

# Chapter 3

## The Art of Ancient Egypt

# Ancient Egypt

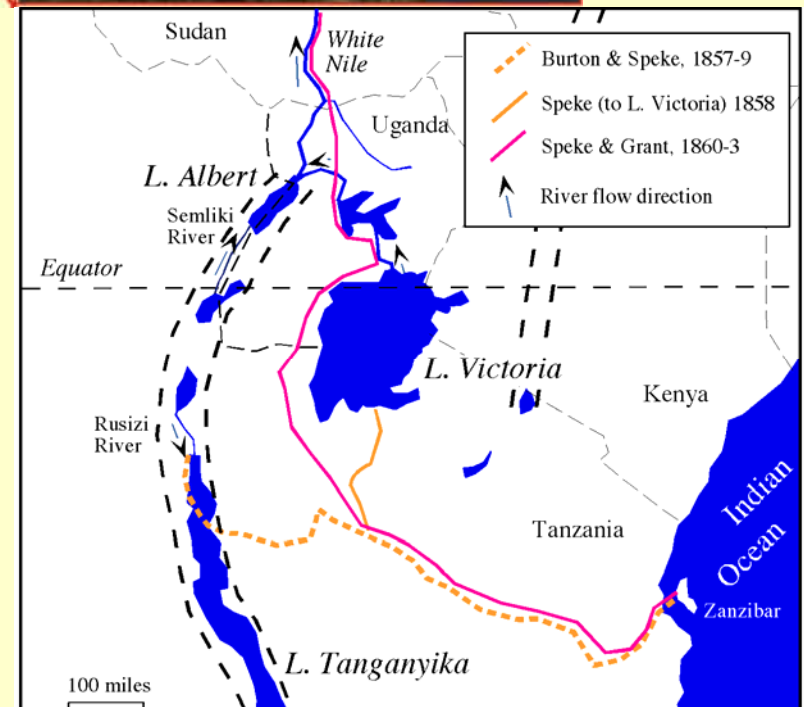


# "Egypt is the gift of the Nile."

Hecataeus, quoted by Herodotus



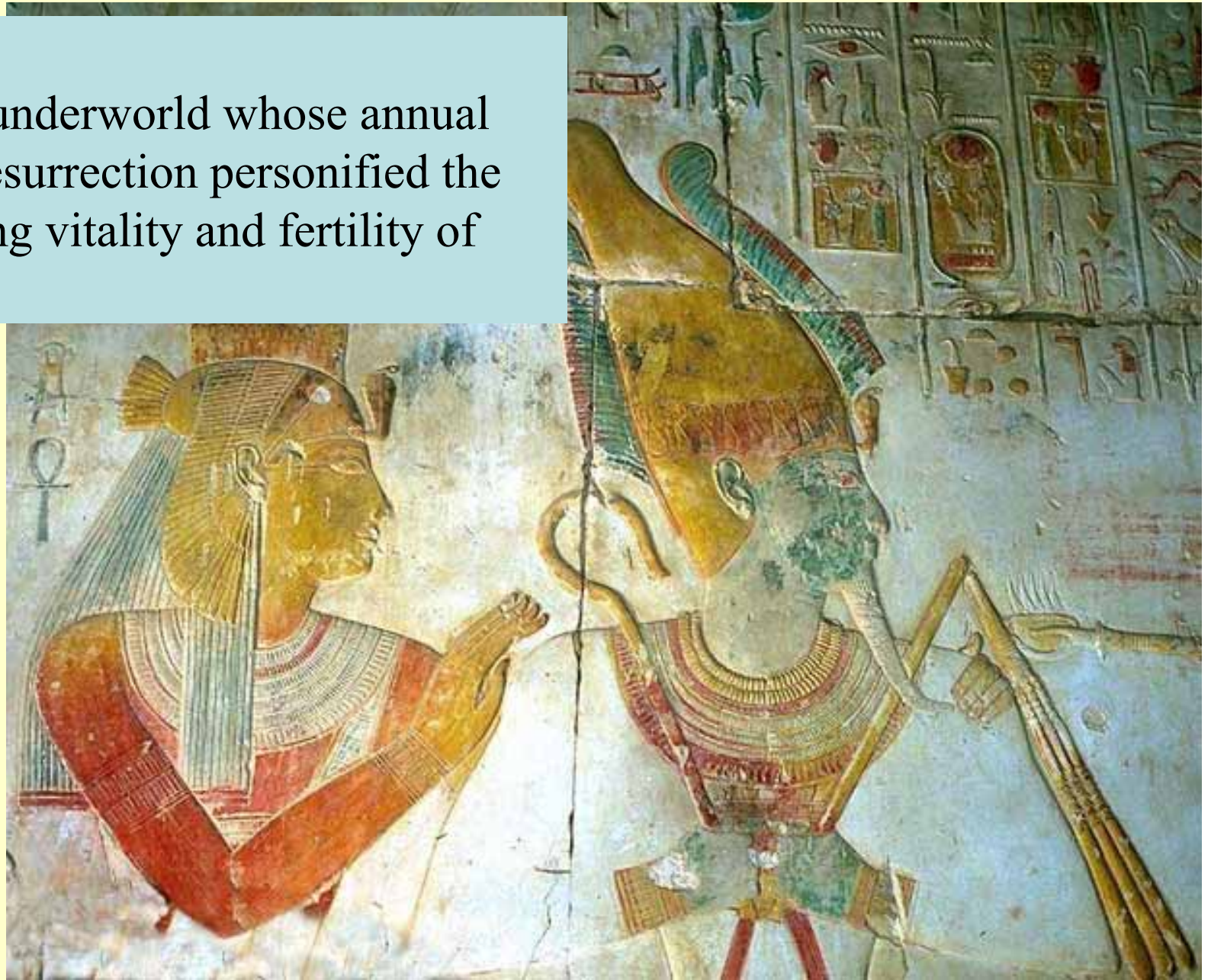
The Nile begins in well-watered regions near the equator and flows northward across the Sahara Desert before it empties into the eastern Mediterranean Sea.



# **Isis and Osiris**

## Osiris

God of the underworld whose annual death and resurrection personified the self-renewing vitality and fertility of nature.

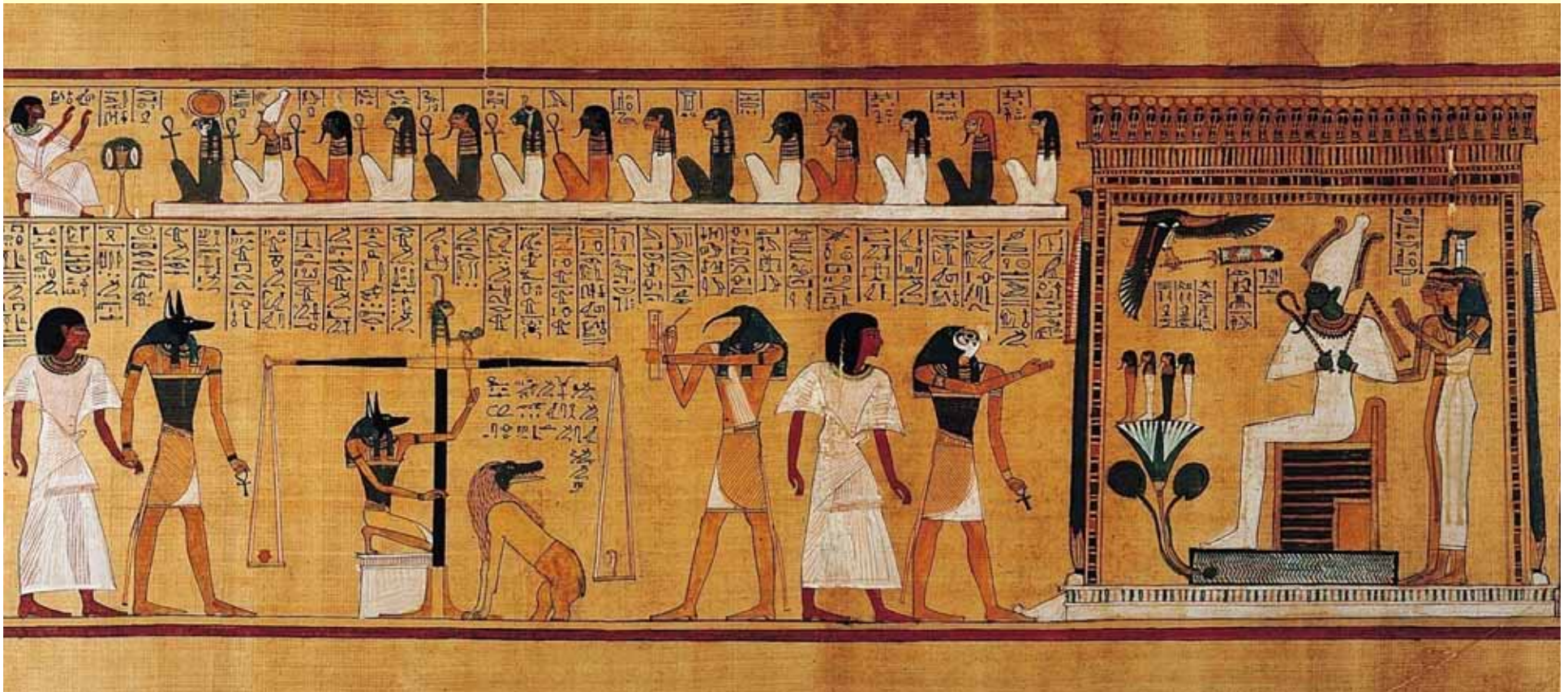


**Isis and Osiris.** 1291-1279 BCE (New Kingdom.) Temple of Seti I. Abydos

**Whether I live or die I am Osiris,  
I enter in and reappear through you,  
I decay in you, I grow in you,  
I fall down in you, I fall upon my side.  
The gods are living in me for I live and grow in the corn  
that sustains the Honoured Ones.  
I cover the earth,  
whether I live or die I am Barley.  
I am not destroyed.  
I have entered the Order,  
I rely upon the Order,  
I become Master of the Order,  
I emerge in the Order,  
I make my form distinct,  
I am the Lord of the Chennet (Granary of Memphis?)  
I have entered into the Order,  
I have reached its limits. . . .**

'Coffin Texts,' 330,

**Papyrus:** A paperlike material made by binding together two layers of strips of pith (a spongelike substance in the center of stems and branches) from the papyrus plant.



**Last judgment of Hu-Nefer**, from his tomb at Thebes, Egypt, Dynasty XIX, ca. 1290–1280 BCE. Painted papyrus scroll, approx. 1' 6" high. British Museum, London.

## **Book of the Dead. Chapter One**

...O you who are the openers of ways and the cleavers of roads for effective souls in the house of Osiris.

Open then the ways, cleave then the roads for my soul with you, so that he may go in in fury, and emerge in peace from the house of Osiris, without being blocked, without being turned back...

I have proceeded here, and no fault has been found with me: the scales are free of its moment.



# **Horus and Hathor**



Hawk-headed Horus. From  
Treasury of King Tut



**Horus Stele**  
30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty  
British Mus., London



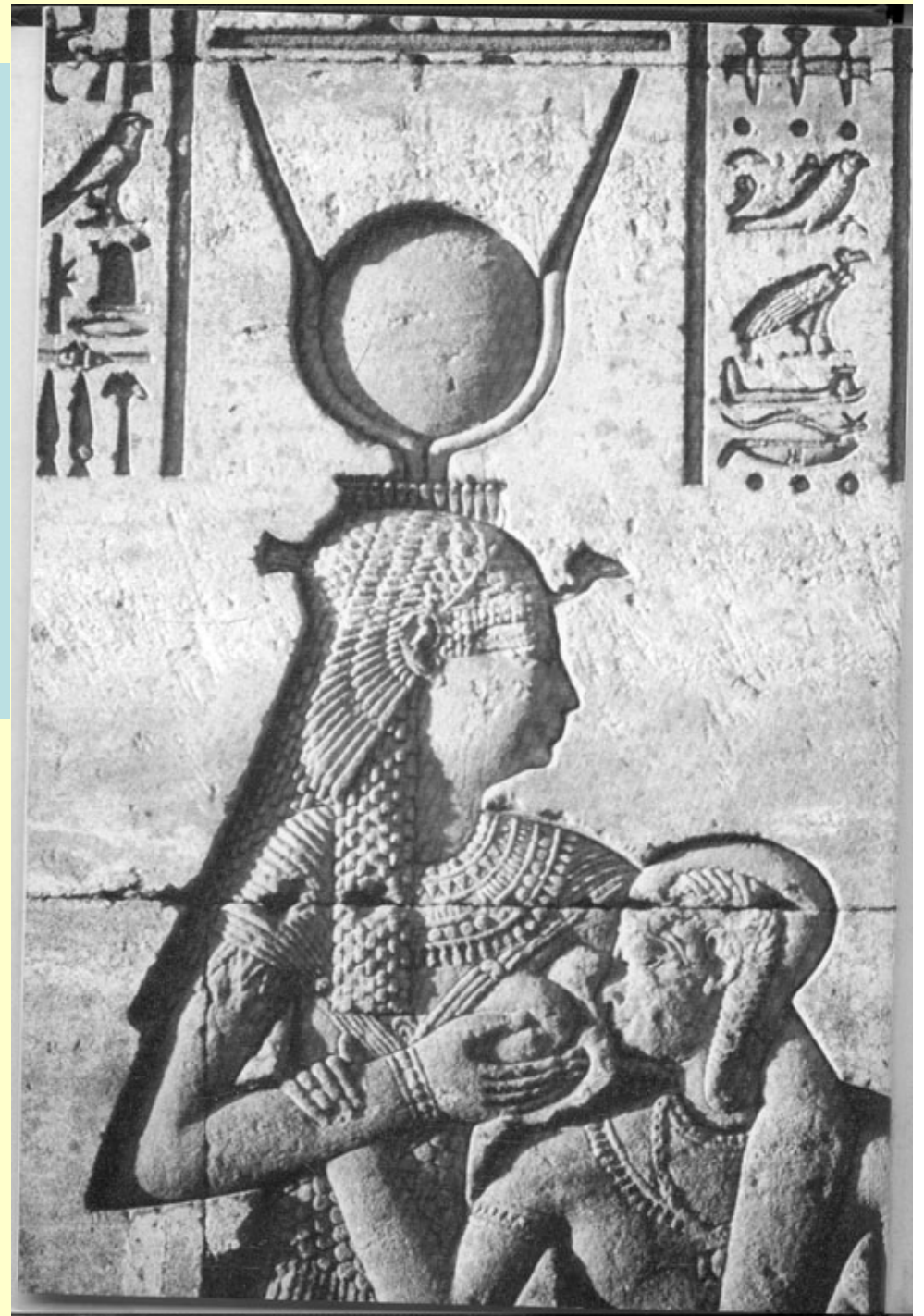
**Isis Nursing Horus**  
Ptolemaic Period  
(ca. 300–30 B.C.)  
Faience; h. 6.7 in.  
Metropolitan, NY

## Hathor

The goddess of the sky, of women, and of fertility and love. Her principal animal form was a cow, and she was strongly associated with motherhood.

In Upper Egypt she was worshiped with Horus,

**Hathor nursing the  
infant Horus.**

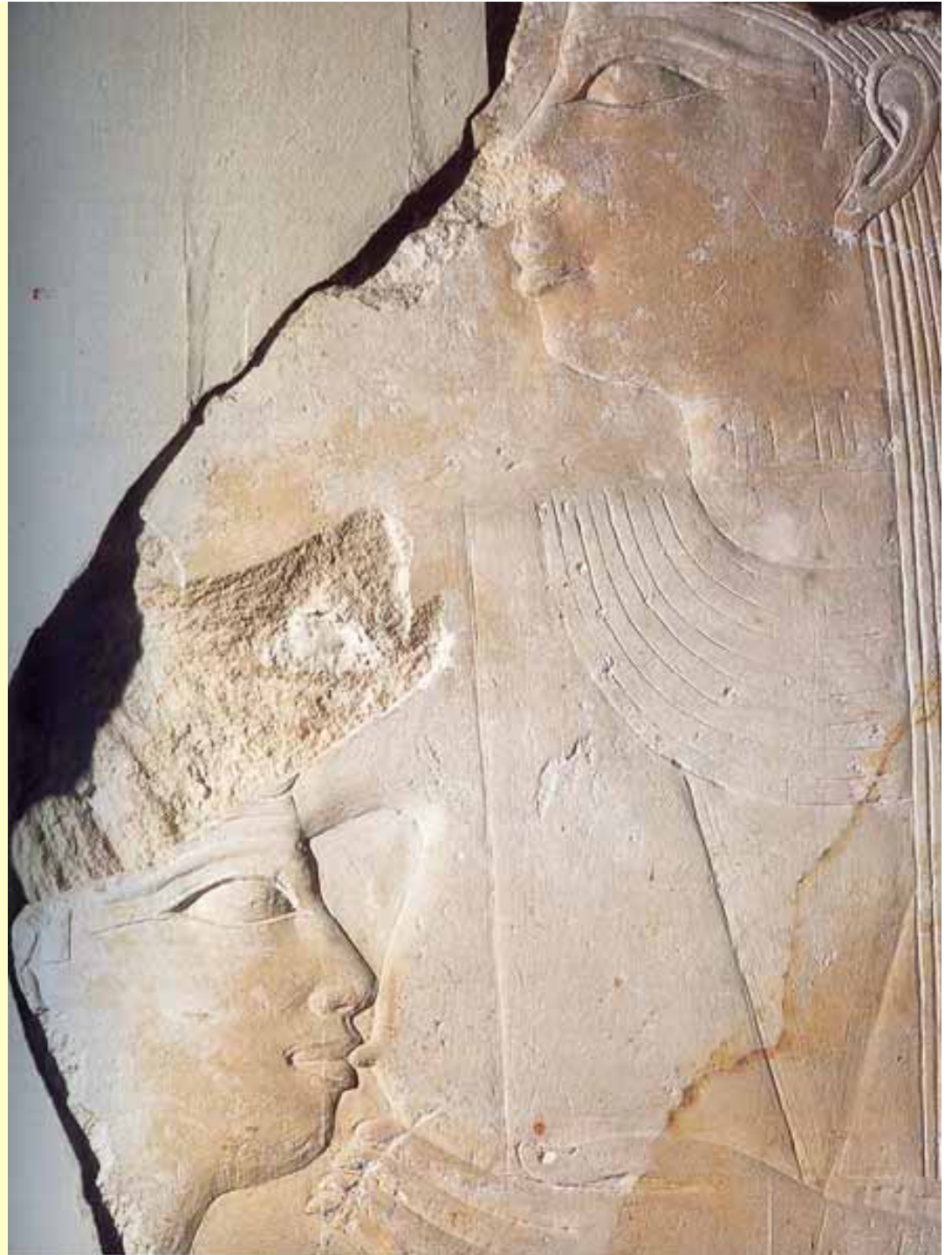


**Goddess Suckling King Wenis**

From the pyramid temple of  
Wenis at Saqqara.

2356-2323 BCE. Limestone.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



# Early Dynastic Period (Bronze Age)

30<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> c. BCE



**Palette of King Narmer (back)**

From Hierakonpolis, Egypt,  
 Predynastic, ca. 3000–2920 BCE.

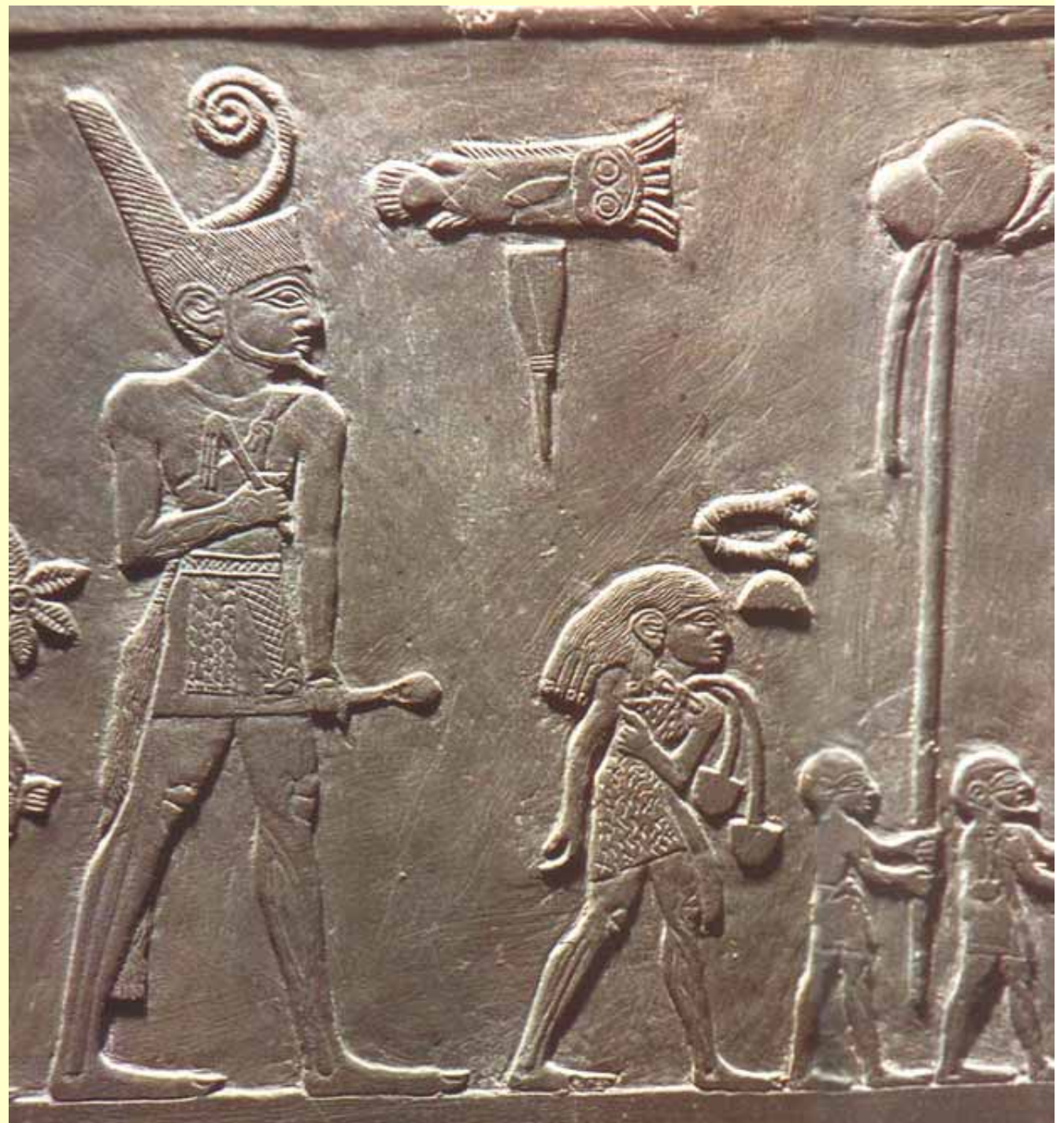
Slate, approx. 2' 1" high.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



**Palette of King Narmer (front)**  
from Hierakonpolis, Egypt,  
Predynastic, ca. 3000–2920 BCE.  
Slate, approx. 2' 1" high.  
Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

**Palette of King  
Narmer (front)**  
Detail





**Palette of King  
Narmer (front)**  
Detail



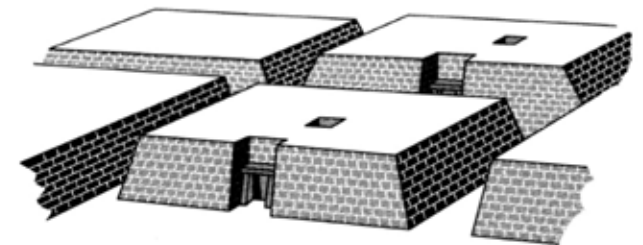
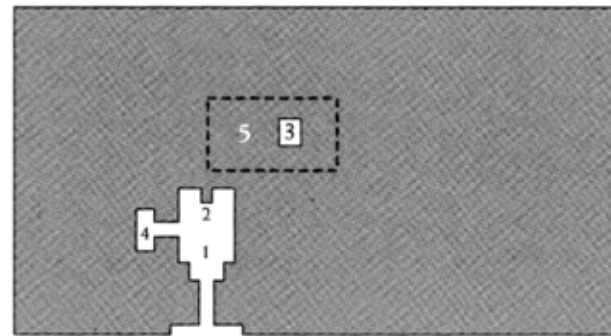
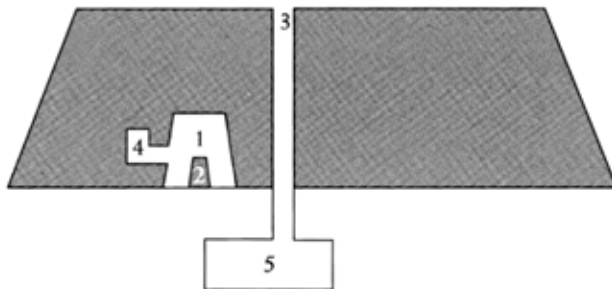
**Ka:** An individual's vital force, the total of the hereditary qualities received from one's ancestors. The ka was sustained through food and drink. Though it was the ka of the food that was consumed, not the physical aspect.

**False door (or Ka door) of Shery** from his Saqqara Mastaba. Fourth dynasty

**Mastaba:** A tomb with a rectangular base, sloping sides, and a flat roof.



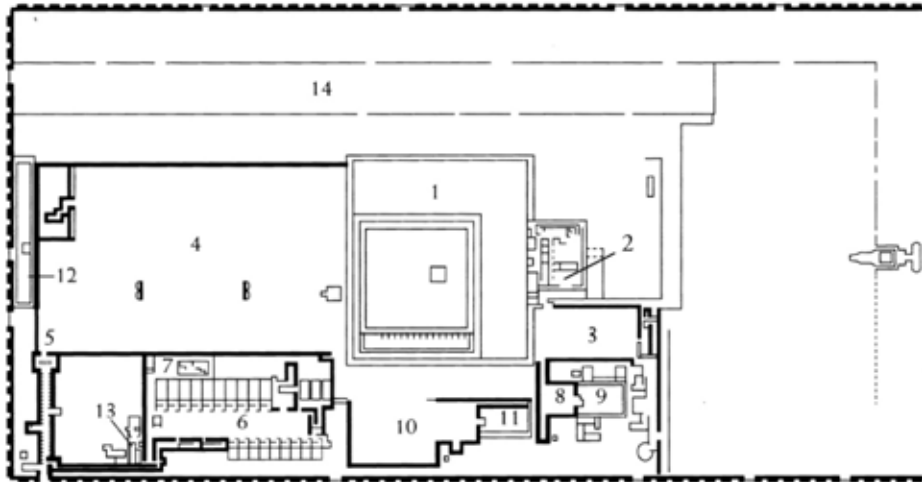
**Mastaba tombs.** Section (left), plan (center), and restored view (right).



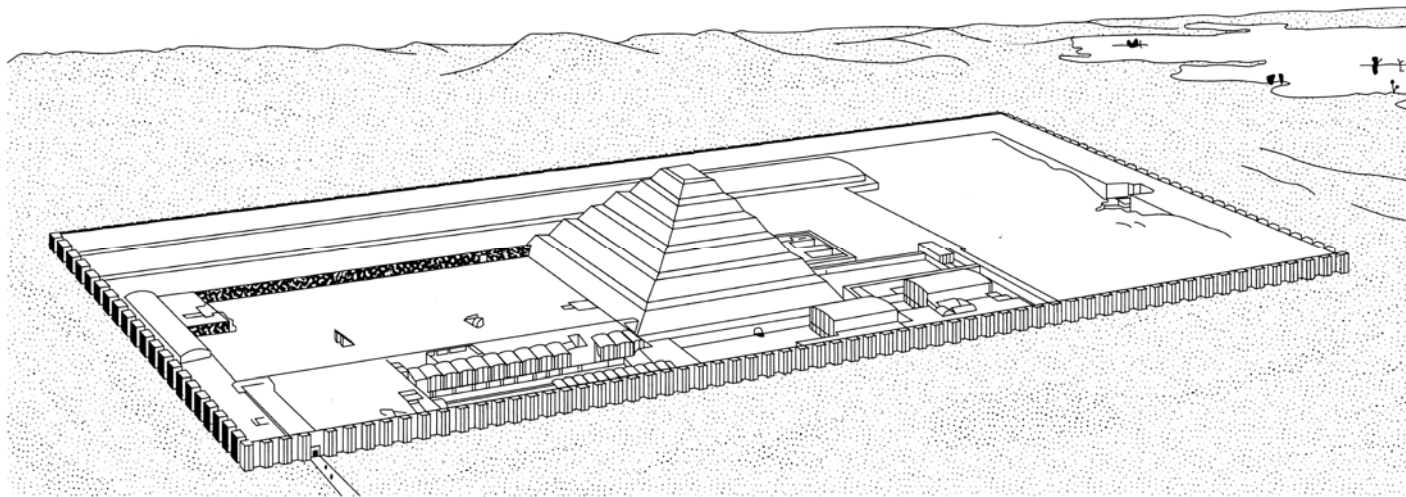
1. Chapel 2. False door 3. Shaft into burial chamber 4. Serdab (chamber for statue of deceased) 5. Burial chamber



IMHOTEP, **Stepped Pyramid and mortuary precinct of Djoser**, Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty III, ca. 2630–2611 BCE.



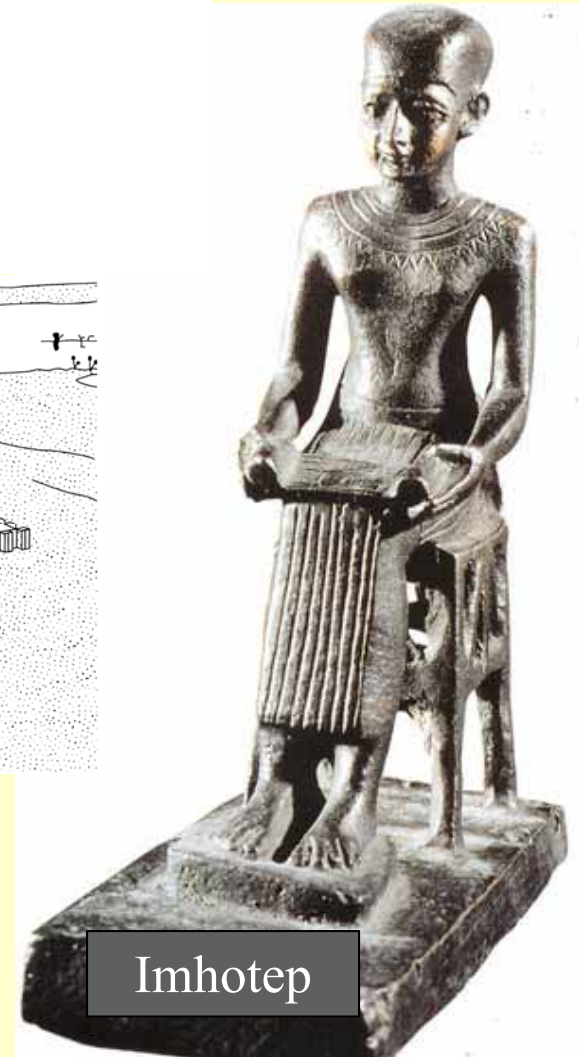
1. Stepped pyramid derived from square-plan mastaba
2. Funerary temple of Djoser
3. Court with serdab
4. Large court with altar and two B-shaped stones
5. Entrance portico
6. Heb-Sed court flanked by sham chapels
7. Small temple
8. Court before North Palace
9. North Palace
10. Court before South Palace
11. South Palace
12. South tomb
13. Royal Pavilion
14. Magazines



## Mortuary precinct of Djoser

Restored plan (top) and view (bottom).

Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty III, ca. 2630–2611 BCE.



Imhotep

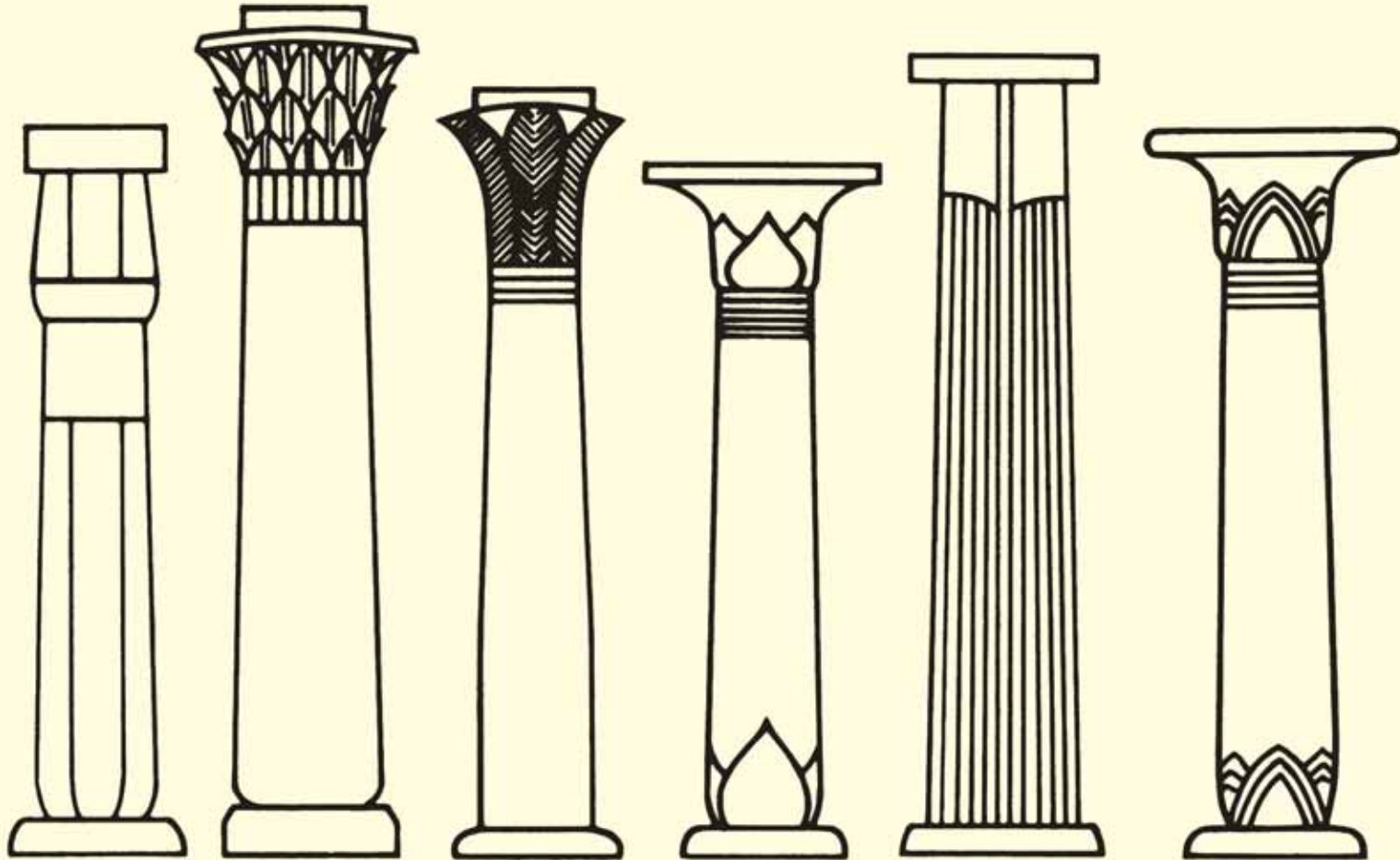
**Columnar entrance  
corridor to the  
mortuary precinct  
of Djoser**

Saqqara, Egypt,  
Dynasty III, ca.  
2630–2611 BCE.



**Facade of the North Palace of the  
mortuary precinct of Djoser,**  
Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty III, ca.  
2630–2611 BCE.





Papyrus

Foliated

Palm leaf

Papyrus  
blossom

Reed  
bundle

Lotus

Egyptian column types.

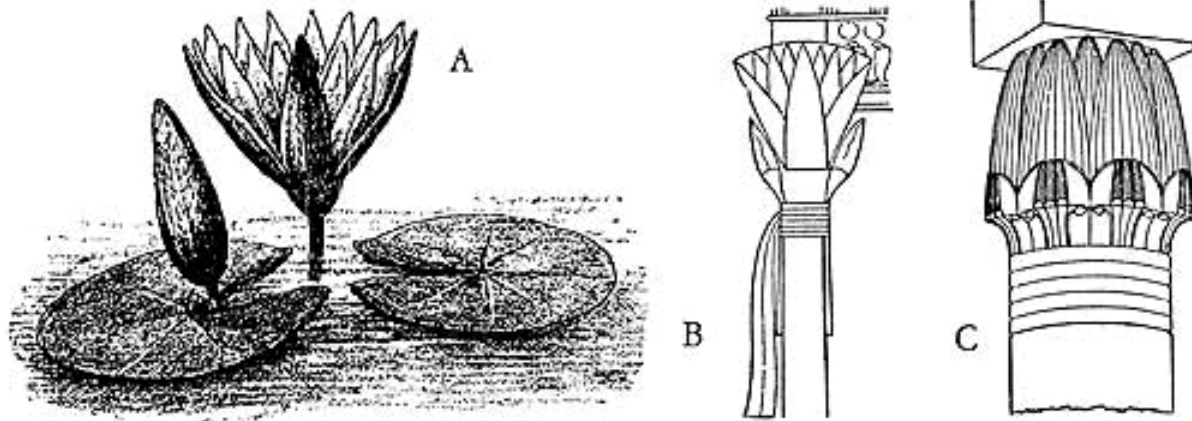


Fig. 68. *A*, Blue Lotus. *B*, Lotus Flower Column. *C*, Lotus Bud Column. (Borchardt)

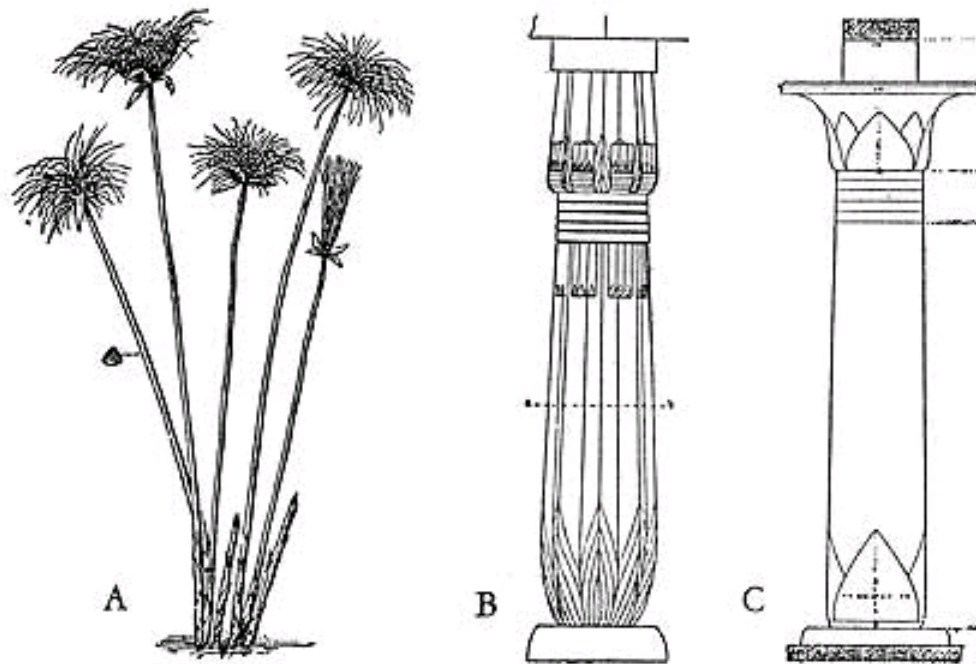
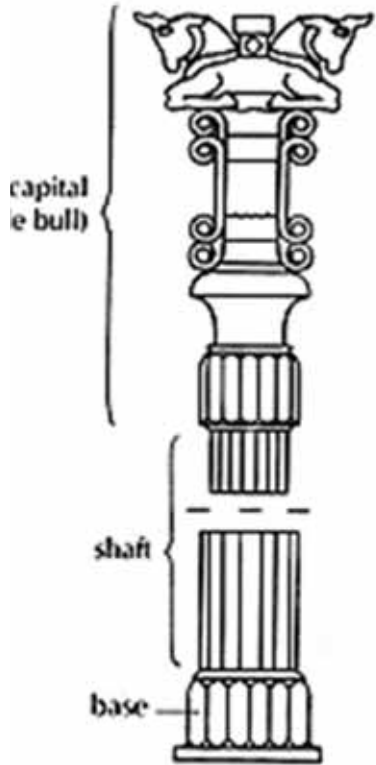
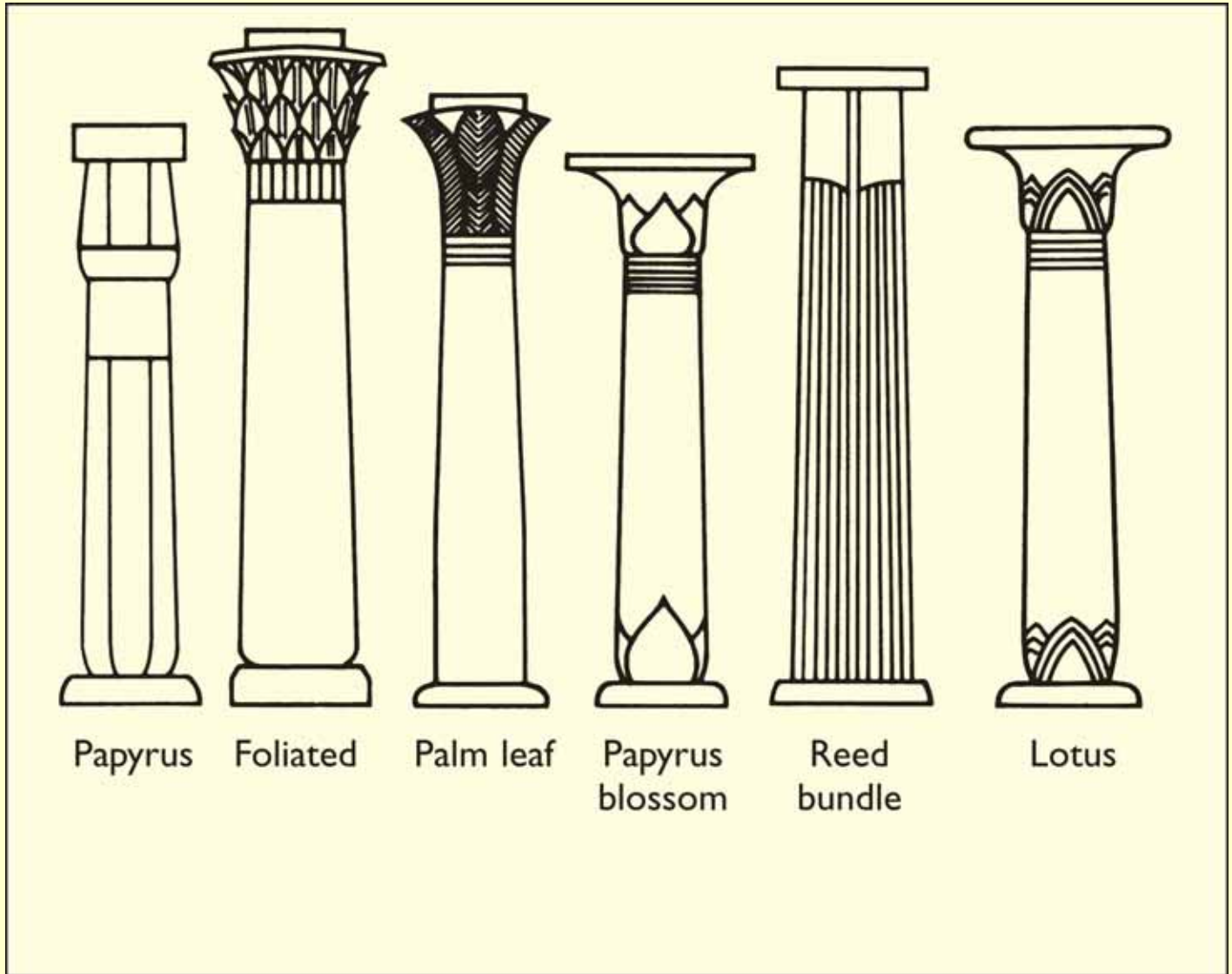


Fig. 69. *A*, Papyrus. *B*, Papyrus Cluster Bud Column. *C*, Papyrus Flower Column. (Borchardt)





Persian column



# The Old Kingdom Dyn. IV-VIII

26<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE  
( Bronze Age)



**Pyramid of  
Khufu:**

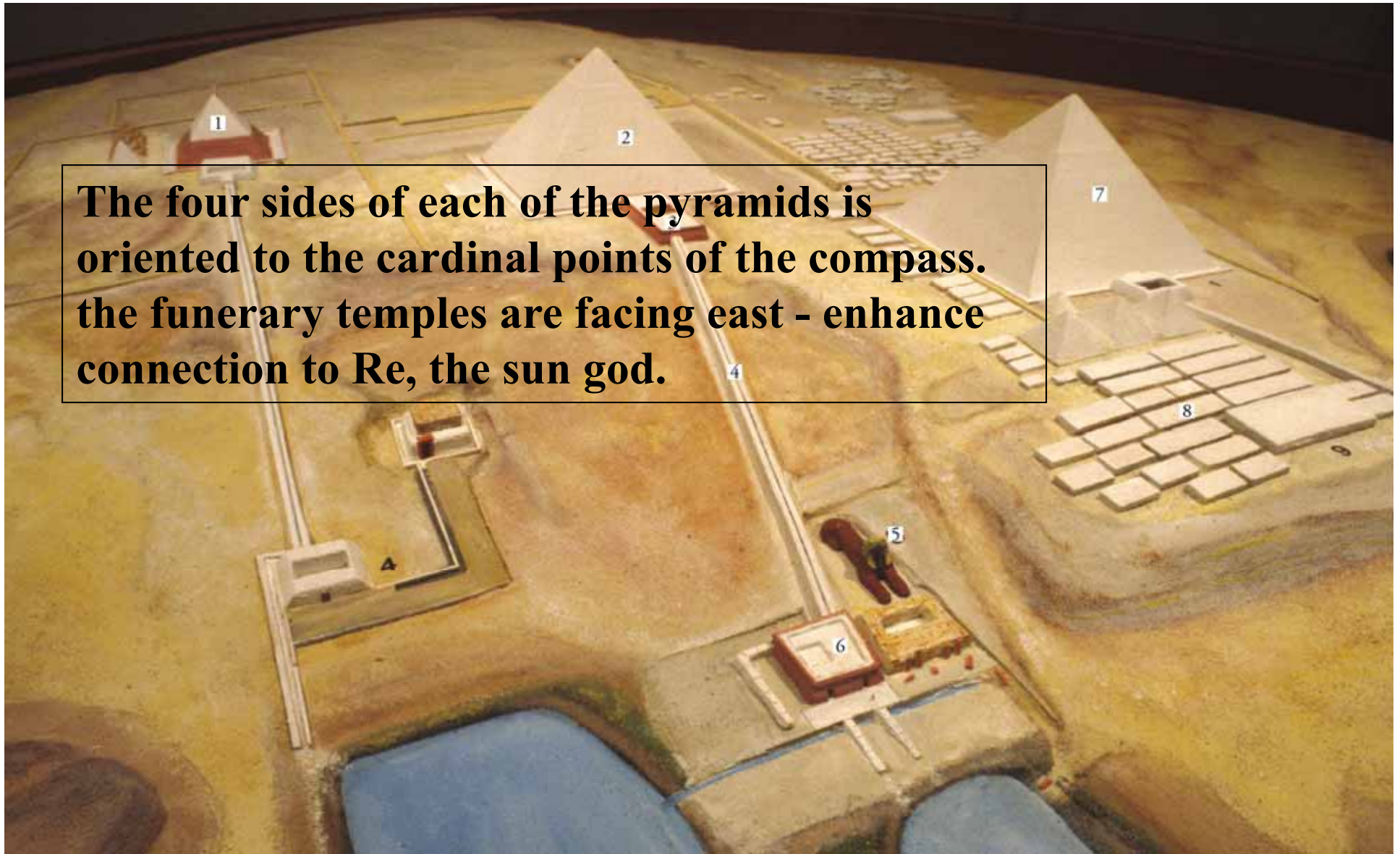
Length of one side  
- 775 feet.

Area - 13 acres

height - 450'  
(originally 480')

2.3 million blocks  
of stone, each 2.5  
tons

**Great Pyramids, Gizeh**, Egypt, Dynasty IV. From left: Pyramids of Menkaure, ca. 2490–2472 BCE; Khafre, ca. 2520–2494 BCE; and Khufu, ca. 2551–2528 BCE.



**The four sides of each of the pyramids is oriented to the cardinal points of the compass. the funerary temples are facing east - enhance connection to Re, the sun god.**

**Model of the pyramid complex**, Gizeh, Egypt. Harvard University Semitic Museum.

1. Pyramid of Menkaure, 2. Pyramid of Khafre, 3. Mortuary temple of Khafre, 4. Causeway, 5. Great Sphinx 6. Valley temple of Khafre, 7. Pyramid of Khufu, 8. Pyramids of the royal family and mastabas of nobles.



**Great Pyramids,** General view from NW: Khufu, Khafre, Menkaure



**Pyramid of Khafre,**  
(with white limestone cap.)  
Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV ca.  
2520–2494 BCE

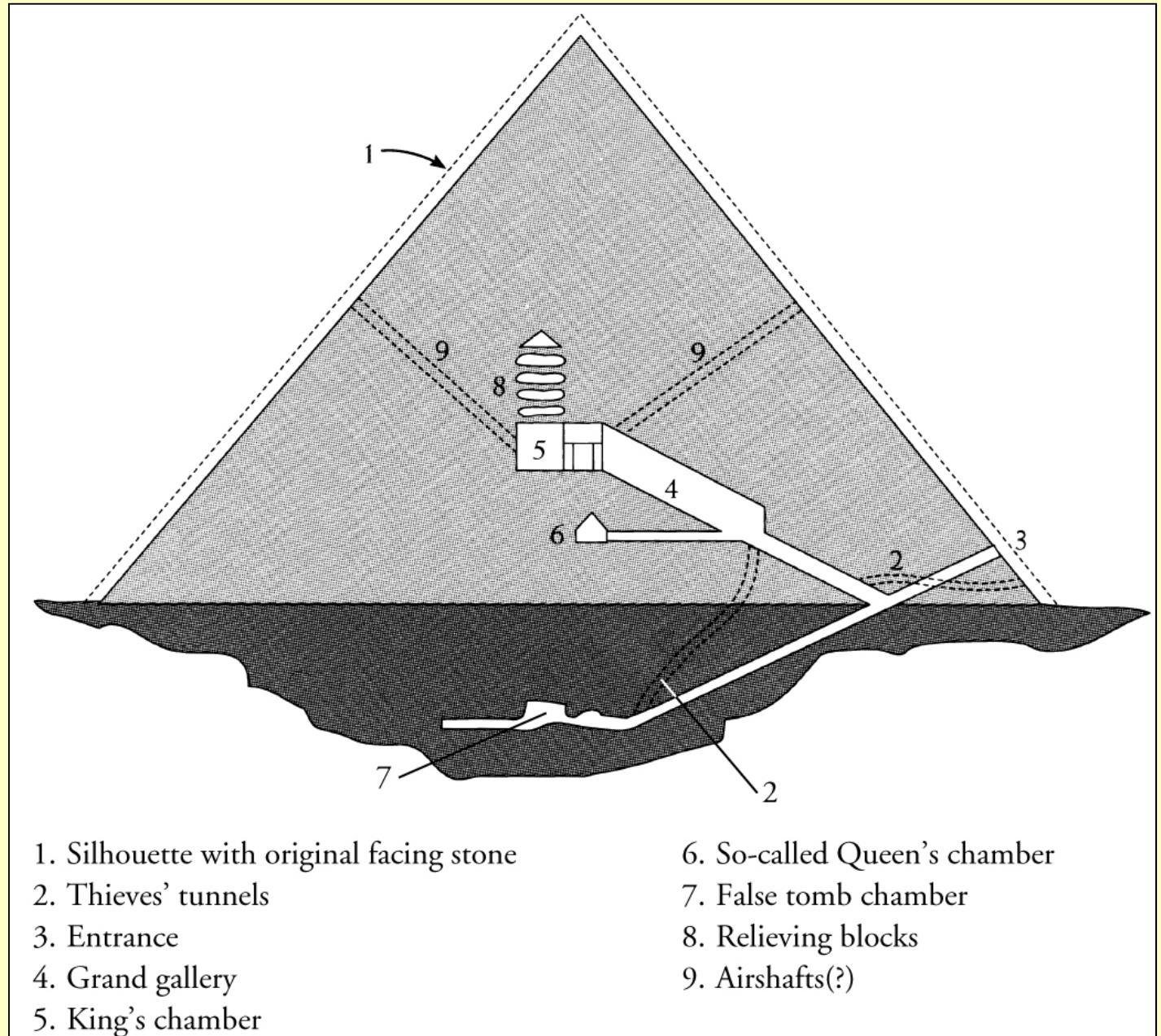
**Section of the  
Pyramid of Khufu,**  
ca. 2551–2528 BCE

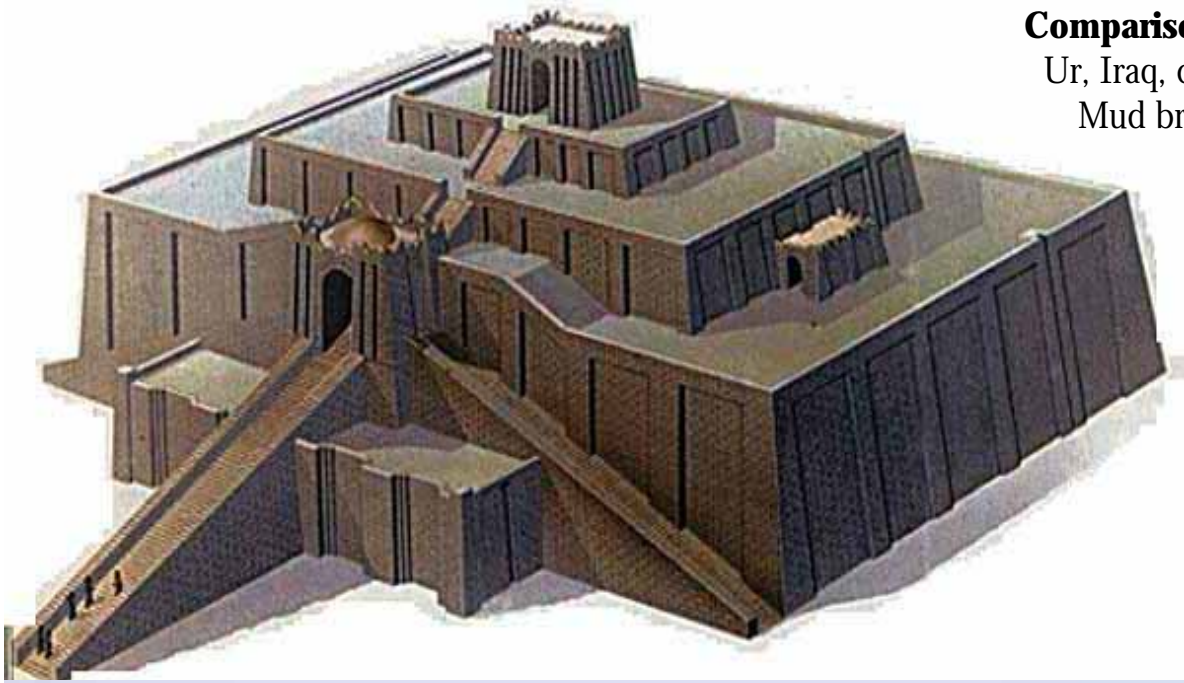
Length of one side -  
775 feet.

Area - 13 acres

height - 450'

2.3 million blocks of  
stone, each 2.5 tons





**Comparison: Ziggurat**

Ur, Iraq, ca. 2100 BCE

Mud bricks. 50' high

**Pyramid of Khufu:**

Length of one side  
- 775 feet.

Area - 13 acres

height - 450'  
(originally 480')

2.3 million blocks  
of stone, each 2.5  
tons

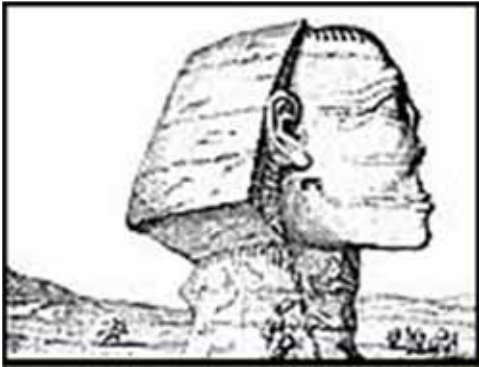


**Great Pyramids, Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV.** From left: Pyramids of Menkaure, ca. 2490–2472 BCE; Khafre, ca. 2520–2494 BCE; and Khufu, ca. 2551–2528 BCE.





**Great Sphinx**, Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE. Sandstone, approx. 65' high, 240' long.



Drawing of the Sphinx by  
Frederick Lewis Norden, 1737  
(Napoleon arrived in 1798)

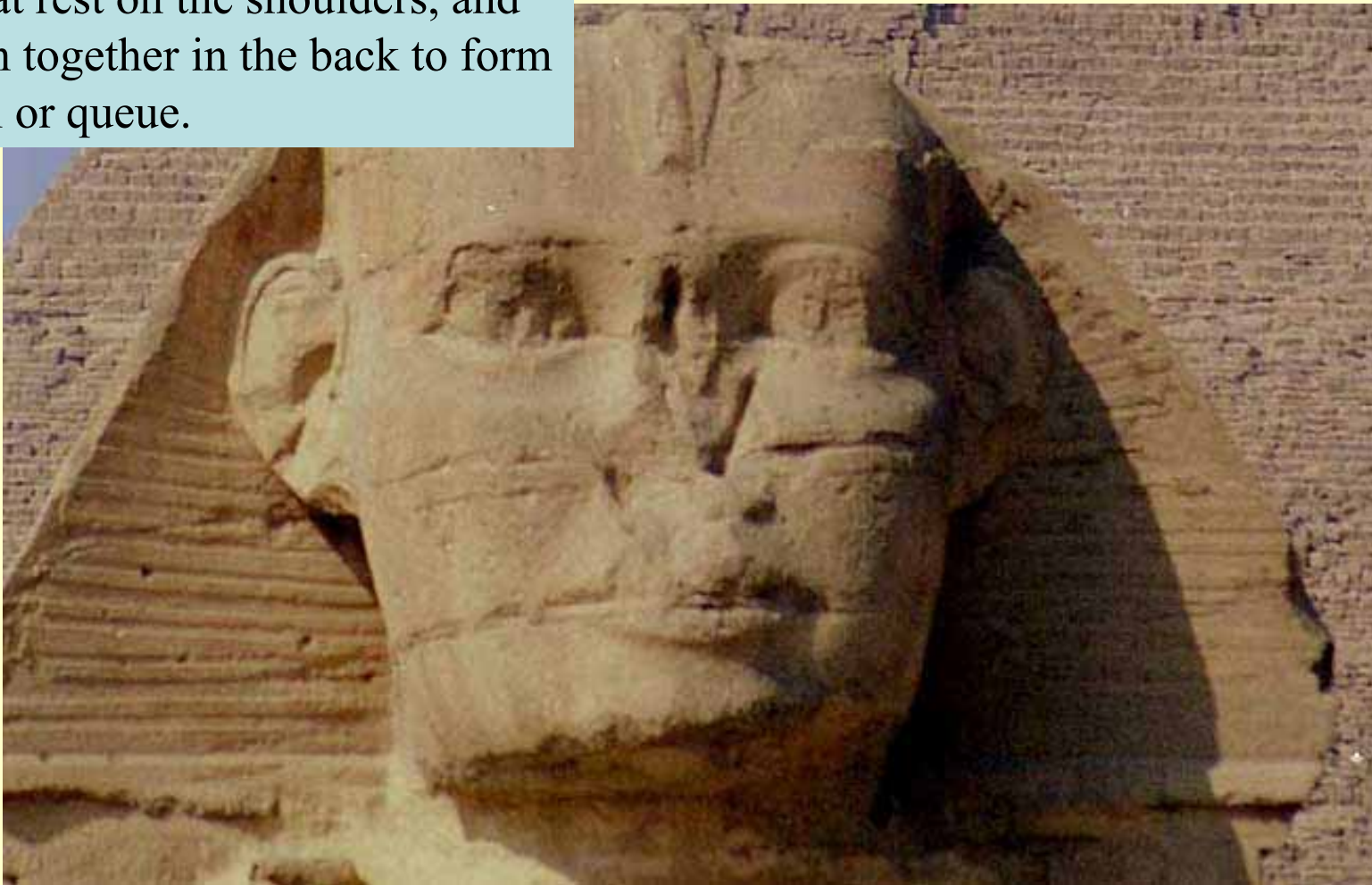


**Detail. Great Sphinx, Gizeh, ca. 2520–2494 BCE.**

## **Nemes-headress**

A royal head covering, made of stiff cloth pleated or banded with different colors. The nemes has side parts that rest on the shoulders, and is drawn together in the back to form a pigtail or queue.

**Uraeus:** The protective goddess Wedjet in the form of a cobra, whose image was affixed to the royal headgear.



**Detail. Great Sphinx, Gizeh, ca. 2520–2494 BCE.**

**Comparison: Cobra mask**  
from Sri Lanka. 19<sup>th</sup> c.



## **Ka-Statue, or Tomb Statue**

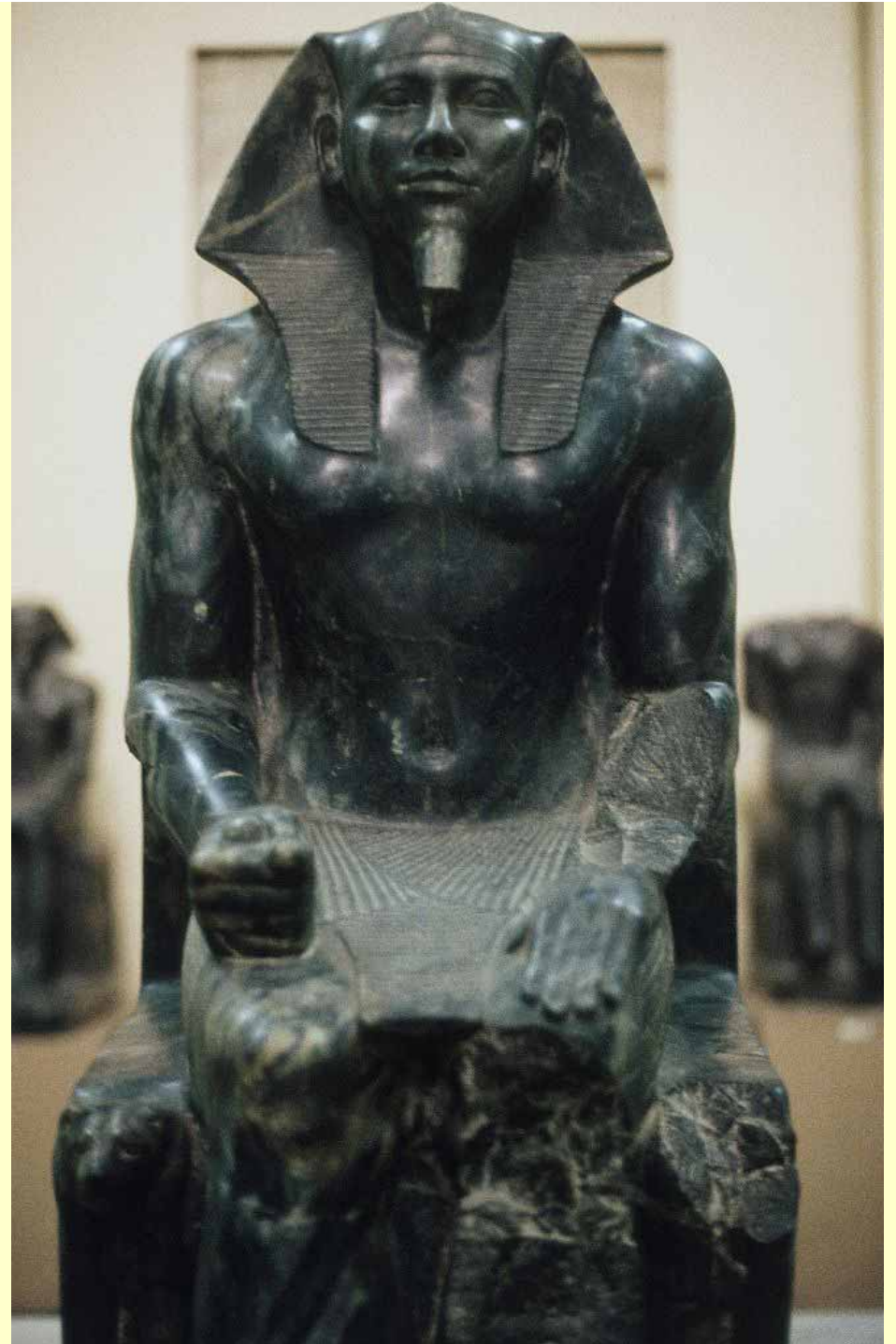
The ka, or life force, of an individual was believed to inhabit statues of stone or wood placed in a chapel or a serdab and, through them, to partake of sustenance in the form of food offerings. The statues also provided a “spare body” in the event that the mummy was damaged.

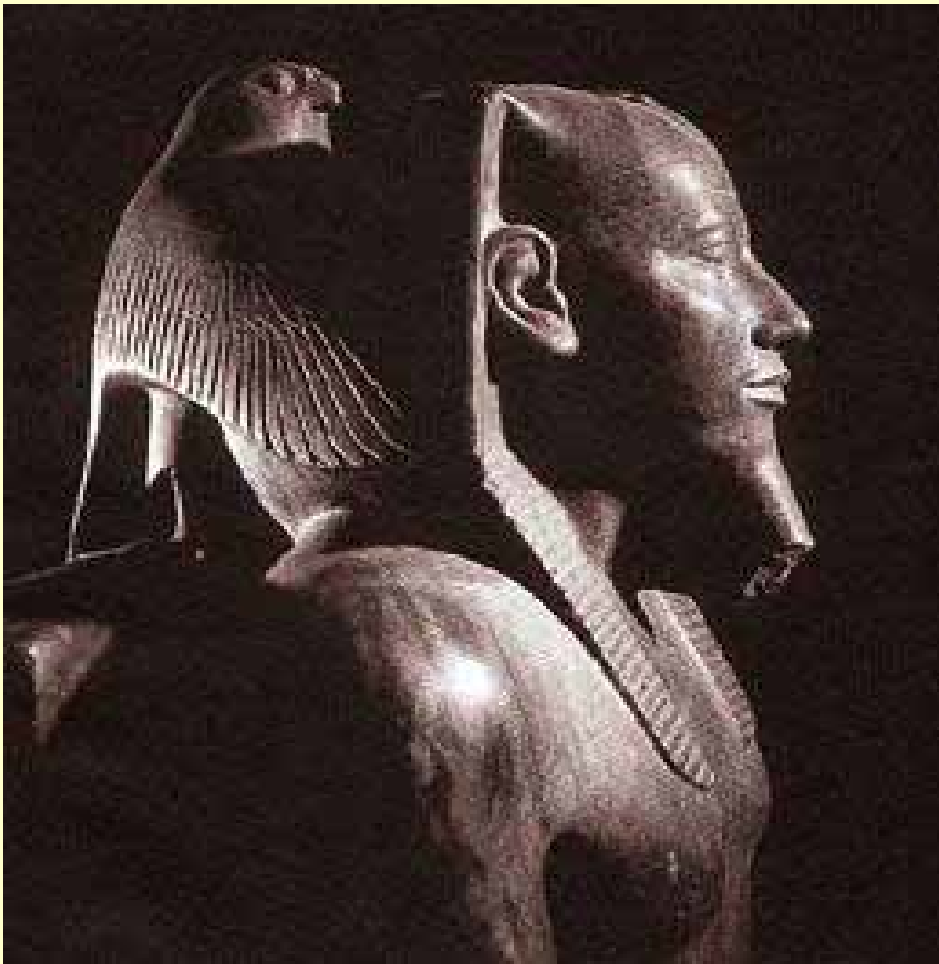
**Khafre**, Builder of 2nd pyramid,  
from Gizeh, Egypt,  
Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE.  
Diorite, approx. 5' 6" high.  
Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



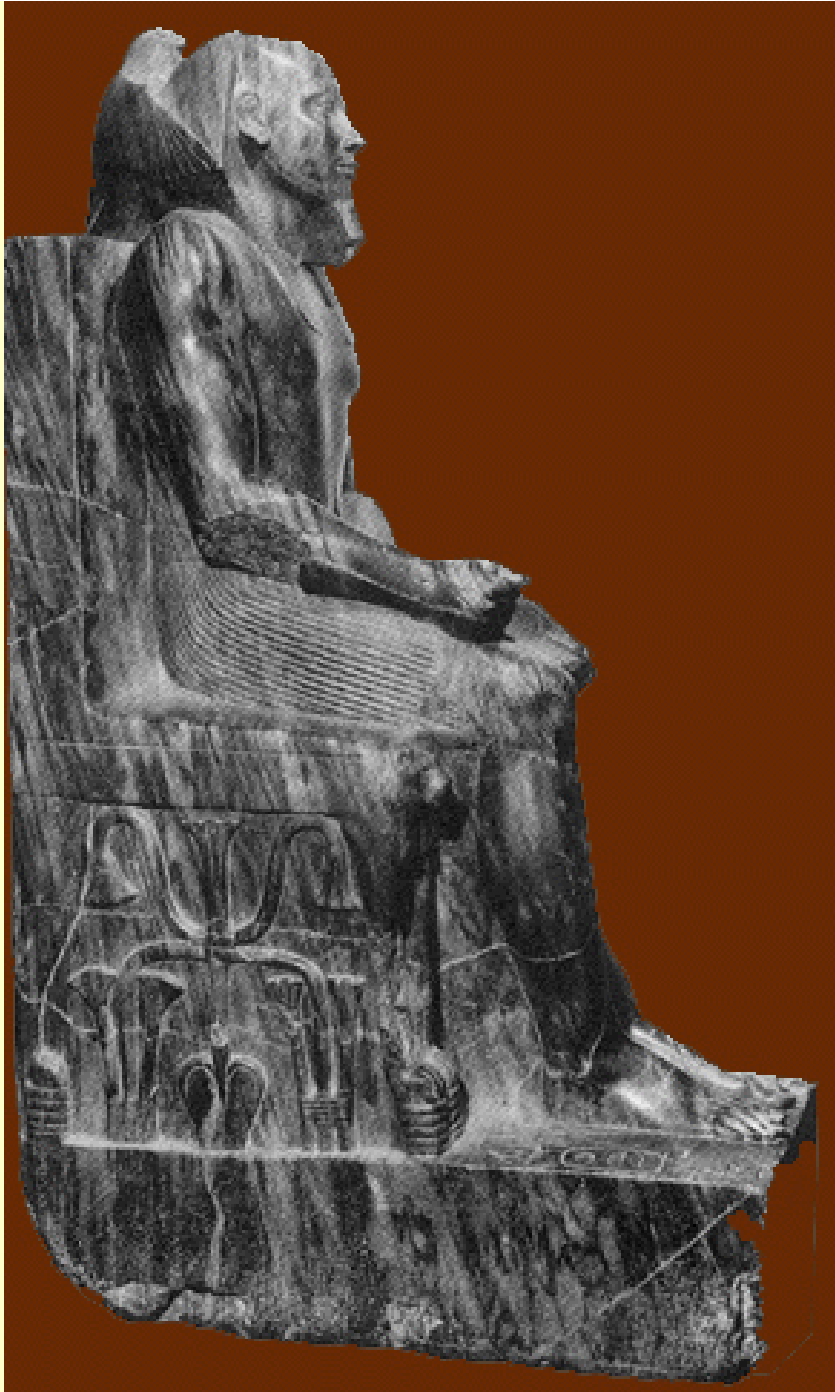


**Khafre**, from Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE. Diorite, approx. 5' 6" high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo





**Khafre**, from Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE. Diorite, approx. 5' 6" high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



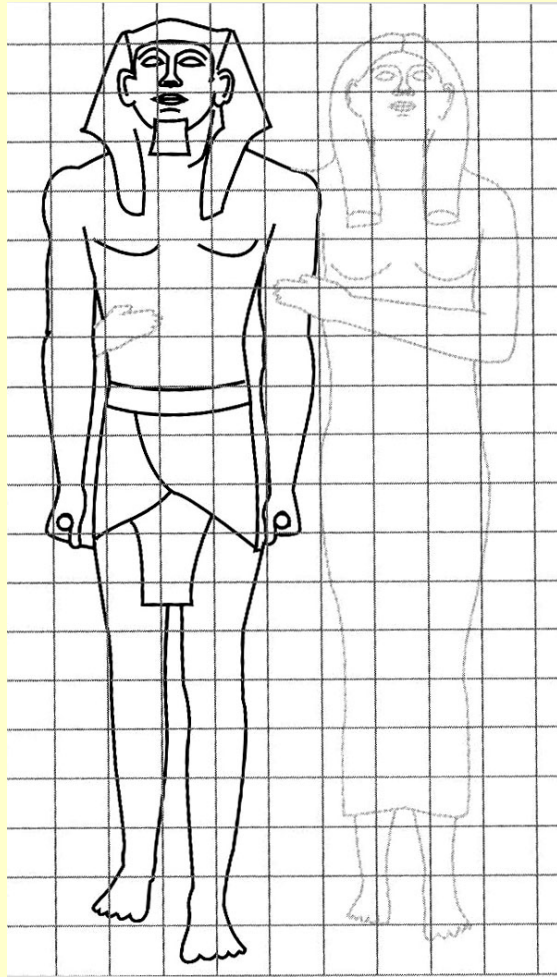
The lotus - Upper Egypt

The papyrus – Lower Egypt





The Egyptian  
Canon (system  
of proportions)



**Menkaure and Queen Khamerernebty (?)**  
from Gizeh, Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2490–2472  
BCE. Graywacke, approx. 4' 6 1/2" high.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



## **Rahotep and Nefert**

From the tomb chapel of  
Rahotep at Meidum.

4<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Egypt. Plastered  
and painted limestone.

Height 122 cm



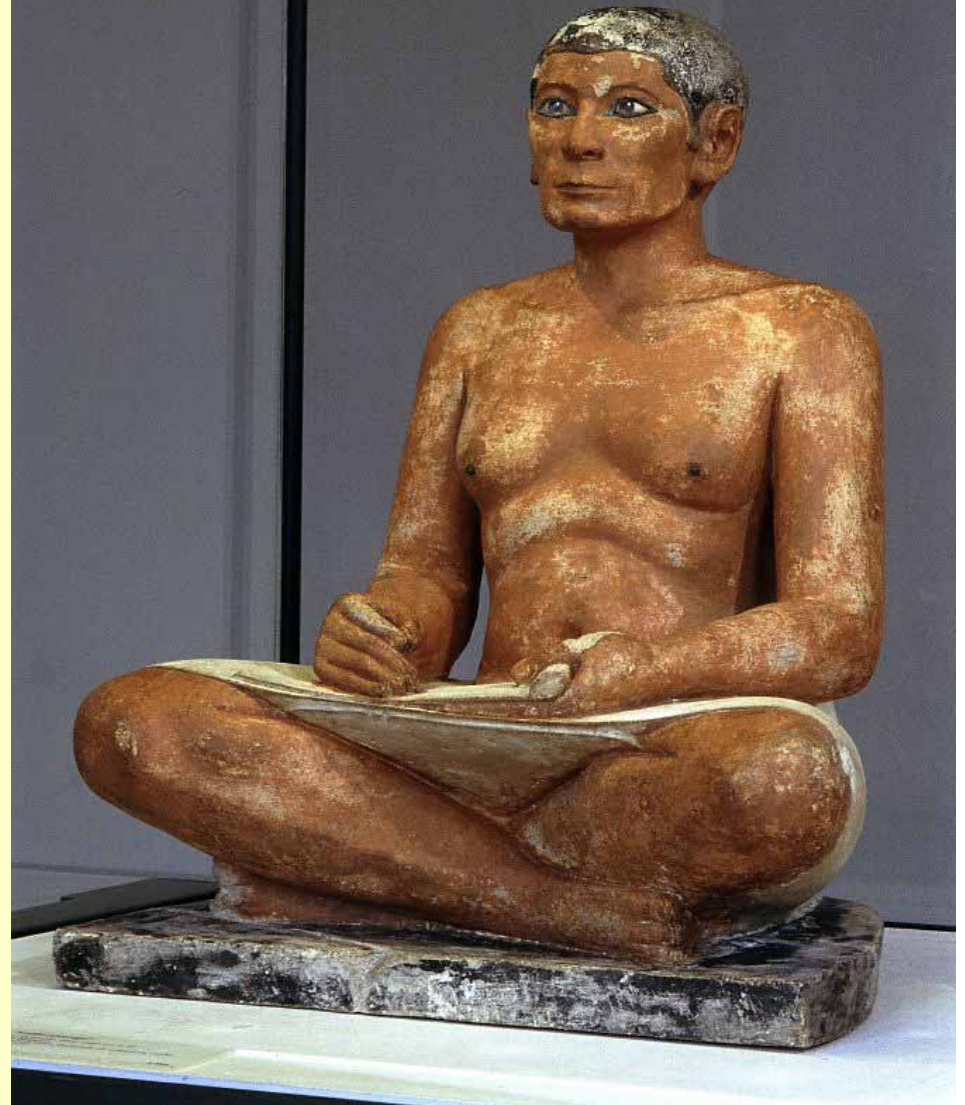
**Seated scribe (Kay?),**  
from his mastaba at  
Saqqara, Egypt,  
Dynasty V, ca. 2450–  
2350 BCE. Painted  
limestone, approx. 1'  
9" high. Louvre, Paris.



**Khafre**, Builder of 2nd pyramid,  
from Gizeh, Egypt,  
Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE.  
Diorite, approx. 5' 6" high.  
Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



**Seated Scribe (Kay?)**, from his  
mastaba at Saqqara



**Ka-Aper**, from his mastaba at Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty V, ca. 2450–2350 BCE. Wood, with inlaid eyes of rock crystal. Approx. 3' 7" high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



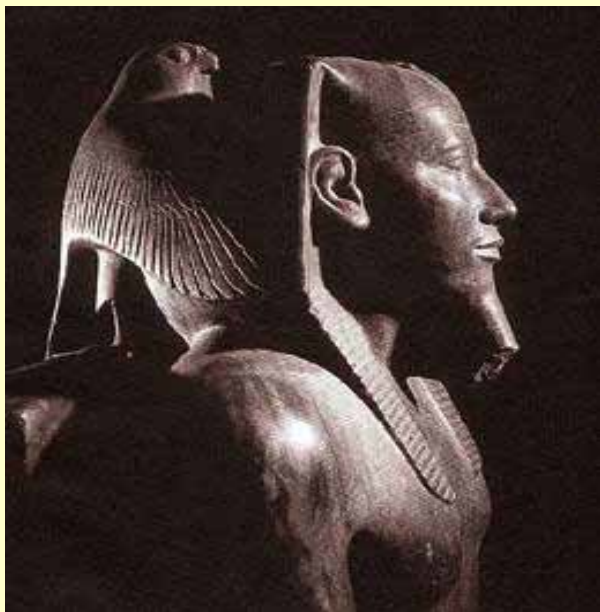
**Ti watching a hippopotamus hunt**, relief in the mastaba of Ti, Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty V, ca. 2450–2350 BCE. Painted limestone, hunting scene approx. 4' high.



# The Middle Kingdom Dyn. XI-XIV

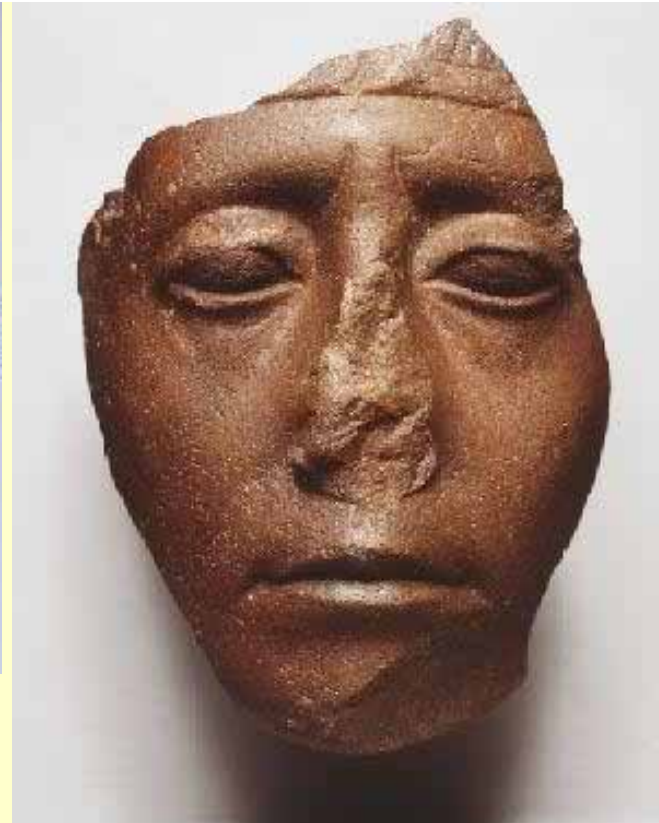
21<sup>st</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> c. BCE  
(Bronze Age)

**Comparison:**  
**Khafre.** Detail  
ca. 2520–2494 BCE.  
Diorite, approx. 5' 6"  
high.



**Head of Senusret III.**

Nelson-Atkins  
museum, New York



**Fragmentary head of Senusret III,**

Dyn. XII

ca. 1860 BCE. Red Quartzite 6.5"  
high. Metropolitan Mus. NY





Rock-cut tombs. Beni Hasan, Egypt, ca. 1950-1900 BCE



**Interior hall of the rock-cut tomb of Amenemhet**  
Beni Hasan, Egypt, Dynasty XII, ca. 1950–1900 BCE.

# The New Kingdom Dyn. XVII-XX

16<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c. BCE  
(Bronze Age)

**Hatshepsut with offering jars**

ca. 1473–1458 BCE.

Red granite, approx. 8' 6" high.





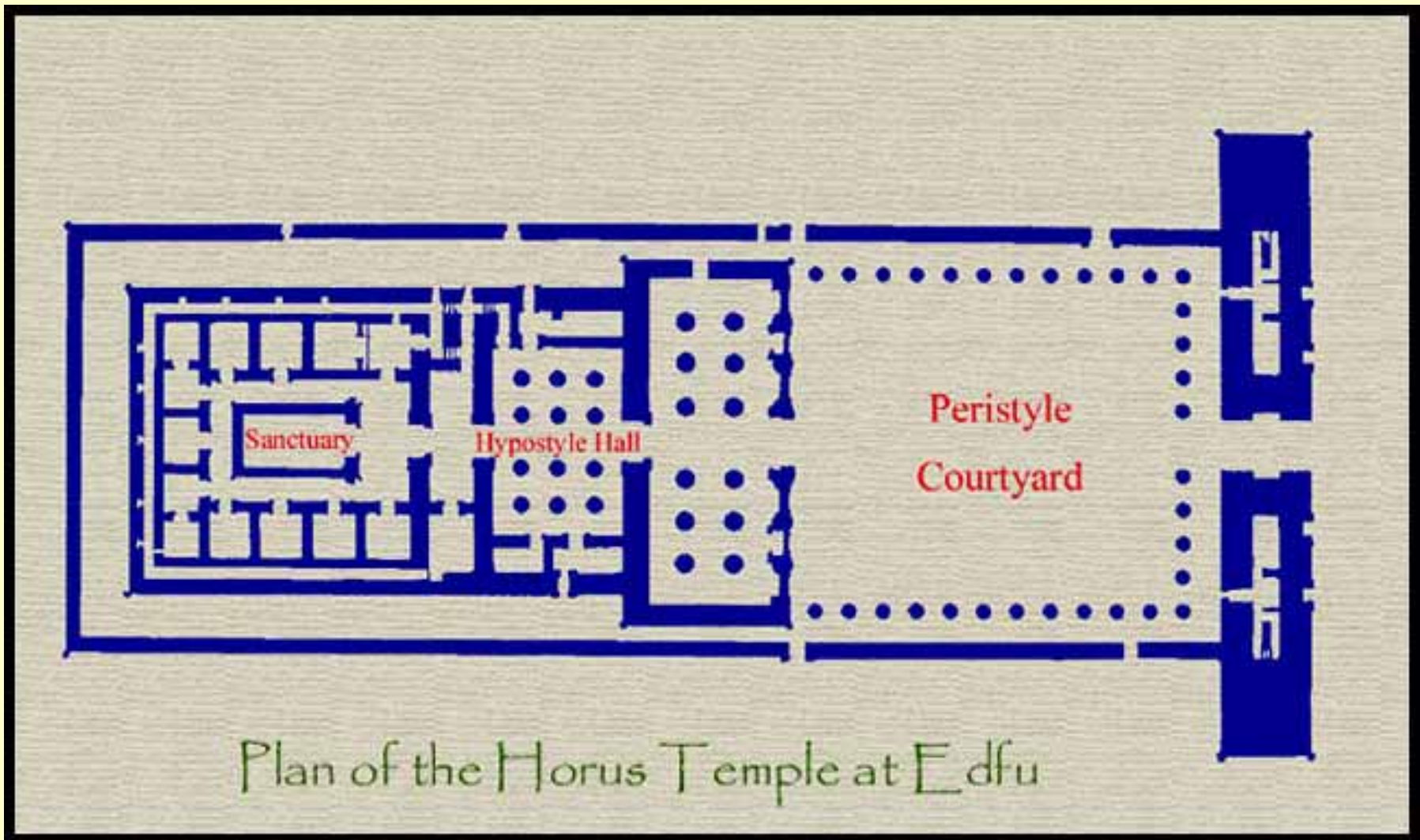
**Mortuary temple of Hatshepsut** (with the mortuary temple of Mentuhotep II at left),  
Deir el-Bahri, Egypt, Dynasty XVIII, ca. 1473–1458 BCE.



**Hathor Suckling Hatshepsut.** Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut.  
Temple of Hathor. Deir el-Bahri. Egypt. 1490-1468 BCE

**Senmut with Princess Nefrua,**  
(block statue) ca. 1470–1460 BCE.  
Granite, approx. 3' 1/2" high.



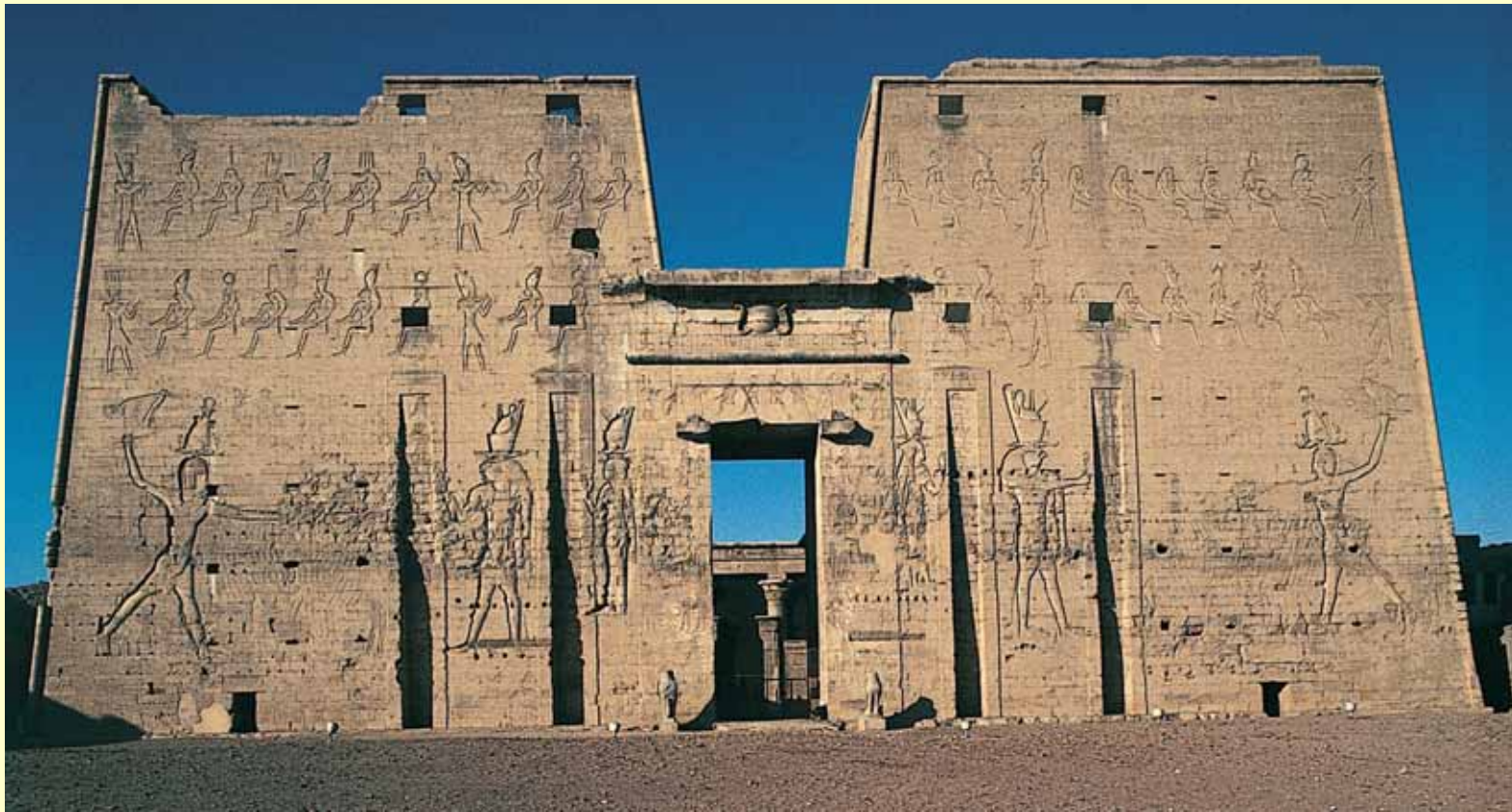
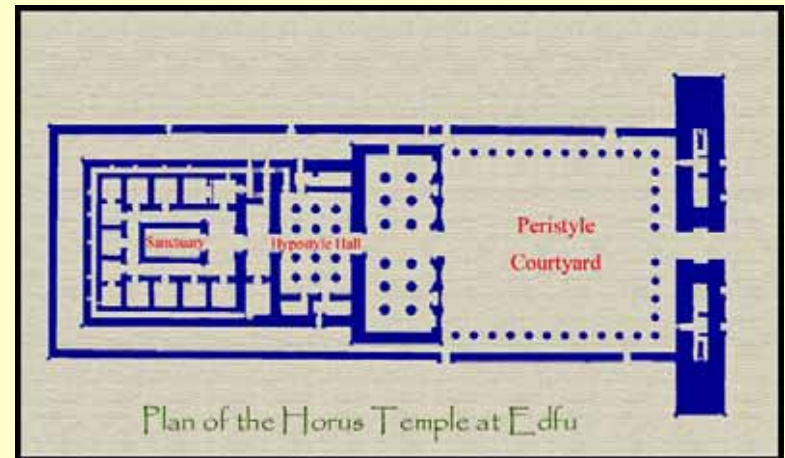


**Hypostyle Hall:** A hall with a roof supported by columns.

**Peristyle Courtyard:** Courtyard surrounded by columns.



**Pylon:** Monumental gateway to an Egyptian temple, consisting of a pair of tower structures with slanting walls flanking the entrance portal.

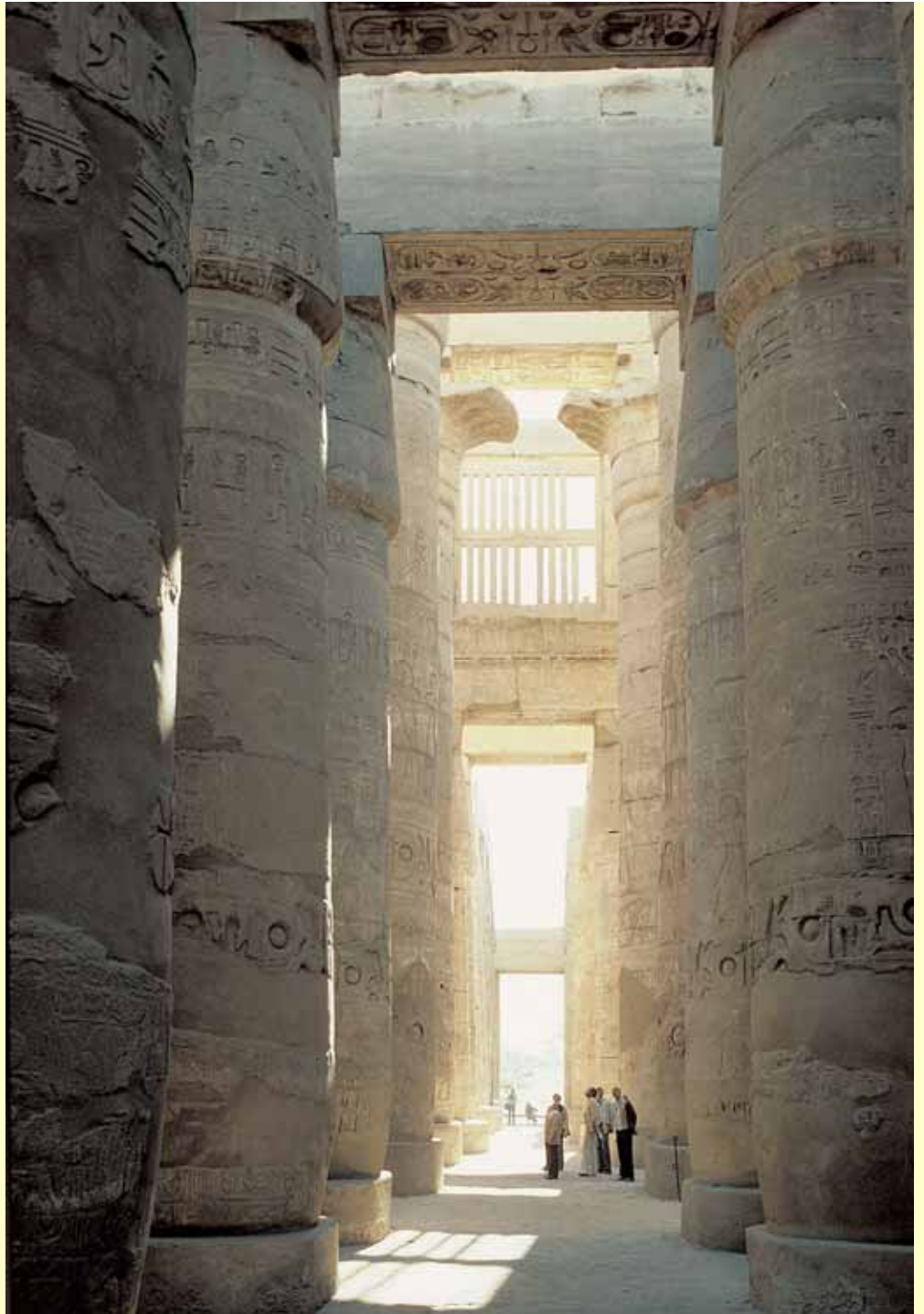


**Temple of Horus, Edfu, Egypt, ca. 237–47 BCE.**

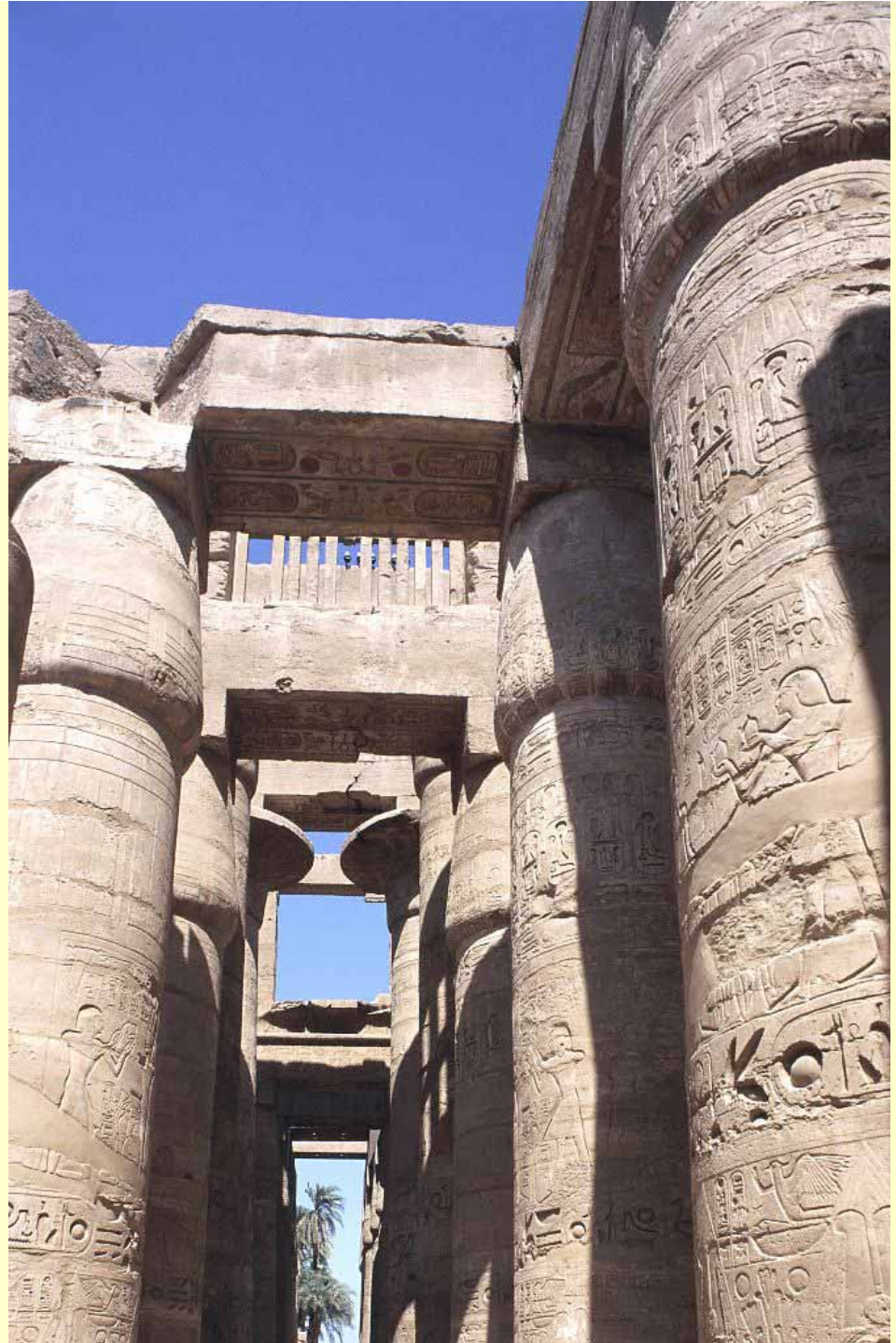


**Model of Hypostyle Hall.** Temple of Amen-Ra. Karnak.  
c. 1290-1224. Metropolitan Museum of Art. NY

**Hypostyle hall, temple of Amen-Re,**  
Karnak, Egypt, Dynasty XIX,  
ca. 1290–1224 BCE.



**Hypostyle hall, temple of Amen-Re**  
(closed & open papyrus capitals and  
clerestory window.)





**Hypostyle Hall. Temple of Amun-Mut-Khonsu, Luxor. Begun c. 1390 B.C.E.  
Height of columns 30'**

## **Entrance Pylon & Obelisk of Ramses II.**

Luxor. c. 1290  
BCE-1224 BCE  
Limestone

### **Obelisk:**

A four-sided tapering pillar of stone with a triangular top.  
Obelisks were based on the shape of the benben, the sacred stone of the sun god in the city of Heliopolis



# **Akhenaton and the Amarna Period**

14<sup>th</sup> c. BCE



**Akhenaton** (Amenhotep IV), from the temple of Aton, Karnak, ca. 1353–1335 BCE. Sandstone, approx. 13' high. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



**Akhenaton**  
(Amenhotep IV) , from  
the temple of Aton,  
Karnak, ca. 1353–1335  
BCE. Sandstone,  
approx. 13' high.



**Comparison: Menkaure and his Queen**  
ca. 2490–2472 BCE. (Old Kingdom)  
Graywacke, approx. 4' 6 1/2" high.



## Aten

The disk of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology, and originally an aspect of Ra.

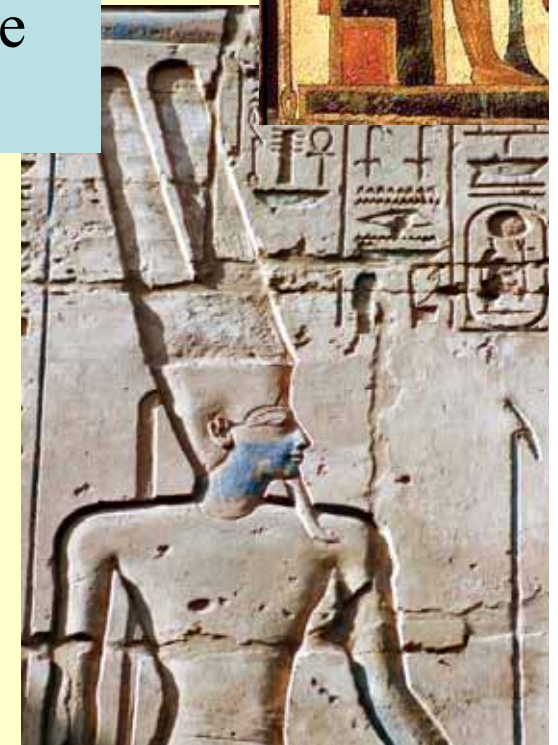


## Amen-Ra

**King of the gods.**

During the New Kingdom he became a solar god and universal creator.

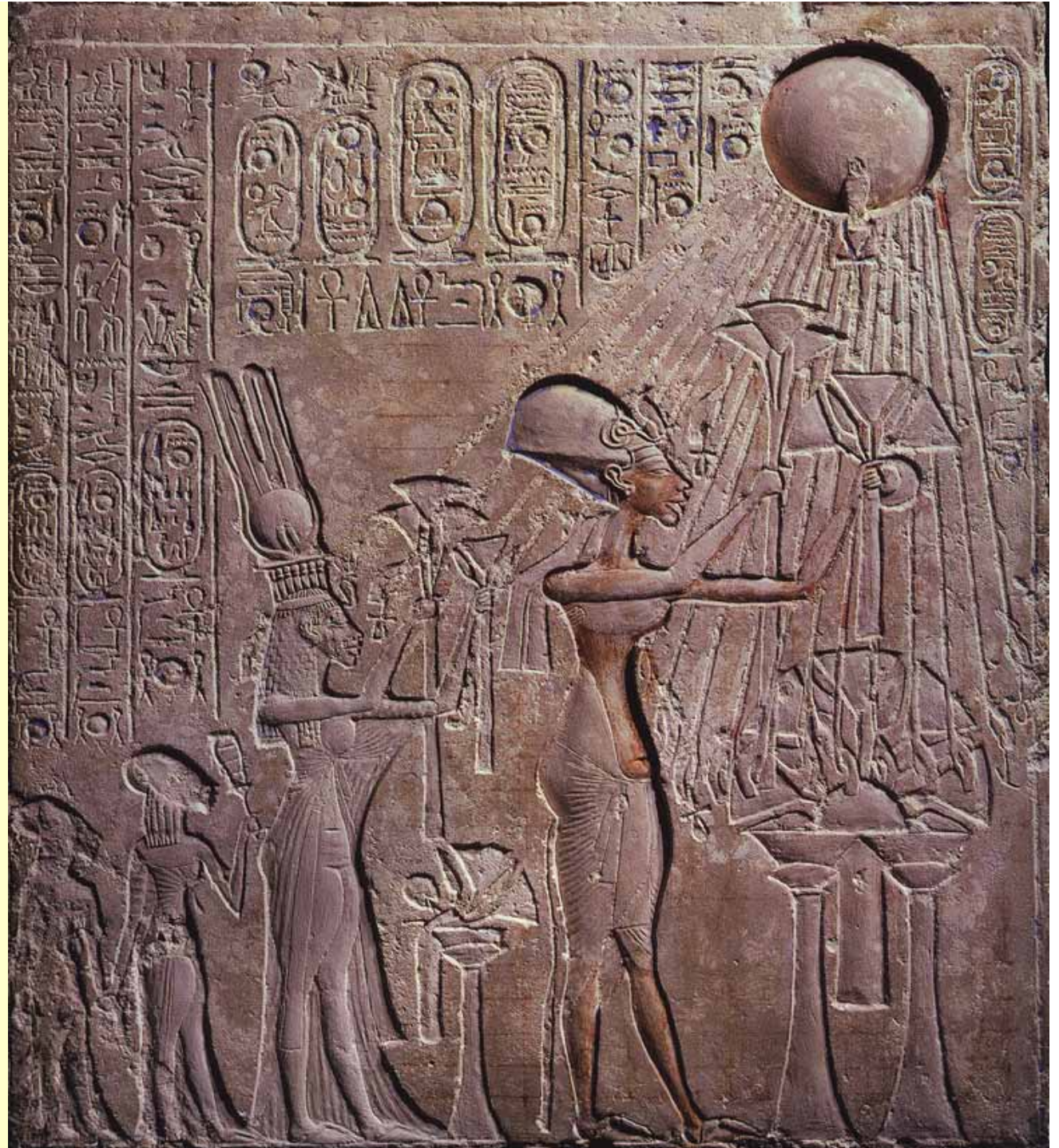
Akhenaton directed his reforms against the cult of Amen.



When Akhenaten changed the religion to the worship of one god, Aten, he also changed the location of the empire's capital from Thebes to Amarna.



**Akhenaton, Nefertiti  
and Two Daughters  
Offering Flowers to the  
Sun Disk Aten.** Painted  
limestone. H. 53 cm.  
Egyptian Museum. Cairo

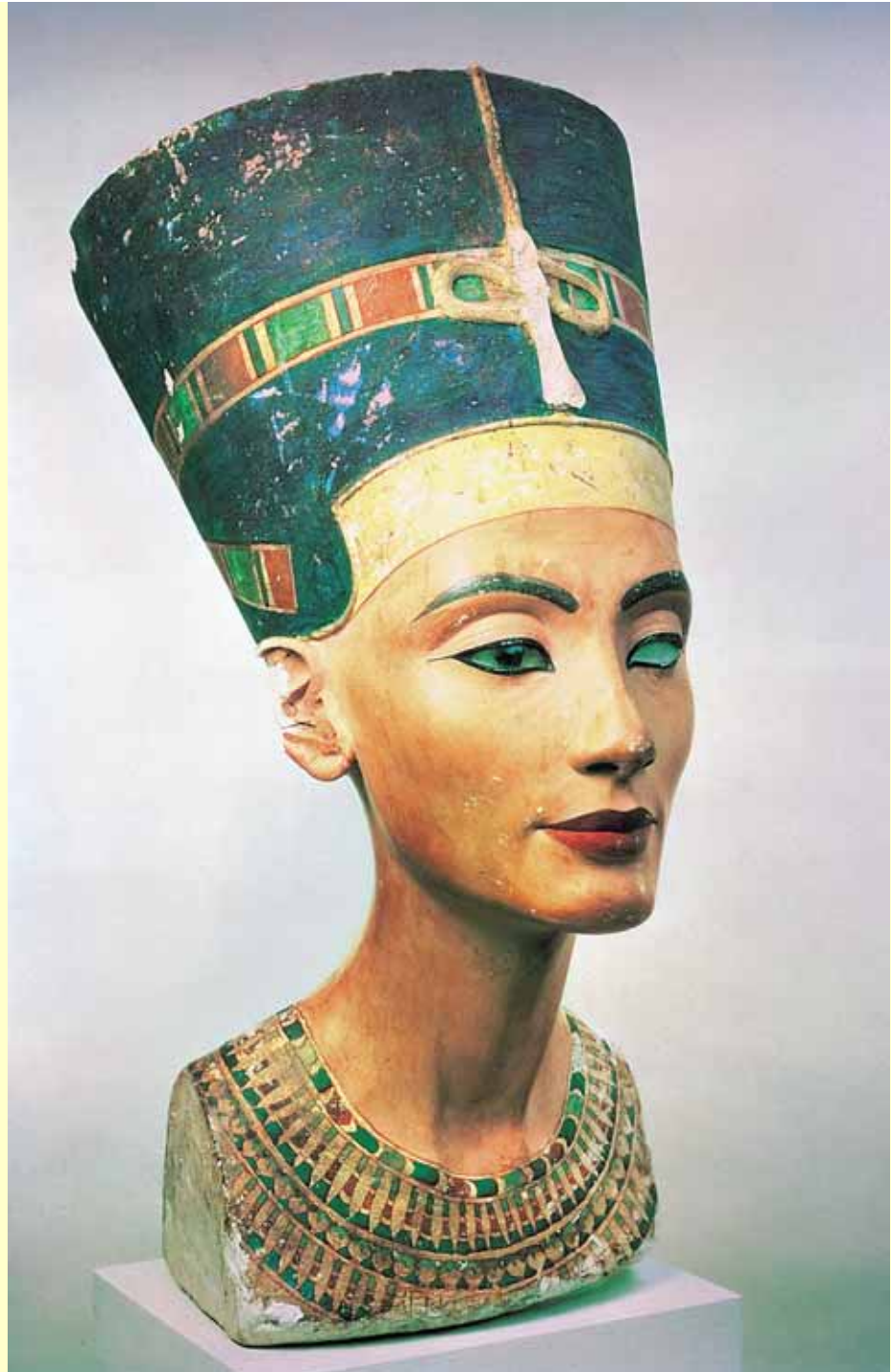






**Akhenaton, Nefertiti, and three daughters**, from Tell el-Amarna, ca. 1353–1335 BCE.  
Limestone, approx. 12 1/4" high. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin.

THUTMOSE, **Nefertiti**,  
ca. 1353–1335 BCE. Painted  
limestone, approx. 1' 8" high.  
Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin.



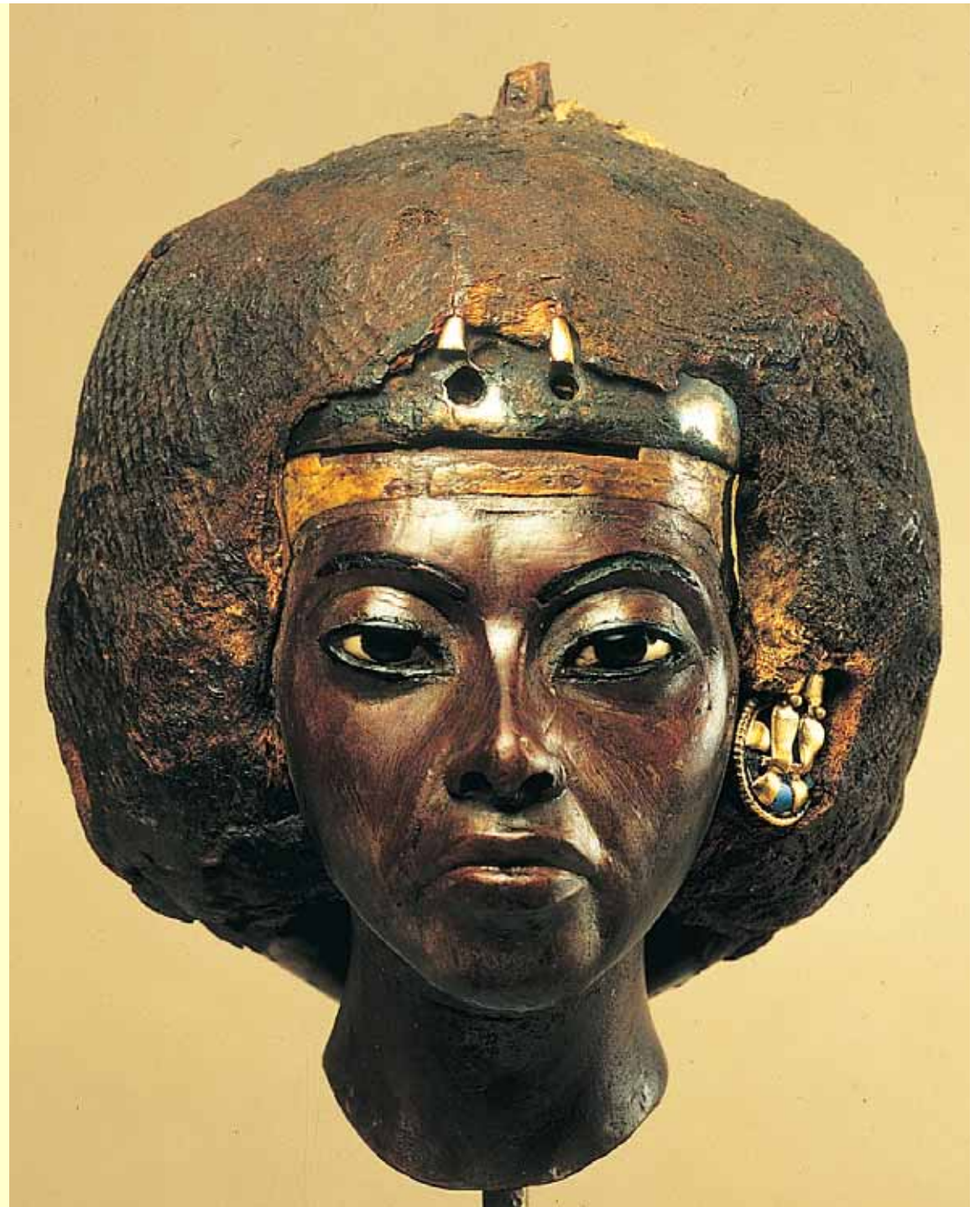


**Tiye,**

ca. 1353–1335 BCE.

Wood, with gold, silver,  
alabaster, and lapis lazuli,  
approx. 3 3/4" high.

Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin.



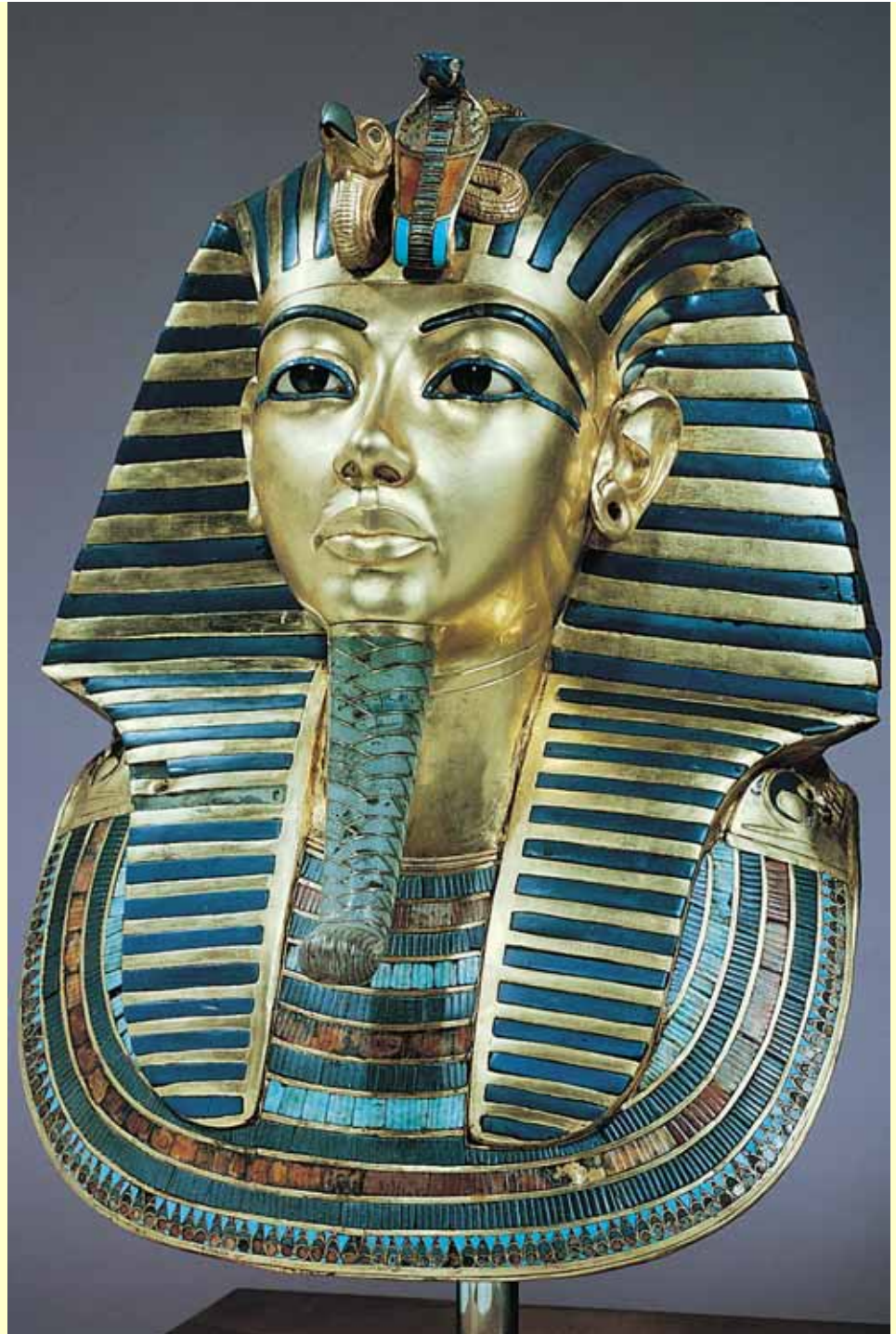


His original name, Tutankhaten, means "Living Image of Aten", while Tutankhamun means "Living Image of Amun".

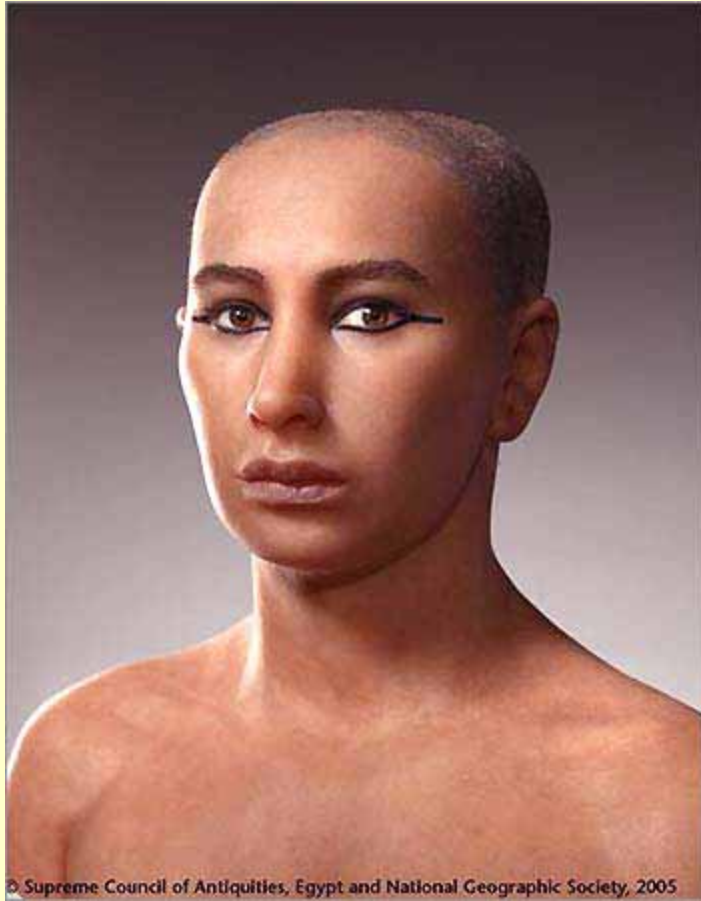
The vulture's head symbolizes sovereignty over Upper Egypt. The cobra symbolizes sovereignty over Lower Egypt.

**Death mask of Tutankhamen,** from the innermost coffin in his tomb at Thebes, Egypt, ca. 1323 BCE.

24 pounds of solid gold, inlaid lapis lazuli, carnelian, quartz, turquoise, obsidian, and colored glass.







© Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt and National Geographic Society, 2005

Three teams of forensic artists and scientists—from France, the United States and Egypt—each built a model of the boy pharaoh's face based on some 1,700 high-resolution photos from CT scans of his mummy to reveal what he looked like the day he died



**Innermost coffin of Tutankhamen**, from his tomb at Thebes, Egypt, Dynasty XVIII, ca. 1323 BCE. 296 pounds of solid gold with inlay of enamel and semiprecious stones. Approx. 6' 1" long. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.





**Painted chest, from the Tomb of Tutankhamen,** Thebes, Egypt, ca. 1333–1323 BCE. Wood, approx. 1' 8" long. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



**Painted chest, from the Tomb of Tutankhamen**  
Detail of left end with king in the guise of two sphinxes



**Musicians and dancers, detail of a fresco from the tomb of Nebamun,**  
Thebes, Egypt, Dynasty XVIII, ca. 1400–1350 BCE. Fragment approx. 1' x 2' 3".  
British Museum, London.



**Fowling scene, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, Egypt, Dynasty XVIII, ca. 1400–1350 BCE. Fresco on dry plaster, approx. 2' 8" high.**





**Garden with Fishpond.** Fresco from Thebes. Egypt.  
18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. (New Kingdom.) British Museum, London

### **Discussion Question 7:**

Compare the way the Egyptians depicted animals with the way animals were depicted by the artists of ancient Mesopotamia and those of Paleolithic Europe. Which artists seem to portray them most naturally? What do they represent? What is the relationship between humans and animals? What part does abstract pattern play in each? What role does conceptual approaches to art play in each? (hint: think about the composite view). Which figures do you like best? Why?



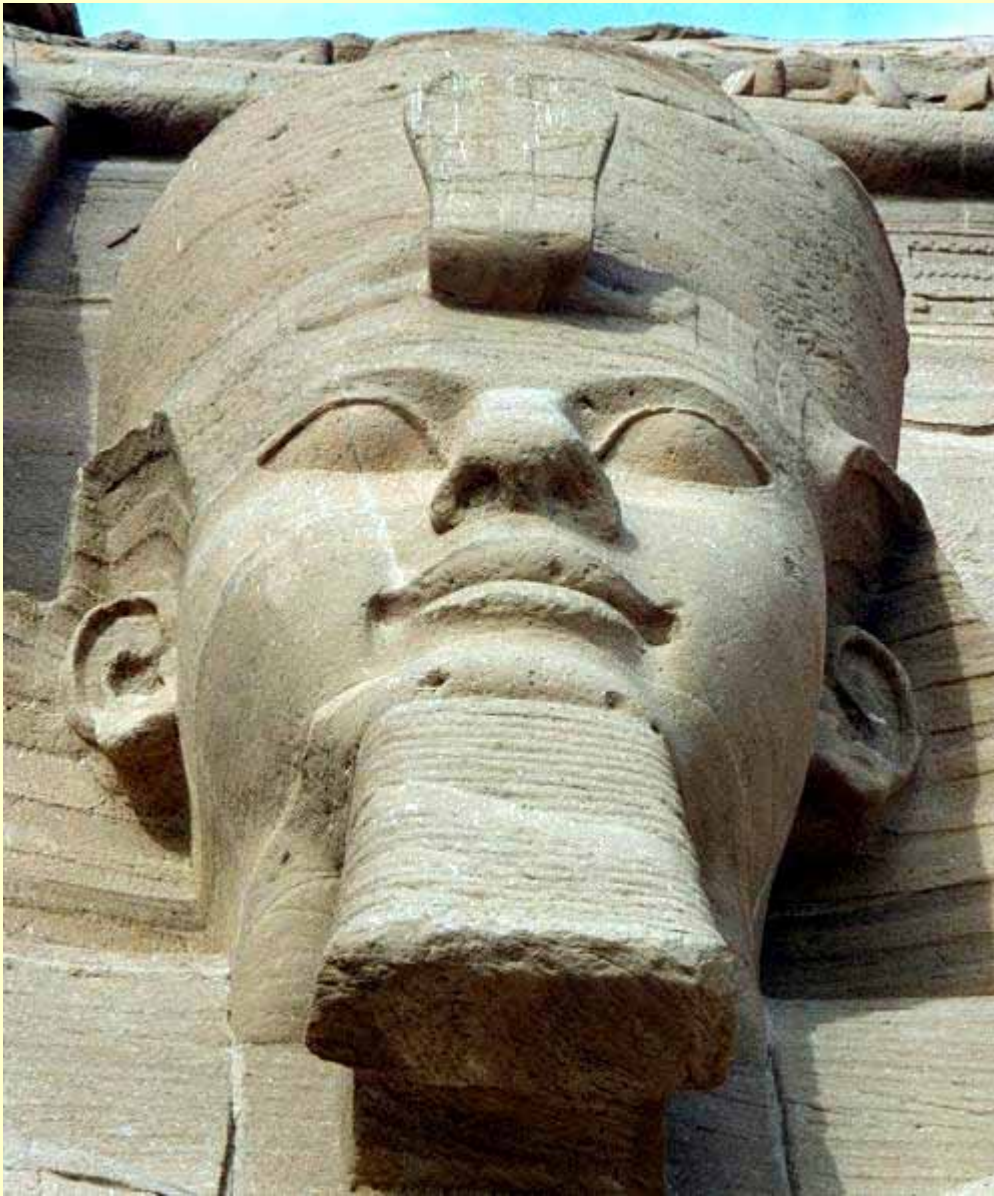
**Fowling scene, from the tomb of Nebamun, 1400–1350 BCE**



**Paleolithic: Hall of the Bulls, Lascaux, Dordogne, France, ca. 15,000–13,000 BCE.**

**Assyrian: Ashurbanipal hunting lions. ca. 645–640 BCE Detail.**





***Ramses II***, Abu Simbel.  
1290–1224 BCE.

**Ramesses II** (also known as **Ramesses the Great**) reigned for 67 years. During his long reign, eight women held the title Great Royal Wife (often simultaneously). He had around 110 children .

Under him Egypt acquired unprecedented splendor. Ramses left monuments throughout Egypt.



HITTITE EMPIRE

MITANNI

ASSYRIA

SYRIA

Mediterranean Sea

PALESTINE

LIBYA

EGYPT

NUBIA

KUSH

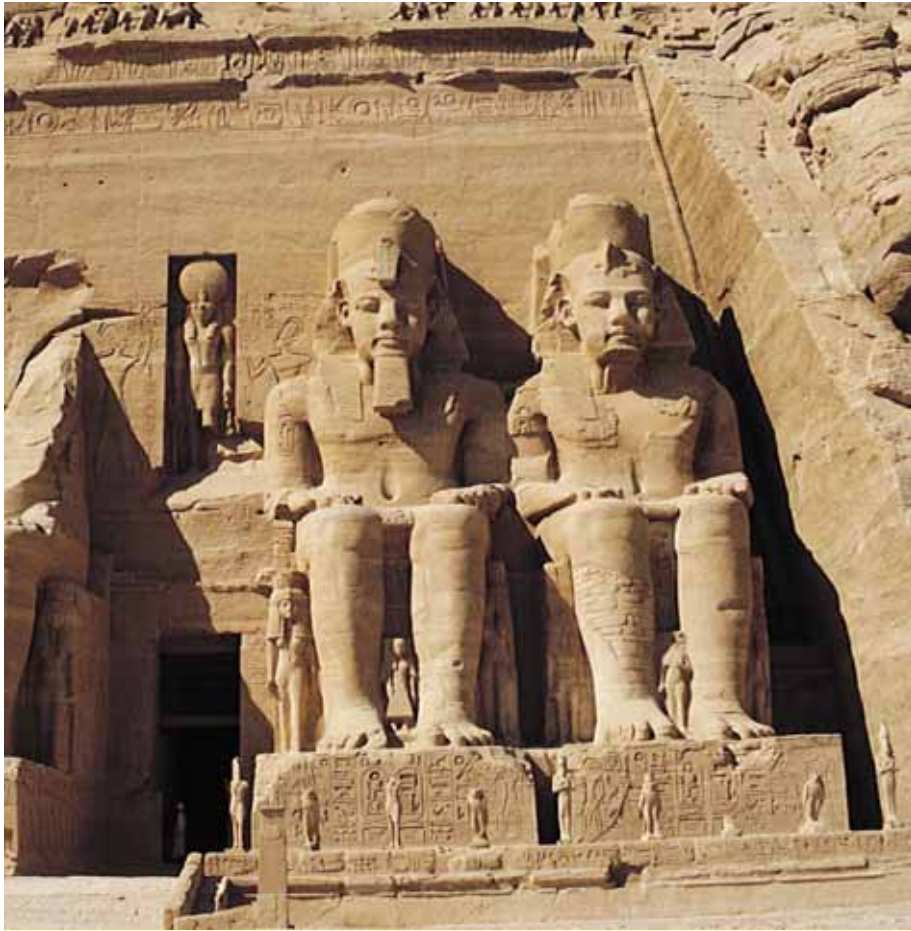
Red Sea



**Temple of Ramses II**, Abu Simbel, Egypt, Dynasty XIX, ca. 1290–1224 BCE.  
View of rock-cut façade fr SE (moved to higher ground in 1960s)

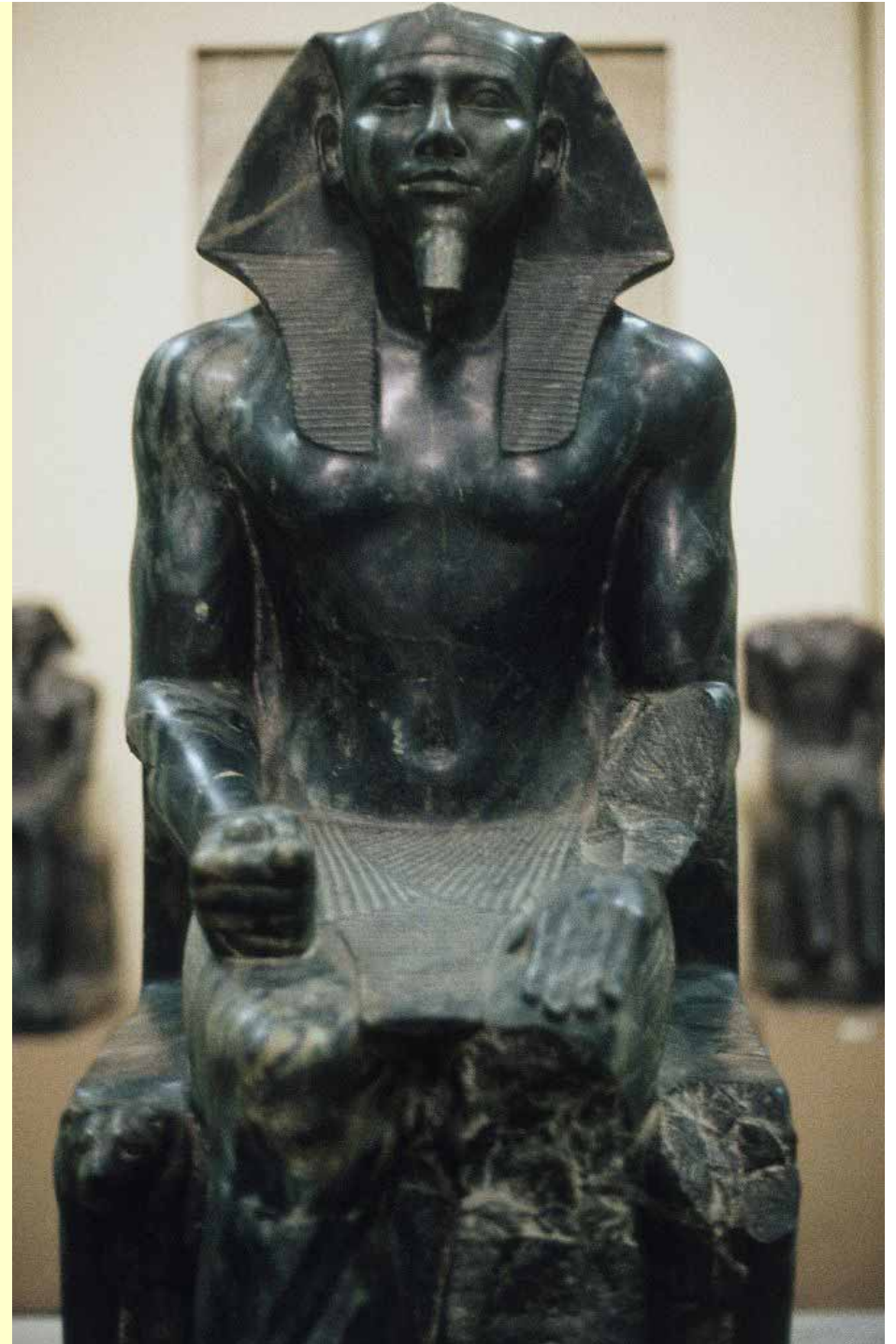


**Temple of Ramses II**, Abu Simbel, Egypt, Dynasty XIX, ca. 1290–1224 BCE.  
Sandstone, colossi approx. 65' high.

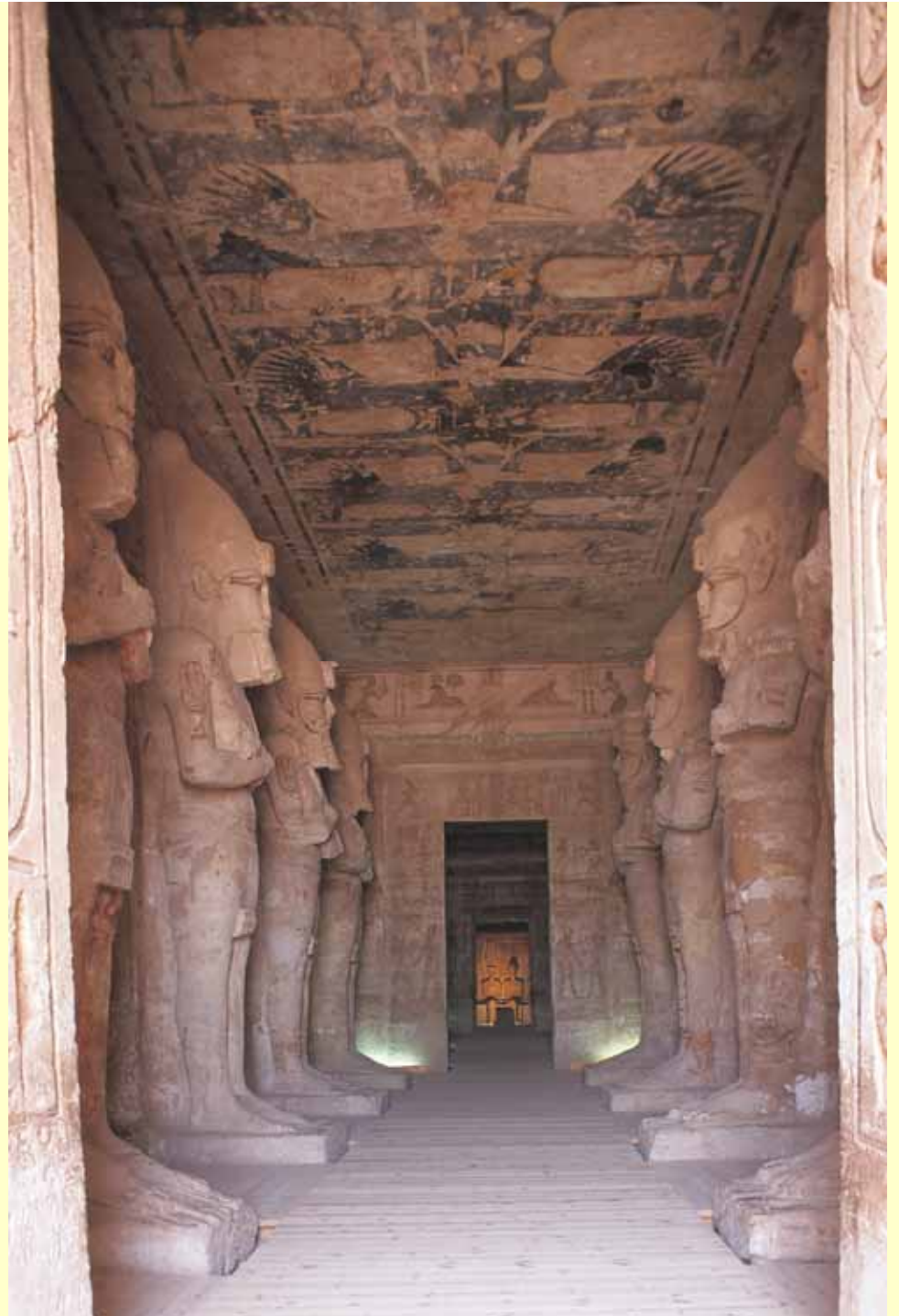


**Temple of Ramses II**, Abu Simbel, Egypt,  
Dynasty XIX, ca. 1290–1224 BCE.  
Sandstone, colossi approx. 65' high.

**Comparison: Khafre**, from Gizeh,  
Egypt, Dynasty IV, ca. 2520–2494 BCE.  
Diorite, approx. 5' 6" high. Egyptian  
Museum, Cairo



**Interior of the temple of Ramses II,**  
Abu Simbel (now relocated), Egypt,  
Dynasty XIX, ca. 1290–1224 BCE.  
Sandstone, pillar statues approx. 32'  
high.







**Interior of the temple of Ramses II** with colossal Osiris statues