

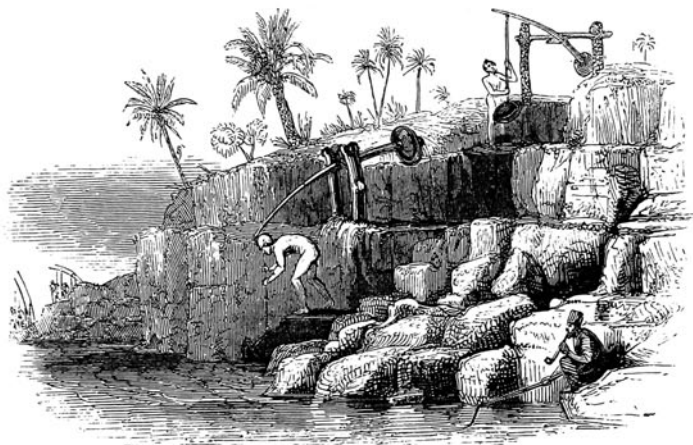
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS  
OF THE  
ANCIENT EGYPTIANS.



VIGNETTE D. Modern shadoof, or pole and bucket, used for raising water, in Upper and Lower Egypt.

CHAPTER IV.

*The other Members of the Second Caste: The Peasants, Huntsmen, and Boatmen.— The Lands farmed.— Irrigation.— Third Caste: Tradesmen, Artificers, Public Weighers and Notaries. — Money.— Writing. — Fourth Caste: Pastors, Fishermen, and common People. — Legislative Rights of the King. — Judges. — Laws. — Passports. — The Bastinado.*

I HAVE concluded the foregoing chapter with an account of the military order, which, as it holds a

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

rank so far above all the other subdivisions of the second caste, I may be excused for treating almost as if distinct from it. We now proceed to notice the other members of this caste; the principal subdivisions of which consisted of the military just mentioned, the farmers, husbandmen, gardeners, huntsmen, and boatmen.

The statement of Diodorus, who says, the husbandmen were hired to till the estates of the kings, priests, and soldiers, is so strongly confirmed by the scriptural account of the cession of all the landed property to the government on the occasion of Joseph's famine, that we are reduced to the necessity of concluding, the husbandman had no rights in the soil, the richer peasants farming the land from the proprietor, while the poor were hired as labourers for the cultivation of the ground. The wages paid them were trifling\*, and it may be inferred that the farmer received the land on very moderate terms. The cattle, flocks, or herds, which were tethered in the clover, appear also to have belonged to the land-owner; but those employed in the plough, and for other agricultural purposes, were usually the property of the farmer. In extensive domains, the peasants frequently acted as superintendents of the herdsmen, and were obliged to give an account to the steward of the number and condition of the cattle on the estate, the direct care of them being the office of an inferior class of people: the clover was also let, as at the present day, to any person who had cattle, which

\* Diodor. i. 74.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CHAP. IV. FARMERS AND GARDENERS. 3

were tethered in the meadows about the close of autumn, and, at other seasons of the year, particularly during the period of the inundation, were fed in the villages and farm-yards on hay, which had been dried and preserved for the purpose.\*

If the farmer had no right in the soil, it is still reasonable to suppose, that the choice of the crop depended chiefly on his decision, care being taken, as is still the custom in Egypt, as well as in other countries, that the land should not be injured by an imprudent repetition of similar crops †: and, indeed, from what Diodorus says, it is evident the farmers were not only permitted to choose the grain they intended to cultivate, but were justly deemed the only persons of sufficient experience to form a judicious opinion on the subject; and so skilful were they, says the historian, about these matters, in the study of which they were brought up from their youth, that they far excelled the agriculturists of every other nation. They carefully considered the nature of the soil, the proper succession of crops, and the mode of tilling and irrigating the fields; and by a constant habit of observation, and by the lessons received from their parents, they were acquainted with the exact season for sowing and reaping, and with all the peculiarities of each species of produce.

The gardeners were employed by the rich in cultivating trees and flowers in the parterres at-

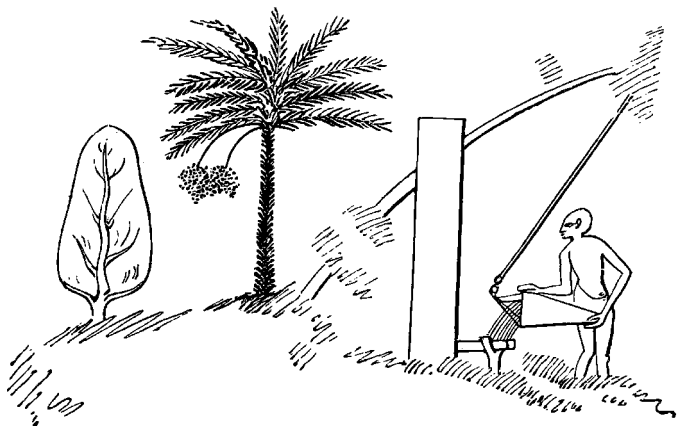
\* Diodor. i. 36. Like the *drees*, dried clover of modern Egypt.

† M. Macaire has shown the reason of this, and proved by experiments that the noxious matter thrown out by roots of vegetables unfits the soil for the growth of the same plant, though it may be beneficial to another kind.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

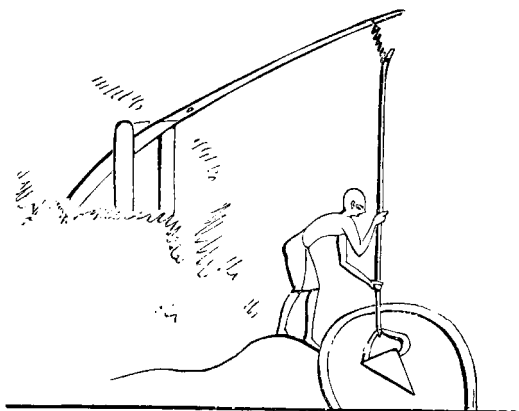
[More information](#)

No. 74.

Shadoof, or pole and bucket, for watering the garden.

Thebes.

tached to their houses ; and the vineyard, orchard, and tanks which served for ornament as well as for the purposes of irrigation, were under their superintendence and direction. In Egypt, the garden, and the fields, were both watered by the *shadóof*\*



No. 75.

Shadóof for watering the lands.

Thebes.

\* The pole and bucket still used in Egypt. This is the Arabic name. *Vide* Vignette D.

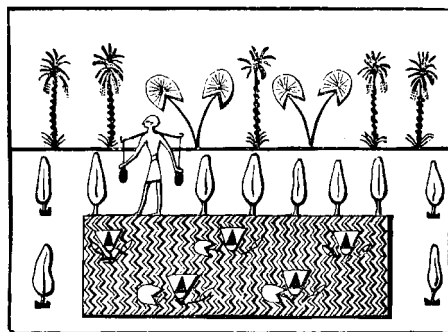
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

or by buckets, carried on a yoke across the shoulders; but there is no appearance of their



No. 76.

Water buckets carried by a yoke on the shoulders.

Thebes.

having used any hydraulic machine similar to the Persian wheel, now so common in the East; nor do the sculptures represent the foot machine mentioned by Philo, which is supposed to be referred to in the sacred writings.\* It is, however, not a little remarkable that an Arab tradition still records the use of the shadoof in the time of the Pharaohs: and I have found a part of one in an ancient tomb at Thebes, consisting of an angular piece of wood, on which the pole turned, and the rope that secured it to the cross bar.

The huntsmen constituted another subdivision of this caste, many of whom were employed to attend and assist the chiefs, during their excursions in pursuit of the wild animals of the country; the

\* Deut. xi. 40. "Egypt . . . where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy *foot*, as a garden of herbs." Some think that this alludes to the mode of stopping the small watercourses with mud by the foot, and turning off the water into another channel, still adopted in their gardens and fields. *Vide infra* on the gardens.

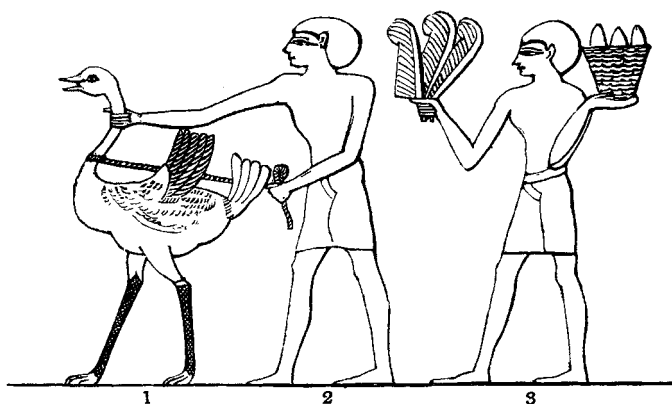
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

scenes of which amusements were principally in the deserts of Upper Egypt. They conducted the dogs to the field, they had the management of them in loosing them for the chase, and they secured and brought home the game, having generally contributed with their own skill to increase the sport of the chasseur. They also followed this occupation on their own account, and secured for themselves considerable profit, by catching those animals that were prized for the table, by the rewards given for destroying the hyæna and other noxious animals, and by the lucrative chase of the ostrich, which was highly valued for its plumes and eggs \*, and was sold to the wealthier Egyptians.



No. 77.

Ostrich, with the feathers and eggs.

Thebes.

The boatmen, like others who composed the subdivisions of each caste, were of different grades : some belonged to the private sailing or pleasure

\* That ostrich eggs were also highly prized, is evident from their forming part of the tributes brought to the kings.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

boats of the grandees ; others to those of burden ; and the rank of each depended on the station he held. The office of steersman seems to have been the most important, and to have ranked above all the other grades ; but it is reasonable to suppose that when the Egyptians undertook naval expeditions, the more warlike occupation of the sailor raised that class of people in the estimation of their countrymen, and the pilots of ships of war bore the highest station in the class of boatmen. The officers of their fleet were probably selected from the army\*, and the marines, or fighting men, who served on board, were all of the military order.†

## THE THIRD CASTE.

The third caste consisted of artificers, tradesmen or shopkeepers, musicians, builders, masons, carpenters, cabinet-makers, potters, public weighers, and an inferior class of notaries.

Among the artificers may be reckoned braziers and smiths of all kinds, in short, all who pursued any handicraft occupation not included among those which I have distinctly mentioned ; and the leather cutters, many of whom are said to have lived at Thebes in the quarter of the Memnonia‡, were doubtless a branch of the same class. Their skill in stamping leather was very remarkable ; and many specimens of unusual thinness

\* The Austrian admirals at the present day are military men.

† Sculptures at Medeenet Haboo.

‡ In the papyrus of Mr. Grey. *Vide* Dr. Young on Egyptian Lit. p. 65.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 8 THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS. CHAP. IV.

and delicacy, presenting figures and other devices, show how well they understood the art of tanning, and of turning it to an ornamental purpose.

The workers in linen, and other manufacturers, were comprehended under the same general head; but each class had its peculiar branch, and no one presumed to interfere with the occupation of another. Indeed it is probable that certain portions of the city, in which they dwelt, were set apart for, and exclusively belonged to, each of the different trades (as is still the case in a great degree at Cairo\*): and this may be inferred from the mention of “the leather cutters of the Memnonia,” above alluded to, who appear to have been a body of workmen living in a particular part of Thebes.

All trades, says Diodorus†, vied with each other in improving their own peculiar branch, no pains being spared to bring it to perfection; and to promote this object more effectually, it was enacted that no artisan should follow any other trade or employment, but that which had been handed down to him from his parents‡, and defined by law. Nor was any one permitted to meddle with political affairs, or to hold any civil office in the state, lest his thoughts should be distracted by the inconsistency of his pursuits, or by the jealousy and displeasure of the master in whose business he was employed. They foresaw that without such a law

\* As the Seroogéh, or saddlers; the Harrateen, turners; the Warakeen, paper-sellers, and others, which are the names of the streets of Cairo where they have their shops.

† Diodor. i. 74.

‡ Like many other things, this is plausible in theory, but bad in practice.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

constant interruptions would take place, in consequence of the necessity, or the desire, of becoming conspicuous in a public station; that their proper occupations would be neglected, and that many would be led by vanity and self-sufficiency to interfere in matters which were out of their sphere. Moreover, they considered that to follow more than one occupation would be detrimental to their own interests, and to those of the community at large; and that when men, from a motive of avarice, are induced to engage in numerous branches of art, the result generally is, that they are unable to excel in any. Such, adds Diodorus, is the case in some countries, where artists occupy themselves in agricultural pursuits, or in commercial speculation, and frequently in two or three different arts at once. Many, again, in those communities which are governed according to democratical principles, are in the habit of frequenting popular assemblies, and, dreaming only of their own interests, receive bribes from the leaders of parties, and do incredible mischief to the state. But with the Egyptians, if any artisan meddled with political affairs, or engaged in any other employment than the one to which he had been brought up, a severe punishment was instantly inflicted upon him; and it was with this view that the regulations, respecting their public and private occupations, were instituted by the early legislators of Egypt.

It is unnecessary to enter into any detail of the peculiar employments of the various members of the class of artificers and tradesmen, as mention will be

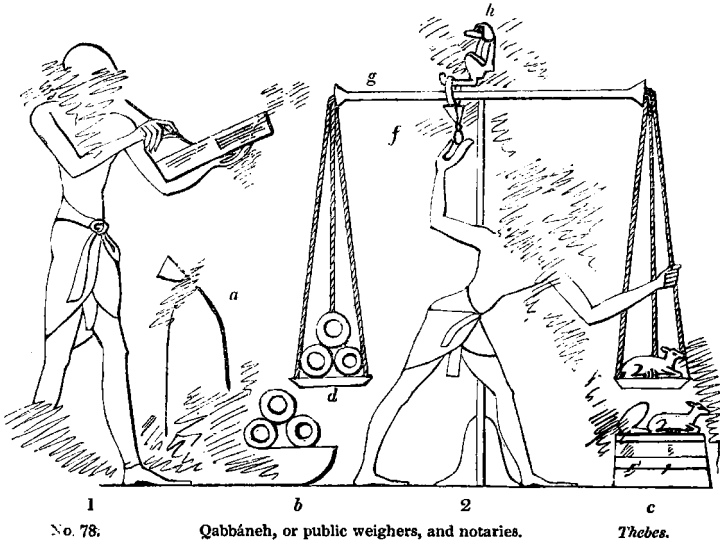
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06644-0 - Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians: Including their Private Life, Government, Laws, Art, Manufactures, Religion, and Early History: Volume 2  
John Gardner Wilkinson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

made of them in noticing the manufactures of the country; I therefore confine myself to a few remarks on the office of the public weighers or *qabbáneh*, and notaries. The business of the former was to ascertain the exact weight of every object presented to them in the public street, or market \*, where they temporarily erected their scales, and to adjust the sale of each commodity with the strictest



regard to justice, without favouring either the buyer or seller. All things sold by weight were submitted to this test †; and even the value of the

\* "The *superintendence* of weights and measures" belonged to the priests, until the Romans took away that privilege. Conf. the banquet of Xenophon, "as the civil magistrate weighs bread in the market-place."

† Small objects were, no doubt, weighed at the shop by the seller; but if any question arose, it was decided by the public scales; larger goods being always weighed by the *qabbáneh*, as in Modern Egypt.