



## KUSHITE KINGS BEFORE THE TWENTY-FIFTH DYNASTY

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### ABSTRACT

Before the beginning of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty with pharaoh Shebitqo, we lack reliable historical and chronological sources. Although the succession Alara–Kashta–Pi(ankh)y is generally accepted, it is far from clear if there were other rulers between them. Apart from having possible gaps in the line of the known kings, there is the question of the chronological position of the so-called Neo-Ramesside kings. At least two of them can be placed in the early phase of the Kingdom of Kush. In this paper, I intend to evaluate all these sources in order to present gaps, proofs, and assumptions of the period immediately before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

Since the publication of the excavations of G. A. Reisner<sup>1</sup> and a comprehensive presentation of the evidence by Macadam,<sup>2</sup> the succession line of Kushite rulers has generally been accepted. Although there have been some adaptations, mostly concerning the placement of the rulers buried in the Jebel Barkal pyramids,<sup>3</sup> it was only recently that the succession of the earlier kings has been contested: the sequence of two kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, namely Shabaqo and Shebitqo, was reversed. In a longstanding and interdisciplinary debate, the sequence Shebitqo–Shabaqo now is finally proven.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the line of succession of earlier kings needs a deeper investigation as well. The following attempt will go backward step by step

from the secure basis of Shebitqo—this was the first king mentioned by Manetho in his history of Nubian rulers.<sup>5</sup>

### PI(ANKH)Y–KASHTA–ALARA

The names of the kings Pi(ankh)y<sup>6</sup> and Kashta were already known at the time of Reisner: inscriptions to the Kushite god's wives in Thebes present not only their own names but also those of their fathers.<sup>7</sup> Although erased in many places, they are still preserved in several documents, and it was already known in the 19th century that Amenirdis I was the daughter of Kashta and Shepenupet II was the daughter of Pi(ankh)y. The great victory stele of Pi(ankh)y anchors this king in the history of events,

since the long inscription contains many names of (Egyptian) local rulers of the time.<sup>8</sup> Objects found in pyramid El Kurru (Ku.) 17<sup>9</sup> and bearing the name of Pi(ankh)y clearly assign the tomb to this king. Therefore, this tomb was used by Reisner as the starting point for his reconstruction of the royal sequence. According to typological and archaeological features, he classified the tombs of the cemetery of El Kurru in order to establish a sequence of the individual tombs.<sup>10</sup> Even though the chronology of the earlier tombs has been the focus of different interpretations,<sup>11</sup> his assignment of the tombs dated immediately before Pi(ankh)y to the well-known names of Kushite kings nevertheless has not been contested. At the time of Reisner's excavation, only the name of Kashta was known from external sources, thus he attributes Ku. 8 to this king ("probably tomb of Kashta"<sup>12</sup>). From the tomb of Tabiry (Ku. 53), a wife of Pi(ankh)y, a mortuary stela names Alara as her father.<sup>13</sup> Since two stelae of Taharqa mentioning Alara had been found by F. Ll. Griffith in Kawa, this king was also known from external sources at the time of publication of the excavation of El Kurru by Dows Dunham in 1950. Nevertheless, he did not attribute any tomb to this king. This was only done in the reevaluation of the excavation records by Tim Kendall in 1999.<sup>14</sup>

In the following, the information on Kashta and Alara, as well as their connection to Pi(ankh)y, will be put to the test. Before that, however, the connection between Shebitqo and Pi(ankh)y should be briefly considered. In the few monuments of Shebitqo a predecessor is not mentioned. This is not unusual, but typically the ruler sequence is established by a certain density of documents. Concerning the sequence from Pi(ankh)y to Shebitqo, however, we have not only a sparse but also a regionally diverse amount of monuments. From Shebitqo, with the exception of his grave at El Kurru and some scarabs distributed in graves at Sanam and Meroe, we know so far of no mentions in Kush. In Egypt, on the contrary, the extension of the chapel of Osiris Heqa-Djet is connected to his name, as well as some Nile-level records and few other installations.<sup>15</sup> The remains documenting the name of Pi(ankh)y are concentrated at Jebel Barkal: in addition to the triumphal stele found there—which focuses on the events in Egypt—it is construction work in the temple of Amun and its decoration that gives information, as do blocks from temple B 900.<sup>16</sup> His tomb in El Kurru, Ku. 17, is dated before that of Shebitqo (Ku. 18<sup>17</sup>) for typological reasons. The

relative sequence cannot be doubted, but it remains open if this was without interruption. Precisely because of the weak documentation of this time, another king between Pi(ankh)y and Shebitqo cannot be excluded—especially since a regionally limited exercise of power should be considered.<sup>18</sup>

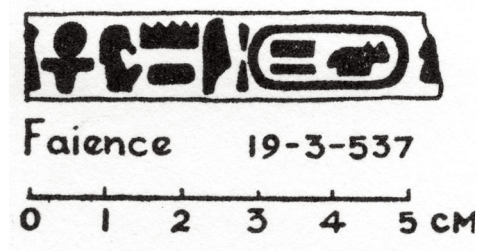
As already mentioned, for archaeological reasons, tomb Ku. 8 is assigned to Kashta, although his name is nowhere preserved in this structure.<sup>19</sup> The name of Kashta is attested at El Kurru only once, namely on the fragment of a faience offering table.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this fragment was found in a secondary location in the filling of the staircase of the later pyramid Ku. 1. This pyramid is situated directly east to Ku. 8, but the staircase of this enormous monument is on its most distant spot. Moreover, the attribution of this fragment is not clear, as only a part of the text is preserved. It starts exactly before the beginning of the name Kashta. The traces of the hieroglyphs before the cartouche do not fit to any of the usual introductions of a cartouche or king's name; therefore, it may also have been an expression of kinship formed with the royal name (FIG. 1). The surviving part of the first visible hieroglyph resembles a sitting woman, therefore I propose to identify this kinship term as *hm.t nsw*. Her theophoric name would include Amun, which has parallels in the names of the women of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty in Kush, such as Amanitakaye or Tekehatamani.<sup>21</sup> Behind Amun the sign could be read as *nh*, but in fact it can also be two different hieroglyphs grouped one above the other. The following hieroglyph is again only partly preserved and thus difficult to identify. It may be a reed (*j*) or a feather (*šw*, *m<sup>3</sup>t*) or even a *tj*. Be that as it may, the fragment did not belong to a royal monument but was inscribed for a wife of king Kashta. This leads to the observation that in fact there is no evidence for Kashta in El Kurru at all. What I am about to show is that, while Ku. 8 has to be dated typologically before Pi(ankh)y and may have hosted a royal or princely burial because of its size, we cannot know for sure that it belonged to Kashta.

Kendall assigned Ku. 9 to Alara, although there is also no evidence for it—except that Ku. 9 dates clearly earlier than Ku. 8.<sup>22</sup> As already stated, the name of Alara appears at El Kurru only in the filiation on the stela of his daughter Tabiry. She mentions, as well, her mother Kasaqa, whose name was documented also at Kawa. Thus, the evidence is similar to that of Kashta: Not the king himself, but family members are attested at El Kurru.



c. Ku. 1. Fragment from faïence offering table of Kashta. 19-3-537. EG. 25

a



b



c

FIGURE 1: Fragment of a faience offering table bearing a royal name (a: photo after Dunham 1950, fig. 7c; b: drawing after Dunham 1950, pl. XXXII.C. c: reconstruction by the author).

In the chapel of Ku. 9, Reisner found a block with a relief that was published not by him but only later in the revisionary investigation of Kendall.<sup>23</sup> In 1999, Kendall interpreted the relief as being part of a human head with a helmet-like crown and a semi-uraeus. However, in preparing this paper Kendall and I agreed that this is not the correct identification and that the block must have been a fragment of another motif. During the conference, Janice Yellin was able to identify it as part of a representation of Osiris (FIG. 2).<sup>24</sup> The upper body with scepter and flagellum is incised as a single line; no inner structure such as the hands holding the instruments was implemented. It seems that the god seated, facing to the right, as a streamer hanging from his crown is visible above his left shoulder. The relief is totally flat; thus, the body is not convex, and it can therefore be suggested that the relief remained unfinished. The block itself was found as a loose block in chapel Ku. 9, and no adjoining blocks are documented. Therefore, it is not certain whether the block originates from there or was translocated from another chapel.<sup>25</sup> It is not possible to date the relief, since there are no parallels recorded from El Kurru. The representation of the sitting Osiris on the stela of Tabiry,<sup>26</sup> although incised with a single line, shows inner structure. Moreover, there is no streamer hanging from the crown. The royal funerary stelae in Nuri depict Osiris as well.<sup>27</sup> All representations

display the hands of the god holding scepter and flagellum, and all of them lack the streamer at the crown. The relief depicting Osiris in B 900 differs, since he is not mummified and holding both arms apart.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, at present, there is no indication for a dating of this specific block, especially if it is considered to be unfinished.

Summing up, in El Kurru we enter safe ground only with the burial of Pi(ankh)y. The attribution of Ku. 8 to Kashta and Ku. 9 to Alara is only hypothetical. Moreover, we know nothing about the connection between Alara-Kashta-Pi(ankh)y-Shebitqo and if the succession was uninterrupted, as there is no documented link between their reigns. We should be aware of the possibility that an unknown or anonymous king could have ruled between any of them.

At Kawa, we come across the names of Alara and Kashta, but in both cases posthumously: Alara is mentioned on two stelae of king Taharqo, who legitimizes his rule by connecting himself to Alara.<sup>29</sup> Alara had created a close connection with Amun, possible through an oracle summoned to secure his claim to the throne. Taharqo binds his legitimation to that ancestor, and it was discussed if both of them claimed their right to the throne in this unusual and extended way because they were not the eligible heirs.<sup>30</sup> Even later in date is the inscription of Irikeamanote in the Temple of Kawa, which names



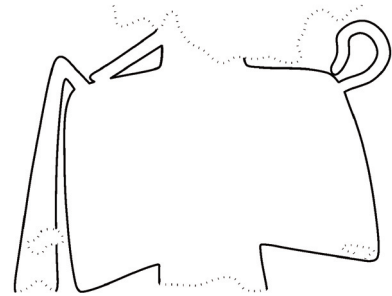
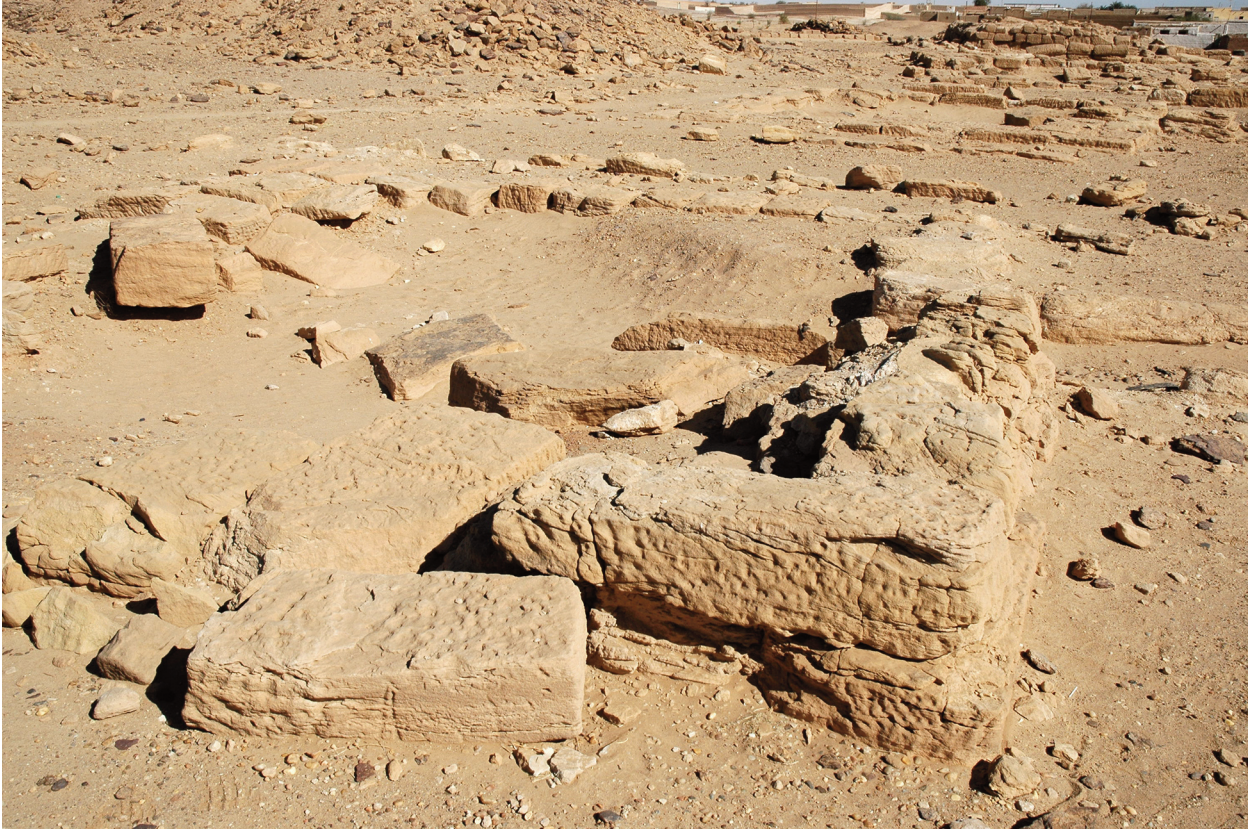


FIGURE 2: Loose block found at Ku. 9 with the depiction of Osiris (a: in situ 2005, photo: T. Kendall; b: photo after Kendall 1999, fig. 15, courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; c: drawing by Alexa Rickert).

both Alara and Kashta. Alara is said to have had a long life (l. 54), and Kashta (l. 117) was a famous king.<sup>31</sup> This shows that the names of both rulers were highly regarded and were handed down for a long time. It is amazing that this is the case at Kawa and not in the region of Jebel Barkal. In fact, Alara is also

mentioned posthumously on the stela of Nastasen.<sup>32</sup> This stela was recorded as early as 1844 in a secondary position at Dongola—that is, opposite Kawa. It is assumed that this stela originally derived from Jebel Barkal, where the stelae of Tanwetamani, Aspelta, and Harsiotef were found in 1862, but until

now there has been no proof for that assumption.<sup>33</sup>

Again, at Kawa the fragment of a cartouche bearing the name of Kasaqa, mother of Tabiry and wife of Alara, was found.<sup>34</sup> The fragment itself is rather enigmatic, for it is unclear to what object it originally belonged. The piece can still be seen as an indication that the family of Alara was present in Kawa—according to the scarce sources that are even a little richer than in El Kurru.

Combining the evidence, we can state that Alara and Kashta were prominent in Kawa but there is no meaningful evidence that they were buried in El Kurru. On the other hand, the evidence for Pi(ankh)y is impressive at Jebel Barkal, and he was definitely buried at El Kurru (Ku. 17). Although an archaeological and typological evolution in the tomb structures of El Kurru leading to that of Pi(ankh)y is evident, it is not proven that this spot acted as cemetery for all the rulers of Kush before Pi(ankh)y. It is assumed that this is a family cemetery, but this does not mean that the buried persons are the royal ancestors—including Alara and Kashta—who expanded the realm to the north and finally to Egypt.<sup>35</sup> The stelae of Taharqo and the legitimization strategy of Alara expressed therein indicate that Kushite rule did not pass down in a straightforward sequence of one family. As it has already been suggested for the Meroitic period, different families gained the power in various times.<sup>36</sup> It might be the case that these families originated from different regions as well. Therefore, in addition to the later focus on El Kurru, a previous focus on Kawa can be noted: it may have been the cradle of one ruling family. Robert Morkot has already tentatively pointed out that Alara might have had his power base in Kawa.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE SO-CALLED NEO-RAMESSIDES

Five kings from Kush are baptized as “Neo-Ramessides,” since they chose their royal epithets based on Ramesside models.<sup>38</sup> Usually they are grouped together in chronologies and overviews of the history of Kush and dated to the very end of the Napatan period or the very early Meroitic period. The names of these five kings are Sabrakamani, Irike-Piye-Qo, Kash ... (yerike?) ... Meriamun, Ary-Amani, and Gatisen-Meriamun.

Sabrakamani is known from an inscription in the temple T of Kawa.<sup>39</sup> In this inscription his predecessor Irike-Piye-Qo is also mentioned. Since it is secondarily attached to the temple of Taharqo, these

two kings definitely date later than the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. And because of its positioning directly above the long inscription of Irikemanaote (and thus more difficult to reach and read than the latter text), it should be later than that Napatan king. Macadam suggested an early Meroitic dating. Not Macadam himself, but later editors also included Kash ... (yerike?) ... Meriamun in the group of “Neo-Ramessides.” His name is fragmentarily preserved on a gold sheet found in Kawa; it may be an ill-written version of the name Kashta with an illegible epithet, but it may be an otherwise unknown king as well.<sup>40</sup> Two more kings are traditionally included in this group of “Neo-Ramessides.” For both of them the placement in the late Napatan/early Meroitic period has already been contested, and an early date, namely pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty, has been suggested.<sup>41</sup>

Ary-Amani is attested on a stela found in temple A of Kawa (Kawa XIV).<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, the inscription was already badly damaged when it was discovered, and it is only partially readable. Macadam therefore did not translate it, and it was only Carsten Peust, who has dealt with the late Napatan texts, who produced a translation.<sup>43</sup> The text includes a list of endowments attached to the temple, similar to those listed by Taharqo on his stelae Kawa III and VII. Another stela (Kawa XV), also from temple A, is preserved only fragmentarily and bears no royal name.<sup>44</sup> Since it is also an enumeration of gifts, it is understood as a continuation of stela Kawa XIV. Ary-Amani was dated by Macadam to the transitional period between the Napatan and the Meroitic era, and other specialists followed this attribution.<sup>45</sup> Robert Morkot, however, interprets the two stelae as monuments of the period before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, since the iconography of the king’s figure has parallels with representations from the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt.<sup>46</sup> Also, the epithet Lord of Might (*nb hps*) seems to be typical for the Third Intermediate Period. Above all, Morkot equates Ary-Amani with Alara, pointing to the similarity of the names. However, Peust has plausibly demonstrated that it cannot be the same name for phonological reasons.<sup>47</sup> But even if it is not Alara, could it be a king to be dated to before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty? The excavator, Griffith, suggested that the language is Ramesside, but Macadam rejected that consideration.<sup>48</sup> Macadam’s evaluation is also confirmed by Peust, who rates the stela among the late Napatan



inscriptions and compares it with the texts of Harsiotef and Nastasen.<sup>49</sup> In briefly discussing the early or late date of the stela, he wrote that no other document with a similar form of speech is known from such an early date. Therefore, he dates it to the end of the Napatan period.<sup>50</sup> Also, Spalinger lists several philological arguments for a late dating; nevertheless he does not include the iconographic elements in his suggestion.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, the iconography clearly resembles that of Herihor, high priest of Amun in Karnak and first king of the Twenty-first Dynasty. His voluminous kilt and the cap-crown are very similar to those of Ary-Amani.<sup>52</sup> Especially the choice of the cap-crown, linked to the theology of Amun in Thebes, is a specific statement of the Third Intermediate Period.<sup>53</sup> The sandals worn by Ary-Amani have tips of the sole fixed at the instep, a feature that some have argued Herihor's sandals lack.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, we know such sandals from representations dating to the Twenty-second Dynasty; thus, a pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty date is plausible.<sup>55</sup> Also the writing of *dd mdw jn ...* in the inscriptions next to the deities, in which the *n* is written in the typical Ptolemaic fashion as a crown, is attested already in New Kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

For the time being, we have more iconographical hints for an earlier dating, but—according to Macadam, Peust, and Spalinger—more philological hints for a later dating. Thus, as Jeremy Pope pointed out recently, “only a thorough monographic study of the stela's iconography, paleography, orthography, lexicography, grammar and archaeological context will convincingly ascertain its chronological placement in either period.”<sup>57</sup> Although no final dating can be fixed at the moment, the possibility that Ary-Amani was a pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty king seems to be more plausible to me, as the pictorial representation cannot be dated to the late Napatan/early Meroitic period.

The fifth king of the Neo-Ramessides bears the name Gatisen or Ketesen and is attested with four monuments that are dated again either to the pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty or late Napatan times. The first of them is a pair of joining blocks deriving from B 501.<sup>58</sup> The left block shows the ram-headed Amun-Re-Harakhte-Atum; on the second block, the protocol of a king survives: lord of the Two Lands, *mn-m<sup>3</sup>t-r<sup>c</sup> stp-n-Imn*, lord of crowns, Gatisen. Hans Goedicke suggested that the image of this specific syncretistic god as well as the epithet *nb Jtn*<sup>59</sup> point

to the Third Intermediate Period.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the reading as *nb Jtn* can be contested: it is as well possible (and plausible) that the epithet is *nb jpt-swt*, thus the common epithet of Amun of Karnak or Jebel Barkal.<sup>61</sup> The ram-headed god with the huge sun disk and without a feather crown resembles the depiction of Amun on the sandstone stela from Jebel Barkal, which can be dated to the time more or less immediately before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (see below).

The second monument with the name of Gatisen-Meriamun is a door jamb from Jebel Barkal with a partly preserved inscription: Lord of Two Lands, *mn-m<sup>3</sup>t-r<sup>c</sup> stp-n-Imn (mrj Imn?)*, *s<sup>3</sup> r<sup>c</sup>*, lord of the crowns, Gati... Since the block is not fully published and Macadam presented only the hieroglyphic text, it is difficult to evaluate this monument in more detail.<sup>62</sup> The third monument is lost today and documented only in a drawing of Max Weidenbach.<sup>63</sup> It is the left part of a block which could have been a door jamb and is recorded as being found in Nuri. This is the only monument of that king that has been studied in detail, although the block itself does not survive. Karl-Heinz Priese wanted to identify this king with Aktisanes, a king mentioned by Diodorus (I, 60) in connection with Amasis of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, based on an investigation of Meriotic names of similar construction, he proposed a date in early Ptolemaic times, which would be contemporary with the very end of the Napatan period.<sup>65</sup> Priese investigated the inscription step by step, and although every line was only documented for about fifty percent, he managed to reconstruct the whole text.<sup>66</sup> But since he preferred to date this king with all the Neo-Ramessides at the end of the Napatan period, all his reconstructions follow this very idea.

Not going into details here, as a reinvestigation should be part of a general study of the sources of the Neo-Ramessides, I highlight only two disputable aspects.<sup>67</sup> Priese restores the Horus name of the king starting with *k<sup>3</sup> nht*, mentioning that this introduction fell out of use in Egypt in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty but was introduced in Kush again in late Napatan times.<sup>68</sup> However, the unknown king of the sandstone stela started his Horus name with *k<sup>3</sup> nht*, too. Since the stela is to be dated prior to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, it can be a clue to the same date of the lost block. Another argument of Priese is the determinative of the toponym Napata, showing the Jebel Barkal, a mound with a uraeus.<sup>69</sup> This sign is

used as determinative of Napata in the stela of Nastasen (l. 6, 15, 50, 54)—clearly late Napatan period. Nevertheless, we find the same sign in the text of the sandstone stela, l. 28. Unfortunately, its context is not clear, as this part of the stela is very badly preserved. However, we can state that the sign itself was in use already in pre-Napatan times.

The fourth monument came to light only recently.<sup>70</sup> The site of Hügeir, about 40 km downstream of Jebel Barkal, was used as quarry in the New Kingdom. Later—the date cannot be specified at the moment—a huge temple was installed. One sandstone block with a fragmentary cartouche of Gati... in fine relief was discovered there.<sup>71</sup> Since a majestic uraeus is depicted beside the cartouche, the block might have been an architrave.

As for the Ary-Amani stela, the monuments of Gatisen also have to be studied in more detail including all perspectives—philological, iconographical and archaeological—in order to propose a date. Here, again, there is no certainty yet whether Gatisen-Meriamun was a king during the emerging phase of the Kingdom of Kush or of the late Napatan period.

#### MONUMENTS OF HITHERTO ANONYMOUS KINGS

Two royal monuments that do not reveal the full name of the ruler can be dated in the time before (or during the emergence of) the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. Both are highly informative and give us an impression of events as well as ideology of kingship of that time. Stela Krt 1851, the so-called sandstone stela, was found in the Amun temple at Jebel Barkal in courtyard B 501 by G. A. Reisner in 1920.<sup>72</sup> It was attributed to Pi(ankh)y in the first brief publication of Reisner. However, the names and the cartouches are erased, as is the depiction of the king in the lunette. A figure of a king was later scratched in and the name of Pi(ankh)y, written in a cartouche, was added. For this reason, Pi(ankh)y has been assumed to be the original author of the stela. However, the monument cannot be attributed to him.<sup>73</sup> None of the three names in the titulary preserved in the text are otherwise documented for Pi(ankh)y. It is true that individual names were sometimes changed during a reign, but not all at the same time. That the name and image of Pi(ankh)y have only been added secondarily also speaks against composition of the stela under this king. It is probably he who reused this monument. For linguistic reasons, the stela can be dated to before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.<sup>74</sup> The

speech of the god Amun in the lunette is written in Middle Egyptian, the king's speech in Late Egyptian. Since only the formulaic eulogy is preserved in the main text, this cannot be used for dating. The language of the triumphal stela of Pi(ankh)y differs greatly from that on the sandstone stela, which resembles much more the language of the Third Intermediate Period.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, a date before the reign of Pi(ankh)y and thus before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty can be assumed.

Three names (Horus, Nebti, Golden Horus) are preserved in the text, thus the king is not totally anonymous. Nevertheless, he cannot be identified with one of the otherwise known rulers. No other document of him has survived and no tomb can yet be assigned to him. As the main text following the introductory eulogy is not preserved—the bottom of the stela was already destroyed in antiquity—the historical embedding is far from clear. However, traces of a date (year 3)<sup>76</sup> indicate that something important happened during the reign of this king. Following an investigation by Priese, it is assumed that a war (or the conquest of Egypt) took place in that time. After looking in detail at this passage, a different interpretation can be given as well, since in line 27 a new passage is introduced. It might be that the chiefs boasted and were “deaf”—and the unknown king solved the problem (he lifted the secret, he can see what is hidden); this might be the claim for his leadership. With regnal year 3, a new passage starts; however, there is no mention of a warlike incident.<sup>77</sup>

The second monument mentioning an anonymous king is the panel of Katimala.<sup>78</sup> The panel is secondarily engraved on the façade of the Thutmose temple of Semna. It consists of two parts, a pictorial scene with Katimala worshipping Isis and a long inscription of thirteen columns. If one considers the layout of the whole panel, it seems that at first only the image was incised.<sup>79</sup> Its position is directly beneath the lunette of the stela of Thutmose III of the original temple decoration, showing three males (king Thutmose III in front of Dedwen and the deified Senwosret III). The scene of Katimala depicts three females, Katimala and a small woman or girl behind her standing in front of the goddess Isis. The depiction seems to be rooted in the Nubian ideology of the balance of male and female aspects, as the male agents of the Thutmose stela are mirrored by female agents in the scene of Katimala—and Katimala may have been deified, too. Given the

direction of the offering tables, it can be assumed that it was Katimala herself who was venerated despite that the inscription mentions an offering for Isis.

The position of the long inscription is not on the wall proper, but rather on the framing of the door jambs. Each side was originally decorated with a vertical register of three Nile gods. The inscription was partially incised over the left register of the Nile gods. Since this space was not sufficient—or the planning of the layout was incorrect—the end of the text crowds behind and below the hand of Isis. The visible connection of the text to the image is drawn by the ornamental block pattern framing both text and image. The text records the speech of an anonymous ruler (*hm=f*) to Katimala. It seems that she was a popular ancestor who was venerated and whose image was venerated, as well. It may have been in this phase that the royal title *nsw hjt* was added to her representation to increase her importance even more. The text itself is far from clear, as the hieroglyphs are badly written and the language is difficult. However, it seems that there was a rebellion going on in the time of the anonymous king and that he was able to overthrow the enemies when he devoted his land to Amun. Again, we do not know who this *hm=f* was, what time he ruled, and where his realm was. He may have been one of the local rulers who dominated individual regions of Nubia after the retreat of the Egyptian colonial power. At least it is another Kushite king before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty whom we must add to the list.

#### ELITE (ROYAL?) TOMBS IN NUBIA

The cemetery of El Kurru is the burial ground of the Kushite rulers of most of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty and their (closest?) family members. But there is the possibility that early kings were interred at different spots. No further royal tomb of that period is yet identified with certainty, but there are some options for such a location. It is likely that regional kings, ruling a specific area, are buried in the central location of that area.

In the region of Jebel Barkal, a possible royal tomb has been discovered recently. Murtada Bushara excavated a large tomb structure in El Tameer, on the opposite side of the Nile near Sanam, that dates typologically to the time of Kashta/Pi(ankh)y.<sup>80</sup> No name has been preserved, thus it cannot be attributed to a specific person, but I would like to point out that our archaeological frame of reference

for potential royal or high elite burials is constantly extending.

The perhaps most prominent location related to the early kings is Kawa. During his excavations at that site, Derek Welsby discovered large graves with pyramid superstructures.<sup>81</sup> All these graves are of later date, but it is evident that there must have been also a cemetery of earlier Kushite times, as there was an intensive building activity especially in the reign of Taharqo. The occupation of the site between the New Kingdom and the reign of Taharqo is far from clear, but distinctive pottery as well as pre-Kushite phases of few buildings were excavated.<sup>82</sup> It is possible as well that elite or even royal tombs of the pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty will come to light, too.

The excavations at Tombos have revealed a large cemetery lasting from the New Kingdom to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. It has brought to light several richly equipped tombs belonging to persons of the highest status.<sup>83</sup> Although here again none of these nearly royal tombs can be dated to the time immediately before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, at least it reflects the possibility of another cemetery of a (local) ruling family.

It is indeed possible that royal tombs were also created elsewhere<sup>84</sup> and not only in the region of Jebel Barkal. We have to constantly re-evaluate knowledge that we believe to be certain.

#### REGIONALITY OF KUSHITE RULE

It is evident that before the Twenty-fifth Dynasty—or before Pi(ankh)y—there ruled already a number of Kushite kings. In addition, an unbroken succession between Alara to Shebitqo is not assured either, because between their reigns there may have been other kings, unknown to us. It is questionable, however, how extensive the individual territory of power of each of these kings was, and this applies to all rulers before Pi(ankh)y. Alara, Kashta, and Ary-Amani are documented only in the Kawa area, and Gatisen-Meriamun only in the region of Jebel Barkal. Also, the anonymous *hm=f* mentioned at Semna may have ruled only regionally. The king of the sandstone stela, however, had a probably supra-regional influence, since he also has a claim to power over Egypt.

From the sources dating to later times it can be concluded that Kush was a polycentric state. In particular, the coronation journey undertaken by some Napatan kings indicates that the local potentates (whether they were priests or secular



leaders is irrelevant) had to recognize the supra-regional king.<sup>85</sup> In several texts we read that after the coronation in Napata the king had to travel to the temples of Amun of Kawa, Pnubs, and Sanam or to the temple of Bastet of Tar in order to get their approval. The model of a state that unites a certain number of local princes under one supra-regional ruler is also known from the Egyptian Third Intermediate Period. There, the Libyan system of rule, which is based on several egalitarian tribal leaders, is argued with. One of these princes is *primus inter pares*, but local rule is not affected.<sup>86</sup> Another interpretation assumes that the coronation journey is an indication of the *segmentary state*. This form of rulership is assumed for the Meroitic period.<sup>87</sup> The model is based on the fact that there are several political centers whose recognition the king needs in order to be accepted as an overlord. Since the evidence of several pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty rulers is locally or regionally restricted, this can hint to the coexistence of several kinglets in different regions of Kush.<sup>88</sup>

The sources of the pre-Twenty-fifth Dynasty allow the interpretation of a ruling system by local potentates. There were probably spatially limited dominions at least around Semna, Kawa, and the Jebel Barkal. A polycentric state was created by the merger of these and other central regions, either by Pi(ankh)y or even before, by the king of the sandstone stela, who could extend his rule also to Egypt. The regionality of the principalities also suggests that the local rulers derived from different families. Thus, it can be assumed that El Kurru indeed was the cemetery of a royal family, but not that all the princes responsible for the establishment of the kingdom of Kush are buried here.

The sources for this phase of Nubian history are still sparse. It is to be hoped that further excavations will uncover additional clues that will make it possible to reconstruct the situation of early rule in Kush.

#### ABBREVIATION

TLA Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae  
< [aaew.bbaw.de/tla/index.html](http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/index.html) >,  
(accessed 10 January 2020).

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dunham 1950; 1955; 1957.
- <sup>2</sup> Macadam 1949, 119–131.
- <sup>3</sup> Briefly summarized in Zibelius-Chen 2006a, 296–299.
- <sup>4</sup> See Banyai 2015; Broekman 2015; Jurman 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> For a short summary, see Payraudeau 2014, 1597–1598.
- <sup>6</sup> The reading of the royal name (Piye or Piankhy) is disputed; cf. extensively Rilly 2001 and Zibelius-Chen 2006b. As a decision on any of the proposal is not yet possible, the spelling Pi(ankh)y is chosen here.
- <sup>7</sup> Gauthier 1907, 2–12, 24–28.
- <sup>8</sup> Egyptian Museum Cairo JE 48862, 47086–9; Grimal 1981.
- <sup>9</sup> Dunham 1950, 64–66.
- <sup>10</sup> Dunham 1950, 1–3, 121–132.



- <sup>11</sup> Kendall 1999; Török 1999.
- <sup>12</sup> Dunham 1950, 46.
- <sup>13</sup> Sudan National Museum, Khartoum, inv. no. 1901 (Dunham 1950, fig. 29f, pl. XXX.A.)
- <sup>14</sup> Kendall 1999, 34.
- <sup>15</sup> Collection of sources in Leclant 1984.
- <sup>16</sup> B 500: Kendall and Mohammed 2016, 53–63; Spalinger 2019; B 900: Kendall 2014.
- <sup>17</sup> Dunham 1950, 67–71.
- <sup>18</sup> As a hypothesis, king Gatisen (as will be discussed) could have reigned between Pi(ankh)y and Shebitqo. Since Gatisen is attested only in the wider area of Jebel Barkal, he could have been an independently king ruling in that region contemporary to Shebitqo, who is attested only in Egypt.
- <sup>19</sup> Dunham 1950, 46.
- <sup>20</sup> Dunham 1950, fig. 7c, pl. XXXII.C. Today, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 19.2361.
- <sup>21</sup> Lohwasser 2001, 145, 88.
- <sup>22</sup> Ku. 9 was an empty tomb (Dunham 1950, 47). The decorated block of the chapel was not published before Kendall’s reinvestigation of the early tombs of El Kurru.
- <sup>23</sup> Kendall 1999, 32–33.
- <sup>24</sup> Janice Yellin, personal communication; I am grateful that she accepted my request to integrate her identification into this article.
- <sup>25</sup> Another block, situated in the vicinity of Ku. 23, directly south of Ku. 9, shows hieroglyphs (*mrj*) in raised relief. The treatment of the relief, as well as the style, differs from the other block, thus one can assume that it originates from another building. Thanks to Tim Kendall for providing photographs of both blocks.
- <sup>26</sup> Dunham 1950, fig. 29f, pl. XXX.A.
- <sup>27</sup> Dunham 1955, figs. 265–268, pls. LXVI–LXX.
- <sup>28</sup> Kendall 2014, 668, pl. 6.
- <sup>29</sup> Kawa IV, 16–19; Kawa VI, 22–25 (Macadam 1949, 16, 36, pls. 7–8, 11–12).
- <sup>30</sup> Jansen-Winkel 2003.
- <sup>31</sup> Inscription Kawa IX; Macadam 1949, 58, 67, pl. 24, 26.
- <sup>32</sup> L. 16, Schäfer 1905–1908, 146.
- <sup>33</sup> Wenig (1997, 25) cites a letter of Theodor von Heuglin (dated 20 August 1852) mentioning “... ich erlaube mir beigehend eine Copie des Reliefs und des Anfangs der besprochenen Inschrift von Maravi vorzulegen.” Whether the locality Maravi can be identified with Merowe near Jebel Barkal is far from clear, since this toponym is used abundantly throughout Nubia (see also Meroe at Begrawiya or Merwa in the Bayuda). Moreover, it is astonishing that this stela was at Dongola already in 1844 at latest, whereas the bulk of the other royal stelae were found together only in 1862.
- <sup>34</sup> Kawa no. XLVI; Macadam 1949, 90, pl. 35, 42.
- <sup>35</sup> Although evidence for Kashta in Kush is only limited, we do have sources mentioning this king in Egypt. The fragment of a stela in Elephantine and the (disputed) mention of his name in the priestly annals in Karnak, as well as a fragment bearing an endowment of Kashta in Thebes, hint at a rule of this king at least in Upper Egypt (Payraudeau 2014, with literature for the evidence).
- <sup>36</sup> Originally Reisner 1923. Wenig (1973) discusses the evidence of parallel dynasties and argued against it; nevertheless, the problem of the change of the location of the cemetery is not solved.
- <sup>37</sup> Morkot 2000, 157.
- <sup>38</sup> General overview: Zibelius-Chen 2006a, 295–296.
- <sup>39</sup> Kawa no. XIII; Macadam 1949, 72–76, pl. 31.
- <sup>40</sup> Kawa no. XLV; Macadam 1949, 90, pl. 35, 38.
- <sup>41</sup> Goedicke 1972; Morkot 2000
- <sup>42</sup> Kawa no. XIV; Macadam 1949, 76–80, pl. 33.
- <sup>43</sup> Peust 1999, 46–53.
- <sup>44</sup> Kawa no. XV; Macadam 1949, 80–81, pl. 34.
- <sup>45</sup> Macadam 1949, 78.
- <sup>46</sup> Morkot 2000, 147–150.
- <sup>47</sup> Peust 1999, 70–71. Francis Breyer, who is preparing an in-depth study of the Neo-Ramessides, has confirmed this to me (personal communication, 3 May 2019).
- <sup>48</sup> Macadam 1949, 78
- <sup>49</sup> Peust 1999, 70–71.
- <sup>50</sup> Peust 1999, 71. But in fact Peust does not give an

- in-depth investigation of linguistic features of the Ary-Amani stela, so a detailed evaluation is still lacking.
- <sup>51</sup> Spalinger 2019, 59–60.
- <sup>52</sup> In the temple of Khonsu; see, for example, Epigraphic Survey 1981, pls. 163, 174.
- <sup>53</sup> Gregory 2014, 51; Zibelius-Chen 1996, 205.
- <sup>54</sup> Gregory 2014, 51; Zibelius-Chen 1996, 205.
- <sup>55</sup> With thanks to Olaf Kaper for pointing out the parallel on the Greater Dakhla Stela (Ashmolean Museum 1894.107a; Kaper 1997, pl. 3).
- <sup>56</sup> See, for example, in Abydos (Seti I), Abu Simbel (Ramses II), and Medinet Habu (Ramesses III). This observation is owed to Alexa Rickert, with thanks. See the digital docket in the TLA (DZA-20.846.100 and following numbers). For an example in Medinet Habu, see Epigraphic Survey 1964, pls. 543, 559, 566.
- <sup>57</sup> Pope 2014, 45.
- <sup>58</sup> Dunham 1970, pl. XXXVII.
- <sup>59</sup> Leitz 2002, vol. 3, 590.
- <sup>60</sup> Goedicke 1972, 89.
- <sup>61</sup> This observation was made by Johannes Auenmüller, with thanks.
- <sup>62</sup> Macadam 1947.
- <sup>63</sup> Priese 1977, fig. 1.
- <sup>64</sup> Priese 1977, 353.
- <sup>65</sup> Priese 1977, 355.
- <sup>66</sup> Priese 1977, fig. 2.
- <sup>67</sup> Spalinger (2019, 60) follows the subsumption of Priese of this text but does not include the other sources of Gatisen.
- <sup>68</sup> Priese 1977, 358.
- <sup>69</sup> Priese 1977, 359.
- <sup>70</sup> Zurawski 2003, 358–359; Bushara et al. 2014, 27.
- <sup>71</sup> Bushara et al. 2014, pl. 5.
- <sup>72</sup> Reisner 1931, 89–100.
- <sup>73</sup> Lohwasser and Sörgel 2020, 109–112.
- <sup>74</sup> The philological investigation of the stela was done by Anne Sörgel.
- <sup>75</sup> Spalinger 2019, 54.
- <sup>76</sup> Priese 1972, 25.
- <sup>77</sup> See Lohwasser and Sörgel 2020, 54–55.
- <sup>78</sup> Grapow 1940; Caminos 1998, 20–27; Darnell 2006.
- <sup>79</sup> Detailed discussion in Lohwasser 2018.
- <sup>80</sup> Bushara 2014.
- <sup>81</sup> See, for example, Welsby 2009, 72–76.
- <sup>82</sup> Welsby 2017.
- <sup>83</sup> Smith 2008.
- <sup>84</sup> See also the suggestion of Welsby (2017, 486) that it might be the case that the kingdom of Kush began not only at a single locality.
- <sup>85</sup> Török 1992.
- <sup>86</sup> Leahy 1985.
- <sup>87</sup> Edwards 1996.
- <sup>88</sup> Spalinger (2019, 87) suggested inner-Kushite wars of Pi(ankh)y, depicted in the reliefs of B 502, which would underline the presence of various rival powerholders in Nubia. However, this suggestion has yet to be discussed.