



Handout

**Ancient Egypt through its Art and Archaeology**

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2. Translations of four ancient Texts: The Autobiography of Weni, The Dispute Between a Man and His Ba, The Eloquent Peasant, and The Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun
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**1. Timeline of Egyptian History**

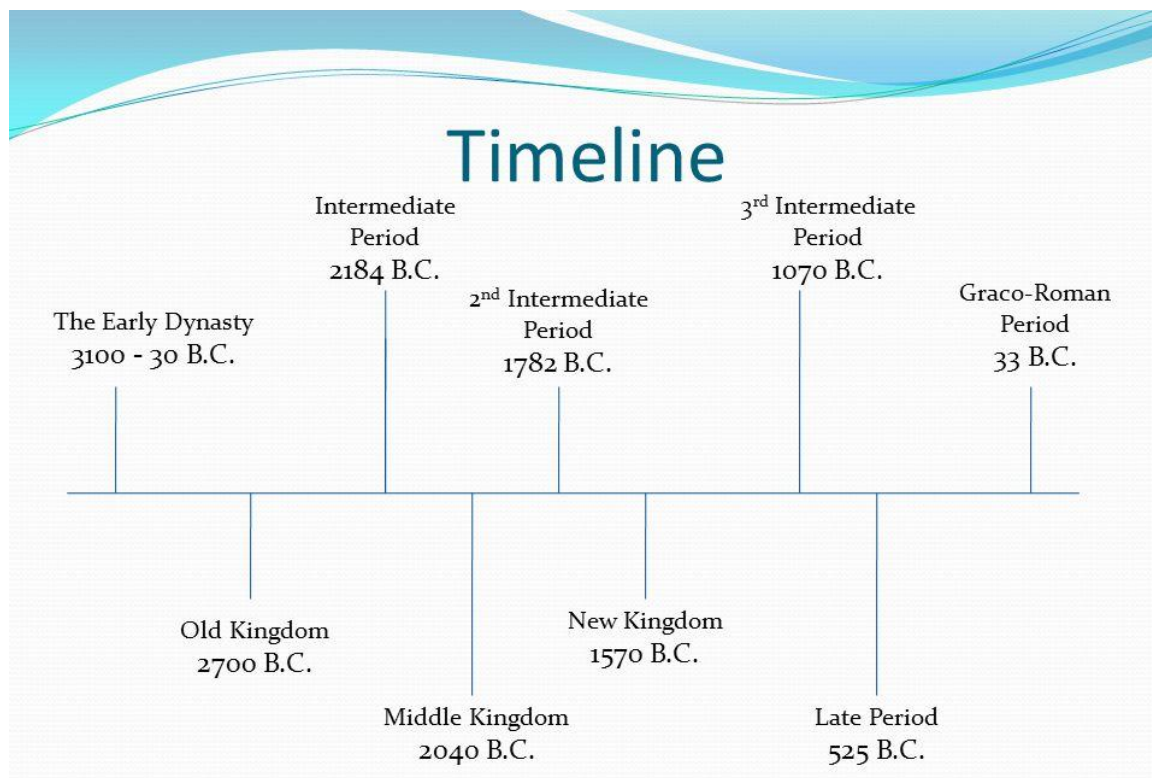
**Periods Discussed Today:**

Old Kingdom

Middle Kingdom

New Kingdom

The Amarna Period (which is in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the New Kingdom)



## 2. Ancient Texts Discussed Today

### Lecture 2: Wonder and Majesty: The Art of the 4th Dynasty of the Old Kingdom

**Excerpt from: the tomb Autobiography of the elite official Weni, Dynasty 6:**

(Translation: Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, v.1, 21-22)

His majesty sent me to Ibbat to bring the sarcophagus "chest of the living" together with its lid, and the costly august pyramidion for the pyramid "Mernere-appears-in-splendor," my mistress...I travelled north with (them) to the pyramid "Mernere-appears-in-splendor" ... Thus, everything his majesty commanded was done entirely as his majesty commanded.

His majesty sent me to Hatnub to bring a great altar of alabaster of Hatnub. I brought this altar down for him in seventeen days. After it was quarried at Hatnub, I had it go downstream in this barge I had built for it, a barge of acacia wood of sixty cubits in length and thirty cubits in width. Assembled in seventeen days, in the third month of summer, when there was no water on the sandbanks, it landed at the pyramid "Mernere-appears-in-splendor" in safety. It came about through me entirely in accordance with the ordinance commanded by my lord.

His majesty sent me to dig five canals in Upper Egypt, and to build three barges and four tow-boats of acacia wood of Wawat.

Then the foreign chiefs of Irtjet, Wawat, Yam, and Medja cut the timber for them. I did it all in one year. Floated, they were loaded with very large granite blocks for the pyramid "Mernere-appears-in-splendor." Indeed, I made a [saving] for the palace with all these five canals.

As King Mernere who lives forever is august, exalted, and mighty more than any god, so everything came about in accordance with the ordinance commanded by his ka.

### Lecture 3: The Elegance of Discord and the Beauty of Empire: Middle Kingdom through the New Kingdom

**Longer Excerpt from: *The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba (soul)*, Papyrus Berlin 3024**

(Translation: Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, v.1, 164-169)

For my suffering is too heavy a burden to be borne by me!...

What my *Ba* (soul) said to me: "Are you not a man? Are you not alive? What do you gain by complaining about life like a man of wealth?"

I opened my mouth to my *Ba* (soul), to answer what it had said...:

To whom shall I speak today?

Brothers are mean,

The friends of today do not love.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Hearts are greedy,  
Everyone robs his comrade's goods.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Kindness has perished,  
Insolence assaults everyone.

To whom shall I speak today?  
One is content with evil,  
Goodness is cast to the ground everywhere.

To whom shall I speak today?  
He who should enrage men by his crimes,  
He makes everyone laugh at his evildoings.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Men plunder,  
Everyone robs his comrade.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The criminal is one's intimate,  
The brother with whom one dealt is a foe.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The past is not remembered,  
Now one does not help him who helped.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Brothers are mean,  
One does to strangers for affection.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Faces are blank,  
Everyone turns his face from his brothers.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Hearts are greedy,  
No man's heart can be relief on.

To whom shall I speak today?  
None are righteous,  
The land is left to evildoers...

Death is before me today  
Like a sick man's recovery,  
Like going outdoors after confinement.

Death is before me today  
Like the fragrance of myrrh,  
Like sitting under sail on a breezy day.

Death is before me today  
Like the fragrance of lotus,  
Like sitting on the shore of drunkenness.

Death is before me today  
Like a well-trodden way,  
Like a man coming home from warfare.

Death is before me today  
Like the clearing of the sky,  
As when a man discovers what he ignored.

Death is before me today  
Like a man longing to see his home,  
When he has spent many years in captivity...

What my *Ba* (soul) said to me:

"Now throw your complaint on the wood-pile, you my comrade, my brother! ... Love me here when you have set aside the West (in other words: love life and turn away from death) But when it is wished that you attain the West, that your body joins the earth, (in other words: when it is your proper time to die)... Then we shall dwell together!

#### **Lecture 4: The Art of Heresy: Akhenaten and Nefertiti**

**Complete Translation of: *The Restoration Stele of Tutankhamun* (in the Cairo Museum).**

Translation after: *Egyptian Historical Records of the Later Eighteenth Dynasty*, Fascicle VI, B.G. Davies, 1995.

May he be given Life, like Re forever and ever, Beloved of Amun Lord of the Two Lands, Foremost in Karnak [Ipet-esut], beloved of Atum Lord of the Two Lands of Heliopolis; of Re-Horakhte and Ptah-south-of-his-wall, Lord of Memphis; and of Thoth, Lord of Hieroglyphs, the one who appeared upon the throne of the living Horus, like his father Re.

The good god, son of Amun, son of Kamutef [literally, Bull-of-his-Mother, title of Horus], the good son, the holy egg whom Amun created, father of the Two Lands, the one who makes the one who made him, the *bas* (souls) of Heliopolis united in order to form him, to be King forever and ever, as Horus, living immortally. He is the effective King who did what was good for his father and all the gods. He restored everything that was ruined, to be his monument forever and ever. He has vanquished chaos from the whole land and has restored Ma'at to her place. He has made lying a crime, the whole land being made as it was at the time of creation.

Now when His Majesty was crowned King the temples and the estates of the gods and goddesses from Elephantine as far as the swamps of Lower Egypt had fallen into ruin. Their shrines had fallen down, turned into piles of rubble and overgrown with weeds. Their sanctuaries were as if they had never existed at all. Their temples had become footpaths. The world was in chaos and the gods had turned their backs on this land. If an army was sent to Djahy to extend the boundaries of Egypt, it would have no success. If you asked a god for advice, he would not attend; and if one spoke to a goddess likewise she would not attend. Hearts were faint in bodies because everything that had been, was destroyed.

Now some days after His Majesty appeared upon the throne of his father and he ruled the "Two Banks of Horus" [Egypt], the Black Land and the Red Land being under his authority and every land bowed down before his might. How His Majesty was in his palace which was in the House of Aakheperkare, being like the Sun in the sky, and His Majesty carried out the works of this land and everything the Two Lands needed every day. Then His Majesty considered in his heart and looked for something which would be effective for his father Amun. He made the holy statue out of genuine electrum, giving to it more than he had done before. He made his father Amun 13 poles long, the holy statue being made of electrum, lapis lazuli, turquoise and every noble and precious stone, although the majesty of this noble god had been only 7 poles long before. His Majesty made monuments for the gods, making their statues from electrum from the tribute of the foreign lands. He renewed their sanctuaries as his monuments forever and ever, endowing them with offerings forever, laying aside for them divine offerings daily, laying aside bread from the earth. He added great wealth on top of that which existed before, doing more than his predecessors had ever done. He allocated *waab*-priests, God's Servants and the heirs of the Chiefs of the Cities to be the sons of wise men whose reputation is established. He has enriched their tables with gold and silver, bronze and copper without limit. He has filled their storehouses with male and female workers and with His Majesty's booty. He has added to the wealth of every temple, doubling, trebling and quadrupling the silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise and every noble precious stone, together with byssus, white linen, ordinary linen, oil, fat, resin, incense, perfumes and myrrh without limit.

His Majesty, Life Prosperity Health, has made quays for the river from new wood from the hill-slopes from the pick of Negau, inlaid with gold, the tribute of foreign countries, so that they might decorate the river. His Majesty, Life Prosperity Health, picked male and female servants, musicians and dancers who had been women of the palace, their cost being charged to the palace and to the treasury of the Two Lands. I shall have them protected and guarded for my

ancestors, the gods, in the hope that they will be contented, by doing what their *kas* (souls) wish while they protect Egypt.

Now the gods and goddesses of this land are rejoicing in their hearts, the Lords of the temples are in joy, the provinces all rejoice and celebrate throughout this whole land because good has come back into existence. The Ennead [the nine gods of creation] in the temple, their arms are raised in adoration, their hands are filled with jubilees forever and ever. All life and might is with them, and it is for the nose of the mighty King Horus, repeater of births, beloved son of his father Amun Lord of the gods, who made the one who made him, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, his eldest son, the true and beloved one who protects his father who begot him. His Kingship is that of his father Osiris son of Re, the son who is good to the one who begot him, plentiful in monuments, rich in wonders, the one who makes an accurate monument for his father Amun, fair of births, the King who has established Egypt.

### 3. Further Reading:

Mariam Ayad (ed), *Women in Ancient Egypt: Revisiting Power, Agency, and Autonomy*, American University Press, 2022. (note that Dr. Williamson has an article in this edited volume on Hatshepsut and Nefertiti.)

Douglas Brewer and Emily Teeter, *Egypt and the Egyptians* (second edition), Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Barry Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and Its People*, Thames and Hudson, 2014.

Mark Lehner, with Zahi Hawass, *Giza and the Pyramids*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Jacquelyn Williamson, *Nefertiti's Sun Temple: A New Cult Complex at Tell el-Amarna*, Brill/Harvard Egyptology Series, 2016.