

Chapter Seven

The 20th & 21st Dynasties Relocated

The Priest/King Menkheperre

The Coronation Inscription

Two separate but incompatible traditions exist regarding the enthronement of the 18th dynasty king Thutmose III. According to one he began his kingship as an infant and in consequence Egypt was ruled by his “sister” Hatshepsut until the child king reached maturity. According to the other he was a priest in the temple of Amun when the god, in the course of a procession through the temple, singled him out from among his fellows and promised him the kingship. Egyptologists have struggled to merge the two traditions. The effort was in vain and for good reason. The respective source documents belong to different centuries and refer to distinct but namesake kings. The infant king, the earlier of the two, belongs to the 18th dynasty; the priest/king Menkheperre, whom we identify as the 7th century king Meryamun Piankhi, must be the author of the Annals.

The inscription which informs the second of the two traditions is known as the “Coronation Inscription” of Menkheperre. We pause here to read a brief selection. If we are correct it is Piankhi’s autobiography we will be reading. The document in question has been widely published since first read by Egyptologists in the middle of the 19th century. It is inscribed on “the exterior of the south wall of the chambers south of the sanctuary” in the temple of Amun at Karnak, and was first published (partially) by Brugsch in 1863. We quote from Breasted’s 1905 translation. But first we let Breasted describe the document:

This inscription contains historical material of the highest importance, which has been overlooked in all the histories. On the occasion of the completion of one of his numerous additions to the Karnak temple, sometime between the years 15 and 22 (l. 17), Thutmose III held an audience and addressed his court, informing them that he owed his crown to Amon, and that he had shown his gratitude by great buildings and sumptuous offerings (ll. 1-22). The court replied, acknowledging his divine call to the throne (ll. 22-24). All this is now recorded as an

introduction to a three-fold list of the king's benefactions to the god: first, his buildings (ll. 25-36); second, his offerings of the field, and the herds, besides gifts of lands (ll. 36-41); third, temple utensils and the like (ll. 42-48). A short peroration concludes the record (ll. 48-49). BAR II 131

Our interest lies primarily though not exclusively in the first few lines, where the inscription "records the elevation of Thutmose III from a position of humble rank in the priesthood of the Karnak temple of Amon to the throne of Egypt." As we read we cannot help but observe the intimate relations exhibited between Menkheperre and the god Amun, just as we saw in the Piankhi stele and the Annals.

I am his (Amon's) son, whom he commanded that I should be upon his throne, while I was one dwelling in his nest (i.e. temple); he begat me in uprightness of heart — there is no lie therein; since my majesty was a stripling, while I was a youth (*inpw*) in his temple, before occurred my installation to be prophet — my majesty. I was in the capacity (i.e. role) of the "Pillar of his Mother," like the youth Horus in Khemmis. I was standing in the northern hypostyle ----. ---- the splendors of his horizon. He made festive heaven and earth with his beauty; he received the great marvels; his rays were in the eyes of the people like the "Coming forth of Harakhte." The people, they gave to him [praise] — the [altar] of his temple. His majesty placed for him incense upon the fire, and offered to him a great oblation consisting of oxen, calves, mountain goats, — — [the god] made the circuit of the hypostyle on both sides of it, the heart of those who were in front did not comprehend his actions, while searching for my majesty in every place. On recognizing me, lo, he halted — [I threw myself on] the pavement, I prostrated myself in his presence. He set me before his majesty; I was stationed at the "Station of the King." He was astonished at me ---- without untruth. Then they [revealed] before the people the secrets in the hearts of the gods, who know these his —; there was none who knew them, there was none who revealed them [beside him]. BAR II 138-140

The narrative continues immediately to describe a coronation and the conferring of the five-fold titulary of kingship.. But this is not to say that the young priest immediately became king. The coronation of which the inscription speaks takes place in heaven, a roundabout way of saying that the gods immediately recognized Menkheperre as king, pending his later installation as king on earth.

[He opened for] me the doors of heaven; he opened the portals of the horizon of Re. I flew to heaven as a divine hawk, beholding his form in heaven; I adored his majesty — feast. I saw the glorious forms of the Horizon-God upon his mysterious ways in heaven. Re himself established me, I was dignified with the

diadems which [we]re upon his head, his serpent-diadem, rested upon [my forehead] — [he satisfied] me with all his glories; I was sated with the counsels of the gods, like Horus, when he counted his body at the house of my father, Amon-Re. I was [present]ed with the dignities of a god, with — my diadems. His own titulary was affixed for me. BAR II 141-143a (italics added)

There follows one of the most complete presentations of a five-fold titulary provided by any Egyptian document. And the titulary is specifically stated to have belonged to the god. We suggest that Piankhi is here acknowledging the fact that these names once belonged to a predecessor. In the Egyptian psyche deceased pharaohs became identified with the gods, and were worshiped in their own right. Piankhi, speaking later in life, is apparently attempting to legitimize his kingship by propagating the fiction that he received from a deceased pharaoh the insignia of office, including his predecessor's names. What else are we to make of this highly unusual text? The diadems worn by the earlier king are figuratively transferred to Piankhi's head, conferring on the newly designated king the right to rule. For the record we include the titulary names which follow in the text.

He fixed my Horus upon the standard; he made me mighty as a mighty bull. He caused that I should shine in the midst of Thebes [in this my name, Horus: “*Mighty Bull, Shining in Thebes*”]¹²⁰ [He made my kingship enduring, like Re in heaven, in] this my [name], Favorite of the Two Goddesses: “*Enduring in Kingship, like Re in Heaven*.” He formed me as a Horus-hawk of gold, he gave to me his might and his strength and I was splendid with these his diadems, in this my name [Golden Horus: “*Mighty in Strength, Splendid in Diadems*”], — [in this my name], King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands: “*Menkheperre*” (the being of Re abides). I am his son who came forth from him, a likeness fashioned like the presider over Hesret; he beautified all my forms, in this my name, Son of Re: “*Thutmose, Beautiful of Form*,” living forever and ever. BAR II 143-147

¹²⁰In our earlier discussion of the name Necho, which Hebrew scholars in the days of Josiah assigned to Piankhi, we suggested as one possibility that they were perhaps making a sarcastic play on words, mimicking some epithet of the 25th dynasty patriarch. We left the matter at that. But the Horus name of Menkheperre Piankhi provides a likely candidate. The epithet “strong bull” was borne by many Egyptian kings, and several included it among their titulary as did Menkheperre. It was a favorite name of Menkheperre. In Egyptian the name translated “strong bull” is Ka Nakht. - literally “bull, the strong one”. Inverted, as sounded in English, it would read “Nakht Ka” which would arguably sound like Neco to a foreign ear. It is immaterial whether the Nubian king enunciated the title in reverse order, or whether the Hebrew scribes did so when they parodied the name.

As we continue to read this narrative it becomes readily apparent that the Menkheperre in this document is the same king who authored the Annals. There is therefore no doubt that he is Piankhi. He boasts of his benefactions to the god Amun, the feasts he has created, the offerings he has bestowed, the buildings he has erected, the lands transferred and the furnishings provided for the ongoing operation of the god's temple. Of particular note is his claim to have erected for the god "an August Holy of Holies," the very enclosure around which, in years to come, Menkheperre would record his successes in his Syrian campaigns.

It is clear from this inscription that Menkheperre, alias Piankhi, began his adult life as a priest. *And once a priest, always a priest.* In the first chapter we observed that king Meryamun Piankhi, in the process of invading Egypt to suppress the Tefnakht rebellion, behaved very much like a cleric. He seemed to have an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Amun temple in Thebes, detailing every action to be taken by his emissaries in their attempt to secure for his upcoming military action the blessing of the god Amun. Even the words of address (prayers) to the god were spelled out in detail. We now understand whence came this intimate knowledge.

The "coronation stele" also provides us with insight into Piankhi's age. He is called an *inpw* in this narrative. He may well have been in his early teens, barely past puberty. But he is not yet king. The promise of kingship implied by his "anointing" relates to the future. His enthronement took place a decade later, perhaps longer. This is important insofar as it relates to our earlier remarks regarding the age at death of this king. We have assumed throughout our discussion that Menkheperre was at least seventy years old when he died, and more likely closer to eighty. This document is one basis for that assumption.

The 21st Dynasty Priest/King Menkheperre

In our second chapter we remarked on the fact that the name Menkheperre, at least in the traditional history, was borne by only three kings - the 18th dynasty pharaoh by that name, Shabataka (successor of Shabaka), and a 21st dynasty king whose other titulary names are

unknown. The revised history has added a fourth king - Piankhi. But one of these kings is an illusion, a phantom. And it is not Piankhi.

According to the textbooks the 21st dynasty, typically dated in the 11th/10th centuries B.C., consisted of multiple kings who began their lives as priests and continued throughout life to bear the dual titles “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” and “High Priest of Amun” (HPA). The king Menkheperre, who belonged to the so-called “Theban branch” of this dynasty, was one such king. At least one document suggests that he continued to function as a priest into his 49th year. Kitchen argues that his pontificate/kingship extended at least into his 53rd year.¹²¹ Various inscriptions indicate that he began his rule at el Hibeh in north central Egypt and extended his authority later to the Theban area. His titles were not honorary, but functional. He was *de facto* both a priest and a king.

We thus have two priest kings by the name of Menkheperre ruling at Thebes, one in the 21st dynasty and one in the 25th dynasty. Each maintained the dual offices of priest and king for upwards of 53 years. We are intrigued by this duality and wonder at the possibility that a phantom king has been inserted into the framework of Egyptian chronology by well intentioned but confused scholars. We cannot help but think that the 21st dynasty priest king Menkheperre and the 25th dynasty priest king Menkheperre (Piankhi) are actually one and the same person. With this suspicion in mind we turn our attention back to the 21st dynasty.

21st Dynasty Chronology – Traditional History

In the traditional history, following the schema introduced by Manetho (as preserved by Africanus), the 21st dynasty consists of seven kings from Tanis, whose combined reign lengths add up to approximately 140 years. According to Africanus the seven kings of this dynasty bore the names Smendes, Psusennes, Niphercheres, Amenophthis, Osochor, Psinaches, and a second Psusennes. Some contemporary Egyptologists add a king Siamon to this list, though others equate this Siamon with Manetho’s

¹²¹See Kitchen, Third Intermediate Period 2nd (1986) table 1 (p. 465). For this priest-king see also sect. 219, 226, and especially 501.

Psinaches. Five of these kings (Osochor and Psinaches excepted) have supposedly been identified in the monuments with kings named Nesubanebdjed, Psebkhannu, Amenemnisu, Amenemope, and (a second) Psebkhannu respectively, though these names differ significantly from the names provided by Africanus (and may not be correct). There is no consensus on the identity of Osochor and Psinaches.

Scholars are agreed that Smendes, the proverbial founder of the dynasty, *must be* identified with a king named Nesubanebdjed on several monuments, and a king by the same name on a papyrus which narrates the travels of a dignitary named Wenamun.¹²² The accuracy of that identification remains to be seen. But based on that assumption the king list for the Tanite branch of the 21st dynasty was set in place at the beginning of the 20th century, *though with many questions concerning the order of the kings and considerable controversy related to reign lengths.*

In the history books we are also told that a parallel dynasty of kings ruled in Thebes in some undefined relationship to the Tanite kings, though they seem to be unknown to Manetho who omits them entirely. Many questions exist concerning this second sequence of kings, but predicated on the fact that its founder Herihor was a contemporary of a northern king named Nesubanebdjed, assumed to be Smendes I, the two branches of the dynasty are considered to have run parallel to one another throughout the roughly 135 years of their existence. The Theban branch of this dynasty is dominated by four names including that of Herihor. In chronological order they are: Herihor, Piankh, Pinudjem, and Menkheperre.

Other names have been added to this Theban sequence in the past century - a second Pinudjem, a second Smendes (Nesubanebdjed) and a third Psusennes (Psebkhannu)- partly in order to extend the length of the dynasty to match that of its northern counterpart, and partly to make sense of documents which link these names with assumed occupants of the Tanite sequence. We will discuss the last three names briefly in our concluding chapter and in more depth in our Appendix C. Here and in the next two chapters our emphasis will be on the first four names: Herihor, Piankh, Pinudjem (I) and Menkheperre.

¹²²Cf. the translation by John A. Wilson in ANET pp. 25-29. This papyrus, found at el-Hibeh in central Egypt, is now stored in the Moscow Museum.

The priest/kings in both branches of the 21st dynasty, as outlined above, together with approximate reign lengths or terms in office, are listed below in table 10. The dates for the Theban kings are cited precisely as found in K.A. Kitchen's *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1986)*.¹²³ The dates for the Tanite kings are based on Manetho's numbers as supplied by Gardiner in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs*.¹²⁴

Table 10: Tanite & Theban 21st Dynasty Kings
(Traditional History)

21st Dynasty Priests & Kings	
Tanite Kings	Theban Priests & Kings
1080-1054 Smendes I (26 years)	1080-1074 Herihor (6 years)
1054-1008 Psusennes I (46 years)	1074-1070 Piankh (4 years)
1008-1004 Amenemnisu (4 years)	1070-1055 Pinudjem I HPA (15 years)
1004-995 Amenemope (9 years)	1054-1032 Pinudjem I king (22 years)
995-989 Osochor (6 years)	1054-1046 Masaharta (8 years)
989-980 Psinaches (9 years)	1046-1045 Djed-Khons-ef-Ankh (1 year?)
980-966 Psusennes II (14 yrs) 980-945 (35 years)	1045-992 Menkheperre (53 years)
	992-990 Smendes II (2 years)
	or 990-969 Pinudjem II (21 years)
	969-945 Psusennes III (24 yrs)

Before we proceed, we need to make a few changes to the table 10 data,

¹²³Op. cit., table 1, p. 465.

¹²⁴We have not followed Kitchen for the dates of the Tanite kings because we disagree with some of his conclusions. He lengthens the reign of Smendes by ten years, entirely without warrant. He also reverses the order of the 2nd and 3rd kings of the dynasty in an attempt to interpret the data on the Berlin stele in a particular way. His interpretation of the stele is incorrect. Finally, he identifies Psinaches as Siamon, something Gardiner is careful not to do. In due time we will argue that **Smendes** I is likely another king named **Siamon**, who has left little to no evidence of his existence. The fact that they bear what is arguably the same name is only one of the arguments supporting that claim.

all related to the Theban priest/kings. The reader will note that Kitchen has two listings for Pinudjem I, the successor of Piankh. According to him Pinudjem functioned as the high priest of Amun (HPA) in the years 1070-1055 B.C., and then passed the high priesthood on to his eldest son Masaharta (1054-1046) as he assumed a kingship in Thebes. As king he ruled for an additional 22 years (1054-1032). Masaharta died prematurely in 1046, was succeeded briefly by DjedKhonsefAnkh, and then by Menkheperre in 1045. If this scenario is correct, we must assume that Menkheperre became king only at the death of Pinudjem in 1032. From 1045 to 1032 Menkheperre was only a high priest. It is not by accident that Kitchen does not separate the two phases of Menkheperre's life as he did for Pinudjem. Only reluctantly, and only in the supplement to his 1986 classic on the *Third Intermediate Period*, does Kitchen acknowledge that Menkheperre did in fact assume a kingship. *When* is the only question. We believe that he became HPA and king within months of each other, following the death of Masaharta. We also believe that his father Pinudjem I died later that same year, not fourteen years later as Kitchen believes. We will argue the case later.

The inscription that records the beginning of the pontificate of Menkheperre in the 25th year of Pinudjem (supposedly in 1046 B.C.) is extremely well known. We will spend some time later in the next chapter examining this document, the so-called Maunier papyrus. Needless to say we disagree with the interpretation provided by traditionalist Egyptologists. In the first place we disagree with the explanation provided for the dateline. We believe that the "25th year" mentioned in the opening line refers to the years of Pinudjem I as king, an interpretive change that argues that Pinudjem became king and HPA at the same time, 1070 B.C. in the traditional history. If 1070 B.C. was Pinudjem's 1st year in office, his 25th must be 1046 B.C. Three changes to table 12 are suggested by these assumptions. The first is that there should be no separation between the high priesthood and kingship of Pinudjem I as in Kitchen's data. Secondly, for reasons unknown Pinudjem assigned the duties of HPA to Masaharta in 1054 B.C. and probably to Menkheperre 8 years later (1046 B.C.) when Masaharta died. Therefore Djed-Khons-e-Ankh should be eliminated from the table.¹²⁵ Accordingly the beginning of the career of Menkheperre (as HPA, then king) should be moved back

¹²⁵Even Kitchen is doubtful about the inclusion of this name - note the question mark in his listing.

a year to 1046. This further implies that within months of Menkheperre assuming the pontificate at the death of Masaharta, Pinudjem also died. The date of death of Pinudjem I should therefore be moved back from 1032 to 1046 B.C. Incorporating these changes into table 10 results in the revised timeline in table 11, shown below.

**Table 11: Tanite & Theban 21st Dynasty Kings
(Traditional History)**

21st Dynasty Priests & Kings

	Tanite Kings	Theban Priests & Kings
1080-1054	Smendes I (26 years)	1080-1074 Herihor in S. (6 years)
1054-1008	Psusennes I (46 years)	1074-1070 Piankh (4 years)
1008-1004	Amenemnisu (4 years)	1070-1046 Pinudjem I HPA & king (24 years)
1004-995	Amenemope (9 years)	1054-1046 Masaharta (8 years)
995-989	Osochor (6 years)	1046-992 Menkheperre (54 years)
989-980	Psinaches (9 years)	992-990 Smendes II (2 years)
980-966	Psusennes II (14 yrs)	or 990-969 Pinudjem II (21 years)
980-945	(35 years)	969-945 Psusennes III (24 years)

We strongly disagree with the dates assigned to the successors of Menkheperre, i.e., Smendes II, Pinudjem II, and Psusennes III. But as stated earlier, the matter will be left largely to our Appendix C. Apart from these three priest/kings, the relative dates in table 11 are remarkably accurate. It is the absolute dates that are grossly in error. Momentarily the entire “dynasty” will be moved into the 8th/7th centuries.

According to table 11 the 21st dynasty priest/kings ruled from 1080-945 B.C. Those dates were left unaffected by the changes we made to Kitchen’s data for the Theban branch of the dynasty. In this same

traditional history the 20th dynasty is assumed to have ruled throughout the century preceding, roughly 1180-1080 B.C. These numbers assume that the 21st dynasty followed the 20th dynasty sequentially, one possible interpretation of Manetho. At first glance, that conclusion appears to be confirmed by the fact that Herihor and Piankh, the founders of the Theban branch of the dynasty, are firmly connected to the time of Ramses XI, the terminal king of the 20th dynasty. So also is the king Nesubanebdjed who figures prominently in the Wenamun story, to be discussed later. As stated earlier, Nesubanebdjed is identified by all scholars as Smendes I, the founder of the Tanite branch of the 21st dynasty.

Based on this chronology it is clearly impossible that the 11th/10th century priest-king Menkheperre can be identified with the 7th century priest-king Menkheperre Piankhi. The one ruled for roughly 54 years in the time frame 1046-992 B.C., the other for 54 years in the time frame 638-584 B.C. Roughly 408 years separate the two kings. But there are serious objections to several of the fundamental assumptions on which the traditional chronology is based. We need to spell these out before we proceed, for it must be abundantly clear by now that we do intend to relocate both branches of the 21st dynasty and ultimately equate the two Menkheperres.

A Modified Chronology (Revised History)

The Early 22nd Dynasty Kings

Already in the first book of this series we lowered by 121 years the dates of the 22nd dynasty beginning with Osorkon II, and we continued that reduction through all subsequent dynasties up to and including the 26th. We suggested at the time that this displacement would have serious implications for all dynasties prior to the 22nd. We certainly implied a lowering of dates for all earlier dynasties, including the 20th and 21st, by at least an identical 121 years. But we also hinted at the fact that the changes might be more substantial.

Before we proceed to move the 20th and 21st dynasties we should first complete our repositioning of the 22nd. To date we have reduced by 121

years the dates for all 22nd dynasty kings, beginning with Osorkon II, whose reign in the revised history began around the year 740 B.C.¹²⁶ There remains the task of assigning dates to the three preceding kings - Sheshonk I, Osorkon I, and Takeloth I - or minimally, determining their combined reign lengths, in order to fix the date when the 22nd dynasty began.

In an Appendix to the present book we argue strenuously that the alleged founder of the 22nd dynasty, Hedjkheperre Sheshonk, was a king of little consequence. Most if not all of the inscriptions credited to him, including the authorship of the famous Bubastite Portal inscription (see Appendix B), belong instead to a second Hedjkheperre Sheshonk whose existence until recently was not even suspected.¹²⁷ In our later discussion of the matter we will demonstrate that this namesake king lived and reigned during the early years of the Assyrian domination of Egypt, i.e. around the 3rd decade of the 7th century B.C.

We argue additionally that the two kings who followed Sheshonk I in the traditional history - Osorkon I and Takeloth I - are equally of little consequence. They are named in the famous Pasenhor genealogy (discussed in our Appendix A), and in Africanus' list of Manetho's kings, but are entirely absent from the monuments. If we read any popular history of Egypt we will be hard pressed to find mention of them. Gardiner, in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, passes over their reigns in a single line of text.

Little is known about the first Osorkon and his successor the first Takelot except that the former reigned at least thirty-six years and the latter possibly as much as twenty-three. The obscurities of Egyptian history now deepen to such an extent that only rarely can a glimpse of the sequence of events be caught. EP 330

Since Gardiner recorded these remarks the assumed length of the reigns of both Osorkon I and Takeloth I has been reduced substantially. The Egyptologist K.A. Kitchen, writing in 1986, admits that "for Sekhemkheperre Osorkon I, Year 36 was for long thought to be the highest-attested, but this is now known to be a misreading for '[Year x, y

¹²⁶ The revised dates for the 22nd and 23rd dynasties used in the following pages follow table 8 on page 58 in *Nebuchadnezzar & the Egyptian Exile*.

¹²⁷ See Aidan Dodson, "A new King Shoshenq confirmed?", GM 137 (1993), pp. 53-58.

month of Pere]t, Day 26, leaving at first sight only the Manethonic datum of 15 years.”¹²⁸ He also tells us that “a monument commonly attributed to Takeloth I and alleged to attest his 23rd regnal year can be totally rejected on two grounds”, and he goes on to point out that “so far, only one clear, unequivocal mention of Takeloth I (as distinct from II, Hedjkheperre, and III, Usimare) has been isolated: that in the famed genealogy on the Pasenhor stela.”¹²⁹ If we assume the accuracy of Africanus for the reign lengths of Sheshonk I (21 years) and Osorkon I (15 years) and if we assign two or three years to the enigmatic Takeloth I, for whom no monument at all exists in Egypt, then these three regional kings ruled at maximum a combined 40 years, half the 80 years assigned them in the traditional history. If correct, then the 22nd dynasty began around the year 780 B.C. (740 B.C. + 40 years). But even this 40 years is too large a number. In a moment we will argue that the 22nd dynasty began around the year 760 B.C., only 20 years before the beginning of the reign of Osorkon II. If correct, then the absolute dates for the 21st dynasty Menkheperre must reduce by an additional 60 years.¹³⁰

Assuming for the moment that the 22nd dynasty began around the year 760 B.C., and that it followed the 21st dynasty sequentially, the 21st dynasty priest king Menkheperre must have begun his reign around 850 B.C. The two priest kings named Menkheperre are now only about two centuries apart. But two additional considerations now combine to bring them together.

Overlapping Dynasties

For the longest while Egyptologists have operated on the unproven assumption that the dynasties of Manetho must be sequential, one dynasty completely yielding place to a successor. This has had the effect of stretching out or unduly lengthening the chronological schema on which Egyptian history is based. Recent studies, however, have shown

¹²⁸TIP 89.

¹²⁹TIP 95.

¹³⁰If the traditional history assigns 80 years to the three kings, while we reduce that number to 20 years, dates for all earlier dynasties, including the 21st, necessarily reduce by 60 years in addition to the 121 year reduction applied to Osorkon II.

significant overlap between select dynasties, the most notable example being the 22nd and 23rd dynasties. We added yet another instance when, in the first book of this series, we moved the entirety of the 26th (Saite) dynasty to overlap the 27th (Persian).

We also observed in that earlier book the rather chaotic state of affairs that prevailed in Egypt at the end of the reign of Osorkon II, near the end of the eighth century, and to an even greater degree in the three decades immediately following his reign, when at least two dynasties (the 22nd and 23rd) and as many as four kings ruled over different regions of Egypt at the same time. While at the time we did not contest the claim by scholars that Osorkon II ruled the whole of Egypt earlier in his reign, and that this chaotic state emerged only late in his reign, neither did we confirm it. In fact we now argue otherwise. *It is our belief that both the 20th and 21st dynasties need to be moved forward in time to overlap the 22nd!* Throughout his reign Osorkon II shared power with at least two other kings.

Dynasties 20, 21 & 22 All Begin Around 760 B.C.

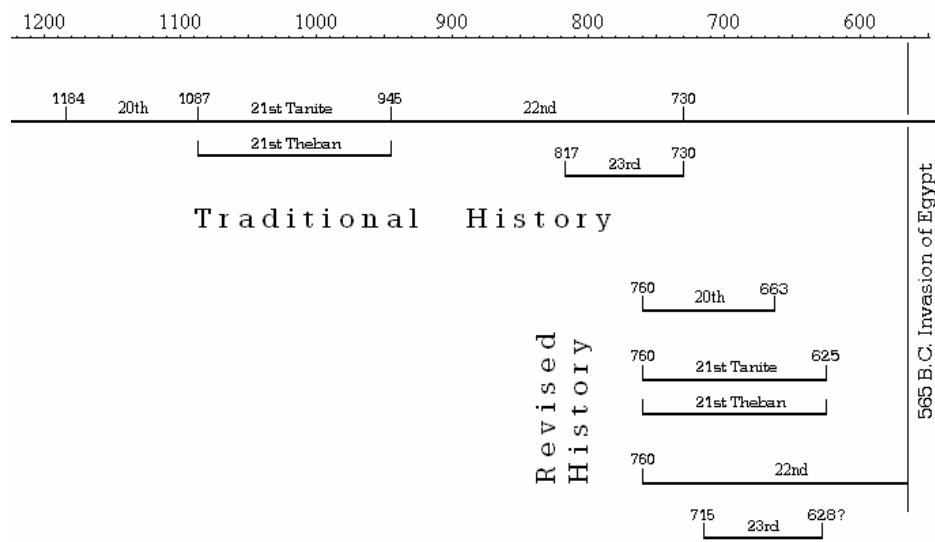
In the 3rd book in this series we will argue the case that the 19th dynasty of Egypt came to a close around the year 765 B.C. when a series of natural disasters encompassed the Ancient Near East, causing massive destruction of life and property accompanied by widespread famine. In the aftermath of this catastrophe, opportunistic groups of foreign nationals (the so called Sea Peoples of the traditional history) invaded Egypt, where they established independent regional governments which endured for decades following. Thus were born, in the space of a few short years, three Egyptian dynasties of kings, the 20th, 21st, and 22nd. Momentarily we will furnish some proof that this was so, though the bulk of the argument must await the publication of *The Genealogy of Ashakhet*.

Assuming this was the case, we argue that the earliest ancestors of Pasenhor in his famous genealogy, particularly the three kings Sheshonk I, Osorkon I, and Takeloth I, actually lived and ruled outside of Egypt, almost certainly somewhere in Libya. Sheshonk I probably never set foot in Egypt, and Osorkon I and Takeloth I were very likely quite elderly

when they arrived in the country, if indeed they arrived. No wonder these kings have left no artifacts behind. The first 22nd dynasty king to actually begin his reign within Egypt, whether or not he was born there, was Osorkon II. And from the beginning he ruled alongside kings of the 20th and 21st dynasties.

In the figure which follows (figure 11) we have produced a timeline to illustrate the point we are making. It reproduces the traditional dates for dynasties 20 through 23 (this time following Gardiner rather than Kitchen), much as we would find them in any standard treatment of Egyptian dynastic history. Alongside, in the revised history section of the diagram, we have positioned the 20th, 21st and 22nd dynasties to reflect the thesis we have just proposed. All three dynasties likely began within months of one another, in the aftermath of the natural disaster of which we have been speaking. We use the approximate date 760/759 B.C. for convenience. We confess that we really don't know the precise number, though 760 B.C. should be within a few years of the truth.

Figure 12: Revised Location of Dynasties 20, 21 and 22.



We anticipate two objections to this proposed timeline. The first is the fact that as yet we have supplied no supportive argument. The second is

the claim by traditional Egyptologists that there exists unimpeachable evidence that Hedjkheperre Sheshonk I, the supposed founder of the 22nd dynasty, reigned in Egypt beginning around the year 945 B.C., and that his reign immediately followed the time of Psusennes II, the terminal king of the 21st dynasty. What do we say to these assumed objections?

Our response to the first will follow in the balance of this chapter and in the three chapters following, where we present multiple lines of argument supportive of our thesis. The answer to the second objection is confined largely to our Appendix B. At this time we provide only the barest outlines of our counter-argument.

Egyptologists, following Manetho, have consistently followed a schema in which the 20th, 21st, and 22nd dynasties ruled Egypt in sequence. Gardiner, in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, assigns to the three dynasties the dates 1184-1087, 1087-945, and 945-730 B.C. respectively. The 945 date for the beginning of the 22nd dynasty is based entirely on a single fragile argument. It is assumed, entirely without warrant, that the founder of the 22nd dynasty was a king named Hedjkheperre Sheshonk, the author of a wall inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak. That wall inscription describes Sheshonk's attack on a group of Palestinian cities early in his reign. From the first moments this inscription was read in the mid-19th century, scholars identified this invasion of Palestine with an attack on Jerusalem by an Egyptian king named Shishak sometime during the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, an event recorded in the Hebrew Bible in 1 Kings 14:25-26. Based on a relatively secure Jewish chronology, that invasion is firmly dated around the year 940 B.C., and in consequence the assumption is made that the reign of Hedjkheperre Sheshonk began only slightly earlier, thus around 945 B.C. The Bubastite Portal inscription thus furnishes the lynchpin which holds both the 21st and 22nd dynasties firmly in their respective sequential time frames.

Needless to say we disagree entirely with almost every aspect of this syllogism. We do not believe that Sheshonk I had the prenomen Hedjkheperre, nor that he authored the Bubastite Portal inscription. Neither do we believe that the Portal inscription has anything to do with an attack on Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam. That most important city is certainly not mentioned in the listing of conquered towns. And

finally, we deny categorically that any evidence exists linking Sheshonk I with the time of Psusennes II and the end of the 21st dynasty. The details of our argument must await the proper forum. The matter is sufficiently complex that it is relegated to our Appendix B, where it will not interrupt the flow of our discussion.

If the 21st dynasty began around 760 B.C. as we claim, and continued through the balance of the 8th century and into the 7th century, overlapping much of the space occupied by the 22nd and 23rd dynasty kings, then when did it end? If we follow the listing of 21st dynasty kings in table 11 above, the dynasty lasted for 135 years (1080-945). In the revised history its dates would be 760-625 B.C. These dates are not written in stone. There are in fact several critical errors in the listing of kings which will need adjusting on an ad hoc basis. But for the purposes of this book the list should provide a workable framework for discussion.

Dates for the 20th dynasty are perhaps more controversial. Manetho states that this dynasty consisted of 12 Diospolite (Theban) kings who ruled for 135 years (Africanus) or 178 years (Eusebius). Egyptologists disagree with both figures and assign about 100 years to the 10 known kings. Gardiner places the dynasty between the years 1184-1087, thus assigning it 97 years in total. If correct, and if the dynasty began in 760 B.C., it must have ended around 663 B.C. This crude calculation will turn out to be remarkably accurate, requiring an adjustment of only a single year.

Our relocation of dynasties 20-22 is complete. The results of our analysis are tabulated in table 12 below.

Table 12: Conjectural Dates for Dynasties 20 - 22¹³¹

dynasty	Range of Kings	Dates
20 th dynasty	Setnakht-Ramses XI	760-663 B.C.
21 st dynasty	Smendes-Psusennes II	760-625 B.C.
22 nd dynasty	Sheshonk I – Osorkon IV	760-608 B.C.

These dates are already incorporated into our figure 12 timeline.

It is now time to defend our reconstruction of this segment of Egyptian dynastic history.

Supportive Argument

Our primary defence of the thesis that the 20th and 21st dynasties began around the year 760 B.C. is scattered through the whole of *The Genealogy of Ashakhet*, the third book in our series. That book in its entirety argues the case that Ramses II of the 19th dynasty ruled during the years 840-774 B.C., and that the 19th dynasty ended ten years later, in 765 B.C. Clearly that situation *demands* that we position dynasties 20, 21, and 22 very soon after the year 765 B.C.

But there is no need for the reader to await the publication of another book for confirmation that we are right. The balance of this chapter provides, in point form, at least four reasons why the reader should be convinced immediately that our thesis is at least plausible, if not probable. The final point, based on the Berlin genealogy of the priest Ashakhet, is particularly compelling. And we end the chapter with an argument based on the archaeology of Nubia, which strongly suggests that the 20th

¹³¹In this table we no longer follow table 8 on page 58 of our earlier book in listing Osorkon IV following a king Pedubast as the terminal king of the 22nd dynasty. That earlier table followed Aston's analysis of 22nd and 23rd dynasty kings largely because we agreed with Aston's analysis of the kings of the 23rd dynasty and there was nothing to be gained by disputing his dates for the terminal kings of the 22nd dynasty. Here we must set the record straight. Following Kenneth Kitchen we believe that Osorkon IV succeeded directly the reign of Sheshonk V. We assume, as mentioned in our earlier discussion of the reign of Aakherure Amenhotep, that he reigned from 617 B.C. (the date of death of Sheshonk V) till around 608 B.C. (see above pp 164-65). We omit the reign of king Aakheperure Amenhotep from this list, since we cannot prove conclusively that he was a son of Osorkon IV and belongs in the 22nd dynasty sequence.

dynasty of kings ruled precisely where we have re-positioned them. Other arguments follow in the remaining chapters of this book. In defense of our thesis we therefore argue as follows.

1. We have quoted Gardiner regarding the complete absence of monumental evidence which exists for the early kings of the 22nd dynasty, suggestive of the fact that either they were petty kings, mere nomarchs with very limited power, or that their reigns actually took place outside of Egypt. Even the reign of Osorkon II yields inscriptional evidence very narrowly centered around Bubastis in the delta, supportive of our belief that he was merely a regional ruler. There is absolutely no evidence supporting the claim by Egyptologists that these early 22nd dynasty kings ruled the whole of Egypt. Egyptologists speculate that the fragmentation of Egypt began only at the end of the reign of Osorkon II, when Takeloth II emerged to contest for power. But again there is no evidence that this was so. The *Chronicle* of prince Osorkon, the future Osorkon III, suggests that the first three decades of the 7th century were extremely chaotic, with multiple pharaohs competing for expanded power. In the revised history this “great disruption” set the stage for the conquest of Egypt by Esarhaddon of Assyria, who immediately divided Egypt among a dozen regional authorities, a division of power apparently patterned after the existing fragmented political structure of the country. And fifty years later, the arrival of Piankhi to suppress the Tefnakht rebellion confirms the fact that Egypt continued to be divided among at least five kings (assuming Piankhi already ruled in Thebes). We wonder where Egyptologists have derived their notion of one nation, one king. Every time the fog lifts briefly, and we obtain a glimpse at the political landscape in Egypt, we see multiple kings. If we are correct then Egypt was never ruled by a single all powerful pharaoh after the demise of the 19th dynasty king Ramses II. We are on firm ground when we suggest that during the final sixty years of the 8th century at least three dynasties of kings ruled simultaneously within Egypt. We are bound by the evidence, not by the assumption of contiguous dynasties imposed upon us by traditionalist Egyptologists.

2. Manetho specifically tells us that the three dynasties we place in the 8th century consisted of regional kings. We are informed by his excerptors, Africanus and Eusebius, that the 20th dynasty consisted of 12

Diospolite (Theban area) kings, whose names were not preserved. These same sources tell us that the 21st dynasty consisted of seven kings from Tanis, and that the 22nd was made up of “nine kings of Bubastis.” That language at least admits the possibility that these three dynasties ruled localized regions of the country from their respective residence cities, not the whole of Egypt.¹³² The Diospolite kings ruled only in the south.¹³³

3. It is well known that several 21st dynasty kings and dignitaries, and not a few members also of the 22nd dynasty, are associated in the monuments in some undefined way with the 20th dynasty. Psusennes I and his son Ankhefenmut¹³⁴ at times identified themselves with the Ramesside kings by adopting the hyphenated names Ramses-Psusennes and Ramses-Ankhefenmut. Various attempts have been made to explain this intrusion of the name Ramses into a 21st dynasty context, omitting that which is most reasonable, namely, that the Tanite priest/kings ruled in close association with the Ramesside kings, often entering into marital alliances. Kitchen made note of this affinity with the 20th dynasty kings in his commentary on these names, but could only leave the matter unresolved. His comments are worth reproducing:

It has not escaped attention that Psusennes I appears to claim some connection with the preceding, Ramesside, dynasty. Thus, one fragmentary block from Tanis bears the cartouche ‘Ramesses-Psusennes, Beloved of [Amun]’, which recurs on a ring-bezel from the burial of Wen-djeba-en-Djed in the tomb of Psusennes I. Furthermore, in room 3 of his Tanite tomb, Psusennes I made provision for the burial of a prince who was doubtless a son that predeceased him, given the probable long duration of Psusennes’ reign. In brief form, this man was called simply ‘the King’s Son, Ankhefenmut’; but on the end of his

¹³²Manetho proceeds to claim that the 23rd dynasty consisted of “four kings of Tanis” and the 24th of a single king “Bochoris of Sais”, yet few if any Egyptologists would claim that these dynastic kings ruled the whole of Egypt.

¹³³We assume that the residence city of the 20th dynasty kings was originally Diospolis Parva, near Thebes. The 20th dynasty kings were entombed in the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes, indication that the south of Egypt was their home. The vast majority of their monuments have been found in the south. Ramses III, who ruled near the outset of this time period, fought against the intrusion of the Sea Peoples in the North, but apparently his successes were not so far ranging as he lets on in his inscriptions.

¹³⁴Throughout our discussion of the 21st dynasty we will continue to use the number designation of the two Tanite kings named Psusennes, even though, as argued below, we believe that the traditional history has reversed the true order of these kings. The king named Psusennes I, with son named Ankhefenmut, was actually the second of the two kings by that name, and technically should be named Psusennes II.

sarcophagus were set out his full name and titles, calling him (*inter alia*): ‘Bodily King’s Son whom he loves, Ramesses-Ankhefenmut.’ These compound names, Ramesses-Psusennes and Ramesses-Ankhefenmut, are wholly in the style of those of the sons and successors of Ramesses III in the 20th Dynasty, and suggest that Psusennes I and his son claimed a link with the Ramessides, a claim which was not taken up by their successors. TIP 41

Twenty-second dynasty associations with the 20th dynasty are equally clear from names on the monuments. Many dignitaries mentioned in 22nd dynasty inscriptions bore the title “King’s Son of Ramses”. There is only one reasonable explanation for this title - the bearer of the name was a son, or perhaps a maternal grandson, of a king named Ramses. And once again Ramses III would be the most likely candidate. These references are late. At least one, that of a “King’s Son of Ramses Pashedbast”, found among the relics in the burial chamber of Harnakht, son of Osorkon II, comes from the last decade of the 8th century (in the revised history).¹³⁵ Two others are even later. We quote Kitchen on the details. But we should read critically. He is discussing the sons of Shoshenk III, three of whom are certain, the fourth and fifth less so. It is only because their names appear on monuments contemporary with Sheshonk III that they are included in Kitchen’s list:

A fourth son was a “King’s Son of Ramses”, Commander of All Troops, Great Chief of [—], Takeloth (C), son of the Lord of the Two Lands, his mokther being Djed-Bast-es-anhk’, whose activity at Busiris is denoted by a donation-stela of Year 18, most likely of Shoshenq III. A fifth possible prince was the ‘High Priest of Amenresonter, King’s Son of Ramesses, Mek-prince of Pawer ..., Army-leader, Padebehenbast’, on a donation-stela of Year 28 of Shoshenq III, probably from Kom el Hisn. TIP 305.

Takeloth and Padebehenbast are not sons of Sheshonk as Kitchen thinks. They are, as their title clearly suggests, sons of a 20th dynasty king Ramses.¹³⁶ There are yet other dignitaries who bear the identical title, but these examples are sufficient to draw attention to the problem. What else should we conclude from these references than the fact that sons and grandsons of a Ramesside king, possibly Ramses III in view of his notoriety, lived into the reign of Sheshonk III, whose dates are 712-673

¹³⁵Cf. Kitchen, TIP 93 (p.118).

¹³⁶It is possible, of course, that Sheshonk III married a daughter of Ramses III, and that these children were born to him by that wife.

B.C. in the revised chronology. This would be possible only if Ramses III ruled in the middle years of the 8th century.

4. One important monument, the so-called “Berlin stele”¹³⁷, which contains what we have termed “the genealogy of Ashakhet”, provides a listing of the high priests of Ptah in Memphis extending back over a thousand years from the time of its composition sometime in the late 7th century. Apparently the Memphite priests kept meticulous records which allowed for the creation of this extremely detailed inscription. In many instances the inscription names a king under whose rule a particular high priest held office. To be specific, it states that two high priests ruled during the lengthy reign of Psusennes I near the beginning of the 21st dynasty, while the high priest in the third generation prior ruled under Ramses II of the 19th dynasty. The 20th dynasty is noticeably absent from the document, leading to speculation that an haplography has caused the artisan to omit entirely the line of priests contemporary with the Ramesside kings of the 20th dynasty. That conclusion is an act of desperation. It cannot be sustained by an examination of the monument. The end of the reign of the 19th dynasty king Ramses II clearly precedes the beginning of the 21st dynasty by no more than two generations. This is possible only if the 20th and 21st dynasties are contemporary with one another. The Memphite priests naturally related their terms in office to the 21st dynasty kings whose realms included Memphis, ignoring completely the parallel 20th dynasty which ruled the Theban area. The Berlin genealogy, in and of itself, confirms the overlap between the two dynasties, a critical aspect of our revised chronology.

While we are on the subject of the Berlin genealogy we must add a brief note about its chronology. The creation of a timeline from the Berlin monument is facilitated by comparing it with a Serapeum stele authored by a priest of Ptah named Ashakhet, who provides his own genealogy, which merges with the Berlin list of names. We cannot overemphasize the importance of these two documents. In combination they will assist us in reconstructing much of Egyptian dynastic history in the next two books of our series. Kitchen acknowledges their importance, though Egyptologists generally are less than enamoured with the Berlin

¹³⁷Ludwig Borchardt, *Quellen Und Forschungen zur Zeitbestimmung der Agyptischen Geschichte* (1935) pp. 96-112.

monument, since its content flatly contradicts the traditional history.

Two major genealogical documents form the core of our knowledge of Memphite pontiffs for this period, and (combined with contemporary data) have an important and direct bearing on 21st-Dynasty chronology. These are the remarkable genealogies of Memphite priests, one of which is in Berlin (23673) and the other is a partial parallel from the Serapeum, which is now in the Louvre (96; Cat. 52). TIP 151

The two genealogies merge beginning in the sixth generation back from Ashakhet with an ancestor named Shedsunefertem. With this name the Ashakhet stele comes to an end, while the Berlin document continues on for a further 50 generations. Four and five generations back from Shedsunefertem we encounter priests named Harsiese and Pipi, each of whom served under Psusennes I (Psebkhanu I) of the 21st dynasty. Thus the beginning of the 21st dynasty can be dated to the 10th and 11th generations before Ashakhet. It follows that if we can date the time of Ashakhet, and can figure out the approximate length of a generation of the priests of Ptah in Memphis, we can date the beginning of the 21st dynasty. Both of these subjects are covered in detail in the next book of our series, the title of which reflects the importance attached to the two documents. Here we merely summarize our later conclusions.

The high priests of Ptah married early, probably in their teens. In consequence they were only fifteen or sixteen years old when their firstborn offspring were born. In the balance of our Displaced Dynasties series we use the figure 16 years per generation for the Memphite priests with surprisingly accurate results. And we have dated the birth of Ashakhet, the author of the Serapeum stele, to around the year 600 B.C. It follows that the priests Harsiese and Pipi who served Psebkhanu I were born around the years 776 and 760 respectively. Assuming they were around 30-40 years of age when they performed their cultic rituals, Psebkhanu (Psusennes I) must have reigned in the final third of the 8th century, precisely where we would expect him to be if the dynasty began around the year 760 B.C. (see table 13 below).

For the moment we rest our case, and with some confidence move the 21st dynasty of kings from the 11th into the 8th century. The displacement is straightforward. All dates in table 11 on page 187 must be lowered by 320 years, moving the dynasty from its traditional 1080-945 B.C.

placement to its revised location. The revised dates for the Tanite/Theban kings of this dynasty are listed in table 13 below.

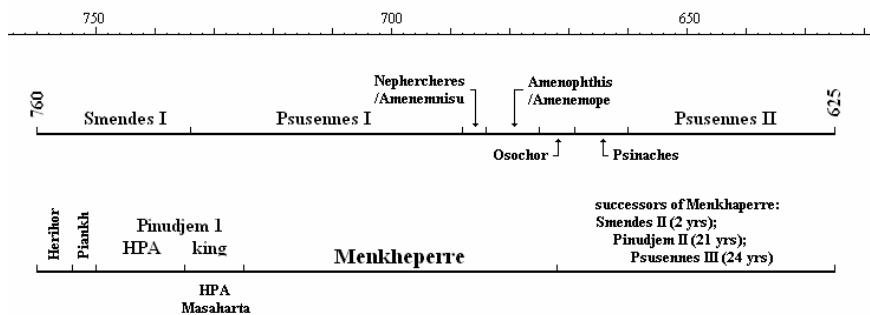
Table 13: Kings of the Tanite & Theban 21st Dynasty
(Revised History – Interim)

21st Dynasty Priests & Kings

Tanite Kings	Theban Priests & Kings
760-734 Smendes I (26 years)	760-754 Herihor in S. (6 years)
734-688 Psusennes I (46 years)	754-750 Piankh (4 years)
688-684 Nephercheres (or Amenemnisu) (4 years)	750-726 Pinudjem I HPA & king (24 years)
684-675 Amenophthis (or Amenemope) (9 years)	734-726 Masaharta (8 years)
675-669 Osochor (6 years)	726-672 Menkheperre (54 years)
669-660 Psinaches (9 years)	672-670 Smendes II (2 years)
660-646 Psusennes II (14 yrs or 660-625 (35 years)	670-649 Pinudjem II (21 years) 649-625 Psusennes III (24 years)

The numbers in table 13 are depicted visually below in figure 13.

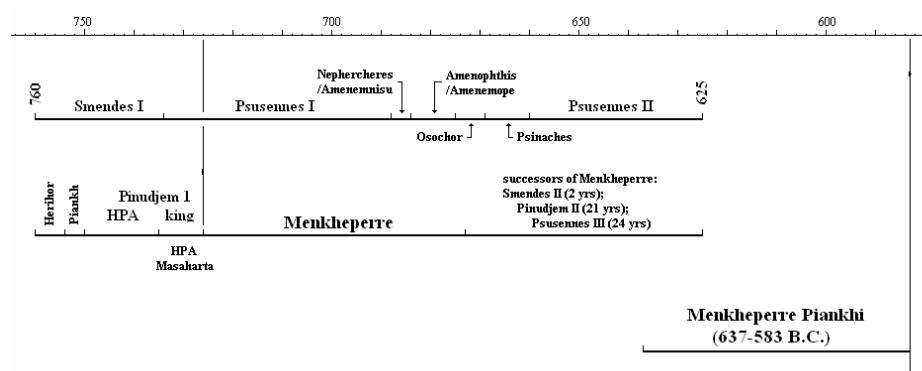
Figure 13: Dynasty 21 Moved to the 8th/7th Centuries B.C.



We set out in this chapter to prove that the 21st dynasty Theban priest-

king Menkheperre and the 25th dynasty priest-king Menkheperre Piankhi were one and the same person. Thus far we have reasoned that the 21st dynasty belongs historically in the approximate time frame 760-625 B.C. The dates for the 21st dynasty Menkheperre have now been reduced to around 726-672 B.C. Piankhi ruled from 638-584 B.C. The two kings remain separated in time by 88 years. Clearly the Theban branch of the 21st dynasty must be displaced further.

Figure 14: The Two Menkheperres 89 Years Apart



A Final Transposition of the 21st Dynasty, Theban Branch.

Theban Branch is not Part of the 21st Dynasty

Thus far we have assumed, following the traditional history, that the Tanite and Theban branches of the 21st dynasty were complementary factions of the same dynasty, ruling their respective halves of the country for precisely the same length of time, beginning and ending in the same years, a claim that should immediately cause us to wonder, since no reason is given in the traditional history for their simultaneous rise to power, nor for their synchronized demise.

It is time to sever the chord linking the two branches of the 21st dynasty. In the chronology suggested in figure 12 (page 195) there is no possibility

that the Theban branch of the 21st dynasty existed where it is positioned there. According to our revised history both the 20th and both branches of the 21st dynasties began around the year 760 B.C. and overlapped each other for close to one hundred years. We thus have two dynasties of kings, the 20th and the “21st Theban”, ruling in the identical area in the same time frame. This is clearly an impossibility. The 21st dynasty Theban priest/kings must move. Accordingly we must remove the link between Smendes, the founder of the Tanite branch of the 21st dynasty, and Herihor, the founder of the inappropriately named “21st dynasty Theban branch” – and displace the latter sequence of kings.

Later in this book we will argue *against* the assumption, long held by Egyptologists, that the king named Nesubanebdjed in the monuments, and in the story of the travels of (king) Wenamun, must be identified as Smendes, the founder of the 21st dynasty. We will argue instead that this Nesubanebdjed lived and ruled near the end of the 21st dynasty, not at its beginning. And since this priest/king is a contemporary of Herihor, the founder of the “Theban branch of the dynasty”, it follows that the Theban kings overlap at most the final decades of the reign of the Tanite kings. The beginning of the Theban branch lies a century after the time of Smendes, and precisely when we expect that the 25th dynasty ancestors of Menkheperre Piankhi began to rule in Egypt. Properly understood, the “Theban branch of the 21st dynasty” is no more a part of the 21st dynasty than are the 22nd and 23rd dynasties, which overlap the 21st dynasty to an even greater extent. It is a misnomer to refer to these kings as 21st dynasty pharaohs, though for the sake of consistency we will continue to do so. As we will soon see, they include Piankhi and his immediate ancestors. As such they are forerunners of Manetho’s 25th dynasty.

The critic has no grounds to complain. The Theban branch of the 21st dynasty is a figment of the collective imaginations of 20th century Egyptologists, based on a single unproven assumption (Smendes = Nesubanebdjed). Manetho knows nothing about any Theban kings contemporary with his 21st dynasty. Not a single monument connects Pinudjem I (1070-1032 B.C.) with Smendes (1069-1043 B.C.), Amenemnisu (1043-1039 B.C.) or Psusennes I (1039-991 B.C.), northern kings whose reigns his life presumably overlapped. No monument of the priest king Menkheperre mentions a single Tanite king. Once we remove

the faulty Smendes = Nesubanebdjed lynchpin which mistakenly holds the Theban kings wrongly in place, we are at liberty to move them at will, so long as they fit in their new surroundings.

Theban Branch Moved into 7th Century

With that in mind we detach the Theban priest/kings from the Tanite branch of the 21st dynasty, and lower the table 13 dates for these kings by a further 88 years¹³⁸, bringing them fully into the 7th century, overlapping the final decades of the 21st dynasty Tanite kings. The dates for Menkheperre are those forced upon us by the results of our previous analyses of the life of Piankhi, which clearly demonstrate that a king by the name Menkheperre Piankhi ruled Egypt during the years 638-584.

Table 14: Revised Dates for the Theban 21st Dynasty Kings¹³⁹

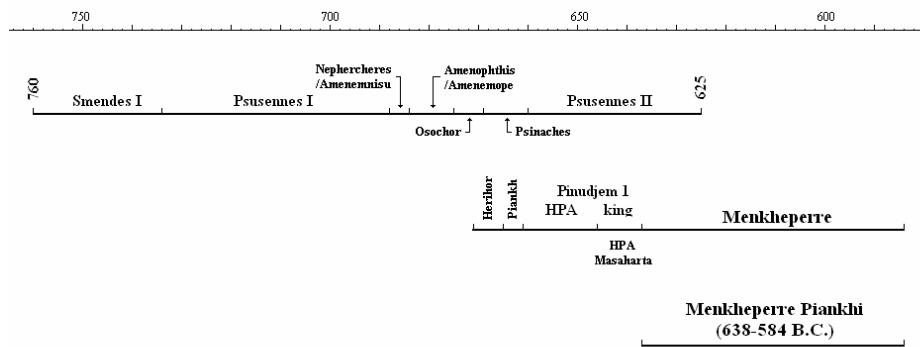
Previously Assigned Dates	Priest/King	Revised Dates
760-754	Herihor in S. (6 years)	671-665
754-750	Piankh (4 years)	665-662
750-726	Pinudjem I HPA & king (24 years)	662-638
734-726	Masaharta (8 years HPA)	646-639
726-672	Menkheperre HPA & king (54 years)	638-584

¹³⁸The net effect of all of these reductions is to lower the dates of the Theban “kings” Herihor, Piankh, Pinudjem and Menkheperre by 408 years from the dates assigned them by the traditional history, as listed in table 11 on p. 190.

¹³⁹We have made but one slight change in the numbers. Reducing Herihor’s dates by 88 years produces the years 672-666. For reasons that will be obvious in a moment we believe that the dates 671-665 B.C. are more appropriate. The 665 date for the end of Herihor’s tenure in office and the beginning of Piankh’s are tentative even in the traditional history. We argue later that both Herihor and Piankh likely died in 662. The reader will also note that we have not included the revised dates for the final three Theban kings. Clearly they do not belong in the position assigned to them by Kitchen, who listed them in sequence as if their pontificates followed successively after the death of Menkheperre. As it turns out several of them were elevated to their clerical positions during the long reign of their father Menkheperre (see Appendix C).

These revised dates for the 21st dynasty Theban branch are now incorporated into a revised timeline for dynasty 21.

**Figure 15: Dates for the Theban 21st Dynasty
Lowered by 88 Years**



There remains for us the task of demonstrating a remarkable correspondence between these dates and information provided by a multitude of monuments. The analysis will require several chapters. But first an excursus into Nubia. We need to add to the timeline the dates for the 20th dynasty kings, and introduce yet one more argument for placing them in the 8th/7th centuries B.C.

20th Dynasty (Revised History)

A Revised 20th Dynasty Chronology

Most of our attention thus far has been directed toward the 21st dynasty, this for an obvious reason. We needed to revise the dates for this dynasty in order to prove that the two priest kings Menkheperre were the same person. But our revision also demands that the 20th dynasty be moved substantially, from its traditional location in the years around 1177-1080¹⁴⁰ to the years beginning around 760 B.C., a displacement of 417

¹⁴⁰In table 15 we use the regnal years provided by Gardiner (*Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 446). But

years. We have already introduced some argument defending this repositioning. It is time to assign specific dates to individual kings. For convenience we simply reproduce, in our table 16 below, the dates for this dynasty using the reign lengths provided by Gardiner in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, based on the assumption that the dynasty began around the year 760 B.C.

For reasons that will become clear in the next chapter, we actually begin the dynasty one year later than the date used for the 21st Tanite kings. We believe, with good cause, that the 19th year of Ramses XI should be dated in 671 B.C., and thus that the 1st year of this king occurred in the year 689 B.C. With the reign lengths provided by Gardiner, the only way to achieve that end is to begin the dynasty in 759; either that or increase the reign length of one of the kings by a single year. We choose the first alternative simply to expedite the process. The table 15 dates are at least close to the truth, and will suffice for the argument of this book.

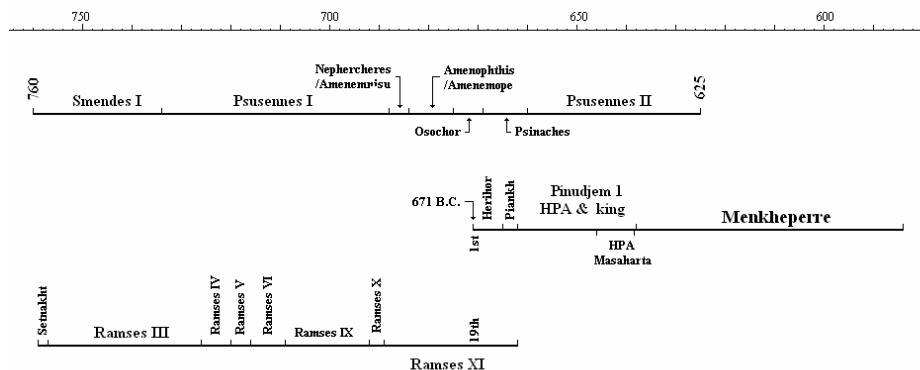
Table 15: Revised Dates for the 20th Dynasty Kings

Table ?: 20 th Dynasty Chronology		
Setnakht	2 years	759-757 B.C.
Ramses III	32 years	757-726 B.C.
Ramses IV	6 years	726-720 B.C.
Ramses V	4 years	720-716 B.C.
Ramses VI	7 years	716-709 B.C.
Ramses VII	---	709 B.C.
Ramses VIII	---	709 B.C.
Ramses IX	17 years	709-692 B.C.
Ramses X	3 years	692-689 B.C.
Ramses XI	27 years	689-662 B.C.

we reduce Gardiner's absolute dates from 1184-1087 to 1177-1080 in order to end the dynasty in 1080, as Kitchen does. Since the dynasty is being moved, the traditional absolute dates have absolutely no bearing on our revision. The change is made only to synchronize the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st in the traditional history, since we are relying on two different sources for data on the two dynasties.

These dates may now be added to the timeline introduce earlier (figure 15, p. 208) to produce our final view of the combined 20th, 21st Tanite, and detached 21st Theban dynasty chronology. We will have cause in the next chapter to refer constantly to this timeline.

Figure 16: Completed Revised Timeline of the 20th, 21st Tanite, and “21st Theban” Dynasties.



Before moving on to analyze and defend these revised dates we digress one last time to provide additional argument for positioning the 20th dynasty in the 8th/7th centuries. Our attention is focused on Nubia.

Archaeological Dark Age

In the aftermath of his early 20th century excavations at the Nuri cemetery, several miles upstream from Napata, Reisner developed an elaborate theory concerning the origins of the 25th dynasty Nubian kingdom, how it began as a province of Egypt under the 22nd dynasty and how its Libyan officials in time became independent of and ultimately conquered the motherland in the time of Piankhi. We let the Egyptologist D.M. Dixon tell the story:

Reisner believed that during the rule of the Twenty-second (Libyan) Dynasty in Egypt (945-730 B.C.) Nubia remained a province of that land ruled by one of the king's sons. On the break-up of Egypt into a number of semi-independent principalities soon after the death of Shoshenq I, Nubia too, according to Reisner,

became independent under its Egyptianized Libyan governor, who thus became the ancestor of the Kushite royal family. This man Reisner identified with the ‘Commander of the Army Pashedenbastet, son of King Shoshenk, whose name occurred on a fragment of an alabaster vessel found in the pyramid of Queen Akheqa at Nuri, and he thought this Pashedenbastet was the father of Kashta, the first of the Kushite rulers about whose activity anything is known. In that case, Kashta’s occupation of Upper Egypt and his action in forcing the Divine Adoratress Shepenwepet, the daughter of Osorkon III to adopt his own daughter Amenirdis, would have to be seen as part of a struggle between rival Libyans for supremacy in Egypt – an unconvincing theory.¹⁴¹

This theory of a “Libyan origin for the 25th dynasty”, now almost universally rejected by Egyptologists, changed somewhat in its details but not in its substance several years later when Reisner excavated the royal cemetery at el-Kurru, a few miles downstream from Napata. There Reisner found, in addition to the more elaborate pyramid tombs of Piankhi, Shabaka, and Shabataka, thirteen tumuli clearly older than the 25th dynasty tombs. Following extensive analysis of these tumuli he concluded that they represented five or six generations of the immediate ancestors of Kashta, the father of Piankhi in the popular history. On the assumption that a generation equaled roughly fifteen to twenty years Reisner estimated that the earliest of the tumuli at this location (Tumulus 1) should be dated around 850 B.C., over a century preceding Piankhi’s invasion of the delta (in the traditional history). This hypothetical mid-9th century date for Tumulus 1, roughly contemporary with Osorkon II in the traditional history, suggested an early 22nd dynasty origin for this king’s reign, an opinion supported (supposedly) by the few artifacts recovered from the tombs.

Following the el-Kurru excavations Reisner modified his earlier opinion concerning 25th dynasty origins, deleting Pashedenbast from the equation, but maintaining the dynasty’s assumed Libyan connection. For the record we note the characteristics of the theory in its final form, again following D.M. Dixon:

Reisner concluded that ‘while the northern Libyans were entering the Delta, or soon thereafter, the southern Libyans, the Temehuw, pushed into the Nile Valley in Ethiopia [i.e. Kush] coming no doubt over the old road of the oases. During the reign of Sheshanq I, or possibly a little later, a Libyan chief, the man buried in

¹⁴¹D.M. Dixon, “The Origin of the Kingdom of Kush (Napata-Meroe),” JEA 50 (1964) 121

Ku. Tum 1, established himself on an estate at el-Kurruw near Napata In all probability this first chief of the el-Kurruw family seized at once on the powers of the old Egyptian Viceroy and became like all the other Libyan chiefs in the Nile Valley nominally tributary to the Libyan King of Egypt.¹⁴²

We have no quarrel with many of Reisner's conclusions. Save for the dates they may be correct. But it is important to note that none of the Kurru tumuli on which this opinion is based contain identifiable inscriptions. Their occupants therefore remain anonymous. Without exception the graves have been thoroughly looted. Little to nothing remains of the original funerary artifacts. No bodies were found, only scattered relics overlooked by tomb robbers. But there are thirteen tumuli, and they do appear to antedate the tomb of Piankhi.

Outside of this graveyard at el-Kurru, whether in Napata, or elsewhere in the area of the Dongola Reach between the 3rd and 4th cataracts, there is no evidence of occupation by these ancestors of king Piankhi. Even more surprising is the absence of any evidence of contact with Egypt, much less occupation by Egyptians, extending backward an additional three centuries from the time of the Tumulus 1 king. *Prior to the assumed 850 B.C. date for this ancestor, there is no archaeological evidence of any interaction between Nubia and Egypt backward as far as the mid-20th dynasty, roughly 1130 B.C. in the traditional history!* Throughout this extended period of time there exists, in the immediate vicinity of Napata, an "archaeological vacuum" or "dark age" extending from c.a. 1130-850 B.C., roughly the time from Ramses III to the beginning of the reign of Osorkon II. The dates, of course, relate to the traditional history.

This so-called Nubian "dark age" is not restricted to the Dongola Reach. It applies to the entire length of the Nile above the 1st cataract! To use the words of Dixon (for the last time): "During the Twentieth Dynasty, the area between the First and Fourth Cataracts was abandoned by the Egyptians and thereafter for nearly three centuries an almost complete blanket of silence descends on events in that land."¹⁴³ Even assuming that Egypt did continue its involvement in Nubian politics through the

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 126. Dixon is here following Reisner's comments in Sudan Notes and Records 2 (1919), p. 247.

¹⁴³D.M. Dixon, "The Origin of the Kingdom of Kush (Napata-Meroe)," JEA 50 (1964) 121.

end of the 20th dynasty, as attested by Egyptian documents from the reigns of Ramses IX through Ramses XI, Egyptologists remain hard pressed to explain why Nubia, from Assuan to Meroe, was abandoned by Egypt for over two hundred years (1070-850 B.C.).

This extended silence continues to perplex scholars, who are unanimous in their belief that the Napatan area contained a thriving temple cultus during the New Kingdom and again in the days of Piankhi. What happened in the interval is a mystery. No satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from Egyptologists. Bruce Trigger, arguably one of the foremost authorities on Nubian culture and history, raises the possibility that some continuity was maintained during that lengthy period, but admits that evidence is entirely lacking:

Unfortunately, it is not known what happened in Upper Nubia between 1070 and 850 B.C. The Egyptian towns north of the Third Cataract seem to have been abandoned by the end of the New Kingdom and some Egyptologists have doubted that there were any Egyptians living in Upper Nubia after that time. Others have suggested that nominal Egyptian sovereignty was upheld by the priests at Gebel Barkal, who remained in contact with the priesthood of Amon at Thebes, or by Egyptian priests, officials, and traders who had remained in Upper Nubia and intermarried with the local population to form a ‘government in exile’ in opposition to the Libyan rulers in Egypt.¹⁴⁴

In the revised history there is no need to explain an archaeological “dark age” because none existed. We have just finished arguing that the reign of Ramses III, which ended shortly after the middle of the 8th century, was followed immediately by the reign of Osorkon II. In fact, the reigns of the two kings overlapped for roughly a decade. No three hundred year interval existed between them. Piankh, the grandfather of Piankhi, was a contemporary of Ramses XI, the terminal 20th dynasty king. It is likely that he was one of the occupants of the later el Kurru tumuli. The occupant of Tumulus 1 must be a contemporary of the earlier Ramessides. He does not postdate the end of the twentieth dynasty by 200 years. He precedes it by at least 50 years. There is no 200 year gap in the archaeological record. The assumed historical vacuum in Nubia is a fiction, resulting entirely from the same faulty Egyptian chronology which has created archaeological mass confusion elsewhere, in cultures

¹⁴⁴Bruce G. Trigger, *Nubia Under the Pharaohs* (1976) 139.

whose histories are linked to that of Egypt. The New Kingdom temple ritual extends uninterrupted through the reign of Piankhi. Properly understood, the archaeology of Nubia constitutes a powerful and convincing argument in support of our contention that the 20th dynasty kings were followed immediately by the 21st Theban dynasty ancestors of Piankhi.

In view of the importance of the critical transition period between the 20th and 21st Theban dynasties, it is imperative that we examine the final years of the reign of Ramses XI, the terminal 20th dynasty king in the traditional history.