

2. The Vizier

- a) The highest ranking official in the state other than the pharaoh and his queen was the vizier.
- b) The pharaoh gave the orders, but the vizier was the one who passed them on, which gave him a lot of power as well.

3. The Nomarchs

- a) The pharaoh and the vizier lived and worked almost exclusively in the capital city. The day-to-day life of Egyptians was more closely watched by local rulers called “nomarchs” who implemented orders from the pharaoh and his vizier.
- b) These local rulers were not always loyal. Their power corrupted them too, which could lead to rebellions.

E. The Age of the Pyramids

1. The First Pyramids

- a) Egyptians began building monumental pyramids during the reign of Pharaoh Djoser, c.2650 BC.
- b) The first pyramids were “step pyramids.” In this design smaller and smaller rectangular buildings were built on top of each other.
- c) Each structure above the others had to be made smaller than the one before because the weight of too many stones piled onto each other would crush the layers beneath, causing the pyramid to collapse, especially because there were small hollow chambers and passages inside for the tombs of the pharaohs.

2. The Pyramid Complex at Giza

- a) The greatest pyramids were built c.2500 BC by the pharaoh Khufu and his descendants Khafre and Menkaure.
- b) Here are some of the impressive figures related to Khufu's pyramid (the largest):
 - It contains about 2.5 million blocks.
 - Some blocks weigh as much as 150 tons. The average is 1.5 tons.
 - The pyramid is 250 yards wide and 480 ft high.
 - The Greek historian Herodotus was told that it was built by a workforce of 100,000 men working for 20 years.

3. The End of the Age of Pyramids

- a) C.2250 BC, a young boy named Pepy II became the ruler of Egypt.
- b) As a boy Pepy must have been controlled by the adults around him.

- c) Then, he went on to live an extraordinarily long life. He was pharaoh for possibly more than 90 years!
- d) As an old man he must have relied on others to run the government as well.
- e) Although historians don't know the detailed of the story, it seems that the Pharaoh's advisors decided to take power for themselves.
- f) At the end of Pepy's reign different parts of Egypt simply decided not to follow the pharaoh anymore. In Thebes, the viziers became the new pharaohs.
- g) With the split of Egypt into at least two separate kingdoms again, the Age of Pyramids came to an end. Pepy has a pyramid dedicated to him, but it lies in ruins today because it was built quickly and cheaply.

F. Later Egyptian History

1. A New Egypt, with New Ways

- a) Egypt was reunified c.2000 by a vizier, who became Pharaoh Montuhotep II.
- b) Montuhotep is an important ruler because he brought the country back together, but also because he built a “rock-cut” tomb in Upper Egypt instead of pyramid in Lower Egypt.

2. Egypt and the Outside World

- a) One pharaoh of this time built a Nile-Red Sea canal, which allowed Egyptians to trade more easily between people in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
- b) The records of this time show that Egypt had contact with:
 - i) the Land of Punt (modern-day Ethiopia).
 - ii) Nubia (modern-day Sudan)
 - iii) the Levant (including the land of the ancient Israelites)
- c) This increased contact led to more trade, but also to wars. Once the Age of Pyramids came to an end, the most important stories about Egypt have to do with wars.
- d) The first of these wars was c.1639 BC, when a mysterious people called the “Hyksos” conquered Lower Egypt. Egypt was again divided. It would be re-unified, but its pharaohs would never again built anything as impressive as the pyramids.