

BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO THE ANCIENT WORLD

A COMPANION TO
**ANCIENT
EDUCATION**

EDITED BY
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Introduction

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The second-century CE essayist and ironist Lucian recounts in a dream how two ladies came to vie for his attention: Paideia (education) promised the not so diligent schoolboy fame and fortune in the future, while Technê (the vocational maestra) had material rewards at hand. A great deal of misty nostalgia fills and thrills the audience, that is, all those who care about Lady Paideia. As scholars we hope not to be engaging in fictitious dreams about the greatness of our subject, but we may be forgiven if we think there is something of abiding value in how the Greeks and Romans organized their educational cultures. When as a society we ask such questions as what should the young read, who should teach them, where, or at whose expense, we are tightly in the grip of the ancient theoretical and practical debates about the right education. Yet in approaching the topic of ancient education, many have not seen the variety of practices that made up ancient educations. Educational nostalgia encourages the teacher or student, whether in the days of late antiquity or in the European Enlightenment, to imagine that the classical is new again. Indeed, by sitting in school and reading the old texts, it is easy, almost natural to identify with the protagonists of those texts. School compositions—writing a speech in character, for instance—can even encourage such identifications. Classical education has often been a stirring call to the van, to educate today's youth in the way that one was educated or wished to have been educated or that one imagines across the span of millennia that Plato and Xenophon, Cicero, or the young Augustine were taught in

Athens, Rome, or Carthage. There is in education a strong desire to repeat—to repeat the way it was for us, our parents, or grandparents, or for aspirational ancestors.

Advocates of a classical education can thus be calling for a return to Athens or Rome, but quite often, such advocacy is more negative than positive. The new old education being proposed is a turn away from disapproved movements such as scholasticism or decadence or modernism or, as in the hands of contemporary homeschoolers, the state provided curriculum and institution. But aside from the fun that Lucian is having with all the serious-minded champions of liberal education, the tug of the two ladies reminds us that Paideia inherently involves a choice of life and values. She can be parodied as an exclusionary and domineering mistress, but there is considerable bite to this parody. No single education has served for all. Many do not have the opportunity, time, and resources to pursue the deferred good that a long education in literature and history and philosophy, with some math and science and perhaps music promises to be. Maybe too, her lofty methods and purpose are simply another craft, different but no better in kind than the manual crafts of the artist and artisan. Lucian had been anticipated by Isocrates (see Muir below), who had flatly declared in his first educational writing, *Against the Sophists* (ca. 390 BCE) that the primary problem in education was that teachers have a poor reputation because they promise that education can attain much more than it can actually do.

Ancient education draws some of its grandeur, like an aging diva, from those who remember her in her prime. Memory may be unreliable—for, after all, memories of childhood education are often told pointedly by adults to children. In addition, great ancient theorists have encouraged a veneration for the old curriculum. Historians of education and proponents of classical education follow in the traces

of Plato, Quintilian, and Plutarch. In the enthusiasm to recover ancient education (and classical culture more generally), adulation works at cross purposes with a properly historical understanding of the old curriculum. But the fans do not deserve all the blame. Education is something of a diva, which is to say, that the institution of education is particularly adept at generating explanations for its own existence and practice. This is again a reflex of its tendency toward replication—many social, political, and religious institutions are concerned with their own survival, but the school gets to practice this each day. Every class of students is encouraged to learn and very often encouraged to see the sometimes harsh practices of learning as necessary. To recover education is in some fundamental way to refound society. Such a recuperation can be a great, productive force or at least one of those sustaining hopes of a society: perhaps the current generation of those to be educated can be so trained as to make them better than the present. What that “better” means is a vexed issue: more pious, more civic, more informed, more critical, more imaginative, or perhaps only better informed on topics that someone or some tradition or some institution deems necessary or important. The reasons to study ancient education are thus complex and fascinating, especially because we—all of us students—are involved in the institution we examine, and our involvement includes hope for the old lady. The historian of education must be alert to the presumptions and normative judgments, past and present, about the value, purposes, and universality of classical education.

The two most famous twentieth-century histories of classical education illustrate the fascinating ideological impulses in studying and writing of education, and also the mature state of the subject. To take the latter first: the study of Greek and Roman education has benefited from

the great flowering of classical studies in Europe since the Renaissance. For many generations have treated paideia, a Greek-style education in the liberal arts, as classical culture. This is no longer so as ancient culture is now understood in more rigorous historical and anthropological modes, but generations of scholars had sought in ancient education the ideals and techniques for their ages and for their own intellectual and ethical formation. These same two mid-century works show also the deep ideological divisions inherent in describing educational practice and theory. Werner Jaeger's *Paideia* (published and enlarged from 1934 in Berlin to 1947 in the United States) brims with the hope that Greek cultural history can renew the decadent West, although it must be said his emigration and growing antipathy for National Socialism only tempered in part what seemed even then an unrealistically nineteenth-century enthusiasm for a national culture. Henri Marrou's *History of Education* (originally Paris 1948) is far less philosophical—he does not so much write about the evolution and triumph of ideas as trace early practices growing toward systematization and universality. Far richer in detail and process, and still of fundamental importance, his magnum opus, it must be said, flattens out the complexity of ancient educations to something like an imperial system. The wealth of studies that have followed have been enriched by the turn to social and institutional history. In addition, a sensitivity to the agents and kinds of education not noticed by the ancient theorists has greatly improved our understanding of ancient education and the ancient world.

The present volume, conscious of the luminaries who have come before, offers a reassessment of the breadth and purposes of education in ancient society. This volume demonstrates the array of instruction that ancient Greeks and Romans deemed sufficiently valuable to merit special

techniques or at least special materials, venues, or teachers. The various chapters aim to bring before the reader the educational systems from the return of literacy to the Greek world in the eighth century BCE to the (partial) collapse or transformation of the Roman order in the fifth century CE. The full map of the topic should track at least thirteen centuries of students, at first in the Greek communities about the rim of the Mediterranean and then extending and contracting with military, political, and cultural conquests to Egypt and North Africa, most of what we now call Europe, Asia Minor, and the Levant. Ideally, the reader should be led through the schools of Hellas and the schools of the Roman empire, introduced to the methods of inculcating literacy and numeracy, and given some notice of the higher or supplementary educations in music, mathematics and science, and athletics. The 33 chapters of this volume present the interpretations of leading scholars on essential aspects of this grand history. Yet the narrative of this history is here scrutinized in ways that reveal the debts and affinities of educational practice to those of other civilizations. This volume takes up the fundamental and traditional question of how Greeks and Romans educated (mostly elite) children in skills of literacy and numeracy and yet also considers the larger set of topics and methods for formal instruction (e.g., the education of slaves, of apprentices, education through toys and games).

The contributors to this volume have been careful to ask what education was thought to be doing and what it was doing. The chapters attend to the complexity of the ancient phenomena of education and to a lesser degree to the ongoing influence and importance of their topics. The myth-making that accompanies ideas about education is perhaps most acutely felt in the stories of the origins and transfer of education (see Griffith, Maras, and Sciarrino especially) and in those groups or figures singled out as exceptions

(preeminently symbolic groups—famously the alleged differences between the Athenians and the Spartans; see Kennell and Powell—and symbolic educators, most famously Socrates; see O’Connor). As a handbook, however, this volume and the chapters just noted are most concerned with the breadth of phenomena that made up ancient education. Thus, the chapter on the coming of education to Greece (Griffith) describes in detail the relations to the Near Eastern civilizations that invented, revised, and transmitted writing and a special schooling in writing for various religious, political, and diplomatic purposes. In the ancient Near East, education had already been conducted in a non-native, archaic language often for a scribal class in service to a palace bureaucracy. The adaptation of this system for the Greek city state and its citizen class is a cultural transformation of enormous significance, but other educations, musical and martial especially (see Hagel and Lynch, and Bannard), benefited or were influenced by changes brought about by the new system of education in literacy and numeracy. In similar fashion, Maras broadens (and complicates) what we thought we knew about the coming of education to Rome by describing the world of Italic literacy and education from the seventh century BCE.

In such richly comparative and synthetic accounts, the singularity alleged for Greece or Rome may recede, but we gain a more precise understanding of the relation of education to the specific social, cultural, and religious life of the societies. Those readers interested in following the historical developments of education may choose to read sections two through five, which move from the world of the sophists in early classical Greece through the Hellenistic period to the city of Rome and then again more broadly to the worlds of Greek and Roman late antiquity. The discussions of the material realities deriving from the

Hellenistic schools in section four, while deeply aware of historical changes, attempt to describe the experience of schooling in the ancient school. A separate section of seven chapters has been reserved for “Theories and Themes of Education,” which treats the greatest theorists of education. Here too, the education of women is discussed, in part because it was an issue of great interest to the ancient theorist and in part because it does not properly belong to the final rubric of non-elite and non-literary education. This final section treats directly the range of educational spheres in the ancient world that had been neglected in great measure and even directly belittled by the champions of liberal education. In studying these, we may have an antidote to the claims of liberal education that troubled Isocrates and Lucian and also strong evidence for the variety of agents, materials, and spheres of life that pursued trainings essential to their ancient societies.

PART I

Literary and Moral Education in Archaic and Classical Greece

CHAPTER 1

Origins and Relations to the Near East

Mark Griffith

1. General Issues: Neighbors, Greeks, and Cultural Contacts

This chapter aims to set the stage for our investigation (in the next chapter) of the earliest forms of Greek training and education for the young, by providing a sketch of the relevant features of those neighboring societies with which Bronze and early Iron Age “Greeks” are known to have had significant contact. Sometimes it is possible to identify likely connections and derivations for early Greek practices from among those Near Eastern neighbors and predecessors. Even when such direct connections are absent, useful analogies and contrasts may often be drawn. In the case of some of these societies, their educational practices are well known to specialists in those fields, though this knowledge is not widely shared by Classicists. In other cases, the evidence is much scantier altogether, but can be supplemented by comparative material or by plausible inference from later periods. Overall, the remarkable range of institutions and techniques that we find operating in these regions should serve as a valuable reminder of the diversity and complexity of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures out of which Western civilization first began to take shape, and of the many different strands and impulses that came together in the earliest “Greek” educational systems.

It has long been recognized that during both the Bronze Age (the so-called "Mycenaean" culture, ca. 1650–1200 BCE) and during the Archaic period (ca. 800–450 BCE), Greek architecture, visual art, technology, religion, mythology, music, and literature absorbed multiple influences, at different times and places, from Egypt, Anatolia, the Levant, Crete, Cyprus, and elsewhere (Vermeule 1972; Hägg and Marinatos 1987; Laffineur and Betancourt 1997; Morris 1992; Burkert 1992; West 1971, 1997; Kingsley 1995; Franklin 2007; Haubold 2013). Those same regions also present us with distinctive administrative and educational programs that were essential to their operations and character, and these will be discussed in what follows. I shall also briefly examine two more distant cultures: the Mesopotamian societies of Sumeria-Babylonia-Assyria and the Vedic-Brahmanic educational system of N. India, whose direct connections with Aegean (and specifically Greek) society during these periods are much less certain. In both cases, their educational systems were so elaborate, long-lasting, and influential that they deserve our close attention, whether or not we can demonstrate their direct impact on Greek culture before the Hellenistic period. By contrast, we know much less about the social structure and institutions of those northern and western neighbors (especially Thrace, Scythia, Italy, and Sicily) with whom Greeks certainly enjoyed extensive cultural contact from at least the eighth century BCE on, through settlement, trade, slavery, mercenary employment, etc. Our ignorance is due in part to the fact that literacy was not yet developed in those regions. But we are still able to recognize in certain cases the origins of some important new kinds of specialized training and instruction that filtered through to other regions of Greece during the Archaic period, sometimes with quite radical consequences.

Scholarly opinions continue to diverge sharply, not only about the nature and degree of contact between these neighboring societies and the earliest Greeks, but also concerning the continuities between Bronze Age (Mycenaean-Minoan) Greek culture and that of the Archaic period. This is not the place to attempt to resolve all these questions (though we will have to consider some particular cases as we proceed, especially in the next chapter). But it would surely be a mistake to attempt any comprehensive account of early “Greek” education without considering the practices of their predecessors and neighbors. So even though parts of this chapter and the next must necessarily be speculative and/or lacunose, the investigation nonetheless seems relevant and worthwhile.

2. Mesopotamia (the Sumero-Babylonian-Assyrian Educational System)

“In the Near East of the 2nd millennium BCE, high culture was Mesopotamian culture ... All civilized peoples borrowed the cuneiform system of writing and basic forms of expression from the Akkadian language culture of Mesopotamia” (Beckman 1983 : 97-98). The cuneiform (“wedge-shaped”) script was first developed by the Sumerians in the late fourth millennium BCE, and was subsequently taken over by the Babylonians to write their own Akkadian language. A Sumero-Babylonian curriculum of scribal training came into existence toward the end of the third millennium BCE at Nippur, and was extended, perhaps on a smaller scale, to other Mesopotamian cities such as Sippar, Ur, and Kish. This cuneiform-based system was subsequently adopted by several other Near Eastern and Anatolian peoples, remaining in use continuously throughout the Bronze and early Iron Ages (Falkenstein

1954; Kramer 1963: 229-249; Sjöberg 1976: 159-179; Vanstiphout 1979, 1995; Veldhuis 1997, 2014). It is found not only in Mesopotamia itself—throughout the Old Babylonian period (c. 2000-1600), the Kassite dynasty (ca. 1530-1150), and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1105), into the era of neo-Assyrian ascendancy (ca. 880-660) and the Chaldean “neo-Babylonian” period (625-539, including Nebuchadnezzar II)—but also, in essentially the same form, in the Bronze Age Hurrian-Hittite, Luwian, and Ugaritic kingdoms of Anatolia and the Levant (discussed later). Even in areas and at periods when Babylon itself was of negligible importance, and even among peoples that spoke quite different languages and already possessed strong cultural traditions of their own, the Sumero-Babylonian scribal system was often superimposed. For over 2000 years, Akkadian (= Old Babylonian, a Semitic language fairly closely related to Hebrew) was thus used as the international language of diplomacy and business, as well as high literary culture, throughout the Near East. So, for example, when the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt ruled the East in the latter half of the second millennium BCE, they did so by means of Babylonian cuneiform. It was not until ca. 900 BCE that, in the Levant and other Western areas, Aramaic superseded Akkadian as the international diplomatic language. In the Achaemenid Persian Empire, both were used, in addition to Old Persian written in cuneiform (see the following text, p. 21).

In general, we may distinguish between two types of teaching within this far-flung and long-lasting Babylonian system: formal schooling and apprenticeship.

Formal schooling follows a more or less set curriculum and is visible in the archaeological record by a concentration of scribal exercises and textbooks. Apprentices, on the other hand, immediately or almost immediately start writing documents, following the example of the master. The most elementary phase of such apprenticeship (the introduction to making tablets and writing cuneiform signs) may not have followed any particular program. The apprentice watched and imitated, the master checked and corrected ... in the same way as one would learn to be a potter, a farmer, a musician, or a government official. Apprenticeship may be visible in the cuneiform record in badly shaped tablets with random signs, in accounts that feature oddly round numbers or have vital information missing, or in letters that exist in multiple duplicates. (Veldhuis 2014)

Examples of the curriculum for the full-scale Babylonian scribal program, known as *Eduba* (literally “Tablet House,” or School), are preserved from the Old Babylonian period (c. 2000–1600) at Nippur, Ur, Sippar, and Kish, each containing thousands of tablets of remarkable uniformity and systematic completeness, written in over 500 different hands. The subject, and to some degree the language, of instruction in these school tablets is Sumerian, a non-Semitic language that had not been spoken for centuries but that was regarded as the proper conduit for many of the most revered and traditional texts and rituals. Thus, those students who undertook not simply to learn basic writing in order to conduct their family's daily business, but to become true members of the scribal class, learned first how to make the wedge-shaped (cuneiform) signs; then to write out and memorize lists of morphemes, phonemes, proper names, and words, both common and rare, with their Akkadian meanings (Vanstiphout 1979; Veldhuis 1997, 2006). After intensive study of Sumerian grammar, the

most advanced students finally proceeded to the composition of “real” Sumerian, and to the reading and interpretation of classic Sumerian poetical and literary texts, including details of theology, astrology, and ritual. The whole *Eduba* system at its highest levels was thus radically bilingual, constantly switching back and forth, even within the same text, between Sumerian and Akkadian. (In some periods and regions, however, especially in the less ambitious schools, there was much less attention paid to Sumerian, and the focus was more on the practical use of Akkadian; Van den Hout 2008; Cohen 2009; Veldhuis 2011.)

The assigned readings and practice exercises, in addition to lists of gods, technical terms, divination and legal procedures, etc., included proverbs and such canonical classics as *Gilgamesh*, as well as other epics, hymns, and wisdom texts. The rudiments of counting, accounting, and measurement were also taught (in cuneiform Akkadian); and some students went on to study the preparation of administrative documents, including various aspects of agronomy, trade, law, and letter writing. Advanced students would also copy actual inscriptions by former kings, real and imaginary, incantation texts, and other specimens of the religio-literary heritage (Veldhuis 1997; Veldhuis and Hilprecht 2003-2004; Charpin 2008; Gesche 2001).

The seventh-century BCE library of the neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal at Nineveh seems to confirm the longevity and continuity of this curriculum and of the literary tradition. Although no “school” texts have been discovered there, many specialized types of documents were assembled, dealing with astronomy, extispicy (studying divination from animal entrails, above all the liver), exorcisms, medicine, and texts for “singers, lamenters, appeasers,” who performed to lyre, lute, or drum accompaniment (Starr 1983; Nougayrol 1968: 25-81;

Burkert 1992; Morris 1992, with illustrations; Parpola 1993; Kilmer 1997; also Cohen 2009: 38–40 on the distinctions and overlaps between diviners and scribes at Late Bronze Age Emar). In general, it seems that this library was assembled in order to demonstrate the king's masterful control of all human knowledge since the beginning of time—a holy mission for which the scribes were essential (Vogelzang 1995, Zamazalová 2011).

Modern scholars who studied the Nippur materials and other sources for the Eduba scribal system used until recently to imagine that the “Tablet House” must have been a relatively large building devoted to the teaching of a numerous class, all together. But it has become clear that, in fact, the teaching normally took place in a single room of a domestic house, usually one on one between a master scribe and his young student, often his son (Robson 2001; Tanret 2002; Veldhuis 2014). Particular families thus tended to perpetuate their monopoly of scribal expertise, and their expertise and influence might extend for centuries (Lambert 1957; Olivier 1975; Charpin 2010; Veldhuis 2011). They might also act as secretaries and advisors to kings, judges, and priests, in a broad range of ritual, scientific, and political contexts (Robson 2011; Michalowski 1991, 2012). Sometimes their advice and rival interpretations appear to have been presented in a quasi-competitive public arena, and skill at oral disputation and interpretation was highly regarded. Preparation for such situations was sometimes included in the Eduba educational program, and examples are preserved of “oral examinations” of students by their teachers (Falkenstein 1954; Sjöberg 1975; Vanstiphout 1995; Veldhuis 1997).

Overall, this Sumero-Babylonian scribal program, promoting as it did, in its fullest and most complete versions, correctness of linguistic expression, the preservation and interpretation of canonical texts in a

“dead” language, and the perpetuation of a specialist, culturally “superior” literate class that largely controlled the religious, legal, and often political life of a far-flung imperial power, bears obvious resemblances to the standardized instruction in Latin that dominated European schools from late antiquity until the modern era. Both systems served to provide a common literary-bureaucratic language of formal communication between elites and administrators over a geographically and linguistically disparate area, and also to separate the fully literate class sharply from the rest. Whether the elites themselves (kings, priests, and their families) were generally literate and able to participate effectively in scribal culture is a matter of continuing discussion among scholars. Some (e.g., Landsberger 1960: 110–118) have claimed that only three Babylonian/Assyrian kings between 2100 and 700 BCE were truly literate. But there is a growing consensus that, in fact, quite a high proportion of Mesopotamian rulers, judges, priests, and ambassadors could read cuneiform and were interested in literary matters (Charpin 2008; Frahm 2011). Indeed, during the Old Babylonian period, it is claimed, “Writing had deeply penetrated into the ruling social class ... The degree of literacy among the elite ... was much higher than during most of the Middle Ages in the West” (Charpin 2010: 128). Two famous examples of proudly literate monarchs used to be cited as exceptions that prove the rule of elite illiteracy: King Šulgi II of Ur (c. 2010 BCE) and the neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal (reigned c. 668–627 BCE), each of whom boasted ostentatiously of his unusual degree of learning and literacy. An Old Babylonian hymn attributed to Šulgi states: “I am a king ... I, Šulgi the noble, have been blessed with a favorable destiny right from the womb. When I was small, I was at the academy, where I learned the scribal art from the tablets of Sumer and Akkad. None of the nobles could write on clay as I could ...” (see, e.g., Veldhuis 2014). But it

appears that in fact these two individuals, while exceptional, represent more of an ideal than an aberration: many other kings participated more or less expertly in the composition, assessment, and appreciation of Akkadian-Sumerian writings. In other cases, to be sure, the king's energies were more focused on the military and leisure arts than on reading and writing. It is unclear in those contexts whether music and orally performed poetry were generally part of a royal education or were assigned instead to professional performers (Kilmer 1997; Vanstiphout and Vogelzang 1996; Michalowski 2010).

Clearly there were differing degrees of literacy, both among elites and at lower levels of society (Veldhuis 2011). The reading and writing of cuneiform script at the basic level, i.e., learning to shape the clay tablets, manipulating the incisor so as to make the tiny wedge marks, and memorizing the commonest syllabic signs, was not in itself especially difficult (modern Western claims about the revolutionary effect of the invention of the—simpler—alphabetic writing system often overstate this factor); but the full-scale *Eduba* training was lengthy and arduous. Scribes had to control at least two, and often more, different languages and deploy over 300 separate syllabic signs. In addition, administrative documents often involved extensive technical terminology and specific formulas of address and expression. In some cases, therefore, the division of authority between (literate) scribes and the (generally illiterate, or semiliterate) political and military rulers seems to have been a delicate and unstable matter, especially when, as often, the rulers wished to accumulate for themselves especial legitimacy and prestige through claims to tradition and divine favor, as recorded in ancient texts whose preservation and interpretation were monopolized by the scribes (Veldhuis 2011; Michalowski 2012).

Over the centuries, of course, the purity and correctness of old Sumerian and Akkadian were not perfectly preserved, even within the *Eduba*. The artificial Sumerian that was taught there ended up being far removed from the original living language; and various regional adaptations of Akkadian (especially in the West) often deviated markedly from the Old Babylonian forms (see later in this chapter, on Late Bronze Age Emar: Cohen 2009). Here again, the analogy with medieval Latin suggests itself: regional, more “vulgar” versions of Akkadian could be taught and written that did not come close to the complexity of the “ideal” Sumero-Akkadian fluency of an expert scribe.

In relation to Bronze Age and Archaic Greek culture, some interesting questions present themselves. How widely read, and for what purposes, were the Sumero-Akkadian epics and other high-canonical texts that were copied so assiduously in the scribal training system all over the Near East? How large was the audience of competent readers of Babylonian literature (Charpin 2008; Veldhuis 2011)? Was the reading, writing, and archiving of such poems as traditional “literature” an entirely separate process from the oral performance and enjoyment of them in public contexts? And in what forms and through what channels did Greeks eventually come into contact with these works, as they certainly did, at some point(s) in the growth of (what eventually became) the Hesiodic, Homeric, and Aeolic-lyric traditions (Speiser 1969: 119–120; Olivier 1975; Walcot 1966; West 1997: 586–630; Haubold 2013)?

3. Anatolia (Hittites, Hurrians, Luwians, and Others)

Anatolia was inhabited during the Late Bronze Age by dozens of distinct, but interlocking, kingdoms, townships, and chiefdoms. Two peoples, or cultures, stand out,

however, for their long-term prominence and for their interactions with early “Greek” communities: the “People of Hatti” (Hittites), whose center of power was located in Eastern Anatolia (capital at Hattusa, 150 miles east of modern Ankara) and the “People of Lawan” (Luwians), who occupied much of Western Anatolia. (On Hittites and Luwians as administrative/cultural units or population groups, rather than peoples, see Bryce 1998 ; Kuhrt 1995; Melchert 2003: 1-3.) In both cases, exchanges of goods and skills with the West are documented, and also from time to time direct diplomatic relations and military conflict, especially between the Hittite king and the *Ahhiyawa* (“Akhaians,” whether based in Ionia, Rhodes, Cyprus, or the mainland). We also find *Milawata* (= Miletus) and *Wilusa* (probably = “Ilion,” i.e., Troy) attested in Mycenaean, Hittite, and Luwian documents.

The Hittites comprised a combination of several different Semitic and Indo-European languages and ethnicities, out of which a powerful kingdom was forged during the seventeenth century BCE (Bryce 1998: 7-20; Drews 1988: 46-73). By the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries, their rulers controlled much of the surrounding area. From the numerous cuneiform tablets that have been excavated from Hattusa, we see that this culture also incorporated many features of the Hurrian civilization of Mitanni. Thus, some documents are composed in the “Nesite” language (the term the people of Hatti themselves use for what we now call “Hittite”), others in Hurrian, and others still in Akkadian/Sumerian—all written in cuneiform. By contrast, all public monuments were inscribed instead in Luwian, a language closely related to Hittite and already widely used elsewhere in Anatolia, in a hieroglyphic (pictographic) script.

Although no actual “schools” or scribal exercises have been found at Hattusa, the Hittites appear to have adopted the

traditional Sumero-Babylonian scribal system, at some periods directly from them, at others perhaps via the Levant or Hurrian neighbors. Students were thus required to learn to write three or even four languages in cuneiform: Hittite, Hurrian, Akkadian, and Sumerian (Beckman 1983; Bryce 1998: 416–427; Van den Hout 2008), with the Sumero-Babylonian “classics” (epics, wisdom texts, hymns) by now being transmitted and taught in a fixed, quasi-canonical form. Messengers, craftsmen, and other specialists (medical, diplomatic, musical, divinatory) were exchanged between the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Hittite courts, as well as between Egypt and Hattusa; and it is probable that other Bronze Age Aegean and Anatolian peoples were thus connected too (Beckman 1983; Grottanelli 1982; S. Morris 1992; Burkert 1992; Cline 1995).

Unlike some of their Babylonian and Assyrian counterparts, there is no evidence that Hittite kings and warrior elite shared in any of this extensive multilingual program of reading, interpretation, and composition (Olivier 1975; Landsberger 1960: 98; Van den Hout 2008). Their chief focus instead was warfare, diplomacy, and hunting, including archery, horses, and chariots: one set of texts (authored c. 1400 BCE by Kikkuli, from Mitanni) provide detailed instructions for the correct training regimen for chariot horses. The king and queen also presided over elaborate musical/ritual performances, involving singers and instrumentalists from many different localities performing in different styles (Schuol 2002; Bachvarova 2008). One curiously mundane instruction manual specifies in minute detail exactly how the royal guards are to escort the king out of his palace, onto his mule-drawn cart, to the law court where he is to preside; and then back again, apparently now in a horse-drawn chariot: the instructions even explain what procedures should be followed if one of

the soldiers finds himself overcome by diarrhea or the need to urinate (Güterbock and van den Hout 1991). Clearly this was a society in which all aspects of public life were subject to regulation and training. Athletics too were prominent in some Hittite religious ceremonies; and ritualized consumption of wine was highly valued, with a special status assigned to young elites as “cup-bearers.” In many of these features, the similarities between Hittite and Mycenaean and/or “Homeric” Greek culture are striking.

Included within the Bronze Age Hittite empire and extending further both to the west and the southeast in Anatolia were Luwian speakers, who occupied much of the area that later (after the fall of the Hittite empire) became Cilicia, Lycia, Caria, Lydia, and Ionia. Some of these Luwian peoples, who, unlike the Hittites, do not appear ever to have comprised a single kingdom or state, were also in regular contact with Egypt, Ugarit, and Cyprus, and intermittently with the *Ahhiyawa*, too. The Luwian language—and scripts—seems to have been widely used throughout Anatolia, and contact between Luwian speakers and Greek speakers in Western Anatolia must have been widespread and constant. The rise of Miletus, in particular, in the Archaic period (after an earlier period of Bronze Age prosperity) certainly owed much to such cosmopolitan connections (Boardman 1980: 28, 48–50, 240–243; Greaves 2002; Niemeier 2004). But we lack extensive archives of Luwian texts or large building complexes, and our knowledge of “Luwian” culture as such is rather limited (Melchert 2003).

Following the disintegration of the Hittite empire (c. 1200 BCE), a number of smaller kingdoms emerged in Anatolia and the Levant, and from the ninth to seventh centuries the growing power of Assyria affected these regions (and their Greek inhabitants) as well. Particularly significant for the development of Archaic Greek culture were the “Neo-

Hittite” or “Phrygian” kingdoms based at Karkemish (on the border of modern Turkey and Syria) and at Gordion (near modern Ankara)—the latter the home of the wealthy king known to the Greeks as Midas and to the Assyrians as Mit-ta-a (Gunter 2012: 797–815). In the seventh to sixth centuries the Lydian empire, centered in Sardis (western Anatolia) absorbed the areas previously controlled by the Phrygian kingdom, with a resultant blending of Phrygian, Lydian, Assyrian, and Greek elements (Burkert 1992; Franklin 2010). The Phrygian language (which is closely related to Greek) was but one of several different languages and scripts that coexisted within the region, while to the south and east, especially within the Assyrian imperial regime, Aramaic was increasingly taking over from Akkadian as the lingua franca of diplomacy and international correspondence. Hieroglyphic Luwian continued in use for many years throughout Anatolia as the chief writing system for everyday transactions (Gunter 2012; Melchert and Hawkins in Melchert 2003). It may well have been through Luwian intermediaries that the Ionian, Cypriote, and Euboean Greeks of the early Iron Age first became familiar with some of the canonical Sumerian/Babylonian myths (epics, theogonies, creation stories, etc.).

4. Egypt

The functions and education of scribes and priests in Egypt bore many similarities to those of the Sumero-Babylonian tradition (Brunner 1957 ; Wilson 1960; Williams 1972; Olivier 1975: 55–56; Zinn 2013). In both cases, those who mastered the intricacies of the writing system (which for the Egyptians entailed both formal hieroglyphics and the cursive “hieratic” script) could aspire to positions of responsibility and power unavailable to the illiterate.

Through intensive exercises on potsherds and limestone flakes, and later on papyrus, the children learned, both by copying and by dictation, to write letters, perform elementary mathematical and geometrical calculations, and also to reproduce and understand the classical Middle-Egyptian texts whose language grew to be increasingly far removed from that of everyday society. At the more advanced level, some scribes of the later second millennium also learned cuneiform Akkadian, since this was the international language of diplomacy and commerce (see earlier pp. 8–12; Williams 1972: 219–220; Zinn 2013: 2322–2323).

Instruction in other activities and skills is also attested, primarily for children of the nobility: swimming, certainly for boys and perhaps for girls as well (Zinn 2013: 2319–2320); and an extensive range of musical and dancing skills, especially for women (Manniche 1991; Zinn 2013: 2320–2322). Several forms of boys’ and men’s athletics were also practiced, including wrestling. Archery and horse riding were especially valued by the ruling class, both for warfare and for hunting; and a number of monuments depict royalty shooting at enemies, game, or fixed targets (sometimes with an instructor guiding the king’s arm: see [Figure 1.1](#))—scenes that might remind us of some of the exploits of Odysseus or Heracles (Brunner 1957; Wilson 1960; Decker 1995; Walcot 1984; and see [Chapter 2](#)). Unlike Babylon, Assyria, or Hattusa, where warrior-kings were generally illiterate and the sacred hymns and epics were sung aloud by the priests and/or poet-musicians to larger audiences, Egyptian royalty appear to have educated their own children to be literate, and they took some pride in the mastery of letters. Nonetheless, at times the scribal/priestly control of ritual and knowledge grew to the point that, as often in Mesopotamia, it usurped large areas of the royal authority.

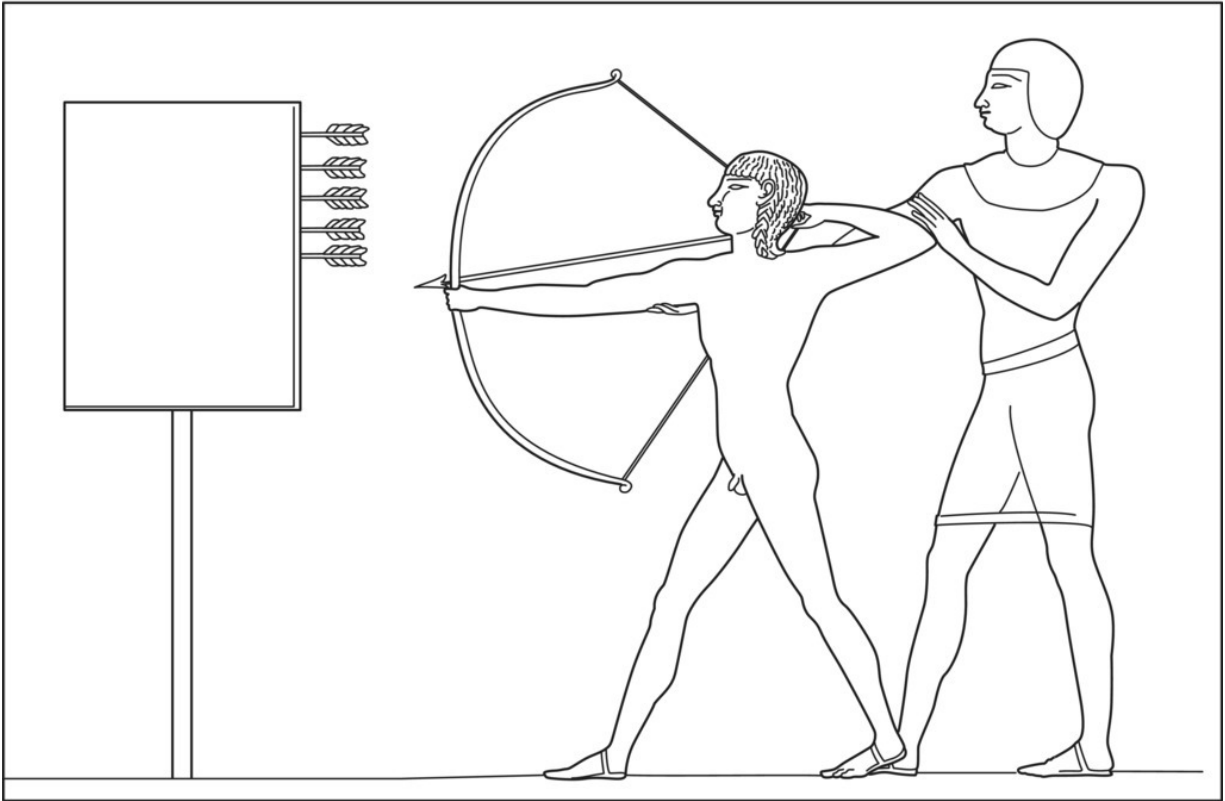


Figure 1.1 The young future King Amenophis/Amenhotep II is instructed in archery by his tutor Min, mayor of Egyptian Thebes. Rock relief from Tomb TT109, Thebes; Middle Kingdom Egypt, ca. 1350 BCE.

(Drawing by Elizabeth Wahle, after an engraving from *Description de l’Egypte* (1809–1829) Antiquities II, plate vol. II, planche 45, “Thebes, Hypogées.”)

Direct influence of Egyptian literature and educational practice on Bronze Age or Archaic Greece is hard to trace; the evidence is less plentiful and clear-cut than in the case of Anatolian and Ugaritic-Phoenician contacts. Yet when we observe the extensive Minoan, Mycenaean, and Archaic Greek borrowings from the Egyptians in the areas of architecture, painting, sculpture, and medicine, we should not rule out such possibilities in the world of letters and ideas too, whether directly or through Cretan, Rhodian, and/or Cypriot intermediaries (Boardman 1980; Bernal

1991; Burkert 1992; S. Morris 1992; *Aegaeum* 18 (1998) *passim*; also Bass 1989).

5. The Levant (Ugarit and Other Canaanites; Israel)

The period ca. 2000–600 BCE witnessed frequent shifts of power, populations, and contacts throughout the Levant, as empires (Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Hittite, and Iranian) contracted and expanded while individual city-states, pastoral tribes, and small kingdoms struggled to maintain their own distinct identities. These regional processes often involved the collection, adaptation, and dissemination of traditional lore and “literature” of many kinds, including prescriptive ritual, hymns and mythological narratives, and moral “wisdom” and practical instruction (the Hebrew Bible being the most conspicuous and best-preserved example of such a tradition). In some cases, specialists were trained to be the preservers and interpreters of the community’s traditions; however, the evidence for this and for actual “schools” is scanty.

Ugarit: The fullest archaeological record from the Levant, and the most significant for the study of early Greece, is to be found at Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra), in northwest Syria. Between ca. 2000 and 1180 (when the Sea Peoples destroyed the city), Ugarit, whose inhabitants appear perhaps to have been Amorites, grew to be a thriving cosmopolitan trading center, one of many independent Levantine city-states in contact with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and (from c. 1600) Anatolia and the Aegean (Boardman 1980 : 35, 54; Burkert 1992; Kuhrt 1995: 300–314; Dietrich and Loretz 1995). By roughly 1300 BCE, a 24-letter cuneiform alphabet was developed for writing religious and mythological texts in Ugaritic (a northwestern Semitic language closely related to, but distinct from, Phoenician

and Aramaic: Lipinski 1981; Segert 1963). Many clay tablets, which included both detailed instructions for cult practice and traditional narratives of the gods and epic heroes (including *Gilgamesh* and the other Sumero-Babylonian classics) written in Akkadian or Ugaritic, were deposited in the temple library of the high priests of Baal and Dagan (Pritchard 1969; Smith and Parker 1997; Wyatt 2002).

The king of Ugarit, assisted by an extensive hierarchy of priests and attendants of various titles and functions, presided over the ritual life of the community, which, as at Babylon and Hattusa (discussed earlier), included lengthy ceremonies of purification, musical and hymnic performances, and divination. Banquets and ceremonial drinking were prominent, as were extispicy, magical and necromantic incantations of various kinds, and possibly even dramatic performances. The scribes of Ugarit employed the Akkadian language (written in cuneiform) to conduct most of the diplomatic and mercantile business; but in addition some could read Egyptian hieroglyphics and hieratic script, as well as Hittite and Hurrian cuneiform (Van Soldt 1995). Their Syrian and inland neighbors to the north and northeast spoke a variety of northwest Semitic dialects (which eventually coalesced into Aramean), and at least some of Ugarit's merchants must also have been able (from ca. 1500) to communicate effectively with the *Ahhiyawa* and other Greek-speaking and/or Minoan traders and raiders (perhaps with the help of Linear A and/or B script, or one of the Cypriot syllabic scripts).

In addition to the Sumero-Babylonian "classics" and the particular sacred instructions of the local Canaanite religion mentioned earlier, we possess fragmentary remnants of specifically Ugaritic epics that provide interesting analogies with those of the early Greeks (Smith and Parker 1997). Whether professional poets, singers, and

other itinerant storytellers and purveyors of wisdom existed we do not know; but it seems likely (West 1971, 1997; Grottanelli 1982; Burkert 1992: 24–35; Cline 1995; Van Soldt 1995; Bachvarova 2008).

Another site of almost comparable importance is Emar (in northeast Syria), where a thirteenth-century BCE Amorite community is found recording numerous private, judicial, real estate, marriage, and other documents, as well as literary and lexical texts and ritual instructions for local cults, in what appears to be a somewhat decentralized scribal culture that also retains elements of the old-style Mesopotamian training. Here it is possible to identify two somewhat distinct traditions of scribal training and practice, employing differently shaped tablets, slightly different dialects, and distinctive versions of the cuneiform symbols: one (the “Syrian” tradition) based more closely on the old Sumero-Babylonian Eduba tradition, the other (the “Syro-Hittite” tradition) incorporating more elements from Hittite administrative habits and conventions. Some of the scribes here seem actually to have been Babylonians or Assyrians (Cohen 2009, especially pp. 46–65 on schools and scribal exercises).

In addition to Ugarit and Emar, sites at Ekalte and Alalakh have yielded further texts; and doubtless other similar communities existed too in that region that have not yet been discovered and excavated. At Amarna (Egypt, c. 1350 BCE), the writing exercises that have been found are more basic and largely eschew Sumerian, restricting themselves to Akkadian; in that context, the more prestigious applications of writing were presumably conducted in hieroglyphics (as discussed later in the chapter). All in all, it is clear that the arts of cuneiform writing and scribal expertise were widespread and somewhat variable; but the basic components enabled extensive exchanges of

knowledge, literature, and ideas, as well as local administration and record keeping, all over the Near East.

Israel: During the period ca. 1300–1000, the “people of Israel” gradually emerged as a distinct culture, assimilating and adapting elements from the multifarious Canaanite cultural heritage that surrounded them. To what degree this assimilation involved the use of writing (on materials now lost: e.g., vellum and/or papyrus), and how systematically the key texts and sacrificial procedures were studied and taught, cannot be determined, since alphabetic Hebrew inscriptions and *ostraka* only begin to appear in significant numbers from c. 1000 BCE, while the biblical texts themselves—which were probably not written down in their present form until the sixth century BCE and later—contain descriptions of events and institutions of the earlier period only in intermittent, and sometimes anachronistic, detail. Religious training of some kind was certainly practiced from an early date, and internal references within the Bible appear to describe apprenticeships of adopted “sons” with individual master-priest/prophet figures: for example, Samuel with Eli (1 *Samuel* 1–3), David with Nathan (2 *Samuel* 12.24–25), “sons of the prophet” building a schoolhouse (2 *Kings* 6.1ff), “Jehoidada the priest instructed <seven-year-old Jehoash>” (2 *Kings* 12.3), Elijah-Elisha (1 *Kings* 19.19–21, 2 *Kings* 2.1–18); and also age groups of boys assigned to one or more teachers or tutors: for example, Reheboam “took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him” (1 *Kings* 12. 8–14; cf. 1 *Kings* 22. 26 = 2 *Chron.* 18. 25), “tutors/guardians of the 70 sons of Ahab” (2 *Kings* 12.3), etc. (Olivier 1975, 58–59; Van der Toorn 2007).

By the time of the regimes of David and Solomon (ca. 1000–922 BCE), or perhaps somewhat later (eighth to seventh centuries), as an increasing need was felt for trained staff to manage the kingdom(s) and communicate with outside

powers (Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians), a broader schooling in administrative procedures, law, ritual, and justice, was developed. This training took place largely, perhaps exclusively, in Jerusalem (and after the division of the kingdom, also at Samaria in the north), where the “sons of the king” were educated together with those of other leading functionaries. As in the Babylonian system, scribal/diplomatic expertise tended to run in particular families (Lemaire 1981: 54-57; Gordis 1943, 1971; Mettinger 1971: 19). Scholars disagree as to how extensive Israelite schooling and priestly training were, but the curriculum was probably much simpler and more limited in scope than the elaborate Near Eastern *Eduba*: for not only was the 24-character Hebrew alphabetic writing system much easier to learn and use than cuneiform or hieroglyphics, but the economic, diplomatic, and bureaucratic transactions of this small kingdom were much less complex than those of the Mesopotamian or Egyptian empires. (Arguing for a rather extensive statehood and bureaucracy, formal educational system and regional schools: Williams 1972; Mettinger 1971; Lemaire 1981; Van der Toorn 2007; Demsky 2012; cf. too Rollston 2010; *contra* Dürr 1932; Gelb 1963; Golka 1983; Crenshaw 1985; and esp. Jamieson-Drake 1991, who argues that only small-scale elementary schooling occurred outside Jerusalem.)

In its most developed form, the Israelite educational system seems to have consisted of several small provincial schools (often connected with military fortresses) that provided elementary training for boys (but probably not girls) in reading, writing, time reckoning, arithmetic, music and singing, and basic etiquette. At the next (“secondary”) level, regional centers (Lakish, Hebron, etc.) may have offered a broader range of texts and procedures to be studied, including bureaucratic exercises, salutations, and copying of formulas and messages, as well as rote learning