

## SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

### عصر الإنتقال الثاني

*Alexander Ilin-Tomich*

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## SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

### عصر الإنتقال الثاني

Alexander Ilin-Tomich

Zweite Zwischenzeit  
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*In the Second Intermediate Period (late 13th to 17th Dynasty), the territories that had been ruled by the centralized Egyptian state—including Lower Nubia—were divided between the kingdom of Kerma, the Theban kingdom, the kingdom of Avaris, and possibly other little known political entities. A gap in the written documentation calls for a wide use of sigillographic and archaeological evidence in the reconstruction of the history of this period. Material culture, art, and administration developed independently in different parts of Egypt due to a lack of a centralized state. In the Theban kingdom, the local administration of the Late Middle Kingdom persisted in a reduced form, as attested by private stelae, statues, and tomb inscriptions.*

خلال عصر الإنتقال الثاني (نهاية الأسرة 13 وحتى الأسرة 17) قسمت الأراضي والمقاطعات التي حكمت بواسطة الدولة المركزية المصرية - بما في ذلك النوبة السفلى - بين مملكة كرما ومملكة طيبة ومملكة أفاريس ، وربما عدد آخر من الكيانات السياسية المعروفة. هناك فجوة في الوثائق المكتوبة تدعو إلى استخدام واسع لدراسة أختام الوثائق الرسمية والشواهد الأثرية في إعادة كتابة تاريخ تلك الفترة. المواد الثقافية ، الفن والإدارة تطورت بشكل مستقل في مناطق مختلفة من مصر بسبب عدم وجود دولة مركزية. في مملكة طيبة ، الإدارة المحلية في نهاية الدولة الوسطى استمرت ولكن بشكل منخفض حيث لوحظ ذلك من خلال اللوحات الخاصة والتماثيل ونقوش المقابر.

**T**he term “Second Intermediate Period” was coined by British Egyptologists at the turn of the twentieth century. Previously this period, recognized as one of the major epochs of ancient Egyptian history in Christian von Bunsen’s (1845) work on Egyptian chronology (resulting from a collaboration with Richard Lepsius), had been known as the “Hyksos Period.” The episode of the foreign (“Hyksos”) rulership in Egypt was of paramount importance for nineteenth century scholarship due to the transmission of its

narrative account by the Hellenistic Jewish writer Flavius Josephus and its alleged relevance to the Biblical history of Joseph in Egypt. Yet the diversity of cultural phenomena in Egypt between Dynasty 12 and Dynasty 18 could not be reduced to this episode, and the term “Second Intermediate Period” came in handy in the discussions of the material culture and art (in the early days, the variants “Intermediate Period” [Garstang 1901: 8] and “Later Intermediate Period” were also in use), eventually superseding the “Hyksos Period” in accounts of political history (Cecil 1904: 124).

Nevertheless, the older term is still favored by some researchers, most notably by Thomas Schneider (1998: 146-167). In terms of dynastic chronology, the Second Intermediate Period is defined as the time span from Dynasty 13 to the end of Dynasty 17. The starting point of the Second Intermediate Period within the sequence of Dynasty 13 kings remains debatable; whereas some scholars include all reigns of Dynasty 13 in the Second Intermediate Period, others place the start of the Second Intermediate Period in the late phase of this dynasty, attributing most of its reign to the Late Middle Kingdom (Marée 2010a).

As other Intermediate Periods of Egyptian history, the Second Intermediate Period is characterized by the loss of political and cultural unity. A protracted crisis of uncertain nature that struck the Egyptian centralized state at the end of the Late Middle Kingdom enabled or caused the division of its territory between several political entities. Rulers of these entities proclaimed themselves kings and adopted elements of Egyptian royal ideology, although some of the rival states were dominated by non-Egyptian elites. As known from the propagandist (the Kamose stela from the reign of the last ruler of Dynasty 17; Popko 2013) and autobiographical texts from the terminal phase of the Second Intermediate Period, the territory once directly administered by Late Middle Kingdom Egypt was divided between three states at the end of the epoch: the kingdom of Avaris, whose rulers of Levantine origin are referred to as the Hyksos, the Theban kingdom, and that of the ruler of Kush in Nubia (known in Egyptology as the kingdom of Kerma after its capital near the Third Cataract). These three kingdoms are thought to have been at play throughout the Second Intermediate Period; however, further independent units could have existed at its earlier stages. Eventually, Theban kings of early Dynasty 18 subdued rival political entities in Egypt and Nubia, consolidating under their reign the territory of the Late Middle Kingdom state and extending beyond its original limits (Popko 2013).

### *History of Research (Sources)*

Modern notions of the Second Intermediate Period depend on the kind of material studied. Research began with the accounts of classical authors (Champollion 1826: 141-151), but gradually new kinds of evidence—first textual, later artistic, and nowadays archaeological—have been introduced affecting our understanding of the period.

### *Manethonian Tradition*

Only a few episodes of Egyptian history as originally narrated by the Hellenistic writer Manetho survive. The central one is the history of the rule of the Hyksos, who were associated by Josephus with Jews (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1.74-92; Lang 2015). The study of the Second Intermediate Period (and of Egyptian history in general) began with Manetho. Originally the very feasibility of juxtaposing Manetho's data with Egyptian evidence was considered a miracle and a testimony of Manetho's veracity (von Bunsen 1845: V), but with time scholars grew more critical, particularly in respect to the narrative passages from Manetho's works.

Manetho's chronological scheme of the Second Intermediate Period comprised by Dynasties 14-17 was transmitted differently by epitomists, as summarized in Table 1. Rulers of the originally concurrent kingdoms of Avaris and Thebes were assigned to subsequent dynasties in Manetho's chronology; rulers of Kerma were ignored. The alleged connection between Dynasty 14 and Xoïs could go back to the confusion between the Egyptian words *ḥꜣst* "foreign land" and *ḥꜣsww* "Xoïs" at some stage of transmission or translation of Manetho's Egyptian sources (Redford 1992: 106-107).

### *Egyptian King-Lists and Genealogies*

The most important source for the reconstruction of the chronology and political history of the Second Intermediate Period is the Turin king-list from the reign of Ramesses II (Papyrus Turin Cat. 1874; its evidence for

|            | <b>Manetho epitomized by Africanus (Lang 2015)</b>  | <b>Manetho epitomized by Eusebius (Lang 2015)</b>        | <b>The Turin king-list (as reconstructed in Ryholt 1997 and Allen 2010)</b> | <b>Royal names preserved in the Turin king-list and their occurrence in contemporary sources</b>   |
|------------|---|--|---|--|
| Dynasty 14 | 76 kings from Xoïs (184 years)                      | 76 kings from Xoïs (184, 284, or 484 years)              | 51 kings (lines 8.28-10.21)   | of the 23 names preserved in the Turin king-list, two are attested on monuments from the Delta and two on small inscribed objects (a scarab and a jar) of unknown provenance                                       |
| Dynasty 15 | six Shepherd kings, listing their names (284 years) | Diopolitan kings (250 years)                             | six [rulers] of foreign lands, ruling 100 [+x] years (lines 10.22-10.29)    | the only royal name preserved in the Turin king-list ( <i>hꜣmwdj</i> ) is not attested elsewhere   |
| Dynasty 16 | 32 Shepherd kings (518 years)                       | five Theban kings (190 years)                            | 15 kings (lines 10.30-11.15)  | of the five different royal names in the six preserved entries of the Turin king-list (one entry is a duplicate), three are attested on monuments from southern Upper Egypt and one on an ax of unknown provenance |
| Dynasty 17 | 43 Shepherd kings and 43 Theban kings (151 years)   | Shepherds, foreign kings, listing four names (103 years) | a dynasty of 16+x kings (starting from line 11.16)                          | no names are preserved in the Turin king-list  |

Table 1. Dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period according to Manetho and the Turin king-list

the Second Intermediate Period has been studied since von Bunsen 1845). Unlike other Egyptian king-lists, it includes rulers of the Second Intermediate Period. The papyrus is fragmented, and modern chronologies rely on its reconstruction by Kim Ryholt, of which only preliminary accounts have been published (Ryholt 1997: 9-33, 2004). Ryholt reallocated some of the fragments, once attributed to the Second Intermediate Period, to the list of mythological rulers at the beginning of the papyrus based on matching fibers, but this solution is not universally accepted. Schneider (1998: 100, 2006: 169-170) rejects it, arguing that some of the reallocated names could be read as Semitic.

The list of dynasties (non-numbered) and kings in the Turin king-list, as reconstructed by Ryholt and by James P. Allen (2010), generally matches the transmission of Manetho's chronology by Africanus (as summarized in Table 1), with Dynasties 14 and 15 ruling at Avaris and Dynasties 16 and 17 at Thebes.

Prior to Ryholt, it was common to follow Africanus more closely in defining Dynasty 16 as a series of foreign kings, attested exclusively on scarabs (von Beckerath 1964: 137-138); yet the summation of the reigns of Dynasty 16 kings in line 11.15 of the Turin king-list does not leave enough room for all of the known Theban kings, which justifies the division of Second Intermediate Period Theban rulers into two dynasties, 16 and 17 (Ryholt 1997: 151-152). However, some scholars reject this proposition in the absence of sufficient evidence on the break between the two dynasties, sticking to the traditional scheme (Schneider 2008). Most studies of the Second Intermediate Period proceed from the assumption that the sequence of reigns within each dynasty is correctly transmitted in the Turin king-list. However, only small parts of these sequences can be verified by other sources, and hypotheses exist that put these sequences or their unilineal nature into doubt.

The Karnak king-list from the reign of Thutmose III contains names of a number of rulers from Dynasties 13, 16, and 17 in non-chronological order. It can be argued that only the rulers who erected monuments at Karnak are mentioned (Ilin-Tomich 2014).

A Dynasty 22 genealogy of Memphite priests (Berlin 23673; Borchardt 1935: 96-112, pls. 2, 2a) claims that the sequence of these priests went uninterrupted from Dynasty 12 to Dynasty 18 and mentions priests who served under three kings, most likely ruling from Avaris.

### *Contemporary Textual Sources*

Among the Second Intermediate Period royal inscriptions known to this date, only those of the Theban kings convey longer texts. The Karnak stelae of early Theban rulers Neferhotep III and Mentuhotepi (Redford 1997: no. 4 and 50) show that the Theban kingdom had to be defended at that time. The Koptos decree of Nubkheperre Intef (Redford 1997: no. 57; Polz 2007: 331-332, pls. 12, 13a) suggests that a high local official had rebelled and was subsequently expelled from officialdom. The stelae of Kamose, the last Theban king of Dynasty 17, albeit undoubtedly biased, give an extensive overview of the political situation in Egypt before the defeat of the kingdom of Avaris. Only two stelae of Kamose were known until recently, one of them was also copied to a Dynasty 18 writing table (Redford 1997: nos. 68-69). In 2004 a fragmented inscription with the Two Ladies name of Kamose was found in Karnak and labeled the third stela of Kamose (Van Siclen 2010), and in 2008 a further inscription of Kamose was found in Armant (Thiers 2009). The preserved inscriptions of Avaris rulers are mere consecration texts. No royal inscriptions from Kerma are known. The Juridical stela (Cairo JE 52453; Lacau 1949) is one of the rare Egyptian legal documents. It certifies the transfer of the office of the governor of Elkab to Sobeknakht under the reign of Dynasty 16 king Nebiryrau.

Numerous private monuments were erected in Upper Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period. Private stelae were being increasingly installed in local sanctuaries and necropoleis (particularly in Edfu, Esna, and Thebes) instead of being sent to Abydos as had been customary. No private monumental inscriptions are attributable to officials of the kingdom of Avaris (although some individuals are mentioned on royal monuments). Two biographical inscriptions from Buhen stem from the subjects of the “rulers of Kush,” and although no further evidence exists, other Lower Nubian memorials known from this period were presumably inscribed under the Kerma rule.

Unlike the Late Middle Kingdom, there are almost no hieratic documents securely datable to the Second Intermediate Period. Ostraca with administrative texts from Deir el-Ballas (Lacovara 1997: 15) and Edfu (Moeller 2012: 124) remain unpublished. A unique historical record from the reign of Apep’s successor has been preserved on the mathematical papyrus Rhind (Popko 2013; for translation, see Redford 1997: no. 43, 71).

### *Seals and Sealings*

Scarab-seals and seal impressions are of particular importance for the study of the Second Intermediate Period. The geographical distribution and contexts of finds shed light on trade contacts between distinct regions in the Second Intermediate Period and help synchronize their internal chronologies (the key here is the repertory of scarabs from stratified contexts in Tell el-Dabaa, analyzed by Christa Mlinar [2001]). The production and use of royal-name scarabs, which flourished under Dynasty 13, was adopted by the rulers of the Delta, many of whom are known exclusively from scarabs. Hence, the study of scarab typology has become the primary means for establishing the chronological order of Avaris kings. It has long been noted that royal-name scarabs can be arranged into series based on artistic features. The first attempt to establish the chronology of Second Intermediate Period kings based on a seriation of scarab designs was

made by Flinders Petrie (1906: 67-71, pl. LI). A step forward was the introduction of scarab head-, back-, and side-typologies into chronological discussions (Ward 1984). However, ongoing attempts to arrange series of royal-name scarabs in a chronological order have not yet resulted in a generally accepted sequence (see most recently Ryholt 2010: 123; Ben-Tor 2007: 103-115). In addition, seals and sealings of the period shed light on administration and administrative practices as summarized below.

### *Material Culture*

The historical developments of the Second Intermediate Period are traceable in material culture and particularly ceramics. One of the first major works on the Second Intermediate Period based on the material culture and the comparable material from the Levant was the book by John van Seters (1966). Since then, the excavations at Tell el-Dabaa and other sites in Egypt and Nubia have made the analyses of the material culture mainstream in the study of the Second Intermediate Period. It has been ascertained that independent ceramic sequences developed in the core of the kingdom of Avaris in the eastern Delta, in the Memphis-Fayum region (where the Late Middle Kingdom tradition persisted), in Middle Egypt, in southern Upper Egypt (the Theban kingdom), on Elephantine, in the western oases, and in Lower Nubia (Bourriau 1997, 2010) during the Second Intermediate Period. Admittedly, it is methodologically incorrect to directly project this evidence for the cultural disconnectedness of Egyptian regions on the political situation, for this diversity could be explained by other factors. Nevertheless, it has become commonplace in modern scholarship to estimate the boundaries of territories directly controlled or influenced by political entities of the Second Intermediate Period according to the spread of particular forms of material culture. This is particularly true for the kingdoms of Avaris (Colin 2005: 44-45) and Kerma (Bonnet 1997: 89, 2014b: 81).

Domestic architecture provides essential evidence for the social and economic profiles of the settlements of the period, as exemplified by analyses of material from Tell el-Dabaa (Müller 2015), Deir el-Ballas (Lacovara 1997: 81-90), Edfu (Moeller 2009), Askut (Smith 1995: 90-102), and Kerma (Bonnet 2014a: 241-242).

### *Political History and Chronology: The Kingdom of Avaris*

The term “Hyksos” goes back to Josephus, who conveys Manetho’s account that Ὑρισός was the name of the foreign people ruling Egypt, allegedly to be translated from Egyptian either as “shepherd kings” or as “captive shepherds,” depending on two copies of Manetho available to Josephus (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1.82). Other epitomists of Manetho simply call the foreign rulers “shepherds” (Lang 2015), which is commonly understood as an allusion to the interpretation given by Josephus. Some kings of Avaris bore the title *ḥꜥꜣ ḥꜣꜣꜣꜣ* “the ruler of foreign lands,” believed by many Egyptologists to be the Egyptian prototype of the Greek term.

The city Avaris, mentioned by Manetho as the stronghold of the shepherd kings and the base for their attacks and by Ptolemy of Mendes (Gambetti 2015) as the city captured by Ahmose and known from Egyptian sources as *ḥwt-wꜣꜣt*, can be identified with the city that has been excavated at Tell el-Dabaa in the eastern Delta since 1966. The identification relies on a series of observations matching the site with the information about Avaris from Egyptian and classical written sources (Bietak 1975: 179-221). The direct evidence for the identification comes from a sealing of a “mayor of Avaris,” found near Ezbet Rushdi, adjacent to Tell el-Dabaa (Czerny 2001).

Manetho’s statement that the foreign rule in Egypt began with a military invasion of foreigners from the east is nowadays rejected by most scholars. It can be a projection of Egypt’s recurring defeats in the first millennium BCE onto the circumstances of the Middle Bronze Age or a repercussion of the

ideological attitude of Dynasty 17 and 18 Theban texts, inclined towards exaggerating the power of and the trouble caused by the Avaris rulers (Ilin-Tomich 2014: 168). The establishment of the kingdom of Avaris is now viewed as an originally secessionist rather than an expansionist move (Ryholt's [1997: 302-304] surmise that a foreign invasion took place at a later stage, marking the transition from Dynasty 14 to Dynasty 15, is admissible, but not sufficiently substantiated).

In the Late Middle Kingdom, Tell el-Dabaa, lying on the Pelusiac Nile branch, became a major harbor for sea-going ships and a trading post with stable connections across the Mediterranean (Forstner-Müller 2014: 33). It became increasingly populated by natives of the Levant, as evidenced by changes in ceramics, burial customs, and domestic architecture. The localized production of Levantine Middle Bronze Age ceramic ware from local fabric is first attested for phases H – G/1-3, although the common Egyptian forms still dominated the ceramic repertoire (Kopetzky 2010: 270). To the same period belongs a house built in the Levantine tradition, whereas other contemporary houses at Tell el-Dabaa were Egyptian in layout (Bietak 2010b: 153-154). Equids and ovicaprids were occasionally buried in front of tombs according to a Levantine custom (Bader 2011). The exact origin of this Levantine population is still debated, but currently the seaborne immigration from the northern Levant (Bietak 2010a) finds better support than the immigration from the southern Levant across the Sinai (Ben-Tor 2007: 189-190). The identification of the Near Eastern population in the eastern Delta with captives and servants of Semitic origin widely attested throughout Egypt during the Late Middle Kingdom (Mourad 2015) is made unlikely by the analysis of the dwellings and burials of early foreign settlers at Tell el-Dabaa, suggesting that these were free people, some of them acquiring significant wealth (Kopetzky 2010: 270).

At some point, the leaders of the local foreign population should have proclaimed themselves kings. The non-Egyptian personal

names of kings, attested mainly by scarabs (fig. 1), are believed to be of northwest Semitic origin; earlier propositions that they could have been of Hurrian origin have been rejected (Schneider 1998). The emergence of original forms of ceramic ware at Tell el-Dabaa with no exact parallels in Egypt or in the Levant in stratigraphic phase F is seen in scholarly literature as a sign of cutting ties with Egyptian central power (Bader 2009: 705; Kopetzky 2010: 270-271). Avaris was actively expanding since becoming the capital of a kingdom, and the size it reached in late Second Intermediate Period allowed Manfred Bietak (2010b: 13) to call it the largest known city in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean of that time.



Figure 1. Scarab of a Lower Egyptian king Maaibra Sheshi found in a Dynasty 18 context in Deir el-Bahri. One of the hundreds of seals and impressions bearing the name of this king, unattested in other sources.

Only a few kings of the kingdom of Avaris, known from contemporary documents, also appear in the Turin king-list.

Nehsi is one of the four Dynasty 14 kings known both from the Turin king-list and from contemporary inscribed objects. This early Second Intermediate Period ruler erected monuments at Avaris, but most of the monumental evidence from his reign comes from Tell el-Hebwa (Abdel Maksoud and Valbelle 2005).

Of Dynasty 15 rulers, only Ausera Apep, whose 33rd year is recorded in the Papyrus

Rhind, can reliably be identified with the penultimate king of Dynasty 15 in the Turin king-list, who is known to have ruled for 40+ years. It is also corroborated by the Manethonean tradition, attributing Ἄφωφις to Dynasty 15. Apep's rule marks the terminative phase of the Second Intermediate Period, highlighted by the confrontation with the Theban kingdom.

The dynastic position of other kings is debatable. The commonly accepted identification of Aauserra Apep with Aaqenenra Apep, contradicted by the genealogy of Memphite priests, and the temporal proximity of kings Khian and Aauserra Apep are questionable (Ben-Tor 2007: 103-110; Moeller et al. 2011; Ilin-Tomich 2014: 149-152). Based on Josephus, who applied the term Ἰκσῶς to Manethonean Dynasty 15 (although Africanus speaks of two shepherd dynasties), and on the fragmented summary of regnal years for Dynasty 15 in the Turin king-list ending with [...] *h3swt*, it was argued that only Dynasty 15 kings bore the title *h3k3 h3swt* "ruler of foreign lands" (Ryholt 1997: 123-125). However, Apep never used this title, and doubts about the dynastic affiliation of Khian questioned this assumption. Only one holder of the title *h3k3 h3swt* beside Khian is attested by a monumental inscription (*skr-hr*; Hein 1994: 150-152), the other three are only known from scarabs (*smkn*, *nt-hr*, *pr-ntj*).

The territory directly ruled by the kings of Avaris was likely confined to the eastern Delta (Colin 2005; Bader 2009), and the nature of power they exerted over the Memphis-Fayum region and Middle Egypt remains unclear. Yet there is fragmentary evidence for the activity of Avaris kings in Upper Egypt: Aauserra Apep reused an offering stand of Senusret I, originally installed in the Theban region (Labib 1936: 30; Krauss 1993); an offering stand of Khian and an architrave of Aauserra Apep were found in Gebelein. Daniel Polz (2006) suggested that the latter two objects could have been brought to Gebelein as booty after the takeover of Avaris, yet the rationale for the assumed transportation of a 126 cm long

limestone architrave from the north is unclear, and no comparable objects are known to have been hauled away during the Second Intermediate Period. The kingdom of Avaris maintained a vast network of trade connections across the Mediterranean and the Near East. In early historiography, specimens of the material culture and inscribed objects found outside Egypt, such as the lion statue of Khian from Baghdad (fig. 2), were considered possible evidence for the power of Avaris kings stretching as far east as Mesopotamia (Meyer 1909: 295-296); however, such interpretations have long been abandoned.



Figure 2. A lion statue inscribed with the name of the king of Avaris Khian.

### *The Theban Kingdom*

The Theban kingdom could have emerged within the limits of the region "Head of South," controlled from Thebes during the Late Middle Kingdom; besides, Theban kings were active along the Wadi Hammamat and on

the Red Sea in Gebel Zeit (fig. 3). The once popular notion that the Dynasty 13 residence was transferred from the north meets objections (Ryholt 1997: 79; Ilin-Tomich 2014: 157-158). An autobiography of a governor of Elkab, datable to Dynasty 16, implied that the Theban kingdom suffered from raids by the kingdom of Kerma (Davies 2003). The first explicit evidence for the confrontation with the kingdom of Avaris dates from the reign of Kamose, the last king of Dynasty 17.

Dynasty 17 kings constructed a palatial complex at Deir el-Ballas, which is thought to have played an important role during this dynasty, but was abandoned in early Dynasty 18 (Lacovara 1997: 14-15; Ryholt 1997: 174 n. 625).



Figure 3. Stela of the Dynasty 16 king Bebiankh from Gebel Zeit, no. 559.

### *The Kingdom of Kerma*

A political entity with a center at Kerma, close to the Third Cataract, is believed to have existed since the third millennium BCE. Excavations of this city revealed massive fortifications (Bonnet 2014a: 215-232) and signs of a complex political organization contemporary with Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdom. Hence, Kerma posed a substantial threat to Egyptian establishments in Lower Nubia long before the Second Intermediate Period (Smith 2003: 75-78). The standardization of material and funerary culture at the stage of Classic Kerma supposedly went hand in hand with the emergence of a more centralized kingdom (Gratien 2014: 98). During late Dynasty 13, after the reigns of Neferhotep I (Török 2009: 100) and Sobekhotep IV (Franke 1994: 72), the decay of the Egyptian state allowed the rulers of Kerma to take hold of the chain of Egyptian fortresses established in Lower Nubia by Dynasty 12 pharaohs. Since Egyptian forts in Lower Nubia show evidence for continuity throughout the Second Intermediate Period, one considers the shift of control over Lower Nubia to Kerma to have been smooth (Smith 1995: 81-136). With its southern limits at the Fourth Cataract and its northern limits in Lower Nubia (or possibly at some times further north), the kingdom of Kerma was the largest of the Second Intermediate Period states on the Nile. There is textual evidence for the raids of Kush (i.e., the kingdom of Kerma) reaching Elkab during Dynasty 16 (Davies 2003), corroborated by finds of Dynasty 12-16 Egyptian monuments at Kerma, presumably looted from Upper and Middle Egypt. It was suggested that the abandonment of the sanctuary of Heqaib on Elephantine and the supposed destruction of the temple of Satet could have resulted from the rise of the Kerma kingdom (Franke 1994: 86; Raue 2014: 12).

The kingdom of Kerma is least represented in written sources of the Second Intermediate Period. Two private inscriptions refer to the leader of the state as “the ruler of Kush” (*ḥkꜣ n kꜣ*), one relating the construction of the temple of Horus in Buhen and the other

being an autobiographical statement of an official, mentioning the ruler's name *ndh* (Philadelphia E.10984, fig. 4, and Khartoum 18; Kubisch 2008: 166-171). The same title is used in a letter claimed by Kamose to have been sent by Apep to his Nubian ally, whereas the composer of the Kamose stelae designated the Nubian adversary as the "chief of Kush" (*wr n kš*; Kubisch 2008: 87). An anepigraphic stela found in Buhen (fig. 5) is often considered to depict a ruler of Kush wearing the Upper Egyptian crown (Smith 1976: 11-12 [691]; contra Knoblauch 2012). Vivian Davies interprets the name *tr-r-h*, which was inscribed at the entrance of a cave in the Nubian Eastern Desert with a lion determinative and coincides with the name of a ruler of Kush who is known from a Dynasty 12 execration text, as the name of a Second Intermediate Period ruler of Kush (Davies 2014: 35-36). Given the Dynasty 12 date of the parallel, this inscription could, however, also antedate the period in question.

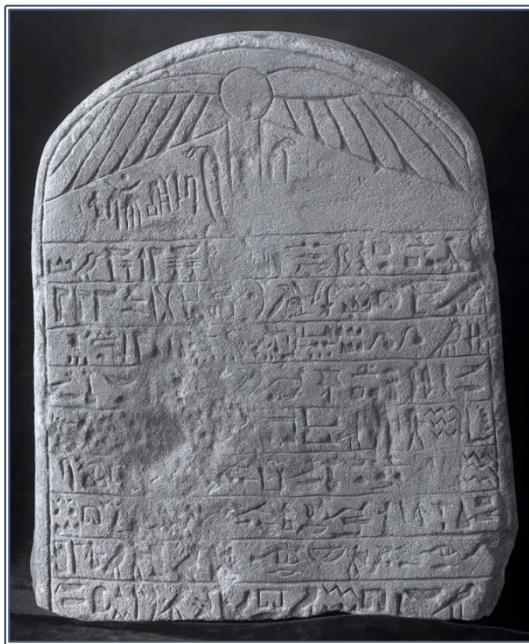


Figure 4. Stela of an Egyptian officer loyal to the ruler of Kush.

The ethnic affiliation of the populations of the kingdom of Kerma remains unknown. The hypothesis that Meroitic had become the language of the ruling elite displacing a

Kushitic language originally spoken in this region by the time of Classic Kerma (Zibelius-Chen 2015: 284-290) is largely speculative.

The direct and intense relations between the kingdom of Avaris and the ruler of Kush, mentioned in the stelae of Kamose, are attested by finds of Lower Egyptian pottery in Kerma cemeteries and in Lower Nubian fortresses (Török 2009: 107). This evidence is supported by seals with the names of Asiatic rulers (Ryholt 1997: 360, 365, 369, 378, 382) and with Tell el-Dabaa or Canaanite designs (Ben-Tor 2007: 60-63) found in Kerma contexts in Nubia. The view that the two regions were connected by roads in the Western Desert (Forstner-Müller and Rose 2012: 200) was recently put into doubt by John Coleman Darnell (2013: 243-244), who pointed out how scarce the ceramic material was that could attest such contacts as compared to Theban Second Intermediate Period ceramics along the Western Desert routes.

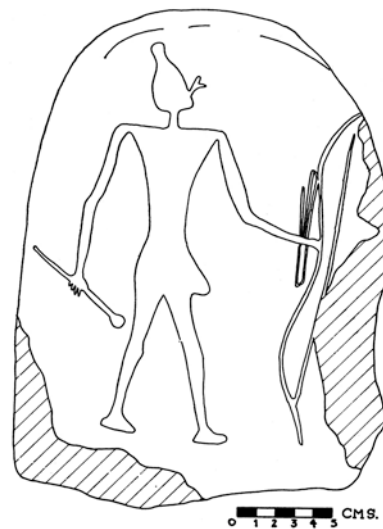


Figure 5. Stela believed by some scholars to represent the ruler of Kush wearing the Upper Egyptian crown.

#### *Other Political Entities*

The existence of other hypothetical political entities has been assumed by scholars, though

there is no sufficient evidence to confirm the reality of any of them. Most recently, the so-called Abydos Dynasty has been widely discussed. Based on three stelae of otherwise unattested kings found at Abydos, Ryholt (1997) suggested that a short-lived dynasty ruled at Abydos. Ryholt's idea was refuted by Marcel Marée (2010b: 261-266), who showed that one of the purported Abydene royal stelae stemmed from the same workshop as the stela of a contemporary of the Theban king Rahotep. Later the idea was revived by Joseph Wegner (2015: 71-73) after a series of Second Intermediate Period royal burials was discovered at Abydos (one of them inscribed for the king Senebkay, otherwise known from a magic wand from a contemporary private Abydene tomb; Cahail 2015: 118). However, the find of a royal tomb does not prove that the royal residence was located at Abydos, for some kings of Dynasties 12 and 13, ruling at Itytawy, and the Theban king Ahmose are known to have constructed tombs and cenotaphs at Abydos.

#### *Debatable Chronological Issues*

The coexistence of several rival political entities makes the synchronization of their internal chronologies a poignant issue. Among the principal problems debated in scholarly literature are the following:

1. *The possible synchronism of the first foreign kings with early Dynasty 13.* Ryholt (1997: 42-43, 321-322, 2010) argued that the first independent rulers in the Delta were contemporaries of the early kings of Dynasty 13, based on the find of a sealing with the name of Sheshi together with sealings of Khabau, a likely coregent of king Hor of earlier Dynasty 13 (for counterarguments, see Ben-Tor et al. 1999: 55-60; Ben-Tor 2010).
2. *The possible synchronism of the foreign king Khian with mid-Dynasty 13.* Moeller, Marouard, and Ayers (Moeller et al. 2011) argued that the copresence of sealings with the names of Khian and Sobekhotep IV in the abandonment layer of an administrative building at Edfu indicated the two kings were contemporaries

(for counterarguments, see Ilin-Tomich 2014). Comparable evidence comes from Tell el-Dabaa, where discarded sealings with the names of Sobekhotep III and Neferhotep I were found along with sealings of Khian (Sartori 2009). Both cases call for further investigations.



Figure 6. Stela of the Dynasty 16 official Horemkhauf from Hierakonpolis. He reports about a journey to the northern residence Itytawy in his biographical inscription.

3. *The possible overlap of late Dynasty 13 with early Dynasty 16.* It was noted by Anthony Spalinger (2001: 298), Chris Bennett (2002: 128-129), and Daniel Polz (Polz and Seiler 2003: 46-47) that the genealogy of the governors of Elkab outlined in the Juridical stela and in their tombs suggests that the last kings of Dynasty 13 at Itytawy could have ruled simultaneously with the first independent Theban rulers. This may

also be evidenced by the stela of Horemkhauef (fig. 6). The consequences of this possible overlap were further discussed by Alexander Ilin-Tomich (2014).

4. *The correspondence between royal names known from contemporary hieroglyphic sources and the entries in the lists of Hyksos kings transmitted by the epitomists of Manetho.* Whereas it is generally accepted that the name of the Dynasty 15 king Apep corresponds to Ἀρωφίς in the Manethonean tradition, the identification of other kings remains debatable. Thus, the identifications of šꜣrk, known from the Memphite genealogy of priests, with Σάλτις (Josephus), of Khian (*ḥjꜣn*) with Ἀπαχνᾶς (Josephus), of Khian's son *jjnss-jdj*, attested on a stela from Tell el-Dabaa (Bietak 1981), with Ἰαννᾶς (Josephus), and of another king *skr-hr*, attested at Tell el-Dabaa, with Ἄρχλης (Africanus and Eusebius), as advocated by Schneider (1998: 50-56; these and other possible identifications of the same Greek names were also repeatedly discussed by other scholars before him), all require substantial emendations that cannot be taken for granted.

5. *Whether the kings, whose names follow the same pattern, should be grouped together chronologically.* Attempts have been made by different scholars, most recently by Julien Siesse (2015), to rearrange the kings of the Second Intermediate Period based on the recurring patterns in their names. The better documented parts of the sequence of rulers display divergences from the clustering suggested by royal names, yet proponents of this approach give preference to the evidence derived from name patterns over other considerations and redefine the place of certain kings in the dynastic history (thus Siesse rejects the identification of Merdjefara with a Dynasty 14 ruler from the Turin king-list, favoring a Dynasty 13 date of the king).

6. *How can the short reigns during the Second Intermediate Period be explained?* Judging from the regnal years recorded in Second Intermediate Period inscriptions and from the overall number of kings during a relatively short period, it is assumed that most kings reigned

no longer than a few years, which calls for an explanation. Once the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Senusret III had been established as absolute date with the aid of a Lahun papyrus, it was possible to determine the length of the period between Dynasties 12 and 18 as being c. 210 (c. 223 by modern count) years. To account for the large number of kings, Eduard Meyer (1909: 301) suggested that the Theban kings of this period were elected for a specific length of time. This hypothesis has not been supported by any unambiguous evidence and is at variance with the Egyptian concept of kingship (von Beckerath 1964: 88). However, Ludwig Morenz (2010) recently attempted to revitalize Meyer's theory, discussing the phraseology of Dynasty 16 royal stelae.

### *Social and Cultural History*

The Second Intermediate Period was the time of large-scale adaptation and relocation of monuments, flourishing in all the kingdoms on the Nile. Avaris kings were reusing and occasionally appropriating (in the terminology of Marianne Eaton-Krauss [2015]) the statuary of Dynasty 12 kings; the rulers of Kush were relocating fine statues and other Egyptian pieces to Kerma during their raids, which reached as far north as Assiut; native Theban rulers were adapting the monuments of their predecessors in Upper Egypt and bringing some items from the Hyksos realm to Thebes after the defeat of the Hyksos.

Rulers of the kingdoms of Avaris and Thebes alike were devoting monuments to Egyptian gods venerated in cultic centers on the territory they controlled. In the case of the rulers of Avaris, these were Seth of Avaris, Hathor, Wadjet, Sobek, Ra (Ryholt 1997: 149), Sopdu (Yoyotte 1989), and Banebdjedet (Abdel Maksoud and Valbelle 2005: 8-9).

Of all Egyptian administrative practices, the use of seals, derived from Egyptian scarabs, was seemingly most easily adopted by officials of Avaris and Kerma. At Kerma, oval seals with geometric designs (likely imitations of Egyptian scarabs) were produced locally from ivory, bone, and clay; numerous sealings were

found in non-burial contexts, evidencing the practice of sealing goods and storage units to secure their intactness (Gratien 2006; Ben Tor 2007: 62-63). At Tell el-Dabaa, sealings, once considered absent from the site, have been found in abundance since the archaeologists introduced a new sieving method in the 2000s. Here, stamps were applied not only to seal goods and spaces, but also for registering goods or transactions (Reali 2013). Some private name scarabs are attributable to the officials of the Avaris kingdom, including large series of scarabs belonging to the treasurers Har and Peremhesut (Quirke 2004).

Only in the Theban realm, scarab seals seem to have fallen out of use as compared to the previous period (the lack of excavated Second Intermediate Period Theban contexts, which could have included seals and sealing, prevents scholars from drawing a definitive conclusion), and the quality of scarab production declined. This is offset by the abundance of private memorials. They attest the continuity of administrative structures employed by the local southern Upper Egyptian administration of the Late Middle Kingdom (Ilin-Tomich 2014). On the other hand, they suggest that the complex administration of the previous epoch was significantly simplified in the Second Intermediate Period, when many earlier bureaucratic offices seemingly disappeared from sources and the repertoire of administrative titles became dominated by those of the military and temple officials.

#### *Significance and Main Phenomena*

New Kingdom Egypt was the direct successor to the Second Intermediate Period Theban kingdom in terms of culture and politics. Many Theban burial customs of the Second Intermediate Period lasted until the reigns of

Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (Polz 2007: 310-311; Miniaci 2011: 128-129). The *Book of the Dead*, first attested in the early Second Intermediate Period (Parkinson and Quirke 1992; Quirke 2005), continued to be used for much longer. The lack of central administration as compared to the Late Middle Kingdom administration of Itytawy and the militancy (manifested in royal ideological texts and the omnipresence of military officials) of the Theban kingdom were inherited by Dynasty 18 Egypt.

The transition from the Second Intermediate Period to the New Kingdom was the time when a number of advances were introduced in Egypt, particularly in the military sphere (including the horse and the chariot, the composite bow, the *hps*-sickle-sword). To what extent the kingdom of Avaris should be credited for these innovations is debatable. Opinions range from the traditional view of Delta foreigners as *Kulturträger* (Labib 1936: 10; Stock 1942: 72-75) to the notion that the kingdom of Avaris and the Theban kingdom simultaneously acquired novelties coming from the Near East (Säve-Söderbergh 1951: 60, 71), and to the idea that the kingdom of Avaris was impeding Egyptian access to innovation and only its defeat introduced technological innovations to early Dynasty 18 Egypt (Shaw 2012: 108). There is evidence for the sickle-sword and the horse appearing at Tell el-Dabaa before the first attestation of their use by Egyptians at the beginning of Dynasty 18. A sickle-sword was found in a burial dating to phase F (Forstner-Müller 2008: 50-51, 180), and the single horse burial found at Tell el-Dabaa (whereas numerous burials of smaller equids are known from this and other sites associated with the kingdom of Avaris) dates to phase E/1 (yet its military use is questioned, see Raulwing and Clutton-Brock 2009: 66-78; and Shaw 2012: 102).

## *Bibliographic Notes*

The two fundamental monographs on the chronology and political history of the epoch are the works by Jürgen von Beckerath (1964) and Kim Ryholt (1997). Both books contain exhaustive (at the time of writing) lists of attestations of royal names from the Second Intermediate Period. The key findings made by Ryholt were critically evaluated by Daphna Ben-Tor, Susan J. Allen, and James P. Allen (Ben-Tor et al. 1999), and important additions to Ryholt's list of attestations were recently presented by Marcel Marée (2009). A critical overview of the chronology of the Second Intermediate Period was given by Detlef Franke (2013: 7-13). The two collected volumes *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Eliezer Oren (1997), and *The Second Intermediate Period (Thirteenth-Seventeenth Dynasties): Current Research, Future Prospects*, edited by Marcel Marée (2010), also belong to the fundamental works on the period. Representative illustrated catalogs of artworks and other objects of this period were published by Irmgard Hein (1994) and by Alfred Grimm and Sylvia Schoske (1999). Dynasty 12 royal statues appropriated and moved by the kings of Avaris are analyzed by Hourig Sourouzian (2006) and Alexandra Verbovsek (2006). Janine Bourriau (1997, 2010) explores the regional sequences of Second Intermediate Period pottery and the ways for synchronizing them. Hieroglyphic transcriptions of important texts were published by Wolfgang Helck (1983), relevant translations by Donald Redford (1997). Private biographic inscriptions were collected by Sabine Kubisch (2008). The Manethonean tradition of the Second Intermediate Period was summarized with references to modern critical editions by Thomas Schneider (2008: 304-307). He also published an analysis of foreign royal names from the Second Intermediate Period in Egyptian and Greek sources (Schneider 1998).

The results of the ongoing excavations at Tell el-Dabaa are regularly published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in the series *Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* (Vienna) and in the journal *Ägypten und Levante*. An account of the first 30 years of excavations can be found in Manfred Bietak's (1996) book on this site, a more up to date overview of the structure and the development of the city is Bietak (2010b). Vera Müller (2008) studied the development of temple offering practices at Tell el-Dabaa, featuring Near Eastern elements, as well as funerary and domestic offering practices, Egyptian in nature. Recent general studies on Second Intermediate Period scarabs are the dissertation by Christa Mlinar (2001) and the monograph by Daphna Ben-Tor (2007).

A detailed discussion of the chronology of Dynasty 17, its royal tombs, and cultural developments during its reign was presented by Daniel Polz (2007). Anne Seiler (2005) studied the evolution of ceramics in Thebes during the Second Intermediate Period and also discusses other contemporary changes in Theban culture (Seiler 2005: 192-200). Gianluca Miniaci (2011) prepared a catalog and a study of coffins from the reign of Dynasties 16-17 and the early New Kingdom. Private statues from this period were analyzed by Silvia Winterhalter (1998), and stick-shabtis by Paul Whelan (2007).

The reports of excavations at Kerma are regularly published in the journal *Documents de la Mission Archéologique Suisse au Soudan* (Neuchâtel). The current framework for the study of the phases of the material culture of Kerma, of which the Classic Kerma corresponds to the kingdom of Kerma in the Second Intermediate Period, was shaped by the works of Brigitte Gratien (1978) and Béatrice Privati (1999). Stuart Tyson Smith (2003) and László Török (2009) outlined the history of the kingdom of Kush in the Second Intermediate Period. The scarce available data on divine and royal cults in Kerma was discussed by Charles Bonnet (2004).

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- Figure 1. Scarab of a Lower Egyptian king Maaibra Sheshi found in a Dynasty 18 context in Deir el-Bahri. One of the hundreds of seals and impressions bearing the name of this king, unattested in other sources. MMA 23.3.182. Rogers Fund, 1923.  
(<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/559596>)
- Figure 2. A lion statue inscribed with the name of the king of Avaris Khian. Purchased in Baghdad. British Museum EA 987. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.
- Figure 3. Stela of the Dynasty 16 king Bebiankh from Gebel Zeit, no. 559. (After Castel and Soukiassian 1985: pl. LXIV. © IFAO.)
- Figure 4. Stela of an Egyptian officer loyal to the ruler of Kush. Philadelphia E.10984. Image courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #33177. (<http://www.penn.museum/collections/object/315633>)
- Figure 5. Stela believed by some scholars to represent the ruler of Kush wearing the Upper Egyptian crown. Khartoum 62/8/17. (After Smith 1976: pl. III.2. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.)
- Figure 6. Stela of the Dynasty 16 official Horemkhauef from Hierakonpolis. He reports about a journey to the northern residence Itytawy in his biographical inscription. MMA 35.7.55. Rogers Fund, 1935.  
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