

Changing Dynasties, Consistent Values:
The Ideals and Beliefs of Ancient Egypt and Their Consistency

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Circa 3100 B.C.E., a civilization rose to power around the Nile River: Ancient Egypt. Ancient Egyptian history spanned over 3,000 years, historically divided into three main periods. These are the Old (ca. 2686–2181 B.C.E.), Middle (ca. 2040–1782 B.C.E.), and New Kingdoms (ca. 1550–1070 B.C.E), periods wherein Egypt experienced the greatest stability. Aside from these three main kingdoms, there is the Predynastic Period, which preceded the Old Kingdom. Moreover, between these more stable intervals were intermediate periods in which disruptions to the Egyptian way of life occurred. Throughout the 3,000–year stretch of Ancient Egypt’s history, a rich culture developed complete with an intricate religion and corresponding values and ideals. The Ancient Egyptians built a multitude of monuments, devised rituals, and wrote various texts describing both everyday life and myths. The value of speech, the homeland, nature, fertility, and the principle of Ma’at (justice), as well as beliefs relating to the afterlife, all appear in the legacy the Egyptians left behind. Through the examination of some textual and artifactual evidence, the consistency of these values and beliefs held by the Ancient Egyptians reveals itself.

The roots of Egyptian values and beliefs formed in its Predynastic Period. Although there are few written sources from this period, conclusions about early Egyptian beliefs can be drawn from the examination of artifacts and human remains. Much like burial sites from periods later in Egyptian history, many Predynastic Egyptians were buried with some of their possessions. This suggests a belief in the ability to take earthly possessions into an afterlife. Unlike in later eras, however, the early Egyptians did not have an extensive mummification process for their dead, so it is unlikely that the significance of the physical body in the afterlife fully developed.

Archeologists have uncovered evidence of crafts, such as pottery and clay figurines.¹ Other excavations have also revealed clay figurines depicting female forms from other civilizations. Like other early civilizations, Predynastic Egyptians built an agricultural society prior to the unification of their country as a civilization. These other agricultural societies linked women to the earth in the sense that the earth gives life to plants even as women give life to children. Women were therefore seen as the source of fertility, and for this reason they were depicted in these figurines.² An inference can be made that Predynastic Egyptian female clay figures, too, symbolized fertility. This reverence for fertility did not disappear, as seen when the Egyptians later established their pantheon of gods. Among other Predynastic Egyptian artifacts are amulets, many of which

¹ Isabella Caneva, Marcella Frangipane, and Alba Palmieri, “Predynastic Egypt: New Data from Maadi,” *The African Archaeological Review* 5 (1987): 105–14.

² Zoreh Behjati-Ardakani, Mohammad Mehdi Akhondi, Homa Mahmoodzadeh, & Seved Hasan Hosseini, “An Evaluation of the Historical Importance of Fertility and Its Reflection in Ancient Mythology,” *Journal of Reproduction & Infertility*, vol. 17 (2016): 2–9.

resembled animals. Their usage pertained to their perceived magical properties, and their prevalence only increased through the Late Period.³

The formation of the Old Kingdom allowed for the values and beliefs of the Egyptians to take a clearer shape. *The Hymn to the Nile*, written during this period, personifies the Nile to demonstrate its importance to the Egyptians' everyday lives. According to the hymn, the Nile, "spreads himself over Egypt, filling the granaries, renewing the marts, watching over the goods of the unhappy."⁴ Through learning to use the flooding of the Nile to their advantage, the Egyptians grew a variety of crops that enabled them to support their growing civilization. The Egyptians navigated the Nile between upper and lower Egypt which allowed for trade and thus a growing economy. Although the majority of Egypt consists of desert, the Egyptians maintained that this was not a hindrance because they possessed a source of life flowing through their land. The Nile provided the Egyptians with the basis of their civilization with which they felt content, and so the value of revering the homeland as well as nature developed.

As each successive pharaoh came to power, the belief in their spiritual significance deepened. This can be seen especially in the Pyramid Texts, a collection of funerary texts designed to aid the deceased pharaoh in his next life. The Pyramid Texts written for Unas, the last ruler of the fifth dynasty of Egypt's Old Kingdom, are a notable example of this. Utterance 217 states: "Re-Atum, your son comes to you, / Unas comes to you, / Raise him to you, hold him in your arms, / He is your son, of your body, forever!"⁵ For the Egyptians, the pharaoh was the son of the gods and he acted as the mediator between them and humans. Normal people still had interactions with the gods in the afterlife; they did not unite with Atum as in this earlier text, but did so with Osiris in later ones.⁶

In addition, the concept of Ma'at had already been personified as a goddess, indicating that the value of justice was incredibly significant. References to her appear in the Unas Pyramid Texts.⁷ The concept of Ma'at itself arose in other texts from this period, such as *The Maxims of Ptahhotep*, which states: "Be generous as long as you live, / What leaves the storehouse does not return" and "Great is the Law [Ma'at]."⁸ Another passage from this text asserts: "Ma'at is good

³Isabel Stünkel. "Ancient Egyptian Amulets," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/egam/hd_egam.htm (accessed March 8, 2022).

⁴*Hymn to the Nile*, in *The Library of Original Sources*, vol. I: *The Ancient World*, ed. Oliver J. Thatcher (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), 79–83.

⁵"Pyramid Texts," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, trans. Miriam Lichtheim (London: University of California Press, 1974), 32.

⁶"Pyramid Texts."

⁷Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1973), 273.

⁸"The Maxims of Ptahhotep," translated in *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks* by Carol Libson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 82–83.

and its worth is lasting. / It has not been disturbed since the day of its creator.”⁹ The Egyptians tried to follow Ma’at in their everyday lives because it wrapped up concepts such as justice, truth, kindness, and balance into one moral principle. Upholding Ma’at meant upholding the universe.

By the end of the Old Kingdom, the Egyptians erected a variety of tomb complexes. Some pharaohs, such as Djoser, built step pyramids oriented in a fashion that would allow the king to unite with the gods for eternity. Other tombs from this period contain paintings on the walls and a variety of the deceased’s possessions. The inclusion of these earthly possessions demonstrates that the belief in the ability to bring objects to the afterlife already present in the Predynastic Period reached a fully fleshed out stage. Furthermore, these aforementioned paintings contained instructions for arriving in the afterlife, depictions of daily life, or scenes designed to ensure the acceptance of the deceased into the afterlife.¹⁰ The Egyptians believed that in order to enter the afterlife, the deceased had to take an intense journey where s/he would be deemed fit or not fit to attain everlasting life. However, to have a successful existence in the afterlife, the preservation of the body had to take place. The Egyptians believed that the soul had many parts, and after death, they needed a physical place to meet.¹¹ Due to this belief, mummification’s place in Egyptian society solidified, although their techniques had not yet advanced during the Old Kingdom.

Despite the fact that Egypt was divided during its First Intermediate Period, the continuation and development upon previous ideas took place. According to a text from the First Intermediate Period: “If you are skilled in speech, you will win, / The tongue is [a king’s] sword; / Speaking is stronger than all fighting, / The skillful is not overcome.”¹² This period of Egyptian history was disorganized and not free from conflict, so it is likely that this ‘dark period’ birthed the idea that what one had to say could overcome difficulties. The value placed on speech emerged more clearly during this period, and this idea would prevail for the rest of Egyptian civilization.

After the First Intermediate Period, Egypt’s reunification by Mentuhotep II marked the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, wherein previous values and beliefs from the Old Kingdom expanded further. For example, take the story *The Shipwrecked Sailor*. In the story, an official of a king feels nervous due to coming home from an unsatisfactory journey, which he must report to the king. A servant of the official recounts his own return from another unsuccessful voyage to try and console the official. The servant, or sailor, unwillingly arrived on the shore of an island where he met a serpent. Although the island contained many riches, the serpent helped the servant, who remained free from temptation. Eventually, some sailors rescued the servant, who wanted to return

⁹Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2012), 62.

¹⁰Tara Prakash, “Egypt in the Old Kingdom (ca. 2649–2130 B.C.),” in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/oking/hd_oking.htm (accessed November 2, 2021).

¹¹Salima Ikram, “Mummification,” *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA, 2008–), 2.

¹²Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London: University of California Press, 1974), 99.

to his homeland. After hearing most of the story, the official stops the servant, realizing that he must report and face the consequences of his own misfortune.¹³ This tale clearly exemplifies the Egyptian value of loving their homeland. During most of their history, the Egyptians never conquered other regions to a great extent like their counterparts in Rome, for instance. Much like the servant in the story, the Egyptians believed that Egypt held all the treasures they could be interested in. In fact, they held their native land in such high esteem that they used belittling terms to reference other groups.¹⁴

Furthermore, evidence of the Egyptians' affection for their homeland emerges in another tale from the Middle Kingdom, *The Story of Sinuhe*. In the story, Sinuhe learns that the pharaoh was assassinated, and in the anticipation of further troubles in Egypt, he flees to what is known today as Syria. Sinuhe assimilates into a tribe, and he later wins a duel with a warrior who was meant to kill him. After his victory, Sinuhe begins to miss Egypt and remarks, "What matter is greater than that my corpse should be buried in the land wherein I was born?"¹⁵ The new pharaoh of Egypt forgave Sinuhe for his departure and after Sinuhe's death, he was laid to rest in a decorated tomb.¹⁶ Although Sinuhe lived a fine life elsewhere, what he left behind (his roots) was far more important. His attitude was shared by most Egyptians. Although conducting business elsewhere was sometimes necessary, the most satisfactory existence remained within Egypt's borders.

Another value present in the Old Kingdom that appears again in the Middle Kingdom is the appreciation of nature, as seen in *The Hymn to Hapy*. Hapy was the personification of the Nile, and his hymn says that he is a "Food provider, bounty maker, / Who creates all that is good!"¹⁷ The hymn goes on to state: "When you overflow, O Hapy, / Sacrifice is made for you; [...] / A great oblation is made to you."¹⁸ The Nile River allowed for the flourishing of Egyptian civilization, and the Egyptians did not underestimate this fact. Hapy's oldest reference appears in one of Unas's Pyramid Texts, but by the Middle Kingdom, the worship of Hapy grew in prominence.¹⁹ This reinforces the idea that holding nature in high esteem had remained consistent, and, if anything, had increased.

¹³*The Shipwrecked Sailor*, translated in *The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song and Art, Vol. III: Egypt, Africa, and Arabia* by Eva March Tappan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 41–46.

¹⁴Barbara Watterson, *The Egyptians* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 60.

¹⁵*The Story of Sinuhe*, translated in *Notes on the Story of Sinuhe* by Alan H. Gardiner (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1916).

¹⁶*The Story of Sinuhe*.

¹⁷*The Hymn to Hapy*, trans. in *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* by Miriam Lichtheim (London: University of California Press, 1974), 266.

¹⁸*The Hymn to Hapy*.

¹⁹ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 51.

The Middle Kingdom also saw the rise of Sobek, the crocodile god of the Nile, though he was worshiped as early as the Old Kingdom. Sobek was associated with bringing fertility to Egypt, creating the Nile (in some myths), and the protection of pharaohs. Sobek could be aggressive or benevolent, just like the flooding of the Nile. At one point, he became associated with Re, which elevated his status among the Egyptian pantheon.²⁰ His popularity was perhaps connected to the Egyptians' love for nature (especially the Nile) as well as the significance they placed on fertility dating back to Predynastic times.

Moreover, Coffin Texts, which derived their ideas from the Pyramid Texts, began to gain popularity with deceased non-royals. These texts contained spells designed to aid with entering the afterlife. One such spell from the Coffin Texts claimed: "As for any person who knows this spell, he will be like Re in the eastern sky, like Osiris in the netherworld. He will go down to the circle of fire, without the flame touching him ever!"²¹ The deceased person did have to satisfy Osiris for this spell to work, which exhibits a continued belief in the necessity of proving oneself to enter the afterlife.

Additionally, a literary work called *The Complaints of Khakheperre-Somb* contains themes surrounding distress. In the writing, a priest remarks: "It is hard to keep silent about it, [...] / And turmoil will not cease tomorrow, / Everyone is mute about it. / The whole land is in great distress."²² The text consists of metaphors and repetitive remarks surrounding the consequences of silence. They suggest that the Egyptians upheld the worth of speech, especially when faced with adversity, much like the aforementioned text from the First Intermediate Period. This manifests itself in a more well-known story from the Middle Kingdom, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*. In this tale, a peasant cheated out of his possessions appeals to a steward, who is so impressed that he informs King Nebkaure. The peasant performs nine petitions eloquently, and, as a result, justice is upheld by the king, and he restores the peasant's possessions. Through speech alone, the peasant proved himself worthy enough to have his case listened to. Though it is a work of fiction, the tale implies that this occurrence was plausible for anyone because the Egyptians' endorsed speech's value equally. On top of that, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* perfectly exemplifies Ma'at. Much like in the Old Kingdom, Ma'at in law and as an ethical principle applied no matter the sex, class, or age of a person. Even pharaohs had to rule and live by Ma'at as they were not above it. Ma'at was an inherent aspect of existence, and, if it did not exist or if it was not preserved, chaos would triumph.

²⁰Maryan Ragheb, "The Rise of Sobek in the Middle Kingdom," at American Research Center in Egypt, Los Angeles: University of California, <https://www.arce.org/resource/rise-sobek-middle-kingdom> (accessed March 7, 2022).

²¹"Coffin Texts," translated in *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* by Miriam Lichtheim (London: University of California Press, 1974), 133.

²²*The Complaints of Khakheperre-Somb*, translated in *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* by Miriam Lichtheim (London: University of California Press, 1974), 147–148.

The onset of the Second Intermediate Period meant some changes occurred for the Egyptians, namely the fact that they were placed under a non-indigenous rule. The Hyksos seized the northern part of Egypt, and of course, they introduced the Egyptians to new ideas. However, the Hyksos did not fully suppress the culture of the Ancient Egyptians, including their religion. But still, scribes from the New Kingdom portrayed the Second Intermediate Period as a dark age because the Hyksos invasion disrupted Ma'at in the land. This disruption gave the Egyptians a wakeup call because they realized that other nations could be just as powerful as them.²³

The establishment of the New Kingdom brought forth a new time of prosperity for Egypt. Egyptian borders were secured and the unification of the country came about yet again. The values and beliefs present in previous eras continued with advances built on top of them. One can observe a trend with some of the popular gods during the New Kingdom. A great deal of the New Kingdom Egyptian pantheon (that developed from previous periods up to this point) included a multitude of deities concerned with fertility such as Isis, Osiris, Amun, Hathor, Min, Sobek, and Taweret. The Egyptians associated some of these deities with human fertility, much like the clay figurines dating back to the Predynastic Period, while others were concerned with the fertility brought by the Nile.

From the beginning of the New Kingdom, the Egyptians used *The Book of the Dead*, a collection of funerary texts which can be traced back to the Old Kingdom.²⁴ A well-known text usually included within *The Book of the Dead* is *The Negative Confession*, which lists sins that a deceased person can declare that they have not committed. For example, the text states: “Bringing Ma'at to you, [...] / I have not done any harm, [...] / I have not caused pain.”²⁵ *The Negative Confession* uses Ma'at to mean truth, but after the deceased person speaks, Ma'at also dictates how s/he is judged for entrance into the afterlife. This demonstrates that the importance of maintaining moral purity throughout life materializes yet again in the New Kingdom. In addition, as was the case in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, respectively, Ma'at's application was equal.

Additionally, a line of reasoning can be drawn that because the deceased must stand before Osiris and declare his/her innocence, the value of speech was upheld still. This is also seen in a spell concerned with the Opening of the Mouth Ritual, which states: “My mouth has been given to me [so] that I may speak with it in the presence of the Great God.”²⁶ The purpose of this spell was to ensure that the deceased would be able to speak when brought in front of Osiris for judgment. The importance of speech in connection to the gods appears again in a poem describing Ramses II's (who reigned ca. 1279–1213 B.C.E.) victory over the Khita. It reads: ““Help me, father

²³ Watterson, *The Egyptians*, 60.

²⁴ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Vol. II: *The New Kingdom* (University of California Press, 1976), 120. It is important to note, however, that a single, standardized version of *The Book of the Dead* did not exist.

²⁵ *The Negative Confession*, trans. in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Vol. II: *The New Kingdom* by Miriam Lichtheim (University of California Press, 1976), 124–26.

²⁶ John H. Taylor, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead: Journey through the Afterlife* (London: British Museum Press, 2010), 89.

Ammon, against the Hittite horde.’ Then my voice it found an echo in Hermonthis’ temple-hall, / Ammon heard it, and he came unto my call.”²⁷ The poem then goes on to describe how Amun (translated as Ammon in the poem) lends his help to Ramses II just from hearing his plea. The worship of Amun grew during the New Kingdom after the expulsion of the Hyksos. An ancient inscription stated: “You are Amun, / the Lord of the silent, / who comes at the voice of the poor; / when I call to you in my distress / You come and rescue me.”²⁸ The Egyptians viewed speech so valuably that one of their most important gods would help whomever as long as they called to him and were of worthy character. Thus Amun also upheld Ma’at.

Another section commonly included in *The Book of the Dead* contains spells designed to preserve the deceased, especially the heart. One such spell states: “My heart is with me, and it shall never come to pass . . . that it shall be carried away.”²⁹ In the aforementioned kingdoms of Egypt, the Egyptians believed that the mummification or preservation of the body was necessary to live in the afterlife. This belief continued into the New Kingdom, as seen in the preservation spells and mummies from the era, which are the best preserved in Egyptian history.³⁰

Predating this era, the Egyptians carried amulets because of a belief in their magical or symbolic abilities. As previously mentioned, amulets date back to the Predynastic Period and they expanded in usage from that point on. During the New Kingdom, the amulets utilized by the living also became utilized by the dead. Embalmers placed amulets between layers of linen while wrapping mummies to aid the dead in the afterlife.³¹

A period of the New Kingdom that lends itself to some debate is the reign of Akhenaten (ca. 1353–ca. 1336 B.C.E.), previously known as Amenhotep IV. Akhenaten disrupted thousands of years of Egyptian tradition by implementing a new, monotheistic religious cult. A notable writing from Akhenaten’s reign, *The Great Hymn to Aten*, describes the magnificence of Aten. Aten was originally a characteristic of the sun god Ra, but Akhenaten elevated him to a sun god as well and to the sole focus of Egyptian religion. The hymn declares: “Splendid you rise in heaven’s lightland, / O living Aten, creator of life!” and “You made Hapy in *dat* [the Netherworld], / You bring him when you will, / To nourish the people.”³² Though in a new form, the value of

²⁷ “The Victory of Ramses II Over the Khita (1326 BCE),” *Internet Ancient History Sourcebook*, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/1326khita.asp> (accessed October 29, 2021).

²⁸ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume II: The New Kingdom* (University of California Press, 1976), 105–106.

²⁹ “From the Papyrus of Amen-hetep,” in *The Book of the Dead* by E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Keagan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.), 73.

³⁰ Barbara Adams, *Egyptian Mummies* (Aylesbury: Shire Publications, 1984), 87.

³¹ Isabel Stünkel, “Ancient Egyptian Amulets,” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/egam/hd_egam.htm (accessed March 6, 2022).

³² *The Great Hymn to Aten*, trans. in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Vol. II: *The New Kingdom* by Miriam Lichtheim (University of California Press, 1976), 96–99.

revering nature still conveys itself in this hymn. Aten manifests as a representation of the sun, which the Egyptians viewed as one of the sources of life, along with the Nile. So, Akhenaten valued Aten in a manner comparable to Ra previously: a giver of life under a different name and appearance. On top of this, the allusion to Hapy in the hymn reveals that even though Egypt's official religion changed, what Akhenaten valued at his core was not terribly different from his predecessors. Akhenaten still recognized and praised the sun and the Nile for contributing to the wellbeing of Egypt.

It is worth noting that although Akhenaten prohibited the worship of traditional gods, archeological evidence suggests that common folk may have worshiped the old gods privately.³³ As mentioned earlier, the Ancient Egyptians managed to keep their beliefs when they faced extended periods of chaos and invasion. So, roughly 17 years under radical change from Akhenaten of course would not be enough for most Egyptians to abandon their long-standing beliefs. This truth emerged again after Akhenaten's death when his successors implemented traditional Egyptian religion yet again and they attempted to erase Akhenaten from records altogether.

The last hurrah of native Egyptian rulers in Egypt is known as the Late Period, which was preceded by the Third Intermediate Period, a poorly documented era of alternating stability and instability. During the Late Period, Psamtik I, a Saite ruler (from Sais, an Ancient Egyptian city), regained control of Egypt after an Assyrian invasion. Psamtik I's successors formed Dynasty 26, which marked a period where Egypt's main concerns pertained to its survival as a nation, so old Egyptian traditions were restored. Even under the later Persian rule of Egypt during this period, the Egyptians were allowed to maintain their culture. The founder of Dynasty 30 (the final native dynasty of Egypt), Nectanebo I, built many monuments and worked to promote Egyptian tradition further.³⁴ However, although Late Period Egyptians tried to maintain their beliefs, the decline of their civilization as an independent nation occurred due to the invasion of Alexander the Great and the establishment of the Ptolemaic Kingdom. Finally, most traditional Egyptian beliefs died out with the introduction of Christianity in the fourth century AD.³⁵

Though the core consistent values and beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians display themselves in textual evidence, for some, alternate interpretations may present themselves. For example, some may point out that the pantheon of gods and what the gods represented sometimes changed over time. These changes occurred since some gods rose or fell in importance and Egyptian society itself changed. Nonetheless, they were not changes that came out of nowhere, like if Set (the god of chaos) became the god of love. The modifications to the pantheon served to strengthen and

³³ Douglas J. Brewer and Emily Teeter, *Egypt and the Egyptians*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105.

³⁴ Joshua J. Mark, "Late Period of Ancient Egypt," *World History Encyclopedia*, https://www.worldhistory.org/Late_Period_of_Ancient_Egypt/ (accessed November 17, 2021).

³⁵ B. R. Rees, "Popular Religion in Graeco-Roman Egypt: II. The Transition to Christianity," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 36 (1950): 86–100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3855100>.

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validate longstanding Egyptian values, for example, when Osiris replaced Anubis as the ruler of the dead. This worked out because Osiris became associated with cycles (including life and death and the flooding of the Nile) and Anubis was credited with inventing mummification (which increased in importance moving forward from the Predynastic Period). Furthermore, it is important to consider the circumstances the Ancient Egyptians faced. After each invasion or period of instability in Egyptian history, the Egyptians tried their best to reestablish their traditions and elaborate upon them. A civilization that did not deeply hold certain values and beliefs would not have worked so hard to maintain them. When native Egyptian beliefs finally died out, it was not as a result from the Egyptians themselves denouncing them. Rather, it resulted from the forced dissolution of the Egyptian civilization itself. Although Ancient Egypt was ruled by many pharaohs and sometimes by non-indigenous groups, the examination of the texts and artifacts they left behind communicates what the Egyptians valued and believed as well as the continuity of their beliefs. Understanding the values and beliefs of the Egyptians is important to understand their actions, artifacts, and history as a whole.

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