

# The Kushite Conquest of Egypt and the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty



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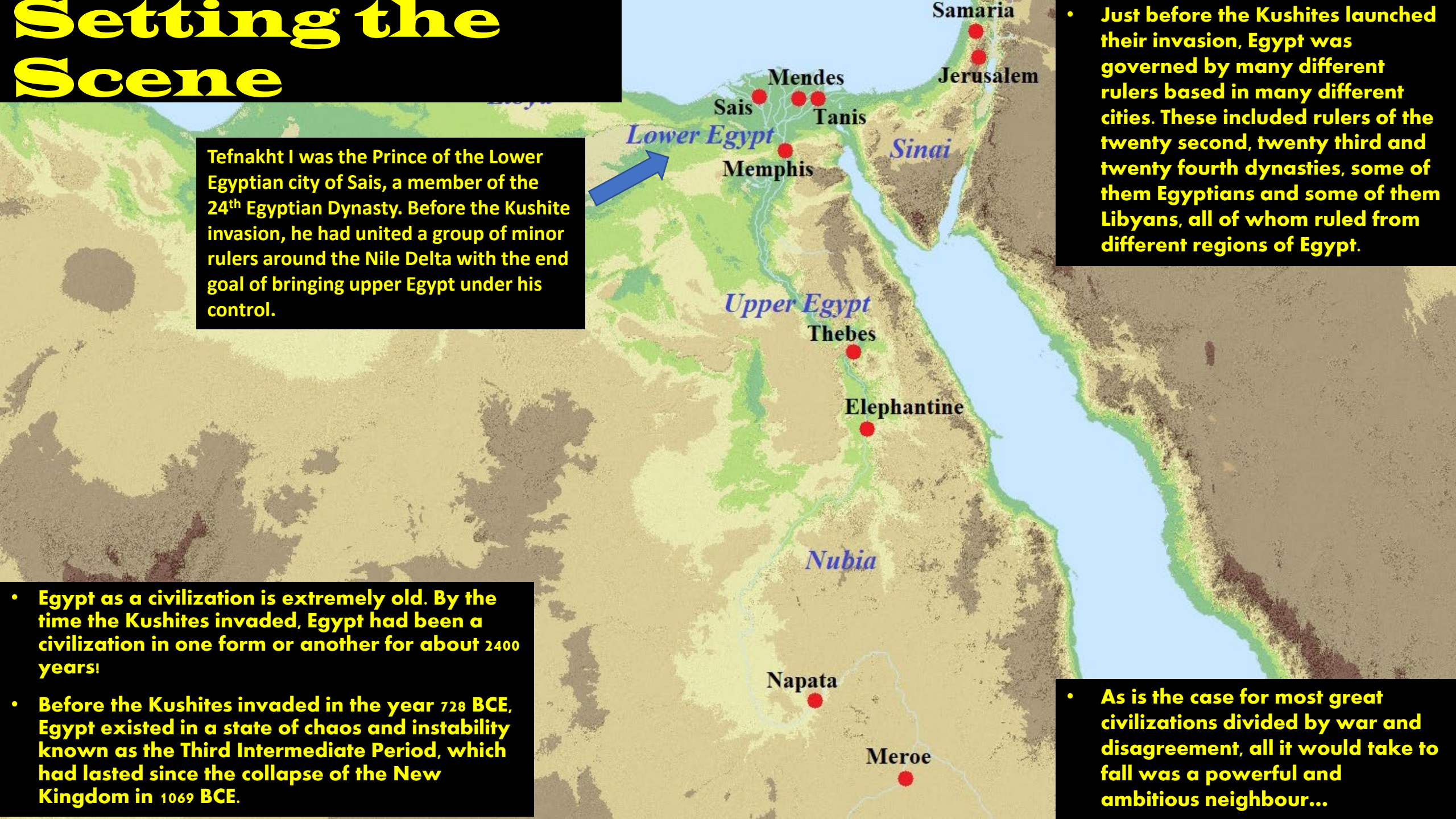
# Setting the Scene

Tefnakht I was the Prince of the Lower Egyptian city of Sais, a member of the 24<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Dynasty. Before the Kushite invasion, he had united a group of minor rulers around the Nile Delta with the end goal of bringing upper Egypt under his control.

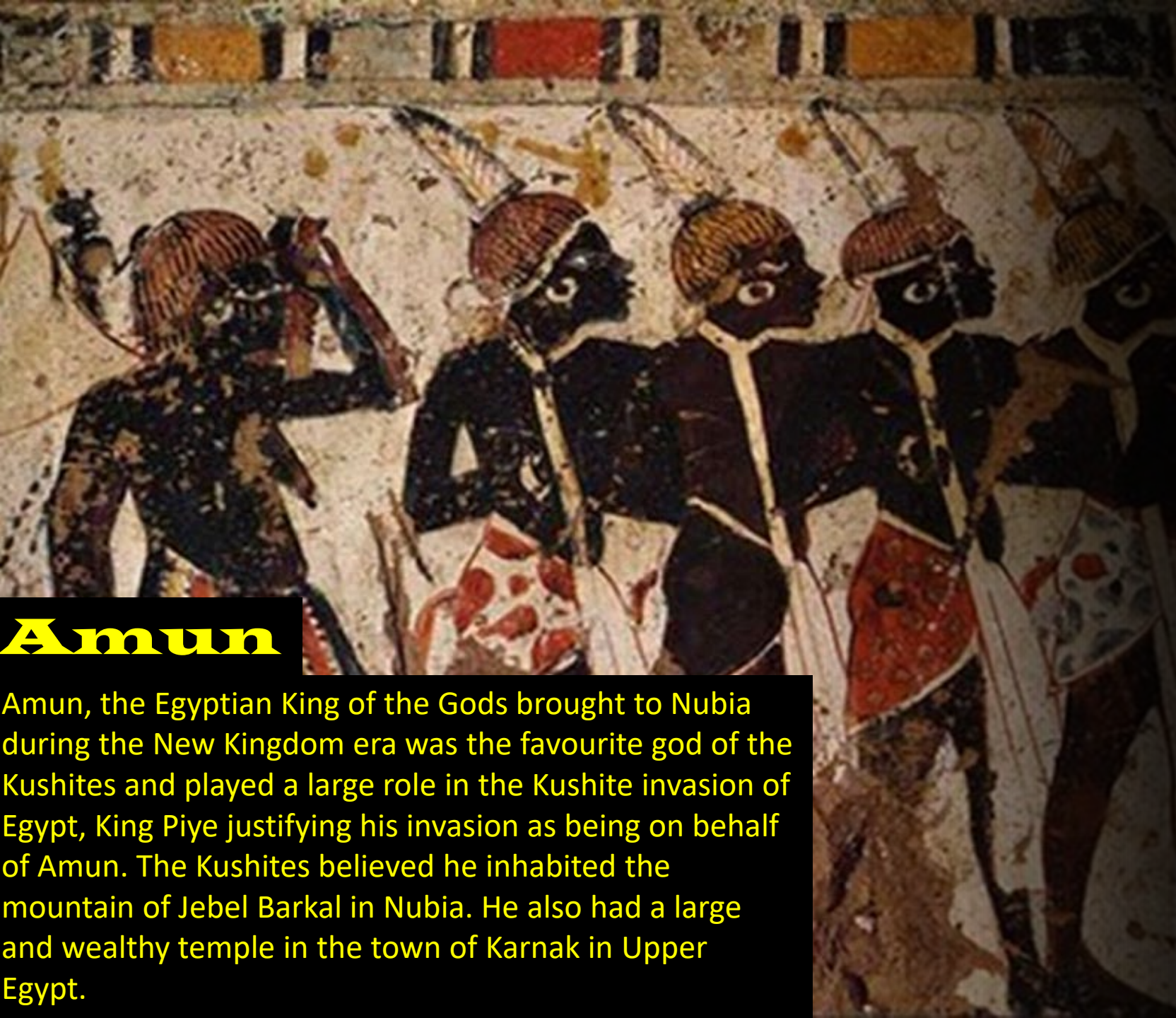
- Just before the Kushites launched their invasion, Egypt was governed by many different rulers based in many different cities. These included rulers of the twenty second, twenty third and twenty fourth dynasties, some of them Egyptians and some of them Libyans, all of whom ruled from different regions of Egypt.

- Egypt as a civilization is extremely old. By the time the Kushites invaded, Egypt had been a civilization in one form or another for about 2400 years!
- Before the Kushites invaded in the year 728 BCE, Egypt existed in a state of chaos and instability known as the Third Intermediate Period, which had lasted since the collapse of the New Kingdom in 1069 BCE.

- As is the case for most great civilizations divided by war and disagreement, all it would take to fall was a powerful and ambitious neighbour...







# The Kingdom of Kush

- The Kingdom of Kush was a powerful kingdom in the region of Nubia to the south of Egypt in what is now Sudan.
- It had a long history going back to the Kerma culture of 2500 BCE and was ruled by the Egyptian New Kingdom from around 1500 BCE to its collapse at which point it became an independent kingdom with a great deal of influence in Egypt.
- During its time as part of the New Kingdom, the culture of Kush gained many Egyptian traits including the worship of the god Amun.
- Kush however kept a strong local culture setting it apart from the chaos of the North. It was ruled by powerful Kings whose seat was the town of Napata.
- The 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt was made up of Kushite rulers who conquered Egypt in its' state of chaos, the first of these rulers was King Piye...

## Amun

Amun, the Egyptian King of the Gods brought to Nubia during the New Kingdom era was the favourite god of the Kushites and played a large role in the Kushite invasion of Egypt, King Piye justifying his invasion as being on behalf of Amun. The Kushites believed he inhabited the mountain of Jebel Barkal in Nubia. He also had a large and wealthy temple in the town of Karnak in Upper Egypt.



# King Piye

Historians sometimes credit King Piye with founding the 25<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Dynasty, however others instead credit his brother, Shabaka. Whichever view we choose to believe, King Piye was central to the success of the dynasty through his conquest.



- King Piye was the ruler of the Kingdom of Kush from roughly 750-716 BCE, he ruled from the Kushite town of Napata.
- During his reign he waged a campaign on a coalition (a sort of team of like-minded rulers) of minor Egyptian kings and chiefs loosely united under the command of 24th Dynasty Pharaoh, Tefnakht I.
- Like his Kushite predecessors he was a keen worshipper of the God Amun and as mentioned on the last slide, used the God to justify his invasion of Egypt.

- As Historians, one of our main sources for the achievements of King Piye is his victory Stela, a large stone slab inscribed with hieroglyphs recording his great deeds. Through this we can see what Piye saw himself as having achieved, comparing this to other sources, we can get closer and closer to the truth!





# Kush Goes to War: Timeline of the Invasion

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- Tefnakht of Sais in the Nile Delta had united the Nile Delta in the region of Lower Egypt in order to invade upper Egypt to the South, Piye had been warned of this and assembled an army to face him.
- Piye sent out his army but ordered that when they reached the Temple of Karnak, they should ritually cleanse themselves in the water there. Which god were they trying to appease?



## The Battles:

- The first battle of the invasion saw Piye's army defeating a fleet of ships on the river Nile and capturing prisoners that were sent back to Kush.
- His army then defeated a land force near the city of Herakleopolis forcing the enemy to retreat.
- Piye's army besiege the city of Hermopolis and Piye himself, travels up from the South to join them.
- The tablet at this point says that Piye declares his victories as being owed to the God Amun strengthening the view historians have that Piye's invasion was viewed as a holy war..
- Piye takes three more strongholds, capturing even more prisoners.
- Hermopolis surrenders to Piye and the ruler of Herakleopolis brings him a tribute (a kind of gift) to prove his loyalty.
- Three more cities surrender to Piye's army
- Piye reaches the ancient capital of Memphis and demands its' surrender, it refuses and Piye takes control of the city through its harbour.



## Timeline of the Invasion (Continued...)

After the fall of Memphis, many of the rulers of the Nile Delta fall to Piye's army.

Piye holds religious ceremonies at several Egyptian cities to give thanks for his victories and to establish his religious legitimacy in Egypt

After defeating a revolt in the city of Mesed, Tefnakht sends an envoy to Piye with his official surrender



Following Tefnakht's surrender to Piye, he swears and oath of allegiance to the Kushite King. Piye accepts the surrenders of his last remaining enemies and then returns to Kush with his newly gained plunder. Piye eventually dies and is buried in the royal cemetery, leaving his successors to rule as Pharaohs of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty...



# Aftermath

# Kushite Kings of the 25<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Dynasty

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- The Kushite rulers of the 25<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Dynasty brought to power by Piye's conquest of Egypt, marked the start of a new period of relative peace and unity to the previously chaotic country. Following Piye's death his relatives would rule as successors...







# Shabaka & Shebitku

## (716-690 BCE)

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- After King Piye's Egyptian campaign it was up to his successor to take control of Egypt.
- Historians are unsure as to who actually succeeded King Piye, however we know it was either Shabaka or Shebitku, with the most likely being Shebitku.
- We know next to nothing about Pharaoh Shebitku, however we do know that his name is mentioned in Assyrian sources and he built shrines at the city of Thebes during his reign. He is also buried in the el-Kurru royal cemetery.
- Shabaka launched a campaign into Egypt at some point between 711 and 709 BCE after which he installed himself as Pharaoh at the Ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis.
- During his rule, he set up trade links with the neighbouring Assyrian Empire under King Sargon II. We know this from archaeological evidence from Assyria (various modern day middle eastern states) bearing his name. We also know that he funded several building programs at Memphis and Thebes and died in roughly 700 BCE, buried in the Royal cemetery of el-Kurru in the Kushite homeland.





# Taharqa

## (690-664 BCE)

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- Historians think Taharqa was probably a son of King Piye, becoming Pharaoh in roughly 690 BCE around the age of 25.
- He sponsored major building programs in both Egypt and Nubia, most prominently in the city of Thebes.
- In 674 BCE, Taharqa fought a war with the Neo-Assyrian Empire under the rule of King Esarhaddon with the Kushites eventually defeating them.
- 671 BCE saw a new war with Assyria, this time the Assyrians were more successful, taking control of Memphis and even capturing Taharqa's heir and bringing him back to Assyria with them. As historians, a source we have for these events comes from another victory Stela, this time belonging to Taharqa's enemy, Esarhaddon, made for his return to Assyria.
- In response to this Taharqa managed to retake Memphis and the Assyrian campaign lost its momentum as Esarhaddon had died.
- When the new Assyrian King, Ashurbanipal, came to power, it spelt the beginning of the end for the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty with Taharqa once again losing Memphis to the Assyrians and dying shortly after.
- Despite his eventual losses, Taharqa ruled Egypt in a relatively prosperous period, his legacy showing him as a builder and a warrior who had won victories against odds versus the most powerful empire in the world (The Assyrians)!

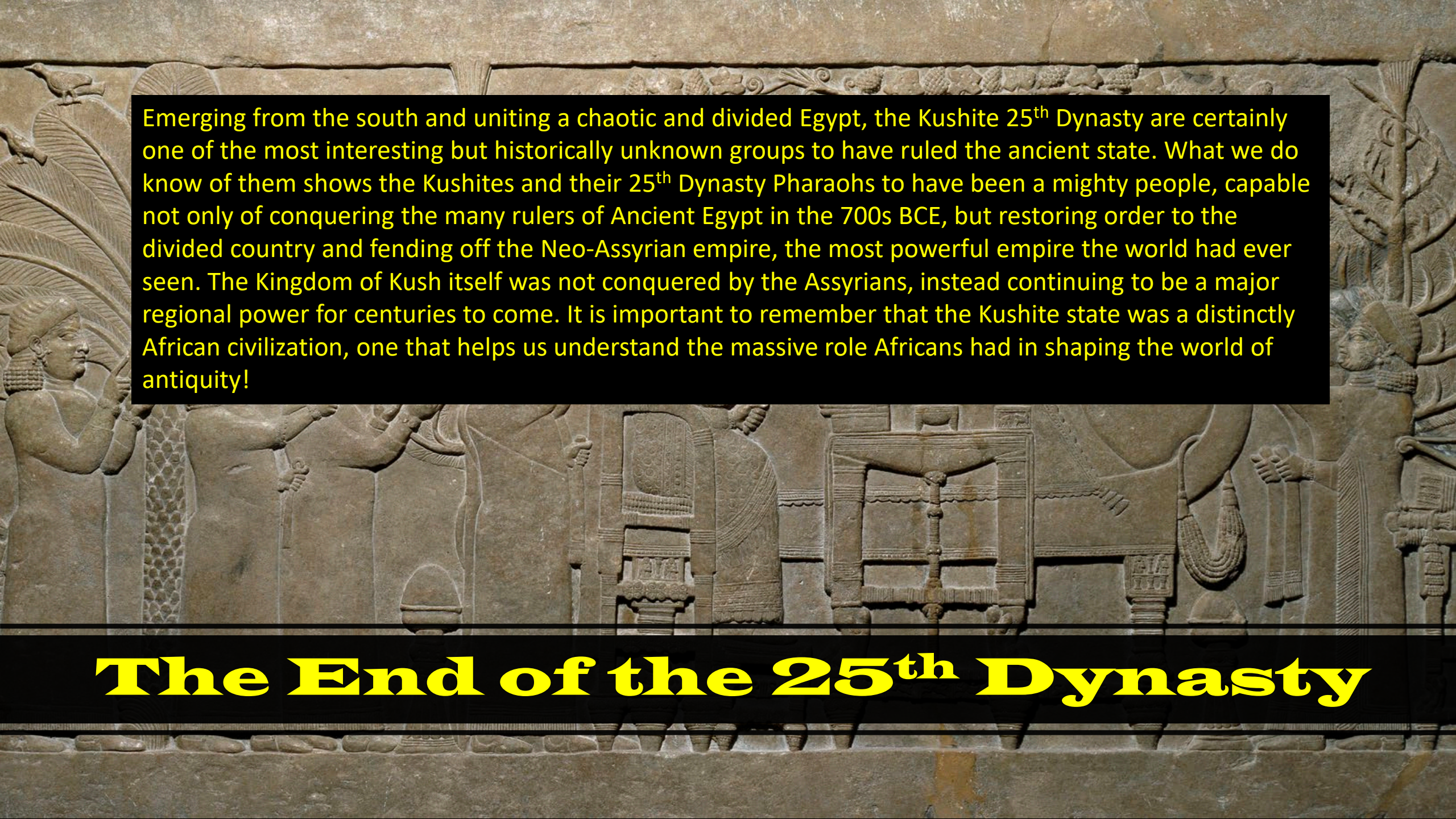


# Tantamani

(664-656 BCE)

- Tantamani was the last Pharaoh of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.
- He was a son of Shabaka and inherited the role of Pharaoh at a particularly bad time for the Kushites in Egypt.
- He managed to recapture the city of Memphis and secure the loyalty of the princes of the Nile Delta similarly to his predecessor, King Piye. However he was defeated once again by Ashurbanipal in 663 BCE, who retook Memphis and even captured and destroyed the city of Thebes.
- While the Kingdom of Kush was able to retain some of its presence in upper Egypt, their rulers' time as Egyptian Pharaohs was at an end marking an end to the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty which had ruled for around a century. Like Taharqa before him, Tantamani won victories against the Assyrians which was very impressive considering their overwhelming power as the world's most powerful empire.



The background of the image is a detailed stone relief carving from an ancient Egyptian temple. It depicts several figures in traditional Egyptian attire, including long robes and headdresses. One figure on the left is shown in profile, holding a staff. Another figure in the center is seated on a throne, holding a bow. To the right, another figure stands, holding a staff. The carving is set within a rectangular frame, with decorative elements like lotus flowers and hieroglyphs visible around the edges. The stone is a warm, brownish-tan color, showing signs of age and wear.

Emerging from the south and uniting a chaotic and divided Egypt, the Kushite 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty are certainly one of the most interesting but historically unknown groups to have ruled the ancient state. What we do know of them shows the Kushites and their 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Pharaohs to have been a mighty people, capable not only of conquering the many rulers of Ancient Egypt in the 700s BCE, but restoring order to the divided country and fending off the Neo-Assyrian empire, the most powerful empire the world had ever seen. The Kingdom of Kush itself was not conquered by the Assyrians, instead continuing to be a major regional power for centuries to come. It is important to remember that the Kushite state was a distinctly African civilization, one that helps us understand the massive role Africans had in shaping the world of antiquity!

## **The End of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty**