



## Standing on the Shoulders of Giants Curriculum



Stele of Anpuemhat, attesting the funerary cult of Merikare in Saqqara during the 12th Dynasty.

### The Instruction of Khety to Merikare IXth Dynasty - ca. 2134 - ? [Excerpts]

The text of the Instruction to Merikare was preserved in three fragmentary papyri. The oldest, dating from the second half of the XVIIIth Dynasty (ca. 1539 - 1292 BCE), the so-called "Papyrus St.-Petersburg 1116A", is the most complete.

**Prologue (P1)** *"{The beginning of the Teaching made by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khety} for his son Merikare.*

#### **On Rebellion (P2 - P35) (-----)**

- 01 May You be justified before the god, (P30)
- 02 that a man may say {even in} your {absence}
- 03 that You punish in accordance {with the offence} !
- 04 (A) good character is a man's heaven,
- 05 (but) the cursing of the {furious} of heart is painful. **1**
- 06 If You are skilled in speech, You will win. (P32)
- 07 The tongue is (---) and the sword of {the King}.
- 08 Speaking is stronger than any weapon.
- 09 No one can overcome the skillful heart.
- 10 {Teach} your {people} on the mat,
- 11 the wise is a {school} to the officials.
- 12 Those who know that he knows will not attack him,

- 13 no {misfortune} occurs when he is near.  
 14 Justice (or truth) comes to him distilled,  
 15 like the intentions of the sayings of the ancestors.

**Dealing with officials & commoners (P35 - P68)**

- 16 Copy your fathers, your ancestors, (P35)  
 17 work is done {successfully} with {their} knowledge.  
 18 Look, their words endure in writings !  
 19 Open, read and copy their knowledge !  
 20 He who is taught becomes skilled.  
 21 Do not be evil, kindness of heart is good.  
 22 Let your memorial last through love of You.  
 23 Increase {the corvee-workers}, befriend the town-folk,  
 24 (and) the god will be praised for the donations,<sup>2</sup>  
 25 (one will) watch over your (reputation),  
 26 praise your goodness,  
 27 (and) pray for your health (---).  
 28 Respect the officials, sustain your people, (P38)  
 29 strengthen your borders, your frontier patrols.  
 30 It is good to work for the future !  
 31 One respects the life of the foresighted,  
 32 while the trustful heart fails.  
 33 Make people come {to You} through your good nature.  
 34 A wretch is who desires the land {of his neighbours}.  
 35 A fool is who covets what others possess.  
 36 Life on Earth passes, it is not long.  
 37 Happy is he who is remembered.  
 38 A million men do not benefit the Lord of the Two Lands.  
 39 Is there {a man} who lives forever ?  
 40 He who comes with Osiris passes (by),  
 41 just as he leaves who indulged himself.
- 42 Make your officials great, so that they act by your laws. (P42)  
 43 He who has wealth at home will not be partial,  
 44 (for) he is a rich man who lacks nothing.  
 45 The poor man does not speak justly.  
 46 One who says : 'I wish I had.' is unrighteous,  
 47 (for) he inclines to him who will pay him.  
 48 Great is the man whose great men are great.  
 49 Strong is the King who has councilors.  
 50 Wealthy is he who is rich in his officials.  
 51 Speak truth in your house,  
 52 that the officials of the land may respect You.  
 53 Righteousness of heart is proper for the Lord (of the Two Lands).  
 54 The front of the house puts awe in the back.  
 55 Do justice, then You endure on Earth. (P46)

56 Calm the weeper, do not oppress the widow,  
57 do not expel a man from his father's property,  
58 do not reduce the officials in their possessions.  
59 Beware of punishing wrongfully.  
60 Do not kill, it does not serve You.  
61 Punish with beatings, with detention,  
62 thus will the land be well-ordered.  
63 Except for the rebel, whose plans are found out,  
64 for the god knows the malcontent of heart.  
65 The god smites the rebels in blood.  
66 He who is merciful {will increase his} lifetime.  
67 Do not kill a man whose excellence You know,  
68 with whom You used to chant the writings,  
69 who was brought up {and recognized} before the god,  
70 with free striding feet in the place of secrets !  
71 The *Ba* comes to the place it knows,  
72 it does not miss its former path,  
73 no kind of magic holds it back,  
74 it comes to those who give it water.

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**Advice on raising troops and religious duties (P57 - P68)**

089 Raise your young soldiers and the residence will love You. (P57)  
090 Increase your supporters among the helpers.  
091 See, your town is full of new growth.  
092 These twenty years, the youth has been happy, following its heart.  
093 The {helpers} are now going forth (once again),  
094 {veterans} return to their children (---).  
095 {Indeed they are the old men,}  
097 I raised troops from on my accession.  
098 Make your great ones great, and promote your {soldiers}.  
099 Increase the youth of your following,  
100 equip with amounts,  
101 endow with fields,  
102 reward them with herds.  
103 Do not prefer the wellborn to the commoner,  
104 (but) choose a man on account of his skills,  
105 then every work of craft will be done !  
106 Guard your borders, secure your forts,  
107 troops are useful to their Lord.

108 Make {many} monuments for the god, (P63)  
109 this keeps alive their maker's name.  
110 A man should do what profits his *Ba* :  
111 perform the monthly service, wear the white sandals,

112 visit the temple, {be discreet} concerning the secrets,  
113 enter the shrine, eat bread in the house of the god,  
114 proffer libations, multiply the loaves,  
115 make ample the daily offerings.  
116 It is good for him who does it.  
117 Endow your monuments according to your wealth.  
118 Even one day gives to eternity,  
119 (and) an hour contributes to the future.  
120 The god knows the man who works for him,  
121 (even) when your statues are brought to far foreign countries,  
122 who do not give them their listed offerings.

**The historical section (P68 - P108)**

123 Diseased and deprived is he who imprisons the evil gang (of rebels), (P68)  
124 (for) the enemy cannot be calm within Egypt.  
125 Troops will fight troops,  
126 as the ancestors foretold.  
127 Egypt fought in the necropolis,  
128 destroying tombs in vengeful destruction.  
129 I did the like, and the like happened,  
130 as is done to one who strays from the path of the god ...

131 Do not deal evilly with the Southland, (P71)  
132 You know what the residence foretold about it.  
133 {As this happened so that may happen.}  
134 (But) they have not transgressed like they said!  
135 I attacked Thinis and Maki, opposite its southern border at Tawet.  
136 I engulfed it like a flood!  
137 King Mer(ib)re, the justified, had not done this,  
138 (so) be merciful on account of this {to the encumbered}.  
139 {Make peace}, renew the treaties.  
140 No river lets itself be hidden.  
141 It is good to work for the future.

142 You stand well with the Southland, (P75)  
143 they come to You bearing tribute, with gifts.  
144 I have acted like the forefathers :  
145 if one has no grain to give,  
146 be kind, since they are humble before You.  
147 Be sated with your bread, your beer ...  
148 Granite comes to You unhindered.  
149 Do not despoil the monuments of another,  
150 but quarry stone in Tura.  
151 Do not build your tomb out of ruins,  
152 (using) what had been made for what is to be made.  
153 Behold, the King is the Lord of Joy ! (P79)

154 May You rest, sleep in your strength,  
155 follow your heart, through what I have done :  
156 there is no foe within your borders.

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185 But this should be said to the bowmen : (P91)  
186 "The miserable Asiatic,  
187 is wretched because of the place he is in :  
188 short of water, bare of wood,  
189 its paths are many and painful because of mountains.  
190 He does not dwell in one place, (and)  
191 food propels his legs.  
192 He fights since the time of Horus,  
193 not conquering nor being conquered,  
194 he does not announce the day of combat,  
195 like a thief who hides for a (united) group."  
196 But as I live and shall be what I am, (P94-95)  
197 these bowmen were a sealed wall.  
198 I breached {their strongholds},  
199 I made Lower Egypt attack them,  
200 I captured their inhabitants,  
201 I seized their cattle,  
202 until the Asiatics abhorred Egypt.  
203 Do not concern yourself with him,  
204 (for) the Asiatic is a crocodile on its shore :  
205 it snatches from a lonely road,  
206 (but) it cannot seize from a populous town !

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### **epilogue (P138)**

306 Do no ill (against) my speech,  
307 which lays down all the laws of kingship,  
308 which instructs You, that You may rule the land !  
309 And may You reach me with none to accuse You !  
310 Do not kill one who is close to You,  
311 whom You have favored, the god knows him.  
312 He is one of the fortunate ones on Earth ...  
313 (for) divine are they who follow the King !  
314 Make yourself loved by everyone,  
315 (for) a good character is remembered.  
316 {When time} has passed,  
317 may You be called : 'He who ended the time of trouble'  
318 by those who come after the House of Khety,

319 {in thinking} of what has come today.  
320 Look, I have told You the best of my thoughts !  
321 Act by what is set before You !"

**Source:**

The Royal Instruction of Khety to Merikare  
Link: <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/merikare.htm>