



WHO IS IMHOTEP?

The following is adapted from online resources including the free encyclopedia, Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>)



Imhotep (sometimes spelled Immutef, Im-hotep, or Ii-em-Hotep, Egyptian: ii-m-ḥtp *jā-im-ḥatāp) (2667 BC - 2648 BC) is the first architect and physician known by name in written history. As one of the officials of the Pharaoh Djzosef he designed the Pyramid of Djzosef (Step Pyramid) in Saqqara, Egypt around 2630 -2611 BC during the 3rd Dynasty. He may also have been responsible for the first known use of columns in architecture. Imhotep was also a poet and philosopher. He urged contentment and preached cheerfulness. His proverbs contained a "philosophy of life." Imhotep coined the saying "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we shall die." His name means "the one who comes in peace."

Imhotep also served as chancellor to the pharaoh and high priest of the sun god Ra at Heliopolis. He was said to be a son of Ptah, his mother being a mortal named Khredu-anekh. He was revered as a genius and showered with titles. The full list of titles includes: Chancellor of the King of Lower Egypt, First after the King of Upper Egypt, Administrator of the Great Palace, Hereditary Nobleman, High Priest of Heliopolis, Builder, Chief Carpenter, Chief Sculptor and Maker of Vases- in-Chief. Imhotep is credited as the founder of Egyptian medicine, and as author of the Edwin Smith papyrus, detailing cures, ailments and anatomical observations. The Edwin Smith Papyrus was probably written around 1700 BC but may perhaps go back to texts written around 1000 years earlier. Imhotep was the only mortal in all of civilization to be recognized on the foot-stone of a king's statue.

Two thousand years after his death, his status was raised to that of a god. Imhotep became the god of medicine and healing. He was linked to Asclepius by the Greeks. The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "the evidence afforded by Egyptian and Greek texts support the view that Imhotep's reputation was very respected in early times... His prestige increased with the lapse of centuries and his temples in Greek times were the centers of medical teachings." As the

son of Ptah, his mother was sometimes said to be Sekhmet, who was often said to be married to Ptah, since she was the patron of Upper Egypt. As he was thought of as the inventor of healing, he was also sometimes said to be the one who held Nut (deification of the sky) up, as the separation of Nut and Geb (deification of the earth) was said to be what held chaos back. Due to the position this would have placed him in, he was also sometimes said to be Nut's son. In artwork he is also linked with Hathor - the wife of Ra, Maat - the concept of truth and justice, and Amenhotep, son of Hapu - another deified architect. It is Imhotep says Sir William Osler, who was the real Father of Medicine: "the first figure of a physician to stand out clearly from the mists of antiquity."

The location for Imhotep's tomb is still unknown. Many Egyptologists have tried locating it but so far haven't succeeded. The general consensus is that his tomb is located at Saqqara, where he built the first ever pyramid. His legacy is found in the past achievement and present potential of generations of people of African descent.

The Imhotep's Legacy After-School Project reminds us to build on that legacy by motivating the youth of today to become the scientists of tomorrow!