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CHAPTER

30 The Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period

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Abstract

The ancient Egyptians of later times saw the Middle Kingdom as their classical period. Its language was used in temple and tomb inscriptions until the Roman Period, and its literature was still read and copied hundreds years after it was written. Its sculpture was the prototype for that of the Late Period, more than a thousand years later. The basic outlines of this period are relatively straightforward: the Eleventh-Dynasty king Mentuhotep II unified the country around 2000 BC, and subsequently the kings of the Twelfth Dynasty built a strong administration and centralized the country. Lower Nubia was conquered and raids into Western Asia are attested. In the Thirteenth Dynasty there is a detectable process of political decline, with a high number of kings ruling over a short period of time. Around 1650 BC, foreign (Hyksos) rulers took over parts of the Delta, while, in the south, Egypt fought against the Nubian Kerma empire, but in about 1550 BC the Theban ruler Ahmose managed to defeat the Hyksos and unite the country.

Keywords: [ancient Egypt](#), [Middle Kingdom](#), [Second Intermediate Period](#), [Thebes](#), [Abydos](#), [Itjtawy](#), [Lisht](#), [Amenemhat](#), [Senusret](#), [Mentuhotep](#), [Hyksos](#), [Avaris](#), [tombs](#), [temples](#), [Kerma](#)

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Introduction: the sources of data

THE Middle Kingdom is often seen as the classical period of Egyptian history. Especially in the Twelfth Dynasty, eight kings ruled for almost 200 years bringing stability and prosperity to the country. However, the survival of sources for writing a history is patchy. The temples of the period, pyramids and pyramid temples as well as the tombs of officials are often heavily destroyed. Historical important inscriptions on temple walls and in tombs are therefore most often totally gone.¹

Despite this destruction, some important texts with historical inscriptions have been preserved. There are biographical inscriptions of court officials on stelae found at Abydos, and those of local officials in their tombs.² In addition, there are parts of stone-inscribed annals belonging to Senusret I (c.1956–1911 BC), found at Heliopolis,³ and to Amenemhat II (c.1911–1877 BC), found at Memphis,⁴ and many dated documents (both private and official) provide a framework for the history of the period. Several important papyri are preserved from the Middle Kingdom; those found at the town site of Lahun reveal many details of the administration and urban life.⁵ Papyrus Boulaq 18 is an administrative document deriving from the Thirteenth-Dynasty Theban palace.⁶ In addition to legal and administrative manuscripts, Middle Kingdom papyri also preserve the earliest literary compositions (see Chapter 50 [Literary]).

p. 639 The Middle Kingdom is especially rich in provincial cemeteries, including the decorated tomb chapels of local governors and the smaller burials of their administrators. These provide a wide source base for religious beliefs and local histories, as many coffins decorated with long religious texts were found at these sites. The tomb chapels of local governors sometimes bear long biographical texts.⁷ Indeed, the history of some provincial places is better known than those of the capital and the whole country. Altogether, there is a wider source base especially in comparison to the Old Kingdom, providing more information on different aspects of life, administration and political events.

Many modern histories of ancient Egypt are still restricted to discussion of the history of the king and the king's family, and the wider population is most often fully ignored.⁸ These histories also frequently focus on architecture and culture and are therefore more often cultural and architectural, rather than political histories in a narrower sense. The reason seems clear. On the one hand, the monuments are the major survivals from ancient Egypt, and, on the other hand, there are few preserved texts that come even close to the concept of modern history writing (see Chapter 48 [Historical texts]). Therefore, it should clearly be said that the information, even when taken together, is fragmented and patchy. The recent re-excavation of a mastaba at Dahshur, belonging to the 'high steward' and vizier Khnumhotep serving under the Twelfth-Dynasty ruler Senusret III (c.1870–1831 BC), included fragments of a long biographical wall-inscription, describing an expedition to Byblos and another Near Eastern coastal town; this inscription reveals a level of Egyptian involvement in the Near East that was not previously appreciated,⁹ demonstrating that a single new find can fundamentally change our view of specific periods.

In recent decades, the society of the Middle Kingdom has attracted increasing attention from researchers, some of whom interpret it as the age of a rising middle class. The evidence, for this, however, is vague, and connected in part with the first appearance of literary papyri, with distinctive terms and themes.¹⁰ The only major study with an archaeological approach confirms that there were several levels of wealth in the society of the period, but terminology for social relations remains only roughly defined.¹¹ Foreigners in Egypt and foreign relations are also popular research topics in the last years. Written sources indicate high numbers of people from the Levant in Egypt.¹² The current interest in their presence is probably influenced by the challenges that these topics raise for modern societies.

The Eleventh Dynasty

p. 640 At the end of the First Intermediate Period, Egypt was ruled by two lines of kings. In the north there were the Herakleopolitans, in the south there was a line of kings at Thebes. The latter was the Eleventh Dynasty (c.2125–1985 BC) with kings named Inyotef and Mentuhotep. Egypt was reunified within the 51-year reign of Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II, who changed his so-called ‘Horus-name’ several times, thus causing some confusion for early historians, as it was initially uncertain whether these names only to Mentuhotep or to several kings.¹³ Little is known about the ‘reunification’ itself, which must have taken place in the second half of his reign.¹⁴ References to civil wars within Egypt are vague, and it is hard to gain any consistent picture of the events.

Following the unification, Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II launched several military campaigns into Lower Nubia,¹⁵ and even perhaps into southern Palestine,¹⁶ but whether such activities resulted in permanent occupations of these regions remains unknown. A rock inscription at Jebel Uweinat, very close to the Sudanese–Libyan border, demonstrates that Egyptian activities in this reign had already extended considerably to the west of the Nile valley.¹⁷ With these campaigns, the king initiated a model for future kings of the Middle Kingdom. All of the Twelfth–Dynasty kings that enjoyed reasonably long reigns seem to have launched military campaigns into neighbouring regions. Mentuhotep II established a new administration partly based on Old Kingdom models, with the re-introduction of the positions of vizier and ‘scribe of the royal documents’. Other titles were new to the royal court, coming in part from the First Intermediate provincial administration, such as the ‘treasurer’ or the ‘steward’. Mentuhotep II also p. 641 launched a building programme renovating several temples in Upper Egypt, or adding new elements to them. His main project was his own funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri. Although the evidence for the Old Kingdom is much more fragmentary, it seems that this was also a new element of royal policy. Many Middle Kingdom rulers built or renovated temples across the country as a whole, not merely in the capital or specific religious centres.

Figure 30.1



View of the mortuary temple of King Nebhepetra Mentuhotep I at Deir el-Bahari.

Picture by Olaf Tausch. Wikimedia Commons (<https://commons.wikimedia.org>).

Another important element of early Middle Kingdom politics was the organization of the provinces, the local governors of which had already become strong in the late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period (see Chapters 35 and 36 for discussion of the interplay between national and local administration). With the unification of the country, it is likely that Mentuhotep II had to face the fact that there were, in several parts of the country, powerful local families, perhaps not always accepting the new dynasty. There are indeed inscriptions mentioning situations resembling civil war. At least in the case of Deir el-Bersha, Mentuhotep II seems to have promoted local governors to the position of viziers, perhaps to gain help from powerful local partners.¹⁸ Similar civil wars are also indicated by inscriptions dating to the Twelfth Dynasty.¹⁹ In reaction, several new lines of governors were installed in different parts of the country. Those at Beni Hasan appear already in the Eleventh Dynasty; at other places, such as Elephantine, Meir or Qau el-Kebir, they were installed at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty. Local governors loyal to the kings were evidently seen as an essential part of the royal power base.²⁰ A high proportion of the resources of the country remained in the provinces and show a wide spread of wealth, at least for the upper levels of society. In terms of material culture, the Eleventh Dynasty still had strong connections with the First Intermediate Period. At many sites it can be problematic to date objects and even officials to the periods before or after unification.²¹

Sankhkara Mentuhotep III, the son of Mentuhotep II, is little attested, although he seems to have continued the politics of his father. He is mainly known from several temple buildings in Upper Egypt. From the next reign, that of Nebtawyra Mentuhotep IV, only several expedition inscriptions have survived, at the Wadi Hammamat greywacke quarries, in the Wadi el-Hudi amethyst mines, and at the port of Ayn Sukhna. He seems to have reigned for only a few years, and the end of the dynasty and of this king remains obscure for us. There is also evidence for activities of some local kings in Lower Nubia.²²

The Twelfth Dynasty

The reigns of the eight Twelfth-Dynasty rulers (all but one holding the name Amenemhat or Senusret) spanned a period of almost two centuries, and they appear to have been among the strongest to rule Egypt. The dynasty ended with the ruling queen Sobekneferu. It is usually divided culturally and politically into early and late phases. From the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty there are some texts preserved referring to situations resembling civil war.²³ Later manuscripts preserve a *Teaching of King Amenemhat I*, mentioning a physical attack on the king. These texts are often hard to place into a general picture and their interpretation and dating is disputed in Egyptology (see Chapters 48 and 50 on the debates surrounding such historical and literary texts).²⁴

Amenemhat I and Senusret I, together ruling for about 65 years, represent the first phase of the Twelfth Dynasty.²⁵ Amenemhat I moved the capital to the north to a place called Amenemhat-itj-tawy ('Amenemhat is the seizer of the two Lands'), usually abbreviated to Itjtawy. This city was perhaps located near the modern village of Lisht, some 50 kilometres south of modern Cairo, close to the site of Amenemhat's pyramid complex.²⁶ In a broader sense it can be said that this is basically the region where Egypt always had its capital, from the Old Kingdom at Memphis to modern Cairo. From here it was easier to control the Delta but also Upper Egypt. The new capital was also closer to the Faiyum, a river oasis, and a region that received special attention throughout the Twelfth Dynasty. It was probably during this period that the Faiyum was first fully cultivated, becoming an important economic zone within Egypt. The new city of Itjtawy seems to have also rapidly developed into a centre of production with many new developments in material culture, best visible from the pottery; a typical Middle Kingdom ware appeared there first under Senusret I and then spread than over the whole country.²⁷ Both kings, but especially Senusret I launched a building programme, renovating and building new temples all around the country, perhaps inspired by piety, but undoubtedly also as an opportunity to take tighter control over the provinces.²⁸ In the Old Kingdom, local temples were under local control, but now they were placed under the control of the central government. After Senusret I,

few new temples were built, perhaps because they were now fully under central control.²⁹ Both kings built pyramids at Lisht, and that of Senusret I appears to be intended to closely replicate the Old Kingdom style of pyramid complex, with a temple of Sixth-Dynasty plan located beside the pyramid, and with a niched enclosure wall evoking that around the Third-Dynasty Step Pyramid of Djoser.³⁰

Senusret I reorganized the provinces, and founded or at least fixed its limits. There is even a listing of all provinces (including measurements of their extent), on a chapel erected at Thebes. Two boundary stelae bearing his name have survived.³¹ Under the early Twelfth-Dynasty kings, many cemeteries that had flourished in the First Intermediate Period now fell out of use, such as those in the region of Qau and Badari³² and the cemeteries at Sedment³³. This might indicate that substantial parts of the population became poorer and therefore became less visible in the archaeological record.³⁴ Most likely it was during this reign that a corvée system was introduced, appearing in the sources as the 'great enclosure'; almost all Egyptians had to work for state projects, and runaways were heavily punished.³⁵ There are indications of new settlements founded all around the country,³⁶ and this evidence suggests that there were substantial population movements, perhaps under government control.³⁷ Amenemhat I and Senusret I were heavily involved in foreign campaigns, including the conquest of Lower Nubia up to the Second Cataract. There is also evidence for expeditions to Libya and South Palestine, although hardly any that appear to have resulted in permanent land occupation in these two regions. All borders of the country were heavily secured with fortresses. Those at the border to Palestine are only known from written sources, but those in Nubia are partly excavated and are impressive monuments demonstrating royal power.³⁸

Recent years have seen much discussion as to whether kings of the Middle Kingdom had a 'co-regency' system, whereby one king might choose, in his old age, to nominate one of his sons as successor reigning together with him in the period leading up to the death of the father. There are indeed several dated inscriptions that name two kings simultaneously, indicating that this practice may have existed. Arguments against this interpretation have been raised, and the evidence has been reviewed by several scholars, but recent discoveries apparently support the existence of co-regencies. There are for example inscriptions of Senusret III at Abydos³⁹ and Dahshur⁴⁰ that provide a year 30 and 39. On a long-known Lahun papyrus, a year 19 is followed by a year 1, and for chronological reasons these dates can only relate to Senusret III and Amenemhat III. Taken together, these texts seem to indicate that Senusret III ruled for 19 years alone and for a further 20 years together with Amenemhat III.⁴¹

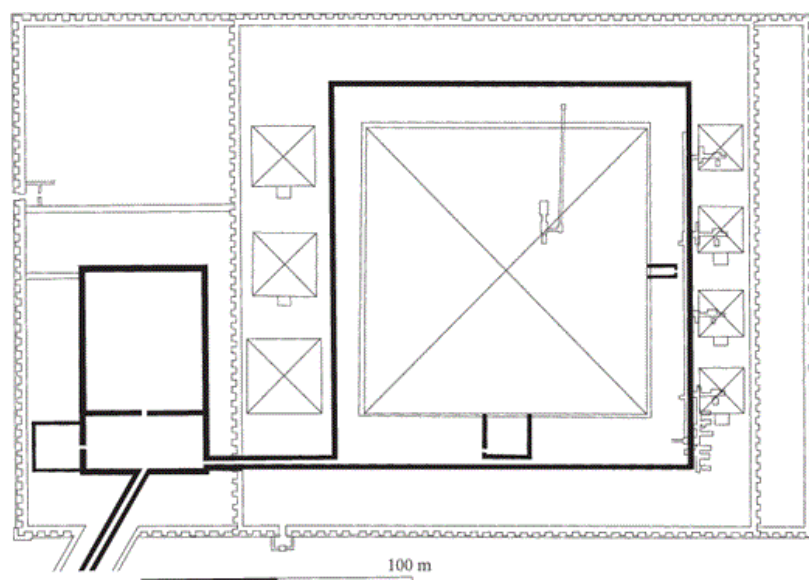
The four decades or so for which Amenemhat II and Senusret II reigned are not well attested, although two years of Amenemhat's II reign are documented by fragments of annals found at Memphis that report mainly donations to different temples of the country, but also trade missions to Asia, and an attack on two towns located in Palestine or even in Turkey or Cyprus.⁴² Captives were brought to Egypt and employed at the royal pyramid complex.⁴³ Silver bowls and a silver seal of Aegean origin found at the temple el-Tod seem to be proof of a flourishing trade with this region.⁴⁴

In the late Twelfth Dynasty (lasting about 75 years, from Senusret III to Sobekneferu) new developments are visible in almost all areas of Egypt,⁴⁵ perhaps the first indications of significant change being the disappearance of the provincial tombs of local governors.⁴⁶ Under Senusret III the last monumental tombs of governors were erected. The line of governors itself continues at most places, but they no longer had the resources for building large tombs, perhaps because of decreased resources and power.⁴⁷ A range of new titles (such as the now very common 'commander in chief of the town regiment' or 'general of the ruler's crew')⁴⁸ appeared in the administration, indicating a reorganization of the whole country⁴⁹. The country was more centralized, a situation evidently backed up by the fact that the vast majority of large-scale monuments were being constructed for the king and his court. The centres of the country were the Memphite-Fayum region (where the capital was located), Abydos and Thebes, with the latter developing into a form of second capital. There were changes in burial customs,⁵⁰ and the mass-production of scarab

p. 644 seals started, including L examples bearing names and titles of officials and kings (see Chapter 21 for further detail on the emergence and significance of scarabs).⁵¹

Senusret III⁵² is best known for his military campaigns into Lower Nubia, where he built or re-built a chain of fortresses, presumably linked with Egyptian interests in raw materials, especially gold. Military campaigns to Palestine are attested too, but they remain obscure, mainly because written texts mentioning enterprises are generally missing, and the archaeological evidence in Palestine itself is not strong, but there is potentially relevant textual evidence in the form of a stele of an official called Sobek-khu which is inscribed with a brief account of a campaign.⁵³ Senusret III erected a pyramid and pyramid complex at Dahshur, but also built a tomb at Abydos,⁵⁴ underlining the growing importance of this religious centre. Amenemhat III built two pyramids, one at Dahshur, and the second at Hawara, where he also erected a funerary complex, later known as the famous 'Labyrinth'.⁵⁵ Many rock inscriptions in mining regions report expeditions. Otherwise, only one rock inscription in Lower Nubia reports a short raid. After the reign of Amenemhat IV, the dynasty ends with the ruling queen Sobekneferu, of whom little is known.⁵⁶ There is also only sparse evidence concerning the general nature of the end of the Twelfth Dynasty; often it is simply assumed that Amenemhat IV had no male heir and that therefore a woman of the family, Sobekneferu, became ruler, but this explanation remains pure speculation.⁵⁷

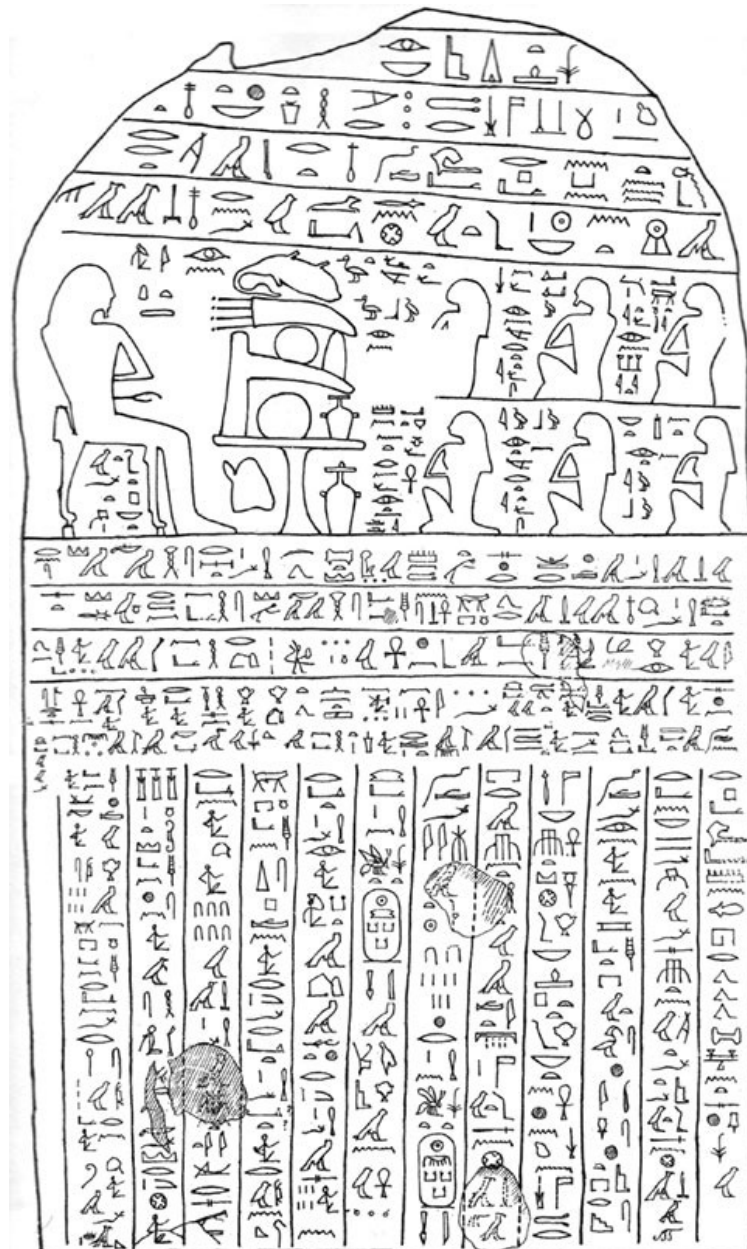
Figure 30.2



Plan of the pyramid complex of King Senusret III at Dahshur.

Drawing: Grajetzki; after Arnold, D. 2002: plan 1.

Figure 30.3



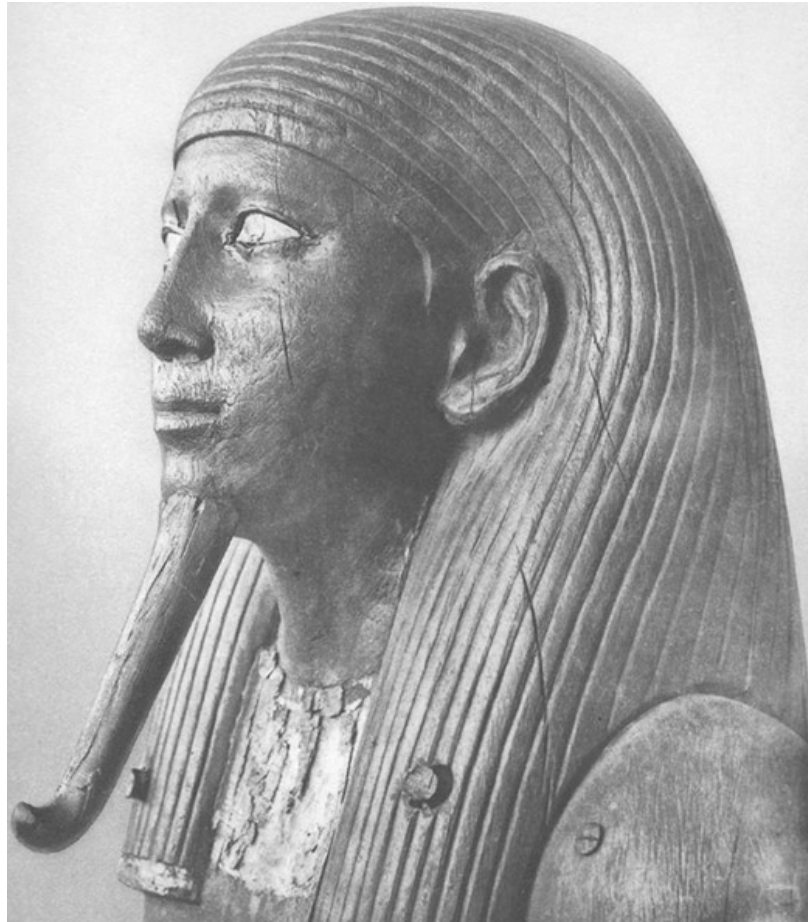
Stele of Sobek-khu.

After Garstang 1901, pl. V.

The Thirteenth Dynasty

Some scholars regard the Thirteenth Dynasty as part of the Middle Kingdom,⁵⁸ while others prefer to place it in the Second Intermediate Period.⁵⁹ Politically, one major difference between the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasty is indeed visible: the line of strong rulers with long reigns ended. Many kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty ruled only for a few years, indicating a stark decline in royal power. In terms of material culture it is often hard to decide whether an object belongs to the end of the one or to the beginning of the other dynasty.⁶⁰

Figure 30.4



King Hor, one of the short-reigning kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty: wooden statue found in his tomb at Dahshur.

De Morgan, J. 1895: pl. XXXV.

p. 647 The Thirteenth Dynasty (c.1773–1650 BC) comprises a long succession of short-reigning kings. The names of the early Thirteenth-Dynasty rulers are well preserved in the Turin Canon (a Ramessid papyrus inscribed with a list of kings from mythical prehistory through to the Nineteenth Dynasty); there are problems in detail with the papyrus, but in general the order seems to be reliable.⁶¹ Most kings still built pyramids and their capital was still Itjtawy,⁶² but some kings were buried at Abydos, thus evidently following the model of Senusret III.⁶³ At least at the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty, they seem to have ruled over the whole of Egypt, as well as Lower Nubia up to the Second Cataract, since monuments bearing their names have been found all around the country. Neferhotep I is even attested in Byblos, where a relief in Egyptian style, bearing an Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription, shows him in front of a local governor, indicating close contacts to that place. In the middle of the dynasty there is a core group of kings, including Neferhotep I, Khaneferri Sobekhotep,⁶⁴ Ibia and Ay, the first three reigning for about ten years, and Ay for about twenty. The first two rulers are known from a number of monuments, and it is notable that many private monuments, especially stelae and statues, are datable to this period. However, Ibia and Ay appear only on crudely cut scarab seals and a few other objects. There is the impression of a steady decline of the country under these two kings, as they reigned long and so few objects bearing either royal name have survived.⁶⁵

There is little evidence for family relations between these rulers, therefore it is unclear whether the Thirteenth Dynasty ever formed a true 'dynasty' in terms of being one family. Neferhotep I and Khaneferri Sobekhotep were brothers. There is a queen Nubhetepi with the titles 'king's wife' and 'king's mother', showing that at least one king was also the father of another king, but the actual husband and son of this

queen are not known.⁶⁶ Other evidence indicates that, at least for some kings, close relations existed with the highest state officials,⁶⁷ and it is possible that some kings shared the same background with high state officials. In recent years it has been proposed that the double names of Thirteenth-Dynasty kings are filiations—thus, Amenemhat Senbef would be Amenemhat's son Senbef.⁶⁸ However, no definite proof has yet been found for this hypothesis, and it should be rejected, since double names are well attested for Egyptians at all social levels, without any implication of filiation.⁶⁹

King Merneferra Ay is the last ruler attested in both Upper and Lower Egypt,⁷⁰ and he is also one of the last kings whose name is still preserved in the Turin Canon. After his reign it becomes hard to follow and reconstruct the line of the kings. There are even problems encountered in assigning certain kings known from monuments to particular dynasties. At about this time or a little bit earlier, the political unity of the country seems to have deteriorated, and Egypt began to be ruled by more than one king, which indicates the starting point of the Second Intermediate Period.⁷¹

The Second Intermediate Period: general issues

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For the whole Second Intermediate Period more than a fifty rulers are known from inscriptions on contemporary objects, but their chronological order is open to discussion. Most of them appear on only a few objects, which are often of poor quality. Only at the very end of the period are there a few instances of kings (of the Seventeenth Dynasty) that are known from inscriptions in temple buildings, on a scale not attested since the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁷² For this and other reasons the history of the Second Intermediate Period is more problematic than that of the Twelfth and even of the early Thirteenth Dynasty. Only the beginning and the end are clear. At some point in the Thirteenth Dynasty the unity of the country fell apart, and at the end of the period there were two distinct sets of rulers. On the one hand there were foreigners, in later sources called Hyksos (Greek for the Egyptian title *ḥkꜣ-h'swt*—‘ruler of the foreign lands’), ruling from the city of *ḥwt-wꜣrt*, which is usually known by the Greek name Avaris (the modern archaeological site of Tell el-Dab'a) at the eastern side of the Delta. On the other hand, there were Egyptian kings ruling from Thebes. After a long war, the latter conquered the Hyksos capital and managed to unite Egypt under one ruler. Everything in between these fixed points currently appears to be floating around, relatively unanchored chronologically.

The Turin Canon is of no great assistance with regard to placing the rulers in a chronological sequence, as it is much destroyed for this period, and the physical piecing together of the surviving fragments remains problematic. With the exception of the Hyksos, the surviving versions of the history compiled by the Egyptian historian Manetho, written in Greek, name only dynasties rather than any individual rulers. Even here, the different ancient authors preserving versions of parts of Manetho's history provide conflicting information. The version preserved via Africanus says that there were thirty-two so-called ‘shepherd kings’ during the Sixteenth Dynasty, while the version preserved via Eusebius assigns the dynasty to Thebes and says that it consists of just five rulers. According to Manetho, the Thirteenth Dynasty is Theban, the Fourteenth Dynasty derives from Xoïs, a town in the Delta, and the Fifteenth Dynasty consists of foreign Hyksos rulers. The rulers of the Fifteenth Dynasty also appear in the Turin Canon, although only the name of the last one, Khamudi, is preserved.

At the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, the material culture of Egypt had been quite homogeneous across the entire country, but by the end of the Second Intermediate Period each region had developed its own pottery and other cultural styles.⁷³ In the eastern Delta there are strong links with Palestine; in the Memphis region Middle Kingdom traditions are still visible, and in Thebes a distinctive local pottery style developed during the Second Intermediate Period.⁷⁴

The 'Hyksos' culture and rulers

As early as the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty there was already archaeological evidence that people from Palestine or the Levant were settling at the eastern edge of the Delta.⁷⁵ Their main city was Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a), where an urban centre developed, with close cultural relations to the Levant and Palestine.⁷⁶ At a certain point these people seems to have become independent and were ruled by their own kings. However, the timing and development of events is far from certain. According to the Jewish writer Artapanos, who used Manetho as a source, this might have happened under Khaneferria Sobekhotep.

In the Turin Canon a certain king Nehesy appears in column 9 as the first ruler. He is also known from contemporary monuments found basically only at sites at the edge of the Eastern Delta, including Avaris.⁷⁷ It has been proposed that Nehesy was one of the kings of the Fourteenth Dynasty, ruling parts of the Delta contemporary with the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁷⁸ By this view, Nehesy would stand at the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period. However, a newly discovered stele, as well as evidence from the style of scarab seals, might indicate that he reigned at the very end of the period.⁷⁹ The example of this specific ruler demonstrates the fundamental problems that researchers still face when dealing with this period. Many scarab seals from the period record kings bearing foreign names. It seems possible that these started to reign at one point from Avaris. These kings have not yet been identified on any other objects than scarabs, and are also not known from later records. However, Manetho's history suggests that a continuous succession of Hyksos kings ruled over parts of Egypt for about century, based at their capital Avaris. Their relationship with those rulers who are only known from scarabs is not known. In Manetho there are six Hyksos rulers recorded, providing the impression of a stable dynasty.⁸⁰ Khyan and Apepi are known from a much larger number of objects, and their texts include royal titles suggesting that they were full Egyptian kings. Khyan is also known from a large number of seal impressions found at Tell el-Dab'a and Edfu. At Edfu, they were discovered in a context with seals of the Thirteenth Dynasty king Khaneferria Sobekhotep, indicating that he might have ruled earlier than previously thought.⁸¹ Both the nature and particularly the extent of their rule are disputed. There is some doubt as to whether any of them ever ruled the whole of Egypt.⁸² Apepi in particular seems to have been in a constant war with the Egyptians ruling in Thebes.

The origins of the Hyksos are much debated. There are two approaches in research for finding a solution. On the one hand there are the names of the foreign kings known from scarabs both of the Hyksos rulers and of some of their officials, which various researchers have compared with the large numbers of names known from contemporary writing in the Near East. On the other hand, there is the material culture found at Avaris and other places, and most likely relating to these foreigners, providing another clue for their origin. The rulers, mainly known from scarabs, are thought to bear Semitic names,⁸³ but both Hurrian and Semitic origins have been proposed.⁸⁴ In terms of archaeology the picture is also rather unclear. The material culture from earlier strata at Avaris show strong links to the northern Levantine. The donkey burials found at several tombs have closest parallels in Syria and northern Mesopotamia.⁸⁵ The fragments of a more than life-size statue found at Avaris,⁸⁶ have their closest parallels with statues found at Ebla (in northern Syria)⁸⁷ and Alalakh (at the southern edge of modern Turkey).⁸⁸

The Theban dynasties

The line of Egyptian kings and dynasties in Upper Egypt after king Merneferra Ay is also far from certain. About forty of them appear on fragments of the Turin Canon. Following Manetho and the remains of the Turin Canon, it has been proposed that these rulers should be separated into three groups. Firstly there are kings still belonging to the Thirteenth Dynasty and still residing in Itjtawy. Secondly, there is the Sixteenth Dynasty consisting of kings with a capital in Thebes, who appear to have been contemporary with the Hyksos in the north. So far it is not known where these kings were buried. However, in 2014, the tomb of king Useribra Senebkay was excavated at Abydos, along with other similar tombs, whose owners' names are not known.⁸⁹ The evidence seem to confirm that there were kings in the Second Intermediate Period for whom Abydos was their main place of residence and also their burial-place. The evidence, however, is not conclusive. Senusret III and a Thirteenth Dynasty ruler called Sobekhotep also had tombs at Abydos, but these two earlier rulers were most likely to have resided in the north, not at Abydos. Senebkay may perhaps belong to a Theban ruling family.⁹⁰

Finally there are the kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty, also ruling from Thebes, and contemporary with the Hyksos. These kings are known largely from the remains of their burials, found at the beginning of the nineteenth century at Dra Abu el-Naga in Thebes. The idea of grouping these rulers together into one dynasty, purely on the basis of their shared burial places and funerary equipment, is problematic and might perhaps be an artificial construct created by the accident of surviving sources. King Nubkheperra Inyotef is also known from his recently excavated pyramid,⁹¹ as well as several blocks coming from temples in Upper Egypt and providing some evidence for a more stable and perhaps longer reign. However, his pyramid is small, probably indicating the limited resources of this king.⁹² The resources for contemporary officials were probably also restricted; thus, the tomb of the 'treasurer' Teti, one of the leading officials at the royal court (found next to the pyramid of king Nubkheperra Inyotef) is a small mud-brick built structure.

p. 651 There are only a few political events known for the whole Second Intermediate Period in Upper Egypt. Some references on royal stelae and private inscriptions indicate a time of trouble and war. At one point the Hyksos in the North must have become a threat, but reports of military campaigns between the Hyksos and Upper Egypt are only known from the very end of the period. The Nubian state Kerma also became an important power during the Second Intermediate Period,⁹³ and an inscription in a tomb at Elkab reports a
↳ raid of the Nubians into Upper Egypt.⁹⁴ The Second Intermediate Period saw the resurgence of some strong local governors in the provinces of Upper Egypt. The tomb of Sobeknakht at Elkab is one of the largest and best decorated known from the period, demonstrating this governor's resources; his family was connected both to kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁹⁵ The local governors at Edfu had also connection to the royal family.⁹⁶

The end of the Second Intermediate Period is marked by the wars of the Theban rulers against the Hyksos. The military campaigns of king Kamose, including the conquest of parts of Middle Egypt, are well known as they are described on two stelae of the king.⁹⁷ Under king Ahmose, Kamose's successor, the Hyksos were finally defeated. The details of these events are still obscure, although Ahmose's mortuary temple at Abydos contained scenes relating to these events (now much destroyed).⁹⁸ Another important text describing the events belongs to Ahmose, son of Ibana, an official buried at Elkab.⁹⁹ His biography mentions the sack of the city and that Ahmose moved on to South Palestine to expel the Hyksos from Egypt.

Future directions of research

Many archaeological missions are currently working on Middle Kingdom sites, but the number of expeditions seems small compared to those working on monuments of other periods. The majority of tombs of the state officials, and most of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period kings are still missing,¹⁰⁰ in stark contrast to the situation for the Old and New kingdoms. New discoveries of royal tombs of the Thirteenth Dynasty would provide pottery and therefore help to date other assemblages with pottery more closely, as the precise dating of archaeological material of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period is still a considerable challenge. The full publication of old excavations is also urgently needed.¹⁰¹ In comparison to other periods, the settlements of the period, often planned on a grid pattern, are quite well known.¹⁰² Nevertheless, 'organic' settlements are still underrepresented in the record. The excavation of an 'ordinary' village would provide important insights into social relations and into how local culture differs from 'official' culture (see Chapter 14 for more discussion of issues relating to settlement archaeology). Furthermore, the Delta is still poorly known in terms of archaeology, with substantial Middle Kingdom remains so far excavated only at the sites of Abu Ghalib (edge of Western Delta), Tell el-Dab'a and Bubastis. Many Middle Kingdom provincial sites, such as Beni Hasan, Meir, el-Bersha and Asyut were excavated around the beginning of the twentieth century, with inadequate recording and publications. New missions are now beginning to fill these gaps, and provide new insights.¹⁰³ However, here too, the missions most often target the burials of the local upper classes, while those of the broader population do not receive much attention. This gap in past and current research applies even to sites thought to be more fully explored: at Thebes, almost all documented burials are of the wealthiest people in society. The priority for future fieldwork and research is clearly a new and intense effort to investigate the population as a whole, in order to begin understanding its diverse elements and the relations between them.

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Suggested reading

A summary of Middle Kingdom history is provided in *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt* (Grajetzki 2006), and shorter syntheses of this period have also appeared (e.g. Callender 2000 and Willems 2010). Still important is the first volume of *The Scepter of Egypt* (Hayes 1953), which uses the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to provide an excellent guide to the material culture and history of the period. For the same reason several exhibition catalogues are important (Bourriau 1988; Morföisse, Andreu-Lanoë 2014, Oppenheim, Arnold, Arnold, Yamamoto 2015). The political history of the Second Intermediate Period is covered by Jürgen von Beckerath (1964) and Kim Ryholt (1997); more recent comments and additions to Ryholt's work are Ben-Tor 1999 and Ilin-Tomich 2016. The material culture of the Second Intermediate Period is best summarized by Janine Bourriau (2000).

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Notes

- 1 The only exception is the funerary temple at the pyramid of Senusret I, see Arnold 1988: 41–57.
- 2 Lichtheim 1988.
- 3 Postel and Regen 2005.
- 4 Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Altenmüller 2015.
- 5 For the so-called ‘town papyri’ from Lahun (those in the collection of the Petrie Museum, University College London) see Griffith 1898; Collier and Quirke 2002, 2004, 2006; and Collier 2009. For the so-called ‘temple archive’ of papyri (those in the Berlin museum), see Borchardt 1899; Scharff 1924; Kaplony-Heckel 1971.
- 6 See Scharff 1922; Quirke 1990: 10–24.
- 7 The Middle Kingdom provincial milieu is best described in Willems 2014.
- 8 Exceptions include Callender 2000; Kemp 1983, Kemp 2006; for a Marxist approach see Zingarelli 2016.
- 9 Allen 2008.
- 10 Critical: Franke 1998.
- 11 Richards 2005.
- 12 Schneider 2003; Mourad 2015.
- 13 Gestermann 1987: 51–3.
- 14 Gestermann 1987: 35–47.
- 15 Postel 2008.
- 16 Willems 1989.
- 17 Clayton et al. 2008.
- 18 Willems 2007: 109.
- 19 Arnold, Do. 1988: 18–20.
- 20 Franke 1996: 8–29; Favry 2004; for the governors at Qau el-Kebir, see Fiore Marochetti 2016.
- 21 Seidlmayer 1990: 394–7.
- 22 Grajetzki 2006: 26–7.
- 23 Willems 1984: 95–101.
- 24 For the problem of dating Middle Kingdom texts see Stauder 2013.
- 25 Grajetzki 2006: 28–45; Willems 2007: 90–2.
- 26 See, for example, Simpson 1963; Malleson 2007.
- 27 Do. Arnold 1988: 145.
- 28 Grajetzki 2017: 159.
- 29 Bussmann 2010: 512–13.
- 30 Arnold 1988: 56–587.
- 31 Habachi 1975: 209–12 (one of the stelae was found at Karnak, the provenance of the other is unknown).
- 32 Dubiel 2008: 166–9.

33 Petrie, and Brunton 1924: 5.
 34 Grajetzki 2017.
 35 Hayes 1955: 64–5; Quirke 1988.
 36 Kemp 2006: 22–244.
 37 Grajetzki 2017: 156–60.
 38 Grajetzki 2006: 31–32, 42–3.
 39 Wegner 1996.
 40 Arnold, F. 1992.
 41 For recent discussion of the evidence, see Schneider 2006: 170–5.
 42 Altenmüller 2015: 297–304.
 43 Altenmüller 2015: 116–117.
 44 Maxwell-Hyslop 1995.
 45 Gestermann 1995; Grajetzki 2013.
 46 Meyer 1913: 276.
 47 Franke 1991.
 48 Quirke 2004: 99.
 49 Quirke 2004: 7–9.
 50 Bourriau 1991.
 51 Martin 1971: 3; Ben-Tor 2004: 27.
 52 See the monograph on his reign, Tallet 2006.
 53 For a most recent summary, see Tallet 2014.
 54 Wegner 2007.
 55 Blom-Böer 2006.
 56 Gillam 2012.
 57 Grajetzki 2006: 61–3.
 58 Grajetzki 2006: 63–75.
 59 von Beckerath 1964; Ryholt 1997: 311–12.
 60 Hayes 1953: 344–5; Bourriau 1991: 13–16.
 61 Ryholt 1997: 9–33.
 62 Hayes 1947.
 63 Wegner, Cahail 2015 (the buried kings might be Neferhotep I and Khaneferri Sobekhotep).
 64 Formerly called Sobekhotep IV; but see now Connor and Siesse 2015.
 65 Ryholt 1997: 298–9.
 66 Quirke 1991: 129.
 67 Franke 1998: 249, n. 5; Ryholt 1997: 220, 222.
 68 Ryholt 1997: 207–9; Allen 2010.
 69 Vernus 1986; Quirke 2006: 263.
 70 Ryholt 1997: 297–8.
 71 Bourriau 2000.
 72 For the Seventeenth Dynasty, see Polz 2007: 5–59.
 73 Bourriau, 1997, 2000.
 74 Bourriau 1997; see also the disappearance of scarab seals in Upper Egypt, while they were still produced in Lower Egypt:
 Ben-Tor 2004; for Thebes see Seiler 2006.
 75 Mourad 2015.
 76 For the archaeology of Avaris see the summary Bietak 1996.
 77 Bietak 1984: 62.
 78 Ryholt 1997: 252–4.
 79 Abdel Maksoud, Valbelle 2005; Ben-Tor 2007: 109–10.
 80 Waddel 1980: 91.
 81 Moeller et al. 2011.
 82 Polz 2006: 246.
 83 Ryholt 1997: 99–102.
 84 Ryholt 1997: 126–30.
 85 Bietak 1997: 103.
 86 Bietak 1997: 100.
 87 Matthiae 1997: 400, fig. 14.18.

- 88 Woolley 1955: 235, pl. XL.
89 Wegner 2015.
90 Ilin-Tomich 2016: 10.
91 Polz 2010.
92 Compare Ryholt 1997: 69–93, 151–183, Ben-Tor 1999 and Polz 2007.
93 See Edwards 2004: 75–111, for a convenient summary of the Kerma culture.
94 Davies 2003.
95 Tylor 1896; Davies 2010.
96 Ryholt 1997: 268–9; Farout 2007.
97 Ryholt 1997, 399 File 17/9; 6, 7 (with further bibliography).
98 Harvey 2001.
99 Davies 2009.
100 Schiestl 2015.
101 Such as Arnold 1988.
102 Moeller 2015: 279–375.
103 For example Willems 2007 (el-Bersha); Kahl 2008(Asyut).