

allowed the Egyptian empire that Thutmose III and others had developed to fall into decay. His successors moved the capital back to Thebes, abandoning the new capital city, which had been occupied only a few years. Modern excavators have found at El Amarna the remains of the buildings that characterized the Egyptian capital in the reign of Akhenaton. This is the place where, in 1887, the famous Tell el-Amarna letters were found, consisting of about three hundred clay tablets written in the cuneiform writing of Mesopotamia, but containing messages between Akhenaton or his father, and the kings of Canaan or the rulers of other sections of the ancient world. These letters are of great value for reconstructing the history of that period. After Akhenaton had died, and the triumph of the priests of Amun had resulted in the capital being moved back to Thebes, Akhenaton was always referred to as a malefactor. The general confusion that now occurred put an end to the 18th dynasty.

The 19th dynasty (about 1303 to 1197), even more than the 18th, was a period of great building. Largely as a result of the activities of the kings of these two dynasties, tremendous ruins stand at Thebes today, making it the great outdoor museum in the world. Ramses II reigned for sixty-seven years (about 1290 to 1224 B.C.), and left many records of his great military exploits. Yet he outlived his energy and his son Merneptah (about 1224 to 1214 B.C.) became king when already an old man. His monuments claim that he repeated the exploits of his father, but his boasting statements are greatly discounted by historians.

Ramses III (about 1195 to 1164), the second king of the 20th dynasty, drove back a great invasion of sea peoples which attacked Egypt by sea and land. One of these peoples is considered to have been the Philistines. Driven away from Egypt, they settled on the southern part of the coastland of Palestine. Ramses III