

A COMPANION TO ANCIENT EGYPT

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CHAPTER 6

The Second Intermediate Period and the New Kingdom

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1 A Socio-Cultural Sketch of the Historical Framework

For a period that began more than 4,000 years ago the political history of the New Kingdom is astonishingly well known. This is due not only to the historically orientated inscriptions of the kings, but also to those of the social elites. Moreover, in the case of the New Kingdom, we can also observe an intensification of historical discourse (Vernus, 1995; Popko 2006). Nonetheless, many fields of human hopes, love, and suffering remain un-illuminated, and we can hardly do more than speculate about certain elementary facts of human history, such as population, life-expectancy, and so on. The world of flowers and fragrances that is presented by fascinating grave paintings of festive banquets reflects only the culture of the elites and feast days, next to which stood another world of sickness, stink, and hard work that was daily life for the majority of the population.

We know only a little about mentalities and bodily histories, such as pain perception. According to the evidence of mummies, members of the elite and even rulers (like Amenhotep III and Ramesses II) sometimes suffered from serious pain, and yet they would have carried out sophisticated court ceremonies, as under the absolutist Louis XIV. The significance of court ceremony in the life of society was so great that it was kept up even during the difficult conditions of military campaigns.

Traditionally, the area from the Delta to Elephantine is understood as part of the territory of the Egyptian national state. In the New Kingdom, Levantine city states were under Egyptian sovereignty but were not organized as an Egyptian province. In fact, a special form of administration with Egyptian suzerainty was devised. The Egyptians had certain centers to ensure trade and to act as protective zones, in particular Bethshan (Morris 2005), but the essentially practical motivation underpinning the administration is demonstrated by the significant absence of Egyptian temples in Palestine (Wimmer 1990; 1998). The situation in the Nile valley south

of Elephantine is quite different; for under Amenhotep III and Ramesses II, in particular, we find an impressive temple-building programme which can be read as an intentional cultural Egyptianization of the Nubian landscape.

For the national Egyptian discourse, the symbolic value of the residence (*ḥnw*) as center of religion, power, and culture, can hardly be overestimated. Thus, certain historical developments of the second millennium BC are reflected in the changing of the capital cities. In the Middle Kingdom, the residence founded by Amenemhet I, called “Amenemhet, who grasps Both Countries,” functioned as a residence, while in the Thirteenth Dynasty stronger local power centers gradually formed. These included a small kingdom in the East Delta, in which we may see a precursor of the Hyksos “state” (Ryholt 1997). It was the origin of the later Hyksos residence *ḥwt wꜣrt*, “Avaris.” The later seventeenth and early sixteenth centuries are characterized by a dualism of two power centers: Avaris, as the capital of the Hyksos in the north (Bietak 1996), and the up-and-coming city of Thebes in the south (and, from the Seventeenth Dynasty, the adjacent residence of Deir el-Ballas with its imitation of the Hyksos palace, Lacovara 1990). During the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty Thebes functioned as the undisputed center of religion and power. With a clear intention to rival Thebes, Akhenaten, as part of his cultural revolution based on the Aten religion, placed his residence, programmatically named Akhetaten, “The Light-place of Aten,” in what had until then been a culturally untouched region in which the physical structure of the countryside had a special symbolic significance (Morenz, 2008b: 252–7). With the end of this very individualistic religious and cultural set-up, the residence was returned to its traditional location in Thebes. In the politics of the Nineteenth Dynasty the Delta became more important. This was, in part, due to intense Asiatic contacts but was also a result of the ancestry of the Ramesses family itself. For this reason the old Hyksos capital Avaris was rebuilt as the new “Ramesses-City” (*Pr-rꜣms-s(w)*).

2 Chronological Considerations

The Egyptological concept of Intermediate Periods, which was developed in the conceptual context of Imperial Germany, is a terminological misnomer which blurs the different periods of Egyptian history and often paints a false picture (Schneider 1998; 2003b). Instead of a “Second Intermediate Period” it would be better to speak of the Hyksos period and the Era of the Second Theban Petty State, which led into the New Kingdom with the victory of the national Egyptian Thebans.

The New Kingdom (c.1539–1071/70 BC) falls in the Late Bronze Age. Egyptian chronology (Hornung, Krauss, Warburton 2006) provides the framework of dates for the chronology of the entire Ancient Near East. Unfortunately, the Egyptian method of counting years can seldom be translated into absolute modern dates. Known conformities with the dating systems of other peoples (synchronisms) only help very slightly, as the calculation from them into modern dates depends on Egyptian dates.

The identification of Egyptian dates in relation to known natural events is only possible in a few instances for the period of the New Kingdom. Eclipses or sightings

of comets are not recorded. The eruption of the volcano of Thera/Santorini in the Aegean, which is sometimes connected to the Storm Stela of Ahmose, cannot be accurately dated. According to the most recent research the tephra layers in Greenland's ice, which indicate a volcanic eruption around 1645 B.C. (± 4 years) and were originally attributed to the Thera eruption, are actually from the eruption of Mount Anjakshak in Alaska (Pearce et al. 2007). Pumice from the Thera Eruption is detectable in Avaris, but in Thutmosid layers over a century later. The Sothis date on the back of the Ebers Papyrus, which notes the early rise of Sirius, provides a dating of the reign of Ahmose, but, even here, due to a number of unknown factors no exact conversion of the dates is possible. Only the dates of new moons which are known from Egypt can be safely exploited for chronological purposes. Thanks to them, it is possible to date the accession to the throne of Thutmose III to the year 1479.

Due to the king lists of the New Kingdom (Redford 1986b) it is possible to establish a sequence of the sovereigns of this period, Manetho's information concerning this era being fragmentary. The Ramesside king lists of Saqqara and Abydos served a cult function in which the reigning sovereigns placed themselves within a long series of legitimate ancestors. Given this function, they neither pass on the exact duration of reigns nor do they include rulers who were considered as illegitimate in the period of the Ramessides. The deliberate ignoring of the Amarna period later on has also resulted in another chronological uncertainty, namely the length of the reign of Horemheb, which was counted as including the entire Amarna period. Until the exact length of the Amarna period is determined, the real length of the reign of Horemheb cannot be calculated. The discussion of this point, which was recently rekindled by van Dijk, forms the basis of the "long" or "short" chronologies of the New Kingdom (Aström 1989; van Dijk 2008).

The Turin Canon of Kings (Ryholt 2004) from the early Ramesside Period served other purposes than the monumental Ramesside lists and for this reason is a useful complement to them. Possibly made for archival purposes, the papyrus lists regnal years beside the names of kings and also names the rulers of the Hyksos period, so that the Egyptians could use it in legal disputes (one might call to mind the Stele of Mes, Gardiner 1964). On the other hand, the grouping of ruling houses and the inclusion of the sums of ruling periods may, in fact, have been motivated by historiographic consideration. Only the high degree of damage to the papyrus, which causes large uncertainties about the order of individual rulers and the lengths of "dynasties," reduces the usefulness of the papyrus as a basis for establishing a chronology. However, in spite of these hotly disputed issues, the overall chronology rests on a relatively stable base, with uncertainties of only a few decades.

3 The Hyksos Period

The term "Hyksos," misunderstood in later tradition as "Shepherd Kings," is based on the Egyptian title *ḥkꜣ-ḥꜣs(w)t*, "ruler of foreign lands." The interpretation as "Shepherd Kings" is known to us from Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 1.14), but we

can trace the change in meaning back to a hypothetical Egyptian confusion arising from a later pronunciation of *ḥkꜣ-ḥꜣs(w)t* as **ḥkꜣ-šꜣsw* which was then misinterpreted as “Lord of the Shepherds.” The title “Lord of Foreign Lands” implies a culturally foreign entity. It is documented not only on scarabs but also on one of the few surviving monumental inscriptions of the Hyksos period. In the lintel inscription of Sikri-haddu (Schneider 1998: 40–3) it is used as an equivalent to the Egyptian *sꜣ-Rꜥ* title – a sign of intercultural adaptation, and, at the same time, a sign of alienation. The non-Egyptian origin of the Hyksos is evident in their personal names, such as Chay(r)an. At the same time, we can observe an increasing cultural Egyptianization.

The Hyksos period (Oren 1997a; Schneider 1998, 2003; Ryholt 1997) can be seen as the first period of foreign rule in the Nile Valley, and for this reason we can expect a corresponding struggle for legitimacy. Thus in the royal records of the “Great Hyksos” (Fifteenth Dynasty) a strong tendency to Egyptianization can be observed. This is seen in the adoption of the traditional Egyptian royal titles *sꜣ Rꜥ* and *ntr nfr*. In the effort to create an Egyptian culture some Egyptian handbooks were written in the later Hyksos period, such as the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus. Admittedly, we must take into account not only the usual vicissitudes of transmission but also an intentional distortion of that transmission, since the pro-Hyksos tradition was attacked by the Thebans in the New Kingdom. To re-capture elements of the perspectives of the Hyksos period we must, above all, employ a methodological approach in which contemporary objects are used to conduct problem-orientated case studies. Through this approach we may hope to obtain glimpses into the historical processes which formed events and mentalities.

Two nearly identical scarabs from the Middle Bronze Age (Keel 1996) represent a special iconographic tradition which represents examples of the visual projection of the Hyksos rulers. The ruler is clearly represented in the scene as an Egyptian king. This is demonstrated by the culturally typical elements of his dress. At the same time, the iconography of this ruler can also be compared to that of the Levantine weather god, who is often represented with a club raised in one hand and a twig or branch in the other. These elements show two central aspects of the king’s function: as a force against enemies and as an assurance of fertility. From the close overlap of the motifs we can assume that this scarab type was produced in series to portray the “Hyksos” as a god-like ruler. If these scarabs were given to followers of the “Hyksos,” then a form of social bonding was transferred along with them in which their recipients were visual and ideological co-players in the ruling system. One scarab offered a further refinement, representing the king with a red crown and describing him in its inscription as the “ruler of the Delta” (Givón 1978: 81–4, pl. 38).

The foreign personal names of the Hyksos are not easily compatible with the traditional Egyptian writing system. That is why they are mostly written with uniliteral signs. In this way, foreign names written in the Egyptian writing system were expressed phonetically; thus we read the name *ḥ-j-j-ꜣ-n*, probably Chayran = “The Chosen One, the Best” (Schneider 1998: 39ff.). On the other hand, the Egyptian names used in the Hyksos royal records were written with signs, in which the iconographic nature of the characters played a stronger role. Next to the



Figure 6.1 A Hyksos scarab after Keel 1996: pl. 135, fig. 24a.

same Chayran in his throne name, *msr n Rc*, two distinctly iconographically stronger hieroglyphs were used:  or alternatively  and . These two characters were also used in one of the throne names of Apophis – *ʿ3-msr-Rc*. A reference to the sun god Re can be recognized in the sun-disc while the *msr*-symbol () has the iconographically striking form of running legs with a jackal's or – reinterpreted – Seth's head which can probably be deconstructed as “(Seth-)Ba^cal has come.” In the texts of the two most Egyptianized Hyksos an attempt is made at a subtle equation of the Egyptian Re and the Semitic (Seth)Ba^cal, even at the level of the writing of the names. This was a form of political propaganda and religious acculturation of these foreign rulers in Egypt.

In older scholarship a vast empire of the Hyksos was imagined, since finds with the names of rulers, especially Apophis and Chayran, were known from such far-flung areas as Knossos, Boghazkoi, and Baghdad. Later this distribution was explained as exported art or as war booty. In reality it seems the Hyksos rulers used a special gift culture to retain loyalty through a sort of indoctrination of the elite. This practice is attested by the bronze dagger of Nakhman, the writing palette of Atja (Morenz 1996: 167–70), and various perfume containers. These gifts sometimes bore highly poetic glorifications of the king. On one perfume bottle (Padró and Molina, 1986; Redford, 1997: 7) we find a text concerning Apophis in grammatically correct and literature-conscious Egyptian, which nonetheless at the same time seems idiomatically foreign: “His power reaches the *borders of victorious deeds*. There is no land which must not serve him.” This text contains a distinctive monarchical rhetoric, seemingly part of a heroic poem, and it presumably functioned via a *pars pro toto* mechanism. We can also assume that this gift culture was not restricted to the elite of the Hyksos but was also used as a means of conducting international diplomacy. The finds from disparate places are not the result of an empire but rather of wide diplomatic relationships.

4 Soldier Kings, Royal Acclamation, and a New Goddess: On the Beginning of the Second Theban City State in the Seventeenth Century BC

The late Middle Kingdom and the so-called Second Intermediate Period were periods of great change in the socio-economic, political, and ideological fields. Shifts in the function of the kingship also formed part of these changes and entailed modifications in royal ideology. On closer inspection we find a network of complex interactions between socio-economic practice and ideology. Though the programmatic performance of kingship in this period of innovation followed certain older patterns, we can nonetheless observe innovations throughout in the seventeenth century in what was otherwise a conservative matter. One aspect was the growing role of royal performance in the army in the Thirteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties, which in some cases allows us to speak of soldier kings. Unlike the Roman barracks emperors, however, our only sources are short inscriptions. In the framework of this interpretation, Eduard Meyer's proposal of an elected kingship should be revisited. So far, no specific evidence for a royal election has been found. The very concept is certainly unusual in Egyptian monarchical ideology. This shortage of evidence explains the scepticism of the most recent research about this concept for the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries BC, but the stela Cairo CG 20533 of Dedumose Djedneferre from Gebelein may well provide support for the proposal of royal election by acclamation (Morenz, in press):

Good god, beloved of Thebes:
The one chosen (*stp*) by HORUS;
Who increases his arm[y?],
Who has appeared like the lighting of the sun.
Who is acclaimed () to the kingship of both lands,
The one who belongs to shouting.

The war-like confrontations of this period led to closer connections between the rulers and the kingdom, as the royal epithet *mry mš^c.f*, “beloved of his army” (Ryholt, 1997: 305 and footnote 1063) used by the Pharaohs of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Dynasties demonstrates. In this sense, Neferhotep III, residing in Thebes, was praised as “He who raised his city (Thebes) up when it was sunk low in battle with the foreigners” (Stela Cairo, JE 59635, Z. 6; Vernus 1982: 131 and 133ff.) For the later first half of the second millennium BC one can also see a closer connection between the Theban kingdom and the military.

The king Dedumose reigned at approximately the same time as the first of the Hyksos rulers in the north. If we allow ourselves a simplification of complex historical processes, we can consider this ruler as marking the beginning of the Theban city-state. Sitting between the Hyksos kingdom in the north and the kingdom of Kerma in the south (Davies 2003), the Theban city-state moved forward to achieve complete control of Egypt and became the kernel of the later New Kingdom. With the separation of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Dynasties, both situated in Thebes, it seems historiographically reasonable to view Dedumose as the founder of the Theban



Figure 6.2 Cairo Stela CG20533 of Dedumose Djedneferre from Gebelein. After CG.

city-state. The form of his rule can be regarded as an exploitation of royal charisma, though there was a clear effort to conduct business along dynastically stable, national, and state lines. Instead of the usual description as “*beloved of a particular god*,” Dedumose was described as “Beloved of Thebes” (*W3st*), providing a strong local identification. Despite the royal ideological fiction Lower Egypt did not belong to the territory of Dedumose in political reality. His power was probably limited to the area surrounding Thebes. In the theo-political royal programme of action of the Sixteenth Dynasty a female deity was developed by extrapolating an older tradition of “*mighty Thebes*.” This figure is represented in iconography with weapons. She is first depicted on the stela of Sekhemsankhtauyre Neferhotep from Karnak (Cairo JE 59635). The figure of the goddess corresponds to the assertion in the fifth line of the stela, which describes the ruler as “leader of mighty Thebes.” In contrast, on the stela of Dedumose *W3st* is still determined with the area-hieroglyph indicating a geographical term. On the other hand, its position in the *mry*-formula shows a clear personification in linguistic use. Thus we can assume that the goddess Waset(-nakht) was conceived as a theo-political personification of Thebes under the successors of Dedumose, and as a reinforcement of the sacro-political identity of the Theban power center. The hymn-like glorification of victorious Thebes, as seen on the stele of Mentuhotep (lines 4–6, Vernus 1989) is also an example of this.



Figure 6.3 Stela of Sekhemsankhtawyre Neferhotep from Karnak (Cairo JE 59635). After Vernus 1982: pl.1.

The establishment of the Theban city state created a significant need for legitimization, for which the traditional patterns and figures of royal ideology could only partly be employed. The conception of the Theban goddess Waset, who personified strength and power, presents us with a trace of the theo-political discourse at the moment when it was developed in a struggle for legitimacy. At the same time citations from the literature of the Middle Kingdom in royal texts demonstrate the concern of these rulers to assert continuity of tradition (Morenz 1996: 183ff.).

5 The New Kingdom

Perspectives on the early New Kingdom

In the seventeenth century the Hyksos kingdom in the north, the national Egyptian Theban city state in the south, and the kingdom of Kerma as a third power all stood side by side (Davies 2003). The Thebans imitated the Hyksos both in the formation of names (Beckerath 1965: 129ff.) and in their architecture (e.g. the palace of Deir el-Ballas). The triumph of Thebes is known to us almost exclusively from epigraphic evidence that presents the Theban perspective. As a result, it is difficult to extract

dates for the history of events from these sources. The literary history of P. Sallier I, with its history of the conflict between Apophis and Seqenenre is problematic. In the first decades after the events described in the text the oral historical memory may have been altered, but the fictionalization and literary format, using the motif of a riddle contest between the two rulers, are clear. The same is true of more historiographic texts, such as the Speos-Artemidos inscription of Hatshepsut. For contemporary sources some texts and images of Kings Kamose and Ahmose are available, (such as the Kamose Stela or the decorated axe of Ahmose) but also the self-presentations of the Theban elites who were near to the court. So Ahmose, son of Ebana reports in his tomb-inscription about his successful participation in the conquest of Avaris (*Urk.* IV 1,1–11,2, Popko 2006: 187–206) while Emhab's memorial stone offers a remarkable text reflecting "the big picture" from the perspective of a participant (Morenz 2006). A perspective closer to that of the Hyksos can be found in the form of a secondary mytho-historical note written on the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus (Morenz 1996: 187–90).

In spite of their Egyptianizing tendencies the Hyksos were characterized as foreign kings by the Upper Egyptian royal houses of the Seventeenth Dynasty in Thebes and Deir el-Ballas. Kamose called the Hyksos king Apophis "Prince of Retjenu" and the first Kamose stela complains that he was obliged to share his power with a Nubian and an Asiatic. The war that had been started by his predecessor Seqenenre and continued by him contained elements of a war of liberation: "I desire to free Egypt, which is oppressed by the Asiatics" (Carnarvon Tablet, l. 4–5, Helck, 1983: 84). This picture became so ingrained that Hatshepsut presented the Hyksos as illegitimate and destructive rulers. The clockmaker Amenemhet rationalized the campaign of Thutmose I against the Mitannian kingdom on the Euphrates as "retaliation for the evil" (columns 2–3, Helck 1983: 110). Even Thutmose III sometimes justified his campaigns as revenge against the attacks of *ḥkꜣw-ḥꜣswt* (cf. *Urk.* IV 1229,5; Redford 1970: 34). It is significant that the Egyptian-occupied Levant was primarily formed as a protective zone rather than as a province conquered for imperialistic reasons (Panagiotopoulos 2000).

Kamose, however, did not live to see the end of the war. He was able to besiege the Hyksos capital Avaris, but its conquest was only achieved by his successor Ahmose. The campaign led Ahmose as far as Sharuhén in southern Palestine where he finally defeated the Hyksos rulers in an interminable battle. With Ahmose the New Kingdom truly began. The perception that this marked a new epoch is not a modern construction but is genuinely Egyptian: Manetho begins the Eighteenth Dynasty with Ahmose. Furthermore the Min-festival relief in the Ramesseum already makes a clear break with Ahmose's rule (Redford 1986: 34–6). Some sources, such as the stela of Ahhotep, suggest internal political unrest which had to be resolved so that Ahmose could turn his efforts to reform of the administration. In this way he left a kingdom to his successors that was secure both internally and externally.

The Hyksos war, regardless of what events actually took place, generated a change of mentalities in relation to historical memory. To a previously unknown extent the Amun-temple of Karnak was now used as a show-case for war booty and power, just as the Parthenon was following the Persian War. This was achieved through architecture and reliefs, but also through the use of prestige objects and estates.

The prominence of Thebes can also be seen on a purely ideological level in the Horus-names of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty – a tradition that can be traced back to Dedumose in the seventeenth century BC.

Queen Hatshepsut

In the year 1479 BC, following the death of Thutmose II, his son of the same name came to power. Born as the son of a royal concubine, he was only a few years old when he assumed control of the government. For this reason his stepmother Hatshepsut was named regent. From the first regnal year of her step-son, Hatshepsut became the most important decision-maker in the court, since Thutmose was still far too young to lead the decision-making process (Dorman 2006: 53). Around the seventh year of “his” reign Hatshepsut crowned herself king (on the chronology see Dorman 2006). It is unclear what compelled her to take this radical step, and various attempts at a psychological explanation remain nothing more than conjectures. According to the *opinio communis*, from this moment Hatshepsut eclipsed her young co-regent. The main iconographical argument for this thesis, namely that Thutmose is depicted *behind* Hatshepsut in ritual acts, is by no means conclusive. Not a single figurative representation of a co-regency is known from the Middle Kingdom in which both rulers appear together acting in one scene. Thus there was no appropriate convention available at the beginning of the New Kingdom (cf. Murnane 1977: 200). It must be remembered that Thutmose both in dress, titles, and proportions appears as an equal beside Hatshepsut.

With her accession to the throne Hatshepsut lost her authority as the widow of Thutmose II and as the God’s Wife. To award herself the status of a legitimately crowned ruler, she could invoke two principles: legitimacy as a ruler chosen by a god or parentage by a king. Hatshepsut employed and updated both options. In the temple of Deir el-Bahri she propagated the notion of her divine parentage and employed an older legend, which is known to us in literary form in P.Westcar. In her version she was declared a daughter of the state god Amun-Re. Selection by Amun-Re features in the myth of her birth, and the god again identifies her as king when she is an adult by means of an oracle. An element of legitimacy through inheritance was also added to this. Another text from Deir el-Bahri reports how Hatshepsut was raised to the throne by her father (*Urk.* IV 241, 10–265,5), a claim in which she may have re-used a model taken from the Middle Kingdom (*Berl. Inscr.* I 138 and 268).

An explanation for Hatshepsut’s need for legitimization (apart from the fact that Thutmose was already the legitimate ruler) may have been her gender. In the Egyptian world order only men could be kings. In the early years of her rule Hatshepsut attempted to find a compromise between male and female dress, between the dress of the wife of a god and that of a contemporary king. Later on she abandoned this mode of representation and appeared simply as a king. In texts, on the other hand, she continued to be described as a woman, and she was referred to with female pronouns. Her titulary also reflected her gender. Thus one must ask if the “male” iconography should not simply be understood as normal royal iconography. Hatshepsut is an interesting case of gender-crossing in the context of a clash between

biological body and what society requires that body to be in terms of gender. Hatshepsut is famous for her expedition to the land of Punt from which she imported incense and myrrh as well as other exotica that were necessary for the Egyptian cult. She attempted to grow some incense trees in her mortuary temple, where a report of the Punt expedition was also inscribed, but it seems that the trees could not tolerate the Egyptian climate and dried up within a short time.

Just as speculative as the reason for Hatshepsut's assumption of the throne is the relationship between her and Thutmose III. The young king does not seem to have been pushed into the background, and even before the death of Hatshepsut he appears as a general, and large architectural projects were conducted in the names of both rulers. Moreover, Thutmose took part in religious ceremonies. Differences between the two are not detectable. The apparent hatred that was supposed to have motivated the destruction Hatshepsut's monuments after her death is a modern fiction and rests on Sethe's long outdated reconstruction of the history of this period (Sethe 1896). The persecution of her memory began towards the end of the reign of Thutmose III and remains a matter of debate. Labouri (1998: 483–512; 2006: 265f.) explains it as a means of promoting the legitimacy of the late-born Amenhotep II as the successor to the throne by discrediting Hatshepsut and her offspring, but, since he is unable to name any offspring of Hatshepsut, this explanation remains a matter of speculation.

The Conqueror Thutmose III

With the start of Thutmose III's sole rule an extremely active phase of military, religious, political, and cultural activities began. His first campaign was also his most successful and was constantly used by him in royal inscriptions (e.g. *Urk.* IV 647, 1–667,16; 767,1–16; 1234,5–1236,15). A coalition of Levantine princes, led by the prince of Kadesh, assembled on the plain of Jezreel and awaited Thutmose at the south pass around the Carmel mountains. Thutmose, however, marched through the pass of Aruna and, having left the pass unmolested, drew up his army on the plain, thus determining both the time and the place of the battle. The few Syrians who survived the battle fled to Megiddo. The Egyptian laughter must have been loud, as the city's door was already closed, and the princes were pulled up its walls by their clothes, a motif which belongs in the realm of anecdotal history and literary decoration (*Urk.* IV 658, 4–12). This setback placed Megiddo in a dangerous situation, and, had the Egyptian troops not preferred to collect booty, they could have taken the city in a short space of time. The truly remarkable part of this narrative is that Thutmose conceded this loss of control (*Urk.* IV 658, 8–1). As a result, the city had to be besieged and was only taken seven months later.

In at least thirteen further campaigns in the Levant Thutmose III succeeded in making Egypt the mightiest state of the Near East and in acquiring enormous prestige. In his 33rd Year, during the eighth campaign, he managed to penetrate further to the north-east than any other Egyptian, with the possible exception of his grandfather Thutmose I. Thutmose and his wars became part of the culture of national memory and a motif in literary tales such as the history of the conquest of Joppa or the Papyrus Turin 1940 + 1941.

Amenhotep II

The successor of Thutmose III concentrated mainly on military activities, but for this reason he is one of the most misunderstood figures of Egyptian history. Gardiner (1961: 199) and Helck (1987: 27) characterized him as a braggart and a barbarian. His apparent reputation for cruelty is based on his execution of seven enemy princes and the display of their bodies in Thebes and Napata, but the princes seem to have been rebels, and for this reason their punishment was entirely normal by ancient standards. We know of similar actions by Thutmose I following a Nubian rebellion. In this respect Amenhotep does not seem to have been more “barbaric” than his predecessors. Nor is he alone in his emphasis on his physical prowess. His father, for example, claimed to have killed an entire herd of elephants in Niy in Syria, though we know from his follower Amenemheb that he was obliged to rescue the king on this occasion (*Urk.* IV 893,16–894,3)! This kind of interplay between sources of court history and the more personal history of the elites is rare in the New Kingdom.

Amenhotep’s campaigns are mostly considered to have been minor affairs which he tried to magnify by recording unbelievably large lists of booty, but Amenhotep never denied that some of the places he had plundered were nothing more than villages. The lists of booty after each individual location are mostly within credible limits. The problem of the high totals at the end of the booty lists is not as straightforward as it first seems, and they may well stem from simple scribal errors (Helck 1977: 251).

Amenhotep III

With the accession of Amenhotep III the Eighteenth Dynasty reached a new period of prosperity. The conquests of his predecessors had brought peace (by way of the Kurušama-Treaty, Groddek 2008), and left Egypt the leading power of this period. The Amarna letters provide interesting insights into the diplomatic relations of this period (Moran 1992), though one must be forewarned not to consider Amenhotep as a diplomatic anomaly (on Amenhotep as a master diplomat see Bermann 1992, 59), since the sources may simply be lost for other periods. Unusually, even at the beginning of this reign, solar symbolism was employed. The connection of royal announcements to the suns god’s manifestation as Khepri in the form of commemorative scarabs is no coincidence. Amenhotep appears as “beloved of Khepri,” on the unique monumental scarab from Karnak, which must have stood originally in Western Thebes, probably in his temple at Kom el-Heitan (Barguet 1962b: 17). Towards the end of his reign solar symbolism took on a more powerful dimension. Alongside his sponsoring of a relatively new deity, the sun disc Aten, we see evidence for his own deification which follows no past model. In a temple at Soleb King Amenhotep is depicted sacrificing to the god Amenhotep (Schiff-Giorgini 1998: pl. 193). A statue now on display in the museum at Luxor identifies him with the sun god Atum, and the timeless young features of his face on his later statues put him in the realm of the self-regenerating sun god (Johnson, 1990: 43, Myśliwiec 2005). The reality behind this ideology was quite different. Towards the end of his life Amenhotep was seriously ill, and the creation of hundreds of statues of Sekhmet, the lady of sickness demons,

was meant to obtain alleviation of his suffering, as were two Ishtar statues which he allowed to be sent from the King of Mitanni (cf. Gnirs 2004: 42).

A cultural revolution motivated by religion

Few periods in Egyptian history have seen as much research as the reign of Akhenaten, and the scholarly literature has become almost unmanageable. The judgement of this period has changed significantly over the course of the history of Egyptology. In the beginning, a happy, light-filled, and cosmopolitan society was envisaged – a true make-love-not-war generation, but in the last few decades Akhenaten has been seen as a despot who imposed his ideas by force. He has been described as an aesthete and a maniac, a dreaming poet and theologian, and as a mad tyrant. Practically no comprehensive study of this period comes without some sort of psychological paradigm.

The cultural revolution manifests itself in various contexts: (1) religion with proto-monotheism, (2) art with a curious new style, (3) literature, (4) the selection of a new capital, (5) the use of daily language as the written language (Late Egyptian), (6) the erasure of inscriptions with the name of the god Amun. Of these the question of monotheism is the most interesting from a modern perspective (Assmann 2000). The more worldly issues, by comparison, often remain untouched by scholarship. The Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun (*Urk.* IV. 2025, 1–2032, 15) offers a glimpse into the practical consequences of this period, even if it has not yet been explained whether the stela represents the truth or only propaganda designed to distinguish the present government from its predecessor. According to this text the sacred areas were in a critical condition, and the temple of Amun in Karnak had been completely destroyed. Later, Horemheb (*Urk.* IV 2120, 3ff.; cf. Leprohon, 1985: 99) even reported that the entire ground and floor (*b3k3yt*) had collapsed. The industrial and administrative buildings that belonged to the temple were probably affected as well. Even the cult images seem to have been involved, and barely any of the surviving cult images are datable prior to the Amarna period. Such was the fanaticism of the followers of Akhenaten, though it seems they acted in this way mostly in Thebes, and there, above all, against the cult of Amun-Re. Light and air deities got away relatively lightly. Outside Thebes other deities were spared, such as Montu in el-Tod or Khnum at Elephantine (Brand, 1999: 123; Krauss, 2000, on Osiris at Abydos and Ptah in Memphis; cf also Bickel and Jaritz, 1997: 92–3; Gabolde, 1998: 24–30). Whether or not temples remained open is an interesting question, as they were junction points between the administration and the economy. To close them would have had far-reaching consequences for the economy of the country, which would have been exacerbated by the foundation of a new capital Akhetaten between Thebes and Memphis. Since all resources now had to go through Akhetaten, the other regions were almost totally neglected (Leprohon 1985: 96; Gnirs 1989: 91 with n. 45), but we cannot establish the extent to which the economy of the country was influenced by the reforms of Akhenaten and the subsequent temple closures. Leprohon has suggested that the centralization of politics at Akhetaten resulted in a loss of control over local authorities and increased corruption (Leprohon 1991: 72). The army was given various powers, largely for the purpose of tax collecting, with which it

terrorized the country. This was not to be stopped until the reign of Horemheb (Leprohon 1985: 101).

The effect of the Amarna period on foreign politics is just as disputed as its effect on internal affairs. From the Amarna letters we learn of various conflicts in the area of Syria. The disputes between Ribaddi, the prince of Byblos, and Abdiashirta (and later his son, Aziru) of Amurru have been connected to an assumed loss of Egyptian control in the Levant. Ribaddi requested help from the Egyptian court several times but apparently never received any. The Khabiru problems dealt with in the letters are interesting in terms of the history of Israel (the Hebrews), the letters suggesting that this group consisted of the *outlaws* of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite cities (Donner 2008). It is an interesting point of cultural history that the Egyptians used the Akkadian language and script as a *lingua franca* for international diplomatic contacts (Rainey 1996). On the basis of their names it would seem that at least some of the scribes and readers on the Egyptian side were Canaanites working in the Egyptian administration. Thus the correspondence was generally conducted between speakers of Semitic languages on both sides, who in Egypt functioned as linguistic intermediaries.

The encroachment of the Hittites on Egyptian territory was a further cause for Egyptian loss of control. The exact chronology of the Hittite Amqu campaign is debated; it is sometimes placed in the reign of Akhenaten, or else during that of Tutankhamun. Publishing a new reading of the letter KUB 19.15 + KBo 50.24, Miller (2007) argued that the entire war took place in the time of Akhenaten and his general Horemheb. The Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun mentions campaigns against Syria under his predecessors, which were more likely to have been those of Akhenaten than the ephemeral Neferneferuaten. Apparently, Egyptian possessions in the Levant were reduced at the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty as a result of Hittite incursions. In the light of the recent research of Panagiotopoulos (2000) one must ask if the Egyptian empire of the early Eighteenth Dynasty really extended as far north as most modern maps suggest. In any case, the Egyptians lost some of their prestige. Amenhotep III could still proudly claim to the king of Babylon that no Egyptian princes had ever been married to a foreigner (EA 4), but, in fact, at the end of the Amarna period something far more spectacular happened. The widow of an Egyptian king, unfortunately known only from her title as Dakhamunzu, *t3-ḥmt-nsw*, “the King’s wife,” had asked for the hand of a Hittite prince. After some initial scepticism the Hittite king Suppiluliumas sent his son Zannanza, but he never mounted the throne, being murdered on the way. And, after his death, the general Horemheb took over the government. The latter, no longer related to any members of the Eighteenth Dynasty, named his vizier Piyemessu as his successor, who ushered in the period of the Ramessides as Ramesses I.

Ramesses II as an international politician

The relationship between Egypt and Hatti at the time of the Hittite Amqu-campaign and the Dakhamunzu affair was tense, and tensions were only heightened by the Syrian campaigns of Sety I. At the start of Ramesses II’s reign it seemed that the time for the decisive battle had arrived. The Egyptian sources report an enemy contingent

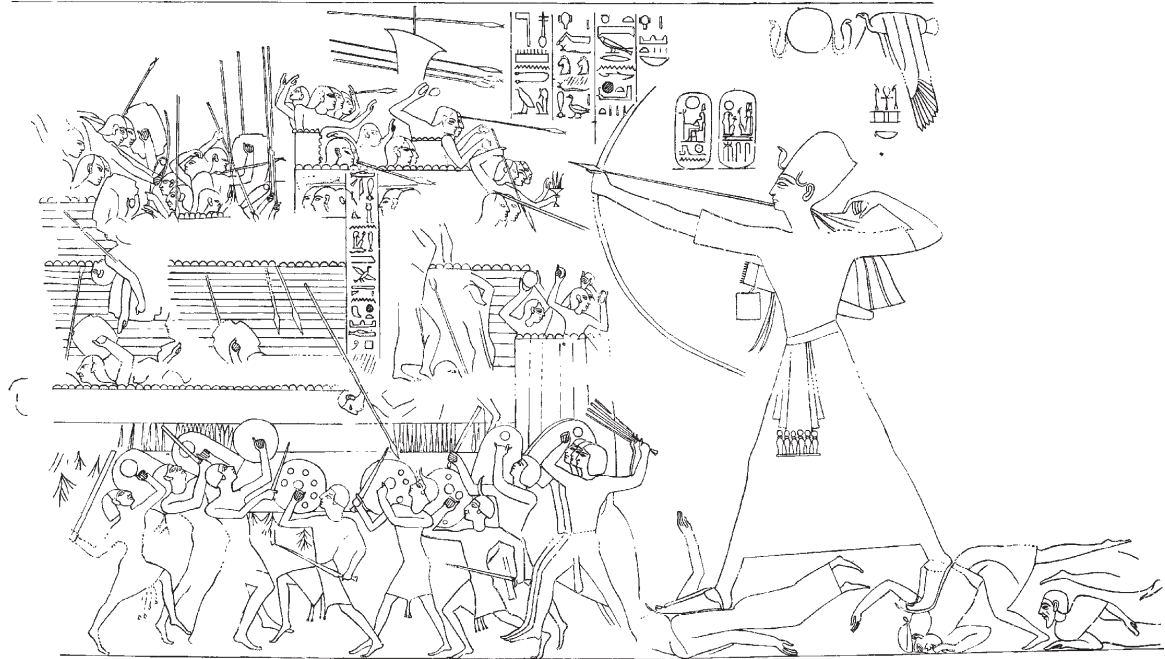
of more than a dozen allies, which then, as now, must have been an organizational masterstroke. Apparently, 37,000 infantry and 3,500 chariots were sent to Syria. The strength of the Egyptian force is unknown, but they are estimated to have been not more than c.20,000. When two Bedouin informed Ramesses that the Hittites were to be found near Aleppo, he crossed the Orontes and marched north with the division of his army named after the god Amun. Three further divisions (Pre, Ptah and Seth) followed him at a distance of half a day's march. On the evening of May 12, 1274 BC he had made camp to the west of Kadesh. Two Hittite prisoners provided the true location of the enemy, which was not, as expected, to the north, but on the other side of the city. Ramesses had hardly sent for the rest of his troops, when the Hittite chariots broke through the lines of the still marching Pre-division and immediately attacked the Amun-division with Ramesses. The ensuing fight is described in epic terms by the so-called Poem of Pentawer, known from almost a dozen Hieroglyphic and Hieratic versions (von der Way 1984). Ramesses prepared for battle, but his soldiers failed and fled. According to this myth-riddled Egyptian account Ramesses stood completely alone against the first Hittite wave of 2,500 chariots and made a quick prayer to heaven, which Amun heard. With the god's help the king drove the enemy back into the river, but the Hittite king did not want to give up and sent the remaining 1,000 chariots into the battle. Ramesses beat these off as well and called out to rebuke his fleeing army. A second battle on the next day ended finally with the Hittite king sending a request for peace, which was approved by the Egyptian officers (on the battle, Kitchen 1997: 50–64).

The problems of the reconstruction of the events arise from the availability of parallel accounts which for once are available. Along with the Poem, we have the Bulletin and finally the battle reliefs with their captions, which contradict the version of the Poem and supplement its account with further details. For example, according to the reliefs Ramesses was not completely alone, as the Poem purports. Just as the battle was at a high point, the Ne'arin arrived. They were perhaps an Egyptian advanced unit, which had been in the area already for some time. It is possible that their appearance on the battlefield caused the deployment of the second wave of the troops of Muwattalis.

Despite the claims of the Egyptian sources, Ramesses does not seem to have achieved a victory. Kadesh was not conquered, and northern Syria remained Hittite. The highly idealized Egyptian representations of the battle of Kadesh on the temple reliefs contain an iconographic anomaly, which is in striking contrast to the highly exaggerated rhetoric of the textual accounts. The victory scene of the Levantine town of Dapur shows complete submission with two specific iconographic characteristics: (a) Semites burning incense and (b) torn Hittite standards. The representation of the battle at Kadesh, on the other hand, lacks these two iconographic elements. Their absence can be explained as a reflection of the historical situation. In a certain sense this representation pays tribute to the historical truth, but it is likely that the average Egyptian observer would not have noticed this detail and would not have recognized the depiction of the battle scene of Kadesh as more than a simple representation of victory.

The campaign was followed by a nearly unique series of diplomatic letters between the two royal houses, the goal of which was to ensure peace between the two states.

A



B

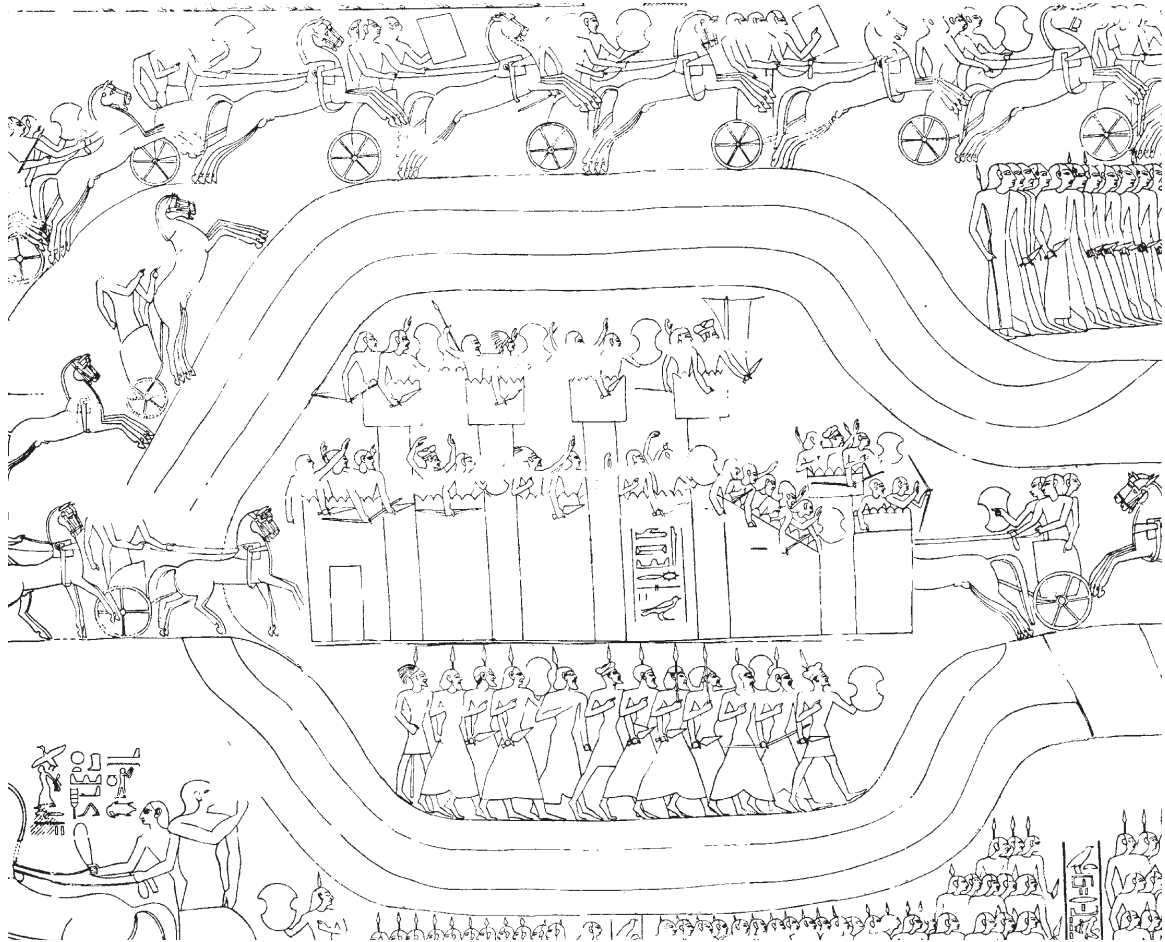


Figure 6.4a and 6.4b A. Dapur surrenders; B. Kadesh survives. After Wreszinski 1923–38.

The high point of this effort occurred in the 11th Year of Ramesses II's reign, when both states agreed to a peace treaty (Edel 1997). In structure and form it was quite unlike earlier Hittite treaties, and it is worth emphasizing that it was the first peace treaty in the history of the world that was formulated on the basis of parity. That is to say, it was made between two equal states. The originals, which were engraved on silver tables, are no longer preserved, but we have copies of the Egyptian version (in a Hittite copy) and the Hittite version (used in the west external wall of the *court de la cachette* at Karnak). The most important aspect of the treaty was concerned with the treatment of prisoners of war and the return of those who had deserted to the other side. It does not deal with questions about the frontier between the two powers. The contract was sealed by a diplomatic wedding between Ramesses and a daughter of Hattusili III, the Hittite king, but the marriage requested by Hattusili for himself to an Egyptian princess did not take place. According to Assmann (1983a) the diplomatic efforts described above were also aided by the Poem; in his effort for peace Ramesses the only obstacle was the influence of the military, so he defamed them in order to reduce their influence. Fecht (1984: especially 49), however, has opposed this interpretation on the grounds that it would have been suicide, in terms of foreign politics, to emphasize the cowardice of the military. The function of the Poem, in which the Egyptian army can hardly be seen as covering itself in glory, is still under discussion.

In the light of the new relationship with the Hittites Ramesses' other efforts in the realm of foreign affairs seem pale indeed, at least in the eyes of later judgements. Moreover, during his reign problems which should have heralded the end of the Bronze Age simply faded away. As a result of the increased maritime trade relations of the New Kingdom the Egyptians had been obliged to deal with a hitherto unknown phenomenon at the latest by the pre-Amarna period: piracy. Amenhotep, son of Hapu, the building master of Amenhotep III, tells us that he secured the Delta against intruders (*Urk.* IV, 1821,13–14). Ramesses II defeated a group of these pirates, the Sherden, and integrated some of them into the Egyptian army as his bodyguard. However, the respite was short-lived. His son and successor Merneptah had to face the threat of the Sherden again, as well as other groups, the Lukka, Tursha, Shekelesh and Aqaiwasha, who had allied themselves with Libyan tribes and threatened Egypt once again. The era of the invasions by Sea Peoples had begun.

The last phase of the reign of Ramesses II is largely marked by building activity and a lack of military campaigns. During his remarkably long reign of 67 years he outlived 12 of his sons who were placed in a collective grave (KV 5) in the Valley of the Kings. His successor was the thirteenth in line to the throne, Merneptah.

The rise and fall of Bay: conflicts of interest amongst the elite

In the succession of Merneptah we can observe two rival lineages competing for power. In this context, an official with the foreign name Bay, who was a common “scribe” and “Cup-bearer of the King” under Sety II, rose to become the “Great seal Keeper of the Entire Country.” This powerful man, close to the royal court, was executed in the fifth year of Siptah. Testimony for this execution is provided by an ostrakon from Deir el-Medina:

Year 5, the third month of the season of shomu, the 27th day.

On this day a scribe of the grave of Paser came to announce:

“Pharaoh (Life, Prosperity, Health) has executed (*sm3*) the *great enemy* Bay.”

The use of the Middle Egyptian word *sm3* could suggest a sacred dimension (Müller-Wollermann 2004: 196). The reason for the execution is not exactly clear to us, but one might suspect some kind of conflict of interest between factions, interest groups, and other powers. This corresponds to the fact that Bay was given the epithet *ir-sw* (“the man who made himself” = social climber) on Papyrus Harris I, 75, 4. His rise in social status ended in an abrupt execution, which was a matter of public interest that was announced in the settlement of workers at Deir el-Medina.

Ramesses III and the Sea Peoples

After Merneptah had beaten off an initial wave of Sea Peoples, it was followed almost half a century later in the reign of Ramesses III by a second wave that was to have enormous implications. The reliefs from Medinet Habu report that in the 8th Year there was a “league on their islands” consisting of Sherden, Shekelesh, Tjeker, Weshesh, Tursha, Danuna, Peleset and more besides. Coming from the north, it seems to have been more of a migration of peoples, quite unlike the campaigns that had occurred under Merneptah. The kingdoms of Arzawa, Hatti, Qedi, Karkemish, and Alashja (Cyprus) were destroyed, and destruction layers have been found from Hattusas in the north through Ugarit down to south Canaan. For the most part the Egyptian hold on the Levant was broken. The Sea Peoples were first stopped at the gateway to Egypt, where they were beaten in a land battle and in a sea battle at the mouth of the Nile in the East Delta. Ramesses III, following the example of his role-model Ramesses II, integrated some of the Sea Peoples into his army and settled others in the Levant. The best known of these are certainly the Peleset (“Philistines”) after whom the Romans named the province of Palestine.

The origins of the Sea People are still debated. The Danuna and Aqaiwasha seem to be Danaans and Achaeans – that is, Mycenaean Greeks, but the identification of other groups is more difficult. Are the Sherden from Sardinia, or was Sardinia their destination? Are the Tursha the same as the Tyrsenoi of later Greek texts, and thus the same as the Etruscans? According to ancient sources the Etruscans came from Asia Minor (Herodotos 1.94) which so far has yet to be proved. A Cretan origin is often assigned to the Philistines, mainly because of the Hebrew Bible, which describes them as an alliance of “Kreti and Pleti” (e.g. 2 Sam 8.18). Connected to this question of their origin is the issue of the cause of their wanderings. In the Migration Period which ended the Western Roman Empire, the invasion of Germanic tribes into the Roman-controlled Mediterranean was caused by the invasion of the Huns from the central Asian steppes. Pushing the Germans in front of them like a blister, the Huns played a major role in the destruction of the Ancient World. However, a similar scenario cannot be proved for the Late Bronze Age. This may be due to missing sources, but, without knowing the exact origins of the individual tribes of the Sea Peoples, it is impossible to give a reason for their migration. Were they themselves fleeing from other migrating peoples? Did they leave their places of residence because

of natural catastrophes, droughts or wars? Were they even complete tribes, or just parts of them? Only the migrations from the Aegean allow some basis for speculation, where the occurrence of earthquakes can be demonstrated at the end of the Bronze Age. It was probably these earthquakes, amongst other things, that dealt the death blow to the Mycenaean world, which had already been weakened by still unexplained factors.

The end of the Ramesside Period

The end of the Ramesside period was marked for the most part by short reigns as well as internal and external political unrest. In the 29th Year of Ramesses III's reign, a few years before his death, the workers of Deir el-Medina went on strike. Missing deliveries of supplies led the workers at the royal necropolis to down tools. Along with demonstrations with torches the workers also conducted sitting strikes near the *Houses of Millions of Years* in Western Thebes, where they hoped to obtain both an advocate and grain from the temple inventory (Vernus 1993: 82–99; Müller 2004). Further strikes occurred in the last years of this king, and in the first years of the next. Under Ramesses IX, in addition to economic and political problems of this sort, there was a phase of plundering the royal graves. A second phase of this occurred again under the final king of the dynasty, Ramesses XI. Under his rule, the Thebaid saw a civil-war situation develop between the viceroy of Kush, Panehsy, and the High Priest of Amun Amenhotep. Panehsy seems to have appropriated the responsibilities of the High Priest, and, because the priests were unwilling to accept him, he besieged them in the temple fortress of Medinet Habu. Ramesses XI granted a request for help from Amenhotep and sent his general Piankhy to Thebes, who succeeded in driving Panehsy into Nubia. After this the power of the Ramessides over Upper Egypt was broken, since Piankhy and his successor Herihor became the effective rulers of the area and even took over the office of High Priest. Their access to military and religious power allowed these new rulers to become the lords of the entire south of the country from which the theocratic state of Amun was formed. In Lower Egypt the power of the Ramessides was also dwindling. Libyan immigrants, who, since the Libyan wars of Ramesses III had often been deported to Egypt and settled in the Nile Delta, increasingly appear in the upper ranks of the Egyptian hierarchy. In the end, they succeeded in obtaining power over northern Egypt. The first ruler of this foreign dynasty was Smendes, who is described in the *Story of Wenamun* as the most powerful man in Lower Egypt, but, with the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt broken once more, Egypt entered a new phase of its history – the so-called Third Intermediate period.

FURTHER READING

On the Second Intermediate Period Ryholt 1997 is essential reading. The Eighteenth Dynasty continues to be a major focus of research. For Hatshepsut and the Thutmosid succession see Ratié 1979. Thutmose III has been studied by Redford 2003 and Cline and O'Connor 2006. On Ramesses II see Kitchen 1997 and on Ramesses III P. Grandet, *Ramsès III. Histoire d'un règne*, Paris 1993. For Egyptian imperial activities in Asia see Redford 1995 and Morris 2004.