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More than people and pots: identity and regionalization in Ancient Egypt during the second intermediate period, ca. 1775-1550 BC

Sacco, A.

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MATTERS OF CHRONOLOGY

The Second Intermediate Period separates the Middle Kingdom (the Eleventh, the Twelfth, and the first half of the Thirteenth Dynasty)¹ from the New Kingdom (Eighteenth to the Twentieth Dynasties). Contrarily to the political unity that characterized the Middle and the New Kingdoms, the Second Intermediate Period was a phase defined by political fragmentation and by the existence of different contemporaneous dynasties. The main dynasties involved in the politics of the Second Intermediate Period are the Thirteenth Dynasty (which initially ruled over the entire country, but later only reigned in over Upper Egypt), the Fourteenth Dynasty (which probably reigned over the Delta or at least over the eastern part of the Nile Delta), the Fifteenth Dynasty (which reigned in the eastern part of the Nile Delta and possibly also a larger territory), the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasties (which both reigned in the Theban region), and the Abydos Dynasty (which reigned over the region around Abydos). The Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Dynasty are considered to be part of the first half of the Second Intermediate Period, from now on called Early Second Intermediate Period, while the other dynasties are considered to be part of the second half of the Second Intermediate Period, from now on called Late Second Intermediate Period.

For the Early Second Intermediate Period, the exact sequence of kings and the lengths of their reigns are problematic for both the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Dynasty, which were contemporaneous. It is also still a matter of debate if the Fourteenth Dynasty was contemporary with the entire Thirteenth Dynasty, or only to its second half. Furthermore, it is still not completely clear if the Fourteenth Dynasty was Egyptian or from the Levant. For the Late Second Intermediate Period, the main problems concern the Abydos Dynasty, whose existence has been proposed around twenty years ago, as well as the exact relations between this dynasty, the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth

¹ As discussed later, while most scholars assign only the second half of the Thirteenth Dynasty to the Second Intermediate Period, a hypothesis that assigns the entire Thirteenth Dynasty to the Second Intermediate Period has also been proposed.

Dynasty. It seems likely that the Sixteenth and the Abydos Dynasty coexisted before the Seventeenth Dynasty, but it is still not completely clear what exactly happened to the Abydos Dynasty and how the power went from the Sixteenth to the Seventeenth Dynasty. Furthermore, there are still unresolved problems that concern the Fifteenth Dynasty, known also as Hyksos dynasty, from the title *hqꜣ-hꜣswt* (“Rulers of foreign lands”) used by the first kings of the dynasty.² In particular, the issues that are still a matter of debate include the origins of the Fifteenth Dynasty, the identity and sequence of its first kings, as well as the territory ruled by this dynasty, are also still a matter of debate, though many data have been retrieved from the excavations in Tell el-Dab’a, located in the eastern Nile Delta. This site has been identified with Avaris, the capital city of the Fifteenth or Hyksos Dynasty, and is the most extensively excavated and studied site of the Second Intermediate Period.

In short, there is still much debate about the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period and the exact sequence of dynasties and events included in this period. There is also much discussion, though, about the absolute dates to which it can be anchored. While the point of transition between the Second Intermediate Period and the New Kingdom seems somewhat clear, the transition from the Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period is more problematic. Furthermore, during the Late Middle Kingdom – namely the phase starting with the kingdom of Senwosret III – some precursors of the Second Intermediate Period are already visible in the material culture, especially in the pottery; these precursors will be discussed in the next chapter. Many questions arise from the described situation. To when can the Second Intermediate Period and its phases be dated? What were the political developments of this period and the relations between the different dynasties? To which absolute years can we date the limits of this period and, consequently, the dynasties and the years of each king?

These are the questions that are discussed in this chapter. First, I am going to discuss what is known about the chronology and the political developments of the Second Intermediate Period, and the related problems. Secondly, I am going to describe the main sources for the reconstruction of the history and politics of this period. Lastly, I am going to give the general chronological frame that will be the reference for what is analysed in this dissertation.

2 It cannot be excluded that this title was used by all the kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty, because it was not simply imposed on them, but was consciously chosen by them, in a process of negotiating and defining their identity when interacting with Egyptian communities. This is discussed in detail and convincingly argued in: Candelora 2017.

The beginning of the Second Intermediate Period and the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty

The Second Intermediate Period is considered to begin with the rise to power of the Fourteenth Dynasty in the north-eastern Nile Delta, which started a process of political fragmentation. When and why precisely the Fourteenth Dynasty rose to power, though, is still a matter of debate. According to one group of scholars, the rise to power of the Fourteenth Dynasty, thus the beginning of the political fragmentation and of the Second Intermediate Period, was contemporary with the second half of the Thirteenth Dynasty, after the reign of Merneferra Ay or around the reign of Sobekhotep IV.³ So far, this assumption seems confirmed by a number of facts. Firstly, Merneferra Ay is the last ruler of the Thirteenth Dynasty to be attested also outside Upper Egypt, especially in Lisht and Hawara.⁴ Secondly, more or less in the same period the activities appear to stop both in Lisht⁵ and in Dahshur,⁶ even though new evidence suggests that the site of Lisht was actually still occupied at the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty;⁷ it has recently been suggested that the rulers of the Thirteenth Dynasty did not abandon the Memphis-Fayyum area, but remained there also in the Early Second Intermediate Period, while in the Theban area the Sixteenth Dynasty, which was contemporary to the last part of the Thirteenth Dynasty, took power.⁸ Thirdly, stratum F in Tell el-Dab'a, dated to the middle of the Thirteenth Dynasty,⁹ seems to show the emergence of a number of phenomena, such as changes in burial customs, which could be connected to the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty.¹⁰ According to Ryholt, however, changes that could be linked to the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty are visible already in the early Thirteenth Dynasty.¹¹ Finally, the Royal Canon of Turin seems to present the Fourteenth Dynasty as a continuation of the Thirteenth, which could mean that the Fourteenth Dynasty rose in the late Thirteenth Dynasty.¹²

3 J.P. Allen 2010, 4; O'Connor 1997, 48–56; Redford 1997.

4 Bourriau 1997, 166; Bourriau 2010, 16; McCormack 2010, 69.

5 Bourriau 1997, 159.

6 Do. Arnold 1982, 51.

7 Bourriau 2010, 13.

8 As proposed by Ilin-Tomich 2014.

9 For more information on the dating of stratum F and of the other strata of Tell el-Dab'a: Bietak 1984a, 474–82; Bietak 1989b, 93–96; Bietak 1991; Bietak 2002, 37; Weinstein 1995, 87.

10 Bietak 1984a, 472–73; Bietak 1989b, 91–93; Bietak 2002, 29.

11 Ryholt 1997, 75–80.

12 J.P. Allen 2010, 5.

Ryholt¹³ has suggested that the Fourteenth Dynasty had seized power in the north-eastern Nile Delta already at the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty. This theory appears to be supported by several facts. Firstly, there is a group of scarabs and seal impressions found in the fortress of Uronarti, in Nubia, in a context believed to date to the first half Thirteenth Dynasty.¹⁴ Some of these scarabs belong to Djedkheperew (who belonged to the Thirteenth Dynasty and possibly reigned around 1772-1770 BC),¹⁵ while one belongs to Maaibra Sheshi (who belonged to the Fourteenth Dynasty and possibly reigned around 1745-1705 BC),¹⁶ which shows that Sheshi was contemporary with the first half of the Thirteenth Dynasty. Furthermore, given that this king would have had four predecessors, not registered in the Royal Canon of Turin but known through their scarabs and likely reigning before him on the basis of their scarabs' typology, then the dynasty would begin already in the early Thirteenth Dynasty.¹⁷ Secondly, Ryholt's theory is supported by the fact that the first kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty, between Sobekhotep I and Seth, were using filiative nomina, which could mean that they wanted to emphasize their legitimization, probably against a rising Fourteenth Dynasty.¹⁸ Moreover, finds from Tell el-Dab'a seem to witness the presence of people from the Levant that had an important role in the community already at the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty, probably as a consequence of the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty.¹⁹ Among these finds, is noteworthy the statue of a man, found in area F/I in stratum d/2 and dated to the latest part of the Twelfth Dynasty, who wears Levantine types of clothes and hairstyle and has a yellow skin colour, usually used by Egyptians in art to represent people from the Levant.²⁰ But according to scholars like Schiestl,²¹ the group of tombs from which this statue comes simply belonged to persons of Levantine descent, who worked in the Egyptian administration and progressively became more Egyptianized. Lastly, Ryholt's hypothesis seems to be supported by the fact that a certain degree of regionalization in material culture appears already detectable in the early Thirteenth Dynasty.²²

13 Ryholt 1997, 75.

14 Bietak 2010, 113; Reisner 1955, 26; Ryholt 1997, 197–200. However, the context is less secure than previously thought: Ben-Tor, Allen, and Allen 1999; Moeller, Marouard, and Ayers 2011, 107–8; Müller 2018, 204–5.

15 Ryholt 1997, 197; Ryholt 2010.

16 Ryholt 1997, 200.

17 Ryholt 1997, 113–20.

18 Ryholt 1997, 296–97.

19 For this hypothesis: Ryholt 1997, 104.

20 For more information on the statue: Bader 2017, 21–22; Bietak 1997, 100; Schiestl 2006; Schiestl 2009, 75–89.

21 Schiestl 2009, 211–15.

22 Bourriau 1997, 159; Bourriau 2010, 11–12; Seiler 2010, 52.

The Late Second Intermediate Period

A new phase of the Second Intermediate Period is considered to start at the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, when the Fifteenth or Hyksos Dynasty rose to power, filling the void left by the Fourteenth Dynasty. Scholars such as Ryholt still hold that the Hyksos were invaders.²³ However, the general consensus is that the coming of the Hyksos was not violent and that they emerged from the Asiatic population who were already living in the eastern Nile Delta.²⁴ This has also been very recently confirmed by new research.²⁵

Another main problem in reconstructing the history of the Second Intermediate Period concerns the relations between the Sixteenth, the Seventeenth, and the Abydos Dynasty. The latter is a dynasty that is known from archaeological finds and textual sources such as stelae, and that probably resided in Abydos, as hypothesized by Ryholt.²⁶ According to Ryholt, the Fifteenth Dynasty, the Abydos Dynasty, and the Sixteenth Dynasty all coexisted in the first part of the Late Second Intermediate Period, until the Fifteenth Dynasty occupied the territories of both the Sixteenth and the Abydos Dynasty. However, there is evidence against a Hyksos occupation of Upper Egypt.²⁷ Ryholt²⁸ has also suggested that, soon after these events, the Seventeenth Dynasty took power in the Theban region and, after a period of coexistence with the Fifteenth Dynasty, went to war against the latter. Also Allen,²⁹ Franke,³⁰ Marée,³¹ and Von Beckerath³² have hypothesized the existence of the Sixteenth Dynasty. However, these scholars are against adding the Abydos Dynasty to the reconstruction of the Late second Intermediate Period.³³ Moreover, according to Von Beckerath, the Sixteenth Dynasty lasted during the whole late Second Intermediate Period, together with both the Seventeenth and the Fifteenth Dynasty, and was a vassal dynasty of the latter in Middle and Upper Egypt. For other scholars,³⁴ neither the Sixteenth nor the Abydos Dynasty existed, but only a longer Seventeenth Dynasty that lasted for the whole Late Second

23 Ryholt 1997, 143–48.

24 Bader 2017, 26–27; Bietak 2010, 139–42.

25 <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/07/invasion-ancient-egypt-may-have-actually-been-immigrant-uprising>

26 Ryholt 1997, 304–7.

27 Franke 2008, 278–79; Polz 2006.

28 Ryholt 1997, 133–37.

29 J.P. Allen 2010, 3–4.

30 Franke 2008, 275–77.

31 Marée 2010.

32 Von Beckerath 1964, 137–38, 220–21.

33 See particularly: Allen 2010, 4; Franke 2008, 277–78.

34 Bennett 2006, 230, 240–41; Miniaci 2010a; Miniaci 2011; O'Connor 1997, 48–56; Quirke 2004, 172–73.

Intermediate Period. Lastly, according to Ilin-Tomich, the Sixteenth Dynasty should be moved to the Early Second Intermediate Period.³⁵

Going to the end of the Second Intermediate Period, it is conventionally considered to be defined by the battles through which the last kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty, especially Seqenenra-Ta'a and his sons, Kamose and Ahmose I, reunified Egypt.³⁶ It is also not known what exactly happened to the Hyksos, and in general, the Asiatic population living in Avaris and in the rest of Egypt. It is possible that they just remained in Egypt also after the expulsion of the Hyksos kings, serving the new kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty.³⁷

SOURCES

The main sources to reconstruct the chronology of the Second Intermediate Period include the Royal Canon of Turin, the Aegyptiaca of Manetho, reports of the Sothic dates, scarabs, and radiocarbon dates. These and other sources and their problems are discussed in the following subsections.

The Royal Canon of Turin

The Royal Canon of Turin is a list of dynasties and kings from the First Dynasty to the end of the Second Intermediate Period and the beginnings of the New Kingdom. The list was written during the reign of Ramesses II or shortly after, on the verso of a papyrus hosted in the Turin Museum (inventory number 1874), while on the recto of the same papyrus a tax-list was recorded during the reign of Ramesses II.³⁸ The document is made up of eleven columns, each of which is composed of between 25 and 31 lines. Each line is reserved for one king, and only at the beginning and at the end of each dynastic break a line is used respectively for the heading and for the summation. The section dealing with the Second Intermediate Period begins in column 7, where the kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty and of the Fourteenth Dynasty are recorded, up to column 10. Then, in the last part of column 10, the kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty are named, while the kings of the Sixteenth Dynasty are reported in column 11. Lastly, the kings of the Abydos Dynasty can possibly be identified with the names registered in the last lines of column 11, while the

35 As discussed in Ilin-Tomich 2014.

36 Especially on the narration made by King Kamose, discussed in: Enmarch 2013; Flammini 2012; Habaši 1972; O'Connor 1997; Redford 1997; Säve-Söderbergh 1956; Smith and Smith 1976.

37 Bietak 2010, 171.

38 For further information on the history of the Royal Canon of Turin and its transmission: Ryholt 1997, 29–33; Ryholt 2004; Ryholt 2006, 26–27; Von Beckerath 1964, 20–26.

Seventeenth Dynasty could likely have been recorded in part of column 12, now lost. The Royal Canon of Turin probably had five previous versions, the first of which was compiled from five different sources dating up to the New Kingdom.³⁹ Already the second version had lacunae, which were transmitted down to the successive versions and which already from the third version were labelled as “lacunae” on the document itself and given a round number to avoid chronological gaps.⁴⁰

According to the interpretation of the Royal Canon of Turin proposed by Ryholt, the Thirteenth Dynasty included at least 51 kings, and the Fourteenth Dynasty likely had 56 kings. Six and fifteen kings can be respectively ascribed to the Fifteenth Dynasty and to the Sixteenth Dynasty, while sixteen kings would belong to the Abydos Dynasty.⁴¹ Other scholars have not agreed with the existence of neither the Sixteenth Dynasty nor the Abydos Dynasty, and have proposed the existence of only a long-two part Seventeenth Dynasty.⁴² Nevertheless, Ryholt has convincingly argued that his proposed rendition would allow to accommodate the Sixteenth Dynasty in the fifteen recorded entries of the Royal Canon of Turin, without having to postulate its existence as vassal dynasty of the Hyksos, while the entries for the Seventeenth Dynasty would simply be in a lost part of the Royal Canon of Turin.⁴³

Manetho

The *Aegyptiaca* was written by Manetho, a priest who lived during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, in the 3rd century BC. This work has not survived to the present day, but it has been transmitted to us through other authors who have mentioned or quoted it. The first of these authors is Flavius Josephus, who in the first century AD reported the *Aegyptiaca* in his work *Contra Apionem*, mentioning in particular, as far as the Second Intermediate Period is concerned, six Hyksos kings and how they reigned for 240 years after having invaded Egypt.⁴⁴ The second is Sextus Julius Africanus, who in the third century AD preserved part of the *Aegyptiaca* in his work *Chronographiai*. The third is Eusebius of Caesarea, who lived in the fourth century AD and transmitted part of the *Aegyptiaca* in his work *Chronicon*. In both the transmissions of the *Aegyptiaca* by Eusebius and Africanus there is also a section about the dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period, which has arrived to the modern

39 Ryholt 1997, 31–33; Ryholt 2004, 145–46; Ryholt 2006, 28.

40 Ryholt 1997, 10–12; Ryholt 2004, 146–48.

41 For this reconstruction and interpretation: Ryholt 1997, 69–75, 94–99, 118–19, 151–71.

42 Bennett 2002, 124–32; Bennett 2006, 232–34; Miniaci 2010a; Miniaci 2011; Quirke 2004, 172–73; Schneider 2006, 181–92.

43 Ryholt 1997, 151–52.

44 Redford 1997, 77.

day through the work of George Syncellus, who lived between the late eight and the early ninth century AD and quoted both Africanus and Eusebius in his work.⁴⁵

Both the transmissions by Africanus and Eusebius ascribe 60 kings, who reigned for 453 years, to the Thirteenth Dynasty, and 76 kings, who reigned for 184 years, to the Fourteenth Dynasty. For the remaining dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period, though, there are discrepancies between the two transmissions. Nevertheless, it can be said that the original version of the *Aegyptiaca* reported six kings for the Fifteenth Dynasty, who reigned for 260 years, while the Sixteenth Dynasty and the Seventeenth Dynasty were respectively made up of 32 and 5 kings, who all together reigned for 251 years.⁴⁶

The Sothic dates

The dates based on the heliacal rising of Sirius and the Sothic cycle (i.e. based on the annual return of Sirius in the night sky) have been used to determine the absolute dates for the Second Intermediate Period. Recently, new calculations have been proposed that take into account how these observations may have been influenced by the place from which the stars were observed and atmospheric conditions, and how, as a consequence, these could influence our own calculations.⁴⁷ Two events are important for the Second Intermediate Period. The first one is the heliacal rising of Sirius noted in year 7 of Senwosret III, and registered in a letter copied in a diary of the temple of Lahun.⁴⁸ According to a group of scholars, this event should be dated between 1872 and 1830 BC,⁴⁹ and preferably towards 1866 BC,⁵⁰ fixing the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty to around 1800. According to other scholars, this event should be dated not later than between 1890 and 1860, setting the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty twenty or thirty years earlier.⁵¹ The second date is the heliacal rising of Sirius recorded in the year 9 of Amenhotep I and written on Papyrus Ebers.⁵² This event should be dated between 1544 and 1506 BC, setting the fall of Avaris, dated to the year 11 or 15 of the reign of Ahmose and

45 For the transmission and interpretation of the *Aegyptiaca*: Bennett 2006, 232; Schneider 2008, 23-24; Von Beckerath 1964, 11-20.

46 J.P. Allen 2010, 3; Bennett 2006, 232; Bietak 1984a, 472-73; Redford 1997, 77; Schneider 2008, 23-24; Von Beckerath 1964, 11-20.

47 Gautschy 2011b.

48 For more information: Gautschy 2011a, 10-12; Gautschy 2011b, 124-25; Luft 2006, 310.

49 Bennett 2006, 236; Bietak 1991, 48-49; Bietak 2002, 29.

50 Bietak 1989b, 91-93; Luft 2006, 314.

51 Schneider 2008.

52 Bennett 2006, 236; Bietak 1984a, 472; Bietak 1989b, 91; Bietak 1991, 47; Gautschy 2011b, 125.

meaning the end of the Second Intermediate Period, between 1577 and 1539 BC.⁵³

The Sothic dates allow altogether a length of 200 or 250 years for the Second Intermediate Period. This length, though, seems too short and does not allow us to accommodate all the certain or reasonable lengths of the dynasties. To solve this problem, both Krauss and Luft developed chronologies based on the lunar dates from Lahun, which would allow a higher chronology and a longer time span for the Second Intermediate Period.⁵⁴ More recently, new studies that compare the lunar dates and the known heliacal rising of Sirius have been published, which confirm the year 1866 BC as the more probable for the heliacal rising of Sirius of year 7 of Senwosret III.⁵⁵ Another solution was proposed by Bennett,⁵⁶ who suggested to use the genealogy of the governors of El-Kab, as reconstructed from the inscriptions in their rock-cut tombs; the genealogy of these governors is discussed more in detail later. This would imply that the Sothic date of Amenhotep I is not taken into consideration anymore, and that the Fifteenth Dynasty and Seventeenth Dynasty both rose together to power after the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, so removing the existence of the Sixteenth Dynasty.⁵⁷

However, all these methodologies present many problems. At present, the best solution seems to be the adoption of a higher and long chronology for both the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, as proposed by Schneider.⁵⁸ According to him, the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty can be dated to around 2025 or 1990 BC, while the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty can be dated to around 1845 or 1820 BC. This gives a period of around 180 years to the Middle Kingdom, while giving to the Second Intermediate Period a length of around 305 years, if one considers that the Thirteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasty do not overlap, or 270 years, if one considers that the two mentioned dynasties do overlap. This reconstruction would also accommodate the information found in the Manethonian tradition.

The scarabs

Concerning the Second Intermediate Period, scarabs have been used to reconstruct the dating and the sequence of kings of the Fourteenth Dynasty, where many kings are attested only through these objects. The beginning of this dynasty around 1800 appears indeed confirmed by the scarabs in the

53 Bennett 2006, 236; Bietak 1984a, 472; Bietak 1989b, 91–93; Bietak 1991, 47–48.

54 Krauss 2003; Luft 2006.

55 Gautschy 2011a.

56 Bennett 2002; Bennett 2006.

57 Bennett 2006, 240–41.

58 Schneider 2008.

Uronarti context, mentioned earlier. According to the seriation of the scarab of the Fourteenth Dynasty, the first king of the Fourteenth Dynasty was Sekhaenra Yakbim,⁵⁹ while the last king for whom both praenomen and nomen are known is Nehsy, who is attested on scarabs and on architectural remains in Tell el-Dab'a and in the eastern Nile Delta. Contemporary to his attestations is also a noticeable spread of Levantine culture that, though it cannot prove Levantine origins for Nehsy, shows that he belonged to a new dynasty that was supported by Levantine people.⁶⁰ Lastly, a group of scholars has attributed Sheshi to the Fifteenth Dynasty, so that the Uronarti context assumes another meaning.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Ryholt has demonstrated that both Sheshi and Yaqubhor are to be ascribed to the Fourteenth Dynasty.⁶²

The seriation of scarabs has been used also to reconstruct the sequence of the kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty, especially as far as the position of the reign of Khayan is concerned. This king has been situated in the second half of the dynasty,⁶³ though new sealings from Edfu, ascribed to this king and found together with sealings of Sobekhotep IV in a large building with columned halls,⁶⁴ appear to suggest a position earlier in the dynasty, and even that the Fifteenth Dynasty could have started earlier than the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁶⁵ However, there is the possibility that the sealings of Khayan are not contemporaneous with the sealings of Sobekhotep IV.⁶⁶

The radiocarbon dating

Radiocarbon dates from Tell el-Dab'a have caused heated discussions, because they give a dating for each stratum that is around 120 years older than the dating given through other archaeological evidence and historical links.⁶⁷ These discrepancies in the radiocarbon data from Tell el-Dab'a have been explained through regional variances in ¹⁴C-depleted CO₂, caused by the proximity to the sea and to mixed situation of sea and fresh water, such as the Nile Delta.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, more and more archaeological evidence and radiocarbon dates from the Levant, from sites such as Tell el-Burak and Tell Ifshar, seem to confirm the radiocarbon dates from Tell el-Dab'a, and suggest that the chro-

59 Ryholt 1997, 94–99.

60 Bietak 1984b; Bietak 1997, 108–9; Bietak 2002, 36.

61 Ben-Tor 2010, 94–97; Tufnell 1975, 69–70; Tufnell, Martin, and Ward 1984.

62 Ryholt 2010.

63 Krauss 1996; Ryholt 1997, 119–23; Von Beckerath 1964, 127–37, 223.

64 Moeller 2009; Moeller 2010; Moeller 2012; Moeller, Marouard, and Ayers 2011.

65 See the scarabs from Tell el-Dab'a and Edfu discussed in: Moeller, Marouard, and Ayers 2011; Sartori 2009.

66 Ilin-Tomich 2014, 149–52.

67 Kutschera et al. 2012.

68 Hagens 2014.

nology used so far is too low and should be higher.⁶⁹ This would also fit with the chronological reconstruction proposed by Schneider.

Further sources

Three written sources need to be mentioned that date from the Second Intermediate Period and which may help us reconstruct the history of the period. The first consists of a group of inscriptions in El-Kab, inscribed in the rock-cut tombs of three governors who were active between the Late Second Intermediate Period and the Early New Kingdom: Renseneb⁷⁰ and Sobeknakht II,⁷¹ who were active during the Sixteenth⁷² or Seventeenth⁷³ Dynasty, and Reneny,⁷⁴ who was active during the Eighteenth Dynasty. These inscriptions tell us about the family members and the ancestry of these governors. Hence, it is possible to reconstruct a genealogy, which in the case of Renseneb's wife goes back to King Neferhotep I, of the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁷⁵ Renseneb and Sobeknakht II belonged to two different branches of the same family, branches which have as common ancestor Aya, governor of El-Kab and then vizir under King Merhotepra (probably Merhotepra Ini), of the Thirteenth Dynasty.⁷⁶ Members of this family are mentioned on the so-called Juridical Stela from Karnak.⁷⁷ This stela is dated to King Nebiryrau I, who probably was the sixth king of the Sixteenth Dynasty.⁷⁸ It records the transfer of the Elkab governorship to Sobeknakht II's father, also called Sobeknakht,⁷⁹ mentioning his ancestry up to Aya; Sobeknakht II himself probably became governor under one of the immediate successors of Nebiryrau I.⁸⁰ Lastly, Reneny was Sobekhotep II's son and became governor during the reign of Amenhotep I, as can be reconstructed from the inscriptions in Reneny's tomb and from a graffito left by the same Reneny in Sobeknakht II's tomb.⁸¹ Combining the data from the tombs and from the stela can help in reconstructing the chronology of the

69 Höflmayer et al. 2016.

70 Davies 2010, 225-29.

71 Davies 2010, 229-34.

72 Following Davies (2010) and Ryholt (2002).

73 Following Bennett (2002).

74 Davies 2010, 235-37.

75 Bennett 2002, 133-39; Davies 2010, 229.

76 Bennett 2002, 124; Davies 2010, 224.

77 Bennett 2002, 124-26 and 288; Ryholt 1997, 389; von Beckerath 1964, 181-83.

78 Davies 2010, 224-25 and 234-35; Ryholt 1997, 151-59; however, Bennett considers this king as belonging to the Seventeenth Dynasty: Bennett 2002, 225.

79 Bennett 2002, 224-25; Davies 2010, 224-25.

80 Davies 2010, 225.

81 Davies 2010, 235-37.

period between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the early part of the New Kingdom.

The other two sources tell us mostly about the end of the Second Intermediate Period and of the Fifteenth Dynasty: the Second Stela of Kamose and the inscription in the tomb of Ahmose, son of Abana. The Second Stela of Kamose is the second of two stelae dedicated by the king at Karnak. Fragments of the First Stela were re-used as building material in the foundations of Pylon III to the east of the Great Hypostyle Hall, likely during the reign of Amenhotep III.⁸² Part of its text has been copied on one side of the so-called Carnarvon tablet, a writing tablet found in the courtyard of a tomb in Thebes; the other side contained an excerpt from the Teaching of Ptahhotep.⁸³ The Second Stela was found as a later reusage in the foundations of a statue of Ramesses II in front of Pylon II.⁸⁴ It is possible that the First Stela stood in a sanctuary, and that the second one, with a twin, framed a pylon.⁸⁵ It is also possible that the first stela contained the entire text of the narration, the same that was divided between the second stela and its twin.⁸⁶ However, it is clear that the three texts belong to the same narrative.⁸⁷ The narration on the stelae informs us on the military campaign that the king, in his third year of reign, conducted northward, against Apepi, ruler of the Fifteenth Dynasty.⁸⁸

The campaign against the Hyksos was completed by Ahmose I, successor of Kamose and founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The success of Ahmose I's army and the fall of Avaris are narrated by inscriptions in the tomb of Ahmose, son of Abana, at El-Kab. The text is an autobiography of the owner of the tomb, a soldier, who was himself son of a soldier who had served in the army of Seqenenra Ta'a, and who took part in the Battle at Avaris and at the Siege of Sharuhén, in modern-day Palestine. He then kept serving under Ahmose I, and under his successors Tuthmosis I and Amenhotep I, accumulating rewards for his deeds.⁸⁹ Sharuhén was, according to the inscription, the reign where the Hyksos fled from Avaris. According to the archaeological evidence presented by Oren,⁹⁰ Sharuhén was the centre of the southernmost of three main reigns in Canaan; it connected Egypt and southern Canaan, and

82 Enmarch 2013, 254; Smith and Smith 1976, 49.

83 Enmarch 2013, 254; Smith and Smith 1976, 49.

84 Enmarch 2013, 254; Habašī, 1972, 16-31; Smith and Smith 1976, 49.

85 Habašī, 1972, 16-31; Smith and Smith 1976, 49-50.

86 Smith and Smith 1976, 50.

87 Enmarch 2013, 254-55.

88 Colin, 35-41; Dirminti 2014, 242-43; Enmarch 2013, 56-63; Flammini 2012, 55-64; Habašī, 1972, 31-55; O'Connor 1997; Säve-Söderbergh 1956; Smith and Smith 1976, 50-66 and 69-74.

89 The inscription is discussed in: Lichtheim 2006, 11-12; Redford 1997, 70.

90 Oren 1997.

it played an important role for the Hyksos kingdom in Egypt. However, no other written sources mention it.⁹¹

THE DYNASTIES OF THE SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

The main dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period are the Thirteenth through Sixteenth Dynasty, the Abydos Dynasty, and finally the Seventeenth Dynasty. These dynasties are briefly discussed in the following subsections.

The Thirteenth Dynasty

The first dynasty to be totally or partially a part of the Second Intermediate Period is the Thirteenth Dynasty. This dynasty included at least 51 kings, recorded in the Royal Turin Canon,⁹² plus another five⁹³ or eleven⁹⁴ kings that are not named in the document, but who are known from other sources, such as statues and inscriptions.⁹⁵ This is about the same number mentioned by Manetho. Chronologically speaking, it is generally accepted that the kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty reigned between 1803 and 1649 BC,⁹⁶ possibly starting with the reign of Sobekhotep I.⁹⁷ In the Royal Canon of Turin, this king is recorded in the second half of the Thirteenth Dynasty, while Wegaf Khutawyre is mentioned as first king, but the typology of their scarabs seems to show that Sobekhotep I was the first king of the dynasty. If this is really the case, the entry in the Royal Canon of Turin was probably incorrect.⁹⁸

The remaining history of this dynasty is also a matter of some debate. According to one possible reconstruction, proposed by Ryholt,⁹⁹ and followed by Franke,¹⁰⁰ it can be divided into four phases. In the first phase, between the reigns of Sobekhotep I and Seth, the dynasty kept access to resources because of commercial and diplomatic agreements with the rising Fourteenth Dynasty. In the second phase, between the reign of Sobekhotep III and Sobekhotep V, the kings emphasized their non-royal descent, while at the same time people of lower classes rose to high ranks and offices, and many of them

91 Hoffmeyer 2004, 27-28.

92 Ryholt 1997, 69-75; Von Beckerath 1964, 31-71.

93 Ryholt 1997, 72.

94 J.P. Allen 2010, 1.

95 An overview of this dynasty is given in: Franke 2008, 270-73; Schneider 2006, 175-81. However, the sequence of kings proposed by the two authors is different.

96 Bietak 1984a, 472-73; Bietak 1989b, 91-93; Quirke 2004, 171; Ryholt 1997, 190-97; Von Beckerath 1964, 222-23.

97 Franke 2008, 270; Ryholt 1997, 243.

98 According to Ryholt: Ryholt 1997, 190. Contra: Schneider 2006, 175-79.

99 Ryholt 1997, 296-99.

100 Frank 2008, 270-73.

became seal-bearers, directly representing the king through his seals. In the third phase, between the reigns of Sobekhotep VI and Aya, both the production of the royal genealogical types of seals, namely royal seals mentioning either the maternal or paternal affiliations, and the monumental production decreased markedly. The fourth and last phase, corresponding to the last 24 kings, was characterized by the total collapse of the dynasty, though some important families managed to keep power.

According to another reconstruction, suggested by Quirke¹⁰¹ and based on the analysis of the power of the Thirteenth Dynasty through the written attestations of the kings and the members of the court, the phases of this dynasty are divided differently. The first one of these phases was characterized by many kings with very short reigns, while the second one had kings with longer reigns, and the last one featured again kings with short reigns and is attested mostly in the Theban region. From this analysis it would also appear that the Thirteenth Dynasty did not proceed through blood line and primogeniture rights, but that the king was more or less in turn chosen from among the elder members of the court and families of highest rank. Thus, the first phase represents the novelty after the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, when the members of the court did not know yet how to deal exactly with the throne succession, while the second phase represents a moment when the succession mechanism had been figured out, and the third phase was the moment when the system of succession proved weak and the country was divided. An analysis of the material and size of royal statues as means of expressing power, recently conducted on the statues of the Thirteenth Dynasty, suggests a similar division.¹⁰²

Both theses agree on the fact that the last part of the Thirteenth Dynasty was very problematic, as seems supported by the relatively poor royal tombs in Dahshur, Saqqara, and Mazghuna, which show that the kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty wished to continue the funerary traditions of the Twelfth Dynasty, but they clearly lacked the necessary resources.¹⁰³

The Fourteenth Dynasty

It has already been mentioned how the dating for the beginning of the Fourteenth Dynasty is problematic.¹⁰⁴ If one follows the theory according to which this beginning is contemporary with the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty, then it can be dated between 1805 and 1649 BC.¹⁰⁵ Otherwise, if one follows

101 Quirke 1991.

102 Quirke, D'Amico, and Picchi 2010.

103 McCormack 2010.

104 Franke 2008, 274-75.

105 Ryholt 1997, 75, 190-91, 198-200, 321-22.

the other hypothesis, then the Fourteenth Dynasty began around the middle of the Thirteenth Dynasty and should be dated between 1700 and 1650 BC.¹⁰⁶

The exact history of the Fourteenth Dynasty is also a matter of debate. According to one reconstruction, the first part of this dynasty, including its first five kings between Yakbim and Sheshi (1805-1705 BC), seems to have been more stable, because the total sum of their reigns amounts to a century. The second part of the Fourteenth Dynasty, with the reign of Nehsy and his successors (1705-1649 BC) was more unstable, like the contemporary part of the Thirteenth Dynasty, probably because famine and epidemics affected the country,¹⁰⁷ weakening both dynasties until they lost power completely.¹⁰⁸

Another problem connected to this dynasty is the territory over which they exerted power.¹⁰⁹ While it is accepted that these kings ruled in the north-eastern part and that at least a few of them probably resided in Tell el-Dab'a, it is assumed that they could be present also in other parts of the Nile Delta, in a territory up to Athribis and Bubastis.¹¹⁰

Lastly, it is also debated if the Fourteenth Dynasty was of Egyptian or Asiatic or multiple origins.¹¹¹ According to Ryholt¹¹² it was of Asiatic origins, because of the west-Semitic roots of the names used by the kings that he ascribes to the dynasty. Conversely, other scholars state that this dynasty was not of Asiatic origins, but only maintained relationships with the Asiatics,¹¹³ and that the trend in the use of Asiatic names was due to intermarriages gradually increasing with the growing Asiatic population in the Delta.¹¹⁴

The Fifteenth Dynasty

The Fifteenth Dynasty probably consisted of six kings.¹¹⁵ It can be noted that only the first four kings of this dynasty used the title *hq³-h³swt*, while Khayan used both this title and the Egyptian royal titles, and the other two kings used only the Egyptian royal titles. According to Ryholt, this derives from the fact

106 Bietak 1984a, 472-73; Bietak 1989b, 91-93; Bietak 2002, 29; Quirke 2004, 171-72; Von Beckerath 1964, 86-94, 223.

107 Bietak 1985, 336; Bietak 1996, 7; Bietak 1997, 105; Bietak 2010, 163; Ryholt 1997, 299-300.

108 For the history of the Fourteenth Dynasty as described here: Ryholt 1997, 299-300.

109 Franke 2008, 273-74.

110 For the territory of the Fourteenth Dynasty: Ryholt 1997, 103-5; Von Beckerath 1964, 93-97.

111 Franke 2008, 273-74.

112 Ryholt 1997, 96-99.

113 J.P. Allen 2010, 2; Bietak 1997, 108-9; Bietak 2002, 36.

114 J.P. Allen 2010, 5.

115 Bietak 1989b, 91-93; Ryholt 1997, 118-23; Schneider 2006, 192-95; Von Beckerath 1964, 127-37.

that these kings had managed to conquer territories of Upper Egypt, up to Abydos.¹¹⁶ However, the use of the title *ḥqꜣ-hꜣswt* is more complex, and reflects a conscious choice in a process of negotiation of identity.¹¹⁷ While it is generally accepted to date the Fifteenth Dynasty between 1649 and 1540 BC,¹¹⁸ and to consider Hotepibra Khamudi (reigned 1540-1541 BC) the last king of this dynasty, it is still not completely clear who the first king of the dynasty was.

Another problem concerns the origins of this dynasty. Both from the features of their material culture and from the written sources, it is known that the dynasty was of Asiatic descent, but a more precise point of origin has not been determined yet. From what appears from the names of the kings, they probably were of Western Semitic or Canaanite origins,¹¹⁹ but from their material culture it would seem more likely that they came from the Northern Levant.¹²⁰

The territory of the dynasty is also debated. It is generally agreed upon that the territory included the eastern Nile Delta, namely the same territory ruled by the Fourteenth Dynasty,¹²¹ with the main residence still in Tell el-Dab'a. Nevertheless, according to Ryholt's reconstruction, which considers the Hyksos contemporary with the entire Thirteenth Dynasty, it is possible that by the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty the Hyksos kings had managed to expand their power over Memphis and, from the reign of Neferhotep III of the Sixteenth Dynasty, over Abydos and the territory up to Thebes. From there, this dynasty would have been chased away by the kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty. However, as already mentioned, the evidence attesting to the presence of Hyksos rulers in Upper Egypt does not support this hypothesis.¹²²

The Sixteenth Dynasty

The dating of the Sixteenth Dynasty is also a matter of debate. The beginning of this dynasty was probably contemporary with the one of the Fifteenth Dynasty, while its end has more possibilities for dating. If one hypothesizes that the Sixteenth Dynasty preceded the Seventeenth Dynasty,¹²³ than its end

116 Ryholt 1997, 123–25.

117 As discussed in: Candelora 2017.

118 Bietak 1984a, 472–73; Bietak 1989b, 91–93; Ryholt 1997, 186–88, 201; Von Beckerath 1964, 127–37, 223.

119 Ryholt 1997, 125–30.

120 As discussed in: Bietak 2010.

121 For these hypotheses: Ryholt 1997, 130–37.

122 This evidence is discussed in detail in: Polz 2006.

123 Ryholt 1997, 189, 201–2.

would be dated to 1582 BC, while it would be dated to ca. 1550 BC if one theorizes that the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasty were contemporary.¹²⁴

The history of the Sixteenth Dynasty is not easy to reconstruct either. According to Ryholt's interpretation, it probably began with the one-year reign of a king whose name is now lost, while the first king to be attested is Sekhemresematawy Djehuty, who reigned between 1648 and 1645 BC.¹²⁵ The last king attested for this dynasty is Sekhemreshedwaset, who reigned in 1588 BC, while the successive part of the dynasty is not clear at present, but it was possibly made up of five kings, whose names and length of reigns cannot be precisely retrieved.¹²⁶ Furthermore, Ryholt has hypothesized the Sixteenth Dynasty as residing in Thebes and reigning over the area around it, between Hu and Edfu, before the Seventeenth Dynasty took power in the region.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, there is the possibility that this dynasty was actually ruling from the area of Abydos, and that the archaeological finds associated with the Abydos Dynasty have actually to be ascribed to the Sixteenth Dynasty.¹²⁸

The Abydos Dynasty

According to Ryholt, who has hypothesized the existence of an Abydos Dynasty, this dynasty of sixteen kings included part of the names traditionally attributed to the Sixteenth Dynasty. Some names, not mentioned in the written sources, can be retrieved in other contemporary sources and, mostly, in monuments found in the region of Abydos.¹²⁹ Ryholt has dated the Abydos Dynasty between 1649 and 1629 BC¹³⁰, and has calculated that each one of its kings reigned for a period between two and four years. Furthermore, he has theorized that the territory of these kings was in the region of Abydos, probably up to Beni Hasan, and that their residence would be in Abydos itself or in its vicinity.¹³¹

Moreover, during excavations at Abydos South a group of tombs has been found, that could belong to the Abydos Dynasty, as suggested by its features.¹³² First, the only name known for the owners of these tombs, Woseribra Seneb-Kay, has parallels with the names partially reported on column 11 of the Royal Canon of Turin, in the section that Ryholt believes to correspond to the

124 Von Beckerath 1964, 20–26, 224.

125 Franke 2008, 275; Ryholt 1997, 152–54.

126 For this reconstruction: Franke 2008, 276; Ryholt 1997, 151–59.

127 For this theory: Ryholt 1997, 159–60.

128 Ilin-Tomich 2014, 145–46.

129 Ryholt 1997, 163–67.

130 Ryholt 1997, 191, 202–3.

131 For the Abydos Dynasty: Ryholt 1997, 163–66.

132 Wegner 2015, 76–77.

Abydos Dynasty.¹³³ Second, the pottery and the spatial relations with tombs of the Middle Kingdom suggest that the tombs of this particular group were made shortly after the Thirteenth Dynasty.¹³⁴ Third, the architectural and iconographical features of these tombs have parallels in the tomb chapels dated to the mid-Sixteenth Dynasty in Hierakonpolis and El-Kab.¹³⁵ Lastly, particular wounds and traumas have been detected on Seneb-Kay's body and on other bodies found in these tombs, which suggest that these persons rode horses and engaged in battles, possibly against the Hyksos, or against the kings of the Sixteenth Dynasty, or even against Nubians.¹³⁶

The Seventeenth Dynasty

The Seventeenth Dynasty included around eight,¹³⁷ nine,¹³⁸ or ten kings,¹³⁹ or alternatively sixteen¹⁴⁰ or fifteen kings.¹⁴¹ There are more possibilities to date this dynasty. If one accepts the existence of the Sixteenth and the Abydos Dynasty,¹⁴² it can be dated between 1580 and 1549 BC, while it can be dated between 1650 and 1550 BC if one does not accept the existence of the Sixteenth Dynasty or, like Von Beckerath,¹⁴³ hypothesizes that both the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasty were entirely contemporary with the Fifteenth Dynasty. According to the first one of these hypotheses, the Seventeenth Dynasty started with the reign of Sekhemrewahkhau Rahotep, between 1580 and 1576 BC.

Because of the written records of the campaigns that led to the defeat of the Hyksos,¹⁴⁴ there is more certainty about this dynasty's last part, beginning with the reign of Wadjikheorra Kamose between 1554 and 1549 BC. It is also known that under the reign of his successor, Ahmose, Avaris fell to the army of these Theban kings, after a period of war, bringing the end of the Second Intermediate Period.¹⁴⁵ Despite this war, the Seventeenth Dynasty was at first

133 Wegner 2015, 72.

134 Wegner 2015, 69–71.

135 Wegner 2015, 71–73.

136 Hill, Rosado, and Wegner 2017; Wegner 2015, 73–76.

137 Franke 2008, 279.

138 Polz 2007, 29–59; Polz 2010, 343–45; Polz 2018, 217–18.

139 Ryholt 1997, 167–71.

140 J.P. Allen 2010, 3.

141 Von Beckerath 1964, 169–95.

142 Ryholt 1997, 189–90, 203–4.

143 Von Beckerath 1964, 224.

144 The stelae with the records are discussed in: Colin 2005, 35–41; Dirminti 2014, 242–43; Enmarch 2013, 56–63; Flammini 2012, 56–64; Habaši 1972, 31–55; O'Connor 1997; Redford 1997, 68–69; Ryholt 1997, 119–23; Säve-Söderbergh 1956; Smith and Smith 1976, 50–66 and 69–74.

145 Ryholt 1997, 167–71.

probably living in peace with the Fifteenth Dynasty.¹⁴⁶ The northern stronghold of the Seventeenth Dynasty seems to be still Abydos, while towards the end of the Dynasty, it went progressively more north, and because resources could be spent in building activities in Medamud, Koptos, Deir el-Ballas, and Abydos.¹⁴⁷

It is also known that the territory ruled by this dynasty had its centre in Thebes, but its exact extension is not known. According to one reconstruction, it extended up to Abydos after this dynasty reconquered the city from the Fifteenth Dynasty.¹⁴⁸ The royal attestations discussed by Polz show, however, that the southern border was probably at Edfu, at least until the end of the dynasty.¹⁴⁹

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, the Second Intermediate Period is considered to start with the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty, which is regarded to begin in the second half of the Thirteenth Dynasty. Even though the interpretation proposed by Ryholt, which sets the beginning of the Fourteenth Dynasty in the very early Thirteenth Dynasty, seems plausible and is well argued, there is still too much debate to fully embrace it. Furthermore, in this dissertation the Second Intermediate Period is divided into an Early Second Intermediate Period, up to the end of the Fourteenth Dynasty, and in a Late Second Intermediate Period, after the end of the Fourteenth Dynasty and until the fall of Avaris.

In this work the beginning of the Fifteenth Dynasty will not be considered a criterion for the beginning of the Late Second Intermediate Period, because the new seals and scarabs found would suggest an earlier beginning for this dynasty, so it is not a reliable feature that can be used for chronological purposes.

The main criterion used here to determine the Late Second Intermediate Period is the rise of the different dynasties in Upper Egypt, namely the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasty, as well as the Abydos Dynasty. The rise of these dynasties is considered of importance in this work because they meant new political powers that possibly caused changes in the material culture, also having an effect on its regionalization and, as a consequence, an impact also on the material culture of the New Kingdom. Given that the existence of the Abydos Dynasty is accepted in the present work, the kings of both

146 Moeller, Marouard, and Ayers 2011, 106-9; Ryholt 1997, 307-9.

147 Franke 2008, 279-80. The evidence is shown in detail in: Polz 2007, 62-95; Polz 2010; Polz 2018.

148 Ryholt 1997, 171-76.

149 Polz 2007, 61-95; Polz 2018, 230-31.

the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Dynasties are referred to as Theban rulers, even though the capital and exact area of power of the Sixteenth Dynasty is problematic, as explained above.

Lastly, the Late Middle Kingdom is also included in the analysis, not only because of the mentioned precursors to the Second Intermediate Period, but also to better understand the onset of the Second Intermediate Period and the changes involved in it.

(Opposite page) Summary of the main chronological frames hypothesized for the Second Intermediate Period: Frame 1 is the frame followed in the present work; Frame 2 is followed by Ryholt (1997); Frame 3 is followed by Allen (2010), Bietak (1984a, 1989b, 1991, and 2002), Franke (2008), and Marée (2010); Frame 4 is followed by Von Beckerath (1964); Frame 5 is followed by Ilin-Tomich (2014); Frame 6 is followed by Bennett (2002 and 2006), Miniaci (2010a and 2011), O'Connor (1997), Quirke (2004), and Schneider (2006).

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