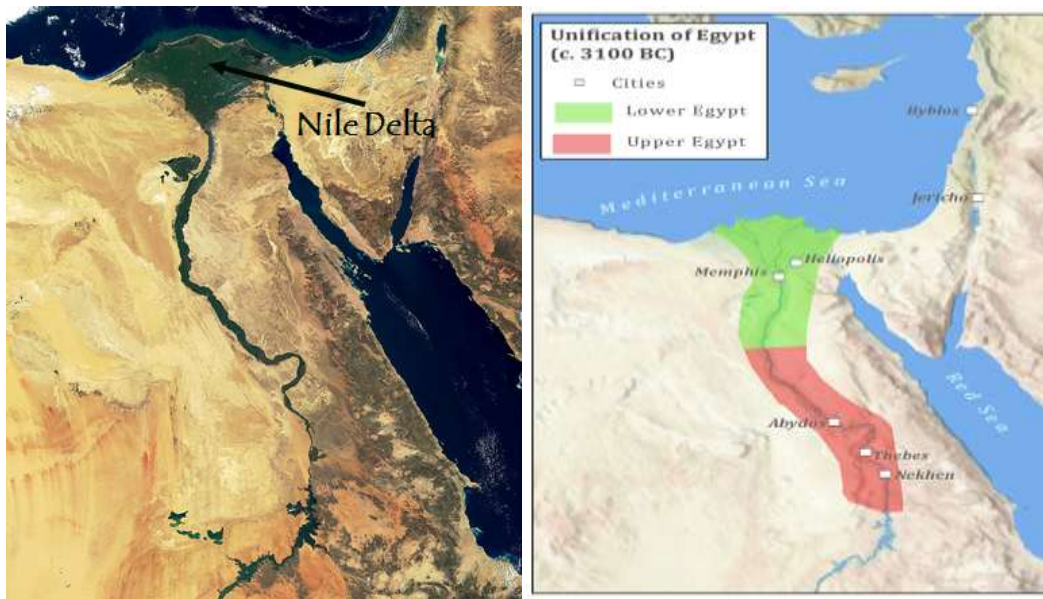


Ancient River Valley Civilizations

Egypt

Geography of Egypt

The first civilization in Africa developed along the **Nile River**, in a place called **Egypt**. These humans were at first nomadic, also known as hunter-gatherers. Over time, they developed better ways of doing things, and began to develop into one of the world's earliest civilizations. The Egyptians created a system of writing, permanent settlements and structures, forms of government, a society dependent on agriculture, and a division of labor. The Egyptians also developed customs such as formal religions and traditions in family structure, food, and clothing.



"Thread: Ancient Egypt." *Ancient Egypt*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014.

"Art History 2385 Knoblauch Flashcards Art History Up to Test 1 StudyBlue." *StudyBlue*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014.

The **Nile River** was the most important physical feature of the region. It originates in central Africa as the Blue Nile and White Nile and merges into the longest river in the world (at over 4,000 miles long). The Nile River flows from Upper Egypt in the south forming a **delta** in Lower Egypt to the north. A delta is a triangular shaped area of land made of soil deposited by a river.

Question: Why would a river flow north?

Question: So why then is Upper Egypt in the south, and Lower Egypt in the north?

Egypt is called “the Gift of the Nile.” It has earned this nickname because the Nile River gave life to the desert. Unlike the other river valleys, the Nile flooded on a predictable flood cycle. This determined the planting season for farmers. This flooding brought rich, nutrient-filled **silt**. Silt is fine sand or soil that is mixed with tiny rocks and carried by water. The silt from the Nile was black in color and was fertile (arable) for farming. The center for farming in Egypt was the delta, which accounted for two-thirds (2/3).

The Egyptians also spoke of the “Black Land” and the “Red Land.” The Black Land hugged the Nile River. The Red Land was the desert just beyond. The Red Land meant danger; the Black Land represented life. The Nile, to Egyptians, meant the difference between life and death.

The Nile River provided more than just silt for farming. It also provided fish, ducks, geese, and other animals. The Nile River could be used for trade with other civilizations and cultures.

Question: What other purpose might the Nile River serve for Egyptian civilization?



Irrigation became one way to solve the flooding problems. Irrigation is a method of using ditches, water wheel, canals, and shadufs to supply water to an area. Early farmers dug large water-holding areas called basins and then created man-made canals. By digging networks of ditches, farmers had a ready water supply along a way to control flood waters. Irrigation made farming very productive and made Egypt a land of abundance.

"ICID: Resources - Irrigation History." ICID: Resources - Irrigation History. 2012. Web. 16 June 2015.

Question: What other types of irrigation do you know of?



Question: What vocabulary word is shown in the picture above?



While the Nile River provided the Egyptians with life, the geography surrounding the river gave their civilization natural protection. To the north was the Mediterranean Sea. To the east was the Red Sea. Unless the invaders were great shipbuilders, these seas made it difficult to cross. To the east and west of the Nile was the largest desert in the world, the Sahara, made up of smaller deserts. Due to the harsh climate, the Sahara was extremely difficult to cross.

http://www.desicommments.com/wallpapers/desert/desert_14.jpg



Question: According to the map what resource was there an abundance of in ancient Egypt?

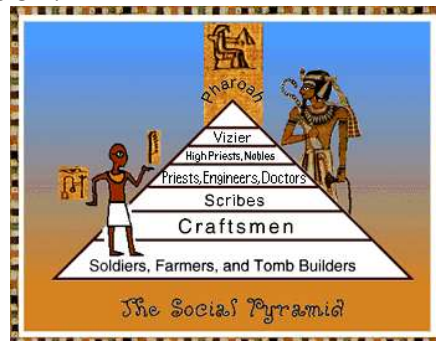
In Upper Egypt, **cataracts** along the Nile made it nearly impossible to sail or travel along. A cataract is a strong, steep rapid. In fact, due to these protections, Egyptians didn't feel the need to build wall around their cities.



"Ancient Egypt." WeiszSocialStudies6 -. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014.

Egyptian Government and Society

The Egyptians believed that the **pharaoh** was not just a ruler but also a living god. When good events happened in Egypt, the people were pleased with the pharaoh. However, when bad events occurred, such as disease or drought, the people blamed the pharaoh.



"Egyptian Social Hierarchy." Hierarchy. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014

Egyptian society was divided into a social hierarchy where certain occupations had different ranks and values.

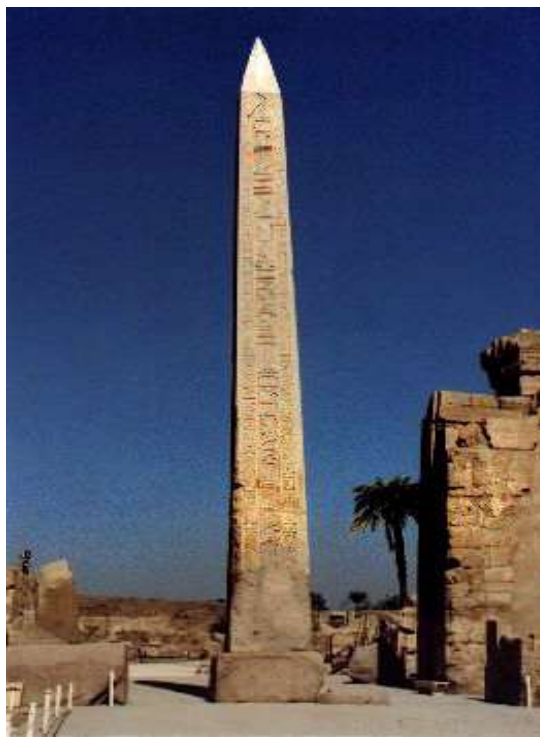
Question: Notice that the bottom of the social hierarchy pyramid is wider than the top. What do you think this says about the population of Egypt?

Egyptian Religion

Throughout history, religion has always played a role in the lives of humans. The same was true of Egyptian society. The Egyptians believed in many gods. The practice of worshipping many gods is **polytheism**. They believed these gods had enormous powers of controlling floods and harvests. These gods could bring illness, health, wealth, disease, life, or death. So pleasing these gods became very important, and it was the duty of each person to worship and serve them.

The Nile River played a part in Egyptian religious beliefs. Egyptians believed in an **afterlife**, life after death. Everything Egyptians did focused on the afterlife. Since the pharaoh was both ruler and god, extra care was taken to prepare his body and soul after he died. Egyptians preserved bodies through a method called **mummification**. Nobles and the pharaoh were mummified in a very detailed process. Average people were simply buried in the sand, letting the body dry out in the hot desert sun. **Pyramids** were built as a tomb for the pharaoh; the bricks to build these pyramids were carried down the Nile. All pyramids were built on the western side of the Nile, the side of the setting sun.

Egyptian Achievements



"Tuthmosis I Obelisk." *Tuthmosis I Obelisk*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014. Nunes, Glen. "How Did the Ancient Egyptians Construct the Pyramids of Giza?" HubPages. HubPages, 8 Oct. 2012. Web. 16 June 2015.

The Egyptians were inventors, architects, and engineers. They are most known for constructing the **pyramids**. Pyramids evolved over a period of time, reaching a peak with the Great Pyramids of Giza. Other examples of architecture include obelisks, temples, and sphinxes. An **obelisk** is a tall four-sided pillar that is pointed on the top. A **sphinx** is a statue of an imaginary creature with a body of a lion and a head of another animal or a human.

Question: Based on what you have read, what can you infer about the Egyptians and their engineering abilities?

Egyptians created a form of picture writing called **hieroglyphics**. It was often carved in stone or written on **papyrus**, a paper-like material. To make papyrus, fibers from the papyrus reed were laid at angles and pressed together. It was known for being tough and durable. It could be rolled into scrolls, making it portable and was ideal for keeping records.

Question: Papyrus is tough and durable. Why would this be important?