

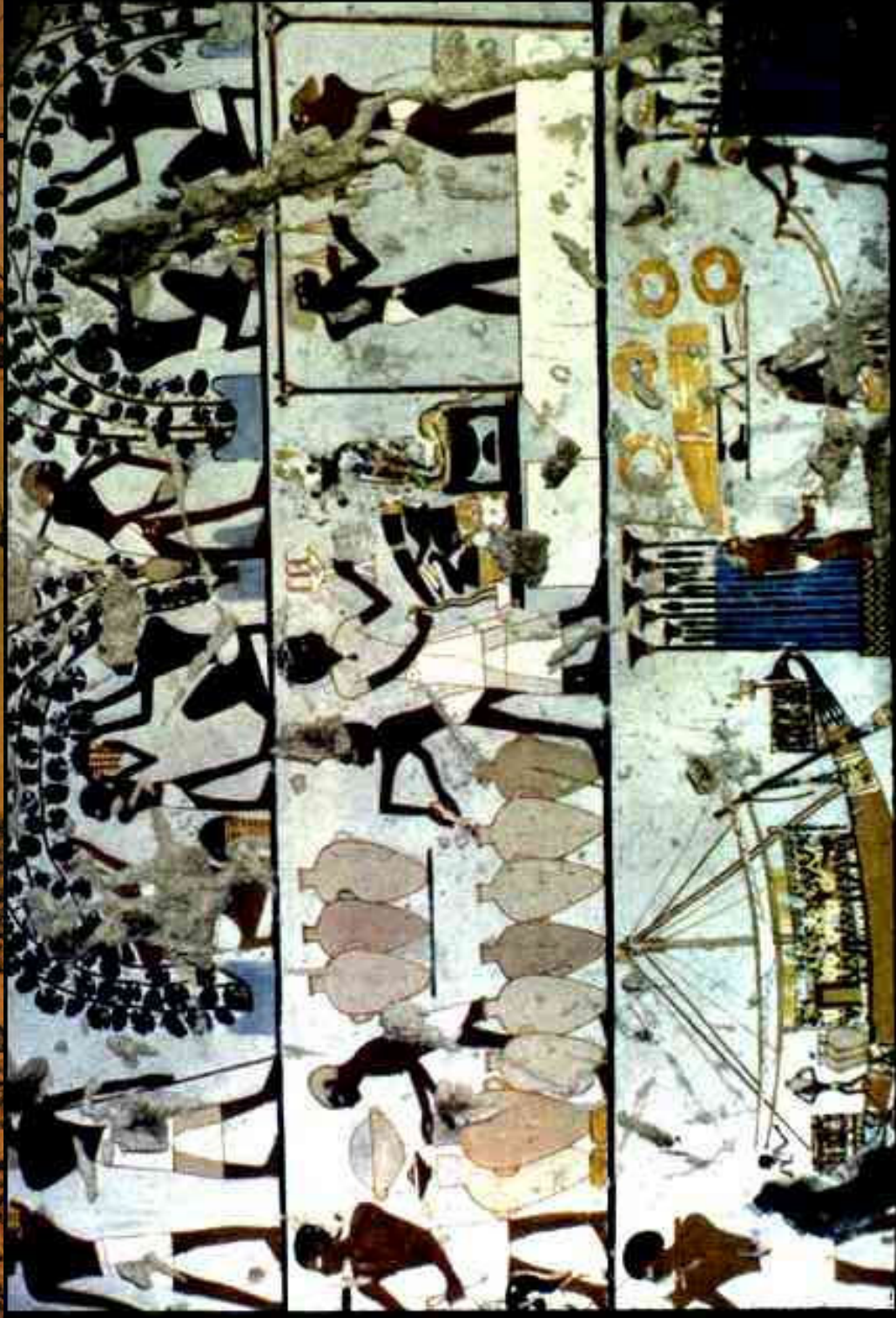


# Ancient Egypt and Nubia

The Culture of the Ancient Egyptians

# Everyday Life of the Ancient Egyptians

Most of the knowledge about the everyday lives of the ancient Egyptians comes from paintings found on the walls of tombs and temples. There are also written records that tell a great deal about what day to day life was for someone living in ancient Egypt.

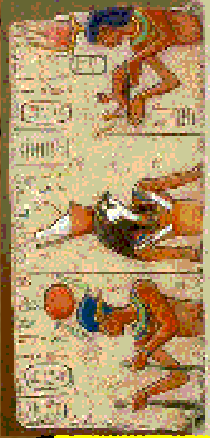


The painting on the right shows Egyptians at work.

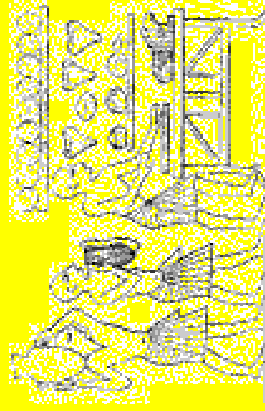
# Social Classes



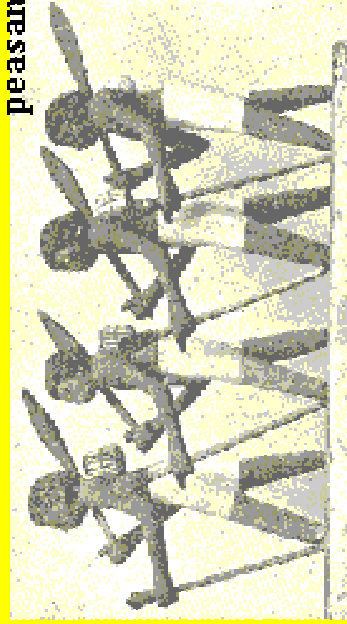
pharaoh



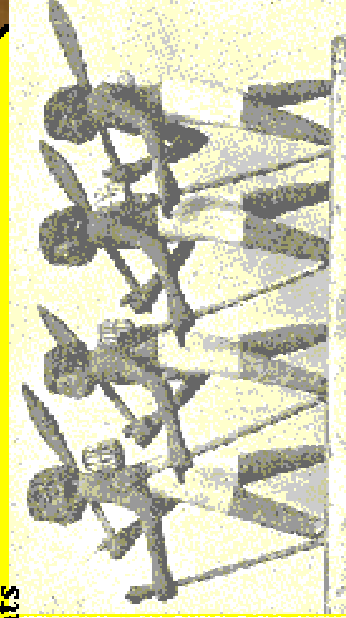
priests and nobles



merchants and  
artisans



peasants



# Egyptian Social Classes

The top class was the pharaoh. The pharaoh was like a god. Every other person was below him.

The class below the pharaoh was the noble class - it was made up of priests, members of the pharaoh's court, and nobles who owned large estates.

The next level was the middle class, which was made up of merchants, artisans, and skilled workers.

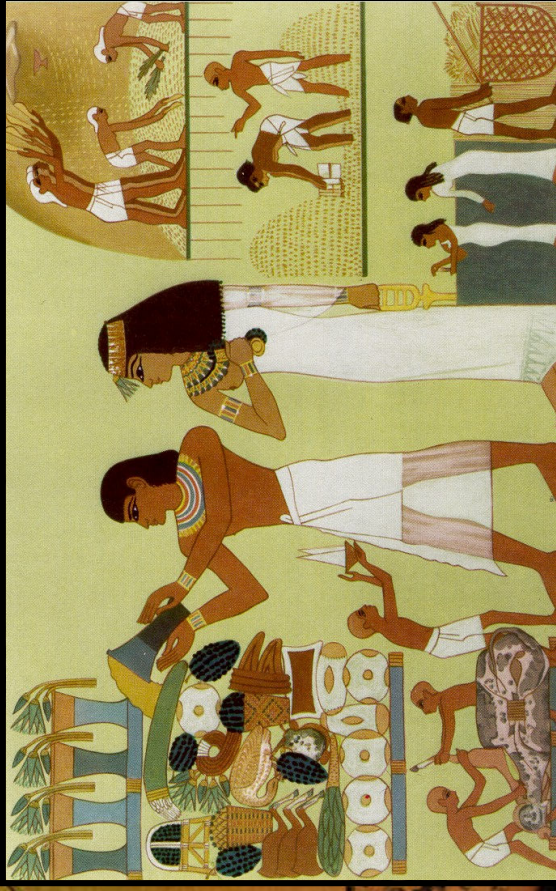
The lowest class, which had the most people, was the peasants. They did all of the hard work, like farming and building temples. They also dug irrigation ditches and built roads.

People could often rise to the next class - usually by serving the pharaoh.

# Lives of the Peasants

Most peasants worked on land that was owned by other, wealthier people. During the flood season, peasants worked on roads, temples, and other buildings. When the flood waters left, they worked in the fields, which had to be planted right away.

The busiest time of year was the harvest. This was the time when the crops were ready to be gathered. Peasants worked from sunrise to sunset during the harvest.



# Egyptian Women

Egyptian women had most of the same rights that men had. They could own property, run businesses, and enter into legal contracts. Some women were priestesses, and were in charge of the temples and the religious practices that went on there.

Women were looked upon as living models of Isis, the wife of the god Osiris. Some women acted as regents until the pharaoh was old enough to rule. There are even examples of women who were pharaohs themselves, such as Hatshepsut and Cleopatra.



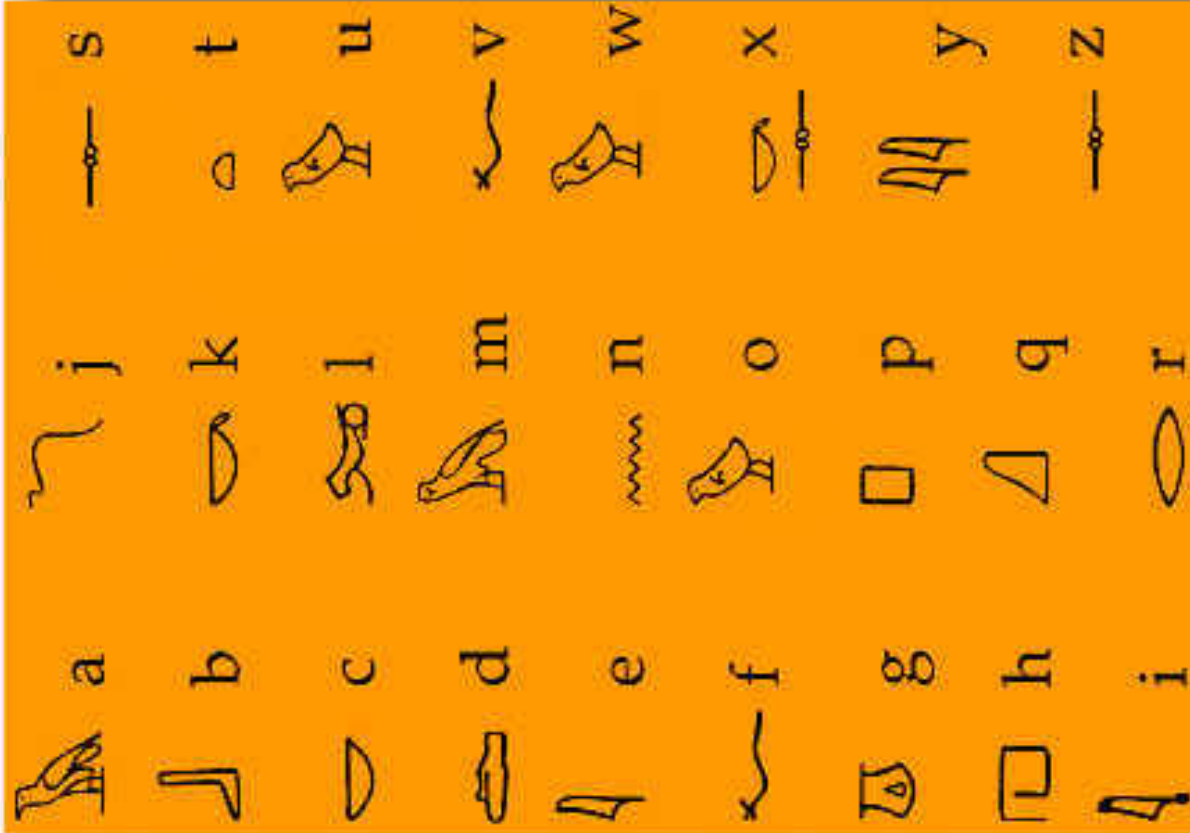
Hatshepsut

# Achievements of the Egyptians

The ancient Egyptians were extremely knowledgeable. They made important advances in architecture, writing, astronomy, and medicine. Egypt was known as a land of great learning.

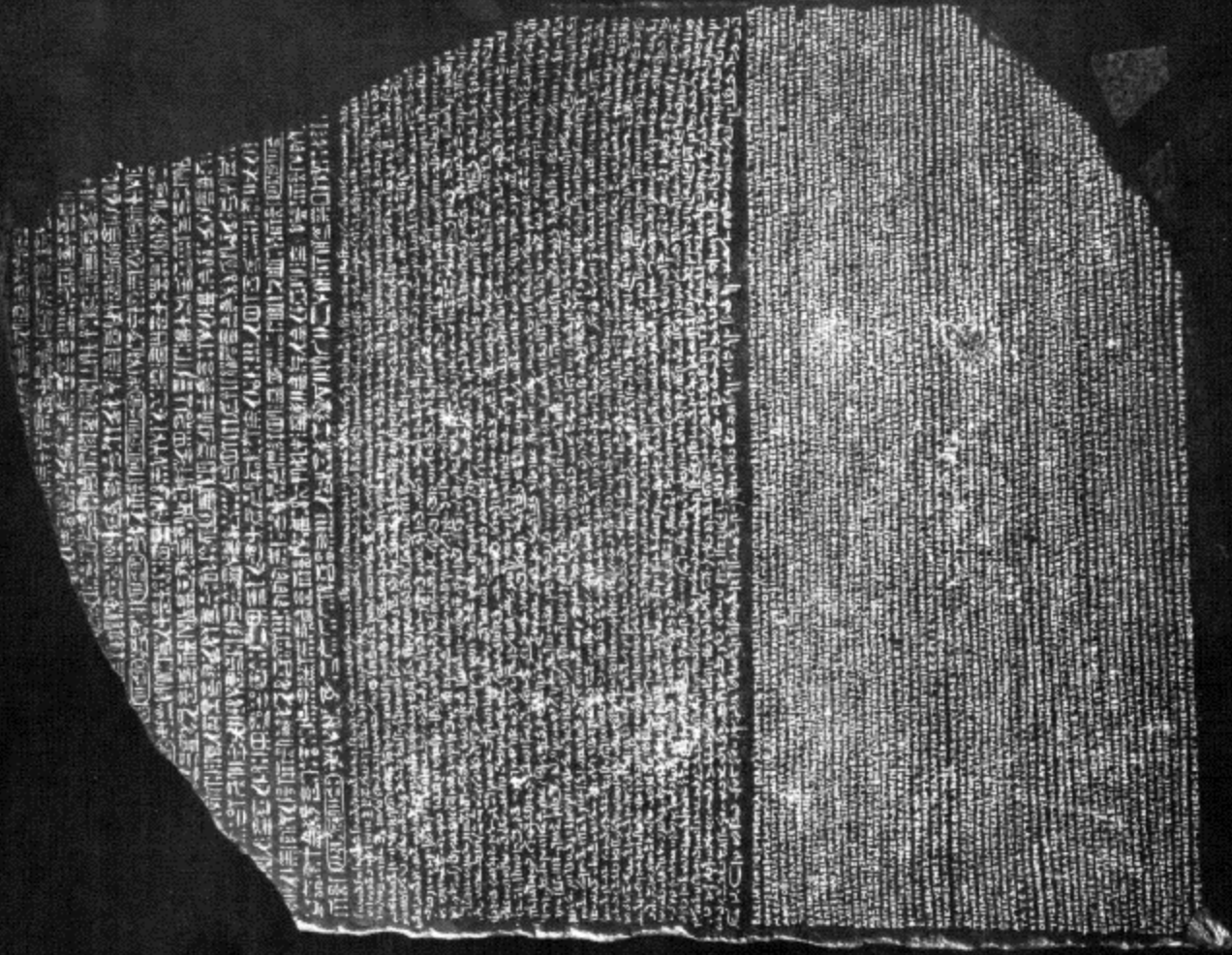
The Egyptians used a system of writing that was similar to the Sumerians. They used picture-like symbols called **hieroglyphs**. In this script, some pictures stand for objects, and some pictures stand for sounds.

At first the Egyptians wrote on clay tablets, like the Sumerians did. Then they found a better surface. They made an early form of paper out of reed like plants found in the marshes of the Nile river delta. The paper was called **papyrus**.



The meaning of the the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs was lost after around 400 AD. Nobody could read the mysterious pictures. Then, in 1799, a soldier digging a fort near the Nile found the **Rosetta Stone**, which was a large black stone with three different types of writing on it. The last type of writing was Greek letters, and people began trying to use the Greek letters to figure out the meaning of the hieroglyphs. Finally, in the 1820's, a young French scholar named Jean Francois Champollion figured it out.

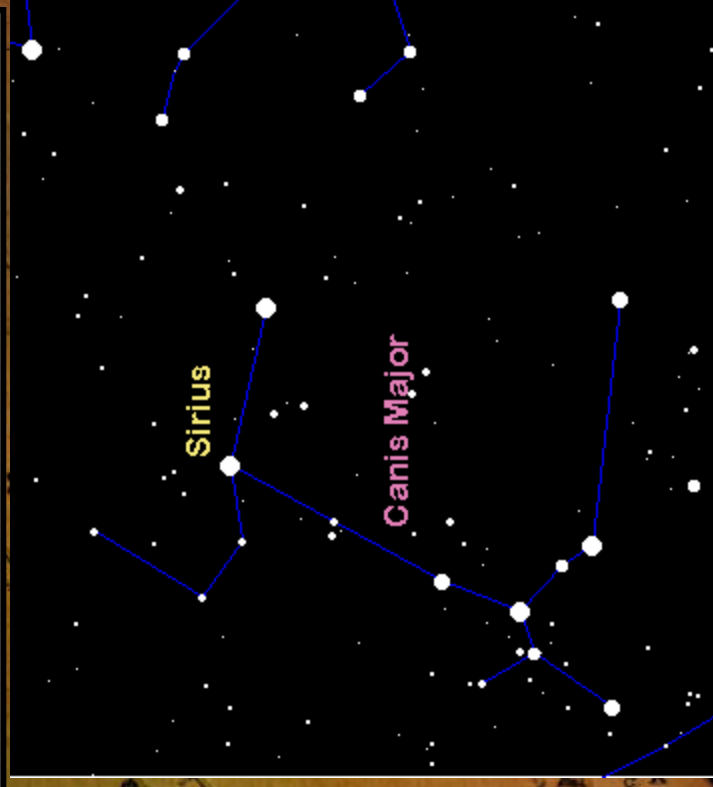
The Rosetta Stone is named after the city that it was discovered near - Rosetta. The Rosetta Stone is on display at the British Museum.



# Keeping Track of Time

The ancient Egyptians depended on farming, so they needed to be able to predict when the Nile would flood. Egyptian **astronomers**, or scientists who studied the stars and other objects in the sky, noticed that the Nile seemed to rise rapidly at the same time that the dog star, Sirius, appeared in the sky shortly before sunrise.

The Egyptians worked out the average time between the appearances of the star Sirius. They found that it came out to be about 365 days, which they used for the length of their year.



# Medicine

The ancient Egyptians knew a lot about the human body. They probably knew so much because of their work on the mummies. The ancient Egyptians learned to perform surgeries. They could set broken bones and even treat spinal injuries.

The ancient Egyptians also practiced **herbalism**, which is the art of creating medicines from plants. They used natural medicines to help with stomachaches and headaches. They made medicines to reduce a child's fever. The ancient Egyptians wrote down a lot of their medical knowledge on papyrus, and the ancient Greeks and Romans used their knowledge centuries later.