

The role of a pharaoh

Roles and responsibilities

The pharaoh was the supreme ruler of all Egypt, but they had to fulfil a large number of duties in a variety of roles. It was a pretty stressful job!

Pharaohs had two titles; 'Lord of the Two Lands' and 'High Priest of Every Temple'. They also had two crowns; a white crown to show they controlled Upper Egypt and a red crown to show they controlled Lower Egypt. The pharaoh had to make sure they wore the correct crown depending on where they were.

As 'Lord of the Two Lands', the pharaoh was the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt and owned all the land, made laws, collected taxes, and defended Egypt against foreign invaders and threats from inside its borders.

As 'High Priest of Every Temple', the pharaoh represented the gods on Earth and performed rituals and built temples to honour the gods. They unified the people under one ruler and acted as a focal point of the nation.

Egyptians believed that the pharaoh deputised for Horus, the son of Osiris, who was the divine ruler over the whole of Egypt and when they died, they would become Osiris, the god of the dead.



Head of the state

- The chief responsibility of the pharaoh was to maintain harmony in the country (Ma'at).
- They were responsible for the style and grandeur of any new buildings.
- They had to ensure order and justice in the land using basic principles of truth, morality and fairness according to ancient 'wisdom texts'.
- They were the chief judge.

Head of the government

- The pharaoh appointed government officials to assist in the control of the kingdom. The most powerful officials were the 'viziers' (chief councillors) and the 'nomarchs' (who controlled the different regions of Egypt for the pharaoh).
- Pharaohs were responsible for increasing the wealth of the country by imposing taxes, controlling trade and making alliances with other countries to maintain harmony.
- They made the laws and owned all the land in Egypt.



Supreme religious leader

- Pharaohs would act as 'messengers of the gods'.
- They played a central role during festivals.
- They would officiate at religious ceremonies.
- They chose the sites of new temples.
- The pharaohs were also seen as being in control of the weather, bringing rain and flooding the River Nile to grow crops.

