

Ancient Egypt – War and Conflict

Ancient Egypt's success as a civilisation depended not only on its culture and farming but also on its ability to defend and expand its borders through military strength. The pharaoh held the title of supreme commander of the army and was regarded as a divine warrior — a god on earth whose duty was to protect Egypt from its enemies.

The Egyptian army was a well-organised fighting force divided into infantry, chariot units, and later, naval forces. Soldiers were equipped with weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, axes, and the khopesh — a curved sword adopted from neighbouring peoples that became a proud symbol of Egyptian military might. Chariots, drawn by horses, allowed archers to move swiftly across the battlefield, providing speed and firepower that infantry alone could not match.

Perhaps the most celebrated conflict in Egyptian military history was the Battle of Kadesh (c.1274 BC), in which Ramesses II led his forces against the powerful Hittite Empire in present-day Syria. The battle was fiercely contested, and neither side achieved a decisive victory. Nevertheless, Ramesses commissioned vast carvings and inscriptions on temple walls portraying himself as a heroic victor — one of history's earliest examples of military propaganda.

The aftermath of Kadesh produced the Treaty of Kadesh — widely regarded as one of the oldest surviving peace treaties in the world — demonstrating that the Egyptians valued skilled diplomacy alongside military power.

Questions

1. What two things, besides military strength, helped make Ancient Egypt successful?
2. How was the pharaoh regarded by the Egyptian people?
3. Name the three types of units that made up the Egyptian army.
4. What was the khopesh and where did it originally come from?
5. What advantage did chariots provide over infantry soldiers?
6. Where did the Battle of Kadesh take place?
7. Who fought against the Egyptians at the Battle of Kadesh?
8. What was the outcome of the Battle of Kadesh?
9. What was the Treaty of Kadesh and why is it historically significant?
10. The article describes Ramesses II's temple carvings as "military propaganda." What do you think this means, and why might a ruler choose to use propaganda?



Text D Quiz



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