

"SO," RULER OF EGYPT

WILLIAM H. SHEA
The Biblical Research Institute
Silver Spring, MD 20904

The following study is a report of the research on a problem in the history in the late eighth century B.C. which was worked out in collaboration with Alberto R. Green of Rutgers University. The results of this joint effort were reported by Green to the Egyptian-Israelite history section of the Society of Biblical Literature at the annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, in November of 1990.

The historical correlations worked out in that joint venture remain unchanged here. The new contribution in the present study has to do with the linguistics of the key word and central problem of the biblical passage involved, the name of the king of Egypt mentioned in 2 Kgs 17:4, traditionally rendered "So." The problem here is that this name does not occur as the name of any ruler in Egyptian history. For the biblical spelling of the name, there would have been, of course, a transliteration from Egyptian into Hebrew. But just who in Egyptian history was this "So"?

My purpose in this essay is to extend the discussion on the question of the transliteration and to find (hopefully) a better solution to So's identity than has thus far been forthcoming. Even though the historical reconstruction set forth herein has already been presented in a public forum, as mentioned above, it is reiterated here as a background for, and aid to, setting my linguistic proposal in context.

1. *The Historico-political Setting*

The historico-political setting may be described as follows:¹ As the northern kingdom of Israel went down to its final defeat at the

¹For a useful review of the history of this period in Egypt see K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (Warminster, 1973), 348-380.

hands of the Assyrians, the last king to rule in Samaria—Hoshea—appealed to Egypt for military assistance against the eastern colossus. The fact that he made such an appeal is not surprising. What is more difficult to clarify is the precise ruler in Egypt with whom he lodged this appeal. The question, then, in regard to 2 Kgs 17:4 is simply this: Who was the king named So?

If the country of Egypt had been unified at this particular time—namely, the decade during which Samaria fell—the answer to this question would be much easier to give. Then we would need to deal with only one line of kings in one dynasty, so that our task would be merely a matter of picking from that list one king from the appropriate time and with the appropriate name (based on phonetic comparisons).

But the picture here is complicated by the fact that Egypt was not unified at this time. It was broken up into a number of smaller units or nomes, each under a local ruler. What we have, then, is a collection of contemporaneous kinglets, not one strong king ruling a central monarchy. In times of weakness, Egypt had a tendency to break up into northern and southern segments, and that was the case at this time too. Beyond that, however, the Delta in particular was divided up into a number of local units. That this was the situation is made evident in particular by the long list of local rulers given on Piankhy's stela, which comes from this very time.

Among this collection of local rulers in the Delta, two in particular stand out above the others: Tefnakht, who ruled from Sais in the western part of the Delta, and Osorkon (i.e. Osorkon IV), who ruled from his royal residence in the eastern section of the Delta. While these were by no means the only rulers in the Delta, they were the two most prominent ones there at the time when Hoshea appealed to Egypt for help against the Assyrians. These two rulers therefore certainly deserve consideration in the attempt to identify So, king of Egypt. Moreover, they have been identified in that way by various scholars.

We should also look toward Upper Egypt for powerful figures at this time, for this is the era when the 25th Dynasty was on the rise and was beginning to meddle in the affairs of Lower Egypt. Even though the 25th Dynasty did not take complete control of Lower Egypt until later, the successful campaign of Piankhy into this area brings that Nubian dynasty onto the scene.

Thus we have at this particular time three concurrent rulers in Egypt who apparently were significant enough for us to consider in attempting to identify So: namely, Tefnakht in the western Delta

of Lower Egypt, Osorkon IV in the eastern Delta, of Lower Egypt, and Piankhy in Upper Egypt and beyond.

The earliest interpretive suggestion was one that opted for a Nubian candidate: In translating 2 Kgs 17:4, the Lucianic Version of the LXX added for So, king of Egypt, the phrase "Adrammelech the Ethiopian, living in Egypt." This is obviously an interpretation, not just a translation. The name "Adrammelech" in the Lucianic Version is not very helpful, however, for it apparently was taken from the name of the son of Sennacherib who, according to 2 Kgs 19:17, assassinated the Assyrian king. Although the name itself is not helpful, the concept of a Nubian or Ethiopian king who was residing in Egypt is noteworthy. While there could be some mistaking of the particular individual who was the king of Egypt to whom Hoshea appealed, there was no mistaking the dynasty that was involved.

In addition, the Lucianic remark gives a hint that Piankhy, rather than some other later king of the 25th Dynasty, was the Egyptian ruler involved, for the statement refers to the fact that this king was somewhat of a temporary resident "living in Egypt," instead of a full-fledged king of Egypt (as the later rulers of this Dynasty were).

2. Reconstructions That Have Been Suggested

When modern commentators began to look for the identity of So, they favored a different interpretation from the one suggested by the Lucianic Version. They did concur that the 25th Dynasty was involved, but they favored some of its later rulers. Sir Flinders Petrie argued that the king in question here was Shabako,² and C. F. Lehmann-Haupt favored Shebitku.³ In their day the chronological problems involved had not been worked out in detail. In fact, it was not until 1922, when R. Kittel suggested that the Egyptian king in this verse should be identified with Piankhy of Nubia, that the chronological problem had really been addressed.⁴ Shabako and Shebitku were too late for Hoshea's time, but Piankhy

²F. Petrie, *Egypt and Israel* (London, 1912), 75-77.

³C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Israel: Seine Entwicklung im Rahmen der Weltgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1911), 100-104.

⁴R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* 2, 4th ed. (Gotha, 1922), 465.

was a serious contender for power in Egypt in the 720s and thus should be taken into account, as Kittel proposed.

Subsequently, the scholarly search for So turned northward. This was especially the case after World War II.

Currently, a basically different approach is taken among these alternative hypotheses. Instead of looking for a king whose name could match with So, researchers have broadened their perspective so as to consider titles and place names. The first suggestion of this sort was one proposed by S. Yeivin in 1952,⁵ who took the expression "So" to be, not the *nomen* or *praenomen* of an Egyptian king, but a title which stood for "vizier." Consequently, he believed that the biblical reference was to the "vizier of the king of Egypt," not to a king of Egypt by name. Yeivin's hypothesis has been abandoned, however, because we now have a better reading for the Egyptian word for "vizier," and it does not fit the biblical expression.

Also left along the wayside is the view that So was the Egyptian general *Sibʿ*, who is known from an inscription of Sargon II for this period. With cuneiformists now reading the signs of his name as *Reʿ*,⁶ it can no longer be matched with So.

In 1963 H. Goedicke offered the suggestion that So was not a personal name, but that it should be taken as the place name of Sais.⁷ This required emending an extra preposition into the biblical phrase to make it read, "to Sais, to the king of Egypt." With this reconstruction the king involved was left unnamed, but from historical considerations Goedicke identified him as Tefnakht I, a reconstruction supported by W. F. Albright.⁸

R. Sayed also argued in favor of Tefnakht, but he did so on different grounds.⁹ He took the biblical So to stand for the first part of *Si3-ib*, the Horus name of that king. Countering this proposal, Kitchen noted that when foreign texts refer to an Egypt-

⁵A. L. Oppenheim in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 2d ed. (Princeton, 1955), 285.

⁶R. Borger, "Das Ende des ägyptischen Feldherrn *Sibʿ* = *sô*," *JNES* 19 (1960): 49-53.

⁷H. Goedicke, "End of 'So, King of Egypt,'" *BASOR* 171 (1963): 64-66.

⁸W. F. Albright, "The Elimination of King 'So,'" *BASOR* 171 (1963): 66.

⁹R. Sayed, "Tefnakht ou Horus *Si3-(IB)*," *VT* 20 (1970): 116-118.

tian pharaoh, they almost always use his *nomen* or *praenomen*, not his Horus name.¹⁰

Utilizing the weaknesses in the Tefnakht hypothesis as a foil from which to develop an alternative candidate for So, K. A. Kitchen nominated Osorkon IV of Tanis and Bubastis.¹¹ His criticisms of the Saite hypothesis have recently been summarized by Duane Christensen, as follows:¹² (1) Tefnakht was geographically too far distant in Sais to be of significant assistance to a king in Israel. (2) The reading proposed by Albright and Goedicke requires an emendation. (3) Hebrew kings had previously dealt with the 22d Dynasty, and to Israel the kings at Sais were of an unknown quantity and quality. (4) The Hebrew prophets of the eighth century had the same kings of the eastern Delta in view as did the kings of Israel and Judah. (5) Osorkon IV is a better historical and linguistic candidate. The linguistic part of this equation is brought out by connecting the biblical So with the second syllable in the name of Osorkon.

These propositions by Kitchen are not, however, without weaknesses. The distance from Israel should not be considered as a major factor, since kings from all parts of Egypt involved themselves in the affairs of Western Asia at one time or another. Kitchen's argument against emendation seems particularly weak, inasmuch as he himself uses it in treating almost all of Osorkon's name as being omitted. The historical situation does not stand Osorkon in good stead because he was, as Kitchen readily admits, a weak king and would not have been able to provide much significant military assistance to Hoshea. Finally, a linguistic correspondence that is based essentially upon one letter does not provide a very strong phonetic connection.

The foregoing reconstructions, as well as the historical circumstances (as noted earlier), thus leave us with three main candidates in Egypt for the biblical So: the older view of Piankhy from Nubia, the more recent view of Tefnakht from Sais, and the most recent proposal of Osorkon from Tanis. While current scholarship divides between support for either Tefnakht or Osorkon, my

¹⁰Kitchen, 373.

¹¹Ibid., 372-374.

¹²D. Christensen, "The Identity of 'King So' in Egypt (2 Kings xvii 4)," *VT* 39 (1989): 144-145.

proposal presented below is a revival of the identification of So with Piankhy.

3. *The Historical and Chronological Correlations*

As a part of addressing in more detail this identification of So with Piankhy, an issue in historical and chronological correlation needs first to be addressed. This has to do with (1) the date for Piankhy's campaign to Lower Egypt, and (2) the time from which Tefnakht dated his regnal years in relationship to Piankhy's campaign. These two issues are interrelated.

The Military Campaigns of Tefnakht and Piankhy

The chronological problem has lurked in the background of our subject for some time, but it has recently been brought to the fore by Christensen.¹³ The first consideration here is that Tefnakht clearly was an expansionist ruler. He started on the warpath, and that warpath took him first of all to other parts of the Delta. His conquests did not stop with these regional activities, however, for he turned next to the South. His most distant point of penetration in that direction appears to have been Hermopolis. Piankhy's stela gives us this information.

This southward move of Tefnakht was evidently seen by the Cushite king as a threat, so he set his forces in motion to counter Tefnakht's moves. One division of Piankhy's troops was sent to besiege and conquer the recently surrendered Hermopolis; a second detachment was sent to engage Tefnakht's ships on the Nile; and a third body of troops was sent to engage Tefnakht at Heracleopolis, which was still holding out against Tefnakht's siege. Piankhy's troops were victorious on all fronts. As Christensen puts it, "Tefnakht saw his short-lived empire crumbling even more quickly than it had taken shape."¹⁴

Three more major cities of the Delta submitted to Piankhy, and then Memphis fell to him by stratagem. Tefnakht retreated to take refuge on one of the remote islands in a western mouth of the Nile, and from there he finally submitted to Piankhy. The situation in

¹³Ibid., 145-149.

¹⁴Ibid., 148.

the Delta had changed completely. Nine months earlier, the petty Delta dynasts had been faced with an emergent kingdom based in Sais. Now all prospects for this had disappeared, swallowed up in the conquests of Piankhy. The Delta dynasts were all now his vassals, having taken an oath of allegiance to him, and paying tribute to him.

Unfortunately, Piankhy's campaign has been difficult to date. Kitchen dates that campaign to 728, and commences the official regnal years of Tefnakht after that.¹⁵ Christensen, on the other hand, dates Piankhy's campaign in the interval between 724 and 722;¹⁶ and he dates both the beginning of Tefnakht's campaigning and the commencement of Tefnakht's official regnal years before that time. That makes Tefnakht's brief day in the sun fall at the right time for Hoshea to send to Tefnakht for help.

Chronological Factors Involved in the Dating of Tefnakht's Regnal Years

The foregoing historical overview has revealed that there are, in fact, three main elements for us to consider: (1) the date of Tefnakht's campaign, (2) the date of Piankhy's campaign, and (3) the date from which Tefnakht began to reckon his official regnal years as king. Of one thing we are sure: namely, that Piankhy's Stela indicates Tefnakht's campaign as taking place before Piankhy's campaign. Indeed, the latter campaign put an end to the former one. The question then is whether Tefnakht dated his regnal years from the time when he began his own militaristic expansion, or whether his regnal-year dating was not begun until after he was defeated by Piankhy and had surrendered to him. Christensen opts for the former view, and Kitchen for the latter.

Some of the chronological factors here are relatively clear. A. Spalinger has shown that Shabako killed Bakenranef, the successor to Tefnakht, in 712.¹⁷ A monument of Bakenranef is dated to his 6th (and final) year. Prior to that, we have a monument dated to year 8 of Tefnakht. If this was the last year of

¹⁵Kitchen, 362-364. See especially n. 688 on pp. 362-363.

¹⁶Christensen, 147.

¹⁷A. Spalinger, "The Year 712 B.C. and Its Implications for Egyptian History," *JARCE* 10 (1973): 95-101.

Tefnakht, a point about which we are not entirely sure, Tefnakht's first year would be 725. On this point Christensen and Kitchen agree. But Kitchen puts this after Piankhy's conquests, while Christensen lines it up with the beginning of Tefnakht's campaigning prior to Piankhy's coming on the scene of action.

One factor that bears upon this matter is the dating of Tefnakht's regnal years. There are two possibilities here. Tefnakht may have taken up royal titles and dating at the time that he set out upon his campaign, or he may have been permitted to take up those titles and that kind of dating by Piankhy after Piankhy had defeated him. The fact that Piankhy obviously permitted these claims to continue is evident from the fact that Tefnakht's inscriptions run up to year 8. This lends support to the idea that Piankhy tolerated or accepted such a usage without interrupting it. If so, then he may also have acceded to the use of those titles and this kind of dating at their outset, after he defeated Tefnakht, for he would have been more likely to stop their use by an enemy who had been employing them before being defeated.

A stronger line of evidence, however, comes from the titles that Tefnakht did use in his earlier rulership, before he took over his full royal titulary. Upon his claim to kingship Tefnakht took a Horus name, a golden Horus name, a Nebty name, and a *praenomen* to accompany his *nomen* of Tefnakht. Before that time, however, the monuments show nine different titles which he used. Some were religious, such as Prophet of Neith and Edjo, while others expressed his political claims, such as Great Chief of the Ma, Great Chief of the Libu, Great Chief of the entire land, and Prince of the Western Nomes. When Piankhy had his great conquest written up in Napata, royal titles were not employed for Tefnakht, but the latter was identified as ruler of three of the western nomes and three cities in the west lands. By no means can this be stretched into a claim to kingship.

The comparison is thus with the pre-kingship titles of Tefnakht, which are amply documented. To make Tefnakht a full king by this time is not just an argument from silence, it is an argument which runs counter to the evidence. On this point we must adjudge Kitchen correct in indicating that Piankhy's campaign came prior to Tefnakht's full titulary and regnal dating. This favors an early date for these events.

A Chronology of Egyptian Events

At this point we should construct our chronology for the aforementioned Egyptian events. Shabako defeated and killed Bakenranef in 712, Bakenranef's sixth and last year. That dates the accession of Bakenranef to at least as early as 718. Prior to Bakenranef's accession, there was a minimum of the eight inscriptionally known years of Tefnakht. This takes us back to 726 for Tefnakht's first year, which at the latest should also coincide, approximately, with his official coronation as king. Since Tefnakht's kingship began after, not before, Piankhy's campaign, that campaign should be dated to the preceding year, 727. Tefnakht's own campaign should thus be dated to the year before that, 728. Thus, I favor Kitchen's high date for these events over Christensen's low dates, even though Christensen has done a better job of portraying the dire political straits to which Tefnakht had been reduced after his defeat.

Correlation with the Biblical and Assyrian Data

With the Egyptian scene now drawn up, we should next look at the biblical and Assyrian materials in order to correlate them with the pattern set forth above. Concerning this matter we have a useful new study by Nadav Na'aman.¹⁸ Of special interest here is the way in which this researcher has treated the Babylonian Chronicle's reference to the dealings of Shalmaneser V with Samaria. For the chronology of this reference he has stated the following:

The text of the chronicle is organized throughout in a chronological order, with each and every event accurately dated within a specific year of the king of Babylonia and a transverse line marked to separate the years of reign. The 'ravaging' of Samara'n is included within the accession year of Shalmaneser and should accordingly be assigned to that year.¹⁹

¹⁸N. Na'aman, "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 B.C.)," *Biblica* 71 (1990): 207-225.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

As Na`aman has noted, as early as 1887 H. Winckler dated this event to that accession year of Shalmaneser, or 727 B.C. For the verb *hepu* which is used here Na`aman points out that a simple meaning of "to ravage" or "plunder" is adequate.²⁰ It does not have to refer to a complete and devastating conquest with attendant destruction. Thus, this reference can be separated from what happened to Samaria at the end of the three-year siege by the Assyrians. This makes a nice correlation with 2 Kgs 17:3, the verse which precedes the reference relating to king So. It states, "Against him [Hoshea] came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute." Hoshea would have had all the more reason to pay that tribute if Shalmaneser was ravaging the country at that time.

From these useful correlations, however, Na`aman's study diverges from the historical evidence in an attempt to locate the entire subsequent siege and conquest of Samaria within the reign of Sargon II.²¹ While it is possible to attribute the end of the siege of Samaria and its final conquest to Sargon, it is not possible to attribute the entire siege to him without completely dismissing the biblical references to this subject. Both this passage (2 Kgs 17:4) and one in the next chapter (2 Kgs 18:9-11) make it clear that a considerable portion of the three-year siege must be attributed to Shalmaneser.

In general agreement with this is the fact that the Eponym Chronicle lists three campaigns for the years 725, 724, and 723, against a country for which the name has unfortunately been broken away.²² To deny a connection between this record and the biblical data is to overlook the obvious. The three-year campaign of the Chronicle is most naturally taken as the same three-year campaign referred to in 2 Kgs 17 and 18, and the name of Samaria should be supplied to the damaged Assyrian text from the biblical references.

Thus we have two Mesopotamian sources which bracket the verse with which we have been dealing. The Babylonian Chronicle

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965), 144, 213.

supplies the parallel to verse 3, which records an occurrence at the beginning of the reign of Shalmaneser in 727, and the Eponym Chronicle provides the parallel to the siege from 725 to 723/22 that is mentioned in verse 5. This leaves us with the year 726 as an open year between these two events, thus providing an opportunity for us to date to that year the events mentioned in verse 4, including the embassy of Hoshea to king So. This Assyro-biblical chronology can now be laid alongside the one which has been reconstructed above for Egypt.

When such a correlation is made, it can be seen that Tefnakht's campaign began in 728, the last full year of the reign of Tiglath-pileser III in Assyria. Piankhy's campaign in answer to Tefnakht occurred in the year following, 727. In Assyria this was the year when Tiglath-Pileser died and when Shalmaneser V came to the throne. During that same accession year, Shalmaneser set about quelling a revolt in the Assyrian empire, in the course of which part of his attention was directed to Samaria. It was therefore at this time that he ravaged Israel and extracted a surrender and payment of tribute from Hoshea.

Disgruntled with what Shalmaneser had done to him and to his land, Hoshea set out to acquire support for rebellion. The quarter to which he turned for this assistance was Egypt. In 726, the year after Piankhy's victorious campaign, it was abundantly clear where the real power in Egypt lay. That power was not seated in Tanis or Bubastis or Sais. It was seated at Napata in Nubia, and it was exercised by Piankhy. Thus it would have been to Piankhy that Hoshea sent his ambassadors.

Piankhy was now the suzerain over the Delta and the rest of Lower Egypt, and he was the most powerful figure on the scene of action in Egypt, as he had recently demonstrated. If any assistance of significance was to be forthcoming to Hoshea from Egypt, it would have to come from Piankhy or at least be authorized by him. Thus, from the standpoint of both chronological correlations and historical circumstances, Piankhy fits best as the king So to whom Hoshea sent for assistance. The requested assistance was not forthcoming, however, and this fits well with the fact that Piankhy did not return to Lower Egypt after this.

As we conclude our discussion on the biblical passage in question, we may note that 2 Kgs 17:6 refers to the exile of the captives from Samaria and the places to which they were sent in the east. Assyrian records point out quite clearly that this was the action of Sargon II, who followed Shalmaneser V on the throne. He

may also have finished the conquest of Samaria for Shalmaneser, either before or after the latter's death.

The entire biblical passage of 2 Kgs 17:3-6 can now be outlined as follows:

1. Verse 3 is paralleled by the Babylonian Chronicle's reference to the ravaging of Samaria by Shalmaneser, dated as 727.
2. Verse 4 points to an unsuccessful embassy sent to So, king of Egypt. I have suggested that this embassy was sent to Piankhy of Nubia, suzerain over Egypt after his victorious campaign in Lower Egypt. That campaign has been dated to 727, and the embassy to Piankhy by Hoshea in the next year, 726.
3. Verse 5 refers to the three-year siege of Samaria conducted mainly by Shalmaneser in 725, 724, and 723. The precipitating event for this siege was Hoshea's treachery in sending ambassadors to Egypt.
4. Verse 6 refers to the deportation of the exiles after the fall of Samaria. This action was carried out by Sargon II after he secured control over the Israelite kingdom at the beginning of his reign.

4. *The Linguistic Question*

Historical and chronological correlations have now been worked out between the biblical, Babylonian, and Egyptian sources. These have pointed to Piankhy as the mysterious So to whom Hoshea sent ambassadors according to 2 Kgs 17:4. One final correlation remains to be made, and that pertains to the matter of linguistics. Linguistic correlations with Osorkon rest, as we have seen, upon only one common consonant. Correlations with Tefnakht do not even rest upon a relationship with any of his throne names. The question then is, Is the situation regarding Piankhy any better?

At the time when Green and I worked out the historical and chronological scheme described above, I proposed a linguistic connection between the biblical name of So and the Egyptian Pharaoh Piankhy's titulary. The suggestion at that time was that Hebrew *siwa*^c (not vocalized as *sô*²) derived from the first part of Piankhy's Horus name of *sima*² *tawy*, "Pacifier of the Two Lands." The first part of this name, the verbal element, was then connected with the biblical name through a simple and well-known phonetic shift in labial letters, from *sima*² to *siwa*^c.

I have now dropped that interpretation and wish here to propose another connection which may possibly be a more direct

way to making the identification. Because foreign texts seldom use the Horus name to identify a pharaoh, one should look more directly at Piankhy's *praenomen* and *nomen*. The most direct connection should be with this king's *nomen*, Piankhy. But we now know through more recent detailed studies²³ that this king's *nomen* should not be read as "Piankhy," but rather as "Piye." It is thus with "Piye" rather than with "Piankhy" that any correlation of the biblical name "So" must be made if indeed it derived from his Egyptian royal *nomen*.

It may be noted that in general both of the names So and Piye are short. That does not mean that they have to be the same name, but it does point in a similar direction—much more so than if one were a long name and the other a short one.

Starting with the final *e*-vowel, we may note that the Hebrew letter *aleph* at the end of this name can carry with it either an *e* or an *a* vowel, but not an *i*, *o*, or *u* vowel, which would be represented with a *yodh* or a *waw*. An example of a Hebrew word ending in an *aleph* vocalized with an *e*-vowel would be the word *tame*?, "unclean, defiled." Thus, the final vowel reconstructed by Egyptologists in Piye is compatible with the way in which this final consonant in Hebrew can be vocalized in an acceptable fashion.

As far as the medial consonant of this word is concerned (not the medial vowel letter), it should be noted that the *waw* and the *yodh* were written in a form very close to each other in both the preexilic and the postexilic Hebrew scripts. In the preexilic script, both of these letters were written with a long vertical tail and a divided head. The only difference between them was that the *yodh* had a sharply forked head while the *waw* had a curved semicircular head. At times the neck of the *yodh* angled to the left, whereas the *waw* remained directly vertical. Since these differences are minor, there are various occasions upon which these two letters can be confused in preexilic inscriptions. The problem remains the same in the postexilic script. The differences now become the length of the tail, the *waw*'s tail being longer, and the angle with which the head of the letter bends to the left, the *yodh* coming closer to a right angle than the *waw*. The distinction between these letters poses such a common problem that at times in the Dead Sea Scrolls it becomes extremely difficult to distinguish between them. The suggestion I am making here is that the scribe originally wrote

²³K. Baer, "The Libyan and Nubian Kings of Egypt," *JNES* 32 (1973):24-25.

a *yodh* and that the later copyists developed this into a *waw* in the course of transmission.

The initial consonant of Piye is a bit more difficult to explain, for we have to go from the Egyptian *p* (Hebrew *pe*) to a Hebrew *s* (*samekh*). In the preexilic script these two letters do not look much like each other. The *pe* is a large curved letter, occasionally more angular, while the *samekh* is a vertical line with three crossbars. In the postexilic period, however, these two letters looked more alike, for the *samekh* came to be a circular letter with a point aiming to the left at its left upper corner. The *pe* was circular, but it still was an open circle, even though it had a small curved line extending downward from its left upper corner. Thus the difference came to be whether the circle was open or closed to the left, and how much of a point or line was written at the left upper corner of the letter. A confusion between these two letters in the postexilic period could thus have led to this shift of *p* to *s*.

Taking these two potential scribal errors into account, one minor and one major, we find the following course of development from Egyptian Piye to Hebrew *Siwe*² (Sô²) as it is now found in the printed Hebrew Bible: *Piye*—*Piye*²—*Piwe*²—*Siwe*². In this case we are not dealing with phonetic shifts in pronunciation as to how this foreign king's name was heard, but rather with scribal shifts in the way in which letters were written in the successive copies of the scroll of Kings as handed down from generation to generation.

5. Conclusion

In summary we should note that the real power in Egypt during the decade of the 720s was held by Piye in Nubia. Osorkon in the eastern Delta was virtually an impotent kinglet, and Tefnakht in the western Delta was not much stronger. Tefnakht's real weakness was readily demonstrated when his forces encountered those of Piye.

Since this demonstration of Piye's power and Tefnakht's weakness took place shortly before the time when Hoshea needed to call upon Egypt for assistance, according to the chronology developed here, Hoshea should have been able to read those events clearly enough to know that Piye was the only real source of power in Egypt upon which he could call. Whether Piye could have helped Hoshea to any significant extent on the battlefield we will never know, for he did not respond to this appeal for assistance from Samaria.

ADDENDUM

The most recent study of the problem of King So that has appeared, subsequent to my preparing the foregoing article, is John Day, "The Problem of 'So, King of Egypt' in 2 Kings XVII 4," *VT* 42 (1992): 289-301. Day adopts the common view that this King So was Tefnakhte of Sais and that the name of his capital became confused with the personal name now in the text. Day's study differs from others written from the same general point of view, in that other studies have relegated to later copyists the confusion of the personal and place names, whereas Day would attribute it to the original author/editor. Since my study has taken a different approach to this matter, Day's study does not materially affect the conclusion I have reached.