Preface

I have always been fascinated by ancient history, but it was not until I took early retirement from my career as a dental surgeon that I was able to pursue this subject in some depth. A chance encounter with a magazine on ancient Egypt kindled my attraction for this particular culture, and I soon became an avid reader and student of all things related to Egyptology. I was able to combine this new interest with a study of ancient dentistry when undertaking a Master's Degree in Biomedical Egyptology at the University of Manchester in 2006. My further studies in Egyptology culminated in attaining a PhD in 2013 on *The Role of the Lector in Ancient Egyptian Society*, a work which is now published.

My specific interest in the Saïtes arose from my early online studies at Exeter University with Dr Robert Morkot when I not only became intrigued by the Saïte Dynasty but realised that the 26th Dynasty seemed less well known and under-published compared with many of the other periods in Egyptian Pharaonic history. The Saïte Period was a high-achieving one historically, and is often neglected in the literature dedicated to ancient Egypt. I became committed in attempting to understand, research and put into print an account of this enthralling early time, an undertaking that has taken me a number of years.

The reader who has an interest in ancient Egypt may be unaware of the dynamic nature of this period, of the astuteness of the Saïte rulers and their considerable achievements in the political, economic, administrative and cultural spheres. The story of Saïte Egypt is a fast-moving epic, a time of no mean achievement. Within a period of under ten years, Psamtek I, the first ruler of the Saïte Dynasty, reunited a politically divided country after almost four hundred years of disunity and bouts of foreign domination. The Saïtes then re-established central government, reformed the economy and promoted trade, and the country grew wealthier. Egypt achieved a pre-eminent role in the Mediterranean world

and was able to preserve its independence as a sovereign state for over 140 years against powerful foreign adversaries.

I am truly indebted to Dr Campbell Price, curator of Egypt and Sudan at the Manchester Museum, for his many helpful comments and scholarship during the preparation of this book, a topic with which he is also fascinated. I am pleased that he kindly agreed to write a foreword to this volume. My grateful thanks to Associate Professor Penny Wilson from the University of Durham for her very many observations, useful suggestions and insight into this period. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the book for their very many helpful comments. Also, my thanks to those who kindly supplied images for use in the book – Aidan Dodson, Sarah Griffiths, Glenn Janes, Peter Phillips, Campbell Price, Dietrich Raue, Penny Wilson and the Egypt Exploration Society. Lastly, to Meredith Carroll and all at Manchester University Press for their assistance in finally helping to bring this project to fruition.

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