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To the degree that the Philistine threat was a factor in the Israelites’ ill-considered request for a king “like the nations,” their influence remained in Israel many years after they themselves had disappeared. The archaeological record in recent years has complemented the biblical record by illuminating their life and flourishing culture in ways that the biblical record did not.74

Recommended Reading


74. After this essay was completed, two books on the Philistines appeared: Nea Bierling, *Giving Goliath Its Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); and Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992). Both are popular overviews of the Philistines, the latter by two archaeologists who have directed digs at several Philistine sites. See my review of both books in *Archaeology in the Biblical World* 2.2 (1993).

Egyptians

James K. Hoffmeier

*Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.*
—Acts 7:22

Egypt, “the gift of the Nile,” is strategically located at the northeastern tip of Africa, bordering on Sinai and Palestine. Surrounded by deserts on the east and west and naturally defended by a series of cataracts in the south, Egypt is an oasis sustained by the Nile and somewhat cut off from the rest of the world.1

Strange as it may seem, the Egyptians had no single proper name for their land. Of their several expressions for Egypt, *tawy* (“the Two Lands”) is one of the most common, and the title *Lord of the Two Lands* was regularly used by the pharaoh. Northern Egypt, including the delta, is known as Lower Egypt, while southern Egypt, moving upstream along the Nile, is Upper Egypt. In predynastic Egypt (before 3100), Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt had varying material cultures and worshiped different deities. The Memphite Theology, containing a tradition about the unification of Egypt by a southern king, says that the new capital, Memphis, was the “Balance of the Two Lands” in which Upper and Lower Egypt had been weighed.2 The striking contrast between the rich soil of the Nile Valley and its delta and the vast stretches of desert resulted in the names *bmt* (“the Black Land”) and *dirt*


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("the Red Land"). Knw is probably the most frequently used expression by the indigenous population for Egypt.

The duality found in these terms is also reflected in the Old Testament name for Egypt, mišrayim, which is dual in form. Mišrayim occurs early in Genesis (1:6) as the name of the son of Ham, son of Noah, and is also used by other Semitic-speaking peoples in Ugaritic texts, the Amarna letters, and Assyrian records. The present-day Arabic word for Egypt is miṣr, a survival of the ancient Semitic root. The Egyptians also called their country ti-mri ("the Beloved Land"), which says something about their notoriously ethnocentric attitude toward their country.

The word Egypt has an interesting history, deriving from the name of the temple of the patron deity of Memphis: hwt k3 pth ("the temple of the Ka (spirit) of Ptah"). The earliest use of this term for Egypt is found in the Amarna letters (fourteenth century) as hktu-p’t pht. It came into Greek as Egyptos in the writings of Homer and Herodotus and then into English as Egypt. The term Coptic (Arabic qfr) is a survival of the same word.

Egypt's ideal location between the great cultures of Western Asia and Africa meant that it was destined to give up and take from these cultures, and thus it had significant impact on the history and culture of a vast region. While the Egyptians might well have been content to mind their farms and build their tombs for eternity, the richness of the Nile and the lush delta made it too attractive to Libyans in the west, Nubians to the south, and Semitic-speaking peoples in Syria-Palestine. Therefore, from the dawn of history, the pharaohs were called upon to defend Egypt. As early as Dynasty 1, Pharaoh Den's pictured bashing the head of a foreigner; an accompanying inscription reads, "The first occasions of smiting the easterners" (i.e., tribes from the Sinai). Throughout Egyptian history, the pharaoh was responsible for the defense of the two lands. Pharaohs from the earliest dynasties down to the Hellenistic period are regularly pictured in this defensive posture. Perhaps the last king to be shown defending Egypt in this manner is the Roman emperor Titus (A.D. 71–81). The king's role as warrior, as the incarnation of the god Horus (the "son of Re"), and as high priests of the ma-

or cult centers made the pharaoh extremely powerful, especially in the Old Kingdom (2700–2200).9

History

Prehistory (before 3100)

The final century of the fourth millennium saw the introduction of writing, thus demarcating history from prehistory. The Nile Valley was home to horticulturists before 7000, and humans in the western oases of Egypt can be traced back as early as the Lower Paleolithic period (ca. 250,000–90,000). These people left behind only stone implements (e.g., hand axes) as evidence of their presence in an area that was by no means a desert then. Middle Paleolithic times saw the introduction of the spear. The bow and arrow likely appeared toward the end of the Paleolithic (ca. 12,000–10,000), preceding its appearance in Europe by at least three thousand years.11 Ecological changes may have forced these hunter-gatherers to migrate toward the Nile Valley to establish the Neolithic farming communities of the succeeding period.12 In the late 1950s, evidence of the latest phase of Paleolithic humans in the Nile Valley was discovered at present-day el-Kab (ancient Nekheb). Carbon-14 dates for its three levels range from 6400 to 5980.13

The Neolithic revolution, marked by the introduction of animal husbandry, agriculture, and ceramics, burst on the scene in seventh-millennium Egypt around the same time as it did at Jemdet Nasr in Mesopotamia and at Jericho in Canaan. The next millenium saw the appearance of diverse cultures: from Merimde (at the base of the delta) and Faqum (just south of Cairo), along the shores of Lake Moeris or Birket el-Qarun to the important sites of el-Badara and Naqada in Upper Egypt. The presence of flint sickle blades, quern, domestic architecture, distinctive pottery, and burials witness a developing culture. Circular, oval, and square pits, sometimes covered by a small mound of sand or dirt, served as the final resting place for the early Egyptians. A wide

12. Ibid., 67.
range of grave goods—the basics for life—were placed with the dead. Most of the pottery, flints, jewelry, and other artifacts now in museums come from the cemeteries of this period.

The predynastic period, comprised of the Naqada I (Amratian) and II (Gerzean) periods (ca. 4000–3100), was a formative period, shaping cultural, religious, and political concepts that would appear fully developed at the dawn of history, i.e., divine kingship. Rudimentary writing began to appear in art forms toward the end of the fourth millennium.

The cultural differences between the north and south may have taken on hostile dimensions toward the end of this period, perhaps because of differences over irrigation rights. Karl Butzer argues that the emergence of a chieftain was due to a community's need to build, maintain, and control canals and irrigation projects. The Scorpion Macehead illustrates agricultural ceremonies over which the king, shown wearing the so-called White Crown of Upper Egypt, presided. Sometime around 3100, Narmer, perhaps the legendary Menes, the chieftain (or king) of Nekhen (Hirakonpolis), conquered the northern chieftain. The Narmer Palette may provide a pictorial record commemorating this event, although recent study of the macehead and palette questions this interpretation. Even if these objects do not commemorate Egypt's unification, there is little doubt that the south subdued the north, resulting in the apparent founding of Memphis by Menes.

The political unification of Egypt marks the beginning of Dynastic or Pharaonic Egypt. According to Manetho (a third-century Egyptian priest-historian), Menes was the founder of Dynasty I, a tradition that finds some support in earlier inscriptions. The name Menes occurs first on king lists at Seta II's temple in Abydos (1294–1279). The problem with determining whether Menes and Narmer are one and the same king lies in the use of two different royal names for the pharaoh as early as Dynasty I. Pharaoh, familiar to readers of the Bible, is a title derived from the expression fr fr meaning "great house" (i.e., the palace). Attested in the Old Kingdom, it is not applied to the king as a title until the New Kingdom (fifteenth century).

Archaic Period Dynasties I–II (3100–2700)

The archaic period, comprised of Dynastic I–II (ca. 3100–2700), witnessed the beginnings of significant royal cemeteries at Sakkarah (the necropolis at Memphis) and Abydos (the traditional spot of Osiris's burial). The burial structures, called "mastabas" after the Arabic word for mud benches, were large, single-story buildings, likely fashioned after domestic architecture. The superstructure served as a chapel to preserve the cult of the dead, while shafts contained the burial and vessels with food and other necessities for the afterlife. Writing is found on palettes, labels, seals, pots, and stone and wooden objects during the archaic period.

Contact between Egypt and Palestine is attested as early as Dynasty 1, and Narmer's name has been found on potsherds at Tell Arad and Tell Erani. On the Egyptian side, there is considerable inscripitional and pictorial evidence to show Egyptian interest in the Levant during Dynasties 1–6. Scholars continue to debate the nature of this contact: some regard it as military in nature, others maintain it was purely economic and peaceful. The latter stance dismisses as unhistorical Egyptian militaristic motifs (e.g., those on the Narmer Palette) and attaches no significance to epithets such as "Conqueror of Asia." However, the two positions are not mutually exclusive. Ensuring Egypt's economic interest in Sinai and Palestine may well have required the use of military force, which for propagandistic purposes could be stretched a bit. This same combination of military and economic interest existed in Nubia during this same time. And during the Middle Kingdom,

23. A review of all the sources is Donald B. Redford, "Egypt and Western Asia in the Old Kingdom," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986): 125–43.
26. Ibid., 12.
the height of Egyptian economic interest in Nubia coincided with a great military buildup to judge from the dozen or so massive forts in the second cataract area. The dynasty 2 appears to have been marred by a rebellion in the north, which resulted in warfare that was resolved when a northern princess, Nemathap, married Khahekhemwy, the last king of Dynasty 2. Resistance to political unity in Egypt arose periodically in the following centuries, resulting in the establishment of competing dynasties in the north, followed by warfare and then reunification.

**Old Kingdom, Dynasties 3–6 (2700–2200)**

The transition from the arcaic period to the Old Kingdom remains problematic since the lengths of the various dynasties remain subject to debate. The date 2700 is commonly conjectured for the beginning of Dynasty 3. 30 Manetho's 214 years for this dynasty have been reduced to 138 years by recent investigations. The Old Kingdom, Dynasties 3–6 (ca. 2700–2200), the pyramid era, saw Egypt rise to its cultural apex, to judge from the execution of the massive pyramids and accompanying complexes for the burial of the pharaoh. The concept of divine kingship had been shaped in the predynastic period, and from Dynasty 1 onward, the king bore a Horus name, Heru being the son of Re, the sun. During Dynasty 5 a further development on the royal titulary occurred: Son of Re became the new appellation that continued throughout and beyond pharaonic history. Because of the divine nature of the king, it is not surprising that the monarch could initiate massive building projects for the gods and for himself.

With the reign of Pharaoh Neferkhet, better known as Djoser, Egypt entered the pyramid age. His vizier Imhotep is credited with supervising the transition of Djoser's original mastaba into a pyramid. Surrounded by a wall that measures 1800 feet by 900 feet, he six-stepped, limestone pyramid stands 204 feet high. Many impressive chambers and chapels still stand within the funerary complex. Subsequent monarchs in Dynasty 3 built stepped-pyramids, but none approached that of Djoser's in size or quality (several are incomplete). While Djoser was believed by many to have been the founder of Dynasty 3, it now appears that at least one or more monarchs preceded him and experimented with pyramid structures.

The development of the true pyramid came about in Dynasty 4, possibly during the reign of Sneferu, although it is conceivable that the last monarch of Dynasty 3, Huni, Sneferu's father-in-law, built the first true pyramid. Sneferu constructed two large pyramids (and several subsidiary pyramids) at Dashur (south of Memphis). The southern pyramid is known as the " bent " pyramid because around half-way up the angle shifts from 54°31' to 43°21' (it stands just over 310 feet high). This somewhat experimental pyramid yielded to a second one, about the same height and approximately the same angle as the top of the bent pyramid.

The Palermo Stone (an early Egyptian king list) records that during Sneferu's reign of twenty-four years he conducted military campaigns against Libya and Nubia and that forty ships bearing cedar (probably from Byblos) reached Egypt. This and other evidence shows that Egypt continued to assert its interests in international affairs in the Mediterranean and Africa throughout the Old Kingdom.


the pyramid complex of valley temple, causeway, upper (or funerary) temple, and pyramid proper. The function and purpose of these structures, especially the valley and upper temples, continue to be discussed by Egyptologists. A funerary, cultic function seems most likely, despite recent theories suggesting that the function of the upper temple was to celebrate "the rituals of divine kingship." The great pyramid stood 481 feet high and its base covered 13.1 acres. One of the treasured discoveries from Khufu's complex is an impressive boat measuring 143 feet in length and 19.5 feet wide. It was probably used during the king's lifetime, but could have had afterlife functions too.

The recent discovery of tombs, living quarters, bakery, and various workshops sheds new light on the workers who built the pyramids. Such information helps us understand the human dimension of these massive building projects.

The arrangement of the Giza pyramids—moving southward from Khufu's tomb to those of Khafre and Menkaure (Hellenized, respectively, as Chephren and Mycerinus by Herodotus)—might lead one to think that these latter kings were the immediate successors of Khufu. However, some inscriptive evidence and the Turin Canon (a: Egyptian king list suggest that Redjedef succeeded Khufu for eight years before the accession of Khafre. The appearance of Redjedef's name on the roofing blocks of Khufu's boat pit suggests that he presided over the interment of his father, which is the role of the successor. But the hasty abandonment of his pyramid site at Abu Roash (five miles north of Giza) and the battered condition of his statues suggest that a rival party supporting Khafre was responsible for the damage and perhaps for Redjedef's demise.

Khafre's pyramid complex is the best preserved of the Giza group. Its valley temple is constructed of massive red granite blocks from Aswan, and it stands in the shadow of the sphinx, which is likely the work of Khafre's artisans. Statues of Khafre and Menkaure are among the most magnificently executed in ancient Egypt. Beyond these impressive burial complexes, little can be said about their accomplishments. Herodotus (2.124, 128) preserves the tradition that these two kings were tyrannical, but this may be the result of belief that Khufu employed one hundred thousand slaves to build his pyramid—an assessment that the Egyptian evidence does not support.

After Bakare's brief reign (two years according to the Turin Canon), Menkaure, generally thought to be a usurper, succeeded. His twenty-eight-year reign is marked by the construction of the third and smallest pyramid at Giza, standing only 204 feet in height. Some of Menkaure's famous statues, including the triads showing the king in the company of two deities, were found in his valley temple.

Menkaure's death signaled the virtual end of Dynasty 4. His successor, Shepseskaf, ruled but four years (so the Turin Canon) and was buried in a modest burial structure located between Dashur and Saqqara. What led to the demise of this once powerful dynasty and the establishment of Dynasty 5 is not certain. There may be a link between the dynasties

43. For a thorough study of the Giza group that reviews the literature and proposes a different interpretation, see Zahi Hawass, 'The Funerary Establishments of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure during the Old Kingdom' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987).
44. Ibid., xxv.
49. Smith, "Old Kingdom in Egypt," 173.
50. Ibid., 174.
51. Ibid., 175. Manetho's 63 years is likely exaggerated.
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Userkaf, the founder of the new dynasty, appears to have been the son of Neferhetepes, the daughter of the usurper king Redjedef, but the identity of his father remains a mystery. Since Userkaf's claim to the throne was questionable, a number of steps were taken to legitimize the new king. He married Khentkaues, probably the daughter of Menkaure; she in turn became the mother of two succeeding kings of Dynasty 5: Sahure and Neferirkare. Although it is not beyond dispute, the "Tale of Three Wonders" (Papyrus Westcar) might have been composed as propaganda to authenticate Userkaf's rule. Is the tale, the sage Djedi informs Khufu that a women is pregnant with triplets sired by Re. Djedi assures Kh.fu that these children will not come to the throne until Khufu's grandson has died. Because Papyrus Westcar is written in good Middle Egyptian, Wil. Am K. Simpson believes it dates to Dynasty 12, the early kings of which were masters of propagandistic literature. Since Papyrus Westcar would have little political advantage for these kings, one is inclined to think that the section of Papyrus Westcar that legitimized Fifth Dynasty monarchs is based on an Old Kingdom tradition.

Userkaf built his pyramid, which was poorly constructed and is not well preserved, at Sakkarra near the funerary complex of Eßer. After only a seven-year reign according to the "Urin Canon," he was succeeded by Sahure, who reigned twelve years. Sahure, Neferirkare, Neferede, and Neuserre all built their pyramid complexes at a new site, Abu Sir, situated between Giza and Saqqara. Neferirkare's pyramid originally stood around 223 feet in height and was the largest at that site. Poorer construction techniques and irregular sizes of blocks contributed to the dilapidated condition of the pyramids. Comparing the pyramids of Dynasties 4 and 5 might lead one to think that the power and prestige of the pharaoh had been somehow diminished. In one sense, this is true. John Wilson says, "In the Fourth Dynasty the pharaoh had dominated Re; in the Fifth Dynasty Re dominated the pharaoh." Wilson believes that the Re priesthood at Heliopolis was jealous for their patron deity, whose power was being overshadowed by the pharaoh. Evidence for this theory comes from two areas. Beginning with Userkaf, at least six of the nine monarchs built impressive sun temples near Abu Sir. And every king from Dynasty 5 onward used the epithet: "son of Re (sê n)," perhaps signaling a more humble stature for the king. Only two of these six sun temples have been discovered and excavated (those built by Userkaf and Neuserre, the other four are known only from contemporary textual evidence). Neuserre's sun temple is situated at Abu Gurob, about a mile north of Abu Sir. Built completely of limestone, its focal point was a "ben-ben" or truncated obelisk erected on a raised platform. The "ben-ben" stone was the sacred symbol of the shrine of Re at Heliopolis. The surviving reliefs from the sun temple are well executed. It is fair to say that the cost and energy of erecting the sun temples resulted in the smaller pyramid complexes for the royal burials. Concerning this economic reality of building both a personal burial structure and a sun temple, Sir Alan Gardiner says:

The strain upon his [the king's] resources must have been enormous more so since there is good evidence that the predecessors' foundations were not abandoned at their demise. It is not surprising that the cumulative responsibility proved too much for Iseri [Iseis, Dynasty 5, king 8], in whose time such enterprises came to an end.

Iseis abandoned both Abu Sir as a burial site and the practice of building sun temples. His humble pyramid complex was built closer to Sakkarra

55. Smith, *Old Kingdom in Egypt,* 178.
56. Ibid., 178–79.
61. Ibid.
63. Wilson, *Culture of Ancient Egypt,* 58.
64. Ibid., 87–88.
65. This epithet is used earlier by Khafre, but with Dynasty 5 its use is regular and not an option; see Smith, *Old Kingdom in Egypt,* 179–80; Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs,* 44–85.
67. The temple at Heliopolis was called *burnt mnb* ("Mansion of the Benefic"); see Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians,* rev. ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984), 108. This same name was later used by Akhenaten for one of his solar temples at Thebes and then at Amarna; see Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63, 71–78.
68. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs,* 85.
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and betrays his lengthy reign (probably more than the twenty-eight years assigned him in the Turin Canon). One text indicates that this king celebrated a Heb Sed, or renewal of kingship jubilee, which normally occurs on the thirtieth year.7

The last king of Dynasty 5, Unas, like Userkaf, the founder of the dynasty, moved his pyramid complex close to that of Djoser at Sakkara. The pyramid complexes of Dynasties 5 and 6 continued to use the layout established by Dynasty 4 at Giza. Unas's complex has two additional features: a 2,190-foot-long causeway and inscriptions engraved within the pyramid itself. Prior to the time of Unas, texts were likely recorded on papyri and have not survived.71 The walls of Unas's pyramid, along with those of a number of Sixth Dynasty kings and queens, are covered with what Egyptologists call Pyramidal Texts.72 Comprising the most important corpus of Egyptian religious literature from the Old Kingdom, the Pyramid Texts include liturgical spells used in the funerary cult and magical incantations for the king in his journey through the netherworld.

In contrast to Wilson's view, some believe that the power of the king was not reduced during Dynasty 5.73 However, funerary establishments of high-ranking Fifth Dynasty officials rival Old Kingdom royal tombs in size and quality (e.g., the mastaba of Vizier Ptahshepses at Abu Sir).74 During Dynasty 4, the viziership and other top administrative posts were held by the king's sons. But this practice comes to an end during Dynasty 5.75 Thus, while the king ideally was still the mythic son of Re and incarnation of Horus, power was no longer completely in the grasp of the royal family. This trend continues in Dynasty 6, as the kings continue to build humbler pyramid establishments in the Memphite region, still the seat of power.

Officials could build their mastabas near the kings they served or in their home districts or nomes. Two Sixth Dynasty officials, Weni and Harkhuf, chose to be buried in their home districts. These and other officials recounted in tombs and on steles their careers and service for their sovereign.

Weni traces his elevation from rather humble beginnings in Nekheb, modern el-Kab (south of Thebes), where he started as “custodian of the storehouse,” moved on to the roaring rooms of king Pepi I, and finally to chief justice and vizier. He boasts of hearing the case of Queen Weni Yant, who was implicated in a harem conspiracy against the king, but he is so preoccupied with relating the king's confidence in him that he never tells the outcome of the case. He led five military campaigns against troublesome nomads in the Siraiti and quarrying expeditions to Hatnub (in Middle Egypt), Elephantine (at the first cataract), and Nubia to obtain stone for the funerary estate of King Merenefer.

A scout who led trade expeditions to Nubia, Harkhuf also records an informative biography. He became the seal bearer of the king, making him something akin to the secretary of commerce. He was specially decorated by the youthful Pharaoh Pepi II for bringing an African papyrus to Egypt. Included in Harkhuf's tomb as part of his biography, the king's letter instructs Harkhuf to ferry the papyrus safely to Egypt:

Some north to the residence at once! Hurry and bring with you this papyrus whom you brought from the land of the horizon-dwellers live, male, and male genitor, for the dances of the gods, to glad the heart, to delight the heart of King Neferefre [Pepi II] who lives forever! When he goes down with you into the ship, get worthy men to be around him deck, lest he fall into the water! When he lies down at night, get worthy men to lie around him in his tent. Inspect [him] ten times at night.76

This somewhat humorous anecdote shows the human side of the young king. As we move through Dynasty 6, the influence of the governors increased. In part, because the nomarch's office became hereditary rather than being by royal appointment (which usually guaranteed loyalty to the crown).77

The reign of Pepi II, the last significant ruler of Dynasty 6, exacerbated the problem.78 When crowned, he was but a child, and in his first years he was a smile old man. Both ends of his rear-century-long reign, when royal power was weak, provided golden opportunities for the nomarch to assert their power.79 Further influence was gained when the Sixth Dynasty kings made

70. Smith, "Old Kingdom in Egypt," 36.
71. An important discovery of several unearthy liturgical papyri from Dynasty 5 may hold the clue to the origin of the Pyramid Texts and provide other spells not attested in the standard critical edition (see n. 72). These papyri are being studied by Jean-Étienne de Paris.
75. Trigger et al., Ancient Egypt, 77.
76. Lichthein, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1:27.
78. The Turin Canon assigns 90+ years to him, which makes Mentuhotep's 59 years possible; see Gardner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 436.
various temple estates tax exempt. While this may have had a short-term benefit of curing favor with monarchs and regional cult centers, it weakened the economic and political base of the crown. Pepi II's long reign posed another serious dilemma; he survived his heirs. The reign of Nitocris, a woman, marked the end of both Dynasty 6 and the Old Kingdom.41

First Intermediate Period, Dynasties 7-10 (2200-2000)

Egypt then plunged into a dark age known as the First Intermediate period.42 Manetho's description of Dynasty 7 suggests confusion and uncertainty: "Seven kings of Memphis, who reigned for seventy days."43 The little knowledge we have of Manetho's Dynasty 8 comes from the names of its monarchs recorded by the Abdos King List. It is customary to allot forty to fifty years for Dynasties 7 and 8, but this is by no means certain.44 Tombs and funerary steles surviving from this period furnish little historical information.45

The Turin Canon shows no separation between Dynasty 9 and Dynasty 10, together commonly called the Heracleopolitan period. During these dynasties, several kings bear the name Khety, the apparent founder of the dynasty. Little is known about Heracleopolis, which has been minimally excavated in recent years.46 The dark age did not end until Dynasty 11, when Montuhotep II, a Theban king, reunited Egypt under his rule.47

Middle or classical Egypt an replaced Old Egyptian as the vernacular during the First Intermediate period, and it remained the standard well into Dynasty 18 (ca. fourteenth century) when Late Egyptian began to emerge.48 One

piece of literature composed in this era is "The Eloquent Peasant," which portrays a resident of the Wadi en-Natrun oasis coming to Heracleopolis to trade at the capital.49 En route, the peasant is robbed of his goods, and he lodges a complaint with the high steward, Rensu, who in turn makes Pharaoh Nebkaure aware of the situation.50 The peasant's eloquent speeches on justice (maat) may have more to do with Egyptian rhetoric than with a historical description of the state of affairs.51

"Wisdom for Merykare," a didactic work by Merykare's father, Meryibre Kheti, provides further evidence of civil strife between Heracleopolis and Thebes, the new emerging power.52 The king confesses,

Lo, a shameful deed occurred in my time;
The Nome of This was ravaged;
Though it happened through my doing,
I learned it after it was done.53

This event is probably what prompted the king to say earlier:

Egypt fought in the graveyard,
Destroying tombs in vengeful destruction.
As I did it, so it happened,
As is done to one who strays from god's path.
Do not deal evily with the Souteland . . .
I attacked This 'straight to its southern border 'at Taut',
I engulfed it like a flood,
King Meryibre, justified, had not done it;
Be merciful on account of it,
Renew the treaties.54

While caution is needed in extracting history from ancient literature, it is hard to believe that the king would admit wrongdoing if it were not true.55 That a monarch would make such a confession shows how far the power and prestige of kingship had fallen. Accepting the historicity of Meryibre's state-

81. Manetho records Nitocris's reign as twelve years in duration; her reign (but not its length) is attested on the reliable Turin Canon. See Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 436.
82. Recent historians avoid the term de-k3 age for the First Intermediate period since some of the finest ancient Egyptian literature comes from this time. Consequently, dark age should be used to describe our lack of knowledge about the political or royal history, not the culture of this period.
83. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 437.
84. Smith, "Old Kingdom in Egypt," 19.
88. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1:69-84.
89. William C. Hayes, "The Middle Kingdom in Egypt," in CAH 3/4:46, suggests that this is Khety II, the fourth king of this dynasty.
92. Ibid., 135.
93. Ibid., 132.
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The reason for the hostility could have been economic. Gardiner suggests that trade from the south was able to flow north because of this incursion. The Heracleopolitan kings certainly would have felt squeezed between powerful southern monarchs and a significant Asian population in the delta that apparently had infiltrated the region during the waning years of Dynasty 6. In "Wisdom for Menkare" there is a specific reference to the foreign presence to the north. The instruction may reflect a push north and south to provide the Middle Egyptian kingdom with breathing room.

One of the most important developments in the First Intermediate period is the rise of Thebes (in modern Luxor). In the Old Kingdom, it was "no more than an insignificant village stretching along the eastern bank of the Nile." During the New Kingdom, it rivaled Memphis in political and religious power. Under the energetic leadership of several monarchs, Thebes engaged Heracleopolis and emerged as the winner.

Middle Kingdom, Dynasties 11-13 (2000-1700)

The fifth king of Dynasty 11, Montuhotep II Nebhepetre, either began or continued a movement north to secure Middle Egypt under his control. Bearing the name of the Theban god Montu, this king had three different Horus names, indicating his aspirations and accomplishments as the "uniter of the Two Lands": Sakkehityawy ("One who makes the heart of the Two Lands live"), used at his coronation in 2131; Neferheredj ("Lord or possessor of the White Crown"; year 14), which may have signaled his northward march to gain control of Upper Egypt; and Sernetawy ("Uniter of the Two Lands"; year 39), indicating the reunification of Egypt and the end of the First Intermediate period. Thus, a little after the midpoint in his lengthy fifty-one-year reign, around 2000, the Middle Kingdom began.

Montuhotep II followed the lead of his predecessors in establishing his funerary estate in the area of western Thebes at Deir el-Bahri. The size of his magnificent funerary temple is testimony to the success of his reign and the revitalization of Egypt. Epigraphic evidence suggests that he moved south below the first cataract, Egypt's southern border, and possibly into Sinai to reassert Egyptian influence.

An expedition to quarry stone for the sarcophagus of Montuhotep IV Nebawyre left inscriptions at Wadi Hammamat, east of Copsos. Heading up the expedition was the mayor of Thebes and Montuhotep IV's vizier, Amenemhet, who is almost certainly the founder of Dynasty 12. Nothing suggests that Amenemhet usurped the throne; rather, this energetic official seemed most qualified to fill a vacancy. Aware of his nonroyal pedigree, Amenemhet (ca. 1963–1534) took a number of steps to secure his throne and the place of his successors:

1. He utilized propagandistic literature to ensure his legitimacy. The "Prophecy of Neferti," set in the court of Sneferu (Dynasty 4), proclaims that after a period of instability and chaos, Ameny (short for Amenemhet) would become king, dispel the anarchy, and establish maat (order and justice).

2. He secured Egypt's frontiers by building forts in Nubia and on Egypt's northeastern frontier. Neferti prophesied that Ameny would build "the Walls of the Ruler," which is the name given to the military posts mentioned in the "Tale of Sinuhe."

3. He initiated the practice of regency with the crown prince to secure a dynastic succession.

95. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 96.
96. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1:104.
98. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 96.
99. The time from Montuhotep I through Intef III is approximately 2106-2133, according to Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Supplementary Notes on 'The Basics of Egyptian Chronology,'" in High, Middle or Late? Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Göttingen 20th-22nd August 1987, ed. Paul Aström (Göttingen: Aströms, 1989). I thank Prof. Kitchen for providing me with a prepublication typescript of this article.
100. Hayes, Middle Kingdom in Egypt, 479-80.
101. Ibid., 480.
102. For a translation, see Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1:113-15.
103. Hallo and Simpson, Ancient Near East, 244.
105. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1143. Concerning the use of literature for political propaganda, see note 59.
106. For a translation of Sinuhe, see Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1:222-35. and ANET 18-22. The mention of the "Walls of the Ruler" is found in line 106.5. For the Nubian evidence, see Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 136; and Trigger, "Reasons for the Construction."
4. He established a new capital at Itjavy ("Seizer [i.e., Amenemhet of the Two Lands"] (modern Lish). It remained the capital into Dynasty 13.\textsuperscript{108}

5. He reduced the power of the powerful nomarchs and reassigned neme boundaries to their previous position. The office of nomarch remained hereditary, but now allegiance was clearly to the crown, and the governors were obliged to gather taxes in their district for the king.\textsuperscript{109}

These policies contributed to making Dynasty 12 one of Egypt's most stable, peaceful, and prosperous periods. Thanks to vigorous international trade, the Middle Kingdom was a period of considerable wealth, and Egypt began to wield more influence in the Levant.\textsuperscript{110} As early as the second half of Dynasty 11, trade via the Red Sea was reopened.\textsuperscript{111} There was significant contact with the Levant (principally Bublos) and the Aegean. Mining expeditions to Sinai were a regular feature of the Middle Kingdom.\textsuperscript{112}

At his death after a reign of nearly thirty years, Amenemhet was laid to rest in a pyramid at Lish.\textsuperscript{13} The pyramid complexes of Dynasty 12 follow the pattern popular at the end of Dynasty 6. In fact, Senusert I's establishment has been called "a near facsimile of that of Pepy II."\textsuperscript{118}

Senusert I, the second king of Dynasty 12, is portrayed as an effective ruler and warrior in the "Thief of Sina" probably written on his behalf for propagandistic purposes.\textsuperscript{115} Although Karnak temple in Thebes may have its origin in Dynasty 11, its beautiful preserved White Chapel of Senusert I stands as a tribute to the god Amon, who emerged during this period as the preeminent deity in Egypt.\textsuperscript{116} The same "Amenemhet ("Amon is foremost"), borne by four monarchs during Dynasty 12, reflects his new status. Of the new temple built in Heliopolis by Senusert, today only a single obelisk stands surrounded by corn fields as a memory of its past glory.\textsuperscript{117} Senusert I won a complete victory in Lower Nubia in his eighteenth year and established an Egyptian military presence as far south as Abu el near the second cataract and perhaps as far south as Kerma at the third cataract.\textsuperscript{118}

Under Senusert III (1862–1843), the fifth pharaoh of Dynasty 12, the fortress building in Nubia reached its zenith.\textsuperscript{119} His stele from the Semna fortress near the third cataract indicates that he considered this spot Egypt's southern boundary.\textsuperscript{120} More than a dozen massive forts in this area defended Egypt's southern frontier and safeguarded its economic interests.\textsuperscript{121}

Amenemhet III ruled nearly a half-century (1843–1798). With Egypt militarily secure and economically prosperous, Amenemhet ruled Egypt during its greatest prosperity, surpassed perhaps only by the New Kingdom. No fewer than fifty-nine Sinai inscriptions attest to his acquisition of turquoise for jewelry.\textsuperscript{122}

To Amenemhet III goes the credit for completing a land-reclamation project begun under Senusert II.\textsuperscript{123} Some 17,000 acres of marshland were drained and made arable in the Fayum by diverting the Nile via channels. Amenemhet built energetically in this area: several temples, colossal statues of himself, and two pyramids. While this enduring and vibrant reign was a boon for Egypt in many ways, the "long life" of the monarch, as happened with Pepi II in Dynasty 6, contributed to the demise of the dynasty Amenemhet IV must have been an old man when he came to the throne, for he reigned only nine years and was succeeded by Sobekhor, a female coregent, who ruled independently for three years.\textsuperscript{124}

Historians debate whether the following dynasty (13) was the end of the Middle Kingdom or the beginning of the Second Intermediate period. While a cultural continuity is evident and the royal family that succeeded the house of Amenemhet remained at Lish, the power of the court began to wane toward the end of Dynasty 13, when royal kings arose in opposition to...
Anatolia, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt

Irrigation. A contributing factor may have been hard economic times brought on by inconsistencies in the Nile, as Cyril Alred observes:

Fluctuating climatic conditions seem to have returned to Egypt and caused irregularities in the flow of the Nile. High floods, slow to fill and allow seed be sown at the proper time, were as disastrous in their effects as feeble inundations. The manifest inability of the pharaoh to control the Nile may have been the chief reason for another slump in the prestige of the kingship, which is apparent throughout the Thirteenth Dynasty, with a host of pharaohs each ruling in obscurity for a short time and leaving few monuments behind him. 126

Second Intermediate Period, Dynasties 14–17 (1703–1540)

By the end of Dynasty 13, Egypt had slipped into its second major period of political turmoil, an “intermediate” period between the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom, also described as the “Hyksos period” because Dynasties 15–17 were ruled by the Hyksos according to Manetho. “Who are the Hyksos? and where did they come from?” are questions that have vexed historians for centuries. Jewish historian Josephus (Against Apion 1:75, 78) quotes Manetho:

Turimaus. In his reign, I know not why, a blast of God’s displeasure broke upon us. A people of ignoble origin from the east, whose coming was unforeseen, had the audacity to invade the country, which they mastered by main force without difficulty or even a battle. . . . Having discovered in the Sphoite nome a city very favorably situated on the east of the Bubastis arm of the river, called after some ancient theological tradition Avaris.

Manetho interpreted the term Hyksos to mean “king-shepherds,” which reflects a garbled understanding of the Semitic term “foreign ruler[s],” which indeed they were. Manetho’s claim of a Hyksos invasion and subjugation of Egypt is commonly interpreted this way: owing to the presence of Asiatics (i.e., Semitic-speaking people from Syria-Palestine) and the breakdown of Egypt’s defenses, more people infiltrated from the Levant and eventually took over. 127 For example, Manfred Bietak, the excavator of Tell ed-Dab’a (most likely Avaris), suggests “a k.ap of exodus by BAKITES to the Eastern Delta, particularly to Tell ed-Dab’a, where their own people had already strongly established themselves or most advantageous terms against the background of the declining 13th Dynasty.” On the other hand, Donald B. Redford vigorously argues for a genuine foreign invasion that swept the Hyksos to power, thus supporting the Manethonian tradition. 128

The nature of the Hyksos arrival remains unresolved, but there is a growing consensus that their place of origin was Syria-Palestine. 129 Based on ceramic evidence, Bietak believes it could be Phoenicia (i.e., the Byblos region). 130 And whether they came by force or by default, the precise date of the beginning of Hyksos rule also remains problematic. However, the dating of their expulsion from Egypt is well established. Ahmose I ascended to the throne in Thebes around 1550, 131 but his defeat of Avaris did not occur until his fifteenth regnal year (1535). 132 According to Redford’s understanding of the Turin Canon, only 108 years can be accounted for and only eight true kings can be correlated between the king lists and epigraphic remains. 133 Thus it appears that the Hyksos domination of Egypt during the Second Intermediate period was just over a century in length.

New Kingdom, Dynasties 18–20 (1550–1100)

The liberation of Egypt and its eventual reunification under Ahmose I appear to go back to the Seventeenth Dynasty Theban ruler Seqenenre Tao II. The Late Egyptian “Story of Apophis and Seqenenre” suggests that hostilities toward the north began with this king. This may be confirmed by the shattered remains of Seqenenre’s skull, careful investigation of which reveals wounds consistent with those caused by Hyksos weapons. 134 His legacy as a freedom

129. Redford, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel, 114–15.
133. 133. Redford, Egypt, Canaan and Israel, 106–1.
fighter was passed to his son Kamose: Karnak steles boast of Kamose's success against Apophis at Avaris. Since it was left to Akhnaton to dislodge the Hyksos from Avaris, it appears that Kamose had only marginal success, perhaps reclaiming areas of Middle Egypt under Hyksos control. If Claude Vandersleyen is correct in allotting four years until Akhnaton achieved victory, then the time from Seqenenre's initial attempts until the Hyksos defeat might have taken decades. Because of his successful conquests, Akhnaton is generally credited with being the founder of Dynasty 18 (even though he is related to the Theban Dynasty 17) and the New Kingdom.

For the past half century it has been thought that Akhnaton and his successors, especially Amenhotep I and Thutmose I, were largely responsible for bringing the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine to a conclusion, with the devastation of twenty or more major city-states. However, in the past decade serious questions have been raised about this interpretation of the Egyptian historical records and the Palestinian archaeological record. While the traditional explanation for the end of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine is certainly plausible, it lacks the support of Egyptian sources. My challenge of the generally accepted understanding of the end of the Middle Bronze Age to scotch off a heated discussion. The general consensus is that the Egyptians tried to


137. Vandervelde, Les Guerres d'Amour, 40.


control the coastal areas (which permitted the empire-minded monarchs of Dynasty 18 to have access to key ports) and the Via Maris (the coastal highway) up to Phoenicia and points east into Syria. There is little archeological and no epigraphic evidence to place Egyptian military actions in the hill country of Ephraim and Judah. Thutmose I and Thutmose III campaigned north to the Euphrates, and the latter crossed the great river to take on the Mitanni, whose rising power posed a threat to Egyptian hegemony in the Levant.

Egypt's empire extended south into Nubia and north into Syria-Palestine. Just as Egypt had virtually colonized Nubia during the Middle Kingdom, the Theban kings now realized the economic benefits of once again controlling Nubia. As early as Ahmose I's reign, Egyptian troops marched south to reassert Egyptian influence, and Amenhotep I concentrated on securing Ahmose's gains. Various titles—"King's Son of Cush," "Commandant of (Fort) Buhen," and "Overseer of Southern Lands"—indicate a significant bureaucracy governing Nubia.

Before Thutmose III was able to secure the throne and establish Egypt's empire, he had to watch from the sidelines as coregent: while his aunt, Hatshepsut, wife of Thutmose II and daughter of Thutmose I, ruled for twenty-one years. For two decades Egypt enjoyed prosperity and peace under this dowager queen. She built extensively at Karnak in the Theban area, including temples and two towering 97-foot obelisks made of single pieces of granite. The one that still stands is inscribed with all the titles of kingship and with her speech to the patron of Thebes, Amen, for whom she built. Her impressive funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri in western Thebes records many of her achievements, including a celebrated expedition to the mysterious land of Punt to obtain gold and incense.

Only a year or weeks after Hatshepsut's demise, Thutmose III launched his first campaign into western Asia because of a rebellious coalition rallied at Megiddo by the king of Kadesh. Berveen his twenty-second and forty-

42. Hoffmeier, "Reconsidering Egypt's Part," 89.

43. For a documentation of these sources, see ibid., 182–88; Donald R. Redford, "A Gate Inscription from Karnak and Egyptian Involvement in Western Asia during its Early 18th Dynasty," Journal of the American Oriental Society 97 (1977): 270–77; idem, "Contact Between Egypt and Jordan," 115–19; idem, Egypt, Canaan and Israel, 138–40.

44. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 69–70.


second regnal years, Thutmose III sent expeditions into the Levant nearly every year to collect taxes or to establish order. Thutmose III’s annals were inscribed on the walls of his Karnak temple at Thebes.\textsuperscript{149}

Under the succeeding kings, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, and Amenhotep III, Egypt’s interests in Syria—Palestine and Nubia were maintained, and commercial contact with the Aegean was established. The resulting booty, tribute, and trade brought incredible wealth and prosperity to Egypt. Beginning with Thutmose I, the kings of the New Kingdom were buried in lavishly decorated tombs in the Valley of the Kings in western Thebes, while massive funerary temples and estates were built at the edge of the food plain. Little remains of the mortuary establishments of the early Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs in this area. Of Amenhotep III’s temple, only the famous Colossi of Memnon (actually statues of Amenhetep III) stand at what was the entrance to his temple, while a few blocks are found at the rear of the temple along with a large stela that chronicled his many building accomplishments.\textsuperscript{150} During Amenhotep III’s thirty-eight-year reign, he built a new palace at Malqata (western Thebes), an adjacent lake (or harbor) that measured 1,200 feet by 1,200 feet,\textsuperscript{151} and temples at Karnak, Luxor, and Nubia. Amenhotep III’s political marriages saw Mitanni and Babylonian princesses come to Egypt. While the practice of diplomatic marriage preceded this period, during Dynasties 18 and 19 it was especially used to solidify diplomatic ties throughout the realm.\textsuperscript{152}

Born during this heyday of the empire period, Amenhotep IV succeeded his father around 1353. Shortly after his accession he changed his name to Akhenaten and elevated Aten, the visible image of the sun, to a place of supremacy and closed the temples of other deities. During his first five years he built an extensive temple complex for Aten at Karnak called pr-ittu (“the domain of the Aten”). After his death, these temples were unceremoniously dismantled and many of the blocks reused in other building projects.\textsuperscript{153}


\textsuperscript{150} Liechtein, \textit{Ancient Egyptian Literature}, 2:43–48.

\textsuperscript{151} Gardiner, \textit{Egypt of the Pharaohs}, 265–7.


Karnak temples were found in 1975–76 in the area where a number of colossal statues of Akhenaten had been discovered in 1922.\textsuperscript{154} For about a decade Akhenaten relocated his capital to what is now modern El-Amarna, a site north of Thebes in Middle Egypt. According to the boundary stones that surrounded this capital (inscribed in his sixth year), he dedicated this area to Aten and declared his intention to stay there the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{155}

Irrespective of whether Akhenaten was a monotheist, his expression of Aten worship had some unique elements (as the famous “Hyrum to Aten” attests), but it drew largely on Old Kingdom solar theology.\textsuperscript{156} Akhenaten’s concern with religious matters and building projects may have prevented his maintaining firm control in Palestine, since his “preoccupation in his intellectual revolution permitted . . . disintegration.”\textsuperscript{157} To be sure, the disintegration began as early as Amenhotep II; nevertheless, Akhenaten is blamed for letting the empire slip away. The Amarna letters from Egyptian vassal-kings in Palestine and Syria and from rulers in Anatolia and Mesopotamia indicate interneic strife in the Levant.\textsuperscript{158} Since we do not have the Egyptian responses to these requests for help, it is generally assumed that Akhenaten did nothing.\textsuperscript{159} However, Alan R. Schulman maintains that Akhenaten initiated military activity beyond Egypt’s borders,\textsuperscript{160} a view reinforced by the discovery of reliefs at Karnak showing battle scenes with Hittites.\textsuperscript{161} Akhenaten apparently was not negligent in maintaining the empire, but sent his general, Horemhab, on military missions.

\textsuperscript{154} Redford, \textit{Akhenaten the Heretic King}, 89.

\textsuperscript{155} Liechtein, \textit{Ancient Egyptian Literature}, 2:48–51.

\textsuperscript{156} James K. Hoffmeier, “Hymns to Aten: The Antecedents and Implications,” in \textit{Tell el-Amarna}, 1887–98, ed. Barry Beitzel and Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming). This volume will contain many essays on the Amarna period in Egypt and Palestine, including several papers dealing with the famous Amarna letters.

\textsuperscript{157} Wilson, \textit{Culture of Ancient Egypt}, 230.


\textsuperscript{161} Alan R. Schulman, “Hittites, Felphets and Amarna: Akhenaten’s First Hittite War,” in \textit{Akhenaten Temple Project}, vol. 2, ed. Donald B. Redford, \textit{Aegypti Texta Propositiones} 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 53–79. Schulman firmly believes that the reliefs belong to Akhenaten, although he refers to scholars who maintain that they belong to Tutankhamun.
Because Akhenaten was branded a heretic, much information about him and his immediate successors (Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun, and Ay) has been lost. King lists (e.g., the Abydos list) skip over these four kings. In the same way that Akhenaten and his iconoclastic followers hacked out the name of Amon and other gods from monuments, so Horemhab eradicated the memory of the Amau-men kings. Tutankhamun apparently sought to restore relations with the Amon priests in Thebes and reopen the temples. By the time Tutankhamun died in 1336 BC, the practice of burying kings in the Valley of the Kings (traced to Thutmose I) continued with Rameses I down to the end of Dynasty 20 in 1069.

Set I was an energetic king who placed Egypt on a track like his empire-minded predecessors Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. His building at Karnak included work on the famed Hypostyle Hall, which was begun under Horemhab and continued briefly under Rameses I. One of its walls records numerous scenes of Seti’s military campaigns into Syria-Palestine. Seti built a summer palace at Avaris in the shadow of the old Hyskos capital. He also built a magnificent cenotaph at Abydos, which contains the famous Abydos King List.

Rameses II (the Great) succeeded Seti and went on to become one of Egypt’s most celebrated monarchs and one of its most prolific builders. Characterized by their grand size, his temples can be found from the delta to Nubia, including the famous Abu Simbel temples that had to be relocated during the Nubian salvage campaign in the 1960s. While Thebes and Memphis remained capitals, Rameses built a new capital just northeast of Seti’s summer palace and named it Pi-Ramesses ("the house [or domain] of Rameses"). This name is likely behind the toponym Rameses in Exodus 1:11. By locating his capital in the northeast delta, Rameses was able to keep a close watch on affairs in western Asia, which would become an epicenter of military activity.

In Rameses’ fourth year he campaigned in Palestine, followed the next year by the famous Battle of Kadesh against the armies of Hittushili III, the

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162. Tutankhamun's stela documenting his restoration was usurped by Horemhab; see ANET 251-52.
165. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 249, 255.
166. For a historical interpretation of these reliefs, see W. J. Murnane, The Road to Kadesh: A Historical Interpretation of the Battle Reliefs of King Sety I at Karnak, 2d ed., Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 42 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1990).
Hittite king—an event well documented in Egyptian sources.\textsuperscript{171} The Near
military disaster for Ramesses and his forces was turned into a victory by propa-
gandistic rhetoric and monumental battle scenes at the Luxor temple, the
Ramessuem (his mortuary temple in western Thebes), and Abu Simbel. Relations
remained cool between the two superpowers for over a decade, but
gradually warmed up. The rising power of Assyria prompted Hattushili to
take a conciliatory approach with Egypt, which led to a treaty with Ramesses
and eventually a diplomatic marriage between the Hittite and Egyptian
courts.\textsuperscript{172}

Ramesses outlived his first twelve sons (he ruled into his sixty-seventh
year) and was succeeded by Merenptah, the thirteenth, who was in his fifties
when crowned.\textsuperscript{173} Despite his age, he apparently led the campaign into
Canaan recorded on the famous Israel Stele—the earliest nonbiblical
attestation of Israel.\textsuperscript{174} Frank Yurco suggests that a sequence of Karnak reliefs
is a pictorial version of the renowned stele.\textsuperscript{175} One of the vignettes, Yurco
believes, portrays the Israelite is Canaanite attire and coiffure.

After Merenptah’s death, Dynasty 19 limped along with several kings
whose combine reigns lasted only thirty years and then concluded with
Queen Tewosret. The Ramesside family, it appears, died out, bringing the
dynasty to an end and resulting in the emergence of Dynasty 20. According to
the Great Harris Papyrus, Setnakht, the founder of Dynasty 20, claims that
he took control of Egypt after a period of social upheaval in which “Isru the
Asian was with them as chief.”\textsuperscript{176} Isru may have been Bay, a Syrian who
bore the title Chancellors of the Entire Land,\textsuperscript{177} but it is unclear whether he
ruled before or after Tewosret.

\textsuperscript{171} Alan H. Gardiner, The Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 1960); Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 2:57–72.

172. Kitchen, Ptolemy Triumphant, 74–81. For Hittite and Egyptian versions of the treaty,
see Ernst F. Weidner, Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasiern, Boghazköy Studies 8–9 (Leipzig:
Hinrichs, 1923), 11–23; and Kenneth A. Kitchen, Ramasese Inscriptions (Oxford: Blackwell,
Egypt in 1245, but Ramesses did not reciprocate; see Kitchen, Ptolemy Triumphant, 83–88.
This one-sided policy of welcoming foreign princesses to Egypt but not sending the pharaoh’s
dughters abroad continued until the time of Solomon I Kings 4:1; see Schulten, “Diplomat
marriage.”


174. William M. F. Petrie, Six Temples at Thebes (London: Quichel, 1897), pls. xiii–xiv;
for a translation, see Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 2:74–77.

175. Frank Yurco, “Merenptah’s Canaan Campaign,” Journal of the American Research
Center in Egypt 23 (1986): 189–215; idem “3,200-Year-Old Picture of Israelites Found in


177. Ibid., 240–41.

Rameses III is the only Twentieth Dynasty monarch to distinguish himself
by his building projects and international affairs. His mortuary temple at
Medinet Habu in western Thebes is the best surviving of New Kingdom funerary
estates. The inscriptions and scenes provide a detailed report of much of
his reign, including extensive reliefs of the sea Peoples invasion, which
included the biblical Philistines.\textsuperscript{178} While Egypt was able to defend itself
against this invasion, it never really recovered. The debate or whether the
Egyptians relocated the Philistines to the coastal area of Canaan or whether
they settled there on their own accord has recently been rekindled.\textsuperscript{179} While
an Egyptian presence in Palestine is attested as late as the time of Ramesses
VI (1143–1136), its influence was clearly beginning to wane.\textsuperscript{180}

Troubled by strikes and inflation at home toward the end of Ramesses III’s
reign,\textsuperscript{181} Dynasty 20 quickly declined. Before the death of Ramesses XI in
1065, Herihor, the priest of Amun and “commander of the army,” was the
de facto ruler in Thebes.\textsuperscript{182} Meanwhile in the north, Smendes established a
rival dynasty (Manetho’s Twenty-first) in Tanis, a newly founded city.
With this political bifurcation, Egypt entered the so-called Third Intermedi-
ate period. Except for a few futile attempts during the next centuries by Necho
II and Apries, Egypt would never again be a dominant force in the Near East.
The Late Egyptian “Tale of Wenaamon” well reflects this situation.\textsuperscript{184} Wena-
amon, a Theban official, confers with Smendes in Tanis before embarking for
Phoenicia to buy timber. Upon his arrival in Byblos, he is rudely treated by the
prince. After being snubbed for twenty-nine days, Wenaamon is finally
granted an audience, thanks to the divine intervention of Amun via an
ecstatic utterance by a young man. The treatment of this royal envoy shows that
Egypt was no longer held in high esteem in the Levant. The once-proud empire
could be aptly called “that splintered remnant of a staff” by the Assyrian em-
peror Sennacherib in 701 (2 Kings 18:21).

178. Medinet Habu, 4 vols., Oriental Institute Publications 8, 9, 23, 51 (Chicago: Oriental
Institute, 1930–40).

179. Bryant G. Wood, “The Philistines Enter Canaan—Were They Egyptian Lackeys or In
vading Conquerors,” Biblical Archaeology Review 7.6 (1991): 44–52; and Itamar Singer,
“How, Did the Philistines Enter Canaan? A Rejoinder,” Biblical Archaeology Review 18.6
(1992): 44–46. See also the entry “Philistines” in this volume.


ground Information on the Strikes of Year 29 of Ramses III,” Oriens Aegyptus 18 (1979):
301–8.


183. Kenneth A. Kitchen, The Third Intermediate Period (1100–650 bc.2, ed. (War-

Third Intermediate Period and Beyond (1000 to the Christian Era)

Egypt was politically divided for much of the Third Intermediate period, except for parts of Dynasty 22, all of Dynasty 26, and brief intervals between foreign conquests. Undoubtedly because of Egypt's weakness during this time, Israel's monarchy was able to flourish and, for a short time, become a major power in the Levant.

Under the energetic Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak), Egypt was reunited, even as far south as Thebes, by his fifth year. He was of Libyan origin and hailed from the delta city of Bubastis, but Tanis remained his capital. In his penultimate year, Shoshenq invaded Palestine, received tribute from Rehoboam in Jerusalem (1 Kings 14:21), and attacked the northern kingdom of Israel.

Dynasties 23 and 24 were of little significance and, in fact, overlapped toward the end of the eighth century. Dynasty 25 was made up of Cushite kings from Nubia. For reasons that remain unclear, Piankhy (or Pyc) sailed north from Napata (just above the fourth cataract), conquered Egypt, and claimed to be the legitimate pharaoh. His campaign is well documented in the annalistic style of the New Kingdom. After uniting Egypt, Piankhy returned to Napata. Perhaps as a result of seeing the Egyptian pyramids, Piankhy abandoned the mastaba and used a small pyramid as his burial structure, a practice continued by his successors.

Dynasties 25 and 26 were characterized by an artistic and literary renaissance. Pyramid and Coffin texts from the Old and Middle Kingdoms were utilized as coffins and in tombs of this period. In the Memphite Theology on the famous black stone now in the British Museum, Shabako (Piankhy's successor) states, "This writing was copied out anew... or his majesty found it to be a work of the ancestors which was worn from, so that it could not be understood from beginning to end." This renewed interest in the literature of the past was not limited to Egypt, but is also found in Assyria (as the discovery of Ashurbanipal's library attests).

Egyptians

196. Gardner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 352.
blinding of Assyria and the rise of Babylon, Necho II saw his chance to reassert Egyptian influence in Syria-Palestine, and he marched to the Euphrates to stake his claim. En route, he was opposed by King Josiah of Judah, who was killed at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29-30). From 609 to 605, Egyptian troops occupied Carchemish and manipulated events in Judah. But with the coronation of Nebuchadnezzar, the new Babylonian king moved quickly to oust the Egyptian garrison, thus opening the way to control Palestine and eventually invade Egypt in 568.

Under Cambyses, Egypt was invaded and made a Persian satrapy from 522 to 404. During the Persian era, the Matenoth gesture of the temples continued to be built and decorated in the Egyptian artistic tradition, and the name of Darius appears on the sarcophagi of the Apis bull at Sakkara. Inscriptions record that Cambyses ordered the removal of statues from the temple precincts of Neith and Isis, which indicates Persian support for Egyptian traditions.

Dynasties 28-30 represent the last periods of Egyptian independence, as the Persian period came to an end under the Persian control until Alexander's conquest in 332. The Hellenization of Egypt continued under Ptolemy I and his successors, and the Ptolemaic period saw the blending of Egyptian and Greek cultures, such as the Great Heliopolis at Philae, continued to display traditional Egyptian architecture and were covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions, some of them dating back to the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Despite the arrival of Greek culture with the Ptolemaic kings and the subsequent dominance by Rome, Egyptian religion and culture were not dismantled. Ironically, what finally pulled Egypt out of its ancient polytheism was not an invading army, but Christianity. By the early fourth century, Christianity was the dominant force in Egypt. Egyptian worship centers became churches, and the name of Ramses the Great was plastered over and replaced by Christian symbols. Centuries earlier, Isaias of Jerusalem said, “The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD” (19.21 NV). In a sense, the Sireh of Christianity heralded the death of Egypt as it has been known. Today in Egypt, six to eight million Christians think of themselves as Egyptians, not Arabs. In the liturgy of the Egyptian Orthodox Church, Coptic—the last vestige of the ancient Egyptian language—can still be heard.

Religion

As in all ancient societies, religion was a dominating factor in Pharaonic Egypt. Even in the twilight of Egyptian history, Herodotus observed, “They are more religious than any other nation... Their religious observances are, one might say, innumerable.”

Even before Menes united Egypt, the Egyptian pharaohs were viewed as divine and were associated with Horus. The foundation for this belief was rooted in the myth of Osiris, Horus, and Seth, which is known from the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, the later Coffin Texts, and the Memphite Theology. Because of this mythic foundation, the pharaoh was a bridge between the mortal and the divine, the ultimate high priest who built temples and oversaw their maintenance.

Egyptian religion can be divided into three areas: state, popular, and funerary. The foundation of state religion was laid in the previous paragraph, and a number of excellent studies on state religion and the gods are available. Major deities like Atum-Re of Heliopolis, Ptah of Memphis, and Amon of Thebes dominate much of Egyptian history, but scores of other divinities were worshipped at local sanctuaries.

Popular religion, perhaps owing to the less glamorous nature of the evidence compared with that of state religion, has not been thoroughly studied. Ashraf Sadek corrects this imbalance by introducing the sources for the study of the religious practices of the common folk. While in their basic assumptions...

199. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 164.
201. For a survey of this period down to the Arab invasion in ad 642, see A. K. Bowman, Egypt after the Pharaohs, 332-350 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
205. For translations, see Faulkner, Egyptian Pyramid Texts; idem, The Egyptian Coffin Texts, vols. 1-3 (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1972-77); and Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 151-57.
tions the two branches are identical, the differences come in practice. The large New Kingdom temples at Karnak and Luxor, for instance, were not normally accessible to the common people. Only on special festive occasions were they able to enter the massive walls, but they could not enter the holy place, which was reserved for the priesthood. 208 Perhaps because of this exclusion from or limited access to the temple, small c. It centers were established close to towns and villages in the Old and Middle Kingdoms. 209 It is only in the New Kingdom that sufficient evidence survives to enable a fuller description of these religious practices. Lay priests operated small chapels at Deir el-Medineh where hundreds of small offering stelae and votive objects have been found. 210 The votive objects show that the same deities worshiped in the state religion were also revered by common people. However, the latter had patron deities that were not worshiped elsewhere, such as the divinized Amenhotep I. 211

Yielding perhaps the largest body of sources for the study of religion, burial customs are well attested in Egypt from predynastic through Roman times. 212 In addition to the corporal funerary texts mentioned already, 213 the Book of the Dead (a late development of the Pyramid and Coffin texts recorded on papyrus) was popular from the New Kingdom on. 214

From the various mortuary sources, it is evident that a mythic foundation stands behind funerary practices. The god Osiris, who resides over the netherworld and before whom everyone stands for judgment, appears to have been a historical figure of predynastic times who was killed by his violent brother Seth. 215 Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris, wept and searched for him. Through sexual union with Osiris, his gave birth to Horus, who succeeded his father. Anubis gathered the fallen Osiris and assisted in his mumification and burial. While in the Old Kingdom only royalty was associated with Osiris in the next life, the funerary c. It was democratized during the First Intermediate period (as seen in the Coffin Texts), and others were able to share in the same privilege. 216

210. Ibid., 79–85.
211. Ibid., 131–46.
212. For a comprehensive study of Egyptian burial practices, see A. J. Spencer, Death in Ancient Egypt (Middlesex: Penguin, 1992).
213. See 3, 205.
216. Wilson, Culture of Ancient Egypt, 136.

Egyptians

Because people had to stand before Osiris's tribunal for judgment, it was necessary to live according to maat, the Egyptian concept of justice and righteousness. 217 Admission to heaven was contingent on an individual's being pronounced "maa sruk." Spell 125 (the so-called negative confession) of the Book of the Dead contains a list of sins and taboos that: the deceased claims not to have done so as to merit divine favor. These provide good insights into Egyptian morals and ethics. It could be that the moral dimension of Egyptian wisdom literature served as a practical guide to help individuals live according to the principles of maat and thus be vindicated in the judgment.

Tombs and their accompanying chapels or temples aimed to preserve the body of the deceased and provide a place for the Ka (the spirit or alter ego) to come and go. Through the so-called false door of the chapel, the Ka could return to eat and drink the foodstuffs placed on altars. 218 It was, naturally, the obligation of the family to provide the offerings on behalf of the departed. In the New Kingdom, a type of ancestor worship developed, in the form of Rā statues. 219

Because of the plethora of information regarding mortuary religion, one might think that the Egyptians were preoccupied with death, and thus lived morbid lives. However, from Dynasty 5 onward, tomb scenes make it clear that this is not so. On the contrary, in paintings and reliefs we see people engaged in various types of recreation—hunting and fishing being favorites. Egyptian nobility and middle classes frequented parties with music, dancing, drinking, and banqueting, as paintings of the New Kingdom illustrate. 220

Herodotus was right: the Egyptians were a most religious people. Religion affected every area of life: piety, ethics, politics, and death. If we eliminate all the archaeological remains connected to religion (i.e., temples, funerary structures, cultic statues, stelae, etc.), little would remain.

Egypt and Israel

During the Second Millennium B.C.

Abraham had a brief visit to Egypt sometime in the early second millennium (Gen. 12:10–20). Since the name of the Egyptian monarch is not given, only the title Pharaoh, there is no way to determine the identity of the king. If

218. Spencer, Death in Ancient Egypt, 53.
220. Examples of this type of scene are found at the tomb of Nefer at Sakkara and on the relief of Hetep Horachti at Leiden.
expulsion of the Hyksos and the establishment of the New Kingdom with Dynasty 18 seems to be a logical time for the change in attitude toward the Israelites. One can imagine Ahmose’s exasperation upon finding a sizable Semitic population in the very region where the hated Hyksos had lived. This new king feared that the Hebrews would join his enemies if war broke out (Exod. 1:10). Could Egypt’s enemies have been the Hyksos?

The absence of direct archaeological or historical evidence for the Israelite sojourn and exodus from Egypt leads some scholars to question the historicity of the exodus narratives. The result is to regard Israel as just another Canaanite tribe that emerged from obscurity to become a nation. However, the exodus tradition is too deeply enshrined in the Old Testament to be dismissed as an innovation of the late period of Israelite history. Similarly, the historicity of Moses is undeniable, although his name is not attested in any contemporary literature and even his precise historical setting cannot be proven. Siegfried Herrmann affirms this conclusion: “Thus we are left ultimately with only the mighty figure of Moses, which cannot be put aside as invention or interpolation, but which is constructive for the whole account.”

In recent decades, two main positions have emerged on the dating of the exodus from Egypt. The so-called early date is computed from 1 Kings 6:1: 967 (Solomon’s fourth year) + 480 years from the exodus to Solomon = 1447. A second view, the late date, regards the figure 480 as the result of multiplying 12 x 40 years (the symbolic length of a generation). Since a generation is actually closer to 25 years, 967 + 300 (12 x 25) = 1267, which would fall in the reign of Rameses II. The Egyptians were forced to

221. Abraham is placed broadly within the first third of the second millennium; 12 Dynasties: 12-13 would be a likely period for his descent to Egypt.

222. The next contact between the Hebrews and Egypt is found in the Joseph story of Genesis 39-50. Once again, the biblical text is vague about historical matters, making the dating of the accounts difficult. However, Egyptian coloring to the story is well established, which lends credibility to the historicity of the Joseph cycle. Redford argues that the Egyptian personal names in the story, Potiphar and Asenath, point to the first millennium. However, equally compelling arguments have been offered for the antiquity of the Genesis record. Joseph’s rise to power from a domestic to a high-ranking official is not without parallel in Egypt. Bay, a non-Egyptian, was elevated to “Chancellor of the Entire Land” during Dynasty 20. Gardiner writes, “There is good reason for thinking that Bay was a Syrian by birth, possibly one of those court officials who in this age frequently rose to power by the royal favor.” The Hyksos period, when foreigners controlled the delta and northern Egypt, is a likely time for Joseph to have come to prominence and for Jacob’s family to have settled in Goshen in the delta.

In the years intervening between Joseph’s death and the birth of Moses, the Hebrew population grew to the point that the Egyptian pharaoh saw their presence as threatening. Exodus 1:8 reports that “a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.” Clearly, time had passed since the death of Joseph (Exod. 1:6), and “the new king probably refers to a new dynasty, not just a different king than the one mentioned in Genesis.”


225. In both dates 1940 and 1267, the number of years is 300, which is a round number and easy to remember. The 300-year period also coincides with the end of the Hyksos period in Egypt around 1370 B.C., which is significant in the context of the biblical text. The 300-year period is also consistent with the traditional dating of the Exodus event as occurring in the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III, who ruled from 1410 to 1370 B.C.

226. The dating of 1270 B.C. is commonly accepted by scholars, which corresponds to the end of the Hyksos period and the beginning of the 19th Dynasty under Ramesses I. This dating places the Exodus event in the late 13th century B.C. and provides a historical context for the exodus story.


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