Map 1. The Double Kingdom and its environs.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Long before [the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty], the New-Kingdom pharaohs of Egypt found it impossible to rule both Egypt and Kush in person all the way from the Mediterranean coast well over 2,000 miles (well over 3,200 km) to Napata and the 4th cataract of the Nile. The 25th Dynasty had exactly the same problem, albeit technically in reverse . . . [I]t took up to 3 weeks to sail from Memphis to Thebes alone, and surely up to 3 months to go from Memphis to Napata—or, 6 months (half a year!) to send up and have a reply!

Kenneth A. Kitchen

The huge extent of the Kushite state—excluding Egypt—embraced Nubian Nile valley and Sudanese savanna, separated by tracts of desert. How was it possible for one king to control all of that territory? . . . How did the Kushite monarchy function?

Robert G. Morkot

The establishment of Kushite rule over Egypt during the eighth and seventh centuries BC resulted in a political state of extraordinary geographic dimensions and ecological diversity. From their dynamic homeland within Africa’s tropical belt,\(^3\) the rulers of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty exerted differential forms of political control southward into the savannah, latitudinally across the Sahel, and northward over 3,000 km through the Nile corridor and desert oases to the Mediterranean marshes of the Egyptian Delta. Famously termed the “Double Kingdom” by Egyptologist Gaston Maspero,\(^4\) this state also fused Kushite and Egyptian realms that had once been represented as culturally and politically distinct in Egyptian royal propaganda and literary topoi.\(^5\) The dimensions and diversity of the resulting political system raise a number of questions as to how such a state would have been structured and administered. Yet the means by which the Double Kingdom was actually governed during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty have never constituted the focus of a monographic study.

The book that follows will address precisely this issue: how was it possible for one king to control all of that territory? Enfolded within this problem are several longstanding enigmas that have dogged study of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty: to what extent were the Kushite pharaohs’ strategies of governance influenced by the circumstances and traditions of their homeland versus the precedents of Egyptian and later Libyan rule in Egypt? Was the basis of Kushite power primarily military or religious? Did the kings of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty appoint a deputy to help them manage the 3,200 km expanse of the Double Kingdom? Would such a position have been most likely filled by a coregent, by the God’s Wife of Amun, or by the Queen Mother? And how did the policies of the Kushite dynasts differ from those of their Saïte successors? Pursuit of these questions has driven the present inquiry beyond certain methodological, geographic, and chronological boundaries which have demarcated earlier published scholarship on the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.

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\(^1\) Kitchen, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Egyptian Chronology,” 293.
\(^3\) As Edwards observes, Sudan is located immediately to the south of the Tropic of Cancer and is thus “entirely within the tropics”—hence Connah’s characterization of polities in the region as “the earliest known cities and states of tropical Africa”: Edwards, “Ancient Egypt in the Sudanese Middle Nile,” 140; Connah, “Birth on the Nile,” 18. For discussion of the homeland of the el-Kurru dynasts, see Ch. II.1-II.2 below. Palaeo-climatological evidence also suggests that isohyets in Kush during the first millennium BC reached well to the north of their modern locations, placing the Bayuda region within a slightly less arid climate than that of today: Ahmed, “Economy and Environment in the Empire of Kush,” 294-95; Chaix and Grant, “Palaeoenvironment and economy at Kerma,” 27; Gowlett, “Human Adaptation and Long-term Climatic Change in Northeast Africa”; Mawson and Williams, “Wetter Climate in the Eastern Sudan 2,000 Years Ago?”; Bradley, “Variation from the City of Meroe,” 167-169. For the Third Cataract region and its gradual desertification across the first millennium BC, see Macklin et al., “Reach-scale river dynamics.”
\(^4\) Maspero, History of Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Babylonia, and Assyria VIII, 138.
\(^5\) Loprieno, Topos und Mimesis; Smith, Wretched Kush, 24-27.