

**Education and Ethics in Ancient Egypt**

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Introduction :

Education is an essential factor which affects the development of the world. It means learning new aspects, reading, writing, gaining knowledge as well as developing new ideas and increasing the culture. To improve your society, you need to have more educated people and you have to plan for a great beneficial educational system which should be based on developing the mental abilities of the people to gain the best results from these inhabitants. The ancient Egyptians were pioneers in the different aspects of life, therefore there should be something different concerning their minds, abilities, education and ethics. This study will focus on the education and the ethics of the ancient Egyptians to see if there were main points that should be applied to help us in improving our future generations or were there points missing in our educational system. Therefore, studying the ethics and the educational systems of the ancient Egyptians might be a great benefit and worth the trail.

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For the ancient Egyptians education was regarded as a privilege in the Egyptian society which was provided mainly to those who intended to have supervisory roles in administration, building projects, temple cults and other professional capacities. In ancient Egypt, few were given the formal education, but the majority, were illiterate. Training was essentially vocational as in practical trades and crafts which used to pass from one generation to another, as the son would take over his father's profession, or trade to provide the principal means of support for the family. For this reason boys used to learn practical skills from their parents, therefore there may have been a system of apprenticeship before these boys can practice a trade independently.

This paper allows us to determine and focus upon the significance of education which can be summarized as follows:

1. Engage teachers and students to search for the truth, rather than permitting the manipulation of the truth to perpetuate domination, privilege, or advantage.
2. It enables the students to experience a healthy continuity and compare between their present and the past conditions, as well as to help in indicating the educational goals.
3. Additionally, it assists the student to develop strong sense of personal, social and cultural identity.
4. Moreover, it helps the students to be a creative person rather than being an imitator.
5. It allows the students to be exposed to a broad variety of alternative cultural experiences to gain an accurate and non-oppressive sense.
6. It allows the students to learn how to be analytical about the sociopolitical and the broader environmental conditions where he lives.
7. Education is a necessity for helping the students to experience an affirmation of his value as an educated person.
8. It guarantees that all the students have the opportunity to enjoy self and group expression.

In the light of the preceding ideas, everyone should focus on improving the quality of education, as it ensures the development of the whole society. Education is the base of any system, that's why if the elementary education is well developed they will start with a concrete base on which they can build on for the professional higher education.



Meaning and Terminology:

Education was essential for the elite members, the pharaohs, their sons, high officials, priests, scribes, some members of the army...etc. Essentially education was considered as a matter of scribal training, where writing was the main key for the Egyptian administration, economic organization and confidential matters.ⁱⁱ Some scholars initiated that the education was restricted to the male members of the upper class or the elite Egyptians and they were mainly entitled to master the Egyptian writing system and to be acquainted with a great stock from religious and literary texts, together with moral and cultural values.

Throughout the pharaonic history, Education was given the term: "sb3yt" which has the meaning of "teaching" or sometimes being related to the "punishment" as the instructors used to hold a stick to be firm and to scare the students to obey the instructions. Teachings, instructions and educations were mentioned in most of the Wisdom Texts as "sb3yt". However, during the Late period, they used "mrt" which means "testimony". The main distinction between these words is like the distinction between "the theory of education" and "the actual practice of education."

Consequently, the ancient Egyptians thought that Education was an indispensable prerequisite for building a career as a scribe in administration or as a priest in a temple cult. During the Old Kingdom, the social elite who was in charge of these institutions comprised around 1 to 5 percent of the population, who were the literate sector of the society.ⁱⁱⁱ

Boyhood or the time of education, which came after the childhood around the fourth year, showed that the school boy used to have his proper costume which consisted of a girdle. The ancient Egyptians realized that father's duty had to superintend the education of the children, as well as the gymnastic exercises as for example swimming, riding horses...etc. Concerning the school-course it included above all the teaching of ethics, morals, practical philosophy as well as the good manners.

Educational principles were mentioned in ancient Egyptian treatises known as "Books of Instructions." These books used to contain rules for the well ordered life as well as the elements of morality which included justice, wisdom, obedience, humanity and restraint. The Egyptians used to make several copies of these books as they were used as teaching texts in the schools for the scribes. They were compiled by senior officials and humbler scribes.^{iv}



Dating back to the Old Kingdom, there were some instructions made by a father to his son during the reign of king 'Ess'e from the 5th dynasty. He mentioned: "Be not proud of thine own learning, but do thou take counsel with all, for it is possible to learn from all. Treat a venerable wise man with respect, but correct thine equal when he maintains a wrong opinion. Be not proud of earthly goods or riches, for they come to thee from God without thy help. Calumnies should never be repeated: messages should be faithfully delivered. In a strange house, look not at the women; marry; give food to thy household; let there be no quarrelling about the distribution. For the rest, keep a contented countenance, and behave to thy superiors with proper respect, then shalt thou receive that which is the highest reward to a wise; the princess who hear thee shall say: How beautiful are the words which proceed out of his mouth".^v

According to Mariette, during the New Kingdom, there were several instructions giving more details which showed clearly that the Egyptians were lovers of strict etiquette, as well as indicating that the rules of the good manners and the strict formulae of the letters were of great importance specially for the high class, as they mentioned: "let thine eyes be open, lest thou become a beggar; for the man that is idle cometh not to honor."^{vi} "Be not importunate nor indiscreet, enter not uninvited into the house of another; if he bids thee enter thou art honored. Look not around, look not around in the house of another. If thine eye see anything, be silent about it, and relate it not outside to others, lest if it be heard, it become to thee as a crime worthy of death. Speak not too much, for men are deaf to the man of many words; be silent rather, then shalt thou please, therefore speak not. Before all things guard thy speech, for a man's ruin lies in his tongue. Man's body is a storehouse, full of all manner of answers. Choose therefore the right one and speak well, and let the wrong answer remain imprisoned in thy body. Behave with propriety at meals and be not greedy to fit thy body. Never forget to be respectful, and do not sit down whilst another stands."^{vii}

In ancient Egypt, the males were allowed to receive as much education as they needed to ensure their abilities to accomplish their job perfectly. However the females were excluded from scribal education and therefore, it can be that few from the ancient Egyptian women were literate or even semiliterate.

Methods of Learning:

The ancient Egyptians valued learning, for the fact that superiority was achieved to the learned men over the unlearned men in the different aspects of life. Therefore learning divided the ruling class from the ruled ones. This idea was approved when the wise "Dauuf" son of "Cherte" voyaged up the Nile together with his son Pepy, he introduced him into the court school of books by saying:



"Give thy heart to learning and love her like a mother, for there is nothing that is so precious as learning."^{viii} Moreover, when you go through the Egyptian literature, you will find the same enthusiastic reverence for learning as the wise man "Dauuf" mentioned: "Behold there is no profession which is not governed; It is only the learned man who rules himself"^{ix}

For the ancient Egyptians education consisted mainly of rote learning, reading, writing, calculating, accounting and even some basic science as for example the astronomy.

In the ancient Egyptians society, writing played an important role which became very obvious from the quantity and range of documents that had been found. The main system of writing was the cursive style of the ancient Egyptian language known as the "hieratic" which was originated during the pre-dynastic era, as it was considered to be a rough imitation in outline of hieroglyphs.^x Consequently, a thorough training in scribal skills was regarded as essential prerequisite for everyone in professional or political aspirations.^{xi} As the one who followed learned studies and thus became a scribe was considered to put his feet on the first rung of the great ladder of the official life and therefore all the offices were opened in front of him. Additionally, he was exempted from all the bodily work, and all the troubles which others were tormented with. However, the poor ignorant man was like heavily laden donkey he was driven by the scribe, while the fortunate man who had set his heart on learning, he was above work and became a wise prince.^{xii}

Moreover, writing and copying texts initially needed memorizing, as evident in an idealistic Ramesside instruction where he mentions: "Apply yourself to writing by day, while you read by night."^{xiii}


Education chiefly consisted of endless rote of copying and recitation of texts, in order to achieve perfection in spelling and orthography. Learning implies that the students should learn to write whole words not only single signs. Additionally, as the scribe was considered to be one of the most significant professions, it needed special qualifications as for example memorizing the classics of literature by heart and a great number of religious texts. However, the rote learning was done by singing loudly, while beginners were given flakes of limestone or ostraca mainly for writing exercises, but later they were allowed to use the papyrus rolls when they acquired mastery of the hieratic script. From the economic point of view, the papyrus was expensive, whereas the ostraca were always available.^{xiv}



Concerning the profession of the scribe, he never lacked food as he was provided with everything he needed from the royal store, as mentioned: "the learned man has enough to eat because of his learning."^{xv} Additionally, when the scribe cared for his profession, he may become a prince, or attain the council of the thirty or act as an ambassador or his name would be always remembered in the court. Consequently, the wise one would be faithful for leaning and therefore will pray for god Thoth god of wisdom and knowledge and inventor of writing to give him understanding and assistance. God Thoth was depicted in the form of a baboon with shining hair and amiable face.

Schools:

According to the textbooks, the school was not just regarded as one of the arenas of the daily life, but it was portrayed in ancient Egypt as the main source of the elementary moral knowledge, which had been carried proudly by the child back to his family.^{xvi}

The school in the ancient Egyptian language was: : "t-sbtyt", which literary means "room of instruction" or "instruction house". Sometimes they gave the word "sbty" to indicate teaching or instructions and additionally they used these words to describe didactic literature which were handed through the different generations.^{xvii} It is still mysterious whether students of different levels used to attend in a single class simultaneously or there were several classes to allow different levels of education.

In ancient Egypt there were various types of schools, inside and outside the temple. The curriculum of these schools depended mainly on their function, whether they were intended for future scribes or priests or any other profession. The students were introduced to the main basics of writing and reading by professional scribes and they were sometimes called "sb" meaning teacher or "imy-r sbw" which means the overseer of teacher. The instructions which were given in the class for around four years and then it was followed individual teaching or training for a specific job. While the apprentices used to be credited by being called the assistant "hry-c" which means literary being under the guidance or the hand of someone.^{xviii}

During childhood, the early four years were considered as the time when the child became wise.^{xix} Afterwards, came the boyhood which was regarded as the time of education. The main recognition of the school boy was his proper costume, which consisted initially of a girdle only.^{xx}

Consequently, the ancient Egyptians used to plan for everything their life, their education and even their death. Therefore, a formal school was required for the



different professions. During the Old Kingdom, there were no regular schools except at court. For example in one of the stela of the 5th dynasty which was found in one of the tombs of Saqqara and erected nowadays in the British Museum, it belongs to Ptahshepses, where he mentioned that as soon as he knotted the girdle, he was able to be educated among the royal children in the palace as he was valued by the king above all the children. Some scholars believed that the boys were usually trained by their fathers, although some of the elder men used to take sons of other people as their pupils. In the "Instruction of Ptahhotep" which dates back to the 5th dynasty, he differentiates between the son by the grace of god and the actual offspring who can make trouble and disobeys his parent.^{xxi}

During the First Intermediate Period, in the "Instructions of Merikare", he says: Do not kill a man whose virtues you know, with whom you have chanted the writings. This indicates who has been with you in school and it also implies that there were several classmates with the royal princes.

During the Middle Kingdom, the state which followed the reunification of Egypt showed the essential requirement of capable administrators. Due to the troubles of the first intermediate period, the skills were largely lost to the extent that it was impossible to relay on the few who were trained in an informal way by their fathers, so, this urged the need of the foundation of schools. Near El-Lishet, the most important school, known as the central training institution was located, dating back to the 12th dynasty, Khety the man of Sile, he mentioned that "he placed his son in the school of scribes among the children of the magistrates with the elite of the Residence." However, Khety was just a simple citizen, he was still capable of placing his son at the school of topmost class, which will provide him with excellent opportunities for the pursuit of a successful future career.^{xxii}

Moreover, during the Middle Kingdom, the wise men used to have several sons, as mentioned in the "Tales of Wonder" where the magician Djedi used to have many students and many books that were transported on a special ship. Additionally, in the tomb of Kheti, the monarch of Asyut, he urges "every scribe and every scholar ... who has been to school." to indicate how important they were and to ensure that the scribes were formally educated.

Dating back to the New Kingdom, on the limestone block statue of Bekenkhons^{xxiii}, the high priest of Amen at Karnak during the reign of king Ramesses II, he mentioned that how he passed four years in primary school in the Temple of Mut at Karnak, then eleven years of apprenticeship in the royal




stables, during which he learnt the basic ropes of the administration. Additionally, he tells us that he did not start his career until he had finished these 15 years of education. He described the first four years as being spent as a simple priest under the supervision of his father, then he had to follow a progressive rise to the hierarchical ladder, until he reached 39 years, by this he had been held to the top of the ladder and then he served 27 years as a high priest.

In the ancient Egyptian texts the local schools were mentioned as being the elementary schools. Additionally, there were other schools usually at the Capitals, where the children of the magistrates were educated, as they needed much higher levels of education. According to the religious texts the priests used to instruct their students in two kinds of letters, some called sacred and others called commoner kind.^{xxiv}

Concerning the age of the schoolboys, or the start of education, it seemed to be similar to our society, but it was not regulated by laws. Therefore, the scholars suggested that the education depended initially on the physical and mental ripeness of the individual boy, which was around five to ten years.^{xxv} According to "Satire of the Trades", it mentioned that the school-hours were usually in the morning, as in it tells us: "If you leave the school when midday is called and go roaming in the streets...", then the sentence was lost. Although it was mentioned during the Middle Kingdom, it was included in one of the textbooks of the New Kingdom which indicates that the school-hours were the same.

In ancient Egypt the school system was widely spread specially during the New Kingdom, as at Thebes there were at least two institutions: one of them was located in the temple of Mut and the other was at the back of the Ramesseum. Additionally, there was also a school located at Deir El Medina for the children of the workmen.

According to Gardiner, The "House of Life":  : pr nbw: means the institution or the place where the scribes were employed and trained. Moreover, he noted that the new recruits in any profession were to be youth of good birth under the charge of men of solid learning.^{xxvi} In these schools they were not only taught reading and writing, but there were also arithmetic and other subjects.

The Different Subjects in ancient Egypt:

The ancient Egyptians used to enjoy and appreciate learning that's why they had several subjects beside the general knowledge which had been covered by the curriculum of scribal apprentices. The most important subjects were:



epistolary formulas and letter-writing, grammar, orthography and rhetoric, mathematics and geometry, foreign languages, onomastics and geography.

1. Grammar, orthography and rhetoric:

Grammar and vocabulary developed throughout the history, therefore the ancient Egyptian language can be divided into four phases of development, the most important of which were: the **Old Egyptian** which was commonly used during the Old Kingdom for all the types of texts, the **Middle Egyptian** which was a standard form on the monumental inscriptions and in the formal documents until the 18th dynasty, as well as its usage in some religious texts until the Roman period, and the **Lat Egyptian** which was utilized during the New Kingdom and the Third intermediate period.^{xxvii} Finally, the **Demotic** which was used from the Late period onwards.

The Egyptians considered the writing to be a sacred activity filled with magical powers. The term for Hieroglyphs in the ancient Egyptian language was "mdw ntr" which means "god's words" or "god's signs". The ancient Egyptians had used a standardized way for teaching the grammatical paradigms, which allowed the betrayal of certain awareness of basic linguistic elements.

The different exercises displayed orthographic mistakes which indicated the assumption that the apprentices were taught to write single words and even whole sentences rather than single signs.

Rhetoric was regarded as a constant topic in the instructional literature. According to Ptahhotep^{xxviii}, eloquence was not mainly restricted to members of the elite. Sometimes even the female slaves used to be credited with good speeches.

Concerning the main system of writing, it has changed markedly in between the uses of writing and its degree of penetration in the society. Baines admitted that one can work on the observation of the uses of writing to hypotheses about the range of the written genres and the social context. The following table illustrates the appearance of the different scripts.^{xxix}

2. Foreign Languages:

Owing back to the military expeditions, the trade with the foreign countries that the ancient Egyptians had known the necessity of learning foreign languages to know how to deal with the foreigners such as Libyans, Nubians, Asiatics... etc. Trade with the Aegean and Crete involved language barriers.



3. Onomastics:

The Egyptian scribes inspired from the Babylonian a strong tendency toward organizing their knowledge in word lists. The lists were arranged in subject sections as the Egyptian toponyms arranged from south to north, then classes of people, professions, titles or animals. There existed several specimens of these catalogues dating back to the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Late period onomasticon's material were based mainly on the Ramessid-era school text.

4. Geography:

The onomastica was the main evidence that the scribes had known the most important places of Egypt, its neighbors and its locations. Moreover, the officials who were responsible of the foreign affairs, trade, or the military campaigns had to be credited with these knowledge.

5. Mathematics and Geometry:

The most important document for the mathematical operations was "Moscow Mathematical Papyrus" dating back to the late Middle Kingdom, its instructions address the potential user, invents problems as models for future calculations and It also abstract formulas. Concerning the bookkeeping, it was considered to be a primary occupation for the scribes. Therefore, the four basic arithmetic operations were forming subjects for education in ancient Egypt.^{xxx} Moreover, the calculations had been supplemented by several geometrical problems, as those which had been found in the mathematical manuscripts which were written in hieratic and demotic.

6. Epistolary formulas and letter-writing:

In ancient Egypt the letters consisted mainly of three sections:

1. The initial address, 2. Its content, 3. Its final address. Sometimes, it also included a farewell to the addressee. Usually the introduction used to contain polite formulas commending the recipient to make a good care for a certain god or gods. One of the most important examples for letters was the "Satirical Letter of Papyrus of Anastasi I" which emphasis certain stylistic features.

7. Ethics and Morals:

The ancient Egyptians didn't deal with ethics in a theoretical framework, but the scholars deduced the good conducted morals from the autobiography and the various texts which were associated with wisdom as a tradition.^{xxxi}

The ethical teaching covers men's conduct towards neighbours, family, gods, society and even themselves. Therefore, most of their texts contain information about ethical principles and their connection with religion.^{xxxi}



The earliest example for the ethical values was dating back to the **Old Kingdom**, the 5th dynasty, they were mainly autobiographies addressed from one generation to the other. For example the official "Nefer-seshem-re" when he says:

I have left my city, I have come down from my province, having done what is right (maat) for its lord, having satisfied him with that which he loves. I spoke maat and I did maat, I spoke well and I reported well... I rescued the weak from the hand of one stronger than he when I was able, I gave bread to the hungry, clothing (to the naked) a landing for the boatless. I buried him who had no son, I made a boat for him who had no boat, I respected my father, I pleased my mother, I nurtured their children.^{xxxiii}

However, most of the texts used to have instructions and advices, they still included denials of misconduct, as they used to say: Never did I take the property of any person, Never did I say a bad thing about anyone to the king to a potentate because I desired that I might be honoured before the god, Never did I do anything evil against any person. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians had recognized all the ethics values of the society of their time, which were justice, honesty, fairness, mercy, kindness, generosity, ...etc. Consequently, these aspects were depending upon the concept of maat which was governing and unifying the ideology of the state which had been determined by the king whose main focus was to determine the political unity.^{xxxiv} So, "Nefer-seshem-re" wanted to show that he had he left the world but after having done maat for his lord.^{xxxv}

Moving to the **Middle Kingdom**, The wisdom traditions were reflecting the weakening of the dominant position of the king, which strengthened the link between maat and the creator god. For example during the 9th or 10th dynasties under the rule of king Nebkaure, the Eloquent Peasant mentions in the texts "Do maat for the lord of maat." And he claimed that these words had been said by god Re himself.^{xxxvi} Although the king still holds the central role to maintain maat, he's was now regarded as the god's representative on earth. Additionally, he reaffirms the old conception that the proper behavior will ensure a happy afterlife. "Indeed maat is for eternity, even to the necropolis it goes down, together with him who does it. He is buried and united with the earth, but his name is not obliterated from the earth. He is remembered because of goodness. It is the standard of god's word."^{xxxvii} Therefore by teaching how behavior was compatible with maat and by the assist of the wisdom instructions, the people can achieve the best life and the perfect afterlife. The traditional concept, reflects that if the people lived their lives according to the precepts of



maat they would prosper, and the society would function smoothly and therefore transgressors would be doomed to automatic failure.

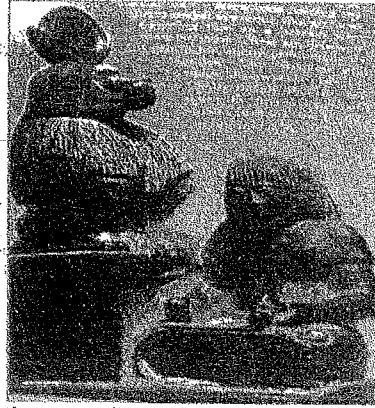
During the New Kingdom the ancient Egyptians did not live up to the ethical standards they had espoused in the different aspects of their life. For example in the tomb of the vizier Rekhmire dating back to the 18th dynasty, he recorded the problem of partiality on the part of the officials and he mentioned that the king urges by saying; "Regard one whom you know like one whom you do not know, one close to yourself like one far from your house."^{xxxviii}

Furthermore there were several surviving letters and documents from the site of Deir El Medina (the village of the workers) which emphasizes the foibles, the weakness and the great corruption.^{xxxix} Additionally, there were evidences of dishonest judges, as they mentioned in a prayer to god Amen; "Amen is the vizier of the poor, he does not accept bribes from the guilty, he does not speak to the one who witnesses, he does not look to favor the one who makes promises."^{xl}

All these corruptions and crimes allows the rise of an impression that the breakdown in the moral and ethical standards was an essential result of the destruction of the old concept of maat. However, Bruner demonstrated that the most dramatic change concerning maat was the great loss of its traditional role as being the mediating principle between god and humankind. Moreover, it must be noted that although they do not often mention maat, but still the teachings and the autobiographies of the New Kingdom espouse the same ethical standards as the Old and Middle Kingdoms and they were also interested in the social cohesion. Finally, the understanding of maat and the will of god were less capable of encouraging ethical behavior than the old concept.^{xli}

Divinities related to Education:

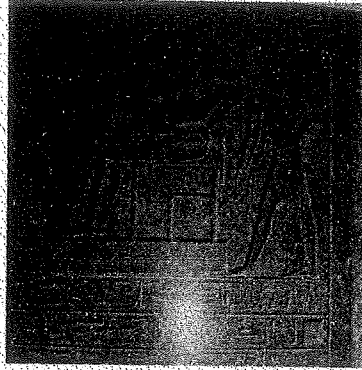
Two principle divinities were associated with writing god Thoth and goddess Seshat (whose name was incorporates the sound used mainly for the word scribe and the scribal palette).



(Fig. 1) A statue depicting a scribe writing at the feet of Thoth who was in the form of a baboon, with lunar disk upon his head, seated on a pedestal. This statue dates back to the 18th dynasty, El-Amarna period, exhibited in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

God Thoth or Djehuty:

He was originally god of the moon, god of wisdom, inventor of writing and knowledge. His main role was to preside over scribes and scholars of all types. This god was depicted in two forms either in the manifestations of an ibis bird or as a baboon. He played an important role during the Old Kingdom, as he was mentioned several times in the Pyramid Texts, as well as being mentioned in the coffin Texts and the different religious books. He invented the art of writing, and the words of god, for this reason he was usually depicted holding a papyrus roll and a reed pen in order to write a sacred book or to record a significant event in the divine world. Additionally, he was the scribe of the Ennead of Heliopolis who used to record the divine words and all the kinds of accounts and records.^{xiii}



(Fig. 2) Thoth as an Ibis-headed man with his writing equipment, from the temple of Ramesses II at Abydos.

Moreover, he was the patron of all areas of knowledge and written treatises of all kinds. He was associated with the libraries which were attached to the temples. God Thoth's record has a great association with the afterlife and appeared in the vignette of the Book of the Dead, as he stands before the scales where the heart of the deceased was weighed against the feather of Maat and then he records the verdict.

This essential role gave him the reputation of becoming a symbol for truth and integrity and he reflected that the deceased had good manner being straight and true like Thoth. Furthermore, he was related to goddess Nebtawy who was regarded as his consort, though he was associated with goddess Seshat who was his wife or daughter.^{xiii}



(Fig. 3) Wood and Bronze Statue representing god Thoth in the form of the sacred Ibis, dating back to the Late Period, in Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim.



Furthermore, Thoth or *ḏḥwty* was "the Messenger", he had functions equivalent to the qualities of Hermes in the pantheon. In one of the texts of Edfu, god Thoth introduces himself by saying: "I am Thoth, the eldest son of Re, whom Atum has fashioned, created from Khepri... I descended to earth with the secrets of what belongs to the horizon."

As Thoth was connected with the moon, he became "lord of time", "reckoner of years", therefore his attributes were a writing palette or a palm leaf. Additionally, as he was regarded as inventor of writing, he was the protector of scribes. Moreover, he was described as the tongue or heart of Re. The main cult centre of god Thoth was Hermopolis in Middle Egypt.^{xiv} However, Thoth was considered as god of wisdom, he was known specifically as god of Medicine and Science. God Thoth was responsible for giving Isis the charms and magic that brought Osiris to life to be able to give birth to Horus. Later on he was capable of curing Horus from his scorpion sting, as well as curing the eye of Horus after being removed by Seth.^{xiv}

The ancient Egyptians used to believe that Thoth was the source of rhetoric, names for objects and the alphabet. Furthermore, he was responsible for the invention of hieroglyphic writing, arithmetic and astronomy. For the Egyptians, he was considered the most appealing contributor to learning. He kept the written records of the seasons as well as celestial geometry. His main responsibility was recording the results of the last judgment and writing letters on behalf of the gods at Heliopolis. According to the book of the Dead "I have brought the palette and the inkpot as being the objects that are in the hands of Thoth; hidden is that which is in them! Behold me in the character of the scribe."^{xv}

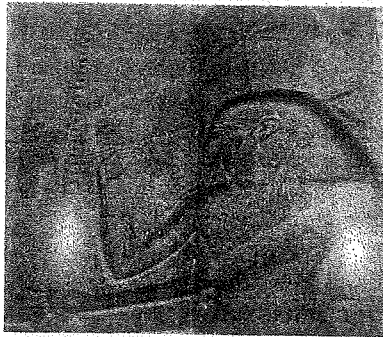
It is interesting to note that Thoth's ability as a writer involved a great hidden knowledge, but his art went beyond performing secretarial duties for the different divinities, he was also regarded as the chief author, sometimes they even believed that he was the author of the whole Book of the Dead, and he wrote some parts of the "Book of Breathings" with his own fingers and therefore it might enabled the different souls to breathe forever.^{xvii}

Goddess Seshat:

Literary the meaning of her name was "the female scribe". She was considered to be the goddess of writing, notation, record keeping, accounting and census.^{xviii} She was regarded as the patroness of libraries and several



collections of texts, as she was called "she who is foremost in the house of books". During the Old Kingdom, she was depicted while recording herds of the different types of animals, but during the Middle Kingdom she was represented recording the names of the foreign captives and in the New Kingdom temples she was depicted recording the king's name, the regnal years and the jubilees on the leaves of the sacred ished persesea tree.^{xlix}



(Fig.4) A scene depicting goddess Seshat in the form of a lady, having her enigmatic emblem on her head, holding a stylized scribal palette on her shoulder, writing upon the notched palm rib which means year and symbolizes the record of time. Here Seshat inscribes the length of the kings, reigns at their accession. The scene dates back to the 19th dynasty, at Luxor temple.

Conclusion:

Finally, it can be concluded that the minds of the Egyptians possessed much subtlety and acuteness. Additionally, the ancient Egyptians were fond of literary composition, advanced in art and science and they proved to be very intelligent and ingenious in the different aspects of life. No doubt it is astonishing to see the extensive literature they had possessed, the great collection of books on religion, morals, law, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, medicine, books of travel and above all novels.

Concerning the art of ancient Egypt, the power which the Egyptians had exhibited was much greater than anyone could thought and they belong to the highest quality. The architecture produced a great effect not only by its mass of production, but also by its harmony of proportion. Furthermore, Egypt was regarded as the "dawn of artistic development for the whole human race."

In the light of the preceding discussion, it is observed that the core elite of the ancient Egyptians were identified with literacy; while the scribal sub-elite were identified with administrative office. Moreover, literacy was essential for the



proper performance of temple ritual, especially which involved lector priest. The Egyptians proved to be extremely very religious as Herodotus said: "The Egyptians were religious to excess far beyond any other race of men, and accordingly, the greater portion of his description of is occupied with an account of the priests, the temples and the religious ceremonies." Apparently, the Egyptian religion had two phases or aspects: one of them presented to the public, the vast mass of population and the other was in the minds of the intelligent, the learned and the initiated.

In the religion of the ancient Egyptians, there was a great motive ethical force based on their belief in immortality and the great and godlike life which a good life on earth secured. Therefore, in connection with this doctrine, the ancient Egyptian ethical ideal was very high. Moreover, the morality was as lax in practice as it was elevated in theory. Besides, there were classes separated from each other. The soldiers and the priests were privileged, while the rest of the community was without any privileges from any kind. However, among all the classes the most powerful and the organized class was the priests. Among the learned professions in Egypt, the scribes were considered to be one of the most important professions. Although writing was regarded as an ordinary accomplishment for the educated classes, yet the Egyptian religion necessitated the multiplication of copies of the religious books and rituals as "Ritual of the dead", as well as the employment of numerous clerks in the registration of the sacred treasures and the management of the sacred estates. Some highly educated Egyptians used to devote themselves in special branches of medical science and even some priests were required to study medicine.

In ancient Egypt there used to be several high schools made for the acquirement of the qualifications of the important professions as the schools which were initially made for training the priests in Thebes, Memphis and Heliopolis. Therefore, members of the royal family were only allowed to associate with the priests sons and sometimes they can even receive priestly education. Moreover, there were schools of architect to secure the succession of competent architectures. However, for the military class they used to provide a regular course of instruction in gymnastic and music. Additionally, there were industrial classes where they used to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. Concerning the children, they were trained according to the occupation of their parents, so they received practical and technical instruction since the earliest years of their education.



As a conclusion, the most interesting fact in the education in ancient Egypt was the institution of schools in all the large towns of those who enjoys superior intelligence or great ambition, while leaving the mass of the laboring and industrial class. However, if you tried to compare between the education in Egypt with the other nations, you will deduce that education in ancient Egypt was widely spread. In ancient Egypt, there were numerous schools, not only in the large towns, but also in the small villages. Therefore, the schools were held mainly in the temples or parts of the temple buildings. Sometimes, the village schools were held in the house of the teacher or in the open air under some cover.

Moreover, the occupation of the scribe became the link between the lower classes and the higher class. Additionally, the difficulty of teaching lies in the severe discipline, as, Maspero mentioned that an irate Egyptian school-master said: "The hawk was taught and the pigeon to nest; I shall teach you your letters, you idle villain."

Finally, it can be concluded that the standard of the intellectual life and culture in a certain depended mainly on education. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians had an education, which was widely spread and effective as Europe had in the earlier decades of this century.



End Notes

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