

Ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom
The British Museum

The New Kingdom is composed of the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Dynasties, following the expulsion of the Hyksos and the reunification of the country by Ahmose. The New Kingdom was a time of great prosperity in Egypt. The massive building projects at Thebes, the religious centre and sometime capital of the period, demonstrate the power and wealth of the kings of the New Kingdom. The Temple of Amun at Karnak, the Luxor Temple and the many mortuary temples on the west bank of the Nile record great battles and other royal exploits. Several kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty led campaigns into Palestine, parts of which were brought under Egyptian control.

The rock cut tombs of kings and private individuals were lavishly decorated. Most famous of these is the tomb of Tutankhamun, which shows that royal tombs were provisioned with treasures. A wide variety of literature from this period has survived, including funerary, legal, medical and literary papyri, personal letters and hymns.

The gold resources of the conquered Nubia were heavily exploited until they were exhausted in the early Nineteenth Dynasty. A less settled period followed and the threat of the Hittite empire reached a crisis in the reign of Ramesses II with the battle of Kadesh. The assassination of Ramesses III marked the beginning of decline. The New Kingdom ended with a series of weak kings, a corrupt administrative system, tomb robberies and incursions of Libyans into the Theban region.