History and Stories in Ancient Egypt.
Theoretical Issues and the Myth of the Eternal Return*

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Introduction

My participation to a workshop devoted to the relation between Event and History in ancient Egypt, allows me touch two different aspects of my researches into the Egyptological field. The first is certainly the way of dealing with history and ancient Egypt, an analysis of the last half century of Egyptology and its relation with history. The second instead will be an application of what has been theorised in the first part, applied to my specific first millennium BC interests.

History and ancient Egypt

As many scholars have pointed out, if we use a modern concept of history, Egyptians and all ancient Near Eastern peoples did not write history at all (Van de Mieroop 1997, 297). In the last fifty years or so, Bull (1955, 32–33) completely denied the existence of history as present in the modern Western concept, in spite of not denying ancient Egyptians' interests toward their own past: As Bull (1955, 33) says: "It is clear, however, that the Egyptians were intensively interested in the origin of the universe, in their gods, in life after death, and in making and preserving records of their past as a nation. Their kings carefully recorded what may be called the facts of public history and private individuals took great pains to preserve those facts of personal history which would reflect credit upon them."

As matter of fact, using the modern view of making history, there is no narrative in ancient Egyptians' ways to remember the deeds of their rulers, nor to write of themselves, and for this aspect, their documents are so different from ours (Van de Mieroop 1999, 79, 84).[1] Going back to Egyptian historical material, no Egyptian "historical" text ever tried a description of the past, focusing to explain a rationale, or a normal cause-effect. At the best, any event is completely imbued by the concept of theodicy, by which the individual is punished for not having acted favourably toward the god (Demotic Chronicle for instance, cf. below).

Any analysis of historical sources in ancient Egypt faces a major problem: linear sequence of facts receives no attention in Egypt. The actors, Pharaohs or officials, transfer their vision of the world in their texts, which is embodied by the view of a peaceful stability over the country during everlasting times.

In fact, _ḏt_ and _nḥḥ_, both terms meaning "eternity", in spite of the fact that some different nuances should be implied –possibly continuity and discontinuity (Assmann 1975, 11–12; idem 1991, 39–46; Servajean 2008), represent two important factors defining any Egyptian conceptions of their own past. It is in the scale of time represented by eternity that ancient Egyptians placed their own events: if a particular series of facts are part of it , eternity will see the same series happen sometime in the future.

In these conditions, a canonisation of the literary and historical genres is natural to happen in repeating clauses and concepts. The same use of the Middle Egyptian, a dead language also in the late second millennium BC, helped with it, as it was a canonical language for canonical texts (Loprieno 1995, 5–6). Thus the canonical representation of the reality leads to stereotypes like that of the Pharaoh smiting his enemies, even when there was no war or enemy, at all (Hall 1986; Schoske 1994; Heinz 2001).[2] The use of stereotypes cannot be reduced to just one objective however, as different aims were contemporaneously

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reading and commenting over an earlier version of this paper. I owe the responsibility for any mistakes however.

1 Collingwood (1993, 15–16) described Near Eastern historiography as a theocratic history, while the myth was a '_quasi-history_,' using his own words.

2 For instance, Pepi II copied those of Sahure's mortuary temple, on its turn copied by Taharqo in his Kawa temple more than fifteen centuries later (Macadam 1955, Pl. IX, 8; Morkot 2003, Figs 5:1–5:3).

present, but at a certain point the result leads to very similar conclusions. Just dealing with instances coming from my own field of specialisation, the first millennium BC, Shabaqo's Stone is surprising for its archaising taste, in this context not being important whether it is an original Nubian creation or simply a reprisal of a more ancient document (Junge 1973; Gozzoli 2006, 236–239). Slightly more than a century later, Apries' decree from Memphis is nothing more than an update of a Sixth Dynasty one (Gozzoli 2006, 104).[3] Therefore, the conjunction of Maat and eternity implies that the Egyptian view of their own past cannot be anything else than repetitive.

Recollection of their past was a feature going on in ancient Egypt for a long time. At the end of the Old Kingdom, the mythological conception of the Pharaoh as god in earth suddenly collapsed (Posener 1956).[4] Fronted to the fact of being *homines novi*, the Twelfth Dynasty found the way of doing that making a revision of their past, and therefore king-lists and folktales became the way to do such a recollection. This development became more impressive at the times of the New Kingdom: Redford has pointed out as Eighteenth Dynasty Pharaohs referred themselves to the glorious Twelfth Dynasty, creating a bridge between these two periods (Redford 1986, 170). And the Ramesside connections with the past brought to the interest about king-lists, and presumably to the same archaeological interest as demonstrated by prince Khaemwase (Assmann 1985, 42–43; idem 1991, 305–308; Eyre 1996, 423; Aufrère 1998, 16–25).

Ancient Egyptians did not define their different genres of historical inscriptions; the only ones are the *gnwt*, the Annals (Redford 1984; idem 1986, 87–89). The only examples we have are the lacerti recollected under the name of the Palermo Stone, which are administrative in its contents.[5] Partial

annals referring to single pharaohs are also known.[6] Apart from the specific instance of the Royal Canon of Turin, king lists in private and royal contexts and carved on monuments have a cultic intention has to be seen. The king list tradition has become the established framework for any historical book on the argument, but even in it a sort of 'cleaning up' of the past is present, and the *damnationes memoriae* of Hatshepsut and Amarna pharaohs during the Ramesside period gives a glimpse of it. If a concept of chronicle really existed in Egypt is problematical to say it now. Verner (1975, 46) hypothesised their existence since the New Kingdom, being the source of Manetho's work. The only text named Chronicle, the Demotic one (Johnson 1974; 1983; 1984; Johnson and Ritner 1990; Felber 2002), is the opposite of a real chronicle, is a partisan view of the late dynasties in Egypt.

The private autobiographies (Gnirs 1996; Kloth 2002; Baud 2003; idem 2005; Frood 2007; Heise 2007), in a smaller scale, can be considered 'monumental', coming from tombs and temples, so a codification is latent in them. Filled by codes as they are, are interesting as reconstruction of a 'history from (upper) below' (Redford 2003a, 3). All these sources represent the usual first hand documents in order to write a first hand history.

There is also Manetho. His historical work is still fundamental for any kind of reconstruction of Egyptian history, as it was at Champollion's times in 1820s as well as it is at the present. As I have shown elsewhere however (Gozzoli 2006, 191–225), Manetho's work was obviously biased, and some of his information was also not entirely correct. Without blaming the priest of Sebennytos' lack of historical objectivity, however his work should be considered as fruit of his own period, and to be seen in such perspective (Murnane 2003)

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3   For a discussion of the archaism: Der Manuelian (1994, xxxviii). Neureiter (1994) has interesting passages, but fails to convince me.

4   As Assmann (1995, 201) has noted: 'Der erste Grundsatz der ägyptischen Anthropologie besagt: *Der Mensch kann ohne Ma'at nicht leben*. […] Der zweite Grundsatz lautet: *Der Mensch kann ohne Staat nicht leben*.' The italic is of Assmann himself. Being Maat and kingship one and only concept, the falling of the latter also means a decadence of the former.

5   The main bibliography can be found in von Beckerath (1997, 13 nn. 25–28) to which Wilkinson (2000) should be added. About the administrative nature of them, see Baines (1989, 133).

6   For Sesostris I's (Redford 1987; Barbotin and Clère 1991; Postel and Régen 2005), Amenemhet II's of the Middle Kingdom (Altenmüller and Moussa 1981; Malek and Quirke 1992; Obsomer 1995, 595–607), Thutmose III's of the New Kingdom (Grapow 1947; Redford 1979a; Redford 2003b; Grimal 2003; Cline and O'Connor 2006), and Pamy's of the Libyan Period (Bickel, Gabolde and Tallet 1998).

Modern event-based histories and "new" evolutions

Limiting myself to post Second World War books, Gardiner (1961), Drioton and Vandier (1962), Helck (1968), Grimal (1994), Vercoutter (1992) and Vandersleyen (1995) can be called the handbooks of ancient Egyptian history.[7] We easily see that these books belong to a certain kind of tradition, which I can label as "philological", in spite of the fact such a term is not entirely appropriate for all those books.[8] In them, the reconstruction of each event is strictly based over a translation in modern languages of facts already described in those texts dated to the specific Pharaoh under study. The event history (*histoire événementielle*) as is known (Redford 2003a, 2) still has its power. As pointed out by Valbelle (2003, 20), those handbooks are heavily influenced by publishers' policies, who feel that an over conceptualised book should be too much overwhelming for the normal reader!

The fact that a non specialised reader might be unused to reading a "difficult" text, if theoretically conceptualised, seems to ignore that any book has to be contemporarily reader-friendly as well as informative and enriching reader's culture.

Whatever may be the case, and accepting it as date of fact, any ancient Egyptian text has to deal with a major issue, which is under the name of propaganda. This concept and its presence in Egyptology have been discussed a few times in a quite distant past (Williams 1964; Lloyd 1982b, 3–35; Bleiberg 1985/1986), as well as in more recent times (Popko 2006, 113–116). Propaganda recalls negative images, as expressions and phraseologies that distort the reality to their own consumption, therefore separating narrative from real events. But propaganda in such a way never existed in ancient Egypt, as texts had particular functions and role (e.g. love between god and Pharaoh, legitimacy, maintenance or restoration of order, fighting against a 'vile' enemy). Within these functions, certain clauses and formulae were used, and with a rigid dependence between each other.[9] Those clauses and formulae were strictly dependent over the function of a text, not over the representation of the event itself. As the concept of ritualistic aspect was so important in ancient Egypt, the western concept of historical reality was certainly very loose.

But the main question still hangs around: what can be done with ancient Egyptian historical texts?

What I propose here is considering Egyptology within Humanities' theoretical background of the last 60 years. Many historiographical schools have been born and grown up in the humanities in the last hundred years. Annales school, Marxism, New Cultural History and microhistory as its subgroup and New Historicism are the main branches, from which smaller ones developed.[10] Those schools may

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7 My list is devoted to those books used as reference books. The ponderous third edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, not yet completely published, suffered for the long delays in the completion of the volumes, as well as the lack of a view of historiographical problems. The book by Shaw (2000) is difficult to be considered. It is not really clear the reader the book should address to. A simple undergraduate student or a general layman is not able to appreciate the references present in each essay, as the book requires knowledge of ancient Egyptian history. But a graduate student or a professional Egyptologist may consider those essays as too much general and lacking any in depth analysis, see for this deficiency also the remarks by Spencer in: Hart, Spencer, Jeffreys, et al. (2001, 42). Moreover, the fact that the book is substantially without any reference –and the final reference list does not really help in that- is quite irritating, as it does not permit to understand how many theories are fruit of each author's mind and how much is due to earlier scholarship.

8 Gardiner (1961, vii) in the preface to his history, expressly declares: 'Like Neneferkaptah in the demotic story my ambition was to read the hieroglyphic inscriptions and to capture the actual words of the ancient people. […] And so it has come about that my present book has been written from an avowedly philological point of view'. Redford (1979b, 5) is very critical that writing Egyptian history should wait for the complete publication of every text.

9 Baines (1996, 343, 347) clearly notes that using the term propaganda for Thutmose III's Annals and royal inscriptions in general does not make any sense (Kemp 1978, 8). As many inscriptions are located in places only permitted to high level temple personnel and inscribed in wall sectors high above the ground, both limitations make them impossible to be seen and read by the large audiences. Level of literacy in ancient Egypt was very low anyway (Baines 1983; 1990; Baines and Eyre 1983; Eyre 1990, 138). For the case of the reliefs of Sethi I and Ramesses II from Luxor, the immediate audiences of those reliefs were of two kinds: the members of the elites who were actually involved with the execution of those reliefs and the gods themselves (Baines 1996, 350–351). In his field of study, Van De Mieroop (1997, 296) notes that there is no attention to a future reader by the literates writing the inscription, so even the concept of propaganda has to be better defined.

10 See Breisach (1994, 327–410) and Marwick (2001, 88–149), for a general overview. The work by Bloch (1992) remains

have not played any major role in Egyptology, but it was not the same in the ancient Near East.

During 1970s and 1980s the Proppian structuralism and the Marxist view of history made their entering in the modern research of Fertile Crescent (Badali, Carlotti, Liverani, et al. 1982, 15–17).[11] The Italian - Roman - school of Assyriology has been in fact one of the main promoters of new approaches to ancient Near East (Liverani 1973; idem 1993a; idem 1993b). I consider Marxism in history as a not fertile ground for Egyptology anymore, at least a work has come out from it (Barocas 1978), but the theories by Propp could still find use in Egyptology, (cf. Spalinger 2006, 123–136). Analysis and ideas have to be changing factors in a changing society, even in a scholarly restricted world as Egyptology.[12]

What I propose here is just one of the possible readings of Egyptian material, and possibly even not the most innovative. Using Saussurian methods and terminology, the first step is to understand the relation between signifiers (words) and signifieds (concepts), despite the arbitrariness in their use, helping to find the 'hidden' meanings of the texts (McCullagh 1998; Allen 2000, 8–10; Van de Mieroop 1999, 56). By hidden, I mean the reasons which a text was written for, set in a determinate literary code and in a specific literary genre. It is the knowledge of the context, and gives origin to a cultural history, as people represent their world (McCullagh 1998, 156–157). If I am able to analyse a text throughout the complexities of the various textual features, each inscription becomes a sign of the reality as expressed by a specific historical and cultural entity within a defined span of time. At this point, the path can be followed: the study of the texts as historical artefacts themselves, full of ideologies and abstractions proper

of their times (Van de Mieroop 1999, 152). In this sense Marwick opens up two questions whenever a primary source is studied (Marwick 2001, 181–82): "How did the source come into existence in the first place, and for what purpose? What person, or group of persons, created the source? What basic attitudes, prejudices, vested interests would he, she or they be likely to have? Who was it written for or addressed to?" and the other question: "How exactly was the document understood by contemporaries? What, precisely, does it say?".

But similar questions have been posed by Hume (1999, 37), forming the theoretical basis of my earlier work (Gozzoli 2006, 11).

As noted by Liverani: "The influence of ideology on the narrative is known. Great part of this book has been devoted to this genre of influence, in the conviction too often we forget words mean concepts and not things, and "historical" accounts reproduce "mental representations" of what happened. […] The account of a battle is a cultural product, but first before it, army disposition and tactics are cultural products, modelled following the ideal values of the time. The battle gets to be represented at first as following the ideological model, and then narrated as following the model itself. […] The deep understanding of the importance of ideology on the historical events should generate a new "reading" of the political history. […] The explicit result (i.e. of this book) is the definition of the political ideologies, but the implicit one is the systematic re-reading of the political history of that time. […] More in general, this is a solicitation for a different evaluation of political history. Economic and social history has already established the level of the single episodes cannot be correctly understood without reconstructing the general structures in the background. Instead, political history has been a free field for the histoire événementielle, as a non structured and no systematic sequence of events. Even battles and treaties have their own structures, and the correct understanding of each political event cannot renounce to a structural grid of reference and a precise methodological analysis" (Liverani 1994, 271–273), (the translation is mine).

Hoffmeier (1992, 296), one of Redford's former students, addressed the problem in such words: "If we approach an Egyptian text in such a manner, understanding the genre, why and for whom it was

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fundamental for the early developments of the *Annales* school. See Glassner (2003) for a collection of them. The New Cultural History has Clifford Geertz and his 'Thick Description' as founder (Geertz 1973) and the works collected in Hunt (1989). See Schmitz (2007, 157-75), also referring to Greenblatt and the University of California at Berkeley experience. For Cultural History in general, I refer to Burke (1997; 2006). For Historicism and New Historicism, I refer to Hamilton (1996) and Hume (1999).

11 For a useful introduction about Propp and his *Morphology of the Folktale* in Hebrew studies see Milne (1988, 67–122). Instead, for the eclipse of the Marxist ideology, see Diakonoff (1999, 3).

12 See the critics of Redford (2008, 25) on the lack of theories in modern books of ancient Egyptian history.

written, one can use texts as sources for reconstruct- ing Egyptian history even if a specific historiographic genre was not developed by Egyptian scribes".[13]

And Redford himself has repeated many times the need to create historiography sounded Egyptologists.

The past is a foreign country, paraphrasing a scholarly book (Lowenthal 1985), on its turn going back to L. Hartley's *The Go-Between*. There is no escape from it. As a philological approach to the inscriptions has been the main stream until the present times, now a more balanced vision can be searched; the texts are representation of the reality through their rigidly schematic contents. This kind of research can be used throughout all the millenary history of Egypt, being this culture filled by written documents.

Mentioning the Middle Kingdom figure of Sinuhe, Loprieno (1996, 52–53) points out as the adventures of the courtier are an example of the bureaucratic class of the Middle Kingdom, divided between a loyalty to the state and a cultural emancipation. But examples could be legions.

For Sinuhe, as well as Westcar papyrus, Famine stela and many other similar texts, the historical fact cannot be searched or questioned; it is something intertwined with fiction. Extracting data from pseudo histories is a dangerous and difficult task, if not otherwise proven by facts, and the later Bentresh and Famine stelae, classified as 'pseudo epigraphs', are really historical fakes (Gozzoli 2006, 240–261). But the knowledge of the context during which the text was composed permits to explore the beliefs of different groups as narrated in the inscriptions they produce, within the general organisation named society. As Morris (1999, 11) has pointed out, 'cultural history is about divisions and conflicts as much as agreements and shared understandings'. It is a perception of a dead reality from inside. Of course, ancient societies did not have the same development of literacy as we have in the modern world, and the vision that we perceive is that of a small elite.[14]

Due to the existence of those patterns, a study of ancient Egyptian historical material for a reconstruction of Egyptian history has to go over the specific text: grouping a few texts of the same reign is the preliminary process, and from this stage, an analysis of the single features is needed in order to find specificities and trends present in them.

In effects as explicitly defined in the appendix, an evolution in literary theory - or the application of a theory already existing - for Egyptian civilization can lead to understand the interrelations between genre, historical events and textual features, giving a comprehensive overview of the strategies present inside the documents themselves.[15]

Psammetichus I and the eternal return

Having introduced a theory, I will now apply it to Psammetichus I and his legend. Psammetichus I was the founder of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, and the stela of Nitocris, set up at Karnak was issued at the time of Psammetichus I's established control over Upper Egypt (Caminos 1964; Manuelian 1994, 297-321; Perdu 2002, 17-26; Gozzoli, 2006, 87-92).

Among external sources, Herodotus in particular is the one giving significant information. As Hero- dotus is introduced to the Labyrinth, the twelve

13 The same thing has been reiterated later on. An article by Piccato (1997; idem 1998), partially in reply to an earlier paper by Derchain (1992) relative to the date of the Berlin Leather Roll, discusses the existence of an Egyptian sense of history.

14 The only real danger I see in this approach is that a scholar could see only he wants to see, and for this an accurate analysis of the texts has to be the first and main step. As said by Lloyd (1982a, 167): "The detection of attitudes, as distinct from acts, is a more delicate, though often more fruitful pursuit, and depends upon the cultivation of a finely tuned awareness of the fundamental semantic structure of the text as revealed in formulae, vocabulary, and the choice and interrelationship of stereotypes".

15 Lloyd (1982a, 167) points out about the total dependence of the texts to conceptual stereotypes and the need of the modern historian to separate the two elements. As Redford (2003b, 19–20) says relatively to the royal inscriptions: "But is the role, because it is stereotypical, to be rejected by historians for its failure to convey specifics in an individual instance? Does it correspond to reality, or is it a heavenly mask rather than a terrestrial record? It is perhaps not as clear-cut as these questions imply: the conjuring of the ideal may well be occasioned by the event. Only an independent source, or a concerned thrust in circumstantial evidence, can decide the issue. All sources, of course, for us modern at least, fall under the heading *propaganda*, i.e. that which is to be propogated [sic] in support of the dissemination, or continued validation, of an ideology: and all, no matter which society or culture is involved, will originate with the privileged elite and display their bias. In a sense this defines, rather than complicates the historian's task: a form/critical approach is a *sine qua non*".

rooms are explained through the story of the Dodecarchy, a partition of Egypt between twelve indigenous rulers (II, 147-149).

Moreover, Herodotus' informers told him the oracle, which said that the one drinking from a bronze cup in the Ephestus temple will be fated to be sole king of Egypt. The story is completely aetiological and derivative from the etymology of the name Psammetichus "the one of the *mtk*-cup" or "the one of the mixed wine", cf. Quaegebeur (1990, 259). Forgetting for the moment about the etymological connection, in the way Herodotus puts the account relative to Psammetichus, the fact that the soon-to-be-ruler drinks from his helmet is considered as an inappropriate - but fully out of malice - error, which an unforgettable prince Psammetichus has done.

Having fully considered the accidental nature of his actions, the other Dodecarchs rightly decided to avoid the death penalty, which was the punishment of such an action, and more humanly sensible, issued that Psammetichus should be secluded in the marshes. Psammetichus' exile however is the beginnings of the Dodecarchs' demise, as Herodotus' informers took pain to note. Buto's oracle announced the coming of men of bronze (152, 3), who by chance were the Greek mercenaries who made the Saite army for the whole dynasty.

The episode lets Herodotus and his informers say that Psammetichus had already left Egypt once before (II 152, 1), in occasion of Sabaco's rule over Egypt, as the Ethiopian Sabaco (read Tantamani) had killed his father Necho.[16]

The specific episode in Herodotus finds a historical confirm from Assyrian sources, which mention the Egyptian prince Nabu-Shezibanni as taking refuge in Assyria, once his father Necho (I) fell fighting against the Nubian army led by Tantamani.[17] in Herodotus II, 137, the blind Anysis - an unidentified ruler, possible assemblage of various historical pharaohs - took refuge in the marshes in order not to fall into Sabaco's hands. As the blindness is usually dictated by something the man does against the deity, the reasons of Anysis' blindness are passed under silence. In this occasion I may jus

refer to Lloyd's commentary about it.[18] The escape to the marshes was quite a big topic in the Egyptian literature and myth: the Delta and its slow waters were a place where anyone fleeing from established order escaped. Just reminding a major historical event, it was in the Delta Ramesses III fought the Sea Peoples, making of the occasion one of the major events of his reign. From a mythological point of view, Isis gave birth to her son Horus at Chemmis, an unidentified place in the Delta. It is fair to say that for Anysis as well as Psammetichus (Servajean 2001), their escape to the Delta is used by the fifth century BC priests in order to evoke such a mythological connection. Such connection is not accidental, as Herodotus II, 137 remarks that the island used by Anysis for his refuge was later rediscovered by Amyrtaeus at the time of his rebellion against the Persians .

That Herodotus was not able to fully comprehend the mythological connection present in it does not eliminate its presence in any case. In any case, Herodotus brings together two recurring elements of Egyptian literature and history: the two leaders of the unfortunate Egyptian rebellions under the Persians. Both Inaros and Amyrtaeus took refuge in the marshes in order to escape the preponderant Persian armies, and at least for the latter, fighting to his death.[19]

This sort of unspecified divine punishment parallels both characters, and such feature may be not entirely casual. Anysis returns, Bocchoris seems to disappear forever, but in the Oracle announces the coming of a saviour, which is part of his own dynasty. The main section is quite fragmentary, but can still be read: "He is the one of the Two (years), who is not ours, (he is) the one of the fifty-five years, who is ours" (II, 5). I believe that Anysis himself is not a historical figure, but he can be considered as a personification of the House of Sais itself, as the family was able to come back and reunite Egypt.

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16 As noted by many scholars, Herodotus' Sabaco groups any Nubian king between Shabaqo and Tantamani.

17 See Onasch (1994, 120–121) for the Assyrian Prism A, 17, where the prince Nabu-Shezibanni is mentioned.

18 See Lloyd (1988, 91–92). Opening a parenthesis, following Herodotus' chronology, Anysis and Psammetichus should be contemporary. The name itself does not recall any of the royal names known for the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Dynasties.

19 For the list of the events and historical sources, I refer to Lloyd (1975, 43–49) and Kahn (2008). See also Chauveau (2004) for an ostrakon from Ayn Manawir, mentioning Inaros, with corrections in Winnicki (2006).

The Oracle of the Potter and the -Oracle of the Lamb are pseudo-historical accounts, written between the last couple of centuries of the Ptolemaic domination and the first two centuries of the Roman Empire.[20] The Typhonians are said to kill themselves as well as acting against the god (P³, 26-27=P², 13-14). P², 16-20, integrated with P³, 32-33, has the quotation from the Oracle of the Lamb: "And the one who will be hateful to all men [and abominable] [will c]ome down out of Syria. And also from Eth[i]opia [another one who is] himself from the holy ones will [come d]o[wn …] to Egypt. And he will set[tle in the city which] later will be made desolate. And the one (ruling) for two years was [not o]urs […] and <the lamb spoke well". P³, 32-33: "But the one (ruling) for fifty-five years because he is ours, will bring to the Greeks the evils which the lamb announced to Bacharis", translation after Kerkeslager (1998, 74).

In both texts the mention of a period of two kings, ruling contemporaneously over Egypt.

Various conclusions have been attempted for, and it has been considered the reference to this 55 year long reign as a reference to Ptolemy Epiphanes' length of reign, with the indigenous king able to rule longer than him. Following Meyer however, I agree here that it is a reference to Psammetichus I, who ruled for 54 years, and Tanutamani, the one who ruled for only 2 years (Meyer 1994, 292-96; idem 1997, 179, 195).[21]

The Ptolemaic connections cannot be denied, but if the reference to Psammetichus (I) and the Saite royal family can be considered as a sort of date of fact, the reference to the king coming back has also a very important reference to Egyptian dynastic history. Thus, it is possible to see that the Saite royal family was centre of a political propaganda, which appears on documents since the beginnings of the fifth century BC (Herodotus), less than forty years from the fall of the Saite dynasty itself. In this case, the name Psammetichus as reference to the first of the line, as well as symbol of the entire dynasty needs to be considered. In facts, the name Psammetichus was used by Egyptian rebellious leaders during the fifth century BC. Ostraka from Ayn Manawir make us know a Psammetichus who ruled after Darius I, and now identified with Amyrtaeus, the only king of the Twenty-eighth Dynasty.[22] And for Psammetichus IV, possibly Inaros' father, I refer to Cruz-Uribe's and Pestman's studies (Cruz-Uribe 1980; Pestman 1984).[23] Otherwise, as the king is the guarantor of the divine wellbeing, the end of his rule is sealed.

As this workshop is about events, the main question might really be where the event actually is.

From a historical point of view, the amount of material relative to Psammetichus as real historical figure and information about his deeds is certainly minimal. Nothing can be really extracted from Herodotus' sources, apart a generic statement that Psammetichus ruled in contemporary with other Egyptian rulers, and slowly was able to subdue them to a central power, with the annexation of Thebes and the South in the year 8th of his reign, as testified by the Nitocris stela.

Searching for the event, and if I follow an event based approach will dismiss the set of information given here as folklore. As the very same information can be used as giving glimpses of the feelings of the period comprising the last five centuries of the first millennium BC, and beyond, can be said, the amount of information is essentially different.

Psammetichus and the Saite royal family assumed in the collective imagery the importance

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20 For the Oracle of the Lamb, it is known from a copy held in the Papyrological Collection of the in Österreichischen Nationallibibliothek, Vienna (D. 1000), published by Zauzich (1983); Thissen (1998); Thissen (2002). The return of the order with the new king will be 900 years after the disgraces started. This span of time should be considered as fully symbolic. For the Oracle of the Potter, the most ancient copy is the Papyrus Graf G. 29787 (=P¹), from Soknopaios Nesos, second century AD, see Koenen (2002), as the most recent publication of the text.

21 Thus, a prophecy ex-eventu is referred here, like the Prophecy of Neferty, but the idea goes back to Zauzich (1983, 170 n. 18), as Assmann (2002, 383 n. 2), who thought that the figures referred to Necho (I) and Psammetichus I. Koenen (1984, 11) rejects this interpretation and for him the 2-year reign may refer to some short reign of the Twenty-Ninth Dynasty Pharaohs. He opposes the identification of Psammetichus I with the ruler of fifty-five years on the basis that the quotation seems to apply to a negative situation. For Koenen, the saviour king has to rule one year more than Ptolemy VIII, who ruled for fifty-four years.

22 The ostraka are dated to years 5 and 6, see Chauveau (1996, 44–47); idem. 2003, 39).

23 The return motif appears also in the Nectanebo legend, as it can be seen in Ryholt (1998; 2002), as well as the Lepers story in Manetho, with reference to the Amarna Period and the two fundamental studies by Assmann (1997a; 1997b, 23–42).

and relevance of the last indigenous dynasty, the last one able to defeat foreign armies and keep Egypt altogether. The saviour of Egypt was Psammetichus, this is certainly clear. From a political point of view, this is demonstrated from the different texts and names presented.

The texts however present two different perspectives. First of all, the evil in Egypt can come only whether royal evil actions are made, which make the king lose the gods' favours, and make the king lose his own status.

This appears in Herodotus, for Cambyses' madness as the major example. And Psammetichus III's bad temper against his ambassador defines his fate.

And for the later Lamb and Potter, bad times are the cause of the problems, and why the gods leave Egypt. Whether the abandonment theme was just introduced in the later literature may be possible, but such theme surely goes back as far as Herodotus' account, as it can be possibly seen already with Psammetichus III.

As I wanted just to give a Late Period example, my own speciality, I may even end up here.

A very conclusive note is needed: I am perfectly willingly to accept that methodologies applied in other field of humanities and beyond may be used in Egyptology with some difficulty.

I accepted such gaps in any case, as my research was experimental as it could be. As reiterated a few times, my aims were the application of theories to ancient Egyptian historical texts.

The participation to this workshop, as virtual it might be, it serves to press that a workshop in Egyptian history may come to existence and work for modern approaches to those ancient texts.

Chronological studies, monographs over single Pharaohs can coexist together with other kind of approaches. I hope that this workshop will be fruitful toward new adventures in dealing with ancient Egyptian historical texts.

Appendix: Hume's theoretical approach

1) "The primary object of Archeo-Historicism is to reconstruct historical contexts. I might more properly say 'construct' rather than 'reconstruct' because the past is gone: we are building the best simulacrum we can from such 'traces' as remain" (Hume 1999, 1–2).

2) "Three things made New Historicism of the 1980s different (i.e. from the earlier Historicism), at least in the eyes of members of the club: (1) The belief that no period is intellectually monolithic, and that 'tensions' should be sought; (2) the admission that no historical scholar can be wholly impartial; all the investigators are influenced by their own backgrounds and circumstances; (3) particular attention to 'power' as a motivating and explanatory force" (Hume 1999, 5).

3) "Archaeo-Historicism, as I conceive it, is devoted to the reconstruction of historical events and viewpoint from primary materials. Possessed of such a reconstruction, one can attempt to read poems, plays, novels, operas, or paintings in the light of authorial viewpoint and the assumptions, knowledge, and expectations of the original audience. More broadly, one can attempt to understand the lives, choices, failures, and intellectual assumptions of the artists" (Hume 1999, 10–11).

4) "As I conceive the enterprise, Archaeo-Historicism comprises both the reconstruction of context and the interpretations of texts within the context thus assembled. The object, however, is not to pretend that we are (say) seventeenth-century readers, which would be both fallacious and silly. [...] One reads the culture of the past with attention to its original integrity for much the reason that one troubles to understand fellow human beings in the present: not to do so leaves you trapped in your own mindset" (Hume 1999, 26).

5) "The second point about method is that the approach has to be 'bottom up' rather than 'top down'. By this I mean that one starts with a method -Archaeo-Historicism- one approaches a subject with no prior commitment to any theory by which the primary material is to be organized and explained. [...] He or she aims to reconstruct the viewpoint of the time, and must attempt to do so in whatever terms the original inhabitants thought and worked" (Hume 1999, 29).

6) "The textual interpretative part of Archaeo-Historicism occurs when we attempt to alter our understanding of a particular text by reading it in the light of context. Such an enterprise presupposes a close reading of the text itself […] To bring text and context together we must ask questions - and they are our questions. For example:

Why did the author write what he or she wrote? What audience(s) did the author address? What are the interpretative implications of the work's allusions and implied intellectual context? What reactions did the work generate around the time of its original publication or performance? How would various members of the original audience (as best we can reconstruct it) have understood the work or reacted to it? What do we learn from parallels to and differences from related works at about the same time?" (Hume 1999, 36–37).

7) "Archaeo-Historicism allows us to carry out two interlinked activities: (1) we reconstruct historical context, and (2) we can them employ those contexts to help us read texts in something like their original circumstances. I believe that one of the reasons historicism has failed to make its own case effectively in recent years is that its practitioners have succumbed to the temptation to play safe by sticking to background facts. Excellent and important work may be done this way, but the whole enterprise loses its point if we forget that the ultimate goal of the historicist is to shed light on texts from original contexts. We may do all sorts of other things en route to that end, but this is, ultimately, the point. I am particularly conscious of the problem because proponents of Theaterwissenschaft (emphasizing factual and archival research) have chosen to regard the aesthetic considerations of dramatic literature as a wholly separate (and uninteresting) matter. Context must ultimately connect to text. [...] When choosing a method, a scholar needs to be acutely aware of its uses, potential abuses, and limits. Justification of any method must rest on its claims to satisfy four essential criteria:
1. Clear sense of purpose
2. An operating procedure neither self-delusory or circular
3. Admission to its limits
4. A validation process that will demolish false results.
I have argued that Archaeo-Historicism stands up well on all four points" (Hume 1999, 188–190).

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