

Hyksos

group of **mixed Semitic-Asiatics** who settled in northern Egypt during the 18th century BC. In about 1630 they seized power, and **Hyksos** kings ruled Egypt as the **15th dynasty (c. 1630–1521 BC)**. The name **Hyksos** was used by the Egyptian historian **Manetho** (fl. 300 BC), who, according to the **Jewish historian Josephus** (fl. 1st century AD), translated the word as “king-shepherds” or “captive shepherds.” **Josephus** wished to demonstrate the great antiquity of the **Jews** and thus identified the **Hyksos** with the **Hebrews of the Old Testament**. This view is not now supported by most scholars, though it is possible that Hebrews came into Egypt during the **Hyksos** period or that some **Hyksos** were the ancestors of some Hebrews.

“**Hyksos**” was probably an Egyptian term for “**rulers of foreign lands**” (**heqa-khase**), and it almost certainly designated the foreign dynasts rather than a whole nation. Although traditionally **they also formed the 16th dynasty**, those rulers were probably only vassals of the 15th-dynasty kings. They seem to have been connected with the general migratory movements elsewhere in the Middle East at the time. Although most of the **Hyksos** names seem to have been **Semitic**, there may also have been a **Hurrian** element among them.

The **Hyksos** introduced the **horse and chariot**, the **compound bow**, **improved battle axes**, and **advanced fortification techniques** into Egypt. At **Avaris** (modern Tall ad-Dab'a) in the northeastern delta, they built their capital with a fortified camp over the remains of a Middle Kingdom town that they had seized. Excavations since the 1960s have revealed a **Canaanite-style temple**, **Palestinian-type burials, including horse burials**, Palestinian types of pottery, and quantities of their superior weapons.

Their chief deity was the **Egyptian storm and desert god, Seth**, whom they identified with an **Asiatic storm god**. From **Avaris** they ruled **most of Lower Egypt** and **Upper Egypt** up to **Hermopolis directly**. South to Cusae, and briefly even beyond, they ruled through **Egyptian vassals**. When under **Seqenenre** and **Kamose** the Thebans began to rebel, the Hyksos pharaoh **Auserre Apopi I** tried unsuccessfully to make an alliance with the rulers of **Cush** who had overrun Egyptian **Nubia** in the later years of the 13th dynasty (c. 1650 BC).

The **Theban revolt** spread northward under **Kamose**, and in about 1521 **Avaris** fell to his successor, **Ahmose**, founder of the 18th dynasty, thereby ending **108 years of Hyksos rule** over Egypt. **Although vilified by the Egyptians starting with Hatshepsut**, the **Hyksos** had ruled as pharaohs and were listed as legitimate kings in the **Turin Papyrus**. At least superficially **they were Egyptianized**, and they **did not interfere** with Egyptian culture beyond the political sphere.

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Encyclopedia Britannica 2005: Hyksos from Phoenicia History

In the 18th century BC new invaders, called **Hyksos**, destroyed the **Amorite** rule in **Byblos** and, passing on to **Egypt**, brought the **Middle Kingdom** to an end (**c. 1720 BC**). Little is known about the **Hyksos'** origin, but they seem to have been ethnically mixed, including a considerable Semitic element, since the **Phoenician deities El, Baal, and Anath** figured in their pantheon. The rule of the **Hyksos** in **Egypt** was brief and their cultural achievement slight, but in this period the links with **Phoenicia** and **Syria** were strengthened by the presence of **Hyksos** aristocracies throughout the region.

Egypt , ancient

The Second Intermediate Period

The increasing competition for power in Egypt and Nubia crystallized in the formation of two new dynasties : the 15th , called the [Hyksos](#) (c. 1630–c. 1523 BC), with its capital at Avaris (Tall ad-Dab'a) in the Delta , and the 17th (c. 1630–1540 BC), ruling from Thebes . The word Hyksos goes back to an Egyptian phrase meaning “ruler of foreign lands” and occurs in Manetho 's narrative cited in the works of the Jewish historian Josephus (1st century AD), which depicts the new rulers as sacrilegious invaders who despoiled the land. They may have invaded , but they presented themselves—with the exception of the title Hyksos—as Egyptian kings and appear to have been accepted as such. The main line of Hyksos was acknowledged throughout Egypt and may have been recognized as overlords in Palestine , but they tolerated other lines of kings, both those of the 17th dynasty and the various minor Hyksos who are termed the 16th dynasty. The 17th dynasty therefore had to accept that it was a junior line , and in this distinction of status lay an occasion , if not a cause, of later conflict. The 15th dynasty consisted of six kings, the best known being the fifth, [Apopis](#), who reigned for up to 40 years. There were many 17th-dynasty kings, probably belonging to several different families. The northern frontier of the Theban domain was at al-Qusiyya, but there was trade across the border and the Thebans pastured their herds in the Delta .

Asiatic rule brought many technical innovations to Egypt, as well as cultural innovations such as new musical instruments and musical styles. The changes affected techniques from bronze working and pottery to looms ; and new breeds of animals and new crops were introduced . In warfare, composite bows, new types of daggers and scimitars , and above all the horse and chariot transformed previous practice , although the chariot may ultimately have been as important as a prestige vehicle as for tactical advantages it conferred . The effect of these changes was to bring Egypt, which had been technologically backward, onto the level of western Asia. Because of these advances and the perspectives it opened up, Hyksos rule was decisive for Egypt's later empire in the Near East.

Whereas the 13th dynasty was fairly prosperous , the Second Intermediate Period may have been impoverished . The regional centre of the cult of Osiris at Abydos, which has produced the largest quantity of Middle Kingdom monuments , lost importance , but sites such as Thebes , Idfū, and Kawm al-Aḥmar have yielded significant , if sometimes crudely worked, remains . Virtually no information has come from the north , where the Hyksos ruled , and it is impossible to assess their impact on the economy or on high culture. The Second Intermediate Period was the consequence of political fragmentation

and immigration and was not associated with the severe economic collapse of the early First Intermediate Period.

Toward the end of the 17th dynasty (c. 1545 BC), the Theban king [Seqenenre](#) challenged Apopis, probably dying in battle against him. Seqenenre's successor, Kamose, renewed the challenge, stating in an inscription that it was intolerable to share his land with an Asiatic and a Nubian (the Karmah ruler). By the end of his third regnal year he had made raids as far south as the Second Cataract (and possibly much farther) and in the north to the neighbourhood of Avaris, also intercepting in the Western Desert a letter sent from Apopis to a new Karmah ruler on his accession. By campaigning to the north and to the south Kamose acted out his implicit claim to the territory ruled by Egypt in the Middle Kingdom. His exploits formed a vital stage in the long struggle to expel the Hyksos.

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