

Notes on Quiz #1: God-Kings of Egypt

1. The Nile River impacted the Egyptians by
 - a. never flooding, aiding trade and irrigation
 - b. rarely flooding, but always destructively, forcing Egypt to rebuild
 - c. flooding unpredictably, leaving Egyptians fearful and uncertain
 - d. flooding every year, leaving fertile soil and suggesting a world of cycles and benevolent gods

The annual flooding of the Nile provided permanent, reliable agricultural fertility to the Egyptians. Unlike the Sumerians, they did not have to struggle against nature simply to achieve sustenance from the land. As such they saw nature, and the gods, as benevolent and nurturing.

2. All of the following were true of the pharaohs... EXCEPT:
 - a. The government revolved around the pharaoh, who owned the land and everything it produced
 - b. The pharaohs were considered full-fledged gods, identified with Ra, Horus, and Ptah
 - c. The pharaoh's wife was usually an unrelated noble from a nonroyal clan
 - d. Even the pharaoh was bound by ma'at, the system of order, justice, and harmony mandated for all by the gods

The pharaoh held all power and controlled the government and the land. That said, in an orderly world of cyclical permanence, a worldview that resulted from and was constantly symbolized by the annual flood of the Nile, the Egyptians saw everything as working unchangingly and forever, according to harmony and balance (ma'at). The god with the responsibility to guarantee this balance was Horus, whose agent and manifestation in the human world is the pharaoh. Therefore, the pharaoh had to uphold harmony and benevolence as a manifestation of the gods. As a god, and to preserve the divine bloodline, pharaohs normally married the closest possible relatives, their siblings.

3. Egypt was unified as a single kingdom
 - a. from the beginning
 - b. when the king of Upper Egypt conquered the rest
 - c. only metaphorically, in myth and literature
 - d. by outsiders from Kush, to the far south of Egypt

Lower and Upper Egypt were separate kingdoms for some centuries before the king of Upper Egypt at Abydos, known variously as Menes or Narmer, conquered Lower Egypt and founded what is known as the First Dynasty of the unified kingdom of Egypt.

4. All of the following are true of the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs... EXCEPT:
 - a. It was an ancient writing system of ideograms with over 7,000 symbols
 - b. The Egyptians developed no way to show proper names and foreign words
 - c. A cursive form was used on papyrus, a kind of paper made using the hollow stem of a particular plant
 - d. Its origins lay in the little-known early centuries of Egyptian civilization

Names and foreign words were spelled out using a cartouche, inside which hieroglyphs could be read as sounds, not words.

5. In Tablet 6 of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the goddess Ishtar proposes to Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh
- a. accepts, succumbing to her beauty
 - b. accepts, but on behalf of Enkidu, not himself
 - c. refuses, citing her mistreatment of past lovers
 - d. refuses, saying he must first love himself

Ishtar is entranced by Gilgamesh's beauty and wants to mate with him, but Gilgamesh spurns her advances. He lists the terrible fates of her previous lovers, criticizing her for her capriciousness and vindictive cruelty. — Ultimately he fears the loss of what he has achieved as a man—his identity. Even if Ishtar does not cast him aside, by becoming the consort of a goddess Gilgamesh will leave the society of mortals and so lose his mortal identity.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. Why do you think Egypt was able to unify, but not Sumer?

The main point here is that the city-states of Sumer were in competition for limited resources, and so remained in rivalry with each other and were often hostile. In Egypt, however, the environment provided plenty for all, so there was no need to compete for resources, and everyone had in common the protection and nurturing of the gods—eventually manifested as a single god-king.