



5

Ancient Egypt

The Gift of the Nile

Egypt, in northeast Africa, was the home of one of the most powerful and longest-lasting civilizations of the ancient world. In the Neolithic period, before about 7000 B.C., farming communities had settled along the banks of the Nile. They used stone tools and made ivory and bone objects and pottery. Until its unification around 3100 B.C., ancient Egypt had been divided into Upper Egypt in the south and Lower Egypt in the north. Egypt was defined by its most important geographical feature, the Nile, the world's longest river. Because annual floods kept the land fertile, Egypt was called "the gift of the Nile."

The Pharaohs

From approximately 3100 B.C., Egypt was ruled by pharaohs, or kings, whose control of the land and its people was virtually absolute. Egyptian monumental art on a vast scale begins with pharaonic rule, originating when King Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt.

Modern scholars have divided Egyptian history into the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods, followed by the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms and the Late Dynastic period. These were punctuated by so-called "intermediate periods" of anarchy or central political decline, as well as by periods of foreign domination (see Box).

Between the Middle and New Kingdoms there was a period of more than one hundred years during which Semitic rulers in the northeastern Delta controlled Lower Egypt. Known as the Hyksos, from the Egyptian *heqaukhasut* (meaning "princes of foreign countries"), these rulers are credited with having introduced the horse-drawn chariot to Egypt. During the New Kingdom, some important changes occurred. Hatshepsut, the first queen to assume pharaonic status and preside over an artistic revival, co-ruled Egypt with Thutmose III from c. 1479 to 1458 B.C., and later, during the Amarna period, the pharaoh Akhenaten (ruled c. 1353–1336 B.C.) made important changes in the hierarchy of gods.

From the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt's preeminent position was weakened by infiltration from other states. During the Late Dynastic period, Egypt twice fell under Persian rule—from 525 to 404 B.C. and again in 343 B.C. In 332 B.C. the Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great, who annexed Egypt to his empire. After his death in 323 B.C., control of Egypt passed to the Macedonian general Ptolemy, whose successors ruled until the Roman conquest in 30 B.C.

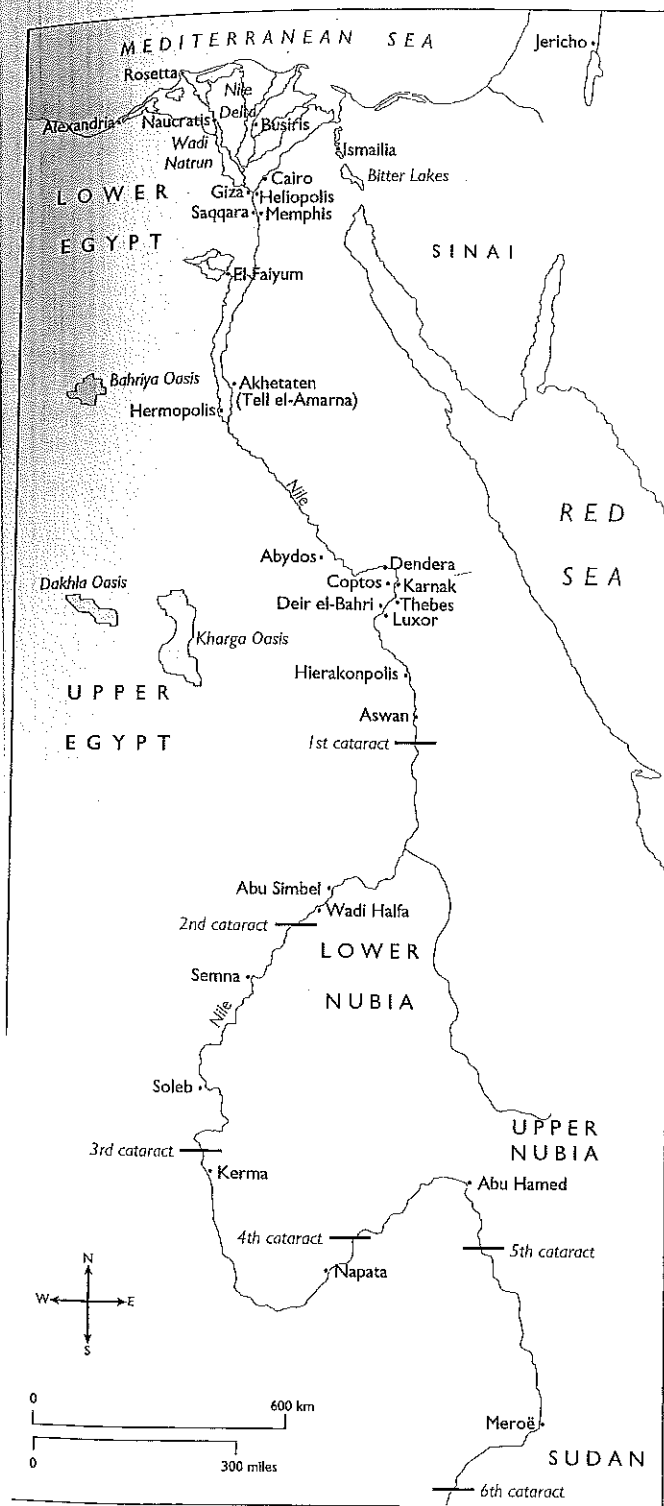
The Egyptian Concept of Kingship

As in Mesopotamia (Chapter 4), kings mediated between their people and the gods. In Egypt, however, the kings were also considered gods. They ruled according to the principle of *maat*, divinely established order (personified by Maat, the goddess of truth and orderly conduct) (see Box). From the Third Dynasty, the god Ra, in the guise of

Chronology of Egyptian Kings

(all dates before 664 B.C. are approximate)

Predynastic period		5450–3100 B.C.
Early Dynastic period	Dynasties 1–2	3100–2649 B.C.
Old Kingdom	Dynasties 3–6	2649–2150 B.C.
First Intermediate period	Dynasties 7–11	2143–1991 B.C.
Middle Kingdom	Dynasties 12–14	1991–1700 B.C.
Second Intermediate period	Dynasties 15–17 (including the Hyksos period)	1699–1641 B.C. 1640–1550 B.C.
New Kingdom	Dynasties 18–20	1550–1070 B.C.
Third Intermediate period	Dynasties 21–25	1070–660 B.C.
Late Dynastic period	Dynasties 26–30	660–343 B.C.
	Persian kings	343–332 B.C.
Ptolemaic period	Macedonian kings	332–31 B.C.



ancient Egypt and Nubia.

The reigning pharaoh, was believed to impregnate the queen with a son who would be heir to the throne. This divine conception was part of each pharaoh's official personality and iconography. A queen could be either the king's mother or his principal wife. Marriages occasionally

took place between a pharaoh and his sister, half-sister, or daughter when this was politically useful. The ambiguous position of the queen by comparison with that of the pharaoh reflects her complementary role. Certain exceptions notwithstanding, Egyptian kingship was not for women. The queen was the king's means of renewal, providing him with male heirs to the throne or with daughters for creating alliances through advantageous marriages.

In entering into incestuous marriages, the king, like the gods, was distinct from the general population. Despite many uncertainties about daily life in ancient Egypt, texts indicate that monogamous marriage was considered a positive and natural state and that the Egyptian commoner tended to have one wife at a time. Infidelity, especially if committed by the wife, was grounds for divorce, as were impotence, infertility, dislike of a wife, or a wish to marry another woman. A primary purpose of marriage was the production of children, and fertility gods were worshiped in the home. In Egypt, as in the Near East, homosexuality was viewed as counterproductive to the ideal of fertility. Widows and orphans were disadvantaged members of society, although adoption was an established institution.

The royal family modeled its behavior on that of the gods, separating itself from those it ruled. Egyptian kings maintained power not by setting an example to the public at large, but rather by their distinction from it. In the transfer of kingship from father to son or to some substitute for a son, Egypt created another avenue of identification with the gods.

The Palette of Narmer

The links between divine and earthly power can be seen in the Palette of Narmer (figs. 5.1 and 5.2); it dates from the beginning of pharaonic rule and, like the Akkadian stele of Naram-Sin (see fig. 4.12), is a good example of *Macht-kunst*. On both sides, the palette is decorated in low relief. The large scene in figure 5.1 is depicted according to certain conventions that lasted for over two thousand years in Egypt. King Narmer (thought to be Menes, the first pharaoh) is the biggest figure—his size and central position denote his importance. His composite pose, in which head and legs are rendered in profile view with eye and upper torso in frontal view, is an Egyptian convention. This is a conceptual, rather than a naturalistic, approach to the human figure, for the body parts are arranged as they are individually understood, and not as they are seen in nature. The entire body is flat, as is the kilt, with certain details such as the kneecaps rendered as stylizations, rather than as underlying organic structure.

Narmer wears the tall white conical crown of Upper Egypt (the *hedjet*) and threatens a kneeling enemy with a mace. He holds this enemy by the hair, symbolizing conquest and domination. Two additional enemies who are already dead occupy the lowest register of the palette. Behind Narmer on a suspended horizontal strip is a



5.1 Palette of Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, c. 3100 B.C. Slate, 25 in. (63.5 cm) high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. This is called the Upper Egypt side because Narmer wears the white crown.

servant whose small size identifies him as less important than the king. The servant holds Narmer's sandals indicating that the king is on holy ground (just as Muslims remove their shoes before entering a mosque). In front of Narmer, at the level of his head, is Horus, the falcon god of sky and kingship, who holds a captive human-headed creature at the end of a rope. From the back of this figure rise six papyrus plants, which represent Lower Egypt. The image of Horus dominating symbols of Lower Egypt parallels Narmer, crowned as the king of Upper Egypt and subduing an enemy.

At the top center of each side of the palette is a rectangle known as a *serekh*. A *serekh* contained a king's name in hieroglyphs (pictures, symbolizing words, that were the earliest Egyptian writing system) and was a flattened representation of the royal palace. Flanking the *serekh* are frontal heads of the cow goddess Hathor, who guards the king.

The other side of the palette (fig. 5.2) has three registers below the Hathor heads and the pharaoh's name. In the upper register, Narmer wears the red crown of Lower Egypt (the *deshret*). His sandal-bearer is behind him, and he is preceded by standard-bearers. At the far right, ten



5.2 Palette of Narmer (reverse side of fig. 5.1). This is called the Lower Egypt side because the pharaoh wears the red crown.

decapitated enemies lie with their heads between their feet. These figures are meant to be read from above, as a row of bodies lying side by side. Such shifting viewpoints are characteristic of Egyptian pictorial style.

Two felines, roped by bearded men, occupy the central register. Their elongated necks frame an indented circle similar to those that held liquid for mixing eye makeup on smaller palettes. This one, however, was found as a dedication in a temple and is larger than those used in everyday life. It was most likely a ceremonial, rather than a practical, object. The meaning of the felines, called *serpopards*, is uncertain, but their intertwined necks could refer to Narmer's unification of Egypt (signified by his two crowns). In the lowest register, a bull—probably a manifestation of Narmer himself—dominates a fallen enemy.

Every image on the palette conveys Narmer's might and importance. He is protected by the gods. He is taller, more central, and more powerful than any other figure. He destroys his enemies and their cities. The iconographic message of this work is a statement of power, for it celebrates the king's divine right to rule and illustrates his ability to do so.

Religion and Egyptian Gods

The Egyptians, like their Near Eastern neighbors, were polytheists. Gods were manifest in every aspect of nature; they influenced human lives and ordered the universe, and they could appear in human or animal form or as various human and animal combinations. The result of this belief system was a pantheon of enormous complexity. Over time the number was increased by the introduction of foreign gods into Egypt. Like most polytheists, the Egyptians did not find the religious ideas of other cultures incompatible with their own, and they incorporated new deities either singly or in combination. This process of fusion is known as syncretism. A few of the principal gods of ancient Egypt in their most typical guises are listed here.¹

Amon	Great god of Thebes; identified with Ra as Amon-Ra; sacred animals—the ram and goose.
Anubis	Jackal god, patron of embalmers; god of the necropolis who ritually “opens the mouth” of the dead.
Aten	God of the sun disk; worshiped as the great creator god by Akhenaten.
Bes	Helper of women in childbirth, protector against snakes and other dangers; depicted as a dwarf with features of a lion.
Hapy	God of the Nile in flood; depicted as a man with pendulous breasts, a clump of papyrus (or a lotus) on his head, and bearing tables laden with offerings.
Hathor	Goddess with many functions and attributes; often depicted as a cow, or a woman with a cow's head or horned headdress; mother, wife, and daughter of

Ra; protector of the royal palace; domestic fertility goddess.

Horus Falcon god, originally the sky god; identified with the king during his lifetime; the son of Osiris and Isis.

Imhotep Chief minister of Zoser and architect of his step pyramid; deified and worshiped in the Late Dynastic period as god of learning and medicine.

Isis Divine mother; wife of Osiris and mother of Horus; one of four protector goddesses, guarding coffins and **canopic** jars.

Maat Goddess of truth, right, and orderly conduct; depicted as a woman with an ostrich feather on her head.

Mut Wife of Amon; originally a vulture goddess, later depicted as a woman.

Osiris God of the underworld, identified as the dead king; depicted as a mummified king.

Ptah Creator god of Memphis, patron god of craftsmen; depicted as a mummy-shaped man.

Ra (Re) Falcon-headed sun god of Heliopolis, supreme judge; often linked with other gods whose cults aspire to universality (e.g., Amon-Ra).

Serapis Ptolemaic period; with characteristics of Egyptian (Osiris) and Greek (Zeus) gods.

Seth God of storms and violence; brother and murderer of Osiris; rival of Horus; depicted as pig, ass, hippopotamus, or other animal.

The Old Kingdom

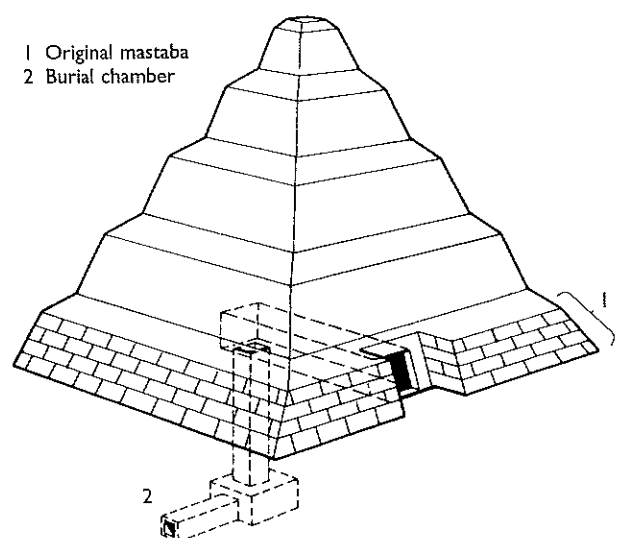
(2649–2150 B.C.)

Pyramids

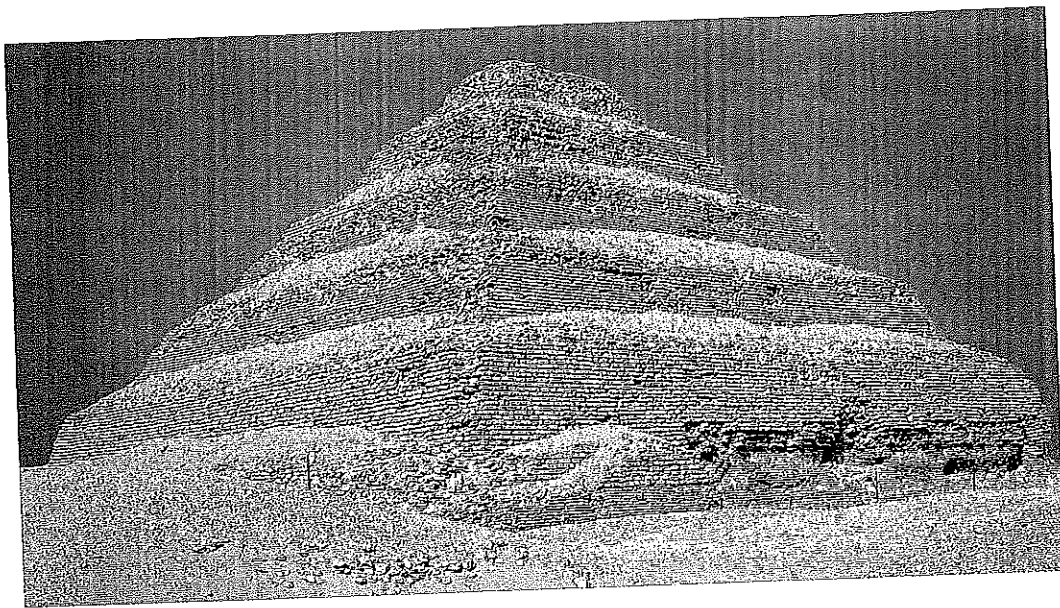
The most monumental expression of the Egyptian pharaoh's power was the pyramid, his burial place and zone of passage into the afterlife. Pyramids were preceded by smaller **mastabas**, single-story trapezoidal structures; the term derives from the Arabic word for “bench” (fig. 5.3). These were originally made of mud-brick and later were faced with cut stones.

From 2630 to 2611 B.C., King Zoser's architect Imhotep constructed a colossal structure within a sacred architectural precinct at Saqqara, on the west bank of the Nile about 30 miles (48 km) south of Cairo. Five mastabas of decreasing size, one on top of the other, resulted in a “step pyramid” (fig. 5.4). Inside, a vertical shaft some 90 feet (27.4 m) long led to the burial chamber. The exterior was faced with limestone, most of which has now disappeared.

The next major development in pyramid design was the purely geometric type. Four triangular sides slant inward from a square base so that the apexes of the triangles meet



5.3 Step pyramid with a mastaba base.



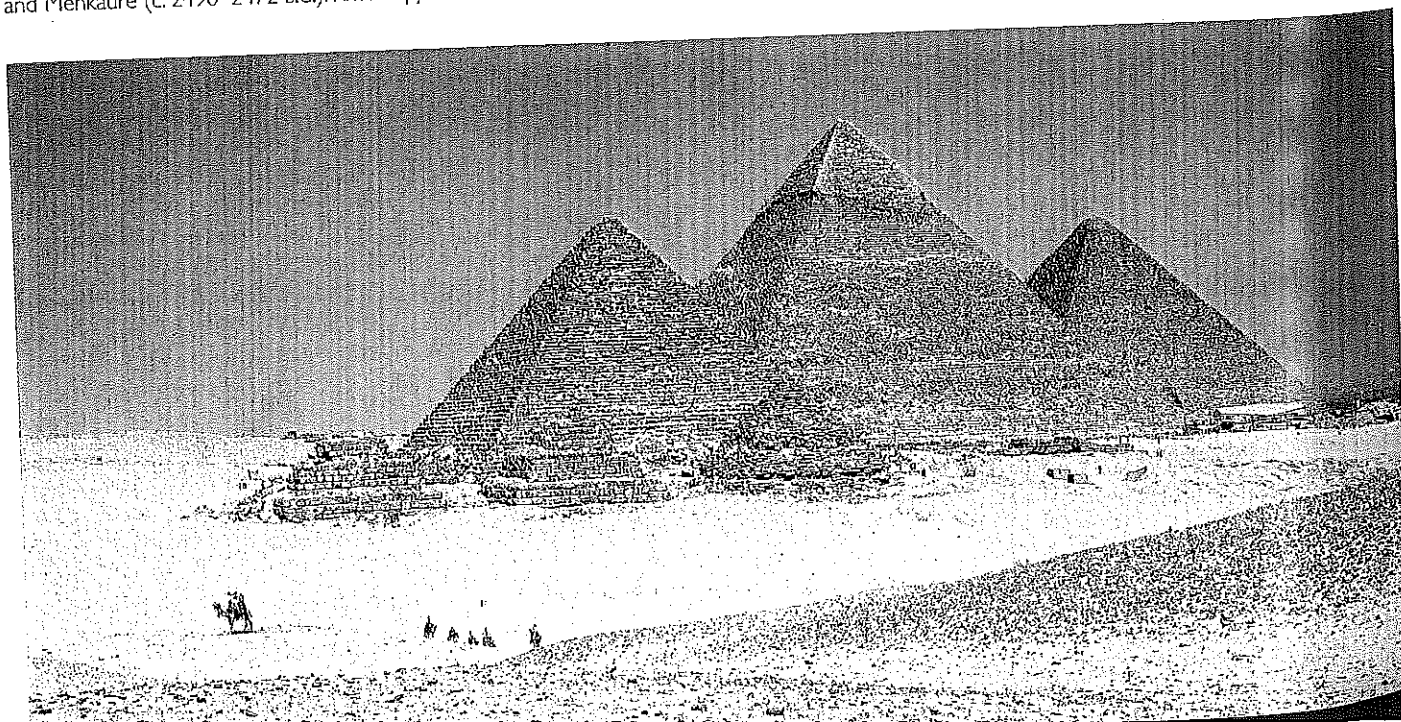
5.4 Step pyramid, funerary complex of King Zoser, Saqqara, Egypt, 2630–2611 B.C. Limestone, 200 ft. (61 m) high. Its architect, Imhotep, was a priest at Heliopolis and is reputed to have been the first Egyptian to build monumental stone structures. His name is inscribed inside the pyramid, where he is designated "First after the King of Upper and Lower Egypt." He became a legendary figure in ancient Egypt, revered for his wisdom as a magician, astronomer, and healer, and was worshiped as a god.

over the center of the square. Originally, the sides were smooth and faced with polished limestone, and the four corners of the plan were oriented to the cardinal points. A capstone, probably gilded, reflected the sun, signifying the pharaoh's divinity and identification with the sun. The most impressive pyramids were built for three Old Kingdom pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty: the pyramid of Khufu (the largest, known as the Great Pyramid); the pyramid of his son Khafre; and the pyramid of Khafre's son Menkaure (fig. 5.5). All three are near Cairo at Giza, on the west bank of the Nile, facing the direction of sunset (symbolizing death).

Each pyramid was connected by a causeway (an elevated road) to its own valley temple at the edge of the original flood plain of the Nile. When the king died, his body was transported across the Nile by boat to the valley temple. It was then carried along the causeway to its own funerary temple, where it was presented with offerings of food and drink, and the Opening of the Mouth ceremony was performed (see fig. 5.20).

The pyramid was a resting place for the king's body (see Box), and burial chambers were constructed either in the rock under the pyramid or in the pyramid itself. In Khufu's case (fig. 5.6), the burial chamber is located in the middle

5.5 Pyramids at Giza, Egypt, 2551–2472 B.C. Limestone: pyramid of Khufu approx. 480 ft. (146 m) high; base of each side 755 ft. (230 m) long. The Giza pyramids were built for three Old Kingdom pharaohs of the 4th Dynasty: Khufu (c. 2551–2528 B.C.), Khafre (c. 2520–2494 B.C.), and Menkaure (c. 2490–2472 B.C.). Khufu's pyramid—the largest of the three—was over twice as high as Zoser's step pyramid at Saqqara.



of the pyramid. There were also smaller chambers, possibly for the body of the queen, the organs of the deceased, and worldly goods for the journey to the afterlife. The chambers were connected by a maze of passages, including dead ends designed to foil grave robbers. In this objective the builders failed; during the Middle Kingdom a succession of thieves plundered all of the Giza pyramids.

From the pyramid of Khafre, a processional road led to his valley temple, guarded by the Great Sphinx (fig. 5.7), a colossal human-headed creature with a lion's body, carved out of sandstone. The location of the sphinx suggests that it represented Khafre himself. Surrounding the sphinx's head is the trapezoidal pharaonic headcloth (the Nemes headdress), which fills up the open space above the shoulders and enhances the sculpture's monumentality.

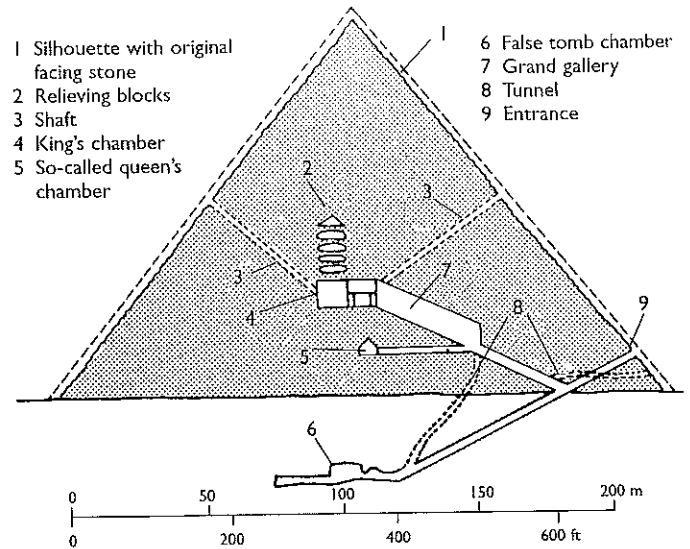
Mummification

For the ancient Egyptians, death was a transition to a similar existence on another plane. To ensure a good afterlife, the deceased had to be physically preserved along with earthly possessions and other reminders of daily activities. This was first achieved by simple burial in the dry desert sands. Later, coffins insulated the body, and artificial means of preservation were used. But in case the body of the deceased did not last, an image could serve as a substitute. The dead person's *ka*, or soul, was believed able to enter the surrogate before journeying to the next world.

Procedures such as mummification highlight the ancient Egyptian's preoccupation with a continued material existence in the afterlife. Enormous resources were devoted to providing for the dead, both on an individual level and, in the case of the royal family and its court, on a grand scale involving the whole society. Much of the art and writings that have survived are funerary, preserved in the dry desert climate for thousands of years.

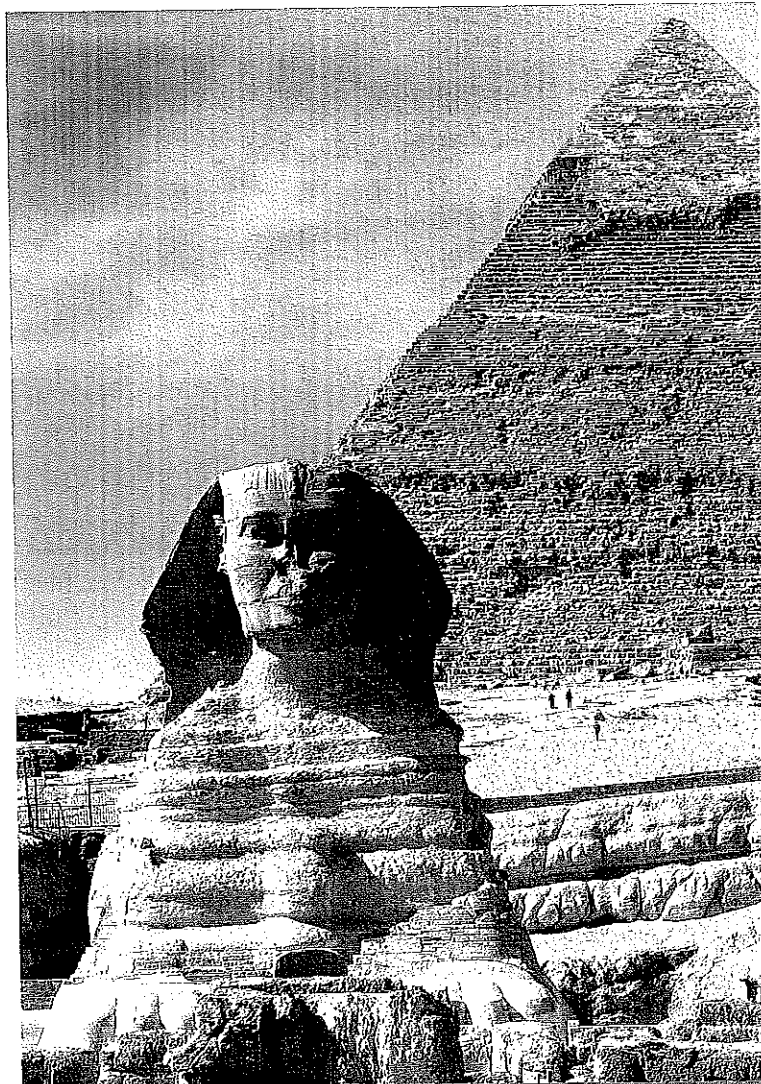
The seventy-two-day process of embalming corpses began with the removal of internal organs, except for the heart, which was believed to be the seat of understanding and was therefore left intact. The body was then packed in dry natron (a natural compound of sodium carbonate and sodium bicarbonate found in Egypt), which dehydrated the cadaver and dissolved its body fats. Then the corpse was washed, treated with oils and ointments, and bandaged with up to twenty layers of linen. The substances applied to its skin caused the body to turn black; later travelers took this to mean that the body had been preserved with pitch, for which the Arabic term is *mumiya*—hence the English terms “mummy” and “mummification.”

The organs were embalmed and placed in four canopic jars, but the brain was discarded as useless. Each jar held a particular organ and was under the protection of one of Horus's four sons.



5.6 (Above) Cross section of the pyramid of Khufu.

5.7 (Below) Colossal statue of Khafre, known as the Great Sphinx, Giza, c. 2520–2494 B.C. Sandstone, 66 ft. (20.12 m) high, 240 ft. (73.15 m) long. In Egypt, as elsewhere in the Near East, lions guarded entrances, especially to temples and palaces. In addition to the tradition that lions never sleep, they were associated with the sun as the eye of heaven.

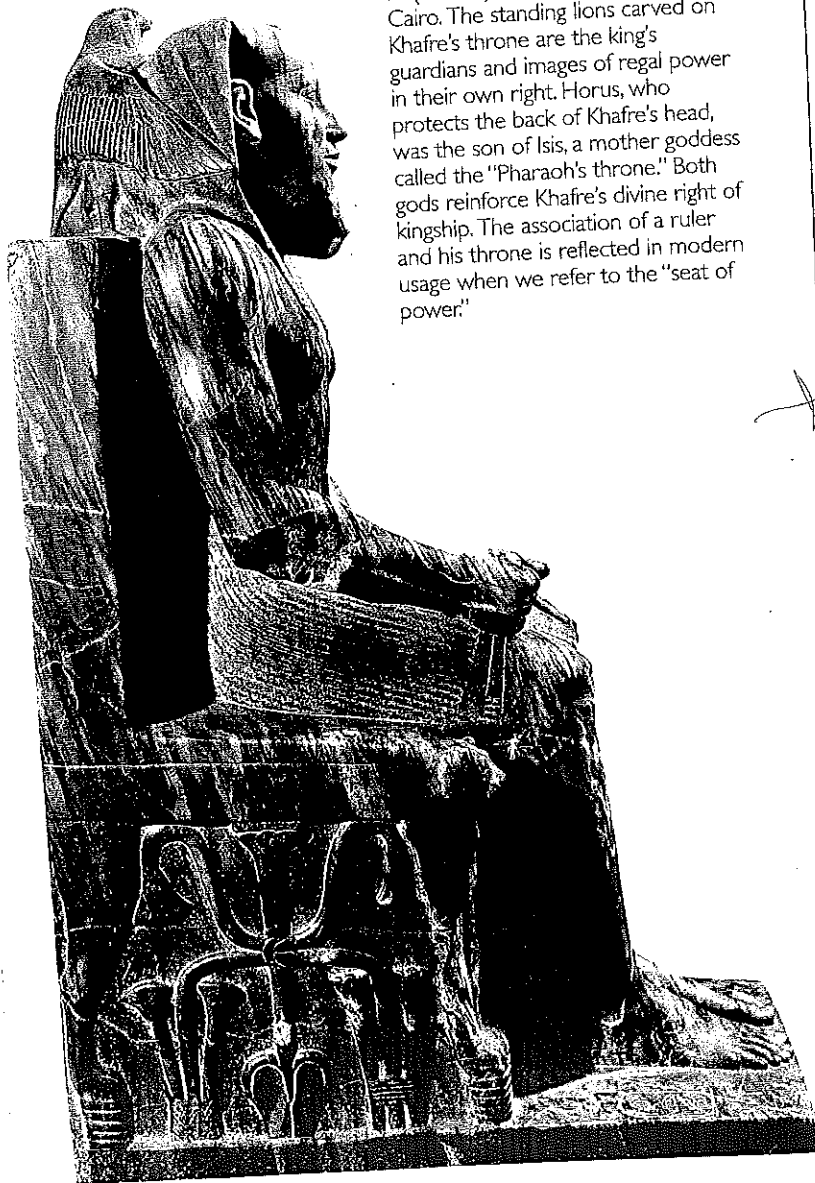


Sculpture

Egyptian artists followed certain conventions for sculptures in the round and in relief. The more important the personage represented, the more rigorously the conventions were observed.

An over-life-size diorite statue of Khafre (fig. 5.8) illustrates the conventional representation of a seated pharaoh. Khafre sits in an erect, regal posture, both hands on his lap, his right fist clenched and his left hand lying flat above his knee. The sculptor began with a rectangular block of stone to which the planes of the figure conform. Khafre's throne and its base are a stepped arrangement with two verticals (corresponding to the king's torso, upper arms, and calves) meeting three horizontals (his

5.8 Seated statue of Khafre, from Giza, 2520–2494 B.C. Diorite, 5 ft. 6 in. (1.68 m) high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. The standing lions carved on Khafre's throne are the king's guardians and images of regal power in their own right. Horus, who protects the back of Khafre's head, was the son of Isis, a mother goddess called the "Pharaoh's throne." Both gods reinforce Khafre's divine right of kingship. The association of a ruler and his throne is reflected in modern usage when we refer to the "seat of power."

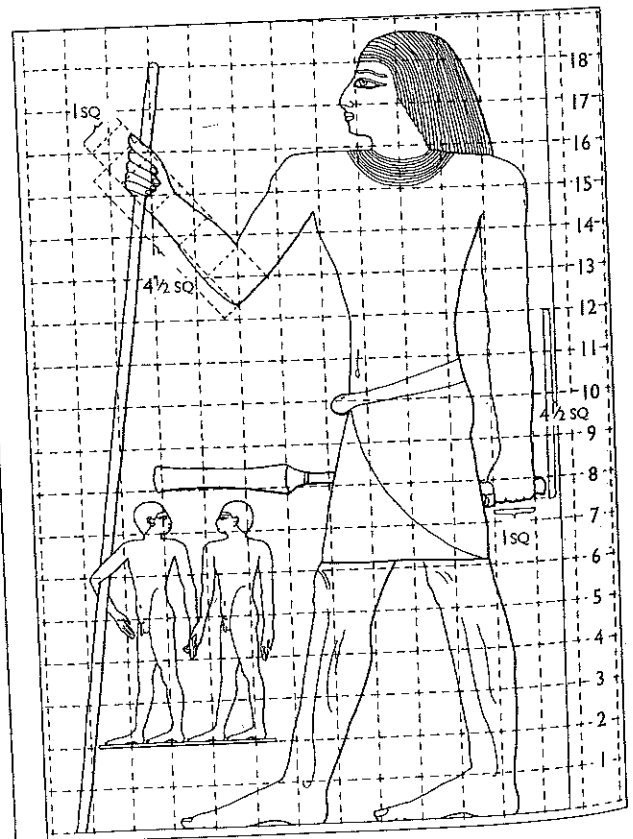


The Egyptian Canon of Proportion

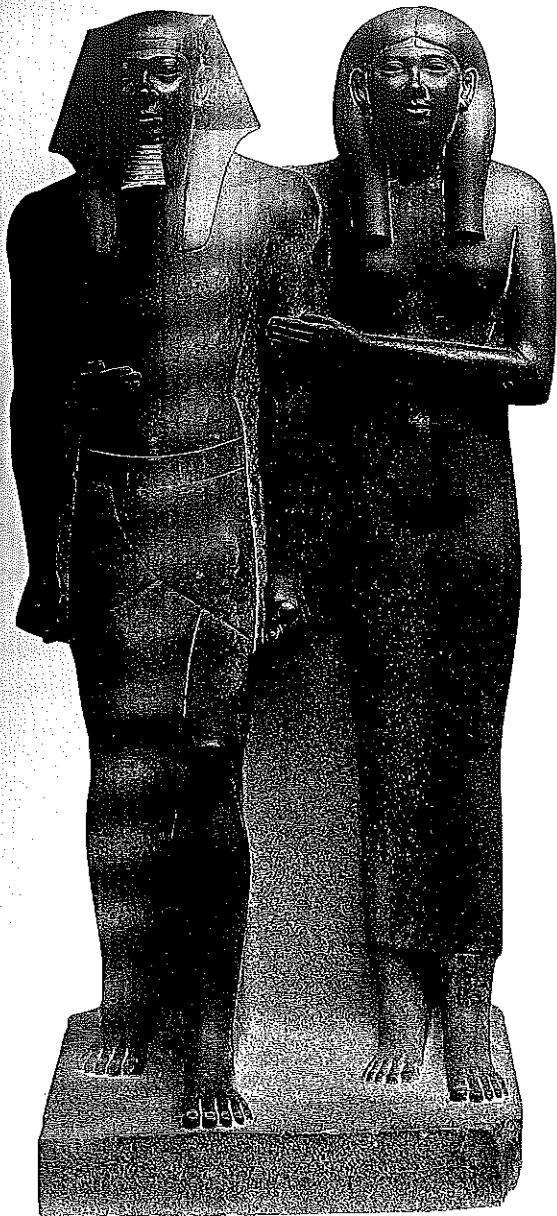
Canons of proportion are commonly accepted guidelines for depicting the ideal human figure by specifying the relationships of the parts of the body to one another and to the whole. They vary from culture to culture and have evolved over time. The canons followed by Egyptian artists changed only slightly from the Old to the New Kingdom, a reflection of the unusual stability of ancient Egypt. The illustration here (fig. 5.9) is based on the Old Kingdom canon as it was used at Saqqara during the reign of Zoser.

The surface of a relief or a painting is divided into a grid of squares, each equivalent to the width of the figure's fist. The distance from the hairline to the ground is 18 fists, from the base of the nose to the shoulder 1 fist, and from the fingers of a clenched fist to the elbow $4\frac{1}{2}$ fists. The length of a foot (heel to toe) is $3\frac{1}{2}$ fists.

Note the characteristic way of depicting the human body: the shoulders and the one visible eye are frontal; the head, arms, and legs are in profile; the waist is nearly in profile but is turned to show the navel. One purpose of this system was to arrive at a conventional, instantly recognizable image. The persistence of such canons contributed to the continuity of Egyptian style over a two-thousand-year period.



5.9 Egyptian canon of proportion.



5.10 Menkaure and Queen Khamerernebt, from Giza, 2490–2472 B.C. Slate, 4 ft. 6½ in. (1.39 m) high. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

forearms, thighs, and feet) at right angles. Spaces between body and throne are eliminated because the original diorite remains, reflecting the symbolic identification of the king and his throne.

A good example of standing figures from the Old Kingdom is the statue of Khafre's son Menkaure and Queen Khamerernebt (fig. 5.10). The original upright rectangular block remains visible in the base, between the figures, and at the back. Menkaure is frontal and stands as if at attention, arms at his sides and fists clenched. His left leg extends forward in an assertive stance signifying his power. The Nemes headdress closes up the space around the head, as in the sphinx at Giza. Both the kneecap and the ceremonial beard are rectangular.

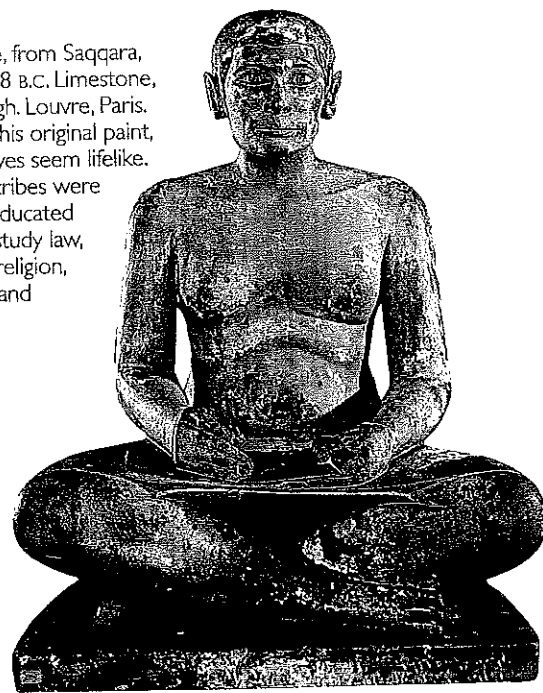
A comparison of Menkaure with Khamerernebt illustrates certain conventional differences between males and females in Egyptian art. Within the rigorous social hierar-

chy of ancient Egypt, a queen was below a king in rank, a position indicated not only by her slightly smaller size but also by her stance. Her left foot does not extend as far forward as her husband's, nor are her arms as rigidly positioned as his. In addition, her arms are bent, the right one reaching around the king's waist and the left one bent at the elbow and holding the king's left arm. Her open hands lack the tension of the king's clenched fists. Her garment, in contrast to Menkaure's, outlines the form of her body and, like her wig, is more curvilinear. The less imposing, more naturalistic, and less formal portrayal of the queen in comparison with the king is a function of her lower rank.

The statues of Khafre and of Menkaure and Khamerernebt were originally found in their valley temples. Their function was to embody the *ka* of the royal personages they depicted and to receive food and drink brought by worshipers. Priests were believed to have the magic power to transform the images into real people who could eat the offerings.

Compared with the royal figures, the seated scribe in figure 5.11 is less monumental though no less impressive. He sits cross-legged, a pose that was conventional for scribes. A papyrus scroll extends across his lap, and his right hand is poised to write. In contrast to statues of pharaohs, the lower rank of the scribe allowed the sculptor to convey a more individual character. The sculptor has also cut away the limestone between the arms and body as well as around the head and neck, thereby reducing the monumentality of this statue as compared with that of Khafre. The depiction of the scribe is also more personalized than that of Khafre—he has a roll of fat around his torso, a potbelly, and sagging breasts. This particular scribe must have been of high status because he had his own tomb.

5.11 Seated scribe, from Saqqara, Egypt, c. 2551–2528 B.C. Limestone, 21 in. (53.3 cm) high. Louvre, Paris. The scribe retains his original paint, which makes his eyes seem lifelike. In ancient Egypt, scribes were among the most educated people, having to study law, mathematics, and religion, as well as reading and writing.



The Middle Kingdom

(c. 1991–1700 B.C.)

Monumental architecture continued in the Middle Kingdom, though much of it was destroyed by New Kingdom pharaohs for use in their own colossal building projects. Besides pyramids, a new form of tomb was introduced. This was rock-cut architecture, in which the sides of cliffs were excavated to create artificial cave chambers. Rock-cut tombs became popular with aristocrats and high-level bureaucrats in the Eleventh and Twelfth dynasties, and in the New Kingdom with the pharaohs. Thutmose I (reigned c. 1504–1492 B.C.) was the first Egyptian pharaoh buried in a rock-cut tomb in the Valley of the Kings, which is across the Nile from Luxor and Karnak.

Middle Kingdom sculpture is often somewhat more naturalistic than Old Kingdom sculpture. Forms tend to be more rounded, and faces show occasional hints of an expression.

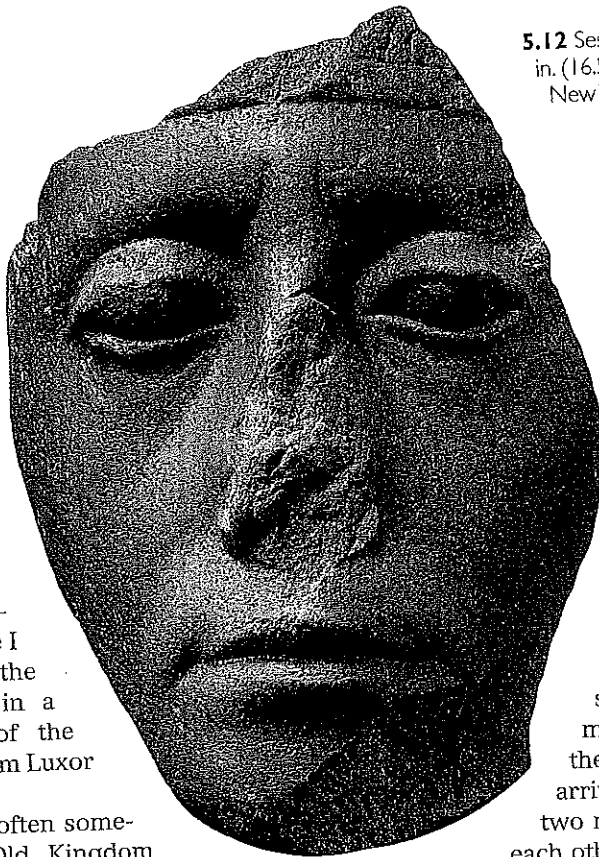
The political turbulence and invasions of the First Intermediate period that preceded the Middle Kingdom disrupted confidence in the pharaoh's absolute divine power. Although pharaonic rule quickly reasserted itself, certain works of art reflect a new national mood. The portrait of Sesostris III (fig. 5.12) exemplifies the new approach to royal representation in the Middle Kingdom. He referred to himself as the shepherd of his people, and his portrait seems to show concern. Lines of worry crease the surface of his face, and his forehead forms a slight frown. There are bags under his eyes, and his cheeks are fleshy. This is no longer solely an image of divine, royal power. Instead, it departs from earlier conventions of royal representation, and a specific personality emerges.

The New Kingdom

(c. 1550–1070 B.C.)

Temples

The first known Egyptian temples in the Neolithic period had been in the form of huts preceded by a forecourt. From the beginning of the dynastic period, a courtyard, hallway, and inner sanctuary were added. The columned hallway, called a **hypostyle**, was constructed in the post-and-lintel system of elevation. Its two rows of tall central



5.12 Sesostris III, c. 1878–1841 B.C. Quartzite, 6½ in. (16.5 cm) high. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1926.

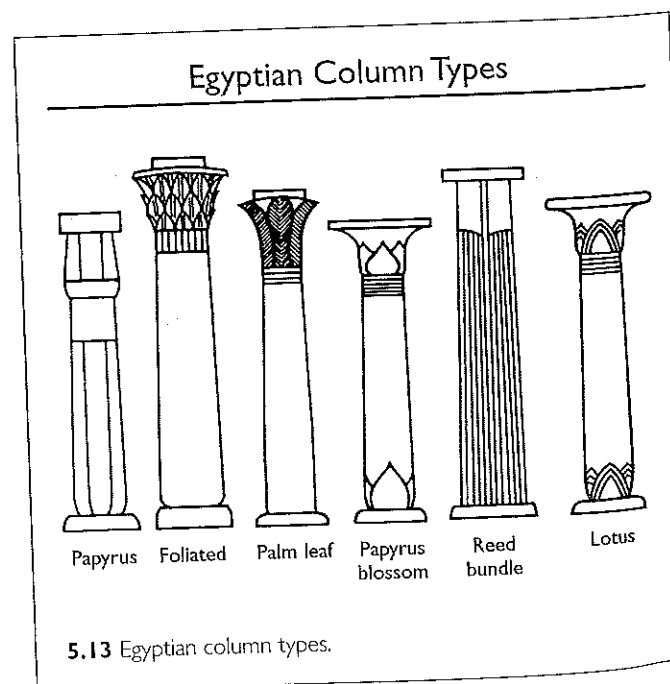
columns were flanked by rows of shorter columns on either side (see Box).

The standard Egyptian temple, called a **pylon temple** after the two massive sloping towers (pylons) flanking the entrance, was designed symmetrically along a single axis.

Temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu

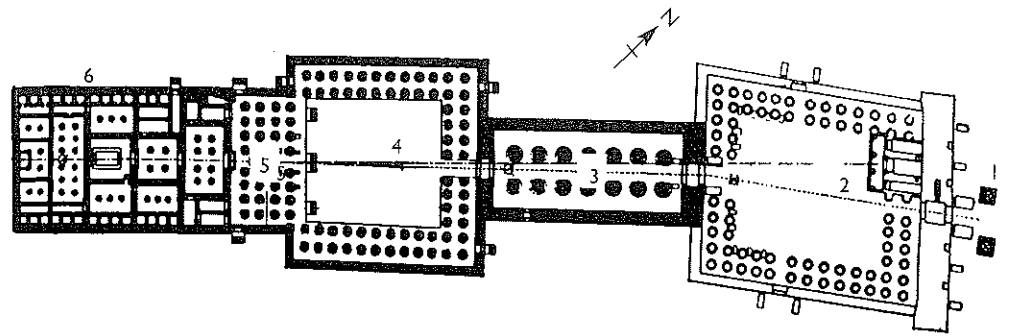
The plan of the New Kingdom temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu at Luxor in figure 5.14 shows the spaces through which worshippers moved from the bright outdoors to the dark inner sanctuary. When they arrived at the entrance, they confronted two rows of gods in animal form facing each other. At the end of the row were two **obelisks** (tall, tapering, four-sided pillars ending in a pointed tip, or **pyramidion**) and two colossal statues of pharaohs (fig. 5.15).

From the courtyards (2, 3, and 4 on the plan), the worshippers entered the hypostyle hall (5 on the plan), its massive columns casting shadows and creating an awe-inspiring atmosphere. The upper (clerestory) windows let

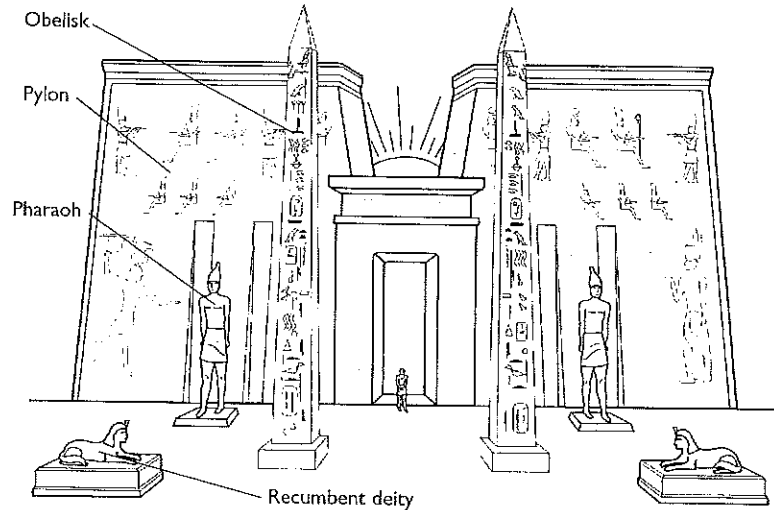


5.13 Egyptian column types.

5.14 Plan of the temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu, Luxor, Egypt, begun c. 1390 B.C. Reading the plan from right to left, number 1 refers to the pylons flanking the entrance. From the entrance, one proceeded through three open-air colonnaded courtyards (2, 3, 4). Then the worshiper was plunged into the darkened and mysterious realm of the hypostyle hall (5), beyond which lay the sanctuary complex (6).



5.15 (Right) Diagram of a pylon façade. The obelisks were derived from the sacred *benben* stone worshiped as a manifestation of Amon at Heliopolis. At dawn, the rays of the rising sun caught the *benben* stone before anything else, and the stone was thus believed to be the god's dwelling place. The obelisks flanking the pylon entrance were arranged in relation to positions of the sun and moon and, like the pyramids, were capped with gold.



in a small amount of light that enhanced the effect of the shadows. Most people never entered the temples, but watched from the outside the processions for which the temples were planned. The elite were allowed to enter the courtyards, while the priests carried images of the gods in and out of the innermost sanctuaries in boat-shaped shrines called barks. The transitional quality of this architecture is carefully designed to evoke the feeling of a mysterious enclosure, a space implicitly accessible only to priests, pharaohs, and gods.

The temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu is dedicated to a triad of gods worshiped at the New Kingdom capital city of Thebes (fig. 5.16). The view in the illustration shows the hypostyle columns and a pylon façade in the background. At the far end was the sanctuary—the “holy of holies”—a small central room with four columns.

5.16 (Below) Court and pylon of Ramses II and colonnade and court of Amenhotep III, Temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu, Luxor, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, c. 1279–1212 B.C.



Like all ancient Egyptian temples, this one was considered a microcosm of the universe and as such contained both earthly and celestial symbolism. Column designs (fig. 5.13) were derived from the vegetation of Egypt—in this case papyrus—and represented the earth. The original ceiling was painted blue and decorated with birds and stars, denoting its symbolic role as the heavenly realm.

Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple and Sculpture The Eighteenth Dynasty is notable for its female pharaoh, Hatshepsut (reigned c. 1473–1458 B.C.). She was the wife and half-sister of Thutmose I's son, Thutmose II. When Thutmose II died, Thutmose III, his son by a minor queen, was underage. Around 1479 B.C. Hatshepsut became regent for her stepson-nephew, but she exerted her right to succeed her father and was crowned king of Egypt in 1473 B.C. Although female rulers of Egypt were not unprecedented, Hatshepsut's assumption of the title of king was a departure from tradition. Despite her successor's attempts to obliterate her monuments, many of them survive to document her productive reign.

It is not known why Hatshepsut became king or why Thutmose III tolerated it. Hatshepsut's strong character and political acumen must have contributed to her success. She claimed that her father had chosen her as king, and she used the institution of co-regency to maintain her power without having to eliminate her rival. Above all, she selected her officials wisely, particularly Senenmut, who was her daughter's guardian as well as her first minister and chief architect.

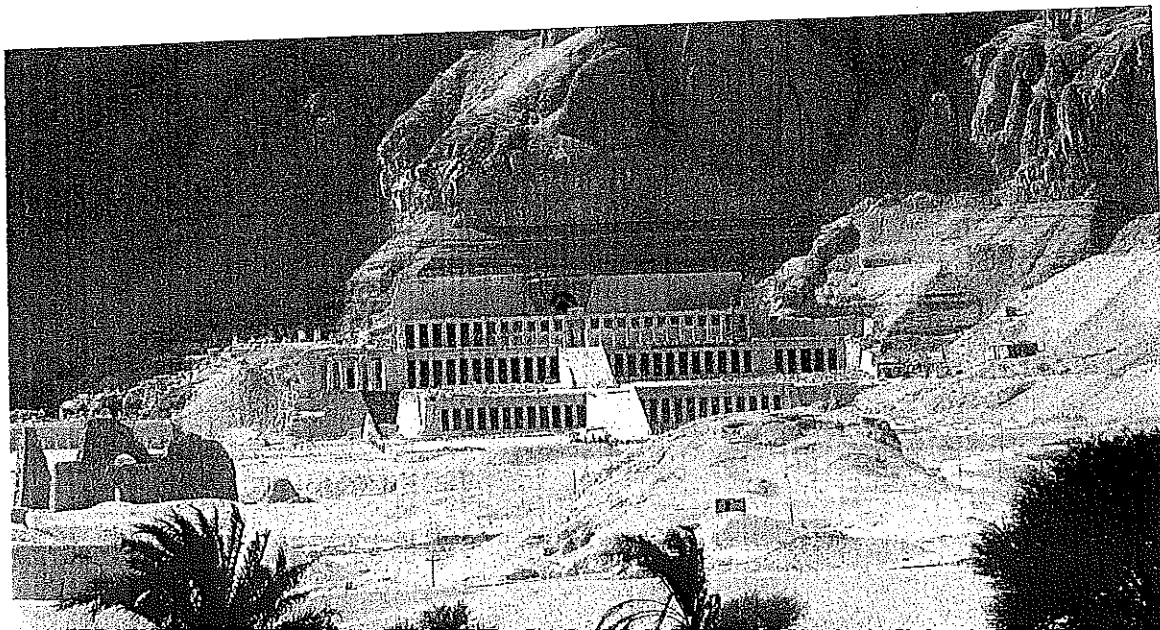
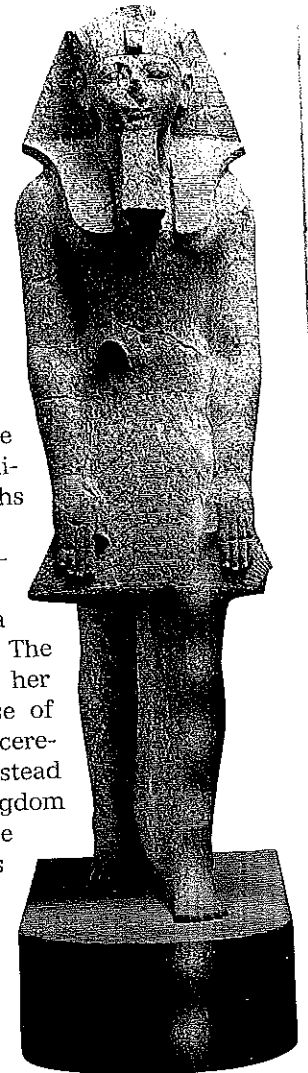
Hatshepsut, like other pharaohs, assumed royal titles and iconography, and had her own divine conception depicted in her temple reliefs. In keeping with the conventional scene, the compound god Amon-Ra was shown handing the *ankh* symbol (☥), hieroglyph for "life," to her mother, Queen Ahmose. In this imagery, Hatshepsut proclaimed her divine right to rule Egypt as a king. She also

5.17 Statue of Hatshepsut as pharaoh, 18th Dynasty, c. 1473–1458 B.C. Granite, 7 ft. 11 in. (2.41 m) high. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Hatshepsut was the second known queen who ruled Egypt as pharaoh. The earlier queen, Sobekneferu, ruled in the 12th Dynasty but, unlike Hatshepsut, did not preside over an artistic revival.

referred to herself in texts as the female Horus, evoking the traditional parallel between pharaohs and gods.

Despite such acknowledgments of her gender, Hatshepsut chose to be represented as a man in many of her statues. The example in figure 5.17 depicts her in the traditional assertive pose of standing pharaohs, wearing a ceremonial headdress and beard. Instead of the clenched fists of Old Kingdom pharaohs such as Menkaure (see fig. 5.10), Hatshepsut extends her arms forward and lays her hands flat on her trapezoidal garment.

The main architectural innovation of Hatshepsut's reign was the terraced mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri (fig. 5.18). The primary function of the Egyptian mortuary temple, usually constructed from a pylon plan, was twofold: first, to worship the king's patron deity during his



5.18 Funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut, Deir el-Bahri, Egypt, 18th Dynasty. Sandstone and rock. Construction of this temple began in the reign of Thutmose I (1504–1496 B.C.) and continued during the reign of his daughter Hatshepsut (1473–1458 B.C.). Most of the projecting colonnades have been restored after being vandalized during the reign of Thutmose III. They adorn the three large terraces, which are connected to each other by ramps. The inner sanctuary is located inside the cliff.

5.19 Nebamun hunting birds, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, Egypt, c. 1390–1352 B.C. Fragment of a painting on gypsum plaster. British Museum, London.

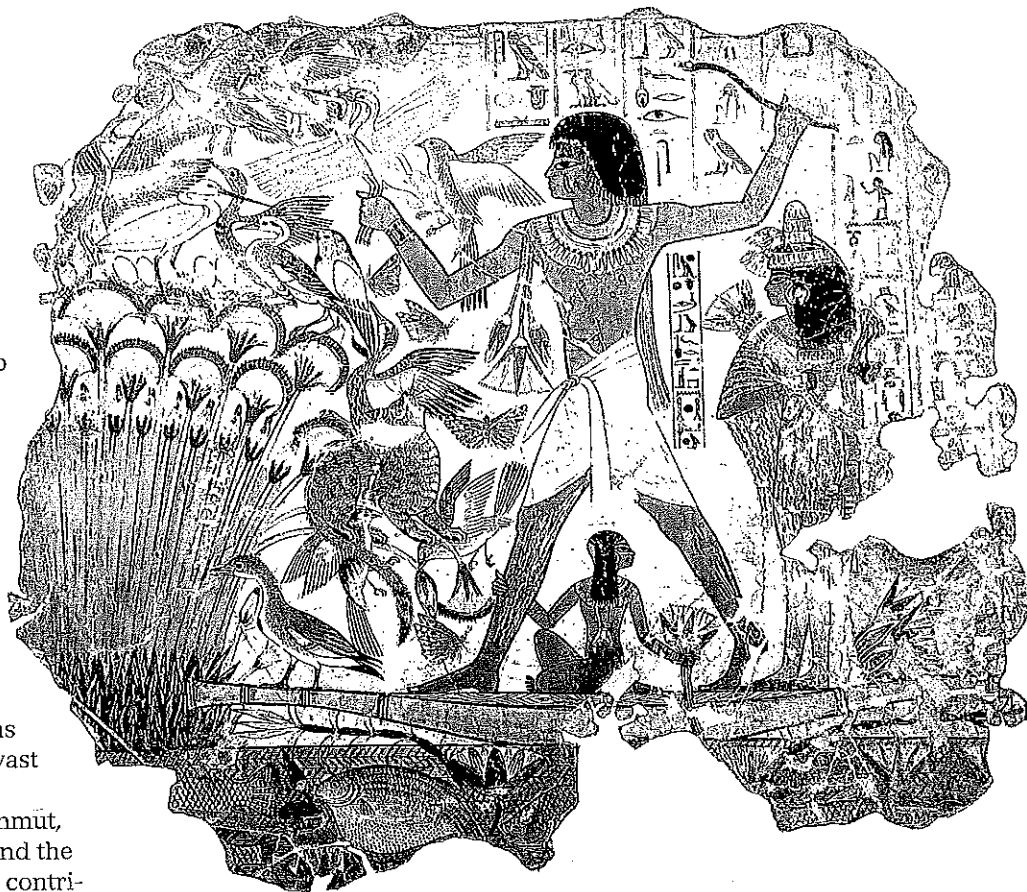
lifetime; and, second, to worship the king himself after his death. As a mortuary temple for both Hatshepsut and her father, the Deir el-Bahri complex reinforced her image as his successor. At the same time, the major deities Amon, Hathor, and Anubis were worshiped in shrines within the temple. On the exterior, terraces with rectangular supports and polygonal columns blended impressively with the vast rocky site.

Hatshepsut's architect, Senenmut, was the main artistic force behind the temple and its decoration. His contribution to the artistic renewal under Hatshepsut is evident in a series of characteristic self-portraits. These show him kneeling in prayer to Amon and were located in the temple behind doors to the chapels and niches for statues. When the doors were opened during religious rites, the figures of Senenmut became visible.

At the end of Hatshepsut's reign, Thutmose III, then in his late twenties, finally assumed sole power (c. 1458 B.C.). He demolished the images of Hatshepsut and emphasized his own role as his father's successor. Whereas Hatshepsut's reign had been notable for diplomatic missions, Thutmose III became a great conqueror, gaining control of Nubia and invading the Near East. Reflecting his interest in foreign alliances were his marriages to three women with Syrian names.

Painting

Gypsum Plaster A New Kingdom painting on gypsum plaster from the tomb of Nebamun, a Theban official (fig. 5.19), shows him hunting birds. He is accompanied by his wife and daughter, and is surrounded by animals and a landscape. Following the conventional Egyptian pose, his head and legs are in profile, and his torso and eye are frontal. He wears a flattened trapezoidal kilt. Nebamun's wife and daughter are small and curvilinear by comparison, continuing the Old Kingdom tradition of increasing naturalism for decreasing rank. Paintings of this period, however, were slightly more naturalistic than those of the Old Kingdom. The birds turn more freely in space than the

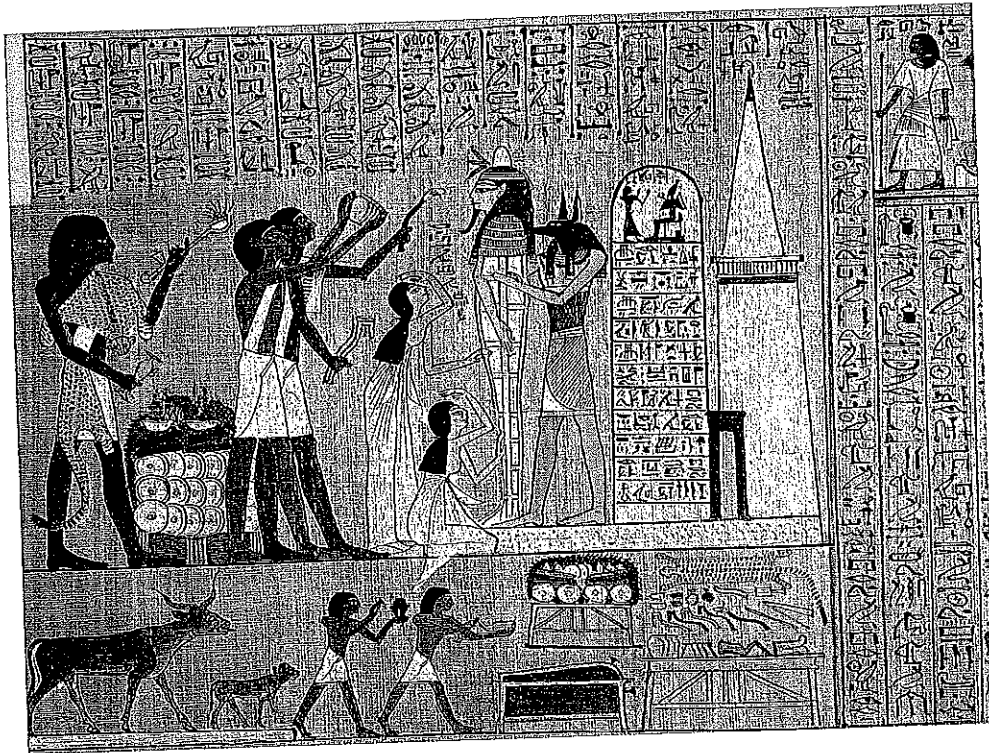


human figures, and on the fish there is evidence of shading, which conveys a sense of volume.

Papyrus A New Kingdom painting on papyrus from the *Book of the Dead* (fig. 5.20) illustrates the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, which ritually "opened the mouth" of the dead body and restored its ability to breathe, feel, hear, see, and speak. In this scene, described in the rows of hieroglyphics at the top, the ritual is performed on the Nineteenth Dynasty mummy of the scribe Hunefer. Reading the image from left to right, we see a priest in a leopard skin, an altar, and two priests in white garments with upraised ritual objects—a hook, a bull's leg, and a knife. Two mourning women are directly in front of the upright mummy. Their lighter skin tones, in comparison with the men's, had been a convention of Egyptian art since the Old Kingdom.

Behind the mummy is Anubis, the jackal-headed mortuary god. The two forms behind him are a stele, covered with hieroglyphs and surmounted by a representation of Hunefer appearing before a god, and a stylized tomb façade with a pyramid on top. Note the similarity between the iconography of the power-revealing scene at the top of the stele and that on the law code of Hammurabi (see fig. 4.15). In both, the seated god combines a frontal and profile pose, while the smaller mortal—as if commanding less space—is more nearly in profile.

In spite of the remarkable social, political, and artistic continuity of ancient Egypt, it is clear from the fragment in figure 5.19 and from Hunefer's papyrus that certain changes had occurred in the two thousand years between



5.20 Opening of the Mouth ceremony, from the *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer, New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty, c. 1295–1186 B.C. Pigment on papyrus. British Museum, London.

the beginning of the Old Kingdom and the New Kingdom. The most important cultural change, however, took place from around 1353 B.C., when a revolutionary pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, came to power.

The Amarna Period (c. 1349–1336 B.C.)

Generations of scholars have tried to answer the questions surrounding Amenhotep IV, the Eighteenth Dynasty king who challenged the entrenched religious cults. In their place he adopted a new, and unpopular, religious system that was relatively monotheistic.

Amenhotep's primary god was the Aten, represented as the sun disk, and accordingly he changed his own name to Akhenaten (meaning "servant of the Aten"). He effaced the names and images of the other gods and moved the capital north from the major cult center of Thebes to Akhetaten (now known as Tell el-Amarna, from which the term for this period is derived). Akhenaten chose the site and name for his new capital because the sun rising over the horizon at that point resembled the hieroglyph for sunrise.

Nothing is known of the origin of his ideas, which greatly influenced artistic style during his reign. Statues of Akhenaten and his family differ dramatically from those of traditional pharaohs. The monumental example in figure 5.21 is from early in his reign, before he moved to Amarna. His age and his idiosyncrasies are already evident, and he looks as if he had unusual, if not deformed, physical features. At the same time, however, Akhenaten holds the crook and flail, which are attributes of Osiris and of Egyptian royalty. He also wears the combined *hedjet*

and *deshret* crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt. *Cartouches* (rectangles with curved ends framing the name of the king) appear on blocks on either side of his beard, on his wrist bracelet, and on his waist. They are also incised along the top of his tunic.

The best-known sculpture from the Amarna period is the painted limestone bust of Akhenaten's wife, Nefertiti (fig. 5.22). The well-preserved paint adds to its naturalistic impression. This is enhanced by the organically modeled features, the sense that taut muscles lie beneath the surface of the neck, and the open space created by the long, elegant curves at the sides of the neck. Instead of wearing the queen's traditional headdress, Nefertiti has her hair pulled up into a tall crown, creating an elegant upward motion. The two diagonal planes of the sculpture create a new dynamic tension not seen in the traditional single vertical planes of pharaonic imagery.

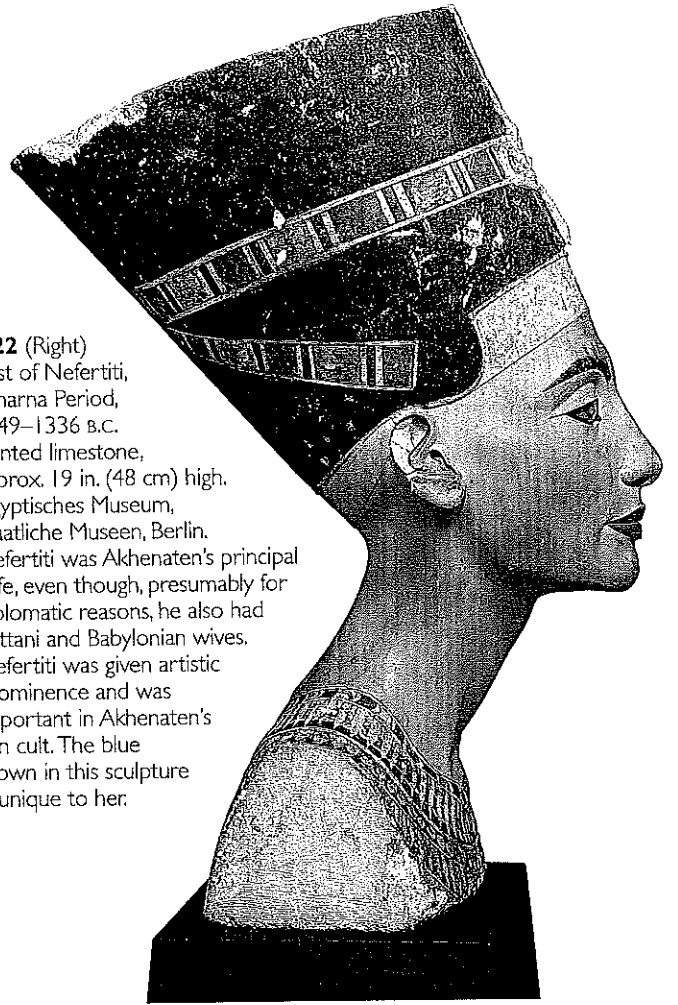
A small relief in which Akhenaten and Nefertiti play with their daughters illustrates some of the stylistic and iconographic changes under Akhenaten (fig. 5.23). The king and queen are rendered with a naturalism unprecedented for Egyptian royal figures. Their fluid, curved outlines—repeated in their drapery patterns—add a new sense of individual motion within three-dimensional space, which is enhanced by the flowing bands of material behind their heads. There is also a sense that figures turn slightly in space; this is suggested by the lines incised at the waists of Akhenaten and two of the children.

Although the daughters are represented as miniature adults, their behavior and relative freedom of movement endow them with a childlike character. The girl on



5.21 (Above) Akhenaten, from Karnak, Egypt, 1353–1350 B.C. Sandstone, approx. 13 ft. (3.96 m) high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Akhenaten was the son of Amenhotep III and his principal wife Tiy. Amenhotep III ruled Egypt for thirty-eight years. During Tiy's lifetime, he married a Mittani (from Mesopotamia) and two Babylonian princesses, and then made his daughter his principal wife.

5.22 (Right) Bust of Nefertiti, Amarna Period, 1349–1336 B.C. Painted limestone, approx. 19 in. (48 cm) high. Ägyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Nefertiti was Akhenaten's principal wife, even though, presumably for diplomatic reasons, he also had Mittani and Babylonian wives. Nefertiti was given artistic prominence and was important in Akhenaten's sun cult. The blue crown in this sculpture is unique to her.



5.23 Akhenaten and Nefertiti and their daughters, Amarna period, 1349–1336 B.C. Limestone relief, 13 × 15 in. (33 × 38 cm). Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

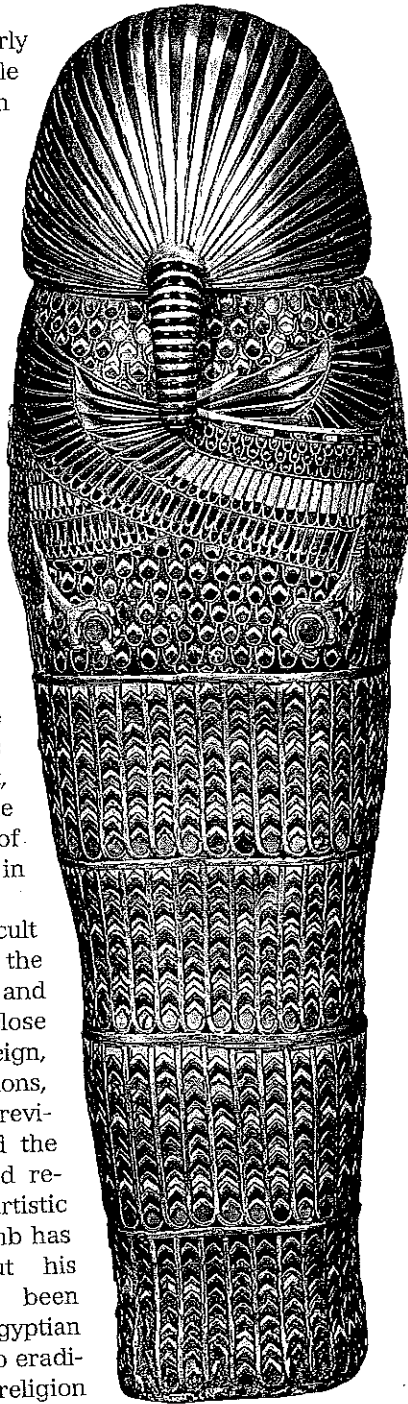
Nefertiti's lap points eagerly toward her father, while the other seems to hang on Nefertiti's shoulder. She is touching a *uraeus* that descends from her mother's headdress. Akhenaten holds a third child, whom he kisses. The intimacy of a scene such as this reflects the new humanity of the Amarna style.

Hieroglyphs are carved at the top of the scene and include many cartouches. In the center of the hieroglyphs is the sun disk Aten, with rays of light that end in hands. Some hold the *ankh*, symbol of life. Unlike earlier representations of gods in Egyptian art, this one embodies the Aten in the pure shape of the circle rather than in human or animal form.

Akhenaten's new cult posed a danger to the established priesthood and its traditions. At the close of his seventeen-year reign, despite certain innovations, Egypt reverted to its previous beliefs, reinstated the priestly hierarchy, and revived traditional artistic style. Akhenaten's tomb has been identified, but his mummy has never been located. Subsequent Egyptian rulers did their best to eradicate all traces of his religion and its expression in art.

Tutankhamon's Tomb

After Akhenaten's death, the next pharaoh, Tutankhamon (reigned c. 1336–1327 B.C.), returned to the worship of Amon, as his name indicates. He died at eighteen, and his main claim to historical significance is the fact that his tomb, with its four burial chambers, was discovered intact.



5.24 Canopic coffinette (coffin of Tutankhamon), c. 1327 B.C. Gold inlaid with enamel and semiprecious stones, 15¼ in. (39 cm) high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



In 1922 an English Egyptologist, Howard Carter, was excavating in the Valley of the Kings, to the west of the Nile and the New Kingdom temples of Karnak and Luxor. To the delight of his patron, Lord Carnarvon, Carter found one tomb whose burial chamber and treasury room had not yet been plundered. It yielded some five thousand works of art and other objects, including the mummified body of the king himself.

Tutankhamon's mummy wore a solid-gold portrait mask. It was inlaid with blue glass, lapis lazuli, and other colored materials. Three coffins, one inside the other, protected the mummy. The two outer coffins were made of gilded wood; the innermost coffin was made of solid gold and weighed 243 pounds (110 kg). The mummy and its three coffins rested inside a large rectangular stone sarcophagus. The canopic coffinettes in figure 5.24 are one of four that contained the pharaoh's organs. These small coffins were housed in a wooden shrine that was placed in another room of the tomb. Their shape conforms to that of the large coffins, and they also show Tutankhamon as Osiris. Each was made of beaten gold, decorated with inlaid colored glass and semiprecious stones.

A comparison of Tutankhamon's effigy with the images produced under Akhenaten shows that the rigid, frontal pose has returned. The natural spaces are closed—for example, around the head and neck by the *Nemes* headdress and around the body by virtue of the crossed arms

and tight drapery—thus restoring the conventional iconography of kingship. Like Akhenaten, Tutankhamon holds the crook and flail. Protecting his head are two goddesses, Wadjet the cobra and Nekhbet the vulture. The wings wrapped around Tutankhamon's upper body belong to the deities on his forehead, and their claws hold the sign for infinity.

More than forty years after Carter's discovery, the contents of Tutankhamon's tomb became one of the world's most popular and widely traveled museum exhibitions, appearing in Paris, London, Russia, and the United States. But Lord Carnarvon did not live to see it. Just five months after Tutankhamon's tomb was opened, Carter's patron died of an infection, which the popular press attributed to the mummy's curse.

Egypt and Nubia

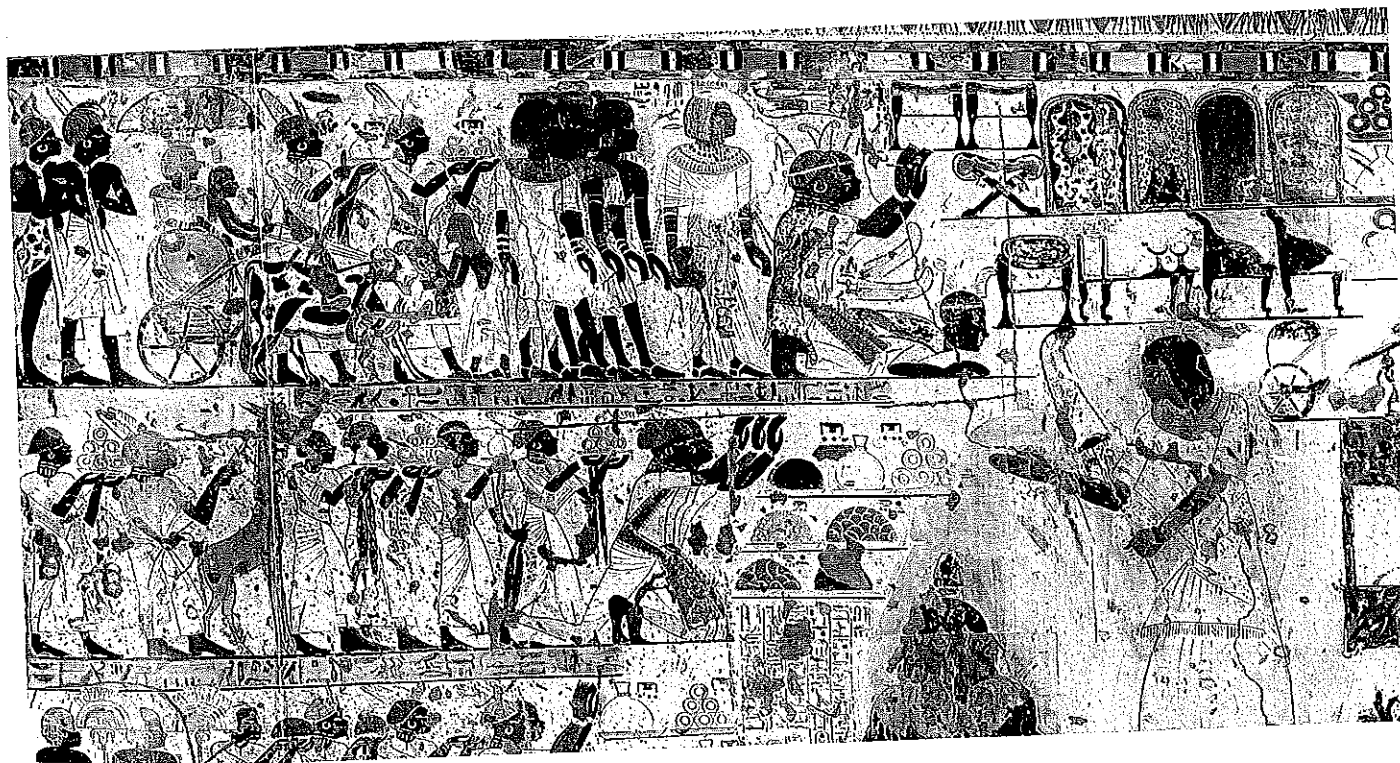
The land south of the Nile's first cataract (now southernmost Egypt and the Sudan) was called Nubia by the Romans. To the Egyptians, it was the Land of the Bow (after the Nubians' standard weapon), the Land of the South, and Kush. As in Egypt, the Nile's floods were crucial to the development of Nubian culture, which was enhanced by the wealth of its natural resources—gold, copper, and semiprecious gems—and its location along a major African trade route.

During the Old Kingdom, Egypt raided Nubia for natural resources and slaves. By the Twelfth Dynasty, pharaohs invaded the region with a view to mining copper and gold and taking control of the trade route. Their successes were reinforced by the construction of massive fortresses and a highly organized communication system.

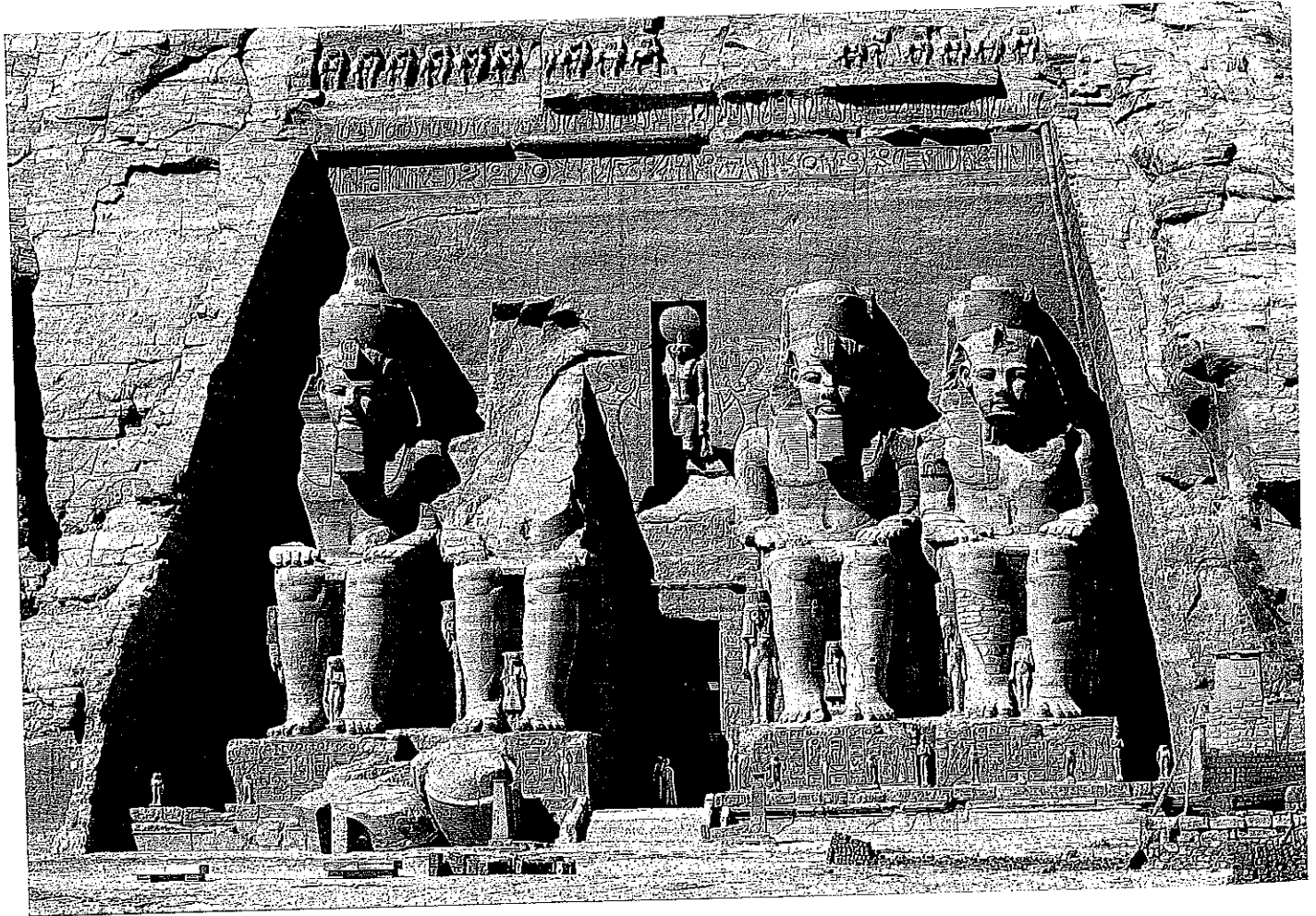
Tombs of Huy and Ramses II

A painted relief from the Theban tomb of Huy, Nubia's viceroy under Tutankhamon, shows Heqanufer, the local prince of Mi'am, bowing to the pharaoh (fig. 5.25). A princess follows in an ox-drawn chariot.

In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth dynasties, the Egyptians built their most imposing temples in Nubia. Figure 5.26 shows the façade of Ramses II's rock-cut temple at Abu Simbel, one of a series of six colossal structures south of Aswan. Four huge seated statues of Ramses II represent him in a traditional royal pose, wearing the ceremonial beard and headdress. Ramses' purpose in constructing such works in Nubia was to proclaim to the Nubians his identification with the gods Amon and Ra as well as to emphasize Egyptian domination over Nubia. During the last hundred years of the New Kingdom (c. 1170–1070 B.C.), Egypt and Nubia declined. But by the third century B.C., a new stage of Nubian cultural development can be identified. The economic and artistic high point of this period is called Meroitic, after the site of Meroë, south of Napata.



5.25 Presentation of Nubian tribute to Tutankhamon (restored), tomb chapel of Huy, Thebes, Egypt, 18th Dynasty, c. 1336–1327 B.C. Wall painting, 6 × 17¼ ft. (1.82 × 5.24 m). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Egyptian Exhibition of Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.21)



5.26 Temple of Ramses II, Abu Simbel, Nubia, 1279–1213 B.C.

Meroë

Archaeological exploration of Meroë is still incomplete, but its significance in antiquity is clear from Classical accounts. In about 430 B.C., the Greek historian Herodotus (*History*, II, 29) described the arduous journey by ship, followed by forty days on foot and another boat journey, from Aswan to Meroë.

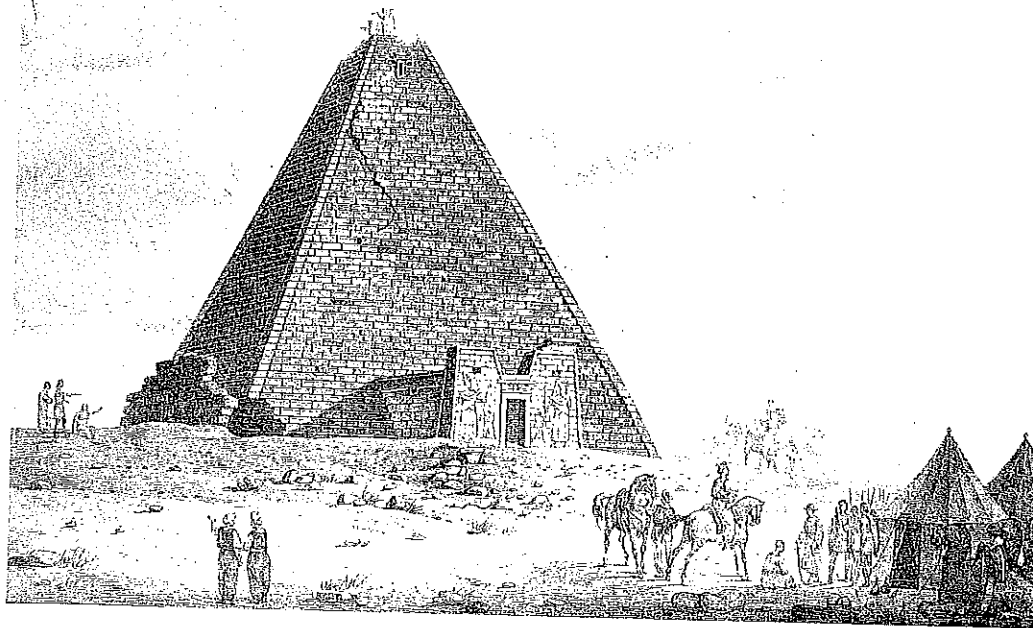
The most impressive buildings from Meroë are the pyramids. They are derived from Egyptian pyramids but rise more steeply than those at Giza and have flat, rather than pointed, caps. Scholars believe that these flat tops may each have supported a sun disk, indicating worship of a sun god. Burial chambers were underground, and the deceased, as in Egypt, were mummified. The outer stone blocks, and the structures themselves, are smaller than Old Kingdom Egyptian royal pyramids. They are closer in form to New Kingdom examples built for private individuals, even though those at Meroë were royal tombs.

In 1820–21, a French traveler, F. Cailliaud, accompanied the Egyptian army into the Sudan and made drawings of the pyramids at Meroë. The pyramid in figure 5.27

belonged to Queen Amanishakheto (first century B.C.) and was in a relatively good state of preservation. According to Cailliaud's drawing, the entrance, inspired by Egyptian temple pylons, was decorated with reliefs illustrating the ruler's triumph over Meroë's enemies.

Excavations of the interior of the pyramid were carried out some thirteen years later by the Italian physician Giuseppe Ferlini. His account of the excavation reflects the careless and unscientific procedures current in nineteenth-century archaeology, including the destruction of some objects and the removal of others from the site.

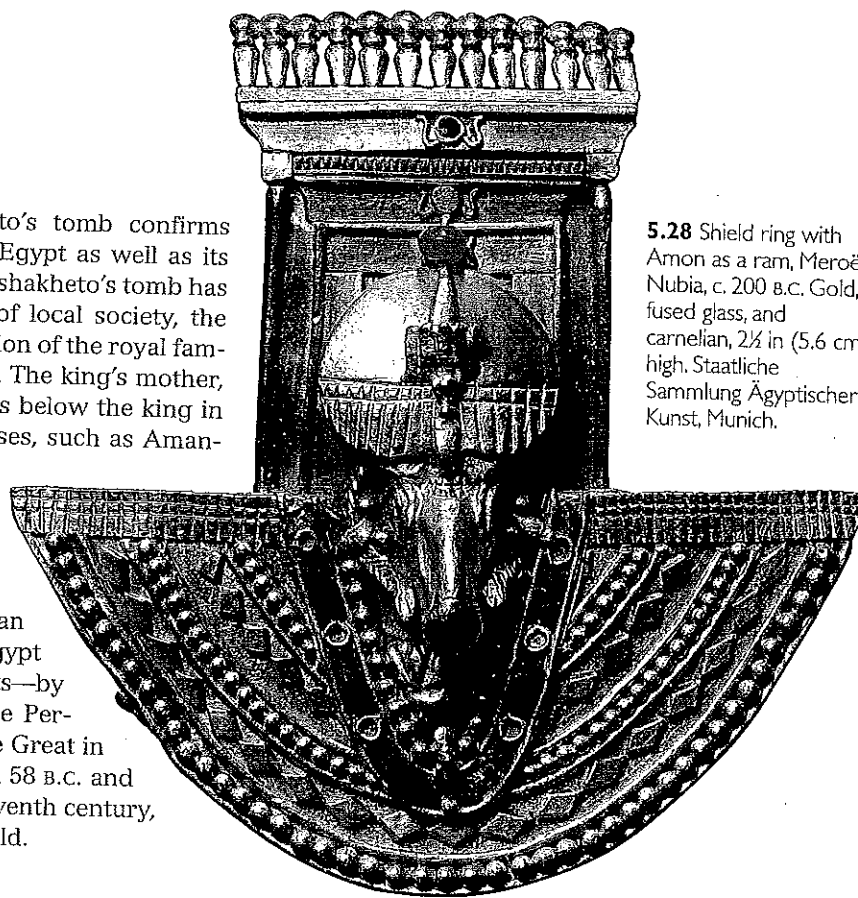
Among the goldwork from Amanishakheto's tomb were nine so-called shield rings, of which figure 5.28 is a typical example. The god Amon is depicted in the guise of a naturalistic ram's head under a sun disk. Behind the disk stands a chapel façade with smaller circles flanked by *uraei*. Blue glass is fused into the circle, which is soldered onto its gold background. The red glass on top of the sun disk was glued into the gold circle. It is not certain what purpose was served by the shield rings, but it is possible that they were pendants similar to the decorative pieces worn by Nubian women of today on their foreheads.



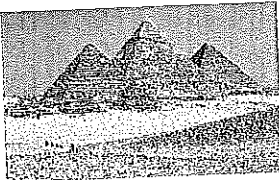





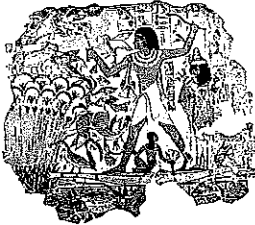


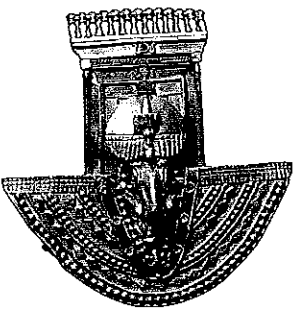

5.27 Tomb of Amanishakheto, Meroë, Nubia, late 1st century B.C. Drawing from F. Cailliaud, *Voyage à Méroé* (Paris, 1823–1827), plate XLI.

The excavation of Amanishakheto's tomb confirms Meroë's artistic independence from Egypt as well as its absorption of Egyptian forms. Amanishakheto's tomb has also contributed to our knowledge of local society, the position of women, and the organization of the royal family in this part of sub-Saharan Africa. The king's mother, who was given the title Kandake, was below the king in the royal hierarchy, but in certain cases, such as Amanishakheto's, the Kandake herself ruled. This is reflected in a New Testament text referring to a eunuch "under Candace [Kandake], queen of the Ethiopians" (Acts 8:27).

After the first century of the Christian era, Nubian civilization declined. Egypt itself underwent a series of conquests—by the Assyrians (c. 673–657 B.C.), by the Persians in 525 B.C., and by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. The Romans invaded Egypt in 58 B.C. and annexed it in 30 B.C. Since the early seventh century, Egypt has been part of the Islamic world.



5.28 Shield ring with Amon as a ram, Meroë, Nubia, c. 200 B.C. Gold, fused glass, and carnelian, 2½ in (5.6 cm) high. Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst, Munich.

Style/Period	Works of Art	Cultural/Historical Developments
<p>3000 B.C.</p> <p>PREDYNASTIC c. 5450–3100 B.C.</p> <p>2500 B.C.</p> <p>OLD KINGDOM c. 2649–2150 B.C.</p> 	<p>Palette of Narmer (5.1, 5.2), Hierakonpolis</p> <p>Step pyramid (5.4), Saqqara</p> <p>Great Pyramids (5.5), Giza</p> <p>The Great Sphinx (5.7), Giza</p> <p>Seated statue of Khafre (5.8), Giza</p> <p>Menkaure and Khamerernebtj (5.10), Giza</p> <p>Seated scribe (5.11), Saqqara</p> 	<p>Egypt unified under a single pharaoh (3100 B.C.)</p> <p>Hieroglyphic writing appears (c. 3100 B.C.)</p> <p>Copper widely used in Egypt (2700 B.C.)</p> <p>Egyptian conquest of Nubia (2600 B.C.)</p> <p>Potter's wheel in common use in Mesopotamia (c. 2500 B.C.)</p> <p>Egyptians discover use of papyrus (2500–2000 B.C.)</p> 
<p>2000 B.C.</p> <p>MIDDLE KINGDOM c. 1991–1700 B.C.</p> 	<p>Sesostris III (5.12)</p> 	<p>Epic of Gilgamesh written in Sumer (2000–1000 B.C.)</p> <p>Earliest Minoan palace built at Knossos, Crete (c. 2000 B.C.)</p>
<p>1500 B.C.</p> <p>NEW KINGDOM c. 1550–1070 B.C.</p> 	<p>Funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut (5.18)</p> <p>Hatshepsut as pharaoh (5.17)</p> <p>Nebamun hunting birds (5.19)</p> <p>Temple of Amon-Mut-Khonsu (5.14), Luxor</p> 	<p>Citadel at Mycenae (Greece) constructed (c. 1600–1500 B.C.)</p> <p>Hyksos expelled from Egypt (1550 B.C.)</p> <p>Dominance of Mycenaean Greeks in eastern Mediterranean (1400–1200 B.C.)</p> <p>Exodus of the Hebrews, led by Moses, from Egypt to Canaan (mid-13th century B.C.)</p>  
<p>Egypt and Nubia</p> 	<p>Statue of Akhenaten (5.21), Karnak</p> <p>Akhenaten and Nefertiti and their children (5.23)</p> <p>Bust of Nefertiti (5.22)</p> <p>Canopic coffinet of Tutankhamon (5.24)</p> <p>Opening of the Mouth ceremony (5.20)</p> <p>Painted relief (5.25), tomb of Huy, Thebes</p> <p>Temple of Ramses II (5.26), Abu Simbel</p> <p>Tomb of Amanishakheto (5.27), Meroë</p> <p>Shield ring with Amon as a ram (5.28), Meroë</p> 	<p>Beginning of Judaism (c. 1200 B.C.)</p> <p>Iron in common use (c. 1200 B.C.)</p> <p>Dorians invade Greece from the north (c. 1100 B.C.)</p> <p>Egypt loses control of Nubia (c. 1100 B.C.)</p> <p>Phoenicians develop alphabetic script (1100 B.C.)</p> 