

The Middle Kingdom in Egypt

DETLEF FRANKE

THE REIGN OF Pharaoh Amenemhet (Amenemes) I, from about 1938 to 1909 BCE, marks the beginning of a new era in Egyptian history. The Egyptians of later periods viewed it as the golden age of their history, and it is called the Middle Kingdom by Egyptologists.

THE RISE OF THE TWELFTH DYNASTY: RESTORATION AND RENAISSANCE

The achievements of Amenemhet's Eleventh Dynasty predecessors shaped the Egyptian society of his time. A necessary precondition was the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by Nebhepetre Mentuhotep (ca. 2008–1957) under a single ruling dynasty based in Thebes. The rival Tenth Dynasty, which ruled from the region of the ancient Old Kingdom capital of Memphis (modern Mit Rahina), came to an end—perhaps as a result of one final military attack by the Theban army and its allies.

The end of the Eleventh Dynasty was characterized by a significant—and perhaps fatal—concentration of political, administrative, religious, and building activities in Upper Egypt. Royal expeditions were sent to the south and into the Wadi Hammamat, even to Punt, the far-off land of exotic products like myrrh and incense on the Red Sea coast of Sudan and Ethiopia. Temples in Upper Egypt were refur-

bished with fine stone reliefs. The southern regions were administered by mayors of cities who were both administrative directors and the ceremonial chiefs of the local temples. Evidence for activities in the north is slight: some archaeological discoveries near modern Tell al-Dab'a and Qantir (roughly corresponding to ancient Avaris/Pi-Ramsese) in the eastern Nile Delta, the mention of a military raid into southern Palestine in the inscriptions of a Nubian soldier who served under Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, and the inscription of a newly installed provincial official in the Herakleopolitan nome in northern Middle Egypt.

The seat of the royal residence and central administration was at Thebes, where during his fifty-one-year reign Nebhepetre Mentuhotep laid out the royal cemetery with his tomb and mortuary temple at Dayr al-Bahri. The royal tomb was surrounded by a large group of tombs of his courtiers, officials, and priests. Local artists from Thebes were joined by experts from Memphite workshops in the north, and it is possible to identify both local styles and classical ones based on the Old Kingdom in this era's royal and nonroyal tombs at Thebes.

Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's impressive royal tomb in the amphitheater of Dayr al-Bahri is still a prominent landmark recalling the rise of the Middle Kingdom. It was a focus for the veneration not only of the dead king but also of the Theban deities Hathor, Mentuhotep, and especially Amun, whose cult image, hidden in its

sacred bark, traveled once a year at the Festival of the Wadi in a solemn procession to the deceased king's mortuary temple. The victory of the Theban kings was also a victory for the Theban gods, primarily Amun, who became the dynastic god of the Twelfth Dynasty: the name Amenemhet means "Amun is at the fore (of the gods)."

Middle Kingdom society grew out of social and ideological developments of the First Intermediate Period (Ninth through Eleventh dynasties). It was shaped by the development of networks of followers tied to local patrons by reciprocal bonds of security for fidelity, economic dependence, and the ideal of the good shepherd. Additional factors were the distinctive Thebes-centered character of Eleventh Dynasty rulership, which was characterized by the king's being the exclusive chosen one of Hathor of Dendara and Thebes, Mentuhotep, Amun, and Re, and by links with traditions of the late Old Kingdom.

The twelve-year reign of Hebhepetre Mentuhotep's successor, Sankhkare Mentuhotep (ca. 1957–1945), is known above all from superb reliefs from the temples of Armant, al-Tod, and Elephantine. Ironically, the existence of Nebtawyre Mentuhotep (ca. 1945–1938), the last king of the Eleventh Dynasty, is known principally from mentions in inscriptions of his vizier Amenemhet; he does not appear in the later kinglist tradition. We do not know what happened before Amenemhet I's accession to the throne or how he managed to become pharaoh despite his nonroyal birth. It is no more than a hypothesis that he is identical with the vizier Amenemhet who led an expedition to the quarries in the Wadi Hammamat on behalf of Nebtawyre Mentuhotep. Thus, the very man who may have deposed Nebtawyre was the only one to pass on his remembrance.

The situation in Egypt before Amenemhet's accession was bad and chaotic—at least, this is the impression the king and his councillors wanted to create for posterity. We cannot decide if this propaganda picture is right, exaggerated, or wrong. In the *Prophecy of Neferti*, Amenemhet is announced as a charismatic savior of the country, almost a messiah.

While the Upper Egyptian and nonroyal origin of Amenemhet in the *Prophecy* seems to be

in accordance with the historical facts, his seemingly popular nickname "Ameni" in this text also alludes to the parallel mythic-historical situation of the time of Menes (Aha?), the legendary founder of Egyptian kingship in the First Dynasty, with whom Amenemhet wished to be compared. While Neferti said of the time before Amenemhet's accession to the throne, "The sun-god Re withdraws himself from humanity . . . Re has to begin creation [again]," the usurper Amenemhet labels his reign an era of "recreation" of the kingship and of the cosmic and social order after a dark period of interruption (the First Intermediate Period). So his reign should be understood as a continuation of the Old Kingdom tradition and at the same time as an innovative period of creation.

Amenemhet I and his reign are almost a historical blank. Very few facts are known from his time. He may have begun to build his mortuary monument at western Thebes in a wadi south of Dayr al-Bahri, behind the hill of Shaykh Abd al-Qurna, a complex that hitherto was considered to be the tomb of Sankhkare Mentuhotep. Amenemhet's vizier Antefoker also began to build his tomb at Thebes (Theban Tomb no. 60). The contemporary private letters of the minor priest and landholder Heqanakhte, found in a tomb at Dayr al-Bahri, mention a period of famine.

Amenemhet made significant changes in his titulary during his reign. His first titulary, *Shtp-jb-t'wj* and *Zm'*, resembles that of Teti (ca. 2350–2338), *Shtp-t'wj* and *Zm'*, the founder of the Sixth Dynasty, while his later titulary makes a political-religious formulation of the king's role, giving a comprehensive term for the whole era of restoration and renaissance: The Repeater of Births (i.e., creation, *whm mswt*). It is attractive to link this politically motivated change of titulary with the foundation of a new capital named Itjtawy, "Grasper of the Two Lands" (*jt-t'wj*). The new city was situated in northern Egypt near modern al-Lisht, south of the Old Kingdom capital of Memphis, which had, according to Egyptian tradition, been founded by Menes. The city has not been excavated, but at the desert edge of Itjtawy, Amenemhet began a new royal pyramid cemetery with surrounding tombs of his courtiers. The royal court evidently moved from Thebes to the northern residence, which

From Middle Kingdom Literature

The Prophecy of Neferti, preserved in New Kingdom copies only but evidently composed in the time of Amenemhet I, is set fictitiously at the court of King Sneferu of the Fourth Dynasty. The sage Neferti first describes the chaotic conditions prevailing in Egypt: "The land perishes, though laws are decreed against it, for destruction is what is done, and loss is what is found . . . I shall show you the land in a state of suffering, the weak as the lord of force, and the one once greeted greeting." Then Neferti foretells,

A King will come in the South, Amen, the justified, by name, son of a woman of Ta-Seti (the region of Aswan in Upper Egypt), a child of Upper Egypt. . . . Rejoice, people of his time, the son of a distinguished man will make his name for all eternity! . . . Then Mat (order) will return to its place, and chaos be driven away. Rejoice he who may behold, and he who may attend the king!

The Teaching of Amenemhet I for His Son is known from numerous school copies of the New Kingdom, but was evidently composed in the reign of Senwosret I. In a quite personal tone, Amenemhet reports on his own dramatic experience of a palace revolt against his life, and reminds his son of the duties of a king:

Listen to what I tell you, that you may rule the land, and govern the shores, increasing the well-being. Beware of subjects who are nobodies, whose respect cannot be trusted. . . . Trust no brother, know no friend! . . . It was one who ate my provisions who made insurrection; one to whom I had given my arms was creating plots with them. . . . Look, my injury happened while I was without you, when the entourage had not yet heard that I would hand over [kinship] to you . . . and my heart had not taken thought of the negligence of servants.

The solitude of the god-king is one aspect of Egyptian kingship, emphasized here because of the king's personal experience. Even so, Senwosret I did not hesitate to surround himself with loyal partisans. *The Story of Sinuhe* is the fictional autobiography of a palace servant, who fled from Egypt to Palestine after the death of Amenemhet I for fear of getting involved in a revolt. He is welcomed by a local ruler. Asked about the situation in Egypt, Sinuhe answers with solemn praise of Senwosret I. It is a good account of different aspects of Middle Kingdom kingship:

He (Senwosret I) is a god without peer, no other comes before him. He is lord of knowledge, wise planner, skilled leader, one goes and comes by his will. . . . Wide-striding he smites the fleeing, no retreat for him who turns him back. Steadfast in time of attack, he makes [others] turn back and turns not his back. . . . Lord of grace, rich in kindness, he has conquered through affection. . . . Men outdo women in hailing him, now that he is king. Victor while yet in the egg, set to be ruler since his birth. Augmenter of those born with him, he is unique, god-given. Happy the land that he rules!

Senwosret did not forget such a loyal subject. After many adventurous years in exile, Sinuhe was welcomed back to Egypt and was highly rewarded.

The stela of Sehetepibre, an official of Senwosret III and Amenemhet III, contains the first part of another literary text, styled in the form of an instruction to the official's children but evidently composed earlier. It contains exhortations to worship the king, hence its modern name, *Loyalist Teaching*. The second part of the teaching, recorded only in New Kingdom copies, deals with the relationship between the upper and lower classes. This extraordinary literary work interprets the social ideal of the good shepherd, and it is the earliest known treatise about solidarity in a hierarchically ordered society. The officials are reminded to treat their underlings well:

Provide for men, gather your people together, that you may secure(?) servants who are active. It is workmen who create that which exists; one lives on what comes from their hands. If they are lacking, poverty prevails. . . . Do not make the field labourer wretched with taxes. . . . If you press him too hard, then he thinks of becoming a vagabond. He who assesses the taxes in proportion to the grain, he is [a just] man in the eyes of the god. The riches of the unjust cannot stay. . . . The merciful—the cow bears for him; the evil shepherd—his herd is small. . . . Fight for the workers in all circumstances; they are a flock, useful for their lord.

The preceding translations have been adapted from MIRIAM LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (1973); and R. B. PARKINSON, ed. and trans., *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings* (1991).

became the new focus of the country. These changes may have taken place in the second part of his thirty-year reign. Only minor buildings are known from his reign: at the temples of Dendara, Koptos, Armant, and al-Tod, among others. In the eastern Delta, near Tell al-Dab'a, a temple was built, perhaps a "ka house" in the tradition of the late Old Kingdom for the cult of the royal ka (spirit-soul), and a royal statue. This royal interest in the Delta fits the picture given in the *Prophecy of Neferti*, which foretells the penetration of Palestinian tribesmen into the Delta, and announces that Amenemhet will build the "Walls of the Ruler," a system of fortified garrison posts that protected the eastern Delta against the tribes of northern Sinai and southern Palestine. Many scholars believe that Amenemhet was responsible for the introduction of co-regency, a practice that was followed by most of his Twelfth Dynasty successors. Amenemhet I declared his son Senwosret (or Sesostri; the name means "Man of the [Theban goddess] 'The Vigorous One'") co-regent at the beginning of his twenty-first year of rule (ca. 1919 BCE). The reasons for this political innovation are difficult to make out. Again, we must look for a possible explanation in a literary text that was assigned to Amenemhet's reign by its author.

In the *Teaching of Amenemhet I for His Son*, the central theme is an attempt on the king's life by his immediate associates at court—the palace guard and the women of the royal apartments (see the box). It is still uncertain whether this intrigue succeeded in murdering the king. If Amenemhet survived the attack, perhaps one consequence was the installation of his son as coregent—a political act intended to strengthen the power of the kingship. On the other hand, there is not a single explicit source confirming a ten-year co-regency of Amenemhet I with his son Senwosret I. Perhaps it is wise to abandon this idea and to credit Senwosret for the innovation of coregency with his son Amenemhet II. In doing so, he may have drawn his conclusions from the murder of his father and made two mythological concepts into a political reality: that of the king as the earthly representative of his "father" Re and that of the old and weary god (Re or Osiris) and his young and energetic son (Horus). The *Teaching* would then be a literary

work that legitimized Senwosret's claim to the throne and the new system of joint rulership.

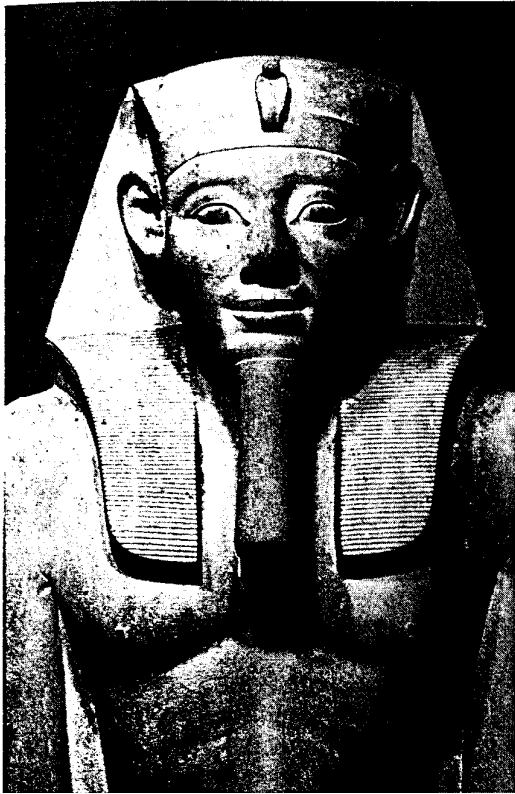
The starting point of the *Story of Sinuhe*, another literary work of the time, is the death of Amenemhet in his thirtieth regnal year. Senwosret, who at that time was in charge of a military campaign in Libya, had to return immediately to the residence to ensure his claim to the kingship. That the foundations of Amenemhet's and Senwosret's kingship were still not rock solid and that upheaval or revolt was conceivable are shown in the story by the reaction of the courtier Sinuhe, who fled in anxiety from Egypt when he heard of Amenemhet's death and stayed in Palestine until he could come back to Egypt through the king's grace.

SENWOSRET I: TRADITION AND INNOVATION

With the accession of Senwosret I to the throne, there is a radical change in our knowledge of the Middle Kingdom. Whereas almost nothing survives from the reign of Amenemhet I, sources of all kinds now become abundant. More than fifty royal statues and more than forty-five inscribed royal and nonroyal stelae, as well as several statues and offering tables donated by his officials for their own commemorative chapels or tombs, can be dated to Senwosret's forty-five years as king (ca. 1919–1875). The picture of his time is enhanced by numerous commemorative inscriptions and graffiti of mining and military expeditions, papyri such as the accounts of a royal dockyard at This (Thinis, near modern al-Girga), autobiographical inscriptions from tombs of his officials in the court and provincial cemeteries, and the remains of his vast building program throughout Egypt.

Senwosret significantly chose the Horus name "The Active One in Creation" (*nhmswt*), proclaiming his active role as prosecutor of his father's policy of renaissance. All of the distinctive changes, acts of restoration, and innovations that characterize the renaissance at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty can be traced from Senwosret's reign on.

The royal residence and royal and court cemetery were situated in the Memphis region;



Upper part of limestone statue of Senwosret I, one of ten from his mortuary temple at Lisht. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

the royal tomb revived the Old Kingdom form of a pyramid with decorated mortuary temple. A pyramid city sprang up near the pyramids of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I at Itjtawy.

Senwosret I initiated a large-scale building program emulated by such later kings as Senwosret III (ca. 1836–1818), Amenhotep (Amenophis) III (ca. 1390–1353), and Ramesses (Ramses) II (ca. 1279–1213). At Elephantine, Hierakonpolis, al-Tod, Armant, Karnak, Abydos (modern Araba al-Madfuna), Abgig in the Faiyum, and Heliopolis, buildings were constructed and renovated; the temples were built on a larger scale and with stone walls in a new stressed-skin construction technique. For the first time in Egyptian history, one of the primary concerns of royal policy was to build stone temples for the gods.

Administrative districts were reorganized on the basis of local towns, ruled by mayors, and the surrounding countryside. In some distinctive re-

gions of Middle and Upper Egypt, which were important for the control of the eastern and western desert routes and trade, new nome governors from local families were installed at the head of the civil, military, and religious spheres in order to strengthen the ties between the royal court and the regions.

In the Eleventh Dynasty, viziers had already been appointed again and the new office of royal treasurer created. In the Twelfth Dynasty these officials were joined by newly created officers with titles like chamberlain, reporter, and high steward (of the king's property). A school at the residence-city, Itjtawy, was inaugurated, and a new court elite formed.

Royal quarry expeditions were organized on a large scale, not only to the Wadi al-Hudi and Wadi Hammamat but also to Sinai for copper, malachite, and turquoise. The biggest expedition ever sent out by the Egyptians consisted of more than 17,000 people who went to the Wadi Hammamat to bring back stone for 150 statues and 60 sphinxes for Senwosret.

Senwosret led military expeditions to Nubia, Libya, and southern Palestine. Lower Nubia was occupied permanently and protected through a network of fortresses and administrative and trading centers like Quban and 'Aniba, as far as Buhen near Wadi Halfa, close to the Second Cataract.

The international system of trade was expanded to provide the court and the elite with imports. These came from Nubia, Palestine, Syria, and the eastern Mediterranean.

The site of Abydos, with its temple of Osiris and its ancient royal cemetery, where the supposed tomb of Osiris was situated, gained national popularity. Not only the king but also officials erected their monuments there. It was their desire to participate in perpetuity in the yearly solemn performance of Osiris's death and resurrection and the celebration of Horus's victory over his and his father's enemies.

In art, the Memphite tradition became dominant. Both Old Kingdom types of statuary and new forms were incorporated into the standard repertoire of the royal workshops. These included group statues of the king with gods, colossal striding statues, Osirid columns, and sphinxes. Among nonroyal statuary were squatting statues, block statues, and statues with

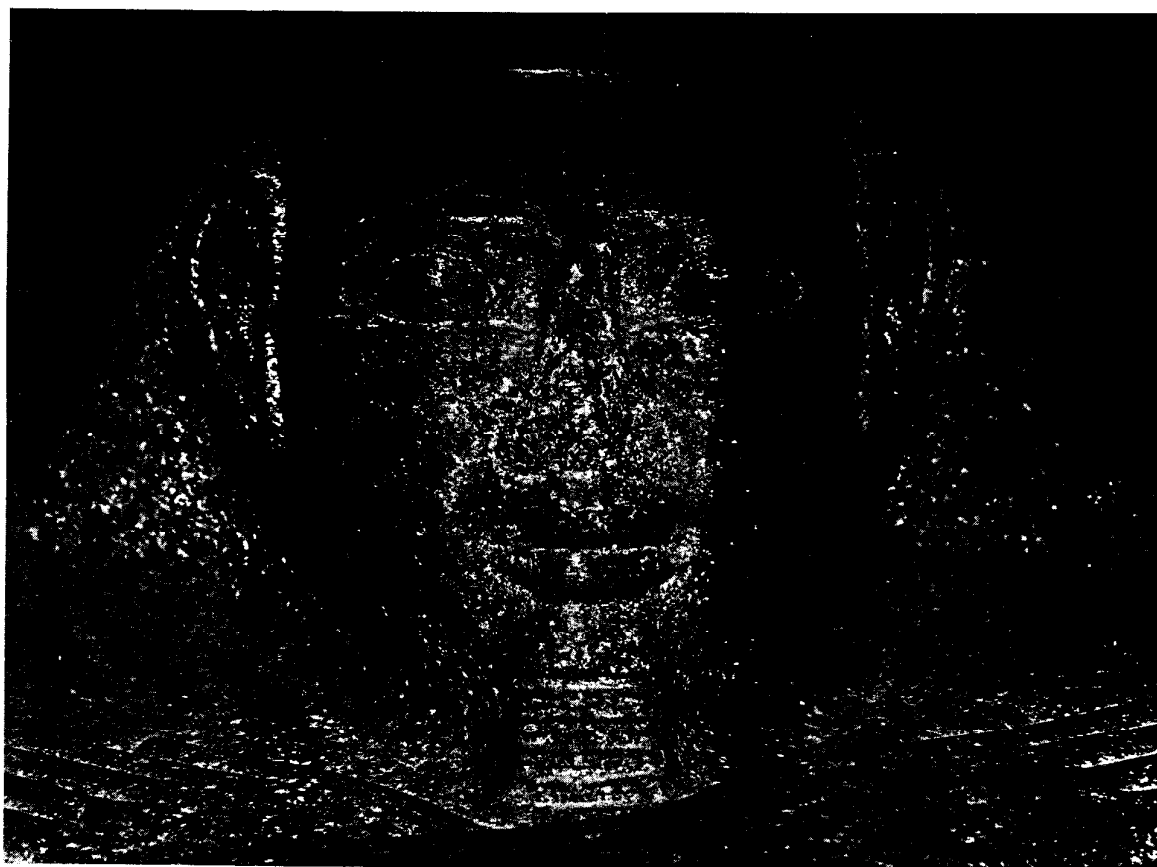
hands held out to pray and to beg for offerings. Most of them were set up as temple statues, not as tomb statues. (For a further discussion see "Palaces and Temples of Ancient Egypt" in Part 4, Vol. I.)

Literary works were composed as media for propagating royal and elite interests. Traditional literary forms such as the *Teaching* were used, but new forms were developed, including the dialogue between king and courtiers. The works were disseminated through schools, temples, and literate men. A new medium for communication was monumental royal hieroglyphic inscriptions addressed to the public, like those on the so-called Obelisk monument at Abgig and in the temples of Karnak, al-Tod, and Elephantine. The corpus of literature in vogue consisted of the teachings of Ptahhotep and of Prince

Hordjedef, the teaching for the vizier Kagemni, the *Satire on the Trades* written by the scribe Khety to promote the profession of scribe, the *Shipwrecked Sailor*, the *Story of Sinuhe*, and perhaps the *Loyalist Teaching* and the *Teaching of a Man for His Son*, which were intended to promote adherence to the pharaoh and to the elite vision of a hierarchical social order (see the extracts above and the discussion of Egyptian literature in Part 9, Vol. IV).

The phraseology and orthography of hieroglyphic inscriptions were reformed. The calligraphy on the inscriptions was also standardized.

In ceramics, a totally new repertoire and style were created at Itjtawy in the second part of Senwosret's reign. This change marks the archaeological end of the First Intermediate Pe-



Face of the granite block statue of the Egyptian official Hotep, from Saqqara, early Twelfth Dynasty. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

The Middle Kingdom in Egypt

riod, about one hundred years after its political end with the unification of Egypt under Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, and the beginning of the more or less homogeneous material culture of the mature Middle Kingdom.

Taken together, these developments indicate clearly that there was more than just a continuation of tradition. Amenemhet I, Senwosret I, and their counselors not only commemorated the past with "teachings" ascribed to Old Kingdom sages and dedications of statues of their royal forebears but also inaugurated a period of renewal for Egyptian culture: the new formation of a great tradition. The central elements of this policy were three. First, there was a strong desire for commemoration: to erect buildings for eternity, using stone as the enduring medium of cultural identity and remembrance. Second, in the interest of social cohesion, there was propagated an ideal of reciprocity: "to act for the one who has acted before" should be the prevailing ethical pattern of behavior in society. This principle, along with the certainty that doing good things will be rewarded by those for whom they are done and by future generations, was, so elite sources tell us, the motivation for many of their activities. The third basic aspect determined by society, which was communicated by many texts and autobiographical inscriptions, was loyalty to the pharaoh. Loyalty was an expression of the conviction that the welfare of every member of society depended on the functioning and success of government. The king, in turn, had to ensure that his subjects were loyal and to support his supporters.

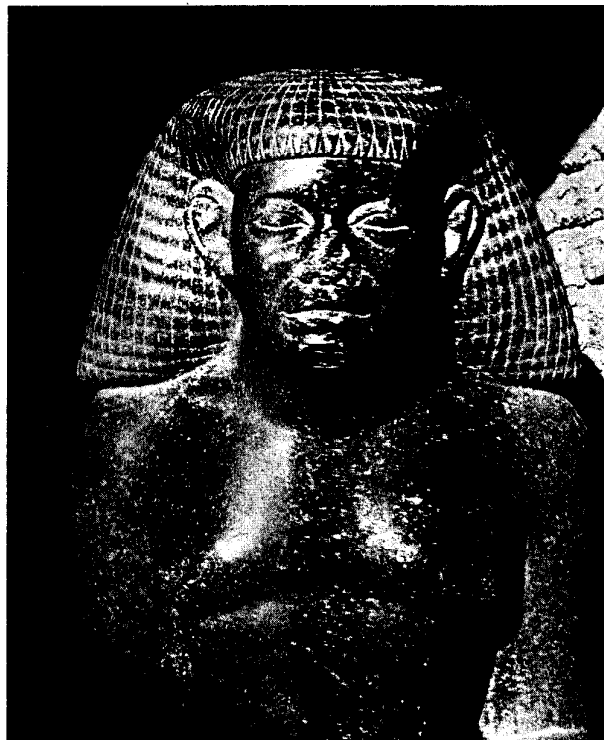
Dozens of officials and hundreds of ordinary people of Senwosret's time are known only by name and from scattered documents, but rather more is known about some of the leading people of the time who were the pharaoh's close companions. The four best-known officials were evidently parvenus, owing their promotion to the highest offices to the pharaoh's rewarding their loyalty.

The vizier Antefoker may have served Amenemhet I and was, like his king, of Theban extraction. As a courtier he followed his king to the north, leaving his rock tomb at Thebes for his mother, and built his new tomb at the foot of Amenemhet's pyramid at Itjtawy. He served the two kings for more than thirty years, but—the

dark side of being the king's favorite—he and his son later fell into disgrace.

Mentuhotep—the royal treasurer and royal master builder, who supervised most of the king's building activities—dedicated about ten statues of himself in the temple of Amun at Karnak and built a commemorative chapel for himself at Abydos. South of Senwosret's pyramid at Itjtawy he constructed a large mastaba furnished with more statues and inscribed with Pyramid Texts derived from Old Kingdom sources.

Provincial administrators also benefited from the king's favor. As a reward for their loyalty—which was only natural, because they owed their rank to him—Senwosret made royal artists available to work on their rock tombs. The governor Djefaihapi is known for the ten contracts inscribed on the walls of his tomb at Asyut, which he made with his funerary priest and the local priests and workmen responsible for his mortuary services.



Upper part of gray granite statue of Heqaib II, mayor of Aswan, from the Sanctuary of Heqaib, Elephantine, Twelfth Dynasty. ELEPHANTINE MUSEUM, ASWAN

Some of the most informative texts of the Middle Kingdom we owe to another governor, Sarenput, mayor of the city on Elephantine Island opposite modern Aswan. His long autobiographical inscription in his impressive rock tomb on the west bank of the Nile north of Elephantine not only describes his performance of his duties and the favors he received from the king but is also full of extravagant praise of Senwosret I. On Elephantine he reconstructed the sanctuary of a local "saint" named Heqaib, who had been a leader of military and trade expeditions into Nubia during the Sixth Dynasty. This man, who was at first venerated by his followers as their patron, was later deified as a mediator between the living and the realm of gods and the dead. As a follower of his king's policy of commemorating the past, Sarenput established a tradition of venerating Heqaib and of donations for the sanctuary by the mayors and overseers of priests of Elephantine and by royal officials who came south on royal business.

THE END OF THE RENAISSANCE ERA

At the end of Senwosret's long reign, there was probably a short coregency with his son Amenemhet II. In contrast to the abundant commemorations of the reign of his father, information about Amenemhet II's thirty-five-year reign (ca. 1876–1842) is scarce. He built his pyramid not at Itjtawy but farther north, near the two pyramids of the venerated "good king" Sneferu at Dahshur. Perhaps significantly, not a single royal statue inscribed with his name is known. The number of royal monuments is smaller, and the relief work on many of the about thirty-five private stelae from his reign is of lesser quality. Some of these private stelae contain interesting autobiographical statements, but most include only religious formulas and prayers. A long inscription found at Memphis enumerates royal donations to several temples, records statues of the royal family and of officials, and—most strikingly—gives an account of military raids into Palestine that took large quantities of booty. In the temple of al-Tod there was found a deposit of treasure, sealed under Amenemhet's

name, containing silver cups and other objects in precious materials imported from the Levant and Mesopotamia.

Only eight years of reign are known for Senwosret II (ca. 1844–1837), who was perhaps Amenemhet's son, three of them spent in a coregency with his father. It is therefore not surprising that very few sources are preserved from his time. Three statues inscribed with his name, all now headless, are known. Three colossi found at Tanis (biblical Zoan) were ascribed to his reign on stylistic grounds, but they were usurped and reworked by later kings. There are two magnificent complete seated statues of his queen, Nofret. Few inscriptions in the mining regions date to his reign, and Amenemhet III mentioned later some building activities of Senwosret in the town of Elkab. Six dated private stelae are known from his time. The long and eloquent autobiography of the provincial official Khnumhotep in tomb no. 3 at Beni Hasan was inscribed in the reign of Senwosret II.

The best-known monument of Senwosret II is his mortuary complex at Illahun, near the Faiyum. His pyramid shows some innovations: it was built of mud bricks over a limestone frame, and its entrance is not on the north side but on the south. The whole complex seems to be an architectural reproduction of the imaginary tomb of Osiris, and the pyramid's interior plan is like a labyrinth. The pyramid city beside the valley temple, called Kahun by its excavator, William M. Flinders Petrie, flourished throughout the rest of the Twelfth Dynasty and in the Thirteenth Dynasty. The settlement was characterized by a few large villas for the higher officials, their families, and servants; many smaller houses of ordinary townsmen; and workmen's quarters. This plan incorporates the architectural vision of a hierarchically ordered society, a vision that received literary expression in the *Loyalist Teaching* recorded on a private stela in the time of Amenemhet III (see the extract above).

A large group of papyrus documents found at Illahun, such as letters, accounts, wills, and household lists, gives surprising insights into life in a Middle Kingdom town while raising many other questions. One letter, dated to year 7 (1830 or 1866 BCE according to low or high chronology of Senwosret III, provides the only astronomi-

cally fixed point for earlier Egyptian chronology: the forecast of the heliacal rising of Sirius.

THE MATURE TWELFTH DYNASTY: AS YE HAVE SOWN, SO SHALL YE REAP

With the accession of Senwosret III (illustrated in Egyptian reliefs in Part 10) after the sudden death of his father Senwosret II, the Middle Kingdom came to a second turning point. During his sole reign of about nineteen years, which may have been followed by a coregency with his son Amenemhet III (ca. 1818–1772), further distinctive and fundamental changes in society and culture can be observed.

The first century of the Twelfth Dynasty was characterized by a concern to rebuild a royal residence city with its culture and court elite, in balance with the dignitaries living in the provinces. The main beneficiaries of the successful domestic and foreign policy of Senwosret I and Amenemhet II were the king and the capital. The full consequences of this policy came only under Senwosret II and Senwosret III. During their reigns, local administrators with the title “nomarch” disappear from the record and the provinces retire into the background, leaving little record of provincial affairs. The last great decorated rock tombs, such as those of Djehutihotep at Dayr al-Barsha, of Ukhhotep at Meir, of Heqaib near Elephantine, and of Wakhka at Qaw al-Kabir, can be dated to the reign of Senwosret III. Some members of an intermediate layer of society at the residence, including petty officials and military men, had increasing economic means at their disposal, a development visible archaeologically in the expansion of the necropolises in the region of the residence and by a growing number of dedications of private stelae and statues in such sacred places as Abydos.

A new effort was made to define the ideology of kingship and royal conduct in domestic and foreign policy. This can be deduced from the hymns in honor of Senwosret III, a collection of six songs in praise of the king found at Illahun (the date of composition may be earlier), and the royal boundary stelae found at the Nubian for-



Brown quartzite statue of the late Twelfth Dynasty official Amenemhetankh. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

tresses of Semna and Uronarti, in which the king explains a policy of what would now be termed "flexible response" against the "vile Nubians." Four military campaigns to Nubia are known from his reign, reaching up the Nile as far as the Dal Cataract, some sixty-five kilometers (about 40 miles) south of the frontier at Semna. For his active policy in Nubia, Senwosret was later venerated and became the patron of Nubia; in the New Kingdom he was worshiped as a god in chapels of the fortresses of Uronarti and Buhen. A military campaign into Palestine that captured Sichem is mentioned in the autobiography of the soldier Khusobek.

The *Eloquent Peasant*, with its nine wonderful rhetorical speeches pleading for justice in government, may have been written in the reign of Senwosret II or III.

The most obvious signs of the period's distinctive view of kingship are to be seen in about sixty-five royal statues and statue fragments. It is the face of the king that proves something had changed. The expressive royal portraits can be interpreted as a "realistic" visualization of an ideal personality: the king as the "good shepherd" of his subjects, as a man who is concerned and well aware of his responsibility. To be sure, these duties of the king were not new, but for the first time they were made visible in his portraiture. These qualities of personality are reproduced in a kind of "citation" in the facial expression of numerous contemporary and later statues of officials and nonroyal persons who aspired to identify themselves with this ideal.

New features are also prominent in religion, funerary beliefs, and architecture. Senwosret III issued a royal decree to ensure the continuity of the funerary cult in the temple built by his great predecessor Nebhepetre Mentuhotep at Dayr al-Bahri, and he set up statues of himself there, for the first time showing a king in a posture of prayer. His building activities are known from the temple sites of Hierakonpolis, Armant, Medamud, Karnak, Abydos, Herakleopolis (modern Ihnasya al-Madina), Bubastis (modern Tell Basta near Zagazig), Pi-Ramsese, and others. His official Ikhnofret described on his stela some of the episodes of the festival of Osiris at Abydos.

A change in beliefs is visible in the two mortuary complexes erected by Senwosret III. At

Dahshur, he built the first pyramid constructed completely in mud brick with only the casing in limestone; the arrangement of the interior chambers followed the late Old Kingdom model, except for having the entrance on the west. At Abydos a temple complex with a second tomb was constructed, modeled after the prototype of the imaginary tomb of Osiris and the ground plan of his predecessor's pyramid at Illahun. The winding underground passages are perhaps styled in accordance with an older work of funerary literature, the *Book of the Two Ways*, a guide through the regions of the next world. Senwosret III's use of mud brick in building a pyramid and the interior ground plan of his tomb at Abydos were followed by most of his successors.

For nonroyal burials, the practice of building decorated tombs and depositing wooden models of workers, craftsmen, workshops, and boats ceased, and *shabtis*—small figures substituting for the tomb owner in his work in the realm of the dead—came into use. By the end of the Old Kingdom, it was possible for any member of the elite to "become" Osiris, but there are now hints of a growing interest in a distinctive and detailed picture of the netherworld. The idea of becoming a freely moving spirit (*ba*) after death became prominent in funerary practices, and its implications were elaborated. For the dead, it was now possible to exist as a follower of Osiris and to participate in the daily solar cycle in the company of the sun-god Re simply through the help of transfiguring recitations and the acquisition of magical knowledge about the realm of the dead; a decorated tomb chamber was not needed.

Egypt now possessed a unified material culture and ceramics distinctive of the "high" or "classic" Middle Kingdom. This unity was the result of a long evolution that had begun at the residence during the reign of Senwosret I.

Reminiscences of Senwosret III, mixed with achievements of Senwosret I and of Ramesses II of the Nineteenth Dynasty, were fused in later oral tradition into the legendary figure of the hero-king Sesostris recorded by Herodotus (2.102–110), Diodorus Siculus (1.53–58), and other Greek and Roman writers; there was even a Sesostris romance.

The following reign of Amenemhet III shows

the climax of all these changes. About seventy statues of Amenemhet III are known, some of very rare types, such as double statues of the king in a distinctive costume and carrying offerings and statues of the king as a sphinx with an impressive lion's mane, showing only a human face.

More than thirty mining expeditions to Sinai, Wadi Hammamat, and Wadi al-Hudi are recorded from Amenemhet's reign; but no military campaigns are known. Discoveries at Tell al-Dab'a—the site that was to become the residence of foreign Canaanite rulers, the Hyksos's Fifteenth Dynasty—near Qantir in the eastern Delta show an increase of immigration and integration by a Palestinian population. Some lists of servants on papyri of the time show the high percentage of foreign workers and servants in Egypt, so that—at least for the eastern Delta—we can speak of the coexistence of materially and ethnically distinct cultures.

The balance between the capital and the provinces, and between Egyptians and more or less egyptianized foreigners, was maintained by an extraordinarily elaborate and proliferating bureaucracy and administration. Even humble servants of the treasury or of provisioning quarters and the households of high officials proudly inscribed their titles and names on stelae; people from those social strata had never before had the opportunity and the economic means to immortalize their names. More than fifty private stelae datable to Amenemhet III's reign belonged to officials, priests, military men, and others. Dozens of administrative titles show that everything possible in the country was supervised, counted, and registered. The enlistment of people for corvée labor for royal building activities and expeditions is well attested. But a note of caution is in order: the picture that has been drawn of a totalitarian "police state" with an all-pervasive control, like that in George Orwell's 1984, seems to be exaggerated and overestimates the capacity of the Egyptian bureaucracy. Furthermore, control of economic and social affairs in a hierarchically ordered society does not seem to have been an innovation of the time of Senwosret III and Amenemhet III. There is no reason why this picture should not apply to the time of Senwosret I. The difference is that only from the time of Senwosret III and

Amenemhet III do we have clear sources, mainly because even the lower strata of society—at least in the area of the capital—were reasonably prosperous.

A major royal project of Amenemhet's time was the reclamation of more arable land in the Faiyum by manipulating the water level of the Faiyum Lake. This concern for the Faiyum was displayed by the erection of two colossi of Amenemhet III at Biahmu. For his reclamation works, Amenemhet was worshiped in the Faiyum even in Ptolemaic and Roman times under the Greek form of his prenomen, Lamares.

Perhaps in connection with the intensified cultivation of the land, the height of the annual inundation of the Nile was recorded on the riverbank at several places. We have these Nile levels from the fortresses of Semna and Kumma at the Second Cataract in Nubia, as well as one from Nag' al-Dayr in Upper Egypt, north of Abydos.



Limestone statue of Amenemhet III, from his pyramid complex at Hawara, late Twelfth Dynasty. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

Amenemhet built a mud-brick pyramid for himself and his family at Dahshur, and at least one of his queens was buried there. This pyramid had to be abandoned because of construction problems, and Amenemhet built a new pyramid in the Faiyum at Hawara. Nearby was a vast temple for the royal funerary cult filled with many statues, a magnificent building that provoked the admiration of Herodotus (2.148) more than a millennium later, but today is reduced to scattered fragments. Also in the vicinity was the tomb of his daughter Nofru-Ptah, a sister of the future king Amenemhet IV (ca. 1773–1763), discovered intact in the 1950s.

FINALE: THE END OF THE ROYAL LINE OF THE TWELFTH DYNASTY

Amenemhet III enjoyed a reign of forty-six years, the last few perhaps in coregency with his son Amenemhet IV. In the temple of Madinat Madi in the Faiyum, both kings are shown together, offering to Sobek, the crocodile god of the Faiyum, and the snake goddess Renenutet. No statue of Amenemhet IV is known; the only sculpture that can be ascribed to his reign consists of three sphinxes. He sent four expeditions to Sinai, and during his reign the shrine of the patron goddess Hathor at Serabit al-Khadim in Sinai was inscribed and decorated. About seven private stelae can be dated to his reign, some of them with the cartouches of both Amenemhet III and Amenemhet IV. Amenemhet IV reigned for a little more than nine years, evidently leaving no son to succeed him as pharaoh.

Four basalt statues of a female pharaoh named Nefrusobek (Sobeknefru, ca. 1763–1759) have been excavated in a mud-brick temple at Khatana near Qantir. Two depict her enthroned, wearing the normal long woman's garment; the others are a kneeling statue and a sphinx. She bore a full royal titulary: Female Horus: Merit-Re (Beloved One of Re), King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Sobek-ka-Re, Daughter of Re: Nofru-Sobek. Obviously Nefrusobek was a daughter of Amenemhet III, because she is called "Daughter of His [the king's] Body" on a fragmentary statue now in the Louvre that shows

her in a woman's garment but wearing a male royal headcloth.

It seems to be a consistent pattern in Egyptian history that the reign of a woman signifies the end of a great period: Queen Nitokris at the end of the Sixth Dynasty, Queen Tewosret at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and Queen Cleopatra VII Philopator at the end of the Ptolemaic period. (But this was not so in the case of Queen Hatshepsut.) Similarly, the reign of Nefrusobek, which lasted less than 4 years, marked the end of about 180 (or 190) years of uninterrupted male succession and unbroken rule of the family of Amenemhet I.

THE LONG AFTERMATH

The Thirteenth Dynasty is marked by the large number of kings—about fifty—reigning during a period of roughly 150 years. At the beginning of the dynasty, only the rapid succession of ephemeral kings seems markedly different from the preceding period; material culture and the efficiency of administration continued.

It is difficult to account for the pattern of royal succession during these times. Obviously the prestige of kingship declined, and every king had to struggle for his legitimacy—gained not through birth but through his charisma, his deeds, and the power of his family. Ideologically the king was proclaimed as being chosen by the sun-god Amun-Re, but in a more pragmatic perspective the kingship may have been obtained through a sort of "circulating succession" reflecting the rivalry of a number of important and powerful families.

We do not know much about most of the kings and the perhaps changing character of kingship during the Thirteenth Dynasty, but for the bureaucracy it is one of the best-documented periods of Egyptian history. Large numbers of nonroyal inscribed objects, principally stelae from Abydos, provide much information about the successions, family relationships, and other connections of hundreds of officials and household servants of the time.

The dynasty falls into three distinct political phases. For about the first eighty years, the kings and a well-organized bureaucracy contin-

ued to rule from the residence region between Memphis and the Faiyum. Soon after a last, unsuccessful attempt to revive Twelfth Dynasty traditions during the reigns of the three brothers Neferhotep, Sahathor, and Sobekhotep IV, there were important changes in Upper Egypt and in the eastern Delta. In Upper Egypt, the royal family was related to local families through ties of kinship and marriage, leading to a growing wealth and importance of the Upper Egyptian centers of Thebes, Edfu, and Elkab. The high level of non-Egyptian influence in the eastern Delta at the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty is shown by weapons, "Levantine painted ware" ceramics of Syro-Palestinian Middle Bronze Age IIA date, and burials of donkeys in connection with tombs, all found at Tell al-Dab'a. The continuously increasing immigration of Canaanite people, among them a significant number of soldiers, is evident from the archaeological record. One result of this cultural and ethnic infiltration was a gradual shift of the eastern Delta away from the mainstream of Egyptian policy, which now found its political expression in the establishment of a local dynasty rivaling the Memphite rulers, the Fourteenth Dynasty in the later numbering. Thereafter, Egypt was divided between two dynasties for about 160 years.

The very last phase of the Thirteenth Dynasty is marked by a decline in the power of the Memphite pharaohs, the later abandoning of the fortress towns in Lower Nubia, and a consolidation of Canaanite influence in the Delta, confronting Egyptian culture with such innovations as the horse-drawn chariot. In a sudden wave a group of West Semitic (and perhaps Hurrian) invaders from Palestine and Syria seized the Memphite residence by force and installed their rulers as pharaohs with full Egyptian titularies, claiming sovereignty over all of Egypt. These foreign rulers, recognized in Egyptian kinglist tradition as an aberrant group of six pharaohs called the Hyksos (Rulers of the Foreign Lands), reigned for about one hundred years (Fifteenth Dynasty¹). They chose as their residence the city of Avaris (modern Tell al-Dab'a, near Qantir).

But their authority over Egypt was only a fiction. At Thebes, a provincial rump state on the model of the Thirteenth Dynasty was established (Seventeenth Dynasty), with pharaohs

who displayed themselves as the chosen ones of Amun and protectors of their hometown, Thebes. The kings had special mythico-religious and kinship ties to Edfu, the nearby city of the temple of Horus. Thebes, Elkab, and Edfu were the nuclei of a new kind of cultural and political entity between the Hyksos dominion in the north and a new political power in the south, the kingdom of Kush, whose rulers had their residence at Kerma. Cut off from the Memphite residence region and its traditions, the inevitably provincial continuation of Thirteenth Dynasty culture, the adaptation of new influences and innovations, and the increasing impatience at sharing authority with foreign rulers contributed basic elements to later New Kingdom culture. The elite in Upper Egypt had become more and more oriented toward military ideals; and finally, swept along with a feeling that right and the gods were on his side, Pharaoh Ahmose (Amosis) gained victory over the Hyksos about 1520.

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