

## Role and contribution of prominent officials within Egypt and the empire

While the pharaoh had responsibility for the inspiration and direction of internal and foreign affairs, it was his officials who carried out pharaonic policy and ensured its success. Initially it was the military officials who played the most prominent roles. Men such as Ahmose son of Ebana and Ahmose Pennekhbet were not only instrumental in pharaohs' victories, they recorded their contributions in their tomb biographies, thereby leaving invaluable evidence for scholars reconstructing the expulsion and its aftermath.

### Civil administration

As the 'empire' grew, a vast bureaucracy of civil officials became necessary to administer both internal and external policy. At the head of the civil administration stood the vizier who was directly responsible to the pharaoh for all of the branches of national government. The complexity of the New Kingdom administration required two viziers, one for the north and one for the south, although most of our evidence relates to the southern (Theban) vizier in this period. He was the chief financial officer in charge of taxation and tribute, he acted as chief judge in legal affairs and had overall responsibility for the royal building program. He also acted on behalf of the king in foreign affairs such as the reception of the annual tribute. Perhaps the best-known vizier of this period was Rekhmire who served both Thutmose III and Amenhotep II.

Below the vizier were other important officials such as the overseers of the treasury, overseers of the granaries and overseers of building works and members of the provincial administration such as nomarchs and mayors. The official Neferperet was chief treasurer and overseer of building works at Abydos during the reign of Ahmose. He was responsible for the reopening of the Tura quarry, which was the source of the fine limestone used for casing stones and other projects after the expulsion of the Hyksos. A notable nomarch of the early New Kingdom period was Paheri of Nekheb who lived during the reigns of Thutmose II, Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. As provincial governor, Paheri performed similar duties to the vizier, albeit on a much reduced scale. He was responsible for tax collection, justice and the local religious cults in his nome. He also made an important contribution to the economy through his supervision of the weighing and transportation to Thebes of the gold that was mined in the desert near Nekheb.

Because of the importance of Thebes, its mayor was a high ranking member of the provincial administration. He worked with the southern vizier to oversee the great building projects of Thebes. His duties included supervision of the workers' village at Deir el-Medina and the organisation of the great religious festivals of the Theban year. The mayor of Thebes during the reign of Amenhotep II was Sennefer, who no doubt enjoyed a close relationship with the vizier of the time, Amenemopet, who happened to be his brother. These two men enjoyed such favour with the king that they were both given tombs in the Valley of the Kings (a privilege usually reserved for royalty).

### Religious officials

The religious administration was headed by the chief priest (or first prophet) of Amun, who was also chief overseer of all the other religious cults. We have already seen how important this office became during the early New Kingdom, when the chief priest of Amun, Hapuseneb, also held the post of vizier during the reign of Hatshepsut. Other important members of the religious hierarchy were responsible for administering the finances and estates of the various cults, and these included the second prophet and stewards of the gods. Senenmut, a chief official of Hatshepsut's reign, had considerable influence in his role as chief steward of Amun.

### The King's estate

The pharaoh's personal estate and affairs were administered by officials, the most important of whom included the chancellor (personal seal-bearer of the king), the chamberlain and the chief steward. Kenamun, a boyhood companion of Amenhotep II, who had also served with him on campaigns, was appointed steward of the King's household, an important and lucrative position. The same position under Thutmose IV was occupied by a close personal friend of the king, Tjenuna, who also held the post of steward of Amun.

## Administration of empire

The most important official in the administration of the empire in this period was the Viceroy of Kush. As the king's senior deputy in the south, this official governed the whole of Nubia, which was divided into two regions: Wawat (Lower Nubia) and Kush (Upper Nubia). Each was administered by a deputy answerable to the Viceroy. The Viceroy of Kush controlled the Nubian forts, the military, the collection of taxes and the building of temple towns. The career of Usersatet, under Amenhotep II, is a good example of the importance of this position. There is much less evidence for imperial administration in Syria–Palestine during this period. The machinery for this was first established during the reign of Thutmose III and was initially carried out by garrison commanders and local vassal princes.

### For further investigation

A useful discussion of administration in the 18th Dynasty can be found in Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 269–71.

### Activity: Extended response

- 1 Synthesise your knowledge of the role and contribution of officials by using the information in this section and in other relevant parts of this chapter then creating a table similar to one of the examples below. Where you can, find specific evidence for an official, for example, a tomb, an inscription or other evidence.

#### Example table style 1:

Pharaoh	Civil administration		Religious	Military
	Egypt	Empire		
Ahmose	Neferperet (chief treasurer)			

#### Example table style 2:

Official	Title/role	Pharaoh served	Contribution/impact	Evidence
Neferperet	Chief treasurer	Ahmose		

- 2 Use the information you have compiled in the table and the same format as in the previous extended response to plan and write an essay on the topic: Assess the contribution of (name of prominent official) to the development of New Kingdom Egypt.

## EXPANSION OF EGYPT'S BOUNDARIES

The expulsion of the Hyksos signalled the beginning of an age of militarism. In the century that followed the Hyksos wars, Egypt embarked on a policy of expansion in both Syria–Palestine and Nubia. Ahmose laid the foundations of this policy in the north by taking the war against the Hyksos into their homeland at Sharuhem in Southern Palestine. In the south, his conquest of the Kerma Nubians who had allied themselves with the hated Hyksos, also opened the way for further Egyptian expansion. Ahmose's successors campaigned vigorously, for the most part, to 'extend Egypt's boundaries with might', the greatest expansion occurring during the reign of Thutmose III. To what extent Egypt had developed 'an empire' in this period is open to question.

The accounts of these campaigns reveal the enormous political, religious and economic benefits of conquest. Politically, the ideology of kingship was increasingly based on the concept of an all-conquering warrior pharaoh whose successes were linked to the mighty god, Amun-Re. His cult became the wealthiest in the land thanks to donations of booty and tribute, and to an increase in trade. These resulted from the opening up of the north and the south by the army. The wealth that flowed into Egypt stimulated the development of a grandiose building program, requiring a large labour force controlled by a complex network of officials. Military conquest, therefore, played a central role in the development of the New Kingdom.

## Development and role of the army

The permanent military campaigning of the early New Kingdom brought about important changes in the structure and operation of the Egyptian army. In Old Kingdom times, a fighting force was conscripted as the need arose. By the Middle Kingdom, more frequent campaigning in Nubia saw the beginnings of a professional fighting force and a distinct military hierarchy. Now in the New Kingdom, with warfare as a constant activity, a standing army was essential. In a similar manner to a modern state, Egypt required a professional, well-trained armed force.

## Composition and tactics of the army

The core of the Egyptian army was the infantry, which included archers and rank-and-file foot soldiers. In battle, the archers formed the front line, firing their volleys of arrows into the advancing enemy to break their line of attack. The massed ranks of infantry followed using their close-range weapons, including the *khepesh* and the axe to complete the slaughter.

The infantry was supported by the new chariot divisions, which revolutionised warfare by adding both mobility and the element of surprise. During an attack the chariotry would charge at full speed at the enemy, showering them with their arrows as they passed by the massed ranks of infantry. Once the enemy lines were broken, the light, easily manoeuvrable chariots could pursue and harass the scattered foot soldiers. In time, the chariotry became an elite corps of the Egyptian army known as the *maryannu* (young heroes). From this time onwards, the holders of the office of the viceroy of Nubia, the chief administrator of Nubia, were recruited from the members of the chariotry (see Profile: The Army).

Foreign contingents of soldiers also served in the Egyptian army. The most significant of these were the Medjay Nubians who were used as scouts and especially as skilled archers. Other foreign contingents, usually serving as mercenaries, were incorporated into the Egyptian army as the wars of expansion widened.

## Organisation of the army

The early New Kingdom army was composed of two divisions named after the chief gods Amun of Thebes and Re of Heliopolis. Numbers of soldiers within each unit were:

- division—approximately 5000
- host—approximately 500
- company—250
- platoon—50
- squad—10.

## Command structure

The pharaoh himself was the supreme commander of the army. Below him was the commander-in-chief, usually a son of the king, and below him, chief deputies of the northern and southern corps, representing Lower and Upper Egypt respectively. The upper echelon of military command comprised the generals, the scribes of infantry, host commanders, standard bearers and adjutants (deputies) for the above. These staff posts were restricted to educated men who usually began their career as young scribes, carrying out basic clerical duties such as pay and account keeping and stores records. The next step on the career path was as chief army clerk, responsible for general secretarial work such as report writing. From here one could expect to become scribe of recruits who supervised the conscription and allocation of new recruits.

Military strategy was usually devised in a council comprising the pharaoh and his generals. The *Annals* of Thutmose III give us some evidence of how the pharaoh consulted with his war council (see Sequence chart of the Megiddo campaign of Thutmose III).

The lower ranks were organised into combat and non-combat roles. Combat officers included leaders of platoons, garrisons and squads as well. On the bottom rung of the ladder came the ordinary infantrymen. Non-combat personnel included scribes responsible for equipment, weaponry,

rations, and the day-to-day record keeping of the army's activities. Some were also deployed in other non-combat areas such as mining, quarrying and building.

## Role of the navy

The Egyptian navy operated largely as a means of transporting soldiers and equipment in the campaigns of the early New Kingdom and as such was part of the army. For example, the navy was involved in the campaigns against the Hyksos transporting the king and his soldiers from Thebes in the south to battle sites such as Avaris in the north. The well-known soldier Ahmose son of Ebana began his career as a marine. He distinguished himself both as a marine and a soldier in the Hyksos campaigns under King Ahmose and also in the Nubian campaign of Amenhotep I and the Syrian campaigns of Thutmose I. The navy also featured in the logistical strategy of Thutmose III, where it was used to transport men and equipment to the coastal ports of Syria in preparation for the campaign against the Mitanni. A notable feature of this campaign was Thutmose's transportation of pre-fabricated boats from the Syrian coast by land to the Euphrates River, to enable the army to cross over and attack the Mitanni.



# PROFILE

## THE ARMY: AN ATTRACTIVE CAREER

It is clear from the accounts of career soldiers such as Ahmose son of Ebana (Source 15), Ahmose Pennekhbet (Source 16) and Usersatet (Source 17) that an army career offered outstanding opportunities for reward and promotion.

Officers—and even rank-and-file soldiers who demonstrated exceptional bravery—received land, gold and slaves as rewards for their valour. We should not forget the desire for adventure and foreign travel that would have drawn many an Egyptian boy to the army. Add to that the honour of fighting with the pharaoh for the glory of Egypt and the social prestige of being on the winning side. A potent mix!

Most significantly, the importance of the army's

role in building the empire contributed to its growing status as a new social élite. It allowed men of all classes access to power. By the end of the 18th Dynasty, army generals like Horemheb were able to become pharaohs.

### **Distinguished service: the career of Ahmose son of Ebana**

Ahmose son of Ebana was one of the most decorated soldiers of the early New Kingdom. His family, loyal followers of the Theban princes, came from ElKab, an important centre of support for the new dynasty. His father had served under Seqenenre of the late 17th Dynasty. In the following source he proudly records each of his major promotions under the pharaohs whom he served.



**FIGURE 16**  
Gold flies of valour, a decoration of the early New Kingdom this necklace was found in the tomb of Ahhotep (the Younger)

## SOURCE 15

### From the biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

(i) Service under King Ahmose in the Hyksos campaigns: I have been rewarded with gold seven times in the sight of the whole land with male and female slaves as well. I have been endowed with very many fields ... I became a soldier ... on the ship 'The Wild Bull' in the time of the Lord of the Two Lands, Nebpehtire [Ahmose]. I followed the sovereign on foot when he rode about on his chariot. When the town of Avaris was besieged, I fought bravely on foot in his Majesty's presence. Thereupon, I was appointed to the ship 'Rising in Memphis' ...

(ii) Promotion under Amenhotep I: ... I conveyed King Djoserkare [Amenhotep I] ... when he sailed south to Kush, to enlarge the borders of Egypt ... Now I was in the van [that is, front] of our troops and I fought really well. His majesty saw my valour, I carried off two hands and presented them to his majesty ... and I carried off a living captive and presented him to his majesty. I brought his majesty back to Egypt in two days from 'Upper Well [that is, at First Cataract] and was rewarded with gold ... Then they made me 'Warrior of the Ruler' ...

(iii) Promotion under Thutmose I: Then I conveyed King Aakheperkare [Thutmose I] ... when he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer [Egyptian term for Nubia], to crush rebellion throughout the lands ... I was brave in his presence in the bad water, in the towing of the ship over the cataract. Thereupon I was made crew commander ...

Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, pp. 12–14

### The career of Ahmose Pennekhbet

Like Ahmose son of Ebana, Ahmose Pennekhbet came from ElKab. His long military career spanned the reigns of the kings from Ahmose to the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Among the rewards he received during his career were: golden bracelets, necklaces, armbands, daggers, golden flies and axes. Source 15 is from his tomb biography.

### The career of Usersatet

Another document from much later in our period during the reign of Amenhotep II is a personal letter from the pharaoh to Usersatet, his viceroy in Nubia. Usersatet had developed a close, personal relationship with the king, beginning as a 'child of the nursery' (one of the boys who grew up with the king). He began his career as a royal herald and later served in the military as a member of the king's chariot corps. His final and highest promotion was as Viceroy of Nubia. In this letter, Amenhotep, celebrating the twenty-third anniversary of his accession, fondly recalls his youthful days of military campaigning in Syria–Palestine with Usersatet. He concludes with some advice for Usersatet about how to handle the Nubians. Usersatet was so proud of this evidence of his friendship with the pharaoh that he had the letter inscribed on a stone stela and set up in the fort at Semna in Nubia.<sup>21</sup>

## Understanding and using the sources

Sources 15, 16 and 17

Explain what is revealed about the following aspects of these soldiers' careers: methods of fighting, role of foot soldiers, marines, chariotry, and treatment of the enemy, rewards, relationship with the pharaoh.

## SOURCE 16

### From the biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

I was not separated from the king upon the battlefield, from (the time of) King Nebpehtire (Ahmose I), triumphant, to King Okheperre (Thutmose II), triumphant; I was in the favour of the King's presence until King Menkheperre (Thutmose III), living forever ... I have attained a good old age, having had a life of royal favor, having had honor under their majesties and the love of me having been in the court.

Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, pp. 11–12, p. 259

## SOURCE 17

### The Semna Stela of Usersatet

Year 23, fourth month of Akhet [season of inundation], day 1, the day of the festival of the king's accession. Copy of an order which his Majesty made with his own two hands for [the king's son, Usersatet] ... of Pharaoh—Life! Prosperity! Health!—while sitting and drinking, and making holiday ... might, brave with strong arm, who binds [the northerners, and who overthrows the southerners(?)] in all of their places. There are no enemies left in any land.

You sit ... a brave one, who takes plunder from all lands, a chariot soldier who fights for his Majesty, Amenophis, who-rules-in-Heliopolis ... Naharin ... ; the [possessor of a wo] man from Babylon, and a servant from Byblos, of a young maiden from Alalakh and an old lady from Arrapkha ...<sup>22</sup> The people of Tahksy are completely worthless. Of what are they trustworthy?<sup>23</sup>

Further speech to the king's son: Do not trust the Nubians, but be wary of their people and of their magicians. Watch the servant of private citizens whom you have brought in order to promote him.

URK IV, 1343–44, cited in Der Manuelian, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II*, pp. 157–8

<sup>21</sup> Der Manuelian, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II*, pp. 154–5

<sup>22</sup> Amenhotep II boastfully refers to the women he himself has taken as part of the 'spoils of war' during his campaigns in Syria–Palestine

<sup>23</sup> Tahksy was an area on the upper Orontes River in Syria between Kadesh and Damascus; it revolted from Egypt and was attacked by Amenhotep II in his Syrian campaign of year 3



## Establishment of empire: Military campaigns in Nubia

Egypt's earliest contacts with Nubia date to Old Kingdom times. They were mostly trading and mining expeditions to exploit the valuable resources of the region. These included gold and copper mines and quarries of diorite, granite and amethyst in Lower Nubia. Of particular importance for Egypt was the fact that Nubia acted as a trading corridor to central Africa, through which exotic products of the interior such as **frankincense**, **myrrh**, ebony, ivory and precious oils reached Egypt. During Middle Kingdom times, the Egyptians began to establish a more permanent presence there by building fortresses, such as those at Buhen and Semna between the Second and Third Cataracts. Their purpose was to secure Egypt's access to the rich resources of the region and protect trading missions from attack by Nubian tribes.

### Egyptian policy in Nubia in the New Kingdom

During the New Kingdom the province of Nubia extended southwards from Aswan to the district of Napata (modern Sudan). As we have already seen, the warlike Kerma people (the most powerful of the tribes of Kush) posed a major threat to Egypt at the beginning of this historical period (see Sources 2 to 6).

Once the 18th Dynasty was established, Egyptian policy towards Nubia was dictated by both political and economic necessity. Politically it was designed to protect Egypt's southern border from further threat, and economically it was designed to guarantee safe access to the resources of the region. It was not long before these aims were expressed in imperial language and deeds—the conquest of Nubia soon became the order of the day.

### Campaigns of Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I

The military conquest of Nubia took some years to accomplish. Lower Nubia (the district of Wawat) was more quickly subdued than Upper Nubia, the heartland of the Kush. It held out for some time offering fierce resistance to a number of warrior pharaohs. The first campaigns into Nubia in this period were conducted by Kamose and Ahmose, who were bent on driving back the Kerma Nubians who had captured the Egyptian fort at Buhen. The campaigns of Kamose and Ahmose resulted in the recapture of Buhen, which was to serve as a launching pad for future expansion.

Amenhotep I and Thutmose I continued to campaign in the south, both leaving records of their victories at sites including Sai and Tombos. Thutmose I built a fort at Tombos (Third Cataract) to mark the new southern boundary of Egypt's control. The Nubian campaigns conducted by Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I were also recorded by the two soldiers who fought in these campaigns, Ahmose son of Ebana and Ahmose Pennekhbet.

### Other methods of control

In addition to regular military campaigns to deal with rebellion and unrest among the Nubian tribes, the pharaohs of this early period employed a number of other methods to consolidate their control. These included the strengthening of existing forts, the establishment of Egyptian colonies clustered around temple-towns and—beginning in the reign of Amenhotep I—the setting up of a system of imperial administration headed by the important viceroy of Nubia, often referred to as the 'king's son of Kush'.<sup>24</sup>

### Final conquest under Thutmose II and his successors

Kush continued to rebel and was finally pacified sometime between the reigns of Thutmose II and Thutmose III. The Aswan Inscription of Thutmose II records a major campaign to quash an uprising, somewhere between the Third and Fourth Cataracts. In this campaign, ruthless punishment was meted out to the rebels, and all, except one son of the ruler of Kush, were put to death. Disturbances broke out again during the reign of Hatshepsut, who has left a record of at least two campaigns in Upper Nubia during her reign. One of these may have been led by Thutmose III late in their joint reign.

<sup>24</sup> The earliest evidence of the use of this title dates to the reign of Thutmose IV: Bryan, *The Reign of Thutmose IV*

## Sequence chart of the Nubian campaigns of the early 18th Dynasty

### 1 AHMOSE

Now when his Majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer [below the Second Cataract] to destroy the Nubian Bowmen. His majesty made a great slaughter among them ... His majesty journeyed north, his heart rejoicing in valor and victory. He had conquered southerners, northerners ...

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

### 2 AMENHOTEP I

(i) Then I conveyed King Djoserkare [Amenhotep I], when he sailed south to Kush, to enlarge the borders of Egypt. His majesty smote that Nubian Bowman in the midst of his army. They were carried off in fetters, none missing, the fleeing destroyed as if they had never been ... Then his people and his cattle were pursued, and I carried off a living captive and presented him to his majesty ...

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

(ii) I followed King Djoserkare [Amenhotep I], triumphant, I captured for him in Kush, a living prisoner ...

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

### 3 THUTMOSE I

(i) Then I conveyed King Aakheperkare [Thutmose I] ... when he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer to crush rebellion throughout the lands, to repel the intruders from the desert region ... Then his majesty [was informed that the Nubian] ... At this, his majesty became enraged like a leopard. His majesty shot, and his first arrow pierced the chest of that foe. Then those [enemies turned to flee], helpless before his *Uraeus*. A slaughter was made among them; their dependents were carried off as living captives. His majesty journeyed north, all foreign lands in his grasp, and that wretched Nubian Bowman head downward at the bow of his majesty's ship 'Falcon' ...

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

(ii) I followed the King Aakheperkare [Thutmose I], triumphant; I captured for him in Kush, two living prisoners, besides three living prisoners, whom I brought off in Kush, without counting them.

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

(iii) He hath overthrown the chief of the [Nubians] ... there is not a single survivor amongst them ... the Nubian Troglodytes [that is, ugly, sub-human creatures] fall by the sword ... the fragments cut from them are too much for the birds, carrying off the prey to another place ... The lords of the palace have made a fortress for his army, [called] 'None-Faces-Him-Among-the-Nine-Bows-Together' [a reference to the Tombos fortress]; like a young panther among the fleeing cattle; the fame of his majesty blinded them.

Tombos Stela of Thutmose I

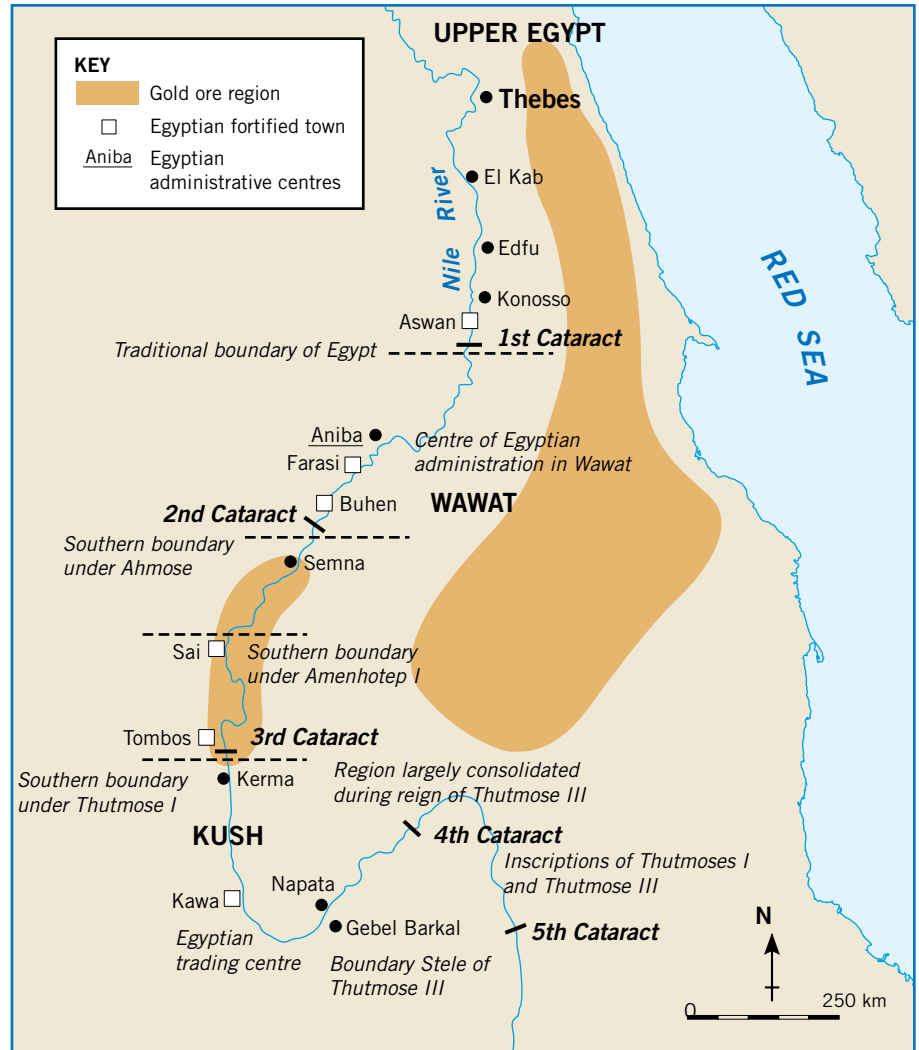


FIGURE 17

#### 4 THUTMOSE II

One came to inform his majesty as follows: 'the wretched Kush has begun to rebel ... The inhabitants of Egypt [that is, Egyptian colonists in Nubia] are about to bring away the cattle behind this fortress that thy father built [that is, the one built by Thutmose I at Tombos] ... His majesty was furious like a panther, when he heard this. Said his majesty 'I swear, as Re loves me, as my father, lord of gods, Amun, lord of Thebes, favours me, I will not let live anyone among their males' ... Then his majesty despatched a numerous army into Nubia ... this army of his majesty overthrew those barbarians; they did not let anyone live among their males ... except one of those children of the wretched Kush, who was taken away alive as a living prisoner with their people to his majesty ... This land was made subject of his majesty as formerly ...

Aswan Inscription of Thutmose II

#### 5 HATSHEPSUT

(i) I followed the good god, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt [Makare] [that is, Hatshepsut] may she live! I saw when he [sic] overthrew the Nubian bowmen, and when their chiefs were brought to him as living captives. I saw when he razed Nubia, I being in his majesty's following ...

Inscription of Tiy, from Hatshepsut's temple at Sehel on the island of Elephantine (First Cataract)—note that scribes used both 'he' and 'she' to refer to Hatshepsut, indicating the difficulty they had writing about a female pharaoh in a language designed for male pharaohs

(ii) I saw the collection of booty by this mighty ruler from the vile Kush, who are deemed cowards, the female sovereign, given life, prosperity and health forever.

Stela of Djehuty

#### 6 THUTMOSE III

(i) List of these south countries, [115 names of Nubian towns/districts are given] the Nubian Troglodytes of Khenthenofer, whom his majesty overthrew, making a great slaughter among them, [whose] number is unknown, and carrying away all their subjects as living captives to Thebes, in order to fill the storehouse of his father, Amun-Re, lord of Thebes.

Inscription from 6th Pylon of Thutmose III

(ii) ... among the negroes, given from chiefs and living captives, [...] for divine offerings of Amun, when Kush, the wretched, was overthrown; together with the tribute of all countries, which his majesty gave to the temple of Amun as yearly dues, for the sake of the life, prosperity, and health of King Thutmose III.

Tomb Biography of Ineni

#### 7 AMENHOTEP II

... glorious arising of his Majesty ... upon the great Throne-platform, in order to proclaim wonders for his army, [victorious?] and steady in the fray [battle]. The expedition ... that stood in the presence of his Majesty and brought the tribute of the southern foreign lands in front of this perfect god, while the courtiers gave praise and the army revered his Majesty ...

Inscription of Usersatet

#### 8 THUTMOSE IV

Behold, his majesty was in ... Karnak ... One came to say to his majesty: 'The Negro descends from above Wawat; he hath planned revolt against Egypt. He gathers to himself all the barbarians and the revolters of other countries ... his majesty proceeded to overthrow the [Negro] in Nubia ... His army came to him, numerous—with his mighty sword. The fear of him entered into every body ... He coursed through the eastern highland, he traversed the ways like a jackal ...

The Konosso Inscription—this inscription was cut into the rock-face near the island of Philae (Aswan at the First Cataract)



We know that Thutmose III left extensive records of his Nubian activities, although there is limited evidence of specific military campaigns during his sole reign. It seems likely that the major work of pacification had been accomplished by his predecessors and that Thutmose III's contribution was a consolidation of Egypt's control. However, he is credited with having achieved the greatest extension of Egypt's southern boundary, at Napata (the Fourth Cataract) as evidenced by his building of a temple to Amun at nearby Gebel Barkal.<sup>25</sup>

After this time there is less military activity. There is one reference to a possible campaign during the reign of Amenhotep II and one campaign is recorded for year eight of the reign of Thutmose IV. However, despite the claims in Thutmose IV's Konosso Inscription of a widespread Nubian revolt, this was most likely a punitive raid against Nubians attacking Egyptian gold caravans near Edfu. Figure 18 provides an overview of the Nubian campaigns of the pharaohs of this period and the main evidence for them.

### Activity: Summary

Use the information provided in this section and in the sequence chart on pages 34–35 to record Egypt's military campaigns in Nubia in the following table. The first one has been modelled for you.

Pharaoh	Location of battle/s	Relevant details	Evidence	Significance
Ahmose	Buhen	Defeat of Nubian bowmen Recapture of fort at Second Cataract	Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana	Southern frontier protected Buhen secured as launch pad for future expansion

### For discussion

- What evidence do the records of the pharaohs and their officials in the sequence chart reveal about the motives for the campaigns and Egyptian attitudes to the enemy?
- Why was the conquest of Nubia essential to the development of the early 18th Dynasty?
- What historiographical issues can you identify in the sources for this section?

### Activity: Extended response

Using the table you have completed and other relevant information, plan and write an answer to the following: **ASSESS** the importance of military campaigns against Nubia in the development of the early 18th Dynasty.

#### Hint:

- identify the important features of the military campaigns against Nubia
- use these features to structure your answer—avoid a purely narrative structure
- make judgements of the relevant importance of these features
- use specific evidence to support your assessment
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.

<sup>25</sup> It is likely that both Thutmose I and Thutmose II may have penetrated as far as Napata from the evidence of building remains at the site

## Establishment of empire: Military campaigns in Syria–Palestine

As with Nubia, Egypt's relations with its Asian neighbours in Syria–Palestine (which the Egyptians called Retjenu) before the New Kingdom were dominated by trading interests. The 160-kilometre stretch of the Sinai desert formed a natural border with Palestine. From Middle Kingdom times onwards Egypt constructed a network of fortresses along this border, both to protect its north-eastern border and to facilitate its access to the valuable resources of Asia. Some of the materials that Egypt obtained from mining and trade expeditions included turquoise, gold and copper from Sinai, silver from Anatolia and cedar from Byblos in Lebanon (Egypt lacked timber of any quality for building purposes). A particularly valuable resource was lapis lazuli (a semi-precious stone of deep blue colouring used in jewellery) which reached Egypt from Afghanistan via well-established trading networks.

### Egypt's policy in Syria–Palestine during the New Kingdom

From the time of Ahmose's expulsion of the Hyksos, the issue of border protection became an important priority. New forts were constructed on the eastern border to create a buffer zone between Egypt and its neighbours. The survival and consolidation of the new dynasty in Thebes also relied on maintaining the wealth that came from trade with the north (much of which had previously been in Hyksos hands). As we have already seen, the gleeful cataloguing of the rich booty in the aftermath of the Hyksos defeat is important evidence that economic interests, as much as political ones, dictated Egypt's policy in Syria–Palestine.

The political situation in Syria–Palestine was much more complex than that in Nubia at this time. Beyond the Sinai, home of the nomadic Shasu Bedouin tribes, lay the settled and developed city-states of Palestine, including important towns such as Megiddo and prosperous trading ports such as Byblos. It is important to remember that control of Kadesh was the key to the control of Syria. It was a well-fortified town at the headwaters of the Orontes River. It was also strategically and economically the most important gateway linking the trading ports of the Phoenician coast with Syria and the kingdoms beyond. In our period these kingdoms included Naharin (the home of the Mitanni and the dominant power in the region during the early New Kingdom), Babylonia and Assyria. Later in the period, it included the emerging Hittite power.

Syria–Palestine during the New Kingdom consisted of what Redford aptly calls 'a welter of jockeying states'.<sup>26</sup> There was competition and conflict, both between the powerful kingdoms of the north and the smaller towns of Syria–Palestine. They all fought for territory, resources and access to trade. The Mitanni wished to expand into Syria at the same time that the Egyptians, under the Thutmosid pharaohs, began to establish their own sphere of influence in the region. The smaller, vulnerable towns were tied to the more powerful states by a complex network of alliances and treaties. In effect, they became vassals of these greater powers. They received protection from enemy attack in return for supporting their overlords.

#### For discussion

- What were the main features of Egyptian policy in Syria–Palestine?
- Why was policy in Syria–Palestine different from that in Nubia?
- What role did diplomacy play?

<sup>26</sup> Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, p. 149