

# WORLD HISTORY-1

## MODULE II-BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATIONS



**TOPIC-LEGAL SYSTEM AND WRITING SYSTEMS-  
EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION**

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# EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION



- Egypt is called the ‘Gift of the Nile’.
- History of Egypt into 3 periods-The old kingdom, The middle kingdom and the new kingdom
- The old kingdom is also called the ‘Age of the Pyramids’
- During this period,Memphis, situated near modern Cairo, was the capital
- The Egyptian king was called Pharaoh. He had absolute powers
- Responsible for enacting laws, delivering justice and maintaining law and order
- The Egyptian law was based on a common sense view of right and wrong that emphasized on reaching agreements
- Local council of Elders known as ‘Kenbet’ in the new kingdom were responsible for ruling in court-cases involving small claims and minor disputes



- More serious cases like murder, major land transactions and tomb robbery were referred to the ‘Great Kenbet’, which was presided over by the Pharaoh himself
- The plaintiffs and the defendants were expected to represent themselves and were required to swear on oath that they had told the truth
- Punishments for minor crimes included either imposition of fines, beatings, facial mutilation or exile, depending on the severity of the offence.
- Serious crimes such as murder and tomb robbery were punished by execution, carried out by decapitation, drowning or impaling the criminal on stake

# WRITING SYSTEMS



- The Egyptians learned the idea of writing from the Sumerians before 3000 BC
- The Egyptian Script is known as ‘Hieroglyphic’ which means ‘sacred writing’
- It consisted of 24 signs,
- Later, the Egyptians started using symbols for ideas and total number of signs rose to about 500
- The writers, who constituted an important section of society, wrote with reed pens on the leaves of a plant called ‘Papyrus’ from which we get the word ‘Paper’
- Champollion (1790-1832), the great French decipherer, succeeded in deciphering the entire Egyptian alphabet



- Tradition of writing had evolved into ‘Tomb Autobiography’ such as ‘Harkhuf’ and ‘Weni’.
- The genre known as ‘Sebayt’(instructions) was developed to communicate teachings and guidance from famous nobles.
- The story, ‘Sinuhe’ written in Middle Egypt might be classic of the ancient Egyptian literature
- The ‘Instructions of Amenemope’ is considered a master-piece of near Eastern literature
- Towards the end of the New kingdom, vernacular language were employed to write popular pieces like the ‘Story of Wenamun’ and the Instruction of Any’

# CITY OF MEMPHIS



- Memphis, situated near modern Cairo was the capital of the old kingdom.
- The word Memphis is the Greek version of the Egyptian name, 'Mn-nfir' meaning 'the beautiful monument'.
- The city of Memphis was founded by in 3100 BCE
- During the old kingdom, it was the capital of the country as well as the primary residence of the king
- Memphis was also the principal place for the cult of the God, Ptah, who was believed to have been the creator God
- The principal necropolis associated with Memphis were Saqqara and Giza, the two great pyramids
- The city of Memphis had many temples, palaces and gardens
- It was the most populated city in the world during the ancient period continuously until 700 BCE with the invasions of the Hyksos and their rise to power around 1650 BCE



- Many monuments and statues were destroyed during the Hykso invasion
- It became the centre of education to the royal princes during the new kingdom
- According to an inscription found in Memphis, Akhnaton had built a temple of Aten in the city
- By 671 BCE Memphis was attacked by Assyrians
- The Assyrians sacked and ruined the city again in 664 BCE
- Later under the Persians, Memphis had regained its lost glory
- The Greeks occupied it in 332 CE and later by Arabs
- The city of Cairo was built by the dismantled stones of Memphis