

NEW KINGDOM EGYPT – Final Script

Introduction

For more than 3000 years, pharaohs ruled Ancient Egypt, with its monumental pyramids, obelisks and temples providing a lasting legacy to its grandeur. However, one period lasting 500 years would stand out as Egypt's Golden Age – **New Kingdom Egypt. (Main Title).**

New Kingdom Egypt saw the development of the “warrior pharaoh” image, the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, and the flourishing of the Amun Re cult. Covering three dynasties, Egypt had unprecedented power, which it exerted across the ancient world. Pharaohs of the New Kingdom are instantly recognizable today – Hatshepsut, Tutankhamun and Ramesses – and the many temples, fortresses and monuments they built, remain as a tribute to the glory of the Egyptian Empire.

GEOGRAPHY (chapter heading)

Egypt is located in northeastern Africa. The Libyan, Nubian and Eastern Deserts form a natural barrier from its enemies. The mountains between the Nile and the Red Sea also gave protection from eastern invasion.

The Nile River, with its annual flooding and inundation, was the vital lifeline of ancient Egypt. Beginning at Lake Victoria, tributaries join the White Nile as it flows north to Khartoum. The Blue Nile begins in the mountain ranges of Ethiopia, carrying silt, the rich black mud of the Nile. The river continues on through Egypt, flowing into the Delta, Egypt's most fertile region, and finally emptying into the Mediterranean. The first capital of Ancient Egypt was at Memphis, south of the delta, where Cairo, the present-day capital, is located.

CHANGE TO NEW KINGDOM EGYPT 18th Dynasty (Chapter heading)

THE HYKSOS (sub heading)

Ancient Egypt was divided into a series of stable time periods, known as Kingdoms, separated by times of relative instability, known as Intermediate Periods. From 2686 BC to 1574 BC were the Old Kingdom, the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period. (*insert dates of each period*)

Throughout the Second Intermediate Period, Egypt began to fracture. The glory of the past was dwindling, and famine destabilized the nation.

Government and the power of the pharaoh were decentralized to provincial rule. Around 1720BC, an Asiatic tribe, the Hyksos, moved into the delta. They seized the town of Avaris, and from there, spread their influence across the north and delta region, eventually founding a foreign dynasty, the Fifteenth.

Little remains of the Hyksos, who maintained their capital at Memphis. The Hyksos kingdom was centered in the eastern Nile Delta and Middle Egypt. Its authority never extended south into Upper Egypt, which remained under the control of the pharaohs in Thebes, present day Luxor. The Hyksos traded with these Egyptian rulers, who paid a tribute to maintain peace with the militarily superior foreigners. But, increasingly, the pharaohs of the seventeenth Dynasty wished to reclaim the delta region and liberate Egypt from Hyksos rule.

SEQUENRE TAO II & KAMOSE (sub-title)

A campaign to rid Egypt of the Hyksos was begun by Sequenre Tao II. He led his troops in the first of many bloody clashes. When he died during battle, his son Kamose continued the war. But, he also was unsuccessful in defeating the foreign rulers and he too died in battle.

AHMOSE I 1570 – 1546BC (sub-title)

The second son of Tao II, Ahmose I, continued these campaigns. To counter Hyksos military dominance, he copied their tactics and weapons, and the use of Nubian troops. His army was equipped with bronze daggers and shields, the composite bow and the war chariot. This chariot was large enough to allow for a charioteer to control the horses, leaving the archer free to use his weapons while on the move. Ahmose began a bloody, hard-fought war with a vengeance, attacking the Hyksos bastions of Avaris and Memphis. Eventually, he succeeded in routing the Hyksos and pursuing the retreating forces back to Palestine. Egypt was again united under one pharaoh, heralding the dawn of the New Kingdom.

Ahmose I established the 18th Dynasty, and the 'warrior-pharaoh' ideology. New Kingdom pharaohs were known as military leaders rather than living gods. They had to prove their worth in battle, a major cultural shift from the Middle Kingdom. The 'warrior-pharaoh' concept was the catalyst for an expansionist foreign policy: *"the taste of warfare... developed into an appetite for imperial adventure."* (Cyril Aldred). This policy was also designed to protect the Egyptian people and their country. Commonly, New Kingdom pharaohs wore the Blue Khepresh War Crown into battle. Worn at other times, the Double Crown symbolized control over Upper and Lower Egypt.

The 18th Dynasty saw the emergence of the **Amun Re** cult. Amun was arguably the most important deity, both as a god of the state and as a deity to whom common people turned to in adversity. From the 18th dynasty, the pharaoh assumed the divine qualities of gods that would benefit his subjects. He was the physical representative of Re on earth, and the image of the sun god. Every king continued these traditions, which became the catalyst for controversy during Akhenaten's rule. Amun determined if a pharaoh had upheld the balance of **ma'at**, defined as truth, harmony, righteousness and unity. In doing this, the pharaoh legitimized his power as protector of Egypt. As a creator god, **Amun** is most often identified as **Amun-Re**, in combination with the main solar deity, **Re**. Ahmose began the tradition of building to honour the gods, and of giving booty to Amun's temple at Karnak, thanking him for military successes. The Karnak stele illustrates that the ruler went to war "*at the command of Amun.*" In his role as high priest, the pharaoh performed rituals in all Egyptian temples and every New Kingdom pharaoh undertook vast building programs in Egypt and beyond. This also dealt with the continuing problem of unemployment.

The role of the Queen cannot be ignored in the defeat of the Hyksos. Ahmose praises his mother Ahhotep: *Respected Mother of the King "pacified Upper Egypt and expelled her rebels."* Historians believed she acted as an interim regent for both her sons, Kamose and Ahmose. Other archaeological evidence suggests she saved Egypt from rebellion, and led the Egyptian army, restoring ma'at. Her gilded coffin contained a gold pendant decorated with three large golden flies, a New Kingdom symbol of bravery.

Queen Ahmose-Nefertari is considered one of the most influential and successful queens of Egypt, with great religious status, as she was worshipped as a deity after her death. Her titles included *Second Prophet of Amun, King's Wife* and *King's Sister*, with the most significant being **God's Wife of Amun** given to her by her husband, Ahmose, indicating his great trust and respect. Historian Tyldesley believes that "*to attempt to rule Egypt without a consort became an offence against ma'at*", emphasising both the political and religious importance of the *God's Wife* to the pharaoh.

For the remainder of his reign, Ahmose was compelled to strengthen his grip over Egypt. He defended its borders against would-be Syrian invaders, and re-established Egypt's old dominance over Nubia.

SOCIETY IN THE NEW KINGDOM Chapter Heading

In the New Kingdom, societal position was based on such factors as kinship, occupation, literacy and proximity to the king. Social stratification determined a hierarchy, with the king at the pinnacle.

Immediately below him were such offices as high priest and vizier, then rankings all the way down to the non-elites, servants and peasants. Military officers held a high position, reinforcing the early New Kingdom notion of a 'warrior-pharaoh'.

Every aspect of society was conditioned and presided over by the king, with him at the centre of everything. Because of this, he had both practical and theological responsibilities. In a practical sense, the king was required to maintain ma'at by exercising the sun god's rule on earth. As well, it was necessary to establish an internal order of justice and administration, good harvests, and to protect Egypt from external threats. It was also the king's duty to regulate the relationship between the gods and humankind. Historians characterize the relationship between the king and his people as the 'Hesut' system. This rewarded officials who give good service to the state and were therefore favoured by the king according to their level of service. Such gifts could include a promotion, statues in temples, funeral equipment or the gold of honour, which is a collar.

Status in society was based on rank and relationship to the king. Rank was determined by one's office, and this was gained through inheritance, merit and talent, or granted by the throne. Relationships were personal and not dependant on rank. A person from a lower class, for example, could be given the name of *King's Favourite*.

Egyptians at the lower end of the social spectrum were not significantly involved in religious ceremonies and festivals. For instance, during the Beautiful Festival of the Valley, they could only watch the street procession. They were also not allowed into the temples' innermost precincts, which were exclusively the domain of the pharaoh and his royal retinue.

GROWTH OF THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE 18th Dynasty (Chapter Heading)

Historically, the beginning of the New Kingdom is marked by Egypt's territorial expansion into Nubia and Asia Minor. The pharaoh who commenced empire building was Amenhotep I, son of Ahmose I.

Amenhotep I (sub heading)

During his first military campaign, Amenhotep re-conquered the Nubians who had encroached on Egyptian territory during his father's rule. He extended the boundaries further south to the gold mines found in Kush. He appointed a viceroy or *Overseer of Southern Lands* to deal with Nubian taxation and conscription.

Amenhotep continued Egypt's unification by focusing on its central bureaucracy founded by Ahmose rather than on military campaigns, believing this was the best way to serve ma'at. He introduced reforms such as the standardization of administration, laws and worship.

Amenhotep I created a father/son link with the god Amun, and subsequent pharaohs reinforced this. Due to a combination of political power and wealth, sites devoted to the cult of Amun increased as never before, and Amun was elevated to the chief god. The influence of the royal family within the divine cult was politically important.

Thutmose I (sub-heading)

Amenhotep was succeeded by Thutmose I. He was a commoner who achieved his status by distinguished military service, and married into the royal line to legitimize his claim to the throne. A prolific builder, he raised monuments and temples the length of Egypt, including magnificent new buildings in the Temple of Amun at Karnak. He relied on his architect, Ineni, to supervise the construction. Ineni's biography contains information about Thutmose's building for his 'father', Amun.

Thutmose I was known as one of the most successful 'warrior-pharaohs' of the time and, like all kings, dedicated his victories to the cult of Amun. He expanded the 'empire', leading campaigns south to Nubia, and north to the Euphrates and Naharin, "*His Majesty arrived at Naharin... his Majesty made a great slaughter among them*" (the biography of Ahmose, son of Ebana). While military raids were conducted to protect Egypt's borders, they also allowed for the expansion of trade.

The New Kingdom's Eighteenth Dynasty built tombs that befitted the kings of a united Egypt. Pyramids had proved vulnerable so, beginning with Thutmose I, the tombs of the pharaohs were carved out of a desolate valley in the arid hills west of Thebes, the Valley of the Kings.

Hatshepsut (sub-heading)

A few kilometres south of the Valley of the Kings is Deir Al Bahari, and the expansive mortuary temple of Hatshepsut. She was one of the most controversial female pharaohs of not only the 18th Dynasty but also of the whole ancient Egyptian period. Hatshepsut was wife to King Thutmose II, daughter of Thutmose I and Queen Ahmose. When her husband died suddenly in the thirteenth year of his rule, she was without sons to assume the throne.

Instead, power was passed to Thutmose III, her husband's infant son by one of the royal consorts. She lacked royal blood, so the title of regent was given to Hatshepsut. For many years, Hatshepsut acted as a typical co-regent, without overshadowing the young ruler. However, by the seventh year of her regency, her ambition led her to assume the title of king. She was careful to acknowledge Thutmose III as joint king, but her dominance was evident on the many monuments and shrines she built. Hatshepsut also played down her own femininity. She provided an image of strength her people would believe in, and appears in many statues and drawings with a feminine face, but with the body of a man.

Throughout her reign, Hatshepsut had to continually legitimise her claim as pharaoh. Some historians believe that her close alliance to the god Amun was motivated by her need to justify this claim. Hatshepsut first defined her relationship with Amun as paternally based: he was her physical father, and with her mother, Queen Ahmose, she was created by divine conception. Wall reliefs on the middle colonnade of her mortuary temple depict this. The first inscription states Amun addresses 12 important deities about his intention to father a daughter who will rule Egypt: *"We give her all life and good fortune on our part... She is at the head of all living Ka's together with her Ka as King of Upper and Lower Egypt on the throne of Horus, like unto Re, forever and ever."* The relief also implies that the fate of Amun's daughter was planned. She would achieve greatness during her time as pharaoh, thanks to her father. To further legitimise her title as king of Egypt, Hatshepsut took a queen. Her own daughter, Princess Neferure, was called on to assume the role, accepting the traditional titles of *"Lady of Upper and Lower Egypt"* and *"Mistress of the Lands"*.

Hatshepsut's most trusted official was Senenmut. One of his twenty official titles was *"Steward of Amun"*. Their close connection made a positive contribution to her position on the throne. He was Hatshepsut's "favourite" and, as her administrator and financial manager, he was more influential than Hapuseneb, the royal vizier. Senenmut controlled the estates of Amun, which included the fields, gardens, cattle, peasants and royal household. He was also appointed *"Steward of the King's Daughter"* to Neferure, Hatshepsut's daughter. They appear together on at least six statues. His two greatest achievements as *"Controller of Works"* were the temple at Deir El Bahari, and the two giant obelisks at Karnak.

Early in her rule, Hatshepsut suppressed uprisings in neighbouring countries, by staging quick, decisive military actions in Nubia, Syria, and the Levant. It appears that the remainder of her rule was peaceful, without the need to conquer.

Hatshepsut's greatest achievement was the commissioning of an expedition south to the bountiful land of Punt, somewhere near present-day Ethiopia. Five ships and over 200 men set out on the long, arduous journey which included a 200-kilometre desert march, carrying dismantled boats. The expedition was a great success. Her envoys brought back abundant treasures, including thirty-one frankincense trees. She was so pleased with the outcome that it was recorded on the Middle Colonnade at Deir El Bahari. Hatshepsut made this journey for trading purposes, not conquest. In her Puntian Inscriptions, she makes it clear there were no deaths on the voyage, emphasising the creation of peaceful relations with Egypt's neighbours. Under Hatshepsut, the priesthood gained considerable power, and was richly rewarded by trade with Punt. Senenmut was on the Punt expedition, collecting and storing the trade items dedicated to Amun. This included fragrant woods, and incense resins which were used in religious rituals, mummification and as medicinal aids. Ebony was one of Egypt's most prized timbers, used in shrines and tombs, while ivory and metals like gold and antimony were fashioned into amulets.

Hatshepsut honoured Amun and his priests by her dedication to him of numerous temples and monuments. At Karnak, she built a pylon linking the main body of the temple to the precinct of Mut, Amun's wife. She added many halls and chapels, including the Red Chapel, as well as her great obelisks. Hatshepsut's magnificent mortuary temple was built for Amun and was referred to as the *Mansion of Ma'at-ka-re, Amun is the Holy of Holies*. One of her officials, Thutiy, (*Overseer of the double gold and silver houses*) described the Deir El Bahari temple as "... the house of Amen... its floor wrought with gold and silver."

Historians have differing thoughts on the relationship between Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Some believe that Thutmose resented that, for twenty-one years, his stepmother was regent. It is suggested that he destroyed statues and reliefs of her. Alternatively, some historians believe they had a good relationship. Thutmose had been entrusted with the immense responsibility of commanding Hatshepsut's army. His brilliance as a military leader established him as a "warrior pharaoh", enabling him to easily assume the throne upon Hatshepsut's death. She is not mentioned on a tablet, called 'The Kings' List', an indication that later pharaohs wanted no record of this controversial female.

Thutmose III (sub heading)

Many historians consider Thutmose III to be Egypt's greatest warrior-pharaoh, creating the largest empire in the history of Ancient Egypt. As with all members of the royal family, he was schooled at Memphis. Like his grandfather,

Thutmose I, he had a tremendous military career, which began as Hatshepsut's commander. Thutmose III's first objective as sole ruler was to secure and control Palestine, creating a protection zone between Egypt and the northern lands. In the second year of his reign, he led his troops on a brilliant campaign up the Syrian coast, taking Gaza and the city of Megiddo. The Annals, a series of logbooks, recorded Thutmose's 17 campaigns, and describe how victory at Megiddo brought much wealth to Egypt: "... *the capture of Megiddo is the capture of a thousand cities*". For more than twenty years, Thutmose III ventured further into Syria, until 350 towns had been added to his empire. Thutmose was known for his diplomacy, and displayed clemency towards his enemies, aiming to egyptianise them.

This created good relations within the empire and maintained **ma'at**. However those who chose not to accept Egyptian rule were severely punished. A scene at Karnak depicts Thutmose seizing the hair of an enemy and taking a huge swing with his mace to kill him. Beneath his feet, the names of conquered cities and peoples are listed. Egyptian garrisons and administrations were established throughout the empire, with Egyptian advisors controlling the princes of Palestinian city-states. Sons of Palestinian princes were often taken as hostages and raised in the royal court at Memphis. Later, they returned to their homelands well educated in Egyptian ways and obedient to the Egyptian throne.

This imperialistic expansion of the empire was dedicated to the god Amun. Like many pharaohs of the New Kingdom, Thutmose III went to war "*at the command of Amun*". The king referred to Amun as his father in all inscriptions. Thutmose was in training to become a priest, before he was 'chosen' by his god to be pharaoh. The Great Coronation Inscription tells historians Amun stopped in front of Thutmose during a religious procession at Karnak, and led him to the place reserved for the king. Like all pharaohs before him, Thutmose lavished the spoils of his campaigns on building works. He was fond of obelisks and steles proclaiming his victories.

It was impossible for the pharaoh to administer all the affairs of state without the support of a vizier. Rekhmire, vizier to Thutmose III, was considered second in command, answerable only to the pharaoh. The role of vizier was often a hereditary position through the nobility. The vizier was the chief minister, associated with the Amun priesthood, but had no religious responsibilities. He supervised building projects and public works, oversaw taxation and presided over law courts. As head of the diplomatic corps, he met foreign ambassadors, but his main duty was to carry out orders given by the pharaoh under his own title as, *Seal Bearer of the King of Lower Egypt*.

MAINTENANCE OF THE EMPIRE 18th Dynasty (Chapter Heading)

For 120 years, dating from Ahmose I in 1570BC to the death of Thutmose III in 1450BC, the Egyptian pharaohs built a vast empire. It stretched from Nubia in the south, to the Euphrates River in the north. Two pharaohs, Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV, would maintain this empire rather than expand it, defending it from tribal chieftains who rebelled against Egypt's imperial rule.

Amenhotep II (sub-heading)

Amenhotep II, like his father Thutmose III, trained as a priest of Amun Re during his youth. Following with tradition, he created his own propaganda. Inscriptions on many relics depict him as a great athlete. His feat of shooting four arrows through a copper plate while driving a chariot is recorded on steles at Thebes and Giza. At Karnak, a stele displays his loyalty to Amun, saying, "*Amun himself crowned him the king upon the throne of the living.*" This reinforced the belief that pharaohs were living gods, and that the "*divine rights of king*" and ma'at was chosen by Amun.

It is interesting that Amenhotep's wife Tiaa, was never honoured with monuments, only ever seen on those built by her son, Thutmose IV. As a result here is debate among historians as to whether or not Amenhotep actively discouraged the concept of *God's Wife of Amun*, who was the highest-ranking priestess of the Amun cult. This office had political importance, and Amenhotep may have wanted to curb the power of women, following Hatshepsut's usurping of the throne. It is claimed that Amenhotep II initiated attempts to remove records of Hatshepsut's reign, taking many of her achievements as his own.

Amenhotep II ruled during a period of almost unbroken peace and prosperity. Rebellions in Syria were swiftly and severely quashed. Following one campaign, he returned to Egypt with the bodies of seven princes from the region of Tikhshi. Later, six of them were hung from the walls of Thebes, the other displayed in Napata, to warn the Nubians of the pharaoh's might. The Napata inscription in Nubia describes his victory, "*His Majesty returned with a joy in his heart to his father Amen, when he slew with his own mace the seven princes.*" Such displays of force effectively subdued other potentially aggressive powers. On stele inscriptions, various chiefs are shown offering Amenhotep II gifts and alliance, "*the prince of Naharin... the prince of Babylonia imitated one another in making presents and... begging peace from his Majesty*". Of course, this could also be just another example of the propaganda that all pharaohs created.

The highly regarded Rekhmire was **vizier** to both Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Reliefs within his tomb provide historians with insight into the vizier's role in government. Next to the entrance, the text 'Installation of the Vizier' states: "*I was a noble, being second with the king...first in the estimation of ordinary people...I rescued the weak man from the strong man...*" (Breasted) This supports the idea that the vizier was the people's link to their pharaoh.

Thutmose IV (sub heading)

Thutmose IV is chiefly remembered for the "Dream Stele" erected between the paws of the Sphinx. It illustrates that, while out hunting, the young prince fell asleep in the sphinx's shadow.

He dreamt the sun god would crown him pharaoh if he cleared away sand from around the Sphinx. He completed the task and duly became king, enjoying a long and prosperous, though uneventful, reign.

Thutmose's building programmes demonstrate the cultural transition from the sole importance of Amun through to a collection of powerful gods to worship. At Karnak, tributes were erected to Amun, but Thutmose also placed a statue of Osiris, the god of the afterlife, at the temple. Osiris and other gods were worshipped there, thus shifting Karnak to a polytheistic site. This pharaoh also began the connection with the "ATEN" sun-disc cult.

Thutmose IV continued to maintain the empire, but his military actions were minimal. Minor campaigns to Syria and Nubia, resulted "*in the maintenance of the outposts of the empire*" from Naharin in the north to Napata in the south. Diplomatically, he continued the foreign policies of Thutmose III. In fact, this strategy initiated a period of reconciliation, with his marriage to a princess of the Mittanni in the north. This region was under pressure from a new superpower, the Hittites. This union benefited both Egypt and the Mittanni, strengthening their resistance to this threat to the empire.

THE AMARNA REVOLUTION 18th Dynasty (Chapter Heading)

Amenhotep III (sub heading)

For forty years, Amenhotep III ruled one of the most prosperous and stable periods in Ancient Egyptian history. During the thirtieth anniversary of his reign, he transferred his royal residence from Memphis to the western side of Thebes. Many new buildings were constructed and temples were adorned with expensive tributes from the Empire. Despite all this magnificence, the Colossi of Memnon are all that remains of Amenhotep's mortuary temple.

Throughout the 18th Dynasty the Amun priesthood had become extremely powerful, encouraging pharaohs to go to war “at the command of Amun”. This led to Amun’s immense prestige and wealth compared to other cults. The Amun priesthood also threatened the pharaoh’s authority, prompting Amenhotep III to curb its power.

As a result, a new religious fervor gained acceptance within the palace, where the king was greeted daily as the image of the sun. This saw the emergence of the god Aten, the term for the sun disc. However, it would be left to Amenhotep III’s son Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaten, as he renamed himself, to initiate the most amazing Religious Revolution ever seen in Ancient Egypt.

Akhenaten (sub heading)

Akhenaten was crowned pharaoh at Karnak and, like his father, married an astonishingly beautiful commoner, Nefertiti, daughter of the Vizier Ay. Early in his reign, Akhenaten overturned Egypt’s entire religious system by insisting that there was but one god – **Aten**. His choice of name, meaning “servant of the Aten” reflected this. His most dramatic step was to establish a new city, located between Memphis and Thebes, near present day el-Amarna. The new city was also named Akhenaten, and this period is referred to as the **Amarna Kingship**. The significance of his actions cannot be overstated, as Egypt’s pantheon of gods had evolved for over 2000 years. The pharaoh’s role encompassed **Ma’at**, which implies continuity. At Akhenaten’s whim, all that changed, and Egypt became a monotheistic realm.

However, it was only at the Amarna court that devotion to Aten was strictly observed. The state religion had little impact upon the Egyptian people. For the remainder of his life, Akhenaten was devoted to serving his god. He left the civil and military administration of Egypt to his vizier and father-in-law Ay, and the military commander, Horemheb. Akhenaten was only interested in truth and art. The chief sculptor and master of works, Bek, was instructed to paint true to life. Amarna art was a radical departure from the traditional royal iconography. The athletic figures of previous pharaohs were replaced by rounded bellies and sagging chests. The face of Akhenaten and his courtiers appeared more human, though strangely elongated. This physical trait is described by some Egyptologists as the result of extensive incest within the royal family.

Akhenaten died around 1334 BC, and his body has never been found. He, like Hatshepsut, is not mentioned in the king’s lists.

Tutankhamun (sub heading)

The next pharaoh, Smenkhkara, ruled for only two years, and was succeeded by the best-known Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun. Howard Carter discovered his virtually intact tomb in The Valley of the Kings in 1922, revealing much about the little-known king. The wonderful riches found there caught the attention of the world, as it still does today. The tomb is small, and it is clear that no one expected to bury such a young king. Some Egyptologists suggest the tomb had been built for a royal official, but was hastily commandeered for Tutankhamun. Like his father Akhenaten, Tutankhamun was also omitted from the kings' lists.

The boy pharaoh inherited the throne at the age of nine, and was probably cared for by the vizier Ay, and the general Horemheb, who had both served his father. He later married his older half sister, Ankhesenamun. To separate himself from the Aten religion established by his father, he changed his name from Tutankhaten to Tutankhamun. This signaled a return to the old religions, with temples to Amun re-opened and restored, and significant additions constructed at Karnak and Luxor. Egypt was once again a polytheistic society. During his reign, military campaigns were launched into Syria and Nubia, in an attempt to maintain the empire, and recover territory lost under Akhenaten's neglect. It is unlikely that the young boy-king would have ventured into battle.

Tutankhamun died between the ages of seventeen and nineteen, thought to be from either tuberculosis or malaria. Another theory arose from the analysis of a tiny bone fragment lodged inside his skull, indicative of a blow to the head. Forensic scientists cannot tell whether the blow was the result of an accident, or a deliberate attack. Tutankhamun's death raised the question of succession, as he had no sons. Royal succession was traditionally carried through the female line in Egypt. Ay seized his chance to be pharaoh, validating his claim to the throne by marrying Ankhesenamun, Tutankhamun's widow. His reign was short, lasting four years, with little to show for it and no clear successors to the throne.

Horemheb (sub heading)

Horemheb, general to the previous three pharaohs, was middle-aged when he declared himself king in 1321 BC. He strengthened his claim to the throne by marrying Nefertiti's sister Mutnodjme. He initiated works at the great temple of Karnak, and destroyed everything he could of the city of Akhenaten and its creator. He even dated his reign from the death of Amenhotep III, further expunging the Amarna interlude. Despite his military background, there were only minor campaigns against the Hittites. There is no evidence of Horemheb reasserting Egyptian dominance over the region.

Horemheb had exerted a great deal of influence over Egypt for six decades. Despite his long life, he appears to have produced no heir, and was the last pharaoh of the Eighteenth dynasty. He named the northern vizier Paramess as his successor. Paramess would later adopt the name Ramesses I, becoming the first pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty. Many kings of this period regard Horemheb as the founder of their dynasty.

THE RAMESSIDE PERIOD 19th & 20th Dynasty (Chapter Heading)

The first two pharaohs of the Ramesside Period, Ramesses I and Seti I, carried out political reforms within Egypt. Seti I restored many of the old Amun shrines, and declared Akhenaten a heretic king. For economic and strategic reasons, a new capital, Pi Ramesse, was established in the eastern delta, near the old Hyksos center at Avaris. The city of "Pi-Ramesse" was a sprawling complex of temples, palaces and military installations. A factory produced many weapons, including Hittite style shields made from copper. The city was situated on the road to Palestine and Syria. A series of well-protected forts along this road enabled Egyptian armies to advance quickly from the capital against Palestinian and Syrian tribes, which threatened Egypt.

Ramesses II (sub heading)

The country of Amurru with its center at Kadesh, allied itself with the Hittites, threatening Egyptian colonies throughout Palestine. Seti I's successor, his son **Ramesses II**, assembled the largest-ever Egyptian army of 20,000 men to deal with this menace. The army followed the traditional route through the Gaza strip to reach Kadesh, but fell into a trap. However, thanks to the ill discipline of his enemy, Ramesses managed to withdraw south. The indecisive battle of Kadesh was ironically proclaimed as a victory on Egyptian temple walls, glorifying Ramesses. Further campaigns were fought over the years until both sides realized that a complete military victory could not be achieved. Moreover, the king of the Hittites faced internal political difficulties, with epidemics and famines contributing to his problems. The Egyptians and Hittites concluded a detailed peace treaty, ending hostilities.

In his early life, Ramesses II had continued the military tradition of his family, being taken regularly on campaign by his father.

He succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty-five and reigned for over sixty five years, outliving many of his children. In his youth, he had two principal wives, Nefertari and Istnofret, fathering at least five sons and two daughters by them. Some of the daughters held the office of "Great Wife of the King".

Following royal custom, he took many subsequent wives from his own immediate family. He also had a cosmopolitan harem, including a number of Hittite, Syrian and Babylonian princesses. Later in life, he would boast of fathering over a hundred sons and daughters.

Ramesses II was the most prolific monument builder of all the pharaohs, funded by the intensive mining of Nubian gold. He added to the temples at Luxor and Karnak, and completed the great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, which his father had begun. But for sheer majesty, the rock cut temples at **Abu Simbel** represent the highest artistic achievement of this type of architecture. From the Abu Simbel temples we gain insight into the greatness and creative imagination of Ramesses II. He was little more than fifteen years old when he gave the order for its construction. The complex comprises two sacred buildings that compliment each other. The Great Temple houses three gods of the empire, Amun, Re-Horakhty and Ptah, together with the deified king. The small temple links Ramesses II with the goddess Hathor, embodied in the "Great Wife of the King", Nefertari. The seated colossi at the entrance demonstrated in this distant province, the overwhelming power of the pantheon of Egyptian gods. Inside, at the rear of the temple, the gods are seated against its western wall with the deified king. The temple was orientated so that twice a year, on February 20 and October 20, the rays of the rising sun illuminate all four statues. Also within the temple, is another depiction of the great battle and "victory" over the Hittites at Kadesh.

Between 1964 and 1968, an international collaborative project saved Abu Simbel from the rising waters of Lake Nasser. The temples were sawn into blocks, assembled on steel plates, and relocated on higher ground. Technically this relocation was as great a feat as the original construction. The alignment of the temples was done as precisely as possible, with the illuminating of the gods within the inner chamber occurring a day later, the 21st of February and October.

Ramesses died when he was in his nineties, with his fourteenth son **Merenptah** succeeding him. Merenptah was elderly, and had survived all his brothers to become pharaoh. He had to contend with the first attack on the delta by Libyan tribes, who had joined forces with bands of the so-called 'Sea People' from the Aegean. After a massive land and sea battle Merenptah and his army were victorious.

For the next twenty years, subsequent pharaohs had to deal with civil wars and the constant threat of invaders that shook the very framework of Egypt. During this time, Setnakhte the first king of the 20th Dynasty was crowned.

He took the crown as a reward for protecting Egypt's borders against foreign invasion and restoring order.

Ramesses III (sub heading)

Ramesses III succeeded Setnakhte when Egypt's situation was again precarious. The Hittite kingdom had collapsed, as a result of attacks from the Sea Peoples, who cut off sea routes and devastated the coastal regions of Asia Minor and Cyprus. In the fourth year of Ramesses III reign, combined land and sea forces moved against Egypt, to capture its rich delta region. Libyan troops moved along the coast, while the Sea People came by warships. This was not an army but families, women, children and oxen, with carts piled high, seeking a better place to live. Ramesses and his army destroyed the invaders, taking an enormous amount of wealth back to the priests of Amun. The booty was used to extend the temple of Medinet Habu, and Ramesses III considered himself the descendant of the great Ramesses II. He expressed this both in words and in buildings.

Egypt gradually went into economic decline. Trade and the payment of tribute from Palestine had ceased, as a result of Philistine occupation of the region. The payment of mercenary forces and the reduced gold revenue from Nubia further accelerated this decline. Ramesses III had become old and was assassinated by a Harem conspiracy instigated by Queen Tiy. Control of Upper Egypt increasingly slipped from the grasp of succeeding Ramesside kings. Libyan mercenaries plundered Theban temples, and the Viceroy of Nubia, Paneshi, waged a private war against Amenhotep, the High Priest of Amun at Thebes. Ramesses XI, the final king of the 20th dynasty, resided in the delta, and could only watch, as pharaonic power at Thebes was lost. Egypt was split in two, with Herihor, the High Priest of Amun assuming power over Upper Egypt, and beginning a ruling line of priests that lasted decades. In the delta, Smedes declared himself king, legitimizing his claim through marriage to one of Ramesses XI's daughters. He ushered in the 21st Dynasty and the beginning of The Third Intermediate Period.

New Kingdom Egypt, the 'golden age' in the history of this ancient land, had ended. It saw the development of the "warrior pharaoh" image, the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, and the flourishing of the Amun Re cult. For 500 years, including three dynasties, Egypt held unprecedented power, which it wielded across the ancient world. Pharaohs of the New Kingdom are instantly recognizable today, and the many temples, fortresses and monuments built by the pharaohs, remain as a reminder of the glorious Egyptian Empire.