

History of Ancient Kush**Biography**

King Taharqa

c. 710-664 BC



HOW HE AFFECTED THE WORLD Taharqa was the third Kushite king of Egypt. Egypt thrived under his rule, and new temples and pyramids were built throughout Egypt.



As you read the biography below, think about how challenging it must have been for King Taharqa to accomplish all that he did.

The ancient kingdom of Kush, which rose in the northeast African region now known as Nubia, was conquered by Egypt around 1500 BC. After living for about 450 years under Egyptian rule, the people of Kush rose up against Egypt and eventually won their independence. Kush grew stronger while Egypt became weaker and abandoned many of its customs. The Egyptians had even stopped building pyramids to serve as tombs for their rulers.

A Kushite king named Kashta began attacking Egypt in the 700s BC. When Kashta died, his son Piankhi (also known as Piye) continued the assault. Piankhi had succeeded in bringing Egypt under Kush's control by the time he died around 716 BC. Shabaka, Piankhi's brother, then took over and declared himself pharaoh, becoming the first king of the twenty-fifth **dynasty**.

Kush had adopted the Egyptian language and customs when it was under Egyptian rule, so Shabaka wanted to return Egypt to its former glory. When he died, Shabaka was buried in a pyramid like the pharaohs in Egypt's past. Shabaka's nephew Shebitku then became the second king of the Kushite dynasty. Taharqa was Shebitku's brother, who helped defend Egypt from an invasion by the Assyrians.



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VOCABULARY**dynasty** family of rulers

When Shebitku died, 17-year-old Taharqa was crowned king. As king Taharqa had many public buildings built in both Egypt and Nubia. Under his rule, the colonnade of the temple of Amun was built. This structure contained many tall columns. A single column almost 70 feet tall still stands today. Perhaps Taharqa's greatest accomplishment was the temple at Gebel Barkal in the Sudan. The temple was carved from rock and featured images of Taharqa that were more than 100 feet high. Taharqa also rebuilt and restored temples in Kawa and Nubia.

Assyria invaded Egypt once again in 677 BC. Taharqa was able to defeat the Assyrians this time, but Assyria returned to attack three years later. In 671 BC, the Assyrian king conquered the capital city of Memphis and captured many members of the Egyptian royal family. Taharqa was wounded in the battle and was forced to flee. A new king took power and a new dynasty began for Egypt.

King Taharqa spent his final years in exile. He is believed to have died in 664 BC and was buried in a pyramid near Napata.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Recall** What were two of King Taharqa's accomplishments?

- 2. Sequence** How was Taharqa related to the other kings of the twenty-fifth dynasty? Explain their relationship to one another.

ACTIVITY

Write an epitaph for King Taharqa's tomb. Include one or two details that you learned from your reading.