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Herodotus *Aigyptiophrōn*: Conversing With the Learned Egyptians

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Abstract

It is acknowledged that Herodotus foregrounds methodological concerns in book two of his Histories*, but I challenge the notion that his frequent claims to have heard a thing from Egyptian priests are mere source citations. I argue that Herodotus emphasizes how he listened to the Egyptians in order to differentiate his method of inquiry from the competitive verbal displays of his contemporaries and predecessor Hecataeus. Herodotus replaces the feigned authority of the latter with a demonstration that listening to other intellectuals is crucial to learning. I suggest further that the portrayal of the Egyptian priests is no misrepresentation by Herodotus but is indicative of their acquaintance. Egyptian literature attests the remarkable emphasis placed on listening as a requirement in the pursuit of wisdom. The Book of Thoth may reveal how the education of literate priests involved oral inquiry and listening. Egyptian priests were thus suitable intellectual peers for an inquiring Herodotus.*

In the second book of Herodotus' *Histories* various Egyptian priests are frequently invoked by the historian as he describes the history, customs, geography, and society of Egypt and its people.[1] At the opening of the book, after narrating an incredible story of how the Egyptian king Psammetichus investigated the antiquity of the Egyptian people, Herodotus reports that he heard this account from the priests of Hephaestus (Ptah) in Memphis, although, he adds, the Greeks articulate many other and foolish versions of the story (2.2.5). But, he continues, he heard other things in conversation with the priests of Hephaestus, and he went to Thebes and Heliopolis because he wanted to know whether they (the priests in those cities) would agree with what he'd learned in Memphis; he further explains his motive for traveling to Heliopolis by noting that the Heliopolitans are said to be the most learned (*logiōtatoi*) of the Egyptians (2.3.1).

This passage and others like it have been considered by scholars in assessing Herodotus' use of sources and his method of inquiry (*historiē*).[2] This method is typically characterized as being based on oral information (*akoē*, as Herodotus calls it), personal autopsy (*opsis*) and reasoning (*gnōmē*).[3] In the passage cited, his procedure seems to consist in making inquiries and collating the responses he received to determine their consistency. Debate has arisen over the significance of the qualifier "learned" (*logios*), whether it denotes his local sources,[4] refers to a specific class of oral memorialists,[5] or merely applies to those who are authoritative speakers in any local, non-Greek tradition.[6] This raises the larger question of the relationship between those such as the learned Egyptians and the historian who practices inquiry.[7] Herodotus' characterization of his work as the "display of his inquiry" (*historiēs apodexis*, proem) has been adduced by scholars to place the historian in a Greek intellectual milieu characterized by competitive displays of learning,[8] whereas it has been suggested that Herodotus views his method of *historiē* as superior to the learning of his various local informants.[9] Moreover, it has been claimed that Herodotus shows "no genuine understanding of the ethos of Egyptian civilization or of the mentality of the Ancient Egyptians."[10] Are the Egyptian priests, learned as they may be, thus merely cited as sources–whether genuine or invented–in order to lend credibility to Herodotus' narrative for his Greek audience?[11]

In this paper I argue that Herodotus' purported conversations with Egyptian priests serve not as simple source citations but as illustration of his method of inquiry in action. Fundamental to this method is conversation with one's intellectual peers. It emerges most clearly in these conversations with the Egyptians that this procedure stands in contradistinction to another intellectual mode–that of Herodotus' contemporaries and notably his predecessor Hecataeus of Miletus. When Herodotus says he heard something (*akoē*), this should be understood as a methodological principle–Herodotus *listened*. This is to be distinguished from the practice of his fellow Greeks, who, desirous of a reputation for wisdom (*sophiē*), are all too eager to speak in competition with one another but fail to listen and hence fall short of true *sophiē*.[12] I suggest, however, that the Egyptian priests are represented as inquirers like Herodotus. I then

adduce evidence from Egyptian literature to contend that the belief that listening is key to learning was well rooted in Egyptian thought. I conclude that Herodotus' portrayal of his conversations with the Egyptians is not pure invention but is based on his familiarity with the Egyptian intelligentsia. Whereas Plutarch labeled the historian a barbarian-lover (*philobarbaros*) for censuring Greek ignorance of Egyptian customs,[13] I consider him as Egyptian-minded (*Aigyptiophrōn*) and explore how his affinity for Egypt is manifest as well in the presentation of his intellectual mode in operation as he engages with his peers.

We begin with a passage that is seldom remarked upon, but one that shows the Egyptian priests engaged in the same procedure as Herodotus. In support of the thesis that Northern Egypt has become land by alluvial deposition, Herodotus reports that the priests gave the following great proof (*mega tekmērion*): when Moeris ruled, the land was inundated by a flood of eight cubits, whereas in his own day a rise of fifteen or sixteen cubits was required (2.13.1).[14] From this knowledge, Herodotus states that it seems to him that those who dwell in the Delta would, if the land continued to increase and the Nile no longer flooded, suffer that which the priests said the Greeks would one day suffer. He explains: "on learning (*puthomenoi*) that all the land of the Greeks receives rain but is not watered by rivers as theirs, they said that one day the Greeks, cheated of their great expectation, would wretchedly starve" (2.13.2-3). Their assessment, Herodotus elucidates, meant that the Greeks relied upon Zeus for rain, that they would have famine if the god refused to rain; he affirms the Egyptians spoke rightly about the Greek situation (2.13.3-14.1).

We may note Herodotus' procedure: the Egyptians' "great proof" that a greater inundation of the Nile was required then than in Moeris' day supports the thesis of the land's increase by alluviation. The proof leads to the further conjecture by Herodotus that, should alluviation continue unabated, the inhabitants of the Delta would starve. The Egyptians, meanwhile, *on learning* of the geography of Greek land, conjecture that the Greeks will one day starve. The passage implies that it was from Herodotus himself that the Egyptians learned of Greek geography: the reader is presented with the conversation of the Greek tourist and the learned Egyptian priests. Each learns facts from the other and independently applies reason to arrive at a correct conclusion;[15] reason (*gnōmē*) is wedded to empirical observation and depends above all on listening (*akoē*). We may conclude that the Egyptians are here presented not merely as storytelling sources but as reasoning inquirers like Herodotus.[16]

But let us consider the Egyptians' conclusion more closely, for it further reveals the affinity of the Egyptian priests to Herodotus. In fact, the formulation "if the god refuses to rain the Greeks will suffer drought" does not entail the conclusion attributed to the Egyptians that one day the Greeks *will* starve. Yet Herodotus assents to their conclusion. The reason, I think, must be that he and the Egyptians share an unstated premise. This premise is none other than the fundamental principle announced at the outset of the *Histories*: human fortune never abides in the same place (1.5.4). It would therefore be contrary to nature for the Greeks perpetually to receive sufficient rain for their crops; a period of drought is predictable in accordance with the natural law observed by Herodotus and the Egyptian priests alike.

It is shortly after this discussion that Herodotus treats at length two major debates about the river: the cause of its inundation and its sources (2.19-34). Concerning the inundation, he outlines three contemporary theories advanced by unnamed Greeks and dismisses each before offering a new explanation. I submit that in this passage Herodotus, by drawing into the conversation, as it were, these other Greek thinkers, is able to distinguish his method of inquiry from their activity. It emerges again that the historian identifies intellectually with his Egyptian priests.

To begin, Herodotus states that he was "unable to ascertain anything concerning the nature of the river from the priests or anyone else" (2.19.1). Alan Lloyd in his commentary explains this "odd" statement as a disguise of the fact that Herodotus *did* learn of the priests' views, but these were too overtly theological to be of interest to him.[17] But Herodotus insists that he was unable to learn anything on the matter from the Egyptians when making inquiry (*historeōn*) of them (2.19.3), so let us consider the implications if we take him at his word.

If the priests told him nothing of the Nile's nature in spite of his questioning, may this not indicate that they disclaimed knowledge of an unknowable thing? That this is Herodotus' point is strongly suggested by the sequel. Herodotus declares: "wishing to know about the aforesaid matters, I made inquiries" (*tauta te dē ta lelegmena boulomenos eidenai historeon* 2.19.3). In the very next sentence Herodotus introduces the three theorists of the Nile as certain Greeks who, "wishing to become remarked for wisdom, spoke" (*episēmoi boulomenoi genesthai sofiēn elexan*) about the river (2.20.1). There is thus a marked contrast between the historian's avowed desire of knowledge, which he seeks through the process of inquiry, *historiē*, and the theorists who desire a reputation for wisdom and so merely articulate their idiosyncratic theories.[18]

Herodotus repeatedly emphasizes the loquaciousness of the theorists to their discredit. The theory of the second lecturer (who, though unnamed, may confidently be identified as Herodotus' predecessor Hecataeus of Miletus)[19] is described as being "more lacking in knowledge (*anepistēmonesterē men*) but wonderful to tell (*logōi de eipein thōmasiōterē*)," and the theory is personified as speaking itself (*hē legei* 2.21). When Herodotus turns to the part of this theory that involves connecting the Nile to the mythical river Ocean, he labels the account a *mythos*, a word that he uses most rarely: "the man who spoke (*lexas*) of Ocean and put his *mythos* in an invisible realm has no means of refutation (*elenchon*)" (2.23). Robert Fowler has recently demonstrated how this labeling of the theory as *mythos* rather than *logos* marks it out as being qualitatively distinct: a *mythos* is properly a pronouncement from an authoritative speaker, and by using it here Herodotus highlights

the pretensions of Hecataeus' vain, unfounded *logos*.[20] That is, Hecataeus' pronouncements about Ocean and the Nile that were made with a (false) claim of authority are shown to be precisely the opposite–assertions that are entirely unverifiable and hence unreliable. And we have independent evidence that corroborates this portrait of the grandiloquent Hecataeus, the preserved opening words of his fragmentary *Genealogies*: "Hecataeus of Miletus speaks (*mytheitai*) as follows..." (*FGrH* 1 F 1).[21] By contrast, Herodotus has represented the Egyptians as refusing to speak about the Nile's sources, and I submit that his purpose in doing so is to draw attention to the limits imposed by their method of inquiry.[22]

How, then, does Herodotus the inquirer present his own opinion on the inundation of the Nile? Most carefully. He writes: "if it is *necessary* (*dei*) that I, having censured the proposed opinions, display an opinion about invisible matters (*mempsamenon gnōmas tas prokeimenas auton peri tōn afaneōn gnōmēn apodexasthai*), I shall state for what reason it seems to me that the Nile floods in summer" (2.24.1). Note that Herodotus couches his own view not in terms of certain knowledge but as what seems likely to him, and he affects to give this only if it be felt necessary. Most significantly, he emphasizes once more that he is speaking about invisible matters, so his account bears a disclaimer. Rosalind Thomas, in a chapter that situates Herodotus in an intellectual climate characterized by persuasion and polemic, suggests that he employs here the language of demonstration or display (*gnōmēn apodexasthai*), verging on the sense "proof," to mark out his discourse as something greater than mere statement.[23] But consider that Herodotus simultaneously distinguishes himself from the Greek theorists by framing his own *gnōmē* in quite different terms. Whereas the others out of a desire for a reputation for wisdom spoke their opinions with an unfounded claim of authority, Herodotus emphasizes the incertitude of his own opinion.[24]

Such a contrast points to another, that of methodology: Herodotus engages in conversation with the Egyptian priests–he listens, but the Greek theorists merely speak. This is not to deny that Herodotus' method of argument belongs to contemporary Greek intellectual culture.[25] Rather, his polemic here that is so characteristic of Greek argumentation simultaneously distinguishes his position within that milieu.[26] Other Greeks had noted the epistemological value of listening, but Herodotus makes it the centerpiece of his method.[27] The importance of listening is emphasized once more in one of his most explicit methodological statements: "Up to this point my autopsy, reason, and inquiry have been saying these things, but from this point I proceed speaking Egyptian accounts, in accordance with what I listened to. And something of my own autopsy will be added to this" (2.99.1).[28] Whereas above it was the theories of the Greeks that metaphorically spoke, here it is the complex of Herodotus' investigative tools that are made responsible for the first half of book two. The latter half, largely concerned with Egypt's past, is necessarily reliant above all on what Herodotus has heard from the Egyptians. But when Herodotus foregrounds himself by switching to the first person ("I proceed speaking Egyptian accounts"), he does not endow this speech with his personal authority like Hecataeus or his own contemporaries but emphasizes it as a product of his listening.[29] I submit that the common impression of Herodotus as a curious and eager listener who duly records whatever he hears must be modified by the observation that this mode is consciously opposed to that of his loquacious contemporaries and predecessors.

The dichotomy between auditor and lecturer occurs again in book two in a much-discussed passage where Herodotus' intellectual opponent is explicitly identified as Hecataeus the speech-maker (*logopoios*), and once more the Egyptian priests appear as a foil.[30] In an excursus on the greater antiquity of Egypt in comparison with the Greek world, Herodotus describes how the priests of Zeus (Amon-Re) displayed to him, as they had previously done for Hecataeus, an uninterrupted series of wooden statues representing the hereditary succession of priests for 345 generations. When they did this for Hecataeus, it was in response to his "genealogizing himself and binding his ancestry to a god in the sixteenth generation" (2.143.1). Herodotus, however, maintains that he did not genealogize himself before the Egyptians (2.143.1). He then reiterates the portrait of Hecataeus giving his genealogy, and coins a word for what the Egyptians did in response-they genealogized right back (*antegeneēlogēsan*, 2.143.4).

Herodotus here carefully differentiates himself from Hecataeus.[31] The encounter is presented as a proper conversation, an exchange of *logoi*: the Egyptians were "not accepting from him (Hecataeus) [the account] that a man came to be from a god" (*ou dekomenoi par' autou apo theou genesthai anthrōpon* 2.143.4). Hecataeus spoke, the Egyptians listened and rejected. But what of Herodotus' silence before the Egyptian priests? His insistence that he did not give his genealogy is no gratuitous swipe at his predecessor but rather reveals once more his methodological principle. Just as the Egyptians, for lack of knowledge, had refused to concoct an account about the Nile's inundation or sources, Herodotus here refuses to trace his ancestry to a god–not, I think, because he finds the notion inherently ridiculous or impossible, but because such a claim has no means of refutation (*elenchos*). Herodotus therefore, unlike Hecataeus, knows when to listen to his interlocutors instead of speaking.[32]

By proudly tracing his genealogy to a god, Hecataeus is again represented as taking his *logos* into the invisible, nor is this genealogy purported to be predicated on anything other than Hecataeus' conviction. The Egyptians, by contrast, genealogize, but based on informed grounds, for which they provide visual proof.[33] They display their knowledge and its basis in terms identified by Thomas as deriving from the latter fifth-century Greek intellectual climate of competitive displays (*exērithmeon deiknuntes*, 2.143.2).[34] But the very point of their genealogizing is, paradoxically, that they have *no record* of a man born from a god. As such, the Egyptian *logos* with its visible backing proves a negative point, the converse of Hecataeus who seeks to make a

positive claim of divine ancestry and thereby sets his *logos* into the invisible. In short, the Egyptians co-opt the Greek habit of agonistic displays of learning wherein everyone is prompt to speak but slow to listen.

This last point prompts us now to consider an issue raised in my introduction: Herodotus' explicit valuation of the Egyptians as good sources of information. Herodotus at one point remarks, "the Egyptians inhabiting the cultivated region of Egypt are most learned (*logiōtatoi*) of all people whom I have tested because they most practice memory" (2.77.1).[35] It is evident that by the phrase "practice memory" Herodotus chiefly has in mind written records (cf. 2.100.1, 2.145.3).[36] Alan Lloyd has exhaustively demonstrated that the kinds of information Herodotus imputes to the Egyptian priests and in particular his account of Egyptian history are congruent with that with which genuine Egyptian priests of the day would have concerned themselves.[37] The question may then be asked, does Herodotus showcase the Egyptian priests merely as superior sources, not as critical inquirers in their own right?[38] In answer, I adduce now a final passage which shows more explicitly their use of Herodotean *historiē*.

Herodotus states that he made inquiry (*moi...historeonti*) of the Egyptian priests and was told an account about Helen that differs from that of the *Iliad*: she came to Egypt from Sparta and was never at Troy (2.113-15). Subsequently, Herodotus asks the priests whether the Greeks tell an idle story (*logon*) about Troy or not, and their answer differs again from Greek tradition–the Trojans told the Greeks they did not have Helen, that she was in Egypt, but the Greeks only believed this after sacking the city and failing to find her (2.118). How could the Egyptians know of what had transpired in Troy? Herodotus relates that they said they knew from Menelaus himself by means of *inquiry* (*historiēisi phamenoi eidenai par' autou Meneleō* 2.118.1). Their meaning is clarified at the end of the chapter, where they are said to know some of the events by means of inquiry (*historiēisi*) but of what happened in their own land they knew with certainty (*atrekeōs epistamenoi* 2.119.3). That is, they knew of what happened at Troy by making inquiry of Menelaus and of what happened in Egypt from their own knowledge. In both cases, of course, they do not mean that they have first-hand knowledge; rather, as Herodotus has already emphasized, the Egyptians cultivate memory better than other peoples and maintain records of human events much further back than do the Greeks.[39]

Scholars have argued that Herodotus sets his own division of the *spatium mythicum* and *spatium historicum* by reference to Egypt, whose *spatium historicum* embarrasses the typical Greek notion of the distinction, such as Hecataeus' claim of a divine ancestor just sixteen generations back.[40] But what is perhaps more striking here than the difference between the Greek and Egyptian notions of the past is the fundamental similarity of Herodotus' method and that of his Egyptian priests.[41] Herodotus is not interested in systematically confirming or denying various points of Greek myth. Rather, this passage serves to illustrate his method of inquiry and its limitations. For example, much as Herodotus does (e.g. 1.160.2), the Egyptians disclaim knowledge of what happened to Menelaus after he left Egypt (2.119.3) because he was their interlocutor and source of knowledge of Greek affairs. It is because the Egyptians' ancestors were already engaging in *historiē* at the time of the Trojan War that the chronological limit of their knowledge is greater than the Greeks'.

It may strain credulity to accept that the priests gave any account about Helen at all, but it has been suggested that the "rational" version of the Trojan War was in fact taken from Hecataeus.[42] Yet if this is so, Herodotus has almost certainly cast it in a new light. Whereas Hecataeus set about rationalizing Greek myths, Herodotus almost entirely eschews them (though he does use reason to explain his acceptance of the Egyptian account, 2.120).[43] For Herodotus, only the Egyptians' fortuitous practice of *historiē* could preserve the account for him to give.[44] In this way, Hecataeus has been stripped of the authority with which he had endowed his *logos*, and Herodotus has shown the superiority of his method. I suggest that Herodotus thus utilized to advantage his perception that the Egyptians shared his intellectual approach.[45]

My discussion so far has focused upon Herodotus' portrayal of the Egyptian priests as inquirers much like himself who value listening as the path to learning and how this portrayal distinguishes his method of inquiry from the feigned authority of Hecataeus and his similars. It could be objected that this is all merely Herodotus' projection of his own values and interests onto the Egyptian "other" as he critiques his own culture.[46] Certainly Herodotus employs an *interpretatio Graeca* to much of what he encounters in Egypt. But might Herodotus' evident affinity for Egypt in this regard (recall Plutarch's slur *philobarbaros*) have a basis in the actual habits of learned Egyptian priests?[47]

Egyptian wisdom literature, a super-genre that endured from the Middle Kingdom into the Greco-Roman period, attests to the great value placed on listening for the attainment of wisdom. Although few examples of this literature were composed in Herodotus' day, the texts of various earlier *Teachings* were known into the Late Period and used as school texts.[48] Certainly some of these could have been familiar to the literate priests of the House(s) of Life whom, it has been argued, Herodotus consulted in Memphis, Thebes, and Heliopolis.[49] Continuity with ancient education is claimed in the statue inscription of Udjahorresnet, which boasts that under the rule of Darius Udjahorresnet had restored the House of Life by appointing wellborn individuals whom learned men were to instruct and by "suppl[ying] them with everything useful to them, with all their equipment that was on record, as they had been before" (43-45).[50] Let us consider some examples.

The celebrated *Teaching of Ptahhotep* begins, after its preface, with an address to Ptahhotep's son: "Do not be haughty because of your knowledge, but take counsel with the unlearned man as well as with the learned...."[51] This is indeed an extreme example of the command to seek learning through intercourse; Ptahhotep may even find wisdom by listening to "the women at the grindstones."[52] Such a notion is reminiscent of Herodotus, who is

popularly caricatured as eager to converse with anyone who will talk with him. Similar advice proliferates in the *Teaching of Ptahhotep*: one who sits in his lord's council is told that his "silence will be more profitable than babbling" since "speech is more difficult than any craft, and only the competent can endow it with authority."[53] This is precisely Herodotus' criticism of Hecataeus, who, it may be added, is later in the *Histories* represented giving questionable advice in the context of the Ionian revolt (5.36, 125).[54] But it is the conclusion of *Ptahhotep* that provides the most sustained commentary on the necessity of listening–roughly one-quarter of the entire text. The son of Ptahhotep is, as is common in wisdom literature, initially exhorted to heed the preceding instructions, but it is in the second stanza of the epilogue, as R.B. Parkinson remarks, that the benefits of listening are praised extensively with repetitious play on the word "hear":

> Hearing is beneficial to a son who willingly hears,
> For when what is heard takes root in the hearer,
> He who has heard will become one (worthy himself of being) heard.
> It is good to hear and it is good to speak,
> But he who can hear possesses what is advantageous.
> Hearing is beneficial to the hearer;
> Hearing is better than everything,
> For (through it) good affection comes into being.[55]

The epilogue continues in this vein, developing the strong connection between listening, wisdom, correct speech, and good reputation.[56] This thesis surely goes beyond the trite exhortations found in any wisdom text that the maxims be heeded by the reader.[57]

We consider now a few similar examples to show that the thesis of *Ptahhotep* is representative of Egyptian thought. Among the Egyptian discourses *The Dialogue of a Man and his Soul* is intriguing for its meditations on death and man's place in the world. At one point in the dialogue the man's soul, in a desperate exhortation to enjoy life, cries: "For your own sake, listen to me! Behold, it is good when men listen. Seek happy days and forget your care."[58] R.B. Parkinson sensitively comments: "The soul reminds the man that he, unlike the oblivious ones, has an interlocutor [...]. The advocacy of *listening* is characteristic of wisdom literature, and the soul does not advise mindless hedonism."[59] Indeed, the very form of the dialogue genre models such advice (strikingly so in the Demotic text discussed below).

In a Ramesside miscellany (P. Anastasi V, 8, 1-9, 1), after a command to the scribe not to be idle, we find the following exhortation: "Write with your hand, recite with your mouth, and converse with those more knowledgeable than you."[60] The *Satirical Letter* preserved in P. Anastasi I augments our impression of educated Egyptians, at least during the Ramesside period, for it consists of a letter by the scribe Hori that challenges the recipient's learning on diverse topics such as mathematics and geography. Notably in the eighth chapter Hori criticizes his addressee for quoting a maxim from the *Teaching of Hardjedef* but not showing any understanding of it. Hori's point may be that listening *alone* is insufficient for wisdom, but this too reveals the standard Egyptian education.[61]

A more detailed picture of the education of temple priests is afforded by the lengthy Demotic text of the *Book of Thoth*. Although the earliest manuscript is dated to the first century BCE, the text very likely draws on earlier material.[62] The editors suggest that this book, which combines scribal, theological, and scholarly knowledge, was closely connected with the function of the House of Life.[63] The work is structured as a question and answer dialogue mostly between a student (The-one-who-loves-knowledge) and Thoth (He-who-praises-knowledge).[64] The text seems to be titled thus: "[The word]s which cause a youth to learn and a son of *Wn-ỉmȝ* to question."[65] The pupil must ask questions to learn. This establishes the frame of the work. Later in the same fragment the instructor seems to address the pupil: "If you wish (?) to hear them, set your ears to them."[66] The text contains as well exhortations familiar from the wisdom texts already mentioned, for example, "Ask the one less important than yourself ! / Desire to listen to the voice of the wise man!"[67] Such advice, together with the question and answer format of the dialogue, suggests that a form of oral inquiry with a strong emphasis on listening was central to the Egyptian mode of learning for scribes and priests. The compatibility with Herodotus is striking.

We conclude with a fascinating text of undetermined genre that still awaits its full publication, Papyrus Queen's College recto, written in abnormal hieratic and evidently containing a complex narrative.[68] Its dating to the 25th or 26th Dynasty puts us definitely closer to Herodotus than the other texts so far adduced.[69] The core of the text appears to be a dispute between two scribes of Heliopolis. They could be priests as well, but they are given no titles in what survives.[70] The following seems to be spoken by the plaintiff, Ihy, in the dispute that concludes the narrative:

> Now look (*ptr-sw*), <I> will let our lord know the words/affairs with which one is maltreating me (*jȝd*) and which are not worth listening/hearing to. And the slave/youth (*pȝ-ḫr/ḥr*) [came(?)] to listen to them and(?) the wise man (*pȝ-rmt-rḫ*) put his hand on/to his ear.[71]

There is an entreaty to be heard which is granted. This is of course a different context from the texts we have canvassed so far, though the basic connection between the wise man and listening remains.

But the sequel is revealing too. After mention of the *ỉrỉ-pˁ.t* called Hem-na-nefi, the speaker's plea continues: "Our chief, return to <me>! Do not turn your back (on) <me>/do not be inattentive (towards) <me>!"[72] The speaker then launches into a seemingly historical narrative that recounts what happened in the reign of one king Usermaatre, who is said to have built pylons in the precinct of Re. After the building program of Usermaatre is described in detail, Re-Harakhty's response to this activity is given: "If only you had saved/protected the weak (*gbj*) from the

strong/mighty (*nᶜs*)! I have not allowed another one/a stranger(?) to take his ... (?) legally."[73] The god reproaches the king for his unjust behavior, despite the latter's beneficence. Hans-W. Fischer-Elfert proposes that this historical episode is adduced as a sort of just-so story in the context of the scribes' dispute. The unjust king is parallel to Ihy's disputant, who has done him some wrong. In the end, Ihy's suit is successful, and he offers thanks to Re-Harakhty.[74] It would seem that the parable of the impious king was key in persuading the listener. The essence of justice and its converse are to be discerned in historical (or pseudo-historical) tales.

A similar spirit pervades the *Histories*, not least the second book: note in particular the prophesied early doom of Mycerinus, who, though he reopened the temples, nevertheless acted contrary to necessity and continued in his folly by attempting to contravene the oracle (2.133). This is not to suggest that such an episode is directly related to the Queen's College Papyrus narrative,[75] but it is indicative of a shared ethos. Consider again the account of the Trojan War, where Herodotus even has occasion to blame the destruction of Troy on the Greeks who did not heed the Trojans, *although they spoke the truth* in declaring they did not have Helen–an incredible condemnation of the Greek failure to listen (2.118.3-4, 120.5). To this Herodotus adds his own inference (*gnōmē*): the divine intended to make clear to mankind that there is great divine punishment (the destruction of Troy) for great injustice (Alexander's rape of Helen) (2.120.5). Like the tale of king Usermaatre, such stories hold value, if understood rightly. It bears repeating, however, that the Trojan War account is owed to inquiry, that of the Egyptian priests and Herodotus. The historian next offers a long, incredible account of king Rhampsinitus. He then offers a challenge: "let he to whom such things are believable make use of what was said by the Egyptians; as for me, throughout the whole *logos* it is my principle that I write what was said by everyone as I listened to it (*akoēi*)" (2.123.1). Herodotus again mutes his own authority and encourages the reader-auditor of the *Histories* to be an engaged listener like himself.[76]

Herodotus, I contend, found not just great wonders and a mirror for his own culture in Egypt but genuinely kindred spirits. We are accustomed to speak of the orality of archaic and classical Greece, Herodotus' oral style, Greek competitive displays of verbal prowess. Seldom do we hear mention of Greek aurality. But Herodotus, I think, was aware of the distinction, as were the Egyptian priests with whom he conversed. Book two of the *Histories* is certainly no transcript of these interactions, but it reveals the intellectual compatibility of Herodotus and his peers in Egypt.

Notes

1 See Lloyd 1975-88 I, 89-91, 114-16.

2 Fowler 1996, 76-87 in an important article argues that the problematizing of sources was Herodotus' innovation. See Lloyd 1975-88 I, 84-89, on the frequent "source citations" in book two. Marincola 1987, 121-37 suggests that their proliferation in book two is owed to the book's material and the historian's need to supersede his predecessors writing on Egypt.

3 Luraghi 2006, 76-91; cf. Lloyd 1975-88 I, 81-84. Hartog 1988 261-73 distinguishes three types of *akoé*-statement.

4 Jacoby 1949, 215-18 argued that the *logioi* were Herodotus' usual sources whom he relied on for local oral history and that any "citation" of an ethnic referred to them. Cf. Lateiner 1989, 100-3 on "Barbarian Authorities."

5 Nagy 1987, 175-84 and 1990, 221-24; Evans 1991, 89-146.

6 Luraghi 2001, 156-59; Vannicelli 2001, 213-15; Luraghi 2009, 439-56.

7 See Branscome 2013, 11-21 with literature.

8 Thomas 2000 and 2006, 60-75; cf. Fowler 1996, 62-76 and 2006, 29-45; Raaflaub 2002, 149-86.

9 Luraghi 2009, 456, contrary to Nagy 1987, 175-84 and 1990, 221-24.

10 Lloyd 2010, 1076.

11 See Fehling 1989 and Pritchett 1993 for either extreme on the issue of Herodotus' invention of sources.

12 Lloyd 1987, 83-104 and Kurke 2011, 95-124 emphasize how competition to be recognized for authority and wisdom characterized archaic and classical Greek intellectualism.

13 Plut. *Mor.* 857a (12), which refers to Herodotus' defense of the Egyptians who are charged with having attempted to sacrifice Heracles (2.45). Lloyd 1975-88 I, 154-55 identifies examples that lend some credence to Plutarch's charge.

14 Lloyd 1975-88 II, 70-73 demonstrates the confusion in Herodotus' account here, but the historian's procedure is nevertheless coherent.

15 Cf. Munson 2001, 145 esp. n. 31 where this is characterized differently as the "Egyptians' ethnocentric criticism of the Greeks' dependence on rainfall."

16 Christ 1994, 167-202 has fruitfully considered Herodotean kings as inquirers. The Egyptian Psammetichus, unlike most, is largely a favorable example. See now Branscome 2013 on rival inquirers in the *Histories*.

17 Lloyd 1975-88 II, 94-95. Connor 1993, 11 characterizes the Egyptians' silence as a potential problem for Herodotus, who, desiring to adjudicate conflicting accounts, therefore turns to Greek theorists. See Lateiner 1989, 59-75 on instances of omission or reticence, esp. 61-64 on claims of ignorance.

18 Indeed, these theories are literally termed "three paths" (*triphasias hodous* 2.20.1); the metaphor suggests that they diverge from the truth, just as Herodotus had described with the same expression the divergence of the Nile into three streams (2.17.3). Contrast claims to know something unerringly, *atrekeōs* (as at 2.119.3,

discussed below), which etymologically may mean "without turning from the path"; see Cartledge and Greenwood 2002, 362.

19 *FGrH* 1 F 302; Lloyd 1975-88 II, 100-1.

20 Fowler 2011, 47, 53-55; cf. Fowler 1996, 79. See Thomas 2000, 206-8 on Herodotus' use here of language found in contemporary medical treatises.

21 Fowler 2011, 53-55. As the continuation of the fragment shows, Hecateaus is emphasizing his authority *qua* author; see Bertelli 2001, 81.

22 Herodotus provides one exception to the Egyptians' silence on the matter, but it is not the priests. The secretary of the sacred property of Athena (Neith) in Sais told him a story about Psammetichus' search for the sources of the Nile, but Herodotus observes that this fellow seemed to be jesting by saying that he knew for certain (*phamenos eidenai atrekeōs*) (2.28.1-2). His point is the same as with Hecataeus: the claim of certain knowledge on this matter is suspect. Psammetichus allegedly made a test that proved the sources were bottomless, but Herodotus reasons that such a test merely suggested there were strong eddies; there can be no proof of bottomlessness. And Herodotus exculpates the secretary by noting that he seemed to be teasing the inquiring historian. See Christ 1994, 171-72.

23 Thomas 2000, 224.

24 See Thomas 2000, 245-46, who concedes that Herodotus differs from contemporary medical writers in this regard, but cf. Lloyd 1987, 124-35 on expressions of uncertainty in medical handbooks not directed at a public audience.

25 See Thomas 2000, 136, 182-90.

26 See Lateiner 1989, 91-108 on Herodotean polemic.

27 The thinker Heraclitus of Ephesus, a contemporary of Hecataeus, is notable: "the things of which there is seeing (*opsis*), hearing (*akoē*), and perception (*mathēsis*), these do I prefer" (fr. 5 Markovich). But Heraclitus also reveals solipsism similar to Hecataeus': "I asked myself (*edizēsamēn emeōuton*)" (fr. 15 Markovich). Herodotus never makes inquiry of himself!

28 *Mechri men toutou opsis te emē kai gnōmē kai historiē tauta legousa esti, to de apo toude Aigyptious erchomai logous ereōn, kata ta ēkouon· prosestai de autoisi ti kai tēs emēs opsios.*

29 de Bakker 2012, 124-25 proposes that the indirect speech in the following chapters also alerts the reader to use of *akoē*. Thomas 2000, 235-47 highlights the similarity of Herodotus' first-person style to the egocentric polemic of contemporary Greek intellectuals, but the latter lack his repeated avowals of having listened. Lateiner 1989, 190-91 emphasizes Herodotus' epistemological worries here, but his material here changes to past events, for which *akoē* must be the primary tool. See Dewald 2002, 274-77 on Herodotus as narrator.

30 Discussion of this passage has focused upon the question of Herodotus' fabrication of Hecataeus' encounter with the priests (e.g., Fehling 1989, 77-85; West 1991, 144-60; *contra*, Pritchett 1993, 187-91; Burkert 1995, 148 n. 38; Bertelli 2001, 91) and the role the encounter played in inspiring Herodotus' (or Hecataeus') sense of historical chronology (e.g., Burkert 1995, 139-48; Bertelli 2001, 89-94; Vannicelli 2001, 211-40; Moyer 2002, 70-90, who argues that Herodotus employs notions of the past held by Late Period Egyptians to criticize Hecataeus).

31 Dewald 2002, 267-89 argues that Herodotus here creates an "outsider" authorial voice, distinct from his inquirer-persona, but the distinction is not clear-cut. Kurke 2011, 378 suggests that Herodotus' statement that he did not give his genealogy is gratuitous and intended to differentiate the "sober" historian from the "aristocratic, heroic pretensions" of Hecataeus.

32 Perhaps Hecataeus wrote of his divine genealogy without reference to an encounter with the priests: Bertelli 2001, 81 points out there is no evidence Hecataeus used foreign evidence to correct the "foolish *logoi*" of the Greeks (*FGrH* 1 F 1). The Herodotean narrative would thus be all the more damning since Hecataeus would be portrayed as having learned nothing from the Egyptians.

33 Hunter 1982, 61-63 reads the passage as emphasizing autopsy.

34 Thomas 2000, 266-67 situates the "anti-genealogizing" of the Egyptians in the context of Greek agonistic displays but no more than remarks the fact that here the display is made by Egyptian priests.

35 *autōn de dē Aigyptiōn hoi men peri tēn speiromenēn Aigypton oikeousi, mnēmēn anthrōpōn pantōn epaskeontes malista logiōtatoi eisi makrō, tōn egō es diapeiran apikomēn.* We may note that Herodotus' testing must mean intellectual engagement, conversation. Cf. Luraghi 2001, 152; Vannicelli 2001, 214-15.

36 Lloyd 1975-88 II, 330-31. Hartog 1988, 279-83 suggests that Herodotus has a different attitude to Egyptian writing than to Greek. But it is the antiquity and supposedly unbroken continuity of Egyptian records that encourages Herodotus' faith; cf. Hunter 1982, 57-58; Luraghi 2001, 153-54.

37 Lloyd 1975-88 I, 89-100, 104-13. See now Quack 2013, 63-88 on recent Demotic evidence and Postel 2013, 89-118 on Herodotus' use of Egyptian royal annals.

38 Luraghi 2009, 455-56; cf. Lateiner 1989, 102-3; Vannicelli 2001, 214-15; Fowler 2011, 60.

39 Hunter 1982, 52-61 argues that 2.116-20 serve to validate Herodotus' faith in the Egyptian *logos*. I would rather characterize the passage as a general illustration of method.

40 On this issue, see Hunter 1982, 86-92; Thomas 2001, 198-210; Vannicelli 2001, 211-40; Moyer 2002, 83-85; Saïd 2012, 87-105.

41 de Jong 2012, 136-39 makes a similar observation, but she suggests it is a device that allows Herodotus to investigate the mythic past; cf. Munson 2001, 141-44. Grethlein 2010, 154-56 views this as a means of criticizing epic poetry. de Bakker 2012, 107-26 persuasively argues that in this passage Proteus too serves as model inquirer, but I doubt the claim (120) that

Herodotus is interested in applying his method to myth generally.

42 Lloyd 1975-88 III, 46-47; *FGrH* 1 F 307-9.

43 There is no evidence Hecataeus used foreign sources to rationalize Greek ones: Bertelli 2001, 81. Herodotus conspicuously avoids reference to Stesichorus' *Palinode* or Hesiod's version (fr. 358 M-W) of the Helen story, but Hecataeus is more likely to have quoted them. Hecataeus states that the sons of Aegyptus numbered, "as Hesiod composed (*epoiēse*), fifty, but as I [compose], not even twenty" (*FGrH* 1 F 19). He thus presents himself as a rational Hesiod. On Herodotean rationalization, see Lloyd 1975-88 I, 135-38, 162-63; Hunter 1982, 107-15; Raaflaub 2002, 157-58; Saïd 2012, 90-92.

44 Vannicelli 2001, 227 over-emphasizes as a criticism of Egyptian knowledge Herodotus' statement (2.154.4) that knowledge of Egyptian affairs after Psammetichus is precise owing to Greeks living in Egypt. Just as the Egyptians only claim precise knowledge of what transpired in their country, as opposed to what they learn by inquiry from Menelaus, so Herodotus points out that prior to Psammetichus' reign Greeks (i.e. Herodotus) must use *historiē* to acquire knowledge. A similar distinction is found at 2.29.1, Herodotus' autopsy as far as Elephantine but use of *akoē* beyond. Cf. Hunter 1982, 95-96; Hartog 1988, 282-83.

45 It is therefore of little consequence here whether or not Herodotus actually extracted from the priests some version of a possibly Hecataean account that had become known in Egypt. Thucydides' (1.22.1) principle of composing speeches suitable to the occasion and speaker may apply: the Egyptians are represented as saying what they are in a position to say. Cf. 2.54-55.1, where Herodotus reports the account of the Theban priests about the women who founded the oracles of Siwa and Dodona. See Cartledge and Greenwood 2002, 353-63; Marincola 2007, 51-66; Branscome 2013, 6-11 on Herodotus' method in light of the truth/fiction debate generated by Fehling 1988 and Pritchett 1993.

46 Thus the mirage of "the other" that Hartog 1988 identifies in Herodotus' ethnography; on the device of polarity, see Lateiner 1989, 147-52; Cartledge and Greenwood 2002, 363-71 with further references.

47 Moyer 2002, 70-90 argues that Herodotus' account of the Theban priests' genealogizing betrays awareness of Late Period Egyptian priests' view of their own past. Quack 2013, 63-88 and Postel 2013, 89-118 demonstrate Herodotus' familiarity with literature to which the priests had access.

48 Jasnow 1999, 193-210.

49 Lloyd 1975-88 I, 112-13; Postel 2013, 89-118.

50 Lichtheim 1980, 39-40.

51 Tobin in Simpson 2003, 131.

52 Tobin in Simpson 2003, 131.

53 Tobin in Simpson 2003, 140.

54 See the analysis of these passages by Kurke 2011, 378-80.

55 Tobin in Simpson 2003, 145; cf. Parkinson 1997, 271 n. 50.

56 See the comments of Parkinson 1997, 271 nn. 51-52.

57 So in Greek didactic literature, Perses, for example, is instructed to "lay up in his heart this [advice]" by Hesiod (*Works and Days* 27). But the general "wisdom through listening" thesis is hardly developed in the Greek tradition: in just three lines Hesiod notes that one who heeds a person who speaks well is excellent, that one who is ignorant and doesn't heed such a person is worthless (*Works and Days* 295-97).

58 Translation by Tobin in Simpson 2003, 182.

59 Parkinson 1997, 162 n. 20.

60 Simpson 2003, 439.

61 Fischer-Elfert 1986, 279-90 views the text as a "Bildungskritik" of learning by rote.

62 Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, 72-77. The editors note there is also a hieratic manuscript witness, identified by Joachim Quack. Quack 2007, 260 argues that the archaic language of the text suggests a considerable use of earlier sources or a translation of an older model and adduces (262) a possible parallel from a statue inscription as old as the 30th Dynasty.

63 Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, 74-75 (B07,1).

64 Quack 2007, 250 proposes that the latter is better interpreted as merely a tutor or examiner.

65 Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, 8, 373, 464 leave the fragment unplaced; Quack 2007, 251 insists it be placed at the beginning.

66 Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, 464 (B07,9); cf. Quack 2007, 251-52, who suggests that the opening passage shows the work is basically an initiatory dialogue.

67 Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, 6, 226 (L01, 4/4).

68 Baines, Donker van Heel, Fischer-Elfert 1998, 234-36; Fischer-Elfert 2013, 143-51.

69 Fischer-Elfert 2013, 144, 151 suggests the reign of Taharqa (c. 670 BCE) based on the dating of the verso text to that period and the witness scribe formula used at the end of the recto.

70 For the narrative of conflict between priests, compare the lengthy petition of P. Rylands 9.

71 Fischer-Elfert 2013, 147.

72 Fischer-Elfert 2013, 147.

73 Fischer-Elfert 2013, 148.

74 Fischer-Elfert 2013, 148-49.

75 Lloyd 1975-88 III, 82 points out elements of the Mycerinus story that are paralleled in Egyptian literature but not Greek.

76 See Lateiner 1989, 76-90 on the autonomy of Herodotus' readers.

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