Egyptian Chronology
(all dates BCE)

3100-2600 Early Dynastic Period

2600-2150 **Old Kingdom**
Pyramid Era: 2550-2400

2150-2040 1st Intermediate Period

2040-1650 **Middle Kingdom**

1650-1567 2nd Intermediate Period: The Hyksos

1567-1069 **New Kingdom**
Hatshepsut: 1479-1458
Akhenaten: 1352-1338
Ramses II: 1279-1212

E1-04b
The Palermo Stone
Graffiti found outside of Egypt
First Dynasty, c.3100-2890 BC
These eight kings presided over the first united Egyptian state and the emergence of the hieroglyphic script. From this beginning to the end of the indigenous dynasties, kingship, scrip, art and religion interlocked in the historic fusion that we call Pharaonic civilisation. The tombs of the First Dynasty kings lie in a confined section of the cemeteries at Abydos.

NARMER

Named on the necropolis seal of Den as first ruler of the First Dynasty. His position seems confirmed by the famous votive palette on which he is shown wearing both the crowns of dual Egypt.

AHA

First king under whom a governor built a tomb at Saqqara, the cemetery of Memphis. Aha may then have been the founder of Memphis, the city which came to be the capital of Egypt in the Old Kingdom (Third to Eighth Dynasties).

Djer

The earliest surviving royal jewellery comes from an arm found in the tomb of Djer. In the Middle Kingdom and afterwards the Egyptians thought that this tomb housed the body of Osiris, god of the dead. The king left an inscription near Wadi Halfa, evidence for a military campaign deep into Nubia.
42 Inscription on an ivory label for an oil-jar, with a record of events in the reign of King Aha. The top register contains the hieroglyph *mn* at the right-hand side; this has been linked with Menes, named in later Egyptian sources as the founder of the First Dynasty. From the tomb of Queen Neithhotep at Naqada. About 3100 BC.
Drawing of a Mastaba Tomb
Mastaba Tomb of King Ka’a (Abydos)
Den was buried in a chamber lined with costly granite from Aswan, which marks the reign as a time of prosperity and royal initiative. He was the first king to hold the title *nswt bity* (‘He of the Sedge and Bee’) or ‘dual king’.
Selection of objects from an A-Group grave, including two Egyptian imports (the tall jar and painted pot), c. 3500–3000 BC, H. of tall jar 45 cm. (EA51193, 51187, 51188, 51191, 51192)
LEFT Granite stele of Peribsen from tomb P at Abydos. 2nd Dynasty, c.2700 BC, H. 1.13 m. (EA35597)
Statue of Khasekhemuwy
Second Dynasty, c.2890–2686 BC:
The first three kings of the dynasty were probably buried in tombs at Saqqara, surviving only as underground corridors beneath the royal tombs of the Third Dynasty.

The last two kings of the dynasty were buried at Abydos. Peribsen took a panel name with Seth instead of Horus; the Horus name Sekhemib is either the second name of Peribsen, or a separate king not buried at Abydos. The last king took both a Horus name, Khasekhem, and a panel name with both Horus and Seth, Khasekhemwy. He deposited votive objects at the Horus temple in Hieraconpolis, including the earliest surviving royal sculpture in stone. The great mudbrick panelled enclosures at Abydos and Hieraconpolis may represent royal cult centres of this ruler.
FIGURE 5 Map of Egypt, showing locations of pyramid towns (numbers refer to Table 2).
Abydos Grave Goods
Abydos Grave Goods
Third Dynasty, c.2686–2613 BC

An uncertain number of kings, buried at Saqqara. Here king Netjerikhet built the Step Pyramid to house his body and achieve immortality, and around it stood life-size stone copies of royal cult buildings. New Kingdom visitors left graffiti in which the king of the pyramid has the cartouche Djoser, now thought to be the birth name of Netjerikhet. The king’s First Minister, Imhotep, was credited with the design, the model for all later pyramids, and he became a god of science of the Late Period. The tomb of king Sekhemkhet also took the form of a Step Pyramid, but was never completed. Kings of the Third Dynasty sent expeditions to Sinai to procure turquoise, malachite and copper.
The royal family of Dynasty 3 (c. 2686-2613 B.C.) came from Memphis, and from Dynasty 3 to the end of the Old Kingdom, all kings were buried in the north. The most elaborate and
The Famine Stele
Bronze Statuette of Imhotep
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Fourth Dynasty, c.2613–2494 BC
The rulers of the Old Kingdom (Fourth to Eighth Dynasties) cannot yet be grouped on secure historical grounds. The sole papyrus kinglist, from the reign of Ramses II, gives no break at all between the First and Eighth Dynasties, and the groupings by Manetho into ‘dynasties’ may rest in these cases on a misinterpretation of older records. Therefore the groupings Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Dynasties are used in this list simply for convenience. Future research and excavation may provide more secure grounds for dividing the Old Kingdom into separate phases.

Sneferu

The reign of Sneferu witnessed the appearance of the true pyramid, the final development of classic proportions in Egyptian art, and the cartouche, a signal that Pharaonic civilisation had now taken shape. The energy of the reign can be seen in the volume of stone expended on the royal tombs, which surpasses the quantity needed for the Great Pyramid of Khufu. The royal cult centres of Sneferu include the pyramid at Meidum and two more at Dahshur. The king was probably buried at the north Dahshur pyramid. Middle Kingdom tales portray Sneferu as a good, even merry, king.
The Classical Age

Family tree of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties (generations 1–6).

×...m...HUNE
(Dynasty III)

m...Merensank I...

m...× m...× Hetepheres I

m...× m...× Snefru

...m...× Nefermaat 4

Ankhaf 7 Kanefer 2 Henutsen 3 ...m...Cheops ...m...Merites m...Libyan? ...m...Nefertkau woman

Hemiunu 5

Khufukhaf Minkaf 6

Chephren ...m...Merensankh II Djedefhor

Baefer Kawab ...m...Hetepheres II

Nebemakhet Khentkawes Neferhetepes ...m...× 7

Sahure (Dynasty V) Neferirkare (Dynasty V) Userkaf (Dynasty V)

1 Chephren’s first vizier.
2 Snefru’s second vizier, then Cheops’ first vizier.
3 Cheops’ third wife.
4 Snefru’s first vizier.
5 Cheops’ second vizier.
6 Chephren’s second vizier.
7 Priest of Heliopolis in Papyrus Westcar.
Cheops Statuette
KHUFU

Builder of the Great Pyramid at Giza, the purest geometric form in human architecture and only surviving Wonder of the World after the classical list. Although it cost less effort than the three pyramids of Sneferu, the sheer size of this one monument earned Khufu a reputation for tyrannical cruelty in later generations. Nothing from the burial of the king survives, but the queen mother, Hetepheres, was robbed soon after her death and her remaining tomb goods reburied, to be rediscovered in 1925 (now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

DJEDFRA

Eldest son of Khufu and first king to call himself 'son of Ra', though not yet as a fixed title. His pyramid at Abu Roash north of Giza remained unfinished at his death.

KHAFRA

Second son of Khufu and builder of the Second Pyramid at Giza. Though slightly less tall and geometrically less perfect than the Great Pyramid, the Second Pyramid stands on slightly higher ground and retains its top course of fine limestone, lending it a dominant position over the site. The Pyramid Temple and Valley Temple survive, and magnificent statues of the king, of a stone from Nubia known as Toshka diorite, were found in the Valley Temple. The Valley Temple was built south of its proper place on the axis of the Khafra pyramid complex because an outcrop of rock stood in its way. The outcrop was sculpted into a massive lion with the head of Khafra, earliest and largest Egyptian sphinx, called in Arabic 'Father of Dread'.
The God Ra as Ra-Horakhte
Obelisk (Karnak)
Drawing of Obelisk (Karnak)
Fifth Dynasty, c.2494-2345 BC

The kings who reigned between Shepseskaf and Teti do not form any clear separate group. In a Middle Kingdom tale Userkaf, Sahura and Neferirkara were triplets opening a new royal line, and Teti of the Sixth Dynasty may also have started a new royal family, but the kings between may not all have belonged together. The first kings of this ‘dynasty’ built at Abusir and set up royal sun-temples as well as pyramids. The sun-temple centred on an open court with a squat colossal obelisk, which represented the sacred benben stone at the solar temple in Heliopolis. Fragments of the exquisite decoration from the royal sun-temples and pyramid complexes are preserved in several museums today, but a number were destroyed in the last war. The last two kings of the ‘dynasty’ stand out. Iesi ended the practice of building royal sun-temples, and Unas began the custom of inscribing the chambers within the pyramid with funerary texts, and most ancient religious literature surviving from Egypt. Neferirkara is the first king for whom a second cartouche name is known, Kakai, presumably his birth name. Henceforth both names in cartouches are given wherever known.
Sixth Dynasty, c.2345–2181 BC
Possibly singled out by Manetho as members of one family. Pepy I set up life-
size copper statues of himself and his infant son at Hieraconpolis. The
kinglists credit Pepy II with a reign of 94 years, but this may be a mistake for
64 years, since 60 and 90 can be confused in the cursive hieratic script. His
long reign witnessed the evaporation of royal authority at home, and a build-
up in foreign settlements on the borders of Egypt, in Nubia to the south and
into Sinai to the east.

TETI  
MERYRA (T) PEPY I

Merenra (T) NEMYEMSAF  
NEFERRARA (T) PEPY II
Alabaster statue of Pepy II: as a child on his mother’s lap
Alabaster Figurine of Pepy II as a child
Pepy II as an adult: copper hammered over wood
Vizier

Plate 1. Egypt, BUST OF PRINCE ANKH-HAF
ca. 2600 B.C., painted limestone, lifesize
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Egyptian Scribe
Stele of Prince Netjer-aperaf
Statuette of Dwarf
Statue of a non-royal pair
C-Group bowl of polished incised ware from Faras, c. 2340–1550 BC, H. 8.1 cm. (EA51230)
Handmade ‘Kerma ware’ beaker from Tumulus K at Kerma. Classic Kerma phase, c.1750–1550 BC, H. 11.6 cm. (EA55424)
Evidence for malnutrition: detail of a wall relief at Saqqara in Egypt depicting famine victims, c. 2350 BC.