

Chapter 3: Early Africa and Egypt: 3-3 The Pharaoh: Egypt's God-King
Book Title: World Civilizations
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3-3 The Pharaoh: Egypt's God-King

As was true of most early civilizations, the Egyptians' religious beliefs reflected their environment to a considerable degree, and the fully developed religion had an enormous impact on the nature of their government.

The period from 3100 to about 1000 B.C.E. was Egypt's foundation period. During these centuries, the land was ruled by an unbroken line of native Egyptian divine kings who apparently faced no serious threats either inside or outside their domain. It is important to recognize that the pharaoh was not *like* a god. Instead, he (or sometimes she) *was* a god—a god who chose to live on Earth among his favored people for a time. From the moment that his days-long coronation ceremony was completed, he was no longer a mortal man. He had become immortal, a reincarnation of the god of order, Horus. His was not an easy life: he was surrounded by constant protocol and ceremony to protect him from profane eyes and spiritual pollution. The pharaoh's will was law, and his wisdom made him all-knowing. What he desired was, by definition, correct and just. What he did was the will of the almighty gods, speaking through him as one of them. His regulations must be carried out without question. Otherwise, the gods might cease to smile on Egypt. His wife and family—especially his son who would succeed him—shared to some degree in this celestial glory, but only the reigning pharaoh was divine.

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