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## NOTES ON EGYPTIAN WISDOM TEXTS

*Emil Buzov*

From the Old Kingdom until the Ptolemaic period there are around 20 preserved texts, which have common specific characteristics. They all have the same subject and stylistics, which distinguishes them from the other texts in the ancient Egyptian literature. Based on some formal marks, as title, author, recipient, content, common ideas modern scholars place them in a separate genre. (Lichtheim 1973, 5). These texts called with different names such as “wisdom texts”, “wisdom literature”, “didactic texts”, “Teachings”, “Instructions” etc. are the most valuable source for restoring the way the ancient Egyptians used to think. They are also the first documented attempt of humans to understand their place in the world and to build their own value system in order to run the whole society.

The present study aims to sum up all studies of the scholars for the past years, by pointing the achievements in the modern understanding of this part of the ancient Egyptian literature. It also tries to give and answer to some of the most important questions about these texts – what is the reason for their creation and how they were used back then.

### §1. INSTRUCTIONS AS A GENRE

Instructions are a genre of the ancient Egyptian literature, because they have specific features, which differs them from all other texts. The general marks of the didactic genre can be divided in two basic groups. Relations concerning the form, that is title, authorship and recipient and connections about the main subject and style of presentment. (Parkinson 1996, 298).

#### §1.1 TITLE

The most characteristic mark of didactic texts is their title. All literary works, belonging to the period in question are called *sb3jt* “instruction” [Schott 1990, 299–302 nos. 1384–93, 345–7; mo. 1552]. *sb3jt* means “Lehre, Unterweisung” (Wb. IV.

85–86); “instruction, teaching, wisdom” (F.D. 219). The word comes from verb *sb3* “teach”, hence the name of the genre – “Teachings, Instructions, Lehres”. Since the time of the New Kingdom the title of these teachings has changed. To the word *sb3j* they added *mtrw*, meaning “witness” (Wb. II. 172; F.D. 121). *mtrw* comes from *mtj* “straightforward, precise” FD. 120 and *mtr* “testify, instruct” FD. 121. As we will see *mtj* along with *ḳ3* “precise, accurate” FD. 50, can be considered synonyms and appear as basic terms in the didactic literature. With the adding of *mtrw* a combination of words is formed – *sb3jt mtrw*, which is translated “instructions for guidance”. This is the title of two of the New Kingdom instructions (Teaching of Amunnacht and Teaching of Any): *ḥ3t-ḥ m sb3jt mtrw* “*Beginning of an instruction for guidance...*”. In the third text from this time, the Teaching of Amenemope, the two words are used, not as a combination of words, but separately: *ḥ3t-ḥ m sb3jt m ḥnh mtrw n wd3* “*Beginning of the instruction for life, instruction for a good existing...*”. According to Quack *sb3jt* has more of a theoretical meaning, and *mtrw* – practical (Quack 1994, 83, n. 3). The example from the Teaching of Amenemope shows that both words have close meaning, and since the time of the New Kingdom, probably become synonyms. As time passes the word *mtrw* gains wider use and in the teachings of the Late Period the title is only (*t3*) *mtrw...* “*Guidance...*” (Kitchen 1979, 244). The simultaneous use of both terms in the New Kingdom is probably a striving of the authors to continue the tradition of the Old and Middle Kingdom by using as a title the archaic word *sb3jt*. At the same time they wanted to follow the tendency of their own time by adding *mtrw*.

The titles of the teachings, which belong to the didactic genre, have been gathered by Luft (Luft 1973). Later Kitchen comes back to the topic to examine the structure of this kind of texts in Egypt and Mesopotamia. (Kitchen 1979). According to him a difference is noticeable in the formation of the title as time passes. He says that the earliest one is *sb3jt nt* “*Instruction of...*”, and after this comes the titles, duties and the name of the author, as is the case in the Teaching of Ptahhotep from pap. Prisse: *sb3jt nt imj-r3 niwt Bty Pth-htp* “*Instruction of the mayor and vizier Ptahhotep...*” In its later copies the beginning is consistent with the model from the First Intermediate Period, which Kitchen calls “classical formulation”: *ḥ3t-ḥ m sb3jt ir.t.n...* “*Beginning of the instruction, made by...*” (Kitchen 1979, 244). This formulation becomes polite expression for all texts, which bear the marks of the instructions until the end of the Middle Kingdom. The verb *iri* in this case is in relative verb form and immediately after it are the titles and name of author. If Kitchen is right then the earliest version of a teaching would be the Teaching of Ptahhotep from pap. Prisse. In spite of the fact that the papyrus is dated from the XII dyn., it

<sup>1</sup> In addition to this title it could be added: *ḥ.w n w3t n ḥnh* “*Sentences for the path of life.*” (Teaching of Amunnakht) (Dorn 2004, 40).

may have been copied from an older monument. The only surviving copy of the Teaching for Kagemni is also written on it, but its beginning is missing.

The works of the ancient Egyptian literature usually do not have titles. That's why the presence of one, written by the author himself, is extremely interesting. On one hand, it implies that even for them these texts are a separate part of the literary tradition, which contrasts with everything else. On the other, putting a title shows a desire for his text to be added to the group of the so-called wisdom literature. In order to call their work *sb3jt*, the ancient Egyptian had to conform to the requirement of this group of texts. This complying, as we will see later, is connected not only with the title, but also with the whole content of the text.

According to some scholars the presence of the title *sb3jt* in the literary works does not mean that we can separate them in an independent genre. Except for the didactic works, there are some other texts that bear the same title, such as auto-biography texts from tombs (the tomb, TT 97, of the first prophet of Amun Amenemhat, who lived in the time of Amenhotep II (Gardiner 1910)), some onomastic (onomastic from the Ramesseum – papyrus Berlin 10495; onomastic of Amene-mope: papyrus Golenishev from the Pushkin museum in Moscow; BM 10379; BM 10202 (Gardiner 1947)), calendars with happy and unhappy days and student's exercises (Williams 1981, 7; Fox 1986, 303).

The writing of the title *sb3jt* is not the only criterion, used to define a text to the genre in question. As we will see, it is only one of the components, which build its formal marks. As for the text from the tomb of Amenhotep, even though it is not considered to be a wisdom text it has all formal and thematic marks of the genre and can in fact be regarded as an instruction.

## §1.2 AUTHORSHIP

The biggest interest, undoubtedly, raises the fact that the authors of these literary works are known. This interest is justified, because there is no information about the authors of the other texts from the ancient Egyptian literature. We are familiar only with the names of the scribes who copied them, but not the writers themselves. From the time of the Old Kingdom we are aware of the fact that Imhotep, Djedefhor (the son of Khufu) and Ptahhotep (the vizier of king. Djedkare Isesi) wrote instructions. The author of the Teaching for Kagemni remains unknown. Most probably that is the father of Kagemni, who was also a vizier. During the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, the people who wrote instructions are the father of Merikare – king Khety; founder of XII dyn. king Amenemhet I and the scribe Khety. The so called "Loyalist instruction" and the Teaching of a man to his son are anonymous. These are the only teachings

that have no author. According to the scholars, both texts are part of a subgroup of the didactic texts, which they call “Loyalist texts”. Both texts are made at the same time – the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. As we will see, both texts are distinguished from other wisdom texts by their content. Their main purpose is to emphasize the high role of the Egyptian king for the existence of the visible world and the necessity of every person to be loyal to the king and to fulfil his every command (Lichtheim 1996, 251–252). The nature of these texts and the time of their creation do not necessarily require the presence of an author. The advices given in them are common to their time. In spite of the fact that there is no author of the texts they are undoubtedly part of the wisdom literature of Ancient Egypt. This is visible by their title: *ḥ3t-ꜥ m sb3jt* “*Beginning of teaching*”. For instance the Egyptian who wrote the Teaching of a Man to His Son had to put an author to the text in order for it to be a part of the genre of wisdom texts. That’s why he named it the way he did: instead of a name – “a man” and instead of a recipient – “his son”. Thus, in spite that the text remains anonymous it sticks to the tradition of teachings. The Loyalist instruction also shows this tendency. The beginning of the text is known from the stela of Sehetepibre who is not the true author of the teaching. Despite that in his stela from Abydos he is the one named an author of the teaching and the recipients are his children. In other words, in spite that the real authors are not written, the people who made them did not break the tradition of the didactic literature.

All instructions dated to the New Kingdom have an author. One of their characteristic features is that only people who were on lower positions in the administration wrote teachings – scribes and priests. This tradition is preserved until the Roman period.

For the ancient Egyptians, there is no doubt – the names given at the beginning of the texts are indeed the authors of the instructions. Their names were perpetuated thanks to their works and centuries later we pronounce them with respect. In later tradition they are named *rḥw-ih̄t* “knowing something, wise men” (Brunner 1966, 30; Fox 1980, 127). In the Teaching preserved in papyrus Chester Beatty IV, the names of those wise men are listed: Djedefhor, Imhotep, Neferty, Khety, Ptahemdjehuty, Haheperraseneb, Ptahhotep (Kairsu<sup>2</sup>):

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<sup>2</sup> The names of Imhotep and Djedefhor as wise men are written in the so called “Harper’s songs”, song of Intef from pap. Harris 500 (British Museum 10060) VI, 2 – VII, 3 and partly in the tomb of Paatenemheb from Saqqara (presently in Leiden) from the time of Akhenaten (Lichtheim 1945, 192). Another monument is known where the names of some of the wise men in Egypt are listed. This is a relief from a tomb in Saqqara from the time of XIX dyn. The names of Imhotep, Kaires, Khety and Khaheperraseneb are mentioned (Simpson 1973, pic. 6).

*in iw wn di mj Hr-ddf*  
*in iw kj mi Ij-m-htp*  
*bw hpr m h3w n.n mi Nfrti*  
*H(3)ti p3.sn tpj*  
*di.i rh.k rn n Pth-m-ddddhwtj*  
*H<sup>c</sup>-hpr-R<sup>c</sup>-snbj*  
*in iw ki mi Pth-htp*  
*K3irs m-mitt*

“Is there anyone like Djedefhor?  
 Is there somebody like Imhotep?  
 There is no one like Neferti,  
 (or the same like) Khety, who is above all of  
 them.  
 I give you to know the names of Ptahemdjehuti  
 and Khaheperraseneb.  
 Is there anyone like Ptahhotep or Kaires?...”  
 [Chester Beatty verso 3,5–7  
 [Gardiner 1935, pls. 18–19]]

Of all names, mentioned so far, only this of Ptahemdjehuty cannot be connected to a certain text. The works of Neferti and Khaheperraseneb do not correspond to the formal marks of the genre of the instructions and are not part of it. Despite this, the content of both texts is similar to the best examples of the didactic literature. The rest of the wise men are known as authors of instructions.

In the modern literature there is no unified opinion on the question whether these are the true authors of the teachings or they are merely authorities, chosen to make the text more popular. The problem is mostly connected to the dating of these literary works, because for most of them we only have later copies, which are written in the language of their own time – not from the time of their creation. That’s why some scholars agree with the thesis that the authors mentioned in the texts never are the real one (Helck 1970a, 159). For Katznelson, in view of authorship, every teaching should be examined separately and he is extremely skeptical about the texts that give kings or high dignitaries as their authors. (Katznelson 1973, 317). It is interesting to note, that for the time of the Old Kingdom all three instructions that have survived until now were written by viziers. We should also add the teaching of Imhotep, which is unrepresented today. Then only the highest dignitary in Egypt who had the skills and abilities to create such texts makes all didactic texts from the mentioned period. Scholars, who claim that a high dignitary does not write them, point the argument that neither of these texts mentions anything about the nature of duty. That is true, but the office itself includes multiple sides of life, so many of them described in the instructions (hearing requests, passing sentences and so on). We also should not forget that the copies of the didactic literature that we have now, are texts that have gone out of use only for the successor of the vizier and turned into a universal wisdom.

As for the instructions written by kings, it should be noted that for the whole history of Ancient Egypt there are only two – Instruction for Merikare and Instruction of Amenemhat I<sup>3</sup>. Very much has been said by scholars about the abilities of

<sup>3</sup> According to Antes the teachings wrote by Egyptian kings are three: for Merikare, from Amenemhat I and one from the king Khety, which is not preserved (Anthes 1957, 176).

the Egyptian king to read and write<sup>4</sup>. The two teachings in question are connected only with a certain moment of the history of Egypt and are quite specific. It is possible that their authors are indeed the two rulers. The question, whether Khety and Amenemhet I made the teachings themselves or scribes did them on their behalf, is still controversial. It is generally accepted that the real author of the Instruction of Amenemhat I is the scribe Khety, who also wrote a wisdom text. It is quite possible that this royal instruction was made after the death of the king.

O. D. Berlev makes an observation on the subject that is very interesting. He draws the attention to the fact that only in the Instruction of Khety and that of Amenemhet I we have both the names of the authors and those of their fathers. He thinks that precisely these texts were written by the given authors while the others are just authorities (Berlev 1984, 27). During the process of examining six wisdom texts Herman reaches the conclusion that they are made of separate parts in different time and most probably by different people. He presumes that they were gathered by one person who proclaims himself an author (Williams 1981, 6).

Without new versions of the text it would be extremely hard to give a synonymous answer to the question of who is the actual author of every text. Most of the scholars nowadays unite around the idea that the names, written in texts are merely authorities. But then comes the questions – if they didn't write the wisdom texts how did they become so famous and why are these particular texts assigned to them. Now it's time to mention the special treatment of the ancient Egyptians towards the name. According to them it is not an interpretation, which separate one object from another or some abstract category. In Ancient Egypt it is considered that the name expresses “the essence of human personality” and “while the written name exists so will its carrier.” (Lekov 2004, 117–120).<sup>5</sup> Taking into consideration this it is hard to imagine that the names, written at the beginnings of the teachings do not belong to the authors, but are merely well known people – authorities.

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<sup>4</sup> Information about the literacy of the kings we find first in Pyramid texts. There the king is called “scribe of divine books” (PT § 1146). From the “Prophecy of Neferti” it is known that Snefru himself wrote down the wise words of Neferti. It is said for Djedkare-Isesi that *sš hmw:f ds:f m db<sup>c</sup>:w:f* “his majesty writes with his own fingers”. (Urk. I 60 , 8). King Neferhetep (XIII dyn.) is famous for spending long hours in bookstore (Pieper 1929). For the education of the ancient Egyptian king see Baines (Baines 2007, 82–83).

<sup>5</sup> The most appropriate example for illustrating this notion is the myth about Re and his secret name, which the goddess Isis wants to know: *dd.n.i rn.k it ntr<sup>c</sup>nh s dm.twhr rn.f* “Tell me your name father-god, because a man live when his name is pronounced”. (Pap. Turin = Pleyte/Rossi. 1869–1876, 131–138).

### §1.3 ADDRESSEE

Unlike the works of other genres of the ancient Egyptian literature, which don't specify who is the text intended to and whom it should serve, the instructions have a recipient. These texts are a synthesized knowledge, which the author has and wishes to pass forward. In all teachings where the beginning is preserved right after the title and the name of the author there is the addressee – the son of the author. According to the ancient Egyptian concept the pupil (or apprentice) of every tutor (or teacher) is his son. That's why we can't tell for sure whether the named recipient is actually the son of the author. From the Teaching of Ptahhotep we understand why it is so important for ancient Egyptians to pass on the gained knowledge to their pupil through a teaching:

*“Permit your servant to appoint a staff of old age.  
Let my son become of my position.”* (Pt. 28–29).

“Staff of old age” [Wb. II. 178, 11 “Stab des Alters” vom Sohn als Gehulfen (und Amtsnachfolger) des Vaters”; FD. 122 “staff of old age” = supporter of an aged parent”]<sup>6</sup> should be comprehended not as an assistant, who must always be with the old vizier to help him, but as a pupil who will be there for his tutor until the end of his life and who will be taught by him in his craft. A good example for what exactly the expression *mdw n i3w* means is an inscription from Theban tomb № 97 (tomb of Amenemhat):

<i>wn(.i) m w<sup>c</sup>b mdw n i3w m-<sup>c</sup></i>	“I was a wab priest staff of old age to my father
<i>it(.i) m wn.f tp t3</i>	until he existed upon the earth”.
	(Urk. IV 1409, 3–10; Gardiner 1910, 92).

After the death of his father (teacher) his son (pupil) must take his position. This is visible from an inscription from the tomb of Amenemhat in Beni Hassan (tomb № 2) in the time of Senusret I:

*“I was going upstream (to the north) as a son of hereditary prince, bearer of the seal of Lower Egypt, general m idn s it(.f) i3ww as a person who inherit the place of his old father.”* (Urk.VII.14,12; Lefebvre 1940, 364).

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<sup>6</sup> The expression has been studied by Blumenthal and Brunner (Blumenthal 1987; Brunner 1985). For a translation of examples in New Kingdom see (McDowell 1998, 201203). For a parallel of the expression see: Berschek I 33,5 *m st ntt wmt sw mdw i3w pw n it.f pn*; P. Kah. 2.11,18 *mdw i3w hft ntt wi tn.kwi*; Kairo 583,13 *mdw i3w m s3 mr.f*.

The expression  $\text{ḥ}^{\text{c}} m st$  (FD. 47 “stand in the place of = succeed someone”) is particularly interesting. Giving the duty (or position) from a father to his son  $s3.f \text{ḥ}^{\text{c}} m st.f$  “His son took his place” (Urk. IV. 59, 16), is considered compulsory for the existence of *maat*. In other words “the institution” of *mdw n i3w* may be perceived as coregency like the common practice from the time of the Middle Kingdom (McDowell 1998, 203).

The use of this expression in wisdom texts shows that one of the reasons for creating an instruction is for a pupil to be taught, who will in time take the place of his father. This is clear even from the title itself – *sb3jt* “an instruction”. That’s why it is absolutely obligatory for the text to have a recipient. He is the person the wisdom text is written for.

The beginning of the Teaching for Kagemni is missing but from its end we see that the text is for him. In the Instruction of Djedefhor his son is named – Aui-bre. In the variant of the Teaching of Ptahhotep from Papyrus Prisse it is only said: *dd.in.f hr s3.f* “And then he (Ptahhotep) said to his son...” [Pt. 51], but in the copy of BM 10409 it is added: *dd.in.f n s3.f Pth-ḥtp-šri* “And then he said (Ptahhotep) to his son Ptahhotep junior...”. The two royal instructions are addressed to the future kings Merikare and Senwosret I whose names are written in cartouches. The Instruction of Khety is written for his son Pepy:  $\text{ḥ}3t\text{-}^{\text{c}} m sb3jt ir.i.n s Dw3f s3 \underline{H}tj rn.f n s3.f Ppj rn.f$  “Beginning of the instruction, made from the men from Sile, son of Duaf, Khety is his name, to his son whose name is Pepy” (Ia-b). Both loyalist texts have no author and because of that we can’t expect to find the name of the recipient. During the New Kingdom this tradition is carried on. The Teaching of Amenemope is aimed, as the text says to: “for his son, the youngest of his children, the least of his family, initiate of the mysteries of Min-Kamutef ...Horemmaakheru is his true name.”<sup>7</sup> (Amenemope II, 13- III, 2). The son of Amunnacht to whom the text is written is called Hor-Min: *sb3jt mtrw ts.w n w3t ḥnh ir.n sš Imn-nḥt (n) hrj-ḥ.f Hr-Mnw* “Beginning of the teaching for instruction, sentences for path of life which the scribe Amunnakht made for his pupil Hor-Min” (Brunner 1988, 232; Dorn 2004, 40). Unfortunately the beginning of the instruction from papyrus Ramesseum II has not been preserved. That’s why we don’t know the name of the author, nor that of his pupil. The Teaching of Any is the only example among the all mentioned so far (without the two Loyalist instructions) where neither the name of his son is mentioned, nor to who is the text addressed to:  $\text{ḥ}3t\text{-}^{\text{c}} m sb3jt mtrw t3 \text{ḥ}3w.tj n t3 sb3jt mtrw ir(.t).n sš Inj irj sš Inj n t3 \text{ḥ}wt Nfr.t-irj$  “Beginning of an instruction for guidance, made from the scribe Any from the home (palace) of queen Nefertary.”

<sup>7</sup> W. K. Simpson. The Literature of Ancient Egypt. Yale University, 2003, 225.

### §1.4 CONTENT AND STYLE

By examining all the texts, belonging to the genre of instructions, we find out that a study about understanding the nature of a person is implicated in them. They also show his connection to God and how one should keep it. This theme is valid for all the texts and due to that it may be considered a characteristic for the genre.

According to most of the scholars the content of the ancient Egyptian wisdom texts can be reduced to two basic trends:

- Explaining the principles of *maat* and its execution.
- Pointing out the person who knows (*rh*), who is respectful (*sndw*), accurate (*mtj*), quiet (*grw*) and calm (*hrw*). He achieves these states of existence through *d3r-ib* “control over his heart”. The modern scholars call this person “the perfect person”. As opposed to the person who knows stands the one who does not know, who is called a fool (*wh3*). A fool because he neglects the advices of his forefathers and does everything the wrong way. As a result of that he has no luck in his endeavors and is spurned by society (Brunner 1988, 11–17; Lichtheim 1996, 244–247; Allen 2000, 258–260).

According to the ancient Egyptians gaining knowledge (*rh*) is made through the heart *ib*. It is not by chance that the study (or to be more precise teaching/instruction) of king Akhenaten is called: *sb3yt hmw.f m ib.f* “Instruction of his highness, (which is) in his heart”. This instruction he places in the hearts of all his subjects (Hornung 1999b, 52). In other words, Akhenaten shares his wisdom with his people and when they put it in their hearts they perceive it and live according to it. The path toward knowledge passes by understanding and controlling the heart. For this path it is said: *nh wd3 pw n.s ib.f* “Life and stability of a person are his heart.” [Pt. 548 – 552].

It is interesting to note that the mastering of the skill happens through listening (*sdm*): *ir sdm.k nn dd.n.i n.k wnn shr.k nb* “If you are listening to this, which I said to you, your every plan will exist.” [Pt. 507–8]; *sb3 s pw r dd n imj-ht sdm.f st hpr m hmww sdmw nfr dd n iml-ht ntf sdm.f st* “Instruction for a man is this for him to talk to the next. If he listens that he will turn into master who listens. Talking to the next is great, (because) he will hear this.” [Pt. 517–519]; *dd.i wr.t di.i sdm.tn di.e rh.tn shr n nh3 s3r nh m3w sb.t h3w m htp* “I have something important to say, I give to you to hear, I give to you to know the plans of eternity, the path of life, as it should be and the passing of life in peace.” [Les. 68, 11–13<sup>8</sup>]; *imj nh.wj.k sdm iddt imj h3tj.k r wh3.w 3h p3di.t.st m ib.k wg3j n p3 wnw.st m-3 hnw n ht.k irjw pn3t m ib.k ...ir irj.k h3w3wj.k ir nn m ib.k gm.k sw m sp m3r gm.k mdt.i m wd3 n nh wd3 h3t.k hr tp.k* “Give

<sup>8</sup> Loyalist teaching 3–7 in Posener’s edition [Posener 1976, 55–57].

*your ears and heard what is said, Give your mind over to their interpretation: It is profitable to put them in your heart' But woe to him that neglects them! Let them rest in the shrine of your insides. That they may act as a lock in your heart; Now when there comes a storm of words; They will be a mooring post on your tongue. If you spend a lifetime with these things in your heart, You will discover mw words to be a treasure house of life, And your body will flourish upon earth."* [Amenemopet 3, 9 – 4, 2]<sup>9</sup>.

By hearing, the words of the wise ones enter the heart of a man and he becomes "one who listens" meaning "one who knows" and all his actions are according to these words: *3h sdm n s3 sdmw ʕk s dmm sdmw hpr sdmw m sdmi nfr sdm nfr mdt sdmw nb 3ht* "Listening is beneficial for a son, who listens. (If) the listening enters inside the one who listens, he becomes a judge, (because) listening is great, speaking is great and the one who listens is master of what is good." [Pt. 534–538]. All of this is shown best in the last words of the instruction of Kagemni:

*ir ntt nb.t m šs hr p3 šfdw sdm  
st mj dd.j st  
m sn h3w-hr š3t  
wn.in.sn hr rdj.t st hr ht.w.sn  
wn.in.sn hr šd.t st mj ntt m šs  
wn.in nfr st hr-ib.sn r ht nb.t  
ntj m t3 pn r dr:f  
wn.in ʕhʕ.sn hms.sn hft*

"As for everything put down in this roll,  
listen to it as I sad!  
Do not cross beyond of what is definite  
And then they gave it in his bodies.  
And then they recited it as it was in the roll.  
And then it seemed good among them more then every-  
thing in this land to it's limit.  
And then they lived according to it!"  
[Kagemni II, 5–9].

The same idea is found in the wisdom texts from the New Kingdom. The sage Any says to his son:

*ptr tw dd n.k n3j sp.w mnḥ  
ntj ip m ib.k  
iir sw hpr.k m nfr  
w3i dw nb ir.k*

"Look! I speak to you these benefit matters,  
That you (must) examine in your heart.  
Do it and you will transform yourself in someone good;  
And all the evil will be far away from you!"  
[Any 18, 4–5]<sup>82</sup>

All the cited examples show how the teaching of the words of the ancestors happens. They are being read to the ignorant, who then repeats them. That's the reason why the role of listening is so important.

<sup>9</sup> W. K. Simpson. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*. Yale University, 2003, 227.

<sup>10</sup> see aslo Instruction of Any 20, 4–5 *iw.k sš3 m sš.w ʕk m sš.w imj sn m ib.k hpr idd.k nb.t mnḥt*.

By complying with his ancestors' instructions a person controls his heart (*d3ir ib*), which is the first step towards purifying the link between him and god. This is also the only way of gaining knowledge. Having control over your heart is particularly important because of the double-faced nature of a person who is willing to do both good and evil<sup>11</sup>. From the Teaching of Ptahhotep it is known that the decision to act the right or wrong way is made by the heart: *in ib shpr nb.f m sdm m tm sdm* "It is the heart who changes his master into one who listen or one who is not *Именно сърцето е което кара да се промени господаря му (човека) в слушащ или не слушащ,*" [Pt. 550–551]. That's why it must be studied and controlled. It is said frequently in texts that the heart should be supported: *w3h ib.k tr n mdwj.k* "Support your heart in while you are speaking" [Pt. 624], which is a synonym of controlling (*d3r ib*).

The knowledgeable person, according to the wisdom literature, is known for his knowledge and his wisdom lives through the centuries. He *sm b3.f m smn.t(w) nfr.f im.f tp t3* "is helpful to his Ba with what is stable and Ba is beautiful in him upon earth." [Pt. 526–527]. His thoughts are identical with the words he speaks and his every action is a confirmation of *maat*: *m3h3.n ib.f ns.f k3 sp.tj.fj iw.f hr dd ir.tj.fj hr m33 n3.wj.fj twt hr sdm 3ht n s3.f irr M3t šw m grg* "His heart equals his tongue. His lips are precise when he speaks and his eyes until he sees. His ears are pleased to hear what is profit to his son. (Because) one who is doing maat is free from falsehood." [Pt. 528–532].

A typical mark of the texts, which pertain to the genre of instructions, is the inner order of the text or its style. After the title of the work comes the name of the author and that of the recipient of the text. The narrative is led from the first person singular and is aimed to the wise man's son, who shares his wisdom with him. This opening part is present in all texts, which have their beginning. An introduction or a prologue is next and then comes the main part of the work. It may have different length. According to Kitchen the prologue is extended with time and in later instructions during the I mil. BC the prologue is obligatory for all works of the genre (Kitchen 1979, 248). An exception to the rule is only the Instruction of Ptahhotep, which has a long introduction, but as we will see later it most probably is a product of later times.

Kitchen thinks that the Instruction of Djedefhor and that of Merikare don't have introductions. That's the reason he puts them in a subcategory, called by him Type A, unlike all other texts, which he put in the so Type B (Kitchen 1979, 241). We know the Instruction of Djedefhor only from versions written on ostraca from the time of the New Kingdom. It is possible that due to the lack of space the introduction was not written and the student went on directly with the gist of the in-

<sup>11</sup> see also CT 1130.

struction. On the other hand, the Teaching for Merikare, being the first royal teaching was probably purposefully made without a prologue as a distinctive feature of the text. Of course, it is possible that the distinctions of both texts were not planned in advance, but is a product of the individual style of their authors. The content of the prologue is in the context of the idea of the importance of hearing the statement, which is about to be done.

The prologue of the text proceeds, to the essential part of the instruction, or as Kitchen calls it *Main Text* (Kitchen 1979, 249). In accordance with it all teachings can be separated into several groups. He differentiates three – instructions, which main part is entity; instructions with main part that is divided into two or three separate parts; and the last group is where the main text is divided into many themes. The last ones Kitchen calls multi-segment texts. The main text in them is divided into chapters or maxims. Some of the best representatives of this group are the Instructions of Ptahhotep and Amenemope. The number of texts belonging to the first group is the biggest. There the authors pass on from one subject to another without a definite order and often they repeat a certain theme, which has been examined earlier. The lack of clearance of the inside order of these texts is due on a big extend, to our misunderstanding of the rhythm of the work. In the case of the second group each part of the text examines one subject. Different themes can be separated through a sub-title as in the instruction of Ani. These multi-segment texts are a set of many clearly designated parts. Each part scrutinizes one topic. It is possible for a theme to turn into several segments without being changing and the difference is only in the point of view. Maxims 2, 3 and 4 from the Instruction of Ptahhotep are a typical example, where the proper attitude to a superior, equal and one to the lower strata is shown. The separate segments are visible and designated as subtitles just like it's done in the teaching of Amenemope or they could be divided by red ink and same beginning – The instruction of Ptahhotep.

After the basic part all texts end with an epilogue. As Kitchen points, it has no definite structure, but depends on the preferences of the author. Basically the instructions from the III and beginning of the II millennium BC have an epilogue. At the end of II millennium BC it is usually omitted and during the whole I millennium it is a compulsory element of each and every text (Kitchen 1979, 251). The longest epilogue is that from the Instruction of Ptahhotep. There the vizier of king Isesi repeats briefly the basic deductions from his teaching. The colophon of the wisdom texts is a standard one and does not differ from those of the other literary works from Egypt.

## §2 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GENRE OF TEACHINGS

Set in a chronological order of the time of their creation the teachings are:

Old Kingdom:

- The Teaching of Imhotep(?)<sup>12</sup>
- The Teaching for Kagemni
- The Teaching of Djedefhor
- The Teaching of Ptahhotep

First Intermediate Period:

- The Teaching for Merikare

Middle Kingdom:

- The Teaching of Amenemhat I
- The Teaching of Khety
- The Teaching of a Man to his Son
- The Loyalist teaching
- The Teaching from pap. Ramesseum II

New Kingdom:

- The Teaching of Any
- The Teaching from Pap Chester Beatty IV
- The Teaching of Amunnakht
- The Teaching of Amenemopet

Late Period:

- The Teaching of Ankhsheshonq
- The Teaching from pap. Louvre D 2414
- The Teaching from pap. Insinger

These are the texts, which have the formal and thematic marks of the genre. In this group there are subgroups, which are characterized by some additional marks. These are the royal instructions, written by kings and the so called Loyalist texts (Instruction of a Man to his son and Loyalist instruction). They have their own

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<sup>12</sup> This instruction has not been found yet. The vizier of king Djoser – Imhotep is mentioned as an author of an instruction in the time of the New Kingdom (Gardiner 1935 pl.18–22) and also in the so called “Harper’s songs”: pap. Harris 500 and the tomb of Paatenemheb (The Antef song) (Lichtheim 1945, 192; Katznelson 1973, 318).

marks, which distinguish them from all other texts, but in their nature they are still part of the wisdom literature.

The number of instructions is not final yet. Some new texts can be added to the enumerated ones. Similar in content, but having different characteristics from those in the genre are: “The Prohibitions”, Instruction from Oxford, Instruction from papyrus Amherst, The speeches of Renseneb and Sasobek and the so on. They have not been included in the list of didactic texts due to their fragmentariness and unclear use. Some of them certainly are wisdom texts, but because of the short parts which are preserved from them we can’t fully comment them.

According to Kitchen, the text of Michaelides 16 ostrakon is also a part of a wisdom text, which hasn’t been recognized by this moment. Fifteen lines of the text are partly preserved, so by their content they can be added to the didactic literature. For Kitchen this text is dated to the time of XII dynasty (Kitchen 1970).

A big number of fragmentary texts from the Late Period can also be added to the instructions. In Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.135 we find a long, but fragmentary text, which according to some scholars is a teaching. It dates to the time between 650 and 350 BC and hasn’t been published yet. There are two other demotic texts partly preserved – Papyrus Louvre 2377 verso and Louvre 2380<sup>13</sup>. They were written by the same hand and are dated to the time between 163 – 159 BC. A translation of Papyrus Louvre 2377 verso that has 13 lines is made by Williams and Lichtheim (Williams 1976; Lichtheim 1983, 100–103). The text from Papyrus Louvre 2380 is badly damaged and has never been translated. The only translation has been made by Williams (Williams 1976 268–9). He also translates 7 sentences from an ostrakon from Deir el-Bahri, which starts with “*Here is a copy of a teaching that a [scribe of House of Life] gave them...*” (Williams 1976, 270). In Papyrus Michalidis another text is present and it probably is an instruction. Eighteen lines from it are preserved but only two are readable (Lichtheim 1983, 103). The text was published in 1963 (Bresciani 1963, Pl. I). Some fragments from papyri from Cairo museum (Pap. Cairo 30672) and from Berlin (Pap. Berlin P 15658) are also waiting to be published. The latest text, which can be added to the genre of wisdom texts, is in a fragment from a papyrus from Tebtunis (pap. Tebt. Tait 15) dated from the III century (Williams 1981, 3).

Lichtheim considers that to the genre of instructions (divided in three sub groups: real, royal and loyalist) the so called “Laments” must be added. These are the texts of Ipuwer, Neferti and Khaheperaseneb as well as another sub group where the The Man Who Was Weary of Life and The Eloquent peasant are included. All these 5 groups of texts, according to her, form the ancient Egyptian didactic literature (Lichtheim 1996, 243). In the present study it is accepted that only those

<sup>13</sup> Versions of this text are also found in an ostrakon from the British museum O. BM 5067 [Williams 1976, 270–271].

texts, which have all the enumerated formal and characteristic marks, are part of the didactic literature. The so-called “Laments”; as many other texts, have features in common with the instructions but they do not correspond to the formal marks of the genre so they are not part of it.

During the examination of the texts of the differentiated genre of the instructions all scholars come across some problems. Dating some of them is uncertain. The multiple copies of texts we have now are only parts of a particular text and very rarely are the whole literary text. The ostraca we have with parts of texts are exercises of young scribes and they are full of errors. Word play, based on similar meaning and sounding is pretty common in them, but is also missed due to the fact that the young scribes did not speak the ancient Egyptian language fluently. All these problems are not to be viewed here. They could be subject to a different study.

### **§3. REASON FOR CREATING TEACHINGS**

After we have distinguished the texts, which are part of the genre of teachings, it is time to pay some attention to their creation. Here we will examine the modern interpretations for their meaning and the ancient Egyptian notion of them.

#### **§3.1 MODERN CONCEPT ABOUT ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TEACHINGS**

After the first translations of some wisdom texts in the beginning of the XX century many attempts have been made by scholars to give an explanation about their meaning. The great number of difficult terms, the ambiguity of some passages and the disparate concepts of the ancient Egyptians toward the world around them lead the modern scholars to misunderstanding of the essence of these texts. In spite of all the publications and studies, dedicated to these literary works, some authors continue to view the instructions as merely a set of practical advices for behaving in society, combined with worldly wisdom, which aim is quickly to climb up the ladder (Quirke 1992, 127–131, 134; Hornung 1999a, 37). This, along with the many passages, which are hard to comment, is one of the reasons that the ancient Egyptian wisdom texts are still not very popular and are not included in the anthology of the human wisdom.

It is to be noted that along with the mentioned interpretations of the ancient Egyptian authors, there are some scholars, who consider these texts as the first documented example of social thinking (Hertzler 1933, 174) or as “fundamental sources for Egyptian ethics” (Shafer 1991, 159) and try to find in them a reflection of the social relations and principals, which used to guide the Egyptian society.

In spite all that, none of the previous studies answers the question of what is the reason for the creation of these texts and how did the residents of the Nile valley use them. Are they a product of the king's administration aiming to manipulate the population and obligate them to behave or they are a synthesized knowledge, gained by individuals in the ancient Egyptian society, who want to pass it on to the next generations? Were these texts read, listened or copied for pleasure because nothing new was said in them and the interest towards them is only thanks to the eloquence of the author or were they used as a starting point for everybody who dared to get to know themselves, the world he lived in and the principles that run it?

Finding the answer to these questions and understanding the didactic literature is possible only if a person crosses beyond the modern notions of state, wealth, superior, master, kind and so on. One should search for the point of view of the ancient Egyptian people. It should be taken into consideration that they were not familiar with the division of art, politics and religion. They did not feel separated from the god, but on the contrary – they were plunged in a world full of divine. The ancient Egyptians were part of him and they did not need to search for a lost link with the god (Lekov 1999, 23). At the head of the state there was a king who was conceived by the Creator and in his nature was a god. By serving in this social hierarchy, in which everyone knows their place, the ancient Egyptian knew they served the god. For people nowadays it is hard to imagine this mechanism, which by a great extend is a description of the Underworld.

### §3.2 THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CONCEPT

The ancient Egyptians themselves, unfortunately, did not specify what their understanding of the word *sb3it* was. In the instructions it is pointed out frequently that it is best if these texts are read so they can enter the heart of a person and this way he may live and act according to them. Then he will be successful in all of his endeavors: *ir sdm.k nn dd.n.i n.k wnn shr.k nb* “If you listen to what I said your every plan will exist.” [Pt. 507–8]; *ir iryw.k h3w.k iw nn m ib.k r n3j.k mswt ptr sn* “If you live with these (words) in your heart, your children will respect them (lit. see).” [Amenemope 17, 15–16]. From the so called Loyalist instruction we find out that the words, which were put into the literary work represent “the plans of eternity” and their keeping will give a man the opportunity to live his life in peace: *dd.i wr.t di.i sdm.tn di.i rh.tn shr n nh3 s3r 3nh m3w sb.t h3w m htp* “I have something important to say. I give you to hear, I give you to know the plans of eternity. The acts of life as they should be. The passing of life in peace.” [Les. 68, 11–13].

Hearing and studying these texts changes the ignorant person into one who knows. According to the ancient Egyptian ideas a person is born ignorant and must

learn. Thanks to the instructions a person becomes wise. This is visible from the final words of the Instruction of Amenemope:

*ptr.n.k t3y 30 ḥ(w)t  
st sd3y ḥr st sb3y  
st n ḥ3ty n šfd nb  
st di.t rh p3 ḥm  
ir ʿšiw st m-b3ḥ p3 ḥm  
ḥr ir.f twr ḥr r3.sn  
imḥ tw n imw imy st m ib.k*

“Mark for yourself these thirty chapters:  
They please, they instruct,  
They are the foremost of all books;  
They teach the ignorant.  
If they are read before an ignorant man,  
He will be purified (of his ignorance) through them.  
Fill yourself with them; put them in your mind (lit. heart)”.  
[Amenemope 27, 7–15].

The information in these texts is, on one side, the standard of behavior of the Egyptian society and on the other is a teaching of self-control and self-knowledge – an obligatory stage towards gaining knowledge of the world and the Creator. In view of the moral values, teachings emphasize the right method of behavior in multiple worldly situations aiming to show the ideal person, carrier of all positive human qualities. Examining this model of human behavior it is particularly important to have in mind the nature of the ancient Egyptian state, which determines the boundaries of relations of a person to the world around him. When someone studies the right behavior – meaning the moral-ethical norms, he learns the principles that lead the ancient Egyptian state – the principles of the created world. Gaining self-control, on the other hand, is the essence of the wisdom literature. It is accomplished through studying the nature of a person and his heart (*ib*). Acquiring knowledge about the core opens the doors to a free communication with the Creator and fulfilling his plans. These two purposes of the instructions are expressed as early as the introduction of the Instruction of Amenemope:

*ḥ3t-ʿ m sb3jt m ʿnh  
mtrw n wd3  
tp rd nb n ʿkwʿkw sr:w  
nt-ʿ n smr:w  
rh ḥsf wšb n dd sw  
r ʿn smi n h3bw sw  
r sʿk3.f r mi w3.wt n ʿnh  
r swd3.f ḥr tp t3  
r rd.t h3j ḥ3tj.f r k3ri.f  
irj ḥmw r dw  
r nḥm.f m r3 n k3wj  
smsm m r3 n rhjt*

“The beginning of the instruction about life;  
The guide for well-being,  
All the principles of official procedure,  
The duties of the courtiers;  
To know how to refute the accusation of one who made it,  
And to send back a reply to the one who wrote;  
To set one straight on the path of life;  
And to make him prosper on earth;  
To let his heart settle down in its chapel,  
As one who steers him clear of evil;  
To save him from the talk of others,  
As one who is respected in the speech of man”.  
[Amenemope I, 1–12].

### §3.3 STUDIES ON THE GENRE OF INSTRUCTIONS

Researcher's work on the instructions started in the mid XIX century with the publication of some papyri containing wisdom texts. The first text was published in 1847. This is the only copy of the Instruction of Kagemni and the version of the Instruction of Ptahhotep from pap. Prisse (*Fac-simile d'un papyrus égyptien en caracteres hieratigues, trouve a Thebes. Donne a la Bibliothèque royale de Paris et publié par E. Prisse d'Avennes. Paris 1847*). Until the end of the century many of the monuments containing wisdom texts were published: Instruction of Amenemhat (Griffith 1896); Loyalist instruction (Mariette 1880, 34, pls. 24–26); Instruction of a Man to His Son (Birch 1871); Instruction of Ani (Mariette 1871, pls. 15–28); Instruction of Amenemope (Virey 1886, 169; Renouf 1889). A key contribution to studying the wisdom texts is the work of Wallis Budge, who in 1910 publishes a big part of the collection of papyri stored in the British museum (Budge 1910). The first decades of the XX century were a time when the first translations and studies of the particular didactic texts appeared. (Gardiner 1914, 20–36; Budge 1924; Boeser 1925; Lexa 1926). In 1927 r. an anthology with texts is published, with a great number of instructions. This is the work of Adolf Erman (Erman 1927). Although most of the texts included there were only partly translated and all the problematic passages were missed, this remains the first attempt for a collection with ancient Egyptian texts to be published in order to be popularized. In the two decades to come many new translations appeared. With the work of Budge from 1924 the beginning of monographic examinations on didactic texts was initiated (Budge 1924). Ten years later E. Suys published his work on the Instruction of Ani, which included a hieroglyphic transcription, a translation, grammar commentary and a dictionary of the text (Suys 1935). Thanks to the studies of A. Volten, we have translations of the Late Egyptian instructions. The Danish Egyptologist specializes in demotic texts and publishes the papyri from the Carlsberg collection. To him the Egyptology owes the first whole examination of papyrus Insinger. In 1941 he published a study on demotic instructions which remains a standard for examining these texts during the next 40 years. (Volten 1941). Volten also pays attention on/to the teachings from the Middle and New Kingdom. In 1937 he published a translation and commentary of the Teaching of Ani [Volten 1937] and 8 years later he examined the two royal instructions and for the first time showed their political character (Volten 1955). The zenith in monographic studies on teachings is the work of Z. Žaba on the Instruction of Ptahhotep, issued in 1956 r. (Žaba 1956). He compared the all versions of the text known by that time and gave a translation with a comment of all previous translations.

The excavation of the village of the workers, who build the royal tombs of the New Kingdom – Deir el-Medina, gives a new direction of the studies of the didactic

literature. Except information for the everyday life in that time it also gives scholars a nice surprise – a great number of ostraca made of stone and clay with texts, written in hieratic. Thanks to the colossal work of Jaroslav Černý and Georges Posener these ostraca have been translated in the years from 1938 to 1977 and published in three volumes. (Posener 1938; 1972; 1977). Due to the small surface of the material, the inscriptions are fragmentary. The texts are parts of literary works, short notes for purchasing different goods, information about the supplies of the village and administrative documents. Among the ostraca with literary texts there are new versions of already known texts as well as unknown parts of some teachings. For example, the text of the Instruction of a man to his son was published in 1871. (Birch 1871), but it turned out that it was merely a part of the didactic text. In 1950 Posener issued many ostraca from the village with parts of the text that completely changes the meaning of the teaching. The ostraca contained only isolated sentences, but were analyzed by him and published as a whole text in 1979 (Posener 1979).

The new versions of the texts require reconsidering of the translations. The natural next step is to compare the different versions in every different record and to put a translation with critical notes. In the end of the 60s Wolfgang Helck started the project “*Kleine Ägyptische Texte*”. For almost two decades he has published almost every didactic text (Helck 1969; 1970a; 1970b; 1977; 1984).

In the 70s with the works of W. K. Simpson and M. Lichtheim, Egyptology has been enriched with new translations of all texts belonging to the genre of instructions taking into consideration the new versions (Simpson 1973; Lichtheim 1973; 1976; 1980). The authors of these studies, however, cautiously explain in the preface of their books that the aim of the material presented by them is merely to popularize the Egyptian literature and make no claim to have given a completely right translation and comprehensiveness of the commentary. The last published anthology with translations of texts from the Middle and New Kingdom written by Richard Parkinson also sticks to this model (Parkinson 1997).

Since the end of the 60s new critical studies of almost every didactic text have been published. In 1967 Hans Goedicke issued a translation of the Instruction of a man to his son (Goedicke 1967). Two years later Kitchen published a translation of the same text (Kitchen 1969). The Instruction for Merikare has been examined consecutively by Müller and Donadoni (Müller 1967; Donadoni 1968). Seibert comments some passages of the Instruction of Khety (Seibert 1967), and Lopez – the Teaching of Amenemhat (Lopez 1973). The studies on the didactic text of Amenemope also have increased their number (Posener 1968; Anthes 1970). All these translations and studies have helped for the better understanding of the texts and their interpretation. Unfortunately, there are no studies on all didactic texts, which may show their common idea and the aim of their creation. One and the same combination of words, used in different instructions are being translated in a differ-

ent way by different scholars. Thus no common language and expressions can be caught. This way, in spite of the new translations, the understanding of teachings as a different genre of the ancient Egyptian literature remains obscure.

In 1981 Williams published his work, dedicated to the wisdom literature known to that moment. The author gives bibliographical information for the texts and makes an attempt to structure the basic marks of the genre and the problems, which go along with their studying. That is the first specialized study on wisdom literature. Williams defines the directions of future studies on the subject (Williams 1981). His examination may be considered as a continuation of the work of Fox, which came out a year earlier (Fox 1980). M. Fox summarizes all studies on ancient Egyptian teachings for the period from 1958 to 1977. He pays biggest attention to some basic themes considered in wisdom texts: *maat*, god, ancestors/wise men.

In the begging of the 80s, thanks to the work of Miriam Lichtheim, attention is paid once more to the late wisdom texts, written in demotic. The last critical study on these texts is the work of Volten, published in 1941 (Volten 1941). Lichtheim, who had dedicated her life to studying the ancient Egyptian literature, published in 1983 a complete publication on demotic instructions (Lichtheim 1983). Her work was a continuance of the published translations of the Teaching of Anchsheshonk and the Teaching from pap. Insinger in the third volume of her anthology of Egyptian literature (Lichtheim 1980). In her study from 1983 she included a translation of the third, partly preserved, instruction from this period – Instruction from pap. Louvre 2414 and two more fragments from similar texts<sup>14</sup>. She has also made an attempt to reveal the inner structure and metrics of the texts. Lichtheim commented their content and compared it to the earlier instructions and with ones from neighboring cultures that have similar meaning.

At the end of the 80s H. Brunner has published the only full research on Egyptian teachings. His work was issued in 1988 and for the second time, with some little changes, in 1998 (Brunner 1998). The author makes a translation on all the instructions and added some biographical texts. He makes the attempt to explain the basic concepts in didactic literature: god/gods, *maat*, ancestors and so on. Unfortunately Brunner did not examine the inner structure and content of the texts. He paid no attention to the so-called “teaching for control of the heart”, which is the core of the ancient Egyptian teachings. That’s why he could not answer the question: what is the meaning of these texts and why were they written.

In the 90s Egyptology has been enriched with new translations of the didactic texts. A substantial contribution to examining the ancient Egyptian teachings are the two works of Quack, dedicated to the Teaching for Mericare (Quack 1992) and the Teaching of Ani (Quack 1994). The first work, even though it was a master’s

<sup>14</sup> Pap. Louvre 2377; Louvre 2380 and two ostraca from Deir el-Medina.

thesis, gives not only a translation and commentary, but for the first time a transliteration of the whole text. In his PhD dissertation on the Instruction of Ani he repeated the method, which has become a standard for examining a literary text.

At the end of the century – in 1999, the first whole study on the Instruction of a Man to His Son has been published by Fisher-Elfert (Fisher-Elfert 1999). The author makes a reconstruction of the text, based on the newly found ostraca; he also gives a transliteration of parts of the text, translation and a commentary. The last published monograph about the genre of teachings belongs to Adrom and represents a new publication of the Teaching of Amenemhat with a lot of new copies (Adrom 2006). In his work he has gathered all known papyri, writing boards and ostraca with parts of the text, known to scholars until 2005. These two studies show the necessity of new publications of literary works, which could include the newly found variants of the texts, scattered in different museums. The books of Helck, published in the 70s and 80s are no longer current and in the years to come more monographs like this of Adrom probably will appear for all the other didactic texts.

In the beginning of the XXI century scholars publish translations of some parts of the instructions in small collections, dedicated to the popularization of the ancient Egyptian wisdom. Such a study is the work of Schlögl from 2001 (Schlögl 2001). In 2003 Burkard publishes a brief story of the literature during the time of the Middle Kingdom as he tries to summarize the basic studies known to him by that time (Burkard 2003). None the less that the work looks more like a dictionary of the literary texts of that time, it is valuable with its attempt to systemize the literary works by their plot and to draw attention to the characteristic features of every genre.

#### **§4 THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN IDEOLOGY ACCORDING TO THE WISDOM LITERATURE**

Studying the sum of conceptions of the surrounding world, the social life and their regularities through texts that we define as instructions, could be done by examining the main topics or by relations between them. In the basis of the first approach is situated the person. The aim is to study what the ancient Egyptian teachings consider to be the right attitude, which a person should have towards the different objects. They are: god, the Egyptian king, the ancestors, the family (wife, son), supervisors, subordinates, knowledge, property and so on. In view of the second method, the accent falls not on the attitude of a person towards the different objects, but toward the relations – the connections between the objects.

The first method is used in the present study – examining the point of view and the value system of the ancient Egyptians according to the wisdom literature, based on objects. Within the framework of showing the attitude of a person toward

the different objects that surround him, the means of expression are differentiated – the combination of words and phrases. They have eventually turned into terms, which the texts use to give a description of certain states of a person.

#### §4.1 ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD

According to the instructions, god has created the world and everything in it. He rises every day for the people and repeatedly destroys the enemies, who are among them. He is the creator of temples so he can hear people's complaints. He has given them a ruler, who takes care of the weak and poor. And finally he has given them a strong weapon – magic, to oppose to what's happening. They should learn (know) the advices of god (written in teachings), so they can "clean" their connection with him. Then they will be able to know his plans and to foresee the future. A person's duty to god is to serve the rites and to offer sacrifices. Besides that a person should not oppose in any way to god and to the people, connected to him. If a person fulfils all that then god will grant him with his mercy, satisfy his every need and listen to him when he has a request towards god.

#### §4.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE KING

Instructions give us both points of view towards the "lord of the two lands". On the other hand it is the attitude of a person towards the king, and on the other – the idea of the king for himself. The second standpoint is present in both royal teachings, made at the end of the First Intermediate Period and the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (Instruction for Merikare and Instruction of Amenemhat I). In the Instruction for Merikare we find the most complete explanation of what the Egyptian king is and what he must do daily. The role of the king in the created world, designed by the Creator, is "to lift up the spine of the weak". That lifting" is accomplished by keeping the principles of *maat*. This is the main task of the ruler. God creates *maat* and gives it to the people. The king must keep a watchful eye on its applying and every day he must give it back the gods. They feed on it – they exist only in the conditions of *maat*. With it being returned to the god, who created it, the circle of the constant giving of justice, its making and returning on the hand of the people and the king is completed. Then the world moves in its normal frames. If *maat* is being done than everything will go the right way. The king is an example for the people next to him as well as for the entire population. He must not kill or judge wrongly. To keeping *maat* means that the people who cry will be quite and the widows will be comforted.

The attitude of a person towards the king in the instructions is being shown for the first time since the Middle Kingdom. In the texts that we place in the Old Kingdom, there are no reference to the personality of the king and the attitude of a person towards him. The reason may be found in the existence of a taboo about the person of the king during that period. He is too distant from his people to be an object of commentary. Since the beginning of the Middle kingdom there has been a striving for an explanation of the meaning of the king's institution and the activities of the ruler. In the instructions this striving finds an expression in both "Loyalist instructions" (Instruction of Khety and Loyalist instruction). The obligations of a person towards the king are best shown in the second one. They are to praise him, to follow his orders and not to transgress them – i.e. to be loyal. An additional requirement is that people must keep the name of the king, to pronounce and remember it as well as to pay homage to all of his images. If a person complies with all that he will have a good life on earth and existence in the afterlife.

### §4.3 THE NOTION OF MAAT

The divine principle *maat* (a right act in every life situation) is in the basis of the wisdom texts. The ancient Egyptian point of view is built namely on this principle. One of the aims of didactic texts is to reveal its essence. In the everyday life *maat* is a certain behavior, which is the opposite of *isefet*. From CT spell 1130 we see that a person is given certain opportunity to choose freely his behavior – according to *maat* or *isefet*, or in other words – between the right model and the wrong one. Here comes the role of the teachings. They show what is the right model of behavior, how a person should act in the variety of everyday activities without violating the principle of *maat*. For that purpose both the right and wrong models are designed – *maat* with its consequences, and *isefet* with the result of its execution. If we enumerate some of the obligatory conditions for doing *maat*, according to wisdom texts and autobiographies, then the following list or rules of conduct can be created:

- praising god
- giving offerings
- following the orders of the king
- strictly executing the official duties
- passing judgement
- praising the parents
- helping the ones in need (giving food, clothes, ferry with a boat through the river, burring the dead, who have no relatives).
- being humble in the presence of your superior

- benevolence to the subordinate
- friendly attitude toward your neighbors
- silence (lack of complaining and boasting)
- lack of lie
- equality of words and deeds
- striving towards knowledge

The presence of *maat* and crossing life according to its rules requires acting in the frame of these commands in every life situation. If these regulations are being followed, than making *maat* (keeping all these rules) means that a person is free of lie. He is successful until he lives and possesses the property, which he will give to his heirs. The man, who sticks to the right model of behavior – *maat* accomplishes success not only in his earth life, but in the Afterlife too. His name will be preserved and remembered by the future generations.

#### §4.4 THE NOTION OF A PERSON

The role of the man in the created world is also the object of interest by the instructions. According to them god has created people and the whole world at their own will. People and their surrounding world have been made in order for the evil to be made quiet. They take an active part in the everyday making of the world. They do it through multiple ritual practices, aiming to help the sun in its fight in the Afterlife. People's responsibility is to maintain *maat* in the created world. Thus they are not only a product of the Creation, but are also responsible to the creator for their acts. This way the role of the man, according to the ancient Egyptians, is raised from a simple creation to a supporter of the creation and a creator himself in the everyday re-making of the world. The place of the person is raised to a point when he could interact directly to the god. That could be accomplished since the time of the New Kingdom and is called "personal piety".

#### §4.5 ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PROFESSION

In wisdom literature there are no advices how to do a certain job. The only exceptions are about sending to work in the place of one dignitary to another and having a high rank in the administration (the position of a superior). The lack of recommendations for the behavior on the work place distinguishes teachings from the so-called "The Duties instructions" (*tp-rd*) as those of the vizier. This is another proof that these texts are intended to the form of communication between the man

and the surrounding world. These instructions represent directions for the right communication between people.

The conscientious employee, according to the instructions, is quiet, calm and silent. He does everything that is told to do without opposing his superiors and subordinates. He is humble and shows his respect to his superiors; he is patient to those who are under him.

#### §4.6 THE NOTION OF GAINING PROPERTY

Throughout the whole history of Egypt an idea exists that wealth belongs and depends only on god. For the time of the Old and Middle Kingdom a person may gain wealth only thanks to his personal skills and the execution of the orders of his superior or the king. According to the instructions during these periods gaining fortune depended on the moral qualities of a person. Only the one who lives in accordance with *maat* can rise in the hierarchy of the state, to be on high post and possess property. Since the New Kingdom the idea that a person may gain fortune through fraud, begins to appear. The distribution of wealth no longer depends on the will of the king. In New Kingdom instructions gaining property opposes the moral values. During the Late Period, in the final phase of the tradition for writing instructions, the notion of wealth in Egypt resembles the understanding of the ancient Israelites, written in the Bible – god owns all wealth and may give it as a gift, but the impious may also become rich. In other words there is a negative attitude towards the wealthy man and the wealth itself. This idea brightly contrasts with the time of the classic Egypt when only the moral person, who lives in accordance with *maat*, possesses wealth. The reason for this essential change should be sought not only in the dual nature of a person, keen on doing evil, but also in the gradually dying divine royal authority.

#### §4.7. THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

According to the ancient Egyptian texts a person is born ignorant. Thanks to the studying of texts he gains knowledge. Egyptians often emphasize that learning is the best thing that a man can do for himself. Spending the day in writing and the night is reading is considered more pleasant than any other job or amusement. From all the texts we see that gaining knowledge and the transformation of a person into “knowledgeable” (*rh*) comes down to studying the principle of *maat*. The knowledge of “the cosmic order”, on the other hand, is insufficient. A person should also live in accordance with it so he can be called “knowledgeable”. Recognizing

*maat* and living according to its principles also means understanding the essence of a person, his nature and character. During the process of learning a person inevitably changes. Egyptians think that a person's character changes. For that reason, in wisdom texts it is frequently said that the wise man that gives his knowledge in the form of an instruction changes (lit. *irj* "make") the character (*kd*) of those he teaches. With the change of someone's character, he does not only gain knowledge for the world that surrounds him, but also the ability to control himself. This doesn't mean suppressing the feelings and emotions, it means reaching the right model of behavior – *maat*. The essence, which must be controlled, is the organ through, which knowledge is gained –*ib*. Having control over it (*d3ir-ib*) means that a person has realized, studied his own nature and in every situation will act in accordance with *maat*.

The man, who has knowledge who lives in accordance with *maat* is called "knowledgeable", while the one who transgresses this principle and does *isefet* (the opposite of *maat*) is called "ignorant". In other words, the difference between the righteous and the doer of evil is only the lack of knowledge, which could be gained.

The world, where the wisdom texts were created, was a world filled with divinity. It was made by the Creator and ruled by his son. In this world the principle of *maat* ruled and every people are equal in their nature. The existence of a deity (i.e. king) at the head of the state means that the possibility for injustice is eliminated. Rising in the bureaucratic system and gaining personal wealth can be accomplished only if the will of the king is fulfilled. His plans are conformed to the Creator and are given to people through his commands. For this reason the execution of the orders by the person is considered an obligatory condition for justice. After god has given the commands, then complaining and discontent about them would mean opposing of the Creator himself. Such acts are despicable and rejected. The right behavior of a person, according to the ancient Egyptian system, is to be quiet, calm and patient. The "perfect" person is the one, who obeys his superior, who understands his place in society. He knows what's coming next and expects what is about to happen. He is capable of controlling his heart (*ib*) and that's why he always makes right decisions. His plans happen, because they are equal with the predetermined. His family and all people around him love such a person. Also the king praises him. His place in society is raised and his faith in the Afterlife – secured.

#### §5. TERMINOLOGICAL APPARATUS – BASIC TERMS AND PHRASES

According to the ancient Egyptian notions the heart (*ib*), except that is a physiological organ is also an element of the human personality. It represents something that is external to the person. The heart perceives and memorizes everything that

a person does and is his impartial observer. Due to that reason it may even be considered as a “a second me” of a person (Spiegelberg 1931; Лекков 2004, 49). As an organ of thoughts, senses and emotions, his heart leads every act of a person. It is what pushes its owner toward doing every action as does every deed of a person leave a mark on his heart. The described in the previous chapter behavior of a person shows exactly that. In every situation, depending on a man’s understanding, his heart is in a certain state, which dictates the person’s model of behavior.

In wisdom literature the idea that human acts influence, build and form his character (*bi3t, 3d, irw*), is widely accepted. Under character in Ancient Egypt it was understood not only the initial form of a person, made in his birth, but also the combination of qualities acquired during his life. The character of a person is that part of his personality, which shows him to the people around him and through which they perceive him. Depending on the behavior of a person in society and the “path” that he has chosen to follow his character might be good (*nfr*), trusty, skilful (*ikr*), profitable (*3h*) or bad (*bin*) and evil (*dwt*). Controlling the heart (*d3ir-ib*), which is the basic task of instructions, leads to perfecting the character of a man and his turning into a good and excellent human being. The man who has power over his heart is always with a good character, which is valued by his contemporaries.

A person’s behavior is based on his thinking and deeds. The ancient Egyptian system of thinking is based on the interaction between the heart (or to be more precise – the core/essence *ib*) and the character (*bi3t, 3d, irw*) of a person. The mechanism of functioning of these terms gives us an opportunity to understand the value system of the inhabitants of the Nile valley and to find the meaning and function of didactic texts.

The information, which a modern scholar of Ancient Egypt uses, is a product of only a little part of the country’s population – the educated one. The point of view and the value system of the lower strata, poor and uneducated people remain unclear due to the lack of sources. On the other hand, during the different periods of the Ancient Egyptian history the value system and the way of thinking also change. The ideas and conceptions of the people who lived during the Old and Middle Kingdom, as seen in the literary works, brightly contrasts with the notions from the time of the Late Period. That’s why the present study focuses on the time until the beginning of the I mill. BC.

The first stage of the thinking process of a person is perceives. According to the ancient Egyptian texts a person perceives the environment and the objects in it through his senses and especially through his ears (hearing) and eyes (seeing). In texts the nose of a person, his tongue (taste) and touch are rarely mentioned as a means of perceiving the world. We are aware that the ancient Egyptians thought that they were breathing through their noses and their lives passes through it. But

from the point of view of perception it does not raise any interest. The same can be said about taste and touch. The next step in the thinking process is the processing of what has been perceived and its rationalization. This process, as we have already seen, is being done in the essence/core of a person (*ib*). All that has been seen heard and smelled, all that the separate parts of a person sense is being brought to the heart. Through it a person perceives what his senses register as activities, happening around him. Thanks to his character, the essence reacts to that, which the senses have perceived. There are two possible models of behavior, depending on the preparation of the heart and the level of self-control, which a person possesses. He might rationalize the situation negatively or positively according to the principle of *maat*. The negative perception will mean that his essence will be in contradiction to the principle of *maat*. That would be expressed through combinations of words, which show a departure from the norm. The heart will be “great” i.e. greedy (ʕ; *wr*), “rashly” (ʕs), “thirsty” (ʕwn), “swallowed” (ʕm) and so on. The other model of rationalization is when the heart is in unison with the justice (*maat*). Then it would be expressed through positive word combinations. It will be “right, accurate” (*mtj*; ʕkʕ), “kindly, patient” (*wʕh*), and “discreet” (*kʕʕ*). Hence, rationalization of every situation in life influences the heart of a person and might be described through a change of this heart (it becomes tall, big, sinks, diverts). By acting this way for a long time a man changes his character, thanks to the modification of his heart. In other words, the heart (*ib*) of a person may be regarded as a prism, which illustrates human deeds and changes his character. This rationalization, based on the kinds of behavior, which a person may choose, reflects on the decision that he will take for acting in a specific situation. Making a decision is the next step of the thinking process of a person. It has been prompted by the state of his heart. Every deed of a man is the result of the decision that his heart had made, based on the information, which has been given to it by the organs of sense. Making a decision for every act is the most important phase of man’s thinking. It is this phase, indeed, that wisdom texts are intended to. The role of a teacher is to show his student both models of behavior in making a decision and the consequences of those acts. A teacher cannot influence on the perception of a student. It is individual for every person. The teacher’s function is to give the knowledge he possesses for the outcome of both types of behavior and to show the right one. That is exactly that we see in the Instruction of Ptahhotep. Each and every maxim begins with a description of a particular situation. The heart realizes the situation and depending on which model it will choose it acquires a different definition. This definition determines the decision that will be taken. Ptahhotep also shows the result of this decision in both possible ends – in accordance with *maat* and in accordance with *isefet*. All maxims end with a deduction, which reflects the point of view of the wise-men toward the right act in the current situation.

Knowing both models of behavior in every surrounding doesn't automatically mean that the student will make the right thing. The aim of the teacher is not only to represent the consequences of the decision and to show the model in accordance with *maat*, but also to learn the student to control his heart so it can always make the right decision.

Controlling the heart (*wḏ3-ib*) means that a person owns and dominates his heart and therefore himself. He has power over his every act and reaction. Thanks to this he always acts and talks the right way – in accordance with *maat*. After the end of the last stage of thinking comes the action. It is based on the rationalization in the heart of the person and is a result of the decision that was made. A person's action may be expressed in deeds or words. The whole process of perceiving, realizing, making decisions i.e. the process of thinking as well as someone's actions influence on his character. This is the place for a gentle reminder that the human character, according to the ancient Egyptians, is a combination of qualities given to the person from birth and skills acquired during the life. It is also important to say that the actions, which a person decides to make based on decisions that he has taken during the time of rationalization influence and build his character. But his character also outlines these deeds. In other words, there is a retroaction between the heart of a person and his nature. Decisions made by the heart form the character of a person, but the character itself predisposes his heart to make certain decisions.

## §6. 5. SUMMARY

The ancient Egyptian wisdom texts represent a description of the moral philosophy of the ancient Egyptian society. The principles of well-behaving and self-knowledge are implicated in them. Being good and acting well is a conduct in accordance with the divine principle – *maat*.

Describing and studying the divine principle cannot make a person do the right thing in every situation. That's why the main aim of the instructions is to change the person himself and not only to represent the life in accordance with *maat*. Thinking and making decisions, according to the ancient Egyptians, is made in the heart (*ib*) of a person for these texts accent precisely on this organ of the human personality. Teachings show the way the human mind and manners work. Their aim is to influence thinking and making decisions. For this purpose the study of controlling the heart has been invented – so it can always make the right (*mtj*; *ḥ3*) decision and the consequences would not be in contradiction to *maat*. Controlling the heart is accomplished through studying the influence, which every deed of a person has to his heart. Human actions change the heart and form someone's character. Good deeds – the ones according to *maat*, lead to positive states and qualities of the heart. These conditions and virtues,

on the other hand, build ones' character as turning him in a good one (*nfr*). Having control over the heart allows a person to maintain "clear" (active) connection to the Creator. Then he acts in accordance with god's design. His plans are consubstantial with these of the deity and his actions are in unison with *maat*. A man who has mastered his core and is knowledgeable (*rh*), his actions are effective (*mnh*), he is quiet (*gr*), calm (*w3h-ib*), respected by the people around him and praised by the king.

The reason for the creation of these texts is rooted in the desire to preserve the words of the authors for the future generations. Teachings from the time of the Old Kingdom have originally been passed on verbally and many years after their author had died they were edited and written on a papyrus. Until that time they were not popular and were known only to certain people who used them. Probably that circle of people was on the teacher-pupil chain, which led from the author of the instruction. The fact that they were not widely spread is visible by the lack of ideas and terms, used in them in biographies from the Old Kingdom. During the years of the First Intermediate Period, influenced by the chaos in the country, a desire appeared for these verbal instructions to be written down. Then the words of the wise men from the Old Kingdom were gathered, edited by unknown people and turned into literary works. During the last years of the Middle Kingdom the number of the wisdom texts drastically increased and with that the popularity of the authors of instructions. The teachings from the New Kingdom continued the tradition of their predecessors. The use and meaning of the means of expression is preserved. At the same time the change of thinking, prompted by the time of their creation, is visible. Egypt had now turned into an empire, which controlled vast territories. The number of foreigners living in the country has increased and with that the diversity of ideas. The ordinary Egyptian communicated freely with gods without the need of a mediator. The role of the personal responsibility before god and the principle of *maat* began to have bigger instead obeying the orders of the king. Thanks to this direct contact between a person and a god, in the New Kingdom instructions we see for the first time what the direct obligations of a man before god are. At the same time, we see a tendency toward weakening of the role of the ruler. He is turning from a "god in flesh" into an ordinary ruler.

As a means of teaching and guidance, instructions have exercised a great influence on their contemporaries. The moral norms, eminent in them are a reflection of the way of thinking of the ancient Egyptians. Instructions describe the established norms, but also expand them by creating new ones. The greatness of their authors roots precisely in explaining the principle of *maat*, resulting in displaying the right model of behavior. These way instructions do not merely describe the moral norms, but create them as well. The influence that they have is attested best in biographical texts and narratives from the time of Middle and New Kingdom. As a mirror image of teachings, a biography influenced mostly. Since the time of the First Intermediate Period terms and expressions from the instructions had begun

to penetrate/enter in biographical texts. They did not explain the meaning of these terms. This is the role of the wisdom literature, and biographies merely use them in order to describe the quality of the essence/core of a person and his character. A comparison between these two genres shows that the direction of influence is from instructions to biographies. The positive model of behavior that instructions had built was considered a standard that every person strived for. In biographies nobles described themselves as people, who are an example for such a behavior.

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