



Herodotus' Account of Pharaonic History

Author(s): Alan B. Lloyd

Source: *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 37, H. 1 (1st Qtr., 1988), pp. 22-53

Published by: Franz Steiner Verlag

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4436037>

Accessed: 21-02-2019 07:13 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Franz Steiner Verlag is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*

HERODOTUS' ACCOUNT OF PHARAONIC HISTORY*

The purpose of the present paper is to bring together the results of some twenty years' study of Herodotus' account of Egyptian history. Much of the material has been published in some form elsewhere, but the works in question are not always easy of access, and their format frequently makes it difficult to develop a consecutive argument or provide a coherent overview of my thinking on the subject. A survey, therefore, seems not inapposite, though for detailed discussion of many specific points the reader must still consult the three volumes of my commentary on Herodotus Book II.¹

Herodotus makes sporadic references to Egyptian history at many points in his work (e.g. I, 105, 1; IV, 42), but his attempt at a consecutive and systematic account of the subject appears in the second half of Book II and the first half of Book III. The narrative breaks down into two sections: the rulers from Min to Sethos (II, 99–142) and those from the Dodecarchs to Psammenitos (II, 147–82; III, 1–15).² The format is quite straightforward and very much of a piece with that employed elsewhere in the *Histories*. The kings are arranged in what Herodotus believed to be their chronological order, and the traditions relating to each of them and of interest to him are then recounted, though the narrative flow is frequently interrupted by excursuses.³ Often these are integrated in some measure with the narrative: the Labyrinth excursus of II, 148, is inserted because the building was believed to be associated with the Dodecarchs who are being discussed at this point; the

* I should like to thank Dr. M. A. Leahy of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Birmingham, who read and commented upon an earlier version of this paper. His perceptive remarks significantly improved it at several points, but he is in no way responsible for any infelicities that remain.

¹ *Herodotus, Book II. Introduction* (EPRO 43) (Leiden, 1975); *Commentary 1–98* (EPRO 43) (Leiden, 1976); *Commentary 99–182* (EPRO 43) (Leiden, 1987). In the present study footnotes have been kept as brief as possible. Copious bibliographical references will be found in the relevant sections of my commentary and in the works which have been cited in this article.

² I have chosen to end the analysis with Psammenitos. The account of Cambyses' activities in Egypt belongs organically with the earlier material, but I have discussed the Cambyses' logos in detail elsewhere and refer the reader to that study ('Herodotus on Cambyses: some Thoughts on Recent Work' in A. Kuhrt and H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Eds.), *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory* (Leiden, in press)). Two relatively recent discussions of this material will be found in K. v. Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, I (Berlin, 1967), p. 158ff., and R. Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 56ff.

³ The standard discussion of excursuses is that of J. Cobet, *Herodots Exkurse und die Frage der Einheit seines Werkes* (Historia Einzelschriften 17) (Wiesbaden, 1971).

account of Buto and its shrines at II, 155–6, is suggested by the claim that the oracle of Leto at Buto played an important role in the career of Psammetichos I; and the description of the royal cemetery at Sais (II, 169, 4–5) is encouraged by the narrative of the death of Apries. On the other hand, some excursuses are of more dubious relevance and seem to appear for no other reason than association of ideas: the account of L. Moiris (II, 149–50) is only there because of its proximity to the Labyrinth and its value as a marvel, whilst the discussion of the cult of Osiris at Sais (II, 170–1) is only included because Herodotus has just been discussing the Saite tombs of the kings of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. The relative looseness of structure which permits such inclusions is, of course, one of many indications of the close affinity which Herodotus shows to the oral tradition of narrative which produced Homeric epic.⁴

Defining the source material for this account of Egyptian history is not a difficult matter.⁵ Herodotus indicates at II, 99, 1, that his sources for the subject differ from those used in the preceding section: 'Up to this point, it is what I myself saw (*opsis emē*), my own opinion (*gnōmē*), and my personal enquiry (*historiē*) which have been the basis for my statements; henceforth, I am going to recount Egyptian traditions as I heard them, but this will be supplemented by my own observation'. This does not mean that categories of source are being used which were not employed previously, but that a change has taken place in the relative importance of different types of source. *Opsis* is to be relegated from first to third position in the discussion of Egyptian history where Herodotus uses it as a major instrument for evaluating the truth of his traditions. In this capacity it appears explicitly at a number of points (II, 106, 1; 125, 6; 127, 1; 131, 3; 137, 5; 143, 3; 148; 170, 2; III, 12), though we must make allowance for the possibility that it also features elsewhere without our being able to demonstrate it. *Gnōmē* implies rational assessment of evidence and the development of a view of the truth on that basis and is frequently signalled by the use of some such phrase as *dokeei moi*, 'it seems to me'. Despite its importance in the first part of the account of Egypt, it is ignored as

⁴ On this affinity see, amongst others, J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (Dover Publications, New York, 1958) (Reprint of 1909 Edn.), p. 41ff.; J. A. K. Thomson, *The Art of the Logos* (London, 1935); A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954); Ph.-E. Legrand, *Hérodote: Introduction*, 2nd Edn. (Paris, 1955), p. 149ff.; A. Momigliano, 'Some Observations on Causes of War in Ancient Historiography', *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome, 1960), p. 14f.; H. Strasburger, 'Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung', *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil. hist. Klasse, Jahrg. 1972, 1; M. L. Lang, *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (Cambridge Mass. and London 1984), particularly Ch. 3; K. H. Waters, *Herodotos the Historian, his Problems, Methods and Originality* (London and Sydney, 1985), pp. 1, 9, 13, 51, 62, 136, 169.

⁵ Lloyd, *Introduction*, p. 93ff. The comments of S. West, 'Herodotus' Epigraphical Interests', *CQ* 35 (1985), p. 297ff., are also worth pondering.

a factor in processing historical material. Nevertheless, it played a more important role than Herodotus recognized. Nearly all the cases of *opsis* listed above can also be regarded as instances of *gnōmē* since most of the observed phenomena are being used to argue for the truth of an historical tradition. Here, Herodotus' consciousness of the *opsis* dimension has, in all probability, concealed the *gnōmē* dimension. Nevertheless, cases of *gnōmē* which do not fall into this category can be identified: II, 103, 1, contains an archaeological proof (certainly erroneous) of Sesostri's conquest of the Scythians and Thracians; at II, 104, the Egyptian origin of the Colchians is impressively supported by physiological and cultural arguments (How much, if any, of this is based on personal observation is unclear); at II, 134–5, we encounter the rejection of the tradition that Rhodopis had been responsible for the Third Pyramid of Giza: cf. also II, 116, 1ff., 120, 146. Perhaps the best explanation of Herodotus' omission of *gnōmē* from his list of sources is that he made an *a priori* assumption at the beginning of his work on the subject that the traditions which came his way were much less amenable to *gnōmē* than the subject matter of II, 1–98, and that this assumption led him grossly to underrate its value in processing such traditions.

In the context of II, 99, 1, 'personal enquiry' (*historiē*), means 'oral enquiry'; it is hearsay evidence elicited as the result of a specific attempt by Herodotus to acquire information by interrogation. All the hearsay material described in the second sentence as 'Egyptian traditions' does not necessarily fall into this category, but in most cases we can be confident that it did. However, whereas *historiē*/hearsay occupies third place in the initial sentence, hearsay evidence is elevated to the prime position for II, 99ff. This reorientation is clearly the consequence of the change in subject matter: II, 1–98, is concerned pre-eminently with aspects of the land of Egypt which Herodotus was in a position to see and investigate for himself whereas II, 99ff., is devoted to Egypt's past which could be studied, for the most part, only through oral or written tradition. It emerges from later statements, however, that these oral sources change as between the first and second sections of his history of Egypt. The section down to Sethos (II, 99–142) is ascribed to the Egyptians, above all the priests (II, 142; 147, 1); the section from the Dodecarchs to the death of Psammenitos (II, 147–III, 15) is a little more complicated. At II, 147, 1, the oral sources first mentioned are non-Egyptians and, although Colchians appear at II, 104, 1, it emerges from II, 154, 4, that these non-Egyptians are mainly Greeks and that they drew particularly on the tradition emanating from the Carian and Ionian mercenaries employed in Egypt from the seventh century onwards. Egyptian oral sources also play a role, but Herodotus asserted that they are only used when their tradition is compatible with Greek sources, a comment that must imply that Herodotus was not unsceptical of the reliability of his Egyptian

informants. This view of the Egyptians also appears at II, 123, 1, where Herodotus makes it quite clear that he does not necessarily believe the traditions which he recounts but feels obliged to record them anyway (cf. VII, 152, 3). He also insists that *opsis* plays a role in II, 147ff., a comment which indicates that he had been able to use physical material relating to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty to a much greater degree than in the pre-Dodecarch period. Herodotus explicitly states that the availability of Greek sources had led to a greater degree of accuracy in post-Dodecarch history.

The priestly sources which figure so prominently in the pre-Dodecarch section have given rise to much discussion.⁶ The difficulty here is that the non-Egyptologist is inclined to credit Ancient Egyptian priests with greater expertise than they possessed. It should be remembered that priestly titles were borne by many people in Late Period Egypt and that the range of sacred and profane learning amongst them would have varied very considerably. Some simply drew the salary,⁷ but even the higher-ranking members of the priestly staffs of major Egyptian temples would not necessarily have known the history of their country well. If they needed chronological information, there were king lists like the Turin Canon⁸ which provided names and reign-lengths in sequence, and Herodotus was evidently confronted with such a document on at least one occasion (II, 100, 1). Even such texts as this, however, did not aspire to an objective reality. They convey no more than the opinion of a given school on who was a legitimate ruler at a given time, and such opinions could have a variety of origins which had nothing to do with a desire for historical truth as we understand it.⁹ Furthermore, if a priest required details on the activities of individual kings, they would have to be obtained from other sources. Few priests, we can be confident, took the trouble to sift through the available documentary and epigraphic material for such informa-

⁶ Lloyd, *Introduction*, p. 94ff.

⁷ A. W. Blackman, 'Priest, Priesthood (Egyptian)' in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, X (Edinburgh and New York, 1918), p. 302; F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library Manchester*, III (Manchester, 1909), pp. 82, 84, 92, where Peteese's priestly office was surely honorary.

⁸ For the Turin Canon see A. H. Gardiner, *The Royal Canon of Turin* (Oxford, 1959). The Abydos and Saqqara King Lists will be found in E. Meyer, *Aegyptische Chronologie* (Abh. Königl. Preuss. Akad. Wiss. 1904) (Berlin, 1904) and the Karnak List in K. Sethe, *Urkunden des äg. Altertums*, IV (Leipzig, 1906), p. 608ff. The evidence of these texts and of the fragments of the Palermo Stone is conveniently summarized in Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1961), p. 429ff. and has recently been subjected to a searching analysis by D. B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-lists, Annals and Daybooks, A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (SSEA Publication IV) (Mississauga, 1986).

⁹ E.g. the Turin Canon omits Montuhotpe IV in Col. V, and the Abydos King List omits Hatshepsut after no. 69 and the Pharaohs of the Amarna period between Amenhotpe III and Horemheb.

tion. The knowledge of most individuals would have been made up of a rag-bag of material acquired quite unsystematically from a variety of sources. Literary texts, such as stories, instructions, and messianic prophecies, often referred to historical figures and events, but they were, to a greater or lesser extent, fictitious in content and usually far from concerned with historical accuracy¹⁰. Furthermore, in the priest's day-to-day duties, texts might come his way which mentioned kings of old, e.g. certain chapters of the *Book of the Dead* were ascribed to specific kings.¹¹ However, a particularly fruitful source would have been the oral tradition current within the country at large. Analogies with such material occurring in pre-literate societies in modern times indicate that this would have consisted of an amalgam of folklore, propaganda, moralizing, and sheer entertainment often with scant regard for the preservation of accurate historical information.¹² In a literate society, such as that of Ancient Egypt, the tradition would sometimes be modified by the insertion of material from written sources, but this process would be unlikely to alter significantly the character of the material. When information was not available to satisfy the enquiries of importunate Greeks, it is by no means inconceivable that even a priest would simply invent it. It has been observed that those who set themselves up as experts in pre-literate societies are perfectly capable of acting in this way, if only to protect their status as experts,¹³ and it would not be surprising if this tendency survived to affect the data purveyed by Herodotus' priests. All things considered, we should not expect the statements of people drawing on such heterogeneous material to possess a high degree of historical

¹⁰ Useful recent collections of translated material are W. K. Simpson (Ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven and London, 1973); M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, I. *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975); *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, II. *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1976); *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, III. *The Late Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980).

¹¹ Spells 64 and 148 were supposed to have been found in the time of Menkaurê by his son Hardedef (T. G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going forth by Day* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 37) (Chicago, 1974), pp. 58, 140). Spell Pleyte 166 was claimed to have been found at the throat of Ramesses II (op. cit., p. 215) and Spells Pleyte 167–9 were alleged to have been discovered by the crown prince Khaemwese, son of Ramesses II (op. cit., p. 216).

¹² A particularly illuminating study is J. Vansina (tr. H. M. Wright), *Oral Tradition: a Study in Historical Methodology* (London, 1965). See also Thomson, op. cit.; J. Goody and I. Watt in J. Goody (Ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 27ff.; P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past, Oral History* (Oxford, 1978); D. Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London, New York and Lagos, 1982); and W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London, 1982). The comments of B. Lewis, *History Remembered, Recovered, Inverted* (Princeton, 1975), are also worth considering.

¹³ Vansina, op. cit., p. 91.

accuracy, and a survey of the extant testimony to the account of Egyptian history by the Egyptian priest Manetho writing in the third century BC strongly confirms these suppositions in that it presents the spectacle of a king list embellished with very much the kind of material which we find in Herodotus and other Greek writers.¹⁴

Priests were not the only Egyptian informants available to Herodotus for Egyptian history. 'Egyptians', who are clearly laymen, are mentioned in general terms at II, 142, 1. He is rarely more explicit, but in several cases he does define more precisely who they are: at II, 125, 6, he acquires demonstrably false information from an interpreter (*hermēneus*) about an inscription on the Great Pyramid; at II, 148, 5, 'superintendents' at the Labyrinth provide data on the building which we cannot control; at II, 150, 1–2, local inhabitants make statements about L. Moiris which are certainly false; and at III, 12, 1, statements are made by locals at Pelusium about the relative thickness of Persian and Egyptian skulls which are highly suspect. The low-grade information attributable to lay Egyptian sources in these cases should not dismay us. The tradition available to such people would have been mainly the oral tradition discussed above, with all its weaknesses. They, like the priests, would often have been prepared to invent information to preserve their position as authorities, and we must also make allowances for the determination of Egyptian informants to be obliging to their interlocutors, particularly if they paid well, a phenomenon with which modern visitors to Egypt are far from unfamiliar. To quote only Cyril Aldred's discussion of Egyptian stories surrounding the fate of clay tablets discovered at El-'Amarna during the nineteenth century:

It was then (i.e. when the finders could not convince anyone that the tablets were genuine) that the tablets may have suffered some damage in being hawked from one dealer to the next. *A story is related, for instance, of their being taken to Luxor in sacks thrown across the backs of asses and camels. This would have been an unusual, slow and costly method of transport when the river was at hand, and its truth may be doubted.* The Rev. A. H. Sayce, who travelled extensively in the Near East throughout most of the eighty-eight years of his life, reported in 1917 that he had heard from those who made the find in 1887 that in the process of recovery nearly two hundred tablets had been totally destroyed and fully as many broken and otherwise seriously damaged. *It would, however, have required considerable skill and experience of interrogating Orientals*

¹⁴ For texts of Manetho see W. G. Waddell, *Manetho* (Loeb Classical Library) (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1940) and F. Jacoby, *FgrHist* III (Leiden, 1958), 609. The best overall study is still that of R. Laqueur, *RE* XIV, 1060ff. On the character of Manetho's tradition see Lloyd, *Introduction*, p. 110f.

*on the part of Sayce to have elicited the true answer from his informants and not the one that they thought he wanted to hear, assuming that they could divine his motives for questioning them.*¹⁵

As for the Greek sources mentioned by Herodotus, they could only be oral, with the possible exception of the occasional notice in Hecataeus.¹⁶ Such traditions would show the same basic characteristics as their Egyptian counterparts, but their points of emphasis, choice of subject matter, attitudes, and the thought-structures into which the material is cast would be Greek.

The nature of the source material is not, however, the only determinant of the character of Herodotus' Egyptian history. Two further factors must also be taken into consideration: his perception of historical experience and his perception of his role as an historian.

Herodotus' perception of the nature and significance of historical experience must be a function of his perception of the nature and significance of human experience in general. Since I have discussed this issue in detail elsewhere, it will be sufficient in the present context to summarize the points which I made in these studies.¹⁷ The Herodotean world had two interpenetrating aspects, the cosmic and the human. The former was conceptualized as a cosmic order, both moral and physical (*dikē*), in which the most important notion was the concept of boundaries by which all things and all beings were allotted their proper place. There is an absolute obligation on man to recognize and integrate with this order. If he does so, he is *dikaios*; if he does not, he, or his kith and kin, will sooner or later be visited with retribution. The most prominent offence in the Herodotean world is *hybris*, i.e. the transgression of boundaries. This can consist of actions or indeed even a presumptuous attitude of mind such as ignoring that any success or happiness which one enjoys is ultimately the gift of the gods and can be taken away as and when they will. The key role of these concepts emerges clearly in the Croesus *logos* in Book I which is intended to

¹⁵ *Akhenaten, Pharaoh of Egypt* (New Aspects of Antiquity) (London, 1972), p. 144f. I have myself heard Egyptian guides talk the most arrant, nonsense at some length and with total conviction. The uninformed layman, however intelligent he might be, could easily have been taken in by their patter. In such situations it becomes very easy to see where some of the oddities preserved in our classical sources originated. See also Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 31, and Vansina, *op. cit.*, pp. 29ff., 92f. 94.

¹⁶ On Herodotus and Hecataeus see Lloyd, *Introduction*, p. 127ff. and F. Mora, *Religione e religioni nelle storie di Herodoto* (Le edizioni universitarie JACA 18) (Milan, 1986), particularly p. 249ff.

¹⁷ Lloyd, 'Herodotus on Cambyses, some Thoughts on Recent Work', *op. cit.* In general see, e.g., Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 131ff.; H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (American Philological Association Monograph Series 23) (Chapel Hill, 1966), p. 306ff.; Waters, *op. cit.*, p. 96ff.

serve as a paradigm for the entire work.¹⁸ This order is guaranteed by the gods, but also by fate which is, at the most basic level, a symbol of the fixed and implacably self-maintaining order of the universe. The concept of fate does not, however, in any way impair man's responsibility as a moral agent. He is regarded as being motivated by a wide range of aspirations and feelings, but the most important is the desire for prestige and its corollary, the determination to wipe out shame. Between the human and divine elements there are clearly defined avenues of communication; oracles, dreams, portents, seers, and warner figures all provide pointers to men of what the will of the gods is in a particular situation. Herodotus perceives human history as a series of demonstrations of these principles, and they provide a conceptual framework which must determine the choice of material and the manner of its treatment.

Herodotus' perception of his role and obligations as a historian is inseparably linked with these ideas. In the preface to his *Histories* Herodotus defines his intentions with crystal clarity. His subject matter is to be Greek and non-Greek achievements (*erga*) which are 'great' and 'marvellous' (*thōmasta*), and his object is stated to be to commemorate and preserve the glory of these deeds. It also emerges that he is concerned with explaining why things have happened. In the account of the Persian Wars which follows the achievements are both 'great' and 'marvellous' in scale, but the recurrent insistence on moral significance indicates that the adjectives are meant to embrace, amongst other things, great and striking demonstrations of the moral issues which emerge as Herodotus' overriding concern. In pointing up the moral significance of events few would deny that Herodotus allowed himself wide latitude in the use of the literary apparatus of epic and oral story telling. The invention of speeches is simply the most obvious example of this.¹⁹ How great that latitude was is probably the central question of Herodotean scholarship. To some, Herodotus was capable of inventing episodes and authorities at will in order to reinforce the impact of his account of particular events.²⁰ Certainly modern studies of

¹⁸ The Croesus *logos* is discussed by F. Hellmann, *Herodots Kroisos-Logos* (Neue Philologische Untersuchungen 9) (Berlin, 1934); G. de Sanctis, *Studi di storia della storiografia greca* (Il pensiero storico 34) (Florence, 1951), p. 47ff.; M. Miller, 'The Herodotean Croesus', *Klio* 41 (1963), p. 58ff.; O. Regenbogen, 'Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösos. Eine Studie zur Geistesgeschichte des 5. und 6. Jahrhunderts', in W. Marg (Ed.), *Herodot* (Wege der Forschung 26) (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 375ff.; B. Snell, 'Gyges und Kroisos als Tragödien-Figuren', *ZPE* 12 (1973), p. 197ff.; H.-P. Stahl, 'Learning through Suffering? Croesus' Conversations in the History of Herodotus', *YCS* 24 (1975), p. 1ff.

¹⁹ The role of speeches is analysed by R. Heni, *Die Gespräche bei Herodot* (Diss. Heidelberg) (Heilbronn, 1976), and P. Hohti, *The Interrelation of Speech and Action in the Histories of Herodotus* (Helsinki, 1976).

²⁰ W. A. Heidel, 'Hecataeus and the Egyptian Priests in Herodotus Book II', *American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Memoirs*, XVIII, 2 (Boston, 1935), p. 50ff.; D. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot* (Berlin and New York, 1971); O. K. Armayor, 'Did Herodotus ever go to Egypt?' *JARCE* 15 (1980), p. 59ff.; 'Sesostris and Herodotus' Autopsy of Thrace, Colchis,

oral tradition reveal that the purveyors of oral narratives concerned with historical events are capable of modifications of this kind,²¹ and one might wish to press this analogy into use in the interpretation of Herodotus in view of his affinities with oral tradition. It is, however, important not to allow our enthusiasm for the perspectives offered by such ethnographical studies to obscure the fact that Herodotus' *Histories* is not a work of oral literature. It is the product of a society literate for some centuries, however much it may draw upon materials and techniques handed down by oral means. Furthermore, it should be remembered that even in oral societies the details of a tradition which is intended specifically to record the past are treated with considerable circumspection,²² and that one of the consequences of the advent of literacy is to promote considerably such attitudes of mind.²³ Indisputably it can be difficult, if not impossible, at times to explain how Herodotus could have obtained a particular notion from his stated source or from what is claimed to be personal observation, so much so that some commentators have argued that Herodotus' alleged sources and autopsy are spurious, mere devices to promote the authoritativeness of his account.²⁴ Such views often seem compelling in the sober light of the study or seminar room, but they fail to make sufficient allowance for Herodotus' problems of acquiring, processing, and recording

Inland Asia Minor, and the Levant', *HSCPh* 84 (1980), p. 51ff.; *Herodotus' Autopsy of the Fayoum: Lake Moeris and the Labyrinth of Egypt* (Amsterdam, 1985). Such scepticism has won the support of scholars of the calibre of S. West (Review of A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus*, Book ii, Introduction, Commentary 1–98, *CR N. S.* 28 (1978), p. 231f.; *CQ* 35 (1985), p. 293f.) and D. Lewis (*Postscript* in A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, 2nd Edn. (London, 1984), p. 597), but it seems to me that the deficiencies of this position are adequately exposed by Cobet (Review of D. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot.*, in *Gnomon* 46 (1974), p. 737ff.) and Mora (op. cit., pp. 21, 230f.).

²¹ Vansina, op. cit., pp. 5, 64, 82, 109, 134. 'The historical element is often reduced to a mere background against which the tale unfolds and it must in no way detract from the story itself. Indeed there is a tendency to supply historical details that are lacking, or touch them up if they are vague. Causes and motivations are invented, and historical personages are given a personality, or imaginary ones introduced' (op. cit., p. 159).

²² Again, Vansina, op. cit., pp. 47ff., 80. If, on the other hand, there is no incentive to preserve oral tradition accurately, distortion can creep in remarkably quickly. C. Taylor describes a striking modern English example: 'In Wiltshire the land around the village of Snap was acquired in the early years of this century by a family of Ramsbury butchers who turned it into a sheep farm. Deprived of employment the villagers were forced to leave and by 1914 Snap had been abandoned. Despite a violent outcry which involved the local MP, memories soon faded. By 1950, when M. W. Smith wrote the history of Snap, the local tradition was that the village had been deserted because its water supply had failed' (*Village and Farmstead. A History of Rural Settlement in England* (London, 1983), pp. 235–6).

²³ In general see Goody and Watt, op. cit., p. 44ff. For some interesting comments on the effects of literacy in a Greek context see P. A. Cartledge, 'Literacy in the Spartan Oligarchy', *JHS* 98 (1978), p. 25ff.

²⁴ E.g. Heidel, op. cit. and Fehling, op. cit.

information, and, where autopsy is concerned, nowhere nearly enough attention is devoted to the copious literature on the psychology of visual perception.²⁵ The most natural interpretation of the preface and the *Histories* as a whole is that Herodotus proceeded on the principle that the past consisted of a series of events which had an objective existence in space and time and that it was his role not simply to expound the most important or intriguing of them but also to point up their significance by such techniques as highlighting, juxtaposition, and variation of pace, but without conscious distortion of the data as they came to him. We are confronted with conscious literary embellishment, not conscious historical distortion or falsification.

To conclude. Herodotus' history of Egypt is based on oral tradition supplemented by autopsy, but these oral sources differ in the two sections of the narrative. Down to the Sethos they are Egyptians, mainly Egyptian priests; subsequently Greek sources dominate, though information continues to be drawn from Egyptian informants. The activity of rational assessment of material (*gnōmē*) is not explicitly recognized by Herodotus but is, nevertheless, in evidence. None of these sources or techniques can be expected to yield a reliable account of Egypt's past. These data are then processed by Herodotus on the basis of his perception of the nature of historical experience and his own view of the role and obligations of the recorder of the past. What exactly this view was, in all its ramifications, is a controversial matter and is likely to remain so, but the increasingly fashionable tendency to regard his references to sources as unreliable, part of the story-teller's apparatus for creating a mirage of authority should be treated with circumspection. It may well tell us more of the deficiencies of modern scholarship than the methods of Herodotus.

Let us now turn to a detailed analysis of the Egyptian history to determine how far it conforms with this assessment of Herodotus' intentions, claims, and general practice. We propose to conduct the discussion under several headings: royal names, chronology, and the narrative of historical events.

1. Royal Names

Ten royal names are accurately rendered if we allow for slight modifications to make them pronounceable to Greek speakers:²⁶ *Min* (Eg. *Mni*, *Mnn3*, *Mn*, *Mns*), *Nitōkris* (Eg. *Nt-īkr-ty*), *Cheops* (Eg. *Ḥw.f-wi*), *Chephrēn* (Eg. *Ḥ.f-r'*), *Mykerinos* (Eg. *Mn-k3w-r'*), *Sabakōs* (Eg. *Š3-b3-k3*), *Psammetichos* (Eg. *Psmṭk*), *Nekōs* (Eg. *Nk3w*), *Apriēs* (Eg. *W3ḥ-ib-r'*), and *Amasis* (Eg. *'Iḥ-msw*).

Five names are immediately recognizable corruptions of Egyptian proto-

²⁵ I hope ere long to discuss the relevance of this research in an article on Herodotus' account of the pyramids.

²⁶ A modern list of Egyptian kings will be found in Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 429ff.

types: *Moiris* (Eg. *Ni-m3t-r'*²⁷; probably also with assimilation to the name of L. Moiris, the predecessor of the modern Birket Karûn in the Fayûm), *Sesostris* (Eg. *S-n-wsrt*), *Rhampsinitos* (Eg. *R'-ms(w)-sw*, supplemented by the late royal epithet *s3 Nt*, 'son of Neith'), *Psammis*, and *Psammēnitos* (Eg. *Psmṯk* with, in the second case, the addition of the epithet *s3 Nt* or *mry Nt*; the evolution of these variants was clearly motivated by a Greek need to distinguish between kings bearing the same name).

Two are patently false names: *Pherōs* (Eg. *Pr-ʿ3*, i.e. the title 'pharaoh'; later sources give *Nencoreus* or corruptions thereof which clearly derive from *Nb-k3w-r'*,²⁸ *nsw-bṯy* name of Amenemḥēt II)²⁹ and *Prōteus* (No Egyptian ancestor; the name is clearly that of the Homeric sea god).

Three names are of problematic origin: *Asychis* (Various prototypes have been suggested, but the position of the king in Herodotus' narrative as well as phonetic and historical considerations make it probable that the name reflects the Libyan royal name *Šsnḳ* borne by several Pharaohs of the Twenty-second Dynasty. If so, the name can be transferred to the corruption category); *Anysis* (probably derived from the place-name *Anysis* associated with this ruler. If so, the name can be transferred to the category of false names);³⁰ and *Sethos* (Strong phonetic arguments suggest a corruption of *Š3-b3-t3-k3* with the loss of the bilabial and guttural stops.³¹ If so, the name can be transferred to the corruption category).

This survey reveals that half of the twenty royal names employed are rendered accurately, five are easily identifiable corruptions of Egyptian names, and two are probable, though not obvious, corruptions. Only two are clearly false names, though one other is likely to be false. It should, however, be

²⁷ The pronunciation of the *-m3t-r'* element was something like *muaria*, as cuneiform parallels demonstrate (W. F. Albright, 'The Egyptian Correspondence of Abimilki', *JEA* 23 (1937), p. 195; id., 'Cuneiform Material for Egyptian Prosopography 1500–1200 B. C.', *JNES* 5 (1946), p. 17, 36). In Manetho's confused account of the Twelfth Dynasty we appear to have two transliterations of *Ni-m3't-r'*, *Lamarēs/Lamaris* and *Amerēs*, where, in the first case, the *ni* has gone to *L* and, in the second, to *A* (*FgrHist* 609, F. 2–3b, pp. 30–2). This evidence *in toto* suggests that Herodotus' *Moiris* originates in the Egyptian *Ni-m3'-t-r'* with the loss of the initial element.

²⁸ Pliny, *HN* XXXVI, 74.

²⁹ From the Fifth Dynasty onwards Egyptian Pharaohs all had a fivefold titulary which contained five names: the Horus name, the *nbty* name, the Golden Horus name, the *nsw-bṯy* name, and the *s3-R'* (son of Rē') name. It was the last two which were most commonly used (Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd Edn. (Oxford, 1957), p. 71ff.).

³⁰ The place name is mentioned at II, 137, 166, 1, where it emerges that it lay in the E. Delta. It is conceivable that it was identical with Herakleopolis Parva in the vicinity of Tanis (see Lloyd, *Commentary* 99–182, n. II, 137).

³¹ *Š3-b3-t3-k3* (Manetho's *Sebichōs*) could well have given rise to a form *Sebithōs*, the guttural stop being dropped as in *Psammis* (from *Psmṯk*). The loss of the medial bilabial stop is easily paralleled (cf. Gk. *Souchos* for *Sbk*) and is actually exemplified in the variant version *Seuēchos* for Manetho's *Sebichōs*.

noted that one of those which are certainly false is nevertheless an Egyptian royal title. In the case of all the genuine names the prototypes are normally *nsw-b'ty* or *s3-R'* names. This means that Herodotus' informants were following the same principles of choice as those found in the New Kingdom king lists and in Manetho. Only one name, *Prōteus*, has demonstrably been injected into the tradition from Greek sources.

The upshot of this analysis is that, in the main, royal names are recorded with gratifying accuracy and in accordance with the practice prevalent in Egypt during the Late Period. There is some distortion and one case of clear contamination from Greek sources. This situation is evidently consistent with Herodotus' claim that his informants on Egyptian history were often Egyptians, in particular Egyptian priests.

2. Chronology

Herodotus' chronological scheme³² reveals a basic distinction between the dynasty of the gods and the human kings of Egypt (II, 4, 2; 144–5). This is entirely of a piece with an Egyptian tradition which emerges in many contexts but with particular clarity in the Turin Canon and Manetho.³³ Herodotus' divine kings are Pan, Herakles, Dionysos (Osiris), Typhon (Seth), and Horus. The tradition on the last reflects the standard Egyptian view. Herakles (Shu) is also an unsurprising feature since, although he appears neither in the Turin Canon nor in Manetho, he is nevertheless a senior member of the Heliopolitan Ennead of primordial gods and, as such, would become a likely candidate for inclusion in such a list. Pan (Mendes) is, at first sight, more problematic, but on closer consideration an explanation is not difficult to find: Mendes (Eg. Banebde) was the major god of the great Delta city of Mendes. Pre-eminently a creator god, he features in the Late Period as one of the major deities of the Egyptian pantheon.³⁴ It is far from improbable that his position in Herodotus' list reflects a tradition on the composition of the divine dynasty emanating from the Delta where the god Mendes was particularly in favour.

The account of the human kings from Min to Psammenitos offers its fair share of problems. The section from Min to Sethos presents a complex picture. The narrative yields 342 kings down to, and including, Sethos. If, as seems likely, this ruler is identical with Shabataka, Herodotus' total is by no means implausible. It should, however, be borne in mind that the concept of a 'correct total' in absolute terms is at best illusory in this context since Egyptian

³² In detail see Lloyd, *Introduction*, p. 185ff.

³³ Turin Canon, Col. I; Manetho, *FgrHist* 609, F. 3a, pp. 12–14.

³⁴ H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1952), pp. 451, 868ff.; H. de Meulenaere in W. Helck and W. Westendorf (Eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, IV (Wiesbaden, 1982), 43–5.

history was punctuated by periods of internal disruption when several rulers, often of dubious status, held power at the same time. Deciding who should be counted as a king was, therefore, very much a matter of opinion for the Ancient Egyptian and remains so for us. In addition, ancient scholars, like their modern descendants, would be confronted with numerous contradictions and confusions in their documentation amply illustrated by the surviving Egyptian king lists.³⁵ For all that, a survey of such chronological tables as that of Gardiner indicates³⁶ that a figure in the 350s would be perfectly compatible with available sources, and it is most intriguing that Manetho yields 323 if we simply use the volume totals given for the first two books of his work and add the dynasty totals from the Twentieth Dynasty down to Sethos/Sebichos.³⁷

The situation with the king total, therefore, is not unhappy, but the same cannot be said of some of the other features of the scheme which presents a number of historical errors:

a. The Pyramid Builders are located after Rhampsinitos and immediately before Asychis, i.e. over a millennium too late. There have been numerous attempts to explain this deficiency, but much the most plausible is to argue that it arose in the main from misleading information retailed to Herodotus by Egyptian priests and recorded at II, 100–101, 1. After informing Herodotus that Min was followed by 341 kings, the priests claimed that this group included 18 Ethiopian rulers and 1 woman, but ‘they did not speak of any achievement of distinction of the other kings, except for the last of them, Moiris’. This committed Herodotus to locating the Pyramid Builders at some point after Moiris since he knew perfectly well that they had been responsible for great monuments. There was no place for them after the Dodecarchy since Herodotus had firm information on that period which yielded a consecutive historical narrative. The events of the careers of Anysis and Sabakos lock them firmly into the early stages of the career of Psammetichos. The order of succession Moiris-Sesostris was presumably dictated by the fact that the prototypes of both belong to the Twelfth Dynasty. This means that we are left with the space between Sesostris and Asychis to accommodate Pheros, Proteus, Rhampsinitus, and the Pyramid Builders. Proteus would require a position close to Moiris because he had connections with the Trojan War

³⁵ E.g. Manetho’s account of the Twelfth Dynasty is badly muddled (*FgrHist* 609, F.2, 3a–b, pp. 28–31), even assigning Amenemhêt I to the Eleventh Dynasty. A comparison of the Abydos and Saqqara King Lists will reveal a distinct lack of congruence (e.g. Abydos 7 is missing in the Saqqara List and after *Snd* there is considerable variation) as well as considerable confusion (e.g. items 38–46 in the Saqqara List are out of sequence).

³⁶ *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 429ff.

³⁷ At the end of each volume of Manetho’s *Aigyptiaka* a total for the number of kings is given. The figures in the received text of Africanus’ version of Manetho are 192 for volume I and 96 for volume II. The total for the kings in the next volume down to Sethos/Sebichos is 35 in Africanus (*FgrHist* 609, pp. 58–61).

which Herodotus located c. 1330–1250 BC, and Moiris is placed in Herodotus' scheme c. 1350 BC (see below, p. 37). The reasons for the other positions are inevitably a matter of speculation, but perhaps are not, in this specific context, a crucial issue. It is sufficient that we have been able to offer perfectly plausible reasons for Herodotus' extraordinary late positioning of the Pyramid Builders.³⁸

b. The reign-lengths assigned to the rulers of this period are consistently wrong: Cheops gets 50 years (II, 127, 1) whereas the latest date known from contemporary monuments is Regnal Year 25/6. A likely explanation is that confusion has arisen in interpreting the Egyptian dating system. In Pharaonic times dates were expressed in terms of the cattle count which was described as a *h3t-sp*, so that events were said to take place in *h3t-sp* 2, 3, 4 etc. In the Old Kingdom a *h3t-sp* was normally two years long, whereas in later times it was only one and came to be equivalent to a regnal year. Thus, in the Old Kingdom *h3t-sp* 2 would be Regnal Year 3/4, but later Regnal Year 2.³⁹ This situation may well account for Herodotus' high figure since his reign length is *twice* that yielded by contemporary sources. It seems very likely that the person responsible for it saw a figure expressed in the post-Old Kingdom system but assumed that the Old Kingdom system was being used and, therefore, multiplied it by 2. We have a similar problem with Chephren who is allotted 56 years (II, 127, 3). The last known date on contemporary monuments is Regnal Year 25/6 whilst Eratosthenes gives 27 (*FgrHist* 610, F.1, Saophis II). The explanation for Herodotus' high figure may again rest in confusion created by the Old Kingdom dating system.

The situation is quite different with Mykerinos. According to II, 133, 1 and 5, he completed his 6th year and died in the 7th. In fact, he ruled much longer, the Turin Canon probably allotting him 28 years. In this instance it seems likely that the explanation lies in the folklore character of the Mykerinos *logos* as a whole since the figure 7 and its multiples are common typical numbers in folk contexts.⁴⁰

Intriguingly enough, if we turn to Manetho, we find that all three rulers are given reigns over twice as long as they should be: Cheops gets 63 years (*FgrHist* 609, p. 22), Chephren 66 (op. cit., p. 24), and Mykerinos 63 (op. cit., p. 24). These figures indicate that even a high-ranking Egyptian priest could provide reign lengths for these rulers which are even further from the mark

³⁸ This is essentially the view of H. Erbse, 'Vier Bemerkungen zu Herodot', *RhM* N.S. 98 (1955), p. 99ff.

³⁹ See further Gardiner, 'Regnal Years and Civil Calendar in Pharaonic Egypt', *JEA* 31 (1945), p. 11ff.; W. Stevenson Smith, *Cambridge Ancient History*, I, 3rd Edn. (Cambridge, 1971), p. 160ff.

⁴⁰ S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 Vols. (Copenhagen, 1955–8), M341.1.1.2; M341.1.2.5; M341.1.4.3.1; VI, p. 688ff.

than those of Herodotus. It might be countered that the figures in Manetho's tradition may be the product of textual corruption rather than an accurate reflection of what he actually wrote, but a deeper study of the testimony to Manetho suggests that textual corruption of numbers may well be less common than is often assumed and confusion in interpreting tradition, either on his part or that of his predecessors, is often a more likely explanation.⁴¹

The only other king in the first section to be given a reign length is Sabakos who is assigned 50 years (II, 137, 2; 139, 3). This is far too high since the Nubian king Shabaka reigned only from c.716–702. There is, however, a ready explanation. Since the Nubian conquest of Egypt was completed c.714 and was ended by Psammetichos I who came to the throne in 664, it could be claimed that the Nubian period lasted exactly 50 years. All we need to do, therefore, is to argue that, in the Herodotean tradition, Sabakos has subsumed all the other Nubian rulers.

c. At II, 127, 1, Chephren is said to be the successor and brother of Cheops. He was neither. Cheops' successor was Djedefrē'.⁴² This error probably arose in part because of the suspect legitimacy of Djedefrē' and in part because his pyramid was constructed at Abu Roash some way to the north of the Giza necropolis where the three major pyramids adjacent to each other would have encouraged the notion of immediate chronological propinquity. There is no reason to believe that it was Herodotus or any Greek source who made this error; for it occurs in the Westcar Papyrus where the succession Cheops-Chephren-Mykerinos is assumed. The error in the Herodotean tradition on the kinship relationship between Cheops and Chephren may have resulted from a vague knowledge on someone's part that Chephren was the brother of his predecessor Djedefrē'. When Djedefrē' fell out of the tradition, the other element may have remained and Chephren would then have been converted into Cheops' brother.

d. Mykerinos is stated to be the successor of Chephren (II, 129, 1). This is in agreement with the majority of the surviving Egyptian and Greek king lists, but there is evidence that at least one king, Baufrē', may have come between Chephren and Mykerinos.⁴³

e. Mykerinos is stated to be the son of Cheops (II, 129, 1). He was, in fact, the grandson, but the error would easily have arisen once the mistake had been made over the relationship between Cheops and Chephren (see above).

⁴¹ E.g. in Africanus' version of Manetho's Twelfth Dynasty Amenemhēt III appears twice, and on both occasions he gets 8 years. This is much too low since he is known to have ruled for at least 45 years (Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 439). It would, however, be difficult to argue for a textual corruption since the year total given for the dynasty at the end of the notice equals the total of the reign lengths given in the received text. The erroneous reign length for Amenemhēt III has probably arisen through confusion with his successor Amenemhēt IV who is given 8 years in Manetho and 9 years, 3 months, 27 days in the Turin Canon.

⁴² Stevenson Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 172ff.

⁴³ *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 175f.

f. On several occasions Herodotus attempts to pin down individual rulers in terms of years: at II, 142, 2–3, his calculations place Min 11,340 years before Sethos; at II, 13, 1, we are informed that Moiris died 900 years before Herodotus came to Egypt, i.e. c.1350 BC; and at II, 140, 2, it is claimed that Anysis lived more than 700 years before Amyrtaeus, i.e. c. 1150 BC. The first fix is spectacularly wrong since Min would have been king not much more than 2000 years before Sethos. The error arises from Herodotus' own calculations in that he makes the erroneous assumption that 341 kings must mean 341 full generations, and then converts at 3 generations to 100 years. The Moiris figure is about 400 years too late, but obtaining a true figure from any but the best informed priest would have been a problem. The only way in which such a total could have been acquired was by dead-reckoning and the complications of the Second and Third Intermediate Periods would have presented awesome difficulties to such an enterprise. The third figure is contradicted by Herodotus' own narrative. It emerges from II, 137, 1–2, 140, 1, and 152, 1, that Anysis was roughly contemporary with Psammetichos I, i.e. he should be placed rather over 200 years before Amyrtaeus. Presumably, Herodotus either did not notice or chose to ignore this problem. However, the figure 700 in itself would not be a surprising feature to find in a native folk tradition about Egypt's past since, like the reign length of Mykerinos, it embodies the typical number 7.⁴⁴

So much for the human kings from Min to Sethos. The second section consists of the Dodecarchy and the six kings of the Saite Dynasty from Psammetichos to Psammenitos. The Dodecarchy, or group of twelve kings, is best taken as a symbolic description of the fragmentation of Egypt during the period preceding the rise to power of Psammetichos I in 664. Why that number should have been chosen is an open question, but it may well be that Griffith was correct in relating it to the twelve courts of the Labyrinth which they were supposed to have constructed. As for the subsequent rulers, the number and order of kings are impeccable.⁴⁵ Particularly interesting, however, is the information given on reign lengths; for they are spectacularly more accurate than those of the previous section: those of Psammetichos, Nekos, Psammis, Amasis, and Psammenitos are all compatible with Egyptian data. The only major problem is Apries who is given 25 years (II, 161, 2). This ruler came to the throne at the beginning of the civil year 589–8 and was deposed in 570 not later than month 10, having reigned 19 full years and a substantial part of his regnal year 20. However, he continued to lay claim to the throne as late

⁴⁴ See above, n. 40.

⁴⁵ On the history of these troubled times see K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period*, 2nd Edn. (Revised) (Warminster, 1986), pp. 398, 456, 459. Griffith discusses the significance of the figure 12 in op. cit., III, p. 71.

as the civil year 567.⁴⁶ On that reckoning he would have had a reign of 22–3 years which is strikingly in harmony with Diodorus' figure of 22 years (I, 68, 1). Perhaps the most plausible explanation of Herodotus' total is that it arose from confusion created by the propagandist tradition of II, 169, 2ff. (see below, pp. 44ff.) and doubts resulting from it as to when precisely Apries did die.

Our analysis of these chronological data may be summarized as follows. The conception of Egypt's past underlying the account – a dynasty of gods followed by a long series of human kings – is canonical Egyptian doctrine; the number of human kings is consistent with extant information; and the chronological information on the Saite kings is generally compatible with Egyptian sources. There are, however, clear errors in pre-Saite chronology. Most glaring is the displacement of the Pyramid Builders, but reign-lengths, when given, are consistently wrong, family relationships are sometimes incorrect, and the few attempts to pin down rulers in time are unsuccessful. However, whatever problems or errors occur, we can almost always plausibly ascribe them to deficiencies in Herodotus' Egyptian sources which would by no means have been as reliable as some modern scholars unversed in Egyptology are determined to believe. It is clear from the discussion that these sources were in some cases documentary, but evidence of the presence of folk elements indicates that oral tradition has played a role at some level. Saite chronology is much better and corroborates Herodotus' claim that the second half of his history is based on better sources and is more accurate than the earlier section.

3. *The Narrative of Events*

A careful reading of the historical narrative soon reveals a number of clearly defined features:

a. There is a certain amount of genuine, or probably genuine, historical reminiscence. The historicity of the royal names and chronology has already been discussed (see above, pp. 31ff.). Apart from that, the pre-Dodecarch section includes the role of Min/Menes as the first king of a united Egypt, the connection of Moiris/Amenemhēt III with Memphis (II, 101, 2), the martial prowess of the Senwosrets of the Twelfth Dynasty (II, 102–10), the wealth of the Ramessids (II, 121), the building prowess of the Fourth Dynasty (II, 124–34), the Nubian occupation (II, 137, 139–40), and the conflict with Assyria (II, 141). In general, however, the admixture of non-historical elements is preponderant. The second half of the narrative shows a firmer

⁴⁶ For the chronology of Apries' reign it is now essential to use E. Edel, 'Amasis und Nebuchadrezar II', *GM* 29 (1978), p. 13ff. This renders all previous discussions obsolete.

purchase on historical reality, even though the coverage of events is rather patchy: we have a clear indication that Carian and Ionian mercenaries were important; the building activities of Saite kings are frequently discussed; Nekos' canal-building scheme is described at some length; relations between the kings and the *Machimoi* get extensive treatment; data on relations between Saite rulers and Greeks both outside and inside the country abound – particularly useful is the evidence on Amasis' activities abroad and on the organization of Naucratis; we also get information on Saite foreign military adventures and a lengthy, if suspect, account of the motives behind and course of the Persian invasion which brought the Twenty-sixth Dynasty to an end. It is, however, clear that, even in the post-Dodecarch section, the historical data are overlaid and permeated by a large quantity of pseudo-historical matter.

b. Folklore and other narrative fiction elements abound throughout:⁴⁷ at II, 100, the tale of Nitokris, who takes revenge on behalf of her murdered brother by inviting those responsible to a feast and killing them, illustrates the *fête-fatale* motif; at II, 107, the efforts of Sesostris' brother to kill him, exemplify a string of motifs – the treacherous brother (K2211), the fire motif (H1199.10; F848.4, S12.2.2), son-saves-father (R154.2, cf. 3; H1162.2), and *fête-fatale*; at II, 108–9, the Sesostris *logos* also exemplifies the culture-hero motif; the tale of the blindness of Pheros at II, 111, is almost equally rich in motifs – the spear motif, particularly the spear which offends a divine being to bring disaster on the thrower, the oracle which appears easy but proves difficult to fulfil, the figure 10, urine as a magical agent, sexual purity, the immorality of women, the anonymous hero, and rags-to-riches;⁴⁸ at II, 121–2, Rhampsinitos' activities provide us with the discomfiture-of-the-ruler motif (H507.1.0.2; K346.1.1), the wily thief (K301ff.), the formulaic number 3, prostitution (T455), substitution (K525.1), reversal-of-fortune, the underworld motif,⁴⁹ and the winning of advantage by victory in a game (E756.2; R111.1.10); at II, 131, we find the incest motif, at 133 the death prophecy (M341), the downfall-of-the-king (M342.1), and prophecy-fulfilled (M370ff.); at II, 140, the-return-of-the-king (F451.6.12; J1189.3; R191). Even in the post-Dodecarch period the search for such material does not go unrewarded: the tale of Psammetichos' contre-temps with the Dodecarchs (II, 147, 152, 2–5) is firmly rooted in the historical conditions of Egypt during the Twenty-fifth–Twenty-sixth Dynasties when fragmentation was very much the order of the day, but fictional elements are easily detectable – the prophecy of the bowl provides another example of the extremely common prophecy-fulfilled motif; the

⁴⁷ In referring to motifs I have generally used the system of Thompson, op. cit.

⁴⁸ See W. Aly, *Volksmärchen, Sage und Novelle bei Herodot und seinen Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen, 1921), p. 66; Thompson, op. cit., Index, s.v.

⁴⁹ For the number 3 see Thompson, op. cit. VI, p. 791ff.; for reversal of fortune see op. cit., L100ff.; for the underworld motif see op. cit., Index, s.v. Underworld.

account of the Elean embassy to Psammis at II, 160, shows the folk-motifs of the wise ruler⁵⁰ and the test (D1810.8.4; H530–886) as well as the common motif of the wisdom of the Egyptians; the scatological element at II, 162, smacks of folks sources; and the reproofs offered by Amasis to the Egyptians who expressed contempt for his allegedly humble background (II, 172) look distinctly fictional; for we find no fewer than four common motifs: reversal-of-fortune, the wise ruler, the trick, and the obscenity motif.⁵¹ Finally, it should be noted that aetiological legends particularly designed to explain features of monuments are also in evidence (II, 126, 2, 131, 141, 151 (possibly), 175, 3–5, 181).

c. Propaganda elements are clearly present.⁵² They may well have entirely oral origins, but, where Egyptian sources are concerned, we must remember that many Egyptian literary genres are to a greater or lesser extent propagandist in character and the elements which occur in Herodotus' tradition may well have been injected into it from written sources. Cases of Egyptian propaganda are not difficult to isolate: the Sesostris *logos* clearly embodies nationalist propaganda in that Sesostris, the ideal Egyptian ruler, is presented as an Egyptian king whose conquests surpass those of the Persian rulers of Egypt: at II, 110, 1, he overcomes the Ethiopians against whom Cambyses had suffered heavily (III, 25), and at II, 103, 1, he conquers the Scythians who had defeated even the great Darius (IV, 1–144). At II, 152, 1, the omission of the Assyrians from the narrative of how Nekos I was restored to Egypt may also be due to nationalist distortion. At II, 169, we have a more complex case. The account of Apries' captivity given here is refuted by the Amasis stele where Apries is said to have been killed in battle (see below, p. 45). The easiest explanation for the Herodotean tradition is to argue that it is based on pro-Amasis propaganda since Amasis' reputation benefits from this account in that Apries is clearly blamed for his own death. According to Herodotus, although Amasis had deposed Apries, the latter richly deserved it. Amasis then treated him well and kept him in the palace; he did not kill him, even under pressure, but handed him over to his subjects who executed him themselves. All this suggests that Herodotus' tradition is drawing on pro-Amasis propaganda. The precise source cannot be established with certainty, but the fact that the same propagandist bias is exemplified in the Amasis stele raises the distinct

⁵⁰ For the wise ruler see Lloyd, 'Necho and the Red Sea: some Considerations', *JEA* 63 (1977), p. 142ff. On royal tales in general see Thompson, *op. cit.*, Index, s.v. Royalty; *id.*, *The Folktale* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1977), p. 268.

⁵¹ For the obscenity motif see Thompson, *Motif-Index*, Index, s.v. Obscene.

⁵² On propaganda in Ancient Egypt see G. Posener, *Littérature et politique dans l'Égypte de la XIIIe dynastie* (Paris, 1956); Lloyd, 'Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt', *Historia* 31 (1982), p. 33ff.; W. K. Simpson, 'Egyptian Sculpture and Two-dimensional Representation as Propaganda', *JEA* 68 (1982), p. 266ff.

possibility that it is Egyptian in origin. At II, 172–3, on the other hand, we are probably confronted with an element of anti-Amasis propaganda since the point of emphasis in these tales is Amasis' alleged low antecedents and bohemian predilections. A similiar source may also explain the anti-Amasis tradition at II, 174.

In addition to this Egyptian material there is at least one trace of what looks suspiciously like Greek propaganda. At II, 163, the number of Greek mercenaries mustered by Apries is given as 30,000, and we are subsequently told at II, 169, 1, that they were numerically greatly inferior to the Egyptian forces of Amasis which defeated them. All numbers featuring 3 must be treated with caution in Herodotus,⁵³ but a disparity in numbers is likely enough, and it seems at the least probable that Herodotus, or a Greek source, has made the most of it in order to soothe Greek national pride for a signal setback to Hellenic arms.

d. Ethical and ideological concerns, both Egyptian and Greek, are detectable, and can sometimes be shown to have exercised a pernicious influence on the preservation of accurate traditions. In the material on the pre-Dodecarch period the Egyptian ideal of kingship appears to have had serious effects in stripping away the historically specific. According to this concept⁵⁴ the king was a divine being, champion of the cosmic order and responsible for the well-being of Egypt in all its aspects. As such he was expected to discharge, or was claimed to have discharged, a canonical set of actions which emerge clearly in surviving documentation and include internal economic activities, works for the gods, and military expeditions to Asia, Libya, and Nubia to name only the most prominent. Traces of this view of kingship are easily detected: at II, 99, Min's canal-digging and associated irrigation activities are canonical; at II, 102–110, Sesostris emerges as an embodiment of the Pharaonic ideal, despite some Greek retouching, and it is likely that few, if any, of his alleged activities reflect the achievements of his Twelfth Dynasty prototypes; at II, 111, Pheros' connection with the Nile is of a piece with Egyptian tradition, despite the fact

⁵³ On the number 3 in Herodotus see J. W. S. Blom, *De typische Getallen bij Homeros en Herodotos*. I. *Triaden, Hebdomaden en Enneaden* (Nijmegen, 1936), and Fehling, op. cit., p. 155ff. Such numbers are simply intended to promote verisimilitude and are best treated as symbolic, the 3 signalling that the figure is not to be taken at the foot of the letter, e.g. the claim that the blocks used in the Great Pyramid all exceeded 30 feet (II, 124, 5) is a gross exaggeration, taken literally, but Herodotus means, and would have been taken to mean, no more than that they were largish blocks. The mercenary figure here symbolizes a substantial but not overwhelming force.

⁵⁴ On the Egyptian concept of kingship see A. Moret, *Le caractère religieux de la royauté pharaonique* (Annales du Musée Guimet. Bib. d'Etudes XV) (Paris, 1902); Bonnet, op. cit., p. 380ff.; Posener, *De la divinité du pharaon* (Paris, 1960); E. Hornung, *Geschichte als Fest* (Darmstadt, 1966); Helck and Westendorf (Eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, III. 462–4; 475–96, 526–626 (various authors).

that he is presented as acting contrary to the ideal and is punished accordingly; the association of Asychis with legislation at II, 136, is again in harmony with the ideal of kingship; at II, 137, the account of Sabakos' excavation activities looks like another reflection of Pharaoh's responsibility for the irrigation system; finally, at II, 140, the tale of Anysis and his island has very much the appearance of a demythologized account of the death and resurrection of the king in his aspect as demiurge.⁵⁵

Greek ideology and value systems can also be detected at numerous points: at II, 111, Pheros is said to have been afflicted with blindness because, out of *atasthaliē*, 'arrogance, presumptuousness', he had attacked the Nile with a spear. This moral judgement is deeply rooted in the body of concepts encapsulated by *hybris*; at II, 120, the notion that offences against the moral order will be visited with retribution is clearly stated; the warning dream of Sabakos (II, 139) is an excellent example of a feature frequent in Herodotus. The notion of retribution for *adikia* is also clearly present in his interpretation of its significance; the dream oracle of Sethos (II, 141) is equally typical whilst the alleged inscription on the stone statue of Sethos illustrates the principle that the pious will receive the assistance of the gods; at II, 151–2, the Dodecarchs make an unsuccessful attempt to avert a prophesied disaster. They fail to accept this, and are thereby guilty of an *adikon* which brings retribution (*tisis*); at II, 161–169, the events leading to the fall of Apries are explicitly cast into the mould of the *hybris-nemesis* syndrome. He begins at the height of prosperity but falls from this state to disaster and death. According to Herodotus, he alienated the Egyptians by his cruel treatment of Patarbemis, but his most heinous offence is retailed in II, 169, where it is stated that he was convinced that not even the gods could deprive him of his kingdom. Such presumption is hybriatic and in Herodotus' value system will always be visited with retribution; in the narrative of relations between Amasis and Polycrates (II, 182; III, 39–47) Amasis is presented as a warner figure operating on the principle that success which passes beyond the lot of man will excite the wrath of the gods. Amasis advises Polycrates to abandon something by which he lays great store, but the latter's attempt to take this advice proves abortive. Amasis then decides that disaster is inevitable and breaks off his relationship to avoid the pain of losing his friend.⁵⁶ The narrative of the test of Psammenitos at III,

⁵⁵ The island/hill is one of the commonest and most potent of Egyptian mythological symbols. It is the primeval hill which emerged from the waters of the ocean Nun and from which all created things and all creative power were held to emerge: see Bonnet, *op. cit.*, p. 847ff.; R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1959), Index, s.v. Primeval Mound.

⁵⁶ The narrative of Polycrates' career is heavily contaminated by pseudo-historical material (Amasis the warner figure, III, 40–3; the ring motif, 41–3; the carefully wrought speech of the fisherman replete with dramatic irony, 42; the trick motif, 123; the dream, 124; the blindness of the doomed magnate, 125, all set firmly against the background of the success-*hybris*-retribution syndrome). Once this is stripped away, we are left with a significantly reduced body of material

13–14, again emphasizes the unpredictability of fortune both in the fate of Psammenitos himself and in his reaction to that of his old retainer. This point is reinforced by the reintroduction of Croesus at III, 14, 11, the ruler whose career provided Herodotus with the paradigm *par excellence* of this principle, though whether this reappearance is Herodotus' own creation or emanates from his sources must remain an open question.

e. There are probable traces of mythical themes in a number of episodes: at II, 137, the pro-Ethiopian tradition probably owes something to Nubia's special status in Egyptian attitudes as a mythical land;⁵⁷ Anysis' island of ash and earth (II, 140) looks suspiciously like a reflection of the Egyptian mythological concept of the island/hill which was believed to be the source of life; at II, 141, Sethos receives divine assistance in discharging his office. In Egyptian thought Pharaoh was himself a god, the incarnation of Horus, and was believed to receive the assistance of the other gods when he discharged his duties strictly according to the cosmic plan. In the Sethos episode his Horus aspect may even be indicated by the reference to mice, if we regard the mouse in this instance as equivalent to the shrewmouse of Horus of Letopolis.⁵⁸

f. Confusion between or conflation of different rulers is likely in a number of cases; the colossi of Sesostris described in II, 110, are similar to known examples of Ramesses II, a situation suggesting that the two rulers have been assimilated; the Rhampsinitos of II, 121–2, looks like a composite creation embodying the Ramesses Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, though the mesmeric figure of Ramesses II may have made a particularly important contribution;⁵⁹ at II, 137–40, Anysis appears to be the equivalent of the Pharaohs of the Twenty-third Dynasty whilst Sabakos seems to have subsumed all the Nubian rulers of the Twenty-fifth; finally, at II, 152, 1,

which we can take seriously as history. As far as relations between Amasis and Polycrates are concerned, the most that we can accept is that an alliance existed at some stage and was eventually terminated for some reason by one or the other. Attempts to flesh out this episode (e.g. B. Mitchell, 'Herodotus and Samos', *JHS* 95 (1975), p. 75ff.) are inevitably speculative. Short of the improbable advent of new and different types of evidence we shall never know the truth of the matter.

⁵⁷ See L. Kákossy, 'Nubien als mythisches Land im Alterthum', *Annales Univ. Budapest: Sect. Hist.* 8 (1966), p. 1ff. The deep penetration of the area by Egyptian religion in the New Kingdom is well described by B. J. Kemp, 'Imperialism and Empire in New Kingdom Egypt (c.1575–1087 B.C.)', in P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker (Eds.), *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 21ff.

⁵⁸ On Horus of Letopolis and his affinities see H. Junker, *Der sehende und blinde Gott* (SBAW phil.hist. Classe, 1942, 7) (Munich, 1942); E. Brunner-Traut, 'Spitzmaus und Ichneumon als Tiere des Sonnengottes', *NAWG* 1965, 7, p. 124ff.

⁵⁹ The image of Ramesses II in later tradition is discussed by Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Monumenta Hannah Sheen Dedicata II) (Warminster, 1982), p. 226ff.

Herodotus states that Nekos I was killed by king Sabakos whereas it must have been Tanutamūn, the last Nubian king of Egypt.⁶⁰

g. Chronological confusion is patent (see above, pp. 33ff.).

b. Confusion and foreshortening of events is not difficult to detect: the omission of certain rulers from the Fourth Dynasty (see above, p. 36) may well have its origins here, though it is just as likely that it directly or indirectly derived from written sources which, for some reason, refused to concede their legitimacy; at II, 154, we are informed that Carian and Ionian mercenaries were settled in the *Stratopeda*, 'Camps', by Psammetichos but were subsequently moved to Memphis by Amasis. It has generally been assumed that this took place at the very beginning of the latter's reign as part of the wave of anti-Greek feeling which brought him to the throne. Herodotus clearly implies that the mercenaries never returned and states that he saw the remains of their houses and the slipways for their ships. It could well be that the course of events was rather more complex than this. Recent research to the east of the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile has identified a fort which has come to be called 'Migdol'. This and the well-known military installation at Daphnae fit Herodotus' description of the location of the *Stratopeda* admirably. If this is correct, the Herodotean account of the withdrawal of the mercenaries must be in error since the pottery indicates occupation by such troops at both sites down to the end of the reign of Amasis.⁶¹ Perhaps what happened was that the Carians and Ionians were moved by Amasis at the beginning of his reign and subsequently restored there to meet the serious threat of invasion over the eastern frontier. Such an hiatus might well have failed to leave any identifiable trace in the archaeological record. If this suggestion is valid, the ruins seen by Herodotus could only have reflected a later withdrawal, presumably in the Persian Period, and Herodotus, or his source, would stand convicted of conflating two different movements of the Carian and Ionian mercenaries. Again, it is stated at II, 161, that Psammis died immediately after his Nubian campaign whereas the latter event took place in 593/2 and his death in 589/8. Intriguingly enough, a Demotic papyrus of the Persian Period makes precisely the same error.⁶² However, the most spectacular example of distortion is to be found in Herodotus' account of the civil war between Apries and Amasis (II, 161–3, 169). According to Herodotus, Apries sent an expeditionary force of *Machimoi*, the Egyptian warrior class, against Cyrene, but this was defeated

⁶⁰ On the history of this period see id., *The Third Intermediate Period*, p. 393.

⁶¹ The archaeology of Daphnae is discussed by W. M. F. Petrie, *Tanis II. Nebesheh (Am) and Defenneh (Tahpanhes)* (London, 1888), p. 47ff.; R. M. Cook, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. British Museum*, VIII (London, 1954), p. 57ff.; J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*, Revised Edn. (London, 1980), p. 133f.; A. Snodgrass, 'Archaeology', in M. Crawford (Ed.), *Sources for Ancient History* (Cambridge, London etc., 1983), p. 144f.

⁶² See Griffith, op. cit., p. 92.

and rebelled against him. Apries then sent Amasis to deal with the problem, but the rebels appointed him king. Apries then made ready his mercenaries and marched against Amasis, the two forces meeting at Momemphis. Here Apries and his mercenaries were defeated, and he himself was taken prisoner by Amasis who deposited him at Sais and treated him well there until persistent rumours of disloyalty compelled Amasis to hand him over to the Egyptians. They duly executed him. This narrative of events is very different from that in the Amasis stele which provides an Egyptian view of the episode.⁶³ According to this text, Apries was defeated by Amasis in the last months of the civil year 570 but survived for a further three years, possibly as an exile in Babylonia, though his precise whereabouts at this stage remain a mystery. He then resurfaced in Egypt with a Babylonian army in 567, possibly as part of a plan of Nebuchadrezzar II to re-establish him on the throne as a pro-Chaldean puppet. In the defeat of this force in the third month of the civil year 567 Apries was killed. Although we must make some allowance for pro-Amasis propaganda in the Amasis stele, it is reasonable to assume that it is basically accurate in its broad narrative framework. If so, Herodotus' account is badly wrong. It would appear that the operations of Regnal Year I and Regnal Year 4 of Amasis have been combined, i.e. the tradition has been foreshortened.

i. Contamination from Greek traditions and practices is easily detectable, but it is impossible to establish whether this emanates from Herodotus or his sources: at II, 99, it is conceivable that the description of Min's hydraulic enterprises owes something to Greek traditions on Thales' activities in the same sphere (see I, 75); the claim that Egypt had been suitable for horses and carts before Sesostri's canal-building operations (II, 108, 2) involves a considerable anachronism which may well have a Greek origin,⁶⁴ but the assertion that his aim was to improve the drinking water chimes so well with Hippocratic preoccupations with this problem that we must assume Greek contamination there;⁶⁵ the same holds true of the ascription of egalitarianism to Sesostri at II, 109, 1; the narrative of Proteus' reign and the sojourn of Helen in Egypt bears an unequivocally Greek stamp. Proteus is simply the Homeric sea god of *Od.* IV, 351ff., who has been transmuted into a human ruler and has then supplanted the *Odyssey's* Thon, whilst Thon himself has been converted into an official. Note that the insistence in II, 114, on the demands of *xenia* belongs firmly in a Greek context; at II, 125, 2–4,

⁶³ See n. 46 above.

⁶⁴ The horse and wheeled transport do not appear in Egypt until the Second Intermediate Period well after the time of Sesostri's Twelfth Dynasty prototypes.

⁶⁵ This concern also appears at Herodotus, III, 23, 2–3. The fullest treatment of Hippocratic views on the subject appears in *Airs, Waters, Places* (W. H. S. Jones, *Hippocrates* (Loeb Classical Library) (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 65ff.), but it is a recurrent theme (H. E. Sigerist, *A History of Medicine*, II (New York, 1961), pp. 247, 280ff.).

Herodotus states that the stone blocks used in building the Great Pyramid were raised by means of 'devices made of short pieces of wood'. Several ingenious attempts have been made to explain the expression,⁶⁶ but much the most plausible view is that Herodotus is simply thinking in terms of contemporary Greek building practice, i.e. he thought that cranes were used by the Egyptians exactly as Greeks would in his own time. The conviction that they were of small pieces of wood may have arisen from the knowledge that boats were made in that way in Egypt (II, 96, 2); at II, 125, 7, it is claimed that iron tools were used. This again surely reflects contemporary Greek technology;⁶⁷ in the same section we find a reference to the use of silver to pay for work on the Great Pyramid, a statement which cannot be true and probably reflects contemporary Greek economic practice; at II, 134, we are informed that one tradition on the origin of the Third Pyramid of Giza attributed it to the Greek courtesan Rhodopis. This evidently had its origins in the notorious relationship between Doricha-Rhodopis and Sappho's brother Charaxos who had Egyptian trading connections; at II, 136, the claim that in Asychis' times there was 'a lack of commerical dealings' and the discussion of the law of credit sounds much more Greek than Egyptian. Probably, Herodotus, or his source, simply assumed that Egypt was running a money economy of a Greek kind at that period; finally, the insistence at II, 151, 3, that the issue of *pronoia* was a factor in apportioning blame harmonizes perfectly with Greek legal thinking on cases of homicide, but has no counterpart in our extant Egyptian documentation.⁶⁸

j. Overschematization, a standard Greek habit of mind, is not conspicuous by its absence: in the account of the Labyrinth (II, 148) we are told that there were two types of chamber which complemented each other, one series above ground and the other below. Each group was alleged to number 1500. Leaving aside the figure, which is probably impressionistic, we can say with some confidence that, despite the severe destruction on the site, sufficient information has been gleaned from it to indicate the extreme improbability of such a neat arrangement. The most likely explanation is that Herodotus, or his source, had heard of the existence of some subterranean chambers and simply

⁶⁶ J. J. Coulton, 'Lifting in Early Greek Architecture', *JHS* 94 (1974), p. 11.

⁶⁷ It is not inconceivable that the Egyptians contemporary with Herodotus had acquired this technology from the Greeks and were using it themselves in the fifth century, but I know of no evidence to support this suggestion.

⁶⁸ Cases of homicide where *pronoia* was involved were treated in Athenian law quite differently from those where it was not: see J. Jones, *The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks* (Oxford, 1956), p. 68; D. M. MacDowell, *Athenian Homicide Law in the Age of the Orators* (Publications of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Manchester 15) (Manchester, 1963); id., *The Law in Classical Athens* (London, 1978), p. 114ff.

assumed that those below ground corresponded in number and area with those above.⁶⁹

An even clearer case exists in the description of Naukratis at II, 178. Here all the *temenea* mentioned are regarded as belonging to the same period. They demonstrably do not; for the archaeological evidence proves conclusively that the Hellenion is of later date than the other sacred enclosures mentioned. In this case the taste for neat schematized patterns has evidently encouraged the assumption that all the *temenea* belong to the period of the reorganization of the city by Amasis.⁷⁰

k. Analogies with Greek culture, real or imaginary, are of consuming interest and play an important role in the choice and treatment of subject matter. Throughout, the interest shown in dreams and oracles within Egyptian traditions must be due to a considerable degree to the importance attached to them in Greek culture; at II, 2, Psammetichos is claimed to have tried to discover by experimental means the oldest people in the world, and at II, 28, the same king is presented as attempting to establish the sources of the Nile. Both of these problems were current preoccupations of Greek science, and their presence in this context is a reflection of that;⁷¹ at II, 113,2, it is at least conceivable that the parallel with Greek *asyla* attracted Herodotus' attention to the existence of the institution in the temple of Herakles at the Canopic mouth of the Nile; the attention devoted to the alleged occurrence of the doctrine of *palingenesia* in Egypt (II, 123, 2–3) must reflect its importance in Greek philosophical and religious thought; at II, 144–5, a considerable amount of the interest in the Dynasty of the Gods was generated by the fact that the relevant Egyptian deities had been identified with gods of the Greek pantheon; a particularly interesting case is provided by the account of the *Machimoi* (II, 164–8) which is, to a considerable extent, the result of alleged similarities with the Spartan *homoioi*; at II, 170, the lake of Sais is explicitly compared to the *trochoeidēs* at Delos; the Saite mysteries are connected at II, 171, with the *Thesmophoria* which is alleged to have been imported from Egypt; at IV, 42, we are presented with the spectacle of Nekos dispatching an expedition to circumnavigate Africa. It is extremely improbable that this

⁶⁹ Useful studies of the Labyrinth problem will be found in K. Michalowski, 'The Labyrinth Enigma: Archaeological Suggestions', *JEA* 54 (1968), p. 219ff.; Lloyd, 'The Egyptian Labyrinth', op. cit. 56 (1970), p. 81ff.; D. Arnold, 'Das Labyrinth und seine Vorbilder', *MDAIK* 25 (1979), p. 1ff.

⁷⁰ C. C. Edgar in D. G. Hogarth, H. L. Lorimer, and C. C. Edgar, 'Naukratis, 1903', *JHS* 25 (1905), p. 136; Boardman, op. cit., p. 120f.

⁷¹ It is inconceivable that an Egyptian king could have proceeded in the way described by Herodotus. We can only assume that these interests have been foisted onto Psammetichos by Greeks themselves: see Thomson, op. cit., p. 56ff.; Lloyd, *JEA* 63 (1977), p. 153.

episode is historically sound.⁷² It seems more likely that it is, in part, a reflection of a concern for the Red Sea in military and commercial terms on Nekos' part and a conviction that he shared the Greek interest in the question of the number and demarcation of the continents.

The potential for historical distortion provided by this concern with analogies is particularly clear. The scientific interests foisted on Psammetichos and Nekos are patent instances of this, but there is always a danger that the Greek analogy will contaminate the Egyptian phenomenon involved. It is, therefore, justifiable to suspect that the clear attempt to find analogies between the Spartan *homoioi* and the *Machimoi* has severely contaminated Herodotus' description of the latter, and we should be extremely cautious of taking it at the foot of the letter as an accurate description of a major group in Egyptian society.

1. The focus of interest is patently graeco-centric. It is evident that Herodotus was not in the least concerned with producing a survey and appraisal of Egypt's past with the intention of isolating the happenings of intrinsic historical importance. Many events are chosen for discussion because they have a particular interest for a Greek audience: at II, 103, the concern with Sesostris' alleged subjugation of the Scythians and Thracians arises because they both formed an important element on the fringes of the Greek world; at II, 104, the discussion of the Egyptian origin of the Colchians can be similarly explained; the attention devoted to Sesostris' putative Ionian monuments at II, 106, could not fail to arrest a Greek audience; the lengthy discussion of the relations between Proteus, Helen, and Menelaus (II, 112–20), and the disquisition on the activities of Rhodopis (II, 134–5) are further clear examples.

The graeco-centric orientation emerges with particular clarity in Herodotus' account of Saite foreign policy where the choice of material is patently determined by Greek interest or involvement: at I, 105, we are told how Psammetichos persuaded the Scythians to abandon their movement southward to Egypt. The reason for the inclusion of this episode is that the Scythian invasion was an important event in the recent history of Asia which Herodotus regarded as the preliminary to the Persian attacks on the Greek world; at II, 157, we have a brief mention of the siege of Azotos (Ashdod). It is likely that one motive, though not the only one, is that Greek mercenaries were involved; at II, 159, the only events in Nekos' Asiatic operations to be mentioned are the Battle of Magdolos (Migdol) and the capture of Kadytis (Gaza). These events are clearly selected for discussion because they were commemorated in the temple of Apollo at Branchidae; the account of the Elean embassy to Egypt

⁷² See Lloyd, *JEA* 63 (1977), p. 142ff.; Y. Janvier, 'Pour une meilleure lecture d'Hérodote. A propos de l'Égypte et du périple de Néchao', *LEC* 46 (1978), p. 97ff.

(II, 160) must have been included and given such prominence because of its intrinsic interest to Greeks; at II, 161–9, the Greek participation in the Nubian campaign of Psammis will have been a major, if not the major, reason for mentioning the campaign; the lengthy and detailed discussion of Naucratis and Amasis' alleged philhellenism (II, 178–9) evidently reflects the interests of Greeks, and the same holds true of the account of the Delphian embassy to Amasis and his generous donation (II, 180), the description of Amasis' close relationship with Cyrene and his marriage to a Cyrenean woman (II, 181), his dedications to Greek temples in Cyrene, Lindus, and Samos, and the reference to his capture of Cyprus (II, 182).

It would appear that the discussion of Saite internal policy was built up in the same way. The *Machimoi* problem gets full rein because of Greek involvement in attempts to solve it and also because of Greek interest in a Spartan parallel to the *Machimoi*. Other important issues, such as Saite relations with the temples, are absent,⁷³ presumably because Greeks did not feature in the measures and policies in question. Indeed, this may explain why internal policy as a whole gets such cavalier treatment.

The graeco-centric bias of Herodotus' Saite history has an important consequence which is easily ignored. We tend to assume, often quite unawares, that Herodotus' account gives us an indication of what was particularly important about the period. The foregoing analysis makes it clear that this view is unwarranted and that major issues may well have been ignored and become lost to us simply because they did not impinge to any extent on Greek consciousness.

m. Herodotus' taste for *thōmata*, 'marvels' is clearly a potent factor in determining what is chosen for discussion: royal building activities at the large and spectacular temple of Ptah at Memphis are frequently mentioned with awe (II, 101, 108, 110, 121, 136, 153: cf. 112, 176); the long discussion of the pyramids (II, 124–35) is clearly motivated by their status as *thōmata*; the discussion of the Labyrinth forms an essential part of the Psammetichos *logos* (II, 148), but its inordinate length is a reflection of its value as a marvel. It is explicitly above all its size which impresses; we have a particularly good example at II, 149–50, in the description of L. Moiris. This is patently irrelevant and owes its presence exclusively to its being a *thōma*, a status which arises from Herodotus' mistaken conviction that the lake was man-made. If it had been, it would have been necessary to move 50,000 million cubic m of spoil!⁷⁴ Herodotus' interest in Psammetichos' building work on behalf of the

⁷³ On this aspect of policy see F. K. Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens vom 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende* (Berlin, 1953), p. 48ff.; Lloyd in B. Trigger and others, *Ancient Egypt, a Social History* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 284, 301ff.

⁷⁴ On the geology of the area see R. H. Brown, *The Fayum and Lake Moeris* (London, 1892); G. Caton-Thompson and E. Gardner, *The Desert Fayum* (London, 1934); J. Ball, *Contributions*

Apis (II, 153) presumably reflects the animal's status as a *thōma*; in the excursuses on Buto and its shrines (II, 155–6) it is explicitly the *thōmata* which attract attention – the allegedly monolithic naos, with a monolithic roof, would have had an area of c.400 sq. m, and the allegedly floating island of Chemmis was an even more astounding phenomenon; at II, 157, in the account of the twenty-nine year siege of Ashdod during the reign of Psammetichos, Herodotus' astonishment is evident. There is no reason to doubt the historicity of the event, but its length is quite unacceptable, though we can only guess at the explanation for attributing such a time-span to the operation. The *thōma* element is also crucial in other sections: Nekos' abortive canal (II, 158), the account of the royal cemetery at Sais (II, 169), the obelisks and the sacred lake at Sais (II, 170), the account of Amasis' building operations (II, 182), and the alleged circumnavigation of Africa in Nekos' reign (IV, 42).

n. Narrative embellishment is clearly in evidence. The tale of the treasury of Rhampsinitos (II, 121) is a particularly fine specimen. It is based on a situation where the king is presented with four problems, attempts four solutions, and is foiled every time by a clever adversary. The problems and the ingenuity of the solutions in themselves generate interest, and tension escalates as each successive trick is played out, and the listener/reader is driven to ask himself whether the king's adversary can get away with it yet again. The narrative is given a psychological dimension in that motives and reactions are carefully recorded, the impact of the mother's intervention and the progressive and skilfully measured beguiling of the guards being particularly well delineated. The whole tale is given verisimilitude by the device much favoured by Herodotus and used by all practised story-tellers, the judicious use of detail – we are told where the treasury was, what it was made of, the size of the movable stone, that the old builder even gave his sons the measurements relating to it, that traps were not simply deposited in the chamber but were actually disposed around the jars, and much more besides.

The multiple *peripeteiai* in the rise of Psammetichos may well owe something to the desire for dramatic effect; the grim irony of the consequences of the Dodecarchs' humane treatment of Psammetichos is clearly brought out (II, 151, 3); at II, 172–4, the three tales told of Amasis are narrated with a skilfully varied format: in the first, the lesson is delivered in indirect speech; in the second, direct speech is used; the third, on the other

to the *Geography of Egypt* (Cairo, 1939), p. 178ff.; K. W. Butzer, *Studien zum vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Landschaftswandel der Sahara*. III. *Die Naturlandschaft Ägyptens während der Vorgeschichte und der dynastischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1959); id., *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt. A Study in Cultural Ecology* (Prehistoric Archaeology and Ecology Series) (Chicago and London, 1976), pp. 16, 36ff., 41, 47, 51ff., 92.

hand, employs a narrative technique. It should also be noted that the language and rhythm of II, 173, 2–4, are given tragic overtones, no doubt to put over with maximum weight the point at issue.

The account of the testing of Psammenitos at III, 14, is particularly effective, being specifically designed to extract the maximum of pathos: it begins with formal phraseology (βασιλεύσαντα μῆνας ἕξ) which contrasts strikingly with his humiliating situation; Herodotus signals at the beginning that a test is taking place, and this generates the excitement and tensions inherent in the reader/listener's desire to know how it all worked out; two tests are then conducted, the second more severe than the first; the contrast of reactions between Psammenitos' companions and himself emphasizes the strength of Psammenitos and at the same time increases tension. When will he break? The *peripeteia* is provided, predictably, by the third test which offers at first sight a paradox but which enables Herodotus to ram home the moral of the transitory nature of human fortune both in the speech of Psammenitos and the carefully calculated introduction of Croesus, the ruler who constituted Herodotus' paradigm *par excellence* for the moral lesson which he is concerned to draw. Yet even this is not enough; for Herodotus then strengthens the impact of Croesus' intervention with the *anagnōrisis* and *peripeteia* of Cambyses himself, nuanced with the savage irony that this late repentance comes all too late to save Psammenitos' son from death. Throughout, the unfolding of the episode is enhanced by cunning use of detail to increase verisimilitude, variation between narrative and speech and between *oratio obliqua* and *oratio recta*, assonance, and a measured and solemn pace reinforced by the use of balanced co-ordinates⁷⁵ which almost imparts an incantatory quality to the prose.

It emerges clearly from this analysis that the stratigraphy of Herodotus' narrative of events is extremely complex. A basis of historicity there certainly is, and it becomes noticeably fuller for the post-Dodecarch period, but this is permeated and distorted by a plethora of pseudo- or totally unhistorical ingredients such as folklore, propaganda, Greek and Egyptian ideological preoccupations, confusions of rulers and events, contamination from Greek practices, and probably, the intrusion of mythical themes. The recording of historical events is further distorted by mental habits such as a tendency to overschematization, the obsessive interest in analogies with Greek culture and in marvels, and a graeco-centric focus of interest. We must, furthermore, make allowance for the possibility that the narrator's artistic obligation to tell a good story well has led him at times to embellish and even take licence with received traditions. All of these factors could have been affecting the evolution of the

⁷⁵ E.g. ὡς δὲ βοῇ τε καὶ κλαυθμῷ ἀντεβῶν τε καὶ ἀντέκλαιον προῖδων καὶ μαθῶν τοὺς τε αὐχένας κάλῳ δεδεμένους καὶ τὰ στόματα ἐγκεχαλινωμένους (III, 14, 3–4).

material used by Herodotus considerably before his own time, but most, if not all, were part of Herodotus' own intellectual apparatus and must often have influenced his personal processing and treatment of the material.

This picture harmonizes perfectly with the claims which Herodotus makes for the character of his Egyptian history and the aims of his work as a whole. Many of the features identified are typical of oral tradition; the assertions that his sources were both Egyptian and foreign is amply corroborated; and the historical information is undoubtedly more accurate from Psammetichos on. We can also see that his concern with great and wondrous deeds and the determination to detect the workings of cosmic law in human affairs operate just as clearly in the account of Egyptian history as they do elsewhere.

* *

*

What does all this amount to? The framework of the narrative is provided by a series of kings whose names are given according to precisely the principles we should expect of Late Period priests, and they are rendered in Herodotus with surprising accuracy. We have one Greek intruder in Proteus who demonstrates that not even a king list was proof against Greek contamination. Statements about reign-lengths and chronological relationships are paradigmatic of the historical narrative as a whole and exactly what Herodotus warns us is the case: the pre-Saite material is unreliable whilst the Saite data stand up well if confronted with Egyptian sources.

When we turn to the narrative of events with which this skeleton is fleshed out, we are confronted with a disconcerting, if fascinating, phenomenon. A compound of many heterogeneous elements, only one of which is historical fact, it presents a view of Egypt's past which shows no genuine understanding of Egyptian history. Everything has been uncompromisingly customized for Greek consumption and cast unequivocally into a Greek mould. It is likely that this process was well under way before Herodotus appeared, and that he is both recording its results and carrying it further. The advent of Carians and Ionians in the early Saite period meant that Greek sources were available from that time and the historical accuracy of the traditions greatly improves, as Herodotus knew full well. The main value of II, 99–142, is not as history but as a record of the traditions on the distant past which were generally current in Egypt during the fifth century BC. The judgement on the historicity of II, 147–82, can, however, be more positive: while suffering from many of the deficiencies of the earlier section, it is still our most important extant source on Saite history and the earliest consecutive account which we have. Even so, it should not be forgotten that at one important point, i. e. the conflict of Apries and Amasis, where we are able to check the narrative in detail against an

Egyptian text, it can be shown to be badly in error. This is not likely to be Herodotus' fault. Indisputably, he derived the material from an Egyptian source, but this example provides a disturbing demonstration of the fact that he, like ancient historians in general, simply did not possess the techniques of scholarship to test satisfactorily what he was told and was, therefore, in normal circumstances entirely at the mercy of his informants. Even Herodotus' account of Saite history is a minefield in which we must proceed with the utmost circumspection and with a keen awareness of the precise nature of the phenomenon with which we are confronted – and there is no reason why this baleful picture should not also hold true for the non-Egyptian sections of Herodotus' work. Such strictures should not, however, lead us to conclude this discussion of his pharaonic history in too negative a vein. It is extremely doubtful whether any historian before modern times could have significantly improved on Herodotus' performance when faced with similar material and well-nigh certain that none would have made of it so consummate a literary masterpiece.

University College of Swansea

Alan B. Lloyd