



Ancient Egypt and Kush

Topic 3 Presentation

Egyptian Civilization: “The Gift of the Nile”

“The Egyptian Nile surpasses all the rivers of the world in sweetness of taste, in length of course and usefulness. No other river in the world can show such continuous series of towns and villages along its banks.” – Arab traveler

The Impact of Geography

- Longest river in the world
- Black Land
 - Fertile land; dark in color from the silt and the crops that grew on it so densely
- Red Land
 - Deserts; lay beyond fertile strips of land on either side of the Nile
- Lower Egypt
 - Delta region; about 100 miles before Nile empties into the Mediterranean
- Upper Egypt
 - Land upstream to the south of the delta region

The Impact of Geography

- The flooding of the Nile was gradual and usually predictable
 - Irrigation systems still needed, but did not require the massive state intervention that was required in Mesopotamia
- Unifying factor (fastest way to travel)
 - Winds from the Mediterranean Sea blew sailboats south
 - Nile's current carried sailboats north

The Impact of Geography

- Natural barriers
 - Deserts, cataracts, Mediterranean Sea
 - Fostered isolation
 - Protected from invasions
 - Sense of security
- Did not prohibit development of trade
 - Evidence of trade between Mesopotamia and Egypt

The Impact of Geography

- Nile flooded – “the fields laugh, and people’s faces light up”
- Egyptians faced life with a spirit of confidence in the stability of things
- [Gift-of-the-Nile - Video](#)

The Old and Middle Kingdoms

- Old Kingdom --- 2686 to 2180 BCE
- First Intermediate Period
- Middle Kingdom --- 2055 to 1650 BCE
- Second Intermediate Period
- New Kingdom --- 1550 to 1070 BCE

The Old Kingdom

- Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt in 3100 BCE
- Double Crown
 - White Crown of Upper Egypt and Red Crown of Lower Egypt
- Age of prosperity and splendor, made visible by the construction of the greatest and largest pyramids in Egypt's history
- [Pharaoh-Menes-Unites-Egypt - Video](#)

The Old Kingdom

- Kingship was a divine institution

“What is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without an equal.”

- Pharaoh
 - “great house” or “palace”

The Old Kingdom

- Kings ruled by set principles, not arbitrarily
- Ma'at
 - Spiritual precept that conveyed the ideas of truth and justice and especially right order and harmony
- Kings did not rule alone
 - King's family performed administrative tasks
 - Bureaucracy with regular procedures developed
 - Vizier
 - "steward of the land"
 - Leader of the bureaucracy
- Provinces, or *nomes* (Greek word)
 - Governor, or nomarch, head of each nome
 - Responsible to the king and vizier
 - Nomarchs land and power holdings created potential rivalry

The Middle Kingdom

- Golden Age of Egypt (as portrayed by the Egyptians)
- Boundaries of nomes settled precisely
- Obligations of the nomes to the king clearly delineated
- Nomarchs duties performed faithfully
 - Collection of taxes for the state
 - Recruitment of labor forces for royal projects

The Middle Kingdom

- Old Kingdom pharaoh was seen as inaccessible god-king
- Middle Kingdom pharaoh portrayed as shepherd of his people
 - Build public works
 - Provide for public welfare

“He created me as one who should do that which he had done, and to carry out that which he commanded should be done. He appointed me herdsman of this land, for he knew who would keep it in order for him.”

Society and Economy in Ancient Egypt

- Society organized along hierarchical lines with the god-king at the top
- Surrounded by upper class of nobles and priests
 - Participated in elaborate rituals of life that surrounded the pharaoh
 - Ran the government and managed landed estates; provided much wealth

Society and Economy in Ancient Egypt

- Merchants
 - Traded up and down the Nile
 - Crete and Syria for wood and other products
 - Nubia for ivory
 - Punt for incense and spices
- Artisans
 - Made stone dishes, painted boxes made of clay, wooden furniture, gold, silver, and copper tools and containers, paper and rope made of papyrus, linen clothing

Society and Economy in Ancient Egypt

- Serfs, common people bound to the land, cultivated the estates
 - Paid taxes in the form of crops to the king, nobles, and priests
 - Lived in small villages or towns
 - Provided military service
 - Forced laborers for building projects

Spiritual Life in Egyptian Society

- Polytheistic
- All-important sun god took on different names for different roles
 - Worshipped as Atum in human form and as Re, who had a human body but the head of a falcon
 - Pharaoh was “son of Re” (earthly form of Re)
 - Associated with Amon, an air god of Thebes, as Amon-Re

The Pyramids

- City of the Dead
 - Large pyramid for the king
 - Small pyramids for his family
 - *Mastabas*, rectangular structures with flat roofs, for pharaoh's noble officials

The Pyramids

- Egyptians believed humans had two bodies; physical one and spiritual one they called the *ka*
- *Ka* could return, surrounded by earthly comforts, and continue its life despite death of the physical body
- Mummification preserved the physical body after death
 - Primarily for the wealthy who could afford it
 - [Egyptian-Mummies - Video](#)

The Pyramids

- Tombs
- Great Pyramid
 - Built for King Khufu
 - 13 acres
 - 756 feet at each side of its base
 - 481 feet
 - Four sides are almost precisely oriented to the four points on a compass

The Pyramids

- The pyramid was not only the king's tomb; it was also an important symbol of royal power. It could be seen from miles away, a visible reminder of the glory and might of the ruler who was a living god on earth.
- [Pyramid-Geometry – Video](#)
- [How-Pyramids-Were-Built - Video](#)

Art and Writing

- Wall paintings and statues of gods and kings in temples served a strictly spiritual purpose
- Mural scenes and sculptured figures found in the tombs were supposed to assist the journey of the deceased into the afterworld

Art and Writing

- Hieroglyphics – “priest carvings” or “sacred writings”
- [Hieroglyphics - Video](#)
 - Depicted objects and had sacred value
 - Later simplified into two scripts for writing purposes
 - Never developed into an alphabet
 - Initially carved in stone
 - Scripts written on papyrus
 - Paper made from reeds that grew along the Nile
 - [Papyrus-The-Invention-of-Paper - Video](#)

Disorder and a New Order: The New Kingdom

- Hyksos invaded on horse-drawn chariots and defeated Egyptian soldiers who fought from donkey carts
- Egyptians learned to use bronze for making tools and weapons, mastered the military skills of the Hyksos, especially the use of horse-drawn chariots

The Egyptian Empire

- Egyptians drove out the Hyksos
- Built an empire that became the most powerful state in the Middle East

The Egyptian Empire

- Queen Hatshepsut
 - Female pharaoh in her own right
 - Temple at Deir el Bahri
 - Military expeditions
 - Encouraged mining
 - Fostered agriculture
 - Trading expeditions up the Nile
 - Clothed and bearded like a king
 - “His Majesty”
 - [Hatshepsut-The-Queen-Who-Became-King - Video](#)
- Thutmose III
 - Hatshepsut's nephew; succeeded her
 - Occupied Palestine and Syria and moved westward into Libya
 - [The-Overseer-Senemut-and-Hatshepsut-s-Stepson-Thutmose-III - Video](#)

Akhenaten and Religious Change

- [Pharaoh-Akhenaten-and-his-Religious-Revolution - Video](#)
- Amenhotep IV introduced the worship of Aten and pursued his worship with great enthusiasm
- Aten
 - god of the sun disk; chief god
- Akhenaten
 - “servant of Aten”

Akhenaten and Religious Change

- Lessen the power of Amon-Re
- Replaced capital of Thebes with Akhetaten; “horizon of the Aten”
- Attempts failed
 - Too much to ask Egyptians to give up their traditional ways
 - Priests at Thebes were unalterably opposed to the changes, which had diminished their influence and power
 - Akhenaten’s preoccupation with religion caused him to ignore foreign affairs; lost Syria and Palestine

Akhenaten and Religious Change

- Tutankhamun – the boy-pharaoh
 - Returned government to Thebes and restored the old gods
 - [Religious-Revival - Video](#)

Decline of the Egyptian Empire

- Ramses II
 - Regained Palestine, but could not reestablish borders of old empire
 - [Ramses-From-Military-Leader-to-Tomb-Builder - Video](#)
- “Sea Peoples”
 - Destroyed Egyptian power in Palestine
- Egypt will be dominated by the Libyans, Nubians, Persians, and Macedonians under Alexander the Great
- Egypt becomes a province of the Roman Empire

Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Family and Marriage

- Optimistic attitude toward life
- Married young and started families
 - Monogamy
- Husband could keep additional wives if first wife was childless
- Pharaoh
 - Harem; multiple wives
 - Queen was “great wife”; higher status than other wives

Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Family and Marriage

- Husband was master of house
- Wives very much respected and in charge of household and education of children
- Women's property and inheritance remained in their hands even in marriage

Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Family and Marriage

- Marriages were arranged
 - Family and property
 - Chief purpose was having children, especially sons
- Marriages could end in divorce
 - Compensation for the wife
- Adultery strictly prohibited
 - Woman caught in adulterous relationship could have her nose chopped off or be burned at the stake

Works Cited

- Duiker, William J., and Jackson J. Spielvogel. *World History: to 1500*. 6th ed. Australia: Wadsworth Cengage, 2009. Print.