

2. The Vizier

- a) The highest ranking official in the state other than the pharaoh and his queen was the vizier.
- b) The vizier consulted with the Pharaoh directly and implemented the Pharaoh's orders.
- c) The fact that the pharaoh's power was exercised through the Vizier meant that the vizier was very well positioned to exercise power himself.

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) Like dukes and counts in the Middle Ages of Europe, the nomarchs were lords of their domains, and had their own local army under their control, but they were allowed to maintain power only if they remained loyal to the pharaoh.
- c) Of course, just like in European history, the loyalty of a lord to his king was never certain. The power of a nomarch corrupted him as much as anyone else.

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.
- d) As pharaohs tried to build taller and more impressive pyramids, their architects discovered the limitations of the stones, and were forced to reduce the heights of pyramids during construction. This resulted in a small number of "bent pyramids".

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) Of the three great pyramids in their complex, Khufu's is the largest, though Khafre's (in the center of the group of three great pyramids) appears bigger

because of its slightly steeper construction and because it is built on higher ground.

- c) Here are some of the impressive figures related to Khufu's pyramid:
- It contains about 2.5 million blocks.
 - Some blocks weigh as much as 150 tons, while the average is about 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 whose pharaonic name was Pepy II became the ruler of Egypt.
- b) As a boy Pepy must have been guided, if not controlled, by adult advisors.
- 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, then, he also would have had to rely on others to run the government.
- e) Although historians don't know the detailed of the conspiracy, it seems as though the Pharaoh's advisors decided to take power for themselves.
- f) To make matters worse, there was a series of low Niles, bringing a famine to Egypt. (Maybe this helped them justify a rebellion against the god-king.)
- g) 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.
- h) 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, illustrating that its construction was not as seriously undertaken as those of the Khufu and other great god-kings.

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) Like Menes/Narmer before him, Montuhotep was a ruler of Upper Egypt who extended his power over Lower Egypt.
- c) Montuhotep is an important ruler because he brought the country back together, but also because rather than build a prominent pyramid in Lower Egypt to house his tomb, Montuhotep chose to have his tomb constructed in a much less prominent location in Upper Egypt, nestled in a rock face, in part no-doubt so that it would be safer from tomb-robbers.

2. Practical Projects

- a) In the newly unified Egypt, the pharaohs had a greater focus on the practical challenges of being accepted as kings. Which is to say, they focussed less on the afterlife, and more on maintaining power.
- b) One project notably undertaken by a pharaoh of this period was the Nile-Red Sea canal, which meant Egyptians could more easily transport goods and people between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean.

3. Egypt and the Outside World

- a) The Nile-Red Sea canal project shows that Egypt was coming into greater contact with other civilizations.
- b) The records of this time specifically 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 conflicts. Once the Age of Pyramids came to an end, the most significant stories about Egypt are centered around their wars with others, and especially, the conquests of Egypt by other peoples.
- d) The first of these conquests was c.1639 BC, when a mysterious people called the “Hyksos” took over Lower Egypt. Egypt was again divided. It would be re-unified, but never again with the same character as it had during the days of its pyramid building god-kings of old.