

Reconstructing the Homeric Model of Mentoring: A Review of Mentoring Relationships in Prehistoric and Ancient World History of Human Development

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To cite this article:

Nick Dukakis, Efthymios Valkanos, Ioanna Papavassiliou. Reconstructing the Homeric Model of Mentoring: A Review of Mentoring Relationships in Prehistoric and Ancient World History of Human Development. *Journal of Human Resource Management*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 2022, pp. 56-65. doi: 10.11648/j.jhrm.20221002.13

Received: April 3, 2022; **Accepted:** May 3, 2022; **Published:** May 26, 2022

Abstract: This paper assesses how mentoring has historically been an integral part of human development, a modern implication for Human Resource Development (HRD), with the purpose of reconstructing the Homeric Model of Mentoring as an Open System of Educational Management. It highlights evidence of mentorship behaviors throughout human civilization and across diverse cultural groups, with a focus on Homer's Odyssey, as well as during the pre-Homeric and prehistoric eras. The historicity of mentoring is offered as a timeless cultural phenomenon, without imposing the data or limiting the analytical perspective. The theoretical approach selected was to conduct a literature review of primary and secondary sources, with an ad hoc utilization of elements of the context of the reality, material and non-material. Based on theoretical knowledge and preconceptions, this paper's conclusions are subject to the limitations of its specifications, bypassing the quantitative component, while the interest in expanded future research is revived. Pointing out the evolutionary stages of the described mentoring relationship, this study also reveals "hidden" mentors and elements of mentorship activity in a variety of ancient civilizations such as the Minoans, the Chinese, the Israelites, the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians and the Indus Valley civilization. The historic mentorship examples discussed in this paper show evidence of genuine mentoring characteristics such as nurturing, advising, counseling, guiding, and teaching, reflective of modern mentoring relationships and mentoring culture.

Keywords: Mentoring, Mentor, Mentees, Homeric Analogy, Homeric Mentoring Model Reconstruction, Ancient Civilizations, Pre-Homeric Mentors

1. Introduction

Mentoring is a complex process. Basically, it includes components of teaching, advising, counseling, and coaching, transcending the transfer of knowledge and the practicing of skills while becoming integrated into the career context. In the absence of a commonly accepted definition, most scholars agree upon the regular and consistent mentor-mentee interaction, the principle of reciprocity that governs mentoring relationships, and the developmental benefits arising for those involved, whether individuals or organizations [21]. According to L. J. Zachary, "Mentoring is best described as a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee

work towards achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals [63].

Mentors are living among us. Armed with knowledge, experience, and empathy, they play a variety of roles, including the ones of teacher, counselor, coach, advisor, guide, and "devil's advocate" [17]. As L. A. Daloz characteristically states, "they lead us on the journey of our lives ... they shed light on the road ahead of us, they interpret occult signs, they warn us of hidden dangers, and they point out unexpected pleasures along the way"[50].

When between 50.000 BCE and 65.000 BCE, human migrations to the continents of Europe, Australasia, and North America emerged in the midst of multiple difficulties

[34], some of these distant ancestors were pioneers and guides, the first to pave the way, making it easier for others. Thirty millennia later, evidence of a prehistoric learning culture was discovered and include human-made shapes on a mammoth tusk in alluvial strata at *Mamontovaya Kurya* on the Polar Circle [55] and drawings in the Paleolithic caves of *Altamira* in Northern Spain [42]. Cumulative technological change requires “social transfer of knowledge and expertise” [62]. As such, inherited knowledge, experience and creativity are said to have formed informal learning environments that, in today's terms [63] constitute a prerequisite for the development of a mentoring culture.

Traces of mentoring practices is found between 1.600 BCE and 1.400 BCE, in the mix of a centuries-long oral tradition, captured in Homer's Epics [51]. The tracks of the mythical Mentor, the recording of the first mentoring relationship in the ancient Greek epic poem of the *Odyssey* is revealing. In fact, many academics believe that mentoring has not changed much since then [20]. However, as will be discussed in this article, human relationships with mentoring characteristics are constantly being revealed in cultures older than the Mycenaean, and are even traced in primitive human societies. According to B. R. Ragins, and K. E. Kram, mentoring, although reduced to mythology, has been an indisputable reality and an integral part of human life [46].

2. Mentoring: Etymological and Linguistic Origin

The origins of modern mentoring (from noun *mentor* + suffix *-ing*) go back to the moment Odysseus (*Ulysses*), the ancient king of Ithaca, departed for Troy, when (*Odyssey* 2.253-254; 22.208-209, 235) he entrusted his faithful companion Mentor, son of Alcimus [45]. On the one hand (2.224-227), he was safeguarded by the authority of his father, Laertes, so that “his word is respected by all” and, on the other hand, he was tasked with the management of the palace so that “everything remains intact” [45]. Therefore, Mentor took on the responsibility of the protection and supervision of Prince Telemachus [11, 12, 13, 19, 45, 47].

According to D. Clutterbuck, “the linguistic and syntactic origins of the word ‘mentor’ derive from ‘mind’, not in the context of ‘minding’ (as in ‘child minding’), but as ‘one who makes another think’.” [46]. More specifically (*Figure 1*), the word *mentor* “comes from the Proto-Indo-European root *mon - eyo* (source also of Sanskrit *man-tar* ‘one who thinks’, and Latin *mon-i-tor* ‘one who admonishes’, causative form of root *men-* ‘to think’)” [41]. Besides, the term is derived from the French infinitive *mentorer* (guide/advise), from Latin *mentōr*; which in turn comes from the ancient Greek *Μέντωρ* (*Méntōr*) [35, 56]. As a prefix, the root *μεν-* (Latin: *-men*), is due to the verb form *mn-* (to desire passionately, to yearn for) [4], while the suffix *-τωρ* (Latin: *-tor*), refers to the “person who acts” [2]. Finally, according to E. Klein, the addition of the female suffix *-trix* indicates the female-mentor (*mentrix*) [47].

3. Following the Tracks of the Mythical Mentor

3.1. When Archaeology, Geology, and Astronomy Meet the Mentoring Reality

Mentor, who differs from the one in the *Iliad* (50.171-181), is already an old man at the time his peer Odysseus departs (*Odyssey* 1.227, 253-254; 2.225) [45]. The king of Ithaca, due to his special epic importance, retained his authority even after twenty years of extreme suffering (21.409-410) [45]. He must therefore be sought in the true historical context of the destruction of Troy as a “mere mortal person”. The findings of Schliemann, Dörpfeld, Blegen and Korfmann in Mycenae, Pylos and Troy (present-day *Hisarlik*) show that such a context does exist, as at least one war of economic and political motivation had taken place in the area, constituting the core of a story that had been orally perpetuated until it received its final form in the Epics [32]. This suggests that Mentor comes from an earlier era. Described customs, but also elements of the material world, are consistent with similar conclusions. E.g., the history of the “Odysseus’ boar's tusk helmet” (*Iliad* 10.260-265) dates back to the 17th century BCE [39, 45].

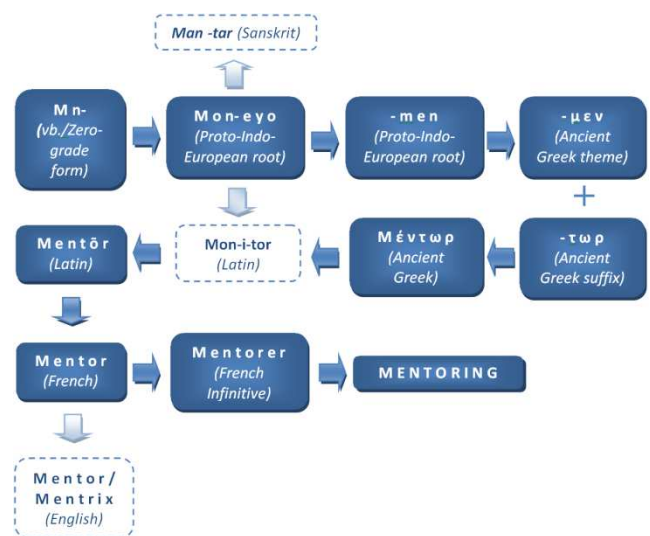


Figure 1. Mentoring: Etymological and Linguistic Origin.

Although he lived in the Iron Age, Homer has accurately depicted the Bronze Age war. The inscriptions on the “oenochoe of Dipylon” in Attica and on the “cup of Nestor” mentioned in the *Iliad* (20.632-637) place its composition between 750 BCE – 735 BCE [45]. F. I. Kakridis insists on 750 BCE and, on 710 BCE for the *Odyssey*. His estimate is confirmed by the evolutionary- linguistic [27] and phylogenetic statistical methods for comparing the rates of differentiation between Homeric, Modern Greek and Hittite lexical elements, with a deviation of one decade only, in relation to the *Iliad* [1].

Ithaca seems to be quite compatible with the *Odyssey* (1.186; 2.293, 413-429; 16.324, 343, 351-353, 473; 20.158; 21.252; 24.468), and of course its identification with the

Homeric island is often disputed. E.g., the wording of the Odyssey “the last one to the west” (10.25) [45] could imply Kefallinia or perhaps the Paliki peninsula. According to Strabo (10.2.15), these two landforms were separated by a narrow channel [54]. From a scientific point of view, this hypothesis cannot be rejected [23]. But Homer, to maintain the *Dactylic Hexameter*, sometimes moves words causing “semantic errors” (cf., 10.245, 309, 342) [45]. Thus, with a rearrangement, this phrase seems to imply the sea, not the island. As Ithaca is described with a significant accuracy for topographic details, Sir William Gell was impressed by this resemblance, and theories such as the one of Dörpfeld have been refuted [7, 30].

Homer is constantly being vindicated. P. A. Mountjoy studying the archaeological layer VIIa of Troy, dated the construction of its walls to around 1.230 BCE and its destruction at around 1.190 BCE or 1.180 BCE [36]. Descriptions of many of natural aspects in the Iliad also match the data of layers VI and VII [51]. Hittite texts mention the treaty of the king of *Wilus[s]a (Troy/Ilium)* Alexander (*Hittite: Alākšandūš*) with the Achaeans (*Ahiyyawans*) or Danaans (*Danuina*) who, between 1.300 BCE and 1.250 BCE campaigned against Troy, first camping in Miletus (*Millawanda*) [8]. This was preceded by two major conflicts (1430s BCE) wherein the Greeks were repelled. Their wrath against Hittite crimes is mentioned in the *Tawagalawa* letter during the reign of Hattusili III (1267-1237 BCE). In fact, it is alleged that Troy was involved as a tribute city. Thus, between 1.237 BCE and 1.209 BCE, the Greeks launched another campaign. NASA technical publications confirm the annular solar eclipses of June 6, 1.218 BCE and October 30, 1.207 BCE. The 1st, with 75.2% obscuration, was observed in Troy three days after Patroclus' death and the 2nd, with 75% obscuration, in the Ionian Islands five days prior to the arrival of Odysseus, in accordance with the Homeric descriptions of the weather conditions, the autumn rural life and the time the suitors were slain [6, 43].

Based on the preceding analysis, the timeframe and narrow tracking space for Mentor are represented in Figures 2 and 3. Despite his brave attitude, he was faced with the indifference of the Ithacans (2.229-241), and the arrogance of the suitors (1.162-170, 171-173; 2.61-62; 22.213-223), while (1.427-444) the prince remained timid and indecisive [45]. Regardless of his name, his mentoring skills are disputed. These skills, instead, are due to the accounts in the novel “*Les Aventures de Telemaque*” (1699) by the archbishop, mystic and educator François de Salignac de la Mothe - Fénelon [47].

3.2. The Forgotten “Mentor” and the Homeric Mentoring Model Reconstruction

With her appearance in the palace, goddess Athena is incarnated not as Mentor, but as Mentès (1.102-105), son of Anchialos, which is often overlooked in the literature. Mentès is the forgotten “mentor” of the Odyssey in some way. Unlike Mentès of the Iliad (Iliad 27.73), he was a trusted friend of Odysseus and the leader of the people of the Taphos Islands (Odyssey 1.178, 180-181, 418) which Strabo

(10.2.14) places near the Akarnanian coasts [45, 54]. In the absence of Odysseus, Mentès constitutes a “paternal figure” (Odyssey 1.308-309) for prince Telemachus. This is another mentoring role where Athena-Mentès is shown to motivate Telemachus. Intending to “reveal” herself, Athena (1.340-353) refuses the bath and gift offered to her and “disappears” in the form of a bird. The tactic of mentoring succeeds, as Telemachus (354-360), dazzled, realizes the “divine support” and is so encouraged that he changes his attitude, becoming ready to take initiative [45].

Athena first appears as Mentor in the 2nd rhapsody systematically guiding Telemachus. Afterwards, as the goddess of wisdom, and warfare, she [45]:

1. supports him by escorting him on his crucial journey (Odyssey 2.399-401),
2. participates in the slaying of the suitors (22.1-88), and, intervenes in a catalytic way when the followers of Eupheithes, the father of the slain suitor Antinous (by Laertes), revolt (24.522-525).

Therefore, the classic Homeric mentoring model which, according to J. A. Barondess “embodies the correct advice, prudent restraint and practical insight through the virtues of wisdom and justice” [57], is reshaped through her dual incarnation in the form of Athena-Mentès/Mentor, and through which Telemachus is motivated and encouraged. This is a reconstruction of the Homeric Mentoring Model (Figure 4).

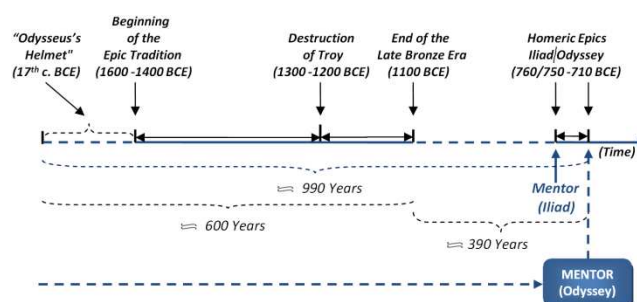


Figure 2. The narrow tracking space for Mentor.

In this context, six additional and different mentoring roles are played by the goddess [19]:

- I. teacher to a teacher (1.311-322),
- II. facilitator (2.266-274),
- III. supportive protector (421-434),
- IV. role model (3.19-31),
- V. guide (21.431-434), and,
- VI. counselor (22.236-256).

The journey of Telemachus is also illustrative of the ancient mentoring model. He maintains an educational character, again referring to the modern concept of Organizational Mentoring. C. Bennetts refers to a search for “one’s self” (the mentee) in partnership with “someone else” (the mentor) and a metaphorical journey of courage, challenge, creativity and “self-discovery” [19]. After all, as D. Clutterbuck states, “a mentee is someone who is caused to think” [46]. In fact (Iliad 1.276-285), the experienced king of Pylos possesses well-established empathy, insight,

objectivity, persuasion, self-respect and counseling skills in general [45]. Thus, the involvement of Menelaus and Nestor

perfectly resembles L. J. Zachary's modern concept of "opportunities to increase the demand for mentoring" [63].

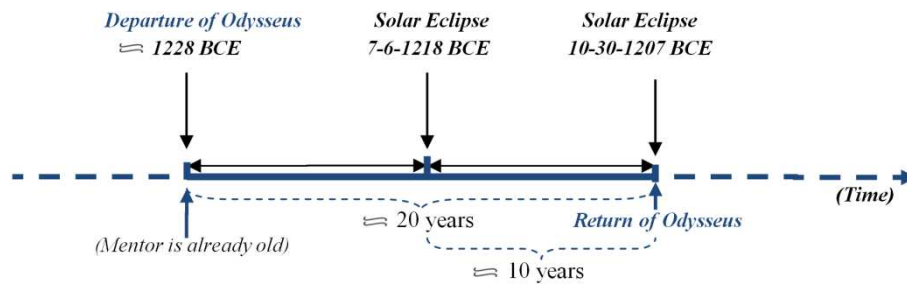


Figure 3. The narrow tracking space for Mentor (Based on NASA Technical Reports).

3.3. The Homeric Mentoring Model as an Open System of Educational Management

The modus operandi of the Athena-Telemachus mentoring dyad also seems to refer to the modern Open System of Educational Management (Figure 5) which, in addition to being delimited, includes [24]:

- inputs (e.g. people, materials, finances),
- processing & transformation of the inputs,
- outputs (e.g. products, services) and,
- the necessary "feedback loop" for the adaptation of the organization to the framework changes.

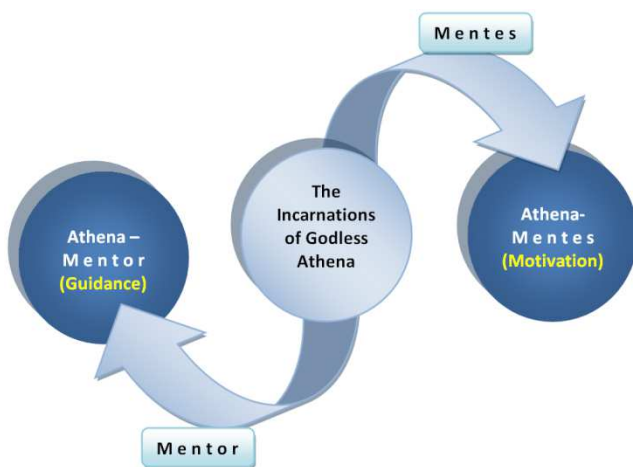


Figure 4. Reconstruction of the Homeric Mentoring Model.

In modern terms, the boundaries and the external environment of the Ithaca Kingdom can be conceived as an organization. In a sense, both Athena and prince Telemachus operate as "inputs". In the context of their mentoring relationship, the goddess of wisdom acts as a hub of communication between the collection of ethical values, moral codes, expectations, and practices of Telemachus' ancestors -that is the Kingdom's organizational culture- and himself. In addition to the human element (Odyssey 1.321-322), the spiritual, moral and emotional energy of the Kingdom's value system, are transformed into *menos* (wrath, vigor, and strength), *tharsos* (courage and confidence), and *mneme* (memory and awareness of Telemachus' ancestors) [45]. While these are considered inputs, his heroic mentality,

attitude and behavior constitute the generated outputs. As these align with the culture, they ensure its effective feedback. In modern terms, these "principal organizational benefits" are "the transmission of corporate culture and the provision of a 'deep sensing' apparatus for top management" [59, 61, 63]. As evidenced in this model, the simple knowledge of having the support of a mentor can be enough to motivate someone in difficult circumstances. This could be a crucial component of organizational cultures where autonomy is highlighted.

Moreover, the evolutionary stages of the Athena-Telemachus mentoring relationship become distinct, and in harmony with modern approaches, such as that of the Kram model [31]:

Stage 1: Initiation

The mentoring dyad is determined from the moment the goddess is revealed to the prince. He accepts her leading role with relief, as he decisively changes his attitude, and acts accordingly.

Stage 2: Cultivation

In the crucial journey to Pylos and Sparta, the mentoring relationship develops and takes shape. Mentoring operates on a psychosocial and "professional" level, in the sense that the princely status of Telemachus acquires practical significance associated with the survival and sustainability of the Ithaca Kingdom.

Stage 3: Separation

Defending the value system of his ancestors with decency, the prince achieves his actual emancipation, while goddess Athena is still present (e.g., in the slaying of the suitors).

Stage 4: Redefinition

The cycle of the mentoring relationship is completed (24.469, 545-548), as the course of the dyad is adjusted in terms of conditions and in terms of the frequency of interaction. Indeed, the goddess now acts as a catalyst, facilitating the peaceful end of the controversy between the angry followers of Euphithes and the palace [45].

However, this model has been accused of sexism, in the sense that it demeans Athena over Mentor, while ignoring Penelope as a mother and Odysseus' wet nurse Euryclea as a counselor [44]. H. Colley considers the Athena-Telemachus relationship to be "extremely impersonal and devoid of emotional attachment", yet she highlights in it features of counseling, role modeling, and support for increasing the

prince's self-esteem [12]. Despite considering these characteristics as a “secondary aspect” of the efforts to rescue the Kingdom, as Telemachus (1.430-431, 438-441, 446-447) was unable to fill the “power vacuum”, in combination with the fact that the throne was no longer hereditary due to a crisis in the institution of monarchy [45], H. Colley herself confirms the *Homeric Analogy* [58] as the first historically recorded mentoring relationship which focuses on the organizational benefits. Indeed, as Telemachus (the mentee) is established and the kingdom of Ithaca (the organization) is saved, Athena (the mentor) enjoys a deep moral satisfaction. She even reveals that her support for Odysseus is due to her resemblance (Iliad 2.636) - as the goddess of Wisdom - to him, as the king is “equal in wisdom to Zeus” [45]. After all (Odyssey 13.291-307), unlike ordinary mortals, he was able to see her in person [45]. The “triangle” of these positive interactions between Goddess Athena, prince Telemachus and Ithaca Kingdom (i.e. the “Homeric Analogy” Triangle) is represented in Figure 6.

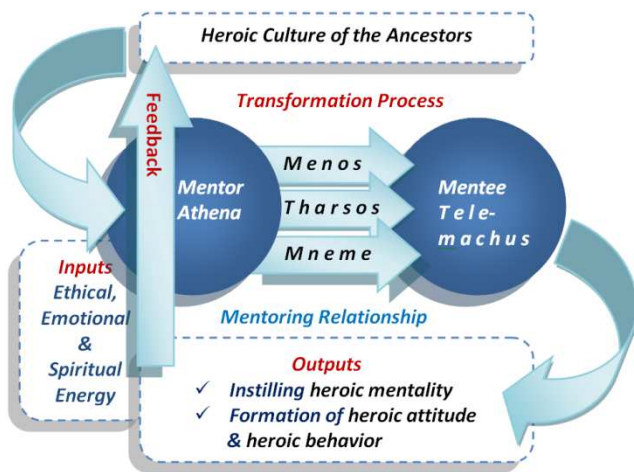


Figure 5. The Homeric Mentoring Model as an Open System of Educational Management.

4. Mentors of the Pre-Homeric Era

4.1. Minoan Civilization: Household Management and Job Mentoring

The first important European civilization, due to its advanced architecture, economy, politics, literacy and hydro-technologies (e.g. water pipe technology) [29], is considered to be the Minoan, which probably arose before 3.000 BCE (*Prepalatial period*) in the Mediterranean island of Crete, subsequently expanding to the southern Aegean (e.g. to the islands of *Delos*, *Naxos*, *Paros*, *Thera* and *Melos*), while the latter two phases of the Cycladic Civilization merge with the Minoan one [60]. At the zenith of this civilization (around 1400 BCE) the Minoans developed palace cities like Knossos, Phaistos, Malia and Zakros. Therefore, Minoan technology required the cognitive and social skills for planning, procuring resources, organizing production and also for learning, applying, and teaching the appropriate technical steps [38].

Under these circumstances a fertile learning environment was formed. There is solid evidence, e.g., in the frescoes and the Linear B script, that mentoring relationships were a Minoan institution. A characteristic example of counseling guidance was for new mothers. Childcare practices at that time evolved into a professional type of mentoring, typical of modern job mentoring practices. This approach to mentoring relationships seems to be related to activities such as food gathering, cooking, household care, ceramics and textile crafts. Of course, the established socio-economic hierarchy of the Minoans -whose practices appeared highly sophisticated- influenced these relationships accordingly. Apart from the middle class, there were also the elite (upper class) and the servants' class. A fourth, smaller class, included women who participated in specific religious duties, which presupposes the existence of a similar type of guidance, the initiation [9, 40].



Figure 6. The “Homeric Analogy” Triangle.

4.2. Ancient China: Reverse Mentoring in the Tao Philosophy

As Asia was the first continent that prehistoric human beings inhabited when they dispersed from Africa, “China was to the developing cultures of this area what The Near East, Greece and Rome were to Europe” [28]. From this perspective, Taoism (*Daoism*), as a set of cooperative teachings, timelessly promoted active and contemplative practices related to early Gnosticism, which was closely related to early Christianity and Confucianism. Taoism developed from Taoist mystical philosophy and folklore. Buddhism also emerged as a comprehensive system of ideas and as an important philosophical, religious and mystical tradition which utilized basic principles of counseling guidance, as a learning and development process. As a religion, Taoism emphasizes “doing what is natural” and “going with the flow” in accordance with the *Tao*, which is “a cosmic force” that “flows through all things and binds and releases them” Although it exerted a great influence

during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) its core philosophy shaped by the peasant class during the Shang (or Yin) Dynasty [10, 35].

The Shang ruled from 16th century BCE to 10th century BCE in the middle and lower basin of *Huang He* (Yellow River), as the earliest Dynasty of traditional Chinese history. In this light, Taoism took its current form as a life relationship governed by trust, honesty and avoidance of condemnation, and related to the emotional and mental functions of man. Therefore, Taoism is referring to mentoring as a philosophy as much as a practice. In Taoist philosophy “there is joy and reward in the journey itself, which is not always to be found in the achievement of the goal”. By incorporating the teachings of simplicity, self-reflection, “openness” to others, and “self-sharing”, mentors and mentees benefit from exchanging ideas and support. Thus, each mentor acts as a mentee and vice versa [25] emphatically referring to the modern reverse “workplace mentoring model” [63].

4.3. Ancient Israel: A Religious Model of Mentoring

The first written record regarding the ancient Israelites appears in 1.209 BCE in a pillar dedicated to Merneptah [15], who was the fourth pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty of ancient Egypt. According to the Hebrew Bible or Torah, God Yahweh (Exodus 3: 13-15) guided them through specific commandments and laws, so that they may keep up with their religious, social, political, and economic obligations. There are numerous examples of mentoring relationships taking place throughout the Old Testament. F. E. Freeks states that narratives of figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David and Solomon are “linked with the theory about mentoring and the significance there of in today’s society of a father as mentor in a home” [18]. In some cases, individuals were involved in “multiple mentoring relationships” [63], referring to the modern mentoring model.

A characteristic example of guidance was the *Decalogue* (Ex., 20: 2-17; Lev., 19: 2-4, 11-13; Deut., 5: 6-21) whereupon the principles of Judaism and later Christianity were founded. Thus, the establishment of monarchy through the authority of King David is placed in this context (2 Sam; 2 Kgs., 7: 8). The new state, whose national identity was based solely on its religious organization, legitimized the old tribal community of Israel. Three typical examples in which Yahweh himself acted as a mentor relate to the cases of Moses (Deut., 31: 8-9), Elijah (2 Kgs., 2: 9-13), and Deborah (Jdg., 4: 3-7) even though the role of women was circumscribed. The result of this action was that Moses, Elijah and Deborah became mentors themselves (Figure 7). The 1st case concerned the training and preparation of Moses’ successor, Joshua, to lead the Israelites to the “Promised Land” (Num., 27: 18-19); the 2nd case referred to the “transfer” of Elijah’s spiritual abilities to Elisha (1 Kgs., 19: 16), so that the latter could succeed him, and the 3rd case referred to Deborah (Jdg., 4: 6-7, 5: 2), who inspired and encouraged the army of Israelites and its leaders -together with General Barak- to victory over the Canaanites [16].

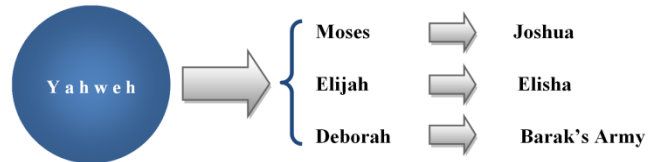


Figure 7. Typical Examples of Mentoring in the Bible.

4.4. The Indus Valley Civilization: The Guru - Shishya Mentoring Dyad

Around the same time period as the Minoans, Indus Valley cities were “well-defined grid systems” while early hydro-engineers formed significant drainage and sewerage systems [29]. At that ancient time, the early centers of Hinduism were being formed, and with them emerged the *Parampara*, a traditional practice of master-student succession. In this context, the idea of the *Guru* was conceived in the Indian subcontinent. These spiritual teachers and guides constituted timeless actors of spiritual and moral development. Their relationships with students were characterized by reciprocal commitment and participation. Not only did they provide basic education, but they also provided opportunities for personal and -ultimately- professional development through the exercise of skills, as well as the consolidation of acquired knowledge and experience. Of crucial importance to the *Shishya* was the period between the end of formal education and the beginning of practice, as their skills were expected to turn into acts of substance [3].

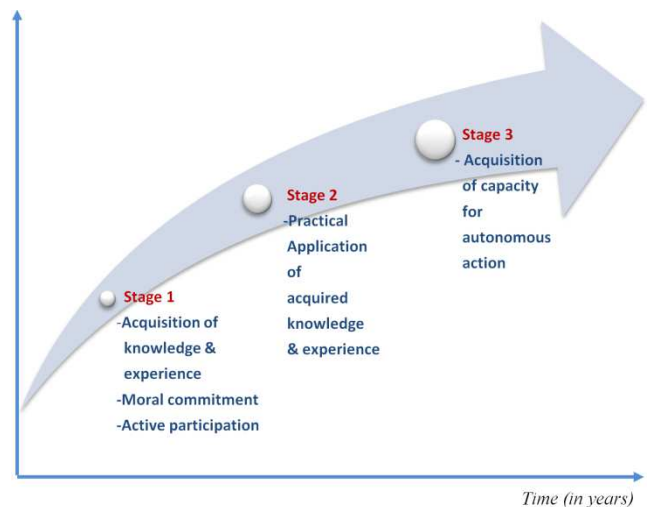


Figure 8. Stages of the Guru-Shishya mentoring relationship.

As *Paramara* was a fundamental model for a spectrum of artistic techniques, the *Guru-Shishya* tradition “is as old as the Sanskrit epics of ancient India *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata* often known as a form of Bible”. More specifically, around 3000 BCE the teachings in *Bhagwad - Gita* (a Hindu scripture that is part of *Mahabharata*) establish the importance of the mentoring relationship between the warrior prince Arjun (or Arjuna) and the protector Lord Krishna [14]. Therefore, apart from the religious rigor that characterized the specific relationships, their resemblance to the modern institution of apprenticeship (cf., [17]) in

combination with the practices and stages of modern mentoring (cf., [31, 63]) is definitely noticeable (Figure 8).

4.5. Ancient Mesopotamia: HRD, Apprenticeship and a Mentoring Model

Around 7000 BCE, Neolithic technology and culture was established in the Greater Near East. Therefore, a key-point of the economic growth and Human Resources Development has been the cultural leap from the hunting-gathering stage to that of the production organization [33]. In this light, the Epic of the King Gilgamesh of Uruk Mesopotamia formed as a written process of guidance from the distant past. It described how the ones guided should approach the ephemeral nature of life, as well as what attitude they must adopt in order to cope with difficulties through virtue, while armed with knowledge, passion and devotion. As shown in the Figure 9, the Enkidou - Gilgames Mentoring Model has obvious similarities to the classic Homeric Model of Mentoring (cf. 3.3).

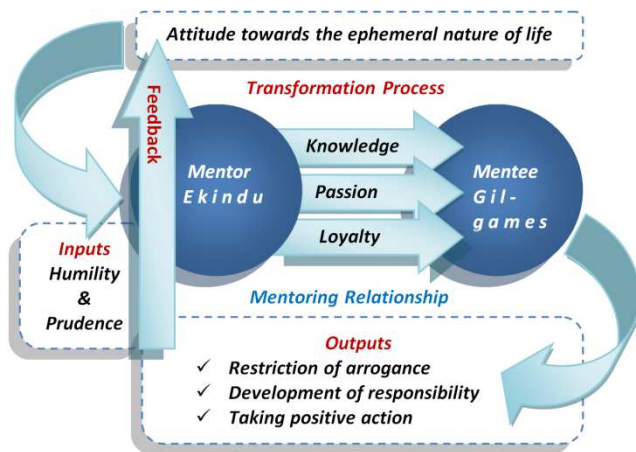


Figure 9. The Enkidou-Gilgames Mentoring Model as an Open System of Educational Management.

Originating in 3.000 BCE, the Epic of Gilgamesh took its final form in 2.100 BCE and shares significant similarities with some key aspects of modern existentialism, as it was analyzed in the works of the Kierkegaard, Buber and Heidegger. As the second oldest religious text, after the “Texts of Pyramid”, this epic poem depicts an adventurous educational journey (similar to the one of Telemachus in the Odyssey), during which Gilgamesh is called upon to face a series of dangerous circumstances. Eventually, he becomes wiser with the help of the mythical Enkidu who was sent by the gods as a counselor and teacher (as he counsels Gilgamesh and teaches him humility and prudence, so that he shall restrain his arrogance), as a coach (as he empowers him, so that he is able to face the opponent), and as a role model (serving as a role model, in order for specific modes of action to be assimilated) [11, 48, 49].

An important record of early guidance dating back to the 19th century BCE is derived from the famous Hammurabi Code, who according to the “middle dating” ruled Babylon between 1792 BCE and 1750 BCE. It is a list of mandatory rules that strongly influenced the ancient Babylonians, in

guiding them how to regulate their way of life. Although it did not constitute an economic document, the code contained basic elements of modern capitalism (recognition of private property, support for trade and the economy, and a “price theory”). It thus promulgated the development of Human Resources in the Fertile Crescent (among the ancient civilizations found along the Tigris, Euphrates and Nile rivers) by focusing on the institution of apprenticeship through practical guidance. Practical learning was a key thread of the social fabric that ensured the development of professional skills in each subsequent generation [37]. In addition to the striking resemblance to the mentoring seen in the Odyssey, Hammurabi’s code obliges craftsmen to teach their art to the younger generation, who later would retain the right to refer their tutors to court, in case the training was not effective [5, 22].

4.6. Ancient Egypt: Imhotep, the First Recorded Mentor

The ancient Egyptians were aware of the importance of counseling and guiding from early on, as seen in recorded historical data with clear mentoring features. Teachers guided their students on the basis of reciprocity, and provided advice, guidance and encouragement related to leadership and to life in general. There were several high-ranking officials who performed mentor duties. Known as “Viziers” (*chancellors or first ministers*) in Ancient Egyptian history (starting in the Early Dynastic Period), they were known to place particular importance to the ethics of these relationships, with a great emphasis on the value of justice [26, 60].

The first recorded individual in world history who performed mentor duties as a Vizier was the ancient official Imhotep (2667- 2600 BCE), who lived between 2.635 BCE and 2.595 BCE and was highly educated (architect, doctor, secretary, chief lecturer, priest and astronomer). His name meant “he who comes in peace”. In ancient Greece and Rome he was worshiped as a god. Imhotep (*Greek Imouthes*) was chancellor to the king Djoser (*Greek Tosorthros or Sesorthos*), an ancient Egyptian pharaoh of the 3rd Dynasty during the Old Kingdom [26, 56, 60].

Writers such as Battiscombe George Gunn, M. I. Ali, and A. M. Barbari, point to the unfinished work of Kagemni, which dates back to the 4th Dynasty (2613 BCE - 2494 BCE), and to the complete work of Ptahhotep (Ptahhotep I or Ptahhotpe), of the 5th Dynasty (2465 BCE - 2323 BCE), giving special reference to the teacher-guide Ani who advised King Merikare (Merykare or Merykara) of the 10th Dynasty. Many of those ancient mentors had tried to find early communication “channels” to transfer their knowledge, experience and understanding via informal practices of mentoring relationships and in written form to the future generations [26, 60].

5. The Prehistoric “Ancestors” of Modern Mentors

Four million years after the Australopithecus, *Homo*

erectus discovered fire and handled primitive tools, articulating some form of words to communicate. Even since the ice age - for two million years - emotional connections seem to have played an important role in the lives of the now-extinct Neanderthal hominids (*Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis*). Scientific evidence suggests that they lived in social groups and wondered about their place in the cosmos and sought explanation for their existence. Neanderthals used speech to encourage each other and give advice. They had an extensive vocabulary - words not only for geographical locations or food, but also for individuals, techniques, and emotions. They formed emotional bonds, and expressed sympathy and empathy in their care of the dead and injured. Thus, they were on an evolutionary track towards expressing a far greater depth, extent and range of cues to trigger compassion than in any other primate mammal [34, 52, 53, 62].

With the advent of *Homo sapiens* on the African continent around 130,000 BCE, primate intelligence shifted to a different level. They had hunting journeys of more than a day using dangerous killing techniques; they varied their prey according to the season, and traveled short distances. Finally, they used an “out and back” pattern almost exclusively and lacked a clear gender difference in foraging patterns [62]. Gradually our early ancestors came to comprehend abstract concepts such as “future” and “past”. They made jewelry (e.g., necklaces) by drilling holes in bones or shells and created paintings and drawings on cave walls, sometimes conveying coded messages [34]. In other words, early *Homo sapiens* had technology, culture and art. There are semantic archaeological evidences for an early human presence in the Russian Arctic [55], and famous cave paintings (black drawings and rock engravings) have been found in the Franco-Cantabrian region (Northern Spain and Southern France) older than thirty or even sixty thousand years [42]. Moreover, according to the archaeological context and present knowledge of the *Hohle - fels* bone flute (at least 40,000 years old) and the Neanderthalian one from *Divje Babe I* cave in Slovenia, these finds tend to be recognized as musical instruments [53, 58].

Obviously, some of those Neanderthals were highly effective as musicians, and informal teachers, counselors and guides. Like Antonio Stradivari did, their informal students “learned by watching and doing, trial and failure with perhaps a kind, or more likely a rude, word here and there from a mentor” [62]. Furthermore, the evolution of articulate speech has been a catalyst for mentoring. Gradually these distant ancestors would build emotional motivation for mutual assistance, to encourage, counsel, and care for one another. Simple acts of mutual help and coexistence exuding their cultural traces show how the evolution of social emotions and the ability to transcend “one’s self” laid the foundations for both survival and success through the consent and cooperation of modern representatives of humankind. For millennia before man, as *Homo sapiens-sapiens*, survival traits such as caring, teaching, advising, counseling, guiding and nurturing led to the modern version of mentoring

relationships [34, 53].

6. Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to show how mentoring has been an integral part of human development. With a careful examination of Homer’s Mentoring Model and evidence of human behavior in the Ancient era, specific convergences between timeless human behaviors and mentoring features were highlighted. The Odyssey reaffirms a remarkable similarity between the described mentoring relationship and the modern organizational mentoring model at the base of the Mentor-Mentee-Organization triptych. The classic Homeric model for mentoring is reconstructed around Athena’s incarnations (Mentes / Mentor), with respect to the similarity of its operation with the modern Open System of Educational Management. It includes inputs, processing & transformation of the inputs, outputs, and the necessary “feedback loop” for the adaptation of the organization to the framework changes. In addition to the striking resemblance to the mentoring seen in previous civilizations, the context of the Athena-Telemachus mentoring relationship reflects the importance of embedding mentoring in the organizational culture.

Although Homer’s Epics refer to the beginning phase of the Late Bronze Age, there is evidence that mentoring practices took place thousands of years before the Odyssey. Historical documents and relics reveal that ancient teachers, advisors, counselors, and guides were present at the Ziggurats of Babylon, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Temple of Solomon, the ancient cities of the Indus Valley, the earthen walls of the Chinese urban centers, the Minoan palaces, and the Cyclopean Walls of Mycenae. These historic discoveries of human development suggest that critical phases of human evolution require mentoring relationships for societal and cultural progression. By creating the first informal learning environments our early human ancestors gradually established a genuine mentoring culture, inextricably linked to the material, spiritual and moral pursuit of the human being, and also to the very dynamics of our perpetuation as a species.

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