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## EGYPTIAN METHODS OF WRITING HISTORY

by CONSTANT DE WIT

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**G**ENERALLY speaking, very little of the history of Egypt, which flourished during the three millennia preceding Christ, has come down to us in written documents.

It is, however, safe to assume that from the first dynasty onward, the kings kept a series of annals, recording in each year the great deeds and achievements of the Pharaoh (Breasted, *Ancient Records I*, pp. 3-4).

Fragments of the Palermo Stone have come down to us and they form a record of kings and main events extending from the earliest times to the Vth Dynasty. They are very short, but real annals.

We may also mention inscriptions which the Pharaohs placed here and there to commemorate victories—such are the inscriptions of Wedimu (Ist Dynasty), Smerkhet (Ist), Snefru (IVth), Khufu (IVth), Sahure (Vth), Neuserre (Vth) and others, celebrating victories over the barbarians.

The tombs of notables of the Old Kingdom such as that of Uni (Elephantine) have given us in their autobiographies stories of memorable expeditions in Nubia and Palestine.

Practically all that we know of the kings of the XIth dynasty is drawn from records in their quarries in the Wadi Hammamat. From the Middle Kingdom, we also have, besides the autobiographies of officials, business and administrative documents preserved on papyri.

It is under the New Kingdom that the available documents become abundant, although here again we have to bewail many lacunae due to the fact that the temple walls on which they were recorded have disappeared.

Autobiographies in the tombs of noblemen shed considerable light on the history of this period.

So for instance, the biography of Ahmose, son of Abana, who relates the expeditions he took part in under the reigns of Amenhotep I and Thutmosis I, and that of Ahmose Pennekhbet, relating the Asiatic expedition of Ahmose I, the Libyan campaign of Amenhotep I, and the Beduin campaign of Thutmosis II.

The biography of Amenemheb gives us as it were a diary of the Asiatic expeditions of Thutmosis III, the Negeb campaign, the Naharina campaign, the Ouan campaign, the Karkemish campaign, the battle of Sendjar, the siege of Kadesh, the Tikhesi campaign, the elephant-hunt in Niy, and the second siege of Kadesh.

The Pharaohs of the New Kingdom have left us a great number of inscriptions, which are to be called annals in the real sense of the word.

The greater part of what we know about the Asiatic campaigns of Thutmosis III are the Annals which are inscribed on the walls of the sanctuary of Karnak. These give details of seventeen Asiatic campaigns.

Egypt had uncontested supremacy in the Near East in those days and the richness of the country is still to be seen from the splendour of its monuments. The regular entry of tribute is mentioned on many inscriptions and depicted in numerous tombs of civilians, viz. those of Rekhmire, vizier of Thutmosis III, Menkheperresenb, high-priest of Amon, Amouredjeh, herald of the king, Puyemre, second prophet of Amon, etc. Most of these tombs are illustrated with scenes, so that we can see what Libyans, Syrians, Kefti, Hittites and peoples of the sea looked like (cf. Nina M. Davies, *Ancient Egyptian Paintings*).

The reverse of the coin is not mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions. People do not boast of their defeats. The decadence of the Egyptian empire in Asia is, however, displayed in the Tell el-Amarna letters, written in cuneiform. The expeditions in Asia were successfully taken up again by Sethy I and Rameses II who have also left us extensive annals and inscriptions on the spot as at Nahr el-Kelb.

The peace treaty between Rameses II and the Hittite King Hattusil II is probably one of the oldest extant. We have cuneiform and hieroglyphic versions of it.

The Hittites fared badly after that and a hieroglyphic inscription of Merneptah teaches us that the Hittites were obliged to fight for their sustenance and that they came to Egypt to find food.

The stela preserving a hymn of victory of Merneptah over the

Libyans, commonly known as the Israel-stela, is worth mentioning here, because of the reference to Israel in the last section. This is the passage (Breasted, *Ancient Records*, III, paragraph 617):

The great ones are in prostration, saying: "Salaam!"  
 There is not one who lifts up his head among the Nine Bows.  
 Since the Libyans are daunted, the land of the Hittites is in peace.  
 Canaan is purged from every bad thing.  
 Ascalon is conquered, Gezer is held,  
 Yenoam is as good as no longer existing.  
 Israel is destroyed, they have no (longer) corn.  
 Khor is like a widow in respect to Egypt.  
 All the countries are peacefully minded.  
 Whosoever robs, he is repressed.

What is to be drawn from this text is very scanty except for the existence of a people of Israel at the time of Merneptah.

The Egyptians then had to fight against the peoples of the sea, and Rameses III had these scenes and the story depicted on the walls of his temple at Medinet Habu.

The Ptolemaic temples have left us no records of annals. Egypt as a world power was then long forgotten. The walls are covered with religious scenes and inscriptions. It may be interesting for the O.T. scholar to know that some of these texts go back to the very oldest religious ideas and literature (e.g. the Pyramid Texts which are at least 2,500 years older).

These Edfu texts also recall the victory over the peoples of the sea, such as the Tjekker, with whom the Egyptians had had no contact for a thousand years (J. Yoyotte in *Kémi* XII, 1952, 92).

Even in the literary papyri which have kept stories for us we find echoes of historical events and perhaps, doubtless embroidered, pages from the royal archives.

Such is the story of Sinuhe (cf. also the predictions of the accession of the three first kings of the Vth dynasty, and the prophecies of Neferty, announcing the coming of a saviour in the person of King Amenemhat, founder of the XIIth dynasty), which recalls the adventures of a man who fled to Palestine and Syria and lived there with the Asiatics, being overtaken with panic after having heard of a plot against the king; and the story of Wenamun, an envoy who was sent off to bring back wood from the Lebanon, at a period when Egypt's might was on the decline and when such an envoy could be arrogantly dealt with.

Now what is the reliability of these documents?

The annals, generally speaking, are reliable documents, though they are less to be considered as historical records, than as triumph memorials. Thus in records of whole campaigns of Thutmose III in Syria, the hostile Syrian king is called "the fallen one" and the

Nubian king, "that wretched enemy of Kush", and it is left vague which king or what place is meant.

Still, when we find stelae and rock inscriptions of Egyptian kings outside the borders of Egypt, these give a valuable confirmation that the Egyptians really have been there. In a stela on Tombos, King Thutmosis I tells us about the boundaries of his kingdom. The river Euphrates is called there: "this water which runs the wrong way and which goes downstream when proceeding to the south". The documents outside Egypt go back to the first dynasty.

Some also are couched in very poetic language and as the Egyptians were highly conservative, a great number of these laudatory hymns tended to become stereotyped and to be used for various kings, so that the question immediately comes to our mind, "how far is this story true of this particular king?"

Knowing the conservative minds of the Egyptians, who were always looking to the past for a model, we have in cases like this to make out from exterior evidence what is real fact and what is rhetoric.

The annals of Thutmosis III, a document of 223 lines (cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, II, para. 391 *et seq.*) is the longest and most complete historical inscription in Egypt. It shows that careful, systematic records were made and preserved in the royal archives, giving a description of each with full strategic details. The king also speaks of "recording for the future" (para. 568, line 22) and we know the name of the official who kept these records—Thaneny. The precision of the account of the Megiddo campaign is such that it allows us to draw a plan of the battlefield. Other campaigns are much abbreviated and the scribe tells us that this is "in order not to multiply words" (Breasted, *A.R.*, II, para. 393). Unfortunately for us, the scribe, being a priest, was more often interested in detailing the captured booty and tribute than the strategic operations.

We know from the stela at Napata that Amenhotep II crossed the Orontes and set up a tablet of victory somewhere in Naharin, as his father and grandfather had done before him, and his Memphis stela speaks of 71,000 prisoners among whom are 3,600 'Apiru.

The Karnak reliefs of Sethy I have mainly a religious function; these scenes illustrate the relation between Pharaoh and his god and the meagre explanatory inscriptions leave much in the dark; the dates of the campaign, for example, are not given.

One relief, for instance, depicts the taking of a fortified town called Pekanaan. *Pe* is the Egyptian article, and Kanaan is

Canaan (what we could call the Levant), so the only thing we can surmise is that Sethy was fighting somewhere in Canaan.

Rameses II's first campaign aimed at securing the Phoenician coast and he left stelae on the Nahr el-Kelb. The materials for his campaigns are very scanty, except for the battle of Kadesh and the peace treaty. The battle is well-described and we may follow the tactics and the dispositions of both armies. We have different versions of this battle. Some of them are just a short military communiqué but another, called the Poem of Pentawer, is so full of poetical and laudatory material, that it goes beyond the scope of history. (The *Chanson de Roland* and Shakespeare's histories are masterpieces of literature, but no one would call them history.)

I would like to mention here the "Stela of the year 400". This monument was erected at Tanis by an official of Rameses II and is dated in the 400th year of a Hyksos ruler. The knowledge of this lapse of time is very valuable. The historical inscriptions of Rameses III on the walls of the temple of Medinet Habu form a vast record of the achievements of this king. Unfortunately, everything seems to be related in a poetic style, whole strophes and passages of which are utterly unintelligible. There seems to be total lack of order or progress in the narrative and the texts are so full of praise and exultation and figurative language that the total historical content is meagre (Breasted, *A.R.*, IV, para. 21).

The campaign of Sheshonq in Palestine in the fifth year of Rehoboam, king of Judah, is brought to our notice by two passages in the Bible:

"And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, (that) Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem, and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold, which Solomon had made" (1 Kings 14: 25 ff.).

"And it came to pass, (that) in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord, with twelve hundred chariots and three-score thousand horsemen: and the people (were) without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which (pertained) to Judah, and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 12: 2 ff.).

That this was indeed a great victory for Shishak is borne out by the fact that, as the archaeological evidence proves, Egypt lived for 200 years on the booty brought back from Palestine (Drioton-Vandier, *L'Egypte*, p. 504).

A large relief in Karnak has kept for us a list of the towns and localities plundered by Sheshonq. Unfortunately, only one half of the approximately 180 names remain and the mention of Jerusalem

is lost. Let us recall that at Tell-el-Mutesillim (Megiddo), in Northern Palestine, an Egyptian inscription has been found with the name of Sheshonq (cf. Cl. Fisher, *The Excavation of Armageddon*, O.I.C. 4 [Chicago, 1929], p. 13). All the cities mentioned bear Canaanite names and are situated either in Judah or in Israel, so that Pharaoh did not go further north than northern Galilee (Beth-anat). Where the statement of Amon in the relief credits Sheshonq with having captured Mitanni, this is probably an overstatement (Breasted, *A.R.*, IV, para. 710).

It is not only Egyptian inscriptions which shed light on the Bible, but the Bible which gives evidence where Egyptian texts are silent. For instance, 25 years or so after Sheshonq's victory, we read in 2 Chron. 14: 9-15 (verses 8-14 in Hebrew) that in the reign of Asa, king of Judah, Zerah the Ethiopian invaded the land; a battle in fought "in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah" at which the Ethiopians were defeated "and Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar". Zerah, if an Egyptian, is generally identified with Osorkon II.

Let us now turn to the Topographical Lists. A great number of what are called Topographical Lists are found on the walls of the temples (Luxor, Karnak, Medinet Habu, Abydos, etc.), while a smaller number of lists are engraved on the bases of statues and colossi. They have been ably edited by J. Simons in *Handbook for the Study of Egyptian Topographical Lists relating to Western Asia* (Leiden, 1937).

The most common form is a series of oval rings symbolizing the city-walls of the conquered places and surmounted by head, shoulders and bound arms of a captive. The name of the place is written inside. These names are nearly all written in the so-called "syllabic orthography" or "group-writing". W. F. Albright in *The Vocalization of the Egyptian Syllabic Orthography* calls this an attempt at a vocalized rendering of foreign words and names. The German school call it a result of the *Entwertung* of the so-called weak consonants. Suffice it to say that this writing gives Egyptologists considerable trouble and that no one really knows how to transcribe it (cf. Simons, *op. cit.*, p. 17). If one and the same Ancient Egyptian group *pw*, for instance, can be used to represent a Hittite syllable with *a*-vowel, an Accadian syllable with *i*-vowel, and also a Canaanite syllable with *u*-vowel, the conclusion is that all this is not very helpful. (One name, for instance, was read *y r ' s t* by many generations of Egyptologists, save by Brugsch, who read Arinath = Orontes, which, Breasted has shown, gives the sense required.)

Let us now examine these lists.

The three great geographical lists of Thutmose III may be divided into a Megiddo or Palestinian list of cities and a Naharina or Northern List. The superscriptions of these lists have given a lot of trouble and it is possible that the superscription in its original form was only intended for a list of the conquests of Thutmose III during his first Asiatic campaign. When, however, after several other successful campaigns the Pharaoh's conquests extended far beyond Upper Retenu, the scribe or sculptor once more reproduced the entire earlier Palestine List, including its superscription, to which he then added a new list of northern conquests (Simons, *op. cit.*, 34, 35). Although the greater part of the 119 names of this list so far resist all attempts at topographical identification, Upper Retenu here seems to comprise the northern part of Palestine, including the northern districts of Transjordan (Simons, *op. cit.*, p. 35). Whether all these towns or places were actually conquered by Pharaoh is difficult to say. It is possible that the lists of conquests were lengthened by adding many names of places, whose chiefs before or after the fall of Megiddo or Kadesh decided to offer tribute to Pharaoh. There seems also to be no systematic order in the place names.

Some early students of the Palestine lists believed that these places were enumerated in the order in which they were taken by Pharaoh. There is no foundation for this (Simons, *op. cit.*, p. 37).

Nor is it possible to divide the Palestine list into a Galilean and a Judean section, as did Maspero. With the probable exception of Gezer not a single place name of this list can be attributed to Southern Palestine.

It is also wrong to read: Joseph-el (Albright, *Vocalization*, 34, B4). The name is yšp-ir (Simons, No. 78) and has not been identified (cf. Meek, *J.A.O.S.*, vol. 63, No. 2, April-June, 1943).

The two topographical lists of Sethy I on the N. wall of hypostyle hall at Karnak are to a great extent identical in content, both enumerating Asiatic as well as African places. In spite of this, all figures surmounting the name-rings are bearded Semites, with the exception of the highest rows of list XIII, where the original bearded Semites have clearly been changed into African types (Simons, *op. cit.* 54). A number of these ring-names are palimpsest inscriptions. The African names of the second hand have been borrowed in groups from the great African list of Thutmose III at Karnak. Another series of remnants of Asiatic names are identical with a section of a list of Rameses III, the latter having been copied from the Sethy list (Simons, *op. cit.*, 56).



Some lists of Rameses II on bases of colossi at Luxor contain only or mainly names of "peoples of the Nine Bows" (the prehistoric enemies of Egypt). Their value is small, but it is interesting that a name like that of 'Moab' should have been preserved there (Simons, *op. cit.*, 70) only. A palimpsest list of Rameses II on the east of the entrance to the hypostyle at Karnak is unmistakably composed of several coherent groups or short lists copied from earlier documents (Simons, *op. cit.*, 74).

At the right of the entrance to the temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu (north tower), the name-rings are mostly African, and are borrowed from the great African list of Thutmosis III at Karnak. A good number were copied from the list on the south tower. In both lists the captive figures are alternately Hittites and bearded Semites, with the exception of six Negro figures on the south tower. On the list on the north tower which is mainly African, there is not a single African figure. This and the meaningless alternation of Hittites and Semites sufficiently prove their artificial character (Simons, *op. cit.*, 80). The Asiatic list on the south tower reproduces a great number of names from one of the Karnak lists of Rameses II.

The great relief scene with topographical list celebrating Sheshonq's Palestinian campaign must have contained originally 180 names, but only 80 different Palestinian names have been preserved.

Notwithstanding the special interest of this list for Biblical scholars, Egyptologists do not seem to have given it the attention it deserves.

The absence of the name Jerusalem seems to have induced the earlier scholars to seek it, come what may. Several Egyptologists of the nineteenth century interpreted No. 29 as the name of Judah's capital city translating *ywd-h-mlk* as "Kingdom of Judah" or "King of Judah". Brugsch saw that this translation was untenable (*Geogr. Inschr.* II, 62-63) and Muller in P.S.B.A. 10 (1888), 81-86, suggested *y(a)d h(a)-m(e)l(e)k*, which is more plausible, though not quite convincing (Simons, *op. cit.*, 96).

Also based on the hypothesis of a metaphor is the interpretation of No. 13, *r b t* as the name of Jerusalem. But this is more than improbable, as is convincingly demonstrated by H. Clauss in Z.D.P.V. 28 (1905) 147-149. It is now generally accepted that No. 13 represents *R(a)bb(i)th* in Issachar; cf. Josh. 19: 20 (Simons, *op. cit.*, 96).

Another famous name in this list is that of "The Fields of Abraham" (Nos. 71-72), *p3-hqr(i3)-ibrm*. This identification is accepted by Breasted (Breasted, *A.R.*, IV, para. 715) and by

Drioton & Vandier (*L'Égypte*, p. 503). Maspero transcribed as \*b(e)l(im), but this form is found nowhere else. "The Field of the Bulls" (*abbir(im)*), however, would also be possible (Simons, *op. cit.*, 183). With the form *ḥqr-ibrm*, cf. Aram. *ḥ<sup>a</sup>kāl* (also Syriac and Arabic forms), and "Hakeldama" (Matt. 27: 8).

So we ought to be cautious and resist the easy game of transcribing hieroglyphs into Hebrew characters, especially when the result is a *hapax legomenon*.

In spite of the commonly accepted unfavourable reputation of the Sheshonq list, which is largely due to Wellhausen, it would seem that the contents of this list are on the whole original. About fifty names are mentioned in this list only and this destroys the accusation of plagiarism.

A list of Taharqa is nothing more than a copy of nos. 1-14 of the list of Haremhab at Karnak (Simons, *op. cit.*, 103).

The conclusion is that these Topographical Lists contain much information for the Biblical scholar, and if they are not to be used without criticism, there is no justification for the complete neglect in which they have been held.

When we discuss the Egyptian approach to history, we must never forget the religious character of Egyptian Kingship. On the palette of Narmer, possibly the same as Menes the first king, we see the Pharaoh striking a crouched enemy with his club. This theme was to be used unaltered during the thirty centuries of Egyptian civilization. Egyptian art is thematic. In a certain sense Egyptian history writing is also thematic and that is why we see powerful kings of the New Kingdom claiming they have vanquished the Nine-Bows, who were pre-dynastic enemies of Egypt. The primary duty of an Egyptian monarch is to maintain order not only in his kingdom but in the Universe. He is in a certain sense immanent. This function is independent of the accidents of history. It is an eternal truth (Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 9).

The Egyptians viewed the world as essentially static. The incidents of history, therefore, lacked ultimate reality.

No actuality, no incident of history could ever equal the dignity of the unchangeable order of creation (Frankfort, *Kingship*, 56). Consequently, the king is depicted on his reliefs as a victor, as bringing abundant tribute to the god, as having vanquished the powers of evil, the disturbing elements in this world and the other. The whole stress is laid on this function of divine kingship. Pharaoh is god incarnate on earth. (See also Jacobsohn, *Die dogmatische Stellung des Königs*.) It matters very little whether a South Palestinian or African name comes up in a list of North Palestinian

places. It is not haughtiness when a Rameses II depicts himself as a god or when he usurps the statues of his predecessors; he is not a hypocrite, he is always acting with religious ends in view.

At the festivals of Rameses III, all the kings back to Menes appear as the Royal Ancestors. King Sebekemsaf of the XIIIth dynasty speaks of his father Sesostris III (Frankfort, ch. 8, note 1), who was not even of the same house. Thutmosis III considered Mentuhotep as his ancestor (Naville, *Z.A.S.*, 50, pp. 15-17). If we take the word 'father' with the genetic meaning we attach to it, these utterances make no sense.

Lists of kings such as we find in the New Kingdom again seem to be inspired much more by cultic than by historical considerations. (S. Sauneron, *Chronique d'Égypte*, 51, p. 48.)

Nelson writes in *J.N.E.S.* viii (1949): "The lists at the two temples (Karnak and Abydos) were certainly not mere historical records, but surely served some end in connection with the temple observances." The purpose suggested is the transfer of the offerings that had been placed before the god during the ceremonies to other uses, and particularly, rites performed upon the altar of the kings (cf. Gardiner, *J.E.A.*, 24, pp. 87 f.) that all those whose names appeared upon the walls around the altar might be considered as present when the priest called the roll of the honoured dead" (Nelson, *ibid.*). That the names of hated heretic kings should have been left out is quite natural.

As for the category of Egyptian literature which is called the *Königsnovelle* (Alfred Herrmann, *Leipziger Aegyptologische Studien hrsgh. von Walther Wolf*, Heft 10), there are no grounds at all for denying historical value to them.

The Egyptian concept of time is quite different from ours. The Egyptians do not consider events as a running stream, but more as the returning to quietness of the surface of a lake after this has been disturbed (A. Herrmann, 35). It would be quite un-Egyptian to depict the evolution or the history of their whole civilization. They simply register events as they would register the contents of a granary. Evolution and progress make no sense for an Egyptian, for theirs is a static universe and time and again the kings say they have put everything in order again "as it was in the beginning". This static conception of history is to be found just as much in the *Königsnovelle* as in the 'Annals'.

Historians have for long had a low opinion of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*. M. B. Rowton has, however, proved (*J.E.A.* 34 [1948], pp. 57-74) that Manetho's king-list, together with the Assyrian king list from Khorsabad (*Iraq*, VIII, 94 f.) constitutes a

major source for comparative chronology. Rowton has determined with the help of the new Mesopotamian evidence, the exact date of the accession of Rameses II (1290 B.C.) and has then proved that Manetho gave identically the same date.

As a high priest of Egypt, Manetho must have had access to chronological material of the utmost importance and recent research and excavation have materially strengthened the impression that Manetho's king list was substantially correct.

Book III of Manetho, which covers the period from the end of Dyn. XIX to the end of Dyn. XXX, is essentially sound. He correctly placed the accession of Psammetichus I in 663 and the Assyrian invasion in 671.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand the chronology of Books I and II has been distorted beyond all recognition.

Again when priests of the Later Period mention in the Bakhtan Stela the exact day in the 10th month on which fell a feast of Opet in the reign of Rameses II, it is hard to believe that they could have calculated this so precisely at 800-900 years' distance and we must suppose that they made use of an old text where they found this date correctly indicated (cf. de Wit, in *Mélanges H. Grégoire*, t. IV, p. 132). When R. G. Collingwood argues in *The Idea of History* that historical writing began with the Greeks, he is quite wrong. The four points that he lists as characteristics of history are fully apparent in the Hebrew historians (W. A. Irwin in *J.N.E.S.* viii, 1949, p. 303) and, I would add, also in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian history writers.

Did the Egyptians have any understanding of their history?

This question has been answered by H. Ranke ("Vom Geschichtsbilde der alten Aegypter," *Chronique d'Égypte* 12, 277-286), who declared rightly that the Egyptians and Babylonians were the first peoples of the Ancient Near East who found it necessary to write down what they were doing, for the generations which would come after them.

If the Turin papyrus had come down to us in an undamaged state, we would today possess a list of kings from Menes up to Rameses II, without mention of the great events of their reigns it is true, but with the indications of the years and months they have reigned.

Further in this list the kings are grouped into categories and the total number of years of these groups are given. These groups correspond to what we, after Manetho, still call dynasties.

<sup>1</sup> Manetho's chronology for the obscure period covered by Dynasties XXVIII-XXX is now known to be right.

Ranke concludes that the Egyptians themselves were aware of the three great divisions of their history, which we call Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom.

The scribes under Rameses II knew that the period in which they lived started with king Ahmose, and also that the Middle Kingdom started with Mentuhotpe (= *Neb-hepet-rē' / Sma-tawī*), and the Old Kingdom with Menes. These people then had a very clear and correct insight into their own history and, as is the case in many other spheres—with Egyptian art, for instance—it is absurd to say that nothing existed before the Greeks. Call Herodotos the “father of history” if you like, but remember that without Babylonians, Egyptians and Hebrews the “Greek miracle” would never have been possible.

My conclusion is then that the Egyptians did write history, did possess accurate records, the greater part of which are irretrievably lost, and were aware that they were writing history. Like all history, it is to be dealt with critically. Because not a single Egyptian law has come down to us, we are not to conclude that the Egyptians had no laws. The scenes in the Tomb of Rekhmire prove that they had and show us the vizier seated before the 40 books of Law.

Similarly, it would be unfair to judge from the scanty documents which have survived that the Egyptians had no records.

It may interest the Old Testament scholar to know what happened in the house next door and certain traits may be worth recording such as that old religious texts were copied without alteration over a period of nearly 3,000 years.

*Brussels.*

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- Breasted, A.R.—Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 5 vols.  
 J.A.O.S.—*Journal of the American Oriental Society*.  
 J.E.A.—*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*.  
 J.N.E.S.—*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.  
 O.I.C.—Oriental Institute of Chicago.  
 P.S.B.A.—*Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology*.  
 Z.A.S.—*Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*.  
 Z.D.P.V.—*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*.