The Fall of the Old Kingdom
The decline of the Old Kingdom in the 6th Dynasty - the rise of provincial power at the expense of central authority:

- Nomarchs were no longer required to visit the capital every year.
- Nomarchs were buried in large tombs close to the provincial capital rather than in the capital near their patron (Pharaoh).
- Their posts became increasingly hereditary, freeing them from the control of the central authority.
- Climate change was also involved.

- Reliefs from the causeway of Unas (5th Dynasty) show scenes of starving men - might have been the result of several years of low Nile inundation.

- Dendrochronological evidence suggests that rainfall decreased substantially after 2900 BC.

- Reduced the agricultural resources available, and eliminated much of the seasonal pasturage adjacent to the Nile Valley.
First Intermediate Period

Dynasties 7-11
2181 - 2040 BC
The First Intermediate Period, which lasted approximately 140 years, was a time of state decentralization.

The Nomarchs of Herakleopolis (who ruled in Dynasties 9 & 10) vied for power over the country with the remnants of the Old Kingdom rulers at Memphis (who ruled in Dynasties 7 & 8)
First Intermediate Period was actually recognized by the ancient Egyptians themselves as a time of distress.

The **Lamentations of Ipuwer**, a text which has been dated to the First Intermediate Period, relates that:

“the land is full of gangs and a man goes to plow with his shield...All is in ruin, a man smites his brother, plague is throughout the land, blood is everywhere...the land is diminished, its rulers are multiplied.”
The reasons for the breakdown of central authority and social order are not completely understood.

Egyptologists think that the decentralization of the country was due to the rising independence of the nomarchs, especially those at Beni Hassan, Coptos, and Herakleopolis.
Herakleopolis
The **Akhtoy** lineage of Herakleopolis, was recognized by Manetho as Dynasties 9 & 10.

The breakaway kings of **Herakleopolis** sought legitimacy by being buried near the tombs of the 6th Dynasty kings at Saqqara.

By about 2100 BC, the Akhtoys of the 10th Dynasty controlled the northern part of Egypt.
Thebes
The south was held by the Inyotef and Mentuhotep families of Thebes (who ruled during the 11th Dynasty).

The Theben families were able to maintain power over the southern portion of the country during the First Intermediate Period through a system of shifting alliances with other powerful Nomarchs.
Conflict During the 1st Intermediate Period
Although there were periods of peace and stability, the rulers at Thebes and those at Herakleopolis were often in conflict.

The most notable depiction is made in a document called the “Teachings of Merikare:”

Troops with fight troops
As the ancestor’s foretold:
Egypt fought in the graveyard,
Destroying tombs in vengeful destruction…
I attacked This to its southern border
I engulfed it like a flood…
I breached their strongholds,
I made Lower Egypt attack them
I captured their inhabitants
I seized their cattle
(Re) Unification
the Egyptians themselves later thought that the kings at Herakleopolis brought the retribution of the gods when Akhtoy III attacked and destroyed the royal necropolis of Abydos.

Theben king Mentuhotep II at the very end of the 11th Dynasty - the military tide had turned.

Mentuhotep II was able to install his own officials in Herakleopolis, thereby reunifying the country
The Middle Kingdom

Dynasties 11-13
2040 - 1782 BC
The Middle Kingdom is a time of relative prosperity, general peace, and long reigning kings.

it is also a time in which the role and status of Pharaoh is diminished (compared to the Old Kingdom)
• **Amenemhet**, the first Pharaoh of the 12th Dynasty, attempted to decrease the power of the nomarchs.

• He sent troops against a number of disloyal and independent nomarchs, and redrew the borders of the existing nomes.

• **Senwosret III** - existing nomes were broken into three administrative districts (called *warets*) which were overseen by a “reporter” who answered directly to Pharaoh.
The capital was moved from Memphis to Itchtowy/Itj-tawy (which means "Seizer of the Two Lands")

Royal tombs were built near the new capital at Lahun (Kahun), Dashur, and Hawara.
Pyramids in the Middle Kingdom
• Pyramid building ceased during the First Intermediate Period

• The form of the pyramid complex was revived during the Middle Kingdom by the 12th Dynasty pharaoh Amunemhet I

• The 7 pyramids built during the Middle Kingdom were nowhere near the same quality as those in the Old Kingdom
The tombs are smaller, and constructed of smaller stones or bricks encased in stone - more economically feasible to build.

Elaborate systems of portcullises and false passages

Used to protect against robbers whose activities, even towards the bodies of the kings, were fairly commonplace.
Discord During the Middle Kingdom
As related in the text known as the “Instructions of Amenemhet,” King Amunemhet I was assassinated by his palace royal guard.

The diminished status of Pharaoh is further reflected in a document called the “Loyalist Instructions,” which implored men:

“to fight on behalf of his [the king’s] name…the one whom the king loves shall be provided for - for these is no tomb for anyone who rebels against his majesty; his corpse shall be cast into the waters.”
Middle Kingdom
Foreign Policy

Nubia
Under Amenemhet, Egyptians occupied Nubia all the way to the Second Cataract.

Under Senwosret III, the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Cataract was cleared to facilitate the passage of trade and troops.

Forts were built all around the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Cataract to safeguard the passage north and southward.
The Egyptian defensive measures included observation posts around the 2nd Cataract.

In addition, the Semna Dispatches reveal widespread intelligence gathering and surveillance.

Egyptian forces included the Medjay
The Cosmopolitan Middle Kingdom
Amenemhet I - “The Walls of the Ruler”

Despite intensive efforts to control immigration and foreign aggression, Egypt was becoming far more cosmopolitan.

Records from the town of Kahun list many inhabitants with foreign names.

Middle Kingdom tombs present a mixed view of society and economy during the period.
The End of the Middle Kingdom
The end of the Middle Kingdom has been placed at the end of the 12th Dynasty.

Kings of the 13th Dynasty, who ruled from Itchtowy, were acknowledged in Upper Egypt.

Growing instability and the increasing threat of political fragmentation was evident in a number of rulers who are virtually unknown and only recorded by Manetho.
The End