

# Peasants lives in ancient egypt



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The great story of ancient Egypt has existed from thousands of years; it took place from around 7000 B. C to 30 B. C. At first Egypt was divided into two kingdoms, and had different ruler. These two kingdoms developed along the Nile River. The first one was in Upper Egypt, which known as the White Crown; while the second one was in Lower Egypt, which known as Red Crown. Then, in about 3200 B. C the Pharaoh of the north captured the south and united these two into one. The name of pharaoh was King Narmer or Menes. As we already knew, Ancient Egypt was one of the superlative civilizations in the past period because of its geographical condition, social system, and educational system.

Egypt is located in the Northeast corner of Africa. It is the great position; also there is the longest river in the world, the Nile River, flows through the country into the Mediterranean Sea. In the history of ancient Egypt, Egyptians people divided their owned country into two areas. The first one was called Deshret (Red land) because that area is full of deserts and surrounded Kemet (Black Land), moreover these deserts prevented ancient Egypt from invading armies and separated ancient Egypt from neighboring countries. The second one was called Kemet (Black Land) because the Nile floods were so flexible. Since the Nile River flooded every year between June and September, Nile reached rich soil from central Africa and left it on the banks of its valley, and its areas of low flat land in Mediterranean. All of these stuffs produced such an excellent alluvium that gave a priority to the ancient Egypt on their agriculture and their life as well. The Nile River was the giver of life because Nile not only provided water, food, and

transportation to stabilize the Egypt's lives, but also provided fertile land, which facilitated them to grow their crop and raise their animals as well.

The people in Egypt society were structured in a hierarchical system like a pyramid that pharaoh stood at the top, then the ruling class and the middle class, and the bottom one was peasants and slaves. The majority of Egyptians were peasants. This term paper is going to describe more about peasants' lives in ancient Egypt. What did they do? How did they survive in the ancient time? What was their relationship with the Pharaohs? And what were their religions and beliefs?

## Peasants' Daily Lives in Ancient Egypt

### Working Condition

Like the rest of the ancient world, the Egyptian people lived in agricultural life. Such a life seemed so far removed from the common stories heard about Egypt, the glory of its treasures and pyramids. Egypt ' s glorious past could note an image of ancient Egyptians living more advanced, luxurious lives, as if all they did was to gather treasures and eat in abundance well, in some sense all these things were true, but only for their rulers, noble families, and priests . The rest of the Egyptian population was poor peasants who had to rely on the predictability of the Nile flooding to plant and harvest crops. The peasants; however, were very much connected to the glory of Egypt, for it was their unchanged situation, persevering unacknowledged, often felt contempt, and always ill-rewarded even if they worked so hard. All the achievements of Egypt were made possible by the lower class people. Needless to say, it was the sweat of the peasants that produced the great

pyramids, jewelry and treasures to Egypt, that provided the luxurious living of their Pharaohs and ruling families and that made possible all of Egypt's military conquest, commercial expansion and influence and prestige abroad.

Peasants also played an important role to build Pyramids for Pharaoh. While the flooding season was coming, the Nile River flooded the ground and made the filed more fertilized. This was the time for the peasants help to build the Pyramids. On the other hand, peasants had no rights to own the land even they were the ones who planted the crops to supply for everyone's need. They had to pay tax to the government and this made more difficulties for them to get out of poverty.

#### Livelihoods

In ancient Egypt, peasants were considered as the lowest level in social classes. Peasants lived in mud brick houses with a bad condition. They equipped their rooms with a bed, a bench, pots for cooking, baskets and tools for grinding wheat. The ancient Egyptians paid most attention to their healthcare such as hygiene and appearance. Frequently, they took bath in the Nile River and used soap pastes based on animal fat and chalk to clean their bodies. Sometime because of famine, they were forced to eat papyrus while the upper class live with a better condition, with enough food to eat and a comfortable lifestyle. Egyptians usually intermarried their cousins or other members in the family. Pharaohs got married to their sisters, but this was not common practice in the peasant class. In ancient Egypt, marriage to non-relatives was not permitted. The Egyptians had their own ideal idea of

family life; a man and woman needed to settle down, make a home and have children together.

### Leisure Activities

In spite of their activities on agriculture and building temples for the pharaoh, peasants also had their leisure activities. Most of the activities were outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and playing river games. Peasants hunted water birds, desert animal, etc. They caught some animals such as gazelle, oxen, hares and ostriches (Leisure Time in Ancient Egypt, 2001). The weapons that they used for hunting were bows and arrows, lassos, and throwing sticks. Moreover, peasants enjoyed fishing during their free time. Due to their location nearby the Nile River, the canals and the lakes, peasants liked to go there after they finished their works. They went fishing in the Nile River, where it was rich of fish, chatted with their people, and collected fish for their family. Besides, the river games were also their leisure activity. For instance, boat racing, there were boats that started in the same direction and there were two or three men for each boat with poles. After they had won, they knocked all the men off a boat, and then they would turn it over. This was one of the most interesting games played in ancient Egypt. Furthermore, the Egyptians also enjoyed music. There were many religious celebrations and secular festivals that provided entertainment and relief from work throughout the year.

### Peasants' Relationship with the Pharaoh

In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs were known to be not only mortal rulers, but also divine deities. The pharaohs had extensive power to rule over Egypt.

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There were not many documents writing about the peasants' relationship with the pharaohs because at that time scholars focused more on the pharaohs achievements. However, towards thorough search through books and on the Internet, it can be assumed that the relationship of the peasants to the Pharaoh was more of a dictatorship, a religious, physical and intellectual enslavement that was carried on for almost three historic centuries; " The pharaoh had absolute control over people's live" (Prentice Hall, n. d., p. 23). Like other early civilizations, Egypt had its own specific class system. At the top of the class stood Pharaoh and his royal family, then directly next to him were the priests and priestess, and then below them were the nobles who fought for Pharaoh's war. A small percentage of merchants, artisans and scribes made up the next rank. Then occupying the bottom of the ladder is the majority of the population was peasants. They were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and it was very hard for them sometimes. However, in the Middle Kingdom, peasants had good quite relationship with the pharaoh because the pharaoh gave more rights to the peasants. At that time, peasants were allowed to mummify their bodies after death.

### Religions and Beliefs

The beliefs of gods and life after death were the center aspect of life in ancient Egypt.. Scholars believed that " Egyptians were polytheistic" (Prentice Hall, n. d., p. 21). They worshiped a lot of gods, except during the reign of Akenaton. The ancient Egyptians had many different gods and goddesses; totally there were around 2000 gods and goddesses.

### Gods and Goddesses

During ancient Egypt, Pharaoh was worshipped by all the people across the country because they believed that Pharaoh was the god or representative of the god on earth. So, at that time, peasant had to pay tax, gave respect, worshipped, and built the pyramids and temples in order to show their dedication to their kings. However, they not only worshipped pharaohs, but they are also worshipped other gods that were believed to have a lot of impacts on their birth, daily life, or death.

Amun-Re was regarded as one of the most well-known and important god in ancient Egypt. He was known as the symbol of the sun, king of the gods, life creator, and the bringer of light. Amun-Re came form the combination of two gods Amun, god of air or hidden, and Re, god of the sun. Osiris was worshipped as the god of living and vegetation among the peasants. The majority of peasants in ancient Egypt were farmers that depended on growing crops near the Nile River in ancient Egypt, moreover; He was regarded as the one that controlled the annual flooding of the Nile River that fertilized the land, where peasants grew crops. However, Osiris was also known as the god of afterlife and the dead.

The peasant in ancient Egypt had the obligation to worshipped pharaohs as their god but they also believed in other gods that influenced their life in many ways from living and thinking, and working, even though; the belief was changed from time to time and region to region.

### Rituals and Ceremonies

Egyptians concerned more about life after death. When a person died, they always practiced burial ritual in order for the person to be happy and

harmonious in the afterlife. One of the most important ceremonies was the opening the mouth ceremony that was leaded by a priest. At the entrance of the grave, the mummy was lifted to on upright position. The priest utters the words of ritual, touch the mummy; and moreover, he puts water and incense in the coffin. Meanwhile, a daze (a tool used for smoothing rough-cut wood) was lifted to the lip of mummy's face. The daze was raised in this twice. This ceremony is very essential because it makes the mummy could breathe and speak in the next life. In addition, the priest could utter the words to reanimate the mummy's legs, arm and the other part of the body. One ritual that can preserve the dead body is Mummification. In this process, the internal organs of the dead body were removed. Then they fill the body hollow with fragrant spices and perfume. After 70 days, the body was wrapped in bandages. Furthermore, they decorate the body with gold and jewels that cover around the head and shoulder of the mummy. Besides these rituals, other rituals were performed to help prepare for the king's final journey. The king's mummy was kept inside the Pyramid with enormous amount of food, drink, furniture, clothes and jewelry, which were to be used in the afterlife. After the king's funeral, the king becomes god.

## Conclusion

In summary, we can see that peasants' lives in ancient Egypt were struggling. They strived to live in very good life, but they couldn't even if they worked so hard during the farming season and helped the pharaoh to build the great pyramids. At the same time, peasants also gained benefits from the richness of fertile soil from the Nile River that made their lives less hard. Peasants did not only worship the pharaoh as their god, but also some <https://assignbuster.com/peasants-lives-in-ancient-egypt/>



other gods such as Amon-Re and Osiris. Throughout the year, they usually enjoyed the celebrations and festivals that could make them relieve from work for a short period of time. Besides, worshipping gods or goddesses, they also had some other rituals ceremony; one of which was called mummification. In order to make a person who died prosperous in the next life, they celebrated this kind of ritual. There were not many documents saying anything about the relationship between the pharaoh and the peasants. But as being observed, there was a really big gap between them. Peasants had no rights to own the land, for all the lands were belonged to the pharaoh; moreover, they had to pay tax to the pharaoh, as well.