

The Making of the Last Pharaoh

-- A Case Study of Changes in the History Writing of Ptolemaic Egypt

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Abstract

Historical writing about the last native pharaoh was a means of domination by the Ptolemaic royal family for political propaganda at the ideological level. In the official historical accounts, Nectanebo II of the Thirtieth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt has been regarded as the last native pharaoh. This paper re-examines the identity of the last native pharaoh of Ancient Egypt on the basis of excavating historical materials, explores the historical status of Nectanebo II and Khababash, confirms the real identity of Khababash as the last native pharaoh, and points out the shift in the historical writing about the last native pharaoh. At the same time, after analyzing the political propaganda color embodied in the shift of history writing, the reasons for the shift of history writing in this case are explored from the ancient Egyptian codified history tradition, the comparison of the two pharaohs' political achievements, and the demand of the Ptolemaic royal family's realistic rule. It can be seen that the creation of the last native pharaoh, from Khababash to Nectanebo II, is one of the important means of consolidating the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and also an important symptom of the process of its "Egyptianization".

Keywords

Last Native Pharaoh; Ptolemaic Egypt; History Writing; Egyptianization.

1. Introduction

After the 25th Dynasty, Egypt entered a period of alternate rule by foreign and native rulers. In the 26th Dynasty the Saite residents defeated the Assyrian rulers and re-established the native rule of the Egyptians; then the Persian King Cambyses II destroyed the 26th Dynasty and established the Persian-ruled 27th Dynasty; after an anti-Persian revolt, Amyrtaios II of the 28th Dynasty ascended the throne; he was then replaced by the 29th Dynasty. In 380 BC, Nectanebo I usurped the throne of Nephertites I of the 29th Dynasty and established the 30th Dynasty of Egypt. This was the last of the last native dynasties of Ancient Egypt.

According to Manetho, the 30th Dynasty consisted of 3 kings of Sebennytos and totaled 38 (20) years. Archaeological material also confirms 38 years. Nectanebo II was the last pharaoh of the 30th Dynasty in both official records and classical historians. In reality, however, the identity of Nectanebo II as the last native pharaoh is still open to question, even though Nectanebo II is the last native pharaoh traditionally recognized in official historical accounts and in the writings of classical historians. In the archaeological findings we find another figure, Khababash, who in the temporal dimension is the last native pharaoh in the true sense of the word in ancient Egypt. This proves that Khababash was the true last native pharaoh of ancient Egypt, and that the "last native pharaoh" status of Nectanebo II was actually created by later generations.

The research on the last native pharaohs of ancient Egypt is of certain academic significance and practical significance. In the Egyptology research community, the late Egyptian research has been a weak link, the relevant research results are relatively weak, in-depth study of the last native pharaohs, help to fill the blank of the late dynasty research in Egyptology. At the same time, in-depth verification of the identity of the last native pharaohs of ancient Egypt, but also to make clear the evolution of the historical process of the change of the power of the king in that period of time, and deepen the understanding of the academic community for the late dynasty of Egypt.

As to why there are two different identities of the last native pharaohs in the classical historians' writings and archaeological historical data, and why there is such a change of historical writing in the context of the time, there is a temporary gap in the results of the current research in this area. Domestically, there is few research and study on this issue. Anthony Spalinger summarized the historical data of Khababash his paper *The Reign of King Khababash: An Interpretation*, [1] Wemer Huß pointed out that Khababash was forgotten in his book *DER RÄTSELHAFTE PHARAO Khababash*. [2] In his book, Wemer Huß points out that the oblivion of Khababash may be related to the shortness of its reign. However, the previous studies are mostly about the introduction and translation of the historical materials of Khababash, but lack the analysis of its causes and the excavation of its essence.

Therefore, this paper intends to re-examine the relevant historical materials about the two last native pharaohs from specific historical sources, confirm the real identity of the last native pharaohs, and analyze the reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon in the context of the historical background at that time, as well as exploring their historical positioning in the light of changes in the writing of history.

2. Factual Analysis of the Dispute Over the Last Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt

In 1923, Mr. Gu Jiegang, a Chinese historian, put forward the "layered fabrications theory" in his *Discussion of Ancient History*. [3] According to Mr. Gu Jiegang, firstly, "the later the era, the longer the period of ancient history of the legend". Gu then formed a hypothesis: "Ancient history was created in a cascading manner, and the order of occurrence and the system of arrangement were exactly the reverse of each other." Secondly, "the later the era, the larger the central figure in the legend." Thirdly, in exploring ancient history, even if we "cannot know the true state of an event, we can know the earliest state of an event in the legend." [4] In general, Mr. Gu believes that history is a cascade, a process of overlapping layers and mutual influences, including not only overlapping political and institutional levels, but also the inheritance and evolution of ideologies, values, cultural traditions, and so on. These layers have intertwined and interacted with each other in the long river of history, forming China's unique historical development trajectory. This academic viewpoint pioneered a new approach to the study of ancient history, and was the academic premise and foundation for the creation of modern Chinese scientific historiography. [5].

As one of the theoretical perspectives used by Gu Jiegang to explain the evolution of Chinese history, although the "layered fabrications theory" is mainly applied to China, it is also applicable to a certain extent to the history of other countries and regions. The context of this paper is the post-dynastic period (26th-31st dynasties, ca. 664-332 BCE), a period in which Egypt alternated between foreign and native rulers. [6] The inherited heritage of different periods, the historical events recorded by different historians, and the folk records from different literary perspectives can be regarded as the "layers" of the history of the post-dynastic era in ancient Egypt.

First, trace the chronicle work *Aegyptiaca* (*History of Egypt*) by the historian Manetho. One of the most important references for understanding the history of ancient Egypt and Egyptian

dynasties, it states that the 30th Dynasty of Egypt consisted of the 3 kings of Sebenetus for a total of 38 (20) years, and that the last pharaoh of the 30th Dynasty was Nectanebo II. It should be noted, however, that much of the History of Egypt is lost, and with regard to the list of pharaohs of the 30th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, the Excerpt version, and based on the author's priestly status, we need its cautious interpretation.

Table 1. list of pharaohs of the 30th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, the Excerpt version

Sextus Julius Africanus c. 160-c. 240 AD) edition	Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340 AD)
The Thirtieth Dynasty included the three kings of Sebennytus: 1. Nectanebis, 18 years; 2. Theos, 2 years; 3. Nectanebus, 18 years; Total 38 years.	The Thirtieth Dynasty consisted 3 kings of Sebennytus: 1. Nectanebis, 10 years; 2. Teos, 2 years; 3. Nectanebus, 8 years; Total 20 years.

Once again, references to the reign of Nectanebo II can be found in The Library of History, a chronicle written by Diodorus Siculus, an ancient Greek historian who lived during the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC. [7] Diodorus described Nectanebo II 's reign as Egyptian pharaoh and his contributions to Egypt, his architectural and cultural endeavors, and his impact on Egypt's economic and social development. Among the things that can prove Nectanebo II's status as the native last pharaoh are his military achievements and failures. The Library of History records that in the battle against the invasion of the Persian Empire, due to Persia's constant attacks and onslaught, the Egyptian city of Bubastis opened and surrendered, and the rest of the cities surrendered to Persia in fear. [7].

And in the field of literature, we can trace the Alexander Romance to the period between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. [8] As a literary work about Alexander the Great, it depicts the life and adventures of Alexander, the formation of which Book 1 dates back to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC. [8] It is written about the story of the connection between Nectanebo II and Alexander the Great. According to the portrayal, Nectanebo II is depicted as a wise, intelligent and powerful pharaoh, with whom Alexander was father and son. As a ruler with magical and mystical powers, he was able to influence real ships by observing and casting spells on models of ships in bowls. But when Persia invaded, he tried to resist through magic, but after realizing that it was the gods of Egypt who were in command of the enemy fleet, he realized that he had been abandoned by the gods, and gave up the resistance and fled to Macedonia. And later, by disguising himself as the god Ammon of Libya, fathered a child with Olympias, the then queen of Macedonia, viz. Alexander. [9].

In another literary work, Nectanebo's Dream, the reasons for Nectanebo's abandonment are recounted. This literature was written in secular Egyptian and was written in the 2nd century BC. As pharaohs were widely regarded as incarnations or representatives of the gods in ancient Egypt, As for Khababash, its identity can be proved by the following primary historical sources. The Satrap Stela preserves information about the brief reign of Khababash. In the account, Khababash is recognized as the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, and his relevant achievements are recounted. (The northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Senenenptah-setepentenen, the Son of Re, Khababash, living forever, gave it to the gods of Pe and Dep after His Majesty proceeded to Pe and Dep, making a circuit of the marshland that is in its entire territory, going into the interior of the swamps and examining each Nile branch that goes to the sea, in order to repel the ships of Asia from Egypt.) [10].

And in another original historical source, the Papyrus Ibbey, edited and translated by Spiegelberg, as a dated text recording the reign of Khababash, the rule of Khababash is used as

a chronological method, and the inscription Thebes therein attests to the fact that Khababash's power was recognized throughout Egypt at the time, reflecting that his rule was widely acknowledged by the populace of the period. The inscription Thebes also attests to the fact that Khababash's power was recognized throughout Egypt at the time, reflecting the widespread popular recognition of his rule. [11].

"In the year I, in (the month of) Athyr, of King Khababash)

Other materials that explicitly mention Khababash include the black granite sarcophagus dedicated by Khababash to the Apis bull (now in the Cairo Museum), which bears the name of Khababash and the inscription of the Apis bull for the year of his reign, reflecting Khababash's close ties to Lower Egypt (especially Memphis), and preserving the highest known date of the king's reign and some of the pharaoh's religious activities. This is in addition to the small orb engraved with his name, the vase engraved with Khababash's name, etc., excavated in the palace of King Apis (all of the above objects were excavated in the Memphis area).

Based on the analysis and comparison of the above historical materials, we can find that the identity of Khababash is supported by the original historical materials and can be recognized as the last native pharaoh, while the identity of the "last native pharaoh" of Nectanebo II is created by the later generations. Before analyzing the reasons for the deviation in the writing of history, it is necessary to explore the nature of the relevant texts at a deeper level.

3. From Khababash to Nectanebo - The Reality of the Changing Face of History Writing

In 323 B.C., Alexander III died in Babylon after a long illness. During the War of the Successors, his generals began to fight over the vast imperial legacy. During this time the generals signed the Partition of Babylon. This was an agreement to divide Alexander the Great's imperial legacy, in which the generals assigned different regions and kingdoms. Ptolemy, Alexander's general and close friend, was given Egypt and became its governor. The rich land of Egypt was undoubtedly attractive to them; internally, Ptolemy, as a foreign ruler, lacked the legitimacy to rule Egypt, and was in dire need of the approval of the Egyptian traditional upper class, the priests. Ptolemy I, as one of Alexander the Great's generals, was granted Egypt as a partitioned territory. As a foreigner, he faced the problem of suspicion and mistrust from the Egyptians at the ideological level. As a historical and civilized country with unique religious and cultural traditions, Egyptians had a deep sense of emotion and identification with their country and kingship, so accepting a foreigner as a ruler was a challenging task. To establish his legitimacy and authority among the Egyptians, Ptolemy I took a number of measures. One of these was to publicize his rule in the form of monuments and stelae, an example of which is The Satrap Steala mentioned above. [10].

A parallel comparison of the before and after histories is shown below.

The recording of Khababash as the last pharaoh through the before and after comparison of the contents of the governor's tablet is a political propaganda by Ptolemy to show his legitimacy. In the historical sources, it is clear to determine Ptolemy's intention to link Khababash's performance with his own in order to show that he is the direct successor of his predecessor Khababash. He linked himself to the last native pharaoh of Egypt in order to strengthen his legitimacy and authority and to emphasize the continuation of Egyptian history.

However, according to the above, it can be found that *Aegyptiaca*, which was written by Manetho, the high priest, at the behest of Ptolemy II, also had a political propaganda flavor. In the opening chapter of *Aegyptiaca*, Manetho introduces himself as "High Priest and Scribe of the Holy Land of Egypt, born in Sebenutos and residing in the City of the Sun, in honor of my Lord Ptolemy. It is my duty to consider carefully all that You, the Omniscient One, would have me explore." [12] According to Suencelus, an ecclesiastical historian of the 9th century A.D.,

Manetho's epistle to Ptolemy II begins: "To Ptolemy, the great king and "beloved sister" of Augustus", and Suencelus mentioned that "in Egypt, the high priests of the temple, Sebenutos, Manetho, after Berossus, was born in the time of Ptolemy "the sister-lover," and wrote for Ptolemy." This shows that Manetho, as a senior priest and scribe of the Egyptian resort with an orthodox pedigree, whose writings were commissioned and directed by the dynastic government, must have had the color of political propaganda, aiming to emphasize the legitimacy and prestige of the Ptolemaic dynasty and to consolidate the dominant position.

Table 2. A parallel comparison of the before and after histories

	Ptolemy Sotal	Khababash
assault	He then went with his armies to the land of the Syrians, with the result that they fought with him and he entered among them with his heart strong like a raptor in pursuit of small birds, seizing them in a single instant. To Egypt he brought away their princes, their horses, their ships, and all their wonders. Afterward, he made an expedition to the territory of Irem, seizing them in a single moment. In retaliation for what they had done against Egypt, he brought away their people, both male and female, together with their gods. He then returned to Egypt with his heart happy at these things that he had done. [10]	Khababash, living forever, gave it to the gods of Pe and Dep after His Majesty proceeded to Pe and Dep, making a circuit of the marshland that is in its entire territory, going into the interior of the swamps and examining each Nile branch that goes to the sea, in order to repel the ships of Asia From Egypt...expelled the enemy Xerxes7 from his (Egyptian) palace together with his eldest son. [7]
Honor the gods and worship the temples	As he brought back the sacred images of the gods which were found within Asia, together with all the ritual implements and all the sacred scrolls of the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt, so he restored them in their proper places. [10]	The northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, it formerly belonged to the gods of Pe and Dep, before the enemy Xerxes revoked it. He did not make offerings from it to the gods of Pe and Dep.... Let Your Majesty command to give back the northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, to the gods of Pe and Dep, including its bread, beer, oxen, fowl and every good thing. Let its renewal be heralded in your name regarding its donation to the gods of Pe and Dep a second time in exchange for making your deeds successful. [10]

At the same time, in the context of Egypt in the second century BC, the image of Nectanebo II as the last native pharaoh was further confirmed and propagated, and Nectanebo became more closely associated with the legitimacy of the Ptolemaic royal family's rule over Egypt. The original version of Nectanebo's Dream was in Ancient Greek, found in the Sarapeion region of the city of Memphis, and written in the second century BC. The first chapter of the Alexander Romance, which serves as a directly related chapter to the Dream, was also written roughly in that time period. This remnant was originally written by a Greek author, incorporating elements of Egyptian folklore. [13] Greek was the official language of the Greek rulers in Ptolemaic Egypt, which means that the Egyptian folklore of Nectanebo and Alexander was probably adapted and recreated by the Greek ruling class as important material for the political propaganda of the Ptolemaic kings. In the Alexander Romance, after fleeing Macedonia, Nectanebo II became a guest of Philip II, King of Macedonia, and was favored by the Empress Olympia. One night, Nectanebo II, by pretending to be an image of the god Amun, has sex with the queen Olympia, who then becomes pregnant with Alexander. [9] The emergence of this

almost legendary element is inextricably linked to the political propaganda environment of the time. Ptolemy I, originally of the Ptolemaic family was originally one of the major nobles of the Macedonian kingdom, and Ptolemy himself was a close friend and valet of Alexander. After taking effective control of Egypt, Sotar, in an effort to associate himself with Alexander and assert his legitimacy as a ruler, hijacked Alexander's body in 321 BC, which was destined for Macedonia, and buried it in the city of Alexandria. [14] And in this book, Alexander became the son of Nectanebo II, clearly to provide a bloodline basis for Alexander's rule over Egypt. Putting this text into the historical context of the Ptolemaic kings emphasizing their own relationship with Alexander, then, reveals that the legitimacy to rule Egypt went from Nectanebo through Alexander and finally to the Ptolemaic kings.

In other words, the historical writing about the last native pharaohs began to emphasize Nectanebo from the time of Ptolemy II, and the image of Nectanebo II was highlighted to the peak in the middle and late Ptolemaic period. A number of reasons are implicated behind this shift in historical writing.

4. Between Forgetting and Remembering - An Exploration of the Reasons for Changes in History Writing

The accounts of historical texts about Khababash are in fact colored by political propaganda, and the change in the writing of the relevant history is in fact a shift in political propaganda. So why Khababash suffers from oblivion in political propaganda while Nectanebo is remembered? This can be analyzed mainly in terms of the lineage status and historical performance of the two pharaohs.

There seems to be a lack of good reasons for Khababash's oblivion as a pharaoh. One is that Khababash's reign was similar to that of Ptolemy II. Through the sources we can know that Khababash reigned from about 338 to 336 B.C.. Ptolemy II's reign was around the beginning of the third century B.C.. This means that in the historical context of that time, Khababash's existence should not have gone unnoticed. Even with a shorter reign, his presence still played a role in the social and political climate of the time and is unlikely to be forgotten. Secondly, there is no reason why the intellectuals of the time, especially those dominated by Manetho, should have forgotten Khababash. As high-status priests and historians, they had in-depth knowledge of Egyptian history, religion and culture. Their records and documents would have covered the important events and rulers of the time. In particular, *Aegyptiaca* written by Manetho probably referred to the sacred texts and was supposed to be recording objective and accurate history, so it is impossible to be unaware of the existence of Khababash. Then it can be judged that the historians also intentionally forgot the identity of Khababash in their recording of history. This may indicate a conscious choice to deliberately forget the status and rule of Khababash in order to support or emphasize other rulers who were more in line with the needs of political rule at the time.

Looking deeper into the reasons, we analyze them in two ways. The first is the reason why Khababash is forgotten and the second is the reason why Nectanebo II is remembered. According to historical sources, the writing of the Egyptian king's table attaches great importance to the legitimacy of the ruler. As an important historical material of ancient Egypt, the king list usually recorded the name of the king, the time of reign, family lineage, important events and other information, reflecting the concept of kingship and political system, used to show the legitimacy and authority of the ruler, especially focusing on reflecting the orthodoxy of the bloodline and religious beliefs. We can find that the Abydos King List and the Karnak King List record a series of pharaonic reigns and dynasties, respectively, providing information about the sequence and timeline of pharaonic rule, yet traces of the rule of the Hyksos rulers have been eliminated from the material of both king lists. The Hyksos, a nomadic tribe from

outside the region, invaded and ruled the Lower Egyptian region from the late 17th century BC to the early 16th century BC, undermining traditional Egyptian pharaonic rule. [15] Thus the king lists of Abydos and Karnak, in recording the rulers of the early period, may have intentionally excluded the Hyksos rulers for purposes of political propaganda or historical revision. [16] And in the Saqqara King List, which is the king table that lists 58 kings of ancient Egypt, there is no direct record of Amarna royalty such as Akhenaten, Tutankhamun, and Ay, possibly due to their status as religious heretics. [17] During his reign, Akhenaten attempted to promote monotheism, which ran counter to the traditional polytheistic beliefs of ancient Egypt. This religious reform may have led to his being regarded as a heretic by later rulers and ignored or excluded from king lists.[18].

At the same time, we find no record of Khababash in the Egyptian King List. Given the political and religious stance of the King List, it can be hypothesized that there were reasons behind the omission or elimination of the name Khababash. First of all, in terms of descent, Khababash was probably not a "pure" Egyptian, and did not conform to the notion of "racial orthodoxy" in the Egyptian compilation tradition of the King's List. His Egyptian name "kabbaš", with its double consonant "b" and final "š", is typical of the Libyan Meshwesh tribe. [1] His ancestors were probably Libyans who immigrated to Egypt proper during the Late Egyptian period. In addition, as the last native pharaoh, Khababash ruled for a short period of time, roughly two years in the records, and had fewer historical accomplishments, resembling nothing more than an insurrectionist. Not only was his reign relatively short, but he actually only controlled the region of Upper Egypt [6]. As a result, his authority was questioned at a later stage and he was regarded as an illegitimate or controversial ruler, or his rule was considered by later generations to be of no significance to Egyptian dynastic continuity and traditions, and thus his record in the King List was ignored and eliminated.

On the contrary, Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II reigned for a longer period, during which their initiatives and policies had a wide and far-reaching impact, covering a wide range of political, military, economic, cultural, and religious fields. First of all, they had organized large-scale foreign mercenaries and successfully defeated the invasion from the Persian Empire. This showed their leadership and strategic ability in the military field and their determination to maintain the security of Egyptian territory. Secondly, the Nectanebo family focused on the development of foreign trade, and also mimicked the Greeks by minting coins with their own avatars and trading with the Greeks, showing the importance they placed on cross-cultural exchanges and international trade, advancing the growth and stability of the Egyptian national economy at the time. Once again the Nectanebo family also made important contributions in the field of construction. They embarked on many large-scale construction projects and built many temples, including at Karnak, Edfu, and Sebennytos. These temples were dedicated to deities and symbolized the power and glory of the pharaohs, as well as having a positive impact on local religion and society.

Taken together, they defeated the Persian invasion militarily and ensured Egypt's territorial security; economically, they developed foreign trade and built large-scale construction projects, which contributed to the economic prosperity of ancient Egypt; and religiously and culturally, they passed on Egyptian religious traditions through the construction of temples dedicated to the gods. Their initiatives and policies laid an important foundation for the development and stability of ancient Egypt.

In addition to this, analyzed from the perspective of the Ptolemaic royal family, it is the realities of the royal family's need to rule that have to be taken into account. Among the powerful native Egyptian nobility, one of the noble members who supported the Ptolemaic dynasty had many descendants from the family of Sebennytos, among whom General Nectanebo, a descendant of the Nectanebo family, was among the members. General Nectanebo's close pre-Ptolemaic connections can also be traced through the following ancestral genealogy.

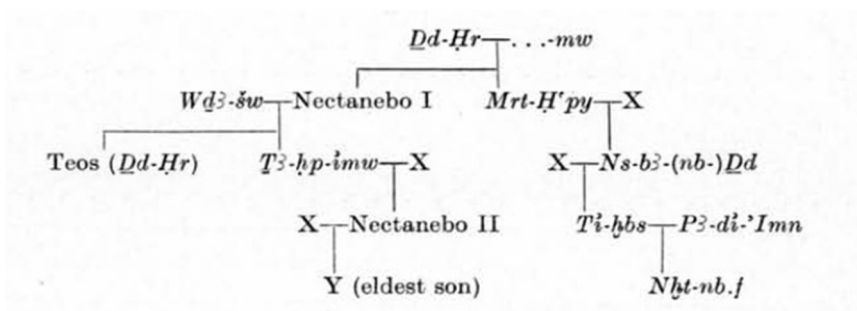


Figure 1. ancestral genealogy

It can be judged that the Ptolemaic regime was trying to gain the support of local political clans and social elites to ensure the political stability of the country and to maintain the legitimacy and stable rule of the Ptolemaic royal family. They might have drawn in with the local political clans in Egypt to gain their own support in local politics. As an important strategy of Ptolemy, drawing in local political families and social elites emphasized its importance and support for the Nectanebo family. At the same time, it intentionally ignored or minimized the position of the Khababash, which may also be one of the reasons for the change in the writing of history.

Second, while Ptolemy I and his descendants were foreign rulers, Egypt's upper social classes, however, had a special identification with the native pharaohs. Thus from the governorship of Ptolemy I to the continuation of pharaonic rule, rulers needed to link political ties with the previous pharaonic ruling class. Thus, early on, by supporting Khababash as the last pharaoh, they balanced their position as foreign rulers, expecting to show the similarity of their foreign identity by linking with Khababash, thus proving that the Ptolemies also had the ability to rule Egypt. Over time, however, as the Ptolemaic royal family gained a deeper understanding of Egypt's historical traditions, religion, and culture, they realized that the Khababash was not widely recognized and could not help the Ptolemies gain the upper echelons of recognition to stabilize their rule. As a result, the Ptolemaic II abandoned Khababash and instead shifted to supporting Nectanebo as the last native pharaoh, making connections with him who was more recognized by the native Egyptians, in order to gain more legitimacy and prestige.

5. Summarize

All of the above analyses of Egypt's last native pharaohs reflect a series of strategies and actions taken by the Ptolemaic royal family, as Greek Macedonians, in adapting to the Egyptian cultural and social environment. These strategies were aimed at consolidating their dominance in Egypt, establishing legitimacy, and gaining the support and acceptance of the natives.

Changes in the History Writing of Ptolemaic Egypt about the Last Native Pharaohs, as a strategy based on the cultural traditions and social context of the ruled region, was a more flexible means of ruling, aiming to achieve political stability and the sustainability of rule by integrating native cultures, building empathy, and gaining local support. By gaining a deeper understanding of and respecting for local cultural traditions, the Ptolemaic royal family was able to forge closer ties and win acceptance, increasing their legitimacy and influence. Thus, the creation of the last native pharaohs, from Khababash to Nectanebo II, became a symptom of their "Egyptianization".

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