ISSN: 2632-4091 History *of* Classical Scholarship 10 November 2026
Issue 8 (2026): 235–249

^{URU}Puṭu-ia-a-man. Cyrene Between Babylon, Egypt, and Libya — According to Mazzarino: A Reassessment

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Abstract

This article revisits Mazzarino's identification of the toponym ^{URU} Buṭujaman in the cuneiform tablet BM 33041 with the polis of Cyrene. New evidence and new research confirm Mazzarino's thesis, making it possible to reassess Nebuchadnezzar's war against Egypt and to gain a clearer understanding of Amasis' alliance with Cyrene against Apries, while simultaneously substantiating the reliability of the story of Amasis' marriage to Ladice, the daughter of the Cyrenaean king Battus II, as narrated by Herodotus. Furthermore, the chronology of the kings of Cyrene can be more accurately defined. In broader historical terms, the history of Cyrene during the 6th century BCE appears indeed defined, as Mazzarino had argued, by its relationship with Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Near East.

Keywords

Cyrene, Amasis, Nebuchadnezzar, Herodotus, Lybia

At least two significant reasons recommend revisiting the pages of *Fra Oriente e Occidente* in which Mazzarino identified as Cyrene the ^{city}Buṭujaman (^{URU}Puṭu-ja-a-man) recorded in the cuneiform tablet BM 33041.[1] First, more evidence has become available (and better understood): this makes it possible to assess Mazzarino's argument more thoroughly than before. The second, more general point is even more important. The current understanding of Babylonian history at the time of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562) and of Saitic Egypt under the Pharaohs Apries (r. 589–570) and Amasis (r. 570–526) vindicates Mazzarino's attempt of viewing the history of Cyrene in the 6th century BCE in the light of Ancient Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean history.

[1] Mazzarino (1947) 144–153; 345–347; 391–392 n. 901; 393; 411–414.

The Cuneiform Tablet BM 33041: Cyrene between Babylon, Egypt and Libya

Mazzarino's starting point was the geopolitical landscape of the years following the demise of the Assyrian Empire. The role played by Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562) was crucial to his argument. This polity was plugged into a tight-knit mosaic of powers spanning Lydia, the Levant, and Egypt. Against that backdrop, he situated the text of BM 33041, which was available to him in the *Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* edited by Stephen Langdon.[2] The tablet unquestionably refers to a military endeavor against Amasis' Egypt dated in the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar (568/67 BCE). Mazzarino's attention was caught by the words «...] -ku of ^{city}Buṭujaman» (l. 16=2r.). The problem concerned the location of the city Buṭujaman,[3] and the identity of ...] -ku, in his view, referring to its «lord». Hugo Winkler had suggested that the tablet mentioned Lesbos and Pittacus.[4] Against this view, Mazzarino discussed the word Puṭu against the background of the Old Testament, the Achaemenid inscriptions referring to Putiya, and Posener's remarks about the equivalence with Punt (the Egyptian designation of the Horn of Africa region), at the time commonly taken for granted, which Posener deemed unlikely.[5] Following Posener, Mazzarino concluded that Puṭu stood for «the Libyan world» and that ^{city}Buṭujaman could not refer to anything but Cyrene. Until then, only Albright had supported such a view (in 1926), but apparently unbeknownst to Mazzarino.[6] As for ...] -ku, Mazzarino's argument assumed that it rendered in Akkadian a Greek personal name ending in -*χος*, arguably Learchos (Herodotus 4.160.4).[7] This was the brother (and murderer) of king Arcesilaus II.[8] Furthermore,

[2] Langdon (1912) no. 48: 206–207. For a previous edition of the tablet, see Langdon (1905) 180–183.

[3] According to Mazzarino (p. 147) Buṭujaman meant «Jaman (Javan) of Buṭu (Puṭu)» and it was «the city's very same name».

[4] Winkler (1897).

[5] Mazzarino (1947) 147; see also 411–412. Cf. Posener (1936) 186–187 (Puṭu = Libya).

[6] Albright (1926) 227 (« the compound Pûtu-Yaman, that is, Pût of the Ionians (Greeks), an expression which can only refer to Cyrene»).

[7] The name appears as Learchos also in Nic. Dam. *FGrHist* 90 F 50. However, Polyaenus, *Strat*. 8.41 and Plut. *Mor*. 260e, 261a have Laarchos, maybe the original (Doric) form of the personal name (discussed in Soldati 2012).

[8] Learchos was the brother of Arcesilaus II in Herodotus and Nicolaus Damascenus. According to Plutarch he was a *philos* of the king. Jacoby (1925) and Momigliano argued (unconvincingly) to prioritize Plutarch over Herodotus. Mazzarino's treatment

Mazzarino noted that Plutarch (*mor*. 260e–261b) suggested that Amasis backed Learchos and that Cyrene at the time found itself «so to speak, under Amasis' protectorate».[9] Following his brothers, Learchos may have taken sides against Arcesilaus and with the Libyans at the time of the foundation of Barce. Then, with Amasis' support, he may have led the Libyans to victory against Arcesilaus in the battle of Leukon (Herodotus 4.160.3). Finally, he presumably got rid of his brother, as suggested by the role he played as Amasis' Cyrenean supporter in the cuneiform text of the tablet. Accordingly, the reign of Arcesilaus II ended in 567 BCE. Mazzarino concluded that «The story of Buṭujaman or Cyrene hence moved between Egypt and Greece; Nebukadnezar's inscription sheds light on the moment in which Cyrene tilted towards Egypt. Indeed, as can be evidenced from Plutarch, Learchos was backed by Egypt. Hence, from this standpoint, Buṭujaman is part of the competition between Egypt and Babylon for the Eastern Mediterranean».[10] Finally, Mazzarino focused on the mention in the tablet of «far away countries in the middle of the sea». He argued that, like in other cuneiform texts, the reference was to Cyprus, also subordinated to Amasis (Herodotus 2.182). In Mazzarino's eyes, Cyrene and Cyprus were embedded «in the Ancient Near Eastern states system around 568/7».[11]

In the decades following the publication of *Tra Oriente e Occidente*, neither Egyptologists nor Assyriologists paid attention to Mazzarino's ideas. Historians of Archaic Greece also consistently ignored them. Indeed, starting with a notoriously scathing review by Arnaldo Momigliano,[12] various insightful propositions put forward by Mazzarino in this work have not received the scholarly attention they merit.

Yet, it is possible today to say that Mazzarino's interpretation of URUPuṭu-ja-a-man mentioned in the tablet BM 33041 is most likely correct. The most thorough scholarship on the text does, in fact, interpret URUPuṭu-ja-a-man very much in the same way,[13] albeit without ever referring to Mazzarino. This is true for the distinguished Egyptologist Elmar Edel (1978) and for Terence Croft Mitchell (1992), then Keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum. Especially in the case

of the issue (Mazzarino (1947) 148 and 346–347 n. 425) ought to be taken as conclusive.

[9] Mazzarino (1947) 149.

[10] Mazzarino (1947) 150–151.

[11] Mazzarino (1947) 153.

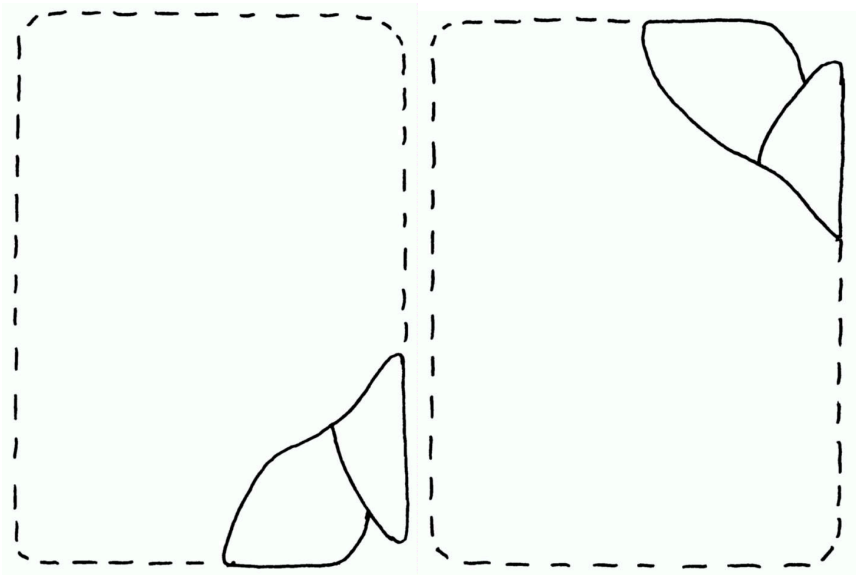
[12] The review (*Rivista storica italiana* 60, 1948, 127–132) was reprinted in Mazzarino 1989 (1947) 397–403.

[13] Edel (1978); Mitchell (1992).

of Mitchell, the argument rests on several linguistic observations comparable to those put forward by Mazzarino. For Edel and Mitchell, ^{URU}Puṭu-ja-a-man, "the Libyan city of the Greeks" undoubtedly referred to Cyrene.

A closer look at BM 33041

The text was collated on the document itself by Edel and Wilfred G. Lambert in the 1970s and 1980s. It was also carefully discussed by Mitchell,[14] but currently no newer edition is available.[15]



obverse reverse

Mitchell estimates that the tablet may have been 15 cm wide and 18 cm long. The two preserved fragments constitute the obverse's right bottom corner and the reverse's upper left corner. It follows that the text is much more lacunose than usually thought.[16] Indeed, no more than 1/10 of the original text is likely to have survived. Yet, where reconstruction is

[14] Leahy (1988) 191 n. 30 informs on the reading of the text by Lambert.

[15] The tablet is not published in RINBE 1/1, and apparently will not be published in RINBE 1/2 (Giulia Lentini, University of Turin, personal communication). On the online platform *electronic Babylonian Library* (eBL) an excellent color photograph is available (https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/BM.33041?tab=photo). For a copy of the cuneiform text, see Wiseman (1956) tables XX–XXI.

[16] For example, it is precisely the extent of the lacuna between l. 2r and l. 3r what prevents from linking the expression «[a dis]tant region which (is) in the middle of the sea» (l. 3r) with $^{(URU)}$pu/bu-ṭu-ia-a-man (l. 2r) as argued by Weisberg (2012) 90.

possible, the overall gist is by and large established.[17] From ll. 6–9 of the obverse it is possible to recognize the style of a "Letter to the God": somebody addresses a deity in the 1st person saying, for example, «you caused to capture», or «you gave rest». From line 10, the text switches to the 3rd person. There, references are made to «his soldiers», «his army» (11), «the road». A military expedition is a logical hypothesis. In the last two lines appear a dating in the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar king of [Babylonia] (13) and the wording «…] Egypt to make a battle he c[ame] » ([… Mi̯-sir a-na e-piš taḫazi il-[lik] […). In the first line of the reverse (15 = 1r), following a lacuna, one reads «[Amas]is king of Egypt called up [his troops]» (…] [Aḫm]a-su šar Mi̯-sir ipḫir [NIGIN] ma- [….). In the second line (16=2r) …]-ku-ú šá alu (URU)pu/bu-ṭu-ia-a-man should most likely be read as «…]-ku-ú of the city Pu/Buṭuiaman». …], and -ku- may stand for the ending of a personal name. One would think of the ruler of the city, but the determinative is strikingly absent. Reading the name as Learchos/ Laarchos involves considerable challenges for an historical reconstruction, which shall be discussed further below. Arguably, Wilfred Lambert had a point when he suggested ša-ku-ú — (another rendering of šaqû?) with the sense of «chiefs» (Lambert, Mitchell), or, alternatively, «Obersten» (Edel). In the next line (17 = 3v.) it is possible to read the expression «[a dis]tant region which (is) in the middle of the sea» (…] [na]-gi-i- ni-su-tú šá qí-rib tam-tim), which cannot be connected with CITYPu/Buṭuiaman in the previous line because of the lacuna. Next, lines 18–20 (4–6 v.) record (troops?) «numerous which are in Egypt», then «weapons, horses», maybe even [chariots], and the following sentence goes «he summoned to his [he]lp». This is clearly a reference to Amasis' mobilization maneuver. Making sense of the few words still legible in the ll. 21 and 22 is currently impossible.

Despite the lacunae, it is possible today to take as established some key aspects. One concerns the identification of URUPuṭu-ja-a-man with a toponym referring to a city as 'Puṭu of the Greeks': the determinative is critical in this respect. Whether or not the first part of this compound name stood for the Libyan region has been debated for a long time. This is because many argued in favor of equating Puṭu with Punt, the Egyptian name for the Horn of Africa region. In fact, it is now certain that Punt

[17] The most significant breakthrough in the understanding of the text has been achieved by Edel (1978), Leahy (1988) and Mitchell (1992). Berger (1973) no. 321 and 6, 68–69, 72, 100, 108, does not believe the reference to a Babylonian military campaign in Egypt, and Ladynin (2006) doubts that the tablet mentions Amasis. Both are off the mark.

vocalizes (wrongly) the Egyptian place name *pwn.t*.[18] Accordingly, it only remains to discuss the ethnic name *pd*, one among four attributed to people West of the Nile,[19] and the Hebrew *pûṭ*, featuring in the Old Testament and translated in the Septuagint as Libues. Finally, there is the Old Persian form *put[i]ya* (also *pūṭu*), referring to Egypt with Libya and Cyrene within the Achaemenid Empire. In Babylonian, ^{mātu}*pu-u-ṭa* designated the 'land of Libya'.[20] Against this backdrop, it is likely that the compound Puṭujaman indeed meant 'Libya of the Greeks', and ^{URU}Puṭu-ja-a-man indicated 'the city of the Libya of the Greeks', hence Cyrene.[21]

The war of Babylon against Egypt and Amasis' stele from Elephantine

Another crucial point concerns how to interpret the geographical references and the place names. Cyrene, «[a dis]tant region which (is) in the middle of the sea», as well as Egypt (mentioned in the final preserved part of the text) ought to be understood as the places from which troops and weapons were sent to Amasis as he fought against the Babylonian king. Furthermore, it is now clear that the picture of the conflict emerging from the text by and large overlaps with the one referenced in the second edition (dated in Amasis' 4th year: 567 BCE) of Amasis' stele from Elephantine. This is a complex and poorly preserved hieroglyphic text carved on a pink granite stele commissioned by Amasis and known since the beginning of the 20th century. However, only recently could it be read and understood properly.[22] The stele discusses the 'civil war' fought by Amasis against Apries. «It is self-evidently a partial, retrospective account from the victor's standpoint».[23] Details related to the armies' movements and the geography of the campaign(s) do not concern us here. With an eye of the accounts provided in Herodotus (2.162–169) and

[18] Mitchell (1992) 74.

[19] On the ethnic name *pd* (p(j)d(j) see also Graefe 1975; an overview of the Egyptian designations of Libyan people is provided by Winnicki (2002).

[20] Mitchell (1992) 75–76.

[21] Besides Edel (1978), Leahy (1988), Mitchell (1992), see Zadok (1985) 252; Brinkman (1989) 60 with n. 35; Haider (1996) 71; Niemeier (2001) 19; Kuhrt (2002) 12 n. 24; Winnicki (2002) 214; Rollinger (2007) 281.

[22] After the ragtag edition by Daressy (1900), the often-mentioned stele has been correctly understood by Edel (1978). He could identify two sections, the first, dated to Amasis' first year (570), and the second one dated in his fourth (567). It was also extensively commented upon by Leahy (1988). Jansen-Winkeln (2014) provides the most extensive study of the text currently available.

[23] Leahy (1988) 190.

Diodorus of Sicily (1.68.2–5), the following scenario can be suggested. Amasis was crowned Pharaoh by the army. Then, during the year 570, he defeated Apries' troops in the Northwestern Delta. He was acknowledged across several areas of Lower and Middle Egypt and took residence at Sais. Meanwhile, arguably as late as October, Apries was still recognized as Pharaoh in Thebes.[24] Sometime in the fall, Apries pushed forward against Sais. He may have set out from Memphis, supported by Greeks boarded on ships.[25] However, he was defeated by Amasis in a battle which is likely the same Herodotus situates at Momemphis (2.169.1). Contrary to Herodotus' account, Apries was not captured and disposed of in Sais.[26] This is because stele's text has him fighting again against Amasis in 567: only then he dies. Apries is nowhere to be found in the Egyptian record of the previous three years,[27] and this has frequently resulted in the assumption that he departed from Egypt, which is however far from certain.[28] The Elephantine stele suggests that he made a comeback around 567, while the «Asiatic» 'invaders' were active (those being the Babylonian army). Apries entered the Delta with a fleet, but he drowned in the wreckage of the expedition. Amasis buried him with all honors in Sais. This is unquestionably the timeframe of the 'civil war' mentioned in the tablet BM 33041, dated in the year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar (567 BCE). In this year, the Babylonian king attacked Amasis, and the latter resorted to military support from Cyrene, Egypt itself, and «a faraway region in the midst of the sea».

Cyrene and Amasis

As for the military collaboration between Cyrene and Amasis, Ockham's razor prompts one to think that the Pharaoh sealed a formal alliance with Cyrene right at this time (during the years of the 'civil war') and not later. Amasis was busy fighting Apries, who allied himself with the Libyans and set to clash with Cyrene in the battle of Irasa. It stands to reason that Amasis wanted to take advantage of Cyrene's hostility towards Apries, who was still a considerable threat. Herodotus' account of Amasis' diplomacy, henceforth, is of crucial importance. The Pharaoh secured a close

[24] P. BM 10113: cf. Leahy (1988) 188.

[25] «[A]t least coterminous with the Greek mercenaries whom Herodotus describes as providing Apries' support»: Leahy (1988) 190 n. 29; see also Quack (2007) 349–350.

[26] 2.169.2–3.

[27] Leahy (1988) 192 with n. 36.

[28] Edel 1978; Leahy (1988) 192.

relationship (*philotes*) and an alliance with Cyrene. Moreover (and also because of the *philotes*) he wedded Ladice of Cyrene, daughter of Battus, son of Arcesilaus. According to others — Herodotus remarks — she was the daughter of a city's notable.[29] The ensuing story of the Ladice's wedding with Amasis develops as a legend-like story replete with folklore and fairytale motives. It is evidently a traditional tale embedded in orality, yet this does not mean that the Pharaoh's marriage and especially his alliance with Cyrene are to be discarded as fictional. Herodotus' text strongly suggests that both were part and parcel of Amasis' diplomatic and military strategy. Moreover, it is hardly surprising that a political alliance was sanctioned through marriage.

Much more unlikely is the hypothesis according to which we are dealing with events from the reign of Battus III, some 20 years later than the facts of 567. In this scenario, of course, Ladice would be his daughter. Even leaving aside the chronological conundrum, such a scenario lacks the historical logic underpinning the diplomatic and military relationship between Amasis and Cyrene. The decisive point, of course, is that in 568/67 Cyrene's military support to Amasis is actually recorded: it is moreover in that year that Amasis needed it, in order to gain the upper hand over Apries and resist the Babylonian onslaught. All told, there is every reason to think that Amasis allied himself with Cyrene in 567 BCE at the latest. He did not marry a daughter of Battus III, but a daughter of Battus II. Ladice's descent from a commoner, furthermore, is likely to be slander aimed at her and indirectly at Amasis. It may have originated in Cyrene, resulting from an anti-Battiad and anti-Egyptian doctoring of the oral tradition. After all, marrying Ladice closely tied Amasis to Battus II, Ladice being both his daughter and the sister of his son Arcesilaus (II), who was meant to follow him on the throne. Amasis' dedication of a golden statue of Athena (the Pharaoh was closely attached to the Neith of Sais) may date from around this time. The same goes for a portrait of himself (Herodotus 2.182.1). Finally, Ladice's gift to Cyrene of a statue of Aphrodite still standing while Herodotus was alive (181.5) may be a narrative device resulting from a case of 'iconatrophy'.[30]

In a nutshell, key to the history of the period is the strong connection between Cyrene and Amasis from the early 60s of the 6th century. During this period, there was a hostile Babylonian presence and civil war throughout Lower Egypt involving Amasis and Apries, the Pharaoh who

[29] Hdt. 2.181.2.

[30] As Jan Vansina pointed out, the term refers to that class of spurious explanations devised retrospectively by oral tradition to explain the existence of a monument, especially a statue (Vansina 1985, 10); on iconatrophy in Herodotus, see Luraghi (2006) 78 and David (2006).

had defeated Cyrene at Irasa around 570. This connection lasted until the internal turmoil in Cyrene during Demonax's time in the 40s.

The broader picture: Egypt in the Levant

At this point, it may be useful to sift through the history of the Levant in the previous decades to locate Amasis' early years within an international context.[31] Starting from the 630s, Egypt under Psammetichus I was actively present in the Levant, taking advantage of a waning Assyrian presence. During the 610s, the Northern Levant was made tributary of Egypt, whose military presence can be spotted in the Middle Euphrates basin. However, in 605 Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish and pushed forward, reaching the Eastern borderlands of the Saitic kingdom. Next, he attempted a full-scale invasion between December and January 601/600.[32] Defeated, he withdrew, and the Egyptians reached as far as Gaza. A few years later (598/97) Nebuchadnezzar cut their ambitions once again. However, in 588, barely after ascending to the throne, Apries came to the aid of Jerusalem, then allied with Egypt, to repel Nebuchadnezzar's attack. His intervention delayed, but could not prevent, Jerusalem's fall and the destruction of its temple in 587.[33] In 582 Nebuchadnezzar tried to surprise Apries in Egypt but failed.[34] It remains unknown when Apries sent an expedition against Sidon and fought at sea against Tyre.[35] In 567, year fourth of Amasis' reign, the invasion of Egypt mentioned in BM 33041 and in the Elephantine stela took place. It seems evident that this represented the outcome of the battle for the Levant involving Apries' Egypt and Babylonia.

In 567, Nebuchadnezzar's foe was Amasis. However, this does not necessarily entail that, following the defeat of 570, Apries switched sides to the Babylonian king, taking refuge with him after fleeing Egypt, even though scholars have put forward this hypothesis.[36] He may well have

[31] See Khan (2018) for the most updated discussion, followed in the text. On Apries' foreign policy see now Forshaw (2019) 146–148.

[32] Glassner (2004) 227.

[33] Ezekiel 17.17; Jeremiah 37.5, 7–8; 11; Jos. 10.109.10; see now Forshaw (2019) 146–147.

[34] The evidence is now represented by an Apries stela published in 2013: Kahn (2018) 72–73.

[35] Hdt. 2.161.2 and Diod. 1.68.1, also recording an attack against Cyprus. Lloyd (1993) 170 ff. argues that the campaign took place between 574 and 570.

[36] Edel (1978) and Leahy (1988) 192. Lloyd (1988) 45 claims that there existed «a plan of Nebuchadrezzar II to re-establish him on the throne as a pro-Chaldean puppet», vd. Lloyd (1988) 45.

stayed in Egypt, perhaps even in his palace at Memphis.[37] Remarkably, in the Elephantine stela Apries moves of his own initiative. This is at odds with his alleged status as Babylonian *protegé*. This is not least true because his naval campaign, mentioned in section XII of the text,[38] seems only vaguely related to the land invasion, through the Sinai Peninsula, by the Babylonian army. Otherwise put, Apries likely tried to take advantage of the challenges faced by Amasis. He failed, and according to the Elephantine stela, he died in the shipwreck of his fleet. The Babylonians were initially successful, but Amasis eventually got the upper hand and chased them away.

Amasis received critical support from Cyrene. However, in the tablet the phrase «a far away region in the middle of the sea» seems to refer to further military support for Amasis.[39] Mazzarino took it for granted that Cyprus is referenced here, following the tradition of Assyrian royal inscriptions. In his view, the island already was Amasis' «vassal».[40] However, the picture is more complex. To begin with, it is unlikely that in 567 Amasis controlled Cyprus. The challenging internal situation of Egypt cannot be squared with the scale of the human capital and economic resources required by a naval expedition against the island. Alternatively, the phrasing of the cuneiform text may imply, without excluding Cyprus, a wider geographical context, embracing the Southern Anatolian world, Greece, and Caria.[41] Amasis did not need to hold Cyprus to ensure the flow of troops from that region to Egypt. The movement of mercenaries towards the Nile was arguably more intense and diversified than scholars are inclined to admit: Babylonians, too, relied on paid armed service from Greece and Caria.[42] Hence, the involvement of Cyprus and other polities from Asia Minor in support of Amasis cannot be ruled out. Once again, Mazzarino was on the right track. Amasis, however, took control over Cyprus only later. This was the outcome of a story that quickened during the 'civil war' against Apries and represented the pinnacle of a century-old relationship between Egypt and the island.

If one looks at the broader picture, the history of Cyrene in the 6th century indeed is marked by «the question of its relationship with Egypt»

[37] Leahy (1988) 197 and n. 68.

[38] Jansen-Winkeln (2014) 137.

[39] BM 33041 (l. 3 of the reverse).

[40] Reyes (1994) considers it plausible that the text was, in fact, evoking Cyprus.

[41] Rollinger (2001) 237–240.

[42] Rollinger (2007) 290, 292, 296 e n. 153.

and it is also embedded in the history of the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean, as sensed by Mazzarino.[43]

Learchos and the chronology of the kings of Cyrene

A thorny problem remains in the history of the Battiad monarchy. The question is whether the usurper Learchos fits into the historical context of the 'civil war' between Apries and Amasis and, consequentially, whether the traditionally accepted chronology of Cyrene's kings still stands. Mazzarino's suggestion never found wide acceptance. Revisiting the issue seems advisable.

Once again, the core of the matter is the equation between cityPuṭujaman and Cyrene and the alliance with Amasis. L. 2r in the text of BM 330141 reads [.....]-ku-ú šá ālu (URU)Pu/bu-ṭu-ja-a-man. As already mentioned, Mazzarino saw -ku-ú as the remains of the Akkadian rendering of Learchos' name. Hence, the reign of Arcesilaus II would end in 567 with his death at the usurper's hands.

This scenario implies a chronology which is problematic in many ways. Arcesilaus would have succeeded Battus II two or three years before 567. According to such a scenario, within no more than three years after 570, the following is supposed to have taken place: king Arcesilaus' brothers rose against him, then departed from Cyrene and organized the founding of Barce. The Western Libyans rebelled and linked up with the Eastern Libyans. Their mobilization is supposed to have happened next (Mazzarino saw it unfolding at the behest and through the involvement of Learchos himself). An army marched against Cyrene, resulting in the clash at Leukon and the devastating defeat of Cyrene (7000 men fell).[44] Learchos' court putsch would have ensued, resulting in Arcesilaus' death and, finally, in the usurper's takeover with his alliance with Amasis. The alliance had allegedly been sealed through a diplomatic marriage between the Pharaoh and the sister of the murdered king Arcesilaus. It is hard to deny that such a picture appears rather unlikely.

The alternative is to follow Lambert in reading ša]-ku-ú in BM 33041. This would be a generic term covering pivotal (military?) positions at Cyrene. The acting king may still have been Battus II, which would make the marriage alliance with Amasis easier to understand. If Learchos disappears from the picture implied by the tablet, Arcesilaus' rise to the throne could be dated to the end of the 560s or the beginning of the 550s. The murky events caused by the brothers' revolt and everything cascading

[43] Mazzarino (1947) 149.

[44] Hdt. 1.160.3.

from those (from the foundation of Barce to the battle of Leukon and finally Learchos' disposal of Arcesilaus II) should be placed in the following years. Against Mazzarino's view,[45] it does not necessarily follow that Learchos had already planned for the Leukon drama. He may just have seized the moment. Cyrene stayed closely linked to Amasis (who may even have supported and protected the settlement) under Learchos and his murderer Polyarchus, the latter being the son of Arcesilaus' widow.[46] The alliance between the troubled Cyrene of the 6th century and a Pharaoh like Amasis could not be one among equals. One could wonder why Learchos did not reverse the course established by his predecessors concerning Egypt. It may be argued that, even more than them, he needed Amasis' backing (and perhaps his protection). At any rate, he neither had the strength nor the interest to give up both.

In light of all the above, the chronology of the Battiad kings may be defined (with some adjustments to the one established by Chamoux) roughly as follows.[47] Battus II reigned from 580 until, at the latest, the late 60s. Arcesilaus II followed from the late 60s until the late 550s. Some years are then taken up by the events related to Learchos' takeover, his assassination at the hands of Polyarchus, and the handing over of power to the by-now adult son of Arcesilaus II. So, the throne passed to Battus III 'the lame', maybe during the first half of the 540s. However, under him the king's power never regained strength vis à vis the family and the court. Some years later, likely in the late 540s, the time became ripe for the 'reforms' under Demonax of Mantinea. This solution to the crisis of the monarchy was by no means a gift to the people. On the contrary, it heralded the renewed power of the court élites and the land's notables against the king's might. Arguably, the relationships with Amasis' Egypt built over the years by Cyrene's kings appeared to those who took power after them as one reason more to curb their power. The civic pride strategically mobilized by élites striving to tame the king's role in society looked with suspicion upon the oversized role of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Arcesilaus III likely succeeded Battus III not in 535/530 (as usually argued) but in the early 20s.[48] Starting in 525, Cyrene and the Battiad monarchy faced another Eastern force. This time, the invader of Egypt did not come from Mesopotamia but from Iran. In a way, Cambyses

[45] Mazzarino (1947) 150.

[46] Plut. *Mor*. 261 b–d.

[47] Chamoux (1953) 151 n. 2 and 210 (Battus I: 639–599; Arcesilaus I: 599–583; Battus II: 583[also 580/75: see 123]–post 570; Arcesilaus II: post 570–555/50; Battus III: ?–?; Arcesilaus III: ante 525–520/15; Battus IV: ca. 515–470/65; Arcesilaus IV: ante 462–ca. 440).

[48] Giangiulio (2023) 9 with nn. 11–12.

looked like a new Nebuchadnezzar.[49] This impacted the history of Cyrene considerably, once again within a horizon embracing Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, with Cyprus at the forefront.

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[49] See Habaj (2018).

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