

The New Kingdom

Egypt: The New Kingdom

I was always fascinated with the Egyptians and their way of life. The way they utilized the water, the land and the tools still amaze me to this day. The art was something that would astound you. And the Pyramids and temples are breathtaking wonders. The New Kingdom is one of the most interesting periods of the Egyptian Empire. The New kingdom was to me the most glorious period of the Egyptian periods.

The Egyptians knew how to utilize the water and make dams to irrigate their crops and bathe during the first Egyptian civilization. "The Egyptians were accomplished farmers. They knew the Nile would flood each year and bring abundant grain." During the 18th dynasty the Egyptians improved on farming and art by assimilating some of the culture and artistic knowledge of the people that they conquered (I will talk about the people that they conquered later on in this report). In doing this it made them one of the greatest farmers there were. The Egyptian art and architectures during the New Kingdom still leaves people in awe to this day. Cyril Aldred stated " The New Kingdom seems the most golden of all the epochs of Egyptian history, perhaps because so much of its wealth remains." Although there were no pyramids built at this time, there were tombs and temples built. The Pyramids were also restored during this magnificent period by kings and Queens to come in the 18th dynasty and on into the Roman period. The pyramids are being kept up to this day. Scientist and archaeologists are trying to figure out just how the pyramids were built.

The tomb artifacts, and the tomb paintings are like a doorway to ancient Egypt. From the artifacts in the tombs, archaeologists know that men and women wore jewelry such as earrings and necklaces. In their jewelry they put amethyst, turquoise, and onyx in with copper and gold. From the paintings you would learn that they made boats, believed in different Gods and religion. The Sphinx also has archaeologists bewildered on how an ancient civilization could build one of the seven wonders of the world with the tools of their day. The Sphinx's dimensions are: the paws; 50 feet long (15m), The Head; 30 feet long (10m) 14 meters wide (4m), The Entire Body: 150 feet (45m).

"To keep the monument within it's past and present shape, the Ancient Egyptians from the Old Kingdom into the new, and even in the time of the modern Twentieth century, have added to the monument to maintain it structurally."

"The ancient Egyptians interpreted every occurrence in terms of relationship between natural and supernatural forces." The flooding of the Nile river, the daily cycle of the sun are some of these natural forces. The Egyptians believed that the sun god Re would be reborn every day.

Egypt was divided into Lower Egypt (north) and Upper Egypt (south). Early in the history of Egypt they were unified. This unification would not last but it would happen again in the 18th dynasty under the rule of Ahmose (Ahmosis). Ahmose ruled from 1570 -1546 B.C. He was the first ruler and was said to be the founder of the New Kingdom. Ahmose drove the Hyksos across the Red Sea avenging a defeat that they had suffered more than a century ago. This unification began the expansion and power of the New Kingdom. "During the New Kingdom, Egypt reached the peak of its power, wealth, and territory. The government was reorganized into a military state with an administration centralized in the hands of the pharaoh and his chief minister." Thutmose I (3456 - 3443) pursued the Hyksos through Canaan and into Syria. He also expanded Egypt's empire into Nubia. Thutmose I constructed the first tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

Thutmose III ruled from 1490-1436 B.C. and he led profound campaigns against the Palestine's, Syria, and the Northern Euphrates area in the Mesopotamia. They conquered these people and their farmers and artisans and assimilated their culture as Egypt's own. Egypt expanded by bringing their conquered enemy into the Egyptian empire. Thutmose III established an intricate system of diplomacy,

alliances, and treaties. Pharaohs that succeeded him often engaged in warfare with other nations. The Hittites and the Hurrians were two of the enemies that Egypt would have to become allies with. Thutmose III was also credited for making peace with the Hurrians. Two Hurrian kings married their daughters to the two Egyptian kings Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III, thereby insuring peace between the two nations.

Hatshepsut was the queen of Egypt during the 18th dynasty. She ruled from ca. 1503 to 1480 B.C. "In contrast to the warlike temper of her dynasty, she devoted herself to administration and the encouragement of commerce. In the summer of 1493 B.C. , she sent a fleet of five ships with thirty rowers each from Kosseir, on the Red Sea, to the Land of Punt, near present-day Somalia. It was primarily a trading expedition, for Punt, or God's land, produced myrrh, frankincense, and fragrant ointments that the Egyptians used for religious purposes and cosmetics." She was the daughter of Thutmose I. She married Thutmose II. Hatshepsut built the temple at Deir Al- Bahri.

Expansion continued under the reign of Amenophis II and Thutmose IV. Amenophis III was the next king and under his rule was built some of the greatest Pharaonic structures. The Temple of Luxor is one of his greatest tributes.

Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV, 1364-1347 B.C.) ruled towards the end of the 18th dynasty. He ruled for a short time but while he was ruler, he changed Egypt forever. He believed in one god, Ra, at this time this was unheard of. He had his god's symbol replace that of all the other gods. Akhenaten's religious ideas did not survive his death. His ideas were abandoned in part because of the economic collapse that ensued at the end of his reign. To restore the morale of the nation, Akhenaten's successor, Tutankhamen, cleaned and repaired temples. New images were made, priests appointed, and endowments restored. Akhenaten's new city was abandoned to the desert sands. This was done to appease the gods. Tutankhamen ruled for 16 years. After his father's death monotheism died out but it would take two kings after the young ruler for the beliefs to be eradicated.

The 19th dynasty experienced rulers such as Seti I and Ramses The Great. Just as Akhenaten lost territories, Seti I recaptured these territories. Seti I began the construction of a temple at Abydos and it was completed by his son, Ramses II also known as Ramses The Great. Ramses II was the co-ruler of Egypt during his father's reign. He also constructed structures like the Ramesseum in Thebes and the sun temples of Abu Simbel.

Merneptah was the next successor and he spent most of his rule forcing back invaders from Libya and the Mediterranean.

The Last king of the 19th dynasty was Seti II. He defended the Egyptian empire from Libya and the Mediterranean foes also. The Last dynasty of the New Kingdom was the 20th Dynasty. Ramses III was also occupied with defending the Egyptian empire from invasion.

"His successors, who were all named Ramses, presided over the decline of their empire until Ramses XI withdrew from active control over his kingdom, delegating authority over Upper Egypt to his High Priest Amun Herihor and Lower Egypt to his minister Smendes. They were to be the last rulers of the New Kingdom."

This was not the end of the Egyptians but it was to lead to the demise of the Egyptian empire. Through their Art and sculptures they will always be remembered . Their fantastic tombs and other architecture will always be looked upon as a wonder in itself. Living in the ancient times of the Egyptians and others like them seems to have been very war-like. To have survived back then you would have to have been very powerful and resourceful.

I will always be fascinated with the accomplishments of this ancient civilization. I just named some of their achievements and kings. How could an empire this powerful and civilized befall such a great demise as they did. That question would lead us into Third intermediate period, which would take much more time to write about. But you can see that the Egyptians were a glorious people.

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