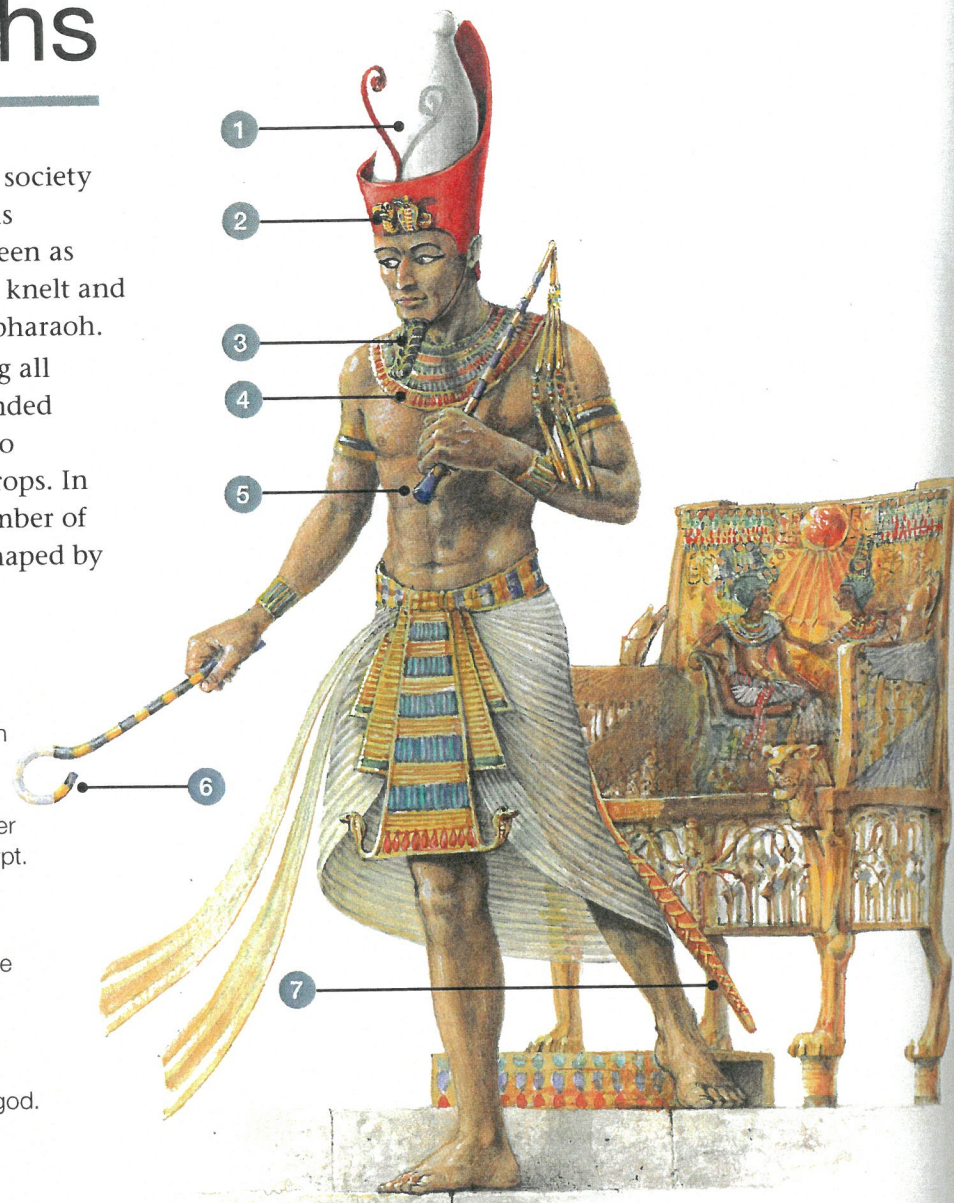


# 8.5 Pharaohs

The pharaoh was the head of Egyptian society and was almost always a man. Pharaohs were regarded as god-kings, and were seen as descendants of Ra, the sun god. People knelt and kissed the ground when they met the pharaoh.

Pharaohs were very wealthy, owning all the land and its resources. They demanded heavy taxes, which were usually paid to them in the form of grain and other crops. In addition to power, pharaohs had a number of responsibilities, some of which were shaped by law, others by religion (see Source 2).

- 1 A crown symbolised the pharaoh's position as chief ruler. The crown shown here was the official crown; its design is a combination of the white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt that merged to form a united Egypt. Pharaohs also wore a range of other headgear depending on their duties.
- 2 The *uraeus* (gold headpiece shaped like an upright cobra) symbolised magical powers and a readiness to strike.
- 3 A false beard made from goat's hair symbolised the pharaoh's status as a god.
- 4 The heavy jewelled collar symbolised great wealth.
- 5 The flail (whip) symbolised total authority.
- 6 The crook symbolised the pharaoh's role as a shepherd of the people.
- 7 An animal tail (usually from a bull) symbolised strength and fertility.



Source 1 An artist's impression of a pharaoh with his symbols of power

Earthly responsibilities (shaped by the law)	Divine responsibilities (shaped by religion)
<p>The pharaoh was responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>directing the government</li><li>commanding the army and leading them into battle</li><li>protecting the people and keeping peace and order</li><li>making all laws, and sometimes making decisions in the courts</li><li>managing building, mining, trade and irrigation.</li></ul>	<p>The pharaoh was responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>acting as chief priest</li><li>keeping the gods happy so the Nile flooded every year and harvests were plentiful</li><li>choosing priests</li><li>overseeing religious ceremonies and festivals</li><li>building temples to honour the gods</li><li>performing religious duties.</li></ul>

Source 2 Responsibilities of the pharaoh as god-king

## The rulers of ancient Egypt

By about 3300 BCE, the Nile settlements were grouped into two kingdoms: Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. These united in about 3100 BCE. For the next 2800 years, the unified kingdom of Egypt was ruled by pharaohs, thus creating the world's first national government.

### Dynasties

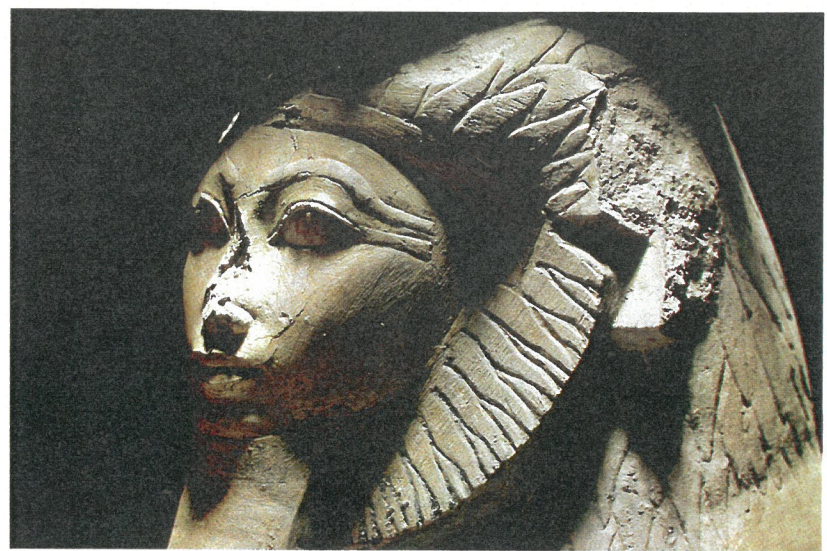
The laws and traditions of ancient Egypt meant that a pharaoh passed on his power as ruler to the son (usually the eldest) of his main wife – in the ancient world, it was common for men to have more than one wife. If the main wife did not have a son, the son of a less important wife would become the new ruler, or heir. The period of time where members of the same family ruled was known as a **dynasty**. Sometimes, someone from outside the family seized power and became pharaoh. This meant the start of a new dynasty.

In 332 BCE, Egypt was conquered by the king of Macedon, known as Alexander the Great. He started what was to be the last dynasty in ancient Egypt, known as the Ptolemaic Dynasty. This dynasty lasted until 30 BCE when its last ruler, Cleopatra, committed suicide. After that, Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

### Hatshepsut – 18th-dynasty ruler

Hatshepsut was one of the only female pharaohs. She ruled between about 1473 and 1458 BCE. When she became pharaoh, she wore a false beard, men's clothing and a bull's tail, and changed her name to its male form. She was very ambitious. In her time as pharaoh, she ordered the construction of many buildings, paid for many trading expeditions, and rebuilt trade routes that had been damaged by former invaders.

## 8B What shaped the roles of key groups in ancient Egypt?



Source 3 An ancient stone carving of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut

## Check your learning 8.5

### Remember and understand

- 1 Give two examples each of the pharaoh's divine role and earthly role.
- 2 What was a dynasty, and why did a dynasty usually change?
- 3 How did the Ptolemaic Dynasty end?
- 4 Look carefully at Source 1. Copy and complete this table in your notebook, adding as many entries as you can.

Item worn or carried by the pharaoh	What it symbolised
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### Apply and analyse

- 5 Pharaohs had religious, legal and political responsibilities. Explain how this would have influenced the way Egyptians behaved towards their ruler.
- 6 Think about some of the items the following people wear or carry to reflect their social position and/or role. For each item, indicate what it symbolises:
  - the Queen of England
  - the captain of the Australian cricket team
  - an Australian High Court judge
  - the principal of your school.

### Evaluate and create

- 7 a How and why did Hatshepsut adjust her appearance to suit her role as pharaoh?
- b Do you think people today feel pressured to change their appearance and behaviour when they move into a public leadership role? Discuss with a partner. Give examples if possible.