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Jeremy Pope. *The Double Kingdom under Taharqo: Studies in the History of Kush and Egypt, c. 690 – 664 BC.* Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 326. ISBN: 978-90-04-26294-2€ 185 (£137)

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Early on in his introduction Pope notes that there has been a fairly resilient geographic division in studies of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty between those who focus on their rule in Nubia and those who focus on their rule in Egypt. This has allowed a perception to persist that the Kushite kings were attempting to reconstitute the form of traditional Egyptian kingship, and that any deviation from this resulted from a lack of understanding of Egyptian traditions, residual Libyan influence or the personality of individual kings.¹ Pope's book opposes this division, and not only does it successfully provide a detailed overview of the probable structure of Kushite administration across both Nubian and Egyptian territories, it also successfully uses this overview to challenge the existing impressions of Kushite rule and to suggest an alternative model for that structure, albeit briefly.

The introduction provides a clear sense of what Pope is trying to achieve in terms of developing our understanding of how the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty actually governed Nubia and Egypt. In addition it provides a clear explanation of the key terms and the chronology he uses for the period, allowing both the author and reader to avoid becoming bogged down in discussions of such details for the rest of the book and to focus instead on the core argument.

The introduction is followed by a region by region analysis of the structure of Kushite rule under Taharqa, a reign which Pope notes in his introduction comprises nearly half of the total length of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.² Throughout each of these

¹ Pope 2014: 1-3.

² Pope 2014: 3.

sections, Pope reviews the current analysis and explanations of Kushite administration for each region, as well as other current academic debates such as the possibility that the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty originated from Meroë or its surrounding area.³ He also provides new translations of important but little known texts, such as the Sanam Historical Inscription.⁴

Chapter 2 deals with the region of Meroë and the surrounding area, and appears to conclude definitively that this region was not the birthplace of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty. Instead, through his analysis of the various pieces of early evidence from Meroë Pope favours the interpretation that this region was not conquered until the reigns of the early Napatan kings during the period following the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty in Nubia.⁵

Chapter 3 discusses the heartland of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, the region of the Dongola-Napata reach. In this chapter Pope notes the importance of Török's theory of 'ambulatory kingship' for the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, and how this reflects the original formation of the Kushite state from a number of city states.⁶ Pope, however, notes that neither Kawa nor Pnubs were included in the original Twenty-Fifth Dynasty coronation cycles, but were present in later versions and this leads him to conclude that this was an 'invented tradition'.⁷ He supports this with the first attempted full translation of the Sanam Historical Inscription which includes a list of the most important cultic centres of Taharqa's reign, namely Napata, Thebes and Memphis.⁸

The next chapter discusses Lower Nubia, a region often ignored in discussions of Kushite rule. Again, Pope provides a clear analysis and answer to an ongoing debate, carefully disproving that the Mayor of Thebes, Montuemhat, was ever present or in charge of the region and thus demonstrating that all current

³ Pope 2014: 5-20.

⁴ Pope 2014: 59-145.

⁵ Pope 2014: 31-33.

⁶ Pope 2014: 39; Török 1997: 213-232.

⁷ Pope 2014: 56-58.

⁸ Pope 2014: 59.

explanations of Kushite rule of the region are incorrect. Indeed, it is in this chapter that Pope begins to present his explanation for the structure of Kushite rule, noting that the reality appears to have been that the Kushite kings left the local leaders of the region in place. This chapter also provides a new translation of a little known text, in this case the graffiti dating to Taharqa's reign found along a footpath by the Nile, although now under Lake Nasser.

Chapter 5 examines Upper Egypt which has been believed to provide a model for Kushite rule more generally, particularly as Thebes was so clearly a focus of Kushite attention. Within this chapter, therefore, Pope has attempted to correct a number of assumptions and problems by examining the group of Theban officials as a whole rather than looking at individual families as has been common in recent studies. This approach is best shown in his detailed analysis of the God's Wives of Amun and his careful refutation of the proposal that this institution was also present in Nubia at Gebel Barkal.⁹ Ultimately, he follows Naunton and Exell's recent argument that far from reinstating the Egyptian bureaucratic system, the Kushites left local leaders in control irrespective of their particular titles.

Chapter 6 continues the discussion of whether the Kushite kings were truly attempting to remove the Libyan tribal influence or whether this was carried out by the Saite kings, as proposed by Ritner.¹⁰ Through examination of the Harbour Masters of Herakleopolis he demonstrates that this title had appeared in the late Kushite Period and, most importantly, that rather than reflecting either a Kushite or Saite attempt to establish a new set of institutions it was simply a slight change to the structure of the local which both relied on for their governance of Egypt.¹¹ This chapter, however, does contain one of the few problems with Pope's reconstruction. By following Kitchen and placing the Twenty-Third Dynasty in the north at Leontopolis,¹² rather than at Herakleopolis/Thebes as Aston does,¹³ he is unable to discern a connection between the extensive ties linking Herakleopolis and Thebes

⁹ Pope 2014: 215-223.

¹⁰ Ritner 2009: 338-339.

¹¹ Pope 2014: 255.

¹² Kitchen 1986; 2006; 2009

¹³ Aston 1989: 140-144

during the Third Intermediate Period and the probable presence of a dynasty at Herakleopolis who ruled Upper Egypt and who often placed their eldest son as the High Priest of Amun. Indeed, whilst citing evidence of such connections, including from kings of Aston's 'Theban' Twenty-Third Dynasty,¹⁴ he at no point acknowledges that such connections would surely have been reinforced by the presence of a dynasty at Herakleopolis and, moreover, that the strong administrative connections between Thebes and Herakleopolis would support such a conclusion.

The last regional chapter focuses on the Delta region, where Pope notes that the discrepancies in evidence have led to widely different interpretations of Kushite control over the region. Rather than the two, differing, versions of competition between the Libyan and Kushite rulers in Lower Egypt envisaged by Perdu and Kahn, Pope instead prefers a third option, co-option of the existing systems. He argues that at different times and places the three strategies of 'violent contestation, resolute hegemony, or local co-option',¹⁵ were all used throughout the 'Double Kingdom' to maintain Kushite rule.

The final chapter presents the author's conclusions, but after a summary of those from the earlier chapters only a very short section is left at the end of the chapter for Pope to present a clear picture of his own understanding of the form or structure of Kushite rule. Much of this section is taken up explaining the anthropological and ethnological concepts behind it, and very little in expressing how this idea matches up to the realities of Kushite reliance on local political structures that he has so carefully detailed in the previous chapters. Whilst Pope makes a clever point, questioning whether 'the "segmentary state" concept [is] a useful means by which to identify polities with meaningful similarities to the Double Kingdom',¹⁶ the chapter could have done with some elaboration of exactly how the societies that are described as 'segmentary states' in the anthropological literature discussed were similar to that of the Kushite administration.

¹⁴ Aston 2009: 26

¹⁵ Pope 2014: 274.

¹⁶ Pope 2014: 287.

Despite some shortcomings this book provides an excellent contribution to the discussion of the structure and form of Kushite rule. There are, however, a number of other small issues. Firstly, whilst it could not have been avoided, this book was published before the debate regarding the chronological reversal of Shabaka and Shabataka was begun by Michael Banyai's article.¹⁷ Although this does not largely affect the overall conclusions of the book, particularly as it focuses on Taharqa's reign, such a reversal would actually lend support to some of the points made by Pope, particularly in Chapter 7 on Lower Egypt. Secondly, all quotes are provided in the original language, without an English translation. This means that the reader requires at least a working understanding of German, French, Italian, and Spanish which could provide difficulties for some scholars, and could easily have been prevented by adding translations for the, sometimes quite lengthy, quotes in the notes. Ultimately, however, the biggest problem is that after a number of excellent chapters analysing in detail the existing evidence and painstakingly refuting current interpretations, only the last five pages of the conclusion contain a clear, developed statement of the author's alternative structure for Kushite rule over the double kingdom. As a result, there is only a very limited discussion of how he ties the concept of the 'segmentary kingdom' to the discussion of the Kushite kings' maintenance of local rulers and political systems in the various different regions under their control. Hopefully this will be elaborated in future publications, and despite this Pope's book has added significantly to the debate over how the Kushites maintained their rule over such a large and disparate territory.

¹⁷ Banyai 2013.

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