

RATE THE PHARAONS

MENES

(RULED 3407 BC – 3346 BC)
(MEE-NEES)



Ancient tradition credits Menes with having united Upper and Lower Egypt into a single kingdom and becoming the first pharaoh of unified Egypt. According to Manetho (an Egyptian historian who lived around 300 BCE), Menes reigned for 62 years.

Menes built the city of Memphis. King Menes built Memphis on the Nile's flood plain. In order to have it on the flood plain and still avoid the water overflow, he constructed a gigantic dam that would redirect the annual floods from the Nile.

Menes established worship of the gods in his new city, as well as manners and styles of decoration and sophisticated tastes. He taught the residents of Memphis to cover their tables and couches with beautiful cloths. These dramatic changes to life seemed almost as if they were a gift of the gods. Of course, not all Egyptians could live this way as they were poor and could not afford the expensive tastes of Menes.

Menes built the temple of Ptah, who was considered the potter and craftsman of the gods. It was believed that Ptah created through his heart, and when he spoke it, the world came into being.

Having Upper and Lower Egypt united and further establishing its culture, King Menes and his subjects accumulated surpluses of food. This no doubt, had a huge influence upon the advancement of technology and government that continued for approximately 1,000 years. The trade of food throughout the Mediterranean brought yet more wealth to Memphis.

RATE THE PHARAOKHS

Khufu

(RULED 2589 ~ 2566 BC)

(*koo-foo*)

Khufu was a pharaoh of Ancient Egypt's Old Kingdom. He reigned from around 2589 to 2566 B.C.E. Khufu was the second pharaoh of the Fourth Dynasty. He is generally accepted as being the builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Khufu's full name was "Khnum-Khufu" which means, "the god Khnum protects me."



Stories from Ancient Egypt depict Khufu as mean and cruel, and consumed by his desire to make sure his dynasty continued past his own sons. Whether anything in these stories is based on fact is unknown. Herodotus, a later Greek historian ("Father of History") told further stories of the king's cruelty to his people and to his own family in order to ensure the construction of his pyramid. He also describes Khufu as a cruel and wicked leader who sold his daughter when he ran short of money, but there is no evidence to support this version of the story. But the Westcar Papyrus describes Khufu as a positive leader: good-natured and friendly to his inferiors.

Khufu came to the throne, probably during his twenties, and at once began work on his pyramid. The entire project took about 23 years to complete, during which time 2,300,000 building blocks, weighing an average of 2.5 tons each, were moved. His nephew Hemiunu was appointed head of construction for the Great Pyramid. Khufu was the first pharaoh to build a pyramid at Giza. The large scale of this monument stands as testament to his skills in commanding the material and human resources of his country. It is now believed the pyramids were built using recruited workers rather than slaves.

Although he organized the construction of the pyramid, not much is known about his life due to the fact that his tomb was robbed. No remains of the mummy have ever been found and there is only an empty sarcophagus that lies in the center of the King's Chamber located inside the pyramid.

RATE THE PHARAOHS

Amenhotep I

(RULED 1525 BC – 1504 BC)

(Ah-men-oh-tep)

Although his reign is poorly documented, it is possible to piece together a basic history from available evidence. Amenhotep I inherited the kingdom formed by his father's military conquests and maintained dominance over Nubia and the Nile Delta.

Two tomb texts indicate that he Amenhotep campaigns into Nubia. Amenhotep later sought to expand Egypt's border southward into Nubia and he led an invasion force which defeated the Nubian army. A tomb biography says he also fought in a campaign in Kush.



Two important pieces of literature were developed during this period. First, the Book of What is in the Underworld, an important funeral text used in the New Kingdom time period, is believed to have come into its final form during Amenhotep's reign. The Ebers papyrus, which is the main source for information on ancient Egyptian medicine, seems to date to this time.

It appears that during Amenhotep I's reign the first water clock was invented. Amenhotep's court astronomer Amenemheb took credit for creating this device. This invention was of great benefit for timekeeping, because the Egyptian hour was not a fixed amount of time, but was measured as $\frac{1}{12}$ th of the night. When the nights were shorter in the summer, these water clocks could be adjusted to measure the shorter hours accurately.

Amenhotep continued to rebuild temples in Upper Egypt, and revolutionized the burial design by separating his tomb from his mortuary temple, setting a trend which would continue throughout the New Kingdom. After his death, he was deified into the patron god of Deir el-Medina.

RATE THE PHARAOHS

T H U T M O S E I I I

(R U L E D 1 4 7 9 B C - 1 4 2 5 B C)

(T U T - M O S E)

Thutmose III was born a prince of the Egyptian Empire. His father, Thutmose II, was pharaoh of Egypt. His mother, Iset, was a secondary wife of the pharaoh. Thutmose III grew up learning about the responsibilities and roles of the pharaoh.

When Thutmose III was still a young child, probably two or three years old, his father died. Thutmose was officially crowned the new pharaoh, but his aunt, Queen Hatshepsut, served as his regent. Eventually, Hatshepsut became very powerful and took the title of pharaoh for herself.

Meanwhile, when Thutmose III grew older he took up a leadership role in the army. While in the army, he learned about warfare and how to be a good commander. This experience would serve him well later in life.



After 22 years of rule, Hatshepsut died and Thutmose III took on the role and power of pharaoh. He was the sixth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Thutmose had waited in the wings for many years, now his time had come. Many of Egypt's rivals were ready to test the new pharaoh in battle. Thutmose was ready.

Not long after becoming pharaoh, several kings from the east rebelled against Egypt. Thutmose III quickly marched his army to meet the rebels. He personally led a surprise attack through a narrow mountain pass to defeat the enemy at the Battle of Megiddo. He soundly defeated the rebels and brought them back under Egypt's control.

Thutmose III continued to launch military campaigns throughout his reign. Over the course of at least seventeen military campaigns, Thutmose conquered hundreds of cities and expanded Egypt's borders to include Nubia, Canaan, and southern Syria. He was both a military genius and brave warrior. He often fought on the front lines, leading his army into battle.

Like many great pharaohs of the New Kingdom period, Thutmose III was a prolific builder. Egyptian writings record that he had over fifty temples built throughout Egypt. He made many additions to the Temple of Karnak at Thebes including new pylons and several towering obelisks.

RATE THE PHARAOHS

HATSHEPSUT (RULED 1479 - 1458 BC) (HAT-SHEP-SOOT)



Queen Hatshepsut was the first female pharaoh in Egypt. Her rise to power went against all the traditions of her time. When her two brothers died, she was in the unique position to gain the throne upon the death of her father. To have a female pharaoh was something that had never happened before. When Thutmose I (her brother) passed away, one of his sons, Thutmose III, was in line for the throne, but due to his age Hatshepsut was allowed to reign as pharaoh.

Hatshepsut was not one to sit back and wait for her nephew to age enough to take her place. She was able to command enough of a following to take control as pharaoh. She ruled for about 20 years, until her death in 1458 BC, and left behind more monuments and works of art than any Egyptian queen to come.

Hatshepsut was a gifted and cunning leader. She had to be to remain in power for 20 years as a woman pharaoh. Rather than go to war, she established trade relationships with many foreign countries. Through trade she made Egypt a rich nation. She expanded trading relations. Although there were no wars during her reign, she proved her power by ordering expeditions to the land of Punt, in present-day Somalia, in search of the ivory, animals, spices, gold and aromatic trees that Egyptians desired. These expeditions are well documented in the hieroglyphics on the walls of her temple.

Hatshepsut, as a female, had many obstacles to overcome. There was always a threat of revolt, especially as her bitter nephew came of age to take the place of her as pharaoh. She even dressed in the traditional clothing of male rulers: the *shendyt* kilt, the *nemes* headdress, the *khat* headcloth, and the false beard.

One way that Hatshepsut stayed in power was to construct many buildings and monuments throughout Egypt. She also had many statues of herself at these sites. This way the people continued to think of her as their leader and pharaoh. One of her most famous buildings was her mortuary temple at Djeser-Djeseru. This temple is considered one of the great achievements in Egyptian architecture.

Hatshepsut, as a final way to be recognized as a legitimate queen, constructed a fabulous temple in the Valley of the Kings, of all places. Eventually her nephew grew into a man and took his rightful place as pharaoh.

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Amenhotep III (RULED 1391 BC - 1353 BC) (Ah-men-oh-tep)

Amenhotep III ruled the Egyptian Empire during the peak of its international power and prosperity. It was a time of peace when art and Egyptian culture flourished.

When Amenhotep was around twelve years old his father died and Amenhotep was crowned pharaoh. He likely had an adult advisor who ruled for him for the first few years as he grew older and learned how to lead.

Amenhotep took over Egypt at a time when the country was very rich and powerful. He was a very capable politician. He maintained his power over Egypt by reducing the power of the priests of Amun and promoting the sun god, Ra. He also made strong alliances with foreign powers by marrying the daughters of foreign kings from Babylon and Syria. He was a master of diplomacy, who placed other nations in his debt through lavish gifts of gold so that they would be inclined to bend to his wishes, which they invariably did. His generosity to friendly kings was well established, and he enjoyed profitable relationships with the surrounding nations.

During the reign of Amenhotep III, Egypt began to export the culture and goods throughout the Mediterranean region. He was in regular correspondence with the Babylonians and the Ancient Greeks. Letters to Amenhotep from leaders of these foreign places show that they made requests for gold and other gifts because they knew of Egypt's wealth under Amenhotep.

Further, Amenhotep III was an adept military leader who "probably fought, or directed his military commanders, in one campaign in Nubia and he had inscriptions made to commemorate that expedition" (Bunson, 18).

During his time as pharaoh, Amenhotep III built many monuments to himself and the gods. Perhaps his most famous construction was the Temple of Luxor in Thebes. This temple became one of the grandest and most famous temples in Egypt. Amenhotep also built hundreds of statues of himself including the Colossi of Memnon. These two giant statues tower around 60 feet tall and show a giant Amenhotep in a sitting position.

Amenhotep III died in around 1354 BC and was buried in his huge tomb in the secluded western branch of the Valley of the Kings. He was succeeded by his son Amenhotep IV, better known as Akhenaten.



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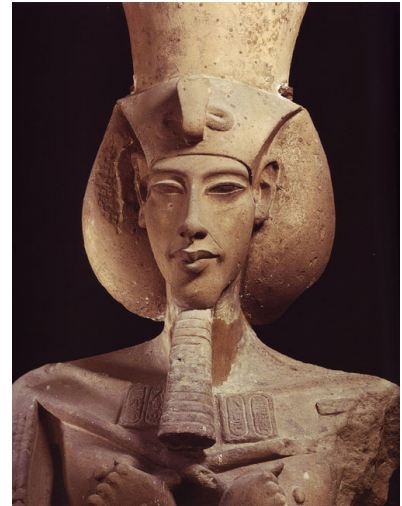
Akhenaten

(ruled 1352 – 1334 BC)

(Ock-uh-Nah-Ten)

A pharaoh of the 18th dynasty of Egypt, Akhenaten ruled for 18 years and died around 1334 B.C.E. He began his reign under the name Amenhotep IV. As the son of Amenhotep III, he inherited a prosperous and peaceful nation.

However, it became clear early in his reign that the young king was prepared to go against tradition. In his first year, he built a Temple dedicated to the Aten at the perimeter of the Temple of Amun at Karnak. Usually temples were not built so close together. He took the unconventional step of celebrating a Sed-festival in his third year (this festival was usually held in the 30th year of a pharaoh's reign).



He is especially noted for abandoning traditional Egyptian polytheism and introducing a religion centered on the Aten, the sun god. In the fifth or sixth year of his reign, he changed his name to Akhenaten to show his full support and worship of Aten. Then, in the ninth year of his reign, he declared that Aten was the only god, and that he was the only connection between the Aten and the people.

This was a switch to a more monotheistic religion, or worship of one god. However, it was not purely a monotheistic religion; other gods were still acknowledged, but it was very different than the traditional Egyptian religion. Akhenaten tried to change the traditional polytheistic religion. He closed temples to the old gods and eliminated their names from monuments. He built a new capital, Akhetaten (present-day Tel el-Amarna), on a previously empty site in the middle of Egypt, as well as introducing a completely new artistic style.

After his death, traditional religious practice of many gods was brought back, and later Egyptian records even describe Akhenaten as an “enemy.” Did Akhenaten’s non-traditional ideas make him a bad leader?

RATE THE PHARAOHS

Tutankhamun / "King Tut"

(ruled 1333 – 1323 BC)

(too-ten-kah-men)



King Tutankhamun ruled Egypt as pharaoh for 10 years until his death at age 19, around 1324 B.C. Although his rule was notable for reversing the tumultuous religious reforms of his father, Pharaoh Akhenaten.

He was barely known to the modern world until 1922, when British archaeologist Howard Carter chiseled through a doorway and entered the boy pharaoh's tomb, which had remained sealed for more than 3,200 years. The discovery sparked a new public interest in ancient Egypt. Tutankhamun's burial mask remains a popular symbol of ancient Egypt. King Tut's mummy and inner sarcophagus (coffin) are in his tomb in

the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. The outer sarcophagi (more than one sarcophagus) and shrines are at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Neither the mummy nor any of the sarcophagi have ever traveled outside of Egypt.

Tutankhamun was born in 1341 BC, the son of Akhenaten. He came to the throne in 1333 BC, at the age of nine. When he became king, he married his half sister, Ankhesenepatan. Records show that the king had advisors, and one was noted for his ability to calm the young king when his temper flared.

Tutankhamun reversed several changes made during his father's (Akhenaten) reign. He ended the sole worship of the god Aten and restored the god Amun to highest authority and made sure the polytheistic tradition of worship continued in Egypt. The capital was moved back to Thebes and was reestablished as the religious center of the civilization. The city of Akhetaten that had been built by his father was abandoned.

Battles with Nubians and people from Asia were recorded during Tut's reign. His tomb contained body armor appropriate for military campaigns. However, given his youth and physical disabilities, historians believe that he did not take part personally in these battles.

There are no surviving records of Tutankhamun's final days. What caused Tutankhamun's death has been the subject of considerable debate. Although there is some speculation that Tutankhamun was assassinated, the consensus is that his death was accidental. A CT scan taken in 2005 shows that he had badly broken his leg shortly before his death, and that the leg had become infected. DNA analysis, conducted in 2010 showed the presence of malaria in his system. It is believed that these two conditions, combined, led to his death.

Tutankhamun was buried in a tomb that was small compared to his status as pharaoh. His death may have occurred unexpectedly, before the completion of a grander tomb, so that his mummy was buried in a tomb intended for someone else less politically important.

RATE THE PHARAONS

Ramesses II

(ruled 1279 – 1213 BC)

(ram-zees)

Ramesses II was born around 1303 BC. His father was the Pharaoh Sethi I and his mother Queen Tuya. He was named after his grandfather Ramesses I. Ramesses was educated and brought up to be a leader in Egypt.

As prince, Ramesses joined his father in his military campaigns. By the age of 22 he was leading battles by himself. When Ramesses was 25 years old his father died. Ramesses II was crowned the pharaoh of Egypt in 1279 BC. He was the third pharaoh of the 19th dynasty.



During his reign as pharaoh, Ramesses II led the Egyptian army against several enemies including the Hittites, Syrians, Libyans, and Nubians. He expanded the Egyptian empire and secured its borders against attackers. Perhaps the most famous battle during Ramesses' rule was the Battle of Kadesh. This battle is the oldest recorded battle in history. Ramesses led his smaller force of 20,000 men against the larger Hittite army of 50,000 men. Although the battle was indecisive (no one really won), Ramesses returned home a military hero. Later, Ramesses would establish one of the first major peace treaties in history with the Hittites. This helped to establish a peaceful northern border throughout the rest of Ramesses' rule.

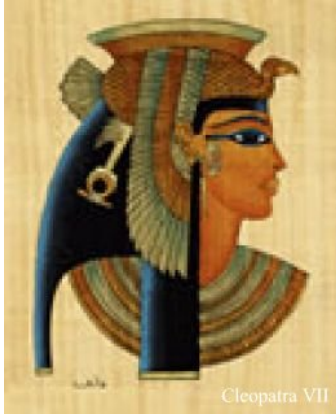
Ramesses II is also known as a great builder. He rebuilt many of the existing temples in Egypt and built many new structures of his own. He had the Ramesseum built. It is a large temple that was located on the west bank of the Nile near the city of Thebes. It was the temple where Ramesses II would be buried. Ramesses had the temples of Abu Simbel built in southern Egypt. At the entrance to the larger temple there are four huge statues of Ramesses sitting down. They are about 66 feet tall!

When Ramesses finally did die, he was 93 years old, an incredible age in a land where most died before they were 40. Egypt was paralyzed with grief. Because of his great rule, Ramesses II has become known as Ramesses "the Great." He was buried in the Valley of the Kings, but his mummy was later moved to keep it hidden from thieves. Today the mummy is in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

RATE THE PHARAOHS

CLEOPATRA VII

(51 – 30 BC)



Cleopatra VII was born to Pharaoh Ptolemy XII in 69 BC. She was the oldest of four children and very interested in her future. Cleopatra became Queen of Egypt in 51 BC when she was 18 years old and shared the throne with her brother.

When Cleopatra was 22, she came into conflict with some royal advisors and she was driven into exile. As she was preparing to fight a battle and return to Egypt, she met Rome's ruler, Julius Caesar (see-zer), who helped her overthrow her brother.

Cleopatra and Julius Caesar fell in love. They had a child named Caesarion. Cleopatra visited Rome and stayed at one of Caesar's country houses.

Despite her romance with Caesar, Cleopatra wanted Egypt to remain independent of Rome. She built up the Egyptian economy, establishing trade with many Arab nations. She was a popular ruler among the people of Egypt both because she embraced the Egyptian culture and because the country was prosperous during her rule.

Later, after Caesar was killed, a Roman general, Mark Antony, gave his support to help her remain as ruler of Egypt. Cleopatra used her charm, intelligence, and determination to capture the hearts of both Caesar and Antony. Cleopatra gave extravagant feasts. The table settings were gold and silver encrusted with precious stones. Cleopatra was the only one of the last rulers to learn the Egyptian language and brought back religious traditions. She loved music, art, dancing, and spoke many languages. Cleopatra used these interests to gain the attention of many admirers.

After Caesar died in 44 B.C. in Rome, Mark Antony, Octavian, and one other Roman shared control of the Roman Empire. A disagreement between Mark Antony and Octavian (who was a nephew of Caesar) began a civil war in Rome. Cleopatra lent Antony hundreds of soldiers and several ships to fight Octavian.

However, Antony would lose the war against Octavian, who ended up invading Egypt. After hearing the news, Antony fell onto his sword to try to kill himself. After Antony's death, Cleopatra was a prisoner of Octavian. Rather than let him kill her and parade her through Rome, she tricked Octavian into leaving her alone and arranged her suicide. Two small marks were found on Cleopatra's arm, which were thought to be the bite of an asp, a poisonous snake. The asp was the animal sacred to the Sun-god Amen-Ra and any person killed by the asp was thought to be in the company of the gods.

Cleopatra ruled Egypt for 21 years under trying circumstances to keep control of the country; ultimately, her actions may have contributed to its downfall. Egypt became part of the Roman Empire after her death in 30 B.C.