Chapter 5: Ancient Egypt & Kush
As empires were flourishing and falling in Mesopotamia, two new civilizations, **Egypt** and **Kush** were emerging in **Africa**, in the **Nile** River Valley.

The Nile River Valley was ideal for settlement because of its **fertile land**. Early hunters and gatherers arrived around **5000 B.C.** and built permanent settlements in the Nile River valley.

These people were the earliest Egyptians and **Kushites**.
Early Egyptians lived in the Northern region of the Nile River Valley and called their land **Kemet**, meaning “black land”, after the dark, rich soil.

Later, this northern Nile area would be called **Egypt**.
• Egypt has a **hot** and **dry** climate. This is one of the reasons many of Egypt’s ancient structures were able to survive.
• Since the region receives little rainfall, Egyptians depended on the **Nile River** as their source of water for drinking, bathing and watering their crops.
• The Nile River is the world’s **longest** river, flowing north about **4,000** miles from central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea.
• The Niles River starts as two separate rivers, the **Blue** Nile and the **White** Nile, before joining just South of Egypt.
• Where the rivers come together, steep cliffs and boulders create fast moving waters called **cataracts**.
Throughout centuries, the flow of the Nile has created a valley. Before the Nile reaches the Mediterranean Sea, it splits into many branches that resemble a plant's bloom. These waterways form a fan-shaped fertile marshland known as a Delta. The lush, green Nile Valley and Delta contrast with the barren deserts that stretch on either side of the river.
• The Nile bordered one of the largest deserts in the world.
• To the West is the Libyan desert, which forms part of the Sahara.
• To the East lies the Eastern Desert which extends to the Red Sea.
• These deserts were not favorable to humans and animals, and kept Egypt isolated from outside invaders.
Other physical features protected Egypt:

- In the Far South, the dangerous cataracts of the Nile barred enemy ships from attacking.
- In the North, delta marshes stopped invaders sailing from the Mediterranean Sea.
- The deserts, cataracts, and Delta Marshes gave Egyptians an advantage that the Mesopotamian people lacked.
- Egyptians were not cut off from trade, they used wind patterns to use sail boats to trade with other regions.
People of the River

Mesopotamian people had to learn to control the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, but in Egypt the flooding of the Nile was seasonal, so the Egyptians did not face the same challenges.
Predictable Challenges:

• Each year during late spring, heavy tropical rains in central Africa as well as melting snow from mountains in Eastern Africa causes the Nile to overflow its banks.
• When waters returned to their normal level in late fall, thick deposits of fertile soil remained.
How did Egyptians Farm?

• After the flooding of the Nile, Egyptians planted wheat, barley and flax seeds while the soil was still wet.
• During the dry season, farmers irrigated their crops by scooping out basins, or bowl-shaped holes in the earth to store river water, which they connected to their fields using canals.
• Egyptians also developed a new tool to make their work easier, a **shadoof**, was a bucket attached to a pole that could be used to lift water from the Nile and empty it into basins.

• To measure the area of their lands and determine **boundary** lines after flood waters washed away markers, Egyptians used **geometry** to recalculate where one field ended and another began.
Egyptians used **papyrus**, a reed plant that grew along the Nile to weave rope, sandals, baskets and river rafts. Later, Egyptians soaked strips of the stalk in water then pounded the strips together to make sheets of **paper**.
How did the Egyptians Write?

• Like Mesopotamians, Egyptians developed their own system of writing, first by using symbols to represent **words**, and later by developing symbols that represented **sounds**.
  • This combination of using pictures and sound symbols created a complex writing system of writing called **hieroglyphics**.
  • Few ancient Egyptians could read or write hieroglyphics. Some men went to special schools to train as **scribes**.
  • Unlike Mesopotamian people who wrote on clay tablets, Egyptian scribes wrote or painted on **papyrus**. However, Egyptian scribes did carve hieroglyphics into stone walls and monuments.
• Egyptian villages along the Nile traded with one another, and before long began trading with Nubia, Mesopotamia, and other places outside of Egyptian borders.
• A need for organized government became increasingly important as farming and trade increased.
• Government was needed to oversee construction of irrigation systems and dams, to develop a process for storing and distributing grain during famine, and settle conflicts over land ownership.
Over time villages formed small **kingdoms**, which were ruled over by **kings**. Eventually, smaller kingdoms fell to the control of stronger ones, and by 4000 B.C., Egypt was made up of two kingdoms.

- **Upper Egypt** - in the south-central part of the Nile River Valley.
- **Lower Egypt** - located on the Nile River’s north Delta.
Who was Narmer?

- The King of **Upper** Egypt
- Around 3100 B.C., his army conquered Lower Egypt and he married one of their princesses, which **unified** the kingdoms.
- Narmer established a new capital at **Memphis**, a city on the border of the two kingdoms, and he governed both **sides** of the kingdom from there.
- Narmer’s kingdom lasted long after his death and rule was passed from father to son to grandson.
- A line of rulers from one family is called a **dynasty**.
From 3100 B.C. to 332 B.C., Egypt was ruled by a series of 30 dynastys... These dynasty’s are organized into three time periods:

1. **Old** Kingdom
2. Middle Kingdom
3. **New** Kingdom
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Life in Ancient Egypt
Around 2600 B.C., the Egyptian Civilization entered what was known as the *Old* Kingdom.

For their government, they developed a *theocracy*, a government in which the same person is both the *political* and *religious* leader.
At first the Egyptian leader was called a king. Later, the king was known as a pharaoh, meaning “great house” – referring to the palace where the king and his family lived.

Pharaohs held total power over their kingdom, and Egyptians believed that his wise, and far-reaching leadership would enable them to survive.
The Pharaoh appointed **bureaucrats** to carry out his orders, oversee building projects, and collect **taxes**.
○ The **Pharaoh** owned all the land in Egypt.

○ Sometimes the pharaoh distributed land to officials, priests, and wealthy Egyptians whom he favored.
Egyptians believed the pharaoh was the son of Re, the Egyptian sun god.

They believed the pharaoh was a god on earth who protected Egypt.

As their religious leader, the pharaoh participated in ceremonies to help the kingdom thrive such as being the first person to cut the grain at harvest time.
Religion in Egypt

- Egyptians worshipped many gods, whom they believed controlled natural forces as well as human activities.

- Egyptians depended on the sun and river to harvest their crops, so their most important gods were Re (the sun god) and Hapi (the river god).
Egyptians believed life after death was better than the present life.

One of the most important writings in ancient Egypt was The Book of the Dead, which explained what a person can expect in the afterlife.
The Afterlife

- Earliest Egyptians believed only the pharaoh could enjoy the afterlife.
- They believed his soul resided in his body and had to be protected in order for him to complete the journey to the afterlife and continue to watch over Egypt.
As centuries passed, Egyptians began to believe everyone could enjoy the afterlife with the help of the god Osiris, ruler of the dead.

Embalming emerged so Egyptians could protect bodies for the afterlife.
• Before embalming, priests removed the body’s organs to be stored in special jars and buried with the body (Canopic jars).
• The body was then covered with a salt called natron and stored for many days to dry up the remaining water in the body.
• Finally, the shrunken, dried body was wrapped in strips of linen and sealed in a coffin.
The wealthy had their coffins sealed inside tombs, while poorer people had their coffins buried in caves or in the sand.

Egyptians viewed animals not only as pets, but as sacred creatures. Even animals were embalmed.
Egyptians learned about the human body through embalming, and became the first to learn how to sew open wounds and set broken bones.

They wrote down their medical information on papyrus, and these became the world’s first medical books.
Pyramid Tombs

- To honor their pharaohs, Egyptians built giant burial tombs called **pyramids**.
- Inside the tombs, Egyptians placed clothing, jewelry, furniture, and other personal belongings for the pharaoh to use in the **afterlife**.
How were the pyramids built?

- Building the pyramids took thousands of workers.
- Surveyors, carpenters, architects, and engineers were needed, as well as farmers during the summer months when the Nile River was flooded and they were unable to farm.
Workers searched the Nile River Valley for stones to be used in building the pyramids. Artisans would use copper tools to cut the stones into huge blocks, then workers moved the stones using wooden sleds and pulley systems.
Egyptians wanted the entrance to each pyramid to face **north**. To find north, they studied the skies and developed an understanding of astronomy.

Using this knowledge, they developed a **365**-day calendar, which is the basis of our modern calendar.
Advances were also made in **mathematics**. Egyptians had to study angles and calculate the number of blocks it would take to build a pyramid.

They developed a system of written numbers based on ten, and created **fractions**.
An Egyptian Wonder

- The Great Pyramid, built around the mid-2000s B.C., is the largest pyramid built by the Egyptians.
- Around the height of a 48-story building, the pyramid stands 500 feet above the desert.
- More than 2 million stone blocks were used in the construction, each weighing on average 2.5 tons.
- The pyramid extends over an area of about 9 football fields.
The Great Pyramid
At its peak, Egypt was home to about 5 million – about the number in Colorado today.

Most lived in the fertile Nile Valley and Delta – about 3% of Egypt’s land mass.
Egypt’s Social Groups

- **Highest Class**: Pharaoh and his family
- **Upper Class**: Priests, nobles, army commanders
- **Middle Class**: Artisans and other skilled workers
- **Lower Class**: Farmers and herders
- **Lowest Class**: unskilled workers and enslaved people
Upper class Egyptians had homes along the Nile River, some 2-3 stories tall and constructed of **wood** and sun-dried mud bricks.

The Upper class dressed in white **linen** clothing and wore dark eye makeup.
Middle Class
(artisans and skilled workers) lived in smaller homes and dressed more simply than the upper class.
The Lower classes: farmers, herders, unskilled workers, and enslaved people made up the majority of the population.

Farmers rented their land from wealthy nobles and lived in small, usually one room homes made from mud bricks with palm leaf roofs.

Unskilled workers performed manual labor such as loading and transporting cargo.
Most unskilled workers settled in crowded city neighborhoods in small mud-brick houses with dirt floors.

Families often gathered on rooftops to socialize and, because of the hot Egyptian climate, they cooked on their rooftops to help keep the home cooler.

Some of the unskilled workers were enslaved people, and many could earn their freedom over time.
The family was the most important group in Egyptian society.

The father was the head of the household.
Women had more rights than in the past and could own land, and obtain a divorce.

Wealthy women sometimes served as priests.

Wives of farmers worked in the fields with their husbands.

Women of higher social class stayed home.
Few Egyptian children attended school.

They had time to play board games, with dolls, balls and spinning tops.

Girls learned to sew, cook and run the household from their mother.

Boys learned a trade from their father.
Boys and girls were expected to marry and begin a family in their teenage years. People generally lived in nuclear family households, but some farm families lived as extended families. The oldest son, or sometimes oldest daughter, was expected to take care of the parents when they became too old or sick. This included giving the parents a proper burial.
Lesson 5.3: Egypt’s Empire
The Golden Age

- Around 2200 B.C., ruling Pharaohs in Memphis began to weaken, and nobles began to struggle for control of Egypt.
- Finally, a new dynasty of Pharaohs came to power and moved the capitol from Memphis to Thebes.
- This began a new period of peace known as the Middle Kingdom.
During the Middle Kingdom, Egypt conquered and expanded to **Nubia** in the south, and to the northeast into present-day Syria. They also required **tribute**, or payments, from the people they conquered.
Improvements Made Within Egypt Included:

- Thousands of acres of farmland added to increase crop production.
- More irrigation dams and channels built to supply water to the population.
- The construction of a canal between the Nile River and the Red Sea to be used for sea trade.
The Arts Flourished

♦ *Tombs* were decorated with colorful paintings depicting the stories of deities and scenes from everyday life.
♦ Sculptors carved *hunting*, fishing, and *battle* scenes onto stone walls.
♦ Pharaohs stopped building pyramids and had their tombs constructed by carving out limestone *cliffs* west of the Nile River. This area became known as the *Valley of the Kings*. 

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![Image of colorful tomb paintings]

![Image of sculpture with hieroglyphs]
The Hyksos

- During the 1600s, Egyptian nobles challenged the Pharaohs. As civil war divided Egypt, people from Western Asia, known as the Hyksos, swept into Egypt.
- The methods of the Hyksos were unknown to Egyptians. They rode horse-drawn carriages and used sturdier weapons made of bronze and iron.
- The Hyksos used this technology to take control of Egypt.
- Hyksos ruled Egypt for over 100 years but remained separate from the Egyptians.
- Meanwhile, Egyptians learned to use this new technology and around 1550 B.C., Egyptian prince, Ahmose, formed an army and drove the Hyksos out.
Ahmose began a new empire and began a new period of rule from 1550 B.C. to 1070 B.C. known as the New Kingdom.
A queen named Hatshepsut came to power around 1473 B.C. when her husband, the Pharaoh, died and she ruled on behalf of her young nephew.

Because the title Pharaoh was reserved for a man she dressed in men’s clothing and wore the fake beard to copy the one worn by male Egyptian kings.

She built magnificent kingdoms and restored old monuments.
Hatshepsut valued trade over going to war. During her reign, she made efforts to restore trade relations lost during the Hyksos invasion. Sailors traveled to ports in Arabia and East Africa to exchange Egyptian beads, metal tools, and weapons for gold, ivory, ebony wood, and incense.
• For wood products, Egyptian traders travelled to the East of the Mediterranean Sea where present day Lebanon is located.
• People in that region were called Phoenicians, and culturally had a large impact on other societies with their invention of an alphabet and a system of writing different from other regions.
Egyptians traded wheat, paper, gold, copper, tin, and tools to the Phoenicians for purple dye, wood, and furniture. In turn, Phoenicians traded Egyptian goods with other people, which spread Egyptian goods and foods across Asia. This trade helped make Egypt wealthier, which Hatshepsut used to build monuments.
The Egyptian kingdom also developed ties with other nations such as the Babylonian Empire in Mesopotamia, the Mittani in Syria, and the Hittite Empire in Anatolia by treaty or by marriage.

To maintain close ties, Pharaoh’s and rulers also traded envoys. This was the first time in history a group of nations worked together to reach common goals.
Expanding the Empire

♦ When Hatshepsut died, her **nephew**, Thutmose III, became Pharaoh and began expanding Egypt’s control north to the **Euphrates** River in Mesopotamia and south to Nubia, which had once thrown off Egyptian rule.

♦ As Egypt’s armies conquered more area, the empire grew wealthy as **slavery** became more common and Egypt acquired gold, copper, ivory, and other valuable goods from the conquered people.
During the New Kingdom, two Pharaohs: Amenhotep IV and Tutankhamen would come to power and their actions would set them apart from other Egyptian rulers in history.
Amenhotep IV came to power around 1370 B.C., and would try to change Egypt’s religion, which was based upon the worship of many deities.
Amenhotep: A Religious Leader

- Fearing the power of Egypt’s priests, Amenhotep introduced the new religion of worshiping Aton, the sun god as Egypt’s only god. He also removed the priests who opposed this change and took their lands.

- He also changed his name to Akhenaton and moved the capitol of Egypt to Akhetaton, a city north of Thebes.
Many Egyptians opposed this change in religion and continued to worship many deities. Priests resisted their loss of power, and army leaders lost faith in the Pharaoh’s rule.

Under Akhenaton’s weak rule, Egypt would lose most of its lands in Western Asia.
Who Was King Tut?

- Tutankhamun was the nephew of Akhenaton who took over as Pharaoh at the age of **ten**.
- He ruled based on the advice of priests and immediately restored the tradition of **polytheism**.
King Tutankhamun died unexpectedly after ruling for nine years.

His tomb was discovered in 1922, perfectly preserved and undisturbed by Howard Carter.

Most tombs of the Pharaohs have been robbed by thieves.
During the 1200s B.C., the pharaohs worked to restore Egypt’s greatness.
Ramses II

♦ Ramses II ruled from 1279-1213 B.C., he conquered the region of Canaan and fought with the Hittites.
♦ He had many new temples built throughout Egypt. One of the most famous was in Thebes, called Karnak.
♦ Temples were used for special occasions, to store valuable items, and as banks.
Egypt fought many costly wars, first by armies in the Eastern Mediterranean.
In the 900s B.C., the Libyans conquered Egypt. Next, Kush seized power. Finally, in 670 B.C., Egypt was taken over by Assyrians from Mesopotamia.
Lesson 5.4: The Kingdom of Kush
Another civilization in Africa was **Nubia**, which would later be known as Kush.

Kush was located south of Egypt along the **Nile River** in present day **Sudan**.

**Cattle herders** were the first settlers to arrive in this region. Later, **farming** villages developed along the Nile river.
Nubians did not have to rely on the flooding of the Nile like the Egyptians, because they received rainfall all year long.
The Rise of Kerma

• The Nubians gradually took over smaller villages and formed the kingdom of Kerma.
• Kerma’s location next to the Nile River made it an important trade link between Egypt and Southern Africa.
Workers in Kerma built **tombs** for their kings, but on a smaller scale than the Egyptians. The kings of Kerma were buried with their personal belongings such as gems, gold, jewelry, and pottery.
Egyptian Invasion

- Egyptians invaded Kerma in the 1400s B.C., and after a 50-year war, conquered the kingdom.
As a result of Egyptian rule, Nubians adopted many beliefs and customs from the Egyptians:
1. Egyptian **gods** and goddesses.
2. Copper and **bronze** tools.
3. Adapted hieroglyphics to fit their own language and **alphabet**.
The Kushite Kingdom

- Egyptians were weak by the end of the Middle Kingdom and the Nubians were able to break away from Egyptian rule.
The Rise of Kush

• By 850 B.C. the Nubians developed an independent kingdom called **Kush**.
• **Napata**, the capital of Kush, was located where trade caravans crossed the upper Nile River.
• Trade brought **wealth** to the traders and **kings** of Kush.
Kush Conquers Egypt

• About 750 B.C., a Kushite King named Kashta invaded Egypt, reaching the city of Thebes before his death. His son, Piye, became king and completed the conquest for Egypt.
• The kings and people of Kush continued to admire Egyptian **culture**.
• They built white **sandstone** monuments similar to those in Egypt.
• They believed in a close relationship between gods and their rulers.
• They built small **pyramids** as tombs for their kings.
The people in Kush also adopted customs and styles similar to southern Africa and developed their own style of painted pottery.
Using Iron

• After ruling Egypt for 60 years, in 671 B.C., the Assyrians, armed with iron weapons were able to defeat the Kush who fled from Egypt and returned to their homeland.
• Despite defeat, the Kushites learned how to make iron and were able to use this to make better tools for farming.
The Capitol of Meroë

• Kush’s rulers moved the capital city from Napata to Meroë, near one of the Nile’s cataracts. This location was safer from Assyrian attacks, and still useful in trade.
• Modeled after Egypt’s great cities, Meroë had a temple dedicated to the god Amon-Re. Walls and palaces were decorated with **paintings**, and small **pyramids** stood in the royal graveyard.
• Meroë was different in that its large deposits of **iron ore** and nearby trees made it prime for producing **iron**. As a result, the city contained iron furnaces which poured smoke in columns into the sky.
A Trading Center

- Meroë was at the heart of a large web of trade that ran north to Egypt’s border and south into Central Africa.
• From Africa, Kush received leopard skins and valuable wood.
• Kush traded these items as well as enslaved workers, and their own iron products to places as far away as Arabia, India, China, and Rome. In return, they brought back cotton, textiles, and other goods.
• Kush remained a great trade kingdom for nearly **600** years before the kingdom of Axum arose near the Red Sea in Eastern Africa.

• **Axum** gained strength and around A.D. 350, invaded Kush and destroyed Meroë.