



EGYPTIAN ART OLD & MIDDLE KINGDOMS

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Stela of Khety and His Wife, Henet, early 12th Dynasty (ca. 1981–1917 B.C.), 44 × 77.2 × 11.2 cm, weight 80 kg, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

- The Egyptian civilisation lasted **for over 3000 years** and its art stands out as eternal, monumental, exciting and mysterious. Just to put it into perspective, we are closer in time to the last pharaoh, **Cleopatra**, than she was to the building of the pyramids.
- My talk is about Egyptian art rather than their civilisation. However, the difficulty is that **they had no word for art** and its sole purpose was to help the dead enter and survive in the afterlife not for it to be idly viewed. The images and pictures we see were the embodiment of their religion so I cannot avoid talking about it and their culture.
- Look at this tomb painting. This was the particular style that lasted for 3,000 years. **Figures were represented to show their key distinguishing features**, statues were **front facing** and wall paintings of important figures showed **heads in profile**, the torso front facing and feet, one forward in the same direction as the head. If you are wondering why the man on the right is piling food on a table, I will be explaining that later.

NOTES

- However, for us it is an enormous outpouring of art that informs us about their day-to-day life, their religion and their culture. What we regard as art works range from enormous statues like the Sphinx at Giza to wall paintings and

ornate sculptures and jewellery.

- The art has survived because of the dry climate but most of the tombs have been raided and works stolen over over thousands of years.
- The Egyptians divided the year into Inundation, Growth and harvest. Every year a monsoon between May and August caused enormous rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands. This carried down sediment and when the Nile overflowed its banks it deposited a nutrient-rich layer of soil in which the seed could be planted. They ploughed the land with oxen but only to create seed furrows not to turn the soil.
- Egyptian Art can be divided into five periods (the dates vary between sources):
 - Early Dynastic period (c. 3150-2613 BCE)
 - Old Kingdom (c. 2613-2181 BCE)
 - First Intermediate Period (2181-2040 BCE)
 - Middle Kingdom (2040-1782 BCE)
 - Second Intermediate Period (c. 1782-1570 BCE)
 - New Kingdom (c. 1570-1069 BCE)
 - Third Intermediate Period (c. 1069-525 BCE)
 - Late Period (525-332 BCE)
 - Ptolemaic Period (323-30 BCE).

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- [Joann Fletcher, *Immortal Egypt*, BBC four-part TV series](#)

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VARIOUS BOOKS - GOMBRICH, JOHNSON ETC.

EGYPTIAN ART - GOMBRICH ETC.

- Rock art led to Egyptian art led to Greek art which is the foundation of Western art.
- The Nile provided security, fertility and continuity. The Egyptians were the most religious of civilisations. Everything was centred on the afterlife. They had no word for art as we understand it. The role of the artist was to construct a unified and complete representation of all the elements of the individual whose life was being immortalised.
- A sculptor was literally "He who keeps alive". Artists was devoted to order and the representation of the whole figure. Architecture, statues, relief work and hieroglyphs were all created to work with each other. Any one on its own meant nothing. Together they provided clarity and were part of the ritual of creating the everlasting.
- Art was produced not to be seen to keep alive. The artists task was to document, like a map-maker. For example, that is why people are shown with a face in profile with an eye from the front, frontal chest, legs from the side and two left feet. Important people are shown larger.
- The rules of artistic representation changed a little over 3000 years, except during the 18th dynasty of Akhenaten and the one and only god Aten. Akhenaten took the best young artists with him to Amarna to create a new form of art. His reign took place after the catastrophic invasion, and the new kingdom, following Akhenaten was Tutankhamen, who followed the same conventions to begin with, but the artistic conventions were gradually restored.

All the art work of Akhenaten that could be found was destroyed.

- Egyptian art was permanent, inflexible and according to Plato novelty was illegal.
- Statues became independent of the sculptor following the ceremony of the "Opening of the Mouth" and the carving of the name.
- Egyptians regarded themselves as highly emotional and volatile and so needed discipline and self-control.
- The overriding aim was to ensure everlasting life for the Pharaoh and later his nobles which was extended to anyone who could afford the rituals.
- Mummification was a critical element as the permanence of the physical body was a necessary part of immortality. The human spirit was thought to have three forms, Ka, the life force, Akh the personality and Ba a ghostly form of the body.
- Narmer was the king who united Lower Egypt in the North with Upper Egypt in the South. Lower Egypt is symbolised by a red crown, the cobra and papyrus and Upper Egypt by a white crown, the vulture and the lotus flower.

LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

- Bread and beer, both made from cereals were the staple diet. Many other crops were grown such as vegetables, cucumbers, onions and lettuce. Vines were also grown for wine and date palms for dates. Ducks, geese, sheep and goats were important sources of protein. Pigs were also farmed but not often shown in tomb-scenes and they ate beef but it was costly to produce.
- The country and its people were well-fed most years but there were years when the inundation from the Nile meant few crops and famine.
- The Red land was the desert and so red was a negative colour and the Black Land was the fertile land where crops grew and so black and green were positive colours.
- The majority of the population worked in the fields as tenant farmers and lived in small villages in mud huts. The year was divided into three and the growing season after the inundation was an active period for everyone but the summer and inundation period there was a lot of free time and many could be seconded to build the temples and pyramids.
- They believed that they would have to work in the fields for the god Osiris in the afterlife, known as the Field of Reeds.

- The Nile was the main means of transport for people and for the large stone blocks weighing up to 1,000 tonnes. It was also the main sewage and waste disposal system. They walked everywhere as road would have been washed away and used the donkey as a pack animal, camels were not used until late in Egyptian history. Prevailing winds were from north to south so it was easy to sail north and to furl the sails and use the current to travel south.
- Egypt was divided into 42 nomes or districts each with a local authority and a mayor and with its own regional gods. Memphis was the capital in the north and Thebes in the south. The nomes had their own cemeteries and splendid tombs of for rich, powerful dynastic officials.
- The majority of houses were made from mud bricks. They were not fired but left to dry in the sun which was fast and easy but meant they following an inundation they could be washed away. Four brick-workers could make about 6,000 bricks a day. Senwosret III's pyramid required 24.5 million bricks (about 400 days for 40 brick-workers). Amarna was built rapidly using mud bricks.
- People believed a god could reside within a statue representing that god. A priest would bring food and drink, wash the clothes and change the clothes on the statue of the god, they were literally the god/statue's servants. The statues were kept in temple's called 'god's house'. There would be a room at the back where the god lived and a courtyard where the god could be seen by a large number of people.

PROF JOANN FLETCHER, EGYPTIAN ART FOUR-PART BBC TV SERIES

EGYPTIAN ART - JOANN FLETCHER

- The following are my notes of the four-part BBC TV series and any errors are mine. Thank you Professor Fletcher for a most enlightening and entertaining series. I have made additions to fill in some gaps.

PART 1: THE ROAD TO THE PYRAMIDS

- From 500,000 to 9,000 BCE the climate was wetter and the Sahara was fertile and occupied by hunter gathers. A dry period ended that way of life about 9,000 BCE the climate became wetter gain.
- The petroglyphs on the rocks are up to 19,000 years old. They show many animals including aurochs and beef was 50% of their diet. The rock art also includes human figures and even boats.
- 10,000 year ago the earth tilted 0.5 degree and parts of the Sahara became green and fertile savannah grassland. People moved following the rains and the animals but the gradually the climate dried.
- During the Saharan Neolithic Period (8800-6800 BCE) humans began to live in more permanent settlements, domesticate animals and make pottery. By 5000 BCE similar communities appeared in the Nile Delta and the Nile Valley and by 4400 BCE their lives were becoming more sophisticated. The most important early city was **Hierakonpolis** (pronounced 'hi-er-akon-po-lis').
- The rock art at Qurta ('curta'), 100km south of Luxor, is uncannily close to that at Lascaux in France [1]. The art predates the pyramids by thousands of years and represents animals such as the aurochs and human beings. It is dated as

between c. 23,000 and 11,000 years ago.

- There was art in the **Predynastic period (4400-3000 BCE)** and it gradually evolved into the art of the dynasties of kings which began about 3000 BCE. It is divided into four main periods. Ceramic pots are the most striking art works but was also have figurines and model animals.
- **Nabta Playa** is one of the earliest Egyptian Neolithic sites dating back to 7500 BCE [2]. It has the oldest calendar in the world, a circle of stones 7,000 years old. It was used to predict when the mid summer rains came. From now on every tomb and temple was aligned with the sky. (The earliest stone sculpture is 5,000 BCE. Is it a cow? A vital part of life providing meat, milk and blood. Does this statue represent the beginnings of the great goddess Hathor. Goddess of love, joy, beauty and motherhood.)
- **Egypt was separated between the north and the south.** In the north around Faiyum in the south around the Qena Bend. The beginning of upper and lower Egypt and two cultures that became united by a common religion and by the Nile.
- **El Kab south of Qena Bend is one of Egypt's earliest settlements.** From 4200 BCE farming started. The Predynastic period was from **5000 to 3100 BCE and food was so plentiful that there was a food surplus** and warehouses and pottery were needed to store it.
- **The religion that developed believed in everlasting life** which later became embodied in the kings, later called pharaohs which literally means 'temple'. It was believed that to achieve everlasting life the body had to be preserved and so the Egyptians became masters of **mummification**. Death was seen as a new beginning and an everlasting afterlife. The origins of this belief are unknown but there is a tomb from about 3400 BCE that contains items from everyday life that have been **naturally mummified** by the heat and dry air so mummification was a natural process they would have observed.
- Egyptian culture can be seen as the esoteric underpinned by the practical. The levels of **bureaucracy bordered on the obsessive**.
- **There were many gods**, hundreds or perhaps even thousands, each with a specific purpose. One important early god was **Amun** and there is a statue in the British Museum. **Sekhmet was the goddess of death** and it was thought that by praying she could be tamed and controlled.
- Religion was fundamental and tied all Egyptian society together. The other

fundamental unifying force that created Egypt was the gift of the fertile Nile and when the lakes of the savanna began to dry about 7,000 years ago it became the only source of water and people moved to occupy its banks.

- The source of the Nile is in Sudan where the Blue and White Nile combine. The modern Aswan Dam holds back the Nile but it used to flood every year. It was the single most important event in Egypt because when the Nile flooded it left behind thick fertile mud. Agriculture flourished on the most fertile land in the world and everything from garlic to sweet corn was grown.
- **Abydos** (a-bide-os) in Upper Egypt was the **first royal burial ground**. The **first use of writing for recording taxes was 3250 BCE** and it developed into hieroglyphics, sacred writings which were not translated until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1822. There was also a script language for everyday use.
- Upper Egypt had developed trading links with outside world. Upper and Lower Egypt were two different cultures and war developed between them. Ancient Egypt's founding document records it, the **Narmer Palette** [3]. The southern king, Narmer, defeated his northern enemy and **united Egypt** and became the god-king, the central figure, the first pharaoh. Narmer (meaning 'fierce catfish') is written as a catfish and a chisel. He has a bull's tail on the back of his belt to take on the power of the bull. He is holding a club to bludgeoned his enemy and the raised arm pose is reused throughout Egypt.
- For 3000 years every pharaoh links themselves to the first. The best preserved list is at Temple Seti I at Abydos. It lists 75 predecessors and there were some **300 pharaohs** organised by historians into **30 dynasties**.
- Early on the pharaohs proved their power by **burying their courtiers** with them, 587 were buried in one place. However, the practice of ritual killing ended as the next pharaoh needed the skills of the courtiers to run the administration. At this time they were buried in underground burial chambers.
- Egypt was a land of plenty, the people were not slaves and were well fed. There were many **scribes** and we know a lot about the civilisation and culture because of the number of written texts discovered. Egypt had become the world's first unified nation state.
- (In Saqqara ('se-car-ra'), a city of the dead for Memphis, we find the tomb of Irukaptah, the royal butcher [4].)

- In the third dynasty the great innovator was King **Djoser** (2650 BCE) who built his legacy **not in mud bricks but in stone** [5]. Columns are made to look like reeds. He built for eternity. At the rear is a shrine built on a tilt with two holes facing true north to the imperishable stars. Astronomy was important to the Egyptians. You can look in at him and he can look out. He built a step on top of the normal building and then three more producing **the first pyramid** and the tallest building in the world at the time. He was seen as truly a living god. Ancient visitors flocked there to marvel at it. It is the first tourist attraction and there is even ancient graffiti from 1300 BC. He was the first architect in stone. The feet of King Djoser is now all that remains of his statue.
- We can see the name **Imhotet his chancellor** and possible architect of King Djoser's step pyramid [6]. He was one of the first non-royals to be deified after their death, showing it was possible to rise to the highest levels in society. A cult of Imhotet developed 1,200 years after his death and he was seen as a demigod and a great physician.
- We now enter **the pyramid age** and over 130 were built using the vast resources available. There are three large **pyramids at Giza** and many smaller ones [7]. The northernmost, oldest and largest is called the Great Pyramid and was the tomb of pharaoh **Khufu** (pronounced 'coo-foo'). It took over 20 years and a complete village was built to house the workers in two storey barracks. 20,000 people constructed it and we know they consumed 74 cattle and 274 sheep a week. It consists of **2.3 million blocks of limestone** and was the tallest structure in the world until Lincoln cathedral spire 3,800 years later. There are perfect joins between the blocks and the burial chamber is granite. It was built 4,500 years ago using soft copper tools.
- They used copper tools to carve the stone. There was job specialisation and a strict hierarchy. It was a united state that provided for everyone and everyone knew their place but both men and women could rise through society. The infrastructure of early Egypt would hardly change over 3,000 years.
- The middle pyramid was built for **Khafre** (pronounced 'kaf-ray') and the southernmost and last pyramid to be built was that of **Menkaure** (pronounced 'men-caw-re'). All three have been plundered internally and externally. The grave goods are missing and externally they would have been clad in smooth, white limestone which remains on the topmost part of

the tomb of Khafre. Other smaller pyramids nearby were for other members of the royal family.

- Life in Egypt was good but it could not last and economic famine and Egypt's dark age was coming.

PART 2: CHAOS

- The pyramid age was not to last. We are now entering a dark age, a period of **civil war** and conflict. It eventually ended and Egypt became more powerful than ever before.
- There was famine when the Nile floods reduced at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE (possibly the 4.2-kiloyear event). The people believed they must have upset the gods. **Sesostrus III built military fortresses**, the people turned to magic spells and curses.
- **Unas** (2345-2315 BCE, 30 years) 9th king and **last ruler** of the 5th dynasty of the **Old Kingdom**. Had a tomb built with a 750m long causeway that joined the Nile to his tomb, joining life and death. The causeway is fully covered with a slit in the roof and the inside is carved in shallow relief. It shows the bountiful food and drink but also a **panel of starving people**, the Bedouins, nomadic tribes that lived on the borders of Egypt.
- **King Pepi II Neferkare** (reigned 2278 to probably 2184 BCE, making him between 64 and 100 years old) was Egypt's longest lived monarch. The king had to **run around** a jubilee circuit around their palace every three years (the Heb-Sed event). It is said Pepi II failed to complete the circuit because of his old age and this led to a loss in the belief in the divine status of the pharaoh. Egypt was in decline before this with crop failures and famine.
- **2180 BCE was the beginning of the dark ages for Egypt**. The people turned to magic, we have a linen mask from this period suggesting individuals claimed magic powers to change events. We find **curses and spells on pots**. The cursed person's name would be written in red, the colour of destruction as it represented the desert and the pot would then be smashed to destroy the person. It was an age of fear.
- This period is known as the **First Intermediate Period**. Egypt broke up into local regions called **nomes** run by local warlords called a nomarch, they survived until Roman occupation. One of these was **Ankhtifi** who wrote "I am a hero without peer" in hieroglyphics and described how everyone in the south was dying of hunger and were eating their children but not in his region.

- Egypt became divided into two regions, the north and the south, the red and the white. A most terrible event to the Egyptians took place. **The troops of the south desecrated the royal tombs in the north.** This destroyed the link to the past and was later called the **Vile Act.** For long afterwards people would bring food offerings in clay pots to the gods to atone for the desecration.
- In the end it was a warlord of Thebes, **Montuhotep**, that would **reunite Egypt.** He is shown wearing the red crown of the south even though he is from Thebes and therefore would wear a white crown. There is a tomb of 60 troops who fought and died in battle that he placed near his highest officials, a great honour.
- 2050 BCE was the dawn of the **Middle Period** and the **rise of Thebes** for the next 2,000 years. **Hathor** the goddess of joy became the leading deity. She wears a headdress of cow horns with a sun disk between them.
- Food was plentiful, trade flourished and a new irrigation system was built. Tomb art changed completely, no longer were there gold face masks but **small models of everyday activities**, people baking, butchering and brewing. Sailors setting sail and workers in a granary silo. Women, who had a similar status to men, are shown making linen which was woven on horizontal looms on the floor.
- South of Egypt was **Nubia** (modern Sudan) and Egypt built enormous forts on the border to control trade such as in Nubian gold. **Buhen fort** is now under Lake Nasser created when the Assam dam was built but we have good records. It looks like the castles of Europe built 3,000 years later. It was 400 metres long (some say 150 metres) and the walls were 20 metres (some say 10 metres) high. Forts were also built to defend the north-east border with Palestine. The nomadic **Aamu people** came from the area and traded with Egypt and eventually took over. **Hyksos** (1650-1550 BCE) was one leader. Egypt was trapped between the Nubians and Hyksos.
- Tawarat was a goddess that combine the hippo and the crocodile. Although not historical accurate there was a belief that the **pharaoh Apophis wrote a letter complaining** about the sound of hippos keeping him awake at night and the letter became public. This scandal led to armed conflict.
- At this time a new **composite bow** made of wood, horn and sinew was invented and used by the Egyptians to **beat back Hyksos.** The horse and chariot also started to be used.

- This was the start of the **New Kingdom** and it was the **god Amun** who now protected Egypt. It was 800 years since the Age of the Pyramids and Egypt entered a new period called the New Kingdom, a truly golden age of monumental architecture, **vast wealth, greed and corruption**.

PART 3: ZENITH

- **Two colossi of Memnon** introduce us to **Amenhotep III** (1380 BCE), perhaps Egypt's greatest pharaoh. The new Kingdom was one of luxury and splendour and they pursued a perfect afterlife which meant everything as it guaranteed the survival of Egypt forever. However, the wealth meant the **priests became wealthy and increasingly powerful** until their power conflicted with that of the pharaohs and this eventually tore Egypt apart.
- During the Age of the Pyramids the royal tombs were combined with the funerary temple but 1300 years later Amenhotep III separated them. He built the largest funerary temple ever built and his body was buried in the **Valley of the Kings** nearby. His wife Queen Tiye has the best preserved statue although a 3 metre head of Amenhotep still remains.
- He wore gold from head to toe and he would give gifts of gold to those he favoured. He sent a gift of gold to the king of Mitanni in Syria who in return sent him his daughter in marriage with an entourage of 300 ladies-in-waiting.
- In Wigan Museum there is a gold coffin face of a woman. Obviously very wealthy with alabaster eyes and black obsidian. The gods had gold skin so she obviously wanted to be seen by them as one of them.
- All the gold in the temples and tombs meant they had to be secure and the kings were buried in a **secret valley called the Valley of the Kings** in tombs carved in the rock face.
- All the building work required access to vast quantities of materials and we have the **earliest map ever produced** in 1150 BCE. It is a detailed geological map of an area describing all the different types of rock to be found.
- In **Dair al-Medina** lived a scribe called **Amennakte**. We know a lot about him as he wrote so much and his handwriting can be recognised. He wrote poems, test and tomb inscriptions. Sadly we know that as he got older his eyesight started to fail.
- The Valley of the Kings and the funerary temples were on the opposite,

west bank of the Nile from **Thebes and the Karnak Temple**. The power of Karnak grew and grew as each pharaoh added to the structure and tried to outdo previous pharaohs. Notre Dame and Saint Paul could be fitted inside the temple of 250 acres with many acres to spare. It was the **religious heart of Egypt** for almost 2,000 years. Karnak was **dedicated to Amun** ('are-moon'). In the centre in the holiest place was a small (30cm) statue of Amun in solid gold. Every morning the priests would greet the god, during the day dancers would entertain him and in return he would cause the sun to rise each day and the Nile to flood each year.

- The priests, men and women, were known as "**the pure ones**" and would shave off all their body hair each day, clean their mouth using a type of toothpaste (bicarbonate of soda), wear white line robes and sandals and use copper mirrors to check their appearance. It had to be perfect for the gods.
- The power of the priests grew. **Amenhotep** employed his relatives in the temples to retain some control but when his son **Akhenaten** came to power everything changed. Everything was **plunged into chaos**. He built new temples, revolutionary new buildings built using small blocks so they could be constructed quickly. There was no Amun, the god was replaced by the **single sun god Aten**. The priests were no longer relevant.
- Aten could only be reached through Akhenaten and **his wife Nefertiti**. When the priests complained he sacked them all and **closed Karnak**. He built a new temple city 400 km south called **Amarna** and he completed it in ten years. He died after a short 17 year reign to be replaced by **his son Tutankhamen** in 1336 BCE, the most famous of the pharaohs although he achieved little during his reign. His golden face mask is perhaps the most famous of all Egyptian works of art. He only reigned for ten years and died when he was 20. He obliterated Akhenaten and reused his father's art work. It is possible his famous mask was made for someone else as it has pierced ears, possibly for Nefertiti.
- On his death Amarna was destroyed and **Thebes and its priests regained power**. Tutankhamen had no heirs and was replaced by **militaristic rulers**, the 19th dynasty. They reinstated traditional beliefs.
- **Seti I** built the largest pharaoh tomb ever created with all the traditional gods shown. He harked back to **Amenhotep III**. Egypt was back, order was restored, the common people were happy. Near **Dier al-Medina** there is a dump filled with broken crockery and pieces of pottery covered in script.

The workers and common people wrote everything on these bits of pottery such as shopping lists, what to take to a party including cake, beer and fruit as well as short diary entries, one about a divorce.

- **In 1275 BCE Rameses II** became pharaoh. He was the **most prolific builder** but in many ways the golden age was becoming superficial and his building programme and wars ran down the country's resources. Grain ran low and in 1155 BCE there was the **first recorded labour strike**. The slogan was "we are hungry" and they had the first sit-in and started to heckle the local rulers, such as the mayor. They were given enough food to shut them up before the visit of the pharaoh.
- The priests became wealthy and powerful. In a **relief of Rameses IX and the head priest** they are shown as the same height and Rameses is on a platform so actually shorter. The priests in practice now had the most power. This de-stabilised the relationship between church and state. The priests took control of the south and the pharaoh the north.
- At **Medinet Habu** was the funerary temple for Rameses III a worker called **Butehamun** received a letter from the high priest instructing him to visit the royal tombs. He knew what was required and every tomb was stripped of gold which was sent to the priest's treasury. The bodies of the pharaohs were rewrapped in fresh linen and we can see his handwriting on the linen, for example, the body of Rameses III. Only one tomb escaped as it was buried under rubble. The priests now had ultimate power and Egypt became a story of invaders.

PART 4: INVASION

- The great port of Alexandria, still the largest port on the Mediterranean, became Egypt's last and greatest capital, home of Cleopatra, last in a long line of invaders.
- The culture of Egypt seduced and absorbed invaders to a greater or lesser extent. During the first millennium BCE wave after wave of invaders took over Egypt and many were absorbed by the culture of the ancient civilisation. This is known as the Third Intermediate period.
- **In 945 BCE the priests were in control of the south**. In the north **Libyan generals** who had been used by Egypt as mercenaries took control and became the 22nd dynasty. The first was **Shesong and his son Nimlot had the Bracelet of Nimlot** with the lotus and the cobra symbols. But the invaders were only paying lip service to the old culture and failed to unite

the country. They ordered the looting of tombs and were not Egyptians at heart.

- The country became fragmented and in **747 BCE Kushite rulers from Nubia invaded**. They were in some ways more Egyptian than the Egyptians. They were fervent believers in the Egyptian gods. At **Gebel ('Jebel') Barkel** was the mound from which it was said Amun was born. It was a holy site on the Nubian border where the Nile began and so where creation began. A temple was built in 1500 BCE to **Amun and his wife Mut** ('moot') and when the Egyptians withdrew the Kushites continued to honour the gods. They founded the 25th dynasty and were the natural successors to the 18th dynasty pharaohs. There were differences the goddess Mut (wife of Amun-Ra) was shown by the Kushites with three tribal scars on her cheek like Nubian queens.
- **King Taharqa at Gebel Barkal** set an inscription covered in gold and a gold statue of himself high on top of a natural rock pillar.
- The necropolis of Nuri is to the east has pyramids. For the first time in 1,000 years kings were buried in pyramids. The Kushites built more pyramids than the Egyptians. They were in power for only a century.
- In 674 BCE the warlike Assyrians marched into Egypt and sacked the sacred city of Thebes. They tried to rip out the religious heart of Egypt. War was their business but after about 20 years they had to return because of problems at home.
- The Saites renaissance followed. Without pharaohs they mummified animals, dogs, cats, crocodiles and even tiny shrews. This reinvigorated the Egyptian embalming industry and priests would trundle round carts with mummified animals to sell at the market in Sakkara.
- The pharaohs had been living gods that embodied the soul of Egypt so they had to be immortalised so that Egypt was immortal. With a shortage of pharaohs the Saites mummified sacred bulls as the equivalent of pharaohs. There are many in the underground Serapeum at Sakkara. The Cult of the Ais bulls went back to the beginning of the Egyptian civilization. When the sacred Apis bull dies it becomes one with Osiris creating Osiris Apis or Serapis.
- In 525 BCE the Persian king Cambyses swept west and destroyed the Saite dynasty. They were a ruthless expanding empire and the king stabbed the sacred Apis bull to death. For the next 200 years the Egyptians became the

heavily taxed servants of the Persians.

- They needed a saviour and in came in the form of a superman, Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE, aged 32), one of the most remarkable people who has ever lived. He created an empire across three continents. In 332 BCE, aged 24, he arrived unopposed. He was crowned as a pharaoh. He left few images but there is one in the temple at Luxor where he is shown as a conventional pharaoh offering incense to Amun and his is complete with a royal cartouche of his name. He went on a legendary journey west into the desert to the oasis and shrine of Siwa where the god told him "You are my son" which is meant to have emboldened him to conquer more countries. He only stayed six months in Egypt but founded Alexandria. He laid out the plan himself and lacking a writing implement he laid the plan with seed. It was eaten by birds and it was foretold that one day Alexandria would feed the world. Within a few years it became the greatest city on Earth. He left in 331 BCE for India and created an empire of 2 million square miles and died aged 32.
- He was mummified and brought to Saqqara. Argument arose about whether to bury him in Greece or Egypt and he was first buried in Saqqara in an unknown location although there are statues of famous Greeks at one location put there by his half-brother Ptolemy. He founded a dynasty of 15 kings called Ptolemy and queens half of whom were called Cleopatra. They were all sensitive to the history of Egypt and wore the right clothes, worshipped the Egyptian gods and built the temples expected of a pharaoh.
- Alexandria had one of the wonders of the world, the lighthouse of Pharos and contained the greatest library in the world. Alexander's body was taken there. Most of the city was stone temples and streets 10 metres wide. It was a diverse, open and multicultural trading city.
- The pharaohs undertook a major restoration and building programme and many of the sites visitors come to were built in the Ptolemaic period. Ptolemy built the most impressive, called Philae (meaning 'end') in the far south on the border. He ordered that every temple in Egypt must contain a statue of his wife Arsinoe.
- The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that the Egyptians were the opposite of everyone else. The women would be trading while the men were at home weaving.
- Ptolemy V was involved in civil war and the country was in debt and the elite

corrupt. He left the Rosetta Stone containing the laws to follow and it was so important it was written in three languages which became the key to unlocking the Egyptian language.

- The Roman Empire reached Egypt and although Cleopatra VII held them at bay for 20 years she committed suicide in 30 BCE on the 31st August and that was the end of the rule of the pharaohs. It was annexed by Rome and the culture and gods continued until Christianity reach Egypt.

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ALASTAIR SOOKE, TREASURES OF ANCIENT EGYPT THREE-PART BBC TV SERIES

1. THE BIRTH OF ART
2. THE GOLDEN AGE
3. A NEW DAWN

ALASTAIR SOOKE, TREASURES OF ANCIENT EGYPT: THREE-PART BBC TV SERIES

[One of my favourite art history presenters gives a personal view of the top thirty works of art from ancient Egypt.](#)

TIMESCALE

Note the dates are approximate, for example, the Old Kingdom is c. 2575-c. 2130, First Intermediate Period c. 2130-1938 BCE, the Middle Kingdom 1938-c. 1630 BCE followed by the Second Intermediate period 1630-1540 BCE, the New Kingdom c. 1539-1075 BCE, the Third Intermediate Period 1075-656 BCE. Source Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Egypt>

7000 BCE Neolithic petroglyphs

6000 BCE Sahara savannah and lakes dried up and people moved east to the Nile

4000 BCE Naqada Period, pottery

2500 BCE Old Kingdom, the Age of the Pyramids

2000 BCE Middle Kingdom, tough pharaohs

1500 BCE New Kingdom, wealth and the flowering of art

1000 BCE Late Period

332 BCE Greek Period, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, Ptolomaic Dynasties

30 BCE Romans conquered Egypt

A NEW DAWN

1. Neolithic cave art
2. Naqada pots, red and black/desert and Nile mud, a common motif was the boat, religion and the afterlife were the centre of Egyptian life.
3. **Narmer Palette**, 3000 BCE, ritual , unification. Note the registers, Horus and Bat ('bart').
4. Rahotep and Nofret (meaning the beautiful one). The king and his wife. The eyes are rock crystal and spectacular and bring the statues to life.
5. Nefermaat (the king's brother), geese, formed the bottom of a larger picture.
6. **The Great Pyramid at Giza** of Khufu. Built about the same time as Stonehenge but vastly more refined. 481 feet high, 2.3 million blocks of a tonne each. His tomb conveys power and sophistication. It was not built by slaves. The art was produced only for religious purposes.
7. **Statue of Khafra** (Khufu's son) in his temple which had a causeway and the Sphinx, his image carved out of the bedrock. The statue is made of polished diorite, a very hard rock carved using copper and bronze tools. The god Horus holds his head from behind.
8. **Golden Horus** is the only remaining gold covered statue from the Old Kingdom as everything else was stolen and melted down. Animals are often represented and the gods are often part animal and animals were regarded as closer to nature and so closer to the gods.
9. **Statue of Ka-aper**, a priest, an early non-royal statue (2500 BCE). Made of sycamore and originally covered in plaster and painted. Wealthy Egyptians shaved their heads and wore wigs.
10. **Tomb of Ty** ('tea') shows many scenes of everyday life, women carrying goods on their heads, a series of donkey heads, Ty on a boat hunting hippos. There are slits in the wall for the Ty statue to see out. The wall paintings have energy and are innovative, especially the animals.

THE GOLDEN AGE

1. Ancient Egypt has obsessed the West but as a mysterious lost world.
2. 2000 BCE Thebes rose to prominence.
3. One of the most notorious tyrants in Egyptian history—**Senwosret III** (British Museum) suppressed the Nubians in the south. He looks youthful except his face has sunken cheeks and looks world-weary. [I think he looks

haughty] Feels like modern portraiture.

4. Egyptian Museum, Cairo **Sensworet III Pectoral**, a pendant made for his daughter contains jewels from all over the known world. Enemies are being crushed at the bottom. Middle Kingdom jewellery is the finest made and even today we struggle to understand how it was made. After his death the Middle Kingdom soldered on for 200 years.
5. This was the first time the term Pharaoh was used, it actually means temple (like the British using the term the Crown). Egyptians first Pharaoh was a woman called **Hatshepsut**, she ruled as a king as they did not have a term for queen. She was red, masculine skin and a beard. The bust is androgynous.
6. Thebes was transformed into a glorious capital city. **Hatshepsut's Obelisk** at Karnak, Luxor is a monolithic 300 ton obelisk, the highest in Egypt. The top was covered in gold leaf. The inscription at the base talks about people of the future who will talk of what she has done. A signpost for posterity.
7. Her crowning glory was on the 'super highway' north from Karnak— **Hatshepsut's Temple** at Deir el-Bahri, Luxor. It looks modern, ordered and clean. It looks like 1930s fascist architecture. It unfurls as you approach. Every aspect boasts of her brilliance and her exploits. There is an intimate chapel dedicated to the mother goddess, the cow god Hathor, that she suckles from and there is a small figure of Senemut. Senemut, her righthand man was responsible for the temple. There were rumours they were lovers. There is a doodle at 19:00 of the two making love.
8. Successive kings vied to build architecture that was more extravagant and opulent than anything before.
9. By the 14th century BCE Egypt had become a land of plenty at peace.
10. The **Colossi of Memnon**. 60 feet high ,five stories, 700 tons. Depicting Amenhotep III (reigned 40 years). There are many busts and figures of him but in Berlin there is a fish cosmetics vessel, blue, yellow and white. Both naturalistic and decorative. Blowing glass was not discovered for another 1,000 years so we did not know how it was made. One experts using core forming it has been shown that sand as molten glass wrapped round a core followed by thin rods of coloured glass wrapped around.
11. Lower ranking officials were buried at ? but it has some of the finest tomb

paintings. One set is in the British Museum—the **Nebamun Paintings**. He was a middle ranking accountant but persuaded one of the greatest artists of ancient Egypt to paint his tomb who has been compared to Michelangelo. Banquet scene with serving girls dancing. This is very rare as they are shown frontal, face on and the arms are foreshortened.

12. The mayor of Thebes had his idea of paradise carved into the limestone cliff. The artistry is astounding. Low relief carvings including women with black lined eyes.
13. Amenhotep IV instigated one of the greatest revolutions in Egypt's culture. He replaced thousands of gods with one, he rejected Thebes and its temples and he introduced a new form of art. The one god was Aten and he even changed his name to Akhenaten. The **statue of Akhenaten** is one of the strangest in all Egypt, everything is distorted and elongated, full lips, slanting eyes and his body is like a man combined with a woman with an enormous belly.
14. Five years into his reign he abandoned Thebes and built his ideal city 300 miles down river. He knew his new religion needed a new capital. He named it Akhetaten, it once stretched for ten kilometres and had 30,000 people. The wasteland has proved a treasure trove in the last few years.
15. **Royal Family Scene**, Egyptian Museum, Cairo. From a private house. Distorted anatomy, the sun disk and it shows a domestic scene with him and his wife Nefertiti and his children. His daughter even has a smile. She has two daughters on her lap. It is completely unprecedented.
16. The great masterpiece of Egyptian art, the **bust of Queen Nefertiti**, Berlin. Painted limestone. Modelled by Tutmos. She is the epitome of elegance and beauty. The headdress is perfectly aligned with her chin. Her neck hardly seems able to bear the weight above. Is she too perfect. At the base of her neck the tendons are taut. Her left eye is unfinished as busts always faced to the left.
17. His one man revolution was doomed to fail. The workers tombs show signs of bone disease, they were overworked carrying stones that were too heavy. A turquoise tiny figure of Bes (pronounced 'bez') found in a grave so people were still worshipping the old gods and no mention of Aten, the new sun god. He died after two decades and his revolution ended. A powerful and brave reformer and prophet. His city was abandoned and his son Tutenkaten resulted in a return to the old religion and the old order. He even changed his name to Tutankhamun.

18. The **Tomb of Tutankhamun**. The most famous of all the pharaohs but his tomb is tiny. His mummy remains in the tomb. The treasures are in the Egyptian Museum Cairo. The range and quality of the tomb contents is astonishing.
19. Final treasure is **Tutankhamun's Funerary Mask**. The most famous face of all time, made of solid gold. He was a nonentity, a boy king that died in his teens. The master craftsmen were so good that it has never been surpassed.

A NEW DAWN

1. A wonder that is misunderstood. The history of art started not in ancient Greece but in ancient Egypt. They did not have a word for art but their craftsmen were exemplary. We are now in the New Kingdom.
2. Rameses II projected power but centuries after his death Egypt slowly declined. The conventional view is the art declined as its power declined but instead it exploded with new ideas.
3. Rameses II (the Great) reigned for 67 years in the 13th century before Christ. He was known as the Great or the Builder as his name is on more monuments than any other pharaoh in Egyptian history. He constructed several temples in lower Nubia including **Abul Simbel** cut out of the cliff face. Four seated colossi that are viscerally thrilling. Size and scale did matter to Rameses II. Carvings of enemies, Nubians bound and about to be crushed. The north wall is devoted to the Battle of Kadesh, his campaign against the Hittites, the enemy is completely destroyed although he never captured Kadesh. He was an effective warlord. The inner sanctum contains four figures, the gods of ancient Egypt plus Rameses II himself sitting with them. His capital Thebes is filled with vast statues of Rameses II.
4. **Faience Shabtis** were mass-produced funerary statues (the first in history to be mass-produced) and were believed to be imbued with magical powers. They are made of a glassy, ceramic material, made of pure sand plus natron salt (a type of baking soda that lowers the melting point of the sand) as a flux and some crushed limestone and the blue is copper oxide, created to mimic lapis lazuli, a very expensive mineral from Afghanistan.
5. Valley of the Kings north of Thebes has Deir el-Medina just over the hill. A village for the workers and craftsmen who created the monuments for Rameses II. An Egyptian Port Sunlight. We know the names of the artists and where they lived, they even have tombs capped with small pyramids.

It gives us a rare insight into the daily lives of artists and what they painted left to their own devices.

6. As we enter the **Tomb of Pashedu**, Deir el-Medina, we see Anubis on either side. Inside there are the usual gods linked by a bright yellow background, like a nugget of gold. It is painted rapidly, spontaneously and painterly. It has his family, his white haired father.
7. They constructed an enormous well but did not find water so gave up and used it as a rubbish tip. A treasure trove for egyptologists as it contains clay tablets (**ostraca**, singular ostrakon) containing the emails of the day with drawings and notes about everything. The art breaks free, we have a mouse driving a chariot with a donkey. Witty, irreverent and free, a long way from the rigid rules of Egyptian art. A wonderful dog in the museum and a cat driving a flock of geese, a fully frontal sketch of a female musician with a see-through dress, it could have been done by Modigliani.
8. Rameses III military campaigns led to economic disaster. Deir el-Medina became the focal point as the workers were not paid so they engaged in the first recorded strike in history, they formed sit-ins and held demonstrations. In the end it is said rameses III had his throat slit by a member of his harem in 1155 BCE. It was the beginning of a long slow decline for Egypt. The final 1000 years is often written off as Egypt was in constant peril but this led to bursts of culture as the conquerors wanted to sometimes appear to be more Egyptians than the Egyptians. In the 8th century BCE the Kushites conquered Egypt and ruled the whole of Egypt from Khartoum to the Mediterranean as Pharaohs.
9. Mentuemhat (pronounced 'munt-oom-hat') Nubian art, the minister of Luxor. Also his son. He represents himself as a king. In Nubian art the face is different from Egyptian art, it speaks to us. The scribe sitting cross-legged. Kushite princess Amenirdis I is austere but sexy. The one I most admire is the **Bust of Mentuemhat** (Egyptian Museum, Cairo), wise but tough and astute. A fusion of two styles.
10. Kushite rule lasted about a century and faced attack from many enemies. This led to the Egyptians returning to their old gods and to a bizarre cult, the worship of animal mummies. One of its main centres was Tuna el-Gebel (pronounced 'al gebel'). 2,500 year catacombs beneath the desert sands. It is a cemetery for literally millions of mummified animals, votive offerings to the gods to bring health and happiness. The mummies look

like stone. They were immensely popular and led to a fortune for the priests, they breed animals to sell as mummies, for example baboons. Mummification was an art form.

11. They had kicked out the Nubians and the Assyrians so there was great pride in their ancient culture. They thought the gods could come down in animal form so animals were an intermediary between the gods and us. Baboons were associated with the sun god Ra.
12. The weirdest masterpiece **Tawaret Statue** (Egyptian Museum, Cairo), the head of a hippo, paws of a lion and human breasts. She was a protective goddess that protected women in childbirth. The stone is extremely hard, greywacke, but she looks soft and swollen.
13. One of the biggest turning points was 332 BCE when Alexander the Great sweep in and liberated Egypt from the Persians. His arrival had an impact on the art. **The Tomb of the Priest Petosiris**, Tuna el-Gebel. The style looks greek but the scenes are ancient Egyptians. There are labourers picking grapes to make wine. An attempt at naturalism. A naked man picking grapes that looks Greece. Maybe not great art but fascinating.
14. Alexander the Great died at 32 and he conquered vast areas but arguably he destroyed as much as he created, he sacked the ancient city of Persepolis in 330 BCE. He lived during the Hellenistic period, a style that could hardly be more different than ancient Egyptian art.
15. After Alexander died Ptolemy became pharaoh the first of fifteen Ptolemies that ruled for the next 300 years based in northern Egypt in a city he founded called Alexandria, one of the great cities of the ancient world. There was a great lighthouse, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Constructed out of 75 ton block destroyed by earthquakes. Egyptologists discovered ancient statues under water. The statues are a Greek head on an Egyptian body, the two styles conflict with each other.
16. A portrait of a bald man, probably a priest, a masterpiece, called The Green Head in Neues museum, Berlin. An successful amalgamation of two traditions.
17. Under the Ptolemies Egyptian returned to its traditional art. **The Temple of Horus** at Edfu, the best preserved in Egypt. Built by the Greeks but dedicated to Horus, every surface is covered in carvings. Each capital is different and there is a black granite statue of Horis as a falcon. The centrepiece is the sanctuary with a replica of the boat of Horus. The oldest

part dates back to before the temple was built. It was retained by the Ptolemies. It was built over 180 years and there is no evidence of the Greek culture, it is completely Egyptian to keep the Egyptian priests sweet.

18. In the end it was Rome that ended the Egypt of the Pharaohs in Alexandria. Cleopatra was matched against Augustus. She remains elusive, there are no images except on a coin where she has a hooked nose and looks like a witch. She committed suicide.
19. Cleopatra built a special temple at Dendera dedicated to Hathor, a multi-coloured visual feast, bright reds and blues, recently cleaned. She is on the back wall with her son Caesarean by Caesar. There is a small temple at right angles called the Mammisi celebrating the birth of Horus and called a birth house. It contains the dwarf god Bes (pronounced 'Bez'). He appears everywhere and is ridiculously ugly, fat, face-on, a large penis and a tongue hanging out. A prototype for devils in Christian art but has been associated with music and sex, all the good things



Map of Ancient Egypt

- First, to orient you, this is a map of ancient Egypt showing some of the key cities.
 - The first thing to notice is **the Nile**, all of ancient Egypt occupied the narrow fertile area either side of the Nile which flooded annually renewing the fertile land. During the long history of the Egyptian civilisation the country, thanks to the annual flooding of the Nile, was **mostly fertile and productive**. For long periods it was **politically stable and under little threat of foreign invasions**.
 - It was divided between **Upper Egypt** to the south and **Lower Egypt** in the north.
 - In the south **Abu Simbel** contains the great Temple of Rameses II which was carved out of the limestone rock face.
 - Further north here is a **vast temple at Karnak** near Luxor the site of the ancient city of **Thebes** on the other side of the Nile from the **Valley of the Kings**, a site which for 500 years was used to bury the pharaohs in tombs cut from the rock.
 - Further north **Amarna** contains the remains of the capital city built by Akhenaten.
 - In the north is **Memphis**, 12 miles south of modern day Cairo and on the opposite bank of the Nile, Giza which includes the **Great**

Pyramid and the Sphinx.

- Finally, on the Mediterranean is **Alexandria**, built much later, by Alexander the Great.
- The Nile was the main means of transport as the **few roads were washed away** every year by the Nile flood. People and goods were transported by boat up and down the Nile and fortuitously the **wind blew mostly from the north** so boats could travel downstream on the current assisted by rowers and then sail back upstream using the wind.

NOTES

• **Other Cities**

- **Philae** is an island-based temple complex built in the 7th-6th century BCE. Now in the lake created by the Aswan dam.
 - **Elephantine** is a fort on an island on the Nile near the city of Aswan and originally on the border between Egypt and Nubia.
 - **Hierakonopolis** also called Nekhen was the religious and political capital of Upper Egypt at the end of prehistoric Egypt (c. 3200–3100 BC) and probably also during the Early Dynastic Period (c. 3100–2686 BC). The oldest known tomb with painted decoration, a mural on its plaster walls, is located in Nekhen and is thought to date to c. 3500–3200 BC.
 - **Abydos** is one of the oldest cities in ancient Egypt and contains the memorial temple of Seti I (1294/90-1279 BCE).
 - **Sakkara** or Saqqara was the necropolis (large cemetery) of Memphis It contains numerous pyramids including that of Djoser.
 - **Heliopolis** was a major city of ancient Egypt and one of its oldest but is today mostly destroyed. It contains what is believed to be the oldest surviving obelisk in the world from the reign of Senusret I (1971-1926 BCE). Augustus took another obelisk to Rome and two others called Cleopatra's Needles are now in London and New York.
- #### • **Kingdoms and Dynasties**
- By about 5500 BCE small tribes had coalesced into tribes the largest of which was the Badarian culture. This was followed by the Naqada culture which over the next thousand years became a powerful civilisation. Their

centre was at Hierakonpolis and later at Abydos. At this time the climate was much less arid and large areas were covered in savanna.

- Prehistoric Egypt coalesced around **3100 BCE** with the political unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under Narmer (3273-2987 BCE), the first king of the **Early Dynastic Period** who won a battle against Upper Egypt (the South) and unified the country. He established the capital at Memphis which became the largest city in the world at that time.
- The **Old Kingdom** (c. 2700-2200 BCE) is known as the "Age of the Pyramids" and spans from the 3rd to the 6th Dynasties. It was kings Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure, who constructed the pyramids at Giza. The Great Sphinx of Giza is thought to represent **King Khafre** (c. 2558-2532 BCE). **King Djozer** (2691-2625 BCE, first king of the 3rd Dynasty) and his vizier and architect **Imhotep** started to build in stone and created the first step pyramid. He moved the capital to Memphis near present day Cairo. In Memphis he build a temple, the word for which was 'pharaoh' and the name stuck as the title of the single ultimate leader who from this point on was regarded literally as a god on Earth, an incarnation of Horus who linked the earthly and spiritual worlds. The Egyptians used pillars 2,000 years before the Greeks.
- The **First Intermediate Period** (2183–2060 BC) is a period of disarray and chaos between the end of the Old Kingdom and the advent of the Middle Kingdom. It consisted of the 7th to 11th Dynasties.
- The **Middle Kingdom** (2040-1802 BCE) is from the First Intermediate Period to the Second Intermediate Period. It consists of the continuation of the 11th Dynasty and the 12th Dynasty followed by the Second Intermediate Period. Some Egyptologists include the 13th and 14th Dynasties in the Middle Period.
- The **Second Intermediate Period** (1802-1550 BCE) is a period of chaos between the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. It includes the 13th to 17th Dynasties. Little is known about many of the Pharaohs during this period.
- The **New Kingdom** (1550-1077 BCE) covers the 18th to 20th Dynasties and ends with the Third Intermediate Period. Three of the best known pharaohs of the New Kingdom are **Akhenaten**, also known as Amenhotep IV, whose exclusive worship of the Aten is often interpreted as the first instance of monotheism, **Tutankhamun** known for the discovery of his nearly intact tomb, and **Ramesses II** who attempted to recover the territories in modern

Israel/Palestine, Lebanon and Syria that had been held in the Eighteenth Dynasty. His reconquest led to the Battle of Qadesh, where he led the Egyptian armies against the army of the Hittite king Muwatalli II.

- **Third Intermediate Period** (1077-664 BCE) marked the end of the New Kingdom after the collapse of the Egyptian Empire at the end of the Bronze Age.
- It was followed by the 21st Dynasty with weak Pharaohs and rule by the high priests. The 22nd Dynasty consisted of rule by Libyans (943-728 BCE). The 23rd Dynasty was also rule by Libyans (837-735 BCE). The 24th Dynasty was short lived and consisted of only two Pharaohs. The 25th Dynasty was ruled by Nubians who ruled until 656 BCE.
- The **Late Period** (664-332 BCE) was ruled by Egyptians and Persians and consisted of the 26th to 31st Dynasties. The last ruler was Darius III.
- The **Hellenistic Period** was when Egypt was ruled by **Alexander the Great** and Philip II of Macedon and Alexander IV of Macedon.
- The **Ptolemaic Dynasty** was ruled by the Ptolemies who ruled from 305 BCE until Egypt became a province of Rome in 30 BCE. The most famous ruler was **Cleopatra VII** known as 'Cleopatra' had affairs with Roman dictator Julius Caesar and Roman general Mark Antony, but it was not until after her suicide (after Mark Antony was defeated by Octavian, who would later be Emperor Augustus Caesar) that Egypt became a province of the Roman Republic in 30 BC. Subsequent Roman emperors were accorded the title of pharaoh, although exclusively while in Egypt.
- The last Roman emperor to be conferred the title of Pharaoh was Maximinus Daza (reigned 311–313 AD).

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Late Predynastic boat, Wadi Abu Sub

grave in Gebelein, Naqada IIa-b (c. Museo Egizio, Turin

Boatmen on the Nile, from the Tomb of Sennefer, a nobleman who ruled Thebes (Luxor) c. 1400 BCE

Late Predynastic boat at site CAS-2 in Wadi Abu Subeira, c. 4000-3000 BCE, photo: Per Storemyr
 Painted linen (detail) from a grave in Gebelein, Naqada IIa-b (c. 3600 BCE), Museo Egizio, Turin
 Boatmen on the Nile, from the Tomb of Sennefer, a nobleman who ruled Thebes (Luxor) c. 1400 BCE

- Let us start at the beginning. If you have heard my talk on The Earliest Art you will remember the rock art in Egypt which has been dated up to 19,000 years old but the newest is from 6-5,000 years ago and we can see a link (CLICK) with this, a piece of linen produce 5,600 years ago in the Pre-dynastic Egyptian period. That is, the period before the kings and pharaohs that historians have divided into dynasties. The first dynastic period started about 3000 BCE.
- (CLICK) And this is a painting from a tomb 2,200 years later. Egyptian art, religion and culture changed little over 3,000 years except for certain periods I will mention later. There is also a direct line from prehistoric rock art to Egyptian art and later to Greek art and from there to today's Western art. So we can trace a line from 20,000 year-old figurative rock art to modern art.
- Also note, there is writing on the later piece—hieroglyphics. Writing was invented about the time of the first dynasty, about 3000 BCE. It took two forms, hieroglyphics, the sacred writing used in tombs, which we see here, and hieratic, a cursive script for everyday use. The Egyptian scripts are ancestor to the majority of scripts in modern use such as Latin, Cyrillic and Arabic.

- Hieroglyphics could represent the sound or the picture shown. (CLICK) For fun, this, for example, is my name, SHAFE, written phonetically.

NOTES

- Every year it flooded covering the land in fertile black mud. Black was a positive colour for the ancient Egyptians and red, the colour of the desert a negative colour. Roads were washed away so all transport was by boat up and down the Nile. The wind generally blew from north to south and the river's flow went from south to north. So, boats sailed upstream and then rowed with the current downstream. This representation of a boat is therefore an anomaly as it shows rowing and sailing at the same time. This is typical of Egyptian art they showed all the important aspects of an object at the same time.
- Between **12,000 and 7,000 years ago** there was a wetter period caused by the Earth's wobble around the Sun in a 20,000 year cycle. The land became covered in **vegetation and lakes** and there are a number of Saharan rock paintings from this period showing elephants, giraffe, hippos, aurochs (a wild ancestor of domestic cattle), and antelope, occasionally being pursued by bands of hunters.
- Roughly 7,000 years ago, domesticated animals such as cattle, goats and sheep began to appear, so whilst hunting and gathering continued, some Saharans adopted a pastoral lifestyle. By 6,000 years ago, the climate began to change, becoming much drier; people and their livestock moved away and by 4,500 years ago the Sahara began to resemble the desert we see today.

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The Narmer Palette, c. 3200-3000 BCE, 64 × 42 cm, Egyptian Museum, Cairo

- That brings us to our first masterpiece.
- This is the Narmer Palette. Narmer was the king who created Egypt by unifying Upper and Lower Egypt and this work celebrates his victories.
- It is one of the earliest typical Egyptian art works known and it contains some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions ever found. It is a ceremonial device carved from siltstone and it is based on the appearance of the palettes they used for grinding cosmetics but this is too large for that purpose, it is about two foot high and one and a half feet wide.
- Everything the Egyptians did had a religious significance including cosmetics which were worn by men and women. For example, black-lined eyes protected against the sun but also against 'Evil Eye'.
- Looking at the palette, **Narmer is on the left** in a pose that was used again and again over the millennia. He is holding a raised mace in one hand and he is about to smash the skull of his enemy whose hair he is holding in his other hand. He is wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt.
- Behind him his servant is carrying his sandals which we see in other artworks. The bearer of the sandals was a high status position so we think footwear was for special occasions and Narmer has his sandals carried symbolising he is king. Below him are his dead vanquished enemies. To the right of Narmer is a **falcon, representing the god Horus**, perched on papyrus flowers, the symbol of Lower Egypt. In his talons, he holds a rope-like object which appears to be attached to

a man's nose by a hook representing the breath of life being taken from his enemy.

- **On the right** we see Narmer at the top left again followed by his servant carrying his sandals. This time he is wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. In front of him are **four standard bearers** holding banners on top of which are an animal skin, a dog and two falcons, maybe representing conquered towns. At the far right are **ten beheaded corpses** with their heads between their feet and their genitals protruding from their mouths.
- Below them are two beasts with intertwined necks that are a combination of **leopard and serpent (Serpopards)**. The round area between them is **the palette** where cosmetic would have been ground although the size of this piece indicates that it has a symbolic function. The intertwined necks may represent the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt although this symbolism is not found in any other work.
- At the bottom a bull is knocking down a city wall while trampling on a fallen foe. The bull signified strength and procreative power and is associated with the pharaoh. You can see that Narmer is wearing a bull's tail, a common attribute used by many later pharaohs.
- Narmer's name is written at the top using the symbols of a catfish (n'r) and a chisel (m'r) within a palace. The words are used to represent the sounds of the king's name. Either side are representations of the cow goddess Bat (pronounced 'bat'), one of the earliest deities later combined with the goddess Hathor. At the time of the Namer Palette she represented the cosmos.

NOTES

- Narmer (3273-2987 BCE) was the first king of the **First Dynastic period** (c. 3150-2613 BCE) and the last king of the **pre-dynastic period** (c. 6000-3150 BCE) before the rise of King Menes. It is believed Narmer won a battle against Upper Egypt (the South) and unified the country. However, a great deal of the interpretation is self-justifying as it is based on this palette. It is strong evidence that he united Egypt based on his wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt on the front (recto on the left) and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt on the back (verso on the right) but we don't know if the crowns had the same significance at this period.

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Step pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, Egypt



Limestone Ka statue of Djoser from his pyramid serdab

- Limestone Ka statue of Djoser (2691-2625 BCE, first king of the 3rd Dynasty) from his pyramid serdab, a Ka statue provides a resting place for the Ka or life-force or spirit of the person after death.
- **Jumping forward about 500 years** we enter the Old Kingdom. There were **three kingdoms**, The Old Kingdom, The Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom with **periods of unrest between them** called Intermediate Periods. Each Kingdom consisted of a number of dynasties and each dynasty consisted of a sequence of pharaohs. In total there were 33 dynasties and about 170 pharaohs including about seven queens.
- This is King Djoser (pronounced 'joe-zer') who reigned for about 30 years around 2650 BCE. This statue is from his tomb and is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.
- His chancellor was **Imhotep** who was the possible architect of the first pyramid (CLICK), this step pyramid at Saqqara. His reputation, possibly unfounded, as a **wise man and a healer** grew and grew over the next 3,000 years and he became one of the few non-royals that became deified. Unfortunately all the images of Imhotep date from about 2,000 years after his death when he was deified, so they are imagined.
- This step pyramid started as a single storey tomb, called a **mastaba**. The five further mastabas were piled one up the other each one smaller than the other creating Egypt's first pyramid.
- The funerary complex typically also included a **serdab**, usually in the mastaba. It

was a sealed burial chamber containing a statue of the dead that was thought to contain the ka or life force of the deceased. The chamber had holes or slits that enabled the soul to move freely and smell food offerings brought to the dead person.

NOTES

- Ancient Egyptians believed a person's soul is made up of eight aspects, their **physical body** (khet), their **name and identity** (Ren), their **spiritual body** (Sah), their **personality** (Ba), their **vital essence** (Ka), their **heart** (Ib), their **shadow** (Shut), their **life-force and power** (Sekhem). Collectively, these were known as their **intellect and ghostly form** (Akh) after the person had made a successful transition to the afterlife.
- In the Old Kingdom only the pharaohs were mummified and granted the opportunity of an eternal life. By the Middle Kingdom all the dead had this opportunity.

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Prince Rahotep and his wife
Nofret, tomb statues, Egyptian
Museum Cairo



Prince Rahotep and his wife Nofret, tomb statues, Egyptian Museum Cairo

- This shows that high-quality art was produced for the most senior officials not just pharaohs.
- **Rahotep was a high official** and was described as the son of a king although this title might have been honorific. He was described as 'unique Chief of Seers at Heliopolis', 'Chief of the Hall', 'Keeper of the Ames Sceptre', 'Eldest of the Palace', 'great unique one at the place of the beer measurers', a 'Great One of the city of Pe', 'overseer of transporters', 'controller of the archers' and a 'physical son of the King'.
- He was married to Nofret described as 'known to the king' which means she was part of the royal entourage court perhaps because she was married to a prince.
- The statues are remarkably well preserved. They were found in 1871 in their brick mastaba. (CLICK) They have glass inlaid eyes to increase the realism and the personal details such as his moustache and their life-size images indicate that they are idealised portraits.

NOTES

- Although not accepted by all Egyptologists, it is generally assumed that, based on the placement of his mastaba at Meidum, Rahotep's father was Sneferu (2613-2589 BCE), the founder of the 4th Dynasty.

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Seated Scribe, c. 2500 BCE, painted limestone,
53.7 × 44 × 35 cm, Louvre

Seated Scribe, c. 2500 BCE, painted limestone, 53.7 × 44 × 35 cm, Louvre
Discovered at Saqqara-Nord, Old Kingdom 4th or 5th dynasty

- This is **Seated Scribe**, a famous work of ancient Egyptian art now in the Louvre. It was produced round the time of Djoser or a bit later, during the **Old Kingdom**, probably 4th dynasty so about 4,500 years old (2620-2500 BCE).
- Most objects and images now on view in museums were **never designed to be seen**. We do not know exactly where this scribe was found but it probably would have been in the **tomb of a high ranking official as his scribe in the afterlife**.
- He is finely modelled with realistic features and probably represents a particular person although we do not know his name. It is made from carved limestone with red-veined, white magnesite eyes inlaid with rock crystal and with nipples made of wood. His reed brush is missing.
- Scribes were some of the **few who could read and write and were highly regarded and well paid**. Although some high status individuals could read and write scribes were needed to conduct the complex administration of the country and they were used as **tax collectors** and were involved in **organising and administering activities such as mining, trade and war**.

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The Great Pyramids of Giza:

- Pyramid of Khufu (pronounced 'koo-foo'), reigned c. 2589-2566 BCE (23 years), original height 146.6 m
 - Pyramid of Khafre (pronounced 'kaf-ray'), ruled c. 2558-2532 BCE (26 years), original height 143.5 m
 - Pyramid of Menkaure (pronounced 'men-KAW-ree'), ruled from c. 2530 BCE and his queen (2490-2472 BCE)
-
- We are in the **Old Kingdom** (c. 2686-2055 BCE), which lasted about 600 years and is known as the **Age of the Pyramids**. The best known group of pyramids are the **Pyramids at Giza** north of Saqqara and near Memphis on the Upper Nile (and about 30 kilometres west of central modern-day Cairo).
 - The Giza pyramid complex contains the **Great Pyramid** also called the **Pyramid of Cheops or Khufu** (c. 2580-2560 BCE, Cheops was the Greek name for Khufu). This was 146.6 metres (481 feet) tall and was the tallest structure in the world for 3,800 years, until the building of the Eiffel Tower (312 metres, 1024 feet), which was overtaken by the Empire State Building in 1931 (381 metres, 1,250 feet). Khufu was a Fourth Dynasty pharaoh described by the Greeks as a cruel tyrant but by the ancient Egyptians as generous and pious. The first writing on papyrus is from his reign and describes the building of the Great Pyramid.
 - The next but one pharaoh was his son Khafre who built the **Pyramid of Khafre** (136.4 metres, 448 feet). It still retains some of its fine white limestone cladding

on top which originally clad all the pyramids and so they shone in the sun like diamonds.

- His son was probably the next pharaoh **Menkaure** (pronounced 'men-KAW-ree') and his is the smaller **Pyramid of Menkaure** with the pyramids of the Queens in front, along with their associated pyramid complexes and the Great Sphinx which is off this photograph to the far right and connected by a causeway to the Pyramid of Khafre.
- All were built during the Fourth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom, between 2600 and 2500 BCE. **There were not built by slaves but by well-paid and well-fed Egyptian craftsmen and farmers** as an act of civil service during the times of the year when there was less work. It took 20,000 to 30,000 skilled craftsman (some say 13,200 to 40,000) to build the Great Pyramid and each block weighed between 2.5 to 15 tons and was dragged up ramps on sledges and lifted into place using pulleys. There are in total some 2.3 million stone blocks which would have taken 3,500 quarry-men about 27 years to produce at 250 blocks-day.

NOTES

- The northernmost and worst preserved of the three satellite **Pyramids of the Queens** probably belonged not to one of Khufu's queens, but to his **mother, Queen Hetepheres I** (pronounced 'he-te-pher-es'), wife of Khufu's father and predecessor, the pharaoh Sneferu. It's now little more than a heap of rubble. It's estimated to have once stood 30 meters tall but now barely reaches 10 meters. The middle pyramid was probably for one of Khufu's senior wives, **Queen Meritites I**. The southernmost pyramid is the best preserved. Some scholars believe it was the resting place of another of Khufu's wives, **Queen Henutsen**.

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Great Sphinx at Giza, 73 (length) × 19 (width) × 20 (height) metres (66 feet tall, 240-feet long)

Great Sphinx at Giza, 73 (length) × 19 (width) × 20 (height) metres (66 feet tall, 240 feet long)

- I could not move on without mentioning the **Great Sphinx at Giza**. A sphinx is a mythical creature with the face of a human and the body of a lion. In this case we believe **the face is that of pharaoh Khafre**, the one with the limestone capped pyramid (who reigned c.2558-2532 BCE) we just saw, so it is about 4,500 years old.
- It is believed the entire statue was **originally painted bright red, yellow and blue** as tiny paint residues still remain.
- Its **nose has been missing at least 600 years** so was not blown off by Napoleon's cannons as many claim. One theory is that Muhammad Sa'im al-Dahr, a Sufi Muslim, mutilated the statue in the 14th century to protest against idolatry.
- It was **carved out of the bedrock** which was part of the quarry used to supply some of the stones for the pyramids. It is estimated it took three years using 100 workers with copper chisels and stone hammers. (The area is sandstone and many of the stones for the pyramids are granite.)
- Over the centuries the Sphinx was **covered in sand** and during the medieval period only the head was visible. It was during the nineteenth century that the body was uncovered.
- One hypothesis to explain the **small size of the head** relative to the body is that the head was recarved several times by different pharaohs and so it is a lot

older than we think. Another, recent theory is that the head is an ancient outcrop of rock that was eroded into the rough shape of a head by the wind and sand.

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Triad statue of pharaoh Menkaura, accompanied by the goddess Hathor (on his right) and the personification of the nome of Diospolis Parva (on his left), Fourth dynasty, c. 2400 BCE, height 93 cm, width 47 cm. Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Triad statue of pharaoh Menkaura (c. 2530-2508/12 BCE), accompanied by the goddess Hathor (on his right) and the personification of the nome of Diospolis Parva (on his left), Fourth dynasty, c. 2400 BCE, height 93 cm, width 47 cm. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Carved from greywacke, a hard, dark form of sandstone.

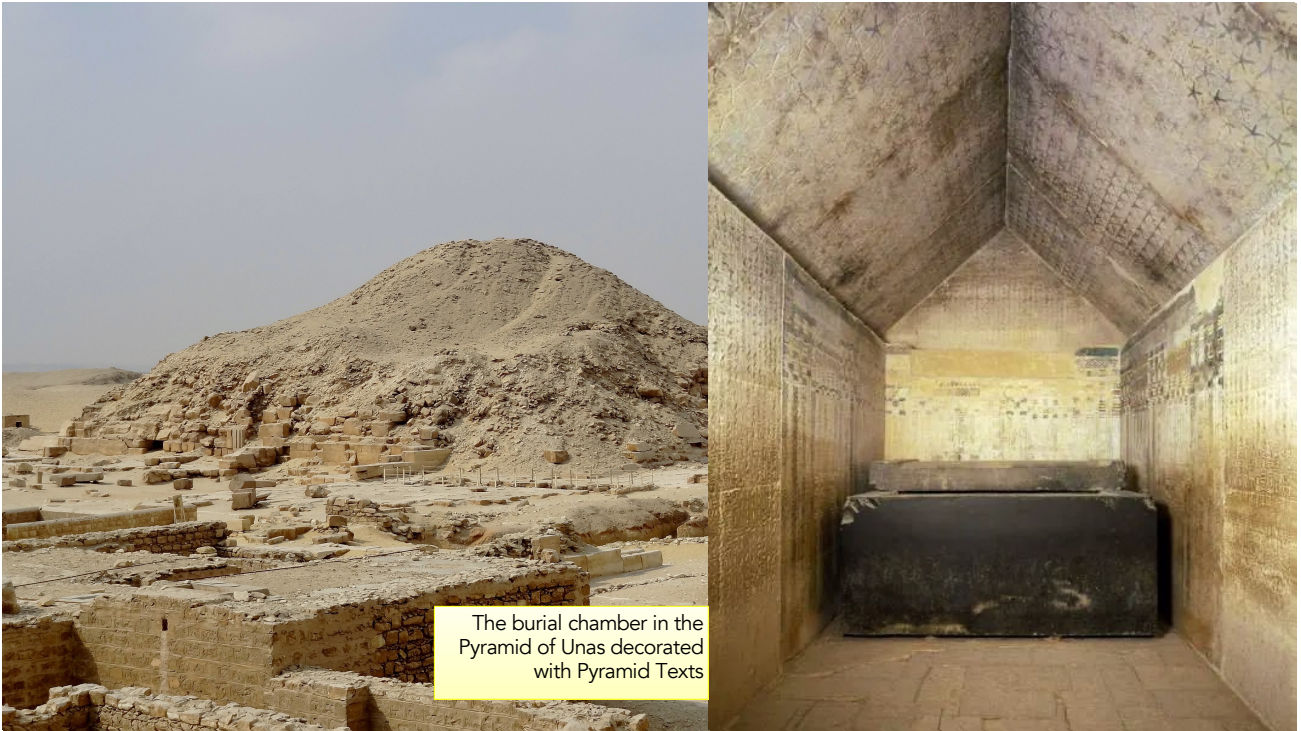
- This is one of the great works of art of the Old Kingdom.
- It is **Menkaura** (pronounced 'men-KAW-ree'), **probably the successor of Kahfre**. His tomb was the third one we saw and this is one of his statue triads with him standing between two goddesses. Hathor on the left and the personification of the 7th nome (district) of Diospolis Parva in Upper Egypt on the right.
- Hathor was the ancient Egyptian deity of many realms: mother to Horus, god of the sky, and Ra, the sun god. Hathor was goddess of beauty (including cosmetics), sensuality, music, dancing, and maternity. She is often depicted wearing a headdress of cow horns with a sun disk between them, or as a cow or lioness. She is less well-known than Isis as Hathor was not exported to the Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. She was popular, sensual and playful. In one story she cheered up Ra by **exposing her genitals**, a common practice in Egyptian religion, and this made him laugh out loud. The gods and goddesses could be great fun.

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Pyramid of Unas, 2360 BCE, Saqqara

The burial chamber in the Pyramid of Unas decorated with Pyramid Texts

- This is the **smallest Old Kingdom pyramid**, but significant due to the discovery of **Pyramid Texts**, spells for the king's afterlife **carved into the walls** of its chambers. **These are the oldest known ancient Egyptian religious texts.**
- The tradition of funerary texts was carried on by later rulers becoming **Coffin Texts** and later the basis of the **Book of the Dead**.
- The purpose of these texts was to describe a process or procedure that enable the spirit of the dead person, the Akh, to mix with the gods.
- I have **talked about the afterlife** and in the next talk I will explain how each person was judged before entering paradise. The Pyramid texts, later expanded into the **Book of Dead gave spells and procedures** to ensure the individual could make the transition to paradise successfully. It did depend on a judgement of the purity of their heart that involved the gods.
- I can explain part of how this was achieved by reading part of Utterance 373:

Gather your limbs, shake the earth from your flesh!

Take your bread that rots not, your beer that sours not,

Stand at the gates that bar the common people!

The gatekeeper comes out to you, he grasps your hand,

Takes you into heaven ...

- I think at this point I should introduce some of the gods...

NOTES

The following example of a spell comes from the pyramid of Unas. It was to be recited in the South Side Burial Chamber and Passage, and it was the Invocation to New Life. Utterance 213:

*Ho, Unis! You have not gone away dead: you have gone away alive.
Sit on Osiris's chair, with your baton in your arm, and govern the living;
with your water lily sceptre in your arm, and govern those
of the inaccessible places.*

*Your lower arms are of Atum, your upper arms of Atum, your belly of
Atum, your back of Atum, your rear of Atum, your legs of Atum, your
face of Anubis.*

Horus's mounds shall serve you; Seth's mounds shall serve you.

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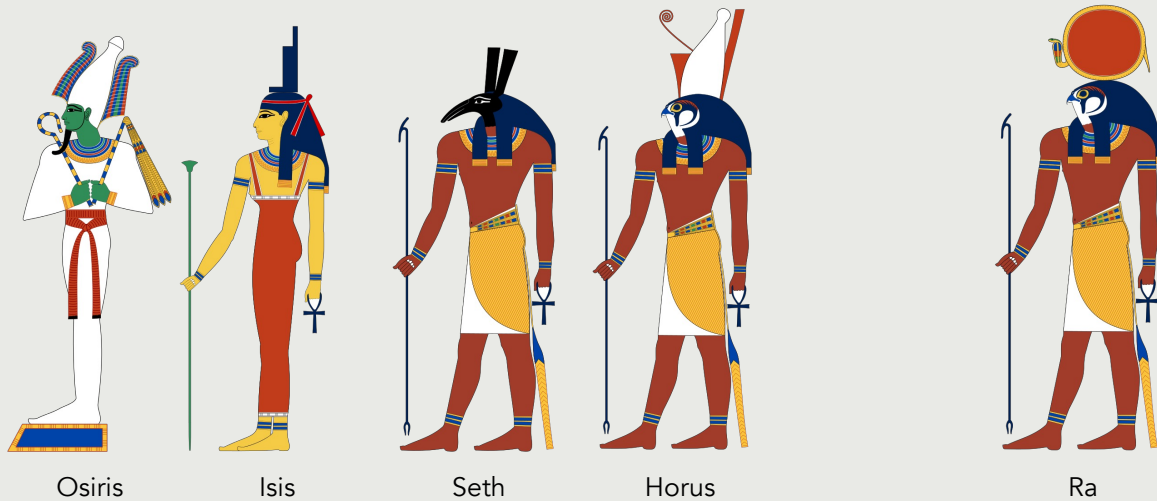
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EGYPTIAN GODS



EGYPTIAN GODS

- There were thousands of gods in ancient Egypt, Wikipedia lists over 500 by name, but the ones I am showing here are a few of the principal characters and they are connected by a story, one of the many myths surrounding the gods.
- It is difficult to say who was the principal god as it depended on the period, the region and the circumstances.
- **Osiris** is the Egyptian **Lord of the Underworld and Judge of the Dead**, **brother-husband to Isis**, and one of the most important gods of ancient Egypt. He is often shown with black or green skin symbolising the fertile mud of the Nile. He is shown wearing the crown of Upper Egypt and the crook and flail, symbols of kingship. Osiris and his sister-wife Isis ruled during a golden age of peace and prosperity.
- **Osiris was murdered by his jealous brother Seth** but his sister and wife **Isis resurrected him and gave birth to their child Horus**. After fathering Horus Osiris departed the earth to rule the underworld.
- Isis hid **Horus** from Seth in the papyrus marshes and raised him to **avenge his father's murder**. The war between them takes many forms and represents **the battle for kingship over the Earth**. In one story, during the fight Horus lost an eye but it was restored by the god Hathor. His eyes were associated with the sun and the moon and the damaged eye was the Egyptians explanation for the phases of the moon.
- **The death of Osiris**, his journey to the underworld and the battle to determine who will be the chief god **symbolically represents the death of a pharaoh**, his

journey to the underworld and his replacement by a new pharaoh.

- **Ra or Re was at one time the most important god** and was associated with the sun. He has the head of a falcon surmounted by the sun's disk. One creation myth was that the world was chaotic, lifeless water from which rose a pyramid-shaped mount and from that the sun, as the sun god Ra.

NOTES

- **Osiris** - god of the underworld, symbolised death resurrection and the annual flooding of the Nile. He also represented all the pharaohs and Egypt itself. He is shown holding a crook and a flail in crossed arms, symbols of royal authority.
- **Isis** - a devoted wife who resurrected Osiris after his murder by his brother Seth and raised their son Horus. She has a vulture head covering worn only by queens and goddesses. She was one of the last gods to be worshipped and later was identified as the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Her cult worship spread as far as Britain and Isis holding Horus influenced Christian imagery of Mary holding the infant Jesus.
- **Seth** - god of chaos, violence, deserts and storms and the brother of Osiris whom he murdered. Also competed with his nephew Horus for the throne of Egypt. He had a human body and the head of a strange animal often with a long snout and long ears. The animal cannot be identified and is thought to be a mythical composition.
- **Horus** - depicted as a falcon or a man with a falcon's head. The sky god associated with war and hunting. He was raised to avenge his father's murder and lost his eye fighting him but it was restored by the god Thoth. His eyes were associated with the sun and the moon so the restoration of his eye gave a mythical explanation for the phases of the moon. He was associated with war and hunting and in some eras the pharaoh was considered to be a manifestation of Horus.
- **Re or Ra** - typically shown with the head of a falcon or as a falcon wearing a sun disk and was the most important god associated with the sun. It was believed he sailed across the sky each day and at night travelled through the underworld. Later he was combined with the sun god Amun as Amun-Ra.
- **Atum** - the most important of the creator gods from whom all the others

arose. He holds a sceptre and an ankh.

- **Ptah** - the senior god of the triad of gods worshipped at Memphis. The other two were his wife, the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet and the god Nefertem who may have been their son. Originally associated with craftsmen and builders. His cult at Memphis was one of the most important.
- **Hathor** - a goddess depicted as a cow or a woman with cow's ears with a sun disk between the horns. She was the daughter of Ra and embodied motherhood and fertility and represented love and was believed to protect women during childbirth. She played an important role during funerals as was known as the 'lady of the west' as tombs were generally built on the west bank of the Nile.
- **Anubis** - was concerned with funeral practices and the dead and he was normally represented with the head of a black jackal. In the Old Kingdom (c. 2575–2130 BCE), before Osiris rose to prominence as the lord of the underworld, Anubis was considered the principal god of the dead.
- **Thoth** - the god of writing and wisdom depicted as a baboon or a sacred ibis or as a man with the head of an ibis. He was believed to have invented language and the hieroglyphic script and to serve as a scribe and adviser for the gods. As the god of wisdom, Thoth was said to possess knowledge of magic and secrets unavailable to the other gods.
- **Bastet** - shown as a woman with the head of a wild cat or a lion. She later took the form of a domestic cat. In the Ptolemaic period she came to be associated with the Greek goddess Artemis, the divine hunter and goddess of the moon.
- **Amon, Amun or Amen** - originally worshipped in Thebes, during the New Kingdom (c. 1539–1292 BCE) he became nationally important. He was god of the air, and the name probably means the "Hidden One." He was usually represented as a man wearing a crown with two vertical plumes and his body is sometimes blue symbolising air and creation. His animal symbols were the ram and the goose. When Thebes re-established Egyptian rule Amon received the credit and merged with the sun god Re and became the most powerful god throughout most of the New Kingdom. The temple of Karnak is dedicated to Amon-Re. Later identified with Zeus in Greece and Jupiter in Rome.
- **Mut** (pronounced 'moot') - wife of Amen and mother of the moon god Khonsu. Shown as a woman wearing a double crown of lower and upper

Egypt.

- **Sekhmet** - represented as a lioness wearing a sun disk. The ferocious daughter of the sun god Ra. She was the wife of Ptah and like him popular in Memphis.

CREATION MYTHS

- There are many myths but they have some parts in common such as the world arising from the lifeless waters of chaos, called Nu. The first thing to emerge from the waters was a pyramid-shaped mound called benben. The sun rose from the mound or a lotus flower growing on the mound as the sun-god Ra. Ra took the form of a heron, falcon, scarab beetle, or human child. A variant was that a cosmic egg substituted for the primeval sea or for the mound.

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Ankhtifi Tomb, west wall

Ankhtifi Tomb, west wall

- The **Old Kingdom**, known as the **Age of Pyramids**, finally ended (about 2181 BCE) when there was a period of famine and a civil war. This period is called **The First Intermediate Period**. It lasted 125 years (from 2181 to 2055 BCE) and was a time of economic hardship, political instability, and foreign invasion which challenged the fabric of Egyptian society.
- **During the Old Kingdom**, Egypt was divided into **42 provinces called nomes ruled by nomarchs**, the governors of the district. During the First Intermediate Period the chaos enabled the nomarchs to rise in power, a bit like **local warlords**.
- This is a scene from the tomb of one of these nomarchs called Ankhthifi (pronounced 'ANK-tee-fee') and he is shown harpoon fishing just right of centre. The hieroglyphics read "**See harpooning fishes by the leader of the soldiers, the chief of the prophets, Ankhtifi the excellent**".
- At the top left an **ox has been slaughtered** as part of the ceremony of inspecting the **fleet show below** and a servant is presenting Ankhthifi with the front right leg of the ox, an offering known as the khepesh.
- **So how was Egypt reunited?**

NOTES

- Nomarchs like Ankhthifi, lived during the First Intermediate Period (2181-2055 BCE) after the Egyptian Old Kingdom state had collapsed, and at a time when

economic hardship, political instability, and foreign invasion challenged the fabric of Egyptian society.

- "This scene is on the left of the return of the wall. It is one of the most beautiful of the tomb, notably because of the iridescent colours of the fishes. The place that has been assigned to fishes is however curious and translates the artist's personal inspiration. Usually, they occupy the lower register, with the exception of the two animals harpooned by the hunter. Here, fishes are all in front of the nomarch and seem to swim in open air, as if the stretch of water had been folded back in a right-angle in front of the harpooner. "

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Relief of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II (r. 2060-2009 BCE) and the Goddess Hathor, mortuary temple, Deir el-Bahri, western Thebes, now Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

- **It was Mentuhotep II** (r. 2060-2009 BCE, 6th ruler 11th dynasty, pronounced 'men-two-ho-tep') who reunited Egypt and he became the **first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom**.
- The king is in the centre wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt with clearly incised features and a balance between image and hieroglyphics. His cartouche is shown to his left. Egyptian pharaohs had five names although only two are typically shown in their cartouche, the nomen and prenomen. Here we see his nomen Mentuhotep. Pharaohs also had a Horus name, a Nebty name, a Golden Horus name, a Throne name or Prenomen and their personal name or Nomen which was given at birth. Their full name was occasionally written and represented a sort of lifetime mission statement. For example, for Mentuhotep it was "**He who unifies two lands, the Golden Falcon, lofty in plumes, the Lord of the rudder is Ra, Montu is satisfied**".
- The figure on the right is the goddess Hathor, as I said, often depicted as a cow or a woman with cow's ears. She was the daughter of Ra and has the sun disk between her horns. She embodied motherhood and fertility and was believed to protect women during childbirth. The image was **chiselled away during the reign of Akhenaten** when only one god, Aten, was permitted.
- After a reign of 51 years Mentuhotep II was buried at Deir el-Bahri ('**deer-el-ba-**

hari') in western Thebes. The building that is there now (CLICK) was built later by Hatshepsut. It is unusual as, at first glance it looks like a modern structure by Le Corbusier ('cor-bu-zee-ay'). It was built on the west bank of the Nile guarding the entrance of the Valley of the Kings. Hatshepsut's temple overwhelms the much older (CLICK) temple of Mentuhotep II to its left and not open to the public. This is a view from the ramp leading up to Hatshepsut's temple.

NOTES

- "King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II was revered by the Egyptians as the ruler who reunited Egypt after the era of disunity (the First Intermediate Period) that followed the end of the Old Kingdom. Descended from a family of Theban rulers, the king built his tomb and mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri in western Thebes. This relief was originally part of the decoration of the temple's main sanctuary that was added to the building at the end of the king's reign. The fine balance between figures and inscriptions on this block, as well as the clear outline and regular proportions of the king's image with its individualised facial features, exemplify the peak of a relief art that had developed over the decades while the vast temple complex was built and decorated. The figure of the goddess Hathor on the right of the block was chiselled away during the Amarna period, when King Akhenaten propagated the sole worship of the god Aten. Hathor was repaired in plaster in early Dynasty 19 and some of the paint on the whole block may also have been renewed at the time." [1]
- **Hathor** - a goddess depicted as a cow or a woman with cow's ears with a sun disk between the horns. She was the daughter of Ra and embodied motherhood and fertility and represented love and was believed to protect women during childbirth. She played an important role during funerals as was known as the 'lady of the west' as tombs were generally built on the west bank of the Nile.

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Stela of Amenemhat and Hemet, Middle Kingdom, early 12th Dynasty, about 1956–1877 BCE, Art Institute of Chicago

Stela of Khety and His Wife, Henet, early 12th Dynasty (c. 2124–1981 BCE), 44 × 77.2 × 11.2 cm, weight 80 kg, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (exhibited at the Met, New York)

Stela of Khety and His Wife, Henet, early 12th Dynasty (ca. 1981–1917 B.C.), 44 × 77.2 × 11.2 cm, weight 80 kg, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Stela of Amenemhat and Hemet, Middle Kingdom, early 12th Dynasty, about 1956–1877 BCE, Art Institute of Chicago

12th Dynasty was the high point of the Middle period, 1991-1802 BCE

- This is the image we saw at the beginning that I said I would explain.
- This **commemorative slab** (stela) shows a son on the right bringing gifts of food and drink to the tomb of his parents on the left. His father is **Khety** (in the centre) and his mother is **Henet** (on the far left)
- The table is heaped with a beaker and various types of meat, vegetables, and fruit. In addition, the son presents the leg of an ox. What is going on? It was believed that the dead needed sustenance after death and the living would **bring food and drink and place it in the outer chamber of their surdab**. You might be thinking—but it would rot. Yes, but they believed the person's soul would extract the nourishment from the food not eat the physical substance. So they would remove the food and bring fresh food.
- By the way, in the background you can just make out traces of the artist's grid, which aided the correct proportioning of the human figures. The standardised application of such grids seems to be an early Middle Kingdom innovation, and this stela is among the earliest surviving examples.
- The figures are typically posed with the head in profile, the shoulders and torso

facing forward and the feet following the head. Men are shown in this deep red colour and women are a lighter colour, white or pale yellow.

- (CLICK) Interestingly, while researching this I came across a **very similar image in the Art Institute of Chicago**. The hieroglyphics tell us it is Amenemhat and his wife, Hemet, "whom he loves." The small man, presumably their son, presents them with a calf's leg and the hieroglyphics tell us he is also called Amenemhat like his father. The ten brown loaves on the table resemble the hieroglyph for the word 'field' and paradise was sometimes called the **field of reeds** where it is hoped his parents will reside for eternity.
- Why are they so similar, I don't know. Maybe they were from the same workshop.

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Painted wooden model of the deceased overseeing the counting of cattle in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo

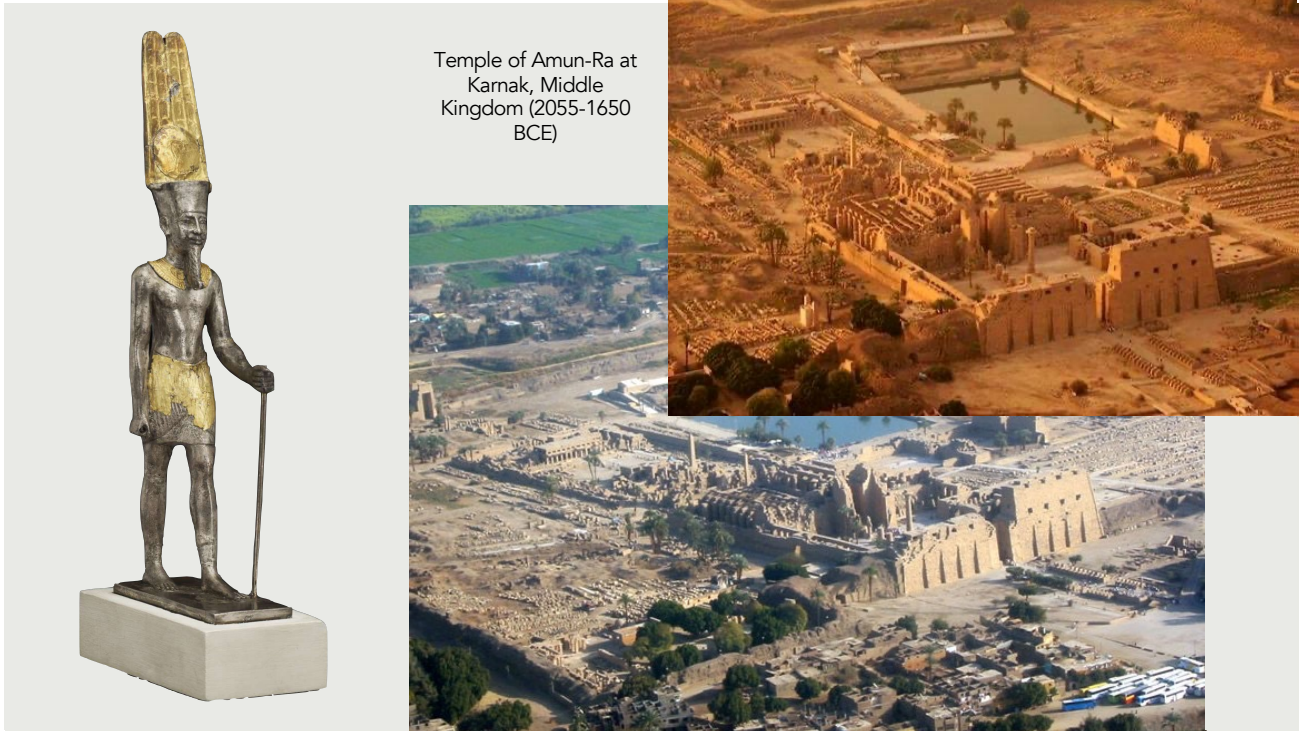
Painted wooden model of the deceased overseeing the counting of cattle in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Middle Kingdom), photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, Khan Academy

- From the **late Old Kingdom until the late Middle Kingdom** wooden models like were placed in tombs and could complement or substitute for tomb paintings. Such models provided a means of sustaining the deceased in the afterlife and some tombs could have **over 30 scenes depicted**.
- The use of these models declines during the later part of the Middle Kingdom although we find **35 model boats in the tomb of Tutankhamun**.
- Like the food it is not the outward physical appearance that is important but what is represented. The spirit of a model cow becomes a cow in the spirit world.

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Temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak, Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE)

Amun-Ra, Temple of Amun, 24 cm, gold-plated silver figure, British Museum
 Temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak, Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE)

Avenue of the Rameses

Rameses III Temple on the right

Hypostyle Hall straight ahead

Obelisk of Thutmose I beyond the Hall with the Precinct of Amun-Ra to the right

Temple of Thutmose III beyond the Obelisk

Temple of Ramesses II beyond that with the sacred Lake on the right.

- It was during the **Middle Kingdom** that the temple complex of **Karnak was started**. It was initially small but it was **near the new capital of Thebes** and so various pharaohs over the years added to it until the main precinct alone had twenty chapels and temples. **It is still one of the largest religious complexes in the world.**
- (CLICK) The main temple was **dedicated to Amun-Ra, guardian of Thebes**, and this is a **gold-plated silver figure of the god**. He can be identified by his beard and his headdress of the **disk of the sun surmounted by two feathers**. Although small he was seen as the **personification of the god** on Earth. He would have been in the centre of one of the room inside the temple and would have been **attended by the principal priests and worshipped as the god on Earth**. Again it is what is represented that is important not the mere physical appearance.

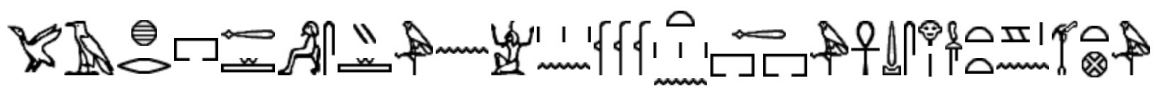
- **Ra was a creator god who brought himself and the rest of the gods into being at the beginning of time** and during the New Kingdom when the god Amun rose to prominence he was fused with Ra as Amun-Ra or Re. Amun-Ra had **blue skin symbolising his association with air and primeval creation**. He **became the chief deity** of the Egyptian Empire and could be identified with the **Greek god Zeus and Roman god Jupiter**.

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Valley of the Kings, looking north



The Great and Majestic Necropolis of the Millions of Years of the Pharaoh, Life, Strength, Health in The West of Thebes

Valley of the Kings, looking north

- The **Valley of the Kings** is in the desert west of the Nile in Lower Egypt, in the south. **For 500 years**, from the 18th (1550-1292 BCE) to the 20th dynasties (third and last of the New Kingdom, 1189-1077 BCE) **65 royal tombs were cut into the rock**. The site was chosen as it is surrounded by high cliffs and is **easily guarded**. It was on the opposite bank to Thebes, modern day Luxor.
- **Rameses II (KV7) is buried here** and his sons are in (KV5), probably the largest tomb in the valley with 120 rooms.
- **It is the site of the discovery in 1922 of the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62)** and is now one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world.
- (CLICK) The official name for the site in ancient times was **The Great and Majestic Necropolis of the Millions of Years of the Pharaoh, Life, Strength, Health in The West of Thebes** or Ta-sekhet-ma'at (the Great Field).

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"Hyksos Sphinxes" are peculiar sphinxes of Amenemhat III which were re-inscribed by several Hyksos rulers, including Apepi.



- The so-called "Hyksos Sphinxes" are peculiar sphinxes of Amenemhat III which were re-inscribed by several Hyksos rulers, including Apepi. Earlier Egyptologists thought these were the faces of actual Hyksos ruler
- The **Middle Kingdom ends with the Hykos** described "**as violent conquerors and oppressors of Egypt**" but modern research indicates they may have been living in northern Egypt and took over during a time of chaos. The **Hyksos from the Levant were the first foreign rulers of Egypt during what is called the Second Intermediate Period (1700-1550 BCE)**. However, they did not control all of Egypt but coexisted with the 16th and 17th dynasties in Thebes.
- The Hyksos period marks the first in which Egypt was **ruled by foreign rulers**. Many details of their rule, such as the true extent of their kingdom and even the names and order of their kings, remain uncertain. The Hyksos practiced many Levantine or Canaanite customs as well as many Egyptian customs. They have been credited with introducing several technological innovations to Egypt, such as the **horse and chariot, as well as the sickle sword and the composite bow**, a theory which is disputed.
- They produced little new court art but instead **appropriated monuments from earlier dynasties by writing their names on them**.

NOTES

- The **Levant** included all or parts of modern day Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Palestine (the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip), Jordan and Cyprus

(the eastern part of the island). The **Canaanites** lived in the Canaan, which was part of the Levant, and were a very influential civilization that developed a writing system and advanced the science of metallurgy and pottery. The Bible describes them as the inhabitants of the Promised Land before the Israelite conquest. One offshoot of the Canaanites were the seafaring Phoenicians.

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EGYPTIAN ART OLD & MIDDLE KINGDOMS

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- **That brings us to the end of the Early Dynastic period** (c. 3150-2613 BCE)—the **Old Kingdom** (c. 2613-2181 BCE), the **First Intermediate Period** (2181-2040 BCE), the **Middle Kingdom** (2040-1782 BCE) and the **Second Intermediate Period** (c. 1782-1570 BCE).
- **The next talk in this series is on the high point of Egyptian culture, the New Kingdom**, which covers five hundred years (from 1550 to 1070 BCE) and included such well known pharaohs as **Akhenaten, Tutankhamun and Rameses II**.
- Thank you for your time.

NOTES

- **The New Kingdom** (c. 1570-1070 BCE) was a time of immense wealth, power, and cultural development in ancient Egypt and consisted of:
 - **The 18th Dynasty** (c. 1550-1292 BCE): The New Kingdom began with the 18th Dynasty, and it saw the rise of powerful pharaohs like **Ahmosé I, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Akhenaten, and Tutankhamun**. **Ahmosé I** (pronounced 'ah-moss') was the founder of the New Kingdom followed by many famous pharaohs—**Amenhotep I** followed by **Queen Hatshepsut I**, one of the most powerful pharaohs, the military genius **Thutmose III**, the wealthiest pharaoh **Amenhotep III** followed by the strangest **Amenhotep IV and his wife Nefertiti**, he changed his name to **Akhenaten** in respect for Aten whom he regarded as the one and only god. Then came, the

most well-known pharaoh today, **Tutankhamun** (1332-1323 BCE).

- **The 19th Dynasty** (c. 1292-1189 BCE) saw the reign of important pharaohs like **Seti I and his son Ramesses II**, often referred to as Ramesses the Great. Ramesses II is known for his military campaigns, prolific building projects, and the famous Battle of Kadesh. This period included Egypt's expansion and the empire's greatest territorial extent.
- **The 20th Dynasty** (c. 1189-1077 BCE): This dynasty marked the end of the New Kingdom, with pharaohs like **Ramesses III**. During this period, Egypt faced external pressures from various foreign invasions, and internal challenges, leading to the decline of the New Kingdom.
- Third Intermediate Period (c. 1069-525 BCE)
 - There followed a **two hundred year period of lesser known pharaohs** until by 1069 BCE Egypt had become divided and a period known as the **Third Intermediate Period** (c. 1069-525 BCE) started. During this **five hundred year** period Egypt became **increasingly divided** and submissive to external Empires including the **Nubians and the Assyrians**.
- Late Period (525-332 BCE)
 - There was then a period of **two hundred years** known as the **Late Period** (525-332 BCE) when there was a **brief flowering** of Egypt's power under native Egyptian rulers. It **ended in 332 BCE when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and built Alexandria**.
- Ptolemaic Period (323-30 BCE)
 - This was followed by the **Ptolemaic Period** (323-30 BCE) founded by Ptolemy I, one of Alexander's generals. This period included **seven queens called Cleopatra and ended with Cleopatra VII** and the **conquest of Egypt by the Romans**.

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