

William J. Murnane

**Once Again
the Dates for
Tuthmosis III and
Amenhotep II**

This paper has no other purpose than to reinstate legitimate doubt. It has long been recognized that the problem of dating Tuthmosis III's accession is resolved by a choice between 1504 and 1490 B.C., and with one exception,¹ recent scholarship has tended to accept the lower date in calculating the chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty.² We intend, then, to examine whether such near unanimity is justified.

Psdntjw, the first day of the Egyptian lunar month, began when the thin crescent could no longer be seen in the morning sky.³ The fact that the days of the lunar month were customarily reckoned in terms of the civil calendar provides the basis for calculating the absolute dates for Tuthmosis III. On a schematic basis, a given lunar day will correspond to the same date in the civil calendar once every twenty-five years,⁴ and since the margin for chronological error for the Eighteenth Dynasty is about fourteen years, the resulting equation between lunar and civil dates in the twenty-five year cycle seems to be decisive. Two variables,

¹ William C. Hayes, "Egypt--to End of Twentieth Dynasty," CAH (Rev. ed.) (Fascicle no. 4: "Chronology"), Ch. VI, p. 17.

² Parker, "The Lunar Dates of Tuthmosis III and Ramesses II," JNES 16 (1957), pp. 39-43; Hornung, Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und Geschichte des Neuen Reiches (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 56-57; Redford, "On the Chronology of the Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty," JNES 25 (1966), p. 124.

³ Parker, The Calendars of Ancient Egypt (Chicago, 1950), SAOC 26, Ch. 1, Sections 25-108.

⁴ Ibid., Sections 49-50; also the appendix to this paper.

however, upset this comfortable picture: Because the beginning of the lunar month depended on observation of an horizon phenomenon, poor visibility brought on by haze or sandstorms might interfere and cause psdntjw to be reckoned one day too early.⁵ The premature beginning of one lunar month would in turn influence the beginning of the following month, while a repetition of the original error in observation would compound the discrepancy between the actual date and the calculation. A second difficulty would arise if, from time to time, the Egyptians adopted a standard lunar month of thirty days which was independent of observation. We do not know, however, whether they did this as early as the Eighteenth Dynasty or, if they did, how consistently. Given this uncertainty, we can only regard solutions based on lunar dates as tentative, useful in most cases only in fixing the more probable choices. For Tuthmosis III's accession, as we have said, the choices are 1504 and 1490.

An important part of Parker's calculation is the date for the Battle of Megiddo, on which "psdntjw exactly" occurred on the twenty-first day of the third month of Shomu in the civil calendar.⁶ This, at least, is what the text tells us, but an emendation has been proposed due to a seeming inconsistency in the account of the Annals. In Faulkner's discussion of the campaign, it was noted that the decision to move the Egyptian army through the pass at Aruna and the accomplishment of this maneuver (which brought the Egyptians face to face with their enemies before the walls of Megiddo) seem to have taken place on the same day, III Shomu 19.⁷ Since it is made clear by the text that, when the army made camp that night, the battle was expected on the morrow, the date for the battle as given (III Shomu 21) leaves one day unaccounted for. This difficulty Faulkner resolved by suggesting that the battle was fought on the twentieth rather than the twenty-first of the month, an emendation which Parker accepts in calculating from the lunar dates.⁸

This argument, circumstantially sound as it appears, overlooks one significant peculiarity in the Egyptian system of reckoning time. The Egyptian day, unlike

⁵ Professor David Pingree, in an oral communication to the writer; thus too Parker, JNES 16, pp. 39-41.

⁶ Urk. IV, 657, 2. Entire passage translated by Wilson, ANET², p. 236.

⁷ Ibid., 652, 13-655, 15.

⁸ Faulkner, "The Battle of Megiddo," JEA 28 (1942), 11. (hh).

our own, extended from sunrise to sunrise,⁹ and it seems that the period of darkness which preceded each day's sunrise belonged to the previous day.¹⁰ Thus, what we would consider to be early morning of the fifteenth would, for an Egyptian, fall within the compass of the fourteenth. That this scheme holds true for the Annals is more than suggested by the progression of events leading up to the battle: following the night's period of rest, the chief officers of the army gather in the king's tent to report on the preparations for the coming conflict; it is only after this, when the battle itself is about to be described, that the new day is announced--"III Shomu 21, psdntjw exactly."¹¹ Since the entire action, from conference to battle, must have fallen on the same day, it is apparent that the preparations mentioned occupied the twilight period before sunrise announced the new day. A comparison of this episode with that of the army's advance into the valley of the Qina is instructive. This account also begins with a deliberative session in the king's tent which, like its counterpart before the Battle of Megiddo, took place after the night's rest.¹² The difference

⁹ Parker, Calendars, Section 32.

¹⁰ The coming of the new day is always associated with the rising of the sun: Note Westendorff's discussion of the formulas hd.n. rf t3, dw3 (or snw n hrw) bpr, in ZAS, 79 (1954), 65-68; cf. Sinuhe, B-10: hd. n.j wn hrw (see Blackman, Middle Egyptian Stories [Brussels, 1932], p. 9, for the parallels). A bit of possibly negative evidence has been adduced from the "Tale of the Two Brothers" (=P. D'Orbiney), 5, 4: m p3 wn tw:j šn p3y smj bin, wnw jw: r jr .f m sd (sic). Gardiner, Late Egyptian Stories (Brussels, 1932), p. 14a proposes to emend sd to sf, thus suggesting a translation which defines the day preceding an evening as "yesterday" (thus Schott, Altägyptische Festdaten [Wiesbaden, 1950], p. 20). This problematical passage is broken at its beginning; we do not know the manuscript tradition which might explain the writing of P.D'Orbiney's manifestly incorrect reading sd. An alternative emendation to hd is both graphically possible and sensible within the context of the story, to wit: "and if I should protest this vile proposition, would not he make it white (= whitewash it)?" Cf. Erman, Neuägyptische Grammatik (Leipzig, 1933), Section 538; Černý, Lectures on Late Egyptian Grammar [unpublished], p. 29 (a). Wilson, ANET², p. 24, seems also to read hd, but takes it for an abbreviation of hd-t3, "tomorrow"! Even if sf, "yesterday," were the correct reading, its bearing on the problem of official time reckoning might not be significant. From the standpoint of daylight, for instance, modern Westerners would speak of "last night" in referring to three o'clock that morning, regardless of the official beginning of the day at midnight.

¹¹ Urk. IV, 656-57.

¹² Ibid., 653, 13-14.

is that the conference itself is here dated, to III Shomu 19, but by analogy it can be suggested that this meeting too was held in the early morning hours. The result was that when the sun rose, the ensuing business fell on III Shomu 20. The absence of the date-change need not be troublesome if we remember that the Annals, as we have them now, consist of selective excerpts from the campaign journals and that a fair number of details must have been lost in the editing.¹³ In the writer's opinion, this explanation is better grounded in Egyptian usage than is Faulkner's, and it does not involve the loss of a day or the "necessary" emendation of 21 to 20. If then, III Shomu 21 is once again the basis of calculating Tuthmosis III's accession, the solution which follows is exact for 1504 by Parker's own method.¹⁴

Recently, in the John A. Wilson Festschrift, Parker has sought to establish absolute dates for Amenhotep II by similar methods, while retaining 1490 as the accession year for Tuthmosis III.¹⁵ The significant data is recorded in P. Leningrad 1116A (lines 192-200): Grain was issued for milling and manufacture into beer for the next psdntjw festival and delivered on a day after III Shomu 6 but before III Shomu 10 in Amenhotep II's nineteenth year. The civil calendar date of the festival proper is nowhere indicated, but a minimum interval of four days from delivery would be necessary to accommodate the time required for the making of beer. Using the twenty-five year cycle of lunar to civil date correspondences, Parker establishes III Shomu 11 in 1420 as the psdntjw of our papyrus, which is consistent with 1490 for Tuthmosis III and with the suggested coregency between this

¹³ From the account of the army's progress until it reached Aruna, it seems obvious that the inscribed version of the Annals has been extracted from a more detailed account, and as much is admitted further in the text: ibid., 693, 10-14.

¹⁴ Parker, JNES 16, pp. 41-42. With regard to the second date, it has been suggested to me that psdntjw here is not II Proyet 30, as Parker supposes, but rather the day before: wđ.hm=(j) sspđ pd-šs hr s3wt hrw n psdntjw r pd šs hr mnw pn m h3t-sp 24, II Prt'rqy (Urk. IV, 835, 17-836, 2), "My Majesty commanded the stretching-of-the-cord to be set up while awaiting the day of psdntjw, in order that the cord might be stretched for this monument on II Proyet, last day, in year 24." Does the date refer to psdntjw itself or to the day of waiting? If the latter, psdntjw fell on III Proyet 1, yielding two exact solutions for 1504 and two inexact ones for 1490.

¹⁵ "Once Again the Coregency of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep II," in Studies in Honor of John A. Wilson (Chicago, 1969), SAOC 35, pp. 75-82.

king and his son, Amenhotep II.¹⁶ Further, Parker suggests that Tuthmosis III's death on III Proyet 30 of his fifty-fourth year occurred concurrently with his son's "first campaign of victory" in his third year.¹⁷

All this is plausible, but not compelling. Of the psdntjw festival mentioned in P. Leningrad 1116A, we know only that it probably was celebrated soon after III Shomu 10. The coregency of Amenhotep II with his father is fixed to a minimum of three and a maximum of six years.¹⁸ Within these limits a reconstruction which fits a presumed accession of Tuthmosis III in 1504 is easily accomplished. The twenty-five year cycle indicates that psdntjw fell on III Shomu 12 in 1434, a day later than Parker's suggested month date and just as plausible.¹⁹ Since Amenhotep II acceded on IV Akhet 1, 1435/4 would be his nineteenth year as reckoned from an accession in 1453. In terms of his son's regnal years, Tuthmosis III's death in 1450 would have taken place in Amenhotep II's fourth regnal year, eight months after the beginning of his "first" campaign of victory in year 3, III Shomu 15.²⁰

The above remarks in no way prove that 1504 must be accepted as the year in which Tuthmosis III came to the throne, but they should make it clear that the higher date cannot be dismissed as easily as it has been. If the disastrous omen issued by the Hittite sun god in the tenth year of Murshilish II is identical with the solar eclipse of March 13, 1335, as suggested by Güterbock²¹ and Rowton,²² the death of Tutankhamun must have occurred c. 1350. This synchronism requires the acceptance of a twenty-seven year

¹⁶ Redford, "The Coregency of Tuthmosis III and Amenophis II," JEA 51 (1965), pp. 107-122.

¹⁷ Parker, Studies, p. 80.

¹⁸ The evidence for this coregency consists of (a), the fact that two accession dates can be postulated for Amenhotep II (IV Akhet 1, as attested by the monuments, and IV Proyet 1, the day following Tuthmosis III's death on III Proyet 30, on which Amenhotep would be expected to accede were there no coregency); and (b), both the campaigns of years 3 and 7 of Amenhotep II are described as his "first campaign of victory." One is presumably his as coregent, the other as sole ruler. Thus, Tuthmosis III could have died as late as the end of his son's sixth year, but the possibilities are narrowed by use of the lunar cycle.

¹⁹ See Parker, Studies, p. 80, chart.

²⁰ Redford, JNES 25, pp. 119-120, outlines the basic chronological data on Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep II.

²¹ Verbal communication to the writer.

²² "Ancient Western Asia," CAH (Rev. ed.), Ch. VI, p. 46.

reign for Haremhab and of 1304 for the beginning of Ramesses II's sole rule. If, in addition, there was no long coregency between Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, 1504 becomes mandatory for Tuthmosis III's accession. None of this, however, is as straightforward as it appears.

In the unlikely eventuality that Amenhotep III and his son were coregents for over a decade,²³ the accession of Tuthmosis III would have to be brought down to 1490. Similarly, if Haremhab reigned as short a time as the Manethonian figures and the extant monuments seem to indicate,²⁴ the chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty would have to be lowered by some fifteen years. This development would involve a rejection of the Hittite synchronism with the eclipse of 1335,²⁵ since to keep it would require raising the accession of Ramesses II beyond the highest suggested date or the equally unacceptable lengthening of Sety I's reign. In any case, such a reduction of the length of Haremhab's reign would demand 1490 for the accession of Tuthmosis III. Such inconclusiveness at both ends of the dynasty is regrettable, but historians will have to live with these uncertainties until more dates in the chronology can be unquestionably validated.

APPENDIX: THE EGYPTIAN LUNAR AND CIVIL CALENDARS²⁶

During the New Kingdom the Egyptians employed no less than three calendars. The discussion of lunar dates involves the civil calendar and the so-called "later" lunar calendar. The civil calendar consisted of twelve months of thirty days each, with an additional five epagomenal days bringing the total up to 365 days in the year. This civil

²³ Redford, History and Chronology of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty: Seven Studies (Toronto, 1967), pp. 88-169; cf. Murnane, "The Hypothetical Coregency between Amenhotep III and Akhenaten: Two Observations," Serapis 2 (1970), pp. 17-21.

²⁴ Harris, "How Long Was the Reign of Horemheb?" JEA 54 (1968), pp. 95-99.

²⁵ The usefulness of the Hittite omen depends, of course, on the assumption that it represents a natural phenomenon, in which case it could scarcely be anything other than an eclipse. Pace Hornung, Untersuchungen, p. 68, the point is not that the verb šaki jahh means other than "to deliver an omen," but rather the type of omen it was.

²⁶ This summary is drawn from Parker, Calendars, passim.

year was further divided into three seasons of four months each, named Akhet, "Inundation," Proyet, "Seed," and Shomu, "Harvest." Thus "III Shomu 21" signifies the third month of the harvest season (= the eleventh month of the civil year), twenty-first day. Since the civil year totaled one quarter of a day less than the solar year, one day was lost every four years, and over a long period the months of the year would lose their original correspondence to the agricultural seasons. The continuance of the civil calendar into the Roman period, where correspondences to Julian dates are available, insures that a Julian/Egyptian civil date correspondence can be established throughout Egyptian pharaonic history, but the knowledge that, hypothetically, III Shomu 21 was September 15 in 1503 does not itself help us in dating events. A synchronization between the civil (hence Julian) calendar and Egyptian chronology is potentially established by the lunar calendar. This calendar consisted of months geared to the motions of the moon, with twenty-nine or thirty days, each of these days having a distinctive name. The beginning of these months (psdntjw) is sometimes found expressed in terms of civil dates, and since a given lunar day will be equivalent to a particular civil date only once in twenty-five years, it would seem that a certain underpinning could be provided if the range of uncertainty is less than one quarter of a century for any period having such a lunar/civil equation. Unfortunately, correspondences with the day before and the day after our date also occur at intervals in the cycle, and as has been noted above, error in observation cannot be ruled out. Thus, a chronology constructed with lunar dates is less certain than it would at first appear.