

## Pharaohs, Dynasties and Kingdoms in Ancient Egypt

The kings of Egypt were called **pharaohs** by the later Greeks and Hebrews: the name originates from the Egyptian *per-aa*, meaning 'great house'. Most Egyptian kings and queens are grouped in **dynasties** (a family in which all the rulers in a time period belong).

There is no archaeological evidence for the earliest Egyptian kings, so we cannot be sure if they existed. There are good records of the kings after **3100** bc, so the period before this is called **Prehistoric** (meaning 'before written records') or **Predynastic** (meaning 'before the dynasties'). Like most cultures, the Egyptians dated historical and political events according to the years during which people ruled. Some written sources, called 'king lists', list when each Egyptian king ruled and the dynasty to which s/he belonged. **Egyptologists** (people who study Egypt) date history and art according to the rulers and dynasties.

The 'king lists' are found in works of writers from the Roman period as well as inscriptions and papyri. Josephus, Sextus Julius Africanus and Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea quoted a Greco-Egyptian priest, Manetho, who wrote a history of Egypt. In his history, which does not survive, Manetho divided the rulers of Egypt into thirty dynasties. The list begins at around **3000** bc and ends at **343** bc with Nakhthoreb (Nectanebo II, as the Greeks called him), the last native Egyptian ruler.

The dates are all approximate. The early years (like **3000** bc) are accurate to within **150** years and the later ones (like **343** bc) are accurate to within one year. By comparing Manetho's lists to those found on other sources, Egyptologists have now agreed that the total number of dynasties is thirty one. Some other sources are the inscriptions known as 'The Palermo Stone' and 'The Turin Royal Canon'. The Palermo Stone lists some of the earlier kings up to Neferirkare (**5th** dynasty). The Turin Royal Canon, from Thebes, dates to the reign of Ramesses II (**19th** dynasty). It names of all the Egyptian rulers before him and includes Egyptian gods who the Egyptians believed ruled Egypt before pharaohs.

*Sadie Pickup*

period	period / dynasty	date (all dates approximate)
Predynastic		Before 3100 bc
Early dynastic period		3000–2800 bc
	Dynasty 1	3000–2800 bc
	Dynasty 2	2800–2675 bc
	Dynasty 3	2675–2625 bc
Old kingdom		2625–2130 bc
	Dynasty 4	2625–2500 bc
	Dynasty 5	2500–2350 bc
	including Neferirkare Kakai	2472–2462 bc
	Dynasty 6	2350–2170 bc
	Dynasties 7 and 8	2170–2130 bc
First intermediate period		2130–1980 bc
	Dynasties 9 and 10	2130–1980 bc (in Herakleopolis)
	Dynasty 11	2081–1938 (in Thebes)
Middle kingdom		1980–1630 bc
	Dynasty 11	1980 bc
	Dynasty 12	1938–1759 bc (in Itj-Tawy)
	Dynasty 13	1759–after 1630 bc (in Itj-Tawy)
	Dynasty 14	?1675– after 1630 bc (in W. Delta)
Second intermediate period		1630–1539/23 bc
	Dynasty 15 ('Hyksos')	1630–1523 bc (in Avaris)
	'Dynasty 16' (Hyksos vassals of Dynasty 15)	1630–1523 bc
	Dynasty 17	1630–1539 bc (in Thebes)
New Kingdom		1539–1075 bc
	Dynasty 18	1539–1292 bc (in Thebes)
	including Tutankhamun	1332–1322 bc
	Dynasty 19	1292–1190 bc (in Thebes)
	including Ramesses (Ramses) II	1279–1213 bc
	Dynasty 20	1190–1075 bc (in Thebes)

Third intermediate period		1075–656 bc
	Dynasty 21	1075–945 bc (in Tanis)
	Dynasty 22	945–712 bc (in Bubastis)
	Dynasty 23	838–712 bc
	Dynasty 24	727–712 bc (in Sais)
	Dynasty 25 ('Nubian' or 'Kushite')	760–656 bc
Late dynastic period		664–332 bc
	Dynasty 26	664–525 (in Sais)
	Dynasty 27: First Persian occupation	525–405 bc
	Dynasty 28	409–399 bc (in Sais)
	Dynasty 29	399–380 bc (in Mendes)
	Dynasty 30	381–343 bc (in Sebennytos)
	Dynasty 31: Second Persian occupation	343–332 bc
Hellenistic period		332–31 bc
	including Alexander III ('the Great')	332–323 bc
	and Cleopatra VII	51–30 bc
Roman period		30 bc – ad 395
Coptic / Byzantine period		Until ad 641

Adapted from Dr David P. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt* (Oxford 1997)