reflect Egyptian practice, it may also indicate that while Tefnakhte was willing to assist Hanunu, he may have been unwilling to confront Sargon personally, or did not consider Hanunu's rebellion to be significant enough to warrant his personal attention, which was primarily focused on the Kushite threat in the south.[31] Alternatively, Tefnakhte may have been unable to leave his domain, perhaps because of preoccupation with local affairs or poor health (it seems likely that 720 B.C.E. marked the end of his reign; Kitchen 1986[2]: 376, §337).

Sargon's treatment of Hanunu was far less lenient than Tiglath-Pileser's had been, no doubt because this time the king of Gaza had engaged in open rebellion. Nevertheless, Gaza and Hanunu appear to have got off relatively lightly: Sargon boasts of his punitive measures against Qarqar, Yau-bi'di's "favourite city", while Yau-bi'di himself was flayed and his co-conspirators killed on the spot. No more is heard of Hanunu following his deportation to Assyria, but the very fact that he was not killed immediately at Gaza hints at the possibility that he was brought to Assur (the religious, as opposed to political, centre of Assyria) to participate in a ritual victory celebration or the administration of a loyalty oath (*adê*),[32] an elaborate and presumably public affair whose theatrical elements are particularly well illustrated in the surviving *adê*-treaties of Esarhaddon from 672 B.C.E. (SAA 2 6). That an oath was imposed on other groups in the Sinai is evident from Tiglath-Pileser III's Annals which refer to "Samsi, queen of the Arabs, who broke her oath to (the Assyrian god of justice) Šamaš" (Tadmor 1994: 81, Ann.23:18). Gaza itself appears to have maintained its independence and was not officially annexed to the Assyrian empire, perhaps reflecting Gaza's strategic importance for trade in the Sinai and Philistia, and Sargon's reluctance to antagonise the city and its allies. Like Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon did not use his defeat of Re'e as a prelude to an attack against Egypt, choosing instead to increase Assyrian presence through resettlement and the regulation of trade.

Developments in Egyptian policy

Given Egypt's political disunity and the lack of information about Hanunu's activities in Egypt, it is difficult to make any definitive statements about contemporary Egyptian attitudes to Assyria. It does appear that Egyptian contemporaries of Tiglath-Pileser III were either unable or unwilling to enter into a conflict with

[29] Cf. Redford's suggestion that a classical tradition may preserve Tefnakhte's traverse of the Sinai desert to aid Gaza (Redford 1992: 347).
[30] I.e. Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II and, later, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon.
[31] As suggested to me by Karen Radner.
[32] Radner (2006b: 351–357).

Assyria (if that was indeed Hanunu's goal). However, Hanunu's brief stay in Egypt may have allowed him to establish new links (or perhaps nurture old alliances) with the Delta dynast(s), which he exploited when the opportunity to rebel against Assyria presented itself again shortly after Sargon's accession. Tefnakhte's support of Hanunu in 720 B.C.E. was undoubtedly motivated by a desire to neutralise the Assyrian threat on Egypt's eastern border and its control over the important trade centres in the Sinai region, although evidence indicates that his involvement was necessarily limited due to the more pressing Kushite threat from the south. Nevertheless, Re'e's direct confrontation of Sargon's forces represented another step towards open defiance of Assyria at Eltekeh.

HAMATH

Yau-bi'di rebels against Assyria

The territory of Hamath in modern Syria was integrated into the Assyrian empire by Tiglath-Pileser III in two stages, the north in 738 B.C.E. and the remainder in 732 B.C.E. In each case, the conquest resulted in the creation of two new Assyrian provinces (Radner 2006a: 66, *s.v.* Hamattu). In 721 B.C.E., capitalising on the internal unrest which accompanied the accession of Sargon II (Tadmor 1958a: 37), a number of vassal city-states in Syria and Palestine formed an anti-Assyrian coalition under the leadership of Yau-bi'di (or Ilu-bi'di),[33] who was proclaimed king of Hamath. The rebels were defeated by Sargon in the following year, but the significance of the episode is reflected in the fact that Sargon's Annals appear to have devoted as many as 36 lines to it (and to Sargon's confrontation with Hanunu), of which only eight survive (Fuchs 1994: 314–315, Ann.23–57). The account in the Great Summary Inscription is better preserved:

"Yau-bi'di, the Hamathite, a *hupšu*-man,[34] with no claim to the throne, an evil Hittite, was plotting in his heart to become king of Hamath. He caused Arpad, Simirra, Damascus and Samaria to rebel against me, had unified them (lit. made them one mouth) and prepared for battle. I mustered the masses of Aššur's (i.e. Assyria's) troops and at Qarqar, his favourite city, I besieged and captured him, together with his warriors. I burned Qarqar. Him I flayed. I killed the rebels in the midst of those cities. I established harmony. I gathered 200 chariots, 600 cavalry from among the people of Hamath, (and) I added them to my royal contingent." (Lawson Younger 2000: 296)

[33] The first part of Yau-bi'di's name invokes Yahweh ("Yahweh is behind me": Fuchs – Parpola 2000; Lawson Younger 2000: 293 n.6). This suggests his Israelite or Judean origins. Given that the former kingdom of Israel had been integrated into the Assyrian empire by that time (Radner 2006a: 61–62, *s.v. Magiddû* and *Samerīna*), the first option is more likely.

[34] A derogatory allusion to Yau-bi'di's inferior social status (Lawson Younger 2000: 296 n.6).

After putting down the rebellion in Syria, Sargon proceeded south to defeat Hanunu and the Egyptian commander, Re'e, at Rapihu (see "Gaza" above). In addition, he took long-term measures designed to strengthen Assyria's position in northern Levant. In the text of the so-called Borowski stele, Sargon declares:

"I pardoned 6,300 guilty Assyrians and showed mercy on them; and I settled them in Hamath. I imposed on them tribute, gifts and corvée work as my royal fathers had imposed on Irhuleni[35] of Hamath." (Lambert 1981: 125)

It seems that the exiled Assyrians had been guilty of opposing Sargon's accession (Lawson Younger 2000: 294 n.2); their resettlement on the fringes of the empire was undoubtedly intended to have the dual effect of removing a seditious element from the Assyrian heartland and of stabilising the volatile region of Hamath by means of an increased Assyrian presence, although the deportees were integrated into the existing administrative framework and given the same tax and labour obligations as native Hamathites. While deportation may have amounted to a lenient treatment, the decision to settle a significant contingent of apparently disloyal Assyrians in a region with a history of anti-Assyrian sentiment (see below) seems puzzling. Did Sargon hope that their gratitude at receiving a second chance would extinguish their grievances? A similar strategy, apparently successful, was followed in Philistia some four years later (see "Sinai: a buffer zone" above).

Historical excursus: Egypt and Assyria in the northern Levant

The Levant's location and strategic and economic importance (namely its access to trade routes and materials) made it the object of political conflict long before the 8th century B.C.E. During the New Kingdom, at the height of Egypt's splendour, Seti I (r. 1305–1290 B.C.E.) and Ramesse II (r. 1290–1224 B.C.E.) attempted to extend Egypt's boundaries in the north; much of the conflict between Egypt and the Hittites, a rival power in Anatolia, centred on the city of Qadesh in southern Syria (Kuhrt 1995: 207). Numerous stele erected in the Levant during this period attest to Egypt's presence in the region, even if they do not necessarily indicate military conquest (Wilson 2005: 72–73) and even though the control exerted by the Egyptian king was, at times, limited. The usual Egyptian practice was to turn conquered territories into vassal states, giving the king only indirect political control (Wilson 2005: 73).

The Levant and its vassal states acted as a buffer zone between Egypt and the kingdom of the Hittites, and it continued to play the same role in the first millennium B.C.E., providing a buffer zone between the expanding Neo-Assyrian

[35] A contemporary of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (see below).

empire and the now disunited Egypt, which nevertheless maintained economic and political links with the Levant. The potential for open conflict between the two entities escalated as a result of two factors. Firstly, Tiglath-Pileser III's change in policy, namely his integration of conquered territories into the Assyrian empire as provinces under the direct control of Assyrian governors (Radner 2006a: 43), increased Assyria's hold on the territories on the outskirts of its empire and brought it closer to Egypt. Secondly, Shabako's reversal of Egypt's political fragmentation placed Egypt in a position to try and revive its military heritage and become a significant player in western Asia again, thus bringing the Egyptian and Assyrian kings within striking distance of one another.

Yau-bi'di's revolt was not unlike the opposition faced by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (r. 859–824 B.C.E.) during his campaign across the Euphrates river (which traditionally demarcated the limits of Assyrian influence in the west). In 853 B.C.E., having subdued cities in north Syria, including Carchemish and Aleppo, Shalmaneser turned south, pillaging three cities belonging to Irhuleni, king of Hamath, and torching "his royal city" Qarqar on the Orontes river (Yamada 2000: 153–154). He was subsequently confronted by an anti-Assyrian alliance supported by twelve kings, whose combined forces included 1,000 camels of Gindibu'u, "the Arab" (from the Syrian desert; Eph'al 1982: 76) and 1,000 footsoldiers "of Egypt" (Yamada 2000: 156–157).[36] Egypt's apparent provision of forces in support of the Syrian rulers provided a precedent for Tefnakhte's involvement in Yau-bi'di's uprising against Sargon, and attests to Egypt's continuing interest in Levantine affairs.

The Hamath rebellion and the role of Egypt

There is some uncertainty regarding the extent, if any, of Egypt's and Gaza's involvement in the Yau-bi'di rebellion,[37] although the fact that the episodes form part of the same narrative block in Sargon's inscriptions supports a connection. Tefnakhte undoubtedly lent his support to Hanunu, but was the confrontation with Sargon at Rapihu the intended goal of the alliance, or the result of plans gone awry? Hanunu may have enlisted Tefnakhte's help on behalf of the coalition on the basis that Re'e would join the battle in Syria. It is possible that Re'e's progress was interrupted by Sargon's swift intervention in the north, forcing him and Hanunu to abandon the original plan in favour of a separate confrontation in Philistia.

[36] It has been suggested that the toponym written KUR *Mu-uṣ-ra-a-a*, "Egypt", may in fact refer to an as yet unidentified city state on the northern Phoenician coast, rather than to Egypt (see Yamada 2000: 158 and n. 282).

[37] Cf. Redford, who treats Sargon's defeat of Yau-bi'di as two separate and unrelated incidents (Redford 2004: 71), while Tadmor lists Gaza among the conspirators (Tadmor 1966: 91). Dalley suggests that "perhaps the Egyptians were involved in the rebellion from a distance" (Dalley 2004: 34).

Given Egypt's historical involvement in Levantine affairs, it is not difficult to believe that Tefnakhte might have wished to support an anti-Assyrian revolt in order to reduce Assyria's presence in regions which were once under Egyptian control, and which would bring Assyria even closer to Egypt's borders. If Hanunu was part of the rebellion, it would surely have made better sense for Egypt to join the main coalition, since strength in numbers would have increased chances of success on the battlefield.

The Bible records an embassy sent to Egypt by Hoshe'a of Israel in 724 B.C.E. The context leaves little doubt that Hoshe'a hoped to gain Egypt's support against Assyria:

"But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshe'a; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison." (2 Kings 17:4)

The identity of "So, king of Egypt" has not yet been conclusively established. Early suggestions included Shabako, acting on behalf of Kashta or Piye (Morkot 2000: 126), as well as Re'e (in the past erroneously read "Sib'e" and hence bearing a slight resemblance to "So"; see Kitchen 1986²: 373, §333 and n. 743). More recent proposals equate So with *Sau* (Saïs) and – through a process of metonymy – Tefnakhte, or with a ruler in the eastern Delta, Osorkon IV (via an abbreviated reference: [O]so[rkon]) (Morkot 2000: 126). The latter may be a more convincing choice since long-standing ties existed between Israel and Osorkon's so-called 22nd Dynasty, whose power base in Tanis in the eastern Delta was well suited to providing assistance (Kitchen 1986²: 372–375, §333–334). Although Hoshe'a's appeal was unsuccessful, the mere fact that it was made implies that some Egyptian kings, at least, were open to the idea of lending support to Levantine rulers, as evidenced by Tefnakhte's support of Hanunu's anti-Assyrian cause in 720 B.C.E. Despite the political fragmentation which preceded Shabako's conquest, historical ties between Egypt and its old territories continued.

In two identical passages in the Bible, a reported message from Sennacherib to Hezekiah, king of Judah, includes a reference to Judah's reliance on Egypt "for horses and chariots" (2 Kings 18:19–24 and Isaiah 36:4–9). Curiously, the quoted communication follows the standard Mesopotamian epistolary formula[38] but not the Neo-Assyrian form,[39] which raises the question of the reliability of the passage. Nevertheless, there is good evidence that Egypt (and Kush) actively bred horses for trade, and that these were particularly prized as military assets (Heidorn 1997:

[38] Familiar e.g. from the correspondence of the Old Babylonian king Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.E.): "speak to A. (the addressee); thus (says) B. (the sender)" (Huehnergard 2005²: 260).
[39] "The king's word to A." (see e.g. SAA 1 26).

109). It is, therefore, highly likely that such horses reached the Levant either through established trade routes, or perhaps as Egypt's support of the anti-Assyrian cause in the region.

CO-OPERATION: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Egypt sends a gift to Sargon II

Sargon II's defeat of Egyptian forces under the command of Re'e at Rapihu in 720 B.C.E. elicited no reaction from Tefnakhte in the form of a gift or tribute (Dalley 1985: 34), indicating perhaps the relatively low importance which Tefnakhte attached to the encounter. However, the so-called Great Summary Inscription from Khorsabad records tribute (*maddattu*) of raw gold ore[40], horses and camels received from "Pir'ū, king of Egypt, Samsi, queen of Arabia and It'amra, the Sabean (i.e. Arab)[41]" in 716 B.C.E.[42] "Pir'ū" does not represent a name but, rather, an Akkadianised version of the Egyptian title *pr-ꜥꜣ*, literally "great house",[43] referring to a palace and, by extension, to the man who occupied it – the pharaoh (a word in the same etymological relationship to the original Egyptian as Pir'ū). A prism fragment from Nineveh sheds light on the pharaoh's identity:

"Šilkanni, king of Egypt – a remote [place] – the fear of the splendour of Aššur, my lord, [overwhelmed him and] he brought to me as his present (*tāmartu*) 12 big horses of Egypt, their like not to be found in Assyria." (Tadmor 1958b: 78[44])

Šilkanni has been identified with Osorkon IV (c. 730–715 B.C.E.), whose rule over Ro-nefer, Tanis and Bubastis in the north-eastern Delta was eventually ended by Piye's successor Shabako (Kitchen 1986[2]: 372, §333). If, as has been advocated by some scholars, Osorkon is indeed the biblical king So to whom Hoshe'a of Israel appealed for help against Shalmaneser V in 724 B.C.E. (2 Kings 17:4; see "Hamath" above), the sending of a gift to Sargon may represent a shift in Osorkon's political allegiances. Although Hoshe'a's appeal to So went unanswered, it seems reasonable to assume that he must have had some expectation of success, perhaps based on Egypt's historical involvement in the Levant (and hence its vested interest in hindering Assyria's expansion in the region). Why So ignored

[40] *Hurāṣu eper šadîšu* (see Fuchs 1994: 198 n.1, Prunk.27). Cf. Lawson Younger (2000: 296), who inexplicably translates "herbs of the mountain".
[41] Fuchs (1994: 424, *s.v.* Arubu).
[42] Fuchs (1994: 344, Prunk.27).
[43] Mattila – Weszeli (2002: 996).
[44] Tadmor notes a discrepancy of one year between Šilkanni's gift (716 B.C.E.) and the gift sent by Pir'ū (715 B.C.E. according to the Khorsabad Annals), which he attributes to scribal error. By contrast, Fuchs interprets the two references as two separate gifts by different individuals (Fuchs 1998: 130–131).

the appeal is unknown; he may have lacked the necessary resources (Kitchen 1986[2]: 375, §334), or the willingness to engage the Assyrians and risk retaliation from a state with vastly superior military capabilities. Whatever the reason, Osorkon sought to profit from his non-aggression towards Assyria with a friendly overture towards Sargon, an action no doubt motivated by political pragmatism and the pressing threat of Kushite expansion.

The terminology used to describe Osorkon's gift is significant. *Tāmartu* (derived from the Akkadian *amāru*, "to see") was a gift sent by a foreign ruler to the Assyrian king as part of diplomatic contact – with envoys hoping to be granted an audience and thus *see* the king – which could remain informal or culminate in a formal *adê* treaty (Radner 2007: 216). The term was therefore entirely appropriate given that Osorkon IV was not under Sargon's dominion and that his gift was merely a part of standard diplomatic overtures. By contrast, both the Great Summary Inscription and the extended version of the same passage in the Annals (Fuchs 1994: 198, Prunk. 27 and 110, Ann.123–125) employ *maddattu* (a derivation of *nadānu*, "to give"), a term which designated tribute exacted from Assyria's vassals (Radner 2007: 219). However, this appears to be driven by context, as the Egyptian king is mentioned together with the Arabs Samsi and It'amra, at least one of whom had at some point been Assyria's vassal.[45] The use of *maddattu*, probably technically correct as a reference to Samsi, was extended to Osorkon by association, although it may also have been a deliberate exaggeration intended to enhance Sargon's reputation (Elat 1978: 22).

The tribute sent to Sargon was carefully selected. Instead of the exotic animals – camels, hippopotamus, antelope, elephant and monkeys – sent by Egypt to Shalmaneser III, as recorded on the famous Black Obelisk now housed in the British Museum (Elat 1978: 22), Osorkon sent Egyptian horses, a highly valued commodity in the Assyrian army, as evidenced for example by a reference to "large Egyptian horses, trained to the yoke" in Sargon's Annals (Dalley 2004: 43). In choosing a gift with a practical application to Sargon's military machine (whose success relied heavily on its cavalry and chariotry; Heidorn 1997: 106–107), rather than simple curiosities for his palace, Osorkon sought perhaps to demonstrate his potential value as an ally at a time when he himself was in need of one: in 716 B.C.E., the Kushite threat from the south was growing, and Shabako's re-conquest imminent. Osorkon may have hoped that Sargon's need for horses, as well as a shared interest in countering the growing power of the Kushites, would gain him an ally in the days to come.

Moreover, Osorkon's gift follows closely on the heels of Sargon's resettlement of the Brook of Egypt and the appointment of the sheikh of Laban as the official

[45] "Samsi, queen of the Arabs, who broke her oath to (the Assyrian god of justice) Šamaš" (Tadmor 1994: 81, Ann.23:18). There is no reason to suppose that the loyalty oath which Samsi owed to Tiglath-Pileser III was not renewed following Sargon II's accession, and that Samsi and her tribe did not, therefore, owe a formal allegiance to Sargon as well.

in charge (Tadmor 1958b: 78),[46] measures which reinforced Assyria's presence on the border with Egypt. Such activities must have caused concern to Osorkon given his location in the eastern Delta, and his gift may have been a gesture of goodwill intended to appease the rising Assyrian threat (Kitchen 1986²: 376, §336), as well as a personal offering of some of the goods now making their way from Egypt into the Sinai via the recently re-opened harbour/trading station (Lawson Younger 2000: 293; see "The Sinai: a buffer zone" above).

Iamani's flight to Egypt and Kush

Almost a decade after Sargon's suppression of Hanunu's rebellion and his defeat of Egyptian troops under the command of Re'e, events in another Philistine city, Ashdod, led to an unprecedented intervention by Kush in Assyrian affairs. The episode, which probably dates to 711 B.C.E.,[47] is described in some detail in Sargon's Great Summary Inscription, in a passage which immediately follows the uprising of Yau-bi'di of Hamath:

"Azuri, the king of Ashdod, plotted in his heart to withhold tribute (*biltu*), and he sent (messages) to the neighbouring kings, hostile to Assyria. Because he committed crimes against the people of his country, I abolished his rule. I placed Ahimiti, his favourite [brother], as king over them. The Hittites (i.e. the Ashdodites), who always speak treachery, hated his rule." (Lawson Younger 2000: 296; Fuchs 1994: 219, Prunk.90–95)

The text makes it clear that although Ashdod was not yet annexed as an Assyrian province, it was a tribute-paying[48] vassal city under the ultimate control of the Assyrian king (Elat 1978: 32),[49] who possessed the power to replace a potentially rebellious ruler with a more compliant one. However, the choice of replacement (the deposed king's brother) speaks volumes about Sargon's anxiety to maintain the appearance of political independence and ensure a positive reception of the new ruler. It seems that Sargon did not wish to antagonise the local population, especially given the region's volatile nature and anti-Assyrian tendencies (evidenced by "neighbouring kings, hostile to Assyria").

[46] Such interpretation assumes that the description of events follows a chronological order as opposed to a purely geographical grouping.

[47] There is some disparity between the dating of Sargon's campaign against Ashdod in the Annals: while the Khorsabad texts place it within Sargon's 11th regnal year, inscriptions from Nineveh attribute the campaign to his 9th year (712 B.C.E.), despite the fact that the Eponym Chronicles (which briefly list significant events on an annual basis) record the 9th year as one of military inactivity. Fuchs has argued convincingly that the Nineveh Annals moved the Ashdod campaign to the 9th regnal year in order to disguise Sargon's inactivity in that year, and that the campaign should therefore be dated to 711 B.C.E. (Fuchs 1998: 126).

[48] The term *biltu* (from Akkadian *wabālu*, "to bring"), is synonymous with *maddattu*, "tribute" (discussed above). See Radner (2007: 219).

[49] Ashdod was annexed as a province as a result of the rebellion (Radner 2006a: 58).

The inscription continues:

"Iamani, who had no claim on the throne, who was like them, and had no respect for rulership, they elevated over them. In the ebullience of my heart, I did not gather the masses of my troops, nor did I organise my camp. With my warriors – who never leave my side in (hostile or) friend[ly territory] – I marched to Ashdod. Now when this Iamani heard from afar the approach of my campaign, he fled to the border area of Egypt which is on the border with Meluhha, and his place was not found... The king of Meluhha – who in... land of Urizzu, an inaccessible place, a way... whose ancestors [from the] distant [past] until now had never sent their messengers to the kings, my ancestors, in order to inquire about their well-being – heard from afar of the might of the gods Aššur, [Nabû], (and) Marduk. The fearful splendour of my majesty overwhelmed him and panic overcame him. He put (Iamani) in handcuffs and manacles, fetters of iron, and they brought (him) the long journey to Assyria (and) into my presence." (Lawson Younger 2000: 296–297)

Sargon's interference was not well received by the people of Ashdod, and the puppet king Ahimiti was overthrown in favour of a man sympathetic to their cause, albeit with no claim to the throne. It is noteworthy that the Ashdodites did not attempt to reinstate Azuri; was this because he had been dispatched by Sargon, or because he had indeed "committed crimes against the people of his country", making him unpopular with his subjects as well as with his Assyrian overlord? In any event, the newly installed king, Iamani, may have shared his subjects' distaste for foreign meddling but he was not willing (or able) to confront Sargon's forces which, even if not led by Sargon himself,[50] must have made a formidable opponent. In a scene reminiscent of Hanunu's flight from Gaza before Tiglath-Pileser III, Iamani fled south to territory outside the Assyrian influence: Egypt and Kush.

The Tang-i Var stele

The Khorsabad inscriptions of Sargon represent the first record of a Kushite king in official Assyrian sources (although, as discussed below, there is evidence of previous contact between the two powers) (Morkot 2000: 203). Until recently, the unnamed Kushite king from Sargon's inscription was thought to have been Shabako. However, the publication in 1999 of an inscribed stele from Tang-i Var

[50] Despite Sargon's claims, it appears that he did not lead the campaign in person but dispatched his *turtānu* instead, as attested in Isaiah 20:1 which refers to a *tartan* (i.e. *turtānu*) "who was sent by Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it" (Tadmor 1966: 94). Similarly, the Eponym Chronicle for 712 B.C.E. records Sargon as being "in the land" (i.e. Assyria). However, note Fuchs's suggestion that the Ashdod campaign took place at a later date (see n. 47 above), which would render the Eponym Chronicle irrelevant as corroboration of Isaiah 20:1.

(located in modern Iran) shed new light on the king's identity and forced scholars to re-evaluate their understanding of the highly problematical chronology of Egypt's 25th Dynasty. The Tang-i Var inscription thus serves as a reminder of the importance of an inter-disciplinary historical approach, especially when studying periods such as Egypt and Kush in the late 8th century B.C.E. – so poorly documented that a single textual source from a geographically remote region can dramatically alter our reconstruction of contemporary events.

The inscription, dated to 706 B.C.E. (Kahn 2001: 1), celebrates Sargon's military campaigns, including that against Ashdod, and while it adds no new details to the episode, it refers specifically to "Šapataku', king of the land of Meluhha" (Frame 1999: 40, l. 20). Šapataku' has been identified with Shebitku, Shabako's successor who was previously believed to have acceded to the throne around 702 B.C.E. (Kuhrt 1995: 624) and hence thought to have played no part in the Iamani episode. Although some doubt still surrounds the exact date of Shebitku's accession and the nature of his relationship with Shabako (in particular, whether there was a period of co-regency or whether control over Egypt and Kush was split between Shabako and Shebitku, respectively; Kahn 2001: 1), it now seems that Shabako, who had been in power during Ashdod's insurgency in 711 B.C.E., died in 707 or 706 B.C.E. and was then replaced by Shebitku. Iamani, who had been living on Kushite-controlled territory since 711 B.C.E., was extradited to Assyria shortly thereafter (Kahn 2001: esp. 18).

Iamani's extradition to Assyria

Iamani's exact destination is unclear since the phrase used to describe it, *ana itê māt Muṣuri ša pāṭ māt Meluḫḫa* (Fuchs 1994: 220, Prunk.102–103), is difficult to interpret. Fuchs, following Borger, tentatively translates it as "zur *Grenze* Ägyptens im *Bereich* des Landes Meluhha" (Fuchs 1994: 348, Prunk.101–104)[51] and suggests that the reference in the passage to Urizzu (i.e. Upper Egypt, an area which, in 711 B.C.E., was under Kushite control) means that Iamani was extradited from there and did not in fact reach Kush itself, remaining instead in the border region between Lower and Upper Egypt (Fuchs 1994: 451, *s.v.* Muṣur). However, the terms *Muṣur* (meaning Egypt in general and Lower Egypt in particular; Fuchs 1994: 451, *s.v.* Muṣur) and *Meluḫḫa* (Kush) may be employed here in a purely geographical sense rather than as a means to designate spheres of Egyptian and Kushite influence, suggesting that Iamani reached a point somewhere north of Kushite territory (Redford 1985: 7 and n.17), within traditional Egyptian borders but now subject to Kushite rule.

What brought Iamani to this location? Following his installation on the throne of Ashdod, Iamani contacted sympathetic Philistine cities as well as rulers in

[51] *Meluḫḫa* is the Neo-Assyrian name for Kush (Lawson Younger 2000: 297 n. 9).

Judah, Moab and Edom in an attempt to form an anti-Assyrian coalition, who proceeded to send gifts to "Pir'ū, king of Egypt", repeatedly requesting his assistance (Fuchs 1998: 73–74, VII.b:25–32). The pharaoh in question has been identified as Bakenranef, Tefnakhte's successor at Saïs, whose trade links with the western Mediterranean attest to his involvement in Levantine affairs (Redford 1985: 6 and n. 16) (although not necessarily in local politics). Nevertheless, the coalition's appeals to Bakenranef were unsuccessful (much like Hoshe'a's appeal to So, discussed above), either because the Delta ruler lacked military resources or because he preferred not to antagonise Assyria (Tadmor 1966: 94). Return to Ashdod cannot have been an appealing option and Iamani chose to head in the opposite direction, towards the domain of the Kushite kings, in the hope of obtaining aid or at least a safe haven outside the Assyrian sphere of influence.

Iamani's flight is elaborated upon in another text from Khorsabad, the so-called Small Summary Inscription, which states that Iamani abandoned his family (much like Hanunu had done) and fled to the border between Egypt and Kush, where he "lived like a thief" (Lawson Younger 2000: 297). If we take this expression at face value, rather than as a derogatory allusion by the Assyrians to Iamani's dishonest and contemptible conduct, it implies that he was living there furtively, without the support or shelter of the Kushite king. However, evidence from the Tang-i Var inscription suggests that Iamani's extradition took place as late as 707/706 B.C.E. and that his exile lasted a number of years; it seems unlikely that his presence would go undetected for so long, or that he would have been able to survive for a prolonged period in unfamiliar foreign territory without local support. It follows that Iamani's exile in Kush probably had official approval[52] until circumstances changed in the wake of Shabako's death and Shebitku's accession.

The evolution of Kushite attitudes to Assyria

If Shabako did in fact offer shelter to Iamani, it suggests that his attitude to Assyria was neutral or perhaps even passively hostile since, while he did not provide Iamani with military support, neither did he expel him from his domain. Iamani's extradition by Shebitku therefore indicates a change of strategy by the new king, who chose to make formal diplomatic contact accompanied by a gesture which left little doubt as to where his loyalties lay. Nevertheless, this same king openly confronted Sennacherib at the battle of Eltekeh only a few years later. How can we explain this apparent volte-face?

One possibility is to discount the Tang-i Var inscription: while Shebitku may indeed have been the ruler at the time of its composition in 706 B.C.E., it is possible that Iamani had been returned by his predecessor, Shabako, whose action was

[52] The reference in the Shabako scarab to "the Sand-Dwellers" who "come of themselves as captives" may thus be to Iamani and his entourage, although other interpretations remain equally possible (see Kahn 2001: 4 n. 20).

then erroneously credited to the current king, Shebitku (Frame 1999: 54). This would make Shebitku's conduct vis-à-vis Assyria less inconsistent and would fit in with other evidence of friendly relations between Kush and Assyria in the period before Shebitku's accession. Sargon's inscriptions claim that diplomatic contact on the part of Shebitku was a historically unprecedented event ("the king of Meluhha... whose ancestors from the distant past until now had never sent their messengers to the kings, my ancestors, in order to inquire about their well-being"). However, as discussed in the section on Gaza above, there is evidence of Kushite presence in Assyria as early as the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III and Piye (Dalley 2004: 44), suggesting friendly relations between the two regions. It seems likely, therefore, that Sargon's claim was a standard literary device designed to heighten the prestige of the Assyrian king and the narrative's dramatic qualities (Morkot 2000: 203).

In addition, a clay sealing stamped with the seal of Shabako, originally attached to a papyrus roll which has not survived, was found at the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh (Tadmor 1966: 94 n. 34). Since it now appears that Shabako died before Sennacherib's accession in 705 B.C.E., it must once have formed part of Sargon's correspondence, indicating that Sargon and Shabako enjoyed a diplomatic relationship, although the exact nature of that relationship is unclear. It has been postulated that the two kings may have entered into a formal agreement which included arrangements for the extradition of asylum-seekers (Tadmor 1966: 94 n. 34), leading to Shabako's return of Iamani, but there is currently no evidence to support this.

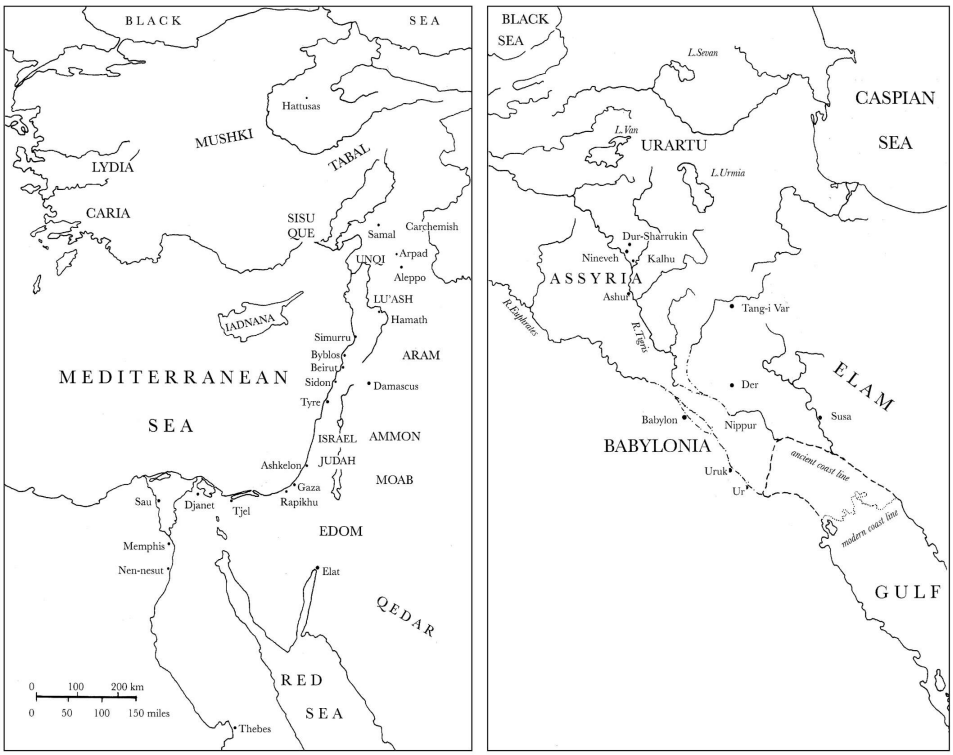
While the theory of scribal error may be tempting, it is entirely possible that Iamani's extradition took place after Shebitku's accession and that the abrupt shift in his loyalties can be attributed to human nature or to changing political circumstances. Perhaps Shabako and Shebitku enjoyed friendly relations with Sargon but relations with Sennacherib proved more strained. Furthermore, if Iamani was extradited under Shebitku, why did Shabako provide political asylum to Iamani, effectively harbouring an enemy of Assyria? Perhaps he wanted to remain as neutral as possible in order to keep his political options open, maintaining a friendly relationship both with Assyria and with Iamani, the representative of the anti-Assyrian element in Philistia. In addition, Shabako may have been honouring the rights of fugitives which were traditionally respected in Egypt (Tadmor 1966: 94 n. 34); given the Kushites' propensity for absorbing elements of Egyptian culture, this is not unthinkable. Unfortunately the scarce nature of current evidence allows us to do little more than speculate at present.

CONCLUSIONS

The second half of the 8th century B.C.E. proved to be a period of vital importance to the interaction of Egypt, Kush and Assyria, setting in motion events which eventually pitted the Egyptians and Kushites against Assyria in open confronta-

Fig. 2

Map of the Ancient Near East (taken from Morkot 2000: 116–117).



tion at the battle of Eltekeh in 701 B.C.E. The surviving sources, particularly in Egypt, are so scarce that reconstructing the history of this period with any certainty is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, it is worth the attempt, since by analysing the origins of a conflict we are better able to understand whether it was an inevitable outcome, or whether events could have taken a different turn: could Egypt and Assyria have co-existed peacefully and without interfering in each other's affairs?

Assyria's ideology of military conquest and the imposition of firmer control on subdued territories not only brought it within Egypt's historical sphere of influence but made Egypt a potential target, although there is no evidence during the 8th century B.C.E. of attempts to invade Egypt. But although Egyptian rulers provided support to the anti-Assyrian element in surrounding regions, such support was necessarily limited while Egypt lacked strong central rule. This changed with Shabako's re-conquest of Egypt and his submission of hitherto independent Delta rulers, as evidenced by the immeasurably stronger Egyptian presence at Eltekeh ("troops, archers, chariots and cavalry... a force without number"; Melville 2006: 346 – see Introduction) compared to the one thousand infantry sent to provide support at the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C.E. Eventually, in the 7th century B.C.E., the struggle over the buffer zone between Egypt and Assyria evolved into a struggle over the control of Egypt itself, as

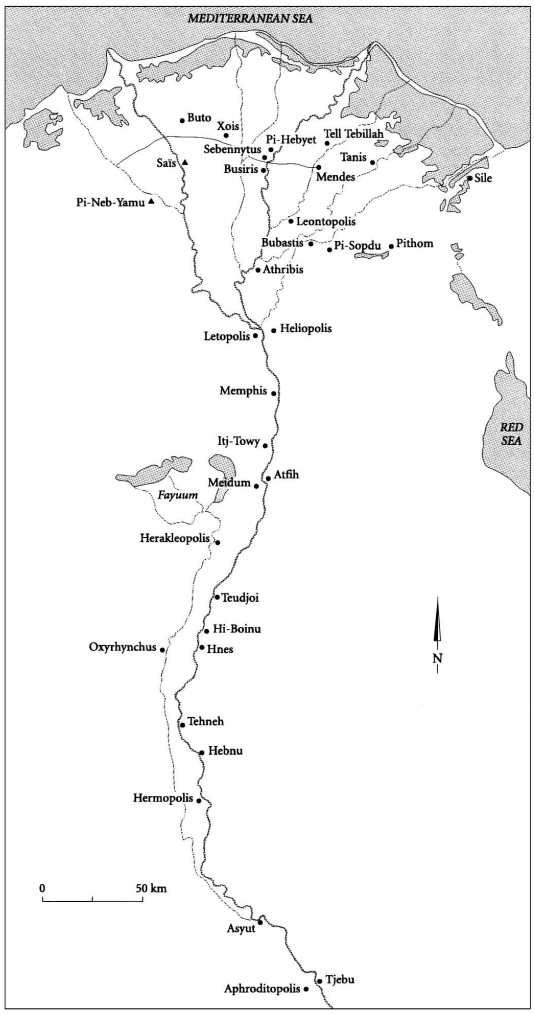


Fig. 3
Map of Egypt (taken from Redford 2004: 73).

Assyria solidified its dominance over western Asia and turned its attention to new pastures.[53]

To what extent Shebitku's decision to aggressively oppose Assyria can be attributed to his personal inclinations, as opposed to political strategy and reason, is impossible to determine. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the circumstances which existed around 701 B.C.E. were propitious to such an enterprise, while the Kushites' programmatic adoption of Egyptian political and cultural heritage provided additional motivation to revive Egyptian influence abroad. Since the Assyrian kings considered themselves similarly entitled to territories in the Sinai and beyond the Euphrates, the scene was set for an inevitable collision between the two powers.

[53] Recent discussions (with previous literature) include Kahn (2004), Kahn (2006) and Radner (2008).

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