



Egyptian Civilization

Art and Architecture
(3100 B.C. to 30 B.C.)

Geographical Factor

Egypt is one of the most **fertile areas** of Africa, and one of the most fertile of the countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

To its north side is the Mediterranean sea.

To its west there is a large Libyan desert.

To its east is the red sea.

Along its coast there is a mountain range going from north to south.

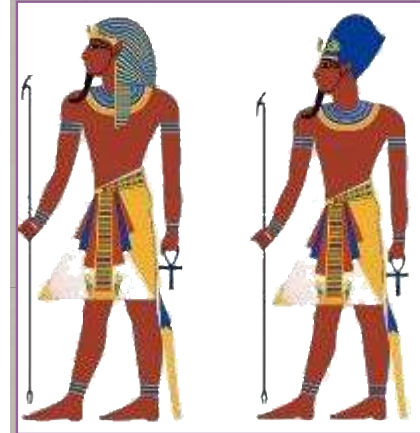


- The ancient Egypt is divided two types of land, the 'black land' and the 'red land'
- The 'black land' was the fertile land on the banks of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians used this land for growing their crops. This was the only land in ancient Egypt that could be farmed because a layer of rich, black silt was deposited there every year after the Nile flooded.
- The 'red land' was the barren desert that protected Egypt on two sides. These deserts separated ancient Egypt from neighboring countries and invading armies. They also provided the ancient Egyptians with a source for precious metals and semi-precious stones.

- Because it is so fertile, people came to live in Egypt earlier than in most places, probably around 40,000 years ago.
- At first there were not very many people, but gradually Egypt became more **crowded**, so there was more need for a unified government.
- Around 3000 BC, Egypt was first unified under one ruler, who was called the **Pharaoh**.

Who is Pharaoh?

- The most powerful person in ancient Egypt was the pharaoh. The pharaoh was the political and religious leader of the Egyptian people, holding the titles: 'Lord of the Two Lands' and 'High Priest of Every Temple'.
- As 'Lord of the Two Lands' the pharaoh was the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt. He owned all of the land, made laws, collected taxes, and defended Egypt against foreigners.
- As 'High Priest of Every Temple', the pharaoh represented the gods on Earth. He performed rituals and built temples to honor the gods.



The Early Dynastic Period
 The Old Kingdom (2575–2134 BCE)
 The Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 BCE)
 The New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE)
 Ptolemaic Era (323–30 BCE)
 The period of Roman rule (30 BCE - 395 CE)

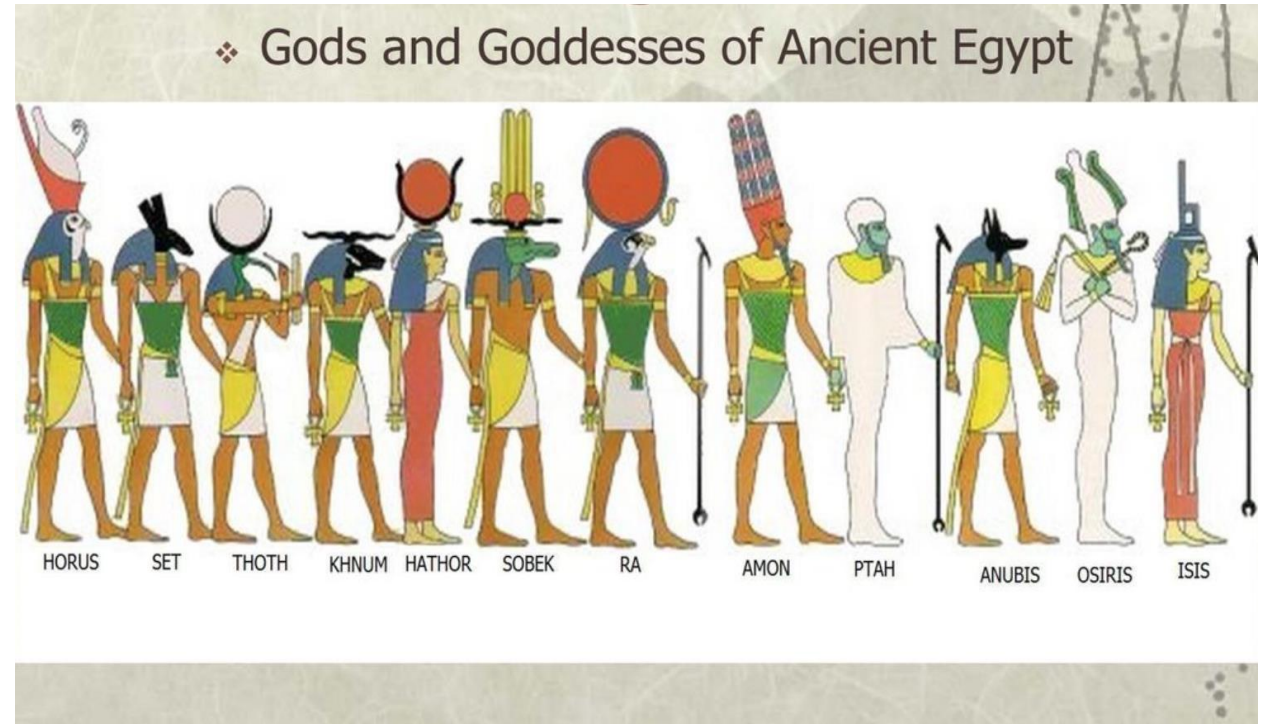


The dynasty ended with the death of the last queen, Cleopatra VII (69 - 30 BCE), and the country was annexed by Rome.

Religious Factor

(Belief of Ancient Egyptians)

- Egyptians were polytheistic (they believed in many Gods).
- Animals were considered the living images of the gods.



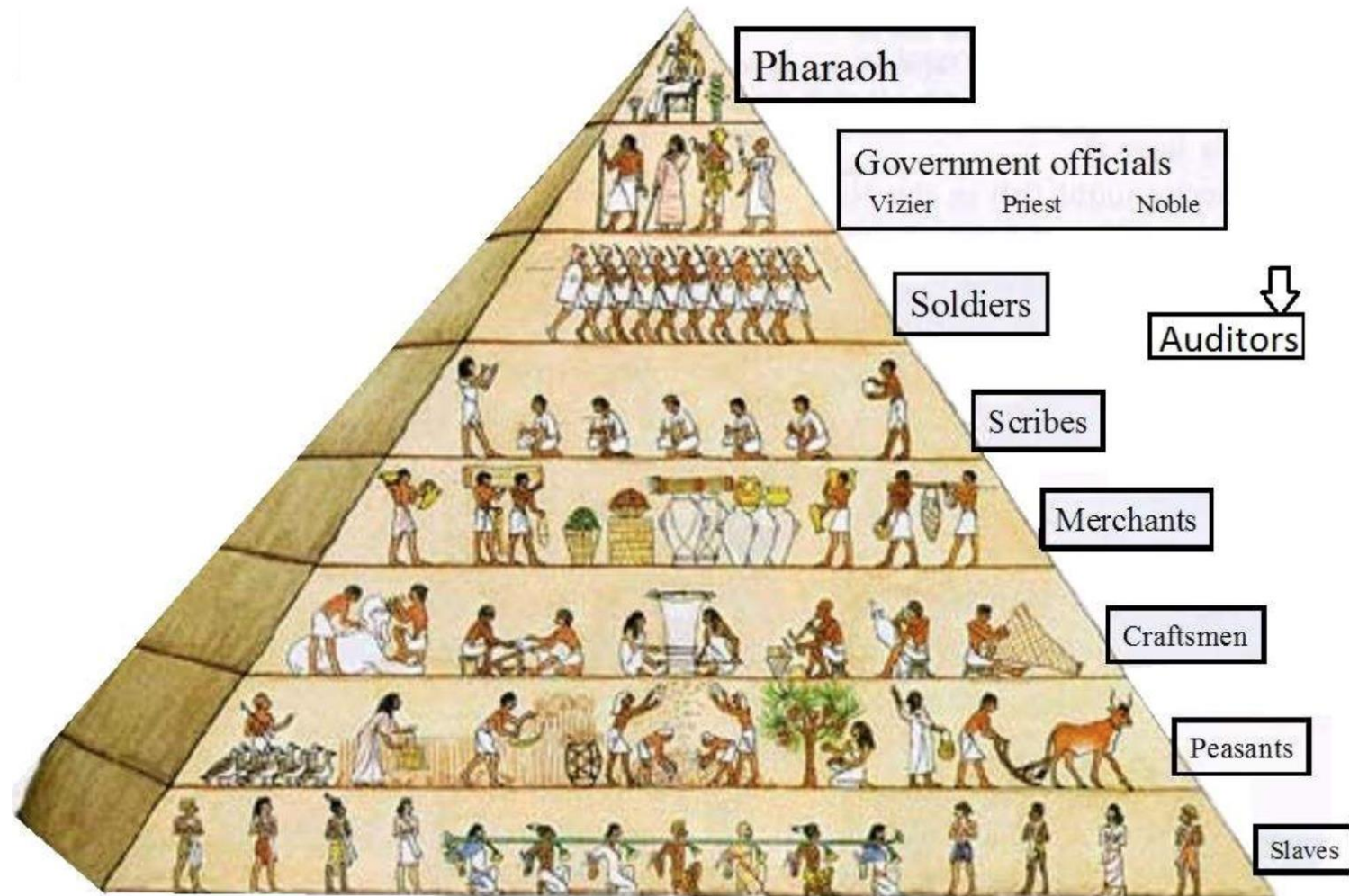


Belief on Life after Death

- According to Egyptian beliefs of the afterlife, the soul would leave the body (on death) and enter into the form of a bird called 'ba.' Then join the path of the sun god, Ra. To Egyptians, the sun represented warmth, light, and growth so this made the sun deity a very essential part of their life, as the sun was viewed as the ruler of everything that he created.
- Mummification



Social Structure in Ancient Egypt



Egyptian Art and Architecture

- Because of the **highly religious nature of ancient Egyptian civilization**, many of the works of ancient Egypt depict **gods, goddesses, and pharaohs**, who were also considered divine.
- Ancient Egyptian art is characterized by the **idea of order**.
- Clear and simple lines combined with simple shapes and flat areas of color helped to create a **sense of order and balance** in the art of ancient Egypt.
- a lot of their art was made of clay or stone and the climate in which they were kept (hot desert air of Egypt) was perfect for preserving them.

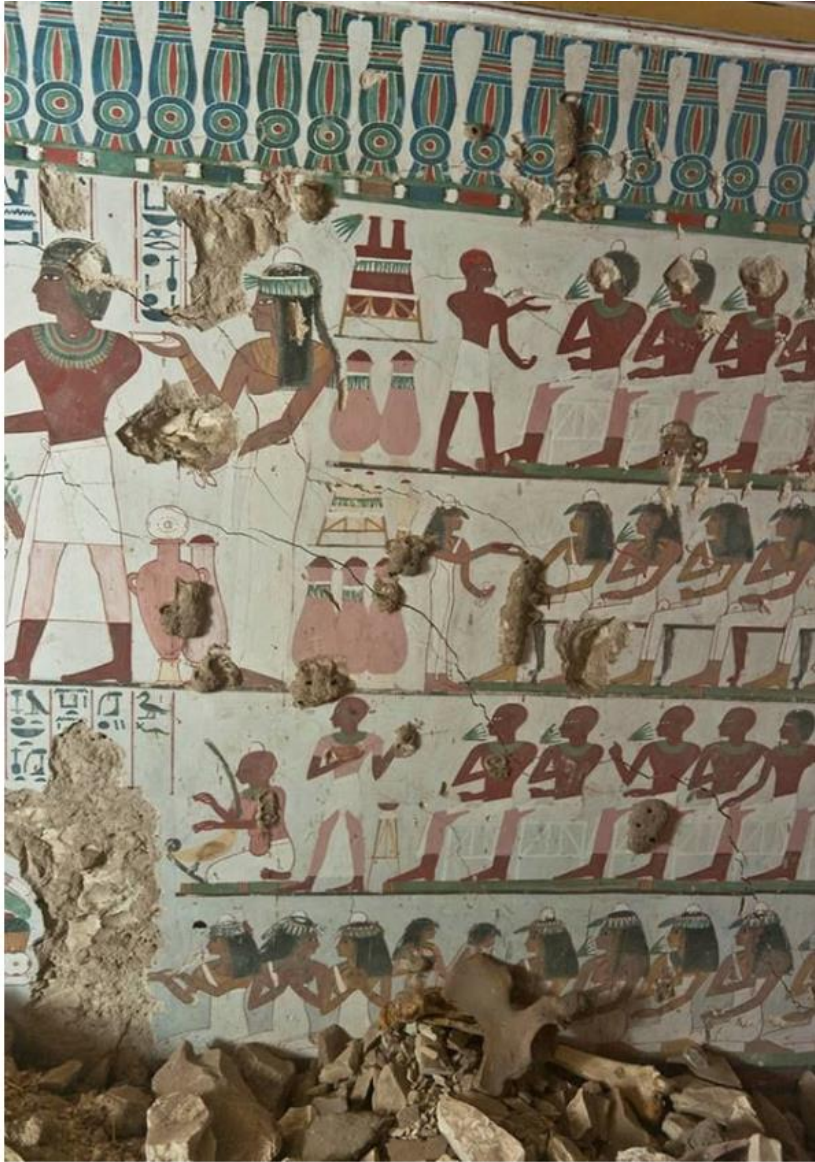
CHARACTERISTICS OF EGYPTIAN PAINTING: THE USE OF COLOR

- ◉ Red, the color of power, symbolized life and victory, as well as anger and fire.
- ◉ Green symbolized new life, growth, and fertility
- ◉ Blue symbolized creation and rebirth
- ◉ Yellow symbolized the eternal, such as the qualities of the sun and gold.
- ◉ White was the color of purity, symbolizing all things sacred, and was typically used in religious objects and tools used by the priests.
- ◉ Black was the color of death and represented the underworld and the night

> Men are painted ruddy brown or red; Women painted lighter with yellowish tinge.

> Shading is rare





Hieroglyphics and beautiful pictures line the wall of an ancient tomb in Luxor.

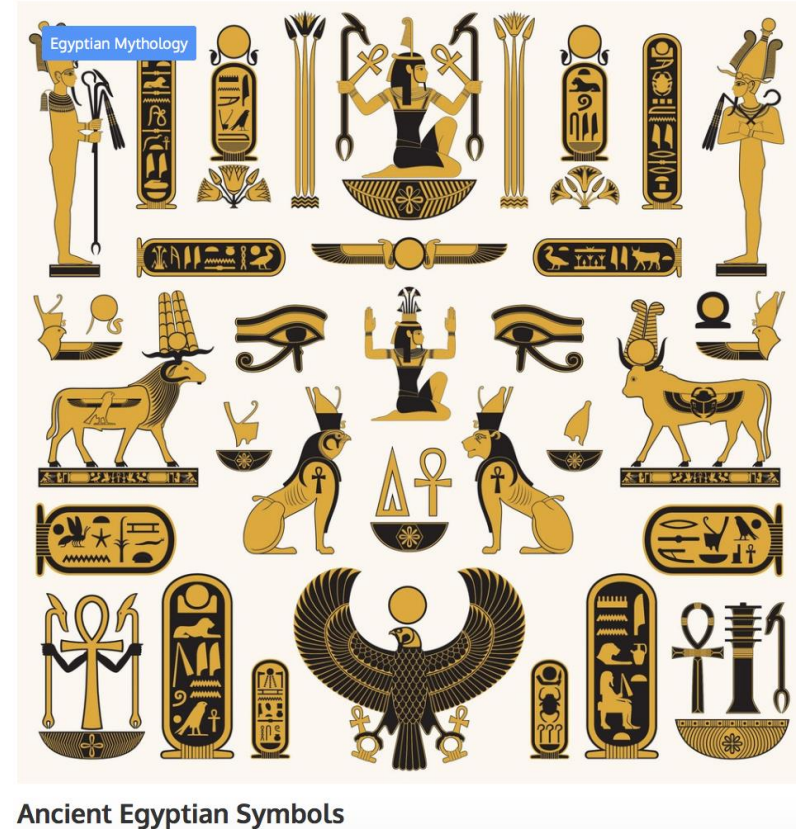




The Funerary

Symbolism in Egyptian Art

- Symbolism also played an important role in establishing a sense of order. Symbolism, ranging from the Pharaoh's regalia (symbolizing his power to maintain order) to the individual symbols of Egyptian gods and goddesses, was omnipresent in Egyptian art.
- Animals were usually also highly symbolic figures in Egyptian art, as well, had extended meaning - Blue and green represented the Nile and life; yellow stood for the sun god; and red represented power and vitality.





How Egyptians represent life

On the Tree Of Life, the birds represent the various stages of human life.

Starting in the lower right-hand corner and proceeding counter-clockwise:

The **light gray** bird symbolizes infancy.
The **red bird** symbolizes childhood.
The **green bird** symbolizes youth.
The **blue bird** symbolizes adulthood.
The **orange bird** symbolizes old age.

In ancient Egypt, the direction east was considered the direction of life, because the sun rose in the east.

West was considered the direction of death, of entering the underworld, because the sun set in the west.

They believed that during the night, the sun traveled through the underworld to make its way back to the east so it could in the east again on the next day.

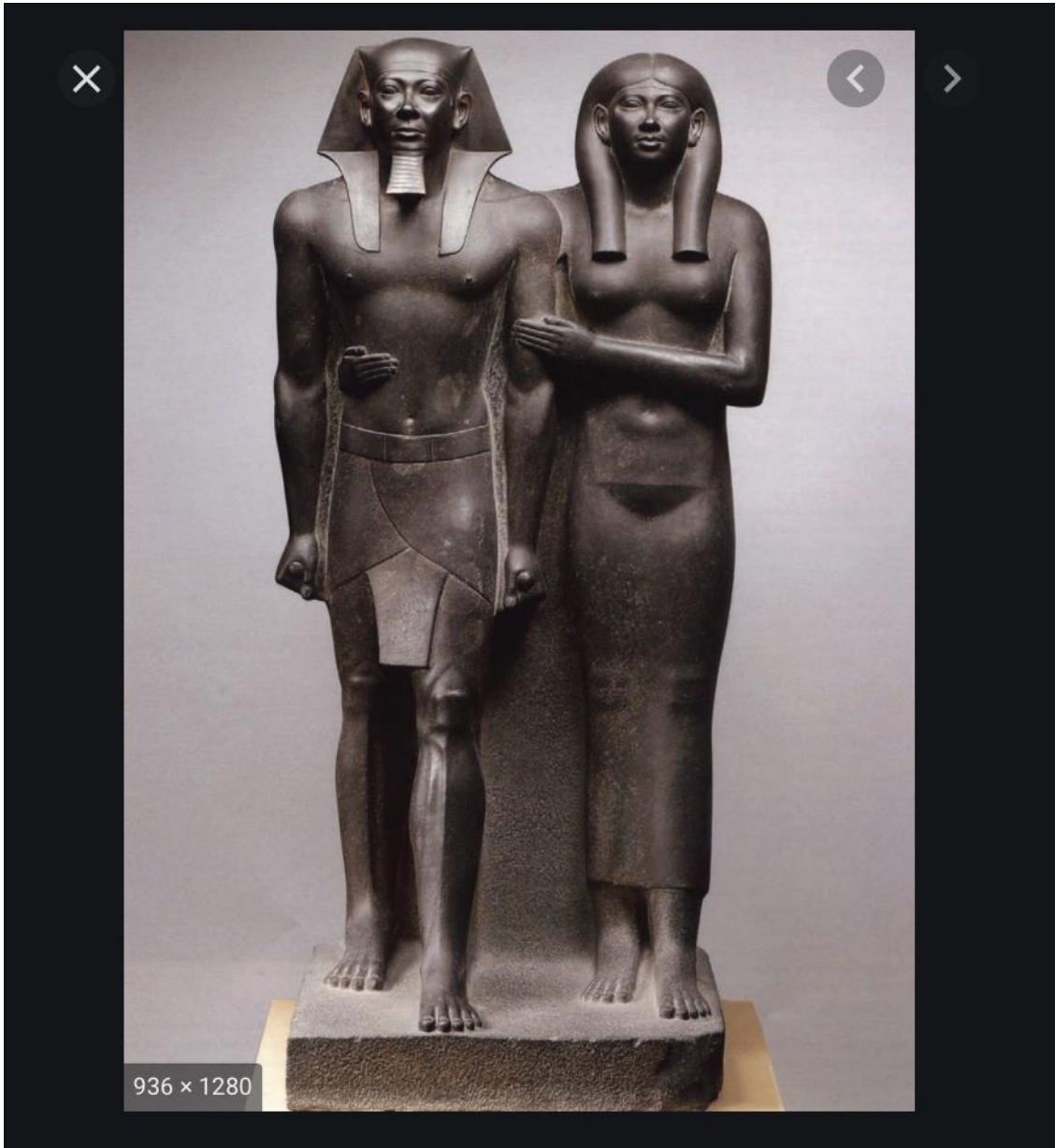
On the tree of life, note that the birds representing the first four phases of life all face to the east, but the bird old age faces to the west, anticipating the approach of death.

Egyptian Sculpture

- Of the materials used by the Egyptian sculptors, we find - clay, wood, metal, ivory, and stone - stone was the most plentiful and permanent, available in a wide variety of colors and hardness. Sculpture was often painted in vivid hues as well.
- Egyptian sculpture **has two qualities** that are distinctive; it can be characterized as **cubic and frontal**.
- The front of almost every statue is the most important part and the figure sits or stands facing strictly to the front. This suggests to the modern viewer that the **ancient artist was unable to create a naturalistic representation**, but it is that this was not the intention.
- Rigid
- No movement



Colossal Seated Statue of a Pharaoh



[Nefertiti bust](#) in Limestone



Great Sphinx

The Great Sphinx at Giza, Egypt.

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Egyptian Architecture

- The best known example of ancient **Egyptian architecture** are the **Egyptian** pyramids while excavated temples, palaces, tombs and fortresses have also been studied. Most buildings were built of locally available mud brick and limestone by levied workers.



Mastaba

Credit: [Jon Bodsworth](#)

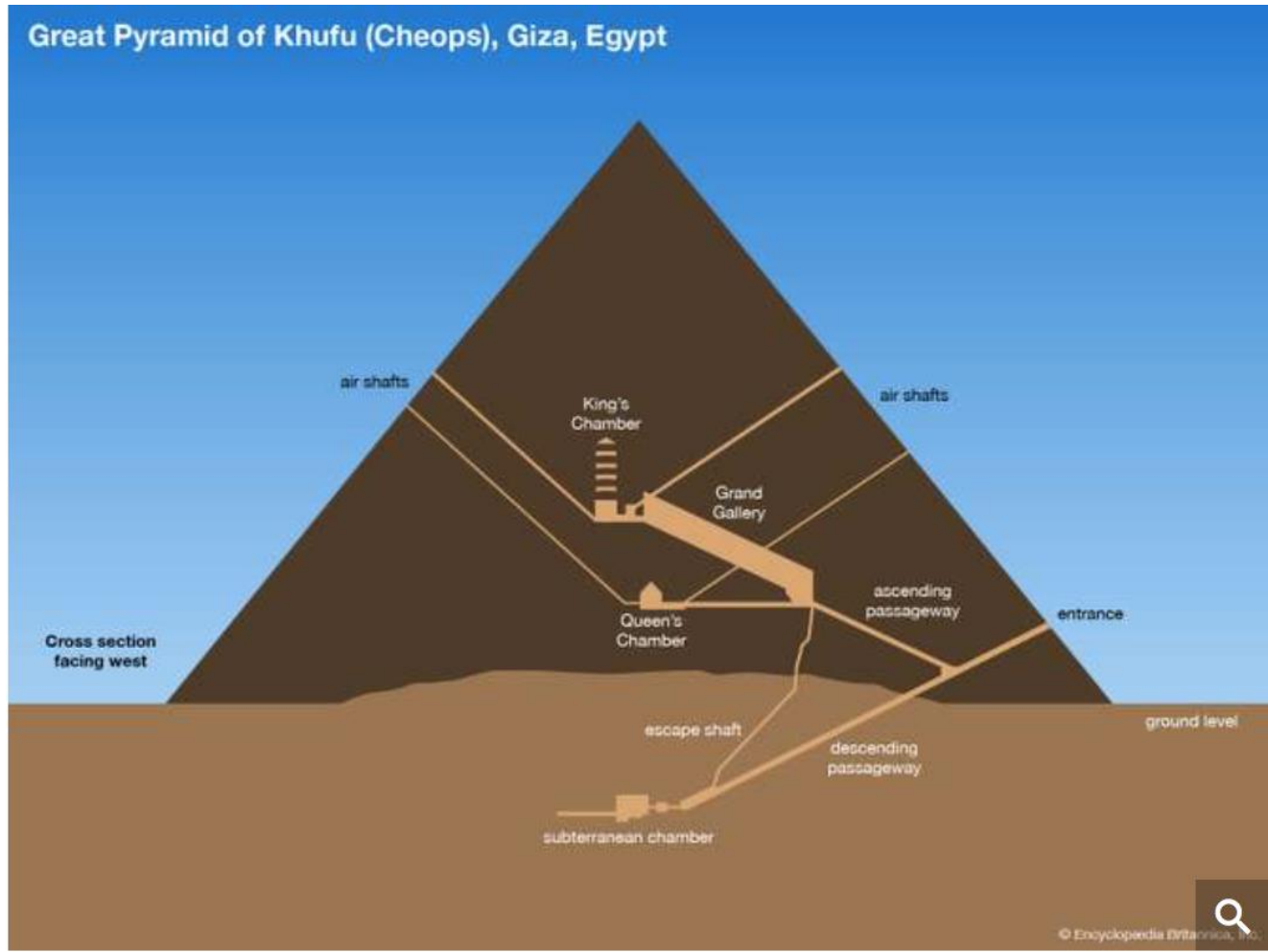
A mastaba is essentially a **one-story structure** with sloped walls and a flat roof, with **vertical shaft(s)** in the floor leading down to the burial chamber



Pyramids of Giza

Credit: [Ian Sherlock](#)

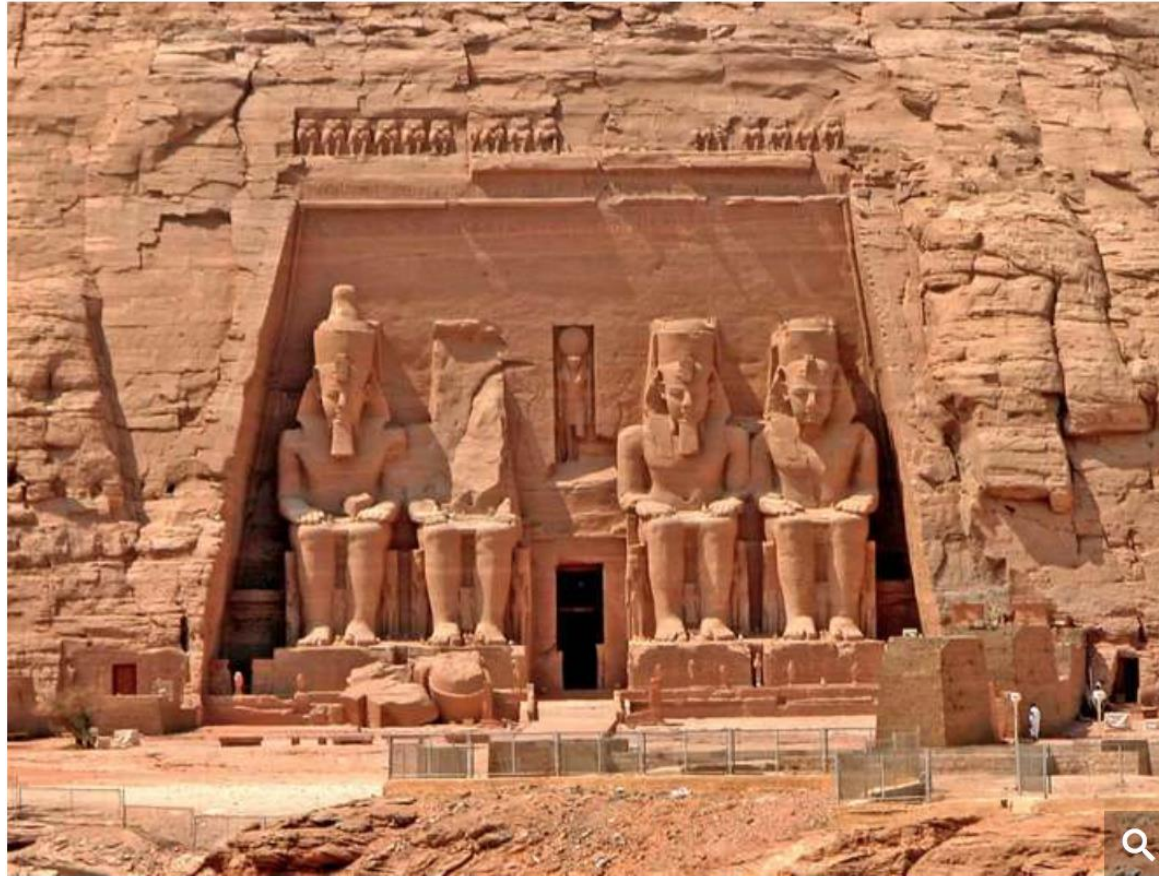
In addition to plenty of mastabas, Giza features a more spectacular kind of tomb: the **pyramid**. The three largest, known as the **Pyramids of Giza**, were all erected during the Old Kingdom; the tallest of these, known as the **Great Pyramid**, is the largest stone structure ever built.



Great Pyramid of Khufu: cross section of interior

Cross section of the interior of the Great Pyramid of Khufu, facing west, near Giza, Egypt.

Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.



Great Temple of Ramses II

Great Temple of Ramses II, the larger of the two temples at Abu Simbel, now located in Aswān *muḥāfazah* (governorate), southern Egypt.

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Ancient Egyptian Column Capitals

Egyptian **column capitals** developed in a variety of **floral designs**, notably [papyrus](#) and lotus. Indeed, the Egyptians were the first to build **stone columns**. It was from Egypt that **Greece** adopted stone columns, as well as floral capitals.

Egyptian writing and literature

- At around the same time of Mesopotamia, Egyptians also developed their own writing system known as **Hieroglyphics**.
- The word 'hieroglyph' means 'sacred' and 'glyph' means 'carved' or 'engraved'. For the Egyptians, it was something sacred and divine.
- Writing was in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, it was an activity reserved for professional people called **scribes**.
- They were highly trained, important people.



- Pictograms: picture to show meaning
 - Ideograms: signs to represent words / ideas
 - Phonetics: signs to represent sounds
 - logograms: visual to show feeling or emotions
- *Phonetics are the basis of most writing systems

- The Egyptians used **papyrus** (an ancient paper made from the papyrus grass plant).



Decline of Civilization

- In 332 B.C. [Alexander the Great](#) drove the Persians out of Egypt and incorporated the country into the Macedonian Empire. After Alexander the Great's death, a line of rulers descended from Ptolemy Soter, one of Alexander's generals. The last of these "Ptolemaic" rulers (as scholars often call them) was [Cleopatra VII](#), who committed suicide in 30 B.C after the defeat of her forces by the Roman emperor Augustus at the [Battle of Actium](#). After her death, Egypt was incorporated into the Roman Empire.

- Although the Roman emperors were based in Rome, the Egyptians treated them as pharaohs. One [recently excavated carving](#) shows the emperor Claudius (reign A.D. 41-54) dressed as a pharaoh. The carving has hieroglyphic inscriptions that say that Claudius is the "Son of Ra, Lord of the Crowns," and is "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands."