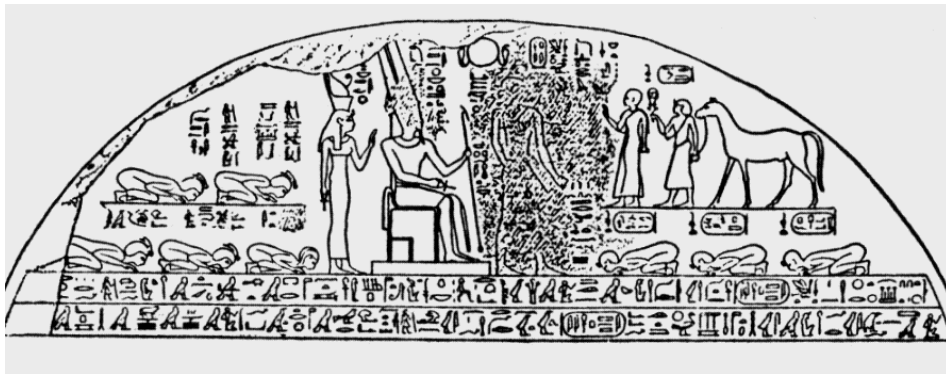


Chapter One Piankhi - 618 B.C.

The Tefnakht Rebellion

In 1862, in the ruins of the Gebel Barkal temple near Napata, the ancient capital of the Cushite kingdom of like name, an Egyptian officer discovered an enormous black granite stela, nearly six feet in height and of equal width, 16 inches thick.¹ On the rounded upper portion of the stela we see the seated figure of the god Amun, the goddess Mut in attendance behind, and a king, back-facing, his features defaced by a spiteful successor. His name, Meriamun Piankhi, remains in bold relief. The Napatan king is addressed by a vassal king Nimlot, who bears as a gift a prancing horse. Beneath Nimlot grovel three other kings. Above the prostrate form of each the kings are named - Peftjauawybast, Iupet, Osorkon. Behind Amun and Mut yet five other vassals submit to Piankhi.

Figure 1: Facsimile of the top of the Piankhi stele²



The narrative which follows in 159 lines of hieroglyphic text (inscribed on the front, back and sides of the stela) tells the story of Piankhi's

¹150x153x30 cm.

²This sketch is copied from Petrie, *History of Egypt* III (1905), p. 269.

suppression of a rebellion in Lower Egypt. The dateline cites the first month of the Egyptian year, his 21st. The storyline begins with a cry for help. Three of the four named kings have been deposed, their cities overwhelmed by the advancing armies of Tefnakht, an ambitious king of Saïs, a town on the fringe of the western delta. Only Peftjauawybast still holds his city, now under siege. At the time of the insurrection Piankhi appears to exercise political control over central and southern Egypt, if not the whole of the country. It is *his* sovereignty which is being challenged.

One came to say to his majesty: “A chief of the west, the great prince in Neter, Tefnakhte (*t3 f.nḥt.t*) is in the nome of – , in the nome of Xoïs, in Hapi (*H ̣ p*), in – , in Ayan, in Pernub, and in Memphis. He has seized the whole west from the back-lands to Ithtowe, coming southward with a numerous army, while the Two Lands are united behind him, and the princes and rulers of walled towns are as dogs at his heels. No stronghold has closed [its door in] the nomes of the South: Mer-Atum (Medûm), Per Sekhemkheperre, the temple of Sebek, Permezed, Theknesh (*T-k3-n-š*); and every city of the west, they have opened the doors for fear of him. He turned to the east, they opened to him likewise. BAR IV 818

The message reached Piankhi in Napata, 400 miles upriver from Thebes. The Nubian king seemed unperturbed by developments, in spite of persistent appeals from those in jeopardy.

Then [his majesty] heard [the message] with courageous heart, laughing, and joyous of heart. These princes and commanders of the army who were in their cities sent to his majesty daily, saying: “Wilt thou be silent, even to forgetting the Southland, the nomes of the [court]? While Tefnakhte advances his conquest and finds none to repel his arm.” BAR IV 819

Cities previously loyal to Piankhi were now in league with Tefnakht. Nimlot, king of Hermopolis, nomarch of the Hare nome, was the last to defect.

Behold, he (Nimlot) goes to follow at his (Tefnakhte’s) heels, having cast off allegiance to his majesty (Piankhi). He carries with him (Tefnakhte) like one of [his vassals in] the nome of Oxyrhyncus, and gives to him (Tefnakhte) gifts, as much as he desires, of everything that he has found. BAR IV 820

Biding his time, Piankhi waited for Tefnakht to overreach. At long last he

acted, sending a Theban force³ to stem further losses at the Hare nome.

Then his majesty sent to the princes and commanders (mr) of the army who were in Egypt: the commander (*ts*), Purem (*P-w3-r-m*); and the commander (*ts*) Lemersekeny (*Rw-^cmr-s-k-n-y*); and every commander (*ts*) of his majesty who was in Egypt (saying): “Hasten into battle line, engage in battle, surround – , capture its people, its cattle, its ships upon the river. Let not the peasants go forth to the field, let not the plowmen plow, beset the frontier of the Hare nome, fight against it daily.” Then they did so. BAR IV 821

Piankhi also dispatched an army from Napata to assist, but with specific instructions to pause at Thebes, to seek there the blessing of the god Amun. Piankhi is no stranger to temple ritual. He knows how to please and appease the god. Nothing is left to chance. Every ritual action is prescribed. Every prayer to Amun is dictated.

When ye arrive at Thebes, before Karnak, ye shall enter into the water, ye shall bathe in the river, ye shall dress in [fine linen]; unstring the bow, loosen the arrow. Let not the chief boast as a mighty man; there is no strength to the mighty without him (Amon). He maketh the weak-armed into the strong-armed, so that multitudes flee from the feeble, and one alone taketh a thousand men. Sprinkle yourselves with the water of his altars, sniff the ground before him. Say ye to him, ‘Give to us the way, that we may fight in the shadow of thy sword. (As for) the generation whom thou hast sent out, when its attack occurs, multitudes flee before it.’ BAR IV 823

The army sailed down-stream. “They arrived at Thebes, they did according to all that his majesty had said.”⁴ Then, sanctified for battle, the Nubian contingent proceeded to relieve the siege of Heracleopolis, the city of Pefjtjauwybast.

They sailed down-stream upon the river; they found many ships coming up-stream bearing soldiers, sailors, and commanders; every valiant man of the Northland, equipped with weapons of war, to fight against the army of his majesty. Then there was made a great slaughter among them, (whose) number was unknown. Their troops and their ships were captured, and brought as living captives to the place where his majesty was. They went to the [frontier] of

³The narrative does not specify where the Egyptian armies were based. We can reasonably assume that at least some troops were garrisoned in Thebes, or that conscript forces were requisitioned from cities loyal to Piankhi in the vicinity of Thebes. But the fact that two commanders are specifically named in the inscription suggests that two separate armies served Piankhi within Egypt. We suggest El Hibe, in central Egypt, as a likely location for the other garrison. There were, of course, officers (commanders) of lesser rank.

⁴BAR IV 825

Heracleopolis, demanding battle. BAR IV 825

There follows on the stela a list of the major opponents of Piankhi, those recently defeated by Tefnakht and compelled to join his cause.

List of the princes and kings of the Northland, namely:

1. King Namlot and
2. King Yewepet (*Yw-w3-p-t*).
3. Chief of Me, Sheshonk, of Per-Osiris (Busiris), lord of Ded.
4. Great chief of Me, Zeamonefonekh, of Per-Benebdeh (Mendes), together with
5. His eldest son, who was commander of the army of Per-Thutuprehui (*Pr-Dhwtj-Wp-rhwy*).
6. The army of the hereditary prince, Beknef (*Bk-n-nfy*), together with
7. His eldest son, chief of Me, Nesneki (*Ns-n3-3y*, sic!) In the nome of Hesebka (*Hsb-k3*).
8. Every chief wearing a feather who was in the Northland; together with
9. King Osorkon, who was in Per-Bast (Bubastis) and the district of Ranofer (*Rc-nfr*).
10. Every prince, the rulers of the walled towns in the West, in the East, (and) the islands in the midst, were united of one mind as followers of the great chief of the West, ruler of the walled towns of the Northland, prophet of Neit, mistress of Sais, sem priest of Ptah, Tefnakhte. BAR IV 830

It was an imposing army. This would be no insignificant battle.

They went forth against them; then they made a great slaughter among them, greater than anything. Their ships were captured upon the river. The remnant crossed over and landed on the west side before Per-Peg. When the land brightened early in the morning, the army of his majesty crossed over against them. Army mingled with army; they slew a multitude of people among them; forces of unknown number; a rout ensued among the remnant. They fled to the North-land, from the blow, great and evil beyond everything. BAR IV 831-832

Tefnakht was overwhelmed and with his auxiliaries he turned and fled northward. He sought sanctuary in Memphis. Piankhi's army disengaged the battle!

When Piankhi, who remained in Napata, was informed of the course of the conflict he was "enraged like a panther", disconcerted that his army had failed to pursue its advantage. He resolved to take personal command of the army.

Have they allowed the remnant of the army of the Northland to remain? allowing

him that went forth of them to go forth, to tell of his campaign? not causing their death, in order to destroy the last of them? I swear: as Re loves me! As my father Amon favors me! I will myself go northward, that I may destroy that which he has done, that I may make him turn back from fighting, forever. BAR IV 835

But Piankhi's departure was delayed. As with the army sent earlier, so for himself, political action must await the approval of the god. First he must petition Amon of Napata at his New Year's festival and then Amon of Thebes at the feast of Opet following. Only then would the battle resume.

Now, afterward when the ceremonies of the New Year are celebrated, I will offer to my father, Amon (of Napata) , at his beautiful feast, when he makes his beautiful appearance of the New Year, that he may send me forth in peace, to behold Amon (of Thebes) at the beautiful Feast of Opet; that I may bring his image forth in procession to Luxor at his beautiful feast (called): "Night of the Feast of Opet," and at the feast (called) "Abiding in Thebes," which Re made for him in the beginning; and that I may (ultimately) bring him in procession to his house, resting upon his throne on the "Day of Bringing in the God," in the third month of the first season, second day; that I may make the Northland taste the taste of my fingers. BAR IV 836

If we correctly read the inscription, several months passed before Piankhi enjoined the battle. On the ninth day of the month Thoth the New Year's celebrations in Napata ended, and "his majesty went northward to Thebes. There he celebrated the Feast of Opet", and the feast of "Abiding in Thebes".⁵ Finally - on to the battle front.

It may seem unusual, all these pauses for religious festival in the midst of a battle.⁶ But Piankhi was an unusual man. Later we will have cause to reflect on the deeply religious side of his character. Though a king, he behaves strangely like a priest.

While Piankhi tarried in Thebes the army, having felt the sting of Piankhi's criticism, had renewed hostilities. The delay had allowed

⁵ BAR IV 840

⁶ The early months of the New Year in Egypt were the time of the annual flooding of the Nile, the so-called inundation, which severely limited mobility within the country. This was not the time for a major battle between land based armies. Piankhi's delay resulted only in part from religious sentiment. Climate was as much the cause. This assumes, of course, that the Egyptian New Year at the time of Piankhi began early in July.

Nimlot time to reoccupy Hermopolis. A siege of that city was begun by the army, soon to be joined by Piankhi. A portion of the army also moved to capture Oxyrhyncus, Teteheh and Hatbenu, walled towns which stood between Hermopolis and Memphis.

Piankhi, on leaving Thebes, “sailed northward to the city of the Hare nome (Hermopolis)” and joined the assault.⁷

The siege of Hermopolis lasted for several months. The detailed story occupies over one quarter of the stela inscription (lines 31 -70). Though the attack began before Piankhi’s arrival, his appearance witnessed an escalation in its intensity.

He (Piankhi) set up for himself the camp on the southwest of Hermopolis (*Hmnw*), and besieged it daily. An embankment was made, to inclose the wall; a tower was raised to elevate the archers while shooting, and the slingers while slinging stones, and slaying people among them daily. Days passed, and Hermopolis (*Wnw*) was foul to the nose, without her (usual) fragrance. Then Hermopolis (*Wnw*) threw herself upon her belly, and plead before the king.
BAR IV 842-843

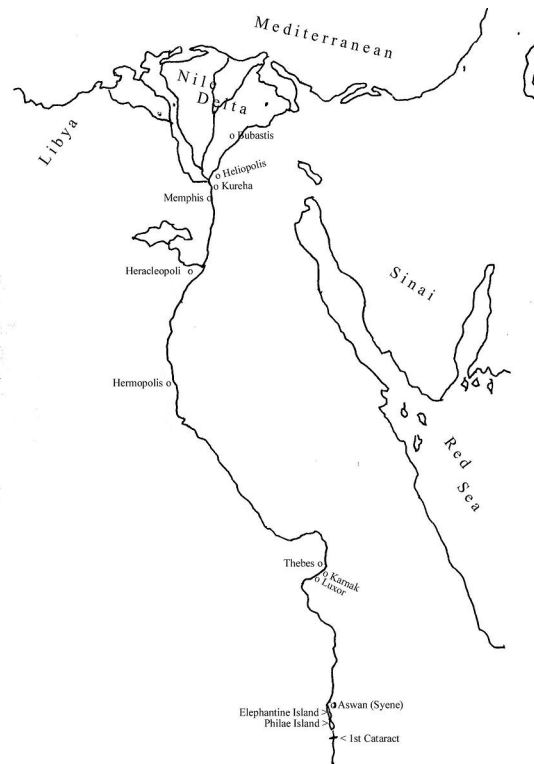
Terms of the surrender were negotiated. Nimlot forfeited his wealth but retained his kingship.

Then he (Nimlot) presented much silver, gold, lapis lazuli, malachite, bronze, and all costly stones. Then he filled the treasury (of Piankhi) with this tribute; he brought a horse in the right hand and a sistrum in the left hand, of gold and lapis lazuli. BAR IV 847

It is this image of a prancing horse, led by the vassal Nimlot, which adorns the great stela, serving to highlight a recurring theme in the narrative - Piankhi’s love of horses. His visit to the stables of Hermopolis has become legendary. In a conversation with Nimlot, as the defeated king escorted him through the palace grounds, Piankhi expressed his disdain, not at the loss of human life and property, but at the suffering endured by Nimlot’s horses. And he chose the occasion to affirm once again the divine favor afforded him by the god Amon-Re. All the suffering was for naught. Nimlot ought to have known that he could not win the contest. The god Amun was with Piankhi.

⁷BAR IV 840

Figure 2: Egypt in days of Piankhi



His majesty proceeded to the house of King Namlot, he entered every chamber of the king's-house, his treasure and his magazines. He caused that there be brought to him the king's-wives and king's-daughters; they saluted his majesty in the fashion of women, (but) his majesty turned not his face to them. His majesty proceeded to the stable of the horses and the quarters of the foals. When he saw that they had suffered hunger, he said: "I swear, as Re loves me, and as my nostrils are rejuvenated with life, it is more grievous in my heart that my horses have suffered hunger, than any evil deed that thou hast done, in the prosecution of thy desire. It has borne witness of thee to me, the fear of thy associates for thee. Didst thou not know that the god's shadow is over me? And that my fortune never perishes because of him? Would that another had done it to me! I could not but [condemn] him on account of it. When I was being fashioned in the womb, and created in the divine egg, the seed of the god was in me. By his ka, I

do nothing without him; he it is who commands me to do it." BAR IV 850

The stage was all but set for the conquest of the delta. Pefjtjauawybast of Heracleopolis arrived at Hermopolis, bearing gifts in gratitude for the salvation of his city - gold, silver, every costly stone, and, of course, "horses of the choicest of the stable."⁸ Three walled towns yet stood in Piankhi's way, Per-Sekhemkheperre, Medûm, Ihtowe. All three capitulated at the mere threat of siege. At long last Piankhi arrived at Memphis.

On the outskirts of Memphis he considered his options. Tefnakht had been provided ample time to strengthen the defenses of the city. He had used the opportunity to fortify its walls and the flooding Nile (for it was the season of inundation) had turned Memphis into an island fortress.

When the day broke, at early morning, his majesty reached Memphis. When he had landed on the north of it, he found that the water had approached to the walls, the ships mooring at [the walls of] Memphis. Then his majesty saw that it was strong, and that the wall was raised by a new rampart, and battlements manned with might men. There was found no way of attacking it. BAR IV 861

Advice from his generals and advisors was not in short supply.

Every man told his opinion among the army of his majesty, according to every rule of war. Every man said: "Let us besiege [it] -; lo, its troops are numerous." Others said: "Let a causeway be made against it; let us elevate the ground to its walls. Let us bind together a tower; let us erect masts and make spars into a bridge to it. We will divide it on this (plan) on every side of it, on the high ground and - on the north of it, in order to elevate the ground at its walls, that we may find a way for our feet." BAR IV 861

The advice, well intentioned, was quickly rejected. Piankhi observed how ships, moored on the river on the eastern edge of the city, rode sufficiently high in the water that their prows projected over the city walls. There, in plain sight, was the means of access to the city. The flooding Nile provided an entrance into the city.

Then he sent forth his fleet and his army to assault the harbor of Memphis; they brought to him every ferry-boat, every [cargo]-boat, every [transport], and the

⁸BAR IV 852

ships, as many as there were, which had moored in the harbor of Memphis, with the bow-rope fastened among its houses. [There was not] a citizen (*nds*) who wept, among all the soldiers of his majesty. His majesty himself came to line up the ships, as many as there were. His majesty commanded his army (saying): “Forward against it! Mount the walls! Penetrate the houses over the river. BAR II 863

The requisitioned vessels, linked in some fashion, served as a bridge to the city walls. The army crossed over. “Then Memphis was taken as (by) a flood of water, a multitude of people were slain therein, and brought as living captives to the place where his majesty was.”⁹

Once again religious ritual intrudes into the narrative. Temples are carefully preserved. Offerings are presented to the gods of Memphis. The city is anointed with natron and incense. Priests are summoned to service. Piankhi proceeded to the temple of Ptah, fulfilling every ritual custom, and a religious celebration followed, replete with offerings of “bulls, calves, fowl, and everything good.”

There was no need to extend the conquest to the balance of the Delta. With the exception of those remote areas controlled by Tefnakht, the chieftains, to a man, yielded the day to Piankhi. They immediately “opened the(ir) strongholds and fled away; none knew the place whither they had gone.” In time they appeared before the Nubian king and acknowledged his sovereignty.

King Yewepet came, and the chief of Me, Akenesh (*3-k3-n-šw*), and the hereditary prince, Pediese, together with all the princes of the Northland, bearing their tribute, to behold the beauty of his majesty. BAR IV 868

There followed a pilgrimage to the chief religious centers of the Delta, to worship Atum of Khereha and Re of Heliopolis. At the latter site “King Osorkon came to see the beauty of his majesty.” Then by ship Piankhi traveled “to the harbor of the nome of Athribis (*K3-km*)”, the city of Pediese, where he set up camp and received another delegation of submissive princes.

Then came those kings and princes of the Northland, all the chiefs who wore the

⁹ BAR IV 865

feather, every vizier, all chiefs, and every king's confidant, from the west, from the east, and from the islands in the midst, to see the beauty of his majesty. Then the hereditary prince, Pediese, threw himself upon his belly before his majesty, and said: "Come to Athribis (*K3-km*), that thou mayest see Khentifkhet (*Hnt-hty*), that thou mayest worship Khuyet (*Hwy.t*), that thou mayest offer an oblation to Horus in his house, consisting of : bulls, calves, and fowl; and that thou mayest enter my house. My treasury is open to thee, to [-] thyself with my paternal possessions. I will give to thee gold, as much as thou desirest; malachite shall be heaped up before thee; many horses of the best of the stable, and the first of the stall." BAR IV 873-4

The gold and silver were destined for the treasuries of the gods adored by Piankhi. The horses were for the king himself.

"Go to the stable that thou mayest choose as thou desirest, of all the horses that thou wiltst." Then his majesty did so. BAR IV 876

The invitation was echoed by the assembled dignitaries:

Said these kings and princes to his majesty: "Dismiss us to our cities, that we may open our treasuries, that we may choose as much as thy heart desires, that we may bring to thee the best of our stables, the first of our horses." Then his majesty did so. BAR IV 877

The delta now belonged to Piankhi. All save the western fringe.

The narrative at this point pauses to list the delta dynasts, in their final act of submission to Piankhi, as they acknowledge his suzerainty and surrender their treasure. The total includes two kings, five princes, and seven Libyan chieftains.

Said these kings and princes to his majesty: "Dismiss us to our cities, that we may open our treasuries, that we may choose as much as thy heart desires, that we may bring to thee the best of our stables, the first of our horses." Then his majesty did so.

List of names belonging thereto:

1. King Osorkon in Bubastis, the district of Ranofer
2. King Yewepet in Tantremu and Tayan
3. The prince Djedamonefankh in "the granary of Re" of Per- Benedbed (Mendes).
4. His eldest son, commander of the army, in Per-Thutuprehui, Enekhhor.
5. The prince, Akenesh, in Sebennytos, in Per-heby, and in Samhudet
6. The prince, chief of Me, Pethenef, in Per-Soped and in "the granary of

Memphis.”

7. The prince, chief of Me, Pemou, in Per-Osiris (Busiris), lord of Ded.
8. The prince, chief of Me, Nesnekedy in the nome of Hesebka.
9. The prince, chief of Me, Nekhtharneshenu in Per-Gerer.
10. The chief of Me, Pentewere.
11. The chief of Me, Pentibekhenet.
12. The prophet of Horus, lord of Letopolis, Pediharsomtous.
13. The prince, Hurabes in the house of Sekhmet, mistress of Sais, and the house of Sekhmet, mistress of Rehesu.
14. The prince Zedkhiyu in Khentnofer.
15. The prince Pebes in Khereha in Per-Hapi. BAR IV 877-878

To this list we must add Pediese, the hereditary chief of Athribis, and the three key dignitaries named earlier in the narrative - kings Nimlot of Hermopolis, Peftjauawybast of Heracleopolis, and the chief of Me, Sheshonk of Busiris, the army commander subordinate to Pemou, prince of that city. They are not unimportant characters in the drama.

The fate of the one missing dynast, Tefnakht, is recounted in the closing lines of the inscription. Fearful of appearing in person before Piankhi, the Saïte chieftain, from his seclusion in the delta marshes, sent an emissary with flattering words and “gold and every costly stone, and the best of the horses, (even) [payment] for everything.” While he would not appear before Piankhi, he requested and received a delegation of priests, representatives of Piankhi, before whom he swore allegiance to the Napatan king.

I will not transgress the command of the king, I will not overstep that which the king saith. I will not do a hostile act against a prince (*ḥ3ty-ꜥ*) without thy knowledge; I will do according to that which the king says, and I will not transgress that which he has commanded.” Then his majesty was satisfied therewith. BAR IV 881

With a brief mention of the submission of a few peripheral strongholds of central Egypt the narrative concludes. All Egypt now belongs to Piankhi - again. “There is not a nome closed against his majesty of the nomes of the South and North; the west, the east, and the islands in the midst are upon their bellies in fear of him, causing that their possessions be presented at the place where his majesty is, like subjects of the palace.”¹⁰

¹⁰ BAR IV 882

With treasure in hand, Piankhi journeyed south.

Then the ships were laden with silver, gold, copper, clothing, and everything of the Northland, every product of Syria (*H3-rw*), and all sweet woods of God's-Land. His majesty sailed up-stream, with glad heart, the shores on his either side were jubilating. West and east, they seized the [-], jubilating in the presence of his majesty; singing and jubilating as they said: "O mighty, mighty Ruler, Piankhi, O mighty Ruler; thou comest, having gained the dominion of the Northland. Thou makest bulls into women. Happy the heart of the mother who bore thee, and the man who begat thee. Those who are in the valley give to her praise, the cow that hath borne a bull. Thou art unto eternity, thy might endureth, O Ruler, beloved of Thebes. BAR IV 883 (emphasis added)

It is regrettable that the name of Piankhi's mother and father are omitted. Had their names been included Egyptian history might have been written differently.

Piankhi: The Traditional View

In view of the notoriety of Piankhi, as evidenced by the events narrated on the stela, we should expect that he was an important figure in Egyptian history. If so, we would be disappointed. As we shall see, his life and times are shrouded in mystery.

When the Piankhi stela was first read by scholars it was immediately recognized that the dignitaries named therein belonged to the late 22nd and 23rd dynasties, and that the rebel Tefnakht must be the father of Bocchoris, the sole occupant of Manetho's 24th dynasty. With confidence early Egyptologists dated the insurrection of Tefnakht and the response by Piankhi to the last quarter of the 8th century B.C. Flinders Petrie, the eminent and influential British Egyptologist, writing at the turn of the 20th century, dated the "invasion" to the year 720 B.C., with the reigns of the 25th dynasty kings Shabaka and Shabataka following closely on its heels. The whole of the 25th dynasty, including most of the reign of Taharka, is of necessity placed between the time of the Tefnakht rebellion and the conquest and occupation of Egypt by the Assyrians, the later event securely dated to the years 671-664 B.C.

A century of scholarship has refined Petrie's dates only slightly. K.A. Kitchen, the foremost living authority on the 3rd Intermediate Period,

dates the Piankhi incident to 727 B.C. and the most recent analysis by the Egyptologist D.A. Aston¹¹ has placed Piankhi's 21st year only a decade earlier, in the time span 740-735 B.C. If Aston is correct, the median year 738 B.C. cannot be far wrong.

The slight difference of opinion on the date of the Piankhi invasion is related to a secondary question of fundamental concern to this revision. How long did Piankhi continue to rule after the rebellion was suppressed late in his 20th year?¹² On this issue as well, there is some divergence of opinion. The question takes on added significance if it be admitted that he ruled over Egypt for much of this time.

Who is Piankhi, this Nubian king who had, some years before the Tefnakht rebellion, conquered the southern and central portions of Egypt, if not the entire country, and who now scoffed at any challenge to his authority? If we correctly interpret the stela inscription he was a sovereign of long standing in Egypt, not a recent intruder. The stela is dated, as mentioned earlier, to the first month of his 21st year. Based on normal standards of interpretation we should glean from this fact that he had been king of Egypt, or a king within Egypt, for twenty years. That is, however, not the typical interpretation of his great stela. With few exceptions scholars believe that Piankhi had ruled central and southern Egypt for at most a few years before the rebellion, and that his control of the country was lost soon after. When they discuss his dates they are debating only his tenure as king in Nubia, not the length of his sovereignty over Egypt.

The explanation for this opinion is related to considerations apart from the stela inscription itself. There is no evidence within Egypt that Piankhi ruled the country for a single year, much less for twenty years, prior to his 21st year. No monument within Egypt bears his name. No building was constructed by him. No artifacts belonging to him have been recovered; no mention of his name occurs in secondary sources. In view of his renown, as evidenced in the narrative of the great stela, this is

¹¹D.A. Aston, "Takeloth II - A King of the 'Theban Twenty-Third Dynasty'?" *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 75 (1989) 139-153.

¹²The Great Stele dateline cites the first month of the first season of the civil calendar in Piankhi's 21st year. The rebellion is over. We assume it ended several months earlier, time for Piankhi to return to Napate and have the monument inscribed (see figure 4 on page 27).

a particularly troublesome silence. If he lived in Thebes, wherein he based an army, he has left no evidence of the fact. If he became king in Thebes two decades before the Tefnakht rebellion the lack of inscriptional evidence is difficult, if not impossible to explain. The conclusion follows that his involvement in Egyptian affairs was brief. He came; he conquered; and for reasons unknown, he quickly departed the country. Or so we are told.

When Piankhi withdrew from the delta, laden with treasure, he was the uncontested sovereign of all of Egypt. Where did he go and for how long did he continue to rule? According to scholars, if he moved south to Thebes he did not long remain there. His home was Napata and there he lived out his years. But for how long? On this issue academia is divided. The majority believe that he continued to rule for either ten or twenty additional years, a conclusion based on the most fragile of evidence. Were it not for an obscured year date on a bandage, it might be argued that his name vanishes from Egypt entirely within a few years of the rebellion. Kitchen, who believes his reign in total lasted only 30 years, provides a summary of the evidence:

The one generally accepted year-date of Piankhy is Year 21 on his great stela. However, a minimum of 31 years is assignable to him on the external evidence which is outlined above (sect. 114). To these factors, a little more can be added. First, there are three documents dated by the reign of 'Pharaoh Py, Si-Ese Meryamun' - two papyri of his Years 21 and 22, most probably Theban, and the lesser Dakhla stela of Year 24. There is good reason to view Py as the real reading of Piankhy and to attribute all three documents to Piankhy's reign. Second, a fragmentary bandage from Western Thebes bears an obscure date of Sneferre Piankhy. The visible traces indicate 'Regnal Year 20', a patch and trace (the latter compatible with a '10'), and a shallow sign perhaps an otiose t. In other words, we here have a date higher than Year 20 of Piankhy, and very possibly Year 30 - which would fit very well with the 31 years' minimum reign which has been already inferred on independent grounds. TIP 123

Based on these and other more subjective considerations Kitchen dates Piankhi's reign to the years 747-716 B.C. with Shabaka (716-702 B.C.), Shabataka (702-690 B.C.) and Taharka (690-664 B.C.) following in quick succession.

Others, including Klaus Baer in his influential analysis of the chronology

of dynasties 22-26¹³, have read year 40 on the bandage fragment and argue that Piankhi ruled for that length of time. Accordingly, Baer dates Piankhi to the years 753-713 B.C., and shortens the reigns of Shabaka (713-698 B.C.) and Shabataka (698-690 B.C.) to compensate for the years added to the reign of Piankhi.

The dates for Taharka (690-664 B.C.) are inflexible in the traditional history, and must be maintained in any dating scheme.

It is largely immaterial, at least for the time being, whether we argue for a thirty year or a forty year reign for Piankhi. It is not the length of his reign that concerns us here. It is the country over which he ruled that is most problematic. We take exception with those who consider Piankhi to be a Nubian king who conquered Egypt late in his reign and lived there only briefly. There is no evidence, other than the silence of the monuments, to support that assumption. And the Egyptian silence can be otherwise explained.

The stela narrative leaves the distinct impression that Piankhi had ruled Egypt for a considerable time before the Tefnakht rebellion. The dateline and the content of the inscription are entirely consistent with, and even argue for, the supposition that his kingship began in Egypt over twenty years before the rebellion ended. It could be argued, a priori, that he began as a nomarch, with limited power, like those he encountered on his tour of conquest, and that the scope of his authority expanded over time. Some evidence exists connecting him with the 23rd dynasty king Rudamon. Peftjauawybast of Heracleopolis, to whose rescue Piankhi came in his 20th year, was married to a daughter of this same Rudamon. Perhaps Piankhi, like Peftjauawybast, originally ruled some principality in central Egypt before assuming power in Thebes. We can even suggest a likely location. But that story must come later.

Piankhi's connections with Napata may be similar to those of Rudamon.

¹³Kraus Baer, "The Libyan and Nubian Kings of Egypt: Notes on the Chronology of Dynasties XXII to XXVI," JNES 32 (1973). According to Baer "The mummy bandage Brit. Mus. 6640 ... indicates that Piye reached his year 40. It reads *h3t-sp x + 20.t*; and, from the grouping, x can only be an even number of tens, probably 20 since the preserved two tens occupy about half the available space. This would place Piye's accession in 753 and the campaign of year 20 in 734 B.C. at the latest. (p.7)

A suggestion was made in *Nebuchadnezzar* that Rudamon descended from a Melukkhan king named Shabataka, whose mention in a Sargonid inscription at Tang-i Var has recently been conjectured in an article in the journal *Orientalia*.¹⁴ We have suggested that this Shabataka, if he actually existed, may have married a daughter of the 23rd dynasty king Osorkon III. From this union came the king Rudamon/Urdamanie, who challenged the domination of Assyria over Egypt immediately following the death of Takeloth III (Tarqu) in 665 B.C. We have further suggested that the 25th dynasty kings Shabaka, Shabataka, and Taharka may have descended directly from Rudamon. If so then they are not descendants of Piankhi as described in the traditional history. Piankhi's origins must be found in another branch of the extended family.

Later in this book we will argue that Piankhi, like Rudamon, descended from a marital alliance that linked a Nubian prince (in this case his grandfather) with a daughter of the 23rd dynasty king Osorkon III. If so then it follows that Piankhi had a legitimate claim to both the Napatan and Egyptian thrones. More will be said about Piankhi's genealogy in a later chapter of this book (see above pp. 236-7). Sufficient here to note that the textbooks are seriously in error concerning the origins of the 25th dynasty. As it turns out, Piankhi is not, technically, a 25th dynasty king. He was not a direct ancestor of Shabaka, Shabataka, and Taharka. But that story must evolve as we proceed.

There is also no reason to doubt that Piankhi's rule over Egypt continued long after the end of the Tafnakht rebellion, whether for another ten or twenty years, or even longer. The evidence cited by Kitchen attesting his 22nd through 30th (or 40th) years is all of Egyptian origin, suggesting, if it doesn't prove, that Piankhi continued to rule the country long after the rebellion. The fact that he established a residence and built extensively in Napata, where he was ultimately buried, is entirely beside the point. His connections with Egypt are of long standing.

But if Piankhi lived in Egypt for thirty or forty years, and in Thebes for much of this time, where is the evidence attesting the fact? Why the silence of the monuments? As we can readily observe from the Piankhi stela, the Egyptian/Nubian king was not reluctant to publicize his

¹⁴See the discussion in Appendix A of *Nebuchadnezzar & the Egyptian Exile*.

accomplishments. Was there nothing of consequence about which to boast during the balance of his extended reign? The names of his Egyptian successors Shabaka and Taharka (and to a lesser extent Shabataka) are encountered frequently in the vicinity of Thebes. They built modestly, but extensively, on both sides of the Nile. Their names are everywhere present in the temple of Amun at Karnak. Yet their combined reign lengths are not significantly larger than the number of years credited to Piankhi. Why is the name of Piankhi absent in the temple of the god he worshiped so passionately? There must be an explanation.

And we wonder about another prominent feature of the stela narrative - the extreme political fragmentation encountered by Piankhi as he traversed the country. The central and northern portions of Egypt are ruled by at minimum six kings, an equal number of princes, and at least that many Libyan chieftains, albeit as vassals of Piankhi. What was the cause of this decentralized rule. Scholars are at a loss to explain how Egypt, ruled only a half century earlier by a powerful pharaoh, Osorkon II, could in the space of a few decades become parceled out among twenty or more nomarchs with variant titles. Such a condition is documented at only one other time in Egyptian history. In 671 B.C., when the Assyrian king Esarhaddon conquered Egypt, he parceled out the administration of the country to twenty local governors, some of whom are called “kings”, some princes or mayors. But that event took place at the end of the reign of Taharka, thus a half century later than the invasion of Piankhi. Or did it? Is it possible that the reign of Piankhi is incorrectly positioned in the 8th century, preceding the Assyrian conquest, rather than following it. Is not the fragmentation of Egypt described in the Piankhi stela the enduring legacy of Esarhaddon’s system of governors? If so, then Piankhi must be dated to the late 7th century.

Piankhi : Alternative Dating

The reader familiar with the first book in this series, *Nebuchadnezzar & the Egyptian Exile*, will be aware of the fact that the chronology of Egyptian dynasties 22-26 is seriously in error, and an alternative chronology was proposed in which traditional dates for these dynasties

were lowered by a systematic 121 years. As a result of this lowering of dates the terminal years of the 22nd and 23rd dynasties, the time of Bocchoris, and the 25th dynasty pharaohs, including Piankhi and his successors Shabaka, Shabataka and Taharka, were moved from the decades immediately *preceding* the Assyrian conquest of Egypt to the decades immediately *following*. In particular the 21st year of Piankhi was tentatively revised downward to 617 B.C. The date was arrived at by subtracting 121 years from Aston's median date 738 B.C., mentioned earlier. This revised date for Piankhi was proposed and left to be defended. The defense will be taken up here and will occupy the balance of this book.

First we need to refine, ever so slightly, the 617 B.C. date. In the next chapter we will argue that Piankhi's years began and ended around the first week in March. His 21st year actually spanned the time from March 618 B.C. to March 617 B.C. It overlaps to a greater degree the year 618 B.C. As it turns out the Great Stele was erected in the year 618 B.C. (see figure 4 on page 27). Henceforth we will use the number 618 for the date of Piankhi's 21st year.

If Pianki's 21st year was 618 B.C. then his first regal year was 638 B.C. and his Egyptian sojourn spanned the years 638-598 B.C., these numbers based on the assumption that he reigned for 40 years. It is important that the reader understand that these dates are not chosen arbitrarily. They are a necessary consequence of the entire argument of the book length revision in *Nebuchadnezzar & the Egyptian Exile*. It is also important to note that, since there exists no proof that Piankhi's Egyptian reign was limited to 40 years, we must hold in reserve any comment on when his kingship ended. He may well have reigned beyond the year 598 B.C. How much longer remains to be seen.

The dates 638-598 B.C. cannot help but engage the interest of all students of Ancient Near Eastern history. Early in this time frame the Assyrian Empire began its decline and within two decades of the death of Ashurbanipal in 628 B.C. the Empire was lost. According to the argument in *Nebuchadnezzar*, Assyria, which conquered Egypt in 671 B.C., continued to control the country through much of Ashurbanipal's reign. This tenuous suzerainty turned into an alliance of equals following

his death. If we are correct in our revised dates for Piankhi, then the Nubian king must have played a part in this reversal of fortunes.

In 625 B.C., early in the reign of Sinsharishkun, the successor of Ashurbanipal, thus over a decade into the reign of Piankhi, the province of Babylon rebelled and claimed independence from Assyria. The rebel king Nabopolassar continued to harass his former suzerain until, in 612 B.C., Nineveh was destroyed with the assistance of Cyaxares of Media. Three years later Assyria exited history, as its last king Ashurballit lost control of Harran on the western fringe of the empire.

Piankhi' reign must have overlapped these eventful years. In fact, he must have been a major participant in the power struggle. And if so, we expect that he publicized the fact.

There is no shortage of reliable information on the years in question. We possess the actual cuneiform tablets which preserve in summary form the annals of the neo-Chaldaeian (Babylonian) kings Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadrezzar II. These same documents describe the terminal years of the Assyrian empire. The Hebrew scriptures also retain historical memories of the activities of Nebuchadrezzar (whom they sometimes call Nebuchadnezzar) vis-à-vis Assyria, Judea, and Egypt. Both these sources mention various actions of the Egyptian army. They fail, with one exception, to name the ruling Egyptian king. But if we are correct, the name of the king is not in question. Piankhi ruled Egypt throughout these tumultuous years. The Egyptian army mentioned in the Babylonian and Jewish records must belong to him. The fact remains to be proved. The only question is how the proof should proceed.

How do we establish that Piankhi lived and ruled in the late 7th century rather than the mid 8th century B.C.? Ideally we should like to examine the source documents of Piankhi during these critical years, and then compare the history of the times therein revealed with the contemporary history documented in the Babylonian Chronicle and in the Hebrew Bible. That should enable us to establish beyond question that we have correctly positioned this 25th dynasty patriarch. But we are confronted at the outset with a major problem, already alluded to. It is claimed by historians that Piankhi has left no documentation, other than his Great

Stela, whereby we can reconstruct his activities during his Egyptian reign. And his Great Stela deals exclusively with local matters. It is regrettable that no monument exists recording the extensive intercourse between Piankhi and Assyria, Babylon, and Judea during these years. Regrettable, that is, if true. But is it a fact that Piankhi failed to boast of his political and military involvement beyond the borders of Egypt?

If our earlier analysis of Egyptian history teaches us anything, it is the fact that Egyptologists are fallible. They occasionally make fundamental mistakes, including the attribution of documents to the wrong person. Is it possible that Piankhi's Egyptian monuments, and therefore his accomplishments, have been mistakenly credited to some other king? If so then the problem of the silence of the monuments during his reign of forty plus years would be solved. And by crediting these monuments to their rightful owner we would have access to documentary proof that our revision of Egyptian history is correct.

But now we face an historical dilemma. If inscriptions exist supposedly belonging to Piankhi but not bearing his name, then how do we establish that they are his? There is only one appropriate methodology. We must first find monuments describing activities of an Egyptian army which parallel the actions registered in the Babylonian and Jewish sources, thus dating them to the late 7th century. And then we must demonstrate that Piankhi is the probable author. There is no other way. Rather than compare Piankhi's Egyptian monuments with the known history of the late 7th century, we must use the latter history to help us find his monuments.

As it turns out there is no difficulty in finding the Piankhi inscriptions. They are everywhere present in Thebes. Far from the ominous silence we are told to expect, Piankhi was the most prolific of authors. He publicized his exploits prominently throughout central and southern Egypt and, predictably, all along the course of the Nile southward to Napata. Tales of his accomplishments regale the walls of the tombs of his many functionaries. Unfortunately, they refer to him by another of his names.

We assume as an hypothetical in the initial stages of our argument the

essential accuracy of our proposed dates for Piankhi. He erected the Great Stela in the first month of the Egyptian civil year, his 21st, thus in July of 618 B.C. His conquest of the delta took place in the preceding year, 619 B.C. We may not be able to detail precisely the course of his life during his first twenty years in office. But for the decades which follow the suppression of the Tefnakht rebellion we are blessed with abundant documentation.