

Ancient Egypt and its dynasties

The exceptional and rich history of ancient Egypt took place five thousand years ago. It all started when a couple of villagers occupied the space around the River Nile in northeast Africa. They lived off the river's water and the crops they grew, such as wheat, barley, as well as flax. They made use of the flax to create clothes. But the Egyptians did not stop there, they expanded their knowledge, power, and lands. And nowadays, Egyptians own one of the most unique and distinguished civilizations.

Nothing will give you a better look at the Egyptian civilization other than being introduced to each period and dynasty.

Prehistoric Egypt

This era starts from 6000 till 3150 BC. All of the discoveries made weren't based on written records, they were based on the artifacts discovered by Archaeologists. Those artifacts unfold the history of the cultural development that occurred in the Nile River Valley.

Archaeologists encountered difficulties trying to determine the start and end date of the prehistoric era, as there is not enough information to help Archaeologists detect it. However, scholars chose the term "Protodynastic Period" to refer to the Early Dynastic Period (from 3150 till 2613 BCE), and referred to the period before the first dynasties as the "Predynastic Period".

This is when villagers discovered and started learning about agriculture, irrigation, and basic architecture. This helped them make the land inhabitable.

Dynastic Egypt

Old Kingdom:(1-6)From 2686 through 2181 BCE, Egypt was ruled by the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth dynasties. They located their capital in Memphis.

This period was known as "the Age of the Pyramids." The Egyptians proceeded to build several humongous and momentous pyramids, each one holding a different story and a king or a queen. The first pyramid was established by the first king of the old kingdom, Djoser, and he named the pyramid after himself to commemorate all of his achievements.

The era of the fourth dynasty is believed to be a period of success. The head of the dynasty, Sneferu, built three pyramids. His son, Khufu, was the one to establish the widely known Great Pyramid of Giza. Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure are members of a remarkable family that left a permanent mark on history.

The head of the fifth dynasty, Userkaf, focused more on religion, gods, and building temples. Unlike the fourth dynasty which focused on building pyramids. Userkaf devoted himself to the god of the sun, Ra. And he built the sun temple in Abusir. This dynasty was also the first to sail trading ships, as they were involved in the trading business.

During the ruling period of the sixth dynasty, pharaohs failed to stay powerful, and their grip on the land and its people started weakening. This is when the Nomarchs took advantage of the situation and took over. The old kingdom came to an end when the 4.2 kiloyear event took the people by surprise. this event affected the Nile's flood level. And left people to suffer for years full of hunger.

First Intermediate Period:(7-10)

The first intermediate period was known to be run by powerless pharaohs. The leadership of the dynasties of this period was crumbling and weak. Some individuals took advantage of this chaos and stole items from the pyramids and tombs, and some individuals used it to cast spells.

During 2160 BC the ninth and tenth dynasties focused on consolidating Lower Egypt from their capital. While the eleventh dynasty reunited Upper Egypt. The two lands were unified once more after the Thebans vanquished the Heracleopolitan pharaohs in 2055 BC.

Middle Kingdom:(11-12)

This period consists of two eras, the first one is the era of the eleventh dynasty that ruled Thebes. And the second one is the era of the twelfth dynasty that ruled Lisht and set it as their capital.

The first pharaoh of the eleventh dynasty is thought to be Intef I, and the last pharaoh was Mentuhotep IV.

And scholars believe the first pharaoh of the twelfth dynasty, Amenemhat I, either took the throne by force or took it after Mentuhotep IV died without announcing a successor. Amenemhat I immediately built a new capital for Egypt and named it Itjtawy. He focused on ruling Nubia once again by fighting the Nomarchs. His son, Senusret I, who took the throne after him, took over his dad's goal too. He tried to rule Nubia and the lands they lost during the First Intermediate Period.

Eventually, the population of Egypt started increasing significantly, and the supplies didn't seem to be enough. That's when Amenemhat III decided to take advantage of Faiyum, to increase farming.

The annual flooding of the Nile seemed to decrease gradually, which lead to a huge increase in food production.

Second Intermediate Period:(13-17)

This period is known to be full of chaos due to previous problems. It was the period when the Hyksos entered Egypt.

The thirteenth dynasty failed to act as good leaders, and that led a group of Levantine to take matters into their hands and decided to form the fourteenth dynasty.

The Hyksos destroyed both the thirteenth and the fourteenth dynasties when they took over and controlled Avaris and Memphis. And those dynasties were taken down easily due to internal conflicts and problems such as hunger and the plague.

While the Hyksos ruled the eastern Delta, the fifteenth dynasty proceeded to rule Memphis and they set it as their capital. When the Hyksos took over Memphis, the native Egyptian ruling house declared its independence and that it will be the start of the sixteenth dynasty. The Hyksos were able to take a hold of Thebes for a short while before they withdrew to the north.

That is when the seventeenth dynasty showed up and revived Egypt by banishing the Hyksos to Asia.

New Kingdom:(18-20)

Throughout this period Egypt witnessed success and wealth, owing to Hatshepsut the ruler of the eighteenth dynasty. Having a female ruler was uncommon during this era, so it was a groundbreaking move for a woman to rule. She was known to be powerful and smart. She extended the Egyptian trade south and overall improved life aspects. She took over and ruled for twenty years.

It is believed that Amenhotep IV was the most remarkable leader in the eighteenth dynasty. He worshipped and respected the god Aten, which inspired him to change his name to Akhenaten in honor of Aten.

By the beginning of the nineteenth dynasty Ramesses I ruled for almost two years. His son, Seti I, took over shortly after and created the temple complex at Abydos.

Ramesses II, who ruled after Seti I, is thought to be a good leader. He ruled for 67 years, and he built many temples throughout his reign.

The last ruler of the nineteenth dynasty, Twosret, took over. However, chaos proceeded to spread. It's thought that the reason behind the chaos is that a foreigner was in control. Which led to the inauguration of Setnakhte as the ruler.

The most powerful leader known in the new kingdom is thought to be Ramesses III, from the twentieth dynasty. The sea people attempted to take over Egypt after eight years of his reign. However, they were defeated after two big battles launched by Ramesses III. Egypt suffered financially due to the high cost of the two previous battles. And after the death of Ramesses III, the problems seemed to only increase. His successors were very weak and unable to be in power, alongside the droughts, hunger, and corruption.

Third Intermediate Period:(21-25)

Smendes, the successor of Ramesses XI, took over Egypt. The High Priests of Amun were the actual rulers of the south, but they were not officially assigned. Eventually, Egypt split up again. Thebes belonged to the Priests, while Tanis belonged to the pharaohs. However, they were replaced by the Twenty-Second Dynasty willingly.

Some sources believe that a number of subversive groups were created during the reign of the twenty-second dynasty, which eventually led to the creation of the twenty-third dynasty.

Late Period:(26-30/31)

Memphis and the Delta region were targeted by the Assyrians, who banished the Nubians and gave power to the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.

The first ruler who ruled Egypt entirely was Psamtik I, who brought peace and stability along with him for 54 years. He established Sais as his capital.

After a while, Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar II attacked the Egyptians and forced them move to Sinai. In 567 BC he ruled Egypt for a short period of time.

By the end of this period, the power of the Persians seemed to only get stronger. Psamtik III tried to fight them; however, they defeated him and ended his dynasty.