

BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae 3

Texte und Denkmäler des ägyptischen Alten Reiches, herausgegeben
von Stephan J. Seidlmayer

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VORWORT

Dieser Band geht auf eine Konferenz zurück, die die Arbeitsstelle Altägyptisches Wörterbuch an der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften im Februar 2001 in der Tagungsstätte der Akademie in Schloß Blankensee bei Berlin ausgerichtet hat. Der Hermann und Elise geborene Heckmann Wentzel-Stiftung gilt unser Dank für eine Zuwendung, die diese Veranstaltung erst ermöglicht hat. Der Leiterin der Tagungsstelle, Frau Freia Hartung, und ihren Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern, die die Tage im malerisch verschneiten Schloß zu einem unvergeßlichen Erlebnis des konzentrierten Austauschs werden ließen, wissen wir uns herzlich verbunden. Ebenso gilt unser Dank den angereisten Gästen wie allen Berliner Kollegen, Studierenden und Freunden, die vielfältig zum herzlichen und produktiven Charakter dieses Zusammenseins beigetragen haben.

Gegenstand der Tagung sollten die Texte und die Sprache des Alten Reiches sein. Hier zeigte sich in den Vorträgen, die im Rahmen der Konferenz präsentiert wurden und in den sich anschließenden Gesprächen einmal mehr, in welchem Maß dieses Forschungsgebiet durch den laufenden Zugewinn neuen Materials entscheidend geprägt wird. Die Verschränkung der Textzeugnisse mit archäologischen Kontexten, ihre Einbindung in ikonographische und epigraphische Zusammenhänge als Grundvoraussetzung ihres angemessenen Verstehens bildete denn auch ein Leitmotiv zahlreicher Projekte, über die berichtet wurde. Darin zeigt sich exemplarisch die charakteristische Situation gerade der altägyptischen Überlieferung, der sich auch jede systematische Erfassung und Erschließung des Textguts stellen muß.

Für den vorliegenden Band wurden die Beiträge der Konferenz teils wesentlich erweitert und aktualisiert. Den Autoren ist zu danken, daß sie sich der Mühe unterzogen haben, ihre Präsentation auch in schriftlich ausgearbeiteter Form vorzulegen. Die redaktionelle Bearbeitung wurde durch Angela Böhme übernommen und mit der gewohnten Sorgfalt durchgeführt. Doris Topmann ist für Hilfe bei den Korrekturen zu danken. Die Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften hat die Herausgabe des Bandes bis in die Drucklegung unterstützt. Um die verlegerische Betreuung hat sich Dr. Norbert Düring verdient gemacht. Ihnen allen sei auch an dieser Stelle herzlich gedankt.

Berlin, im August 2005

Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer

THE BIRTH OF BIOGRAPHY IN ANCIENT EGYPT
TEXT FORMAT AND CONTENT IN THE IVTH DYNASTY*

MICHEL BAUD

While biography is acknowledged as “the most characteristic textual genre of Ancient Egyptian culture”,¹ study of the forms it took prior to the Fifth Dynasty has received only limited treatment. On the one hand, this situation may be explained by the paucity of surviving texts from the early phase of the Old Kingdom, and from the Fourth Dynasty in particular, a gap noted in almost all studies. As argued below, redating some inscriptions which include event narratives changes this picture. On the other hand, this chronological border has been dictated by the forms and contents of classical biographies; the two basic components, the so-called career and ideal biographies, cannot be traced back before the Fifth Dynasty. As ERIKA SCHOTT and JAN ASSMANN rightly pointed out, the display of title strings in tombs, one of the most extensive early uses of writing, certainly paved the way for the career biography, and texts dedicated to tomb protection or builders’ rewards may have been the direct ancestors of the ideal biography.² However, this suggested continuous development towards more literary forms is not without problems, and requires a deeper analysis of the relevant sources. More recently, JOHN BAINES has explored new avenues in several related essays on the “prehistories” of the genre.³ Using an integrative approach that

* This paper is a revised and extended version (Sept. 2001) of my lecture “Titulary as Biography in the Early Fourth Dynasty” delivered at the Blankensee symposium. For most valuable comments, I am very grateful to John Baines, Oxford, Shari R. Clark, Harvard and Marianne Eaton-Krauss, Berlin, all of whom I also warmly thank for correcting my English.

¹ J. ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, München 1991, 178–187 (reprinted 1983 article *Schrift, Tod und Identität*); quotation p. 178. For a sociological analysis of biographical texts, see now B. HACKLÄNDER, *Biographie und Identität. Studien zur Geschichte, Entwicklung und Soziologie altägyptischer Beamtenbiographien*, Berlin 2001.

² E. SCHOTT, *Die Biographie des Ka-em-Tenenet*, in: J. ASSMANN, E. FEUCHT and R. GRIESHAMMER (eds.), *Fragen an die altägyptische Literatur* (hereafter *Gs Otto*), Wiesbaden 1977, 454–455; ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, 179–180; E. EICHLER, *Zu den Königsbriefen des Alten Reiches*, in: SAK 18, 1991, 169–171; A. GNIRS, *Die ägyptische Autobiographie*, in: A. LOPRIENO (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, Leiden 1996, 200–201, 220–223; N. KLOTH, *Beobachtungen zu den biographischen Inschriften des Alten Reiches*, in: SAK 25, 1998, 189–205 (with a detailed examination of the historical development within the early Old Kingdom); HACKLÄNDER, *Biographie und Identität*, 5–17 (much too general in this respect).

³ J. BAINES, *Forerunners of narrative biographies*, in: *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H. S. Smith* (hereafter *Fs Smith*), *EES Occasional Publications* 13, 1999, 23–37 (hereafter

associates text and decoration, he shows how the Egyptian tomb as a whole possesses “underlying narrative/biographical value” that contributes to elucidation of the process of biography formation.⁴ In this respect, the early Fourth Dynasty tomb of Metjen already displays in some sense many elements typical of later biography, despite its rather radical formula of correspondence between inscriptions and decoration.⁵

As a contribution to this renewed interest in the birth of the genre, the present essay focuses on texts, and mostly on the (pre)history of the “career biography”. In fact, this appellation proves to be inadequate, as examples from all periods illustrate. The narrated events rarely encompass the whole career, as they are frequently reduced to a few moments of special intensity, or even to a single memorable moment, that does not correspond to the idea of a continuum. Some events have nothing to do with a professional *curriculum*, and sometimes even antedate the career proper when childhood is referenced. Still others may display fictitious elements. These peculiarities are not unique to Egyptian culture, since biography “always constitutes a narrative selection of relevant facts or phantasies”, even to “start earlier or end later than the ‘real’ biological life-time span of the concerned persons”.⁶ In this paper, I will therefore adopt new terminology recently proposed by ANDREA GNIRS and refer to “action biography” (*Handlungsbiographie*), a suite of events or facts in a chronological and meaningful presentation, and “event biography” (*Ereignisbiographie*), which is closely related to the latter but focused on a particular aspect of an individual’s life.⁷ This subtle distinction finds an exact correlation in Fourth-Dynasty compositions, in the corresponding physical layouts that I will call, respectively, “titulary format” (see part A) and “annalistic format” (part B). At this period, the so-called “ideal biography”, better named “ethical biography” (*ethische Biographie*) by NICOLE KLOTH,⁸ which thematizes the individual’s place within the

Forerunners); ID., *Prehistories of Literature: Performance, Fiction, Myth*, in: G. MOERS (ed.), *Definitely: Egyptian Literature, Lingua Aegyptiaca Studia Monographica 2*, Göttingen 1999, 17–41 (hereafter *Prehistories*). The former is devoted to evidence of the early Fourth Dynasty and earlier, the latter to texts of the Fifth Dynasty.

⁴ BAINES, *Prehistories*, 20–21, as exemplified by, among other things, the depiction of different stages of life; see also the representations of the family in a historical/generational perspective for the continuation of the cult.

⁵ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 29–34.

⁶ A. HAHN, *Narrative identity and auricular confession as biography-generators*, in: A. I. BAUMGARTEN et al. (eds.), *Self, soul and body in religious experience*, Leiden 1998, 27; see also N. KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 193–194.

⁷ GNIRS, in: LOPRIENO (ed.), *Anc. Eg. Literature*, 203–204. I have adapted the first two definitions of the author to the context of the early biographies of the Old Kingdom.

⁸ KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 202 and n. 69, contra GNIRS’s misleading definition “reflective biography.”

system of social and ethical values, is almost absent from the text corpus. Nonetheless, some assertions of moral worth and loyalty to the king already appear in the titulary format as epithets and comments supplementing them.

For all these reasons, the question of format, which is also related to the question of how these texts were inserted into the tomb's decorative programme, is of prime importance and provides insight into the history of the genre.

A. The "titulary format": Biography as a collection of events/situations

Titulary and biography in historical perspective

Any definition must go beyond the boundaries of the subcategories of action or event biography in order to encompass the characteristics of the genre as a whole.⁹ Apart from content proper, or the thematics of the *bio*, the narrative form that belongs to the *graphy* needs some preliminary clarification. Following J. BAINES, I will adopt a broad definition for the concept of narrative, one that does not require rigorously specific syntactic forms and constructions.¹⁰ Not only the linguistic expression of temporality is possible through texture (*i.e.*, the level above the sentence),¹¹ but through specific physical layouts which certainly lend texts an intrinsic narrative value. This is especially the case for the abbreviated career biography, written in a *curriculum vitae* manner. However, at this point, one must return to the fundamental question of the relationship between title strings and biography (see n. 2, above).

Since a titulary, as a simple collection of positions and missions, is basically non-narrative, it is not biographical, even if it is connected in some way to the presentation of the self. Moreover, if action biography is generally restricted to the dynamic perspective of a succession of events, non-chronologically ordered titles depart from this scheme. It is well known from the pioneering work of KLAUS BAER that administrative titles are not arranged chronologically, but rather according to ranking conventions (varying through time),¹² in addition to specialized duties bound to a main function

⁹ KLOTH's list of relevant criteria for the definition of biography and autobiography is very useful (SAK 25, 193–194), but clearly too restrictive for the genre's prehistory. This is illustrated by her overly definitive conclusion (p. 196): "In der 4. Dynastie existieren noch keine biographischen Inschriften im engeren Sinn."

¹⁰ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 23–24; see also GNIRS, in: LOPRIENO (ed.), *Anc. Eg. Literature*, 203–204.

¹¹ As recently explored by M. COLLIER, *The Language of Literature: on Grammar and Texture*, in: LOPRIENO (ed.), *Anc. Eg. Literature*, 531–553.

¹² K. BAER, *Rank and Title in the Old Kingdom*, Chicago 1960, for the multiple variations of conventions from mid-Fifth Dynasty onwards, with a special focus on the king's name during the Sixth Dynasty; other patterns for the Fourth Dynasty, M. BAUD, *Famille royale*

(constellation of *Beititel* attached to a *Haupttitel*) or a territorial unit, a specialized department and related areas of competence. Some of the titles within the strings may relate to successive promotions in the same department, as indicated by the addition of hierarchical echelons (e.g., *jmy-ht, shd, jmj-r*), which does not give an overall chronological value to the titulary as a whole. Varied representations of attitudes, attributes worn and held, and age, do not have any effect on the selection of titles, as exemplified by the rhythmic decoration of the tomb of Hezyra in the early Third Dynasty.¹³ On the contrary, when titles appear to be different, it does not imply a distribution based upon stages of a career, but reflects a separation between functional categories of duties (cultic vs. administrative, honorific vs. functional, etc.), as illustrated by the collection of Babaf's statues.¹⁴ Hence, the usual (and most frequent) titulary works as the basic element of an "identity card" that always includes the owner's name and sometimes the (re)presentation of the immediate family. Though those elements belong to the individual's presentation of self that in some way relates to his or her biography, i.e., they carry "biographical potentials",¹⁵ it is not necessary to broaden this genre's definition to include such title strings (and particularly simple names) within an embryonic biographical genre, or to refer to them as ancestors of action/event biography.

Only in a few cases was the titulary arranged in a chronological order (normal or reversed) that drastically departed from its usual presentation, though the column format and some other rules of layout remained the same. This radical change in perspective constitutes a significant innovation in the history of the biography to which a broadened definition could not do justice. The formal, dynamic titulary, while not narrative in the strictest sense due to the absence of any syntactic form of narration, is made narrative through the sequential disposal of its elements such as a meaningful alignment of king's names in chronological order (Fig. 2, Sekhemkara). This *intrinsic* narrativity has been fruitfully scrutinized by BAINES in other areas such as early tomb decoration in order to trace possible forerunners of biography.¹⁶ In addition to the normal titulary and its dynamic counterpart,

et pouvoir, *BdE* 126, 1999, 257–260; for examples as early as the First Dynasty, see BAINES, *Forerunners*, 26–28, with ranking convention culminating in proximity to the king.

¹³ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 28–29, on Hezyra; he dismisses the possibility that the sequence of wooden panels could be narrative.

¹⁴ Babaf II, see BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 442–443 [55]. On the identity of the owner, see now S. RZEPKA, *One or two B3.b3.fs? Some Remarks on Two Old Kingdom Tombs at Giza*, in: *MDAIK* 56, 2000, 353–360.

¹⁵ BAINES, *Prehistories*, 30.

¹⁶ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 36–37.

other types exist, such as what JAN ASSMANN has termed the “commented titulary” (*kommentierte Titulatur*) that includes syntactic forms of continuous language.¹⁷ As the well known example of Ptahshepses shows, with the selection of a single event or position per reign in a sequence of probably seven successive kings,¹⁸ this formula of explicit narrative titulary is related to the previous type rather than to the basic strings of chronologically unordered titles. Only intrinsically narrative titularies organized by layout, and ones organized extrinsically by syntax, belong to biography, as an extremely restricted expression of the genre apparently devised by and mostly confined to the Fourth Dynasty. The “commented” title string of Ptahshepses is probably the last of its kind in the mid-Fifth Dynasty before a limited, perhaps archaizing reappearance of the rather abbreviated manner in the second half of the Sixth Dynasty that recalls early examples, but no longer in titulary format (*i.e.*, in autonomous columns).¹⁹

As both SCHOTT and ASSMANN recognized, early Old Kingdom narrative titularies represent the most ancient manifestation of the biographical genre, but their examples and forms are much more complex and numerous than hitherto acknowledged. In this paper I show that they definitely antedate the early Fifth Dynasty. Intrinsically narrative title strings are documented at the latest under Khafra (cf. Meretites), and the “commented titulary” occurs as early as Snefru (cf. Metjen; see chronological chart, Fig. 10). If this pattern of historical development towards growing narrativity and complexity can be supported, its path was not as linear as might be expected. Other factors may have been involved. Significant among them were differentiated rules of decorum (in BAINES’s terminology) that accorded with social stratification within the elite. As BAINES has shown,²⁰ and the present contribution confirms, the inner elite at the beginnings of the Old Kingdom seemed reluctant to make extensive use of texts related to personal achievements and career, in contrast to the broader elite (which also included some high

¹⁷ For which see ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, 180–181, more neatly formulated than SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto*, 454–455, both barely illustrated (biography of Ptahshepses, see next note).

¹⁸ PM III², 464; *HTBM* II/2, 17, pl. 17; A. ROCCATI, *La littérature historique sous l’Ancien Empire égyptien*, Paris 1982, 105–107 with refs., to which add ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, 180–181, Translations here always adopt SETHE’s restorations of missing elements (*Urk.* I, 51–53), including top columns with *possible* king’s names from Userkaf to Niuserre (five kings!), which may not have been so numerous.

¹⁹ As, for example, the architrave of Tjeti from Akhmim (Louvre AF 9460 + Chicago FMNH 31700, cf. CH. ZIEGLER, in: *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*, New York 1999, 466–467, with refs.), with repeated bare *nd=tw n=j* + function, most consecutive, “(then) the function of X was granted to me,” some circumstantial.

²⁰ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 35–36.

officials with looser ties to the king).²¹ With all of these background elements in place, it is now possible to return to the sources and to illustrate the many formulas of narrative titulary as embryonic biography.

According to classical rules already established by the Third Dynasty, titularies consisted primarily of independent title lists concerning administration, religion, rank, etc. Just before the name, they usually ended with an epithet, a title-like combination stressing a personal relationship to the king or a god in a rather descriptive and expressive way such as “beloved of his master” or “honored before the great god.” With or without preliminary texts such as an offering formula, they were frequently organized in independent lines or columns, especially on false-doors. When reorganized in a biographical perspective, the titulary may be used as a whole or as only one of its two core components, either titles or epithets.

Intrinsic narrative titulary: Meretites and Sekhemkara

Though in line with the progression from administrative function to statements in the form of epithets, a new arrangement of titles or epithets in chronological order is found in some Fourth-Dynasty tombs at Giza, especially those of the royal family. Interspersed with kings’ names, they were clearly intended to give an indirect account of the subjects’ lifespans. Biographical data were thus restricted to the titulary, not only in format but also in content.

The stela of the queen-mother Meretites I (Fig. 1), a monument discovered in the Eastern Cemetery of Khufu²² and subsequently lost, adopts such a historical order, naming three rulers of the Fourth Dynasty (Radjedef was omitted, if his name was not in a lacuna). It utilizes both components of the titulary, titles (of queenship) and an epithet:

“The beloved king’s wife, *khet*-priestess of Horus, Meretites.
The one great of reverence (*hts*) of Snefru [...], beloved king’s wife, Meretites.
The one great of reverence of Khufu + various titles,
the one honored (*jm3h.t*) before Khafra, Meretites.”

²¹ For the concept of inner elite and its role as carrier of civilization, see J. BAINES and N. YOFFEE, *Order, legitimacy, and wealth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, in: G. M. FEINMAN and J. MARCUS (eds.), *Archaic States, Advanced Seminar Series*, Santa Fe 1998, 199–260, and esp. 218, 233, 235, 258.

²² PM III², 187–188, probably from mastaba G 7120, Giza East Field. E. DE ROUGÉ, *Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques I*, Paris 1877, pl. 62; W. SEIPEL, *Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Königinnen der Frühzeit und des Alten Reiches*, Hamburg 1980, 104.

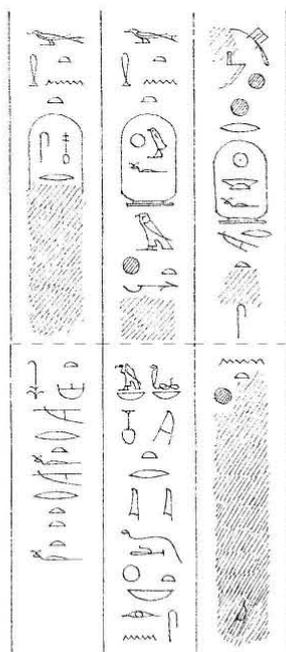


Fig. 1: Stela of Meretites (DE ROUGÉ, *Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques I*, pl. 62).

A text in one of the rooms of the rock-cut chapel of Sekhemkara, a son of Khafra buried in the Central Cemetery, records the exceptional longevity of its owner in the same abbreviated manner, using a long list of kings before whom the official was honored (Fig. 2).²³ Here the titulary is reduced to a single and extended epithet:

“The one honored before his father the king, before the great god,
before the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Khafra,
before the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Menkaura,
before the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Shepseskaf,

²³ PM III², 233–234, tomb LG 89, Giza Central Field. S. HASSAN, *Giza IV*, fig. 64, pl. 34; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 71 (no. 10, § 50). For an almost exact parallel of similar date, see the tomb of Netjeripunesut in the same necropolis, H. GAUTHIER, in: *ASAE* 25, 1925, 180; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 71 (no. 10, § 49).

before the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Userkaf
before the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Sahura.”

The inscription is laid out so that the cartouches form a continuous line reminiscent of a king-list in abbreviated annalistic or cultic assemblages, the earliest written evidence of which already appears in the First Dynasty.²⁴ The horizontal juxtaposition of columns obviously created the effect of a temporal sequence, like the sequences of individual compartments in the royal annals.²⁵ One may also note here a reluctance to make personal statements about longevity or career that may reflect constraints on status in the use of biography (see Conclusions). Titularies of lesser officials, especially priests of royal cults, sometimes display the monarchs’ names in a similar chronological order or harmonious arrangement.

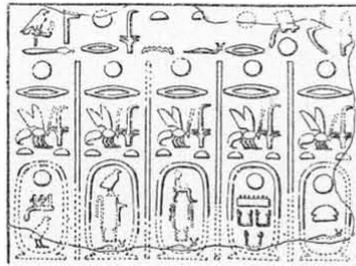


Fig. 2: Relief of Sekhemkara (HASSAN, *Giza IV*, fig. 64).

Action biography as “commented titles”: Metjen

Since the case of Ptahshepses’s career-like “commented titulary” is already well known, I will focus on the poorly understood biography of Metjen, the

²⁴ D. REDFORD, *Pharaonic King-lists, Annals and Day-books. A Contribution to the Egyptian Sense of History*, *SSEA* 4, 1986; for a Fifth-Dynasty example of selective king-list on a writing board, see E. BROVARSKI, *Two Old Kingdom Writing Boards from Giza*, in: *ASAE* 71, 1987, 27–9, pl. I. For the king-lists of necropolis sealings, see G. DREYER, *Ein Siegel der frühzeitlichen Königsnekropole von Abydos*, in: *MDAIK* 43, 1987, 33–43, and DREYER *et al.*, *Umm el-Qaab 7./8. Vorbericht*, in: *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 72; see also T. WILKINSON, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, London and New York 1999, 62–63, fig. 3.1.

²⁵ Though I agree with BAINES’s treatment of the complementary verticality of text and horizontality of decoration (*Forerunners*, 27, 37), the horizontality also belongs to text as far as independent or autonomous columns can be juxtaposed to convey the idea of a chronological sequence.

oldest text of its kind, securely dated to very early in the Fourth Dynasty.²⁶ Strictly speaking, there are no antecedents for such a radical change in both length of text and content.²⁷ This biography, which is displayed in various parts of the tomb, has been studied primarily as an economic and juridical collection of texts since it incorporates several property deeds and a full record of the property acquired.²⁸ This approach is certainly misleading,²⁹ since there is also a detailed account of the official's career, while the property deeds are clearly connected to particular missions or achievements of Metjen at specific points in his life. Surprisingly, these aspects have been largely ignored. This example shows that the action biography in its career-like presentation was already present at the very beginning of the Fourth Dynasty.³⁰

Most earlier studies have not recognized that the beginnings of this multipartite biography are to be found on the entrance passage walls, not in the decorated inner niche.³¹ Furthermore, in accordance with the tomb's seeming reversal of normal north-south patterns in its iconographic programme, the right (north) wall of the passage must be viewed before the left (south).³² This order suits the text's content. The general structure of the biography proves to be similar between the entrance passage (our text A; the two sides are to be taken as a whole) and the west wall of the niche (text B): (a) long string of titles or career narrative connected to the provincial administration of Lower Egypt (*heqa* and *andj-mer* titles of domains, provincial palaces and their land properties, towns, and nomes),³³ (b) a single column of titles con-

²⁶ PM III², 493–494. Dating: H. GOEDICKE, *Die Laufbahn des Mtn*, in: *MDAIK* 21, 1966, 1–3. For stylistic dating criteria, see now N. CHERPION, *Mastabas et hypogées d'Ancien Empire*, Bruxelles 1989, 224; for the characteristic type of niche, N. ALEXANIAN, *Die Mastaba III/1 in Dahschur-Mitte*, in: *Kunst des Alten Reiches*, *SDAIK* 28, 1995, 3–5.

²⁷ For far-reaching conclusions about this tomb, but with a selective choice of texts (entrance passage, south), see BAINES, *Forerunners*, 32–34.

²⁸ H. GOEDICKE, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich*, *WZKM Beiheft* 5, 1970, 5–20; K. B. GOEDECEN, *Eine Betrachtung der Inschriften des Meten*, *AA* 29, Wiesbaden 1976; KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 1998, 196, n. 43 (“Aktenauszüge”).

²⁹ BAINES, *Forerunners*, 32–33.

³⁰ Contra ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, and KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 194–195, for a Fifth-Dynasty date only; the above-mentioned chronological titularies help fill the gap within the Fourth Dynasty so that Metjen does not stand in isolation, contra BAINES, *Forerunners*, 34, 37; see our Fig. 10.

³¹ This is the order finally adopted by GOEDICKE, *Rechtsinschriften* (after J. H. BREASTED), contra ID. in: *MDAIK* 21, 1966, 62–66 and also *pace* the later work of GOEDECEN, *Betrachtung*, 41–42, n. 57.

³² BAINES, *Forerunners*, 33 with n. 60.

³³ The titles displayed on the entrance façade, especially the architrave, must also be connected to this part, as an introduction to the passage's text.

* Text A, second part (entrance passage, north wall)³⁶

General content: inheritance from father and career narrative.

Eleven columns of text, as follows, with a translation of the beginning for comparison:

- [1] Property inherited from father: “was given to him ...”, $d(=w) n=f \dots$
 [2] First promotion: “he was appointed to (lit. ‘upon’) ...”, $wd=tw=f tp$
 ...
 [3] Second promotion: “(then) he was appointed to ...”, $wd=tw=f m \dots$
 [4] Circumstantial statement about third promotion: “and when X was in the suite of Y ...”, $wn X m-ht Y \dots$ (X/Y being high officials);
 Third (double) promotion: “he was given ...”, $jt=tw=f m \dots$
 [6] Fourth promotion: “(then) he was appointed to ...”, $wd=tw=f m \dots$
 [7] Fifth promotion: “(then) he was appointed to ...”, $wd=tw=f m \dots$
 [8] Titles (Lower Egypt)
 [9] Titles (*id.*, *cont.*)
 [10] Titles (*id.*, *cont.*)
 [11] Property established from father’s inheritance: “were founded ...”, $grg(=w) \dots$

The text is organized so that each column contains a complete clause. This treatment differs from the subsequent classical rules of continuous text display that pay limited attention, if at all, to a change in column or line. Another remarkable feature of this column-unit organization is the choice to open each clause with either a verb in the stative form (col. 1 and 11, of passive-transitive verbs) for the inheritance from his father which frames the text, or with a past indicative *tw*-passive (col. 2–3, 5–7) for successive promotions. Visually, the repetition of the verb *wdj* parallels the *hq3* opening of the title strings and gives coherence to the whole section.

The organization of the texts is analogous to title strings that are contained within a single column and end with the owner’s name, with the pattern repeated as desired (*e.g.*, Hetepherneptah). Not only does the text adopt this typical format of the titulary, it is also part of an extensive title string, see col. 8–10, the façade before (text A, first part) and the opposite wall after (text A, third part, col. 1). The section of the inscription that presents Metjen’s career advancement, with its repeated schema $wd=tw=f m$ + position, has the character of a titulary in a truly narrative mode, since the perfective passive forms are clearly past consecutives in the overall context

³⁶ PM III², 493, plan 49, no. 1e; LD II, pl. 5 et 7c; GOEDECKEN, *Betrachtung*, Akte IV/2; GOEDICKE, in: *MDAIK* 21, 1966, Inschr. D; *id.*, *Rechtsinschriften*, Inschr. B.

(indicated in my translation by an initial “then”), and the whole featuring in a continuous language presentation.³⁷ There is also a circumstantial clause in col. 4 that provides a setting for the third promotion. Later Sixth-Dynasty formulas are strongly reminiscent of this syntax and vocabulary, though they are reflexive and part of a continuous discourse (“when *I* was + position, *I* was appointed to + position...”).³⁸ This passage shows just how far the text moves into the realm of biography and how close it is to later narrative career accounts. This aspect of the text has been overlooked because scholars have focused too heavily on the juridical texts in the tomb.³⁹

Although the last column may have the appearance of a conclusion, it is in fact only a recapitulation that introduces the complete list of Metjen’s acquisitions of land on the opposite wall.

* Text A, third part (entrance passage, south wall)⁴⁰

General content: land property and deeds, and foundation of the domain.

Eleven columns of text, as follows:

- [1] Titles (Upper Egypt)
- [2] Donation of property (nome 16, LE) to his “unique” son (*i.e.*, chosen heir);
- [3] Life-time position granted to him, “was given to him...”, *nḥb(=w) n=f* ...
- [4] Foundation of 12 foundations (noms 2, 4/5 & 6, LE), “were founded for him ...”, *grg(=w) n=f* ...
- [5] Acquisition of 200 aroura of land, “were given to him ...”, *jn(=w) n=f* ...
- [6] Reversion of offerings for his tomb, “come to the portico-chapel ...”, *pr(=w) r ḥȝy.t* ...
- [7] Description of the main domain, “a house ... and a vineyard”, *pr ... ȝrr.t* ...

³⁷ On this temporality of texture using “the repetition of members of the same tense paradigm in a sequence of clauses,” and lexical cohesion, see M. COLLIER, *The Language of Literature: on Grammar and Texture*, in: LOPRIENO (ed.), *Anc. Eg. Literature*, 542–543. In the present case, the physical layout of the text adds to the linguistic expression of temporality.

³⁸ *E.g.*, Tjeti of Akhmim, see n. 19 (*wn=j m ... nd=tw n=j ...*). For the interesting case of two different persons with interrelated advancements in careers, see the biography of Nekhebu, *Urk. I*, 216–217 (*ȝhr nd=tw n=f ... wn=j m l hr ...*), DORET, *Narrative Verbal System*, 38 (ex. 36); other references in *ibid.*, 29, n. 168.

³⁹ Wrongly considered to be long strings of titles interspersed with such documents, by *e.g.*, SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto*, 455, and, to a certain extent, by BAINES, *Forerunners*, 29–34.

⁴⁰ PM III², 493, plan 49, no. 1d ; LD II, pl. 6 et 7b; GOEDECKEN, *Betrachtung*, Akten III and IV/1; GOEDICKE, in: *MDAIK 21*, 1966, Inschr. C; ID., *Rechtsinschriften*, Inschr. A.

- ^[8] Property confirmed by royal decree, “– it is written...–”, *jr w zš(=w) ...*
^[9] Description of the fruitful vineyard, “were planted...”, *wšh(=w) ...*
^[10] Acquisition of the vineyard with description (cont.) “was given to him ...”, *jr(=w) n=f ...*
^[11] Two names of personal (funerary) domains, Iymeres and Iat-Sobek.

The text is now framed by titles (col. 1) and names of domains (col. 11). This is echoed by the inscription’s content, which moves from career narrative and acquisitions of land (col. 2–5) to provisioning of the tomb (col. 6) with particular stress upon the foundation of a vineyard (col. 7–10; its production is typically dedicated to religious rituals). Since the initial list of land property (in a dynamic of acquisition/transmission) was part of the career in the format of title strings, one can conclude that the final enumeration of properties (as productive land for the cult) is part of the list of funerary domains.⁴¹ Lists of this kind are well known in the decorative programmes of Old Kingdom tombs, though in a more pictorial than textual form, with personified domains bringing goods. As before, Metjen’s text is organized strictly into column units according to content and clause sequence, each opening consistently with verbal forms, mostly statives. The property deed of col. 2 is an interesting case in this respect, since for the decree proper the size of the hieroglyphs is much reduced to fit in a single column; its lower half is divided vertically, with a rather random positioning of the signs.⁴² Here again, the text displays narrative elements, with a circumstantial clause (col. 8) and a choice of vocabulary, including superlative adverbs that have a literary flavor, as well as unusual content and imagery in the description of the fruitful vineyard.⁴³

* Text B (west wall, above lintel)⁴⁴

General content: strings of titles, then land property and deeds.

Eighteen columns of text, as follows:

- ^{[1]–[10]} Titles (Lower Egypt);
^[11] Titles (Upper Egypt);

⁴¹ This last point is noted by BAINES, *Forerunners*, 32.

⁴² This arrangement clearly shows that the column is a unit, so that the next sentence/column should not be linked to it, contrary to GOEDECKEN’s treatment, *Betrachtung*, 11–12, 39.

⁴³ All elements discussed by BAINES, *Forerunners*, 32–33 (his transliteration *jnknwk* and textnote “e” must be amended to *k(?)nw*, “vineyard,” with an unusual sign order).

⁴⁴ PM III², 494, plan xlix, no. 6a–b; LD II, pl. 3; GOEDECKEN, *Betrachtung*, Akten I and II; GOEDICKE, in: *MDAIK* 21, 1966, Inschr. E; ID., *Rechtsinschriften*, Inschr. C; BAUD and FAROUT, in: *BIFAO* 101, 2001, 43–44, for cols 13–16.

- [12] Titles (Lower Egypt again);
 [13] Acquisition of 200 *aroura* of land, “were given to him...”, *jn(=w) n=f*
 ...
 [14] A quarter of which is given to his mother, “he gave...”, *d-n=f* ...
 [15] First condition for this transfer, “on the condition she / when she does
 ...”, *jr=s* ...
 [16] Second condition, “and that ... is established by...”, *(w)d(w) ... n ...*
 [17] Title (Lower Egypt) and other land acquisition, “... were given to
 him...”, *d(w) n=f* ...
 [18] Land acquisition (end), “(with) sowers and small live-stock”.

The organization remains the same as before, with one clause per column, introduced here by a wide variety of verbal forms, including the circumstantial (col. 15). The exception is the final column, which does not form a separate sentence but continues the previous sentence of col. 17. Here too, the connection between administrative title and economic/juridical text is apparent, as is well illustrated by the final columns 17–18 and probably also by col. 12 (which returns to Lower Egyptian administrative titles) and cols. 13–16.

* Text C (west wall, niche jamb)⁴⁵

General content: strings of titles, then career promotion.

Three columns of text, as follows:

- [1] Titles (Lower Egypt);
 [2] Titles (id., cont.);
 [3] Promotion: “he has been appointed to ...”, *wd=tw=f m ...*

This short text is again organized as a titulary. It is similar to cols. 2–7 of text A, part 2.

Metjen’s long biography thus appears mostly as a titulary, both in format (semi-independent columns in a repetitive scheme) and content (the step-by-step career and the direct link between office and the acquisition and donation of property). However, its largely narrative form utilizes continuous language and imbues the text with the specific dynamic of career advancement. By contrast, the conclusion with its list of acquisitions – although some of the descriptions are literary or even poetic – appears more static and has a logical conclusion in a short, pictorial procession of domains. Both formats,

⁴⁵ PM III², 494, plan xlix, no. 6c; LDII, pl. 6 (right).

the titulary and the procession of domains, are basically successive or/and cumulative lists of items.

Ethical biography as “commented epithets”: Weta and Ankhkhufu

Instead of presenting successive promotions to administrative positions (or the like), the “commented titulary” may also focus exclusively on the last part of the string, the epithet(s). The result is not a survey of a career in chronological order, but a synchronic panorama of the individual’s qualities and specific relationship to the king or to a god. Such self-presentations, bound to assertions of moral worth and loyalty to the king, belong to the category of ethical biography. Although the formulation is substantial, the epithets in these compositions are closely comparable with later first-person discourse both in terminology and content (the king’s love, a god’s favor, etc.). They also offer a generalizing justification of rewards from the king typical of action/event biographies that was only later incorporated into narratives in the narrow sense.⁴⁶ Some Third-Dynasty examples are already very suggestive in this regard, e.g., the epithet of Khabausokar “the one who knows what is good for his master’s heart/mind (*jb*)”.⁴⁷ This process continues during the Fourth Dynasty, when innovative and unusual epithets contrast with the reduced and stereotyped repertory of the following period. If such epithets were the forerunners of the later, more extensive ethical biography, the transfer from the titulary to the format of autonomous text had consequences that included the standardization and reduction in scope of the epithets.⁴⁸

The inscriptions on the sarcophagus of Weta (Fig. 4) provide a good example of such an extended titulary that aims to provide more personal and colorful information about the owner. The monument comes from Giza (Mycerinus Cemetery?) and dates to the late Fourth or early Fifth Dynasty. It belonged to a leather-worker attached to the palace who specialized in royal

⁴⁶ This is the fresh start in the late Fifth Dynasty cited as a point of reference by SCHOTT, *Gs Otto*, 459–561 and ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit*, 181: the king’s reward is contextualized by a description of the official’s achievements, together with a fuller presentation of his “personality”.

⁴⁷ CG 1385, *rḥ nfr hr jb ny nb=f*; J. KAHL et al., *Die Inschriften der 3. Dynastie*, ÄA 56, Wiesbaden 1995, 186–191 (D3/Sa/9). For other examples using *mrj* “beloved of” (his master, his god, the king), see *ibid.*, 18–19 (sealing Ne/Be/13), 56–57 (vase inscription Ne/Sa/28), 206–207, 210–211, 214 (reliefs and statue of Akhetaâ D3/Sa/20, 22, 24), and the slightly earlier C.M. FIRTH and J.E. QUIBELL, *The Step Pyramid*, Le Caire 1935, pl. 90, 1–2.

⁴⁸ A thorough study of this topic is far beyond the scope of the present essay. The change I suggest may have resulted from the administrative reforms of the early to mid-Fifth Dynasty outlined by BAER, *Rank and Title*.

document boxes, leather-rolls for writing, and other items.⁴⁹ The text on the long sides of the trough exhibits the usual progression from title to epithet, the last presented in the style of a contextualized short biographical notice:



Fig. 4: Sarcophagus of Weta, inscriptions on the long sides (after BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler* II, 206 and pl. 110, rearranged).

* Left side (single line of two successive strings):

- ^[1] Titles, ending with the descriptive “one who made anything related to leather-work according to his master’s wish”, and name;
^[2] Titles, ending with similar epithet-like function, and name;

* Right side (a single string):

- ^[3] Titles, ending with “one who made the leather-roll of the lector-priest according to his master’s wish, in accordance with what was commanded, one who made anything related to the throne of the king when he came to sit in the portico-hall (*d3dw*), Weta”.

Another example of this kind, a biographical notice connected to the epithet “honored” (*jm3hw*) in a title string, can be found on the false-door of Ankhkhufu, an official of the late Fourth/early Fifth Dynasty.⁵⁰ The text is carved on the two inner jambs of the monument, the traditional place for title strings and offering formulae:

* Left jamb

- ^[1] “This (= the false-door) was made in the presence of the king himself at the entrance of the portico-hall (*pg3 ny d3dw*), while His Majesty was all day long looking <at it> there everyday. Ankhkhufu.”

⁴⁹ PM III², 311; L. BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler* II, CG 1295–1808, 205–206, pl. 110; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 94–95. For a thorough examination of his functions, see H. JUNKER, *Weta und das Lederkunsthandwerk im alten Reich*, Wien 1957; for the new dating of his career, see BAUD, in: *BFAO* 96, 1996, 24–25, versus the usual mid-Fifth Dynasty or later date.

⁵⁰ PM III², 129–130, G 4520, Giza West Field, Boston MFA 21.3081; G. A. REISNER, *Giza I*, 504–505, pl. 65b, without facsimile; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 99–100.

* Right jamb

[21] “It is because of his *imakh*-condition before His Majesty that His Majesty made this (= the false-door) for him, when he (Ankhkufu) was still alive on his two feet, the *khenti-she* official and singer of the palace, Ankhkufu.”

The formula on the right jamb reverses the normal order of title(s) + epithet(s), and also transfers the latter into an emphasized adverbial adjunct (*r jm3h=f*) associated with a nominal “emphatic” verb form (*jr~n*). Moreover, the text on the left jamb does not belong to a title string, even though it ends with the owner’s name. The name bears no relationship to the preceding text which gives a sort of historical setting. For all of these reasons, the form of the inscription is midway between the titulary format and the autonomous text of later times. Like the biography of Niankhsekhmet,⁵¹ the thematization of the false-door (explicit for the latter, implicit here) explains the location of the inscription and the choice of the (quasi-)titulary format, prevalent on this type of monument. This is probably one reason why texts concerning the whole tomb came to be inscribed in any part of the tomb, paving the way for autonomous texts that were no longer bound to titulary or other formats. Earliest examples are Merykhufu: “the possessor of *imakh*-condition before Menkaura (says): it is because of my *imakh*-condition that my master did this for me ...”;⁵² and Debeheni: “as for this tomb of mine, it is the King of Lower and Upper Egypt [himself] who ascribed its (selected) location for me ...”⁵³

Event biography in an appended titulary: Hetepherntah

It is probably not a matter of chance that the epithets, which are personal statements that can contain specific historical information, were sometimes replaced by more substantial statements about the owner’s life, or even memorable events. This is exemplified by the texts on the exceptionally tall false-door or entrance jamb of Hetepherntah (Fig. 5), which is unprovenanced but certainly Memphite.⁵⁴ It was initially dated to the late Old Kingdom on uncertain grounds, but various stylistic and textual criteria point

⁵¹ PM III², 482–483; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 96–98. See the recent comments of BAINES, *Prehistories*, 22–25.

⁵² PM III², 213–214, Giza East Field; A. FAKHRY, *Sept tombeaux à l’est de la grande pyramide de Guizeh*, Le Caire 1935, fig. 12.

⁵³ PM III², 235–236, LG 90, Giza Central Field. HASSAN, *Giza IV*, fig. 118, pl. 48; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 91–93.

⁵⁴ Cairo Museum JE 15048. First (very partial) publication by P. E. NEWBERRY, *An unpublished monument of a “Priest of the Double Axe”*, in: *ASAE* 28, 1928, 138–140; text is given in *Urk. I*, 231.6. For a new translation and a facsimile of the biographical statement in col. 4, see BAUD and FAROUT, in: *BIFAO* 101, 2001, 47–48.

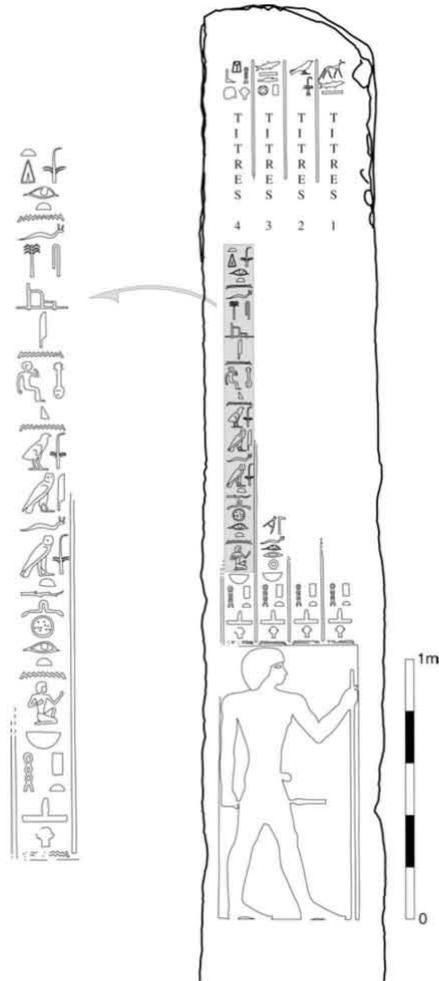


Fig. 5: Door jamb of Hetepherneith (redrawn using adjusted digital photographs, courtesy M. El-Damaty, Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

towards a date in the reign of Snofru, if not slightly earlier.⁵⁵ The text represents therefore a significant addition to the limited narrative textual corpus of that period. Above the representation of the tomb owner are four columns of text:

- [1] Titles and name;
- [2] Titles and name;
- [3] Titles and epithet “one who does what his god praises everyday”,⁵⁶ and name;
- [4] Titles and biographical statement, “the king caused⁵⁷ that a carrying-chair of *sadj*-wood (a palm-tree) be made for him, and that young recruits carry him in it following the king. This had never been done for anyone, Hetep-herniptah”.

The text functions once more as a long titulary organized in independent columns; as usual, the titles follow one another in each string/column, that repeatedly ends with the owner’s name. In accordance with conventions for constructing titularies, the epithet (col. 3) and the short event biography (col. 4) come at the end of a column, close to the name. It emphasizes the personal relationship of the owner to the king, here not in a general statement as an epithet, but in the description of a specific event. Where later Old Kingdom biographies treat the subject in a more narrative and participatory way, as well as using *hm=f* “His Majesty (gave me ...)” to introduce the king as a human being, the present text employs *nswt*, a designation connected to the apparatus of the state and to divine office.⁵⁸ In its use of the verb *rdj*, the beginning of the text is strongly reminiscent of the (newly introduced) funerary formula *d nswt htp*, “may the king give an offering”, and adopts the same honorific transposition. The choice may have been especially relevant in this context since a highly favored gift is mentioned, although not funerary in

⁵⁵ Contra W. HELCK, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *ÄF* 18, Glückstadt 1954, 111–112, n. 5 (end of Dyn. V at the earliest); ID., in: *MDAIK* 47, 1991, 167; see now CHERPION, *Mastabas et hypogées*, 108–109 (iconography: Snofru to Radjedef); BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 312–314 (titles: before Khufu); BAUD and FAROUT, *BIFAO* 101, 2001, 48 (vocabulary of text: not later than early Dyn. IV).

⁵⁶ With complex embedded transpositions, one honorary: *ntr=f mr jrr*.

⁵⁷ Or “one for whom the king caused to...”, as an epithet, cf. SETHE, *Urk.* I, 231, but this possibility is far less convincing, in view of the comparison with the offering formula (see below).

⁵⁸ J.P. ALLEN, *Rē^cwer’s accident*, in: *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths* (hereafter *Fs Griffiths*), London 1992, 18, n. 36; E. WINDUS-STAGINSKY, *Der König in den Texten des Alten Reiches: Terminologie und Phraseologie* (in this volume), whose interpretation departs from GOEDICKE’s (*Die Stellung des Königs im Alten Reich*, *ÄA* 2, 1960).

nature. The event is therefore part of the long title string and inserted into the general layout using an introductory formulation, which is probably borrowed from the funerary formula. Furthermore, the text is organized to build to a crescendo, from title (neutral position in society and state) to epithet (personal, but normalized relationship to the king) to biography (personal and narrative historicized statement). The titulary format probably accounts for the rather abbreviated treatment of the final event, in which the circumstances are not stated, in contrast with parallel texts (see below, “annalistic format”).

The titulary format: conclusions

Whichever format they adopt – more or less narrative, chronologically ordered or not – all these examples show that biographical intent can be expressed through the medium of title strings (or in exceptional cases, through the collection of domains) which provide a structure and sometimes even content, for the inscription of such material in the tomb. Abbreviated as it is, the biographical information, whether an exceptional event or a variety of actions, is conceived as a chronological or dynamic collection of items that are organized in a formal list and displayed in a series of independent columns. Moreover, the elaboration of epithets to build a synchronic social “portrait” shares some distinctive features with the ethical biography. From this structural point of view, the formula is very different from the later biographical style that evolves from the end of the Fourth Dynasty onwards. During that period, the title string no longer organizes the text, but is interspersed between parts of the biographical discourse, as a reminder of the owner’s identity. Thus, the “titulary format” typical of the Fourth Dynasty disappeared, although its content found a new expression in independent texts. The table below summarizes the formulas and relates them to types of biographies:

Type of biography → Type of titulary	Action (“career”)	Event	Ethical (“ideal”)
Intrinsic narrative	X		
“Commented titles”	X		
Appended titulary		X	
“Commented epithets”			X

As I show below, the event biography is not as isolated as it might seem to be, because a specific format was designed, or rather borrowed from the royal sphere, to facilitate its display in the tomb. The “appended titulary” of

Hetepherneptah, which is unparalleled, may therefore have been a short-lived form at the very beginning of the Fourth Dynasty.

Underlying this typical layout and the numerous forms it takes (king-list, “commented titulary”, extended epithets), there are striking differences between the length of the inscriptions and the degree of personal self-presentation and narrativity. At least for the Fourth Dynasty, a chronological explanation of the development is not satisfactory, because there is no evolution toward greater complexity, but rather parallel experiments. This pattern probably owes much to social stratification, if we accept J. BAINES’s valuable observations about the focus on textual or pictorial modes of tomb decoration in relation to status within the elite (n. 20). As he notes, while the tombs of the inner elite of Snefru’s reign buried at Meidum may display an extensive program of decoration, the texts in them are almost completely restricted to titles and captions. The same is true at Giza, exemplified in the tombs of the royal family, where biographical information, if present at all, is given only in the form of titles in a historicized titulary. Metjen’s biography, which can now be seen to be less exceptional than had been thought, is already remarkably complex in the way it relates to his titulary, which may take still further the strong and unparalleled correspondence between scenes and texts.⁵⁹ The status of Hetepherneptah’s biography is more difficult to establish, because none of his tomb decoration is extant except the jamb discussed above. The abbreviated character of his biography suggests a restricted use of text, characteristic of the inner elite, though the event-related data belong to a more narrative scheme exemplified by Metjen. This intermediate character may fit with Hetepherneptah’s status, since he did not belong to the king’s inner circle of intimates but held very high positions within the state hierarchy, as is shown by the titles “overseer of all the king’s works” and some typical elements of the vizier’s duties as attested from Khufu onwards (*smsw sn.wt, hrp j3.wt nb.wt ntry.wt*, and frequently *3 Dw3w, jmy-jz Nhn*).

B. The “annalistic format”: Biography as memorable event.

The “titulary format”, or list of items organized into a sequence of vertical columns, was challenged by a new format introduced in the reign of Khufu (for dates, see below), which disappeared during the first half of Dyn. V. The new format is best illustrated by the biography of Rawer, where the unusual

⁵⁹ For this correspondence, see BAINES, *Forerunners*, 31, n. 51, with ref. to H. SCHÄFER, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, Oxford 1986.

text format is the key to its understanding, as has long been acknowledged. Here I offer a slightly different interpretation.⁶⁰

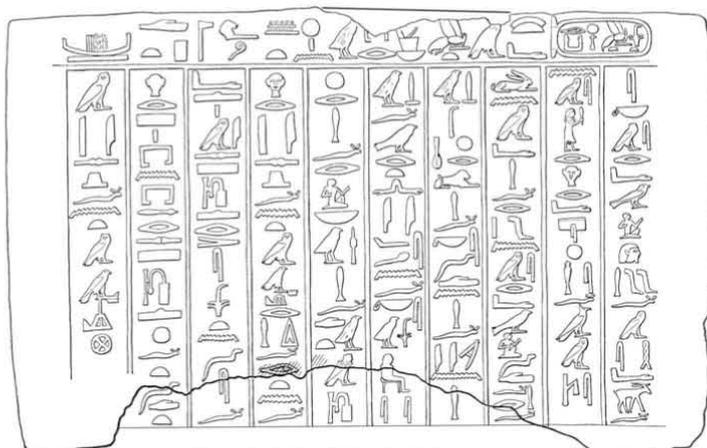


Fig. 6: Slab of Rawer (after HASSAN, *Giza I*, 18, fig. 13, with restoration of missing signs. No scale).

Rawer's accident

The tomb of Rawer in the Central Cemetery of Giza is an immense complex of rooms built in stages from the end of the Fourth Dynasty (Shepseskaf) to the early Fifth Dynasty.⁶¹ The tomb owner was a very high palace official, a royal chamberlain, hairdresser and *sem*-priest, active at a time when the personal care of the monarch was reaching a peak in the state hierarchy.⁶² Apart from a traditional moral biography (together with arrangements for the mortuary cult) carved on a pillar now badly weathered, a rectangular limestone

⁶⁰ E.g., SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto*, 456 and n. 72; more recently ALLEN, *Re^cwer's accident*, in: *Fs Griffiths*, 18 and n. 35; BAINES, *Prehistories*, 23; KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 1998, 198–199; but see further, below.

⁶¹ PM III², 265–269; HASSAN, *Giza I*, 1–61; relative and absolute chronology: M.A. SPEIDEL, *Die Frisuren des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, Konstanz 1990, 15–18, 152–160, 209–233 (Sahura or earlier until Neferirkara); see also CHERPION, *Mastabas et hypogées*, 227, n. 376 (from Shepseskaf onwards).

⁶² CH. EYRE, *Weni's Career and Old Kingdom Historiography*, in: CH. EYRE, A. LEAHY and L. M. LEAHY (eds.), *The Unbroken Reed. Studies in the Culture and Heritage of Ancient Egypt in Honour of A. F. Shore* (hereafter *Fs Shore*), London 1994, 108, n. 14–15; BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 259–265, 315–317, 378.

slab was recovered from the debris of one of the rooms. Inscribed on this slab is the famous text called the “accident (or incident) of Rawer” that narrates how the official’s leg was once struck by the *ames*-sceptre of the king – a powerful symbol – during a ceremony (Fig. 6). Thanks to the appropriate words of his majesty himself, properly recorded, the incident had no disastrous (magical) consequences for Rawer’s life.⁶³

The text is organized in columns under a single introductory line of text. The latter gives the exact circumstances of the incident, historically speaking: “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferirkara appeared as Lower Egyptian King, the day of taking the prow-rope of the god’s boat”. Although the initial verb form is certainly a stative $h^c=(w)$,⁶⁴ the choice of terms is strongly reminiscent of the usual formula “Appearance of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt”, with the substantive/infinitive ($h^c.t$), regularly used in royal annals. This choice is not surprising, since the monarchy had used this kind of ceremonial event as a dating system from the First Dynasty, even though the biennial census counts replaced it from the reign of Snefru onwards.⁶⁵ This archaizing choice is motivated by the importance of the ceremonial context for the incident; in other words, the introductory line not only gives the date, but also narrates an event that provides the proper context for the following biographical narrative, which is organized in columns.

This unusual format for an event biography was hitherto considered to be that of a royal decree or letter (see n. 60). Not only were such documents organized in tabular format, as is well known from surviving examples,⁶⁶ but Rawer’s text also alludes to a document of this type: a “record (‘) written in the presence of the King himself (...) in order to set down <the event> in writing according to what was [said]”. Since the “record” was written on papyrus and the slab was made of stone, it not only may not be an exact copy of the original,⁶⁷ but also another royal format may have appeared more appropriate. This rectangular format with a line above and columns below is

⁶³ HASSAN, *Giza I*, 15, 18–19, fig. 13, pl. 18. Some translations: ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 101 (no. 19, § 74); ALLEN, in: *Fs Griffiths*, 14–20.

⁶⁴ ALLEN, in: *Fs Griffiths*, 16, “subject-stative construction.”

⁶⁵ For a new interpretation of this alternate system and consequences for the dynastic division of rulers, see BAUD, *Les frontières des quatre premières dynasties. Annales royales et historiographie égyptienne*, in: *BSFE* 149, octobre 2000, 32–46; ID., *Ménès, la mémoire monarchique et la chronologie du III^e millénaire*, in: *Archéo-Nil* 9, 1999, 103–141.

⁶⁶ See H. GOEDICKE, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, *ÄA* 14, Wiesbaden 1976, passim, and the documents in favor of the staff of the funerary temple of Raneferef at Abusir, P. POSENER-KRIEGER, *Décrets envoyés au temple funéraire de Rénéferef*, in: *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, *BdE* 97/2, Cairo 1985, 195–210.

⁶⁷ For such adaptations, see H. GOEDICKE, *Diplomatic studies in the Old Kingdom*, in: *JARCE* 3, 1964, 37–38.

typical of the chancery style in general,⁶⁸ which also concerns the royal annals from the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty onward. Like Rawer's text, the annals narrate one or more memorable events associated with a regnal year. The internal layout of Rawer's slab also appears to be closer to the annalistic format than to that of the decree, though the distinctions are subtle and rather tenuous. The former presents the king's identity in the form of a cartouche or complete titulary in a long band above, framing a complete register (Fig. 7a–b). By contrast, the top line of a decree contains only the names of the officials responsible for executing it, and/or mentions the addressee(s)⁶⁹; it never establishes the historical context as in Rawer's text. The latter, however, is not an exact copy of the annalistic format (see n. 67) because it relates to a nonroyal person. In the royal annals of his period, the top line is reserved for the memorial formula associated with the specific king under whom the events of the year occurred: "King NN. (in cartouche) made <this> as his monument (namely ...)". The king's achievements are described in the following columns except for the last, which contains the designation of the year. Rawer's slab presents only a synthesis of the king's identification and the date/event in a single line. For all these reasons, I term this format, which is in any case royal, "annalistic" rather than "decree-type", although this might appear to be a matter of personal preference. Whichever designation be adopted, this type of layout is a significant format for biographies, as is shown by Fourth-Dynasty parallels.

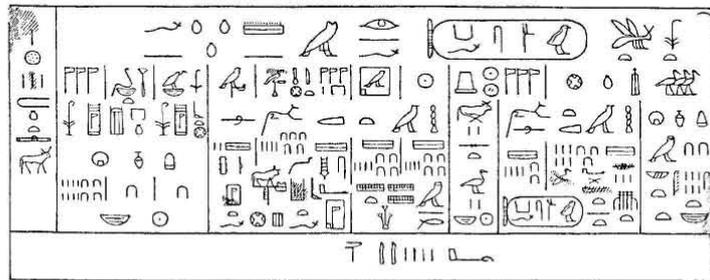


Fig. 7a: Royal monuments in annalistic format. A compartment of the Palermo Stone: annals of Userkaf (SCHÄFER, *Bruchstück Annalen*, 34 (verso 2, no. 2), pl. 1).

⁶⁸ GOEDICKE, in: *JARCE 3*; ID., *Königliche Dokumente*, 7–9.

⁶⁹ GOEDICKE, *Königliche Dokumente*, 33.

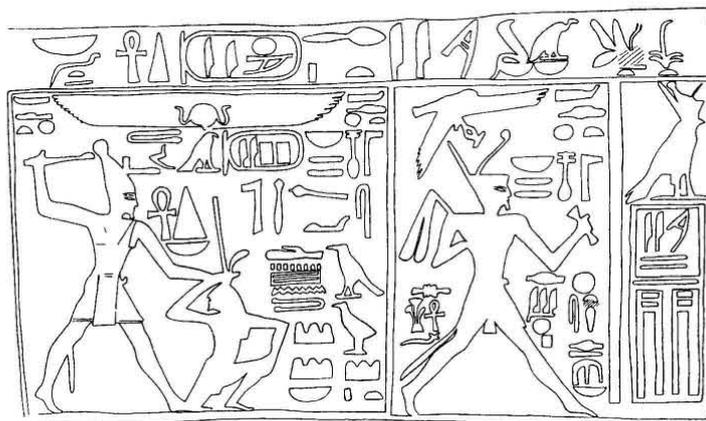


Fig. 7b: Royal monuments in annalistic format. A rock inscription, Wadi Maghara (GARDINER, PEET, ČERNÝ, *Inscriptions of Sinaï*, no. 16).

A sick official and Khufu as benefactor

The monument of Rawer is not completely isolated. Many years ago, H. GOEDICKE published a similar slab from the West Field at Giza. It was found out of context, but surely belongs to one of the mastabas at the western end, where it was discovered by Abdel-Moneim Abu-Bakr (Fig. 8).⁷⁰ The monument is very fragmentary. The top line is almost entirely missing, preserving only Khufu's name in a cartouche. Eight columns remain. The first three are complete while the others are reduced to their lower portions and riddled with lacunae. However, enough is preserved to establish that this text too recounts a biographical event. As in the case of Rawer, col.1 begins with a circumstantial clause that gives the context in which the event proper, the main subject of the text, took place. In this case, the context is the illness of the official ("as for the time when he was sick there", *jr tr mn=f h.t jm*) which prevented him from performing his duties (as is stated positively in col. 2, "in order that he might conduct the work ... under his responsibility"). The event reported is once again the king's grant of a carrying-chair and the necessary personnel from the Residence (col. 1–3): "His Majesty caused that a carrying-chair of the Residence be brought to him (...) and His Majesty caused that young persons of the Residence be appointed so that he should enter ..."

⁷⁰ H. GOEDICKE, *A fragment of a biographical inscription of the Old Kingdom*, in: *JEA* 45, 1959, 8–11, fig. 1, pl. 2; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 134 (§ 107).

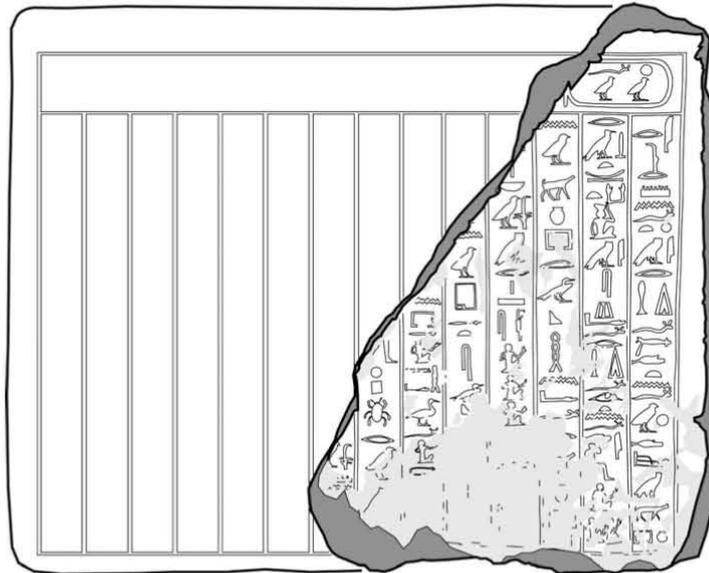


Fig. 8: The second Giza slab (redrawn and rescaled approx 1:5, after GOEDICKE, in: *JEA* 45, 1959, pl. 2).

The striking parallels to Rawer's accident in the brevity of the text, its tabular format, and the "dramatic" event that prompted the monarch's intervention to save the situation suggest that the heading here, too, must be connected to a royal "date". Although Khufu's name has been hitherto interpreted as part of a priestly office held by the protagonist (e.g., *hm-ntr Hwfw*, with appropriate honorific transposition),⁷¹ it could also be part of a royal event that took place during his reign, though one would expect a title such as "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" before the name. That this line narrated some context for the event is confirmed by the use of the adverb *jm* in the introductory clause of col. 1, "as for the time when he was sick *there*", which can only refer to a historical setting. Should this proposal be accepted, the monument must be dated to the reign of Khufu, filling what was presumed to be a major gap in the history of biography.

⁷¹ GOEDICKE, in: *JEA* 45, 9.

Building a tomb in the necropolis of Khufu

A third monument of the same kind, apparently much more conventional in content, was discovered in the West Field at Giza (Fig. 9).⁷² As with the last, its precise provenance is unknown and no relevant archaeological information is available. The object is again a fragmentary rectangular slab bearing a text in the tabular royal format. The upper line opens once more with a king's name, here the Nebty name of Khufu (*mdd-r-Nb.ty*), which is all that remains. As with the previous inscription, it is possible that the name is part of the designation of a priestly office, in this case a *hm-ntr* "servant of the king", a title which is known to occur with the various names of the royal titulary, especially that of Khufu.⁷³ Alternatively, it could refer to a royal event on the model of Rawer's slab, even if the use of the Nebty-name for the monarch is certainly unusual in such a case.

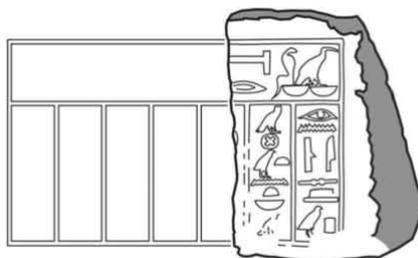


Fig. 9: The third Giza slab (redrawn after CURTO, *Scavi*, pl. 28. No scale).

The two columns of the text remaining do not seem to be connected to an event-like biography. They contain a dedication related to the tomb, of a kind rather common in inscriptions of the Fourth/Fifth Dynasty: "It is in this (funerary) city of my master that I made this tomb of mine . . ." (*jr~n=j jz=j pw m njw.t tw ny.t nb=j*),⁷⁴ probably followed by some assertion of a special relationship to the king or of personal achievements. It is, however, possible that some memorable circumstance such as a royal visit to the site (similar to

⁷² PM III², 177, Turin 1853. S. CURTO, *Scavi*, 96 (15), pl. 28a; *Urk. I*, 154.11–16.

⁷³ All examples are from Giza, West Field: Kahif (PM III², 76, G 2136), mid-Fifth Dynasty; Nefer I (PM 137–138, G 4761), first half of Dyn. V; Minu (PM 140), probably Dyn. IV–V; Khufuseneb I (PM 152–153), dating uncertain; possibly Khemetnu (PM 155, top external frieze, see now BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 542–544, fig. 42A–B), late Dyn. IV or earlier. For Khafra, Kaïdua (PM 244–245, Central Field), probably early Dyn. V; for Shepseskaf, Bunefer (PM 265, Central Field), transition Dyn. IV/V.

⁷⁴ Parallels with various adverbial adjuncts, e.g., *Urk. I*, 18.10 (Debeheni); 49.7 and 50.13 (Pehenuka, but first text incomplete); etc.

that of Debeheni) could have followed. Since the necropolis in question is the West Field at Giza where the slab was discovered, the royal “master” is undoubtedly Khufu, either as the living king who authorized that the tomb be built there as a privilege (under special circumstances stressed by the lost part of the text?) or as a deceased king whose cult was served by our official. The heading should then contain either the sovereign’s titulary or priestly basilophorous titles. The presence of the king’s name confirms that the “annalistic” layout was used, whether or not the content was connected to a memorable event (which tomb building certainly constituted in an official’s life).

These three monuments are sufficient to establish that the biography in royal tabular format, which typically consisted of an account of an event (as is to be expected since annals are a yearly summary of memorable achievements), provided a physical layout for the inscription of biographical narratives in the tomb. The earliest monument of this kind may date to the reign of Khufu, who apparently reorganized the format of the royal annals and introduced the well-known memorial formula.⁷⁵ The latest example attested to date is the text of Rawer from the first half of Dyn. V: the “tomb building” inscription probably dates to (early?) Dyn. IV,⁷⁶ as is suggested by the archaic *pw/tw* demonstratives.

The evolution of the biographical genre in the early Old Kingdom is tentatively summarized in Fig. 10 (for chronological details, see the table below). Due to the limited record, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions. However, it is clear that the three main categories of biographies were synchronistic, even though the ethical type was still very embryonic. There might have been a chronological development between closely related subtypes, either bi-directional (within action biography) or uni-directional (within event biography), as suggested here (see the dark grey arrows), more than multiple parallel experiences. Nonetheless, it seems clear too that the constraint of format had disappeared by the middle of the Fifth Dynasty. As early as the reign of Mycerinus, some event biographies integrated new elements, such as a royal eulogy (Niankhsekhmet), or assertions of moral worth

⁷⁵ See Palermo-Stone fragments Cairo 3 and 4, T. WILKINSON, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt*, London and New York 2000, 228, fig. 8 (Radjedef), 237, fig. 9 (Khufu, fig. incomplete). This topic and the relationship between royal annals and private biography will be further discussed at the conference “Événement, récit, histoire officielle. L’écriture de l’histoire dans les monarchies antiques”, to be held at the Collège de France, June 2002.

⁷⁶ For this possibility, see also KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 196, n. 44.

(Debeheni).⁷⁷ The latter experienced a new start, both in text length and variety of content, even though elementary forms had already appeared as “commented epithets”.

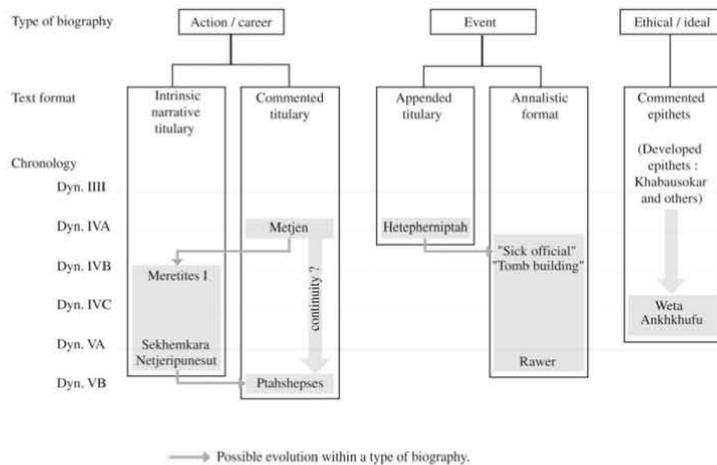


Fig. 10: The formats of early Old Kingdom biography: chronological development.

As both the columnar “titulary format” and the tabular “annalistic format” show, early Old Kingdom biographical inscriptions had to conform to a specific layout if they were to be incorporated into the decoration of a tomb. This constraint probably resulted from a desire to “normalize” the most personal accounts, similar to the process of “normalization” (JAN ASSMANN’s terminology) that affected portraiture in relief and statuary.⁷⁸ Just as the norm dictated a very limited choice of costume and attitude with strict color conventions, the choice of only two formats for biographical inscriptions severely restricted individual creativity and the content of texts. One of the most evident limitations is the presentation of self as “(s)he” and not “I”: almost all the biographies of the period use in the third person. The shift to

⁷⁷ For a recent discussion of these texts, see BAINES, *Prehistories*, 21–25.

⁷⁸ J. ASSMANN, *Preservation and presentation of self in Ancient Egyptian Portraiture*, in: P. Der MANUELIAN (ed.), *Studies in Honour of William Kelly Simpson* (hereafter *Fs Simpson*), Boston 1996, 55–81.

autobiography,⁷⁹ or the transformation of voice, was therefore very slow, and was perhaps impeded by the constraints of these early layouts.

C. Biography, autobiography and the question of format

It is well known that early Old Kingdom tomb biographies (Dyn. IV to mid-V) show a strong connection between format, content, and the choice of grammatical person, as the following table illustrates. It is arranged in a tentative chronological order:⁸⁰

Tomb owner	Date Dyn. reign)	Monument	Text format	Text content	Person
<i>Metjen</i>	IVA (Snefru)	Chapel walls	Titulary & domains	Career narrative; land property and donations	3 rd
<i>Hetepherneptah</i>	IVA (Snefru or earlier)	False-door	Titulary	Single event, no context	3 rd
<i>Unknown, "sick official"</i>	IVA (Khufu?)	Rectangular slab	Annals	Single event, contextualized	3 rd
<i>Unknown, "tomb building" slab</i>	IV (Khufu?)	Rectangular slab	Annals	Tomb dedication	1 st
<i>Meretites I</i>	IVA–B (Khafra)	"Stela" (?)	Titulary	Titles in chronological order	<3 rd >
Debeheni (n. 53)	IVC (Mycerinus)	Chapel wall	Autonomous	Tomb building & related events	1 st (after <i>dd=f</i>)

⁷⁹ I use this term for first-person biographies, though I am fully aware of the attendant problems, for which see KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 192–195; BAINES, *Forerunners*, 23.

⁸⁰ Most dates in the table derive from the historical setting explicitly mentioned in the biographies, e.g., Niankhsekhmet, Washptah, Rawer and Ptahshepses in the first part of Dyn. V. Why this would not hold true for earlier texts, e.g., Merykhufu, alluding to Mycerinus's personal intervention in the choice of tomb location, but dated Dyn. V–VI, or Debeheni with the same king and same context, which has sometimes been dated to the mid-Fifth Dynasty or later (e.g., SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto*, 456 and n. 71, ref. to GOEDICKE; KLOTH, in: *SAK* 25, 199 n. 56) remains a mystery to me. For both these examples, study of the material points towards a late Dyn. IV date or towards an estimate that does not preclude such a date. For Merykhufu, see BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 465 [80]; for Weta, see n. 49 above.

Tomb owner	Date Dyn. reign)	Monument	Text format	Text content	Person
Merykhufu (n. 52)	IVC (Mycerinus)	Chapel wall	Autonomous	Tomb dedication	1 st
<i>Ankhhufu</i>	IVC (Mycerinus?)	False-door	Titulary / offerings	False-door dedication	3 rd
<i>Weta</i>	IVC/+ (Mycerinus?)	Sarco- phagus	Titulary	Developed epithets	3 rd
<i>Sekhemkara</i>	VA (Sahura)	Chapel wall	Titulary	Epithets in chronological order	<3 rd >
Netjeripune- sut (n. 23)	VA (Sahura)	Chapel wall	Titulary	Epithets in chronological order	<3 rd >
Nianksekhem- met (n. 51)	VA (Sahura)	False-door	Titulary / offerings	False-door dedication and related events; royal eulogy	1 st (discourse) 3 rd (narration)
Washptah	VA–B (Neferirkara)	Chapel wall	Autonomous (dedicatory inscr.)	Various events related to owner's health, contextualized	3 rd
<i>Rawer</i>	VA–B (Neferirkara)	Rectangular slab	Annals	Single event, contextualized	3 rd
Ptahshepses (n. 18)	VB (Niuserra)	False-door	Titulary / offerings (dedicatory inscr.)	Career narrative	3 rd
Akhetetep	VA–B	Chapel wall	Titulary / scene caption (dedicatory inscr.)	Tomb provisioning	3 rd

Names in italics were discussed above; for others, see the references to notes in col. 1. For Washptah, see PM III², 456; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 108–11; for Akhetetep, see CH. ZIEGLER, *Le mastaba d'Akhetetep*, Paris 1993, 107 and 109.⁸¹

⁸¹ The biographical inscription at the entrance may represent another interesting case for investigating the question of format. The translation of its beginning is rather problematic. Strictly speaking, it cannot be "His Majesty *has allowed* that his (= Akhetetep's) son ...

Unlike the texts of the late Old Kingdom, the vast majority of earlier biographies were written in the third person, even though they narrated events connected to the owner's life and career. Therefore, they can be classified as historical narratives ("récit historique") without an identified narrator, in contrast to later discourse.⁸²

In the case of the "titulary format" and its manifold realizations, the use of the third person is best explained by the fact that titles and epithets always refer to the official as a third party, "he who is entitled to ..."⁸³ This rather impersonal mode of reference relates to the state apparatus, in which officials were more function-holders than individuals, as is exemplified by Old Kingdom sealings (*i.e.*, post-Third Dynasty), which were anonymous. Even the latest texts in the titulary format, such as the well-developed "commented titulary" of Ptahshepses, or, to a certain degree, the text of Niankheskmet, retain the pattern. The same phenomenon can be observed in the "annalistic format", where the royal model is also formulated in the third person, especially in the memorial formula ("king NN: *he* made as *his* monument ...). So, too, in decrees. Here, the use of the first person on the slab with the "tomb building" inscription is a noteworthy exception. For other texts that do not use either format, conspicuously absent before the late Fourth Dynasty (see table and fig. 10), this choice was dictated by other, formal factors. For example, in the dedicatory text type, the dedicator (usually the chosen son) necessarily celebrates a third party, the tomb owner (*e.g.*, Akhetetep). The latter is deceased at the time of the dedication, so that the situation imposes a respectful distancing.⁸⁴

Apart from the third Giza slab, there is no first person biography prior to the end of the Fourth Dynasty. In the first two examples of this autobiographical revolution which probably date to the reign of Mycerinus (as

receive for him ..." since the initial verb form is not a *rd=w* or a perfective *rd-n*. E. BROVARSKI, *Old Kingdom Beaded Collars*, in: J. PHILLIPS *et al.* (eds.), *Ancient Egypt, the Aegean and the Near East. Studies in Honour of Martha Rhoads Bell*, San Antonio (TX), 1997, 137 and n. 3, recently proposed to understand it as a perfective relative form, "what his Majesty authorized (his son ...)." Or possibly that the *-t* ending could have been placed here for a formal reason, *viz.* to provide a caption-like format (which uses an infinitive form *rd.t* "to allow") for including the text in the decoration. If so, the first alternative still conveys the best sense; the second translation does not make any sense, since *jn* "by" after the infinitive to introduce the agent (that is, the king) is missing.

⁸² DORET, *Narrative verbal system*, 13–14 and n. 17.

⁸³ Already in SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto*, 454–455; see also BAINES, *Prehistories*, 30: "extended caption-like title strings whose 'biographical' potential was realized."

⁸⁴ SCHOTT, in: *Gs Otto* (text type); BAINES, *Forerunners*, 36–37 (owner's deceased situation). Both are exemplified especially by the biography of Washptah, which thematizes the official's health problems and death (*Urk.* I, 40–45; ROCCATI, *Littérature*, 108–111, with refs).

Debeheni and Merykhufu show),⁸⁵ the inscriptions no longer seem to be connected to any kind of format, but appear in the tomb without a specific frame other than the continuous arrangement in separate columns that is typical of texts in general. The advent of the “classical” biography, which includes both first and third person narrative texts, and associates various types of texts, therefore corresponds to the abandonment of textual constraints deriving from restrictive layouts designed for early self-presentations, either the developed titulary as a sum of independent title strings organized in independent columns, or the tabular annalistic format with a heading designating an event placed above a continuous text in columns.⁸⁶

Here I simply call attention to this change, but it appears in general that self-presentation in the Fourth Dynasty, at least in texts, was subject to strict constraints of decorum⁸⁷ and followed norms more closely than later on. When ego became manifest in texts, it signalled the advent of a new “culture” of self-presentation, if not new behavior, that probably corresponds to the change from a family-centered ideology to meritocratic patterns between late Dyn. IV and early Dyn. V.⁸⁸ This phenomenon has a parallel in sculpture. Concurrently, portraiture as illustrated by royal statuary became much more “normalized” than before.⁸⁹ Carefully executed Third and Fourth Dynasty portraits of private individuals, even though normalized to a certain extent, also show that it was in the realm of statuary that the most individual aspects of a person were first conveyed, as can also be seen in the so-called reserve-heads of Dyn. IV.⁹⁰ Conventionalism and conformity also affect the iconography of the couple in both statuary and relief, since many of the earlier attitudes of the “loving family” disappear between the mid-Fourth and the mid-Fifth Dynasty.⁹¹ Although the later development towards an excessive

⁸⁵ For this dating, see n. 78.

⁸⁶ BAINES’s suggestion (*Forerunners*, 34, n. 65, and 37, or *Prehistories*, 20–21), that from this period onwards the new first-person biographies were linked to representations of the owner that set the scene for the discourse, may go too far.

⁸⁷ For which see BAINES, *Prehistories*, 20.

⁸⁸ J. BAINES, *Restricted Knowledge, Hierarchy and Decorum: Modern Perception and Ancient Institutions*, in: *JARCE* 27, 1990, 17–20; EYRE, in: *Fs Shore*, 117–118; BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir*, 323–327, 377–379, with some nuances.

⁸⁹ E.g., ASSMANN, in: *Fs Simpson*, 63–65.

⁹⁰ In tomb relief, this transition occurred earlier: Third Dynasty severe, hyperrealistic portraiture gave way to juvenile, optimistic and highly normalized physiognomy in Dyn. IV: see N. CHERPION, *The Human Image in Old Kingdom Nonroyal Reliefs*, in: *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids* (exh. cat.), New York 1999, 103–115.

⁹¹ N. CHERPION, *Sentiment conjugal et figuration à l’Ancien Empire*, in: *Kunst des Alten Reiches, SDAIK* 28, Mainz 1995, 33–47, with an extensive survey of the data in relief. Such family scenes, conventional as they appear after the middle of the Fifth Dyn., thematize values of the tomb owner’s affection towards his wife and children. For parents and

normalization of facial depiction may be due to a standardization of statue production, it is also explained by, or a consequence of, a shift towards hieroglyphic writing and textual compositions in the interest of the elite. At this period, titles and name were probably considered enough to identify the owner, while the statue itself was transformed into a normalized hieroglyphic icon.⁹² In narrative texts, the later subordination of a person's share of an inheritance (*i.e.*, name, physical characteristics, property transmitted, and possibly functions) to his or her personal achievements (based upon meritocracy and respect of moral worth) may correspond to the changes in ideology and society discussed above, which are evident in other ways during the transition from the earlier to the later phase of the Old Kingdom.

When biography emerged from the constraints of format, it evolved towards a greater variety of content and text composition more adapted to personal preference, as much as any iconographic programme in the tomb can reflect the choice of its owner. Indeed, the strict relationship between content and format (as summarized in Fig. 10) disappeared with the latter, paving the way for more complex and integrated compositions which could make use of all three basic components of biography in the same text: action/career, event and ethical/ideal types. This movement started as early as the end of the Fourth Dynasty, at a time when biographies in titulary or annalistic format were about to disappear.

brothers, such values appeared in texts only; see the "beloved of his father and praised by his mother" pattern in the reflective biography.

⁹² ASSMANN, in: *Fs Simpson*, 65–67, on the "hieroglyphicity" of representations. For nuances about Fifth Dynasty normalization, see, however, A. BOLSHAKOV, *The Ideology of the Old Kingdom Portrait*, in: GM 117/118, 1990, 102–126; CH. ZIEGLER, *Nonroyal statuary*, in: *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*, New York 1999, 63–64.