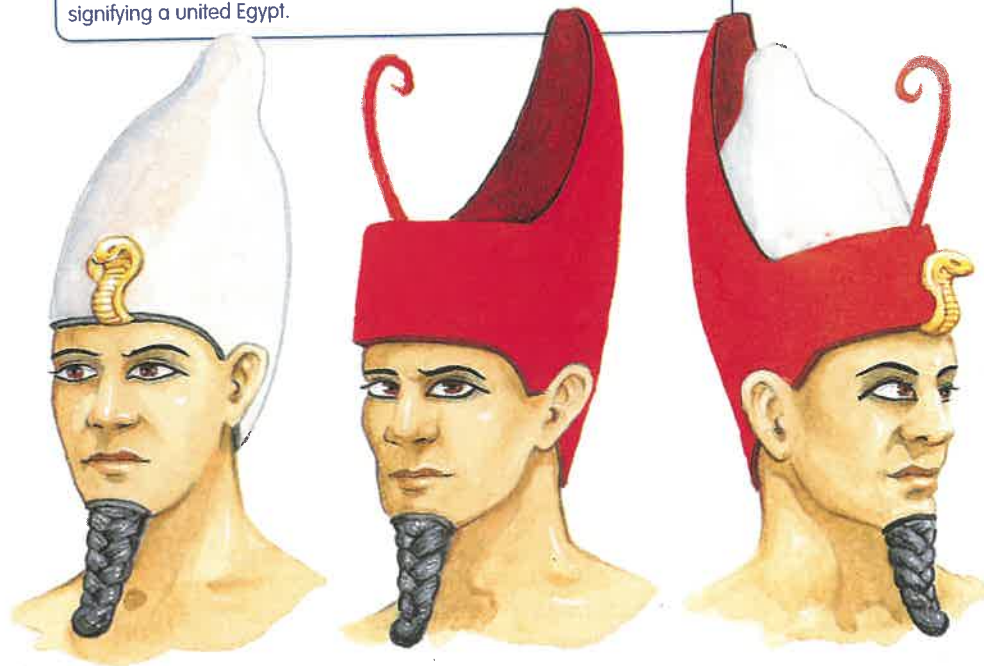


5.4 Pharaoh rules!

The wealthiest, most powerful person in ancient Egypt was the pharaoh. He had the support of an army and a host of priests, scribes and officials, but the pharaoh alone decided how Egypt would be ruled. The people saw him as a god.

Source 1 The king of Upper Egypt wore a white crown, and the king of Lower Egypt, a red crown. Narmer's crown was said to be a mix of both, signifying a united Egypt.



Two into one

Ancient Egypt was once divided into two kingdoms — Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Each was ruled by a king. The king of Lower Egypt had his capital in Buto, and the king of Upper Egypt, in Hierakonpolis. Around 3100 BCE it is thought that these kingdoms were united under King Narmer. He set up his capital in Memphis.

Rise of the pharaohs

During the next 2700 years, Egypt's history was divided into a number of distinct periods. Three of the more important of these — times when Egypt was united and powerful, with a rich culture — are called the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom.

During these three kingdoms, Egypt's rulers (eventually called pharaohs) came from some 30 dynasties. When a pharaoh died, his eldest son became the next pharaoh, unless a man from another family seized control and started a new dynasty. Sometimes the pharaoh's wife or eldest daughter ruled for a short time if the eldest son was very young.

Heavenly powers

The ancient Egyptians saw their pharaoh as a man with supernatural powers. He was believed to descend from the sun god, Ra, and to have the sky god, Horus, living within him.

Egyptians believed that the laws the pharaoh made applied to the whole universe. They believed he



Source 2 The power of the pharaoh was evident in his appearance. For example, he often wore a false beard and a bull's tail (both symbols of pharaonic power), and carried a flail (the symbol of Osiris) and a shepherd's crook (the hieroglyphic sign for a crook meant 'king').

made the Nile River flood and helped the land to produce good harvests. As a mark of respect, they did not call him by his name. Rather, they used the word 'pharaoh', which in ancient Egyptian meant 'great house'.

Source 3 A gold emblem showing Pharaoh Tutankhamen returning from war. This was just one of many priceless objects found in his tomb.



Earthly responsibilities

The people of ancient Egypt expected their pharaoh to protect and feed them, and to maintain a fair justice system and a peaceful society. He drew up the laws of the land and controlled the government and the army. He was also in charge of temple building, tax collection, mines, irrigation, trade, important religious ceremonies, and the appointment of officials and priests. His huge wealth came from the labour and produce that the people provided as their taxes. Thousands of ordinary people worked the huge farms he owned or helped in the running of his palace. There they worked as cooks, cleaners, dancers, stable workers, craftsmen, weavers and wig-makers.

Did you know?

Relief carvings show that after battles Egyptian soldiers cut a hand off the body of each dead enemy. These were then heaped into piles, counted by scribes and included in the records to glorify the pharaoh's victories.

Activities

EXPLANATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 1 Explain the significance of the new crown believed to have been introduced by King Narmer.

CHRONOLOGY, TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- 2 Fill in the gaps in this sentence: In Egypt's long history, the three periods called kingdoms were times when Egypt was _____ and _____ with a _____ culture.
- 3 During which years did each of the following periods exist: the Old Kingdom; the Middle Kingdom; the New Kingdom? (See the timeline in the chapter opener.)
- 4 Use the same timeline to explain how the other periods were different from the three periods called kingdoms.
- 5 Either by hand or using computer software, create a mind map to outline the powers and responsibilities of a pharaoh.
- 6 Imagine that the position of pharaoh has been revived in the modern world. Create a job advertisement for the position with details of qualities required and a description of responsibilities and rewards.

ANALYSIS AND USE OF SOURCES

- 7 Explain what conclusions you can draw from **Sources 1, 2 and 3** about the way that pharaohs wanted to be seen and thought of by their people.

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

- 8 Use the internet and your library to find pictures of some of the treasures of the pharaohs. The Egyptian Museum holds most of the treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamen. Copy two pictures and present them to the class as a data-show with an explanation of their importance.