Necho II Encyclopedia Article

Necho II

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r. 610-595 B.C.

Egyptian pharaoh who reportedly began construction of a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, and who allegedly sponsored a voyage that circumnavigated the African continent. The latter, if indeed it happened, would have preceded the famous voyage of Hanno (fl. c. 500 B.C.) and his Carthaginian colonists by nearly a century. As for the canal, Herodotus (c. 484-c. 420 B.C.) wrote that Necho desisted from the project after an oracle warned him against continuing. He very nearly lost power by forming a disastrous alliance with the Assyrians against the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II (c. 630-562 B.C.), who defeated him at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Nonetheless, Egypt kept the Babylonians out for a time, but eventually succumbed. Later, when the Babylonians themselves lost power to the Persians, Darius II (550-486 B.C.) completed Necho's canal.