

Nefertem Taharqa's Rise to Power

The following are excerpts from the "Year 6" inscriptions of Nefertem Taharqa which refer to the history of his rise to power:

"Year 6" stela, Temple T (Merowe Museum, No. 52). TK, 1, pp. 15f, l. 7–18.

Now his majesty was in Bow Land (Kush) as a goodly youth, a king's brother,¹ 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 Bow Land, in order that he would be there with him, since he loved him more than all his brothers.² He passed to the nome of Amūn of Gempaten so that he could make obeisance at the temple

¹ The expression, "a king's brother" was, "A very common Ethiopian title" (TK, p. 17, n. 15). It may have little to do with his blood kinship with Shebitku and more with his royal and political status. Alan Gardiner speaks of the difficulty in dealing with "Egyptian genealogical problems: one never knows whether terms like 'son', 'daughter', 'brother', 'sister', and so forth are to be understood literally or not" (EP, p. 178. Also see HdO, p. 288). Dan'el Kahn translates the verse to read, "It is because he (Shabatka) loved me more than all *his* brothers and more than all his sons I was promoted over them by his majesty." Kahn then footnotes the word "*his*" and states, "If Shabatka and Taharqa had been brothers, he would phrase this sentence differently: '(because) he loved me more than all my / our brothers. . .'" (MittSAG, 16, p. 161, & n. 166). What we do understand is that Taharqa II was the son of King Piye while Shebitku (Shabatka) was the son of King Shabaqo. The usage of the term "brother" seems best explained by the fact that, as the Assyrians pointed out, the sister of Taharqa was the wife of "Shabakū" (although some believe this to be an Assyrian form of the name which actually stands for Shebitku; JEA, 35, p. 147, no. 76; TIP, p. 150 §121; Kush, 8, p. 72). Yet Shebitku is unlikely and most scholars now believe that Shabaqo was the true brother-in-law of Taharqa II. This detail is supported by the Ethiopian King List, which names Queen Nicauta (Ni-kauta) as the person who ruled Kush after Shabaqo. Therefore, she was a contemporary with her father, Tsawi Terhaq (Taharqa Piye). Thus, it would have been Nicauta who links the line of Piye with that of Shabaqo. Shabaqo and the sister of Taharqa II, in turn, were the parents of Urud-Amun, who ruled Kush after the death of Taharqa II (ARAB, 2, §§775, 844f, 906, 944, 1117; cf. App. J). In this light, Taharqa II was the brother-in-law of Shabaqo and thus related to Shebitku as his uncle, thus the term "brother" was used in the ancient family sense of the term. This usage was common in the ancient Near East. Abraham, for example, referred to his nephew, Lot, as his brother (Gen., 12:5, 14:12–16). The issue is still not fully resolved.

² Notice carefully that Taharqa II does not say that he was Shebitku's brother by the same father, only that he was loved by Shebitku "more than all his brothers." He does not say "my brothers." Despite the platitudes, Taharqa II was forced upon Shebitku by the more powerful King Piye with the intent of replacing the incompetent Shebitku on the throne. According to ancient sources, Taharqa II poisoned Shebitku and took his place on the throne of Dynasty XXV (Papyrus Vandier, first published in 1985, see LPV, pp. 39–97; CdE, 76, p. 35).

door, with the army of his majesty (Shebitku)³ which had traveled north together with him. He found that this temple had been built in brick, but that its sand-hill had reached to its roof, it having been covered over with earth at a time of year when one feared the occurrence of rainfall. And his majesty's heart grew sad at it until his majesty appeared as king, crowned as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, (and) when the Double Diadem was established upon his head and his name became Horus Lofty-of-Diadems, he called to mind this temple, which he had beheld as a youth, in the first year of his reign.

Then his majesty said to his courtiers, "Lo, I desire to rebuild the temple of my father Amon-Rē^c of Gempaten, since it was built of brick and covered over with soil, a thing not pleasant in the opinion of men." The deity was in this place, yet it was not known what the rain had done. But it was he who preserved this temple until it befell that I was crowned king. For he knew that his son, namely I, whom he begat, had made a monument for him. For the 'mothers' of my mother were committed to him by their brother, the chieftain, the son of Ra, Alara.

"Year 6" stela, Temple T (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek). TK, 1, p. 28, l. 13–19.

I came from Bow Land (Kush) in the company of the king's brothers, whom his majesty had summoned, so that I would be there with him, since he loved me more than all his brethren and all his children, and I was preferred to them by his majesty, for the hearts of the people turned toward me and the love of me was with all men. I received the crown in Memphis after the Hawk (Shebitku) had soared to heaven (died), and my father Amun commanded me to place every land and country beneath my feet, southward to Retekhu-Qabet, northward to Qebkh-Khor, and eastward to the rising of the sun and westward to its setting.

[Now she was] in Bow Land, namely the king's sister, pleasant of love, the king's mother, Abar, may

³ "The army of his majesty" is here a reference to the army of King Shebitku. This detail is confirmed when we are told in this passage that Pharaoh Shebitku "had sent to fetch from Nubia" Nefertem and his brothers, "in order that he would be there with him (Shebitku)."

she live. Now further I had departed from her as a youth of twenty years when I came with his majesty to Lower Egypt.⁴ Thereupon she came north to see me after an interval of years. She found me crowned upon the Throne of Horus, having received the Dia-dems of Ra, the Two Serpents having united with my head, and all the gods protecting my body.

⁴ This passage, showing that Pharaoh Shebitku accompanied Nefertem from Thebes to Memphis in Lower Egypt, demonstrates that the story found in Eusebius (CM, p. 251) cannot refer to Nefertem's first arrival in Egypt at the age of 20. In Eusebius, Nefertem marched north with his own army and killed Shebitku. In the above texts, Nefertem came north with the army of Shebitku to Thebes and then accompanied Shebitku to Lower Egypt.

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