

Chapter 3: Early Africa and Egypt Chapter Introduction  
Book Title: World Civilizations  
Printed By: Colin Morris-Moncada (006279659@coyote.csusb.edu)  
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## Chapter Introduction

*They [Egyptian priests] have told me that 341 generations separate the first King of Egypt from the last. Reckoning three generations as a century ... a total of 11,340 years.*

—Herodotus, *Histories*, Book II

### Egyptian Peasants.

Agriculture was the foundation of Egypt's great wealth. Peasant farmers, who made the land productive and built the system of channel irrigation, were the overwhelming majority of the population. Here they can be seen winnowing grain.



Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Chronology

<b>c. 8000 – 3000 B.C.E.</b>	Food-producing revolution in Africa
<b>c. 4000 – 3000 B.C.E.</b>	Nile Valley village-based civilizations
<b>c. 3100 – 2200 B.C.E.</b>	Egypt's Old Kingdom
<b>2500 – 1000 B.C.E.</b>	Desiccation of the Sahara begins; first permanent settlements south of the Sahara
<b>c. 2600 – 2100 B.C.E.</b>	Pyramid-building age
<b>c. 2200 – 2100 B.C.E.</b>	First Intermediate Period
<b>c. 2100 – 1650 B.C.E.</b>	Middle Kingdom
<b>c. 1650 – 1570 B.C.E.</b>	Second Intermediate Period
<b>1500s B.C.E.</b>	Hyksos invasion
<b>c. 1550 – 770 B.C.E.</b>	New Kingdom
<b>c. 1550 – 1250 B.C.E.</b>	The Empire
<b>1300s B.C.E.</b>	Akhnaton's monotheist experiment Tutankhamen
<b>c. 1050 B.C.E. – 350 C.E.</b>	Kingdom of Kush
<b>525 B.C.E.</b>	Egypt's conquest by Persia
<b>c. 500 B.C.E.</b>	Iron making at Meroe and Nok, beginnings of sub-Saharan urbanization

Africa is a huge place—the second largest of the world's continents—and the chief characteristic of its history is its variety. Most of its several different climates and topographies have produced civilizations of various levels of sophistication. More than elsewhere, Africa has repeatedly demonstrated that racial categorization has little meaning generally and even less so as a way of explaining the successes or failures of peoples all over the world in their struggles to achieve better lives and to create distinctive civilizations. Rather than race, the natural environment in which people live and their locations along routes of trade and travel have usually proved to be the more decisive factors in their history.

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