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**Ancient Egypt**

**The Old Kingdom**

# Chapter 4, Section 2

**The Big Idea:** Egyptian government and religion were closely connected during the Old Kingdom.

# The Main Ideas:

1. In early Egyptian society, pharaohs ruled as gods and were at the top of the social hierarchy.
2. Religion shaped Egyptian life.
3. The pyramids of Egypt were built as tombs for the pharaohs.

## Vocabulary:

1. **Old Kingdom [p. 90]:** a period in Egyptian history that lasted from about 2700 B.C. to 2200 B.C.
2. **nobles [p. 91]:** people from rich and powerful families.
3. **afterlife [p. 92]:** life after death.
4. **ka [p. 93]:** Egyptian word for a person’s life force.
5. **mummies [p. 93]:** specially treated bodies wrapped in cloth.
6. **elite [p. 93]:** people of wealth and power.
7. **pyramids [p. 94]:** stone tombs with four triangle-shaped walls that met in a point on top.
8. **engineering [p. 94]:** the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes.

# Early Egyptian Society

## Rule by Pharaohs

* + 1. **Roles:** pharaohs served as both a king and god.
    2. **Status:** pharaohs had absolute power over the land and people. People would blame pharaoh if crops did not grow, trade was not profitable, or war arose.
    3. **Government:** pharaohs hired others, sometimes family members, to serve as government officials.

## The Social Structure

* + 1. **Population:** 2 million around 2200 B.C.
    2. **Hierarchy:** ruler: pharaoh / upper class: **nobles** (priests, government officials) / middle class: scribes and craftspeople / lower class: farmers, servants, and slaves [about 80% of population).

## Egypt and Its Neighbors

* + 1. **Sumer:** Mesopotamian designs found in Egyptian art
    2. **Nubia:** Egyptians traded gold ivory, slaves, and stone with Nubians
    3. **Punt:** area on the Red Sea with incense and myrrh / perfume and medicine
    4. **Syria (Phoenicia):** traded for wood

1. **Religion and Egyptian Life**
   1. **The Gods of Egypt**
      1. **System of religion:** polytheism (similar to Mesopotamians).
      2. **Temples:** influential places of worship; collected payments from government and worshippers.
      3. **Cities:** centers for worship of certain gods. Memphis: Ptah (creator of the world).
      4. **Gods:** sun (Re/Amon-Re), sky (Horus), earth (Geb) gods based in nature. Osiris: god of underworld; Isis: goddess of magic. Many mixed human and animal forms.

## Emphasis on the Afterlife

* + 1. **Afterlife** was a happy, ideal world where all people were young and healthy.
    2. **Ka:** a person’s life force. When a person died, the ka left the body and became a spirit linked to the body. It could not leave the burial site. Ka had same needs as the living so people filled tombs with objects like furniture, clothing, tools, jewelry, and weapons. Relatives would bring food and drink to the tombs.

## Burial Practices

* + 1. In order to extend a person’s ka, the body was preserved.
    2. If the body decayed, the spirit wouldn’t recognize it and the link between body and spirit would break. Ka would no longer receive what it needed to enjoy the afterlife.
    3. **Embalming**: complex process, took weeks, bodies were wrapped in linen cloth, placed in coffins, and preserved as **mummies**. Only royalty and **elite** could afford mummification. Peasants buried their dead in shallow graves and the desert climate naturally preserved the body.

## The Pyramids

* + 1. Great Pyramid of Khufu near Giza = the largest pyramids still standing today.
    2. Historians still do not know exactly how the pyramids were built: Egyptian **engineering**
    3. The bigger the pyramid, the greater the pharaoh. Pointing skyward, pyramids represented the link between life and earth and the afterlife. The happier the pharaoh in the afterlife, the happier the people would be in their afterlife.