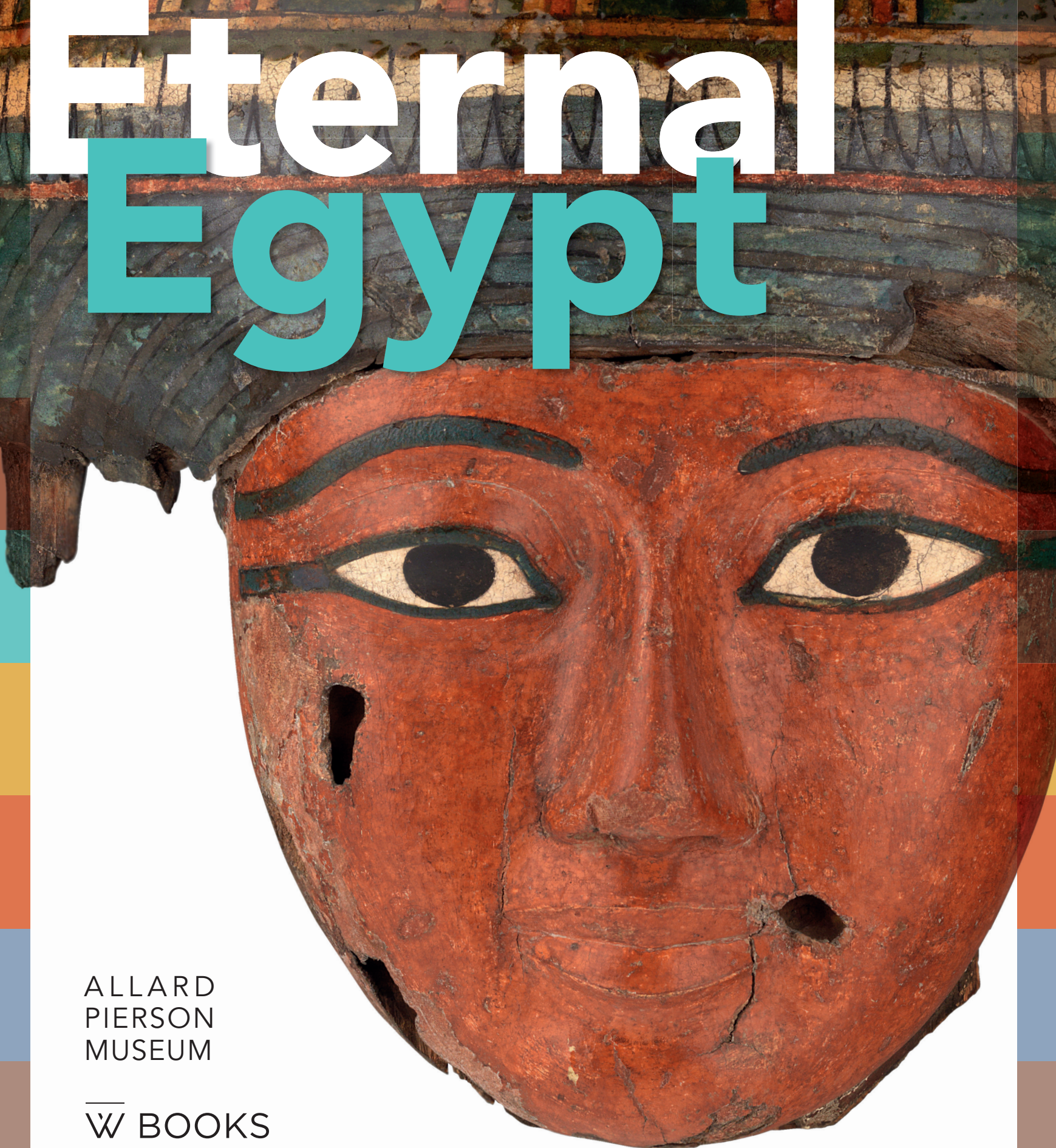
Eternal Egypt



ALLARD
PIERSON
MUSEUM

W BOOKS

Eternal Egypt

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ALLARD
PIERSON
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W BOOKS

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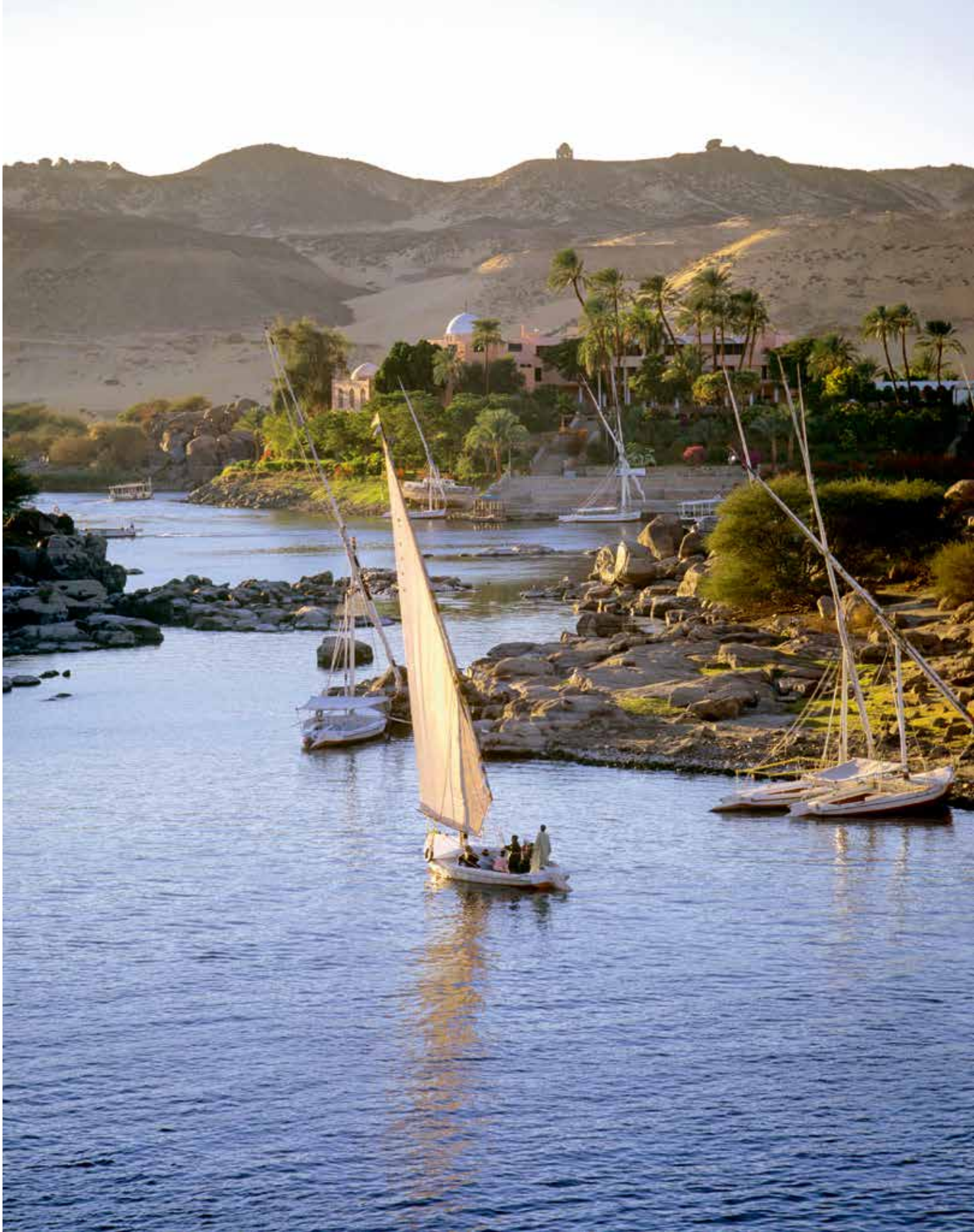


Eternal Egypt unfurls the fascinating history of Egypt and goes deeper than the pharaoh and mummy stereotypes. It focuses on the long history of Egypt, from earliest prehistory (1,600,000 BC) down to modern Coptic and Islamic times. We offer readers an overview of the rich Egyptian collection in the Allard Pierson Museum, of archaeological fieldwork being conducted in Egypt by Dutch and Flemish universities, and of ancient Egyptian culture.

The archaeological collection in the Museum illustrates the inspiring and multifaceted history of Egypt from prehistory up to and including the early Middle Ages. Archaeological fieldwork in Egypt has resulted in surprising new perspectives for many years. Last but not least, this publication also highlights the excavations conducted by the Allard Pierson Museum for over twenty years at Tell Ibrahim Awad under the supervision of curator Willem van Haarlem.

When you think of Egypt, prehistoric petroglyphs, the Greek Ptolemaic Dynasty, Roman temples or Coptic monasteries are not what first springs to mind. However, that will certainly change after reading this publication and visiting the accompanying exhibition. Much of the credit is due to the Netherlands-Flemish Insititute in Cairo (NVIC). The innovative research that has been facilitated for years by this institute has been a fantastic and irreplaceable stimulus. The cooperation between the Allard Pierson Museum and the Netherlands-Flemish Institute has been crucial, and is illustrated by this publication and exhibition. We would like to express our particular thanks to director Dr Rudolph de Jong and assistant director Dr Andre Veldmeijer for their support and assistance.

The publication of *Eternal Egypt* and the accompanying exhibition *Eternal Egypt Experience* are also the result of close cooperation with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina/ Cultnat, with the assistance of Deputy Director Mohamed Farouk being of particular importance.

The exhibition was compiled by Willem van Harlem, who together with Ben van den Bercken is also responsible for the accompanying publication. This project presents the most recent insights concerning Egypt, and has gratefully made use of the research results of the excavations in Egypt conducted under the auspices of the NVIC. We would like to warmly thank Dr Dirk Huyge (Qurta and El-Kab), Willem van Haarlem (Tell Ibrahim Awad) , Prof. Harco Willems (Deir el-Bersheh), Prof. Maarten Raven (Saqqara), Prof. Olaf Kaper (Dakhla/Kellis), Marie-Cécile Bruwier and Francis Choël (Smouha) and Dr Karel Innemée (Deir el-Baramus), who have allowed visitors to this exhibition and readers of this publication to peek over their shoulders and share in the historical sensation of working in Egypt.

Eternal Egypt is the third part of what has become a distinct and successful series for the general public by the Allard Pierson Museum, and is published in cooperation with WBOOKS of Zwolle. The coordination of the publication was organized by Paulien Retèl and the editor was Toon Vugts. The translation into English was by Julia Harvey. The project coordinator for the exhibition was Marian Schilder, the design of the publication was in the hands of Miriam Schlick (Extrablond) and of the exhibition in those of Conita Vermeulen (m3 bouwkunst). The steering group was chaired by Steph Scholten, director of UvA Erfgoed. We would like to thank all of them for their contribution to the realization of the publication and exhibition. This project was made possible with the generous support of DJOSER Reizen and the Friends of the Allard Pierson Museum. The Friends assist the Museum to expand and realize its ambitions, and this exhibition and publication are the tangible results of this cooperation.

Egypt has inspired us, and hopefully it will also inspire you. *Eternal Egypt* demonstrates that the important cultural heritage of Egypt is irrevocably intertwined with European cultural history.

Dr Wim Hupperetz
Director of the Allard Pierson Museum

Chronology

Dates are not always possible to determine exactly and points for discussion will always remain. In addition, several periods and dynasties overlap with each other or do not follow each other precisely.

19000-c. 6000 **Late Palaeolithic**	c. 8800-4700 **Neolithic**	c. 4000 **Badarian**	4000-3000 BC **Predynastic Period**
3032-2820 **1st Dynasty** incl. Menes	2853-2707 **2nd Dynasty** incl. Peribsen, Khasekhemwy	2707-2216 BC **Old Kingdom**	2707-2639 **3rd Dynasty** incl. Djoser
2216-2170 **7th/8th Dynasties**	2170-2046 **9th/10th Dynasties**	2046-1794 BC **Middle Kingdom**	2119-1976 **11th Dynasty** (the country was reunified in 2046) incl. Mentuhotep II
1645-1550 **17th Dynasty** incl. Taa II, Kamose	1550-1070 BC **New Kingdom**	1550-1292 **18th Dynasty** incl. Ahmose I, Thutmosis I, Hatshepsut, Thutmosis III, Amenhotep III, Akhenaten, Tutankhamun, Horemheb	1292-1186 **19th Dynasty (Ramesside)** incl. Seti I, Ramesses II (the Great), Merenptah
756-714 **23rd Dynasty**	740-714 **24th Dynasty**	746-664 **25th Dynasty (Kushite)** incl. Piye, Shabaka, Taharka	664-332 BC **Late Period**
380-342 **30th Dynasty** incl. Nectanebo I, Teos, Nectanebo II	342-332 **31st Dynasty (2nd Persian period)** incl. Darius III	332-30 BC **Ptolemaic Period**	332-323 **Alexander the Great**
96-192 **Various emperors** incl. Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus	193-235 **Severan Dynasty**	235-306 **Era of the soldier emperors** incl. Decius, Valerian, Galienus, Diocletian	306-AD 641 **Byzantine Period** incl. Constantine I, Theodosius I, Justinian
1171-1250 **Ayyubid Dynasty** incl. Saladin	1250-1517 **Mamelukes** incl. Baibars, Qalawun	1517-AD 1922 **Ottoman Period** incl. Osman Bey, Suleyman II, Abdülhamid II	1798-1801 **French occupation (Napoleon Bonaparte)**

1,600,000-4,000 BC
Prehistory

1,600,000-248,000
Lower Palaeolithic

248,000-38,000
Middle Palaeolithic

38,000-22,000
Upper Palaeolithic

4000-3500
Naqada I

3500-3200
Naqada II

3200-3000
Naqada III

3032-2707 BC
Early Dynastic Period

2639-2504
4th Dynasty
incl. Snofru, Kheops, Khefren

2504-2347
5th Dynasty
incl. Sahure, Nyuserre

2347-2216
6th Dynasty
incl. Teti, Pepy I

2216-2046 BC
First Intermediate Period

1976-1794
12th Dynasty
incl. Amenemhet I, Sesostris I

1794-1550 V.CHR.
Second Intermediate Period

1794-1648
13th/14th Dynasties

1648-1539
15th/16th Dynasties (Hyksos)

1186-1070
20th Dynasty (Ramesside)
incl. Ramesses III

1070-664 V.CHR.
Third Intermediate Period

1070-946
21st Dynasty
incl. Smendes, Psusennes I

946-718
22nd Dynasty (Libyan)
incl. Sheshonk I, Osorkon I

664-525
26th Dynasty (Saite)
incl. Psamtek I, Necho II, Apries, Ahmose II

525-401
27th Dynasty (1st Persian period)
incl. Cambyses, Darius I, Xerxes I

404-399
28th Dynasty

399-380
29th Dynasty

310-30
Ptolemaic Dynasty
Ptolemy I to Ptolemy XV and Cleopatra VII

30 BC-AD 306
Roman Period

30 BC-AD 68
Julio-Claudian Dynasty
incl. Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero

69-96
Flavian Dynasty
incl. Vespasian

641-AD 1517
Arab Period

661-750
Ummayad Dynasty

750-969
Abbasid Dynasty
incl. Ibn Tulun, Ibn Tughj el-Ikhshid

969-1171
Fatimid Dynasty
incl. El-Hakim bi Amr Allah

1801-1922
Turkish viceroys
incl. Muhammed Ali, Isma'il

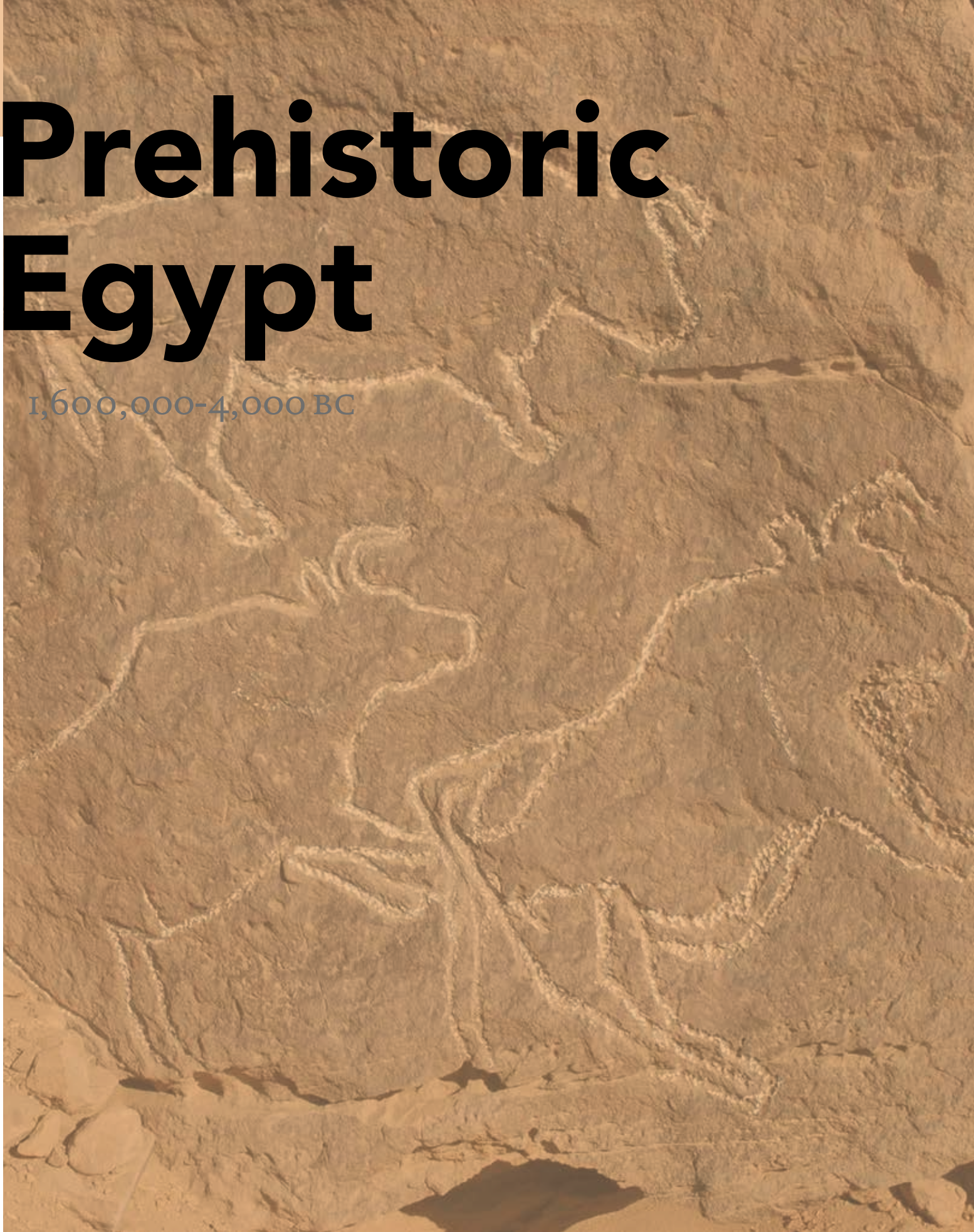
1882-1922
English Protectorate

1922-AD 1952
Semi-independent Kingdom
Fuad I, Farouk

AD 1952 to the present day
Republic of Egypt
Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak, Morsi

Prehistoric Egypt

1,600,000-4,000 BC



The first hominids entered Egypt about 300,000 years ago. They settled along the fertile banks of the river Nile. Between 56 and 35 million years ago there was a 'Proto-Nile' that flowed through the Western Desert and formed the basis for the present-day Nile. The Proto-Nile and the Nile have gradually shifted towards the east. As a result, any traces left by habitation by the earliest humans on the east bank have most likely been obliterated.

The Nile probably acquired its current form at the start of the Pliocene Era (5.5 to 2.5 million years ago). The river is fed by smaller rivers – the Atbara, the White Nile (linking it to Lake Victoria) and the Blue Nile (linking it to Lake Tana) – and inundated regularly due to meltwaters from the mountain ranges of Central Africa. This periodic inundation resulted in the deposition of fertile silt, but the Nile could also wash earth out of the valley. The river eroded a passage into the landscape, creating higher areas or terraces. These play an important role in the archaeological hunt for the first inhabitants of the Nile Valley. Just past Cairo, the Nile divides into a number of branches that debouch into the Mediterranean Sea, creating the Nile Delta. This is a fertile region that changed regularly as a result of the drying up and shifting of the river branches, as well as through the creation of new branches.

Just as today, there were oases in Pharaonic Egypt. The best known is the Fayum Oasis. This low-lying region in the desert is delimited on its north side by a steep cliff and gradually rises towards the south. The Fayum is fed by a branch of the Nile that splits off at about the level of current-day El Ashmunein. This oasis was an important agricultural area, particularly during the Middle Kingdom and the Graeco-Roman periods. A number of oases are located in the Western Desert, parallel to the Nile – Siwa, Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhla, Kharga and Selima. These oases, too, are often delimited on their north side by a steep cliff and gradually rise towards the south. However, unlike the Fayum, they are not fed by river water but by artesian wells – places where the groundwater is pushed up through the surface.

Lower Palaeolithic (1,600,000-248,000 BC)

There were people in the Nile Valley in the Early Palaeolithic Period. This is proved by the discovery of flint tools dating to about 298,000 BC. This period is characterized by the production and use of bifacial tools – flint tools worked on two sides. They can probably be attributed to the hominid *Homo erectus*, the first humans who walked fully upright. The theory is that *Homo erectus* trekked through the region as a hunter-gatherer. The tools that have been

In the Middle Palaeolithic, flint blades were manufactured on a major scale using the Levallois technique – a development of a technique used in a slightly different way already in the Early Palaeolithic. Several blades could be struck from large flint cores. Just like a Swiss army knife, they could be used for anything and everything, and sometimes even reworked into a different tool. These blades have a triangular profile and a flat back. Height: 7 and 9.67 cm.

Microliths (lit. small stones) are first found in Egypt in the Late Palaeolithic. These small, sharp flints were often made by splitting up larger flint blades. They could then be worked as required to make even sharper edges. Microliths could be used as arrowheads, or as part of a larger tool, for example by setting them into a wooden shaft. These examples were found at late Palaeolithic/early Neolithic temporary sites in the Fayum Oasis. Heights between 2.2 and 3.4 cm.

<< This rectangular stone chisel was found in the Fayum Oasis. It is made of a large flint flake and is worked on all sides. Such tools are regularly found with axes, double-edged knives, arrowheads and pottery in the Western Desert. They date from the Neolithic period. Height 6.7 cm.

< These Neolithic sickles were found in the Fayum Oasis. This is where some of the oldest known traces of domesticated plants have been found. The swiftly increasing Neolithic population was engaged in farming and used tools to process the agricultural products. The serrated edges of these sickles are remarkable, as are the beautifully finished, rounded sides. Height 5.2 and 8.5 cm.

found were unfortunately not associated with human or animal bone material. This is because either this material was not preserved, or the original archaeological sites were washed away or covered by the Nile.
It is difficult to say how many of these early Palaeolithic sites there are, or how they are distributed through the landscape. In Egypt we know of sites near Luxor and close to Nag Ahmed el-Khalifa (c. 298,000 BC). Similar finds have been made in Sudan at a few higher-lying rock formations. At site Arkin-8 in North Sudan, tools made from local flint have been found, as well as sandstone blocks that are placed in such a way that they might have formed part of a building. In the Wadi Halfa region, researchers were able to differentiate between flint tools from several periods. This was also where the oldest known tools with traces of what is known as the Levallois technique have been found. This is a special knapping technique for flint that only later became fully developed. The technique involves a flint core being prepared along its edges, resulting in a shape reminiscent of a tortoise shell. A large flake can then be struck from this tortoise core. This flake is immediately usable as a tool, for example a knife. In the Western Desert, tools have been found in Dakhla and Kharga oases (c. 298,000-248,000 BC) and near old, dried-out wells. The hominids who used these tools lived in a climate that was much moister and where the oases and wells were numerous.

Middle Palaeolithic (248,000-38,000 BC)

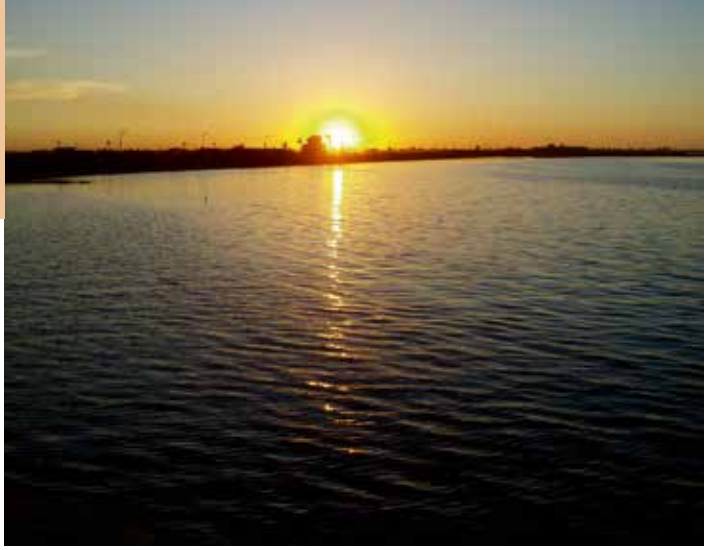
In the early Middle Palaeolithic period, it became more arid in Egypt. Wells in the Western Desert dried up and the Nile began to flow more slowly. The groups of hunter-gatherers were forced to move closer to water sources such as the Nile and remain in the coastal regions. During the Middle Palaeolithic there were also wetter periods when the groups could move to the temporary oases. At about this time the hominids were using bifacial tools, and often tools made using the Levallois technique. Most of the sites we know about are in the Western Desert. This is where the groups of people gathered different kinds of plants and hunted animals, from hare and wildcat to gazelle and giraffe. There are also caves with traces of hearths found on the Red Sea coast near the Eastern Desert, so groups of hominids must have lived in this area too. In the Nile Valley, however, we only have traces of flint quarrying on the Nile terraces from this period. The sites that were occupied were probably closer to the river and are now covered by thick layers of Nile silt.
In around 98,000 BC the climate again became drier, and again the people were forced into the Nile Valley. In the subsequent Taramsa Hill phase (88,000-33,000 BC), people made flint flakes using the Levallois technique on a large scale. This technique enabled them to get several long flakes from a single core, each with a clear point and a triangular profile. This phase has also produced the oldest known burial of an anatomically 'modern human' (c. 53,000 BC), found near Taramsa Hill. Shafts dug by hunter-gatherers to quarry flint for their tools have also been found there. In Sudan, near the site Khor Musa, tools have been found associated with charcoal and the bones of aurochs, gazelle, fowl and fish. Further to the north, human remains have also been found in the Wadi Kubbaniya.
It is difficult to draw up a chronology for the Mid-Palaeolithic based on the different types of tools. The finds that have been made mainly prove that flint was mined. Several different assemblages (large quantities together) of flint tools

CLIMATE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

During the arid periods in Egyptian prehistory, the savannah-like Western Desert became a dry sandy expanse, as seen here at Saqqara. Survival was virtually impossible. Animals trekked to the oases or to the Nile Valley, and so did the people. After all, they depended on these animals for their food. Even today, this desert is inhospitable and hostile to humans, but there are still sites from the time when it was a green savannah.

The development of the prehistoric cultures in the Nile Valley and the Western Desert was dependent on the climate. During the wettest period (before 398,000 BC), no human presence has yet been proved. The first traces of humans found thus far date to the end of the Early Palaeolithic period and come from the Nile Valley. This could be proof that hominids in this period had to stay close to the edges of the water (Nile and oases) to survive. At any rate, they continued to apply this strategy in the following millennia. During the Middle Palaeolithic, the Upper Palaeolithic and the Late Palaeolithic periods, the shifting of the southern monsoon border and the northern Mediterranean border resulted in periods of arid and wet climates alternating with each other. Even during these periods there could be significant shifts in temperature. The climate changes in the south affected the flow of the Nile, but rain brought to the Western Desert changed it into a steppe region.

As the water levels in the Nile rose due to the monsoon rains in the south, the inundation plain was no longer always inhabitable, and the people shifted their settlements to the edges of the Nile Valley. Wadis, seasonal waterways that became permanently dry later on, contained a lot of water during the wet periods, thus creating large expanses of green, habitable areas, for example the Wadi Kubbaniya and the Wadi Halfa. The groundwater levels in many areas must also have been much higher, with artesian wells and also playas (seasonal lakes) offering groups of humans a means of survival. Climate change also influenced the variety of animals and plants. Long ago in Egypt and Sudan, elephants, giraffes and ostriches used to wander around. With the passage of time, however, these animals began to appear only much further to the south. Humans, animals and plants adapted to the climate and a fragile balance was achieved with the immediate environment. After the last wet period in about 6,000-5,000 BC, the climate became drier and has remained arid down to the present day. In the meantime, the groups of people learned to manipulate their environment by domesticating animals and plants, so that despite the aridity they could live permanently in the Nile Valley.



Birket Qarun, the lake in the Fayum Oasis, had different water levels through time. Archaeological investigation indicates that there are a number of Neolithic sites located on terraces around the lake which moved according to the fluctuations in the lake water level.

have been found dating to the Middle Palaeolithic. This could mean that at that time there were different groups of people or cultures in the Nile Valley.

Upper Palaeolithic (38,000-22,000 BC)

The extreme aridity during the Upper Palaeolithic forced the groups of humans to stay close to water sources such as the Nile and the Oases. This period is the first in which *Homo sapiens sapiens* turns up in Egypt. The flint technologies from the late Middle Palaeolithic were continued, but flint was being worked more and more efficiently. There is now little waste product, and a high quality level was reached when working it.

In Nazlet Khater-4 in Middle Egypt, two graves have been found with *Homo Sapiens*. They contain the oldest known burial goods in Egypt – in one grave was a bifacial axe and in the other a human foetus and ostrich eggs. These graves lie close to a place where flint was mined. The people dug holes and underground tunnels to get to the deeper-lying flint. This is an example of one of the earliest known underground mining techniques in the world.

There are few sites known in Egypt dating to the Upper Palaeolithic. Cultures such as the Shuwikhatian and Halfan cultures are representative of this period. Longer blades were created using the Levallois technique.

Late Palaeolithic (19,000 – c. 6,000 BC)

Many Late Palaeolithic sites have been found in the southern Nile valley. During this period the climate remained very arid. As a result, the Nile retracted in its bed and deposited thick layers of clay in the Nile valley, some as much as 40 metres thicker than in previous periods. During the Late Palaeolithic, different groups of people (cultures) can be differentiated on the basis of the flint tool assemblages. In the period 19,000-13,000 BC, they mainly comprised small blades and microliths – small flint tools only a few centimeters long. Microliths could be made by splitting long blades up into smaller parts, but they could also be simple small flakes. This technique enabled optimum use to be made of the flint – every flake was used.

In the dry river beds, called wadis, water remained standing in temporary lakes. They were often a rich source of flora and fauna, which encouraged people to remain in their vicinity. In the Wadi Kubbaniya and at the site Makhadma-4, for example, fish were caught on a large scale. The fish were trapped in small pools and lakes in the wadi after the inundation receded. At the sites Makhadma-2 and Makhadma-4 (c. 10,450-10,050 BC), the fish were not only caught on a large scale but also preserved by being smoked. It thus appears that people were laying in food reserves for the periods when there was less food available. In addition to fish bones, the bones of aurochs, hartebeest (a kind of antelope) and gazelle have been found there. In the Wadi Kubbaniya, the oldest known millstones have been found in large numbers. The inhabitants of the Nile Valley thus adapted to their changed environment. The creation of food reserves reveals that from about 10,000 BC there must have been changes in the way food was shared among the group and thus also in the mutual social relationships. This was the first step on the way to a more permanent, sedentary way of life and an increase in the population in the Nile Valley.

At the end of the Late Palaeolithic, the climate again became wetter and floods occurred. From this period, known as the 'wild Nile' stage (11,000-10,000 BC), and that immediately following (10,000-6,000 BC), graves have been found that reveal that the dead were buried in line with certain customs. For example, at Gebel Sahaba (c. 10,000 BC) the dead were buried on their left sides in a flexed position and facing south. The burial pits were then covered with sandstone slabs. Some of the people buried here seem to have died a natural death, but many of the others appear to have been deliberately killed. This is indicated by finds of bones with flint points embedded in them and with cut marks. It is possible that these people were killed in conflict with another group. During the 'wild Nile' stage, people lived closer to each other because the Nile Valley was mainly under water.

In general, it is assumed that the Nile Valley was sparsely populated in the period 10,000-6,000 BC. We also know

RELIGION AND MAGIC

Burying the dead, whether or not with gifts, illustrates that value was attached to an individual, and possibly that there was a belief in the continued existence of that individual – particularly characteristic of the later Pharaonic civilization. The number of archaeological traces from the Palaeolithic period is limited due to the non-sedentary lifestyle of the groups of people. However, the Neolithic megalithic structures at Nabta Playa are perhaps an indication of actions designed to elicit supernatural reactions. This row of upright megaliths is an indication of some knowledge of astronomy. The excavators of the site associated these stones with a relationship between what happened on earth and the supernatural – just as nomads in the Sahara nowadays still perform animistic rituals, for example to encourage rain.

During the Neolithic period, the material culture became more diverse, and female figurines in ivory and bone appear. The sometimes very simplistic figurines are usually associated with fertility due to their emphasis on the sexual characteristics. These possibly magical objects formed part of the burial goods in the Badarian culture.

Another interesting phenomenon is the rock art that appears in the Nile Valley from the Late Palaeolithic period onwards. The often naturalistic depictions of aurochs, gazelle, the occasional hartebeest, hippopotami, birds and fish, in prominent places overlooking the valley, may indicate a hunting ritual whereby the creators hoped to influence the results of the hunt with their petroglyphs. This seems to be supported by deliberate damage to parts of the animals depicted, some of which were not even completely drawn. Some of the animals seem to be depicting movement, others appear to be dead. The petroglyphs of stylized human figures display significant similarities with the petroglyphs we know from north-western Europe and other locations. Were these artist-hunters perhaps begging a higher power for a successful hunt?

Red polished pottery jar from grave 3800 at Badari. These vessels remained in use after the Badarian period and are regularly found in burial contexts. The lovely red colour was the result of there being enough oxygen and fuel during the firing process. This ensured that the clay was well fired and hard. Height 18 cm.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The material culture of prehistoric times is mainly a flint culture. This is one of the least perishable materials known, and prehistoric Egyptians knapped flint into a wide range of tools. We can see a rough development from raw cut flint handaxes to tools made from flakes. At the end of the Early Palaeolithic period, the first blades made using the Levallois technique were struck from carefully prepared flint cores. Later on, as many blades as possible were struck from a single core in large-scale production. During the Late Palaeolithic period, the blades were in turn divided into microliths (lit. small stones). At the end of the Palaeolithic and in the Neolithic periods, flint was carefully knapped into beautiful knives and arrowheads.

The earliest pottery emerged (c. 7,000 BC) in Bir Kiseiba in the Western Desert. This pottery was decorated with simple patterns, for example horizontal bands of indentations and scratched surfaces that were probably made with a comb. The shapes of the pottery were often simple, for example dishes. After about 5,100 BC, polished red-brown pottery was made in Nabta Playa, sometimes with a black rim similar to that familiar to us from later pottery from Naqada. The pottery shapes become more enclosed, moving from dishes towards pots. This may be related to the need to store food.

Only in the Late Neolithic period did a very varied material culture emerge, such as the Badarian culture. Jewellery made of shells, stone beads and minerals, worked bone and ivory and copper objects reveal that the materials did not just come from the immediate environment, but perhaps also from further away through exchanges. This variety of objects underlines the sedentary character of these groups. They had more time to work on the objects, and in their early villages they also had houses in which to store these belongings.

Arrowheads come in all shapes and sizes. They develop from roughly shaped points to delicately worked tips. The concave-based points have barbs on the back so that the arrow could not easily fall out of the prey. These arrowheads were found in the Fayum Oasis. Heights between 4.4 and 6.5 cm.

Different types of jewellery, using different types of stones and shells, were made during the Badarian period. The upper string also has a small ivory pendant. Lots of jewellery like these pieces have been found in graves. These necklaces are made of tiny beads of carnelian, turquoise, steatite and crystal. These materials are not often found all in the same place, which means that this jewellery was made with materials that came from afar. Top: from Badari, grave no. 3905, length 12 cm; pendant from Abydos, grave 122, height 3 cm. Bottom: from Qau el-Kebir, grave 1765, length 43 cm.

that during this wetter period, people once again occupied the oases of the Western Desert. This is also the period when the first rock art appears on high ground such as Abka in Sudan, and in Egypt in the Wadi Abu Subeira and in El Hosh and Qurta. The carved and scratched petroglyphs show images of cattle, humans and fishtraps.

Neolithic period (8,800-4,700 BC)

The wetter period continued on into the Neolithic period, resulting in the Western Desert developing a permanent population. Just like the people in the Nile Valley in later periods, they first tended herds of domesticated animals and used pottery. These are two of the most important characteristics of Neolithic cultures.

The periodic rains and inundations forced the groups to move around, whereby they populated the oases of the Western Desert during the inundation season. Nabta Playa and Bir Kiseiba are the best known sites from the early Neolithic period (8,800-6,800 BC). At Bir Kiseiba, asemblages of flint have been found that include microliths. The inhabitants kept cattle, but also hunted hare and gazelle. The oldest known pottery also dates from this period. They are simple forms, mainly dishes, decorated with dotted lines and patterns that appear to have been scratched into the clay with a comb. The remains of simple huts and storage pits, possibly for food, have been found near Nabta Playa, and must have been located on the banks of a lake.

Although the Neolithic period had begun in the Western Desert, the people living in the Nile Valley were still following a Late Palaeolithic lifestyle. These groups of people continued to hunt, fish and gather. Two sites are known in the Nile Valley from this period. At the first, El-Kab in Middle Egypt, the people lived on the banks of the Nile. They fished in pools left after the inundation season, but also in the Nile itself, which indicates that they must have had boats. They hunted animals that lived in the nearby wadi regions, for example gazelle and Barbary sheep. Just as in the Western Desert, microliths were used for hunting and fishing. In the Eastern Desert, on the other side of the Nile, traces have been found that are comparable to those at El-Kab, which might indicate that these people too were nomadic hunters tied to the seasons. However, the oldest traces of domesticated sheep and goats come from this region (c. 6,000-5,500 BC). They were found near Quseir, where the settlements have been labelled Neolithic for this reason. The second site in the Nile Valley where the Late Palaeolithic way of life continued was the Fayum Oasis (from about 8,100 BC). Here, too, fish were an important part of the diet, and hunting and gathering also took place. This site has revealed the grave of a woman who was buried in the same way as the bodies in Gebel Sahaba.

Red polished squat jars such as this one mainly come from burial contexts. The polished surface shows that the Neolithic potters were experts at their trade. It is unclear what these small jars were used for. They are reminiscent of the pots that the pharaoh offered to the gods in later periods. Height 10.5 cm.

So why did the groups of people in the Nile Valley before 6,000 BC not make use of domesticated animals and pottery, as the inhabitants of the Western Desert did? One explanation is that there were so many natural food sources in the Nile Valley that there was no need or pressure to adapt the old fishing, hunting, gathering way of life. This process only began with the arid phase at the start of the Middle Neolithic period. The inhabitants of the Western Desert were then once more forced into the Nile Valley.

There are many traces of habitation in the Western Desert from the period 6,500-4,700 BC. There were two types of habitation site – settlement sites and what are called task sites, places where people went for short periods, for example to excavate flints, catch fish or track herds of wild animals. At the settlement sites, traces have been found of buildings that were reinforced with stone, as well as the remains of buildings made of mud and wood. During the Early Neolithic period, blades were slowly replaced by simple flakes

and notched arrowheads. The pottery was decorated with ever more complicated patterns up to about 5,100 BC. From about 4,900 BC, this was gradually replaced by polished red pottery, for example at Nabta Playa, Bir Kiseiba and in the Dakhla Oasis. In Nabta Playa, in the period 5,100-4,700 BC, the first public architecture was constructed. Huge rocks were assembled around the burial of a bull. Close by, smaller stones were set up, perhaps to be used as a star chart. People would have to have worked together to achieve these projects, which is an indication that social relationships were becoming more complex. After about 4,400 BC, the Western Desert developed the climate that we know today.

In the Nile Valley, a lot changed in around 5,100 BC. In the Fayum Oasis, the Fayumian culture developed (5,450-4,400 BC). This resembled the cultures from the Western Desert much more than those from the Nile Valley. It is possible that groups of people from the desiccating Western Desert had moved to the Fayum Oasis. Sites in that region have revealed subterranean grain silos and traces of domesticated plants, including wheat and flax. These domesticated plants were possibly introduced via the Nile Delta from the Near East. The arrival of the people from the Western Desert meant that there were food shortages. This was resolved from 6,200 BC on by the large-scale cultivation of plants. Alongside agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing were the most important food sources. We also see the first domesticated sheep and goats in the Fayum Oasis. There was also trade – sites from the Late Neolithic period regularly contain objects that were probably acquired through contact with regions further away, for example shells and stone palettes used to apply cosmetics.

Merimde Beni-Salame is an important site from the Late Neolithic period. The bones of domesticated sheep, cattle, pigs and goats have been found here in the oldest archaeological layers (c. 4,800 BC). Pottery has been found in the more recent layers of the site, as well as figurines of bone and ivory. This site has also revealed a short street of oval houses made of wattle and daub. Each house had its own storage silo, hearth, millstone and waterpot. The sites of the El Omari culture (named after the discoverer and dated to 4,600-4,350 BC) reveal a similar material culture. In the region around Luxor and in Sudan, pottery now appears for the first time. Changed lifestyles, influences from outside Egypt, and even another way of looking at the environment all reveal that the groups of people were becoming more complex. They were no longer simply adapting to their immediate environment, but were influencing it themselves by domesticating animals and cultivating plants.

Badarian sites (4,400-4,000 BC)

The Badarian culture of Middle Egypt reveals the first clues that agriculture was also being practised further to the south in Egypt. A few sites between Matmar and Hemamia comprise settlements and cemeteries that together form the heart of the area covered by this culture. The sites can certainly be dated to the period 4,400-4,000 BC, but may be even older. The Badarian culture found here is a mixture of weak influences from the Nile Valley and strong influences from the Western Desert. The graves at these sites reveal that there were people of varying status living here – some were given more burial goods than others. The pottery found in the graves is very similar to that of the later Predynastic Naqada culture – small bowls and cups of a brownish colour, with a rippled surface and sometimes a black, polished rim. This pottery was used to store grain, among other things. Just as at Merimde Beni-Salame, there were simple houses of wattle and daub. Animal shelters have been found, too, identified by the animal excrement. Various objects have been found in the settlements – bifacial flint tools, copper beads, hairpins and combs made of bone, bracelets, cosmetic palettes and female figurines made of ivory and bone.

The remains of the Badarian culture have not just been found in that region. Further to the south, in Hierakonpolis, Dendara, Armant and the Wadi Hammamat, similar material has also been found. In the Eastern Desert, too, and in the coastal regions of the Red Sea, traces of the Badarian culture have been found. In turn, shells that were transported via the Eastern Desert have been found in graves in the Nile Valley. It is thus certain that there must have been contact between these regions. The Badarian culture also has strong similarities with the Naqada culture further to the south. That culture would play an important role in the early Pharaonic civilization (from c. 4,000 BC), a sedentary society with a hierarchical system.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Oases were safe havens for the animals and humans that lived in the Western Desert, where they could find reliable sources of water during periods of extreme aridity. Dakhla Oasis, seen in this photo, lies in a part of the landscape that has subsided and has springs where the water flows to the surface. The contrast between the dry desert and the green vegetation, characteristic of oases, can clearly be seen. Oases often contain material from various periods and are thus interesting sites for archaeologists.

The prehistoric cultures from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods in the Western and Eastern deserts and in the Nile Valley comprised groups of hunter-gatherers who did not stay in one place. They were dependent on a balanced relationship with their immediate environment. The members of the group could all perform various duties, thus preserving the wellbeing of the group as a whole.

An important element in their social relationships were the ubiquitous flint tools. It is not easy to work this material, and because people did not grow very old in prehistory, it is probable that people with more experience at knapping flints passed on their knowledge to the younger generation. That transfer of skill would have given the more experienced generation an influential position.

A second element are the large architechtonic structures that could not have been built by a single person, for example at Arkin-8 and Nabta Playa. In particular, the moving of the huge stones at Nabta Playa must have been preceded by planning and only have been achieved by a group of people working together, perhaps even different groups.

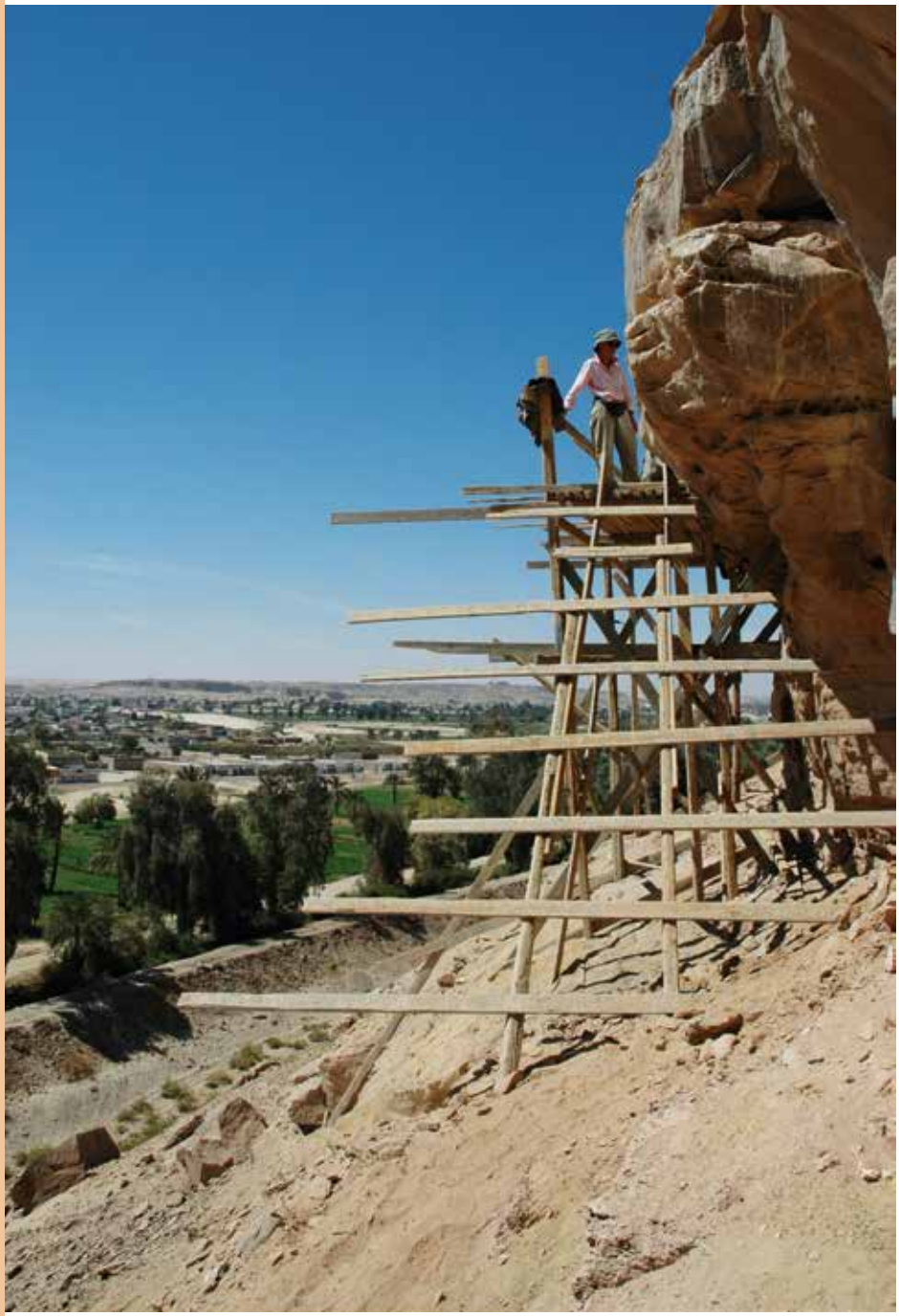
The earliest known graves from Taramsa (53,000 BC) and Nazlet Khater 4 (38,000-22,000 BC) reveal that the dead were not simply left where they died. Their bodies were carefully placed in a certain position in a pit a metre deep and buried.

At Nazlet Khater 4 we can see that burying members of the group was not linked to a special place – the deceased was buried at the place where flint was mined. It is certain that value was attached to giving objects to the deceased. It is not clear whether these were simply the deceased's possessions or whether they were given to be useful to the deceased in a supposed hereafter.

In Gebel Sahaba (c. 10,000 BC), we can also see the deceased being placed in a certain position. This site has revealed that the same place was used to bury people who did not die at the same time. In the Neolithic period, the deceased were placed in a similar position, and the number of burial goods varied.

During the Palaeolithic period, and even more clearly in the Neolithic, there were both larger settlements and smaller task sites. On the one hand, this could indicate seasonal presence at a site – sites are known with several hearths on top of each other, which indicates that people returned to them regularly. On the other hand it could indicate that the group functioned at several places simultaneously, for example to quarry flint. This could indicate a division of tasks within the group.

EXCAVATION **Rock art near El Hosh and Qurta**



Since 1936, the Royal Museums for Art and History in Brussels have been excavating at the site of El-Kab, about 80 km south of Luxor. Since 1998 they have been heading an international team investigating the rock art to the south of El-Kab, near El Hosh, and 10 km further along on the other side of the Nile at Qurta. Here, petroglyphs have been scratched, carved or hammered into the walls of the Nile valley. They were discovered in the early 20th century by explorers, but because we know so little about them they still have a mysterious aura. The Belgian research at El Hosh and Qurta aims to record these drawings and throw more light on their date and meaning.

Some of the rock art at El Hosh dates from the Predynastic Period, but most of it is much older. Using modern technology, researchers were able to analyse the outermost layer of patina on the petroglyphs, and date them to the period 8,000-7,000 BC. The petroglyphs look like skinny toadstools with a long stem that ends in an upside-down heart shape. They are probably illustrations of fish traps. What were the artists trying to achieve? Were they praying for a favourable catch before they went fishing? Are they illustrations designed to ritually ensure massive catches such as those we know from sites like Makhadma-4? These are the kinds of questions the Belgian

Wooden scaffolding has been constructed to access the petroglyphs of Qurta (February 2007). The northern edge of the Kom Ombo Plain and the village of Qurta can be seen in the background. The Nile flows immediately behind the large hill in the distance.

mission is trying to answer with the help of small-scale excavations in the vicinity of the petroglyphs. Unfortunately, the results revealed only severely disturbed sites, and the only traces to be found were from the later Predynastic Period and the Middle Kingdom.
Further to the south, near Qurta close to Gebel el Silsila, a Canadian team of archaeologists saw petroglyphs in the 1960s. They excavated a site close by in the alluvial plain, where the Nile inundation annually deposited silt. This site dates to the period 14,000-13,000 BC, and in addition to stone tools, also revealed many bones of animals depicted in the petroglyphs 150 metres away. The Belgian archaeologists decided to search for these petroglyphs, in the meantime covered with sand and stones. Thus far they have found and investigated three sites with rock art. The petroglyphs they have found show cattle, hippopotamus, birds, gazelle, fish, perhaps a hartebeest, as well as some imaginary animals. There are also some stylized depictions of humans which are very similar to the human figures we know from palaeolithic caves such as Lascaux in the south of France. The petroglyphs were not all made at the same time, and sometimes they are even drawn over each other. They vary in size – the cattle, for example, range from 0.8 to 1.8 metres in length. Unlike the human figures, the animals are illustrated very naturalistically. Some of the animals seem to be depicting movement, others appear to be dead. With the help of Ghent University's Geography Department, the researchers were able to determine that the petroglyphs must have been covered by sand and rubble between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago. The petroglyphs must thus be at least that old. This nicely matches the material excavated by the Canadians.
The rock art found at El Hosh and Qurta are the oldest petroglyphs found in Egypt thus far and are comparable to those found in the rest of the Mediterranean area. Additional research in the future will probably throw more light on these extraordinary depictions, and tell us more about their function and distribution.

The American archaeologist Elyssa Figari is recording the Qurta I petroglyphs. Thirty-three figures have been drawn on the rock wall, including 25 wild cattle and a stylized human figure.

Detail of a Qurta II petroglyph with beautiful illustrations of wild cattle (Bos primigenius or aurochs) with horns that curl forward. The double line of the belly of the right hand aurochs is characteristic of the way that the Qurta II cattle are drawn.

The Pre-dynastic and Early Dynastic Periods

4000-2707 BC

The herds of sheep of the Bedouin are allowed to graze the remains in the fields in the Nile Delta just after harvest; in exchange the Bedouin transport the harvest on their camels. This has been the way for thousands of years.

The Predynastic Period

In the winter of 1894-1895, the distinguished British archaeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie made a puzzling discovery in Naqada, in Upper Egypt. He found a large area full of graves whose contents were completely different to anything excavated before in Egypt – vases decorated with all kinds of figures, red pottery with their upper halves black, cosmetic palettes and mace heads. This was so different to what had been found thus far that Petrie initially jumped to the conclusion that they must have been the graves of immigrants and not of indigenous Egyptians. It soon turned out that there was a much simpler explanation – they were the material remains of the earliest Egyptians known up till then. When he later discovered more such graves not far away, he had enough material to try to place it into the right chronological order. To do so, he developed a brilliant statistical system which he called Sequence Dating. As he expected that a different method or more data would give his finds absolute dates, he used the method as a relative dating system.

Petrie's system mainly depended on the development undergone by certain pottery shapes. For example, he saw a development over time in the changes to pottery with wavy handles – first they had functional handles, later on only a decorative wavy line in shallow relief. The system remained in use for a long time, until better dating methods were developed. One of these is C14 dating, which measures the decay over time of an instable form of carbon, thus enabling an absolute date to be established for organic material.

When exactly did the Predynastic Period start in Egypt, and when did prehistory stop? The answer to this question is still being vigorously discussed, and is thus arbitrary up to a certain point. This book will follow the most commonly accepted terminology and chronology. This means that we view the Predynastic Period as starting in 4000 BC with what is called Naqada I, after the site where the material was discovered.

Naqada I (4000-3500 BC)

The increasingly arid climate, a process that started in the prehistoric period, forced the population more and more into the Nile Valley. The agriculture that had emerged in the preceding Neolithic period was now the definitive means of existence, and the many separate cultures that started before that time now slowly began to evolve into a more coherent whole. The combination of increased population density in the Nile Valley and the slow drying out of the surrounding areas resulted in increasing isolation – a precondition for the development of an independent and social culture relatively undisturbed by outside influences. One drawback for this period is that much more archaeological research has been conducted in cemeteries than in settlement sites. This is because people preferred to bury their dead in locations at the edge of the desert so that they did not have to use valuable

∧ ∧ The Nile Delta is often as flat, green and wet as the Netherlands; even the surface is nearly the same. Only the palm trees mark the difference.

∧ In the foreground, part of Tell Ibrahim Awad. The fields in the distance are being irrigated.

fertile land. As a result, such cemeteries are easy to localize and to investigate. Settlements, on the other hand, were in the fertile valley and were regularly replaced by later settlements, making them much harder to access. They also left far fewer remains, as the constructions in which they lived were mainly made of wood and reeds, material that leaves far fewer traces than stone or mudbrick. One of the few properly investigated sites is located at Hierakonpolis, far to the south. During this period and the one following it, Hierakonpolis developed into an important economic and administrative centre. The houses were varied, with not only reeds, palm tree trunks and wood being used, but also mud, not yet in the form of separate bricks, but applied layer by layer in a way that you still encounter in Egypt. The fences for domesticated animals were also constructed in this way. This may be due to the equally varied socioeconomic circumstances. Part of the population was still seminomadic, with the herders of flocks of sheep, goats and cattle visiting the available meadows in tune with the seasons – a bit like the Bedouin of the Nile Delta still do today. Another part was more settled, and cultivated barley, wheat, flax and fruits. Hunting for gazelle, ostrich and hippopotamus remained an important food source, as did fishing. The desertification was not yet complete, so there were still many different types of animals that can now only be found in the plains of East Africa. Much less material from Naqada I and II has been found in the Nile Delta than in the Nile Valley, but nevertheless it is possible to see differences. The excavated settlement site of Merimde Beni Salame in the Western Delta is the main source of this information. Here, the graves of the dead were found between the houses, not in a separate cemetery. This appears to be relatively common in the Delta, even in later times.

Many different types of graves may indicate social strata and perhaps even religious tendencies. A small number of graves were rich in burial goods, while the majority were significantly less well provisioned. What is particularly noticeable is the role of mace heads, whose wooden handles have often rotted away. In some of the richer burials, these functioned as symbols of the power of the deceased. Mace heads would play this role for a very long time to come. Apparently a sort of leader class began to develop, as yet with only limited power. New elements such as population increase and concentration, and permanent settlements instead of the usual moving around, worked in favour of this trend. The discovery of a model of a defensive wall with sentry posts suggests that this process was not conflict-free – even more reason to form population concentrations under secure conditions, for example villages with ramparts.

Naqada II (3500-3200 BC)

This phase began in around 3500 BC. Unlike the preceding period, remains from Naqada II have been found over a much wider area, including the Eastern Delta and Nubia. There also appears to have been more contact between the different parts of the country, and even with abroad. Proper urban centres arose at Naqada and Hierakonpolis, unlike the smaller settlements of Naqada I. The settlements were also closer to the Nile, probably as a result of the further aridification of the surrounding areas. The increased numbers are also an indication of population growth.

∧ South of Cairo there is a big difference between the desert and the strip of fertile green land along the Nile. Here, at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt, this strip is protected from the encroaching desert sand by reed fencing.

< This house is not being built of individual mud bricks but by a gradual building up of new layers of mud on old, dried-out layers. This is still being done in Egypt in the traditional way.

> This is a mace head from a ceremonial weapon, not intended for actual use. The head is made of quartzite, the wooden handle has not survived. Early Dynastic Period, Tell Ibrahim Awad.

> > Potsherd from a winejar from Tell Ibrahim Awad with the name of pharaoh Narmer in a serekh frame. This frame, the predecessor of the cartouche, was only used for king's names. The winejar must thus have come from a royal vineyard.

An overview of the terrain where the meagre remnants of the old administrative capital Memphis have been found.

Hunting now plays a lesser role in food provision, which was becoming more and more efficient. The first indications of small-scale irrigation played a part in this. One important consequence was the significant increase in handmade products, both in numbers and in variety. This means that part of the population was no longer involved in contributing to food production and was able to concentrate on becoming expert at making these products. As a consequence of the annual Nile inundation, and the resulting cessation of most agricultural activity, extra production capacity became available, which might mean that a large proportion of the working population was busy with other activities for a number of months a year. The question remains whether this made time-consuming specialization and routine possible. It has been estimated that fifty food producers were needed to create enough surplus to subsidize one specialized craftsman. This additionally means that a central redistribution of food products was needed to regulate this – taxation in kind by an accepted authority. This administrative elite was buried in large graves, richly provided with these luxury products. For the first time we encounter imported items as well, for example of ivory, ebony and gold. This is an indication of increased contacts and trade with other countries. Excavations in the same cemeteries have revealed a significantly increased variety in grave shapes and goods than previously, which is an indication of corresponding social strata. The size of the administrative units also appears to be growing. The traditional nomes (provinces) still mirror this development. Although the archaeological picture is not complete, important 'confederations' appear to have formed around Abydos, Naqada and Hierakonpolis, with smaller ones around Elephantine, close to the southern border, and Buto, far to the north in the Delta, to name but a few. Towards the end of this period, the first three of these power centres formed what would later develop into a sort of Upper Egyptian proto-kingdom. When this state gradually began to expand to the south and the north, unification of the country became a realistic option.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Naqada I

Nearly all the artefacts from the Naqada I period come from cemeteries and not from settlement sites, which means the picture we have may well not be representative.

What is clear is that an independent style began to develop. The simple shallow burial pits lined with reed mats from earlier periods were now for the first time sometimes replaced by larger graves with coffins of wood or mud.

During this period the first of the objects and techniques that would remain characteristic of the entire later ancient Egyptian culture also made their appearance.

Pottery shapes with a burnt black top and pottery that was completely black-polished start to become less frequent. There was a relative increase in numbers of red-polished wares decorated with abstract and figurative motifs. In addition to human figures, there were also crocodiles, hippopotami, scorpions, gazelles and cattle, as well as boats for the first time. What is remarkable is the presence of potmarks, possibly signs of ownership or production. These are regarded as a precursur of writing.

Techniques to carve ivory and bone became more refined compared to earlier periods, which resulted in human figurines and other small objects, and small copper objects were also made. The majority of the tools were still of flint. A division can be made between the practical stone tools such as are found in settlement sites, and the very professionally made (decorative) examples found in graves. For the first time stone vessels were made, originally in easily worked stone types such as calcite, but as the boring techniques advanced, later also in hard stones such as basalt and granite. Another innovation is the production of faience, with the main ingredient a paste of ground quartzite, formed in a mould to create statuettes, for example, and then heated. This required reasonably advanced techniques, including heating to the right temperature. This typically Egyptian product remained popular for centuries.

What was also characteristic and unique for the country were the schist cosmetic palettes in geometric and animal shapes, used to grind malachite and kohl to powder which was then mixed with a binding agent and used as eye makeup.

Naqada II

The use of coffins in graves spread during Naqada II, and the larger graves were more often tombs constructed of mudbrick. In addition to the actual burial space, there were also separate areas for the burial goods. The deceased was still often buried in the foetal position. Human and animal figurines in clay were specially made for the burial; it is still not clear what role they played in the burial customs.

The techniques of Naqada I quickly became more refined and efficient for making similar objects. However, more objects dating to Naqada II have been found in settlement sites and not just in cemeteries. The use

In his Sequence Dating system, Petrie assumed that the wavy handles of the vase on the left were still functional; later they were reduced to a modelled and merely decorative wavy line, as on the right hand vase. The criss-cross red lines on this vase are meant to imitate the ropes of a net in which the vase was suspended or transported. It is also merely decorative here. Height 30 cm (left) and 24 cm (right).

Red polished dish. This shape was one of the key shapes for the Egyptologist Petrie when organizing his system of predynastic pottery. The polish is obtained by rubbing the pot with a cloth in the leather-hard stage before firing. From Badari in Upper Egypt, grave 3924. Height 12 cm.

Ivory in ancient Egypt could be either from a hippopotamus tooth or from an elephant tusk. Hippos were still known in Egypt itself, but elephant ivory had to be imported from Nubia. This ivory lion was probably used in a board game. Length 7 cm.

of copper in particular strongly increased in this period, now also being used to make larger tools such as axes, knives, spears and arrowheads. However, stone tools remained in use for normal activities until much later on. We even find flint knives in the tombs of the elite, larger, more refined and demonstrating a craftsmanship that is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. The manufacture of stone vessels also reached a high level of craftsmanship which would not be surpassed even in the Dynastic period, where it in fact declined, certainly if you take the range of types of stone into account. Pottery changed swiftly, in both material and shape. For the first time, marl clay was used on some scale. This came from a limited number of desert hills, unlike Nile silt, and produced harder, less porous pottery. The old red polished decorated pottery was replaced by pottery with a light background decorated with darker lines. Boat motifs become the most popular, alongside abstract patterns, animals and plants, and even sometimes human figures. The pottery with wavy handles mentioned earlier also appears for the first time at the start of this period. Daily use pottery with a rough surface is also characteristic of this period.

Schist palettes – on the left with falcon heads on both sides, on the right rhomboid-shaped – were used to grind malachite, which contains copper, to powder and then to mix it with a binding agent. It could then be used as green makeup and worn on the eyelids. An additional advantage was that the poisonous copper compound kept insects, and insect-borne infections, away. Kohl powder was used in the same way for black make-up. Height 17 cm (left) and length 34 cm (right).

Naqada III

In the period around the unification of Egypt, a number of standards in material culture were developed that would apply throughout the entire history of ancient Egypt. The way that kings were depicted, for example when they are on the point of clubbing the heads of enemies, the use of registers to arrange representations, and the use of writing alongside are a few examples. This is particularly clearly expressed in the cosmetic palettes.

The painting of figures on pottery gradually fell out of use. The creation of cylinder seals was an innovation, perhaps inspired by Mesopotamian examples. Copper was now also used to produce vases and basins.

In architecture, huge constructions of mudbrick were built during Naqada III, with most of the remnants here of tomb architecture. Characteristic was the use of stepped niches in the outer walls, probably also borrowed from Mesopotamian examples. Important tombs from this period were often mastaba-shaped (mastaba is the Arabic word for a mud bench), with a rectangular superstructure intended for the cult and care of the deceased, and a subterranean part for the actual burial.

Early Dynastic Period

This period is characterized not so much by innovation, but by everything becoming more and better than in the preceding period. The mastaba tombs of the elite, including the contents, were now only barely less impressive than the royal tomb architecture. Most of the tombs from this period have been found at North Saqqara, and they are often impressive constructions with dozens of chambers. One of the largest belongs to a certain Hemaka, where gameboards and playing pieces, exquisite stone vessels and lots of weapons (bows and arrows) were found, as well as one of the earliest known papyrus rolls, uninscribed incidentally. Temple architecture in the Early Dynastic Period had hardly developed at all. Another new development is the appearance of stone sculpture – statues and also reliefs on stelae, usually giving the names and titles of kings, and already of a very high quality.

Pottery like this red-polished vase with a black top were probably fired upside down in the kiln's fire. The lowermost part was thus prevented from oxydizing, and turned black (reduced). The iron particles in the part of the vase exposed to the air could oxydize and so turned red. From Hemamiya in Middle Egypt. Height 44 cm.

Vases like these with light-coloured surfaces could have abstract or figurative decoration done in red lines. Here is a pattern of wavy lines, but other examples show plant motifs or ships. This shape, too, was a key shape for Petrie when classifying predynastic pottery. Height 22 cm.

This ivory miniature of a bald man with a beard is one of the earliest figurative representations from Egypt. The legs have been broken off, and the eyes were originally inlaid with another material, perhaps faience or a type of stone. Most of this type of figurine have been found in rich graves; it is possible that they were worn as amulets. Height 5 cm.

This kind of landscape, here at Abydos, is virtually unique in the world – the high cliffs of the desert plateau in which the proto-Nile gouged out a deep channel, with the green fertile land immediately below them.

The Early Dynastic Period

Naqada III / transition to Dynasties 0 and 1 (3200-3000 BC)

The history of pharaonic Egypt until the conquest by Alexander the Great is divided into 31 Dynasties (royal families succeeding each other). This division is based on a history of Egypt written in around 250 BC in Greek, by an Egyptian priest called Manetho. Although it is not completely accurate (some dynasties were concurrent rather than successive), this division is still used today. The great difference with the preceding period is that from now on we not only have archaeological material, but gradually also written source material.

Written and iconographic sources

Written and iconographic sources are often not straightforward, and do not always lead to a better understanding of certain problems. The main sources are large ceremonial palettes made of siltstone with depictions on them. One example is the Narmer Palette from Hierakonpolis. This palette probably depicts the victory of a southern ruler (King Narmer) over the inhabitants of the Nile Delta. This stone has been interpreted as the document recording the first unification of Upper and Lower Egypt – a sort of birth certificate for the unified state. However, it is not certain that this is really so. Perhaps the palette is a ritual reminder of an earlier event. There are several of this type of palette, some of which may depict historical events. The Battlefield Palette depicts dead and beaten warriors as the prey of scavengers and the removal of prisoners of war, and the Libyan Palette shows northern(?) fortified towns being attacked by animals such as the falcon, lion and scorpion, symbols of the southern royal power.

And then there are also huge mace heads decorated with reliefs. One of these, also found in Hierakonpolis, depicts Narmer's predecessor, King Scorpion, with a hoe in his hand, perhaps at the ritual start of the laying of the foundations for a temple, or the ritual breaching of the first irrigation dam. Above him hang dead birds from the standards of the nomes of Lower Egypt; these are probably depicting people further to the north that he has beaten. The partially intact rich tomb of King Scorpion has recently been excavated in the royal necropolis at Abydos, containing many imported wine jars from Palestine and even a sceptre. On another mace head we can see King Narmer sitting on a throne with a procession of standard-bearers, prisoners of war and war booty in front of him. A large ivory knife handle, finally, shows scenes of land and sea battles.

Seals, and particularly their impressions, such as those found not long ago at Abydos, also provide important historical information, for example on names and the correct order of succession of the first kings. Short inscriptions on pottery and stone vases also provide information.

A few stone fragments of a list of the kings from before the 1st up to and including the 5th Dynasty falls into a different category. The most important piece is called the Palermo Stone, after its current location – the Archaeological Museum in Palermo, Sicily, where it ended up at the end of the 19th century. It probably dates to shortly after the 5th Dynasty, but could also be a later copy. After every king's name is a brief notation of the most important events from his reign, for example festivals and the height of the Nile inundation. Later King's Lists, too, such as the one from the temple of Seti I at Abydos, give names to these early kings.

Just how accurate all these sources are is difficult to ascertain – most of the king's lists, for example, were compiled hundreds of years later. The picture that can be distilled from them, however, certainly indicates that the victory of the South over the North was accompanied by the violence of war. There are indications that this unification took place before the 1st Dynasty.

Dynasty 0 (c. 3000 BC)

The main centres were still Abydos and Hierakonpolis, with Naqada perhaps losing something of its importance. In Abydos in particular, very extensive, richly endowed tombs from this period have been found. They are sort of copies of the palaces of the living kings. Most of the written and iconographic sources known thus far, however, come from Hierakonpolis, which was not much less important than Abydos, even though it was not the necropolis or the residence of the kings. The most important god of the time, the falcon-god Horus, came from Hierakonpolis. The familiar double crown worn by the pharaohs is probably made up of a white crown from Hierakonpolis and a red one from the more northerly Naqada. Later on the red crown became that of Lower Egypt, and the white that of Upper Egypt.

The aim was always to unite all parts of the country. This drive for expansion must have been the result of interaction between the neighbouring power centres of Hierakonpolis, Naqada and Abydos. Although the south was not forgotten (Elephantine and even Nubia) most of the energy went into a gradual march towards the north, both peacefully and non-peacefully. Eventually the South succeeded in taking over the entire Nile Delta. The names of a number of

Mastaba of the 1st Dynasty found at Tell Ibrahim Awad, with a main chamber and three side chambers. Rich grave goods were found there, including imported pottery and lots of stone vessels made of basalt, schist and calcite.

Votive objects: a baboon and a miniature imitation stone cylinder vase (note the artificial streaking). These objects were offered to the gods to support prayers, for example for healing or when asking for a child. Baboons are possibly related to an ancestor cult, and the little vase may have contained a perfume. From Abydos. Height 4.5 and 6 cm.

^ ^ Remains of the mastabas of the elite of the Early Predynastic Period at North Saqqara. The mud-brick superstructures are heavily weathered, being exposed to the raw desert climate.

^ Reconstruction of one of the graves near the 'valley' construction of Pharaoh Djer of the 1st Dynasty at Abydos. It is very probable that the deceased was deliberately killed to serve the pharaoh in the hereafter. The deceased was provided with jars, flint tools and a copper chisel.

individual rulers, such as King Scorpion and/or Crocodile, and King Ka, are scratched into jars dating to this period. The names are shown in a *serekh* frame, which depicts the front of a palace in a stylized way, crowned with a Horus falcon. Long before that, however, the separate parts of the country had grown together culturally; the political unification was merely a confirmation of this.

1st Dynasty (3032-2820 BC)

Manetho says that Menes was the mythical founder of the unified state. However, he cannot be directly identified with any of the rulers of the 1st Dynasty known from other sources. The person known as the first pharaoh is Narmer. He is credited with being the founder of the new capital Memphis, symbolically and strategically on the border between the Delta and the Nile Valley. For the time being the pharaohs continued to be buried in the traditional necropolis at Abydos, while at the same time cenotaphs were built for them in the new necropolis of Saqqara, on the desert plateau opposite Memphis, as symbols of the single entity that Egypt was from that time on. Memphis – also called 'the white walls', after what appears to have been a characteristic of that city – would remain the administrative capital of the country for over 3,000 years. Royal residences and religious centres may have moved around, but Memphis remained the most important city administratively and in fact.

The order and the names of the kings of this dynasty are reasonably secure now, because they appear on lists on seal impressions and on reliefs.

It is known that the wife of King Narmer was called Queen Neith-hotep. Whether she came from the north and thus sealed the new union is an interesting question. At any rate, the single state was reasonably stable and in good working order, as demonstrated by the fact that Narmer's name also appears in border regions such as the Eastern Delta and Palestine. This need not be proof of military expeditions, but does at least prove trading contacts. Narmer has also left traces in the Eastern Desert, probably during expeditions in search of raw materials. There is as yet no proof of any expansion southwards, towards Nubia. His relatively modest tomb, comprising two connected chambers, lies in the royal necropolis of Abydos, in an area now called Umm el-Qaab.

His son (?) / successor was the [Horus] Aha. During his reign, the newly founded city of Memphis was confirmed as the residence and administrative capital; this is also when the first huge mastaba tomb of a high official was built at Saqqara. A new capital city was able to offer the opportunity to redesign the administration of the country without being burdened with old traditions. After all, a new and much more centralized design was required, alongside the reorganization of the regional and local administrations (what would be delegated and what not), taxation, storage and redistribution of tax revenues, labour organization and the structure of agriculture and irrigation systems, military matters, etc. The royal domains and estates played an important role in the court culture, in the importation of luxury goods, and last but not least, the increasing resources for the cult of the dead.

The mother of Aha, Neith-hotep, was buried in a huge mastaba near Naqada, from where she might have come. Aha,

RELIGION

The ancient Egyptian religion was a religion of nature, whereby nearly all phenomena from the physical environment of the Egyptians played a role – from the sun to dung beetles, and from the constellation the Plough (Big Dipper) to hamadryas baboons. That their original roles were fetish and totem animals is the most plausible explanation. Traces of them can still be seen in the emblems of the individual nomes, which remained in use throughout the entire history of ancient Egypt. Most of the many gods we know from ancient Egypt are local, as a result of the geographical divisions of the country. During Naqada I it appears that the bull and the cow played a major role, judging by the iconography on vases and in sculpture. From that moment on, the dead were no longer buried in a stellar orientation, but aligned with the Nile. This could have a religious meaning – there are indications of a star cult, and we meet clear traces of this in the later Pyramid Texts.

As a result of the political union, we first see what could be termed cross-border national gods emerging. The victors brought their own gods with them, such as the falcon god Horus of triumphant Hierakonpolis, but not necessarily at the cost of local gods. Gods with human forms are still scarce, but later on the animal gods could also take on a human or partially human shape. This centralizing tendency is not yet discernible in local temple construction. In the few early temples of which we know anything about, for example at Elephantine, Hierakonpolis, Abydos and Tell Ibrahim Awad, the local cults appear to have the upper hand without many clear references to either what became popular or national gods or to the ruling king. This only changed much later, when the central authorities began to take an interest. The votive objects found in these temples resemble each other significantly, but the architecture, which is often very modest, appears to follow its own traditions.

In the course of the Early Dynastic Period, friction developed between the supporters of the southern falcon god Horus and the northern god Seth, and as a result political unrest. The belief in a life after death was mainly expressed by giving increasing amounts of burial goods and food to the deceased. Tombs were designed as houses in a more durable form (no longer wood but stone) and attempts were made to keep the body as intact as possible with the first moves towards mummification. In the centuries to follow, these religious manifestations would develop further.

This divine Apis bull was literally spoiled in the temple of Ptah at Memphis. The bull is shown as a mummy, because after his death he was mummified with all due pomp and buried in a special underground catacomb, the Serapeum at Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis. Height 12.5 cm.

Amulet of Horus, green faience. The Horus falcon was one of the oldest and most important gods of Egypt. He was linked to the pharaoh himself and functioned as a sky god, and in certain forms as the sun god as well. Height 2.5 cm.

The Egyptians developed the art of stone vessel manufacture to perfection with drills of hard stone. Thus they were able to work relatively soft stone like the calcite (Egyptian alabaster) from which these cylinder jars were made, but also jars made of the much harder granite and basalt. From Sidmant el-Gebel in Middle Egypt. Height 12 cm (left) and 13 cm (right).

like his predecessors, was buried at Abydos, in a tomb with three chambers. A tomb close by may have belonged to his wife Benerib. It looks like the first military campaign against Nubia took place under Aha, undoubtedly with an eye to the lucrative import goods from there – gold, ivory, ebony and skins.

The next king was called Djer, and he appears to have ruled for a long time. He may perhaps have organized military expeditions to the Sinai and Palestine. Djer's tomb complex reveals striking changes and innovations when compared to the constructions of his predecessors. The tomb itself is rectangular, with a thick outer wall and niches. It is not possible to reconstruct what it originally looked like, because the tomb was later regarded as the tomb of Osiris and rebuilt with that idea in mind. Luckily a mummified arm of the king, with bracelets, was overlooked – it's now one of the earliest known examples of mummification. Rows of storage chambers were built on three sides of the central burial chamber. Close by were several rows of smaller tombs, apparently for the royal harem ladies, among others. One unexpected phenomenon was the discovery of a large number of small tombs dating to Djer's reign. They are somewhat removed from his tomb, and laid out in a large rectangle, facing the Nile Valley. They were probably situated on the four sides of a now vanished mudbrick enclosure wall, within which burial rites were probably conducted and where a mortuary temple may have been situated. The two parts of the complex may have been linked by an access road, now eroded away, foreshadowing later royal burial complexes, particularly the pyramids. Incidentally, not long ago no fewer than three much smaller constructions dating to the reign of his predecessor Aha were found nearby.

Even more intriguing are the human remains found in these tombs. There are strong indications that some of them were servants and/or courtiers who were killed when the king died to serve him in the hereafter. A number of Djer's successors copied this custom, but it was abandoned not long after. Other early states have similar phenomena, for example Sumer, dating to even earlier than in Egypt.

Unlike his predecessor, King Djet had a relatively short reign. His burial complex is very similar to that of his predecessor. He apparently died while his son and heir Den was still a minor, because Queen Mother Meryt-Neith seems to have functioned as regent until he came of age. Her tomb at Abydos is also very similar to the complexes of her predecessors. It is possible that the valley complex – with far fewer tombs than previously – was not hers but her son's.

The reign of King Den was long and is well documented. For example, there are reports of several campaigns to Palestine. What is remarkable is the large number of mastabas of the elite that were built not only at Saqqara but also at Abu Roash, Helwan and Abusir. This may indicate a vastly ex-

panded administrative class. Den's tomb at Abydos is also of a different design – for the first time there is a long entrance corridor to facilitate the burial procession, which is perhaps an indication of a changed ritual. Another enclosed complex at Saqqara may be dedicated to Den too. It is possible that some of the burial rites were conducted there.

We know only a little about his successor Anedjib, despite his relatively long reign. His tomb is rather modest – two chambers with an access corridor along one of the long sides. He, too, was surrounded by a number of servant-burials. The next king, Semerkhet, only ruled for a few years. His tomb at Abydos differed from those of his predecessors in that the servant-burials were now placed directly against the outer wall of the main tomb. The last pharaoh of the 1st Dynasty was Qa'a. He ruled for a long time and we know of activities outside Egypt. His tomb resembles that of his predecessor and for the last time we find simultaneous servant-burials.

2nd Dynasty (2853-2707 BC)

Strangely, we know much less about this dynasty than the one before. The transition between the two apears to have gone smoothly; perhaps the previous royal family simply died out. Even the names and correct order of the pharaohs of the 2nd Dynasty are not completely certain. What is certain is that it was a period of internal problems, with poor Nile inundations and thus poor harvests playing a role. The country also fell apart for a time, into a northern and a southern part. One certain fact is the name of the first pharaoh – Hetepsekhemwy. However, we don't know much more about him than that he broke with the royal tradition of being buried at Abydos – his tomb is at Saqqara. Close to the pyramid of Unas (from the 5th Dynasty), an extensive underground corridor complex has been found with some main galleries and lots of side passages. With the exception of numerous seal impressions with the name of Hetepsekhemwy, this tomb turned out to be virtually empty. There is now no trace of a superstructure, but there may well have been one. Nynetjer is the best known of his immediate successors. He had a long reign, but internal strife broke out. The underground gallery complex near the tomb of Hetepsekhemwy is attributed to him. It is very unclear who succeeded Nynetjer. Only with the accession of Peribsen do we have more information again. The *serekh* with his name is not crowned with the Horus falcon but with the Seth animal, the first and only time for a pharaoh. In addition, Peribsen was buried in the ancient cemetery at Abydos. His tomb had a corridor around a central chamber with side rooms for the burial goods, and further away a separate enclosed area for the burial rituals. It is possible that the unrest was not yet over, and this king had to withdraw to the south.

We are on firmer ground with the final king of this dynasty, Khasekhem(wy). During his reign, this pharaoh succeeded in reuniting the country after many years of division, and he also was able to take an interest in Nubia. The most monumental of the architecture preserved from the entire Early Dynastic Period dates to his reign. Foremost of these is his mud-brick tomb, at Abydos. It has a rather irregular, elongated shape, over 60 metres long, with a central burial chamber, lined for the first time with limestone blocks, and several rows of side rooms. Although the tomb was not intact, one of the most significant finds made there is a gold-plated sceptre. He also had a separate walled enclosure for burial rites, but only the huge mud-brick enclosure wall is preserved to a great extent, including traces of the constructions inside. One innovation is the wooden boats buried close by, no fewer than fourteen of them, intended to transport the pharaoh and his followers. What is not so easy to explain is a similar enclosure belonging to this pharaoh at Hierakonpolis, and apparently also one at Saqqara. Were burial rituals performed at all three locations? It is also not yet certain whether he built a second tomb (cenotaph?) at Saqqara. The extensive building programme under Khasekhem(wy) was an indication of what was to come in the next dynasty, under Djoser/Netjerikhet, his son and successor.

Impressive remains at Abydos of the mud-brick enclosure wall of the burial complex of Pharaoh Khasekhem(wy) of the 2nd Dynasty.

WRITING

It has long been thought that the Egyptians got the idea for their hieroglyphic script from their contacts with the Sumerian culture in Mesopotamia. Not long ago, however, research at the royal cemetery at Abydos revealed that this is not the case. Ivory and bone labels, attached to storage jars for wine and oil, were inscribed with hieroglyphs indicating their contents and place of origin. This system appears to have been in use before the Sumerians began to use writing, so the Egyptian system is probably the oldest in the world. Economic and administrative developments, such as the transport of products over large distances, meant that a way to record certain information was an early necessity. Only at a later stage would this system also be used to record historical and biographical details, and for religious and literary purposes.

In principle, the hieroglyphic writing system is based on a mixture of signs representing sounds and signs representing images, which does not make learning hieroglyphs any easier. In addition, the sound signs can stand for one, or for two, for three or even for four sounds. Alongside the triliteral signs, the Egyptians often wrote the same sounds out again using uniliteral or biliteral signs. Although an alphabet comprising only uniliteral signs forms the basis of the Egyptian writing system, the final step to a purely alphabetical system was never taken. So it is not surprising that no more than 1% of the ancient Egyptian population was literate at any one time. This did not prevent that 1% from developing an extensive bureaucracy, incidentally. The scribes did their best to keep their profession exclusive, and preferably hereditary, which was not all that difficult given the extensive training needed to master the script.

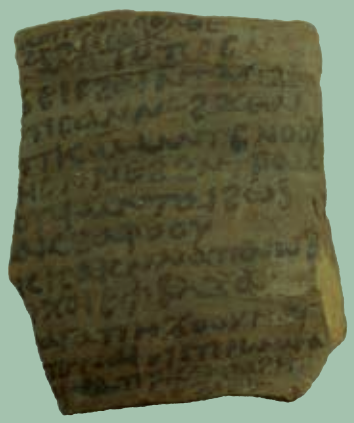
We mainly know the hieroglyphic script from the many tomb and temple walls inscribed with the monumental version, whereby every detail of the individual signs is reproduced – similar to our separately written capital letters. At the same time, in daily life a cursive form was used, called hieratic, whereby the signs were joined up just as in our handwriting. These two forms did not succeed each other – they were used alongside each other. Official documents such as inventories and taxation lists were usually written on papyrus – made from the stems of the papyrus plant, cut into long strips, laid crosswise on each other and pressed and dried, an Egyptian invention. However, papyrus was

Part of a wall of a mastaba tomb at Saqqara belonging to Mehi, superintendent of the provisioning of the palace, from the 6th Dynasty. The monumental hieroglyphs are in very detailed sunk relief. Limestone, height 45 cm.

Fragment of a Book of the Dead belonging to Amenhotep, who was overseer of the sculptors of Amun and of the work at the temple of Mut at Karnak. The opening spells are given here in hieratic, which speak of all that has gone before (such as mummification) the actual start of the journey of the deceased through the underworld. Red is used to mark the start of a new passage. Fragments of this papyrus are currently spread across the world. 18th Dynasty

a labour-intensive product and thus expensive. A cheap alternative were the ubiquitous potsherds, or flakes of limestone. The latter in particular, dating from the New Kingdom, have been found in great numbers in the village of Deir el-Medina, where the builders of the royal tombs lived. They were probably the only completely literate community in pharaonic Egypt. Laundry lists have been found, as well as population registers, legal decisions, wills and much, much more.
From the Late Period on, another form of cursive writing began to be used, Demotic, an even more simplified, almost shorthand form of hieroglyphs, which is very difficult to read. In the meantime, Egypt had fallen under Greek rule, and the use of Greek and the Greek script became normal in Egypt. At a certain moment in time, the advantages were seen of the use of the Greek alphabet to record the Egyptian language in its final phase, better known as Coptic, with the addition of some Demotic signs for sounds which did not occur in Greek. The hieroglyphic script then gradually fell into disuse and was finally forgotten in the 5th century AD. The hieroglyphic system only emerged from obscurity with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 and its eventual decipherment by Jean-Francois Champollion in 1822.

Stela with text in Demotic. The scribe Hor, the son of Pakhas, is libating and censing the god Sokar-Osiris. In principle Demotic was designed as a longhand for use on papyrus, but here it has been carved on a monumental stela, as on the Rosetta Stone. Limestone, height 53 cm.



Ostracon (potsherd) with Coptic script: Greek with a few extra signs derived from Demotic. Hieroglyphs were replaced by Coptic, and eventually forgotten. Height 11 cm.

KINGSHIP

Only during Naqada II can there be a question of clearly crystallized leadership. One of the characteristics of this early leadership could be the close relationship between the physical capabilities of the leader and the physical wellbeing of his subjects and the territory under his authority. This is encountered in many different early cultures. This could have gone so far as a leader being ritually killed at the first signs of decay and being succeeded by another. The ceremony called the heb-sed, a fixed and regularly recurring phenomenon during the reigns of many later pharaohs, may be a later echo of this. During this ceremony the king had to run a certain distance – but without there being any noticeable consequences if he did not or was no longer able to.
At any rate, the distance between a king or leader and his subjects gradually increased. Eventually the pharaoh fulfilled a unique role as the intermediary between the gods and men, and he was the guarantee for the continuity of the country. That development becomes clearer and clearer after unification, because from that moment on the only Egyptian king was literally and figuratively at the centre of the administration and religion of the country.

EXCAVATION Tell Ibrahim Awad

Since 1998, regular excavations have taken place at Tell Ibrahim Awad ('tell' is the Arabic word for a hillock). These excavations are now being supported by the Allard Pierson Museum. The tell is situated in a remote part of the Egyptian province of Sharqiya in the eastern Nile Delta. Archaeological surface research in the wide environs of the nearby district capital Faqus was conducted between 1982 and 1988. This revealed that this tell, which actually comprises two parts, was one of the most promising archaeological sites in the area. Two trial trenches dug in 1986, one on each tell part, revealed thick walls of what later turned out to be a Middle Kingdom temple and a much older rich burial dating to the 1st Dynasty.

Tell Ibrahim Awad is located just outside the village of Umm Agram. The highest point now is about three metres above the ground level, but it must once have been much higher. About thirty years ago, the middle of the tell was dug away to make room for an orchard, thus dividing the tell into two. It currently covers an area of about 20,000 m^2 in total. Extensive drilling has revealed that this is no more than 10% of the original surface area; the rest of the mound has long been dug away for agricultural purposes. The heart of the original tell is formed by a sandy ridge, deposited there by the Nile when it flowed more slowly around a bend. Such sandy ridges remained dry during the annual Nile inundation and were thus good locations for settlements. The sand itself soon vanished under the accretion of habitation layers, eventually reaching a thickness of four metres. Because the Nile branches constantly changed their course, Tell Ibrahim Awad was abandoned in the early Middle Kingdom, when the closest Nile branch shifted its course and the settlement was no longer easily accessible.

Six older temples turned out to lie under the Middle Kingdom temple, the earliest dating back to Naqada II. This makes this temple one of the oldest, if not the oldest, ever found in Egypt. The most important finds were made in the temple layer dating to the late Old Kingdom. Deposits of votive and cult objects in use for long periods were found there, dating back to the Early Dynastic and even

∧ ∧ The excavation squares at Tell Ibrahim Awad measure 10 x 10 m. A grave has been exposed in the mid-foreground.

∧ Satellite photo of the excavations at Tell Ibrahim Awad, where the Allard Pierson Museum is conducting research.

< Overview of the excavations at Tell Ibrahim Awad.

Most of the excavation work is performed by specialist workers from Quft in southern Egypt, who are employed at excavations all over Egypt. The excavated earth is carried away by unmarried girls from the village in baskets on their heads.

the Predynastic periods. Hundreds of figurines depicting people, baboons, crocodiles, hippopotami and lions were offered by the devout to the temple to strengthen their pleas for healing or children. What is remarkable is that concentrations of such figurines are found in temples from the same period all over Egypt – from Elephantine, Hierakonpolis and Abydos in the south, to Tell el-Farkha close to Tell Ibrahim Awad. In this aspect Egypt was a cultural unit from very early times, much earlier than a political one.
Alongside the temple terrain is a cemetery containing about eighty graves so far, dating from the late Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom. Most of them are very poor graves, often with not much more than some pottery and beads as burial goods. This is in contrast to the few large, richly provided burials from the 1st and 2nd Dynasties on the second tell – discovered by the first test trench – which contained a wide variety of pottery (beer jars and wine jars), stone vessels made of calcite, basalt and schist, ivory playing pieces, etc.
Further research is planned for the near future, both in the two burial groups as well as concerning the extent of the settlement. One of the techniques used will be magnetic surveying, to trace architectural remains.

This beautiful ivory figurine of a woman with a long wig and wearing eye make-up has been severely damaged by salts in the ground. It was found in the Old Kingdom temple area and was intended as a votive offering to support a prayer to the god.

This tiny vessel is made of rare, translucent rock crystal. It was found in a rich grave dating to the 1st Dynasty, together with copper and stone vessels, ivory gaming pieces and imported pottery from the Levant.

The Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period

2707-2046 BC

The Old Kingdom

3rd Dynasty (2707-2639 BC)

The first golden age in Egypt, the Old Kingdom, started with Pharaoh Djoser/Netjerikhet. During his reign, mineral exploration in the Sinai started on a grand scale for the first time. Djoser is mainly renowned for his famous Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara, which replaced Abydos as the royal necropolis from that time on. In the complex, architectural developments from the previous period are brought together to form a new kind of burial monument.

The Step Pyramid itself started off as a single mastaba tomb, but was extended in a series of stages with ever-smaller mastabas on top of it, finally forming five 'steps'. The royal tomb is beneath this monument. The remains of a mortuary temple can be seen on the north side. The pyramid forms the centrepiece of a huge rectangular complex, surrounded by an enclosure wall. All kinds of elements from the palace of the living king can be found here, in durable limestone instead of mudbrick, wood and reeds – after all, the tomb was supposed to last for ever. In addition, it was to be a symbol of the unity of the country, which is why elements of both northern and southern palace architecture were included. There was also a separate area for the ritual run of the king during his *heb-sed* jubilee celebrations (see Chapter 2). The story goes that the complex was designed by the doctor/architect Imhotep, who was deified much later on in history. It dominated the necropolis of Saqqara for a long time, because many later tombs were built around it.

Djoser died before his tomb complex was completed. His son and successor Sekhemkhet ruled for such a short time that a similar tomb complex started by him near that of his father had hardly even begun to take shape when he died.

The identification and order of a number of subsequent pharaohs is by no means yet secure; even the location of their tombs is uncertain. Only when we come to Huni, probably the last pharaoh of this dynasty, do we know a bit more. What is remarkable about him is that no clear tomb has been found, instead a series of small step pyramids spread over all of Upper Egypt. It is possible that they were symbols of the centralized power of the king and designed to strengthen the position of the pharaoh, but this is by no means certain.

4th Dynasty (2639-2504 BC)

The most impressive monuments from Egyptian history were built during the 4th Dynasty. Pharaoh Snofru, the first of the dynasty, started the trend. He was married to Hetepheres, a daughter of Huni. We don't know much more about him than that he organized trading expeditions to the Sinai and the Lebanon.

Snofru built two, and perhaps even three pyramids. The Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid at Dahshur can certainly be attributed to him, and it is possible that he was also responsible for the unfinished (?) pyramid at Meidum – although this one could have been started by Huni and only finished by Snofru. Why Snofru left behind no fewer than three pyramids is unclear, although they could be regarded as visible proof of a practical course in 'How to build a pyramid'. The oldest of his pyramids is the one at Meidum, which

Wooden statue. These statues were placed in the tomb to function as 'reserve bodies'; should something happen to the actual body of the tomb owner, his *ka*, his double, would still have somewhere to return to. These statues were literally 'given life', just like the mummy after mummification, so that they could function. This man is wearing a short echelon-curl wig in the fashion of the times, and probably carried a staff in the hand of the missing left forearm. Height 73 cm.

Relief fragment from the wall of a mastaba. There are parts of two scenes on this fragment – on the left the leg of an ox is being cut off. The text urges them to hurry up. On the right, someone is playing a flute, with a description of this in the text above his head. 4th or 5th Dynasty; limestone; 30 cm high.

now looks like a rather strange stump. We are not sure exactly how this came about – was it never completed, did it collapse during construction, or was it dismantled later to be reused as building material? What is also remarkable is that the original pyramid was built in two stages – it started as a step pyramid but was continued as a true pyramid, whereby the 'steps' were filled in. At any rate, and for whatever reason, Snofru decided at a certain point to move to the north to Dahshur and continue his building frenzy there. The first fruit of this frenzy was the Bent Pyramid. This pyramid acquired its remarkable shape because the builders started with a rather steep angle of inclination, and halfway through construction changed to a different angle to finish it off, possibly because it began to become unstable. Once this experiment was completed, a third pyramid was built a little way off, whereby the angle of inclination was the less steep one right from the start. The Red Pyramid owes its name to the reddish colour of the stone used to build it. Snofru was most probably buried in this one.

Stela of Iku, a low-ranking priestess of the god Min in Akhmim (Middle Egypt). She is sitting in front of an offering table bearing long loaves with the head of an ox underneath. The rather clumsy provincial style (incorrect proportions) is characteristic of the First Intermediate Period. Limestone, height 34 cm.

False door of the inspector of fields Ankhef. In the central part, Ankhef is sitting in front of a laden offering table, surrounded by offering formulae. The two eyes are to help Ankhef keep an eye on his surroundings. A false door was an important piece of tomb equipment, because the relatives of the deceased could use it to keep in symbolic contact with the deceased, and vice versa. Offerings for the deceased were placed in front of the false door, usually on an offering table, and the *ka* or double of the deceased could enter and leave through the door. First Intermediate Period; provenance: Herakleopolis Magna, near the Fayum. Limestone, height 90 cm.

RELIGION

The foundations of the ancient Egyptian religion, laid down in the Predynastic Period, were built on in the Old Kingdom. Horus and Seth remained important gods, but they were now joined by gods that were often depicted anthropomorphically (in human form), and who had more than just local significance, among them Ptah of Memphis, the god of the dead Osiris of Abydos, and in particular the sun god Re of Heliopolis. The legendary doctor-architect Imhotep, the builder of the Step Pyramid, was deified much later – he was one of the few people who achieved this status – and was then worshipped for a long time. New dynasties often favoured a different god to their predecessors, such as the 5th Dynasty favouring the sun god Re of Heliopolis, without the other gods ever being forgotten, however.

Traces of an old stellar cult can be found in the Pyramid Texts, where the pharaoh ascends to heaven and becomes a star, alongside the solar cult that emerged later, whereby the pharaoh became one with the sun god Re. Sometimes there were rivalries – for example between Horus and Seth, or their supporters. This is also revealed by the various creation myths around, which originated in more or less rival religious centres. In Heliopolis, creation began with an action by the creator god Atum. By masturbating or spitting, he engendered the god of the air Shu and the goddess of moisture Tefnut. Their children were the earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut. Their descendents were the sisters Isis and Nephthys and the brothers Osiris and Seth. Hermopolis had four divine couples as creator gods: Nun and Naunet for the primeval waters, Heh and Hauhet for eternity or infinite space, Kek and Kauket for darkness, and Amun and Amaunet for air or invisibility.

The walls of the Old Kingdom Temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad, with the deposits of cultic pottery and votive objects.

The walls of the slightly older temple of Tell Ibrahim Awad, under the temple of the Old Kingdom.

The main sources of information about the world of the gods are the temples, particularly those from later periods. We do not know very much about the gods in this period outside the context of kingship, i.e. in the 'outside world', unlike in later periods, because there are very few temples left from the Old Kingdom, with the exception of the pyramid temples.

Life after death

In the Predynastic Period, the body was buried with a few burial gifts in simple, shallow pits in the desert sand – often in the west because

that was where the sun set. This hot, dry environment resulted in natural mummification, with the body remaining relatively intact. This was not the case from the moment that the bodies were buried in coffins, and in burial chambers of wood or stone designed to portray the idea of the tomb as a house. Bodies buried like this decayed normally, so something had to be done. At first the body was wrapped in strips of linen, covered in plaster and painted with the features of the deceased. But the body did not really remain intact, the outer covering merely gave that impression. During the course of the Old Kingdom, the techniques began to be refined, for example the internal organs, which decayed the fastest, were removed and stored outside the body in canopic jars. As time progressed, the process of mummification became more and more refined. At the same time not all the burial goods were supplied in kind any more, they were also depicted on the tomb walls. The deceased no longer received a life-size boat, but an illustration of one; by also showing the construction of the boat the deceased was even more sure that a new one would be built for him if the old one should fail. The ancient Egyptians knew very well that at a certain point the descendants of a deceased person would stop bringing offerings – although that could be a long time, particularly for pharaohs. The pharaohs, however, were still supplied with complete ships. In addition, from Pharaoh Unas on there was another innovation – on the walls of the pyramids were written extensive Pyramid Texts, which were designed to guarantee the continued existence of the pharaoh in the hereafter.

In the background the pyramid of Pharaoh Unas of the 6th Dynasty, just outside the Djoser pyramid complex. This is the first pyramid with Pyramid Texts. Mastabas from the Old Kingdom can be seen in the foreground.

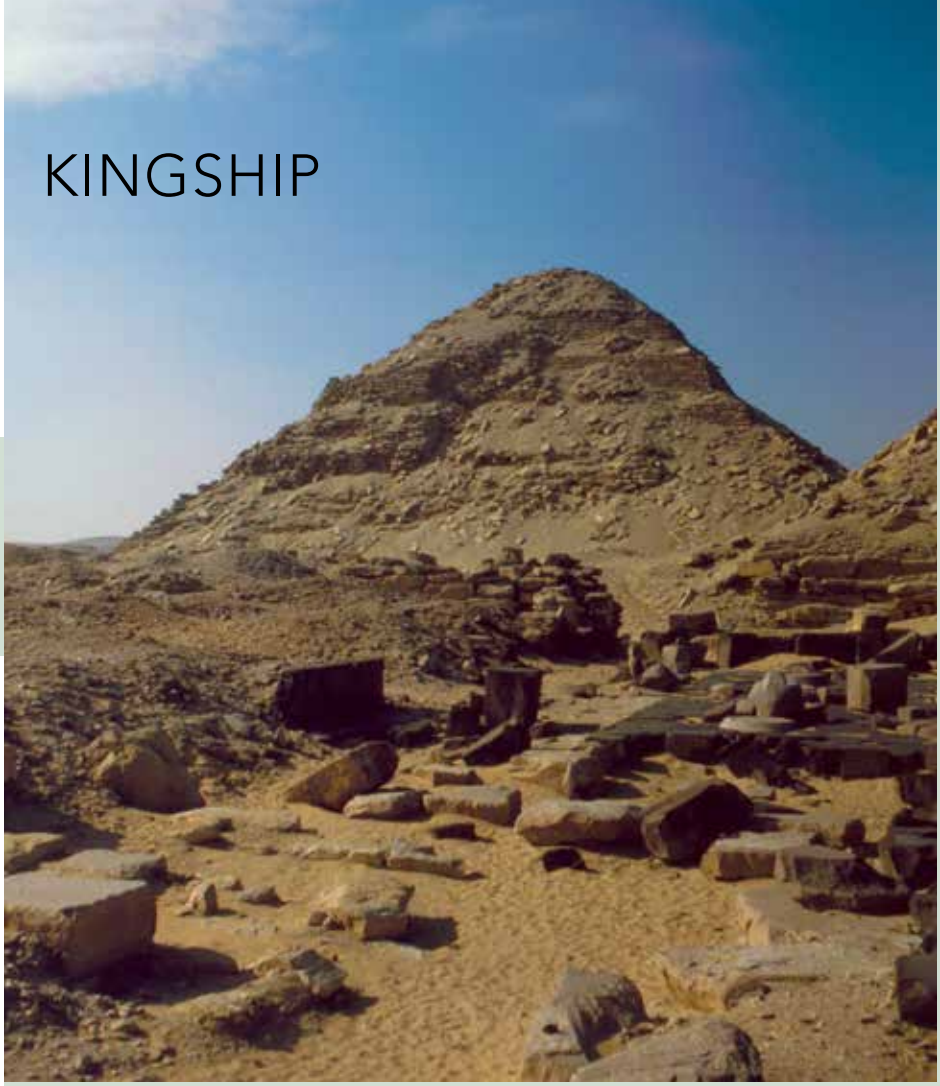
LITERATURE

Hieroglyphs were first developed for economic and administrative goals; only later on were they also used to record events in annals, for example on the Palermo Stone (see Chapter 2). On the walls of the mastabas they were used to list the professional and honorary titles of the deceased and to record his idealized biography, together with scenes from daily life as in a comic book. The Pyramid Texts are the first coherent long religious texts that have survived. We can assume that these texts go back to much earlier oral traditions.
The Pyramid Texts were solely concerned with the continued existence of the king and certainly not for any other individual. In the First Intermediate Period, private individuals also began to use adapted forms of these texts on their coffins – these texts are now known as the Coffin Texts. As a result of the collapse of royal authority, the texts became 'democratized' in a manner of speaking, and were no longer exclusively for the king. We also know of other texts that have been assumed to date to the First Intermediate Period due to their sombre tone, for example *The Dispute between a Man and his Ba*. This text forms part of the

Fragment of a Pyramid Text on a tomb wall from the New Kingdom. Although the Pyramid Texts date to the Old Kingdom, they were still used in the New Kingdom. This is Spell 222, about the journey of the pharaoh across the night sky. Limestone, height 22 cm.

Wisdom literature, a literary genre that gives wise moral advice. Another example is the *Maxims of Ptahhotep*, of the 5th Dynasty. There are also other texts from the First Intermediate Period related to the pessimistic text of Ipuwer, for example the *Complaints of Khakheperresonb*, where the protagonist also bemoans the deplorable state of the country.

KINGSHIP



Pyramids like this one at Abusir belonging to Neferirkare of the 5th Dynasty are much smaller and less solidly built than those at Giza. This illustrates the reduced power of the pharaoh at that time.

Once the single state had been formed, the role of the (single) king accordingly became much more centralized. The court and the royal estates became powerful institutions, both administratively and economically. The king also had much more labour at his disposal, particularly when the regular agricultural work came to a standstill during the inundation. It has been said that the Egyptians built the pyramids, but that Egypt was also built by the pyramids – they unified the state. Such a joint effort would have contributed to nation-building in an unmistakeable way. This would explain why Snofru built no fewer than three pyramids. That they were royal burial monuments says a lot about the impact of kingship. The king was also depicted on a much larger scale than his subjects as a matter of course. He was the one who guaranteed order (the concept of Ma'at) and stability, and protected them against chaos. A pharaoh was the beginning and the end; the calculation of the passage of time began anew with every new pharaoh, and when he died an uncertain and dangerous time could break out, with chaos and anarchy lurking until there was a new pharaoh.

On the left is the pyramid of Neferirkare at Abusir, on the right that of his son Nyuserre; 5th Dynasty. In the foreground, the remains of the mortuary temple.

Even before the true pyramid age, the Step Pyramid of Djoser was a clear sign of increased royal power. However, it was not yet absolute and unchallenged. The fact that the burial sites of the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom shifted from place to place – Abu Roash, Giza, Abusir, Saqqara, Dahshur and Meidum – may be an indication that the power base may have changed. In addition, there are rumours about harem conspiracies.

Although the nomes were originally administered by loyal officials, later on they were able to make their offices hereditary and found local dynasties of nomarchs. Certainly in periods with less central control this was more often the rule than the exception. This emerging elite also had the resources to build rich tombs for themselves, scattered throughout Egypt.

When the country eventually fell apart after the end of the 6th Dynasty, little remained of the authority of the royal family, if there even was a single royal family any more. The image of the pharaoh as a demigod was in tatters. It would be a very long time before the authority of pharaoh was restored.

Snofru's three pyramids together have a greater volume than the single gigantic one built by Kheops. The royal architects had now acquired sufficient know-how to build the pyramid of Snofru's successor, his son Kheops (the Greek form of his name is Kheops). For this pyramid they chose a new, more northerly location – the desert plateau of Giza near modern-day Cairo. This burial monument was never surpassed in the entire history of Egypt. The extensive complex included a number of long trenches around the pyramid, some of which still contain the mortuary boats of Lebanese cedar which were to transport Kheops in the afterlife. Three smaller pyramids close by were intended for Kheops's queens, and a huge field of mastabas was created for his courtiers literally in the shadow of his pyramid. One of those tombs stands out – a richly furnished underground space for the Queen Mother Hetepheres, but with a completely empty alabaster sarcophagus – a mystery that has not yet been solved.

Of the reign of Kheops, like that of his father, we only know of a few expeditions to the north-east; both were probably too busy building to worry about other matters. His reign lasted a long time – which was lucky, otherwise the pyramid could not have been completed. As far as we know no slaves were employed in the construction, they seem to have been well-cared-for workmen. Nevertheless, Kheops acquired a reputation later as a bad and cruel ruler, recorded among others by the Greek historian Herodotus in his book on Egypt. For example, according to Herodotus Kheops allegedly prostituted his daughter to finance the construction of the pyramid.

Kheops was succeeded by his son Djedefra for a short time. The only thing we know of him is that he started to build a pyramid at Abu Roash, some kilometres to the north of Giza, of which only the initial stages were completed. He was succeeded by his brother Khefren (Khephren). He returned to Giza to build his burial complex, and his pyramid is not much smaller than his father's. He also ordered the well-known huge Sphinx to be carved alongside the ceremonial way leading to his pyramid from the Nile valley. Egypt seems not to have been doing so well under his son and successor Menkaure (Mycerinus), a situation reflected by his pyramid at Giza, which is much smaller than the enormous constructions of his predecessors. It is possible that the financial resilience of the country had been significantly weakened by the two previous mega-projects. Menkaure was not even able to complete the outside covering of his pyramid in pink granite blocks. His son and successor Shepseskaf decided to return to Saqqara to build his burial complex – a huge mastaba that was decidedly modest in comparison to the pyramids of his predecessors.

This so-called Meidum bowl is polished to imitate the more expensive bronze variety. This type of pottery is an important clue for dating finds. Provenance: Abydos. Height 19 cm.

5th Dynasty (2504-2347 BC)

The capital city of the 5th Dynasty was Heliopolis (now under a suburb of Cairo), the holy city of the sun god Re (or Ra). This deity would play an important role for several pharaohs of the dynasty. Although we know very little about their reigns, we do know that they paid just as much attention to building sun temples as to building pyramids.

The first pharaoh of the dynasty was Userkaf, possibly a grandson of Djedefre via another branch of the family. He divided his resources over two huge construction projects. This is probably why his pyramid, located just outside the Djoser complex at Saqqara, is of modest dimensions (no more than 50 metres high) and built of small irregular limestone blocks. Userkaf built his sun temple some distance to the north at Abusir. The temple comprised a platform with a large obelisk as a solar symbol on top, and a large valley temple linked to the obelisk temple by a ceremonial way. His son, Sahure, built his pyramid at Abusir, but does not seem to have built a sun temple. All the pyramids at Abusir are built close together, and it is notable that the royal mortuary temples of this dynasty gradually increased in size.

Neferirkare, brother and successor to Sahure, returned to the step pyramid form for his pyramid. The second-last king of the dynasty, Nyusserre, built not only a pyramid

but also a sun temple, including a life-size solar bark made of mudbrick, in which the sun god could travel across the firmament.
The last of the line was Unas. His small pyramid, like that of Userkaf, the first king of the dynasty, lies just outside the enclosure wall of the Djoser complex. A long ceremonial way links the pyramid to the valley temple, but that is not the most extraordinary thing about this pyramid. For the first time, extensive texts appear on the walls of the burial chambers of this pharaoh, not surprisingly called the Pyramid Texts. They were designed to guarantee the continued existence of the pharaoh in the hereafter. This theme would be expanded in the next dynasty.

6th Dynasty (2347-2216 BC)

Pharaoh Teti legitimized his claim to the throne by marrying a daughter of Unas, thus guaranteeing the continuity of the country's administration, which was of great importance to the Egyptians. Not much is left of his pyramid at Saqqara, but his burial chamber, too, was decorated with Pyramid Texts, as are those of the other kings of the dynasty, starting with Pepy I. He was briefly succeeded by a certain Merenre, who in turn was succeeded by Pepy II. This king appears to have reigned for about 90 years, the longest known term of office of any Egyptian pharaoh.
The pharaohs of this dynasty organized expeditions to the desert as well as to Nubia in the south. This is also the period when we first see the local governors of the nomes (provinces) – previously regularly appointed officials – seize the chance to make their office hereditary and slowly become more independent of the central authority. The fact that the reign of Pepy II lasted so long may have contributed to the weakening of that central authority.
In addition, there are clear indications that the levels of the Nile inundation were significantly lower, the result of the climate becoming more arid. The famines that were the result of this (with perhaps even the occasional cannibalism) resulted in anarchy, in turn causing what was left of the irrigation system to be neglected. This contributed to a vicious circle with even poorer harvests. The 6th Dynasty thus ended in chaos, and this situation continued into the 7th/8th Dynasties – the Old Kingdom metamorphosed into the First Intermediate Period.

Libation vases of bronze and pottery, used to pour liquids such as water, milk and expensive oils in front of the statue of the god as an offering, or to purify him. Height 18 cm (pottery) and 12.5 cm (bronze).

The First Intermediate Period

7th/8th and 9th/10th Dynasties (2216-2046 BC)

Written sources also refer to the chaotic situation at this time, the First Intermediate Period. The Papyrus of Ipuwer speaks of bodies not being buried and tombs being plundered – both unthinkable in previous times. A deep pessimism radiates from the text. In addition, the rich tombs of the local governors show how much their power and income had grown at the cost of that of the pharaohs.
Manetho's neat system of successive dynasties does not apply to this period, seeing as the 7th and 8th Dynasties, as well as the 9th and the 10th, and probably the 11th, were at least partly concurrent – several royal families from competing provinces. Eventually two power centres emerged in the south – Herakleopolis in Middle Egypt and Thebes (now Luxor) in the south. Thebes emerges in this period for the first time as an important centre, and in the New Kingdom in particular would really make its presence felt. The 7th and 8th Dynasties probably did not have much authority outside Memphis, and the 9th and the 10th Dynasties were based in Herakleopolis. Only the kings of the 11th Dynasty succeeded in uniting the country for the second time, at the expense of the provincial rulers, particularly those of Herakleopolis. The first kings of the 11th Dynasty, Mentuhotep I, Intef I and Intef II, completed the process. Under their successor Mentuhotep II a second golden age was able to bloom, the Middle Kingdom.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, 3rd Dynasty. This pyramid is actually a number of mastabas on top of each other. It formed part of a huge complex with many subsidiary buildings.

The tomb complexes of the Old Kindom kings and elite are particularly characteristic of this period. Pyramids were never individual monuments – they formed the most important part of a huge complex for the burial rituals. The body of the pharaoh arrived by boat and was first received into the valley temple situated in the Nile Valley. From there, a procession moved up a covered ceremonial way towards the mortuary temple at the base of the pyramid for the last rites, after which the pharaoh was interred in a burial chamber in or under the pyramid. In the 4th Dynasty these complexes were not yet decorated with texts and reliefs, but in later dynasties this became more and more common, with high quality reliefs everywhere in the complex, not only in the pyramid. The security measures taken against potential tomb robbers became more and more sophisticated too, with heavy stone slabs blocking off the corridors, random and dead-end corridors and hidden traps. Many of these elements first appear in a coherent way in the burial complex of Djoser, one of the oldest free-standing stone constructions in the world.
The mortuary temples of the pyramids deserve a special mention. Built of stone, they have survived the centuries better than the 'ordinary' temples of the time, which were usually of mudbrick and modest proportions. The mortuary temples also stand out because of their size. Several statues of the pharaoh were placed in niches, and a large number

The unfinished (?) pyramid of Snofru (or his predecessor Huni) at Meidum. This was probably the first (or perhaps the second, after the Bent Pyramid) of the pharaoh's experiments, on which he continued to work even after he had started buidling the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur. Neither pyramid came up to expectations, however.

of magazines stored the equipment needed for the hereafter.
The mastaba tombs of the elite in Saqqara and Giza are often covered in reliefs. They can sometimes be read like a comic book, including the comments of many of the people depicted, but not in text balloons. They supplement the information we have from excavations, for example what jugs of a certain shape were actually used for. Very few aspects of daily life are not covered on the walls of these tombs – hunting, fishing and farming, food-making processes such as baking bread and brewing beer, crafts like statue-making and ship-building, accounting, dancing, music and games, medical care and funeral activities such as the bringing of offerings. This provides a wealth of information about life during the Old Kingdom, and not just the activities of the elite, but particularly the daily concerns of ordinary men and women. There are not many early cultures that depict these.

So why is this all depicted in tombs? The idea was that in this way the deceased would be symbolically provided with everything that he would need in the hereafter – food mainly, but also clothing, jewellery and transport. If it was depicted, it would be available to him or her. A crucial part of every mastaba complex was the false door, symbolically intended to enable the deceased to remain in contact with the world of the living through the offerings placed in front of it.
Pottery was virtually never decorated any more, and the skills in stone vessel manufacture also seem to have passed their peak. This does not apply, however, to many other forms, materials and techniques. Pottery was sometimes so highly polished that it almost appeared metallic, and the shapes were the same as those of metal vessels – examples include the deep Meidum bowls and slender libation vessels.

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin which results in a stronger metal, first begins to be used for tools and weapons. Copper continued to be worked, and life-size statues were made of hammered plates, for example the statues of Pharaoh Pepy I and his son Merenre. Sculpture in stone and wood was now carved with great skill, often very realistically, and available to the elite and not only to the royal family. We cannot speak of 'art' or individual 'artists' in the modern sense, however. Most of the creators of these works of art were anonymous, and the objects themselves were not purely decorative but had a symbolic function – jewellery was often amuletic, and statues of individuals served as a home for their *ka*, their double. The 'typically Egyptian' way of depicting people, with the face in profile, the torso straight on and the legs in profile, is related to this – the most characteristic view of each part of a human figure had to be depicted, otherwise that person would have to live on without that completeness. For the same reason, children who died young were often depicted as adults in their tombs.

< Furniture-makers at work in the mastaba of Ti, a high official of the 5th Dynasty. Having furniture-makers to hand would enable the tomb owner to symbolically have access to new furniture for ever.

> The Great Pyramid of Kheops at Giza, 4th Dynasty, is 1 km in circumference and 140 m high. The smooth outer casing of white limestone has now vanished, and was partly used to construct the city walls of Cairo. The limestone core blocks are now visible.

Bent Pyramid of Snofru at Dahshur. In order to prevent construction problems, halfway through the builders changed the steep angle of the first part of the pyramid into a less acute angle. The pyramid was never used.

The Red Pyramid of Snofru at Dahshur. The third and final attempt of this pharaoh to construct a strong pyramid. Made wise by experience, the builders immediately started with the shallower angle. This pyramid gets its name from the reddish colour of the limestone used to build it.

EXCAVATION **El-Kab**

At seven in the morning, the excavations at El-Kab are bathed in an unreal light.

In 1937, archaeologists on behalf of the Royal Museums for Art and History in Brussels, headed by Jean Capart, the chief curator at the time, started excavating at El-Kab. These excavations, now headed by Dr Dirk Huyge, curator of Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, continue to the present day. Recently, in 2009 and 2010, the excavations uncovered a well-preserved city dating to the Old Kingdom.

El-Kab is on the east bank of the Nile between Luxor and Edfu, and is visible from miles away because it has a gigantic enclosure wall made of sun-dried mudbricks. However, the enclosure wall is not the oldest pharaonic remains in El-Kab by a long way. It was only built in the mid-4th century BC, on top of much older cemeteries from the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Rock inscriptions

Historical sources reveal that El-Kab must have been an important site by the Old Kingdom at least. It was also known that immediately to the north of the enclosure wall were a number of huge mastaba tombs dating to the Old Kingdom. In addition, in the desert region to the east of El-Kab, in rocks in and along the Wadi Hilâl, a dry riverbed, are hundreds of hieroglyphic rock inscriptions from the Old Kingdom. Other than these mastabas and inscriptions, hardly anything is known about the inhabitants of El-Kab during the Old Kingdom. In the mid-1980s, however, a surprising discovery opened up new research perspectives.

An Old Kingdom cemetery

About four hundred metres to the north of the El-Kab enclosure wall is the rock-cut necropolis of the city, where hundreds of tombs were cut in the 50m high hill. When the Belgian archaeologists started to look more closely at the south-western part of this necropolis, by chance they found the tomb of a high priest called Sawika. All the signs were that this find meant that the late Old Kingdom cemetery of the priests of the vulture goddess Nekhbet had been found at last. Altogether about twenty tombs from this period were found. Most of them, including Sawika's, were reused, plundered – often several times – and jumbled together in later periods.

∧ The well-preserved walls and circular constructions in unbaked mud-brick from the early Old Kingdom in a test square at the end of the 2010 excavation season.

∧ > In 2009, test squares in the settlement area of El-Kab revealed well-preserved construction remains in intact occupation layers from the early Old Kingdom. To the far left in the background is the rock-cut necropolis.

> Satellite photo of the excavation sites at El-Kab.

In November 1988, archaeologists started to excavate a newly discovered tomb about fifty metres to the east of that of Sawika. It quickly turned out that above the shaft was a heap of more than a thousand rough jars from the Old Kingdom. Although the heap was very jumbled up, the pots were in pristine condition. This meant that the chances that the tomb had not been robbed were high. The intact shaft led to two burial chambers. Both were closed off with blocking material of roughly piled up stones. One of the burial chambers not only contained pottery, stone vessels, horn bracelets and a faience necklace, but also a beautiful oval bronze mirror. The inscription made it clear that the burial was that of a lady, called Irtenakhty, with the title of 'priestess of Hathor'. The other burial chamber, presumably that of Irtenakhty's husband, also contained a mirror, this time uninscribed, a beautiful copper goblet-shaped water basin with matching ewer and a bronze amulet on a faïence and semi-precious stone necklace. The bodies of Irtenakhty and her husband were apparently not mummified, but possibly wrapped in a sort of shroud. Right at the top of the hill, and known for a long time, is a rectangular mud-brick construction. Only after the surrounding area was investigated in 1987 did it become clear that it was a mastaba. Its location, on top of a 50-metre-high cliff, is unique in ancient Egyptian tomb architecture. The pottery and the thousands of fragments of stone vessels quickly made it clear that the tomb can be attributed to the 3rd Dynasty. The burial chamber,

∧ Overview of El-Kab, looking south west.

< The rock-cut tombs of El-Kab dating from the Middle Kingdom and the 18th Dynasty.

which was small in comparison to the rest of the monument, sadly turned out to have been plundered. These discoveries in the rock-cut necropolis were a good indication of how the inhabitants of El-Kab in the Old Kingdom were buried.

Occupation during the Old Kingdom

Immediately to the north of the temple area of El-Kab, within the 4th-century BC enclosure wall, is a zone measuring between five and six hectares, partially surrounded by a crooked double wall. This wall, which has been dated to the late Old Kingdom using the C14 method, has for a long time been regarded as the probable enclosure wall of the ancient city.

Here there was once a tell, a hill created by the gradual build-up of consecutive layers of occupation. Such occupation hills are extraordinarily rich in organic waste and thus later formed an attractive and easily accessible source of fertilizer. An exploratory visit to the area in December 2000, and thorough observation of the topography, revealed that the surface here was still several metres above the surrounding landscape.

In autumn 2009, within the framework of a research project financed by the Belgian Science Policy Office, Belgian archaeologists started a thorough survey and archaeological investigation of the area.

The thick surface layer in several test trenches contained pottery from all periods muddled together, undoubtedly the result of the digging and other disturbances by the *sebakhin*. Under this heterogenous level, however, the archaeologists found intact occupation layers and the remains of sun-dried mud-brick constructions. The wealth of archaeological material, particularly the rich collection of pottery shapes, immediately made clear that these were Old Kingdom remains, perhaps from the 3rd Dynasty through to the mid-4th Dynasty.

Numerous new mud-brick constructions were subsequently revealed, both round and rectangular in shape. The walls were even preserved to over 1 metre in height in some places. Several construction phases can be differentiated, all from the early Old Kingdom. Enormous amounts of pottery have been discovered, both luxury goods and more mundane types such as beer jars and bread moulds. In one of the two trenches, signs of copper-working were also encountered.

There is a significant chance that the excavations at El-Kab will enable the researchers to document the transition from a prehistoric settlement or village structure to an urbanized community dating to historical times. The archaeological challenge is huge, and it will require time, money and a special logistical approach, but it would be fantastic if these excavations could continue.

(*After an article by Dirk Huyge.*)

> The eastern gateway in the enclosure wall of El-Kab, dating to the 4th century BC. The wall here was built on top of a Middle Kingdom (2046-1794 BC) cemetery.

The Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period

2046-1550 BC

The head of this statue of a man displays the characteristic features of the sculptural style of the Middle Kingdom – overlarge ears and a sombre expression. The fragment was found in the mastaba of Nebit at Dahshur, together with another piece of the same statue inscribed with an offering formula. Diorite, height 19 cm.

The Middle Kingdom

11th Dynasty (2119-1976 BC)

Under Mentuhotep II, who was considered the second 'Unifier of the Two Lands' (Upper and Lower Egypt) after the mythical Pharaoh Menes, the unified state was once more secure. The second golden age of the country, the Middle Kingdom, begins with him. In addition to consolidating his kingdom, Mentuhotep II concentrated on a magnificent tomb. It was of a completely new design, a precursor of the later Theban royal tombs of the New Kingdom. It is situated on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes (Luxor), at the foot of a steep cliff. A huge open courtyard leads to a mortuary temple two stories high, with columned halls and an underground corridor leading to the burial chamber – which was found empty. The upper terrace was not accessed by a stairway but by a sloping walkway.

This fragment of a wooden sarcophagus has part of a Pyramid Text (Spell 638) and part of an eye of Horus on the outside. The eye would help the deceased to symbolically observe what was happening outside his sarcophagus. On the inside is part of a false door, through which the deceased and his relatives could remain in contact, with on the right a number of offerings. On the extreme right-hand side, part of Coffin Text Spell 925-926 can just be seen. Plaster on wood, 35 cm high.

Very little of the successors of this pharaoh is known, other than that they were all called Mentuhotep. The dynasty ended with the last pharaoh of this name. Under the next dynasty, the country really began to get going again.

12th Dynasty (1976-1794 BC)

Amenemhat I was the first pharaoh of the new dynasty. We know little of his background; he may have been the vizier under the last king of the previous dynasty. He may not have been undisputed in the early part of his reign as he was immediately faced with internal unrest and problems on the eastern and southern borders, which he dealt with very competently. He took the unusual step of building a new Residence, south of Memphis and far from Thebes. He was not buried at Thebes either – despite his name he may not have come from there. The new city, called Itjtawy, has not yet been identified.

An important innovation occurred during his reign – in his 20th regnal year, he made his successor, the later Sesostris I, co-regent beside him on the throne. This was a sensible move, given the instability of the kingdom in the recent past, and this system was followed by all the pharaohs of this dynasty, all of whom reigned for relatively long periods – which was also good for stability. In later periods, too, the coregency system was sometimes implemented. The measure was useful in another way as well, because despite Amenemhat I being murdered by his own bodyguard, the authority of his successor was already so secure that this event had no further consequences. Amenemhat I was buried in a relatively unimpressive pyramid at Lisht, not far from Itjtawy.

The pharaohs of this dynasty appear to have had a particular interest in the Fayum, an area to the west of the Nile in Middle Egypt, around a lake fed by a branch of the Nile. They reclaimed this area for agriculture by means of irrigation projects, and many of them were buried near the Fayum.

Sesostris I had a prosperous and long reign, despite its dramatic beginning. He concentrated his foreign ambitions mainly on Nubia, building a series of impressive forts deep into the south – strongholds designed to keep that country under Egypt's control. A Nubian tribe was even employed to assist the Egyptians, the Medjay. They were included as a separate part of the Egyptian army and also served as a kind of desert police force. A beautiful wooden model of Nubian soldiers from a tomb at Asyut in Middle Egypt bears witness to this. The Medjay kept their own weapons and burial customs. Their rather unusual graves, known as Pan graves, can be found deep inside Egypt. Independent Nubia, called Kush, was forced far to the south, where its centre was the city of Kerma. When Egypt grew weaker, the Nubians profited from this and pushed back northwards, up as far as Aswan.

Sesostris I was also responsible for building the oldest part of the huge Amun temple of Karnak at Thebes. It was an era of cultural and literary highpoints. Sesostris I appointed his son Amenemhat II as his co-regent and successor long before he died and was buried at Lisht, in a pyramid similar to that of his predecessor Amenemhat I.

Under Amenemhat II, foreign trade contacts and diplomatic relations increased, particularly with the Phoenician port of Byblos, in present-day Lebanon, which had long been important to Egypt due to the export of cedar wood, and with Babylon in Mesopotamia. There were also trading contacts with the Aegean world, for example Minoan Crete.

Stela of a man called Intef. He is standing in front of a table with offerings; above him is a standard offering formula. 11th Dynasty, limestone, 29 cm high.

In Avaris, the Hyksos were buried in line with Syrian/Palestinian custom between the houses of the settlement. The graves often had brick vaults, many now broken through and robbed out, as can be seen in these remains excavated at Tell el-Dab'a.

This pharaoh in particular seems to have had a great interest in developing the Fayum. He was buried in a pyramid at Dashur, close to those of Snofru. Many pyramids from this period have lost most of their outer covering of stone slabs, exposing the mud-brick interior to erosion by the weather, resulting in the shapeless state of these pyramids today.

The pattern of coregencies was continued with his successor Sesostris II. During his reign, the power of the local nomarchs appears to have been broken at last. He built his pyramid at Illahun, near the 'entrance' to the Fayum from the Nile Valley. New to this pyramid were the extensive and complicated underground corridors leading to the burial chamber, undoubtedly intended to mislead tomb robbers. This feature was repeated in the later pyramids of this dynasty.

The next pharaoh, Sesostris III, developed into a major military leader. He conquered most of Nubia and penetrated further south than any of his predecessors. There is something strange about his burial arrangements. He built a pyramid near Dahshur, but he also has a much larger burial complex at Abydos. This consisted of a separate mortuary temple, linked along a straight axis to an enclosed courtyard 900 metres away at the edge of the desert plateau. This is where the entrance to the burial chamber lies, at the end of a 150-metre-long underground corridor. There were all kinds of impediments to thieves along this corridor, but all for naught. Because both tombs were empty when found, it is not clear where Sesostris III was actually buried. Dahshur was of course one of the traditional cemeteries for this dynasty, and there were also some solar barks buried near his pyramid. However, the complex in Abydos was clearly built with great care, perhaps too much care for just a cenotaph.

We know that his successor, Amenemhat III, was very active in the mining region in the Sinai. He was actually the last great pharaoh of this dynasty; things went downhill for Egypt after his death. He left two pyramids behind –

which was again unusual. One of them, the first to be built, was at Dahshur, and is now known as the 'Black Pyramid'. It is a tall, irregular construction of dark mudbricks – here, too, the outer stones have been robbed away. The pyramid was probably never used due to structural problems. The groundwater levels were too high here, and too many complicated underground corridors were built to house the tombs of the entire royal family, thus undermining the pyramid's foundations. So Amenemhat III built a second pyramid, near Hawara, not far from Illahun in the Fayum. This pyramid is primarily unusual due to its pyramid temple, which later became known as the Labyrinth. It is an enormous complex of at least eighteen different shrines linked by corridors. Unfortunately there is virtually nothing left today. The second unusual feature is that the burial chamber is carved from a single block of quartzite, and so constructed that the roof could be lowered onto it once the body of the king was in place. This protected the burial chamber from being crushed by the weight of the pyramid itself, which is what happened with his first pyramid at Dahshur. However, it did not protect him against tomb robbers.

The 12th Dynasty ends with the short reign of his son Amenemhat IV, followed by that of his sister or half-sister

^^ Next to the later terraced temple of Queen Hatshepsut (see illustration in Chapter 5) at Deir el-Bahari on the west bank at Thebes is the much older temple of Mentuhotep II of the 11th Dynasty. The remains of a collonade around a solid construction in the middle can be seen on this terrace.

^ The island of Elephantine in Aswan is one of the few places in Egypt where continuous urban inhabitation over dozens of centuries can be seen, here beautifully set off against the almost vertical side of the hill.

Sobekneferu. It is a matter of debate whether to start the Second Intermediate Period after her reign, or not until after the next dynasties.

The Second Intermediate Period

13th/14th Dynasties (1794-1648 BC)

During this period the regular dynastic transition was again interrupted, with several dynasties appearing to run concurrently. What is certain is that many successive kings ruled for a short period of time, and we know neither their number nor the order in which they ruled. It appears that Egypt was slowly falling apart. Nubia, for example, was able to regain its independence from the Egyptian colonizers. Many of the kings of this period were called Sobekhotep and Neferhotep. At Saqqara there are a few small pyramids that can be attributed to the rulers of this period, for example that of Pharaoh Khendjer.

15th/16th Dynasties (1648-1539 BC)

We know slightly more about this period, mainly from archaeological fieldwork and a small amount from written sources. What is new is that part of the country, particularly the eastern Nile Delta, was occupied by a foreign power. Immigrants from Syria-Palestine had previously settled there on a limited scale, but they now became independent of the Egyptian throne. They were known as the Hyksos ('rulers of foreign lands') and took advantage of the divisions and related weakness of Egypt during the 15th Dynasty. What may also have contributed to the success of the Hyksos were their better quality bronze weapons, the bows that shot further, and above all the war chariots drawn by horses. Until the arrival of these Asiatics, horses had been a very rare sight in Egypt; however, horses were so important to the Hyksos that they were buried close to their own tombs. The Hyksos were based at Avaris (today's Tell el-Dab'a) in the eastern Delta. Their rulers had Semitic names such as Yakub-her and Khyan, and they brought their own culture and religion with them, which not long afterwards began to absorb Egyptian influences. At a certain point in time, the Hyksos rulers even took Egyptian names.

For the native Egyptians, still holding on to power in the south, the presence of the Hyksos was a thorn in their side. Because the Egyptians did not simply want to give in to the presence of foreign rulers in their country, the Hyksos felt obliged to expand their sphere of influence towards the south. Via a system of vassal rulers (the 16th Dynasty) they tried to gain control of that part of the country. They themselves preferred not to venture outside their heartland in the Delta.

^^ The Fayum in Middle Egypt, an oasis created by the river, so important to the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom, can be seen here in the distance from the desert plateau with the remains of the Graeco-Roman city of Karanis.

^ At Hawara, in the branch of the Nile Valley that leads to the Fayum, is the mud-brick pyramid where Pharaoh Amenemhet III was buried. Not much remains of the enormous labyrinth-temple that formed part of the complex.

17th Dynasty (1645-1550 BC)

The 17th Dynasty, which once again had Thebes as its power base, just like in the First Intermediate Period, did not succeed the 16th Dynasty but partly overlapped with it. At first the rulers of Thebes were primarily concerned with the south, and there seemed to be a sort of armed truce between them and the Hyksos pharaohs. Later they became more

The Black Pyramid at Dahshur, or rather the unevenly weathered remains of it, was built by Amenemhet III. The pyramid's dark colour is due to the mudbricks used to build it. There was less sand than usual in these bricks of black Nile mud, and so they are darker than usual. It was necessary to mix sand into the material because the bricks would otherwise crack while drying. This was the first pyramid built by this pharaoh, but construction faults led to it being abandoned.

assertive, which did not pass unnoticed by the Hyksos. A remarkable letter has survived from the Hyksos king Apepi to the Theban ruler Taa II in which he complains about the roaring of the hippopotami in Thebes, 800 kilometres upstream, and demanding that Taa do something about it – apparently a metaphor for problems. The Hyksos even tried to form an allegiance with the Nubians against Thebes, but this does not appear to have been very successful. At any rate, Taa II was killed during the subsequent conflict. His mummy has been found with several lethal head wounds, silent witnesses to his violent death.

He was succeeded by his brother Kamose. Kamose started his campaign with a successful offensive against Nubia, and then secured the Western Oases. While there he intercepted a letter from the Hyksos pharaoh Apepi, in which he requests the king of Kush for help against Kamose. Now that his rear was secure, Kamose could attack the Hyksos. According to the two so-called Kamose stelae he did so fearlessly, against the advice of his rather timid advisors – although this could be an example of royal propaganda after the event. It is not known whether Kamose eventually took Avaris with a river fleet and it is possible that the job was finished by his successor. At any rate, the final result was victory over the entire country and the banishment of the Hyksos from Egypt.

LITERATURE

The Middle Kingdom saw a great flowering of literary works. Even in later periods, literature from the Middle Kingdom remained the standard. Two important compositions, both with a moral, are particularly worthy of mention – the *Tale of Sinuhe* and the *Shipwrecked Sailor*.

The *Tale of Sinuhe* is about one of Amenemhat I's courtiers, who flees Egypt after the attack on the king, afraid of anarchy. He ends up in Syria and works his way up to a high position, but not without problems. For example, he has to fight a duel with someone threatening his position. As he gets older, his homesickness for Egypt increases, particularly the urge to be buried in Egypt. The new king has no objections – Sinuhe is welcome to return, and is received with open arms. The moral of the story is – East, West, home's best.

The Shipwrecked Sailor is a story about the leader of a failed expedition who does not dare to report his failure to the king. In order to encourage him, one of the crew tells him how after a shipwreck he was washed ashore on a mythical island ruled by a giant, peaceful snake. Eventually the seaman is rescued from the island, and the snake gives him many presents to take to the king. Motto: Things are never as black as they seem. The leader of the expedition is not completely reassured, as shown by his final remark: 'Why let a goose drink on the day it's to be slaughtered?', in other words, you have wasted your breath!

Many more literary genres are known from this period, including the ponderings of kings Amenemhat I and Merikare, wisdom texts such as those already known from the Old Kingdom, and hymns to the Nile and to King Amenemhet II. Thanks to the huge reputation of these texts, the classical Middle Egyptian phase of the language remained the standard form for literary writing, even long after the spoken language had developed into Late Egyptian.

Model of a bakery with a granary. These kinds of models were very popular in the Middle Kingdom, particularly boat models. They were placed in the tomb to symbolically assist the tomb owner. 31 x 25 cm.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Little remains of Middle Kingdom architecture besides the royal burial complexes as many temples from this period were demolished to make room for new temples, or else were significantly renovated. Only a few can be reconstructed, for example the temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad and that at Ezbet Rushdi. Characteristic are the huge enclosure walls surrounding the actual temple, which was divided into two or three chapels with a forecourt. This was the first step towards the classic Egyptian temple design.
The most impressive mortuary monument of the Middle Kingdom is the complex built by Mentuhotep II on the West Bank at Thebes. It is not clear what formed the third level above the two columned halls – theories range from a pyramid (for which the foundations do not seem strong enough) to a building with a simple flat roof. A large, painted statue of the pharaoh was found in the separate underground tomb complex beneath this temple. The other mortuary temples that have been found continue the traditions of the Old Kingdom, with and without pyramids.
Most of the statuary we know from this period are statues of the pharaohs. What immediately strikes the eye is the rather stern or sorrowful, perhaps even tired, expressions, with heavily lined faces. Whether this was a depiction of reality or just a style characteristic we do not know. In any case, this is a kind of realism completely unknown in the Old Kingdom.
It is a different story with the wooden statuary. Unlike the tombs of the Old Kingdom with their many wall reliefs, in the Middle Kingdom the tombs were provided with lots of three-dimensional wooden models, depicting all kinds of scenes of daily life. There were often models of boats, as well as breweries and bakeries, weaving workshops, carpentry workshops, houses, servants carrying offerings, even army divisions and a unique scene where cattle are being counted for the tax assessment. Perhaps even more than the reliefs, these models give us a lively picture of society at the time.
In addition to the Hyksos influences, this period is also characterized by another phenomenon – the presence of burials under and between the houses in settlements, and near temples and mortuary temples. Usually these matters were strictly segregated in the Egyptian tradition, and this thus points to Asiatic influences. The tombs of the Hyksos themselves also have un-Egyptian characteristics, such as arches made of mudbrick.

RELIGION

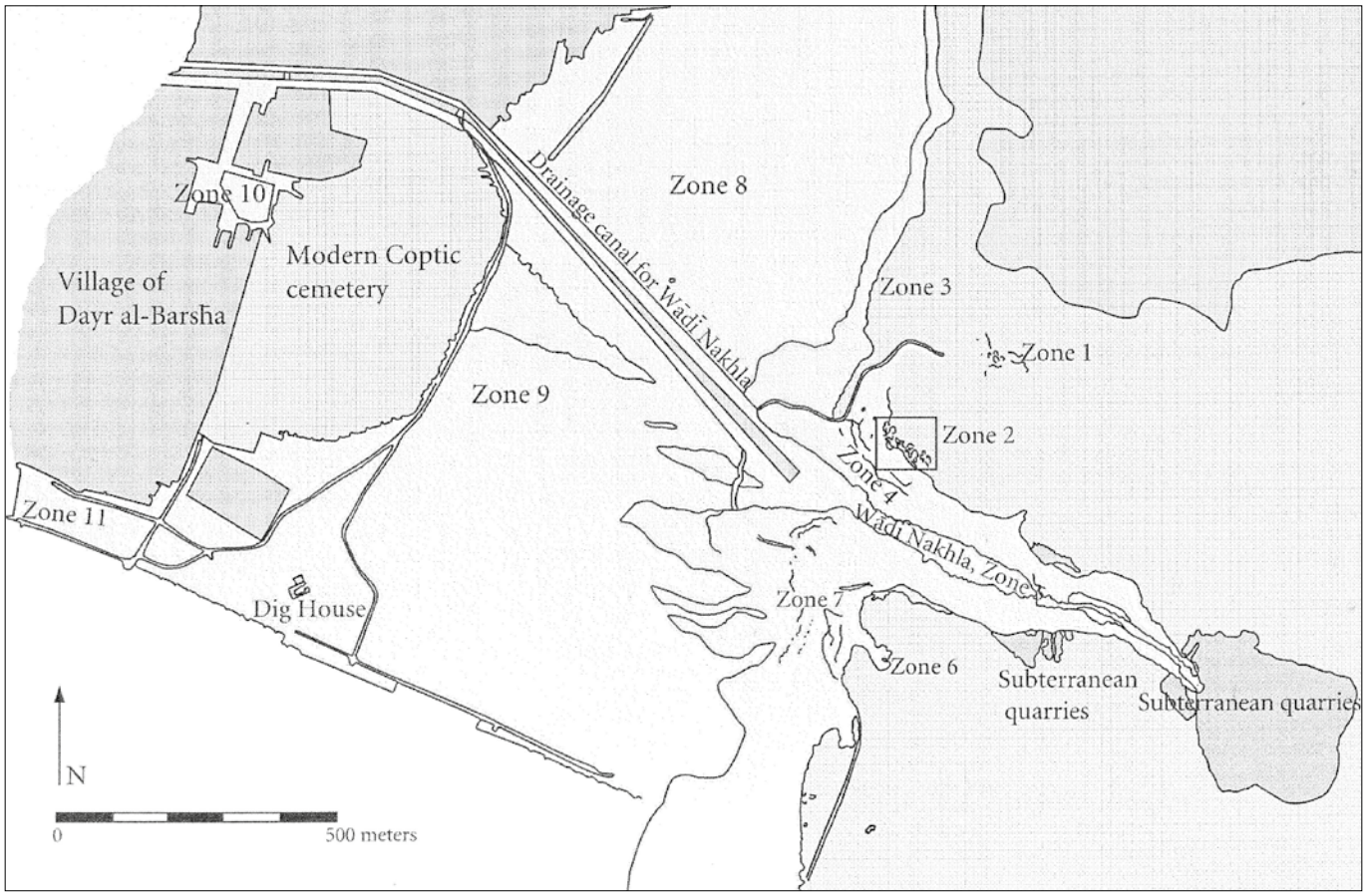
It is evident that religion became centralized and formalized during the Middle Kingdom. The central state became involved to a much greater extent than before, when the local cults still followed their own customs. This now became the exception rather than the rule. Many temples were required to set up a cult for the ruling pharaoh alongside the worship of their local deity. The huge national temples, and the gods worshipped in them, such as Amun of Karnak, which was founded in this period, were literally and figuratively far from the ordinary folk. They could no longer go to them with their prayers and requests because they were no longer allowed direct access to the temples. It is hardly surprising that this is the moment when all kinds of local heroes were worshipped after their deaths as demigods – ordinary men and women hoped that they could invoke these people as intermediaries to ensure their prayers reached the desired deity. Their tombs became places of pilgrimage. In addition, there were also the beloved popular gods, who could be approached directly, as well as amulets that could be used to achieve something; the borderline between Egyptian religion and magic is rather fluid.
Given the importance of the city of Thebes at this time, it will come as no surprise that the local deity Amun, usually depicted anthropomorphically, as a man, was promoted to the national deity. In order to give him extra authority, he was soon merged with the sun god Re to become Amun-Re. This is the period when the foundations of the omnipotence of this god in the New Kingdom were laid.
Before this stage could be reached, however, Egypt still had to pass through a period of (partial) rule from abroad. The Hyksos brought their own gods with them from the east: Ishtar/Astarte – who was easy to identify with Isis -, Reshef and above all Ba'al, who was also identified with Seth. In their turn, the Hyksos adopted Egyptian gods, and their gods lasted longer in the Egyptian pantheon than they themselves did in Egypt.

KINGSHIP

The prestige of kingship had suffered severely during the First Intermediate Period, so the main task of the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom was to reassert their authority. This did not happen straight away, as shown by the fact that the power of several local nomarch families was only curbed during the course of the Middle Kingdom.
Partly thanks to the long and stable reigns (also due to the coregencies) of most of the 12th Dynasty pharaohs, the power of kingship seemed to be mostly restored, until the petty kings of the 13th Dynasty undid all their good work. The reputation of the pharaohs was back to square one once the land fell apart again and foreign rulers (the Hyksos) assumed the title of pharaoh. Back in Thebes, action was once again undertaken to resolve the problem, this time with more success than before. A new sole ruler and third 'Unifier of the Two Lands' would once again restore the power of the king to its old glory.

One of the oldest surviving buildings in the temple of Karnak is this kiosk of Sesostris I. It was intended to provide temporary shelter to the bark carrying the statue of Amun during processions. It was found in the fill of a pylon constructed much later.

EXCAVATION **Deir el-Bersheh**



The archaeological site of Deir el-Bersheh in Middle Egypt is mainly famous as the necropolis of the city of Hermopolis during the Middle Kingdom. Extensive excavations, conducted between 1891 and 1915, concentrated on the rock-cut tombs of the nomarchs of this area. The most important tomb, that of Djehutyhotep, still had beautiful decoration, including a unique scene of the transportation of a colossal statue. Other rock-cut tombs were severely damaged because they had been used as a quarry. Despite their poor state of preservation they still contained important texts, which combined with inscriptions from the quarries at Hatnub have enabled scholars to reconstruct a family tree of governors for most of the Middle Kingdom. This site is also the richest source of coffins inscribed with the Coffin Texts, and its centre was the temple of the god Thoth of Hermopolis.

Since 1988 the site has again been under excavation, now by a team from KU Leuven headed by Prof. Harco Willems. Their research has shown that Deir el-Bersheh has a much longer history than had previously been thought. In addition, it turned out that there was much more to investigate than just rock-cut tombs, and it was a lot more than just a cemetery. The cemetery itself is one of the largest known from the Middle Kingdom, and the earliest parts date back to the 3rd Dynasty. The graves of that date are simple pits lined with a circle of stones, probably of people from a nearby agricultural settlement. There are only a few of these simple graves from the 5th and 6th Dynasties, but many of the rock-cut tombs date to this period.

In the First Intermediate Period, a separate cemetery for the local elite was created. It even included the tomb of the only vizier (advisor of

< Map of the Deir el-Bersheh excavation zones.

∧ The intact tomb of the courier Henu. His sandals, models of women grinding grain and offering bearers have been put on top of his sarcophagus to serve him in the Underworld.

∨ Overview of excavation zone 2 at Deir el-Bersheh, showing the rock-cut tombs of the Middle Kingdom (looking towards the north-west).

the pharaoh) we know of from this period. In addition, the completely intact burial of a man called Henu was found hidden in a tomb reused later. In the Middle Kingdom, not only the tombs of nomarchs were cut, but also tombs that were much simpler in style. Recent research has revealed that the entire region was once a huge ritual landscape, with the focus on the cults of the nomarchs. The Coffin Texts were a typical aspect of all classes of burial.
Tombs from the Second Intermediate Period are also known in this area, but later on the location was no longer an active cemetery but only a quarry. Stone was quarried here during the reigns of Thutmosis II, Amenhotep II, Akhenaten, Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II. The stone was used to build the city of Amarna and the temples of Hermopolis. Later, the quarries and tombs were used by Coptic hermits in the 5th century AD.

(*After an article by H. Willems.*)

∧ When the deceased had a model of a boat in his tomb, he had access to transportation in the hereafter. At the front of the boat is a pilot who originally had a sounding rod in his hand; at the back is the mate who would have held the steering oar, now missing. Wood, height 33 cm.

The New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period

1550-664 BC

The New Kingdom

The 18th Dynasty (1550-1292 BC)

Ahmose I, a son of Taa II who was killed in battle, succeeded his uncle Kamose to the throne of Egypt. After the conquest of the Hyksos, his main task was the consolidation of Egypt, first and foremost along its borders with Syria-Palestine and Nubia. The local administration also needed to be reorganized. One remarkable innovation in his reign was the important role played by several of his female family members. The tomb of Ahmose I must have been situated on the Dra Abu'l Naga hill on the Theban west bank, close to those of several of his forefathers. The tomb itself has never been found, although his well-preserved mummy was found in the Deir el-Bahri cache. An extensive cenotaph belonging to Ahmose I has been found at Abydos, possibly following the example of Sesostris III, with a pyramid, in fact the last royal pyramid in Egypt, situated close to the Nile. A ceremonial way linked the pyramid to the entrance to a winding, hastily constructed underground corridor leading to the actual cenotaph. The complex also had a terraced temple against the cliffs of the desert plateau.

Ahmose was succeeded by his son Amenhotep I. We know that he organized campaigns to Nubia and to Libya. Amenhotep I's most important innovation is that for the first time the royal mortuary temple and tomb were built some distance apart – something that all the kings of the New Kingdom copied for reasons of security. His mortuary temple was all but demolished later when the temple of Hatshepsut, the daughter of his successor, was constructed next to the 500 years older temple of Mentuhotep II.

Amenhotep I was probably the first king to construct a tomb in the Valley of the Kings on the Theban west bank. He was worshipped as a god by the tomb-builders of the village of Deir el-Medina, which he founded, as was his mother Ahmose-Nefertari. His tomb has not yet been identified with certainty, but his mummy was found in the same cache as that of his father. He appears to have died childless. It is not known where his successor Thutmosis I came from, but he married a sister of his predecessor to secure his accession to the throne. He led a number of successful campaigns in Nubia, thus laying firm foundations for the military ambitions of his successors in this dynasty. In addition, his generosity to the Karnak temple of Amun, near Luxor, led to a significant increase in its power and that of its priesthood during his reign. This trend would play a major role in the

View of the back of the huge Temple of Amun at Karnak, looking west. This is where the ordinary people, who were not admitted to the actual temple, could pray to the god against the rear wall.

Amenhotep II (or Thutmosis III) wearing the royal nemes-headdress. The head is from a statue of a seated or standing figure. The left part (original) has been known for ages; the right part is a cast of the original found in the temple of Karnak in 1968 and now in the Luxor Museum. Quartzite, height 28 cm.

∧∧ Two commemorative scarabs. On the left a scarab commemorating the marriage between Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye - their names are written next to each other. The scarab on the right commemorates the fact that Amenhotep III killed no fewer than 102 lions in the first 10 years of his reign. Height 5 and 7 cm.

∧ It was possible to build a temple very fast using talatat. These handy prefabricated limestone blocks were mainly used in the Amarna Period in Karnak and Amarna itself. After the temples were dismantled, the blocks were used as filling for pylons and other constructions, which has meant that their relief decoration has remained relatively intact. This talatat depicts a palace servant bowing low, probably to the pharaoh himself.

This sculptor's piece has been used on both sides. On one side is the head of a man wearing a wig, and on the other the head of Pharaoh Akhenaton wearing the blue war crown. His pronounced nose and chin can clearly be seen. The chisel marks may have been an attempt to destroy this depiction of the heretic king. Limestone, 15 cm high.

years to come. Thutmosis I was buried in a tomb that was later changed and adapted for her own use by his daughter Hatshepsut, and he was later moved to a different tomb. We do not know what happened to his mummy.

His son and successor Thutmosis II married his half-sister Hatshepsut – royal incest was not an unknown phenomenon. He continued the campaigns of his father, but did not rule for long. He constructed a small mortuary temple near Medinet Habu, and his tomb was possibly at Deir el-Bahari, not in the Valley of the Kings. His mummy was also found in the Deir el-Bahri cache. Thutmosis III, his son by a minor wife, was not yet old enough to rule at the death of his father. His stepmother Hatshepsut therefore became regent for him. When Thutmosis III came of age she did not step aside, but became coregent alongside him. In fact she was the actual ruler, not him. She adopted the full set of royal titles, and was depicted as a male pharaoh, a very exceptional phenomenon. There are two major events dating to her reign. The first is the organization of a successful trading venture over the Red Sea to Punt, now Somalia, with her ships returning laden with rich trading goods. This is extensively recorded on the walls of her temple at Deir el-Bahari, her second major achievement. This terraced temple, her mortuary temple, was built next to that of Mentuhotep II, and clearly inspired by it. An important role in its construction was played by a certain Senenmut, one of her principal advisors. He had two tombs, one of which was situated under the forecourt of the temple of his queen – an outrageous privilege – and there is also a relief of Senenmut in a remote part of the temple decoration. Hatshepsut had previously ordered a tomb to be cut high in the cliffs, but chose to be buried in her father Thutmosis I's tomb instead, as mentioned above. She had a stone sarcophagus originally intended for herself to be recarved for her father, and also had (unused?) sarcophagi for herself in both of her tombs. Her mummy has only recently been identified with the help of DNA research. It was found in the tomb of her wet nurse. After Hatshepsut's death, Thutmosis III became the sole ruler. Once in power he caused her depictions in her mortu-

For a long time after the Predynastic Period, pottery in Egypt was not provided with painted decoration. Only in the 18th Dynasty, and in particular the Amarna Period, did that change. Characteristic are the plant and flower decorations in blue, as on this vase, which are only known from around this period.

At the top of this stela is the symbol of the Aten, a sun disc with rays ending in hands. The god is being worshipped by two baboons. Underneath is a man worshipping the sun god Re-Harakhty, who has the head of a falcon and is sitting in a divine bark. At the bottom a man and a woman are offering to the (missing) god Ptah or Osiris. The stela is unfinished – the columns for text are empty. It clearly illustrates that it was possible to worship other gods than the Aten during the Amarna Period. Limestone, height 32 cm.

ary temple to be destroyed and the obelisks she had erected in the temple of Karnak to be bricked up behind walls. It has been suggested that one of his wives was Neferure, the daughter of Hatshepsut, and also his half-sister. If so, Hatshepsut was not only his stepmother but also his mother-in-law.

Thutmosis III is also known as the Napoleon of Ancient Egypt. Thutmosis III conducted no fewer than seventeen campaigns to the Near East and secured Egyptian dominance in the region. The highpoint of his first campaign was the Battle of Megiddo, where he was victorious against the Canaanites thanks to a daring manoeuvre. In the meantime, he also conducted punitive expeditions to Nubia. All the information about these campaigns is recorded on the walls of temples, particularly the temple of Amun at Karnak. Thutmosis III constructed a kind of festival temple there, with behind it a room known as the 'Botanical Garden'. The decorations here are very accurate depictions of plants and animals he brought back as souvenirs from his campaigns.

He also constructed a small mortuary temple, tucked in between those of Mentuhotep II and Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. His tomb in the Valley of the Kings introduced a new phenomenon – a deep pit dug halfway down the corridor to the burial chamber as a trap for tomb robbers, although it

does not seem to have helped. The burial chamber was decorated for the first time with illustrations from the Book of the Underworld, the *Amduat*. Although badly damaged, his mummy survived and was found in the Deir el-Bahri cache. Amenhotep II was his son and successor. When he succeeded to the throne, the Canaanite princes seized their chance to throw off the yoke of Egyptian rule, but the new king reacted swiftly and their rebellion was crushed. The region remained peaceful for the rest of his reign. Amenhotep II also sent punitive expeditions to Nubia. He constructed a small mortuary temple, but his tomb is very impressive. Although it was plundered and damaged, quite a lot of the tomb contents were still there when it was discovered in modern times. The most spectacular fact was that the mummy of the pharaoh was still in his stone sarcophagus, the only pharaoh besides Tutankhamun who has been found in his own tomb in the Valley of the Kings. In addition, another ten royal mummies were found in the side chambers, apparently transferred there in Antiquity for safety reasons.

^ < Part of a tomb wall, probably from Saqqara. At top right is the overseer of goldsmiths Saiempetref and his wife Neshet, receiving offerings from their son Amenmose. Above them is an offering formula. In the lower register the couple are sitting informally on a mat; Saiempetref has taken off his wig for even more comfort. All their children are offering to them. 19th Dynasty, temp. Seti I. Limestone, height 75 cm.

^ This wooden shabti of Pharaoh Seti I is inscribed with the usual spell, designed to enable the statuette to work the fields in the Underworld. A large number of these statuettes were found in the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings in the early 19th century, and are now spread around the world. Height 20 cm.

> Stela with the name of Ramesses IV. The Royal Butler Ramesses-Seth-her-wenemef is depicted here offering incense to the god Ptah. Limestone, height 32 cm.

Among them were his son Thutmosis IV and his grandson Amenhotep III.

There are indications that Thutmosis IV was not the eldest son of Amenhotep II, and thus not the intended successor, so it is possible that there may have been problems. At any rate, the reign of the new pharaoh seems to have progressed peacefully, without much rattling of sabres. His tomb was plundered but not completely stripped – part of a war chariot was found in it. His mummy was found in his father's tomb.

Amenhotep III, a son of Thutmosis IV, was one of the longest reigning pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty – he ruled for nearly forty years. The fact that there were hardly any new military campaigns during his reign is an indication that the empire was stable and consolidated. Instead, the king indulged in an orgy of building works, and patronized the arts – the best and most beautiful works of art from the 18th Dynasty all date to his reign. Amenhotep III developed the habit of having large scarabs created to commemorate important events in his reign. For example, he recorded that he killed 102 lions over a 10-year period. More important is the information that a daughter of the king of Mittanni had joined Amenhotep's harem. Mittanni was one of the most important powers in the Near East at the time, so this was a diplomatic marriage. His marriage to Tiye is also recorded in this way, and this queen played an important role during his reign.

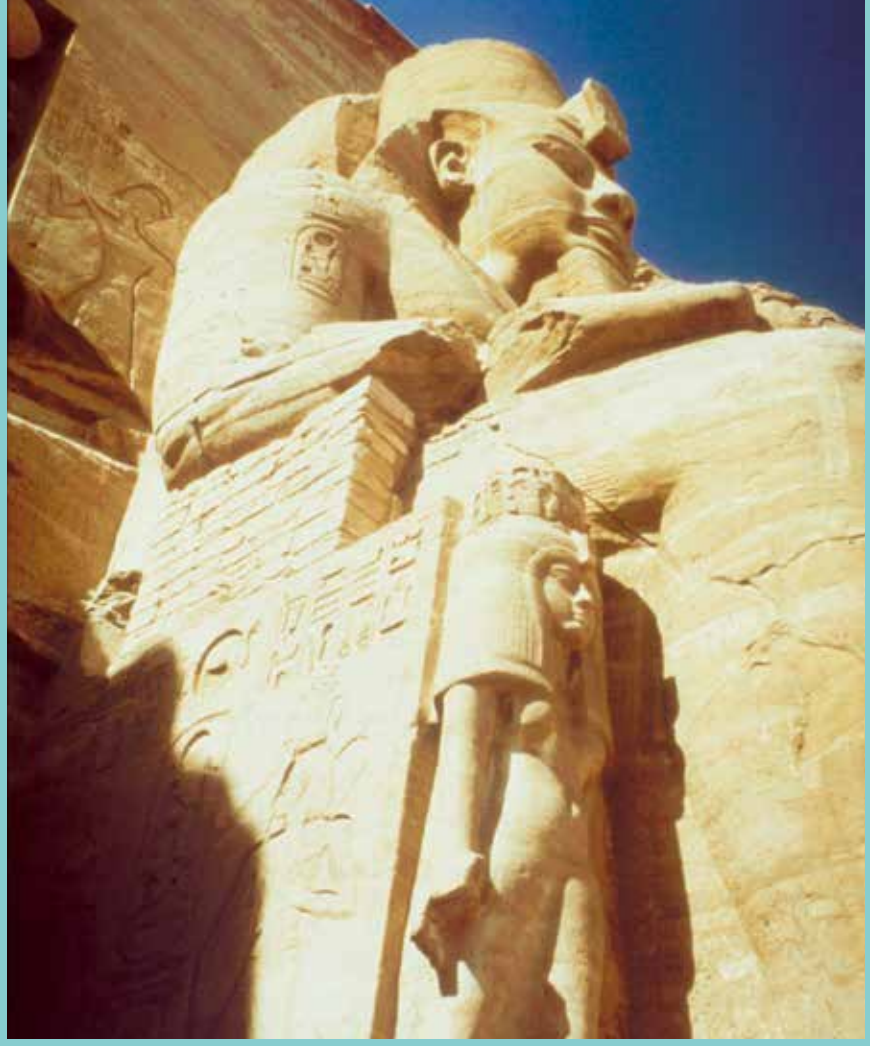
In the meantime, the Amun temple at Karnak had grown significantly and benefited enormously from the wealth flooding into the country at the time. The power of the Amun priesthood had grown apace, and slowly began to seriously rival the power of the king himself. Amenhotep III's son, Amenhotep IV, would experience this at first hand. The old custom of coregencies appears to have been revived with him during the last years of the reign of his father, Amenhotep III. The first indications of the revolution that would occur under Amenhotep IV can be seen during the reign of his father, in the form of the appearance of the god Aten, the sun disc. However, before this could progress any further, Amenhotep III died. His mortuary temple on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes was one of the largest ever built, unfortunately on poor foundations, so there is not very much of it left today. Unusually, he was not buried in the main Valley of the Kings but in a neighbouring valley.

∧ On this ostracon (limestone shard/flake with an inscription) is a calculation in red and black ink. It comes from Deir el-Medina, the village of the artisans who built and decorated the royal tombs. Height 11 cm.

∧ > Shabti of Pharaoh Psusennes I. This pharaoh was buried in a tomb in the temple precinct of Amun in Tanis, along with several other kings from the Third Intermediate Period. These tombs, and the tomb of Tutankhamun, are the only intact royal tombs ever to be found. Height 7.5 cm.

KINGSHIP

A new phenomenon in the 18th Dynasty was the major role played by the female members of the royal family, who apparently operated at a high level in state affairs. This began with Ahmose-Nefertari, the wife of Ahmose I, and continued with Hatshepsut, who actually ruled as pharaoh, and with Nefertiti, who operated on a virtually equal footing with Akhenaten. An important new priestly office was introduced – the 'God's wife of Amun'. It has even been suggested that the 18th Dynasty was matrilinear, but there is no proof of that; what is certain is that the legitimacy of a prospective pharaoh as the next in line could be strengthened via princesses and queens. A nice example of this is the request by the queen-widow of Tutankhamun to the king of the Hittites to send her one of his sons to become the successor to the throne.



One of the four colossal statues of Ramesses II at the entrance to his huge rock-cut temple at Abu Simbel on the southern border of Egypt. His wife Nefertari stands next to his throne, and as usual is depicted on a much smaller scale than her husband.

Closely related to this is the phenomenon of 'royal incest'. It is not correct to think that incest was common in Egypt, as is sometimes thought. The king was different to ordinary folk – he functioned as a link between them and the world of the gods so different rules and laws applied to him and his family. The idea was to keep the royal blood as pure as possible without any contamination from outside, an idea not unique to Egypt. The later Ptolemaic pharaohs of Egypt and the Roman emperors of the Julian-Claudian line followed the same principle, as did the rulers of Hawaii and the Incas much later in time. In a much less extreme form, it is also encountered in the European ruling houses of the 18th and 19th centuries, where marriages between cousins was very common within the framework of 'keep to your own sort'. This had predictable results, for example the haemophilia suffered by the last Tsarevich before the Russian Revolution. Throughout the 18th Dynasty, too, generations of incest and inbreeding had painful consequences, as we can see when we examine the mummies of this dynasty – like the club foot of Tutankhamun.

Royal authority acquired a new propagandistic twist in the first half of the 18th Dynasty by emphasizing the military role of the pharaoh, particularly that of Thutmosis III. During the second half of the dynasty, that authority declined, particularly during and after the Amarna Period, when the legitimate pharaoh was maligned and abominated by his successors. The pharaohs of the Ramesside family, particularly Ramesses II, did all they could to fix the image of the pharaoh as an absolute monarch and demi-god even more securely than before. The successful assassination of Ramesses III did not help that image, and after that things were never the same again.

Obelisk of Pharaoh Hatshepsut (18th Dynasty) in the Amun temple at Karnak. In order to hide the obelisk of his predecessor, Thutmosis III had high walls built around it. These have in the meantime collapsed, but the obelisk is still standing.

The rock-cut temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari on the west bank of the Nile. The temple has several terraces. On the left of the photo are the remains of the ancient temple of Mentuhotep II.

Shortly after the death of his predecessor Amenhotep IV took drastic measures in his fifth regnal year by abandoning Thebes to make the break with the contaminated past complete, and founded a completely new capital city full of Aten temples and palaces far to the north, in Middle Egypt. The city was named Akhetaten, 'Horizon of the Aten', better known today as Tell el-Amarna, or simply Amarna. He changed his own name to Akhenaten ('Living Spirit of the Aten') and closed down many of the traditional temples in order to make the worship of the Aten compulsory, to the exclusion of all the other gods. Akhenaten was also responsible for wide-ranging artistic advances. The strange way that Akhenaten himself was depicted – a long, narrow face, very feminine breasts and a big belly – has led some to suspect a medical disorder, but DNA research has revealed nothing of the kind. It is possible that it was simply a stylistic quirk; it is certainly very different to the delicate style of Amenhotep III's time.

The prominent position given to his wife Nefertiti is also an innovation. In many depictions she is on the same scale as the king and plays an equal part in all kinds of events. It is not clear whether she was a blood relative of Akhenaten or not. The couple had a number of daughters. He also fathered at least one son, the future Tutankhamun, although probably not by Nefertiti but by one of his other wives, Kiya. Recent DNA research has ascertained that Akhenaten was the father of Tutankhamun, and that his mother was related to his father. One important source of information on this period is the archive of diplomatic correspondence from Asia Minor, found at Amarna. It comprises clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform, Akkadian, the diplomatic language of the time. They throw interesting light on the foreign relations of Egypt under Akhenaten. Many of the letters are from Egyptian vassals in Syria-Palestine asking for help against attackers who were apparently aware that there was something strange going on in Egypt. Akhenaten was too busy at home to be much concerned with the outlying parts of his empire; he provided no assistance and the enemies of Egypt were able to do as they wished.

When Akhenaten died, the situation was initially chaotic. He appears to have been buried first in the desert hills east of Amarna, but later his body was moved to a mysterious tomb in the Valley of the Kings, as proven by recent DNA research. It is possible that Nefertiti succeeded to the throne for a short period, although other signs are that she vanished from the stage somewhat earlier, perhaps succeeded by a certain Smenkhkare, possibly a brother or son of Akhenaten. Another possibility is that Nefertiti and Smenkhkare are one and the same person.

The situation becomes clearer again with the accession of the next pharaoh, the young Tutankhamun. Akhetaten was abandoned and not reoccupied until Roman times and later, and the royal court returned to Thebes, where Amun was restored to dominance. This is underlined by the changing of Tutankhaten's name to Tutankhamun ('living image of Amun'). His wife, who was most probably his half-sister, also changed her name, from Ankhesenpaaten to Ankhesenamun. It goes without saying that the high levels of incest in this family had physical consequences: Tutankhamun had a clubfoot, and the two children he fathered were stillborn. His reign was short, and he probably died of an infection after breaking his leg in a fall. His famous, virtually intact tomb in the Valley of the Kings was hastily converted for his use, and the contents appear to have partly been intended for other members of the royal family, includ-

The village of Deir el-Medina, for the elite craftsmen who worked on the royal tombs on the west bank at Thebes. View of the village from the area on the other side of the street, where the workers themselves were buried.

v Here the images of Queen Hatshepsut in her temple at Deir el-Bahari on the west bank at Thebes have been hacked away on the orders of her successor Thutmosis III.

v v Part of the decoration of the temple of Deir el-Bahari is a report of a trading expedition to Punt (Somalia) which Hatshepsut organized. The illustration shows the flora and fauna of this exotic country.

ing one of his sarcophagi, two of which were gilded wood, the third of solid gold. He died without heirs, something which left his widow Ankhesenamun in a rather awkward position. Any candidate for the throne could marry her, among other things, to legitimize his claim, and one of the candidates was a certain Ay, of unknown background. Apparently Ankhesenamun was not very keen on this marriage, because she wrote a letter to the king of the Hittites, the major power in the Near East at that time, asking him to send her one of his sons to marry. We know that this ploy failed, as she married Ay and he became the next pharaoh. But not for long – only a few years later he died and was buried in a tomb in the same valley as Amenhotep III. Again there were no heirs, so he was succeeded by the general Horemheb, unrelated to the royal family. As one of the means to legitimate his claim to the throne, he married a possible member of the royal family, Mutnodjmet. Horemheb left behind two tombs, the one in Saqqara having been built before he became pharaoh. It is possible that his wife Mutnodjmet was buried there – traces of miscarriages have been found on a pelvis found in the tomb, which corresponds with the fact that he died without an heir. Once he became pharaoh, he gained the right to a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The decoration in his unfinished tomb marks one of the artistic highpoints of the 18th Dynasty. Horemheb usurped Ay's mortuary temple on the Theban west bank, and turned it into his own mortuary temple. The illustrious 18th Dynasty ended with his death.

∧∧ Overview of the Dra Abu'l Naga hill on the west bank at Thebes, where the Theban rulers of the 17th Dynasty were buried. They were the predecessors of the powerful pharaohs of the New Kingdom. Behind the hill is the Valley of the Kings.

∧ The Valley of the Kings, with the El Qurn hill in the background. The pyramid-shape of this hill will probably have played a role in the choice of this valley as the burial place of the pharaohs. In the right foreground is the entrance to the tomb of Tutankhamun, behind that the tomb of Ramesses VI.

19th Dynasty (1292-1186 BC)

The new pharaoh was called Ramesses I, a military man and quite old when he succeeded to the throne. He originally came from the eastern Nile Delta. He also had only a short reign, and only a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings. He was succeeded by his son Seti I .

Seti I concentrated on restoring Egypt's foreign interests, which had been neglected in favour of internal problems during the last years of the previous dynasty. We know of campaigns he waged in Syria-Palestine and in Libya. In addition, he was an active builder, with projects in the Amun temple of Karnak (the hypostyle hall), at Abydos where he built a major temple, and also a huge mortuary temple on the west bank at Thebes. He is most famous, however, for his tomb in the Valley of the Kings, which is one of the largest (over 100 metres long) and most beautiful of them all. It was not found intact, but his beautifully preserved mummy had been transferred to a safe hiding place (the Deir el-Bahri cache) and was found there.

His son and successor was Ramesses II, known as 'the Great'. He ruled for over sixty years. Early in his reign he clashed with the other major power in the Near East – the Hittites. Their spheres of influence met at the strategic city of Kadesh and they fought a major battle there. The inexperience of the young pharaoh nearly led to a major defeat, but eventually the battle ended in a draw. The propaganda machine of the Egyptian court of course turned it into a major victory, recorded on several temple walls. The impasse between the two empires was eventually resolved by a peace treaty, preserved in both Egyptian and Hittite versions. Diplomatic marriages also followed. Ramesses's great royal wife was Nefertari, famous for her beautiful tomb in the Val-

One of the colonnades in the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu on the west bank at Thebes. In protected areas, it is still possible to see the original coloured decoration.

View through to the most sacred part of the small temple of Medinet Habu, on the west bank of the Nile. In the background are the desert hills.

ley of the Queens, but she was certainly not his only wife. With her and the rest of his harem, he eventually fathered over a hundred children!

Ramesses II was extremely active – there are few pharaohs whose name is met with so often in Egypt, not only on monuments built by him, but also on many of those built by his predecessors. He expanded the temples of Luxor and Karnak significantly, and built his own temple at Abydos. One of his best-known building projects are the huge rock-cut temples at Abu Simbel, one for himself and one for Nefertari. Often overlooked, but not to be underestimated, is the new residence city he founded, Piramesse, located in the Nile Delta at the site of ancient Avaris, the base of the Hyksos pharaohs. This city, strategically located close to the eastern border, would play an important role under Ramesses II's successors. Memphis remained the administrative capital and Thebes continued to be the most important religious city.

Ramesses II also built himself a huge mortuary temple at Thebes, now known as the Ramesseum. His tomb in the Valley of the Kings was located in an unfortunate place, where water from the occasional rainstorm could enter it unhindered. Only recently have excavators succeeded in slowly freeing the tomb from all the mud washed into it. One interesting detail is that a huge burial complex for many of his sons has been found almost opposite his tomb. The mummy of the pharaoh, who reached the age of ninety, was found undamaged in the Deir el-Bahri cache. Research has revealed that the pharaoh must have suffered terrible pain in his last years due to the many abscesses in his jaw.

Two of his sons are worthy of special mention – Khaemwaset, his eldest son, was high priest of Ptah at Memphis and busied himself with restoring many of the monuments there. He was later renowned as a particularly wise man. He was crown prince until his death, and one of his broth-

ers eventually succeeded their father Ramesses II. He was called Merenptah, and was already an old man at his succession and so did not rule for very long. As so often with a change of rule, unrest broke out on the Libyan border and in Nubia, as well as in the occupied regions in the east, but Merenptah was able to nip the problem in the bud. He set up a large victory stela to record the events. This stela is the first time in history that the word 'Israel' appears, as one of those vanquished. As Merenptah's mummy was not found in the same cache as many of the other royal mummies, it was originally thought by some that he was the pharaoh of the biblical Exodus, as that pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea. That theory no longer held water once the mummy was discovered among those in the tomb of Amenhotep II. Merenptah built a large tomb in the Valley of the Kings; his mortuary temple was constructed close to that of Amenhotep III, parts of which he reused for his own temple.

After his death the situation becomes somewhat confusing. His legitimate heir, Seti II, appears to have been pushed aside by a certain Amenmesse, possibly his son, but he regained the throne later. After Seti II's death, his wife Tausret ruled as regent (just like Hatshepsut) for the son of Amenmesse, Siptah – apparently the only available successor. Siptah died shortly after becoming pharaoh, and Tausret ruled alone as pharaoh. Her tomb in the Valley of the Kings is a reflection of this complicated situation – it was started by Tausret for herself and her husband Seti II, but was completed by her successor Sethnakht, of unknown background. Seti II eventually acquired his own tomb, as did Siptah. With Sethnakht, the next dynasty formally begins.

The huge temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu is built of stone, so that it will last for centuries. Right next to it a palace for the pharaoh was built, of less durable mudbrick. The foundations and the lowermost parts of the walls are all that have survived; this is the podium for the throne of the pharaoh in his audience chamber.

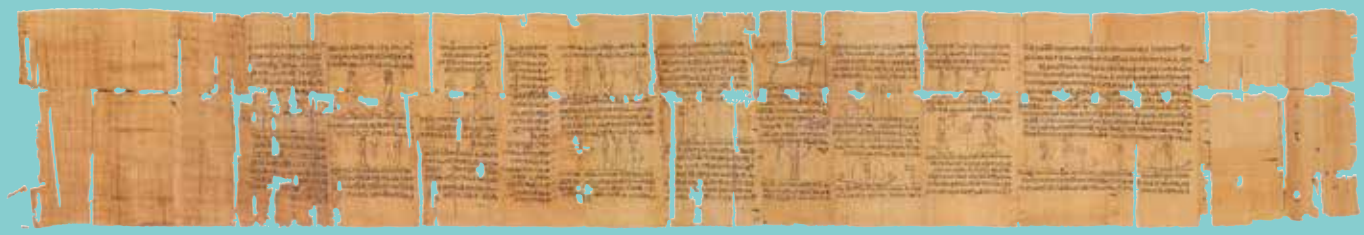
RELIGION

The victory of the Theban kings ensured that the authority of the god Amun was securely anchored. One of the consequences was the strengthening of the priestly office of 'God's wife of Amun', a sort of high priestess of Amun, an office restricted to the female members of the royal family. A series of princesses and queens bore this important title, including Hatshepsut. The Amarna Period marks a temporary end to this series. The office was revived under the Ramessides, and from then on the bearer of this title was an unmarried and virgin member of the ruling royal family. This rule played an important role in the Late Period during the legitimate succession of pharaohs, certainly after the importance of the Amun cult had been given a new boost by the Kushite pharaohs.
In the New Kingdom religious field as well, the events of the Amarna Period were startling. In addition to political reasons motivated by the growing power of the Amun priesthood, Akhenaten also had personal religious motives for propagating the Aten cult in its stead. This can clearly be seen in the solar hymn to the Aten carved in one of the rock-cut tombs at Amarna:

'While your rays nurse every field:
When you rise, they live and flourish for you.
You make the seasons in order to develop all you make:
The Growing season to cool them, and heat so that they might feel you.
You made heaven far away just to rise in it, to see all you make,
Being unique and risen in your aspects of being as "living Aten" –
manifest, shining, far (yet) near.
You make millions of developments from yourself, (you who are) a one-ness: cities, towns, fields, the path of the river.
Every eye observes you in relation to them, for you are Aten of the daytime above the earth (?).
You have travelled just so that everybody might exist.
You create theirfaces so that you might not see [your]self [as] the only (thing) which you made.
You are in my heart'

The dominance of the Aten was not absolute, however, demonstrated by the fact that he is not mentioned in the chapels of the worker's village at Amarna itself, not even once; they worshipped the old gods. Polytheism in Egypt had not disappeared. Once Akhenaten had vanished from the scene, the cult of the Aten was drastically terminated and that of Amun propagated more than ever, especially under the Ramessides. One remarkable development is the fact that from the 21st Dynasty on, the cult of the god Seth became taboo. During the 19th Dynasty, even pharaohs (Seti I and II) had been named after him, but later his depictions were systematically destroyed. His mythological vendet-

Wooden sarcophagus of a priest of Amun in Thebes from the 21st Dynasty, probably from a secret cache containing a large number of these sarcophagi. The anthropoid sarcophagus is completely decorated inside and out with figures and texts, which unfortunately do not give us the name of the deceased. At this time the essential texts and other illustrations were not put onto the walls of easily located and robbed tombs, but onto the coffins themselves, and on papyri, which were easier to transport and to protect. The deceased is shown on the lid with many wreaths around his neck. A large number of gods and religious symbols are depicted underneath the wreaths, and on the sides and the inside, all of which were important for continued life in the hereafter. The Sons of Horus, who accompanied the deceased and protected the deceased's organs, played an important role. Wood with a layer of stucco, length 1.80 m.



Book of the Dead papyrus, belonging to a certain Sema-Tawy, painter in the Amun temple at Thebes. Despite the late date (1st century AD), the text is written in a beautiful, clear hand and the fine line drawings are of very high quality. Only 17 of the 200 available texts have been written on it – the owner probably could not afford any more. They include the Negative Confession, a list of sins that the deceased did not commit. The illustrations sometimes do not match the text, although you would expect them to. Length 2 m.

tas with Osiris and Horus were partly responsible for this, and his colour, red, was the colour of the desert and of chaos, opposing the preferred order, Ma'at. Seth's association with foreigners, who occupied Egypt during the Third Intermediate Period, may also have played a role.
In the meantime, the high priests of Amun had gained secular power as well in Thebes and Upper Egypt – the preliminary victory of the cult of Amun, you could say. Apparently the Kushite kings of the 25th Dynasty felt that the cult of Amun needed an extra boost and initiated a mini-renaissance of the religious traditions.

Life after death

The Coffin Texts, depicted often on coffins from the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, and designed to promote the continued existence of the deceased in the afterlife, were replaced in the early New Kingdom by the Book of the Dead. This was usually inscribed on papyrus, and was not so much a book as a random collection of spells that would be placed with the deceased in his tomb down to Roman times. The Book of the Dead listed in detail what the deceased could expect after death and how he should react. He first had to pass a court of 42 judges, swearing to them that he had not committed a large number of specific sins. Once he was successfully past, he faced the next test – his heart, the repository of everything he had ever done in his life, good and bad, was weighed against the feather symbol of order and truth. If they were in balance, then the deceased could continue his dangerous journey, protected by magical spells, to the Fields of Yarru (paradise). If they were not, then he would be devoured by a monster and lose all chance of an afterlife.
Different rules applied to the pharaoh, as can be seen in a whole series of books of the underworld depicted in the royal tombs, including the Amduat (Book of What is in the Underworld), the Book of Gates and the Book of Caverns. The emphasis here lay on the route the pharaoh had to follow through the Underworld.
The art of mummification reached its apex during the New Kingdom. There was also now a standard set of tomb equipment, including shabtis. These tomb statuettes, which first appeared in the Middle Kingdom, were intended to symbolically stand in for the deceased when he was expected to do hard agricultural work in the hereafter. Originally only a single shabti was provided for the

Monumental mummiform shabti of the lector priest Kaheri. The carefully carved text contains a spell that enables the shabti to perform hard agricultural labour for the deceased in the hereafter. In the New Kingdom, a shabti could function as a replacement for the deceased. Limestone, 27 cm high.

tomb, but later on this became one for every day of the year, with an overseer for every set of ten. So they were no longer unique stand-ins, but simply servants.
During the Third Intermediate Period, when the unstable political situation made everything less safe and tomb robbery increased apace, many high officials were no longer buried in separate, easily located and robbed rock-cut tombs with texts on the walls; they preferred a sarcophagus with the necessary texts inscribed on it. They were then interred in well concealed and secured catacombs, for example those of the Amun priests on the west bank at Thebes.

Gang of ten shabtis with a foreman, recognizable by his wide apron-fronted skirt (the difference in colour is coincidental). He is not mummiform, like the gang, but is wearing his daily clothing and has a barely visible whip in his hands. The ten workers each have a wig and a beard, and carry tools in their hands. These shabtis are no longer replacements but servants. 21st-22nd Dynasty, faïence, height 5-7 cm.

20th Dynasty (1186-1070 BC)

Sethnakht only ruled for a short period, and was succeeded by his son Ramesses III, the last great Egyptian pharaoh, and not only of the New Kingdom. His reign was long but not particularly peaceful. The pharaoh was swiftly confronted with an invasion by sea and overland of a coalition of tribes from across the Mediterranean area, known as the Sea Peoples. They had already overrun the Hittite empire and set their sights now on Egypt. Ramesses III was able to defeat the Sea Peoples, however, and later on the Libyans too. These achievements were extensively recorded on the walls of his temple at Medinet Habu (Thebes), including the number of right hands and penises hacked off the slain foes, thus enabling them to determine exactly how many there had been. The temple is a huge complex, modelled on the Ramesseum of his famous predecessor, Ramesses II. It is a mortuary temple, fort and palace combined. Later on it also became the administrative centre of the west bank. Because royal palaces were not usually built of durable stone like the temples, but rather from mudbrick, the relatively well-preserved palace of Ramesses III excavated here is rather rare. The throne room has a podium for the throne, and a bathroom behind it, both of which are clearly recognizable. It is possible to imagine this palace being the location of the shocking event that terminated the rule of Ramesses III – a harem conspiracy, started by a minor wife of the king, with the aim of murdering him and putting her son on the throne in his stead. Recent CT scans of the mummy of Ramesses III have revealed that the attempt was successful – his throat was slit from side to side. – This mummy, found in the tomb of Amenhotep II, has been used as the inspiration for the mummies in many horror films. – The rest of the plan went hopelessly awry because the conspirators were arrested before they could implement it. The transcripts of their trial have been preserved. There were about forty suspects involved, most of whom were condemned to death – or rather,

∧ The tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara, which was built for him while he was still general. Once he became pharaoh, he gained the right to a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. His wife Mutnodjmet was probably buried in the tomb at Saqqara.

> View from Al-Qurn, the highest hillltop near the Valley of the Kings on the west bank at Thebes. At lower left are the remains of the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III. The hilltop affords views of the entire width of the Nile valley, with the city of Luxor on the opposite side of the Nile.

forced to commit suicide. Ramesses III was buried in the last truly impressive tomb in the Valley of the Kings. While the tomb was being cut, the workers suddenly broke through the wall of a neighbouring, apparently forgotten, tomb belonging to Amenmesse of the 19th Dynasty, and they were forced to shift the axis. These workers were already dissatisfied – we have a report of a strike and a blockade they organized because their rations had not been delivered on time.

This was just a taste of what was to come, because things went from bad to worse with the successors of Ramesses III, both politically and economically. The first to succeed him was his son, Ramesses IV, who had a short reign. His mortuary temple was never completed, and was also used by his two immediate successors. His relatively small tomb was plundered, but his mummy is preserved. His son, Ramesses V, ruled for an even shorter period; he probably

< On the front of the first pylon of the temple of Luxor, Ramesses II had a record carved of his battle with the Hittites at Kadesh in Syria. Although the Egyptian army had difficulty holding its own, Ramesses II presents the battle as a glorious victory.

v Overview of the excavations at Piramesse (today's Qantir), the residence of the Ramesside pharaohs in the eastern Nile Delta. The city was literally moved once the harbour silted up. A column base can still be seen in the middle. The column that originally stood on it was taken away.

died of smallpox, which has left clear traces on the face of his mummy. During his reign there were internal problems. His tomb was usurped by his uncle and successor Ramesses VI, whose mummy has also been preserved. The actual burial chamber has a wonderful ceiling with a depiction of the night sky. The rubble created when this tomb was cut buried that of Tutankhamun, which is one reason why it was virtually intact when it was rediscovered in 1922.

Ramesses VII was a son of Ramesses VI. He had his own tomb, but his mummy has not been found. Ramesses VIII was probably another son of Ramesses III. His mummy has never been found, nor has a tomb been attributed to him.

During this period Egypt went through a real crisis, both economic and political. The high priests of Amun had become more powerful than the weak pharaohs, and their powerbase gradually exceeded that of the king. Even the west bank was no longer safe from marauding nomads, and eventually the isolated village of Deir el-Medina, where the builders of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings lived, was evacuated for safety reasons. The tomb of Ramesses IX reveals that their craftsmanship (or the resources of the reigning king) was no longer what it had once been – the rather irregular ceiling was not even finished in plaster and the painted decoration was applied directly to the uneven stone, in paint that was clearly inferior to that previously used for royal tombs. His mummy has survived. The extent of Egypt's problems are revealed by the court records we have about royal tombs being robbed – often inside jobs by the same workers who created them... Not much more is known of Ramesses X. His tomb has been located, but not investigated, and no mummy has been found.

Things are a bit different for the last pharaoh of this dynasty, unsurprisingly called Ramesses XI. This pharaoh ruled from Piramesse in the Nile Delta, and the high priest of Amun at Thebes, Herihor, was the virtual ruler in the south. One could say that this marked the definitive victory of the Amun priesthood over the royal family – a conflict that had started in the 18th Dynasty. We have a report from the time of Herihor concerning the voyage of a priest called Wenamun to collect cedar from Lebanon for a new divine bark for Amun of Karnak. This important Egyptian envoy was treated with disdain by the king of Byblos, which would have been unheard of in the past. The papyrus is unfortunately not complete, so we do not know how the story ends. The tomb of Ramesses XI is known – the last of the identified tombs in the Valley of the Kings – but his mummy has never been found.

^^ When the residence city Piramesse was literally moved to the new city of Tanis, necessary because of the silting up of the harbour, many statues were chopped off at the ankles. The base was then left in its old position. This is what happened to these feet of a statue of Ramesses II.

^ View of the excavations at Piramesse. Round column bases can be seen everywhere, without their columns, which were removed. Ground water is a problem here, as it is nearly everywhere in the Nile Delta, unlike most of the rest of the country.

View of the damaged mortuary temple of Ramesses II, the Ramesseum, on the west bank at Thebes. Only the foundations or lowermost parts of the walls remain of most of the ancillary buildings built of mudbrick.

The Third Intermediate Period

21st Dynasty (1070-946 BC)

Once again Egypt was to all intents and purposes divided into a northern and a southern part. Ramesses XI was succeeded in the Nile Delta by a certain Smendes, who was married to one of his daughters. The residence of the northern kings had in the meantime moved from Piramesse to Tanis. The branch of the Nile that had made Piramesse a good location for a capital had dried up by the end of the 20th Dynasty, thus robbing it of its strategic importance. Because the resources of the pharaohs of the time were not extensive enough to found a completely new city in a more suitable location, the stone parts of the buildings in Piramesse were dismantled and dragged, or more probably transported by boat, to Tanis, 20 km to the north, an impressive logistical feat. Great care was not always taken – colossal statues were often chopped off at the ankles before removal, with the bases remaining in Piramesse. This operation confused archaeologists for a long time, because it had long been known from written sources that Piramesse had been built on the foundations of ancient Avaris. Once remains from Piramesse had been found at Tanis, it was thought this must be the original site of that city, but older remains were never discovered. The problem was only resolved by excavations at Tell el-Dab'a/Qantir (see Chapter 4). The kings from the 21st Dynasty on tried to turn Tanis into a northern Thebes – the Amun temple at Tanis, for example, was clearly a copy of the Amun temple at Karnak. A number of the pharaohs of Tanis also had themselves buried within that temple terrain, starting with Psusennes I. These royal tombs were rediscovered intact – the only ones besides that of Tutankhamun. A number of tombs of pharaohs from the 21st and 22nd Dynasties are still missing, and it is possible that they could still be found somewhere on the huge site of Tanis.

In Thebes, the high priest Herihor was briefly succeeded by his son-in-law Piankh, in turn succeeded by his son Pinudjem I, who was married to a daughter of Ramesses XI. Thus the two ruling families were linked through marriage, and the two parts of the country also had good relationships. This situation, including mutual marriages, would continue for some time.

MATERIAL CULTURE

All aspects of material culture achieved highpoints during the New Kingdom. The huge temples of Karnak and Abydos were expanded to almost their greatest extent. The reliefs in the temple of Seti I at Abydos are of particularly high quality. The great rock-cut temple at Abu Simbel is unique in design, but the carving, particularly that of the colossi at the entrance, is not very subtle – size was more important than quality. In that sense it has sometimes been compared to Fascist or Stalinist architecture and sculpture.

The way that the Aten temples at Karnak and Amarna were constructed was new – apparently they needed to be built quickly, particularly at the new residence city of Akhetaten. Instead of the huge blocks used to build temples up to that time, on which the reliefs were carved, they used much smaller, easy-to-carry blocks of about 30 x 50 cm, called talatat, which were then carved with reliefs. After these temples were dismantled, the talatat were used as fill for later constructions, for example the huge pylons at Karnak. They were discovered there during excavations and entire decorated walls have been reconstructed.

The long row of royal mortuary temples at the point where the desert meets the fertile land on the west bank at Thebes tells another story. The pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty had learned a lot from their unfortunate predecessors, who had included their mortuary temples in a single burial complex, and not one of which had survived the tomb robbers. Mortuary temple and tomb were separated from now on, and the tombs were built in the Valley of the Kings. Eventually, however, they turned out to be equally susceptible to plundering. What the thieves left behind of the tomb contents can now be viewed in a single room in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The treasures contained by the tiny tomb of the unimportant king Tutankhamun, now stored in two wings of that museum, would have paled into insignificance compared to what must have been buried in the huge tombs of mighty pharaohs such as Seti I and Ramesses II. The iconic golden mask of Tutankhamun seems to be a personal portrait of very high quality, but some of the golden jewellery from his tomb is of doubtful taste to our modern eyes and could even be labelled flashy kitsch. The Amarna style is still clearly visible in the way that Tutankhamun is depicted. An iron dagger from his tomb is one of the earliest examples of the use of this metal in Egypt; however, bronze was and remained the most popular metal for the time being.

Another characteristic of the royal tombs is the appearance of all kinds of underworld texts on the walls, with the ceiling of the burial chamber sometimes decorated with scenes showing the nocturnal journey of the sun god, united with the king, before he rises in the morning again. Most of the corridors of the tombs of the 18th Dynasty make a sharp turn, possibly a reflection of the difficult journey the pharaoh had to make in the underworld. From the end of the 18th Dynasty onwards, the tombs were cut along one long axis. Whereas the decoration of many tombs of the 18th Dynasty was cut in high quality raised relief, that in later tombs was mostly in the inferior low relief style. The royal tombs of the later Ramessides could even be said to be of mediocre quality.

The Kushite pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty gave the country a cultural boost by restoring old monuments and partially returning to the old traditions. They saw themselves as the true guardians of this heritage, and even in distant Nubia they were thoroughly 'Egyptianized'. This 'renaissance' would be continued by the pharaohs of the 26th Dynasty, in the Late Period.

The back of the first pylon of the temple of Amun at Karnak, built by Nectanebo I (30th Dynasty). In front is a small temple built by Seti II (19th Dynasty), intended as a shrine where the bark with the image of Amun could rest during processions.

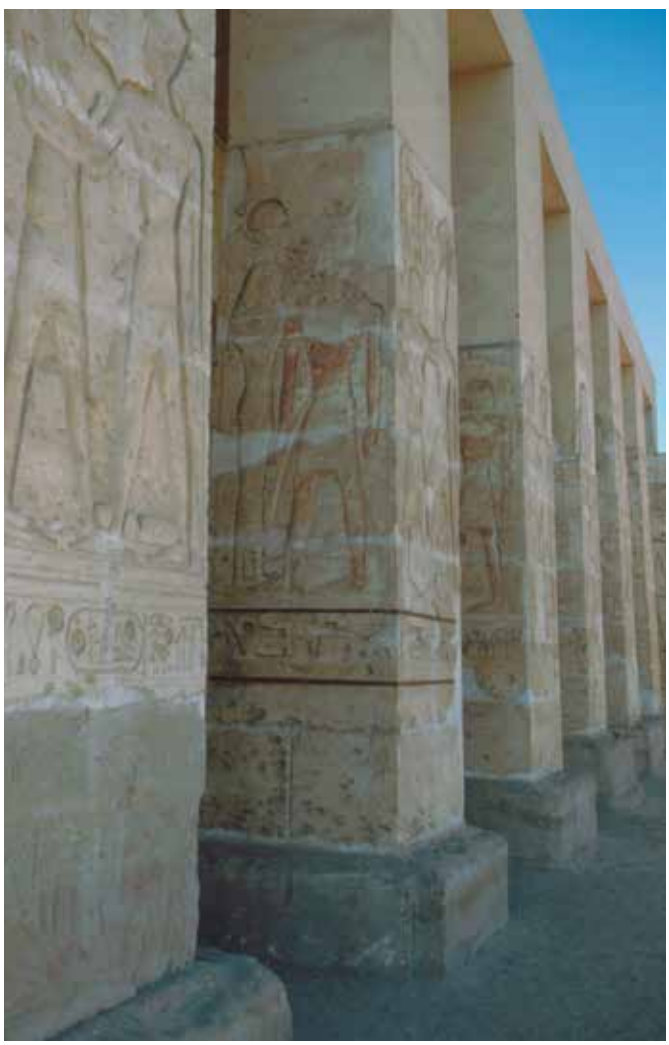
During this period of crisis, the high priests of Amun at Thebes had begun to supplement their income in a curious way – they had ordered the royal tombs and other cemeteries on the west bank to be systematically traced and then stripped of their assets (if they hadn't been so already). The royal mummies were reburied at a few centralized locations, thus ensuring some sort of respect for the ancient dynasties.

Two sons of Pinudjem I, Masaharta and Menkheperra, succeeded him in turn as high priest, and then two sons of Menkheperra, Smendes II and Pinudjem II.

In Tanis, Smendes I was succeeded by Amenemnisu, and then by Psusennes I. The family relations between them and the ruling family at Thebes are not always clear – the result of the many intermarriages and the many similar-sounding names. Psusennes was succeeded first by Amenemope, followed by Osorkon the Elder, Siamun and Psusennes II. The latter also appears to have inherited the position of high priest in Thebes, so at the end of the 21st Dynasty Egypt once again appeared united through a sort of personal union. However, at the end of the dynasty a new phenomenon emerged.

The symbolic animal of the god Seth on this column from Tanis was hacked out and replaced by the sacred animal of Amun, the ram. The long tail, which sheep do not have, is a clue that a different animal was first depicted here.

Colonnade near the entrance to the huge temple of Seti I at Abydos, the sacred place of Osiris, god of the dead. The temple was completed by his son Ramesses II.



22nd-24th Dynasties (946-714)

The 22nd Dynasty is also called the Libyan Dynasty because the pharaohs of this family bear Libyan names. Libyan immigrants had long settled in the Nile Delta, and one of their descendants now succeeded in proclaiming himself pharaoh. The first king of this dynasty, Sheshonk I, was a nephew of Osorkon the Elder.

Now that Egypt was reunited, the new pharaoh consolidated his rule by appointing his sons to important offices throughout the kingdom. This enabled him to turn his sights abroad. He first attacked Judah and Israel, divided since the death of Solomon. He conquered those countries and plundered the temple of Jerusalem, as we also know from the biblical account, where he is called Shishak. His son Osorkon I married a daughter of Psusennes II. Osorkon I was succeeded by his sons Sheshonk II and Takelot I, both of whose intact tombs have been found at Tanis. The next pharaoh, Osorkon II, also buried at Tanis, was a son of Takelot I; during his reign, his cousin Harsiesi declared himself the independent king of Thebes. He and his successors formed the rival 23rd Dynasty, which ruled concurrently with the 22nd Dynasty. During this period of rule by two branches of the same family, the seeds of the slow disintegration of Egypt were sown. Just as in the previous dynasty, the waters are muddied by the many marriages between the ruling families, and the many similar names.

With regard to foreign policy, the Assyrian Empire began to form an increasing threat, so much so that Egypt under Takelot I and his allies in Syria-Palestine engaged in battle against it – and with success, the Assyrians were beaten.

In Egypt itself, the picture does not become much clearer with the emergence of a third rival royal family, from Sais in the western Nile Delta, which became the 24th Dynasty. Thanks to the mutual conflicts between these ruling families, it was not hard for a new foreign factor to seize power – which is exactly what the Nubians, known as the Kushites, did.

25th Dynasty (746-664 BC)

The Nubian king Piye conquered the country with relative ease, despite spirited resistence from a coalition of local rulers. The Nubian pharaohs considered themselves the legitimate rulers of Egypt, and used the full set of royal titles. Their base in Egypt was Thebes, but Piye himself returned to his Nubian capital Napata, where he was eventually buried. Although his brother and successor Shabaka did settle in Egypt, he too was buried in Nubia. His successors, Shabataka and Taharka, were sons of Piye.

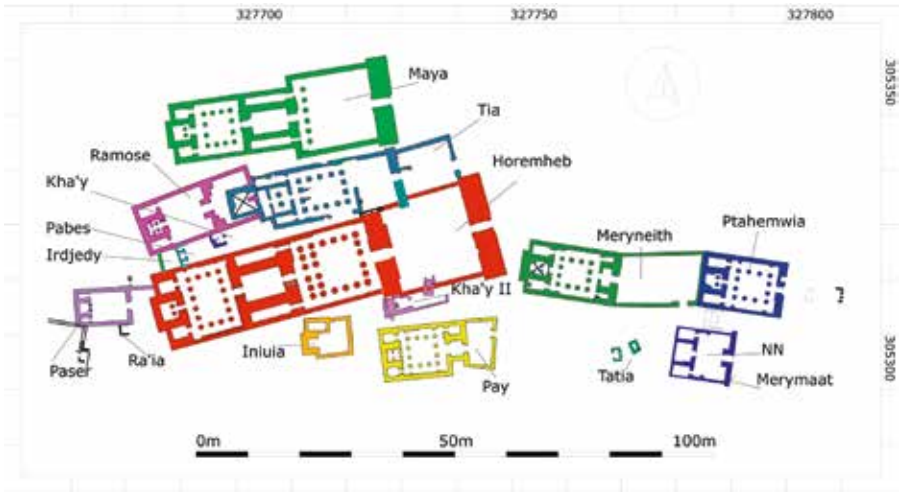
∧∧ View of Tanis, the new residence of the Lower Egyptian kings of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties. All the stone remains of the temple of Amun that can be seen were transported here from the old capital Piramesse, 20 km away.

∧ Several kings of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties were buried close to the temple of Amun in Tanis. With the exception of the tomb of Tutankhamun, these tombs are the only royal burials ever found intact. The superstructures are built from miscellaneous reused parts of older monuments, such as rectangular columns.

The Assyrian problem of the past was in the meantime still unresolved, and under Taharka in particular the two empires clashed again. After a number of battles against the Assyrians, Taharka finally lost the war and had to flee to Napata. Under his successor Tanutamani, the Nubians tried to return but failed completely. Thebes and the temple of Karnak were plundered by the Assyrians under Assurbanipal, who now had Egypt firmly in his grasp. With that, the 25th Dynasty and the Third Intermediate Period came to an end.

EXCAVATION **Saqqara**

On the west bank of the Nile, in the desert close to the modern village of Saqqara, the National Museum of Antiquities (*Rijksmuseum van Oudheden*) in Leiden is conducting excavations under the supervision of Prof. Maarten Raven. In Antiquity, this was where one of the necropoleis of the Egyptian capital Memphis was situated. Memphis was just a few kilometres to the east, on the banks of the Nile. Although the most famous monuments at Saqqara date from the time of the pyramids (Old Kingdom), the necropolis also had a golden age in the 14th and 13th centuries BC (New Kingdom, 18th-20th Dynasties). The high officials of that time, including the treasurers Maya and Tia and the general (later pharaoh) Horemheb, built huge temple tombs there. These tombs comprised a pylon gateway, an inner courtyard with colonnades, and a number of chapels for the mortuary cult. The superstructure was usually built of sun-dried mudbrick, with limestone for the floors, roofs, columns and doorposts. The walls were often faced with limestone blocks, carved with inscriptions and colourful reliefs. The actual burial chambers were located under the chapels in the bedrock.



Map of the excavations at Saqqara.

Overview of the excavations.

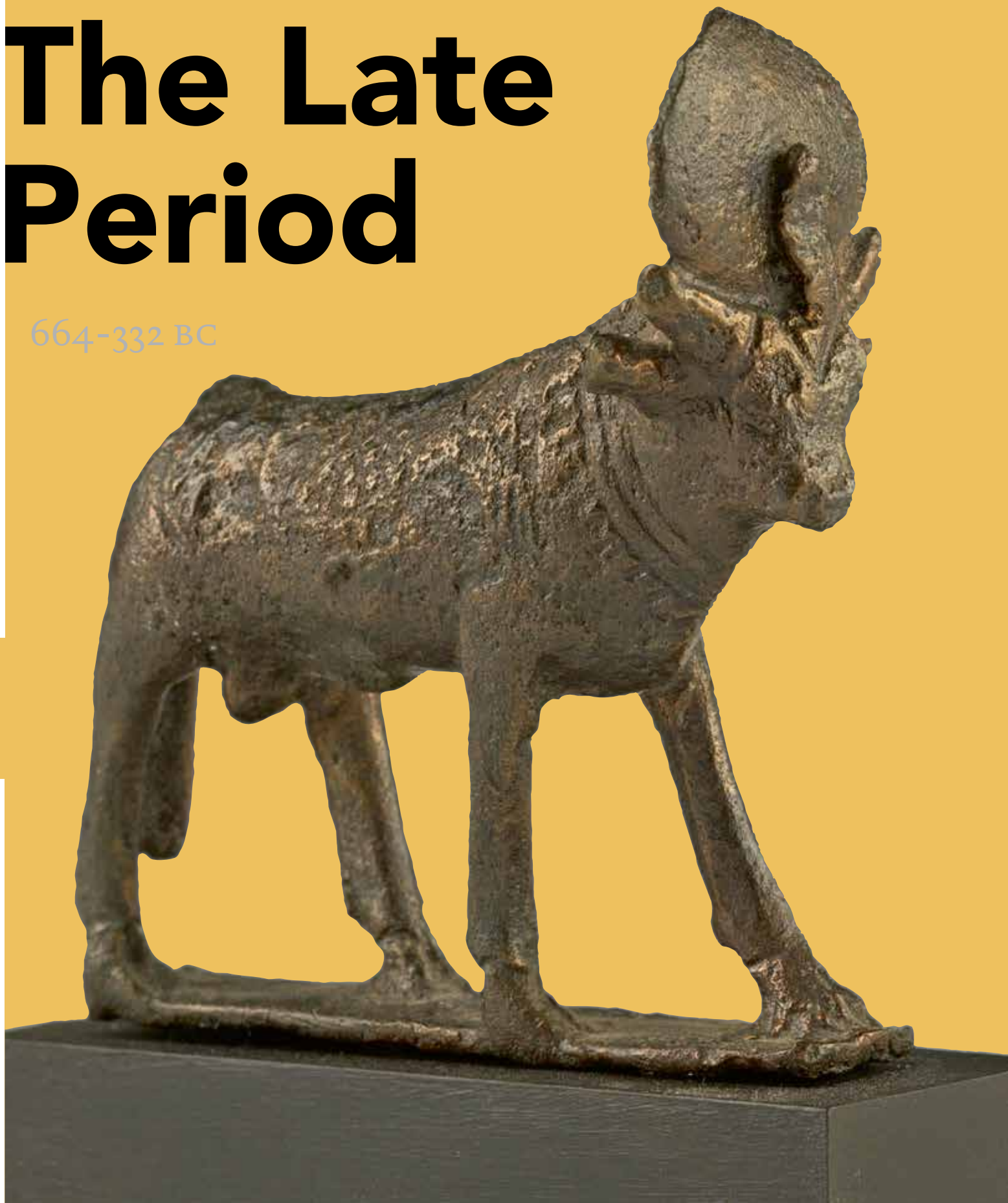
The tombs were nearly all plundered in Antiquity, or reused by later generations. In the 19th century, art thieves stripped many of them of their statues, inscriptions, reliefs and burial goods. The booty is now displayed in many museums all over the world, including the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. The aim of the Leiden expedition to Saqqara is to reconstruct the original archaeological context of these individual objects by excavating a representative selection of burial monuments. These excavations have yielded information about the precise dating of the cemetery, the social stratification, burial rituals and religious beliefs.
In 2011, the cemetery was visited by plunderers during the Egyptian revolution, but luckily they did not cause too much damage. With support from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the Dutch Embassy in Cairo, all the damage could be repaired by the expedition in 2012. At the same time, all the magazines storing the finds were checked to see how much had been stolen. The site is now in good condition again and was opened to visitors a year ago. Over a period of five years, all the tombs in the concession have been consolidated by the expedition and provided with information panels (again with the support of the Dutch Embassy in Cairo). In 2013, replicas of those reliefs in European museums whose original locations on the walls can be reconstructed will be installed.
In the meantime, excavations continue as usual. The burial chambers of an anonymous tomb found in 2010 may be excavated in 2013. In addition, the Leiden archaeologists are going to try to complete their work in some Early Dynastic Period galleries found underneath one of the tombs, as well as expand their work to new terrain to the south of that tomb.
As more and more burial monuments are uncovered in this part of Saqqara, attention is shifting gradually to an analysis of the cemetery as a whole. How was the cemetery organized internally, how was it accessed, who decided who could build what, where? How long was a mortuary cult perpetuated, who visited these tombs and why? What is the relationship between this cemetery and the other areas at Saqqara with burials dating to the same period? What was the attitude of later generations to these monuments, and who were the people who created mass graves here or came here to live in the tombs? There are many questions still waiting to be answered.
M.J. Raven

Archaeologists copying tomb reliefs onto transparent sheets of plastic.

One of the exceptional discoveries in the tomb of Meryneith was this double statue of the tomb owner and his wife Anuy. It was still in its original location when found.

The Late Period

664-332 BC



26th Dynasty (664-525 BC)
The Saite Renaissance

One of the Assyrian vassals during the struggle with the Kushites for control of Egypt was Necho I. His residence city was Sais in the north-west of the Nile Delta. The Assyrians, who did not have a permanent military presence in Egypt, relied on local rulers like Necho I to look after their interests. Necho ruled over Memphis, Sais and Athribis, and was eventually killed in a battle against the Kushite ruler Tanutamani, who conquered the Nile Delta. In the period 663 to 657 BC, the Assyrian king Assurbanipal regained control of Egypt down as far as Thebes, thus ending Kushite influence in Egypt. After Necho's death, his son Psamtek I (Psammetikhos I) was installed by Assurbanipal as a local ruler in the Nile Delta. Assurbanipal himself left Egypt to suppress a revolt back in Assyria.

During the absence of the Assyrians, Psamtek slowly extended his influence over the whole Nile Delta. In 658 BC, he entered into a coalition with King Gyges of Lydia (Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey). This mutual support protected both rulers from an invasion by the Assyrians, from whom they both began to become more independent. The rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the south of Iraq and of the Persian Empire in Iran caused the Assyrians lots of problems, and preventing them from reconquering Egypt or Lydia. Psamtek conducted campaigns against the Libyan rulers in the west, the same rulers who had been able to gain control of the Lower Egyptian throne during the Third Intermediate Period. He also used his army of mercenaries alongside diplomacy to compel the rulers of Upper Egyptian cities and provinces to accept his central authority. Psamtek also entered into allegiances with the rulers of Herakleopolis by giving them positions in his new kingdom. The situation was rather more complicated in Thebes. During the Third Intermediate Period, the high priest of Amun had been ousted as the most important religious figure in Thebes by the 'God's wife of Amun'. This office goes back to the Middle Kingdom, but only became influential during the Third Intermediate Period. The god's wife was a woman who 'married' the god Amun and was his representative on earth. She lived in celibacy in the Temple of Amun and adopted her successor. Under Kushite rule, the position was filled by members of the Kushite royal family. Psamtek I was able to arrange for his daughter Nitocris I to be adopted by the Kushite god's wife Amenirdis II, thus eclipsing the Kushite influence and adding Thebes to his kingdom. At the same time, he was also able to persuade Montuemhat, an influential Amun priest and also governor of Thebes, to support him.

Neith is the goddess of warfare and hunting. She was mainly worshipped in the western Nile Delta; this is the reason why she is wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt. She probably originally held a staff in her left hand. She is wearing a long dress. Bronze, height 19 cm.

Psamtek not only united Egypt, he also changed the administrative organization of the country. The provinces and their administrators were now made subject to the central authority, achieved by appointing military commanders who were loyal to Psamtek. He also instigated a professional army based around a core of mercenaries. They came

mainly from Asia Minor and were garrisoned in special fort cities on the borders of Egypt, including Naukratis, Tell Defenna and Elephantine. This enabled the hard core of the army to respond quickly to flashpoints in the west, east and south. Pharaoh Psamtek also played his role as the link between men and the gods – the successor of Horus –, and he strengthened his position as the divine representative by building numerous new temples in Memphis, Sais and in Dakhla Oasis.

In the meantime, Assyria had vanished from the international stage and been replaced by the Neo-Babylonian Empire, also known as the Chaldeans. This Empire conducted military expeditions in Syria-Palestine, as did Psamtek's successor Necho II. The two powers regularly clashed, and in 601 BC Necho II had to repulse an attack by Nebuchadnezzar on Egypt. Psamtek's successors continued to strengthen the unity of Egypt. Necho II introduced Greek ships (triremes) to the Egyptian navy, and started digging a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, although it was not finished un-

< Aryballos (oil flask) in the shape of a head. Provenance: Naukratis. Painted pottery, height 8.5 cm.

> This amulet represents the eye of Horus, a solar symbol. According to the myth of Horus and Seth, the eye was ripped out by Seth, Horus's enemy, but replaced by Thoth. It was a popular protective and healing amulet. The characteristics of the eye are derived from the eye of a falcon. Faience, height 2.1 cm.

View from the west of the ruins of the capital of kings of the 26th Dynasty: Sais. The central part of the site has been partly dug away by *sebakhin*, who use the earth as fertilizer on their fields. This has created a large hole that is now a lake. Monumental architectural remains still lie on the edges of the lake. The remains of the huge temple of Neith with its enclosure wall are slightly further to the north. The current village of Sa el-Hagar lies partly alongside this lake and on top of the old city.

til the Persian Period. Necho's son Psamtek II conducted a preventive military expedition to Nubia to thwart another Kushite invasion. During this campaign, a number of his soldiers left graffiti on the rocks at Buhen and Abu Simbel. They give us an impression of the composition of the army, which still had many mercenaries. Psamtek II advanced in Nubia as far as the Kushite capital Napata, and along the way he destroyed anything he came across that reminded him of the Kushite conquerors. Psamtek II's daughter also became god's wife of Amun in Thebes in order to ensure Theban loyalty.

Under Pharaoh Apries, the military campaigns shifted more to the Near East, where they tried to hold off the Neo-Babylonian threat. However, battles in Syria-Palestine and at sea could not prevent Egypt losing influence, and after a mutiny Apries was replaced on the throne by the general Ahmose II (or Amasis). As his predecessors had done before him, Ahmose II kept Egypt safe from Babylonian and later Persian attacks by a combination of military campaigns and diplomacy. Unlike his predecessors, however, he favoured the Greeks and even married a Greek woman. The Greeks were mainly present in Egypt as mercenaries and traders. Ahmose encouraged the Greek trade – despite restricting the trading activities to Naukratis, perhaps to be able to control Greek activities better – and used it to fill the royal coffers. In Naukratis, archaeologists have found traces of temples dedicated to Greek gods, as well as various objects indicating a Greek material culture. Ahmose drew up rules for levying taxes on the trade in Naukratis. The tax revenues were used to pay the salaries of the priests and for the maintenance of the temple of Neith in Sais, and temples were built and expanded in Mendes, Athribis, Tanis, Memphis, Thebes, Abydos and Elephantine, to name but a few.

During the 26th Dynasty, local administrators again began to grow in importance. They were given more responsibilities for building projects and also made donations to temples themselves. In addition to political and economic reforms, the demotic script began to be used under Ahmose and gradually replaced hieratic. These administrative reforms still formed the basis of the Egyptian legal system into the Ptolemaic Period. Ahmose II formed many

MATERIAL CULTURE

The Kushite rulers of the Third Intermediate Period had themselves depicted in line with the conventions of the Ramesside 19th and 20th Dynasties. The Late Period is characterized by a similar look back, this time to the glory days of the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. During this period of uncertainty and occasional foreign domination, the Egyptians were searching for certainties in their own history. Monuments from the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms were restored and texts and illustrations were copied. A realistic and true-to-nature style emerged, manifest in closer attention to anatomical details – limbs and torsos clearly show the structure of the muscles and facial features are more individual. At the same time, the composition of what was being depicted was inspired by scenes from the early Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom. Reliefs have been found that are very reminiscent of the depictions of the pharaoh in the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, one of the monuments restored during the Late Period. The early Late Period (the 26th Dynasty) is thus also known as the Saite Renaissance.

Despite this renaissance, Egyptian art in general is still rather conservative – there is no major revolutionary change in how the artistic conventions were applied. This conservative character is underlined by the very limited influence that the foreign rulers had on Egyptian art. The brief Assyrian presence in Egypt has left few traces behind, but rather more striking is that the Greek presence in Egypt from the 8th and 7th centuries BC down to the start of the Ptolemaic Period in 332 BC had very little influence on Egyptian art and material culture.

In the south in particular, in Thebes, a sculptural style emerges in the period of transition from the Third Intermediate Period to the Saite Period that combines this new naturalism with the old styles, one example being the statues of the influential priest Montuemhat, which are reminiscent of the severe royal sculpture of the Middle Kingdom. The monuments of older periods on the west bank at Thebes were also used as a source of inspiration for the decoration of the tombs. In the north, too, statues of the king and private individuals were inspired by the classic Egyptian styles and conventions. The upper echelons of society favoured being depicted as a participant in the religious practices in the temple, for example holding a cult shrine or an image of a god. The result of this inspiration from the past was a more individual, true-to-nature and lively style of art characterized by the Saite smile – a slight smile found on statues from the Saite Period, unlike those of previous periods. Another characteristic of this new artistic style was the high polish given to the hard stone types, for example diorite.

In the 6th-5th centuries BC, iron-working was conducted in Egypt for the first time on a major scale. There was also a significant increase in the production of statuettes of copper alloys. These images of gods in animal, human and hybrid forms were often made in moulds. A lot of faience amulets were made during the Late Period as well. These could be of many shapes – from gods to animals, and from ritual objects to the body parts of humans and animals. The amulets played a role in the mummification process, and were placed between the bandages while the dessicated body was being wrapped. These amulets were probably also worn around the neck during life, and protected the wearer against the powers of chaos.

This relief shows various stages of preparing perfume from lotus flowers. Right to left: bringing the lotus flowers, pressing the flowers in a leather sack; the resulting liquid is poured into smaller vessels; a dance is then performed. This relief from the 26th Dynasty is a good example of how the Saites harked back to the glory days of the Old Kingdom. Limestone, width 75 cm.

Amulet of Taweret. She was depicted as a pregnant hippopotamus goddess. She was very popular with the general population, particularly as the protectress of pregnant women and those giving birth. Here, Taweret is wearing a long wig and a headcloth with a row of cobras. Faience, height 3.9 cm.

Amulet of the scribe god Thoth, shown here as a baboon. The ibis was also dedicated to him. Thoth could also be depicted as a man with the head of an ibis. Height 4.5 cm.

Amulet of Isis Lactans, with Harpocrates. The very popular mother goddess Isis is sitting here on a throne and wearing her symbol, a throne, on her head. She is suckling her son Harpocrates (Horus the child), foreshadowing the Christian Madonna with child. Faience, height 7.7 cm.

Tomb architecture also changed during the Late Period, and local variations also emerged. In Thebes, extensive burial complexes were built for the highest officials, such as the priest Montuemhat. These tombs had superstructures and substructures and resemble temples. At Saqqara and Abusir, huge, deep shafts were dug into the bedrock. A small room was constructed at the bottom of these shafts, in which the sarcophagus of the deceased was placed. In the Nile Delta, tombs for high officials and kings were probably built within the enclosure walls of the major temples, with substructures and superstructures. The Greek historian Herodotus, from the 5th century BC, describes such a tomb for Ahmose II in Sais.

Tombs with a lot of burial goods attracted tomb robbers, for example at the end of the New Kingdom and in the Third Intermediate Period. In the Late Period, however, the situation was relatively secure again and more burial goods were placed in the tombs. During the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period, the anthropoid sarcophagi became increasingly covered in religious texts. In the Late Period, the coffins became plumper and squatter and were sometimes placed in rectangular outer coffins with curved lids. The stone sarcophagi also became plumper and the fronts were covered with texts. These stone sarcophagi mainly come from the huge burial shafts in the north.

The rich burial shafts at Saqqara and Abusir were also provided with a veritable army of shabtis, the servant statues. These little statuettes, also known from earlier periods, were intended to perform work for the deceased in the hereafter. In the Late Period the shabtis were very well made; like earlier shabtis they were inscribed with a spell from the Book of the Dead and bore the titles of the deceased, for example overseer, judge and admiral. The sometimes very fine details of the shabtis are so similar that they were probably made in moulds.

∧∧ This sacred Apis bull is wearing a broad collar and has a sun disc with cobra (uraeus) between its horns, symbols of the link between the Apis bull and the sun god Re. Bronze, height 5.5 cm.

∧ In the middle of the Kharga Oasis, near Hibis, is a temple built in the Egyptian style by the Persian pharaohs. It was possibly built on the edge of the Persian Empire as a political statement. The temple is dedicated to Amun-Re, his consort Mut and son Khonsu, and also has unusual scenes showing the god Seth. The holy of holies is decorated with more than seven hundred different gods. Behind the temple, which is under continuous restoration due to ground water problems, we can see the end of the oasis and the start of the desert.

diplomatic alliances against the Persians, but gradually his allies were swallowed up one by one by the huge Persian Empire. Ahmose had already died when the Persians eventually attacked Egypt. His son Psamtek III fought against the Persian king Cambyses, but lost a crucial battle in 525 BC. From that moment on, Egypt became a province or satrapy of the Persian Empire.

27th Dynasty (525-401 BC)
Egypt under Persian control

Although Egypt was now a Persian province, in many aspects she still retained her own cultural identity. The Persian conquest resulted in a thin administrative layer being laid over the local administration, headed by a Persian satrap, or governor. The Persian administrative layer also introduced a new administrative language, Aramaic. Persian administrators were also appointed in the provinces (nomes), who ruled with the help of Persian garrisons and levied taxes for the Persian treasury. In exchange for these taxes, the Egyptians could count on their administration, traditions and religion remaining relatively untouched under Persian rule. The only office to be abolished by the Persians was that of god's wife of Amun. Cambyses's actions were rather ambiguous – on the one hand he significantly slashed the income of most of the temples, and on the other he paid extra attention to specific temples such as that of Neith at Sais. The Persian king was regarded as the pharaoh and was depicted as such on temple walls. The Persians started major temple construction projects, including the Hibis Temple in Kharga Oasis. Irrigation projects were started in the Western Desert to improve the agricultural revenues. Under Darius I, the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea was completed, thus opening Egypt up further to trade and improving communications with the Persian home front. This achievement was praised on stelae set up along the entire length of the canal. Thanks to its natural resources and food sources, Egypt was an important province in the Persian Empire. Texts on statues relate the biographies of officials such as Udjahorresnet, Horudja and Khnumibre, who cooperated with the Persian rulers. It seems likely that the majority of the Egyptian population endured the conquest without too many problems, but sources such as Greek writers – who were always antagonistic towards the Persians because they had been at war with them for so long – tell a different story, for example that Cambyses deliberately killed a divine Apis bull. Whether or not Persian rule was peaceful, there were regular rebellions against it, particularly in the Nile Delta, which was the old power base of the Saite Dynasty.

The owners of these shabtis from the Late Period are the officials Tjaneheb, Wahibre and Psamtik. Only the one on the right is inscribed with the complete spell to enable him to function. Faience, heights 14 to 19 cm.

After a brief rebellion in 522 BC, Darius I continued the policy followed by his predecessor Cambyses – a subtle Persian presence that could exploit Egypt militarily and economically while leaving Egyptian culture and religion to all intents and purposes untouched. Darius also brought Egyptian craftsmen to Persia to work for him there. A very Egyptian-looking statue of Darius I found in Susa, the capital of Persia at that time, reveals the extent of the influence the Egyptian craftsmen had on sculpture. Under Darius, Egyptian religion was also respected – divine Apis bulls were buried in the Serapeum near Memphis during his reign, as they had been for centuries.

When Darius I was succeeded by Xerxes I, the Persians started being more heavy-handed in Egypt, which undoubtedly led to more local rebellions. Under Xerxes's son Artaxerxes I, the first really serious rebellion against the Persians occurred, led by the Libyan Inaros – who was perhaps related to the old Saite royal family – and supported by Athens, and later on there was another rebellion led by the local ruler of Sais Amyrtaios I. Egypt increasingly became a hotbed of dissent, particularly the Nile Delta with its virtually inaccessible marshy regions. Sometimes local rulers were able to declare their own authority, and as long as they did not harm Persian interests, they were tolerated by the satrap.

Fish mummies (catfish). The catfish was sacred in certain areas, and were specially bred to be presented after mummification as a votive offering to the deity associated with this fish. Votive mummies could function as a prayer for health, or underline the desire to have a child. From the Late Period on in particular, they became extremely popular. Hundreds of thousands of mummies of certain sacred animals have been found, for example ibises. Length 28 to 46 cm.

28th – 30th Dynasties (404-342 BC) Independence

The rebellions against the Persians became more numerous, and after the death of Darius II, Amyrtaios II of Sais declared Egypt independent and the country was once again united under a native pharaoh. Amyrtaios II is the sole representative of the 28th Dynasty, which has left few traces behind.

The 29th Dynasty starts with Nepherites I of Mendes, who possibly usurped the throne from Amyrtaios II. Nepherites is credited with building and expansion projects in temples from Mendes to Thebes, which is an indication that Egyptian independence did not immediately lead to a Persian reaction. Nepherites could call himself pharaoh, and once again became the mediator between men and the gods. It goes without saying that the Persian threat was ever constant, and diplomacy was an important tool guaranteeing the independence of Egypt. Nepherites I signed a treaty with Sparta and also provided them with military assistance. The pharaohs of the 29th Dynasty followed each other in quick succession, and their reigns more often ended in a coup than in natural death. To legitimize their rule, they referred back to their ancestry and to the past by adopting the throne names of important pharaohs such as Wahibre (Psamtek I) and Khnumibre (Ahmose II).

The rulers of the 30th Dynasty were also able to build, expand and decorate many temples. In this way these kings were able to ensure the support of the priesthoods, although it was of course also genuine worship of the gods, designed to breathe new life into the divine kingship.

For the Persians, the loss of Egypt not only meant the loss of a rich province, but also the creation of a hotbed of dissent in the eastern Mediterranean area. Rebellions against the Persians were organized from Egypt. For this reason, Artaxerxes II made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Egypt in 374 BC. The pharaohs of the 30th Dynasty tried to keep him at a distance through diplomatic means, initially with success. Under Ahmose II, Greek and Carian mercenaries had already been integrated into the Egyptian army, which also included machimoi, an originally Libyan warrior class. Only once diplomacy failed were military means employed at sea and on land to fight the Persians.

The first pharaoh of the 30th Dynasty was Nectanebo I, possibly a distant relative of Nepherites I. Nectanebo I deposed Nepherites II in a coup, and began a reign of restoration and renewed building activity. Many temples throughout the country were expanded or renovated by him. He drew inspiration from the Saite renaissance, and old taxes designed for the support of the temple of Neith in Sais were reinstated. Nectanebo I was able to repulse a major attack by the Persians by sea and overland. His son Teos launched a significant counter-attack in the Persian-controlled Levant, but he was betrayed during this campaign by his general and nephew Nectanebo II. Nectanebo II seized the throne with the help of Greek mercenaries from Sparta and Athens, and continued the policies of his predecessors – he supported the rebellion against the Persians in the Levant with troops, and he expanded temples throughout the Nile Valley. In 343 BC, the Persians again succeeded in invading Egypt, and Nectanebo II, the last native ruler of Egypt, fled to Nubia.

31st Dynasty (342-332 BC) Egypt under Persian control again

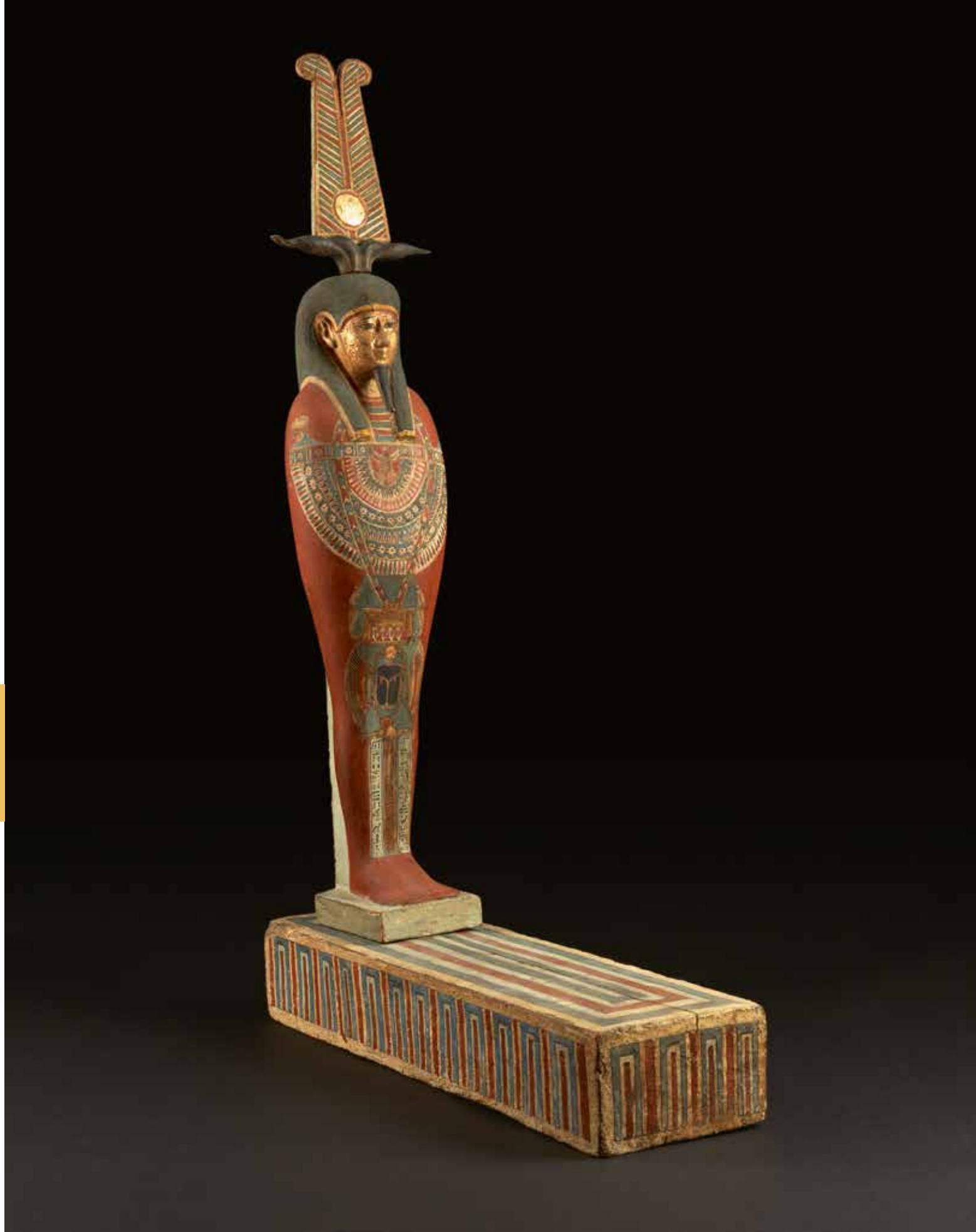
So Egypt was once again conquered by the Persians. This time their rule was violent, with temples being plundered and defensive works around cities being destroyed. Once again a Persian administrative layer was introduced, but the Persians were so unpopular that armed rebellions occurred regularly. The best known was led by a local ruler called Khababash, who was able to gain control of part of the Nile Delta and call himself a king. The repressive rule of the Persians led to Alexander the Great being welcomed with open arms by the Egyptians when he drove the Persians out of Egypt for good in 332 BC. This marked the start of the Ptolemaic Period.

RELIGION

Egyptian religion in the Late Period was not very different to that of the previous periods – the Egyptians remained true to the gods they had worshipped for centuries. However, Amun of Thebes did lose his important position. At the end of the New Kingdom and during the Third Intermediate Period he had gradually increased in importance in line with the growing power of his priesthood. However, as a result of the office of the god's wife of Amun, the priesthood had less power under the Kushites and the Saites. The importance of the city of Thebes, particularly the economic importance, also declined in favour of cities in the Nile Delta. Although the pharaohs of the Late Period also built temples for Amun in these northern cities, the local gods increased in importance, for example the war goddess Neith and the god Banebdjedet, who was depicted as a ram.

There are very few temples that can be completely dated to the Late Period. The pharaohs of this era mainly expanded or supplemented existing temples. Only a very few temples were founded by them, such as the temple of Edfu founded by Nectanebo II (completed under the Ptolemies), and the temple of Hibis in Kharga Oasis founded by Darius I. Under Nectanebo I, an additional element was added to the design of temple complexes which already occurred sporadically under the Kushites, the mammisi, a 'birth house' where the symbolic birth of the divine child took place every year. This symbolism was closely related to the divine character of the pharaoh. Another important development, started in the 25th Dynasty, was an

In Egypt, Osiris was the main god of the dead, king of the Underworld. His consort was the mother goddess Isis, and Horus was their son. Here Osiris is wearing a mummiform costume with a broad collar. His hands are free and are holding the royal symbols of the crook and the flail. He is also wearing the plaited false beard indicating royalty or divinity. On his head is his characteristic high headgear – the atef crown – which has feathers and ram's horns on either side; the royal cobra (uraeus) is on his forehead. Bronze, height 23 cm.



update of the Book of the Dead. This 'Saite Revision' organized and defined the spells and their related illustrations. A number of spells were added to the Book of the Dead, and the new version remained the norm until the Ptolemaic period. In the Roman period, only the motifs still played a role on shrouds. The style and provenance of most of these Books of the Dead seem to indicate that conservative Thebes was the driving force behind this revision. It is possible that the priests in Thebes had access to ancient archives stretching back to the New Kingdom, and that they formed the inspiration for the revision. The deceased was often provided with a personalized selection of spells from the Book of the Dead. The spells were written on papyrus or the mummy bandages and placed into the tomb with the mummy. Sometimes a small papyrus with religious texts was placed inside a wooden statuette of the god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris. This amalgamation of three gods is first known in the Middle Kingdom, and was a symbol of resurrection. In this way the deceased could successfully complete the journey through the underworld to paradise. Although the demotic phase of the language emerged in the Late Period, the Books of the Dead of the 26th Dynasty were still written in hieratic. In the period which followed, the Books were written in both hieratic and in hieroglyphs.

Archaism, the desire to be inspired by an earlier age, resulted in new gods for the Late Period. The interest during the Late Period in monuments from the Old Kingdom also introduced the Egyptians of that era to the people who built them. The most important was the architect of the Step Pyramid of King Djoser, Imhotep. During the New Kingdom, Imhotep had acquired the status of a demigod because of his building achievements. During the 26th Dynasty he was completely deified and given a cult centre at Saqqara. Imhotep was not only a high priest and an architect, he was also a doctor, and it is this office in particular which people called on to resolve their problems. Characteristic of this cult are the bronze statuettes of Imhotep sitting on a chair, with a bald head or a cap on his head and with a papyrus roll on his lap.

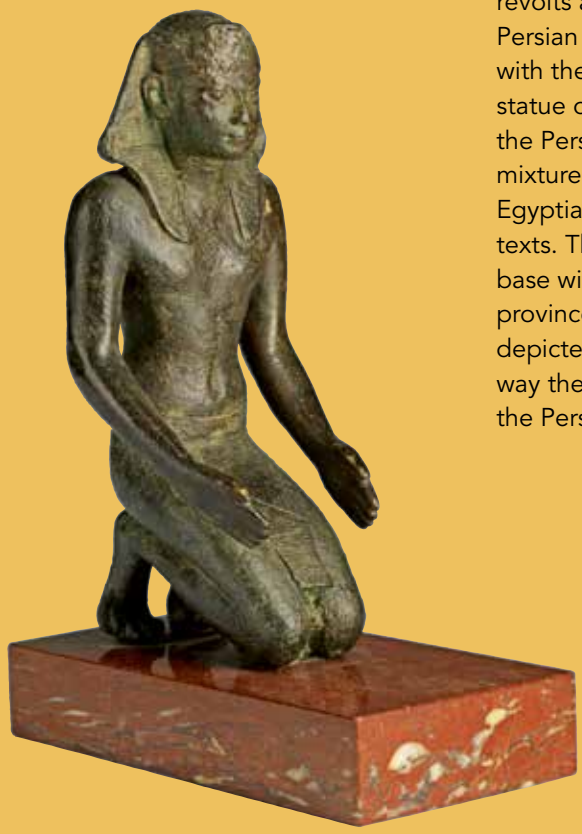
Another interesting development took place at Saqqara. For a long time the Egyptians had buried the sacred animals which were an incarnation of a deity. One example are the Apis bulls, which were buried in the underground tunnels of the Serapeum, a burial complex at Saqqara. Wrapped cuts of meat were also provided as food for the deceased. In the Late Period, however, animal mummies were specially created to be given to a god as a votive offering. These animal mummies were then buried in subterranean galleries. At Saqqara there are galleries full of ibis, dog and cat mummies. At Tuna el-Gebel near Hermopolis there are also galleries of ibis mummies. The animal mummies were created on a huge scale, probably by specialized workshops, and sold to pilgrims and other believers. Although they were a sign of devotion, recent CT scans have revealed that the buyers were often swindled as the mummies they bought only contained a few animal bones, or even just sand.

Ptah-Sokar-Osiris is an amalgamation of three gods: Ptah, the god of Memphis, Sokar, the god of the dead of Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis, and Osiris, the god of the dead. The outward appearance of this god is often the same as that of Osiris – a mummiform garment and a feathered crown with ram's horns. The base of this figure represents the primeval mound, rising up out of the primeval waters. The back of the statue is often hollow to hold a Book of the Dead papyrus, as it is here. Such statues were part of the grave goods in the Late Period. Wood with stucco, height 71 cm.

KINGSHIP

The Kushite rulers of the 25th Dynasty reigned over a kingdom in Nubia long before 746 BC. They had a great deal of influence in the south of Egypt and worshipped the god Amun. They even built temples to Amun in Nubia. The Kushites were in some senses more Egyptian than the Egyptians. With the defeat in 712 BC of the last local ruler, Bakenrenef (or Bocchoris), Egypt was added to the Kushite Empire and Piye became the first 'black pharaoh'. In the preceding period, Egypt had not been unified and local rulers governed the nomes, a situation similar to that at the start of the Middle Kingdom. Once again, a ruler from the south united the nomes of Egypt through conquest and forged a single kingdom from them. Later, after the clash between the Kushites and the Assyrians, Psamtek I ascended the throne of part of the Nile Delta and slowly

brought the entire country under his sole control.
By ascending the throne, Psamtek I automatically assumed the role of divine pharaoh, acting as the link between men and the gods, the preserver of the divine order personified by the goddess Ma'at.By side-lining the priests of Amun, power could be wielded by a single person, with access to the riches of Egypt. These riches enabled Psamtek to secure Egypt's independence and even conduct his own campaigns to extend his influence abroad. The Saite kings distanced themselves from their Kushite predecessors – they wore the Blue Crown (and other traditional crowns) with a single uraeus instead of the Nubian cap (with two uraei), and during the campaign of Psamtek II to Nubia, statues of the Kushite kings were destroyed.
One of the royal duties throughout the pharaonic period was to maintain the gods by offering food, washing and dressing the cult statue, and keeping the temples in good condition. Temples were expanded by Psamtek I and II in Memphis, and by Ahmose II in Sais and Mendes. New sanctuaries were also built by Ahmose in Memphis and by Darius I in Kharga Oasis. The gods had to be worshipped, and as high priest of Egypt, the pharaoh traditionally played an important role. There are various representations of the kings of the Late Period fulfilling these duties – reliefs of Psamtek I and Nectanebo II showing them offering bread to the gods, as well as bronze statuettes of a kneeling king in a simple loincloth and a *nemes*-headdress holding an offering in front of him. The pharaoh resumed his place among the gods, as depicted in reliefs of Nectanebo II in the Serapeum at Saqqara, where the king is being embraced by Isis.
Another of the king's duties was to secure the borders of Egypt and conquer the nine traditional enemies of Egypt, including the Libyans and the Nubians. Kings of the 26th, 29th and 30th Dynasties conducted military campaigns to expand Egypt's empire beyond its borders, or to protect those borders. Psamtek I fought against Libyan tribes in the west and ventured to the east to frustrate Assyrian interests in Syria-Palestine. Necho II and Psamtek II conducted campaigns to Nubia to force the Kushites even further back, and Necho II, Psamtek III, Apries, Ahmose II and Nectanebo II fought in the Levant against the increasing Persian threat.
The position of the Persian king as a pharaoh ruling from a distance was exceptional. The absence of the pharaoh must have been very strange for the Egyptians, and perhaps this contributed to the regular revolts against the Persians. The Persian kings were depicted in line with the Egyptian conventions, but a statue of Darius I has been found in the Persian capital Susa that is a mixture of Persian symbolism and Egyptian sculpture conventions and texts. This statue shows Darius on a base with the satraps of the various provinces of the Persian Empire depicted on it in obeisance. In this way they are symbolically supporting the Persian king.



In this kneeling, worshipful position, the pharaoh as the highest priestly authority is offering to a god. He is wearing a loincloth and the royal *nemes* headdress with its characteristic stripes, as well as the cobra (uraeus) on his forehead. Bronze, height 18 cm.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

The durable stone buildings such as temples, rock-cut tombs and burial monuments of the ancient Egyptians are very well known. Only in recent decades have modern archaeological techniques made it possible to properly investigate the mud-brick houses occupied by the ordinary Egyptians. These houses were not very durable and had to have regular maintenance. The bricks were made of clay and chopped straw and were dried in the sun. After walls were constructed of these bricks, they were then plastered on the inside and outside and sometimes painted. Houses dating to the Old Kingdom have been found in Elephantine, and to the Middle Kingdom at the pyramid city of Illahun. New Kingdom houses are known from Deir el-Medina and Amarna. Amarna in particular has provided archaeologists with a great deal of information as it was in use for just a short time, thus there is no chance of confusion between periods. Many of these houses were spacious and included bedrooms, bathrooms, storerooms and rooms with a shrine for a deity. In many instances, however, they only had a single storey. Houses from the Late Period are less well known, but reveal a very interesting development that started in the Third Intermediate Period. Settlements such as Tell Tebilla and Elephantine contain houses with walls that are sometimes half a metre thick. These are probably the immediate precursors of the 'tower houses' that are so familiar from the Ptolemaic and Roman eras. These houses were often accessed by a raised entrance and could be several stories high. The ground floor rooms contained grinding stones and storage jars, the higher stories were probably where the inhabitants actually lived. On all stories there were niches in the walls for cult shrines or storage space.

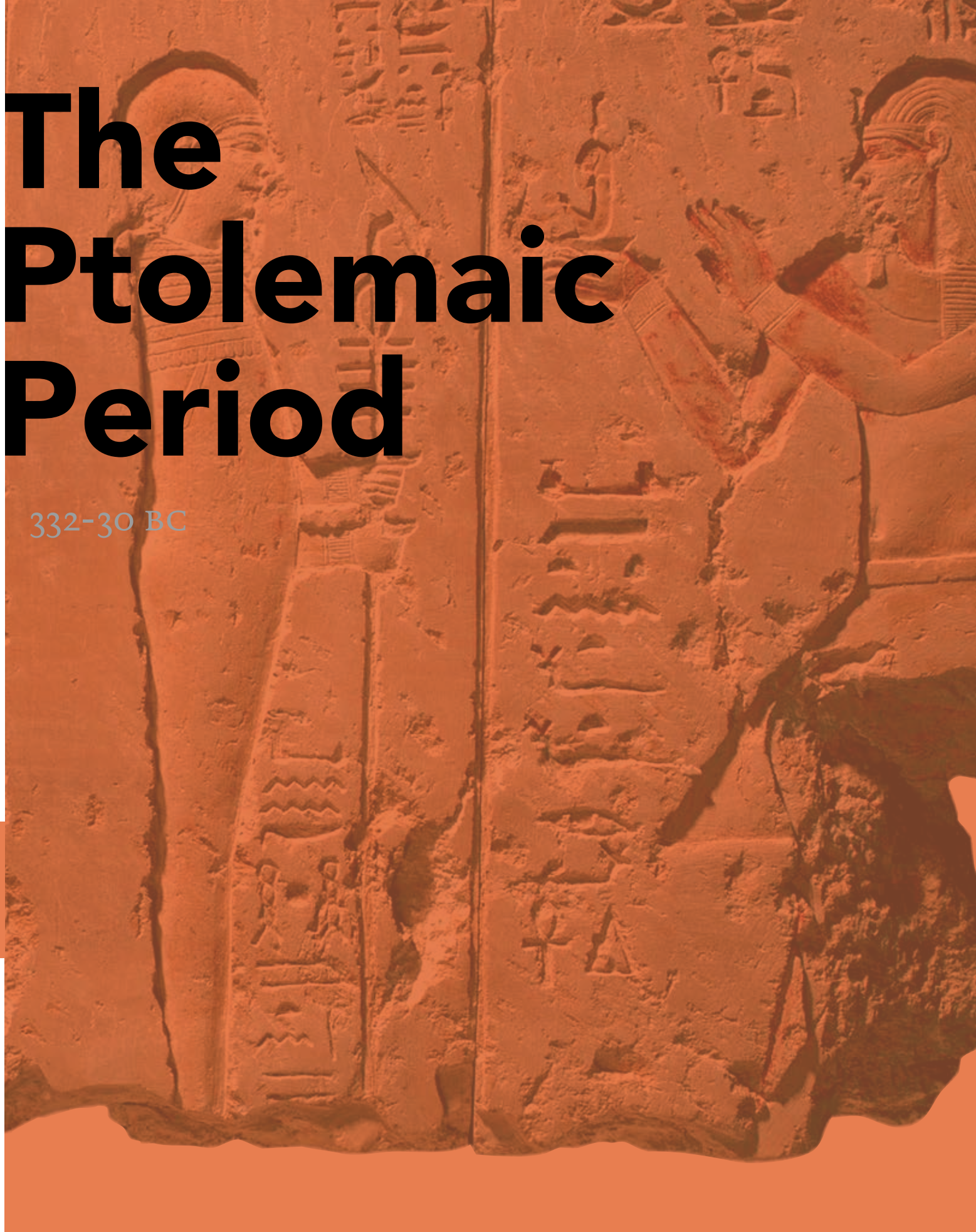
During the Late Period already, but certainly in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, more and more of these houses were built. This may mean that there was a shortage of building space within a settlement, or even that the population of the cities and settlements was increasing.

Just as is still done in the small villages in the Nile Delta today, throughout Egyptian history bread was partly prepared inside the house and then baked in an outside oven. Grain was ground on millstones, then kneaded into a dough and used to make flat loaves. These were baked in ovens that often stood at the edge of the courtyard. Alongside bread, the mainstays of the Egyptian diet were beer, pulses, vegetables and sometimes poultry or fish. Wealthier families had access to a wider range of food, including meat and wine. Partly thanks to the archaeological remains found in Naukratis, we know that there was a lot of trading with the eastern part of the Mediterranean. This was how exotic products reached Egypt, for example drinking cups and amphorae from the Cyclades, an archipelago in the Aegean Sea.

Amulet in the shape of a headrest, the ancient Egyptian 'pillow'. Headrests helped the deceased to raise his head at the resurrection. A small version like this one could magically perform this function. Faience, height 1.3 cm.

The Ptolemaic Period

332-30 BC



Alexander the Great (332-323 BC)

The reinstated Persian regime in Egypt was much more violent and suppressive towards the native Egyptian population, which did not endear the Persians to them. The huge Persian Empire with all its satrapies was challenged in 334 BC by a small army of Macedonians that attacked Asia Minor. Headed by Alexander III (the Great) of Macedonia, a year later this army defeated the Persian king Darius II at Issus in the south of Turkey. Alexander and his army swiftly moved through all of the Near East as far as the borders of India. This heralded the end of the Persian Empire and the start of the Hellenistic Period.

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great drove the Persians out of Egypt. He was regarded as a liberator, but only remained for a short time in Egypt. Virtually straight after his arrival he went to Siwa Oasis in the Western Desert. There had been a temple to Amun there since the Late Period, and Alexander visited this temple to ask the high priest a number of questions. A few centuries later, the Roman author Plutarch wrote in his biography of Alexander that he had asked whether he had avenged the death of his father Philip II, and also whether he would rule the entire world. The priest addressed Alexander as 'son of Zeus' (i.e. Amun) thus giving an affirmative answer to the second question. Alexander then travelled back to the Nile Delta where he founded a new city near the small fishing village of Rhacotis, called Alexandria. This city was not the only one to bear his name – during his passage through the Near East he would found several more. Alexander then moved on to Memphis, where he was proclaimed pharaoh. Not long after he left for the East, where a year later he definitively defeated Darius III and his Persian army at the Battle of Gaugamela, in what is now northern Iraq.

View of the present-day harbour of Alexandria from Fort Qait Bey on Pharos Island. This is where the famous lighthouse once stood, the remains of which were found underwater by archaeologists in the 1990s. Pharos was linked to the mainland by the heptastadion, a road across a dyke. The coastline has changed significantly since Antiquity. In those days it was much more rugged and there were more islands and mooring places.

Alexander died in 323 BC in Babylon. In general, it is accepted that his body returned to Egypt after his death. En route to Macedonia for the funeral, the cart bearing his sarcophagus and mummy was hijacked by Alexander's general Ptolemy, who had become satrap of Egypt. He brought the mummy to Memphis, thus inciting the wrath of Alexander's other generals. The mummy of Alexander was an important symbol of power, and its possessor could call on it to legitimate his position as an heir of Alexander. Thus Ptolemy gained power over the satrapy of Egypt. It is possible that Alexander was briefly interred at Saqqara, not far from the Serapeum, the cult centre for the Apis bulls. Later in his reign, Ptolemy or his successor Ptolemy II moved the mummy to Alexandria, where it was interred by Ptolemy IV in the Soma (mausoleum) for the Ptolemaic cult of the dead. The Soma has still not been located.

Ptolemy I and Greek-Macedonian Egypt (323-282 BC)

From 323 BC, General Ptolemy was satrap of Egypt in the name of the half-brother and successor of Alexander, Philip Arrhidaeus, and after his death in the name of Alexander's son Alexander IV. Alexander's other generals, known as *diadochi*, governed the provinces of the Near East. They competed with each other for power and status. One of the ways to do this was to gain control of Alexander's mummy, which is exactly what Ptolemy had done. He had to rebuff a number of attacks on Egypt, including one by his old comrade-in-arms, General Perdiccas, in 321 BC. After the death of the last *diadochus* who wanted to unite Alexander's empire, Antigonus, in 310 BC, the empire fell apart definitively. Ptolemy I, Seleucus I and Antigonus's successor Demetrius Poliorcetes proclaimed themselves kings of the parts of Alexander's empire that they governed.

Ptolemy I then fought against the other *diodochi* and their successors in the Levant. All of the *diadochi* used armies like Alexander's – the core of the troops was formed by hoplites (soldiers with lances) who engaged the enemy in battle while the cavalry attacked the flanks of the enemy lines. Even the navy – which had had a good reputation since the first Persian conquest – played an important role in the early Ptolemaic Period in maintaining and expanding the interests of Ptolemy I. In 301 BC he gained control of Palestine, and later he also added Cyrenaica (eastern Libya), Cyprus and a number of Aegean islands to the Ptolemaic Kingdom.

Ptolemy I was both a Macedonian king and an Egyptian pharaoh. He stood at the head of the Macedonian-Greek population in Egypt, as well as of the local Egyptian population. In the early part of his reign, his seat was probably Memphis. In this way he could remain close to Alexander's mummy – which formed part of his power base – and also reorganize Egypt in order to strengthen his own dynasty. The administration of Egypt was to a great extent left in place, but efficiency was improved so that more cash flowed into Ptolemy's coffers. This enabled Ptolemy to pay for his wars and also to build a new capital city, Alexandria, which gradually began to take shape. Alexandria was to become a Hellenistic cultural centre in the Mediterranean region. Ptolemy initiated the building of the legendary lighthouse and of the Museion, an academic institution of which the famous library of Alexandria formed part. He sent people all over the Hellenistic world to collect documents for this library, which eventually housed thousands of documents. Ptolemy also created a new god, Serapis, who became the most important Graeco-Egyptian deity and protector of Ptolemy's descendants.

Eventually Alexandria became the new capital under Ptolemy I, but it is unclear whether the mummy of Alexander was transferred there from Memphis at the same time. That may only have occurred under his son Ptolemy II. As well as Alexandria, Ptolemy I also founded another city in Middle Egypt, at present-day Al-Manshah, called Ptolemais Hermiou. This city was planned as a Greek city right from the start, as was Alexandria, including rectangular street plans and Greek city rights. Ptolemais Hermiou may perhaps have been founded to exploit the fertile agricultural areas around it, but it quickly lost its status after the fall of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

The reign of Ptolemy I was characterized by the conscious and intelligent formation of a state, the consolidation of that state, and finally its expansion into an empire that competed with the other remnants of Alexander's world empire.

Ptolemaic heyday (282-204 BC)

After the death of Ptolemy I, his immediate successors Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III continued his policies. They expanded the empire with regions in the Near East and the Greek homeland, and in the west deep into Libya. This success was due to the rich natural resources of Egypt, and the temporary weakness of its neighbours, for example the Seleucids in Syria. The Ptolemaic Kingdom was not always in search of regions to conquer, however, it also signed treaties. The Levant, with its important trading cities and huge supplies of wood for building ships, formed an important boost for the royal treasury and the Ptolemaic war machine. The first contacts between the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the

This temple relief shows Pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadephus on the right, offering a statuette of the goddess Ma'at to the creator god Ptah, who is holding his characteristic staff, and his consort, the lioness Sekhmet, a warrior goddess. Originally from the temple of Dendera. Limestone with traces of paint, height 44 cm.

young Roman republic also date to this period. At first the relationship was between equals, but by the end of the 3rd century BC, Rome became more powerful.

After the death of Ptolemy I, it was not long before his son Ptolemy II deified him. He even founded a festival that emphasized the divine status of Alexander and his father Ptolemy I. These Ptolemaia were to become a cultural and sporting event, comparable to the Olympic Games. They were held once every four years and attracted visitors from across the Mediterranean region. Callixeinus of Rhodes, who wrote a book about Alexandria in the 3rd century BC, describes the second Ptolemaia, when Ptolemy II and his sister-wife Arsinoe II sat on golden thrones in full glory and bedecked with gold in a pavilion close to the Alexandrian stadium. A procession of exotic goods and animals, as well as peacocks and a monumental statue of Dionysos, symbols of Alexander the Great, wended its way past them. The Ptolemies used propaganda and riches as means to legitimate their rule, in this case by claiming descent from Alexander and the god Dionysos. Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II were deified during their lifetimes and ruled the country as a divine brother-sister pair. This incestuous custom of marrying immediate family was practised by some pre-Ptolemaic pharaohs – though it was not customary and the pharaohs only married their half-sisters – and was probably not only due to religious grounds but also to political motives – power remained in the royal family. This marriage practice would result in various conflicts and intrigues later on in the dynasty. The deification of the first Ptolemies and their wives was continued outside Alexandria after Ptolemy II, first in Ptolemais Hermiou, later elsewhere. Under Ptolemy

Plaster models were perhaps used as sculptor's models or practice pieces. Based on the style, this model is probably of one of the Ptolemaic pharaohs. Plaster, height 13 cm.

III, temples even introduced a special department (phyle) to organize the veneration of the 'holy family'.

The Greek fascination for ancient Egypt is visible in Ptolemaic material culture, for example the statuary, which continued the practices of the Late Period. Alexandria continued to expand. Monumental elements such as sphinxes and obelisks were transferred to the new Ptolemaic capital on a major scale – a custom followed by many previous dynasties, incidentally, for example the monuments moved from Piramesse to Tanis during the 21st Dynasty. In 283 BC, during the reign of Ptolemy II, the lighthouse of Alexandria was completed.

The administration, which now operated in Greek and less and less in Egyptian (Demotic), began to optimize the agricultural revenues to cover the costs of this expenditure. Under Ptolemy I already, but particularly under Ptolemy II, the available agricultural areas in the Fayum were tripled in size by building dikes and irrigation canals. Ptolemy II could thus reward his officials with large estates, the most important one being the *dioiketes*, the official in charge of the financial affairs of the entire kingdom. The important archive of Zenos, manager of the domains of the *dioiketes* Apollonios under Ptolemy II, provides a glimpse of how these estates were organized. Zenon's archive reveals that the exploitation of the land was carefully planned, and that items were produced from raw material to end product, for example clothing, and that experiments were conducted with new agricultural crops. Not only high officials but also soldiers were rewarded with land. These soldiers, *cleruchs*, were attracted to Egypt by the early Ptolemies, preferably from the Greek homeland, with the promise of land. When they were called up, they often left the working of their lands to the locals. Temples, cities and private individuals were all owners of land. Taxes were levied on the land to pay for the military and cultural aspirations of the early Ptolemies.

The decline of the Ptolemaic Dynasty started with the reign of Ptolemy IV. Although the government still functioned and the economy was relatively healthy, a number of factors had emerged that prevented Ptolemy IV maintaining the power of the kingdom or the dynastic status of the Ptolemies as very rich, successful warriors. Slowly but surely, territory in the Near East was lost to the Seleucid king Antiochus III moving southwards, until Ptolemy IV was able to stop him near Raphia in Palestine. This battle was the first time that Ptolemy used his Egyptian militia in the fight, *machimoi* – a sign that the importance of Egyptian soldiers had increased and that the Greek component of the Ptolemaic army was decreasing, despite the encouragement to come to Egypt. Another reason for the weakening power of the dynasty was the increasing conflicts within the Ptolemaic family itself. In 205 BC, Ptolemy IV died, and the intrigues at court meant that it was several days before the announcement of his death was made.

Crisis and decline (204-80 BC)

Ptolemy IV was succeeded by his son Ptolemy V. Young though he was, he was supported by Rome, which defended Ptolemaic interests in the Balkans and Asia Minor against the kings of Macedon and the Seleucid Empire. However, these regions were eventually absorbed into the Roman sphere of influence. Possessions in the Near East and overseas regions were gradually lost, and in Egypt the

KINGSHIP

Ptolemaic kingship in Egypt had two faces. Ptolemy I realised only too well that he was both a Macedonian king and an Egyptian pharaoh. He continued the line started by Alexander – he was a son of Zeus (Amun), but also a 'secret' son of Philip II of Macedon. With the support of the army, he could thus declare himself king in the same way as Alexander had.

After the deification of Ptolemy I, and later on that of Ptolemy II and his wife Arsinoe II, a dynastic cult arose. Their marriage as the divine brother and sister was possibly inspired by the marriage between the gods Zeus and Hera, or Osiris and Isis. Cult centres for the deified Arsinoe II sprang up all over Egypt, and cities were named after her. She was even worshipped in the Levant. Ptolemy III appointed priests to maintain the cult of the first deified Ptolemies, creating a special fifth phyle (group of priests) for the job. Even at the end of the Ptolemaic Period, Julius Caesar deified Cleopatra in a certain sense by placing her statue in a temple of Venus in Rome. Such divine status was nothing new in Egypt – Amenhotep III and Ramesses II had been deified during their lifetimes – but previously it had been the exception rather than the rule. The pharaoh then was the representative of men to the gods, now the pharaoh was himself a god. Even brother-sister marriage was the exception rather than the rule in the pharaonic period. Under the Ptolemies it became much more common.

Just as their pharaonic predecessors, the Ptolemaic kings were viewed as the high priests of the entire country, and they were expected to perform other royal duties as well, such as banishing the enemies of Egypt and preserving cosmic balance by maintaining the temples and performing the rituals. The first Ptolemies in particular defended Egypt's territories abroad, later on foreign rulers or the Romans seized power there. We do not know for sure whether the Ptolemaic kings regularly performed rituals in temples outside Alexandria or not. Ptolemy V was the first whom we know was actually crowned pharaoh in Memphis. The social distance between Greeks and Egyptians, particularly in the early part of the Ptolemaic Period, is perhaps an indication that the Ptolemies never left Alexandria, where Greek presence was strongest. On the other hand, we know that Cleopatra and Caesar took a Nile cruise through the whole country.

It remains an open question how much the Ptolemies interfered in the administrative processes. The pharaoh was at the top of the ladder, immediately followed by the *dioiketes*. In the early Ptolemaic Period, the king was probably actively involved in economic policy; in later periods this was probably mainly left to the officials. After the death of Ptolemy IV, his body was concealed by his counsellor Sosibios in the royal apartments in Sosibios's own interests, which demonstrates that the king may have had little direct contact with his own government.

This stela depicts a Ptolemaic pharaoh (it is not clear which), offering a statuette of the cosmic goddess Ma'at to the lion god Maahes of Leontopolis, a town in the Nile Delta. The lion is wearing a sun disc with uraeus on its head; at the top of the stela is a winged sun disc. There is an ancient Greek inscription underneath, apparently a later addition to inventorize this stela. Limestone, height 52 cm.

RELIGION

Egyptian religion changed little during its three-thousand-year history, because the population, and particularly the priests, clung to their traditions and their view of the world of the gods and the interactions of people with those gods. This is why the Egyptian religion is called conservative. This conservatism ensured that even during the Ptolemaic Period, the traditional Egyptian religion remained intact to a great extent. Gods such as Osiris, Isis, Re, Thoth and Anubis continued to be worshipped in their sanctuaries spread throughout the country. With the arrival of the first Greeks, a process of syncretism started in the Late Period, which now continued: Egyptian gods were equated with Greek gods, for example Amun-Re with Zeus, Hathor with Aphrodite and Thoth with Hermes. In general, the Greeks adopted the Egyptian religion and 'translated' it into their own religious experience. Sometimes local Egyptian deities were merged, for example Isis merged with the snake goddess Renenutet of the Fayum to become Isis-Thermouthis – Isis with a snake's body from the waist down. The Greeks also adopted the belief in a hereafter – the idea that the soul made a journey through the underworld en route to a tribunal, after which to be admitted to the kingdom of Osiris. At the same time, the body had to be preserved through mummification so that the *ka*, the soul, could partake of the food offerings. The family of the deceased could always bring offerings to the mortuary chapel or hire a *ka*-priest – funerary priest – to do this. From the Late Period onwards we see this function exercised by the *choachytes* (libationer). These funerary priests often tended several tombs at the same time and were paid a salary by a nearby temple, which was paid in turn by the relatives of the deceased. The office of *choachytes* was hereditary, as was that of the *taricheutes*, the embalmers who wrapped the deceased in linen bandages. Both the *choachytai* and the *taricheutai* were organized into guilds probably even before the Ptolemaic Period. There are many types of tomb in the Ptolemaic Period. In the Nile Valley can be found not only simple rock-cut and shaft tombs, but also tombs with a complete temple-like chapel, for example the tomb of Petosiris in Tuna el-Gebel. The horned altar placed in front of the tomb of Petosiris – for the burnt offerings – is a Levantine concept adopted in Egypt. In Alexandria there were mainly catacombs cut into the stone bedrock, as well as tombs provided with a funerary chapel on the surface. Alongside the traditional and sometimes Greek gods, for example Hera and Apollo who were worshipped in the Greek trading community of Naukratis, several more gods were introduced in Ptolemaic times. The Ptolemaic kings not only deified themselves, they also created a new god, Serapis. He was probably a local god who existed in Memphis before the Ptolemaic period, but he was pushed by the Ptolemaic kings as a 'mixed god' to promote the integration of Greeks and Egyptians. Serapis or *Wesir-apis*, an amalgamation of the god Osiris and the holy Apis bull of Memphis (buried in the Serapeum at Saqqara), was often depicted as a Zeus-like god with a beard, wearing a toga and with a

modius (a basket used to measure grain, the Greek symbol for the land of the dead) on his head. The god was regarded as the consort of Isis, who also played an important role in the Ptolemaic Period, and was equated with the Greek goddess Demeter. Serapis was the most important protective god of the Ptolemaic kings, and was worshipped at Alexandria in the Greek style. This was also where his most important sanctuary was located, the Serapeum, a temple complex on a hill in the city. A single Roman column still rises above the remains of the old temple today, known as Pompey's Pillar.
The Ptolemaic kings not only built temples in Alexandria, they also initiated serious building works in the Nile Valley. Temple projects started under the last kings of the Late Period were continued, the best

This basalt sarcophagus is unfortunately uninscribed, leaving us in the dark about its owner. It can be dated to the Ptolemaic Period by the style of the face. Height 1.74 m.

known being Edfu, Dendera, Esna and Philae. The huge temple complexes of Memphis and Karnak were also extended and new temples built. These temples followed the pharaonic temple design in all essentials, with the addition of a number of elements, such as the pronaos (a covered columned hall) and the mammisi, the birth house introduced in the Late Period, which was linked to the birth of the divine child of the divine triad (father-mother-child) worshipped in the temple, and which could also be associated with the divine birth of the pharaoh, who was after all the son of the gods.

A temple feature found more often in the Ptolemaic Period – and also in the Roman Period – was the contra-temple, a special building not far from the holy of holies of the temple. The holy of holies was only accessible to the priests. The contra-temple, on the other hand, allowed ordinary people to come into contact with the god of a temple via dreams or oracles. The ordinary Egyptians could follow their own traditions during festivals. During festivals, the statue of the deity, just as in pharaonic times, was carried out of the temple for a procession and oracles. With the help of special songs, dances and food, a special interaction would be created between the priests, the deity of the temple and the population. This ritual confirmed the power of the god (and thus that of the priesthood). It is not surprising that as the power of the Ptolemaic kings declined, they turned to the priesthood to keep the population on their side.

Texts and illustrations on the walls of the temples give us a detailed picture of the rituals that were conducted in the Ptolemaic Period. This was when the classical hieroglyphic script was expanded to several thousand signs. The Egyptians used these signs to write on the walls of the temples; they used Demotic and Greek for everyday affairs. By studying the temple walls, researchers can gain more insight into the daily rituals. This included the cult statue of the deity being wakened, fed, washed and dressed so as to preserve cosmic order. During the festival rituals, mythical stories were often played out.

Another part of these temple traditions was the offering of votive mummies to the gods. In the Late Period,

Horned altars are regularly found in tombs. This type of altar, originally from the Near East, was perhaps introduced to Egypt by the Greeks in the 4th century BC. The earliest known example was found at the tomb of Petosiris in the necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel. Their use spread through Egypt swiftly, including to the cemeteries of Alexandria. They could be used for incense offerings or to burn other fragrant substances for a god or for the deceased. Bronze, height 15.5 cm.

but particularly in the Ptolemaic Period, animals identified with a deity were ritually killed on a massive scale to then be mummified and offered to the god in question and placed in a temple or in catacombs. This occurred in Tuna el-Gebel, Saqqara and Bubastis as well as Alexandria, where huge numbers of bird, cat, and dog mummies have been found. Just as in the Late Period, fake mummies were made during the Ptolemaic Period that contained only part or nothing of an animal, but just sand or rubbish.

local population revolted. From about 200 BC, the Ptolemies considered it important to befriend the priesthood. This conservative and powerful group had a lot of influence with the local population. Ptolemy V thus gave extra privileges to a number of temples, including the great temple of Ptah in Memphis. During a meeting of the high priests in Memphis, it was decided to thank Ptolemy V for this, a process recorded on a number of trilingual stelae, including the Rosetta Stone.

The first rebellion in the south of Egypt took place under Ptolemy V, from 206-186 BC. The cause may have been higher taxes to support the Ptolemaic wars, as well as increased self-awareness on the part of the Egyptians, perhaps partly due to their successful contribution to the Ptolemaic army at Raphia. The rebellion interrupted the construction of temples, for example the huge temple in Edfu which had been started in the 30th Dynasty and was being completed by the Ptolemies. The rebels, based at Lykopolis and headed by local rulers – first Haronnophris, then continued under Chaonnophris – forced the Ptolemaic government to divide its attention between the Seleucid threat in the Levant and the problems in the south of Egypt. A Ptolemaic counteroffensive against Haronnophris started successfully, but was eventually halted by Chaonnophris. Other rebellions also broke out in the Nile Delta, and Nubian troops occupied the city of Syene in the south. In a new Ptolemaic counteroffensive, however, the rebellious regions were defeated and their leaders executed.

After the rebellions, the Ptolemaic dynasty was ravaged by internal problems for the rest of the 2nd century and the early 1st century BC. After the death of Ptolemy V, his son Ptolemy VI became king at a very young age. The Seleucid king Antiochus IV took advantage of the weakness of the Ptolemaic Kingdom under this young king and attacked Egypt in 170 BC. After mediation by the Romans, Ptolemy VI became king of Egypt and Cyprus, and his rival brother Ptolemy VIII king of Cyrenaica. Antiochus IV was forced to return to Syria empty-handed. After the death of Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII ascended the throne of the entire Ptolemaic Kingdom. After his death, his sons Ptolemy IX and Ptolemy X squabbled about who was to succeed to the throne. Eventually Ptolemy IX gained the upper hand. After his death, the Roman Senate sent their chosen successor from Rome to Alexandria, Ptolemy XI. This son of Ptolemy X was lynched by the Alexandrian population for murdering the popular regent Berenike III on his arrival. Eventually Ptolemy XII, the father of Cleopatra VII, was proclaimed king. It is clear that from about 170 BC, the Romans were playing an increasingly important role in the Egyptian succession. They first provided protection and mediation, later financial support and then a successor chosen by the Roman Senate. From the start of the 1st century BC, the Ptolemies could make few decisions without the approval of Rome.

Based on stylistic features, this bust is of a Ptolemaic pharaoh. It has royal attributes, including the headdress with the royal uraeus (cobra). The ears are set rather high. Limestone, height 17 cm.

The end of the Ptolemaic Kingdom (80-30 BC)

Ptolemy XII could not operate independently of Rome either. He remained pharaoh for more than thirty years with the help of Roman gold, military support and diplomacy. During his reign, the Ptolemaic Kingdom shrank further in size and eventually Rome took over Cyprus and Cyrenaica. Ptolemy XII was regularly confronted with Roman generals and ambitious Roman politicians who wanted to make use of him to their own ends. However, through diplomacy and by buying off the Romans, he was able to maintain Egypt's independence for a long time. In 55 BC, however, he needed Roman soldiers to regain his throne after a rebellion by the population of Alexandria. From that moment on, there was a Roman presence in Egypt.

After the death of Ptolemy XII, a dynastic conflict broke out between his children Cleopatra VII and Ptolemy XIII, right at the time that Julius Caesar arrived in Egypt. He was on the trail of his rival Pompey, who had ended the Seleucid Empire in Syria a short time before. Caesar became involved in the struggle between Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra and sided with the latter. Civil war followed – and perhaps this was when the famous library of Alexandria went up in flames – with Caesar and Cleopatra eventually gaining the upper hand. Caesar installed Cleopatra and her younger brother Ptolemy XIV on the throne. The relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra eventually led to the birth of a son, Ptolemy XV, also known as Caesarion, little Caesar. After Caesar's death in 46 BC, Caesarion, then only three years old, ascended the throne of the Ptolemies, and Cleopatra married Caesar's confidant Mark Antony. After Caesar's death, Mark Antony governed the eastern part of the Roman Empire; Caesar's posthumously adopted nephew Octavian governed the western part. The marriage between Cleopatra and Mark Antony enabled her to relive the old glory days of the Ptolemaic Kingdom, with several of the old possessions, for example Cyprus, coming under her control again. Rome,

however, was less satisfied, and Octavian and his supporters started propaganda actions against Cleopatra and Mark Antony, who had been 'bewitched' by her. Nevertheless, there followed several peaceful years in Egypt. Eventually, in 31 BC, at the sea battle of Actium in West Greece, the fleet of Octavian vanquished that of Antony and Cleopatra. The losers fled to Egypt, where they were increasingly besieged by Octavian's approaching troops. Less than a year later, Octavian invaded Egypt. Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide, and Octavian had Caesarion murdered. So finally Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire, the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms to do so.

The most important sanctuary of Serapis in Ptolemaic and Roman times was the Serapeum in Alexandria. This high-lying temple complex not only contained the temple of Serapis with his huge cult statue, but also a branch of the library, study areas, cisterns, bathing areas and a Nilometre to keep track of the water level in the Nile. The temple was eventually closed and destroyed with the rise of Christianity. Only the huge column of Diocletian (known as Pompey's Pillar) is still standing today. Nowadays the Serapeum is in the western district of Kom es-Shuqafa in Alexandria, where it contrasts with the modern houses and flats.

PTOLEMAIC ALEXANDRIA

The island of Antirhodos, now underwater, may be where the palace of Cleopatra VII was located. The eastern harbour of Alexandria ends in the east in the narrow peninsula Lochias (upper left), the south side of which was probably the southern border of the Ptolemaic palace district. At that point in the photo we can now see the white roof of the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

Alexander the Great decided to found a new capital city in Egypt, and chose a location in the western Nile Delta. This location was attractive because it had a firm, rocky basis. Near the coast was the island of Pharos, known to the Greeks from the *Iliad*, and not far away the Canopic branch of the Nile debouched into the Mediterranean Sea. There was a small fishing village called Rhacotis there, named after the Egyptian word Ra-qed, which means 'construction site'. This was perhaps the forerunner of what would later become the greatest Hellenistic cultural centre in the Eastern Mediterranean area.

The city of Alexandria was modelled on Greek examples right from the start. It had a grid plan for the streets with two main highways crossing each other and leading to gates in the eastern and western city walls. The Heptastadion, a causeway or mole, linked Pharos to the mainland, and the city had several impressive buildings.

The best known construction in Alexandria was the lighthouse that stood on the eastern point of Pharos, where it guided ships into the Eastern harbour. This high tower, built of differently shaped segments, was surrounded by a number of colossal granite statues of Ptolemaic kings and queens. Some of them were fished out of the sea during the 1990s. The lighthouse was completed by Ptolemy II, but vanished into the sea in the 14th century after several earthquakes and suffering from the effects of the weather. Several temples were also built on Pharos. The Mameluke fort of Qait Bey now stands where the lighthouse used to be.

Another monument was the huge Serapeum temple complex in the southwest of the city. This raised temple was the centre in Ptolemaic times for the worship of the god Serapis and comprised several buildings, including a columned gallery around the entire complex, and an auxiliary branch of the great library of Alexandria. The complex also comprised teaching halls, smaller shrines and an underground shrine where the Apis bull was worshipped. In the temple itself was the famous statue of the god Serapis. In 1943-45, archaeologists found a foundation plaque at the foot of the temple, recording the founding of the temple by Ptolemy III in both Greek and hieroglyphs.

The 'palace district' was probably located close to the Lochias peninsula in the northeastern part of Alexandria. This was where the Ptolemaic palaces were built, and probably also the Soma, a new tomb built by Ptolemy IV for the mummies of Alexander and the Ptolemies. According to the Greek historian Strabo (c. 64 BC – AD 19), this palace district covered at least a third of the area of the city. On a number of small islands in the harbour opposite this district, traces have been found from the Ptolemaic Period, possibly also of the palace of Cleopatra VII.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The left-hand terracotta depicts Serapis on a throne, with Cerberus, the watchdog of the underworld, beside him. The middle terracotta shows Harpocrates (Horus-the-child) holding a statue of himself. The right-hand terracotta depicts Harpocrates with an oversized penis and holding a vase under his arm. He is sitting on a throne or carrying-chair supported by two priests. There is a niche under the throne, so the entire object could function as an oil-lamp. Terracottas like these were manufactured on a large scale, both in moulds and freehand. They have been found in houses and in tombs; most of them come from Alexandria. Pottery, heights between 12.5 and 17 cm.

Just as in the Late Period, in the Ptolemaic Period more and more foreign products began to appear in Egypt. Trade was conducted with the western Mediterranean Sea regions, and also with the kingdoms in India. Amphorae were the most popular storage item, and were traded all over the Mediterranean Sea. Sometimes the handles of these amphorae are stamped with the name of the production centre or the owner. As well as amphorae, all kinds of other vessels were imported, such as pottery from Greece, Cyprus and the Levant, although local pottery was also used. Foreign pottery was also copied in Egypt, for example in Naukratis. Oil lamps were another product made of pottery. During pharaonic times they were usually very simple in shape, but in the Ptolemaic Period they became much more gaily decorated and more complicated in form. Statuettes were also made of pottery. These terracotta statuettes were of deities such as Isis, Harpocrates (the young Horus), Serapis or the popular dwarf god Bes, and were used by the Egyptians during religious festivals, or taken home to serve as objects of devotion. What is remarkable about these statuettes is the dynamism of their poses and their realistic features, which is clearly a Greek influence and is less reminiscent of the often conservative artistic conventions of the Dynastic period. It is clear that Greek influence enabled the Egyptians to depict their gods in a different way.

Glass had already been used in the pharaonic period alongside faience, but in the 1st century BC the Phoenicians introduced glass-blowing to Egypt. The result was that very thin-walled glass could be made, for example for cosmetic vases. In addition, glass continued to be used as inlay, an example being the coffin of Petosiris from the Late Period.

Petosiris was high priest of Thoth in Hermopolis in the 4th century BC. At least five generations of his family are buried in his tomb at Tuna el-Gebel, from the 30th Dynasty down into the Ptolemaic Period. The reliefs in his tomb show a mixture of Egyptian and Greek elements.

It is possible to differentiate between three types of royal statuary. The first type comprises those statues that fit the traditions of the 30th Dynasty. They have a serene expression on their round faces, with oval eyes and a slight smile. In statues intended for private use, too, these traditional elements continued to appear. The second type are the statues that depict the rulers in the traditional Greek-Macedonian way, with an idealized face and hairstyle, and wearing a diadem, a symbol of the royal status of the person depicted. These statues have been found at Saqqara and Tell Timai, but they are not common. Private individuals were also depicted in this way, but without the royal symbols such as the diadem. The third type is a mixed form whereby Egyptian craftsmen adopted the Greek facial style and added Egyptian attributes to it. This style made the statue recognizable to both Greeks and Egyptians as that of a king.

Changes also occurred in the relief art. Figures on temple walls were more often executed in low relief instead of raised relief. They had fuller forms, which is visible at the belly, the breasts and the limbs. Although idealization played a role in the Ptolemaic Period, the body was also represented in a slightly more true-to-nature fashion. Greek influence on Egyptian reliefs is also clear in the tomb of Petosiris at Tuna el-Gebel, mentioned above. The walls of the chapel are decorated with traditional Egyptian scenes of daily life, including working in the fields. The figures depicted, however, are wearing Greek clothes, are carved in great detail, and are sometimes shown frontally or with a sense of movement – something that was very rare in the 30th Dynasty.

Another type of religious object that had already become popular during the Late Period became even more popular during the Ptolemaic Period – the Horus stela (Horus cippus), made of stone or wood. These stelae depicted Harpocrates, Horus-the-child, mastering all kinds of evil influences and powers by catching hold of them or trampling on them. These evil powers were depicted as crocodiles, scorpions and snakes. The protective head of the god Bes can often be seen above Harpocrates. Many of the stone stelae are covered in protective texts over which the user could pour water, thus charging it with magical power. These magical drinks were a popular form of protection against evil powers for ordinary Egyptians.

Coins appear sporadically during the Late Period, and under the Ptolemies, we see the use of coinage increasing. However, in the Ptolemaic Period, too, Egypt remained a barter economy. Grain was the most important barter product, because many farmers paid their taxes in kind. Coins were originally of silver, following the Greek example, and later on also of copper. Gold coins are also known. The coins were minted with a depiction of the ruling pharaoh on the one side, and on the other often a symbol of the Ptolemaic dynasty – an eagle with spread wings sitting on a bolt of lightning.

This Horus stela shows Harpocrates standing on a pair of crocodiles, holding a gazelle, a lion and snakes in his hands; next to him is the dwarf god Bes. The stela is intended to provide protection against snakes, scorpions and crocodiles; the text on the back does the same. The stela is worn through being rubbed and by the water that was poured over it. That absorbed magic power and was then drunk as protection or for healing. Serpentine, height 12 cm.

EXCAVATION **Smouha, Alexandria**

Since 1912, the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Belgium) has had two fragments of a colossal statue. These fragments, a bust of a Ptolemaic queen or goddess and two clasping hands, were purchased by the founder of the museum, the Belgian industrialist Raoul Warocqué. He bought them on a trip to Egypt in 1911 from an archaeologist working in Alexandria, Albert Daninos Pasha, who had found them in 1892 in his excavations just outside Alexandria. In 1896, a certain Abdallah Attya found two fragments of a different statue in the same spot – the head of a man with royal features and a leg. These fragments are now held by the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria.
The fragments of these two statues had already been seen by travellers in the 18th and 19th centuries. They describe the fragments and their location, surrounded by blocks, columns and capitals of granite and limestone. These were the remains of a temple.
The site was forgotten in the 20th century and severely disturbed during both the 19th and 20th centuries, among other things by the construction of a railway line. We know that in the 19th century the site was close to Lake Hadra, which was drained in the 1920s to make way for urban development. The district is named after the entrepreneur who made this urbanization possible, Joseph Smouha.
Since 2004, a Belgian-French-Egyptian group of researchers – a cooperation between the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles), the Centre d'Études Alexandrines (Alexandria) and the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt – has been trying to locate this temple. The aim is to recover the context of the four fragments of colossal statues in the Royal Museum of Mariemont and the Graeco-Roman Museum, and to investigate the temple. By consulting the information from the early travellers, and by combining old maps with modern land registry maps, it was possible to relocate the site within the environs of the modern city of Alexandria. In order to determine the exact location, use was also made of geophysical surveys and ground penetrating radar. The investigations were conducted every summer from 2008 to 2012.

Excavations are even taking place in the playgrounds of two schools. The monumental remains of limestone and granite structures have been exposed.

The research revealed that the history of the site can be divided into four periods. During the first period, a monumental structure was built on the site that was later seriously damaged at various times. Traces have also been found of a group of buildings in their original location, but even the foundations showed traces of damage. During the second period the monumental structure was dismantled and various parts of the building were moved, reworked or used to stoke limestone kilns. Several of these ovens have been found, indicating reuse of the site in the Smouha district. In the third period, the location was levelled and used as a cemetery. Gradually the site was abandoned, until in the 1960s, the fourth period, schools, a bus depot and a police station were built there. In the layers that had not been disturbed, a great deal of archaeological material was found, mainly from the Roman and late Roman periods.

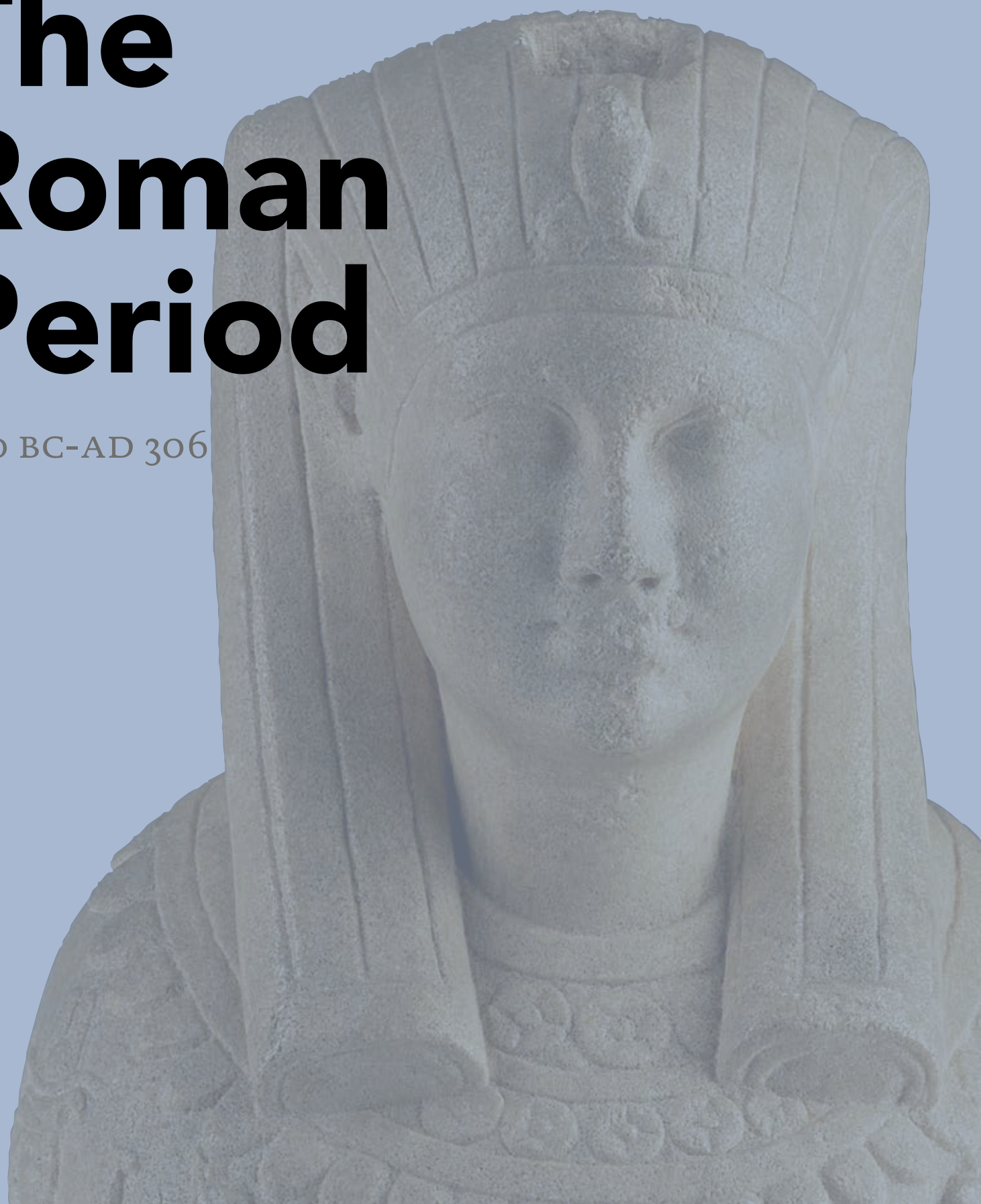
However, material from earlier periods has also been found, including the Ptolemaic Period. The site in Smouha definitely dates from the late Roman period, but stone objects have also been found that indicate the existence of a Ptolemaic complex on the same location or very close by. The presence of a block that came from a pylon might even indicate pre-Ptolemaic activity here. The excavations have at least proved that a significant monument once stood on this spot, which was outside Alexandria in Antiquity. The discovery of building remains, although very seriously damaged and incomplete, indicates that an important complex was built on the banks of Lake Hadra. The study of the excavated material and the stratigraphy will hopefully enable the archaeologists to establish the precise function of this complex.
Francis Choël and Ben van den Bercken

Colossal bust of a Ptolemaic queen/goddess in the Royal Museum of Mariemont. This three-metre high bust was purchased by Raoul Warocqué in Alexandria in 1911 from A. Daninos Pasha.

Excavation work in 2010 in one of the school playgrounds.

The Roman Period

30 BC–AD 306



Augustus and the Julio-Claudian dynasty (30 BC – AD 68)

In 30 BC, Octavian invaded the eastern Nile Delta, and his general C. Cornelius Gallus invaded the western Nile Delta. Alexandria was unprotected and after the suicides of Mark Antony and Cleopatra fell into Octavian's hands. He wanted to spare the city because of its beauty and because it had been founded by Alexander the Great. The Roman historian Dio Cassius wrote two centuries later that Octavian visited the tomb of Alexander, who was his role model. This visit gave him the legitimacy to rule Egypt. During his visit to the tomb, he apparently took over the powers and rights of Alexander. Octavian thus portrayed himself not as the successor to the Ptolemies, but as the successor of Alexander, and he even refused to visit the tombs of the Ptolemies because he 'wanted to see kings, not corpses'.

Although Octavian only remained a short time in Egypt, he nevertheless introduced some important changes. Close to Alexandria, where his army was bivouacked, he founded a new city, Nikopolis. This city would remain a garrison town for a long time, undoubtedly to keep control of the fickle Alexandrian inhabitants. He stationed a further two legions in Egypt – one in Babylon, near Memphis, and the other in Luxor in the south. This was undoubtedly related to the administrative reorganization of Egypt. The country was divided into three (later four) regions, the *epistrategiae*: the Nile Delta, Middle Egypt (including the oases of Bahariya and the Fayum) and the Thebaid (the region around Thebes and southern Egypt, including the oases of Kharga and Dakhla). Later the Nile Delta would be divided into an eastern and a western part. The *epistrategiae* were each governed by an *epistrategos*, a governor. The different *epistrategiae* were subdivided into a total of about forty nomes, roughly matching the pharaonic division of Egypt into forty-two nomes, each with its own capital. A nome was administered by a *strategos*. The administration of the smaller settlements in a nome was in the hands of local officials. De *epistrategoi* were answerable to the *praefectus Aegypti*, the prefect appointed by the emperor as the highest official in Egypt and responsible only to him. All of these Roman officials had relatively short periods in office, probably to prevent them building up a power base in Egypt that could be used against the emperor.

Octavian, who changed his name to Augustus in 27 BC, had been given special powers by the Roman Senate in his fight against Mark Antony. Thanks to these he could claim Egypt as his property, even though he governed the province in the name of the Roman Senate and the Roman people. The special status of Egypt was underlined by Augustus forbidding any senator visiting Egypt without his permission. In this way he maintained his grip on his private possessions and prevented the riches and strategic position of Egypt being used by a potential rival. A good example of this is the first prefect of Egypt, C. Cornelius Gallus, who conducted military campaigns against Meroe, a kingdom to the south of Egypt, and recorded his deeds on stelae in temples. He incited the wrath of Augustus and was recalled to Rome, where he eventually committed suicide.

Augustus introduced the Julian calendar to Egypt, started to mint Roman coins and stimulated trade with more remote regions such as India via the Red Sea harbours, including Myos Hormos and Berenike. He started the nationalization of temple estates, and turned the old royal estates into public and imperial estates. He used the revenues to pay his army and reward his supporters. He also introduced

This relief depicts Serapis, recognizable from his Roman costume, sitting on a throne while ibis-headed Thoth libates before him. Between them is the Horus falcon and an offering table. Limestone, height 33 cm.

< As early as the 3rd century BC, a waterwheel driven by oxen, the *sakiya*, on the left in the photo, began to be used in Egypt alongside the much older shaduf (water sweep, on the right in the photo). Both irrigation tools were used to transport water from a lower-lying field to a higher one. Both were still in use into the Roman Period. At that time the *sakiya* was illustrated more often in the tombs, for example in the Wardian Tomb in Alexandria, which dates to the 1st century AD. The *sakiya* and the shaduf in this photo are in Luxor.

v On the left underneath the winged sun disc, the Roman emperor Tiberius, dressed as an Egyptian pharaoh, is offering a statuette of the goddess Ma'at – a symbol of the order he is maintaining – to the goddess Mut and her son Khonsu, who are sitting in front of him. The text on the stela is about repair work to the enclosure wall of the temple of Mut in Karnak on the orders of Tiberius. It had been damaged by unusually high Nile inundations. Sandstone, height 66 cm.

new Roman legislation and jurisdiction that differentiated between the Egyptian, Greek and Alexandrian inhabitants. Augustus permitted the Greek and Alexandrian inhabitants to take part in administering the country, which explains the use of Greek as the administrative language. This administration concerned itself with censuses (population counts) and taxation.

The agricultural revenues of Egypt were optimized, for example by introducing olive and grape cultivation to the Fayum. Egypt was also known as the granary of Rome. Because taxes were often paid in kind, every year huge ships laden with grain left Alexandria for Rome. Their arrival in Rome was a special event, and if they were prevented from arriving by storms or unrest in Egypt, it could seal the fate of the emperor. Grain from Egypt enabled the 'bread and games' of the Roman emperors.

Although Augustus initially portrayed himself modestly as the 'first citizen' of the Roman Empire, he was actually the sole ruler: caesar. In Egypt they anticipated this by describing Augustus in the Oxyrhynkhos Papyri as 'Caesar, god, son of god' with the pharaonic regalia. In that role Augustus initiated several construction projects in existing temples and ordered new temples to be built. This was one of the ways to keep control of a region, for example the Thebaid and the Dodekaschoinos (Nubia).

Augustus's successor, Tiberius, continued this policy. He, too, is depicted as a pharaoh on temple walls. It became more peaceful in Egypt during the reign of Tiberius, and

so he was able to reduce the number of legions stationed there from three to two. However, there were regular conflicts in Alexandria, in particular between the Jewish and Greek inhabitants. This happened first in AD 38, when Jews and Greeks attacked each other after Greek Alexandrians mocked the visiting Jewish king Agrippa I. During Tiberius's reign, his stepson Germanicus came to Egypt without permission and visited various temples there, where the priests told him about the deeds of Ramesses II. Germanicus also worshipped the Apis bull in Memphis. According to Roman writers, the bull predicted the death of Germanicus by refusing to eat the food he offered it. Under Tiberius's successor Caligula, the Jewish-Greek conflicts flared up again, with both parties pleading their case to the emperor. It was in his interest to preserve the peace, and Caligula's successor Claudius even sent a letter to the Alexandrian people setting out the rights and obligations of the Jewish and Greek inhabitants in an attempt to calm the situation.

The divine status of the pharaoh in Egypt strongly appealed to Caligula, who regarded himself as a god on earth. He had himself depicted as a divine pharaoh and followed Ptolemaic tradition by marrying his sister. Just like Caligula and Claudius, the next emperor, Nero, was depicted on temple walls as a pharaoh offering to the gods, including in the temples of Dendera, Coptos, Karnak, Esna, Elephantine, Philae and Deir el-Hagar. Nero ordered the Sphinx at Giza to be dug out again – it was regularly buried under the desert sands – and also equipped an expedition to search for the source of the Nile. Not long after, fights broke out once more between the Jewish and Greek inhabitants of Alexandria and many Jews were killed. After the death of Nero,

Life-size statues used to flank the rock-cut tombs near the town of Oxyrhynkhos in Middle Egypt. This man is wearing a Roman toga and is holding a wreath in his hand, a sign that he has successfully survived the Divine Tribunal. The deceased had to face the Divine Tribunal of Osiris after a journey with various tests. This is where his heart was weighed against the feather of Ma'at – truth. This symbolized the weighing of all of the good and bad deeds of the deceased. If his good deeds outweighed his bad deeds, then his heart was not heavy – and thus as light as the feather – and the deceased could pass into the realm of Osiris and start his second life in paradise. If his heart was heavier, then the deceased would die a second death and his heart would be devoured by the monster Ammit, waiting next to the scales. During the entire journey, the deceased would be guided by the spells in the Book of the Dead. Limestone with traces of red paint, height 1.50 m.

This capital with plant motifs from a column, clearly inspired by a Corinthian column capital, was found at Oxyrhynkhos in Middle Egypt. Numerous Greek papyri have been found at this site, revealing a wealth of information about daily life in the town. Limestone, height 18 cm.

a struggle broke out for the Roman imperial throne, and emperors Galba, Otho and Vitellius succeeded each other in quick succession.

Emperors in Egypt (AD 69-192)

General Vespasian was sent to Egypt in AD 69 to suppress the Jewish uprising and secure the grain deliveries to Rome. With the support of Tiberius Julius Alexander, the prefect of Egypt appointed by Nero, Vespasian proclaimed himself emperor in AD 69 after bitter power struggles with Galba, Otho and Vitellius, who had each proclaimed himself emperor in turn. The prefect received him in Alexandria as a pharaoh with suitable festivities and rituals. One of the ways Vespasian legitimized his rule was with a dream he apparently had in the temple of Serapis in Alexandria, which was strongly reminiscent of the discussion between Alexander the Great and the priest of Amun in Siwa Oasis (see Chapter 7). Vespasian's son Titus also used this link to Serapis to secure his status. After a campaign in the Levant, Titus was welcomed to Egypt and crowned pharaoh in Memphis.

Man's head from Oxyrhynkhos, probably from a full-size statue. Limestone, height 29 cm.

Emperors Vespasian, Titus and Domitian were active builders throughout the country, but on a small scale. Their reigns were generally speaking peaceful.

After Domitian, Egypt was again systematically exploited by the Romans for its natural resources. For example, stone was quarried on a large scale in the quarries of Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyrites in the Eastern Desert for use inside and outside Egypt. Under Trajan, the Roman Empire reached its greatest extent. In Egypt, he blew new life into the long-distance trade via the Red Sea by restoring the Ptolemaic canal between the Nile and the Red Sea.

In 106-107, one of the legions in Egypt was transferred to Arabia for Trajan's campaigns there. However, this weakened the Roman position in Egypt and once again a major Jewish revolt was the result. It began in Alexandria, where the Jews made up about a fifth of the population, and spread across Egypt and then to Cyprus and Cyrenaica. The revolts

MATERIAL CULTURE

Sculpture in the Roman Period differed from that of the preceding Ptolemaic Period. Four categories can now be differentiated – classical Roman sculpture, traditional Egyptian sculpture, sculpture made in the classical style but with Egyptianizing elements, and sculpture made in the traditional Egyptian way but by non-Egyptian craftsmen. The difference can be seen in the back pillar, the facial characteristics, the idealization of the face, the proportions of the body, and the depiction of the clothing, hairstyle and, in the case of royal statuary, the uraeus, the protective cobra on the forehead.

Because the emperor was in Rome, most of the royal sculpture is there and not in Egypt. In Rome, sculptural elements such as clothing, facial features and symbols continued to develop and the Romans sometimes attributed new meaning to them. Roman sculpture in Egypt was inspired by Ptolemaic sculpture. Statues of the defied Arsinoe II and of Cleopatra VII served as inspiration for statues of the goddess Isis. In relief art, both high and low relief were frequently used on temple walls. In both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art, the body was again given rounded forms, but less idealized than in the Ptolemaic Period – aspects of what a person actually looked like were incorporated. The Romans reopened the mines in the Eastern Desert especially for stone for sculptures. Gold was one of the things they were looking for, but the popular grey granite was quarried at sites such as Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyrites. This is also where the purple porphyry came from, used for the sarcophagi and statues of gods and emperors, for example.

A strong personalization of art, with an eye for the characteristics of the individual, is expressed in what are known as mummy portraits, which date from the early 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. They were either painted on the mummy cartonnage, or on wooden panels. The portraits on panels were found in large numbers by archaeologists at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century in the Fayum, and are therefore called Fayum portraits. The mummy portraits probably had the same function as Roman ancestor busts. The portraits may have been done from life and displayed in the home. After the person died, the portrait was cut to size and attached to the head end of the mummy. The portraits are detailed, naturalistic depictions of the deceased. On the basis of the hairstyle, clothing and jewellery visible in the portraits, archaeologists are often able to date them quite well.

Just as in the Ptolemaic Period, Egypt remained an important trade and transit station. A great deal of locally made pottery is found at archaeological sites in Egypt, but also pottery from the Levant, the Near East and other provinces of the Roman Empire. Among them are cooking pots, drinking cups and vases decorated with plant motifs, as well as vases in the shape of the head of the protective god Bes. The amphora was a pottery storage jar used across the entire Roman Empire. Amphorae differ from each other in shape, size (up to 1.5 metres) and type of clay used, depending on the region where they were made. They were used to store and transport liquids. This included oil and wine from the Fayum and from Marea near Alexandria, where there was industrial-scale production during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. There is often a stamp on the handle of an amphora, giving the name of a person or an indication of the source of the contents.

Oil lamps were made of clay pressed into a mould and then fired. The lamps were decorated with the images of gods, buildings, cities, flowers and geometric motifs. These motifs came from Roman examples or moulds. At the same time local lamps were made that were cruder, some with a depiction of a frog on the upper surface. Various types of terracotta figurines continued to be made in Roman times, including of gods, musicians and actors.

Blown glass, which had been introduced in the Ptolemaic period, was used to make dishes, small bottles, tubes and little jars to store cosmetics. Similar glass objects from the Roman Period are known, and were either blown or formed around a core of sand. Glass could also be engraved with motifs, for example dancers, or painted, for example with gladiators – a bottle with gladiators

Fayum portrait of a woman wearing earrings and a necklace. Such portraits, painted during life, were placed over the face of the mummy and secured in the bandages. The painting technique is called encaustic, painting with colours made of pigments mixed with beeswax. Many of the portraits were found in a cemetery near Hawara (Fayum). They may have influenced the later Christian icons. Wood, height 40 cm.

Heads of priests, probably found in the cachettes – underground hiding places for statues – of the temple of Karnak. Such statues of kings and private individuals were placed in temples to allow the person depicted to share in the daily offerings to the gods. The serious expressions and the eye for detail – particularly in the depiction of the hair – are signs of the stronger personalization of art in the Graeco-Roman Period. Basalt, height 15 and 18 cm.

painted on it has been found in Kellis.
In the Ptolemaic Period already, houses and tombs were decorated with mosaics, particularly in the Greek settlements. Tiny worked stones or pieces of glass were laid into a floor in decorative patterns or illustrations. It may be that the royal ateliers in Alexandria played an important role in the designing of various patterns and scenes. Mosaic floors were also made in Roman times. One of the best known motifs in the late Ptolemaic/early Roman Period is a square enclosing a circle (shield) with the head of Medusa in the middle. Another motif, known in the Ptolemaic Period but very popular in Roman times, is the Nilotic scene illustrating the Nile landscape and its animal and human inhabitants. These scenes were also very popular outside Egypt.
Metals such as bronze, iron and even gold occasionally were used to make various objects, ranging from figurines of wrestlers to oil lamps, from weapons to mummification tools, and from libation vases to depictions of Harpocrates. Coins were also struck with the image of the Roman emperor on one side, and a symbol for Egypt on the other, for example a crocodile, Serapis, or Egypt as a female figure. Egypt had a special place in the Roman monetary system because, unlike the rest of its empire, it kept its own Greek currency (until the 3rd century AD) and thus formed a closed monetary unit.
Alexandria was not only an important centre of mosaic and lamp motifs, it also was a papyrus production centre. Papyrus was important in Egypt itself for ritual texts and for the many thousands of texts stored in the library of Alexandria, and was also exported to the rest of the Mediterranean region. Long after the Roman Period, the city was still famous for its papyrus.

were initially successful, and the Romans suffered a defeat at Memphis. Eventually Trajan sent reinforcements to Egypt to help the prefect, and these troops forcefully suppressed the revolts. There were many casualties. Subsequently, the Jews lost many of their privileges, and under Trajan's successors they were persecuted more and more.

It is probably as a result of these revolts that Trajan's successor Hadrian reformed part of Egypt's administrative system. Two new offices were added to the administration – the *dioiketes*, familiar from the Ptolemaic Period, became the official responsible for taxation and for organizing the agricultural system, and the *archiereus* the official responsible for controlling the temples and the priests. By the end of Hadrian's reign, peace had returned and from that moment on only one legion was stationed in Egypt.

Hadrian, originally from Spain, visited Egypt in 130-131 and displayed a strong interest in the country. He wanted to get to know it better, but was also there to improve the organization of the administration. After being festively received in Alexandria, coins were struck celebrating his entry into the city. After visiting the Nile Delta, he travelled through the Nile Valley. However, his lover, a Greek boy called Antinous, drowned in the river. Hadrian took the loss hard and founded a city on the east bank of the Nile where

^^ Reclining sandstone lion from Oxyrhynkhos, possibly from a temple. Height 53 cm.

^ The site of Akoris is slightly higher than the agricultural ground surrounding it. It offers a wonderful view over the fields of the Nile Valley. During the Roman Period, steps were taken to optimize the revenues from agriculture, and more intensive use of waterwheels like the sakiya increased the amount of land available.

Canopus vase, named after the Greek hero Canopus – the pilot of the Greek royal couple Menelaus and Helen – who died at the mouth of the western arm of the Nile. He was deified as Osiris-Canopus during the Ptolemaic Period. This vase is the reason why antiquarians in the 18th century called the much older jars for the mummified internal organs of the deceased canopic jars. Canopus was worshipped in the town of Per-Guti, later called Canopus, close to Alexandria. Harpocrates and Isis are both depicted twice, on either side of an altar with two cobras on it with above them two Horus falcons. Underneath is a sun disc with uraei (cobras) and a winged scarab with Thoth baboons next to it. Limestone, height 35.5 cm.

Written on this water jar is a duty roster in Greek for the watch in a Roman army unit in Egypt. Pottery amphora, height 40 cm.

Antinous had drowned. This city, Antinoopolis, alongside Alexandria, Naukratis and Ptolemais Hermiou, became the fourth Greek city in Egypt with special privileges. Antinoopolis had a rectangular street pattern with colonnades, a theatre, bathhouses, a hippodrome and a shrine. Greeks were encouraged to settle in the city, and as a reward they were given various privileges, including the right to marry local Egyptians. Antinous was deified as the god Osirantinous and statues of him were erected. Hadrian continued his journey southwards where he visited the colossal statues of Amenhotep III in his mortuary temple at Thebes.

After Hadrian, peace was shattered under Antoninus Pius when the Egyptian prefect was murdered in Alexandria in 153. And during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, there was a rebellion by the *boukoloi*, cowherds and farmers, led by the priest Isidoros. The Roman legion in Egypt was besieged and could only be relieved with help from the Syrian governor Avidius Cassius. After peace had returned, a false rumour that Marcus Aurelius had died spread, whereupon

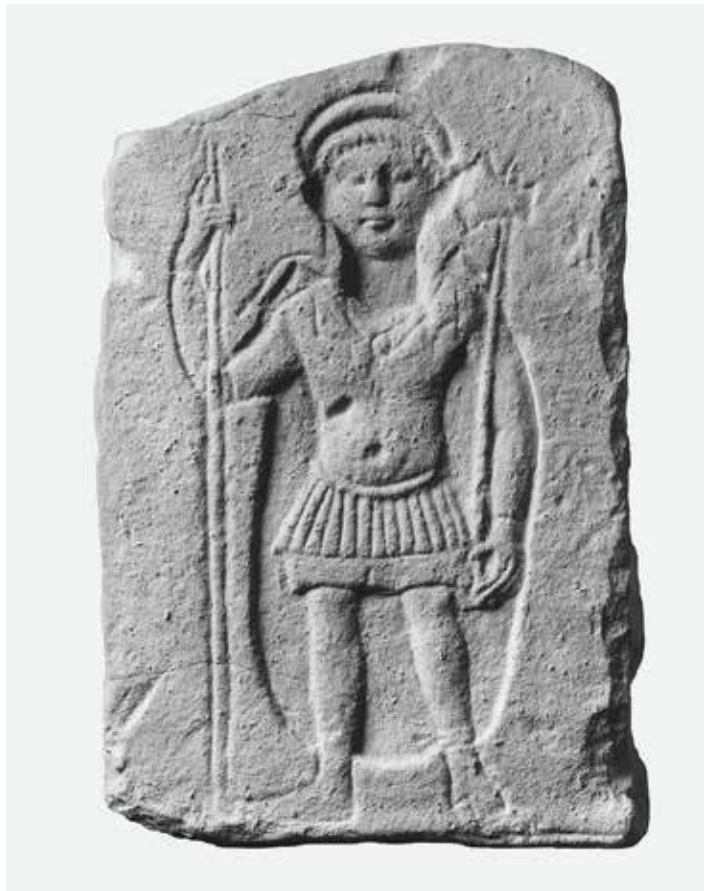
Avidius Cassius proclaimed himself emperor with the help of the prefect of Egypt. Marcus Aurelius led the campaign against Cassius himself, but the latter had been murdered by the time the emperor arrived in the east. Marcus Aurelius then visited Egypt. His son Commodus, who accompanied his father, thus encountered Egypt for the first time. Once he succeeded his father, he had the huge Serapis temple in Alexandria rebuilt after a fire in 181. In the power struggles after the death of Commodus, the Egyptian prefect eventually sided with Septimius Severus – who became the next emperor.

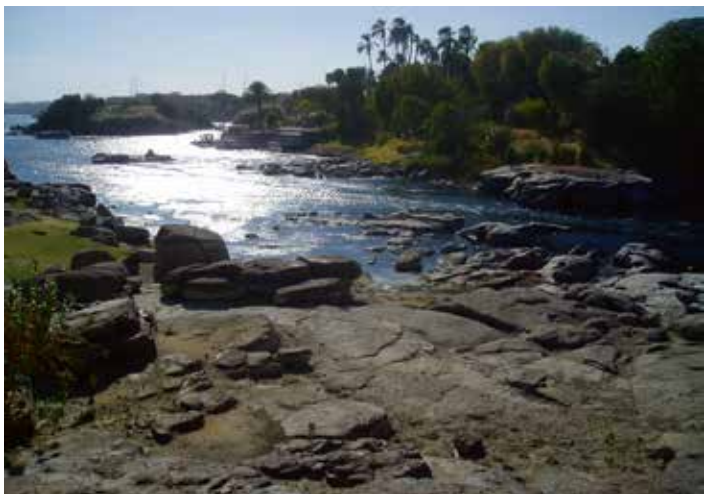
The Severan dynasty and the soldier emperors (AD 193-306)

Septimius Severus, originally from North Africa, visited Egypt in 199-200. He initiated a process that would eventually lead to the decentralization of the administration. Previously, only the Greek cities of Alexandria, Naukratis, Ptolemais Hermiou and Antinoopolis had had their own city council. Severus gave every nome capital the right to a town council. As a result, they were no longer occupied towns, but towns with their own administration and free citizens.
Just like Hadrian, Severus journeyed through Egypt from Alexandria to Philae. He and his family visited the monuments at Memphis and Giza, where he restored the Sphinx, and Luxor, where he restored the colossi in front of the temple of Amenhotep III. In the temple of Esna, a town 55 km south of Luxor, the entire imperial family is depicted in the traditional way as pharaohs – standing before the gods with their names in cartouches. This is an indication that the emperor was still regarded by the Egyptians as the representative of men with the gods. Severus's son Caracalla continued the work of his father by issuing the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212. This edict gave all free men in the Roman Empire Roman citizenship. Caracalla, just as Caligula and Commodus before him, took Alexander the Great as his role model. He is the last emperor known to have visited the tomb of Alexander the Great, perhaps still in the Ptolemaic Soma. Caracalla had statues of himself erected in Alexandria, dressed as Alexander. However, these statues were destroyed by vandals, and when the emperor arrived in Alexandria in 215-216, he looted and plundered the city as punishment, killing many of the citizens. Caracalla paid special attention to the worship of Isis and had several temples built for her. This emperor is also depicted in the temple of Esna as a pharaoh. However, the name of his brother Geta was removed. He had been a rival to the emperor and was murdered by him.

Under the next emperors, the Roman Empire weakened, which in Egypt led to the loss of possessions in Nubia. After 235, the emperors followed each other in quick succession and the period of the soldier emperors began, usually heralded by a coup. Several of the late Severan emperors and the soldier emperors planned to visit Egypt, but they seldom succeeded. In around 250, the Romans lost the Dodekaschoinos (North Nubia) to the Meroites, the successors to the Kushites, and the nomadic Blemmyes. At about the same time, in Alexandria, Christians were persecuted for the first time. One of the reasons was that the uncompromising Christians actively converted people and threatened to disturb the Roman tolerance for multiple religions. Further weakening of the imperial administration resulted in Egypt falling under the rule of the legendary Palmyran queen Zenobia for a short time (270-272). However, Emperor

The Roman soldier on this tomb stela is wearing a tunic and a cloak; he is holding an axe and a lance in his hands. Provenance: probably Luxor. Limestone, height 29 cm.





^^ The site of Karanis was founded in the 3rd century BC. In the early 20th century, the remains of mud-brick houses could be seen up to three stories in height. However, the exposed mud-brick structures weathered away quickly and were also damaged by the work of the *sebakhin*. On the site today are the remains of a temple to the local gods Petesouchos and Pnepheros, as well as Roman baths. Nearby in the oasis, some of the earliest Neolithic sites have been found.

^ The five cataracts in the Nile were dangerous places for shipping, and it was not uncommon for the ships to be carried around these rapids (portage). The setting sun at the 1st cataract, seen here from the most southerly point of the island of Elephantine at Aswan, offers a lovely view of the river and the stones rubbed smooth by centuries of water passing over them. In the early 4th century BC, Emperor Diocletian set the southern limit of the Roman Empire at Philae, an island in the Nile close to the cataract.

Aurelian reconquered the country, in the process badly damaging the eastern part of Alexandria.

Some decades later, the Roman emperor Diocletian had to conquer Egypt again, this time defeating the leader of a local revolution, Domitius Domitianus. A huge pillar was erected in the Serapeum temple complex in Alexandria in celebration of Diocletian's victory. This pillar is still standing today, and is known as Pompey's Pillar. Diocletian only remained in Egypt for a short time. In order to defend the country better, he moved the southern border northwards, to Philae, a temple island in the Nile. He also converted Luxor temple into a fort and stationed a legion there.

Diocletian also continued implementing the plans of Septimius Severus and transferred the administration of the nomes to the nome capitals. He hoped that this would help him govern Egypt more efficiently. A divine Bucchis bull was buried during his reign. This bull, just like the Apis bull, was regarded as the living incarnation of a deity, in this case the god Monthu. This is an indication that the old religion and traditions were still active. The Christians underwent their first persecutions under Diocletian between 303 and 305, a period that became known as the Era of Martyrs. The influence of Christianity was increasing, however, and in 311-313, under Emperor Constantine, Christianity was recognized in Egypt and the growing group of Christians were left in peace.

RELIGION

The Ptolemies added a Greek layer to the old Egyptian religion. The Egyptian gods continued to exist, but even in the time of the Greek historiographer Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC) they had been equated with Greek gods. In the Roman Period, too, this led to a complicated world of the gods where characteristics of Egyptian, Greek and Roman gods were combined and complicated family relationships existed between gods and goddesses. As a result, there are few places where the gods that were originally Roman were worshipped.

Under the Romans, Serapis maintained his important position and became very popular outside Alexandria as well. After being destroyed by fire, the Alexandrian Serapeum was even completely rebuilt by Emperor Commodus. Increasing trade, the amalgamation of gods, the movements of Roman soldiers with their own protective gods throughout the empire and the interest of the Romans in the ancient Egyptian culture all led to deities like Serapis and Isis becoming widely known throughout the Roman Empire. Isis in particular, as a goddess of fertility, motherhood and healing, became very popular. Not only did some of the early emperors build a sanctuary for her in Rome, the Iseum Campensis, sanctuaries dedicated to her have also turned up as far away as London, and Bavay in northern France. Her husband Serapis, a fusion of the Egyptian gods Osiris and Apis, became popular in the form Osiris-Canopus – a god in the form of a jar with a lid in the shape of a human head designed to contain sacred water from the annual inundation of the Nile. Serapis was also increasingly linked to the sun god, who played an important role in the Roman Period. As a result he was also linked to Amun, Helios and Apollo. The increasing interest in the solar cult can also be seen in the many depictions of Horus Somtous, the young sun god who sits on a lotus flower. Anubis, the god of mummification, was also linked to the family of Serapis by being a son of Nephthys. Sometimes Anubis was fused with Thoth (Hermes) and it was he who guided the deceased to the hereafter.

Alongside these mixed gods, there were also a number of other developments in the Roman Period. First, several non-imperial individuals were deified. Hadrian deified Antinous, his lover who had drowned in the Nile, and worshipped him in the city founded in his memory, Antinoopolis. Certain special individuals from pharaonic times were also regarded as fully-fledged gods at this time. They included Imhotep, the architect of the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara. Another was Amenemhat III, who had done a lot for the irrigation of the Fayum and was worshipped there as the god Lamares.

The Romans elaborated on the typical temple structures that had already been adopted by the Ptolemies from pharaonic times. A good example is the temple of Hathor in Dendera, which was started under the Ptolemies and was finished by the Romans. This temple complex was entered via a propylon, a large gate in the temple enclosure wall. The propylon was built by emperors Domitian and Trajan. Further to the south was a walled courtyard enclosing the actual temple. The temple itself comprised a pronaos (a large columned hall) and a naos, the holy of holies of the temple where there was a shrine with the cult statue. Not only depictions of Cleopatra VII and Caesarion can be seen on the walls of the temple, but also those of emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero, all offering to the goddess Hathor. Close to the temple of Dendera, and not long before the arrival of Alexander, Nectanebo I had built a

Relief of Isis Lactans, with the goddess Isis suckling her son Horus. Her wig is covered by a vulture, a symbol worn by queens and goddesses, and she is wearing a crown comprising of cow's horns with a sun disc between them, the symbol of the goddess Hathor. Isis is depicted in a little temple next to a column with a Hathor-head capital; on the façade is a protective winged sun disc. On the missing part of the relief, a person, perhaps a pharaoh, is offering her the double crown of Egypt, still visible on the right. Limestone, height 32 cm.

mammisi, where the cult statue of the deity was brought to be symbolically rejuvenated. Another mammisi was built next to it during the Roman Period. Elements such as the pronaos and the mammisi can be found in the Roman temples at Kom Ombo, Philae, Kalabsha and Dakka. The temples of Philae and Dakka also have reliefs showing Augustus symbolically offering the Dodekaschoinos, part of Nubia, to the goddess Isis.
Temples continued to be forbidden territory during the Roman Period, except for purified priests, but just as in the Ptolemaic Period there were areas where ordinary people could turn to the god with their dreams, questions and prayers. These areas were often at the rear of the temple, and known as contra-temples. Roman policy was to be tolerant of native religions. In addition, there was close cooperation between the Roman administration and the priesthood, who kept many of their privileges. Nevertheless, the power of the temples was reduced. One of the first prefects, Petronius, introduced stricter control of the temples and priests. The temple estates were nationalized and the temple personnel had to follow clothing strictures, outlines of their duties were drawn up and they had to report to the Roman administration. This included regular reports of the temple inventory and temple calendar. A good example of the power of the Roman administration over the temples is a decree that the *strategos* ordered to be carved on the temple of Kalabsha. This decree ordered the removal of all pigs from the temple complex for religious reasons. This administrative responsibility made the temples dependent on the Roman administration in Egypt. In the 1st century AD, the *idios logos* – a high official in the Roman administration in charge of special state revenues – was in charge of monitoring the temple revenues.

Isis is depicted here in a pleated garment, secured with an Isis knot between the breasts. She is wearing a cloak and a feathered crown with a sun disc. One arm is missing; it was cast separately and apparently then attached. The extant hand holds her son Harpocrates, who is sitting on a lotus flower and wearing a sun disc on his head. The young Horus-on-the-lotus with a sun disc was associated with the newly reborn sun god Re – the rising sun. Bronze, height 28 cm.

From the Late Period on in particular, Tutu was an important deity. He is depicted on this relief as a sphinx with a cobra for a tail and a second head, a ram's head. He is holding knives in his paws. In front of him is the dwarf god Bes holding a sword; in the upper left is a winged sun disc. Limestone, height 28 cm.

The priests remained actively involved in taking care of tombs. Just as in previous periods, the dead were mummified. However, during the Roman Period, the belief in fate became much stronger. The emphasis on warding off evil powers by protective gods was for this reason a widespread practice. Belligerent gods such as Horus on a horse were thus very popular, and among ordinary Egyptians, deities like the sphinx Tutu, armed with knives, and the domestic god Bes were regarded as powerful protectors.

KINGSHIP

In the Roman Period, just as in the Persian Period, the king of Egypt was not in Egypt itself. Although Egypt was an important province, the residence of the Roman emperors was initially in Rome and then in Constantinople. They were not generally worshipped as gods, unlike the Ptolemies, but did act as the link between humans and the gods – and were thus demigods. The Roman emperor was only depicted as pharaoh on the walls of the temples, where he wore traditional costume and performed the traditional roles – offering to the gods and crushing the enemies of Egypt with a mace. The only major change in the Roman Period was visible in the titulary of the depicted emperor. Traditionally, a pharaoh had five names – his Horus name, his He of the Two Ladies name, his Golden Horus name, his throne name and his birth name. In the Roman Period, the He of the Two Ladies name and the Golden Horus name were dropped. The throne name comprised the word 'caesar' meaning 'emperor' and the birth name the name of the emperor plus the Egyptian word for *sebastos* (augustus): 'the one who is sacred'.

Augustus legitimized his rule in Egypt by claiming that he had succeeded to the throne of Alexander the Great while visiting his tomb in Alexandria. At first, for political reasons, Augustus did not want to be depicted as the demigod pharaoh, because the Senate would immediately have turned against him. In some temples though, for example those at Kalabsha and Dendera, he was depicted as pharaoh in his first year, but generally this occurred much later in his reign. The emperors who followed Augustus frequently used propaganda to legitimize their rule in Egypt. For example, they claimed that they were descended from the gods through a divine birth. This was depicted in the mammisis built next to the temples, for example that in Dendera, built by Nero or Trajan. The building and expanding of temples was one of the ways the Roman emperors used to legitimize their rule, as well as a means to keep control of the priesthoods and thus indirectly the local populace. These achievements were in turn recorded on stelae showing the emperor offering to the gods.

The emperor in the Roman Period was also the defender of Egypt's frontiers. The prefect actually performed this duty in the emperor's name, for example the prefect C. Cornelius Gallus, mentioned above, who campaigned against the Meroites in the south. Egypt played an ambivalent role in the Roman Empire. The many revolts in Egypt and along its borders ensured that the 'emperor-pharaoh' often had to restore order in Egypt with foreign troops. On the other hand, emperors such as Vespasian and Septimius Severus first secured their authority in Egypt, and then demanded the imperial throne of the entire Roman Empire.

The pharaoh on this relief is a Roman emperor, but we do not know which because not enough of the name in the cartouches has been preserved. He is offering a piece of land on a kind of plateau, symbolized by reed leaves, to a diety indicated by the fragment of staff on the right hand side. He is wearing the royal headcloth with uraeus, and above that a crown, of which only the ram's horns and part of a sun disc can be seen. Sandstone, height 42 cm.

THE FAMILY IN ROMAN EGYPT

This tomb stela is dedicated to a man called Harpocrates. He is dressed in a Greek chiton and is lying on a couch holding a beaker in his hand. Under the bed are offerings, including a three-legged table. Such stelae are characteristic of the cemetery of the town of Terenuthis in the Nile Delta. They were placed in a niche in the superstructure of the tomb. Limestone, height 29 cm.

Before the arrival of the Romans, a family in Egypt comprised the mother, father and children, some unmarried family members or family members whose partners had died. There is a lot of information about families in the Roman Period, because in the first three centuries AD, and perhaps earlier, there were regular censuses performed. Records were kept of these censuses. Together with other written sources, they reveal that in the Roman Period, about half of the families were simply a mother, father and children. It was not uncommon for grandparents and unmarried family members to live in, and rich families sometimes had slaves. Wisdom texts from ancient Egypt recommend men to marry as soon as they have enough income. For men, this was usually when they were about twenty. Women could marry from as young as twelve, and the mother of the bride or the bride herself was able to have a say in the marriage agreement. This was set out in a contract, in which the recording of ownership of property played an important role. Marriages were informal contracts, and a state official was not needed. After marriage, the bride moved into her husband's house. There she was of equal status, and was allowed to take her possessions away with her in the event of a divorce. The woman also shared the use of her husband's tomb and was called 'mistress of the house'. During pharaonic times, but also in the Roman Period, it was common to refer to someone by placing the name of one or both of their parents after their own name, for example 'X the son of Y' or 'A the daughter of B'. The average lifespan was very short – it was rare to become much older than 30, and child mortality was high. Many children died in the early months of life, and mothers regularly died in childbirth. There was a range of magical means to prevent this bad luck – amulets of the protective god Bes and depictions of Isis as a mother goddess were designed to prevent anything bad happening to mother and child during childbirth. If the birth went well, the mother nursed the child herself. In wealthier families a wet nurse could be hired to suckle the child. This wet nurse could often turn into the nanny. Several private archives have survived from the Roman Period, sometimes kept for generations, revealing how ownership was organized and how legacies were implemented. The eldest son was responsible for burying his father, and then the will could be implemented. The death of the head of the family did not always mean that his possessions were divided up, although some documents reveal quarrels between heirs about the legacy of their deceased family member. The site of Oxyrhynkhos in Middle Egypt is one of the places where complete archives have been found, revealing much about daily life and family relationships in Roman Egypt.

Mummy mask of a woman with a Roman hairstyle. These lifelike portraits were originally secured to wooden sarcophagi. Painted plaster, height 25 cm.

EXCAVATION **Kellis**

View of the ruins of the temple of Tutu at Kellis. The limestone remains of the temple building can be seen in the centre of the ruins. The enclosure wall and some of the subsidiary buildings were built of mudbrick, with traces of white plaster sometimes still visible. View from the south west of the contra-temple (far left) and the various shrines of the main building (centre).

Ismant el-Kharab, Kellis

The site of Ismant el-Kharab, antique Kellis, is in the middle of Dakhla Oasis and comprises mainly remains from the Roman Period. It covers an area of about one square kilometre and the remains have been found of a large temple complex, cemeteries with rock-cut tombs, chamber tombs and pit graves, mud-brick houses, a bathhouse and three churches.

The major temple at Kellis was dedicated to the god Tutu, his wife Tapshay and Tutu's mother Neith. Tutu could be depicted as a man, but he was more often shown as a lion with a human head (sphinx) and a cobra as a tail. He was a protective god and is regularly found on stelae. The temple was operational by the reign of Nero (AD 54-68) and was abandoned in the middle of the 4th century AD. By that time there was a church in Kellis. This site thus mirrors the transition from the 'pagan' religion to Christianity.

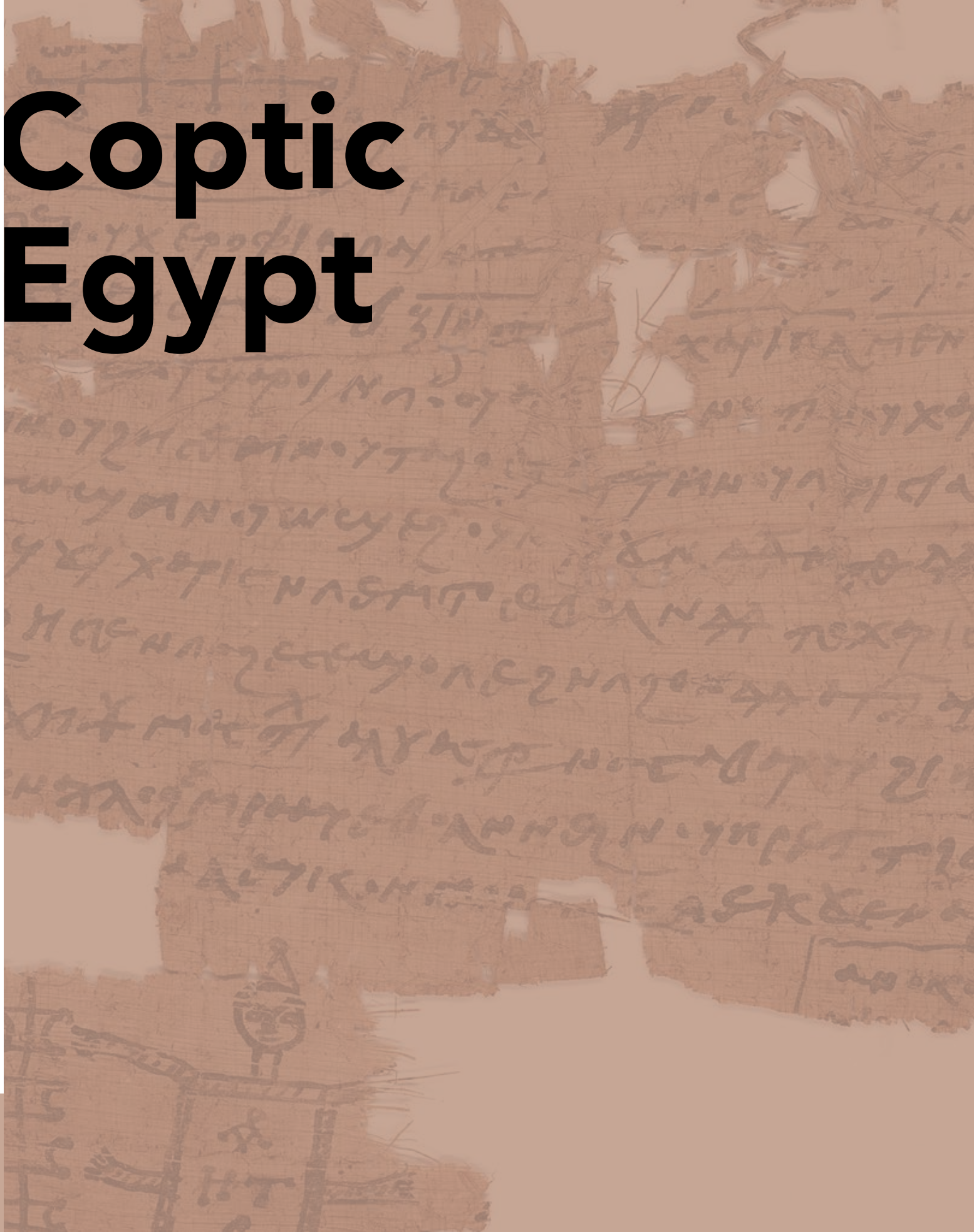
The main entrance to the temple was on the east side, with two monumental gateways giving access to a forecourt. A stela was found in this courtyard bearing the latest hieroglyphic text in the temple, and depicting the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) offering to Tutu and Neith. A portico in the forecourt gave access to the temple itself. The temple also has a contra-temple against its back wall. This is where the ordinary people could come and address the god with prayers, questions and

dreams – the main temple was only accessible to the priests who were in charge of the cult statue. The contra-temple has a small courtyard and was decorated with reliefs from the time of Emperor Pertinax (AD 193). To the south was a shrine measuring 12 x 5 metres, a mammisi, the 'birth house' where the deity of the temple was ritually 'rejuvenated' every year. Archaeologists from the University of Leiden are investigating the site of Kellis as part of the international Dakhleh Oasis Project. Led by Professor Olaf Kaper, they are trying to gain more insight into the changing Graeco-Roman culture in Egypt by investigating the large temple. Since 1991, the excavations have concentrated on the paintings in the mammisi. The walls of this building were in a relatively good state, but the vaulted ceiling, which also had painted plaster decoration, has collapsed. After years of careful excavation and puzzle work, it has been possible to reconstruct the paintings on the ceiling and the walls. They have turned out to be a very interesting mixture of Roman and Egyptian styles. On the walls were illustrations in Roman style of vines, birds and heads of Medusa. The vaulted ceiling was decorated with illustrations of about four hundred Egyptian deities who played a role in the annual ritual renewal of the cult statue that was brought from the temple to the mammisi. These deities were involved in the rebirth of Tutu and the rejuvenation of his powers. The presence of so many gods being actively worshipped so shortly before the rise of Christianity demonstrates how deeply rooted the belief in the ancient Egyptian gods was. There are currently no excavations taking place in the Kellis temple complex, efforts are concentrating on the preservation and reconstruction of the mammisi. The temple complex itself has been protected against the elements by being reburied, the only way to preserve it for the future. After the turbulent times of the Egyptian revolution, there are advanced plans for a local museum with perhaps a reconstruction of the mammisi with its original paintings.

At Kellis, part of the plasterwork was found in the rubble on the floor of the mammisi. It takes a lot of patience to sort through the remains. The photo shows archaeologists puzzling together some of the many gods depicted in a procession.

Hathor is a mother goddess with the features of a cow. In the Kellis mammisi, representations of several different Hathors have been found. This illustration shows the goddesses wearing colourful crowns and garments in a procession, each shaking a sistrum (rattle). This musical instrument, which often incorporates a Hathor head, was regarded as something which could calm the goddess, who also had a fierce aspect.

Coptic Egypt



The new Coptic Cathedral of St Michael in Aswan, Southern Egypt.

Coptic

The word 'coptic' is derived from the Greek word *aiguptios*, which in turn derives from the ancient Egyptian phrase *Hut-Ka-Ptah*, the Temple of the *Ka* of Ptah, one of the names of the city of Memphis. The Arabs turned *aiguptios* into *qibti*, and that in turn became Copt. Coptic thus means nothing more nor less than 'Egyptian'. Over time, the word has acquired the specific meaning of 'Christian Egypt', to make a differentiation with the Islamic majority in Egypt.

Although Christians remained the majority in Egypt for some time after the Arab conquest in AD 640, currently only 10-15% of the Egyptians are Coptic Christians. As such they form the largest Christian community in the Middle East. In Ethiopia, the Christian church, to which about half of the population belongs, became independent of the Coptic church in Egypt not long ago and now has its own patriarch. Although they are thus closely related, both churches should now be considered as separate.

Roman and Byzantine domination

There were Christians in Egypt from about AD 100, particularly in Alexandria. According to tradition, the Apostle Mark had brought the Gospel here about 50 years earlier. The first converts in the city were Greeks and Jews (a large group), only later did the new religion catch the imagination of the native Egyptians. Similarities between Christianity and the Egyptian religion – for example the idea of a last judgement, the resurrection of Jesus as a parallel for the resurrection of Osiris, the trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus, and the image of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus as a reflection of Isis with the child Horus – made the religion familiar to them. Incidentally, the cult of Isis remained a serious rival to Christianity throughout the Roman Empire for many years. Ancient Egyptian motifs also continued to exist for a long time.

The transition to Christianity was not always a peaceful process. Under Emperor Diocletian, a notorious persecutor of Christians, many people were martyred in Egypt and the rest of the Empire; even now the Coptic calendar starts in AD 284, the start of the reign of this emperor, rather than with the birth of Christ. The names of the months they use, however, are directly derived from ancient Egyptian.

As early as 212, free men within the Roman Empire had Roman citizenship, with all the associated rights, including the active and passive right to vote. Emperor Constantine I (Constantine the Great) converted to Christianity and granted Christians freedom of religion in the Edict of Milan of 313, composed with his co-emperor Licinius. When Emperor Julian the Apostate came to power in 361, he tried to turn back the clock by favouring the pagan religions again, but his death in battle in 363 put paid to that. From that moment on, many more people converted to Christianity, and at the end of the 4th century, more than 80% of the population were Christians. The tables were turned on paganism, and Egypt became Christian.

Although Emperor Theodosius had forbidden all pagan religions in the Roman Empire in 392, the last functioning temple, that of Isis on the island of Philae near Aswan, was only closed in 536 on the express orders of Emperor Justinian the Great – Christianity's final victory.

Under Diocletian, administrative reform had already been introduced, whereby the Roman Empire was in fact divided into an eastern and a western empire, and each part further divided into two tetrarchies. They were in turn divided into dioceses (sub-empires), and at the lowest level into provinces. Egypt first formed part of the Diocese of the East, but

St Menas was a popular saint from Alexandria who, according to legend, was taken by camel into the desert after his death to be buried there. At the spot a large monastic town grew up, visited by many pilgrims. They took away pilgrim flasks like these, depicting St Menas between two camels. They were filled with holy water or olive oil, just as the bottles from Lourdes are today. Pottery, diameter 10 cm.

MONASTERIES AND MONKS

The 'White Monastery' near Sohag in Middle Egypt dates to the 5th century. It still resembles a pagan Egyptian temple. It also looks like a fort, which was very practical in an isolated and unsafe environment.

Right from the start, many Christians in Egypt felt strongly inclined to withdraw as anchorites or hermits and do penance and pray in solitude. They often withdrew to caves in the desert, or to old tombs, leaving traces that are still visible in places. Gradually, however, they began to form communities, perhaps because an especially pious or wise anchorite gathered followers around him. Famous names from the early period include Anthony and Pakhom. Anthony is credited with having conceived the concept of monastic life and its specific regimen. Occasionally it is possible to speak of a monastic town, for example the popular pilgrimage of Saint Menas near Alexandria – Menas bottles for holy water from the well there bear witness to this – or near Kellia on the edge of the western Nile Delta. At its peak in the 6th century, Egypt had hundreds of monasteries. Saints and reliquaries played a major role.

In the past, many excavations did not pay too much attention to Coptic remains, whether of houses or monasteries. The number of monasteries that have been properly excavated is thus relatively few, although this has improved recently. As the successors to the anchorite communities, many of these monasteries were situated in isolated places. As a result, however, they were very vulnerable to robbers' bands and 'barbarian' nomads, and early on in their history they were fortified with walls and towers. For this reason, too, they had to be able to provide for themselves as much as possible, and thus there was always a well in the complex. The famous monastery of St Simeon on the west bank at Aswan was abandoned relatively early on, only two hundred years after it was founded in the 10th century, because the water supply failed.

In times of persecution, the monasteries often played the same role as early Medieval monasteries in Western Europe – they were the guardians of cultural heritage in the form of church treasures and manuscripts that would otherwise have been lost. The famous St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Desert is not in fact a Coptic monastery, but a Greek-Orthodox one. One of the oldest Bible manuscripts (from the 4th century) was discovered here in the 20th century. These manuscripts also contain texts that were originally in Greek, but are now only known in their Coptic translations.

Large quantities of manuscripts have been discovered over the years in excavations – legal and illegal – and in forgotten monastic libraries, and sometimes they vanish swiftly into the antiquities trade. Among the most important of these are the *Nag Hammadi codices*, discovered in 1946 close to an Upper Egyptian

town of the same name. These books contain a number of Gnostic texts, including apocryphal books of the Bible. Gnosticism is a partly non-Christian philosophical view of the world, and it was considered to be heretical by the Orthodox Coptic church, also because of its links with pagan perceptions, not only from the ancient Egyptian religion but also from Manichaeism. The latter was founded partly on dualistic opposites such as the divine and the worldly, light and dark, good and evil, a body of ideas that has influenced groups ranging from the Medieval Cathars to the Freemasons and the Rosicrucians.

The successful concept of monastic life spread from Egypt to Europe, partly via Syria to the east and north-east, and partly with a long detour via Ireland to Western Europe. The monastic rules of the Benedictines, for example, are derived from those of Pakhom. St Moritz in Switzerland is named after Maurice, a Coptic missionary whose reliquaries are still preserved there.

LANGUAGE, SCRIPT AND LITERATURE

The Coptic language is the last phase of the spoken ancient Egyptian language. It is now a dead ecclesiastical language, comparable to Latin in the Roman Catholic church. As a spoken language it has long since become extinct. In the early centuries AD, the Egyptians ceased to write their language in the complicated hieroglyphic script, or scripts derived from this, and instead used the Greek alphabet, supplemented by some Egyptian signs for sounds that Greek did not have – the Coptic script. Because Greek was the language of the administration, and originally also the language of the new Christian religion, a great number of Greek loan words have ended up in Coptic. Another advantage of the use of the Greek alphabet was that vowels could also be written, unlike in hieroglyphs, and for the first time it was possible to differentiate between dialects. Although the Coptic script was much simpler than the old hieroglyphic script, and the number of people who were literate also increased, the majority of the population remained illiterate.

Most Coptic literature is religious in nature. Translations of apocryphal and non-apocryphal Bible books, sermons and the lives of saints and pious individuals form the vast majority of the preserved texts. Given the importance of the religious texts, primarily biblical texts, the manuscripts were often written in beautiful calligraphy and wonderfully illustrated, and bound in richly decorated leather. Because the papyrus plant was becoming extinct in Egypt, gradually parchment took over as the 'paper' of preference.

Coptic payprus with a magical text. A man is asking two angels, one of whom is Gabriel, to drive out his demon. The figure at the bottom represents Christ, as is written on the body. Height 30 cm.

Bronze incense vessel with biblical representations, including the annunciation of the birth of Christ, his baptism by John the Baptist, the crucifixion and resurrection. 10th century, height: 10 cm.

later became a separate diocese, subdivided into five to seven provinces. A diocese was headed by a Prefect. During a later administrative reform, the diocese was abolished and Egypt was divided into five independent provinces, each headed by a governor. Church leaders, incidentally, were actively involved in secular matters.

From time to time the division into two empires was abolished, and the empire was again ruled by a single emperor, for example Constantine I and Justinian the Great. In the mid-6th century, the latter succeeded in reconquering part of the old West Roman Empire from the barbarian tribes which had attacked it, but not for long.

In the preceding years, most of the pagan temples had been closed, sometimes accompanied by iconoclasms headed by fanatical believers. An interesting report has been preserved, in which a mob of Christians stormed a pagan temple but finally came to a halt in front of the cult statue in the shrine, because you could never be certain what would happen... One bold Christian dared to throw down the statue – and nothing happened. The traces of such activities can still be seen in many temples in the form of hacked out faces. Afterwards, many temples were converted into churches. Magical practices, often continuations of pagan customs, continued unabated.

There was not only material damage. In Alexandria in the 5th century there was still a school where Greek, non-Christian philosophy was taught, among others by the famous philosopher and mathematician Hypatia – to the dissatisfaction of the Christian majority in the city. She became involved in a conflict between Archbishop Cyril and the Byzantine prefect Orestes, which resulted in all Jews being banished from Alexandria in 415. That same year, Hypatia was lynched by a Christian mob.

However, early Christians within and outside Egypt certainly did not form an entity. There were several major, sometimes violent, conflicts within Christianity, particularly about the nature of God. One of the most significant conflicts occurred in the 4th century in Alexandria, between the theologian Arius and Archbishop Athanasius. The former claimed that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were different entities, while the latter defended the concept of Trinitarianism. The Council of Nicea in 325 decided in favour of Athanasius. The second major conflict took place in the 5th century. It was over the issue of whether God the Father and God the Son had a single divine nature or both a divine and a human nature. The patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, was a supporter of the first option. The Council of Chalcedon in 452, however, decided in favour of the second. As a result the church of Alexandria split from the mother church – the old rivalry between the patriarchs of Alexandria and Constantinople also played a role here – and since then it has functioned as the independent Coptic Church.

Painted tombstone of a certain Tasia. Height 32 cm.

Between 619 and 629, Persia succeeded in gaining control of Egypt from the Byzantines. The Byzantine emperor Heraclius was able to defeat the Persians, but not for long; in 640 Egypt was conquered by the Arab warrior Amr ibn el-As. Heraclius died not long after.

The arrival of Islam

In 640, the rise of Islam began. Voluntarily or involuntarily, over the next centuries most of the native Egyptians converted to Islam. In addition, Islamic immigrants from the Arabian peninsula also settled in the country. In the 12th century, the isolated region of Nubia, which until then had been Christian, was also islamicized. The church became weaker and weaker as the result of spiritual and physical suppression, heavy taxation, stagnation and isolation, and by the time the Turks entered the Egyptian stage in 1517, only a minority were still Christian and only a few

Column from the festival hall of Thutmosis III in the temple of Karnak. This building was later converted into a Coptic church, as the remains of this painting of a Coptic saint clearly show.

monasteries had survived. Some of those still survive today. In recent decades, they have even started to flourish again.

The Copts today

At the head of the Orthodox-Coptic church in Egypt today is Patriarch (commonly referred to as 'Pope') Tawadros (Theodorus) II, with his see in Cairo. The Copts are not unified; there are also Protestants (Coptic Evangelical) and 'united' Copts, who recognize the authority of Rome. However, they are all united against the huge Islamic majority. The relationship with the Muslims is not free of tension; in Middle Egypt, in particular, near Asyut, a hotbed of Muslim Fundamentalism and also an area with a high concentration of Copts causes problems. Things have not got any better since the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. This is one of the reasons for the high emigration statistics of Copts, particularly to California, where there is even a Coptic monastery in the middle of the desert. There is also a flourishing Coptic community in the Netherlands.

Church services can last for hours, with people walking in and out, conversing with each other, and even livestock wandering in and out of the church. Just as in other Orthodox churches, a great deal of the service takes place behind a wooden screen, the iconostasis. Men and women sit separately, each in their own half of the church. Parish priests are allowed to marry, but monks are not. Easter, as in so many Eastern churches, is the most important sacred festival. The Coptic church calendar is still the old Julian calendar, and is thus two weeks behind the modern Gregorian calendar. Periods of fasting, when people are only allowed to eat vegetarian food, precede and follow church festivals and play an important role. Something that the Copts share with their Muslim countrymen is the celebration of the *mulids* (birthdays) of saintly persons. Some of these are even honoured by both Copts and Muslims, and the same is true of the regularly recurring apparitions of the Virgin Mary. When mourning a deceased person, there are special memorial days with varying intervals for a year, exactly as the Muslims in Egypt do; this custom dates back to their joint ancestors, the ancient Egyptians. The Copts regard themselves as the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians, more than the Muslims.

Although Copts were the driving force behind the independence struggles of the Egyptians under the British Protectorate in the 20th century, and have even produced prime ministers, they are currently under-represented at administrative levels, although they do have seats in the national government. Boutros Ghali, for example, the former secretary general of the United Nations and previously minister of Foreign Affairs in Egypt, comes from an influential Coptic family. Copts are better represented in economic life; a relatively high number of businesses are owned by Copts, such as the largest mobile telephone provider, Mobinil, and certain professions, for example pharmacist, are virtually always exercised by them. However, this does not mean that all Copts are rich – the traditional rubbish collectors in Cairo, for example, are Copts (known as *zabalin*); they literally live on the rubbish dumps, surviving by sorting the waste they collect, and are among the poorest of the poor in Egypt.

The frescos in the refectory of the monastery of Saint Simeon on the west bank at Aswan. The 10th century monastery was abandoned in the 12th century due to problems with the water supply and because its situation made it vulnerable to raids.

EXCAVATION Deir el-Baramus

Since 1996, Dr K.C. Innemée has been investigating the remains of the monastery of Deir el-Baramus, the oldest monastic community in the area. The research is funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University. The aim of the research is to sketch the development of monastic life in Scetis (the ancient name for the Wadi el-Natrun) between AD 350 and 1300.

The research can be divided into several parts. First is the excavation of the monastery of Deir el-Baramus, most probably the oldest monastic settlement in the region. It developed from a very loose community, with a core of watchtowers, a communal church and scattered hermit cells, into a walled, defensible monastery. The monastery was abandoned in the 15th century. The monastery next to it, founded later, is still occupied. The project hopes to excavate one more area at Deir el-Baramus and then round off the excavations.

In addition, the hermit cells scattered around the core up to a distance of about 3 km have also been investigated. Further, since 2010 the area around the Monastery of St Macarius (Deir Abu Magar) has also been charted. This work has revealed that the monastery developed in a completely different way after it became the residence of the Coptic patriarch

^ View of the excavations with a large kitchen in the foreground, the modern monastery in the background.

> Map of the excavations at Deir el-Baramus, in the Wadi el-Natrun.

v Fieldwork at Deir el-Baramus

in the 6th century. Until in the 11th century, this was a densely built agglomeration with over a hundred buildings, situated outside the enclosure walls of the actual, central monastery. The settlement has pottery kilns and metal smelters, living quarters and churches. A large cemetery bears witness to the number of inhabitants, which may have been as many as a thousand at its peak.
In the Monastery of Macarius, which is still occupied, an inventory was drawn up of the architectural features and objects that were revealed during the renovation of the monastery in the 1970s, which may throw light on the buildings that were dismantled in the 18th and 19th centuries.
The plan is to complete the research around Abu Magar in the near future and conduct a small-scale test excavation.
K. Innemée

^ Fieldwork at Deir el-Baramus

< Documenting the finds.

^ The ruins of the church of Deir el-Baramus in the 4th-5th century, from the southwest.

v Fieldwork at Deir el-Baramus

Child's dress with hood, made of linen and wool. From the cemetery of Akhmim. 4th-7th century, height 43 cm.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The earliest Coptic monasteries and churches are strongly reminiscent of temples, for example the 'White Monastery' in Akhmim. This fortified exterior was very practical due to the unsafe, isolated location of many of the monasteries. The shape of the churches is derived from the Roman basilica, a building with a high nave and two lower side aisles (often supported by reused ancient columns), with an apse at the end and a dome in the middle. The choir is separated from the rest of the church by a wooden screen or iconostasis. At least some of the walls were painted with religious representations – saints and biblical scenes. The icons painted on wooden panels play an important role in the Coptic Church, just as in other Orthodox churches. The manner of depiction with, for example, disproportionally large eyes, is directly derived from the style of the Fayum portraits, which were also painted on panels and were inserted into the mummy bandages above the face. Icons were touched, kissed and stroked, so they were subject to wear and tear. However, they were simply repaired again and again, and many popular icons have numerous layers of paint on them.

Bronze and iron were used to make incense vases and crosses. Relief work in stone and wood was usually reserved for church decoration and for tombstones. Unlike the ancient Egyptian artwork, Coptic art can sometimes seem to be rather clumsy; it is as if the Copts had broken radically with the ancient Egyptian traditions and had started anew from scratch.

A great deal of Coptic textiles have survived, mainly because the Christians were buried in their best clothes in cemeteries in the desert, which helped to preserve the material. What is remarkable is how long motifs from the classical world which do not look at all Christian continued to be used.

Many bodies illustrating the transition from paganism to Christianity have been preserved in the huge cemetery at Antinoë in Middle Egypt. The earliest bodies were still being mummified – their internal organs were removed and the body was then wrapped in linen bandages. Later on the bodies were still wrapped in bandages, but the internal organs were no longer removed; after all, the body had to remain intact for the Christian Judgement Day.

Islamic Egypt

The Rashidun, the Ummayad and the Abbasid Caliphates (641-969)

In AD 622, the prophet Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina where he laid the foundations of Islamic society. In 630, the followers of Islam, the Muslims, conquered Mecca and then began a quick dissemination of the new religion. The first followers of the prophet brought the Arabian Peninsula under the control of a single leader. Caliph Umar conquered Jerusalem and Damascus, and defeated the Sassanids in the east. Under his leadership, Egypt was wrested from Byzantine control in 641. Headed by General 'Amr ibn el-As, an army of four thousand soldiers entered Egypt where they engaged in battle with the Byzantines near Heliopolis. They then marched to the Roman-Byzantine fort of Babylon, near the ancient capital Memphis, and on to the Byzantine capital in Egypt, Alexandria. The Egyptians had long been considered heretic Christians, since the schism from the Byzantine Church in Constantinople, and they had suffered under the taxes imposed by the Byzantines to finance their wars against the Sassanids. This explains why the Egyptians often cooperated with the Muslims, in the hope that they would exploit them less than the Byzantines. As a result, the Muslims did not meet much resistance. Once Byzantine attempts to reconquer Egypt had failed, a treaty was signed in 641 stating that the Byzantines would leave Egypt.

The Muslims founded a new Egyptian capital just to the north of the fort of Babylon, El-Fustat, a city that would later be absorbed by the Cairo of today. The Rashiduns, the first four caliphs – called the 'successors' after the death of Muhammad in 632 – were followed by fourteen Ummayad caliphs. The last Rashidun caliph – Ali, Mohammad's cousin – was murdered, resulting in the birth of the two great ideological movements in Islam, Shi'ite – the followers of Ali – and Sunni – the followers of Orthodox Islam. Under the Rashidun and the Ummayad caliphs, who ruled from Damascus from 661 to 750, Egypt was administered by a governor who collected taxes for the caliph. The first governor was 'Amr ibn el-As, who initially took over the Byzantine administrative system – this system would not be reorganized until the 8th century. He appointed a supreme commander in Egypt, as well as a supreme judge (*qadi*) and a minister of finance. Taxes were levied on agricultural land, and grain was shipped via the Ptolemaic-Roman canal between the Red Sea and the Nile to the Islamic homeland, the Hejaz, the western part of Saudi Arabia, bordering on the Red Sea. After 'Amr ibn el-As, the Ummayad caliphs appointed governors who alternated between being severe on and well-inclined towards the Egyptian population. In some periods the Christians and Jews were suppressed. Gradually, more and more Muslim migrants from the East settled in Egypt, speeding up the process of Islamization. A number of other measures also contributed to this; for example, under the Ummayad caliphs, Coptic was replaced as the official language of the administration by Arabic, and the coins were from then on minted in Damascus, the capital of the Ummayad Empire. In Egypt, many converted to Islam to avoid the increasingly heavy taxes, which Muslims did

The site of the cemetery of Zawyet el-Maiyitin is not only the site of a small pyramid dating to the 3rd Dynasty, but also of the largest Islamic cemetery in Egypt. Most of the cemetery consists of beehive tombs. The cemetery runs from the borders of the town right up to the cliffs at the edge of the desert.

The southern gate of Bab Zuweila, built in the 11th century, gave access to Fatimid Cairo. The gate swiftly lost its defensive function and became the central point of the Qasaba (later Sharia al-Muizz li-Deen Illah), the most important trading street between the northern and southern gates of Cairo. In the 15th century, there were market stalls selling food, sweets and musical instruments, among other things.

not have to pay. Under the Abbasid caliphs, the dynasty that conquered the Ummayads in 750 and ruled the Islamic Empire from Baghdad, the Egyptians were also increasingly exploited by their governors and the population often sought protection from the supreme judge of the province, who could oppose the laws of the governor.

Between 868 and 905, Egypt was ruled by the dynasty of the Turkish governor Ahmed Ibn Tulun, and experienced a period of prosperity. He was even able to make Egypt independent of the caliph, and although he paid taxes to him, they also regularly clashed over control in Syria. Ibn Tulun built extensively, and even built a new capital city close to El-Fustat, El-Qatai. However, that city was destroyed by the Abbasid caliph when he reconquered Egypt, thus bringing the Tulun dynasty to an end. Abbasid rule weakened over time, and more and more governors began to behave as local rulers. Once again Egypt suffered a period of exploitation. Relatively good management, for example that of Muhammad ibn Tughj el-Ikhshid, was the exception. His dynasty, which lasted until 968, brought great prosperity and cultural development to the cities, but the rural areas became poorer and poorer due to the heavy taxes. In 969, an Egypt plagued by disease and famine was conquered by the Fatimid dynasty from the western part of North Africa.

Fatimids and Ayyubids (969-1250)

Under the Fatimids – these rulers had proclaimed themselves caliphs in 909, thus challenging the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad – another new capital city was founded, this time to the north of El-Fustat: El-Qahira, the Arabic name for Cairo. The Fatimids were the first Shi'ite rulers of Egypt, and this isolated the Sunni religious leaders, particularly when the Fatimid rule was expanded as far as Syria and Saudi Arabia. However, the Fatimids left the Sunnis in peace, so there were never any major conflicts between Shi'ites and Sunnis. In the Near East, the Fatimids regularly fought against the other Islamic dynasties. In Egypt they brought

The settlement of El-Qasr in Dakhla Oasis is built on top of the remains of a Roman fort and was occupied as early as the 13th century. In the 1980s, El-Qasr was declared a UNESCO monument and was abandoned by the inhabitants. The settlement quickly began to deteriorate because mud-brick houses need regular maintenance. The Dakhleh Oasis Project is currently conducting restoration work with a team led by Professor Fred Leemhuis of the University of Groningen.

The Al-Azhar mosque and university were built by the Shi'ite Fatimids. After Egypt was conquered by Saladin, the Al-Azhar complex became one of the most important centres for the study of Sunni Islam. It is the oldest university in the Islamic world, and one of the people who taught there was the scholar 'Abd el-Rahman Ibn Khaldun.

prosperity through good governance, and they stimulated international trade with the east and with Europe.

Fatimid Egypt is renowned for its lustreware – pottery in a metallic glaze with extensive and various decorations, sometimes multicoloured. The country also had a textile industry characterized by calligraphic decorations. Under the early Fatimids, the tax system was reorganized and made more efficient, reducing the corruption significantly. Copts were given important positions in the financial administration of the country.

In 996, the eccentric caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah came to power in Egypt. He is considered responsible for a number of very strange laws, for example the ban on catching and eating fish without scales, or the ban on playing chess, or the ban on making shoes for women because they were supposed to remain in the home. One of the many viziers appointed by Al-Hakim attributed divine status to him; he subsequently had to flee to Syria where he founded the Druze sect. The followers of Al-Hakim gradually lost control of the various Turkish, Sudanese and Berber regiments in the army, which were fighting each other for control, and thus the country was in a vulnerable position. The Fatimid caliph Al-Mustansir Billah eventually asked the governor of Acre in Syria-Palestine for help in restoring order. From about 1099, Western European Christians invaded the Levant on the first crusade to conquer the Holy Land. They also tried to gain control of Egypt, which was now being run more by the viziers than by the caliphs. Eventually the Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty was toppled by the Sunni Syrian viziers.

One of them, Saladin, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, engaged the crusaders in battle. In 1187 he reconquered Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the crusaders for 88 years. Saladin temporarily drove them out of the Levant, and later on also successfully repulsed an invasion of the crusaders in Egypt. There he started major construction projects, including reopening the arm of the river between the Nile and the Fayum, the Bahr Yussef. Saladin, who now called himself sultan, also initiated the building of the Citadel in Cairo, which was fed with water by an aqueduct leading from the Nile. Saladin reintroduced Sunni Islam by building schools and importing Sunni scholars from the east. He promoted Sufism, improved the irrigation system and turned Egypt into an intellectual centre in the Islamic world. Under his successor Al-Salih Ayyub, a new regiment was

added to the army, comprising Turkish slaves, the Mamelukes. They may have started as the sultan's bodyguards, but in 1250 they overthrew the Ayyubid dynasty and mounted the Egyptian throne themselves.

Mamelukes and Ottomans (1250-1798)

The Turkish background of the Mamelukes differentiated them from the ordinary Egyptians. The Mamelukes bought young slaves in Anatolia – now part of Turkey –, the Urals and the Caucasus in order to train them as warriors in their own families. These slaves were taught to view their fellow warriors as brothers, and to obey the leader of the Mameluke household. These links replaced the links of family. Adult slaves – who were given their freedom after finishing their military and religious training – were allowed to found their own families and so continue the tradition. The Mamelukes formed the caliph's bodyguard and were not so much professional soldiers as a sort of warrior caste. The Mamelukes specialized in single combat and were renowned for their fighting and riding skills. They were accepted in Egypt because they protected the farmers against attacks from outside. Their first rulers instigated a huge building programme with schools and mosques, and signed an alliance with the Byzantine ruler against the attacks of the Mongol khans.

The first Mameluke sultan-caliph, Baibars, faced the Mongol khan Hulagu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, who had defeated the Abbasid dynasty in Iraq and then invaded Syria. Baibars was able to defeat the Mongols with his professionally organized army and was the first caliph to adopt the title of 'sultan'. Baibars, a giant of a man and a clever ruler, lived on for a long time as a folk hero in Egyptian stories told for generations, even down to modern times.

Baibars's successor Qalawun maintained a truce with the Mongols, and the Mameluke dynasty reached its highpoint with various building projects, including a mosque-cum-tomb for Qalawun himself, a hospital and a library. Mameluke architecture was richly and colourfully decorated, with calligraphy playing an important role. Typical of the Mameluke Period are the scarlet, green and blue carpets in which an octagonal pattern develops from the centre.

The population of Egypt decreased significantly due to the plague epidemics of the 14th century, as did the amount of farmed land and the resulting tax revenues. This led to a reformation of the trade system by the Mamelukes, whereby the profitable trade in spices became a state monopoly for a long time. By the time that Mameluke rule came to an end in 1516, the economic situation had deteriorated, a heavy burden for ordinary Egyptians. Both the Mameluke sultans and the viziers, who were often also emirs, succeeded each other in quick succession in mutual conflict. In turn, this ensured unstable government and a weak economic situation. Nevertheless, several Mameluke sultans were able to initiate building projects both in Egypt and in the Mameluke-controlled areas elsewhere, such as schools, forts, mosques and roads. In addition, the Mamelukes supported the Sufi monasteries.

At the end of the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire began to make its presence felt in the Near East. It expanded swiftly thanks to a superior army, and in 1453 brought the Byzantine Empire to an end by conquering Constantinople. The Ottomans now turned their attention to Egypt, and after a series of battles they beat the Mamelukes thanks to their superior firepower. In 1516 Egypt became an Ottoman province.

Under the Mamelukes, Egypt had been ruled as an entity from Cairo. During the Ottoman Period, the country was once again divided up into a number of provinces. They were ruled by governors who were responsible to the pasha, the Ottoman viceroy. During the Ottoman period, the agricultural land finally became privately owned. This was the last phase in the long process of privatization started by the Ptolemies. However, taxes still had to be paid. During the Ottoman Period, the Mamelukes, despite the frequent occasions when they revolted against the Ottoman pasha, occupied important positions in the army and the administration. Eventually they again became powerful enough to influence the appointment and deposition of the pasha. The pasha had no army at his disposal and was thus subject to the whims of his Mameluke administrators. The power of the Mamelukes waxed and waned, until the Ottomans at the start of the 18th century once more gained control by playing the various Mameluke families off against each other.

Unlike the Mamelukes, who relied for their income initially only on tax revenues from agricultural land, the salaries of the soldiers of the Ottoman regiments was supplemented by protection money paid by the artisan guilds. This practice led to various Ottoman soldiers marrying into the families of the guilds, which promoted the integration of the Ottomans into the local population. Egypt was an important entrepôt for spices and coffee, and exported local textiles to other Ottoman regions, Europe and Africa. At the end of the 18th century, however, the economic system became more and more disrupted as the traders caused the decline into poverty of the artisan class by exporting the raw materials the artisans needed to a swiftly industrializing Europe. Trade declined due to competition from Europe,

and the farming population was so severely exploited that they could no longer work the fields. The population, and thus also the amount of farmed land, once again declined.

The French occupation and the development of the modern state (1798-1882)

In 1798, the French troops under Napoleon arrived in a disrupted Egypt. They fought the Mamelukes and eventually drove them into southern Egypt and the Sudan. Napoleon then began to restructure Egypt, which turned into a major fiasco. By cooperating with the ulama, the scholars from the Al-Azhar mosque, the most important Islamic religious study centre in Cairo, Napoleon hoped to win the population to his side. Growing dissatisfaction with the French presence, the continually escaping Mameluke leaders ravaging the south of Egypt and the combined English-Ottoman attacks to repulse the French eventually resulted in the French having to leave Egypt after only three years.

What followed was a struggle between the British, the Ottomans and the Mamelukes about who should become governor of Egypt. During this period of chaos, the ulama turned to the only one who appeared to have a vision, Muhammed Ali, an Albanian-Ottoman army commander and a veteran of the fight against Napoleon. Muhammed Ali became pasha of Egypt in name, and thus paid taxes to the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul. He consolidated his power in 1811 by killing the last Mameluke leaders, and started to industrialize Egypt as quickly as he could. The country also got its own professional army, consisting of Egyptians for the first time since the Late Period. Not only the army became Egyptian, the administration and government apparatus also increasingly became run by Egyptians. Huge textile factories were set up in Egypt and the Egyptian railway was built. Although not all of these developments were successful, Muhammed Ali 'Egyptianized' the country. His successors – who called themselves 'sultan' from 1914 onwards – continued his policies. One of these projects was the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869, a modern variant of the canal from the Red Sea to the Nile, which made the journey by sea around Africa redundant.

However, in order to maintain this rate of development, the successors of Muhammed Ali borrowed heavily from Britain. As a result, Britain, together with France, became the actual owners of the Suez Canal. Gradually Egypt was reduced to a piece in a political game between the revolutionaries in Egypt, the creditors in Europe and the successors of Muhammed Ali.

Egypt from the end of the 19th century down to the present day

In the early 1880s, a revolution headed by the army officer Ahmed Orabi led to a conflict between the Egyptian army and the British, and in 1882 Alexandria was bombarded by the British navy. In the same year Egypt became a British protectorate, while still remaining part of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. The British presence had significant consequences for the organization of the administration and the army and a lot changed. Under the British governor Lord Cromer Egypt became economically and administratively stronger, and he also improved the efficiency of the agricultural practices. However, the Egyptians themselves were treated as second-rate citizens. This led increasingly to resistance from the 1890s on. When the First World War broke out, Egypt was separated from the Ottoman Empire by the British. They fought the Ottomans from Egypt and secured their interests in Asia by controlling the Suez Canal. During this war, the Egyptians were encouraged to choose the British side, and they were promised independence if they did so. However, this promise was never kept, and thus the British created a climate that promoted nationalism.

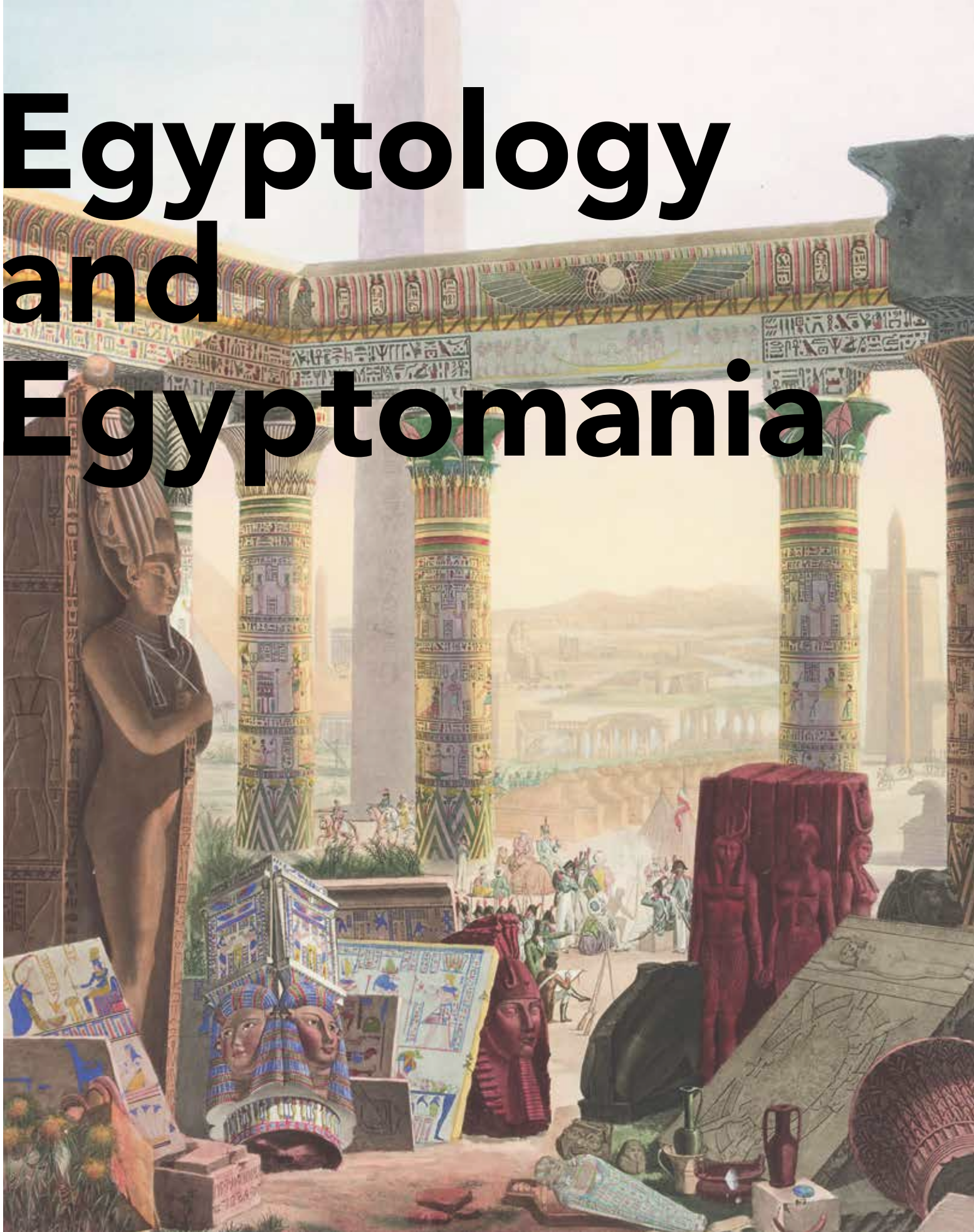
After the First World War, nationalists like Sa'ad Zaghloul negotiated in Europe for Egyptian independence. This was not successful and the political situation in Egypt deteriorated. In order to calm the situation Britain unilaterally announced the creation of the Kingdom of Egypt in 1922, abolishing the protectorate, and Sultan Fouad I was made king of Egypt. Politically this did not change much as the British remained influential in the Egyptian government. This situation continued until Gamal Abd-el Nasser deposed Fouad's successor King Farouk in 1952 in a coup and a daring action that gained control of the Suez Canal. During the Suez crisis, Egypt was at war with Britain, France and Israel. These allies were stronger militarily, but they were forced to withdraw from Egypt by heavy international pressure. From that moment on the Republic of Egypt was truly independent, and for the first time in centuries it was again ruled by Egyptians. Relations between Egypt, Syria and Jordan with Israel were strained for several years. Nasser tried to unite the Arab countries in a pan-Arab state, and with their support fight Israel. Minor incidents caused the situation to escalate swiftly, and in June 1967 Israel attacked Egypt, Jordan and Syria. During what became known as the Six-Day War, Israel gained control of the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. A union of Arab countries in October 1973 tried in vain to regain the lost regions during the Yom Kippur War. Nasser's successor Anwar el-

Shortly after the retreat of the French in 1801, Mohammed Ali gained power in Egypt. Alongside various other building projects, he ordered this new mosque to be built on top of the old citadel of Cairo. The mosque can be seen from a long way off. In 1849, Mohammed Ali was buried in this mosque.

Sadat eventually signed a peace treaty with Israel – the Camp David Agreement, for which Sadat and the Israeli prime minister Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – which returned Sinai to Egypt. However, in 1981 Sadat was murdered by a terrorist during a military parade.

Under Sadat's successor Mubarak, Egypt switched from seeking the support of the Islamic states to seeking that of the West, and back again, throughout the second half of the 20th century. During that period Egypt played an important role in the Arab cultural world. The Egyptian film industry quickly grew into one of the most popular in the Arab world. On the religious front, too, institutes such as Al-Azhar – the mosque and the university – became renowned in the Arab world. After the revolution in 2011, which ended the rule of Mubarak, the situation in Egypt became unstable. The Muslim Brotherhood came to power, but a tense situation arose due to various clashes with revolutionaries and minorities such as the Copts. Parliamentary elections in 2011 and a constitutional referendum at the end of 2012 have not been able to change this.

Egyptology and Egyptomania



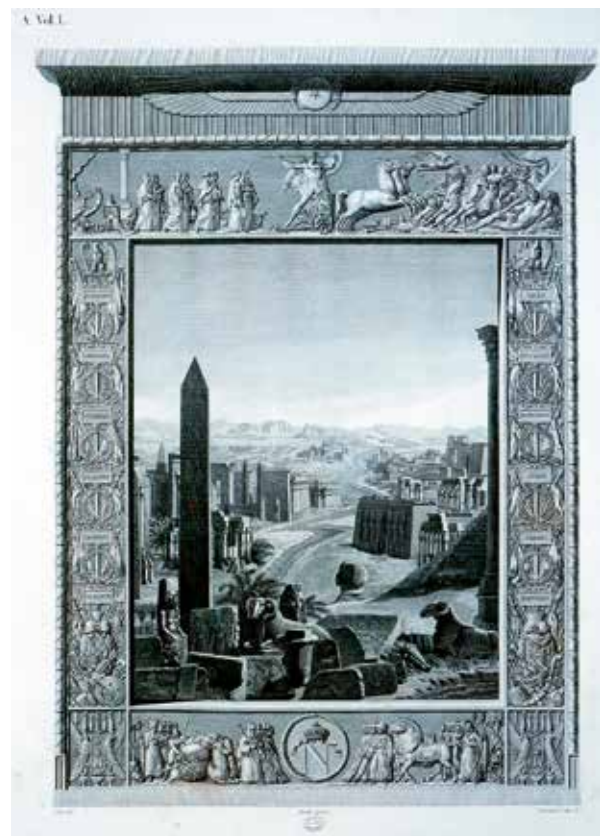
Egypt as an object of study

Islamic scholars

Unlike what is often assumed, the Muslims were not always bent on destroying the remains of pre-Islamic cultures in the Near East. After the conquest of Egypt, various Islamic writers and scholars, both Egyptian and non-Egyptian, studied the remains of the pharaonic culture and wrote about it in glowing terms. One of them was the Egyptian writer Ibn Zulaq. Whereas early western Egyptologists looked for textual sources to help them understand the history of Egypt, Islamic historians, mystics and other scholars were mainly in search of ancient Egyptian scientific knowledge, while at the same time fitting pharaonic history into their own history and culture.

The Islamic scholars of the 9th and 10th centuries had access to sources, including the Koran and the Bible, that listed biblical figures, events and stories. They used these sources in their own works, and they may even have invented new stories, as a number of them are not known from pre-Islamic sources. The Muslims attempted to fit the history of Egypt into the Koran as much as possbile, and thus give the past a valid position in their own beliefs and perceptions. Although Islamic scholars were familiar with documents such as Manetho's kinglist, they sometimes chose not to follow them and interpreted the history of pharaonic Egypt in their own way. It seems as if the Muslims knew the history up to a certain point, but recorded it in a way that would throw light on their own contemporary political and moral issues.

Islamic scholars were also interested in ancient monuments, and visited them regularly. Some writers recount attending the opening of tombs or the exposure of sites. The geographer Abu al-Hasan al-Hamdani in the 10th century described archaeological methods that were far in advance of their time, for example the observation and description of a site, the excavation and meticulous recording of the provenance of objects, writing descriptions and conducting measurements. Three hundred years later, the historian Al-Idrisi set out why the pyramids of Giza needed to be studied, and he gave a description of the pyramids and their inscriptions, the measurements, the inundation sediments studied and the chemical analysis of the construction material. The historian Al-Maqrizi also wrote about the pyramids. As objectively as possible, he related the stories and views about what the pyramids were – some of them contradictory. The Andalusian travellers Al-Banawi and Abu Hamid al-Gharnati in the early 12th century wrote a description and made a drawing of the lighthouse of Alexandria which strongly resemble the reconstructions made on the basis of non-Islamic sources.



< After the return of Napoleon and his savants to France, the information they had collected about Egypt was published in the monumental *Description de l'Egypte*. The first edition appeared in 23 volumes published between 1809 and 1829. This page shows French soldiers among a fantasy collection of ancient Egyptian monuments and objects.

> Napoleon is depicted at the very top of the title page of the *Description de l'Egypte* as a Greek warrior, fighting his enemies. The various regions he conquered are listed down the sides. In the plate in the middle is a perspective of Egypt with several monumental sphinxes, columns and statues in front, followed by pyramids and the Sphinx, the temple of Luxor, the colossi of Memnon and the island of Philae.

At the end of the 19th century, archaeology in Egypt really took off. Archaeologists like William Matthew Flinders Petrie and Georg Steindorff conducted excavations all over Egypt. They tried to better understand the context of the objects, which had previously simply been ripped out of the ground. This photo shows, from left to right, Heinrich Schäfer, Ludwig Borchardt, Georg Steindorff – and next to them one of their workmen – relaxing after lunch from the work on their excavation at Mirgissa. All three later became famous names in Egyptology and archaeology.

The decipherment of the hieroglyphs is often regarded as a purely western discovery, but Islamic researchers also studied them – a contribution recognized by western scholars in the 19th century, but which is often forgotten today. The Sufis in particular were interested in the hieroglyphs, as Egypt had a reputation as a country of knowledge, scholarship and mysticism. In the 17th century, the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher suggested that hieroglyphs were not just symbols but also represented sounds and ideas; among his sources were the works of Islamic scholars. They had conducted their study of hieroglyphs with the help of knowledge of other languages, including Coptic. Several medieval Islamic sources interpret hieroglyphic signs in a way that approaches modern Egyptological knowledge. Research on the importance of the Islamic contribution to the study of the Ancient Egyptian culture is still in its infancy, but is certainly a valuable, growing object of study.

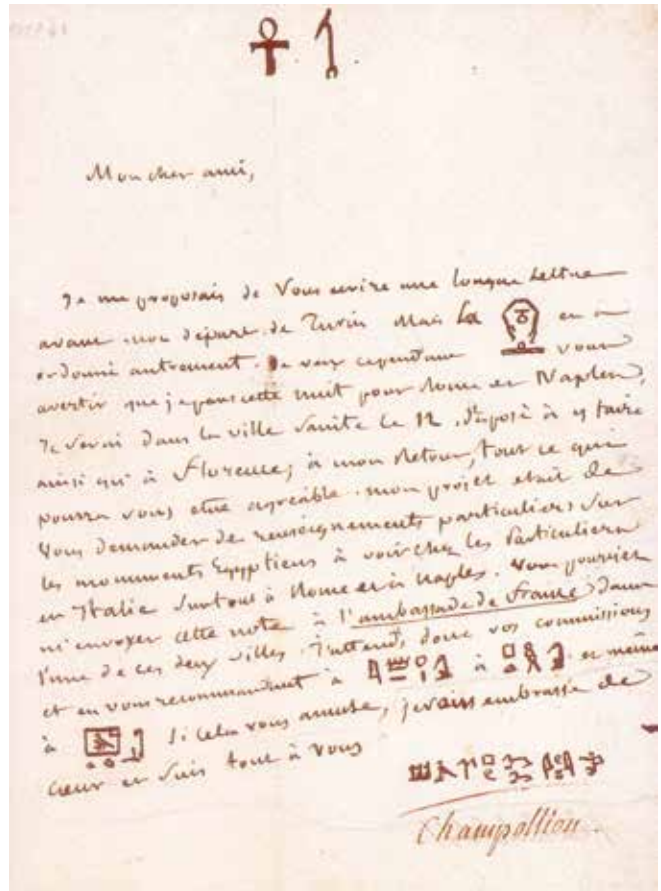
Researchers in the 14th – 17th centuries

In the 14th century, in the early Renaissance period, the works of classical authors and the study of material culture from the glory days of the Classical period in Europe were once again studied. There was renewed interest in the classical periods, not only for inspiration and to learn, but also in the physical remains. Alongside an interest in objects from Greece and Rome, ancient Egypt, as the precursor of Greek civilization, was once more in the picture. The monuments in Egypt were often seen in relationship to the Bible. For ex-

ample the site of Matariya, ancient Heliopolis, was regarded as the place where the Holy Family rested after their flight to Egypt, and the pyramids of Giza were apparently the legendary granaries of Joseph, pharaoh's advisor. Egypt was seen as a country of fables, as well as the source of all human knowledge and scientific achievements. And the mysterious Egyptian script attracted and fascinated many scholars.

The study of Egypt in the Renaissance was mainly through documents dating to the Roman Period. In 1505, for example, *Hieroglyphica* was published, an article in Greek about the hieroglyphs by the Alexandrian scholar Horapollo, who probably lived in the 4th or 5th century AD. Another important document was found in Macedonia in 1460 – the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This was a collection of Greek mythical and mystical texts, which according to tradition had been written down by the mythical figure Hermes Trismegistus, also known as Hermes or the ancient Egyptian god Thoth.

The early scholars also looked at the Egyptian monuments that had been brought to Rome by the Romans, including the obelisks in the Piazza di Porta San Giovanni and St Peter's Square, the sphinxes in the Iseum Campense, and in Pompei at the stelae and shabtis. The two best known scholars are the priest Piero Valeriano (1477-1558) and the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), mentioned above. Both wrote many articles about the hieroglyphs. Valeriano's work was for a long time the standard work for the study of these characters and was a sort of summary of all the knowledge of them at that time. Kircher believed that the hieroglyphs had symbolic value and mystical meaning. He studied Coptic, the latest phase of the Egyptian language, and was the first to correctly suppose that it was descended from hieroglyphs. He tried to decipher the hieroglyphs through Coptic, and he considered himself successful, whereas in fact he was not. Kircher based his work mainly on the Bembine Tablet, or Isiac Tablet, a bronze tablet (probably Roman) with hieroglyphs which he deciphered, but which are now known to be nonsense. In 1652 Kircher published his famous work *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, which is one of the very first contributions to the study of ancient Egypt.



In 1822, Jean-François Champollion deciphered the hieroglyphic script with the help of the Rosetta Stone. In this letter from 1825 to F. Artaud, about some study visits to Italy, Champollion uses hieroglyphs when writing out the names of some of the gods. He signed his name not only in Latin letters but also in hieroglyphs.

The first travellers

Travellers from Europe journeyed to Egypt before the Renaissance, including doctors and divines. Most of them never went further south than Cairo though, with the exception of an anonymous Venetian traveller who also visited Luxor and wrote about the huge temples he had seen there. Despite the Nile being the perfect guide for travellers, the lack of good maps made the journey difficult. Nevertheless, travellers gradually began to penetrate further and further into Egypt and discover new monuments.

In the 17th century, the way that Egypt was regarded became more and more scientific. The British astronomer John Greaves, for example, visited the pyramids of Giza and published a survey of them in 1646. He was the first westerner to use Arab sources in his research. The first antiquities also began to be shipped back to Europe for royal and private collections, for example in 1692 by Benoît de Maillet, the French consul general in Cairo. He even conceived the ambitious, but never executed plan to transport Pompey's Pillar in Alexandria to France. Many scholars were sent by

royal houses in Europe to chart Egypt and bring back ancient objects, although some also went on their own initiative. One of the latter was the Englishman Richard Pococke, who visited Egypt around 1737. He made lots of drawings of monuments, many of which had disappeared by the time Napoleon invaded Egypt.
In addition to those in Alexandria, Giza, Memphis, Saqqara and Luxor, the monuments further to the south were also described, for example the temple of Philae near Aswan. Some travellers ventured even further to the south, searching for the source of the Nile, among them the Scottish explorer James Bruce, who went looking for the source of the Blue Nile in Ethiopia. Other travellers, including the British draughtsman Richard Dalton, not only recorded monuments like the pyramids, but also the people who lived in Egypt at that time, including the Mamelukes. The many reports, drawings, maps and stories inspired new travellers, and also the military-scientific expedition of Napoleon.

Napoleon in Egypt

On 19 May 1798, a French war fleet set off from Toulon for Egypt. On board one of the ships was the successful general Napoleon Bonaparte. He had become fascinated by Egypt, and may have regarded that country as the location for a new independent state he wanted to found, governed by him. There were many rumours about the aim of the fleet, ranging from an invasion of England to paralysing British communication and supply lines to and from India. After a game of cat-and-mouse with the British admiral Nelson in the Mediterranean Sea, the fleet arrived in Egypt.
Although Napoleon hoped that the Egyptian population would welcome him as a liberator and the bringer of the ideals of the French Revolution, he had to conquer the country city by city from the Mameluke pasha of the Ottoman sultan. He first went to Alexandria, and after a long, exhausting journey through the desert, where many soldiers lost their lives, travelled to Cairo, where he defeated the Mameluke troops in the legendary Battle of the Pyramids, which actually did not take place anywhere near the pyramids but to the north of Cairo. Napoleon founded a new government in Egypt and convinced himself that he had freed Egypt from the Mamelukes in the name of the Ottoman sultan. He pursued the Mamelukes deep into southern Egypt. Many scholars, known as the savants, came with Napoleon to Egypt. They studied the many monuments throughout the country, as well as the plants, the animals and the Egyptians themselves. An overview of their discoveries would be published by Baron Vivant Denon, one of the participants in the scientific expedition, in his work *Journey in Lower and Upper Egypt* in 1802. He was also involved in the monumental publication of the scientific work of the expedition in the *Description de l'Egypte* which appeared in 1809-1829 and to which some 160 scholars contributed.
Napoleon's expedition eventually turned into a huge fiasco and he was defeated by the British and Ottoman armies. Napoleon abandoned his army in Egypt in 1801 and returned to France. The French who remained behind in Egypt had collected various objects and monuments, which were confiscated by the British. Among these objects was a sarcophagus that was claimed to be that of Alexander the Great – it later turned out to belong to Nectanebo II – and part of a stela with a text of Ptolemy V in three scripts – the Rosetta Stone.

The decipherment of the hieroglyphs

The discoverer of the Rosetta Stone, a French officer, realised immediately how important the object was. It would later turn out to be a stone with three identical texts written in three scripts – hieroglyphs, Demotic and Greek –, a decree reporting on a meeting of high priests in Memphis which honoured Ptolemy V for his gifts to the temples of Egypt. The French very nearly succeeded in taking the stone with them when they left Egypt, but at the last moment it was confiscated by the British.
The stone was donated by the British king George III to the British Museum, but casts of it were dispersed around Europe, and several scholars tried to solve the mystery of the hieroglyphs. Among them were the British doctor and linguist Thomas Young, two German professors at the University of Leipzig, Friedrich Spohn and Gustave Seyffarth, and the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion. Eventually, Champollion won the race in 1822, and was able to shout: 'je tiens l'affaire!' ('I've cracked it!'). When deciphering the hieroglyphs he made use of Coptic, as had Kircher in his attempt. By identifying the name of Ptolemy V on the Rosetta Stone, he realised how the signs were used and could thus decipher the text. Champollion spent the rest of his short life on further unravelling the grammar of the hieroglyphs, and after him scholars throughout Europe continued the process, and it is still continuing today.

The founding of national and university collections of antiquities

Even before the arrival of Napoleon, Egyptian antiquities had been exported to Europe, but after the departure of the French, this practice increased dramatically. British, French and Italian representatives in Egypt, the consuls, gathered

Soon after the 'rediscovery' at the start of the 19th century, the first tourists arrived in Egypt. The first souvenir/fake industry grew up. Here are a number of early examples, including an imitation faïence hippopotamus, a piece of papyrus and a lid shaped like a dog's head, possibly inspired by the canopic jars.

together collections of antiquities and sold them to the highest bidder. Often they were the huge national museums in Europe. Ownership of Egyptian, and particularly Greek and Roman, antiquities was a way for the 19th-century nation states to underline their descent from these cultures. A good example of this are the Elgin Marbles, part of the Parthenon in Athens that the British consul in Istanbul was able to sell to the British Museum. Antiquities became part of the game of politics. Museums such as the Louvre, the British Museum and even the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden purchased much of their large collections at this time, and they can still be admired in these museums today. Often these collections were an important source for studying ancient Egypt and for the way that the young academic disciplines of Egyptology and archaeology have taken shape. Even as early as the 17th century, universities were also busy forming collections of ancient Egyptian objects. They were used in education, but also in research. Often the objects were human or animal mummies, as is the case in the collection of the University of Leiden. The mummies were unwrapped and investigated further. In the early 19th century, the universities were more interested in objects which were inscribed, such as statues, stelae and papyri. After all, they could be used to decipher the hieroglyphs.

Egyptology as a subject at university

Once the hieroglyphs were deciphered, the foundations were laid for the academic study of Ancient Egypt – Egyptology. Champollion became the very first professor of Egyptology, at the College de France in Paris. Egyptology at other universities was usually a branch of the study of the classical world, for example in Leipzig. Students of Champollion set up new degree programmes in Germany, France and Italy. Scholars such as Karl Lepsius and Emmanuel De Rougé continued to expand on Champollion's work and taught at the universities of Berlin and Paris, respectively. The academic discipline of Egyptology spread across Germany to Jena, Leipzig and Bonn.

Until the 1880s, research and teaching continued to concentrate on inscribed objects. From that time on, archaeologists

like William Matthew Flinders Petrie in London, and Georg Steindorff in Leipzig, trained a new generation of students who used innovative archaeological methods and ways of dating when excavating in Egypt. The teaching at the universities not only concentrated on the historical information from ancient Egypt, but also examined the preserved material culture. Nowadays, the two approaches are intricately interwoven.

The archaeological study of Egypt

In the early 19th century, archaeological objects were simply pulled out of the ground by the agents of the consuls, without any attention being paid to their situation. By the end of that century, researchers had become aware of the importance of the context of the objects – the environment in which an object is found. For the first time archaeologists began to excavate systematically, using excavation trenches and stratigraphic profiles – the different layers in the walls of the excavations trenches – to try to better understand the archaeological sites.

One of the most important of these archaeologists was the Englishman William Matthew Flinders Petrie. He excavated at numerous sites in Egypt, ranging from predynastic sites like Abydos and Naqada, to the settlements of Naukratis and Tell Defenna from the Late Period. Petrie not only excavated the sites, he also published his work virtually immediately. Many of the objects he discovered were not only taken to the new Egyptian Museum in Cairo, but also presented or sold to museums across Europe. The Dutch collections at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam also contain ancient objects from Petrie's excavations.

Egyptomania

After the 'rediscovery' of Egypt by Napoleon's expedition, Europe became even more fascinated by Ancient Egypt. This Egyptomania expressed itself through imitation of the ancient Egyptian culture, through hybridization – where objects have both Egyptian and western characteristics – and through invention. This resulted in Egyptian motifs being reused in a series of objects, architectural designs and other elements that were still, however, recognizable as 'Egyptian'. Very often they had absolutely nothing in common with the original context. Egyptomania was and is based on three elements – archaeological and art-historical sources, public interest in new and exotic things, and the mysterious symbolism that apparently imbued ancient Egyptian culture.

Even before Napoleon, Europe had been fascinated by this ancient, mystical culture. The Roman emperor Hadrian, who visited Egypt in AD 130-131, built a villa near Tivoli with several Egyptianizing elements, including statues of his beloved Antinous, sphinxes and columns. Pharaonic objects like obelisks and statues, and cults such as those of Serapis and Isis were brought to Rome. After Islam arrived in Egypt, the ancient Egyptian culture mainly interested Islamic scholars, alchemists and mystics in search of hidden knowledge. In Europe, the interest was mainly in Coptic history as part of the Christian heritage.

The study of Classical Rome during the Renaissance drew attention to the Egyptian elements there. People were familiar with Egypt, despite few having ever been there. Later on, the obelisk and the sphinx were incorporated into architectural decoration and into objects like clocks. From about 1730, tombs and mausoleums began to display Egyptianizing decorative motifs, and so did gardens. The first collectors added Egyptian objects to their collections – mummies and inscribed objects such as scarabs and sculptures were particularly popular. The tales of the travellers and adventurers who went to Egypt increased this interest. Various paintings and drawings were made with mystical illustrations of Egypt, and Egyptianizing elements even found their way into dinner services and architecture. Soon it was no longer simply a fashion but a generally accepted view that the Egyptian culture was important.

The expedition led by Napeoleon, the publication of the *Description de l'Egypte* and the decipherment of the hieroglyphs triggered the true Egyptomania. Champollion even signed his *Lettre à Mr. Dacier,* in which he announced the decipherment of the script, in hieroglyphs. Tomb monuments were constructed in the shape of pyramids, Egyptian shapes and motifs were adopted in different contexts due to love of ostentation as well as pure interest. Publications by the scholars who were on Napoleon's expedition, as well as by travellers such as L.F. Cassas and Thomas Hope, gave Europe a new way of looking at ancient Egyptian culture. The décor of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* from 1801, for example, was partly based on these stories.

In the 19th century, more and more people were able to travel to Egypt. The Dutch explorer Alexine Tinne was rich enough in 1862 to fund an expedition in search of the sources of the Nile. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the trips to Egypt that the travel organization Thomas

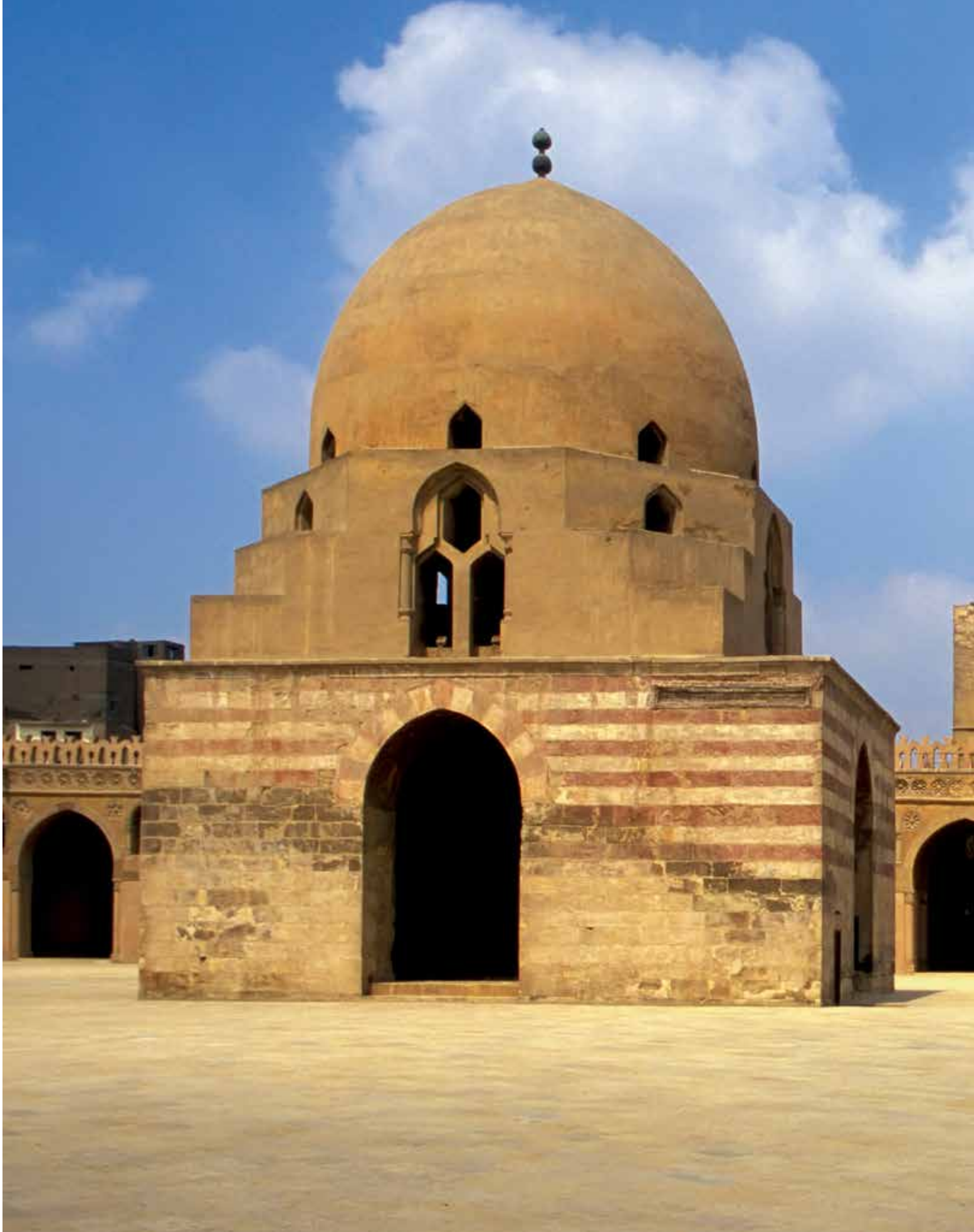
Ancient Egypt remains extremely popular in comic books, the cosmetics industry, the toy industry and many other manifestations.

Cook offered from the end of the century made it possible for less wealthy people to visit the country too. Egypt became more and more popular at world exhibitions, in zoos and museums, and even on screen. The quality of the Egyptomania object also significantly improved due to the influence of scholarly Egyptology.

In the second half of the 19th century, Egypt was no longer seen merely as the cradle of western knowledge and civilization, but also as the land of wisdom and justice. This can be seen in the architecture of administrative and legal buildings in the west, which were given Egyptianizing elements, one example being the state prison in Trenton, New Jersey, USA.

Egyptomania was closely linked to the study of ancient Egypt, to Egyptology and archaeology. At times when Egyptology was in a difficult position, for example if there was little money for excavations, scholars would rekindle an interest in the general public by writing novels and attractive informative books, and by organizing exhibitions. Egyptomania was also regularly stimulated by major archaeological discoveries, for example the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, as well as by the travelling exhibitions of the objects, originals and copies, from his tomb. The film world also adopted Egypt with films like *The Mummy* (1932), *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *Cleopatra* (1963). Around the middle of the 20th century, comic books and richly illustrated books began to appear with Egypt in the leading role.

The distribution of films and books has ensured that Egyptomania is still alive and kicking today, as witnessed by the recent remake of *The Mummy* (1999), Dutch TV series such as *Het Huis Anoebis*, and more spiritual expressions such as the use of Tarot cards and amulets. The role of the ancient Egyptian culture could thus be termed eternal.



Glossary

Alluvium: the fertile mud deposited by the Nile on the banks of the river.

Amir: Islamic title, ranked under the sultan. Comparable to commander or prince. Many of the Mameluke generals bore this title.

Amulet: a small object in the shape of a god, animal or object that had protective powers. An amulet could be worn around the neck or given to the deceased.

Apse: semicircular extension to the chancel of a church.

Archaism: inspiration in the present gained by looking back at the past, for example when making statues or reliefs.

Archiereus: official, responsible for the temples and the priests during the Roman Period from the early 2nd century AD. Probably cooperated with the idios logos, who was in charge of the special state revenues.

Artesian well: a water source where the groundwater is pushed up to the surface.

Bifacial tools: tools, usually of flint, that are worked on both sides.

Caliph: leader of the Islamic community on earth, successor of the prophet Muhammed. This title was claimed by several leaders at the same time at some points in Islamic history – 'anti-caliphs', for example the Fatimids. Often the title of the leader of the most dominant dynasty in the Islamic cultural area. A sultan could also simultaneously be a caliph.

Canopic jars: four jars, each with its own protective god, in which the separately mummified internal organs were stored.

Cartouche: the frame around the name of a king in hieroglyphs. It is a rope with no end, and thus symbolically protects and renews the king. The throne name and the birth name of the pharaoh were written in cartouches from the 3rd Dynasty on.

Cenotaph: an 'empty tomb' for someone buried elsewhere.

Census: population count.

Choachytai: literally 'water pourers', mortuary priests who maintained the funerary chapels of the deceased for the family.

Cistern: storage space for collecting rainwater.

Cleruchs: soldiers given land in Egypt by the Ptolemies for their services.

Contra-temple: area or space behind the sanctuary. Outside the actual temple and the place where ordinary people could address the god with their prayers, dreams or questions.

Crypt: secret, hidden space.

Cult shrine: the shrine (naos) in which the statue of the deity of a temple was kept by the priests. It stood in the sanctuary of the temple and could be made of stone or wood. The priests conducted the daily rituals in front of the naos.

Diadochi: literally 'successors', the successors of Alexander the Great, including his general Ptolemy.

Dioiketes: official, in the Ptolemaic Period responsible for the financial affairs of the entire empire. In the Roman Period, the official responsible in Egypt for levying taxes and organizing the agricultural system.

Dodekaschoinos: the region immediately to the south of Aswan, the northernmost part of Nubia, literally 'Twelve mile land'.

Domestication: the manipulation of wild plants or animals over a long period of time so that they benefit humans. Domesticated species provide humans with food, skins, and pulling and packing power (tame animals).

Dynasty: successive ruling family, also used in a broader sense for a series of kings from the same place or region.

Epistrategos: governor. In the Roman Period, Egypt was divided into three and then later four regions – the Nile Delta (later two separate regions), Middle Egypt and the Thebaid. Each of these regions was governed by an epistrategos.

Faience: fine quartz sand that is mixed with a binding agent and shaped in a mould. After firing the objects have a blue or green glaze.

False door: a representation of a door, intended to enable contact between the deceased and the outside world (receiving offerings).

Flint assemblage: group of flint objects found together.

Holy of Holies: the main sanctuary of every temple, where the shrine (naos) with the statue of the god was located, usually with a sacred bark, the portable boat that transported the statue of the god during processions.

Icon: a picture of a saint painted on a wooden panel, usually a separate object of worship.

Iconostasis: in Coptic and Orthodox churches, the partially see-through wall between the chancel and the rest of the church.

Idios logos: official who in the course of the 1st century AD became responsible for the temples (probably in cooperation with the archiereus) and managed the special state revenues.

Kiosk: pavilion-like reception temple.

Kushites: inhabitants of the kingdom of Kush in Nubia, sometimes called Nubians.

Levallois technique: technique to work flint. In general, the edges and the upper surface of a flint core were struck in such a way that a tortoise shape was created.

Levant: geographical term, used for parts of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and the Sinai Peninsula.

Lower Egypt: the Nile Delta.

Ma'at: cosmic balance between good and evil. Ma'at was often personified as a goddess with a feather on her head.

Machimoi: Egyptian militia, originally a Libyan warrior class.

Mammisi (birth house): building close to a temple that was closely linked to the birth of the divine child of the triad (father-mother-child) worshipped in the temple; a separate sanctuary from the Late Period on.

Mastaba: type of Old Kingdom tomb with a rectangular superstructure with several rooms above the actual subterranean burial chamber.

Microliths: small flint tools only a few centimetres in length.

Mudbrick: bricks made of sun-dried mud (unfired).

Mummification: the preservation of the body after death by removing the internal organs, desiccating the body using natron salts, and wrapping it in bandages soaked in oils and resins

Nave: parts of a building divided from each other by rows of columns, and each with its own roof.

Necropolis: literally 'city of the dead'. Cemetery.

Nilometer: well with a direct link to the Nile used to read the height of the water in the Nile.

Nome: district. Egypt was divided into 42 nomes from the Old Kingdom on.

Nubia: region immediately to the south of Egypt, currently North Sudan.

Pasha: Ottoman title, ranking below that of sultan. This title was borne by Muhammed Ali when he was viceroy of Egypt (under the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople) and was used by many politicians after 1922.

Phyle: team of priests who performed duties in shifts in the temple. The great temple of Karnak had four phyles; under Ptolemy III a fifth was added specially to serve the royal cult. The term phyle is also used in other contexts, including for artisans and workmen.

Playa: dry lake.

Praefectus Aegypti (prefect): the administrator of Egypt in Roman times. He was appointed for a limited period by the emperor.

Pronoas: covered columned hall, that part of the temple just in front of the naos.

Propylon: large gate in the temple wall that gave entry to the temple complex.

Ptolemaia: cultural and sporting festival in honour of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I, founded by Ptolemy II. These festivities were intended to outshine the Olympic Games.

Pylon: gateway of a temple, comprising two towers with sloping sides and usually provided with niches for flagpoles, with the actual gate in between them.

Rashidun: dynasty of caliphs, the immediate successors of the prophet Muhammed as the leaders of Islam. The Rashidun were swiftly succeeded by the Umayyads.

Renaissance: literally 'rebirth', a period in which art, knowledge and thinking flourishes.

Satrapy: province in the Persian Empire, ruled by a satrap (governor).

Scarab: sacred dung beetle (solar symbol), often used as an amulet with an inscription on the flat underside.

Sebakh: earth dug away from archaeological sites – including the archaeological remains it may contain – to fertilize the fields as it is full of organic matter.

Sebakhin: the people who dig the sebakh.

Serapeum: building dedicated to the god Osiris, Apis or Serapis. There was a Serapeum at Saqqara where the sacred Apis bulls were buried. Alexandria also had a Serapeum, a temple complex dedicated to the god Serapis.

Serekh: predecessor of the cartouche in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods. It is a depiction of a palace façade or enclosure wall with a rectangular space on top for the Horus name of the king. A Horus falcon was often depicted on top of the serekh, as the protector of the king.

Shabti: servant figure that performed work for the deceased in the hereafter.

Shi'ites: followers of Ali, the cousin of the prophet.

Shrine: see cult shrine.

Site: location of archaeological remains.

Soma: the still unlocated burial temple complex in which Alexander the Great was reburied, and where nearly all the Ptolemaic kings were interred.

Stela: free-standing flat stone with inscriptions and/or illustrations, intended to memorialize a person or event.

Sultan: noble title – later used as a royal title – literally 'power'. The Mamelukes in their heyday also used this title.
Sunnis: followers of the conservative, majority stream in Islam which adheres to the tradition of the Prophet Muhammed.
Taricheutai: priest-embalmers who wrapped the deceased in linen bandages.
Tell: archaeological mound created by human settlements being built on the same place for centuries, and then abandoned. Over the course of time, the mound grew higher and higher due to the accumulation of debris. These sites are particularly interesting for archaeologists because they reveal the development of a settlement over a long period.
Triad: divine trinity of father, mother and child. One example is the triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus.
Ulama: (sing. alim): Islamic clerics.
Upper Egypt: the Nile Valley.
Uraeus: rearing cobra which was placed on the forehead of a king or queen as a protective god.
Vizier: Ancient Egyptian and Islamic title for prime minister.

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The Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo.

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The Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) was founded in 1971. It was originally called the Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies and only represented Dutch universities. Currently eight Dutch and Flemish universities participate in the NVIC, with the aim of stimulating and propagating their teaching and research activities in the Middle East.
The Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo is an academic centre that provides services to staff and students of the participating universities. These activities primarily relate to Arabic and Islamic Studies, Egyptology, Archaeology and Papyrology, although the NVIC also facilitates the universities in other disciplines and represents them in a general sense.

Both the staff of the institute and the research fellows conduct their work on behalf of the participating universities. The NVIC regularly organizes symposia in the fields related to its expertise, and it also organizes courses in the archaeology of Egypt and Arabic Studies at academic level as an integral part of the BA and MA degree programmes of the Dutch and Flemish universities. These courses concentrate on practical knowledge and academic experience in Egypt, and thus contribute significantly to both fields at the participating universities. In addition, the NVIC supervises theses, papers and other individual study programmes for students during their stay in Egypt. The NVIC also organizes special courses on request in the fields of the languages and cultures of Egypt and the Middle East for non-university target groups (government institutions, businesses).
Finally, the Institute contributes to the dissemination of Dutch and Flemish culture and the promotion of Dutch/Flemish-Egyptian cooperation, in close cooperation with the relevant institutes in the Netherlands and Flanders and the respective embassies in Cairo, primarily by offering Dutch language courses.

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