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IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE ON THUTMOSIS III ...

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING TUTHMOSIS
William D. Petty.

The Importance of Being Tuthmosis

by William D. Petty

Names are important. They mean things. A king in pharaonic Egypt had five names of which two were commonly used; the prenomen and the nomen. The prenomen was a name the king assumed for himself upon ascending the throne. The nomen, sometimes referred to as the king's given—or birth—name, is generally assumed to be the name given the king when he was born. But this is not always the case.

For example, in the 19th Dynasty it seems clear that the nomen was actually the birth name of the king. Ramesses II is depicted as the crown prince Ramesses in Seti I's temple at Abydos. Years later, after he was king, Ramesses depicted his own sons on the temple walls of several of his temples, including his mortuary temple, the Ramesseum. In this depiction, a line of twenty-three princes is

shown, each with his name. The first is crown prince Amenhirkhopshef; the second is Ramesses (sometimes called Ramesses Jr.). The thirteenth son in the line is Merenptah. This is the same Merenptah who succeeded Ramesses to the throne and ruled as King Merenptah (see Table 1).

While wholesale name changes did not occur in the 19th dynasty, they did occur to at least some extent. Ramesses II changed his nomen to Ramessu around the twentieth year of his reign. The prince, Amenhirkhopshef, was originally named Amenhirwonmef, but his name was apparently changed when he became crown prince.¹

It is just as clear that in the 20th Dynasty the king's nomen was generally not his actual, given name. With the exception of Sethnakhte, the first king of the 20th Dynasty, all the kings from

Ramesses III through Ramesses XI used Ramesses for their nomens (see Table 2)². Because these kings were a series of sons, grandsons and great grandsons of Ramesses III (in an order which is still not well established), it is rather certain that not all, if any, of their given names were actually Ramesses. In other words, upon assuming the throne, the new king not only took on a prenomen appropriate for his new status but also chose a nomen suitable for his position. Possibly to claim a spiritual tie to the great pharaoh, or perhaps because of some actual distant relationship, Ramesses became this chosen name.

It has been generally assumed that in the 18th Dynasty the king's nomen was, in fact, his given name. But this may not always have been the case. Obviously, Akhenaten and Tutankhaten had no hesitation in assuming a new nomen that was politically and religiously more acceptable. Akhenaten assumed the throne as Amenhotep IV but changed his nomen to Akhenaten in his regnal year 5.³ Tutankhamun assumed the throne as Tutankhaten, but changed his nomen to Tutankhamun fairly early in his reign. There is monumental evidence for both of these nomen changes. But what of the other kings of the Tuthmoside line?

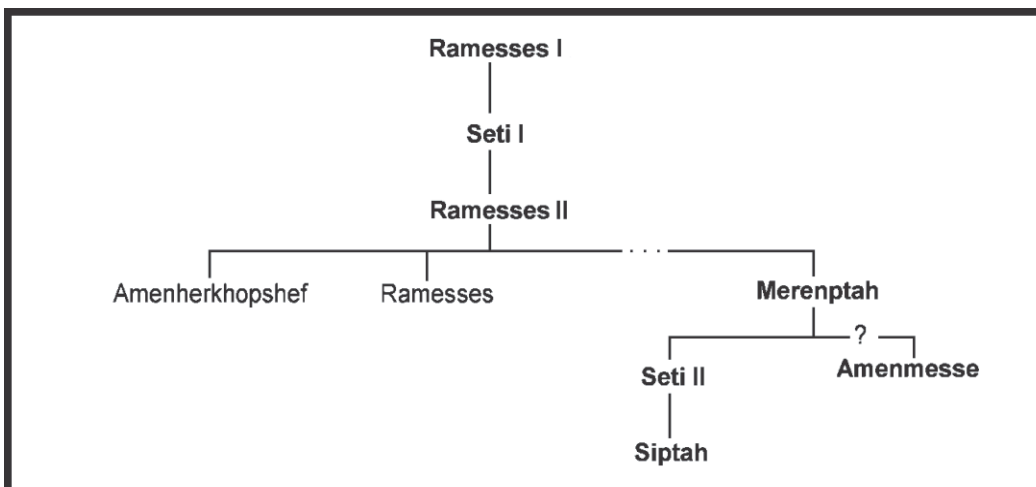


Table 1 - Partial Family tree of the 19th Dynasty
(bold faced names = king)

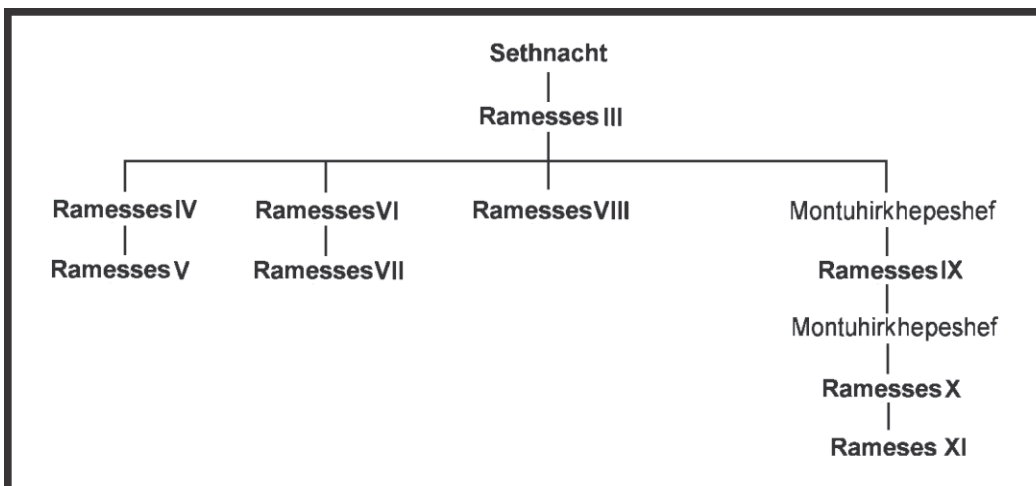


Table 2 - Partial Family tree of the 20th Dynasty ²
(bold faced names = king)

Several observations can be made concerning the males of the 18th Dynasty's Tuthmoside line:

1) EVERY MALE KING OF THE TUTHMOSIDE LINE, UNTIL THE AKHENATEN HERESY, HAD THE NOMEN TUTHMOSIS OR AMENHOTEP (SEE TABLE 3).

A similar situation occurred only three other times in Egyptian history. In the 11th Dynasty, there were three kings in succession with the nomen Intef, followed by three Mentuhoteps. In the 12th Dynasty, all the kings had nomens of either Amenemhet or Senusret. And in the 20th Dynasty, all the kings after Sethnakhte had the nomen Ramesses. As we have already seen, at least most of the nomens in the 20th dynasty were probably adopted upon succession to the throne.

The reigns of the 11th Dynasty kings are somewhat confused. While it does seem rather clear that Mentuhotep II was the eldest son and successor of Mentuhotep I, the origin and reigns of the other kings are less certain.

The kings of the 12th Dynasty were all descendants of one Senusret, who was given the title "God's Father", indicating that he was the non-royal father of a king. His son, Amenemhet I, was the first king of the 12th dynasty. It appears that the first two sons of all subsequent kings of this dynasty were named Senusret and Amenemhet (not necessarily in that order). In this way, the oldest surviving son always bore one of those two names.

Unlike the situation in the 12th Dynasty, not one attested 18th Dynasty crown prince attained the throne and reigned under his own nomen. Eldest sons in this period were rarely named either Tuthmosis or Amenhotep at birth; yet the new king always bore one of those two names. As can be seen in Table 3, four Tuthmoside kings (Tuthmosis I, Tuthmosis III, Amenhotep II, and Amenhotep III) had attested heirs. Based on their names, it would seem that none of these heirs succeeded to the throne. While granting that the sample is small and that the mortality rate in ancient Egypt was significantly higher than today, we still have to conclude either that during this period not a single attested crown prince survived to gain the throne, or that the crown prince, upon ascending the throne, adopted a new name as his nomen.

2) AT LEAST HALF OF THE KINGS OF THE TUTHMOSIDE LINE ARE NOT EVEN ATTESTED AS SONS BY THEIR FATHERS.

Most of the kings of the Tuthmoside line are not attested as their own father's son until sometime after the death of their father and they had ascended the throne. Specifically, prior to their accessions to the throne:

- Tuthmosis II is nowhere attested as a son of Tuthmosis I
- Tuthmosis III is nowhere attested as a son of Tuthmosis II,
- Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) is nowhere attested as a son of Amenhotep III

On the other hand, some future kings are attested by their fathers, but not as crown princes:

- Amenhotep II is attested as a son of, and likely co-regent with, Tuthmosis III prior to his sole rule, but nowhere as a crown prince.
- Tuthmosis IV is attested as a son (but not as a crown prince) of Amenhotep II prior to his accession to the throne.
- Amenhotep III is attested as a son (but not as a crown prince) of Tuthmosis IV prior to his accession to the throne.

It must be granted that attestation of any sons during this time (as opposed to the 19th Dynasty) was not very common. Yet the lack of attestation of sons who were of sufficient importance to eventually succeed to the throne does seem unusual, especially considering the number of non-crown prince sons who are attested.

The purpose of this paper is not to draw any conclusions. Based on the available information, it is likely that no firm conclusions can be drawn in most cases. However, it does seem likely that at least in some instances the kings of the Tuthmoside line assumed a new name as their nomen upon gaining the throne. It is possible that we have already gained some knowledge of these princes, but by a different name, prior to their accession. Likewise, it is possible that a prince with a name of which we are unaware—but a name of no particular political value—simply assumed the nomen of Tuthmosis or Amenhotep upon his accession to improve his royal status.

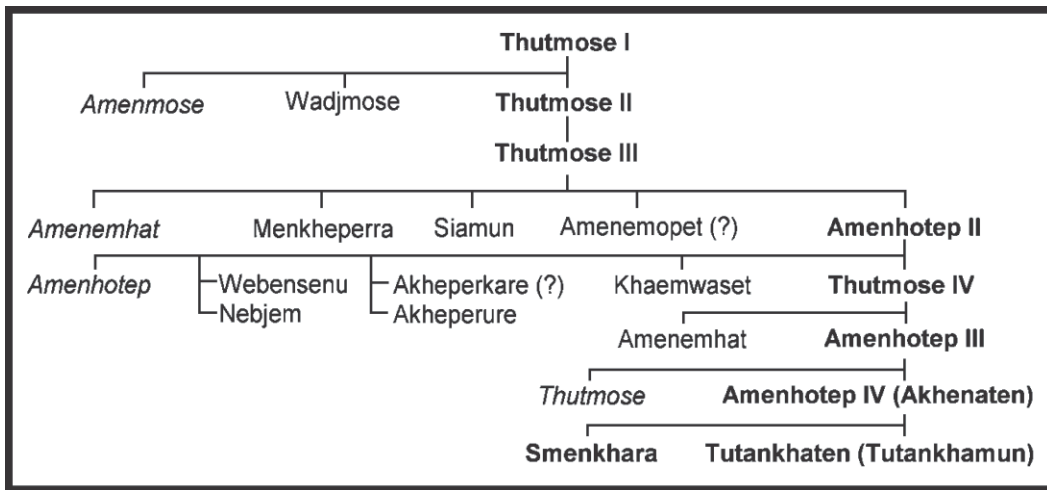


Table 3 - Partial Family tree of the 18th Dynasty
(bold faced names = king, italic names = attested crown prince)

NOTES

1. Kitchen, KA., *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Cairo: Dr. William D. Petty is President of Museum Tours, Inc. He is also President of The Amarna Research Foundation, a past president of the Egyptian Study Society, and a frequent contributor of articles to Kmt: A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt. The American University in Cairo Press, 1982), 102.
2. Dodson, Aidan, *Monarchs of the Nile*, (London: Rubican Press, 1995), 152.
3. Dodson, *Monarchs of the Nile*, 98.

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