

# Ancient egyptians

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



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Egypt has made incredible achievements at all aspects of a civilization.

Over the years, Ancient Egypt has had many cultural accomplishments in art, architecture, and different philosophies which are still cherished today. Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of Africa, bordering on the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east. Religiously speaking the ancient Egyptians are polytheistic and believe in multiple deities or gods. They overall believe that there are divine forces that rule the Earth and the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians have gone through a long and interesting line of rulers.

In our modern time period today, we can look back, learn and cherish the ancient Egyptians. Time Period •3100 BC – Hieroglyphics developed and King Menes united the Upper and Lower Kingdoms. •2700 BC – Pyramid building began, also the beginning of the Old Kingdom •2200 BC – The collapse of the Sixth Dynasty and the Old Kingdom; beginning of the Middle Kingdom •1700 BC – Earliest evidence of diagnostic medicine in Egypt and foreign invaders

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occupied the delta region; the fall of the Middle Kingdom •1550 BC – The rise of the New Kingdom 1503 BC – Woman ruler exercised all the rights of a pharaoh •1200 BC – Ramses became the most powerful pharaoh •1100 BC – The collapse of the New Kingdom •670 BC – The Assyrians attacked Egypt •525 BC – The Persians conquered Egypt •330 BC – Alexander the Great conquered Egypt •30 BC – The Romans conquered Egypt The ancient Egyptians went through many turning points from the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms. The most important events were when the Egyptians were getting invaded and taken over by many different people, including the Persians, Alexander the Great and his men, and for the longest period of time, The Romans.

During these times ancient Egypt was stripped down from some of their freedoms and traditions and also some cultural diffusion was forced upon them. 2 Geography/Location As you read in the “ Thesis Statement”, Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of Africa, bordering on the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east. The Egyptians most important natural resource was the Nile River, which flows from the Mediterranean Sea. They believed that they were blessed by the Nile and believed that the river was a gift from the Gods. The ancient Egyptians geographically divided their land into two types, the “ black land” and the “ red land”. The “ black land” was considered the fertile land on the banks of the Nile. Ancient Egyptians used this land for growing crops. This was the only land in Egypt that could be farmed because a layer of rich, black silt was spread on the land every year after the Nile flooded. The “ red land” was the barren desert that protected Egypt on two sides. These deserts 3 protected ancient Egypt from

nearby countries and invading armies. They also provided the ancient Egyptians with a source for different kinds of metals and stones.

Egypt's proximity to the Nile River enabled the Egyptians the trade, farm, make clothing, and ultimately use the river to its fullest. The ancient Egyptians use to sing a hymn of praise to the Nile for nourishing their land, these are the lyrics... " If the Nile smiles, the Earth is joyous, Every stomach is full of rejoicing, Every spine is happy, Every jawbone crushes its food". 4

**Political Characteristics** The Ancient Egyptian Government was dominated by a single man, the Pharaoh. The Egyptians believed that the ruler was more a man, but that he was a god.

This gave the Pharaoh absolute control over affairs of the Empire and its people. Ancient Egypt was also considered as a theocracy, which was controlled by the clergy. The Pharaoh's advisors and ministers were almost all priests, who were considered the only ones worthy and able to carry out the god-king's commands. In most of the religious ancient societies, priest has a special status above the rest of the citizens. The governmental officials included the prime minister, the chief treasurer, the tax collector, the minister of public works, and the army commander.

These officials were directly responsible to the Pharaoh. The land itself was divided up into provinces called nomes. Each nome had a governor, and was appointed by the Pharaoh, and responsible to the prime minister. Taxes were paid in goods and labor. Citizens were drafted into the army and forced labor for periods of time to pay the labor tax. Slaves, mercenaries, and draftees

were often used in the army. It is believed, however, that Egyptian slaves were not used to construct sacred monuments, such as the Pyramids.

Egyptologists were led to this conclusion by recent findings of worker burial grounds near such monuments. The workers received proper Egyptian burials, whereas slaves did not. The majority of Egyptian people were peasants who worked the land along the fertile Nile flood basin. These people had no voice in the government, and accepted the fact because it was backed by their religion. This aspect of the Egyptian's religion helped keep Egypt so powerful and centralized during its high points. One of the most powerful rulers of ancient Egypt was the mighty Ramses II.

Ramses was very ambitious and looked to expand the Egyptian empire northward as far as Syria. He constructed many temples and monuments and boasted of his conquest. In a battle against the Hittites, Ramses had outstanding bravery and prevented himself from a crushing defeat. Ramses was well respected and went in history for his achievements. His tomb is located in the Valley of the Kings, and his mummy is thought to be one of the most best-preserved mummies ever found. Another greatly respected pharaoh of Egypt was King Menes.

Menes was actually known as the first true leader of Egypt. He accomplished much, including the unification of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms of early Egypt. After Menes united the Kingdoms the Egyptian monarchy lasted in a recognizable form for over three thousand years. Economy There were many aspects to the Ancient Egyptian economy. The Egyptians traded, educated, and farmed. The Egyptians had a large range of resources at their

disposal varying from food and cloth, to metals and gems. Some of Egypt's agricultural products were grain, vegetables, fruit, fish, cattle, goats, pigs and fowl which were the primary food resources and flax was also grown to be spun into linen. A large proportion of grain was used for beer production. In ancient Egypt there was a good variety of metals, but only a small number were used including copper, bronze, and iron. Gems for the upper classes and the pharaoh and much stone were used for the construction of temples and of course the pyramids. The majority of the population more than nine tenths lived on the land in mostly village communities.

The land they worked in belonged in theory to the gods and in particular the gods "Osiris" and "Horus" and his earthly incarnation or "avatar", the pharaoh. The ancient Egyptian economic system was called a "command economy". Administrators, priests, traders, and craftsmen lived mostly in the cities along the Nile. Some of the most commercial cities or capitals of ancient Egypt were Zawiyet el-Mayitin, Abydos, Naqada, el-Kula, Edfu, Seila and the island of Elephantine in the Nile River at modern Aswan. These provincial capitals were popular religious and economic centers serving the surrounding countryside.

In ancient Egypt, a major part of the taxes imposed on the people were used to keep the society running smoothly. Grain was one of the most taxed resources as it could be stored relatively easily and was very vital in years of bad harvests. Three thousand years of development pointed out just how effective this economy was. With the help from transportation by the Nile

River, the Egyptians sold their products on the market. The Egyptians set up trade routes to reach distant countries.

They often visited the countries along the Mediterranean Sea and the Nile River because they were immediately adjacent to Egypt and contained materials that the Egyptians desired. These visited countries included Cyprus, Crete, Greece, Syro-Palestine, Punt, and Nubia. Some of the items that the Egyptians would bring back to Egypt would be leopard skins, giraffe tails, monkeys, cattle, ivory, ostrich feathers/eggs, and gold. When the Egyptians visited Punt, there a major source for incense, also Syro-Palestine provided cedar, oils, unguents, and horses.

Horses were originally used in ancient Egypt, and then the domesticated camel was introduced at around 500 BC. The economy in ancient Egypt was overall mainly very stable and structured over the years. 11 Religious Beliefs Religion was very important to the Ancient Egyptians. Their religion was strongly influenced by tradition, which caused them to resist change. Egyptians did not question the beliefs which had been handed down to them; they did not desire change in their society.

Their main aim throughout their history was to emulate the conditions which they believed had existed at the dawn of creation. The Egyptians were polytheistic people that believed in multiple gods/deities. The god represented various forces of nature, thought patterns and power, and expressed by the means of complex and varied archetypes. These deities were worshipped with offerings and prayers in local household shrines, as well as in formal temples managed by priests. Different gods were prominent

at different periods of Egyptian history, and the myths associated with them changed over time, so Egypt never had a coherent 12 hierarchy of deities or a unified mythology. The religion of the Egyptians, however, contained many overarching beliefs. Among these were the divinity of the pharaoh, which helped to politically unify the country, and the complex beliefs about an afterlife, which gave the Egyptians' elaborate burial customs concluding the process of mummification. Ancient Egyptians had many deities, here are some examples of the most important and famous ones.. Amun – The Egyptians believed that this god created himself in the beginning of time.

They also believed him to be the father of the pharaohs. This god looks like a man with a beard, feathered crown, and shown as a ram or a ram-headed man. His name means the hidden one. Geb – Geb was a bearded god with a goose on his head. He was known as the healer and provider of crops. The Egyptians believed that when that Geb laughed that's what caused the earthquakes. Egyptians had feared he might imprison the dead. 13 Mut – Mut is Egyptian goddess, also known as the mother of all living things. Her hieroglyphic symbol is the vulture. She is a woman wearing a vulture headdress sometimes.

She also sometimes wears a double crown to represent lower and upper Egypt. Osiris – Osiris was a strong element in Egyptian mythology. He was one of the five children born from the god of earth and the goddess of skies. He was inherited to the throne of Egypt. Ra – The God Ra is the Egyptian god of the sun, light, heat, and the supreme judge. Also he was known as “ Re- Horakhty”, which means Horus of the Horizon. A god with a sun disk



around his head, he is worshipped all along Egypt. Egyptians believed he created the world, and the rising sun is the symbol of creation. The sun rising and setting meant renewal.

He is ultimately known as the master of life. 14 Social Structure In the ancient times of Egypt the top of the social importance was the pharaoh, then the government officials such as the nobles priests, next were the soldiers, then scribes, merchants, artisans, farmers, and lastly slaves/servants. The pyramid has been used as a visual metaphor to describe the social structures of ancient Egypt. The position of an individual in the social pyramid was determined by birth circumstances such as class, gender, race, and the relationship among social groups were determined by their occupations.

Ancient Egypt was ruled by a very small rich upper class who enjoyed power and wealth while the large masses of Egyptian workers and peasants struggles to subsist. The ruling class depending on a social system of administrators, who organized the work force, managed resourced and taxed the surplus production. For their services, these government officials received favors and could rise to the highest ranks in the administration. 15 The upper class of Egypt despised the lower classes as inferiors, and many instances of abuse were committed, but peasant and farmers were not slaves.

They had property rights and servants could inherit their master's possessions when is they died without children. Other members of the working class, artisans, were their own masters. They owned property and

land, and could freely buy and sell their products in the market. Education in ancient Egypt was not very advanced. At a young age children were mainly taught by their parents. Most parents would try to instill in their kids various educational principles, moral attitudes, and views of life from a tender age. For girls, they would always stay with their mothers.

Very few careers were open to most women. While most women trained for motherhood and how to be a good wife, some girls could train to be dancers, entertainers, weavers, or bakers. Only the daughters of wealthy nobles received an education in reading or writing. The boys were mainly raised by their fathers. Sons usually followed the same trade that their fathers practiced. Some of the boys at this time attended a general village school while others attended a school designed for a specific career such as a priest or a noble.

Schools taught writing, reading, math, and sports as well as morals and manners. At the age of fourteen, the sons of farmers or craftsmen joined their fathers in their profession. Those children whose parents had higher status careers continued their education at a special school usually attached to temples or government centers. The educational experiences in ancient Egypt had both similarities and differences compared to the present education in the U. S. A. It was similar because most parents like in ancient Egypt teach their kids moral values and educational principles. Unlike Egypt, in

America it is a law that all American children must go to school and get an education. The selective school in Egypt taught similar subjects to the

children, but in America present time, there is a lot more variety and opportunities for the future. 17 Achievements/Accomplishments There were many achievements of the ancient Egyptians including the quarrying, surveying and constructional techniques that facilitated the building of monumental pyramids, temples, and obelisks. They also established a system of mathematics, a practical and effective system of medicine, irrigation systems and agricultural production techniques.

They had the first known ships, Egyptian faience and glass technology, new forms of literature, and the earliest known peace treaty. Egypt truly left a lasting legacy. Their art and architecture were widely copied, and sent around the world today. Egypt's monumental ruins have inspired the imaginations of travelers and writers for centuries. In the mathematical area, Egyptians used a numbering system based on ten. They used vertical tally marks to represent the numbers one through nine, then they used symbols for larger numbers.

For example, a heel stood for 10, a crook was 100, a flower was 1000, a finger was a 10,000, and a tadpole represented 100,000. 18 In the science department, the Egyptians believed that "Thoth", in the form of an ibis, was the inventor of astrology and mathematics, he was known as the god of wisdom and magic. The Egyptians had many outstanding cultural achievements concluding mainly art and architecture. The Egyptian art was highly symbolic and a painting or sculpture was not meant to be a record of as the result of subtle changes, not as altered conception of arts or its role in society.

The pyramids of Egypt are the most famous and mind-blowing structures built by the Egyptians. The Egyptian also had some literature mostly written on papyrus, also contains elements of art. The writings included hymns to the gods, mythological and magical texts, and mortuary texts. 19 Decline Egypt was once one of the most powerful civilizations on the planet. The decline of Egypt started at around 1000 BC when there was struggle for power by priests and nobles and the country started to spilt up. Rich people wanted to take over Egypt and hired men to conquer certain areas of Egypt.

As there was a struggle for power, enemies from other countries invaded Egypt. The Cushites ruled Egypt from about 767 BC until they were defeated by the Assyrians in 671 BC and then Egypt took back their country in 525 BC. In 343 BC, the Persians took over Egypt as a part of their conquest. Later, a man named Alexander the Great conquered most of Europe and Africa including Egypt. Alexander became the Pharaoh of the Egyptian Empire and he was loved by the Egyptian people. He was committed to the well being of people so he chose not to change their ways.

After Alexander died, his generals each ruled areas he conquered, this period of Alexander lasted for 20 300 years until the Romans took it over. The Romans ruled Egypt for seven centuries, Egypt was a great source of wealth to the Romans. The Romans brought Christianity to Egypt. The Roman period of Egypt was peaceful even though the ancient religion of Egypt was taken over by the fast spread of Christianity. The period of ancient Egypt lasted from 3000 BC – 639 AD, was at the end when Arabs brought the religion of Islam to Egypt.

The fall of this rich civilization is probably one of the most interesting parts, in not just Egyptian history, but ancient history in general, since Egypt was the most powerful civilization in the world at the time. 21 Personal Observations I truly think Egypt is one of the most amazing ancient civilizations of all time. I choose Egypt for my research paper because I believe that they have so much unique culture and mind-blowing accomplishments. From this research paper I have learned many new things about ancient Egypt that I never knew before.

I thought that all the monuments and pyramids were very impressive. Also the architectural design of the Egyptians is truly creative and inspiring. I hope that people in our modern time can learn how to appreciate the integrity of the Egyptians, and hopefully by reading this research paper it will help. 22 Bibliography Books – The school textbook of world history, “Egyptian art” by Cyril Aldred, “Egypt” by DK Publishing Websites - [www.wsu.edu](http://www.wsu.edu), [www.ancientegypt.co.uk](http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk), [www.kingtutone.com](http://www.kingtutone.com), [www.reshafim.com](http://www.reshafim.com), [www.ancient-egypt.org](http://www.ancient-egypt.org) 23