

ANCIENT EGYPT - ABSTRACT

Geography

The ancient Egyptians thought of Egypt as being divided into two types of land, the 'black land' and the 'red land'.



The 'black land' was the fertile land on the banks of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians used this land for growing their crops. This was the only land in ancient Egypt that could be farmed because a layer of rich, black silt was deposited there every year after the Nile flooded.



The 'red land' was the barren desert that protected Egypt on two sides. These deserts separated ancient Egypt from neighboring countries and invading armies. They also provided the ancient Egyptians with a source for precious metals and semi-precious stones.

Egyptian Life

Daily life in ancient Egypt revolved around the Nile and the fertile land along its banks. The yearly flooding of the Nile enriched the soil and brought good harvests and wealth to the land.



The people of ancient Egypt built mud brick homes in villages and in the country. They grew some of their own food and traded in the villages for the food and goods they could not produce.

Most ancient Egyptians worked as field hands, farmers, craftsmen and scribes. A small group of people were nobles. Together, these different groups of people made up the population of ancient Egypt



The Gods and Goddesses

The ancient Egyptians believed in many different Gods and Goddesses. Each one with their own role to play in maintaining peace and harmony across the land.



Some Gods and Goddesses took part in creation, some brought the flood every year, some offered protection, and some took care of people after they died. Others were either local Gods who represented towns, or minor Gods who represented plants or animals.

The ancient Egyptians believed that it was important to recognize and worship these Gods and Goddesses so that life continued smoothly.



Pharaoh: Lord of the Two Lands



The most powerful person in ancient Egypt was the pharaoh. The pharaoh was the political and religious leader of the Egyptian people, holding the titles: 'Lord of the Two Lands' and 'High Priest of Every Temple'.

As 'Lord of the Two Lands' the pharaoh was the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt. He owned all of the land, made laws, collected taxes, and defended Egypt against foreigners.

As 'High Priest of Every Temple', the pharaoh represented the gods on Earth. He performed rituals and built temples to honour the Gods.



Many pharaohs went to war when their land was threatened or when they wanted to control foreign lands. If the pharaoh won the battle, the conquered people had to recognize the Egyptian pharaoh as their ruler and offer him the finest and most valuable goods from their land.



Temples

The ancient Egyptians believed that temples were the homes of the Gods and Goddesses. Every temple was dedicated to a God or Goddess and he or she was worshipped there by the temple priests and the pharaoh.



Temple of Luxor, Egypt

The large temple buildings were made of stone so that they would last forever. Their walls were covered with scenes that were carved onto the stone then brightly painted. These scenes showed the pharaoh fighting in battles and performing rituals with the Gods and Goddesses.

Pyramids

The ancient Egyptians built pyramids as tombs for the pharaohs and their queens. The pharaohs were buried in pyramids of many different shapes and sizes from before the beginning of the Old Kingdom to the end of the Middle Kingdom.



There are about eighty pyramids known today from ancient Egypt. The three largest and best-preserved of these were built at Giza at the beginning of the Old

Kingdom. The most well-known of these pyramids was built for the pharaoh Khufu. It is known as the 'Great Pyramid'.

Mummification

The earliest ancient Egyptians buried their dead in small pits in the desert. The heat and dryness of the sand dehydrated the bodies quickly, creating lifelike and natural 'mummies'.



Later, the ancient Egyptians began burying their dead in coffins to protect them from wild animals in the desert. However, they realized that bodies placed in coffins decayed when they were not exposed to the hot, dry sand of the desert.

Over many centuries, the ancient Egyptians developed a method of preserving bodies so they would remain lifelike. The process included embalming the bodies and wrapping them in strips of linen. Today we call this process mummification

Trades

Craftsmen in ancient Egypt were usually trained and skilled laborers. They were often well-respected in the community and had a comfortable lifestyle. Yet every craftsman's lifestyle and social standing depended on the quality of his skills and experience. Thus, some craftsmen had more difficult lives than others.



Most craftsmen worked in workshops with other craftsmen. Objects for temples or the pharaoh were made in temple workshops or palace workshops. Objects for ordinary people were made by local craftsmen in small workshops.

Writing

The ancient Egyptians believed that it was important to record and communicate information about religion and government. Thus, they invented written scripts that could be used to record this information.

The most famous of all ancient Egyptian scripts is hieroglyphic. However, throughout three thousand years of ancient Egyptian civilization, at least three other scripts were used for different purposes. Using these scripts, scribes were able to preserve the beliefs, history and ideas of ancient Egypt in temple and tomb walls and on papyrus scrolls. One of the keys to unlocking the secrets of ancient Egyptian writing was the 'Rosetta Stone'.