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USURPATION OF MONUMENTS
إعادة الاستخدام

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Usurpierung von Monumenten
Usurpation de monuments

Usurpation was the practice by some Egyptian rulers of replacing the names of predecessors with their own on monuments such as temple reliefs and royal statuary. Usurpation was often carried out in connection with the damnatio memoriae *of pharaohs such as Hatshepsut and Tutankhamen. Ramesses II usurped dozens of monuments of various Middle and New Kingdom predecessors, not to defame them but to promote his own kingship. In the later Ramesside Period, usurpation was again linked to* damnatio memoriae. *Usurpation for either reason continued in the Saite Period and, sporadically, into Ptolemaic and Roman times.*

قام بعض الملوك المصريين القدماء بإعادة استخدام آثار من سبقوهم، مستبدلين أسماء أسلافهم بأسمائهم على نقوش المعابد وعلى التماثيل الملكية. غالباً ما ارتبطت إعادة الاستخدام بمحي الملوك من الذاكرة مثل حتشبسوت وتوت عنخ آمون. قام الملك رمسيس الثاني بإعادة استخدام العشرات من أنصاب أسلافه من ملوك الدولتين الوسطي والحديثة وذلك كمجرد ترويج لملوكيته دون ان يرغب في الطعن بأسلافه. إرتبطت إعادة الاستخدام مرة أخرى مع محي الملوك من الذاكرة بأواخر عصر الرعامسه. استمرت إعادة الاستخدام لأحد السببين خلال العصر الصاوي، واستمرت بشكل متقطع في العصري البطلمي والروماني.

A distinctive phenomenon of ancient Egyptian culture was usurpation, the practice by some pharaohs of replacing predecessors' names, displayed on monuments, with their own (Capart 1932; Helck 1986). One form of usurpation is exemplified by the reuse of tombs and funerary equipment by private individuals (see Brand 2010b). The present discussion, however, focuses on the royal usurpation of monuments. Usurpation is to be distinguished from the related practice of *damnatio memoriae*, whereby an individual's name(s) and image(s) were obliterated, often through being violently hacked out, as was demonstrated by Akhenaten's iconoclasm targeting the god Amun, and by the destruction of the ruler's own monuments by his successors (Helck 1986; Schulman 1970). In cases where it was desired not to destroy a particular monument (many temple reliefs, for example, were spared), the goal of *damnatio memoriae* could be achieved by the technique of usurpation. Although usurpation for the purpose of *damnatio memoriae* occurred repeatedly in the New Kingdom, Ramesses II engaged in usurpation for entirely different ideological reasons.

Normally, usurpation was achieved by erasing from a monument the distinctive elements of the original owner's titulary—especially the throne name (prenomen) and birth name (nomen), enclosed in cartouches—and replacing them with those of

Figure 1. Relief of Hatshepsut usurped by Thutmose III in the name of his father, Thutmose II, in the suite of Hatshepsut's cult rooms south of the bark shrine of Phillip Arrhidaeus at Karnak. The queen's names and image have been erased and replaced.

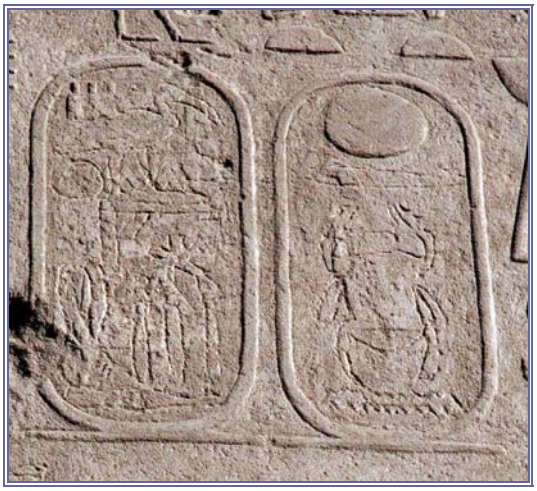

Figure 2. Detail of Figure 1: surcharged cartouches of Hatshepsut. The sun disk from Hatshepsut's prenomen was never erased. Faint traces of the excised glyphs, including the name of Amun at top of left cartouche and the Maat figure in right cartouche, are still visible.

the usurper. The Horus name, framed in a *serekh*, was also sometimes altered. The Two Ladies and Golden Horus names, being visually less distinctive and occurring less frequently in monumental inscriptions, were sometimes overlooked.

The techniques used to replace royal names on monuments depended on the nature of the original relief. With royal names in raised

Figure 3. Relief of Tutankhamen usurped by Horemheb in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple.

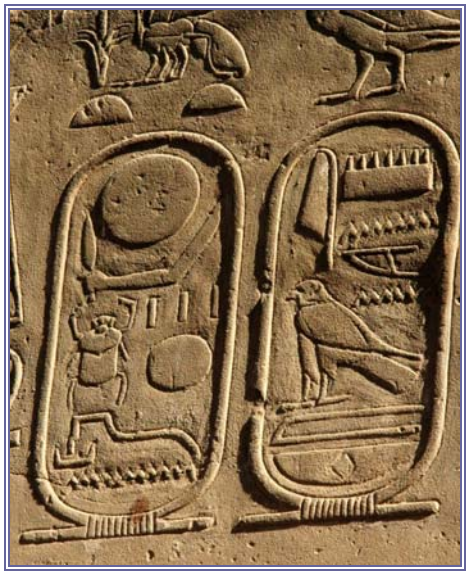

Figure 4. Detail of Figure 3: surcharged cartouches of Tutankhamen. Distinctive elements of Horemheb's name lie in depressions carved to suppress traces of Tutankhamen's name and allow the final version to stand out as raised relief. The sun disk and name of Amun, resting on a higher level, are original.

relief, the hieroglyphic elements of the original name within its cartouche were sliced away (figs. 1 - 5). The usurper's name was then inscribed in sunken relief, as were most Ramesside usurpations (Brand 2009), or engraved in a form of raised relief, as were Horemheb's appropriations of

Figure 5. Another pair of Tutankhamen's cartouches usurped by Horemheb in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple. Here, distinctive traces of Tutankhamen's names are visible within Horemheb's titulary.

Tutankhamen's reliefs in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple (Epigraphic Survey 1994: plates passim; 1998: plates passim). If the original inscription was in sunken relief, the most common practice was to fill it in with plaster and cut the new name also in sunken relief (figs. 6 and 7). Fortunately for Egyptologists, both methods frequently left distinct traces of the primary version, making it possible to decipher the initial text. Plaster used anciently to mask usurped sunken-relief inscriptions has today usually fallen away, allowing palimpsests containing two or even three successive versions of the surcharged cartouches to be seen (fig. 8; Brand 2009: figs. 1, 2, 5, 6; Seele 1940: 8, fig. 1). Where raised-relief inscriptions have been usurped, faint traces of engraved lines or slightly raised edges often attest to the original owner's name (see figs. 5 - 7; Epigraphic Survey 1994: plates passim; 1998: plates passim; Seele 1940: 8, fig. 3).

Historical Scope

Royal usurpation of monuments was rare prior to the New Kingdom, when by far the largest number of cases occurred. Nor was the practice engaged in continuously between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. Rather,

Figure 6. Nomen cartouche of Ramesses IV usurped by Ramesses VI from a bandeau text inside the "cachette court" at Karnak. The original version would have been suppressed with plaster before the final one was carved over it.

Figure 7. Prenomen cartouche of Ramesses IV annexed by Ramesses VI from a bandeau text inside the "cachette court" at Karnak. The horizontal lines are from the dado pattern of the original 19th Dynasty wall-decoration over which Ramesses IV carved the bandeau text.

there were discrete periods that account for most of the New Kingdom examples.

Eighteenth Dynasty Usurpations

Monuments were often targeted for usurpation because the pharaoh who created them was considered illegitimate by a successor. The proscription of Queen Hatshepsut's memory is a prime example. Often, her names and images on monuments were hacked out. In other cases, the queen's figure was carefully erased and her cartouches surcharged, often in the name of her predecessors—Thutmose I, Thutmose II, and less frequently Thutmose III (see figs. 1 and 2). This puzzling fact gave rise to Sethe's bizarre theory that Hatshepsut herself had usurped monuments of her predecessors while they were alive and that a series of *coups d'états* by these four rulers had occurred during

Figure 8. Cartouche of Ramesses IV usurped by Ramesses VI. Three versions are detectable. Ramesses IV first altered the writing of his name before Ramesses VI re-inscribed it. Plaster used to mask one of the suppressed versions is still visible.

the early 18th Dynasty (Sethe 1932 provides the last and most fully developed presentation of the theory). The notion was discredited by Edgerton, who demonstrated that in no case had Hatshepsut's name been carved over that of another pharaoh; rather, her name was in each instance replaced by another's (Edgerton 1933). Thutmose III deliberately chose to surcharge the names of the queen with those of his father and grandfather, and less often with his own. The date of Hatshepsut's proscription was also controversial. It was long thought that Thutmose III suppressed her memory shortly after her death, but it is now known that he initiated the suppression some 20 years into his sole reign (Dorman 1988: chap. 3; Van Siclen 1984, 1989).

In wall scenes where her cartouches were replaced by the names of one of the first three Thutmosides, Hatshepsut's figure was frequently erased. Sometimes it was replaced by an offering table or by an entirely new royal image, or the space occupied by her erased figure was left blank. This treatment of her image differs from usurpations of reliefs later in the New Kingdom, when usually the titulary alone was altered.

Leaving aside the cases where Amenhotep IV changed his birth name (nomen) to Akhenaten on his own early monuments, usurpation became a common practice again only at the end of the 18th Dynasty. Horemheb targeted the monuments of the Amarna and post-Amarna pharaohs from Akhenaten to Aye for usurpation or destruction in his *damnatio memoriae* of these kings. Akhenaten's monuments to the Aten were dismantled or destroyed. The monuments of Tutankhamen dedicated to Amun and the traditional pantheon during the initial return to orthodoxy were, in contrast, usually usurped since they remained serviceable. Horemheb replaced Tutankhamen's protocol on large numbers of statues (many of which were documented, although with dubious conclusions, by Hari 1965, 1984) and in wall reliefs, such as those in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple (see figs. 3 - 5; Epigraphic Survey 1994: plates passim; 1998: plates passim) and even in pre-Amarna reliefs restored by Tutankhamen (Brand 1999, 2010b). Monuments of Aye were more frequently destroyed by Horemheb, although Aye's memorial temple in western Thebes was usurped instead (*PM II*: 457 - 460). The occasional usurpation of post-Amarna monuments overlooked by Horemheb continued into the early 19th Dynasty.

Ramesside Usurpations

A pharaoh did not always usurp a predecessor's monuments in order to de-legitimize him or her. During the earlier 19th Dynasty, surcharging of statuary and monumental wall-reliefs became a widespread phenomenon, especially under Ramesses II. Unlike Thutmose III and Horemheb, the early Ramessides were generally not motivated by a desire to suppress the memory of the kings

whose monuments they appropriated. (Rondot 1997 rejects the term "usurpation" in connection with Ramesses II's annexation of Sety I's inscriptions on the architraves of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak due to its pejorative connotations.) Horemheb's own reliefs on the Second Pylon at Karnak were usurped during the brief reign of Ramesses I only to be reinscribed a second time by Ramesses II (Murnane 1994; Seele 1940: 7 - 11). Ramesses II, in particular, annexed monuments belonging to many royal ancestors—some as far back as the Middle Kingdom, others as recent as those of his own father and grandfather, Ramesses I and Sety I. These annexations, however, were selective and not part of any larger program of *damnatio memoriae* against either his own immediate ancestors, or other illustrious kings of the past whose monuments he reinscribed.

In the early years of his reign, Ramesses II surcharged reliefs completed by Sety I in the southern wing of Karnak's Great Hypostyle Hall after he had completed most of the decoration left unfinished there upon Sety's death. His motive for doing so was perhaps to homogenize the reliefs in that wing, which were largely his own accomplishment (Brand 2000; Murnane 1975). Later, sometime after the 21st year of his reign, and probably in preparation for one of his Sed Festivals, Ramesses usurped Sety's reliefs along the central axis of the Hypostyle Hall and in some parts of the northern wing entirely decorated by Sety (Murnane 1975; Seele 1940). This instance of usurpation was part of a larger scheme to annex much of the main processional route through the Karnak Temple, including the aforementioned reliefs on the Second Pylon. Elsewhere in Egypt and Nubia, but only after his year 21, Ramesses II usurped other monuments including dozens (possibly hundreds) of statues. The timing of these usurpations—that is, their occurrence later in Ramesses II's reign (and concurrent with additions of new inscriptions to existing monuments, including his own), coupled with the fact that his usurpations were clearly not part of a campaign of *damnatio memoriae* against any predecessor—indicates that Ramesses II

Figure 9. Cartouche of Ramesses III from bandeau inscription on east face of Karnak's third pylon. It is tempting to view this deep carving as a deterrent to usurpation and *damnation memoriae*.

sought, rather, to promote his own rule at a time when few living Egyptians could remember any other pharaoh. Reinscribed statues, in particular, often received texts that heralded Ramesses' jubilee festivals and his relations with the gods—even as one of their number (Brand 2007).

In the politically troubled late 19th Dynasty, usurpation and *damnatio memoriae* were common practices and it is not always clear which was intended when the names of some kings were removed from their monuments by their successors. After Merenptah, the pharaohs of the late 19th Dynasty usurped or defaced the royal names of their immediate predecessors, whom they considered illegitimate. Amenmesse seems to have come to rule Upper Egypt and Nubia after Merenptah's death, displacing the erstwhile legitimate successor, Sety II. While it had been thought that Amenmesse surcharged inscriptions of Merenptah in the Theban region, it now seems likely that he only erased distinctive elements of Merenptah's titulary, including his cartouches and Horus name, without inscribing his own name in their stead (Brand 2009). Where Amenmesse had removed Merenptah's name, Sety II later placed his own once he established control of Upper Egypt and Nubia. Although Sety II has been labeled a usurper of Merenptah's reliefs, this is not wholly the case, as it was Amenmesse who began the process through his *damnatio memoriae* of Merenptah (Brand 2009). Sety II did annex some of

Figure 10. Sphinx of Amenemhet III (CG 394), re-inscribed three times by Ramesses II (on base), by Merenptah (on shoulder), and by Psusennes I (chest between forelegs).

Amenmesses's statuary (Cardon 1979) and wall inscriptions. At the beginning of the 20th Dynasty, Sethnakhte usurped the royal tomb (KV 14) prepared for Tauseret in the Valley of the Kings (Altenmüller 1983, 1992). Many of the bandeau and marginal inscriptions carved for Ramesses III are cut in extraordinarily deep sunken relief, often more than 10 cm in depth (fig. 9). In the wake of the 19th Dynasty's proclivity for usurpation, one cannot help wondering if this was meant to deter the practice. Ramesses VI frequently usurped monumental inscriptions of Ramesses IV and Ramesses V (see figs. 6 - 8; Brand 2007: 53, figs. 5.5 - 5.8; Peden 1989, 1994).

Usurpation of Statuary

Appropriation of royal statuary was a common phenomenon in the later New Kingdom. Horemheb systematically appropriated sculpture of Tutankhamen and Aye, including royal colossi and dyad and triad groups representing the king accompanied by deities (e.g., dyads of Amun and Mut in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple; Epigraphic Survey 1998: 214 - 219). Such acts were in keeping with his treatment of Tutankhamen's and Aye's temple reliefs.

Usurpation of royal statues reached a peak under Ramesses II, who appropriated examples dating back as far as the Middle

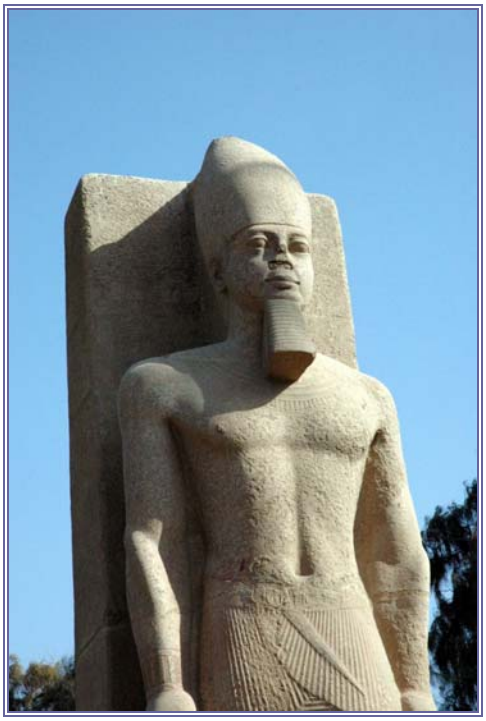

Figure 11. 12th Dynasty colossus usurped by Ramesses II. The king's facial features have been retouched.

Kingdom (Sourouzian 1988; and see, for example, CG 394 and 395, sphinxes of Amenemhet III bearing inscriptions of Ramesses II, Merenptah, and Psusennes I: Borchardt 1925: 11 - 12, pls. 63 - 64) and works as recent as Thutmose III and Amenhotep III (figs. 10 and 11; Sourouzian 1995; Vandersleyen 1979; Yurco 1979a). Ramesses' artists often reworked the facial features and bodily proportions in addition to carving their ruler's names on these works (Kozloff and Bryan 1992: 172 - 175 [Louvre A 20: a statue of Amenhotep III]; Sourouzian 1988; Vandersleyen 1979). This pharaoh's large-scale expropriation of royal statuary was part of the much larger program of new monumental inscription and decoration he carried out throughout Egypt and Nubia after the 21st year of his reign, probably in connection with one or more of his jubilees (Brand 2007). An innovative feature of statue inscriptions on both new and surcharged royal statuary during this period is their density. Multiple cartouches and strings of royal

Figure 12. Left: Luxor Museum J 155, a dyad of Amenhotep III and Sobek appropriated by Ramesses II, who inscribed the dorsal face (right) with multiple columns of formulaic texts and titulary arranged for maximum visual impact.

titulary were added to the shoulders, chest, belts, back pillars, and thrones of statues, as well as to the fronts, sides, and upper surfaces of their bases. The large, flat surfaces on the backs of some dyads, triads, and colossi were used to present multiple columns of formulaic texts containing royal and divine titularies, carefully aligned for maximum visual impact (fig. 12; and see, for example, two dyads of Amun and Mut in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple, and a third in the Luxor Museum [J 188]; Epigraphic Survey 1998: pls. 214 - 219).

Merenptah continued the practice of re-inscribing older royal statuary (for example, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art 22.5.2: Kozloff and Bryan 1992: 173, fig. 14a; see also Sourouzian 1989). Following the example of his father, Merenptah tended to place additional cartouches on the shoulders and chest of usurped statues, as well as alter or add inscriptions on the front and sides of (statuary) thrones, on the base, and on the back pillar. He also added inscriptions to the shoulders of Amenemhet III's sphinxes (see fig. 10). Just as Horemheb usurped

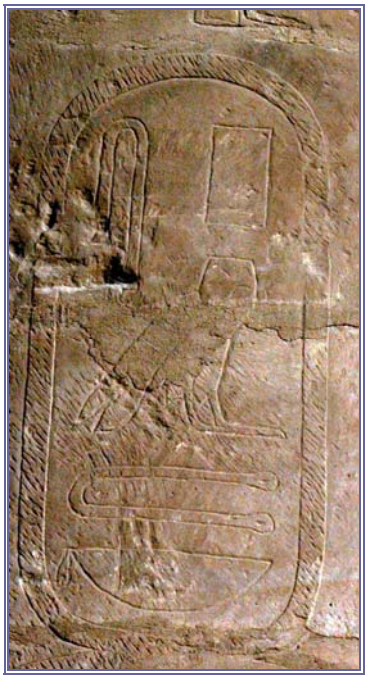

Figure 13. Nomen of Psammetichus II crudely etched in a surcharged cartouche on a column of Taharqo's kiosk in front of the second pylon of the Karnak Temple.

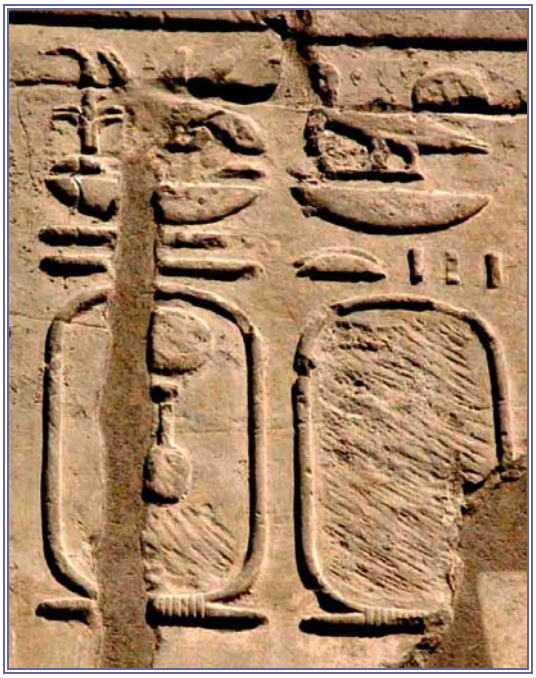

Figure 14. Defaced cartouches of Shabaqo from the passageway of the Ramesside pylon of Luxor Temple. The deliberate preservation of the *Rᶜ* and *nfr* elements in Shabaqo's prenomen cartouche suggests that Psammetichus II was responsible.

post-Amarna works, Sety II annexed a group of statuary made for Amenmesse in the late 19th Dynasty (Cardon 1979; Yurco 1979b).

Usurpation after the New Kingdom

After the New Kingdom, usurpation sporadically occurred, including the reuse of sarcophagi and burial equipment by the 22nd Dynasty kings of Tanis (Brock 1992). Occasionally, older royal statuary was also reused (see fig. 10). During the Saite Period, the monuments of the Kushite 25th Dynasty were subjected to an official program of *damnatio memoriae*. In the temples of Karnak and Luxor, this policy resulted in the erasure of Kushite cartouches, mostly by Psammetichus II. At some point Psammetichus II also usurped Kushite monuments. He replaced Taharqo's names with his own on the former's kiosk before the second pylon at Karnak (fig. 13). A grey area between outright *damnatio memoriae* and usurpation characterizes Psammetichus's treatment of reliefs naming Shabaqo. In the passage of the pylon gateway of Ramesses II at Luxor Temple, Shabaqo's nomen-cartouches and Horus-name *serekhs* were fully erased, but only the *kꜣ*-sign of his prenomen *Nfr-kꜣ-Rᶜ* was removed (fig. 14; *PM II*: 305 - 306 [15c - g] with pl. XXX). This seems likely to be connected to the fact that Psammetichus II's own prenomen was *Nfr-jb-Rᶜ*, although *jb* was never inserted in place of the erased *kꜣ*, nor was Psammetichus's titulary added to the deleted nomen or Horus names. The phenomenon of monumental usurpation continued sporadically after the Saites and is attested, rarely, as late as the Ptolemaic era (Kurth 1990).

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The general phenomenon of monumental usurpation is discussed by Capart (1932) and Helck (1986). In the early twentieth century, Sethe (1932) was an influential but erroneous interpretation of usurpation in a historical context, decisively refuted through the careful scrutiny of Edgerton (1933), which is a masterpiece of epigraphic methodology applied to the phenomenon of usurpation, and of historical method in general. Dorman (1988) is a more recent, thorough appraisal of the *damnatio memoriae* of Hatshepsut, including a redating of the proscription to late in the reign of Thutmose III. Brief articles by Van Siclen (1984, 1989) also provide vital evidence for dating Hatshepsut's proscription to at least 20 years after her death. Schulman (1970) draws a clear distinction between usurpation and *damnatio memoriae*. Hari's (1965, 1984) studies of the reign of Horemheb include data on this ruler's usurpation of monuments of Tutankhamen and Aye, but his conclusions—that Ramesses II and not Horemheb was responsible for the *damnatio memoriae* of the post-Amarna pharaohs—are to be viewed with skepticism. For primary evidence of the varying treatment of Tutankhamen's and Aye's monuments by Horemheb, usurpation, and *damnatio memoriae*, see the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago's Epigraphic Survey (1994, 1998) and Schaden (1987). The usurpation of post-Amarna restoration inscriptions by Horemheb and Sety I is documented by Bickel (1997) and Brand (1999, 2000). For the early 19th Dynasty, Seele's pioneering study (1940) and Murnane (1975, 1994) discuss the usurpations of Ramesses I and Ramesses II on Karnak's second pylon and Hypostyle Hall. Rondot (1997) rejects the term "usurpation" in connection with Ramesses II as being too pejorative. Brand (2007) considers usurpations of Ramesses II along with the king's addition of new reliefs and marginal inscriptions to existing monuments in the context of royal ideology and the celebration of his Sed Festivals. Sourouzian (1989) views the usurpations of Merenptah in a similar ideological vein. For usurpations in the later 19th Dynasty, when the phenomenon was once again a tool for proscribing the memories of pharaohs deemed illegitimate by their successors, see Altenmüller (1983, 1992) for the tomb of Tauseret usurped by Sethnakhte, and Cardon (1979) and Yurco (1979b) for Sety II's usurpations of Amenmesse's statuary. Brand (2009, 2010a) argues that Amenmesse did not usurp Merenptah's inscriptions at Karnak and Luxor but rather erased them, and that Sety II replaced the erased cartouches with his own. Peden (1989, 1994) considers usurpation in the 20th Dynasty. Ramesses II's usurpation of the statuary of his 12th and 18th Dynasty predecessors is discussed by Sourouzian (1988, 1995), Kozloff and Bryan (1992: 172 - 175), and Yurco (1979a). Merenptah's usurpations, especially of statuary, are examined in Sourouzian (1989). For the treatment of Kushite monuments in Thebes by the Saites, see Leclant (1965).

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Figure 1. Relief of Hatshepsut usurped by Thutmose III in the name of his father, Thutmose II, in the suite of Hatshepsut's cult rooms south of the bark shrine of Phillip Arrhidaeus at Karnak. The queen's names and image have been erased and replaced. Photograph by the author.

Figure 2. Detail of Figure 1: surcharged cartouches of Hatshepsut. The sun disk from Hatshepsut's prenomen was never erased. Faint traces of the excised glyphs, including the name of Amun at top of left cartouche and the Maat figure in right cartouche, are still visible. Photograph by the author.

Figure 3. Relief of Tutankhamen usurped by Horemheb in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple. Photograph by the author.

Figure 4. Detail of Figure 3: surcharged cartouches of Tutankhamen. Distinctive elements of Horemheb's name lie in depressions carved to suppress traces of Tutankhamen's name and allow the final version to stand out as raised relief. The sun disk and name of Amun, resting on a higher level, are original. Photograph by the author.

Figure 5. Another pair of Tutankhamen's cartouches usurped by Horemheb in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple. Here, distinctive traces of Tutankhamen's names are visible within Horemheb's titulary. Photograph by the author.

Figure 6. Nomen cartouche of Ramesses IV usurped by Ramesses VI from a bandeau text inside the "cachette court" at Karnak. The original version would have been suppressed with plaster before the final one was carved over it. Photograph by the author.

Figure 7. Prenomen cartouche of Ramesses IV annexed by Ramesses VI from a bandeau text inside the "cachette court" at Karnak. The horizontal lines are from the dado pattern of the original 19th Dynasty wall-decoration over which Ramesses IV carved the bandeau text. Photograph by the author.

Figure 8. Cartouche of Ramesses IV usurped by Ramesses VI. Three versions are detectable. Ramesses IV first altered the writing of his name before Ramesses VI re-inscribed it. Plaster used to mask one of the suppressed versions is still visible. Photograph by the author.

Figure 9. Cartouche of Ramesses III from bandeau inscription on east face of Karnak's third pylon. It is tempting to view this deep carving as a deterrent to usurpation and *damnation memoriae*. Photograph by the author.

Figure 10. Sphinx of Amenemhet III (CG 394), re-inscribed three times by Ramesses II (on base), by Merenptah (on shoulder), and by Psusennes I (chest between forelegs) (Saleh and Sourouzian 1987).

Figure 11. 12th Dynasty colossus usurped by Ramesses II. The king's facial features have been retouched. Photograph by the author.

Figure 12. Left: Luxor Museum J 155, a dyad of Amenhotep III and Sobek appropriated by Ramesses II, who inscribed the dorsal face (right) with multiple columns of formulaic texts and titulary arranged for maximum visual impact (Romano 1979).

Figure 13. Nomen of Psammetichus II crudely etched in a surcharged cartouche on a column of Taharqo's kiosk in front of the second pylon of the Karnak Temple. Photograph by the author.

Figure 14. Defaced cartouches of Shabaqo from the passageway of the Ramesside pylon of Luxor Temple. The deliberate preservation of the *Rᶜ* and *nfr* elements in Shabaqo's prenomen cartouche suggests that Psammetichus II was responsible. Photograph by the author.