

CHAPTER ONE

TERMINOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGY

THE PERIOD 1078/6–664 BCE IS COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE ‘THIRD Intermediate Period’ (the Twenty-First to Twenty-Fifth Dynasty). The once unified government in the preceding Ramesside Period (Nineteenth to Twentieth Dynasty, 1295–1078/6 BCE) was replaced by considerable political fragmentation in the Twenty-First Dynasty. The pharaohs now ruled from the north at Tanis, and a line of Theban High Priests of Amun (HPA) and army commanders controlled the south from Thebes. Alongside this shift of power was the re-emergence of local centres under the control of quasi-pharaohs and local Libyan, or warrior-class, chiefs, starting in the Twenty-Second Dynasty, and concurrently ruling from the mid-Twenty-Second Dynasty onwards. The warrior-chiefs were of the Meshwesh and Libu tribes that had gradually entered Egypt during the reigns of Ramesses II and Ramesses III as prisoners of war,¹ and had subsequently been settled in the Delta and Middle Egypt.² The demographic structure of Egypt also changed at this time as the incoming peoples integrated with the native Egyptian population. Egypt itself became a more politically inward-looking country, while its power hold over the Levant and Nubia was reduced.³ These factors had consequences for the structure of Egyptian society.⁴ This chapter begins by discussing how we have come to view relative chronological phases relating to the period after the New Kingdom, the origin of the term ‘Third Intermediate Period’, and the political and cultural climate in which the term was devised. It then goes on to

outline the chronology of the period to anchor the data sources discussed in this book into a relative chronological framework.

TERMINOLOGY

Labels applied to periods of history often carry with them social connotations, such as the term ‘classical’, used in ‘classical Greece’, which indicates positivity and progression, while those of ‘Dark Age’ indicate negativity, and regression.⁵ At the same time these labels demonstrate the views within previous archaeological thought and theory, which unless challenged through new analysis often go on to subconsciously shape the discussions and approaches to the archaeology, history, and culture of a specific time period. The term ‘intermediate’ has the inherent meaning of ‘between two other related things’, in the case of ancient Egyptian chronology, the New Kingdom (ca. 1540–1078/6 BCE) and the Saite Period (664–525 BCE), both of which are characterised by a central ruling authority. The term ‘intermediate’ within Egyptology has inherent implications of poverty and decline and implies that periods of strong centralised authority were superior. When the central authority is not visible within the archaeological record, for whatever reasons, and the historical sources (most importantly texts) created by the central authority fail to be preserved, then scholars are left with less certainty concerning what was going on. There are, however, only implications of poverty, as well as political and economic decline, in the final decades of the late New Kingdom, but these are primarily recorded around the Theban region. During the reign of Ramesses IX in years 10–15, there were incidents of tribes from the Western Desert coming into the Thebaid and elsewhere,⁶ while in years 13–17 the royal tomb robbery scandal was uncovered. Coupled with high food prices, theft and corruption, and a loss of respect for kings, whether dead or alive, were factors that transformed the sporadic violation of Theban royal tombs into wide-scale pillaging in the following decades.⁷ Later, in the reign of Ramesses XI economic conditions such as famine persisted, indicated by the so-called ‘Year of the Hyenas’.⁸ During such ‘intermediate’ times the socio-political and economic structures of the country may change, but people continue to survive by reorganising their communities, and continuing the day-to-day process of living. Such a process can be viewed as a return to a simpler socio-political structure.⁹ It is argued that post-collapse societies are to many scholars an annoying interlude, their study a chore necessary to understand the renaissance that followed.¹⁰ This attitude is nowhere more vividly portrayed than by William Matthew Flinders Petrie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who, although the term ‘Third Intermediate Period’ was not yet in use during his time in Egypt, states in his diary entry in relation to his excavations at Lahun that: ‘The cemetery at Illahun so far discovered is entirely re-occupied under the

XXIIIrd dynasty and of no historic value.’¹¹ Édouard Naville, who also worked in Egypt during the late nineteenth century, this time at Bubastis, also shared similar negative attitudes and did not consider the fine workmanship of the Hathor columns of Osorkon II as being a product of the Twenty-Second Dynasty and its craftspeople, and proposed they were usurped Twelfth or Eighteenth Dynasty works.¹² This lack of interest, presumptions of a lack of artistic quality, and the placing of a focus on to the periods of the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms created what Lantzas refers to in terms of Archaic Greek studies as an ‘Academic No Man’s Land’.¹³

An evidence-based analysis must be applied when we begin to observe the past objectively, consider what is available for observations and, fundamentally, critically assess how scholars approach the material.¹⁴ To engage with the past objectively and conscientiously, divisions of ‘Kingdom’ (as in Old, Middle, and New) and ‘Intermediate Period’ (as in First, Second, and Third), whether based on absolute or relative chronology, or changes in material culture, must be considered as discrete periods of history, and the language used to define them should be absent of interpretational bias. There must be a critical awareness of the role of the researcher and the biases of cultural historians which have affected scholarly attempts to understand the past,¹⁵ as evidenced by the views of early researchers such as Petrie and Naville in their treatment of the material of the Third Intermediate Period.

The term ‘Third Intermediate Period’, according to Cyril Aldred,¹⁶ was first created by Georg Steindorff in his 1946 museum catalogue as a convenient name to be used in the cataloguing of Egyptian statuary between the New Kingdom, ending with the Twentieth Dynasty (1078/6 BCE), and the Late Period, beginning with the Twenty-Sixth (Saite) Dynasty (664 BCE),¹⁷ while other scholars such as John Romer state that Kenneth Kitchen in his seminal work *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 BC)*, first published in 1973, christened the period as the ‘Third Intermediate Period’.¹⁸ Despite the attributions to the naming of the period, ‘Third Intermediate Period’ has become fixed academic nomenclature to describe this complex period of Egypt’s history. The term has survived and permeated most studies of Egypt’s history, culture, and material studies regarding the Twenty-First to Twenty-Fifth Dynasty. There was a call to change the term to the ‘Post-Imperial Epoch’,¹⁹ but Egyptologists did not adopt this, and the usage of the term ‘Intermediate’ has been retained. The implications of using labels such as ‘intermediate’ can create bias against the periods in question and assign a superiority to the preceding and succeeding phases, which is somewhat demonstrated by the wealth of studies focusing on all aspects of society in the New Kingdom, and even the Saite to Ptolemaic Period which is better defined culturally and chronologically. There are many reasons for the focus on other periods at the expense of the ‘Intermediate Periods’, as so little has survived in

the way of monumental architecture, and the preservation of literature and textual data is limited at best compared with that in the preceding periods of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms. In the ‘Third Intermediate Period’ the arena of royal power was concentrated within the Delta nome capitals, of which hardly anything has survived as a result of the wetter environmental and ecological conditions. This is in striking comparison to the well-preserved and drier area of the desert fringes in Upper Egypt, particularly at Thebes, where tombs and temples are well preserved. While admittedly the material record so far gathered, no more so than the settlement remains, is sparse, like other post-collapse societies such as Archaic Greece, this should not deter scholarly interest. By their nature these periods exercise a fascination and present a challenge, to answer questions regarding what was happening in cultural, social, religious, political, and economic terms.²⁰ The growing corpus of settlement and domestic material culture remains can now begin to answer some of the most pressing questions regarding the development of settlements, and culture in general, from the perspective of this period of Egypt’s history.

CHRONOLOGY

One of the main problems in understanding the Third Intermediate Period is providing a sound historical framework for the Twenty-First to Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, which has been more difficult to establish than for any other period of Egyptian history.²¹ This book has included the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty as forming part of the Third Intermediate Period because the underlying political geography of Egypt from the time of Piankhy (747–716 BCE), and for almost another century later, was ‘thinly veiled behind the purely superficial unity of rule presented by the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty’.²²

Studies have concentrated on understanding the chronology and the sequence of kings and local rulers, and many scholars still do not agree on a wide range of chronological aspects.²³ There is a lack of a continuous series of dates for any ruler, and there can be no confidence in the suggestion that the highest known year date for any reign reflects its true length. Ultimately the chronology of the Third Intermediate Period is imprecise and uncertain in many respects.²⁴ Most of the king lists which have survived from ancient Egypt were written before this period. The only list to survive that includes the kings of the Third Intermediate Period is the list of the Greek historian Manetho who was writing in the third century BCE. Manetho acquired his sources from the High Priests of Ptah at Memphis and several other Delta sources. His king list therefore provides an incomplete picture for the country and contains a Lower Egyptian bias.²⁵ As well as Manetho’s list, royal and private inscriptions have been used to establish the order of the kings, including the cross-referencing of Egyptian sources with Assyrian and other contemporary Near Eastern sources,

including biblical references. The loss of data makes it difficult for a balanced historical picture of the country to be achieved,²⁶ which most seriously affects the Delta, where many of the important historical developments took place.

Libyan rule in Egypt began with the accession of the Twenty-First Dynasty, and the specific administrative system introduced at the outset of the dynasty continued during the Twenty-Second and the Twenty-Third Dynasty. In a more general cultural record there are clear differences between the Twentieth and Twenty-First Dynasty, but a close unity between the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Dynasty. These included a changed conception of kingship. There was no longer one unique ruler over Egypt but rather several kings at the same time, all assuming full royal style and claiming full royal power, without challenging sets of claims. There was a division of the country and the capital of the Lower Egyptian kings of the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Dynasty now became Tanis, where several of them were buried within the temenos of the Amun temple.²⁷ It is now generally agreed that the power of the founders of the Twenty-First Dynasty, Piankh and Herihor, was based on their capacity as army commanders, which may also have applied to Smendes I, the first pharaoh of the Twenty-First Dynasty, although we do not know which military, priestly, or civil titles he held. Piankh and Herihor may have been Libyan Great Chiefs whose mutual relations were determined in accordance with the Libyan social hierarchy where brothers and cousins are placed on equal social levels.²⁸ Furthermore, in this patrilineal system, descent and genealogical closeness was a determining factor, but at the same time brothers and patrilineal parallel cousins were structurally positioned to compete for access to resources, inheritance, and overall leadership, which most likely led fraternal succession to take precedence over father to son succession.

THE *WHM-MSWT* (REPEATING OF BIRTHS), THE THEBAN HIGH PRIESTLY SUCCESSION, AND TWENTY-FIRST DYNASTY HIGH PRIESTS OF AMUN

Owing to the weakness of centralised governmental control during the late Twentieth Dynasty from the reign of Ramesses IX to that of Ramesses XI, Upper and Lower Egypt changed from areas of administrative convenience into distinct political entities. The self-sufficient pride of the Theban hierarchy and the weakness of the northern Ramesside kings helped to form a political schism between the north and south. From Year 19 of Ramesses XI onwards a new regime was implemented called the 'Renaissance' (*whm-mswt*, lit. repeating of births), and from then on, the dateline is formed as Year 1 of X corresponding to Year 19 of Ramesses XI. The *whm-mswt* reached at least a Year 10 (= Ramesses XI Year 28), and probably a Year 12 (= Ramesses XI Year 30).²⁹ This political division saw a strong military command given to

the High Priests of Amun at Thebes who controlled Upper Egypt, and to a new man hailing from Mendes, called Smendes, based on the newly elevated site of Tanis, replacing the now mainly defunct previous Ramesside capital of Piramesse (Qantir). To prevent further socio-political problems, the Viceroy of Nubia, Panehesy, was relieved of his post and the Nubian province was given to the High Priest of Amun at Thebes. However, Panehesy rallied his loyal troops in Nubia and successfully held off the forces of the High Priest of Amun, and it is likely that Panehesy held a practical border somewhere between Maharakka and Derr near Korosko, and maybe even made common cause with a rising new chiefdom in Kush, on whom he could draw for defence in a common interest against Egypt.³⁰

Recent debate as to the sequence of the Theban High Priests of Amun (HPA) during the political transition at the end of the New Kingdom has led to the generally accepted order of Herihor then Piankh to be questioned, and the proposal put forward that Piankh preceded Herihor.³¹ The theory has been both rejected by some³² and endorsed by others.³³ The current arguments used for the reversal of the traditional order Herihor–Piankh have been widely debated.³⁴ The reversed order does, however, match the Libyan social hierarchy and the changed conception of kingship during this period.³⁵ The chronological models for the early inception of the Twenty-First Dynasty in Thebes are still debated, and there is still currently no clear consensus among scholars of the period.

There is general scholarly agreement on the number and reigns of the Twenty-First Dynasty, and a precise idea of the parallel sequence of HPA at Thebes and northern pharaohs. There are seven kings listed in Manetho and the Egyptian archaeological and textual evidence.³⁶ The Tanite pharaohs are Smendes I, Amenemnisu, Psusennes I, Amenemopet, Osochor, Siamun, and Psusennes II. The parallel priestly line in Thebes also has a fixed sequence of Pinudjem I, Masaharta, Menkheperre, Smendes II, Pinudjem II, and Psusennes III (who is almost certainly the same as the Tanite Psusennes II). Between the pontificates of Masaharta and Menkheperre was Djedkhonsuefankh, under the co-kingship of Pinudjem I with Psusennes II, and he was called ‘son’ of the royal Pinudjem (I).

THE EARLY TWENTY-SECOND DYNASTY: SHOSHENQ I TO OSORKON II

The most important chronological sources for the Twenty-Second Dynasty onwards in Upper Egypt are the Nile flood level records at Karnak, the annals of the priests of Karnak, the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon at Karnak, and the statues and other objects belonging to families which provide evidence of extensive genealogies, while for Lower Egypt they are the donation and

Serapeum stelae. The start of the Twenty-Second Dynasty has commonly been fixed by convention to 945 BCE with the accession of Shoshenq I, which saw the brief reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt. Recent analysis of lunar dates would suggest Year 1 of Shoshenq I now correlates to 943 BCE based on a lunar date from a stela of Shoshenq I found in the Dakhleh Oasis.³⁷ The lineage of the first part of the Twenty-Second Dynasty is relatively well known. Based on the stela of Psenhor B (from Year 37 of Shoshenq V),³⁸ there is a definite father to son sequence: Shoshenq I, Osorkon I, Takeloth I, and Osorkon II. This sequence does not mean each one immediately followed the other into office, as the Manethoic list records three unnamed kings between Osorkon I and Takeloth I.

THE MID-TWENTY-SECOND DYNASTY TO THE TWENTY-THIRD DYNASTY

Since the reign of Osorkon II at the latest, the Twenty-Second Dynasty kings and their sons lost out to the powers of decentralisation when clearly defined separate spheres of power and local kinglets of non-Egyptian origin, including Chiefs of the Ma(shwesh) and Libu, appeared, mainly in Lower Egypt and northern Middle Egypt (Faiyum, Heracleopolis, Hermopolis, and possibly as far south as Asyut).³⁹ The dual kingships of the Twenty-First Dynasty recurred in the middle of the Twenty-Second Dynasty. It is not clear whether this regionalisation only came into existence at the outset of the Twenty-Second Dynasty or whether it already existed during the Twenty-First Dynasty, but only became explicit in the surviving sources.⁴⁰ The chronological model set out in Kitchen's seminal *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 BC)*, originally published in 1973, stated that in the Twenty-Second Dynasty King Takeloth II directly succeeded Osorkon II. More than a decade later David Aston published an article in which he suggested Takeloth II was not a Tanite pharaoh as had always been presumed, and was in fact a king of a different, rival, Theban Twenty-Third Dynasty, and a contemporary of the Tanite Pharaoh Shoshenq III who followed the reign of Osorkon II.⁴¹

This newly proposed chronology used the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon, carved on to the Bubastite Gate at Karnak, to suggest that Year 22 of Shoshenq III was close to Year 24 of Takeloth II, and not twenty years later. Assuming Shoshenq III's Year 22 followed Takeloth II's highest known year date, Year 25, then Shoshenq III came to the throne in Tanis in Year 3 of Takeloth II.⁴² The new chronology suggested that the civil war described in the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon, which broke out in Thebes in Takeloth II's Year 11, was caused by Pedubast Siese setting himself up in opposition to Takeloth as King of Thebes, and thus, Year 1 of Pedubast = Year 11 of Takeloth II = Year 8 of Shoshenq III. A detailed study of the burial assemblages of the descendants of

Takeloth, plus generation counting, suggested that Takeloth II should be dated from ca. 825–800 BCE, meaning that Osorkon II had to have reigned for around forty to forty-five years to fill in the chronological gap; this was justified by genealogies that indicate that the reign of Osorkon II covered more than one generation (twenty-eight to thirty years per generation), suggesting that Takeloth II must have reigned slightly earlier in time.⁴³ The new chronological model of Aston has since been adopted, modified, and added to,⁴⁴ but is still strongly criticised by Kitchen.⁴⁵ There are now two main rival competing chronologies for the mid-Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Dynasty, those of Aston and Kitchen. The fragmentation of the Twenty-Second Dynasty and the emergence of the Twenty-Third Theban/Heracleopolitan Dynasty based on Aston's chronological model allowed the creation of a power vacuum, in which several local dynasts began setting themselves up within the important political centres. These political centres and local dynasts continued to function well into the end of the period, until the advent of Assyrian aggression and conquest.

THE KINGDOM OF THE WEST UNDER TEFNAKHT AND THE PROTO-TWENTY-FIFTH DYNASTY IN NUBIA

Political contact between Egypt and Nubia was renewed ca. 750 BCE when the ruler of Nubia, Kashta, of whom we have surviving contemporary records, appears to have been recognised as king throughout Nubia, and as far north as Elephantine, where a stela was found proclaiming him King of Upper and Lower Egypt.⁴⁶ This Nubian kingdom had come into existence in the late tenth or early ninth century BCE. The chiefs were buried in simple graves at el-Kurru.⁴⁷ The previous occupation of the Fourth Cataract area in the New Kingdom and the subjection to Egyptian culture had created an Egyptianised Nubian people, and it was under the rule of the Theban Pharaoh Osorkon III that Nubian power began to interact with the Theban state, although it was initially restricted to the southern border of Egypt at Elephantine.⁴⁸ Kashta, who died in ca. 747 BCE and was buried in a tomb at el-Kurru, was succeeded by his son Piankhy.⁴⁹ Within the first decade of his reign (ca. 747–737 BCE) Piankhy claimed to be the protector and ruler of Thebes, established garrisons along the southern sector of the Nile, and sought out the allegiance of local dynasts in Middle Egypt including Nimlot D of Hermopolis.⁵⁰

In Egypt, two stelae found at Buto⁵¹ state that by Year 36 of the Tanite Pharaoh Shoshenq V (ca. 732 BCE), a western Delta ruler called Tefnakht claimed to be Great Chief of the Ma, Army Leader, and Great Chief of the Libu, challenging the dynast and Chief of the Libu, Ankhhor in Mendes, who still claimed the title in Year 37 of Shoshenq V.⁵² In Year 38 of Shoshenq V (ca. 730 BCE) Tefnakht added the title 'Great Chief of the Entire Lands' and the religious titles of Neith,

Wadjet, and the Lady of *Imaw* which reflected his rule in Sais, Buto, and Kom el-Hisn. Tefnakht was now in control of the entire western Delta, effectively creating a western kingdom, stretching from the Mediterranean coast to Memphis and *Itj-Tawy* in the south. From this power base Tefnakht extended his control south of Memphis by attacking Heracleopolis and advancing on Hermopolis. This rapid advance southward, bypassing the eastern Delta kings, would bring Tefnakht into open conflict with the Nubian state in the south, and the proto-Twenty-Fifth Dynasty now reigned over by Kashta's son Piankhy. The famous Piankhy Stela recounts how, after the defection of Nimlot D to Tefnakht, Piankhy came to Egypt and fought back against Tefnakht. The defeat of Tefnakht's forces at Memphis meant Piankhy could claim both the south and north of Egypt, and the rulers of Egypt now submitted to Piankhy. After the victory Piankhy returned to Napata never to return to Egypt, nor was he challenged in the Thebaid. Egypt still retained a politically divided series of mini-states that would remain for the next century. The Nubian conquest did not make Egypt into a united system and was only a superficial one for the remaining Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.⁵³

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DYNASTY

With the return of Piankhy to Napata, there was no Nubian administration left in place and Piankhy had no intention of ruling as pharaoh. The power vacuum that was left allowed the local dynasts to continue to rule their settlements and hinterlands, especially in the Delta. The old Tanite dynasty had become no more than a petty chiefdom and the Middle Egyptian rulers and Chiefs of the Ma had all become subservient to Piankhy, but Tefnakht at Sais retained the entire united western Delta kingdom.⁵⁴ Tefnakht regained Memphis and became pharaoh in the north, and now has the cartouche of Shepsesre-Tefnakht. Shepsesre-Tefnakht did not attempt to remove Osorkon IV from the Tanite throne and claim the eastern Delta, nor did he move south for fear of Nubian aggression.

Directly after the rule of Tefnakht I came the official beginning of Manetho's Twenty-Fourth Dynasty. The Twenty-Fourth Dynasty was made up of one king called Bakenrenef ruling from Sais, and as he is listed by Manetho, it suggests that he officially ruled in Memphis, and was not *de facto* king like Tefnakht. The nature and extent of the rule of Bakenrenef is unknown, but he did nothing to eliminate the royal lines still presiding in Tanis-Bubastis or the Chiefs of the Ma outside the Western Kingdom. Furthermore, it is not known to what extent the other dynasts accepted and recognised the rule of Bakenrenef.⁵⁵

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DYNASTY

After Piankhy's death in ca. 716/14 BCE he was succeeded by Shebitku, who reconquered Egypt. Shebitku was followed by Shabaka.⁵⁶ On the whole,

during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty from the time of Shebitku the internal affairs of Egypt were peaceful, but at Sais, a Stephanites may have become a local ruler. He may have been a descendant of Tefnakht, ruling from 695–688 BCE. After Shabaka came Taharqa, who was crowned at Memphis. It is widely agreed that the earliest event in Egyptian history that can be dated with relative precision is the accession to the throne of Taharqa in 690 BCE.⁵⁷ The first thirteen years of Taharqa's reign were peaceful, but local chiefs continued to rule their independent mini-states in the same way as in the previous Libyan Period. The portrayal of Nubian rule in the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty as sole rulers of Egypt particularly on Theban monuments provides a superficial impression that, from the reign of Shebitku, the Nubian rulers had created a united country and the era of the local mini-state dynasts was over, but this was not the case. The Twenty-Fifth Dynasty rulers had merely imposed a central rule based at Memphis, Thebes, and Napata. This form of rule was based upon the already existing series of Delta and Upper Egyptian chiefs and mayors compiled by the Assyrian records of local rulers by Assurbanipal in 667/6 BCE, and this is further confirmed by the Egyptian evidence.⁵⁸ In 674 BCE Esarhaddon of Assyria attempted to invade Egypt but was defeated by Taharqa's forces, but he invaded for a second time in 671 BCE, defeating Taharqa and driving him from Memphis. In 669 BCE Esarhaddon attacked Egypt again when trouble broke out, but he died en route. Again in 667/666 BCE Assurbanipal marched to subdue Egypt where Taharqa had re-established his rule since 671 BCE. Taharqa was defeated and he fled to Thebes. The Assyrians went as far south as Thebes, while Taharqa escaped to Napata, and Assurbanipal received the submission of the Upper and Lower Egyptian dynasts headed by Necho I of Sais. After Assurbanipal returned to Nineveh, the Delta chiefs conspired with Taharqa to co-rule with him, but the plot was discovered and the conspirators were sent to Nineveh. The conspirators were executed in the main centres of Sais, Mendes, and Pelusium as a warning. The chiefs were sent to Nineveh where they were all executed, apart from Necho I of Sais and his son. Necho I was appointed as a kinglet and was returned to Sais and Memphis as the Assyrian vassal, while his son Psammetik was appointed to rule Athribis.⁵⁹ In 664 BCE Taharqa's nephew Tantamani succeeded him and, claiming the kingship of Upper and Lower Egypt, sailed through Egypt and invaded the Delta. Necho I of Sais was the only resistance and was killed by Tantamani. The Delta chiefs recognised Tantamani as king, and since Necho I was now dead, sent a deputation to Tantamani led by Pekrur, the ruler of Saft el-Henna.⁶⁰ Assurbanipal invaded Egypt again in 664/663 BCE and caused Tantamani to flee to Thebes. The Assyrians followed Tantamani, sacked Thebes, and then probably went on to Napata.⁶¹ This event was the end of Nubian control of Egypt and the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, but in Napata Tantamani's rule went unchallenged. In the Delta, the start of the Saite Period (Twenty-Sixth

Dynasty) began, with Psammetik I king of the west from the Mediterranean to Memphis, with Athribis and Heliopolis. Psammetik I began imposing his primacy on other districts of the Delta, and by 656 BCE, through the presentation of his daughter Nitocris I to Amun in Thebes and the adoption of Nitocris I by Shepenwepet II and Amenirdis II as the future God’s Wife of Amun, he gained the recognition of Thebes, creating a fully unified Egypt.⁶²