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التأريخ في مصر القديمة

Lutz Popko

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HISTORY-WRITING IN ANCIENT EGYPT

التأريخ في مصر القديمة

Lutz Popko

Geschichtsschreibung im alten Ägypten
Historiographie dans l'Égypte Ancienne

The problematic search for ancient Egyptian historiography is tied to the debated extent and form of historical consciousness. The ancient Egyptians did have a sense of "historical" events or achievements that could be described to a future audience. Though they did not produce a historiography comparable to other ancient, or later Western, models, which attempt to analyze and critically reconstruct the distant past, they left texts that display historiographic features, such as an awareness of the singularity of events, or references to "reality." The annals and the "king's novel" *are the most discussed examples of this kind of text. The non-mythical distant past is a featured subject of king-lists, and it became the object of historiography in Manetho's* Aegyptiaca.

ترتبط اشكالية البحث عن مفهوم التأريخ المصري القديم بمدى مناقشتها وشكل الوعى التاريخى . حيث كان لدى المصريون القدماء ادراك للأحداث التاريخية أو الإنجازات التي يمكن وصفها لجمهور المستقبل. وعلى الرغم من أنهم لم ينتجوا نظام تأريخي مماثل للنماذج القديمة المعاصرة أو الغربية اللاحقة ، والتي تحاول تحليل الماضي البعيد بشكل نقدي وإعادة بناءه ، إلا أنهم تركوا نصوص معظمها ذو طابع دعائي والتي تعرض لنماذج تأريخية ، مثل وعيهم بوجود أحداث وحقائق منفردة. إن الحوليات وما يعرف برواية الملك هي الأمثلة الأكثر مناقشة من هذا النوع من النصوص، بالإضافة إلى الماضي البعيد الغير أسطوري والذي هو عنصر من عناصر قوائم الملوك، وأنه وفى بالمعايير اللازمة لإدراجه في الطراز التأريخي من كتابات «أجيبتياكا» لمانتون.

In Egyptology, the term "historiography" is used twofold—namely for Egyptian texts that deal with the distant past of Egyptian culture itself, and in a more diffuse sense as a synonym for "historical texts" (for this synonymous use compare, e.g., Morschauser 1988: 209 with 221). But both are not the same, and both are not necessarily historiography. This is one reason why the modern definitions of historiography as objective and methodological analyses of historical events do not absolutely match Egyptian genres in question, and why those genres apparently have historiographical deficiencies.

Although the adjective "historical" is often used for works from or referring to "the past," there is a difference between "the past" and "history": the past is a physical phenomenon, whereas history is a cultural phenomenon. The

past is everything that happened before the present; history is a portion of the past that was actively observed by someone (the Greek verb *historeo* means "to inquire, observe, or examine") and that has significance for a specific group of people. For examining history, one depends highly on written records (for the difficulties in reconstructing history based solely on archaeological remains, see Burmeister 2009: 57-58). Such records are called "historical" because they are used by modern historians to reconstruct "history." The main focus of the historical sciences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was political and military history, which was reconstructed with the help of records or narratives of wars and military leaders. Kurt Sethe stood in this tradition (Sethe 1906 – 1909) when he entitled his collection of sources of Egypt's political history *Historisch-Biographische Urkunden*—regardless of the different genres those sources represented. He was followed by Helck (1972: 73), Kitchen (cf. his series *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*), and others. These early precedents constitute the primary reason why texts with facts about wars, building programs, and the like are called "historical texts" in modern Egyptology.

Apart from incidental written records (treaties, letters, graffiti, etc.) that historians use to reconstruct history, some texts were written with the intent to inform posterity about contemporary events. These incidents were thereby imbued with a historical significance, although they were often written down for propagandistic or legitimating purposes. Real historiography, in contrast, is a denomination for a genre that intentionally reflects on, reconstructs, and interprets man-made processes, often in order to explain where we come from, who we are, or where we should be headed. It is mostly a narrative: there is no history without a story. As such, it always contains fictional elements, such as a cohesive time-frame or a specific perspective, although various research methods should be applied to minimize subjectivity and provide the veracity that is theoretically claimed by every historian.

Historical Consciousness

Historical consciousness is a prerequisite, and the "natural environment," as it were, of historiography. It is debated whether the ancient Egyptians possessed it prior to the Ramesside Period (see Assmann 1992: 32 and 1996a: 252-258, 304-305), or whether they possessed it at all (cf. Hornung 1966). This debate is complicated by the fact that the criteria for historical consciousness are debated, moreover, in the historical sciences. Apparently historical consciousness transcends a mere awareness of the past, which may be imputed to every speech community whose language has a tense system. According to Pandel (1987), historical consciousness consists, among other things, of an awareness of time, of alterity ("otherness," i.e., the state of being different), of reality, of identity, of morality. Nearly all of those aspects deserve special attention when speaking about Egyptian historiography, since they define the Egyptians' theory of history and its limits.

The Egyptian theory of history, and our modern perspective of it, is complicated by the Egyptians' dual concept of time as being both linear (*ḏt*) and cyclical (*nḥḥ*). It is stated by Hornung (1966) that the Egyptians related historical events to the latter (*nḥḥ*) and perceived them not as historical but as time-transcending and ritualistic processes. This repetition of structural types and patterns (e.g., defeating rebellious enemies, restoring dilapidated buildings) in fact constitutes a theoretical framework according to which actual occurrences were interpreted. Thus occurrences acquired historical significance and re-historicized those time-transcending patterns. That the Egyptian view of history also operated according to a linear, non-repetitive time-frame is indicated, for example, by formulae that something was found, or not found, in old texts (Luft 1978: 165-166; Redford 1986: 83-84; Vernus 1995: 55-57, 82-84). The former is an appreciation of the past, and the latter, an accentuation of the singularity of the actor's activities. King-lists are another indication of the operation of a linear time-frame.

An awareness of time also includes a notion of consequences, although causality is of lesser importance in the Egyptian concept of cyclical, ever-repeating history. History is apportioned to single events, and causalities are restricted to brief, mostly formalized remarks—for example, a war is necessary because of a rebellion, or building activity is caused by the discovery of an occurrence of destruction. But this restriction is a consequence of the chosen literary form, not of the non-existence of causal thinking (for the latter, see Junge 1978). The *Teaching of Merikare*, § E121, may indicate that the ancient Egyptians actually were aware of historical causalities: "Every beating will be repaid similarly. Everything that is done is entangled(?)."

Events of the distant past are the domain of Egyptian mythology rather than historiography. But since the ancient Egyptians did not distinguish between myth and history, the former must be taken into account when studying their philosophy of history (e.g., Kákosy 1964). Irrespective of this matter, an awareness of time does not generally result in a focus on the distant past. Historical thinking can also focus on contemporary history as the past-to-be (Momigliano 1977: 187). Similarly, the so-called "historical texts" of Egypt recorded contemporary events for the ensuing ages. Indeed Assmann (1992: 169) classified them as "prospective commemoration," and Eyre (1996: 432) wrote: "Texts may be classed as historical insofar as they describe the past for the present or the present for posterity."

Regarding the concept of alterity, Assmann (1992: 66-69) defines ancient Egyptian culture as a "cold culture" in the tradition of Levi-Strauss, because it hid variations and instead emphasized continuity over time. Such a characteristic obstructs the notion of historical progression. Furthermore, the didactic purpose of Egyptian "historical texts" implies that developments can be predicted by projecting the past onto the future. Apparently, this contradicts the above-mentioned awareness of alterity, because it implies equability over time. On the other hand, the same contradiction is inherent in Thucydides' "*ktêma eis aeï*" ("a possession for all time": I 22,4) and even more in Cicero's well-known statement "*historia magistra vitae*" ("history is the teacher of life": *De orat. II* 35,118).

That the Egyptians actually possessed a concept of alterity and progression is shown by their "cultural despair," according to which the world was perfect in the beginning but was not perfect in the present, or by the mentions that something was found or not found in old texts, which points to an awareness of the singularity of events, even if this may only be a *topos*. According to Assmann (1992: 31-32), the awareness of alterity requires a previous break with tradition. He defines the "trauma of Amarna" as this significant break and therefore concedes a historical consciousness no earlier than the Ramesside Period (Assman 1996a: 252-258, 304ff.). Other possible breaks with tradition are variously ascribed to the First Intermediate Period (Otto 1964 – 1966: 170), to the beginning of the New Kingdom (Popko 2006: 12ff.), and to the start of the Third Intermediate Period (Jansen-Winkeln 1996: 106).

Historiography communicates reality. This theoretical demand is of major relevance, since it is often claimed that Egyptian texts present only ideological *maat*, a "second reality," or a dogmatic "truth" (Otto 1965: 15, cf. Otto 1964 – 1966: 161; Helck 1985: 45; Gundlach 1985: 44; Beylage 2002: 534-535), rather than (a first) reality, and that they are therefore highly fictive. But the concept of *maat* includes reality, and when the texts in question, especially those of the early 18th Dynasty, claim to present *maat*, they usually contrast it not with ideological *isfet* ("chaos"), but with ontological antipodes such as *grg* "lie," *jwms* "half-truth," or the like, and *ꜥbꜥ* "boasting" (cf. Popko 2006: 30-34). Thus Egyptian texts display a clear awareness of reality, and a claim to recount factual matters, even if they may not be facts according to the modern concept of historical reality.

History defines a group of people through a common past and so creates identity. Therefore, Egyptian historical texts resemble "cultural texts" (Assmann 1996b) and as such they approximate myths, which can serve the same purpose. In contrast to the latter, history usually remains "bygone," despite the fact that

it can also become ritualized and mythologized. Conversely, myths can also become historicized (Luft 1978).

Aspects of morality are not explicitly addressed in Egyptian historical texts. The lack of distance between the (Egyptian) protagonist and the subject of his report, and the ambivalence of the concept of *maat,* nevertheless render the protagonist and his action morally good. Traces of an evaluation of past events and persons can be detected in later literary reception, but also in some king-lists, and even more so in Manetho's *Aigyptiaka* or the *Demotic Chronicle*.

Textual Evidence

There does not exist in the Egyptian repertoire a genre of historiography comparable to Greek and Roman examples. However, some texts intentionally recorded "historical" data. For this reason they were regarded as a kind of history-writing and indeed were explicitly named as historiography in modern Egyptology.

King-lists

During the Old Kingdom, the Egyptian dating system changed from an eponymous system to a method of dating by regnal years (see Baud 1999 and 2000 for developments within the eponymous system). Both systems require chronologically correct concordances to count and to calculate dates for economic, judicial, and other purposes: an eponymous system requires a reference list with all eponyms, as is the case with the Roman *fasti consulares* (lists of consuls after whom the years were named), while regnal-year systems need only royal names and their highest date. A number of Egyptian texts belong to either class of concordance, or at least reflect the existence of such concordances.

An eponymous dating system is reflected in the Palermo Stone and its associated fragments (fig. 1; Schäfer 1902; Wilkinson 2000), ranging from proto-dynastic times until the 5th Dynasty; the second (and third?) annal stone (fragments C2 and C4, discussed by Wilkinson 2000: 24-28); and the annals of Saqqara South from the 6th Dynasty (Baud and Dobrev 1995 and 1997), all of which are inscribed on both sides and contain year names and other data. Various composition dates ranging from the Old Kingdom to the Kushite Period are ascribed to the Palermo Stone, whereas the annals of Saqqara South were reused as a sarcophagus lid in the late Old Kingdom and are therefore definitely from this time at the latest. O'Mara (1996: 207-208) claims to have detected various handwritings on the former, so it might have been gradually added to at different times, by different people (except perhaps for the first line, as noted below). Such texts are apparently identical with the so-called *gnwt* mentioned in later texts (Redford 1986: 85).

Figure 1. Palermo Stone: recto.

The Turin king-list, also known as the Royal Canon of Turin (Papyrus Turin Cat. 1874 = Papyrus Turin CG 17467; Gardiner 1959; Ryholt 1997: 9-33; 2004), was written in the Ramesside Period on the verso of a tax list and

is therefore clearly a copy of an older record. While its original author carefully collected about 350 kings with their regnal years and tagged missing or obliterated items by *wsf*- or (*ḥw*)*ḏf*ˁ-entries (Redford 1986: 14-15, Ryholt 2004: 147-148), the present copy was made very carelessly (Ryholt 2004: 146-147). A similar text is the Demotic king-list pCtYBR 2885rto, which likewise contained royal names, regnal years, and a possible dynastic summation (Quack 2009b). The papyrus roll mentioned by Herodotus (*Histories II* 100), from a Memphite temple and containing 331 royal names, might be a further example of king-lists dated by regnal year.

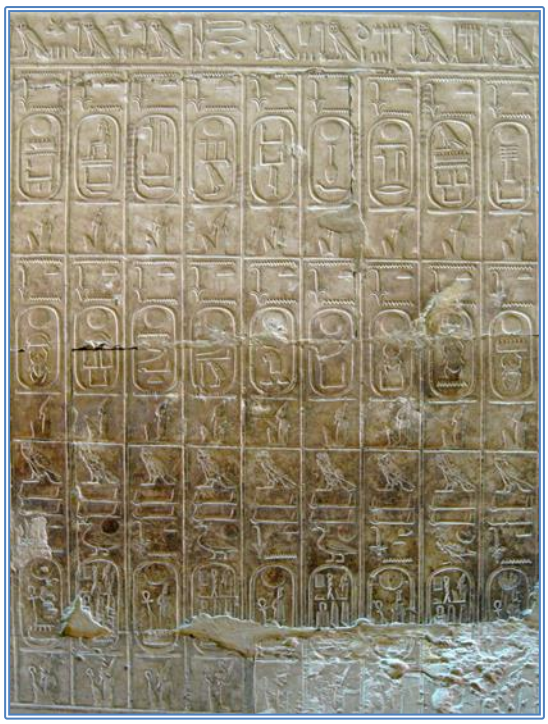

Figure 2. The "King-list" of Sety I at Abydos: detail.

Besides the Turin list, there exist other sequences of kings that were often likewise designated as "king-lists," whereas Redford (1986: 18-59) calls them "cultic assemblages." They are known from royal (Karnak; Abydos, cf. fig. 2) as well as non-royal contexts (the most famous is Tjuloy's list in Saqqara), and were primarily intended to link the current king to (all) previous kings and, beyond them, to primordial times, when the gods ruled the earth. Because of this legitimating purpose, they contain only the kings' names—without the regnal years or dynastic orders—and they do not seek completeness but omit "illegitimate" kings, such as Hatshepsut and the kings of the Amarna Period. These assemblages are in most cases chronologically correct, although apparently such accuracy was not the priority, as can be demonstrated by the Karnak List, which has no chronological order. In a modified way, this kind of legitimacy by virtue of a long line of "legitimate" predecessors was revived in Ptolemaic times (cf. Minas 2000).

Manetho and the Demotic Chronicle

Manetho of Sebennytos' *Aigyptiaka* (Waddell 1940), written in Greek at the end of the fourth/beginning of the third century BCE, is considered by many Egyptologists as the first narrative historiography by an ancient Egyptian (Dillery 1999; already Otto 1908: 229, yet characterizing it as a historical outline rather than a critical historiography). Possible typological and/or literary influences of Greek historiography remain debated (for discussion and literature see, e.g., Moyer 2011: 97-106).

The text consisted of a list of kings' names and regnal years, summations of the length of dynasties, and accounts of every(?) king—that is, it structures and narrates the past and exhibits tendencies to evaluate the past moralistically (see Moyer 2011: 128). Only fragments survived, cited in the works of Flavius Josephus and the Christian chronographers of late antiquity. The latter fragments did not derive directly from Manetho but upon a Manethonian excerpt—the so-called *Epitome*—rendering it difficult to specify the message and the exact purpose of the original Manethonian work. The text's (re)construction and presentation of Egypt's chronological outline closely parallels Greek historiography, despite a missing overarching topic. Perhaps it should link the Ptolemies to the previous kings of Egypt, thus having a similar function as the cultic assemblages mentioned above. The later addition of the 2nd Persian Period as the 31st Dynasty (Lloyd 1988) destroyed this link.

The so-called *Demotic Chronicle* (fig. 3; Papyrus BN 215rto; Spiegelberg 1914; Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 183-191, 353-354; likewise from the early Ptolemaic Period) is comparable to Manetho's *Aigyptiaka* in its presentation of the effects of (moralistically) "right or wrong" behavior. The text deals with rulers of the 29th and 30th Dynasties and contains (secondarily added?) links to the 2nd Persian Period and the Ptolemaic Period. The papyrus, badly destroyed, is in precarious condition, and the parts that serve as the basis for oracular interpretation are cryptic. This renders its classification nearly impossible, although various classifications have been suggested—e.g., that the text is oracular (Quack 2009a), or an exemplary description of the concept of royalty (Johnson 1983), or an example of sacral historiography (Felber 2002: 110). The text's background and intention are similarly debated: it has been described as propaganda for the Ptolemies (Felber 2002) or Nectanebo II (Quack 2009a), an anti-Persian treatise (Johnson 1984), and an anti-Greek treatise (Huss 1994: 143-163). The text is more a propagandistic tractate than a real chronicle, and it emphasizes the prophesied Golden Age through detraction of the previous reigns. As such, the *Demotic Chronicle* historicizes the ideological motive of rejecting the chaos at the ascension of a new king, a motive that can found in earlier descriptions of chaos (compare, e.g., the Sethnakht Stela; *KRI V*: 671-672). In its unusual diachronic depth, the *Demotic Chronicle* recalls the historical section of Papyrus Harris I, wherein contrarily the legitimacy of Ramses IV is emphasized by exposing the legitimacy of his two predecessors.

Historical Texts

From the late Old Kingdom onward, personal achievements were documented in writing, first in non-royal contexts, and later primarily in royal contexts (designated variously by modern scholars as "commemorative" and "historical"). The royal documents can be grouped according to the two lines of development they exhibit.

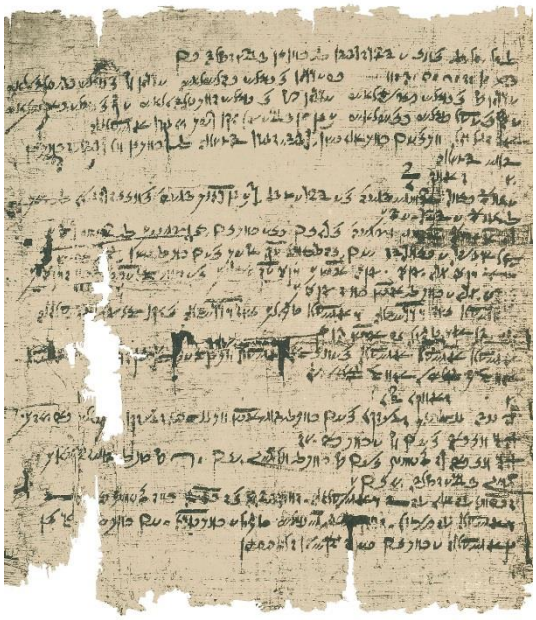

Figure 3. *The Demotic Chronicle*: 2nd column.

The first group originates stylistically (though not functionally) from the annals of the Old Kingdom. Its evolution can be traced from the brief notes in the Palermo Stone to the annals of Amenemhat II (Altenmüller and Moussa 1991), to the detailed annals of Thutmose III (Sethe: *Urk. IV*: 625-765; for this development, see Beylage 2001: 619-628), to the chronicle of prince Osorkon (Caminos 1958). These annals present important events in a yearly succession, though within a determined chronological framework, structuring the narrative by means of infinitives rather than conjugated verbs. They relate primarily to donations to temples, often connected with the outcome of wars, and there are overlappings in function and form with other royal inscriptions. A parallel form of annals comprising records of yearly endowments to the Souls of Heliopolis or to Amun-Ra (in the latter case), but which are devoid of connections to "profane" events, is known from the reign of Senusret I (Postel and Régen 2005), the 22nd Dynasty (Ritner 2009: 44-46), and the reign of Taharqo (ibid.: 527-535, 545-552).

The second group comprises the paraliterary accounts of royal *res gestae* (deeds done), containing expeditions, building projects, or donations to temples. These emerged in the First Intermediate Period from autobiographical statements of the nomarchs (Eyre 1996: 430-431) and were published as single or multiple feats on durable surfaces (rocks, walls, stelae). Apparent historical texts on papyri are in fact private copies (e.g., Papyrus Sallier III) or topical political statements (Papyrus Harris I). As a result, in the case of wall inscriptions, their occurrence partially conforms to temple-building activity, starting in the early Middle Kingdom, increasing during the late Second Intermediate Period, and decreasing in the late Ramesside Period, their peak being the New Kingdom. There are a few examples from the Kushite and Late Periods, but far fewer than in the New Kingdom.

Indigenous terms and an emic definition of the text types in question are unknown. A roughly approximate term seems to be *gnwt*. Primarily denoting the annals of the Old Kingdom, *gnwt* took on a broader and more diffuse sense in later times, when it could denote mythical texts as well as "historical texts," such as Hatshepsut's inscription at Speos Artemidos (Sethe: *Urk. IV*: 383,13; cf. Redford 1986: 96). This conceptual stretching of both the term *gnwt* and its format might be due to the loss of the function of the Old Kingdom annals. The achievements themselves are called *nḫtw* (cf. Galán 1995 for its spectrum), a single one being a *zp* (*n nḫtw*), "occasion" (Galán 1995: 75-79) or *exemplum* (Popko 2009). A record thereof is likewise a *nḫtw* (*KRI V*: 21, 1-2; 59, 1-2), or a *sḏd nḫtw* (Papyrus Anastasi IV 6,1; Gardiner 1937: 40), but mostly a simple *wḏ*, "decree/document," or—with another classifier—"(monumentalized decree >) stela." However, the obvious combination *wḏ n nḫtw*, "stela of *nḫtw*," is apparently restricted to border stelae (Galán 1995: 137; 149-153).

The modern definition of those texts is problematic, too. It is impossible to give a valid classification system, because the (sub-)genres often remain indeterminable. The best known and most studied (sub-)genre of those royal texts is the so-called *king's novel*, brought to life by Hermann (1938). Since then, its characteristics and representatives have been widely discussed, and at times its classification as a genre in its own right has been challenged (e.g., by Loprieno 1996: 295). Hermann specified it by a set of motifs: a provocation of the king; a discussion between the king and his courtiers about a reaction; and the reaction itself. Similarly Beylage (2002: 553-556: defining a superordinate genre "novel" with all elements but the third one): the king's confrontation with a crisis; the reaction; the king's praise or criticism from his courtiers; and the action taken to manage the crisis. Jansen-Winkeln (1993) defines the *king's novel* by a combination of noteworthy content with the king as hero, a propagandistic purpose, a public presentation, and a report (rather than a narrative) as its framework. Similarly Hofmann (2004): noteworthy content, a propagandistic purpose, and a connection between the report and speech.

The classification of other sub-genres of royal *res gestae* is even more complicated. Otto (1970) distinguishes between annals, *king's novels*, and "other texts with historical contents." Furthermore, he defines yet another group as "historical texts about single events" (cf. fig. 4). The distinctions between the latter two are not clear.

Spalinger (1982) divides the war reports into brief texts with the characteristic formula *jwj.tw r ḏd*, "one came to report"; narrative texts (with "daybook reports" and "literary reports" as subgroups); and non-narrative texts (with "speech-address-inscriptions" and "quasi-rhetorical/poetical inscriptions" as subgroups). His definitions—especially that of the *jwj.tw*-reports—are controversial. Lundh (2002) chooses the relationship of actors to thematic focus as a characterizing element, and defines four text types: 1) dominion records with a setting, a rebellion and reaction, and a clear focus of the king as actor; 2) expedition records, which focus on the manifestation of the king's power; 3) achievement records about sequentially, but chronologically unrelated, reported royal feats; and 4) reciprocity records,

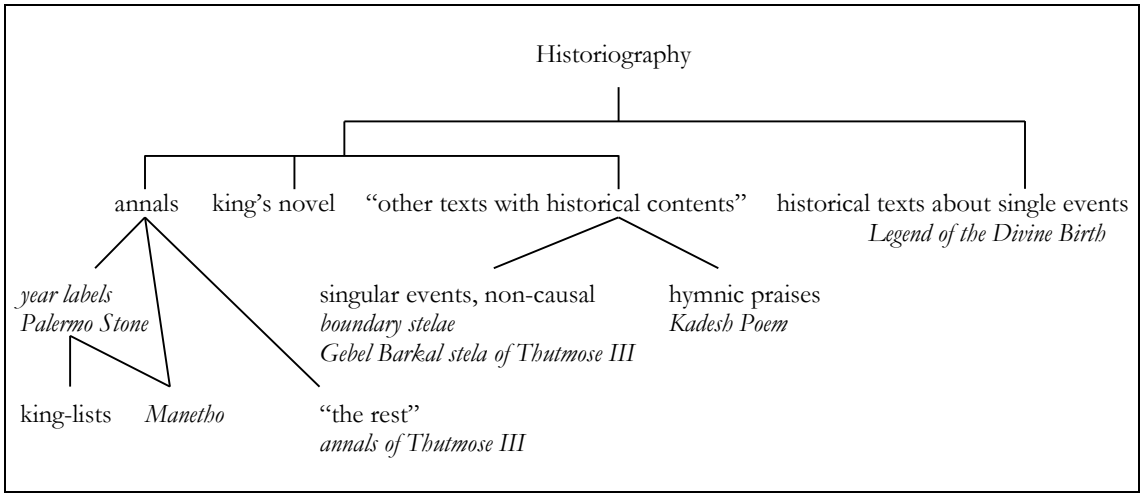

Figure 4. Ancient Egypt's historiographic genres according to Otto (1970).

which present building activity and describe royal gifts as rewards for military successes. Non-military texts are not the focus of Spalinger's and Lundh's works. Building inscriptions are analyzed by Grallert (2001: 9-143), who divides them into primary and secondary building inscriptions with further sub-groups. A very sophisticated classification system for royal stelae of the early 18th Dynasty can be found in Beylage (2002: 533-766), who characterizes narrative novels, annalistic texts, and non-narrative documents as non-compositional texts, and ideological eulogies, factual reports, and ideological and/or topical speeches as compositional texts. Nearly all of the groups mentioned are further divided into subgroups.

Expedition Reliefs

War reliefs (Heinz 2001) are similar to historical inscriptions in content and function. The often synonymously used term "battle relief" is somewhat inadequate, since not every one depicts a pitched battle. "Expedition relief" could be suggested as a better generic term, since it also includes the relevant reliefs with non-military content.

The close relationship between historical texts and the reliefs in question can be seen in Hatshepsut's Punt reliefs, whose accompanying narrative has the form of a *king's novel*, or in the bulletin of Ramses II's Kadesh relief, whose accompanying narrative, though sometimes used like a large caption, is an autonomous text (von der Way 1984: 33-34, cf. fig. 5). The Ramesside Period appears to be the golden age of war (expedition) reliefs, but scanty, highly fragmented evidence for them can be found already on ceremonial palettes of the Predynastic Period. Expedition reliefs communicate the same message and serve the same purpose as the scenes of "smiting the enemies" (for them, cf. Hall 1986)—namely, presenting the king's victory over his enemies, the preservation or restoration of the world order, and the protection of the temples on whose walls they are depicted. Single elements of such reliefs can become a *topos*, but mostly they present apparently contemporary events, thus updating the *topos* of the victorious king (cf. von der Way 1984: 172), or indeed re-historicizing an ahistorical pattern and individualizing the feats of the respective king.

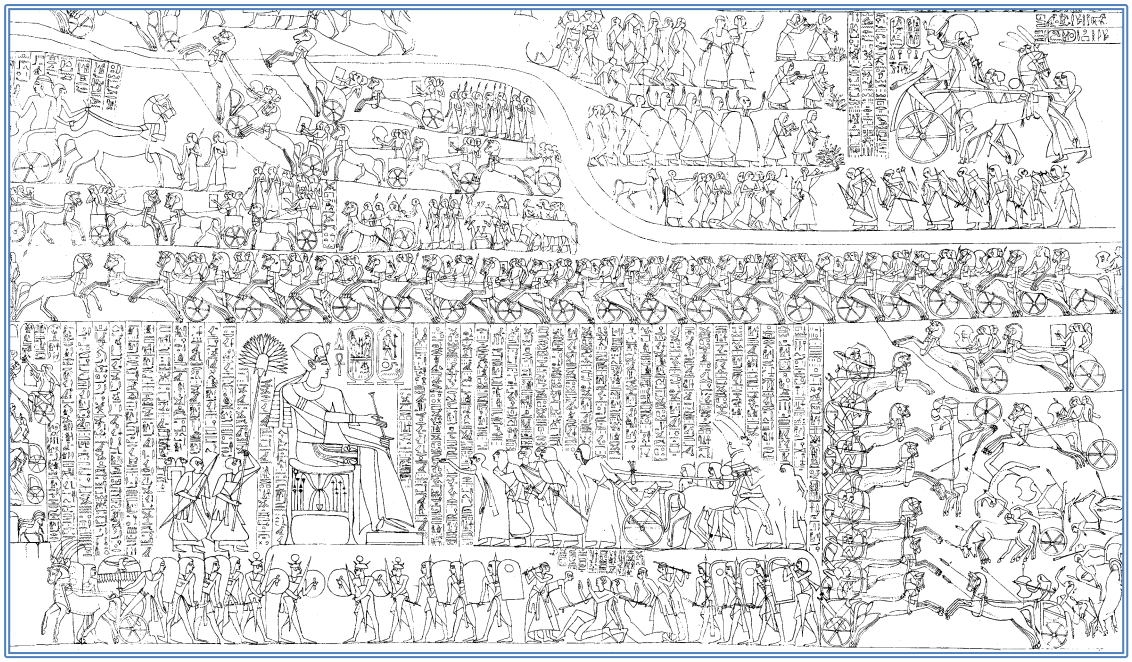

Figure 5. Battle of Kadesh, Abu Simbel: detail with the record left and right of the sitting king.

Synopsis

Historical consciousness existed perhaps as early as the Early Dynastic Period, when specific singular events were chosen as year names (Baines 2008: 23), as attested on Early Dynastic year labels (fig. 6) and in the Old Kingdom annals. The Egyptians also referred—whether implicitly or explicitly—to previous phases of their history in art and literature, especially during the first millennium BCE. Such archaizing attitudes reflect a deliberate way of handling the past. This past is not analyzed systematically and methodologically in a written form, but there exist texts that link the present with history, or narrate achievements for later commemoration. Although not actual historiography, they show approaches to it: they structure the distant past (king-lists), narrate recent events for posterity (commemorative inscriptions), or even apply a moral or ethical value (Manetho).

The primary purpose of the Old Kingdom annals and later king-lists is time measurement (archival lists), as well as a demonstration of continuity from primeval times (cultic assemblages). But the former group provided more information than was necessary. The Palermo Stone also presents, for example, the level of the Nile flood and it displays in the first row some kings wearing the red crown, about whom apparently nothing more than their names was known. Indeed the Turin king-list includes the time when the gods ruled on earth from its mythical beginning, arranges the kings into dynasties, and gives summations of regnal dates. This was necessary neither for calendaric purposes nor for the purpose of legitimization (indeed breaks of continuity are implied by virtue of the existence of different dynasties). Sety I's Abydos list, one of the large cultic assemblages of the Ramesside Period, suppresses the entire Second Intermediate Period, though it is questionable whether the missing kings were all actually considered illegitimate. According to Redford (1986: 20), they were simply not important enough to be included. "Insignificance" is a verdict of their historical value in its own right. Further on, the sequence restarts strikingly with Ahmose (cf. fig. 2, 2nd row, 5th position from left), most likely because he was considered a dynastic founder. This choice is, again, a historio-

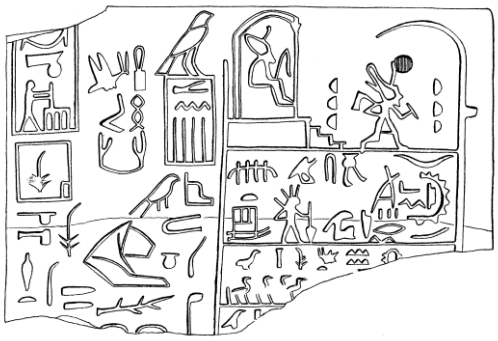

Figure 6. Year label of King Den.

graphical element, not merely dictated by the course of time.

The historical inscriptions, as well as the expedition reliefs, range between ideological affirmations of royal policy and the writing of "prospective" history. They present individuals who act according to *maat* and who concurrently create *maat* by their actions. As such, they turn their actors into role models and their actors' feats into *exempla* for ideal behavior. That these inscriptions were actually perceived as orientation guides and points of reference is proven by the previously mentioned formulae in which comparisons were made with old writings—the implication being that validation was searched for in the older texts. And examples like that of Qenherkhepeshef, who copied the Kadesh poem on Papyrus Chester Beatty III and created some king-lists (McDowell 1991: 96-97), attest that this interest in the past was not always a mere literary *topos*.

Historical inscriptions report events and details that are not only "true" but also "real" from the ancient Egyptian's point of view. They address, sometimes explicitly, a future audience who might be interested in the events described, and they teach this audience how to achieve a similar remembrance. Such elements correspond to the demands of historiography. However, the historical inscriptions do not describe events per se, but rather how their protagonists coped with those events. The missing historical criticism is *inter alia* caused by this ideological function, which implies a restriction on events, or an interpretation of events that casts a positive light on the protagonist; therefore they are characterized by a high degree of *re*-writing history.

Bibliographic Notes

The theory and philosophy of history are fields of research undertaken by scholars such as Peter Burke (1997), Reinhart Koselleck (2000), Paul Ricœur (1955), Jörn Rüsen (1998), and Hayden White (1973). Discussions of if, and to what extent, historical thinking and historiography can be ascribed to the culture of ancient Egypt remain fundamental in Egyptology. Jan Assmann dedicated several works to the perception and structuring of the past, and to historical consciousness (e.g., 1991, 1992, 2005, 2011). Hornung (1966) is a concise essay on the ancient Egyptian theory of history. McDowell (1991) studied the historical consciousness of the people of Deir el-Medina, as was done in a broader context by Vernus (1995). Several aspects of how the Egyptians dealt with their history—including the concept of historical past, the phenomenon of archaism, and the literary reception of their history—are treated in Tait, ed. (2003). Gozzoli (2006) is an investigation of the treatment of Egyptian history in the first millennium BCE. For the genre of king-lists, Redford (1986) is of much relevance, as he is for Manetho and other aspects of the Egyptian's view of their history. Waddell (1940) is the primary edition of Manetho's *Aigyptiaka* and similar Greek texts, such as the *Book of Sothis*, or the *Old Chronicle*. Another Greek king-list was published by Popko and Rücker (2011). Historiographical features of historical inscriptions are discussed by Hoffmeier (1992), Eyre (1996), and Popko (2006); see furthermore Redford (1979) and von Beckerath (1978).

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Figure 1. Palermo Stone: recto (Schäfer 1902: pl. 1).

Figure 2. The "King-list" of Sety I at Abydos: detail (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/2a/Abydos_K%C3%B6nigsliste_09.jpg/450px-Abydos_K%C3%B6nigsliste_09.jpg, photo Olaf Tausch).

Figure 3. *The Demotic Chronicle*: 2nd column (Spiegelberg 1914: pl. 1).

Figure 4. Ancient Egypt's historiographic genres according to Otto (1970).

Figure 5. Battle of Kadesh, Abu Simbel: detail with the record left and right of the sitting king (Wreszinski 1935: pl. 170).

Figure 6. Year label of King Den (Petrie 1900: pl. 15).