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Douglas J. Brewer and Emily Teeter  
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## Egypt and the Egyptians

Surveying more than three thousand years of Egyptian civilization, *Egypt and the Egyptians* offers a comprehensive introduction to this most rich and complex of early societies. From high politics to the concerns of everyday Egyptians, the book explores every aspect of Egyptian culture and society, including religion, language, art, architecture, cities, and mummification. Archaeological and documentary sources are combined to give the reader a unique and expansive view of a remarkable ancient culture.

Fully revised and updated, this new edition looks more closely at the role of women in Egypt, delves deeper into the Egyptian Neolithic and Egypt's transition to an agricultural society, and includes many new illustrations. Written for students and the general reader, and including an extensive bibliography, a glossary, a dynastic chronology and suggestions for further reading, this richly illustrated book is an essential resource for anybody wishing to explore the society and civilization of ancient Egypt.

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Second Edition

DOUGLAS J. BREWER

*University of Illinois*

and

EMILY TEETER

*University of Chicago*



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## Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page vi</i>
<i>List of tables</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Outline chronology of Egypt and major rulers</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>xvii</i>
1 An Egyptian revival	1
2 The river, valley, and desert	17
3 A chronology and history of Egypt	30
4 Cities, towns, and villages	60
5 The government and the governed	79
6 Religion and religious practices	98
7 Society and its expectations	110
8 Language and writing	127
9 Homes for the people, the pharaoh, and the gods	142
10 The quest for eternity	166
11 Egyptian art: craftsmen, techniques, and conventions	189
12 Cultural death or transformation of a civilization?	208
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>211</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>225</i>

## Illustrations

1.1	Belzoni moving the “Younger Memnon” from the Ramesseum, AD 1816 (Giovanni Belzoni, <i>Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries . . .</i> , London: John Murray, 1822)	page 9
1.2	Sequence dating chart (after Petrie and Mace 1901)	13
1.3	Predynastic and Early Dynastic vessels (courtesy of the Carnegie Museum)	14
2.1	Egypt and the Nile Valley	19
2.2	Approximate location of main <i>geziras</i> (after Said 1992)	20
2.3	The Nile inundation before the construction of the Aswan Dam (courtesy of the Epigraphic Survey, The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)	26
2.4	Cross-section of the Nile flood plain (after Krzyzaniak 1977)	26
3.1	Naqada II vessel painted with a representation of a boat (c. 3400 BC) (courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, 09.889.400)	36
3.2	The Narmer Palette, Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Dynasties 0–1, c. 3100 BC) (photo courtesy of the Petrie Museum, University College London)	38
3.3	Relief of starving men from the causeway of Unis at Saqqara (Dynasty 5) (photo by Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)	41
3.4	The Middle East, c. 1500 BC	50
4.1	Early settlements depicted on the Narmer (c. 3100 BC) and Libyan palettes (c. 3200 BC) (after Petrie 1953)	61
4.2	The town of Tell el Amarna (Dynasty 18) (after Pendlebury 1951)	64
4.3	The Central City at Tell el Amarna (Dynasty 18) (Pendlebury 1951)	65
4.4	The workmen’s village at Deir el Medina at Luxor (New Kingdom) (after Uphill 1988)	67
4.5a	The Middle Kingdom fort at Buhen, Nubia	70
4.5b	Reconstruction of the west gate of the Middle Kingdom fort at Buhen, Nubia (Dynasty 12) (Emery, Smith, and Millard 1979, courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society)	71
4.6	The Middle Kingdom fort at Semna, Nubia (after Emery, Smith, and Millard 1979, courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society)	72
5.1	Battle of the Egyptians and the Sea People, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	87
5.2	Statue of Basa, a priest of Hathor (Dynasties 22–23) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 10729)	89
6.1	King Ramesses III offers incense and libation to Ptah, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	100
6.2	The sacred boat carried in procession by priests, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	101
6.3	The gods Osiris and Horus, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	103
6.4	Ramesses III runs the ritual circuit of the jubilee festival, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	104

	VII
<i>List of illustrations</i>	
6.5 Stela incised with the representation of the ears of the god (Dynasties 21–24) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 16718)	106
6.6 A “Letter to the Dead” (Dynasty 11) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 13945)	108
7.1 Statue base incised with scenes of the family of Djedhor (Macedonian Period) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 10589)	113
7.2 Woman’s sheath dress typical of the Old Kingdom, mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara (Dynasty 6) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	117
7.3 Man’s kilt showing inverted box pleat, mastaba of Mereruka (Dynasty 6) (courtesy of Douglas J. Brewer)	118
7.4 Man wrapped in heavy cloak (Dynasty 12) (courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, 41.83)	119
7.5 Classic New Kingdom male clothing with elaborate pleating (Dynasty 19) (after Erman 1971)	120
7.6 The board game known as <i>senet</i> (Dynasty 18) (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA1901.4.1a.p)	121
7.7 A woman who overindulged, tomb of Neferhotep at Luxor (Dynasty 19) (after Erman 1971)	123
7.8 Musicians entertain at a banquet, tomb of Kheruef at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	124
8.1 Ivory tag from Abydos with hieroglyphs (c. 3100 BC) (courtesy of Günter Dreyer).	128
8.2 The Rosetta Stone (Ptolemaic Period) (HIP/Art Resource, NY)	130
8.3 The name Ptolmes on the Rosetta Stone	131
8.4 The name Cleopatra on the Bankes Obelisk	132
8.5 A brief hieroglyphic text, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	133
8.6 Hieratic script with hieroglyphic equivalent (New Kingdom)	134
8.7 Chart with alphabetic hieroglyphic signs, their phonetic values, and the hieratic, demotic, and Coptic equivalents	135
8.8 Hieroglyphic signs arranged symmetrically around a doorway, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	137
8.9 “Mutilated” hieroglyphs, tomb of Kheruef at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	139
9.1 Architectural features: torus molding, <i>khekeru</i> frieze, and cavetto cornice (drawing by J. Brett McClain)	143
9.2 Brick making, tomb of Rekhmire at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (after Davies 1944)	144
9.3 Nighed “palace façade” wall treatment, Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara (Dynasty 3)	145
9.4 Hememeh hut circles, c. 3750 BC (courtesy of the Petrie Museum, University College, London)	147
9.5 Egyptian “soul houses” (offering trays) showing types of domestic architecture (Dynasties 11–12) (a) Photo copyright 2006, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MFA 07.1026; (b) Photo copyright 2006, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MFA 07.550; (c) Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, A 141	148
9.6 The residential quarter at Kahun (Dynasty 12) (after Kemp 1991)	151

9.7	Plan and section of a house at Tell el Amarna (Dynasty 18) (after Fairman 1949)	152
9.8	Plan and section of a house at Deir el Medina, Thebes (Dynasty 19) (after Bierbrier 1982)	154
9.9	A three-storey town-house as shown in the tomb of Djehutynefer at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (after Stead 1986)	155
9.10	The Malkata Palace of King Amunhotep III (Dynasty 18) (after Smith 1958)	156
9.11	The North Palace at Tell el Amarna (Dynasty 18) (after Smith 1958)	157
9.12	The palace of Merneptah at Memphis (Dynasty 19) (after Fischer 1917)	158
9.13	Artist's reconstruction of the throne room in the palace of Merneptah at Memphis (Dynasty 19) (University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia, neg. S4-141816) (drawn and restored by Mary Louise Baker, 1920)	160
9.14	The early shrine at Hierakonpolis (c. 3200 BC) (drawing by Loren Kirkwood, after Lehner 1997)	161
9.15	Detail of a shrine with arched roofline, Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara (Dynasty 3) (courtesy of Emily Teeter)	162
9.16	Reconstruction of the Karnak temple complex at Thebes (drawing by J.-C. Golvin, courtesy of Editions Errance, Paris)	163
10.1	Souls ( <i>ba</i> ) in the form of a birds with human heads, sitting in a garden, tomb of Userhat at Luxor (Dynasty 19) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	167
10.2	Predynastic burial (c. 3600 BC) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 11488)	168
10.3	Alabaster canopic jars, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 25) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 14672-5)	169
10.4	Scene from the "Book of the Dead" (Papyrus Milbank, Ptolemaic Period) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 10486)	171
10.5	Section of a <i>mastaba</i> tomb	172
10.6	View of the offering chamber in the <i>mastaba</i> of Mereruka at Saqqara (Dynasty 6) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	173
10.7	Tomb of King Qa'a (Dynasty 1) at Abydos (after Petrie 1900)	175
10.8	The Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara (Dynasty 3) (courtesy of Douglas J. Brewer)	176
10.9	Elevation of the Step Pyramid (after Fakhry 1961)	177
10.10a	The Step Pyramid enclosure at Saqqara (Dynasty 3)	178
10.10b	Reconstruction of the Step Pyramid enclosure at Saqqara (Dynasty 3) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	178
10.11	The jubilee ( <i>sed</i> ) festival court of the Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara (Dynasty 3) (courtesy of Emily Teeter)	179
10.12	The pyramids at Giza (Dynasty 4) (courtesy of Douglas J. Brewer)	180
10.13	The architectural components of the Giza pyramid complex (Dynasty 4) (after Baines and Málek 1980)	181
10.14	The tomb of Amunhotep II, Valley of the Kings (Dynasty 18) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	184
10.15	The tomb of Seti I, Valley of the Kings (Dynasty 19)	185
10.16	Artist's reconstruction of the eastern façade of the mortuary (royal) temple of Ramesses III, Medinet Habu (Dynasty 20) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	185
10.17	Royal tombs at Tanis (Dynasties 21-22) (courtesy of Emily Teeter)	186

	<i>List of illustrations</i>	IX
11.1	Artisans finishing granite statues of the king and a limestone sphinx and offering table with rubbing stones, tomb of Rekhmire at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	192
11.2	Baked clay figurine of a king, Medinet Habu (Dynasties 21–24) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 15556)	193
11.3	Gold pectoral inlaid with stone and glass from the reign of Senwosert II, from Dashur (Dynasty 12) (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA 16.1.3, Rogers Fund, 1916)	194
11.4	Procession of offering bearers from the tomb of Rekhmire at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (after Norman de Garis Davies 1944)	195
11.5	Drawing of a box employing western perspective (after Robins 1986)	196
11.6	Scene of a garden and a pond, tomb of Rekhmire at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (after Robins 1986)	197
11.7	Boats on the Nile, tomb of Huy at Luxor (Dynasty 18) (after Davies 1926)	198
11.8	Male figure superimposed over proportional eighteen-square grid (after Robins 1986)	199
11.9	Female figure superimposed over proportional eighteen-square grid (after Robins 1986)	200
11.10	Figure from Ptolemaic relief (third century BC) superimposed over twenty-one square grid (after Robins 1986).	201
11.11	Standard representation of the human figure (Dynasties 3–4) (courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund 57.178)	202
11.12a	Woman with V-neck dress shown in relief, mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara (Dynasty 6) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	203
11.12b	Statue of a woman wearing a V-neck dress similar to that depicted in fig. 11.12a. (Dynasty 5) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, OIM 10618)	203
11.13	Classic representation of the human figure showing an arch in both feet and identical hands, mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara (Dynasty 6) (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)	204
11.14	Differing representations of Nefertiti (Dynasty 18) emphasizing the symbolic nature of Egyptian art: the idealized form, replica of Berlin 21300 (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago); the radical style (courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, 1893.1–41[71])	205



## Tables

2.1	Nile evolution and geological time	<i>page</i> 23
3.1	Predynastic chronology of ancient Egypt	34
4.1	Textual evidence for Nile Valley settlement hierarchy	76

## Preface

In 1960 UNESCO, on behalf of Egypt and the Sudan, issued an appeal requesting international action be taken to preserve the treasures of Nubia from the large reservoir that would be created when the High Aswan Dam went into operation. When full, the reservoir would extend 560 kilometers from the first cataract in Egypt south over the Sudan–Egyptian border to the third cataract, covering all of what is known as Lower Nubia, and all archaeological evidence in the region would be lost.

Through the efforts of the United Nations and government officials of several member nations, many archaeologists from Europe and North America agreed to become involved in what is now regarded as a marvelous example of international cooperation in order to save as much of Egypt's historic and prehistoric record as possible. It was at this time (1961 to 1966) that the different disciplines conducting research in Egypt began fully to perceive the benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding Egypt's ancient past. Geologists, botanists, palaeontologists, prehistorians, and Egyptologists, among others, began to work together to achieve their goals. Today Egyptologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, zooarchaeologists, and palaeobotanists are frequently included on the same expedition team; each specialist provides information on a piece of the ancient puzzle and each works to fulfill complementary goals. It is in the spirit of this cooperative effort that this introductory text has been written. The authors come from different academic backgrounds (anthropological archaeology and Egyptology), have different specialties, and work in different periods of Egyptian history (and prehistory).

We would be pleased if our professional colleagues working in Egypt learn something – no matter how minor – from reading this volume, but the truth is that this was not written for them. Rather, it was written for those who know little or nothing about ancient Egypt but want some grounding in the basic history and culture of this civilization. To assist our readers, terms particular to Egyptian history and archaeology are defined in the glossary.

Some readers, particularly those with a background in anthropological archaeology, might question the lack of complicated hypotheses and models related to Egyptian cultural evolution. Unfortunately, despite the copious archaeological research conducted in Egypt and the variety of questions posed, the preponderance of work to date has been directed at mortuary and religious complexes and thus has provided little information

on issues relating to the sociopolitical or economic evolution of Egypt. Such biases and the relative paucity of data collected from controlled systematic excavations of secular sites make it difficult to analyze Egyptian cultural evolution within any modern anthropological/archaeological paradigm. In fact, it has been argued that so little relevant archaeological evidence exists that it is impractical at this time even to test complicated hypotheses and models related to much of Egyptian cultural evolution. Any such analysis must, therefore, focus first on the general contexts in which this society evolved. It is partly for this reason that summary accounts of Egypt's history such as this one are still needed.

Although it is standard practice in academic works to provide citations of other works in the text itself, we have not done this here because we do not want to interrupt the text with lengthy lists of the works on which we have depended so heavily. Instead, each chapter contains suggestions for further reading, with a complete bibliography provided at the end of the book. Keeping our intended audience in mind, we have attempted to provide a balance of primary and secondary sources in the list of readings for each chapter. The reader is encouraged first to review the secondary sources, which are often historical or topical reviews in themselves, before attempting to digest the primary sources.

Preparation of a second, revised, edition of this work afforded us the opportunity to correct and clarify some minor points, and also to add considerably to the discussions of the earliest periods of Egyptian history, the rise of the Egyptian script, and aspects of society such as marriage, law, and popular religion. This revised edition also contains a significant number of new illustrations, many of which are based on epigraphic drawings that more accurately represent Egyptian art.

Many people and institutions contributed to this volume. We are especially grateful to Christopher Woods and Thomas Urban of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, for giving so freely of their time in answering our many questions, and to Steve Holland, Brenda Coelho, Loren Kirkwood, Brett McClain, and Leslie Schramer whose artistic skills produced many of the figures presented here. The Oriental Institute of University of Chicago, and its Epigraphic Survey, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Brooklyn Museum, the Egypt Exploration Society (London), the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, the Ashmolean Museum, the Petrie Museum of University College London, and the Carnegie Museum provided illustrations for this volume. Finally, Simon Whitmore of Cambridge University Press deserves special thanks for suggesting to us the need for a second expanded edition and Jackie Warren for her advice and patience throughout the writing process.

## Outline chronology of Egypt and major rulers

All dates are approximate. Chronology based on Murnane 1983.

**Predynastic (4650–3150)**

**Early dynastic: dynasties 0–2 (3150–2686 BC)**

Dynasty 0 (3150–3050 BC)

Scorpion

Narmer

Dynasty 1 (3050–2890 BC)

Aha

Djer

Djet

Den

Dynasty 2 (2890–2686 BC)

Hetepsekhemwy

Peribsen

Khasekhemwy

**Old Kingdom: Dynasties 3–6 (2686–2181 BC)**

Dynasty 3 (2686–2613 BC)

Djoser

Sekhemkhet

Khaba

Huni

Dynasty 4 (2613–2498 BC)

Snefru

Khufu

Djedefre

Khafre

Menkaure

Shepseskaf

Dynasty 5 (2498–2345 BC)

Userkaf

Sahure

Neferirkare-Kakai

Niuserre

Unis

Dynasty 6 (2345–2181 BC)

Teti

*Outline chronology of Egypt and major rulers*

Pepi I

Mernere

Pepi II

Nitocris (?)

**First Intermediate Period: Dynasties 7–11 (2181–2040 BC)**

Dynasties 7–10 (2181–2160 BC)

Dynasty 11 (2133–2160 BC)

Wahankh Antef II

Mentuhotep I–III

**Middle Kingdom: Dynasties 12 and early 13 (2040–1782 BC)**

Dynasty 12 (2060–1991 BC)

Amunemhet I

Senwosert I

Amunemhet II

Senwosert II

Senwosert III

Amunemhet III

Queen Sobekneferu

Dynasty 13 (1782–1650 BC)

Khendjer

**Second Intermediate Period: Dynasties 14–17 (1782–1570 BC)**

Dynasty 14 (1650 BC)

Dynasty 15–16 (1663–1555 BC)

Hyksos kings

Dynasty 17 (1663–1570 BC)

Sekhenenre Tao II

Kamose

**New Kingdom: Dynasties 18–20 (1570–1069 BC)**

Dynasty 18 (1570–1293 BC)

Ahmose

Amunhotep I

Thutmose I

Thutmose II

Thutmose III

Hatshepsut

Amunhotep II

Thutmose IV

Amunhotep III

Amunhotep IV/Akhenaten

Smenkhkare

Tutankhamun

Ay

Horemheb

*Outline chronology of Egypt and major rulers*

xv

Dynasty 19 (1293–1185 BC)

Ramesses I

Seti I

Ramesses II

Merneptah

Amenmesse

Seti II

Siptah

Tausret

Dynasty 20 (1185–1069 BC)

Sethnakht

Ramesses III

Ramesses IV–Ramesses XI

Herihor

**Third Intermediate Period: Dynasties 21–25 (1069–656 BC)**

Dynasty 21 (1069–945 BC)

Smendes

Psusennes I

Pinedjem I (Thebes)

Amenemope

Dynasty 22 (945–712 BC)

Shoshenq I

Osorkon I

Dynasties 23–24 (818–712 BC)

“Libyan” Kings

Dynasty 25: Kushite Period (772–656 BC)

Piankhy (Piye)

Shabaka

Taharqa

**Late Period: Dynasties 26–31 (656–332 BC)**

Dynasty 26: Saite Period (656–525 BC)

Psamtek I

Necho

Psamtek II

Apries

Amasis

Psamtek III

Dynasty 27 (525–404 BC)

(First Persian Domination)

Cambyses

Darius I

Xerxes

Dynasty 28 (404–399 BC)

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xvi

*Outline chronology of Egypt and major rulers*

Dynasty 29 (399–380 BC)

Dynasty 30 (380–362 BC)

Nectanebo I

Nectanebo II

Dynasty 31 (342–332 BC)

(Second Persian Domination)

Macedonian Period (332–304 BC)

Alexander the Great

Ptolemaic Period (304–30 BC)

Ptolemy I–Ptolemy XII

Cleopatra VII

Roman Period (30 BC–AD 323)

Augustus Caesar

Byzantine Period (AD 323–642)

Arab conquest (AD 642)

## Glossary

- Acheulean** Tool assemblage characterized by a reduction of stone to make a large multi-purpose instrument such as a hand-axe (c. 100,000–50,000 BC).
- AD** Anno Domini (in the year of our Lord).
- akh** One of the divisions of the human soul; undergoes transfiguration into blessed status upon rebirth.
- Amarna** (Tell el Amarna) Modern name for Akhetaten, “Horizon of the Aten,” the capital city founded by King Akhenaten in Dynasty 18.
- Amarna Letters** Cuneiform tablets found at Tell el Amarna detailing the trade and political relationships of Egypt with Western Asia during the reigns of Amunhotep III to Tutankhamun (Dynasty 18).
- Amratian** Synonym for the Naqada I Predynastic Period.
- amulet** Good luck/protective charm, often in the form of a hieroglyph.
- ankh** Hieroglyph in the form of a looped-top cross meaning “to live” and “life.”
- Apis bull** Bull sacred to the god Ptah and later to the god Osiris-Serapis. Buried from the New Kingdom onward in a catacomb at Saqqara.
- archaeologist** A scholar who investigates historic or prehistoric cultures through the study of materials such as objects, inscriptions, or architecture; such information is usually retrieved through systematic excavations.
- Assyria** Kingdom that gained prominence with the decline of the Mitanni-ans around 1300 BC; center of kingdom at Ashur in northern Iraq; invaded Egypt several times in seventh century BC.
- Aten** God represented by the disk or globe of the sun; elevated by Akhenaten (Dynasty 18) above all other deities.
- Atum** Primeval cosmic creator god; appeared spontaneously from Nun; progenitor of elements of the universe.
- aurochs (pl. aurochsen)** Wild bovid (*Bos primigenius*) that extended across Euro-Asian continent and much of North Africa; thought to be the progenitor of domestic cattle.
- ba** Element of the soul of the deceased that was able to leave the tomb and maintain contact with the realm of the living; shown in the form of a human-headed bird (see fig. 10.1).
- bark** A boat; often a sacred boat used to transport a statue of a god or the king (see fig. 6.2).



- bas relief** Technique of carving on stone wherein the background is cut away, leaving the design standing above the background.
- BC** Before Christ (BCE: before the common era). Upper case represents a calibrated or calendrical date; lower case (bc) represents an uncalibrated radio metric or other date.
- bitumen** A naturally occurring mineral pitch composed of hydrocarbons resembling tar.
- “Book of the Dead”** Modern name for series of New Kingdom religious texts intended to protect the soul of the deceased as it traveled through the underworld toward rebirth (see fig. 10.4).
- BP** Before present. Upper case represents calibrated date; lower case (bp) represents an uncalibrated radio metric date.
- C-14** Radiocarbon dating method based on organic (carbon-based) materials such as wood, plant materials, mollusk shells, and bone.
- canopic jar** Vessel of stone or pottery in which mummified organs were stored in the tomb. There were four canopic jars, one each for the stomach, liver, lungs, and intestines. The organs could also be stored in canopic coffins which in turn might be stored in a canopic chest. “Canopic” refers to the Late Period god Canopis who was represented in a form that resembled a jar (see fig. 10.3).
- cartonnage** Papier-mâché-like material made of layers of papyrus, gum, fabric, and plaster, used to make anthropoid coffins and other fittings for mummies.
- cartouche** Oval-shaped loop encircling a royal name.
- cataract** Outcropping of rock in the Nile that created innavigable rapids. The six cataracts from near Khartoum to Aswan protected Egypt from invasion from the south.
- cavetto cornice** Architectural feature; recurved stone surface at top of wall or above doors that represents the frayed reeds at edge of mats once used for walls (see fig. 9.1).
- cenotaph** Symbolic tomb.
- Colossi of Memnon** Name given to a pair of statues in front of the ruined mortuary temple of Amunhotep III in western Thebes.
- Coptic** Sect of Christianity prevalent in Egypt; from the Greek *aiguptios* and Arabic *gubti* for “Egypt”; also the last stage of the ancient Egyptian language, written in Greek letters.
- corvée** Involuntary labor or service to the state theoretically required of all Egyptians.
- cubit** Ancient Egyptian measurement based on the width of six palms; approximately 45 centimeters.
- deben** Unit of weight; by the time of the New Kingdom, metals were expressed in deben as a monetary referent to establish the worth of a commodity.

- Delta** Large flat plain lying north of Cairo (ancient Memphis) and drained by the Nile river. Area also known as Lower Egypt.
- demotic** Cursive script used to write the Egyptian language from about 600 BC onward.
- La Description (de l’Égypte)*** Twenty-four-volume compilation of Egypt’s natural history and culture produced by the savants accompanying Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt.
- determinative** Unvocalized symbol in the Egyptian writing system that prescribes meaning to a word.
- Diodorus** Greek historian (c. 80–20 BC) who wrote forty books on world history.
- dynasty** A series of rulers, often from the same line of descent; generally traced from father to son.
- Early Dynastic** Synonym for Archaic Period, Dynasties 1 and 2.
- Eastern Desert** Desert that lies between the Nile and the Red Sea.
- faience** A fabric made of quartz, lime, and alkali used to make statuettes, amulets, and ritual vessels. Often bright blue or blue green, but it could be glazed in a variety of colors.
- false door** Architectural feature of tombs and temples; representation of a door. In a temple, it functioned as the focus of cult activities; in a tomb it was the means by which the soul could travel between the subterranean burial chamber and the tomb chambers (see fig. 10.6).
- Gerzean** Synonym for the Naqada II Predynastic Period.
- gezira** Deposit of sand, silt, and clay that appears as an island above the flat plain of the Nile Delta.
- heb sed** Ritual in which the king demonstrated his vitality and ability to rule by running a prescribed course. The ritual was initially celebrated in the thirtieth year of the king’s rule and at more frequent intervals thereafter. Also called the “jubilee” (see fig. 6.4).
- henotheism** The elevation of one god over others, without eliminating others as in monotheism; characteristic of the religion of Akhenaten.
- Herodotus** Greek historian (c. 484–430 BC) who traveled widely throughout the Mediterranean world chronicling the cultures of the region. Author of *The Histories*.
- hieratic** Cursive form of hieroglyphs used alongside the more complex hieroglyphs (see fig. 8.6).
- Hittites** Indo-European cultural group occupying central and southern Turkey, c. 1700–1200 BC.
- Hyksos** People from Western Asia who settled in the Delta and ruled parts of Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period.
- hypostyle** Architectural term (Greek: many columned), referring to the columned hall in an Egyptian temple.

- ideogram** Symbol in Egyptian writing system that represents a word or concept.
- intaglio** Technique of carving on stone wherein the design is cut into the background; also called sunk relief.
- jubilee** See heb sed.
- ka** Part of the soul represented in human form; element of the being that needed food and provisions after death.
- Karnak Temple** Complex of temples at modern Luxor; dominated by Temple of Amun – the largest structure ever dedicated to any god (see fig. 9.16).
- Khedive** Title for the Turkish ruler of Egypt (1805–1914).
- khekeru frieze** Form of architectural ornamentation; carved or painted representation of bundles of bound reeds; most often at top of wall or above lintels (see fig. 9.1).
- kingdoms** Sociopolitical units of Egyptian history devised by modern scholars as a means to group dynasties into similar sociocultural units.
- kom** An elevated mound representing an ancient archaeological site (synonym for tell).
- Late Predynastic** Synonym for Naqada II (Gerzean) Period.
- levee** Natural elevated feature created by the annual flooding of the river, usually running parallel to the river's course.
- logogram** Symbol in written Egyptian that represents a word.
- lost wax** Technique of casting a bronze figure by initially fashioning it in wax and encasing it in clay. The clay jacket was heated to harden the clay and melt the wax, and the resulting void was then filled with molten bronze. When the metal had hardened, the clay jacket was broken away from the bronze figure.
- Lower Egypt** The Delta.
- maat** Truth, justice, righteousness; also the goddess (Maat) who is the embodiment of truth.
- mastaba** (Arabic: bench) Mud-brick or stone rectangular tomb superstructure characteristic of Archaic royal tombs and private tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdoms (see fig. 10.5).
- Medjay** Desert police force, usually made up of Nubians.
- menat** Beaded necklace carried by some priestesses and deities; the sound of the necklace when shaken was thought to be pleasing to the gods.
- Middle Egypt** Administrative area referring to the area between Cairo and Asyut.
- Mitanni** Cultural group occupying northern Mesopotamia between Tigris and Euphrates rivers (c. 1500–1300 BC).

- Mousterian** Stone tools characterized by a type of flaking technique whereby the stone is reduced by flaking to a dome-shaped core. In this lithic industry it is the flakes that are further shaped into tools, not the core itself (c. 50,000 BC).
- mulqaf** An architectural feature for cooling a house, composed of a hooded opening on the roof that catches the prevailing wind, carrying it into the house's interior.
- naos** Stone cubicle or shrine, usually in the sanctuary of the temple and in which the cult statue of the god resided.
- Narmer Palette** A votive palette depicting King Narmer (c. 3100 BC), thought to represent the king defeating Delta enemies and commemorating the initial unification of Egypt (see fig. 3.2).
- natron** Sodium carbonate and bicarbonate used in the preparation of mummies.
- Neolithic** Period when evidence of domestication (plants or animals) can be determined. In Egypt the Neolithic precedes the Predynastic.
- Neolithic revolution** Term applied to the apparent rapid spread of a Neolithic lifestyle throughout the ancient world.
- Nilometer** Staircase, or a simple stone or other surface, marked with calibrations to record the height of the Nile flood.
- nomarch** Governor of an Egyptian province (nome).
- nome** Greek name for administrative districts of Egypt.
- Nubia** Area between the first and sixth Nile cataracts (today's southern Egypt and northern Sudan).
- Opet** Annual festival held in Thebes (Luxor) from Dynasty 18 onward in which statues of the gods and the king were carried between Karnak and Luxor Temples. The Opet festival was thought to rejuvenate ritually the spirit of the king.
- Osiris** Major deity of the afterlife; from the Old Kingdom onward the deceased was associated with Osiris (see fig. 6.3a).
- ostrakon (pl. ostraca)** Flake of limestone or pottery used for written records or to practice sketching or writing.
- Palaeolithic** Old Stone Age, a general reference to that period prior to the domestication of plants and animals.
- palette** Flat piece of stone used for grinding cosmetic pigments. Votive examples were carved with commemorative or ritual scenes.
- papyrus** Paper-like substance made of overlapped strips of the papyrus stalk.
- Pharaoh** Title for the King of Egypt attested from the New Kingdom onward; from Egyptian *per-aa*: meaning "great house."
- phonogram** A sign that represents a phonetic value.
- Pleistocene** Geological epoch (c. 1.5 million years ago to 10,000 BP).

- Pliocene** Geological epoch (c. 5–15 million years ago).
- pluvial** A period of increased effective precipitation.
- portico** Architectural term; row of columns around the perimeter of a court.
- Punt** Area south of Egypt famed for incense, perhaps Eritrea.
- pylon** Monumental gateway of an Egyptian temple; represents the horizon.
- Pyramid Texts** Religious texts intended to protect the spirit of the king in the afterlife incised on the walls of pyramid burial chambers from Dynasties 5 to 12. Pyramid Texts were usurped by commoners and evolved into Coffin Texts in private tombs of the Middle Kingdom.
- savants** Scholars accompanying Napoleon's expedition to Egypt.
- scarab** A beetle (*Scarabaeus sacer*); the hieroglyph for "to come into being" or "to exist"; hence its use as an amulet for rejuvenation.
- Sed** See heb sed.
- sequence dating** A relative dating system established through the study of artifact style and its change through time (see fig. 1.2).
- serdab** Statue chamber in an Old Kingdom tomb.
- shabti (also spelled ushebti)** Mummiform statuette deposited in tombs from Dynasty 13 onward to act as a servant for the deceased.
- Sherdan** Peoples thought to have originated near Mt Sardonis in northern Ionia, later migrating to Sardinia.
- sistrum (pl. sistra)** Ritual rattle.
- social complexity (stratification)** Term used to describe a culture with multiple social classes, often used as a synonym for civilization; a socially complex and economically diverse culture.
- sprue** An opening in a casting mold.
- stela (pl. stelae)** Surface of stone or wood carved or painted with scenes or texts; often a monument to the dead or the record of a historical event.
- stratigraphy** Layered arrangement of sediments, in a series of defined layers such that, if undisturbed, older levels underlie younger levels.
- Sumer** Complex society located in southern Mesopotamia (Iraq), c. 3000–2000 BC.
- superposition (law of)** In any sequence of sedimentary strata, not later disturbed, deposition was from bottom to top.
- tell** Mound consisting of the accumulated remains of one or more ancient settlements, often used in Egypt as a place name (synonym for kom).
- Thinite** Synonym for Archaic Period (Dynasties 1–2), based on the legend that the earliest kings of Egypt ruled from an area called This.
- torus molding** Architectural feature consisting of rounded corner where two exterior walls meet; represents the bound junction of reed mats translated into stone (see fig. 9.1).

- Upper Egypt** Southern Egypt, traditionally that area south of Cairo. When used with Middle Egypt, it refers to that area south of Asyut.
- urbanization** Large population centers where evidence indicates a large proportion of the inhabitants were involved in a number of activities other than agriculture.
- Valley** Used in reference to the entire Egyptian Nile Valley, but can refer specifically to Upper Egypt, that area south of Cairo.
- Valley of the Kings** Valley on west bank of Luxor containing tombs of New Kingdom kings and a few notables. (Arabic: Biban or Wadi el Molouk.)
- vizier (*tchaty*)** A position in the Egyptian bureaucracy similar to that of a modern prime minister or Ottoman vizier, who sat as chief adviser, head of administration, and supreme court justice.
- wadi** An open-ended channel that periodically carries water. A wadi looks much like a dry river bed. In North America it would be referred to as an arroyo.
- Western Desert** Desert lying west of the Nile also known as the East Sahara or Libyan Desert.
- Wilbour Papyrus** Fiscal text dating to the reign of Ramesses V (c. 1145–1141 BC).