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The contribution of Egyptian doctor Imhotep to medicine

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Imhotep - an outstanding ancient Egyptian architect of the period of the Old Kingdom, the supreme dignitary (chati) of Djoser - the first pharaoh of the III dynasty (2630-2611 BC). High priest of Ra in Heliopolis. The builder of the pyramid of Djoser - the first of the Egyptian pyramids. Beginning with the First Transitional Period, he was also considered a poet and thinker.

Later, he was deified and revered as a god of healing. Imhotep is considered the world's first known universal person, architect, engineer and scientist, and sometimes also the first doctor (although approximately the same time lived two other doctors, Merit-Ptah and Hesi-Ra).

Biography

Imhotep's high position at the court of the king is described on the basis of the statue of Joser, where after the titles of the pharaoh the titles of his first adviser are followed: "the keeper of the treasure of the king of Lower Egypt, the first after the king in Upper Egypt, the ruler of the grand palace, the chief priest of Heliopolis, Imhotep, builder, architect, Sculptor of stone vases." Little is known about its origin, but judging by the epigraphic data of the architect Khnumibra from Wadi Hammamat (between 495 and 491 years BC), in which Imhotep was named the son of "Kanerefer, the chief of the Upper and Lower Egypt", he was a descendant from the priestly or bureaucratic clan.

Imhotep designed the first step pyramid in Sakkara near Memphis - the tomb of Djoser, as well as a complex of architectural structures surrounding the pyramid. Imhotep is considered the inventor of the pyramidal architectural form: he proposed to build on the stone mastaba (rectangular tomb) of the pharaoh another three smaller sized mastabas, turning the mastaba into a four-step pyramid (hereinafter the number of steps of the pyramid was increased to six and it reached 61 m in height). Thus, Imhotep acts as the founder of the architectural tradition of the entire ancient kingdom, built on the use of a pyramidal shape in the design of royal burials. In addition, there are grounds to consider Imhotep also the inventor of the pillar in architecture.

Imhotep survived Joser. On the north wall surrounding the complex of the unfinished pyramid of successor Joser Sekhemhet, the name Imhotep was discovered, which makes it possible for him to participate in the construction of this tomb. Usually he is also considered the creator of the temple in Edfu.

Imhotep is also credited with the foundation of Egyptian medicine. In particular, he was considered the author of the "papyrus Edwin Smith" - a fundamental medical research, which, although it refers to 1700-1550 BC. E., But is based on materials known from the Ancient or even the Early Kingdom. This papyrus first determines the real causes of many diseases. In particular, 48 traumatic cases are examined, each with a description of physical examination, treatment and prognosis. Famous Canadian medical practitioner of the XIX century William Osler called Imhotep the father of medicine and "the first medician whose personality comes from the fog of antiquity."

Imhotep is considered the author of the first literary teaching, known as the "Instructions of Imhotep." Since this work has not survived until our time, the first known example of such literature is the "Instruction of Ptahhotep", written on behalf of Vizir Pharaoh Jedkar Issy.

Deification

The authority of Imhotep in subsequent periods of Egyptian history was so great that he was considered the greatest sage of all time, possessing magic power. The first signs of worship of Imhotep as a demi-god are met only a century after his death. In the era of the New Kingdom, the deification of Imhotep took shape as a god of healing and the patron of healers. In addition, he, along with Thoth, was known as the divine patron of the scribes and their crafts. The American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted wrote: "In priestly wisdom, in the combination of wise proverbs, in medicine and architecture, this remarkable man of the age of Joser became so widely known that his name was never forgotten. He became the inspiration for the scribes of future generations. Before starting to work, scribes poured water from the vessel onto the floor "(thus showing their respect to Imhotep).

In Egyptian mythology, Imhotep was considered the son of the Memphis god-creator Ptah (and most often, the lioness goddess Sekhmet). He was portrayed in the form of a young man sitting with a papyrus unfolded. Sometimes he also acted as the god of air Shu, who separates the sky (goddess Nut) from the earth (god Geb), and in this capacity prevented the onset of chaos. Being also the patron of the arts, he was associated with Hathor, Maat and another vizier and architect, later deified, - Amenhotep, the son of Hapu, who lived during the time of the Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom of Amenhotep III.

Pilgrims visited Sakkara, paying tribute to both the tomb of Imhotep, and burials of mummies of Ibis, a bird that was associated with both Imhotep and Tot (as the god of wisdom, writing and science). The mummies of the ibises were buried by thousands in the necropolis for animals in the northeast of the complex of the stepped pyramid. Other religious centers of Imhotep were in the Karnak temple in Thebes (where he was honored with Amenhotep, the son of Hapu) and in the sanctuary on the upper terrace of the temple of the woman-pharaoh Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahri, and later in the Ptolemaic temple of Hathor in Deir el -Medine.

The later Greek tradition (from the fifth century BC) identified the god Imhotep with Asclepius. With the latter, the constellation Ophiuchus is identified, and thus, Imhotep is the only real person who "became" a constellation. The cult of Imhotep reached its apogee in the Greco-Roman period, when its temples in Memphis and Filach on the Nile were filled with crowds of infirm and sick who sought to heal, staying for the night in the sanctuary. Imhotep was also remembered as a historical figure - the Hellenistic Egyptian historian

Manetho wrote that Imoutes (Imhotep) "had due to his extraordinary medical skills the reputation of the Greek Asclepius and who was also the inventor of the art of erecting a structure of hewn stone."