FOCUS QUESTIONS

1 What were the significant developments and issues arising from the establishment of the 18th Dynasty?
2 What religious developments and issues are important for our understanding of this period?
3 How did significant individuals and groups shape Egypt’s development in the early New Kingdom?
4 What role did imperial expansion play in Egypt’s development?
5 What are the key historiographical issues for this historical period?

FIGURE 1 Detail from Thutmose IV’s recently reconstructed peristyle court at Karnak Temple

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE 18TH DYNASTY

New Kingdom Egypt was born in warfare. It emerged from the struggle of the Theban rulers of Upper Egypt to rid themselves of Hyksos rule. The Hyksos kings, based at Avaris in the Nile Delta, had dominated Egypt for much of the Second Intermediate Period. Their political and economic influence extended as far south as Cusae in Middle Egypt. King Kamose, and later his brother Ahmose, expelled the Hyksos in a series of battles over a thirty-year period. This resulted in the reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt and established the 18th Dynasty. The adoption of military technology picked up from the enemy was instrumental in the military success of the early 18th Dynasty rulers. The Hyksos composite bow and chariot were used to great effect against those who resisted Egypt.

1 The collapse of centralised rule at the end of the Middle Kingdom was followed by a period of disunity; during this time, native Egyptian kings ruled at Thebes in the south (Upper Egypt) while a line of foreign Hyksos rulers controlled the north (Lower Egypt).
2 You will find different anglicised versions of the names of these pharaohs in scholarly texts: Ahmose is also written as Ahmosis; Thutmose as Thutmosis; and Amenhotep as Amenophis—there is no correct version but it is advisable to choose one spelling for consistency, e.g. Ahmose, Thutmose and Amenhotep or Ahmosis, Thutmosis and Amenophis; the same applies to the spelling of the god Amun (used in this chapter), other spellings include Amon and Amen.
Historical overview

The need to consolidate and expand the newly reunified Egyptian state was a force that shaped the history of the early 18th Dynasty. The first priority was the political survival of the new dynasty. Evidence reveals that rebellions at home in Upper Egypt had to be put down prior to re-establishment of control over Nubia. Campaigns against the Kushites, former allies of the Hyksos, were a feature of every reign, until Thutmose II finally defeated the ruler of Kerma. Even then, successive pharaohs of this period had to fight campaigns in Nubia to ensure the effective exploitation of its resources for the new Dynasty.

Egyptian imperialism was expressed in royal inscriptions that spoke of ‘extending the boundaries [of Egypt] with might’. This expansionist foreign policy first arose from the need to consolidate the new dynasty. Early military activity in Syria–Palestine was restricted to raids to secure Egypt’s borders. By the end of the reign of Thutmose III, the archetypal ‘warrior pharaoh’ of the 18th Dynasty, Egypt had become a major power in the region. The ‘empire’ was forged by a combination of annual military campaigns, a system of forts and garrisons, together with an administrative network of imperial officials to maintain control. By the end of the reign of Thutmose IV, Egypt had added diplomacy to its foreign policy; a peace treaty was negotiated with the Mitanni, later sealed by a diplomatic marriage between Thutmose IV and the daughter of the Mitannian king, Artatama I.

Egyptian response to years of foreign rule was another force that shaped the religious policies of 18th Dynasty pharaohs. They were keen to re-establish the cults of the traditional Egyptian gods, such as Ptah, Montu and Osiris. This was demonstrated by a fever of new building activity including temples and shrines. More significantly, their own god, Amun of Thebes became the chief deity now allied with the great god Re. The cult of Amun-Re, in time, would dominate the religious landscape of the New Kingdom. All kings of this period built at the temple of Amun at Karnak, the focus of his worship, and credited him with their military victories. By the reigns of Hatshepsut and her co-regent and successor, Thutmose III, the cult of Amun-Re and its priesthood had reached unprecedented heights of influence. This was demonstrated not only in the buildings erected to honour Amun, but also by massive offerings of tribute and booty dedicated to his cult.

A notable feature of the early 18th Dynasty was the prominent role played by queens. From the beginning of Theban resistance to the Hyksos, queens were thrust into political and military roles. As regents for their husbands and sons, queens such as Tetisheri and Ahhotep played pivotal roles in establishing the new dynasty. Other queens were influential holders of the title ‘god’s wife of Amun’, the most famous being Hatshepsut, who was able to translate her religious influence into political power and become pharaoh in her own right.

Pharaohs of this period relied on a large and talented civil, religious and military bureaucracy to carry out Egypt’s internal and external affairs. Men such as Ahmose son of Ebana, and Ahmose Pennekhbet made outstanding military contributions and were rewarded with gold and slaves. Egypt’s successful foreign relations depended on diplomats such as Nehesy, the leader of Hatshepsut’s fabled voyage to Punt, while the pharaohs’ building programs relied on architects and stewards such as Ineni and Senenmut. Viziers such as Rekhmire were vital in the administration of Egypt and her ‘empire’, while the king’s high priests of Amun, such as Menkheperraseneb, eventually wielded more power than any other official.

By the end of the period, Egypt was on the verge of a ‘golden age’ of peace and economic prosperity. It was the pre-eminent power in the Near East with a sphere of influence stretching from Syria in the north, to the Fifth Cataract of the Nile in the south. Wealth flowed into Egypt from foreign booty, tribute and trade. Egypt’s pharaohs had established themselves as the direct descendants of the gods and Amun- Re was foremost among the gods, with its priesthood more powerful than any other. Memories of Hyksos rule must have, at long last, dimmed.

There are some major issues of historiographical debate that you should explore in your study of this topic. Be aware that there are significant gaps in the historical record and that surviving written sources may contain bias and inaccuracy. We will draw your attention to key areas of dispute at relevant points in this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pharaoh</th>
<th>Highlights of the reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.1560 BC</td>
<td>Taa Seqenenre</td>
<td>Argument with Hyksos king, Apopi, apparently over hippopotamus noise in Thebes, results in battle A large military establishment is built at Ballas housing Egyptians and Kerma Nubians King dies violently in battle against Hyksos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1555–1550 BC</td>
<td>Kamose Wadjkheperre</td>
<td>An expedition to Buhen in Nubia occurs early in the reign A military and naval raid on Hyksos territory and blockade of Avaris fails to dislodge Hyksos rule Kamose dies after a very brief reign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1550–1525 BC</td>
<td>Ahmose Nebpehtyre</td>
<td>Sacking of the Hyksos capital, Avaris Siege of Sharuhen in southern Palestine, perhaps fought against Hyksos remnant forces Egyptian control of Nubia established Reunification of Egypt: two uprisings put down A palace complex is built at Avaris (modern Tell el-Dab'a), the captured Hyksos capital Memphis resettled and redeveloped Traditional pharaonic building program re-established honouring cults of the traditional Egyptian gods, especially Amun of Thebes at Karnak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1525–1504 BC</td>
<td>Amenhotep I Djeserkare</td>
<td>Foundation of a workers’ village at Deir el-Medina with the king and his mother, Ahmose-Nefertari, as the patrons Possible Libyan campaign Building at Abydos and Karnak Defining characteristics of 18th Dynasty clearly evident by end of reign: pre-eminence of Amun cult; control and exploitation of Nubia; establishment of bureaucracy involving powerful families and relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1504–1492 BC</td>
<td>Thutmose I Aakheperkare</td>
<td>Possible co-regency with Amenhotep I Peaceful assumption of power by a new family possibly cemented by the king’s marriage to Ahmose, a princess of the preceding family Continued military and economic exploitation of Nubia Expedition to Syria lays foundations for Egypt's dominant role in later Near-Eastern trade and diplomacy Extensive building program initiated from Nubia to Giza as well as in Karnak and Abydos Ideology of divine birth of the king probably begins in this reign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1492–1479 BC</td>
<td>Thutmose II Aakheperenre</td>
<td>One Nubian campaign results in the final defeat of the Kushites at Kerma Building takes place at Karnak Queen Hatshepsut plays a very important role in the reign even before the king’s death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1479–1473 BC</td>
<td>Thutmose III Menkheperre</td>
<td>Reign begins with Hatshepsut as regent following the king's accession as a young child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1473–1458 BC</td>
<td>Hatshepsut Maatkare Thutmose III Menkheperre</td>
<td>Co-regency established following Hatshepsut's coronation An extensive building program stretches from Nubia to Memphis and includes middle Egypt for the first time Prolonged peace enables exploitation of domestic and Nubian natural resources Expedition to Punt to gain incense trees and establish African trade Construction of mortuary temple Djeser djeseru, at Deir el-Bahri Promotion of Amun cult through dedication of temples, tribute, trade and booty Some military activity mostly to quash Nubian uprisings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 This chronology follows that offered by Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*
TABLE 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pharaoh</th>
<th>Highlights of the reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1479–1425 BC | Thutmose III  
*Menkheperre* | Successful military campaigns over seventeen years establish Egyptian spheres of influence in Palestine and southern Syria  
Establishment of a policy for administration of the ‘empire’  
Huge increase in Egyptian wealth from exploitation of spheres of influence—divided between king, Amun cult and loyal officials  
The king builds throughout Egypt especially at Karnak  
Later many of Hatshepsut’s monuments are redesigned to honour Thutmose I and Thutmose II |
| 1427–1400 BC | Amenhotep II  
*Aakheperure* | Amendment of Hatshepsut’s monuments continues  
Widespread building especially at Karnak and Giza  
Two campaigns fought in Syria where rebellious vassals were severely punished  
Peace negotiated with Naharin |
| 1400–1390 BC | Thutmose IV  
*Menkheperure* | ‘Dream Stele’ erected between the paws of the Sphinx possibly indicates irregularity in the succession of this king  
The sun cult of Heliopolis is favoured during this reign  
Northern Egypt is important as the administrative centre  
Building construction takes place at most major sites in Egypt and Nubia  
The king marries a Mitannian princess to cement diplomatic relations with Naharin  
Military activity against rebellious vassals in Syria and Palestine while police action takes place in Nubia |

**Activity: Terms and meanings**

1. You will need to have a clear understanding of the following key terms for this topic. In your own words, write definitions for these terms: establishment, consolidation, expansion, empire, imperialism, maintenance, administration.
2. Construct a diagram using these terms as your category headings. Now, summarise the text you have read so far by recording bullet point notes under each of the headings.

**Activity: Summary**

Read through the overview of the period presented in Table 1.

1. Make a copy of the table and label each point with one of the following key words: pharaohs, queens, royal family, bureaucracy, military, trade, diplomacy, foreign affairs, building programs, political development, religious development.
2. Create a summary of the overview of the period choosing the categories that you consider to be most important.

**Internal Developments**

The work you have now done has introduced you to some of the significant developments, forces and issues that shaped Egypt in the early New Kingdom. The sections to come will enable you to study these in more detail and develop a deep knowledge and understanding.

**Impact of the Hyksos**

The Second Intermediate Period was a time of great disunity in Egypt. There was no centralised rule with the country being broken up into independently administered regions. Evidence for this period is very problematic. We are largely dependent on Egyptian sources to reconstruct the events of this time. Hyksos sources are archaeological rather than written and are incomplete.

Excavations at Tell el-Dab’a in the north-eastern delta by Manfred Bietak, a Czech archaeologist, have identified this site as ancient Avaris, the capital of a foreign people known as the Hyksos. Contrary to earlier views that these people were invaders, it is now thought that they gradually migrated to Lower Egypt and settled over a period of time when central authority was not strong enough to maintain control of Egypt’s borders.
Who were the Hyksos? The name comes from the Greek version of the Egyptian hekau khasu, an epithet meaning ‘rulers of foreign countries’. The Egyptians reserved this name for Asiatic rulers to denote a lower status than the Egyptian king and the Hyksos rulers used it themselves. The west Semitic origins of the personal names used by both common and royal Asiatics in Egypt at this time indicate that these people came from the region of Palestine. By the end of the 18th century BC, the Hyksos had extended their rule westward, eventually capturing Memphis, the Egyptian capital. However, despite such gains they maintained Avaris as their base and extended the territory under their control as far south as Cusae. Evidence from the period also indicates that they established diplomatic and trading relations with the Nubians from Kerma. Excavations at Tell el-Dab’a and the Turin Canon reveal a Hyksos Dynasty that lasted for about a hundred years and ended with Awessere Apopi who reigned at the time of the Hyksos–Theban wars.

The Hyksos occupation produced significant cultural and technological developments in Egypt. Among the most important of these were innovations in weaponry, notably the horse-drawn chariot and the composite bow, which the Egyptians were later able to use successfully against them. The Hyksos also established extensive diplomatic and trading contacts with the eastern Mediterranean region and Nubia. Figure 2 summarises the areas of contribution made by the Hyksos.

**Weaponry**
- Introduction of:
  - horse-drawn chariot—note especially the introduction of the wheel and harness
  - the composite bow
  - the khepesh
  - body armour and helmets

**Trade and diplomacy**
- Contacts with:
  - Syria
  - Crete
  - Nubia

**Technology**
- Use of bronze instead of copper
- Silver working techniques
- Introduction of the vertical loom to improve weaving
- Introduction of the potter’s wheel

**Cultural heritage**
- Recopying and preservation of Egyptian literary texts:
  - Westcar Papyrus
  - Rhind Mathematical Papyrus
  - Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus

**Agriculture**
- Introduction of:
  - olive and pomegranate trees
  - hump backed zebu cattle (zebu are the oldest known domesticated cattle, often used as draught animals)

**The performing arts**
- New musical instruments:
  - 12-string lyre
  - long-necked lute
  - oboe
  - tambourine
- New dances and games

**Impact of Hyksos**

**SOURCES**

Kamose’s description of the harbour at Avaris during the reign of Apophis … refers to the ‘hundreds of ships of fresh cedar which were filled with gold, lapis, silver, turquoise, bronze axes without number, not to mention the moringa-oil, fat, honey, wool, boxwood, sticks, and all their fine woods—all the fine products of Syria!’

Though meager, this evidence cannot be misinterpreted. Military conquest, clearly in the north, the status of a great king, vast amounts of tribute—all this accrued to the great Apophis, and perhaps to his forebear Khayan as well. The latter’s name is known from a number of small objects—a weight from Baghdad, an unguent vessel from Boghaz Keui [the later Hittite capital], and the lid of an alabaster vessel from Knossos—which at one time was enough to conjure up to some scholars the vision of a world empire. There was nothing of the sort, of course during Hyksos times; but these scattered objects do tell us something. When combined with the vessel inscribed for a princess and sister of Apophis, from Spain, and the plate of a daughter of Apophis, from Amenhotep I’s tomb at Thebes, can we catch a glimpse of an active court at Avaris, with international interests, sending diplomatic presents and perhaps arranging marriages with the city–states of Palestine and Syria and the Aegean?

Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, p. 120
Technological impact of the Hyksos

The traditional weaponry of the Egyptians consisted of bows and arrows, shields, spears, axes and throwing sticks, and an array of impact weapons such as maces, cudgels and clubs. During the Hyksos wars, the Egyptians added to their armoury by adopting the superior military technology of the enemy, chief among which were the horse-drawn war chariot and the composite bow. Another innovation also introduced from Asia at this time was the *khepesh*.

The chariot

The victory *stela* set up by Kamose after his sack of Avaris lists chariots among the booty collected, so it is therefore likely that the horse and chariot were introduced into Egypt at this time. Archaeological and written evidence indicates that the Egyptians were using the horse and chariot during Ahmose’s reign. Newly found relief fragments at Abydos dating to his reign depict horses hitched to chariots. This is supported by inscriptive evidence from the tomb of a famous soldier of the time, Ahmose son of Ebana: ‘I followed the king [Ahmose] on foot when he rode abroad in his chariot.’

The chariot consisted of a light, wooden semi-circular framework with an open back attached to an axle and a pair of four- or six-spoked wheels with leather tyres. Two horses were yoked to the chassis by a long pole attached to the centre of the axle (see Figure 2.13 in the textbook). It was manned by two soldiers, the charioteer (driver) and the warrior armed with a bow and spear and shield.

The composite bow

The bow and arrow was the most important long-range weapon in the Egyptian armoury. The traditional wooden ‘self’ or simple bow, between 1 and 2 metres long, consisted of a wooden rod that narrowed at either end and was strung with twisted gut (Figure 2.13). An innovation in the design and construction of this bow involved a technique of adding laminated materials, which made it more elastic and gave it greater range and penetration. This new, recurved or composite bow (Figure 2.13) like the chariot, was also introduced by the Hyksos. The composite bow together with the chariot were the main weapons responsible for Egyptian military success during this period.

Other weapons and armour

More sophisticated versions of weapons included a longer, narrower battleaxe blade. The ceremonial battleaxe blade shown in Figure 2.13 was found in the tomb of Queen Ahhotep the Younger (see the section ‘Role of queens’). It has a gold-plated copper head and cedarwood handle and is decorated with *electrum*, jewels and Egyptian motifs. The workmanship is clearly of Aegean origin, characterised by the *niello*-inlaid blade. Less elaborate versions were used in battle.

A new form of dagger introduced from Asia was the *khepesh* (Figure 2.13) with a curved blade. Both the battleaxe and the *khepesh* were used in close hand-to-hand fighting. Other early New Kingdom developments included upper body armour made of leather or linen to which small bronze scales were attached (Figure 2.13) and a smaller type of shield that was tapered in its lower half. Another development deriving from the Hyksos helmet was the protective headgear worn by the pharaoh. This helmet, called the ‘blue war crown’, became an important part of the pharaoh’s regalia. It consisted of metal discs sewn onto a leather headpiece (see Figure 2.13).

4 Harvey, ‘Tribute to a Conquering King’, p. 53

Understanding and using the sources

Source 1

- List the following: goods captured by Kamose in the siege of Avaris; places where the Hyksos had trading or diplomatic contacts.
- Why does Redford reject the view of some scholars that these are evidence of a Hyksos ‘world empire’?
- What more reasonable conclusion can be drawn from the evidence about the extent of Hyksos influence before their expulsion from Egypt?
- Suggest ways in which the victorious Egyptians might have exploited the benefits of the Hyksos occupation outlined in this source.

For further investigation

- For a survey of the latest scholarship on all aspects of the Hyksos period, including an analysis of key historiographical issues, see Oren (ed.), *The Hyksos*.
- Undertake further research on the features of the affects of Hyksos discussed in this section. Useful sources for this activity include:
  - Shaw & Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*
  - Shaw, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*
  - Grimal, *History of Ancient Egypt*
Establishment of the 18th Dynasty: Wars against the Hyksos

While the Hyksos had established their rule in the north of Egypt from Avaris to Cusae, Upper Egypt from Abydos to Elephantine came under the control of a line of native kings, centred at Thebes. King Lists from Thebes, recycled stelae and their tombs and burial goods reveal nine kings who constituted the 17th Dynasty. Their chief god was the local god of Thebes, Amun. Little is known about this period, especially about Theban contact with the north. We do know, however, that the Hyksos taxed Thebans travelling north of Cusae and no doubt limited their access to valuable resources such as cedar from Lebanon and limestone from the northern quarries.

The Thebans would also have felt hemmed in from the south. The Hyksos controlled the route to Nubia via the western oases and so had access to the goldmines and trade of the region. The Theban kings could only use the Nile for trading expeditions to Nubia. They also had to pay a tax to the Nubian king of Kush who controlled the region south of Elephantine at the First Cataract. This helps to explain the Theban military action against both north and south in the coming Hyksos–Theban wars.

The coming of war

A civil war between the rulers of the north and the increasingly belligerent southerners was inevitable. This conflict is not usually portrayed as a civil war, but evidence suggests that this is the appropriate term to use. Primary written sources from Thebes depict the Hyksos as hated foreign oppressors, an affront to maat, the Egyptian concept of the right order of things. However, evidence from Tell el-Dab’a shows that the Hyksos by this time had become thoroughly Egyptianised. Their king had the titles of a traditional Egyptian king and pursued the usual concerns of an Egyptian king, including the worship of Seth, local god of Avaris, whose cult was merged with the Asiatic deity Baal Zephon.

Steps to war

The Hippopotamus affair

Hostilities seem to have begun in the reign of Seqenenre Taa, King of Thebes. A partially preserved 19th Dynasty papyrus records Apopi’s challenge to the Theban king. It appears that he complained of losing sleep due to the noise made by the hippopotami in Thebes. The distance between Avaris and Thebes of about 600 kilometres makes it obvious that either Apopi possessed superhuman hearing or he was being openly provocative. Seqenenre could not ignore the insult. The remains of the papyrus unfortunately do not record the outcome of the incident, although other evidence indicates further trouble in this reign.

Seqenenre, perhaps in preparation for future conflict, built a mudbrick palace and fort at Ballas to the north of Thebes. According to Janine Bourriau: ‘It seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the purpose of the settlement, deliberately built in a remote place, was military, perhaps intended for the mustering of an army containing a large contingent of Kerma Nubians.’

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The death of Seqenenre

We lack specific evidence of open warfare between the Thebans and the Hyksos in the aftermath of the Hippopotamus affair. However, it seems most likely that Seqenenre met a violent death in battle against the Hyksos. His mummy, now on display in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, bears the marks of wounds inflicted by a dagger, an axe, a spear and even a mace. The axe marks on his forehead match Hyksos weapons found at Tell el-Dab’a.

Kamose at war: Enemies in the north and south

Kamose, successor of Seqenenre, took the war to the Hyksos. Before heading north, however, he had to deal with a major threat from the south. Evidence indicates that he attacked and captured the fort of Buhen (at the Second Cataract) from the Kushites, who ruled a powerful Nubian kingdom with its capital at Kerma, and who were allies of the Hyksos.

A remarkable inscription relating to the attack on the south has recently been revealed in the tomb of Sobeknakht, governor of ElKab, an important provincial capital of Upper Egypt in the late 17th Dynasty. The discovery was made during work undertaken by British and Egyptian conservators led by W. Vivian Davies of the British Museum. The inscription contains evidence of a previously unknown attack on Egypt by a coalition of Nubian and southern allies led by the Kingdom of Kush. Source 2 is from a report published in the Cairo Al-Ahram Weekly in mid-2003.

Source 2

The text recounts his [Sobeknakht’s] role in the crisis, from his command to strengthen the defences of ElKab to his mustering of a force to combat the Nubians, to his successful counter-attack southwards which destroyed an enemy force through the aid of ElKab’s vulture goddess, Nekhbet. The inscription ends with an account of celebration in the presence of the Egyptian king, who is not identified by name, and of the temple of Nekhbet’s endowment with a sacred boat … Davies stated ‘We always thought that the Hyksos were the greatest of Egypt’s enemies but Kush was as well.’ The defeat of the Kush-led invasion represented in Sobeknakht’s tomb may come to be interpreted as a critical event in Egypt’s subsequent defeat of the Hyksos and expansion of its nascent empire into Palestine and Sudan.

This new evidence indicates that the Kushite kingdom was a far more dangerous threat than was previously thought and that a Kushite army had penetrated perhaps as far north as Elkab in the region of Thebes. Taking into account this evidence and our prior knowledge of the Hyksos–Nubian alliance, Kamose’s attack on Buhen would have made good sense strategically in order to secure his rear from attack.

Two texts from Kamose’s reign give accounts of what happened next. Kamose’s own account explains his reasons for the proposed attack to his council of nobles:

**SOURCE 3**

‘To what end do I know my [own] strength? One chief is in Avaris, another in Kush, and I sit [here] associated with an Asiatic and a Nubian! Each man has his slice in this Egypt and so the land is partitioned with me! None can pass through it as far as Memphis [although it is] Egyptian water! See he [even] has Hermopolis! No one can be at ease when they are milked by the taxes of the Asiatics. I shall grapple with him that I might crush his belly, [for] my desire is to rescue Egypt which the Asiatics have destroyed.’


His counsellors were reluctant to support the plans for the reasons given in Source 4.

**SOURCE 4**

See, as far as Cusae it is Asiatic water … We are doing all right with our [part of] Egypt: Elephantine is strong, and the interior is with us as far as Cusae. Their free land is cultivated for us, and our cattle graze in the Delta … while corn is sent for our pigs. Our cattle have not been seized … He has the land of the Asiatics, we have Egypt. Only when comes one who [acts against us] should we act against him.


Kamose chose to ignore their arguments and launched an attack. The Source 5 is his own account of the events that brought him to the eve of the attack on Avaris.
SOURCE 5

I sailed north … to repel the Asiatics through the command of Amun, exact-of-counsel, with my brave army before me like a flame of fire and the Medjay archers [contingents of Nubian bowmen fighting on the side of the Thebans] … on the lookout for the Asiatics in order to destroy their places. East and West proffered their abundance, and the army provisioned itself everywhere … [I besieged] Tety the son of Pepy in the midst of Nefrusy. I was not going to let him escape, once I had repelled the Asiatics who had defied Egypt, so that he could turn Nefrusy into a nest of Asiatics.

I passed the night in my ship, my heart happy; and when day dawned I was upon him like a hawk. When breakfast time came I overthrew him having destroyed his walls and slaughtered his people, and made his wife descend to the river bank. My army acted like lions with their spoil—chattels, cattle, fat, honey—dividing their things, their hearts joyful. The district of Nefrusy came down [in submission] …

I put in at Per-djedken … so that I might let Apopy experience a bad time, that Syrian prince with weak arms … I espied his women upon his roof, peering out of their windows towards the harbor. Their bellies stirred not as they saw me, peeping from their loop-holes upon their walls like the young of wild-animals in their holes, saying: he is swift!

Behold! I am come! … Does your heart fail, O you vile Asiatic? Look! I drink of the wine of your vineyards which the Asiatics whom I captured pressed out for me. I have smashed up your resthouse, I have cut down your trees, I have forced your women into ships' holds, I have seized [your] horses; I haven't left a plank to the hundreds of ships of fresh cedar which were filled with gold, lapis, silver, turquoise, bronze axes without number, over and above the moringa-oil, incense, fat, honey, willow, box-wood, sticks and all their fine woods—all the fine products of Retenu—I have confiscated all of it! I haven't left a thing to Avaris to her [own] destitution: the Asiatic has perished!

Redford, ‘Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period’, p. 14

SOURCE 6

I captured his messenger in the oasis upland, as he was going south to Kush with a written dispatch, and I found on it the following, in writing by the hand of the Ruler of Avaris:

‘[Aweserre] son of Re, Apophis greets my son the ruler of Kush. Why have you arisen as ruler without letting me know? Do you see what Egypt has done to me? The Ruler which is in her midst—Kamose-the-Mighty, given life!—is pushing me off my [own] land! I have not attacked him in any way comparable to all that he has done to you; he has chopped up the Two Lands … my land and yours … Come north! Do not hold back! See, he is here with me: There is none who will stand up to you in Egypt. See, I will not give him a way out until you arrive! Then we shall divide the towns of Egypt, and [Khent]-hen-nofer shall be in joy.’


During Kamose’s campaign, his soldiers captured a messenger carrying a message from the Hyksos king to the king of Kush.

Having intercepted the letter, Kamose returned it to the Hyksos king as a gesture of contempt. He then returned to Thebes, conducting mopping up operations against centres of Hyksos resistance in Cynopolis, the Bahariah Oasis and Sako. Reaching Thebes in time for the annual festival of Inundation, Kamose held victory celebrations and gave thanksgiving offerings to Amun. He instructed his chief official to record his triumph on a stela to be set up at the temple of Amun at Karnak.

FIGURE 6 The great stela of king Kamose (limestone, 2.31 m high) found in the first court of the temple of Amun at Karnak
Ahmose and the siege of Avaris

Despite Kamose’s victory celebrations, the final expulsion of the Hyksos was left to Ahmose, the successor and possible brother of Kamose. Ahmose was very young when he came to the throne so the queen-mother, Ahhotep, acted as regent. At this time of great instability, she maintained the Theban dynasty’s control of Upper Egypt by suppressing rebels. When Ahmose finally came of age, he turned his attention to the unfinished business in the north and launched a direct attack on Avaris.

Archaeological evidence for this campaign comes from:
- reliefs from Ahmose’s temple at Abydos discovered in 1993 by Stephen Harvey, which show scenes of both land and naval warfare, fallen Hyksos soldiers and fragments inscribed with Apopi’s name
- excavation at Tell el-Dab’a which reveals abandonment of the site rather than wholesale slaughter; a distinct change of material culture occurs at this time with no further evidence of Hyksos re-occupation of the site.

Expulsion of the Hyksos

A written account of the final victory over the Hyksos comes from Ahmose son of Ebana, a soldier whose career spanned the reigns of Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I. This source is an example of tomb biography genre, in which successful elite officials recorded the achievements of their careers on the walls of their tombs. The purpose of such biographies was to immortalise their deeds both for future generations and for their own afterlives.

The following extract records the role of Ahmose son of Ebana, in the final campaigns. These included the siege and capture of Avaris and a later assault on Sharuhen, in southern Palestine—the last stronghold of the retreating Hyksos.

7 Harvey, ‘Tribute to a Conquering King’, p. 53
The Autobiography of Ahmose son of Ebana

... When the town of Avaris was besieged, I fought bravely on foot in his Majesty's presence. There was fighting on the water in ‘Pjedku’ of Avaris. I made a seizure and carried off a hand. When it was reported to the royal herald the gold of valor was given to me. Then they fought again in this place: I again made a seizure there and carried off a hand. Then I was given the gold of valor once again.

Then there was fighting in Egypt to the south of this town and I carried off a man as a living captive. I went down into the water … and crossed the water carrying him. When it was reported to the royal herald I was rewarded with gold once more. Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there: one man, three women; total four persons. His majesty gave them to me as slaves.

Then Sharuhen was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it: two women and a hand. Then the gold of valor was given me, and my captives were given to me as slaves.

Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol. II: The New Kingdom, pp. 12–13

Reasons for the Hyksos defeat

Part of the explanation for the Hyksos defeat was the ability of the Theban princes to unite the native Egyptians against them. The Egyptians also adopted the horse and chariot and Hyksos weaponry and used them very effectively. Another reason is suggested by archaeological evidence from the excavations at Tell el-Dab’a, the former Hyksos capital.

Some explanation for the defeat may be found in a clue that suggests that the ideal of a warrior elite among the Hyksos did not correspond to reality by the time of the Thebans’ final assault. Battle axes and daggers from stratum D/3 [i.e. period of Egyptian attacks] were of unalloyed copper, whereas weapons from earlier strata were made of tin bronze, which produced a weapon with a far superior cutting edge. It has been suggested that an interruption in the supply of tin can be ruled out and the explanation lies rather in a change in the function of weapons from practical use to one of status and display. In contrast, weapons of the same period from Upper Egypt were made of tin bronze and this would have given the Thebans a clear advantage in hand-to-hand fighting.


Reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt

Ahmose’s final expulsion of the Hyksos paved the way for the reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt under a new dynasty with its capital at Thebes. Egypt was once again a united land for the first time since the end of the Middle Kingdom.

Ahmose now turned to the task of consolidating his reign in a campaign against the Nubian allies of the Hyksos. Ahmose son of Ebana tells us he ‘made a great slaughter among them’. With this victory, Ahmose had ‘conquered southerners and northerners’, completing the work begun by Kamose to free Egypt from the forces that had hemmed it in.

The threats to the new dynasty were not only external. Rebellions in Upper Egypt indicate that Ahmose had to defeat rival claimants to his throne. Ahmose son of Ebana’s account describes a rebellion led by a man called Aata. This was speedily put down by the new king who captured the rebels alive. A further threat came from a man called Teti-an, leader of another rebel group. This time the king showed no mercy and executed Teti-an and his entire troop.

9 A common practice of Egyptian soldiers was to cut off a hand of a slain enemy as a record of numbers killed
10 A decoration for service in the form of golden flies (see Figure 16)
Historiographical issues

The evidence for this period gives rise to some important historiographical issues. For example, we have no surviving written Hyksos sources and are therefore dependent on Egyptian accounts. These accounts themselves are open to question of reliability involving aspects such as identity and background of the writer, purpose, nature of the source and intended audience. We also need to ask whether the sources reveal bias, propaganda or are incomplete.

Following are some questions to consider in your interpretation of the events of this period. You will need to refer to the sources you have been given to inform your analysis.

- How far is Kamose justified in portraying his actions as a war of ‘liberation’? **Hint:** To what extent did Upper Egypt suffer from Hyksos rule? Did Kamose have unanimous support? What other motives might Kamose have had that are not stated in his account?
- How reliable is Kamose’s claim that he conquered the Hyksos at Avaris? **Hint:** Why did Ahmose have to launch a further attack on Avaris?
- How does a soldier’s account of military events reflect a different perspective from that of a king? What issues of usefulness and reliability arise from this?

Activity: Extended response

Use the information in this section to plan and write an essay in response to the following: **Explain** the significance of the wars against the Hyksos for the establishment of the 18th Dynasty.

**Hint:**
- identify the key steps in the wars against the Hyksos
- explain the causes of the wars and their outcomes
- use specific evidence to support your explanation
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.

The role of queens

A significant feature of the Egyptian wars of liberation from the Hyksos was the role played by Egyptian women, especially the queens of the Theban kings. The evidence suggests that these women assumed prominent political roles during this period. This seems to have been because the king was away fighting or had been killed, leaving an heir who was too young to rule. Such queens acted as regents, exercising considerable power, particularly in military affairs.

Three important names stand out in the historical record. They are Tetisheri, Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari.

Tetisheri

Although Tetisheri belonged to the 17th Dynasty, she is regarded as the founding mother of the 18th Dynasty. Of non-royal origin herself, she held the titles ‘king’s mother’ and ‘great king’s wife’. She was the mother of Seqenenre who began the war against the Hyksos, and the grandmother of Ahmose, who completed the expulsion of the Hyksos and founded the 18th Dynasty. It is clear that she played a vital role in the establishment of the new dynasty. She may have acted as regent for her grandson, Ahmose, on the death of his father, Seqenenre. Evidence for this comes from the monuments erected in her honour by Ahmose. These include her own lavishly decorated tomb at Thebes and a pyramid and chapel at Abydos, fully staffed by mortuary priests. The pyramid has been excavated by Stephen Harvey of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. A stela set up by Ahmose at the Abydos site honours Tetisheri (see Source 9).

**FIGURE 8** The vulture headdress worn by queens of this period

11 More information about Stephen Harvey’s excavations can be found at: [http://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/ane/2003-December/011305.html](http://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/ane/2003-December/011305.html)
The Abydos Donation Stela of Ahmose

I, it is, who have remembered the mother of my mother and the mother of my father, great king's wife and king's mother, Tetisheri, triumphant. [Although] she already has a tomb and a mortuary chapel on the soil of Thebes and Abydos, I have said this to thee, in that my majesty has desired to have made for her [also] a pyramid and a house in Tazeser, as a monumental donation of my majesty. Its lake shall be dug, its trees shall be planted, its offerings shall be founded, equipped with people, endowed with lands, presented with herds, mortuary priests and ritual priests having their duties, every man knowing his stipulation … His majesty did this because he so greatly loved her, beyond everything. Never did former kings the like of it, for their mothers.

Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, pp. 15–16

Lunette (upper part) of the Abydos Stela of Ahmose: Ahmose (far right and far left figures) makes a presentation to his grandmother Tetisheri who is seated in front of heavily laden offering tables; Tetisheri wears the regalia of a queen, including the vulture cap and double *shwty* feathers and holds a floral sceptre.
Ahhotep the Elder

There are different theories about the identity of the queen (or queens) known as Ahhotep. The commonly held view is that there were two queens called Ahhotep from this period. You will find them referred to as Ahhotep I, Ahhotep II or simply Ahhotep. (Confusion has arisen among modern writers over the numbering of these queens; a custom which the ancient Egyptians themselves did not follow. The two Ahhoteps are traditionally numbered according to the order of their discovery rather than their order of birth. To overcome this problem, we will call them Ahhotep the Elder and Ahhotep the Younger, although you will not find this terminology in other sources.)

The earliest Ahhotep (usually referred to as Ahhotep II) was the daughter of Tetisheri, wife of Seqenenre and the mother of Ahmose. Her coffin was discovered in the royal cache at Deir el-Bahri. While her mother, Tetisheri, contributed to the establishment of the dynasty, Ahhotep played an active role in its consolidation, holding the kingdom together during a time of warfare. An inscription found on a doorway at the Nubian fortress of Buhen links the names of Ahmose and Ahhotep, implying that they shared a co-regency. Scholars believe that she played an active military role necessitated by the very young age of Ahmose at his accession. Her title ‘Nebet ta’, meaning ‘mistress of the land’, suggests that a particular region was directly controlled by her. The evidence of Ahhotep’s importance can be clearly seen in the stela erected at Karnak by Ahmose in year 18 of his reign.

Ahhotep the Younger

The second Ahhotep, about whom we have less evidence, was obviously connected to the royal family, but the nature of her relationship with them is unclear. She is best known for her tomb in the royal necropolis at Thebes at Dra Abu el-Naga, which was discovered intact by Auguste Mariette in 1859. Her funerary goods included a gilded wooden rishi coffin containing the queen’s mummy, and two model gold and silver barques. An important difference between this coffin and that of the earlier Ahhotep is the absence of the title ‘king’s mother’.

The goods, which have excited the most interest among scholars, are those of a military nature. They include a necklace of golden flies of valour (Figure 16), an ornate ceremonial axe and jewelled daggers. Some of the weapons and jewellery bear the names of both Ahmose and Kamose. What does this evidence indicate about the role of Ahhotep the Younger in the events of the early 18th Dynasty? If these goods were in fact her own, it suggests that her personal involvement in the affairs of state may have been as important as that of the other Ahhotep. However, these might be merely family heirlooms to indicate her family connections.

The ‘Ahhotep problem’: Another interpretation

Another interesting theory that attempts to explain the problem of the two Ahhoteps has been offered by the scholar Marianne Eaton-Krauss. She has reached the conclusion that the material from the two different burials belongs to only one queen named Ahhotep. She has examined the coffin attributed to Ahhotep the Younger, which she says bears a striking similarity to the coffin of Seqenenre and was therefore, she believes, designed for his queen, Ahhotep the Elder. The fact that the inscriptions on this coffin do not refer to Ahhotep as ‘king’s mother’ may be explained by the fact that the coffin could well have been built during her husband’s reign and before her son, Ahmose, became king.14

12 The first discovery was the intact tomb of an Ahhotep by Auguste Mariette in 1859; the coffin of a second Ahhotep, part of a collection of New Kingdom mummies and funerary goods, was discovered near Deir el-Bahri at Thebes in the 1870s.
Ahmose-Nefertari

Ahmose-Nefertari was the daughter of Ahhotep the Elder and Seqenenre, sister and wife of Ahmose and mother of Amenhotep I. She bore the traditional titles ‘king’s mother’, ‘king’s daughter’, ‘king’s sister’, ‘king’s great wife’ and ‘mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt’. She also had the distinction of being the first queen to hold the important title ‘god’s wife of Amun’. This prestigious office gave her both religious and economic influence in the growing state cult of Amun-Re. Ahmose increased her status in the cult by securing for her the position of ‘second priesthood of Amun’, a lucrative financial office which she could pass on to future holders of the office of god’s wife of Amun (see Figure 11). Ahmose-Nefertari also held the office of ‘the Divine Adoratrice’ another important position in the cult of Amun.

Ahmose-Nefertari and her son, Amenhotep I, founded the workers’ village at Deir el-Medina on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes. They were later deified and became the focus of divine worship—their images were depicted on tomb walls and their statues were carried in religious processions by the villagers. No other queen of this period enjoyed such status. A number of inscriptions give us evidence of her role. Apart from her inclusion in her husband’s building inscriptions at Sinai and in Nubia, she appears with Ahmose in his Abydos Donation Stela where she discusses with him the honours they will bestow on their grandmother, Tetisheri.

Ahmose-Nefertari may have served as a regent for her son, Amenhotep I, when her husband died. Evidence also suggests that she was still alive at the beginning of the reign of her son’s successor, Thutmose I.

**Understanding and using the sources**

**Sources 9, 10 and 11**

- List the honours that Ahmose and Ahmose-Nefertari gave to their dead mother, Tetisheri.
- Check the meaning of the underlined words in Source 10 and rewrite Ahhotep’s activities in your own words.
- What does Source 10 tell us about Ahhotep’s role in the consolidation of the dynasty?
- What does the linking of Ahmose-Nefertari’s name to the buildings for Tetisheri at Abydos tell us about the role of queens at this stage of the dynasty’s development?
- Compare the titles held by Tetisheri, Ahhotep the Elder and Ahmose-Nefertari. What conclusion can you draw about the developing role of queens?
Consolidation of the 18th Dynasty

The victory over the Hyksos justified the claim of the new dynasty to the throne of the Two Lands and a new confidence is reflected in the policies of the pharaohs from this time onwards. The advantages of unification were unmistakable—a new energy characterises the material remains from this period. The quality of funerary goods from royal tombs and dedications to the gods are evidence of new wealth and the emergence of a distinctive 18th Dynasty artistic style. When Amenhotep I succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Ahmose, the pattern for future development of the 18th Dynasty had been set.

The following key features had emerged as the prime concerns of 18th Dynasty pharaohs:

- devotion to Amun cult
- pharaonic building program
- exploitation of Nubia
- expansion into Syria–Palestine
- development of kingship
- development of a bureaucracy.

These are the focus issues you will need to examine in your study of the pharaohs of this period. They include Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose III and Hatshepsut, Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV. We will explore these in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Development and importance of the cult of Amun

Although the god Amun was first mentioned in the *Pyramid Texts* of the 5th Dynasty, he is better known as a local god of Thebes, where he was worshipped from the 11th Dynasty onwards. Amun’s name means ‘the hidden one’ as he was the invisible strength of the wind. His name also possibly derives from the Libyan word *aman*, meaning water. This connects him with the creation of Egypt from the *primeval waters of chaos* and explains why Egyptians worshipped him in the form of a goose. Amun was also depicted as a ram with curved horns, which refers to his role as a fertility god. A further animal form of this god was Kematef, a creator god, who could renew himself by taking the form of a snake shedding its skin. In his human form, Amun appeared as a man wearing a double plummed headdress. In the New Kingdom, Amun was part of the Theban triad—that is, the three patron gods of Thebes, with his wife Mut and his son, the moon god Khons.
Politics and religion were very closely related in ancient Egypt and reasons for Amun’s rise to pre-eminence can be seen in both spheres. Politically, Amun’s prestige was bound to rise—he was the patron deity of Thebes, home of the kings who had expelled the Hyksos. Amun’s cult now became the state cult of the newly formed dynasty. The rulers of a reunited Egypt were forging a new political identity that parallels the development of the god and his cult.

The major religious reason for the rise of the Amun cult was its syncretism with that of Re to form what Eric Hornung believes was a new god, Amun-Re, who existed alongside the two older gods.15 Why would this change have taken place? Barry Kemp sees it as a deliberate theological move to overcome the difficulties of sun worship, namely that without giving Amun-Re a human form, the Egyptian people would have found it hard to understand him in a personal way.16 With Amun-Re represented as a crowned man, the god could now be the divine father who looked after the king and the royal family, giving victories and wealth to them and the Egyptian people.

Amun-Re of Thebes

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Amun-Re and the ideology of kingship

The pharaohs of the young 18th Dynasty were keen to develop the ideology of kingship—what it meant to be king of Egypt. Like the innovation of the cult of Amun-Re, the impetus for this can be seen as coming from both the political and the religious spheres. Of prime concern to the pharaoh was his connection with the god Amun-Re. Hatshepsut was a great innovator in this area—the concepts of divine oracles and divine birth of the king both appeared for the first time in the New Kingdom during her reign. Later pharaohs were to adopt her innovations, either following her lead closely, or adapting it to suit their own beliefs.

15 Hornung, Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt, The One and the Many, p. 97
16 Kemp, Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilisation, p. 198
Oracles

An oracle occurred when Amun-Re revealed his intentions through movements of his statue when it was being carried through the gateways of the Karnak Temple. The first record of this happening can be found in the Coronation Inscription of Hatshepsut (see Chapter 4 of the textbook). In recording the oracle, Hatshepsut was able to legitimise her unorthodox succession to the throne by claiming it to be the will of Amun-Re—a political act. It also allowed her to develop an important feature of kingship ideology—pharaohs were divinely chosen.

Thutmose III also chose to assert his divine claim to the kingship when he recorded that the statue of Amun-Re stopped in front of him during a religious procession at Karnak, then led him to the place reserved for the king.

Divine birth of the king

A further element of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs’ development of the kingship was the use of the ‘divine birth of the king’ story. Hatshepsut was the first pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty to claim divine intervention in her birth. Scenes depicting the events surrounding her conception and birth can still be seen on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. They depict Amun visiting Hatshepsut’s mother, queen Ahmose, her subsequent pregnancy and presentation of the newly born Hatshepsut to her father, Amun. Like the stories of the oracles, these divine birth stories can be interpreted as Hatshepsut’s attempts to legitimise her claim to the throne. Some scholars even dismiss them as mere propaganda. However, it is more useful to interpret them as part of the development of the ideology of kingship.

The Pharaoh and the sphinx

Thutmose IV, like his predecessors Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, emphasised his divine claim to the throne. This time, however, it was not Amun-Re who was responsible, but the god Horemakhet, god of the sphinx, a different aspect of the sun cult. According to the ‘dream stela’, which Thutmose erected between the paws of the sphinx, the god promised him in a dream that he would become pharaoh if he freed the sphinx from the sand that covered the monument. Thutmose IV was not the crown prince, and the uncertain circumstances surrounding his subsequent succession to the throne could explain why the sphinx is given credit for his elevation to the kingship. This divine intervention could be seen in political rather than religious terms.

It is also interesting to note that Thutmose IV’s promotion of this aspect of the sun-cult was the beginning of an important development in which the pharaoh identified himself with the sun-god. This was to culminate in the religious revolution of Akhenaten in the later 18th Dynasty.

Amun and military conquest

From the beginning of the wars of liberation from the Hyksos to the later wars of expansion, Amun was credited with the inspiration for the campaigns and the victories that followed. Naturally, a generous portion of the spoils of war and booty were dedicated to Amun in his great temple at Karnak. The following extracts from Thutmose III’s Annals, inscribed on the walls of Karnak Temple, are evidence of this.

**SOURCE 13**

[Year 23] 1st month of summer day five—departure from this place, in valor, [strength], might and right, to overthrow that wretched enemy, to extend the borders of Egypt, his father, mighty and victorious Amun, having commanded that he conquer …


**SOURCE 14**

Then the entire army rejoiced and gave praise to Amun [for the victory] he had given to his son on [this day. They lauded] his majesty and extolled his victory. Then they presented the plunder they had taken: hands, living prisoners, horses, and chariots of gold and silver …

Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol. II*, p. 33

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17 See, for example, Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 186
Other cults

From the very early days following the reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt, the kings made it clear that they were reinstating the traditional gods. These were the gods who had been prominent in Middle Kingdom worship: Amun, Ptah, Montu and Osiris. Amun, of course, as local patron deity of Thebes, received the most attention, as described above. However, other cults were promoted as well. This was mostly in the form of restoration and building at their existing temples, or the construction of new ones. By erecting new temples and refurbishing old ones, the pharaoh gave the cults a share in the growing wealth of Egypt. In religious terms, they were encouraging the gods to come and live in Egypt and contribute to its prosperity and order.

The Amun priesthood

The elevated status of the Amun priesthood in the early 18th Dynasty reflected the position of the Amun cult as state cult of the new dynasty. The high priests of the Amun cult were appointed by the pharaoh. This provided a means for the pharaoh to connect his family with Amun, as in the case of Ahmose’s purchase of the ‘second prophet of Amun’ priesthood for his wife, Ahmose-Nefertari. It also contributed to a growing interdependence between king and Amun priesthood.

The high-ranking priests—the first, second, third and fourth ‘prophets of Amun’—exercised significant political and economic, as well as religious, power. This power appears to have increased in direct proportion to the increasing wealth derived from military conquest, subsequently directed to the Amun cult. It is possible that by the beginning of the reign of the young Thutmose III, the Amun priesthood was powerful enough to play ‘kingmaker’. They supported Hatshepsut in her claim to the throne, enabling her to take the unusual step of assuming the kingship herself.

The power of the ‘first prophet of Amun’ was significantly increased when he also held the title ‘overseer of prophets of Upper and Lower Egypt’. This gave him authority over all other religious cults. Such a man was Hapuseneb, who held both titles in the reign of Hatshepsut. As one of Hatshepsut’s most important officials, he was responsible for her building works at Karnak. Other high priests of the Amun cult combined this role with other official duties that increased their influence. Menkheperraseneb, ‘first prophet of Amun’ under Thutmose III, was a new appointee, not inherited from Hatshepsut’s reign. He combined his priestly role with those of chief architect and ‘overseer of the houses of gold and silver’ or treasurer. He thus carried out both secular and religious duties. Menkheperraseneb was able to pass his office briefly to his nephew before the role was taken on by Amenemhet, the last high priest of Amun in Thutmose III’s reign.

God’s wife of Amun

An important feature of the cult of Amun in the early 18th Dynasty was the introduction of the title ‘god’s wife of Amun’. The title was first held by Ahmose-Nefertari, wife of Ahmose I. The god’s wife, who was usually the king’s ‘great wife’, acted as Amun’s consort in religious rituals that emphasised the ideology of the divine birth of the king. A pharaoh whose mother held the title ‘god’s wife of Amun’ could claim to be directly descended from the god himself.
As noted earlier, this title had more than ritual significance—each holder wielded important economic influence in the state cult. Ahmose-Nefertari’s religious and economic power as ‘god’s wife’ was increased by her other roles in the Amun priesthood: ‘second priest of Amun’ and ‘divine adoratrice’. Ahmose-Nefertari had the power to pass on the benefits of these positions to people of her choice. This power allowed her to emphasise her religious rather than her political role as king’s wife. This can be seen in her more frequent use of the god’s wife title. Ahmose-Nefertari continued to hold the position of ‘god’s wife of Amun’ into the reign of Thutmose I.

Later holders of the ‘god’s wife of Amun’ title were Ahmose Merytamun, sister of Amenhotep I; Satamun, his daughter; Ahmose, queen of Thutmose I; and her daughter Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut’s accession to the throne in her own right following her regency for Thutmose III could well have been made possible by the religious and economic power she exercised as ‘god’s wife of Amun’. As pharaoh, Hatshepsut passed on the ‘god’s wife of Amun’ title and its influence to her daughter, Neferure.

**For discussion**

- What could the pharaoh gain through his power to appoint the chief priests of the Amun cult?
- Explain the link between the growing wealth of the New Kingdom and the influence of the chief priests of the Amun cult.
- How were royal women of the early 18th Dynasty able to exercise power through holding the title ‘god’s wife of Amun’?
- What role might Hatshepsut’s title ‘god’s wife of Amun’ have played in her rise to power as pharaoh?

**Activity: Extended response**

1. Consider the information given above and then identify the main features of the cult of Amun-Re in this period. You could add to these suggestions:
   - the syncretism of the Amun and Re cults
   - Amun-Re and the ideology of kingship
   - the role of oracles
   - ‘god’s wife of Amun’.

   Use these features as categories in a diagram on the cult of Amun-Re and add information from the text on each category.

2. Use your diagram to plan and write an answer to the following: Assess the importance of the cult of Amun-Re in the development of the early 18th Dynasty.

**Hint:**
- identify the important features of the cult of Amun-Re in the early 18th Dynasty
- use these features to structure your answer—avoid a purely narrative approach
- make judgements of the relative importance of these features
- use specific evidence to support your assessment
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.

**Political and religious significance of building programs**

‘Ideology needs architecture for its fullest expression.’ Here Barry Kemp, a respected Egyptian scholar, sums up an important motive for the building policy pursued by New Kingdom pharaohs—building was a politico-religious activity. At the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, the pharaohs of the newly unified Egypt had a statement to make—they had expelled the foreigners and their allies from Egyptian soil, unified a previously divided land and established themselves and their successors as ‘kings of Upper and Lower Egypt’. Moreover, they had achieved this with the inspiration and help of the god Amun-Re. This was their ideology. What remained was to express this in architecture. As each new pharaoh came to the throne of the two lands, he initiated the program that was to determine all building activity in his reign. For the first pharaohs of the dynasty this meant establishing the key features of dynastic building policy that would endure throughout the 18th Dynasty and beyond:

- development of the ideology of kingship through association of the pharaoh with the gods, recorded on royal monuments
- development of the Amun cult through additions to the temple of Amun at Karnak and construction of other temples and structures dedicated to him
- re-establishment of traditional pharaonic building policy honouring the cults of the traditional Egyptian gods throughout Egypt
- construction of funerary monuments for the continuation of their mortuary cults after their deaths—a tomb and mortuary temple
- consolidation of pharaonic control in Nubia and the Egyptian borders through the building of temples and forts
- self-promotion of the pharaoh and the worship of his royal ancestors
- protection of Egypt’s borders and territories.

18 Kemp, *Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilisation*, p. 185
Building programs of the early 18th Dynasty pharaohs

As can be seen from the text above, building was significant in both the political and religious concerns of the early 18th Dynasty pharaohs. A close study of the activities of each pharaoh reveals an interesting pattern enabling us to see where their priorities lay.

The following table presents a selection of the building activities of the pharaohs of this period. It is not an exhaustive treatment, but it will give you the detail you will need for a discussion of pharaonic building policy in this period.

TABLE 2 The building programs of the early 18th Dynasty pharaohs

The throne name of each king is included (in italic) with its English meaning, together with the king’s cartouche

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Evidence of building</th>
<th>Details and significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmose Nebpehtyre ‘The lord of strength is Re’</td>
<td>Avaris</td>
<td>Palace complex</td>
<td>Rebuilding on former Hyksos site and decorated with Minoan frescoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abydos</td>
<td>Pyramid temple</td>
<td>Remains of an inner court decorated with scenes of warfare against Asiatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Tempest Stela</td>
<td>Contains details of rebuilding of tombs and pyramids following a major storm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Donation Stela</td>
<td>Records Ahmose’s purchase of ‘second priesthood of Amun’ for his wife Ahmose-Nefertari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenhotep I Djeserkare ‘Holy is the ka of Re’</td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Limestone gateway and a ring of chapels</td>
<td>Gateway decorated with scenes of king’s Heb-Sed celebrations; it may have been the main south entrance to the temple; chapels decorated with scenes of Heb-Sed and temple celebrants performing rituals to Amun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Barque sanctuary</td>
<td>Made of alabaster with copper and gold features, it was dedicated to Amun; begun by Amenhotep and completed by Thutmose I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abydos</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
<td>Contains inscription commemorating his predecessor, Ahmose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aswan (Sai Island)</td>
<td>Statue and building</td>
<td>Commemorate military victory in Nubia; surviving blocks bear names of Amenhotep I and mother, Ahmose-Nefertari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deir el-Medina</td>
<td>Workers’ village</td>
<td>Founding of village for builders and craftsmen (Thebes) constructing the royal tombs; Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari honoured as patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thutmose I Akhkeperkare ‘Great is the ka of Re’</td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Including 4th and 5th pylons, Hypostyle Hall, two obelisks</td>
<td>Major work at Karnak; these constructions formed the entrance to his western additions to the temple; notable features were: cedar flagpoles with electrum tops and a door of Asiatic copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abydos</td>
<td>Contributions to temple of Osiris</td>
<td>Stela inscription recognises him as son of Osiris; Thutmose I emphasised his divine lineage choosing not to honour the Ahmosid kings (Ahmose and Amenhotep I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nubia</td>
<td>Building blocks and stelae</td>
<td>Remains of these structures indicate importance of Nubia, now administered on behalf of the king by Turi, viceroy of Nubia (Nubian sites include Sai Island, Semna, Buhen, Aniba)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper and Lower Egypt</td>
<td>Remains of buildings</td>
<td>Development in ideology of kingship; stresses links between king and god and king and king, choosing Middle Kingdom rulers as models—sites include Elephantine, Edfu, Memphis and Giza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valley of the Kings (Thebes) Karnak</td>
<td>Undiscovered rock-cut cliff tomb</td>
<td>Evidence for this from an inscription of Ineni, overseer of building works who records his supervision of the tomb’s excavation “alone, no one seeing, no one hearing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gateway at entrance to 4th pylon</td>
<td>Decorated with relief scenes depicting the king, his wife Hatshepsut and daughter, Neferwure, receiving life from the gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thutmose II Akhkeperenre ‘Great is the form of Re’</td>
<td>Nubia</td>
<td>Remains of buildings</td>
<td>Building activity in Nubia follows successful military campaign and indicates consolidation of Egyptian control—sites include Napata, Semna and Kumna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Biography of Ineni in Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt, p. 44
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Evidence of building</th>
<th>Details and significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hatshepsut Maatkare</td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>8th pylon, four obelisks, the Red Chapel, various rooms</td>
<td>Pylon created a new axis and entrance linking it with the temple of Mut, emphasising her divine kingship; obelisks decorated with coronation scenes; decoration of Red Chapel shows scenes of Opet and Beautiful Festival of the Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beni Hasan</td>
<td>Tomb KV20</td>
<td>Rock-cut temple with important inscription recording restoration of temples neglected in Hyksos times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valley of the Kings</td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>Earliest tomb in the valley; burial chamber located beneath forecourt of mortuary temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medinet Habu</td>
<td>Mortuary temple</td>
<td>Dedicated to Amun, this temple became part of the festival processional route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deir el-Bahri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depictions of Nubian campaign, transportation of obelisks, voyage to Punt, divine birth of the king; chapels for Hathor, Anubis and Amun; open-air sun altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thutmose III Menkheperre</td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Festival hall, rebuilding of central areas, 6th and 7th pylons, temple to Ptah, barque shrine</td>
<td>Devoted to the commemoration of this king’s Sed festival; reliefs show scenes from the festival and the botanical garden set up with plants and animals brought back from campaigns; central areas inscribed with the Annals; pylons decorated with lists of conquered peoples and scenes of conquest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medinet Habu</td>
<td>Two temples</td>
<td>One dedicated to Amun and the other, to the north, dedicated to Thutmose II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deir el-Bahri</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
<td>Conversion of an elevated shrine to his own chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valley of the Kings</td>
<td>Tomb KV 34</td>
<td>A cliff tomb decorated with ‘stick figure’ rendition of the Amduat and Litany of Re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper and Lower Egypt Nubia</td>
<td>Temples and other monuments</td>
<td>Elephantine, Kom Ombo, Edfu, ElKab, Tod, Armant, Akhmim, Hermopolis, Heliopolis, Memphis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Temples, other buildings</td>
<td>Nubian—sites include Gebel Barkal, Sai, Semna, Buhen, Amada and Faras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenhotep II Akkheperure</td>
<td>Nubia</td>
<td>Temples, barque chapel</td>
<td>Early monuments were dedicated to Amun and Re-Horakhy and built in the names of both Amenhotep II and his father Thutmose III; sites include—Elephantine, Amada, Buhen Sehel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Columns erected; walls built between 4th and 5th pylons</td>
<td>These attempted to conceal Hatshepsut’s obelisks; Amenhotep II partnered his father in the desecration of Hatshepsut’s monuments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valley of the Kings</td>
<td>Sed festival pavilion</td>
<td>Formed new gateway in front of south entrance at 8th pylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>Tomb KV 35</td>
<td>Decorated in similar manner to the tomb of his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>Dedicated to Horemakhet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thutmose IV Menkheperure</td>
<td>Karnak</td>
<td>Peristyle court before 4th pylon</td>
<td>Sandstone, reliefs of king offering treasures to Amun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper and Lower Egypt Serabit el-Khadim</td>
<td>Various monuments Decoration of Hathor Temple</td>
<td>Sites include—Memphite region, Abydos, Dendera, Elkab, Edfu, Elephantine, Konosso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shows importance of the Sinai turquoise mines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2** (continued)
Ahmose

Military affairs took up the majority of Ahmose's time, but when he turned his attention to building it was to construct a palace on the site of the Hyksos capital at Avaris. Evidence suggests that this was to be an important new commercial centre. Ahmose also built at Memphis, resettling and redeveloping the city that had been the traditional capital of Egypt. The other major focus of his building was Karnak, where he set an example by displaying his piety and devotion to the cult of Amun. Ahmose was also keen to return to the traditional cults that had been neglected under the previous regime, building temples for Ptah, Montu and Osiris as well as Amun.

Amenhotep I

Amenhotep I followed the policies of his predecessor, but introduced an innovation with the founding of the workers’ village at Deir el-Medina. This settlement was designed to house the artisans who would construct and decorate the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Both Amenhotep I and his mother, Ahmose-Nefertari, would be deified and worshipped by the inhabitants for the next two dynasties. Amenhotep’s further innovation was to revive the exploitation of traditional building resources. To achieve this he reopened the turquoise mines in the Sinai desert, quarried alabaster at Bosra and Hatnub and sandstone at Gebel el-Silsila. From now on, Egypt would have a steady supply of the materials needed for royal building projects.

Thutmose I

By the time of Thutmose I, building activities spread from Nubia in the south to Giza in the north. This pharaoh followed his predecessors in building at cult centres, which emphasised the king’s connection with his ancestors and the gods. His building at Abydos, cult centre of Osiris, introduced the concept of divine descent for the first time in the dynasty. Here he was declared the son of Osiris, an ideology that was to be further promoted by his successors. At Karnak, Thutmose I built new pylons that created a new entrance to the temple, a move that later pharaohs would copy enthusiastically.

Hatshepsut

Thutmose II had time to do little more than erect a gateway at Karnak, but his wife, Hatshepsut undertook a building program that reflects the confidence, stability and wealth of this period of the early 18th Dynasty. Her extensive building activities stretched from Nubia to Memphis and included Middle Egypt for the first time, where at Beni Hasan she built a rock-cut temple, now called the Speos
As well as bearing an inscription listing all of her building projects, it records Hatshepsut’s claim to have restored the temples abandoned during the Hyksos rule. This claim gave her both political and religious prestige. Politically, she appeared as the ruler who restored maat or order to Egypt, while through her good works, the gods of all the cult centres were able to share in the growing wealth of Egypt. Hatshepsut’s buildings made a significant contribution to the developing ideology of kingship as well; her divine birth scenes on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri make the first clearly illustrated claim to direct descent from the state god, Amun-Re.

Thutmose III
Thutmose III continued the practice of building extensively, both within and outside Egypt. The furthest extent of his building was at Gebel Barkal, deep in Nubia near the Fourth Cataract. He also followed tradition by adding to Karnak, his major contribution being the magnificent festival hall, built to commemorate his Sed festival and thus the ideology of kingship. An interesting feature of Thutmose III’s activity at Karnak is his desecration, concealment or dismantling of buildings belonging to his predecessor, Hatshepsut. It was once believed that this was an attack in the name of revenge, but it is now thought that by eliminating her monuments and replacing her names with those of his father and grandfather, Thutmose III was simultaneously venerating his ancestors and cutting Hatshepsut’s family line out of the succession. At the late stage in his reign when the desecration occurred, Thutmose III seems to have been more interested in linking himself with his male predecessors than seeking personal revenge against his stepmother. (For further discussion of this matter, see Chapter 4.)

Amenhotep II
Amenhotep II also followed a traditional building program with some innovations. His reopening of the limestone quarries at Tura brought new resources to those already available for royal monuments. As well as building at Karnak, Amenhotep II favoured Giza, where he erected a temple to the god Horemakhet adjacent to the sphinx. This interest in the sphinx was not new, as people had visited the monuments at Giza since the time of Thutmose I. However, in his great grandson’s reign, the practice of ancestor worship extended to the sphinx. It is thought that Amenhotep II even erected a statue of himself in front of the sphinx.

Thutmose IV
Time was not on Thutmose IV’s side, but he did make additions to Karnak, the most notable being a spacious peristyle (or portico) court in front of the fourth pylon. He followed his father in veneration of the sphinx. The erection of the ‘dream stela’ between its paws demonstrates this veneration and is yet another example of a pharaoh wanting to claim a connection with the gods for kingship purposes. What is interesting this time is the omission of Amun-Re and the emphasis on the cult of Horemakhet. This god is now the one legitimising the pharaoh’s reign. It is thought that this indicates the rising importance of the gods of Heliopolis, the old centre of the cult of the sun-god Re. This could also be linked with the political importance and growing strength of the north as Egypt’s administrative capital.

Activity: Extended response
1. Figure 14 summarises the key features of building policy. Redraw it and add details from Table 2 in the correct categories.
2. Using the information given above and your own diagram, plan and write an answer to the following: EXPLAIN the political and religious significance of the building programs of early 18th Dynasty pharaohs.

Hint:
- identify the key features of dynastic building policy—avoid a purely narrative structure
- explain the relationship between building and political and religious policies
- use specific evidence to support your explanation
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.

For further reading
A more detailed discussion of royal building programs of the pharaohs of this period can be found in Bryan, ‘The 18th Dynasty Before the Amarna Period’ in Shaw (ed.), The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, pp. 218–71.

20 This court has been reconstructed in the Open Air Museum at Karnak by the Franco–Egyptian Centre for the Study of the Temples of Karnak; see photo essay by Dennis Forbes in KMT, 11(3), 2000, pp. 42–7
Profile

The Temple of Amun at Karnak

In pharaonic times, the temple of Amun at Karnak was known as Ipet-isut, ‘the most select of places’. Although the temple had existed in the Middle Kingdom, it underwent a systematic program of additions and redecoration in the New Kingdom following the elevation of its patron deity, Amun-Re. The pharaohs of this historical period used the site as a place where the developing ideology of kingship could be given physical expression. They initiated the trend for the erection of pylons, obelisks, statues and chapels that was to be emulated by their successors in the following dynasties. Amenhotep I’s Karnak monuments commemorate his Sed festival or jubilee. Thutmose III was one of the first, as part of ancestor worship, to dismantle the buildings of his predecessors in order to promote the cults of his more favoured relatives. Hatshepsut was the first to change the direction of the processional way, building her pylon in a location that forced the priests carrying the sacred barque to turn and pass through it.

Activity: Extended response

1 Complete a table using the information in this chapter, including Table 1, using the following headings: Pharaoh; Religious policy; Aims and extent of building program; Foreign policy; Specific contribution.

2 Use the information you have compiled in the table to plan and write a response to the following: Assess the contribution of (name of pharaoh) to the development of New Kingdom Egypt.

Hint

- identify the important areas of development in the pharaoh’s reign
- use these features to structure your answer—avoid a purely narrative structure
- make judgements of the relative importance of these features
- use specific evidence to support your assessment
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.
(c) Pylon 8, built by Hatshepsut, created a new axis and entrance linking it with the temple of Mut, which emphasised her divine kingship.

(d) The Red Chapel of Hatshepsut (under reconstruction) was a barque sanctuary for the god Amun—it contained reliefs supporting Hatshepsut’s claim to the throne and scenes of the festival of Opet (note also the restored white alabaster barque sanctuary of Amenhotep I in the background).

(e) Pairs of rose granite obelisks were erected by Thutmose I, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Thutmose IV.

**FIGURE 15**
Plan of the temple of Amun at Karnak showing additions made by the early 18th Dynasty pharaohs.
Role and contribution of prominent officials within Egypt and the empire

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

Civil administration

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

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

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

Religious officials

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

The King’s estate

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

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

Activity: Extended response

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

Example table style 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharaoh</th>
<th>Civil administration</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Military</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Neferperet (chief treasurer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example table style 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Title/role</th>
<th>Pharaoh served</th>
<th>Contribution/impact</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neferperet</td>
<td>Chief treasurer</td>
<td>Ahmose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Expansion of Egypt’s boundaries

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

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

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

Composition and tactics of the army

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

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

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

Organisation of the army

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

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

Command structure

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

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

The lower ranks were organised into combat and non-combat roles. Combat officers included leaders of platoons, garrisons and squads as well. On the bottom rung of the ladder came the ordinary infantrymen. Non-combat personnel included scribes responsible for equipment, weaponry,
rations, and the day-to-day record keeping of the army’s activities. Some were also deployed in other non-combat areas such as mining, quarrying and building.

**Role of the navy**

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

**PROFILE**

**THE ARMY: AN ATTRACTIVE CAREER**

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

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

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

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

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

**FIGURE 16**

Gold flies of valour, a decoration of the early New Kingdom this necklace was found in the tomb of Ahhotep (the Younger)
**SOURCE 15**

**From the biography of Ahmose son of Ebana**

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

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

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

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

**The career of Ahmose Pennekhet**

Like Ahmose son of Ebana, Ahmose Pennekhet came from Elkab. His long military career spanned the reigns of the kings from Ahmose to the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Among the rewards he received during his career were: golden bracelets, necklaces, armlets, daggers, golden flies and axes. Source 16 is from his tomb biography.

**The career of Usersatet**

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

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**Understanding and using the sources**

**Sources 15, 16 and 17**

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

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\(^{22}\) Amenhotep II boastfully refers to the women he himself has taken as part of the ‘spoils of war’ during his campaigns in Syria–Palestine

\(^{23}\) Tahksy was an area on the upper Orontes River in Syria between Kadesh and Damascus; it revolted from Egypt and was attacked by Amenhotep II in his Syrian campaign of year 3
Establishment of empire: Military campaigns in Nubia

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

Egyptian policy in Nubia in the New Kingdom

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

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

Campaigns of Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I

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

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

Other methods of control

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

Final conquest under Thutmose II and his successors

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

24 The earliest evidence of the use of this title dates to the reign of Thutmose IV: Bryan, The Reign of Thutmose IV
Sequence chart of the Nubian campaigns of the early 18th Dynasty

1 AHMOSE

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

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

2 AMENHOTEP I

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

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

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

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

3 THUTMOSE I

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

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

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

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

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

Tombos Stela of Thutmose I

FIGURE 17

KEY
- Gold ore region
- Egyptian fortified town
- Aniba
- Egyptian administrative centres

UPPER EGYPT

Thebes

El Kab

Edfu

Konosso

Aswan

Nile River

RED SEA

1st Cataract

2nd Cataract

3rd Cataract

4th Cataract

5th Cataract

WAWAT

Traditional boundary of Egypt

Centre of Egyptian administration in Wawat

Aniba

Farasi

Buhen

Semna

Sai

Southern boundary under Thutmose I

2nd Cataract

Sai

Southern boundary under Amenhotep I

3rd Cataract

Tombos

Kerma

Napata

Gebel Barkal

Boundary Stele of Thutmose III

KUSH

Kawa

Egyptian trading centre

Inscriptions of Thutmoses I and Thutmose III

Region largely consolidated during reign of Thutmose III

0 250 km

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

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

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

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

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Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

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

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

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

Tombos Stela of Thutmose I
4 THUTMOSE II

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

Aswan Inscription of Thutmose II

5 HATSHEPSUT

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

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

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

Stela of Djehuty

6 THUTMOSE III

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

Inscription from 6th Pylon of Thutmose III

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

Tomb Biography of Ineni

7 AMENHOTEP II

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

Inscription of Usersatet

8 THUTMOSE IV

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

The Konosso Inscription—this inscription was cut into the rock-face near the island of Philae (Aswan at the First Cataract)
We know that Thutmose III left extensive records of his Nubian activities, although there is limited evidence of specific military campaigns during his sole reign. It seems likely that the major work of pacification had been accomplished by his predecessors and that Thutmose III's contribution was a consolidation of Egypt's control. However, he is credited with having achieved the greatest extension of Egypt's southern boundary, at Napata (the Fourth Cataract) as evidenced by his building of a temple to Amun at nearby Gebel Barkal.25

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

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**Activity: Summary**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharaoh</th>
<th>Location of battle/s</th>
<th>Relevant details</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmose</td>
<td>Buhen</td>
<td>Defeat of Nubian bowmen</td>
<td>Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana</td>
<td>Southern frontier protected Buhen secured as launch pad for future expansion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For discussion**

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

**Activity: Extended response**

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

**Hint:**

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

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25 It is likely that both Thutmose I and Thutmose II may have penetrated as far as Napata from the evidence of building remains at the site.
Establishment of empire: Military campaigns in Syria–Palestine

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

Egypt’s policy in Syria–Palestine during the New Kingdom

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

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

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

For discussion

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

26 Redford, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times, p. 149
Antiquity 2

Sequence chart of military campaigns in Syria–Palestine during the early 18th Dynasty

1 AHMOSE

Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there: one man, three women; total four persons. His majesty gave them to me as slaves ...

Then Sharuhen was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it: two women and a hand. Then the gold of valor was given me, and my captives were given to me as slaves.

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

2 AMENHOTEP I

No clear record of military campaigns in Syria–Palestine during the reign of Amenhotep I.

3 THUTMOSE I

After this [that is, Nubian campaign] his majesty proceeded to Retjenu [Syria–Palestine] to vent his wrath [anger] throughout the lands. When his majesty reached Naharin … he found that foe marshalling troops. Then his majesty made a great slaughter of them. Countless were the living captives which his majesty brought back from his victories.

Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana

Again … I served for King Okheperkare [Thutmose I] triumphant; I captured for him in the country of Naharin, 21 hands, one horse, and one chariot.

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

He brought the ends of the earth into his domain; he trod its two extremities with his mighty sword, seeking battle; but he found no-one who faced him. He penetrated valleys which the royal ancestors knew not, which the wearers of the double-crown had not seen. His southern boundary is as far as the frontier of this land [that is, Nubia], his northern as far as that inverted water [that is, Euphrates River] which goes downstream instead of going upstream.27

Tombos Stela of Thutmose I

4 THUTMOSE II

Campaign against the Shasu Bedouin: I followed King Okhepernere [Thutmose II], triumphant; there were brought off for me in Shasu very many living prisoners; I did not count them.

Biography of Ahmose Pennekhbet

27 Egyptians were used to the Nile flowing north, but the Euphrates flowed in a southerly direction
The first 21 years of his reign were the years of co-regency with Hatshepsut; year 22 was a continuation of the reign but it represented the first year of his independent reign; he reigned for a further 32 years, dying in year 54.

Campaign 1: Year 22

The Annals of Thutmose III, the Gebel Barkal Stela of Thutmose III—the first 21 years of his reign were the years of co-regency with Hatshepsut; year 22 was a continuation of the reign but it represented.

Campaign 6: Year 30—capture of Kadesh

Again I beheld his bravery, while I was among his followers. He captured the city of Kadesh … I brought off two men … as living prisoners; I set them before the king, the Lord of the Two Lands, Thutmose III, living forever.

Biography of Amenemhab

Campaign 8: Year 33—conquest of Naharin

They had no champion in that land of Naharin, whose lord had abandoned it through fear. I houghed [destroyed] his cities and his towns and set them on fire … I plundered all their inhabitants, who were taken away as prisoners-of-war along with their numberless cattle and their goods likewise. I took away from their provisions and I uprooted their grain, and chopped down all their trees [even] all their fruit trees …

Now when My Majesty crossed over to the marshes of Asia, I had many ships constructed of cedar upon the mountains of God’s-land [Lebanon], in the vicinity of the Mistress of Byblos, and placed upon carts with oxen drawing them. They travelled in the van [front] of My Majesty to cross that great river [that is, Euphrates] that flows between this country and Naharin …

Thereupon My Majesty set up my stela on that Mountain of Naharin, a block quarried from the mountain on the west side of the Great Bender [that is, Euphrates River].

The Gebel Barkal Stela

Campaign 10: Year 35—revolt of Naharin

Now his Majesty was in Djahy on his tenth victorious campaign. Now his majesty arrived at the town of Araina [town unknown but believed to be north of Aleppo] and that vile doomed one [of Naharin] had collected horses with their people [and … their armies] of the ends of the earth. They were … intent on fighting with His Majesty.

Then His Majesty closed with them, and then the army of his Majesty performed the charging manoeuvre with the [battle] cry. Then His Majesty overpowered these foreigners through the power of … Amun and made a great slaughter among those doomed ones of Naharin.

The Annals of Thutmose III

Campaign 17: Year 42—reconquest of Kadesh

On this last campaign, the Annals record that Thutmose marched towards Kadesh via the coastal route destroying the towns of Irkata, Tunip and Takhsy on the way. He then attacked and destroyed the fortifications of Kadesh which had been rebuilt after the campaign of year 34. Amenemhab, his general, recounts an interesting strategy used by the prince of Kadesh during the siege of the town:

Then the chief of Kadesh released a mare and it galloped upon its legs and entered into the midst of the army; and I ran after her on foot with my sword and ripped open her belly. I cut off her tail and presented it before His Majesty. Thanks were showered on me for it; he gave forth with rejoicing and it filled my soul! A thrill shot through my limbs!

The Biography of Amenemhab

28 The first 21 years of his reign were the years of co-regency with Hatshepsut; year 22 was a continuation of the reign by it represented the first year of his independent reign; he reigned for a further 32 years, dying in year 54.
Three main stages of Egyptian policy

Egypt’s contacts with this region during our period are characterised by three broad stages of development as shown in Figure 19.

**FIGURE 19** Phases of Egyptian foreign policy in Syria–Palestine

29 For a useful survey and attempted reconstruction of the sequence of campaigns and events—and the general reign of Amenhotep II—see Forbes, ‘Akheperure: The 2nd Amenhotep’, pp. 37–52
Stage 1: From Ahmose to Hatshepsut: Border protection

It has been suggested that the very long periods of time Ahmose spent in laying siege to Avaris and Sharuhen may help to explain why, from Amenhotep I to Hatshepsut, there are few if any references to assaults on cities in Syria–Palestine in the context of foreign warfare. However, Thutmose I’s activity in Syria–Palestine, is regarded as having laid the foundations for a major change in Egypt’s relations with that region. We know from the records that he was the first pharaoh to fight a battle against the Mitanni at the Euphrates River. He left behind a stela to mark the event. This campaign appears to have been more in the nature of a raid, rather than any planned strategy of conquest. Betsy Bryan has suggested that the reason why Thutmose I did not make a more permanent impression in Syria–Palestine may have been because he ‘encountered enemies and military technology beyond the capability of Egypt’s armies, which almost certainly had fewer chariots than the Mitanni at the time’. His successor Thutmose II might have been inclined to develop his father’s northern policy but his reign was too short (a maximum of three years, perhaps less) and his main concern appears to have been the consolidation of Egypt’s control of Nubia.

We do not have evidence for Asiatic campaigns during the reign of Hatshepsut. However, she makes conventional claims such as ‘her arrow is among the northerners’ and ‘my eastern frontier is on the marshes of Asia, and the Montiu [‘people across the sand’, that is, Sinai] of Asia are in my grip’. It is possible that her co-regent, Thutmose III, conducted a campaign late in the joint reign to capture the town of Gaza, on the border of Egypt and Palestine.

Stage 2: Thutmose III: Creation of the empire

Thutmose III pursued the most active and certainly the most successful policy of expanding Egypt’s borders during the New Kingdom. J. H. Breasted, the great American Egyptologist, called him ‘the Napoleon of Ancient Egypt’, a reference both to his military abilities and to his physical stature. In the first twenty years of his independent reign, he conducted seventeen campaigns into Syria–Palestine. The records of these campaigns were preserved in a range of sources. Royal sources include the official military log or day book called the Annals, and a number of victory and dedication stelae. They also include pylon inscriptions erected at sites such as Karnak and as far away as Napata in Nubia. Private sources, useful for corroborating the official ones, include the important tomb biography of Amenemheb, a general who served under Thutmose III on his many campaigns.

What is particularly worth noting about Thutmose III’s campaigns is not just his personal bravery in battle, but also his command of military strategy, tactics and logistics. Strategy refers to the long-term planning, that is, the overall objectives of a campaign or series of campaigns; tactics refers to the specific methods used to achieve short-term objectives, for example, in a specific battle. Logistics deals with the equipping and supplying of an army while it is on campaign.

If Thutmose III made much of his great success at Megiddo, it was only the first step in a long military career whose broad aim was to secure Egyptian dominance in Palestine and beyond. While his military ambition had been inspired by the campaigns of his grandfather Thutmose I, his strategy of further conquest in Syria was no doubt formulated in response to developments in the north. The most significant of these developments was the growing power of the Mitanni whose expansionist policy southwards coincided with Egypt’s own northern expansion. Syria and Palestine became the battleground for supremacy. On the eve of the Battle of Megiddo, it seems clear that the large coalition of forces marshalled against Egypt was led by the Prince of Kadesh with Mitanni backing (see Sequence chart of the Megiddo campaign).

30 Redford, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times, pp. 48–9, footnote 284
31 Bryan, ‘The 18th Dynasty before the Amarna Period’, p. 23431
32 For a full account of the reign of Thutmose III, see Forbes, ‘Menkhepere Djehutymes
33 Napoleon was reputedly a very short man; Thutmose III’s height was originally thought to have been only 5 foot 3 inches (1.6 metres) based on an incorrect measurement of his mummy—in reality, he was probably of average height for his time.
Specific details of some of Thutmose’s campaigns are lacking; many so-called ‘campaigns’ were probably no more than tours of inspection to inspire fear and collect the annual tribute. Highlights of the most important campaigns are included in the overview in Table 3. A study of these campaigns reveals development of a strategy based on four major phases.

**TABLE 3** Main phases of the campaigns of Thutmose III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Campaign number</th>
<th>Year/s of reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secure and control Palestine as a buffer zone between Egypt and the north</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gain control of the Phoenician coast and its ports north to Arvad, to secure supply lines</td>
<td>2–5</td>
<td>23–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gain control of Syria by striking inland to capture Kadesh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extend Egypt’s influence to the Euphrates by defeating the Mitanni</td>
<td>8–17</td>
<td>31–42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 20** Remains of the middle/late Bronze Age gate of the city of Megiddo dating to the period of the attack of Thutmose III
1 Route followed by the army of Thutmose III

The Egyptian army, led by Thutmose III, marches north from Thebes, passing through Sharuhen and Gaza in southern Palestine en route to Megiddo ‘to smite those who attacked the borders of Egypt for there was rebellion against his majesty’. They arrive in the town of Yehem and Thutmose addresses his officers telling them that he has learned of a major coalition of enemy forces preparing to attack Egypt ‘… that wretched foe of Kadesh has come and entered into Megiddo … He has gathered together a force of all the princes of all the foreign lands … as well as those from as far as Naharin’.

2 The Council of War

‘His majesty ordered a consultation with his valiant army, saying “Now, tell me [what you think]?” They said. “How will it be to go on this road which becomes narrow, when it is reported that the enemies are waiting there [beyond and they] are numerous? Will not horse go behind horse and soldiers and people too? That means our advance guard will be fighting while the rearguard waits here in Aruna unable to fight. There are two other roads here that we can take. One is to our east and comes out at Taanach. The other is on the north side of Djefti, so that we come out to the north of Megiddo. May our valiant lord proceed on whichever of these roads [that is, Taanach or Djefti] seems best to him, but do not make us go on that difficult, [Aruna] road.”’

3 Thutmose III chooses the Aruna Road

But Thutmose rejected their advice saying: ‘I swear, as Re loves me, as my father Amun favours me … I shall proceed on this Aruna Road. Let any of you who wish, go on the other roads. Let those of you wish, follow me. Or the enemy will say “Has his majesty gone on another road because he is afraid of us?” Then his officers said to his majesty: “We are followers of your majesty wherever your majesty goes! A servant always follows his lord.”’
4 The military genius of Thutmose III

‘Thutmose III was at the head of the army as it marched along the Aruna Road.’ His choice of the Aruna Road was shown to have been a clever tactical decision, because his army was able to ‘come out of the pass, without meeting a single enemy’. The enemy had clearly expected the Egyptians to arrive at Megiddo by either the southern road or the northern road and had been forced to divide and deploy their forces accordingly. ‘Their southern wing was at Taanach, and their northern wing on the north side of the Qina Valley.’ So the enemy, taken by surprise would have to redeploy their forces as quickly as possible to prepare for the Egyptian attack. The Egyptians meanwhile posted sentries and pitched camp to prepare for battle on the following day.

5 The Battle of Megiddo

Thutmose III led his army into battle early the next morning. ‘His majesty set out in a chariot of fine gold, decked in his fine armour, like strong-armed Horus, lord of action; like Montu of Thebes, his father, Amun, strengthening his arms. The southern wing of the [Egyptian] army was on a hill south of the brook of Kina, the northern wing was at the north-west of Megiddo, while his majesty was in the centre.’ It would seem from the account of the battle that the enemy offered only token resistance, so they were either heavily outnumbered or had not been able to regroup in time to meet the Egyptian advance. ‘Then his majesty overwhelmed them at the head of his army, and when they saw this, they fled headlong to Megiddo in fear, abandoning their horses and their chariots of gold and silver. The people inside the city hauled them up, pulling them by their clothing inside the city.’

6 Booty and plunder

At this point, the army of Thutmose showed an unfortunate lack of discipline. Instead of following up their advantage by attacking the fleeing enemy and capturing the city, they stopped to collect the abandoned belongings of the enemy from the battlefield. ‘They captured their horses, their chariots of gold and silver; they lay stretched out like fish on the ground. The victorious army of his majesty counted their possessions. The whole army celebrated, praising Amun for the victory he had granted to his son. They presented the booty they had taken, [including] hands, of living prisoners, of horses, chariots of gold and silver.’
Stage 3: Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV: Maintenance of the empire

The most significant development in this stage is the change in Egyptian foreign policy from warfare to diplomacy, characterised by treaty and foreign marriage. The foreign policy of the first ten years of the reign of Amenhotep II was concerned with consolidating the achievements of his father Thutmose III. This was achieved through military campaigns to suppress rebellion in the north and the wholesale deportation of rebellious populations, for example, the town of Gezer in Palestine. The seven ringleaders of the Takhsy rebellion were put to death and their bodies hung from the temple walls at Thebes and Napata.

However, as the reign progressed a newer and greater threat arose in the north—serious enough to challenge the power of both Egypt and of Mitanni. This threat came from the Hittites, a people from Anatolia (modern Turkey) in the far north-west, who had themselves embarked upon a period of

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34 For a useful survey and attempted reconstruction of the sequence of campaigns and events—and the general reign of Amenhotep II—see Forbes, ‘Akheperure: The 2nd Amenhotep’, pp. 37–52
aggressive military expansion. The Mitanni found themselves caught between two foes—the Hittites in the west and the Egyptians in the south. Negotiations for an alliance between Egypt and Mitanni were begun late in the reign of Amenhotep II and the evidence suggests that a treaty between Egypt and Mitanni was signed in his reign.35

The alliance with Mitanni was renewed and cemented during the reign of Thutmose IV with the marriage of the king to the daughter of king Artatama I of Mitanni. This treaty brought to an end the years of military campaigning in Syria–Palestine and was followed by sixty-five years of peace between the two powers.

For discussion

• How did the political make-up of Syria–Palestine differ from the situation in Nubia? How did this affect Egypt’s policy in Syria–Palestine?
• Which pharaohs were most active in Syria–Palestine and what did they aim to achieve?
• Why did Thutmose III regard Megiddo as one of his most important achievements?
• What do the major campaigns of the military career of Thutmose III reveal about his:
  – abilities as a military tactician?
  – leadership qualities?
  – contribution to the creation of an empire?
• How has Egyptian policy in Syria–Palestine changed by the end of this historical period?
• What conclusions can you draw about the usefulness and reliability of the sources available for this topic?

Activity: Written response

1 Locate the following places on the map of Egypt and her neighbours in Figure 4: Sharuhen; Byblos; Megiddo; Kadesh; Orontes River; Euphrates River; Naharin. Explain why each was important in this period.

2 Summarise the information in this section on military campaigns in Syria–Palestine, by using the following table. The first one has been done to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharaoh</th>
<th>Location of battle/s</th>
<th>Relevant details</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmose</td>
<td>Sharuhen</td>
<td>Three-year siege against remnants of Hyksos army</td>
<td>Biography of Ahmose son of Ebana</td>
<td>North-eastern frontier protected southern Palestine, forms buffer zone between Egypt and Retjenu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Explain the major phases of development in Egyptian foreign policy in Syria–Palestine during this period.

4 Using the Sequence chart of the Megiddo campaign of Thutmose III construct a simple recount of the battle.

5 Trace the changing nature of Egypt’s relations with the Mitanni from the first battles against them under Thutmose I to the conclusion of a peace treaty and the diplomatic marriage, under Thutmose IV. Explain the reasons for the change.

Activity: Extended response

Using the table you have completed and other relevant information, plan and write an answer to the following: Explain the major developments in Egypt’s relations with Syria–Palestine during the early New Kingdom.

Hint:

• identify the key phases of Egypt’s relations with Syria–Palestine
• explain the contributions of significant pharaohs
• use relevant evidence to support your explanation
• refer to relevant historiographical issues.

35 For example, there were no further military campaigns in Syria–Palestine after year 9 of his thirty-year reign; Bryan, ‘The 18th Dynasty before the Amarna Period’, p. 252, also comments on the way in which the former language of imperialism, e.g. ‘that foe of Naharin’ gives way to more moderate language of official inscriptions, e.g. the neutral term ‘Asiatics’
The image of the ‘warrior pharaoh’

The mighty ‘warrior pharaoh’ is one of the most enduring images of ancient Egypt and dates to the beginnings of Egyptian civilisation around 3000 BC. It was both a political and a religious statement and emphasised the king’s role as the divine upholder of *maat*, the Egyptian concept of order. The king is shown triumphing over the forces of chaos, represented by foreign enemies and bound captives. In earlier times, the king, a distant and mysterious being, was held in godlike awe by his subjects. However, by New Kingdom times he was a more earthly, vulnerable figure who fought alongside his troops in battle. The militarism of the New Kingdom gave birth to a new heroic age. To the traditional elements of the warrior pharaoh image was added the chariot, one of the most important innovations of this period. The essential features of the New Kingdom ‘warrior pharaoh’ image include the pharaoh:

- leading his soldiers into battle and returning in victory
- attacking the enemy while riding in his chariot
- wearing war regalia, for example, the blue war crown or other pharaonic headdress
- depicted larger than life-size, holding one or more of the enemy with one hand, while he clubs their brains out with a mace (also known as ‘smiting the enemy’)
- in the guise of a sphinx, trampling his enemies underfoot
- offering the spoils of war to the god Amun, the inspiration for his victory.

Another aspect of the warrior pharaoh image that developed over time was the pharaoh as elite athlete and sportsman, a perfect physical specimen. Both Thutmose I and Thutmose III took time out while on campaign to indulge their taste for big game hunting which included lions, elephants and, on rarer occasions, the rhinoceros. Thutmose IV recorded his hunting expedition in the desert around Giza on his Dream Stela. Thutmose III and Amenhotep II both had themselves depicted in stelae and reliefs driving their chariots at breakneck speed while firing arrows through copper targets. Amenhotep II, the most enthusiastic sportsmen of them all, added running and rowing to this list of royal athletic accomplishments.

The Armant Stela of Thutmose III was set up as a record of the mighty deeds of the king in which both his military and his sporting achievements might be preserved. The first two lines of the text in Source 18 make the king’s intention very clear.
Armant Stela of Thutmose III

Compilation of the deeds of valor and might which this perfect god performed ... Every successful act of physical prowess ...

He shot at a copper target, all the wooden ones having shattered as though [they had been] papyrus; and His Majesty put one such example in the temple of Amun. It was a target of hammered copper, several fingers thick, transfixed by his arrow which protruded three palms [length] out the back ...

If ever he spent a moment of relaxation, hunting in a foreign country, the size of his catch would be greater than the bag of his entire army. He slew seven lions by shooting in the space of a moment, and he cut down 120 elephants in the land of Niya [Syria] on his return from Naharin, when he had crossed the Euphrates, destroyed the towns on both its banks, consumed with fire for ever, and set up his triumph stela upon its bank. He got a rhinoceros by shooting, in the southland in Nubia ... He set up his stela there, as he had done at the ends of Asia.

Redford, The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III, pp. 154–5

Understanding and using the sources

Figures 21 and 22
Describe the weapons used by the pharaoh, the pharaonic headdress, the depiction of pharaoh in relation to those around him and the depiction of the enemy.

Activity: Written response

Using Figures 21 and 22 and Source 18, write a paragraph explaining the importance of the ‘warrior pharaoh’ image in this period.

Administration of the empire: Nubia and Syria–Palestine

Egypt’s aims in creating an empire in Nubia and Syria–Palestine were both political and economic. Having secured her southern and northern borders, the next imperative was to exploit the resources and opportunities for trade offered by these regions. The era of military conquest had fostered a demand for the exotic goods of the north and the south. It had also stimulated the growth of new social elites in the military, the religious and the imperial administration.

While there were a number of similarities between Egyptian aims and methods of administration of the empire in Nubia and Syria–Palestine, there were also some important differences. The most important were:

- Nubia was regarded as a region suitable for colonisation while Syria–Palestine was not
- Egypt already had a long history of relations with Nubia based on conquest during the Middle Kingdom—Egypt’s earlier relations with Syria–Palestine were based on trade, not conquest
- Egyptian administrative structures could be more easily imposed in Nubia; Syria–Palestine, however, had a more complex political organisation of independent city–states whose relations were characterised by treaties and power blocs.
Nubia

We have already seen that in addition to regular military campaigns, the Egyptians employed a number of other methods of control:

- strengthening of existing forts
- establishment of Egyptian colonies clustered around temple-towns
- creation of imperial administration headed by the viceroy of Nubia.

Evidence of Egypt’s more direct and permanent control of Nubia can be seen in the changing pattern of building works. Under the early New Kingdom conquerors such as Ahmose and Amenhotep I, building focused on fortification works. By the reign of Thutmose II, fortification became less important and temple building was undertaken on an increasingly grandiose scale. The temples of Semna and Kumna constructed by Thutmose II and III are among the most complete surviving examples of 18th Dynasty architecture anywhere.36 No such program of building was undertaken in Syria–Palestine.

It is interesting to note that the section of the *Annals* of Thutmose III that records the annual collections of revenue from each, makes a clear distinction between the taxes of Nubia37 and the tribute received from princes of Palestine and Syria. This would suggest that Egypt regarded Nubia as a colonial possession and an extension of its own economic system, whereas the chiefs of Syria–Palestine, as vassals, were regarded as exercising authority over their own towns.

There is debate among modern scholars about the nature and development of Nubian political and social structures and the relationship between Nubia and Egypt during the New Kingdom.38 For example, the Egyptian colonisation of Nubia, according to the scholar David O’Connor, was not as oppressive as has usually been represented.

Syria–Palestine

The first steps in the development of an administrative system in Syria–Palestine were taken by Thutmose III in the aftermath of his military conquests. One of our problems of evidence is that the majority of sources for Egyptian administration of the region come from the Amarna age, a hundred years later, when the system was more fully developed. According to Redford, ‘Only in Ramesside times did a full-fledged provincial system, with “governors”, commercial agents and military personnel become the norm’.39

Redford has identified four key features that characterised the administration initiated by Thutmose III and maintained by his immediate successors.40

- **Demolition and deportation:** This was done to maintain Palestine as a buffer zone to protect Egypt from invasion from the north. This was accomplished by demolishing fortified centres that had resisted Egypt—or might do so in the future—and deporting their populations.
- **Confiscation:** The wheat-producing plains of northern Palestine were taken over by the crown and the estate of Amun; but elsewhere towns and cities retained possession of their own lands and property. The harbours on the coast of Phoenicia were provided with storehouses and perhaps a shrine (for the use of Egyptian traders and officials).
- **Political arrangements:** Securing the loyalty and cooperation of vassals by
  - administration of an oath of loyalty
  - taking as hostages sons and daughters of vassal rulers and powerful local families.

36 Adams, *Nubia*, p. 220
37 Breasted translates this as ‘impost’ (an archaic form of the word, tax)
38 See for example, Morkot, ‘Nubia in the New Kingdom & O’Connor, ‘Early States Along the Nubian Nile’ in W.V. Davies (ed.), *Egypt and Africa*
40 The following is adapted from Redford, *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*, pp. 256–7; see also Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, pp. 192–21
Apart from these requirements, there was rarely any Egyptian interference in local politics.

- **Permanent presence:** During the reign of Thutmose III, the administration of Syria–Palestine was very rudimentary. The Egyptian army marched forth on such a regular basis that ‘resident governors’ were unnecessary. The stationing of permanent troops did not occur until late in the reign—at Gaza in the south and at Ullaza on the north Phoenician coast. Their role at Ullaza was to guard the stores in the harbours, supervise the cutting and transporting of timber, and keep the local area under surveillance. A garrison was also assigned to Ugarit either late in this reign or early in the reign of Amenhotep II.

### TABLE 4
Summary of features of Egyptian administration of Nubia and Syria–Palestine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature of administration</th>
<th>Nubia</th>
<th>Syria–Palestine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System of supervision</td>
<td>Complete reorganisation under chief Egyptian official, Viceroy of Nubia, and a specialised Egyptian bureaucracy</td>
<td>Local vassal rulers maintain control of their own affairs; bound to Egypt by oaths of loyalty and hostaged children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration of local chieftains into Egyptian administrative network</td>
<td>Civil administrators assigned specific tasks as the need arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Troops permanently stationed at all major forts</td>
<td>Troops permanently stationed only in Gaza and Ullaza by end of reign of Thutmose III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status and obligations of conquered peoples</td>
<td>Much of lower Nubia (Wawat) colonial subjects of Egypt</td>
<td>Vassal princes take oath of loyalty to Egypt, but are otherwise independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Areas far from Egyptian centres operated as vassals of Egypt</td>
<td>Obliged to collect and pay tribute, keep the peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military activity</td>
<td>Initial campaigns of conquest followed by punitive raids in the event of rebellion</td>
<td>Initial campaigns of conquest followed by punitive raids in the event of rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance of permanent system of fortresses, e.g. Buhen to protect Egyptian interests</td>
<td>Army used for regular collection of tribute and shows of force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demolitions of rebellious towns in Palestine and deportation of their populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic relationship</td>
<td>Annual harvest tax (similar to Egypt)</td>
<td>Booty taken after military conquest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural resources, e.g. gold, ebony paid to Egypt as tax</td>
<td>Tribute collected by local rulers and sent to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building activities</td>
<td>Construction of fortified temple towns</td>
<td>Construction of storehouses at Phoenician ports for storage of grain, etc. for shipment to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive building indicates policy of permanent control and Egyptianisation</td>
<td>No archaeological evidence of permanent building or occupation in Syria–Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial policy</td>
<td>Deliberate policy of control and Egyptianisation:</td>
<td>Policy of hostage taking (sons and daughters of vassal princes) to ensure loyalty of vassals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Egyptian settlers</td>
<td>No attempt to impose Egyptian political structures or customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• integration of local chieftains in imperial administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• education of Nubian princes in Egypt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### For discussion

- What were the reasons for the different methods of administration in Nubia and Syria–Palestine?
- Which features of imperial administration had a political purpose?
- Which features were primarily economic in purpose?
- Explain what you understand by the term ‘Egyptianisation’.
- What is your understanding of the term ‘colonisation’ from your studies in junior and/or modern history? How does it apply to Egyptian policy in Nubia?
- What arguments does O’Connor offer in Source 19 to counter the traditional view that the Egyptian colonisation of Nubia was oppressive?
- What historiographical issues have emerged from your study of this section?
The nature of Egyptian imperialism

Any discussion of Egyptian imperialism must recognise that ‘imperialism’ is a modern concept. Nevertheless, we can try to understand Egyptian foreign policy by comparing it to a model with which we are familiar. First, it would be useful to consider a definition of the term imperialism: ‘the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies.’

This definition applies to the British Empire of the 19th century, which you will remember from your study of junior history. The main features of British imperialism included:

- permanent military occupation of conquered territories, usually referred to as ‘colonies’
- control and administration by British governors
- economic exploitation of the resources of the colonies for the benefit of Britain
- imposition of British culture on the subject populations.

You will notice that this model is most appropriate to describe the relationship between Egypt and Nubia. It does not satisfactorily describe the relationship between Egypt and her northern neighbours. Here, the nature of Egypt’s control was much less clear. The fact that Thutmose III campaigned almost annually during the first twenty years of his reign—often suppressing rebellious towns—indicates that Egyptian control was limited. This was especially the case with the towns of Syria, such as Kadesh. Perhaps the term ‘sphere of influence’ would better describe Egypt’s relationship with Syria. Here Egypt relied on oaths of allegiance and the taking of hostages, rather than military occupation, to ensure the payment of tribute.

There is considerable debate among scholars about the situation in Palestine, which was closer to Egypt. One view holds that Palestine was a virtual colony established in the aftermath of the Hyksos expulsion. Another view, based on archaeological evidence, refutes this theory. The physical evidence, including artefacts and other remains, from eastern Egyptian sites is distinctly different from that found in the nearest Palestinian towns across the Sinai desert. If Egypt did colonise Palestine, one would expect some substantial evidence of cultural interaction.

The ideology and language of imperialism

You will have recognised Egyptian xenophobia (the fear or hatred of foreigners) from your reading of the accounts of Egyptian military campaigns. It is clear that the Egyptians considered themselves superior to non-Egyptians. For example, many inscriptions refer to Nubia as ‘the vile Kush’ or ‘the wretched Kush’. The Nubians are also sometimes called ‘troglodytes’ (primitive, barbaric cave dwellers). The following excerpt from the Tombos Stela of Thutmose I is a good example of such language:

*The Nubian Troglodytes fall by the sword, and are thrust aside in their lands; their foulness, it floods their valleys; the [—] of their mouths is like a violent flood …*

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41 The Macquarie Dictionary, rev. edn, 1985, p. 875
43 Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt, p. 30
The same kind of language was used to describe the peoples of Syria–Palestine who were frequently referred to as ‘miserable Asiatics’. It is interesting to observe though, how the language of aggressive imperialism (‘that foe of Naharin’), evident in the inscriptions of Thutmose III, changed to the more neutral language of diplomacy (‘the Asiatics’) when the peace treaty between Egypt and the Mitanni was being negotiated.

The negative stereotyped portrayals of Egypt’s neighbours moreover, were not always consistent with reality. Ian Shaw points out first, that the population of many Egyptian towns consisted of both Nubians and Asiatics living in apparent harmony with native Egyptians. Second, the policy of Egyptianisation of Nubians and Asiatics through hostage taking and education of youth is hardly consistent with an attitude of fear and hatred.

Imperialism or divine kingship?

One scholar has suggested another reason why it would be misleading to see an explicit policy of Egyptian imperialism in royal inscriptions and reliefs of the New Kingdom. Barry Kemp suggests in Source 20 that such material provides evidence for an understanding of the nature of divine kingship rather than foreign policy.

**SOURCE 20**

From the New Kingdom, a considerable body of inscriptions and scenes has survived related to the theme of conquest and subjection of the outside world to the rule of the king of Egypt. Some of them, in alluding to specific instances of triumph, are termed ‘historical’ by modern scholars, but from their language, and very often from their context within a temple, one can judge them to be more truly theological documents and sources for our understanding of divine kingship. Within them the divine king is depicted fulfilling a specific role with historical actuality entirely subordinated to a predetermined format. Presented as a form of cultic drama the conquest theme is one element in the broader and fundamental role of divine kingship: that of reducing chaos to order … It is also likely that the great scenes of victory and the listing of conquered places which frequently occur on temple walls, particularly on the towers of pylon entrances, were regarded as magically efficacious in protecting Egypt from foreign hostility.


Economic and socio-political aspects of Egyptian imperialism

To reach a better understanding of the nature of Egyptian imperialism, it would be more useful to examine both the nature of Egyptian activities in Nubia and Syria–Palestine and the importance of the military in Egyptian society during this period. As we have already seen in the previous section on the imperial administration of these regions, one of the main interests in conquest was economic. This was based on a desire to protect and increase Egypt’s trading activities and to exploit mineral and other resources. The importance of Nubian gold, especially, may help to explain why the policy of colonisation was so thoroughly developed in this region. In Syria–Palestine, there can be little doubt that the booty gained from conquest and the regular collection of tribute from these conquered towns was a primary interest of Thutmose III and his successors.

Imperial policy also had an important political dimension, for a successful foreign policy reflected and reinforced the power of the pharaoh and guaranteed the security of Egypt’s borders. It was also enthusiastically supported and sustained by important sections of New Kingdom society and especially by the military, which enjoyed increasing prestige and influence in Egyptian society. The careers of prominent soldiers are well documented and indicate how successful military careers guaranteed not only fame and glory—important for their own sake—but also provided an avenue for advancement in the civil and imperial administration. For example, Usersatet, who began his career as a member of the elite chariot corps, became viceroy of Nubia during the reign of Amenhotep II. The military became so influential in Egyptian society that, by the end of the 18th Dynasty, Horemheb, who had been general of the army under Tutankhamun, became pharaoh.

44 Shaw, ‘Egypt and the Outside World’, p. 326
The overall image of Egyptian ‘imperialism’ ... is multifaceted, the economic and political pragmatism of the pharaohs often being cloaked in the hyperbole of royal rhetoric and piety. The debate concerning ideology versus economics is difficult to resolve because we rely primarily on a combination of royal religious and funerary texts for our reconstruction of Egyptian behaviour in the outside world, yet the real story probably lies in the more prosaic archival material that has so rarely survived.


Understanding and using the sources

Sources 20 and 21
- Explain in your own words the Egyptian concept of divine kingship.
- Kemp suggests in Source 20 that inscriptions and scenes of conquest should be seen as theological (that is, religious) rather than imperial statements. What evidence does he use to support his argument? How does this relate to your understanding of the role of the king as upholder of maat?
- Check your understanding of the words in bold in Source 21. Rewrite this source in your own words.
- According to this source, why is it difficult to reach a firm conclusion about the nature of Egyptian imperialism?
- How does Source 21 support the argument presented by Barry Kemp in Source 20?

Activity: Extended response

1 Use the following headings: Political; Ideological; Economic; Social. Working in groups summarise your knowledge of this section. Share your summaries with other groups to construct a class diagram of Egyptian imperialism.
2 Using the diagram you have completed and other relevant information, plan and write an answer to the following: Explain the nature of Egyptian imperialism.

Hint:
- identify the key aspects of Egyptian imperialism
- explain the features of these aspects and the relationship between them
- use relevant evidence to support your explanation
- refer to relevant historiographical issues.

Activity: Revision

Now that you have completed your study of the early New Kingdom, it is important that you review and consolidate your knowledge and understanding of the major developments and issues that shaped this historical period. The following activities are recommended.

1 Read the introduction to this chapter again; it will be more meaningful to you now that you have studied the period.
2 Allocate each of the Focus questions at the beginning of the chapter to a group for discussion and review. (Focus question 3 on the role of significant individuals and groups could be divided into three: (i) the role of pharaohs, (ii) role of queens (iii) role of key groups/officials.) Each group could report to the class by:
   a presenting their findings in the form of a diagram
   b designing some appropriate essay questions for each of the Focus questions and/or syllabus topics for this historical period
   c brainstorming essay structures, including suggestions for relevant evidence and historiographical issues.
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