**Kheops**

Kheops is the second and most famous king of the 4th Dynasty. He was the son of Snofru and Hetepheres I. He at least had two wives, probably even as much as four, with whom he had several children. Queen Meritates bore him Kawab, Hor-djedef, Hetepheres II and Meresankh II. With Henutsen, Kheops had Re-khaf (the later king Khephren) and Khufu-khaf as children. Other children of Kheops are Re-djedef, who would succeed Kheops as Djedefre, Hor-baf, who is sometimes supposed to have become the otherwise unattested king Bakare, and Khamernebti I.

According to Manetho and Herodotos, Kheops would have ruled for 63 years. The Turin King-list, however, only notes 23 years for the successor of Snofru. Although the name of the king on this line is missing, it does apply to Kheops, being Snofru’s successor.

The highest known year reference of Kheops' reign is the year of the 17th cattle count. This means that Kheops must have ruled from at least 17 years, if the cattle counts were held every year, to 33 years, if the cattle counts were always held every two years.

Like his father, Kheops seems to have been intent on establishing a more or less permanent military presence in the Sinai, probably to prevent the Bedouins from interrupting the work in the turquoise mines. An inscription in Aswan demonstrates Kheops’ interest in this region as well, as it was the main quarry of the granite needed to build his pyramid. A stela found near Abu Simbel and some fragments of an alabaster object found in Byblos, indicate some commercial activity with Nubia and Palestine.

Following his father's example, Kheops again built his funerary monument away from his predecessor’s. Building activity was moved from Dashur to Giza, to the North of the capital Memphis. There he built the monument that has made him one of the most famous kings of the Ancient Egyptian history: the great pyramid of Giza.

Herodotos’ account of thousands of slaves labouring for 20 years to build this monument, is now seen as incorrect. It is now accepted that the harder labour, such as moving and placing the granite and calcite blocks, was done by farmers during the annual 4-month inundation of the Nile. Recent discoveries have shown that they were housed and paid and that they were even buried near the pyramid of the king, so that they could be part of the king’s eternal life after death.

Herodotos, however, did not invent Kheops’ bad reputation. This had, in fact, become part of the Egyptian tradition centuries before this Greek traveller visited Egypt. The Middle Kingdom story recorded on the Westcar Papyrus, which shows Snofru as a wise and kind man, describes Kheops as a cruel and tyrannical ruler, with no respect for life.