

Introduction

The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.) consolidated and reconstructed the Egyptian state after the crisis of the First Intermediate Period. The activities of these rulers were mainly concentrated in four cultural areas: the concept of royalty, literature, building projects, and the rise of the Fayyum region.

The dogmatic aspect of the figure of the sovereign remained unchanged and the king continued to be seen as the incarnation of Horus. Instead the king changed his political position: the practical aspect of kingship was increasingly emphasised. According to this ideology, the king was not king by natural law, but through talent and governance. Secondly, literature became an instrument of propaganda and production of consent, while in parallel the construction of the pyramids resumed in continuity with the Old Kingdom as a symbol of royal power. Finally, the reclamation of the Fayyum acquired more and more importance, becoming an important religious centre.

Amenemhat IV's short and poorly documented reign, the penultimate one of the Twelfth Dynasty, represents an interesting gap in Egyptological research, as it spans a fundamental period in Egyptian history. After the crisis of the First Intermediate Period and the great work of unification and innovation undertaken by the rulers of the Twelfth Dynasty, Egypt achieved once again great power and prosperity. Governmental innovations were introduced under Senwosret III and new territories were added to the kingdom, but it was with his successor, Amenemhat III, that everything was organised, consolidated, and strengthened. However, the country's fate changed again, leading to the Second Intermediate Period: a phase that would call into question the foundations of Egyptian society, which ultimately led to the rise of the New Kingdom.

How, why and when this happened remain questions still unanswered in several respects. Defining Amenemhat IV's role, in particular establishing whether his reign represented an element of continuity or of fracture, may help to clarify the reasons and mechanisms which caused the end of the Twelfth Dynasty. Unfortunately, publications of Egyptian history, both popular and scientific, tend to close any systematic discussion of the dynasty with Amenemhat III; few words are given to the last two rulers, Amenemhat IV and Sobekneferu, and these mainly concern bibliographical references or their mention in the king lists. The apparent insignificance of Amenemhat IV's reign according to these sources, mainly due to the relative scarcity of attestations bearing his name, hides a considerable complexity in the definition of his identity and succession dynamics, as well as the significant presence of this king both within

the borders of Egypt and in relations with neighbouring states – a presence that makes Amenemhat IV anything but a minor sovereign.

The purpose of this book is a comprehensive and integrated analysis of this king's activity in relation to the end of the Twelfth Dynasty. Only with the critical examination of the documentation at our disposal is it possible to reconstruct his reign. Frequently, however, one has to resort to expressions such as "one could assume", "it would seem that": the use of the conditional is recurrent and betrays the inevitable subjectivity of numerous interpretations in a research that is not preceded by any similar, specific study.

The different types of documents – epigraphic, architectural and papyraceous, both private and official – are classified and subsequently examined in relation to their background and subdivided by provenance. The first group (**Group A**) includes documents found in Egypt proper. The second (**Group B**) collects documents from the peripheral areas of the Egyptian state; that is, from Nubia, the Eastern Desert, the Sinai Peninsula, and the port of Mersa Gawasis. Finally, the third group (**Group C**) includes evidence found outside the Egyptian borders. For each document, a record containing some fixed fields (material, size, state of preservation, provenance and bibliography) was compiled on the basis of available data, with a brief description limited to the aspects relating to Amenemhat IV's reign.

The discussion follows a chronological order: from the beginning to the end of the reign, beginning with an attempt to define Amenemhat IV in relation to the family of his predecessor: trying to identify the origins and the circumstances that led to his accession to the throne. Ample room is devoted to genealogical research and to the definition of the relationships between Amenemhat IV and three women of the dynasty: the *mwt-nsw* Hetepti, and the *s3t nsw* Neferuptah and Sobekneferu. The second chapter then focuses on the succession dynamics which allowed Amenemhat IV to occupy the throne, also considering the documentation for or against a possible coregency.

The central part of the analysis includes four chapters devoted to the reconstruction of Amenemhat IV's activity in Egypt itself and in the border lands, as well as to his foreign policy. To begin with, the discussion focuses on his domestic building works. The scarcity of architectural remains from this period is often interpreted as a sign of regnal weakness, and thus as a sign of crisis: a new examination of the documents permits a revision of this interpretation.

Amenemhat IV's activity in the borderlands is then analysed. The reign of a sovereign is often characterised by a project that can reveal who that king is, and the funerary complex is usually the main project of a ruler. From this premise, as far as Amenemhat IV is concerned, we will remain inevitably disappointed: we know nothing of either the location of his burial or his tomb. It is therefore necessary to choose another project by which to evaluate his reign: we have chosen his mining expeditions as substitutes for the missing building project. By comparing the different mining sites and by analysing their frequency and organisation, it is possible to demonstrate that mining became the "mirror" of Amenemhat IV's reign and reflects the situation of his reign although one always must take into account that the sources are often biased.

Looking at Amenemhat IV's foreign policy, many documents coming from different locations of the Syro-Palestinian area were examined. It becomes clear that relations between Egypt and these lands were significant during the span of the Twelfth Dynasty, including Amenemhat IV's reign. Different interpretations of the relationship between Amenemhat IV and the kingdoms of the Levant are thus discussed, ranging from the desire of the Egyptians to rule, to their need to establish diplomatic relations with neighbouring lands to maintain a certain balance of power in the region. For this reason, we have analysed the Egyptian documents from abroad in connection with their context to understand the nature, time, and manner of the documents' arrival in those areas.

Two overviews of the administrative systems and the ideological aspects of the Twelfth Dynasty complete the analysis. We have looked at administrative documents to determine whether the process of centralisation and strengthening of the monarchy, begun with Senwret III and continued by Amenemhat III, ended with Amenemhat IV.

The last part consists of two chapters. The first one analyses the problem of the king's burial, while the second one discusses the end of Amenemhat IV's reign. It is a complex chapter written with two purposes. The first is to understand the end of the king's reign in the light of the evidence in our possession and in relation to the events leading to the end of the Twelfth Dynasty and the rise of the Thirteenth. The second is to verify the stability of the northern borders of the Egyptian state and the possibility of the rise of a parallel dynasty of Asian origin, probably related to the future Hyksos invaders.

A note on chronology¹

Egyptological tradition usually divides the Twelfth Dynasty into two phases, separated by the reign of Senwret III, which began the period often referred to

as the "Late Twelfth Dynasty"². From a chronological point of view, the Twelfth Dynasty raises questions which affect the determination of both the absolute and relative chronology of the period, namely the duration of the entire dynasty and the duration of each kingdom.

In terms of absolute chronology, dates recorded which correspond with known astronomical events are available both for the late Twelfth Dynasty and for the first phase of the Thirteenth; they can be useful in anchoring the relative chronology to the absolute. Unfortunately, however, the locations in which these records were made is unknown, which thus leaves a certain margin of error. Each observation, in fact, varies according to the geographical point from which it is made. Without knowing their physical point of observation, therefore, these astronomical records are not able to provide fully accurate chronological milestones. Over the years, many debates among scholars have been held on the topic and this is not the place to deal with such a complex matter; it suffices to point out the issue that remains most controversial, which is the question of the *high* and the *low* chronology³. As for the Twelfth Dynasty, the date of the seventh year of Senwret III's reign is the main object of debate, which is either placed in 1872⁴ or 1830⁵ B.C.

King	High	Low
Amenemhat I	1963-1934	1937-1908
Senwret I	1943-1898	1917-1872
Amenemhat II	1901-1866	1842-1836
Senwret II	1868-1862	1868-1862
Senwret III	1862-1843	1836-1817
Amenemhat III	1843-1798	1817-1772
Amenemhat IV	1798-1789	1772-1763
Sobekneferu	1789-1786	1763-1759

The debate is open and, if possible, even more heated for the period's relative chronology. In order to simplify, we can distinguish between a "long" and a "short" chronology. The first assigns a total duration of 213 years to the dynasty, while the second one puts it at 177 years⁶.

and have a simple illustrative purpose. As for the possible co-regencies related to this analysis, see Chapter 2: *Succession and Co-regency*.

² Cf., for example, Grajetzki 2006, p. 50.

³ Cf. W. A. Ward, *The Present Status of Egyptian Chronology*, *BASOR* 288 (1992), pp. 53-66. The so-called "high" chronology is based on Parker's studies. The scholar believes that Sirio's heliacal rising was observed from the royal palace, in Lower Egypt; while the "low" chronology is based on Krauss' studies, according to whom the observations were made from Elephantine. See also Cohen-Lake 2002, pp. 12-13; Gautschi 2010.

⁴ Cf. A. R. Parker, *The Sothic Dating of the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties*, *SAOC* 39 (1977).

⁵ Cf. R. Krauss, *Sothis und Mundatten*, *Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge* 20, Hildesheim 1985.

⁶ Cf. Cohen-Lake 2002, p. 13 with related bibliography.

¹ Tables taken from K. A. Kitchen, *The Basics of Egyptian Chronology in Relation to the Bronze Age. High Middle or Low?*, ed. P. Åström, Gothenburg 1987, pp. 35-55. They adopt the "short" relative chronology