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NAPATAN PERIOD

الفترة النبتية (نباتا - نبتة)

Jeremy Pope

Napatanische Zeit
Période napatéenne

The centuries that followed the 25th Dynasty in Nubia witnessed significant changes in the way the kingdom of Kush related to the outside world: an Assyrian invasion had expelled the Kushite kings from the Egyptian throne, and the geographical focus of Kushite royal activity then gradually shifted southward. This period has also received less scholarly attention than the 25th Dynasty that preceded it—in part because of the difficulties posed by the evidence, but also because of modern influences on the interpretation of ancient history. The surviving texts, art, architecture, and other material culture from the Napatan period are generous sources of information, but each body of evidence shows little connection to the others. In addition, most of the evidence for the period was first discovered in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century CE, when Sudan was under foreign domination, leading some of the earliest modern interpreters to depict the Nubian region as an isolated backwater during antiquity. During the second half of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, more recent research has offered alternative interpretations of the Napatan period's foreign relations, domestic statecraft, and chronology.

شهدت القرون التالية للأسرة الخامسة والعشرين في النوبة تغيرات مهمة في طريقة ارتباط مملكة كوش بالعالم الخارجي: الغزو الآشوري قام بطرد ملوك كوش من مصر ، ثم تحول التركيز الجغرافي للنشاط الكوشي تدريجياً إلى الجنوب. تلقت هذه الفترة التاريخية اهتماماً أكاديمياً أقل من فترة الأسرة الخامسة والعشرين السابقة لها ، ويرجع ذلك جزئياً إلى الطبيعة الصعبة للأدلة ، وأيضاً بسبب التأثيرات الحديثة المتعلقة بتفسير التاريخ القديم. تعتبر النصوص، الفنون، العمارة والمواد الثقافية الأخرى الباقية من فترة نباتا من أهم مصادر المعلومات، لكن كل نوع من الأدلة يظهر علاقة ضعيفة بالأدلة الأخرى. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، وللمرة الأولى تم اكتشاف معظم الأدلة الخاصة بهذه الفترة التاريخية في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن العشرين الميلادي ، عندما كان السودان تحت السيطرة الأجنبية ، مما دفع بعض العلماء الأوائل لتصوير منطقة النوبة على أنها أرض قاحلة ومعزولة. وخلال النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين والعقد الأولين من القرن الحادي والعشرين ، قدمت العديد من الأبحاث تفسيرات بديلة للعلاقات الخارجية ، الحكم السياسي المحلي ، والتسلسل الزمني في فترة مملكة نباتا.



The Napatan period bears this name because it was an era in which the kings of Kush were buried in the vicinity of Napata, an ancient town located somewhere near (Gebel/Mount) Barkal, at the Fourth Cataract in the Upper Nubian region of Sudan (figs. 1-2; Dunham 1955; 1957: 22-23, 34-35, 42-43, 49-50, pls. III A, V A, V D). In its broadest definition, the Napatan period may therefore stretch from the eighth to third centuries BCE, including the named progenitors and kings of Manetho's 25th Dynasty (Pope 2019a), as well as all of their royal successors in Kush while those cemeteries near Napata remained in continuous use. Additional threads of dynastic and cultural continuity support that inclusive periodization. As far as can be determined from the available evidence, all of the Kushite kings across this span were related to one another by blood (Macadam 1949: 119-131; Morkot 1999: 209; Dodson and Hilton 2004: 236-237; but cf. Török 1997a: 209-210) and practiced a coronation ritual that involved sequential visits to multiple sites within their kingdom (Schäfer 1901: Taf. I-IV; Macadam 1949: pls. 15-26; Grimal 1981: pls. XI-XIII, XXIIa-XXIII; Eide et al. 1994: 216-228; Török 1995: 65-72; Eide et al. 1996: 400-428, 438-464, 471-501; Peust 1999: 34-44), while maintaining in the Fourth Cataract region both a royal cemetery and a sprawling temple complex (fig. 2; Reisner 1918; Griffith 1929; Macadam 1949: pls. 15-16; Dunham 1970: 21-24, 67-79; Grimal 1981: pls. XVI-XVII; Eide et al. 1994: 223; 1996: 442, 446-447; Kendall and Wolf 2007). Thus, according to a popular and justifiable view, the Napatan period included the 25th Dynasty and lasted for a total of approximately five hundred years (e.g., Al-Rayah 1981; Grzymski 2005: 54; Lohwasser 2010: 6; Howley 2015).

However, that broad definition of the Napatan period is not universally employed by scholars, because significant *discontinuities* separate the 25th Dynasty from the years that followed it in Kush. After the Assyrian invasions of Egypt in the middle of the seventh century BCE (Onasch 1994), never again would a monarch from the land of Kush exercise territorial dominion over any part of

Egypt, and even control of Lower Nubia appears to have been contested or seized by northern hands (Heidorn 1991: 206; 2018). Consequently, the lived experiences of many Kushite royals, officials, and soldiers during the 25th Dynasty will have been quite different from those of their descendants. These changes also yield different epistemological challenges for the historian: whereas the Kushite kings of the 25th Dynasty had been prominently featured in textual sources produced outside of their kingdom (Pope 2014b: 106-111), only one of their Kushite royal successors, Senkamaniskien, was mentioned by name in an inscription outside of Nubia—on a single fragment of a Memphite offering table—across the next four hundred years (Daressy 1910; but cf. Priese 1977 and Eide et al. 1996: 515-520). For these reasons, the 25th Dynasty would seem to merit a separate periodization (Pope 2019a) from the centuries that followed it in Kush, so that both eras may be properly differentiated as phases of a dynamic history. In accordance with the chronologies proposed by László Török (2002: 297, 413-414; see also Török 2015; 2018a: 113-116), Charles Bonnet and Dominique Valbelle (2005: 13), Karola Zibelius-Chen (2006: 284), and Francis Breyer (2014: 5), the discussion below will therefore use the adjective *Napatan* to designate only the four centuries *after* the 25th Dynasty (fig. 2). The era is further subdivided here into Early Napatan and Late Napatan periods, in order to mark the changes wrought by an apparent Kushite reclamation of Lower Nubia in the fifth century BCE (see Zibelius-Chen 2006: 284; Török 2018a: 118).

The terminus of the Napatan period is less ambiguous. The third century BCE witnessed the rise to power of a Kushite family manifesting closer ties to the Keraba region (fig. 1) than to the Fourth Cataract (Török 1992b; Yellin 2009; 2015a), and so Meroe was increasingly preferred over Napata for royal burials (Dunham 1957: 27-33, 47-48, 52-54, 57-58, 63-80, 83-85, 96-97, 103-111, 116-153, 159, 161, 164-206). This apparent dynastic turnover in Kush also occurred only decades after the establishment of Ptolemaic rule over neighboring Egypt, yielding a political sea change across much of northeastern Africa.



Figure 1. Map of northeast Africa during the first millennium BCE, overlaid with approximate modern boundaries.

	Era	Ruler	DG	Kawa	Dongola	Kurru	Barkal	Sanam	Nuri	Dangeil	Meroë	Defeia
EARLY NAPATAN	656	Atlanersa							20			
		Senkamanisken							3			
		Anlamani							6			
	600 BCE	Aspelta							8			
		Aramatelqo							9			
		Malonaqen							5			
		Analamoye							18			
		Amaninataki-lebte							10			
		Amanikarqo (Karkamani)							7			
	500 BCE	Amani-astabarqo							2			
LATE NAPATAN		Siospiqo							4			
		Nasakhma							19			
		Malowiamani (Malowiebamani)							11			
		Talakhamani							16			
		Amannoterike (Irikeamannot)							12			
		Baskakeren							17			
	400 BCE	Harsiyotef							13			
		Akharitene							14			
		Amanibakhi?										
		Nastasen							15			
		Gatisen? (Aktisanes?)										
	300 BCE	Aryamani?										
		Kash[...]?							15			
		Piankhyerikeqo (Irikepiyeqo)							18			
		Sabrakamani										

KEY

- royal tomb number
- temple construction
- inscribed royal stela
- inscribed obelisk
- royal sarcophagus
- royal graffito
- royal sphinx
- large royal statuary
- vandalism likely
- date uncertain

Figure 2. Selected Kushite royal monuments of the Napatan period and their findspots in Nubia (cf. fig. 1). This chart includes minor architectural additions and loose blocks inscribed with royal names, but it excludes palaces, treasuries, tombs of queens and royal kin, small finds, stelae without surviving royal names (e.g., the Banishment/Excommunication Stela: Eide et al. 1994: 252-258), and building activity that is only described in royal stelae without material confirmation. DG = Dukki Gel. For convenience, the column labeled “Dongola” includes both Old Dongola (findspot of Atlanersa’s obelisk) and New Dongola (findspot of Nastasen’s stela). References for most monuments may be found in the accompanying article.

Thus, scholars are nearly unanimous in treating the middle of the third century BCE as a meaningful boundary between the Napatan period and the “Meroitic” era that followed (e.g., Török 1997a: 342, 409; 2002: 413-414; Zibelius-Chen 2006: 284-285; Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 188; Breyer 2014: 5; cf. Al-Rayah 1981).

Sources of Evidence

In contrast to the pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty (Pope 2014b: 106-111; Török 2014: 72-80; Pope 2019a: 3), the Kushite kings of the Napatan period are never clearly mentioned *by name* in either the Hebrew Bible or ancient Greek and Latin texts (cf. Priese 1977 and Eide et al. 1996: 515-520), and, with the exception of the Memphite fragment mentioned above (Daressy 1910), they are never attested even upon the monuments of neighboring Egypt. Consequently, the modern rediscovery of the inscriptions, architecture, and material culture of the Napatan era has presented opportunities and challenges slightly different from those that have attended the study of the 25th Dynasty (Pope 2019a: 3-4, 8-9). On the one hand, the dearth of external testimony for the Napatan period has at least increased the likelihood that internal sources of evidence might be assessed on their own terms (Burstein 2003: 142; Török 2018b: 2). On the other hand, however, the modern circumstances under which those internal sources were first discovered shaped both their immediate and later interpretation. The majority of the Kushite royal inscriptions from the Napatan era were found in the mid-nineteenth century CE during the Turco-Egyptian conquest of Sudanese Nubia (Lepsius 1855: 16; Mariette 1865), while much of the period’s architecture and material culture was excavated by George Reisner, John Garstang, and Francis Llewellyn Griffith under Anglo-Egyptian overrule of the region during the early twentieth century CE (Garstang 1911; Garstang and Sayce 1912: 49-50, 57-63; Garstang 1913: 81-82; Garstang and George 1914: 5-7; Garstang, Phythian-Adams, and Sayce 1916: 1, 8-9; Reisner 1918: 101, 103-112; 1920; Griffith 1922; 1923; 1929; Dunham 1950: 7-10; 1970: 3; Török 1997b: 1-4; Morkot

2000 25-26). Some of the original discoverers of those texts, monuments, and objects drafted Nubia’s ancient history to mirror their perception of its modern condition (Trigger 1994: 330-332), depicting the Kingdom of Kush after the 25th Dynasty as a remote backwater—militarily defeated, culturally dependent, and enervated by its distance from an Egyptian metropole. Discounting the very possibility of an *independent* “national civilization” in ancient Nubia, Richard Lepsius wrote flatly in 1852 that “we have every reason to deny this completely,” because “whatever in the accounts of the ancients does not rest on total misapprehension, only refers to *Egyptian* civilization and art” (Lepsius 1852: 267; 1853: 244, original emphasis). Such assessments of the Napatan era were further potentiated by modern ideologies of “race,” especially during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century CE (Arendt 1962: 158-159; Smedley 1993: 255-256; Trigger 1994: 326; Hannaford 1996: 306, 316; Powell 2003): Reisner opined of the Nubian region across its history that “its very race appears to be a product of its poverty and isolation—a negroid Egyptian mixture fused together on a desert river bank too far away and too poor to attract a stronger and better race” (1910: 348). More recent studies of the Napatan period have jettisoned and often explicitly disputed such theories of racial hierarchy (Adams 1977: 8, 91-95; Török 1997a: 18, 35-36; 2002: 484-487). Nevertheless, even during the past fifty years, some of the most popular treatments of Nubian history have continued to disparage the Napatan period and its available source material on dubious grounds.

One of the most influential works ever published about Nubia delivered a bleak assessment of textual evidence commissioned by Kushite kings after the 25th Dynasty:

[T]he scribes of Egypt were no longer theirs to command, and they had few press-agents at home. . . . In consequence, the historic record ceases almost at once with the collapse of Nubia’s imperial fortunes, and darkness falls again upon the southern dynasty. (Adams 1977: 267)

In our own century, this judgment of the Napatan textual corpus still reverberates in the works of nonspecialists; thus, Yaacov Shavit has asserted: “There is no written Kushite literature at all. Not even in the annals of the Egyptian priests was the history of Kush preserved; if it was, nothing remains” (2001: 194). Even some Egyptologists have continued to opine that Kush became “bastardized and degenerate” after the 25th Dynasty, “a culture gone to seed” whose monumental landscape bore “*silent* witness to the glories that once had been” (Redford 2004: 146-147, emphasis added).

Yet, as Nubiologist László Török has observed, the persistence of such characterizations ignores “the literature produced on the subject in the last decades” (Török 2009: 359 n. 257). A handful of studies at the end of the twentieth century (Török 1995; 1997a; Darnell 1998; Zibelius-Chen 1998; Peust 1999; Vinogradov 1999) inaugurated a spate of articles, doctoral theses, and books in the twenty-first century exploring the wealth of historical detail that may be gleaned from the textual corpus of the Napatan era (e.g., Lohwasser 2001; Peust 2001; Zibelius-Chen 2002; Török 2002; Sargent 2004; Pompei 2005; 2008; Vinogradov 2008; Török 2009; Vinogradov 2009; Pompei 2010; Vinogradov 2010; 2011; Zibelius-Chen 2011; Valbelle 2012; Vinogradov 2012; Doll 2014; Pompei 2014; Revez 2014 a and b; Lenzo 2015; El Nasri Mohamed Ahmed 2015; Vinogradov 2015; Lohwasser 2016: 127-130; Vinogradov 2017; Eltze 2018; Gozzoli 2018; Petacchi 2018). Thanks to this flood of recent scholarship, the Napatan corpus is now more amenable to accurate summary and analysis. With very few possible exceptions (e.g., Rose 2000), all of the surviving Kushite texts found in Nubia and datable to the Napatan period (fig. 3) were

executed primarily in the Egyptian hieroglyphic script (cf. Lenzo 2015: 280-285) and language, with only occasional words included from the Meroitic tongue of Kush (Priese 1965: 9-161; 1968; Valbelle 2012: 42-44, 73-91), yet scholars who have studied the linguistic characteristics and historical contexts of each inscription agree that most or all were commissioned by individuals of predominately Kushite ancestry (e.g., Schäfer 1895: 105; Macadam 1949: xiii, 9, 76, 78, 81; Török 2002: 331-339; Sargent 2004: 1-3, 6, 9, 18, 80, 301, 303, 344; Pope 2014a: 145-148), usually members of the Kushite royal family (Pope 2019b: 199-201; *fc.*; cf. a minor exception: Bonnet and Valbelle 1980: 6 fig. 3, 9-12, pl. IV). The details of many of these texts will be explored under the thematic headings below, but the combined scope of the Kushite royal corpus is immediately noteworthy, for it includes: funerary spells; descriptions of enthronement procedures; quoted dialogue from commoners and from deliberations of the royal council; statements of political and religious creed; accounts of temple construction, maintenance, and staffing; genealogies and commemorations of named ancestors; consultation of oracles; toponymic and ethnonymic lists and narratives; and reports of violent struggles against foreign and possibly internecine antagonists (Pope *fc.*). In a forthcoming overview of the Napatan period, Bruce Williams has argued that this richly detailed Kushite dynastic literary tradition “has no parallel in Egypt” (Williams *fc.*). After the 25th Dynasty, the “historic record” did *not* cease in Nubia, nor did “darkness fall” there, because the surviving texts from the region are far from “silent” on matters of interest to the historian (*pace* Adams 1977: 267 and Redford 2004: 146-147).

	Century	Reign	Text	Major Events	
EARLY NAPATAN	7 th BCE	Anlamani	ANE	coronation(?) circuit to multiple temples	
			investiture of Third Prophet and royal priestesses at Kawa		
			war against <i>Bulabau</i>		
			visit of Queen Mother Nasalsa		
		Aspelta	ASE	selection and enthronement of king at Barkal	
			festivals and temple donations at Barkal		
			ADS	investiture, endowment of royal priestess at Sanam	
			DGS	royal delegation to temple at Dukki Gel	
6 th (?) BCE	KHA	tomb construction and provisioning for mayor/royal kinsman			
LATE NAPATAN	5 th BCE	Amannoterike		death of King Talakhamani	
				wars against <i>Rebrebs</i> and <i>Meded</i>	
			AER I	enthronement of King Amannoterike at Barkal, coronation circuit → Kawa → Pnubs	
				donations and staffing for Barkal, Kawa, and Pnubs temples with people from <i>Geramunet</i> , <i>Sekset</i> , <i>Tjerhetj</i> , <i>Mewaresen</i> , <i>Merakur</i> , <i>Artakur</i> , <i>Ashawmeta</i> , <i>Garkan</i> , <i>Arma</i> , <i>Tayineb</i> , and <i>Arn</i> [...]	
					renovations and clearance of processional avenue at Kawa
				AER II	donations to temple at Kawa
			AER III	provisioning of army at Kawa	
			AER IV	donations to temple at Kawa	
	4 th BCE	Harsiyotef	HAR	renovation of temples, palace, enclosure wall at Barkal	
				renovation of temple at <i>Taraonensi</i>	
				construction of <i>Tara</i> at Barkal	
planting of groves at Barkal and Meroë					
coronation circuit from Barkal → Kawa → Pnubs → <i>Tare</i>					
wars against <i>Rebrebs(a)</i> , <i>Meded (Metete)</i> , <i>Anrenware</i> , <i>Sawearaga</i> [...] <i>ta</i> , <i>Akene</i> , <i>Braga</i> , <i>Saamanisa</i> , Aswan, <i>Mekbuf</i> , <i>Kharawe</i> , <i>Arawe</i> , <i>Shaykara</i> , and <i>Mekbty</i> in <i>Taqotsbe</i>					
festivals at <i>Yottaye</i> , Meroë, <i>Maratae</i> , <i>Garere</i> , <i>Sebrase</i> , <i>Sekarage</i> , <i>Karate</i> , <i>Mabae</i> , <i>Aratanaye</i> , Barkal, <i>Nebane</i> , Kawa, and Pnubs					
Nastasen		NAS	summons from Meroë → Barkal, then coronation circuit → Kawa → Pnubs → <i>Tele</i>		
	festival and donations to Barkal temple(s)				
	wars against <i>Kambasawden</i> , people “from <i>Kuratape</i> to <i>Tarawdie</i> ,” <i>Mekhindekennete</i> , <i>Ayonku</i> , <i>Rebala</i> , <i>Akulakuro</i> , <i>Luboden</i> , <i>Arrasa</i> , <i>Mabae</i> , <i>Abso</i> , <i>Makhsherkbarta</i> , <i>Mayokue</i> , <i>Sycamore-of-Sarsare</i> , and <i>Tamakbeyta</i>				
3 rd BCE	Aryamani?	K XIV	temple construction and donation at Kawa		
		K XV	donations to temple at Kawa		
	Sabrakamani	K XIII	donations to temple(s) at Kawa (and Pnubs and Barkal?)		

Figure 3. Selected Kushite royal inscriptions recording events of the Napatan period (excluding most funerary texts). Items in red font were likely vandalized. Obscure toponyms, ethnonyms, and personal names are shown in italics. ANE=Anlamani's Enthronement Stela (Macadam 1949: pls. 15-16); ASE=Aspelta's Enthronement Stela (Grimal 1981: pls. Va-VII); ADS=Aspelta's Dedication Stela (Valbelle 2012: 9-19); DGS=Dukki Gel Stela (Valbelle 2012: 21-25); KHA=Khaliut Stela (M. B. Reisner 1934); AER=Amannoterike's Inscriptions (with Roman numerals) (Macadam 1949: pls. 17-30); HAR=Harsiyotef's Stela (Peust 1999: 24-33); NAS=Nastasen's Stela (Peust 1999: 34-46); K=Kawa stelae (with Roman numerals) (Peust 1999: 46-52; Macadam 1949: pls. 31-34).

Century	Selected Major Events	Non-Kushite Sources		
		Contemporaneous	Intermediate	Retrospective
7 th BCE	Necho II's Kushite soldiers in Syria (605)			
6 th BCE	Psamtik II's invasion of Nubia (593)	Dendur graffiti ∇		
		Tomas graffiti ∇		
		Abu Simbel graffiti δ ∇ ?		
		Buhen graffiti δ ∇		
		Shellal stela I <i>A</i>		
		Shellal stela II <i>A</i>		
		Karnak stela <i>A</i>		
		Tanis stela <i>A</i>		
			Jeremiah 46:9 𐤁 Ezekiel 29-30 𐤁	
	Apries's soldiers defect to Nubia (ca. 586)	Neshor statue <i>A</i>		
5 th BCE	Egyptian caravan to Nubia (529)	<i>Papyrus Berlin 13615</i>		
	"Aktisanes" wars against Amasis (ca. 526)			
	Cambyzes II's invasion of "Aithiopia" (ca. 525)			
				Herodotus 2.161.1 δ
				Herodotus 3.17.1-25.7, 3.97.2-3 δ
4 th BCE	Xerxes I's "Aithiopian" soldiers (480)	Herodotus 7.69 δ		
	plague in "Aithiopia" (430)	Thucydides 2.48 δ		
	Nectanebo II flees to "Aithiopia" (ca. 341)		Ephorus δ	
3 rd BCE			Hecataeus of Abdera δ	
	"Aithiopian" attack on Elephantine	papyrus letter from Elephantine δ		
	Ptolemy II's invasion of "Aithiopia"		Agatharchides δ	
2 nd BCE				Septuagint δ
1 st BCE				Diodorus 1.37.5 δ
				Diodorus 1.60-61.1 δ
				Diodorus 16.51.1 δ

Figure 4. Selected major events (some likely apocryphal) in Nubia or involving groups of Kushites (not single individuals) during the Napatan period, as claimed or indirectly attested by non-Kushite sources written in Egyptian hieroglyphs (*A*), Demotic Egyptian (*italicized*), Phoenician (𐤁), Biblical Hebrew (𐤁), Carian (∇), and Greek (δ). Sources are color-coded here to match the events upon which they report, and sources labeled as "intermediate" survive only as quotations within later, "retrospective" sources shown in the same color. References for each non-Kushite source may be found in the accompanying article.

What this corpus of royal texts does lack is consistent and explicit connection to other bodies of evidence for the Napatan period. Particularly frustrating is the absence of incontestable synchronisms between the Kushite royal corpus (fig. 3) and contemporaneous texts from neighboring Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Near East (fig. 4). The Saite and Achaemenid eras produced in Egypt valuable hieroglyphic and Demotic testimony of repeated campaigns and caravans to Nubia (Schäfer 1904; Erichsen 1941: 57; Bakry 1967; Goedicke 1981; Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952; Zauzich 1992; Der Manuelian 1994: 333-371; Eide et al. 1994: 279-286; Gozzoli 1995; Jansen-Winkeln 2014: 303-304, 318-319, 408-410; Gozzoli 2017: 45-61, 107-116), yet all of these texts neglected to name the reigning kings of Kush. The same problem characterizes the corpus of ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern references to Kushite involvement in events of the Napatan period, but it is further exacerbated by the passage of time: aside from some Phoenician, Carian, and Greek graffiti in Lower Nubia (Weigall 1907: 113, pl. LXIV 6; Bernard and Masson 1957: 1-20; Bernard 1962: D8-D9, j G, VI, XVIII; Magnanini 1973: 61-62; Žába, Hintze, and Verner 1974: 193-194; Masson, Martin, and Nicholls 1978: 50-54; Masson 1979: 195-196; Bresciani 1988: 257-259; Meiggs and Lewis 1989: 12-13; Eide et al. 1994: 286-290; Dillon 1997; Adiego 2006: 109-110, 115-119; Schmitz 2010), two brief passages authored by Herodotus and Thucydides (Eide et al. 1994: 314-315; 1996: 393-396; Török 2014: 38-39), and a single Greek papyrus letter from Elephantine (Sachau 1911: no. 48, pl. 39; Eide et al. 1996: 536-538), most of the Greek and Hebrew sources for the Napatan era were written a century or more after the events they describe (Eide et al. 1994: 323-330; Sadler 2005: 97-105; Török 2014: 30, 32-37, 80-81, 107-111; Burrell 2020: 207, 247, 310), and some passages (labeled in Figure 4 as “Intermediate”) are first attested as copies or quotations in later texts (labeled in Figure 4 as “Retrospective”) (Eide et al. 1996: 501-503, 515-520, 655-657). In fact, with the exception of the aforementioned graffiti and Elephantine letter, every one of the Greek and Hebrew

passages shown in Figure 4 (including each one categorized as “retrospective”) has, in turn, survived in hard copy only in even later manuscripts of the Common Era (e.g., Jahn 1972; Lacquer 1992; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 1999; Ben-Zvi Enterprises 2003; Bravi 2008: 117-128; British Library 2010). Moreover, the Kushite royal inscriptions’ own coverage of foreign affairs (fig. 3) was focused almost exclusively on neighboring polities of the desert and steppe that produced no surviving written record of their own for the historian to cross-check, balance, and synchronize (Schäfer 1901: Taf. I-IV; Macadam 1949: pls. 15-26; Grimal 1981: pls. XVIIIa-XXI; Peust 1999: 28-43; Eide et al. 1994: 221-222; 1996: 407, 410-411, 448-454, 485-488, 490-492). Even within Nubia itself, the royal tombs and inscriptions were not supplemented by any appreciable number of private (non-royal) texts to illuminate domestic affairs (Pope 2019b: 199-201; *fc.*). The student of Napatan history is therefore confronted with a paradox. On the one hand, the period can be analyzed through several impressive bodies of textual evidence—including royal Kushite hieroglyphic inscriptions (fig. 3) and (all in fig. 4) royal Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, private Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, Demotic Egyptian papyri, passages of the Hebrew Bible, and ancient Greek historical and epistolary texts, along with ancient Greek, Carian, and Phoenician graffiti. On the other hand, however, the Kushite and non-Kushite texts have resisted direct correlation with one another, and they are not supplemented by texts written from the perspective of the Napatan state’s private citizens or its eastern, western, and southern enemies and allies (as italicized in Figure 3).

As discouraging as this circumstance may be for the historian, it is ameliorated by the evidence of material culture and public and private architecture from the Napatan era. The chambers beneath the pyramids at Nuri (fig. 2) contained an assemblage of pottery, canopic jars, figurines, scarabs, jewelry, amulets, and offering tables, including both locally made luxury goods and disparate imports crafted from ivory, ostrich egg shell, wood, faience, lapis lazuli, turquoise, agate, amethyst, beryl,

crystal, carnelian, glass, hematite, jasper, bronze, copper, electrum, gold, lead, silver, alabaster, granite, limestone, obsidian, sandstone, and slate (Dunham 1955; Balanda 2020; Howley *et al.*). In fact, the large granite sarcophagi of Anlamani and Aspelta (Dunham 1955: 58, 81, 86-95, figs. 57-68, pls. LXXVI-LXXVIII; Doll 1978; Török 2002: 336) exceed in size and detail any object found in the tombs of the 25th Dynasty (Dunham 1950; 1955: 6-16), and Doll has judged them “the most . . . carefully designed sarcophagi from 3000 years of *Egyptian* history, . . . fuller and richer than any other known examples [and] . . . on a far greater scale than anything found at Thebes” (1978: 371, *emphasis added*). On the basis of this Nuri cemetery and its contents, archaeologist George Reisner was able to reconstruct a relative chronology of the Kushite kings that spans centuries (Reisner 1919: 57-58) and differs little from that employed by scholars today (e.g., Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 187-188).

The kings of the Napatan period also added to the temple complexes constructed by their ancestors at Dukki Gel (Bonnet and Valbelle 2005: 38), Kawa (Macadam 1955: xiv, 16, 43, 71, 85, 89-90, pls. XVIIIa-d, LIIa, LVIIa-b), (Gebel) Barkal (Reisner 1918; Griffith 1929; Dunham 1970: 21-24, 67-79), and Sanam (Griffith 1922: 85, 106, 109-111), where many then installed large royal statues and sphinxes on the premises (fig. 2; Dunham 1970: 21-24, 33, pls. IIIa, XII-XXIII; Bonnet and Valbelle 2005: 70-139), while their royal kin and non-royal contemporaries expanded the cemeteries at Sanam and Meroe (Griffith 1923; Dunham 1963; Lohwasser 2010, 2012). In fact, the surviving architectural landscape of the Napatan era includes several geographic areas and types of construction that still remain unattested for the 25th Dynasty in Nubia: recent excavations have indicated an Early Napatan royal palace at Barkal (Kendall and Wolf 2007), production areas for faience shabtis (exceptionally *within* the temple precinct) at Sanam (Howley 2018), a desert fortress west of the Nile at Gala Abu Ahmed (Jesse 2013), and private domestic architecture at Al-Meragh in the Bayuda Steppe (fig. 1; Kendall 2001, 2007, 2018). The earliest

surviving inscribed Kushite royal monuments at Meroe (fig. 2) likewise date, not to the 25th Dynasty, but to the Early Napatan era (Yellin 2004; Török 1997b: 28, 104; Pope 2014a: 5-33), and an example of Early Napatan royal statuary (fig. 5; Vercoutter 1961) was discovered at Defeia (fig. 1), near the confluence of the Blue and White Niles—hundreds of kilometers south of any known monument commissioned by the 25th Dynasty. Moreover, a considerable proportion of this archaeological evidence testifies not only to acts of construction and adornment but to subsequent episodes of *destruction* and *effacement*: some temples, statues, and stelae at Dukki Gel, Kawa, Barkal, Dangeil, and Meroe were later toppled and broken (fig. 2; Macadam 1949: 89, pl. 40; Dunham 1970: 3, 21-24, 33, pls. IIIa, XII-XXIII; Priebe 1974; Hinkel 2001: 191-200, 222-223; Bonnet and Valbelle 2005: 70-139; Anderson and Mohamed Ahmed 2009; Valbelle 2012: 51)—either by human hands or beneath the weight of a collapsed temple roof (Reisner 1920: 263; Grimal 1981: pls. XIa-XI, XVIa-XVI, XXIIa-XXII; Eide *et al.* 1996: 442, 446, 454-455)—while the names of Aspelta, his royal ancestresses, and others were systematically erased from Kushite royal stelae (figs. 2 and 3; Grimal 1981: pls. Va-VII; Lohwasser 2016: 127-130; Gozzoli 2018) and relief scenes (Macadam 1955: pl. XVb).

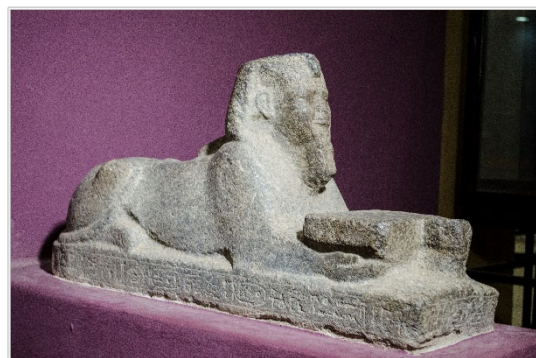


Figure 5. Sphinx of King Aspelta from Defeia.

Thus, the available bodies of evidence for the Napatan period, while often quite disparate, still present multiple opportunities for future research. The inscriptional corpus speaks to internal political processes in Kush

and broader relations with the desert and steppe that are much more elusive to the historian of earlier periods (e.g., cf. Spalinger 2019: 13-15). The variety of available material evidence can be analyzed, not only for economic and cultural exchange between Kush and Egypt, but also in pursuit of more precise dating methods: for example, much work remains to be done in differentiating the pottery, uninscribed art, and small finds of the 25th Dynasty from those of the centuries that followed in the Napatan period, with significant implications across a wide array of archaeological sites (Hill 2004: 51 n. 2; Russmann 1974: 20; Pope 2014a: 27, 29, 155, 179-181). Patterns of destruction might also allow the synchronization of textual and archaeological evidence at discrete moments on a historical timeline. The promise of future research on the Napatan era is particularly evident in three thematic areas discussed in further detail below: foreign relations, domestic statecraft, and chronology.

Foreign Relations

The transition between the 25th Dynasty and the ensuing Napatan period witnessed significant changes in the way Kush related to the outside world. The Neo-Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon had first driven the Kushite pharaoh Taharqo out of Lower Egypt, and Esarhaddon's successor, Ashurbanipal, soon returned to finish the job, expelling Taharqo from Upper Egypt and then rebuffing a brief *revanche* by Tanutamani (Onasch 1994; Kahn 2004). If the Greek accounts of Polyaeus and Pseudo-Aristaeus are to be believed, Tanutamani regained Memphis once more but was then defeated by the Assyrians' vassal at Sais, Psammetichus I (Burstein 1985). After the reign of Tanutamani, only a single Kushite king is named on any object in Egypt for the next four centuries (Daressy 1910), and the Kushite royal corpus's allusions to Egypt likewise become vague and formulaic (Cailliaud 1823: pl. LXI; Zibelius-Chen 1999: 712; Kuckertz 2018: 129). Many scholars have therefore assumed that subsequent Kushite kings (fig. 2) Atlanersa, Senkamanisken (fig. 6), Anlamani (fig. 7), and their descendants employed the

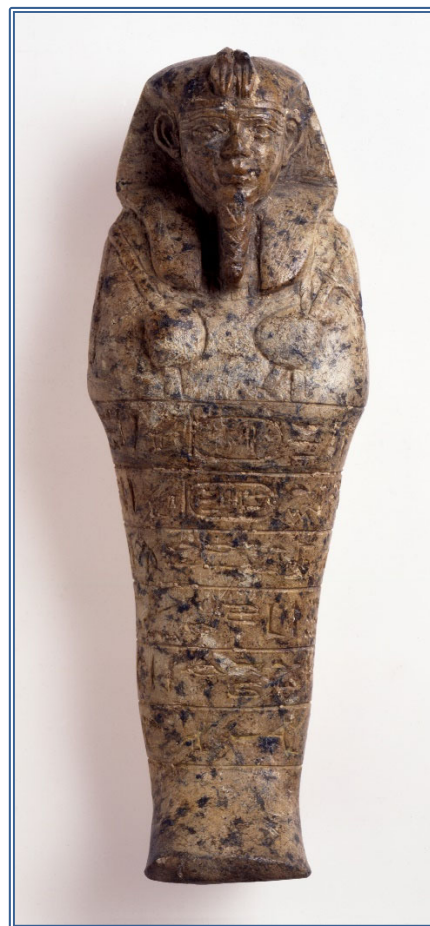


Figure 6. Shabti of Senkamanisken from Nuri, possibly from pyramid 3.



Figure 7. Broken head from a statue of King Anlamani at Dukki Gel.



Figure 8. Dorsal pillar of King Senkamanisken's shabti from Nuri pyramid 3.



Figure 9. Shabti of King Senkamanisken bearing only a single hoe from Nuri pyramid 3.

title *nswt bjtj* as an empty boast or vain ambition to regain their ancestors' status as "King of Upper and Lower Egypt"—a land from which they had long since become alienated (e.g., Arkell 1961: 138; Adams 1977: 249-254; Redford 2004: 145). However, Kushite princes and princesses continued to occupy high *priestly* offices in Upper Egypt even after their royal kinsmen had surrendered Lower Egypt (Camino 1964; Parker 1962: 5 fig. 2c, 29 §50, pls. 1, 15), and indeed the appointment of some *Egyptian* priests was conducted under the imprimatur of the Kushite king Tanutamani years after his expulsion from the country (Vittmann 2001). So loss of territory should not be equated with the immediate loss of influence or commerce. Kathryn Howley's thorough analysis of the shabti figurines buried during the Napatan period at Nuri has noted several features

indicative of Egyptian manufacture: the use of distinctly Egyptian materials like serpentine and alabaster, the latter carved most easily soon after its quarry; a particularly fine variety of faience found also on contemporaneous shabtis in Egypt; and the appearance of shabtis with dorsal pillars (fig. 8), bearing only a single hoe (fig. 9), or with text covering only the back side—all characteristics that first emerged in Egypt *after* the Kushite kings had been driven from Egyptian soil (Howley 2014, *fc.*). Likewise, Cara Sargent's grammatical study of Kushite royal inscriptions has revealed that "there are few, if any, linguistic anomalies in the Classical Egyptian Napatan texts that do not also occur in contemporary Egyptian texts," so she proposes that throughout the era "Napatans were 'keeping pace' linguistically with their northern neighbors" (2004: 8; see also Doll 1978). Most recently, Elizabeth Eltze observes that the title *nswt bjtj* need not signify

any Kushite pretension to renewed dominion in Egypt, because the title had acquired a broader, cosmic significance long before it was adopted by the kings of Kush (2018: 53-55). Kushite use of Egyptian language and manufactures during the Napatan period was not the mere reminiscence of an earlier golden era, but instead the product of ongoing exchange with Egyptian neighbors and contemporaries to the north.

In addition to linguistic and commercial exchange, the Napatan era also witnessed direct military conflict between Egypt and Nubia. During the early sixth century BCE, the Egyptian king Psammetichus II orchestrated an invasion of Nubian territory that is attested in multiple graffiti and royal inscriptions (fig. 4; Weigall 1907: 113, pl. LXIV 6; Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952; Bernard and Masson 1957: 1-20; Bernard 1962: D8-D9, j G, VI, XVIII; Bakry 1967; Magnanini 1973: 61-62; Žába, Hintze, and Verner 1974: 193-194; Masson, Martin, and Nicholls 1978: 50-54; Masson 1979: 195-196; Goedicke 1981; Bresciani 1988: 257-259; Meiggs and Lewis 1989: 12-13; Eide et al. 1994: 279-290; Der Manuelian 1994: 333-371; Gozzoli 1995; Dillon 1997; Adiego 2006: 109-110, 115-119; Schmitz 2010; Jansen-Winkel 2014: 303-304, 318-319, 408-410; Gozzoli 2017: 45-61, 107-116). The specific target(s), cause(s), and geographic extent of this military campaign are still debated (e.g., Török 1997a: 371-374; Pope 2014a: 87-94; Koch 2014; Gozzoli 2017: 45-61; Zurawski 2019), because the surviving evidence does not explicitly name Psammetichus's southern foe or his *casus belli*, and some of the Nubian toponyms mentioned in the Egyptians' itinerary remain ambiguous—e.g., “the Land of the *Nehesyu*,” *Sbas*, *Ta-Debenet* (“The Hill”), and the “Residence of the *Qore*” at “[...]r[...]ba” (Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952: pls. III-IV). At the very least, the evidence of material culture indicates that Psammetichus II's southward march achieved Egyptian control of Lower Nubia's riverine fortresses for at least the next century (Heidorn 1991: 206; 2018). Many authors have further linked the textual accounts of Psammetichus II's campaign with the archaeological evidence of destruction in *Upper Nubia* (e.g., Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952; Gozzoli 2017: 51-52)—

including a burned treasury at Sanam (Griffith 1922: 118, but cf. Vincentelli 2011: 271), as well as mutilated statues of King Aspelta and his predecessors (fig. 2) at Dukki Gel (Bonnet and Valbelle 2005: 70-139), Dangeil (Anderson and Mohamed Ahmed 2009), possibly at Kawa (Macadam 1949: 89, pl. 40), and convincingly at Barkal (Dunham 1970: 3, 21-24, 33, pls. IIIa, XII-XXIII), where Aspelta's palace was also damaged (Kendall and Wolf 2007: 82, 86-87) and his name erased from royal stelae (fig. 3; Grimal 1981: pls. VIIa-VII; Lohwasser 2016: 127-130; Gozzoli 2018). Yet this convenient linkage of textual and archaeological evidence is now disputed by Carola Koch (2014) and Bodgan Zurawski (2019), both of whom would attribute the destruction to other causes and argue instead that Psammetichus II's target was more likely to have been a Lower Nubian rebel, not the Kushite king Aspelta in Upper Nubia. Koch's and Zurawski's hypotheses are still so new that they have not yet been systematically evaluated by a large group of scholars.

The proposed linkage between Psammetichus II's invasion and the destruction of Upper Nubian monuments has given rise to a chain of attendant theories, each sparking its own debate. In the middle of the twentieth century CE, Jean Yoyotte associated Psammetichus's campaign against Nubia with the widespread erasure of the 25th Dynasty's names from monuments *in Egypt* and their replacement there with the names of Psammetichus II (Yoyotte 1951). Quite recently, authors have further speculated that this program of *damnatio memoriae* would have been accompanied by “cheap racial slurs” and “racial profiling” in Egypt directed against Kushites of the Napatan era (Wilkinson 2010: 423; Barrat 2014). Yet Koch observes that the monuments of Psammetichus II's royal kinswomen were still honoring the names of the 25th Dynasty for years after the conclusion of his reign, so the Egyptian king's occasional replacement of such names with his own should be interpreted, not as a policy of iconoclasm against hated foreigners, but as typical instances of a pharaoh usurping his predecessor's monuments (2014: 401-404). According to Koch, erasures of 25th Dynasty names that were *not* replaced by that of

Psammetichus II could have resulted from later Egyptian struggles against Kushite adversaries (*ibid.*: 404-408). Even so, Koch questions whether Egyptian antipathy toward Kushite royalty was ever widespread or enduring in the Late Period, since Egyptian kings continued to inscribe monuments in honor of the Kushite 25th Dynasty two hundred years after Psammetichus II's lifetime (*ibid.*: 405). Even if some Egyptian antagonism toward the Kushite royal house did exist in the Napatan period, no scholar has yet made a reasoned case that such feelings would have derived from "race"—a social construct that may well be anachronistic for the study of ancient Egypt (Trigger 1978b; Keita 1993).

If Psammetichus II's campaign actually reached the Fourth Cataract, then it may be linked to a decline in royal construction in that region during the early sixth century BCE and the simultaneous rise of Meroe to the south (Vila 1980: 170; Lohwasser 2001: 78; Yellin 2004; Baud 2010: 51; Pope 2014a: 30-33); if Psammetichus's campaign did *not* reach the Fourth Cataract, then those changes within Upper Nubia must be explained by other means. One factor influencing foreign policy may have been dynastic conflict, as there are multiple suggestions of internal strife within the Early Napatan regime. The evidence of the Dedication Stela (ADS in fig. 3; Schäfer 1895; Valbelle 2012: 9-19) suggests that the Kushite king Anlamani deliberately sidelined a collateral branch of his family by relegating his sister to a minor office with a surprisingly modest endowment (Vinogradov 2012). In addition, vandalism upon Aspelta's Enthronement Stela (ASE in fig. 3; Grimal 1981: pls. Va-VII) specifically erased his list of ancestresses reaching back several generations—an unlikely target for Psammetichus II's Egyptian soldiers (Lohwasser 2016: 127-130; Gozzoli 2018: 349-351). Moreover, Aspelta's many successors over the next century do not appear to have erected or renovated temples anywhere beyond Meroe (fig. 2). While trade with the Egyptian north evidently continued (Howley 2014, *fc.*), and the funerary arts and literature in Nubia still developed under Kushite royal patronage (fig. 10; Dunham 1955; Doll 1978; Doll 2014; Balanda 2020), the composition of historical



Figure 10. Funerary cylinder sheath of King Amanastabarqo.

inscriptions either ceased or diminished to so few examples that none has survived (figs. 2 and 3) between the reigns of Aspelta and Amannoterike (sometimes read as "Irike-Amannote": see Eltze 2018: 40). External sources (fig. 4) claim that a series of dramatic conflicts transpired between Nubia and Egypt during this interval—e.g., the defection of Apries' soldiers to Nubia (Schäfer 1904), an Egyptian caravan to Nubia in 529 BCE (Erichsen 1941: 57; Zauzich 1992;), the (likely apocryphal) aggression of a Kushite king "Aktisanes" against the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis (Eide et al. 1996: 515-520), and the dubious invasion of "Aithiopia" attributed to Cambyses II (Eide et al. 1994: 323-330; Török 2014: 32-37, 107-11)—but internal sources from Nubia itself make no mention of any of these events (Török 2014: 110). It remains unclear whether non-political factors played any significant role in this prolonged Kushite silence, for a plague in "Aithiopia" (presumably

Nubia) during the fifth century BCE is reported by only a single Greek contemporary (Thucydides) who never traveled to Nubia (fig. 4; Eide et al. 1996: 393-396). Whatever the cause, the Early Napatan regime buried at Nuri after Aspetla evidently witnessed some change in either its priorities, its fortunes, or both, between the beginning of the sixth century BCE and the middle of the fifth.

When the proverbial fog lifts from Napatan history at that century's end during the reigns of Amannoterike and his successors, the geographic foci of recorded events have diversified noticeably. In the north, Harsiyotef and Nastasen claim to have waged campaigns against foes in Lower Nubia (Schäfer 1901: Taf. IV; Grimal 1981: pls. XIXa-XIX; Zibelius-Chen 1972: 94-95, 101, 126-127; Eide et al. 1996: 438, 451, 489; Peust 1999: 41). In the south, Meroe is explicitly named as a royal residence in both Kushite (AER I in Figure 3; Macadam 1949: pls. 17, 22; Eide et al. 1996: 401) and Greek texts (Eide et al. 1994: 308; Török 2014: 31), while the temples of Kawa (and soon Barkal) have fallen into disrepair (Macadam 1949: pls. 19, 21, 24, 26; Grimal 1981: pls. XVIa-XVI; Eide et al. 1996: 412, 418, 447), and the resumption of detailed historical reportage now targets a host of enemies from the desert and steppe (some of the italicized names in Figure 3), without mention of Egypt or the Mediterranean world. Following the 25th Dynasty's loss of Egypt centuries earlier, these subsequent changes across the Napatan period have been characterized as a "Kushite retreat into Africa" (Kendall 1982: 11). Yet such an interpretation implicitly assumes that an indeterminate Africa south of Napata already belonged to the Kushite kings as their natural inheritance. A 2014 study by the current author has proposed instead that the Keraba and Butana regions (fig. 1) may have been zones of active expansion for kings of the Napatan period, "rather than a territorial bequest from their Twenty-Fifth Dynasty forebears" (2014a: 33). If this hypothesis withstands further scrutiny, then it would recast the Napatan period as one of territorial growth in at least one direction—the south. During the reigns of Amannoterike, Harsiyotef, and Nastasen, several military

campaigns were narrated against named polities and leaders (italicized in Figure 3), including repeated appearances by the Medja (Meded=Mediye=Metete?; Schäfer 1901: Taf. IV; Macadam 1949: pls. 18, 23; Grimal 1981: pls. XVIIIa-XIX; Eide et al. 1996: 399, 407, 425, 448-450, 492; Peust 1999: 43), whom scholars have localized partly to the Nubian Desert (Zibelius-Chen 1972: 133-137; Updegraff 1988: 55-57). Yet most of the other toponyms and persons carefully listed and described by the Late Napatan kings are otherwise unknown to the Egyptologist, Classicist, biblicist, or Assyriologist. Indeed, when "Aithiopian" soldiers do appear in Greek texts of this Late Napatan era (fig. 4), many are described with weaponry and attire uncharacteristic of the Kushite troops (Eide et al. 1994: 314; Török 2014: 38-39, 116-117). Even for famed episodes like Nectanebo II's flight to "Aithiopia" in the fourth century BCE (Eide et al. 1996: 501-503), no explicit reference is made in the Kushite royal record (Ladynin 2010; Wojciechowska 2016: 55-57), and attempts to identify Nastasen's foe, Kambasawden (fig. 3; Schäfer 1901: Taf. III; Peust 1999: 39), with the Upper Egyptian rebel Khababash are no longer entertained by most scholars (e.g., Eide et al. 1996: 503; Welsby 1996: 66; Williams *fc.*). A Greek account of an "Aithiopian" attack on Elephantine (fig. 4; Sachau 1911: no. 48, pl. 39; Eide et al. 1996: 536-538) likewise finds no echo in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Kush (fig. 3). Foreign affairs of the Late Napatan period thereby become not ahistorical, mythic, or timeless, but simply incongruent with Greek and Egyptian lore and consequently unfamiliar to modern ears. It can at least be hoped that future research will succeed in correlating more of the obscure toponyms of the written record (Zibelius-Chen 1972) with the few excavated sites of the central Sudan (e.g., Kendall 2001; Jesse 2013; Edwards 2014: 122-128; Lohwasser 2014: 128-129; Brass, Kozieradzka-Ogunmakin, and Fuller 2018; Kendall 2018), bringing the archaeology of the Napatan era closer to its history.

Domestic Statecraft

Across the same span of centuries when Kush's foreign affairs became progressively more difficult to trace, its domestic affairs were illuminated through the surprising transparency of official record. The Napatan corpus is remarkable among the royal annals of antiquity for its detailed and relatively forthright accounts describing the investiture and legitimation of Kushite rulers—as if political traditions were being deliberately invented and reinforced through inscription. The resulting image of Napatan statecraft sometimes departs noticeably (and perhaps self-consciously) from Egyptian precedent, while yielding possible clues to Kushite traditions that had been limned only briefly in the earlier accounts of the 25th Dynasty. A stela erected by Aspelta at Barkal (ASE in fig. 3; Grimal 1981: pls. Va-VII; Eide et al. 1994: 232-252) depicts the expected protocol of oracular election, but this stamp of divine approval merely culminates a much longer process in which the army deliberated over the choice of an appropriate successor, decided to bring the matter to the temple priesthood, and then presented to the god a cohort of eligible royal brethren. In its emphasis upon the elevation of the king from among this cohort, Aspelta's account may echo a tradition recorded briefly by Taharqo in the preceding century (Macadam 1949: pls. 7-10; Eide et al. 1994: 139, 153; Revez 2014b). The version commissioned by Aspelta also carefully emphasizes that some earlier traditions were rejected during his selection in favor of specifically Kushite alternatives. A 2014 article by Jean Revez notes a divine competition at the heart of the account pitting an “essentially Egyptian” god against a local one: even though the army first conceded that the selection of a king “has been the decision of Ra since heaven came into being and since crowning the king came into being,” they eventually decided to appeal instead to “*Amen-Ra*, Lord of the Thrones of Two-Lands, who resides in the Pure Mountain [Gebel Barkal],” because “he is the god of Kush” and “has been the god of the kings of Kush since the time of Ra,” so that “the kings of Kush have (always) been in his hands” (Revez 2014a: 213). The text thereby claims that preference

for Amen-Ra over Ra had *not* initially been self-evident to all, suggesting that the royal investiture involved some degree of negotiation between foreign and local traditions, as well as between groups of Kushite citizens (viz., the army, priesthood, and royal family).

Other texts show how new kings were then legitimated across the larger Napatan state beyond the town of Napata itself. Royal inscriptions commissioned by Anlamani (ANE in fig. 3; Macadam 1949: pls. 15-16; Eide et al. 1994: 216-228), Amannoterike (AER I: Macadam 1949: pls. 17-26; Eide et al. 1996: 400-428), Harsiyotef (HAR: Grimal 1981: pls. XI-XIII, XXIIa-XXIII; Eide et al. 1996: 438-464), and Nastasen (NAS: Schäfer 1901: Taf. I-IV; Eide et al. 1996: 471-501; Peust 1999: 34-44) depict a process in which the newly crowned king traveled downstream from Napata to Kawa, then to Pnubs (Kerma/Dukki Gel), and finally (in the fourth century BCE) to the enigmatic site of Tare (Tarae/Tele), receiving royal insignia distinctive to each site: the cap-crown and dominion-scepters at Napata, the bow and arrows at Kawa, and the water skin at Pnubs (Török 1995: 65-72; Zibelius-Chen 2002: 116-119). In each temple, documentation of his initial, Napatan coronation was first read aloud, so that coronation became “not a singular event binding across the realm, but a series of interdependent events each conferring localized authority” (Pope 2014a: 38). The internal logic of this “ambulatory kingship” was first recognized by Nubiologist László Török (1992a), who further argued that the regional division of the coronation ritual might in turn reflect the regional division of Kushite governance during the Napatan era (1995: 72). The hypothesis is a logical one in view of the Nubian landscape, whose surviving monuments (and presumed population centers) were separated from one another by Nile cataracts, adverse currents, and stretches of intervening desert, Sahel, and steppe (see again fig. 1). Moreover, the regions included within the coronation circuit during the Late Napatan era (HAR and NAS in fig. 3) include one site (Tare/Tarae/Tele) that was not mentioned during the Early Napatan era, and



Figure 11. Pyramid of King Nastasen at Nuri (Nu. 15).

the resulting itinerary differs even more fundamentally from that recorded during the 25th Dynasty, suggesting a creative evolution of Kushite political tradition (Pope 2014a: 41-58). Some Napatan royal inscriptions (ADS, DGS, and KHA in fig. 3; Schäfer 1895; M. B. Reisner 1934; Valbelle 2012) also list the names and offices of the kingdom's leading administrators (Pope 2014a: 146-147 Table A), but these have thus far resisted correlation with individual provinces of the Kushite state. Likewise, modern speculation about centralized ceramic production within the ancient Napatan state (Trigger 1978a: 226-227) has yet to be sufficiently demonstrated through comparative analysis across multiple sites. As generous as the Napatan corpus may be with details of domestic governance, there is much work left to be done before the internal workings of the kingdom can be satisfactorily understood.

Chronology

Reisner's sequencing of the Nuri tombs (Reisner 1919: 57-58; Dunham 1955: 2-3) has withstood a century of examination and still forms the accepted chronology for most of the Napatan period (fig. 2 above; Welsby 1996: 207-209; Török 1997a: 200-206; Von Beckerath 1999: 272-273; Edwards 2004: 115; Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 187-188), but no such consensus exists for the century that followed Nuri's abandonment. After the construction of

Nastasen's pyramid (Nuri 15 in figs. 2 and 11; Dunham 1955: Map), scholars do not agree on the sequence of kings or even the total number of them who ruled, and the uncertainty is exacerbated by the fact that several of the most conspicuous monuments on the Nubian landscape bear no surviving royal names. Foremost among these is the largest tomb (and only surviving pyramid) at (el-)Kurru (Kurru 1 in figs. 2 and 12; Dunham 1950: 23-24 Fig. 6), which has been dated provisionally to Nastasen's successor through stylistic analysis of its decorated chapel (Emberling 2015; Yellin 2015b). The reuse of Kurru after three centuries at Nuri may signal another dynastic struggle between branches of the royal family, but the details remain wholly mysterious, and Kurru seems to have been abandoned once again in the very next generation. Another two pyramids, this time at Barkal (11 and 14 in fig. 2; Dunham 1957: 22-23, 34-35, pl. IVa), are central to the most popular chronology explaining the next several decades of Napatan history: some scholars (e.g., Priese 1977; Welsby 1996: 208; Török 1997a: 203) maintain that one of these Barkal pyramids was commissioned by a King Gatisen attested on a lost inscription from Nuri (Priese 1977: figs. 1-2; Eide et al. 1996: 513-514) and on a relief fragment among the Barkal temples (Dunham 1970: 34, pl. XXXVII), while the other pyramid (either Barkal 11 or 14) belonged to a successor named Aryamani who left inscriptions at Kawa (K XIV-XV in fig. 3;



Figure 12. Kite photograph of el-Kurru showing largest pyramid (Ku. 1) in the foreground.

Macadam 1949: pls. 32-34; Eide et al. 1996: 522-532). According to one interpretation (Priese 1977: 355), the international fame of the Late Napatan king Gatisen in the fourth century BCE then led the Hellenistic author Hecataeus of Abdera to retroject him (under the moniker “Aktisanes”) into an account of much earlier and possibly apocryphal events of the *Early* Napatan era, an error later perpetuated by Diodorus Siculus (fig. 4; Eide et al. 1996: 515-520). Perhaps owing to this chronological morass, some have even termed the kings buried at Barkal as “Early Meroitic,” thereby associating them less with the Napatan period than with the epoch that followed it (Priese 1977; Pope 2014a: 42-45).

Yet this scenario has come under criticism in recent decades, particularly from Robert Morkot (1993: 191, 226; 2000: 147-150, 157), Timothy Kendall (1999: 34, 64), and Aidan Dodson (2012: 140-141, 270 n. 15). Noting the resemblance of the royal epithets employed in

the Barkal relief fragment and Kawa stela XIV to those used by the Ramesside kings in Egypt during the late second millennium BCE, they propose that these texts might actually belong to Kushite kings of the *early* first millennium BCE—i.e., the era *preceding* the 25th Dynasty, long before the period defined here as “Napatan.” Morkot further argues that the name written in the Barkal relief fragment admits several readings dissimilar to “Aktisanes,” and he observes that the hieroglyphs in the cartouches upon Kawa stela XIV could be read, not as “Aryamani,” but as “Alara, beloved of Amun”—an ancestor of Taharqo from the early eighth century BCE (2000: 147-149). Under this scenario, the Barkal pyramids (11, 14, 15, and 18 in fig. 2; Dunham 1957: 22-23, 34-35, 42-43, 49-50) would belong to an entirely different era than the Nuri inscription, Barkal relief fragment, and Kawa inscriptions (K XIV and K XV in fig. 3; Macadam 1949: pls. 32-34; Eide et al.

1996: 522-532). The hypothesis voiced by Morkot, Kendall, and Dodson has not received widespread support (cf. Zibelius-Chen 1996: 204-206; Török 1997a: 394; Peust 1999: 46-47, 70-71; Török 2008: 158-159), but it underscores the remarkable ambiguity of the available evidence. Of the competing published interpretations, none as yet presents a thorough analysis of the relevant art and inscriptions on the basis of their style, iconography, palaeography, orthography, lexicography, grammar, and archaeological context. The researchers who choose to undertake this exercise in the future must accept the possibility that it could yield a mere confirmation of the chronology already followed by a plurality of scholars, without

exciting revisions to our understanding of the period. Nevertheless, such research would perform an invaluable service by placing that understanding on firmer epistemological ground. In any case, it would seem most logical in the interim *not* to place the Barkal pyramids 11, 14, 15, and 18 within the Meroitic period (Zibelius-Chen 2006: 284; Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 188; Pope 2014a: xx), because they bear no significant, discernible connection to the changes and results of the late third century BCE, when the kings of Kush abandoned the Napatan cemeteries and chose instead to be buried at Meroe for the next seven hundred years.

Bibliographic Notes

Unlike the 25th Dynasty, the Napatan period has never formed the exclusive subject of a published *historical* monograph—i.e., one focused, not upon a particular category of evidence, but instead upon narrating events, their causes, and the motivations of their agents. Economic and social histories of the era are particularly unexplored, in part because few papyri have survived in Nubia and because non-royal Kushites rarely seem to have enjoyed access to the specialized scribes, craftsmen, and artists needed to produce lasting monuments of self-presentation (Pope 2019b and *fc.*). Nevertheless, royalty of the Napatan period is covered in sumptuous detail alongside the 25th Dynasty in several excellent overviews of Kush during the first millennium BCE—most notably, in László Török’s *The Kingdom of Kush* (1997a), his *Image of the Ordered World in Ancient Nubian Art* (2002), and in Angelika Lohwasser’s *Die königlichen Frauen im antiken Reich von Kusch* (2001). Most book-length studies devoted to the Napatan era have focused upon its material culture at sites of royal monumentality (fig. 2), much of which was lavishly documented by assistants to the lead excavators: George Reisner’s excavations at el-Kurru, Nuri, and Barkal were later published by Dows Dunham (1950; 1955; 1970), and Francis Llewellyn Griffith’s work at Kawa was published in a four-volume series by Miles F. L. Macadam (1949; 1955). By contrast, John Garstang’s excavations at Meroe were not adequately published until nearly a century later through the careful efforts of László Török (1997b). The finds of all of those excavations are now housed primarily at the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Liverpool’s School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies (SAOS), the British Museum, and the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, with additional documentation at the neighboring Griffith Institute. These collections and archives have provided valuable data sets for doctoral theses—e.g., the unpublished dissertation of Sanhoury Al-Rayah (1981), a recent book by Brigitte Balanda (2020), and a forthcoming book by Kathryn Howley. Beginning with the Brooklyn Museum in 1978 (Wenig 1978), several institutions have showcased traveling exhibitions and produced catalogs highlighting and analyzing a broad chronological sweep of Nubian material culture and art, including that of the Napatan era (e.g., Wildung 1998). Ongoing excavations may be followed especially in the pages of the journals *Sudan & Nubia* and *Der Antike Sudan: Mitteilungen der Sudanarchaeologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*. The Kushite royal inscriptions of the Napatan period (fig. 3)

have thus far been treated primarily as a subject for philological, rather than historical, analysis. The first and second volumes of the *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* series (Eide et al. 1994 and 1996) provide transliterations and translations of nearly all royal inscriptions, and detailed photographs and hand copies of these (Macadam 1949; Grimal 1981) have facilitated philological analysis by Karl-Heinz Priese (1965), Carsten Peust (1999), Cara Sargent (2004), and Dominique Valbelle (2012). Particularly original among textual analyses is Elizabeth Eltze's 2018 doctoral thesis, which uses the Great Inscription of Amannoterike (AER I in Figure 3) to produce a biographical study of the king. Given the lack of chronological continuity and topical connection among the available bodies of evidence (cf. figs. 2-4), a narrative history of the Napatan period would be exceptionally challenging to construct, but the material culture, art, and texts of the era are each impressively detailed for such a distant epoch of antiquity.

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- Figure 1. Map of northeast Africa during the first millennium BCE, overlaid with approximate modern boundaries. (Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Cartography Laboratory.)
- Figure 2. Selected Kushite royal monuments of the Napatan period and their findspots in Nubia (cf. fig. 1). This chart includes minor architectural additions and loose blocks inscribed with royal names, but it excludes palaces, treasuries, tombs of queens and royal kin, small finds, stelae without surviving royal names (e.g., the Banishment/Excommunication Stela: Eide et al. 1994: 252-258), and building activity that is only described in royal stelae without material confirmation. DG = Dukki Gel. For convenience, the column labeled “Dongola” includes both Old Dongola (findspot of Atlanersa’s obelisk) and New Dongola (findspot of Nastasen’s stela). References for most monuments may be found in the accompanying article. (Chart by the author.)
- Figure 3. Selected Kushite royal inscriptions recording events of the Napatan period (excluding most funerary texts). Items in red font were likely vandalized. Obscure toponyms, ethnonyms, and personal names are shown in italics. ANE=Anlamani’s Enthronement Stela (Macadam 1949: pls. 15-16); ASE=Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela (Grimal 1981: pls. Va-VII); ADS=Aspelta’s Dedication Stela (Valbelle 2012: 9-19); DGS=Dukki Gel Stela (Valbelle 2012: 21-25); KHA=Khaliut Stela (M. B. Reisner 1934); AER=Amannoterike’s Inscriptions (with Roman numerals) (Macadam 1949: pls. 17-30); HAR=Harsiyotef’s Stela (Peust 1999: 24-33); NAS=Nastasen’s Stela (Peust 1999: 34-46); K=Kawa stelae (with Roman numerals) (Peust 1999: 46-52; Macadam 1949 pls. 31-34). (Chart by the author.)
- Figure 4. Selected major events (some likely apocryphal) in Nubia or involving groups of Kushites (not single individuals) during the Napatan period, as claimed or indirectly attested by non-Kushite sources written in Egyptian hieroglyphs (𓆎), Demotic Egyptian (*italicized*), Phoenician (𐤂), Biblical Hebrew (א), Carian (𐤀), and Greek (δ). Sources are color-coded here to match the events upon which they report, and sources labeled as “intermediate” survive only as quotations within later, “retrospective” sources shown in the same color. References for each non-Kushite source may be found in the accompanying article. (Chart by the author.)
- Figure 5. Sphinx of King Aspelta (Sudan National Museum 11777) from Defeia. (Photograph courtesy of Kathryn Howley, used with permission of the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum and the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums.)
- Figure 6. Shabti of Senkamanisken from Nuri, possibly from pyramid 3 (UM/IEAA 1981.1.41). E. H. Little and Suzanne Trezevant Little Fund. (Courtesy of the Institute of Egyptian Art & Archaeology of the University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee.)
- Figure 7. Broken head from a statue of King Anlamani at Dukki Gel. (© Swiss-Franco-Sudanese Archaeological Mission of Kerma/Dukki Gel.)

- Figure 8. Dorsal pillar of King Senkamanisken's shabti from Nuri pyramid 3. British Museum EA55508. (Photograph by Kathryn Howley, taken courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)
- Figure 9. Shabti of King Senkamanisken bearing only a single hoe from Nuri pyramid 3. British Museum EA55508. (Photograph by Kathryn Howley, taken courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)
- Figure 10. Funerary cylinder sheath of King Amaniastabarqo (Sudan National Museum 1360). (Photograph courtesy of Kathryn Howley, used with permission of the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum and the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums.)
- Figure 11. Pyramid of King Nastasen at Nuri (Nu. 15). (Courtesy of the Nuri Archaeological Expedition.)
- Figure 12. Kite photograph of el-Kurru showing largest pyramid (Ku. 1) in the foreground. (Photograph courtesy of Kathryn Howley.)