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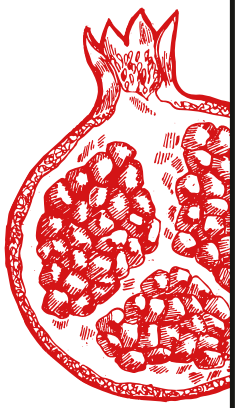

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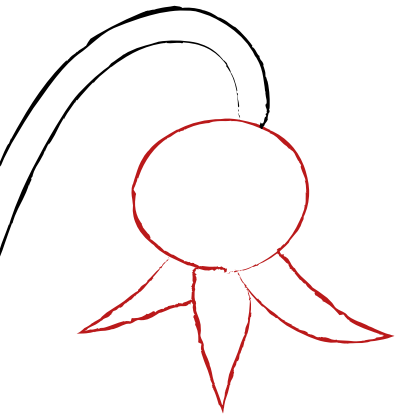

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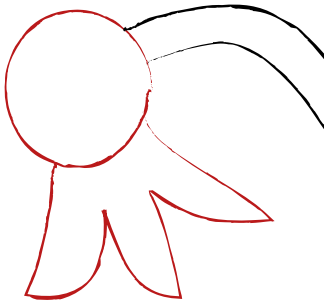

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JUDEANS AND SAMARIANS AT TAHPANHES: SPECULATING ON THE IDENTITY OF THE KING IN PAPYRUS AMHERST 63 COL. XVII

Marshall A. Cunningham

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Abstract

In this short article, I offer a speculative identification of the unnamed king who receives a caravan of Judeans and Samarians in Papyrus Amherst 63 col. xvii. I also identify the location of the royal site where the meeting might have occurred. Through a close reading of this passage and a comparison with a similar account of Judean and Samarian migration in Jeremiah 40–44, I argue that the caravan arrives at Tahpanhes, modern-day Tell Dafana, an important royal outpost in the eastern Nile Delta. The king was most likely Apries, a member of the Saite dynasty, who is said to have come to Judah's aid in the early sixth century BCE and whose military exploits are recorded in two stelae that have recently been discovered at Tell Dafana.

In diesem kurzen Aufsatz biete ich eine spekulative Identifizierung des namenlosen Königs an, der in Papyrus Amherst 63, Spalte xvii, eine Karawane aus Judäern und Samariern empfängt. Ich identifiziere auch den Ort des königlichen Ortes, an dem das Treffen stattgefunden haben könnte. Durch eine genaue Lektüre dieser Passage und einen Vergleich mit einem ähnlichen Bericht über die Migration der Judäer und Samarier in Jeremia 40–44 stelle ich fest, dass die Karawane in Tahpanhes ankommt, dem heutigen Tell Dafana, einem wichtigen königlichen Außenposten im östlichen *Nildelta*. Der König war höchstwahrscheinlich Apries, ein Mitglied der Saiten-Dynastie, der Juda im frühen sechsten Jahrhundert v. Chr. zu Hilfe gekommen sein soll und dessen militärische Heldentaten auf zwei Stelen aufgezeichnet sind, die kürzlich in Tell Dafana entdeckt wurden.

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JUDEANS AND SAMARIANS AT TAHPANHES: SPECULATING ON THE IDENTITY OF THE KING IN PAPYRUS AMHERST 63 COL. XVII

Marshall A. Cunningham

Introduction

Papyrus Amherst 63, a scroll featuring a collection of Aramaic compositions written in Demotic script,[1] features a short narrative concerning the arrival of a group of Judean and Samarian refugees to an unnamed royal outpost. At this outpost, they are received by an unnamed king who welcomes them into his kingdom with an offer to sustain them. In this article, I begin by outlining the basic contours of this narrative in Papyrus Amherst 63 column xvii (hereafter, P. Amh. 63 col. xvii). I then briefly highlight similarities between it and the story of the prophet Jeremiah's forced flight to Egypt in Jeremiah 40–44. Finally, I suggest that the two accounts are similar enough to use the Jeremianic version

[1] For a full introduction to the scroll, its scribal idiosyncrasies, and its basic contents, see Holm 2023.

to fill in gaps in P. Amh. 63, identifying its unnamed king as Apries, the fourth pharaoh of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, and the royal outpost of Tahpanhes as the site where he receives the Judean and Samarian caravan.

The narrative of the Judean and Samarian caravan occurs in col. xvii of P. Amh. 63[2] and immediately precedes what Tawny Holm (2017) has identified as a sacred marriage hymn for the goddess Nanay. Alongside Holm's dedicated critical edition of this column, Karel van der Toorn (2018) and Richard Steiner and Charles Nims (2017) have published complete critical editions of P. Amh. 63 that offer analysis of this scene, and the following summary relies heavily on their readings.

The text opens with narration in the first person,[3] with the speaker describing the arrival of a caravan of Samarians (*Šmryn*) appearing before an unnamed king (*bmry mlk'*; l. 2). When asked their place of origin, a spokesman for the caravan answers:[4]

ʾ[n(h)] ⌜mn⌝-[y]hwd ʾt(h)	[I] come from [Y]ehud.
ʾḥy mn-šmry⌜n⌝ m{m}y⌜t⌝(y)	My brother is brought from Samaria.
pkʿt ʾdm ⌜m⌝sq ʾḥty myrwšl{l}m	And now[5] a man is bringing my sister up from Jerusalem.

[2] In the Steiner and Nims edition, this is identified as col. xvi (Steiner and Nims 2017).

[3] In a recent article on when the Judean garrison at Yeb was established, Kahn (2022, 154) has connected this scene with the description of the Elamite jackal causing chaos in Rash's temples in the preceding column, suggesting Rash as the caravan's point of origin. None of the recent critical editions of P. Amh. 63, however, make this connection. All three treat the caravan section as the beginning of a new composition. The dramatic shift from the hymnic material in col. xvi to this use of the first person in col. xvii supports separating the two as distinct compositions that have been juxtaposed in P. Amh. 63.

[4] This transliterated Aramaic text comes from Holm's (2017) reconstruction of the passage. For the Demotic signs behind this transliteration, please refer to Holm's edition and to those of Van der Toorn (2018) and Steiner and Nims (2017).

[5] The conjunction *p-* appears in the two Aramaic inscriptions from Sam'al (KAI 214–15) and, according to Jonas Greenfield (1978, 94), likely represents a dialectal variant. See Holm 2017, 8.

In response, the king offers exceptional hospitality and to treat the members of the caravan to a feast. After the feast is described, the text transitions—without a marked break[6]—into a sacred marriage hymn for the goddess Nanay.

While the details surrounding the scene are vague, there is strong evidence to suggest that the Judean and Samarian caravan is to be understood as a group of refugees: displaced soldiers and their families fleeing war and seeking shelter. First of all, the narrator identifies the band of Samarians as a *gys*, a "troop" (l. 1).[7] Although previously attested only in later Aramaic dialects (Holm 2017, 7),[8] *gys* occurs again in a broken but clearly military context in col. xxi (l. 17) of P. Amh. 63, where it refers to a group under the control of Aššurbanipal's general. Van der Toorn's transcription of col. xvii's fragmentary opening line, in which he reconstructs more text than either the edition by Holm or Steiner and Nims, adds that the group consisted of *'nš dqy*, "broken men" (Van der Toorn 2018, 203). This speculative reading would suggest a group of soldiers and their families battered by war and in search of refuge.[9]

Line 5 of col. xvii concludes with the Demotic signs NYS + '. The recent editions disagree in how they interpret this unit. Steiner understands the Demotic sign to reflect Aramaic *nsy*, and interprets the form as a first person common plural imperfect form from the root *ns'*, "to lift."[10] Holm prefers to take NYS as a passive participle from the root

[6] The scribe who compiled P. Amh. 63 often, though inconsistently, employed the Demotic sign SP, "remainder," perhaps representing Aramaic *sōp*, "end," to divide between distinct literary sections on the papyrus. The marker appears after l. 19 of col. xvii, apparently to mark the end of the current composition (Holm 2017, 22, 36).

[7] All three recent editions of the text translate *gys* as "troop" (Holm 2017, 6–7; Steiner and Nims 2017, 63; Van der Toorn 2018, 203–5).

[8] Compare CAL (https://cal.huc.edu/), s.v. *gys*, for examples (accessed December 7, 2023).

[9] The presence of women and children among the caravan is strongly suggested by the presence of the Judean leader's sister (*'ḥty*). On this latter point, see Holm 2017, 23.

[10] They translate: "The plants, with everything else, we will carry (for you)" (Steiner and Nims 2017, 64).

nws, "to flee," and translates "refugee."[11] Van der Toorn offers a third option, reading NYS as the noun *nēs*, "battle flag" or "banner," "a pars pro toto for a military unit, 'battalion.'"[12] While none of these readings is definitive, either "refugee" or "banner" would fit the sense of the local syntax,[13] and both readings support interpreting the caravan as composed of military refugees.

The sad state of the Judean and Samarian refugees is offset by the kindness and hospitality of the unnamed king who receives them: "Come in, young man. Let us host you."[14] Rather than turning the caravan away, the king offers them shelter and sustenance. A series of clauses with imperfect verbs describes the bountiful future that the refugees might have in the king's land as well as his own investment in their success:

nṭʿm ʿmk kl nys	We will feed your people, every refugee.[15]
ʿl ptwrk ysm ʾgnt	On your table bowls will be set.
wmn kl mʿyn yyn	From every fountain, wine (will flow).
[ʾgnt] wmn kl mn mnt špr	[Bowls?] and from every vessel,[16] a great portion.

[11] This would be a masculine singular Gp participle, with the singular standing in for the entire group (Holm 2017, 9).

[12] He continues: "what in the Elephantine Papyri would be referred to as the *degel*" (Van der Toorn 2018, 204).

[13] The key factor in each case is how to render the Demotic sign NṬʿ that precedes *nys*. The phrase *kl nys* seems to be in apposition to *ʿmk*, "your people," suggesting that the sign NṬʿ should represent a verbal form to create a clause. Steiner and Nims (2017) unconvincingly translate "plant," a comparatively late noun known from Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (see DJBA: 745b). Also, it is unclear what it would mean for the king and his subjects to "carry plants" in this context. Holm (2017) suggests a D-stem first person common plural imperfect of *ṭʿm*, "we will feed," while Van der Toorn (2018) prefers a G imperfect of *nd*ʿ, "we will know/recognize."

[14] The form *nʾrḫk* (split between ll. 4–5), a first person common plural jussive form with a second person masculine singular suffix, is likely in the otherwise unattested C-stem for the root *ʾ-r-ḫ/ḥ* ("to visit, travel" in the G) (Holm 2017, 9). For a discussion of unmarked jussive forms in Egyptian Aramaic, see Muraoka and Porten 1998, §24k.

[15] Following Holm 2017, 5–6, 9.

[16] Following Holm (2017, 10), who interprets *mn* as the noun *mn* or *mʾn*, "vessel." Compare DNWSI, s.v. *mʾn*, 588.

As a result of the king's generosity, the refugees find their circumstances greatly improved, at least for the time being.

While the narrative in col. xvii provides the geographic origins of the caravan, the text's first person speaker identifies neither the location of the royal palace nor the name of the generous king who so graciously receives the Judeans and Samarians. Consistent with his treatment of P. Amh. 63 as the product of an ethnically diverse group of refugees who fled Assyrian rule before joining together at the desert oasis of Palmyra, Van der Toorn suggests that the king in question rules over Palmyra.[17] As Dan'el Kahn (2022, 154) has pointed out, however, there is absolutely no evidence that Palmyra was inhabited between the end of the Bronze Age and the Hellenistic era, making Van der Toorn's incredibly complicated theory of P. Amh. 63's composition history (and thus this historical reference) quite implausible.

More compelling in her conjecture is Holm (2017, 2023), who suggests that we might understand this king to be a pharaoh who receives this caravan somewhere in Egypt.[18] She does not push the issue,

[17] Van der Toorn (2018: 8–36) argues that the place of refuge for the diverse communities reflected in col. xvii and its broader literary context was the desert fortress of Palmyra. Based on a number of historical clues that he sees in the text, he argues that the text recounts an otherwise unattested flight of troops from Judah to the Syrian stronghold in the wake of Sennacherib's Levantine campaign at the end of the eighth century. Among those clues, Van der Toorn highlights the presence of Samarians under the authority of a Judean general, which he argues would have been most likely after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 720 but before refugees from Samaria would have been fully integrated into the Kingdom of Judah; the mention of a *ḥlṣ tmr*, "fortress of palm," as a reference to Palmyra; and the parallels between the pantheon of Palmyra in the Roman period and the variety of deities recognized in section four of P. Amh. 63, particularly the association between the god Bol and Bethel. In general, Van der Toorn's suggestion is incredibly speculative, with each layer of argument building on previous speculations. It also adds significant complexity to the process of transmission without corroborative evidence.

[18] Holm tentatively suggests that the king who welcomes the Judean and Samarian refugees could be an Egyptian and that some of those responsible for compiling/producing P. Amh. 63 "had come most immediately from Judah and Samaria" (2023, 172–73). Her suggestion avoids the problem of an otherwise unattested

admitting that it is also possible that the welcoming king is the same one addressed elsewhere in the composition (Holm 2017, 22). However, P. Amh. 63's technical ties to Egypt, its use of an exclusively Egyptian writing system, and the fact that many of its diverse traditions can be linked to communities who were settled in Egypt at the time when P. Amh. 63 was likely compiled[19] make Holm's suggestion all the more likely.

If Holm is correct that the account of the Judean and Samarian caravan is meant to take place in Egypt, then a comparison with a similar account of migration to Egypt may allow us to fill in some of the omitted details. Jeremiah 40–44 narrates the prophet Jeremiah's forced flight from Judah in the aftermath of a political assassination of the Babylonian-appointed governor, Gedaliah, and his supporters. While the traveling party in that narrative is primarily composed of Judeans fleeing Babylonian reprisal, it does include a group of Samarians that had been taken captive by the rebel Ishmael outside Mizpah.[20] Notably, the group includes men of fighting age alongside their families (41:16; 44). Finally, according to Jeremiah 43:7–9, the Judeans and Samarians in Jeremiah's caravan made their first stop at the Egyptian city of Tahpanhes (תחפנחס). Once there, the prophet received an oracle that began by identifying the city as the site of a royal palace (בית פרעה) before performing a sign-act and announcing Pharaoh's (and the caravan's) impending devastation at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army (43:8–12).

migration to Palmyra by Judean and Samarian forces. It treats Egypt as the location of the cultural and religious "mixing" demonstrated by the document, a point that is well-attested in the historical record. Holm also highlights a number of other details that support identifying the composition's origins with Egypt, including a potential reference to the Yahu temple at Yeb and frequent reflections on drought.

[19] For a concise and helpful discussion of the variety of traditions and communities reflected in the document and their relationship to Egypt, see Holm 2023, 165–73.

[20] According to Jeremiah 41:10–16, Ishmael intercepted a group of eighty worshippers coming from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. He spared ten of them, and it is reasonable to conclude that they were included in "the remnant of those people whom Ishmael ben Nataniah captured at Mizpah after he assassinated Gedaliah ben Ahiqam" (Jer 41:16).

The Tahpanhes of this passage from Jeremiah has traditionally been associated with the site of Tell Dafana (Greek Δάφναι) in the eastern Nile Delta. W. M. F. Petrie (1888), who first excavated the site, believed that the tell was an ancient border fort that housed Greek mercenaries, specifically the στρατόπεδον that Psammetichus I is said to have established for Ionian and Carian mercenaries, according to Herodotus.[21] Recently, a reexamination of Petrie's discoveries in the British Museum and a new excavation led by François Leclère have produced a radically different picture of Tahpanhes/Daphnae in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE (Leclère et al. 2014). Rather than a military outpost showing considerable Greek influence, Leclère et al. argue that the site's architectural features "correspond to those of a classical temple town functioning as a frontier post, and it is to this specific context that the presence of [Greek] imports must be understood" (2014: 9). As a royal temple city and a gateway to the Levant, Tahpanhes/Daphnae was the first large town that travelers from Asia would have encountered on their trip to Egypt, and it would have been a point of departure for Egyptian travels east (Leclère et al. 2014). Anecdotally, Petrie noted that the locals encountered during his expedition called the site "Kasr el Bint el Yehudi," or "the Palace of the Jew's Daughter" (1888, 47), suggesting a long tradition of Judean or Jewish association with the site.

Notably, two stelae have been discovered in the environs of Tell Dafana in the twenty-first century commemorating royal achievements and victorious campaigns in Canaan by the Saite king Apries.[22] Apries ruled Egypt from 589 to 570 BCE and was the fourth king of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. In one of these stelae, dated to the seventh year of his reign (582 BCE), Apries claims to have raised his army of Egyptian and foreign soldiers, in order to set out to meet an enemy—likely the

[21] *Histories* 2.154 (compare 2.30, 107); Petrie 1888, 48.

[22] The first was discovered in 2011 and dates to year seven of his reign (El-Maksoud and Valbelle 2013). The second stela was discovered in 2021 and was published by Mostafa Nour, John Iskander, and Sameh Hashem in 2023. It is likely from early in Apries's reign—year one or two—and deals primarily with small royal accomplishments and the mustering of troops. See also James Hoffmeier's (2023) recent treatment of Jeremiah's journey into Egypt in BAR.

Babylonians—beyond the borders of Egypt. It is likely that Tahpanhes/Daphnae was the staging ground for this campaign, as it had been for one of Apries's predecessors, Psammetichus I, when he campaigned in the Levant in 637 BCE.[23] These stelae, which promote Apries's skill as a military leader and defender of Egyptian sovereignty, speak to both the strategic and ideological importance of Tahpanhes/Daphnae for Apries at the beginning of his reign.

The Saites were a line of rulers from the region of Sais in the western Nile Delta who reestablished Egyptian independence during the mid-seventh century BCE, pushing the Assyrians out after a decade of imperial domination. In addition to throwing off the Assyrian yoke, the Saites had imperial aspirations of their own: the first two kings of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, Psammetichus I and Necho II, expanded their kingdom's borders and established control in the southern Levant during the last third of the seventh century BCE. They incorporated important trade centers in the region like Ashkelon and Ekron into their imperial orbit, and they also seem to have acquired Judah as a vassal. Necho II even went so far as to appoint his preferred king, Jehoiakim, to the Judean throne (2 Kgs 23:35).[24]

As Egypt and Babylon struggled over the territory vacated by the Assyrians in the southern Levant at the end of the seventh century and during the first decades of the sixth, Judah seems to have consistently aligned itself with the Saites. Jehoiakim was a Saite vassal prior to Nebuchadnezzar's victory at Carchemish in 605 BCE, and, depending on how one reads the notice in 2 Kings 24:7 about the king of Egypt not heading out to battle, the Judean king may have expected Egyptian support when he ultimately rebelled against Babylon.[25] Roughly a

[23] Herodotus mentions Psammetichus I's campaign against Ashdod in *Histories* 2.157. An ostracon, written in Demotic and dated to the twenty-eighth year of Psammetichus's reign (637 BCE), mentions that the king is in Daphnae and planning to invade Canaan (Chaveau 2011).

[24] See also Schipper 2011.

[25] The reference likely recalls the resounding victory that Nebuchadnezzar won against Necho II at Carchemish, driving the Egyptians out of the Levant (Cogan and Tadmore 1998, 307–8). However, the Historian's decision to include it here

decade later, Zedekiah—a Judean king who had been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:17)—called on Apries to aid his own rebellion.[26] And, perhaps more importantly, if the claim in Jeremiah 37:5 is historically accurate, Zedekiah actually received that support and was thereby able to temporarily hold off the Babylonian incursion.[27] Apries and the Saites, then, are remembered in contemporary Judean sources as friends to the crown and its subjects—if not always Yahweh's chosen ally for Judah[28]—and as sources of support against the threat of Babylonian hegemony.

This relationship between Judah and the Saites, and between Zedekiah and Apries in particular, explains why Jeremiah's traveling party would seek refuge in Egypt following Gedaliah's assassination. Judah and Egypt shared a recent history of cooperation and a common enemy in Babylon. This history might also account for the positive reception that the Judean and Samarian caravan receives from the unnamed king in P. Amh. 63. If this is, in fact, the case, and it is this relationship between Judah and Egypt that stands behind the narrative in col. xvii, then we might make two further speculative claims based on the narrative of Jeremiah 40–44 and the inscriptional evidence from Egypt. First, the setting for the meeting between the refugees and the king that

at the conclusion of the brief treatment of Jehoiakim's reign suggests that their failure to leave their territory was related to the Judean king's ultimate demise.

[26] This expectation seems to be asserted in texts like Ezekiel 17, which records a Judean envoy sent to Egypt seeking military aid in its condemnation of Zedekiah's politics. Compare also Lachish Letter 3, which mentions that Coniah, a Judean general (שר הצבא), went to Egypt and sent word back to Judah (ll. 13–15).

[27] While Jeremiah 37:5 claims that Apries, identified by title (פרעה) rather than name, sent troops to Jerusalem to (successfully) drive back the Babylonians, that campaign is otherwise unattested in contemporary Greek and Egyptian sources. Herodotus does claim that Apries undertook campaigns to Sidon and Tyre during his reign (*Histories* 2.161), which means that he may still have considered the Levant (and especially its ports) as territory worth fighting for.

[28] For example, the pan-Egyptian curse of Jeremiah 44 predicts Apries's delivery into enemy hands, just like Zedekiah had been delivered to Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel 17, too, denounces the Judean monarchy for relying on Egypt for support against the (superior?) Babylonian Empire.

is narrated in col. xvii should be identified as Tahpanhes/Daphnae, an important gateway between Egypt and the Levant. Second, the king who treats the broken Judean and Samarian families with such kindness should be identified as Apries, the Saite monarch who was on the throne in 586 when Judah fell, who may have still considered Judah a vassal of his Egyptian empire, and for whom Tahpanhes was a site of strategic and ideological importance.

If the preceding analysis is correct, then it raises an important question concerning the relationship between P. Amh. 63 and some of the literature that has been preserved in the Hebrew Bible. Despite significant differences in how each text evaluates the Judean and Samarian refugees and their decision to enter Egypt, I have argued that there are enough points of narrative overlap to rely on the narrative in Jeremiah 40–44 to fill in details for the sparser version in P. Amh. 63. Of course, this (posited) shared account would not require that one narrative be dependent on the other, nor would the available evidence allow us to determine a direction of dependence if we were to somehow establish a direct link between the two texts.[29] Still, the inclusion of a shared account of a migration to Egypt during the Saite period in P. Amh. 63 and the Hebrew Bible would provide an important piece of data for considering the processes that led to the compilation of the Hebrew Bible and to authoritative literature more broadly. P. Amh. 63 famously includes an Aramaic parallel to Psalm 20 alongside a pair of psalm-like prayers to Yahu,[30] which demonstrates that a genealogical relationship between the traditions preserved in both collections is at least possible. The varying evaluations of the migration to Egypt, if indeed there is a shared tradition between the two accounts, might then offer an opportunity to

[29] If there is any dependence between the two compositions (P. Amh. 63 and Jer 40–44) or if they share a tradition about migration to Egypt, it is entirely possible that the account in P. Amh. 63 was earlier (Persian period?) and reflects a more apologetic stance towards a flight to Egypt, while the author of Jeremiah 40–44 set their account in the Neo-Babylonian period to further highlight the negative aspects and rebellious elements in the story (Simeon Chavel, personal communication).

[30] The parallel to Psalm 20 occurs in col. xi. For a discussion of the parallels, see Nims and Steiner 1983; Zevit 1990; Van der Toorn 2017.

consider the values that informed the compilation processes behind P. Amh. 63 and the Hebrew Bible.

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