Egyptian Historical Literature from the Greco-Roman Period[1]

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The purpose of this paper is to present a brief survey of *Ereignis* in relation to historical literature of the Greco-Roman period.[2] I shall concentrate on two main questions:

- What were the main principles behind the selection of specific reigns and rulers?
- To what extent was reliable historical information available?

It lies in the nature of the subject that I will focus mainly on demotic source material. It is not my intention to accumulate all relevant data pertaining to the aspects in question. I have instead made a deliberate attempt to include new or little-known material. Further examples could easily be added, but this would be unlikely to modify the general points and observations.

Definition and material

First, a few words on definition. A very large proportion of Egyptian narrative literature that survives from the Greco-Roman period may be defined as historical in the sense that it concerns historical people or events. In the case of the Tebtunis temple library, its entire share of narrative literature seems to be historical in nature and it may well have been selected on that very principle. The Tebtunis material is unique in representing the only known temple library from ancient Egypt from which extensive remains have survived.[3] It is, at the same time, the largest single assemblage of literature from the Greco-Roman period. The library is estimated to have included between three and four hundred texts, most of which date to the 1st-2nd centuries AD. Much of the material still remains to be studied and published, but it is currently estimated that nearly a fourth of the material is narrative.[4]

Further groups of historical narratives are attested in papyri from other sites in the Fayum, including Soknopaiou Nesos, from Saqqara and from tombs from Akhmim, as well as a number of papyri, tablets and ostraca that represent isolated finds or have no known archaeological context.[5] Another important

1 My thanks are, once again, due to Cary Martin for improving my English.

2 I defer a discussion of the purpose of the historical narrative literature for another occasion and simply note here that various aspects indicate it was primarily kept and transmitted as a form of history record, sometimes with a nationalist agenda; cf. the preliminary remarks in K. Ryholt, 'The Assyrian Invasion of Egypt in Egyptian Literary Tradition', *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, edited by J. G. Dercksen (Leiden, 2004), pp. 505-6, and *The Petese Stories II* (The Carlsberg Papyri 6; Copenhagen, 2006), pp. 18-9.

3 For the Tebtunis temple library and its contents, see surveys by K. Ryholt, 'On the Contents and Nature of the Tebtunis Temple Library. A Status Report', *Tebtynis und Soknopaiu Nesos. Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum. Akten des Internationalen Symposions vom 11. bis 13. Dezember 2003 im Sommerhausen bei Würzburg*, edited by S. Lippert and M. Schentuleit (Wiesbaden, 2005), pp. 141-70 [general survey]; A. von Lieven, 'Religiöse Texte aus der Tempelbibliothek von Tebtynis - Gattungen und Funktionen', ibid., pp. 57-70 [religious texts], and J. F. Quack, 'Die hieratischen und hieroglyphischen Papyri aus Tebtynis - Ein Überblick', *The Carlsberg Papyri 7: Hieratic Texts from the Collection*, edited by K. Ryholt (CNI Publications 30; Copenhagen, 2006), pp. 1-7 [hieratic and hieroglyphic texts].

4 A number of these texts are mythological, but these would hardly have been considered less historical from an Egyptian point of view, dealing as they do with the Egyptian pantheon and events that took place in the mythological era. Note, for instance, their inclusion in the Turin King-list; cf. K. Ryholt, 'The Turin King-List', *Ä&L* 14 (2004), p. 139.

5 Recent surveys of demotic narrative literature include J. F. Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III. Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur* (Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 3; Berlin, 2005), pp. 16-80; F. Hoffmann, 'Die ägyptischen literarischen Texte', *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologen-Kongresses*, edited by B. Palme (Papyrologica Vindobensia 1; Wien, 2007), pp. 279-94; K. Ryholt, 'Late Period Literature', *The Blackwell Companion to Ancient Egypt*, II, edited by A. B. Lloyd, in press. All substantial texts have recently been translated by F. Hoffmann and J. F. Quack, *Anthologie der demotischen Literatur* (Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 4; Berlin, 2007).

source for historical literature is provided by classical authors such Herodotus and Diodorus who transmit many stories, although mostly only in summary or allusion.

In addition to the literary texts themselves, personal names provide an important clue to the circulation of traditions about specific kings. In Greco-Roman Egypt people sometimes named their children after heroic figures in popular culture, whether consciously or not, as do some people today.[6] Thus we find that the names of the main heroes of the most popular story cycles were all in popular use, i.e. the cycles of stories about prince Inaros and his allies, king Sesostris, the high-priest Khamwase, and others. This is surely no coincidence in view of the fact that many of the names were archaic in construction or even unique.

The Identity of the Dominant Royal Figures

The dominant royal names from this material are presented in the table below. Some of these names were used by several rulers; in these cases I have added in parenthesis which historical figures are likely to have been the original or main inspiration for the later traditions. The names Marres, Menchpres and Smanres, which all represent unetymological writings of prenomens, are discussed below. Omitted from the table and the following discussion are the kings of the Saite Period since there were stories and traditions about all of them and since this material differs from that concerning the earlier kings in several respects (see Tab. 1).

Principles of Selection

As the table shows, the dominant royal figures pre-dating the Saite period form a relatively limited group. We may now turn to the nature of the principles that governed which kings became part of the literary tradition.

Even at a glance, it is clear that most of the kings in question were associated with large-scale building activities of which there was still amble testimony in later times. A whole group of these kings were responsible for the construction or significant enlargement of temples in Thebes, viz. Tuthmosis III, Amenhotep III, Sety I, Ramesses II, Merenptah, Ramesses III and Sheshonq I. More noteworthy still, each of these kings erected large-scale battle reliefs and inscriptions that survived more or less intact until modern times.[7] In fact there does not seem to be a single example of a king with still-standing and accessible monumental descriptions of victorious battles who did not enter the literary tradition. Hence such depictions are exceedingly likely to have been instrumental in shaping the image of these kings.[8] This is not to say that it was necessarily the Theban monuments alone that formed the inspiration for those traditions, — the archaeological record is greatly skewed since many other important temples such as those of Memphis and Heliopolis were later destroyed — but they may be regarded as representative for the relative level of building activity and inscriptional programme during the reigns of the kings.

Another group of kings with large-scale monuments are the builders of the large pyramids. The main kings are Djoser, Cheops and Mycerinus.[9] In their case, the association between later tradition and their building activities is more explicit. The invention of building with hewn stone was directly

6 Some examples are discussed in K. Ryholt, 'A Sesostris Story in Demotic Egyptian and Demotic Literary Exercises', *Festschrift Heinz-Josef Thissen*, forthcoming.

7 These include such noteworthy records as the so-called Annals of Tuthmosis III, the war reliefs of Sety I, the Qadesh inscriptions and reliefs of Ramesses II, the Great Karnak Inscription of Merenptah, the Medinet Habu inscriptions of Ramesses III, and the triumphal reliefs of Sheshonq I next to the Bubastite Portal.

8 For the special attention paid to the enormous monuments, the supposed wealth and the foreign conquests of the Ramesside kings, cf. also A. Blasius, 'Das Königtum der Ramessiden im Spiegel der griechisch-römischen Überlieferung', *Das Königtum der Ramessidenzeit, Voraussetzungen - Verwirklichung - Vermächtnis, Akten des 3. Symposiums zur ägyptischen Königsideologie in Bonn 7.-9.6.2001*, edited by R. Gundlach and U. Rößler-Köhler (ÄAT 36,3; Wiesbaden, 2003), pp. 305-52.

9 Snofru seems to have played a much less important role in the Greco-Roman period. His name is not attested in contemporary Egyptian literary sources nor in the onomastic record. D. Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewusstsein ihrer Nachwelt* (MÄS 17; Berlin, 1969), pp. 151-2, discusses a sculpture with the name of Snofru (BM EA 1666) which has been dated to the Ptolemaic or Roman period, but according to the British Museum website it may not be genuine.

Old Kingdom	Menes Djoser Cheops Mycerinus
Middle Kingdom	Amenemhet (main figures Amenemhet I and Amenemhet III) Sesostris (main figures Sesostris I and Sesostris III) Marres, i.e. Amenemhet III
New Kingdom	Ahmose Tuthmosis (main figure Tuthmosis III and perhaps Tuthmosis I) Amenhotep (main figure Amenhotep III) Menchpres, i.e. Tuthmosis III Haremhab Sethos (main figure Sety I) Ramesses (main figures Ramesses II and Ramesses III) Smanres (main figures Ramesses II and Ramesses III) Merenptah
Third Intermediate Period	Sheshonq (main figure Sheshonq I) Inaros (main figure Inaros I, but also Inaros II) Petubastis (main figure the Petubastis of Tanis who was contemporary with Esarhaddon)

Tab. 1

associated with the reign of Djoser, undoubtedly because he had the first pyramid built.[10] Moreover, Cheops was in some contexts regarded as an oppressive ruler because of the sheer enormity of his funerary monument; the overwhelming accomplishment led to the belief that he must have closed down the temples so that he could force the entire country to work on his tomb, thus leading the people into misery. Mycerinus built the smallest of the great pyramids of Giza which, in turn, was taken to indicate that he had reversed his predecessor's policy and had re-opened the temples, thus earning a much more favourable reputation.[11]

A second group of kings are associated with certain decisive historical events rather than any extant monuments of note. This group includes Menes who was regarded as the first human king and founder of Memphis; Sesostris who was regarded as the founder of the Middle Kingdom; Ahmose who ended the Hyksos domination and founded the New Kingdom; Haremhab who ended the Amarna age and began the Ramesside era; and Inaros I who ended the Assyrian domination and *ipso facto* was instrumental in the rise of the Saite era. Kings such as Menes and Sesostris seem to have been regarded primarily as founders, while Ahmose, Haremhab and Inaros were rather regarded as liberators or restorers. (For the latter three kings in the role of liberators, see further the tradition about the building of the Giza pyramids discussed below.)

A much more obscure ruler who figures in several historical narratives, but surely did not enter the literary tradition because of any extant monument or a known involvement in noteworthy historical events, is Petubastis of Tanis. In his case, the later tradition seem fortuitous in the sense that he merely happened to be one of the main rulers among the

10 So according to Manetho, *Aigyptiaka*; translation in W. G. Waddell, *Manetho* (London and Massachusetts, 1940), pp. 40-5.

11 Herodotus, Book II, 124, 129; cf. further A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II. Commentary 99-182* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romaine 43.3; Leiden, 1988), pp. 62-4, 78, w. refs.

The main principles behind the selection of specific reigns and rulers

1. Kings whose extant monuments gained them a reputation.
   a. Those with large-scale monuments and depictions of victorious battles
   b. Those with large-scale pyramid tombs
2. Kings associated with certain decisive historical events
   a. The founders
   b. The liberators

Tab. 2

petty kings between whom Egypt was divided at the time when Inaros I rebelled against the Assyrians. Hence his reign forms the background to several known Inaros stories whose main protagonists were Inaros and his allies (cf. below). Petubastis himself plays an active role in some of these stories, but he is portrayed as a weak ruler who commands little respect. The presence of the even more obscure and contemporary king Wenamun of Natho in an Inaros story can be ascribed to the same circumstances, and so can the presence of a whole series of historical princes (see Tab. 2).

Availability of reliable historical information

Because of Manetho's *Aigyptiaka*, it is sometimes assumed that the Egyptians had general access to a reliable king-list tradition. There is, however, nothing to indicate that this was a typical situation. The Tebtunis temple library includes no king-list or comparable material, and to judge from the frequent unetymological rendition of royal names attested in contemporary literature and onomastics, it seems safe to conclude that there was either no general access to reliable information or that it was simply not put to use. Some examples pertaining to renowned kings will suffice:[12]

Old Kingdom

• Cheops' name *ḫw=f-wi* becomes non-sensical *ḫwf* and later *šwf*.[13]

• Mycerinus' name *mn-kȝw-rᶜ* becomes *mn-ky-rᶜ*, 'another sun (or: Re) is stable' and *mnḳ-rᶜ*, 'the sun (or: Re) is complete'. A common personal name.[14]

Middle Kingdom

• Amenemhet's name *imn-m-ḥȝ.t* becomes *imn-mḥt*, 'Amun of the north wind'.[15]

• Sesostris' name *s-n-wsr.t* becomes *s-ws*, 'the strong man'. A common personal name.[16]

• Amenemhet III's prenomen *ny-mȝᶜ.t-rᶜ* becomes *mȝᶜ-rᶜ*. A common personal name.[17]

12 For a discussion of the corruption of royal names specifically in the king-list tradition, see e.g. K. Ryholt, 'King Seneferka in the king-lists and his position in the Early Dynasty Period', *Journal of Egyptian History* 1 (2008), pp. 166-8.

13 D. Wildung, *op. cit.*, p. 243; Quack, *Sokar* 8 (2004), pp. 3-5. To his list may now be added the Inaros story discussed below (*šwf*) as well as P. Berlin 23701 vo. (*ḫwf*), the latter of which is published in G. Burkard, 'Frühgeschichte und Römerzeit: P. Berlin 23071 vso.', *SAK* 17 (1990), pp. 107-33.

14 *Demot. Nb.* I, p. 590. The concept of the *ka* seems to have disappeared by the Greco-Roman period and this element of the name was therefore no longer understood by all.

15 Orthography attested in the Sesostris stories of Carlsberg 411 and 412 as well as the unpublished Inaros Epic preserved in P. Carlsberg 68+123; for the former, cf. G. Widmer, 'Pharaoh Maâ-Rê, Pharaoh Amenemhat and Sesostris: Three Figures from Egypt's Past as Seen in Sources of the Graeco-Roman Period', in K. Ryholt (ed.), *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies. Copenhagen, 23-27 August 1999* (CNI Publications 27; Copenhagen, 2002), p. 387. The false etymology is due to a misinterpretation of the preposition *m*, which was no longer used in later demotic (having become *n*) and which was therefore thought to belong to the following group (*m-ḥȝ.t* thus becoming *mḥt*), and to the well-attested association between Amun and the wind in contemporary sources, cf. e.g. M. Smith, *On the Primaeval Ocean* (The Carlsberg Papyri 5; Copenhagen, 2002), pp. 57, 59, 62-4, 203.

16 For the re-interpretation of the original name as 'the strong man', cf. K. Sethe, 'Der Name Sesostris', *ZÄS* 41 (1904), pp. 43-57.

17 *Demot. Nb.* I, p. 578-9.

New Kingdom

• Tuthmosis III's prenomen *mn-ḫpr-rᶜ* becomes *mnḫ-pȝ-rᶜ* and *mnḫ-rᶜ*, 'the sun (or: Re) is perfect'. A common personal name.[18]

• Merenptah's name *mr.n-ptḥ* becomes *mr-ib-ptḥ*, 'loving the will of Ptah'? A common personal name.[19]

• Ramesses II's prenomen *wsr-mȝᶜ.t-rᶜ* becomes *smn-rᶜ*, 'the sun (or: Re) is established', and *ns-mn-rᶜ*. A common personal name.[20]

Several of these names are so garbled that it would not have been obvious which historical kings they pertained to. For the same reason, they could not have been checked against contemporary monuments or more accurate king-lists. In other words, the reader of any of the literary texts that mention a name such as Menkhpre would not have been able to look up this king, identify him as Tuthmosis III and situate him in time. This situation may help explain the garbled chronology encountered in many historical narratives and perhaps also the curious and frequently discussed chronology presented by Herodotus. Again a few examples may be offered:

Old Kingdom

• Cheops is described as the son of Mycerinus in an unpublished Inaros story (cf. below); but Mycerinus was the fourth successor of Cheops.[21]

New Kingdom

• Tuthmosis III is described as ruling 1,500 years before Ramesses II in the story of *Khamwase and Siosiris*; but only 150 years separate their reigns.[22]

• Merenptah is described as a remote predecessor of Ramesses II in the story of *Khamwase and Naneferkaptah*; but Merenptah was the son and successor of Ramesses.[23]

Saite Period

• The magician Hor son of Pwensh is situated both in the reigns of *mnḫ-pȝ-rȝ sȝ-imn* (so *Khamwase and Siosiris*) and *wȝḥ-ib-rᶜ-mn iᶜḥ-ms* (so unpublished papyri in Berlin).[24] The former can be identified with Tuthmosis III (where the element *sȝ-imn* is perhaps rather to be understood as an epithet than a conflation with the later king by this name) and the latter as a peculiar conflation of Apries and Amasis who ruled about 900 years later.

• Psammetichus II described as contemporary with (Indian) king Ashoka in a literary letter; but Ashoka ruled 300 years later than Psammetichus.[25]

Curiously, much more reliable information was available concerning one of the more obscure historical periods. This is the ten-year long period when Assyrians and Kushites fought for control over Egypt and the country was divided between many rulers. It ended c. 664 BC with the accession of Psammetichus I and the subsequent re-unification of Egypt. This period forms the background and to some extent also the subject matter for the cycle of Inaros stories, and the historical information is remarkably more accurate than that concerning earlier periods. Thus, for instance, the stories correctly portray kings Necho of Sais, Petubastis of Tanis and Wenamun of Natho, princes Inaros of Athribis, Pekrur of Pisopd and Nehka of Heracleopolis, and the Assyrian king Esarhaddon as contemporaries.[26] This situation may indicate a strong, continuous literary tradition about Inaros and his allies since his own life-time.

18 *Demot. Nb.* I, p. 595.

19 *Demot. Nb.* I, p. 600.

20 *Demot. Nb.* I, p. 128.

21 The direct association between Cheops and Mycerinus is also attested in Herodotus (Book II, 129) and Diodorus (Book I, 64.6) where Mycerinus is described as a son of Cheops, thus at least providing the kings with their correct historical order.

22 Translations in R. K. Ritner, in W. K. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (3rd edition; New Haven and London, 2003), pp. 470-89; Hoffmann and Quack, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-37.

23 Translations in Ritner, *op. cit.*, pp. 453-69; Hoffmann and Quack, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-52.

24 Preliminary description of the Berlin papyri in K. Th. Zauzich, 'Neue literarische Texte in demotischer Schrift', *Enchoria* 8.2 (1978), pp. 36.

25 Translation in Ph. Collombert, 'Le conte de l'hirondelle et de la mer', in K. Ryholt (ed.), *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies* (CNI Publications 27; Copenhagen, 1999), pp. 59-76. For the identification of *ȝwšky* with Ashoka, see Betrò, *Studi Ellenistici* 12 (1999), pp. 115-25.

26 Cf. K. Ryholt, 'The Assyrian Invasion of Egypt in Egyptian Literary Tradition', *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, edited by J. G. Dercksen (Leiden, 2004), pp. 484-90; and for Wenamun, idem, *The Carlsberg Papyri 10: Narrative Literature from the Tebtunis Temple Library* (CNI Publications 35, Copenhagen, in press).

Diodorus' alternative tradition concerning the builders of the Giza Pyramids	
Pyramid of Cheops	attributed to Haremhab who ended the Amarna age, c. 1320 BC
Pyramid of Chephren	attributed to Ahmose who ended the Hyksos era, c. 1535 BC
Pyramid of Mycerinus	attributed to Inaros I who ended the Assyrian domination, c. 665 BC[29]

Tab. 3

Why this period came to dominate the historical narratives in the Greco-Roman period remains to be fully understood. Important factors are likely to include the destruction caused to the ancient capital of Memphis by the repeated assaults on the city by the Assyrian and Kushite armies as well as the large-scale plundering of temples by the Assyrians before their final retreat from Egypt.

The Pyramids - Monuments of National Victories and Identity

Another good example of the century-long memory of grand national trauma is afforded by the traditions concerning the great pyramids at Giza. Herodotus (Book II, 124-9) reports that the pyramids were built by Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinus. This information is confirmed by modern archaeology and it has therefore received little attention that there were different traditions. Diodorus who visited Egypt in the mid-1st century BC had access to the same information as Herodotus, but adds (Book I, 64.13):

> *'But with regard to the pyramids there is no complete agreement among either the inhabitants of the country or the historians; for according to some the kings mentioned above were their builders, according to others they were different kings; for instance, it is said that Armaios built the largest, Amosis the second, and Inaros the third.*[27]

While this alternative tradition is plainly wrong from a historical point of view, it is important for the light it sheds on the general historical conscience. The pyramids are here ascribed to three great patriotic figures from the past and are implicitly regarded as colossal monuments built to celebrate national victories that put an end to what may be regarded as the three most traumatic periods prior to the Persian invasions in the mid-first millennium BC, i.e. the Hyksos era, the Amarna age and the Assyrian domination of Egypt. The strength of the traditions concerning these kings is further demonstrated by the popular and very extensive use of their names throughout the Late and Greco-Roman periods.[28] It may be noted that Inaros never actually ruled as king, but he is described as a past king in several of the Inaros stories and hence regarded as such in later literary tradition.

If the equation between the specific kings and the size of the pyramids has any relevance, it is noteworthy that the Amarna trauma is placed above the two foreign invasions represented by the Hyksos and the Assyrians (see Tab. 3).

The account by Diodorus is by no means the only testimony of the late circulation of traditions concerned these three eras.[30] Through quotes preserved in Josephus, we know that Manetho

27 Cited after C. H. Oldfather, *Diodorus of Sicily*, I (The Loeb Classical Library; London / Cambridge, 1933), pp. 222-3, except that the original Greek form Armaios is retained in preference to the Latinized version Armaeus. The former is the typical Greek transliteration of Haremhab, cf. *Demot. Nb.* I, pp. 812-3.

28 *Demot. Nb.* I, pp. 58 (Ahmose), 72-3 (Inaros), 812-3 (Haremhab).

29 Inaros I, who rebelled against the Assyrians, should not be confused with his later name-sake, Inaros II, who rebelled against the Persians. His identity was only recently established on the basis of the Inaros Epic, cf. K. Ryholt, 'The Assyrian Invasion of Egypt in Egyptian Literary Tradition', *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, edited by J.G. Dercksen (Leiden, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004), pp. 384-511, and is further substantiated in J. F. Quack, 'Inaros, Held von Athribis', *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante. Festschrift für Peter W. Haider zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (Oriens et Occidens 12, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), pp. 499-505.

30 For the trauma of the Amarna age, which was sometimes conflated with that of the Hyksos era, see in detail J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (London, 1997), esp. pp. 23-54. Sources concerning the trauma of the Assyrian domination of Egypt are collected in the two studies cited in the preceding footnote.

(early 3rd cent. BC) knew traditions about the end of the Hyksos era as well as the Amarna age and included these in his history of Egypt. The section covering the Late Period is known only from the *epitome*, an excerpt consisting of a bare king-list, and it therefore remains uncertain whether Manetho also knew and cited traditions about the Assyrian invasions. To judge from contemporary narrative literature, it would seem exceedingly unlikely that he did not. As already mentioned, a whole cycle of stories is built up around the character of Inaros I and it is by far the best attested story cycle from the Greco-Roman period and evidently circulated widely. Many other stories similarly concern or refer to the Assyrian conflict.

Much earlier examples of the traumatic conception of the Hyksos and Amarna eras and the roles of Ahmose and Haremhab are afforded by the king-lists inscribed by Sety I and Ramesses II in their temples at Abydos. These king-lists begin with the earliest historical kings and end with the two Ramesside kings themselves. Both, however, omit the Hyksos and Amarna kings and skip directly to Ahmose and Haremhab respectively, thus entirely suppressing the two periods in question.[31]

References to the past events

Several historical narratives from the Greco-Roman period include references to past events and it may be worth discussing here two new examples from unpublished texts. Both references occur in the context of Inaros stories which are set c. 670 BC, while the actual manuscripts form part of the Tebtunis temple library and date to the early 2nd century AD. The references have several points in common. To judge from the hand-writing, the texts were copied by the same scribe and it is clear, even in their fragmentary state, that they were similarly and perhaps even identically phrased.

P. Carlsberg 57 + P. CtYBR 298 (previously unknown Inaros story):
---] *pr-ꜥ Šwf sꜣ Mnḳ-kꜣ-Rᶜ ḥḳ=f nꜣ wr.w* [---
---] king Cheops son of Mycerinus. He captured the chieftains [---

P. Carlsberg 68+123 (the Inaros Epic):
---].. *irm pr-ꜥ* [*Ỉmn-mḥt sꜣ*] *;S:-Ws ḥḳ=f nꜣ* [---
---] Re[32] and king [Amenemhet son of] Sesostris. He captured the [---

The examples both concern the remote past, more specifically the two earliest golden eras represented by the 4th and the 12th Dynasties. Moreover, both concern successful military campaigns which — whether real or imagined — were apparently believed to be the source for the wealth represented by the contemporary royal monuments. This latter circumstance is analogous to the situation concerning those kings of the 18th and 19th dynasty whose monumental descriptions of military campaigns similarly earned them a lasting reputation as rulers with prosperous reigns.

Concluding remarks

Summing up, it may be argued that surviving monuments were really the primary factor in deciding what kings entered literary traditions and that the memory of specific historical events played a lesser role. Without a particularly good or detailed knowledge about the past, this might be considered a logical criterion since large-scale monuments combined with the depictions of victorious battles to many would have been indicative of a prosperous reign and a measure of success. Accordingly the description of specific reigns encountered in the historical narratives of the Greco-Roman period may largely be regarded as recreations or inventions based on information supplied by impressive monuments.

The main exception is formed by a few periods of different length and nature that may be regarded as great national trauma of the type that most countries share and which often form an important part of their present identity. For Egypt three distinctly traumatic periods were the Hyksos era, the Amarna age and the

31 Cf. conveniently D. B. Redford, Pharaonic King-lists, Annals and Day-books (SSEA Publication 4; Mississauga, 1986), pp. 18-21.

32 A divine or royal name precedes *irm*.

Assyrian invasions. During the introduction to the symposium and during the subsequent discussions, various definitions of *Ereignis* were suggested. These three periods are likely to meet any definition of the term. They all had a very tangible impact on Egyptian history with obvious changes to various aspects of society before and after and they were all remembered not just for generations but centuries to come.