

Ancient Civilizations of Africa—Egypt

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Middle Kingdom was a period of stable government between periods of disorder.
2. The New Kingdom was the peak of Egyptian trade and military power, but its greatness did not last.
3. Work and daily life differed among Egypt's social classes.

Key Terms and Places

Middle Kingdom period of stability and order in ancient Egypt between about 2050 and 1750 BC

New Kingdom the height of Egypt's power and glory, between 1550 and 1050 BC

Kush kingdom south of Egypt

trade routes paths followed by traders

Section Summary

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

The Old Kingdom ended with the pharaohs in debt. Ambitious nobles serving in government positions managed to take power from the pharaohs and rule Egypt for nearly 160 years. Finally, a powerful pharaoh regained control of Egypt around 2050 BC and started a peaceful period of rule. This era was called the **Middle Kingdom** and lasted until Southwest Asian invaders conquered Lower Egypt around 1750 BC.

From where did the raiders who ended the Middle Kingdom come?

THE NEW KINGDOM

When an Egyptian named Ahmose (AHM-ohs) drove away the invaders and declared himself king of Egypt in 1550 BC, he ushered in Egypt's eighteenth dynasty and the start of the **New Kingdom**. Responding to invasions, Egypt took control of possible invasion routes by taking over areas such as Syria and **Kush**, and quickly became the leading military power in the region, with an empire extending from the Euphrates River in the northeast to Nubia in

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the south. These conquests also made Egypt rich, through gifts and vastly expanded **trade routes**. One ruler in particular, Queen Hatshepsut, was active in establishing new paths for traders.

Despite the strong leadership of Ramses the Great, a tide of invasions from Southwest Asia and from the west eventually reduced Egypt to violence and disorder.

Which direction would you go from Egypt to reach Nubia?

WORK AND DAILY LIFE

During the Middle and New Kingdoms, Egypt's population continued to grow and become more complex. Professional and skilled workers like scribes, artisans, artists, and architects were honored. These roles in society were usually passed on in families, with young boys learning a trade from their fathers.

For farmers and peasants, who made up the vast majority of the population, life never changed. In addition to hard work on the land, they were required to pay taxes and were subject to special labor duty at any time. Only slaves were beneath them in social status.

Most Egyptian families lived in their own homes. Boys were expected to marry young and start their own families. Women focused on the home, but many also had jobs outside the home. Egyptian women had the legal rights to own property, make contracts, and divorce their husbands.

Which type of workers likely designed the pyramids?

For farmers, did daily life in Egypt change much with the rise and fall of dynasties and kingdoms?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Design a “want ad” for a position held in ancient Egyptian society. Then write a letter to a potential employer explaining why you should be hired.