

Lecture 13 The Hyksos



HIST 213 Spring 2012

The Hyksos Kingdom (15th Dynasty)



- 1720 BCE Hyksos establish capital in Avaris
- 1640 captured Memphis
- Next 100 years Egypt divided between:
 - Lower Egypt (Hyksos)
 - Upper Egypt (Theban Princes)

According to Manetho

Around 1720 BCE the centralized control of Egypt collapsed

- local rulers of the Delta took control of various parts of Lower Egypt
 - Manetho's 14th Dynasty.
- Meanwhile, 13th Dynasty kings in Upper Egypt were quickly losing control of the northern and southern territories
 - eventually reduced to rule in a small area between south of Abydos and Thebes.

Josephus quotes Manetho as follows:

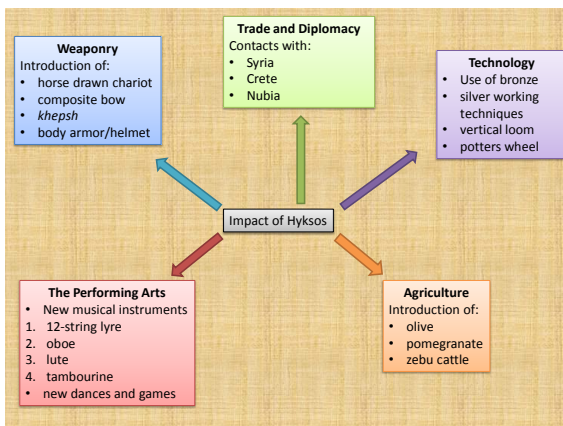
and unexpectedly from the regions of the East invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land. By main force they easily seized it without striking a blow; and having overpowered the rulers of the land, they then burned our cities ruthlessly, razed to the ground the temples of the gods, and treated all the natives with cruel hostility, massacring some and leading into slavery the wives and children of the others.

Sophisticated military technology



- horse drawn chariot
- composite bow and quivers
 - 200 yards further
- slashing sword (*khepsh*)
- penetrating axe
- helmets and body armor





Weaponry
Introduction of:

- horse drawn chariot
- composite bow
- *khepsh*
- body armor/helmet

Trade and Diplomacy
Contacts with:

- Syria
- Crete
- Nubia

Technology

- Use of bronze
- silver working techniques
- vertical loom
- potters wheel

The Performing Arts

- New musical instruments
- 1. 12-string lyre
- 2. oboe
- 3. lute
- 4. tambourine
- new dances and games

Agriculture
Introduction of:

- olive
- pomegranate
- zebu cattle

Cultural traits of the Hyksos

A mixture of Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traits

- West Semitic
 - Some were economic migrants, some captured at Egyptian campaigns in the Levant coast.
- Houses and tombs
 - burial customs: tomb next to the house
 - burial of donkeys
 - body in contracted position
 - Syro-Palestinian style pottery

Enemies along the Nile

Hyksos

- Auserra Apepi (r. 1600 BCE)
- Exceptionally long reign
 - at least 40 years
- Extensive trade relations
 - claimed to be King of Upper and Lower Egypt but in reality, never ruled below Cusae.

Theban Kings

- Seqenenre Taa (r. 1560 BCE)
 - Last Theban king of the 17th Dynasty
- began campaigning in Middle Egypt and succeeded to regain some of the lost territory
 - formed as Hyksos alliance

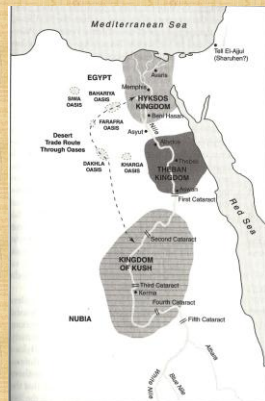
Kingdom of Kush

Kushite kings sought an alliance with the Hyksos.

- evidence is attested in Kamose Inscription and trade relations using the oasis route in the Western Desert
- never realized.

Doubtful that the so-called "Hyksos Kingdom" included Palestine and even eastern Syria

- influx of Canaanites became even greater after the Hyksos takeover of the Delta
- Levant city-states retained their independence during this period.



Cultural traits of the Thebans



- **Anthropoid coffins**
 - made of sycamore or tamarisk as opposed to rectangular coffin made of cedar
- **Loss of the 'hieroglyphic tradition'**
 - appearance of hieratic writing due to lack of training from the scribal schools in Memphis
 - loss of contact with the Memphite scribal school led to the creation of new texts and a new compilation of funerary spells.
 - The first known copy of the **Book of the Dead** was developed during the 16th Dynasty

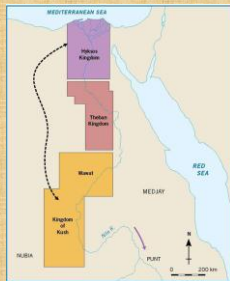


The Hippopotamus Affair

Kamose (1555-1550 BCE)

Kamose, son of Ahmose I followed his father's footsteps.
 First he retook Buhen

- drove the Kerma Nubians south
- Then turned northward
 - assembled a flotilla and conducted a campaign in Hyksos territory.



Here is an excerpt from a threat of Kamose against Apepi (Apophis), the ruler of the Hyksos at the time:



"I have to engage with him (in battle): I intend to cut open his belly. My intention is to take (back) Egypt and smite the Asiatics."



*"Your back will see evil, since my army is in the back of you.
The women of Avaris will not conceive ...
I will make Apophis see a wretched time."*

He sacked Nefrusy, north of Cusae, and the following excerpt shows the ferocity of the fight:

"as lions are with their prey, so were my army with their servants, their cattle, their milk, fat, and honey, in dividing up their possessions with joyous hearts."

Nefrusy was only an ally of the Hyksos, so its sack must have been punitive and a warning for the other allies.

The Kamose Stelae 17th Dynasty

In celebration of the Hyksos campaign Kamose erected two victory stelae in the Temple of Amun at Karnak after his triumphal entering to Thebes.

They are considered historical and a good source of information of what was the actual situation and what happened.



*“One chief is in Avaris,
another in Kush, and I
[Kamose] sit (here)
associated with an Asiatic
and a Nubian! Each man
has his slice in this Egypt
and so the land is
partitioned with me! None
can pass through it as far
as Memphis (although it is)
Egyptian water!*



*See he [the Hyksos king]
(even) has Hermopolis! No one
can be at ease when they are
milked by the taxes of the
Asiatics! I shall grapple with
him that I might crush his
belly, (for) my desire is to
rescue Egypt which the
Asiatics have destroyed.”*

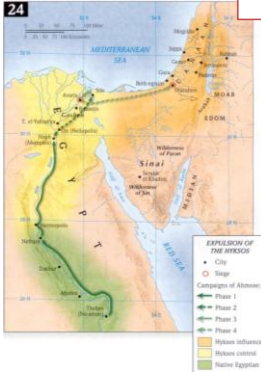


“Expulsion” of the Hyksos

Kamose died shortly afterwards but nearly completed his lifetime goal

- the southern border was strong again
- in the north Hyksos power was seriously reduced
- Ahmose (1550-1525 BCE) finished the job
 - battle hardened younger brother

Expulsion of the Hyksos



- 1551 Ahmose I drives Hyksos from Avaris and pursues into Canaan
- Amenhotep I expands East



siege of Hermopolis against the Hyksos

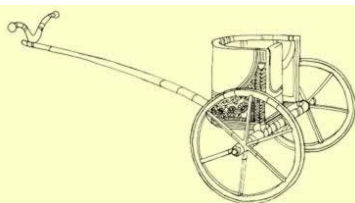
“Expulsion of the Hyksos”

a historical text written by one of the soldiers, from Upper Egypt

- narrates repeated attacks of King Ahmose I on the Hyksos at Avaris
- gives some details of the follow up military campaign in the Levant
 - does not mention Kamose's gains although his predecessors fought under Seqenenre Taa and Kamose.

Ahmose bypassed Memphis

- took Heliopolis
- moved his army east of the city to cut off the Hyksos from retreat
- then laid siege of Avaris



Egyptian Chariot

- D shape of lighter wood
- belly-bar and leg straps
- greater tensile strength
- central yoke and axle
- moved to the rear
- special quiver for archer





horse, chariot and composite bow

The future of Tell el-Dab'a (18th Dynasty)

After the sack and destruction of Avaris, the city and the fortress have been rebuilt.

- Minoan style frescoes
 - (connection with Crete?)
- The eruption of the Thera volcano possibly in 1628 BCE
 - traditional date is 1530 BC during the reign of Ahmose
 - pumice dated later in the reign of Amenhotep I to Tuthmose III



Utility of the “foreign invader” for Egyptian unification

- Hyksos act as a foil for a new “national” narrative
- expulsion of foreign invader and reestablishment of central monarchy memorialized as a “traumatic experience” and a moment of national glory
- Royal representation also changes
 - king now endows temples to show piety
 - helps with legitimacy and bureaucratic administration
 - embellishment of temples (Amun-Ra at Thebes)

Foundation of the New Kingdom

The 17th Dynasty Theban kings fought the Hyksos for over 20 years.

- Ahmose I, the first king of the 18th Dynasty finally defeated the foreign rulers and Egypt became once again united.
 - his victory was due not only his military skills but the international situation as well.
 - Apepi died in the year of his ascension and the Hittites started flexing their muscles at the back of Hyksos allies.

Kamose and Ahmose I are the founders of the 18th Dynasty

- **New Kingdom** (1550-1070 BCE)
 - Dynasties 18-20
