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Kyle H. Keimer and George A. Pierce

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CHAPTER 42

RECONSTRUCTING THE KUSHITE ROYAL HOUSE

The Chronology of Egypt's 25th Dynasty
and Its Relation to Judah

Jeremy Pope

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Jeremy Pope

Introduction

At the close of the 8th century BCE, a text attributed to the prophet Isaiah described “swift messengers” heading west toward the Nile (Isa 18:1–7). The reasons for their mission were predictable, but the results decidedly were not. Faced with the Assyrian threat in the east, the inhabitants of the Levant had been appealing to Egypt for decades, with varying degrees of success. When Tilgath-Pileser III swept down the Mediterranean littoral, Hanunu of Gaza found refuge in the Nile Valley, but after the Assyrian king’s death, Hoshea of Samaria received little help from the obscure “So, King of Egypt” (Pope 2014b: 108–11). Iamani of Ashdod fared even worse when he arrived in northeast Africa, as the pharaoh readily extradited him into the hands of Sargon II. Subsequent envoys from Ekron and Judah were somehow able to convince the pharaoh to dispatch his own troops to fight Sennacherib on their behalf. Levantine appeals to Egypt continued after Isaiah’s lifetime, with an equally mixed record. When Ba’alu of Tyre sought help against Sennacherib’s successor, he turned once again to Egypt, which soon folded against the Assyrian threat (Onasch 1994). Egypt thereafter employed Judahite soldiers (Kahn 2007), but it then invaded the Levant, clashed with Judah’s troops, and deposed its king, Jehoa-haz (2 Kgs 23:34). Just a few generations later, Egypt was once again in Judah’s corner, encouraging Zedekiah’s rebellion against Babylonia (Jer 44:30; 2 Kgs 25:1). For Levantine diplomats in the Late Iron Age, Egypt must have seemed a protean enigma.

Egypt’s changing policies and fortunes during this era were due in large part to the unprecedented stakes of dynastic turnover: in no other period had the transition between dynasties corresponded to such radical fluctuations in the size of a pharaoh’s domain. When a Kushite king asserted his suzerainty over Memphis in the second half of the 8th century BCE, the length of the pharaonic state *doubled*, stretching from the Sahelian steppe to the marshy apex of the Egyptian Delta (Figure 42.1; Pope 2014a). His successors then extended their dynasty’s authority to the Sinai border, and the population under their control was now capable of fielding some of the largest armies in Egypt’s history. The resulting Double Kingdom of Kush and Egypt was a mosaic of contrasting ecozones and local cultures, each with its own political traditions, styles of warfare, and priorities for international relations (Pope forthcoming). When the Kushite kings based in Upper Nubia became Egypt’s 25th

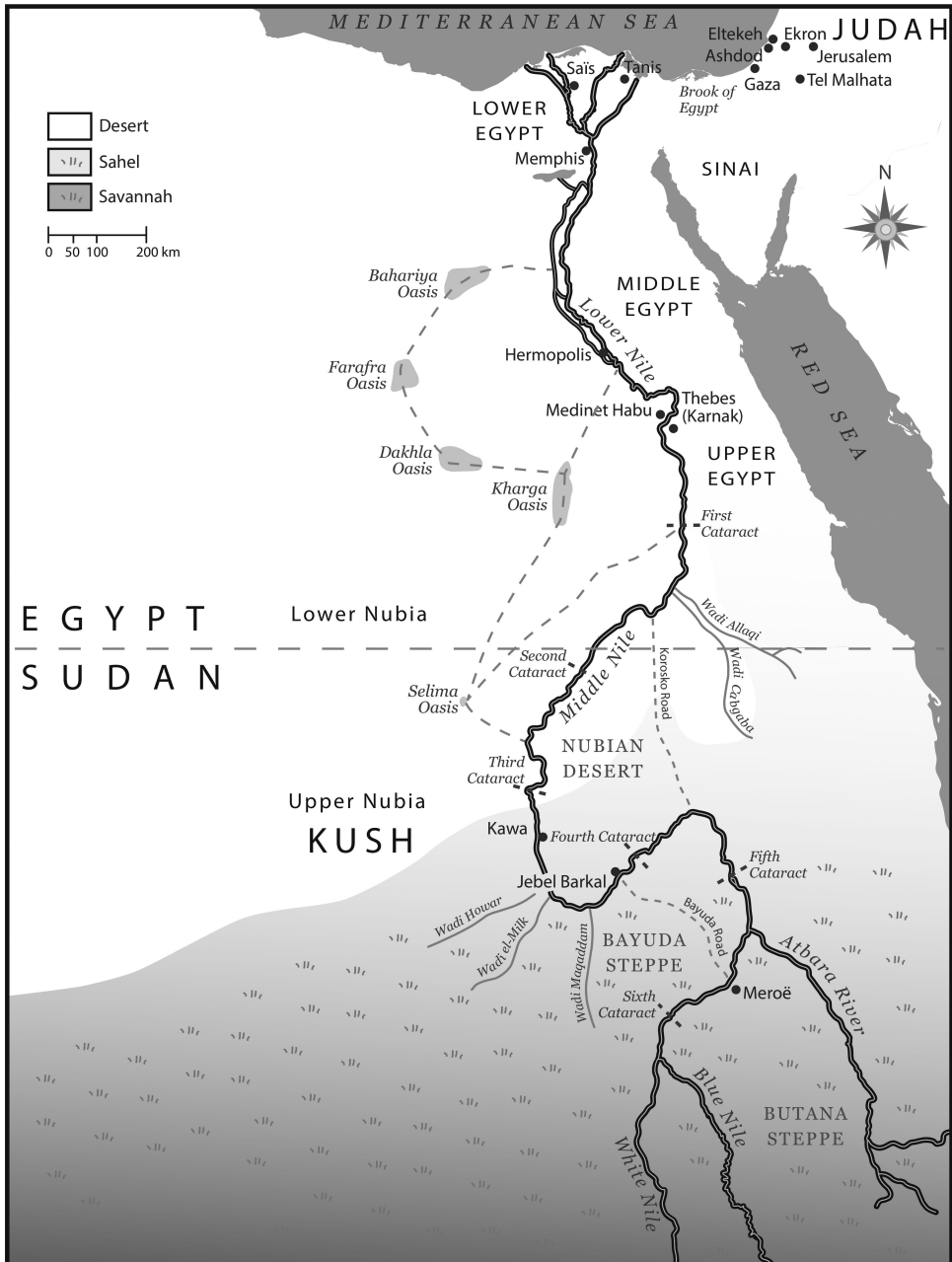


Figure 42.1 Map of northeast Africa and the southern Levant during the first millennium BCE. Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Cartography Laboratory

Dynasty, they faced the challenge of amalgamating these disparate polities into a single state.

The new dynasty's sense of territorial ownership and responsibility appears to have evolved in stages. The Kushite king Pi(ankh)y was content to let the petty rulers of the

22nd, 23rd, and 24th Dynasties war among themselves in Lower Egypt, but he objected when they involved Hermopolis in Middle Egypt (Eide et al. 1994: 69). The Kushite royal house initially manifested little interest in political affairs of the Near East (Pope 2014b: 113), and the Assyrian king Sargon II complained of Kush that it was “an inapproachable region” ruled by a dynasty “whose fathers never—from remote days until now—had sent messengers to inquire after the health of my royal forefathers” (Frame 2021: 153). Pi(ankh)y’s successors would soon become more possessive of the Delta and more assertive in the Near Eastern theater of war, but their involvement later precipitated an Assyrian reprisal that expelled the Kushite rulers from Egyptian soil (Onasch 1994). In the power vacuum left by the Assyrian conquest, unification of Egypt now proceeded in reverse order—this time, from north to south and eventually into the fortresses of Lower Nubia—under the command of a Lower Egyptian 26th Dynasty increasingly hostile to the retracting Kushite state. The continuity of pharaonic propaganda across the 8th through 6th centuries BCE therefore obscures significant changes in the geographic territory, military capacity, and international priorities that constituted “Egypt” on the world stage.¹

As a result, scholarship on the 22nd through 26th Dynasties in Egypt has become a very interdisciplinary field—involving not only Egyptologists, but also Nubiologists, even Meroitists, and many specialists in Libyan studies. While this dialogue has enhanced the accuracy and depth of historical research, it has rendered Egypt of the Late Iron Age less accessible to colleagues in biblical studies, Near Eastern archaeology, and Assyriology. Like the Levantine messengers of antiquity who sought a recognized authority in Egypt only to find that political fissures had divided the country, many scholars today *cherchent le chef* in Egyptology only to find that disciplinary fissures have divided the study of the Third Intermediate Period. Scholars of the ancient Near East have long turned to Redford as one of the Egyptologists most attuned to Levantine and Assyriological connections, because he has published extensively on Egyptian history of the Third Intermediate Period (Redford 2004). However, the Nubiologist Török lamented that “[t]he sweeping summary of Nubian history after the end of the Egyptian rule of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty by Redford (2004: 139ff.) was written in a surprisingly guileless ignorance of the literature produced on the subject in the last decades” (2009: 359). Scholars relying on the magisterial work of Kitchen will perhaps find fewer critiques from Nubiologists and Libyanists, but they may also be treated to the typographical equivalent of a shouting match.² Warning his readers against new interpretations as a matter of principle, Kitchen advises that “it is *always* wisest to look first for the most banal and *unexciting* interpretation possible; and if that is inadequate, only then to look further afield” (2009: 162, emphasis in the original). Faced with such rancorous dismissals, scholars from other disciplines may well infer that ongoing research by other Egyptologists, Nubiologists, and Libyanists must have nothing fundamental to add to the inherited wisdom of 20th-century Egyptology, and thus the non-specialist need not engage with the most recent publications on the Third Intermediate Period.

Such an assumption would be misguided for the 25th Dynasty, because the last eight years have witnessed a fundamental revision in the regnal chronology of the period that has earned widespread acceptance among many of the most recognized authorities in Egyptology, Nubiology, and Libyan studies. The new chronology is considered “a real possibility” by several others—including Kitchen (see Broekman 2017a: 13, n. 4)—and it bears substantial implications for the history of ancient Judah. The chronology of the 25th Dynasty has affected multiple questions of importance to the Levant: Why did Gaza, Samaria, Ashdod, Ekron, Judah, and Tyre seek help from Egypt, and what form of help did they expect to receive? Why did Egypt remain aloof on some occasions but send troops on others? What precipitated Sennacherib’s departure from Jerusalem in 701 BCE? Could the Kushite king Taharqo

really have been involved in that conflict, as reported in 2 Kings and Isaiah? Did Sennacherib campaign twice against Judah or just once? And what were Judah’s relations with Egypt in the decades that followed? At a broader level, the 25th Dynasty is crucial to the interlocking chronologies of the Near East during the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. As Morkot and Quirke have observed, “[t]he 25th Dynasty was (and remains) the earliest fixed date—or the latest uncertain point in ‘absolute chronology’” (2001: 353).

Chronologies of the 25th Dynasty

The essay that follows will trace seven major phases of evolution in modern chronological understanding of the 25th Dynasty to demonstrate the ways in which new evidence and assumptions were integrated and sometimes uncritically perpetuated from the early 19th century to the present.³ The closing section will consider the evidentiary basis for the newest chronology introduced in 2014 and then examine its significance for Judah’s relations with northeast Africa during the Late Iron Age.

I. From Manetho to the Monuments: The First Chronologies, ca. 1833–1854

Historiographic discussion of the chronology of the “25th Dynasty” must necessarily begin with the earliest known source to use that moniker: the lost *Aegyptiaca*, as composed in Greek by the Egyptian priest Manetho (3rd century BCE) and then conveyed through the epitomai of Sextus Julius Africanus (3rd century C.E.) and Eusebius of Caesarea (4th century C.E.) to the earliest surviving copies: the Armenian version of Eusebius translated by Jerome (5th century C.E.) and another Greek version of both Africanus’s and Eusebius’s epitomai recorded by the Byzantine chronicler George Syncellus (9th century C.E.) (Waddell 1964: 166–9). According to Manethonian tradition, Egypt’s 25th Dynasty consisted of three “Aithiopian kings” (Αιθιοπών βασιλέων, loosely “kings of the people with kindled faces”) who ruled in the following order: Σαβάκων, then Σεβιχώς, and then Ταρακός. The epitomai of Africanus and Eusebius both adhered to this sequence but differed in the number of years that they attributed to each king (Table 42.1):

Table 42.1 Manetho’s 25th Dynasty according to the epitomai of Africanus and Eusebius

Royal Names		Regnal Years		
Greek	Latin	Africanus	Eusebius	
Σαβάκων	Sabacon	8	12	
Σεβιχώς	Sebichos	14	12	
Ταρακός	Saracus	18	20	
		40	44	Totals

Scholars during the early modern era supplemented this information with the accounts of Herodotus (5th century BCE) and Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE), but neither of those ancient authors was entirely consonant with Manethonian tradition: Herodotus claimed that Egypt across its long history had been ruled by “18 Aithiopian kings and one queen,” but he named only *Σαβακῶς* and ascribed to him a reign of 50 years (Godley 1946: 386–7, 440–5, 462–3), whereas Diodorus recorded that “Egypt was ruled by *Σαβάκων*, who was by birth an Aithiopian,” while stating in quotations elsewhere that in Egyptian history there had been “four Aithiopian kings, and they did not rule in a single sequence but at separate times,” so that, “in total, they ruled slightly less than 36 years” (Karst 1911: 62; Oldfather 1946: 224–5). The Hebrew Bible named the “sons of Kush” as “Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, and Sabteca” (Gen 10:7; 1 Chr 1:9), but assigned the title of “King of Kush” (מלך-כוש) to only a single named individual: “Tirhaqah” (תרהקה), of 2 Kgs 19:9 and Isa 37:9. Attempts to establish the chronology of the 25th Dynasty solely on the basis of ancient Greek and Hebrew sources were therefore deprived not only of coherent structure but also of sufficient raw material—a task less akin to the biblical challenge of making bricks without straw than to the Sherlockian challenge of making bricks without *clay* (Exod 5:7; Conan Doyle 1892: 298).

Champollion’s 1822 decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs offered the new possibility of building that chronology upon a foundation of *native* and *contemporaneous* testimony as carved in monumental stone. Inscriptions from the monuments of Egypt’s Kushite kings were first translated by the Franco-Tuscan expedition to Egypt in 1828–9 and then interpreted by Rosellini in the 1833 *Monumenti Storici* fascicles of his multi-volume *Monumenti dell’Egitto e della Nubia*. Armed with Champollion’s decipherment of the hieroglyphic script, the expedition identified three non-Egyptian royal names that seemed to match those of Manetho’s “Aithiopian” 25th Dynasty. The clearest of these was found upon a pylon at Medinet Habu and read $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}}\right) T3-h-r-q$, which Rosellini readily equated with “the king Tarakus [*Ταρακός*]... in the list of Manetho” and the “Tirhaqah” of the Hebrew Bible (1833: 105–13, tab. VIII). From the Fourth Pylon at Karnak, Rosellini recorded the name $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-k3$ and noted that it matched hieroglyphic inscriptions upon a statue and two amulets that had already been taken to Europe during the 18th century. Rosellini also encountered a very similar name, $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-**t**-k3$, among reliefs on a chapel by the Sacred Lake at Karnak. Though this name differed from that on the Fourth Pylon by only a single hieroglyphic grapheme $\overline{\text{𓆑}}$ and corresponding phoneme **t** (in bold font hereafter for clarity), its accompanying royal titulary was distinct on several points. Rosellini therefore proposed that $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-**t**-k3$ and $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-k3$ had been separate pharaohs, each corresponding to one of the two remaining “Aithiopian” kings recorded in Greek by Manetho.

Less clear was the way Manetho would have transliterated into Greek the names $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-**t**-k3$ and $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆑}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-k3$. Manetho’s *Σαβάκων* echoed the sequence of sibilant *š*, labial *b*, and velar *k* sounds from both hieroglyphic royal names—but the same was equally true of Manetho’s *Σεβιχῶς*. Moreover, neither *Σαβάκων* nor *Σεβιχῶς* contained any dental phoneme corresponding to the **t** of *Š3-b3-**t**-k3*, and neither *Š3-b3-**t**-k3* nor *Š3-b3-k3* contained any nasal phoneme corresponding to the *v* of *Σαβάκων*. Complicating matters further was the Manethonian tradition’s inconsistent transliteration of Egyptian *š* into Greek: in some cases, Manetho (or his epitomists) would render Egyptian *š* with a Greek epsilon (*Mn-k3.w-r^c* > *Μενχέρης*) or possibly iota (*B3(?)-k3-r^c* > *βίχερης* and *Z3-Imn* > (?) *Ψιναχῆς*), while in other cases Egyptian *š* was rendered by Manethonian tradition as alpha (*P3-di-B^cst.t* > *Πετουβάστεις*), omicron (*B^ck-n-rn=f* > *βόχχωρις*), or omega (*Š3-š3-n-q* > *Σέσωγχις*) (Waddell 1964: 46–7, 154–67; Von Beckerath 1999: 54–5). This variability is likely due to the fact that, after the New Kingdom, Egyptian *š* seems to have conveyed “nil

or minimal” phonological value of its own in the spoken language (Allen 2020: 45–6). As a result, both Manetho’s Σαβάκων and his Σεβιχῶς were plausible Greek transliterations of either $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{𓆎} & \text{𓆏} & \text{𓆐} \\ \text{𓆑} & \text{𓆒} & \text{𓆓} \end{smallmatrix}\right) \check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$ or $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{𓆎} & \text{𓆏} & \text{𓆐} \\ \text{𓆑} & \text{𓆒} & \text{𓆓} \end{smallmatrix}\right) \check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$.

Despite this ambiguity, Rosellini confidently declared that the $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{𓆎} & \text{𓆏} & \text{𓆐} \\ \text{𓆑} & \text{𓆒} & \text{𓆓} \end{smallmatrix}\right) \check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$ of the monuments (Rosellini’s “Sciabak”) was equivalent to Manetho’s Σαβάκων (Rosellini’s “Sabbakon, Sabaco”). By default, the similarly-named $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{𓆎} & \text{𓆏} & \text{𓆐} \\ \text{𓆑} & \text{𓆒} & \text{𓆓} \end{smallmatrix}\right) \check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$ (Rosellini’s “Sciabatok”) was deemed the equivalent of Manetho’s Σεβιχῶς (Rosellini’s “Sevechus, Sebichus”). Rosellini did not explain the reasoning behind his conclusion, but three possible influences can be hypothesized. First, the *v* of Manetho’s Σαβάκων could simply reflect the Greek practice of using *-ov* as a variant of the *-ως* ending on masculine personal names (e.g., the spellings *μανεθῶς* and *μανέθων* used for Manetho himself); Σαβάκων would then be an alternative writing of Σαβακῶς—a form used by Herodotus (II.139.4)—with consonantal skeleton Σ-β-κ. Second, Champollion’s “Lettre à M. Dacier” had already equated Egyptian *ḥ* with the Greek alpha (1822), inaugurating the popular but inaccurate convention of rendering that ancient Egyptian phoneme with the letter ‘a’ in modern European languages. Between Manetho’s Σαβάκων and his Σεβιχῶς, only the name Σαβάκων contained Greek alphas, and thus, to modern Western eyes, it could appear an appealing match for $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$. By contrast, Σεβιχῶς presented no apparent vocalic match to the hieroglyphic options, just as $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$ presented an imperfect consonantal match to Manetho’s Greek options. So those two inconvenient names were equated with one another and thereby quarantined from the more satisfying equation of Σαβάκων = $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$. Third, the growing historical positivism of 19th-century European scholarship may have favored Rosellini’s confident identification of one match (Σαβάκων = $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$) over the more equivocal identification of two plausible matches for each (Σαβάκων = $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$ or $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$, and Σεβιχῶς = $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$ or $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$). Rosellini was followed in his judgment by the most influential figures of early Egyptology (Hoskins 1835: 296–97; Wilkinson 1837: 138–39; Heeren 1838: 214; Gliddon 1843: 65; Lepsius 1853: 6, 505), even as some of these scholars continued to implicitly acknowledge the orthographic ambiguity by designating the two kings as “Sabaco I”/“Sabaco II” (Wilkinson) or “Sevech I”/“Sevech II” (Lepsius).

The monumental records did not immediately clarify the duration of each king’s reign, in part because the various epitomai of Manetho had themselves offered no ancient consensus on the subject. When Rosellini discovered a hieroglyphic inscription referencing the 12th regnal year of $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$, he did not then cite the congruity of this figure with the 12 regnal years allotted by Eusebius to Σεβιχῶς, nor did he remark the hieroglyphic inscription’s incongruity with the figure of only eight regnal years allotted by Africanus to Σαβάκων; instead, Rosellini cited the new hieroglyphic evidence as confirmation of the 12 regnal years allotted by Eusebius to Σαβάκων (1833: 107, tab. VIII). Further attempts to map this relative chronology onto an absolute one varied wildly: Wilkinson posited the accession of $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$ as early as 778 BCE, and Rosellini and Gliddon both ascribed the same event to 719 BCE, while peer scholars ranged between these two extremes (Layard 1853: 133; cf. Wilkinson 1837: 138–9). All seemed to share Heeren’s (1838: 214) assumption that the chronology of the 25th Dynasty was ultimately to be “determined by the Jewish history” as documented in the Hebrew Bible, and most likewise concurred that the “So, King of Egypt” to which Hoshea of Samaria appealed (2 Kgs 17:4) must have been identical to either $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}k3$ or $\check{S}z\text{-}b3\text{-}\mathcal{B}\text{-}k3$ of the Egyptian monuments; yet they did not agree upon the Gregorian calendric year when that appeal had occurred. As a result, the stones of Egypt still resembled wet clay in the hands of Egyptologists for most of the 19th century.

Historical repercussions for the Near East were then illustrated by a fascinating discussion in Layard’s 1853 book, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*. Layard had

discovered within Room LXI of Sennacherib's Southwest Palace at Kuyunjik (Nineveh) a trio of clay sealings bearing the cartouche of Š3-b3-k3, one of which was also stamped with an Assyrian signet impression. Layard then opined:

It would seem that a peace having been concluded between the Egyptians and one of the Assyrian monarchs, probably Sennacherib, the royal signets of the two kings, thus found together, were attached to the treaty, which was deposited amongst the archives of the kingdom.

(1853: 134)

To situate this Assyrian sealing within Egyptian dynastic chronology, Layard quoted the Egyptologist Birch in a footnote that spanned three pages of Layard's book. Birch's note explained that the discipline of Egyptology now recognized two kings named "Sabaco" who had ruled Egypt consecutively before the accession of "Tirakhah" during the 25th Dynasty. Observing that the Hebrew Bible mentioned "Tirakhah" as a contemporary of Sennacherib, Layard therefore deduced that the Š3-b3-k3 named on the sealings in Sennacherib's palace would most likely have been "Tirakhah's" immediate predecessor, "the *second* Sabaco the Æthiopian," concluding: "There can be no doubt whatever as to the identity of the cartouche" (1853: 132, emphasis added). By comparing Manethonian tradition and the Egyptian monuments to the newly excavated data from Nineveh, Layard became the first prominent scholar to assert that Š3-b3-k3 was the *second* "Sabaco": Manetho's Σεβιχῶς.

Remarkably, Layard seems not to have noticed that the Egyptologist whom he quoted for support was actually *contradicting* his own judgment: just two pages after Layard's pronouncement, Birch's footnote instead followed the lead of Rosellini and asserted that the Š3-b3-k3 whose "seal was affixed to some treaty between Assyria and Egypt" was, in fact, Σαβάκων, "the name of the *first* king" in Manetho's chronology (Layard 1853: 134, emphasis added). Neither Birch nor Layard acknowledged the discrepancy between their conclusions, but the stakes were potentially significant. Within the scenario envisioned by Rosellini and then Birch, the diplomacy between Assyria and Egypt could have *preceded* Sennacherib's invasion of Judah; within Layard's scenario, that same diplomacy was more likely to have *followed* the invasion of Judah.

II. The Saqqara Revision, 1855–1883

At the beginning of the 1850s, the absolute chronology of the 25th Dynasty presented a rather pitiful contrast against that of the 26th: while the latter was buttressed by numerous synchronisms with Assyrian, Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek sources, the former was still an incoherent scatter of data points—the building blocks of a chronology but lacking structure. Without a foundation in external sources, the newly discovered evidence for the 25th Dynasty could provide at best *relative* dates, because nearly all of the monuments of ancient Egypt and Kush had been inscribed with only *regnal* years and therefore consistently restarted their internal chronology with 'year one' at the accession of a new king. Birch's assessment was bleak: "The great difficulty is the dreadful confusion of the period" (Layard 1853: 133).

Even as Birch wrote those words, a solution was beginning to emerge from the rock substratum of Saqqara near Memphis. Just two years prior, Mariette had discovered there a Serapeum—a vast network of underground crypts for sacred Apis bulls, many replete with inscribed stelae enumerating the duration of their lives and the regnal years of their births and deaths. Because some of these bulls outlived the pharaohs who had appointed them for

eneration, their stelae were *double-dated*—with a birth ascribed to the regnal year of one king and a death ascribed to the regnal year of his successor. Conveniently, the lifetime of one such Apis bull straddled the end of the 25th Dynasty and the early decades of the 26th: according to his stela, the bull was born in the 26th regnal year of $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) T3-h-r-q$ (the Ταρακός who closed Manetho’s 25th Dynasty), lived for 21 years, and then died just before the 21st regnal year of $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) P(3)-z(i)-m\bar{i}k$ (the Ψαμμήτιχος of Manetho’s 26th Dynasty). When de Rougé published an interpretation of the stela in 1855, he calculated on the basis of later synchronisms that the reign of this “Psammétik” had begun “à l’an 665 avant Jésus-Christ,” and thus the Aithiopian “Tahraka” would seem to have ascended the throne no earlier than 691 BCE (de Rougé 1855: 39–42). De Rougé immediately recognized a potential contradiction between this new information and the accepted chronologies of Assyria and Judah: Assyriologists such as Oppert had deduced that Sennacherib campaigned against Judah at the end of the 8th century BCE, but the biblical testimony of 2 Kgs 19:9 and Isa 37:9 claimed that the Assyrian had received a report in Judah that $\text{תִּרְהַקֵּה מֶלֶךְ-כּוּשׁ}$ “Tirhaqah, King of Kush,” was coming forth to meet him. The attempt of de Rougé to anchor the chronology of the 25th Dynasty into the bedrock of the Saqqara Serapeum thereby cracked open a fault approximately ten years wide between monumental and biblical testimony, one that future scholars would struggle to bridge.

The 1860s then witnessed the discovery and publication of five Kushite royal stelae from the Sudanese site of Jebel Barkal, several of which contained detailed historical narratives set in the 8th through 6th centuries BCE (Mariette 1865). However, these stelae did little to clarify the chronology of Manetho’s 25th Dynasty, because not a single one of them so much as mentioned $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-Ḕ-k3$, $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) Š3-b3-k3$, or $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) T3-h-r-q$ —even as two of the stelae attributed a series of actions to kings named $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) P-ḩnh-y$ and $\left(\overline{\text{𓆎}} \frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆎}}\right) T3-n-w3-ti-Imn$ that were strikingly reminiscent of the exploits that Herodotus had attributed to his Σαβάκως (Török 2014: 78–9). The inadequacy of Greek evidence for Egyptian history was becoming increasingly evident, but scholars continued to lean heavily upon it. Egyptologists consistently echoed Rosellini’s proposed equations of $Š3-b3-k3$ as Σαβάκων and $Š3-b3-Ḕ-k3$ as Σεβιχῶς (e.g., Mariette 1865: 167), thereby using Manetho to sequence the monuments.

III. The Turin Revision, 1884–1940

Published in 1884, Wiedemann’s two-volume *Ägyptische Geschichte* was one of the earliest and most influential attempts to use the Manethonian scheme of numbered dynasties as scaffolding for a narrative history of ancient Egypt; yet it was also one of the first studies to prioritize an Egyptian monument *over and against* Manethonian testimony about the 25th Dynasty. Wiedemann drew his readers’ attention to a stela in the Turin Museum, published by Pleyte in 1876, that featured a pair of crowned and seated kings on the left with cartouches reading (from the center outwards) $Š3-b3-k3$ and $Š3-b3-Ḕ-k3$ and facing a male and female pair on the right. Neither of the kings on the left was represented iconographically or textually as a deceased ancestor, and thus Wiedemann logically concluded that $Š3-b3-k3$ and $Š3-b3-Ḕ-k3$ must have ruled concurrently for a time and the stela must have been commissioned during the overlap between their reigns (1884: 585). No epitome of Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca* had ever asserted such coregency for the “Aithiopian” kings. Wiedemann was not the first modern scholar to entertain the possibility of a coregency during the 25th Dynasty, but others had done so only *sotto voce* based on highly ambiguous evidence (Maspero 1868: 332–3; Rawlinson 1881: 455 n. 2). Wiedemann foregrounded a coregency between $Š3-b3-k3$

and $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ as a “very probable” (“sehr wahrscheinlich”) conclusion. It is important to note that Wiedemann did not propose this coregency as a solution to any chronological problem, whether the conflicting reign estimates of Africanus and Eusebius or the seeming anachronism of “Tirhaqah’s” appearance as “King of Kush” in 2 Kgs 19:9 and Isa 37:9; for Wiedemann, coregency was presented as simply the most defensible interpretation of the Turin stela. Nevertheless, the historical implications of Wiedemann’s proposal were considerable: if any two Kushite kings had ruled Egypt concurrently, this would greatly increase the odds that other members of the same dynasty might have followed an identical practice, so that a variety of chronological problems could be resolved simply by overlapping the estimated reigns of any two consecutive Kushite pharaohs.

Unfortunately, Wiedemann had overlooked a crucial sentence in the Turin Museum’s catalog: “Questa stela, pervenuta al Museo per dono, è un lavoro moderno fatto in Egitto” (Fabretti, Rossi, Lanzone 1882: 126). *The stela was a modern fake*, lacking provenance and rife with both errors and unparalleled idiosyncrasies. For instance, the male figure on the right not only bore a feminine title (*dw3t ntr*) but also the personal name ($\check{S}p-n-Wpt$) of a prominent royal woman known to have used that title during the 25th Dynasty (Morkot and Quirke 2001: 350–52). To make matters worse, the male figure’s accompanying statement of filiation was garbled, as if it had been copied inexpertly from a genuine artifact. In the top half of the stela, a scarab had been painted in a shape never attested on any other monument, and, as if to underscore the deception, the whole ensemble sat atop a checkered band that was equally without parallel on objects of this type and date. As a foundation for chronologies of the 25th Dynasty, the Turin stela was effectively quicksand.

Two decades after the publication of Wiedemann’s *Ägyptische Geschichte*, Petrie recognized that the Turin stela was a fake, yet he chose to retain the coregency theory that Wiedemann had derived from that stela (Petrie 1905: 287–97). After all, a hypothesis based upon spurious evidence was not necessarily false, just unfounded. Rather than advocating for a coregency between $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ and $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$, Petrie concluded that $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ had ruled concurrently with his successor, $T3-h-r-q$, between 701 and 693 BCE, after which the latter ruled alone until 667. The apparent utility of this reconstruction lay precisely in its ability to bridge the aforementioned cleft between monumental and biblical evidence: under Petrie’s scenario, the biblical account had accurately described the coregent “Tirhaqah” as “King of Kush” when he advanced against Sennacherib in the late 8th century BCE, because this same $T3-h-r-q$ then continued to rule alongside $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ for eight years, before governing without $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ for 26 more. Petrie was not alone in his adoption of the coregency theory, but his contemporaries used it for different ends. In the analysis of Breasted, it was instead “Taharka” and “Tanutamun” (the $T3-n-w3-ti-Imn$ of the Barkal stelae) who had ruled concurrently in 663 BCE (1905: 558). The appearance of “Taharka” in 2 Kings and the Book of Isaiah was instead explained by Breasted as a case of biblical prolepsis: the Hebrew authors had erroneously “suppose(d) him to have already been king in 701” (1905: 554). Two decades after Breasted, Hall decided that it was more likely “Shabaka” who had been “associated with Piankhi [the $P-nh-y$ of the Barkal stelae] about 715 (?),” and “Tirhaqah” was not “King of Kush” when he faced Sennacherib ca. 700 BCE but instead a mere “turtan” (1925: 277). The fake Turin stela was now disregarded, but scholars continued to repurpose Wiedemann’s coregency theory as a kind of bivouac that could be pitched at various spots across the timeline whenever circumstances required.

Despite their disagreements about the chronology of the 25th Dynasty, Egyptologists during the first half of the 20th century converged on two larger points of history. First, they held unanimously that $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ had ruled before $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$. Thus, when a fragmentary

inscription discovered at Tanis mentioned that a 20-year-old prince *T3-h-r-q* had been summoned to Egypt by a preceding Kushite king, Breasted inferred that the king must have been *Š3-b3-k3* recruiting *T3-h-r-q* to assist with the suppression of βόχχωρις in Lower Egypt—an event ascribed to Σαβάκων in Manethonian tradition (Breasted 1906: 455). Second, scholars observed that the reigns of *Š3-b3-k3* and *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* had been very dissimilar: 15 regnal years were now attested for *Š3-b3-k3*, and his name had circulated in the Near East, not only on the three sealings at Nineveh but also on another recently excavated at Megiddo (Lamon and Shipton 1939: 172, pls. 41, 115). By contrast, his presumed successor *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* was, in Hall’s words, “totally undistinguished,” with only three attested regnal years and no influence in the Near East during the period following Sennacherib’s campaign against Judah (1925: 279). The historical trajectory of the 25th Dynasty was now plotted with an initial peak of grand international ambitions followed by a sharp decline toward irrelevance; their involvement in Judah was deemed to be a cause of that decline.

IV. The Aššur Revision, 1941–1948

Just as de Rougé’s analysis of a stela from the Serapeum crypt at Saqqara had laid a cornerstone at the low end of the dynasty’s chronology (ca. 665 BCE), Weidner’s (1941) analysis of a prism from the temple at Aššur would now lay another cornerstone at the high end of the dynasty’s chronology. The prism had been discovered in 1910, but it was Weidner who first highlighted within it a passage referencing the 5th regnal year of Sargon II, in which one “Shilkanni, Ruler of Egypt,” sought to conciliate the Assyrian by sending a gift of “12 large horses from Egypt.” Weidner recognized that the consonantal skeleton of the name *Ši-il-kan-ni* was an identically-sequenced four-point match with that of the Egyptian pharaoh *W3-s3-i-r-k-n*, “Osorkon” (IV) (1941: 44–5), whose name was attested upon the monuments of the Delta and then echoed as Ὄσορχῶ and Ὄσορθῶν in the epitomai recording Manetho’s 23rd Dynasty (Waddell 1964: 160–3). Unlike the “Sib’e, turtan of Egypt,” with whom Hanunu of Gaza had allied in the Assyrian records, and the “So, King of Egypt,” to whom Hoshea of Samaria had appealed in 2 Kgs 17:4, the “Shilkanni” of the Aššur prism could not reasonably be transmuted into the name of one of the kings of the 25th Dynasty. Scholars therefore concluded that the Kushite kings could not have assumed primary rulership of the Egyptian Delta until the 5th regnal year of Sargon II—a date calculated as 716 BCE by Assyriologists using the meticulously documented astronomical phenomena and eponym lists of Mesopotamia (Bickerman 1991: 67, 86–87). According to this understanding, the 15 attested regnal years of *Š3-b3-k3* and the 26 attested regnal years of *T3-h-r-q* both had to be accommodated within the narrow span of just five decades (ca. 716–665 BCE), leaving for *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* at most nine years ruling alone between those two reigns. During the 1940s, these new parameters were not yet regarded as particularly troublesome for the chronology of the 25th Dynasty, but they had set strict limits into which all future discoveries would need to be incorporated; even if the structure began to teeter, its foundations could no longer be widened.

V. The Kawa Revision, 1949–1998

The discovery of the Jebel Barkal stelae in the 1860s had provided lengthy historical narratives commissioned in the Egyptian hieroglyphic script by Kushite kings, but it was not until Griffith’s excavations at the Sudanese site of Kawa in 1930–1931 that scholars finally gained access to lengthy historical narratives in that same hieroglyphic script referencing the names

of $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ and $T3-h-r-q$. After Griffith's passing in 1934, his assistant Macadam assumed the responsibility of publishing those excavations—including five stelae commissioned by $T3-h-r-q$, one of which (Kawa IV) mentioned $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$. The relevant passage was translated by Macadam as follows:

Now His Majesty had been in Nubia as a goodly youth, a king's brother, pleasant of love, and he came north to Thebes in the company of goodly youths whom His Majesty King Shebitku had sent to fetch from Nubia, in order that he might be there with him, since he loved him more than all his brethren.

(1949: 15)

An accompanying stela (Kawa V) further revealed that $T3-h-r-q$ had been 20 years old when he first left his mother in Nubia to travel to Egypt (Macadam 1949: 17, 28). Taken together, Kawa stelae IV and V decisively overturned Breasted's earlier interpretation of the Tanis inscription (Breasted 1906: 455), demonstrating that it had not been $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ but rather $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ (Macadam's "Shebitku") who had recruited $T3-h-r-q$ to come to Egypt at the age of 20; as $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ was still held to be the $\Sigma\alpha\beta\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omega\nu$ responsible for the suppression of $\beta\acute{o}\gamma\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$ in Manethonian tradition, the recruitment of $T3-h-r-q$ could no longer be connected to that event. Kawa IV further specified that, during the trip northwards to join $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$, prince $T3-h-r-q$ became dismayed when he saw a ruined temple at Kawa:

And His Majesty's heart grew sad at it until His Majesty appeared as King, crowned as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, (and) when the Double Diadem was established upon his head and his name became Horus Lofty-of-Diadems, he called to mind this temple, which he had beheld as a youth in the first year of his reign. Then His Majesty said to his courtiers, "Lo, I desire to rebuild the temple..."

(Macadam 1949: 15)

Macadam (1949: 17–20) drew several inferences from this new evidence: (1) $\check{S}3-b3-t3-k3$ had summoned $T3-h-r-q$ north to Egypt to establish a coregency between the two Kushite kings. (2) That event was later remembered as the first regnal year of $T3-h-r-q$, and thus it occurred ca. 689 BCE. (3) It was during his summons in that year that $T3-h-r-q$ first observed the ruined temple at Kawa. (4) The coronation of $T3-h-r-q$ as the **sole** king took place five years later, ca. 684 BCE, when he vowed to rebuild the temple. (5) As this scenario would attribute to $T3-h-r-q$ only 20 years of age ca. 689 BCE, then "the statement in 2 Kings xix 9 that the enemy of Sennacherib at Altaqu [Eltekeh] in 701 B.C. was Taharqa is manifestly a mistake, since he was then only eight years old" (Macadam 1949: 19–20). Accepting Macadam's interpretations of the Kawa stelae, Albright and other eminent biblicalists therefore proposed that the reference in 2 Kings was to a *second* campaign waged by Sennacherib against Judah and its Kushite defender, "Tirhaqah" (תרהקה), several years *after* 701 BCE (Albright 1953: 8–9; Horn 1966: 3–11; Bright 1972: 298 n. 9; Shea 1999).

Unfortunately, the assumption that $T3-h-r-q$ was "too young" to be involved in 701 BCE (Arkell 1961: 126) became widely disseminated throughout academe before scholars had yet considered a crucial intervention: Leclant and Yoyotte observed that the grammatical conventions of the Egyptian language would require instead in Kawa IV that the adverbial phrase "in the first year of his reign" specify the moment when the king "called to mind this temple," *not* when he had first "beheld (it) as a youth" (Leclant and Yoyotte 1952: 20–21). Consequently, several of Macadam's other conclusions dependent upon that one were

unnecessary and even unlikely: (1) The “first year of his reign” did *not* need to correspond to the year when prince *T3-h-r-q* was called to Egypt and passed the Kawa temple *en route*, so (2) the summons may have been wholly unrelated to any assumed coregency with *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3*. (3) If the summons was unrelated to *T3-h-r-q*’s first regnal year, then his age during that summons was in no way tied to his own regnal chronology: he could have reached the age of 20 at any point during the reign of *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3*. Realizing this, Kitchen would later propose that *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* had summoned the 20-year-old *T3-h-r-q* to Egypt in 701 B.C. to send him at the head of the troops that would defend Judah against Sennacherib, thereby producing his appearance as “Tirhaqah” in 2 Kgs 19:9 and Isa 37:9 with the proleptic title, “King of Kush.” As Kitchen explained: “If in current speech one says that Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926, this is precisely like saying that king Taharqa was in Palestine in 701 B.C.; only a fool and a pedant would seek to ‘correct’” either statement as anachronism (1973: 160). At the end of the 20th century, Shea (1999) revived the theory that Sennacherib had campaigned twice against Judah and encountered “Taharqa” only during his latest attempt, citing a newly discovered stela that, according to Redford, documented the exploits of “Taharqa in Western Asia” (Redford 1994). Yet the stela made no actual mention of “Taharqa,” and a subsequent analysis by Revez (2003) has assigned it to a different dynasty altogether. Whatever one thinks of the two-campaign theories still repeated in biblical studies (Sadler 2005: 116–18), they are neither grounded in nor required by Egyptian and Kushite evidence from the 25th Dynasty.

The new evidence from Kawa precipitated two further developments that deserve brief comment here. First, Kawa stelae III, VI, and VII documented the import into Kush of “Asiatic copper,” “true cedar of Lebanon,” and “good gardeners of the Mentiu of Asia” during the reign of *T3-h-r-q* (Macadam 1949: 9, 35–6, 42). When combined with Kletter’s discovery of commercial weights bearing Egyptian hieratic numerals at Tel Malhata, these references suggested a lively trade between the Double Kingdom and the Levant during the first quarter of the 7th century BCE (see K. Pierce, this volume). Many scholars interpreted this commerce as one cause of the Assyrian invasion that would follow roughly 15 years later under Esarhaddon (Spalinger 1974: 301–2; Redford 1992: 356; Kitchen 1995: 117; Picchi 1997: 44), rather than as one result of the Assyrian invasion that had withdrawn from Jerusalem 15 years prior under Sennacherib. Second, Macadam’s publication of the Kawa evidence introduced a new, modern spelling of the name *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3*. Following Griffith’s unpublished notes, Macadam inserted into the name a series of vowels borrowed from its presumed Manethonian equivalent, Σεβιτῶς: *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* thereby became “Shebitku” (1949: 124). As Griffith was the leading scholar of the Meroitic language spoken in Kush during the 25th Dynasty, Macadam also heeded his advice that the phonemes *-k3* and *-q* at the ends of the names *Š3-b3-k3*, *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3*, and *T3-h-r-q* were likely all Egyptian transliterations of the demonstrative pronoun *-qo* and copula *-o* that closes many Kushite names later written in the Meroitic script (Pope 2014a: 8, n. 13). Thus, *Š3-b3-ḫ3-k3* soon came to be rendered in the secondary literature as “Shebitqu” (Bakr 1965) and eventually as “Shebitqo” (Wenig 1978)—a modern spelling so close to Manetho’s Σεβιτῶς that it could easily be mistaken for proof of their *ancient* equivalence. The basic chronological structure of the 25th Dynasty had now stood for decades, so it seemed prudent to cover the joints with a coat of paint.

VI. The Tang-i Var Revision, 1999–2013

Those joints began to crack after Frame (1999) published an English translation of the Tang-i Var Inscription. Just as scholars had long assumed from the Tanis Inscription that Prince *T3-h-r-q* had been called to Egypt at the age of 20 by (the unnamed) *Š3-b3-k3*, only to be surprised by Kawa stela IV where the ruler in question was actually *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3*, scholars had long assumed from the Great Display Inscription at Khorsabad that Iamani of Ashdod had been extradited from Egypt by (the unnamed) *Š3-b3-k3*, only to be surprised by the Tang-i Var Inscription where the ruler in question was actually—once again—*Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3*. This new revelation was more destabilizing, however, because it could not be averted by simply detaching the monumental chronology of Egypt from the later, external testimony of the Hebrew Bible; the Tang-i Var Inscription shook the presumed internal chronology of the 25th Dynasty by forcibly realigning it with that of Assyria. Copious Assyrian evidence had already demonstrated that the extradition of Iamani had occurred at some point between 712 and 706 BCE, so the Tang-i Var evidence now required that *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3* was already ruler during that span. If his predecessor on the throne were indeed *Š3-b3-k3*, then it appeared that the 15 attested regnal years of *Š3-b3-k3* in Egypt now had to be wedged like an oversized voussoir between the reign of Osorkon IV (Shilkanni) ca. 716 BCE and the accession of *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3* ca. 706 BCE.

Scholars proposed three main ways of salvaging the existing structure. Redford and Dallibor returned to coregency theories not unlike that which Wiedemann had derived from the fake Turin stela, overlapping the reigns of *Š3-b3-k3* and *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3* by several years (Redford 1999; Dallibor 2005: 20–5). Kitchen, for his part, opined that the *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3*, “ruler of Meluhḥa (Kush),” who extradited Iamani could not have been more than the “deputy” in Kush of King *Š3-b3-k3* in Egypt, but he concurred with Redford and Dallibor that the two Kushites must have governed together in some fashion. All three authors speculated that the length of the Double Kingdom might have necessitated a “bifurcation” of the realm, with *Š3-b3-k3* and *Š3-b3-ṯ3-k3* each responsible only for their half, and Kitchen (2009: 163) even offered from his own imagination the words with which *Š3-b3-k3* might have explained such an arrangement to the Assyrian king. By contrast, Kahn (2006) quoted from multiple Kushite royal inscriptions to directly challenge the notion of a ‘Divided Kingdom’ ruled by coregency: no ancient monuments were double-dated to the reigns of two Kushite kings, and individual Kushite pharaohs had made frequent claims to rule both Egypt and Kush simultaneously, with some stating quite explicitly that they would share the kingdom with no one. Rather than overlapping the reigns of two *Kushite* kings, Kahn therefore proposed to overlap the reigns of one Kushite and one *Egyptian* king, by dislodging Weidner’s cornerstone from its position in 716 BCE: Kahn argued that when “Shilkanni (Osorkon IV), Ruler of Egypt,” sent tribute from the Delta to Assyria, he must have done so in bold defiance of his Kushite overlord, *Š3-b3-k3*, even though the latter was, according to Kahn, “the *recognized* king of Egypt” even “in the Delta” (Kahn 2001: 9). Despite the ingenious solutions offered by Redford, Dallibor, Kitchen, and Kahn, many specialists now agreed that the chronology of the 25th Dynasty in use for most of the past century no longer appeared sound under the weight of the new evidence from Tang-i Var. As summarized by Brunet (2005: 29): “[t]his carefully crafted reconstruction tumbled down in 1999.”

VII. From the Monuments to Manetho: The New Chronology, 2014–Present

His Majesty found it built in mudbrick, a (collapsed) heap thereof having reached its roof. He rebuilt it in stone, as an excellent construction.

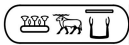
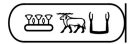

—Taharqo’s Kawa stela VI

(Pope 2014a: 49–51)

In 2014, Nubiologist Lohwasser convened a roundtable to discuss an ostensibly new idea about the chronology of the 25th Dynasty: the possibility that the reign of $\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3$ might have preceded that of $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ (Bányai et al. 2015). This theory was not actually as new as the roundtable participants seem to have supposed, having been first advanced by Layard in 1853. Yet it did contradict the orthodoxy established by Rosellini at the very dawn of Egyptology and subsequently followed by every specialist in the field for the past 161 years of scholarship. The only published voices of dissent across that long span had come from outsiders to Egyptology and Nubiology (Brunet 2005; Bányai 2013). Even though many participants were not convinced by some details of Bányai’s own theory (2013), not a single scholar at the roundtable mounted an open refutation of the larger proposal that $\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3$ had reigned before $\check{S}3-b3-k3$.⁴ After the Münster roundtable, the proposed $\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3 \rightarrow \check{S}3-b3-k3$ sequence gained further published support from Egyptologists (Payraudeau 2014; Broekman 2015, 2017a, 2017b; Agut-Labordère and Moreno García 2016; Jansen-Winkel 2017; Jurman 2017; Donker van Heel 2021).

These authors have buttressed the new chronology with a wide variety of evidence from cemeteries, temples, and both hieroglyphic and hieratic texts. Their recent articles and books combine to demonstrate that the $\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3 \rightarrow \check{S}3-b3-k3$ sequence accords better with: the evolution of Kushite royal tombs and burial equipment; the chronology of temple construction at Karnak and Medinet Habu; the placement of successive Nilometer readings at Karnak’s quay; the evolution of private donation stelae in the Delta and of Apis burials in the Saqqara Serapeum; the sequence of archaizing prenomina chosen by the Kushite kings; the limited genealogical data available for the Kushite royal family; the prosopographic chronology of private papyri and inscriptions; and, most pointedly, a Kushite royal statue from the reign of $T3-n-w3-ti-Imn$ in Egypt that lists his predecessors as $\check{S}3-b3-k3$ and $T3-h-r-q$, while omitting $\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3$ altogether (Bányai 2013: 49–50, 76–81, 84–92; Payraudeau 2014: 118–20, 124–6; Bányai et al. 2015: 148–60, 171–3; Broekman 2015: 21–3, 25, 27–8; Jurman 2017: 129–36,

Table 42.2 Absolute chronology of the 25th Dynasty according to Payraudeau 2014: 127

Hieroglyphic Names	Transliterated Names	Years B.C.E.
	$\check{S}3-b3-\mathfrak{B}-k3$	714 – 705
	$\check{S}3-b3-k3$	705 – 690
	$T3-h-r-q$	690 – 664

138–45; Donker van Heel 2021: 27–9). According to the interpretations of these scholars, Š3-b3-~~ḫ~~-k3 was featured in Kawa stela IV, not because he was the direct predecessor or coregent of T3-h-r-q, but simply because it was King Š3-b3-~~ḫ~~-k3 who first summoned a young prince T3-h-r-q to serve the Kushite regime in Egypt—precisely as stated in the text. The new chronology would easily accommodate the monumental evidence of 15 attested regnal years for Š3-b3-k3 between the reigns of Š3-b3-~~ḫ~~-k3 and T3-h-r-q; the absolute dates for those three kings are estimated by Payraudeau (2014) as shown above (Table 42.2):

If Manetho's information about the sequence was accurate, then this new chronology would also require that he rendered the name Š3-b3-~~ḫ~~-k3 as Σαβάκων and the name Š3-b3-k3 as Σεβίχως. As we have seen above, these Greek transliterations are indeed every bit as plausible as Rosellini's alternative.

However, the temptation to build this new chronology upon Manetho misses a crucial point of methodology. As explained by Broekman (2015: 21): “[T]he first-hand data of the monuments should be given greater consideration than Manetho's tradition, composed centuries later, and from which we possess only very late copies of copies, frequently having been manipulated in a tendentious way.” Accordingly, scholars in recent years have begun to abandon spellings of the Kushite royal names that were based on presumed Manethonian equivalents, in favor of more neutral transliterations that conform as closely as possible to the consonantal skeletons of their Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, their vocalic transliteration in contemporaneous Assyrian texts, and their underlying Meroitic grammar: Shabatako, Shabako, and Taharqo.

In comparison to previous interpretations, the new chronology also suggests a very different history of Egypt's relations with the Levant during the Kushite era. The absence of Shabatako's name in the Near East and his decision to extradite Iamani are tied to his new chronological position as the first Kushite king to establish a permanent presence in Lower Egypt and treat its security as his own responsibility. The subsequent extension of Kushite royal alliances to include Ekron and Judah would not have been a *volte face* by Shabatako but instead a new position taken by his successor, Shabako. Following Kushite royal custom of delegating actual leadership in combat to a subordinate (Pope *fc.*), Shabako would then have sent to Judah's defense his kinsman, Taharqo—who could have been anywhere between 25 and 33 years old in 701 BCE. The Hebrew Bible's subsequent description of “Tirhaqah” (תרהקה) as “King of Kush” (מלך-כוש) would be nothing more than prolepsis, exactly as recognized by Breasted (1905: 554) and then explained by Kitchen (1973: 160). Under this historical scenario, circulation of Shabako's name upon objects in the Near East and especially the sealings at Sennacherib's palace—whether affixed to actual state documents or merely trade items—would most likely have *followed* the Assyrian king's withdrawal from Jerusalem, suggesting that the two rulers had reached some diplomatic resolution to their conflict in Judah that was deemed advantageous to both sides (Pope 2019). The long-term advantages for Kush are suggested by Taharqo's receipt of “Asiatic copper,” “cedar of Lebanon,” and viticulturists from western Asia during the 680s BCE, as well as by the use of Egyptian hieratic numerals upon commercial weights at Tel Malhata in Judah. Viewed as a whole, the shape of this reconstruction shows the Double Kingdom's gradual ascent toward international prominence, peaking in the reign of Taharqo before the devastating reprisals by Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal. If this new chronology of the 25th Dynasty continues to pass inspection in the years to come, then it should place the history of Egypt's relations with Judah on a more solid foundation.

Notes

- 1 For Egypt's interactions with the Levant during the Third Intermediate Period, see K. V. L. Pierce, this volume.
- 2 Kitchen has vociferated against the "mere guesses" and "stupid illusion" of peer scholars in a strident essay whose every page is marked by either triplicate exclamation points, underlined, bold, and italic fonts (sometimes with all three combined), or words printed in all-caps (2009).
- 3 Between the earliest and most recent attempts, intermediate phases are named for consistency here by either the place of accession for the key evidence (e.g., Turin) or its provenance (Saqqara, Aššur, Kawa, and Tang-i Var). The modern year ranges given correspond to dates of subsequent public dissemination.
- 4 The only scholar to reject that proposal outright since 2014 has been the Egyptologist Robert Morkot, speculating only that "a more detailed knowledge of the Libyan dynasts and Theban officials" may undermine it in the future (2016: 108).

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