

Customs of the Ancient Egyptian Peasant

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Abstract

The research deals with the customs, which were practiced by the ancient Egyptian peasant either they were social or religious customs. The research also classified the social customs as; a type that was practiced by the peasant only, and another type that was not only practiced by him but the community with its different classes as well, regarding the peasant as the largest sect in the community. The religious customs usually connected to agriculture.

Key words: customs, peasant, countryside, social, cattle, animal, religious, and festival.

Introduction

The customs practiced by the ancient Egyptian peasant either were social or religious customs. The social one could combine a type which was confined to the peasant or his family was, for instance, talking to his cattle while feeding them, singing while working in the field, branding the cattle, and fattening their cattle and bird, while the other one which practiced by peasants and society in general; such as the relation between the man and his wife that relied on fidelity, love, stability, protection, respect and unity, marrying in a young age, and the desire to have a son more than a daughter.

The religious customs were considered as festivals connected to agriculture and the produce of the soil,¹ but under the head of religious ceremonies,² such as: heralding the rebirth of the crop, the bearing of the crop to the granary, the opening of new canal, the reaping of the first sheaf,³ or the harvest festivals the festival of the Nile,⁴ and others.

1. Social Customs

The social customs that were followed by the ancient Egyptian peasant could combine a type of customs was only limited to the peasantry families. The other type which practiced by peasants and society in general.

¹ Wilkinson, J. G., *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including Their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religions, and Early History*, Vol. IV, London, 1847, p.123.

² Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.125.

³ Kamil, J., *The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom*, Cairo, 1996, p.185.

⁴ Sauneron, S., *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, Cornell University press, USA, 2000, p. 95.

1.1 Customs confined to the peasant

Among the peasant's daily customs or habits, were represented in his daily routine of work. This is clearly pictured in the " *Tale of the Two Brothers*",⁵ when "Baïti, the younger brother, used to take the cattle to the fields and brings them back to the stable, he guides the plough, he mows, he binds the hay, he beats out the corn, and brings in the hay. Every evening before going to bed, he puts the household bread into the oven, and he rises early to take it out baked. During the season for field work, it is he who runs to the farm to fetch the seed, and carries a load sufficient for several men on his back. He spins the linen or wool as he leads his animals to pastures of good grass, and when the inundation confines men and beasts within doors, he seats himself at the loom and weaves".⁶

The peasant used to talk or stroke to his cattle while feeding (fig.1).⁷ The modern studies showed that stroking and talking increase the animal-human relationship,⁸ which as a result encouraging the animal to eat and drink, or to make it in a good mode, and facilitate the interact between the peasant and his animal. Also, they used to bring the calves before their mothers at the time of milking (fig.2), as calves stimulated milk production in cows and lowered their heart rate.⁹



Fig. 1 Stroking to cattle during feeding, Tomb of Nefer and Ka- Hay
After: Omran, R., "Bird Preening during the Old Kingdom", in: *JFTH*, Vol.13, Iss. 2, 2016, Scene 1-1.

⁵ Maspero, G., *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, Putnam, 1915, p.4.

⁶ Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, p.CXXIII- CXXIV.

⁷ Montet, P., *Everyday Life in Egypt in the Days of Ramesses the Great*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, p.123; Erman, A., *Life in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1894, p.436.

⁸ Lange, A ., et.al, "Talking to Cows: Reactions to Different Auditory Stimuli During Gentle Human-Animal Interactions", in: *Front. Psychol.*, Vol. 11, p.1-14, 2020, p.1.

⁹ Zipp, K. A., et.al, "Agitation behaviour and heart rate of dairy cows with and without calf-contact during different stimuli in the parlour", in: *Proceedings of the 4th ISOFAR Scientific Conference: 'Building Organic Bridges'*, at the Organic World Congress (Istanbul: Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut), p.463- 466, 2014, p.465.

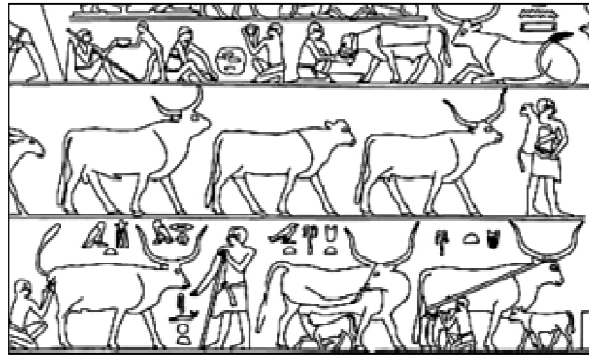


Fig.2 The different interactions with cattle; In the upper register, a peasant feeding the animal by his hand, carrying the small calf in middle register, while in lower register the calves were brought before their mothers at the time of milking, Mastaba of Iasen (G2196).

After: Shehab, N.F., "The Identity of The Cattle Herdsman: A Study In Ancient Egyptian Private Tombs Scenes", in: *JGUAA*, Vol.7, Iss. 1, p. 84-107, 2022, p.89.

The peasant followed the custom of branding the cattle (fig.3). The origin of branding livestock dates back to 2700 BC,¹⁰ as documented in paintings of Egyptian tombs branding oxen with hieroglyphic sign especially on cattle's right shoulder.¹¹ It was by making a hot iron stamp on animals in order to distinguish the ownership.¹² The purpose was to indicate ownership, so that livestock could easily be found if escaped or be stolen.¹³

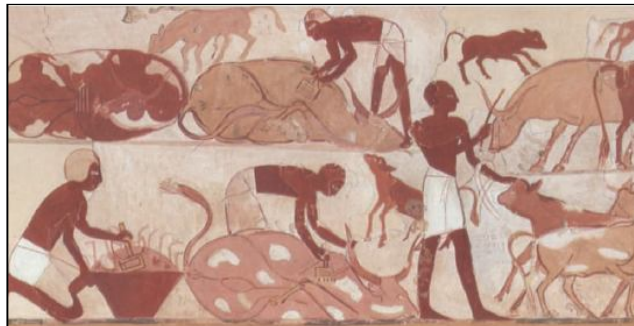


Fig. 3 The custom of branding the cattle, from Tomb of Nebamun, at Sheikh abd El-Qurna
After: Wilkinson, Ch., *Egyptian Wall Paintings: The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Collection of Facsimiles*, New York, 1983, p.28; Scott, *MMAB*, Vol. 31, no. 3, fig.10.

¹⁰ Starcevic, S., "The Origin and Historical Development of Branding and Advertising in the Old Civilizations of Africa, Asia and Europe", in: *Marketing*, p.179-196, 2015, p.179; Fadel, D., "The Role of Advertising and Trademarks affections in Greco - Roman Egypt", in: *JAAUTH*, Vol. 21, No. 2, p.80-97, 2021, p.83.

¹¹ Brier, B. and Hobbs, H., *Daily life of the ancient Egyptians*, 2nd ed., The Greenwood Press, Westport, 2008, p. 97.

¹² Starcevic, *Marketing*, p.179.

¹³ Starcevic, *Marketing*, p.182; Fadel, D., "The Role of Advertising and Trademarks affections in Greco - Roman Egypt", in: *JAAUTH*, Vol. 21, No. 2, p.80-97, 2021, p.83.

The ancient Egyptian peasants followed the custom of fattening their cattle and bird.¹⁴ They tied up to pegs and with the dough of bread, beating the dough, and making it into rolls (fig.4); they then squat down before the ruminating oxen and push the dough from the side into their mouths, admonishing them to eat.¹⁵ The birds, such as geese were fattened by force-feeding.¹⁶ The fattening bolus was pushed down the throat of the goose (figs. 5, 6). The way of fattening the birds by force feeding is still used in modern Egyptian countryside people.



Fig. 4 Preparing the food of their cattle or birds by making the dough into rolls
After: Omran, *JFTH*, Vol. 13, Iss. 2, Scene 6-3.

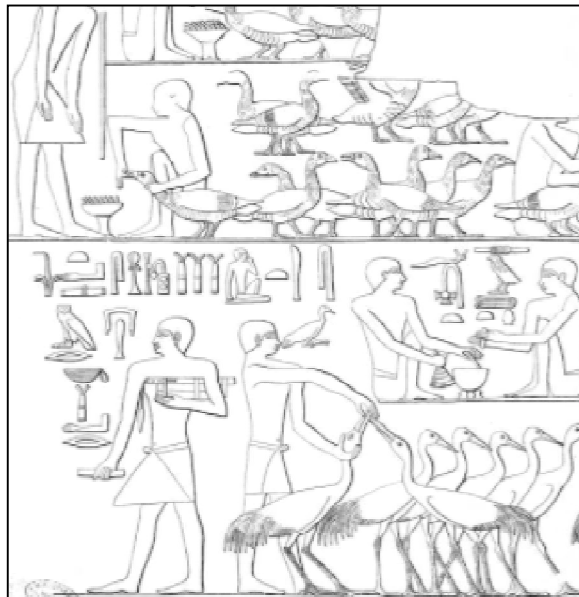


Fig.5 Force feeding of different birds by peasants, tomb of Ti
After: Épron, L. and Dumas, F., " Le Tombeau de Ti," *MIFAO 65.1*, Les approches de la chapelle 1939, pl. XXXIII.

¹⁴ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.444.

¹⁵ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.438, 442

¹⁶ Bard, K. A., *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, p.158; Smith, *Country Life in Ancient Egypt*, pl.28.



Fig.6 Force feeding of goose in the chapel of Kagemni
After: Omran, *JFTH*, Vol. 13, Iss. 2, Scene 6-1.

The harvester used to work in the fields while singing or listening to music.¹⁷ The song leader accompanied with the flautist while the harvesters probably chanting in response, as in tomb of Ty and tomb of Mereruka.¹⁸ Sometimes, they were encouraged in their work by children beating a rhythm with stick.¹⁹ This habit of crooning while working resembles that of workers and builders of nowadays.²⁰ Clappers also played by men while laborers pressed grapes or worked in the fields to boost the spirit of the hard-working peasants.²¹ A song was said by threshers inscribed at the tomb of *Paheri* at El-Kab²² (fig.7) could be read as:

*ḥwi .tn n.tn sp-sn iw3w ḥwi.tn n.tn ḥwi.tn n.tn dh3 r wnm it n nbw.tn m rdi wrd n ib.tn tw sp-sn ḳbb*²³

You thresh to yourselves (twice), the oxen, you strike, you thresh the straw to yourselves, the mouth eating the barley of your masters, making the weariness in your heart, you are cool, (twice).

¹⁷ Erman, A., *The literature of the ancient Egyptians; poems, narratives, and manuals of instruction, from the third and second millennia B.C .*, (trans.) Blackman, A. M., 1971, p.60;

عبد العزيز صالح ، الأسرة المصرية في عصورها القديمة ، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب ، القاهرة ، 1988 ، ص. 134، 135 ؛
سليم حسن ، موسوعة مصر القديمة ، الجزء 17 ، الأدب المصرى القديم: فى القصة و الحكم و الأمثال و التأملات و الرسائل الأدبية ،
هنداوى ، ويندسور ، المملكة المتحدة ، 2018 ، ص. 34

¹⁸ Strouhal, E., *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, Cairo, 1996, p.99.

¹⁹ Brier & Hobbs, *Daily life of the ancient Egyptians*, p.116.

²⁰ Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, p.99.

²¹ Ruiz, A., *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, Algora, New York, 2001, p.60.

²² Tylor, J. and Griffith, F. LL. *Ahnas El Medineh: The Tomb of Paheri at El Kab*, London, 1894, p.15; Wilkinson, J. G., *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. 2, London, 1890, p.43; Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.88, 90; Erman, A., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Routledge, USA, 2013, p.251.

²³ Lesko, L. H., *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian*, 2001, p. 106, 303; Faulkner, R. O., *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford, 2017, p. 15, 204, 389; Gardiner, A., *Egyptian Grammar*, (3rd ed.), Oxford, 1973, p. 529.



Fig. 7 The song is recorded on the west wall at tomb of Paheri, above ascene of threshing by oxen.
After: Tylor & Griffith, *The Tomb of Paheri at El Kab*, pl.3.

Another song dates back to the 5th dynasty, was sung by the shepherd to his sheep, according to Egyptian custom, when he was driving them after the sower over the wet fields, so that they might tread in the seed into the mud " *Your shepherd is in die water with the fish, He talks with the sheath-fish, he salutes the pike. From the West! your shepherd is a shepherd from the West.*" The meaning is that the shepherd is making fun of himself for having thus to wade through the puddles, where the fish call out good-day to him.²⁴

A custom that still nowadays and has an Ancient Egyptian origin, placing round loaves of bread among wheat grains after their harvesting and winnowing and heaping them in heaps covered with palm leaves . These loaves of bread become an extra reward for the farmer who finds them the next day and transfers them to the granaries.²⁵

Peasants used to take care of their animals , they used to help them in feeding process patiently.²⁶ They took their cattle to pastures to feed them.²⁷ At time of animal's illness, presenting proper food and respecting the best mode for treating.²⁸ The peasantry people had the custom of helping the eggs for hatching by some special ways.²⁹ The custom is for the proprietors of the ovens; collecting eggs from peasants, then giving them to rearers who placing the eggs on mats strewed with bran in a room 11 feet square with connected ovens to make warm which helps in hatching.³⁰

²⁴ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.385.

²⁵ Ragueh, Ch. A., "The Blessing of Grain Represented in God 'Nepri' and his Affiliate Gods of Grain: 'Osiris' and 'Renenetet' ", *JAAUTH* , Vol. 13, NO.2, part1, 2016, p.13.

²⁶ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.139.

²⁷ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.127; Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom*, Cairo, 1996, p.170.

²⁸ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.133.

²⁹ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.134.

³⁰ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.133-137.

The wheat doll which is represented in some tombs like the tomb of "Nakht" at Al Sheikh Abd El Qurna of the New Kingdom. It is thought to be connected to the harvest season. A farmer used to go to the field before harvesting the crop, picking some early crop spikes, then these spikes were shaped in the form of a doll. The farmers considered it as an amulet for bringing goodness and blessing, and they hanged it on the entrance of the house or the granary or the store. This doll remained in its place until the next harvest season when it was replaced by a new one, or it was left to fall naturally then the new one is placed next to it. The wheat doll was placed temporarily on the crop heaps after the winnowing to guarantee a good crop the next year. Sometimes the grains of the wheat doll were mixed with the seeds of the next year while sowing them.³¹

Among the habits of poor peasants, eating with any finger, while Egyptians ate only with the thumb, index and middle finger and considered eating with any finger is poor manner and a sign of low class.³²

Also, the peasants followed a custom at the harvest-time. When this time came, They used to work quickly, in co-operation either with family, or in a gang at the field, as shown in the tomb scenes represent the peasant work (fig.8).³³ They cut by means of a short sickle.³⁴

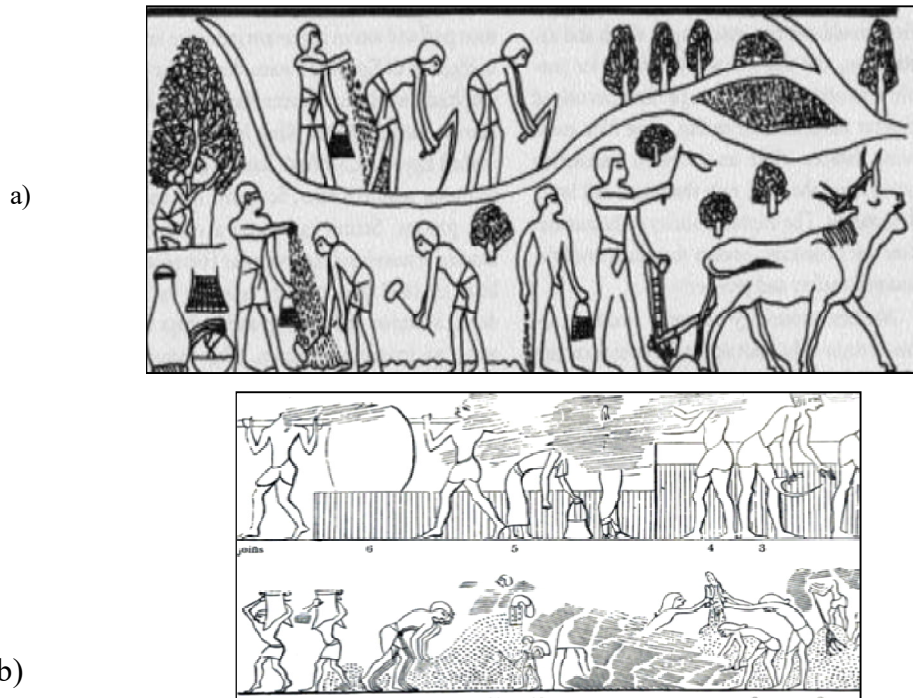


Fig.8 working in the field stick together

After: a) David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.118.

b) Wilkinson, *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. 2, p.44.

³¹ Ragueh, *JAAUTH*, p.13

³² Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.40.

³³ David, R., *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, New York, 2003, p.119.

³⁴ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.429.

The peasants followed the custom of trampling in of the seed by using the animals. sheep and pigs were set loose on the plowed area to trample the land.³⁵ When *Herodotos* travelled in Egypt, he noticed that pigs were employed in the Delta for this purpose; while in the time of *Pliny* this custom was considered as a long-forgotten custom.³⁶

The ancient Egyptian peasants used to transfer their crops and grain to granaries on the back of their donkeys (fig.9). This custom is still used in the Egyptian countryside. To make the donkey move faster, the peasant held stick to hit the beast, such as nowadays in our modern Egyptian countryside of the drivers admit of no delay. When one of the animals then kicks up his heels, and refused to come alongside. One of the peasant drivers pulled him by the ears and leg, another beating and saying: "*run as thou canst*".³⁷



Fig.9 Two baskets of grain taken by donkey to the granary
After: Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, fig.100, p.98.

The followed custom during the inundation season was to suspend all agricultural works and feasts, just amusements, games played.³⁸ Peasantry indulged in period gave the peasant time to enjoy. The cattle were housed and supplied with dry food already laid in the storage.³⁹

There were also another customs that were nearly not common; for example, herdsmen could take care of people's cattle in exchange for low fees, as in the story of "*The Blinding of Truth by Falsehood*" showed some customs of peasants at Ramsside period.⁴⁰ The text mentioned in the story by son of *Truth* to the herdsman of *Falsehood* " *Now take for yourself these ten loaves as well as this staff, this / waterskin, this sword, and this pair of sandals, and keep watch over this ox for me until I return from town*".⁴¹ It seems that it was customary to give the cattle to the stranger while the son of the man of the house is still alive.⁴²

³⁵ David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.119.

³⁶ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.429.

³⁷ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.430-431.

³⁸ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.122.

³⁹ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.122; Kamil, J., *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.171.

⁴⁰ سليم حسن، موسوعة مصر القديمة، الجزء 17، الأدب المصرى القديم: فى القصة و الحكم و الأمثال و التأملات و الرسائل الأدبية، هنداوى، ويندسور، المملكة المتحدة، 2018، ص. 142.

⁴¹ Simpson, W.K., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, Yale University press, London, 2003, p.106.

⁴² Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 8.

An ancient Egypt custom of that the state, the towns, or the wealthy proprietors rented the lands belonging to them to the peasants for a rental of half the products of the soil.⁴³ The landowners used to eat from the produce of their estates.⁴⁴

The confinement of hair would have been a costume adopted by Egyptian peasants while working in the hot weather during sowing grain in the fields.⁴⁵

It was a custom that peasant women who were considered to be heads of households,⁴⁶ to go to work in field in order to help in the harvest.⁴⁷ In case that she did not work in the field, she used to wait for her husband to serve him when he got home, as in the "*Tale of the Two Brothers*".⁴⁸ Many women peasants contributed to the family income by establishing their own small businesses, selling surpluses (bread, beer or food),⁴⁹ and making dairy products.

1.1 General Customs

Peasants married in young age. In the Instruction of the sage *Any* from the New Kingdom, he advised to marry at a young age and to have more children,⁵⁰ as the one who had more children was much respected:⁵¹ "*Take a wife while you're young, that she make a son for you; she should bear for you while you are youthful. It is proper to make people. Happy the man is people are many, he is saluted on the account of his progeny*".⁵²

Peasants treated their wives in a tender way. Many advices showed how a wife should be treated in the house; for instance, the sage *Any* said: "*Do not control your wife in her house, When you know she is efficient; Don't say to her: "Where is it? Get it!" when she has put it in the right place. Let your eyes observe in silence, then you recognize her skill; it is joy when your hand is with her, there are many who don't understand this. If a man desists from strife at home, he will not meet its beginning. Every man that founds a household should hold back the hasty heart*".⁵³

⁴³ Maspero, *popular stories of Ancient Egypt*, p.63.

⁴⁴ David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.365.

⁴⁵ Harris, S.J., *Decoding ancient Egyptian diadems: symbolism and iconography as a means of interpreting feminine identity*, Master of Arts in Ancient Near Eastern Studies, The University of South Africa, 2018, p.124.

⁴⁶ Lesko, B. S., " Women's Monumental Mark on Ancient Egypt", in: *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 1991, pp. 4-15. p.6

⁴⁷ Tyldesley, J., *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt: From Early Dynastic Times to the Death of Cleopatra*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 2006, p.13.

⁴⁸ Graves-Brown, C., *Dancing For Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*, Continuum UK, London, 2010, p.47.

⁴⁹ Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt*, p.13.

⁵⁰ Budge, W., *A Short History of the Egyptian People: With Chapters on Their Religion, Daily Life, Etc.*, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1914, p.206; Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt*, p.11.

⁵¹ Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p.55; Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.141.

⁵² Allen, T.D. *The Ancient Egyptian Family: Kinship and Social Structure*, Routledge, New York, 2009, p.30; Stead, M., *Egyptian Life*, British Museum Press, London, 1989, p.16; Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.141.

⁵³ Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Family*, p.30; Troxel, L., et.al., *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, Eisenbrauns, USA, 2005, p.232.

Unfaithful peasant wife was punished with death. However, the wife was treated with a deep respect, when she betrayed her husband, she received a severe punishment. The literature tells us that punishment of the non-loyal wife was the death. For example, in the "*Tale of the Two Brothers*", *Anupu* the elder brother killed his wife, slained her and threw her body to the dogs,⁵⁴ as she was seducing *Bata*. Also, Oubainer's wife who deceived her husband was burnt alive and her ashes were thrown into the Nile.⁵⁵

Also, among the customs which continued till nowadays in the modern Egyptian countryside, is the desire to have a son more than a daughter.⁵⁶ A stela in British Museum includes a story written by a woman indicates that her husband was sad to be given only daughters and he wanted a son. As a result, she prayed with her husband to god *Imhotep*, son of *Ptah*,... who granted sons to the those who have none as she said, and finally she got after these prayers.⁵⁷ In addition, the wife of *Setnakhaemwase* who had no male child spent the night in the temple of *ptah*. The god appeared to her in a dream and gave her some advice that she hastened to obey, and she conceived a child. Her husband dreamed that the son should be named *Senoseris*.⁵⁸

The peasant women as any woman of the ancient Egyptian society used to make some tests by using some crops or plants, for instance, pregnancy test consisted of passing water over reeds, to see if they germinated. If they did, then the woman was with child. Another diagnostic method was practiced to determine the gender of the unborn baby. The mother passed urine over wheat and barley. If the wheat sprouted first, the baby would most likely be a girl; if the barley sprouted first, a boy could be expected. If nothing sprouted, she was not pregnant. Unfortunately, no records have been found to indicate the success rate of these methods.⁵⁹ If a couple already had many children and could not afford more. Contraception was sometimes followed. A popular recipe consisted of plant fibers coated in a mixture of honey, sour milk, crocodile dung and natron. Another recipe consisted of cotton soaked in a mixture of dates and acacia bark. The lactic acid acted as an effective spermicidal agent. Conversely, if a couple had difficulty conceiving, they could tend to magic. Rituals consisting of having the hopeful mother squat over a steaming potion of oil, frankincense, dates and beer. If she vomited from the aromas generated by this mixture, she was thought to be able to conceive. If she did not, it was believed that the smell of the mixture had become trapped within the woman's body, preventing her

⁵⁴ Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, p.27; Bunson, M., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 2002, p.394; Bediwy, M., *Polygamy in Ancient Egypt*, MA Thesis, Department of Tour guidance, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Sadat City University, Egypt, 2018, p.6; After: Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p. 54; Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 60.

⁵⁵ Maspero, *popular stories*, p.27; Bediwy, M., *Polygamy in Ancient Egypt*, p.6; After: Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p. 54; Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 60.

⁵⁶ Bediwy, *Polygamy in Ancient Egypt*, p.254.

⁵⁷ Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p.52.

⁵⁸ Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p.59.

⁵⁹ Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.25.

from conceiving. Also, childless couple would pray to the deities for divine assistance.⁶⁰

As any ancient Egyptian person, when a peasant died, his eldest son inherited his father and had to bury his father with the correct rites.⁶¹ When both parents died, the son inherited the land, while the daughter inherited household items, furniture and jewelry if existed. She was entitled to the entire property, if there were no sons in the family.⁶²

In the poor classes the ceremonies used to be curtailed.⁶³ In popular tale of *Setna Khaemwast*, the procession of poor consisted of nothing but the body of a poor laborer, who was wrapped in simple straw mat and carried by his two sons, while his wife and daughter mourning.⁶⁴

The poor used to use written spells on linen to produce a magical effect. The amulets were thought to possess magical powers either because of the substance of the amulet or the words which were inscribed upon them.⁶⁵

2. Religious Customs

Religious customs of the countryside were designed to commemorate certain events in the daily lives of the people particularly agriculturally events,⁶⁶ so peasants had many festivals connected to agriculture and the produce of the soil,⁶⁷ but under the head of religious ceremonies,⁶⁸ such as, heralding the rebirth of the crop, the bearing of the crop to the granary, the opening of new canal, the reaping of the first sheaf,⁶⁹ or the harvest festivals the festival of the Nile,⁷⁰ and others. These religious customs which happened in different periods of the year could be either as invocation to the deity to protect from something that they were afraid of, or as a sign of gratitude and expressing the happiness. Sometimes, all the country shared the peasants in these customs. All these rural festivals were accompanied by singing, clapping, and dancing.⁷¹

In following, are some examples for the religious customs of the ancient Egyptian peasants:

The Egyptians, especially peasants were afraid that Nile would not flood as it causes famine, as a result a ritual used to be performed to bring the flood: Cakes, fruit, sacred jewelry, and sacrificial animals (within the frame of their financial capabilities) were thrown into the river, and to ensure the Nile's fertility females figurines or

⁶⁰ Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.24.

⁶¹ David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.360, 361.

⁶² Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.27.

⁶³ Budge, W., *Egyptian Magic*, Kegan, Paul, Trench and Trübner & Co., London, 1901, p.193.

⁶⁴ Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.29.

⁶⁵ Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, p.125.

⁶⁶ Bunson, M., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 2002, p.138.

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.123.

⁶⁸ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.125.

⁶⁹ Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.185.

⁷⁰ Sauneron, S., *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, Cornell University press, USA, 2000, p. 95.

⁷¹ Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.185.

“dolls” were also included.⁷² Writer *Ibn Abd-el Hakam* (c. 871) recounted the custom of casting a young girl into the Nile during the month of *June*. However, there is no corroborating evidence of this practice, this could be a folktale based on the ancient Egyptian festival rites of taking sacred objects (usually a statue of a divinity) to the river and to ensure annual inundation and favorable New Year.⁷³

The peasants used to thank many deities that had relation with the agriculture. For instance, two little altars erected near the threshing-floor between the heaps of grain,⁷⁴ and in another a little bowl is placed on the heap of grain that a woman has piled up; both are doubtless offerings to the snake goddess, *Renenutet*; the altars and chapels in the courts of the granaries were also probably erected to her honour.⁷⁵ In addition, a Theban tomb representation shows that at the day of harvest, an offering of grapes and wine was presented to *Renenutet* goddess of harvest (fig.10).

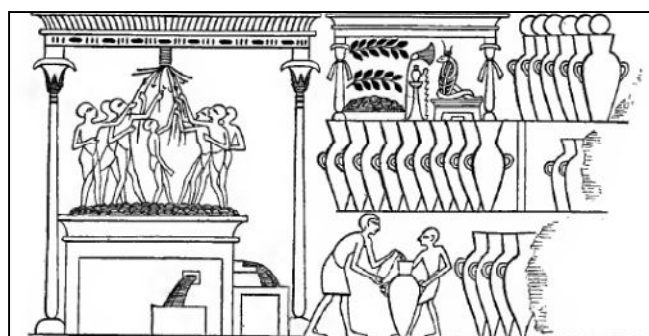


Fig. 10 Above on the right is a little temple to the goddess of the harvest, before whom has been placed an offering of grapes and wine on this harvest day. Below is seen filling of the great wine-jars with jugs.

After: Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.198.

In the vicinity of *Akhmim*, where the god *Min* had his ancient cult center, crude phallic figurines are still set up in fields. This custom is likely to go back to ancient times. They are probably used today because is thought to stimulate crop growth and because an erect penis is thought to frighten away the ghosts who threaten crops.⁷⁶

During the season of the harvest; the harvest was gathered in,⁷⁷ the peasants thanked the gods.⁷⁸ They dedicated the first fruits to specially the local god, and celebrate a festival to *Min* the god of *Koptos*, the patron of agriculture,⁷⁹ fertility and

⁷² David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 117.

⁷³ Harris, *Decoding ancient Egyptian diadems*, p.183.

⁷⁴ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.432.

⁷⁵ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.433.

⁷⁶ Pinch, G., *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, British Museum Press, London, 1994, p.119.

⁷⁷ Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.159.

⁷⁸ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.432.

⁷⁹ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.432.

vegetation,⁸⁰ the festival of *Min* was celebrated. His image was honored at this time in order to bless the crops with abundance.⁸¹

In the month *Mesore* (coincided with end of *March*), the peasants offered the first fruits of their lentils to *Herpocrats*, and the allegorical festival⁸² of the delivery of *Isis* was celebrated after the vernal equinox to commemorate the beginning of harvest.⁸³

The Festival of the *Djed* Pillar depicted growth and the movement of the sap in the trees as part of rebirth. Other festivals honored the Nile, and on those occasions elaborate shrines were floated onto the river, with flowers and hymns saluting the nurturer of all life in the land.⁸⁴

Among the festivals that partly related with the agriculture was *Opening the year festival* was the first of annual festivals. The festival accompanied the rising of the Nile. Its existential significance was as the pre condition for agricultural life in Egypt.⁸⁵

Also, the *Osirian Khoiak* festival. This festival was performed to ensure the rebirth of the god Osiris. The festival was celebrated at the same time as the last month of the inundation season, which could mean the rebirth of the land as the receding of the Nile flood and reappearance of fertile farm land. The *Osirian Khoiak* lasted several days and allowed for plenty of opportunities for the public to participate in the god's cult, either by being involved in the procession where they would erect statues and/or stelae and watch the procession taking place, or by watching the drama of the Osiris myth that was performed.⁸⁶

The peasants believed in lucky and unlucky days. In agricultural festivals, they cared for the *Year of Nature*; they maintained the old tradition that the day to be regarded as the beginning of the year, and of the inundation, was that on which *Sothis* first reappeared in the morning sky.

Conclusions

To conclude, the customs practiced by the ancient Egyptian peasant were social and religious customs.

The social costumes combined; for instance, using the wheat doll, branding the cattle, fattening the cattle and birds, talking to their animals and taking care of them, work in the fields while singing or listening to music, trampling the seed by using the animals, and using the donkey to transfer the crops, helping the eggs for hatching, and placing round loaves of bread among wheat grains after their harvesting. In addition the general customs which the peasant shared the classes of the community in.

⁸⁰ Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p.245.

⁸¹ Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, p.159.

⁸² Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.123.

⁸³ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs*, p.124.

⁸⁴ Bunson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, p.138.

⁸⁵ Arnold, D., et.al, *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, Cornell University Press, USA, 1997, p.221.

⁸⁶ Cornelissen, M., *Festivals and Feasts in Ancient Egypt A comparative study of the socio-political implications of festivals and feasts in Egypt and Rome*, 2019, p.13, 14.

Marrying in young age, treating their wives in a tender way and punishing with death in case that she betrayed her husband, the desire to have a son more than having a daughter.

The religious customs of ancient Egyptian peasants were designed to commemorate agriculturally events, such as, heralding the rebirth of the crop, the bearing of the crop to the granary, the opening of new canal, the reaping of the first sheaf, or the harvest festivals the festival of the Nile.

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الملخص العربي

عادات الفلاح المصري القديم

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تناول البحث العادات التي كان يمارسها الفلاح المصري القديم سواء كانت عادات اجتماعية أو دينية. كما صنف البحث العادات الاجتماعية بنوع كان يمارسه الفلاح وحده مثل: التحدث إلى ماشيته أثناء إطعامها ، والغناء أثناء العمل في الحقل ، ووسم الماشية ، وعاداته لتسمين الماشية والطيور ؛ كما وجد نوع آخر من العادات كان يمارسه أيضاً المجتمع بفئاته المختلفة ، و باعتبار أن الفلاح فرد في المجتمع فلذلك تم ذكر تلك العادات؛ ومن أمثلتها : علاقة الرجل بزوجه التي تعتمد على الإخلاص والمحبة والاستقرار والحماية والاحترام والوحدة ، والزواج في سن مبكرة ، والرغبة في إنجاب الذكور أكثر من البنات. كما ذكر البحث العادات الدينية والتي كانت تعتبر احتفالات ذات علاقة وثيقة بالزراعة وما تنتجه الأرض ولكن تحت مسمى الاحتفالات الدينية مثل: أعياد الحصاد، عيد بداية السنة الجديدة، عيد النيل ، وغيرها.

الكلمات الدالة: الفلاح، العادات، الريف، الماشية، الحيوان، الإحتفالات والدين.