

*Appendix H*  
***Dating the  
Empire of Piye***

Another important question that must be answered is, “How long did Taharqa Piye’s empire last?” Inscribed on the *Sandstone Stela of Piye* from the temple of Amûn at Napata, during Piye’s 3rd year as a king of Egypt (694 B.C.E.),<sup>1</sup> he not only declared himself to be a king of both Kush and Egypt but also of many foreign countries. In the lunette (half-moon-shaped space), the enthroned Amûn (Amun, Amon) holds out in his left hand to King Piye the Red Crown of Lower Egypt and the Kushite skullcap-crown with one uraeus at the front in his right hand.<sup>2</sup> László Török adds:

Appearing *in lieu* of the Upper Egyptian White Crown, the skullcap in Amûn’s hand indicates the associations between these two crowns . . .,<sup>3</sup> but it may also refer in subtle iconographical terms to the actual rule of the Kushite Piye over Upper Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

The inscription proclaims that the deity Amûn prophesied that Piye was destined from the womb to be the ruler of the Black-land (Egypt).<sup>5</sup> In another part of the inscription, Piye proclaims, “Amûn of Napata has granted me to be RULER OF EVERY FOREIGN COUNTRY” and “Amûn in Thebes has granted me to be ruler of Black-land (Egypt).”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, as a king of Kush who was under the deity Amûn of Napata, Piye was able to rule “every foreign country,” while, as a king in Egypt under Amun of Thebes, he ruled Egypt. Piye reiterates this claim when describing himself as, “Horus: Mighty-bull, who-appears-in-Napata,” adding:

Golden Horus, Whose-diadems-are-holy, Whose-strength-is-powerful, at seeing whom every one lives like He-of-the-horizon, King-of-Upper-and-Lower-Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, [Piye], son-of-Rê, lord of diadems, [Meri Amun, Piye], the good deity, KING OF KINGS, RULER OF RULERS, THE SOVEREIGN WHO SEIZES ALL LANDS, whose power is mighty

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<sup>1</sup> FHN, 1, p. 59, l. 5; LAIE, p. 464, l. 29.

<sup>2</sup> RKD, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> ZAS, 66, pl. vi; FHN, 1, p. 60. By the time of Piye, the Kushites had expanded the name Kush to include a large part of Upper Egypt. For the Assyrian definition, see Chap. XI, pp. 173–175.

<sup>4</sup> FHN, 1, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> FHN, 1, p. 55, l. 1–5.

<sup>6</sup> FHN, 1, p. 57, l. 1–3.

whose *atef*-crown [is on] his head,<sup>7</sup> . . . ONE ALONE WHO EXPANDS KUSH, fear of whom is put into the lords of foreign countries, there being no boasting of great men.<sup>8</sup>

At Medinet-Habu (the Pylon of the Ethiopians) we read that a king named Taharqa claimed to have conquered Kamet (Black-land; Egypt), Teshet (the desert), and Tapa(?).<sup>9</sup> We also find a long list of captured cities written on the base of a statue found at Karnak which belonged to a king named Taharqa.<sup>10</sup> Each city represents the greater region under the control of this king. This record not only states that a king named Taharqa (Tirhaqah) controlled Ethiopia, Egypt, and northern Africa, but it claims that he had some sort of sovereignty over Tunip (Upper Syria, west of the Euphrates), Qadesh (Lower Syria/Palestine), and the Shasu (region of Edom and the Trans-Jordan), as far north as Arzawa (western Asia Minor), Khatti (eastern Asia Minor), and Naharin (western Mesopotamia), and even as far east as Assur (Assyria) and Sinagar (Babylonia).<sup>11</sup>

Greek records also discuss Taharqa Piye's great conquests. Strabo, for example, speaks of a great king named "Tearko the Ethiopian,"<sup>12</sup> Tearko being a Greek form of the Ethiopian name Taharqa, called Tirhaqah by the Israelites.<sup>13</sup> Tearko, he points out, led one of the great "expeditions" of the ancient world "to lands far remote," campaigns which were not "matters of off-hand knowledge to everybody."<sup>14</sup> Strabo lists these great leaders as "Madys the Scythian, Tearko the Ethiopian, Cobus the Treran, Sesostris and Psammetichus the Egyptians, and the Persians from Cyrus to Xerxes."<sup>15</sup> In another place, Strabo, citing Megasthenes (c.300 B.C.E.), defines just how far Tearko conquered:

However, he (Megasthenes) adds, Sesostris the Egyptian and Tearko (Tirhaqah) the Ethiopian advanced AS FAR AS EUROPE. And Nabocodroser (Nebuchadnezzar II), who enjoyed greater repute among the Chaldaeans than Heracles, led an army even AS FAR AS THE PILLARS (of Hercules). This far (to the Pillars), he states, TEARKO ALSO WENT. And Sesostris also led his army from Iberia to Thrace and the Pontus.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The *atef*-crown is the White Crown of Upper Egypt as the symbol of the Osiris cult.

<sup>8</sup> FHN, 1, pp. 58f, l. 1-3.

<sup>9</sup> MH, p. 9. The mentioning of the god Sopdu of Asia in the inscription might imply that Tapa was a reference to western Asia. If this is the case, Kamet (Egypt) would be coupled with Teshet (the desert), a reference to the Sahara desert and all North Africa west of Egypt, and Tapa (western Asia).

<sup>10</sup> KETA, p. 66, Plate 45a; ETL, p. 187, List xxxvi.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this inscription and the locations of the area, see above Chap. XII, pp. 188f, ns. 32-40.

<sup>12</sup> Strabo, 1:3:21, 15:1:6.

<sup>13</sup> HE, 6, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> Strabo, 1:3:21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Strabo, 15:1:6.

Sulpitius Severus similarly states that in the days of Sennacherib, “Tarraka, king of Ethiopia, invaded the kingdom of the Assyrians,”<sup>17</sup> indicating that Tirhaqah’s forces moved well beyond Pelusium at the northeastern frontier of Egypt and into the territory of the empire of the Assyrians. Bar Hebraeus indicates the same thing. He writes in his third chapter that, AFTER the 185,000 Assyrians were destroyed by the plague before the walls of Jerusalem, Sennacherib “heard that Tarhak, king of the Kushites, had come forth to fight with him, and straightway he departed to Nineveh” in order to escape. This comment shows a belief on the part of Bar Hebraeus that Tarhak (Tirhaqah) had passed beyond Pelusium and was now approaching the city of Jerusalem in pursuit of Sennacherib. It is no surprise that Taharqa Piye boasts that he was the only Kushite king to make such a great conquest into Asia. As mentioned above, on his *Sandstone Stela of Piye* for Year 3, he records that he was the “RULER OF EVERY FOREIGN COUNTRY”<sup>18</sup> and the “king of kings, ruler of rulers, the sovereign who SEIZES (i.e., conquers) ALL LANDS, . . . ONE ALONE WHO EXPANDS KUSH, fear of whom is put into THE LORDS OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES, there being no boasting of great men.”<sup>19</sup>

Yet when we come to the Victory Stela, dated to New Year’s Day of Piye’s 21st year (Feb. 8th, 676 B.C.E.),<sup>19</sup> the king can only claim that he is a ruler of Kush and Egypt. In Year 20 he had to leave Napata in Kush in order to reestablish his authority over Lower Egypt (the North Land). In this stela, Piye describes himself as “the king-of-Upper-and-Lower-Egypt,”<sup>21</sup> declaring himself a “mighty ruler” who reestablished his rulership over the North-land (Lower Egypt), proclaiming himself, “Ruler, beloved of Dominion (Thebes).”<sup>22</sup> Nothing, meanwhile, is mentioned regarding his former boast of great conquests and rulership over many foreign countries. The reason for this omission in the Victory Stela is that by 679 B.C.E. Piye had lost all those regions of his empire lying beyond Egypt. In that year, Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, had recovered great portions of the Assyrian Empire which had been lost to the Kushites by his father, Sennacherib, in 701 B.C.E. In the 2nd regnal year of King Esarhaddon (679/678 B.C.E.), we read the Assyrian king had marched west all the way to the Arza, located on the border of Egypt.<sup>23</sup> In Year 4 of Esarhaddon (677/676 B.C.E.), he captures Sidon on the Phoenician coast.<sup>24</sup>

The loss of the Levant is also demonstrated by an inscription reporting a prayer that has been assigned by Pascal Vernus to Nefertem Taharqa,<sup>25</sup> but might actually belong to Taharqa I (Piye). Vernus notes that this inscription

<sup>17</sup> Severus, 1:50.

<sup>18</sup> FHN, 1, p. 57, l. 1–3.

<sup>19</sup> FHN, 1, pp. 58f, l. 1–3.

<sup>20</sup> HdO, p. 272, for the Egyptians dates for 676 B.C.E.

<sup>21</sup> FHN, 1, p. 65, l. 1, p. 76, l. 23, p. 87, l. 76, p. 99, l. 101.

<sup>22</sup> FHN, 1, p. 112, l. 157–159.

<sup>23</sup> ABC, Chron. 14, l. 6–8. This invasion was Esarhaddon’s first this far west. It shows that Assyria was regaining its power over this part of the world. For the identification of Arza with Pelusium on the northeast border of Egypt, see our forthcoming text, *Mount Sinai*.

<sup>24</sup> ABC, Chron. 14, l. 12.

<sup>25</sup> BIFAO, 75, pp. 26–48.

reflects the Assyrian advance towards Egypt and Egypt's loss of control over Syria-Palestine. Dan'el Kahn writes, "The text can be classified as a personal prayer (requesting for god's help after an enemy's invasion or defeat in battle)."<sup>26</sup> Two columns from this prayer express the defeat.

O, the one who will not abandon his work when it has only been half realized. (col. 5)

Let me do it with your tribute (*inw*) of Huru (Syria-Palestine) which has been turned aside from you. (col. 16).

Vernus estimates the date for this inscription to be somewhere between 677 and 674 B.C.E.<sup>27</sup> These dates lie shortly after the conquest of Palestine (679/678 B.C.E.) and Sidon and the Phoenician coast (677/676 B.C.E.) by Esarhaddon yet prior to the time before an Assyrian setback in March of 673 B.C.E.<sup>28</sup> Anthony Spalinger, meanwhile, tries to narrow the date for this prayer to about 675 B.C.E.<sup>29</sup> The threat of the Assyrian Empire on the border of Egypt in 679 B.C.E. is a contributing cause to the revolt of Tefnakht II of Sais against Piye. Tefnakht no doubt hoped that a fear of the Assyrians would encourage Piye to keep him in power by using Tefnakht's kingdom as a buffer state, thereby encouraging Piye not to move against the revolt in Lower Egypt.

With the great defeat of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E., a good part of the westernmost districts of the Assyrian Empire were lost until the end of Sennacherib's reign in 681 B.C.E. Assyria was able to put down a rebellion in Babylonia in 700 B.C.E. and made attacks on neighboring lands especially to their east and south. For example, there were a number of wars between Assyria and Elam, the latter having an alliance with the Babylonians. Sennacherib also sent expeditions into Anatolia during the years 696 and 695 B.C.E. and into northern Arabia in about 690 B.C.E. Nevertheless, most of his time was spent securing his empire in the eastern districts. The Assyrian Empire did not begin to fully recover in the west until after Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, came to the throne in 681 B.C.E.

The dates for initial conquests, gradual reduction, and then loss of the Levant (coastlands along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean) by Piye are as follows:

**701** Year 6 of Piye as the king of Kush. Sennacherib the king of Assyria retreats and Piye begins forming his empire in western Asia and northwestern Africa.

**694** Year 3 of Piye as king of Egypt. Piye still claims to hold an empire over many nations.

<sup>26</sup> JSSEA, 31, p. 111.

<sup>27</sup> BIFAO, 75, pp. 45f.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ABC, Chron. 1, iv.16, on the 5th day in the month of Adar (March).

<sup>29</sup> CdE, 53, p. 43.

A gradual loss for Taharqa Piye of most of the conquered territory in western Asia begins after the death of Sennacherib in 681 B.C.E. No doubt the revolt of the kings in the Delta of Egypt in 678 B.C.E. encouraged Esarhaddon. Believing Lower Egypt to be vulnerable, he attempted an attack on Lower Egypt in 674 B.C.E.

- 679 Year 2 of Esarhaddon as the king of Assyria. Assyrians retook Huru land, marching to Arza on the border of Egypt.
- 678 Year 19 of Piye as the king of Egypt. Tefnakht II openly revolts from Piye.
- 676 Beginning of Year 21 of Piye as the king of Egypt. Piye no longer makes mention of his empire over Asia.
- 674 Year 7 of King Esarhaddon of Assyria. Esarhaddon makes his first, albeit unsuccessful attack on Egypt.

The key point is that only Taharqa Piye fits the description given by ancient writers of the Taharqa who formed a vast empire that stretched from northwest Africa to Egypt, on to Palestine and Syria, and then north to Asia Minor. This evidence clearly marks Taharqa Piye as the Tirhaqah who opposed Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E.

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