

EGYPTIAN THOUGHT

1. political and religious leadership not neatly separated
 - a. no formal schools of philosophy, so far as we can tell
 - b. focus on knowledge, wisdom, ethical and moral living
 - c. complex array of deities in the cosmos
 - d. available hierarchically
 - e. competing institutions built around particular deities or patron gods of cities
 1. e.g., Amun of Thebes
 2. Ptah of Memphis

THE PHARAOH

1. Egyptian kings commonly called pharaohs
 - a. Old Testament usage
 - b. term derived from the Egyptian *per 'aa* ("great estate")
 - c. dates to the designation of the royal palace as an institution
 - d. his term for palace was used increasingly from about 1400 bc as a way of referring to the living king
 - e. rare earlier
2. Pharaoh's character
 - a. earthly avatar of the falcon-god Horus
 - b. Ramesses II: claimed to have been born of Path
 - c. succeeded at sunrise on the day after his predecessor's death
 - d. coronation imbued him with divinity
 - e. grand tour: "The creation of order in all Provinces"
 - f. as god was to Pharaoh: so Pharaoh was to humankind in his position as "the god of the living"
3. Pharaoh's roles
 - a. "lord of performing rituals"
 - b. statues and images were activated with his *ka* (spirit): served in his stead
 - c. for much of Egyptian history: was the only individual who could found temples,

commission divine statues, make donations to state temples (apart from private affairs)

- d. rare evidence for king participating actively in combat
- e. little evidence for participation in legal matters

DEITIES

1. multiple gods in pantheon: associated temples
 - a. centralized worship of king as deity
 1. **Horus**: Falcon God
 2. then **Re**: Sun God
 - b. pattern
 1. local gods
 - a. e.g., **Ptah**: patron god of Memphis
 - b. **Amun**: patron god of Thebes
 2. universal gods
 - a. **Osiris**: ruler of netherworld
 - b. **Isis**: wife of Osiris
 - c. **Anubis**: jackal god, associated with mummification
 - d. **Imhotep**: deified official of Djoser, patron of scribes
 - c. **Aten**: sun disk
 1. temporary supreme deity under Ahkenaten
2. emphasis on afterlife
 - a. increasing investment through time in temple and pyramid sites
 - b. priesthood ran temples
 1. large full-time priesthood only after New Kingdom
 - c. much interpretation based on formulaic scripts
3. official religion
 - a. cult and festivals at main temples
 - b. king: actually priests
 1. provided for gods
 2. cared for cult images
 3. only priests could enter temples
 - c. in return, gods took up residence in the images

- 1. showed favor to king
 - 2. hence to humanity
- d. almost a contractual relationship
- e. aim of cult: to enhance established order of world
- f. local people essentially uninvolved with official religion
- 4. private religion
 - a. many local shrines and temples
 - b. pilgrimage centers: e.g., Abydos, Saqqara
 - c. personalized religious objects
 - 1. magical sayings
 - d. busts of ancestors in houses
 - e. personal rites of passage do not seem to have been celebrated
 - 1. e.g., birth, circumcision (just before puberty), marriage
- 5. animal worship
 - a. major feature of public and private religion
 - 1. ibises, dogs or jackals, cats, baboons, ichnuemons (kind of mongoose), rams
 - 2. also fish, snakes, crocodiles
 - b. e.g., Saqqara: animal necropolis
 - 1. heyday in Middle Kingdom
 - c. e.g., Apis bull
 - 1. sacred to Ptah
 - 2. buried in catacomb
 - d. town sprang up at N. Saqqara to cater to these needs
 - 1. ibises farmed on industrial scale

EGYPTIAN WRITING

- 1. Egyptian language
 - a. member of Afro-Asiatic language family
 - b. includes Semitic
 - c. African groups
 - 1. Berber
 - 2. Chadic: around lake Chad
 - 3. Kushitic: southern Sudan

- d. significant difference between Egyptian and Semitic
 - 1. as far as Latin and English
- 2. hieroglyphs: *sacred carvings*
 - a. origins: unclear
 - 1. antecedents in glyphs of Naqada era (4th mill BC): in both Delta and Upper Egypt
 - 2. perhaps territorial or emblematic markers: like those of Ubaid and Uruk Mesopotamia
 - 3. perhaps signs of economic relationships: e.g., ownership, tribute, manufacture
 - b. first appearance as hieroglyphs traditionally set at ca. 3100 BCE: Narmer's Palette
 - 1. but characters that are recognizable as glyphs appear as early as 3250 BCE
 - 2. earliest known sentence in 2nd Dynasty
 - 3. hieroglyphs were used till CE 40
 - c. script well in place by Old Kingdom: 2700 BCE
 - 1. documents on papyrus: by the early Old Kingdom
 - 2. early subjects most often treated
 - a. astronomy
 - b. geometry
 - c. accounting
 - d. surgery
 - e. architecture
- 3. first appearance: fairly developed form
 - a. earlier, developmental forms of the script seem to be missing
 - 1. presumably fully pictographic
 - b. possible preservation problem
 - 1. e.g., lost papyrus
- 4. probably not straight introduction from Mesopotamia: Egyptian writing different in terms of
 - a. characters
 - b. media of expression
 - 1. papyrus
 - 2. incised on ceramic, stone or wood surfaces
 - 3. painted on mural surfaces
 - 4. no clay tablets: as in Mesopotamia

- c. but similar transition in visual expression from “showing” to “telling”
- 5. script: mixture
 - a. phonetic elements
 - b. determinatives
 - 1. tell how a character with several possible meanings is to be read in specific context
 - c. grammatical markers
 - 1. Egyptian script differs from Mesopotamian
 - 2. written form for nouns and verbs varies according to grammatical context
 - d. several forms of the script
 - 1. hieroglyphs: used for monumental and ornamental inscriptions
 - 2. cursive hieroglyphs: religious texts, such as the “Book of Kemyt”
 - 3. hieratic: normal cursive
 - a. everyday purposes
 - b. form that scribes probably first learned
 - 4. demotic
 - a. cursive style of the north after 700 BCE
 - b. all of Egypt after 600 BCE
 - e. form of the character varied through time
 - 1. Old Kingdom: hieroglyphic
 - 2. cursive hieroglyphs died out during 1st millennium
 - 3. New Kingdom: hieratic started to be used on monuments
 - a. used on religious texts till the end
 - f. divergence between spoken and written forms of language over time
 - g. form varied by subject and context
 - 1. e.g. grave characters: early religious texts
 - 2. showy characters: later military texts
 - h. script: poised for conversion to fully alphabetic format
 - 1. about 24 signs
 - 2. never simplified to this format
- 7. deliberate restriction of social span within which the script could be used
 - a. possible that scribes kept things difficult
 - b. functions
 - 1. administrative/leadership purposes
 - a. royal book-keeping

- b. dynastic recording
 - c. letters, administration
- 2. literature
 - a. narrative fiction
 - b. instruction
 - c. love poetry
- 3. religion
 - a. cult and religious hymns
 - b. philosophical texts
 - c. ritual and mortuary books
- 4. medical and mathematical texts
- c. assisted system of restricted literacy
 - 1. limited to high ranking, specialized segment of society
 - 2. i.e., people who had the time and social standing to become literate
- 8. contrasted with Mesopotamian writing
 - a. trend over time to making the script more widely usable
 - 1. wider social range
 - 2. wider functional range
- 9. breaking the hieroglyphic code: Rosetta Stone
 - a. people had long-term interest in hieroglyphs
 - 1. but little success in decipherment
 - b. stone unearthed during Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798-1801
 - 1. captured by English
 - 2. now in British Museum
 - c. Jean François Champollion de Jeune (1790-1832)
 - 1. decipherment 1822-24
 - d. stone contains three scripts
 - 1. hieroglyphic
 - 2. demotic
 - 3. Greek
 - e. priestly text honoring Ptolemy V Epiphanes: 196 BCE