CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EGYPT

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An interest in things ethnographical was not new in Herodotus' time. Already in Homer we see numerous examples of a concern with non-Greek peoples, real or fictional,\(^1\) and the surviving fragments of Hecataeus of Miletus provide ample evidence of this phenomenon.\(^2\) It is clear and natural that these ethnographic interests were closely linked to geographical speculation. This is most obviously the case in the parallelism between the early Greek division of the earth into two continents, i.e., Europē and Asie, to each of which is allocated an archetypal 'barbarian' people, the Scythians in Europē and the Egyptians in Asie. This neat mapping of the world is slightly impaired for Herodotus by the introduction of Libye (Africa) as a third continent,\(^3\) but its influence is still patent in the fact that the two longest and most searching of all Herodotus' ethnographical excursions are those dealing with Egypt in Book Two and Scythia in Book Four.\(^4\)

The origins of these ethnographical preoccupations are not far to seek. At the most basic level they are part of a mapping process by which any culture defines the physical world in which it finds itself, but there is also a deeper psychological imperative at work. Self-definition is a fundamental requirement if any individual, social group, or society is to be able to locate 'self' psychologically in its world, negotiate terms with that world, and thereby make it tractable. An essential part of this process of self-definition is defining 'self' in relation to other human beings. Evidently, 'others' can present themselves basically in two forms: (a) 'others' with whom there is a perceived

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\(^1\) E.g., the Egyptians, Ethiopians, Lotus-eaters, Carians, Lycians, and Phoenicians; see Wace and Stubbings (1962) 283 ff., for a convenient survey.

\(^2\) For the fragments see Jacoby (1923) I.

\(^3\) See Lloyd (1975) 126 ff.; (1976) 82 ff.

\(^4\) Much has been written on Herodotus' ethnographical interests: Grassl (1904); Trüdinger (1918); von Friz (1967) 128 ff.; Müller (1972); Rossellini and Säid (1978) 949 ff.; Hartog (1980); Mora (1986) 60 ff.
identity and sense of solidarity separate. The first group may be ethnic, class, who are perceived to be in the family, lineage, or class, or geography, such as towns; politically defined, though not universally, as physical characteristics. Generally, all those with whom no contact is recognized ‘otherness’ these as a sense of ‘self’.

Herodotus’ Histories are beginning as the testament of the Greeks, but it is more than the nature of the very nature of what it means of human being and, ipso, therefore, raising, exploring, a ‘What is it to be Greek?’; doing this in a historical context, and in an unnervingly stark and frontal, the confrontation between the Persians, therefore, engaged in nothing less than to define ‘self’ and ‘alien’ value.

Within an account of the empire, some discussion of integration of Egypt into the major military and economic fact that the Persians could not be said much for the capacity of part of an inexorable dynamic of its crescendo (at least to 63 B.C.); states of mainland Greece, and, finally, an analysis of the characterization of the

3 In general see Hartog (1986).
identity and sense of solidarity; (b) ‘others’ who are regarded as disparate. The first group may include a wide range of categories: those who are perceived to be biologically linked with the individual, e.g., the family, lineage, or clan; units defined by shared functions, interests, or geography, such as clubs, groups of colleagues, churches, or towns; politically defined structures such as the state; and possibly, though not universally, groups defined by genetically determined physical characteristics. Group (b), on the other hand, will comprise all those with whom no such sense of corporate solidarity is recognized. The perception of such differences will have two major effects. Most obviously, it defines disparate entities which must be conceptually located in one’s world. Less conspicuously, by the very act of recognizing ‘otherness’ the consciousness is defining more precisely a sense of ‘selfness’.

Herodotus’ *Histories* are explicitly presented at their very beginning as the commemoration of the achievements of Greeks and non-Greeks, but it is more than that. The work becomes an exploration of the very nature of what were, to Greeks, the two major categories of human being and, *ipso facto*, of humanity as a whole. It is, therefore, raising, exploring, and meditating upon the critical questions: ‘What is it to be Greek?’; ‘What is it to be a non-Greek?’—and it is doing this in a historical context where these questions had been posed in an unnervingly stark and immediate manner by the great confrontation between the Persian empire and Greece. Herodotus is, therefore, engaged in nothing less than responding to the intense challenge to define ‘self’ and ‘alien’ which the experience of that war presented.¹

Within an account of the clash between Greece and the Persian empire some discussion of Egypt has a natural place: the incorporation of Egypt into the Persian empire made it one of the many major military and economic forces ranged against the Greeks; the fact that the Persians could conquer such a great and wealthy nation said much for the capacities of the Empire; the conquest also formed part of an inexorable dynamic of western movement which reached its crescendo (at least to Greek observers) in the clash between the states of mainland Greece and the armies of Darius and Xerxes; and, finally, an analysis of Egyptian civilization contributed much to the characterization of the non-Greek, the ‘barbarian’, the deadly

¹ In general see Hartog (1980); Hall (1989).
foe which the Greeks had to confront and overcome if they were to survive.

Easy though it is to identify the logic for the inclusion of an Egyptian section in the narrative, it must be conceded that Herodotus has indulged himself mightily in his Egyptian excursus and produced a discussion which is seriously out of scale. It has frequently been argued, with considerable plausibility, that it was originally a separate piece written as an independent ethnographic inquiry and subsequently imported into the account of the Persian Wars when the relevance of such a discussion became clear. On the other hand, it might be the case that, once Herodotus had got started, the discussion grew and that no opportunity or inclination subsequently intervened to edit it down to an appropriate scale.

It is possible to detect a number of factors determining what Herodotus discussed and the presuppositions which he brought to bear. There is, of course, no attempt to provide a clinical and objective view of Egypt. Greek foci of interest are all-powerful, whether it be Egypt's impact on Greek history, its influence on Greek culture, strident differences between Greek and Egyptian ways of doing things, or the real or imagined moral lessons that might be learned by Greeks from Egyptian historical experience. Greek perspectives are also in evidence in the pervasive influence of to thomasion, 'the marvellous' (i.e., to a Greek), a point which Herodotus explicitly concedes in his famous sentence, 'I shall speak at some length of Egypt because beyond all lands it possesses very many wonders and marvels which pass all power to describe' (2.35.1). On the other hand, similarities, real or imaginary, between Egypt and Greece can act like a magnet to draw him into rampant cultural diffusionism, and Greek religious inhibitions can lead him to avoid discussing certain aspects of Egyptian belief. Herodotus' thinking on all these matters shows the marked influence of contemporary ethnographic theory: Pindar's relativism is strongly endorsed—'custom is king in all things', and cultural practices must be treated as valid culture by culture (3.38.4); the operation of the widely current custom/nature polarity is clearly visible; and he is convinced of the pervasive influence of environment in creating Egyptian customs.9

A striking feature of Herodotus' work is his willingness to indicate the remarkable example of the 'inquiry' he pursues in his (opsis), 'opinion', i.e., an evaluation of data (gnôma), (99.1, 123.1, 147.1). For in his discussion of geographical sites, both archaeological explicitly present in matter evidence is very much how he evidence is very much how he evidences in the earlier part of the account from the priests and 'other' evidence from the reign of Psammetichus in the Greek (2.154.4). That the evidence he knew full well, and he makes as for the claims of the priests, find credible. As for me, I record what each group says, in addition to these stated sources, the Greek tradition on Egyptian religion played a major role in defining and shaping his work, but he also drew much from geographical and ethnographic knowledge, the Ionians Anaximander and others.

Let us now consider how

Herodotus had available a considerable body of material: 'Egypt is the area which the inhabitants of people are Egyptians who...'

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9 On this issue, see Jacoby (1913) 330 ff.; Formara (1971a) 1 ff.; Lloyd (1975) 66 ff.
10 On the sources for Book V, see the references in note 10 above.
A striking feature of Herodotus' narrative of the Persian Wars is his willingness to indicate sources, and Book Two is a particularly remarkable example of that trait. At the very beginning of the Histories he describes the work as an historiē, 'inquiry, investigation',9 and this 'inquiry' he pursues in Egypt using three stated methods: autopsy (opsis), 'opinion', i.e., an expression of personal opinion based on evaluation of data (gnōmē), and inquiry or hearsay (historiē, akoē) (2.29.1, 99.1, 123.1, 147.1). For our context the first is very prominent in his discussion of geography, geology, botany, zoology, customs, and sites, both archaeological and inhabited. 'Opinion' is widely and explicitly present in matters of religion and tradition whilst hearsay evidence is very much his stock-in-trade for history and traditions: in the earlier part of the Aigyptios logos he inquires and 'hears' mainly from the priests and 'other Egyptians', but in historical discussions from the reign of Psammetichus I onwards his oral sources are mainly Greek (2.154.4). That these sources yielded data of variable value he knew full well, and he issues a clear warning to that effect: 'Now as for the claims of the Egyptians, people can use whatever they find credible. As for me, it is my policy throughout my narrative to record what each group says as I heard it' (2.123.1, cf. 7.152.3). In addition to these stated sources he was also influenced deeply by the Greek tradition on Egypt. This began with Homer who played a major role in defining and disseminating the Greek image of Egypt, but he also drew much from and reacted strongly against the geographical and ethnographical tradition developed by the two great Ionians Anaximander and Hecataeus of Miletus.10

Let us now consider how all this works out in practice.

Political and Social Structure

Herodotus had available a clear definition of what an Egyptian was: 'Egypt is the area which the Nile inundates when it rises, and those people are Egyptians who live below the city of Elephantine and

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9 The word can be used to denote 'inquiry, investigation', whatever the method, or to refer to specifically oral inquiry. In the first line of the Histories it is the former sense which is at issue (Lloyd (1975) 81 f.).

10 On the sources for Book Two, see Lloyd (1975) 77 ff; (1988b) 23 ff; Fehling (1989); and Pritchett (1993).
drink from this river’ (2.18.3), a definition which no ancient Egyptian would have had any difficulty in accepting. His comments on their physical appearance are, at first sight, puzzling: at 2.104.2 he describes them as ‘dark-skinned and curly-haired’, which certainly describes many an Egyptian (cf. 2.57.2), but both in ancient and modern times the range of physical types goes well beyond that. However, we should not make too much of this. Clearly we must allow here for a Greek concept of the ‘symbolic’ Egyptian, i.e., if a spot-check were taken amongst Greeks to name two Egyptian characteristics ‘dark-skinned’ and ‘curly-haired’ would be the likely result, and, if an artist of any kind required a physically identifiable Egyptian,11 he would work with these descriptors.

Within this body of people Herodotus perceived a society dominated by kingship and divided into seven distinct classes (genea) which were defined by their ‘crafts’. These are enumerated at 2.164.1 as the priests (hieroi), the warriors (makhimos), the cowherds (boukoloi), the swineherds (suboloi), the inland-traders (kaplooi), the interpreters (hermeneis), and the pilots (kybernai). Elsewhere he also talks of craftsmen, fishermen, and the peasantry, but they clearly did not present themselves to him as groups which could be defined by their ‘crafts’ in the same way as the seven classes listed above, perhaps because they lacked the tight corporate unity which he probably perceived in the genea.12 Birdcatchers, though frequent in the Egyptian record, find no place in his narrative, despite the fact that Herodotus was well aware of the Egyptian predilection for eating birds in a variety of forms (2.77.5).

Kings occupy a dominant place in Herodotus’ account, and it is through them that the historical narrative unfolds.13 The political power of this institution is, of course, a major area of divergence from the eleutheriē or ‘freedom’ which is so often praised as a distinctive feature of the Greek world (cf. 2.172.5). Herodotus is clearly aware that the main principle of succession was heredity, but he knows perfectly well that other factors can intervene, e.g., he speaks of a priest of Hephaestus by a conversion of eclembulated in Egyptian history, bringing a usurper to the throne. Divine assistance was also a factor in several cases of them recounted (Mycerinus, 2.133.1; Sethos II). Rulers are correctly described as nomes (administrative districts). Herodotus mentions eight in the Delta, a fact which gives Delta bias of his narration.

Herodotus was well aware that Egypt had initially been ruled by a king being Min. For him Psammetichus (Psammetichus III) and subsequently executed for his devotion to the description of Cambyses will be left out of this span over which this human extraordinary features of his wisdom on the past of Egypt was the perfect basis for the enunciation of the principle in arguing for the 14

The first part of this history, from Min to the Dodekannai, is most striking deficiency in that it displaces the Pyramid Builders from representatives of all the maniologists: Thinite (Min), Old Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Thinite (Min), Old Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitocris, Middle Kingdoms, Nitograined commentary 14

11 Making ‘Egyptians’ even remotely genuinely Egyptian could well be surplus to requirements. The ‘Egyptian’ context of Euripides’ Helen dispenses completely with anything that could be called Egyptian local colour.
12 Note that the swineherds are stated to practise exclusive intermarriage (2.47.1).
14 On the Cambyses tradition.
of a priest of Hephaestus (Egyptian Ptah) becoming king at 2.141.1, by a conversion of ecclesiastical into royal power which is easily paralleled in Egyptian history. He is also aware that the political coup bringing a usurper to the throne was not unknown in Egypt (2.162.2). Divine assistance was available to kings, and Herodotus mentions several cases of them receiving messages through oracles and dreams (Mycerinus, 2.133.1; Sethos, 2.141.3-4; Psammetichus, 2.152.3). These rulers are correctly described as ruling over a country divided into nomes (administrative districts comparable to an English county). Herodotus mentions eighteen of these (less than half), all but one in the Delta, a fact which reflects nothing more than the general Delta bias of his narrative.

Herodotus was well aware of the Egyptian tradition that Egypt had initially been ruled by dynasties of gods (2.144.2), the first 'human' king being Min. For him the sequence of native kings ended with Psammeticus (Psammetichus III) who was deposed in 525 by Cambyses and subsequently executed. Most of the text from 2.99 to 3.64 is devoted to the description of royal actions, though for our purposes Cambyses will be left out of consideration. The astonishing time-span over which this human history unfolded was one of the most extraordinary features of Egyptian history and received much careful consideration, not least because it gave the lie to received Greek wisdom on the past of Greece itself, and provided Herodotus with the perfect basis for the operation of the post hoc ergo propter hoc principle in arguing for the Egyptian origin of much of Greek culture.

The first part of this historical narrative covers the reigns of kings from Min to the Dodecarchs (2.99–141). To the Egyptologist its most striking deficiency is the eccentric chronology which seriously displaces the Pyramid Builders, but it does include discussion of representatives of all the major periods recognized by modern Egyptologists: Thinite (Min), Old Kingdom (Cheops, Chephren, Mycerinus, Nitocris), Middle Kingdom (Sesostris, Moeris), New Kingdom (Rhamsp-sinus), the Libyan Period (Asychis, Anysis), the Nubian Period (Sabacos, Sethos, the Dodecarchs), and the Saite Period (Necho I,
Psammetichus I, Necho II, Psammetichus II (Psammis), Apries, Amasis, Psammetichus III (Psammenitus). Only two of his kings are patently unhistorical—Pheros, who is a complete fabrication, and Proteus, who was imported from Greek legend.\footnote{Pheros' name is clearly based on the Egyptian title per-aa, the origin of the English Pharaoh, but he was clearly identified in later tradition with Amenemhet II of the Twelfth Dynasty (Lloyd (1988c) 38 ff.). Proteus is an import from Homeric tradition (Lloyd (1988c) 43 ff.).}

The actions attributed to this first batch of rulers are of varying historical credibility. They include imperialist expansion—Sesostris campaigns on the Red Sea Coast, in Asia, and in Europe (!), bringing back prisoners who were used for building and civil-engineering purposes. He also conquered Nubia which he is alleged, quite wrongly, to have been the only king to subdue. A recurrent activity is temple-building and embellishment—Min founds the temple of Hephaestus at Memphis, Moeris builds its north pylon; Sesostris erects obelisks and statues in Memphis; Pheros dedicated statues at Heliopolis; Proteus was responsible for a temple enclosure at Memphis; Rhampsis built the west pylon of the temple of Hephaestus at Memphis and set up statues in the same shrine; and Asychis constructed the east pylon at Memphis. (Much of this has some truth in it.)\footnote{Herodotus' accounts of Egyptian buildings have been discussed in detail by Lloyd (1995) 273-300.} Irrigation works such as canal-digging and dyke-building are also mentioned: Min is alleged to have diverted the Nile around Memphis, almost certainly wrongly; Sesostris is claimed to have been responsible for Egypt's canal system, despite the fact that it must have been much older, and his alleged motivation is distinctly odd; and Moeris is claimed, quite incorrectly, to have been responsible for the creation of Lake Moeris. Kings can also found cities: Min is asserted to have been responsible for the foundation of Memphis after he had reclaimed the requisite land; and kings also engage in spectacular tomb-building (2.124–36). In all these enterprises Herodotus rarely mentions the existence of administrators or agents acting on Pharaoh's behalf. Sesostris is described as using his brother as regent at 2.107.1, and Thonis holds the office of 'Guardian of the Canopic Mouth of the Nile' (2.113.3), but otherwise rulers operate in isolated omnipotence. This almost exclusive concentration on royal action may simply arise from a narrative dynamic which insists on a sharp and exclusive focus on the protagonist, something to Egyptian tradition.

With the beginning of Psammetichus II (2.147 ff.) the narrative is more explicit, but a great deal of what he does is suggested, rather than specified. The narrative is still in evidence in the south, but Sesostris' more rationalistic expansion is succeeded by a return to the mythical traditions of the north. The later Asyut is the latest example: Sesostris' attempts to occupy Egypt are not mentioned, and we hear nothing of his occupation as invading Nubia (Ethiopia) or his interest in Asia; and Amasis' activities in the Phoenician city-states are stated to be calculated diplomatically. Amasis is claimed to have diverted the Nile to found the Dodecarch, and to have been responsible for building a city of the Dodecarch, and to have been responsible for the foundation of Memphis after he had reclaimed the requisite land. Kings also engage in spectacular tomb-building (2.124–36). In all these enterprises Herodotus rarely mentions the existence of administrators or agents acting on Pharaoh's behalf. Sesostris is described as using his brother as regent at 2.107.1, and Thonis holds the office of 'Guardian of the Canopic Mouth of the Nile' (2.113.3), but otherwise rulers operate in isolated omnipotence. This almost exclusive concentration on royal action may simply arise from a narrative dynamic which insists on a sharp and exclusive focus on the protagonist, something to Egyptian tradition.

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Herodotus, however, goes beyond this by attempting to lay down the rules of his narrative. This Isis temple cannot be confirmed actually as it is, but its existence is implied by the evidence of the sculptors in the accounts of Strabo, and Sethos is shown as having

\footnote{This Isis temple cannot be confirmed actually as it is, but its existence is implied by the evidence of the sculptors in the accounts of Strabo, and Sethos is shown as having been directly involved in its construction. (Lloyd (1985) 197 ff.)}
focus on the protagonist, but it is perfectly possible that it owes something to Egyptian tradition for which such exclusivity is normal.

With the beginning of the account of the Saite Dynasty in 664 (2.147 ff.) the narrative moves more firmly into the world of history, but a great deal of what we have identified in the earlier historical narrative is still in evidence. Familiar fields of activity recur: imperialistic expansion is ascribed to Psammetichus, who campaigns in Asia, though the remarkable extent of these operations escapes Herodotus completely; conquests are also attributed to Necho II who operates in Asia and the Red Sea, the latter’s ambitions furthered, it is claimed, by the enhancement of the Egyptian navy. However, we hear nothing of his campaign into Nubia; Psammis is described as invading Nubia (Ethiopia), but there is no reference to his known interest in Asia; and Apries engages in naval operations against Phoenician city-states as well as in a disastrous invasion of Libya. Finally, Amasis is claimed to have subdued Cyprus. Allied to all this are calculated diplomatic activities such as gifts to Greek shrines ascribed to Necho and Amasis and Amasis’ relationship with Polycrates of Samos. Temple-building continues to be a major royal activity: the Dodecarchi are stated (wrongly) to have built the Labyrinth, and Psammetichus later built a pylon at the temple of Hephaestus and a court for the Apis bull. Amasis constructed a pylon in Sais as well as colossal statues and large sphinxes; he also attempted to set up an allegedly monolithic shrine, erected colossal statues at Memphis, and built a temple of Isis there.\(^8\) Whilst every item in this catalogue cannot be confirmed archaeologically, there is nothing intrinsically implausible here. Tomb-building is less in evidence, though we do hear of the royal necropolis at Sais, but this disparity simply reflects the fact that the construction of royal burial installations on the grand scale was very much a thing of the past.

Herodotus, however, goes much further in his history of Egypt than attempting to lay down a historical framework and explicitly or implicitly ascribes character and motivation to these kings: ambition to excel is highlighted in the case of Asychnis; benevolence features in the accounts of Sesostris, Mycerinus, and Sabacos; Pheros and Sethos are shown as pious and Mycerinus as just; arrogance is

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\(^8\) This Isis temple cannot be identified, but Amasis’ interest in this goddess is gratifyingly confirmed by his temple constructed in her honour at Philae (Haeney (1985) 197 ff.).
ascribed to Sesostris, Pheros, Cheops, Sethos, and Mycerinus, and vengefulness to Nitocris, Sesostris, and Proteus; a streak of ruthlessness emerges in Nitocris, Sesostris, Pheros, Cheops, and Chephren, and the trickster in Nitocris, Rhamphituus, and Mycerinus; magnanimity features in the behaviour of Rhamphituus, and Proteus is described as maintaining the moral order. Whether these motives or character traits were inherited in material from Egyptian informants or imported by Herodotus cannot be definitively resolved, though the coincidence of this body of motives with those occurring elsewhere in Herodotus’ Historiae justifies the strong suspicion that they owe much to his standard narrative apparatus (see Lloyd (1988c) 1 ff.).

The characterization of the Saite rulers is very much in line with what we are told of these earlier Egyptian kings. The omniscient, proactive, dominant ruler is much to the fore: it is Psammeticus who recognizes the significance of the oracle and acts at 2.152.5, and it is he who consolidates relations with Greeks for the benefit of the kingdom; it is Psammeticus who is alleged (inconceivably) to have attempted to establish the sources of the Nile, and it is Necho II who is behind the alleged circumnavigation of Africa; similar problem-solving expertise is assumed in the case of Psammis who is required to unravel a difficulty in which the Eleans found themselves; Amasis’ alleged foundation of Naucratis provides yet another example of the proactive ruler; benevolence features in the behaviour of the Dodecarchs, as also in Amasis’ treatment of Apries; arrogance as well as ruthlessness are attributed to Apries, and vengefulness to Psammeticus. Necho can show acquiescence in the divine will, but much of Amasis’ behaviour is characterized by irreverence. However, in his relationship with Polycrates he is described as showing a firm grasp of the workings of the divine order, even if that order is unequivocally Greek. Some rulers can also appear as tricksters, Amasis in a didactic context and in relation to Cambyses and Psammeticus with lethal consequences to himself after his capture by the Persians.

Herodotus is explicit on his sources for Egyptian history. To begin with there is a very heavy emphasis on Egyptian tradition (under which heading he prioritizes the priests)\(^{19}\) supplemented by autopsy,\(^{20}\) but from 2.147 they are eminently Greeks\(^{21}\) who is justifiably convinced that very much more accurate is, only, source of information oral tradition which had pre-Saite kings. There is he says, but oral tradition is needed or considered there for the benefit of sanct set of data. Traditions arranged, trimmed, often on current social, politically specific is, therefore, individuals are progressively a addition, have assimilated lore, political and cultural elements or features of more. Nevertheless, the general the classic activities of Pharaoh, traditions recorded by Herodotus, because they are part of the kind of things which is the character of this tradition, Egyptian kingship was generally little genuine history from patent historical inadequacies taken as proof that the measure, from Egyptian accounts, an er.

\(^{19}\) For the character of Herodotus’ priestly tradition, see Lloyd (1975) 89 ff.

\(^{20}\) On autopsy, see Lloyd (1975) 84 ff.

\(^{21}\) See Lloyd (1975) 116 ff.

\(^{22}\) See Lloyd (1988a) 60 ff.
but from 2.147 they are reinforced by non-Egyptian sources, pre-eminently Greeks\textsuperscript{21} who had acquired direct knowledge of Egyptian history from their participation in making it. As a result Herodotus is justifiably convinced that his account of the XXVIth Dynasty is very much more accurate than what precedes. The main, if not the only, source of information accessed through these informants was oral tradition which had evolved over many centuries in the case of pre-Saite kings. There is some historical foundation for much of what he says, but oral tradition is intrinsically fluid and retains only what is needed or considered relevant to a given generation. The past is there for the benefit of the present and is far from being a sacrosanct set of data. Traditions may, therefore, be supplemented, re-arranged, trimmed, often radically customized, depending entirely on current social, political, or conceptual imperatives. The historically specific is, therefore, gradually lost, and situations and individuals are progressively assimilated to archetypes.\textsuperscript{22} They would, in addition, have assimilated or been affected by such influences as folklore, political and cultural propaganda, myth, tales explaining monuments or features of monuments, myth, and even ritual practice. Nevertheless, the general trend of the accounts of these rulers reflects the classic activities of Egyptian kings. Such actions appear in the traditions recorded by Herodotus, even when they are not historical, because they are part of the agenda of Egyptian kingship, i.e., the kind of things which Egyptians expected a king to do. Therefore, the character of this tradition indicates that an authentic image of Egyptian kingship was getting through to Herodotus, even if very little genuine history frequently came with it. It follows that the patent historical inadequacy of so much of 2.99–141 should not be taken as proof that the narrative did not emanate, at least in some measure, from Egyptian sources, however much it may have been contaminated in transition.

Once in Greek hands, the process of evolution of these traditions was influenced by new factors: the introduction of elements from Greek tradition, chronological misunderstandings, over-schematization, analogies with things Greek which may then be imported into Egyptian accounts, an emphasis on things of relevance and interest

\textsuperscript{21} See Lloyd (1975) 116 ff. Usually Herodotus simply refers to them as \textit{Hellēnes}, but references to Ionians and Cyreneans do occur.

\textsuperscript{22} See Lloyd (1988a) 60 ff.; (1988b) 39 ff.
to a Greek audience, and the pervasive predilection for the marvellous. To all this we must add the Herodotean agenda. We have already described the contemporary-relevance principle applied to tradition in oral societies, and that principle still exercised a profound influence on Herodotus’ writing, but Herodotus belonged to what was, at least in part, a literate society, and the advent of literacy induced a progressive reorientation, though this was neither immediate nor indeed complete. The capacity to record ‘facts’ in writing has the effect of exteriorizing and objectivizing them. To a much greater extent than in oral society these data are, and their reality must be accepted and respected. To Herodotus certain phenomena in which he is interested and on which he focuses existed/took place in space and time. They are realities which form a matrix of fact, but the important thing about such realities is their significance to his Greek audience, and he worked on the basis that he had complete freedom to use whatever narrative techniques he felt necessary to put over their perceived significance to his readers. Therefore, the modern rigorous distinction between fiction and non-fiction is not appropriate to the reading of Herodotus, or, for that matter, to historical writers of the ancient world in general. Put simply, he clearly felt justified in editing, supplementing, or highlighting received historical tradition as he thought fit, and, if this involved departing from what we call history or even adding non-historical elements, he felt at complete liberty to do so.

Thus it is that, underpinning the account of Egyptian history and explaining it, we find a Greek moral universe. Egyptian history is used to illustrate and confirm fundamental Greek perceptions of the way the world works: the punishment of Pheros (2.111), the moral disquisition at 2.120, the concept of divine punishment at 2.139, the rewards of piety at 2.141, the fall of Apries from unparalleled good fortune (2.161.2; 169), Psammetichus’ recognition of the pathos that can arise from the transitory nature of human well-being (3.14), and, most telling of all, the quintessentially Greek moral thinking driving the narrative of the relationship between Amasis and Polycrates and the latter’s disastrous end (3.39–43). This remarkable episode reveals with complete clarity the relationship between historical matrix and customization. The basis is evidently an alliance concluded between Polycrates and Amasis for strategic reasons in the face of the growing threat of Persia. This alliance was terminated, probably by Amasis and probably because Polycrates had become more of a liability than an asset. This situation, with legendary material described by George Co.

A novella is a creative way the author’s distinctive happened long ago and continues to happen so that each new audience into an imaginative by the author. Its concern is

One final point should be mentioned. The author showed far or anywhere else, of the appeal of the king, that the god Horus, in conciliation with him by dreams, which were available to Polycrates a capacity of human action (2.122), no classical writer does. The Greeks who got very close to the Old Period. We can only consider the unity of Pharaoh did not in political contexts and was very

Egyptian priests are far from the major occupations. The Heliopolitans are said in general are regarded as specialists. The priests were a topic of concern to a dedicated priestly class within the world. He also comments that not one priest per deity but one priest (2.37.5). He recognizes when he informs us that F

25 (1992) 980. On the application, see also Ch. 11,
an asset. This situation is then picked up by Herodotus, together with legendary material to produce a 'novella', a literary form aptly described by George Coates:

A novella is a creative construction by the author, designed to meet the author's distinctive goals. The author presents not simply what happened long ago and far away, but rather what happened and continues to happen so that the traditions carried by plot structure capture each new audience. Historical figures and events are caught up into an imaginative fabric produced by the creative activity of the author. Its concern is not to report historical events...23

One final point should be made before leaving Herodotus on Egyptian kingship. The author shows no awareness in his historical narrative, or anywhere else, of the Egyptian ideology of divine kingship, i.e., that the king was conceptualized as a god incarnate, the living embodiment of the god Horus. He does indicate that gods could communicate with him by dreams and oracles, though these were media which were available to anyone, and he does describe in the case of Rhampsinitus a capacity to break outside the normal boundaries of human action (2.122), but that is as close as he gets. Intriguingly, no classical writer does any better, despite the fact that there were Greeks who got very close indeed to Egyptian Pharaohs in the Late Period. We can only conclude that, whatever theory said, the divinity of Pharaoh did not impress itself on Greek observers in practical contexts and was very far from being evident.

Egyptian priests are frequently mentioned by Herodotus, particularly those of the major centres of Heliopolis, Memphis, and Thebes. The Heliopolitans are said to be the most learned, but priests in general are regarded as a major source of historical information. The priests were a topic of considerable interest to Herodotus because a dedicated priestly class was an unfamiliar phenomenon in the Greek world. He also comments on the odd practice whereby there was not one priest per deity but a whole group presided over by a high priest (2.37.5). He recognizes their potential to achieve political power when he informs us that Pharaoh Sethos had originally been a priest of Hephaestus. He is aware that the priesthood was in his time an hereditary office and has much to say about their personal habits.

23 (1992) 980. On the applicability of the term 'novella' where Herodotus' work is concerned, see also Ch. 11, pp. 257-8, this volume.
In all this we can see both similarities to and contrasts with Greek practice directing Herodotus’ attention to aspects of this important group, and much of what he says amply qualified to a Greek as ‘marvels’. Well informed though he is, however, Herodotus shows no knowledge of the theory behind the institution of priesthood, i.e., that the chief officiant is the substitute for Pharaoh in temple ritual, and his function is to maintain deities which have the potential to die if they are not properly tended.24

According to Herodotus the Warriors were a large proportion of the population. They were a hereditary class made up of two groups, the Kalasiries (250,000 strong) and the Hermotybies (160,000 strong). They were based almost exclusively in the Delta, and each was given 12 arourai (8 acres) of land free of tax. They were required to devote themselves entirely to war, and he is particularly emphatic on their exclusion from all forms of banaisē, ‘handicraft’. Their weaponry, at least in marine mode, is described as formidable, and they were well protected by helmets, shields, and breastplates (7.89.3). Every year the two groups had to provide a thousand men each to act as a royal bodyguard, and in return for this they received generous rations over and above their land-allotments. It is clear, though far from explicit, that Herodotus’ description of this class is pervaded by contamination from his or his sources’ knowledge of the Spartan elite warrior class, and that we must allow for severe distortion in this account from that influence. We should edit out anything here which smacks too much of Sparta.25

Cowherds were certainly numerous, particularly in the Delta area, and played a major part in the Egyptian economy, but Herodotus felt under no obligation to linger over them. The same held true of the swineherds and the inland traders. The interpreters interested him rather more since they were allegedly created by Psammetichus I to facilitate communication with Greeks. Finally, he talks of the pilots, a select group within those who plied the waters of the Nile who were expert in dealing with navigational hazards and are comparable to the elite corps of river pilots still to be found in Middle Egypt.

Herodotus’ knowledge of the importance of agriculture to its success. He is also aware of the extent and considerable accuracy of rain records in land-reclamation works, which was certainly untrue.26 Several major canals he devised the Egyptian canals may have been responsible for Lake Nasser: frequent references elsewhere, notably Nitocris (2.100.3), Qaroun (2.158), etc., are to the function of the king laying out irrigation system, a point made by Egyptian history by the many.

Since Herodotus was big on siege engines it is a little surprising that he did not give agriculture the attention it clearly deserved; he is entirely on the fact that it was a privilege to the pharaoh, unlike in Greece, and that it was an industry. However, he leaves out of account the scale of labour required to keep the canals efficient.

Herodotus refers to raw granite being quarried at the Fayum and shipped to Egypt. He states that granite was used for building the temples at Abydos and that some granite blocks were used for the obelisks at Memphis. He also mentions that some granite was used for the temples at Abydos and that some granite blocks were used for the obelisks at Memphis. The stone was cut by hand and then transported to the building sites by ox carts.

25 Froidefond (1971); Lloyd (1988a), 184 ff. It is a matter of some considerable doubt whether these late Pharaonic Makhaem are the ancestors of the Ptolemaic class of the same name (Goudriaan (1966), 121 ff.).
26 Recent excavations strongly suggest that the Fayum was a major centre for granite quarrying. The granite was worked in large blocks and then transported to the building sites by ox carts.
27 The Fayum basin is a natural basin that was created when an offshoot of the Nile flowed through the western cliffs and flowed down the valley of the Wadi el-Arish.
28 This monument dates from the reign of Amenophis III (1410–1370 BC) and shows the king in a typical pose, waving a hoe to create a canal.
Herodotus’ knowledge of the Egyptian economy is partial. He knows of the importance of agriculture and the contribution of irrigation to its success. He is also aware of the phenomenon of sedimentation. However, some of his comments betray a limited understanding and considerable inaccuracy: King Min is claimed to have engaged in land-reclamation works at the site of fifth-century Memphis, which was certainly untrue; Sesostris is asserted, quite wrongly, to have devised the Egyptian canal system; and King Moeris is said to have been responsible for Lake Moeris, which he was not. There are frequent references elsewhere to royal water direction or canal-digging: Nitocris (2.100.3), Cheops (2.127.2), and Necho II’s abortive Red Sea Canal (2.158). True or not, however, there is no doubt that these traditions reflect an Egyptian perception that a critical function of the king lay in guaranteeing the workings of the irrigation system, a point made emphatically at the very beginning of Egyptian history by the mace-head of King Scorpion.

Since Herodotus was highly aware of the importance of irrigation, it is a little surprising that he can say at 2.14.2 that Egyptian agriculture was easier than anywhere else. Here he is evidently focusing entirely on the fact that little, if any, ploughing would be needed, unlike in Greece, and that sowing the seed was a relatively easy task. However, he leaves out of account completely the enormous amount of labour required to keep the irrigation system up and running.

Herodotus refers to raw materials, mentioning the acquisition of stone from the quarries at Tura on several occasions and the transportation of granite from Elephantine. Beyond that he does not go. Metals he mentions, gold, copper, silver, and iron all featuring at some point, but there is no awareness of sources of supply or the

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36 Recent excavations strongly indicate that the settlement of Memphis moved gradually southwards during its long history, and that the site of ‘Min’s’ Memphis lay to the north of the fifth-century site (Giddy, Jeffreys, and Malek 1990: 13; Giddy and Jeffreys 1991: 6; and Giddy and Jeffreys 1992, 2).

27 The Fayum basin is a natural formation created by wind erosion. The lake was created when an offshoot of the Nile, now known as the Bahr Yusuf, broke through the western cliffs and flooded the lower part of the basin (Lloyd 1988c: 126).

28 This monument dates from the late prehistoric period and shows the king wielding a hoe to create a canal (Spencer 1993: 56, fig. 36).
case or difficulty with which Egyptian requirements might be met. There is nothing on the Egyptian timber problem, though he does mention the use of acacia in boat-building. He fails to grasp the enormous value of papyrus as, amongst other things, a timber substitute, but he does recognize that it had its uses in boat-building (though not, oddly enough, to construct the hulls of boats), the weaving of ropes, and also in the making of sandals.

Manufacturing, in particular technology, does come in for some discussion. He can speak of craftsmen (2.141.4) as an identifiable group, even though he does not recognize them as a genos. He is aware of the use of the vertical double-beamed loom in Egypt and contrasts its technique of beating-in with that customary on the more primitive Greek warp-weighted loom; his discussion of Egyptian boat-building is most remarkable and corresponds closely to known Pharaonic practice; building technology also attracts his attention, and he has much to say on the construction of pyramids and on the movement of large masses, not all of it as accurate as one would wish. As for trade, he knew of the existence of inland traders (see above), the role of Naucratis as a Greek trading post (2.178.9), and a large-scale wine trade with Greek and Phoenician sources of supply (3.6), but there is also some awareness in the account of Naucratis and the wine trade that a high degree of centralization existed.

There are, then, strengths in what Herodotus has to say, but the strengths lie in detail. There is little evidence of insight into the way economic institutions worked in Pharaonic Egypt. Above all the critical role of storage and redistribution centres, such as palaces, temples, and large estates, finds no place in his account.

The Egyptian Belief System

Herodotus’ choice of material for discussion in this area is partly determined by the conviction that much of Greek religion had an Egyptian origin and partly by ‘the marvellous dimension’ which attached to so much Egyptian religious practice (Lloyd (1975) 141 ff).

39 On the Egyptian use of papyrus, see Lucas and Harris (1962) index, s.v.
40 On this intriguing account, see the studies of Morrison in Greenhill (1976) 161 ff; Lloyd (1979); and Haldane and Shelmerdine (1990).
41 See the analysis of Lloyd (1988c) 63 ff; (1995) 274 ff.

The information is marked down what he had learned about (i.e., myth and theology). The assertion that it was impossible exists (2.3). The concept of a tradition acquired from distant origins in the Egyptian gods. The gods preoccupy him with comments on an Egyptian but this does not break his doctrine held by the Memphite view of the interrelationship between occupation which leads him narrating in the insistence that Egyptian origin. Evidence is not extend to discussing this permit him to making statements on behalf; he was simply the origins of Greek concept two main phases in the development and the Hellenic Pelasgian the objects of cult in Greece and the gods. Subsequently, the oracular personalities came from Egypt not necessarily at one and the same as mata of all the classic Greek gods (who allegedly came from Themis, the Charites, and those by the Pelasgians. Other religious Egypt in this process. The idea sharpened itself up and and flesh and bones and Hesiod played a crucial role in ancient construction means that Amun as Zeus or Neith as Athena as a matter of convenience.
The information is marked by a profound reticence in discussing what he had learned about the character and actions of the gods (i.e., myth and theology). This reticence is founded on the conviction that it was impossible to gain reliable knowledge on such topics (2.3). The concept of Fate appears at 2.133.3, but only as part of a tradition acquired from Egyptian priests which may have its distant origins in the Egyptian concept of šay, 'the predestined'.

The gods preoccupy him greatly, but he treads very carefully. He comments on an Egyptian opinion on the orders of gods at 2.46, but this does not break his rule because it is presented simply as a doctrine held by the Mendesians. Of consuming concern is the issue of the interrelationship between Greek and Egyptian deities, a preoccupation which leads him into pervasive *interpretatio graeca* culminating in the insistence that the vast majority of Greek deities are of Egyptian origin. Evidently Herodotus felt that his inhibitions need not extend to discussing this historical issue because it did not commit him to making statements about the nature of the gods on his own behalf; he was simply expounding his considered opinion on the origins of Greek concepts of divine beings. To him there were two main phases in the development of these concepts, the Pelasgian and the Hellenic. Pelasgian beliefs evolved in two phases: at first, the objects of cult in Greece were undifferentiated and unnamed gods. Subsequently, the *ounomata* of the gods, i.e., 'their names and personalities', came from Egypt and were taken up by the Pelasgians, not necessarily at one and the same time. These included the *ounomata* of all the classic Greek deities, with the exception of Poseidon (who allegedly came from Libya) and the Dioscuri, Hera, Hestia, Themis, the Charites, and the Nereids who were supposedly 'named' by the Pelasgians. Other religious material was also acquired from Egypt in this process. The Greeks subsequently took all this over, sharpened it up and and fleshed it out, a process in which Homer and Hesiod played a crucial part. This ingenious but entirely erroneous construction means that, when Herodotus refers to the Egyptian Amun as Zeus or Neith as Athene, he is not using the Greek names as a matter of convenience for the sake of his readers. On the con-

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trary, he is reflecting a profound conviction that the Greek and Egyptian deities are one and the same thing. The same issue of transference of doctrines arises at 2.123, where he insists, quite wrongly, that the Egyptians were the source of the Greek doctrine of metempsychosis.

Given his reticence on matters of belief, it is not surprising to find Herodotus concentrating much attention on observable phenomena. He speaks of iconography, and festivals occupy a great deal of attention: he distinguishes between different types and describes those of Artemis at Bubastis (2.60), Isis at Busiris (2.61), Athene at Sais (2.62), and Ares at Papremis (2.63), as well as those of Dionysus (2.48) and Demeter (2.122). He also speaks of the games of Perseus at Chemmis (2.91), which he evidently believed to be of a thoroughly Greek character.

Methods of communication between man and god are equally exempt from Herodotus’ inhibitions since they too are observable phenomena. He speaks of portents and portent books, dreams, and oracles, all of the latter given by the gods, though methods could differ. He also has much to say on methods of sacrifice and the requirement for purity in temples. He devotes a substantial amount of space to sacred animal cults which had particular value as a ‘marvel’, but here again he concentrates on observable aspects such as the animals which were worshipped, the penalties for killing them, their maintenance, and their mode of burial. Egyptian mortuary practices are also a focus of much attention, particularly mummification which he discusses to good effect, clearly because of its status as a ‘marvel’. He also speaks of repositories for the dead which he describes as ‘sepulchral chambers’.

What, then, is our verdict on Herodotus’ portrayal of Egyptian religion? Typically, although he knew a great deal of correct or largely correct detail, particularly on cult practice, he lacks any grasp of the concepts underpinning belief or ritual; he shows no awareness of the Egyptian concept of gods potentially subject to mortality who must be maintained by priestly action; in his account of animal cults there is no awareness of the thinking underlying these practices; and in his account of mummification he betrays no knowledge of why it was practised, though 2.122 shows that he knew something of the Egyptian concept of the underworld, and 2.78 reveals an awareness of the Egyptian preoccupation with mortality.

In discussing daily life Herodotus is not concerned with the physical conditions of those who inhabited the marsh area, though he is somewhat vague and it is only at 2.92 ff. that he mentions northerners. His dominant concern is with the practices and those occurring in Greece. His explanation of the doctrine of environmental conditions is explicitly stated at 2.35.2, and in II.1.10 when he insists that the reason why the Egyptians are the healthiest of men is because they eat fish. The excess of fish, he argues, is a reason for their longevity, for it supports burdens, urination and defecation, cooperation, care for the elderly, cooperation between household, care for the elderly, cooperation on rituals, arrangements with animals, and the practice of agriculture. The Egyptians are also described by Herodotus as particularly virtuous in their respect for the customs of the Egyptians and are claimed to be the healthiest of men because they purge themselves for three days. The presence of food is the source of health, but also a view widely held in Egypt, for they used emmer wheat (as distinct from barley or naked wheat); they consumed fish, which was prepared in a variety of ways, and all food was prepared in a variety of ways. They also consumed fish, displaying the image of a cult of fish and purging themselves of their mortality and fasting. They do not import customs and practices only, though similar practices, e.g., in the Maneros/Linos stories shared with the Sparta...
In discussing daily life Herodotus makes a distinction between those Egyptians who dwelt in the arable part of Egypt and those who inhabited the marsh area, i.e., the northern part of the Delta, but most of what he says is intended to be valid for the entire country, and it is only at 2.92 ff., that he addresses the peculiarities of the northerners. His dominant theme is the differences between Egyptian practices and those occurring elsewhere, above all divergence from Greek custom. His explanation for differences is the current Greek doctrine of environmental determinism, a concept which is virtually explicitly stated at 2.35.2, and at 2.77.3 he is unequivocal on the point when he insists that the reason why the Egyptians, after the Libyans, are the healthiest of men is the absence of change in the seasons.\footnote{See the Hippocratic \textit{Airs, Waters, Places} and, e.g., Snowden (1971) 172 ff.}

Once established, this thesis is developed at some length and to excess: he speaks of contrasts in shopping practices, weaving, transporting burdens, urination and defecation, organization of the priesthood, care for the elderly, coiffure and practice related thereto, living arrangements with animals, bread-making, the kneading of dough and mud, circumcision, habits of dress, sail-making, and writing; the Egyptians are also described as the most pious of men who lay particular emphasis on ritual purity. At 2.77 ff. he specifically addresses the customs of the Egyptians who lived in the arable part of Egypt and are claimed to be the most learned in traditions of all men: they purge themselves for three days consecutively each month, believing that food is the source of all illnesses (certainly an Egyptian idea but also a view widely held in Hippocratic circles); they ate loaves of emmer wheat (as distinct from common Greek practice of using barley or naked wheat); they made 'wine' from barley (another contrast); they also consumed fish dried in the sun or salted and birds prepared in a variety of ways; they observed a macabre practice of displaying the image of a corpse at dinner parties to remind the guests of their mortality and encourage them to enjoy themselves. They do not import customs from elsewhere but follow home-grown practices only, though similarities with Greek practices are identified, e.g., in the Maneros/Linos song, in the extreme reverence for the aged (shared with the Spartans), and their wool taboo (shared with
such groups as the Orphics). They wore their linen tunics long with tassels at the hem (whereas Greek tunics were of wool), but they did wear woollen garments over them. Medicine in Egypt was highly specialized, unlike the situation in Greece.

The marsh dwellers provide contrasts both with the rest of the country and with Greece: unlike other Egyptians but like the Greeks they only have one wife and exploit cheap food resources provided by the seeds of the rose lotus and papyrus stalks, though many lived exclusively from sun-dried fish; they made oil from the castor-oil plant which, unlike Greeks, they cultivated; and they had also developed an ingenious method of combating mosquitoes by using their fishing nets as mosquito curtains (i.e., 'a marvel').

What is our final verdict on all this? The ethnography is characterized by a wide range of knowledge which has a sound basis in fact, but its focus is determined by Greek interests, in particular the focus on clear points of similarity and difference to Greek culture. This can lead to omissions and to serious distortion of the truth. Distortions can be aggravated by two additional faults, over-schematicization and the too ready application of the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy. The historical material in the earlier section of Book Two amounts largely to a series of tales which are closer to Egyptian stories and propaganda texts than recognizable history, though Herodotus makes the most of their narrative possibilities to spin a good yarn and, where opportunities present themselves, he exploits their didactic potential for the benefit of his Greek audience. The Saite history is evidently much more firmly based on historical events, but here again it is impossible to allay the suspicion that events were chosen for discussion because they were of interest to Greeks, indeed frequently involved Greeks. We are not confronted with anything like a considered assessment of what really mattered in the Saite period, though historians are too often ready to work on that assumption. This section, however, offers Herodotus considerable potential for teaching his moral lessons, and the relationship between Amasis and Polycrates provides a superb example of the use of the 'novella' which is fundamental to Herodotus' approach to the writing of 'history' throughout his work. But religion and history do not abstain from Egyptian data, and that attitude is no more than skating on thin ice.

All is not surface, however. Any ordinary narrative, i.e., in that tension which permits and absorbs the tension which permits and absorbs the interior, there is an insistence on an agenda of defining Greek/foreign and Greek/profound willingness to fuse the binary human world whole.

A curious thing to say since the Egyptians were, in practice, almost entirely monogamous, whatever might be permitted in theory.
throughout his work. But be warned. These caveats on ethnography and history do not absolve us from confronting his narrative with Egyptian data, and that exercise frequently reveals a wealth of accurate data, even if, ultimately, Herodotus must be convicted of doing no more than skating over the surface of Egyptian civilization.

All is not surface, however. Depth lies elsewhere in this extraordinary narrative, i.e., in the fundamental tension and resolution of that tension which permeates the whole of the Histories. On the one hand, there is an insistence on difference which reflects the broad agenda of defining Greek and non-Greek. On the other, there is a profound willingness to tie Egyptian history into that of Greece to the extent that the Egyptians are claimed to be the ancestors of the Kings of the Dorians and much that is fundamental to Greek culture is alleged to have been imported from Egypt. Even the kings of Egypt are presented as inhabiting what is essentially a Greek moral and intellectual universe. Therefore, the centrifugal tendency of the Greek/non-Greek dualism is counterbalanced and mitigated by a centripetal imperative to create a unity out of this duality and thereby fuse the binary human world into a coherent, intelligible, and tractable whole.