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*The Most Successful
Civilization*

最成功的文明



The Egyptian civilization lasted in total for nearly 4,000 years, beginning before 3,100 BC and surviving (in fossilized form) until c. AD 500. That is, it lasted possibly three-quarters of the period between its earliest beginnings and the present day. What is even more remarkable is that throughout its history, through periods of rise, decline and recovery, from flourishing empire to foreign rule, through unity and disunity, Egypt kept its way of life and government comparatively unchanged, intrinsically Egyptian. There is no evidence that Egypt, was indebted to any parent civilization, and no significant civilization branched from it. Since it was “rediscovered” by French scholars in the late eighteenth century its greatest impact upon men’s minds has been through its stereotyped art and hieroglyphic language, its colossal buildings, and its preoccupation with death.

The art of Egypt, though stiff and formal, gives a fascinating insight into the way the Egyptians—or at least the Egyptian ruling class—saw their own society. Egyptian art depicts a highly organized people dependent upon a lifegiving river and the supreme wisdom of a divine king backed by a multiplicity of deities. Today the fertile strip along the banks of the river Nile supports about 30 million people, and as early as 1,200 BC it probably already sustained a tenth of that number. Their prosperity—their very survival—depended not only upon the mere existence of the Nile, but also upon the co-ordination of their efforts to put the vital river to greatest use.

埃及文明始于公元前 3100 年前，一直延续到公元 500 年左右，历时约 4000 年。也就是说，从起源到今天，它持续的时间也许就占了四分之三。更值得一提的是在整个历史时期中，无论兴起、衰亡还是复兴，无论王朝的昌盛还是外族的统治，也无论统一还是分裂，其生活方式和政府组织形式相对说来都没改变，本质上仍是埃及式的。没有证据表明埃及文明是受其他文明的影响而形成的，也无法证明其他重要的文明形式来源于埃及文明。自从 18 世纪末法国学者‘重新发现’埃及文明以来，它以其特有的艺术形式和象形文字、庞大的建筑以及对死亡的潜心关注给人们的思想带来了巨大的冲击。

埃及的艺术虽有些刻板拘谨，但却非常有趣地反映了埃及人——至少是埃及统治阶级对社会的看法。埃及的艺术描绘出了一个组织严密的民族，他们的生活完全依赖一条孕育了其生命的河流和受到众神庇佑的神圣国王的智慧。今天，在尼罗河两岸肥沃的土地上生活着约 3000 万人，而早在公元前 1200 年，这里的人口可能就已达到 300 万。他们的繁荣乃至生存不仅要依赖尼罗河的存在，还得依靠大家齐心协力地充分利用尼罗河。

At the top of Egyptian society was Pharaoh, a divine king who after death joined the pantheon of gods that watched over Egypt. Through his nobles and officials, led by the vizier, he imposed law and economic order throughout the land, employing a large army of priestly clerks called *scribes* as supervisors.

The conscientious scribes regulated agriculture, industry and trade. They set up Nilometers to measure the rise of the river, calculated the size of the coming harvest and the probable tax yield, and allotted funds to various government ministries to finance the ambitious projects of Egypt's economic planners. By controlling traffic on the Nile—the only important trade highway—the scribes brought almost all internal and external trade under their scrutiny. Through their hands passed the precious imports that great economic developers such as Rameses II (who reigned through most of the thirteenth century BC) either purchased or exacted as tribute from Egypt's neighbours. Up the Nile came cedar wood from Lebanon, copper—probably from Cyprus—gold, iron, tin and wine from the Levant and Asia Minor.

Down the Nile from Nubia came amethyst, diorite and more gold; from black Africa, a great variety of animals and animal products. As agricultural production became more and more efficient and the output per head rose, so each generation spared more men to train as artisans. The cities of Egypt became trea-

法老^①处于社会的最上层，具有神圣的地位，他死后会跻身于庇佑埃及的众神之殿。国王之下是由大臣领导的贵族和官员，国王制定的法律和经济法规通过他们得以在全国实施。他们还组建了一支由被称为祭司的僧侣组成的监督队伍。

祭司们的工作是管理工业、农业和商业。他们创立了尼罗计量法来测量尼罗河水的涨落，计算来年的收成和税收，并且负责分配资金到各政府部门，以资助埃及经济策划者们制定的宏伟的经济规划。通过控制当时惟一的重要商业水上要道——尼罗河上的运输，祭司们几乎控制着国内外的所有贸易。伟大的经济发展者，如国王拉美西斯二世（公元前 13 世纪的大部分时间里埃及都在他的统治之下）就是通过向邻国购买或征收贡品而获得许多稀有的进口物品。比如从尼罗河上游黎巴嫩进口香柏木，铜可能来自塞浦路斯，金子、铁、锡和葡萄酒则来自黎凡特和小亚细亚。

此外，他们还从下游地区的努比亚进口了紫晶、闪长岩和更多的黄金，从黑非洲^②引进了各种动物和动物制品。随着农业生产效率的提高以及人均生产量的增加，每一代埃及人中都有越来越多的人加入工匠行业。埃及各城邦成了统治阶级的

① 古埃及君王称号。

② 撒哈拉沙漠以南的非洲地区。

sure houses for the rulers; the temples, magnificent abodes for priests and gods.

The peasants lived more simply. Except in the Nile delta they faced little danger of attack from foreign raiders for the first 2,000 years of Egypt's existence, for unlike the peasants of the Asian Mediterranean mainland, most of them lived in isolation from other peoples. They seldom went short of food and their diet was varied. But they had their grievances, recorded by an unknown scribe who championed their cause. Many of the complaints he voiced—including the lament over payment of taxes—would be familiar to present-day farmers. But in addition the peasant faced an ever-present threat of being taken into the service of Pharaoh: to do forced labour, till his land, build and maintain canals, and construct the great palaces, tombs and temples that survive to this day.

Compared with the citizens of Athens, the Egyptians had hardly any freedom at all. Many were actually slaves—either through the misfortunes of war or because they had fallen into debt. They lived to serve a divine Pharaoh whose officials at every turn laid down how life should be lived. But if they had no freedom, they at least had relative security and, in theory, equality before the law. Egyptian law was in fact highly developed and extraordinarily efficient.

Oratory counted for little, and lawyers had to fight their clients' cases before judges in written, not spoken, words.

聚宝盆 宏伟的寺庙里则供奉着大批的僧侣和神灵。

埃及农民的生活较为简朴。除了尼罗河三角洲地区,其他地区的农民在埃及王国成立最初 2000 年时间里,几乎没有受到外族的入侵。他们同亚洲地中海大陆地区的农民不同,他们中大多数不与外族人生活在一起。他们也很少挨饿,而且食物种类繁多。但根据一位捍卫农民利益的无名祭司的记载,农民也有很多悲哀,其中之一就是繁重的苛税,而这种情况在今天也是司空见惯的。除此之外,农民时刻面临着被抓去为法老服劳役的危险,比如种地、修建或维修运河以及建造那些保留至今的宏伟宫殿、坟墓和寺庙。

同雅典的公民相比,埃及人几乎没有自由可言。事实上,很多埃及人都因为战争或债务沦为奴隶。他们生活的目的就是为神圣的法老服务,而且处处受到官吏们的控制和压迫。即便如此,他们至少也享有相对的人生安全,而且从理论上说,在法律面前人人平等。埃及的法制其实已经高度发达且行之有效。

律师们口才的好坏已无足轻重,在法官面前他们必须以书面的形式,而不是口头的方式替自己的当事人辩护。

Despite foreign invasions and the cultural upheavals across the Mediterranean, Egypt's form of government lasted longer than any other system has ever endured. But the last 1,500 years of Egyptian civilization was only a shadow of the former glory of the kingdom. By c. 1000 BC waves of invaders began to assail the land. Libyans came from the north-west, Ethiopians from the south, and Assyrians from the north-east.

In 525 BC a Persian army captured Egypt; in 332 BC Alexander of Macedonia took the country; and in 30 BC it became merely a Roman province. Long before Moslem armies took Egypt for Islam in the AD 640s, the old civilization had disappeared. Even the perfectly preserved hieroglyphics on the temple walls had become no more than magic signs for the superstitious inhabitants of a decadent country.

By and large, Egypt's bureaucratic despotism served the needs of the country well. But when it passed away practically nothing was inherited by later civilizations.

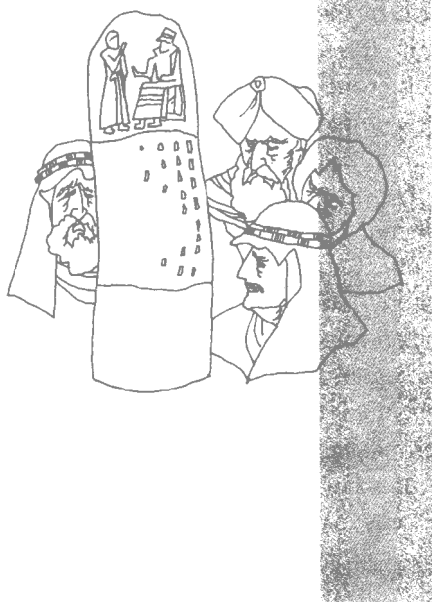
尽管经历了外族的入侵和席卷整个地中海地区的文化动荡,埃及的政府组织形式却是迄今为止持续时间最长的政治体制。然而,最后 1500 年间的埃及文明只不过是曾辉煌过的埃及王国的影子而已。到公元前约 1000 年,埃及遭受到蜂拥而来的入侵者的掠夺。来自西北的利比亚人,来自南面的埃塞俄比亚人,以及来自东北的阿细里亚人都相继攻入了埃及。

公元前 525 年,一支波斯军队占领了埃及;公元前 332 年,马其顿王国的亚历山大率军攻占了整个埃及;公元前 30 年,埃及又沦为罗马帝国的一个行省。早在公元 7 世纪 40 年代穆斯林军队为了传播伊斯兰教而占领埃及以前,古老的埃及文明就已消失殆尽。即便是那些在寺庙壁上保存完好的象形文字,也被后来统治国的居民当作具有魔力的象征而盲目崇拜。

总的说来,埃及的官僚专制体制虽然适应了当时的需要,但在它消亡之后,实际上并未为后来的文明所继承。

Babylon and the Law

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At about the same time as civilization emerged and developed along the banks of the Nile, another great area of civilization appeared north of what is now called the Persian Gulf, between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Already by 3000 BC several city states had been established by *Sumerians* — dark-skinned, non-Semitic people who probably migrated from the east. The Sumerians settled on the flat, fertile plain built up over thousands of years by alluvial deposits from the Euphrates and Tigris flowing southwards into the Persian Gulf. The ruins of Sumerian cities now lie well over a hundred miles north of the Gulf, witness to the fact that the sea has for thousands of years been receding as alluvium built up at the single mouth of the two rivers.

In the course of time, civilization spread northwards from the old Sumerian cities into what the Greeks later called *Mesopotamia* (between the rivers), and by c. 2000 BC the great city of Babylon dominated the Euphrates about 60 miles south of presentday Baghdad. In c. 1800 BC Babylon was the capital city of King Hammurabi, who ranks as one of the greatest law-givers of all time. Hammurabi ruled Babylon for 43 years, during the first 30 years fighting wars against neighbouring peoples to expand the Babylonian empire and establish its supremacy. But when peace came he proved to be even more competent as a law-giver and administrator than as a soldier. His fame as a law-giver arose from the discovery in

几乎在尼罗河沿岸的埃及文明兴起和发展的同时，在幼发拉底河和底格里斯河之间，即今天称作波斯湾的北部地区兴起了另一个伟大的文明区域。在公元前 3000 年前，苏美尔人就建立了好几个城邦国家。他们皮肤黝黑，可能是从东方移民过来的非闪米特人^①。幼发拉底河和底格里斯河由北向南流入波斯湾，经过几千年的沉积，沿途形成了肥沃的平原，苏美尔人便在两河流域定居下来。在今天的波斯湾北部绵延上百英里的地区，分布着苏美尔人城邦的废墟，它们见证了几千年来波斯湾水域随着两河流域带来的泥沙沉积而逐渐变小的历史。

随着时间的推移，苏美尔文明逐渐由原来的城邦朝北扩展至被希腊人称为美索不达米亚（两河流域之间）地区。到公元前 2000 年左右，巴比伦城邦控制了今天巴格达南部约 60 英里地的幼发拉底河流域。在公元前 1800 年左右，国王汉谟拉比^②定都巴比伦。他是历史上最伟大的法律制定者之一。在他统治巴比伦的 43 年之中，有 30 年用于征服邻国以拓宽王国领地，确立自己的统治地位。但在平时期他所表现出来的立法和管理才能甚至超过其军事方面的能力。1901 年人们发现

① 包括希伯来人、巴比伦人、腓尼基人和亚述人。

② 汉谟拉比（？~公元前 1750 年）于公元前 1792~公元前 1750 年在位期间，武力统一美索不达米亚地区，实行中央集权，颁布了《汉谟拉比法典》。

1901 of a stone pillar once stolen from Babylon as a war trophy and now exhibited in the Louvre, Paris. Finely engraved on the pillar is the code of laws that Hammurabi imposed upon his subjects. Hammurabi's ability as an administrator and practical man of business is shown in his letters written to officials in various parts of his empire. The letters, written on clay tablets, and enclosed in clay envelopes, tell us much about the government of Babylon nearly 4,000 years ago. In them Hammurabi instructs his officials on the collection of taxes, on the punishment to be meted out for bribery, or on the procedure for clearing the Euphrates after a flood.

Hydro-engineering works were a special concern of Hammurabi's and he caused a canal to be constructed linking Kish (near Babylon) with the Persian Gulf. It was his proud boast that he brought water, security and good government to the many tribes incorporated into his empire. Below the king, Babylonian society had four main classes: the nobles, the middle class, the poor freemen, and the slaves. All people—even slaves—had definite rights laid down by the law. Slaves could marry free people, and on the death of the slave parent the children became free. But the position of slaves was ambiguous. As people they could appeal to the courts to uphold their rights, but in much of Hammurabi's code they were treated as chattels rather than as people.

The state dealt harshly with poor people who

了一个石柱,从而确立了他在立法史上的地位。该石柱曾作为战利品从巴比伦被掳走,现存于巴黎的罗浮宫。雕刻在石柱上的便是汉谟拉比为他的臣民制定的法典。从汉谟拉比写给各地官员的信函中,我们也可以看出他作为统治者和实干家的能力。这些写在黏土板上并由黏土封好的信函揭示了很多关于约 4000 年前的巴比伦的政治统治情况,内容涉及税收、如何处罚行贿受贿以及如何治理洪灾过后的幼发拉底河等问题。

汉谟拉比特别重视兴修水利工程。他组织人民开凿了一条连接克什(近巴比伦)和波斯湾的运河。让他常感自豪的是他为许多臣服于巴比伦王国的其他部落带来了水源、安全和廉洁的政府。国王之下,巴比伦还有四个主要的阶层:贵族、中产阶级、贫穷的自由人和奴隶。法典对各阶级的人——包括奴隶——的责任和义务都作了明确的规定。奴隶可以和自由人通婚,一旦身为奴隶的父母死后,他们的子女可以马上成为自由人。但是奴隶的地位很不明确。尽管作为人他们有权要求法庭维护他们的权利,但在法典中他们更多是被当作私有财产而不是人来对待。

如果穷人侵犯了贵族的利益,他们就

committed offences against nobles. On the other hand, nobles had to pay double for the services they received.

The Babylonian priesthood formed a powerful class active in agriculture, industry and commerce. From wealthy temples they enforced the worship of Marduk (city god of Babylon), Ishtar (goddess of love) and lesser deities. In theory the king was no more than an agent of Marduk. The priests reinforced their power by exploiting the superstitions of the public. They foretold the future by peering at the entrails of sacrificed animals and by interpreting the message of the stars.

In many ways women fared better in Babylon than they did in nineteenth-century Europe. They had citizenship and legal rights quite independently of their husbands, and some even rose to be judges. They kept control over their own money and could own slaves and run businesses in their own right.

Normally, a man had only one wife, but if she fell permanently sick her husband could remarry provided that he continued to support the invalid. Yet, paradoxically, the man who fell into debt could enslave his wife to a creditor for up to three years. Men could divorce their wives but not without paying them in compensation an amount in silver laid down for each class by law. This financial obligation did not apply if the wife's behaviour towards her husband had been unsatisfactory.

会受到严厉的制裁。另一方面，贵族也必须为他们所得到的服务付出双倍的价钱。

巴比伦的祭司构成了一个很有权势的阶层，他们活跃于农业、工业和商业等领域。他们在富有的神庙里供奉着马杜克（巴比伦的主神太阳神）、伊师塔（爱神）和其他一些次要的神灵。从理论上说，国王也只不过是太阳神马杜克的代言人。祭司们通过观察所供奉的动物内脏和星相来预测未来，他们利用迷信来强化自己的权势。

巴比伦妇女的地位在很多方面都比19世纪欧洲妇女的地位要高。她们不依赖丈夫，有自己的公民权和法律权，甚至还出现过女法官。她们还可以自由支配自己的钱财，可以拥有自己的奴隶，经营自己的生意。

一般说来，男人只能有一个妻子。如果妻子得了久治不愈的疾病，丈夫可以再娶，但必须保证继续赡养患病的妻子。但自相矛盾的是，如果丈夫欠了债务，可以将妻子卖给债主为奴，时间可以多达三年。丈夫可以与妻子离婚，但必须付给妻子一定数目的银子作为补偿，数目的大小根据他所处阶级的法律而定。如果妻子的表现令丈夫不满意，丈夫可以不提供任何经济赔偿。