

CLASS NOTES FOR MR. MOORE'S CLASS

Gift of the Nile

- 4160 miles: longest river in the world - flows north to the Mediterranean.
- Source of drinking water, fish, transportation, armies, and products.
- Center of a 10-mile wide strip of fertile land surrounded by desert.
- Annual flooding deposited a layer of rich soil (silt).
- Floods were predicable, but occasionally caused destruction or failed to bring enough water.
- To control floods and store water for the dry season, dikes, reservoirs, and irrigation canals were constructed.
- It was the breadbasket of the Mediterranean - wheat and flax.

- Upper Egypt
 - In the south, (higher elevation), to within 100 miles of the Mediterranean.

- Lower Egypt
 - In the north, (lower elevation), delta region.

- Natural Barriers led to geographic isolation.
 - Sinai Peninsula was the only crossing.
 - The desert protected against invasion, but limited settlement and the acquisition of new ideas.

Three Kingdoms of Ancient Egypt

- 3100 BCE - Menes united the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt.
- There were 30 dynasties (ruling families) between 2700 and 1100 BCE.
- Old Kingdom: 2700 - 2200 BCE : Pyramid Age
- Rulers acquired extensive power and took the title pharaoh
- Pharaohs were believed to be the son of Amon-Re

Accomplishments:

- hieroglyphics improved
- strong centralized government created
- engineering skills developed to construct pyramids

Collapse:

- crop failures and cost of building pyramids exhausted treasury
- power struggles, civil wars, and peasant revolts

Middle Kingdom: 2050 - 1800 BCE : Turbulent Age

- more interest in the common people
- lower classes gained the right to mummification

Accomplishments:

- drainage project in the delta created 1000's of acres of arable land
- canal built to connect the Nile to the Red Sea
- huge temples built at Luxor and Karnak, near Thebes the new capital
- borders expanded
- increased trade contributed to a flourishing in the arts and literature

Collapse:

- Nile flooding was not regular
- weak pharaohs, corruption, rebellions, and civil wars in the provinces
- 1700 BCE - Hyksos with horse-drawn war chariots occupied the delta

New Kingdom : 1550 - 1100 BCE : Empire Age

Accomplishments

- empire at peak of power, stretching from Kush (Ethiopia) to the Euphrates
- tribute from the new territories and taxes on trade filled the treasury
- Great rulers : Queen Hatshepsut, Akhenaton, Ramses II

Collapse:

- civil wars left Egypt weak and open to invasion

Egyptian Religion

Gods controlled the forces of nature and had the power of life and death.

Amon-Re - the sun god and chief god

- Pharaohs claimed to be his son and only they could conduct certain ceremonies in his honor.

Osiris - god of the dead and god of the Nile

- He judged souls by weighing their heart against a feather, the symbol of truth. Sinners were sent to the eater of the dead. Worthy souls entered the "Happy Field of Food."
- He also controlled the annual flood that made the land fertile.

Isis - goddess

- She taught women to grind corn, spin flax, weave cloth, and care for children.
- She also promised the faithful life after death and was prayed to for protection.

Each village had a special god.

Pyramids

- Tombs for eternity that stored mummified dead.
- Filled with treasures, furniture, and food needed for the afterlife.
- Imhotep designed the step pyramid at Sakkara around 2650 BCE. It is the oldest surviving stone building and a blueprint for later pyramids.
- During the Old Kingdom, three large pyramids were built at Giza.
- Built without the aid of iron tools or wheeled vehicles.
- The largest is 480 feet high with over 2 million blocks weighing over two tons apiece.
- Used winding ramps of dirt and brick to haul sleds loaded with limestone blocks.
- Up to 100,000 laborers were fed, clothed, and housed.
- Most pharaohs were buried in the Valley of the Kings.

Mummification - bodies were preserved as a home for the soul.

- internal organs removed and placed in canopic jars
- brain extracted through the nose
- body cavity filled with spices
- corpse placed in natron (salt) solution for 70 days to dry out
- later wrapped in linen bandages

Egyptian Culture and Accomplishments

Social structure resembled a pyramid

- pharaoh
- priests and priestesses who served gods and goddesses, conducted daily sacrifices to please the gods, cast fertility spells, recited prayers to help the souls of the dead reach the afterlife
- Nobles: governors of provinces, court officials, tax collectors
- Middle class: merchants, scribes, doctors, artisans, and skilled workers
- Peasant farmers: worked the land and paid half of each harvest in taxes; were often required to do manual labor - building palaces and temples, digging canals, or serving in the army.
- Slaves (most were prisoners of war) - most did the same manual labor as the peasants and lived a hard existence; some lived as servants and led a very comfortable life and occasionally gained their freedom; some achieved high positions in the palace or in government.

In Old Kingdom, status was hereditary.

Women

- They had higher status than in many other ancient societies.
- They could enter business deals, buy and sell goods, testify in court, and obtain divorce.
- Property was inherited through the female line.
- They had different occupations than men, but were not confined to the home.
- Few were literate. They could not be scribes or hold government jobs.
- Valued role as wife or mother yet referred to as property of husband, who was asked to treat kindly.
- Queen had a privileged position as the wife of a god, and she often ruled jointly with her husband.

Education

- Schools were first established to train priests.
- Students learned reading, writing, math, religious ceremonies and rituals.
- Later, a general education was provided to wealthy males.
- Students learned by dictation on scraps of broken pottery and papyrus for advanced students.
- Strict discipline.
- Scribes performed an important function as record keepers of taxes and expenses, chronicled the heroic deeds of pharaohs, and noted the events of daily life : birth, death, and marriage. It was a vehicle for upward mobility.
- Centers for higher learning were established, such as Heliopolis where astronomy was taught.

Accomplishments

- Scribes also learned mathematics, medicine, engineering, and astronomy.
- Mathematics - practical geometry developed to redraw boundaries after annual floods; measure area of squares and circles; figured volume of cylinders and spheres; calculated the exact size of blocks to be used in pyramids.
- Engineering - pyramids, temples, irrigation systems. Invented a stone-cutting technique for cutting obelisks from a single rock.
- Astronomy - predicted Nile floods and eclipses; mapped constellations; charted movement of the planets; developed 365-day calendar with 12 months of three 10-day weeks and last month had 5 extra days. This calendar was modified by the Greeks and Romans and became the basis of our modern calendar. They had three seasons: Nile flood, planting, and harvest.
- Medicine - most renowned doctors in the ancient world; anatomy learned from mummification; became skilled at observing symptoms, diagnosing illness, and finding cures; performed surgical operations; set bones; treated spinal injuries; prescribed medicines; prescriptions and treatments were recorded on papyrus. The Greeks and Romans learned from the Egyptians.
- Literature - hymns and prayers to the gods, proverbs, love poems, battle victories, practical advice, folk tales
- Painting and Sculpture - statues, wall paintings, carvings. Many images were of humans with animal heads.