Ramesses II – Website Summary Notes

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| **Background:*** Ramesses II was also known as Ramesses the Great and was recognised for the size and number of buildings he produced.
* Born within the 19th Dynasty in 1303, His father was Seti I and his mother was Queen Tuya.
* Became pharaoh at the age of 25 in 1279 and reigned for 67 years living till the estimated age of 91.
* Ramesses had eight royal wives, with his chief wife being Nefertari. Ramesses is believed to have had around forty to sixty children.
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| **Role as Pharaoh: Main Contributions:** |
| **Warrior*** Responsibility of the pharaoh was to protect Egyptian empire from attacks, threats and subdue internal revolts that would disrupt Maat.
* Pharaoh would display themselves as part divine, part human when depicting themselves as warriors.
 | **Battle of Kadesh: (second Syrian campaign)*** The battle occurred within year five of Ramesses reign, in 1274, between the Hittites and Egyptians.
* Ramesses army was broken into four divisions; Ptah, Amen, Re and set. The battle commenced with the Egyptian army discovering the Hittite plan to ambush them.
* The Egyptian army was over powered as the Hittites were more advanced in numbers and weapons.
* The arrival of Egypt’s reinforcements saved the Egyptians and neither empire one the battle.
* When Ramesses arrived home he declared the battle a ‘victory’ for Egypt. The battle is inscribed on various temples within Egypt, including temples at Abu Simbel and Karnak.
* The reliefs emphasis Ramesses role as warrior and depict him with divine and god like powers and protector of Egypt.
* Later, unsuccessful campaigns in the northern regions lead to the Hittite and Egyptian empires arranging a peace treaty.

**The Sherdan Sea pirates:*** Within year two of Ramesses reign Ramesses defeated tribe known as the Sherdan Sea Pirates.
* They lived on the islands of Delta and were disrupting the peace by robbing ships along the Mediterranean coastline.
* Ramesses launched a surprise attack, capturing the pirates. Historians believe they were then assimilated into Egypt’s army – were brave warriors.

Throughout Ramesses reign he also launched many campaigns within the Asiatic region, Nubia and Syria-Palestine.  |
| **Builder**Construction of buildings was and important aspect of the Kings role as by erecting numerous temples:* The pharaoh demonstrated his power.
* acknowledge and honoured the gods
* insured his remembrance throughout history.
 | * As Ramesses ruled for 67 years this allowed him to construct more buildings than most pharaohs. – he is one of the most recognised builders of Ancient Egypt.
* In additions to his own buildings Ramesses usurped structures built by previous pharaohs, claiming them as his own.

**The Ramesseum:*** Was his mortuary temple located at Thebes on the Nile bank.
* Began construction in his second year of reign.
* Also known as ‘House of a million years’ – All Ramesses buildings were built to last for eternity.
* Layout was traditional Egyptian style – 275m by 168m wall surrounding temple.
* Consisted of 1st and 2nd court and hypostyle hall, surrounded by numerous small temples and storerooms.
* Pictorial reliefs of Battle Kadesh inside.

**Abu Simbel:*** Most recognised of all the temples in Nubia.
* Carved from rock – famous for its four twenty meter statues of Ramesses outside the temple.
* The temple is dedicated to Himself, Ptah, Amen and Re.
* Smaller temple with similar layout lies next to the temple and is dedicated to his chief wife Nefertari and the Goddess Hathor.
* In the 1960’s the temple was moved to high ground as it was in danger of being flooded by Nile.
* Contains most accurate reliefs of the battle of Kadesh.

**Pi-Ramesses:*** Ramesses built a new capitol city – Pi-Ramesses.
* Began constructing the city in his second year of reign and didn’t finish until his twentieth year.
* Located in Eastern Delta, became the third religious capitol.
* Ramesses is believed to have built the city because of the locational advantages – closer to the Asiatic region and the Hittites – easier for foreign diplomats to locate.
* Noted for its elaborate decorations and huge palace. Although completely decayed poems were written about the city, describing its wealth and luxury.
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| **Religion:**Religion was a major aspect of the Egyptian lifestyle and so it was essential for the pharaoh to have good communication with the gods. * This was done through construction of elaborate temples and offerings for the gods.
* Gods insured the prosperity of the empire and prevented disorder and chaos.
 | * Communication and devotion to the gods can be seen through Ramesses numerous elaborate temples and his participation in religious festivals such as Heb-sed.
* The temples are described by historians as mirrors of Ramesses religious beliefs.

**Chief Gods:*** **Amen, God of Thebes:** was depicted as the Pharaohs father and associated with the sun god Re. Temples dedicated to him include Abu Simbel, Ramesseum sanctuary and several temples in Nubia.
* **Ptah, God of Memphis:** Patron of architecture and craftsmanship. Was worshipped by Ramesses because he had so many building programs. Temples: Abu Simbel, Derr and Gerf Hussein (all in Nubia)
* **Re, God of Heliopolis:** Was the sun god and creator and also portrayed as Pharaohs father. Was honoured in many temples including Abu Simbel. Ramesses also emphasised his presence within new building technique which allowed a maximum amount of sunlight into the temples.

**Nefertari:** * Chief wife of the Pharaoh, Ramesses dedicated many temples to her including Abu Simbel and temples within the Ramesseum. Closely associated with the Hathor Goddess of fertility.

**The Cult of the Pharaoh:*** Followed example of his father Seti I.

The Pharaoh depicted himself as a god though:* Dedication of temple at Abu Simbel to himself portrays him as equally divine and powerful the other Chief gods.
* Propaganda is used to make him divine and super human. Shown through depictions at the battle of Kadesh within Ramesseum and Abu Simbel.
* Occasionally Ramesses name is found without the cartouche encircling it, this signifies that Ramesses did not need the protection the gods as he was one.
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| **Administration:*** The administration of Egypt was broken into internal and external admin and the royal admin.
* The system was hierarchical with the pharaoh leading.
* With the help of officials the Pharaoh ran the empire efficiently by having campaigns, dealing with minor and major issues.
 | **Background**: * Ramesses came from a generation of military leaders who were not part of the royal blood line.
* While Ramesses was still heir to the throne he gained experience in the three main areas of admin by accompanying his father to building programs and campaigns.
* At the age of ten Ramesses was titled ‘*Chief of Military’*

**Officials**:* Nebwenenef was appointed the New *High Priest* of Amen.
* Paser: the *Vizer of Thebes* and served bother Ramesses II and his father.
* Iuni: *the Viceroy of Kush*
* Merenptah: *Executive head of the two lands* and *Royal Scribe* –Was Ramesses II 12th son so later became heir to the throne.
* Many High priests were gaining too much power and influence as they controlled a large percentage of Egypt’s food and land.
* To prevent the High Priests of Amen from gaining to much influence Ramesses partially took the focus of religion away from Amen to other gods like Ptah.

**Campaigns**:* Within Ramesses reign only a small amount of uprisings occurred through Nubia and Egypt. When necessary the pharaoh stepped in to maintain public order.

**Irem**:* The Irem tribe organised a rebellion within the 15th to 20th year of Ramesses reign.
* Ramesses came to Nubia personally and captured seven thousand of the members. By advertising the capture of the tribe throughout Nubia Ramesses demonstrated his power over Nubia and no rebellion reoccurred.
* The Temples at Abu Simbel look over the Nile at Nubia and it overpowering size emphasised the pharaoh’s control of the region.
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| **Maat**:* The most important role of the pharaoh was to maintain Maat.
* Through the preservation of Maat the empire would be governed efficiently and fairly.
* To establish Maat a pharaoh had to promote his image as Warrior, builder and pharaoh and have a good relationship with the gods.
 | * Ramesses aimed to preserve maat and effectively presented himself in many roles.
* He was presented as a builder for his colossal size structures
* Had a positive relationship with the gods as he built numerous temples in honour of them.
* Portrayed himself as a mighty warrior – within his early years he continually launched campaigns and displayed propaganda.
* Although these Ramesses had many campaigns most of these were not effective in bringing peace to Egypt.
* Ramesses resorted to diplomatic actions:
* Within year 21 of his reign Ramesses arranged a peace treaty with the Hittites. This was significant as it allowed the kingdom to flourish and grow under the command of the Pharaoh.
* The peace treaty was reinforced years later with a diplomatic marriage between Ramesses and a Hittite princess.
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