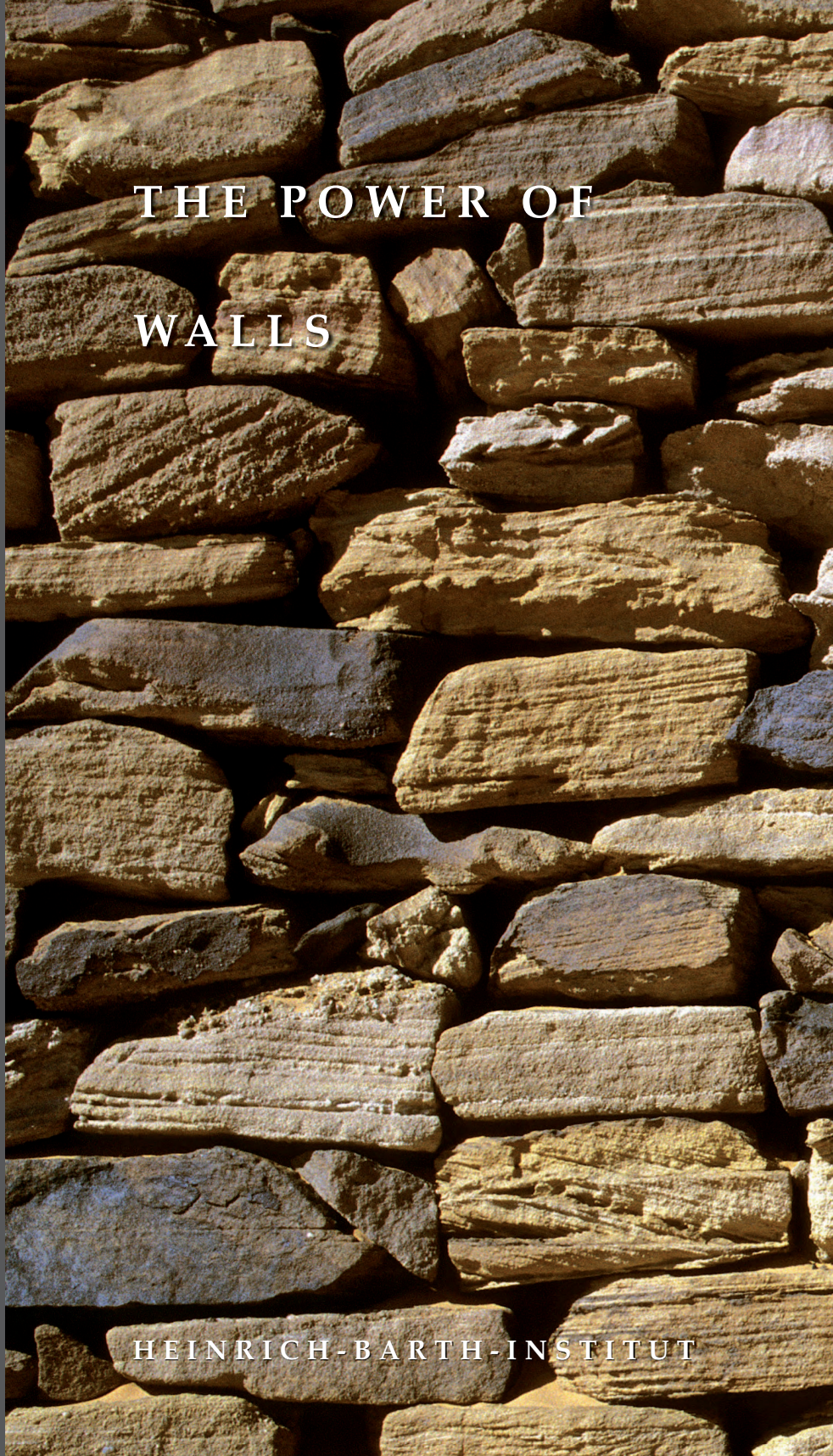
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THE POWER OF WALLS

HEINRICH-BARTH-INSTITUT

HEINRICH-BARTH-INSTITUT e.V.
in Kooperation mit der Universität zu Köln

5 COLLOQUIUM AFRICANUM

Beiträge zur interdisziplinären Afrikaforschung

Contributions to Interdisciplinary Research in Africa

Contributions à la recherche interdisciplinaire en Afrique

KÖLN 2013

The Power of Walls – Fortifications in Ancient Northeastern Africa

Proceedings of the

International Workshop

held at the University of Cologne

4th – 7th August 2011

Edited by
Friederike Jesse & Carola Vogel

H E I N R I C H - B A R T H - I N S T I T U T

HEINRICH-BARTH-INSTITUT e.V., Köln 2013
Jennerstraße 8, D–50823 Köln

http://www.hbi-ev.uni-koeln.de

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Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at http://www.dnb.ddb.de

Financed by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Typeset, digital image editing and layout: Lutz Hermsdorf-Knauth
Printed in Germany by Hans Kock GmbH, Bielefeld

ISBN 978-3-927688-39-1

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Dan'el Kahn

The History of Kush – an Outline

I have been asked to give a short review of Kushite history during the period in which the Gala Abu Ahmed fortress was in use. Radiocarbon dates indicate that the fortress was inhabited from the 20th Egyptian Dynasty (*c.* 1200 BC, Friederike Jesse, personal communication 2011) until *c.* 400 BC (Jesse & Kuper 2006: 143; Eigner & Jesse 2009: 154). Significant changes occurred in Kush during this long period of almost a thousand years. In order to draw a complete picture, I will start my survey before the period in question.

1. The independent state of Kush (2500–1500 BC)

Between 2500 BC and 1500 BC, the kingdom in the middle Nile valley was extremely powerful. It stretched from the area of the 5th Cataract in the south (Smith 2005: 136–138; Emberling & Williams 2010) to north of the 3rd Cataract. Its capital was at Kerma, just south of the 3rd Cataract. At the zenith of its power, it bordered Egypt at the 1st Cataract, as was revealed by the Kamose stela (Smith & Smith 1976: 59) and, according to the fragmentary inscription on the tomb of Sobeknakht from the 17th Dynasty at el Kab, it even conducted raids that penetrated deep into Egypt proper (Davies 2003a: 52–54).

2. Egyptian expansion into Kush

Kamose, the last ruler of the 17th Dynasty, retaliated against the Kushites (Habachi 1972; Smith & Smith 1976) and regained control over Buhen. Lower Nubia, which, long before, had consisted of the kingdoms of Wawat, Irtjet and Satju but by then was simply designated Wawat, also came under direct Egyptian control. Kamose's successor, Ahmose I, the founder of the 18th Dynasty, conducted further incursions into Kush (Berg 1987; Morkot 2000: 70); to what extent remains unclear. We now know that Ahmose campaigned deep into the territories of Kush, much farther south than the 2nd Cataract, as had previously been agreed by scholars.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Frederick Green discovered an Ahmose cartouche inscribed on Jebel Kajbar, downstream from the 3rd Cataract, but this was not published. David Edwards (2006: 58f.) rediscovered the inscription, and it was recently revisited by Vivian Davies (personal communication August 2010). This find strengthens

the suggestion that Ahmose fought further south than previously thought. He must even have gone much further south, since Emhab of Elkab claims – on a stela that is difficult to interpret – that he followed in the footsteps of his master to Avaris in the north and to the land of Miu in the south. Since Ahmose was the last Pharaoh to fight the Hyksos, and who expelled them from Avaris, Emhab's stela should be dated to his reign at the latest. Following the collation of the inscriptions on the Hajar al-Merwa rock, it is clear that at least part of Miu is to be located there (Davies 2005: 55, n. 20). This campaign seems to have been more of a raid with no territorial gain, as Davies has already suggested. During the rest of the 18th Dynasty, several more campaigns were conducted against Kush.

3. Subjugated Kush

Thutmose I recorded his arrival at Kurgus by carving a royal inscription on the rock (Davies 1998: 26–28). He conquered Kerma, the capital of Kush, and built a temple to Amun-Re there (Bonnet 2007: 192–194), the first of many in Kush. Consequently, the postulated border of direct Egyptian control at Tombos (Morkot 1991a: 298; Smith 2003: 3), to the north of the 3rd Cataract, cannot be affirmed. Thutmose II, the son of Thutmose I, inherited a vast kingdom stretching from the Euphrates in the north to Abu Hamed in the south. He had to crush an insurrection at the Kushite capital (Bonnet 2008: 75). Hatshepsut, his queen and successor, probably lost control of vast parts of southern Kush, thus causing her to conduct at least two military expeditions against Kush (Habachi 1957; Redford 1967: 57–62; Davies 2005: 52f.). The now famous expedition to Punt was commemorated as a major achievement but, in fact, avoided direct contact with the heartland of the Kingdom of Kush, which had previously been controlled by her father. When Thutmose III finally ruled alone, however, he repeated the achievements of his grandfather, Thutmose I, and carved a royal inscription next to that of his grandfather (Davies 2001).

During the reign of Thutmose III, at the latest, a temple complex was founded at Jebel Barkal (Kendall & Wolf 2011: 237). This would serve as a religious centre for centuries to come. During the reign of Amenhotep III and, later, during the early part of the reign of Akhenaten, several religious centres were built in the middle of the most fertile territories of Kush, namely at Sedeinga, Soleb, Sesebi, Kerma, Gem-pa-Aten/Kawa and Napata (Hein 1991; Török 2009: 157–207), thus strengthening the colonialist grip of the Egyptian administration in Kush. The priests were surely not left to administer and control Upper Nubia on their own. Minor building programs during the reigns of Tutankhamun (Faras, Soleb and Kawa) and Horemheb (attested at Jebel Barkal) indicate that control over the southern boundaries of Kush remained firmly in Egyptian hands. Only a handful of small-scale rebellions are attested in different parts of Kush during the reigns of Amenhotep III,

Akhenaten and Tutankhamun, as is known from royal stelae and temple reliefs (O'Connor 1998; Schulman 1982; Helck 1980; Johnson 1992) and a mention in the Kamid el Loz letters about the settling of Kushite deportees in the northern district of the Empire at Upe, i.e. Lebanon during the days of Tutankhamun (Na'aman 1988).

Early in the 19th Dynasty, Seti I was confronted with attacks by the Kingdom of Irem. These are reported on several royal stelae that were set up at Amara West, Sai and also in the Qurqur Oasis (Kitchen 1977: 213–219; Darnell 2011; El-Saady 2011). The location of Irem is debated by scholars: Kenneth Kitchen suggested that Irem lay to the west of the Dongola reach (Kitchen 1977); Jean Vercoutter (1980) located Irem to the south of this area, at the bend between Dongola and Napata, while David O'Connor (1987) preferred to search for Irem in the northern part of the Butana, at the confluence of the Nile with the Atbara, up to Shendi and the 6th Cataract. Ramesses II also had to deal with Irem and took some 7,400 captives (Kitchen 1977: 220). These rulers controlled Napata and Ramesses II built there extensively (Hein 1991: 66; Kendall 2009), so there would have been no serious entity to the west of the Nile between the 3rd and 4th Cataracts that was strong enough to challenge and endanger these powerful kings. I maintain that Irem lay to the south of Abu Hamed (contra Török 2009: 18, n. 61). It should further be noted that only these warrior kings, who are known to have pushed on as far as the southern borders of Kush (cf. Davies 2001; 2003b), confronted Irem. Thus, during the early 19th Dynasty, Egypt controlled the most southerly borders it had ever reached, and fought against a new and powerful opponent – Irem.

4. Climate catastrophe and the temporary weakness of the Empire

According to several sources, it seems that the fifth year in the reign of Merneptah, Ramesses II's successor, was a turning point in the favourable situation that the king had inherited from his father. A massive rebellion broke out on all the borders of Egypt: Ashqelon in Canaan rebelled; Libyan hordes endangered Heliopolis, the Delta and the Nile valley, and the Nubians in Wawat (Lower Nubia) revolted after decades of peace. The rebellion did not occur many hundreds of miles to the south of Egypt but, rather, in Egypt's 'backyard', between the 1st and the 2nd Cataracts, in the area where many Egyptian temples with enormous granaries had been built during the reign of Ramesses II (Kahn 2012). The rebellion was brutally quelled by Mesui, the 'King's son of Kush' and viceroy in the days of Merneptah, who can probably be identified as the later King Amenmesse (Dodson 2011; contra Török 2009: 194), and control was restored at least as far as Doukki Gel. This may be inferred from the find of a still-unpublished cartouche on a masonry block of King (Akh-[n]-Re [setepen-Amun]) Siptah at the site (Bonnet et al. 2000: 1114). The years following Merneptah's reign were years of weakness and a rapid succession of

rulers. Seti II, the rightful heir of Merneptah, fought against Amenmesse, an usurper who ruled for four years. Despite these setbacks, it seems that the Egyptian zone of control remained stable during these turbulent times. No Egyptian building activity or artefacts dating to the end of the 19th Dynasty have been recorded south of Kerma.

5. Temporary recovery

During the reign of Ramesses III, Egyptian military accomplishments reached further heights. Egyptian hegemony over Upper Nubia was re-established after several decades (Kitchen 1977: 224f.; Kahn 2010: 20, n. 45). According to texts and reliefs of Ramesses III, he defeated the armies of Irem, although no building activity by him is reported to the south of Soleb (Hein 1991: 103; Török 2009: 199)[1]. The date of the end of Egyptian domination in Upper Nubia is contested. Whether it occurred during the reign of Ramesses VI as Karola Zibelius-Chen suggests, or during the reign of Ramesses IX as László Török proposes in his recent research 'Between Two Worlds' (Hein 1991: 51ff.; Zibelius-Chen 1996: 197; Török 2009: 373) depends on whether the statue of an official of Ramesses IX named Bakenwerel was set up by the official himself or was looted and brought to Jebel Barkal as booty. The question of Egyptian withdrawal from Upper Nubia may be linked with Egypt's almost concurrent withdrawal from Canaan (cf. Finkelstein 1995), or it may have been the consequence of Panehesy's revolt against Payankh (Török 2009: 204–207).

6. Independent rule – the rise of the Kushite state

Kush was freed from its Egyptian overlords at the end of the New Kingdom. Since no power vacuum remains empty for more than ten seconds, it is clear that members of the local population seized control immediately. However, our information on this period is very fragmentary. The 1992 Nubian conference at Gosen was aimed at clarifying the origins of the Kushite state (Wenig, ed., 1999). Some scholars suggested that the new rulers came from Lower Nubia, others thought they came from the south. However, one should not forget two facts:

A. The emerging kingdom was called Kush by its own people; it could thus be the successor of the former Kingdom of Kush and should be sought within the borders of that kingdom.

1 For a possible inscription of Ramesses III from Doukki Gel, see: Bonnet et al. 2000: 1114f., referred to again in Valbelle 2006: 433, where the inscription is dated 'sans doute durant le règne de Ramsès III', with no further elaboration.

B. According to recent research in the area of Kerma, no remains of the Third Intermediate Period have been found there (Charles Bonnet, personal communication August 2010), so one should look further south.

While tackling the question of royal succession in the Kingdom of Kush, Robert Morkot (1999b: 218ff.) suggested that the royal line was created by the merging of two families of chiefs, the matrilinear family of Alara and the patrilinear family of Kashta. The two chiefdoms were based at two different centres at least. In a previous paper, I claimed that this idea is not supported by any evidence (Kahn 2005). Török came to a similar conclusion, claiming that the Kingdom of Kush was in origin a confederacy of chiefdoms (Török 1992; 1995: 65–73). This is not the place to delve into this problem. Suffice it to say that in the many periods of weakness the Kingdom of Kush did not break up and revert to these alleged chiefdoms, nor is there any concrete textual evidence to support their hypothetical existence (cf. Wenig 1992).

The emergence of the Kushite kingdom remains mostly based on an interpretation of the finds from the El Kurru cemetery, where the ancestors of the 25th Dynasty, the future rulers of Kush, were buried. The start of the cemetery was dated to *c.* 900 BC by its original excavator, George Reisner (1919), who assigned several of the graves to female members of the royal family. This date leaves a gap of *c.* 200 years between the end of the Egyptian New Kingdom and the resumption of local rule in Upper Nubia. This chronological-historical problem has been treated in three ways:

1. A long chronology – as initially suggested by Timothy Kendall (1982), and willingly endorsed by Török in 1992 (Török 1999) – whereby the cemetery was assigned solely to male rulers from the end of the New Kingdom in *c.* 1070 BC to the known rulers of the 25th Dynasty;
2. This idea was later abandoned by Kendall in favour of a revised Reisner-based short chronology (Kendall 1999a and b; cf. Török 2009: 298–309), thus leaving the apparent chronological gap of about two and a half centuries;
3. Morkot (1991b) suggested lowering the dates of the New Kingdom by some 200 years, thus closing the chronological gap between the two periods. This school of thought was in fashion in the 1990s following the publication of the book 'Centuries of Darkness', which advocated lowering the chronology in the entire Middle East by about two centuries. This was vehemently criticized (see list of reviews in http://www.centuries.co.uk/reviews.htm, accessed September 2011) and did not receive much support in scholarly circles.

The lack of archaeological material from the Third Intermediate Period is now slowly being reduced by finds from the cemeteries at Sanam, opposite Napata (Lohwasser 2010: 91–100), Hillat el Arab (Vincentelli 2006), Tombos (Smith 2007; 2008), Sai and Amara West (Spencer 2009: 57), to name just a few sites. No Third Intermediate Period remains

have been found so far at Doukki Gel (Charles Bonnet, personal communication August 2010). When considering the various chronologies proposed for the El Kurru cemetery, one should bear in mind that these cemeteries may have been in continuous use from the time of the New Kingdom onwards, or that burial grounds in the same area may have been reused, as seems to be the case at Tombos (Smith 2007; 2008). This hinders the analysis of the great variety of C14 dates and the suggested heirlooms in the cemetery (cf. Kendall 1999a: 44–47). Be the chronology as it may, it is clear that the El Kurru chiefs gradually adopted Egyptian religious customs and abandoned indigenous Kushite practices. While Kendall's suggestion that the Napatan Amun cult was revived by refugee priests after the Theban civil war cannot be substantiated on any factual basis, there is still no alternative explanation for the rise of Egyptianization and the resumption of the Amun cult.

Morkot and Kendall followed Hans Goedicke (1972) in claiming that so-called 'post-Ramesside' rulers, such as Men-maat-Re setepen-Amun and User-maat-Re setepen-Re Ary-mery-Amun and KTSN, may have ruled as local successors to their imperial Ramesside predecessors (Morkot 1999a, 2000: 145–149; Kendall 1999a: 63–65). However, grammatical and iconographical considerations firmly secure their dating in the late 4th century, as was initially suggested (Zibelius-Chen 2003: 435; 2006: 295f.; Török 2009: 292f.). There is thus not a shred of evidence of a post-Ramesside kingdom with local rulers in Kawa, or elsewhere, except in the Napata region.

The rising Kingdom of Kush thrived because of its direct access to gold-producing areas and its control over the caravan routes: to Chad in the west through Wadi Howar; to the deep African South along the Nile; to the Red Sea coast in the east and, to the north, trade with Upper Egypt and polities in the Levant (Heidorn 1994; 1997; Lohwasser 2010; Vincentelli 2011). This trade even reached as far as Assyria, as is indicated by the mention of African luxury items that were given by the King of Egypt to Shalmaneser III, his Assyrian counterpart, around 828 BC (Grayson 1996: 149f.).

7. Kushite expansion towards Egypt

A further piece of evidence that is thought to illuminate the dark ages in Kush is the notorious Kadimalo/Karimala inscription from Semna. This text has been used as one of the fundamental proofs of a Kushite expansion into Lower Nubia before the 25th Dynasty. While John Darnell (2006) dates this inscription to the 21st Dynasty, largely on the palaeographic peculiarities of seven signs (!) (Darnell 2006: 46), Morkot dates the inscription to the 9th–8th centuries BC (Morkot 2000: 150–153) and Török dates it to the early 8th century BC (Török 1995: 45–49; 2009: 294–298). These scholars interpret it as

Meroitic/Nubian. However, the dating of the inscription seems shaky; the degree of Egyptianization is too early for a Kushite/Meroitic text; the royal title *nsw* does not fit early Napatan rule; and the identification of Karimala/Kadimalo as a Meroitic queen, based on an alleged etymology of a Meroitic graffiti some hundreds of years later in the yet undeciphered Meroitic language meaning 'Good Lady', is too modest and male chauvinist a name for an allegedly remarkably successful woman. She may be a queen of Libyan descent, as suggested by her clothes, hairstyle and the proposed Libyan etymology. Her piety with regard to Amun would be surprisingly early for a Kushite queen of Meroitic descent (Bennett 1999; Kendall 1999a: 61–63; Zibelius-Chen 2007).

The first clear evidence of a Kushite expansion to the north is a stela from Elephantine of Kashta, the ruler of Kush during the second quarter of the 8th century BC (Leclant 1963). Kashta adopted royal Egyptian titles and his scribes erected a royal monument in the Egyptian style and dedicated to the Egyptian gods. Clearly, another step towards the Egyptianization of the Kushite royal house had been taken. The date of Kashta's monument in Egypt coincides with the demise of the Egyptian office of Viceroy of Kush during the reign of Takeloth III (Török 2009: 289). It is not clear whether it was Kashta who conquered Upper Egypt and installed his daughter as the wife of the god Amun at Thebes, or whether it was his son, Piankhy, who may have installed his sister (Török 1995: 50–52). During Piankhy's reign, at the latest, the Kushite Kingdom controlled a vast area, from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the city of Meroe in the south (Török 1995: 44f.), and may have even controlled territories yet further to the south. However, no clear archaeological data are available at present.

8. Conflict between Kush and Assyria

The arrival of the Kushites on the shores of the Mediterranean coincided with the conquest of the Levant by the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the days of Tiglath-Pileser III (Kahn 2001). The encounter between these two superpowers initially created trade opportunities (Lohwasser 2002; Heidorn 1994) with trade routes stretching from deep within Africa, through Phoenicia and the emerging markets in the western Mediterranean, east to Mesopotamia and beyond. This economic honeymoon very soon fell apart, when the Kushites and Assyrians fought for control over the southern Levantine kingdoms (Kitchen 1983; 1996; Spalinger 1978; Kahn 2001) and the Arabian and Phoenician trade routes. This conflict ended with the inevitable Assyrian realisation that in order to succeed in rooting out Kushite control from the Levant, Assyria would need to expel them from Egypt as well (Spalinger 1974a and b; Kahn 2004; 2006). In a concentrated effort, the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal conducted five successive campaigns to conquer Egypt, which lasted a total of ten years; after a prolonged continuous war, they finally succeeded in expelling the Kushites.

9. Conflict with Egypt's 26th Dynasty during the 7th–6th centuries BC

It is not clear when and how Egypt gained independence from Assyria, but the rulers of the 26th Dynasty were not content with the expulsion of the Kushites from Egypt and waged war against Kush several times, from the inception of the dynasty onwards. During the reigns of Psammetichus I (Kahn 2007: 513f.) and Necho II., Egypt expanded its borders again into Lower Nubia and occupied the fortress of Dorginarti at the 2nd Cataract (Heidorn 1991).

According to a fragmentary stela of Necho II from Elephantine, he conducted a campaign against Kush upstream along the Nile (Jansen-Winkeln 1989). This campaign seems not to have achieved lasting success, since he had to muster troops for an expedition down the Red Sea (Herodotus, *Histories* II, 158), possibly to bypass Kush and, most probably, in order to reach Punt. The peak of hostilities was reached during the reign of Psammetichus II who effaced the Kushite name from their monuments in Egypt and campaigned against Kush. He evidently reached Kerma (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005) and Jebel Barkal (cf. Török 2009: 361f.), destroying the temples and setting them on fire during the reign of Aspelta, the King of Kush. Sanam Abu Dom (Vincentelli 2011: 281) was also destroyed and abandoned.

Memories of the wars between 26th Dynasty Egypt and Kush are echoed in the biblical books of Zephaniah, Ezekiel and later classical authors such as Herodotus (*Histories* II, 161), Poliaenus and Aristeas as well as in the graffiti of the participating mercenaries along their route of advancement in Kush (FHN I: 286–290, 322f.; Kahn 2007; 2009: 446–449).

A 26th Dynasty stela, found at Dafneh in the Delta, claims that the Egyptian forces marched southwards toward Punt (Petrie 1888: 107, pl. 42; Kahn 2008: 147). To me, the agreement in dates with the recorded campaign of Psammetichus II does not seem to be mere coincidence. Indeed, I would go as far as to suggest that the recently found smashed statues of Taharqa, Senkamanisken and probably Aspelta at the temple of Dangeil (Anderson & Mohamed Ahmed 2009), were also destroyed by the wrath of the troops of Psammetichus II. Julie Anderson, one of the excavators of Dangeil, doubted this interpretation when discussing the issue with me because a broken statue in the Meroitic 1st century level was found in the same archaeological context. We must patiently await the results of future excavations at Dangeil to resolve this question.

Egyptian economic interest in African commodities may therefore have been a significant factor in Egypt's policy towards the south. The finds of Egyptian artefacts and luxury items, such as the New Year flasks, at the Gala Abu Ahmed fortress may point to the same conclusion (Lohwasser 2009; Török 2009: 363). A small tablet made of faience with a cartouche was first read as Nefer-ib-Re, referring to Psammetichus II, and allegedly strengthening his interest in trade routes deep into Africa. However, a second reading suggested Nefer-ka-Re, the throne name of Shabaka, which should clearly be preferred (Lohwasser 2009: 161). A small cartouche made of blue faience also shows Shabaka's throne name, Nefer-ka-Re (Friederike Jesse, personal communication 2012).

10. Kush and Persia

The history of the Kingdom of Kush is obscure during the decades between the campaign of Psammetichus II (593 BC) and the appearance of the Persian Empire on the borders of Kush during the reign of Cambyses (525–522 BC). According to one tradition, Cambyses is claimed to have invaded Kush and, on arrival at Meroe, re-named the city after his sister. According to another tradition, his army perished on the way (Herodotus, *Histories* III, 17–26). According to Herodotus, the main army, which marched to Ethiopia, suffered from hunger and many died on the way. The unit that marched against the Amonians at Siwa vanished in a sand storm. Recently, the Castiglioni brothers announced the discovery of remains of the lost Persian army near the Bahrin oasis, a small oasis not far from Siwa (http://archaeologynewsnetwork.blogspot.com/2010/06/flashback-vanished-persian-army-found.html, accessed September 2011).

Herodotus claims that Ethiopia paid bi-annual tribute to Egypt from the time of Cambyses until his own day (Herodotus, *Histories* III, 97). Pliny (1st century AD), while describing Petronius' Nubian campaign (*Natural History* VI, 181), mentions Forum Cambusis in the vicinity of the 2nd Cataract (probably Faras? See: FHN I: 313; FHN III: 879), thus suggesting that Cambyses' presence was remembered at this site for centuries. During the reign of Darius II, Kush sent ivory to Susa as tribute and *T3 Nḥsy* is listed as Persia's southernmost province (Yoyotte 1974; Briant 2002: 172–176). The mention in the book of Esther (1:1) of the limits of Xerxes' Empire, which stretched from India to Kush, and the mustering of Kushite troops into Xerxes' army against the Greeks in 480 BC (Herodotus, *Histories* VII, 69) both corroborate this information (Morkot 1991c). The archaeological remains from Dorginarti support the evidence that Lower Nubia was in Persian hands, as absolutely no information on Persian presence in Lower Nubia after this period is known (Heidorn 1991). Persia was expelled from Egypt no later than 398 BC.

According to the Kawa inscriptions of the Kushite king Irike-Amanote, traditionally dated to the end of the 5th century BC onwards, the king had trouble with the nomadic Rhrs and Mdd tribes in the vicinity of Meroe and further north (FHN II: 401, 407). After subduing his enemies, the Kushite king set out from Meroe on a 'coronation journey', or victory journey, and stopped at the main religious centres of Amun at Napata, Kawa and Pnubs (Kerma). He did not go further north, which suggests that he did not control the area of Lower Nubia. Unfortunately, our historical sources for the rest of the 5th century BC, as well as the scope of my paper, end here.

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