

Chapter 9

Daily Life in Ancient Egypt

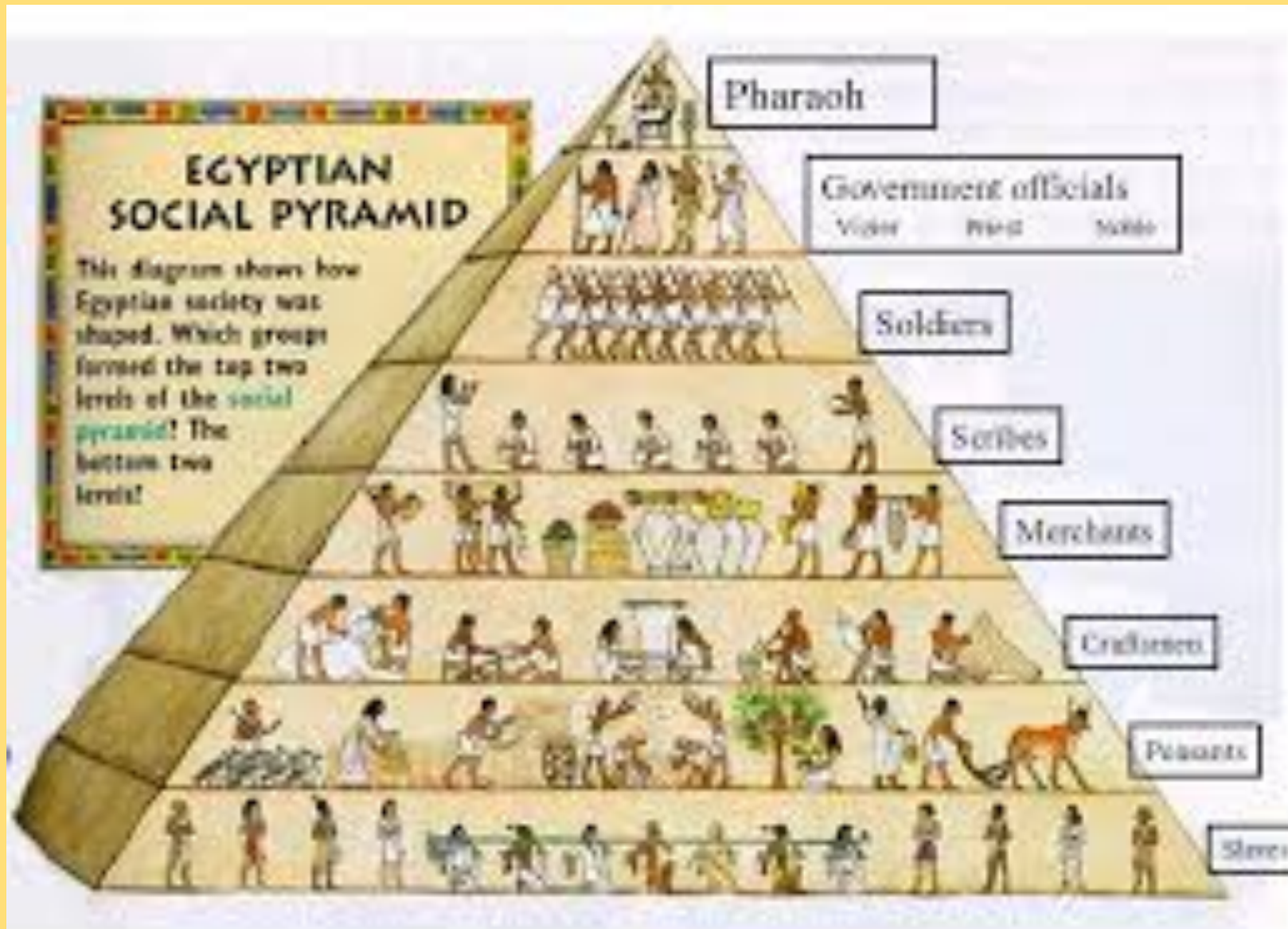
How did social class affect daily life in ancient Egypt?



Vladimir Wrangel/Shutterstock.com

Skilled artisans created this sculpture of the Egyptian sun god Amon-Re.

Ancient Egypt's Social Pyramid



How did social class affect daily life in ancient Egypt?



Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS

Egyptian women enjoyed more freedom and rights than most women in the ancient world. A few women even became pharaohs.

- Egyptian society was structured like a pyramid. At very top of this social pyramid was the pharaoh, Egypt's supreme ruler. Egyptian religion strengthened the pharaoh's authority. Pharaohs were believed to be gods, and their word was law.

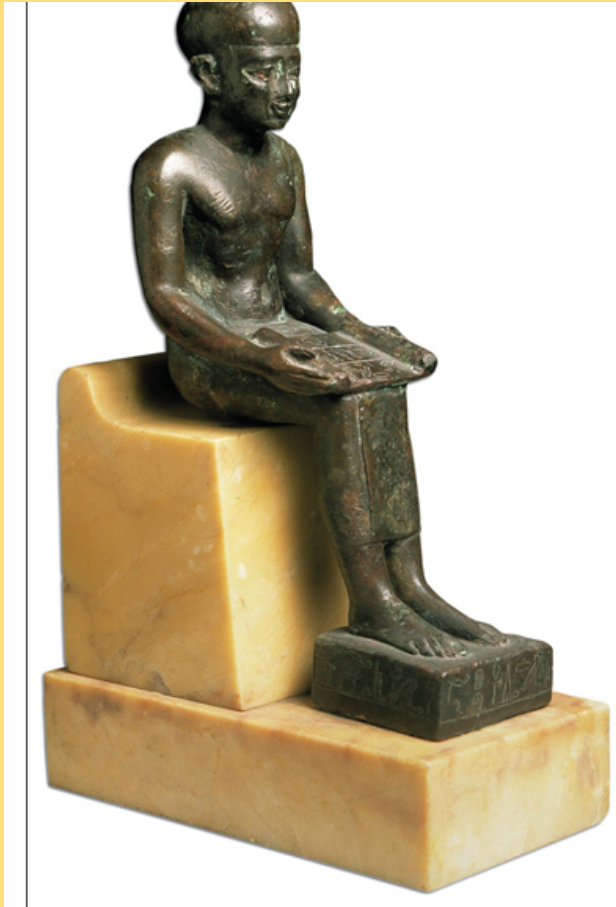
How did social class affect daily life in ancient Egypt?

- Egypt's social pyramid was fairly rigid. Most people belonged to the same social class as their parents. There was little chance of moving to a higher class. Members of different classes may have had some things in common, but, in general, their lives were quite different.
- Egyptians in all social classes cherished family life. Most Egyptians married within their social group. Children were highly valued.
- Men and women had different roles within the family. Men were the heads of their households. They worked to support the family. Fathers often began to train their sons at a young age to take on their line of work. Women typically managed the home and raised the children. Upper-class women had servants or slaves to help them. Lower-class women did the work themselves.

How did social class affect daily life in ancient Egypt?

- Men were in charge of Egyptian society, but women enjoyed more freedom and rights than most women in the ancient world. They could own land and run businesses. They could also ask for divorces and represent themselves in legal matters. Some women in the middle and upper classes worked as doctors, government officials, or priestesses. Both women and men enjoyed a better quality of life the higher they were on the social pyramid.
- The Egyptians believed that their class system created a stable, well-ordered society. Each group had its own role to play.

Government Officials: Vizier, Chief Treasurer, & Military General



Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

This is a statue of Imhotep, who was an early and powerful vizier in ancient Egypt. Imhotep was famous for his role in designing and building great

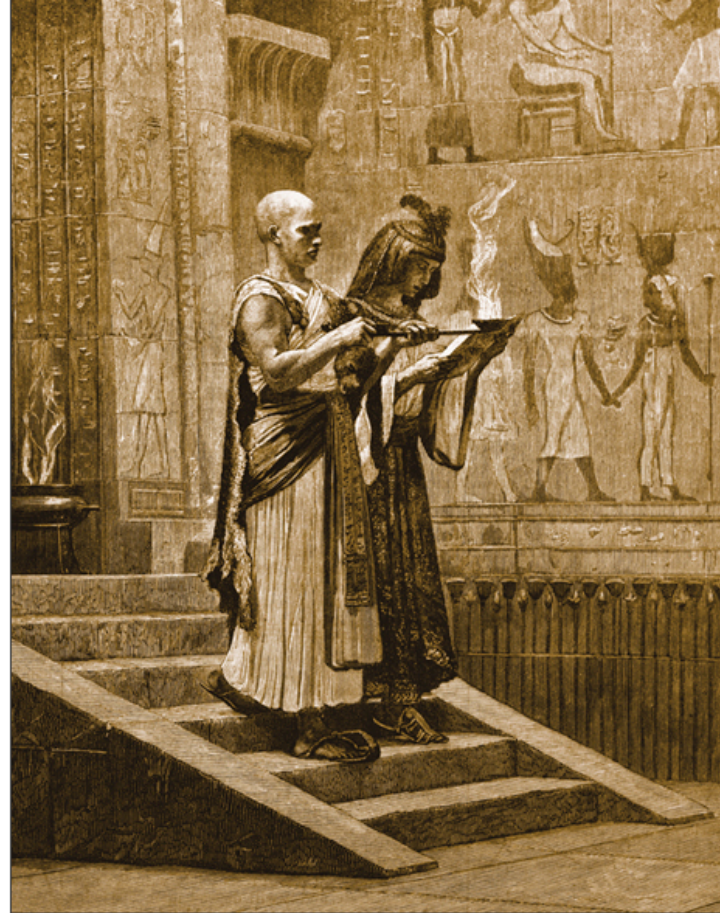
Lives of Luxury



Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY

These women of high social class enjoy a banquet.

Priests were powerful and highly respected in society. Priests advised the pharaoh, oversaw religious ceremonies, take care of the temple and take care of the burial practices.



Bettmann/CORBIS

Priests shaved their heads as one of many steps in achieving religious purity.

The Priests' Role in Burial Practices



RF/Scott Rothstein/Shutterstock

The Egyptian process of embalming a body produced a mummy, such as the one shown here.

Scribes were Egypt's official writers and record keepers.



Shutterstock

This engraving shows students in a scribe school, working at their writing.

The Work of Scribes



Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis

This relief shows two scribes. Only men were allowed to be scribes, although women were sometimes taught to read and write.

Artisans were highly skilled laborers who created some of the most beautiful art objects in the ancient world.



Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Stone carvers were some of the most skilled workers in the artisan class.

The Daily Life and Work of Artisans



Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

This painting shows different types of artisans at work. Look carefully. What do you see?

Peasants made up the lowest and largest class in Egypt. Peasants were unskilled farmers and monument builders.



RF/Vladimir Wrangel/Shutterstock

This engraving shows a young peasant with his cow. Peasants worked hard to supply Egyptians with food.

The Daily Lives of Peasants



Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

This painting shows peasants cutting and gathering the wheat harvest.

Summary

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In this chapter, you learned about Egypt's social pyramid. Their social class determined the daily life of ancient Egyptians.

Government Officials This was the highest social class after the pharaoh. Many officials were nobles who inherited their jobs, but some rose to power. Three key officials were the vizier, the chief treasurer, and the general of the armies.

Priests Priests were powerful and respected. They advised the pharaoh, oversaw religious ceremonies, took care of temple gods, and prepared bodies for the afterlife.

Scribes Scribes were Egypt's official writers and record keepers. They were well paid and respected. They trained for many years in special schools to learn hieroglyphs, Egypt's writing symbols. Boys from several social classes could become scribes.

Artisans These highly skilled laborers created beautiful objects but got little respect. Stone carvers were among the most skilled and important artisans.

Peasants This lowest and largest social class grew crops that supplied food and also helped build monuments such as the pyramids. Peasants' lives revolved around the three seasons of the Nile River.