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Abdel Aziz Saleh

Plural Sense and Cultural Aspects of the Ancient Egyptian mdw-ntr.

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PLURAL SENSE AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN *MDW-NṮR*

BY

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(Cairo Univ.)

The term *mdw-nṯr* was one of the highly appreciated mystical terms in ancient Egyptian literature. It has been literally translated by modern Egyptologists as «God's word» or «The word of God» or «Gottesworte»; and has been interpreted to denote : «Hieroglyphs» (by Gardiner, Breasted, and the Berlin *Wörterbuch*)[1] : or to indicate «Literary writings especially in hieroglyphs» (by Gardiner, Schaefer, and the Berlin *Wörterbuch*)»[2]; or «Spoken magic and ritual formulae» (by Boylan)[3]; or «Die Schrift und die heiligen Bücher» (by Erman)[4]; or «Heiligen Schriften und religiosen Schriften» (by Junker)[5].

Despite the multiplicity of these interpretations, and the fact that each maintains a certain validity in its approach to the meaning, none of them has realized the full sense conceived by the ancient Egyptians concerning their *mdw-nṯr*.

In the course of the following study, it will seem evident that the ancient conception extended so far as to include all the Classics which the Egyptians maintained in many branches of their traditional civilization, particularly what they believed to be the achievements of inspired superhuman geniuses, whether these were gods or deified patrons, not in only one or another of the above mentioned items (of hieroglyphic literary writings, calligraphy, liturgy, or magic) separately, but in all of them, together with other aspects of art and science as well.

[1] A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts,* I, p. 14; *Theban Ostraca,* p. 4; J.H. Breasted, *Ancient Eg. Records,* I, 757; *Wb.* II, 181, 1-2.

[2] A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Papyri,* IIIrd. series, 131; H. Schaefer, *Mysterien*, 38; *Wb.* II, 180, 13.

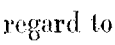
[3] P. Boylan, *Thoth the Hermes of Egypt,* 1923, pp. 94-95.

[4] A. Erman, *Die Literatur...,* 271 Anm. 1.

[5] H. Junker, *Giza,* VII, 233; *ASAE,* 1943, 208.

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To justify this viewpoint, it is necessary to begin with a few preliminary philological notes concerning the paleography and the literal significance of the term in question. As for the former, it may be noted that the oldest construction of the formula *mdw-nṯr* was written mainly in the singular form as :  [1];  [2];  [3];  [4]; ... etc.

This form is more often transliterated into *mdw-nṯr*, and rarely as *m(w)dw-nṯr* (with regard to the rare orthography  and the Coptic ⲙⲟⲩ·ⲧⲉ S.; ⲙⲟⲩ† B.F.) [5]. In meaning, the term seems better to denote either «god's saying», or «god's wording»; rather than «God's word» or «The word of God», as it is usually translated.

This preference in the translation of the term, gets sustenance in the use of the variant *mdt-nṯr*  in several texts (since the time of the 18th Dyn.), both in the singular [6] and in the plural forms (see further below, p. 18). Among the appropriate meanings of *mdt*, are «speech, subject, and matter» [7], which are more coherent than the singular «word», as the following extracts may illustrate :

 *Urk.* I, 128, 5f.

 *Urk.* I, 253, 7 ; 254, 6 ; etc.

 *Urk.* I, 292.

 *Pap. Kahun* 35, 31.

 *Max. d'Anii,* 9, 6.

Leaving aside some instances in which the word *nṯr* in the term *mdw-nṯr* may refer to the Pharaoh, it is improbable that the ancient Egyptians meant with their true divine «*mdw-nṯr*» a single word (or saying, or wording). It is more likely that the construction echoes some other old formal titles such as : *ỉmy-r sš* (lit.

[1] Pyr. 333 *C; Memphite Theology,* 56; *Bersheh,* I, 8, 5; Mariette, *Cat. d'Abydos,* 1179; Berlin 1191, 1204 (M.K.); etc...

[2] *ZÄS,* LXIII, 66; Louvre C 14 (Dyn. 11); *Beni Hasan,* I, 32.

[3] P. Lacau, *Sarcophages,* 206.

[4] H. Junker, *Giza,* VII, 233; Mariette, *Mast.,* D 1.

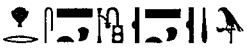
[5] *Wb.* II, 179, 4; Sethe, *Verbum,* I, 481; also G. Lefebvre, *Grammaire,* p. 436. Compare also the forms : *m(w)dw, m(w)dww, m(w)dyw* and *m(w)dt.* Gardiner, *Grammar,* p. 261, 517.

[6] Berlin 19742 (N.K.); *Edfu,* I, 291.

[7] *Wb.* II, 181, 7 f.; also B. Gunn, *Syntax,* 47, 2.

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overseer (of the) scribe); *šḏ sš* (lit. inspector (of the) scribe); *ḫry-ib pr mḏ3t* (lit. supervisor of the mansion of the book *i.e.* library); *ḫrp šndyt* (lit. controller of the kilt); etc. The object under supervision in all such occupations does not imply the singular case; but implicity denotes a collective noun. In other words, each instance does not suggest that the superintendent is in charge of only one scribe, or one library-book, or one chest containing a single kilt; but it has a collective connotation, though traditionally written in the singular form.

A typical example of such indicative terms is the old title:  [1] which literally signifies : «the confident of the secret writing of the office of the god's (or king's) word». The *pr mdw-nṯr* here obviously means a scribal-bureau, or an office for preserving the secret archives of all that the god says, though the word *mdw* is grammatically singular.

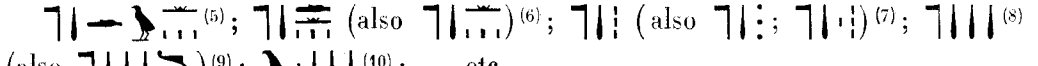
For another instance expressing the plural significance of the term *mdw-nṯr* and its synonyms, in contrast to the other normal term «*mdw*» which is presented in the plural form and yet implies only part of the *mdw-nṯr*, see such Old Kingdom titles as :

a)  [2].

b) [3].

Compare, as well, the Middle Kingdom title *sš mdw*, which W.M.F. Petrie translated as «scribe of speech» or «reporter» [4].

At any rate, the collective sense of the term *mdw-nṯr* would no longer be a mere hypothesis in relation to some Middle and Late Egyptian instances, where the *mdw* in the term *mdw-nṯr* seems to be in the plural form, with the abstract determinative or without it, as may be discerned in these variants :

 [5]; (also) [6]; (also ;) [7]; [8] (also) [9]; [10]; ... etc.

(1) H. Junker, *Giza,* VII, 233; *ASAE,* 1943, 208.

(2) *Ti,* pl. 27; Junker, *op. cit.,* 236.

(3) *Ibid.,* VII, 233, 235.

(4) Petrie, *Scarabs,* pl. 14, 10.

(5) *Bersheh,* II, 45.

(6) *Urk.* IV, 121, 2; *Urk. M.R.* I; *B.D.* 68, 10.

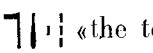
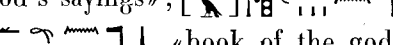
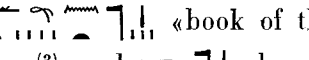
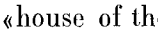
(7) *Mem. Miss.,* I, 122 (N.K.); Louvre C 55, 17 (N.K.); Berlin 2293, 2 (N.K.); Pap. Lee, 2, 5; Mariette, *Abydos,* I, 30 *c.*

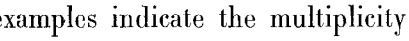
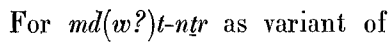
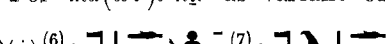
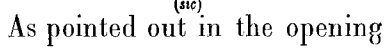
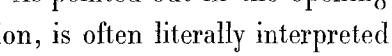
(8) *Mem. Miss.,* V, 625; *Edfu,* II, 80; Piehl, *Inscriptions,* I, 122 *b.*

(9) Mariette, *Dend.,* III, 30 *a,* 37 *i.*

(10) *Edfu,* R.I, 27.

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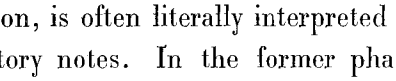
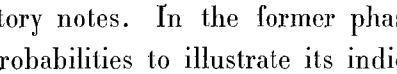
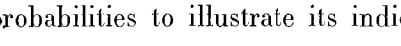
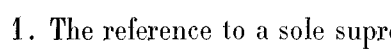
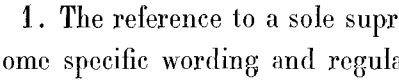
The same sense of plurality is evident in such expressions as :  [1] «all the god's sayings» ;  «the texts of god's (legal) wording» [2] ; also  «book of the god's sayings» or «statute-book of the god's wording» [3] ; and  «house of the *mdw-nṯr*» *i.e.* a sacred library [4]. All of these examples indicate the multiplicity of the *mdw* included.

For *md(w?)t-nṯr* as variant of the plural *mdw-nṯr*, see :  [5] ;  [6] ;  [7] ;  [8] ;  [9] ;  [10].

As pointed out in the opening lines, the word *nṯr* in the term under consideration, is often literally interpreted as a noun, though as an adjective in the explanatory notes. In the former phase, *i.e.* as genitive substantive, there are three probabilities to illustrate its indications :

1. The reference to a sole supreme god that ordained, from the very beginning, some specific wording and regulations that might lead to an ideal, both in the material and in the mental aspects of life.

2. The thought of any god, the esteemed patron of a certain distinguished knowledge which is being dealt with throughout the context.

3. To imply the sense of plurality though apparent in singular form ; and thus becomes an allusion to all deities associated with wisdom and refined culture. In fact, there is no direct evidence to confirm this supposed plural sense ; yet it may be tolerated in connection with a few scattered instances in which the plural form occurs with the *nṯr* sign, either deliberately or accidentally. See for instance :  [11] ;  [12] ;  [13] ;  [14] and  [15]. That is besides the fact that the Egyptians alluded with reverence to words (or sayings) of more than one god, particularly those of Ptah, Thoth, Atum, and Rē^{c}.

(1) Mariette, *Abydos,* II, 29, 6 (XIII Dyn.).
(2) Jur. Pap. Lee, 2, 5 ; *and see* p. 33.
(3) E. Naville, *Totb.,* 170, 5 ; *and see* p. 36.
(4) *ZÄS* 90 (1963), 105.
(5) Pap. Sallier, I, 6, 2 ; 6, 16 ; Berlin, 6910 (XVIII Dyn.). Theb. Ostracon A 2.
(6) Pap. Berlin 3038, 15, 3 ; 21, 9.
(7) Pap. Sallier, IV vs., 18, 2.
(8) Pap. Chester Beatty, IV, vs., 7, 3f.
(9) P. Boylan, *Thoth ...,* p. 92, n. 1.
(10) Mariette, *Mon. d'Abydos,* No. 1179 ; *Wb.* II, 182, 5 ; *Philae* ⟨ 54 ⟩.
(11) Pyr. 2110 *d.*
(12) B. Bruyère, *Fouilles de Deir el Medineh,* 1953, Index (20th Dyn.).
(13) Pap. Anastasi, I, 1, 1 ; Pap. Sall. I. 6, 2.
(14) Pap. Anastasi, V, 6, 2 ; 15, 7 ; Pap. Chester Beatty, XVIII, rt. ; Gardiner-Černý, *Hieratic Ostraca,* I, pl. VI, 1, l. 2.
(15) *ZÄS,* LXXI, 119.

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Finally, it is interesting to witness the word *nṯr* applied as an adjective, to mean «divine» or «sacred», and to confirm the holy nature of the wording in question; though it had scarcely been written in the nisbé form in a few dubious cases [1].

* * *

It seems hard to handle the cultural implications of the *mdw-nṯr* without paying attention to the main trends underlying the views held in the Egyptian texts in reference to the holy sources of the distinguished Egyptian civilization; despite some difficulties in the statements made in different works of different periods.

The ancient Egyptian civilization never lacked progress at any stage of its development. Yet, it is equally true that the successive generations were fully aware of the fact that their refined culture owed much to the remote past. This sense of gratitude to their ancestry grew constantly ever since the Old Kingdom when the Egyptian legacy seemed so mature, so harmonious, and so majestic that it could hardly be initially attributed to specific developments or to mere human efforts.

Religion and myths enabled the Egyptians to speculate on a distant creative epoch starting, according to their imagination, shortly after the rise of the universe, when certain deities undertook to rule the earth, and when «men and gods were one thing», that is when they lived together and manifested their authority in organizing refined life.

Through such speculation, the Egyptians came to believe in a far dignified realm of certain eminent gods [2], of whom Ptah-Tathjnen had the power to bring every *mdw-nṯr,* (or all the *mdw-nṯr*) into being; and at his wording all provisions were secured, life was granted to the peaceful, whereas annihilation befell the sinner. In conformity with his command(s), all kinds of work and crafts started, and towns and nomes were founded. Having thus made everything through (or as well as) every *mdw-nṯr,* Ptah felt contented [3].

[1] Berlin, 419, 421; *and see,* A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar,* p. 1.

[2] H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der aeg. Religionsgeschichte,* 1952, 228 f.; Goyon, «*Les travaux de Chou et les tribulations de Geb ...*», in *Kêmi,* 1936, 1 f.; H. Jacobsohn, *Die dogmatische Stellung des Königs in der Theologie der alten Aegypten,* Munich, 1939; Roeder, *Rel. Urk.,* 153 f.; S. Schott, *Spuren der Mythenbildung,* in *ZÄS,* 73, 8.

[3] Brit. Mus. St. 797, 56, 59-60; H. Junker, *Die Götterlehre von Memphis,* 1940, 59, 60, 63, 65.

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In that divinely fabulous realm, there was also Rē‘ who ordained justice and divine order [1]. Besides, there were the gods Osiris and Thoth, the donors of order and legislation. Thoth and Seshat were distinguished for the invention of reckoning and writing.

The less mythical initial period that imprinted a peculiar stamp on the ancient Egyptian civilization was that of the first three historical dynasties whose achievements were never obliterated from the conscience of the Egyptians. With the final stages of that period, not only did the art of writing hieroglyphs (which some authors regard as the essence of the *mdw-ntr*) attain perfection, but also some other great achievements in various branches of the civilization were in rapid progress ; a coincidence that induced later successive Egyptian generations to regard all the evolutionary phenomena of the far past as one compact phase of a marvelously divine order [2].

Undoubtedly, some Egyptians were not ignorant of the fact that those achievements owed much to the efforts of human geniuses. However, as the royal names always surpassed the common ones, some of the initiative accomplishments in medicine, anatomy, divine themes, and even in the means of perfecting life, were traditionally attributed to early kings, like Menes, Athothis, Kakaw and Tosorthros. The only fortunate private person of this early period, who evaded oblivion, was Imhotep often alluded to as the architect who had first invented building with hewn stone and devoted his attention to writing, together with his medical skill. Later, he became the esteemed patron of scribes, and healer, and son of god [3].

This reasonable attitude of ascribing evolutionary ideas to human efforts, gradually gained ground. But, side by side with it, there still existed the sense of conservatism, piety, and devotion to the gods, which all characterized the Egyptian way of thinking. This prevented the Egyptians from discarding the other inherited conception that the initial stages of their mature culture owed much to the genius of divine patrons who became ideals for other efficient and industrious human

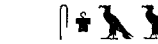
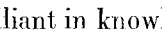
[1] Brit. Mus. Pap. 10509, 2, 7 f. (Pap. Prisse, 88 f.) ; A. Erman, *Die Literatur ...*, 89 Anm. 2 ; H. Frankfort, *Anc. Egyptian Religion,* New-York, 1945, 62 f.

[2] *Compare also,* H. Frankfort, *The Birth of Civilization,* pp. 30-31, 25.

[3] H. Schaefer, in *ZÄS,* XXXVI, 147 ; K. Sethe, *Imhopet der Asklepios der Aegypter,* 1902 ; Leipoldt, in *Mélanges Schubart,* 1950, 56 f.

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mentalities. Hence, an affinity between those patrons and the inspired humans is often illustrated in texts [1].

Concerning those divine deities and patrons, we should not fail to note that the Egyptians, like other ancient peoples, were more inclined to assign to each deity all possible capacities and functions, rather than to confine his qualities within clear-cut limits [2]. Yet, the Egyptian god Thoth had the priority in every cultural matter. He was the knower  [3] par excellence; the intelligent  [4] and the brilliant in knowledge  [5]. He was considered the source of all deep knowledge and acumen which men possess, and the donor of all human foresight and astuteness [6]. Hence, it was he «who granted knowledge and led the scribes to the accurate rules» [7], and «he granted the writers the ability to interpret» [8]. Since the Middle Kingdom onwards, he had become known as «Lord of the *mdw-nṯr*» par excellence [9]. A Theban Text of the time of the 18th Dynasty extolls some of his faculties and functions by saying : «Lord of the *mdw-nṯr*, the perceiver of what heaven and earth contain, the high god of the very distant past. He who granted wording  and script . (He who) caused the mansions to flourish and founded the shrines. (He who) let the gods know their interests. (He who led) every craft (to) its perfection. (He who organized) the countries and (stipulated) the rules for the field boundaries» [10].

[1] See for example :
— Thotmosis III was «Thoth in every thing, there was no matter he did not accomplish» (*ZÄS*, 1901, 61).
— Thotmosis IV is as «clever as Ptah»; «skilfully-minded as He- (who is) -south-of-his-wall» (Petrie, *Six Temples*, pl. 12, 8; Breasted, *Anc. Records*, II, 836).
— «He (the king) is keen of wit as Thoth» (Couyant-Montet, No. 240).
— «Whose laws are as stable and lasting as (those of) Thoth» (Pap. Anastasi I, 9, 2).
— «I am initiated into the decrees of Month» (*Ibid.* 28, 2).
— «He is (a man like) Thoth, second to Ptah and Khnum» (Brit. Mus. 159, 4 f.).
— «He (a man) resembles Meskhent and Khnum in making men» (*PSBA* XIII, 202) ...
and compare, H. Polotosky, *Zu den Inschriften der 11 Dyn.*, 1929, 42 f.

[2] *See also*, Boylan, *op. cit.*, 82.

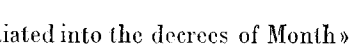
[3] Mariette, *Dend.* II, 35 *b*.

[4] Gayet, *Louxor*, 10, 3.

[5] Karnak Hypostyle, St. 21, 67.

[6] H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Aegyptischen Religions-geschichte*, 1952, 806; Boylan, *op. cit.*, 103.

[7] *Urk.* IV, 19, 16-20,1.

[8] Louvre Wb. N° 16 (58)  (or :..., he who grants the scribes perceive the solvability ?).

[9] *See*, J.A. Wilson, in *AJSL*, LVIII (1941), p. 229 and note *h*.

[10] Berlin 2293, 2 f.

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Classical writers cited much of the above mentioned presumably holy sources of the Egyptian culture. Plato, for instance, commended the Egyptian prudence in preserving traditional arts in a compact and harmonious whole by attributing their origins to divine sources (a view which should not be carried to such an extreme as to insinuate the immobility of the ancient Egyptian civilization).

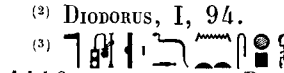
Clement of Alexandria enumerated forty-two distinguished books, which he sorted into books of legislation, liturgy, cosmogony, hieroglyphs, astrology, astronomy, etc., all of which were attributed to the god Thoth (or rather to his inspiration), and were still exhibited during the festival processions of the god [1], in the beginning of the third century A.D.

Earlier to this, Herodotus and Diodorus discussed the Egyptian creed in detail. The latter was clever enough to attribute its perpetuation either to the common tendency to regard any idea having impact on public welfare as deserving to be miraculous in itself, or because the people would be more bound to any regulations (especially in legal affairs) if they believed in their formulation by an almighty god [2].

Both views are quite reasonable and to them may be added that many a professional Egyptian staff were eager to ascribe their basic knowledge to a more or less divine status and sacred source, in order to secure stability and reverence for it. Such a purpose was not unattainable for the Egyptian mind which appreciated the idea that the inventive genius could be elevated to a semi-divine level. For instance, the staff of scribes who were nicknamed attendants or disciples of Thoth, Lord of the *mdw-ntr,* believed that the genuine writer acquires a mysterious power through thought as well as productive speech. The scribe of the divine book was referred to as he «who recounts what exists and brings into being what does not exist» [3]. The wise were declared as «The learned writers since the time of those who lived after the gods. Their names have become everlasting even though they were gone after having completed their lives. ... Though they have concealed their magic from everybody, it may be read in a book of (their) wisdom» [4].

[1] *Stromates,* VI, 4, 35f.; *see,* Th. Hoffner, by Bonnet, *op. cit.,* 291.

[2] Diodorus, I, 94.

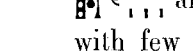
[3]  Pyr. 1146 *a-c; compare,* Boylan, *op. cit.,* 120-121.

[4] Pap. Chester Beatty, IV vs.; A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri,* 3rd. series, I, 38 f.; J. Capart, «Les Grands Maîtres de la Littérature Egyptienne», *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin,* Bruxelles 1935, t. XXI, 289 f.

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In order to substantiate the wider implications of the *mdw-nṯr,* the following topics are to be considered :

In Didactic Courses : The teachers of the Ramesside period did their best to arouse the interest of their pupils and gain their concentration by inserting in their teachings such phrases as : «Furthermore, it is said to me that thou forsakesth *sš(w?)* and turnest thy back to the *mdw-nṯr* (*w?*) » [1]. Such a statement, with few variants, confirms the view that :

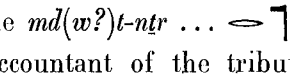
1. The mere calligraphy or script in hieroglyphs [2] cannot stand here for the *mdw-nṯr,* for two reasons :

a) The *mdw-nṯr* occurs independent of *sš(w?)*, not as a substitute for it.

b) The students addressed here, who were mainly scribes under training, used to write often in hieratic and seldom in hieroglyphs.

2. In the meanwhile, neither liturgy nor magic would be an adequate substitute for those *mdw-nṯr* (compare Boylan's viewpoint) [3]; since courses arranged for the teaching of such students, in the state departments, were often of a secular nature.

The closest sense of the *mdw-nṯr* sought by those teachers seems to be expressed in the traditional courses of the classical studies they were wont to teach.

The teacher *Ptaḥ-m-wi̯* once addressed his pupil saying : «... I have heard that thou turnest thy back to the *md(w?)t-nṯr* ... , thou commander of the whole land, thou accountant of the tributes in the royal palace, ...». Then, he devoted more than four pages to this topic, enumerating what the prospective tributes might be composed of, as for instance : minerals with reference to their various provenances and the manner in which they were delivered; various commodities of oil, incense, animals, birds; and products of the oases. Finally, he gave an account of the tribute carriers, those coming «from all lands», Syria and Nubia in particular [4].

[1] Pap. Anastasi, V, 15, 6-7; 6, 1-2; Pap. Sallier, I, 6, 1-2; etc...

[2] Compare for instant, A.H. Gardiner, *Theban Ostraca,* p. 4; *Hieratic Papyri,* 3rd. series, I, p. 44, n. 2.

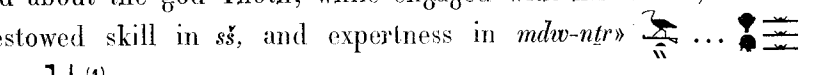
[3] Boylan, *op. cit.,* pp. 94-95.

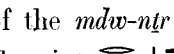
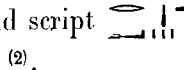
[4] Pap. Chester Beatty, IV vs., 7, 3 f.

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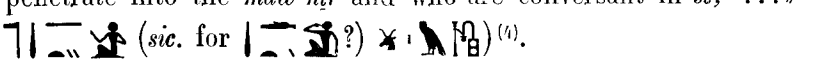
It may be noted in such a treatise that the *mdw-nṯr,* that is the divine wording (or sayings), which the teacher was keen to insert into his pupil's mind and in his studies, were not merely script and spelling drills, or pure literary themes, but were mostly hints of general knowledge included in the traditional program and considered as a whole to be essentially required for making up the state-trained-scribes.

Turning to the above-mentioned contrast between the script *sš* together with its equivalents, and the *mdw-nṯr,* the following instances may be noted :

1. It was stated about the god Thoth, while engaged with his books, that it was he «who bestowed skill in *sš,* and expertness in *mdw-nṯr*»  [1].

2. As master of the *mdw-nṯr* , Thoth was considered as he «who bestowed wording and script  (or he who ordained (the method of) speaking and writing) [2].

3. Some funerary appeals were made to plead for the spiritual rest of the dead : «All scribes (or draughtsmen?) who interpret (lit. solve) script signs *drf,* and who are keen of wit in the *mdw-nṯr*...» () [3],

or «Those who penetrate into the *mdw-nṯr* and who are conversant in *sš,* ...» (... ) [4].

The *mdw-nṯr* here were neither mere script nor signs, but were mainly uttered or written words ascribed to divine sources or primarily pronounced by the gods [5].

It is noteworthy that together with the differentiation revealed here between the script and the *mdw-nṯr,* the last text went on to illustrate those who penetrated into the *mdw-nṯr* and became conversant in *sš,* both through religious and secular qualifications, by referring to them as « those who have been enlightened

[1] Berlin 8042 (II, 304).

[2] Berlin 2293 (II, 41). *See also* Ebers, 1, 8 ; Mariette, *Karnak,* 16 ; Naville, *Totb.* Ch. 182, 3 f. ; Boylan, *op. cit.,* 93, with his note that the «*drf*» means primarily legible signs, the separate characters in script ; but it sometimes means «writing» in the sense of documents or texts (cf. Mariette, *Dend.* III, 72 *a*).

[3] Theb. Tomb 57 (Dyn. 18) ; *Mem. Miss.,* I, 122.

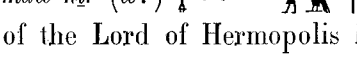
[4] Louvre C 232 ; Pierret, *Rec. Inscr.,* II, 21, 67 ; A.H. Gardiner, in *J.E.A.* XXIV, 172-173.

[5] *Compare also,* Boylan, *op. cit.,* p. 94 f. and 111 f.

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in the house of life, and conceived the way of gods. Those who are versed in the library manuscripts and can explain the emanations of Rēʿ (*i.e.* the books), being excellent in the works of the ancestors, and capable of deciphering what is written on the walls, ...».

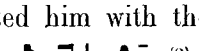
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Akin to the didactic themes, there is the Ramesside literary controversy held between Hori and Amenemope. The former being teacher in the diwan of writing as well as scribe and officer in the royal army, was proud to declare that he was «versed in the *mdw-nṯr* (*w?*) , champion in the art of Seshat, and attendant of the Lord of Hermopolis in the office of writing».

To demonstrate his excellent talents and wide knowledge, both in the *mdw-nṯr* and in the art of writing, he claimed to master such mental and professional abilities as : [1]

a) An accuracy in handwriting, as well as an excellent ability to set down records.
b) A remarkable talent to interpret any obscure data (or annals) in the same manner as he who composed them (*i.e.* the god Thoth).
c) To memorize a considerable part of the classical literature.
d) To be thoroughly acquainted with all the secrets of heaven, earth, and the netherworld.
e) To have an outstanding skill in mathematics.
f) To be familiar with the famous towns and districts in Egypt and Syria.

The versedness of Hori both in the *mdw-nṯr* and in script, did not therefore owe as much to religious experience, as it did to his secular knowledge which was highly appreciated in his surroundings.

When Hori intended to expose his adversary's utter ignorance of the mysteries which he claimed to have mastered, he banished him from the range of «the god's sayings» and confronted him with the warning : «Beware lest thy fingers approach *m mdw-nṯr* (*w?*)... »[2].

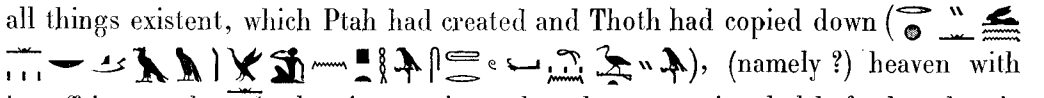
[1] Pap. Anastasi, I, 1 f.; A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts, series I,* Leipzig 1911; Text, 1, 4; 1, 6; 7, 5 f.; 10, 7; 11, 1-2; 18, 5 f.; Deir el Medineh Ostracon, 1070, 7.

[2] Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 279 and note 8.

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Amenemope, the son of Amenemope, was another learned man of the Ramesside period, and author of a valuable onomasticon [1]. He did not actually mention the *mdw-nṯr* by name in this onomasticon, though at the same time, he closely approached their sphere in two ways :

a) Through his job as *sš mḏ;t-nṯr, i.e.* «scribe of the god's book(s)» or scribe of the divine book(s) [2], he was very close to the *mdw-nṯr* which were essentially required for the data of his onomasticon.

b) In view of the scheme he planned for his book intended for «... learning all things existent, which Ptah had created and Thoth had copied down (), (namely ?) heaven with its affairs, earth and what it contains, what the mountains belch forth, what is watered by the flood, all things on which the sun has shone, and all that grows on the back of the earth » [3].

Amenemope did not confine his onomasticon to natural phenomena, but went so far as to give reasonable qualifications to various administrative posts, priestly ranks, civil occupations, as well as social classes and nations. He extended his remarks to Egyptian towns, types of buildings and lands, and so on. Hence, he aimed at a kind of general information despite his semi-religious title of «scribe of the books of the god» or «scribe of the divine books».

Concerning the divine intelligence assigned to the two deities, Ptah and Thoth in the introduction of this onomasticon, it seems that in attributing so many accomplishments to the sacred inventive power of Ptah, the learned man Amenemope had been influenced by the ancient Memphite Theology which regarded the wording of Ptah as a key to the whole creation and to all beings, the creative mentality that planned the natural phenomena, populated the universe, and regulated worship, rules and rations. (See p. 19 supra).

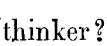
The god Thoth, in turn, who initially copied down those various points of knowledge referred to in Amenemope's onomasticon, was not merely a copyist, but he was regarded as the all knowing, the source of all deep learning, master of the

[1] Golénischeff's Onomasticon; A.H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica,* 3 vols., Oxford 1947.

[2] *See,* Gardiner, *op. cit.,* I, p. 25, n. 2; *J.E.A.* XXIV, 168; and Boylan, *op. cit.,* p. 60.

[3] Gardiner, *op. cit.,* I, pp. 1-2.

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mdw-nṯr  [1] and its great (thinker?) par excellence  [2]. He was a perfect designer on his own part, a writer and philosopher through both the ideas and the productive wording. He commenced his role of spiritual inspiration in the mythology of cosmogony, as the heart of Ptah «that conceives and sets forth every complete concept». Afterwards, he became the heart of Atum «that fashioned all things». Later on, he was depicted as the mouthpiece of the three chief creators, Ptah-Tathjnen, Atum, and Rē^{c}, as well. In other words, the two faculties of creativeness, namely the thought (or heart and mind) and the command (or tongue), were blended in him [3].

To come to a conclusion then, it is not unlikely to consider the above mentioned onomasticon of Amenemope as an ingenious endeavour to interpret the holy regulations referred to in the Memphite Theology as god's formulations, and to add to them intellegible minutiae.

Despite the absence of any definite reference ascribing the proper literary works to the *mdw-nṯr;* yet the ancient literature could not be discarded from the realm of the divine inheritance.

To take but one example, the schoolboy and trainee scribe Inena who transcribed the story of the two divine brothers, Anubis and Bata, dedicated the text to the *k*^{3}(*w*) of his teachers, and declared the holy character of the narrative, in the conclusion of his writing, by the warning : «As for him who may disregard this writing, Thoth (the patron of writing and *mdw-nṯr*) will be an opponent to him».

*
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In Artistic Affairs : The pharaoh Nefer-Hotep, of the XIIIth Dynasty, once paid a private visit to one or more libraries (*pr md*^{3}*t* and var. *prw nw sš*(*w?*), presumably

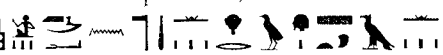
[1] Mariette, *Abydos,* I, 30 C ; *Mon. d'Abydos,* p. 445 ; Theb. Ost. A 2 ; Berlin, 17272, 19742 ; (II, 419, 421) ; *Edfu,* II, 8 ; etc...

[2] *Edfu,* R.I, 27.

[3] *Compare,* Boylan, *op. cit.,* 111 f. and 120 f., with references ; and note Boylan's comments on the Memphite Theology, that the divinities first created by Ptah were Thoth and Horus who were his heart and tongue. By the thought of Ptah's heart and utterance of his word were called into being Atum and his Ennead. The next product of the heart and tongue of Ptah is the *mdw-nṯr* , so that not only the gods, but the «divine words» also were created by Thoth and Horus.

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at Heliopolis, to examine all the *mdw-nṯr*  and to investigate (therein?) the ancient writings of Atum, concerning the (precise) form of the god, the minutiae dealing with the Ennead (council) in their annals (?) together with their offerings, and mainly concerning the god Osiris in his exact posture. Such investigations on the part of the Pharaoh were performed with the prospect of refashioning the god's statue according to its original style, as (precisely) occurred «when they (*i.e.* the creators or the artist patrons) fashioned [the statues] in their council, ... in order to establish their monuments upon earth».

His majesty together with his companions, «the real scribes of the *mdw-nṯr*, perceivers of all mysteries , opened the rolls and discovered among them the manuscripts of the house of Osiris ... Thus, he (the Pharaoh) declared among his followers, «I shall fashion [him as well as his limbs, his face and his fingers] according to what my majesty has discovered in these manuscripts ...» [1].

It seems that the sacred *mdw-nṯr* consulted in that visit were mainly the classical records of art which define the precise figures and measurements of the sacred statues, with suitable minutiae even for the fingers. The holiness ascribed to such records included in the *mdw-nṯr* may be due to their perfection or to their antiquity, besides the reference to the gods' attitudes. Meanwhile, it is not improbable that those records were primarily composed to interpret some ancient allusions such as the one included in the just quoted text starting with «when they fashioned [the statues] in their council ..., in order to establish their monuments upon earth», which seems a quotation from an earlier text.

The god or gods to whom the artistic *mdw-nṯr* in question were assigned may be Atum, who has already been named in the context, and whose ancient writings were essentially sought by the Pharaoh during his investigations [2]. He might have also been Ptah, the patron of art, to whom the Memphite Theology referred as «he who fashioned the gods' forms to their satisfaction. So, the gods joined (lit. entered into) their bodies, of every (kind of) wood, precious stone, clay, and all (other) substances which might grow upon him, *i.e.* on the earth».

[1] Mariette, *Abydos*, II, 28-30; J.H. Breasted, *Anc. Records*, I, 755 f.; Max Pieper, *Die grosse Inschrift des Königs Neferhotep*, Leipzig 1929.

[2] Compare also the writings or books of Atum in the library of the temple of Horus at Edfu (Chassinat, *Edfou*, III, 338).

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Ptah was an artificer by trade, and patron of the artists par excellence [1]. It is said that «according to his wording, all kinds of work and crafts were accomplished». It was he «who fashioned the arts and founded ateliers» [2]. His high priest looked after his hobby on earth, and was thus entitled «the great supervisor of art-work (or of the craftsmen)» (*wr ḫrp ḥmwt*) [3]. The artists in turn, were esteemed as the representatives of Ptah on earth, particularly the sculptor who was literally called «he who revives», or «he who makes live» *sˁnḫ* [4].

Khufu-seneb of the sixth (?) Dynasty, stated that he had accomplished his tomb according to the secret writing of art [5]. His claim might refer to a traditional writing dealing both with the building and the reliefs thereon.

Thoth shares the artistic interest with Atum ant Ptah. There remain many references concerning his qualifications, especially from the N.K. and the Late Period [6]. A text from the temple of Ramses II at Abydos, states that the Ennead (depicted on the temple walls) were shaped «in their forms primarily designated by Ptah, and in accordance with what Thoth had written concerning their (characteristic) attitudes on the great drawing manuscript (?) which is in the library» [7].

It was as well stated that the figure of Hathor, the patron goddess of Denderah, was sculptured in conformity with the ordinances of the all-knower of the two lands (*i.e.* Thoth) [8]. The sacred figures (*šḫmw*), depicted on the walls of the twelfth chamber in the same temple, were «beautifully executed in accordance with the glorious wording of the god Sia» [9].

The pictorial and decorative nature of the Egyptian hieroglyphs gave them an artistic value besides their essential inscriptive purpose. So, an artisan of Ramses

[1] *See,* Stolk, *Ptah,* 13 f.; Sethe, in *ZÄS,* LV, 65 f.; Murray, *Index* ..., pl. XIX; *Saqqara Mastabas,* II, pl. 1; Mariette, *Mast.,* pp. 130, 148, 375, 390; *Urk.* I, 18, 13; 20, 7. *See,* Sandman-Holemberg, *The god Ptah,* 1946.

[2] *See,* Berlin 6910; *Wb.* III, 86, 9, 13; Champollion, *Notices,* I, 702 (Gurna Sethostempel) *Wb.* Nr. 7 (var. 237) NK; Dümichen, *Hist. Inschr.* II, 43 *a* (D. 19).

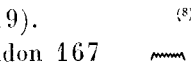
[3] Cairo 42155 (D. 19), London 167 (D. 19), 183 (N.K.); Gol.'s Onom. 2, 8; also Cairo 1419; *Urk.* I, 82; 20, 38; Harris 51 *a*; Louvre C 213; *Anc. Records,* I, 211-212.

[4] *See, J.E.A.* IV, 2; Gardiner, *Onomastica,* I, 67; H. Schäfer, *Von aegyptischer Kunst,* 46.

[5] H. Junker, *Giza,* VII, 131-132.

[6] See on this topic and for some of the following notes: Boylan, *op. cit.,* 89-91.

[7] Mariette, *Abydos,* II, 9.

[8] Mariette, *Dend.* I, 37*b*. ().

[9] *Ibid.,* II, 73.

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II's reign stated that his majesty built a temple for Amun, the stone walls of which were decorated with the writings of Thoth ... [1].

In Denderah, as well, it is recorded that the temple chambers were splendidly engraved with the words of Sia (Thoth) [2].

In both records, the holy words of Thoth or Sia seem to imply the texts as well as the style.

Among the patrons of ecclesiastical architecture Thoth had the priority, whereas Ptah was regarded simply the builder. Many texts attribute to Thoth as author, a set of instructions to the designers and builders. Accordingly, temples were to be planned in conformity with his knowledge of god's writings which define the exact height, breadth and the four sides of the temples [3].

When the temple of *Wp-w3wt* in Siut was renovated during the period of the tenth Dynasty, it was stated to have been re-erected identically with the one «which Ptah had (previously) built with his own fingers, and according to Thoth's (original) designation» ... [4].

The interesting drawing plan of the Heliopolitan temple of Hathor, that was erected first under Sesostris I, was supplemented by explanatory notes citing that it was designed to correspond with (the ancient directions and instructions of) the Lord of the *mdw-ntr(w?)* (... *snnty r ỉr ... nb n mdw-ntr(w?)* [5].

Another outstanding achievement assigned to Thoth, is the planning of Ramses' temple at Abydos. There, it is reported that Thoth, together with an assistant, prescribed the dimensions of the temple [6].

Moreover, the individual spaces of the Edfu temple were said to have been disposed «as Thoth had written thereof ( )» [7].

The different apartments of the house of *Ḥr-Nbt* at Denderah, were to correspond in structure and arrangement to the plans of *Istn* [8].

Besides, the seventh chamber of the great Denderah temple was described as

(1) L.*D.* III, 170 (Ramesseum).

(2) Mariette, *Dend.* II, 13 *e*, etc...

(3) *See also,* Boylan, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

(4) *Siut,* IV, 21; L.*D.* II, 150 *g*; *Anc. Rec.* I, 403.

(5) *ZÄS,* LXXI, 119 where H. Ricke suggests «... all of the divine words ...» (*sic*).

(6) Mariette, *Abydos,* II, pl. II *c*.

(7) *Edfu,* R.I, 23.

(8) Dümichen, *Baug.* II.

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duly constructed according to the work of the knower of the two lands (*i.e.* Thoth), that which his heart created [1].

Ptah as the supreme architect was often referred to as the executor of all Thoth's schemes, as well as those of the seven wise Memphite gods who emanated first from the holy eye of Rē^{c}, on the shore of Nun close to the southern sycamore [2].

It was Ptah who built and sculptured the mysterious roof of the Denderah temple, according to the writings and the worthy wording of *Istn* [3].

He was rarely considered as a designer. In the inscriptions of Seti's temple at Abydos, it is said that it was Ptah who designed this temple for Rē^{c}.

The goddess Seshat known as «Lady of the builders», is often depicted helping the pharaoh to measure out the building area, and to stamp the right corner marks and poles [4].

The presumed writings and wordings of the patron gods were not the only appreciated sources consulted in establishing important monuments. In glorifying the fame of Memphis, the centre of classical art since the beginning of the Old Kingdom or even before, the reconstruction of the temple of Denderah in the Late Period was claimed to have been accomplished in accordance with «the finding of decayed writings that go back to the time of King Khufu» [5]. The city of Denderah was rebuilt according to instructions written on a decayed leather roll pertaining to the time of the «Followers of Horus», and was discovered later in the stone precinct of the Southern House in the reign of Mery-(en)-Rē^{c} son of Pepi [6].

*
* *

In Medicine : An oculist and court physician of the sixth Dynasty period was entitled «he who masters the secrets of the *mdw-ntr*» [7]. Another physician of the Middle

[1] Mariette, *Dend.* II, 29 *b*.

[2] Dümichen, *Tempelinschriften,* Taf. 25; Budge, *Book of the Dead,* I, 517.

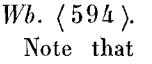
[3] Mariette, *Dend.* III, 70.

[4] Pyr. 616 *a-b*; *Hierakonpolis,* I, pl. II; Berlin I, 234; L.*D.* III, 148; Luksor *Wb.* ⟨594⟩.

Note that such claims seem universal. In ancient Greece for instance, it was claimed that the Theseum, the fine temple of Hephaistos, was planned by Hephaistos himself and Athens, patron divinities of arts and crafts.

[5] S. Birch, in *ZÄS,* IX, 104.

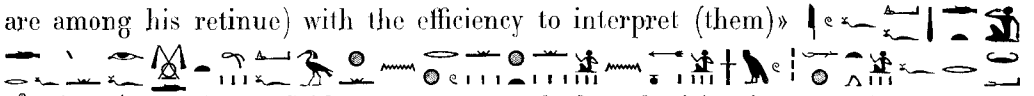
[6] *Ibidem.*

[7] H. Junker, in *ZÄS,* LXIII, 66 ().

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Kingdom, referred to as the author (or transcriber) of certain remedies, was entitled «scribe of the *md(w?)t-nṯr,*  (sic), the chief physician *Nṯr-ḥtp*» [1].

With reference to the *mdw-nṯr,* both titles may allude to the efficiency of their bearers in classical medical writings including perhaps what was referred to as «the physician's secret»  [2], besides a notable acquaintance with the spells and magical formulae that permeated the medical profession in ancient times.

We also come across some medical prescriptions authorized through the claim of having been composed initially by certain gods, such as Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Isis and Osiris. For instance, it was said that the god Shu composed six prescriptions on his own part [3]. Horus of Letopolis was entitled «the great physician» *wr sinw* [4]; whereas Thoth was referred to as «... he who composed sets (of prescriptions), and endowed the learned people and the physicians who follow his track (lit. who are among his retinue) with the efficiency to interpret (them)»  [5]. The goddess Sekhmet was one of the physicians' patrons [6]; and her adoptive son Imhotep was considered one of the early pharmacists.

To insure the validity of some other prescriptions, they were attributed to very old manuscripts. For instance, a certain prescription was said to have been found among old writings in a small case, under Anubis's feet, during the reign of King *Smty* (of the first Dynasty). Later on, it was presented to his majesty King Senedj (of the second Dynasty), because of its value and efficiency [7]. Another prescription was claimed to have been discovered one night, on a fallen scroll, by the hand of a lector-priest, at the court of the temple of the goddess (Isis) in Coptos, when the land was in darkness and when the moon shone on every part of the scroll. It was offered as a heavenly miracle to King Khufu [8]. Another genuine remedy was found in the registers of the temple of *Wnn-nfr,* at Abydos [9].

[1] Pap. Berlin 3038, 15, 3; 21, 9; H. Kees, *Kulturgeschichte* ..., 308.

[2] Pap. Ebers, 99, 1-2; J.H. Breasted, *Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus,* 1930, pp. 107-108; G. Lefebvre, in *Aesculape,* Paris, Octobre 1955, 181 f.

[3] Ebers, 46, 16-47, 6; Pap. Hearst, 5, 7.

[4] Spiegelberg, in *ZÄS,* LVII, 70,

[5] Pap. Ebers, 1, 8-10; Pap. Hearst, 6, 9 f., 14, 6.

[6] Gardiner, in *J.E.A.* XXIV, 133, n. 4; G. Lefebvre, *op. cit.,* 189 f.; *Archiv. Orientalni,* 1952, 57 f.

[7] Berlin Pap. 3038, XV, 1-4; *ANET,* 493.

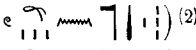
[8] Brit. Mus. Pap. 10059, VIII, 11-13; *ANET,* 493.

[9] Pap. Ebers, LXXV, 12-13.

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Hence, it seems that an efficiency in professional medicine, both scientific and magical, together with an intimate acquaintance with those prescriptions ascribed to divine patrons and remote antiquity, were sufficient evidence that the famous physicians owed their skill to the power of the *mdw-nṯr,* as it was in the case of those two physicians referred to above by name [1].

* * *

In Law and Regulations, the *mdw-nṯr* were occasionally consulted. In the legal Lee Papyrus, it was stated that the guilty should be sentenced to death in conformity with god's decision embodied in the texts (or writings) of the *mdw-nṯr* (... ) [2].

Many were the gods referred to as legislators and regulators, such as Rēʿ, Osiris, Maʿet, and Ptah [3]. Thoth, the «Lord of the *mdw-nṯr*», was also entitled «He who enacted laws, who began them and established them» [4]; «He who devised rules for Egypt and regulations for its nomes» [5]; «The leader of the world, who determines its course» [6]; «Whose wording (*mdw*) established the two lands» [7]; «He who ordained laws and granted them» [8]. Besides, the pharaonic statutes were said to have been as strict, effective and lasting as those of Thoth [9].

* * *

In Art of Writing : The previous data of the possible significances of the *mdw-nṯr,* can hardly exclude the other affinities, often referred to, between the art of writing and the *mdw-nṯr*. But it is equally true that such affinities did not prevail except in the Late Egyptian Periods when the hieroglyphs in their various applications

(1) Compare other ancient physicians bearing the sacred «*ḫry-ḥbt*» title : Cairo 1569, 1570; *Urk.,* I, 42; *Meir,* IV, 12, No. 91.

(2) Pap. Lee, I, 7, 2, 5 (Deveria, *Le papyrus Judiciaire de Turin et les papyrus Lee et Rollin,* Paris 1868).

(3) For Osiris, see *Mit. Inst. Or.,* 1954, 165 f.

For Ptah as «*nb mȝʿt*», *see,* Berlin 6764; Ostraca of Deir el Medineh, 1105; Anastasi Pap. I, 8, 7 (Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts,* I, p. 10, n. 14); Leyden Stele, V, 17; Sandman-Holemberg, *op. cit.*

(4) Cairo *Wb.* Nr. 116; *Edfu,* R.I, 124; Boylan, *op. cit.,* 89.

(5) Ost. Deir el Medineh, 1101, 4-5; 1180.

(6) *Edfu,* R.I, 378.

(7) Naville, *Totb.* 182, 4.

(8) Stele of Tutankh-amen, l. 29; *Rec. Tr.* 29, 116.

(9) Pap Anast. I, 9, 2.

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as script, style and decoration were esteemed as *šfd n mdw-nṯr* [1]; *sš n mdw mḏ;t nt Ḏḥwty* [2]; *sš nb n mdw-nṯr* [3]; and *sš n mdw-nṯr* [4]. The last occurred as an equivalent of the Greek *ἱεροῖς γράμμασιν*, and *τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα*.

During earlier pharaonic times, the relationship between the art of writing and the *mdw-nṯr* was vague, and could only be traced through the various scribal titles and functions conferred on the wise Thoth, patron of writing, who became «Lord of the *mdw-nṯr*» since the Middle Kingdom [5]. Thenceforth, he was entitled : «Lord of writing» ; «He who has given words and script »[6] ; «The writer of the holy book (*sš mḏ;t-nṯr*) [7] ; besides, the accurate scribe of the divine Ennead and editor of their letters [8]. The outstanding works of script were designated as : *sš n Ḏḥwty* [9], *sšyt nt Ḏḥwty* [10], *sšwt nt Ḏḥwty* [11], *drf n Ḏḥwty* [12], «The writing of the Lord of Hermopolis» [13], and «The writing of the god himself» [14], and that is Thoth. This tendency prevailed during the Late Periods, as referred to above, when Thoth was fairly designated as «He who began signs (*šs;ᶜ tit*) [15], and «fashioned them» [16], «The lord of sacred writing» [17].

To the ancient mind, the invention of counting and mathematics was not less mysterious than that of writing. The great mathematical Rhind papyrus was entitled : «Rules for knowing all that exists, ..., every mystery and every secret» [18]. Thoth the wise was «He who knows reckoning» par excellence [19]. He was the «reckoner of gods and goddesses» [20], who reckons all things [21], particularly those of Rēᶜ [22].

(1) *Goshen,* 4, 6.

(2) Naville, *Totb.* 68, 10 (var. *mdw-nṯr*).

(3) *Edfu,* I, 557.

(4) *Wb.* II, 181, 1-2 ; Rosetta Stone, 14 ; *Philensis,* I, 16 ; *and see* note 2 *supra.*

(5) *Compare, Wb.* II, 181, and Wilson, in *AJSL,* 1941, p. 229 and note *h.*

(6) Berlin 2293 ; Pap. Ebers, 1, 8.

(7) Pyr. 1146 *c* ; Pap. Salt, 825, VII, 2-4.

(8) L.*D.* III 220 *d* ; Pap. Anast. V, 9, 2.

(9) Cairo 20539 ; Leyden I, 350 rt. 4, 23.

(10) L.*D.* III, 170.

(11) Mariette, *Abydos,* II, 9.

(12) Berlin 7316 (II, 134).

(13) *See for early instances :* Cairo 1653 ; L*D.* II, 103 ; Petrie, *Deshasheh,* pl. 28.

(14) *Wb.* IV, 477, 1-2 ; L*D.* Erg. 21 ; Mariette, *Dend.* I, 36,

(15) *Edfu,* R.I, 164.

(16) *Edfu,* R.II, 67.

(17) Mariette, *Dend.* II, 71.

Note lastly a text from the New Kingdom, refers to «every scribe who has got his (writing-) palette and became advertent in the *mdw-nṯr*» *Urk.* IV, 121, 1, a state which may consider the versedness in the *mdw-nṯr* as a direct result of the skill in writing.

(18) T.E. Peet, *The Rhind mathematical Papyrus,* Liverpool, 1923.

(19) *Edfu,* R.I, 63.

(20) Philae Z 3546 *ḥsb ntrw rpỉwt.*

(21) Piehl, *Inscrip.* II, 101 : (sic).

(22) Harris Magical Pap. I, 6-8.

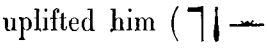
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Seshat was referred to as «The first who notched and counted» [1], «The inventor of writing at its very beginning» [2]. Therefore, she was often associated with Thoth in such skills. The connection between them as patrons of reckoning (and writing) grew stronger at Hermopolis since the New Kingdom. They were not only referred to as an intimate couple, but she was also considered by some as his sister; whereas others regarded her as his daughter [3]. It seems probable, as Wainwright has noted, that notching or engraving on palm-leaf stalks was one of the earliest methods of tallying and keeping accounts, before writing proper was invented [4].

* * *

In Liturgy and Magic : Liturgy and magic had equal affinities with the *mdw-nṯr*. This is evident in such cases as :

a) The consideration of Thoth as the author of the secret writing of the *ḫry-ḥbt, i.e.* the lector priest [5], whose ability was often associated in the Old Kingdom with the *mdw-nṯr,* as the following inscriptions may illustrate :
«A lector priest (he who) percieves the mysteries of the *mdw-nṯr*»
or «A lector priest (he who) controls the secrets of the mysterious writing(s) of the office of (?) the *mdw-nṯr*» [6].
Presuming this translation of H. Junker to be accurate, the mystery of both the written signs and the recited words should be taken into consideration.

b) The Utterance 333*c* of the Pyramid Texts emphasizes the mysterious impact of the *mdw-nṯr* when it says to Rēʿ :
«It is your messengers who brought him (the Pharaoh), and it is the *mdw-nṯr* that uplifted him () (to heaven)».

[1] *See,* G.A. Wainwright, in *J.E.A.,* 1940, 32.

[2] *Edfu,* VII, 45; III, 32, 168; VI, 144, 174; Mariette, *Dend.* I, pl. 57; Dümichen, *Inschriften,* IV, 134.

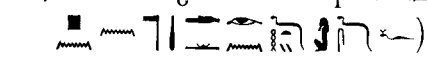
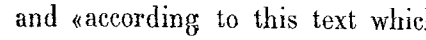
[3] Mariette, *Abydos,* I, 51; *Dend.* II, 74; H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religions-geschichte,* Berlin 1952, 699 f.

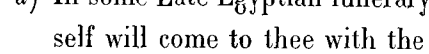
[4] Wainwright, *op. cit.*

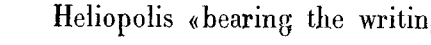
[5] Cf. H. Kees, *Totenglauben,* 166; K. Sethe, in *ZÄS,* LXX, 134; and *Wb.* III, 61. (Compare «*ḫrw ḥb·t*» by S. Morenz, *La Religion Egyptienne* (tr.) p. 288).

[6] H. Junker, *Giza,* VII, 233, 235, 263.

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c) Many Egyptian funerary texts invoke specific deities to grant the deceased every good thing «according to this hymn (?) of the *mdw-nṯr*, which Thoth had composed» (... ) [1]
or, «according to this script of the *mdw-nṯr*, which Thoth himself had set» () [2].
(Note here the distinction between the written signs *sš*, and the *mdw-nṯr*)
or «according to this text which Thoth has composed for Osiris in the house of the *mdw-nṯr*» () [3]
and «according to this text which Thoth had set in the library» (... ) [4].

d) In some Late Egyptian funerary texts, the deceased is promised that «Thoth himself will come to thee with the book of the *mdw-nṯr*» (... ) [5].

e) A chapter of the Book of the Dead speaks of a journey which Hathor made to Heliopolis «bearing the writings of the words (*mdw*) of the Book of Thoth» (... ) [6].
As P. Boylan notices, this book can scarcely be any other than a collection of sacred formulae ascribed to Thoth's authorship [7].

A number of other funerary manuscripts were ascribed to the handwriting of Thoth (though their subjects were not referred to as proper *mdw-nṯr*). Chapter XXX B of the *B.D.* is declared to have been found in Khemenu at the feet of his majesty the god Thoth, inscribed on a slab of the Upper Egyptian stone (?), in the handwriting of the god himself, in the reign of King Menkawrē^{c}, by the prince Hordedef while going to make inspection of the temples. Thoth had written also the book of Atmen «by his own fingers» [8], and composed a special funerary formula «for his majesty the god Osiris» [9].

[1] *Bersheh* II, 45; *and see* G. Maspero, in *ZÄS*, XI, 30; E. Naville, *Un chapitre inédit du livre des morts...*; S. Schott, *Die Oferliste als Schrift des Thoth*, *ZÄS*, 90 (1963), 103-110.
[2] Lacau, *Sarcophages*, p. 206; Schott, *op. cit.*, 105.
[3] Schott, *op. cit.*
[4] *Ibidem.*
[5] Naville, *Totb.* C. 170, 5.
[6] *Book of the Dead*, Ch. 68, 9-10.
[7] P. Boylan, *op. cit.*, 94. *See also* S. Morenz, *op. cit.*, p. 282, and his tenth chapter on sacred texts.
[8] Pap. Louvre, 3284, II, 8 f.
[9] *B.D.* 101, 11 f.

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Some divine instructions were compiled in the name of other specific gods and implied their (presumed) own wording. Examples of these compositions are :

a) An ancient text purports to give the words of the creator god in making all men equal in access to the basic necessities of life [1].

b) An interesting dialogue held between Rē^{c} and Thoth, concerning the assignment of the holy functions to Thoth [2].

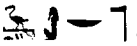
c) The 17th chapter of the *B.D.* that introduces «A speech of the Lord of all» annexed with legible glosses.

d) The 175th chapter of the *B.D.* which illustrates Atum's discourse in viewing the future life in the land of burial and the other world.

e) The book of overthrowing Apophis (*ʿbb*), in which the «All-Lord Rē^{c}-Khepri» records how he started creation after he himself had come into being [3].

Such discourses and dramatic records seem to approach closely the sphere of the *mdw-nṯr,* though nothing as such affinity was fairly stated, except the designation of the divine books as «*bꜣw-Rʿ*» and «*bꜣw-nṯrw*», meaning their spirits or their emanations, manifestations and inspirations [4].

*
* *

In Ethics : The association of the *mdw-nṯr* with ethics is most insteresting and appropriate though only one case is available here. It is the residue of a lost book of didactic purpose, inscribed on both faces of an ostracon, with the title of «Thoth, Lord of the *md(w?)t-nṯr* ». The introduction opens with «Beginning of instructions composed by a man for (his) son. I say to thee : act

[1] *See,* J.A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* pp. 7-8 ; J.H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience,* p. 221 f.

[2] Ch. Maystre in *BIFAO*, XL (1941), 93 f. ; G. Roeder, *Urkunden zur Religion...*, 147-148.

[3] Papyrus Bremner-Rhind, XXVI, 21 f. (*J.E.A.,* 1937, 172 f.).

[4] A.H. Gardiner, in *J.E.A.,* 1938, 168 ; S. Morenz, *op. cit.,* 282-283.

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according to ...». The text is continued on the verso of the ostracon where the only intelligible sentence may be a proverb that says «He who avoids vicissitudes is an owner of wealth (*i.e.* a fortunate man)» [1].

The sage Ptahhotep did not mention the *mdw-ntr* by name in his instructions, but *mdt nfrt* , *i.e.* good maxims; and ascribed these maxims to the ancestors who hearkened to the gods.

[1] A.H. Gardiner, H. Thompson & J.R. Milne, *Theban Ostraca,* A 2, p. 3. *See also* p. 27, *supra,* and Gardiner-Černý, *Hieratic Ostraca,* I, pl. VI, 1.

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