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RECREATING IMPERIAL THEBES  
MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS, BUILDING AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THE  
HIGH PRIESTS OF AMUN AT KARNAK FROM HERIHOR TO MENKHEPERRE

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## **Introduction**

Although scientific interest concerning the history of 21st dynasty has increased in the last decades, and several new theories have recently come to light, the fundamental work of K. Kitchen, written in 1973, augmented with new results in the following years and revised in 1995 still remains the most comprehensive study of the period. The above mentioned new studies concentrate mostly on the chronological problems of the era, and particularly on the succession of the high priests of Amun at Thebes at the beginning of the 21st Dynasty.

The present study concentrates on the monumental inscriptions of Herihor, Pinudjem I, Masaharta and Menkheperre, who were great army-commanders and high priests of Amun at Thebes during the above mentioned period. In spite of the attention that these texts enjoyed from the dawn of Egyptology, only selected inscriptions were objects to a broader examination and these too were used rather for chronological purposes or philological investigations.

Thanks to the studies of J. Černý – I. Groll, F. Junge, K. Jansen-Winkel and J. Winand we have satisfactory knowledge concerning the Late Egyptian language of the texts. Although monumental inscriptions usually preserved the traditional expressions used on temple walls, the new language phase is also well represented on stelae and administrative documents.

M. Römer was the first, who collected the inscriptions of the above mentioned high priests for a socio-political research. In this basic work these texts were used for analysing the different titles of these powerful army-commanders and real rulers of Upper Egypt and for comparing them to those found in the inscriptions of the earlier priests. Beside these, M. Römer also set up a fundamental study concerning Egyptian oracles.

The Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago published and translated the text attached to the scenes of Herihor in the Temple of Khonsu, and the inscriptions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty were collected and published by K. Jansen-Winkel in hieroglyphic form. Only selected texts were translated by R. Ritner in his recent anthology of the Libyan period.

Although the above mentioned works are essential resources for any study, the inscriptions still await comprehensive analysis and contextualizing, which is the aim of the research presented here. The study concentrates on the building program and activity of the great army-commanders and high priests who also used royal epithets or titulary from a certain phase of their tenure, hoping that this will allow a greater insight into the religious, social, economical and political life of the first half of the 21st Dynasty. I hope that the addition of several important inscriptions of Pinudjem I will also contribute to our knowledge of the religious map of Ancient Egypt during the period.

This study does not intend to answer chronological problems, a matter irrelevant for the authors of the texts.

### **Summary of results**

If we try to summarize the activity of Herihor at Thebes, we can realise that it is difficult to set up distinct phases in his career. Although it is probable that he has military background, his early career is unknown and we meet him first when he already holds several important military and administrative titles and is high priest of Amun at Thebes.

His granite statue found at the Karnak Cachette most probably commemorates the early career of Herihor as his titles worn by him accentuate his relation to the ruler and his role as vizier of Upper Egypt. It has to be remarked that only the *ḥ3wty* 'leader' title of his most important duties was missing from the statue, however, he was designated as 'great army-commander of Upper and Lower Egypt'. During this period Herihor took part in the restoration efforts of the chaos left in Thebes by Panehesy and also in the reburial of Sethos I and Ramesses II into their own tombs.

The decoration of the Hypostyle Hall in the Khonsu temple was related to the reign of Ramesses XI where Herihor wore titles emphasising his subordinate role to the king but appeared in the temple scenes independently from him. He wore his military titles jointly with his high priestly one, and was dressed only twice as a high priest represented before the processional barks of the Theban Triad. In my opinion the monuments and inscriptions of Herihor do not support the assumption that he separated his functions and was more 'high priestly' in the temple context, and behave more 'general' in administrative context.

His high priestly title occurred alone only in few instances in the case of the renewal texts carved on the bases of the sphinx-avenue leading to the Mut temple and in the graffiti carved to the eastern face of the doorway of the court of the Eighth Pylon. One lesser-known renewal text shows that Herihor also could use his ‘great army-commander of the entire country’ title instead of his high priestly one. If we compare this to the much debated oracle of Nesamun where Piankh was titled *t3y hr hr wnmw n(y) nswt s3 nswt n(y) Kš hm-ntr tp(y) n(y) Jmn-Rc nswt ntrw jmy-r(3)-msc h3wty* ‘fan-bearer on the king’s right, royal son of Kush, high priest of Amun-Re, the king of the gods, general, leader’ in lines 1-2, and shortly general in line 15 the question emerges: were the high priestly and leading military titles complementary to each other?

I believe that the above mentioned details weaken the thesis of K. Jansen-Winkel, namely that Herihor was more ‘high priestly’ in tenure than Piankh in his inscriptions, and the surviving monuments of Herihor show that he did not lay peculiar emphasis on his high priestly title. His monumental inscriptions rather underline the fact that as the leader of the army and administration and as high priest of Amun simultaneously, he was the most powerful man in the region who could also replace Ramesses XI in his ritual functions in the Khonsu Temple.

The graffiti that could have been carved onto the eastern face of the doorway of the court of the Eighth Pylon by a subordinate of Herihor, might show that it was a distinct change in his status from high priest to king.

As it was already observed by A. Gnirs, the most detailed titulature of Herihor survived in a model-letter, written on an ostrakon by the scribe of the necropolis workmen Butehamun on behalf of the entire gang. Following the titles of the addressee Herihor and the naming of the sender party the text continued with the customary well wishes for the sake of the recipient that contained the following: ... *jmy jry=f p3 h3w n(y) p3 Rc m t3 pt jmy hrp.f p3 t3* ... ‘give that he reaches the lifetime of Re in the sky, give that he controls the country ... that usually designated the Egyptian king’s accession to the throne.

This ostrakon shows that the members of the administration regarded Herihor equal to a pharaoh, although he was mentioned only with his administrative titles and not with his royal titulature. Unfortunately it is difficult to decide whether the letter was composed before or after Herihor reached royal status, but it is more probable that it reflects the transitional period when Herihor was the most powerful man in the region but was still a subordinate of Ramesses XI.

His works as king, the restoration of the Great Hypostyle Hall and the decoration of the Court of the Khonsu temple, were in accordance with the responsibilities of a traditional Egyptian ruler. In his scenes Herihor uses Ramesside iconography and his epithets in the architrave dedications of the Court of the Khonsu Temple echo those of Sethos I and Ramesses II in the Great Hypostyle Hall.

With the decoration of the Court of the Khonsu Temple Herihor could fulfil his obligations with limited expenses that could not have been irrelevant in the troubled period, as the temple was most probably ready in the time of Herihor and only its decoration was missing. Temple courts were frequented by the inhabitants of Thebes in special occasions and in the form 'who fixes the destiny' (*p3 jr shrw*) as an oracular god, Khonsu gained importance in popular religion from the late 20th Dynasty onwards, which could have meant that his temple was regularly visited by the inhabitants of Thebes and in reality the kingship of Herihor did not remain secretly closed inside the sacred walls of Karnak. Contrary to Horemheb, Herihor did not feel the importance to re-carve his earlier monuments after reaching royal status. The reason for this has to be searched in the altered position of kingship and power in Egypt.

Although we possess rather abundant monumental inscriptions of Pinudjem I, it is difficult to establish a chronological order between them. According to M. Römer five separate phases could be observed during the evolution of the titles of Pinudjem, who used royal titulary from Year 16 of Smendes but it remained obscure whether these phases were ever attached to different carrier stages. It is noteworthy that civil titles appear only outside Karnak where the high priestly title with additional royal epithets and the usage of royal iconography dominates. Similarly to Herihor, Pinudjem I did not alter any of his previous monuments after ascending to regal status.

As it was already observed by K. Kitchen the earliest inscription of Pinudjem was most probably the secondary scene of the then deceased Piankh, Pinudjem I and his brothers before Amun-Re-Kamutef and Nodjmet. He used his overseer of Thebes, vizier and military titles besides his high priestly one in the two secondary scenes at the Luxor Temple and in Medinet Habu where the population of Thebes West lived and Pinudjem also had a residence in the former palace of Ramesses III. However, the decoration of the door-jambes and lintel fragments rather fit for a house of a high official than of a king.

As the governor of Upper Egypt and also as a high priest of Amun, Pinudjem I was responsible for the sufficient building and renovation projects in Thebes. The Dibabieh quarry stela of Smendes informs us of a severe flood that ruined the canal bed of the Luxor temple that needed repairs. The Tanite king sent architects and three thousand men to quarry the sufficient amount of stone for the restorations. This flood most probably affected the quay and the processional avenue of Ramesses II in front of the Second Pylon at the Karnak Temple of Amun, too. Although the exact date of this event is unsure, it is highly probable that it was Pinudjem I who restored this area and in the meantime he re-organised and re-inscribed the sphinxes with his inscriptions. He also finished the decoration of the pylon and the roof-chapel in the Temple of Khonsu and constructed the processional avenue in front of the temple with re-used ram-shaped sphinxes of Amenhotep III. The high priest concentrated his works to ritual places that were accessible by his subordinates and according to his inscriptions on the Pylon of the Khonsu temple and on the sphinxes in front of the Second Pylon his goal was to magnify Thebes and the temples of its gods.

Pinudjem's building program shows that he had a predilection towards Ramesside examples. He usurped several monuments of Ramesses II at Karnak and made a pair to the scene of his famous predecessor at Luxor. His inscriptions carved on the fronts of the sphinx bases in front of the Second Pylon at Karnak echoes the geographical lists of Ramesses III and Ramesses VI from Medinet Habu but were altered to a unique dedicatory inscription of the high priest who made 'great wonders' in Thebes and who was given benefactions in return from the gods of entire Egypt.

Pinudjem I constructed a mud-brick chapel, next to the one that was built previously by Ramesses II, of the deified Amenhotep I at the Treasury of Thutmose I and re-organised his cult at Karnak North which was highly popular throughout the 21st Dynasty.

The enclosure wall of the Medinet Habu complex also had to be restored after the destruction caused by unknown enemies of the country at the beginning of the 21st Dynasty, and Pinudjem I also made alterations on the entrance of the First Pylon in the memorial temple of Ramesses III. Besides these, he restored the temple cult and re-established the decade feast in the Eighteenth Dynasty Temple that connected Medinet Habu with the Luxor Temple.

Beside these Pinudjem re-organised or modified two of the main processional routes at Karnak, and renewed the local cult of Amenhotep I and re-installed the decade feast at Medinet Habu. The building activity of Pinudjem I in Thebes shows that the high priest acted

as a new but traditional king who restored order and re-organised the religious sphere where his father Amun had lived.

Representations of Henuttawy (A) and Maatkare (A) showed that the wife of the high priest who held the ‘chief of the musical troops’ title and his daughter who was ‘divine adoratrice’ had an important role in the religious sphere. A window found northeast of the Karnak temple with the cartouches of Henuttawy and Maatkare suggests that they also had a residence or a chapel there. The institution of the divine adoratrice of Amun was derived from its ‘god’s wife of Amun’ predecessor of the New Kingdom and the title was also enclosed in a cartouche from the 20th Dynasty onwards. Originally it was held by royal women at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and an administrative institution with temporal personnel was attached to the title. The first divine adoratrice of the 21st Dynasty was named most probably after queen Hatsepsut, who also held the title before ascending to the throne, and was the first who had to oblige celibacy. Istemkheb (A)’s name appears on the stamped bricks of Pinudjem I found in the fortified wall at El-Hibeh suggesting that the wives of the high priest were also considered as prominent members of the administration of Upper Egypt.

As it was already observed by M. Römer, several inscriptions of Pinudjem I refer to Amun and once to Khonsu as kings who could have royal titulary or epithets like the ‘lord of the Two Lands’ and who placed the high priest as their representative under divine protection. However, with the use of cryptography for the eulogy of Amun in his inscriptions on the Eighteenth Dynasty Temple this subordinate role of the high priest remained hidden from the inhabitants of Medinet Habu. The fact that all allusions for his authority over at least Upper Egypt was written also with cryptography suggests that this inscription was an early text of the high priest, whose power was not yet solidified enough for openly claiming royal status.

After analysing the inscriptions of Pinudjem I, it is more probable that three stages could be distinguished in his career. His inscriptions listing his administrative titles beside his high priestly one at the Luxor Temple and at Medinet Habu could refer to an initial period. The majority of the monuments of Pinudjem I belonged to the second phase with the emphasis on his high priestly title and his additional royal epithets or iconography, while the last stage was ascending to kingship with the usage of a complete royal iconography.

Before and after reaching royal status Pinudjem I was represented beyond Thebes up to Tanis and was interred as a king in the reused and refashioned coffin of Thutmose I with funerary objects like his funerary papyrus representing him as king, shabtis and shabti boxes inscribed with his cartouches.

The few surviving monuments of Masaharta show that the terminology or iconography used by him was similar to those employed on the earlier monuments of Herihor or Pinudjem I. The high priest usurped a sphinx and a falcon-headed kneeling statue of earlier kings. He was also active in the southern sector of the temple, where he built a gate leading to the kitchens and storehouses that produced daily offerings, and decorated it with his offering scenes. He also placed a large scene of Amun-Re near a possibly previously carved similar graffito in order to grant access to secondary worship for the temple personnel and occasional temple visitors. Both form of the god were probably popular during the 21st Dynasty. Although Masaharta did not participate in the wall decoration of the Temple of Khonsu, his unique statue shows that he was equally devoted to its resident god.

He continued the re-wrappings and reburials of the royal mummies and was found interred in TT320 with funerary objects suitable for a high priest. It is noteworthy that his monuments can be divided into two groups; the inscriptions without mentioning the name of his father could be classified in the first group, while the inscriptions referring to Masaharta as son of king Pinudjem I might have belonged to a second phase.

Compared to the nearly fifty years Menkheperre spent in office as a high priest of Amun, most probably from year 25 of Smendes well into the last years of Psusennes I, the remains of his building activity in Thebes are scarce. However, it is probable that Menkheperre, following the death of his brother Masaharta, began his high priestly career also during the tenure of then king Pinudjem I and could have acted independently only after the latter's death. It is highly possible that he concentrated his revenues on the building of a chain of forts along the Nile Valley from el-Hibeh to possibly Edfu. While his additions to the Khonsu temple and the minor restoration at Luxor Temple were rather insignificant, he built fortified girdle walls in the north part of the Karnak enclosure and probably at Luxor temple.

His inscriptions surviving on stelae or in the Khonsu Temple are our most important sources concerning the internal circumstances of period. According to these texts, Menkheperre had to suppress local opposition and instability in the beginning of his high priesthood, but he also had problems to solve later on.

The record of a property settlement of the high priest Menkheperre suggests that the heirs mentioned in the inscription received some sort of compensation for plots of land which their relatives had probably lost during the troubled times. Thus an injustice was later restored by the high priest Menkheperre. The text informs us that the heirs received 40 per cent more for the value of silver and *rwḏw* garment than the usual price throughout the country.

Moreover, the high priest himself paid this extra 40 per cent probably in an attempt to win the support of the lower or middle class priesthood and the officers of the Temple of Amun at Karnak. The inscription survived on a column in the court of the Temple of Khonsu that was occasionally visited by those who participated in the festivals and was carved near a doorway that was used by priests upon entering the temple from the Amun precinct. This fact also strengthens the assumption that the text was not only an administrative record of some purchases by the Estate of Amun, but it commemorated an important event in the life of the Theban community.

The letters and administrative inscriptions of the ‘el-Hibeh archive’ written mostly by two priests mention the high priest of Amun Menkheperre, his wife Istemkheb (C), as well as their children Istemkheb (D) and Smendes II, then second *ḥm-ntr* of Amun, later high priest and successor of Menkheperre. Among the recipients were the third *ḥm-ntr* priest and viceroy of Kush Akheperre, a member of the household of the god’s wife, a court official and a member of the high priest’s personnel, army and police officers, too.

The only monument where Menkheperre mentions his great army-commander title beside his high priestly one, was the ‘Banishment stela’. This, however, does not mean that he was less powerful than his predecessors. His titles listed in the Papyrus Moscow 5660 oracle fragment were the following: *ḥm-ntr tp(y) n(y) [Jmn]-R<sup>c</sup> nswt ntrw jmy-r(3) mš<sup>c</sup> wr Šm<sup>c</sup>w Mḥw ḥ3wty Mn-ḥpr-R<sup>c</sup> m3<sup>c</sup>-ḥrw nty ḥ3t n3 mš<sup>c</sup>w 3w n(y) Kmt drw* ‘high priest of [Amun]-Re, the king of the gods, great army-commander of Upper and Lower Egypt, leader, Menkheperre, who is at the head of the great armies of entire Egypt’. He emphasised his royal lineage before reaching royal status in all of his monuments and used similar phraseology to his predecessors in these.

A letter fragment written to the god Penpaihay that was recently pieced together by D. Lefèvre and M. Müller preserved a plea for the well-being of now king Menkheperre:<sup>1</sup> ‘... You shall preserve Menkheperre, your son and ward. You shall make him well. You shall grant him life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, a great and strong kingship (*nsw.yt 3.t qn*) and a victory of his sword against every country and every foreign country ...’.

Menkheperre, like Herihor, frequently used his high priestly title enclosed in a cartouche, which survived on his bricks at several sites throughout Upper Egypt. It is also remarkable that his Rio de Janeiro statue emphasised that he was high priest and king at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of M. Müller (2009 263).

## Conclusion

After collecting, analysing and contextualizing the most important monumental inscriptions of the first half of the 21st Dynasty, we can try to draw some conclusions. First of all, it has to be stated that we possess abundant inscriptions, which are not restricted only to the Karnak Temple of Amun at Thebes, one of the best preserved temples of Ancient Egypt, but can also be found at other important southern cities like Abydos or Coptos.

It is frequently remarked concerning the end of the 20th Dynasty that royal power had diminished in southern Egypt, of which Thebes had always been the administrative centre, and consequently the high priests of Amun rose to prominence. It cannot be denied that during the troubled times the Ramessesnakht family managed to hold the high priesthood at Karnak and the control over the vast estate of Amun, as well as several key positions at Thebes for at least fifty years. Ramessesnakht was the first high priest who was represented standing alone performing libation and bringing flowers before the Theban triad on an outer temple wall surface, and was also involved in issues outside the estate of Amun, but he and his sons never aspired to any form of kingship. The status of the high priests of Amun in the first half of the 21st Dynasty, however, was different.

As it was stated by A. Gnirs ‘in ancient Egypt, centralized power was always connected with (sanctioned) use of violence and the control of the armed forces. Historical evidence shows that at least from the Middle Kingdom, the mastery of specialized weapons, the organisation of manpower, leadership and battle experience were basic features to any claim to the throne’.<sup>2</sup>

The administrative documents of the late 20th Dynasty throw light on a turbulent period marked by political fragmentation, insecurity, economic difficulties and famine. With the weakening of the centralized bureaucracy, several administrative functions concentrated in the hands of a new leading military elite of mostly foreign descent who controlled Thebes, the royal granaries, the Nubian province and the estate of Amun. The inscriptions of Herihor in the Hypostyle Hall of the Khonsu Temple clearly showed that his *jmy-r(3) mšꜥ wr* ‘great

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<sup>2</sup> Gnirs 2013 639.

army-commander' and *h3wty* 'leader' titles combined with his function as high priest of Amun could equal him to a king.

Herihor began his career under Ramesses XI and accepted his authority during the first half of his tenure. He held important administrative and military titles and clearly did not belong to the former priestly elite. His surviving monuments show an evolution of his power towards kingship, and he was the only high priest of Amun, who had a similar statue to his high priest predecessors, but was later also represented as a king. In the walls of the Court of the Khonsu Temple, Herihor was depicted as a traditional king of entire Egypt.

The 21st Dynasty Tanite kings and southern high priests and army commanders were closely related and belonged to the same new political class of most probably Libyan origin.

While both parties enjoyed independence, they maintained strong connections. The effects of the Libyan tribal background – the genealogical emphasis, the importance of the notion of brotherhood, and the altered conception of kingship – became visible already during the 21st Dynasty. We possess few monumental inscriptions of Smendes, Amenemnisut, Psusennes I, however, these invariably used royal titulary and iconography.

The influence and power of the king remained dominant at Memphis during at least the rule of Psusennes I and Siamun as the private doorway-decorations of the period show. Meanwhile, the Theban lintels closely follow earlier Ramesside examples, but do not contain royal cartouches or any reference to the king. In Thebes the owner received similar gifts and grants as previously, but the person of the benefactor has changed: the figure of the ruler gave place to the gods and from the middle of the 21st Dynasty onward Amun became the king of at least the priesthood of Karnak.

It is highly probable that the general Egyptian population was more resistant towards the new leaders in Thebes, who therefore adapted their monuments and policy to the circumstances.

The Luxor graffito of the deceased Piankh, Pinudjem I and his brothers before Amun-Re-Kamutef and Nodjmet informs us that besides his military and high priestly titles Pinudjem I also held the most important administrative offices, while the management of the greatest Theban temples, following the example of the Ramessesnakht family, was controlled by his family members.

Before ascending to royal status Pinudjem I combined the high priestly iconography with royal elements and emphasised his descent from Amun-Re, Mut and Khonsu. The

analysis of his building activity underlined that Pinudjem already acted as a king before officially reaching royal status.

Contrary to the opinion of M. Römer, who believed that the basis of the kingship of Herihor, Pinudjem I and Menkheperre was their high priest of Amun title, I think that their connection to Amun as son and priest played a more important role in their legitimacy than in their power.

Royal titulary for Amun and for Khonsu appeared during Pinudjem I, however, the effects of this phenomenon are not visible during the first half of the 21st Dynasty, but became more prominent later. The elaborate titulary of Amun was inserted into a eulogy with the use of cryptography in his inscriptions on the Eighteenth Dynasty Temple at Medinet Habu, the subordinate role of Pinudjem thus remained hidden. The kingship of gods, however, was not a 21st Dynasty invention and the wish of prominently Amun in important affairs was frequently asked during oracles from the early New Kingdom onward.

Masaharta used the same phraseology and iconography during his short tenure like his father in his earlier years. He is also termed as *sšm T3wy* ‘controller of the Two Lands’ on his unique, usurped statue representing Khonsu. All the high priest under study held titles or epithets that were related to the supreme control of at least Upper Egypt.

Menkheperre strengthened his control over Upper Egypt and the oases with a chain of forts. Although his monuments in Thebes were not abundant, he built fortified walls there and was active in the life of the Theban community. The ‘el Hibeh archive’ informs us that the family of Menkheperre controlled life in the realm’s capital. Menkheperre had to cope with local unrest in Thebes, but after stabilizing the situation gave clemency to his opponents.

Although we possess limited administrative documents compared to the earlier periods, the surviving letters and administrative texts confirm that everyday life in Egypt did not change significantly as opposed to the 20th Dynasty, and the officials accepted the authority of the great army-commanders. Wishes like ‘the lifetime of Re’ or ‘great kingship’ for Herihor and Menkheperre further strengthen the altered approach towards their power.

If we try to summarize the building activity of the high priests at Thebes, it can be observed that the following main characteristics are dominant: they used royal iconography, concentrated their works on processional avenues and ritual places that were accessible by his subordinates, followed Ramesside examples, and placed statues or scenes for secondary worship for temple personnel and occasional visitors.

All high priests of Amun were active in the Khonsu Temple, whose resident deity gained more prominence during the Third Intermediate Period onwards. Khonsu as an oracular god enjoyed more popularity in the period, and his role as an alternate of Horus emphasised his role in the royal legitimacy, as the scenes of Osorkon III, found during the excavations in the Ethiopian colonnade in front of the temple, show.

Herihor decorated the court of the Khonsu Temple and Pinudjem finished the decoration of its pylon and constructed its processional avenue. Menkheperre probably re-established the temple offerings, which was commemorated with a decoration of a side-door. Masaharta, of whom we possess the fewest monuments due to his short tenure, placed an almost two-meter-high statue of Khonsu in the temple.

The analysis of the decoration program of Herihor and Pinudjem I in the temple show, however, that it is Amon-Re who was the dominant god in the scenes of the Court and the Theban triad in the Pylon.

Herihor's works in the temple were in accordance with the responsibilities of a traditional Egyptian ruler. While Pinudjem I was represented as a high priest of Amun on the Pylon, he performed rituals restricted for the king of Egypt and accordingly received reciprocal benefactions. He not only performed purification rituals, offered food, drinks and ointment, brought flowers or necklaces to the gods but was also represented once holding the two *hs*-vases and presenting Maat to the gods several times. This iconography was used by Masaharta, too, but on a lesser scale, on his doorway leading to the *šn<sup>c</sup> w<sup>c</sup>b* of the temple of Amun.

According to the dedicatory inscriptions of Herihor in the Hypostyle Hall of the Temple of Khonsu, the high priest remade the hall from white sandstone, adorned the sanctuary with electrum and precious stones, and refashioned the cult statues and altars of the temple and doubled the previous offerings. The epithets used by Pinudjem I in the scenes of the pylon of the temple stressed his presence in Karnak and in Thebes, and emphasised his building activity and works done for restoring the grandeur of the City.

Pinudjem I also re-organised the main processional routes at Karnak and re-established festivals and divine cults in Thebes.

In his scenes Herihor uses Ramesside iconography, and his epithets in the architrave dedications of the Court of the Khonsu Temple echo those of Sethos I and Ramesses II in the Great Hypostyle Hall.

The building program of Pinudjem shows that he also had a predilection towards Ramesside examples. He usurped several monuments of Ramesses II at Karnak and made a pair to the scene of his famous predecessor at Luxor. His inscriptions carved on the fronts of the sphinx bases in front of the Second Pylon at Karnak echo the geographical lists of Ramesses III and Ramesses VI from Medinet Habu, but were altered to a unique dedicatory inscription of the high priest who made 'great wonders' in Thebes and who was given benefactions in return from the gods of entire Egypt.

These monuments clearly show that Herihor and Pinudjem stressed that they continued the two-thousand-year-old royal traditions and maintained Maat, an essential element for the balance in Egyptian society.

Although Herihor, Pinudjem and Menkheperre used royal epithets and titulary, probably in the later stages of their tenure, this was usually regarded as illusory. It is noteworthy that none of them upgraded his earlier monuments after reaching royal status. This phenomenon is closely related to the altered attitude towards kingship and leadership in Egypt during the Libyan period. As it was showed by G. Broekman 'on the traditional Egyptian level the king was the supreme and unique ruler over Egypt, whereas on the level of Libyan hierarchy he was an equal of the other great chiefs... Obedience to the king was not so much based on his august royal status resulting from an ideological tradition, as on alliances and agreements'.<sup>3</sup> The new leaders maintained royal iconography and stressed their connections to earlier kings but this could have been more important for their acceptance by the Egyptian population.

After Psusennes I the origin of the kings is unknown, but they probably belonged to a different tribe and with their rising to the throne the family of Menkheperre seemed to lose its connections to direct power, as the inscriptions of Smendes and Pinudjem I testify. Soon a new Dynasty ascended to the throne of Egypt, the rulers of which tried to keep the most influential positions in their close family like the function of army-leaders and high priests of Amun at Thebes and of Herishef at Herakleopolis. If they failed, these powerful army leaders and controllers of Upper Egypt could equally reach royal status.

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<sup>3</sup> Broekman 2010 87.