Press Release

CaixaForum Madrid

From October 17, 2018 to January 20, 2019
The new exhibition at CaixaForum Madrid allows visitors to discover the true significance of kingship in this ancient civilisation.

The pharaohs, rulers of the Two Lands, were responsible for protecting Egypt against its enemies and ensuring the order of the universe. They governed Egypt from approximately 3000 BC until the Roman conquest in 30 BC. The images and objects that have survived from Ancient Egypt cast light on the reality of an empire that has fascinated people throughout history.

Pharaoh: King of Egypt is a new exhibition organised by "la Caixa" Foundation in collaboration with the British Museum. The show explores the symbolism, ideals and ideology of Egyptian kingship through 164 objects selected to uncover the realities of this ancient civilisation. These outstanding pieces include fine gold jewellery, monumental statues and superb carved reliefs from the temples and together they allow visitors to learn more about royal life and power in Ancient Egypt.

Madrid, 16 October 2018. At CaixaForum Madrid today, Elisa Durán, Deputy General Director of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, Marie Vandenbeusch, Lead Curator, and Neal Spencer, Co-curator and Keeper, British Museum Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, will officially open the new show organised by the two institutions: Pharaoh: King of Egypt.

In its programme of cultural projects, "la Caixa" Foundation pays particular attention to the great cultures of the past. The resulting exhibitions are designed to illustrate the various ways in which men and women from different places and times have sought to answer the great universal questions and to expand our understanding of the world through the latest historical and archaeological investigations. In recent years, the Foundation has presented various aspects of ancient Egyptian civilisation through a series of exhibitions: Nofret the Beautiful; Nubia: The Kingdoms of the Nile in Sudan; Egyptian Mummies: The Secret of Eternal Life; and Animals and Pharaohs: The Animal Kingdom in Ancient Egypt.

On this occasion, the new exhibition jointly organised by "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum as part of the strategic alliance between the two institutions presents a unique opportunity to learn about this ancient culture through the figure of the pharaoh.

The human face of the gods

Pharaoh: King of Egypt explores the symbolism, ideals and ideology of Egyptian kingship by revealing the stories of the objects and images that have come down to us from that ancient civilisation.

Hundreds of gods were worshipped in Ancient Egypt, and the pharaoh was believed to be associated with them in different ways. According to the ancient myths, before the first pharaoh, Egypt was ruled by the gods. As high priest, the pharaoh oversaw the construction of the great temples where rituals were celebrated. Royal burials, beneath the
pyramids or in the Valley of the Kings, were designed to ensure that the pharaoh was reborn as Osiris, lord of the Underworld or Land of the Dead.

Besides this divine nature, the pharaoh was also often represented as a brave warrior, a mastermind of military strategy, ruthlessly crushing his enemies. The pharaoh led his armies in order to maintain peace in the country and to expand its borders. However, Egypt suffered many costly defeats against Roman and Nubian forces, among others. Moreover, despite their status as rulers of the Two Lands, credited with having unified Upper and Lower Egypt, the truth is that the pharaohs were unable to prevent great internal tensions. At times, Egypt was divided by civil war, conquered by foreign powers or ruled by competing kings.

Through statues and monuments, the pharaohs carefully built up their identity, projecting an idealised image of themselves, whether as powerful warriors protecting Egypt against its enemies or as fervent worshippers of the gods, as they acted as intermediaries between these divine beings and the rest of humanity. Behind these representations of royalty, however, the reality was much more complex. Not all the country’s rulers were male, or even Egyptian, such as the ancient Macedonian king and ruler, Alexander the Great. Evidence has also been found of conspiracies to assassinate the king, and of coups d’état.

Whatever their country of origin, and whether they were men or women, the Egyptian rulers were defined by the royal symbols they adopted: for example, they inscribed their names on cartouches (oval frames) or wore the uraeus (rearing cobra) on their brow. While some pharaohs were the object of veneration – such as Thutmose III, who created the largest empire that Egypt had ever seen, or Amenhotep I, who was worshipped as a god after his death – others were condemned to oblivion. Such was the case of Akhenaton, who sparked enormous religious uproar by introducing the cult of the sun-disc Aten as the only national god.
The exhibition, which is divided into ten sections, examines the figure of these Egyptian rulers from all perspectives: as divine beings, installed at the centre of the social structure, inspiring symbols and beliefs that went beyond earthly existence; in their life at the palace, surrounded by their family; as king; as warrior; and so on. Consideration is also given to the fact that the pharaohs were not always Egyptian in origin.

**Monumental statues, glittering jewels and more unusual objects**

The exhibition presents 164 outstanding pieces from the Egyptian collection of the British Museum, one of the finest of its kind in the world, which provides the most complete and comprehensive view of Ancient Egypt.

The objects on show enable the visitor to appreciate the many skills of ancient Egyptian artists, while illustrating the image that the pharaohs wished to transmit of themselves.

These works show us the faces of the pharaohs, with their impressive, solemn demeanour. Here, too, are coronation scenes in which the Pharaoh is surrounded by the gods amidst explosions of joy, and stelae in which he is depicted with his arms crossed – a posture associated with Osiris – transformed, in turn, into a god. These fascinating artworks are accompanied by texts that provide a glimpse of the world in which they were created and describe the scenarios in which the lives of the pharaohs unfolded: the temple, the palace, parties, memory, ways of legitimising and transmitting power, the Afterlife and so on.

The visitor is invited to discover a selection of monumental statues, stone reliefs from ancient temples, papyrus documents, jewellery and ritual objects. The exhibits also include several unique works: the statue of the falcon-god Ra-Horakhty; the impressive head of Pharaoh Thutmose III in green siltstone; tiles from the palace of Ramses III; a marble bust of Alexander the Great; and so on.
The show also features a selection of more unusual objects: the colourful inlays used to decorate a pharaoh's palace; the letters inscribed in cuneiform on clay tablets that bear witness to the intense diplomatic activities between Egypt and Babylon during the 18th dynasty; the wooden bow of one of the Pharaoh's troop commanders; a papyrus recording a trial for temple robbery; and images of Nubian, Greek and Roman rulers who acted as Pharaoh.

To complement these works, the exhibition also includes three audiovisual features – two videos and an interactive. The first video presents the geography of the ancient Egyptian civilisation, while the second explores the evolution of royal tombs in ancient Egypt. Finally, the interactive Lista de reyes (List of Kings) represents an Egyptian carved stone – five metres long in reality – with incisions, but incomplete. The purpose of this piece is to enable visitors to learn about how pharaohs constructed their legitimacy by linking themselves to some of their predecessors choosing to leave out others.

A visit to an Egyptian landscape in the education section

In line with the goal of making the exhibition accessible to all audiences, the exhibit Pharaoh: the Image of Egypt is installed in the education section. Here, visitors will feel immersed in an Egyptian landscape and will select and dress the king with all the attributes that give him power and prestige.

Moreover, parallel to the show, a full programme of activities for all audiences will be organised. These activities include a lecture by the curator, Marie Vandenbeusche, specific guided tours for senior citizens, families and schools groups, and Night of the Pharaohs. This event, part of the Summer Nights programme organised on Wednesdays throughout July and August, features such activities as a show cooking session and lecture and a visit to the exhibition accompanied by the ballerina Anna Hierro.

A season of lectures, The Egypt of the Pharaohs, will also take place. This cycle will include a new lecture format designed for the whole family, presented by the archaeologist Núria Rosselló.

As usual, moreover, the project is completed by the publication of a catalogue, jointly produced by "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum and coordinated by the exhibition curator, Marie Vandenbeusche
Press Release

Third exhibition jointly organised with the British Museum

Pharaoh: King of Egypt was first seen as a travelling exhibition that visited several British cities between 2011 and 2013. The selection of objects included in the show and the themes explored were later extended for international exhibition. CaixaForum Barcelona now hosts the show after its visit to Cleveland Museum of Art.

This is the third in a series of four projects jointly organised by "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum for presentation at various CaixaForum centres over a four-year period (2016-2020). The exhibitions are all based on the British Museum’s collections of objects from across ancient and global history, which are among the finest in the world. The show The Pillars of Europe was the first fruit of this new stage in the collaboration between the two institutions, followed later by Competition in Ancient Greece.

This collaboration is born of the determination of both institutions to promote knowledge by jointly organising major exhibition projects based on the British Museum’s collections.

In September 2015, Sir Richard Lambert, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the British Museum, and Elisa Durán, Assistant General Manager of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, signed a collaboration agreement between the two institutions for the coming years. The agreement serves to intensify a relationship based on a long-standing understanding between the two institutions, which have regularly worked together for several decades. The British Museum has always been a key source of works on loan for the exhibitions that "la Caixa" devotes to the great cultures of the world.

This ambitious agreement forms part of a line of action pursued by "la Caixa" Foundation in recent years to establish strategic alliances with leading cultural institutions around the world with the goal of intensifying the organisation's cultural activities and generating synergies with different international centres of the highest standing.
KEY OBJECTS OF THE EXHIBITION

Section 2  **Granite statue of the god Ra-Horakhty**  
19th Dynasty, reign of Ramses II, about 1279-1213 BC.  
Tell el-Maskhuta, Egypt

This statue depicts the falcon god Ra-Horakhty, protecting the name of Pharaoh Ramses II enclosed within a cartouche (oval frame). The name of this god, which can be translated ‘Ra-Horus of the two horizons’, represents the union between the sun-god Ra and the sky-god Horus. Both can be represented as a falcon. The hieroglyphic inscription upon the base describes Ra-Horakhty as ‘great god, lord of the sky’. The statue is one of many created during the 66-year-long reign of Pharaoh Ramses II, as part of a temple building programme that extended beyond Egypt into Nubia. These temples were decorated with depictions and descriptions of his military victories. Statues such as this convey how the pharaoh was protected by the gods. This statue was found at Tell el-Maskhuta, east of the Nile Delta, a town apparently uninhabited during the reign of Ramses II. The statue was probably moved there to decorate a temple built by a later pharaoh.

Section 3  **Green siltstone head of Pharaoh Thutmose III**  
18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479-1425 BC  
Karnak, Thebes, Egypt

The white crown was the symbol of Upper Egypt. Its origins can be traced to the beginning of ancient Egyptian history and were linked to the vulture goddess Nekhbet, protector of this region. Usually worn by the pharaoh to claim supremacy over Upper Egypt, it is generally associated with the *uraeus* (rearing cobra), here finely carved on the forehead of the pharaoh. This head preserves no inscription, but the king can be identified as Pharaoh Thutmose III by the style of the delicate facial features. After a long co-regency with his stepmother, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III extended his empire to its greatest extent, with several military expeditions northwards through Syria-Palestine and southwards into Nubia. His prosperous reign is characterised by high quality sculptures produced in the royal workshops.
Section 4  
*Black basalt slab with depiction of Pharaoh Nectanebo I*

30th Dynasty, reign of Nectanebo I, about 380-362 BC  
Egypt

Making offerings to the gods was an important task of the pharaoh. Temples were decorated with many scenes, including those depicting the pharaoh presenting food, drink and precious items to various gods. Here Pharaoh Nectanebo I offers a lump of incense. Although the scene has been partially erased by hammering, the hieroglyphs which describe the offering still remain. Pharaoh Nectanebo I, founder of the last Egyptian dynasty, repelled Persian attempts to invade Egypt by calling on the assistance of Greek soldiers. Under his rule, Egypt experienced a cultural renaissance and his reign was notable for innovation, both in terms of temple building and portraiture. He launched a massive project to build temples across the country. He also recognised illustrious ancestors through his throne name Kheperkara, which is the same as that of Pharaoh Senusret I who ruled about 1600 years earlier.

Section 5  
*Red granite relief of Pharaoh Osorkon II from his Sed-festival gateway*

22nd Dynasty, reign of Osorkon II, about 874-850 BC  
Temple of Bastet, Bubastis, Egypt

The celebration of the Sed-festival is known throughout Egyptian history. Normally occurring after 30 years of a reign, it comprised a series of rituals designed to rejuvenate the pharaoh for the following years. These included running around boundary markers, processions and offerings. Several kings built large monuments to commemorate their Sed-festivals. This stone block is from a monumental gateway found in the temple of the goddess Bastet, at Bubastis in the Nile Delta. It depicts some of the events which occurred during the Sed-festival. On this relief, Pharaoh Osorkon II is shown inside a kiosk facing the goddess Bastet, a protector and warrior deity with the head of a lioness. The pharaoh wears the traditional cloak of the Sed-festival. In front of the king, some priests recite spells while others perform ritual running or prepare offerings.
Section 6  *Faience tiles from the palace of Ramses III*
20th Dynasty, reign of Ramses III, about 1184-1153 BC
Tell el-Yahudiya, Egypt

Palaces, like houses, were mainly built of sun-dried mudbrick, while stone was largely reserved for temples to the gods. Though mudbrick rarely lasts as it is eroded by rain and wind, the survival of fragments of paintings and faience (a glazed material similar to ceramic) inlays indicate that they were once lavishly decorated places, fit for a pharaoh. Many palaces featured plant motifs, depicting the fertile and lively landscape of Egypt. Royal names were also used as ornamental elements to commemorate the king who built the palace. The examples of decoration shown here include parts of the names of Pharaoh Ramses III preserved from a palace at Tell el-Yahudiya in Northern Egypt, which is now largely destroyed. Two tiles depict the *rekhyt* bird, which symbolises the population under the pharaoh’s authority. The bird sits upon a basket, forming a hieroglyphic text that can be read as, ‘all the subjects of Pharaoh’, emphasising to visitors how the pharaoh held ultimate control over all people in Egypt. Scenes depicting foreign prisoners were also found in palaces, evoking the pharaoh’s domination over other regions.

Section 7  *Granodiorite stone statue of government official Sennefer*
18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479-1425 BC
Thebes, Egypt

Sennefer was a powerful official within the Egyptian government under Pharaoh Thutmose III. His position enabled him to order this high quality statue. The block statue, a type invented at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty (first half of the 20th century BC), depicts a seated man wearing a cloak, a reference to the rebirth of the god Osiris after his death. Sennefer is also known for having commissioned at least two other statues and a beautifully decorated tomb in the necropolis (burial ground) at Thebes. Statues of loyal officials were often placed inside temples as a favour by the king. This example may have been situated in the funerary temple of Pharaoh Thutmose III. Through the intermediary action of his statue, Sennefer hoped to benefit from the daily offerings given to the gods. These advantages are described in the lengthy hieroglyphic inscription carved on the front of the statue, where Sennefer asks to be provided with funerary offerings after his death.
Section 8 *Limestone door jamb from the tomb of General Horemheb*
18th Dynasty, reigns of Tutankhamun-Horemheb, about 1336-1295 BC
Saqqara, Egypt

Pharaoh Horemheb was not expected to become a king. He was probably unrelated to the royal family, but served under several pharaohs until becoming an army General under Pharaoh Tutankhamun. After a successful career in the army, Horemheb came to the throne, taking advantage of the instability following Tutankhamun’s death. He ruled for almost thirty years, during which many temples across Egypt were renovated or extended. He built two tombs: his original tomb in Saqqara was never used, as once he became pharaoh, a royal burial place was prepared in the Valley of the Kings in Thebes. This doorjamb comes from his original tomb. It depicts Horemheb as an army General, with hands raised in prayer to the sun god Ra. He wears an elaborate costume made of different layers of cloth, which is typical of this period. Though never used for his burial, the tomb in Saqqara was opened to visitors during his reign, and the *uraeus* (rearing cobra) was added to depictions of the General’s forehead to acknowledge he had become king.

Section 9 *Graywacke stone statue of Pharaoh Senusret III*
12th Dynasty, reign of Senusret III, about 1874-1855 BC
Elephantine, Egypt

*Limestone head of a Ptolemaic pharaoh*
Ptolemaic period, about 332-30 BC
Egypt

*Marble head of Alexander the Great*
Macedonian period, reign of Alexander the Great, about 332-323 BC
Temple of Aphrodite, Cyrene, Libya

Pharaoh Senusret III is shown wearing the *nemes* (headcloth) with the *uraeus* (rearing cobra) on his brow. These symbols of kingship were used and copied from the earliest dynasties. Later, foreign kings adopted these symbols but often depicted in their own style, as shown by this head of a Ptolemaic (Greek) ruler. Alexandria in Lower Egypt had become the newly founded Greek capital and unlike the Egyptian temples, its palaces were decorated with statues in the Greek style, very similar to this head of Alexander the Great.
Section 10 *Fragment from the sarcophagus lid of Pharaoh Ramses VI*
20th Dynasty, reign of Ramses VI, about 1143-1136 BC
Tomb of Ramses VI, Valley of the Kings, Thebes, Egypt

Pharaohs of the New Kingdom were buried in large and impressive sarcophagi (stone coffins), which in turn housed one or more smaller coffins. Broken pieces of the sarcophagus of Pharaoh Ramses VI, such as this upper part of the lid, were found in his grave in the Valley of the Kings. It was left behind by robbers who had stripped the tomb of precious metals and other valuable items. At times, such tomb robbery was a state-controlled activity intended to recycle precious materials for other uses.

The body of Pharaoh Ramses VI was eventually recovered at the end of the 19th century. He was no longer located in his own grave, but had been moved to that of Pharaoh Amenhotep II who had reigned almost 300 years before him. This tomb had been used to gather together the remains of royal burials from across the Valley of the Kings, which were at risk from looters who were plundering the tombs. Ancient texts record these tomb robberies, including that of the tomb of Ramses VI.
SECTION OF THE EXHIBITION

1. **Egypt, land of the pharaohs**

Pharaohs ruled Egypt in North Africa from about 3000 BC until the Roman conquest in 30 BC. Behind an apparent unity, many changes – economic, technological, artistic and political – transformed the country. Moreover, power was sometimes shared with invaders coming from mighty nearby kingdoms. In spite of these changes, however, the inherent flexibility of the Egyptian monarchy allowed it to persist for over three millennia. Pharaoh represented the gods on Earth, maintaining *maat* (universal order) and protecting Egypt from her enemies. This exhibition explores the ideals, beliefs and symbolism of Egyptian kingship, but also seeks to uncover the realities behind these ideas.

Ancient Egyptians recorded years following the reign of each pharaoh. For example, year five of the reign of Ramses II is equivalent to about 1274 BC. In modern times, we are familiar with the system of dynasties (related groups of rulers), which was first created by Manetho, an Egyptian priest who lived during the third century BC. These dynasties were later organised into larger periods of history known as the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, which are interspersed with Intermediate Periods, during which the state was often not centralised. Ramses II is thus the third pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty, within the New Kingdom.

**Egypt and her geography**

Egypt has always been defined by the river Nile, which flows from Upper Egypt in the south to Lower Egypt in the north, where it fans into a delta with several channels running into the Mediterranean Sea. Beyond the Nile valley, the land gives way to arid desert.

The land surrounding the Nile was very fertile, thanks to the silt deposited by the river’s annual floods. Ancient Egyptians found ways to channel the water of the Nile, making year-round agriculture possible. The Nile was also the main transport route in Egypt, although cataracts made journeys difficult in the south, as boats had to be unloaded and carried around the dangerous rapids. This did not deter expeditions from travelling to distant lands in search of valuable and exotic goods, such as ebony and elephant tusks. Often commanded by royal decree, these expeditions were essential to the prestige of the pharaohs. Donkeys were used to carry goods along caravan routes across the deserts surrounding the Nile valley, where stones and precious metals were mined.

Upper and Lower Egypt were once known as the Two Lands and, in times of stability, they were ruled as one country. A strong pharaoh was necessary to control such a vast territory and help keep peace with its many neighbours: Nubians in the south, Libyans in the west, and the states of Hatti, Mitanni, Assyria and Persia in the north-east. The relationship with these peoples and states changed over three millennia, from enemies to allies. Depending on the outcomes of Egyptian military campaigns and diplomacy, the borders of the pharaohs’ empire shifted.

2. **Born of the Gods**

Hundreds of gods were worshipped in ancient Egypt, and the pharaoh was believed to be associated with them in different ways. Ancient myths recount how Egypt was governed by gods before the first pharaoh. The last divine ruler was the hawk-headed...
god Horus, of whom the pharaoh was considered an incarnation. At his death, each pharaoh transformed into the god Osiris, father of Horus and lord of the underworld. His successor became the new Horus on Earth.

The kings constantly used their relationship to the gods as a proof of their right to reign: they acted as both representatives of the gods and intermediaries between human and divine beings. Images depicting the pharaoh's relationship to the gods cover the walls of ancient Egyptian temples. Scenes of creation mythology are often depicted alongside those showing offerings being made to the gods in return for a fertile Nile flood and a prosperous reign. These offerings could include milk, bread, wine or figurines of the goddess Maat. Depictions of military victories are also shown on temple facades, presenting the pharaoh as a mighty warrior who dominates his enemies.

3. Symbols of power
Magnificent clothing and elaborate jewellery distinguished the pharaoh from ordinary people. His power was symbolised by a range of different crowns, each with a specific meaning, as well as the uraeus (rearing cobra) placed on his brow. For example the double crown, a combination of the red crown of Lower Egypt and the white crown of Upper Egypt, indicated his control over the united country.

The pharaoh had a titulary made of a multitude of names, titles and epithets. These held important symbolic meanings and were carefully chosen to indicate devotion to a certain god or connection to a previous ruler. Pharaoh had usually five royal names. Two of these, the throne name and the birth name, were depicted within separate cartouches (oval frames) surrounded by a knotted rope as a form of protection.

4. Temples: the kings and the gods
The Egyptian word for temple (Hut-netjer) means ‘House of God’. Egyptian temples featured a succession of courtyards and halls with columns, leading to the most sacred area, which only a small number of priests could access. This contained the statue of the main god of the temple. Temples were essential to the relationship between the pharaoh and the gods, with some being repeatedly extended and modified by successive kings. Existing temples were often dismantled and reused, with names of the new pharaoh inscribed over those of his predecessors.

As High Priest, the pharaoh was expected to perform the most important religious ceremonies such as the daily ritual of offering, clothing and feeding the god. In reality, priests across the country performed these rituals on his behalf. If the gods were pleased, they would reward Egypt with stability and the pharaoh with a long and prosperous reign.

5. Festivals and memory
Many religious festivals were celebrated in Egypt’s temples and some were an opportunity for the population to interact with the gods, or at least their statues. One of the most important was the Sed-festival, intended to reinvigorate the pharaoh’s powers and his right to rule over Egypt. During this ceremony, the pharaoh had to perform various physical rituals to prove he was fit to defend his country.

The memory of previous rulers was an important element of Egyptian culture – both in official religion and in personal beliefs – as saintly figures who could intervene in day-to-day lives. Some pharaohs were worshipped as gods after their death thanks to their earthly deeds.
By contrast, the names of some other pharaohs were erased from official monuments. The names of Pharaoh Hatshepsut, who temporarily ruled in place of her stepson Thutmose III, and of Amenhotep IV (later Akhenaton) who caused a religious uproar by worshipping a single god (the sun-disc Aten), were desecrated by later kings. The pharaohs from periods of political or religious instability were generally omitted from royal lists.

Official texts, such as those found in temples, present an ideal kingship with the pharaoh successful as a priest, a king and a warrior. Fortunately for modern-day Egyptologists, some literary texts also allow an insight into less official ideas about the pharaohs.

6. Royal life: palace and family
Royal palaces were built all across Egypt. As well as providing living quarters for the royal family, palaces were also the setting for rituals and ceremonies, and included rooms for official guests and foreign visitors. In contrast to temples which were built in stone, palaces were mainly made of sun-dried mudbrick, so few have survived to the modern day. However, colourful inlays and paintings found in some show the original splendour of these places.

Egyptian royal families were very large. The pharaoh would take a principal queen as well as several other wives. Diplomatic alliances were formed or strengthened through marriage with daughters of foreign rulers. Many children were born from these royal unions. Pharaoh Ramses II is believed to have fathered over 40 sons and 40 daughters with several wives.

Precious goods
Jewellery and other objects of daily life have rarely been found in palaces, but many examples have been discovered inside royal tombs. The finest materials, such as gold, semi-precious stones and glass, were worked by skilled artists in royal workshops. Most of the raw materials arrived through trade with other lands or from tributes paid by conquered territories. A painting from the tomb of Sobekhotep, chancellor during the reign of Pharaoh Thutmose IV (around 1400-1390 BC), shows Nubian men carrying gold rings, ebony, leopard skins, nuggets of red jasper and giraffe tails offered in tribute to the pharaoh. Although the ancient Egyptian economy was based on trade rather than money, standard measures of gold, silver and copper were often used for business transactions.

7. Running Egypt: Officials and government
Texts surviving from ancient Egypt reveal that the pharaoh ruled over a complex administrative system designed to maintain religious, economic and political control over the country. He was supported by one or two viziers (the highest ranking government officials) to oversee a vast network of scribes, priests and administrators.

In tombs and temples across the land, high officials recorded their lives and their most important acts. They often exaggerated their personal skills and participation in events, and wrote about what brought them wealth and power. Very little is known of ordinary people or those who held lower positions. The vast majority of Egyptians were farmers who were not provided with lavish burials: their names remain unknown.
8. **War and diplomacy**
Defending Egypt and building an empire were central obligations of the pharaoh. Temple façades were covered with scenes of the pharaoh as a warrior, fighting in battles and crushing enemies. Although the pharaohs were usually depicted as victorious, the reality was often very different, if less well-documented. Egypt frequently suffered periods of civil war and was invaded many times by foreign armies. Nubians, Persians, Libyans, Greeks and Romans all attacked and ruled the country at different times. These facts are usually absent from the official version of events, instead being described in private documents which sometimes mention battles that were lost.

Military action was not the only way that Egypt encountered its neighbours; diplomatic alliances were also an important part of managing foreign relations. Exchanges of gifts and political marriages were used to help maintain peaceful relationships with neighbours.

9. **Foreigners on the throne**
Egypt experienced several invasions and periods when foreign powers ruled the country. During these times, most foreign kings adopted the iconography and traditions of ancient Egypt, depicting themselves as pharaohs and taking royal titles and regalia. This approach sought to appease the local population. Some were interested in the history and beliefs of the country and copied art and traditions that were already centuries old.

Foreign kings maintained traditional religious beliefs by showing devotion to Egyptian gods. Greek kings and Roman Emperors were great builders of temples dedicated to Egyptian gods, in which they represented themselves as traditional pharaohs. However, these rulers also continued to worship their own gods in their native countries where they were rarely depicted as pharaohs.

10. **An eternal life: the death of pharaoh**
At his death, the pharaoh was believed to journey to the underworld. Magical texts, spells, tomb decorations and burial equipment would provide the pharaoh with everything needed for the journey. On arrival, the pharaoh would be assimilated with the god Osiris, lord of the dead, ruler of the underworld, and one of the mythical rulers of Egypt before the arrival of mankind. In death, the pharaoh was also associated with other gods, including the solar god Ra. Like the sun, the pharaoh would travel each night through the underworld to be reborn every day at dawn.

**Royal burials**
To help the pharaoh on his journey to a new and eternal life, a grand tomb was constructed to hold his body. Building would start very early in his reign to make sure everything was ready at his death. The structure of royal tombs changed throughout history. Pyramids were built during the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Later, tombs were dug into the hillside of the Valley of the Kings in Thebes to disguise the actual location of the tombs and their precious contents. Each tomb was finely decorated with protective magical texts and descriptions of rituals. Despite all these precautions, almost all the tombs were looted, mostly during antiquity.

Many valuable objects were deposited in royal tombs, including furniture, jewellery and food. They demonstrated the wealth and magnificence of the pharaoh and were supposed to address his needs for eternity. To preserve his body, the pharaoh was mummmified (embalmed and wrapped) during a process that took around 70 days. Today, most of the royal mummies are in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.
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