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Diversity and Inclusion in the Egyptian Society During the Dynastic Era

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Diversity and inclusion are two important measures in determining the degree of acceptance for the other in any society as well as its level of fairness and equity. Both terms are modern but they can be applied to ancient societies based on evidence available. Many sub groups can be identified in ancient Egyptian society through text and art. We know now that our ancestors recognized the existence of more than two genders. There are also countless sources which mention old people or people with disabilities. Moreover Egypt has enjoyed a long history through which it made contact with other cultures, languages and immigrants. The present research was concerned with determining how far the Dynastic Egyptian society was diverse and inclusive for all sectors of its people including persons of different genders, ethnic backgrounds, ages and physical abilities. The study found a high degree of diversity in the Dynastic Egypt society in regards to gender roles, age and disability. On the other hand, foreigners were accepted only when they lived within the borders of Egypt, but there was great skepticism towards people of other nations living outside the country.

1. Introduction

Diversity is defined in the field of sociology as the degree of differences among the members of a randomly selected group of the society according to different classifications such as age, gender, religion, physical abilities, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity (KK, 2018).

Inclusion is defined in the context of social responsibility in the Cambridge dictionary as “the act of allowing many different types of people to do something and treating them fairly and equally”.

The present article aims to apply both concepts on the ancient Egyptian society during the dynastic era.

2. Ethnicity

Fig. 1. Note: God Horus with the four groups of humanity: Egyptian, Asian, Nubian and Libyan. Reprinted from *Die Welt der Altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Abb. 494), by O. Keel, 1977, Benziger Verl.

Many sources showed different races during dynastic Egypt. Among these are artistic representations which clearly differentiate between mainstream Egyptians and foreigners or Egyptians living near the borders of Egypt. Such depictions highlight different skin colors, facial features, hair texture, costumes and material culture (tools, weapons, other artificial products). From these representations we can conclude that Egyptians classified humans to four separate stereotypes, commonly described by modern research as "Egyptians," "Asiatics", "Nubians," and "Libyans." fig. 1 (Butner, 2007).

Schneider (2010) has rightly noticed that the Egyptian term XAs-tiw, "foreigners" was never used to refer to peoples of non-Egyptian origin living within Egypt, but it was exclusively used for foreigners outside Egypt who did not have any opportunity of integration with Egyptian culture. In considering how Egyptians viewed foreigners living outside of their borders, one has to bear in mind a simple fact: Egypt, a country rich in resources and considerably more advanced than its neighbors, has suffered along the dynastic history of several foreign conquests and resisted the attempts of many others. Keeping the borders safe and the country intact was thus a priority for its people. Therefore, a traditional Egyptian scene that shows the Egyptian king smiting an enemy, usually an Asiatic but occasionally a Nubian or a Libyan, started to be depicted as early as Naqada II. Luiselli (2011) has detected 90 occurrences of this theme along 3000 years of Egyptian history and concluded that it was the longest-lasting and best-attested iconographic motif of Egyptian art. Hence, in Egyptian culture, foreigners living outside Egypt were mostly perceived as enemies or war prisoners and were depicted in degrading places (foot stool, sandals, under the chariot of the king), albeit with some exceptions.

There seems to be some skepticism towards foreigners living in Egypt as well. The Ipuwer papyrus which was written during the 19th Dynasty states that, in the context of social disorder, "Foreigners have become people everywhere" (Enmarch, 2011). The word "people" (rmt) was used only to describe Egyptians. Consequently the author is regretting the fact that foreigners have managed to become Egyptians. Thus the settlement of foreigners into Egyptian society was in this text perceived in negative terms, as something out of the norm and as a reason for chaos.

Yet who exactly were the Egyptians? It seems that our predecessors had broader terms to define citizenship. The ancient Greek historian and geographer Herodotus narrated a legal dispute that describes what makes one an Egyptian: a community on the far western Delta complained that it should not pay tax, since it was outside Egypt, but the oracle consulted in the situation stated that "all who drank of the Nile north of Elephantine were Egyptians" (Herodotus Book II, chapter 18). This certainly provides a broader spectrum for Egyptian nationality than today. Although Egyptians were not aware of the real Nile origins they definitely knew that it extended well into Africa, far beyond the maximum political power of Egypt. This definition also excludes vast territories in the Near East which were under Egyptian control for some time during the New Kingdom.

Schneider (2020) points out that Egypt received massive waves of immigrants, although we can only find hints of evidence for this. For example the settlement of people from the Levant in the eastern Nile delta after 2000 bce is only indicated from the material culture at the city of Avaris that shows the mix of Egyptian and Levantine cultures. But since the Old Kingdom the presence of foreigners in Egypt is more detectable. Schneider (2010) gave many examples of foreigners who appeared in many occupations of the period. Among these are Nubian attendants employed in private households who are attested in early 5th Dynasty in Giza cemetery and Asiatic seafaring specialists who appear in ships in the funerary temple of Sahure and in the causeway of Unas.

Nubians were employed as mercenaries in the Egyptian army as archers according to tomb scenes and stelae. Many of them settled in Egypt, where they lived, died, and were buried according to local customs. A limestone stela dating to the First Intermediate Period exhibited in the museum of fine arts of Boston belongs to a Nubian soldier called Nenu who was married to an Egyptian woman. Nenu is identified as a Nubian by text as well as his attire and that of his two children which include curly hair and sash (Smith, 2003).

The Middle Kingdom and the First Intermediate period are marked by the huge influx in the number of foreigners in Egypt. Indeed about 800 foreign individuals were documented in published literature across all socio - economic classes expanding ca. 100 professions and functions, ranging from prisoners of war and compulsory workers to high administrative offices and royalty as well as cultic and priestly functions (Schneider, 2010). In the tomb of the nomarch Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan dating to Dynasty 12 we see one of the most famous pieces of artistic evidence of Asiatic connections to Egypt (fig.2). This scene represents some Asiatic traders from a land named Shu. The inscription states that 37 Asiatics have arrived in Egypt bringing galena, the material from which black eye-paint is made, and that they were accompanied by 61 women and children (Karmin, 1999). The presence of these family members may suggest that these traders were intending to stay for some time in Egypt, probably to settle there.

Fig.2 Note: The Asiatics from the Khnumhotep tomb no. 3 at Beni Hasan. Reprinted from Beni Hasan, Part I. Archaeological Survey of Egypt 1 (69, Pl. XXX), by L. Newberry, 1893, Egypt Exploration Fund.

Schneider (2010) noticed the ethnicity of foreigners in Egypt was more showcased during the New Kingdoms since it was being displayed in physical features, attire, hairstyles, culture - specific objects, eating habits, art (dance, music) and foreign languages. A stela from Amarna exhibited in the Egyptian museum in Berlin depicts a foreign Asian mercenary with his wife. The man is identified by his Asian name, clothing and spear but the wife is dressed like an Egyptian in spite of bearing a non-Egyptian name (Cornelius, 2013).

The vizier Aper-El was a prominent character under Amenhotep III and IV. He bore a Semitic name derived from the well-known Syro-Canaanite god El. Aper-El was buried with his wife and one of his sons, probably the elder one, in Saqqara. They were all mummified and each was interred in three wood anthropoid sarcophagi. Zivie (2018) believed that the foreign name of Aper-El was an indication of his non-Egyptian origin, hinting a connection to the Biblical story of Joseph. Regardless of the identification between the two personalities, the fact that Aper-El had non-Egyptian parents might be an indication that descendants of foreigners in Egypt had access to social promotion.

Greek mercenaries worked in Egypt since the Saite period (Bruni. 2021). An ancient Greek graffiti carved into the Temple of Abu Simbel refers to the military campaign fought by Egyptian King Psamatik II in 593 BC in Nubia. It includes the name of Psammetichos, the son of Theokles, who was most probably a second-generation mercenary since his name seems to have been driven from Egyptian Pharaoh Psamtik I. There is a possibility however that Psammetichos changed his original name to an Egyptian one to better integrate into Egyptian society. Not all of the Greeks in Egypt were mercenaries recruited by the king; a good number was working in trade and other business. Such Greeks formed a distinct community when the Egyptian king allowed them to establish the town of Naucratis in the Delta (Kaplan, 2003).

According to Herodotus (Book 2, chapters 152-154), the Carians first arrived in Egypt in the reign of Psamtik I too. The presence of Carians in Egypt is documented in a group of graffiti spreading around Egypt, including graffiti at Abu Simbel, Wadi Shatt al-Rigal, Gebel al-Silsila, Thebes and Abydos (Labudek, 2010). In addition to being mercenaries, it is evident that the Carians were also engaged in nautical trades (Vittmann 2003). After examining many bronze votive objects dedicated by Carians to Egyptian deities, Ray et. al (1995, p. 1190) noticed the “tendency for most foreign communities in Egypt to become more Egyptian than the Egyptians as time progressed”. Kaplan (2003) made a survey about the mercenary communities of various ethnicities – Greek, Carian, Aramaean, Jewish, Phoenician, and others that settled in Egypt during the late period. Laubdek (2010) who studied a group of Carian stelea from the necropolis of Saqqara during the late period concluded that the Egyptian populace was successful in absorbing those foreigners, a fact which was undoubtedly supported by mixed marriages such as those evidenced on these stelae.

Herodotus stated that Amasis moved the Greek and Carians mercenaries from the “Camps” to Memphis during a civil war against Apries. This movement allowed the troops to be integrated with Egyptian society. By the time of Nechtenbo I, Carian stelea in Memphis were reused in building temples. Whether the Carians were targeted as a foreign group or their stelea were simply recycled as old materials (3 centuries old by that date) is unclear (Labudek, 2010).

Diplomatic marriage was practiced often in the ancient world to maintain peaceful relationships with neighboring countries. Many sources indicate the existence of several incidents of diplomatic marriage between Egypt and Near Eastern kingdoms during the New Kingdom among these are the Amarna letters, the annals of Suppiluliuma and the Hittite-Ramaside marriage correspondence (Schulman, 1979). The most prominent example is however Amenhotep III’s marriages to foreign women. A series of letters record the negotiations between him and the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil about the marriage of each to a princess of his correspondent country. While Amenhotep III ended up marrying 2 Babylonian princesses, namely the sister and daughter of Kadashman-Enlil, he was reluctant to send an Egyptian princess abroad, maybe out of the fear of claims to the throne later. In subsequent letters Kadashman-Enlil inquires for the condition of his sister, being told by his ambassadors they have not seen her in their trip to Egypt. Here again Amenhotep III responds from the position of power bluntly calling that the messengers of Kadashman-Enlil lairs. It seems that Kadashman-Enlil was ultimately willing to accept this insult, as long as he got gold from the Egyptian pharaoh (Harvard, 2016). This is a clear indication of Egyptian supremacy over its Asian neighbors of the era.

3.Languages

Egypt was always in direct or indirect contact with several linguistic zones since it was a destination for immigrants from different cultures, controlled foreign territories or was itself subject to occupation (Haspelmath et al., 2015). There is strong evidence for ongoing language contact between Egypt and Nubia since the Naqada Period. Egyptians toured often into Lower Nubia and the neighboring deserts. Inhabitants of Middle Nile areas—the archaeological A-Group, C-Group, and Pan-Grave cultures—are well documented in Upper Egyptian cemeteries and in the ceramic inventories in Elephantine and Edfu (Cooper, 2021).

Based on some similarities in basic vocabulary, linguists have assumed a degree of contact between Egyptian and Semitic and Chadic languages (Takács 1999: 35-38, 47-48). On the other hand, evidence for linguistic contact between Egyptians and people from the Levant at

Avaris is only the Northwest Semitic names in conjunction with Egyptian titles on Second Intermediate Period artifacts (Schneider, 2020).

Lexical transfer during the Egyptian New Kingdom is the most well documented example for Egyptian–Near Eastern language exchange since ca. 350 loan words of Semitic origin are attested in Egyptian New Kingdom texts (Schneider, 2020).

El Aguizy and Haykal (1996) pointed out that Egyptian language developed being influenced by north eastern foreign vocabulary and more Semitic words were introduced into the language. The phenomenon reached its peak in the New Kingdom, in particular in the Ramesside period. Therefore, loan words were simultaneous with new techniques, more comprehensive geographical know-how and new imports to the country. The existence of large Semitic communities in Egypt contributed to the enrichment of the language and literature. Eventually and after the New Kingdom and the recession of Egyptian control in the Levant this influence declined and the usage of foreign vocabulary became less common after the Ramesside period.

Since foreign linguistic communities were spotted throughout Egypt during the Late Period, bilingualism must have been a common occurrence. Indeed, the bilingualism of mercenaries of Saite and Persian Egypt is unquestionable because in all known cases mercenary garrisons were headed by commanders of a different ethnicity, but whether this meant that leaders learn their language(s) or the soldiers had to learn the Country's native language is hard to tell (Kaplan, 2003). The only direct source in this regard is Herodotus' account who stated that king Psamtek gave the Greek soldiers Egyptian children to teach Greek, from which came a whole generation of interpreters (Book 2, Chapter 154).

Bilingual inscriptions are another evidence of Multilingualism of foreign communities in Egypt, most of which are Egyptian- Carians texts. The stela and a statue of Apis bull from the Carian cemetery in Saqqara are inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphics and in Carian (Mason et. al , 1978). The fact that texts in either language are not a translation but complementary to the other suggests that visitors of the cemetery could read both with no need of interpreters.

4. Gender roles

Many Egyptologists rightly observed that social class rather than gender determined the rights of individuals in Egypt. Contrary to modern Egyptians who strictly classify humans to two genders, the ancient Egyptians recognized the existence of inter sex and classified people to three genders. Thus there were three genders in ancient Egypt: tai (male), sht (intersex) and Hmt (female) (Brustman, 1999). However, and since ancient Egyptians that the balance of the universe is based on the male versus female powers, the third gender, though recognized, was barely mentioned in ancient sources (Farouk, 2022).

As for women, they had access to many important positions. For instance, from the Old Kingdom until the New Kingdom, females were appointed as sealers, an essential position to safeguard property in absence of locks and keys (Robins, 1993). Since the Old Kingdom we see women, independent of their husbands' status, bearing titles of weavers, overseers of weavers, singers, overseer of singers, dancers, grinders of grain, food vendors, winnowers, domestic servants, stewardesses of the queen's household, as well as overseers of ornaments and overseers of clothes (Sabbahy, 2013). Although temple posts were filled by male bureaucracy, females were not totally excluded from priestly offices (Onstine, 2010) since there are numerous examples of women who were regular priestesses in the daily rites. Most of the women in temples were associated with ritual music.

Ward (1989) however noticed the disappearance of female titles containing the words overseer or administrator since the Middle Kingdom concluding that women of the era were deprived of supervision jobs even within the household. Graves-Brown (2010) noticed as well that after the Old Kingdom, no women were represented doing agricultural work such as sowing, gleaning, winnowing, sieving of grain and pulling of flax. He thus concluded that in later periods women's roles became more restricted and that a gradual replacement of women's roles by men happened. He attributed the change to the exclusion of women from literacy by religious or social factors. Weaving seems to be the job most attached to women during Egyptian history but here again, since the New Kingdom, men started to be involved in the profession probably due to the invention of vertical looms which needed more physical power to operate.

Legally and generally speaking, ancient Egyptian women enjoyed the same rights under the law as men. They were able to represent themselves in marriage contracts and any other legal documents. They were entitled to trade and inherit property in direct line from their family. No evidence of inheritance inequality between males and females exists. As Egyptologist Barbara Watterson (1978, p.98) noted "An ancient Egyptian woman was legally capax [capable]. In contrast, an ancient Greek woman was supervised by a kyrios [male guardian]".

In art, Egyptian women, equal to men, could appear naked. Nudity was not a mural wrong and female bodies were not censored. Scenes of childbirth and nursing were considered very natural and often represented in temples, contrary to modern embarrassment around such situations.

On the religious level, the Egyptian pantheon consisted of an equal number of gods and goddesses. The latter represented the traditional female values of beauty, motherhood and sexuality but just as often carried the powers that are in our modern conception more connected to the masculine like violence, war and revenge. As a matter of fact the Egyptian universal system was personified by a woman, Maat, who ensured truth, justice, and the cosmic order.

5. Sexual orientations

One of the earliest examples of socially acceptable same-sex couples is often said to come from Egypt, albeit with little foundation. It is the well-known tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep in Saqqara dating to the Old Kingdom. Both men shared the title of Overseer of the Manicurists in the Palace of King Nyuserre. It is the only tomb in ancient Egypt where men are displayed embracing and holding hands. Nevertheless each was married to a wife who is represented elsewhere in the tomb (although that of Niankhkhnum was erased in antiquity). Moreover both had several children whose names are recorded in the tomb. It should be noted that, contrary to what is often quoted in literature, homosexuality is only one explanation for this unusual tomb. Moussa and Altenmüller (1977) for example considered the two owners brothers while Baines (1985) proceeded to describe them as twins.

Another ambiguous reference to male homosexuality in dynastic Egypt is a part of the tale of King Neferkare (disputed to be Pepi II Neferkare of the Sixth Dynasty or Neferkare Shabaka of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty) and General Sasanet, the beginning of which, thus the context, is lost (Van Dijk, 1994). However, the first piece available states that Sasanet was keeping the king's company 'because there was no woman, or wife, there with him.' The story then proceeds to say that a commoner named Teti, followed the king while going to visit Sasanet's house at night where a ladder was lowered down for him. Hours later, the story reads 'When his divine person had done what he wanted with the general, he returned to

the palace'. Although there is more than one suspicious detail around the story, there is still no confirmation of the type of relationship the king and his general had.

Parkinson (1995) concluded that other artistic representation often interpreted by scholars as depicting same sex intimate situations, such as figures of Akhenaton and Semenkhkare embracing on Berlin stela 17813, can equally represent family closeness only.

The only Egyptian source where a same sex intercourse is explicitly mentioned, is recorded in a version of the contending of Horus and Seth on a late twelfth Dynasty fragment of the Lahun papyrus, where the latter is said to have performed a sexual act on the former, trying to use the incident to win the eternal case between both (Parkinson, 1995). However in that particular situation homosexuality was clearly used as an act of humiliation and submission or a form of sexual molestation. The story thus hardly gives any indication that same sex relationships were a socially acceptable behaviour in ancient Egypt.

6. People of disabilities

In ancient Egypt physical disabilities or body anomalies were considered divine attributes gifted to humans by the gods. This was interpreted by Mahran and Kamal (2016) from the fact that certain gods were represented with misshapen bodies or as dwarfs, like god Bes, Hapi and some forms of Ptah and Ptah-Sokar-Osiris.

Archaeological evidence even suggests that some kings were disabled; DNA testing proved that Tutankhamon had a bone disorder (Than, 2010). The body of Thutmose IV had a pelvic tilt due to an injury (Woods, 2011). The mummy of Siptah, a 19th Dynasty king who died at the age of 16, shows a deformity of the left leg and foot which can be a result of polio or cerebral palsy (Schipper, 2006). None of these kings were represented disabled which might suggest that the ideal in ancient Egyptian mentality was still centered around healthy bodies. In spite of that, there is at least one representation of an Egyptian king with disability. According to Loebel and Nunn (1997), king Semenkhkare, having lived during a period of artistic freedom, was represented with a stick as a walking aid, an indication of a mobility issue (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Note: Smenkhkara on a limestone block from the late Amarna Period. Reprinted from "Staffs as walking aids in ancient Egypt and Palestine" by W. Y. Loebel and J. F. Nunn, 1997 *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (90), p. 453.

Contrary to other ancient civilizations which promoted the perfection of the body, the ancient Egyptians showed great respect and empathy to disabled persons (Finch, 2013). This is apparent in the teachings of Amenemope which drew the code of ethics of our ancestors towards the weakest of the society "Beware of robbing a wretch or attacking a cripple. Do not laugh at a blind man, nor tease a dwarf, nor cause hardship for the lame. Don't tease a man who is in the hand of the god (i.e. ill or insane)..." (Lichtheim, 2006a, p.160).

Physical disabilities represented in Egyptian art included many types of body impairments such as: dwarfism, leg deformities, blindness, back deformities and kyphosis. Leg deformities included cases of "genu recurvatum" which causes the knee joint to bend backwards resulting in trouble in walking. In spite of that Mahran and Kamal (2016) recorded three scenes of herders suffering from backward knees during the Old Kingdom (fig.4).

Kyphosis is a structural deformity characterized by a hump on the upper back of the affected person. People with Kyphosis were detected in ancient Egyptian art as offering bearers, dog keepers, herders and boat builders (Mahran and Kamal, 2016)

The earliest known prosthesis in the world was discovered in the Theban necropolis, from which 2 prosthetic toes came (Finch, 2011). One of them was fitted to the foot of a female owner called Tabaketenmut from around 950–710 BC who may have had diabetes which could have caused ischaemic gangrene in the toe requiring its amputation. The prosthetic should have helped to walk in spite of the amputated toe.

Blind people were employed as musicians and are represented in many tomb scenes, sometimes with bands over their eyes (fig.4) (Andresen, 2009)

Fig.4. Note: Male musicians with a band tied over their eyes on two blocks of sandstone from Akhenaten's sun temples in Karnak. Reprinted from "The eye and its diseases in Ancient Egypt" by S. R. Andersen, 2009, *Ophthalmologica Scandinavica*, 75(3), p. 342.

Dwarfs were represented in dozens of tombs dating to the Old Kingdom spreading across the necropolises of Giza and Saqqara. Thus Kozma (2006) could draw some remarks about their social status and roles. It is clear that male dwarfs specialized in certain professions like jewelry making, animal or pet care, fishing, keeping wardrobes, entertainment and dancing, supervision of clothing and linen and personal attendance. Female dwarfs on the other hand worked as nurses or midwives. Consequently it is clear that dwarfs had accessibility to a wide range of professions and they were accepted and integrated in the ancient Egyptian society.

7.Age diversity

Age demographic is one way to examine the diversity of any society. Sadly life expectancy in ancient Egypt is one of the most difficult topics to research. Zakrzewski (2015) has explored the resources and methods by which life expectancy in Egypt might be assessed. She explained that average life expectancy is other than the most common age at death. Indications from modern technical analysis of mummies point out that life expectancy during the days of the pharaohs was thirty five to thirty nine years for males and three to five years less for females (Farouk, 2015).

A passage from the Insinger Papyrus, dating to the Ptolemaic period, outlines the main stages of life as following:

“A man spends ten years as a child before he understands death and life. He spends another ten years acquiring the instruction by which he will be able to live. He spends another ten years earning and gaining possessions by which to live. He spends another ten years up to old age, when his heart becomes his counsellor”. (Lichtheim, 2006b, p.199)

Thus the last stage of life, being considered an old person, started actually at the age of forty for ancient Egyptians. It was estimated that people over sixty accounted for less than 5 percent of the population (Baratte & Boyaval, 1974). It's a well-known fact that ancient Egyptians paid great respect to their elders. In the instructions of Amennope we read “Do not stretch out your hand to touch an old man, nor snip at the words of an elder. Do not reproach someone older than you for he has seen the Sun before you”. It's thus clear that the hierarchy of the society favored the older over the younger.

Textual evidence suggests that for the lower and middle classes the care of the elderly who were unable to work was left to the younger people in their families and that parents received stipends from their children (Kontopoulos, 2020). But in some cases the elders were granted a retirement sum from their previous jobs. For example, the older men of Dier El Madina, explicitly described as "old", were granted a monthly grain-ration, though theirs was less than that of the other workmen.

Wisdom and experience of the elderly were appreciated and many older or mature men and women were represented among workers (Sweeny, 2004). It seems that the workforce included older resources to execute tasks which require higher skills (Davies, 1923). In the tomb of Menna, a scribe of the eighteenth dynasty, a scene shows an elderly balding white-haired man overseeing agricultural work (fig.5). Loebel and Nunn (1997) assumed that when the farm worker became old and contracted osteoarthritis that limited his mobility, he was employed as an overseer of workers.

Fig. 5 Note: An aged person, overseeing agricultural activities from the tomb of Menna dating to the 18th Dynasty. Reprinted from “Staffs as walking aids in Ancient Egypt and Palestine” by W.Y. Loebel & J. F. Nunn, 1997, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 90(8), p. 452.

Many top officials in the ancient Egyptian government were still in office in their later years. For instance Old kingdom officials were active until their death (Farouk, 2015).

8. Conclusion

Foreigners were considered of two categories in ancient Egypt, those outside the borders and those living within. The former were treated with skepticism, as enemies who constantly needed to be suppressed and kept distant. The latter was however accepted in Egypt. Examples of foreigners employed in Egypt prove that they could keep their original names and costumes and could be married to Egyptian spouses. Most Nubians and Asians living in Egypt however adopted Egyptian religion and burial customs. The contact between Egypt and its neighbors influenced the ancient Egyptian language in the form of countless loan words. However this impact receded by the end of the New Kingdom.

People with disabilities enjoyed wonderful integration in ancient Egypt and were under the protection of a strict code of ethics, a situation only comparable to modern advanced societies. They were seen in many occupations, some of which adapted to their physical impairment. For example blind people were employed as musicians. Those with mobility disability used sticks to aid them in walking and even prosthesis as a replacement toe. Many disabled men and women are shown with their families leading a prosperous life just like healthy persons.

Ancient Egyptians had great respect for older people as well. There was no specific age for retirement so people continued to work as long as they were physically able to. Even when their health declined, they were appointed as overseers of work which needed less physical effort. Many upper class occupations were inherited and the parents still received their salaries. From the village of Dier El Madina there is evidence that retired workers were granted a monthly endowment, though less than those still in service. Children were expected to take care of their elderly parents.

Women in ancient Egypt were the equals of men in every aspect of life except occupations. On the other hand, there seems to be more restrictions in the jobs accessible to women since the Old Kingdom, especially those of overseers. Egyptians recognized the existence of a third gender but it was rarely represented in ancient sources. When represented, there does not seem to be any degradation or negative aspects attributed to people who are neither male nor female. There is very little evidence about non heterosexual orientations during the dynastic period. Even the most celebrated examples are still a subject of interpretation by modern scholars. Therefore it's impossible to tell if ancient Egyptians accepted and integrated people with different sexual preferences.

In summary, it could be concluded that the ancient Egyptian society was diverse and inclusive in these dimensions at different degrees: ethnicity, age, physical ability and gender.

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التعددية والتضمين في المجتمع المصري خلال عصر الأسرات

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الملخص

معلومات المقالة

تعرف التعددية في العلوم الاجتماعية بدرجة الاختلاف بين الأشخاص في عينة عشوائية من المجتمع من حيث السن و الجنس و القدرات الجسدية و الميول الجنسية والأصول العرقية. بينما يعرف التضمين بالسماح لأنواع مختلفة من الأشخاص بالاشتراك في الأنشطة المجتمعية مع معاملتهم بمساواة وعدل.

كان هذا البحث يهدف إلى تطبيق المفهومين على المجتمع المصري القديم خلال عصر الأسرات. فقام ببحث الفرص المتاحة لجميع أفراد المجتمع علي أساس المعايير السابقة.

وقد توصل البحث إلى أن نظرة المصري الي الأجناس المغايرة عنه كانت تعتمد على وجود هؤلاء الأشخاص خارج أو داخل الحدود. فقد تعامل المصري بالكثير من الريبة والحذر مع أي أجنبي يعيش خارج مصر وكان يرى أن هؤلاء الأجانب ينبغي قمعهم والتعامل معهم بشدة وذلك لحماية مصر من الاحتلال . أما الأجانب الذين جاءوا إلى مصر كتجار أو بحارة أو مرتزقة أو خدم للملك فقد كانت معاملتهم كالمصريين تماما. وكان لهم الحرية في الاحتفاظ بالأسماء والملابس الأجنبية والزواج من مصريات. إلا أن معظمهم قد اختاروا تبني الآلهة المحلية والدفن على العادات المصرية. وتدرجيا اندمج الأجانب في المجتمع وكانوا مزدوجي اللغة في تجمعاتهم. أما بالنسبة للهوية الجنسية فقد رأى المصري القديم وجود ثلاثة هويات هي الذكر والأنثى والجنس الوسيط. وهذا النوع الأخير بالرغم من الاعتراف به دون تحقير إلا أننا لا نملك من الأدلة ما يكفي لمعرفة مدى مشاركته في المجتمع. أما بالنسبة للإناث فقد أتاحت لهم فرص متساوية وحقوق متكافئة مثل الذكور في القانون والملكية والميراث، إلا أن مجال العمل قد ضاق نسبيا على الإناث منذ نهاية الدولة القديمة فلم نعد نسمع عن وظائف اشرافية او ادارية للنساء منذ ذلك الحين.

وقد كان الجانب المشرق في المجتمع المصري القديم هو الميثاق الأخلاقي الذي تعامل به مع المعاقين جسديا ومع كبار السن. فلقد حظيت كل من الفئتين بفرص متكافئة في العمل والحياة. وسجلت الكثير من الحالات التي تم تعيين فيها العمال الأكبر سنا الغير قادرين علي العمل الجسدي كمشرفين للعمل. كما أن هناك الكثير من الأمثلة على اشتراك أصحاب الإعاقات الجسدية في وظائف عديدة في المجتمع. بل ان منهم من حقق ثروات ومكانة عالية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

المجتمع المصري
القديم؛
التعددية؛الأجناس؛
الأعمار؛ ذوى
الاحتياجات الخاصة.

(JAAUTH)

المجلد ٢٣، العدد ١،
(٢٠٢٢)،
ص ١٢٩-١٤١.