Ancient Egypt: Government and Society

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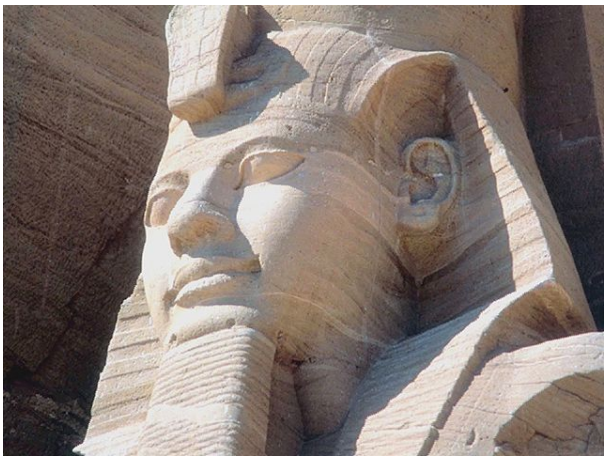
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ARTICLE

ancient Egypt

civilization in northeastern Africa that dates from the 4th millennium BCE. Its many achievements, preserved in its art and monuments, hold a fascination that continues to grow as archaeological finds expose its secrets. This article focuses on Egypt from its prehistory through its unification under Menes (Narmer) in the 3rd millennium BCE—sometimes used as a reference point for Egypt's origin—and up to the Islamic conquest in the 7th century CE. For subsequent history through the contemporary period, *see* Egypt. For a list of ancient Egyptian dynasties, *see* list of dynasties of ancient Egypt. For a list of Egyptian kings from the Predynastic through Ptolemaic periods, *see* list of pharaohs of ancient Egypt.



A discussion of some of the most important sites associated with ancient Egypt.

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Side view of the Sphinx with the Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) rising in the background, Giza,...

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Introduction to ancient Egyptian civilization

Life in ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt can be thought of as an oasis in the desert of northeastern Africa, dependent on the annual inundation of the Nile River to support its agricultural population. The country's chief wealth came from the fertile floodplain of the Nile valley, where the river flows between bands of limestone hills, and the Nile delta, in which it fans into several branches north of present-day Cairo. Between the floodplain and the hills is a variable band of low desert that supported a certain amount of game. The Nile was Egypt's sole transportation artery.

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The First Cataract at Aswān, where the riverbed is turned into rapids by a belt of granite, was the country's only well-defined boundary within a populated area. To the south lay the far less hospitable area of Nubia, in which the river flowed through low sandstone hills that in most regions left only a very narrow strip of cultivable land. Nubia was significant for Egypt's periodic southward expansion and for access to products from farther south. West of the Nile was the arid Sahara, broken by a chain of oases some 125 to 185 miles (200 to 300 km) from the river and lacking in all other resources except for a few minerals. The eastern desert, between the Nile and the Red Sea, was more important, for it supported a small nomadic population and desert game, contained numerous mineral deposits, including gold, and was the route to the Red Sea.

To the northeast was the Isthmus of Suez. It offered the principal route for contact with Sinai, from which came turquoise and possibly copper, and with southwestern Asia, Egypt's most important area of cultural interaction, from which were received stimuli for technical development and cultivars for crops. Immigrants and ultimately invaders crossed the isthmus into Egypt, attracted by the country's stability and prosperity. From the late 2nd millennium BCE onward, numerous attacks were made by land and sea along the eastern Mediterranean coast.

At first, relatively little cultural contact came by way of the Mediterranean Sea, but from an early date Egypt maintained trading relations with the Lebanese port of Byblos (present-day Jbail). Egypt needed few imports to maintain basic standards of living, but good timber was essential and not available within the country, so it usually was obtained from Lebanon. Minerals such as obsidian and lapis lazuli were imported from as far afield as Anatolia and Afghanistan.

Agriculture centered on the cultivation of cereal crops, chiefly emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare*). The fertility of the land and general predictability of the inundation ensured very high productivity from a single annual crop. This productivity made it possible to store large surpluses against crop failures and also formed the chief basis of Egyptian wealth, which was, until the creation of the large empires of the 1st millennium BCE, the greatest of any state in the ancient Middle East.

Basin irrigation was achieved by simple means, and multiple cropping was not feasible until much later times, except perhaps in the lakeside area of Al-Fayyūm. As the river deposited alluvial silt, raising the level of the floodplain, and land was reclaimed from marsh, the area available for cultivation in the Nile valley and delta increased, while pastoralism declined slowly. In addition to grain crops, fruit and vegetables were important, the latter being irrigated year-round in small plots. Fish was also vital to the diet. Papyrus, which grew abundantly in marshes, was gathered wild and in later times was cultivated. It may have been used as a food crop, and it certainly was used to make rope, matting, and sandals. Above all, it provided the characteristic Egyptian writing material, which, with cereals, was the country's chief export in Late period Egyptian and then Greco-Roman times.

Cattle may have been domesticated in northeastern Africa. The Egyptians kept many as draft animals and for their various products, showing some of the interest in breeds and individuals that is found to this day in the Sudan and eastern Africa. The donkey, which was the principal transport animal (the camel did not become common until Roman times), was probably domesticated in the region. The native Egyptian breed of sheep became extinct in the 2nd millennium BCE and was replaced by an Asiatic breed. Sheep were primarily a source of meat; their wool was rarely used. Goats were more numerous than sheep. Pigs were also raised and eaten. Ducks and geese were kept for food, and many of the vast numbers of wild and migratory birds found in Egypt were hunted and trapped. Desert game, principally various species of antelope and ibex, were hunted by the elite; it was a royal privilege to hunt lions and wild cattle. Pets included dogs, which were also used for hunting, cats, and monkeys. In addition, the Egyptians had a great interest in, and knowledge of, most species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish in their environment.

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Most Egyptians were probably descended from settlers who moved to the Nile valley in prehistoric times, with population increase coming through natural fertility. In various periods there were immigrants from Nubia, Libya, and especially the Middle East. They were historically significant and also may have contributed to population growth, but their numbers are unknown. Most people lived in villages and towns in the Nile valley and delta. Dwellings were normally built of mud brick and have long since disappeared beneath the rising water table or beneath modern town sites, thereby obliterating evidence for settlement patterns. In antiquity, as now, the most favored location of settlements was on slightly raised ground near the riverbank, where transport and water were easily available and flooding was unlikely. Until the 1st millennium BCE, Egypt was not urbanized to the same extent as Mesopotamia. Instead, a few centers, notably Memphis and Thebes, attracted population and particularly the elite, while the rest of the people were relatively evenly spread over the land. The size of the population has been estimated as having risen from 1 to 1.5 million in the 3rd millennium BCE to perhaps twice that number in the late 2nd millennium and 1st millennium BCE. (Much higher levels of population were reached in Greco-Roman times.)

Nearly all of the people were engaged in agriculture and were probably tied to the land. In theory all the land belonged to the king, although in practice those living on it could not easily be removed and some categories of land could be bought and sold. Land was assigned to high officials to provide them with an income, and most tracts required payment of substantial dues to the state, which had a strong interest in keeping the land in agricultural use. Abandoned land was taken back into state ownership and reassigned for cultivation. The people who lived on and worked the land were not free to leave and were obliged to work it, but they were not enslaved; most paid a proportion of their produce to major officials. Free citizens who worked the land on their own behalf did emerge; terms applied to them tended originally to refer to poor people, but these agriculturalists were probably not poor. Slavery was never common, being restricted to captives and foreigners or to people who were forced by poverty or debt to sell themselves into service. Enslaved persons sometimes even married members of their owners’ families, so that in the long term those belonging to households tended to be assimilated into free society. In the New Kingdom (from about 1539 to 1077 BCE), large numbers of captives were enslaved and acquired by major state institutions or incorporated into the army. Punitive treatment of enslaved foreigners or of native fugitives from their obligations included forced labor, exile (in, for example, the oases of the western desert), or compulsory enlistment in dangerous mining expeditions. Even nonpunitive employment such as quarrying in the desert was hazardous. The official record of one expedition shows a mortality rate of more than 10 percent.

Just as the Egyptians optimized agricultural production with simple means, their crafts and techniques, many of which originally came from Asia, were raised to extraordinary levels of perfection. The Egyptians’ most striking technical achievement, massive stone building, also exploited the potential of a centralized state to mobilize a huge labor force, which was made available by efficient agricultural practices. Some of the technical and organizational skills involved were remarkable. The construction of the great pyramids of the 4th dynasty (c. 2543–c. 2436 BCE) has yet to be fully explained and would be a major challenge to this day. This expenditure of skill contrasts with sparse evidence of an essentially neolithic way of living for the rural population of the time, while the use of flint tools persisted even in urban environments at least until the late 2nd millennium BCE. Metal was correspondingly scarce, much of it being used for prestige rather than everyday purposes.

In urban and elite contexts, the Egyptian ideal was the nuclear family, but, on the land and even within the central ruling group, there is evidence for extended families. Egyptians were monogamous, and the choice of partners in marriage, for which no formal ceremony or legal sanction is known, did not follow a set pattern. Consanguineous marriage was not practiced during the Dynastic period, except for the occasional marriage of a brother and sister within the royal family, and that practice may have been open only to kings or heirs to the throne. Divorce was in theory easy, but it was costly. Women had a legal status only marginally inferior to that of

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men. They could own and dispose of property in their own right, and they could initiate divorce and other legal proceedings. They hardly ever held administrative office but increasingly were involved in religious cults as priestesses or “chantresses.” Married women held the title “mistress of the house,” the precise significance of which is unknown. Lower down the social scale, they probably worked on the land as well as in the house.

The uneven distribution of wealth, labor, and technology was related to the only partly urban character of society, especially in the 3rd millennium BCE. The country’s resources were not fed into numerous provincial towns but instead were concentrated to great effect around the capital—itself a dispersed string of settlements rather than a city—and focused on the central figure in society, the king. In the 3rd and early 2nd millennia, the elite ideal, expressed in the decoration of private tombs, was manorial and rural. Not until much later did Egyptians develop a more pronouncedly urban character.

The king and ideology: administration, art, and writing

In cosmogonical terms, Egyptian society consisted of a descending hierarchy of the gods, the king, the blessed dead, and humanity (by which was understood chiefly the Egyptians). Of these groups, only the king was single, and hence he was individually more prominent than any of the others. A text that summarizes the king’s role states that he “is on earth for ever and ever, judging mankind and propitiating the gods, and setting order [*maʿat*, a central concept] in place of disorder. He gives offerings to the gods and mortuary offerings to the spirits [the blessed dead].” The king was imbued with divine essence, but not in any simple or unqualified sense. His divinity accrued to him from his office and was reaffirmed through rituals, but it was vastly inferior to that of major gods; he was god rather than man by virtue of his potential, which was immeasurably greater than that of any human being. To humanity, he manifested the gods on earth, a conception that was elaborated in a complex web of metaphor and doctrine; less directly, he represented humanity to the gods. The text quoted above also gives great prominence to the dead, who were the object of a cult for the living and who could intervene in human affairs; in many periods the chief visible expenditure and focus of display of nonroyal individuals, as of the king, was on provision for the tomb and the next world. Egyptian kings are commonly called pharaohs, following the usage of the Bible. The term *pharaoh*, however, is derived from the Egyptian *per ʿaa* (“great estate”) and dates to the designation of the royal palace as an institution. This term for palace was used increasingly from about 1400 BCE as a way of referring to the living king; in earlier times it was rare.

Rules of succession to the kingship are poorly understood. The common conception that the heir to the throne had to marry his predecessor’s oldest daughter has been disproved; kingship did not pass through the female line. The choice of queen seems to have been free; often the queen was a close relative of the king, but she also might be unrelated to him. In the New Kingdom, for which evidence is abundant, each king had a queen with distinctive titles, as well as a number of minor wives.

Sons of the chief queen seem to have been the preferred successors to the throne, but other sons could also become king. In many cases the successor was the eldest (surviving) son, and such a pattern of inheritance agrees with more general Egyptian values, but often he was some other relative or was completely unrelated. New Kingdom texts describe, after the event, how kings were appointed heirs either by their predecessors or by divine oracles, and such may have been the pattern when there was no clear successor. Dissent and conflict are suppressed from public sources. From the Late period (664–332 BCE), when sources are more diverse and patterns less rigid, numerous usurpations and interruptions to the succession are known; they probably had many forerunners.

The king’s position changed gradually from that of an absolute monarch at the center of a small ruling group made up mostly of his kin to that of the head of a bureaucratic state—in which his rule was still absolute—based on officeholding and, in theory, on free competition and merit. By the 5th dynasty, fixed institutions had been

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added to the force of tradition and the regulation of personal contact as brakes on autocracy, but the charismatic and superhuman power of the king remained vital.

The elite of administrative officeholders received their positions and commissions from the king, whose general role as judge over humanity they put into effect. They commemorated their own justice and concern for others, especially their inferiors, and recorded their own exploits and ideal conduct of life in inscriptions for others to see. Thus, the position of the elite was affirmed by reference to the king, to their prestige among their peers, and to their conduct toward their subordinates, justifying to some extent the fact that they—and still more the king—appropriated much of the country’s production.

These attitudes and their potential dissemination through society counterbalanced inequality, but how far they were accepted cannot be known. The core group of wealthy officeholders numbered at most a few hundred, and the administrative class of minor officials and scribes, most of whom could not afford to leave memorials or inscriptions, perhaps 5,000. With their dependents, these two groups formed perhaps 5 percent of the early population. Monuments and inscriptions commemorated no more than one in a thousand people.

According to royal ideology, the king appointed the elite on the basis of merit, and in ancient conditions of high mortality the elite had to be open to recruits from outside. There was, however, also an ideal that a son should succeed his father. In periods of weak central control this principle predominated, and in the Late period the whole society became more rigid and stratified.

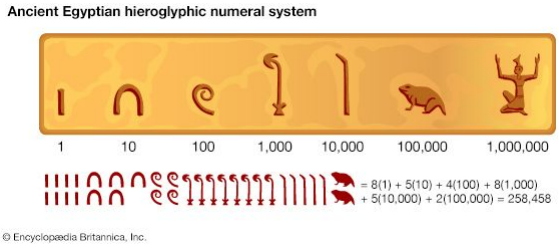


Chart of numerals in the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system.

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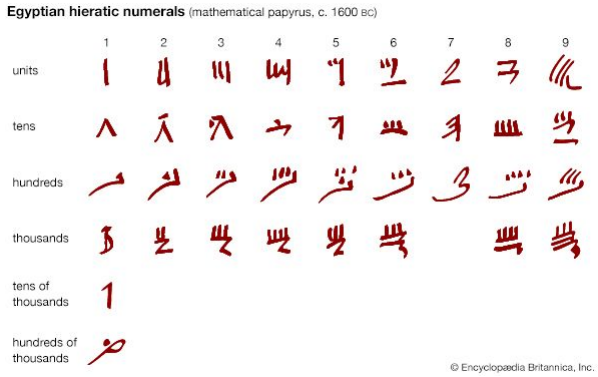


Chart of numerals in the Egyptian hieratic writing system.

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Writing was a major instrument in the centralization of the Egyptian state and its self-presentation. The two basic types of writing—hieroglyphs, which were used for monuments and display, and the cursive form known as hieratic—were invented at much the same time in late predynastic Egypt (c. 3000 BCE). Writing was chiefly used for administration, and until about 2650 BCE no continuous texts are preserved; the only extant literary texts written before the early Middle Kingdom (c. 1980 BCE) seem to have been lists of important traditional information and possibly medical treatises. The use and potential of writing were restricted both by the rate of literacy, which was probably well below 1 percent, and by expectations of what writing might do. Hieroglyphic

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writing was publicly identified with Egypt. Perhaps because of this association with a single powerful state, its language, and its culture, Egyptian writing was seldom adapted to write other languages; in this it contrasts with the cuneiform script of the relatively uncentralized, multilingual Mesopotamia. Nonetheless, Egyptian hieroglyphs probably served in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE as the model from which the alphabet, ultimately the most widespread of all writing systems, evolved.

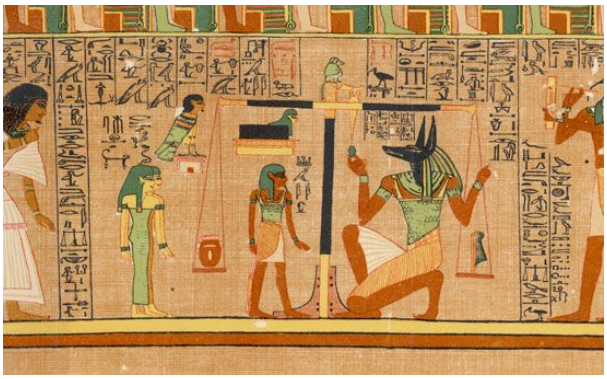


Illustration of Ani's Judgment from an Egyptian Book of the Dead, c. 1275 bce, showing the...

Mary Evans Picture Library/age fotostock

The dominant visible legacy of ancient Egypt is in works of architecture and representational art. Until the Middle Kingdom, most of these were mortuary: royal tomb complexes, including pyramids and mortuary temples, and private tombs. There were also temples dedicated to the cult of the gods throughout the country, but most of these were modest structures. From the beginning of the New Kingdom, temples of the gods became the principal monuments; royal palaces and private houses, which are very little known, were less important. Temples and tombs were ideally executed in stone with relief decoration on their walls and were filled with stone and wooden statuary, inscribed and decorated stelae (freestanding small stone monuments), and, in their inner areas, composite works of art in precious materials. The design of the monuments and their decoration dates in essence to the beginning of the historical period and presents an ideal, sanctified cosmos. Little in it is related to the everyday world, and, except in palaces, works of art may have been rare outside temples and tombs. Decoration may record real historical events, rituals, or the official titles and careers of individuals, but its prime significance is the more general assertion of values, and the information presented must be evaluated for its plausibility and compared with other evidence. Some of the events depicted in relief on royal monuments were certainly iconic rather than historically factual.

The highly distinctive Egyptian method of rendering nature and artistic style was also a creation of early times and can be seen in most works of Egyptian art. In content, these are hierarchically ordered so that the most important figures, the gods and the king, are shown together, while before the New Kingdom gods seldom occur in the same context as humanity. The decoration of a nonroyal tomb characteristically shows the tomb’s owner with his subordinates, who administer his land and present him with its produce. The tomb owner is also typically depicted hunting in the marshes, a favorite pastime of the elite that may additionally symbolize passage into the next world. The king and the gods are absent in nonroyal tombs, and, until the New Kingdom, overtly religious matter is restricted to rare scenes of mortuary rituals and journeys and to textual formulas. Temple reliefs, in which king and gods occur freely, show the king defeating his enemies, hunting, and especially offering to the gods, who in turn confer benefits upon him. Human beings are present at most as minor figures supporting the king. On both royal and nonroyal monuments, an ideal world is represented in which all are beautiful and everything goes well; only minor figures may have physical imperfections.

This artistic presentation of values originated at the same time as writing but before the latter could record continuous texts or complex statements. Some of the earliest continuous texts of the 4th and 5th dynasties

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show an awareness of an ideal past that the present could only aspire to emulate. A few “biographies” of officials allude to strife, but more-nuanced discussion occurs first in literary texts of the Middle Kingdom. The texts consist of stories, dialogues, lamentations, and especially instructions on how to live a good life, and they supply a rich commentary on the more one-dimensional rhetoric of public inscriptions. Literary works were written in all the main later phases of the Egyptian language—Middle Egyptian; the “classical” form of the Middle and New kingdoms, continuing in copies and inscriptions into Roman times; Late Egyptian, from the 19th dynasty to about 700 BCE; and the demotic script from the 4th century BCE to the 3rd century CE—but many of the finest and most complex are among the earliest.

Literary works also included treatises on mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and magic, as well as various religious texts and canonical lists that classified the categories of creation (probably the earliest genre, dating back to the beginning of the Old Kingdom, c. 2543 BCE, or even a little earlier). Among these texts, little is truly systematic, a notable exception being a medical treatise on wounds. The absence of systematic inquiry contrasts with Egyptian practical expertise in such fields as surveying, which was used both for orienting and planning buildings to remarkably fine tolerances and for the regular division of fields after the annual inundation of the Nile; the Egyptians also had surveyed and established the dimensions of their entire country by the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. These precise tasks required both knowledge of astronomy and highly ingenious techniques, but they apparently were achieved with little theoretical analysis.

Whereas in the earliest periods Egypt seems to have been administered almost as the personal estate of the king, by the central Old Kingdom it had been divided into about 35 nomes, or provinces, each with its own officials. Administration was concentrated at the capital, where most of the central elite lived and died. In the nonmonetary Egyptian economy, its essential functions were the collection, storage, and redistribution of produce; the drafting and organization of manpower for specialized labor, probably including irrigation and flood protection works, and major state projects; and the supervision of legal matters. Administration and law were not fully distinct, and both depended ultimately on the king. The settlement of disputes was in part an administrative task, for which the chief guiding criterion was precedent, while contractual relations were regulated by the use of standard formulas. State and temple both partook in redistribution and held massive reserves of grain; temples were economic as well as religious institutions. In periods of decentralization similar functions were exercised by local grandees. Markets had only a minor role, and craftsmen were employees who normally traded only what they produced in their free time. The wealthiest officials escaped this pattern to some extent by receiving their income in the form of land and maintaining large establishments that included their own specialized workers.

The essential medium of administration was writing, reinforced by personal authority over the nonliterate 99 percent of the population; texts exhorting the young to be scribes emphasize that the scribe commanded while the rest did the work. Most officials (almost all of whom were men) held several offices and accumulated more as they progressed up a complex ranked hierarchy, at the top of which was the vizier, the chief administrator and judge. The vizier reported to the king, who in theory retained certain powers, such as authority to invoke the death penalty, absolutely.

Before the Middle Kingdom, the civil and the military were not sharply distinguished. Military forces consisted of local militias under their own officials and included foreigners, and nonmilitary expeditions to extract minerals from the desert or to transport heavy loads through the country were organized in similar fashion. Until the New Kingdom there was no separate priesthood. Holders of civil office also had priestly titles, and priests had civil titles. Often priesthoods were sinecures: their chief significance was the income they brought. The same was

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true of the minor civil titles accumulated by high officials. At a lower level, minor priesthoods were held on a rotating basis by “laymen” who served every fourth month in temples. State and temple were so closely interconnected that there was no real tension between them before the late New Kingdom.

Sources, calendars, and chronology

For all but the last century of Egyptian prehistory, whose neolithic and later phases are normally termed “predynastic,” evidence is exclusively archaeological; later native sources have only mythical allusions to such remote times. The Dynastic period of native Egyptian rulers is generally divided into 30 dynasties, following the *Aegyptiaca* of the Greco-Egyptian writer Manetho of Sebennytos (early 3rd century BCE), excerpts of which are preserved in the works of later writers. Manetho apparently organized his dynasties by the capital cities from which they ruled, but several of his divisions also reflect political or dynastic changes—that is, changes of the party holding power. He gave the lengths of reign of kings or of entire dynasties and grouped the dynasties into several periods, but, because of textual corruption and a tendency toward inflation, Manetho’s figures cannot be used to reconstruct chronology without supporting evidence and analysis.

Manetho’s prime sources were earlier Egyptian king lists, the organization of which he imitated. The most significant preserved example of a king list is the Turin Papyrus (Turin Canon), a fragmentary document in the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Italy, which originally listed all kings of the 1st through the 17th dynasty, preceded by a mythical dynasty of gods and one of the “spirits, followers of Horus.” Like Manetho’s later work, the Turin document gave reign lengths for individual kings, as well as totals for some dynasties and longer multidynastic periods.



The front side of the Palermo Stone, which preserves the fragmentary regnal annals of the Egyptian…

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In early periods the kings’ years of reign were not consecutively numbered but were named for salient events, and lists were made of the names. More-extensive details were added to the lists for the 4th and 5th dynasties, when dates were assigned according to biennial cattle censuses numbered through each king’s reign. Fragments

of such lists are preserved on the Palermo Stone, an inscribed piece of basalt (at the Regional Museum of Archaeology in Palermo, Italy), and related pieces in the Cairo Museum and University College London; these are probably all parts of a single copy of an original document of the 5th dynasty.

The Egyptians did not date by eras longer than the reign of a single king, so a historical framework must be created from totals of reign lengths, which are then related to astronomical data that may allow whole periods to be fixed precisely. This is done through references to astronomical events and correlations with the three calendars in use in Egyptian antiquity. All dating was by a civil calendar, derived from the lunar calendar, which was introduced in the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE. The civil year had 365 days and started in principle when Sirius, or the Dog Star—also known in Greek as Sothis (Ancient Egyptian: Sopdet)—became visible above the horizon after a period of absence, which at that time occurred some weeks before the Nile began to rise for the inundation. Every 4 years the civil year advanced one day in relation to the solar year (with $365^{1}/_{4}$ days), and after a cycle of about 1,460 years it would again agree with the solar calendar. Religious ceremonies were organized according to two lunar calendars that had months of 29 or 30 days, with extra, intercalary months every three years or so.

Five mentions of the rising of Sirius (generally known as Sothic dates) are preserved in texts from the 3rd to the 1st millennium, but by themselves these references cannot yield an absolute chronology. Such a chronology can be computed from larger numbers of lunar dates and cross-checked from solutions for the observations of Sirius. Various chronologies are in use, however, differing by up to 40 years for the 2nd millennium BCE and by more than a century for the beginning of the 1st dynasty. The chronologies offered in most publications up to 1985 have been thrown into some doubt for the Middle and New kingdoms by a restudy of the evidence for the Sothic and especially the lunar dates. For the 1st millennium, dates in the Third Intermediate period are approximate; a supposed fixed year of 945 BCE, based on links with the Bible, turns out to be variable by a number of years. Late period dates (664–332 BCE) are almost completely fixed. Before the 12th dynasty, plausible dates for the 11th can be computed backward, but for earlier times dates are approximate. A total of 955 years for the 1st through the 8th dynasty in the Turin Canon has been used to assign a date of about 3100 BCE for the beginning of the 1st dynasty, but this requires excessive average reign lengths, and an estimate of 2900 BCE is preferable. Radiocarbon and other scientific dating of samples from Egyptian sites have not improved on, or convincingly contested, computed dates. More-recent work on radiocarbon dates from Egypt does, however, yield results encouragingly close to dates computed in the manner described above.

King lists and astronomy give only a chronological framework. A vast range of archaeological and inscriptional sources for Egyptian history survive, but none of them were produced with the interpretation of history in mind. No consistent political history of ancient Egypt can be written. The evidence is very unevenly distributed; there are gaps of many decades; and in the 3rd millennium BCE no continuous royal text recording historical events was inscribed. Private biographical inscriptions of all periods from the 5th dynasty (c. 2435–c. 2306 BCE) to the Roman conquest (30 BCE) record individual involvement in events but are seldom concerned with their general significance. Royal inscriptions from the 12th dynasty (c. 1939–c. 1760 BCE) to Ptolemaic times aim to present a king’s actions according to an overall conception of “history,” in which he is the re-creator of the order of the world and the guarantor of its continued stability or its expansion. The goal of his action is to serve not humanity but the gods, while nonroyal individuals may relate their own successes to the king in the first instance and sometimes to the gods. Only in the decentralized intermediate periods did the nonroyal recount internal strife. Kings did not mention dissent in their texts unless it came at the beginning of a reign or a phase of action and was quickly and triumphantly overcome in a reaffirmation of order. Such a schema often dominates the factual content of texts, and it creates a strong bias toward recording foreign affairs, because in official ideology there is no internal dissent after the initial turmoil is over. “History” is as much a ritual as a process of events; as a ritual,

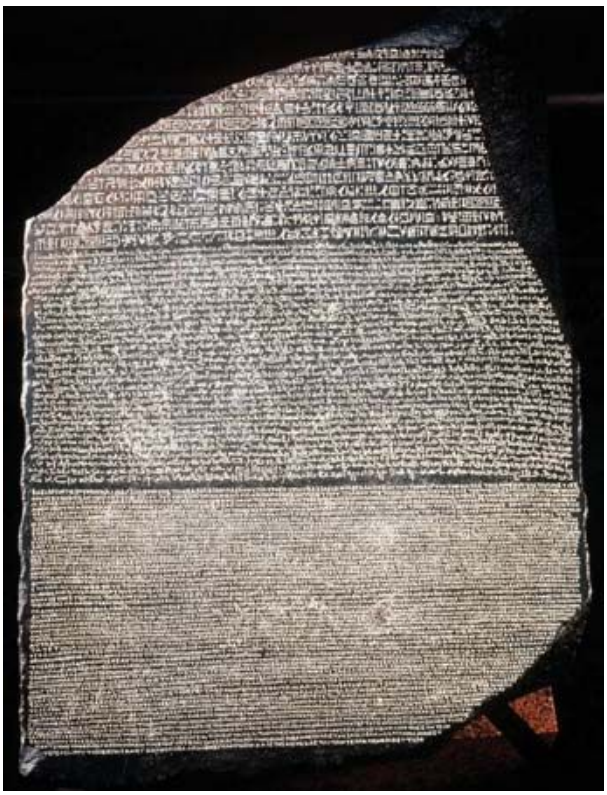
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its protagonists are royal and divine. Only in the Late period did these conventions weaken significantly. Even then, they were retained in full for temple reliefs, where they kept their vitality into Roman times.

Despite this idealization, the Egyptians were well aware of history, as is clear from their king lists. They divided the past into periods comparable to those used by Egyptologists and evaluated the rulers not only as the founders of epochs but also in terms of their salient exploits or, especially in folklore, their bad qualities. The Demotic Chronicle, a text of the Ptolemaic period, purports to foretell the bad end that would befall numerous Late period kings as divine retribution for their wicked actions.

The recovery and study of ancient Egypt

European interest in ancient Egypt was strong in Roman times and revived in the Renaissance, when the wealth of Egyptian remains in the city of Rome was supplemented by information provided by visitors to Egypt itself. Views of Egypt were dominated by the classical tradition that it was the land of ancient wisdom; this wisdom was thought to inhere in the hieroglyphic script, which was believed to impart profound symbolic ideas, not—as it in fact does—the sounds and words of texts. Between the 15th and 18th centuries, Egypt had a minor but significant position in general views of antiquity, and its monuments gradually became better known through the work of scholars in Europe and travelers in the country itself; the finest publications of the latter were by Richard Pococke, Frederik Ludwig Norden, and Carsten Niebuhr, all of whose works in the 18th century helped to stimulate an Egyptian revival in European art and architecture. Coptic, the Christian successor of the ancient Egyptian language, was studied from the 17th century, notably by Athanasius Kircher, for its potential to provide the key to Egyptian.



A decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Greek, hieroglyphic Egyptian, and demotic Egyptian on the Rosetta ...

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Napoleon I’s expedition to and short-lived conquest of Egypt in 1798 was the culmination of 18th-century interest in the East. The expedition was accompanied by a team of scholars who recorded the ancient and contemporary country, issuing in 1809–28 the *Description de l’Égypte*, the most comprehensive study to be

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made before the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script. The renowned Rosetta Stone, which bears a decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in hieroglyphs, demotic script, and Greek alphabetic characters, was discovered during the expedition; it was ceded to the British after the French capitulation in Egypt and became the property of the British Museum in London. This document greatly assisted the decipherment, accomplished by Jean-François Champollion in 1822.

The Egyptian language revealed by the decipherment and decades of subsequent study is a member of the Afro-Asiatic (formerly Hamito-Semitic) language family. Egyptian is closest to the family's Semitic branch but is distinctive in many respects. During several millennia it changed greatly. The script does not write vowels, and because Greek forms for royal names were known from Manetho long before the Egyptian forms became available, those used to this day are a mixture of Greek and Egyptian.

In the first half of the 19th century, vast numbers of antiquities were exported from Egypt, forming the nucleus of collections in many major museums. These were removed rather than excavated, inflicting, together with the economic development of the country, colossal damage on ancient sites. At the same time, many travelers and scholars visited the country and recorded the monuments. The most important, and remarkably accurate, record was produced by the Prussian expedition led by Karl Richard Lepsius, in 1842–45, which explored sites as far south as the central Sudan.

In the mid-19th century, Egyptology developed as a subject in France and in Prussia. The Antiquities Service and a museum of Egyptian antiquities were established in Egypt by the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, a great excavator who attempted to preserve sites from destruction, and the Prussian Heinrich Brugsch, who made great progress in the interpretation of texts of many periods and published the first major Egyptian dictionary. In 1880 Flinders (later Sir Flinders) Petrie began more than 40 years of methodical excavation, which created an archaeological framework for all the chief periods of Egyptian culture except for remote prehistory. Petrie was the initiator of much in archaeological method, but he was later surpassed by George Andrew Reisner, who excavated for American institutions from 1899 to 1937. The greatest late 19th-century Egyptologist was Adolf Erman of Berlin, who put the understanding of the Egyptian language on a sound basis and wrote general works that for the first time organized what was known about the earlier periods.

Complete facsimile copies of Egyptian monuments have been published since the 1890s, providing a separate record that becomes more vital as the originals decay. The pioneer of this scientific epigraphy was James Henry Breasted of the Oriental Institute (now the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures) of the University of Chicago, who began his work in 1905 and shortly thereafter was joined by others. Many scholars are now engaged in epigraphy.

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Howard Carter (1873–1939), a British archaeologist who discovered the tomb of King Tutankhamen....

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In the first half of the 20th century, some outstanding archaeological discoveries were made: Howard Carter uncovered the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922; Pierre Montet found the tombs of 21st–22nd dynasty kings at Tanis in 1939–44; and W.B. Emery and L.P. Kirwan found tombs of the Ballānah culture (the 4th through the 6th century CE) in Nubia in 1931–34. The last of these was part of the second survey of Lower Nubia in 1929–34, which preceded the second raising of the Aswan Dam. This was followed in the late 1950s and ’60s by an international campaign to excavate and record sites in Egyptian and Sudanese Nubia before the completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1970. Lower Nubia is now one of the most thoroughly explored archaeological regions of the world. Most of its many temples have been moved, either to higher ground nearby, as happened to Abu Simbel and Philae, or to quite different places, including various foreign museums. The campaign also had the welcome consequence of introducing a wide range of archaeological expertise to Egypt, so that standards of excavation and recording in the country have risen greatly.

Excavation and survey of great importance have continued in many places. For example, at Ṣaqqārah, part of the necropolis of the ancient city of Memphis, new areas of the Sarapeum have been uncovered with rich finds, and a major New Kingdom necropolis is being thoroughly explored. The site of ancient Memphis itself has been systematically surveyed; its position in relation to the ancient course of the Nile has been established; and urban occupation areas have been studied in detail for the first time.

Egyptology is, however, a primarily interpretive subject. There have been outstanding contributions—for example in art, for which Heinrich Schäfer established the principles of the rendering of nature, and in language. New light has been cast on texts, the majority of which are written in a simple meter that can serve as the basis of sophisticated literary works. The physical environment, social structure, kingship, and religion are other fields in which great advances have been made, while the reconstruction of the outline of history is constantly being improved in detail.

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The Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods

Predynastic Egypt



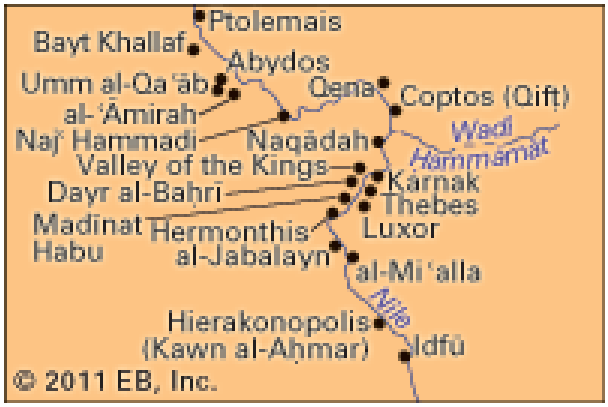
Sites associated with Egypt from Predynastic to Byzantine times.

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Sites associated with Egypt from Predynastic to Byzantine times, Nile delta region.

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Sites associated with Egypt from Predynastic to Byzantine times, Thebes region.

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The peoples of predynastic Egypt were the successors of the Paleolithic inhabitants of northeastern Africa, who had spread over much of its area; during wet phases they had left remains in regions as inhospitable as the Great Sand Sea. The final desiccation of the Sahara was not complete until the end of the 3rd millennium BCE; over thousands of years people must have migrated from there to the Nile valley, the environment of which improved as the region dried out. In this process the decisive change from the nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life of Paleolithic times to settled agriculture has not so far been identified. Sometime after 5000 BCE the raising of crops was introduced, probably on a horticultural scale, in small local cultures that seem to have penetrated southward through Egypt into the oases and the Sudan. Several of the basic food plants that were grown are native to the Middle East, so the new techniques probably spread from there. No large-scale migration need have been involved, and the cultures were at first largely self-contained. The preserved evidence for them is unrepresentative because it comes from the low desert, where relatively few people lived; as was the case later, most people probably settled in the valley and delta.

The earliest known Neolithic cultures in Egypt have been found at Marimda Banī Salāma, on the southwestern edge of the delta, and farther to the southwest, in Al-Fayyūm. The site at Marimda Banī Salāma, which dates to

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the 6th–5th millennium BCE, gives evidence of settlement and shows that cereals were grown. In Al-Fayyūm, where evidence dates to the 5th millennium BCE, the settlements were near the shore of Lake Qārūn, and the settlers engaged in fishing. Marimda is a very large site that was occupied for many centuries. The inhabitants lived in lightly built huts; they may have buried their dead within their houses, but areas where burials have been found may not have been occupied by dwellings at the same time. Pottery was used in both cultures. In addition to these Egyptian Neolithic cultures, others have been identified in the Western Desert, in the Second Cataract area, and north of Khartoum. Some of these are as early as the Egyptian ones, while others overlapped with the succeeding Egyptian predynastic cultures.

In Upper Egypt, between Asyūṭ and Luxor (Al-Uqṣur), have been found the Tasian culture (named for Dayr Tāsā) and the Badarian culture (named for Al-Badārī); these date from the late 5th millennium BCE. Most of the evidence for them comes from cemeteries, where the burials included fine black-topped red pottery, ornaments, some copper objects, and glazed steatite beads. The most characteristic predynastic luxury objects, slate palettes for grinding cosmetics, occur for the first time in this period. The burials show little differentiation of wealth and status and seem to belong to a peasant culture without central political organization.

Probably contemporary with both predynastic and dynastic times are thousands of rock drawings of a wide range of motifs, including boats, found throughout the Eastern Desert, in Lower Nubia, and as far west as Mount ʿUwaynāt, which stands near modern Egypt’s borders with Libya and Sudan in the southwest. The drawings show that nomads were common throughout the desert, probably to the late 3rd millennium BCE, but they cannot be dated precisely; they may all have been produced by nomads, or inhabitants of the Nile valley may often have penetrated the desert and made drawings.



Comb decorated with a wildebeest, ivory, predynastic, Late Naqādah I–Naqādah II, c. 3900–c. 3500...

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1923, 23.2.2, www.metmuseum.org

Naqādah I, named for the major site of Naqādah but also called Amratian for Al-ʿĀmirah, is a distinct phase that succeeded the Badarian. It has been found as far south as Al-Kawm al-Aḥmar (Hierakonpolis; ancient Egyptian

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Nekhen), near the sandstone barrier of Mount Silsilah, which was the cultural boundary of Egypt in predynastic times. Naqādah I differs from its Badarian predecessor in its density of settlement and the typology of its material culture but hardly at all in the social organization implied by the archaeological finds. Burials were in shallow pits in which the bodies were placed facing to the west, like those of later Egyptians. Notable types of material found in graves are fine pottery decorated with representational designs in white on red, figurines of men and women, and hard stone mace-heads that are the precursors of important late predynastic objects.

Naqādah II, also known as Gerzean for Girza (Jirza), is the most important predynastic culture. The heartland of its development was the same as that of Naqādah I, but it spread gradually throughout the country. South of Mount Silsilah, sites of the culturally similar Nubian A Group are found as far as the Second Cataract of the Nile and beyond; these have a long span, continuing as late as the Egyptian Early Dynastic period. During Naqādah II, large sites developed at Al-Kawm al-Aḥmar, Naqādah, and Abydos (Abīdūs), showing by their size the concentration of settlement, as well as exhibiting increasing differentiation in wealth and status. Few sites have been identified between Asyūṭ and Al-Fayyūm, and this region may have been sparsely settled, perhaps supporting a pastoral rather than agricultural population. Near present-day Cairo—at Al-ʿUmāri, Al-Maʿādi, and Wādī Dijlah and stretching as far south as the latitude of Al-Fayyūm—are sites of a separate, contemporary culture. Al-Maʿādi was an extensive settlement that traded with the Middle East and probably acted as an intermediary for transmitting goods to the south. In this period, imports of lapis lazuli provide evidence that trade networks extended as far afield as Afghanistan.



A jar from the late Naqādah II era is decorated with paintings of people aboard a boat and animals,...

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.2.10), www. metmuseum.org

The material culture of Naqādah II included increasing numbers of prestige objects. The characteristic mortuary pottery is made of buff desert clay, principally from around Qinā, and is decorated in red with pictures of uncertain meaning showing boats, animals, and scenes with human figures. Stone vases, many made of hard stones that come from remote areas of the Eastern Desert, are common and of remarkable quality, and cosmetic palettes display elaborate designs, with outlines in the form of animals, birds, or fish. Flint was worked with extraordinary skill to produce large ceremonial knives of a type that continued in use during dynastic times.

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Sites of late Naqādah II (sometimes termed Naqādah III) are found throughout Egypt, including the Memphite area and the delta region, and appear to have replaced the local Lower Egyptian cultures. Links with the Middle East intensified, and some distinctively Mesopotamian motifs and objects were briefly in fashion in Egypt. The cultural unification of the country probably accompanied a political unification, but this must have proceeded in stages and cannot be reconstructed in detail. In an intermediate stage, local states may have formed at Al-Kawm al-Aḥmar, Naqādah, and Abydos and in the delta at such sites as Buto (modern Kawm al-Farāʿīn) and Sais (Ṣā al-Ḥajar). Ultimately, Abydos became preeminent; its late predynastic cemetery of Umm al-Qaʿāb was extended to form the burial place of the kings of the 1st dynasty. In the latest predynastic period, objects bearing written symbols of royalty were deposited throughout the country, and primitive writing also appeared in marks on pottery. Because the basic symbol for the king, a falcon on a decorated palace facade, hardly varies, these objects are thought to have belonged to a single line of kings or a single state, not to a set of small states. This symbol became the royal Horus name, the first element in a king’s titulary, which presented the reigning king as the manifestation of an aspect of the god Horus, the leading god of the country. Over the next few centuries several further definitions of the king’s presence were added to this one.

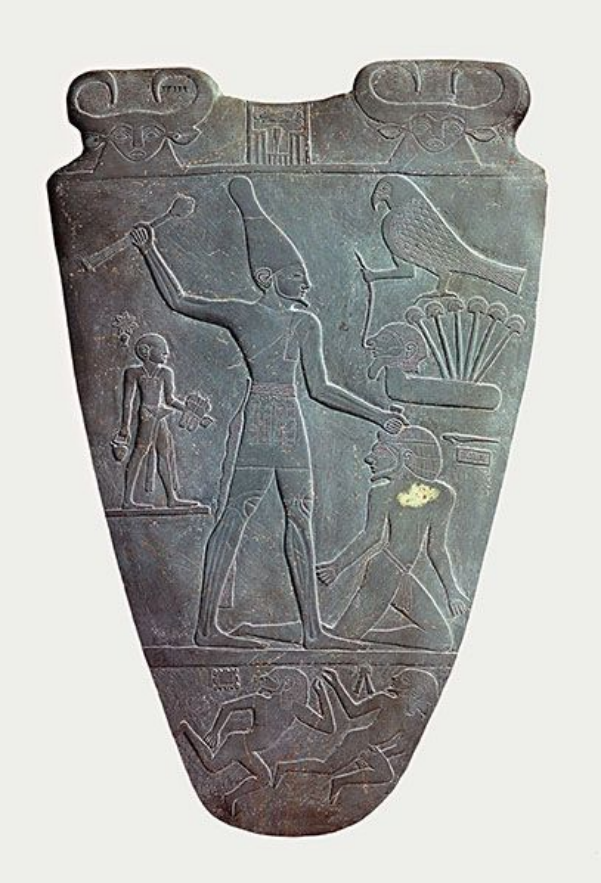
Thus, at this time Egypt seems to have been a state unified under kings who introduced writing and the first bureaucratic administration. These kings, who could have ruled for more than a century, may correspond with a set of names preserved on the Palermo Stone, but no direct identification can be made between them. The latest was probably Narmer, whose name has been found near Memphis, at Abydos, on a ceremonial palette and mace-head from Al-Kawm al-Aḥmar, and at the Palestinian sites of Tall Gat and ʿArad. The relief scenes on the palette show him wearing the two chief crowns of Egypt and defeating northern enemies, but these probably are stereotyped symbols of the king’s power and role and not records of specific events of his reign. They demonstrate that the position of the king in society and its presentation in mixed pictorial and written form had been elaborated by the early 3rd millennium BCE.

During this time Egyptian artistic style and conventions were formulated, together with writing. The process led to a complete and remarkably rapid transformation of material culture, so that many dynastic Egyptian prestige objects hardly resembled their forerunners.

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The Early Dynastic period (c. 2900–c. 2544 bce)

The 1st dynasty (c. 2900–c. 2730 bce)



From Hierakonpolis, beginning of 1st dynasty, c. 2900 bce; in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Reverse,...

Album/Alamy

The beginning of the historical period is characterized by the introduction of written records in the form of regnal year names—the records that later were collected in documents such as the Palermo Stone. The first king of Egyptian history, Menes, is therefore a creation of the later record, not the actual unifier of the country; he is known from Egyptian king lists and from classical sources and is credited with irrigation works and with founding the capital, Memphis. On small objects from this time, one of them dated to the important king Narmer but certainly mentioning a different person, there are two possible mentions of a “Men” who may be the king Menes. If these do name Menes, he was probably the same person as Aha, Narmer’s probable successor, who was then the founder of the 1st dynasty. Changes in the naming patterns of kings reinforce the assumption that a new dynasty began with his reign. Aha’s tomb at Abydos is altogether more grandiose than previously built tombs, while the first of a series of massive tombs at Ṣaqqārah, next to Memphis, supports the tradition that the city was founded then as a new capital. This shift from Abydos is the culmination of intensified settlement in the crucial area between the Nile River valley and the delta, but Memphis did not yet overcome the traditional pull of its predecessor: the large tombs at Ṣaqqārah appear to belong to high officials, while the kings were buried at Abydos in tombs whose walled complexes have long since disappeared. Their mortuary cults may have been conducted in designated areas nearer the cultivation.

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In the late Predynastic period and the first half of the 1st dynasty, Egypt extended its influence into southern Palestine and probably Sinai and conducted a campaign as far as the Second Cataract. The First Cataract area, with its center on Elephantine, an island in the Nile opposite the present-day town of Aswān, was permanently incorporated into Egypt, but Lower Nubia was not.

Between late predynastic times and the 4th dynasty—and probably early in the period—the Nubian A Group came to an end. There is some evidence that political centralization was in progress around Qustul, but this did not lead to any further development and may indeed have prompted a preemptive strike by Egypt. For Nubia, the malign proximity of the largest state of the time stifled advancement. During the 1st dynasty, writing spread gradually, but because it was used chiefly for administration, the records, which were kept within the floodplain, have not survived. The artificial writing medium of papyrus was invented by the middle of the 1st dynasty. There was a surge in prosperity, and thousands of tombs of all levels of wealth have been found throughout the country. The richest contained magnificent goods in metal, ivory, and other materials, the most widespread luxury products being extraordinarily fine stone vases. The high point of 1st-dynasty development was the long reign of Den (flourished c. 2800 BCE).

During the 1st dynasty three titles were added to the royal Horus name: “Two Ladies,” an epithet presenting the king as making manifest an aspect of the protective goddesses of the south (Upper Egypt) and the north (Lower Egypt); “Golden Horus,” the precise meaning of which is unknown; and “Dual King,” a ranked pairing of the two basic words for king, later associated with Upper and Lower Egypt. These titles were followed by the king’s own birth name, which in later centuries was written in a cartouche.

The 2nd dynasty (c. 2730–c. 2590 bce)

From the end of the 1st dynasty, there is evidence of rival claimants to the throne. One line may have become the 2nd dynasty, whose first king’s Horus name, Hetepsekhemwy, means “peaceful in respect of the two powers” and may allude to the conclusion of strife between two factions or parts of the country, to the antagonistic gods Horus and Seth, or to both. Hetepsekhemwy and his successor, Reneb, moved their burial places to Ṣaqqārah; the tomb of the third king, Nynetjer, has not been found. The second half of the dynasty was a time of conflict and rival lines of kings, some of whose names are preserved on stone vases from the 3rd dynasty Step Pyramid at Ṣaqqārah or in king lists. Among these contenders, Peribsen took the title of Seth instead of Horus and was probably opposed by Horus Khasekhem, whose name is known only from Kawm al-Aḥmar and who used the programmatic epithet “effective sandal against evil.” The last ruler of the dynasty combined the Horus and Seth titles to form the Horus-and-Seth Khasekhemwy, “arising in respect of the two powers,” to which was added “the two lords are at peace in him.” Khasekhemwy was probably the same person as Khasekhem after the successful defeat of his rivals, principally Peribsen. Both Peribsen and Khasekhemwy had tombs at Abydos, and the latter also built a monumental brick funerary enclosure near the cultivation.

The 3rd dynasty (c. 2592–c. 2544 bce)

There were links of kinship between Khasekhemwy and the 3rd dynasty, but the change between them is marked by a definitive shift of the royal burial place to Memphis. Its first king, Sanakhte, is attested in reliefs from Maghāra in Sinai. His successor, Djoser (Horus name Netjerykhet), was one of the outstanding kings of Egypt. His Step Pyramid at Ṣaqqārah is both the culmination of an epoch and—as the first large all-stone building, many times larger than anything attempted before—the precursor of later achievements. The pyramid is set in a much larger enclosure than that of Khasekhemwy at Abydos and contains reproductions in stone of ritual structures that had previously been built of perishable materials. Architectural details of columns, cornices, and moldings provided many models for later development. The masonry techniques look to brickwork for models and show little concern for the structural potential of stone. The pyramid itself evolved through

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numerous stages from a flat mastaba (an oblong tomb with a burial chamber dug beneath it, common at earlier nonroyal sites) into a six-stepped, almost square pyramid. There was a second, symbolic tomb with a flat superstructure on the south side of the enclosure; this probably substituted for the traditional royal burial place of Abydos. The king and some of his family were buried deep under the pyramid, where tens of thousands of stone vases were deposited, a number bearing inscriptions of the first two dynasties. Thus, in perpetuating earlier forms in stone and burying this material, Djoser invoked the past in support of his innovations.

Djoser’s name was famous in later times, and his monument was studied in the Late period. Imhotep, whose title as a master sculptor is preserved from the Step Pyramid complex, may have been its architect; he lived on into the next reign. His fame also endured, and in the Late period he was deified and became a god of healing. In Manetho’s history he is associated with reforms of writing, and this may reflect a genuine tradition, for hieroglyphs were simplified and standardized at that time.

Djoser’s successor, Sekhemkhet, planned a still more grandiose step pyramid complex at Ṣaqqārah, and a later king, Khaba, began one at Zawyat al-ʿAryan, a few miles south of Giza. The burial place of the last king of the dynasty, Huni, is unknown. It has often been suggested that he built the pyramid of Maydūm, but this probably was the work of his successor, Snefru. Inscribed material naming 3rd-dynasty kings is known from Maghāra to Elephantine but not from the Middle East or Nubia.

The organizational achievements of the 3rd dynasty are reflected in its principal monument, whose message of centralization and concentration of power is reinforced in a negative sense by the archaeological record. Outside the vicinity of Memphis, the Abydos area continued to be important, and four enormous tombs, probably of high officials, were built at the nearby site of Bayt Khallaf; there were small, nonmortuary step pyramids throughout the country, some of which may date to the 4th dynasty. Otherwise, little evidence comes from the provinces, from which wealth must have flowed to the center, leaving no rich local elite. By the 3rd dynasty the rigid structure of the later nomes, or provinces, which formed the basis of Old Kingdom administration, had been created, and the imposition of its uniform pattern may have impoverished local centers. Tombs of the elite at Ṣaqqārah, notably those of Hezyre and Khabausokar, contained artistic masterpieces that look forward to the Old Kingdom.

The Old Kingdom (c. 2543–c. 2120 bce) and the First Intermediate period (c. 2118–c. 1980 bce)

The Old Kingdom

The 4th dynasty (c. 2543–c. 2436 bce)

The first king of the 4th dynasty, Snefru, probably built the step pyramid of Maydūm and then modified it to form the first true pyramid. Due west of Maydūm was the small step pyramid of Saylah, in Al-Fayyūm, at which Snefru also worked. He built two pyramids at Dahshūr; the southern of the two is known as the Blunted Pyramid because its upper part has a shallower angle of inclination than its lower part. This difference may be due to structural problems or may have been planned from the start, in which case the resulting profile may reproduce a solar symbol of creation. The northern Dahshūr pyramid, the later of the two, has the same angle of inclination as the upper part of the Blunted Pyramid and a base area exceeded only by that of the Great Pyramid at Giza. All three of Snefru’s pyramids had mortuary complexes attached to them. Snefru’s building achievements were thus at least as great as those of any later king and introduced a century of unparalleled construction.

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The Blunted, Bent, False, or Rhomboidal Pyramid, so named because of its peculiar double slope,...

© Photos.com/Jupiterimages

In a long perspective, the 4th dynasty was an isolated phenomenon, a period when the potential of centralization was realized to its utmost and a disproportionate amount of the state's resources was used on the kings' mortuary provisions, almost certainly at the expense of general living standards. No significant 4th dynasty sites have been found away from the Memphite area. Tomb inscriptions show that high officials were granted estates scattered over many nomes, especially in the delta. This pattern of landholding may have avoided the formation of local centers of influence while encouraging intensive exploitation of the land. People who worked on these estates were not free to move, and they paid a high proportion of their earnings in dues and taxes. The building enterprises must have relied on drafting vast numbers of men, probably after the harvest had been gathered in the early summer and during part of the inundation.

Snefru's was the first king's name that was regularly written inside the cartouche, an elongated oval that is one of the most characteristic Egyptian symbols. The cartouche itself is older and was shown as a gift bestowed by gods on the king, signifying long duration on the throne. It soon acquired associations with the sun, so that its first use by the builder of the first true pyramid, which is probably also a solar symbol, is not coincidental.



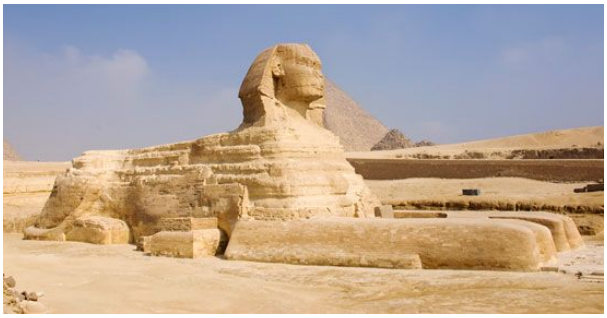
The Pyramids of Giza, Egypt, built by the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom.

Perry Toback

Snefru's successor, Khufu (Cheops), built the Great Pyramid at Giza (Al-Jīzah), to which were added the slightly smaller second pyramid of one of Khufu's sons, Khafre (more correctly Rekhaef, the Chephren of Greek sources), and that of Menkaure (Mycerinus). Khufu's successor, his son Redjedef, began a pyramid at Abū Ruwaysh, and a king of uncertain name began one at Zawyat al-ʿAryan. The last known king of the dynasty (there was probably one more), Shepseskaf, built a monumental mastaba at south Ṣaqqārah and was the only Old Kingdom ruler not

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to begin a pyramid. These works, especially the Great Pyramid, show a great mastery of monumental stoneworking: individual blocks were large or colossal and were extremely accurately fitted to one another. Surveying and planning also were carried out with remarkable precision.



Located on the Giza plateau near the Great Pyramids, the Great Sphinx was likely part of Khafre's...

© vinzo/iStock.com

Apart from the colossal conception of the pyramids themselves, the temple complexes attached to them show great mastery of architectural forms. Khufu's temple or approach causeway was decorated with impressive reliefs, fragments of which were incorporated in the 12th dynasty pyramid of Amenemhet I at Al-Lisht. The best known of all Egyptian sculpture, Khafre's Great Sphinx at Giza and his extraordinary seated statue of Nubian gneiss, date from the middle 4th dynasty.

The Giza pyramids form a group of more or less completed monuments surrounded by many tombs of the royal family and the elite, hierarchically organized and laid out in neat patterns. This arrangement contrasts with that of the reign of Snefru, when important tombs were built at Maydūm and Ṣaqqārah, while the King was probably buried at Dahshūr. Of the Giza tombs, only those of the highest-ranking officials were decorated; except among the immediate entourage of the kings, the freedom of expression of officials was greatly restricted. Most of the highest officials were members of the large royal family, so that power was concentrated by kinship as well as by other means. This did not prevent factional strife: the complex of Redjedef was deliberately and thoroughly destroyed, probably at the instigation of his successor, Khafre.

The Palermo Stone records a campaign to Lower Nubia in the reign of Snefru that may be associated with graffiti in the area itself. The Egyptians founded a settlement at Buhen, at the north end of the Second Cataract, which endured for 200 years; others may have been founded between there and Elephantine. The purposes of this penetration were probably to establish trade farther south and to create a buffer zone. No archaeological traces of a settled population in Lower Nubia have been found for the Old Kingdom period; the oppressive presence of Egypt seems to have robbed the inhabitants of their resources, as the provinces were exploited in favor of the king and the elite.

Snefru and the builders of the Giza pyramids represented a classic age to later times. Snefru was the prototype of a good king, whereas Khufu and Khafre had tyrannical reputations, perhaps only because of the size of their monuments. Little direct evidence for political or other attitudes survives from the dynasty, in part because writing was only just beginning to be used for recording continuous texts. Many great works of art were, however, produced for kings and members of the elite, and these set a pattern for later work. Kings of the 4th dynasty identified themselves, at least from the time of Redjedef, as Son of Re (the sun god); worship of the sun god reached a peak in the 5th dynasty.

The 5th dynasty (c. 2435–c. 2306 bce)

The first two kings of the 5th dynasty, Userkaf and Sahure, were sons of Khentkaues, who was a member of the 4th dynasty royal family. The third king, Neferirkare, may also have been her son. A story from the Middle

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Kingdom that makes them all sons of a priest of Re may derive from a tradition that they were true worshipers of the sun god and implies, probably falsely, that the 4th dynasty kings were not. Six kings of the 5th dynasty displayed their devotion to the sun god by building personal temples to his cult. These temples, of which the two so far identified are sited similarly to pyramids, probably had a mortuary significance for the king as well as honoring the god. The kings' pyramids should therefore be seen in conjunction with the sun temples, some of which received lavish endowments and were served by many high-ranking officials.

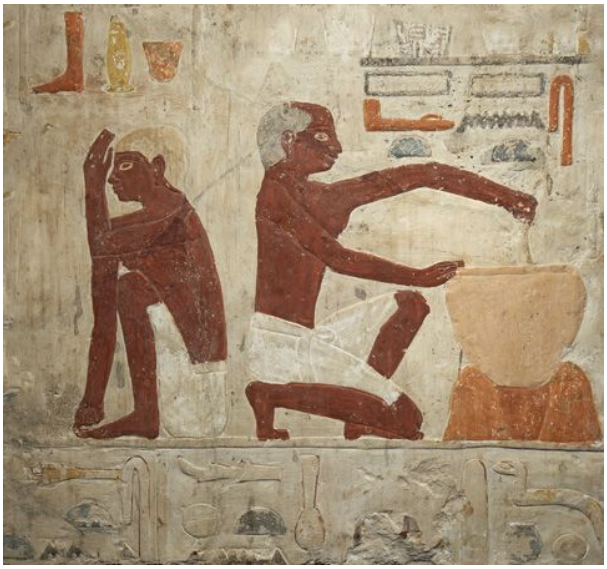
Pyramids have been identified for seven of the nine kings of the dynasty, at Ṣaqqārah (Userkaf and Unas, the last king), Abū Ṣīr (Sahure, Neferirkare, Reneferef, and Neuserre), and south Ṣaqqārah (Djedkare Izezi, the eighth king). The pyramids are smaller and less solidly constructed than those of the 4th dynasty, but the reliefs from their mortuary temples are better preserved and of very fine quality; that of Sahure gives a fair impression of their decorative program. The interiors contained religious scenes relating to provision for Sahure in the next life, while the exteriors presented his "historical" role and relations with the gods. Sea expeditions to Lebanon to acquire timber are depicted, as are aggression against and capture of Libyans. Despite the apparent precision with which captives are named and total figures given, these scenes may not refer to specific events, for the same motifs with the same details were frequently shown over the next 250 years; Sahure's use of them might not have been the earliest.

Foreign connections were far-flung. Goldwork of the period has been found in Anatolia, while stone vases named for Khafre and Pepi I (6th dynasty) have been found at Tall Mardīkh in Syria (Ebla), which was destroyed around 2250 BCE. The absence of 5th dynasty evidence from the site is probably a matter of chance. Expeditions to the turquoise mines of Sinai continued as before. In Nubia, graffiti and inscribed seals from Buhen document Egyptian presence until late in the dynasty, when control was probably abandoned in the face of immigration from the south and the deserts; later generations of the immigrants are known as the Nubian C Group. From the reign of Sahure on, there are records of trade with Punt, a partly legendary land probably in the region of present-day Eritrea, from which the Egyptians obtained incense and myrrh, as well as exotic African products that had been traded from still farther afield. Thus, the reduced level of royal display in Egypt does not imply a less prominent general role for the country.

High officials of the 5th dynasty were no longer members of the royal family, although a few married princesses. Their offices still depended on the king, and in their biographical inscriptions they presented their exploits as relating to him, but they justified other aspects of their social role in terms of a more general morality. They progressed through their careers by acquiring titles in complex ranked sequences that were manipulated by kings throughout the 5th and 6th dynasties. This institutionalization of officialdom has an archaeological parallel in the distribution of elite tombs, which no longer clustered so closely around pyramids. Many are at Giza, but the largest and finest are at Ṣaqqārah and Abū Ṣīr. The repertory of decorated scenes in them continually expanded, but there was no fundamental change in their subject matter. Toward the end of the 5th dynasty, some officials with strong local ties began to build their tombs in the Nile valley and the delta, in a development that symbolized the elite's slowly growing independence from royal control.

Something of the working of the central administration is visible in papyri from the mortuary temples of Neferirkare and Reneferef at Abū Ṣīr. These show well-developed methods of accounting and meticulous recordkeeping and document the complicated redistribution of goods and materials between the royal residence, the temples, and officials who held priesthoods. Despite this evidence for detailed organization, the consumption of papyrus was modest and cannot be compared, for example, with that of Greco-Roman times.

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A wall painting of an ancient Egyptian making batter for bread manufacturing, 25th–24th century bce.

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The last three kings of the dynasty, Menkauhor, Djedkare Izezi, and Unas, did not have personal names compounded with “-Re,” the name of the sun god (Djedkare is a name assumed on accession); and Izezi and Unas did not build solar temples. Thus, there was a slight shift away from the solar cult. The shift could be linked with the rise of Osiris, the god of the dead, who is first attested from the reign of Neuserre. His origin was, however, probably some centuries earlier. The pyramid of Unas, whose approach causeway was richly decorated with historical and religious scenes, is inscribed inside with spells intended to aid the deceased in the hereafter; varying selections of the spells occur in all later Old Kingdom pyramids. (As a collection, they are known as the Pyramid Texts.) Many of the spells were old when they were inscribed; their presence documents the increasing use of writing rather than a change in beliefs. The Pyramid Texts show the importance of Osiris, at least for the king’s passage into the next world: it was an undertaking that aroused anxiety and had to be assisted by elaborate rituals and spells.

The 6th dynasty (c. 2305–c. 2118 bce)

No marked change can be discerned between the reigns of Unas and Teti, the first king of the 6th dynasty. Around Teti’s pyramid in the northern portion of Ṣaqqārah was built a cemetery of large tombs, including those of several viziers. Together with tombs near the pyramid of Unas, this is the latest group of private monuments of the Old Kingdom in the Memphite area.

Information on 6th dynasty political and external affairs is more abundant because inscriptions of high officials were longer. Whether the circumstances they describe were also typical of less loquacious ages is unknown, but the very existence of such inscriptions is evidence of a tendency to greater independence among officials. One, Weni, who lived from the reign of Teti through those of Pepi I and Merenre, was a special judge in the trial of a conspiracy in the royal household, mounted several campaigns against a region east of Egypt or in southern Palestine, and organized two quarrying expeditions. In the absence of a standing army, the Egyptian force was levied from the provinces by officials from local administrative centers and other settlements; there were also contingents from several southern countries and a tribe of the Eastern Desert.

Three biographies of officials from Elephantine record trading expeditions to the south in the reigns of Pepi I and Pepi II. The location of the regions named in them is debated and may have been as far afield as the Butāna, south of the Fifth Cataract. Some of the trade routes ran through the Western Desert, where the Egyptians established an administrative post at Balāṭ in Al-Dākhilah Oasis, some distance west of Al-Khārijah Oasis. Egypt

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no longer controlled Lower Nubia, which was settled by the C Group and formed into political units of gradually increasing size, possibly as far as Karmah (Kerma), south of the Third Cataract. Karmah was the southern cultural successor of the Nubian A Group and became an urban center in the late 3rd millennium BCE, remaining Egypt's chief southern neighbor for seven centuries. To the north the Karmah state stretched as far as the Second Cataract and at times farther still. Its southern extent has not been determined, but sites of similar material culture are scattered over vast areas of the central Sudan.

The provincializing tendencies of the late 5th dynasty continued in the 6th, especially during the extremely long reign (up to 94 years) of Pepi II. Increasing numbers of officials resided in the provinces, amassed local offices, and emphasized local concerns, including religious leadership, in their inscriptions. At the capital the size and splendor of the cemeteries decreased, and some tombs of the end of the dynasty were decorated only in their subterranean parts, as if security could not be guaranteed aboveground. The pyramid complex of Pepi II at southern Ṣaqqārah, which was probably completed in the first 30 years of his reign, stands out against this background as the last major monument of the Old Kingdom, comparable to its predecessors in artistic achievement. Three of his queens were buried in small pyramids around his own; these are the only known queens' monuments inscribed with Pyramid Texts.

The 7th and 8th dynasties (c. 2150–c. 2118 bce)

Pepi II was followed by several ephemeral rulers, who may have been in turn succeeded by the short-lived 7th dynasty of Manetho's history (although some scholars have suggested that this dynasty did not exist in actuality) and the 8th, one of whose kings, Ibi, built a small pyramid at southern Ṣaqqārah. Several 8th dynasty kings are known from inscriptions found in the temple of Min at Qifṭ (Coptos) in the south; this suggests that their rule was recognized throughout the country. The instability of the throne is, however, a sign of political decay, and the fiction of centralized rule may have been accepted only because there was no alternative style of government to kingship.

With the end of the 8th dynasty, the Old Kingdom system of control collapsed. About that time there were incidents of famine and local violence. The country emerged impoverished and decentralized from this episode, the prime cause of which may have been political failure, environmental disaster, or, more probably, a combination of the two. In that period the desiccation of northeastern Africa reached a peak, producing conditions similar to those of contemporary times, and a related succession of low inundations may have coincided with the decay of central political authority. These environmental changes are, however, only approximately dated, and their relationship with the collapse cannot be proved.

The First Intermediate period

The 9th dynasty (c. 2118–c. 2080 bce)

After the end of the 8th dynasty, the throne passed to kings from Heracleopolis, who made their native city the capital, although Memphis continued to be important. They were acknowledged throughout the country, but inscriptions of nomarchs (chief officials of nomes) in the south show that the kings' rule was nominal. At Dara, north of Asyūṭ, for example, a local ruler called Khety styled himself in a regal manner and built a pyramid with a surrounding "courtly" cemetery. At Al-Miʿalla, south of Luxor, Ankhtify, the nomarch of the al-Jabalayn region, recorded his annexation of the Idfū nome and extensive raiding in the Theban area. Ankhtify acknowledged an unidentifiable king Neferkare but campaigned with his own troops. Major themes of inscriptions of the period are the nomarch's provision of food supplies for his people in times of famine and his success in promoting irrigation works. Artificial irrigation had probably long been practiced, but exceptional poverty and crop failure made concern with it worth recording. Inscriptions of Nubian mercenaries employed by local rulers in the south indicate how entrenched military action was.

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The 10th (c. 2080–c. 1980 bce) and 11th (c. 2080–c. 1940 bce) dynasties

A period of generalized conflict focused on rival dynasties at Thebes and Heracleopolis. The latter, the 10th, probably continued the line of the 9th. The founder of the 9th or 10th dynasty was named Khety, and the dynasty as a whole was termed the House of Khety. Several Heracleopolitan kings were named Khety; another important name is Merikare. There was intermittent conflict, and the boundary between the two realms shifted around the region of Abydos. As yet, the course of events in this period cannot be reconstructed.

Several major literary texts purport to describe the upheavals of the First Intermediate period—the *Instruction for Merikare*, for example, being ascribed to one of the kings of Heracleopolis. These texts led earlier Egyptologists to posit a Heracleopolitan literary flowering, but there is now a tendency to date them to the Middle Kingdom, so that they would have been written with enough hindsight to allow a more effective critique of the sacred order.

Until the 11th dynasty made Thebes its capital, Armant (Greek, Hermonthis), on the west bank of the Nile, was the center of the Theban nome. The dynasty honored as its ancestor the God’s Father Mentuhotep, probably the father of the king Inyotef I (?–c. 2067 BCE), whose successors were Inyotef II and Inyotef III (c. 2066–17 and c. 2016–09 BCE, respectively). The next king, Mentuhotep II (c. 2009–c. 1959 BCE, whose throne name was Nebhepetre), gradually reunited Egypt and ousted the Heracleopolitans, changing his titulary in stages to record his conquests. Around his 20th regnal year he assumed the Horus name Divine of the White Crown, implicitly claiming all of Upper Egypt. By his regnal year 42 this had been changed to Uniter of the Two Lands, a traditional royal epithet that he revived with a literal meaning. In later times Mentuhotep was celebrated as the founder of the epoch now known as the Middle Kingdom. His remarkable mortuary complex at Dayr al-Baḥrī, which seems to have had no pyramid, was the architectural inspiration for Hatshepsut’s later structure built alongside.

In the First Intermediate period, monuments were set up by a slightly larger section of the population, and, in the absence of central control, internal dissent and conflicts of authority became visible in public records. Nonroyal individuals took over some of the privileges of royalty, notably identification with Osiris in the hereafter and the use of the Pyramid Texts; these were incorporated into a more extensive corpus inscribed on coffins (and hence termed the Coffin Texts) and continued to be inscribed during the Middle Kingdom. The unified state of the Middle Kingdom did not reject these acquisitions and so had a broader cultural basis than the Old Kingdom.

The Middle Kingdom (c. 1980–c. 1760 bce) and the Second Intermediate period (c. 1759–c. 1539 bce)

The Middle Kingdom

Mentuhotep II campaigned in Lower Nubia, where he may have been preceded by the Inyotefs. His mortuary complex in Thebes contained some of the earliest known depictions of Amon-Re, the dynastic god of the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Mentuhotep II was himself posthumously deified and worshiped, notably in the Aswān area. In administration, he attempted to break the power of the nomarchs, but his policy was unsuccessful in the longer term.

Mentuhotep II’s successors, Mentuhotep III (c. 1958–47 BCE) and Mentuhotep IV (c. 1947–40 BCE), also ruled from Thebes. The reign of Mentuhotep IV corresponds to seven years marked “missing” in the Turin Canon, and he may later have been deemed illegitimate. Records of a quarrying expedition to the Wadi Ḥammāmāt from his second regnal year were inscribed on the order of his vizier Amenemhet, who almost certainly succeeded to the

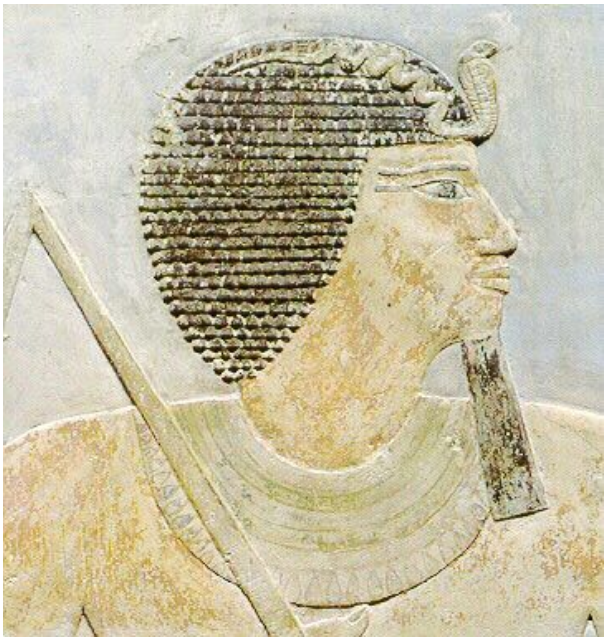
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throne and founded the 12th dynasty. Not all the country welcomed the 11th dynasty, the monuments and self-presentation of which remained local and Theban.

The 12th dynasty (c. 1939–c. 1760 bce)

In a text probably circulated as propaganda during the reign of Amenemhet I (c. 1939–10 BCE), the time preceding his reign is depicted as a period of chaos and despair, from which a savior called Ameny from the extreme south was to emerge. This presentation may well be stereotyped, but there could have been armed struggle before he seized the throne. Nonetheless, his mortuary complex at Al-Lisht contained monuments on which his name was associated with that of his predecessor. In style, his pyramid and mortuary temple looked back to Pepi II of the end of the Old Kingdom, but the pyramid was built of mud brick with a stone casing; consequently, it is now badly ruined.

Amenemhet I moved the capital back to the Memphite area, founding a residence named Itjet-towy, “she who takes possession of the Two Lands,” which was for later times the archetypal royal residence. Itjet-towy was probably situated between Memphis and the pyramids of Amenemhet I and Sesostris I (at modern Al-Lisht), while Memphis remained the center of population. From later in the dynasty there is the earliest evidence for a royal palace (not a capital) in the eastern delta. The return to the Memphite area was accompanied by a revival of Old Kingdom artistic styles, in a resumption of central traditions that contrasted with the local ones of the 11th dynasty. From the reign of Amenemhet major tombs of the first half of the dynasty, which display considerable local independence, are preserved at several sites, notably Beni Hasan, Meir, and Qau. After the second reign of the dynasty, no more important private tombs were constructed at Thebes, but several kings made benefactions to Theban temples.



A relief from the tomb of the pharaoh Amenemhet I at Al-Lisht, Egypt.

Crucifixion

In his 20th regnal year, Amenemhet I took his son Sesostris I (or Senwosret, reigned c. 1910–c. 1875 BCE) as his coregent, presumably in order to ensure a smooth transition to the next reign. This practice was followed in the next two reigns and recurred sporadically in later times. During the following 10 years of joint rule, Sesostris undertook campaigns in Lower Nubia that led to its conquest as far as the central area of the Second Cataract. A series of fortresses were begun in the region, and there was a full occupation, but the local C Group population was not integrated culturally with the conquerors.

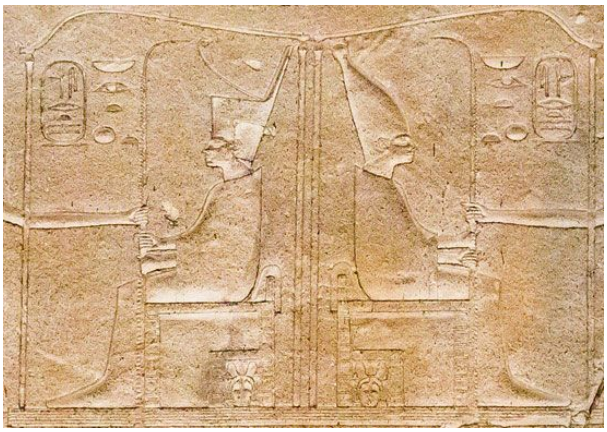
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Amenemhet I apparently was murdered during Sesostris's absence on a campaign to Libya, but Sesostris was able to maintain his hold on the throne without major disorder. He consolidated his father's achievements, but, in one of the earliest preserved inscriptions recounting royal exploits, he spoke of internal unrest. An inscription of the next reign alludes to campaigns to Syria-Palestine in the time of Sesostris; whether these were raiding expeditions and parades of strength, in what was then a seminomadic region, or whether a conquest was intended or achieved is not known. It is clear, however, that the traditional view that the Middle Kingdom hardly intervened in the Middle East is incorrect.

In the early 12th dynasty the written language was regularized in its classical form of Middle Egyptian, a rather artificial idiom that was probably always somewhat removed from the vernacular. The first datable corpus of literary texts was composed in Middle Egyptian. Two of these relate directly to political affairs and offer fictional justifications for the rule of Amenemhet I and Sesostris I, respectively. Several that are ascribed to Old Kingdom authors or that describe events of the First Intermediate period but are composed in Middle Egyptian probably also date from around this time. The most significant of these is the *Instruction for Merikare,* a discourse on kingship and moral responsibility. It is often used as a source for the history of the First Intermediate period but may preserve no more than a memory of its events. Most of these texts continued to be copied in the New Kingdom.

Little is known of the reigns of Amenemhet II (c. 1878–43 BCE) and Sesostris II (c. 1845–37 BCE). These kings built their pyramids in the entrance to Al-Fayyūm while also beginning an intensive exploitation of its agricultural potential that reached a peak in the reign of Amenemhet III (c. 1818–c. 1773 BCE). The king of the 12th dynasty with the most enduring reputation was Sesostris III (c.1837–19 BCE), who extended Egyptian conquests to Semna, at the south end of the Second Cataract, while also mounting at least one campaign to Palestine. Sesostris III completed an extensive chain of fortresses in the Second Cataract; at Semna he was worshiped as a god in the New Kingdom.

Frequent campaigns and military occupation, which lasted another 150 years, required a standing army. A force of this type may have been created early in the 12th dynasty but becomes better attested near the end. It was based on "soldiers"—whose title means literally "citizens"—levied by district and officers of several grades and types. It was separate from New Kingdom military organization and seems not to have enjoyed very high status.



Sesostris III wearing the crowns of Lower and Upper Egypt, 19th century bce; in the Egyptian Museum, …

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The purpose of the occupation of Lower Nubia is disputed, because the size of the fortresses and the level of manpower needed to occupy them might seem disproportionate to local threats. An inscription of Sesostris III set up in the fortresses emphasizes the weakness of the Nubian enemy, while a boundary marker and fragmentary papyri show that the system channeled trade with the south through the central fortress of Mirgissa. The

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greatest period of the Karmah state to the south was still to come, but for centuries it had probably controlled a vast stretch of territory. The best explanation of the Egyptian presence is that Lower Nubia was annexed by Egypt for purposes of securing the southern trade route, while Karmah was a rival worth respecting and preempting; in addition, the physical scale of the fortresses may have become something of an end in itself. It is not known whether Egypt wished similarly to annex Palestine, but numerous administrative seals of the period have been found there.

Sesostris III reorganized Egypt into four regions corresponding to the northern and southern halves of the Nile valley and the eastern and western delta. Rich evidence for middle-ranking officials from the religious center of Abydos and for administrative practice in documents from Al-Lāhūn conveys an impression of a pervasive, centralized bureaucracy, which later came to run the country under its own momentum. The prosperity created by peace, conquests, and agricultural development is visible in royal monuments and monuments belonging to the minor elite, but there was no small, powerful, and wealthy group of the sort seen in the Old and New Kingdoms. Sesostris III and his successor, Amenemhet III (c. 1818–c. 1773 BCE), left a striking artistic legacy in the form of statuary depicting them as aging, careworn rulers, probably alluding to a conception of the suffering king known from literature of the dynasty. This departure from the bland ideal, which may have sought to bridge the gap between king and subjects in the aftermath of the attack on elite power, was not taken up in later times.

The reigns of Amenemhet III and Amenemhet IV (c. 1772–64 BCE) and of Sebeknefru (c. 1763–60 BCE), the first certainly attested female monarch, were apparently peaceful, but the accession of a woman marked the end of the dynastic line.

The 13th dynasty (c. 1759–c. 1630 bce) and 14th dynasty (c. 1759–c. 1530 bce)

Despite a continuity of outward forms and of the rhetoric of inscriptions between the 12th and 13th dynasties, there was a complete change in kingship. In little more than a century about 70 kings occupied the throne. Many can have reigned only for months, and there were probably rival claimants to the throne, but in principle the royal residence remained at Itjet-towy and the kings ruled the whole country. Egypt’s hold on Lower Nubia was maintained, as was its position as the leading state in the Middle East. Large numbers of private monuments document the prosperity of the official classes, and a proliferation of titles is evidence of their continued expansion. In government the vizier assumed prime importance, and a single family held the office for much of a century.

Immigration from southwest Asia is known in the late 12th dynasty and became more widespread in the 13th. From the late 18th century BCE the northeastern Nile River delta was settled by successive waves of peoples from Palestine, who retained their own material culture. Starting with the *Instruction for Merikare*, Egyptian texts warn against the dangers of infiltration of this sort, and its occurrence shows a weakening of government. There may also have been a rival dynasty, called the 14th, at Xois in the north-central delta, but this is known only from Manetho’s history and could have had no more than local significance. Toward the end of this period, Egypt lost control of Lower Nubia, where the garrisons—which had been regularly replaced with fresh troops—settled and were partly assimilated. The Karmah state overran and incorporated the region. Some Egyptian officials resident in the Second Cataract area served the new rulers. The site of Karmah has yielded many Egyptian artifacts, including old pieces pillaged from their original contexts. Most were items of trade between the two countries, some probably destined for exchange against goods imported from sub-Saharan Africa. Around the end of the Middle Kingdom and during the Second Intermediate period, Medjay tribesmen from the Eastern Desert settled in the Nile valley from around Memphis to the Third Cataract. Their presence is marked by distinctive shallow graves with black-topped pottery, and they have traditionally been termed the “Pan-grave” culture by archaeologists. They were assimilated culturally in the New Kingdom, but the word *Medjay* came to mean police or militia; they probably came as mercenaries.

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The Second Intermediate period

The 15th (c. 1630–c. 1530 bce) through 17th (c. 1630–c. 1540 bce) dynasties

The increasing competition for power in Egypt and Nubia crystallized in the formation of two new dynasties: the 15th, called the Hyksos (c. 1630–c. 1530 BCE), with its capital at Avaris (Tell el-Dabʿa) in the delta, and the 17th (c. 1630–c. 1540 BCE), ruling from Thebes. The word *Hyksos* dates to an Egyptian phrase meaning “ruler of foreign lands” and occurs in Manetho’s narrative cited in the works of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (1st century CE), which depicts the new rulers as sacrilegious invaders who despoiled the land. They presented themselves—with the exception of the title Hyksos—as Egyptian kings and appear to have been accepted as such. The main line of Hyksos was acknowledged throughout Egypt and may have been recognized as overlords in Palestine, but they tolerated other lines of kings, both those of the 17th dynasty and the various minor Hyksos who are termed the 16th dynasty. The 15th dynasty consisted of six kings, the best known being the fifth, Apopis, who reigned for up to 40 years. There were many 17th-dynasty kings, probably belonging to several different families. The northern frontier of the Theban domain was at Al-Qūṣiyyah, but there was trade across the border.

Asiatic rule brought many technical innovations to Egypt, as well as cultural innovations such as new musical instruments and foreign loan words. The changes affected techniques from bronze working and pottery to weaving, and new breeds of animals and new crops were introduced. In warfare, composite bows, new types of daggers and scimitars, and above all the horse and chariot transformed previous practice, although the chariot may ultimately have been as important as a prestige vehicle as for tactical military advantages it conferred. The effect of these changes was to bring Egypt, which had been technologically backward, onto the level of southwest Asia. Because of these advances and the perspectives it opened up, Hyksos rule was decisive for Egypt’s later empire in the Middle East.

Whereas the 13th dynasty was fairly prosperous, the Second Intermediate period may have been impoverished. The regional center of the cult of Osiris at Abydos, which has produced the largest quantity of Middle Kingdom monuments, lost importance, but sites such as Thebes, Idfū, and Al-Kawm al-Aḥmar have yielded significant, if sometimes crudely worked, remains. Aside from Avaris itself, virtually no information has come from the north, where the Hyksos ruled, and it is impossible to assess their impact on the economy or on high culture. The Second Intermediate period was the consequence of political fragmentation and immigration and was not associated with economic collapse, as in the early First Intermediate period.

The end of the Second Intermediate Period

Toward the end of the 17th dynasty (c. 1545 BCE), the Theban king Seqenenre challenged Apopis, probably dying in battle against him. Seqenenre’s successor, Kamose, renewed the challenge, stating in an inscription that it was intolerable to share his land with an Asiatic and a Nubian (the Karmah ruler). By the end of his third regnal year, he had made raids as far south as the Second Cataract (and possibly much farther) and in the north to the neighborhood of Avaris, also intercepting in the Western Desert a letter sent from Apopis to a new Karmah ruler on his accession. By campaigning to the north and to the south, Kamose acted out his implicit claim to the territory ruled by Egypt in the Middle Kingdom. His exploits formed a vital stage in the long struggle to expel the Hyksos.

John R. BainesPeter F. Dorman

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The New Kingdom (c. 1539–c. 1077 bce)

The 18th dynasty (c. 1539–c. 1292 bce)

Ahmose

Although Ahmose (ruled c. 1539–15 BCE) had been preceded by Kamose, who was either his father or his brother, Egyptian tradition regarded Ahmose as the founder of a new dynasty because he was the native ruler who reunified Egypt. Continuing a recently inaugurated practice, he married his full sister Ahmose-Nofretari. The queen was given the title of God's Wife of Amon. Like her predecessors of the 17th dynasty, Queen Ahmose-Nofretari was influential and highly honored. A measure of her importance was her posthumous veneration at Thebes, where later pharaohs were depicted offering to her as a goddess among the gods.

Ahmose's campaigns to expel the Hyksos from the Nile River delta and regain former Egyptian territory to the south probably started around his 10th regnal year. Destroying the Hyksos stronghold at Avaris, in the eastern delta, he finally drove them beyond the eastern frontier and then besieged Sharuḥen (Tell al-Fārʿah) in southern Palestine; the full extent of his conquests may have been much greater. His penetration of the Middle East came at a time when there was no major established power in the region. This political gap facilitated the creation of an Egyptian "empire."

Ahmose's officers and soldiers were rewarded with spoil and captives, who were enslaved as personal servants. This marked the creation of an influential military class. Like Kamose, Ahmose campaigned as far south as Buhen. For the administration of the regained territory, he created a new office, overseer of southern foreign lands, which ranked second only to the vizier. Its incumbent was accorded the honorific title of king's son, indicating that he was directly responsible to the king as deputy.

The early New Kingdom bureaucracy was modeled on that of the Middle Kingdom. The vizier was the chief administrator and the highest judge of the realm. By the mid-15th century BCE the office had been divided into two, one vizier for Upper and one for Lower Egypt. During the 18th dynasty some young bureaucrats were educated in temple schools, reinforcing the integration of civil and priestly sectors. Early in the dynasty many administrative posts were inherited, but royal appointment of capable officials, often selected from military officers who had served the king on his campaigns, later became the rule. The trend was thus away from bureaucratic families and the inheritance of office.

Amenhotep I

Ahmose's son and successor, Amenhotep I (ruled c. 1514–c. 1494 BCE), pushed the Egyptian frontier southward to the Third Cataract, near the capital of the Karmah (Kerma) state, while also gathering tribute from his Asiatic possessions and perhaps campaigning in Syria. The emerging kingdom of Mitanni in northern Syria, which is first mentioned on a stela of one of Amenhotep's soldiers and was also known by the name of Nahrin, may have threatened Egypt's conquests to the north.

The New Kingdom was a time of increased devotion to the state god Amon-Re, whose cult largely benefited as Egypt was enriched by the spoils of war. Riches were turned over to the god's treasuries, and as a sign of filial piety the king had sacred monuments constructed at Thebes. Under Amenhotep I the pyramidal form of royal tomb was abandoned in favor of a rock-cut tomb, and, except for Akhenaton, all subsequent New Kingdom rulers were buried in concealed tombs in the famous Valley of the Kings in western Thebes. Separated from the tombs,

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royal mortuary temples were erected at the edge of the desert. Perhaps because of this innovation, Amenhotep I later became the patron deity of the workmen who excavated and decorated the royal tombs. The location of his own tomb is unknown.

Thutmose I and Thutmose II



Dragging a Statue of Thutmose I, tempera on paper by Norman de Garis Davies, 1911 (original c....

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, Rogers Fund, 1915, (15.5.17a), www.metmusem.org



Account of a campaign of Thutmose I, limestone, c. early 15th century bce; in the Metropolitan...

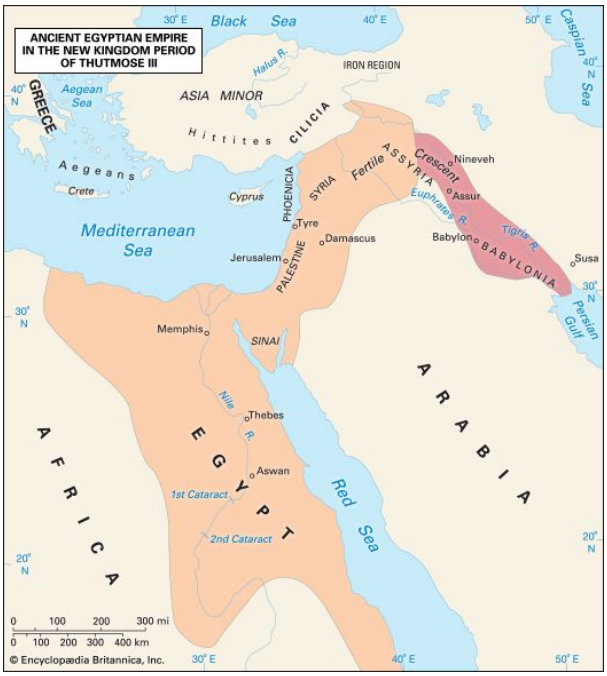
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, Rogers Fund, by exchange, 1966, (66.57), www.metmusem.org

Lacking a surviving heir, Amenhotep I was succeeded by one of his generals, Thutmose I (ruled c. 1493–c. 1483 BCE), who married his own full sister Ahmose. In the south Thutmose destroyed the Karmah state. He inscribed a rock as a boundary marker, later confirmed by Thutmose III, near Kanisa-Kurgus, north of the Fifth Cataract. He then executed a brilliant campaign into Syria and across the Euphrates River, where he erected a victory stela near Carchemish.

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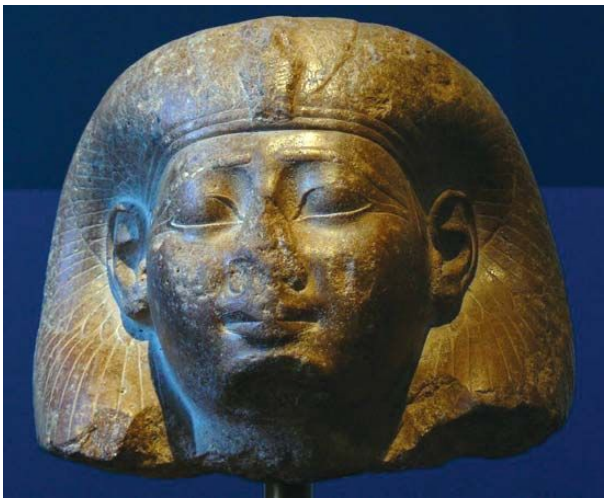
Thus, in the reign of Thutmose I, Egyptian conquests in the Middle East and Africa reached their greatest extent, but they may not yet have been firmly held. His little-known successor, Thutmose II (c. 1482–80 BCE), apparently continued his policies.

Hatshepsut and Thutmose III



The ancient Egyptian empire during the rule of Thutmose III (1479–25 bce).

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Head of a queen, brown quartzite sculpture from Egypt, c. 1479–25 bce; in the Brooklyn Museum, New…

Photograph by Trish Mayo. Brooklyn Museum, New York, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 65.134.3

At Thutmose II's death his queen and sister, Hatshepsut, had only a young daughter; but a minor wife had borne him a boy, who was apparently very young at his accession. This son, Thutmose III (ruled c. 1479–25 BCE), later reconquered Egypt's Asian empire and became an outstanding ruler. During his first few regnal years, Thutmose III theoretically controlled the land, but Hatshepsut governed as regent. Sometime between Thutmose III's second and seventh regnal years, she assumed the kingship herself. According to one version of the event, the oracle of Amon proclaimed her king at Karnak, where she was crowned. A more propagandistic account, preserved in texts and reliefs of her splendid mortuary temple at Dayr al-Baḥrī, ignores the reign of Thutmose II and asserts that her father, Thutmose I, proclaimed her his successor. Upon becoming king, Hatshepsut became

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the dominant partner in a joint rule that lasted until her death in about 1458 BCE; there are monuments dedicated by Hatshepsut that depict both kings. She had the support of various powerful personalities; the most notable among them was Senenmut, the steward and tutor of her daughter Neferure. In styling herself king, Hatshepsut adopted the royal titulary but avoided the epithet “mighty bull,” regularly employed by other kings. Although in her reliefs she was depicted as a male, pronominal references in the texts usually reflect her womanhood. Similarly, much of her statuary shows her in male form, but there are rarer examples that render her as a woman. In less formal documents she was referred to as “King’s Great Wife”—that is, “Queen”—while Thutmose III was “King.” There is thus a certain ambiguity in the treatment of Hatshepsut as king.



The Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Dayr al-Baḥrī, Thebes, Egypt, 15th century bce.

Katherine Young/Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Her temple reliefs depict pacific enterprises, such as the transporting of obelisks for Amon’s temple and a commercial expedition to Punt; her art style looked back to Middle Kingdom ideals. Some warlike scenes are depicted, however, and she may have waged a campaign in Nubia. In one inscription she blamed the Hyksos for the supposedly poor state of the land before her rule, even though they had been expelled from the region more than a generation earlier.

During Hatshepsut’s ascendancy Egypt’s position in Asia may have deteriorated because of the expansion of Mitannian power in Syria. Shortly after her death, the prince of the Syrian city of Kadesh, stood with troops of 330 princes of a Syro-Palestinian coalition at Megiddo; such a force was more than merely defensive, and the intention may have been to advance against Egypt. The 330 must have represented all the places of any size in the region that were not subject to Egyptian rule and may be a schematic figure derived from a list of place-names. It is noteworthy that Mitanni itself was not directly involved.

Thutmose III proceeded to Gaza with his army and then to Yehem, subjugating rebellious Palestinian towns along the way. His annals relate how, at a consultation concerning the best route over the Mount Carmel ridge, the king overruled his officers and selected a shorter but more dangerous route through the ʿArūnah Pass and then led the troops himself. The march went smoothly, and, when the Egyptians attacked at dawn, they prevailed over the enemy troops and besieged Megiddo.

Thutmose III meanwhile coordinated the landing of other army divisions on the Syro-Palestinian littoral, whence they proceeded inland, so that the strategy resembled a pincer technique. The siege ended in a treaty by which Syrian princes swore an oath of submission to the king. As was normal in ancient diplomacy and in Egyptian practice, the oath was binding only upon those who swore it, not upon future generations.

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Thutmose III smiting his Asian foes, detail of a limestone relief from the Temple of Amon at Karnak, ...

Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich

By the end of the first campaign, Egyptian domination extended northward to a line linking Byblos and Damascus. Although the prince of Kadesh remained to be vanquished, Assyria sent lapis lazuli as tribute; Asian princes surrendered their weapons, including a large number of horses and chariots. Thutmose III took only a limited number of captives. He appointed Asian princes to govern the towns and took their brothers and sons to Egypt, where they were educated at the court. Most eventually returned home to serve as loyal vassals, though some remained in Egypt at court. In order to ensure the loyalty of Asian city-states, Egypt maintained garrisons that could quell insurrection and supervise the delivery of tribute. There never was an elaborate Egyptian imperial administration in Asia.

Thutmose III conducted numerous subsequent campaigns in Asia. The submission of Kadesh was finally achieved, but Thutmose III’s ultimate aim was the defeat of Mitanni. He used the navy to transport troops to Asian coastal towns, avoiding arduous overland marches from Egypt. His great eighth campaign led him across the Euphrates; although the countryside around Carchemish was ravaged, the city was not taken, and the Mitannian prince was able to flee. The psychological gain of this campaign was perhaps greater than its military success, for Babylonia, Assyria, and the Hittites all sent tribute in recognition of Egyptian dominance. Although Thutmose III never subjugated Mitanni, he placed Egypt’s conquests on a firm footing by constant campaigning that contrasts with the forays of his predecessors. Thutmose III’s annals inscribed in the temple of Karnak are remarkably succinct and accurate, but his other texts, particularly one set in his newly founded Nubian capital of Napata, are more conventional in their rhetoric. He seems to have married three Syrian wives, which may represent diplomatic unions, marking Egypt’s entry into the realm of international affairs of the ancient Middle East.

Thutmose III initiated a truly imperial Egyptian rule in Nubia. Much of the land became estates of institutions in Egypt, while local cultural traits disappear from the archaeological record. Sons of chiefs were educated at the Egyptian court; a few returned to Nubia to serve as administrators, and some were buried there in Egyptian fashion. Nubian fortresses lost their strategic value and became administrative centers. Open towns developed around them, and, in several temples outside their walls, the cult of the divine king was established. Lower

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Nubia supplied gold from the desert and hard and semiprecious stones. From farther south came tropical African woods, perfumes, oil, ivory, animal skins, and ostrich plumes. There is scarcely any trace of local population from the later New Kingdom, when many more temples were built in Nubia; by the end of the 20th dynasty, the region had almost no prosperous settled population.

Under Thutmose III the wealth of empire became apparent in Egypt. Many temples were built, and vast sums were donated to the estate of Amon-Re. There are many tombs of his high officials at Thebes. The capital had been moved to Memphis, but Thebes remained the religious center.

The campaigns of kings such as Thutmose III required a large military establishment, including a hierarchy of officers and an expensive chariotry. The king grew up with military companions whose close connection with him enabled them to participate increasingly in government. Military officers were appointed to high civil and religious positions, and by the Ramesside period the influence of such people had come to outweigh that of the traditional bureaucracy.

Amenhotep II

About two years before his death, Thutmose III appointed his 18-year-old son, Amenhotep II (ruled c. 1425–c. 1400 BCE), as coregent. Just prior to his father’s death, Amenhotep II set out on a campaign to an area in Syria near Kadesh, whose city-states were now caught up in the power struggle between Egypt and Mitanni; Amenhotep II killed seven princes and shipped their bodies back to Egypt to be suspended from the ramparts of Thebes and Napata. In his seventh and ninth years, Amenhotep II made further campaigns into Asia, where the Mitannian king pursued a more vigorous policy. The revolt of the important coastal city of Ugarit was a serious matter, because Egyptian control over Syria required bases along the littoral for inland operations and the provisioning of the army. Ugarit was pacified, and the fealty of Syrian cities, including Kadesh, was reconfirmed.



Men waiting to have their hair cut by a barber (at lower left), in a modern painted copy of an...

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.40), www. metmuseum.org

Thutmose IV

Amenhotep II’s son Thutmose IV (ruled c. 1400–c. 1390 BCE) sought to establish peaceful relations with the Mitannian king Artatama, who had been successful against the Hittites. Artatama gave his daughter in marriage, the prerequisite for which was probably the Egyptian cession of some Syrian city-states to the Mitannian sphere of influence.

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Foreign influences during the early 18th dynasty



Detail of a wall painting from the tomb of Nebamun in Thebes, Egypt, c. 1450 bce.

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

During the empire period Egypt maintained commercial ties with Phoenicia, Crete, and the Aegean islands. The Egyptians portrayed goods obtained through trade as foreign tribute. In the Theban tombs there are representations of Syrians bearing Aegean products and of Aegeans carrying Syrian bowls and amphorae—indicative of close commercial interconnections between Mediterranean lands. Egyptian ships trading with Phoenicia and Syria journeyed beyond to Crete and the Aegean, a route that explains the occasional confusion of products and ethnic types in Egyptian representations. The most prized raw material from the Aegean world was silver, which was lacking in Egypt, where gold was relatively abundant.

One result of the expansion of the empire was a new appreciation of foreign culture. Not only were foreign objets d’art imported into Egypt, but Egyptian artisans imitated Aegean wares as well. Imported textiles inspired the ceiling patterns of Theban tomb chapels, and Aegean art with its spiral motifs influenced Egyptian artists. Under Amenhotep II, Asian gods are found in Egypt: Astarte and Resheph became revered for their reputed potency in warfare, and Astarte was honored also in connection with medicine, love, and fertility. Some Asian gods were eventually identified with similar Egyptian deities; thus, Astarte was associated with Sekhmet, the goddess of pestilence, and Resheph with Mont, the war god. Just as Asians resident in Egypt were incorporated into Egyptian society and could rise to important positions, so their gods, though represented as foreign, were worshiped according to Egyptian cult practices. The breakdown of Egyptian isolationism and an increased cosmopolitanism in religion are also reflected in hymns that praise Amon-Re’s concern for the welfare of Asians.

Amenhotep III

Thutmose IV’s son Amenhotep III (ruled c. 1390–53 BCE) acceded to the throne at about the age of 12. He soon wed Tiy, who became his queen. Earlier in the dynasty military men had served as royal tutors, but Tiy’s father was a commander of the chariotry, and through this link the royal line became even more directly influenced by the military. In his fifth year Amenhotep III claimed a victory over Kushite rebels, but the viceroy of Kush, the southern portion of Nubia, probably actually led the troops. The campaign may have led into the Butāna, west of the ʿAṭbarah River, farther south than any previous Egyptian military expedition had gone. Several temples erected under Amenhotep III in Upper Nubia between the Second and Third cataracts attest to the importance of the region.

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Peaceful relations prevailed with southwest Asia, where control of Egypt's vassals was successfully maintained. A commemorative scarab from the king's 10th year announced the arrival in Egypt of the Mitannian princess Gilukhepa, along with 317 women; thus, another diplomatic marriage helped maintain friendly relations between Egypt and its former foe. Another Mitannian princess was later received into Amenhotep III's harem, and during his final illness the Hurrian goddess Ishtar of Nineveh was sent to his aid. At the expense of older bureaucratic families and the principle of inheritance of office, military men acquired high posts in the civil administration. Most influential was the aged scribe and commander of the elite troops, Amenhotep, son of Hapu, whose reputation as a sage survived into the Ptolemaic period.



Stone statues of Amenhotep III, near Thebes, Egypt, 14th century bce.

Katherine Young/Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Amenhotep III sponsored building on a colossal scale, especially in the Theban area. At Karnak he erected the huge third pylon, and at Luxor he dedicated a magnificent new temple to Amon. The king's own mortuary temple in western Thebes was unrivaled in its size; little remains of it today, but its famous Colossi of Memnon testify to its proportions. He also built a huge harbor and palace complex nearby. Some colossal statues served as objects of public veneration, before which men could appeal to the king's *ka*, which represented the transcendent aspect of kingship. In Karnak, statues of Amenhotep, son of Hapu, were placed to act as intermediaries between supplicants and the gods.

Among the highest-ranking officials at Thebes were men of Lower Egyptian background, who constructed large tombs with highly refined decoration. An eclectic quality is visible in the tombs, certain scenes of which were inspired by Old Kingdom reliefs. The earliest preserved important New Kingdom monuments from Memphis also date from this reign. Antiquarianism is evidenced in Amenhotep III's celebration of his *sed* festivals (rituals of renewal celebrated after 30 years of rule), which were performed at his Theban palace in accordance, it was claimed, with ancient writings. Tiy, whose role was much more prominent than that of earlier queens, participated in these ceremonies.

Amenhotep III's last years were spent in ill health. To judge from his mummy and less formal representations of him from Amarna, he was obese when, in his 38th regnal year, he died and was succeeded by his son Amenhotep IV (ruled c. 1353–36 BCE), the most controversial of all the kings of Egypt.

Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten)

The earliest monuments of Amenhotep IV, who in his fifth regnal year changed his name to Akhenaten ("One Useful to Aten"), are conventional in their iconography and style, but from the first he gave the sun god a didactic title naming Aten, the solar disk. This title was later written inside a pair of cartouches, as a king's name would be. The king declared his religious allegiance by the unprecedented use of "high priest of the sun god" as one of his own titles. The term *Aten* had long been in use, but under Thutmose IV the Aten had been referred to

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as a god, and under Amenhotep III those references became more frequent. Thus, Akhenaten did not create a new god but rather singled out this aspect of the sun god from among others. He also carried further radical tendencies that had recently developed in solar religion, in which the sun god was freed from his traditional mythological context and presented as the sole beneficent provider for the entire world. The king’s own divinity was emphasized: the Aten was said to be his father, of whom he alone had knowledge, and they shared the status of king and celebrated jubilees together.



A statue of King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti of Egypt, limestone, 14th century bce; in the Louvre...

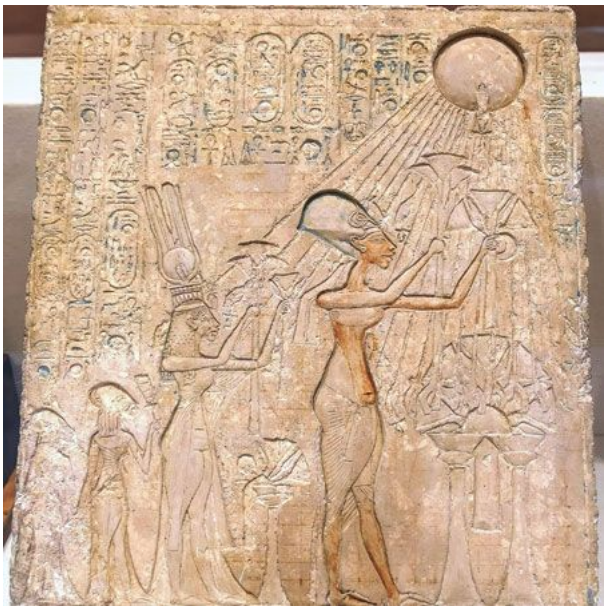
© Photo Josse/Leemage—Corbis Historical/Getty Images

In his first five regnal years, Akhenaten built many temples to the Aten, of which the most important were in the precinct of the temple of Amon-Re at Karnak. In these open-air structures was developed a new, highly stylized form of relief and sculpture in the round. The Aten was depicted not in anthropomorphic form but as a solar disk from which radiating arms extend the hieroglyph for “life” to the noses of the king and his family. During the construction of these temples, the cult of Amon and other gods was suspended, and the worship of the Aten in an open-air sanctuary superseded that of Amon, who had dwelt in a dark shrine of the Karnak temple. The king’s wife Nefertiti, whom he had married before his accession, was prominent in the reliefs and had a complete shrine dedicated to her that included no images of the king. Her prestige continued to grow for much of the reign.

At about the time that he altered his name to conform with the new religion, the king transferred the capital to a virgin site at Amarna (Tell el-Amarna; Al-ʿAmārinah) in Middle Egypt. There he constructed a well-planned city—Akhetaten (“the Horizon of Aten”)—comprising temples to the Aten, palaces, official buildings, villas for the high ranking, and extensive residential quarters. In the Eastern Desert cliffs surrounding the city, tombs were excavated for the courtiers, and deep within a secluded wadi the royal sepulcher was prepared. Reliefs in these tombs have been invaluable for reconstructing life at Amarna. The tomb reliefs and stelae portray the life of the royal family with an unprecedented degree of intimacy.

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In Akhenaten’s ninth year a more monotheistic didactic name was given to the Aten, and an intense persecution of the older gods, especially Amon, was undertaken. Amon’s name was excised from many older monuments throughout the land, and occasionally the word *gods* was expunged.



King Akhenaten of Egypt (right) with Queen Nefertiti presenting lotus flowers to the sun god Aten,...

© Christopher Bellette/Dreamstime.com

Akhenaten’s religious and cultural revolution was highly personal in that he seems to have had a direct hand in devising the precepts of the Aten religion and the conventions of Amarna art. In religion the accent was upon the sun’s life-sustaining power, and naturalistic scenes adorned the walls and even the floors of Amarna buildings. The king’s role in determining the composition of the court is expressed in epithets given to officials he selected from the lesser ranks of society, including the military. Few officials had any connection with the old ruling elite, and some courtiers who had been accepted at the beginning of the reign were purged. Even at Amarna the new religion was not widely accepted below the level of the elite; numerous small objects relating to traditional beliefs have been found at the site.

Akhenaten’s revolutionary intent is visible in all of his actions. In representational art, many existing conventions were revised to emphasize the break with the past. Such a procedure is comprehensible because traditional values were consistently incorporated in cultural expression as a whole; in order to change one part, it was necessary to change the whole.

A vital innovation was the introduction of vernacular forms into the written language. This led in later decades to the appearance of current verbal forms in monumental inscriptions. The vernacular form of the New Kingdom, which is now known as Late Egyptian, appears fully developed in letters of the later 19th and 20th dynasties.

Akhenaten’s foreign policy and use of force abroad are less well understood. He mounted one minor campaign in Nubia. In the Middle East, Egypt’s hold on its possessions was not as secure as earlier, but the cuneiform tablets found at Amarna recording his diplomacy are difficult to interpret because the vassals who requested aid from him exaggerated their plight. One reason for unrest in the region was the decline of Mitanni and the resurgence of the Hittites. Between the reign of Akhenaten and the end of the 18th dynasty, Egypt lost control of much territory in Syria.

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The aftermath of Amarna

Akhenaten had six daughters by Nefertiti and possibly a son, perhaps by a secondary wife Kiya. Either Nefertiti or the widow of Tutankhamun called on the Hittite king Suppiluliumas to supply a consort because she could find none in Egypt; a prince was sent, but he was murdered as he reached Egypt. Thus, Egypt never had a diplomatic marriage in which a foreign man was received into the country.

After the brief rule of Smenkhkare (c. 1336–34 BCE), possibly a son of Akhenaten, Tutankhaten, a nine-year-old child, succeeded and was married to the much older Ankhesenpaaten, Akhenaten’s third daughter. Around his third regnal year, the king moved his capital to Memphis, abandoned the Aten cult, and changed his and the queen’s names to Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamen. In an inscription recording Tutankhamun’s actions for the gods, the Amarna period is described as one of misery and of the withdrawal of the gods from Egypt. This change, made in the name of the young king, was probably the work of high officials. The most influential were Ay, known by the title God’s Father, who served as vizier and regent (his title indicates a close relationship to the royal family), and the general Horemheb, who functioned as royal deputy and whose tomb at Ṣaqqārah contains remarkable scenes of Asiatic captives being presented to the King.

Just as Akhenaten had adapted and transformed the religious thinking that was current in his time, the reaction to the religion of Amarna was influenced by the rejected doctrine. In the new doctrine, all gods were in essence three: Amon, Re, and Ptah (to whom Seth was later added), and in some ultimate sense they too were one. The earliest evidence of this triad is on a trumpet of Tutankhamun and is related to the naming of the three chief army divisions after these gods; religious life and secular life were not separate. This concentration on a small number of essential deities may possibly be related to the piety of the succeeding Ramesside period, because both viewed the cosmos as being thoroughly permeated with the divine.



Gold funerary mask of King Tutankhamun, Thebes, Egypt, 14th century bce; in the Grand Egyptian…

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© Lee Boltin



Headrest in the form of the god Shu with two crouching lions, from the tomb of Tutankhamun, 14th...

Photos.com/Thinkstock

Under Tutankhamun a considerable amount of building was accomplished in Thebes. His Luxor colonnade bears detailed reliefs of the traditional beautiful festival of Opet; he decorated another structure (now only a series of disconnected blocks) with warlike scenes. He affirmed his legitimacy by referring back to Amenhotep III, whom he called his father. Tutankhamun’s modern fame comes from the discovery of his rich burial in the Valley of the Kings. His tomb equipment was superior in quality to the fragments known from other royal burials, and the opulent display—of varying aesthetic value—represents Egyptian wealth at the peak of the country’s power.

Ay and Horemheb



King Tutankhamun's tomb (lower left) in the Valley of the Kings, Thebes, Egypt, 14th century bce.

© Robert Holmes

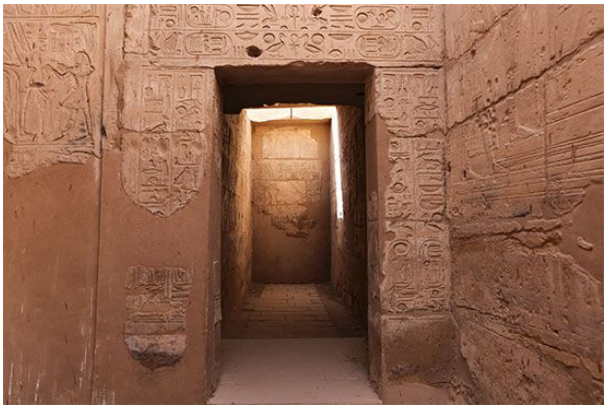
Tutankhamun’s funeral in about 1323 BCE was conducted by his successor, the aged Ay (ruled 1323–20 BCE), who in turn was succeeded by Horemheb. The latter probably ruled from c. 1319 to c. 1292 BCE, but the length of his poorly attested reign is not certain. Horemheb dismantled many monuments erected by Akhenaten and his successors and used the blocks as fill for huge pylons at Karnak. At Karnak and Luxor he appropriated Tutankhamun’s reliefs by surcharging the latter’s cartouches with his own. Horemheb appointed new officials and priests not from established families but from the army. His policies concentrated on domestic problems. He issued police regulations dealing with the misbehavior of palace officials and personnel, and he reformed the judicial system, reorganizing the courts and selecting new judges.

The Ramesside period (19th and 20th dynasties) (c. 1292–c. 1077 bce)

Horemheb was the first post-Amarna king to be considered legitimate in the 19th dynasty, which looked to him as the founder of an epoch. The reigns of the Amarna pharaohs were eventually to be subsumed into his own,

leaving no official record of what posterity deemed to be an unorthodox and distasteful interlude. Having no son, he selected his general and vizier, Ramses, to succeed him.

Ramses I and Seti I



Details in the hallway in the temple of Seti I, Thebes, Egypt, 13th century bce.

© EvrenKalinbacak/stock.adobe.com

Ramses I (ruled c. 1292–91 BCE) hailed from the eastern Nile River delta, and with the 19th dynasty there was a political shift into the delta. Ramses I was succeeded by his son and coregent, Seti I, who buried his father and provided him with mortuary buildings at Thebes and Abydos.

Seti I (ruled c. 1290–79 BCE) was a successful military leader who reasserted authority over Egypt's weakened empire in the Middle East. The Mitanni state had been dismembered, and the Hittites had become the dominant Asian power. Before tackling them, Seti laid the groundwork for military operations in Syria by fighting farther south against nomads and Palestinian city-states; then, following the strategy of Thutmose III, he secured the coastal cities and gained Kadesh. Although his engagement with the Hittites was successful, Egypt acquired only temporary control of part of the north Syrian plain. A treaty was concluded with the Hittites, who, however, subsequently pushed farther southward and regained Kadesh by the time of Ramses II. Seti I ended a new threat to Egyptian security when he defeated Libyans attempting to enter the delta. He also mounted a southern campaign, probably to the Fifth Cataract region.

Seti I's reign looked for its model to the mid-18th dynasty and was a time of considerable prosperity. Seti I restored countless monuments that had been defaced in the Amarna period, and the refined decoration of his monuments, particularly his temple at Abydos, shows a classicizing tendency. He also commissioned striking and novel reliefs showing stages of his campaigns, which are preserved notably on the north wall of the great hypostyle hall at Karnak. This diversity of artistic approach is characteristic of the Ramesside period, which was culturally and ethnically pluralistic.

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Ramses II



Detail of the face of the Colossus of Ramses II, Temple of Luxor, Thebes, Egypt, 13th century bce.

© Mypix/Dreamstime.com

Well before his death, Seti I appointed his son Ramses II, sometimes called Ramses the Great, as crown prince. During the long reign of Ramses II (c. 1279–13 BCE), there was a prodigious amount of building, ranging from religious edifices throughout Egypt and Nubia to a new cosmopolitan capital, Per Ramessu, in the eastern delta; his cartouches were carved ubiquitously, often on earlier monuments. Ramses II's penchant for decorating vast temple walls with battle scenes gives the impression of a mighty warrior king. His campaigns were, however, relatively few, and after the first decade his reign was peaceful. The most famous scenes record the battle of Kadesh, fought in his fifth regnal year. These and extensive accompanying texts present the battle as an Egyptian victory, but in fact the opposing Hittite coalition fared at least as well as the Egyptians. After this inconclusive struggle, his officers advised him to make peace, saying, "There is no reproach in reconciliation when you make it." In succeeding years Ramses II campaigned in Syria; after a decade of stalemate, a treaty in his 21st year was concluded with Hattusilis III, the Hittite king.

The rise of Assyria and unrest in western Anatolia encouraged the Hittites to accept this treaty, while Ramses II may have feared a new Libyan threat to the western delta. Egyptian and Hittite versions of the treaty survive. It contained a renunciation of further hostilities, a mutual alliance against outside attack and internal rebellion, and the extradition of fugitives. The gods of both lands were invoked as witnesses. The treaty was further cemented 13 years later by Ramses II's marriage to a Hittite princess.

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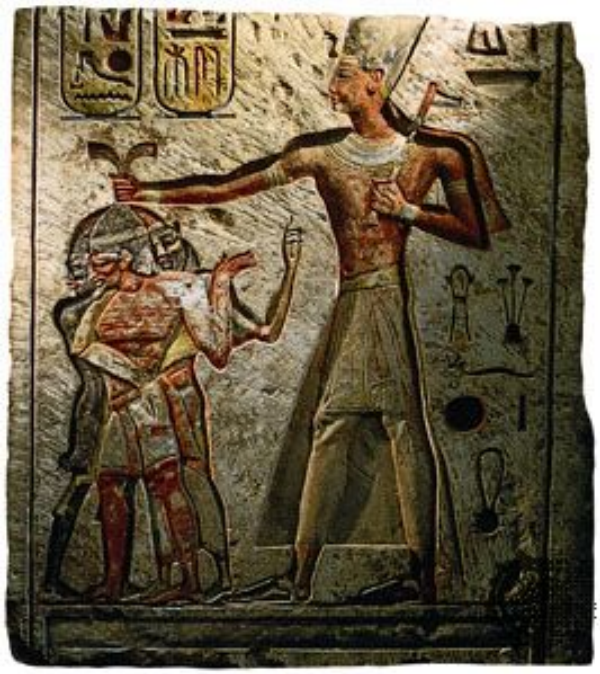


Queen Nefertari Playing Senet tempura on paper by Nina de Garis Davies, painted at the tomb…

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1930(accession no. 30.4.145); www.metmuseum.org

The king had an immense family by his numerous wives, among whom he especially honored Nefertari. He dedicated a temple to her at Abū Simbel, in Nubia, and built a magnificent tomb for her in the Valley of the Queens.

For the first time in more than a millennium, princes were prominently represented on the monuments. Ramses II’s fourth surviving son, Khaemwese, was famous as high priest of Ptah at Memphis. He restored many monuments in the Memphite area, including pyramids and pyramid temples of the Old Kingdom, and had buildings constructed near the Sarapeum at Ṣaqqārah. He was celebrated into Roman times as a sage and magician and became the hero of a cycle of stories.



A larger-than-life Ramses II towering over his prisoners and clutching them by the hair. Limestone…

Egyptian Museum, Cairo; photograph, O. Louis Mazzatenta/National Geographic Image Collection

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Merneptah

Ramses II’s 13th son, Merneptah (ruled c. 1213–03 BCE), was his successor. Several of Merneptah’s inscriptions, of unusual literary style, treat an invasion of the western delta in his fifth year by Libyans, supported by groups of Sea Peoples who had traveled from Anatolia to Libya in search of new homes. The Egyptians defeated this confederation and settled captives in military camps to serve as Egyptian mercenaries.

One of the inscriptions concludes with a poem of victory (written about another battle), famous for its words “Israel is desolated and has no seed.” This is the earliest documented mention of Israel; it is generally assumed that the exodus of the Jews from Egypt took place under Ramses II.

Merneptah was able to hold most of Egypt’s possessions, although early in his reign he had to reassert Egyptian suzerainty in Palestine, destroying Gezer in the process. Peaceful relations with the Hittites and respect for the treaty of Ramses II are indicated by Merneptah’s dispatch of grain to them during a famine and by Egyptian military aid in the protection of Hittite possessions in Syria.

Last years of the 19th dynasty

Upon the death of Merneptah, competing factions within the royal family contended for the succession. Merneptah’s son Seti II (ruled c. 1202–c. 1198 BCE) had to face a usurper, Amenmeses, who rebelled in Nubia and was accepted in Upper Egypt. His successor, Siptah, was installed on the throne by a Syrian royal butler, Bay, who had become chancellor of Egypt. Siptah was succeeded by Seti II’s widow Tausert, who ruled as king from c. 1192 to c. 1191 BCE and counted her regnal years from the death of Seti II, whose name she restored over that of Siptah. A description in a later papyrus of the end of the dynasty alludes to a Syrian usurper, probably Bay, who subjected the land to harsh taxation and treated the gods as mortals with no offerings in their temples.



Entrance to the temple of Abu Simbel, near Aswān, Egypt, 13th century bce.

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The early 20th dynasty: Setnakht and Ramses III

Order was restored by a man of obscure origin, Setnakht (ruled c. 1190–88 BCE), the founder of the 20th dynasty, who appropriated Tausert’s tomb in the Valley of the Kings. An inscription of Setnakht recounts his struggle to pacify the land, which ended in the second of his three regnal years.

Setnakht’s son Ramses III (ruled c. 1187–57 BCE) was the last great king of the New Kingdom. There are problems in evaluating his achievements because he emulated Ramses II and copied numerous scenes and texts of Ramses II in his mortuary temple at Madīnat Habu, one of the best-preserved temples of the empire period. Thus, the historicity of certain Nubian and Syrian wars depicted as his accomplishments is subject to doubt. He

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did, however, fight battles that were more decisive than any fought by Ramses II. In his fifth year Ramses III defeated a large-scale Libyan invasion of the delta in a battle in which thousands of the enemy perished.

A greater menace lay to the north, where a confederation of Sea Peoples was progressing by land and sea toward Egypt. This alliance of obscure tribes traveled south in the aftermath of the destruction of the Hittite empire. In his eighth regnal year Ramses III engaged them successfully on two frontiers—a land battle in Palestine and a naval engagement in one of the mouths of the delta. Because of these two victories, Egypt did not undergo the political turmoil or experience the rapid technical advance of the early Iron Age in the ancient Middle East. Forced away from the borders of Egypt, the Sea Peoples sailed farther westward, and some of their groups may have given their names to the Sicilians, Sardinians, and Etruscans. The Philistine and Tjekker peoples, who had come by land, were established in the southern Palestinian coastal district in an area where the overland trade route to Syria was threatened by attacks by nomads. Initially settled to protect Egyptian interests, these groups later became independent of Egypt. Ramses III used some of these peoples as mercenaries, even in battle against their own kinfolk. In his 11th year he successfully repulsed another great Libyan invasion by the Meshwesh tribes. Meshwesh prisoners of war, branded with the king’s name, were settled in military camps in Egypt, and in later centuries their descendants became politically important because of their ethnic cohesiveness and their military role.

The economic resources of Egypt were in decline at that time. Under Ramses III the estate of Amon received only one-fifth as much gold as in Thutmose III’s time. Even at the great temple of Madīnat Habu, the quality of the masonry betrays a decline. Toward the end of his reign, administrative inefficiency and the deteriorating economic situation resulted in the government’s failure to deliver grain rations on time to necropolis workers, whose dissatisfaction was expressed in demonstrations and in the first recorded strikes in history. Such demonstrations continued sporadically throughout the dynasty. A different sort of internal trouble originated in the royal harem, where a minor queen plotted unsuccessfully to murder Ramses III so that her son might become king. Involved in the plot were palace and harem personnel, government officials, and army officers. A special court of 12 judges was formed to try the accused, who received the death sentence.

Many literary works date to the Ramesside period. Earlier works in Middle Egyptian were copied in schools and in good papyrus copies, and new texts were composed in Late Egyptian. Notable among the latter are stories, several with mythological or allegorical content, that look to folk models rather than to the elaborate written literary types of the Middle Kingdom.

Ramses IV

Ramses III was succeeded by his son Ramses IV (ruled c. 1156–50 BCE). In an act of piety that also reinforced his legitimacy, Ramses IV saw to the compilation of a long papyrus in which the deceased Ramses III confirmed the temple holdings throughout Egypt; Ramses III had provided the largest benefactions to the Theban temples, in terms of donations of both land and personnel. Most of these probably endorsed earlier donations, to which each king added his own gifts. Of the annual income to temples, 86 percent of the silver and 62 percent of the grain was awarded to Amon. The document demonstrates the economic power of the Theban temples, for the tremendous landholdings of Amon’s estate throughout Egypt involved the labor of a considerable portion of the population; but the ratio of temple to state income is not known, and the two were not administratively separate. In addition, the temple of Amon, which figures prominently in the papyrus, included within its estates the king’s own mortuary temple, for Ramses III was himself deified as a form of Amon-Re, known as Imbued with Eternity.

The later Ramesside kings

The Ramesside period saw a tendency toward the formation of high-priestly families, which kings sometimes tried to counter by appointing outside men to the high priesthood. One such family had developed at Thebes in

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the second half of the 19th dynasty, and Ramses IV tried to control it by installing Ramessesnakht, the son of a royal steward, as Theban high priest. Ramessesnakht participated in administrative as well as priestly affairs; he personally led an expedition to the Wadi Ḥammāmāt (present-day Wādī Rawḍ ʿĀʾid) quarries in the Eastern Desert, and at Thebes he supervised the distribution of rations to the workmen decorating the royal tomb. Under Ramses V (ruled c. 1149–46 BCE), Ramessesnakht's son not only served as steward of Amon but also held the post of administrator of royal lands and chief taxing master. Thus, this family acquired extensive authority over the wealth of Amon and over state finances, but to what extent this threatened royal authority is uncertain. Part of the problem in evaluating the evidence is that Ramesside history is viewed from a Theban bias, because Thebes is the major source of information. Evidence from Lower Egypt, where the king normally resided, is meager because conditions there were unfavorable for preserving monuments or papyri.

A long papyrus from the reign of Ramses V contains valuable information on the ownership of land and taxation. In Ramesside Egypt most of the land belonged to the state and the temples, while most peasants served as tenant farmers. Some scholars interpret this document as indicating that the state retained its right to tax temple property, at an estimated one-tenth of the crop.

Ramses VI (ruled c. 1145–39 BCE), probably a son of Ramses III, usurped much of his two predecessors' work, including the tomb of Ramses V; a papyrus refers to a possible civil war at Thebes. Following the death of Ramses III and the disrupted migrations of the late Bronze Age, the Asian empire had rapidly withered away, and Ramses VI is the last king whose name appears at the Sinai turquoise mines. The next two Ramses (ruled c. 1138–30 BCE) were obscure rulers, whose sequence has been questioned. During the reigns of Ramses IX (ruled c. 1129–11 BCE) and Ramses X (c. 1110–07 BCE), there are frequent references in the papyri to the disruptions of marauding Libyans near the Theban necropolis.

By the time of Ramses IX the Theban high priest had attained great local influence, though he was still outranked by the king. By Ramses XI's 19th regnal year the new high priest of Amon, Herihor—who seems to have had a military background and also claimed the vizierate and the office of viceroy of Kush—controlled the Theban area. In reliefs at the temple of Khons at Karnak, Herihor was represented as high priest of Amon in scenes adjoining those of Ramses XI. This in itself was unusual, but subsequently he took an even bolder step in having himself depicted as king to the exclusion of the still-reigning Ramses XI. Herihor's limited kingship was restricted only to Thebes, where those years were referred to as a "repeating of [royal] manifestations," which lasted a decade.

With the shrinkage of the empire, the supply of silver and copper was cut off, and the amount of gold entering the economy was reduced considerably. During the reign of Ramses IX the inhabitants of western Thebes were found to have pillaged the tombs of kings and nobles (already a common practice in the latter case); the despoiling continued into the reign of Ramses XI, and even the royal mortuary temples were stripped of their valuable furnishings. Nubian troops, called in to restore order at Thebes, themselves contributed to the depredation of monuments. This pillaging brought fresh gold and silver into the economy, and the price of copper rose. The price of grain, which had become inflated, dropped.

The Ramesside growth of priestly power was matched by increasingly overt religiosity. Private tombs, the decoration of which had been mostly secular until then, came to include only religious scenes; oracles were invoked in many kinds of decisions; and private letters contain frequent references to prayer and to regular visits to small temples to perform rituals or consult oracles. The common expression used in letters, "I am all right today; tomorrow is in the hands of god," reflects the ethos of the age. This fatalism, which emphasizes that

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the god may be capricious and that his wishes cannot be known, is also typical of late New Kingdom Instruction Texts, which show a marked change from their Middle Kingdom forerunners by moving toward a passivity and quietism that suits a less expensive age.

Some of the religious material of the Ramesside period exhibits changes in conventions of display, and some categories have no parallel in the less abundant earlier record, but the shift is real as well as apparent. In its later periods, Egyptian society, the values of which had previously tended to be centralized, secular, and political, became more locally based and more thoroughly pervaded by religion, looking to the temple as the chief institution.

While Ramses XI was still king, Herihor died and was succeeded as high priest by Piankh, a man of similar military background. A series of letters from Thebes tell of Piankh’s military venture in Nubia against the former viceroy of Kush while Egypt was on the verge of losing control of the south. With the death of Ramses XI, the governor of Tanis, Smendes, became king, founding the 21st dynasty (known as the Tanite).

Egypt from 1076 bce to the Macedonian invasion

The Third Intermediate period (c. 1076–723 bce)

The 21st dynasty

At the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt was divided. The north was inherited by the Tanite 21st dynasty (c. 1076–c. 944 BCE), and although much of the southern Nile River valley came under the control of the Theban priests (the northern frontier of their domain was the fortress town of Al-Hība), there is no indication of conflict between the priests and the Tanite kings. Indeed, the dating of documents, even at Thebes, was in terms of the Tanite reigns, and apparently there were close family ties between the kings and the Thebans. Piankh’s son, Pinudjem I, who relinquished the office of high priest and assumed the kingship at Thebes, was probably the father of the Tanite king Psusennes I. Some members of both the Theban priestly and the Tanite royal lines had Libyan names. With the coming of the new dynasty, and possibly a little earlier, the Meshwesh Libyan military elite, which had been settled mainly in the north by Ramses III, penetrated the ruling group, although it did not become dominant until the 22nd dynasty.



Face from an Egyptian coffin, wood, gesso, and pigment, probably from Thebes, c. 1070–945 bce; in...

Photograph by Lisa O'Hara. Brooklyn Museum, New York, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.2037E

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Beginning with Herihor and continuing through the 21st dynasty, the high priests' activities included the pious rewrapping and reburial of New Kingdom royal mummies. The systematic removal of such goods from the royal tombs by royal order during the 20th dynasty necessitated the transfer of the royal remains in stages to two caches—the tomb of Amenhotep II and a cliff tomb at Dayr al-Baḥrī—where they remained undisturbed until modern times. Dockets pertaining to the reburial of these mummies contain important chronological data from the 21st dynasty.

The burials of King Psusennes I (ruled c. 1051–06BCE) and his eventual successor, Amenemope (ruled c.1002–c. 993 BCE), were discovered at Tanis, but little is known of their reigns. This was a period when statuary was usurped and the material of earlier periods was reused. At Karnak, Pinudjem I, who decorated the facade of the Khons temple, usurped a colossal statue of Ramses II, and Psusennes I's splendid sarcophagus from Tanis had originally been carved for Merneptah at Thebes. Much of the remains from Tanis consists of material transported from other sites, notably from Per Ramessu.

After the demise of Egypt's Asian empire, the kingdom of Israel eventually developed under the kings David and Solomon. During David's reign, Philistia served as a buffer between Egypt and Israel; but after David's death the next to the last king of the 21st dynasty, Siamon, invaded Philistia and captured Gezer. If Egypt had any intention of attacking Israel, Solomon's power forestalled Siamon, who presented Gezer to Israel as a dowry in the diplomatic marriage of his daughter to Solomon. This is indicative of the reversal of Egypt's status in foreign affairs since the time of Amenhotep III, who had written the Babylonian king, "From of old, a daughter of the king of Egypt has not been given to anyone."

Libyan rule: the 22nd and 23rd dynasties

The fifth king of the 21st dynasty, Osorkon I (ruled c. 992–c. 987 BCE), was of Libyan descent and probably was an ancestor of the 22nd dynasty, which followed a generation later. From Osorkon's time to the 26th dynasty, leading Libyans in Egypt kept their Libyan names and ethnic identity, but in a spirit of ethnicity rather than cultural separatism. Although political institutions were different from those of the New Kingdom, the Libyans were culturally Egyptian, retaining only their group identity, names, and perhaps a military ethos. Toward the end of the 21st dynasty the Libyan leader of Bubastis, the great Meshwesh chief Sheshonk I (the biblical Shishak), secured special privileges from King Psusennes II (ruled c. 967–c. 944 BCE) and the oracle of Amon for the mortuary cult of his father at Abydos. The oracle proffered good wishes not only for Sheshonk and his family but, significantly, also for his army. With a strong military backing, Sheshonk eventually took the throne. His reign (c. 943–c. 923 BCE) marks the founding of the 22nd dynasty (c. 943–c. 746BCE). Military controls were established, with garrisons under Libyan commandants serving to quell local insurrections, so that the structure of the state became more feudalistic. The dynasty tried to cement relations with Thebes through political marriages with priestly families. King Sheshonk's son Osorkon married Psusennes II's daughter, and their son eventually became high priest at Karnak. By installing their sons as high priests and promoting such marriages, kings strove to overcome the administrative division of the country. But frequent conflicts arose over the direct appointment of the Theban high priest from among the sons of Libyan kings and over the inheritance of the post by men of mixed Theban and Libyan descent. This tension took place against a background of Theban resentment of the northern dynasty. During the reign of Takelot II, strife concerning the high priestship led to civil war at Thebes. The king's son Osorkon was appointed high priest, and he achieved some semblance of order during his visits to Thebes, but he was driven from the post several times.

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The initially successful 22nd dynasty revived Egyptian influence in Palestine. After Solomon’s death (c. 936), Sheshonk I entered Palestine and plundered Jerusalem. Prestige from this exploit may have lasted through the reign of Osorkon II (ruled c. 872–c. 842 BCE). In the reign of Osorkon III (c.780BCE), Peywed Libyans posed a threat to the western delta, perhaps necessitating a withdrawal from Palestine.

The latter part of the dynasty was marked by fragmentation of the land: Libyan great chiefs ruled numerous local areas, and there were as many as six local rulers in the land at a time. Increased urbanization accompanied this fragmentation, which was most intense in the delta. Meanwhile, in Thebes, a separate 23rd dynasty was recognized.

From the 9th century BCE a local Kushite state, which looked to Egyptian traditions from the colonial period of the New Kingdom, arose in the Sudan and developed around the old regional capital of Napata. The earliest ruler of the state known by name was Alara, whose piety toward Amon is mentioned in several inscriptions. His successor, Kashta, proceeded into Upper Egypt, forcing Osorkon IV (ruled c. 730BCE) to retire to the delta. Kashta assumed the title of king and compelled Osorkon IV’s daughter Shepenwepe I, the God’s Wife of Amon at Thebes, to adopt his own daughter Amonirdis I as her successor. The Kushites stressed the role of the God’s Wife of Amon, who was virtually the consecrated partner of Amon, and sought to bypass the high priests.

The 24th and 25th dynasties

Meanwhile, the eastern capital in the Nile River delta, Tanis, lost its importance to Sais in the western delta. A Libyan prince of Sais, Tefnakhte, attempting to gain control over all Egypt, proceeded southward to Heracleopolis after acquiring Memphis. This advance was met by the Kushite ruler Piye (now the accepted reading of “Piankhi,” ruled c. 753–c. 723 BCE), who executed a raid as far north as Memphis and received the submission of the northern rulers (in about 730 BCE). In his victory stela, Piye is portrayed as conforming strictly to Egyptian norms and reasserting traditional values against contemporary decay.

After Piye returned to Kush, Tefnakhte reasserted his authority in the north, where, according to Manetho, he was eventually succeeded by his son Bocchoris as the sole king of the 24th dynasty (c. 736–c. 723 BCE). Piye’s brother Shabaka meanwhile founded the rival 25th dynasty and brought all Egypt under his rule (c. 722–c. 707 BCE). He had Bocchoris burned alive and removed all other claimants to the kingship.

In this period Egypt’s internal politics were affected by the growth of the Assyrian Empire. In Palestine and Syria frequent revolts against Assyria were aided by Egyptian forces. Against the power of Assyria, the Egyptian and Nubian forces met with little success, partly because of their own fragmented politics and divided loyalties.

Although the earlier years of King Taharqa (ruled 690–664 BCE), who as second son of Shabaka had succeeded his brother Shebitku (ruled c. 706–c. 690 BCE), were prosperous, the confrontation with Assyria became acute. In 671 BCE the Assyrian king Esarhaddon entered Egypt and drove Taharqa into Upper Egypt. Two years later Taharqa regained a battered Memphis, but in 667 BCE Esarhaddon’s successor, Ashurbanipal, forced Taharqa to Thebes, where the Kushites held ground. Taharqa’s successor, Tanutamon, defeated at Memphis a coalition of delta princes who supported Assyria, but Ashurbanipal’s reaction to this was to humiliate Thebes, which the Assyrians plundered. By 656 the Kushites had withdrawn from the Egyptian political scene, although Kushite culture survived in the Sudanese Napatan and Meroitic kingdom for another millennium.

The Late period (664–332 bce)

Assyria, unable to maintain a large force in Egypt, supported several delta vassal princes, including the powerful Psamtik I of Sais. But the Assyrians faced serious problems closer to home, and Psamtik (or Psammetichus I,

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ruled 664–610 BCE) was able to assert his independence and extend his authority as king over all Egypt without extensive use of arms, inaugurating the Saite 26th dynasty. In 656 Psamtik I compelled Thebes to submit. He allowed its most powerful man, who was Montemhat, the mayor and the fourth prophet of Amon, to retain his post, and, in order to accommodate pro-Kushite sentiments, he allowed the God's Wife of Amon and the Votaress of Amon (the sister and daughter of the late king Taharqa) to remain. Psamtik I's own daughter Nitocris was adopted by the Votaress of Amon and thus became heiress to the position of God's Wife. Essential to the settling of internal conflicts was the Saite dynasty's superior army, composed of Libyan soldiers, whom the Greeks called Machimoi ("Warriors"), and Greek and Carian mercenaries, who formed part of the great emigration from the Aegean in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. Greek pirates raiding the Nile delta coast were induced by Psamtik I to serve in his army and were settled like the Machimoi in colonies at the delta's strategically important northeastern border. Trade developed between Egypt and Greece, and more Greeks settled in Egypt.

The Saite dynasty generally pursued a foreign policy that avoided territorial expansion and tried to preserve the status quo. Assyria's power was waning. In 655 BCE Psamtik I marched into Philistia in pursuit of the Assyrians, and in 620 BCE he apparently repulsed Scythians from the Egyptian frontier. During the reign of his son Necho II (610–595 BCE), Egypt supported Assyria as a buffer against the potential threat of the Medes and the Babylonians. Necho was successful in Palestine and Syria until 605 BCE, when the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar inflicted a severe defeat on Egyptian forces at Carchemish. After withdrawing his troops from Asia, Necho concentrated on developing Egyptian commerce; the grain that was delivered to Greece was paid for in silver. He also built up the navy and began a canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea. Under Psamtik II (ruled 595–589 BCE) there was a campaign through the Napatan kingdom involving the use of Greek and Carian mercenaries who left their inscriptions at Abu Simbel; at the same time, the names of the long-dead Kushite rulers were erased from their monuments in Egypt. Psamtik II also made an expedition to Phoenicia accompanied by priests; whether it was a military or a goodwill mission is unknown.

The next king, Apries (ruled 589–570 BCE), tried unsuccessfully to end Babylonian domination of Palestine and Syria. With the withdrawal of Egyptian forces, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE. In the aftermath of his conquest, many Jews fled to Egypt, where some were enlisted as soldiers in the Persian army of occupation. Apries' army was then defeated in Libya when it attacked the Greek colony at Cyrene, some 620 miles (1,000 km) west of the Nile delta; this led to an army mutiny and to civil war in the delta. A new Saite king, Amasis (or Ahmose II; ruled 570–526 BCE), usurped the throne and drove Apries into exile. Two years later Apries invaded Egypt with Babylonian support, but he was defeated and killed by Amasis, who nonetheless buried him with full honors. Amasis returned to a more conservative foreign policy in a long, prosperous reign. To reduce friction between Greeks and Egyptians, especially in the army, Amasis withdrew the Greeks from the military colonies and transferred them to Memphis, where they formed a sort of royal bodyguard. He limited Greek trade in Egypt to Sais, Memphis, and Naukratis, the latter becoming the only port to which Greek wares could be taken, so that taxes on imports and on business could be enforced. Naukratis prospered, and Amasis was seen by the Greeks as a benefactor. In foreign policy he supported a waning Babylonia, now threatened by Persia; but six months after his death in 526 BCE the Persian king Cambyses II (ruled as pharaoh 525–522 BCE) penetrated Egypt, reaching Nubia in 525.

As was common in the Middle East in that period, the Saite kings used foreigners as mercenaries to prevent foreign invasions. An element within Egyptian culture, however, resisted any influence of the resident foreigners and gave rise to a nationalism that provided psychological security in times of political uncertainty. A cultural revival was initiated in the 25th dynasty and continued throughout the 26th. Temples and the priesthood were overtly dominant. In their inscriptions the elite displayed their priestly titles but did not mention the

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administrative roles that they probably also performed. Throughout the country, people of substance dedicated land to temple endowments that supplemented royal donations. The god Seth, who had been an antithetic element in Egyptian religion, came gradually to be proscribed as the god of foreign lands.



Feline on falcon heads, limestone relief from Egypt, 664–630 bce; in the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Photograph by Stephen Sandoval. Brooklyn Museum, New York, gift of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, 80.7.7

The revival of this period was both economic and cultural, but there is less archaeological evidence preserved than for earlier times because the economic center of the country was now the delta, where conditions for the preservation of ancient sites were unfavorable. Prosperity increased throughout the 26th dynasty, reaching a high point in the reign of Amasis. Temples throughout the land were enhanced and expanded, often in hard stones carved with great skill. The chief memorials of private individuals were often temple statues, of which many fine examples were dedicated, again mostly in hard stones. In temple and tomb decoration and in statuary, the Late period rejected its immediate predecessors and looked to the great periods of the past for models. There was, however, also significant innovation. In writing, the demotic script, the new cursive form, was introduced from the north and spread gradually through the country. Demotic was used to write a contemporary form of the language, and administrative Late Egyptian disappeared. Hieratic was, however, retained for literary and religious texts, among which very ancient material, such as the Pyramid Texts, was revived and inscribed in tombs and on coffins and sarcophagi.

The Late period was the time of the greatest development of animal worship in Egypt. This feature of religion, which was the subject of much interest and scorn among classical writers, had always existed but had been of minor importance. In the Late and Ptolemaic periods, it became one of the principal forms of popular religion in an intensely religious society. Many species of animals were mummified and buried, and towns sprang up in the necropolises to cater for the needs of dead animals and their worshipers. At Ṣaqqārah the Apis bull, which had been worshiped since the 1st dynasty, was buried in a huge granite sarcophagus in ceremonies in which royalty might take part. At least 10 species—from ibises, buried by the million, to dogs—were interred by the heterogeneous population of Memphis, Egypt’s largest city.

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Egypt under Achaemenid rule

The 27th dynasty



Egypt as part of Persian Empire, 6th–5th century bce.

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According to the Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt in about 450 BCE, Cambyses II's conquest of Egypt was ruthless and sacrilegious. Contemporary Egyptian sources, however, treat him in a more favorable light. He assumed the full titulary of an Egyptian king and paid honor to the goddess Neith of Sais. His unfavorable later reputation probably resulted from adverse propaganda by Egyptian priests, who resented his reduction of temple income. Darius I, who succeeded Cambyses in 522 BCE and ruled as pharaoh until 486 BCE, was held in higher esteem because he was concerned with improving the temples and restored part of their income, and because he codified laws as they had been in the time of Amasis. These stances, which aimed to win over priests and learned Egyptians, were elements of his strategy to retain Egypt as a lasting part of the Persian Empire. Egypt, together with the Libyan oases and Cyrenaica, formed the sixth Persian satrapy (province), whose satrap resided at Memphis, while Persian governors under him held posts in cities throughout the land. Under Darius I the tax burden upon Egyptians was relatively light, and Persians aided Egypt's economy through irrigation projects and improved commerce, enhanced by the completion of the canal to the Red Sea.

The Persian defeat by the Athenians at Marathon in 490 BCE had significant repercussions in Egypt. On Darius I's death in 486 BCE, a revolt broke out in the delta, perhaps instigated by Libyans of its western region. The result was that the Persian king Xerxes reduced Egypt to the status of a conquered province. Egyptians dubbed him the "criminal Xerxes." He never visited Egypt and appears not to have utilized Egyptians in high positions in the administration. Xerxes' murder in 465 BCE was the signal for another revolt in the western delta. It was led by a dynast, Inaros, who acquired control over the delta and was supported by Athenian forces against the Persians. Inaros was crucified by the Persians in 454 BCE, when they regained control of most of the delta. In the later 5th century BCE, under the rule of Artaxerxes I (ruled 465–424 BCE) and Darius II Ochus (ruled 423–404 BCE), conditions in Egypt were very unsettled, and scarcely any monuments of the period have been identified.

The 28th, 29th, and 30th dynasties

The death of Darius II in 404 BCE prompted a successful rebellion in the Nile delta, and the Egyptian Amyrtaeus formed a Saite 28th dynasty, of which he was the sole king (404–399 BCE). His rule was recognized in Upper Egypt by 401 BCE, at a time when Persia's troubles elsewhere forestalled an attempt to regain Egypt.

Despite growing prosperity and success in retaining independence, 4th-century Egypt was characterized by continual internal struggle for the throne. After a long period of fighting in the delta, a 29th dynasty (399–380 BCE) emerged at Mendes. Achoris (ruled 393–380 BCE), its third ruler, was especially vigorous, and the prosperity of his reign is indicated by many monuments in Upper and Lower Egypt. Once again Egypt was active in

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international politics, forming alliances with the opponents of Persia and building up its army and navy. The Egyptian army included Greeks both as mercenaries and as commanders; the mercenaries were not permanent residents of military camps in Egypt but native Greeks seeking payment for their services in gold. Payment was normally made in non-Egyptian coins, because as yet Egypt had no coinage in general circulation; the foreign coins may have been acquired in exchange for exports of grain, papyrus, and linen. Some Egyptian coins were minted in the 4th century, but they do not seem to have gained widespread acceptance.

Aided by the Greek commander Chabrias of Athens and his elite troops, Achoris prevented a Persian invasion; but after Achoris's death in 380 BCE his son Nepherites II lasted only four months before a general, Nectanebo I (Nekhtnebef; ruled 380–362 BCE) of Sebennytos, usurped the throne, founding the 30th dynasty (380–343 BCE). In 373 BCE the Persians attacked Egypt, and, although Egyptian losses were heavy, disagreement between the Persian satrap Pharnabazus and his Greek commander over strategy, combined with a timely inundation of the delta, saved the day for Egypt. With the latent dissolution of the Persian Empire under the weak Artaxerxes II, Egypt was relatively safe from further invasion; it remained prosperous throughout the dynasty.

Egypt had a more aggressive foreign policy under Nectanebo's son Tachos (ruled 365–360 BCE). Possessing a strong army and navy composed of Egyptian Machimoi and Greek mercenaries and supported by Chabrias and the Spartan king Agesilaus, Tachos (in Egyptian called Djeho) invaded Palestine. But friction between Tachos and Agesilaus and the cost of financing the venture proved to be Tachos's undoing. In an attempt to raise funds quickly, he had imposed taxes and seized temple property. Egyptians, especially the priests, resented this burden and supported Tachos's nephew Nectanebo II (Nekhtharehbe; ruled 360–343 BCE) in his usurpation of the throne. The cost of retaining the allegiance of mercenaries proved too high for a nonmonetary economy.

Agesilaus supported Nectanebo in his defensive foreign policy, and the priests sanctioned the new king's building activities. Meanwhile, Persia enjoyed a resurgence under Artaxerxes III (Ochus), but a Persian attack on Egypt in 350 BCE was repulsed. In 343 BCE the Persians once again marched against Egypt. The first battle was fought at Pelusium and proved the superiority of Persia's strategy. Eventually the whole delta, and then the rest of Egypt, fell to Artaxerxes III, and Nectanebo fled to Nubia.

The 4th century BCE was the last flourishing period of an independent Egypt and was a time of notable artistic and literary achievements. The 26th dynasty artistic revival evolved further toward more-complex forms that culminated briefly in a Greco-Egyptian stylistic fusion, as seen in the tomb of Petosiris at Tūnah al-Jabal from the turn of the 3rd century BCE. In literature works continued to be transmitted, and possibly composed, in hieratic, but that tradition was to develop no further. Demotic literary works began to appear, including stories set in the distant past, mythological tales, and an acrostic text apparently designed to teach an order of sounds in the Egyptian language.

The second Persian period

Artaxerxes III dealt harshly with Egypt, razing city walls, rifling temple treasuries, and removing sacred books. Persia acquired rich booty in its determination to prevent Egypt from further rebelling. After the murder of Artaxerxes III, in 338 BCE, there was a brief obscure period during which a Nubian prince, Khabbash, seems to have gained control over Egypt, but Persian domination was reestablished in 335 BCE under Darius III Codommanus. It was to last only three years.

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Macedonian and Ptolemaic Egypt (332–30 bce)

The Macedonian conquest

In the autumn of 332 BCEAlexander the Great invaded Egypt with his mixed army of Macedonians and Greeks and found the Egyptians ready to throw off the oppressive control of the Persians. Alexander was welcomed by the Egyptians as a liberator and took the country without a battle. He journeyed to Siwa Oasis in the Western Desert to visit the Oracle of Amon, renowned in the Greek world; it disclosed the information that Alexander was the son of Amon. There may also have been a coronation at the Egyptian capital, Memphis, which, if it occurred, would have placed him firmly in the tradition of the kings (pharaohs). The same purpose may be seen in the later dissemination of the romantic myth that gave him an Egyptian parentage by linking his mother, Olympias, with the last king, Nectanebo II.

Alexander left Egypt in the spring of 331 BCE, having divided the military command between Balacrus, son of Amyntas, and Peucestas, son of Makartatos. The earliest known Greek documentary papyrus, found at Ṣaqqārah in 1973, reveals the sensitivity of the latter to Egyptian religious institutions in a notice that reads: “Order of Peucestas. No one is to pass. The chamber is that of a priest.” The civil administration was headed by an official with the Persian title of satrap, one Cleomenes of Naukratis. When Alexander died in 323 BCE and his generals divided his empire, the position of satrap was claimed by Ptolemy, son of a Macedonian nobleman named Lagus. The senior general Perdiccas, the holder of Alexander’s royal seal and prospective regent for Alexander’s posthumous son, might well have regretted his failure to take Egypt. He gathered an army and marched from Asia Minor to wrest Egypt from Ptolemy in 321 BCE; but Ptolemy had Alexander’s corpse, Perdiccas’s army was not wholehearted in support, and the Nile crocodiles made a good meal from the flesh of the invaders.

The Ptolemaic dynasty



A silver tetradrachm coin with image of the first Ptolemaic king, Alexandria, Egypt, 3rd century…

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

Until the day when he openly assumed an independent kingship as Ptolemy I Soter, on November 7, 305 BCE, Ptolemy used only the title satrap of Egypt, but the great hieroglyphic Satrap stela, which he had inscribed in 311 BCE, indicates a degree of self-confidence that transcends his viceregal role. It reads, “I, Ptolemy the satrap, I restore to Horus, the avenger of his father, the lord of Pe, and to Buto, the lady of Pe and Dep, the territory of

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Patanut, from this day forth for ever, with all its villages, all its towns, all its inhabitants, all its fields.” The inscription emphasizes Ptolemy’s own role in wresting the land from the Persians (though the epithet of Soter, meaning “Savior,” resulted not from his actions in Egypt but from the gratitude of the people of Rhodes for his having relieved them from a siege in 315 BCE) and links him with Khabbash, who in about 338 BCE had laid claim to the kingship during the last Persian occupation.

Egypt was ruled by Ptolemy’s descendants until the death of Cleopatra VII on August 12, 30 BCE. The kingdom was one of several that emerged in the aftermath of Alexander’s death and the struggles of his successors. It was the wealthiest, however, and for much of the next 300 years the most powerful politically and culturally, and it was the last to fall directly under Roman dominion. In many respects, the character of the Ptolemaic monarchy in Egypt set a style for other Hellenistic kingdoms; this style emerged from the Greeks’ and Macedonians’ awareness of the need to dominate Egypt, its resources, and its people and at the same time to turn the power of Egypt firmly toward the context of a Mediterranean world that was becoming steadily more Hellenized.

The Ptolemies (305–145 bce)



Egypt as part of the Hellenistic world, c. 188 bce.

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The first 160 years of the Ptolemaic dynasty are conventionally seen as its most prosperous era. Little is known of the foundations laid in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter (305–282 BCE), but the increasing amount of documentary, inscriptional, and archaeological evidence from the reign of his son and successor, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BCE), shows that the kingdom’s administration and economy underwent a thorough reorganization. A remarkable demotic text of the year 258 BCE refers to orders for a complete census of the kingdom that was to record the sources of water; the position, quality, and irrigation potential of the land; the state of cultivation; the crops grown; and the extent of priestly and royal landholdings. There were important agricultural innovations in this period. New crops were introduced, and massive irrigation works brought under cultivation a great deal of new land, especially in Al-Fayyūm, where many of the immigrant Greeks were settled.

The Macedonian-Greek character of the monarchy was vigorously preserved. There is no more emphatic sign of this than the growth and importance of the city of Alexandria. It had been founded, on a date traditionally given as April 7, 331 BCE (but often cited as 332 BCE), by Alexander the Great on the site of the insignificant Egyptian village of Rakotis in the northwestern Nile River delta, and it ranked as the most important city in the eastern Mediterranean until the foundation of Constantinople in the 4th century CE. The importance of the new Greek city was soon emphasized by contrast to its Egyptian surroundings when the royal capital was transferred, within a few years of Alexander’s death, from Memphis to Alexandria. The Ptolemaic court cultivated extravagant luxury in the Greek style in its magnificent and steadily expanding palace complex, which occupied as much as a third of the city by the early Roman period. Its grandeur was emphasized in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus

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by the foundation of a quadrennial festival, the Ptolemaieia, which was intended to enjoy a status equal to that of the Olympic Games. The festival was marked by a procession of amazingly elaborate and ingeniously constructed floats, with scenarios illustrating Greek religious cults.

Ptolemy II gave the dynasty another distinctive feature when he married his full sister, Arsinoe II, one of the most powerful and remarkable women of the Hellenistic age. They became, in effect, co-rulers, and both took the epithet Philadelphus (“Brother-Loving” and “Sister-Loving”). The practice of consanguineous marriage was followed by most of their successors and imitated by ordinary Egyptians too, even though it had not been a standard practice in the pharaonic royal houses and had been unknown in the rest of the native Egyptian population. Arsinoe played a prominent role in the formation of royal policy. She was displayed on the coinage and was eventually worshiped, perhaps even before her death, in the distinctively Greek style of ruler cult that developed in this reign.

From the first phase of the wars of Alexander’s successors, the Ptolemies had harbored imperial ambitions. Ptolemy I won control of Cyprus and Cyrene and quarreled with his neighbor over control of Palestine. In the course of the 3rd century a powerful Ptolemaic empire developed, which for much of the period laid claim to sovereignty in the Levant, in many of the cities of the western and southern coast of Asia Minor, in some of the Aegean islands, and in a handful of towns in Thrace, as well as in Cyprus and Cyrene. Family connections and dynastic alliances, especially between the Ptolemies and the neighboring Seleucids, played an important role in these imperialistic ambitions. Such links were far from able to preserve harmony between the royal houses (between 274 and 200 BCE five wars were fought with the Seleucids over possession of territory in Syria and the Levant), but they did keep the ruling houses relatively compact, interconnected, and more true to their Macedonian-Greek origins.

When Ptolemy II Philadelphus died in 246 BCE, he left a prosperous kingdom to his successor, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BCE). Euergetes’ reign saw a very successful campaign against the Seleucids in Syria, occasioned by the murder of his sister, Berenice, who had been married to the Seleucid Antiochus II. To avenge Berenice, Euergetes marched into Syria, where he won a great victory. He gained popularity at home by recapturing statues of Egyptian gods originally taken by the Persians. The decree promulgated at Canopus in the delta on March 7, 238 BCE, attests both this event and the many great benefactions conferred on Egyptian temples throughout the land. It was during Euergetes’ reign, for instance, that the rebuilding of the great Temple of Horus at Idfū (Apollinopolis Magna) was begun.

Euergetes was succeeded by his son Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–205 BCE), whom the Greek historians portray as a weak and corrupt ruler, dominated by a powerful circle of Alexandrian Greek courtiers. The reign was notable for another serious conflict with the Seleucids, which ended in 217 BCE in a great Ptolemaic victory at Raphia in southern Palestine. The battle is notable for the fact that large numbers of native Egyptian soldiers fought alongside the Macedonian and Greek contingents. Events surrounding the death of Philopator and the succession of the youthful Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205–180 BCE) are obscured by court intrigue. Before Epiphanes had completed his first decade of rule, serious difficulties arose. Native revolts in the south, which had been sporadic in the second half of the 3rd century BCE, became serious and weakened the hold of the monarch on a vital part of the kingdom. These revolts, which produced native claimants to the kingship, are generally attributed to the native Egyptians’ realization, after their contribution to the victory at Raphia, of their potential power. Trouble continued to break out for several more decades. By about 196 BCE a great portion of the Ptolemaic overseas empire had been permanently lost (though there may have been a brief revival in the Aegean islands in about 165–145 BCE). To shore up and advertise the strength of the ruling house at home and abroad, the administration adopted a series of grandiloquent honorific titles for its officers. To conciliate Egyptian feelings, a religious synod that met in 196 BCE to crown Epiphanes at Memphis (the first occasion on

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which a Ptolemy is certainly known to have been crowned at the traditional capital) decreed extensive privileges for the Egyptian temples, as recorded on the Rosetta Stone.

The reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 BCE), a man of pious and magnanimous character, was marked by renewed conflict with the Seleucids after the death of his mother, Cleopatra I, in 176 BCE. In 170/169 BCE Antiochus IV of Syria invaded Egypt and established a protectorate; in 168 BCE he returned, accepted coronation at Memphis, and installed a Seleucid governor. But he had failed to reckon with the more powerful interests of Rome. In the summer of 168 BCE a Roman ambassador, Popillius Laenas, arrived at Antiochus's headquarters near Pelusium in the delta and staged an awesome display of Roman power. He ordered Antiochus to withdraw from Egypt. Antiochus asked for time to consult his advisers. Laenas drew a circle around the king with his stick and told him to answer before he stepped out of the circle. Only one answer was possible, and by the end of July Antiochus had left Egypt. Philometor's reign was further troubled by rivalry with his brother, later Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon. The solution, devised under Roman advice, was to remove Physcon to Cyrene, where he remained until Philometor died in 145 BCE. It is noteworthy that in 155 BCE Physcon took the step of bequeathing the kingdom of Cyrene to the Romans in the event of his untimely death.

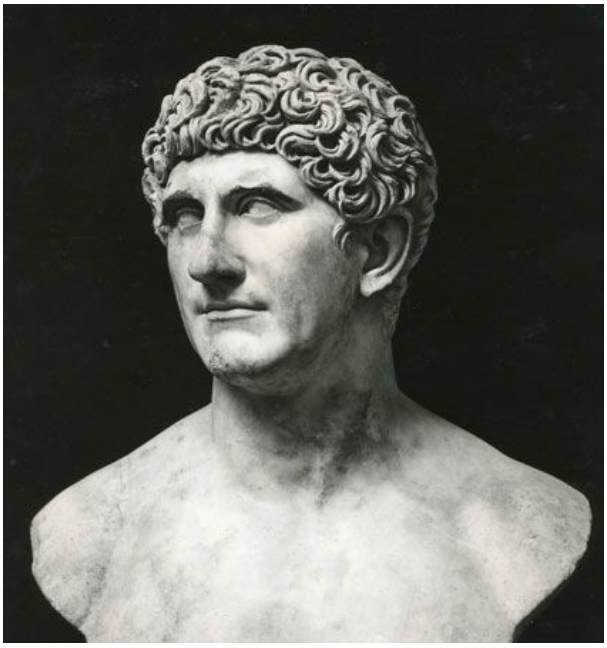
Dynastic strife and decline (145–30 bce)

Physcon was able to rule in Egypt until 116 BCE with his sister Cleopatra II (except for a period in 130–124 BCE when she was in revolt) and her daughter Cleopatra III. His reign was marked by generous benefactions to the Egyptian temples, but he was detested as a tyrant by the Greeks, and the historical accounts of the reign emphasize his stormy relations with the Alexandrian populace.

During the last century of Ptolemaic rule, Egypt's independence was exercised under Rome's protection and at Rome's discretion. For much of the period, Rome was content to support a dynasty that had no overseas possession except Cyprus after 96 BCE (the year in which Cyrene was bequeathed to Rome by Ptolemy Apion) and no ambitions threatening Roman interests or security. After a series of brief and unstable reigns, Ptolemy XII Auletes acceded to the throne in 80 BCE. He maintained his hold for 30 years, despite the attractions that Egypt's legendary wealth held for avaricious Roman politicians. In fact, Auletes had to flee Egypt in 58 BCE and was restored by Pompey's friend Gabinius in 55 BCE, no doubt after spending so much in bribes that he had to bring Rabirius Postumus, one of his Roman creditors, to Egypt with him to manage his financial affairs.

In 52 BCE, the year before his death, Auletes associated with himself on the throne his daughter Cleopatra VII and his elder son Ptolemy XIII (who died in 47 BCE). The reign of Cleopatra was that of a vigorous and exceptionally able queen who was ambitious, among other things, to revive the prestige of the dynasty by cultivating influence with powerful Roman commanders and using their capacity to aggrandize Roman clients and allies. Julius Caesar pursued Pompey to Egypt in 48 BCE. After learning of Pompey's murder at the hands of Egyptian courtiers, Caesar stayed long enough to enjoy a sightseeing tour up the Nile in the queen's company in the summer of 47 BCE. When he left for Rome, Cleopatra was pregnant with a child she claimed was Caesar's. The child, a son, was named Caesarion ("Little Caesar"). Cleopatra and Caesarion later followed Caesar back to Rome, but, after his assassination in 44 BCE, they returned hurriedly to Egypt, and she tried for a while to play a neutral role in the struggles between the Roman generals and their factions.

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Detail of a marble bust of Mark Antony; in the Vatican.

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

Her long liaison with Mark Antony began when she visited him at Tarsus in 41 BCE and he returned to Egypt with her. Between 36 and 30 BCE the famous romance between the Roman general and the eastern queen was exploited to great effect by Antony's political rival Octavian (the future emperor Augustus). By 34 BCE Caesarion was officially co-ruler with Cleopatra, but his rule clearly was an attempt to exploit the popularity of Caesar's memory. In the autumn Cleopatra and Antony staged an extravagant display in which they made grandiose dispositions of territory in the east to their children, Alexander Helios, Ptolemy, and Cleopatra Selene. Cleopatra and Antony were portrayed to the Roman public as posing for artists in the guise of Dionysus and Isis or whiling away their evenings in rowdy and decadent banquets that kept the citizens of Alexandria awake all night. But this propaganda war was merely the prelude to armed conflict, and the issue was decided in September 31 BCE in a naval battle at Actium in western Greece. When the battle was at its height, Cleopatra and her squadron withdrew, and Antony eventually followed suit. They fled to Alexandria but could do little more than await the arrival of the victorious Octavian 10 months later. Alexandria was captured, and Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide—he by falling on his sword, she probably by the bite of an asp—in August of 30 BCE. It is reported that when Octavian reached the city, he visited and touched the preserved corpse of Alexander the Great, causing a piece of the nose to fall off. He refused to gaze upon the remains of the Ptolemies, saying "I wished to see a king, not corpses."

Government and conditions under the Ptolemies

The changes brought to Egypt by the Ptolemies were momentous; the land's resources were harnessed with unparalleled efficiency, with the result that Egypt became the wealthiest of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Land under cultivation was increased, and new crops were introduced (especially important was the introduction of naked tetraploid wheat, *Triticum durum*, to replace the traditional husked emmer, *Triticum dicoccum*). The population, estimated at perhaps three to four million in the late Dynastic period, may have more than doubled by the early Roman period to a level not reached again until the late 19th century. Some of the increase was due to immigration; particularly during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, many settlers were attracted from cities in Anatolia (Asia Minor) and the Greek islands, and large numbers of Jews came from Palestine. The flow may have

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decreased later in the Ptolemaic period, and it is often suggested, on slender evidence, that there was a serious decline in prosperity in the 1st century BCE. If so, there may have been some reversal of this trend under Cleopatra VII.

Administration

The foundation of the prosperity was the governmental system devised to exploit the country's economic resources. Directly below the monarch were a handful of powerful officials whose authority extended over the entire land: a chief finance minister, a chief accountant, and a chancery of ministers in charge of records, letters, and decrees. A level below them lay the broadening base of a pyramid of subordinate officials with authority in limited areas, which extended down to the chief administrator of each village (*kōmarchēs*). Between the chief ministers and the village officials stood those such as the nome steward (*oikonomos*) and the *stratēgoi*, whose jurisdiction extended over one of the more than 30 nomes, the long-established geographic divisions of Egypt. In theory, this bureaucracy could regulate and control the economic activities of every subject in the land, its smooth operation guaranteed by the multiplicity of officials capable of checking up on one another. In practice, it is difficult to see a rigid civil service mentality at work, involving clear demarcation of departments; specific functions might well have been performed by different officials according to local need and the availability of a person competent to take appropriate action.

By the same token, rigid lines of separation between military, civil, legal, and administrative matters are difficult to perceive. The same official might perform duties in one or all of these areas. The military was inevitably integrated into civilian life because its soldiers were also farmers who enjoyed royal grants of land, either as Greekcleruchs (holders of allotments) with higher status and generous grants or as native Egyptian *machimoi* with small plots. Interlocking judiciary institutions, in the form of Greek and Egyptian courts (*chrēmatistai* and *laokritai*), provided the means for Greeks and Egyptians to regulate their legal relationships according to the language in which they conducted their business. The bureaucratic power was heavily weighted in favor of the Greek speakers, the dominant elite. Egyptians were nevertheless able to obtain official posts in the bureaucracy, gradually infiltrating to the highest levels, but in order to do so they had to Hellenize.

Economy



Learn about the beer of ancient Egypt and the role of the yeast microbe in the brewing process.

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The basis of Egypt's legendary wealth was the highly productive land, which technically remained in royal ownership. A considerable portion was kept under the control of temples, and the remainder was leased out on a theoretically revocable basis to tenant-farmers. A portion also was available to be granted as gifts to leading courtiers; one of these was Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who had an estate of 10,000 *arourae* (about 6,500 acres [2,630 hectares]) at Philadelphia in Al-Fayyūm. Tenants and beneficiaries were able to behave very much as if these leases and grants were private property. The revenues in cash and kind were enormous, and royal control extended to the manufacture and marketing of almost all important

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products, including papyrus, oil, linen, and beer. An extraordinarily detailed set of revenue laws, promulgated under Ptolemy II Philadelphus, laid down rules for the way in which officials were to monitor the production of such commodities. In fact, the Ptolemaic economy was very much a mixture of direct royal ownership and exploitation by private enterprise under regulated conditions.



Bowl of pressed mosaic glass, believed to be from Alexandria, Egypt, 1st century bce; in the...

Courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

One fundamental and far-reaching Ptolemaic innovation was the systematic monetarization of the economy. The monarchy also controlled this from top to bottom by operating a closed monetary system, which permitted only the royal coinage to circulate within Egypt. A sophisticated banking system underpinned this practice, operating again with a mixture of direct royal control and private enterprise and handling both private financial transactions and those that directed money into and out of the royal coffers. One important concomitant of this change was an enormous increase in the volume of trade, both within Egypt and abroad, which eventually reached its climax under the peaceful conditions of Roman rule. There the position and role of Alexandria as the major port and trading entrepôt was crucial: the city handled a great volume of Egypt’s domestic produce, as well as the import and export of luxury goods to and from the East and the cities of the eastern Mediterranean. It developed its own importance as an artistic center, the products of which found ready markets throughout the Mediterranean. Alexandrian glassware and jewelry were particularly fine, Greek-style sculpture of the late Ptolemaic period shows especial excellence, and it is likely that the city was also the major production center for high-quality mosaic work.

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Religion



A statue of the Egyptian cat goddess Bastet, possibly Ptolemaic period.

Brooklyn Museum, New York, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.379E (CC BY 3.0)

The Ptolemies were powerful supporters of the native Egyptian religious foundations, the economic and political power of which was, however, carefully controlled. A great deal of the late building and restoration work in many of the most important Egyptian temples is Ptolemaic, particularly from the period of about 150–50 BCE, and the monarchs appear on temple reliefs in the traditional forms of the Egyptian kings. The native traditions persisted in village temples and local cults, many having particular associations with species of sacred animals or birds. At the same time, the Greeks created their own identifications of Egyptian deities, identifying Amon with Zeus, Horus with Apollo, Ptah with Hephaestus, and so on. They also gave some deities, such as Isis, a more universal significance that ultimately resulted in the spread of her mystery cult throughout the Mediterranean world. The impact of the Greeks is most obvious in two phenomena. One is the formalized royal cult of Alexander and the Ptolemies, which evidently served both a political and a religious purpose. The other is the creation of the cult of Sarapis, which at first was confined to Alexandria but soon became universal. The god was represented as a Hellenized deity and the form of cult is Greek, but its essence is the old Egyptian notion that the sacred Apis bull merged its divinity in some way with the god Osiris when it died.

Culture

The continuing vitality of the native Egyptian artistic tradition is clearly and abundantly expressed in the temple architecture and the sculpture of the Ptolemaic period. The Egyptian language continued to be used in its hieroglyphic and demotic forms until late in the Roman period, and it survived through the Byzantine period and beyond in the form of Coptic. The Egyptian literary tradition flourished vigorously in the Ptolemaic period and produced a large number of works in demotic. The genre most commonly represented is the romantic tale,

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exemplified by several story cycles, which are typically set in the native, Pharaonic milieu and involve the gods, royal figures, magic, romance, and the trials and combats of heroes. Another important category is the Instruction Text, the best known of the period being that of Ankhsheshonq, which consists of a list of moralizing maxims, composed, as the story goes, when Ankhsheshonq was imprisoned for having failed to inform the king (pharaoh) of an assassination plot. Another example, known as Papyrus Insinger, is a more narrowly moralizing text. But the arrival of a Greek-speaking elite had an enormous impact on cultural patterns. The Egyptian story cycles were probably affected by Greek influence, literary and technical works were translated into Greek, and under royal patronage an Egyptian priest named Manetho of Sebennytos wrote an account of the kings of Egypt in Greek. Most striking is the diffusion of the works of the poets and playwrights of classical Greece among the literate Greeks in the towns and villages of the Nile River valley.

Thus there are clear signs of the existence of two interacting but distinct cultural traditions in Ptolemaic Egypt. This was certainly reflected in a broader social context. The written sources offer little direct evidence of ethnic discrimination by Greeks against Egyptians, but Greek and Egyptian consciousness of the Greeks' social and economic superiority comes through strongly from time to time; intermarriage was one means, though not the only one, by which Egyptians could better their status and Hellenize. Many native Egyptians learned to speak Greek, some to write it as well; some even went so far as to adopt Greek names in an attempt to assimilate themselves to the elite group.

Alexandria occupied a unique place in the history of literature, ideas, scholarship, and science for almost a millennium after the death of its founder. Under the royal patronage of the Ptolemies and in an environment almost oblivious to its Egyptian surroundings, Greek culture was preserved and developed. Early in the Ptolemaic period, probably in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, the Alexandrian Museum (Greek: *Mouseion*, "Seat of the Muses") was established within the palace complex. The geographer and historian Strabo, who saw it early in the Roman period, described it as having a covered walk, an arcade with recesses and seats, and a large house containing the dining hall of the members of the Museum, who lived a communal existence. The Library of Alexandria (together with its offshoot in the Sarapeum) was indispensable to the functioning of the scholarly community in the Museum. Books were collected voraciously under the Ptolemies, and at its height the library's collection probably numbered 500,000 or more papyrus rolls, most of them containing more than one work.

The major poets of the Hellenistic period, Theocritus, Callimachus, and Apollonius of Rhodes, all took up residence and wrote there. Scholarship flourished, preserving and ordering the manuscript traditions of much of the classical literature from Homer onward. Librarian-scholars such as Aristophanes of Byzantium and his pupil Aristarchus made critical editions and wrote commentaries and works on grammar. Also notable was the cultural influence of Alexandria's Jewish community, which is inferred from the fact that the Pentateuch was first translated into Greek at Alexandria during the Ptolemaic period. One by-product of this kind of activity was that Alexandria became the center of the book trade, and the works of the classical authors were copied there and diffused among a literate Greek readership scattered in the towns and villages of the Nile valley.

The Alexandrian achievement in scientific fields was also enormous. Great advances were made in pure mathematics, mechanics, physics, geography, and medicine. Euclid worked in Alexandria about 300 BCE and achieved the systematization of the whole existing corpus of mathematical knowledge and the development of the method of proof by deduction from axioms. Archimedes was there in the 3rd century BCE and is said to have invented the Archimedean screw when he was in Egypt. Eratosthenes calculated Earth's circumference and was the first to attempt a map of the world based on a system of lines of latitude and longitude. The school of medicine founded in the Ptolemaic period retained its leading reputation into the Byzantine era. Late in the

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Ptolemaic period Alexandria began to develop as a great center of Greek philosophical studies as well. In fact, there was no field of literary, intellectual, or scientific activity to which Ptolemaic Alexandria failed to make an important contribution.

Alan Edouard SamuelAlan K. Bowman

Roman and Byzantine Egypt (30 bce– 642 ce)

Egypt as a province of Rome

“I added Egypt to the empire of the Roman people.” With these words the emperor Augustus (as Octavian was known from 27 BCE) summarized the subjection of Cleopatra’s kingdom in the great inscription that records his achievements. The province was to be governed by a viceroy, a prefect with the status of a Roman knight (*eques*) who was directly responsible to the emperor. The first viceroy was the Roman poet and soldier Gaius Cornelius Gallus, who boasted too vaingloriously of his military achievements in the province and paid for it first with his position and then with his life. Roman senators were not allowed to enter Egypt without the emperor’s permission, because this wealthiest of provinces could be held militarily by a very small force, and the threat implicit in an embargo on the export of grain supplies, vital to the provisioning of the city of Rome and its populace, was obvious. Internal security was guaranteed by the presence of three Roman legions (later reduced to two), each about 6,000 strong, and several cohorts of auxiliaries.

In the first decade of Roman rule the spirit of Augustan imperialism looked farther afield, attempting expansion to the east and to the south. An expedition to Arabia by the prefect Aelius Gallus about 26–25 BCE was undermined by the treachery of the Nabataean Syllaeus, who led the Roman fleet astray in uncharted waters. Arabia was to remain an independent though friendly client of Rome until 106 CE, when the emperor Trajan (ruled 98–117 CE) annexed it, making it possible to reopen Ptolemy II’s canal from the Nile to the head of the Gulf of Suez. To the south the Meroitic people beyond the First Cataract had taken advantage of Gallus’s preoccupation with Arabia and mounted an attack on the Thebaid. The next Roman prefect, Petronius, led two expeditions into the Meroitic kingdom (c. 24–22 BCE), captured several towns, forced the submission of the formidable queen, who was characterized by Roman writers as “the one-eyed Queen Candace,” and left a Roman garrison at Primis (Qaṣr Ibrīm). But thoughts of maintaining a permanent presence in Lower Nubia were soon abandoned, and within a year or two the limits of Roman occupation had been set at Hiera Sykaminos, some 50 miles (80 km) south of the First Cataract. The mixed character of the region is indicated, however, by the continuing popularity of the goddess Isis among the people of Meroe and by the Roman emperor Augustus’s foundation of a temple at Kalabsha dedicated to the local god Mandulis.

Egypt achieved its greatest prosperity under the shadow of the Roman peace, which, in effect, depoliticized it. Roman emperors or members of their families visited Egypt—Tiberius’s nephew and adopted son, Germanicus; Vespasian and his elder son, Titus; Hadrian; Septimius Severus; Diocletian—to see the famous sights, receive the acclamations of the Alexandrian populace, attempt to ensure the loyalty of their volatile subjects, or initiate administrative reform. Occasionally its potential as a power base was realized. Vespasian, the most successful of the imperial aspirants in the “Year of the Four Emperors,” was first proclaimed emperor at Alexandria on July 1, 69 CE, in a maneuver contrived by the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander. Others were less successful. Gaius Avidius Cassius, the son of a former prefect of Egypt, revolted against Marcus Aurelius in 175 CE, stimulated by false rumors of Marcus’s death, but his attempted usurpation lasted only three months. For several months in 297/298 CE Egypt was under the dominion of a mysterious usurper named Lucius Domitius Domitianus. The emperor Diocletian was present at the final capitulation of Alexandria after an eight-month siege and swore to take revenge by slaughtering the populace until the river of blood reached his horse’s knees;

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the threat was mitigated when his mount stumbled as he rode into the city. In gratitude, the citizens of Alexandria erected a statue of the horse.

The only extended period during the turbulent 3rd century CE in which Egypt was lost to the central imperial authority was 270–272, when it fell into the hands of the ruling dynasty of the Syrian city of Palmyra. Fortunately for Rome, the military strength of Palmyra proved to be the major obstacle to the overrunning of the Eastern Empire by the powerful Sāsānian monarchy of Persia.

Internal threats to security were not uncommon but normally were dissipated without major damage to imperial control. These included rioting between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria in the reign of Caligula (Gaius Caesar Germanicus; ruled 37–41 CE), a serious Jewish revolt under Trajan (ruled 98–117 CE), a revolt in the Nile delta in 172 CE that was quelled by Avidius Cassius, and a revolt centered on the town of Coptos (Qifṭ) in 293/294 CE that was put down by Galerius, Diocletian's imperial colleague.

Administration and economy under Rome

The Romans introduced important changes in the administrative system, aimed at achieving a high level of efficiency and maximizing revenue. The duties of the prefect of Egypt combined responsibility for military security through command of the legions and cohorts, for the organization of finance and taxation, and for the administration of justice. This involved a vast mass of detailed paperwork; one document from 211 CE notes that in a period of three days 1,804 petitions were handed into the prefect's office. But the prefect was assisted by a hierarchy of subordinate equestrian officials with expertise in particular areas. There were three or four *epistratēgoi* in charge of regional subdivisions; special officers were in charge of the emperors' private account, the administration of justice, religious institutions, and so on. Subordinate to them were the local officials in the nomes (*stratēgoi* and royal scribes) and finally the authorities in the towns and villages.

It was in these growing towns that the Romans made the most far-reaching changes in administration. They introduced colleges of magistrates and officials who were to be responsible for running the internal affairs of their own communities on a theoretically autonomous basis and, at the same time, were to guarantee the collection and payment of tax quotas to the central government. This was backed up by the development of a range of "liturgies," compulsory public services that were imposed on individuals according to rank and property to ensure the financing and upkeep of local facilities. These institutions were the Egyptian counterpart of the councils and magistrates that oversaw the Greek cities in the eastern Roman provinces. They had been ubiquitous in other Hellenistic kingdoms, but in Ptolemaic Egypt they had existed only in the so-called Greek cities (Alexandria, Ptolemais in Upper Egypt, Naukratis, and later Antinoöpolis, founded by Hadrian in 130 CE). Alexandria lost the right to have a council, probably in the Ptolemaic period. When it recovered its right in 200 CE, the privilege was diluted by being extended to the nome capitals (*mētropoleis*) as well. This extension of privilege represented an attempt to shift more of the burden and expense of administration onto the local propertied classes, but it was eventually to prove too heavy. The consequences were the impoverishment of many of the councillors and their families and serious problems in administration that led to an increasing degree of central government interference and, eventually, more direct control.

The economic resources that this administration existed to exploit had not changed since the Ptolemaic period, but the development of a much more complex and sophisticated taxation system was a hallmark of Roman rule. Taxes in both cash and kind were assessed on land, and a bewildering variety of small taxes in cash, as well as customs dues and the like, was collected by appointed officials. A massive amount of Egypt's grain was shipped downriver both to feed the population of Alexandria and for export to Rome. Despite frequent complaints of oppression and extortion from the taxpayers, it is not obvious that official tax rates were all that high. In fact the Roman government had actively encouraged the privatization of land and the increase of private enterprise in

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manufacture, commerce, and trade, and low tax rates favored private owners and entrepreneurs. The poorer people gained their livelihood as tenants of state-owned land or of property belonging to the emperor or to wealthy private landlords, and they were relatively much more heavily burdened by rentals, which tended to remain at a fairly high level.

Overall, the degree of monetarization and complexity in the economy, even at the village level, was intense. Goods were moved around and exchanged through the medium of coin on a large scale and, in the towns and the larger villages, a high level of industrial and commercial activity developed in close conjunction with the exploitation of the predominant agricultural base. The volume of trade, both internal and external, reached its peak in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. However, by the end of the 3rd century CE, major problems were evident. A series of debasements of the imperial currency had undermined confidence in the coinage, and even the government itself was contributing to this by demanding increasing amounts of irregular tax payments in kind, which it channeled directly to the main consumers—army personnel. Local administration by the councils was careless, recalcitrant, and inefficient. The evident need for firm and purposeful reform had to be squarely faced in the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine.

Society, religion, and culture

One of the more noticeable effects of Roman rule was the clearer tendency toward classification and social control of the populace. Thus, despite many years of intermarriage between Greeks and Egyptians, lists drawn up in 4/5 CE established the right of certain families to class themselves as Greek by descent and to claim privileges attaching to their status as members of an urban aristocracy, known as the gymnasial class. Members of this group were entitled to lower rates of poll tax, subsidized or free distributions of food, and maintenance at the public expense when they grew old. If they or their descendants were upwardly mobile, they might gain Alexandrian citizenship, Roman citizenship, or even equestrian status, with correspondingly greater prestige and privileges. The preservation of such distinctions was implicit in the spread of Roman law and was reinforced by elaborate codes of social and fiscal regulations such as the *Rule-Book of the Emperors' Special Account*. The *Rule-Book* prescribed conditions under which people of different status might marry, for instance, or bequeath property, and it fixed fines, confiscations, and other penalties for transgression. When an edict of the emperor Caracalla conferred Roman citizenship on practically all of the subjects of the empire in 212 CE, the distinction between citizens and noncitizens became meaningless; however, it was gradually replaced by an equally important distinction between *honestiores* and *humiliores* (meaning, roughly, "upper classes" and "lower classes," respectively), groups that, among other distinctions, were subjected to different penalties in law.

Naturally, it was the Greek-speaking elite that continued to dictate the visibly dominant cultural pattern, though Egyptian culture was not moribund or insignificant. One proof of its continued survival can be seen in its reemergent importance in the context of Coptic Christianity in the Byzantine period. An important reminder of the mixing of the traditions comes from a family of Panopolis in the 4th century, whose members included both teachers of Greek oratory and priests in Egyptian cult tradition. The towns and villages of the Nile valley have preserved thousands of papyri that show what the literate Greeks were reading (e.g., the poems of Homer and the lyric poets, works of the Classical Greek tragedians, and comedies of Menander). The pervasiveness of the Greek literary tradition is strikingly demonstrated by evidence left by an obscure and anonymous clerk at Al-Fayyūm village of Karanis in the 2nd century CE. In copying out a long list of taxpayers, the clerk translated an Egyptian name in the list by an extremely rare Greek word that he could only have known from having read the Alexandrian Hellenistic poet Callimachus; he must have understood the etymology of the Egyptian name as well.

Alexandria continued to develop as a spectacularly beautiful city and to foster Greek culture and intellectual pursuits, though the great days of Ptolemaic court patronage of literary figures had passed. But the flourishing

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interest in philosophy, particularly Platonic philosophy, had important effects. The great Jewish philosopher and theologian of the 1st century, Philo of Alexandria (Philo Judaeus), brought a training in Greek philosophy to bear on his commentaries on the Bible. This anticipated by a hundred years the period after the virtual annihilation of the great Jewish community of Alexandria in the revolt of 115–117 CE, when the city was the intellectual crucible in which Christianity developed a theology that took it away from the influence of the Jewish exegetical tradition and toward that of Greek philosophical ideas. There the foundations were laid for teaching the heads of the Christian catechetical school, such as Clement of Alexandria. And in the 3rd century there was the vital textual and theological work of Origen, the greatest of the Christian Neoplatonists, without which there would hardly have been a coherent New Testament tradition at all.

Outside the Greek ambience of Alexandria, traditional Egyptian religious institutions continued to flourish in the towns and villages, but the temples were reduced to financial dependence on a state subvention (*syntaxis*), and they became subject to stringent control by secular bureaucrats. Nevertheless, like the Ptolemies before them, Roman emperors appear in the traditional form as Egyptian kings on temple reliefs until the mid-3rd century, and five professional hieroglyph cutters were still employed at the town of Oxyrhynchus in the 2nd century. The animal cults continued to flourish, despite Augustus's famous sneer that he was accustomed to worship gods, not cattle. As late as the reign of Diocletian (285–305), religious stelae preserved the fiction that in the cults of sacred bulls (best known at Memphis and at Hermonthis [Armant]) the successor of a dead bull was "installed" by the monarch. Differences between cults of the Greek type and the native Egyptian cults were still highly marked, in the temple architecture and in the status of the priests. Priests of Egyptian cults formed, in effect, a caste distinguished by their special clothing, whereas priestly offices in Greek cults were much more like magistracies and tended to be held by local magnates. Cults of Roman emperors, living and dead, became universal after 30 BCE, but their impact is most clearly to be seen in the foundations of Caesarea (Temples of Caesar) and in religious institutions of Greek type, where divine emperors were associated with the resident deities.

One development that did have an important effect on this religious amalgam, though it was not decisive until the 4th century, was the arrival of Christianity. The tradition of the foundation of the church of Alexandria by St. Mark cannot be substantiated, but a fragment of a text of the Gospel According to John provides concrete evidence of Christianity in the Nile valley in the second quarter of the 2nd century CE. Inasmuch as Christianity remained illegal and subject to persecution until the early 4th century, Christians were reluctant to advertise themselves as such, and it is therefore difficult to know how numerous they were, especially because later pro-Christian sources may often be suspected of exaggerating the zeal and the numbers of the early Christian martyrs. But several papyri survive of the *libelli*—certificates in which people swore that they had performed sacrifices to Greek, Egyptian, or Roman divinities in order to prove that they were not Christians—submitted in the first official state-sponsored persecution of Christians, under the emperor Decius (ruled 249–251). By the 290s, a decade or so before the great persecution under Diocletian, a list of buildings in the sizable town of Oxyrhynchus, some 125 miles (200 km) south of the apex of the delta, included two Christian churches, probably of the house-chapel type.

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Egypt’s role in the Byzantine Empire



Egypt as part of the Byzantine Empire, c. 565 ce.

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Diocletian was the last reigning Roman emperor to visit Egypt, in 302 CE. Within about 10 years of his visit, the persecution of Christians ceased. The end of persecution had such far-reaching effects that from this point on it is necessary to think of the history of Egypt in a very different framework. No single point can be identified as the watershed between the Roman and Byzantine period, as the divide between a brighter era of peace, culture, and prosperity and a darker age, supposedly characterized by more-oppressive state machinery in the throes of decline and fall. The crucial changes occurred in the last decade of the 3rd century and the first three decades of the 4th. With the end of persecution of Christians came the restoration of the property of the church. In 313 a new system of calculating and collecting taxes was introduced, with 15-year tax cycles, called indictions, inaugurated retrospectively from the year 312. Many other important administrative changes had already taken place. In 296 the separation of the Egyptian coinage from that of the rest of the empire had come to an end when the Alexandrian mint stopped producing its tetradrachms, which had been the basis of the closed-currency system.

One other event that had an enormous effect on the political history of Egypt was the founding of Constantinople (now Istanbul) on May 11, 330. First, Constantinople was established as an imperial capital and an eastern counterpart to Rome itself, thus undermining Alexandria’s traditional position as the first city of the Greek-speaking East. Second, it diverted the resources of Egypt away from Rome and the West. Henceforth, part of the surplus of the Egyptian grain supply, which was put at 8 million *artabs* (about 300 million liters) of wheat (one *artab* was roughly equivalent to one bushel) in an edict of the emperor Justinian of about 537 or 538, went to feed the growing population of Constantinople, and this created an important political and economic link. The cumulative effect of these changes was to knit Egypt more uniformly into the structure of the empire and to give it, once again, a central role in the political history of the Mediterranean world.

The key to understanding the importance of Egypt in that period lies in seeing how the Christian church came rapidly to dominate secular as well as religious institutions and to acquire a powerful interest and role in every political issue. The corollary of this was that the head of the Egyptian church, the patriarch of Alexandria, became the most influential figure within Egypt, as well as the person who could give the Egyptian clergy a powerful voice in the councils of the Eastern church. During the course of the 4th century, Egypt was divided for administrative purposes into a number of smaller units but the patriarchy was not, and its power thus far outweighed that of any local administrative official. Only the governors of groups of provinces (*vicarii* of dioceses) were equivalent, and the praetorian prefects and emperors were superior. When a patriarch of Alexandria was given civil authority as well, as happened in the case of Cyrus, the last patriarch under Byzantine rule, the combination was very powerful indeed.

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The turbulent history of Egypt in the Byzantine period can largely be understood in terms of the struggles of the successive (or, after 570, coexisting) patriarchs of Alexandria to maintain their position both within their patriarchy and outside it in relation to Constantinople. What linked Egypt and the rest of the Eastern Empire was the way in which the imperial authorities, when strong (as, for instance, in the reign of Justinian), tried to control the Egyptian church from Constantinople, while at the same time assuring the capital's food supply and, as often as not, waging wars to keep their empire intact. Conversely, when weak they failed to control the church. For the patriarchs of Alexandria, it proved impossible to secure the approval of the imperial authorities in Constantinople and at the same time maintain the support of their power base in Egypt. The two made quite different demands, and the ultimate result was a social, political, and cultural gulf between Alexandria and the rest of Egypt and between Hellenism and native Egyptian culture, which found a powerful new means of expression in Coptic Christianity. The gulf was made more emphatic after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 established the official doctrine that Christ was to be seen as existing in two natures, inseparably united. The council's decision in effect sent the Egyptian Coptic (now Coptic Orthodox) church off on its own path of monophysitism, which centered around a firm insistence on the singularity of the nature of Christ.

Despite the debilitating effect of internal quarrels between rival churchmen, and despite the threats posed by the hostile tribes of Blemmyes and Nubade in the south (until their conversion to Christianity in the mid-6th century), emperors of Byzantium still could be threatened by the strength of Egypt if it were properly harnessed. The last striking example is the case of the emperor Phocas, a tyrant who was brought down in 609 or 610. Nicetas, the general of the future emperor Heraclius, made for Alexandria from Cyrene, intending to use Egypt as his power base and cut off Constantinople's grain supply. By the spring of 610 Nicetas's struggle with Bonosus, the general of Phocas, was won, and the fall of the tyrant duly followed.

The difficulty of defending Egypt from a power base in Constantinople was forcefully illustrated during the last three decades of Byzantine rule. First, the old enemy, the Persians, advanced to the Nile delta and captured Alexandria. Their occupation was completed early in 619 and continued until 628, when Persia and Byzantium agreed to a peace treaty and the Persians withdrew. This had been a decade of violent hostility to the Egyptian Coptic Christians; among other oppressive measures, the Persians are said to have refused to allow the normal ordination of bishops and to have massacred hundreds of monks in their cave monasteries. The Persian withdrawal hardly heralded the return of peace to Egypt.

In Arabia events were taking place that would soon bring momentous changes for Egypt. These were triggered by the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina and by his declaration in 632 CE of a holy war against Byzantium. A decade later, by September 29, 642, the Arab general ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was able to march into Alexandria, and the Arab conquest of Egypt, which had begun with an invasion three years earlier, ended in peaceful capitulation. The invasion itself had been preceded by several years of vicious persecution of Coptic Christians by Cyrus, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, and it was he who is said to have betrayed Egypt to the forces of Islam.

The Islamic conquest was not bloodless. There was desultory fighting at first in the eastern delta, then Al-Fayyūm was lost in battle in 640, and a great battle took place at Heliopolis (now a suburb of Cairo) in July 640 in which 15,000 Arabs engaged 20,000 Egyptian defenders. The storming and capture of Trajan's old fortress at Babylon (on the site of the present-day quarter called Old Cairo) on April 6, 641, was crucial. By September 14 Cyrus, who had been recalled from Egypt 10 months earlier by the emperor Heraclius, was back with authority to conclude a peace. Byzantium signed Egypt away on November 8, 641, with provision for an 11-month armistice to allow ratification of the treaty of surrender by the emperor and the caliph. In December 641 heavily laden ships were dispatched to carry Egypt's wealth to its new masters. Nine months later the last remnants of

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Byzantine forces left Egypt in ships bound for Cyprus, Rhodes, and Constantinople, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ took Alexandria in the name of the caliph. The new domination by the theocratic Islamic caliphate was strikingly different from anything that had happened in Egypt since the arrival of Alexander the Great almost a thousand years earlier.

Byzantine government of Egypt

The reforms of the early 4th century had established the basis for another 250 years of comparative prosperity in Egypt, at a cost of perhaps greater rigidity and more-oppressive state control. Egypt was subdivided for administrative purposes into a number of smaller provinces, and separate civil and military officials were established (the *praeses* and the *dux*, respectively). By the middle of the 6th century the emperor Justinian was eventually forced to recognize the failure of this policy and to combine civil and military power in the hands of the *dux* with a civil deputy (the *praeses*) as a counterweight to the power of the church authorities. All pretense of local autonomy had by then vanished. The presence of the soldiery was more noticeable, its power and influence more pervasive in the routine of town and village life. Taxes were perhaps not heavier than they had been earlier, but they were collected ruthlessly, and strong measures were sanctioned against those who tried to escape from their fiscal or legal obligations. The wealthier landowners probably enjoyed increased prosperity, especially as a result of the opportunity to buy now state-owned land that had once been sold into private ownership in the early 4th century. The great landlords were powerful enough to offer their peasant tenants a significant degree of collective fiscal protection against the agents of the state, the rapacious tax collector, the officious bureaucrat, or the brutal soldier. But, if the life of the average peasant did not change much, nevertheless the rich probably became richer, and the poor became poorer and more numerous as the moderate landholders were increasingly squeezed out of the picture.

The advance of Christianity

The advance of Christianity had just as profound an effect on the social and cultural fabric of Byzantine Egypt as on the political power structure. It brought to the surface the identity of the native Egyptians in the Coptic church, which found a medium of expression in the development of the Coptic language—basically Egyptian written in Greek letters with the addition of a few characters. Coptic Christianity also developed its own distinctive art, much of it pervaded by the long-familiar motifs of Greek mythology. These motifs coexisted with representations of the Virgin and Child and with Christian parables and were expressed in decorative styles that owed a great deal to both Greek and Egyptian precedents. Although Christianity had made great inroads into the populace by 391 (the year in which the practice of the local polytheistic religions was officially made illegal), it is hardly possible to quantify it or to trace a neat and uniform progression. It engulfed its predecessors slowly and untidily. In the first half of the 5th century a polytheistic literary revival occurred, centered on the town of Panopolis, and there is evidence that fanatical monks in the area attacked non-Christian temples and stole statues and magical texts. Outside the rarefied circles in which doctrinal disputes were discussed in philosophical terms, there was a great heterogeneous mass of commitment and belief. For example, both the gnostics, who believed in redemption through knowledge, and the Manichaeans, followers of the Persian prophet Mani, clearly thought of themselves as Christians. In the 4th century a Christian community, the library of which was discovered at Najʾ Ḥammādī in 1945, was reading both canonical and apocryphal gospels as well as mystical revelatory tracts. At the lower levels of society, magical practices remained ubiquitous and were simply transferred to a Christian context.

By the mid-5th century Egypt’s landscape was dominated by the great churches, such as the magnificent church of St. Menas (Abū Mīna), south of Alexandria, and by the monasteries. The latter were Egypt’s distinctive contribution to the development of Christianity and were particularly important as strongholds of native loyalty to the monophysite church. The origins of Antonian communities, named for the founding father of monasticism,

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St. Anthony of Egypt (c. 251–356), lay in the desire of individuals to congregate about the person of a celebrated ascetic in a desert location, building their own cells, adding a church and a refectory, and raising towers and walls to enclose the unit. Other monasteries, called Pachomian—for Pachomius, the founder of cenobitic monasticism—were planned from the start as walled complexes with communal facilities. The provision of water cisterns, kitchens, bakeries, oil presses, workshops, stables, and cemeteries and the ownership and cultivation of land in the vicinity made these communities self-sufficient to a high degree, offering their residents peace and protection against the oppression of the tax collector and the brutality of the soldier. But it does not follow that they were divorced from contact with nearby towns and villages. Indeed, many monastics were important local figures, and many monastery churches were probably open to the local public for worship.

The economic and social power of the Christian church in the Nile River valley and delta is the outstanding development of the 5th and 6th centuries. By the time of the Arab invasion, in the mid-7th century, the uncomplicated message of Islam might have seemed attractive and drawn attention to the political and religious rifts that successive and rival patriarchs of the Christian church had so violently created and exploited. But the advent of Arab rule did not suppress Christianity in Egypt. Some areas remained heavily Christian for several more centuries.

Alan K. Bowman

Additional Reading

From prehistory to the Second Intermediate Period

The most-detailed presentation of Egyptian history, with full bibliographies arranged by subject, is the multivolume *Cambridge Ancient History*, though vol. 1 and 2 no longer reflect current knowledge. More recent overviews are presented in IAN SHAW (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2003); and NICOLAS GRIMAL, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (1992; originally published in French, 1988). A more anthropological perspective is found in BARRY J. KEMP, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, 2nd ed. (2003). WOLFGANG HELCK, EBERHARD OTTO, and WOLHART WESTENDORF (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (1975–), is the basic reference work in Egyptology, of which 6 vol. had appeared by 1986 with an additional volume of corrections and indexes by WOLFGANG HELCK published in 1992.

MICHAEL A. HOFFMAN, *Egypt Before the Pharaohs: The Prehistoric Foundations of Egyptian Civilization* (1979, reissued 1984); and BÉATRIX MIDANT-REYNES, *The Prehistory of Egypt from the First Egyptians to the First Pharaohs* (2000; originally published in French, 1992), are comprehensive general works on prehistory; while LECH KRZYŻANIAK, *Early Farming Cultures on the Lower Nile: The Predynastic Period in Egypt* (1977), focuses on the transition to agriculture and on Lower Egypt.

General studies include CYRIL ALDRED, *The Egyptians*, rev. ed. (1984); and JOHN RUFFLE, *Heritage of the Pharaohs: An Introduction to Egyptian Archaeology* (1977); as well as other works cited below under the specific periods on which they focus. General histories include B.G. TRIGGER et al., *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (1983), containing four essays on the main periods, concentrating on relations with Africa and including valuable bibliographies; and SIR ALAN GARDINER, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (1961), a personal history, notable for the use made of ancient Egyptian texts. WILLIAM W. HALLO and WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (1971), is a reliable brief introduction; and ÉTIENNE DRIOTON and JACQUES VANDIER, *L'Égypte: des origines à la conquête d'Alexandre*, 4th ed. (1962, reprinted 1984), remains valuable for its critical discussions.

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A detailed discussion of various historical periods can be found in TOBY A.H. WILKINSON, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (2001; originally published, 1999); JEAN VERCOUTTER, *L'Égypte et la vallée du Nil: tome 1, des origines à la fin de l'Ancien Empire 12000–2000 av. J.C.* (1992); and CLAUDE VANDERSLEYEN, *L'Égypte et la vallée du Nil: tome 2, de la fin de l'Ancien Empire à la fin du Nouvel Empire* (1995). JOHN A. WILSON, *The Burden of Egypt: An Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Culture* (1951, reprinted 1965), is a selective historical study. WILLIAM C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt*, 2 vol. (1953–59), is a detailed cultural history of Egypt to the end of the 20th dynasty, based on the collections in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

WOLFGANG HELCK, *Geschichte des alten Ägypten* (1968, reprinted 1981), is still the best general history; his *Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 2nd ed. (1971), is the fundamental work on foreign relations, and his *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Alten Ägypten im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend vor Chr.* (1975) covers institutions and economics. ROLF KRAUSS, *Sothis- und Monddaten: Studien zur astronomischen und technischen Chronologie Altägyptens* (1985), is a vital chronological study for the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE; its dates are adopted in this article with minor variations.

JOHN BAINES and JAROMÍR MÁLEK, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (1980), is a concise geographically oriented survey. HERMANN KEES, *Ancient Egypt: A Cultural Topography* (1961, reprinted 1977; originally published in German, 2nd ed., 1958; 3rd German ed., 1977), studies a number of major sites in depth. KARL W. BUTZER, *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt: A Study in Cultural Ecology* (1976), is a useful discussion of geographic and environmental conditions and their relation to the development of ancient Egyptian civilization.

CLAUDE VANDERSLEYEN et al., *Das alte Ägypten* (1975), is the most comprehensive survey of Egyptian art. W. STEVENSON SMITH, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed., edited by WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON (1981), is an excellent general account; and, for the Old Kingdom, Smith's *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*, 2nd ed. (1949), is still a fundamental source.

MIRIAM LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 3 vol. (1973–80), offers an excellent collection of texts in translation, covering the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms and the Late Period. A smaller selection of readings is available in WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*, new ed. (1973); while JAMES B. PRITCHARD (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (1969), contains a wide selection of Egyptian material in translation.

Studies of administration include KLAUS BAER, *Rank and Title in the Old Kingdom* (1960, reprinted 1974); to which NIGEL STRUDWICK, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom: The Highest Titles and Their Holders* (1985), adds a vast amount of detail. WOLFGANG HELCK, *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs* (1958), with a separately published index volume (1975), is the basic work on the succeeding periods.

From the New Kingdom to 332 BCE

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Citation (MLA style):

"Ancient Egypt." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 Aug. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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ARTICLE

chariot

open, two- or four-wheeled vehicle of antiquity, probably first used in royal funeral processions and later employed in warfare, racing, and hunting. The chariot apparently originated in Mesopotamia in about 3000 BC; monuments from Ur and Tutub depict battle parades that include heavy vehicles with solid wheels, their bodywork framed with wood and covered with skins. On the earliest chariots the wheels rotated on a fixed axle that was linked by a draft pole to the yoke of a pair of oxen. To the axle was attached a superstructure consisting of a platform protected by sidescreens and a high dashboard. These Mesopotamian chariots were mounted by both spearman and charioteer, although it is doubtful that fighting was conducted from the vehicle itself.

The two-wheeled version soon proved superior in battle because of its higher maneuverability. Greater speed was attained by the use of teams of two or four onagers and by the evolution of the light, spoked wheel. The

introduction of the horse as a draft animal in about 2000 BC was the final step in the development of the chariot into a military arm that revolutionized warfare in the ancient world by providing armies with unprecedented mobility. Chariotry contributed to the victories, in the 2nd millennium BC, of the Hyksos in Egypt, the Hittites in Anatolia, the Aryans in northern India, and the Mycenaeans in Greece. By 1435 BC Egyptians were making chariots, and by the end of the century chariots with four-spoked wheels and light design were in use throughout the Levant and had been introduced to Minoan Crete and the southern European mainland.

Bronze chariot plaques and horse trappings from graves of the Shang dynasty (18th–12th century BC) indicate that chariotry was introduced to the Chinese steppes by the 14th century BC, but no reconstruction of the earliest types is possible. Chariots of *c.* 300 BC found in a burial at Liu-li-ho, in Peking municipality, have dished wheels but otherwise are similar in construction to Celtic chariots in western Europe.

In Europe the chariot was transmitted, perhaps by the Etruscans, to the Celts, who were using it in the British Isles about the 5th century BC. The bodywork of Celtic chariots was somewhat heavier than that of the Greek, and metal, sometimes inlaid with fine enamels, was extensively used for axle and draft pole, and occasionally for solid wheels. On the fringe of the Celtic world, where the chariot remained in use until the 4th century AD, small ponies, yoked four abreast, were used for draft.

By the time of Alexander the Great, the war chariot had been superseded by cavalry, but chariot racing had become popular in Greece and was a main feature of the Olympic Games and of the Pythian Games at Delphi. In the Roman circus games, chariot racing took foremost place, and chariotry became socially important. Racing vehicles were drawn by two, three, or four horses, although as many as 10 horses were harnessed on spectacular occasions; chariots drawn by dogs and even ostriches are mentioned.

In England and America in the 18th and early 19th centuries, a popular four-wheeled vehicle was called a chariot. It was essentially the rear half of a coach, cut off just in front of the door.

Citation (MLA style):

"Chariot." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 20 Jul. 1998. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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ARTICLE

dress

also called apparel or attire, clothing and accessories for the human body. The variety of dress is immense. The style that a particular individual selects is often linked to that person’s sex, age, socioeconomic status, culture, geographic area, and historical era.

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Henry VIII, painting by Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1540.

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This article considers the chronological development of fashionable dress and decoration—that is, the attire selected and adopted by the leading members of a society. This reflects the fact that in any group of people—whether constituting a small community or a great nation—it is usually those with wealth and power who influence, and even dictate, fashions to other members. The discussion does not concentrate solely on apparel but also covers, as appropriate, certain aspects of hairdressing, jewelry, and the use of cosmetics. In addition, the nature and purposes of dress and some of the specific social, political, economic, geographic, and technological factors influencing changes in fashion are treated. Not treated here are specialized attire, including ecclesiastical dress; military dress; academic, trade, or professional dress; and the national or regional costumes of peasant or indigenous peoples.

The history of Middle Eastern and Western dress

Ancient Egypt

Modern knowledge of ancient Egyptian dress derives from the ample evidence to be seen in the wealth of wall and sarcophagus paintings, in sculpture, and in ceramics; few actual garments have survived. Such illustrative material is depicted clearly and colourfully, but care must be taken in interpreting the designs too literally, partly because the art is frequently stylized but also because the artists were bound by tradition and their representation of dress often lagged far behind the actual changes of fashion.

The chief textile to have been preserved is linen, which has been found in graves from the Neolithic Period. The growing of flax, from which linen is made, dates from very early times; the Egyptians believed that the gods were clothed in linen before they came to earth. Wool was more rarely employed, and sericulture, the raising of silkworms, had not yet extended as far west as Egypt.

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Egyptian statuette with angular harp, painted wood, Late Period (1085–525 bce); in the British...

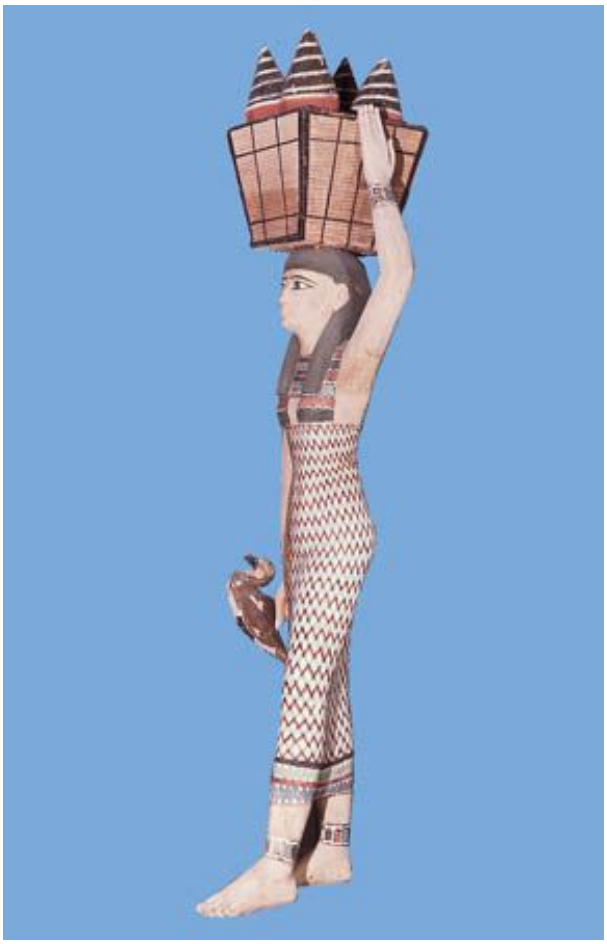
Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London; photograph, J.R. Freeman & Co. Ltd.

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The technique of using mordants, any of several chemicals used to bind dyes to cloth, was slow to come to Egypt, so most garments were white. Instead, colour was provided by jewelry, in which semiprecious stones were widely incorporated. Among the most common types, the characteristic deep, decorative collar, worn by both sexes, was introduced early. These brightly hued bands were made of embroidered and beaded materials and set around the neck and shoulders either on bare skin or on top of a white cape or gown. In some depictions the collar is clearly the major, if not the only, item of apparel worn.

During the most distant era, dress for both sexes was confined to loincloths, a vest or shirt, capes, and robes. Skins of various animals were utilized. These were sometimes simply raw hides, which have survived only rarely, but the Egyptians became skilled at curing the skins to become leather by the tawing method—that is, by the use of alum or salt. Tawing yields a white, stiff leather that may be dyed various colours. Later they adopted the tanning method, employing oak galls for the purpose. Leather was used widely in dress for footwear, belts, and straps.

During the 3,000 years of the ancient Egyptian culture, costume changed comparatively little and very slowly. It generally emphasized a draped style of dress, the garments consisting of pieces of material held in place around the body by knots tied in the fabric and by belts, sashes, and collars. Little sewing was needed, being confined generally to side seams and, in later years, to armholes. This draped type of dress conformed to that of other civilizations in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region, such as Greece, Rome, and Mesopotamia, but differed from the styles of Persia, northern India, and China, where people wore more fitted, sewn garments based upon coats, tunics, and trousers.

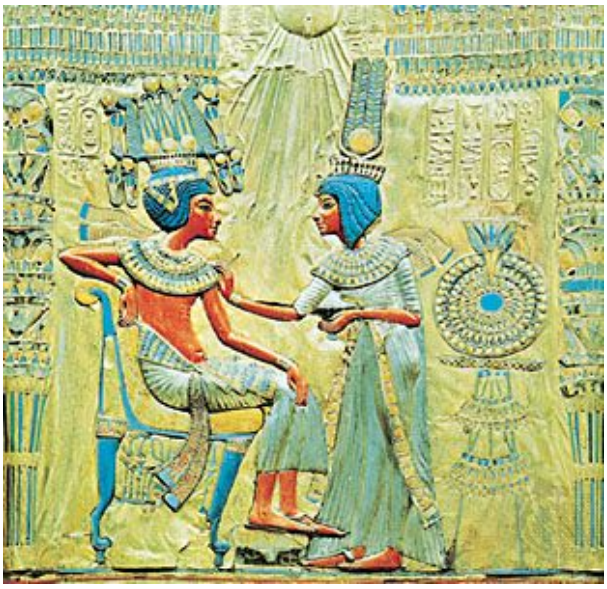


Woman wearing sheathlike gown held up by shoulder straps, typical of Egyptian dress of the Old and...

Borromeo/Art Resource, New York

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Over the years the style of these garments slowly evolved and became more complex; a greater number were worn either in combination with or on top of one another. During the Old Kingdom (its capital at Memphis), which lasted until about 2130 BCE, dress was simple. Men wore a short skirt tied at the waist or held there by a belt. As time passed, the skirt became pleated or gathered. Important people wore in addition a decorative coloured pendant hanging in front from the waist belt and a shoulder cape or corselet partly covering their bare torso. A sheathlike gown was typical of feminine attire. This encased the body from the ankles to just below the breasts and was held up by decorative shoulder straps. Woolen cloaks were worn for warmth by men and women.



Egyptian dress of the New Kingdom, 18th dynasty. King Tutankhamen wearing a double skirt, long and...

Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich

Under the Middle Kingdom (its capital at Thebes), which prospered until about 1630 BCE, the masculine skirt could be hip- or ankle-length. More material was now used, making the garment fuller, such fullness being concentrated in the centre front; and the pendants became more elaborate and ornamental. A cape might be draped around the shoulders and knotted on the chest. Late in the period a double skirt was introduced; alternatively, a triangular loincloth might be worn under a skirt.

The most elaborate dress for both sexes was to be seen under the New Kingdom from about 1539 BCE until the Egyptians were conquered by the Assyrians (671 BCE), the Persians (525 BCE), Alexander the Great (332 BCE), and finally Rome (30 BCE). During these later years Egyptian dress was strongly influenced by that of the conquerors. New Kingdom dress was more complex than theretofore. The garments were of similar type but were composed of larger pieces of material; draping became more complicated and ornamentation richer. A robe or gown was now worn by important persons of both sexes. It consisted of a piece of fabric measuring 5 by 4 feet (1.5 by 1.2 metres) that was draped and held in place by pins and a waist belt, creating wide, elbow-length sleeves. There were many ways of draping the material, but with most methods all the pleats and folds seemed to be gathered around a single point at the waist. The cape, decorative collar, skirt, and pendant girdle also continued to be worn. Foci of bright colour were provided by the deep collar and pendant apron. Embroidered and carved ornamental motifs included especially the lotus flower, the papyrus bundle, birds in flight, and many geometric forms. Sacred emblems such as the scarab beetle and the asp were worn by priests and royalty.

Children were dressed, as in most of the history of costume everywhere, as miniature versions of their parents, although they are often depicted wearing little at all—not surprising considering the climate of Egypt. Servants also were almost naked, as were labourers in the fields, who are depicted clad only in a loincloth.

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Heavy wigs or a padding of false hair, worn by men and women alike, are known from an early period. They served not only as an adornment but also to protect the wearer’s head from the burning rays of the Sun, thus in a way acting as hats. Semicircular kerchiefs, tied by the corners at the nape of the neck under the hair, were sometimes worn to protect the wig on a dusty day. Wigs were dressed in many different ways, each characteristic of a given period; generally speaking, the hair became longer and the arrangement of curls and braids—set with beeswax—more complicated as time went on.

The earliest records indicate that Egyptian men grew hair on their chins. They might frizz, dye, or use henna on this beard, and sometimes they plaited it with interwoven gold thread. Later, a metal false beard, or postiche, which was a sign of sovereignty, was worn by royalty. This was held in place by a ribbon tied over the head and attached to a gold chin strap, a fashion existing from about 3000 to 1580 BCE.

Many people went barefoot, especially indoors, but people of rank are depicted outdoors in sandals made from palm leaves, papyrus, or leather.

Cosmetics were extensively applied by both sexes, and considerable knowledge of their use is available because of the Egyptian custom of burying comforts and luxuries with the dead. Examples of the cosmetics used and of the means of making, applying, and keeping them may be seen in museums, especially in Cairo and London. The Egyptians applied rouge to their cheeks, red ointment to their lips, and henna to their nails and feet, and ladies traced the veins on their temples and breasts with blue paint, tipping their nipples with gold. The chief focus of makeup was the eye, where a green eye shadow (made from powdered malachite) and a black or gray eyeliner was applied; the latter substance, called kohl, was manufactured from, among other materials, powdered antimony, carbon, and oxide of copper.

Mesopotamia



Alabaster head of a man wearing a turban, from Adab, Akkadian period, c. 24th century bce; in the...

Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of The University of Chicago

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Ancient Mesopotamia was situated in the area of land that is defined by the great Tigris and Euphrates river system and that is contained within modern Iraq. Several important cultures arose there, their empires waxing and waning successively as well as overlapping in time. Among the most prominent were the empires of Sumer, Akkad, Assyria, and Babylonia.



Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash, detail of a limestone relief, c. 2500 bce; in the Louvre, Paris.

© Photos.com/Jupiterimages

The Sumerian civilization was established before 4000 BCE and reached a high level of culture between 2700 and 2350 BCE. In early times both sexes wore sheepskin skirts with the skin turned inside and the wool combed into decorative tufts. These wraparound skirts were pinned in place and extended from the waist to the knees or, for more important persons, to the ankles. The upper part of the torso was bare or clothed by another sheepskin cloaking the shoulders. From about 2500 BCE a woven woolen fabric replaced the sheepskin, but the tufted effect was retained, either by sewing tufts onto the garment or by weaving loops into the fabric. Named *kaunakes* by the Greeks, this tufted fabric is shown in all the sculptures and mosaics of the period, as, for example, in the art from the excavations at Ur exhibited in the British Museum in London. At this time, also, long cloaks were worn, and materials for garments and head coverings included felted wool and leather.

Both sexes seem to have often worn large wigs, as in ancient Egypt. Metalworking was of a high standard, as may be seen in the elaborate golden jewelry, which was encrusted with semiprecious stones and worn by both sexes. Brooches, earrings, hair ornaments, and neck chains have all been found.

A different style of dress is evident in Mesopotamian sculptures dating after about 2370 BCE. Both men and women were clothed in a large piece of material—most commonly of wool, though later also of linen—draped around the body over a skirt. This garment, similar to a shawl, was characteristically edged with tassels or

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fringe. The draping varied, but, for men at least, the fabric was arranged so that the fullness was at the rear, leaving the right, or sword, arm free. This newer form of dress had originated from farther north and east and was adopted by the Semitic people of Akkad under Sargon (the dynasty founded by Sargon lasted from *c.* 2334 to *c.* 2193 BCE) and by the revitalized Sumerian culture in the years 2110–2010 BCE.

The dress worn in Mesopotamia by the Babylonians (2105–1240 BCE) and the Assyrians (1200–540 BCE) evolved into a more sophisticated version of Sumerian and Akkadian styles. Ample evidence of this more elaborate draped costume can be seen in the large relief sculptures of the age. There were two basic garments for both sexes: the tunic and the shawl, each cut from one piece of material. The knee- or ankle-length tunic had short sleeves and a round neckline. Over it were draped one or more shawls of differing proportions and sizes but all generally fringed or tasseled. Broad belts held the shawls in position. Wool was the most frequently used material, in bright or strong colours. Decoration was rich, in allover patterns or in borders, carried out in embroidery or by printing. Motifs were chiefly geometric. Women wore a short skirt as underwear, men a loincloth. Footwear for both sexes was made from fabric or soft leather in the form of sandals or boots.



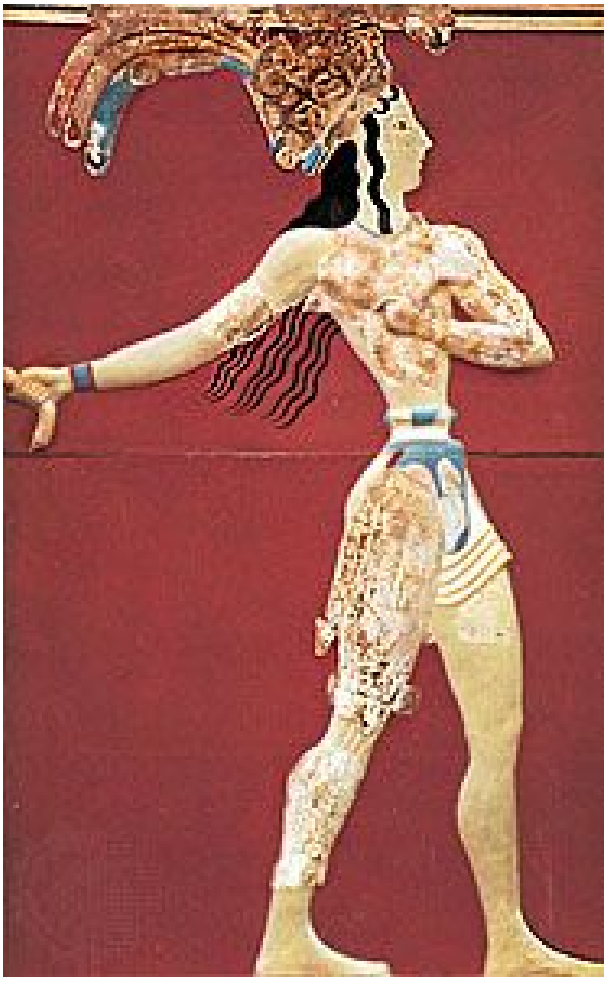
Ashurnasirpal II, relief from Nimrūd; in the British Museum

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

Care of the coiffure was very important for men and women among both the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The hair was grown long and carefully curled and ringleted, with false hair added if needed. Perfumes, oils, and black dye were used on the hair. Men grew long, carefully tended curled beards. A band of metal or fabric encircled the brow, or a woolen, felt, or leather cap shaped like a fez was worn. The royal headdress resembled a pleated crown or a mitre and had dependent lappets at the rear. Jeweled ornamentation to the costume was rich and heavy and of high quality.

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The Aegean: Minoan and Mycenaean dress



Priest-king, detail from a Late Minoan fresco, c. 1550 bce, that was in the palace at Knossos,...

Andre Held, Switzerland

The Aegean region—and in particular the island of Crete, which was inhabited from about 6000 BCE—can be considered the cradle of western European culture. Settlers came to Crete from areas farther east, including Anatolia, North Africa, Syria, and Palestine. By 2500 BCE the Cretan civilization was becoming established. As a maritime people with extensive trade in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the Cretans were influenced by many sources. They created a society and a dress style of their own, one dissimilar from the earlier styles of Egypt and the later styles of Greece.

The greatest and most prosperous years were from 1750 to 1400 BCE; this was the time of the building of the great palaces, notably the complex at Knossos, from where the remains of coloured frescoes, painted vases, and sculpture in marble, terra-cotta, and coloured ceramics have been excavated. Even finer and more complete frescoes have been preserved from the excavations of the Minoan city on the island of Thera (Thíra), an island largely destroyed in the cataclysmic volcanic eruption of about 1500 BCE.

Cretan dress is characterized by its vivid colouring, elegance, and sophistication. It is also notable for the gaiety of feminine attire, typical of a society where women—unlike in Classical Greece—are depicted side-by-side with men, apparently taking part in all the activities of life and not relegated to the domestic background. Men’s garments were few. Chief of these was a loincloth of wool, leather, or linen, tightly belted at the waist and arranged as a short, elaborately decorated skirt. The belt was drawn tight to accentuate the slender waist. By

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1750 BCE women were wearing a long bell-shaped skirt, often in a series of flounces, over a loincloth; with this, they wore a bolero-like jacket that had elbow-length sleeves but was open in front, leaving the breasts bare. In the later period a bodice was worn, constricting the upper torso but accentuating the full, bare breasts above. Such clothing may have been associated with priestesses or goddesses rather than ordinary women, however.

The Cretans liked bright colours, and their dress was vividly embroidered and decorated. The hair of both sexes was worn long, looped and braided and dressed with jewels, pearls, and ribbons. The Cretans bathed frequently, oiling their bodies afterward. Men were generally clean-shaven. Outdoors both sexes wore sandals or shoes. In winter calf-length boots were adopted, and short woolen, fur-lined cloaks were fastened by pins around the shoulders.

With the collapse of the Minoan civilization in Crete about 1400 BCE, a new culture arose on the mainland in the Peloponnese, notably in the maritime principalities of Mycenae, Tiryns, and Pylos. As the frescoes from the palace of Tiryns illustrate, the costume was similar but richer still.

Ancient Greece



Youth wearing a Phrygian cap, marble, Roman copy of a Greek original, 4th century bce; in the...

By permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Eng.

Ancient Greek civilization is customarily classified into three segments. Up to about 500 BCE is described as the Archaic period. This was the time when the several different civilizations of mainland and island Greece,

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Anatolia, and North Africa coexisted, the arts and costume of each influencing the others. The Dorians had invaded the Minoan kingdoms in Crete and the Peloponnese from about 1200 BCE. They were a northern race from Illyria and a less technologically developed society than the Minoans. Modern knowledge of their dress is imperfect, but it seems to have been simple. Woolen cloth, made from the flocks of local sheep, was employed. It was cut into squares of fabric and then pinned on the shoulders and bound around the body. The influence from Anatolia, where the inland climate was more severe, introduced hooded cloaks, banded leg coverings, and Phrygian caps with a point on top.

A later Archaic culture, the Ionian, then established itself in Greece. The Ionians developed a higher-quality textile industry, producing finer materials in wool and linen that were more suited to a draped style of dress. In the 8th and 7th centuries BCE the Ionians developed an extensive trading economy around the Mediterranean region from Gaul in the west to Libya in the east.



Artemis as a huntress; in the Louvre, Paris

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

The 5th and 4th centuries BCE were the years of the great Classical period, the time when a very simple but highly sophisticated and superb quality of work was achieved. Greek literature, architecture, and sculpture were particularly fine. This was the case with costume as well, the designs of which can be studied in detail from painted vases and sculpture. Classical Greek dress was a draped style, one in which there was little sewing. The garments for men and women were similar, consisting of oblong pieces of fabric in different sizes and materials, draped in various ways and held in place by ribbons and decorative pins. The dress was a totally natural one; there was no constriction and no padding. The simplicity of the dress was offset by the myriad ways of wearing it, a sophistication achieved by personal expression of the wearer.

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As time passed and finer materials (mostly linen) were produced, a further variety in draping was created by pleating, a treatment particularly in use for feminine wear. The pieces of material were set into pleats, soaked in a thin starch solution, twisted and tied at the ends, then left in the sun to dry. This gave a greater permanence to the pleating.

The subject of colour in Greek dress is a difficult one. Neither sculpture nor vases (which are in black, red, and white) provide information. For a long time it was believed that the dress was largely white, and the reintroduction of the “Greek” style in Regency England and Directoire France presumed this from the marble sculpture. It is known, however, that buildings and ornament were painted in bright colours, and literary sources report colour being employed. Decoration was most often by the Classical ornament forms seen in architecture: the fret (key) pattern, flowers such as honeysuckle in running anthemion patterns, circles (*paterae*), and stripes.

The Hellenistic Age of Greek culture, dating from 323 BCE and lasting until Greece became part of the Roman Empire in 30 BCE, was a wealthier time, reflecting the wider boundaries of the Greek world resulting from the conquests of Alexander the Great. To the fine linens available in costume were added cotton from India and silk from China; thus the draped mode became more varied and elaborate.



Woman wearing the Greek chiton and himation. Marble statue from the Nereid Monument, Xanthus, Lycia, …

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

From Classical times the chief garment was the chiton, a type of tunic made from one or two pieces of material hanging back and front, pinned on one or both shoulders, and girded. For men the chiton was usually knee-length and seamed up one or both sides. An ankle-length version was worn by women and for more formal wear by men. The simplest type of chiton was sleeveless, but later a sleeved version was made possible by using a much wider piece of material pinned at intervals at shoulder level, creating an elbow-length wide sleeve. A variation on the chiton style for both sexes was achieved by wearing a double girdle, one at waist level and one

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around the hips, the material being bloused out in between. The peplos was an additional garment worn by women. Made of one or two pieces of fabric, it hung from the shoulder pins to above or below the waist girdle. Alternatively, women used a longer piece of the chiton material and folded it over in front to hang in a similar manner.

There were two chief forms of cloak or wrap. The smaller one—the *chlamys*—was of dark wool and was worn pinned on one shoulder, usually leaving the right arm free. The larger wrap was the *himation*, worn by both sexes. Draped in many different ways, it covered the body and could be drawn up over the head. In sculpture, philosophers and statesmen are commonly depicted wearing the *himation*.

Knowledge of underwear is limited. Literary sources tell of a linen girdle and a band to delineate the breasts. Men wore a loincloth.



Women's dress from the Hellenistic Age, showing the himation draped over the head and covered by a…

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

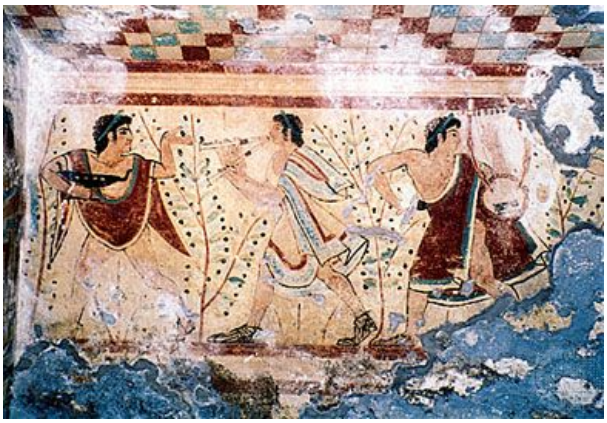
Men’s hair was long in the early years, but later it was cut short and carefully curled. Bleach was often used to make the hair fashionably blond; perfumes and pomades were applied. Beards were common until the time of Alexander. Most men were bareheaded, a hat being reserved for bad weather. There was a low-crowned, broad-brimmed style—the *petasos*—and a brimless cap, the *pilos*. Women’s hair was long; it was usually curled and waved on the forehead and sides and drawn to a chignon at the nape. Many women wore wigs of different shades and decorated their coiffure with flowers, jewels, and fillets. They draped the head with the cloak and, in the Hellenistic period, sometimes perched a straw hat on top.

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Both sexes went barefoot indoors but outside wore leather sandals. Men also wore boots, which were laced up the front and might be fur-lined.

Greek jewelry was very fine and was, especially in the later centuries, worn in abundance. Both sexes used perfume, and women employed extensive makeup to give brilliance to their eyes, lashes, and cheeks.

Etruria



Etruscan musicians wearing tunics, cloaks similar to the Greek chlamys, and sandals. Detail from a...

Scala/Art Resource, New York

Cultural development came later to Italy than to the Aegean area. The Greeks colonized southern Italy and Sicily from the later 7th century BCE, but it was the Etruscans who introduced a high standard of civilization, in the previous century, to the central region of the peninsula. They called themselves the Rasenna, though in Latin they were known as the Etrusci or Tusci. It is believed that they may have emigrated from Anatolia or possibly from farther east. They quickly developed their culture in their new land, and, soon after 700 BCE, they were living in an urban society capable of a high standard of building and visual arts. In dress, as in the other applied arts, they drew their inspiration and knowledge from a mixture of sources, chiefly Greek and Middle Eastern.



Detail of a gold Etruscan fibula with granulated decoration, 7th century bce; in the British Museum

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

The Etruscans also had a close affinity of dress with the Minoans, with sewn and fitted garments, bright colouring, rich decoration, and an abundance of beautiful jewelry, especially in gold. Nevertheless, Etruscan

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dress, for both sexes, demonstrates a marriage between East and West, blending Eastern features from Egypt, Syria, and Crete with a later Ionian-style draped attire probably derived from the contemporary Greek colonists in southern Italy. Thus, Etruscans can be seen wearing both draped, pinned tunics and fitted, sewn ones, or such Greek styles as the *chlamys*, *himation*, or chiton in conjunction with footwear with Middle Eastern-style turned-up toes. Some Etruscan garments presaged later styles; for example, the *tebenna*, a semicircular mantle, was an early version of the Roman toga, and a decorative collar derived from Egypt anticipated a later Byzantine version.

Ancient Rome

The civilization of ancient Rome spanned more than a thousand years, from the traditional founding of the walled city in the mid-8th century BCE to the final collapse of the western part of the empire in 476 CE. Until the 3rd century BCE the Romans derived their culture from the Greeks and the Etruscans but after this gradually began to develop their own civilization and to expand their influence, taking over territory after territory—first that of the Etruscans, then Sicily, Carthage and North Africa, Greece, and Egypt. They went on to found the great Roman Empire, which by the 2nd century CE extended from Spain to the Black Sea and from Britain to Egypt.

The history of Roman dress is paralleled by that of Roman arts and architecture. They inherited many ideas from the Greeks, but, as the empire extended its borders and incorporated peoples of different customs, climates, and religions, matters of style became more complex. In costume, as in art, the trend was toward a more ornate, richly coloured, more varied, and, especially in the later days of the empire, very luxurious attire. Roman dress also reflected a distinct division of social class, with certain colours, fabrics, and styles reserved for citizens and important personages.

With the expansion of the empire, wider trading was made possible. This increased the availability of more varied and elegant fabrics. Cotton from India and silks from East Asia were accessible to the wealthy, enriched by high-quality embroidered edging and fringing. Elagabalus (218–222 CE) was the first Roman emperor to wear silk. Later, looms were set up to weave silk, but China retained control of sericulture, exporting only silk thread or fabric, both of which were expensive.

The art of dyeing and knowledge of the use of mordants was now more extensive. The famous dye of the Classical world was Tyrian purple, so called because its centre of production was in the twin cities of Tyre and Sidon (now in Lebanon). The dye was obtained from small glands in the mollusk *Purpura* and was costly owing to the small size of the source material. Thus, the wearing of Tyrian purple was reserved for a few; although the name *Purpura* gave rise to the word *purple*, the colour would be described today as something between red and purple. Under the empire, production sites were established in Crete, Sicily, and Anatolia. At Taranto in southern Italy a hill survives that is composed entirely of the shells of the *Purpura* mollusk.

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Imperial Roman toga on Tiberius (reigned 14–37 ce); in the Louvre, Paris

Gianni Dagli Orti/Shutterstock.com

The garment for which Rome is most famous is the toga. A large piece of material wrapped around the masculine body as a cloak, the toga served a similar function as the Greek *himation*, although the fabric was of quite a different shape. Under the empire, the toga acquired a special distinction because of its unique and complex method of draping and because, as a note of rank, its wearing was restricted to Roman citizens. The toga was not rectangular in shape like the *himation* but was a segment of a circle, measuring about 18 feet (5.5 metres) along the chord of the segment and about 5.5 feet (1.7 metres) at its widest point. It was made of wool and so was very heavy. To drape it, about five feet of the straight edge of the fabric was placed against the centre front of the body from ground level upward. The rest of the material was then thrown over the left shoulder and passed around the back, under the right arm, and once again over the left shoulder and arm. The right arm was therefore left free. The material could be pouched in front as well as drawn up over the head. Certain patterns and colours were worn by specific members of society.

The basic masculine garment was like the chiton; it was called a *tunica*. Colours differentiated the social classes—white for the upper classes, natural or brown for others. Longer *tunica*s were worn for important occasions. About 190 CE the *dalmatic* was introduced from Dalmatia. This was a looser, ungirded style of tunic with wide sleeves.

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Agrippina the Elder wearing the stola and palla, 2nd century ce.

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

Feminine dress was very like the Greek, with the Roman woman’s version of the chiton called a *stola*. As time passed, women took to wearing several garments one on top of the other, while the garments themselves were made of finer fabrics and were more lavishly decorated. The feminine cloak, the *palla*, resembled the Greek *himation*.

Underwear for both sexes consisted of a loincloth—like briefs—and women also wore a breastband—the *mamillare*. Footwear was based upon the Greek but was more varied. Apart from sandals, several styles of shoe and boot existed.

Face powder, rouge, eye shadow, and eyeliner were lavishly applied by upper-class women, who also attached beauty patches to their faces. Wigs and hair switches were commonly worn, and certain colours of hair were fashionable; for example, during the Gallic and Teutonic campaigns, blonde wigs made from the hair of captured slaves were in vogue.

Ancient nonclassical Europe

Animal furs and hides made up the chief garments during the European Stone Age. They would be held to the body by a thong belt and by pins at the shoulder. Later such skins were pierced with awls and sewn together with cordage to give a closer fit. Finds from tombs and living sites dating to the Upper Paleolithic Period (*c.* 38,000–*c.* 8,000 BCE) indicate that people had a fair knowledge of dressing skins, weaving, and sewing. No garments have survived the oldest part of the Upper Paleolithic, but archaeologists have recovered artifacts such as boxwood and bone combs, delicate bone needles, reindeer horn buttons and plaques, and decorative items such as necklaces and armlets of beads, amber, and ivory. Discoveries from more recent eras, such as that of the Iceman, or Ötzi (*c.* 3300 BCE), have provided more information.

The advent of the Bronze Age varies in time and expression from one part of Europe to another. The art of bronze working came to Italy from the Middle East and then spread westward to Britain and Scandinavia. During the years 1500–600 BCE the arts of spinning and weaving were further developed; simple natural dyes were used; and decoration was by embroidery, fringing, and plaiting.

In Denmark, the northern Netherlands, and Germany the practice of burying people in peat bogs has preserved a number of actual, almost complete, Bronze Age garments. Most of the garments are woolen or leather items

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that were maintained in remarkable condition in oak log coffins. They include large semicircular cloaks, felt caps, tunics with leather straps and belts, and, for women, jackets and skirts with ornamental belts and hair ornaments. Many of these are on display in the National Museum in Copenhagen and the Schleswig-Holstein Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Germany.

A different type of dress was worn by the nomadic peoples who lived on the Steppe, a grassy plain that stretches from Hungary to Manchuria. Such groups, which included the Scythians, Cimmerians, and Sarmatians, traveled immense distances on horseback. Their attire being suited to their way of life, both sexes wore similar garments consisting of a woolen tunic over a shirt and wide trousers. These garments were worn in layers one on top of another; they were fairly close-fitting but loose enough for comfort and for the practical needs of hours spent on horseback. Short boots were pulled up over the trouser bottoms and tied in place. These peoples also wore leather belts around their waists, and felted woolen caps kept their heads warm. Around 600 BCE the Scythians lived in the region around the Black Sea and then gradually moved westward to Romania, Hungary, and Germany. Excavation of their burial sites in the Dnieper valley and near Simferopol, both in Ukraine, and in the Balkans has yielded both actual garments and a wealth of relief sculpture, vases, and plaques that illustrate Scythian dress.

The 6th-century-BCEHallstatt culture of the Bavarian and Bohemian areas had an advanced lifestyle for its time. Finds from this early phase of the Iron Age, however, are chiefly weapons and jewelry. In the 4th century BCE the Celts from central Europe, or at least some of their styles and methods of manufacture, moved into Italy and thence on to Britain, Ireland, and Spain. Finds of the Celtic culture, which consist largely of jewelry, toilet articles, and ornaments, illustrate both the high Celtic standard of craftsmanship, especially in metal, and the individual character of their design. Museums in many countries—notably Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Britain—display a wealth of such work.

Roman influence on the dress of the northern and western countries of the empire was strong until the early 5th century CE. This was to a certain extent, however, a two-way influence since, in the colder northern areas, the Romans found the indigenous dress styles of belted tunics with trousers or leg-banding more suitable than their own Classical *tunica* and bare legs. Useful evidence of local attire in Britain, Gaul, and Germany is graphically illustrated on Trajan’s Column and that of Marcus Aurelius, both in Rome. This evidence is reinforced by the written accounts of Roman historians such as Cornelius Tacitus of the 1st century CE and Sidonius Apollinaris of the later years.

The pre-Columbian Americas

At the time of their first encounter with European explorers, the American Indian population was composed of societies of many levels of social and economic complexity. Cultural groups extended from the Eskimo (Inuit and Yupik/Yupiit) of the Arctic circle to the Maya, Aztec, and Inca of Central and South America. With such immense climatic variation, the Americas were home to a wide variety of dress.

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Native Americans



Kiksadi clan members wearing traditional Tlingit regalia.

James Poulson—Daily Sitka Sentinel/AP

Cloth was rarely made in the region north of the Rio Grande, although many cultures there made finely woven baskets. The California Indians and the Northwest Coast Indians also wove capes and hats from plant fibres.

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Iroquois shoulder bag made of buckskin and decorated with porcupine quills and deer hair, c. 1750;...

Courtesy of the Linden-Museum fur Volkerkunde, Stuttgart, Germany.

Most people wore clothing made from the tanned or chamois skins of local animals, such as deer, elk, buffalo, moose, beaver, otter, wolf, fox, and squirrel. Native Americans employed animal oils, particularly those found in the brains of the animal, to produce a softly textured material that they then dyed in brilliant colours. They often made use of the entire skin, adapting the garment to the shape of the animal and wearing it draped and sewn only minimally; the legs, paws, and tail were left attached and hung down as decoration. Two skins were often used for a woman’s dress or man’s tunic, one back and one front. Like other groups with little to no metalworking, Native Americans pierced the edges of skins with bone or stone awls and then threaded the edges together with animal sinew or fibre cordage. Decoration was by porcupine-quill embroidery, the quills being softened by chewing or simmering and then dyed. Garments were also decorated by fringed edging.

Depending upon local conditions, men might wear a breechclout and women a short skirt. In warm, dry climates shirts were often optional, while in wetter regions a cloak or poncho might be added. In cooler areas men typically wore a loose hip-length tunic and thigh-length leggings, the latter tied to the waistband of the breechclout. Women typically wore a long dress and short leggings.

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Sauk and Fox Indians, painting by Karl Bodmer, c. 1833.

MPI/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Hair was carefully tended by both sexes. For the men there were many, varied styles; in some areas hair was grown long and plaited, in others it was worn loose. Some styles were dramatic, consisting of, for example, a ridge of hair sticking up along the crown of the head, extending from the forehead back, with the remainder of the head shaved. (This style was revived in punk coiffures of more modern times when it was called the Mohawk or Mohican.) Animal hair and feathers were added to many hairstyles. An important form of regalia was a feathered headdress, which sometimes included buffalo horns, ermine tails, and quillwork. Women’s hair was generally worn long, either loose, plaited, or held in place by a headband.

The moccasin was the traditional shoe. It was made from one or two pieces of soft leather, which enclosed the foot, with no added heel. It was seamed to an inset decorative piece on top of the instep. The leather was then folded over at the back.

Facial and body hair was often plucked out with tweezers, and both face and hair were painted. Red pigment was frequently used to paint the body. Both sexes tattooed their bodies, sometimes all over, and some continue this tradition today; bright red and black were the colours most often used for this.

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The Eskimo



Inuit family from Alaska wearing fur parkas, early 19th century.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-ppmsc-02276)

The clothing of the Eskimo (Inuit and Yupik/Yupiit) and Aleut was adapted to the Arctic cold and had much in common with that worn in the Siberian Arctic. This clothing was made from animal skins, but because of the climate it was sewn and tailored to the body to keep out the wind. The fur or pelt of the animal was retained, and garments were often worn fur side in. Thread was of animal sinew, awls for piercing the skin were generally stone, and needles were of bone or ivory. The Eskimo used all available animal skins: polar bear, deer, caribou reindeer, antelope, dog, and fox. They also used birds—the skin for clothing and the feathers as decoration. Sealskin was ideal for boots, which were made with the fur turned inward. Seal gut was used to make waterproof outer garments for those who ventured onto the sea.

Both sexes wore the same type of garments: a hooded tunic or coat, trousers, and boots. The hooded tunic was variously named in different areas. Two of these—the parka of the Aleutian Islands and the anorak of Greenland—have become essential items of modern dress.

The Aztec, the Maya, and the Inca

In Central and South America lived the Aztec, the Maya, and the Inca. The Aztec settled in Mexico about the 12th century. Their capital city, Tenochtitlán, which they established in the 14th century, was on the present-day site of Mexico City. The men wore loincloths, the women tunics and skirts, all made from woven cotton fabric. Ornamental cloaks were worn as garments of rank. The decoration of Aztec costume was chiefly by exotic plumes, but fur also was used. The Aztec elite wore a great deal of jewelry, mainly of gold.

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Mayan fresco from Bonampak, in Chiapas, Mexico, original c. 800 ce, 20th-century reconstruction by…

Ygunza/FPG

The Maya came to Guatemala about 800 BCE and spread into the Yucatán Peninsula. Their culture flourished chiefly between 250 and 900 CE. They also wore few garments: a loincloth for men and a cloak when needed; a loose sleeveless dress or blouse and skirt for women. Cotton and sisal were cultivated; women were responsible for spinning and weaving these fibres. The Maya also developed a method of tie-dyeing the yarn and of weaving patterns using bright colours for dyes. Embroidery also was practiced.



Mayan men of the upper class wearing decorated loincloths and ornamental headdresses. Detail from a…

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

Cotton fabrics were mainly reserved for upper-class wear, as were beautifully decorated leather belts and sandals. For the ordinary people, tapa—a cloth derived from tree bark, as in Polynesia—was made. An important part of Mayan decoration was provided by feathers from birds of brilliant plumage, which were skillfully incorporated into the weaving processes. The feathers were also widely used in the ornamentation of headdresses. The long, iridescent tail feathers of the quetzal, a member of the trogon family of birds, were especially prized, as they were in Aztec dress.

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Inca men and women working in a cornfield; drawing from El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno...

From a facimile of El primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala

The Inca came from the valley of Cuzco in the high mountains of Peru. During the 15th century they established a powerful empire of several million people in what are now Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and extending into parts of Argentina and Chile. Their attire was brightly coloured and decorated by feathers—indeed some of their fine cloaks were made entirely of feathers woven into a cotton fabric base. They kept herds of llamas for wool and hunted other animals, such as the chinchilla, for their fur. Nonetheless, Inca garments were simple in construction: a basic loincloth for both sexes and, over this, a short tunic for men and an ankle-length dress for women. The poncho was the most usual cloak. People went barefoot or wore sandals. They also frequently went bareheaded or, in bad weather, adopted a woolen cap or turban.

The Middle East from the 6th century

The style of costume worn throughout the Middle East has been remarkably constant for centuries. This is partly because it has evolved as one suited to the climate, serving as a protection against heat, dust, and blazing sunshine. The wearing of traditional clothing has also been accepted and supported by many Muslim countries.

The traditional garments of the Middle East are loose-fitting and cover or even envelop much of the body. The names of these garments vary from country to country, but the similarity between them is clear. Likewise the materials from which they were, and still are, made vary according to what is available. In general, linen, cotton, and wool are the norm, but the well-to-do have always worn garments made from rich fabrics with a silk base. Several of the most famous of these materials originated in this area, including baldachin, the richly decorated fabric with a warp of gold thread and a weft of silk, named after the city of Baghdad, and damask, named after Damascus (in Syria), the source of this richly patterned silk fabric.

A number of the traditional garments were originally derived from ancient cultures in the region, particularly from Persia (Iran) and farther east in India, Mongolia, and Asian Russia. The caftan is one such example. It is an open, coatlike garment, termed in ancient Persia a *candys* or *kandys*. Also worn extensively in the cooler

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climates of Mongolia and China, the style extended westward to become, eventually, the fashionable dolman of the late Ottoman Empire.

The spread of the characteristic costume of the Middle East was due in large part to the spread of Arab peoples and cultures. The people of the Arabian Desert were by the 6th century CE leading a stable, rural life in the border areas of Yemen, Syria, and Iraq; in the interior region they were largely Bedouin nomads raising camel herds for a living. By 750 CE the Arab empire extended from Spain and Morocco in the west to the Caspian Sea and the Indus River in the east. The chief garments worn at that time were a loose shirt, chemise, or robe; a draped cloak; wide, baggy trousers; and a head cloth or turban. Similar versions of these may still be seen on the streets of Cairo, Istanbul, or Damascus.



An Egyptian agricultural worker (fellah) wearing a traditional djellaba (gallibiyah).

©1992 Bill Lyons

The simple basic garment for both sexes was a loose, long shirt, chemise, or tunic, which often had long sleeves. Over this men wore a robe or mantle of various types. The aba (‘*abā*’ or abaya) was of ancient origin and is mentioned in the Bible as the attire of Hebrew prophets. It was traditionally made of heavy cream-coloured wool decorated with brightly coloured stripes or embroidery. A voluminous outer gown still worn throughout the Middle East in the Arab world is the *jellaba*, known as the *jellabah* in Tunisia, a *jubbeh* in Syria, a *gallibiya* in Egypt, or a *dishdasha* in Algeria. The garment generally has wide, long sleeves, and the long skirt may be slit up the sides; some styles are open in front like a coat or caftan.

Outer gowns or cloaks sometimes incorporated head coverings. These included the haik, which was an oblong piece of material (generally striped) that the Arabs used to wrap around their bodies and heads for day or night wear; the material measured about 18 feet by 6 feet (5.5 by 1.8 metres). A similar mantle was the burnous, a hooded garment also used for warmth day or night.



Turkish woman wearing long anteri (coat) over patterned chalvar (trousers) and backless slippers, c. …

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

The loose, baggy trousers traditional to the Middle East, as well as to the Balkans and Anatolia, are still widely worn by both sexes. The garment is believed to have originated in Persia, and it is presumed that the Arabs saw it there when they invaded that country in the 7th century. The trousers, called *chalvar*, *chalwar*, or *ṣalvar* according to the country where they were worn, measured about 3 yards (2.75 metres) across at the waist and were drawn tight by cords. The full, leg portion was tied at each ankle. A broad sash then encircled the waist, on top of the *chalvar*. Worn in this way the garment was ideal for working in the fields because it allowed freedom of movement and protected the lumbar region of the spine, especially while bending, from chills. For centuries the garment has also been adopted by men in the fighting forces. Cotton is the usual material for working attire, but fashionable ladies wear a *chalvar* made from a brocade or silk fabric over linen drawers.

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Muslim woman wearing a yashmak and chador, in “Femme du peuple,” coloured engraving, Egypt, 1855–60

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The tradition for women to cover themselves from head to toe and veil their faces when they go out in public is an old one, predating Islam in Persia, Syria, and Anatolia. The Qurʾān provides instructions giving guidance on this matter but not a strict ruling. However, some modern regimes have insisted on the strict veiling of women in public. The enveloping cloaks worn by women for this purpose are similar to one another and often incorporate a mesh panel through which women may peer at the world outside. The most common names for this garment are burka, chador, *chādar*, *chadri*, *çarşaf*, and *tcharchaf*.

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King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 1990.

Tannen Maury/AP Images

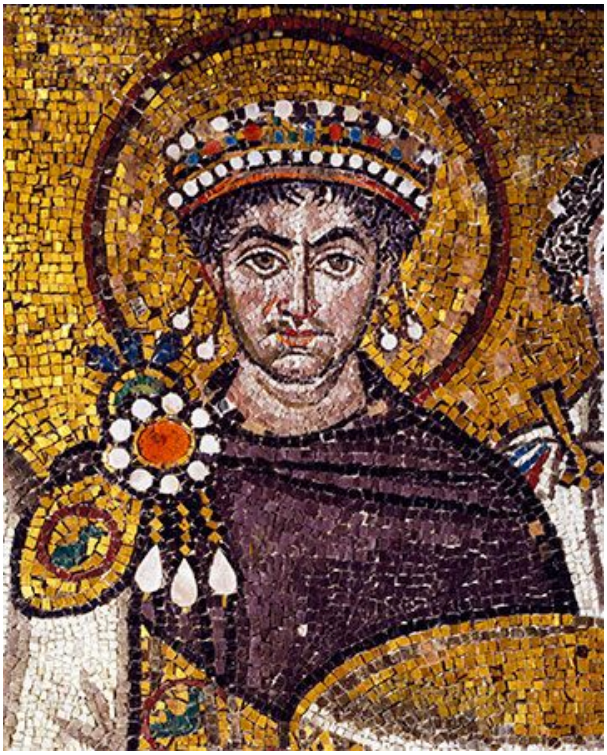
The characteristic masculine Arab headdress has been the *kaffiyeh*. It is still worn today, although it may now accompany a business suit. Basically, the *kaffiyeh* is a square of cotton, linen, wool, or silk, either plain or patterned, that is folded into a triangle and placed upon the head so that one point falls on to each shoulder and the third down the back. It is held in place on the head by the *agal* (*igal*, *egal*), a corded band decorated with beads or metallic threads.

Footwear was in the form of sandals, shoes, or boots, with the toes slightly turned up. Women traditionally wore decorative wooden pattens called *kub-kobs* to walk about in muddy unpaved streets.

The Byzantine Empire

In 324 CE the Roman emperor Constantine I decided to rebuild the great city at Byzantium, then a Greek centre. The city was sited strategically on the Bosporus, whose narrow waters connecting the Mediterranean and the Black Sea acted as a gateway between West and East. Constantine called his city New Rome; it was later renamed Constantinople (now Istanbul) in his honour. After the collapse of the western part of the Roman Empire, which was based in Rome (and later Ravenna), Constantinople became the capital city of the Christian-dominated Byzantine Empire, the extent of which fluctuated considerably until its collapse in 1453.

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Justinian I, detail of a 6th-century mosaic at the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy.

© A De Gregorio—DeA Picture Library/age fotostock

Owing to the site of its capital city, the empire was subject to a complex of influences that were nowhere more marked than in the dress of its ruling classes. Over the centuries there were two notable periods of wealth and prosperity that were reflected in costume. The first period was in the time of the emperor Justinian I, who reigned from 527 to 565 CE. Until this time the influence of Rome was still strong, and dress styles tended to be draped in the fashion of the later years of the empire. There were differences, however, derived in part from Persian and Anatolian designs, such as the use of sewn, closer-fitting garments and richer ornamentation and jewelry. In addition, because of its success as a trade centre between East and West, the Byzantine Empire had become extremely wealthy. This wealth led to a costume of magnificent splendour that became the envy of the known world. Luxury fabrics from Asia, Syria, and Egypt became available in quantity and were utilized, despite the high cost, by the leading members of society.

The domestic textile industry was also stimulated. Its development was greatly aided by the introduction of sericulture into Constantinople. The Chinese had guarded secrets of the manufacture of silk for hundreds of years, but by about 1000 BCE silkworm culture and silk manufacture had been established in northern India, and the knowledge later percolated through to Korea, Japan, Persia, and Central Asia. Justinian had tried early in his reign to divert the silk trade from its route from Persia but without success. He was presented with a tremendous opportunity when two Persian monks, who had worked as missionaries in China and had studied the process of sericulture and the weaving of the filaments, agreed to smuggle this knowledge, as well as the necessary silkworm eggs, to Constantinople in exchange for a large monetary reward. Silkworms flourished in Constantinople, and the authorities there, like the Chinese and others before them, guarded the secrets of the process and controlled their monopoly in Europe until, inevitably, in the early Middle Ages, the knowledge and means were once more disseminated, this time to Anatolia and Sicily and from there gradually to Italy and France.

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Empress Theodora, detail of a wall mosaic, 6th century; in the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy.

© seraficus—iStock/Getty Images

During Justinian's reign, Byzantine textile manufacturers produced beautiful, glamorous fabrics, mainly of silk interwoven with gold and silver metallic threads and interspersed with pearls and jeweled embroideries. The use of these heavy lustrous fabrics gradually altered the style of dress; the stiff, ornate materials lent themselves to a simpler cut with only a few folds to break up the often allover, large-motif designs. For both men and women a more fitted, sewn tunic, cinched at the waist by a richly decorated wide belt and hanging straight to knee or ankle, replaced the Roman draped *tunica*. A rich, deep decorative collar, like the preceding Egyptian and Etruscan versions, covered the shoulders. The influence of the Christian church could be seen in the fact that the limbs were generally covered by long, usually fitted sleeves and cloth or silken hose. Cloaks, pinned at the shoulder, were worn outdoors. Imperial dress was characterized by the extensive use of purple and gold. Garments for the wealthy were vividly coloured in reds, yellows, and greens. Such attire is depicted in the 6th-century mosaics and the Ravenna churches of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, which include portraits of Justinian and his wife, Theodora.

The second period of expansion and prosperity came between the 9th and 11th centuries. Court dress became richer than ever, encrusted with jeweled embroideries and dyed in deep colours, especially purples and reds. Imperial dress included a long panel of gold-embroidered material, which was wrapped around the body with the end hung over one arm. The classical line had completely given place to an Eastern form of dress. For example, the caftan had been adopted as formal wear. Open down the centre front, this coatlike garment was shaped to fit at the back. For both sexes the caftan was accompanied by trousers, not full like the Middle Eastern *chalvar* but more elegantly and closely cut, especially on the lower limbs where they were tucked into boot tops or worn over shoes.

Byzantine dress strongly influenced that of eastern Europe, especially the Balkans and Russia. Some of the bejeweled silk formal garments were gradually adopted by the church to become vestments in the Middle Ages.

Men tended to prefer leather boots in footwear, black for normal use and red at court. Women sometimes wore sandals but more often were found in soft, ankle-height shoes, brightly coloured and embroidered.

Masculine hairstyles were short, and men were mostly clean-shaven. Outdoors they adopted the Phrygian cap or a hood. Women wore veils and often encased their long hair in a silk cap or a pearl net. Elaborate jewelry was characteristic of all Byzantine dress of the upper classes. Perfume was liberally applied but cosmetics less so.

MedievalEurope

The dress of Europeans during the years from the collapse of the western part of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE to about 1340 was slow to change and was largely standardized over a wide area. Clothes for men and women were similar, being sewn albeit crudely and loosely cut. A shirt or chemise and *braies*—that is, a

roughly fitting kind of drawers—constituted underwear. These were of a natural coloured linen. The shirt was hip-length for men, longer for women. It had a round neck, slit in front for ease of donning, and was tied with a drawstring; the *braies* were similarly fastened at the waist. On top of this was worn one or more tunics—knee- or ankle-length for men and ground-length for women. The tunic had a round neckline and long sleeves cut in one with the garment; it was loose fitting but girded at the waist. Tunics were made from coloured linen or wool and were decorated with embroidered bands at the neck, wrists, and hem. Legs were covered with ill-fitting hose, which were cut from cloth in two vertical sections and sewn together. They were held up by banding or garters.

Thirteenth-century dress was noted for its plainness. There was little or no decoration, and garments were unbelted. A sleeveless surcoat was generally worn over the tunic. This had derived in the late 12th century from the tabard, a garment worn by crusading knights over their armour to prevent the sun from reflecting off the metal and making them visible to an enemy. The surcoat, which was worn by both men and women, often had slits (called fitchets) on each hip so that the waist belt underneath with purse attached could be reached without fear of thieves.

Men’s hair might be long or short; some men were clean-shaven, while others had beards. Women wore their hair long, parted in the centre, and plaited and then pinned up at the sides; they then pinned a white linen neckcloth to the plaits on each side (the wimple), concealing the hair, and on top of this wore a veil, a white linen crown, or a pillbox cap. Such headdresses were known by a variety of names, including *barbette*, fillet, and *touret*.



Charles IV receiving his sister Isabella and her son Edward from England, miniature from Jean...

Giraudon/Art Resource, New York

Toward 1350 a great change occurred in costume. Clothes increasingly were tailored to fit and display the human figure. The ability to tailor garments improved. More and better fabrics were now reaching the West from Italy and farther east. But perhaps the most important reason for sartorial change was the spread of the Renaissance movement from Italy. A movement both spiritual and secular, the Renaissance was dedicated to reviving Classical concepts and to celebrating the dignity and importance of human beings. This was expressed in costume by the beautification and display of the human figure.

During the remainder of the medieval period, men wore close-fitting, modish clothes, such as the fitted tunic, which was cut into four sections that were seamed at the centre back and at the sides and fastened with buttons centre front. By 1340–45 this tunic was hip-length with a heavy leather belt decorated with metal and jeweled

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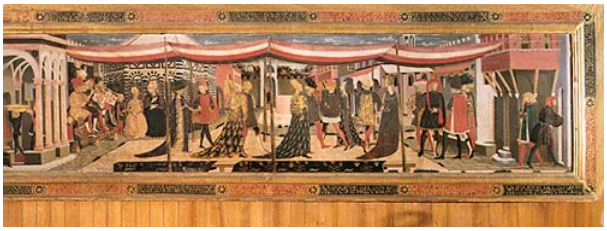
brooches encircling the hips only a few inches above the hem. Sleeves were elbow-length. The undertunic, of similar cut, had long sleeves, buttoned to fit closely from elbow to wrist.

The hose were now fitted more closely also. These stockings were cut from velvet, silk, or woolen cloth in four sections and extended from the foot to the upper thigh, where they were attached by points (laces with metal tag ends) to the lower edge of the undertunic. By 1370–80 the hose grew longer to become tights and were laced by points all around the body to the by-then waist-length undertunic. As outer tunics also became increasingly short in the early 15th century, a codpiece became necessary. This was a bag covering the front opening between the two legs and was attached by points to the hose. (The name derives from the medieval term *cod*, meaning bag.)

Women’s dresses also changed form. The neckline was lowered and was cut straight across at shoulder level. The bodice, which extended to the hips, was fitted like the men’s tunic, and a similar heavy belt encircled the hips. Below the hips the skirt was gored, very full, and long. Sleeves resembled men’s styles. Another gown, called a sideless surcoat, was often worn on top. This had no sleeves but had a very large armhole to display the gown beneath; the armholes and a front panel (known as the plastron) were often trimmed with fur.

There were several new forms of decoration at this time. One was parti-colouring, in which all garments, including hose, could be of one colour down one side and a different hue on the other, the dividing line thus delineating the form of the figure. Counterchange designs—heraldic, floral, or geometric in motif—were introduced where the ground colour and design colour were interchanged. Edges of garments were cut into various shapes; these were called *dagges* (Middle English: *dags*).

During the 15th century these trends developed further. Men’s hose became still better-fitting. Tunics were shorter, often only waist-length. Fabrics were richer and beautifully patterned. For older men, for whom displaying the figure was less suitable, a long gown was introduced to wear over the tunic. At first (in the 14th century) it was full and long like a dressing gown (the *houppelande*), but it gradually became more tailored and formal, with vertical pleats in back and front. All garments, for both sexes, were fur-edged and, often, fur-lined—for both warmth and appearance.



Fashionable mid-15th-century Italian dress. The men wear pleated, fur-trimmed tunics, fitted hose,...

Scala/Art Resource, New York

By the 15th century, styles, accessories, decoration, and fabrics were beginning to vary from area to area. The fashion-setter in the years 1430–75 was Burgundy, a duchy that controlled Flanders and much of modern France. It was the wealthiest region in Europe, and the fabrics it manufactured—velvets, silks, gold and silver materials, and embroideries—were of the highest quality. After Burgundy’s defeat in 1477 at Nancy, Italy became the fashion centre of Europe. Italian fabrics were equally beautiful to those from Burgundy but were less heavy and with less fur. Colours were gay and bright, and the emphasis for both sexes was on an elegant, natural human form with a gracious ease of movement.

Men’s hairstyles varied greatly during this long period. In general, they were short until the later 15th century, and men were mostly clean-shaven. The main head covering was the hood with an attached shoulder cape and a long extended point, or tail, known as a *liripipe*. By the 1420s a new way of wearing this hood was tried. The face

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portion was placed on the head, then the cape was arranged in folds like a cockscomb and tied into place with the liripipe, the end of which trailed over the shoulder (a style immortalized in jester's attire). This was an inconvenient arrangement and so a padded roll evolved—the roundlet—with the separate shoulder cape sewn in place to one side and the liripipe to the other. Toward the end of the century, various styles of tall or broad-brimmed hats, decorated by coloured plumes, replaced the hood.



Woman wearing a wimple in "Portrait of a Young Lady," oil portrait by Rogier van der Weyden, 1435;...

Courtesy of the Gemaldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz

Women's headdresses were extremely varied. Hair was still long, plaited, and coiled over the ears. These coils might be enclosed in metal mesh jeweled nets called cauls and were worn with a veil. In the 15th century turbans—a Byzantine style that had been introduced in Italy—were fashionable. Wimples had also gained popularity, as did steeple headdresses resembling dunce caps and shorter fezlike caps. All were made of rich fabrics and accompanied by veils, either in a soft flowing mode or formed into winglike shapes by wire framework underneath.

Footwear was similar for both men and women. Hose might be soled for indoor wear. Outdoors shoes could be worn with wood and cork pattens strapped on to keep the elegant fabrics out of the mud of the streets. Men wore boots for traveling. Long toes were fashionable in the late 14th century, the ends being padded to keep the shape.

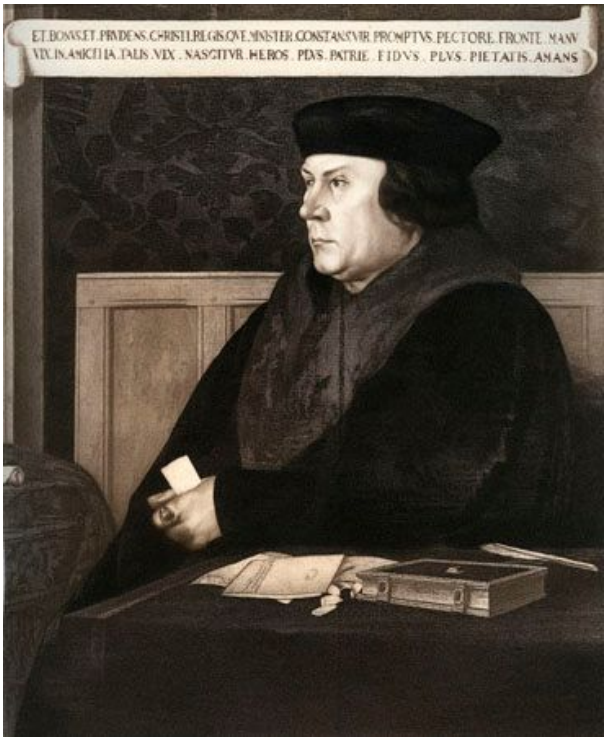
Europe, 1500–1800

The 16th century witnessed further changes occurring in Europe. The limitations bounding medieval society were gradually being breached, and the concepts of the Renaissance were being accepted farther west, in

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France, Flanders, England, and Spain. People expected a higher standard of living, and there was an expanding middle class. Europe was also looking outward. From Portugal, Spain, and Italy especially, sailors were voyaging to explore both east and west. Their journeys brought the acquisition of riches, new materials, and precious metals. Costume, as always, reflected all this.

The chief centres of wealth were the pacesetters in fashion. Until about 1510 the style was generated from Italy. After this the Germans and Flemish set the pattern, but from about mid-century it was Spain that dominated the scene. Styles of the first two decades were a development and expansion of the Italian modes of the late 15th century. Young men wore white silk shirts, frilled and embroidered at the neck and wrists. Over this they wore an abbreviated tunic and close-fitting hose, which were often striped to delineate the masculine limbs. Older men covered the tunic and hose with a long gown, open down the centre front, the edges turned back to display the contrasting lining. Men’s hairstyles were long and flowing. Their hats, which were set at a jaunty angle, were made of black velvet and decorated with brooches and plumes. Ladies’ gowns had square necklines and were cut low enough to reveal the frilled chemise worn underneath. Sleeves were wide and full, and skirts were held or pinned up to display the undergown. From about 1520 to 1545 the fashionable shape was governed by the addition of padded puffs, decoratively slashed. This idea is thought to have been derived from the dress of Swiss and Bavarian mercenaries. Each garment was slashed to show the contrasting colour of the material of the one beneath.



Thomas Cromwell, engraving after a painting by Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1537.

The Print Collector—Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Whereas the humanist concept of the Renaissance had led to figure display and elegance, the new modes were influenced by the Reformation of northern Europe, giving rise to darker colours, heavier materials, and bulky garments padded to conceal the figure. The masculine tunic—now called a doublet—had a knee-length, gored skirt that was open in front to display the now padded protruberant codpiece. Over this was worn a rich velvet gown with fur collar and padded sleeves. Shoes and boots had broad toes and, like all other garments, were decoratively slashed. Short hair styles, small beards, and flat velvet caps worn at an angle were fashionable.

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Queen Elizabeth of England, showing the queen adorned in Renaissance fashion with pearl choker and...

Carlo Bevilacqua—Scala/Art Resource, New York

The feminine figure was artificially controlled by a tight underbodice with metal or whalebone strips in the seams to give a small waist and slender torso. This was the precursor of the corset. In contrast, the skirt was shaped into a cone or inverted-V silhouette by being draped over a petticoat made from canvas and inset at intervals with circular hoops of wicker. This fashion had originated during the previous century in Spain, and by 1500 it had become high fashion there. The Spanish skirt, called a *verdugado*, was bell-shaped, however. About 1530 the cone-shaped hoop was introduced into France, where it was popularized by the queen and called a *vertugade* . The style soon appeared in England, where it was known as a farthingale.

The fashionable lady’s headdress was a hood made of dark velvet, with long flaps or folds hanging down the back and sides. The face was framed in front by a jeweled metal frame shaped like a pyramid (the English hood) or a horseshoe (the French hood). Under this was worn a decorative cap that almost concealed the hair.

The costume worn from mid-century until about 1620 was the richest ever seen in the history of European dress. It was made from beautiful fabrics heavily encrusted with embroidery, pearls, and jewels. Fine lawns and lace were employed, and all garments were extensively patterned. During these years Spain was enjoying the wealth yielded by the New World, and Spanish dress—which was elegant and tasteful, formal and restrictive, and doubtlessly uncomfortable to wear—was paramount. Paradoxically, when other nations adopted Spanish modes they mostly took them to excess, the Spaniards themselves remaining restrained in their dignified black garments.

The masculine doublet was fitted to the waist and buttoned centre front. Its skirt had now been replaced by trunk hose, which were loose mid-thigh-length breeches gathered into a tight waist and thigh bands; decoration was by embroidered strips called panes. Embroidered clocks decorated the now knitted silk stockings. Shoes had returned to the natural foot form. The dashing Spanish cape had replaced the cumbersome gown. These capes displayed great variety in size, shape, and method of wearing.

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Women’s fashions became more constricted and elaborate as the boned bodice evolved into the first true corset. The farthingale became wider and, by the 1580s, was extended by a padded sausage known as a bum roll or barrel, which was tied around the waist under the skirt. Later the French introduced the wheel farthingale, which was drum-shaped with radiating spokes on top. The gown neckline became very décolleté, almost displaying the breasts. From the 1570s to the 1770s a stomacher—a stiff, V- or U-shaped panel heavily decorated with jewels and embroidery—was often worn over the centre front bodice of the gown.



Woman wearing a ruff, detail of “Portrait of a Lady of the Vavasour Family,” oil on wood by...

Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

A characteristic feature of dress of this time for both sexes was the ruff collar, introduced from Spain. Called a band (ruffs laundered and ready to wear were kept in band boxes), it was a strip of material tied around the neck. Another, ruched strip was sewn on to it. After 1565, with the introduction of starch, ruffs became larger and were often edged with embroidery and lace. The very large “cartwheel” ruffs were not worn in Spain, nor was the wheel farthingale. It was in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and England that the extremes of these fashions, which lasted until about 1620, were seen.



The Syndics of the Amsterdam Drapers' Guild, oil on canvas by Rembrandt, 1662; in the collection of...

Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; on loan from the city of Amsterdam

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By the 1620s the Netherlands was emerging from Spanish control and extending its trade dramatically to become wealthy and influential. The garments worn by the well-to-do were still made from beautiful fabrics, but these now included fine wools as well as velvets and silks. The material that above all was characteristic of these years was lace, seen especially in the falling bands—large collars covering the shoulders, which had replaced the 16th-century ruffs—and their elegant matching cuffs.



Skittle Players in a Garden, oil on canvas, ascribed to Pieter de Hooch, 1660–68.

The Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, Purchase

The years between 1630 and perhaps 1680 (depending on location) have been aptly dubbed by some costume historians as the time of “long locks, lace, and leather.” Men grew their hair long and wore it, beautifully cared for, falling naturally onto the shoulders and down the back. Complementary to this coiffure was a large beaver, felt, or velvet hat, dramatically ornamented by coloured ostrich plumes. The leather refers to the fact that the fashionable footwear was a boot rather than a shoe. These boots were made of soft leather; they had heels with platform soles and immense bucket tops, over the edge of which frothed lace-edged boot hose. The doublet had become an elegant hip-length jacket, and the trunk hose were replaced by knee-length breeches tied with a ribbon sash at the knee. Women’s dresses had a full skirt that fell naturally from a raised waistline; the shoulders were covered by a band of lace. The hair was dressed high on the crown in a bun decorated with pearl ropes and with ringlets at the sides and brow.

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Portrait of King Louis XIV, by Charles Le Brun, c. 1655.

Photos.com/Jupiterimages

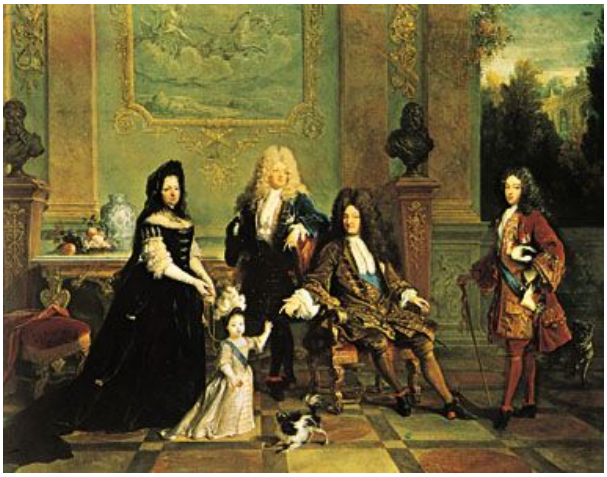
The *grand règne* of Louis XIV of France lasted from 1643 to 1715. In this time the king established France as a great European power, and from about 1660 France became the unchallenged leader of European fashion, a position it held until 1939 and even later. The mode was set in Paris, and new styles were disseminated by mannequin dolls sent out to European capitals and by costume plates drawn by notable artists from Albrecht Dürer to Wenceslaus Hollar.

In men’s dress the mid-century years represented a transitional period when ribbon and lace ornamentation dominated the whole attire, which consisted of a white shirt, an open, waist-length jacket, and full breeches that resembled a skirt. These breeches were known as petticoat breeches or rhinegraves.

Between 1665 and 1670 came a quite different masculine style that presaged the three-piece suit of modern times. Initiated in France, this began as a knee-length coat called a *justaucorps*, an idea deriving from the Persian caftan. It had no collar and was worn open in front. The short sleeves ended in cuffs. By 1680 the sleeves were longer, and under the coat was worn a slightly shorter waistcoat together with close-fitting knee-breeches. At the neck the falling band had been succeeded by an elegant, lace-edged cravat.

Women’s styles changed less noticeably at this time. The gown neckline was lowered, and the waistline was also lowered. Skirts were fuller and longer but were draped up on each side and fastened with ribbon bows to display the petticoat underneath.

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Louis XIV and His Family, oil painting by Nicolas de Largillière, 1711; in the Wallace Collection,...

Reproduced by permission of the trustees of the Wallace Collection, London; photograph, J.R. Freeman & Co. Ltd.

In the last decade of the century both sexes wore a high coiffure. In the case of the men it was a wig. The periwig or peruke had been fashionable since about 1670. It was made of naturally coloured hair—human where possible—and consisted of a great curtain of curls and ringlets cascading over shoulders and back, while above the brow the curls rose high on either side of the centre parting. With these full-bottomed wigs the hat, now a three-cornered tricorne, was usually carried under the arm. Ladies wore a tall headdress—the fontange—consisting of tiers of wired lace decorated by ribbons and lappets.

Until the early 1770s, French control of fashion was complete. It was in France where the trades and professions vital to fashion were established: dressmaking, tailoring, wig making, haberdashery, millinery. Textiles for these crafts were varied and luxurious. They were beautiful but, unlike their 16th-century counterparts, were painted, embroidered, or printed with dainty rather than large-motif designs and were decorated not with jewels but with lace ruffles, ruching, and ribbon bows. Silks, satins, taffetas, and velvets were preferred until the last three decades of the 18th century when—as a consequence of the infamous “triangular trade” of manufactured goods, slaves, and raw cotton carried on by Europeans, Africans, and Americans—fine cottons became readily available.

The Enlightenment caused fundamental changes in society during the 18th century. Men, for hundreds of years the peacocks of fashion, gradually ceded their position; men’s garments became less ornamental and changeable while women’s dress became the vehicle for fashionable display. As capitalism and ideas of democracy burgeoned, so did the middle classes, which were increasing in numbers and influence. These developments lead to a wave of egalitarianism in dress and a gradual end to the idea that richness and high fashion were the prerogative of the aristocracy.

Thus, during the 18th century men continued to dress elegantly, but changes in their costume style were gradual and limited. The *habit à la française*, the French term for the suit consisting of coat, waistcoat, and knee breeches, had become accepted wear. There was a trend away from brightly coloured satins and velvets toward darker, more sombre cloth materials. The cut of the *habit* also became subdued; there was less decoration, and the style fitted the figure more closely. Wigs were worn through the 1780s, in many and varied styles, but became smaller and less elaborate as time passed; powder was used for much of this time. The tricorne hat remained the style of this century.

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Woman wearing corset and hoop skirt, Meissen porcelain figurine, German, 1741; in the Victoria and...

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

A rigid corset continued to slenderize the waist and a framework petticoat to define the shape of the skirt. In the early decades this was a hoop skirt, circular in section and very full. A popular style of gown worn over this was the sack (*sacque*), which had been derived from the informal house dress of the early years of the century. In France this style was often called the *robe volante*. From a low, wide neckline the gown flared out freely over the hoop petticoat. By 1720–25 the fullness was concentrated at the back in two deep box pleats sewn to the neckband, while the gown was waisted at the front. This was the *robe à la française*.



Marie-Antoinette, mixed-method colour print on two sheets of paper by Jean-François Janinet, print...

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, (Austin and Irene Young Trust by exchange AC1996.127.1), www.lacma.org

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Toward mid-century the hoop framework gradually changed shape to become oval. Then known as a *panier* (“basket”), it consisted of a basket form on each hip tied in at the waist by tapes. Soon the frame became so wide that women found it difficult to negotiate a doorway or a sedan chair, so a collapsible folding panier was devised, made only of whalebone hoops connected together by tapes. The years 1750–75 saw the most elaborate and outrageously decorated panier gowns, a riot of ruffles, flounces, and ribbon bows. It was also the time of ridiculously high, overdecorated, and powdered wigs. Cosmetics of all forms, many containing white lead, mercury, and other injurious chemicals, were copiously used, a reintroduction of the 16th-century practice.



Queen Marie Antoinette, also known as The Muslin Portrait, oil on canvas by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,...

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Timken Collection (1960.6.41)

By the 1770s a reaction to this excess was beginning in England, where simpler gowns with a framework petticoat were worn, and the fullness of the skirt was drawn to the back. A sash encircled a high waistline, and a soft fichu, or light scarf, was draped around the neck. These gentler yet elegantly feminine styles gradually spread throughout Europe and were finally accepted in France, although a 1783 portrait of Marie-Antoinette in such a gown angered the public, who claimed that her use of muslin—a fabric not produced in France—undermined the French textile industry.

For centuries children had been dressed as miniature adults, but in the 1770s there was a marked divergence from this established custom. Children, especially boys, began to be dressed in more comfortable garments suited to their age. Girls’ dresses were rather like the easier styles of their mothers at this time, but boys were dressed in a shirt and ankle-length trousers, the waistband of which was buttoned to the shirt. This costume, in which the wearing of trousers as fashionable dress antedated its introduction for adults by a generation, was oddly entitled a skeleton suit.

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Colonial America



Historical interpreter Stephen Seals explains what life was like for children, working adults, and...

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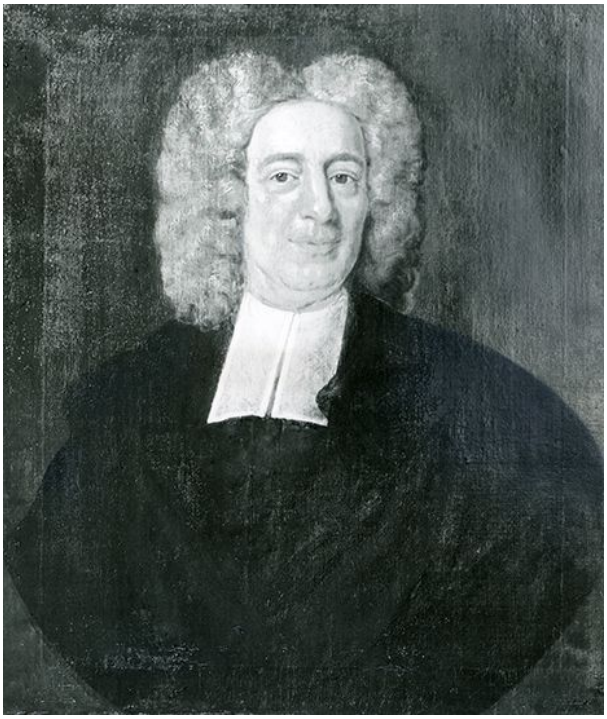
North America was colonized by settlers from northern and western Europe. These settlers brought with them habits and ideas in dress that were characteristic of their places of origin, but their clothes were also influenced by the climate of the part of the country to which they had come. For example, the earliest settlers, the Spanish, arrived in Florida in 1565. There, as well as in their later settlements in Texas and California, the climate was not very different from that of Spain, so that the colonists continued to wear Spanish styles. In contrast, colonists farther north in New England experienced harsher winters than they had been accustomed to and so found a greater need than they had in England to wear furs and skins.



Capt. John Smith, engraving.

North Wind Picture Archives

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Cotton Mather, portrait by Peter Pelham; in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society,...

Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

Many colonists thought it important to preserve class distinctions in all areas. Because of this, they passed many sumptuary laws that proscribed what members of the different classes could purchase or own; protocol in dress was a visible expression of their determination to maintain their heritage. Similar laws restricting dress were also passed for religious reasons, reflecting some of the areas of conflict that led to the English Civil Wars (1642–51). In America, as in England, plain dress and rich dress became, in effect, the respective symbols of the Puritan and the Cavalier, respectively. Many Virginia colonists leaned toward the Cavalier; Puritan ideas prevailed in Massachusetts. The Puritan penchant for simpler dress had begun before their departure for America. Having moved overseas, they continued to omit such extravagances as fine brocades, rich laces, ribbons, and feathers.

Probably the greatest change in clothing in America, as opposed to Europe, took place in the everyday working costume, with the Americans wearing heavier and warmer clothing made of stronger and stouter materials. The distinguishing characteristic of all clothes listed in the inventories of the colonization companies is their wearing quality, and the terms “heavy cloth” and “strong durable stuff” are often encountered. Men and boys wore comfortable, durable jackets and breeches, for example, made from deerskin and buckskin tanned to the consistency of fine chamois with the use of animal brains, a process the colonists had learned from the Indians.

For many English colonists the early years were hard. Most people made their own clothes, cultivating flax and cotton and raising sheep for wool. Clothes for everyday wear were plainer versions of those worn back in England. Best clothes were kept for Sundays and holidays; such garments lasted a long time, and most colonists were therefore wearing styles considered old-fashioned in England. For example, men wore breeches full at the waist, a doublet and jerkin, and a hip-length, loose overgarment that had been fashionable in Europe in the later 16th century. This was the mandilion, derived from the medieval tabard. It was now a loose jacket with free-hanging sleeves. It had been adopted by the Puritans, whose version was generally lined with cotton and fastened with hooks and eyes. By mid-century the buff coat had also become a staple garment among colonists in New England. Originally a military coat made of hide, it was durable and warm; it was cut simply in four sections, with or without sleeves.

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The everyday dress of women was a short gown of durable material, with a full skirt over a homespun petticoat, covered by a long apron of white linen. The more stylish dress was longer and made of finer material. It often had the virago sleeve—full at elbow and shoulder and drawn in at intervals by strings of narrow ribbon—that appears in most 17th-century portraits of American women and children.

Stockings were either knitted or cut from woven cloth and sewn to fit the leg. They were attached to men’s breeches by points, or strings, which were also used to secure other garments; later, sashlike garters replaced points. Both men and women wore stout leather shoes with medium heels. Men also wore French falls, a buff leather boot with a high top wide enough to be crushed down. After 1660 the jackboot, a shiny black leather boot large enough to pull over shoe or slipper, replaced the French falls; oxfords of black leather were worn by schoolchildren.

Both men and women wore a steeple hat of felt or the more expensive beaver. Men also wore the montero cap, which had a flap that could be turned down, and the Monmouth cap, a kind of stocking cap. Women of all ages wore a French hood, especially in winter, when it was made of heavy cloth or fur-lined; this hood, tied loosely under the chin, is seen in many portraits of the time. Sometimes the steeple hat was worn on top of the hood.

Dutch settlements, including New Netherland and New Amsterdam (later New York City), were founded in the 1620s. The settlers in these areas were industrious and tolerant, mixing harmoniously with colonists from other nations. They created a wealthy community but placed no restrictions on dress for sumptuary or religious reasons. Their attire was, as it had been in the Netherlands, of high quality and fashionable but not ostentatious.

French colonists, like the Dutch, were assisted by their home government with provisions and equipment to found settlements. Eastern Canada was one area of colonization, and another, which the French called Louisiana, was established on the lower reaches of the Mississippi River. Early French settlers made their own fabrics and clothes and bartered with indigenous peoples for animal skins and pelts, with beaver predominating in Canada and deer in Louisiana.

By 1700 Americans were dressing fashionably, and the distinctions between colonists of one nation and another were no longer very noticeable. Americans who were well-to-do followed the current fashions from Europe, and the main differences in attire were between city dwellers and those from rural areas. Many of the latter still made their own clothes from homespun and woven fabrics, but the former could afford to import luxury fabrics and follow the fashion trends. Fashion dolls and costume plates now reached America, and it was possible to be au courant with the latest modes.

In the first half of the 18th century, English colonists tended to follow English fashions, but the American Revolution altered this attitude. During the war there were severe restrictions on imported goods, and, when the war was over and independence had been won, most Americans did not return to buying their clothes from England; they went directly to the source of fashion—Paris.

Anne Wood Murray

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The Ottoman Empire



Mehmed I, miniature from a 16th-century manuscript illustrating the dynasty; in the Istanbul…

Courtesy of Istanbul University Library

From the early 12th century the Byzantine Empire had begun its slow decline in the face of the Turkish advance. In 1324 or 1326 the Ottoman Turks captured Bursa, on the opposite side of the Sea of Marmara from Constantinople, and this city became the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. In 1453, Constantinople itself fell to the Turks. By then the fashions of each culture had been influencing one another for many years. From the Turks had come the wearing of the caftan and trousers; the Byzantines contributed beautiful silks, jeweled embroideries, and cloth of gold. The Turks adopted this richness of attire with such enthusiasm that, by the 16th century, sultans were trying to stem the tide of luxury in dress, as western Europe had long been attempting to do, by the passing of sumptuary laws forbidding the wearing of these materials and decoration except by the privileged few.

From the 15th century until the modernization of Turkey soon after 1918, the basic garments of the general population changed comparatively little. Although a Europeanization movement had begun about the middle of the 19th century, this was a slow process, affecting mainly the dress of the upper strata of society and that of the urban population. For many years such attire was a blend of styles from western Europe worn together with traditional Ottoman garments.

Traditional men’s dress comprised a shirt, trousers, jacket, and boots. The trousers were of the very full, baggy type (similar to the Middle Eastern *chalvar*), fitting tightly only on the lower leg. A deep waist sash, the *kuşak*,

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bound the body over the junction between trouser and shirt. The jacket was a short one, worn open, and was decoratively embroidered. In cold weather a caftan would be worn on top of these garments. The only difference between the clothing worn by the average member of the population and those in a higher social class was that the garments of the latter would be made from richer, more decorative fabrics and that a long caftan would be worn on top. Sometimes more than one such coat was worn, with or without sleeves.

The traditional Turkish cap, the tarboosh, resembles an inverted flower pot and is made of cloth or felt. Similar to the fez, a term believed to have derived from the Moroccan town of that name, this cap was for centuries under the Ottoman Empire bound around the brow with a turban. The cap was made part of the national dress of the Turks during the 19th century and remained so until it was proscribed when Turkey became a republic in 1923. It is still worn by Muslims of both sexes in the Middle East.

The dress for women in the Ottoman Empire was very similar to that worn by Muslim women in the Middle East. It consisted of a knee-length, white, sleeved chemise (*gömlek*) and long drawers tied at the waist (*dislik*). The usual full trousers (*chalvar*) were accompanied, as in men’s dress, by a decorative waist sash (*kuşak*). Over these garments a waistcoat (*yelek*) and long gown (*anteri*) were worn. Backless slippers were worn indoors. Outdoors the enveloping cloak (*tcharchaf*) and veil (*yashmak*) were obligatory, and decorative pattens (*kub-kobs*) kept the elegant slippers out of the mud of the streets.

The Ottoman Empire extended its control westward in Europe over the Balkans and as far as Hungary, where masculine dress was strongly influenced by Turkish styles. Until well into the 18th century men in these non-Muslim areas wore the dolman over the *mente* (both are styles of caftan), together with trousers, boots, and a fur-trimmed hat known as the *kucsma*. Dress for women in these areas, however, followed the current styles of western Europe.

Europe and America: 19th and 20th centuries

The 19th century



Beau Brummell, engraving by John Cooke after a portrait miniature, 1844.

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum; photograph, J.R. Freeman & Co. Ltd.

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The influence of national features in dress had been declining since about 1675 and by 1800 had become negligible; from then on fashionable dress design was international. The character of the feminine wardrobe stemmed from Paris, the masculine from London. The English gentleman was established as the best-dressed in Europe, the lead being set by elegants such as Beau Brummell, whose clothes were copied by the prince regent himself (later King George IV). Brummell was so concerned with fit that he had his coat made by one tailor, his waistcoat by another, and his breeches by a third. The neckcloth was so elaborate and voluminous that Brummell's valet sometimes spent a whole morning getting it to sit properly.

It was during this period (*c.* 1811–20) that English modes for men became everywhere accepted as correct, even in Napoleonic France (the top hat, for example, became almost universal). Men's dress slowly became stereotyped, etiquette having laid down detailed regulations for the attire to be worn for different occasions, for different times of day, and by the various social classes. The tailcoat, waisted and padded on the chest, was de rigueur, accompanied by a waistcoat and close-fitting trousers called pantaloons, which were first buckled at the ankle and later, after 1820, strapped under the instep.

French dominance of women's fashion was absolute during the 19th century. Parisian designs of garments and accessories were publicized throughout Europe and America by fashion plates and journals. At first originating from England and France, after 1850 they came from all European countries, and the Americans introduced some of the later world-famous journals—for example, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

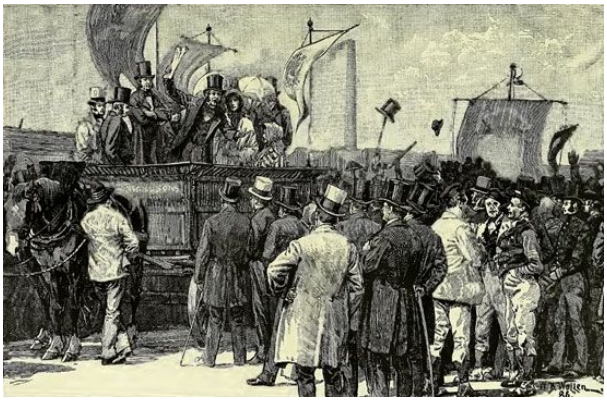


Detail from The Coronation of Napoleon, oil painting by Jacques-Louis David, 1806–07; in the Louvre, ...

J.E. Bulloz

Until about 1820 women's dress continued to reflect the Neoclassical styles initiated in the era of the French Revolution. These fashions were supposedly based upon the Classical dress of ancient Greece. Ladies wore loose, draped, high-waisted gowns in white or pale colours in imitation of those depicted by white marble statuary. Corsets became less restrictive or were abandoned. Hair was dressed in Classical fashion, usually in a chignon bound with ribbons. The Romantic age of the 1830s brought back more colour, a tighter waistline at a more natural level, fuller skirts, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and complex high coiffures surmounted by large-brimmed hats or bonnets.

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Chartist demonstration, Kennington Common, 1848; illustration from The Life and Times of Queen...

From The Life and Times of Queen Victoria, volume II, by Robert Wilson (Cassell and Company, Limited, 1900)

From the 1840s men's dress lost most of its colour: black, shades of gray, blue, and white were the norm. The formal black tailcoat was now reserved for evening attire. For daywear, tailcoats of various types were worn with a waistcoat and the new looser style of trousers over boots. Neckwear was plainer, consisting of a collar with neck scarf. The three-piece lounge suit, with a jacket instead of a tailcoat, was introduced in the 1850s for informal occasions. In the last two decades of the century a more countrified attire consisting of Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers became popular. The name was taken from the nom de plume Diedrich Knickerbocker, which was adopted by Washington Irving for the comic history of New York that he wrote in 1809. In Irving's history, the Knickerbockers were a family of Dutch settlers in 17th-century New Amsterdam who were depicted in George Cruikshank's illustrations for the book wearing the fuller style of breeches.

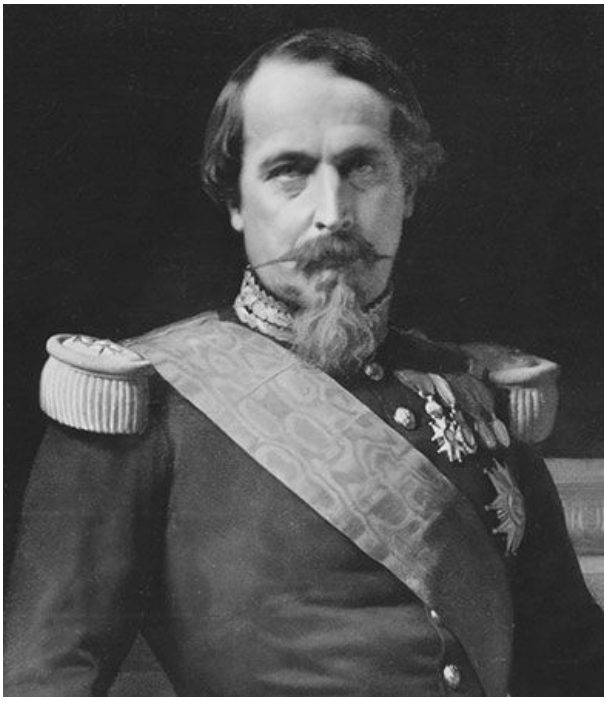


Some dress fashions of the 1850s.

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The increasing levels of informality extended to hat design, with new styles being introduced. The bowler, also known by such other names as the colloquial British "billycock" and, in America, the derby, was introduced about 1850 by the hatter William Bowler. The straw boater, originally meant to be worn on the river, became popular for all summer activities. The homburg felt hat, introduced in the 1870s and popularized by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), stemmed from the German town of that name. Also popular at this time for sports and country wear in Britain was the deerstalker cap immortalized in the illustration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.

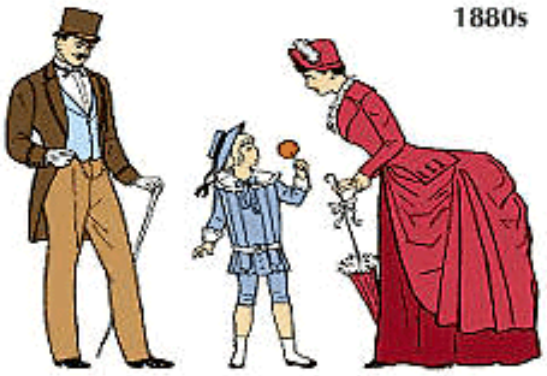
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Napoleon III, detail of a portrait by Hippolyte Flandrin; in the Versailles Museum.

H. Roger-Viollet

Between about 1840 and 1870, long, bushy side-whiskers were fashionable. These whiskers, which left the chin clean-shaven, were called burnsides or sideburns, after the U.S. Civil War general Ambrose Burnside. Other popular beard styles included the imperial, a small goatee named for Napoleon III, and the side-whiskers and drooping mustache known as the Franz Joseph in honour of the head of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After 1880 men tended to be clean-shaven or to wear a mustache only.



Some dress fashions of the 1880s.

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The second half of the 19th century was a time of prosperity in Europe. Despite wars and upheavals, the bourgeoisie dressed fashionably and luxuriously. The styles worn by men and women acted as foils to one another—the men’s dress sombre, dignified, and only slowly changing, the women’s dress colourful and changing ever faster in a kaleidoscope of modes. The technical advances and the capability for mass manufacturing that had been brought about by the Industrial Revolution were making fashionable dress available to a rapidly expanding public. The invention of the sewing machine and the jacquard loom (used for weaving patterned textiles), the development of the ready-to-wear trade, the growth of new marketing techniques, and the establishment of department stores were revolutionizing the fashion scene.

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Charles Frederick Worth, detail of an engraving

BBC Hulton Picture Library

In France, haute couture had taken over control of the fashion-design world. The Englishman Charles Frederick Worth, who had emigrated to Paris in 1845, was the first of the great couturiers and one of the most influential. He introduced the practice of preparing a collection of designs, and he was the first to use live models rather than mannequins to display designs to buyers. Although only the rich could afford designer fashions, the styles gradually reached the ready-to-wear market (in a modified form that nonetheless prompted the introduction of new fashions for the upper classes), and haute couture came to lead women’s fashions.



Women holding a cage crinoline of metal hoops, detail from a cartoon in Punch, English, 1865; in the ...

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Crown copyright

Women’s dress from 1840 onward was dominated by a boned corset and framework underskirt. The fullness of the skirt was at first achieved by adding more layers of petticoats, leading to the crinoline petticoat of 1850.

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Named after the materials from which it was originally made (Latin: *crinis*, “[horse] hair”; *linum*, “thread”), this petticoat was, like its predecessors the farthingale and the hoop, a heavy underskirt reinforced by circular hoops, in this case of whalebone. By 1856 the weight of the petticoats became intolerable, and the cage crinoline was invented. This was a flexible steel framework joined by tapes and having no covering fabric. Sold at two shillings and sixpence, it was immensely popular and worn by most classes of society, at least for Sunday dress. It became the target for cartoonists, who took full advantage of all possible ludicrous situations, but this in no way lessened its popularity.



A bustle under a ruffled dress, French, 1885; in the Brooklyn Museum, New York City.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.2007.211.773a-d), www.lacma.org

Gradually, in the 1860s, the shape of the crinoline changed, metamorphosing into that of the rear bustle, which was fashionable in the 1870s and ’80s. Only in the 1890s did the skirt return to a relatively slender silhouette, but there was no letup in the constrictive corset, which was then at its most painful and harmful stage. In general, the styles of the late 19th century were feminine and elegant but not easy to wear. They restricted natural movement with their multiple layers, extensive decoration, and sheer quantity of material.

Women’s hair, always worn long during the century, was from about 1840 to 1870 dressed in a severe style in which it was drawn back tightly from a centre parting into a bun at the back. Later styles were dressed high on top and in a chignon or ringlets behind. The bonnet in many and varied guises was the chief head covering and was replaced by dainty hats only in the 1870s and ’80s. Throughout the 19th century cosmetics were worn mostly by actresses, and rarely if ever by “respectable” women.

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Not all the women of the 1880s, however, wore these fashionable clothes. Followers of the Aesthetic movement in England wore looser garments with enormous sleeves supposed to resemble those worn by women in early Florentine paintings. The humorous journals of the period made great play with the contrast between fashionable and Aesthetic modes.



A Currier & Ives rendition of the bloomer costume influenced by Amelia Jenks Bloomer.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digital. id. cph 3b49861)

An earlier attempt to introduce a more comfortable, practical attire for women had been made by the American Elizabeth Smith Miller. The costume she designed was enthusiastically advocated by her friend Amelia Jenks Bloomer, a journalist and writer. In 1851 Bloomer traveled to London and Dublin to publicize this dress reform. The outfit, consisting of a jacket and knee-length skirt worn over Turkish-style trousers, was regarded as immodest and unfeminine. It was greeted with horror and disdain, and the idea quickly died. What has survived is the name *bloomers*, which originally referred to Miller’s full trousers but was later applied to long knickers worn as underwear in the early 20th century. Miller’s garment was also the inspiration for “rationals” (sometimes also known as bloomers), the knickerbockers worn by women for cycling and sport in the 1890s.

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Boy dressed in the Little Lord Fauntleroy style, 1908.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Children’s clothes varied according to their age. Older boys wore clothes similar to those of young men, but some young boys wore so-called “Little Lord Fauntleroy” velvet suits with lace collars and cuffs and with their hair dressed long in curls. Little girls wore dresses that were shorter than those of adult women but otherwise similar.

James Laver

The early 20th century

There were dramatic changes in women’s dress during the first decade of the 20th century. Men, however, continued to wear a black frock coat with gray striped trousers for formal day wear and a black tailcoat and trousers with a white waistcoat for evening wear if ladies were present. In America, the tuxedo, or dinner, jacket was beginning to provide a more comfortable alternative; the term derives from the fact that the style was introduced in the millionaire district of Tuxedo Park in the state of New York for wear at small dinner parties. Three-piece lounge suits were worn for less formal day functions, and for country and sportswear the Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers remained popular.

Women’s fashions changed considerably between 1900 and 1910. The fashion of 1900 was characterized by an S-shaped silhouette that was achieved mainly by a boned corset that was long and rigid in front and shorter at the rear. The costume was extremely feminine, overdecorated with flounces and lace, frills and embroidery. Picture hats were set upon pompadour coiffures, affixed with hat pins. The neckline was high, and the skirt reached the ground.

From 1907 important changes began to take place in feminine attire. The French couturier Paul Poiret led the field in designing an exotic range of glamorous creations in brilliant colours. Poiret claimed that he had freed

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women from the corset, and he did, in fact, help replace it with the brassiere. However, his skirts were restrictive, making it difficult to walk. His hobble skirt, in which the material was very narrow at the ankle, was particularly aptly named. Poiret's other designs included Eastern-style trousers, Neoclassical gowns, and the so-called lamp shade skirt.



The American dress reform movement arose in the mid 19th century.

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Working women tended to wear a blouse and skirt. During the war years of 1914–18 a minority of women were in uniform, but far more worked in factories, in offices, as postal carriers, and in other jobs previously performed by men. They sometimes wore trousers. Shorter skirts also appeared by 1915, which showed even more of the ankle than Poiret's slit skirts of 1912.

After the war ended in 1918, styles began to change. Men's dress changed more slowly than women's, but the trend toward informality was accelerated. The tailcoat was reserved for weddings and dances, the lounge suit became the accepted city wear, and sports jackets and gray flannel pants were popular for casual attire. After 1925 trousers commonly featured turnups (cuffs in America), and the legs became increasingly wider; the popular "Oxford bags" measured 20 inches at the hem. Knickerbockers had become fuller and longer, overhanging the kneeband by four inches, and were thus known as plus fours, which remained fashionable until at least 1939. Knitted pullovers (often homemade) in coloured (fair isle) patterns replaced the waistcoat for informal occasions. Technical advances had improved water-repellent fabrics, and most men had a raincoat. A favourite style was the trench coat, a classic design based upon the coats worn by World War I officers in the trenches. Men were mostly clean-shaven, and their hair was short. A peaked cap accompanied leisure wear, and a trilby felt hat the lounge suit. (The latter was named after George du Maurier's novel; the American term was *fedora*, named for the heroine of a play.)

For women in the 1920s, freedom in dress reflected the new freedoms opening up for them to take up careers, to study at college, and to enter professions. The skirt hemline rose steadily to become, at its shortest in the years 1925–27, knee-length. With the short skirts, flesh-coloured stockings were introduced, made from expensive silk or more practical lisle or wool (other colours were also worn). Corsets disappeared to be replaced by brassieres and elasticized girdles. Probably the most revolutionary change was in the coiffure. Hair was first cut shorter by trendsetters even before the war, and by the 1920s the shingle and the more severe Eton crop were being adopted by many women. Marcel waving, introduced in the late 19th century, and the later "perm," or permanent wave, also became popular at this time. The new hairstyles were accompanied by the cloche hat, which closely covered the head.

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Bebe Daniels wearing an elegant ensemble during the filming of Silver Dollar, c. 1932.

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Femininity returned to fashion in the 1930s. The ideal figure was still slim, but the waistline returned to its natural level. The skirt lengthened again until it reached about eight inches above the ground for the daytime and ground length for the evening. For evening styles, the backless dress and halter neckline became fashionable. The bias cut of material, a mode introduced in the 1920s by the French couturiere Madeleine Vionnet, was widely adopted in the 1930s and was very effective with the longer skirts, creating a figure-hugging style which then flared out at the hemline. Brassieres were redesigned to emphasize the breasts.

By this time there was available a great variety of specialized clothing for different occasions, including for sport and leisure or resort activities, such as swimming, skiing, and golfing. The cosmetics industry had also expanded and became big business in the 1930s; most women routinely carried face powder, lipstick, eye shadow, and tweezers in their handbags for running repairs.

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Lucille Ball in Her Husband's Affairs (1947).

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The high proportion of men and women in uniform in the years 1939–45 strongly influenced the civilian dress style. For women, garments had square padded shoulder lines, and skirts were a practical knee length. Trousers were widely worn by both civilian and military women. After World War II, trousers and trouser suits remained popular, especially between 1945 and 1970. In Europe, the war years meant austerity and clothing coupons; fashion did not have a high priority. Shortages of materials both during and immediately after the war led to the introduction of “utility” styles, especially in Britain, where government rulings insisted on the removal of all superfluous trimmings, including pockets and pleats, and restricted the fullness of garments in order to economize on the amount of fabric used.

Post-World War II



The woman who would eventually become a fashion icon learned to sew in an orphanage.

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Many changes took place after the late 1940s. The rules of etiquette governing what type of dress should be worn by whom and when had virtually disappeared. Long before the turn of the 21st century, it had become the accepted dictum to “do your own thing,” to choose clothes, whether for day or evening or for formal or holiday wear, according to personal inclination. Wide-scale advertising, especially on television, and modern marketing brought fashion within the reach of all, in both cost and availability. Leading manufacturers and department

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stores purchased original designs from fashion houses and then manufactured ready-to-wear versions in quantity at various price levels to suit the entire population.

One of the most influential factors in the development of modern fashions was the technological advance in the production of synthetic textile fibres. Permanent pleating, colour-fast dyes, crease resistance, preshrinking, and other easy-care characteristics of synthetics made it possible to manufacture clothing more quickly and less expensively. Although traditional natural fabrics remained popular, they were almost completely replaced by synthetics in the manufacture of some garments. Women’s stockings made of nylon, for example, first went on sale about 1940 and, after World War II, soon supplanted all other types. Similarly, the underwear industry was revolutionized when latex thread was employed to fabricate comfortable two-way stretch garments.

The keynote of the changes in men’s dress has been casualness. The tailored jacket and vest were steadily ousted and were often replaced by casual jackets and sweaters. Many men accepted little distinction between day and evening attire.



Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in Roman Holiday (1953).

© 1953 Paramount Pictures Corporation; photograph from a private collection

Soon after the war the French designer Christian Dior introduced his 1947 “Corolle” collection, quickly dubbed the “New Look” by the American press. Here was a return to femininity: a long, full skirt with a bouffant ruffled petticoat beneath, a slender waist, and sloping shoulders. This set the style for the next decade or so of feminine fashions and was supplanted only by the rise of the miniskirt in the 1960s. These very short skirts were introduced first in London by Mary Quant and several years later by André Courrèges in Paris. Starting at the knee, the hemline over time crept upward to the upper thigh, a style that had only been made feasible by the introduction of nylon tights (panty hose in the United States). In 1970 other lengths appeared—the midi and the maxi—but neither was as popular as the mini.

After 1945 much emphasis was placed on clothes for the young. Throughout most of history, children and young people had worn basically the same type of clothes as their parents. After 1945 a complete teenage wardrobe evolved, comprising garments that tended to be either extremely tight-fitting or baggy. Blue jeans, once scorned

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as the attire of prisoners, were popularized by films with young, charismatic stars; perhaps the most important example was *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), in which James Dean played the jeans-clad protagonist.

By the late 20th and early 21st century, youth-oriented fashions also included looks inspired by musical styles such as punk rock, glam rock, hip-hop, grunge, heavy metal, and country (or “roper,” in contrast to the “doper” styles preferred by fans of rock music). Additional influences included Gothic novels (“goth”) and science fiction and computers (“geek”). There were also styles typified by wealthy, conservative young adults—“Sloanie” or “Sloane ranger” attire in England (named for the fashionable Sloane Square district of London and initially epitomized by Lady Diana Spencer, the future Diana, princess of Wales); and the “preppie” look in the United States, named for the apparel preferred by students at private college-preparatory schools.

Doreen Yarwood

The history of Eastern dress

Western-style clothes, which many people find convenient to wear during business hours, are now a common sight in many large cities of eastern and southern Asia. This is particularly so in Japan, which since 1945 has built a reputation as an international fashion centre. However, in Japan, China, and India, traditional dress is often preferred for occasions such as weddings.

Over the centuries, notably in Korea and Japan, traditional styles of dress have reflected a marked Chinese influence, though both countries developed characteristic styles of their own. In like manner, modes of dress in the South Asian subcontinent have been a source of inspiration to some of the countries of Southeast Asia and of the East Indian archipelago.

China

By the Shang dynasty (*c.* 1600–1046 BCE) Chinesesericulture—the raising of silk worms and the production of silk—had become very sophisticated. Textile production was associated with women; as a proverb put it, “men till, women weave.” Already by the Dong (Eastern) Zhou dynasty (770–256 BCE) the art of weaving complex patterned silks was well advanced.

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The Legendary Emperor Yao, hanging silk scroll depicting the emperor in a pao, or robe, by Ma Lin…

Courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

By the end of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) virtually every technique of weaving now known had already been invented in China. Han bas-reliefs and scenes painted on tiles show men and women dressed in wide-sleeved kimono-like garments which, girdled at the waist, fall in voluminous folds around their feet. This *pao* robe changed form but continued to be worn in China until the end of the Ming dynasty in 1644. Other traditional garments include the tunic or jacket, worn by both sexes over loosely cut trousers. For colder weather, clothing was padded with cotton or silk or lined with fur.

Chinese records indicate that at least as early as the Tang dynasty (618–907) certain designs, colours, and accessories were used to distinguish the ranks of imperial, noble, and official families; the earliest visual evidence of these emblematic distinctions in dress is to be found in Ming portraits. In some of these, emperors are portrayed in voluminous dark-coloured *pao* on which are seen the 12 symbols—dragon, pheasant, sun, moon, constellation, fire, mountain, axe, chalice, water weed, millet, and *fu*—that from time immemorial had

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been designated as imperial insignia. Other Ming portraits show officials clothed in red *pao* that have large bird or animal squares (called “mandarin squares,” or *pufang*) on the breast, as specific bird and animal emblems to designate each of the nine ranks of civil and military officials had been adopted by the Ming in 1391.



Panel from an imperial Chinese silk dragon robe embroidered in silk and gold thread, 17th century,...

Lee Boltin

When the Manchus overthrew the Ming and established the Qing dynasty (1644–1911/12), it was decreed that new styles of dress should replace the *pao* costume. The most formal of the robes introduced by the Manchus was the *chaofu,* designed to be worn only at great state sacrifices and at the most important court functions. Men’s *chaofu* had a kimono-style upper body, with long, close-fitting sleeves that terminated in the “horsehoof” cuff introduced by the Manchus, and a closely fitted neckband over which was worn a detached collar distinguished by winglike tips that extended over the shoulders. Below, attached to a set-in waistband, was a full, pleated or gathered skirt. Precisely stipulated colours and pattern arrangements of five-clawed dragons and clouds, waves, and mountains were specified for the *chaofu* of emperors, princes, nobles, and officials; the emperor’s lofty rank was clearly identified by the bright yellow of his robe and the 12 imperial symbols emblazoned on it. All other ranks wore “stone blue” *chaofu* decorated in accordance with prescribed rules about the number, type, and arrangement of dragon motifs.

Only women of very high rank were permitted to wear *chaofu*. Women’s robes were less commodious than the men’s and were cut in long, straight lines with no break at the waist. The narrow sleeves with horsehoof cuffs of these *chaofu* robes and the arrangement of their dragon, cloud, mountain, and wave patterns were essentially the same as those of the so-called dragon robes discussed below. They were clearly differentiated from the dragon robes, however, by their capelike collars and by flaring epaulets that gradually narrowed as they continued downward and under the arms. Stole-like vests, always worn over women’s *chaofu*, were also a distinguishing feature of this costume.

Qifu, or “dragon robes” (*longpao*) as they were usually called, were designed for regular court wear by men and women of imperial, noble, and official rank. The *qifu* was a straight, kimono-sleeved robe with a closely fitted neckband that continued across the breast and down to the underarm closing on the right side, the long tubular sleeves terminating in horsehoof cuffs. The skirt of the *qifu* cleared the ground to permit easy walking and in men’s garments was slit front and back as well as at the sides to facilitate riding; the extra slits were the only

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feature that distinguished the *qifu* of men below the rank of emperor from those of their wives. All *qifu* were elaborately patterned with specified arrangements of dragons, clouds, mountains, and waves, to which were added Buddhist, Daoist, or traditionally auspicious motifs. Distinctions in rank were indicated by the colours of the robes and by slight variations in the basic patterns; however, because of the large number of personages who wore *qifu*, these distinctions were not always easily recognizable. Emperors' *qifu*, either yellow or blue, were always distinguished by the 12 imperial symbols.

The informal Manchu *changfu*, a plain long robe, was worn by all classes from the emperor down, though Chinese women also continued to wear their Ming-style costumes, which consisted of a three-quarter-length jacket and pleated skirt. Men's *changfu*, cut in the style of the *qifu*, usually were made of monochrome patterned damask or gauze; women's *changfu* had wide, loose sleeves finished off with especially designed sleevebands decorated with gay woven or embroidered patterns.

The declining Qing dynasty was swept aside in 1912, and China began to emulate the world outside its boundaries. Gradually this was reflected in dress. By the 1920s upper-class women, in particular, had adopted a compromise attire. This was the *qipao*, better known in the West by its Cantonese name, *cheongsam*, or as a "mandarin dress." The *qipao* had developed from the *changfu*. A close-fitting dress made from one piece of material, the *qipao* was fastened up the right (or more rarely, the left) front side. It had a high mandarin collar, and its skirt was slit up the sides to the knee. It was made of traditional Chinese fabrics, padded in winter for warmth. At first it was a long dress, but the hemline gradually rose.



Jiang Qing and Mao Zedong, 1945.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (neg. no. LC-USZ62-126856)

In mainland China the communist revolution of 1949 brought strict directives on dress. Styles were to be the same for everyone, whether man or woman, intellectual or manual labourer. The drab uniform that resulted, often known as a "Mao suit" because it was favoured by Mao Zedong, was a blend of peasant and military

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design. It consisted of a military-style high-collared jacket and long trousers. Men’s hair was short and usually covered by a peaked cap. Women’s hair was longer and uncurled. Shoes had flat heels. No cosmetics or jewelry were permitted. Traditional Chinese cotton was used to make the garments; colour designated worker, soldier, or cadre. After about 1960 a small degree of Westernization set in, permitting a variation in colour and fabric. Dresses were introduced for women.

After Mao’s death in 1976, China experienced a distinct, if gradual, loosening of communist directives. In terms of fashion, the increasingly entrepreneurial economy created both the desire for and the financial means to obtain a wider variety of dress, especially in urban areas.

Japan



Haniwa Garden of Heiwadai Park, Miyazaki, Japan.

Minoru Warashina/Bon

The earliest representations of dress styles in Japan are to be found in 3rd- to 5th-century CE clay grave figures (*haniwa*), a few of which show men and women wearing meticulously detailed two-piece costumes consisting of crossed-front jackets that flare out over the hips, the men’s worn over full trousers, which, banded above the knees, hang straight and loose beneath; women’s jackets were worn over pleated skirts.

Two-piece costumes appear to have been worn regularly during the 7th and 8th centuries, the jackets of this period being called *kinu*, the men’s trousers *hakama*, and the women’s skirts *mo*.

However, during the Nara period (710–784) Japanese court circles adopted Chinese court dress, the most characteristic feature of which was the long kimono-style *pao* garment. It is clear that emblematic colours and patterns as well as the *pao* style were borrowed from China because modern court dress in Japan, which has been little changed since the 12th century, has many purely Chinese characteristics.

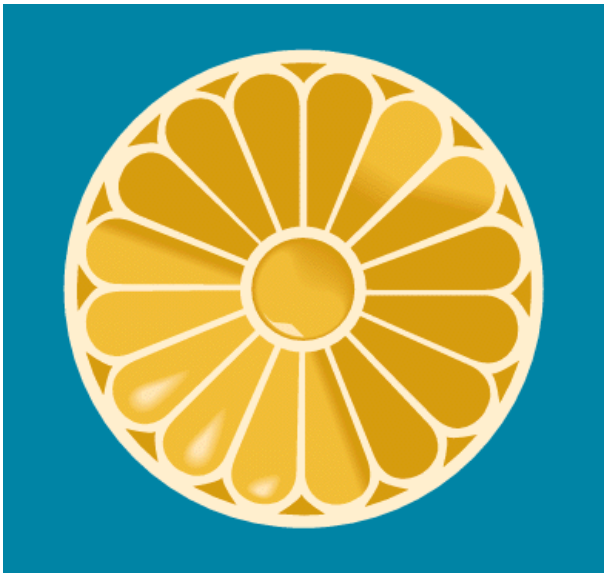
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Hirohito wearing a sokutai at his enthronement ceremony, 1926.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (reproduction no. LC-USZC2-724)

The most important court costumes of Japan are the *sokutai* of the emperor and the *jūni-hitoe* of the empress, which are worn only at coronations and at important ceremonial functions. Similar costumes are worn by the crown prince, by princes and princesses of the blood, by high officials, and by ladies-in-waiting.



The 16-petaled chrysanthemum mon, or crest, of the Japanese imperial family.

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The *sokutai* ensemble begins with a cap-shaped headdress of black lacquered silk (the *kammuri*), which includes an upright pennon decorated with the imperial chrysanthemum crest. The voluminous outer robe (*ho*) is cut in the style of the Chinese *pao* but is given a distinctively Japanese look by being tucked up at the waist so that the

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skirt ends midway between the knees and the floor. This *ho* robe is yellow (the colour worn only by emperors and their families in China), and it is patterned with *hō-ō* birds and *kilin*(Japanized versions of the mythical Chinese *fenghuang* and *qilin*). The outer and most important of three kimonos worn under the *ho* is the *shitagasane*, which has an elongated back panel that forms a train some 12 feet (4 metres) long. The *shitagasane* is made of white damask, as are the baggy white trousers (*ue-no-hakama*) that are a characteristic feature of the *sokutai* costume. All these garments are purely Japanese in style. However, the ivory tablet (*shaku*) carried by the emperor when wearing the *sokutai* was undoubtedly inspired by tablets of jade that Chinese emperors carried as symbols of their imperial power.

The outermost garment of the empress's *jūni-hitoe* costume is a wide-sleeved jacket (*karaginu*) that reaches only to the waist and has a pattern of *hō-ō* bird medallions brocaded in colours of the empress's choice. Attached to the waist at the back of the *karaginu* is a long, pleated train (*mo*) of sheer, white silk decorated with a painted design. The outer kimono (*uwagi*) is very large to accommodate the many layers of kimono worn under it, and it has an abnormally long skirt that is worn swirling out around the wearer's feet. This, too, is made of rich brocade, its design and colours being a matter of personal taste. Under the *uwagi* is a plain purple kimono, and under that is a robe known as the *itsutsu-ginu*. The *itsutsu-ginu* has multiple bands of coloured silks (usually five) attached at the edges of the sleeves, at the neckline, and at the hem, giving the appearance of several robes worn one over another.

No special interest attaches to the *hitoe* kimono worn under the *itsutsu-ginu* or to the *kosode* worn next to the body, but the divided skirt (*naga-bakama*) that completes the costume is an extremely picturesque garment. Made of stiff, red cloth and fastened high up under the breasts, the *naga-bakama* covers the feet in front and is carried out in a train in back. Worn with the *jūni-hitoe* is an elaborate coiffure known as *suberakashi*, and affixed directly over the forehead are special hair ornaments consisting of a lacquered, gold-sprinkled comb surmounted by a gold lacquered chrysanthemum crest.

Other types of dress formalized in the 12th century were the *noshi* (courtiers' everyday costumes) and the *kariginu*, worn for hunting. Both of these garments were voluminous hip-length jackets worn with baggy trousers tied at the ankles. As political control shifted from the emperor to the newly formed shogunate, it became necessary to devise special costumes for the samurai, the caste from which the shogun drew his power. The *hitatare*, the formal court robe of samurai, and the *suo*, a crested linen robe designed for everyday wear, were characterized by V-shaped necklines accentuated by inner-robe neckbands of white.

Several centuries later the samurai adopted the *kamishimo*, a striking jumperlike garment, with extended shoulders and pleated skirt-trousers, which was worn over the *hitatare*. This costume probably inspired a later fashion of wearing skirt-trousers (*hakama*) over a full-length black kimono, which, together with the short black *haori* coat, was until fairly recently the approved formal attire for Japanese men.

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The Courtesan Itsutomi Holding a Plectrum, Japanese woman wearing an uchikake, or flowing outer...

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; photograph, A.C. Cooper Ltd.

The basic kimono style adopted by Japanese women during the Nara period has remained amazingly close to that of the *pao* robes worn by the women of Tang China. The practice of wearing a short-sleeved kimono (*kosode*) as an outer garment and belting it in with a narrow sash (*obi*) originated during the Muromachi period (Ashikaga shogunate; 1338–1573), when samurai women began to wear a voluminous outer kimono (*uchikake*) as a kind of mantle. Eventually, the *kosode* came to be worn only by married women, the long-sleeved *furisode* being reserved for young unmarried girls. The wide *obi*, tied in a variety of ways and fastened with an often intricately carved toggle (netsuke), was adopted in the early 18th century, and it was at this time also that women first began to wear the short *haori* coat, which has come to be an important feature of Japanese women's dress.



Hishikawa Moronobu's Beauty Looking Back exemplifies the changing lifestyles, artwork, and fashion...

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The *yukata*, which is worn by both men and women, is a cotton kimono with stencil-dyed patterns (usually done in shades of indigo) that was originally designed for wear in the home after a bath. Because it has become accepted practice to wear *yukata* on the street on warm summer evenings, the cottons designed for them have become increasingly handsome.

Traditional Japanese footwear includes sandals, slippers, and wooden clogs (*geta*) worn with the *tabi*, a sock with a separate section for the big toe.

Korea

Some of the basic elements of modern traditional dress in Korea, the *chŏgori* (jacket), *paji* (trousers), and *turumagi* (overcoat), were probably worn at a very early date, but the characteristic two-piece costume of today did not begin to evolve until the period of the Three Kingdoms (*c.* 57 BCE–668 CE). During the early part of this period both men and women wore tight, waist-length jackets and short, tight trousers; and it is believed that the Koreans' traditional fondness for white clothing dates from this period.

Korean records state that special costumes for court wear modeled after those of Tang China were adopted during the 7th century; but Chinese influence on Korean dress at this period is verifiable only in changes that occurred in the everyday costumes of the nobility. Noblewomen formerly had worn tight trousers and jackets (which continued to be worn by the poorer classes); now they began to appear in wide-sleeved, hip-length jackets, belted at the waist, and in full-length skirt-trousers. The corresponding dress for noblemen was a narrower, tunic-style jacket, cuffed at the wrists, belted, and worn with roomy trousers bound in at the ankles. The most striking evidence of Chinese influence at this time is to be seen in the style of the *turumagi* overcoat worn by noblemen, pictured in fresco paintings as a voluminous full-length garment made almost exactly like the *pao* robe of Tang China. One-piece robes were not worn in Korea until the late 13th century, when the court was forced to adopt Mongol dress; after Mongol domination ended in 1364, Koreans wore the one-piece robe only at wedding ceremonies.

In the 15th century, Korean women began to wear pleated skirts (*chima*) and longer *chŏgori*, a style that was undoubtedly introduced from China. Noblewomen wore full-length *chima* to indicate their social standing and began gradually to shorten the *chŏgori* until eventually it attained its present length, just covering the breast. This style made it necessary to reduce the fullness of the skirt somewhat in order to make it possible to extend it almost up to the armpits, which remains the fashion.

The adoption of Chinese-style mandarin squares as emblems of rank for civil and military officials (who wore them on their *turumagi*) appears to have been the only notable example of Chinese influence on men's dress at this period. Otherwise, few changes were made until 1894, when class distinctions were relaxed by government decree. It was at this time that the *turumagi* was shortened and narrowed to its present form.

The most picturesque costume of modern Korea is that of men of leisure, *yangban*, who are past 60 years of age. The *yangban* wear white almost exclusively, their costumes consisting of full trousers tied at the ankles with ribbons, over which is worn a short *chŏgori* and a fitted vest and, over all, a loose *turumagi*, which falls just below the knees and is tied at the breast. The patriarchal appearance of the *yangban* (who is usually bearded) is accentuated by a black horsehair hat, its flat brim and high crown giving him somewhat the appearance of an American colonial Pilgrim Father. Younger men wear a similar costume (though not the hat) in gray, light blue, or light brown.

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Performers at the Arirang Festival in P'yŏngyang, North Korea.

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Women’s costumes feature a bolero-style white *chŏgori*, finished off at the neck by a figured band or ribbon that ties from left to right, and overlaid by high-waisted *chima*, which, in formal costumes, is a full, billowing garment made of beautifully patterned silk.

South Asia

The Hindu population of South Asia comprises about 2,000 castes, each of whose members wear distinct clothes and ornaments. Thus, the subject of dress cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in a few paragraphs. Some of the principal features of upper-class Hindu and Muslim dress and the history of their development can, however, be sketched briefly.



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Couple wearing long strips of cloth, the precursors of the sari and dhoti, c. 200–175 bce; detail of ...

P. Chandra

The ancient origin of two of the most characteristic garments of modern India, the dhoti worn by men and the sari worn by women, is verifiable in sculptured reliefs as far back as the 2nd century BCE. Both men and women are pictured wearing a long piece of cloth wrapped around the hips and drawn between the legs in such a fashion that it forms a series of folds down the front. The upper bodies of both men and women were unclothed, though women sometimes wore a narrow cloth girdle around the waist. Men are pictured wearing large turbans, women with head scarves that fall to the hips. Women also wore a great amount of jewelry—bracelets, anklets, and girdles—but men’s ornaments consisted solely of bracelets.

No major change in costume appears to have been made until the 12th century, when the Muslims conquered northern and central India. In this part of the subcontinent, radical new dress styles were adopted to conform with Muslim practice, which required that the body be covered as completely as possible. Men’s costumes thereafter consisted of the *jamah*, a long-sleeved coat that reached to the knees or below and was belted in with a sash, and wide trousers known as *isar*. These garments and the *farji*, a long, gownlike coat with short sleeves, which was worn by priests, scholars, and high officials, were made of cotton or wool, silk being forbidden to men by the Qurʾān. Somewhat modified, these traditional styles continue to be worn by upper-class men of Pakistan and Bangladesh.



Woman wearing a ghaghra and coli, Rajasthani miniature, late 18th century.

P. Chandra

Women’s garments consisted of wide-topped trousers snugly fitted around the calves of the legs, a long shirtlike garment, and a short, fitted outer jacket. Silk was not forbidden to women; and highborn women, forced to spend their lives in seclusion, devoted much time and money to their costumes. During the Mughal dynasty (*c.* 1526–1748), emperor Akbar’s Rajput wives became inspired by the profusion of luxurious fabrics available in

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India and designed a graceful new style of dress that Muslim women adopted forthwith. This costume consisted of an open-front pleated skirt, or *ghaghra*, worn with a long apronlike panel over the front opening, and a short-sleeved, breast-length blouse called a *coli*. The *ghaghra* and *coli* continue to be basic elements of Muslim women’s dress, the loose front panel replaced by the traditional sari, which is worn as an overgarment, one end draped around the hips, the other carried up over the shoulder or head.



Woman wearing a sari, detail of a gouache painting on mica from Tiruchchirāppalli, India, c. 1850;...

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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Dress in southern India was little affected by Muslim rule in the north. The dhoti continued to be worn by most Hindu men (it was traditionally forbidden to some castes) and the sari by women. Some additions to these traditional costumes have been adopted. On formal and semiformal occasions many Hindu men wear a long, full-skirted, white cotton coat, which reaches to the knees and buttons down the front from top to bottom, over jodhpur-style white trousers; most Hindu women wear a short *coli*-style blouse under a sari or with a long skirt under a loose waist-length bodice.

Pauline SimmonsDoreen Yarwood

The nature and purposes of dress

Perhaps the most obvious function of dress is to provide warmth and protection. Many scholars believe, however, that the first crude garments and ornaments worn by humans were designed not for utilitarian but for religious or ritual purposes. Other basic functions of dress include identifying the wearer (by providing information about sex, age, occupation, or other characteristics) and making the wearer appear more attractive. Although it is clear why such uses of dress developed and remain significant, it can often be difficult to determine how they are achieved. Some garments thought of as beautiful offer no protection whatsoever and may in fact even injure the wearer. Items that definitely identify one wearer can lose their meaning in another time and place. Clothes that are deemed handsome in one period are declared downright ugly in the next, and even uniforms—the simplest and most easily identified costume—are subject to change. What are the reasons for such changes? Why do people replace garments before they are worn out? In short, why does fashion, as opposed to mere dress, exist?

There are no simple answers to such questions, of course, and any one reason is influenced by a multitude of others, but certainly one of the most prevalent theories is that fashion evolved in conjunction with capitalism and the development of modern socioeconomicclasses. Thus, in relatively static societies with limited movement between classes, as in many parts of Asia until modern times or in Europe before the Middle Ages, styles did not undergo a pattern of change. In contrast, when lower classes have the ability to copy upper classes, the upper classes quickly instigate fashion changes that demonstrate their authority and high position. During the 20th century, for example, improved communication and manufacturing technology enabled new styles to trickle down from the elite to the masses at ever faster speeds, with the result that fashion change accelerated.

Furthermore, the idea that fashion is a reflection of wealth and prestige can be used to explain the popularity of many styles throughout costume history. For example, royal courts have been a major source of fashion in the West, where clothes that are difficult to obtain and expensive to maintain have frequently been at the forefront of fashion. Ruffs, for example, required servants to reset them with hot irons and starch every day and so were not generally worn by ordinary folk. As such garments become easier to buy and care for, they lose their exclusivity and hence much of their appeal. For the same reason, when fabrics or materials are rare or costly, styles that require them in excessive, extravagant amounts become particularly fashionable—as can be seen in the 16th-century vogue for slashing outer garments to reveal a second layer of luxurious fabric underneath.

Similarly, it has been thought that impractical fashions demonstrate that the wearer does not need to work, and indeed would find it difficult to do so. Examples include the Chinese practice of binding women’s feet, making it difficult for the women to walk far. Yet this did not prevent working-class Chinese families from binding their daughters’ feet. In Europe, corsets were worn not only by aristocratic women but also by middle-class and working-class women. Contrary to popular belief, 19th-century women’s clothing does not prove that a woman’s husband or father could afford to hire servants to work for her. Men have also worn their share of impractical apparel; notable examples include the necktie and the high, powdered wig.

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The foregoing discussion does not attempt to be a comprehensive introduction to even one influence on fashion; it merely tries to suggest some of the ways in which costume can be analyzed and interpreted. Similar treatments of four other factors affecting fashion follow.

Display of the human physique

Male display

Male sexual display at its most blatant can be seen in parts of Papua New Guinea, where the men wear penis sheaths (usually made from a dried gourd) that may be 15 inches long or in some cases even longer. The purpose is to impress both women and enemies, by showing that the warriors are more virile than their opponents. The competition between warriors has led to a great variety of additional adornments such as boars’ tusks, animal skins, animal teeth, claws, feathers, shells, metal pieces, bamboo, and the use of paint. In general, the more naked a society is, the more body paint, tattoos, or scarification is employed to denote the warriors and the chiefs, with each rank having its individual pattern. In addition, in many societies, only after an individual has reached a certain age or satisfied some other requirements is he allowed to wear certain colours or decorations. Sometimes each item of adornment represents a specific achievement, so that the more decorations a man wears, the better, braver, or more powerful he is shown to be.

Martial display in Europe reached its apex with the tournaments of the Middle Ages. The participants spent fortunes on enameled armour, ostrich plumes, pearl-embroidered tabards, ornate saddles and horsecloths, fine mounts, a retinue of grooms and squires, weapons, tents, and other materials. It was a formalized kind of warfare, and foreign ambassadors were invited to be impressed by the martial display of the king or prince. An audience of women was also essential, as they had to confer favours on the knights, and the lady of the tournament had to present the bejeweled prize to the overall victor.

In terms of its blatant attempt to draw attention to the phallus, the European codpiece was analogous to the penis sheath of New Guinea. During the 14th century men started shortening their tunics until they reached the crotch. A special pouch, the codpiece, had to be created to fill in the gap between the hose, as the latter comprised a pair of individual cloth tubes—one for each leg—that tied directly to a belt at the waist. Initially the codpiece was not padded, but it grew larger until by the 1540s the Spanish were wearing a vertical, or erect, codpiece. This style—and its spread to other parts of Europe—may be seen to be a reflection of Spain’s new dominance in the Western world and its new wealth.

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Gentleman in ruffled shirt with neckcloth, oil portrait by an unknown French artist, c. 1810; in the ...

Philadelphia Museum of Art, the John G. Johnson Collection

A covered-up look dominated male attire from the 17th until the late 18th century, when the Neoclassical movement led to tighter, more revealing clothes. Skin-coloured knee breeches in buckskin became the rage, and waistcoats shrank, so that from the waist downward the male form was again on show. A naked style affected the army too; uniforms became skintight, and the male form was displayed most obviously in the Napoleonic period. Under Queen Victoria the frock coat concealed all such shocking elements as legs, waist, and genitals, which remained concealed until after World War II, when skintight jeans became the means for a renewal of male sexual display. By the 1990s, Lycra had entered at least some men’s wardrobes in the form of leisure wear, its clinging characteristics providing even more extreme “naked” outlines. Thus, since the 14th century in the West, the degree of exposure of the male body has alternated between total concealment and complete display.

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Female display



Woman wearing a burka.

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Views on female display have also changed dramatically. In “primitive” societies living in hot climates, almost total nudity was acceptable for both sexes. However, with the rise of Christianity, and 600 years later of Islam, covering of the female form became compulsory. Meant to simultaneously demonstrate and inculcate modesty, both religions exhorted women to be clothed from head to foot. St. Paul wrote to Timothy “that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion.” St. Peter expressed similar views, and St. Augustine of Hippo censured makeup as well, although he allowed that a woman might adorn herself slightly to please her husband if the practice was carried out in private. Traditions of modest dress are expressed today in the apparel worn by women who are conservative Muslims or members of “plain” Christian groups such as the Amish and Mennonites.

From 381, when Theodosius I made Christianity compulsory in the Roman Empire, Christian views on modesty dominated women’s apparel. These views not only mandated the covering of the body and hair but also maintained that the fabric and fasteners of the covering itself should be modest. Later, Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into two parts, and Constantine I the Great founded another capital, Constantinople. Eastern Rome on the Bosporus adopted the Eastern taste for coloured and patterned fabrics, and after 552, when the emperor Justinian I established the first silk-manufacturing industry in Europe in Constantinople, the city became renowned for its luxurious silks and brocades.

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Meanwhile, western Rome suffered barbarian invasions and centuries of disorder until it broke up into separate kingdoms. Once these new courts had established themselves, they, too, started trying to outdress and outshine one another. The Anglo-Saxons, for example, wore loose clothes, but after the Norman Conquest (1066) members of the court started wearing tighter-fitting clothes. This was achieved by cutting the garments on the bias and lacing them under the arm, with the result that the female figure in particular was outlined very obviously. Although abbots and bishops objected vehemently, the new fashion for displaying the physique continued unabashed. This style, which also featured exaggerated cuffs reaching the ground, dominated the 1100s. By the 1340s necklines had become so wide that they were almost off the shoulder. Moreover, the adoption of buttonholes from the Moors around 1250 had introduced the art of tailoring. Clothes could now be cut very tight and still be easily removed. Shaped seams evolved, and the possession of a shapely figure was essential for both men and women. By 1400 women’s waistlines were higher, emphasizing the bosom and making the differences between the sexes obvious. The exposure of the female neck became almost permanent in court circles thenceforth.

It was not until the end of the 18th century, when Neoclassical taste came to the fore, that the exposure of the female form was again a major issue. When the English novelist Fanny Burney visited Paris in April 1802, her modest wardrobe was found too full: “Three petticoats! no one wears more than one! Stays? everybody has left off even corsets! Shift-sleeves? not a soul now wears even a chemise.” In an homage to the styles of Classical Greece and Rome, women adopted high-waisted, diaphanous gowns.

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a more covered-up style developed. But the Victorians were not as prudish as people think. Crinolines revealed the ankles, and corsets emphasized female curves. Evening dresses had very low necklines. The narrower skirts of the 1870s and 1880s allowed the outline of a woman’s legs to be seen.

Also influential in the late 19th century was the vogue for women’s sports, and some freer clothes evolved in consequence. Amelia Bloomer’s reformed trousers (“bloomers”) for women did not become fashionable, but they were adopted by women gymnasts, sea bathers, and cyclists. Shorter skirts were designed for walking, golfing, shooting, and tennis.

The acceptance of less cumbersome costumes for sports affected swimwear, and, once the designer Coco Chanel made suntans the rage, exposure of the female form became almost total. Sunbathing suits revealed more of the female anatomy than any costume since antiquity: whereas in the past ladies had gone to great lengths to avoid being browned by the sun (for a sunburned complexion was the mark of a peasant), there was an almost universal vogue for sun worship in the West from the 1920s until the 1980s, when heavy sun exposure began to be warned against, with doctors stressing the dangers of skin cancer. The backless evening dresses of the 1920s and ’30s required a suntan to display and in cut were practically bathing costumes with skirts. The 1950s launched the bikini, which provided minimal coverage for women and was followed by the acceptance of even total nudity on some designated beaches.

Government regulation of dress

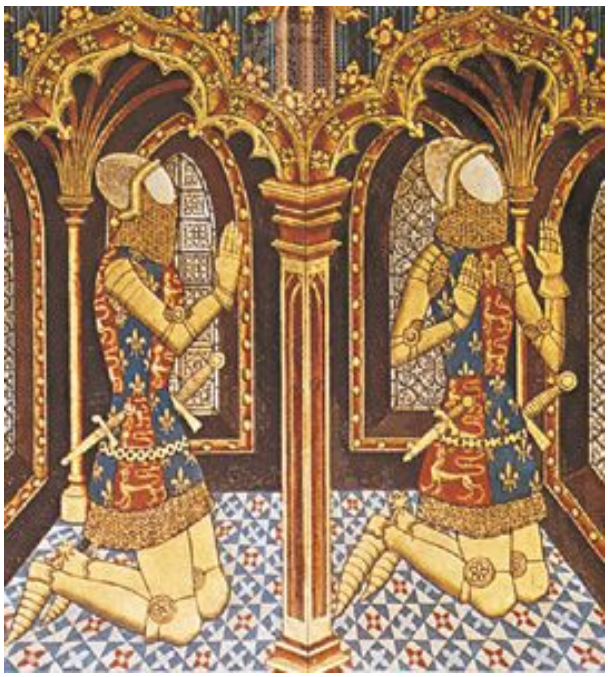
Sumptuary laws

For thousands of years governments have tried to control spending by employing sumptuary laws. The first such law under the Roman Republic, the Lex Oppia, was enacted in 215 BCE; it ruled that women could not wear more than half an ounce of gold upon their persons and that their tunics should not be in different colours. Most Roman sumptuary laws tried to control spending on funerals, banquets, and festivals; there were no further laws on dress until the emperor Tiberius ruled that no silken clothing should disgrace men. Such a soft fabric as silk was considered fit only for women; the Roman male was to be a tough and severe character who did not wear

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Eastern imports. By 303 CE, however, Diocletian’s Edict on Maximum Prices mentions the *sarcinator*, a professional tailor who made only silk clothing, and so the business seems to have expanded despite Tiberius’s efforts to contain it.

It was not until the 1300s, when national governments had been established in France and England and city-states formed in Italy, that sumptuary laws appear in any number in the rest of Europe. In 1322 Florence forbade the wearing of silk and scarlet cloth by its citizens outside their houses. In 1366 Perugia banned the wearing of velvet, silk, and satin within its boundaries. The impact of such legislation can be seen in the wardrobe of Francesco di Marco Datini, a merchant of Prato. Despite the fact that he had business houses from Avignon to Spain as well as in Italy and was the equivalent of a modern millionaire, his finest gowns in 1397 were made of woolen cloth, their only hint of luxury provided by a taffeta lining. The law did not permit the commercial classes to own garments made of velvet, brocade, silk, or other rich fabrics.



Sons of Edward III wearing heraldic gipons, detail of a copy of a wall painting from St. Stephen's...

Courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London

Whereas Roman sumptuary law had applied equally to all women and all men, in western Europe the laws were more discriminatory, restricting the richest fabrics, furs, and jewels to the aristocracy. Thus, in England in 1337 Edward III ruled that no one below the rank of knight could wear fur. The same law also decreed that only English-made cloth could be worn in England. This dual role of ensuring class distinctions and banning imported goods was common in sumptuary law. In 1362 Edward III issued another edict aimed at preventing people from dressing above their station. Merchants could wear the same clothes as an esquire or knight, but only if they were five times wealthier. Yeomen and below could not wear silk, cloth of silver, chains, jewels, or buttons (which were then made of expensive materials or gems). They were not to wear the short coats or tunics worn by noblemen. Carters, plowmen, shepherds, oxherds, cowherds, swineherds, dairymen, and farm labourers were to wear only russet cloth at a shilling a yard and undyed blanket cloth. Thus, farming folk were restricted to natural wool tone and russet, and they continued wearing such colours into the 20th century. Only lords might wear cloth of gold and sable furs. Esquires and gentlemen were not allowed velvet, satin, ermines, or satin damask unless they were sergeants of the royal household. Women could not wear gold or silver girdles, nor foreign silk head covers.

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Edward V (lower right) with his father, Edward IV, and mother, Elizabeth Woodville, illumination...

Courtesy of the Lambeth Palace Library; photograph, Royal Academy of Arts

Similar laws explicitly stipulating the fabrics, styles, and colours to be worn by men and women of particular social or economic standing were issued in Spain and France as well. Furthermore, in France and England it was often claimed that such laws were issued for moral or religious reasons. For example, in 1583 Henry III of France decreed that in order to regularize and reform clothing, which was dissolute and superfluous, the wearing of precious stones and pearls on garments was restricted to princes. The richest fabrics allowed were velvet, satin, damask, and taffeta, all without any enrichment beyond silk linings. Bands of embroidery in gold and silver were banned. Henry III stressed that God was angry because he could not recognize a person’s quality from his clothes. A similar excuse had been given in England in 1463 when Edward IV issued a sumptuary law on the grounds that God was displeased by excessive and inordinate apparel.

In the 17th century sumptuary laws were increasingly used to restrict foreign imports and had begun to have less to do with status than with trade wars. France, for example, was trying to set up its own silk industry and therefore banned Italian silks and English cloth. Italy and Spain, however, continued issuing class restrictions on dress until 1800.

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Other types of legislation



Peter I.

Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum; object no. SK-A-116

In Russia, laws regarding apparel were used to modernize the country. As soon as Tsar Peter I the Great returned from working in the dockyards of Amsterdam and London in 1697–98, he began requiring his princes to shave their beards. Then in 1701 he ruled that his subjects must adopt Western dress. Peter’s command applied to both men and women but at first affected only members of the court and government officials. Merchants and peasants continued to wear traditional garments into the 19th and sometimes even the 20th century.

A similar attempt to modernize a nation through its clothing was made by Kemal Atatürk (Mustafa Kemal) in Turkey in 1925. Laws were passed banning the fez and requiring Panama hats to be worn. To some Turks, wearing Western attire instead of traditional garments was akin to heresy, but Atatürk succeeded in changing dress, in the cities at least. With the rise of fundamentalist Islam in the late 20th century, Western styles of dress again became a subject of controversy in Turkey. Some Turks demanded that women be required to cover their heads and men to wear beards. The government responded by imposing fines on women who wore head scarves as a Muslim gesture.

In other countries, clothing legislation has been passed to ensure the preservation of local identity and dress in the face of encroaching foreign cultures. In Iran, for example, following the Islamic revolution in the late 1970s, laws that had encouraged Western customs and clothing were replaced by ones that enforced traditional Islamic codes of dress and behaviour (*see* Shariʾa).

In the West the most recent government restrictions of clothing occurred during World Wars I and II, when shortages prompted the establishment of clothes-rationing systems.

Rebellion

Rebellion against the established or dominant fashion has been a constant theme in the history of costume. The reasons prompting such rebellion are various: to shock, to attract attention, to protest against the traditional

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social order, to avoid current trends and thereby avoid looks soon considered dated or outmoded. One of the earliest forms such rebellion has taken—and continues to take—has been that of women adopting male dress. By donning men’s clothing, women have been able to challenge the status quo and participate in activities or roles traditionally perceived as masculine.

There are several examples of women in antiquity who put on male armour to go to war. Herodotus cites Queen Tomyris of the Massagetai, who led her troops against Cyrus II the Great of Persia and killed him in 529 BCE. The ancient author also records Queen Artemisia I, who commanded her own ships in 480 BCE when she sailed with the navy of Xerxes I, who valued her opinions highly. Queen Boudicca of the Iceni tried to drive the Romans out of Britain in 61 CE. The Saxon king Alfred appointed his daughter Aethelflaed commander in chief of the west, and she successfully liberated Derby and Leicester from the Danes in 917–918. In 1080 Duchess Gaita of Lombardy rode in full male armour alongside her husband.



Joan of Arc at the Coronation of Charles VII in Reims Cathedral, by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres,...

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The practice of women wearing male dress has not always been accepted, however. In 1429 Joan of Arc adopted male clothes, and this wearing of male dress was included among the charges against her when she was tried by the bishop of Beauvais. The bishop said her claim that God, angels, and saints had told her to don male attire was contrary to the modesty of women, was prohibited by divine law, and was forbidden by ecclesiastical censure on pain of anathema. If her voices had told her to dress as a man, why had she chosen such short, tight, and dissolute garments as tabards, cottes, and elaborate hats, and why had she cut her hair like a man, with a shaved neck? Joan confessed to error and was ordered to wear women’s clothing. Nevertheless, she reverted to male dress in prison, which the bishop claimed was a sign that she had reneged on her confession. On further questioning, Joan recanted her confession and was condemned to be burned.

It has not been only for reasons of war or to defend their homes that women have adopted men’s clothing. British historian Henry Knighton complained in 1348 that some 40 or 50 English ladies were arriving at

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tournaments in male dress and armour to parade in the intervals, so that they might share in the glory of a tourney. Knighton claimed that God so was incensed at this behaviour that he sent thunderstorms to drive the women indoors.

Women also have found men’s clothing more suitable for certain types of work. The women pirates Mary Read and Ann Bonney donned trousers when at sea until their capture in 1720. In 1745 Britain’s Hannah Snell joined the marines and served in India for five years, wearing a male uniform all the time. It was not only a wish for action that made some women adopt male clothing. In the 19th century there were several examples of women doing so in order to earn a man’s wages, which were higher than a woman’s. In 1818 Helen Oliver in Scotland met a plowman who turned out to be a woman, so she copied the idea and, borrowing her brother’s suit, went off to work as a plasterer. By 1866 Helen Bruce had been working in male dress since she was 17, as an errand boy, shop lad, ship’s stoker, tallyman at a mine, and clerk. As women were not allowed to become doctors, Miranda Barry dressed as a man and obtained a degree in medicine at the University of Edinburgh. She then became an army surgeon and ended her career as inspector general of military hospitals in Canada in 1857, after serving in the Crimean War.

Cultural rebels have often chosen to adopt antique fashions in order to reject, or at least distance themselves from, their own time or to identify with what they believed to be a superior age. Sometimes such borrowings from the past become a widely accepted fashion, as in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when Neoclassicism was at its height and women’s gowns were supposed to be based on ancient Greek and Roman styles. More frequently, however, the practice remains on fashion’s fringes. It has nevertheless persisted since ancient times.



Messalina, marble bust; in the Uffizi, Florence

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

The Roman empress Messalina Valeria led a revolt against Roman dress by wearing Greek clothes herself (coloured Ionic chitons fastened down the arms with bejeweled brooches) and by wearing her hair in Greek hairnets and tiaras. Her male friends similarly wore coloured Greek cloaks instead of the chalky white Roman toga. More recently, in the 1960s and ’70s, many young men and women in the United States adopted the “granny” look. By wearing garments that had been popular 100 years before, such as collarless shirts, long, high-

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waisted cotton dresses, and small, metal-rimmed “granny” glasses, the wearers expressed their disdain for the contemporary adult establishment and their dress.



Mona Lisa, oil on wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1503–19; in the Louvre, Paris.

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Artists have similarly often preferred older fashions, but this is usually because they wish to achieve an effect of timelessness. Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his *Treatise on Painting,* published long after his death, that art should avoid the fashion:

As far as possible avoid the costumes of your own day. . . . Costumes of our period should not be depicted unless it be on tombstones, so that we may be spared being laughed at by our successors for the mad fashions of men and leave behind only things that may be admired for their dignity and beauty.

He showed how to tackle the problem in his portrait*Mona Lisa*, by dressing her in a coloured shift that is loosely pleated at the neck instead of the tight clothes that were then popular.

This concept spread through western Europe over the following centuries. In the 17th century many rulers were depicted as Roman emperors in Roman armour, considered the ideal symbol for the age of absolute monarchy, and it became a sign of sophistication to look Roman in one’s portrait, even if the sitter was wearing a periwig at the same time. (People were reluctant to change their hairstyles to an antique manner, as they had to wear them to and from the artists’ studios.) In the 18th century, aristocrats had copies made of the clothes in their ancestors’ portraits to wear at masquerades and in their own portraits. Although the practice was a cultural revolt against the tyranny of contemporary fashion, the clothing was generally expressed with current tastes in mind.

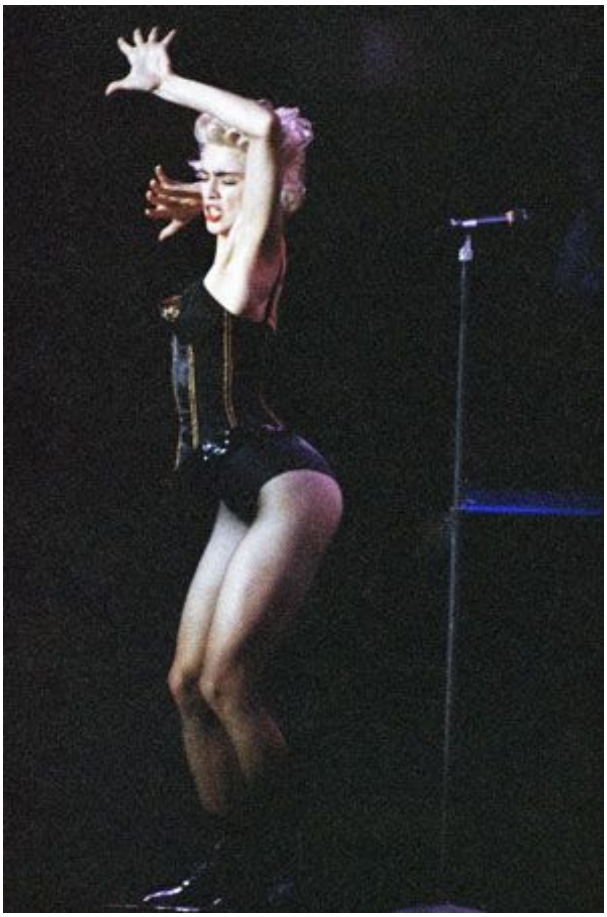
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Royal family portrait, August 22, 1951. (From left) Prince Charles, Queen Elizabeth, Princess...

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Artistic reform of dress in the 19th century was initiated by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, and by the 1860s the “Aesthetic” dress they promoted began to be adopted in sophisticated societies. The invention and widespread use of photography has effectively abolished any further need for the establishment of a specific clothing policy for art in opposition to that of high fashion. It has become acceptable for painters and sculptors—like photographers—to render contemporary fashions accurately. Extreme trends are still usually avoided, however, and portraitists of royalty often use uniforms and robes of orders of knighthood to confer a historical character.



The American singer, songwriter, and dancer pushed the boundaries for women in pop and rock music.

Frank Rumpenhorst—AP/REX/Shutterstock.com

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In 1783 Queen Marie-Antoinette was painted wearing a white muslin chemise dress—to the horror of the French silk industry (which considered the use of muslin an affront) and to the elderly and conservative, who considered the chemise an undergarment. Such use of underwear as outerwear has been recurrent in fashion history and has continued into modern times, as can be seen by the popularity of the bustier among young women in the 1980s and the slip dress among young women of the early 21st century.

Similarly, the desire to shock has remained a constant, especially among the young, who since World War II have had a significant influence on the fashion scene. Postwar teenagers have had both the money and the leisure time necessary to reject the established order and to devise a look of their own. Included among the styles they introduced are the T-shirts and jeans of the 1950s, the long-haired hippie look of the 1960s, the punk rock look of the late 1970s, the conservative preppie or Sloanie look of the 1980s, the grunge rock look of the 1990s, and, in the 2000s, looks based on the musical styles of emo and hip-hop.

Exotica

Like rebellion, the adoption of foreign elements has been a constant theme in the history of dress, and it too dates to antiquity. The first exotic fabric to reach the West was silk from China, which the Persians introduced to the Greeks and Romans and which has remained popular to the present. Another early import was the caftan coat, which is believed to have originated in Central Asia and which appeared among the Hittites, the Assyrians, and the Medes and Persians by 700 BCE. During the Hellenistic Age Greek tunics were introduced into the Middle East, but the caftan continued to be worn in Persia. The caftan eventually made its way to Russia, where it was described by the Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan in 922 CE when he saw a Viking chief’s funeral on the Volga; the chief’s body was dressed in a caftan of cloth of gold with golden buttons and a gold cap trimmed with sable. The Turks also adopted caftans, and they then brought the style to Hungary and Poland when they conquered those lands. Subsequently, there were occasional vogues for Turkish dress in Italy, Germany, and England, and the caftan became the model for later Western garments featuring fitted backs and open fronts.

The Japanese kimono entered the Western wardrobe in the 17th century. The English called the garments “Indian gowns,” probably because the East India Company imported them, but the Dutch more accurately called them “Japanese coats.” The garment was also termed a nightgown and a banyan and became fashionable for undress. The diarist Samuel Pepys bought himself an Indian gown on July 1, 1661, for 34 shillings. He further recorded that on Nov. 21, 1666, “I to wait on Sir Ph. Howard, whom I find dressing himself in his night-gown and Turban like a Turke.” Strictly speaking, the Indian gown was meant to be worn for informal, private occasions, but a superior like Sir Philip Howard could wear such clothing to receive underlings, though they had to be fully dressed to attend him. The first nightgowns were cut loose like the Japanese originals, but in the late 18th century they became more fitted and tailored like coats. Such dressing gowns have remained fashionable and are now known as housecoats, bathrobes, wraps, and negligees depending on the material used. Indian pajamas, a soft cotton suit consisting of trousers and a loose, fitted jacket fastened down the front, were also introduced into Europe in the early 17th century. They, too, have remained popular for undress, although the style has sometimes also been adopted for more formal wear.

Many foreign garments are copied or borrowed of necessity. For example, when the Europeans invaded the Americas, the English and the French were quick to adopt Native American moccasins because few of the settlers knew how to make shoes. Similarly, in Canada the indigenous snowshoe was essential footwear, and many hunters and trappers adopted fringe on their deerskin tunics as a practical embellishment that helped rain to run off the garment. When winter sports became fashionable in the 20th century, the padded boots and parkas of the Arctic peoples were copied.

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The modern Western wardrobe can include elements of Asian, African, and Native American dress. Similarly, non-Western cultures have adopted some Western garments, particularly the Western-style business suit. As improved transportation and communication technology effectively shrink the size of the world, foreign influences on dress will no doubt continue to be introduced with increasing speed and influence.

Diana Julia Alexandra de MarlyEB Editors

Additional Reading

General works

Broad histories of Western dress and clothing accessories, spanning many centuries of development, include FRANÇOIS BOUCHER and YVONNE DESLANDRES, *20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment*, new ed. (1987; also published as *A History of Costume in the West*; originally published in French, 1983); MILLIA DAVENPORT, *The Book of Costume*, 2 vol. (1948, reissued in 1 vol., 1976); PHYLLIS G. TORTORA and KEITH EUBANK, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 4th ed. (2004); JAMES LAVER and CHRISTINA PROBERT, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, new ed. (1982); RICHARD CORSON, *Fashions in Makeup: From Ancient to Modern Times* (1972), and *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years* (1969, reissued 1984); ALFRED RUBENS, *A History of Jewish Costume*, new and enlarged ed. (1973, reissued 1981); and CHRISTOPHER BREWARD, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (1995). More thematically oriented studies include MARGOT HAMILTON HILL and PETER A. BUCKNELL, *The Evolution of Fashion: Pattern and Cut from 1066 to 1930* (1967, reprinted 1987); C. WILLETT CUNNINGTON and PHILLIS CUNNINGTON, *The History of Underclothes*, new rev. ed., by A.D. MANSFIELD and VALERIE MANSFIELD (1981); DIANA DE MARLY, *Working Dress: A History of Occupational Clothing* (1986); and PENELOPE BYRDE, *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in Britain, 1300–1970* (1979).

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MADGE GARLAND, *Fashion* (1962); DIANA DE MARLY, *The History of Haute Couture, 1850–1950* (1980); ELIZABETH EWING, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, rev. ed. (1986); and FARID CHENOUNE, *A History of Men's Fashion* (1993).

For insights into the work of fashion designers, see CAROLINE RENNOLDS MILBANK, *Couture* (1985); IRVING PENN and DIANA VREELAND, *Inventive Paris Clothes, 1909–1939: A Photographic Essay* (1977). See also such biographies and autobiographies as DIANA DE MARLY, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture*, 2nd ed. (1990); PALMER WHITE, *Poiret* (1973); CHRISTIAN DIOR, *Christian Dior and I* (1957; originally published in French, 1956; also published as *Dior: The Autobiography of Christian Dior*); MARY QUANT, *Quant by Quant* (1966, reissued 1974); ELSA SCHIAPARELLI, *Shocking Life* (1954); and JANE MULVAGH, *Vivienne Westwood* (1998).

American dress

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Asian dress

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Social and psychological aspects of dress and the place of fashion in human culture are the subject of many works representing various disciplines. See JOHN C. FLÜGEL, *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930, reissued 1976); QUENTIN BELL, *On Human Finery*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (1976); ANNE HOLLANDER, *Seeing Through Clothes* (1978, reissued 1988); ELIZABETH WILSON, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985); and MARY ELLEN ROACH-HIGGINS, JOANNE B. EICHER, and KIM K.P. JOHNSON, *Dress and Identity* (1995).

Citation (MLA style):

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ARTICLE

Herodotus

(born 484 BCE?, Halicarnassus, Asia Minor [now Bodrum, Turkey]?—died *c.* 430–420) was the Greek author of the first great narrative history produced in the ancient world, the *History* of the Greco-Persian Wars.



Herodotus, detail of a Roman herm probably copied from a Greek original of the first half of the 4th …

Courtesy of the Soprintendenza alle Antichità della Campania, Naples

Scholars believe that Herodotus was born at Halicarnassus, a Greek city in southwest Asia Minor that was then under Persian rule. The precise dates of his birth and death are alike uncertain. He is thought to have resided in Athens and to have met Sophocles and then to have left for Thurii, a new colony in southern Italy sponsored by Athens. The latest event alluded to in his *History* belongs to 430, but how soon after or where he died is not known. There is good reason to believe that he was in Athens, or at least in central Greece, during the early years of the Peloponnesian War, from 431, and that his work was published and known there before 425.

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Herodotus, sculpture.

Carol M. Highsmith Archive/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-highsm-02111)

Herodotus was a wide traveler. His longer wandering covered a large part of the Persian Empire: he went to Egypt, at least as far south as Elephantine (Aswān), and he also visited Libya, Syria, Babylonia, Susa in Elam, Lydia, and Phrygia. He journeyed up the Hellespont (now Dardanelles) to Byzantium, went to Thrace and Macedonia, and traveled northward to beyond the Danube and to Scythia eastward along the northern shores of the Black Sea as far as the Don River and some way inland. These travels would have taken many years.

Structure and scope of the History

Herodotus's subject in his *History* is the wars between Greece and Persia (499–479 BCE) and their preliminaries. As it has survived, the *History* is divided into nine books (the division is not the author's): Books I–V describe the background to the Greco-Persian Wars; Books VI–IX contain the history of the wars, culminating in an account of the Persian king Xerxes' invasion of Greece (Book VII) and the great Greek victories at Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale in 480–479 BCE. There are two parts in the *History,* one being the systematic narrative of the war of 480–479 with its preliminaries from 499 onward (including the Ionian revolt and the Battle of Marathon in Book VI), the other being the story of the growth and organization of the Persian Empire and a description of its geography, social structure, and history.

Modern scholars disagree about whether Herodotus from the first had this arrangement in mind or had begun with a scheme for only one part, either a description of Persia or a history of the war, and if so, with which. One likely opinion is that Herodotus began with a plan for the history of the war and that later he decided on a description of the Persian Empire itself. For a man like Herodotus was bound to ask himself what the Persian-led invasion force meant. Herodotus was deeply impressed not only by the great size of the Persian Empire but also by the varied and polyglot nature of its army, which was yet united in a single command, in complete contrast to the Greek forces with their political divisions and disputatious commanders, although the Greeks shared a

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common language, religion, and way of thought and the same feeling about what they were fighting for. This difference had to be explained to his readers, and to this end he describes the empire.

A logical link between the two main sections is to be found in the account in Book VII of the westward march of Xerxes' immense army from Sardis to the Hellespont on the way to the crossing by the bridge of boats into Greece proper. First comes a story of Xerxes' arrogance and petulance, followed by another of his savage and autocratic cruelty, and then comes a long detailed description of the separate military contingents of the army marching as if on parade, followed by a detailed enumeration of all the national and racial elements in the huge invasion force.

Herodotus describes the history and constituent parts of the Persian Empire in Books I–IV. His method in the account of the empire is to describe each division of it not in a geographical order but rather as each was conquered by Persia—by the successive Persian kings Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. (The one exception to this arrangement is Lydia, which is treated at the very beginning of the history not because it was first conquered but because it was the first foreign country to attack and overcome the Greek cities of Asia Minor.)

The first section of Book I, the history and description of Lydia and its conquest by the Persians, is followed by the story of Cyrus himself, his defeat of the Medes and a description of Persia proper, his attack on the Massagetae (in the northeast, toward the Caspian), and his death. Book II contains the succession of Cambyses, Cyrus's son, his plan to attack Egypt, and an immensely long account of that unique land and its history. Book III describes the Persians' conquest of Egypt, the failure of their invasions to the south (Ethiopia) and west; the madness and death of Cambyses; the struggles over the succession in Persia, ending with the choice of Darius as the new king; the organization of the vast new empire by him, with some account of the most-distant provinces as far east as Bactria and northwest India; and the internal revolts suppressed by Darius. Book IV begins with the description and history of the Scythian peoples, from the Danube to the Don, whom Darius proposed to attack by crossing the Bosporus, and of their land and of the Black Sea.

Then follows the story of the Persian invasion of Scythia, which carried with it the submission of more Greek cities, such as Byzantium; of the Persians' simultaneous attack from Egypt on Libya, which had been colonized by Greeks; and the description of that country and its colonization. Book V describes further Persian advances into Greece proper from the Hellespont and the submission of Thrace and Macedonia and many more Greek cities to Persian might, then the beginning of the revolt of the Greek cities of Ionia against Persia in 499, and so to the main subject of the whole work.

Method of narration

This brief account of the first half of Herodotus's *History* not only conceals its infinite variety but is positively misleading insofar as it suggests a straightforward geographical, sociological, and historical description of a varied empire. The *History*'s structure is more complex than that, and so is the author's method of narration. For example, Herodotus had no need to explain Greek geography, customs, or political systems to his Greek readers, but he did wish to describe the political situation at the relevant times of the many Greek cities later involved in the war. This he achieved by means of digressions skillfully worked into his main narrative. He thus describes the actions of Croesus, the king of Lydia, who conquered the Greeks of mainland Ionia but who was in turn subjugated by the Persians, and this account leads Herodotus into a digression on the past history of the Ionians and Dorians and the division between the two most powerful Greek cities, the Ionian Athens and the Doric Sparta. Athens's complex political development in the 6th century BCE is touched upon, as is the

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conservative character of the Spartans. All of this, and much besides, some of it only included because of Herodotus's personal interest, helps to explain the positions of these Greek states in 490, the year of the Battle of Marathon, and in 480, the year in which Xerxes invaded Greece.

One important and, indeed, remarkable feature of Herodotus's *History* is his love of and gift for narrating history in the storyteller's manner (which is not unlike Homer's). In this regard he inserts not only amusing short stories but also dialogue and even speeches by the leading historical figures into his narrative, thus beginning a practice that would persist throughout the course of historiography in the classical world.

Outlook on life

The story of Croesus in Book I gives Herodotus the occasion to foreshadow, as it were, in Croesus's talk with Solon the general meaning of the story of the Greco-Persian Wars, and so of his whole *History*—that great prosperity is "a slippery thing" and may lead to a fall, more particularly if it is accompanied by arrogance and folly as it was in Xerxes. The story of Xerxes' invasion of Greece is a clear illustration of the moral viewpoint here; a war that by all human reasoning should have been won was irretrievably lost. To Herodotus, the old moral "pride comes before a fall" was a matter of common observation and had been proved true by the greatest historical event of his time. Herodotus believes in divine retribution as a punishment of human impiety, arrogance, and cruelty, but his emphasis is always on human actions and character rather than on the interventions of the gods, in his descriptions of historical events. This fundamentally rationalistic approach was an epochal innovation in Western historiography.

Qualities as a historian

Herodotus was a great traveler with an eye for detail, a good geographer, a man with an indefatigable interest in the customs and past history of his fellow citizens, and a man of the widest tolerance, with no bias for the Greeks and against the barbarians. He was neither naive nor easily credulous. It is that quality that makes the first half of his work not only so readable but of such historical importance. In the second half he is largely, but by no means only, writing military history, and it is evident that he knew little of military matters. Yet he understood at least one essential of the strategy of Xerxes' invasion, the Persians' dependence on their fleet though they came by land, and therefore Herodotus understood the decisive importance of the naval battle at Salamis. Similarly, in his political summaries he is commonly content with explaining events on the basis of trivial personal motives, yet there again he understood certain essentials: that the political meaning of the struggle between the great territorial empire of Persia and the small Greek states was not one of Greek independence only but the rule of law as the Greeks understood it; and that the political importance of the Battle of Marathon for the Greek world was that it foreshadowed the rise of Athens (confirmed by Salamis) to a position of equality and rivalry with Sparta and the end of the long-accepted primacy of the latter. He knew that war was not only a question of victory or defeat, glorious as the Greek victory was, but brought its own consequences in its train, including the internal quarrels and rivalry between the leading Greek city-states, quarreling that was to later culminate in the devastating internecine strife of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE).

Conclusion

Herodotus had his predecessors in prose writing, especially Hecataeus of Miletus, a great traveler whom Herodotus mentions more than once. But these predecessors, for all their charm, wrote either chronicles of local events, of one city or another, covering a great length of time, or comprehensive accounts of travel over a large part of the known world, none of them creating a unity, an organic whole. In the sense that he created a work

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that is an organic whole, Herodotus was the first of Greek, and so of European, historians. His work is not only an artistic masterpiece; for all his mistakes (and for all his fantasies and inaccuracies) he remains the leading source of original information not only for Greek history of the all-important period between 550 and 479 BCE but also for much of that of western Asia and of Egypt at that time.

EB Editors

Additional Reading

GEORGE RAWLINSON (trans.), *The History of Herodotus*, ed. by HENRY RAWLINSON and J.G. WILKINSON, 4 vol. (1858–60, reissued 1984), is a classic 19th-century translation. In the 20th century many translations were published, including A.D. GODLEY (trans.), *Herodotus*, 4 vol. (1920–24, reissued 1981–82), in *The Loeb Classical Library* series; DAVID GRENE (trans.), *The History* (1987); and AUBREY DE SÉLINCOURT (trans.), *Herodotus: The Histories*, new ed., rev. by JOHN MARINCOLA (1996). Among 21st-century translations are ROBIN WATERFIELD (trans.), *The Histories*, new ed., edited by CAROLYN DEWALD (2008); ANDREA L. PURVIS (trans.), *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories* (2009), with maps, annotations, appendices, and an encyclopaedic index, ed. by ROBERT B. STRASSLER; and TOM HOLLAND (trans.), *The Histories* (2013).

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ARTICLE

hieroglyphic writing

system that employs characters in the form of pictures. Those individual signs, called hieroglyphs, may be read either as pictures, as symbols for objects, or as symbols for sounds.



Hieroglyphics on a temple wall at Karnak, Egypt.

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The name *hieroglyphic* (from the Greek word for “sacred carving”) is first encountered in the writings of Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE). Earlier, other Greeks had spoken of sacred signs when referring to Egyptian writing. Among the Egyptian scripts, the Greeks labeled as hieroglyphic the script that they found on temple walls and public monuments, in which the characters were pictures sculpted in stone. The Greeks distinguished this script from two other forms of Egyptian writing that were written with ink on papyrus or on other smooth surfaces. These were known as the hieratic, which was still employed during the time of the ancient Greeks for religious texts, and the demotic, the cursive script used for ordinary documents.

Hieroglyphic, in the strict meaning of the word, designates only the writing on Egyptian monuments. The word has, however, been applied since the late 19th century to the writing of other peoples, insofar as it consists of picture signs used as writing characters. For example, the name *hieroglyphics* is always used to designate the monumental inscriptions of the Indus civilization and of the Hittites, who also possessed other scripts, in addition to the Mayan, the Incan, and Easter Island writing forms and also the signs on the Phaistos Disk on Crete.

Because of their pictorial form, hieroglyphs were difficult to write and were used only for monument inscriptions. They were usually supplemented in the writing of a people by other, more convenient scripts. Among living writing systems, hieroglyphic scripts are no longer used.

This article is concerned only with Egyptian hieroglyphic writing.

Development of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing

The most ancient hieroglyphs date from the end of the 4th millennium BCE and comprise annotations incised onto pottery jars and ivory plaques deposited in tombs, presumably for the purpose of identification of the dead. Although by no means can all of these earliest signs be read today, it is nonetheless probable that these forms

are based on the same system as the later classical hieroglyphs. In individual cases, it can be said with certainty that it is not the copied object that is designated but rather another word phonetically similar to it. This circumstance means that hieroglyphs were from the very beginning phonetic symbols. An earlier stage consisting exclusively of picture writing using actual illustrations of the intended words cannot be shown to have existed in Egypt; indeed, such a stage can with great probability be ruled out. No development from pictures to letters took place; hieroglyphic writing was never solely a system of picture writing. It can also be said with certainty that the jar marks (signs on the bottom of clay vessels) that occur at roughly the same period do not represent a primitive form of the script. Rather, these designs developed in parallel fashion to hieroglyphic writing and were influenced by it.

It is not possible to prove the connection of hieroglyphs to the cuneiform characters used by the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia. Such a relationship is improbable because the two scripts are based on entirely different systems. What is conceivable is a general tendency toward words being fixed by the use of signs, without transmission of particular systems.

Invention and uses of hieroglyphic writing

The need to identify a pictorial representation with a royal individual or a specific, unique event, such as a hunt or a particular battle, led to the application of hieroglyphic writing to a monumental context. Hieroglyphs added to a scene signified that this illustration represented a particular war rather than an unspecified one or war in general; the writing reflected a new attitude toward time and a view of history as unique events in time. Beginning in the 1st dynasty (c. 2925–c. 2775 BCE), images of nonroyal persons were also annotated with their names or titles, a further step toward expressing individuality and uniqueness. The so-called annalistic ivory tablets of the first two dynasties were pictorial representations of the events of a year with specifically designated personal names, places, and incidents. For example, accompanying a scene of the pharaoh’s triumph over his enemies is the annotation “the first occasion of the defeat of the Libyans.” Simultaneously, the writing of the Egyptians began to appear unaccompanied by pictorial representations, especially on cylinder seals. These roller-shaped incised stones were rolled over the moist clay of jar stoppers. Their inscription prevented the sealed jar from being covertly opened and at the same time described its contents and designated the official responsible for it. In the case of wine, its origin from a specific vineyard and often also the destination of the shipment were designated, and, as a rule, so was the name of the reigning king.

From the stone inscriptions of the 1st dynasty, only individual names are known, these being mainly the names of kings. In the 2nd dynasty, titles and names of offerings appear, and, at the end of this dynasty, sentences occur for the first time. The discovery of a blank papyrus scroll in the grave of a high official, however, shows that longer texts could have been written much earlier—i.e., since the early part of the 1st dynasty.

Relationship of writing and art

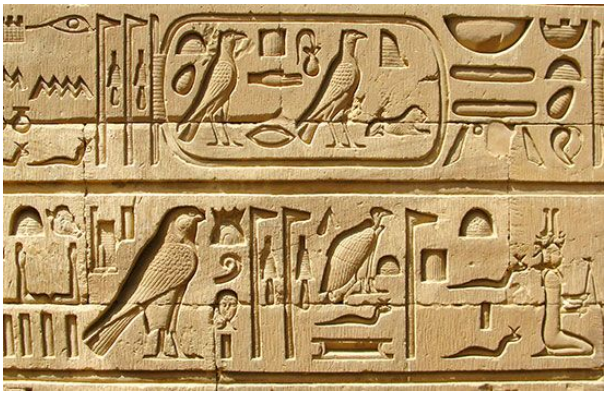
The form of these hieroglyphs of the Archaic period (the 1st to 2nd dynasty) corresponds exactly to the art style of this age. Although definite traditions or conventions were quickly formed with respect to the choice of perspective—e.g., a hand was depicted only as a palm, an eye or a mouth inscribed only in front view—the proportions remained flexible. The prerequisite of every writing system is a basic standardization, but such a standardization is not equivalent to a canon (an established body of rules and principles) in the degree of stylistic conformity that it requires. A recognized canon of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing arose in the 3rd dynasty and was maintained until the end of the use of the script.

In that hieroglyphic signs represented pictures of living beings or inanimate objects, they retained a close connection to the fine arts. The same models formed the basis of both writing and art, and the style of the

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writing symbols usually changed with the art style. This correspondence occurred above all because the same craftsmen painted or incised both the writing symbols and the pictures. Deviations from the fine arts occurred when the writing, which was more closely bound to convention, retained patterns that the fine arts had eliminated. The face in front view is an example of this. This representation, apart from very special instances, was eventually rejected as an artistic form, the human face being shown only in profile. The front view of the face was, however, retained as a hieroglyph from the Archaic period to the end of the use of hieroglyphic writing. Similar cases involve the depiction of various tools and implements. Although some of the objects themselves fell out of use in the course of history—e.g., the general use of clubs as weapons—their representations, mainly misunderstood, were preserved in the hieroglyphic script. The hieroglyphs corresponding to objects that had disappeared from daily life were therefore no longer well known and were occasionally distorted beyond recognition. But the style of representation in the hieroglyphs still remained closely bound to the art of the respective epoch. Thus, there appeared taut, slender hieroglyphic forms or sensuous, fleshy ones or even completely bloated characters, according to the art style of the period.

Media for hieroglyphic writing



Hieroglyphs on the temple at ancient Ombos, near modern Kawm Umbu, Egypt.

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In historical times (2800 BCE–300 CE), hieroglyphic writing was used for inscribing stone monuments and appears in Egyptian relief techniques, both high relief and bas-relief; in painted form; on metal, sometimes in cast form and sometimes incised; and on wood. In addition, hieroglyphs appear in the most varied kinds of metal and wood inlay work. All these applications correspond exactly with the techniques used in fine art.

Hieroglyphic texts are found primarily on the walls of temples and tombs, but they also appear on memorials and gravestones, on statues, on coffins, and on all sorts of vessels and implements. Hieroglyphic writing was used as much for secular texts—historical inscriptions, songs, legal documents, scientific documents—as for religious subject matter—cult rituals, myths, hymns, grave inscriptions of all kinds, and prayers. These inscriptions were, of course, only a decorative monumental writing, unsuitable for everyday purposes. For popular use, hieratic script was developed, an abbreviated form of the picture symbols such as would naturally develop in writing with brush and ink on smooth surfaces such as papyrus, wood, and limestone.

Writing and religion

The influence of religious concepts upon hieroglyphic writing is attested in at least two common usages. First, in the 3rd millennium, certain signs were avoided or were used in garbled form in grave inscriptions for fear that the living beings represented by these signs could harm the deceased who lay helpless in the grave. Among these taboo symbols were human figures and dangerous animals, such as scorpions and snakes. Second, in all periods and for all uses of the writing, symbols to which a positive religious significance was attached were

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regularly placed in front of other signs, even if they were to be read after them. Among these were hieroglyphs for God or individual gods as well as those for the king or the palace. Thus, for example, the two signs


, denoting the word combination “servant of God” (priest), are written so that the symbol for God,


, stands in front of that for servant,


, although the former is to be read last. Moreover, theology traced the invention of hieroglyphic writing back to the god Thoth, although this myth of its divine origin did not have an effect on the development of the script. In the late period, Egyptian texts referred to hieroglyphic inscriptions as “writing of God’s words”; earlier, in contrast, they were simply called “pictures.”

Literacy and knowledge of hieroglyphic writing

At all periods only a limited circle understood the hieroglyphic script. Only those who needed the knowledge in their professions acquired the arts of writing and reading. These people were, for example, officials and priests (insofar as they had to be able to read rituals and other sacred texts), as well as craftsmen whose work included the making of inscriptions. Under Greek and especially under Roman rule, the knowledge declined and was entirely confined to temples where priests instructed their pupils in the study of hieroglyphic writing. From the time of the rule of the Ptolemies (305 to 30 BCE), national consciousness became more and more narrowly bound up with religion, and the tradition-filled hieroglyphic writing was an outward sign of pharaonic civilization—in the fullest sense, a symbol. There was no lack of attempts to replace the hieroglyphic writing, cumbersome and ever more divergent from the spoken language, with the simpler and more convenient Greek script. Such experiments, however, remained ineffective precisely because of the emotional value that the old writing system had when the country was under the foreign domination of the Macedonian Greeks and the Romans.

Christianity and the Greek alphabet

The situation was altered with the conversion of Egypt to Christianity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. The new religion fought against the Egyptian polytheism and traditions, and with its victory the Greek script triumphed. From the beginning, Egyptian Christians used the Greek alphabet for writing their spoken Egyptian language. This practice involved enlarging the Greek alphabet with seven supplementary letters for Egyptian sounds not present in Greek. As a consequence, the knowledge of hieroglyphic writing quickly declined. The last datable evidence of the writing system is a graffito from the island of Philae, from August 24, 394, during the reign of the emperor Theodosius I. The language, as well as the writing system, of the Egyptian Christians is called Coptic.

Characteristics of hieroglyphic writing

The hieroglyphic writing system consists almost entirely of signs that represent recognizable objects in the natural or constructed world, and these can be grouped into three categories. The first is the logogram, in which a word is written (and read) by means of a single sign, providing both sound and meaning in itself. Ideograms can be read as the object they represent, such as

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, “wood, stick,” or can have extended meanings, such as the sun disk, ☉, which can be understood as “sun or (the solar god) Re” (in its phonetic reading “day” (read as *H* + *r* + *w*).

The second category is the phonogram, which represents a sound (or series of sounds) in the language. This group includes not only simple phonemes, which usually derive from logograms of the objects they depict but which acquired purely phonetic character, but also a much larger corpus of biliteral and triliteral signs (that is, signs that denote two or three sounds). Biliterals and triliterals, as well as logograms themselves, are often accompanied by the simple phonetic signs as a reading aid.

The third category of signs consists of determinatives, which carry no phonetic significance but are employed to specify meaning and assist in word division. For example, the phonetic writing *p* + *r* + *t* can signify the infinitive of the verb “to go,” the name of the winter season, or the word for “fruit, seed.” The meaning of the word is signaled by a terminal determinative that also acts as a word marker: the walking legs (



), the sun disk (☉), or the pellet sign (°), respectively. Generic determinatives are those that are denoting walking, running, or movement; the man with a hand to his mouth signifies words for eating, drinking, feeling, and perception; and the book roll is used for nouns pertaining to books, writing, and abstract concepts.

Egyptian inscriptions usually employed a combination of all three categories of signs, with liberal allowance for variation in spelling and in the grouping of signs. Egyptian generally avoided the writing of vowels aside from the semivowels *i*, *y*, and *w*; thus, the hieroglyphic system represents for the most part only the consonants of words. Pronunciation of Egyptian, therefore, is imperfectly reflected in the hieroglyphic writing system.

Number of symbols

In the classical period of Egyptian writing, the number of hieroglyphs totaled approximately 700. Their number multiplied considerably in the late period (which began about 600 BCE); this proliferation occurred because scholars began to invent new forms or signs. The additional hieroglyphs were, however, always in accordance with the principles that had governed Egyptian writing from its beginnings. The hieroglyphic system remained flexible throughout all periods, always open to innovation, even though, as with every writing system, convention played a preponderant role.

Direction of writing

Hieroglyphic inscriptions were preferentially written from right to left, with the direction of reading indicated by the orientation of the signs, which normally face toward the beginning of the text. The right-to-left orientation in writing was scrupulously observed in the cursive form of the script, called hieratic (*see below*). Reversals of orientation in the writing of individual signs are relatively rare and were incorporated for either religious or decorative purposes.

Because Egyptian monuments were decorated according to strict conventions of symmetry, temples and tombs are usually adorned with hieroglyphic texts that face in both directions, to provide a visual sense of axial balance. Inscriptions could be written either in horizontal rows or in vertical columns, a feature that was ideally suited for the decoration of monumental walls, doorways, and lintels. In two-dimensional scenes containing human or divine figures, hieroglyphic texts are closely associated with the figures to which they pertain. That is, the identifying name, epithet, and utterance of an individual are oriented in the same direction in which the figure itself faces. And as one might expect for a distinctly pictorial script, the preferential right-to-left

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orientation of the Egyptian writing system had an effect on the development of three-dimensional art as well. For example, the striding male stance used for statuary requires that the left foot be placed forward, a visual pose that derives from the prescribed stance of the human hieroglyphic figure in preferred right-oriented inscriptions.

Cryptographic hieroglyphic writing

That knowledge of the hieroglyphic system and the principles upon which it was devised had not become diluted with time is attested by two phenomena: cryptography and the development of the hieroglyphic writing during the last millennium of its existence. From the middle of the 3rd millennium but more frequently in the New Kingdom (from c. 1539 to c. 1075 BCE), hieroglyphic texts are encountered that have a very strange appearance. The absence of familiar word groups and the presence of many signs not found in the canon characterize these texts at first glance as cryptographic, or encoded, writing. This kind of hieroglyphic writing was probably intended as an eye-catcher, to entice people to seek the pleasure of deciphering it. Composed according to the original principles of the script, these inscriptions differed only in that certain features excluded when the original canon was formulated were now exploited. The new possibilities involved not only the forms of the signs but also their selection. For example, the mouth was not drawn in front view (

), as in the classical script, but in profile (

), although it had the same phonetic value. An example of a change in the choice of signs is the case in which a man carrying a basket on his head (



), a determinative without phonetic value in the classical script, was later to be read as *f* and was used in lieu of the familiar sign having this phonetic value, that of the horned viper. In the new selection of the sign, the phonetic value is obtained from the word *f* + *š* + *ỉ* “to carry” (neglecting its two weak consonants), in accordance with a principle that the inventors of the writing had applied in 3000 BCE. These cryptographic inscriptions prove that alongside the method of instruction in the schools, which was based on memorization or recognition, not upon analytical understanding, there was another tradition that transmitted knowledge of the basic principles of the hieroglyphic script. A command of the principles of hieroglyphics similar to that which the composers of the cryptic inscriptions had was presupposed for the puzzle-happy decipherers.

The later development of hieroglyphic writing

About the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, Egyptian writing experienced new developments and a revival of interest. Again the inscriptions abounded with new signs and sign groups unknown in the classical period, all generated according to the same principles as the classical Egyptian script and the cryptographic texts. The writing of this late period was distinguished from the cryptograms in that this script, like every normal system of writing, developed a fixed tradition, being intended not to conceal but to be read easily, whereas the cryptography strove for originality.

The development of hieroglyphic writing thus proceeded approximately as follows: at first only the absolutely necessary symbols were invented, without a canonization of their artistic form. In a second stage, easier readability (i.e., increased rapidity of reading) was achieved by increasing the number of signs (thereby eliminating some doubts) and by employing determinatives. Finally, after the second stage had endured,

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essentially unaltered, for about 2,000 years, the number of symbols increased to several thousand about 500 BCE. This rampant growth process occurred through the application of hitherto unused possibilities of the system. With the triumph of Christianity, the knowledge of hieroglyphic writing was extinguished along with the ancient Egyptian religion.

Tools

The tools used by the craftsmen for writing hieroglyphic symbols consisted of chisels and hammers for stone inscriptions and brushes and colours for wood and other smooth surfaces. A modified form of hieroglyphic writing (called cursive hieroglyphs), in which certain details of the monumental signs were abbreviated, was used for the decorative and minor arts—that is, for inscriptions chased into metals, incised in wood, or lavishly painted onto papyrus. Only for the truly cursive scripts, hieratic and demotic, were special materials developed. Leather and papyrus became writing surfaces, and the stems of rushes in lengths of 6 to 13 inches (15 to 33 cm), cut obliquely at the writing end and chewed to separate the fibres into a brushlike tip, functioned as writing implements. The split calamus reed used as a writing implement was introduced into Egypt by the Greeks in the 3rd century BCE.

Hieratic script

The Egyptian cursive script, called hieratic writing, received its name from the Greek *hieratikos* (“priestly”) at a time during the late period when the script was used only for sacred texts, whereas everyday secular documents were written in another style, the demotic script (from Greek *dēmotikos*, “for the people” or “in common use”). Hieratic, the cursive form of Egyptian hieroglyphs, was in fact employed throughout the pharaonic period for administrative and literary purposes, as a faster and more convenient method of writing; thus, its Greek designation is a misnomer.

The structure of the hieratic script corresponds with that of hieroglyphic writing. Changes occurred in the characters of hieratic simply because they could be written rapidly with brush or rush and ink on papyrus. Often the original pictorial form is not, or not easily, recognizable. Because their models were well known and in current use throughout Egyptian history, the hieratic symbols never strayed too far from them. Nevertheless, the system differs from the hieroglyphic script in some important respects:

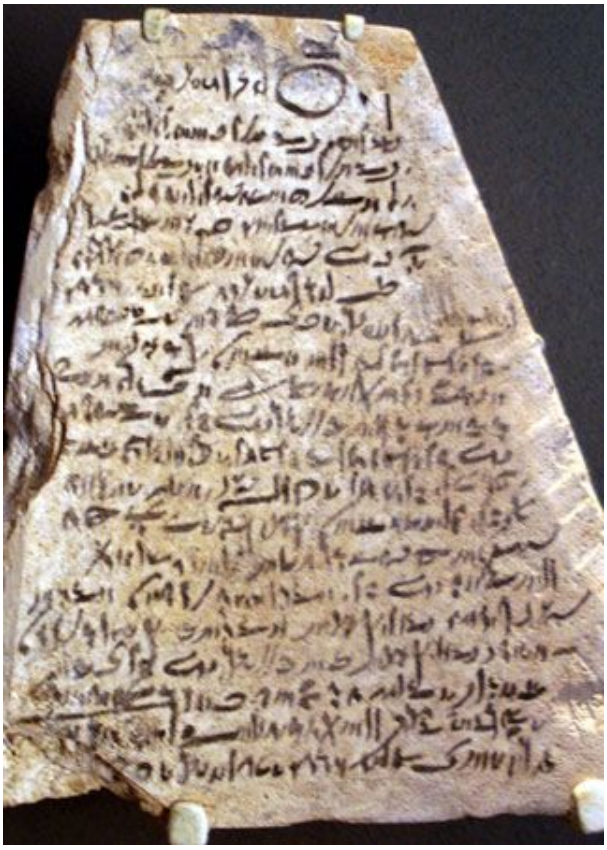
Hieratic was written in one direction only, from right to left. In earlier times the lines were arranged vertically and later, about 2000 BCE, horizontally. Subsequently the papyrus scrolls were written in columns of changing widths.There were ligatures in hieratic so that two or more signs could be written in one stroke.As a consequence of its decreased legibility, the spelling of the hieratic script tended to be more rigid and more complete than that of hieroglyphic writing. Variations from uniformity at a given time were minor; but, during the course of the various historical periods, the spelling developed and changed. As a result, hieratic texts do not correspond exactly to contemporary hieroglyphic texts, either in the placing of signs or in the spelling of words.Hieratic used diacritical additions to distinguish between two signs that had grown similar to one another because of cursive writing. For example, the cow’s leg received a supplementary distinguishing cross, because in hieratic it had come to resemble the sign for a human leg. Certain hieratic signs were taken into the hieroglyphic script.

All commonplace documents—e.g., letters, catalogs, and official writs—were written in hieratic script, as were literary and religious texts. In the life of the Egyptians, hieratic script played a larger role than hieroglyphic

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writing and was taught earlier in the schools. In offices, hieratic was replaced by demotic in the 7th century BCE, but it remained in fashion until much later for religious texts of all sorts. The latest hieratic texts stem from the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century CE.

Demotic script



Ostracon with demotic inscription, Ptolemaic dynasty, c. 304–30 bce.

David Liam Moran

Demotic script is first encountered at the beginning of the 26th dynasty, about 660 BCE. The writing signs plainly demonstrate its connection with the hieratic script, although the exact relationship is not yet clear. It appears that demotic was originally developed expressly for government office use—that is, for documents in which the language was extensively formalized and thus well suited for the use of a standardized cursive script. Only some time after its introduction was demotic used for literary texts in addition to documents and letters; much later it was employed for religious texts as well. The latest dated demotic text, from December 2, 425, consists of a rock inscription at Philae. In contrast to hieratic, which is almost without exception written in ink on papyrus or other flat surfaces, demotic inscriptions are not infrequently found engraved in stone or carved in wood.

The demotic system corresponds to the hieratic and hence ultimately to the hieroglyphic system. Alongside the traditional spelling, however, there was another spelling that took account of the markedly altered phonetic form of the words by appropriate respelling. This characteristic applied especially to a large number of words that did not occur in the older language and for which no written form had consequently been passed down. The nontraditional spelling could also be used for old, familiar words.

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Decipherment of hieroglyphic writing

With the possible exception of Pythagoras, no Greek whose writings have survived seems to have understood the nature of hieroglyphic writing, nor did the Greeks obtain guidance from their Egyptian contemporaries. Rather, the Greek tradition taught that hieroglyphs were symbolic signs or allegories. The Egyptian-born Greek philosopher Plotinus interpreted hieroglyphic writing entirely from the viewpoint of his esoteric philosophy. Only one of the numerous works on the hieroglyphic script written in late antiquity has been preserved: the *Hieroglyphica* of Horapollon, a Greek Egyptian who probably lived in the 5th century CE. Horapollon made use of a good source, but he himself certainly could not read hieroglyphic writing and began with the false hypothesis of the Greek tradition—namely, that hieroglyphs were symbols and allegories, not phonetic signs.

The Middle Ages neither possessed any knowledge of hieroglyphic writing nor took any interest in it. But a manuscript of Horapollon brought to Florence in 1422 stirred great interest among the humanists. Apparently without realizing that ancient Egyptian originals might be available in Rome, Renaissance artists designed hieroglyphs after Horapollon’s descriptions, as well as from their own imaginations. They used hieroglyphs as wisdom-laden symbols in architecture and also in drawings and paintings.

Kircher’s attempts at decipherment



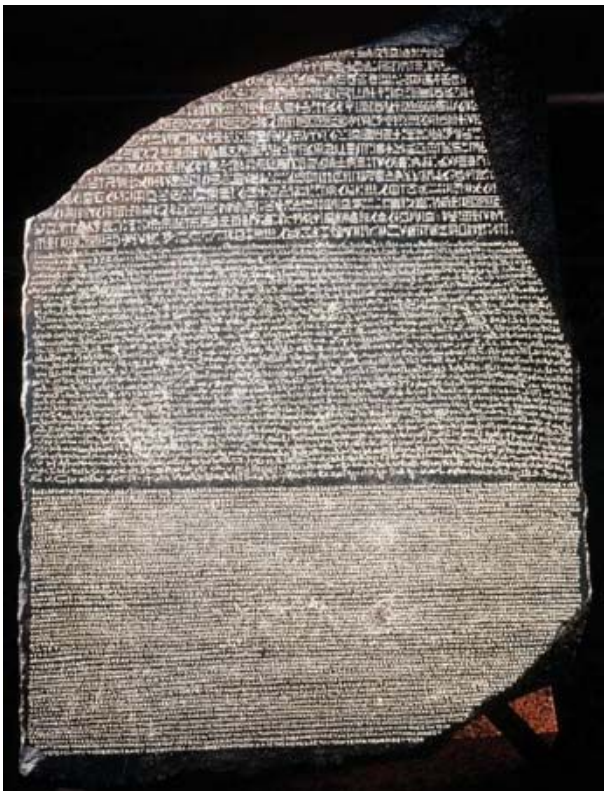
Athanasius Kircher (1601–80), a German Jesuit scholar and polymath.

ATHANASII KIRCHERI E SOC. JESU CHINA MONUMENTIS, The New York Public Library

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The great German scholar Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) began his attempts at decipherment with the Coptic language and with the correct hypothesis that the hieroglyphs recorded an earlier stage of this language. He also believed, again correctly, that the signs recorded phonetic values. In spite of this, he did not arrive at correct results—with the exception of a single character. This failure can be attributed not only to Kircher’s erroneous assumption that the hieroglyphs must correspond phonetically to an alphabet but primarily to the fact that he was most interested in the Renaissance conception of a supposed symbolic meaning constituting the deeper significance of hieroglyphs. In his view the phonetic value of the hieroglyphs was merely the commonplace, superficial part of the sign.

Discovery of the Rosetta Stone



A decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Greek, hieroglyphic Egyptian, and demotic Egyptian on the Rosetta …

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Carved over 2,000 years ago, the Rosetta Stone is one of our most tangible links to ancient Egypt.

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Both the intellectual and the physical prerequisites for the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script first presented themselves at the end of the 18th century. By accident, a stone that exhibited three different scripts—hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek—was discovered by members of Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1799 near Rashīd (French: Rosette; English: Rosetta) on the Mediterranean coast. The Greek text stated clearly that the

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document set forth the same text in the sacred script, the folk or popular script, and Greek. The stone was promptly made known to all interested scholars. Important partial successes in the effort of decipherment were achieved by the Swede Johan David Åkerblad and by the English physicist Thomas Young, who mainly studied the demotic text, again beginning with the false hypothesis that the hieroglyphs were symbols. Young succeeded in proving that they were not symbols—at least that the proper names were not—and that the demotic signs were derived from the hieroglyphs. (He first published this result in the supplement to the 4th, 5th, and 6th editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.) He was the first to isolate correctly some single-consonant hieroglyphic signs. But a wrong turn in the course of his investigations then prevented him from fully deciphering the writing.

Champollion’s decipherment

This task of complete decipherment was first accomplished by the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) in 1822, after long years of intensive work and many setbacks. His success was due to the recognition that hieroglyphic writing, exactly like the hieratic and demotic scripts derived from it, did not constitute a writing system of symbols but rather a phonetic script. He arrived at this breakthrough by an exact comparison of the three Egyptian forms of writing, as well as by reference to Coptic, the late phase of the Egyptian language that was written with the Greek alphabet and was thus directly readable. The Coptic language was also understood at that time. Starting, as had his predecessors, from Ptolemy and Cleopatra, both ring-enclosed royal names, and adding the hieroglyphic spelling of Ramses’ name, Champollion determined, essentially correctly, the phonetic values of the signs. Soon after, he also learned to read and translate a large number of Egyptian words. Since then, precise research has confirmed and refined Champollion’s approach and most of his results.

Hellmut BrunnerPeter F. Dorman

Additional Reading

Books in English on hieroglyphic writing include SIR ALAN GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*, 3rd ed., rev. (1957, reprinted 1988), still useful, with a list of hieroglyphs from the Middle Kingdom; WERNER FORMAN and STEPHEN QUIRKE, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (1996), a richly photographed work that puts the sources into context; JAMES P. ALLEN, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (2000), which has become a standard text; and BOYO OCKINGA, *A Concise Grammar of Middle Egyptian*, 2nd rev. ed., revised and expanded by HELLMUT BRUNNER (2005).

Shorter introductions to the hieroglyphic writing system and Egyptian grammar can be found in W.V. DAVIES, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (1987); HENRY GEORGE FISCHER, *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy: A Beginner’s Guide to Writing Hieroglyphs*, 4th ed. (1999); MARK COLLIER and BILL MANLEY, *How to Read Hieroglyphs: A Step-by-Step Guide to Teach Yourself*, rev. ed. (2003); and KARL-THEODOR ZAUZICH, *Hieroglyphs Without Mystery*, 6th ed., translated by ANN MACY ROTH (2004; first published in German, 1980).

Peter F. Dorman

Citation (MLA style):

"Hieroglyphic writing." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 26 Jul. 2021. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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ARTICLE

papyrus

writing material of ancient times and also the plant from which it was derived, *Cyperus papyrus* (family Cyperaceae), also called paper plant. The papyrus plant was long cultivated in the Nile delta region in Egypt and was collected for its stalk or stem, whose central pith was cut into thin strips, pressed together, and dried to form a smooth thin writing surface.

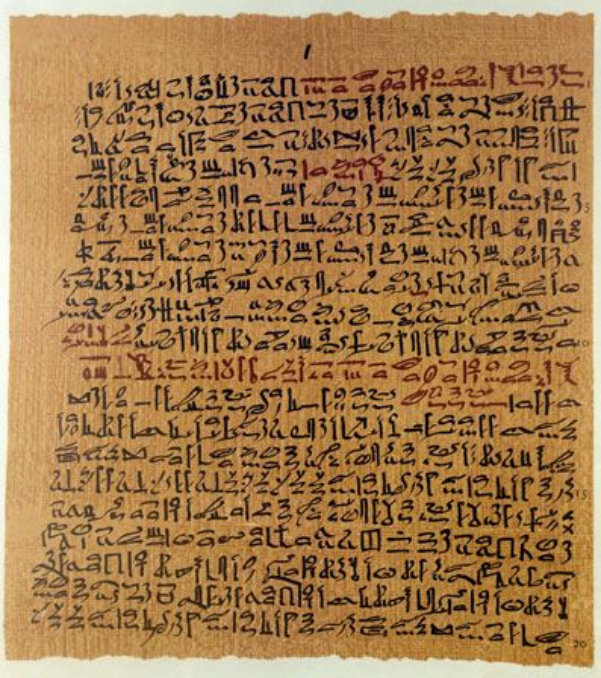


Papyrus (Cyperus papyrus).

Adrian Pingstone

Papyrus is a grasslike aquatic plant that has woody, bluntly triangular stems and grows up to 4.6 m (about 15 feet) high in quietly flowing water up to 90 cm (3 feet) deep. The triangular stem can grow to a width of as much as 6 cm. The papyrus plant is now often used as a pool ornamental in warm areas or in conservatories. The dwarf papyrus (*C. isocladus,* also given as *C. papyrus* ‘Nanus’), up to 60 cm tall, is sometimes potted and grown indoors.

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This papyrus, one of many ancient Egyptian medical writings, included a prescription for asthma....

Wellcome Collection, London (Public Domain Mark)

The ancient Egyptians used the stem of the papyrus plant to make sails, cloth, mats, cords, and, above all, paper. Paper made from papyrus was the chief writing material in ancient Egypt, was adopted by the Greeks, and was used extensively in the Roman Empire. It was used not only for the production of books (in roll or scroll form) but also for correspondence and legal documents. Pliny the Elder gave an account of the manufacture of paper from papyrus. The fibrous layers within the stem of the plant were removed, and a number of these longitudinal strips were placed side by side and then crossed at right angles with another set of strips. The two layers formed a sheet, which was then dampened and pressed. Upon drying, the gluelike sap of the plant acted as an adhesive and cemented the layers together. The sheet was finally hammered and dried in the sun. The paper thus formed was pure white in colour and, if well made, was free of spots, stains, or other defects. A number of these sheets were then joined together with paste to form a roll, with usually not more than 20 sheets to a roll.

Papyrus was cultivated and used for writing material by the Arabs of Egypt down to the time when the growing manufacture of paper from other plant fibres in the 8th and 9th centuries CE rendered papyrus unnecessary. By the 3rd century CE, papyrus had already begun to be replaced in Europe by the less-expensive vellum, or parchment, but the use of papyrus for books and documents persisted sporadically until about the 12th century.

EB Editors

Citation (MLA style):

"Papyrus." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 6 May. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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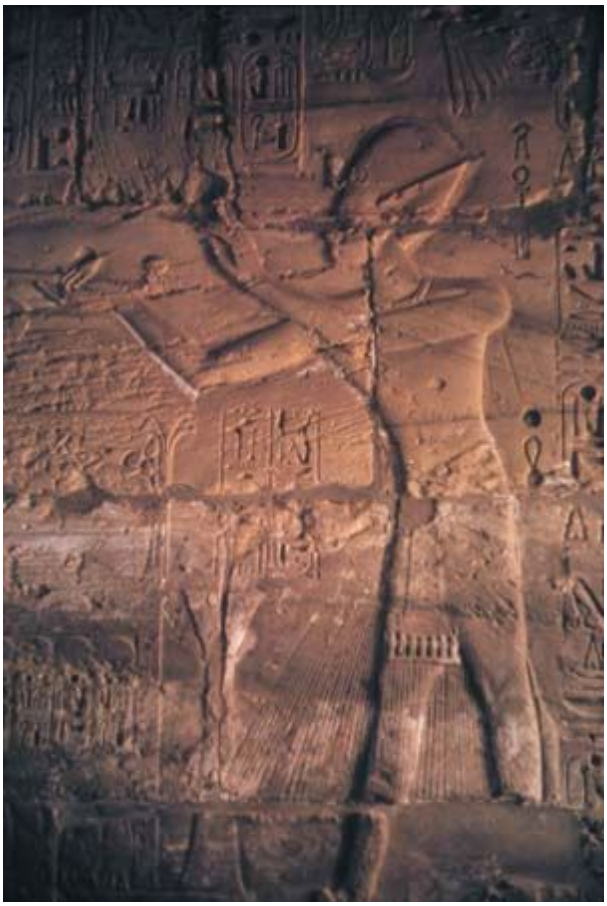
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pharaoh

Britannica Note:

The Egyptian king (later known as pharaoh) was the centre of human society, the guarantor of order for the gods, the recipient of god-given benefits including life itself, and the benevolent ruler of the world for humanity. He was ultimately responsible for the cults of the dead, both for his predecessors in office and for the dead in general. His dominance in religion corresponded to his central political role.

(from Egyptian *per ʿaa,* “great house”), originally, the royal palace in ancient Egypt. The word came to be used metonymically for the Egyptian king under the New Kingdom (starting in the 18th dynasty, c. 1539–c. 1292 BCE), and by the 22nd dynasty (c. 943–c. 746 BCE) it had been adopted as an epithet of respect. It was never the king’s formal title, though, and its modern use as a generic name for all Egyptian kings is based on the usage of the Hebrew Bible. In official documents, the full title of the Egyptian king consisted of five names, each preceded by one of the following titles: Horus, Two Ladies, Golden Horus, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Son of Re. The last name was given to him at birth, the others at coronation.



Pharaoh making an offering, rock-cut relief from Karnak, Egypt.

Katherine Young/Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

The Egyptians believed their pharaoh to be the mediator between the gods and the world of men. After death the pharaoh became divine, identified with Osiris, the father of Horus and god of the dead, and passed on his

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sacred powers and position to the new pharaoh, his son. The pharaoh's divine status was portrayed in allegorical terms: his uraeus (the snake on his crown) spat flames at his enemies; he was able to trample thousands of the enemy on the battlefield; and he was all-powerful, knowing everything and controlling nature and fertility.

As a divine ruler, the pharaoh was the preserver of the god-given order, called *maat*. He owned a large portion of Egypt's land and directed its use, was responsible for his people's economic and spiritual welfare, and dispensed justice to his subjects. His will was supreme, and he governed by royal decree. To govern fairly, though, the pharaoh had to delegate responsibility; his chief assistant was the vizier, who, among other duties, was chief justice, head of the treasury, and overseer of all records. Below this central authority, the royal will of the pharaoh was administered through the nomes, or provinces, into which Upper and Lower Egypt were divided.

For further discussion of the pharaoh's role in Egyptian society, religion, and art, *see*ancient Egypt: The king and ideology: administration, art, and writing.

EB Editors

Citation (MLA style):

"Pharaoh." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 15 Apr. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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ARTICLE

Rosetta Stone

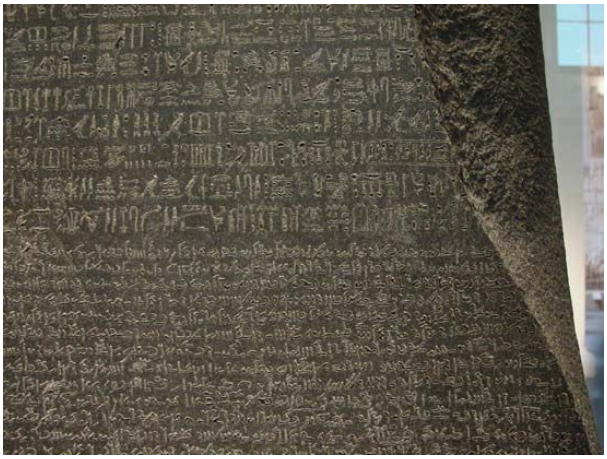
ancient Egyptian stone bearing inscriptions in several languages and scripts; their decipherment led to the understanding of hieroglyphic writing. An irregularly shaped stone of black granite 3 feet 9 inches (114 cm) long and 2 feet 4.5 inches (72 cm) wide, and broken in antiquity, it was found near the town of Rosetta (Rashīd), about 35 miles (56 km) northeast of Alexandria. It was discovered by a Frenchman named Bouchard or Boussard in August 1799. After the French surrender of Egypt in 1801, it passed into British hands and is now in the British Museum in London.

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A decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Greek, hieroglyphic Egyptian, and demotic Egyptian on the Rosetta …

© Photos.com/Getty Images Plus



The Rosetta Stone, with Egyptian hieroglyphics in the top section, demotic characters in the middle, …

© Jens Teichmann/stock.adobe.com

The inscriptions, apparently composed by the priests of Memphis, summarize benefactions conferred by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205–180 BCE) and were written in the ninth year of his reign in commemoration of his accession to the throne. Inscribed in two languages, Egyptian and Greek, and three writing systems, hieroglyphics, demotic script (a cursive form of Egyptian hieroglyphics), and the Greek alphabet, it provided a key to the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing.

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Carved over 2,000 years ago, the Rosetta Stone is one of our most tangible links to ancient Egypt.

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The decipherment was largely the work of Thomas Young of England and Jean-François Champollion of France. The hieroglyphic text on the Rosetta Stone contains six identical cartouches (oval figures enclosing hieroglyphs). Young deciphered the cartouche as the name of Ptolemy and proved a long-held assumption that the cartouches found in other inscriptions were the names of royalty. By examining the direction in which the bird and animal characters faced, Young also discovered the way in which hieroglyphic signs were to be read.

In 1821–22 Champollion, starting where Young left off, began to publish papers on the decipherment of hieratic and hieroglyphic writing based on study of the Rosetta Stone and eventually established an entire list of signs with their Greek equivalents. He was the first Egyptologist to realize that some of the signs were alphabetic, some syllabic, and some determinative, standing for the whole idea or object previously expressed. He also established that the hieroglyphic text of the Rosetta Stone was a translation from the Greek, not, as had been thought, the reverse. The work of these two men established the basis for the translation of all future Egyptian hieroglyphic texts.

EB Editors

Citation (MLA style):

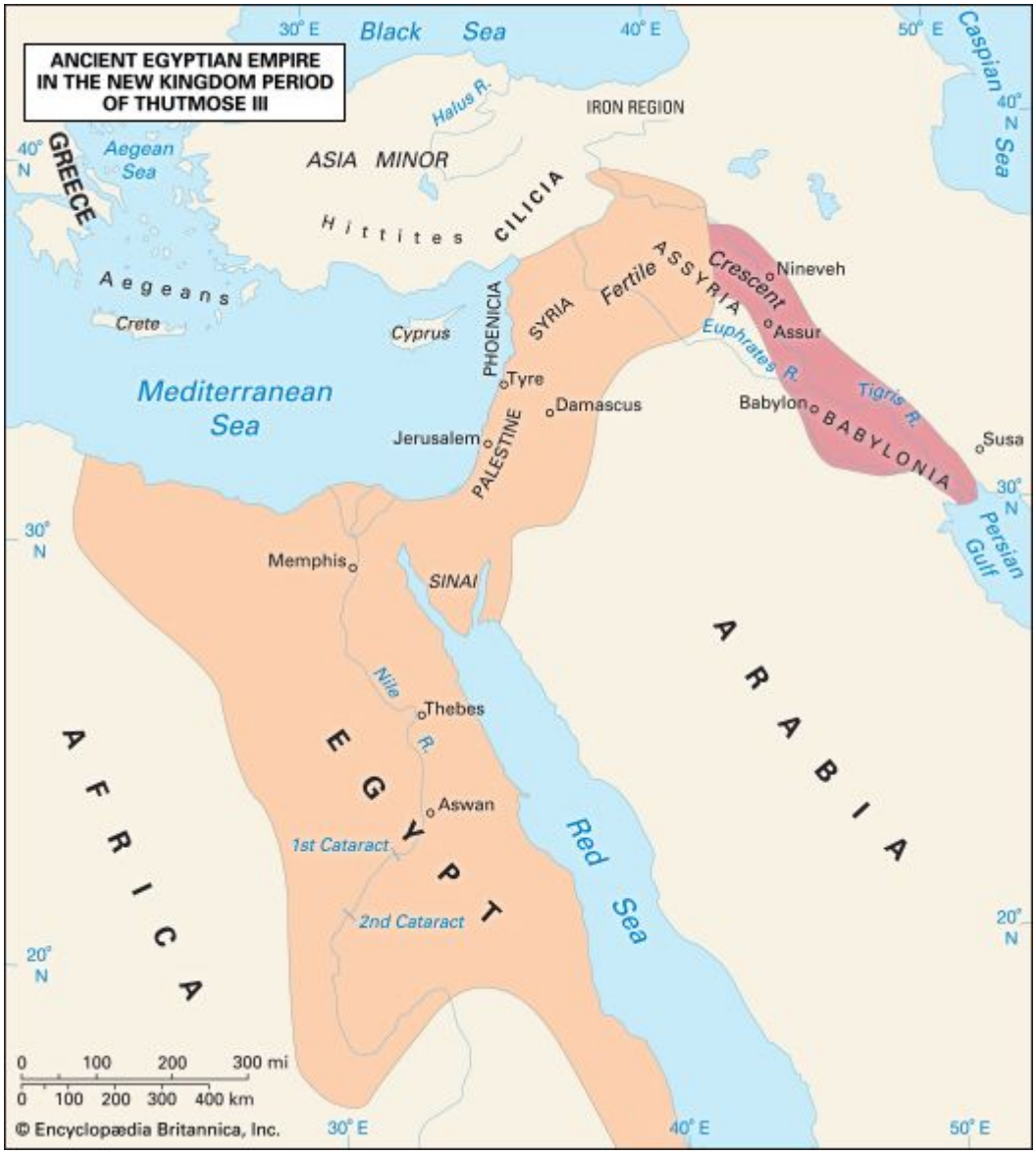
"Rosetta Stone." *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 30 Apr. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

ancient Egyptian empire under Thutmose III



The ancient Egyptian empire during the rule of Thutmose III (1479–25 BCE).

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Citation (MLA style):

Ancient Egyptian empire under Thutmose III. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

ancient Egyptian jewelry

Britannica Note:

The ancient Egyptians valued personal adornment highly and Egyptian jewelery was worn by women and men, and of all social classes.



A collection of ancient Egyptian jewelry in the British Museum, London.

Photos.com/Thinkstock

Citation (MLA style):

Ancient Egyptian jewelry. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

Ancient Egypt: temple of Abu Simbel



Many ruins from ancient Egypt can still be seen today. The temple of Abu Simbel was built during the reign of Ramses II almost 3,300 years ago. It was dedicated to two sun gods.

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Citation (MLA style):

Ancient Egypt: temple of Abu Simbel. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

Egyptian dancing

Britannica Note:

Music and dance were valued and practiced in ancient Egyptian culture.



Egyptian dancing, detail from a tomb painting from Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qurnah, Egypt, c. 1400 BCE; in the British Museum, London.

Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

Citation (MLA style):

Egyptian dancing. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

Karnak: avenue of sphinxes



Avenue of sphinxes leading to the main temple precinct at the ruins of the Great Temple of Amon at Karnak, Egypt.

© Gelia/Fotolia

Citation (MLA style):

Karnak: avenue of sphinxes. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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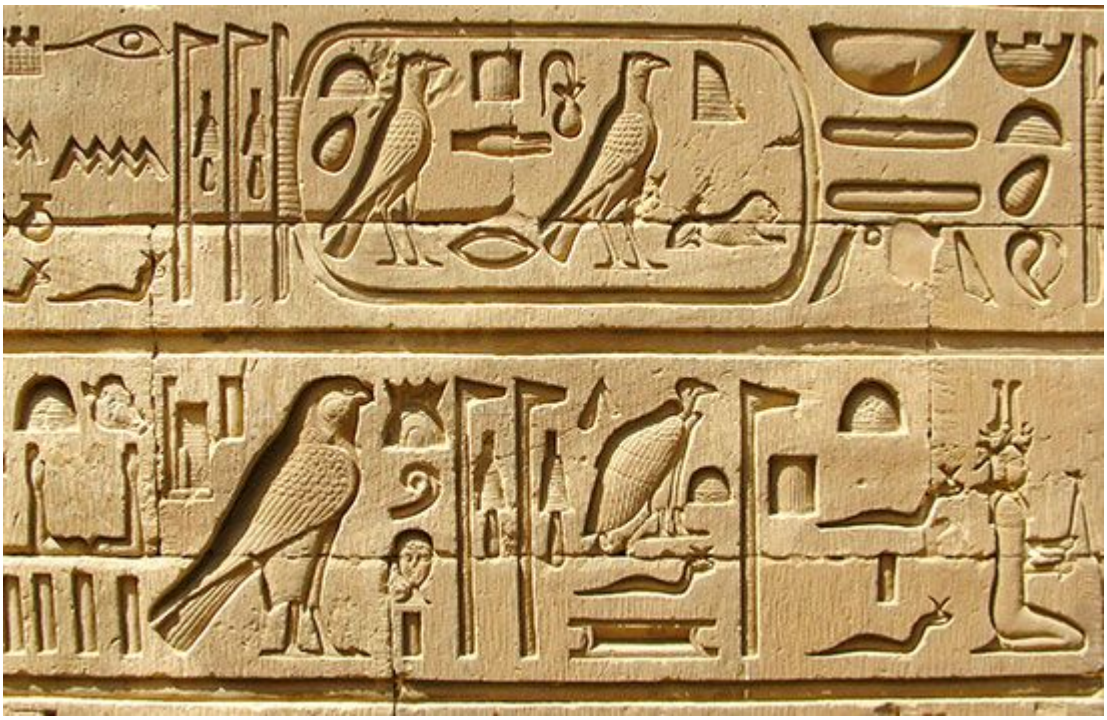
IMAGE

hieroglyphs

Britannica Note:

Hieroglyphic texts are found primarily on the walls of temples and tombs, but they also appear on memorials and gravestones, on statues, on coffins, and on all sorts of vessels and implements. Hieroglyphic writing was used as much for secular texts—historical inscriptions, songs, legal documents, scientific documents—as for religious subject matter—cult rituals, myths, hymns, grave inscriptions of all kinds, and prayers.

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Hieroglyphs on the temple at ancient Ombos, near modern Kawm Umbu, Egypt.

© Icon72/Dreamstime.com

Citation (MLA style):

Hieroglyphs. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

Thutmose III

Britannica Note:

The Egyptians of the New Kingdom (1560–1085 bc) built up their army in two ways: by recruiting citizens and by enlisting foreign troops. Some of the foreign troops were slaves from conquered lands. In this way Egypt shifted to her subject nations the burden of supplying fighting men.



Thutmose III smiting his Asian foes, detail of a limestone relief from the Temple of Amon at Karnak, Egypt, 15th century BCE.

Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich

Citation (MLA style):

Thutmose III. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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IMAGE

boat on the Nile River



A papyrus painting from ancient Egypt shows a boat traveling on the Nile River.

© Keith Wheatley/stock.adobe.com

Citation (MLA style):

Boat on the Nile River. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

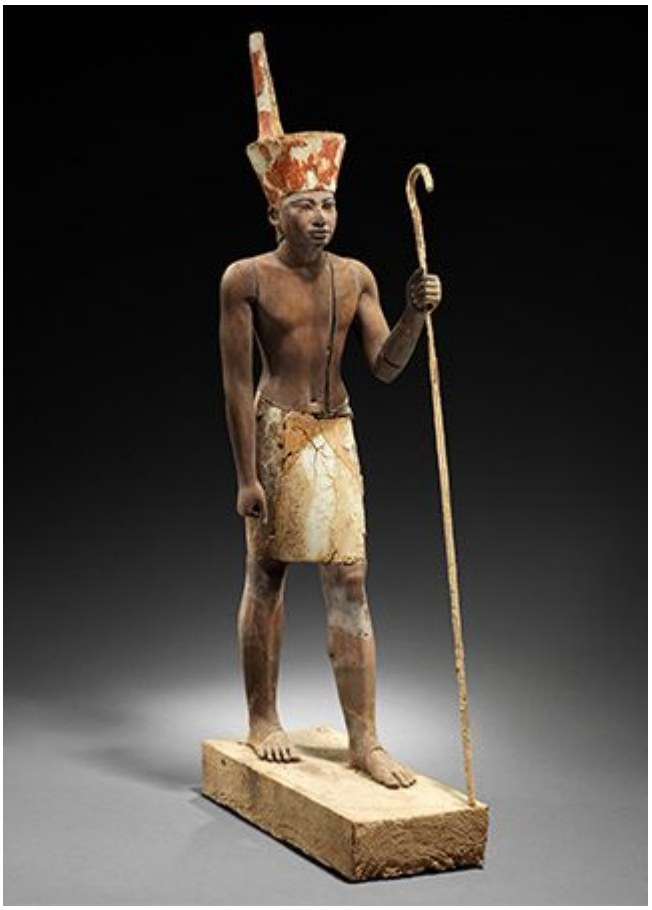
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IMAGE

loincloth

Britannica Note:

From about 3000 bce Egyptians wore a loincloth (schenti) of woven material that was wrapped around the body several times and tied in front or belted. Sometimes the schenti was pleated or partially pleated and sometimes stiffened to project in front.



Ancient Egyptian wearing a loincloth (*schenti*).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1914, 14.3.17; www.metmuseum.org

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Citation (MLA style):

Loincloth. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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VIDEO

ancient Egypt: monuments



Video Transcript

NARRATOR: This map illustrates some of the most important sites associated with ancient Egypt. The area around the Nile delta holds several pyramids constructed during the major pyramid age. That period lasted from about 2600 BC to about 2325 BC. The pyramids were built as tombs for the kings and queens of Egypt. At Saqqarah is one of the earliest stone buildings of importance that has survived from ancient Egypt. It is an early form of a pyramid, but it was built in six stages. It is known as the Step Pyramid. It was built about 2600 BC. Further up the Nile at Dahshur stands an early attempt to build a true pyramid. The bottom part has steeper sides than the top part. Because of this, it is known as the Bent, Blunted, False, or Rhomboidal Pyramid. It was built by the first ruler of the 4th dynasty, which began about 2575 BC. The most famous of the true pyramids built by the ancient Egyptians lies at Giza. Of the three pyramids built there, the Great Pyramid is the oldest and the largest. Just south of the Great Pyramid rests the Great Sphinx. The sphinx has the facial features of a man but the body of a lion. Up the Nile from Giza is Thebes. Thebes was the capital of the ancient Egyptian empire at its height, from about 1500 BC to about 1075 BC. The area around Thebes--which includes Luxor, the Valley of the Kings, and Karnak--is host to many temples and shrines. Thebes and the Valley of the Kings also served as the burial site of almost all the pharaohs during this period. By then the kings and queens of ancient Egypt were no longer buried in pyramids. Instead, the tombs were cut into the ground. There are 62 known tombs in the Valley of the Kings. The only one that was not plundered, or robbed, was the tomb of Tutankhamen.

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Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered in 1922 and excavated. The wonderful treasures that were found there now reside in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. They show how rich the burial of a great pharaoh must have been. The southern part of Thebes developed around a site known today as the Temple of Luxor. King Amenhotep III, who ruled in the 1300s BC, had the temple built to honor Amon, king of the gods. An avenue of sphinxes connected the temple complex at Luxor to the Great Temple of Amon at Karnak. The most striking feature of the temple is a huge hall with 134 columns. Abu Simbel was at the southern boundary of ancient Egypt. In the 1200s BC the pharaoh Ramses II ordered two temples cut from a cliffside there. Four colossal statues of Ramses himself adorn the main entrance to the Great Temple. The temple and the statues had to be removed from their original site in the 1960s. The nearby Aswan High Dam created a lake that threatened to cover the site.

Several pyramids and other buildings from ancient Egypt have survived to the present day. Many are located along the course of the Nile River.

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Ancient Egypt: monuments. Video. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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VIDEO

Why was ancient Egypt so successful?

Video Transcript

NARRATOR: The Egyptians - a culture boasting extraordinary accomplishments was way ahead of its time. The Nile, a river which traces an over 120-mile path through the desert, provided the foundation for their civilization. The river brought fertility to the land, and peace lasting millennia helped it flourish. Ancient Egypt was impressive; even in antiquity its architecture and monumental structures left visitors breathless. Contemporary

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accounts report how advanced the Egyptians were in sciences and technology. Archaeological excavations confirm that Egypt was the birthplace of our civilization. Abydos is the site of the Egyptians' first sacred ground. Archaeologists have dated a potsherd with an inscription from King Scorpion to 3200 B.C., making it quite possibly the oldest scripted tableau in human history. For the Egyptians this was a groundbreaking cultural achievement which greatly contributed to the development of the empire. KENT WEEKS: The development of writing in Ancient Egypt made possible the development of Egyptian civilization in its most complex forms. Without writing, there could have been no record keeping. NARRATOR: Ancient Egypt was the first culture to document its existence, preserving its story for posterity. Mysterious symbols which had long been forgotten. It was not until 200 years ago that researchers managed to unlock the hidden meanings of the hieroglyphs. Many historical records tell of the pyramids. Archaeologists are still at a loss when it comes to explaining how it was possible to assemble millions of stone blocks to construct the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Seventh Wonder of the World. It's thought that the Egyptians employed ramps to build them. How exactly the pyramids were erected will forever remain a mystery. What is certain is that it took a concerted effort on the part of all Egyptians. The pharaoh and his pyramids were the focus of all social life in Ancient Egypt. The Egyptian people aided and venerated the king, laboring to realize his construction projects. In return the pharaoh guaranteed his people a stable and orderly community life. It was thus that the pyramids gained political meaning. They helped ensure power and stability for the pharaohs. A model of leadership that succeeded: the Egyptian Empire was a picture of stability which remained invulnerable for thousands of years.

An overview of ancient Egypt, including a discussion of hieroglyphics and the pyramids.

Contunico © ZDF Studios GmbH, Mainz; Thumbnail © Mikhail Kokhanchikov/Dreamstime.com

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Why was ancient Egypt so successful?. Video. *Britannica LaunchPacks: Ancient Egypt: Government and Society*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1 Mar. 2024. packs-learn.eb.com.au. Accessed 27 Aug. 2024.

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