

Ancient Egypt: 2nd Intermediate Period

The Second Intermediate Period is dominated by the first foreign rulers of Egypt, the Hyksos. This group came from the Levant and ruled as the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties of Manetho from their capital at Avaris in the Nile Delta.

The Hyksos controlled most of the northern part of Egypt, and also traded with the Levant and the Aegean, as well as with the kingdom of Kush. Power in the Delta was, however, somewhat fragmented.

The last rulers of the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty openly campaigned against the Hyksos kings and King Seqenenre Tao was probably killed during a battle against them. The Hyksos were eventually defeated by Kamose and his successor, Ahmose.

The tradition of royal burial in pyramids ceased at the end of the Middle Kingdom (around 1750 BC) and the burials of the Hyksos kings have not been found. The native Egyptian rulers of the south were buried in rock cut tombs in their capital Thebes. One of the innovations of this period was the introduction of the rishi, an anthropoid (human-shaped) coffin which was decorated with protective vulture wings.

Literature of this period includes mathematical papyri, literary tales and a new revision of funerary literature, resulting in the Book of the Dead and various underworld texts.