CHAPTER NINE

NEW KINGDOM EGYPT IN NUBIA (c. 1550–1069 BC)

Turning my face to the south I did a wonder for you,
I made the chiefs of wretched Kush surround you,
Carrying all their tribute on their backs.

Turning my face to the north I did a wonder for you,
I made the countries of the ends of Asia come to you,
Carrying all their tribute on their backs.

They offer you their persons and their children,
Beseeking you to grant them breath of life.1

1. The Conquest

In this chapter we shall discuss the history of the re-conquest of Lower Nubia and the conquest of the territory controlled by the kingdom of Kerma as one and the same process. As a result of this process the limit of Egypt was extended as far south as the region of the Fourth Cataract. Egypt’s Nubian province was divided into two administrative districts, viz., the Lower Nubian Wawat between the First Cataract and Semna, and the Upper Nubian Kush between Semna and the Fourth Cataract region. In the following also the evidence relating to Kush will be surveyed, for Egypt’s policy in Lower Nubia cannot be investigated independently from her policy in Upper Nubia (Pl. 41).

In Chapter VII we have followed the course of the war fought by the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty against the Hyksos and for the reunification of Egypt up to the accession in c. 1550 BC of the boy-king Ahmose, the first ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The final phase of the war against the Hyksos started in Ahmose’s (?) eleventh year with the occupation of Heliopolis.2 The occupation of Heliopolis was followed by the

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1 Amun’s blessing to Amenhotep III, stela from the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III in Western Thebes, Lichtheim 1976 46f.
2 Our source, the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, refers to Year 11 of an unknown king who may equally be identified with Ahmose and the Hyksos ruler Khamudi, see Bourriau 2000 212.—For the reign of Ahmose, see Vandersleyen 1971.
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siege and occupation of Avaris. Ahmose’s victory resulted in a mass
exodus of the Hyksos from Egypt. After the expulsion of the Hyksos a
campaign was directed to Palestine in order to secure Egypt’s northern
frontier and establish trade contacts with Lebanon and Phoenicia.

The biography of the admiral Ahmose son of Ibana gives a chrono-
logical account of the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Palestinian cam-
paign under Ahmose, and the subsequent Nubian campaigns of Ah-
mose and his successors Amenhotep I (1525–1504 BC) and Thutmose I
(1504–1492 BC). The traditional topoi of the establishment of universal
regency in the account of Ahmose son of Ibana conceal the differences
between the forms of imperialism in the north and the south. While
Egyptian presence in the Levant was economic, in Nubia the aim was
more complex, i.e., economic, political, and military at the same time.

According to Ahmose son of Ibana’s biography,

[w]hen His Majesty [King Ahmose] had slain the nomads of Asia, he
sailed south to Khenet-hen-nefer, to destroy the Nubian Bowmen. His
Majesty made a great slaughter among them.

Military control over Lower Nubia was established without delay. The
inscription of a door jamb from Buhen with the representation of
Ahmose and his mother Ahhotep offering to Horus of Buhen (cf. 
Chapter VII) and Min also commemorates Turoy, commander (šsw)
of Buhen and “king’s son” (for the title, see Chapter IX.2). A rock
drawing in the form of the Son-of-Re name of Ahmose discovered
recently at Gebel Kajbar at the northern end of the Third Cataract
seems to indicate the southern limit of the occupation established by
the end (?) of the second decade of Ahmose’s reign. Ahmose founded

3 Bourriau 2000 210ff.
5 For Egypt in the Levant, see Kemp 1978; D. Valbelle: Les Neuf Arcs. Paris 1990; 
6 According to A.H. Gardiner in: Davies–Gardiner 1926 11: place in Upper Nubia; 
Vandersleyen 1971 64ff.: Nubia south of the Second Cataract; Säve-Söderbergh–Troy 
1991 6: general term for Nubia. In the view of Spalinger (2006 347ff.), “we can assume
it to be quite far south of the Second Cataract… At this time… I would assume Khenet-
hen-nefer to refer to the kingdom of Kush and its immediate environs; its later uses can
be seen always to refer to an undefined extent of land upstream and out of Egyptian
control, ready to be attacked if need be”. The meaning of the term obviously changed
in the course of the time.
7 PM VII 130; Smith 1976 206; S.T. Smith 1995 120.
8 Edwards 2006 58ff., Pl. 4.