



The History of Ancient Egypt

Duane R.

AFN 121, BMCC

Prof. Alapo

Fall 2021



Introduction

References for photos will be found in the reference page

- In class we learned about many African civilizations and their various contributions to society and history.
- In this presentation we will be focusing on one of the most well know civilizations ancient Egypt
- I chose ancient Egypt because not only was it one of the most well-known but also one of the biggest contributors to modern day society
- With this presentation I want to touch on various ways Egypt's knowledge vastly exceeded that of their peers

History

- Egypt was one of the longest standing societies as it lasted 30 centuries which began with its unification in 3100 BC
- Egypt had 3 main eras of rule the old kingdom, the middle kingdom, and lastly the new kingdom
- The old kingdom lasted from 2700 BC to 2200 BC, big contributions from the old kingdom are the Great pyramids and sphinx along with other great structures.

History continued

- The middle kingdom ruled from 2050 BC to 1800 BC and their major contributions were rights to common people along with an explosion of trade and contact with outside forces.
- Finally, the new kingdom ruled from 1570 BC to 1090 BC and their major contributions included bringing wealth, power, and prosperity to Egypt; it was known as the golden age of Egypt.
- This just gives a sense of how ridiculously long egypt was able to last as it is till this day one if not the longest standing civilization in the world.

Government

- To begin, the government of ancient Egypt was a theocratic monarchy meaning the kings otherwise known as pharaohs ruled based on a mandate from the gods.
- The government worked with little changes for centuries, this pattern being issued by the First Dynasty of Egypt (3150-2890 BCE).
- The King ruled with a second in command called a “vizier”, there were government officials, scribes, regional governors, mayors of the town, and a police force.
- Most of early Egypt's government was based on religion

Economy and Social classes

- Ancient Egypt had a very defined economical structure and social class
- The economy focused on trade and agriculture and used slave work
- Social class was basically determined at birth with people like the pharaoh being "chosen by god".
- Social classes determined many things from wealth and even whether you could have a tomb made for you
- This was until the middle kingdom where those of a lower class were given more rights and religious freedom

EGYPTIAN SOCIAL PYRAMID

This diagram shows how Egyptian society was shaped. Which groups formed the top two levels of the social pyramid? The bottom two levels?

Pharaoh

Government officials

Vizier Priest Noble

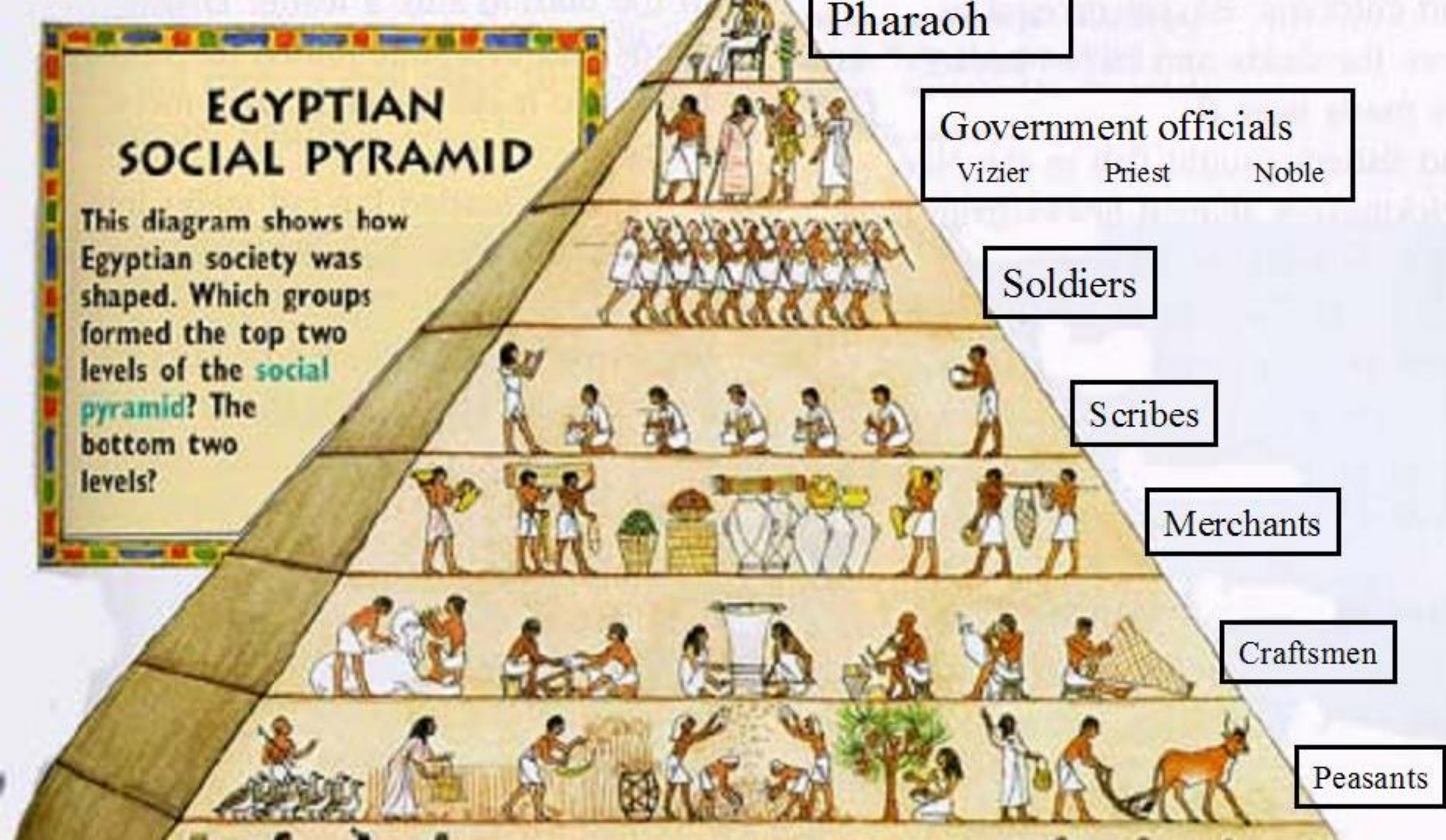
Soldiers

Scribes

Merchants

Craftsmen

Peasants



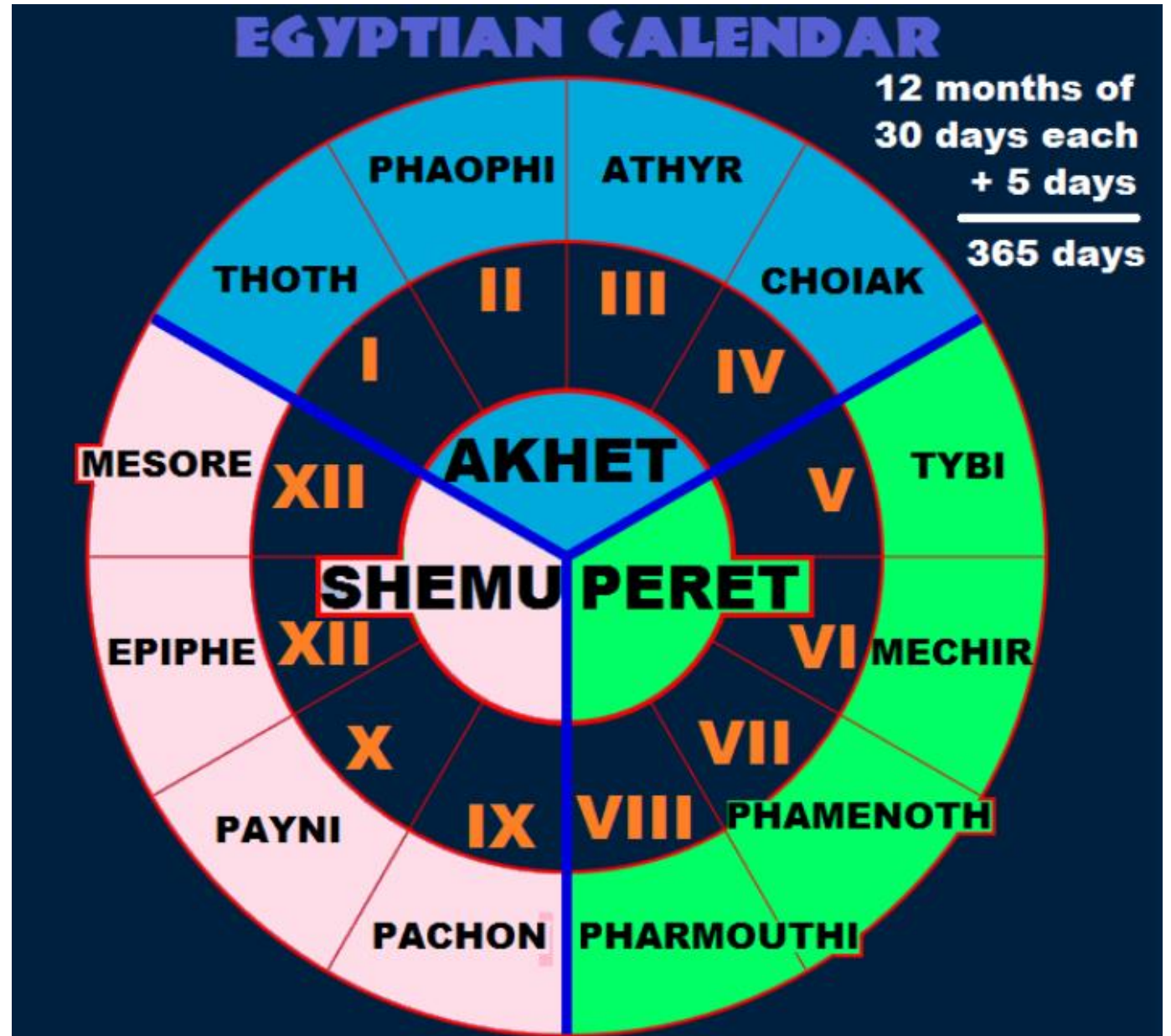
Major contributions

- The Egyptians were one of the greatest contributors to modern society having made contributions in every facet of life.
- The main area Egyptians contributed in was science as they made many of the first renditions of commonly used tools or ideas.
- To begin with their scientific contributions, I want to start with their astronomy. The Egyptians made the first 365-day calendar along with figuring out that there were multiple seasons

Major contributions: the calendar

- The Egyptians were the first to discover the 365-day calendar.
- The Egyptians did this because they wanted to figure out when the flooding of the Nile would take place.
- This resulted in them using astronomy to figure out that when a certain alignment of stars was seen which happened every 365 days there would be a flood of the Nile.
- They then divided this calendar into 3 seasons: 1 “inundation” or when the Nile over flooded; 2 the “going forth” when planting and farming season began due to the Nile receding; and lastly “deficiency” the time to harvest and when water levels were at their lowest.

This image displays the more modern calendar which added 5 days and was called the civil calendar.



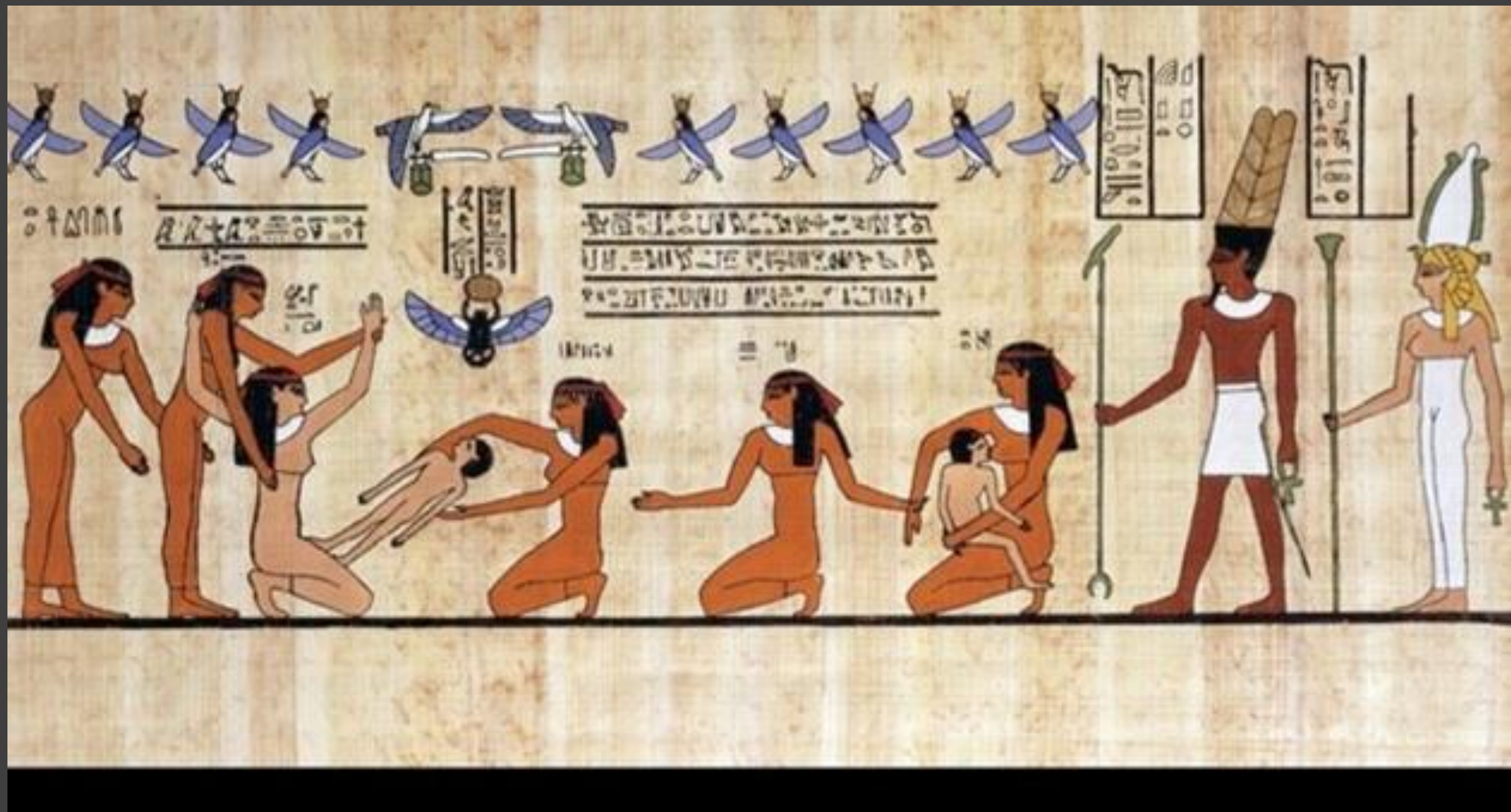


- The second calendar is a section of the hieroglyphic calendar at the Kom Ombo Temple displaying the transition from the twelfth month to the first without mentioning the 5 extra days added later

Major contributions: Human anatomy and medicine

- The Egyptians were one of the first civilizations to study human anatomy and use different medicines to help with sickness
- Egyptians believed that gods, demons, and spirits were the main reason behind sickness and diseases.
- At first most Egyptian doctors were priests who used a mixture of prayer and natural remedies.
- Since Egyptians had created a written language, they were able to record and develop ideas overtime. This led to the profession "doctor of medicine" being created.





Major contributions: Human anatomy and medicine continued

- We know a lot about how Egyptian medical science worked due to a scripture called Ebers Papyrus which is a medical papyrus containing medical knowledge and was over 110 pages.
- From documents like Eber Papyrus, we learned that the Egyptians had a very extensive knowledge of bone structure along with knowledge on how major organs like the heart, liver, and even the brain worked.
- The Egyptians also knew a decent amount about hygiene recommending to wash and cleanse yourself to prevent infection along with using toothpaste and promoting somewhat decent dental hygiene

Ebers Papyrus

On the right we see Ebers papyrus which is one of the oldest and most important medical papyri of ancient Egypt. It is currently being kept in the library of the university of Leipzig, in Germany



Major contributions: Architecture and mathematics

- The Egyptians are one of the first civilizations with a standardized measuring system which goes hand and hand with their architecture.
- Egyptians had a standardized measuring system that was based on body parts.
- For example, they used a unit called a cubit which was based on the length between the point of your longest finger to your elbow.
- The Egyptians were also the first civilization to develop and solve quadratic equations

Major contributions: Architecture and mathematics continued

- With the standardized measuring system, the Egyptians were able to build some of the greatest monuments of all time
- Egyptian architecture focused mainly on religious ideas.
- For example, the belief in the afterlife resulted in huge tombs being made for pharaohs. These tombs were the great pyramids, each pyramid being made to help the Pharaoh pass on to the afterlife with his/her riches.
- The great pyramids were not the only great structures built by the Egyptians. The great sphinx, the valley of kings, and the Karnak temple are other examples of great architecture



Top left: The Great Sphinx of Egypt
Top right: Valley of Kings
Bottom left: The Karnak Temple

Major Contributions: Language and religion

- The Egyptians were one of the first civilizations to have a written language which they called Medu Netjer which translates to “words of the gods”; we now call them hieroglyphics.
- They called it this because they believed that this language was created by the gods which they heavily believed in.
- This language consisted of pictures which constructed words which then made-up sentences. This is significant because this is one of the first ever written languages in human history.
- Through their hieroglyphics we were able to learn of their religion and pharaohs along with their culture and history.

Major Contributions: Language and religion continued

- The Egyptian religion was a polytheistic religion that centered around the afterlife and reincarnation.
- The Egyptians were one of the first civilizations to have a major belief in the afterlife. The Egyptians believed in a ka which we would call a soul or something that is separate from the physical body. The ka would have to pass a trial of Osiris in the afterlife to live comfortably but it would also live eternally.
- Along with the Ka existed the Ba which was another aspect of the soul as it was the mobility of the soul. This meant bodies had to be preserved as the ba would return at night.

Major Contributions: Language and religion continued

- The pyramids and other various Egyptian architecture were giant tombs for great kings and pharaohs which let them bring their riches with them to the afterlife. This resulted in high-status people such as kings and queens having their tombs loaded with treasures and other valuables.
- Common folk couldn't have temple burials until the middle kingdom of Egypt as the idea of the Ba was relegated only to high-status people
- Eventually, it was believed that everyone had a Ba, not just those chosen by the gods or of high status. This led to even common people being allowed to have tombs.



This scene details a scene described in the book of the dead where a human's heart is weighed on the scale against a feather to determine if he is worthy to pass on or be devoured by the beast



Conclusion

- To conclude, Egyptian society is well ahead of its time in almost every facet whether it be their architecture or medicine. There were still many areas I didn't expand on such as their everyday essentials like toothpaste or their government. But nonetheless, Egyptian society is one of the cornerstones of human existence as it created the foundation for many ideas or items we still use in today's society.

References

- ALL IMAGES CAME THANKS TO GOOGLE IMAGES ALONG WITH SOME LINKS BELOW
- https://www.worldhistory.org/Egyptian_Government/
- <https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/civil/egypt/egcgov1e.html>
- <https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/bcoag/coins.aspx>
- <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/90037/What-do-you-know-about-Egyptian-Hieroglyphs>
- <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldcivilization/chapter/ancient-egyptian-religion/>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ba-Egyptian-religion>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/the-egyptian-pyramids>

References continued

- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323633#medical-practice>
- <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/media/6521/ancient-egyptian-measurements.pdf>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/digit-ancient-Egyptian-unit-of-measurement>
- <https://discoveringegypt.com/ancient-egyptian-inventions/>
- <https://timeprophecy.com/date/egyptian-calendar.php>

- https://www.worldhistory.org/Egyptian_Government/#:~:text=The%20government%20of%20ancient%20Egypt,laws%20passed%20and%20policies%20approved.
- <https://libguides.stalbanssc.vic.edu.au/ancient-egypt/social-structure>