THE DARK AGE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century archaeologists were at the cutting edge of a new discipline - archaeology. The public's interest in the heroic tales of the Mycenaean warriors such as Achilles and the decade long Trojan War between the Greek city-states and Troy recorded in Homer's *Iliad* had been heightened by the daring excavations of an amateur archaeologist named Schliemann. The people of Victorian Europe were amazed at his claims. Schliemann's excavation of a deserted hillside, Hissarlik, in Turkey drew widespread public attention. Could his startling claim that he had discovered the legendary Troy actually be true?

Later, Evans, an Englishman excavated Knossos on the island of Crete and found the Minoan civilization, home of the legendary Minotaur. Public interest grew and soon funds were raised for further exploration of these ancient and forgotten civilizations. Among the pioneers was a young man with an extraordinary dedication and the unlikely name of Flinders Petrie. He developed the first systematic attempts at separating the strata at ancient sites into historical eras.

The first attempt of archaeologists to classify these ancient civilizations was by their metallurgy – the Stone Age was followed by the Copper Age that was, in turn, followed by the several Bronze Ages and finally by the Iron Age. It soon became apparent that these greatly overlapped, which made them indistinct reference points. Layers of occupation or strata were easier to reference by their distinctive pottery.

The Iron Age Greek styles were given names like Corinthian, Archaic and Geometric ware. These styles had been preceded by Mycenaean pottery. It was this pottery that belonged to the Trojan War. Dating of the Mycenaean pottery was problematic as no reliable Greek dates existed earlier than the 7th century BC but Greek archaeologists did notice that the Iron Age pottery of the 8th and 7th century was influenced by earlier Mycenaean pottery. Dates were estimated according to the time needed for the new pottery styles to evolve from the old.
Then in 1890 a major discovery changed everything. Flinders Petrie discovered Mycenaean pottery at a place called el-Amarna. In ancient times, it was called Akhetaton and had been the capital built by Pharaoh Akhenaton, who was the first pharaoh to worship only one god. Petrie's

excavation revealed that the Egyptian pharaohs had imported Mycenaean pottery [Petrie 1890]. Unlike Greece, Egypt had an absolute chronology that went back three thousand years before Christ. These absolute dates could now be applied to Mycenaean pottery, replacing the estimated Greek archaeological dates.

Archaeology relies heavily on pottery for dating. Creating a new system of dates for pottery is a major event for archaeologists. So when Petrie insisted on solving the chronological problems of the Greek archaeologists, it was examined very seriously. However, it was a gift that the Greek archaeologists were neither expecting nor wanted. Torr, a Greek classicist pointed out that when Petrie applied his dates to Mycenaean pottery it created a huge 500-year historical and archaeological gap [Torr, 1896]. Formerly, the dates of the Mycenaean period, *circa* 1000-700 BC, allowed continuity with and even overlap of the Mycenaean and Geometric pottery. Petrie's dates pushed back the Mycenaean era to 1450-1200 BC but without providing history or material culture to fill the empty gap. This gap became known as the Greek Dark Age.

The Greek Dark Age was not like the dark ages after the fall of the Roman Empire during which only a little of the history is recorded. The Greek Dark Age lacks any history or material culture at all. Furthermore, the culture of the 7th century Archaic Period is clearly derived from the Mycenaean Age, which was now dated to 500 years earlier. Despite Petrie's great discovery, the Geometric pottery was still just as influenced by the Mycenaean pottery as it had been before. Now, however, the Greek archaeologists had to explain how 14th and 13th century Mycenaean pottery had influenced 7th century Geometric pottery. To account for this influence, they have had to postulate that some motifs had survived during the 500 years on material such as textiles that had decayed and left no trace for the archaeologist to find. [P. James, p. 74]. This argument explains the silence. However, it is also an argument that assumes the silence to be real.

Thus began the debate between Torr and Petrie. Torr's first claimed that Petrie's pottery was not really Mycenaean. This simply was not true. Having lost that argument, he tried to correct the Egyptian chronology. He reduced the reigns of pharaohs to the bare minimum allowed by the data and maximized all possible overlaps between the dynasties [Torr, 1896]. This too fell flat because it was highly improbable and, from the viewpoint of Egyptologists, entirely unnecessary. The Egyptologists insisted that their chronology was within 30-40 years in the 18th Dynasty. So, the 500-year gap in Greek stratigraphy was not their problem.

Era	Petrie's dates	Torr's dates
Mycenaean IIIA	1425-1300 BC	10th century and early 9th
Mycenaean IIIB	1300-1200 BC	later 9th century
Mycenaean IIIC	1200-1000 BC	8th century

Dark Ages	1000-700 BC	No Dark Ages
Late Geometric	700-650 BC	700-650 BC

Table 1 –Effect of Petrie's Egyptian Dates on Greek Archaeology

Torr expressed many criticisms of Petrie's results. Greek coins and gems, dated about 700-600 BC, resembled the late Mycenaean coins and gems so closely "that any judge of art would be prepared to place the Mycenaean age immediately before 700" [Torr, p.51]. This was evidence that Petrie's dates, which broke the connection of Mycenaean and Geometric eras was wrong but nobody was listening.

Another issue was the tomb of Maket. Petrie excavated this tomb in Kahun and found 12 coffins [W.M. F. Petrie]. The earliest three coffins, 1, 2 and 3 he dated to the last 3 generations of the 18th Dynasty. The next coffins were never dated exactly. According to Petrie, there is no pottery in these coffins like that of the late 18th Dynasty or the 19th Dynasty. The latest two coffins, 11 and 12, he dated to the early 19th Dynasty on the basis of style. This situation was problematic. To what dynasty do the intervening coffins 4-10 belong? Petrie could not assign them to the 18th Dynasty as coffin 3 was the last possible 18th Dynasty tomb. If the intervening coffins belonged to the 19th Dynasty, would not coffins 11 and 12 be very late in the 19th Dynasty?
Petrie wrote,

> "The question of the age of this tomb is important, as the Greek and Phoenician pottery was found in it. …There is no pottery here like that of the XVIIIth and early XIXth dynasty; no trace of blue paint, no hard white faced ware, no elegant forms"

Ultimately, he had to assign the tombs to the 20th Dynasty because of the Iron I pottery. Despite Petrie's observations on the pottery, Egyptologists regard these coffins as belonging to the 18th Dynasty. Furthermore, Petrie found ribbed beads reminiscent of the 22nd Dynasty in coffins 4 through 7 yet he did not assign them to that dynasty as that would imply the 22nd Dynasty followed the 18th Dynasty. He believed it could not intervene between the 18th and 19th dynasties! Furthermore, the 22nd dynasty belonged to the 9th and 8th century BC - a date that would imply an error of 500-600 years in the dating of the 18th and 19th dynasties.

Torr's rather brash and arrogant presentation won him no friends and he lost the historical debate. Since the time of Torr's debate a continual accumulation of Mycenaean Age problems has arisen to the point it forces one to wonder if Torr was right. It does happen that the arrogant and irritating scholars are right sometimes despite their bad manners. What would have happened if Torr had been able to access modern information or had a gentlemanly disposition? Would the result of a debate be any different today? Torr today would have had no trouble in making

Petrie's dates look very dubious. His problem today would be to persuade his peers that a debate was necessary.

THE PROBLEM AT HISSARLIK

Schliemann and Dorpfeld were archaeological pioneers of the 19th century. Their discoveries at Hissarlik and his sensational claim that it was the Troy of King Priam and the heroic Achilles drew the world's attention. Schliemann's great trenches were dug hastily to reach the lower layers, where he believed he would find the remains of Priam's fortress, the remnant of the Trojan War. He found at Level II some fabulous golden jewelry that he claimed belonged to King Priam. Actually, the treasure was too early and scholars identified the later Level VI or VII as belonging to the time of the Trojan War.

The modern excavation of Hissarlik was carried out by the University of Cincinnati under the direction of Blegen from 1932-1936 [Blegen, 1963]. According to Blegen, Level VI contained pottery referred to as Late Helladic IIIA (Mycenaean). That town suffered a violent earthquake. Next the town was rebuilt at Level VIIa but it suffered a violent destruction by fire. This stratum, in Blegen's opinion, was most likely to represent the fall of Troy. The town at Level VIIb exhibited a feeble recovery. Then a people who made Knobbed Ware pottery came from the north and mixed with the local culture.

Troy Level VI contained LH IIIA pottery of the 14th century according to Petrie's chronology. In Level VIIa the Mycenaean pottery gradually became LH IIIB or 13th century. Also present was pottery known as Grey Minyan Ware and Tan Ware. [Blegen, 1963, p. 160]. Level VIIb saw a continuation of Mycenaean pottery into LH IIIC dated to the 12th and 11th century. Level VIIb also saw the introduction of the Balkan Knobbed Ware, unknown prior to this level. Grey Minyan and Tan Ware continued. Thus, although a new culture arrived, the old culture remained. This was puzzling because in Level VIII Blegen found 7th century Geometric pottery as well as the Balkan Knobbed Ware, the Minyan Ware and the Tan Ware. Troy VIIb was almost certainly destroyed by fire, *circa* 1100-1050 BC but there was 400 years missing [Blegen, 1963, p. 169-172]. Thus the connection of Mycenaean pottery with the 18th Dynasty by Petrie produced another enigma. A similar conclusion was forced by the Grey Minyan Ware found in Levels VI, VIIa and VIIb and VIII and Blegen had to suppose a 400-year gap in the middle of the Grey Minyan Ware also,

> "In the seventh century B.C. the Trojan citadel, which had been virtually deserted for some four centuries, suddenly blossomed into life once more with occupants who were still able to make Gray Minyan pottery." [Blegen, 1963, p. 172]

According to Blegen, the people who produced this ware must have lived somewhere else and returned 400 years later. This is a very strained explanation to say the least. Worse still the Late

Geometric pottery of the 7th century is actually found in Level VII with the 11th century Mycenaean LHIIIC pottery! Blegen reported that the Geometric sherds found in Level VII seem to be of exactly the same kind as the late Geometric pottery from the Archaic (seventh-century) strata. [Blegen et al, 1958, p. 181]. Blegen also reported Geometric ware below deposits of Knobbed Ware,

> "..the deposits of Knobbed Ware present a perplexing and still unexplained problem.
> [Blegen et al,1958, p.158.]"

The problem here lay in the fact that Knob Ware is considered Late Bronze Age pottery which according to Petrie's chronology ended in 1200 BC. Iron Age Geometric pottery of the 7th century should not have preceded it.

Blegen problems continued with the excavation of House no. 814. House no. 814 was a Late Bronze Age building from Level VIIb dated to the 12th century. Under it Blegen found Iron Age pottery from the 8th century [Blegen et al, 1958, pp. 291-92].
Blegen's results show Levels VII and VIII are continuous. The rational application of stratigraphic principles would demand a date from the late 9th to early 8th century for Levels VIIa and VIIb to fit the 7th century date of the succeeding Level VIII. From Torr's perspective, it is exactly the result he would have expected. Was Torr wrong? If he was right, why do the archaeologists not revised their dates?

The answer may lie in the magnitude of the shift and its implications. If fall of Troy in Level VIIa were dated near 800 BC rather than Blegen's 1260 BC then the chronological gap is 460 years. In Greek history this solves the important problem of the Dark Ages. They never existed. In Egyptian history it creates a logjam. Such a downward revision implies that the 18th Dynasty began about the time of King Saul of Israel. The history of three dynasties, the 19th, the 20th and the 21st would have to be put elsewhere or even disappear. Egyptian history would be drastically altered. Consider, for example, the story of the biblical Exodus, thought by modern biblical scholars to have occurred in the 19th Dynasty. One cannot place the reign of King Saul in the 18th Dynasty and then have Moses free the Israelites in the 19th Dynasty!

PROBLEM OF MYCENAE

Mycenae was the leading Greek city-state in the time of the Trojan War. According to tradition, the city's founder was the legendary hero Perseus of Greek legend. Its Late Bronze Age, King Agamemnon commanded the expedition against Troy personally. It was only natural for Schliemann to excavate Mycenae after his success at Hissarlik. Since the time of Schliemann's expedition to Mycenae in the 1870's it has become the most thoroughly excavated and studied site in the world.

Figure 1: Lions at Late Bronze Mycenae and Phrygian Gordion

Mycenae

Gordion

This brings us to the gateway at Mycenae. The gateway at Mycenae has two standing lions facing each other with a column in between. Lions are a common motif in the ancient world. Because of the similarity in Mycenaean design to that of eighth century Gordion, late 19th century art historians originally assigned the Mycenaean gateway to the eighth century BC. Figure 1 contains pictures of the two gateways.

Petrie's Egyptian chronology had the effect of redating the Mycenae gate to 500 years earlier. Boardman, although he accepted a thirteenth-century attribution for the gate, observed that

> "more than five hundred years were to pass before Greek sculptors could [again] command an idiom which would satisfy these aspirations in sculpture and architecture." [Boardman]

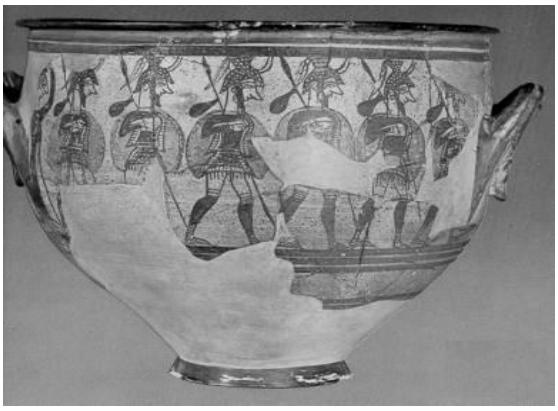
Torr would have argued that the similarity between the two gateways meant one had been copied and therefore they could not be separated by 500 years.

Not far from the Lion Gate was the building known as the granary. Wace dug a test trench in 1920 between the Gate and the granary because the trench provided the best stratigraphic section of the site [Wace]. Wace differentiated thirteen layers. The bottom ten layers contained exclusively Mycenaean IIIC circa. 1250 - 1100/ 1050 B.C., or 150-200 years. The eleventh layer, in addition to 11th century Mycenaean pottery, also contained a significant number of fragments of "Orientalizing" ware. This ware shows influence from the East and is dated by archaeologists to the seventh and sixth centuries BC. It is very important to note that the eleventh layer contained no pottery dated to 1050-700 BC, the very same gap as found at Hissarlik.

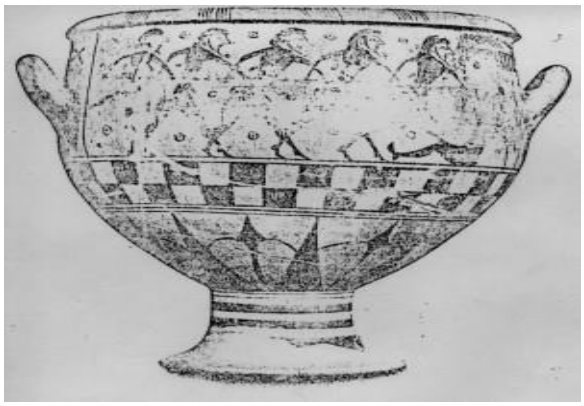
How does one explain the layer, which contained pottery of both the 11th century and the 7th century and nothing in between? The problem cannot be blamed on the thickness of the layer. It was, in fact, thinner than one of the earlier layers representing ca. 15-20 years. It cannot be explained by the abandonment of Mycenae between the 11th century and the 7th century because a layer lacking pottery would have built up during those years and would have been very apparent. There is no evidence that any person or process had removed any of the material or had disturbed the layering. One layer contained pottery of two styles customarily separated by hundreds of years, yet the trench layering showed no evidence that those centuries existed.
The mixing of Mycenaean IIIC and 7th century pottery at Hissarlik and Mycenae are not isolated examples. Other archaeological sites include Tiryns, Athens, Kythera, Vrokstro in Crete and Emborio on the island of Chios [Rudolph; Broneer; Coldstream; Hall; Snodgrass].

One of the most interesting conundrums found at Mycenae is the case of the so-called warrior vases [Schorr]. Schliemann discovered a vase used in mixing wine called a krater. A picture of a series of soldiers encircled the vase. Its peculiar handles were shaped into a bull's head (see Figure 2). It was deemed a development from an earlier 8th century style of krater and assigned to the 7th century. The soldiers on the vase were equipped like soldiers on another vase which had been signed by Aristonothos, an artist of the 7th century. However, after Petrie's chronology became accepted, the Warrior vase was redated to 1200 BC as part of the Mycenaean IIIC pottery. This left the problem of explaining how Greek warfare and military weapons had changed so little over 500 years. Their chariots also showed no technological development. Mycenaean era chariots showed on Mycenaean pottery are followed by a four century long hiatus until they reappear in the Geometric Age almost exactly like their Mycenaean predecessors.

Figure 2 – Warrior Vases



Warrior Vase



Vase of Aristonothos

These vases also left another unexplained puzzle. Before the 8th century, the Greeks had used mainly geometric designs on their pottery. In the 8th century they added the figures of human beings on the pottery. When the Warrior Vase was redated it meant that this peculiar relationship was repeated twice in the history of Greek pottery: first in the 13th to 12th century and than again in the 8th to 7th century. This development of two similar style changes in two different eras that had so many similarities was indeed curious and has never been satisfactorily explained. This is more evidence for Torr.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

The impact of the Egyptian dating of Mycenaean pottery was not restricted to Greece because the Greeks traded their pottery all over the Mediterranean. Everywhere their pottery was found; the stratum containing it became identified with the Mycenaean era and was given Egyptian dates. Thus Dark Ages spread into many places in the Mediterranean. [P. James, 1993, p.16].

In Italy, the 8th century Villanovan Iron Age pottery succeeded the Late Apennine with its Late Mycenaean, which causes the intermediate pottery to be stretched out over 300 years. In Sicily, the Pantalican culture of the late 8th century succeeded the Thapsos, with its 13th century Mycenaean pottery, leaving a 500-year gap. In Sardinia, Middle Nuragic, whose artefacts linked it to the 8th/7th Villanovan in Italy, followed the 13th century Late Bronze Archaic Nuragic, which leaves a 500-year gap unfilled. In Malta, Borg in-Nadr 3 culture that was linked to the 8th century Punic culture that followed the Late Bronze Borg in-Nadr 2 culture [P. James, 1993, pp. 34-41]. In all these places huge chronological gaps appeared between the cultures that traded with Mycenaeans and those cultures touched by Greek colonists of the 8th/ 7th centuries.

Not just the western Mediterranean region but also the Anatolian world was affected. Between Late Bronze and the Iron Age in Anatolia, there is a 400-year void. Akurgal, the leading Anatolian archaeologist, stated the problem thusly,

> "...it is striking that not only no Phrygian (remains) but no cultural remains of any sort have been found which belong to the period 1200 - 800 BC [Akurgal, 1962, p. 124]."

It appears as if Anatolia was uninhabited for over 400 years! How could all these peoples disappear and return 400 years later?

In Table 2 is a list of locations and objects that indicate the Mycenaean-Iron Age gap and its chronological value. In various localities local chronology affects the age of the late Bronze strata so that the gaps are not all the same size. This does not materially affect the existence or the size of the problem. The evidence that has been examined demonstrates consistently that there is a 400 or 500-year gap; it is always at the Late Bronze/ Iron Age boundary and always with similar artifacts on both sides of the gap. Archaeology consistently fails to indicate any large gap in time between the Mycenaean and Geometric Ages. The evidence shows that the Late Bronze strata habitually underlie 8th /7th century strata, just as Torr and the early Greek

archaeologists originally thought. Conventional archaeologists have proposed various solutions all of which are merely *ad hoc* patches to avoid the obvious. The problem is systematic not archaeological.

Table 2: Chronological Gaps at the Late Bronze/Iron Age Boundary

Location	**Type of Evidence**	**Gap Years**	**Page***
Italy	Late Apennine pottery	300	33
Sicily	LB/IA I Tombs	550	36
Aeolian Islands	LB/IA I Pottery	500	40
Malta	Pottery	600	41
Sardinia	Soldiers' Armour	400-500	47
Troy	Pottery	250-400	62-63
Greek\Levant	Ivories	325	73
Greek	Linear B/Earliest Alphabet	400	82
Greece/Cyprus	Bronzes	400	80
Greek	Pottery	400	94,95
Hittite	Art	350	123
Anatolia	Artefacts	400	138
Bogâzköy	Ceramics	300	139
Palestine	Pottery	400	160
Nubia	Tombs	200	216

Page reference is to Centuries in Darkness [James et al., 1993]

It is acknowledged that Torr lost the debate but the archaeological problems caused by Petrie's wonderful discoveries persist. The real problem is that modern archaeologists are not prepared to admit that the subject must be rethought. To do this means finding a referee between Greek and Egyptian dates. One such referee is the Assyrian chronology. One place where it can be applied is at Enkomi. Enkomi was the ancient capital of Cyprus. In 1896 Murray excavated a cemetery there and discovered pottery, porcelain, gems, glass, ivory, bronze, and gold in its tombs. The artefacts presented one and the same difficulty. They had parallels in the 14^{th} /13^{th} century Late Bronze Mycenaean era while at the same time had parallels in the 9^{th} /7^{th} centuries in Assyria, Phoenicia, and Greece.

Mycenaean vases of the 14th century were found with dark outlines of the figures accompanied by white dotted lines. This gave them a perforated appearance. The same peculiarity of white dotted lines is found also on a vase from Etruria, signed by the 7th century potter named Aristonothos. The problem of pottery of two different ages is repeated in ivory. Among the Nimrod ivories (850-700 B.C.) is a pyxide showing a chariot in pursuit of a lion, with a dog running alongside the horses. Virtually the same scene is found on a panel of an ivory gaming box of Cypro-Mycenaean style at Enkomi. Even the harness of the horses is similar but the dates are four centuries earlier.

The silver vases of the Enkomi tombs are obviously Mycenaean in shape. They were found with two similar silver rings; the first one with Late Bronze style hieroglyphics and the second engraved with a design of a man dressed in a lion's skin standing before a seated king, to whom he offers an oblation. The design is distinctly Assyrian in character and may be seen on an Assyrian sculpture from Nimrod of the time of Assur-nasir-pal (884-860 BC). Do the silver vases date to the 14th century Late Bronze hieroglyphics or to the time of the Assurbanipal? Though these finds belonged to the same stratum they are dated by two different chronological systems – with Egyptian dates 500 years greater than the Assyrian dates.

CONCLUSION

The Petrie-Torr problem re-emerged at Enkomi; this time with Assyrian dates. The Assyrian dates agree with Torr's old Greek pottery dates. To continue to say the Egyptian chronology is right is to say that both the Greek archaeological dates and the Assyrian dates, while agreeing, are both 500 years off. Furthermore, in the first millennium BC, biblical dates agree to Assyrian dates within 50 years. Thus three different chronological systems agree with each other and disagree with a fourth system. Rationality demands the acceptance of the three and the rejection of the fourth. Egyptologists were the first to construct their chronology and thus enjoyed the privilege of primacy. Unfortunately, they set the standard, which makes them extremely intransigent to change.

Manetho

The dynastic order was determined by a 3rd century BC priest named Manetho. His work is no longer extant and it is not clear what sources he used. Furthermore, the parts passed onto us by the ancient writers Josephus, Africanus and Eusebius contradict each other. Many names from the historical king lists have not yet been found on the royal monuments and some from the monuments are not found on the historical king lists. According to Breasted, a father of Egyptology, "Manetho is a late, careless and uncritical compilation which can be proved wrong from contemporary monuments in the vast majority of cases where such monuments have survived [Breasted, 1906, A History of Egypt, p. 23]. The first scholar to understand that even the dynastic order of Manetho was wrong was Velikovsky.

Velikovsky's method was historical not archaeological. He saw by comparing Israelite history with the history of Egypt of the corresponding dates that there was a great discord. For example, there was considerable discord between the activities of the Israelite Judges and the corresponding Egyptian pharaohs [Velikovsky, 1952]. Just prior to King David and Solomon, the Egyptians had held sway in Canaan during the 15th to 12th centuries. One would think therefore that the primary opponents of the Israelites during the period of the Judges would have been the Egyptians. However, during the era of the Judges and the reigns of Samuel, Saul and David there is a conspicuous lack of Egyptian presence. During the era of the Judges the Hebrew Scripture mentions Moabites, Ammonites, Canaanites, Amalekites, Midianites and Philistines but no Egyptians.

During Solomon's reign, an Egyptian pharaoh offered his daughter in marriage to the Israelite king. To give the princess a dowry, the Egyptian pharaoh attacked and took possession of Gezer. According to the conventional Egyptian chronology, the pharaoh of this time was Si-Amon. Si-Amon was both a High Priest and a Pharaoh in the 21st Dynasty. The 21st Dynasty was a time of weakness and division in Egypt. There are no records of any invasions of Canaan during Si-Amon's reign nor any other 21st Dynasty pharaoh. When in the Bible, the Egyptians marched into Israel and defeated Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the Egyptologists recorded a weak, divided Egypt incapable of launching an attack outside of Egypt.

Velikovsky shifted the Egyptian dynasties to match the history of the Israelites. One of the historical shifts was to place the 18th Dynasty opposite Saul, David and Solomon up to the end of the Omride kings of Israel. He then created a scenario in which Egyptian history had been duplicated under different dynasties. The history of the 19th was the same as the 26th Dynasty in the 7th century. Similarly, the history of the 20th/21st was the same as the 30th Dynasty in the 4th century. This left the dynasties 22 to the 25 in between the 18th and 19th Dynasty. This explains the strange results of the arrangement of coffins at the tomb of Maket. These coffins belong to the dynasties which intervened between the 18th and the 19th dynasties.

Furthermore, Velikovsky's placement puts the 18th Dynasty exactly where Torr and the Greek archaeologists claimed it was – in the 10th and 9th centuries. Velikovsky and Torr arrived at the same result but through different methodologies. The question now arises: can the history caused by the revision of Egyptian dates be aligned with Israelite history? Velikovsky claimed that it could.

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