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Ethnicity of the Hyksos Forces and the Death of Pharaoh Seqenenre Tao

Abstract: The mummified remains of ancient Egyptian king Seqenenre Tao (c. 1560 BCE) reveal traces of trauma caused by violence. Several blows to his head produced cuts, allowing scholars to identify the weapons of the attackers. Considering that among these weapons were Levantine Middle Bronze Age II chisel-shaped, socketed axes, and that Middle Bronze Age II material culture is attributed to ‘Asiatics’ and the subjects of the 15th Dynasty (Hyksos), it is widely accepted that Seqenenre Tao died in conflict with the Hyksos forces. This paper analyses the culture-historical background behind this reasoning. Evidence for the use of weapons of foreign origin by the Egyptian forces is presented along with the possible mechanisms of their acquisition. The entanglement of weapons with the ethnic identity of their users is brought into question, allowing for several possible perpetrators and scenarios in which Seqenenre Tao died.

Keywords: Seqenenre Tao, Hyksos, death, Second Intermediate Period, culture-historical archaeology, ethnicity

Introduction

Ancient Egyptian king Seqenenre Tao (c. 1560 BCE) was one of the last 17th Dynasty Theban rulers of the Second Intermediate Period (1650-1550 BCE) in Egypt. It is commonly accepted that the mummified remains (Egyptian Museum in Cairo JE 26209, CG 61051, SR1710192) from the coffin bearing the name of Seqenenre Tao and found in 1881 in the Deir el-Bahari cache¹ belong to this

¹ Deir el-Bahari cache refers to a tomb (Theban Tomb, TT 320) south of the mortuary temples of rulers Mentuhotep II, Hatshepsut, and Thutmose III. This tomb contained a cache of mummified remains of 40 royal individuals which were moved there from their resting places in the Valley of the Kings (KV) to protect them from looters. Next to the mummified remains of Seqenenre Tao were also those of Kings Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose II, Thutmose III, Ramesses I, Seti I, Ramesses II, and Ramesses IX.

king (Bietak and Strouhal 1974). At the time when the cache was discovered, the standard examination method was unwrapping mummified remains (Riggs 2014). The remains of Seqenenre Tao were unwrapped in 1886 by French Egyptologists Gaston Maspero (1846-1916) and Eugène Grébaut (1846-1915), who found that the outer shroud was greasy to the touch and gave off a foul odour. After cutting through the final layers, they noticed three injuries to the head (Figure 1): a large irregular wound above the right eyebrow, surrounded by whitish material that was most likely brain matter (no. 2); a wound inflicted on the left cheek that had broken the bottom jaw (no. 4); and a wound originally concealed by the hair at the top of the head, in the form of a long slit through which brain matter must have leaked (no. 1) (Maspero 1889, 526-527). Daniel Fouquet (1889) made the same observations as Maspero. Grafton Elliot Smith (1871-1937), anthropologist and professor of anatomy at Kasr Al Ainy School of Medicine in Cairo, examined the remains of Seqenenre Tao in 1906. He described the head injuries in detail and noted the absence of wounds on the rest of the body (Smith 1912, 6). This was confirmed by an X-ray examination in the late 1960s (Whitehouse 1980, 289). Smith (1912, 4-6, Pls. 2-3; Figure 1) distinguished five wounds:



Figure 1. Remains of King Seqenenre Tao's skull from his coffin found in the Deir el-Bahari cache. The numbers indicate the location of the wounds as enumerated by Grafton Elliot Smith, photo, no scale (after Smith 1912, Pl. II).

Smith's wound no. 1 – a horizontal wound in the upper frontal bone (the area of the upper forehead), which Smith suggested was inflicted using an axe.

Smith's wound no. 2 – a fusiform scalp wound that fractured the lower frontal bone below wound no. 1, just above the right eye, also probably delivered with an axe.

Smith's wound no. 3 – a blunt injury that caused the fracture of the nasal bones and the right eye, possibly caused by a stick or the handle of an axe or spear.

Smith's wound no. 4 – a cut on the left cheek below the eye, caused by an axe or some other edged weapon.

Smith's wound no. 5 – a sharp injury below the left ear at the base of a skull, possibly caused by a pointed instrument such as a pike or spear.

While Maspero (1889) and Fouquet (1889) were the first authors to suggest that King Seqenenre Tao had died in battle, Smith (1912) argued that he was assassinated in his sleep. Almost a century later, the cause of death of Seqenenre Tao was examined again, and the weapons that wounded him were identified with greater precision by Manfred Bietak and Eugen Strouhal (1974; see also Saleem and Hawass 2021). The identification of the weapons led to the identification of their carriers. It was assumed that the cultural origin of the weapons correlated with the origin or even the ethnic identity of those who used them to deliver the blows to the head of Seqenenre Tao. The interpretative background behind this suggestion is rooted in a culture-historical paradigm. Considering all this, the aim of this paper is to:

1. Initialise the discussion on the ethnicity of the Hyksos forces that supposedly killed Seqenenre Tao.
2. Analyse the culture-historical premises behind the interpretations of the causes of death of Seqenenre Tao.
3. Argue that there is no direct correlation between the cultural origin of weapons and the ethnic identity of those who used them.

As simple as it might seem, the commonly accepted narrative of the death of Seqenenre Tao has never been challenged before. Since Egyptology can no longer be excused from developments in theory and method in world archaeology, the case of Seqenenre Tao is due for reconsideration.

The Hyksos and Middle Bronze Age in the culture-historical paradigm

During the Second Intermediate Period (circa 1650-1550 BCE), the previously politically unified Egypt of the Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE) was divided between several competing dynasties (Figure 2). These included Dynasties 14 and 15 in Tell el-Dab^a, Eastern Delta of Lower Egypt, which at one

point extended up to Cusae (Al Qusiyyah) in Middle Egypt, and Dynasties 16 and 17 in Upper Egypt, which occupied the lands from Edfu in the south to Abydos in the north (Polz 2018, 230). There may have even been a dynasty in Abydos itself (arguments for and against this are summarised in Ilin-Tomich 2016, 10).

During the late Second Intermediate Period, the kings of the 14th and 15th Dynasties ruled in the north, in Lower Egypt. Most of these kings had West Semitic names (Ryholt 1997, 98-130; Schneider 2003a; Candelora 2017, 209-211). Although the kings of the 14th Dynasty already used traditional Egyptian royal titles such as *ntr nfr* ('good god') or *s3 R^c* ('son of Ra'), several 15th Dynasty kings even adopted titles such as *ḥk3 ḥ3s.wt* ('ruler of foreign lands'), used by Egyptians to refer to foreign rulers. The rulers of the 15th Dynasty took this title and later became known as the Hyksos (Greek form of Egyptian *ḥk3 ḥ3s.wt*) in *Aegyptiaca* (History of Egypt), written by Ptolemaic era Egyptian priest Manetho² in 3rd century BCE (Polz 1998, 221; Ilin-Tomich 2016, 2-7; Candelora 2017, 204-208).

The foreign names of these rulers and the designation 'ruler of foreign lands' they gave themselves are the main reasons why Egyptologists consider them rulers of foreign descent (Candelora 2017, 216). Since people from the Levant settled in the Eastern Delta during the late Middle Kingdom (late 12th and 13th Dynasties), it is now commonly accepted that the kings of the 14th and 15th Dynasties descended from these settlers in Tell el-Dab^a or ancient Avaris, the capital of the Hyksos kings (Ryholt 1997, 302-304; Forstner-Müller and Müller 2006). We do not know what the settlers who came to the Eastern Delta called themselves (Schiestl 2009, 200). The Egyptian ethnonyms for the inhabitants of western Asia include *ʿ3m.w* ('Asiatics')³ *Jwntj.w* ('those with *jwn.t* bows'), (*M*) *fk3tjw* ('those of the turquoise mining region on the Sinai'), *Mntw.w* ('furious

² *Aegyptiaca* survived in copies in the centuries later work of Flavius Josephus (*Contra Apionem*; English: *Against Apion*). Josephus' epitome was preserved by Sextus Julius Africanus and Eusebius of Caesarea, and the latter was preserved by Jerome in Latin, an Armenian translation, and by George Syncellus.

³ 'Asiatics' is a rather unfortunate translation rooted in the discipline's *orientalism* (Said 1978). Egyptologists use the term 'western Asia' to describe the region also known as the Near East, which includes both Mesopotamia and the Levant. Various suggestions have been made for the etymology of the ethnonym *ʿ3m* (summary in Mourad 2015; Saretta 2016; Burke 2021, 146 with further references). Roman Gundacker recently argued that the most convincing one is that it derives from Semitic *drm* ('south, south-land') and therefore means a man from the southland, Gundacker, 2017: 349. According to Gundacker, the homeland of the *ʿ3m.w* was in the Negev, but later they were found also on the Sinai, North Galala Plateau in Lower Egypt, Byblos in northern Levant, and during the Middle Kingdom also in the Eastern Desert of Egypt and in Ullaza in northern Levant (Gundacker 2017, 350, Fig. 13.1).

ones(?)’), and *Sttj.w* (‘those from the land of *Stt*’) (Mourad 2015, 14; Gundacker 2017, 349-353). These ethnonyms reflect how ancient Egyptians viewed their neighbours, which does not necessarily correspond to how these neighbours saw themselves. However, there are strong indications that some of the people who settled in Egypt at one point adopted these Egyptian designations, at least in specific contexts. The late 12th-early 13th Dynasty cemetery in area F/I in Tell el-Dab^a contains scattered fragments of a broken, colourfully painted limestone statue of a man depicted as a *ꜥ3m* in Egyptian iconography (specific hairstyle or hair dress, long robe, and a throw-stick); however, he is in the posture of an Egyptian official and has Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions mentioning incense and indicating an Egyptian offering formula (Bietak 1996, 20-21; Schiestl 2009, 77-78). The statue was supposedly carved by Egyptian sculptors in a style similar to that of the statues of 12th Dynasty king Amenemhat III (1831-1786 BCE) from the Hawara workshop (Arnold 2010, 192). It originally belonged to one of the cemetery’s tombs or funerary chapels and depicted a foreign dignitary who adopted Egyptian iconography of foreigners and local officials for self-representation. He was clearly communicating that, although of foreign descent, he was nevertheless a high-ranking official.



Figure 2. Main archaeological sites mentioned in the paper (copyright: Uroš Matić using Google Earth).

However, Tell el-Dab^a, the eastern Delta, and Lower Egypt, were also inhabited by local Egyptians as well as those of foreign origin who adopted Egyptian names, although it is impossible to differentiate between these groups solely on the basis of names (Ryholt 1997, 99; for the most recent debate on this issue with numerous contradicting examples see Ilin-Tomich 2023, 175-176). For example, treasurers bearing Egyptian names were in the service of 15th Dynasty kings (Quirke 2004) as were high-ranking officials with non-Egyptian names (Ilin-Tomich 2023, 186). However, we also find officials with names such as ^c*3m* in the corpus, which as Alexander Ilin-Tomich (2023, 175-176) demonstrated, does not necessarily mean that they came from western Asia. According to the First Stela of Kamose (K1) or the Carnarvon Tablet, an Egyptian official named Teti, son of Pepi, even incurred King Kamose's rage because he turned the Egyptian town of Neferusi 'into a nest of Asiatics' (Simpson 2003, 348) which some interpret as evidence of subordination to Hyksos rule (Flammini 2015, 240). Although often neglected in discussions of the Hyksos state formation (Mourad 2015, 4), as stressed by Robert Schiestl (2009, 202), the local Egyptian population was also affected by the events of the Second Intermediate Period, causing it to redefine its loyalty and understanding of ethnic identity. This is why it is erroneous to apply the adjective Hyksos to the entire population of the territory under the control of the 15th Dynasty kings. Examples of scholarly publications in which one finds erroneous use of terms such as 'Hyksos burials', 'Hyksos tombs', 'Hyksos pottery', 'Hyksos weapons' etc. are numerous and cannot be covered by this paper. The population under their rule was surely multi-ethnic and included people of local Egyptian descent, people descended from Levantine settlers, people from mixed unions of Egyptians and Levantines, newcomers from the Levant, and other regions of the Eastern Mediterranean (Bietak and Strouhal 1974, 51; Bietak 2018; Stantis, Kharobi, Maaranen, Nowell, Bietak, Prell, and Schutkowski 2020; for problems of identification solely based on material culture see Matić 2020, 2023). In fact, even though they referred to themselves as 'rulers of foreign lands' among other titles, the rulers of the 14th and 15th Dynasties did not identify with the Egyptian term ^c*3m*, nor with any of the ethnonyms used by the Egyptians for the population of the Levant.⁴ It was their rival from Upper Egypt, King Kamose of the 17th Dynasty, who called Apep of the 15th Dynasty *wr n Rtnw* ('ruler of Retjenu (Syria-Palestine)')⁵ and a ^c*3m* ('Asiatic') in the Second Stela of Kamose or K2

⁴ This title is maybe found in the name of a 13th Dynasty king Hotepibra Sihornedjheritef, Mourad 2015, 27.

⁵ One should not overinterpret this designation. Although the Hyksos probably had some form of political control over Sinai and Sharuhin in the southern Levant, they had only commercial and possibly political ties with the rest of the Levant. Consequently, it is now argued that there was no such thing as a Hyksos empire in the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Levant, as summarised in Ilin-Tomich 2016, 7.

(Habachi 1972, 33-36; Mourad 2015, 9). This most certainly has to do with what Daniel Polz (1998, 221) described as *interpretatio thebarum* and the legitimization of the expansionist war of the 17th Dynasty.⁶ Thus, Kamose deliberately refers to his rival as a foreigner, and the scribes of his stela, including K2, carefully distinguish between the King and his rivals using the same title for the ruler – *hk3*, but with different hieroglyph classifiers, specifically papyrus roll for the rulers of Avaris and Kush in Nubia instead of a ruler wearing the crown of Upper Egypt (Flammini 2011-2012, 57-74).

It was also established that during the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, material culture in Tell el-Dab'a and the eastern Delta underwent changes (Bietak 1996; Forstner-Müller 2008, 126). The increase in Middle Bronze Age II material culture forms was gradual. For example, during the 13th Dynasty, the percentage of imported Levantine pottery (e.g., Canaanite amphorae) increases from 20% to 40% (Bietak 1996, 49). This, among other things, has led several scholars to identify the emergence of Middle Bronze Age II material culture as a direct indicator of foreign presence and foreign ethnic identity (Bietak and Strouhal 1974, 33; contra arguments in Schiestl 2009, 201; Matic 2020). Since the gradual increase of Middle Bronze Age II material culture in the eastern Delta, as well as the development of the distinct material culture of the eastern Delta, coincided chronologically with the rise of the 15th Dynasty (Forstner-Müller 2008, 126), many Egyptologists simply extended the adjective Hyksos to label all material culture forms not traditionally Egyptian. The interpretative strategy behind this is known in archaeology as the 'pots equal people' premise. Within the culture-historical archaeological framework, territorial distributions of the same or similar material culture forms (e.g., pottery, jewellery, weapons) are understood as reflections of the norms shared by the people who used them, and are termed archaeological cultures (Childe 1929, v-vi). These norms are more often than not interpreted in ethnic terms, so that people using the material culture forms in question are considered one ethnic group or simply one people (Childe 1929, v-vi; for numerous issues with this equation see Jones 1997; Lucy 2005; Babić 2008; Porčić 2013).

⁶ Later reflections of this are found in both the 18th and the 19th Dynasty. The relief blocks of King Ahmose's temple in Abydos depict people from the Levant among his enemies. If these reliefs depicted his conflict with the Hyksos, then he either depicted a fraction of the Hyksos forces as having Levantine origin, or he deliberately depicted the Hyksos forces as foreigners, even though in reality, Egyptians had to be involved too (see the discussion later in this paper). In the text from Speos Artemidos, female pharaoh Hatshepsut of the mid-18th Dynasty claims that she raised what was destroyed when the *3m.w* were in Avaris and ruled without Re (Gardiner 1946, 47-48; Mourad 2015, 9; Pierce 2024). The fact that the rulers of Avaris devoted monuments to not only the god Seth of Avaris, but also Hathor, Wadjet, Sobek, and Ra (Ryholt 1997, 11) shows that Hatshepsut's claim was nothing more than an ideological statement.

Thus, the archaeological culture of Middle Bronze Age II in the Levant and that of the eastern Delta are thought to have belonged to a people who not only produced and used the same material culture forms but also belonged to the same ethnic group. Since these archaeological cultures originated in the Levant and the Eastern Delta, and since ancient Egyptian textual sources refer to the inhabitants of the Levant as *ʿ3m.w* ('Asiatics'), Egyptologists have used the common translation of this ethnonym to label the users of Middle Bronze Age II as 'Asiatics'. Furthermore, they often interchangeably use the terms 'Asiatics' and 'Hyksos' to refer to the same users of Middle Bronze Age II culture, without recognizing that Hyksos is a term for rulers. However, not everyone in the Levant and the eastern Delta who used the material culture forms of Middle Bronze Age II necessarily came from the same place or saw themselves as belonging to the same ethnic group. Ancient DNA analyses from five southern Levantine Bronze and Iron Age sites indicate that people who shared the local material culture either descended from local Neolithic populations or populations related to the Chalcolithic Zagros or the Bronze Age Caucasus (Agranat-Tamir et al. 2020). The terms used by ancient Egyptians to describe the inhabitants of the Levant are diverse and do not necessarily correspond to the realities of Middle Bronze Age II ethnic identities. Moreover, it is unclear as to what extent ethnic identity was important to the inhabitants of the Levant and in which contexts.

After the Second Intermediate Period, several Egyptian kings (Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II) organised military campaigns in the Levant. Various textual sources from their reigns provide insights into these campaigns. Through these sources, such as the Annals of Thutmose III (1479-1425 BCE), we learn about the fragmented political landscape of the Levant and the division of its territory among city-states only a few decades after the Hyksos were defeated by Thebans. Recent analyses of the names of West Semitic, Hurrian, and Indo-Aryan origin belonging to the rulers of Levantine city-states during the Amarna period, as attested in the Amarna letters, suggest that these names cluster geographically and reflect local elite naming traditions (Kilani 2020a). These clusters also correlate intriguingly with the military campaigns of Thutmose III. The West Semitic name cluster can be found in the area south of the Carmel Range, the area east and north of the Sea of Galilee, and along the northern Levantine coast, north of the Galilee and west of the Lebanon range. These regions, according to the Annals of Thutmose III, were not perceived as a threat by him. Conversely, the Hurrian-Indo-Aryan name cluster is found in the corridor that runs through the Beqa'a valley from the areas east of the Akkar plain to Damascus, as well as in regions south of it. In these regions, both Thutmose III and his successor Amenhotep II (1427-1400 BCE) encountered resistance and were forced to confront their enemies (Kilani 2020b). Therefore, it is questionable as to whether the people of the Levant

living in these different city-states necessarily shared a common ethnic identity or any sense of belonging, despite their use of similar material culture forms. It is possible that some of them (e.g., Kilani's Hurrian-Indo-Aryan cluster) developed a shared sense of identity only when confronted with a common enemy – Egypt. This does not negate the existence of some similarities among them; rather, it suggests that these similarities (e.g., naming tradition) gained increased significance in response to new political realities.

Consequently, since Middle Bronze Age II material culture forms do not necessarily reflect a unified ethnic identity, and there is no justification for applying the label Hyksos to all inhabitants of the territory controlled by the 15th Dynasty, caution must be exercised in using the labels Hyksos or 'Asiatic' for Middle Bronze Age II material culture. Similarly, using 'Asiatic' as a translation of an Egyptian term *ꜥ3m* may not accurately reflect the complex identities in the Levant. In the absence of terms that adequately capture the complexities of the ancient political landscape and identities, scholars must clearly define the meanings they attach to words that carry culture-historical assumptions that may not be fully substantiated.

Since the death of Seqenenre Tao is often interpreted as the result of the conflict with the forces of the Hyksos, bearing all of the above in mind, I turn now to the ethnicity of the Hyksos forces.

Ethnicity of the Hyksos forces

Information about the ethnicity of the Hyksos forces is sparse (*comp.* Ryholt 1997). While visual and textual sources of Ancient Egypt for the New Kingdom are abundant and informative, sources from the Second Intermediate Period are scarce and largely silent regarding the forces of the Hyksos. In Alexander Ilin-Tomich's database *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom* (University of Mainz), not a single person bearing so-called 'military titles' is associated with the 14th or 15th Dynasties (<https://pnm.uni-mainz.de>, last visit on 26 August 2024). However, one should be careful not to read too much into this. People in charge of civil administration could also lead forces to battle. This is because the titles usually understood to be military are also found in non-military enterprises such as building projects and expeditions. The same designation (*msꜥ*) can refer to a fighting unit, an expedition force, or a labour force (Stefanović 2014, 429–430; Stefanović, forthcoming). Until the very end of the Second Intermediate Period, there were no standing armies or commanders tasked exclusively with military duties.

Indeed, burials with weapons are documented at Tell el-Dab'a (areas F/I; A/I; A/II; A/IV) from the late Middle Kingdom until Stratum D/3 or mid-15th

Dynasty (Forstner-Müller 2008; Schiestl 2009; Prell 2021). According to the results of strontium isotope analyses conducted on bone samples belonging to some of the individuals buried in these tombs, some were locals and others not (Stantis, Kharobi, Maaranen, Nowell, Bietak, Prell and Schutkowski 2020). However, strontium isotope analyses do not answer the question of ethnicity because they ultimately inform us of the geographic origin of the consumed food and water (Matić 2020, 53-55; Matić 2023). Some of the people buried with weapons came from outside Tell el-Dab'a; however, the results of strontium isotope analyses do not allow for the precise pinpointing of their origin, meaning that they were not necessarily and only from the Levant (Stantis, Kharobi, Maaranen, Nowell, Bietak, Prell and Schutkowski 2020). Some of the men buried with weapons and coming from Tell el-Dab'a may have had either local or foreign ancestors, which is something strontium isotope analyses cannot inform us about. Nevertheless, burials with weapons are missing from the peak of the Hyksos period and the time of increased conflicts with the Theban 17th Dynasty, which eventually defeated the Hyksos rulers. However, as Irene Forstner-Müller



Figure 3. Nehenmen's dagger (Luxor Museum JE 32735), reign of 15th Dynasty king Apep, found in the Saqqara burial with a coffin belonging to a man named Abed, photo, no scale (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b3/Hyksos_dagger_handle.jpg, courtesy of Wikimedia user पाटलपुत्र).

and Wolfgang Müller (2005: 200-201) accurately notice, it is exactly in these new circumstances that one would probably avoid depositing valuable weapons in tombs. There are, however, exceptions to this, with the often-neglected Nehemen's dagger (Luxor Museum JE 32735) warranting attention (Figure 3). This bronze dagger with a handle made of electrum was discovered in Saqqara, near the pyramid of King Teti, in a burial located within the no longer operational funerary temple of Queen Iput from the 6th Dynasty (2345-2181 BCE). It was found inside the coffin of a man called Abed (West Semitic name), positioned next to his left leg (Daressy 1900, 115; Arnold 2010, 210).

The dagger handle depicts a man spearing a lion and a horned animal fleeing in the opposite direction. The hunter is adorned with a kilt featuring a central lappet typical of Middle Kingdom Egyptian officials (Arnold 2008, 117; Aruz 2013, 221). In front of the horned animal is a plant with leaves, while another leaf-like object appears between the hunter's right hand and an L-shaped section of the ground where the lion's back legs rest. Below the hunter, an inscription reads *šms.w (n) nb=f Nḥmn* ('follower of his lord Nehemen') (Daressy 1900, 118; Arnold 2010, 210). The back of the dagger bears the inscription *ntr nfr nb t3.wy Nb-ḥpš-R^c s3 R^c Jpp dj ^cnh* ('the good god, lord of the two lands, Nebkhepeshre, son of Re, Apep, given life') (Daressy 1900, 118-119; Arnold 2010, 210). It has been suggested that the king himself gifted the dagger to Nehemen (West Semitic name), forming bonds of mutual loyalty (Arnold 2010, 213). Had there been an intention to associate the hunter and Nehemen, then he, having a foreign name (Schneider 2003b, 140-141), would have been depicted wearing Egyptian official attire. Unlike the official from Tell el-Dab^a who used Egyptian iconography for foreigners and Egyptian officials combined, Apep and Nehemen fully use Egyptian iconography and combine it with motifs commonly found in the Eastern Mediterranean (Arnold 2008; Aruz 2013). We will never know if Nehemen, to whom the dagger originally belonged, and Abed, with whom the dagger was eventually buried, actually fought for the Hyksos King Apep. However, the use of Egyptian iconography for the dagger, by a man with a foreign name, indicates that the identities of those in the service of Apep and possibly his forces were diverse. They can hardly be said to fall into the lump categories of 'Egyptian' and 'Asiatic', as indicated by the results of the strontium isotope analyses of some of the burials with weapons from Tell el-Dab^a.

Another potential clue regarding the ethnicity of the Hyksos forces can be found on the Abydos temple walls, which depict the battles of Ahmose (1550-1525 BCE) (Figure 4), the first 18th Dynasty king, who defeated the Hyksos and united Egypt according to ancient Egyptian sources. These fragmentary relief blocks are currently studied by Stephen Harvey, and the findings have been only partially published (1994; 1998; 2002-2003; see also Spalinger 2005, 20-21; Spalinger 2011).

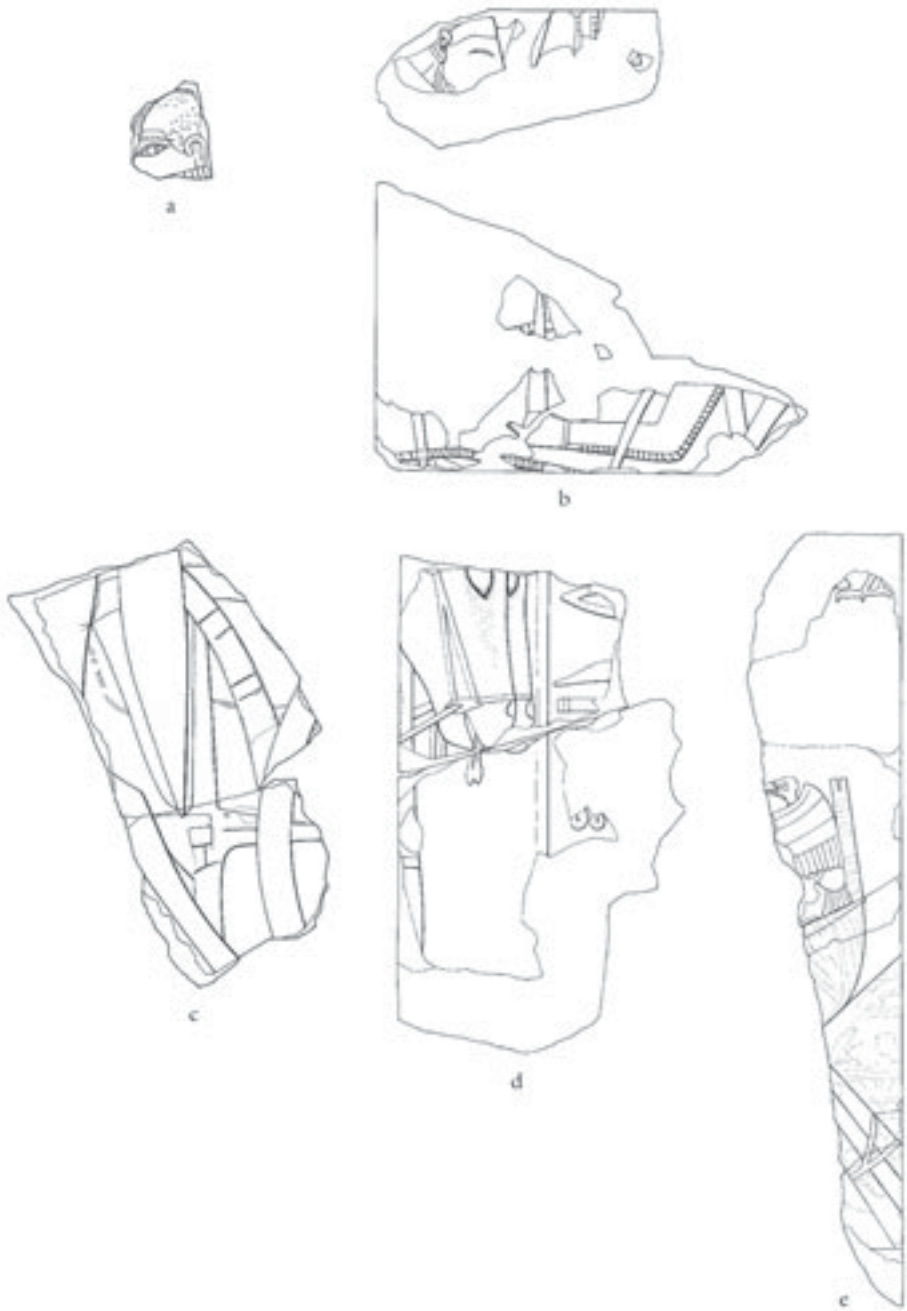


Figure 4. Battle reliefs from the temple of King Ahmose in Abydos, line drawing, no scale (after Spalinger 2005, 21)

Two of these reliefs depict soldiers with short hair and beards (Figure 4.a), while the third shows an arm holding a dagger (Figure 4.b), probably of the same type as Nehemen's dagger. The arm is clad in a long sleeve with a border adorned with parallel lines. Both the heads and the arm in a long sleeve have similarities with New Kingdom Egyptian representations of Levantine foreign rulers in 18th Dynasty tribute scenes found in private tombs (Hallmann 2006, 261-264; Anthony 2017, 23-24). Similar figures include the ruler of Tunip in western Syria in the tribute scene from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (TT86) and some of the Levantines in the tombs of Rekhmire (TT100), Sobekhotep (TT63), and Huy (TT 40). This type of foreigner, identified in the accompanying inscription as coming from Naharin (Mitanni), is also depicted at the base of the throne dais of Amenhotep III (1390-1352 BCE) and Tiye in the representation of this enthroned couple within the tomb of Anen (TT120). One such figure is depicted among the enemies on a relief block (Figure 5) housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MMA 13.180.21), presumably dating from Amenhotep II's reign or earlier (Roehrig 2008, 263).⁷

Therefore, if the relief blocks from Ahmose's temple indeed depict his conflict with the Hyksos, as commonly assumed because of the name Apep written on one of them (Harvey 1994: 4-5; Spalinger 2005, 19-22), then the soldiers depicted on some of these blocks may represent the Hyksos forces. However, due to the limited number and fragmented nature of these blocks, it is difficult to determine if all of Ahmose's enemies are depicted as foreigners or only some of them. If all the enemies were portrayed like this, it could imply a deliberate distortion of reality, considering that some Egyptians likely fought in the forces of the Hyksos against the Thebans (e.g., Teti, son of Pepi, who angered Kamose). Furthermore, as indicated by the iconography of the dagger of Nehemen, some men with foreign names who served in the Hyksos forces may have represented themselves as Egyptians. As indicated by the results of strontium isotope analyses, some of the men buried with weapons in Tell el-Dab'a were locals, and some came from elsewhere. Conversely, if only some enemies of Ahmose were depicted as foreigners, this could imply that they were only a faction comprising individuals of Levantine descent and culture residing in Egypt, or possibly a foreign contingent within the Hyksos forces. In the latter scenario, this would be the sole evidence supporting the use of foreign troops by the Hyksos.

⁷ This dating is based on the stylistic features of the depicted enemy figures. However, the same features are found even before the reign of Amenhotep II. The block was found re-used in the foundation of the temple of Ramesses IV in Asasif, Upper Egypt, during the excavations of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1912-1913.



Figure 5. Relief block from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MMA 13.180.21), possibly from the reign of Amenhotep II or earlier, found re-used in the foundation of the temple of Ramesses IV in Asasif, Upper Egypt, photo, no scale (<https://www.metmuseum.org/de/art/collection/search/544720>).

The death of Seqenenre Tao

Bietak and Strouhal (1974) analysed the wounds identified by Maspero and Smith and compared their shapes to weapons from the time period. They argued that Smith's wound no. 4, located in the left cheek below the left eye, as well as Smith's wound no. 2, immediately below the right eye, were caused by Levantine Middle Bronze Age II chisel- or narrow-bladed socketed axe. Smith's wound no. 1 on the upper forehead was caused by an axe or hatchet with a broad blade, possibly of Egyptian origin. While they suggested that Smith's wound no. 3 in the nasal area was inflicted by a blunt object, they could not identify the weapon responsible for Smith's wound no. 5 at the base of the skull (Bietak and Strouhal 1974, 49-51). Sahar N. Saleem and Zahi Hawass (2021) conducted a study of Seqenenre Tao's remains using computed tomography and, like Bietak and Strouhal (1974), compared their findings to weapons found in Tell el-Dab'a. They also identified some of the wounds as being delivered by 'Asiatic' and 'Hyksos' weapons. Since Bietak's and Strouhal's study, other authors have either argued, based on X-ray analyses, that Seqenenre Tao might have survived Smith's wound no. 2 (Bockenheimer, Eickhoff, Metzel and Voigt 1978, 691-693), or that he survived but suffered from post-traumatic hemiparesis due to a right-sided brain lesion inflicted during that injury (Metzel 1990, 78-80). However, some have argued that it is unlikely that the king survived given that the head blows penetrated the brain to a depth of 2,1 cm, an injury deemed im-

possible to heal (Gonzalo Sanchez as reported by Shaw 2009, 163). The prevailing suggestions regarding Seqenenre Tao's cause of death include death on the battlefield, possibly while in a chariot (Bietak and Strouhal 1974), assassination within the palace (Smith, 1912), or assassination by enemies following the defeat in battle and subsequent imprisonment (Shaw 2009, 175-176; Saleem and Hawass 2021).⁸ The assassination in the palace scenario does not fully account for the evidence regarding the types of weapons used in delivering the wounds, unlike the battlefield scenarios. Which and if any of the so far suggested scenarios is true is hard to answer. The concerns here are with the erroneous idea that the cultural origin of the weapons can be used as an argument for the ethnic identity of its carrier. Ultimately, the origin of the weapons does not provide a definite answer as to who killed Seqenenre Tao.

According to Bietak and Strouhal (1974, 38) chisel-shaped socketed battle axes of the Middle Bronze Age II culture were used exclusively by 'Asiatics' and not by the local Egyptian population. This argument is based on the distribution of such axes in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period. Most of these axes (16 pieces) and even two moulds for their production have been found in Tell el-Dab^a. However, as indicated by the results of strontium isotopes of bone samples taken from burials with weapons in Tell el-Dab^a, some belonged to locals and others to those from elsewhere. Additionally, socketed axes are known from other sites in the Eastern Delta, such as Tell el-Yahudiyah and Tell el-Maschuta (Mourad 2021, 262-262). According to a recent study of ancient Egyptian copper artefacts by Martin Odler (2023, 582), foreign axe types from the Early and Middle Bronze Age in Egypt are concentrated in Lower Egypt (Kom el-Hisn, Tell el-Dab^a, Khatana, Tell el-Maschuta, Helwan), with Abydos being the only site he mentions in Upper Egypt. However, one should neither neglect nor read too much into this evidence, as the absence of evidence in archaeology is not necessarily evidence of absence. The reason behind this distribution pattern could indeed be the restriction of the usage of these axes to the Levant and Eastern Delta. Even so, this does not mean that only 'Asiatics' lived in the Eastern Delta at the time. However, it is possible that the abundance of these axes at Tell el-Dab^a is due to the extraordinary degree of research at this site, which has been systematically excavated since the 1960s. There are no other Second Intermediate Period sites in Lower Egypt that have been as extensively investigated as Tell el-Dab^a. Comparatively excavated and published sites in Egypt are also few in number (e.g., Amarna, Elephantine). Regarding the Second Intermediate Period, the lack of finds in the region south of Fayum and north of Abydos could be attributed to the poor state of research in these

⁸ For similar interpretation of the wounds and death of Seneb Kay, another Second Intermediate Period king who died a violent death some 50-75 years before Seqenenre Tao and was buried in Abydos, see Wegner and Cahail 2021, 134.

areas (Polz 1998, 223). Furthermore, we have seen that there are no known burials with weapons in Tell el-Dab^a during the late Hyksos period, possibly a consequence of the need to keep them in use during the conflict rather than to deposit them in tombs. The same argument can be used to explain why no such axes were found to have been used south of Lower Egypt and the Eastern Delta during the late Second Intermediate Period. The people in these other regions also needed them in action.

According to Bietak and Strouhal, the wounds on the skull of Seqenenre Tao inflicted by these axes are a clear indicator that this Egyptian king fell in battle against the subjects of the Hyksos kings. Consequently, they argue that the Theban rebellion against the Hyksos started already before the well-known campaigns of King Kamose (Bietak and Strouhal 1974, 50). Since their study, it has been generally accepted that the wound on the forehead of Seqenenre Tao was caused by a 'Hyksos' axe (Bourriau 2000, 199; Darnell and Manassa 2007, 13; G. Shaw 2009, 239; I. Shaw, 2017: 86-87; Mourad 2021, 262-263). However, even if the axe in question was issued by a Hyksos ruler or used by a soldier in the forces of the Hyksos, the cultural origin of the axe and its archaeological distribution are not indications of the ethnic identity of its user. As we have seen, the Hyksos kingdom was populated by a multi-ethnic population, and its forces could have been equally ethnically diverse.

Weapons across borders

The interpretations of the death of King Seqenenre Tao rely on identifying the weapons that caused the wounds on his head and the idea that these weapons are exclusively associated with users from specific cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds. This notion stems from the premise of culture-historical archaeology, which assumes that the spread of certain material culture forms coincides with the spread of ancient ethnic groups. However, as we have seen, it is erroneous to use the term 'Hyksos' to describe the entire population of the Eastern Delta or those who used objects produced in what archaeologists label as the Middle Bronze Age II tradition. Hyksos should be a term of restricted use, referring specifically to the rulers of the 15th Dynasty.

There is abundant evidence from ancient Egypt and elsewhere that weapons and equipment of foreign origin found their way into local Egyptian forces. Several mechanisms facilitated this process, and below are some of the possibilities:

Spoils of war

Plundering in war is a well-documented practice in both ancient (Deuchler 2015) and modern warfare. Ancient Egyptian soldiers also engaged in plunder-

ing during military campaigns, with lists of spoils documented since the reign of the Early Dynastic King Narmer, around 3200 BCE. One such list is recorded on his famous mace head, found in the main deposit of the temple of Hierakonpolis and now housed in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.⁹ Such lists are also known from the Old and Middle Kingdom. However, the administrative process of registering spoils of war is best reconstructed based on New Kingdom evidence. In the aftermath of the New Kingdom battles, the spoils taken by the soldiers were presented to the Pharaoh, who could reward the soldiers by allowing them to keep the spoils as rewards or compensate them for their achievements with 'gold of valour'. Soldiers who received such rewards (gold of valour, slaves, and land in Egypt) proudly mention this in their autobiographies; e.g., Ahmose, son of Ebana, in El Kab (Breasted 1906, 3-9). The spoils of war in the form of women and children from the Levant and Nubia are depicted in the fifth register of the tribute scene in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100) from the time of Thutmose III / Amenhotep II. The far right of this register shows scribes recording the number of imprisoned women and children on papyrus rolls (Davies 1943, Pl. XXI). Although such papyrus rolls or their fragments have not been discovered, it can be assumed that they were written in Hieratic, the administrative script of ancient Egypt. Similar registrations of spoils of war are also known from the Medinet Habu temple of Ramesses III (1184-1153 BCE), which depicts scribes counting cut-off hands and phalli (Nelson 1930, Pl. 23; Matić 2019, 40-64). The number is written on the papyrus roll, as depicted in the scene, and is also indicated in the accompanying hieroglyphic text. These texts also mention other spoils, such as people, animals, and objects. The original papyri in Hieratic, listing the spoils of war, served as records of plunder and could be copied into other formats. For example, the Annals of Thutmose III are hieroglyphic texts inscribed on the walls of the temple of Karnak. They describe his military campaigns in the Levant, list the spoils of war he took on various campaigns, and inform the reader that the source of this text is a leather roll placed in the temple (Redford 2003, 4). Several examples of lists of spoils of war will be used here to demonstrate that foreign weapons were plundered by the Egyptian forces. These examples illustrate how forces can acquire weapons from other cultural backgrounds:

- A) Lists of spoils of war are found in the Annals of Amenemhat II (1911-1877 BCE), inscribed on this king's Mit Rahina stela. Among the spoils from the lands of *Iw3i* and *I3sii-Cyprus*¹⁰ are 10 axes (*mjnb*), 12 daggers and 79 knives, 56 spears (30+26), and one lance (Budka 2000, 12-13; Marcus 2007, 140). The lexicography of this list does not allow us to associate any of these weapons with

⁹ The author of this paper is currently working on the first edition of the known corpus of ancient Egyptian and Nubian (Napatan and Meroitic) lists of spoils of war.

¹⁰ For the identification of these toponyms, see Quack 1996.

specific Levantine or Cypriot pieces. The use of generic terms is also relevant. Even though the Egyptian forces took weapons as spoils in these regions, there is no guarantee that all of these weapons originated from here.

- B) The Second Stela of Kamose describes the king's campaign against the Hyksos and the numerous spoils of war he collected. He mentions hundreds of ships filled with various spoils including (line 14) countless bronze axes (*mjnb*) (Habachi 1972, 37). Bietak and Strouhal (1974, 38) interpret this as evidence that Middle Bronze Age II axes were the most common weapons of the 'Asiatics'. However, the Egyptian word *mjnb*, meaning axe, is not type-specific and has been used by the Egyptians since the Old Kingdom.¹¹ Thus, the axes in question could have been both Middle Bronze Age II and Egyptian. Again, the use of generic terms does not allow for closer typological identification.
- C) The lists of spoils of war taken by King Merenptah (1213-1203 BCE) from the Libyans (*Rbw*) and inscribed on the walls of the Karnak temple also contains entries of plundered weapons: 120,214 arrows (*šsr:w*) as well as knives/swords (*šf.w*) and generic weapons (*mđrn.w*) grouped with vessels and razors and counting altogether 3,174 pieces (Manassa, 2003, 164-165). As in the previous cases, the use of generic terms does not allow for more specific typological identification.

We do not know whether these weapons were further distributed to soldiers as part of their rewards, kept by the state for future military campaigns or interventions, or melted and formed into ingots. However, nothing excludes the possibility that, despite being taken from a foreign enemy, these weapons were used by the Egyptian forces. The local (Egyptian) forces either needed to be well-acquainted with these weapons or to learn how to use them. What consequence does this mechanism of acquiring foreign weapons have for the interpretation of the death of King Seqenenre Tao? In light of this mechanism, the wounds inflicted on the king using Middle Bronze II weapons could have been delivered by someone who acquired them through looting. Furthermore, since plundering was a well-known practice for acquiring weapons, it is possible that Middle Bronze Age II weapons also found their way into the equipment of Seqenenre Tao's own forces. In fact, a dagger with the name of Hyksos King Apep was purchased in Luxor by H. A. Corble in 1916, possibly indicating that it was found in the area. However, since Luxor was a hub for the antiquities market at the time, this cannot be determined with certainty. Another almost identical dagger, without the name of Apep, was found in Thebes (Dawson 1925; Ryholt

¹¹ *mjnb* (Lemma ID 68460) <<https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/68460>>, edited by Altägyptisches Wörterbuch, in: Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae, Corpus issue 18, Web app version 2.1.3, 16 May 2023, ed. by Tonio Sebastian Richter & Daniel A. Werning on behalf of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert & Peter Dils on behalf of the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig (accessed: 20 May 2024)

1997, 135). Both daggers belong to the same type as that of Nehemen. Consequently, this also suggests that the use of Middle Bronze Age II axes was not limited to those fighting for the Hyksos kings, regardless of their cultural or ethnic identity. This brings us to the next possible mechanism for the spread of foreign weapons.

Foreign contingents

The presence of foreign contingents in ancient Egyptian forces is well-attested. During the First Intermediate Period (2160-2055 BCE), Nubian archers served in the armies of both the Theban 11th Dynasty kings and the monarchs of Asyut in Middle Egypt, who were loyal to the Herakleopolitan kings of the 9th and 10th Dynasties in Lower Egypt. The latter were the rivals of the Thebans at that time (Fischer 1961; El-Khadragy 2007, 110; El-Khadragy 2008, 227-228; Ejsmond 2017; Shaw 2019; Schneider 2023, 143-145). These archers could have brought their own bows and arrows to Egypt, preferring weapons they knew and trusted.

During the Second Intermediate Period, an axe inscribed with the royal name of King Nebmaatre was found in a grave in the Pan-grave cemetery in Mostagedda-Cemetery 3100/3200 (Brunton 1937, Pl. LXXVII, 9; Odler 2023, 451). Kim Ryholt (1997: 179) even suggested that the axes found in Pan-grave cemeteries were produced specially for mercenaries. Bietak and Strouhal (1974, 38) suggested that the axe with the royal name of King Nebmaatre found in a grave in Mostagedda and other Egyptian weapons might have been taken as spoils of war by the Medjay in the service of the Thebans, since these authors identify the Medjay as the bearers of the Pan-Grave culture. This traditional view, rooted in culture-historical archaeology, dates back to 1907 and the work of Arthur Weigall.¹² However, recent research on the Medjay and Pan-grave communities has sought to disassociate the two concepts (Liszka 2011, 2015, 2022). The terms Medjay-land and Medjay-people are attested from the 6th Dynasty to the end of the New Kingdom, evolving in meaning over time. Initially, they signified pastoral nomads from the Eastern Desert (east of Lower Nubia) but later came to denote Egyptian desert patrols guarding capitals, royal tombs and temples, and borders

¹² Weigall first identified the Medjay-people as a 'warlike race' using the 6th Dynasty Autobiography of Weni, which mentions their employment in a campaign against people living in Sinai, and the depiction of Medjay troops in the service of Akhenaten (1352-1336 BCE) from the tomb of Mahu at Amarna. Next, he argued that Pan-grave people were warlike because 'their pottery' was found in Egyptian military fortresses. One of many problems with this latter assumption is that Weigall lumped together pottery of different traditions which were closely defined only later by Geore Andrew Reisner and Gerald Wainwright (Liszka 2015, 45).

(Liszka 2015, 42). During the Old Kingdom, the term Medjay was used as an Egyptian stereotype for groups that did not necessarily share an ethnic identity. Beginning with the 12th Dynasty, some Eastern Desert pastoral nomads began adopting this term in their self-expression (Liszka 2011, 155, Fig. 1). On the other hand, the Pan-grave culture, originally defined by William Matthew Flinders Petrie (Weigall's teacher) in 1899, appears in the archaeological record during the Late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period (Liszka 2015, 42).

This separation of the Medjay and Pan-grave cultures does not mean that people who had identified as Medjay or were identified as such by the Egyptians, were not able to serve in the Egyptian forces. The First Stela of Kamose (K1) refers to Medjay bowmen in the service of Kamose (Simpson 2003, 348). Moreover, during the Second Intermediate Period, Medjay were employed by the Hyksos, Thebans, and Kushites (Liszka 2011, 167). The separation also does not rule out the possibility that some people buried with weapons in Pan-grave cemeteries offered their services to the Egyptian forces. The presence of a weapon in a tomb is generally believed to indicate that the person was a warrior during their lifetime. However, as stressed by Aaron de Souza (2019, 147), weapons are also found in the burials of women and children in Pan-grave cemeteries. This suggests that we should reconsider previous assumptions that only men were allowed to fight¹³, or acknowledge that the weapons in burials may have had different meanings, potentially varying depending on who was buried with them. The case of Medjay illustrates that soldiers of different ethnic backgrounds served different armies in the Second Intermediate Period Nile Valley as foreign contingents. The case of Egyptian weapons in Pan-grave illustrates that people of different ethnic identities could have acquired them.

In the New Kingdom, various groups of Sea Peoples warriors also served the Egyptian pharaohs, the most famous being the Shardana 'bodyguards' of Ramesses II (1279-1213 BCE), depicted in the Battle of Qadesh scenes in several Egyptian temples such as Abydos, Luxor, the Ramesseum, and Abu Simbel (Abbas 2016). They are shown with long swords, which were not the typical weapon of choice of the Egyptian forces, at least not until this time period. Their appearance here is undoubtedly connected to a phenomenon that can be traced across a larger region. Specifically, the Naue Type II long sword originated in the area between the eastern Alps and the Carpathians (the Sprockhoff Ia subtype in Austria and Hungary dates as early as 1450 BCE). By the 13th century BCE, it had spread throughout Europe and the Aegean, from Italy and the Balkans to Britain and Scandinavia (Mehofer and Jung 2017). It was also used in the Near East (Schulz 2014, 83-92). Furthermore, it should be noted that while some Shardana served in the Egyptian forces, others fought against the Egyptian

¹³ Interestingly, Egyptian texts regularly attribute battle participation of women to foreigners, *comp.* Matić 2021.

forces alongside other Sea Peoples groups (Emanuel 2013; Mynářová 2022). This clearly indicates that members of the same group (ethnic or other) could have offered their services as foreign contingents to different polities.

As I explored earlier in this paper, it is possible that the Hyksos forces included troops depicted by the Egyptians as having Levantine origin. This suggests that the Hyksos forces either consisted of individuals culturally affiliated with the Levant (through dress, hairstyle, beards) or employed troops from the Levant. Therefore, foreign weapons could have been introduced to various armies during the Second Intermediate Period Nile Valley through foreign contingents. Similar to previous scenarios, the local forces would need to be familiar with or learn how to use these weapons. What does this mean for how we interpret the death of King Seqenenre Tao? Considering this mechanism of weapons acquisition, the wounds inflicted on the king by Middle Bronze II weapons might have been caused by someone from foreign contingents specialised in using such weapons, or by someone who acquired them from such troops.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the discussion in this paper:

1. *Culture-historical interpretations of Seqenenre Tao's death*

The interpretations of King Seqenenre Tao's cause of death are rooted in a culture-historical archaeological paradigm. This paradigm often attributes Middle Bronze Age II material culture (including weapons) to a distinct ethnic group labelled as 'Asiatics' or 'Hyksos'. Consequently, users of Middle Bronze Age II weapons are immediately assumed to have been foreigners (either 'Asiatic'/'Hyksos' soldiers or 'Hyksos' kings). This assumption excludes the likelihood that these weapons were used by others.

2. *Revisiting the Hyksos label*

Since the adjective Hyksos should only be used for rulers of the 15th Dynasty and since Middle Bronze Age II material culture does not correspond to a single geographically bound ethnic group, one should avoid associating Middle Bronze Age II weapons with a single ethnic group.

3. *Diverse composition of the Hyksos forces*

The Hyksos domain was ethnically diverse, likely including individuals from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Among them were:

- Eastern Delta or Lower Egypt locals of possibly different origins, as indicated by the results of strontium isotope analyses of individuals from burials with weapons in Tell el-Dab'a
- incomers from different regions, as indicated by the results of strontium isotope analyses of individuals from burials with weapons in Tell el-Dab'a
- Egyptians in the Hyksos service (e.g., Teti, son of Pepi) as indicated by K1

- individuals with foreign names but possibly depicting themselves as Egyptian officials (e.g., Nehemen).
- individuals born in Egypt but culturally or ethnically affiliated with the Levant (second, third, or later generation settlers).

4. *Mechanisms of foreign weapon integration*

There are various mechanisms for the acquisition of foreign weapons and their integration into local armies. Collecting foreign weapons as spoils of war and acquiring foreign contingents armed with foreign weapons is a practice well-documented in ancient Egypt, before, during, and after the Second Intermediate Period. Therefore, it is plausible that Middle Bronze Age II weapons were also used by armies other than the multi-ethnic forces of the Hyksos kings.

Consequently, the possible causes of death of Seqenenre Tao are more numerous than previously believed. Yes, he could have been killed by a soldier of the Hyksos forces, but this soldier's ethnic identity cannot be defined based on the use of Middle Bronze Age II weapons. The hypothetical soldier could have been an Eastern Delta– or Tell el-Dab^a-born Hyksos subject, with or without Levantine descent. This soldier could have also been an Egyptian who did not originate in the eastern Delta or Lower Egypt, but rather from one of the cities and villages along the Nile Valley, up to Cusae and under Hyksos domain. Seqenenre Tao could also have been killed by a member of a foreign contingent in the service of the Hyksos, or even in the service of a Kushite king, since the Thebans had rivals in the kingdom of Kush in Nubia as well. However, the ethnic identity of this presumed foreign contingent member cannot be determined based on the use of Middle Bronze Age II weapons either. Middle Bronze Age II is a term created by archaeologists and not an ethnonym. If this hypothetical foreign contingent member came from the Levant, he may have originated in any of the Levantine cities. Seqenenre Tao could have also been killed by someone who was not loyal to the Hyksos king and did not fight in his forces. This could have been a member of a rival faction within Thebes. The possibilities are diverse, reflecting the complex and multi-ethnic realities of the time.

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Etnicitet vojnih snaga Hiksa i smrt kralja Sekenenre Taa

Mumificirani ostaci kralja Sekenenre Taa (Sedamnaesta dinastija, Drugi međuperiod) pokazuju tragove povreda na glavi nanesenih nasilnim putem. Nekoliko udaraca u glavu ostavilo je tragove koji su omogućili identifikaciju oružja koje je nanelo ove povrede. Među tim oružjem su egipatske sekire i sekire srednjeg bronzanog doba II na Levantu. Nosioci arheološke kulture srednjeg bronzanog doba II na Levantu su identifikovani sa „Azijatima“ i „Hiksima“ iz egipatskih pisanih izvora, te je stoga izveden zaključak da je kralj Sekenenre Tao poginuo u sukobu sa Hiksima, kraljevima istovremene Petnaeste dinastije. U ovom radu analizirana je kulturno-istorijska pozadina ove argumentacije kojom

je na pogrešnim premisama uspostavljena neraskidiva veza između kulturnog porekla oružja i etničkog identiteta korisnika. Razmotreni su i mehanizmi putem kojih je oružje stranog porekla moglo pronaći put i do egipatskih snaga. Oružje stranog porekla dobro je posvedočeno kao deo ratnog plena u egipatskim listama ratnog plena (na primer Anali kralja Amenemhata II, Dvanaesta dinastija; Druga stela kralja Kamozea, Sedamnaesta dinastija; natpisi kralja Merenptaha u Karnaku, Devetnaesta dinastija). Takođe je dobro posvedočeno i angažovanje stranih trupa u egipatskoj vojsci (na primer Nubijaca već od Prvog međuperioda ili Šardana grupe Naroda s mora tokom Novog carstva). U radu je dovedena u pitanje uska veza između porekla oružja i etničkog identiteta korisnika. Sekire arheološke kulture srednje bronzne II nisu nužno morale biti u rukama snaga levantskog porekla ili iz istočne Delte, gde se nalazilo središte države Hiksa. Ovo oružje su mogle koristiti i snage egipatskog porekla u službi Hiksa, ali i drugi. Kao posledica razmotreni su različiti mogući počinioci nasilja i scenariji koji su mogli dovesti do smrti kralja Sekenenre Taa.

Ključne reči: etnicitet, Hiksi, smrt, Sekenenre Tao, vojne snage, oružje, sekire, srednje bronzano doba II, Drugi međuperiod

*Ethnicité des forces armées des Hyksos
et la mort du roi Seqenenrê Tâa*

Les restes momifiés du roi égyptien Seqenenrê Tâa (vers 1560 av. J.-C.) montrent les traces de blessures causées par la violence. Plusieurs coups à la tête ont laissé des marques ayant permis aux chercheurs d'identifier l'arme de l'agresseur. Etant donné que parmi ces armes on trouve des haches de l'âge du bronze moyen II au Levant et que la culture de l'âge du bronze moyen II est attribuée aux „Asiatiques“ et aux sujets de la 15^e dynastie („Hyksos“), il est généralement admis que Seqenenrê Tâa est mort dans un conflit avec les forces armées des Hyksos. Dans cet article, l'approche historico-culturelle a été appliquée pour cette argumentation. Les données sur l'utilisation d'armes d'origine étrangère par les forces armées égyptiennes ont été examinées ainsi que les mécanismes possibles de leur acquisition. Le lien entre les armes et l'identité ethnique des utilisateurs a été remis en question, ouvrant la possibilité aux plusieurs acteurs et scénarios dans lesquelles Seqenenrê Tâa a perdu sa vie.

Mots-clés: ethnicité, Hyksos, mort, Seqenenrê Tâa, forces armées, armes, haches, âge du bronze moyen II, deuxième période intermédiaire

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