The Enemy Within: Internecine Conflict in the Second Kingdom of Kush

Sophia Farrulla

College of William and Mary

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The Enemy Within:
Internecine Conflict in the Second Kingdom of Kush

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History from
The College of William and Mary

by

Sophia Farrulla

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Williamsburg, Virginia
April 25, 2013
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# ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Æ.I.N.</td>
<td>Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copenhagen), Egyptian Collection, inventory number</td>
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<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td><em>Anno Domini</em>, after Christ</td>
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<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before the Common Era</td>
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<td>BIFAO</td>
<td><em>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale</em></td>
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<td>c.</td>
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<td>Cairo CG</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td><em>Göttinger Miscellen</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>ibid.</em></td>
<td><em>ibidem</em>, (at) the same place</td>
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<td>JARCE</td>
<td><em>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</em></td>
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<td>JEA</td>
<td><em>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</em></td>
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<td>JEH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Egyptian History</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kawa</td>
<td>inscription from Kawa (see Bibliography, Macadam 1949)</td>
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<td>Ku</td>
<td>El-Kurru (grave, see Bibliography, Dunham 1955)</td>
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<td>MDAIK</td>
<td><em>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</em> Abteilung Kairo</td>
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<td>MittSAG</td>
<td><em>Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft</em></td>
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<td>MMA</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)</td>
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<td>Nu</td>
<td>Nuri (grave, see Bibliography, Dunham 1955)</td>
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<td>p</td>
<td>papyrus</td>
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The following signs have been used in translations and transliterations of documents written in the Egyptian language:

[] Enclosing damaged word or parts of words restored by modern writers

&\ Enclosing words the reading or translation of which is uncertain

( ) In transliterations, enclosing words not written by the scribe but probably present in the spoken language; in translations, enclosing words added by the modern writer to clarify the sense

<> Enclosing words omitted in error by the scribe

{} Enclosing words to be deleted
Figures


2. Detail of the Katimala Tableau, from Darnell: The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State.


4. Cartouche of the Papyrus Vandier’s poisoned pharaoh, from Posener: Le Papyrus Vandier.

5/6. Possible renderings of the poisoned king’s throne name

7. Detail of Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone Stela, Detail of Immolation Stela, from Török: The Royal Crowns of Kush: A study of the Middle Nile Valley regalia and iconography in the 1st millennia BC and AD.

8. Detail of Taharqo’s Kawa V lunette, from Macadam The Temples of Kawa I: Pl. 10.

9. Detail of Immolation Stela lunette, from Grimal, Quatre stèles napatéennes: Pl. VII-IX.
1. Introduction

The Second Kingdom of Kush (also known as Nubia-Fig. 1) was one of the largest and most influential states in the ancient world. Classical authors held Kush in great esteem, labeling it the progenitor of all civilization, responsible for the spread of art, science, and culture. Its inhabitants were the first and finest in the world, led northwards by Osiris to colonize Egypt. Ideas of Kushite primacy endured until the mid-nineteenth century AD, when Richard Lepsius’ study of the Egyptian language’s alleged northern roots attributed cultural precedence to Egypt and its northern ancestors. Worsened by contemporary race relations, views of the Kushite state degenerated, and the kingdom became known as a feeble periphery, subject to the tyranny and exploitation of its northern neighbor, Egypt. In reality, Nubia’s coveted raw materials of gold, ivory, and ebony, its

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3 D. Siculus, The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian: in fifteen books.
4 For example: G. Hoskins, Travels in Ethiopia above the Second Cataract of the Nile. London 1835, 72. In this work, the author also claims that it is in Nubia one may see the first signs of ‘human science and ingenuity’. Russell contented, “That the land of the Pharaohs was indebted to Ethiopia for the rudiments, and perhaps for the finished patterns of architectural skill, is no longer questioned by any writer whose studies have qualified him to form a judgment”; Rev. M. Russell, Nubia and Abyssinia: comprehending their civil history, antiquities, arts, religion, literature, and natural history: New York: 1833, 139.
5 First references to this study were made in Gliddon’s work: G. Gliddon, “Ancient Egypt: her monuments, hieroglyphics, history, and archaeology, and other subjects connected with hieroglyphical literature,” in New World. (New York: April 1843), 58.
formidable armies, and its celebrated leaders\(^7\) helped gain Kush a leading role on the international stage. Only with the rise of the UNESCO Salvage Operation in the mid-twentieth century did scholars begin to re-ascribe Kush with global importance.

Yet this newly acknowledged internationalism has come at a price, and Nubia’s internal dynamism has been compromised as a result. In his article, “Continuity and Change in Nubian Cultural History,” William Adams characterizes the Mediterranean influences upon Nubia as “dynamic” and its African context as “persistent,” concluding: “it seems clear that almost every major development in Nubian cultural history was due to cultural stimuli from Egypt”\(^8\). Adams is not alone in his opinion, as many believe all catalysts for significant change within Nubia originated outside of tropical Africa.\(^9\) This belief reverberates throughout the study of Kush, prompting scholars like Dunham and Macadam to recreate a Kushite genealogy composed of one cohesive family, with the crown passing peacefully through a set kingly line.\(^10\) Such viewpoints result in a deceptively simple image of Kush. Both archaeological and textual evidence—in its content

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\(^7\) For example, see D. Siculus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian: in fifteen books*, trans. G. Booth (London: 1814), esp. when discussing the confidence of the Kushite king’s response to Cambyses: “The King of Aethiopia (Kush) sends this counsel to the king of Persia—'when his subjects shall be able to bend this bow with the same ease that I do, then with a superiority of numbers he may venture to attack the Macrobian Aethiopians.'; Herodotus, *Herodotus: Translated from the Greek, with Notes*, trans. Rev. W. Beloe (Philadelphia: 1814), Vol. II. 2 Kings 19:9 *Standard King James Version* “And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold he is come out to fight against thee.”


and vandalism—indicate quite the opposite, revealing a kingdom charged with internal political rivalries. Through a historical event-based study, this thesis will combine analysis of ancient inscriptions, iconography, and royal Kushite burial practice to explore internecine conflict within the Second Kingdom of Kush.

Beginning with a short historiographical outline, this work’s following section examines the roots entrenching Kush in cultural and political stagnation. With this exposed, it then proceeds into a brief historical introduction—providing the foundation for a more detailed case-by-case study. Finally, primary source analysis—subdivided into the Early and Middle Napatan Periods—provides a look into the politically turbulent Kushite kingdom. By capitalizing upon individual incidents of royal strife, this fourth chapter presents a new outlook of the Second Kingdom of Kush, centered on events and their associated Kushite actors.
Fig. 1
2. A Brief Historiographic Outline

Scholars have approached the respective histories of Egypt and Kush very differently, but in a manner that reinforces perceptions of Kushite homogeneity. While Kush dwells within the outline of long duration history, its northern neighbor, Egypt is frequently analyzed in terms of individuals and distinct events. *Damnatio memoriae* against the ‘heretic’ King Akhenaten, intrigue encircling Tutankhamun’s death, Amenemhat I’s rise from humble beginnings, and the Harem Conspiracy surrounding Ramses III represent only a few of many abounding examples involving the event-based history of Egypt.11 Even the 25th Dynasty—the line of Kushite kings who ruled as pharaohs in Egypt and Nubia—is viewed differently according to whether one studies the dynasty through the lens of Egyptian or Nubian history. Such disparity in the historiography of two habitually associated empires results in a conception of binary opposites: progressive Egypt and docile Kush. This dichotomy seems to have arisen from a combination of factors, particularly UNESCO’s rescue archaeology in Lower Nubia, the processualist paradigm, and Fernand Braudel’s concept of *longue durée*.

One of the most crucial advances in Nubiology, UNESCO’s salvage operation in Lower Nubia, also functions as one of the main contributors to Nubia’s position within the long-term history paradigm. This undertaking was a response to imminent flooding of the area due to construction of the Aswan High

Dam. It was UNESCO’s first international collaboration, and championed the sweeping notion of “world heritage” sites.\textsuperscript{12} However, while salvage archaeology is necessary—it also faces problematic constrictions of time and contemporary politics\textsuperscript{13}, even more than other forms of archaeology. These restrictions often “do not allow for the usual development of research questions and archaeological methods...and there is inevitably a significant and irrevocable loss of historical knowledge.”\textsuperscript{14} Salvage work pressures archaeologists to examine extremely long ranges of time and space. For instance, Bruce Trigger recalled that through his work during the campaign, he attempted to cover artifact distribution over a 6000-year period.\textsuperscript{15} These obstacles often produce sweeping generalizations.

Archaeological theory from the time of the UNESCO Salvage Operation also solidified Kush’s place in long-term history, as it was dominated by an interpretive movement termed “New Archaeology”, or processualism. This innovative paradigm provided an alternative to culture-historical archaeology\textsuperscript{16}, whose proponents essentialized various ethnic groups through material culture. Lewis Binford, processualism’s leading proponent, understandably found culture-history impractical, and sought evolutionary explanations for how certain


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 71.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
societies developed. This view introduced a highly scientific approach to archaeology; processualists systematically analyzed artifact assemblages and aimed to create comprehensive gradients of human behavior. New Archaeologists utilized markedly formulaic procedures in their deductions, driving attention away from the individual human actors behind the pieces they studied. This school of thought looked towards overarching patterns in the past, which they believed persisted into the present.

Between the nature of salvage archaeology and concurrent archaeological paradigms, interpretation of artifacts unearthed in Lower Nubia fits perfectly into Braudel’s longue durée structure. In his famed work, Le Méditerranée et le monde méditerranien, Braudel implied preference towards this long-term history, claiming “l’histoire événementielle’, that is, the history of events: surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs,” was “A history of brief, rapid, nervous fluctuations.” Braudel and other members of the Annales School endeavored to underscore cohesion and totality of societies and time periods—whose history, in turn, was partially determined by underlying forces beyond mankind’s control. Skeptics of the Annales School were leery to accept what they viewed as ‘unreasonable antipathy’ towards event-based

history. The emphasis that the *longue durée* paradigm places upon history’s undercurrents makes it prone to underestimating individual societies and associated events.

From this, a glaring question arises: If the *longue durée* so deeply permeates the study of Kush, why then is Egypt analyzed through *histoire événementielle*? An array of explanations may answer this query. At the root of the problem are historically volatile debates over Nubian cultural and racial inferiority. A number of nineteenth and twentieth century scholars imposed modern perceptions of race onto the interpretation of ancient history, leaving the black Kushites at the disposal of the apparently white Egyptians, upon whom Kushites based their own culture. Tropical African stagnancy formed the heart of these earlier studies from the nineteenth century, and this lasting characterization has carried into succeeding decades.

Egyptian history had also undergone extensive historical study before modern archaeological methods arose. Regnal chronologies and associated political events fashioned the core of Egyptology. Conversely, the first narratives of Nubia were written *after* archaeological survey and excavation were conducted in the region starting in the early twentieth century with George Reisner. These

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22 For example, see B. Taylor’s *Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the While Nile, Being a Journey to Central Africa* (New York: 1854), 237. As he explores the ruins of Meroë, Taylor supposes if he were to ask any inhabitant of the region about their country’s past, he would be met with a famous Childar the Prophet quote: “As thou seest it now, so it has been forever!”
projects, which covered large blocks of time, predisposed Nubia to analyses set in the long-term. As this specific form of archaeology represents Nubiology's beginnings, historical narratives like those seen in Egyptology are relatively sparse for Kush.

As such, the view of Kush is partially obscured. While the *longue durée* undoubtedly holds a critical position in the study of times past, on its own, this paradigm fails to provide a holistic historical view. In order to better comprehend the characteristics of Kushite society, scholars must begin exploring its event-based history in greater detail. This thesis attempts to initiate a step in that direction. Through the study of both archaeological remains and the documentary record, it traces political conflict and rivalry amongst Kushite royals. In this way, this work attempts to restore internal dynamism and agency to Kush's history without erring on the side of vindicationism. Kush was a complex kingdom in its own right, and its detailed facets often are eclipsed by claims of Egyptian hegemony or smoothed by Braudel's deep “tides of history”. A fresh analysis of vacillations within Kush's past yields a fuller image of the kingdom and its position in the ancient world.
3. The Second Kingdom of Kush—A History

Pharaonic Egyptian history spans nearly three millennia, from approximately 3100 to 332 BCE. Egyptologists divide this range into eight distinct periods, starting with the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by King Narmer in the Early Dynastic Period and ending with Alexander the Great’s invasion during the Late Period. Between these stages, legendary pharaohs like Khufu, Sesostris III, and Rameses II ruled during the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, respectively. Following each of these “Kingdoms” are Intermediate Periods, times during which centralized Egyptian power collapsed due to internal conflict, foreign domination, or both.

These divisions are further split into 31 Dynasties, which roughly represent the time various royal families spent in power. Manetho, an Egyptian priest of the Ptolemaic era, first developed this timeline in his historical work, Aegyptiaca. Historians have traced Egyptian history using Manetho’s dynastic system since the 3rd century BCE. This thesis is primarily concerned with the 25th Dynasty (ca. 747-656 BCE) within the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1068-650 BCE). At this time, Kushite kings from Upper Nubia ruled both Egypt and their homeland jointly, creating a Double Kingdom.

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As this study is focused upon Kush, it reaches beyond Manethonian chronology, into the decades surrounding the 25th Dynasty as well. Before their rise to power in Egypt, this Kushite “dynasty” ruled their homeland, and maintained power in Kush after the Assyrian Empire drove their predecessors from the North.\(^\text{26}\) This era, in which Kush centered on the city of Napata, is referred to as “Napatan”. Of particular interest to this discussion are the Early and Middle Napatan Periods, which together span the 11th-6th centuries BCE. No uniform consensus differentiating the end of the Early and beginning of the Middle Napatan Period exists. For the purposes of this thesis, the Early Napatan refers to pre-25th Dynasty Kush, while the Middle Napatan consists of the 25th Dynasty through Aspelta’s death in the early 6th century BCE. It is in this timespan that internecine strife within Kush has been most underestimated. These years fall into a broader era, the Second Kingdom of Kush, not to be confused with the First Kingdom of Kush, an empire centered on Kerma during the Egyptian Middle and New Kingdoms.\(^\text{27}\)

In order to more fully understand the operation of the Second Kingdom of Kush, it is also necessary to study its origins. Unfortunately, due to lack of archaeological and textual evidence, the genesis of the Second Kingdom of Kush remains unclear. As a result, the Early Napatan Period (contemporaneous with Manetho’s 21-22nd Dynasties) was deemed a “Dark Age” in Kushite history.

\(^{26}\) C.L. Sargent, *The Napatan Royal Inscriptions: Egyptian in Nubia* (PhD diss., Yale University, 2004), iii.

Nonetheless, this label is contested by historians like Robert Morkot, who argue that notable marriage alliances were central to the rise of the Kushite state during this period. Only beginning with Queen Katimala, whose Semna inscription is discussed in greater detail below, does one start to see documentary evidence for the state’s development.

Although earlier royals certainly featured prominently in the kingdom’s formation, the declared founder of Upper Nubia’s Kushite Dynasty was Alara. Relatively little is known about Alara, but later kings proudly trace their lineage back to him—legitimizing their own rule. The mode of succession amongst these Kushite kings is uncertain. Therefore, the following list of rulers is tentative, and only represents the most commonly accepted order. The primary purpose of such a list is to establish a basic frame for the subsequent more detailed discussion.

After Alara’s reign, the Kushite king Kashta began gradually expanding into Egypt. A stela fragment from Elephantine asserts Kashta’s presence on the Egyptian frontier, and it is likely he who successfully seized Thebes. Most

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29 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 2006).
33 Cairo JE 41013 in Leclant, “Kashta, Pharaon, en Égypte,” ZÄS 90 (1963), 74-81, fig. 1.
Egyptologists agree that he ruled approximately 760-747 BCE. His successor, Pi(ankh)y, continued the Kushites’ invasion of Egypt. Starting with Pi(ankh)y’s reign, scholars begin to see an increase in documentary evidence. Found at Gebel Barkal, the Great Triumphal Stela was inscribed in Pi(ankh)y’s 21st regnal year, and contains details of the king’s conquest. According to the text, he expanded into Lower Egypt, and seized Memphis in only one day. At the time of his campaign, multiple rulers dominated the Nile Delta—and ultimately, they all paid tribute to Pi(ankh)y and the Kushite Empire. Following his triumph, Pi(ankh)y returned to Napata, never to set foot in Egypt again.

Shabaqo ascended the throne around 712 BCE, and was the first of the Kushite rulers to truly establish himself in Egypt as pharaoh. Like Pi(ankh)y before him, Shabaqo faced opposition from the Saïtes of the Western Nile Delta. While the results of ensuing battles remain unknown, by 710 BCE, the Kushites ruled at least from Aswan to Memphis—and were recognized by the Delta rulers. Shabaqo initiated the first major building efforts of the dynasty at Thebes and his new resident city, Memphis. One of the most important elements of

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36 Cairo JE 48862 (main stela), 47086-47089 (fragments), ll. 96-97.in Grimal, La stele triomphale de Pi(ankh)y, pls. I-X, Pl. III, IX-X.
37 Manetho, Aegyptiaca, 167.
38 Louvre E 10571 in Meeks, “Les donations aux temples dans l’Egypte du Ier millénaire avant J.-C” (Leuven, 1979), 672-673 no. 25.4.2; New York MMA 55.144.6 (4118) in S. Hodjash and O. Berley, The Egyptian reliefs and stelae in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (Leningrad, 1982), 163 and 165.
Shabaqo’s reign was his opposition to the Assyrian Empire in Western Asia.\textsuperscript{40} His successor, Shebitqo, allied his Double Kingdom with Jerusalem against Sennacherib.\textsuperscript{41} According to Manetho’s king list, Shebitqo ascended the throne with his father’s death.\textsuperscript{42} This resistance to Assyrian interference resulted in grave repercussions throughout subsequent decades. Little else is known about Shebitqo, and he erected very few monuments.

Much can be said about his successor, King Taharqo—the most celebrated of the Nubian pharaohs.\textsuperscript{43} He was a proficient builder and influenced Kushite art forms for decades through erecting a number of imposing temples and sculptures.\textsuperscript{44} However, Taharqo also saw the rapid decline of the 25\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty under his reign. War with the Assyrians plagued his rule. Initially, Taharqo’s army successfully deterred impending forces—but in 671 BCE, Assyria’s king, Esarhaddon, seized Memphis, also capturing members of the royal court, whom


\textsuperscript{41} It would seem Shebitqo, and not Shabaqo initiated this alliance as King Sargon, Sennacherib’s predecessor, deems Shebitqo the Kushite king. See: Tang-i Var Inscription \textit{(in situ)}, ll. 19-21 in G. Frame, “The Inscription of Sargon II at Tang-i Var,” \textit{Orientalia} 68 (1999): 31-57 and Tables I-XVIII.

\textsuperscript{42} Manetho, \textit{Aegyptiaca}, 167.


\textsuperscript{44} His work at Gebel Barkal serves as a fantastic example. Here, Taharqo daringly incorporated the mountain for which the locale is named (Gebel Barkal translates to “Holy Mountain”) into his monumental record. Upon the pinnacle, he ordered an inscription carved—which is impossible to read from the ground, and Kendall argues was meant for godly eyes. See T. Kendall, “The Monument of Taharqa on Gebel Barkal” in S. Wenig, ed. \textit{Feldforschungen im Sudan und in Eritrea} (2004), 1-45.
he took back to Assyria. The Kushite ruler was forced to seek refuge in Thebes.\textsuperscript{45} About two years later, when Taharqo attempted to reassert himself in Memphis, Esarhaddon’s successor, Assurbanipal, quelled Kushite forces.\textsuperscript{46} Not long after, in 664 BCE, Assurbanipal launched an attack against Thebes.\textsuperscript{47} The siege of Thebes represents one of the most devastating events in Egyptian history. Though Kushites would attempt to regain power in Egypt, Nubia’s Double Kingdom never truly recuperated.

Taharqo’s successor, Tanwetamani, recaptured Memphis during his rule with the help of Pakrur, a Delta prince.\textsuperscript{48} Just one year later, in 663 BCE, Assurbanipal marched on Tanwetamani, contesting Kushite rule once again.\textsuperscript{49} Tanwetamani was acknowledged as pharaoh in Thebes until his 8\textsuperscript{th} year—his reign over Upper Egypt was unaffected by events in the Delta.\textsuperscript{50} At the same time, an Assyrian vassal, Nabu-shezzi-banni (later known as Psamtik I) ruled Lower Egypt.\textsuperscript{51} Psamtik I eventually liberated himself from Assurbanipal’s command and

\textsuperscript{45} Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin 2708 (Zinçirli Stela), rev. ll. 43b-50a in Leichty, Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, 185-186.
\textsuperscript{46} British Museum 91026 (Rassam Cylinder)/British Museum 91086 (Prism A), col. I, ll. 123-126, in Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, vol. 5, pls. 1-10.
\textsuperscript{47} Chronicle 1.iv.16 (British Museum 92502) in Grayson, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (Eisenbrauns, 1975), 84 and pls. XII-XIII.
\textsuperscript{48} Cairo JE 48863 in Grimal, Quatre stèles napatéennes (Paris, 1981), pls. VIII-IX.
\textsuperscript{49} British Museum 91026 (Rassam Cylinder)/British Museum 91086 (Prism A), col. I, ll. 123-126, in Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, vol. 5, pls. 1-10.
\textsuperscript{51} LET, Prism C, and Prism, A (British Museum 91086 and British Museum 91026 (Rassam Cylinder), esp. ll. 17-18, in Onasch, Die assyrischen Eroberungen Ägyptens I, 40 (Anm. 183), 100-101 and 120-121.
extended his rule throughout the Delta region with Memphis as its center without Assyrian intervention.52

Kushite control in Egypt evidently came to a close in Tanwetamani’s ninth regnal year. Psamtik I sent his daughter, Nitocris, to Thebes so that she would become the God’s Wife of Amun after the Kushite princess, Shepenwepet II.53 While Psamtik did not dethrone Shepenwepet II, he required recognition as pharaoh in Thebes—limiting Tanwetamani’s kingdom to Kush. The length of his reign remains unknown.54

Relatively sparse documentary evidence from the Middle Napatan Period after Tanwetamani’s rule shrouds events of subsequent decades in uncertainty. However, the line of kings that presided over the Double Kingdom of the 25th Dynasty certainly continued their rule in Kush. Archaeological remains in Kush indicate extensive building activity.55 Atlanersa, generally recognized as Taharqo’s son, succeeded Tanwetamani in the latter half of the 7th century BCE.56 He began constructing a temple at Gebel Barkal (“Holy Mountain”)—which was later completed by his successor, Senkamanisken.57 This temple represents an endurance in iconographic style of its preceding 25th Dynasty counterparts.58

53 Cairo JE 36327 in Caminos, Nitocris Adoption Stela (London, 1964), pls. VIII-IX.
57 Ibid., 212.
Senkamanisken’s successor, Anlamani, continued the tradition of building. His best-preserved monument is his Enthronement Stela from Kawa. He also elaborated upon Meroe’s Amun temple, far south in Nubia’s Butanna Steppe region. King Aspelta, Anlamani’s brother and successor, ascended the throne around the last years of the 7th century BCE. He continued construction at Meroë, along with Sanam, Napata, and Kawa. Like Anlamani, Aspelta legitimized his rule through an Enthronement Stela, which describes popular participation in a divine oracular election. While oracular elections are fairly common in Egyptian and Nubian sources, the populace’s involvement is relatively unusual, especially in Egypt. Aspelta’s ascension and kingship are central to this thesis, and will be discussed extensively below.

Around this same time, in 593 BCE Psamtik II dispatched Egyptian forces to Nubia. For the first time since Tanwetamani’s agreement with Psamtik I, the 26th Dynasty focused its attention southward. This renewed attentiveness may have been the result of a potential Kushite threat to invade Egypt. Scholars are unsure which king elicited such a militant response from the Saïtes—however, most believe the attack was launched during either Anlamani’s or Aspelta’s

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59 Æ.I.N. 1709 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 15-16.
61 FHN I, 230.
63 Cairo JE 48866 in Grimal, Quatre stèles napatéennes (Paris, 1981), pls. VI-VII.
64 K. A. Kitchen, TIP, 406.
reign. The purposeful destruction of royal Kushite monuments is often facilely attributed to Psamtik II’s campaign. This conclusion prematurely proscribes *internal* conflict from consideration, making further study of the event critical to the study of Kushite autonomy.

The Napatan Period came to a close in the 3rd century BCE, bringing in the Meroitic Period. This new era started with King Arkamanigo’s rule66, and is characterized by the relocation of the royal cemetery to Meroë, Ptolemaic involvement in North Africa, and development of the Meroitic language. Kushite conflict persisted into this period, but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. Now, with both historiographical and historical background, the discussion may proceed into a detailed analysis of evidence for internecine strife in the Second Kingdom of Kush.

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4. Discussion

4.1 The Early Napatan Period

4.1.1 Makaresh and the Failed Pharaoh

The origins of the Kushite state from which Egypt’s 25th Dynasty kings emerged in the 8th century B.C.E. are murky—obscured within a period known as the ‘Nubian Dark Age’. This Dark Age refers to the time lapse between the fall of the Egyptian Ramesside rule in Lower Nubia and the 25th Dynasty’s rise in Upper Nubia. Few archaeological remains securely datable to this period have been unearthed in Upper or Lower Nubia, leading some to oversimplify and disregard Kush during the 19th through 22nd Dynasties. It is generally assumed that during this time Upper Nubia reverted to a “tribal level”, while Lower Nubia was deserted with the fall of its Egyptian conquerors. These conclusions support Adams’ thesis—that change within Kush was a direct result of external forces from Egypt; immediately after Egyptians lost their influence in tropical Africa, the Kushites purportedly became naïve and unenlightened. However, as Morkot notes, the former indigenous elites of New Kingdom Nubia were not likely to exchange their privileged life for the fate of a nomad. Rather, “It is more likely that changes in Nubia, and any disappearance of the population, are to be attributed to internal political factors”.

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68 The 23rd, 24th, and 25th Dynasties were contemporaneous.
69 B. Trigger, Nubia Under the Pharaohs, 140.
70 R. Morkot, The Black Pharaohs, 133; emphasis added.
Following Egypt’s withdrawal from Lower Nubia, Kushite officials who had once served under the Egyptian colonial regime would likely have then intermarried, forming their own small fiefdoms.\textsuperscript{71} Such fragmentation and degeneration of central authority would set the stage for rival claimants vying for supremacy, creating a dynamic and tenuous political climate within Kush. One text in particular—the Katimala Inscription\textsuperscript{72}—demonstrates previously overlooked political tension within Nubia during this so-called Nubian Dark Age. Historians often dismissed the tableau as an incoherent rendering of the Egyptian language\textsuperscript{73}, evidence of Nubia’s cultural and intellectual decline after Egypt’s colonial control retracted northward. However, a recent translation by John Darnell of Yale University has revealed that the inscription is not incomprehensible, and that it can facilitate study of early conflicts in the Second Kingdom of Kush.\textsuperscript{74}

In addition to examining the Nubian origins of Katimala’s inscription, this section focuses largely upon the text’s elusive criminal, Makaresh. He has been likened to Katimala’s foreign enemies—desert-dwellers, or those from “the mountains of gold” mentioned in the beginning of the inscription.\textsuperscript{75} With further

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance in Darnell \textit{The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna}, col. 3. pls. VI-VIII.


\textsuperscript{74} J.C. Darnell, \textit{The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State}.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 43 and R.K. Ritner, \textit{The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period} and J.C. Darnell, \textit{The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State}.
examination of grammar and context, however, this assumption becomes problematic. The following discussion will explore Makaresh’s stance as a Nubian insider, and perhaps even as Katimala’s royal predecessor. His iniquitous actions and their possible repercussions lay at the crux of internal struggles in the Early Napatan Period.

Since the publication of Darnell’s edition, critic Rafed El Sayed has attempted to demonstrate that Katimala was an Egyptian or Libyan asserting her power in Nubia. As Darnell argues, the imagery and text of the inscription clearly illustrate Katimala’s Nubian ancestry—an observation El Sayed seems to ignore. She and the small female figure behind her sport characteristically Kushite closely cropped hair (Fig.2), as opposed to the long wig typically seen in royal Egyptian depictions. Most importantly, the name Katimala is clearly composed of lexemes from Meroitic, the Kushite spoken language, and literally translates to “Lady Beautiful”.

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77 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 8.
The tableau was found at Semna, in Nubia's Second Cataract Region (Batn el-Hagar), surcharged upon the southern façade of an earlier temple wall within a fortress constructed by the Egyptian pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III during the New Kingdom. Darnell contends that in combination with Katimala’s references to an enemy from the mountains of gold, the inscription’s location at Semna suggests the Queen’s attempt to gain control over Nilotic and Eastern Desert routes. On the basis of its palaeographic and grammatical features, he dates the tableau to the Early Napatan Period—between the 21st and 22nd

80 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 58.
Egyptian Dynasties. When fully translated, Katimala’s Inscription exposes political tribulations and an embattled region. Katimala has inherited a beleaguered land from a failed king—likely her husband. She was the first queen since Hatshepsut of the 18th Dynasty to declare herself ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’. Militaristic themes dominate Katimala’s inscription, accompanied by Isis in her war-goddess form.

The main body of the text mentions a malevolent and mysterious “event”. Katimala places her unwavering trust in Amun, which allows her to eliminate memories of the unfortunate episode, “What I did was to act as servant of Amun. For I did not remember the event which happened to me this year, since I have trusted in Amun”. The passage later reads, “Is it good to fear, and to show the back before the enemy, as did (my) {fathers} to whom (I) succeeded? Since it was because of the event that occurred to me that...did...in that year”. It is in this same year that the Queen claims to have discovered the mighty powers of Amun. While the occurrence was clearly taboo, it seems to have resulted in Katimala’s ascension and her predecessor’s demise. Whereas Katimala’s unnamed forerunner failed, her newfound allegiance to Amun enables the new ruler to

81 Ibid., 2.
82 Ibid., 35.
84 J.C. Darnell, The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 7.
85 In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance in Darnell, The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna, pls. VI-VIII, col. 3.
86 Ibid., cols. 5-6.
87 Ibid., col. 6.
defeat her enemies. Under a central god-figure, Katimala mobilizes and unifies her people against threats.

The tableau also demonstrates severe inner strife within an early Nubian royal family and possibly other members of their society. Makaresh, a proclaimed enemy of the state, best illustrates this dissonance—and a deeper analysis of his actions demonstrates the potential breadth of political complexities within Katimala’s kingdom. The inscription mentions him bitterly, “Is it bad to control this cattle of Amun daily? Is it good to sacrifice from the herd of Amun, like that which Makaresh did? Since daily all the city people cursed Makaresh, while there afflicted him likewise destruction...”. Darnell contends that Makaresh’s sacrificing of cattle may have been a euphemism for homicide, dramatically enhancing the severity of his misconduct.

Yet, Makaresh’s name is transcribed in an enigmatic manner. Despite his abhorred reputation, he receives a determinative reserved for revered men: “noble squatting with flagellum” (Gardiner Sign List A52). For an enemy to be represented in such a manner is strikingly atypical. Kushite inscriptions predominantly signified foreign enemies by employing one of three determinatives: (1) “man bleeding from weapon wound on head” (Gardiner Sign

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88 In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance in Darnell, The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna, pls. VI-VIII.
89 Ibid., cols. 9-10.
List A14), (2) “man with staff” (Gardiner Sign List A21), or (3) simply “kneeling man” (Gardiner Sign List A1) (see Fig. 3).  

Specifically naming a foreign enemy while simultaneously neglecting to name one’s royal predecessor is also rare. Two New Kingdom texts may shed further light upon Makaresh’s status: the Israel Stela and the Great Libyan War Inscription at Karnak, both from Merneptah’s reign (late 13th century BCE), provide a potentially comparable situation, as they do name the pharaoh’s foreign Libyan foe. According to the Israel Stela, Mauroy (Meryey) — like Makaresh — was cursed, “the lord of Egypt has cursed his name, Mauroy, the abomination of Memphis”.  

91 The A14 determinative is employed in many of the Kawa inscriptions referring to foreign enemies: Taharqo’s Kawa IV stela refers to hill peoples, “he overcomes the mighty, trampling the hill in pursuit of his foes with fight in his mighty arm” Khartoum 2678 = Merowe Museum 52 ll. 4-5 in Macadam, Kawa I, pls. 7-8. Similarly, Anlamani’s Kawa VIII inscription reads, “he overthrows all thy foes in this land”. E.I.N. 1709 l. 7 in Macadam, Kawa I, pl. 15-16. Again, in Kawa IX, Aman-nête-Yerike (Irike-Amannote) faces enemies, “when the desert-dwellers, the foes of R<rh>s, revolts against His Majesty, being to the north of this nome carrying off all the cattle, herds, and men that they could find” in situ E wall, S side of the Hypostyle Hall of Temple T at Kawa cols. 5-6 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 17, 22. Occasionally, foreign leaders were portrayed with the A21 determinative, as in Nastaseñ’s Year 8 inscription — see Berlin ÄMP 2268 l. 39. in Schäfer, Aethiopische Königssinschrift des Berliner Museums, Taf. I-IV. Foreign enemies were also labeled by the neutral A1 determinative — as in Irike-Amannote’s Kawa stela: “families of Arma and of My-mistress, and families of Aru...” in situ E wall, S side of the Hypostyle Hall of Temple T at Kawa cols. 67-8 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 19, 24. 

92 Cairo CG 34025 vso. (“Israel Stela”), l. 9, in Kitchen Ramesside Inscriptions IV 4, 3.
Mauroy”. In both instances, the neutral “kneeling man” (A1) determinative accompanies Mauroy’s name. A “man bleeding from weapon wound on head” (A14) grapheme is used, but only with the word “enemy”.

If one opts to consider Makaresh an outsider, Katimala’s allusion to him closely parallels references to Mauroy—both being explicitly named foreign enemies. Yet, the determinative used with Mauroy’s name is still markedly different from that which accompanies Makaresh’s name on the Katimala tableau. Although Mauroy held a high position in Libya, Merneptah’s scribe did not concede him honor through labeling his name with the “noble squatting with flagellum” (A52) determinative. The Libyan’s name was merely written as most people’s, with a “kneeling man” (A1) grapheme. Makaresh did receive this written distinction94—one not usually bestowed upon any foreign enemy, even one like Mauroy, who was named.

This detail is not merely an oversight on the scribe’s part, as he did employ the A52 determinative elsewhere in Katimala’s inscription. In the first lines of text, another king asks Katimala, “Whither are we (to turn) if we do not serve among the servants of Amun when there is an opponent”95. The word “opponent” does receive the A52 determinative. With this larger context in mind, one may dismiss the possibility that the grapheme was simply not part of the scribe’s hieroglyphic repertoire. Therefore, ascribing some form of respect to Makaresh was assuredly

93 Merneptah’s Libyan War Inscription at Karnak, l.41, in K. Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions IV 7, 4.
94 In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance col.9. in Darnell The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna, pls. VI-VIII.
95 In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance , cols. 1-2 in Darnell The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna, pls. VI-VIII.
intentional. Considering Makaresh’s reputation as an enemy of the state, this representation is highly perplexing. Why would an individual whom the population was cursing daily be simultaneously labeled as a revered man? What was Makaresh’s status vis-à-vis the Kushite society Katimala ruled?

Some consider Makaresh a “desert dweller”, a rebel from the mountains of gold. In addition to odd determinative choice, the nature of Makaresh’s crime seems to indicate otherwise—that he was not a foreigner, but a societal insider. As previously mentioned, Katimala and her people condemned Makaresh because he sacrificed cattle of Amun—which often symbolize people of the god. This analogy is clearly underscored in the Middle Kingdom text, Papyrus Westcar. The anecdote features Dedi, a magician famed for his ability to reattach severed heads. Upon his arrival to Khufu’s court, the king asks him to perform his trick on a prisoner. Dedi protests, “But not on a human, O ruler, my lord! For see it is forbidden to perform such a thing on ‘noble cattle’”. This excerpt provides merely one of many cases in which humans and cattle are analogous, so it is certainly plausible that Makaresh was pronounced guilty of homicide.

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96 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 43 and R.K. Ritner, The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period and J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State.

97 Collombert tentatively entertains the idea of Makaresh as an insider, but also concedes he may be Libyan. See P. Collombert, “Par-delà Bien et Mal: L’Inscription de la reine Katimala à Semna,” 206.

A similar infraction is recounted in the Banishment Stela\textsuperscript{99}, a Kushite text involving the condemnation of indigenous priests. Within the inscription, this family of priests is proclaimed guilty and executed for “killing a man who had committed no crime”.\textsuperscript{100} Makaresh’s sin appears comparable to that of the priests’—both situations involve wrongdoers accused of murder. Along with his crime, Makaresh’s status may also prove analogous to that of the criminals in the Banishment Stela. As excommunicates, the priests were once societal \textit{insiders}. These two instances seem to represent parallel sins of native Kushite enemies. Makaresh, with his distinguished A52 determinative, was most likely a once-revered individual who later became an internal threat.

This proposal is supported by onomastic analysis. First, Makaresh’s Kushite background most notably manifests itself through his name. As Sayed has observed, if Makaresh were an enemy from the Eastern Desert, he would likely bear a name from the Medja (Bedawi) ethnic group that dominated the region.\textsuperscript{101} However, scholars like Zibelius-Chen postulate $Mk\text{"}r\text{"}s$ is a Meroitic name —like the name $mklise\text{-}ye$ (“he who belongs to the god”) found on an inscription from Gebel Adda.\textsuperscript{102} The $Mk$ component of $Mk\text{"}r\text{"}s$ noticeably contains the Meroitic lexeme meaning “god”, a lexeme also present within the name of one of the Kushite royal

\begin{footnotes}
\item[99] Cairo JE 48865 in Grimal, \textit{Quatre steles napatéennes}, pls. VIII-IX. The Banishment Stela features prominently in this thesis, and as argued in section 4.2.3, its content is better represented by renaming it “The Immolation Stela”.
\item[100] \textit{Ibid}, l. 7.
\item[101] El Sayed, Rafed. Review of \textit{The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State}, 347 n. 35.
\end{footnotes}
wives, *Mk-mlo*.\(^{103}\) Moreover, while the first grapheme in Makaresh’s name is copied as the sickle and vulture 𓊳 in Darnell’s work, it more closely matches the ayin-arm and owl 𓎭. If this is the case, the orthography of *mk* in Makaresh’s name is identical to that within *Mk-mlo*, making Zibelius-Chen’s conclusion exceedingly probable. Perhaps more tentatively, the end of Makaresh’s name, *k3-r-š*, may also suggest Meroitic origin. In comparison, Zibelius-Chen discusses another possibly Meroitic name, *b3-k3-r-š*, mentioned in an Egyptian text.\(^{104}\) The name ending *k3-r-š* is clearly a non-Egyptian one, but it is featured in an Egyptian source—which traditionally were more prone to discuss Nilotic Meroites and Kushites than Medja from the Eastern Desert. Therefore, all portions of Makaresh’s name point to his Kushite background.

Makaresh’s anomalous determinative helps address another conundrum: the fact that Katimala’s royal predecessor is briefly alluded to and never named. In itself, this omission is quite strange, but even more bewildering is specifically naming the foreign enemy while concurrently leaving one’s antecedent unidentified.\(^{105}\) Such would be the case if readers equate Makaresh to an external adversary. But could it be that Makaresh and Katimala’s predecessor were one in the same? Upon analyzing the text further, this scenario seems increasingly plausible: Makaresh was not only a societal insider, but also Katimala’s own

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 109-110. Zibelius-Chen tentatively proposes *b3-k3-r-š* as equivalent to the later Meroitic name, *qaqedise*. For this Meroitic text, see Berlin 3031 XI, 2-3, M. Allam, *Papyrus Berlin 3031* (PhD diss., Bonn 1991), 177.
\(^{105}\) See discussion of Mauroy in Merneptah’s Israel and Great Libyan War Stelae above. K. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions IV*. 
indisposed husband removed from his throne for incompetent behavior. This hypothesis offers an explanation for the two most perplexing elements of the Katimala inscription, (1) the Queen’s failure to name a royal predecessor and (2) determinative choice: Katimala’s forerunner was named Makaresh, who was represented as a revered man because of his former, albeit failed, kingship.

Analyzing Robert Ritner’s translation of the Katimala tableau introduces further possible indications of Makaresh’s kingly status. Lines 7 and 8 are of particular interest to this discussion. Darnell transliterates this portion as:

\[7\text{nfr iry} \text{ bin m-di p3} \text{nty} \text{ bw ir=f sm im=f bin iry bin m-di rhy(t) iw=f sm iw=f r di.t p3 nty nlyptr n=n[my]} [sdm=n(?)] [n]3y bin 8iw=w nhy\]

7It is good to do evil to this one whom he does not know; it is bad to do evil to people whom he knows. He shall appoint the one who is alive. See here-[we have heard (?)] these evil ones, 8while they were yet alive--

Ritner’s understanding is similar, however there are several key differences:

\[7\text{nfr ir.(t) bin m-di p3} \text{nty} \text{ bw-ir=f sm im=f bin ir.(t) bin m-di rhy.(t) iw=f sm iw=f r di.(t) p3 nty nhy pt(r)i=n p[t]...n3}y=w bin 8iw=w nhy\]

7It is good to do evil to the one whom he (Amon) does not know. It is bad to do evil to the subjects whom he knows. He will appoint the one who lives. We have seen the patricians (?) [...] their evil, 8while they were yet alive.

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106 When the Queen’s predecessor (and assumed husband) is mentioned earlier in the passage, the adjective chosen to describe him, wiwir “may refer to incompetent behavior”. Darnell briefly discusses other translations of the term used in this instance—one of which is termed ‘scandal’; J.C. Darnell, *The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State*, 28. Such diction corresponds with the scandalous nature of Makaresh’s crime. While this similarity does not immediately link Makaresh and the failed ruler, it certainly introduces the possibility.

107 J.C. Darnell, *The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State*, 68-69.

First, he translates the word after "we have seen" ("we have heard" in the first transliteration) as not the verbal intensifier ‘my’ like Darnell, but as *p.t*, “patricians”. Therefore, the phrase following the lacuna would read *nAy=w bin*, “their evil”, as opposed to *nAy bin*, “the evil ones”. If Ritner’s translation is correct, Makaresh’s evildoing is referenced in the same context as that of the patricians, lending supplemental support to the possibility that he was among their numbers.

The two authors translate columns 10 and 11 of the tableau differently as well. Whereas Darnell reads the text as: “Is it evil to flee before him, like the one who flees before the army of the one who does good for the entire land?” Ritner sees: “his [Makaresh’s] evil, which entered into his heart like that which entered into the heart of the army? He who does good for the entire land…” According to Ritner’s translation both the patricians from the preceding line and the army would have committed a malevolent deed. This passage connects Makaresh with the army, and like the previous columns, reinforces his position of a member of Kushite society.

The organization of the text itself further likens him to the fallen pharaoh. It disassociates Makaresh from the initial desert-dwelling foes threatening the “Mountains of Gold”. While these foreign enemies are introduced at the beginning of the inscription, Makaresh’s name appears at the end. The first four

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109 Ibid., 458.
110 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 71.
112 In situ: Semna; Temple of Dedwen and Sesostris III, façade beside West entrance, col.4 in Darnell, The Inscription of Queen Katimala at Semna, pls. VI-VIII.
lines of text contain a conversation between an unidentified ruler and Katimala, who discuss enemies and the deplored “event”. However, at the end of the fourth line, the tableau specifies that the ensuing text contains Katimala’s address to the thirty chiefs. She begins her monologue with “Bad is the pharaoh who is stripped of his strength”, and proceeds to address the various deficiencies of her predecessor’s reign. Katimala then specifies how she has improved the kingdom’s situation. It is within this context that Makaresh’s name arises, likening him more to the failed pharaoh than the enemy at the inscription’s start.

The townspeople cursing Makaresh, also discussed within this later setting, may possess juridical meaning that directly links him to the unavailing pharaoh’s fate. Darnell comments that while the city dwellers’ cursing of Makaresh in line 10 may simply refer to resentment, it could also signify a “juridical” process, a “cultically sanctioned magical procedure”. The tableau contains another more explicit reference to such a procedure—Katimala’s conference with the thirty chiefs. “The thirty”, ṡḥḥ.t, likely refers to government administrators and their function, which may have involved taking on the role of judges, as “a separate specialized class of ‘judges’ or permanent courts of law may not have existed”. Perhaps Darnell’s proposition that the cursing of Makaresh was a sanctioned procedure should be linked to this decidedly juridical meeting, during which the

113 Ibid., col. 5.
114 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State, 42.
fallen king suffers condemnation. These two congruent events may in fact refer to the same procedure. Alternatively, the chiefly council and city dwellers’ defamation of Makaresh could have been distinct authoritative processes deliberating the fate of one person: Makaresh, the wretched pharaoh.

Katimala’s inscription, particularly the character of Makaresh, encapsulates internecine conflict in the Nubian Dark Age. With her distinct cap-crown and Meroitic name, it is evident that Katimala and her tableau are of Kushite origin. Makaresh’s status as a “desert-dweller” is first problematized by his “noble squatting with flagellum” (A52) determinative, which generally indicates a revered individual—not a foreign rebel. His Meroitic name further classifies him as a societal insider. Odd determinative usage, Katimala’s failure to name her predecessor, the text’s organization, and possible juridical processes further imply Makaresh himself may have been the failed ruler. As such, the text’s strife was not only a product of external factors, but primarily stemmed from the very heart of the royal court in the form of a fallen king.

116 J.C. Darnell, The Inscriptions of Queen Katimala at Semna: textual evidence for the origins of the Napatan State. 34.
4.1.2 King Alara, Schemers, and the Genesis of the 25th Dynasty

No known later sources mention Katimala or the “event” which plagued the Early Napatan Period. However, further instances of internal controversy permeated the reign of another Early Napatan ruler, Alara. This celebrated king was heralded by later Kushite rulers as the one who initially secured their dynasty through a covenant with Amun. While Alara was not the first ruler of his line, his status as dynastic founder is well attested within Taharqo’s Kawa inscriptions. Located at the southern end of Kerma’s fertile basin, Kawa (then known as Gem-Aten) contains a large temple constructed by Taharqo in the late 7th century BC. In his Kawa IV stela, Taharqo recounts Alara’s covenant, which entreated the god for prosperous descendants,

the son of Re, Alara, justified, with the words, ‘O thou god that recognizes him that is loyal to thee...do thou look for me upon the womb of my siblings. Do thou set up their children upon the earth. Do thou act for them as thou didst act for me, and do thou cause them to attain prosperity.’

Later in his reign (years 8-10), upon his Kawa VI stela, Taharqo proudly stresses his relation to Alara through his matriline, legitimizing his own governance. These references raise a number of questions about the origins of the Kushite state and mode of succession in Kush. First—if Alara was the initial Nubian king to

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117 Alara is first referenced in Tabiry’s Funerary Stela (commissioned in the late 8th century BCE), Khartoum 1901 l.3 in Dunham, *Royal Cemeteries of Kush: El Kurru*, fig. 29.
118 FHN I, 52.
officially adopt Amun-worship, where does this leave Amun’s militant devotee, Katimala? What accounts for the markedly apparent absence of Katimala? No immediate answer to this question exists; however it is possible that the Queen belonged to a rival family of the 25th Dynasty kings, thereby being barred from memory.

More concrete evidence for dynastic rivalry is evidenced in Taharqo’s Kawa VI mention of Alara.¹²³ In this instance, Taharqo recounts Alara’s words—which specifically mention plotters against the throne, “act for her even as thou didst act for him that acted for thee, as a wonder unpremeditated and not trusted by schemers, for thou didst thwart for me him that devised evil against me and didst set me up as king”.¹²⁴ Taharqo’s stela establishes an image of the 25th Dynasty’s tumultuous beginnings, during which multiple groups vied for the Kushite throne. This excerpt runs contrary to the notion that only one family played a role in the formation of Kush, an idea advanced by Dunham and Macadam’s genealogical work¹²⁵ that Morkot criticizes.¹²⁶ From the outset, it is clear that the road to Kushite kingship was not an easy one.

¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁴ Ibid., cols. 23-24.
4.2 The Middle Napatan Period

4.2.1 Jerome’s Glosses and Royal Fratricide

The next evidence for internecine royal strife derives from the reign of King Taharqo himself. He ascended the throne around 690 BCE, and is generally considered Alara’s fifth successor, following Kashta, Pi(ankhy), Shabaqo, and Shebitqo. It is the transferal of power from Shebitqo to Taharqo that demonstrates the most compelling example of political controversy, although it may not appear so at first blush. Taharqo boasts of congenial relations with his predecessor in his Kawa IV stela, claiming Shebitqo “loved him more than all his brethren”. This inscription provides Egyptologists with a primary source attesting for a simple and non-controversial transmission of power from Shebitqo to Taharqo. Such has been the general consensus since Griffith’s Kawa excavations in the 1930s.

However, numerous pieces of evidence draw this view into question. Jerome’s glosses (c. 4th century AD), a statuette of Harmakhis (a 25th Dynasty High Priest of Amun), Papyrus Vandier (c. 7th century BCE), and abrupt shifts in the location of the Kushite royal necropolis indicate Taharqo’s ascension was rather suspicious, and may have involved regicide. In analyzing these sources, this section will explore the controversy encircling Taharqo’s rise to power, primarily focusing on the possibility that his instatement involved the murder of Shebitqo.

127 Khartoum 2678=Merowe Museum 52 ,col. 9. in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 17, 22.
Jerome’s glosses of Eusebius’ Greek *Chronicle*, composed in the 4th century AD, directly asserts Taharqo killed his predecessor.\(^{129}\) The *Chronicle*, divided into two parts, strove for comprehensiveness—discussing topics ranging from Hellenistic chronology to Bronze Age Near Eastern history. The original Greek volumes are now lost. Fortuitously, the *Chronicle* was translated and extended by the 7th century AD in a variety of languages.\(^{130}\) Jerome’s (ca. 340-420 CE) Latin translation of Eusebius’ second installment served as an ancient history textbook in the West for approximately 1500 years.\(^{131}\) A few manuscripts of Jerome’s edition contain narrative regarding Pharaonic Egypt, and hold particular value for Nubiology. Although these texts were not contemporaneous with the Second Kingdom of Kush, their contents retain historical merit. Depuydt argues extensively for the value of the manuscripts through tracing their origins back to merely a few decades after Jerome’s death (c. 442 CE). With this established high date, he contends these texts should be taken at least as seriously as Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca*.\(^{132}\) One gloss in particular contains valuable evidence for Kushite dynastic animosity.

The relevant account alludes to King Taharqo’s violent ascension, and exists in both long and short gloss forms.\(^{133}\) Vatican Reginensis 560, the oldest

\(^{129}\) *Ibid.*, 33-34.
\(^{132}\) For an extended discussion regarding the validity of Jerome’s Glosses, see L. Depuydt, “Glosses to Jerome’s Eusebios as a Source for Pharaonic History”.
\(^{133}\) *Ibid.*, 33.
known text containing the long version, dates between the 13th and 14th centuries BCE. It recounts,

_Tharacus: hic ab ethiopia duxit exercitum atque Sebionem occidit ipseque regnavit Egiptiorum._\(^{134}\)

_Taharqo: This one led an army from Nubia, killed Shebitqo and ruled the Egyptians himself._

Similarly, the 9-10th century CE short gloss found in Oxford Merton 315 tells of Shebitqo’s murder,

_Tarachus Sebicho interfecto Aegyptis regnavit._\(^{135}\)

_After Shebitqo was killed, Taharqo ruled over the Egyptians._

Taken together, the manuscripts containing variations of Shebitqo’s murder led scholars to believe Taharqo seized his throne through assassination up until the early 20th century CE.\(^{136}\)

Griffith’s excavations changed this consensus through revealing a series of inscribed stelae, one of which included Taharqo’s own account of his ascension.

His Kawa IV stela relates Taharqo’s youth, and suggests an affable relationship with Shebitqo. Lines 7-9 state,

‘Now His Majesty had been in Nubia as a goodly youth, a king’s brother, pleasant of love, and he came north to Thebes in the company of goodly youths whom His Majesty King Shebitku had sent to fetch from Nubia, in order that he might be there with him since he loved him more than all his brethren.’\(^{137}\)

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134 A. Schoene, _Eusebi Chronicorum Canonum quae supersunt_ (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875-1876), 129.

135 J. K. Fotheringham, _Eusebii Pamphili Chronicorum Canones: latine vertit, adauxit, as sua tempora produxit S. Eusebius Hieronymus_ (1923), 159, footnote to line 15.

136 Most knew of the alleged murder of Shebitqo through Unger’s 1867 work: G.F Unger, _Chronologie des Manetho_, (Berlin: Weidmann, 1867), 251. For further discussion, see L. Depuydt, “Glosses to Jerome’s Eusebios as a Source for Pharaonic History”, 39.

137 Khartoum 2678=Merowe Museum 52 cols. 7-9. in Macadam, _Temples of Kawa_ I, pls. 17, 22.
This first-hand account stands in marked contrast to Jerome’s Eusebios glosses. The historian’s desire to privilege primary sources here must be balanced by an awareness of the chief motives of their authors. In this case, one must bear in mind Taharqo’s stela was royally commissioned, and therefore more prone to reflecting the king’s political agenda. Kings utilized stelae as forms of propaganda. In this way, the content of Kawa IV may actually help further notions of internal strife within Kush’s ruling elite, exactly the opposite of what a ruler would intend. Quite notably, the inscription seems inordinately disarming. Taharqo’s overt proclamation of Shebitqo’s preference for him may be taken as overcompensation for Taharqo’s insecure claim to the throne.

In his study of Jerome’s glosses, Depuydt references two ancient sources that also hint at Taharqo’s scandalous ascension. First, a statue of the high priest of Amun, Harmakhis, lists a line of kings, but excludes Shebitqo. The list comprises of Shabaqo, Taharqo, and Tanwetamani.\(^\text{138}\) Barring the omission of Shebitqo between Shabaqo and Taharqo, such is the generally accepted order of Kushite kings amongst scholars today—making the elimination of Shebitqo all the more conspicuous. Nevertheless, this remains an argument from silence.

Papyrus Vandier,\(^\text{139}\) on the other hand, may provide affirmative evidence for intra-dynastic rivalry within Kush. Merely a few decades after Shebitqo’s death, this Demotic tale recounted the poisoning of a king named, S\(\mathbb{S}\)-\(\mathbb{B}\)k. The king’s historicity is unclear; the name may refer to Sheshonq I, to Shepseskaf, or to


\(^{139}\) P. Lille 139 in G. Posener, Le Papyrus Vandier, Pl. 1.
“son of Shabaqo”. The latter hypothesis is the most compelling, as Shebitqo is generally posited as Shabaqo’s son. The prenomen which accompanies S3-Sbk in the papyrus would therefore seem crucial to establishing the king’s identity. Unfortunately, the cartouche in question is transcribed in hieratic in a rather ambiguous way (Fig. 4), so that one grapheme in particular has proven challenging to decipher. Scholars debate whether the king’s prenomen reads \( dd-k\text{3}\text{w-rt} \) or \( mn-k\text{3}\text{w-rt} \) (Figs. 5 and 6)—written with either a djed-pillar (Gardiner Sign List R11) or senet-board (Gardiner Sign List Y5) grapheme, respectively.

If the former interpretation is accurate, the king from the tale and Shebitqo share the same throne name—making it increasingly likely that the tale was based upon the murder of Shebitqo. Depuydt holds to Posener’s reading of \( dd-k\text{3}\text{w-rt} \) in the first publication of the Papyrus Vandier. Others contest this, claiming that the name should rather be read as \( mn-k\text{3}\text{w-rt} \).

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143 For example, see: R. Jasnow, “A Note on Pharaoh S3-Sbk in Papyrus Vandier,” *Enchoria* 23 (1996), 179.
After examining plates of the Papyrus Vandier, it appears as though the missing grapheme is considerably wide, more closely resembling the djed-pillar (R11) than the senet-board (Y5).\(^{144}\) While it cannot be entirely certain, the protagonist of the tale does seem to most likely symbolize Shebitqo. The semblance between Shebitqo's throne name and that of Papyrus Vandier's murdered king along with the tale's chronological proximity to Shebitqo's death are likely not simply coincidental.

Until this point, discussion of political upheaval has relied solely upon textual sources. However, the most tantalizing and substantial piece of primary evidence for Taharqo's questionable ascension is archaeological. Analyzing the king's choice of burial site may help unearth more information about his relationship with other Kushite rulers. The first royal cemetery of the Kushite

\(^{144}\) P. Lille 139 in G. Posener, *Le Papyrus Vandier*, Pl. 1.
nobility was located at el-Kurru, where objects found in tombs bore the names of Kashta, Pi(ankh)y, Shabaqo, and Shebitqo. Breaking with custom, Taharqo chose to establish a new burial site on the opposite Nile bank at Nuri. On its own, this sudden shift of royal necropolis within the same Dynasty is striking. The situation becomes increasingly peculiar upon exploring familial relations and burials of succeeding kings.

Tim Kendall contends that Taharqo’s burial relocation represented an effort to mimic the resurrection of the god Osiris. Indeed, as Kendall observes, the king’s inundated burial pit and his pyramid’s alignment with the rising sun on New Year’s Day invokes themes of godly regeneration. This religious symbolism, however, does not preclude political significance. It is entirely possible the construction of Taharqo’s tomb at Nuri had dual political and religious significance: the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, if Taharqo had political reasons for switching locations as it seems, he would ideally reinforce his decision with religious meaning.

Following Taharqo’s interment at Nuri, his successor, Tanwetamani, relocated to el-Kurru. Tanwetamani’s relocation discredits overcrowding as an explanation for Taharqo’s move. If there was a lack of space, Tanwetamani could

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146 Kendall believes Taharqo chose his burial location because of his pyramid’s alignment with the rising sun on New Year’s Day. This would perpetually link him with rebirth, as did his burial pit’s position beneath the water table (similar to the Osireion at Abydos). Kendall’s hypothesis, while grounded in religion, does not presuppose an inherent change in theology. He merely capitalizes upon existing doctrines. For further information, see: T. Kendall. “Why did Taharqa Build his Tomb at Nuri?” In Between the Cataracts: Proceedings of the 11th Conference for Nubian Studies, Warsaw University, 27 August – 2 September 2006. Part One: Main Papers. Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean, Supplement Series 2:1. Warsaw, 117-147.
not have chosen to return. Furthermore, based on Reisner’s tomb chronology, eight graves\textsuperscript{148} (including Tanwetamani’s) corresponding with or postdating Taharqo’s burial were constructed at el-Kurru. Thus, King Taharqo had plenty of area for his internment and land upon which even his vast pyramid could sit.

If neither necropolis congestion, nor fundamental religious reform, nor rise of a new Dynasty caused King Taharqo to switch sites, then what spurred this conspicuous change? Tanwetamani’s familial relations, while unresolved, are critical to analyzing this move. Assyrian texts label him the son of Shabaqo and one of Taharqo’s sisters.\textsuperscript{149} Manethonian tradition also labels Shebitqo as Shabaqo’s son.\textsuperscript{150} If Taharqo had usurped Shebitqo and moved to Nuri in order to differentiate himself from his predecessor, it is unlikely that Tanwetamani would have wished to maintain that symbolic separation from his father and brother. Similarly, when the crown returned to Taharqo’s lineage with Atlanersa (and onward to Aspelta), the royal cemetery moved back to Nuri.\textsuperscript{151} It is Tanwetamani’s lone deviation from this new burial practice that largely provides evidence for political unrest.

Taharqo’s move to Nuri suggests the creation of a cadet line, with which Tanwetamani did not identify—as indicated by his return to el-Kurru. Following Tanwetamani’s death, however, the Nuri line resurfaced with Atlanersa. If all of Taharqo’s successors remained at Nuri, Taharqo’s reasons underlying the move

\textsuperscript{148} D. Dunham, \textit{The royal cemeteries of Kush: El Kurru}, (1950), vol. 1, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{149} “Tanwetamani son of Shabaku seated himself upon his royal throne.” British Museum 91026 (Rassam Cylinder)/British Museum 91086 col. 1, l. 52-col. 2, l. 27 in Luckenbill, \textit{Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 295.
\textsuperscript{150} Manetho, \textit{Aegyptiaca}, 167.
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Ibid.}
would be less suspicious. Alternatively, had the entire succession of Kushite kings returned to el-Kurru, there would be little indication of enduring dynastic rivalry. However, the existence of two contemporaneous royal burial sites within the same kingdom seems to reflect an imperial clash. Considering all the evidence indicating Taharqo’s controversial rise to power, it is quite plausible that he pioneered a cadet line, rivaling those buried at el-Kurru.

The divergence in cemeteries served as a tangible embodiment of a deep political rift between the Kushite kings. Kinship ties add a further layer of complication, as Taharqo’s successors appeared to have chosen their burial site based upon family relations. While the material and structural continuity linking el-Kurru and Nuri supports the notion of cultural cohesion, the separation of cemeteries indicate underlying political unrest. Such inconsistency makes the murder of Shebitqo as mentioned in Jerome’s glosses all the more plausible.

This conglomeration of evidence problematizes Taharqo’s rise to power. Material from the ancient historical record stands in accordance with Jerome’s glosses, and is indicative of discord amongst Kushite elites. Shebitqo’s absence from the king list on Harmakhis’ statue is bizarre—and its oddity is further underscored by Papyrus Vandier’s anecdote involving the poisoning of a king nominally comparable to Shebitqo. Taharqo’s proclaimed camaraderie with his predecessor in the Kawa IV stela stands in marked contrast with his decision to relocate the Kushite royal burial site to Nuri, away from Shebitqo and his predecessors. This move appears to indicate the formation of an alternate royal line. While scholars cannot attain conclusiveness regarding the exact trajectory of
Taharqo’s ascension, Jerome’s glosses—augmented by this combination of ancient sources—certainly demonstrate some form of internal struggle encircling Taharqo’s reign.
4.2.2: Residual Rivalries: Taharqo’s Legacy

The inscriptions left by Taharqo’s descendants, namely Nesishutefnut and Aspelta, suggest that enduring internal strife carried into later generations. Perhaps the most mysterious example involves a statuette of Taharqo’s son, Nesishutefnut. The black granite figure from Karnak suffered damnatio memoriae, but the stricken name is neither Nesishutefnut’s nor even Taharqo’s. Rather, it was Taharqo’s wife’s name that was destroyed.152 This is exceedingly puzzling—if the vandal’s intention was to challenge Nesishutefnut’s royal legitimacy, then why not erase his name? Almost as perplexing is the fact that Taharqo, the most powerful Nubian king’s name, remains untouched.

In the past, scholars have argued damnatio memoriae of Kushite inscriptions like Nesishutefnut’s were all a product of the 26th Dynasty’s desire to expunge any memory of their rule.153 These hypotheses advance notions of Egyptian dynamism and tropical African stagnancy. Yoyotte asserts,

le martelage des noms royaux éthiopiens n’est pas, semble-t-il, le résultat de rancunes familiales qui auraient animé les uns contre les autres les rois de la XXVe dynastie, mais bien une conséquence des pretentions opposes des monarchies kouchite et saïte.154

Psamtik II, a 26th Dynasty Saïte king, certainly ordered the erasure of Kushite monuments in Egypt, occasionally chiseling his name over those he had

152 Cairo CCG 42203 in Legrain, Statues et stauettes de rois et de particuliers (1925), Vol. 3, Pl. VI.
expunged. However, his involvement does not seem to account for all erasure, some of which likely reflects internal strife within the Kushite royal court. This can be seen in part through examining the various targets of damnatio within the inscriptions.

Nesishutefnut’s statue offers a very convincing example of Kushite damnatio memoriae. If all erasure of Kushite inscriptions were a result of a later Egyptian effort to expunge the 25th Dynasty kings from memory, then why would Psamtk II leave Taharqo’s name upon the statuette? One would think that if given such a prime opportunity to strike Taharqo, the quintessence of Kushite power, from posterity, the Saïtes would have snatched the chance. The invading army would have had little reason to single out one of Taharqo’s multiple wives for erasure.

Due to the eminence of women in Kushite society and the recounted complexities amongst Taharqo’s wives, it would be unsurprising if resultant enmities arose amongst the women and the families from which they came. As the damnatio specifically targets Nesishutefnut’s mother, it seems that royal conflict may have extended even beyond the controversies encircling Taharqo’s ascension. Like her husband, some form of discord surrounded Nesishutefnut’s mother. These relations intensify awareness of antagonism within the Kushite court.

Residual rivalries originating with Taharqo also appear to have carried

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155 For example, Psamtk II replaced Taharqo’s name with his own in the cartouches upon the first court and the second pylon of Karnak. He did the same with door hinges at Memphis J. Yoyotte, “Le martelage des noms royaux éthiopiens par Psammétique II”, 222-223. For door hinge, see F. Petrie, Meydum and Memphis III, 40, pl. XXXIII (figure 13).
into the last quarter of the 7th century BCE. At this time, about 60 years after Taharqo’s coronation, Aspelta claimed the throne. Aspelta’s reign is fraught with textual hints of unrest, as his rule was clearly contested through the destruction of his stela at Meroë and the extensive damnatio memoriae plaguing his Enthronement Stela. This inscription was found near the First Pylon of Amun’s Temple at Napata. Although Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela was in Kush, it and the other inscriptions in Napata have been grouped with those pieces assumed to have been destroyed by Northern forces.\footnote{J. Yoyotte, “Le martelage des noms royaux éthiopiens par Psammétique II”, 216.}

Akin to his claim that all erasure of Kushite monuments in Egypt reflects Psamtik II’s efforts, Yoyotte further extends this argument to include destroyed inscriptions in Kush. He confronts Reisner’s assertion that Kushite dynastic struggle was the root of damnatio in Napata\footnote{Reisner’s argument can be found in G.A. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal, Part I,” in ZÄS (1931), 76-100.}, stating once again these were attempts of Psamtik II to quell lingering allegiance to the Kushite dynasty.\footnote{J. Yoyotte, “Le martelage des noms royaux éthiopiens par Psammétique II”, 216.} Not only do the erasure’s subjects within Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela problematize this claim in the same way as Nesishutefnut’s statuette—it is also doubtful Psamtik II and his army reached as far south as Napata during Egypt’s 593 BCE campaign in Kush.

Little is known of this early 6th century BCE expedition; its causes remain obscured and the travelled distance is convoluted by vague triumphal
stelae. The tentative reconstruction of Kush’s royal chronology further clouds the situation—most believe Psamtek II ruled contemporaneously with Napatan King Aspelta—but this too is debated. Due to these inconsistencies, piecing together the details of Psamtek II’s campaign is an extremely tenuous task. For the purposes of this thesis, the expedition’s significance lies in the fact that scholars have utilized it to explain various instances of damnatio memoriae throughout Kush.

Yet, it is unlikely that all erasure in Kush was initiated by invading peoples from the North. In fact, Psamtek II probably did not even reach Gebel Barkal and its corresponding town, Napata. Contrary to Sauneron and Yoyotte’s opinion, Török perceptively notes that all three stelae (found at Karnak, Tanis, and Shellal)

159 The Shellal and Karnak inscriptions both indicate the army reached Pnubs, whereas the Tanis text says Trgb (Pliny’s Tergedum/Psamtek II’s Tergeb)—believed to be the site of a royal palace; see B. Zurawski, “Pliny’s Tergedum discovered,” in Sudan & Nubia: the Sudan Archaeological Research Society bulletin. (1998), 74-82. The recent discovery of a palace at Soniyat has led scholars to most likely confirm it was Tergeb; see “Polacy odkryli najwiek szyj palace królestwa Kusz,” Nauka w Polsce, April 4, 2013, accessed April 5, 2013. http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,394755,polacy-odkryli-najwiekszy-palac-krolestwa-kusz.html. This would place the locale between the Third and Fourth Cataracts. Psamtek II’s arrival at Tergeb doesn’t require their arrival at Napata, as Soniyat marks a logical stopping point for a military expedition—any Nilotic travel beyond that point en route to Napata would require one to sail against both the wind and current due to the sigmoid curve of the Nile. Psamtek’s Karnak stela: PM II 37 [135] in Sauneron and Yoyotte, “La campagne nubienne de Psammétique II et sa signification historique,” pls. I-II.; Shellal (Psamtek’s Year 3 stela) found near Western bank at Aswan, now at New Kalabasha in H. Goedicke, “The Campaign of Psammétique II against Nubia,” MDAIK 37 (1981), 187; and Tanis stela: Cairo JE 67095 in Sauneron and Yoyotte, “La campagne nubienne de Psammétique II et sa signification historique,” pls. III-IV.

160 While Morkot and Welsby both seem to assert Aspelta and Psamtek II were contemporaries at the beginning of both of their reigns, Török contests this—claiming the evidence is not substantial enough. See R. Morkot, Black Pharaohs, 303; D. Welsby, The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan and Meroitic Empires, 20; L. Török, The Kingdom of Kush: handbook of the Napatan-Meroitic civilization, 371.

161 Contrary to Yoyotte, Török contends that damage to Aspelta’s inscriptions was a result of internal politics. See L. Török, Kingdom of Kush: Handbook of the Napatan-Meroitic Civilization (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 379.

narrating Psamtik II’s mission fail to mention a journey to Napata. Graffiti inscribed by his soldiers at Abu Simbel references reaching the city “Kerkis”, but the location of this toponym remains unclear. As Kush’s primary city, one would assume that if the Egyptians successfully ravaged Napata, the momentous event would be heralded throughout Psamtik II’s inscriptions. No known evidence of such an achievement exists—so the chances of a triumphant Egyptian army travelling to the region are exceedingly slim. This geographical inference alone immediately begins to invalidate the assumption stating Aspelta’s stelae suffered defacement at the hands of the Egyptians.

Analogous to Nesishutefnut’s statuette, this inscription exhibits damnatio memoriae targeting the matriline. Seven generations of Aspelta’s female ancestors were recorded on the stela, all subsequently expunged from the record. Even if the Egyptians had infiltrated the boundaries of Napata and Gebel Barkal, that they would have felt the need to entirely remove all memory of Aspelta’s entire female lineage is improbable. In fact, the Egyptians placed relatively little emphasis upon their matrilines, especially compared to those in Kush—where the importance of women is well attested. George Reisner went so far as to boldly claim Kushite succession filtered through the matriline. First century BCE Greek historian, Nicolaus of Damascus, similarly asserted, “Aethiopians have a particular respect for their sisters; the kings do not leave the succession to their own but to their

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sisters’ sons.”\textsuperscript{166} As seen above, tracing exact hereditary relations amongst the Kushite kings presents scholars with an elaborate and daunting task. Thus, decisive statements like Reisner’s should be approached with caution.

Regardless of Napatan rules of succession, the significance of royal Kushite women is seen as early as Taharqo’s rule. To supplement his legitimacy, he recounts, “the mother of his mother was committed to him by her brother, the Chieftain, the son of Re-Alara.”\textsuperscript{167} The lengthy matriline recounted in Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela is reminiscent of Taharqo’s female linkage to Alara. Relatedly, Kushite queens served as earthly vessels for eternal goddesses.\textsuperscript{168} This theme extended through Nubian history, and serves as another trait distinguishing Kushite and Egyptian societies. With women playing such a distinguished role, it is almost unsurprising that, like their male counterparts, queens would be targets of \textit{damnatio} in Kush. Such purposeful erasure implies the perpetrator (1) was not Egyptian, and (2) not only had an objection to Aspelta, but his entire family as well.

With whom then was Aspelta associated? While erasure severely obscures Aspelta’s lineage, it would appear likely that he was trying to emphasize his link to Taharqo. It may have been this connection that inspired opponents to mutilate Aspelta’s stela. Morkot observes, “The ‘Aspelta Accession Stela’ [Enthronement Stela] emphasizes the king’s matrilineal descent (whether actual or adoptive) and

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{FHN} II, 684. \textit{Florilegium} 4.2 FGrH 90 F103m.
\textsuperscript{167} Khartoum 2679=Merowe Museum 53, col. 22 in Macadam, \textit{Temples of Kawa} I, pls. 11-12.
implicitly his connection with Taharqo and perhaps also with Alara”. His Enthronement Stela outlines seven generations of women, all bearing the title “king’s sister”. Unfortunately, all of their names have been erased, but the first woman listed is undoubtedly Nasalsa, as she is otherwise attested as Aspelta’s mother in his Year 3 Adoption Stela. Preceding Nasalsa was one possessing the titulary, “king’s sister, divine Adoratrix of Amen-Re, king of the gods of Dominion (Thebes), [...], justified”. Taharqo’s daughter, Amenirdis II held these precise titles. Whether her relation to Nasalsa was biological or adoptive is still contested. Either way, Aspelta evidently wished to link himself to Amenirdis, resulting in a definite connection with Taharqo. Beyond these two individuals, however, the identities of the remaining women are wholly unknown. Aspelta’s patriline is especially difficult to reconstruct, so it is impossible to determine if it too can be traced back to Taharqo. Nonetheless, Aspelta’s ancestral (at least

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170 Louvre C 257 in Schäfer, Die aethiopische Königsinschrift des Louvre, Taf. 4-5, col. 1-2 (above Aspelta’s mother).
171 Cairo JE 48866, l. 20 in Grimal, Quatre steles napatéennes, pls. VI-VII.
172 If Amenirdis II succeeded Shepenwepet II as God’s Wife of Amun, this relation would presumably have been adoptive. Yet, it is conceivable that Amernirdis II never fulfilled this position—which instead may have been taken by Nitocris, Psamtik I’s daughter. In the Nitocris Adoption Stela, Psamtik I asserts, “Now then, I have heard that a king’s daughter is there, (a daughter of) the Horus Lofty-of-diadems, the good god [Taharqo], justified, whom he gave his sister to be her eldest daughter and who is there as Adorer of god. I will not do what in fact should be done and expel an heir from his seat seeing that I am a king who loves truth”. Despite these avowals, Nitocris may have taken Amenirdis II’s place as Shepenwepet II’s ‘eldest daughter’, making her the next God’s Wife. Habachi argues Amenirdis went on to marry Mentuhotep, a royal vizier. Morkot contends that if Amenirdis married, she would have and could actually have been Nasalsa’s mother. For further information, see: L. Habachi, “Mentuhotep, the Vizier and Son-in-Law of Taharqa”, E. Endesfelder, ed. Ägypten und Kusch. Festchrift. F. Hintze. Berlin: 167-170. and R. Morkot, “Kingship and Kinship in the Empire of Kush,” S. Wenig, ed. Studien zum antiken Sudan (1999): 197.
173 Aspelta’s only known fraternal relation is to his brother and predecessor, Anlamani. The two are linked by their mother, Nasalsa: Refer to Anlamani’s Enthronement Stela (Æ.I.N. 1709 in
matrilineal) connection to Taharqo may have encouraged political opponents to etch Aspelta and his contestable legitimacy from memory.

Further internal complexity can also be inferred from the textual content of the Enthronement Stela. As the erasure on this stela implies, it seems that Aspelta’s claim to the throne was not fully established upon the death of his predecessor, Anlamani. The inscription itself begins in uncertainty, with the Kushite army wandering like “cattle without a herdsman”. Military commanders and their men deliberate their unfortunate predicament, concluding that a future king is amongst them, yet to be revealed. In want of a king, the army contemplates, “Though our lord is here with us, we do not know him. If only we knew him so that we might serve him…” The commanders and their men resolve to seek Amun-Re’s guidance,

‘Now, there is this god, Amun-Re, Lord of the Two Lands who dwells in Pure Mountain. He is the god of Kush. Come! Let us go to him. We will not make a decision in ignorance of him. A matter undertaken in ignorance of him is not good, while a deed in the hand of god is successful. He has been the god of kingship of Kush since the time of Re. It is he that will guide us. The kingship of Kush is in his hands—that which he has given to the son whom he loves.’

Macadam, *Temples of Kawa I, l. 22*: “The king’s mother, Nasalsa” and Aspelta’s Dedication Stela (Louvre C 257 in Schäfer, *Die aethiopische Königsinschrift des Louvre*, Taf. 4-5, col. 1-2 (above Aspelta’s mother): “The king’s sister and the king’s mother, the mistress of Kush, Nasalsa”. Aspelta’s father, generally assumed to be Senkamaniskeñ, remains unidentified. As Morkot notes, Senkamaniskeñ’s name does not fit in Aspelta’s father’s obliterated cartouche; see R. Morkot, “Kingship and Kinship in the Empire of Kush”, 199. Macadam briefly proposed Atlanersa’s name would more likely fit in the cartouche, but never conducts a study himself; see M.F.L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, Vol. 1: The Inscriptions: Text, 129. Reisner considers the possibility of there being a king unattested for in the historical record, “The only question, is whether or not there was another king, not buried at Nuri, also between Tanutaman and Senkamanesken.”; see G.A. Reisner, “The Barkal Temples in 1916: Continued,” in *JEA* (1918): 110.

174 Cairo JE 48866, l. 5 in Grimal, *Quatre steles napatéennes*, pls. VI-VII.
175 *Ibid.*, l. 5-6, pls. VI-VII.
With this popular initiative, the king is chosen through a typical oracular election, during which the army defers to the priesthood. In turn, priests gathered the royal brethren—and placed them facing a statue of Amun, which was then believed to tilt in the direction of the rightful king. Following this public appointment, Amun reaffirmed his selection in private with Aspelta. This oracular process, common in both Egypt and Nubia, is preserved in a number of temple scenes.177

Following Aspelta’s appointment, the formerly aimless troops greeted their new king with infinite joy, “Then his entire army was shouting very greatly...their hearts exceedingly pleased.”178 The populace’s wish was granted. This laudatory reaction frequents Egyptian and Nubian texts, but (particularly in Egyptian inscriptions) the people’s initiative to appoint a king does not. Whether the public’s call for a king truly existed is unknowable. It is also impossible to exclude popular solicitation from standard Kushite procedure; Aspelta’s Election Stela may recount customary election practice.179

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177 While depictions are common, it is quite atypical for even oracular elections to be textually described at such length. Perhaps the most commonly known example is that of Thutmose III’s Coronation Stela: “I was enabled with the diadems which were upon him; his serpent-diadem rested on [my forehead]...[He satisfied] me with all his glories, I was sated with the nourishment of the gods, like Horus when he counted his body at the house of my father Amun-Re. I was [presented] with divine honors in...my diadems. His own titulary was affixed for me.” In J.H. Breasted, A New Chapter in the Life of Thutmose III, (Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1900), 9.

178 Cairo JE 48866, l. 28 in Grimal, Quatre steles napatéennes, pls. VI-VII.

179 A later Kushite inscription (beyond the scope of this thesis), Irike-Amannote’s Enthronement Stela, contains similar involvement of the populace. This increases the probability that a popular solicitation of oracular election was not simply a one-time idea Aspelta concocted. The army asks, “Why go, since we [wan]der about as cattle without a herdsman, for our lord is not among us? The rebellious foreigners will continue [...] We desire to give him the throne [of this] land” His father [Amun-Re] had already appointed him in the womb of his mother, (namely) the son of Re [(Irike-Amannote)] living forever.”; in situ E wall, S side of the Hypostyle Hall of Temple T at Kawa cols. 5-6 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 17 and 22.
Either way, the inclusion of this detail seems to mark an attempt by Aspelta to further legitimize his rule against potential enemies. It may indicate that, from the beginning of his reign, perhaps due to his lineage, adversaries doubted Aspelta’s claim to power. Divine ordinance as invoked through oracular election was not enough—the newly appointed king further buttressed his sovereignty through demonstrating the people’s desire for a rightful king. This contention present in Aspelta’s early reign likely extended into his later years as well, compelling him to repeatedly reassert his legitimacy. One such validation may be present in another of Aspelta’s inscriptions—the Khaliut Stela.

Also in Amun’s temple at Napata, alongside Aspelta’s damaged Election Stela, stands a strikingly unscathed inscription. It too was commissioned by Aspelta (c.a. 590 BCE)\textsuperscript{180}, but the text predominantly focuses upon one of Pi(ankh)y’s sons—Khaliut. Khaliut, as the “bodily son of Pi(ankh)y”\textsuperscript{181}, was part of the Kushite royal line. Taharqo is often considered one of Pi(ankh)y’s son as well, since the Nitocris Adoption Stela proclaims him brother of Shepenwepet II\textsuperscript{182}, who in turn was Pi(ankh)y’s daughter.\textsuperscript{183} As such, most see Khaliut and Taharqo as brothers. According to the inscription, Khaliut served as Count of Kanad, a Kushite province.\textsuperscript{184} Yet, it has been proposed that Khaliut may have had the right to a more distinguished position—the kingship—which was taken from him by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[180] \textit{in situ:} Amun temple at Gebel Barkal l. 21 in M.B. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal”, pls. IV-VIII.
\item[181] \textit{Ibid.,} ll. 1-2
\item[182] Cairo JE 36327 in Caminos, \textit{Nitocris Adoption Stela}, pls. VIII-IX.
\item[183] Berlin AMP 7972, as photographed in F. Hintze and U. Hintze, \textit{Civilizations of the Old Sudan} (Leipzig, 1968), fig. 64.
\item[184] \textit{in situ:} Amun temple at Gebel Barkal l. 21 in M.B. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal”, pls. IV-VIII. (above Khaliut).
\end{footnotes}
Taharqo.\textsuperscript{185} Scholars like Macadam argue Aspelta, as one of Taharqo’s
descendants, erected the Khaliut stela in order to appease the Count of Kanad’s
dissatisfied family line.\textsuperscript{186}

Macadam contested, “If Aspelta was descended from Taharqa, as I have
supposed...his reburial of Khaliut and the setting up of a mortuary service, must
have been intended to propitiate Khaliut’s descendants, and it follows that
Shebitku’s anxiety to have Taharqo succeed him was in order to prevent Khaliut
from coming to the throne.”\textsuperscript{187} László Török has addressed this proposition with
considerable skepticism: “The preservation of the Khaliut Stela and the
remarkable fact that Aspelta ostentatiously cared for the mortuary cult of a son of
his eighth predecessor generated the hypothesis according to which Aspelta
usurped the throne from an elder line descending from Khaliut.”\textsuperscript{188} This assertion
completely omits any discussion of Taharqo, making it seem as if Aspelta
personally seized the crown from another. If such was Török’s interpretation, it is
a moot point, considering the insurrection likely took root long before Aspelta
gained power. While Aspelta may have occupied a throne intended for one of
Khaliut’s descendants, the issue appears to have started years prior with Taharqo.

Macadam’s argument more likely resembles the truth. His understanding
rests upon three major points: (1) Aspelta was somehow related to Taharqo, (2)
the stela in question was erected in order to appease Khaliut’s dissatisfied

\textsuperscript{185} Macadam, \textit{Temples of Kawa} I, 128.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Ibid.} For further discussion, see also R. Morkot, “Kingship and Kinship in the Empire of Kush,”
\textsuperscript{187} Macadam, \textit{Temples of Kawa} I, 128.
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{FHN} I, 249.
descendants, and (3) Shebitqo placed Taharqo in power as an attempt to prevent Khaliut from becoming king. The first two deductions are apposite to the present work. However, in his third theory, Macadam presumably chooses to interpret Taharqo’s Kawa IV assertion that Shebitqo “loved me more than all his brethren” literally. This is certainly an assumption that must be approached with caution. Therefore, this thesis would propose amending Macadam’s theory: Taharqo deposed Shebitqo (whether by regicide or otherwise), thus barring Khaliut from his place as pharaoh. In turn, Aspelta commissioned a stela honoring Khaliut to help neutralize any contestation of his kingly power from those associated with the Count of Kanad.

With at least a matrilineal connection to Taharqo, Aspelta’s ancestral legitimacy as king would have been contested by any who disapproved of his famed ancestor. The damnatio on his Enthronement Stela reinforces this resentment. If Taharqo seized the throne preemptively from Shebitqo as Jerome’s glosses assert, it is likely that a presumptive successor was barred from the throne in the process. Just as Macadam proposed, Khaliut may have been this intended king, later dominated by his brother Taharqo. Decades later, Khaliut’s descendants likely questioned Aspelta’s authority—and Aspelta’s stela for Khaliut would then represent the king’s attempt to appease such internal threats. The textual content of Aspelta’s Khaliut Stela and its undamaged state, as compared with Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela, lend some credence to this hypothesis.

189 Morkot mentions Taharqo may have usurped Khaliut, but does not pursue the idea. He notes the Khaliut Stela is open to different interpretations, one of which involves an “attempt by Aspelta to placate the descendants of Khaliut who had perhaps had a better claim to the throne than Taharqo.” See Morkot, “Kingship and Kinship in the Empire of Kush”, 200.
In addition to the stela’s exemplary condition, an analysis of the inscription’s content divulges further hints of political complications and Aspelta’s goal of appeasement. Aspelta is lauded for his virtuous works,

How fortunate it is for gods and men that since His Majesty [Aspelta] appeared he has been seeking what is advantageous...and has acted for every god and every goddess. Fashioning their images, setting up their offering stones, building their shrines, provisioning their temple-compounds with every good thing, multiplying their offering-tables in gold, silver, and copper, founding their endowments, giving voice-offering to the glorious dead, building tombs for those who have no tomb, respecting the image of the follower of Horus as the monument of his ka, placing his son on his seat.\(^{190}\)

This portion of the Khaliut stela outlines the king’s respectfulness for both deities and the dead. Reference to Aspelta’s construction of Khaliut’s tomb is also accounted for later in the text, within Khaliut’s address to Re-Horakhty, “Aspelta, may he live forever. [He] built for me a pyramid of fine, white sandstone. He provisioned a pyramid-compound of millions of years with everything. He made my name endure in it.”\(^{191}\) Aspelta specifically pays homage to Khaliut, who appears to have lacked an impressive tomb until Aspelta constructed one for him years after his death.\(^{192}\) In itself, the notion that any son of Pi(ankh)y did not have a decent burial is suspicious. Aspelta seems to have regenerated some veneration for Khaliut, as he made his name endure in a lasting pyramid.

Khaliut’s dialogue as recreated by Aspelta’s scribes also contains an expressed desire to ensure their king and his successors ceaseless prosperity.

\(^{190}\) in situ: Amun temple at Gebel Barkal, ll. 15-18 in M.B. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal”, pls. IV-VIII.

\(^{191}\) Ibid., l. 21.

\(^{192}\) M. Reisner contends that Khaliut’s tomb was either insignificant or crumbling. See: M.B. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal, Part 4. The Stela of Prince Khaliut,” ZÄS 70 (1934), 37.
Amongst his implorations to Re-Horakhty for Aspelta’s health, Khaliut requests of the god: “[Grant] him your kingship, your awesomeness, and your might...Establish his heir. Bring his children into being on earth, without perishing, for ever and ever.” These entreaties surface after Aspelta’s benevolent works for Khaliut are accentuated. Some would attribute these recorded wishes to an unassuming goal of kingly renewal that sought accreditation from a deceased predecessor. Such a rationalization does not sufficiently address the wealth of complexities behind this text; and simply citing Khaliut’s moral integrity as outlined in the Negative Confession at the beginning of the inscription does not fully explain Aspelta’s selection of Khaliut. Even if Khaliut was ethically sound, the king’s choice to legitimize his position through honoring the son of his eighth-predecessor, a count for whom there is no evidence of close familial ties to Aspelta, is peculiar. Hence, this solution leaves a major question unanswered—why Khaliut?

For the various reasons narrated above, it appears as though Khaliut was not merely an arbitrary honorable royal chosen by Aspelta to strengthen his political stance. Khaliut wishes well upon the king—and explicitly solicits Re-Horakhty to empower Aspelta’s heir. This may be interpreted as Aspelta’s way of proclaiming the uncompromised validity of his line to those questioning his reign,

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194 For example: FHN I, 249, 277.
195 Utterances of a “Negative Confession” date back to the Old Kingdom, and appear frequently in biographical texts. The practice is founded upon Chapter 125 in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Khaliut’s confession begins, “I did not make falsehood, the abomination of the gods. I did not rob the lapwing-people. I did not commit a wrong.” in situ: Amun temple at Gebel Barkal ,ll. 4-5 in M.B. Reisner, Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal, pls. IV-VIII.
particularly Khaliut’s loyalists. Any doubt about this king’s legitimacy based upon wrong done to Khaliut and his line would therefore be nullified, as demonstrated by Khaliut’s posthumous blessing. In honoring Khaliut, a deferential Aspelta gained favor of the one whom his ancestor, Taharqo, may have overtaken decades prior.

The fact that amongst his vandalized stelae, Khaliut’s remains untouched should not be a detail haphazardly dismissed. There was controversy surrounding Aspelta’s legitimacy, but not when in association with Khaliut. The count’s close familial link to Taharqo makes it increasingly likely that this 25th Dynasty king and the debate surrounding his ascension played a part in this situation. Khaliut’s supporters may have represented enemies of Taharqo’s cadet line. As Aspelta was buried at Nuri along with Taharqo, it is quite possible that he too was a member of this lineage.

Another of Aspelta’s inscriptions, the Dedication Stela, demonstrates how he may have connived to curtail future internecine royal conflict through political stratagem. In the text, royal officials assemble to appoint Kheb, the king’s sister, as Madiken’s adoptive daughter and Amun’s sistrum-player. The position indefinitely belongs to Madiken, her daughter Henuttakhebit, and their successors, “It is her [Madiken] children’s. It is her children’s children’s, enduring for ever and ever, without anyone cutting them off forever.” Yet, beyond this basic overview, scholars have interpreted this 26-line text in a multiplicity of ways.

Philological irregularities of the text yield a range of interpretive variations, and as Alexey Vinogradov highlights, those studying this inscription
still face three rudimentary questions: "(a) who was the subject of the action, (b) who or what was the object of the action, [and] (c) what was the aim of the action under discussion." After a relatively brief (but effective) analysis, Vinogradov logically concludes those dignitaries acting on the king’s behalf are the text’s subject, while Kheb and her descendants represent the object. The third inquiry is of particular interest to this thesis, as Kheb’s appointment likely embodied a strategic political move.

Vinogradov argues this appointment was not necessarily an honor as it may initially appear. Those filling the apparently ‘esteemed’ position of Amun’s sistrum-player received a meager fixed allowance, of which Schäfer justifiably commented, "Das Gehalt selbst ist nicht übermäßig hoch, es wird wenig mehr als das zum Leben Nothwendige gegeben haben." For a position of repute to receive such small rationing is quite strange. Analyzing others who were employed in the same occupation further diminishes the prestige of those dedicated as sistrum-players. According to Taharqo’s Kawa III stela, the king commissioned foreign captives’ children—hardly venerated members of society—to “rattle the sistrum". The temple in which these women were placed was also less than illustrious—unlike the Temples of Amun at Gebel Barkal and Amun-Re at Kawa, it was never part of the Kushite royal coronation circuit.

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196 A. Vinogradov, "The Golden Cage: What is the <<Dedication Stele>> Dedicated to?," in *MittSAG* 23 (2012), 105. For the sake of brevity, this thesis only briefly discusses the first two questions—and is primarily concerned with Vinogradov’s latter inquiry. For further explanation, see article.

197 Trans, "The provisions themselves weren’t very high, just a little more than what the necessities of life required." H. Schäfer, "Die aethiopische Königsinschrift," 108.


199 A. Vinogradov, "The Golden Cage: What is the <<Dedication Stele>> Dedicated to?,", 113, n. 76.
Furthermore, while the event was under the auspices of the king, he was not actually present—which Vinogradov proposes may lend to the office’s mediocrity. Taking all of this into account, he concludes the event’s aim was inherently political, perhaps “a deliberate incapacitating of the person(s) involved, if not a kind of punishment.”200 As Kushite rulers oftentimes invoked their matriline to legitimize kingship, this proposition involving the incapacitation of women is extremely pressing for the present work. If a monarch’s female line played a role in kingly eligibility, appointments like that in the Dedication Stela may have been an attempt to tailor the number of eligible heirs (and by extension, rivals).201 Vinogradov’s well-crafted argument suggests Kushite royal awareness of the delicate problems of succession.

Taharqo’s contestable ascension evidently carried into later generations. It seems at least some members of the royal family—particularly Aspelta—felt negative reverberations of Taharqo’s kingship. Aspelta’s inscriptions are dominated by hints of internecine strife. The Enthronement Stela implies he may not have been an obvious choice for the kingship—and perhaps in an attempt to further legitimize his reign, the text capitalizes upon an extensive election process. Its damnatio reveals protestation towards the king and his family line. In the same vein, the Khaliut stela demonstrates Aspelta’s continued efforts to justify his eminence to Khaliut’s supporters—who potentially viewed Aspelta’s claim to the throne as illegitimate due to his connection with Taharqo. Finally, the Dedication Stela may represent an attempt to thwart future dynastic strife.

200 Ibid., 113.
201 Ibid., 114.
Although these later pieces have never before been analyzed in the same context as Jerome’s glosses, when viewed connectively they build upon one another. Thus, perhaps the variety of evidence investigated above should be viewed in a new light—dynastic struggles within the Kushite court in dialogue with one another over the course of decades.
4.2.3: Courtly Conspiracy: The Immolation Stela

A mysterious inscription, commonly attributed to Aspelta\textsuperscript{202}, recounts an unspeakable ill, punishable by death. The condemned family of priests was caught in a treacherous scheme, “They have conspired in their heart(s) about killing a man who had committed no crime, [something] which the god forbids to be done.”\textsuperscript{203} As a result, the criminals were sentenced to death and made into a burnt offering. All of the priests’ heirs were barred from succeeding their malevolent forerunners. The content of this inscription overtly relates a politically charged event, and regardless of the year it was commissioned, it is the epitome of internal struggles that infested the Kushite kingdom. Nonetheless, some exceedingly questionable assumptions previously made about this stela must be addressed. Specifically, the manner in which the inscription has been dated dubiously limits internecine strife to the reign of one king, Aspelta—while failing to acknowledge the possibility that other Kushite kings might also have faced the issues present in the text.

Generally referred to as the Banishment or Excommunication Stela, these misleading titles do not properly encapsulate the severity and grimness of the priests’ fate—which was not simply banishment, but sacrificial death by flame. Amun “made them speak with their [own] mouths...in order to bring about their destruction...he killed them, they being made into a burnt offering.”\textsuperscript{204} This fate

\textsuperscript{203} Cairo JE 48865 , l. 7 in Grimal, Quatre stèles napatéennes, pls. VIII-IX.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., ll. 8-9.
transcended worlds in Ancient Egypt, and Kush as well. Incineration was reserved for only the most heinous of offenders—and annihilated any hopes of an afterlife.\textsuperscript{205} As such, this thesis terms the inscription “Immolation Stela”, in attempt to more accurately portray the inscription’s content.\textsuperscript{206} The Immolation Stela was found in the Amun Temple B 500 at Gebel Barkal, along with the Enthronement and Khaliut stelae. Like the Enthronement stela, this inscription is afflicted with damnatio. Due to the erasure and the stela’s location next to Aspelta’s other texts, scholars have ascribed the Immolation Stela to Aspelta.\textsuperscript{207}

In the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Auguste Mariette published commentary on the text and admitted that the erasure upon the stela problematized attempts to date its inscription. Yet, he ultimately concluded, “je croirais donc que l’inscription dont nous allons faire l’analyse, prend sa place aux environs de la fin de la XXVI\textsuperscript{e} dynastie.”\textsuperscript{208} Mariette attributed this date to the text’s so-called “gaucherie”, which he did not believe characteristic of earlier Kushite inscriptions.\textsuperscript{209} Whether this awkwardness refers to paleography or grammar is somewhat unclear. Either way,


\textsuperscript{206} Referring to this inscription as the Immolation Stela (rather than Banishment) also is nominally pragmatic, as another text from the Third Intermediate Period known as the Banishment Stela (Louvre 257) exists. In contrast to the “Immolation” Stela, the punishment in Louvre 257 is limited to banishment.


\textsuperscript{208} A. Mariette, “Quatre Pages des Archives De L’Ethiope,” in \textit{Revue archéologique} 12 (1865), 174.

\textsuperscript{209} A. Mariette, “Quatre Pages des Archives De L’Ethiope,” 174.
Mariette’s assessment of Napatan texts was likely based upon inferences surrounding Pi(ankh)y’s Great Triumphal Stela, the only royal inscription from the Early Napatan era in Kush that was known to late 19th century scholars. As the Great Triumphal Stela utilizes nearly flawless Classical Middle Egyptian grammar, Mariette evidently believed that all texts from this period were written in the same manner. However, other inscriptions dating to the same period and earlier were virtually unknown at the time. Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone stela was not yet discovered and Katimala’s tableau, while known, had not undergone intensive study. These texts certainly deviate from this Classical style present in the Great Triumphal Stela, thus invalidating Mariette’s grounds for assigning the Immolation Stela to the post-25th Dynasty era.

Seeing no reason to contradict Mariette, later scholars accepted his tentative deduction, which is now firmly rooted in Nubian studies. More than forty years after Mariette’s publication, Schäfer expanded upon Mariette’s work and labeled Aspelta as the text’s commissioner, as he linked this king with the early 6th century BCE. Therefore, Schäfer’s assumption (that Aspelta is the 6th century BCE king to whom the stela belongs) builds upon Mariette’s problematic dating methods. Until this point, many features undermining the stela’s attribution to Aspelta have escaped scholars’ attention.

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210 See Grimal’s edition of the text: N. Grimal, La stèle triomphale de Pi(ankh)y au Musée du Caire (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale), 1981.

For over a century since, Egyptologists have operated under Mariette’s tentative conclusion, and subsequent discussions have yet to problematize it.\footnote{212 For example, see H. Schäfer, \textit{Die Sogenannte “Stèle de l’excommunication” aus Napata: ein angeblicher Religionskampf im Aethiopenreich} (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1906); G. Maspero, “Sur un decret d’excommunication trouvé au Djeta-Barkal,” in \textit{Revue archéologique} 22 (1870-1871). Surprisingly, E.W. Budge does not mention the 26th Dynasty or Aspelta in his translation and commentary of the Immolation Stela, see E.A.W. Budge, “The Stele of Excommunication,” in \textit{Egyptian Literature; the Egyptian Texts} (1912), vol. 2.} Much faith has been put in these presumptions, and some recent transcriptions of the Immolation Stela \textit{unquestioningly} reconstruct Aspelta’s name in the erased cartouches—without even acknowledging that the names were expunged.\footnote{213 FHN I, 252-256.} Yet, with at least two squares’-worth of space available, the cartouche’s size allows enough room for the majority of Napatan king names—excluding only those of Tanwetamani and Senkamanisken. The inscription’s turbulent content also meshes well with Aspelta’s distinctly troubled reign, which is exemplified through his other defaced stelae. However, as argued below, the text appears to date to a much earlier period than traditionally believed. Priese briefly entertained this idea, “it [the ‘Banishment’ Stela] has been ascribed without evidence to Aspelta, but is certainly older”.\footnote{214 in K. Priese, “The Kingdom of Napata and Meroë,” D. Wildung, ed. \textit{Sudan: Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile} (1998): 207. Bianchi also fleetingly proposes this, without elaboration. See \textit{Daily Life of the Nubians} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 213.} Beyond this passing comment, he does not pursue the subject any further.

The Immolation Stela possesses a number of peculiar visual features that may help in dating the piece. Unlike the \textit{damnatio memoriae} found on most Kushite inscriptions, the king’s name \textit{and} image were erased. Even more bizarrely, they were both subsequently restored. With its single uraeus, the cap-crown
featured in the redrawn image of the ruler diverges from the traditional double-uraei crowns of the Middle Napatan Period (25th Dynasty through Aspelta). The lunette scene also deviates from the stylistic patterns of this period. While the majority of Kushite stelae depict royal women and have dual-scene lunettes, the Immolation Stela is missing both of these elements. Now the question stands: What other, if any, Kushite royal stelae share these unusual traits? The stelae of Pi(ankh)y.

Pi(ankh)y, the first Kushite king to unite the Double Kingdom of Egypt and Nubia, is known for his military expeditions in the North. His Great Triumphal Stela exquisitely narrates victories over Egyptians and ruling Libyans. Despite—or perhaps because of—his accomplishments, Pi(ankh)y surely faced domestic conflicts as well. Both his Sandstone and Great Triumphal Stelae from Gebel Barkal feature extensive damnatio memoriae, where the king's name and image have been stricken from the record. All of the idiosyncrasies present in the Immolation Stela are found in one or both of these inscriptions.

Like the king in the Immolation Stela, Pi(ankh)y's image and name were stricken from his Great Triumphal and Sandstone Stelae. A desire to obliterate memories of the Kushite Dynasty is seen in Egypt—Psamtik II consistently erased Pi(ankh)y's name throughout the country, sometimes replacing it with his own. Yet, these incidents are most likely independent of the damage done to the king's stelae at Gebel Barkal. As described in regards to Aspelta's stelae, Psamtik II

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215 Khartoum 1851 in Reisner, "Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal," Taf. V.
216 Cairo JE 48862 (main stela), 47086-47089 (fragments) in Grimal, La stele triumphale de Pi(ankh)y, pls. I-X.
probably never travelled as far south as Napata/Gebel Barkal. Bearing this in mind, it would seem Pi(ankh)y’s reign was met with contestation in Kush as well. In the same vein, he evidently possessed avid supporters who retraced his name in both texts and his image in the Sandstone Stela. While it was fairly common for one’s name to be erased, Pi(ankh)y is the only Napatan king whose *image* is known to have been expunged from any Kushite monuments. More specifically, he is the lone Kushite whose depiction was subsequently restored.

Aside from the Immolation Stela, it is certainly noteworthy that Pi(ankh)y’s stelae are the only otherwise Kushite examples of a king’s destroyed image. The redrawn image in the Immolation Stela includes no elements debarring it from an earlier period. For example, the subsequently etched figure dons a skullcap crown with streamers, a piece of regalia that unquestionably predates Pi(ankh)y. Ku. 9, a tomb certainly preceding his reign, features such streamers—clearly demonstrating they were in use during the Early Napatan Period. The skullcap itself is also attested for early on, as in Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone Stela.

The signature Kushite cap-crown frequented royal illustrations throughout the Napatan Period. It existed in a multitude of forms; adorned with everything from diadems and superstructures to streamers and uraei. Even so, a distinct characteristic of the king’s skullcap in the Immolation Stela differentiates it from its likenesses in nearly every other known Kushite portrayal of the piece—with

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217 As previously mentioned, Nasalsa’s image was removed from Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela. See Cairo JE 48866 in Grimal, *Quatre steles napatéennes*, pls. VI-VII.
the exception of the Sandstone Stela. Typically, kings of the Napatan Period
donned two uraei—signifying the Double Kingdom of Egypt and Kush. Unlike the
vast majority of royal Kushite skullcaps, the one featured in the Immolation Stela
has a single uraeus. The only other known representation of a Kushite cap-crown
with one uraeus is found upon Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone Stela.\textsuperscript{220} Pi(ankh)y clearly
receives such a skullcap from Amun—along with the crown of Lower Egypt—in
his Sandstone Stela (Figure 6). The rarity of this simplistic crown prototype, and
its presence in these two inscriptions deserves attention.

![Fig. 7: Skullcaps with streamers. From left to right: Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone Stela (see capcrown in Amun’s right hand) and redrawn king from the Immolation Stela](image)

Aesthetic similarities between the Sandstone and Immolation Stelae
extend to their greater lunette scenes as well. In her dissertation, Sargent briefly

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Fig. 7: Skullcaps with streamers. From left to right: Pi(ankh)y’s Sandstone Stela (see capcrown in Amun’s right hand) and redrawn king from the Immolation Stela}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{220} It must be noted that Taharqo’s crown in his Kawa V stela is particularly difficult to discern, and it is therefore impossible to completely discount the possibility that it only had one uraeus. However, the two-uraei style is much more likely—considering this is how Taharqo is featured in all of his other representations. His Kawa V crown was also drawn with a diadem, unlike the cap-crowns of interest in the Sandstone and Immolation Stelae. For the Kawa V Stela, see \textit{Æ.I.N. 1712} in Macadam, \textit{Temples of Kawa I}, pls. 9-10.
footnotes this parallel, simply instructing readers to “Compare the lunette scene [of the Immolation Stela] to Piye’s Sandstone stela.” Napatan Period lunettes generally followed a consistent pattern—with dual images of the king (Figure 7), sometimes accompanied by female relatives, carrying offerings to a deity (or deities). Not many royal stelae in Kush deviated from this configuration. However, both the Sandstone and Immolation Stelae diverge, as does Pi(ankh)y’s eminent Great Triumphal Stela. These three lunettes demonstrate marked similarities, featuring a single image of the king making offerings to a divine triad: Amun, Mut, and Khonsu. Admittedly, two of Aspelta’s inscriptions (Enthronement and Dedication) follow this arrangement as well. Yet, Aspelta’s stelae prominently depict his female relatives, unlike the Immolation Stela or either of Pi(ankh)y’s texts. In fact, a kings’ female kin do not appear in Napatan lunette scenes until Taharqo’s Kawa V Stela, where Abalo, Taharqo’s mother, stands behind her son playing the sistrum. All of the 25th Dynasty and post-25th Dynasty Napatan royal inscriptions in Kush feature either royal women, a dual scene, or both; only Pi(ankh)y’s stelae are the exception. The Immolation Stela does not include royal women or a dual scene, both of which are most characteristic of the later

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221 C.L. Sargent, The Napatan Royal Inscriptions: Egyptian in Nubia, 210 n. 468.
222 The Khaliut Stela, also commissioned by Aspelta, does not display female relatives. However, this perhaps furthers the argument that the Immolation Stela is older than initially believed. While funded by Aspelta, this inscription was dedicated to Khaliut, who lived decades earlier.
223 Kawa XIV, possibly Alara’s stela, also lacks royal women. See Ä.I.N. 1708 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 32-33.
224 Aspelta’s Khaliut stela is the only exception—and this inscription is of a different category than the others, as its content commemorates one dead official rather than narrating high affairs of the state.
Napatan Period. Therefore, based upon these stylistic observations, it seems increasingly likely the Immolation Stela predates Aspelta’s reign.

Fig. 8: Lunette Scene of Taharqa’s Kawa V Stela

Figure 9: Lunette Scene of the Immolation Stela
Supplementing these aesthetic details are textual elements of the Immolation Stela, which also raise doubts about its previous attribution to Aspelta.\(^{225}\) The next observation involves a kingly appellation. The king in the Immolation Stela bore an elaborate epithet, “the eldest son, whom his father interrogates and who answers on the occasion of replacing [him] on his throne.”\(^{226}\) Indeed, the title ‘eldest son’ is relatively generic, and was not always used literally. Oftentimes, this phrase simply denoted royal legitimacy, establishing each king as son of the god.\(^{227}\) Such was the case with the Ramessides in New Kingdom Egypt. Upon a Luxor pylon, Ramses II’s epithets include, “Eldest son of the king of the gods, whom he crowned upon his throne on earth.”\(^{228}\) Grimal likens this symbolic title to the Immolation Stela.\(^{229}\) However, this analogy looks past some major differences between the contexts in which these epithets appear.

In the case of the Immolation Stela, the text puts abnormal emphasis on the

\(^{225}\) Perhaps most simple of these details: The opening lines of Pi(ankh)y’s Great Triumphal Stela and Immolation Stela are certainly akin to one another. Both highlight an embodiment of Atum—a god whom Aspelta barely acknowledges in his stelae. Atum is only mentioned once in all three of Aspelta’s stelae, and his name does not carry the same prominence as it does in the two other inscriptions in question. Compare Immolation and Great Triumphal stela (respectively): “The good god, the likeness of Re, Atum of the beginning, who knows the end”; see Cairo JE 48865 l. 1 in Grimal, *Quatre steles napatéennes*, pls. VIII-IX.; and: “I am the king, image of god, living likeness of Atum.”; see Cairo JE 48862 l. 1 in Grimal, *La stele triomphale de Pi(ankh)y*, pls. I-X., Only Aspelta’s stela dedicated to Khaliut (who lived in an earlier period) names Atum: “May you give him your heavenly life-time, the kingship of Atum, the throne of Geb.” in situ: Amun temple at Gebel Barkal, *Il. 12-13* in M.B. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal”, pls. IV-VIII.

\(^{226}\) Cairo JE 48865 , l. 2-3 in Grimal, *Quatre steles napatéennes*, pls. VIII-IX. For further information on the reading of this epithet, see P. Derchain and M. Derchain-Urtel, “Harendotes (Celui a qui son pere demande des comptes),” *GM* (2012), 5-8.


\(^{228}\) *Ibid.*, 165. Translated from: “Fils aîné du roi des dieux, qu’il a couronné sur son trône sur terre”.

epithet, which is further accompanied by a more specific role, one “whom his
father interrogates and who answers on the occasion of replacing [him] on his
throne.” As the Immolation Stela appears to deal with a tumultuous royal
succession, this description is especially apt. Following the former king’s demise,
his successor—seemingly an individual who appears to be his literal son—
adopted the crown. This elaboration (specifically “replacing him on his throne”) in
the Immolation Stela is uncharacteristic of other epithets incorporating the
distinction “eldest son”, including Ramesside prototypes.231 Even other Kushite
texts do not use the epithet with such specific embellishments.232 It seems
reasonable to hypothesize that, due to these specificities, “eldest son” and its
accoutrements were used literally, in reference to royal succession.

As such, this title much more likely applies to Pi(ankh)y, and not to Aspelta.

One of the few definite Napatan fraternal relations precludes identifying Aspelta
with this king—as he surely did not succeed his father, but his brother,
Anlamani.233 While scholars debate Pi(ankh)y’s parentage, he seems to have been

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230 Essentially referring to a son who upholds his father’s desires, or one who answers to his
father.
231 It would seem the pairing of “eldest son” with “whom his father interrogates” is not as unusual
as the addition of “replacing him on his throne”. See P. Derchain and M. U. Derchain, “Harendotes
(Celui a qui son pere demande des comptes)” in GM (2012), 7.
232 The only other Kushite inscriptions that feature the “eldest son” epithet are Pi(ankh)y's Great
Triumphal Stela and Anlamani’s Enthronement Stela, and neither specifically identify the eldest
son’s function as does the Immolation Stela. The Great Triumphal Stela uses the title only in a
literal sense: “king Nimlot together with king Yewepet, the chief of the Ma, Sheshonq of House-of-
Osiris-lord-Djedu together with his eldest son, who was the commander of House-of-Thoth-who-
Separates-the-Two-Combatants; the army of hereditary prince Bakennefy together with his eldest
son.”; Cairo JE 48862, II, 17-18 in Grimal, La stele triomphale de Pi(ankh)y, pls. I-X. Anlamani’s stela
labels the king symbolically as “the eldest son of Atum, his offspring, the Chieftain of the Lands, the
Foremost of the Living”; Æ.I.N. 1709 l. 5 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 15-16.
233 See n 173: the two brothers are clearly linked through a shared reference to their mother,
Queen Nasalsa.
of the same generation as Kashta’s daughter, Amenirdis.\textsuperscript{234} And unlike Aspelta, it is certain possible that Pi(ankh)y was the son of his predecessor, Kashta.\textsuperscript{235}

Further analysis of the crime’s context and its nature may also help identify the historical import of this text. First, the offense seems to have been directed against a king.\textsuperscript{236} Whoever inscribed the Immolation Stela affirms the unspeakable nature of the violation, “They shall not be allowed to enter the temple of Amun of Napata who dwells in the Pure Mountain because of that deed—\textit{(even) saying it is an abomination}—which they have done in the temple of Amun.”\textsuperscript{237} Such refusal to disclose the crime’s nature resembles Queen Katimala’s earlier unwillingness to describe the elusive and calamitous “event” that plagues her kingdom. Yet, in the case of the Immolation Stela, the text eventually admits these reviled priests plotted to kill an innocent man. Whether or not they accomplished their goal remains to be seen. Nonetheless, the taboo placed upon this sin amplifies its graveness, and the probability that he “who had committed no crime” was a man of great significance—most likely the king.

The priests’ gruesome fate also helps shed light upon the nature of their crime. Death by flame, and its power to keep one from the afterlife surely represented a formidable end for anyone, especially priests. As briefly mentioned

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{234} Pi(ankh)y was likely of the same generation of Kashta’s daughter, the God’s Wife of Amun, Amenirdis I—as she adopted Pi(ankh)y’s daughter, Shepenwepet II as her successor.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Dodson and Hilton highlight Pi(ankh)y’s marriage to one of Kashta’s daughters, “It has been assumed that Kheñsa was one of his [Pi(ankh)y’s] wives, in which case her titles of King’s Sister and King’s Daughter might suggest that both she and Piye were children of Kashta.”; A. Dodson and D. Hilton, \textit{The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt}, (Thames & Hudson: London, 2004), 235-236, emphasis added.
\item \textsuperscript{236} For further information on this assertion, see \textit{FHN} I, 258, also see below for linkage between immolation and rebellion against the established political framework.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Cairo JE 48865 \textit{II. 5-6} in Grimal, \textit{Quatre stèles napatéennes}, pls. VIII-IX.
\end{itemize}
above, incineration was reserved for only the vilest lawbreakers. Based upon the few instances of fiery deaths in recorded Egyptian and Kushite history, the punishment seems to have been primarily used on those guilty of rebellion.

Anthony Leahy traces this association with two main examples: (1) Prince Osorkon’s burning of Theban rebels and (2) Manetho’s anecdote alluding to the insurgent Bocchoris’ sentencing under Shabaqo. He notes,

Such attempts to overthrow the established political order, embodied in the person of the king, echoed parallel mythological assaults...especially the rebellion of Seth against the legitimate rule of Osiris. The destruction by fire of the latter’s enemies can be traced back to the Coffin Texts and is a recurrent theme in the theological literature of the New Kingdom and after.

Considering the taboo nature of the priests’ crime, the historically close link between defying ruling figures and death by fire, and the fact that the Immolation Stela specifies the crime aimed against a single individual—it would seem reasonable to consider a king served as the murderers’ target.

This leads to a further inquiry: Against whom was this plot unleashed—the king who commissioned the stela or his predecessor? And did the priests’ loathsome scheme ultimately come to fruition? These questions are not specifically addressed in the text itself. Perhaps due to the unthinkable crime at the center of this inscription, the precise sequence of events remains opaque. It does, however, seem more likely that the ruler whose name was stricken from the inscription was recounting a plot hatched against his predecessor, rather than against himself. Hints of this scenario appear throughout the Immolation Stela.

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239 Ibid., 201.
perhaps most noticeably culminating in the line that specifies the current king as “his (father’s) protector, who addressed the matter and succeeded to his place”. The “matter” likely refers to the corruption at hand. Such a chain of events may help explain the unusual elaboration upon the “eldest son” epithet: the new ruler, he “whom his father interrogates”—carries out his father’s wishes for vengeance. There is hardly a more fitting description for one conducting a legal punishment on behalf of his predecessor. Due to this emphasis upon succession and legitimization, it would appear quite likely that the priests accomplished their aim.

Keeping this in mind, Pi(ankh)y’s forerunner, Kashta appears to fit the role of slain king more convincingly than Anlamani, Aspelta’s predecessor. First, Anlamani was certainly not Aspelta’s father. Even beyond this obvious issue, if Anlamani suffered death at the hands of these traitors, it is surprising the event was not alluded to in Aspelta’s first year stela chronicling his enthronement—especially considering the Immolation Stela was completed by the second year of its king’s reign. Conversely, considering Kashta’s scarce representation in the archaeological and textual record and his complete absence from Gebel Barkal, it is not so bizarre to propose he was murdered, left with little opportunity to establish himself. In the same vein, supposing Kashta did leave a mark on the

240 Cairo JE 48865 ll. 2-3 in Grimal, Quatre stèles napatéennes, pls. VIII-IX.
241 Ibid. I. 2.
242 Besides small fragments from a dedication stela found in Elephantine: Cairo JE 41013 in Leclant, “Kashta, Pharaon, en Égypte,”, fig.1. and a faience offering table from el-Kurru, Kashta is only briefly mentioned on monuments of his later relatives. For further discussion, see FHN I, 46.
material record, if such controversy encircled him, subsequent removal from memory through destruction and erasure would be unsurprising.

Taken together, these observations certainly cast doubt upon assumptions that place the Immolation Stela in the 26th Dynasty under Aspelta. At the same time, this thesis does not claim to have ultimately “solved” the mystery of this fascinating inscription. Rather, I have sought here to lay out the evidence and weigh the possible explanations—and the result indicates that the stela most likely dates to the beginnings of the 25th Dynasty. Like the Katimala tableau, the Immolation Stela demonstrates underlying internal strife present from the early years of the Second Kingdom of Kush.
5. Conclusion

James Henry Breasted remarked in his assessment of Kushite civilization, “As Egyptian influence in Nubia died out, Nubia relapses into semi-barbaric condition.” From Adams’ perspective, Breasted’s “semi-barbaric” Kush would have receded back into its simplistic and “persistent” African context. This persistent context, however, does not seem to have existed. Rather, continued conflict amongst an established Kushite elite contradicts any notions of a basic and static Kush. Through its study of the Early and Middle Napatan Periods, this thesis has highlighted specific events and individuals in Kush that illustrate intense conflict during a timespan in which internecine strife is severely underestimated. Layers of internal political rivalries extend throughout this era, from the early years of the Nubian “Dark Age” all the way into Aspelta’s reign in the 6th century BCE and beyond.

At the dawn of the Second Kingdom of Kush, Katimala exerted her power within Lower Nubia. She overcame the tribulations of her failed predecessor—who may also have been the text’s abhorred criminal, Makaresh. Similarly, King Alara, the acknowledged founder of the Kushite dynasty that would later overtake Egypt, faced contention from “schemers” in the early years of his battle for dominance. From this, it is evident that from its outset, the Napatan Period was fraught with political complications.

Dynastic contention carried into the Middle Napatan Period, possibly escalating to the point of regicide. Jerome’s glosses, accompanied by an array of

ancient sources and shifting royal cemeteries, imply Taharqo seized the throne in a questionable manner—perhaps through the murder of his predecessor, Shebitqo. King Taharqo’s reign, from its murky and controversial conception through Aspelta’s ascension nearly a century later, seems to have had influence over Kushite royal relations for decades.

This is particularly revealed by the clear challenges posed to Aspelta’s kingship. Damnatio memoriae plaguing Aspelta’s Enthronement Stela provides a tangible example of his Kushite rivals’ protestations to his family line (which likely associated him with Taharqo) and royal legitimacy. Aspelta’s awareness of such threats manifests itself through the repeated desire to justify his position, as seen through the text of his Election and Khaliut Stelae. Later in his reign, Aspelta appears to have seen the need to curtail any future dynastic struggle—and his dedication of Kheb to the role of Amun’s sistrum-player potentially marks an attempt to limit the number of heirs vying for the throne.

Finally, the Immolation Stela—once thought to have belonged to Aspelta—rather brings us back to the rocky beginnings of the Early Napatan Period. The mere subject of the inscription, a conspiring priestly family facing death by flame at the hands of a king, exudes internal conflict. Its newly proposed dating further demonstrates the pertinence of such strife to a variety of Kushite rulers (not just limited to Aspelta’s reign); in this case Pi(ankh)y and his predecessor, Kashta.

Each of these examples of internecine strife belongs to a histoire événementielle of the Second Kingdom of Kush—a perspective rarely explored in the discipline—and even openly disclaimed by scholars like Adams. They reveal
the only “persistent” element of Kush’s African context is in fact its enduring political complexity. And while this thesis has focused its attention upon rivalry within Kush, the kingdom’s interactions with surrounding tropical African peoples244 build upon the already intricate web of relationships and rivalries present amongst the Kushites themselves.

The concept of a static tropical Africa assumes a homogeneous landscape, free of political interactions and rivalry. Long before scholars like Breasted and Adams, Hegel advanced this view, deeming Africa “unhistorical”, always running in stagnant and unbreakable circles while never experiencing any change.245 After ensuring to distinguish Egypt from the rest of Africa, he asserted, “We shall therefore leave Africa at this point, and it need not be mentioned again. For it is an unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own.”246 This claim is in direct opposition to the clear profusion of internecine complications within the Second Kingdom of Kush. It would seem that Africa is not an unhistorical continent, and as this specific case study has attempted to demonstrate: it was neither homogeneous nor static.

244 References to state enemies south of Egypt frequent Napatan texts, and these various peoples often posed serious threats for the Nubians. Nomadic bands including the Nubai, Megabaroi, Trogloodytes, and Blemmyes (or Medja) were amongst those who further complicated Kush’s African context; for further discussion, see K.H. Priese, “The Kingdom of Napata and Meroë,” 214. Perhaps the most infamous of these groups were the Rehrehes—mentioned in both Irike-Amannote’s and Harsiyyotef’s stelae; see in situ E wall, S side of the Hypostyle Hall of Temple T at Kawa col. 5 in Macadam, Temples of Kawa I, pls. 17, 22 and Cairo JE 488864, l. 74 in Grimal, pls. X-XXV.


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