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# The Historicity of Papyrus Westcar*

An approach first explicitly evident in Meyer's monumental 1909 Geschichte des Altertums[1], Papyrus Westcar has been persistently[2] treated as exhibiting an "historisch völlig richtigen Kern," as representing a "Widerspiegelung der realen Vorgänge"[3] from Dynasty 4 to 5. This has been done even in the face of the tale's fabulous elements – when these are mentioned, it is only in order to dismiss them from the equation of a historical inquiry[4]. As this approach endures[5] despite protestations made in passing by Goedicke recently in this journal[6], there are grounds for a concentrated inquiry into the text's worth as a historical trace. For my own part, even after having set its wonders aside, I

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[1] E. Meyer, Geschichte des Altertums², vol. I/2, Stuttgart – Berlin 1909(2), 205: He feels that, even if pWestcar represents the first three kings of Dyn 5 as begotten of the sun god, this must reflect a later view; "aber trotzdem enthält diese Sage einen historisch völlig richtigen Kern." This specific position results from the methodological assumptions set forth at ibid., 24–25: "In diesen Erzählungen [der volkstümlichen Literatur] sind die geschichtlichen Tatsachen noch erkennbar; aber sie sind zu Volkssagen geworden und mit populären Stoffen, Märchen und Wundern verknüpft, und gehören oft weit mehr der Märchenliteratur an." But such works are not only of the highest value in revealing the thought and the understanding they had of "geschichtlichen Leben," but "sie kann und muß auch kritisch als eine Quelle für die den geschichtlichen Sagen zu Grunde liegenden Tatsachen benutzt werden." A world turns on the word "kritisch".

[2] As by S. Schott, Mythe und Mythenbildung im Alten Ägypten (UGAÄ 15), Leipzig 1945, 15, citing Meyer. Others include but are not limited to: E. Otto, Ägypten. Der Weg des Pharaonenreiches, Stuttgart 1953(4), 68–69: "Wir wissen von der 5. Dynastie genug, um in der Sprache des Märchens die historische Wahrheit zu erkennen." W. S. Smith 1971 "The Old Kingdom in Egypt and the Beginning of the First Intermediate Period" in CAH³ I/2, 179: "No explanation of the position of Khentkaues can be made to fit exactly with the tale in the Westcar Papyrus ... Nevertheless the story evidently reflects elements of the true facts." H. Altenmüller 1970 "Die Stellung der Königsmutter Chentkaus beim Übergang von der 4. zur 5. Dynastie" in CdE 45, 90; p. 227: "Ein Neuansatz für die Untersuchung des Chentkausproblems ergibt sich durch eine positive Wertung der Erzählungen des Papyrus Westcar." M. Moursi, Die Hohenpriester des Sonnengottes von der Frühzeit Ägyptens bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches (MÄS 26), München – Berlin 1972, 160: "Wenn auch diese Geschichte in den Rahmen einer Märchenerzählung gekleidet ist, so scheint ihr doch ein historischer Kern zu Grunde zu liegen." W. Barta, Untersuchungen zur Göttlichkeit des regierenden Königs (MÄS 32), München – Berlin 1975, though cautioning that the document's historical worth should not be overstressed because of disparity between the figures of Khentikaus and Ruddjedet (p. 29), nevertheless takes it as evidence for the "Existenz eines Geburtsrituals ... für die Zeit des Alten Reiches" (p. 19). And pWestcar is yet drawn upon in introductory histories of Egypt without explicit evaluation of the document's historical worth, as in N. Grimal, A History of Ancient Egypt, I. Shaw trans., Oxford 1992, esp. 70–77.

[3] R. Gundlach, Der Pharao und sein Staat. Die Grundlegung der ägyptischen Königsideologie im 4. und 3. Jahrtausend, Darmstadt 1998, 247: he holds that, although composed about six centuries after the events it recounts, and though preserved only in a still later manuscript, "wir können vermuten, daß sie eine Widerspiegelung der realen Vorgänge darstellt."

[4] See Gundlach 1998, 248: "Wenn wir die märchenhaften Elemente einmal beiseite lassen, können folgende königsideologisch wichtigen Aspekte aufgeführt werden," with the points following. There is no question that the work is of utmost importance as a source for ideological history, but it remains to be illustrated that pWestcar is a reliable source for the study of the ideological history of the OK, rather than the period in which it was composed.

[5] See the two preceding notes.

[6] See H. Goedicke 1993 "Thoughts about the Papyrus Westcar" in ZÄS 120, 32.

would urge that the text comes up short when approached for its historical content, but that, on the contrary, it can be prized when approached as a literary work.

As typically[7] understood, when exhibiting a kernel of historical truth pWestcar is supposed to portray the rise of a sun cult to predominance in Dynasty 5, and this rise is supposed to be evident in Old Kingdom data. As to the latter, usually advanced are the frequency of use of the title "Son of Re"[8] in Dynasty 5, and the advent of sun temples[9] with Userkaf, first king of the same. These, then, are two[10] phenomena worthy of inspection.

Three kings immediately following Khufu made use of the title "Son of Re," the earliest being Djedefre, according to the reconstruction of a handful of fragments surfacing in Munich in 1960[11]. The reconstruction was secured through comparison of the fragments to an inscription from one of a pair of diorite statues of Khafre, calling him *ḥr wsr-ib ḫʿ-f-rʿ ḥr-nfr*[12] *nfr-nṯr zꜣ-rʿ nb-ḫʿ.[w]* "Horus Userib Khafre, the good Horus, the good god, the Son of Re, lord of appearances"[13]. The third king attested as bearing the title is Menkaure, with a cylinder seal reading: *mn-kꜣ.w-rʿ zꜣ-rʿ {t} mrii-nṯr.w rʿ nb* "Menkaure, Son of Re, beloved of the gods every day"[14].

With these second two, one notes how *zꜣ-rʿ* does not appear before the king's name, but is appended to it as an appositive[15]. This practice occurs in Dynasty 5 as well. Sahure, second king of Dynasty 5, but the first, to my knowledge, of the dynasty attested with the honorific, has an inscription calling him *sꜣḥ.w-rʿ zꜣ-rʿ* "Sahure, the Son of Re"[16]. After him, the next king of Dynasty 5 attested bearing the honorific is Niuserre, as when he is called *ni-wsr-rʿ zꜣ-rʿ mrii-wꜣḏ.t* "Niuserre, son of Re, beloved of

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[7] Atypical is the novel interpretation of H. Jenni 1998 "The Papyrus Westcar" in SAK 25, 113–141, who sees it directly reflecting historical circumstances of Dyn 12, specifically concerning the coregency of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I; on this, see n. 62 below.

[8] So W. S. Smith 1971, 180, and J. Assmann, "Die Zeugung des Sohnes. Bild, Spiel, Erzählung und das Problem des ägyptischen Mythos" in J. Assmann et al., Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos. Drei altorientalische Beispiele (OBO 48), Freiburg – Göttingen 1982, 30. S. Schott "Mythen in den Pyramidentexten" in S. A. B. Mercer, The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary, vol. iv, New York – London – Toronto 1952, 117, though holding for the appearance of the sun god at the forefront of cult and the "Mythe von Heliopolis" at the beginning of Dyn 5, is at the same time aware that "Der als Beiname schon im Pyramidentempel Königs Chefren aufkommende Namenstitel 'Sohn des Re' verbindet die Könige in neuer Weise mit dem Schöpfer und Herrn der Welt."

[9] So Otto 1953, 70; W. S. Smith 1971, 180; and J. Assmann 1982, 30.

[10] Dyn 5 entries of the Annals Stone are sometimes advanced as another indicator of the sun god's rise (e.g. Schott 1945, 15–16; S. Schott 1950 "Bemerkungen zum ägyptischen Pyramidenkult" in Beiträge Bf 5, 148; and W. S. Smith 1971, 180 (evidently following Schott), on the basis of a relatively great allocation of material wealth to *rʿ* and the *bꜣ.w iwn.w*, as opposed to a smaller allocation to other gods in Dyn 5. The bias of proportion within Dyn 5 is indisputable, but, if the argument is to illustrate diachronic change, i.e. from a low status of Re in Dyn 4 to a higher status in Dyn 5, then it is unavoidably necessary to have diachronically distributed data, i.e. records of such allocations both from Dyn 5 and from Dyn 4. This the Annals Stone does not provide: allocations of real property to gods of this sort are not mentioned in the preserved blocks pertaining to kings of Dyn 4 (see Urk I 235, 15–239, 18), which are much more restricted in writing-space than the blocks of kings of Dyn 5. In the absence of comparable data from Dyn 4, it is simply impossible for the Dyn 5 entries to show change.

[11] See H. W. Müller 1964 "Der Gute Gott Radjedef, Sohn des Rê" in ZÄS 91, 131 and pl. III, 3.

[12] Reading transposition of the tall vertical sign *nfr*; see the NK writings shown at Wb ii 257.

[13] CG 15 = LdR 89–90 (XVIII A/B). Although he dates this item to Dyn 4 for the Cairo catalog (see L. Borchardt, Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo Nr. 1-1294, I, Berlin 1911, 16), Borchardt had earlier concluded that it was stylistically, and orthographically, a "Pseudo-a. R.-Statuen"; see L. Borchardt 1898 "Über das Alter der Chefrenstatuen" in ZÄS 36, 16.

[14] P. Kaplony, Die Rollsiegel des Alten Reichs II. Katalog der Rollsiegel B. Tafeln (MonAeg 3[B]), Bruxelles 1981, pl. 33 *mn-kꜣ.w-rʿ* 7.

[15] A similar situation occurs with the Name of Gold title coming after the cartouche of Khufu; H. Müller, Die formale Entwicklung der Titulatur der ägyptischen Könige (ÄF 7), Glückstadt – Hamburg – New York 1938, 69.

[16] Urk I 169, 8.

Wadjet"[17]. After Sahure and Niuserre, to my knowledge the title does not appear again until Izezi[18] and Wenis, the last two kings of the dynasty, and two who did not build sun temples.

The pattern of attestation is illuminating: of the six kings believed to have built sun temples[19], only Sahure[20] and Niuserre[21] are attested as "Sons of Re," which suggests that the phenomenon "Son of Re" was not directly connected to the sun temples. Moreover, the honorific's attested usage in Dynasty 5 is infrequent in comparison to that of Dynasty 4, with three out of four kings after Khufu bearing it. Indeed, its appearance in the middle of Dynasty 4 in direct contact with the names of kings suggests that the notion conveyed by it had already become an integral element of royal ideology[22]. With the king designated as king through being called son of the sun god[23], Re was evidently already of paramount importance to the state in Dynasty 4.

Also adduced to illustrate a rise of the sun god's prominence in Dynasty 5 is the advent of the sun temples. There is no doubt that these were fundamentally bound up with the sun god[24], because the names of the structures in question are uniformly constructed with the element *rᶜ*: thus *nḫn-rᶜ* "Fortress of Re," *sḫ.t-rᶜ* "Field of Re," and so on[25]. The arrival of new monuments with an explicit solar connection[26]

[17] See A. H. Gardiner and T. Eric Peet, The Inscriptions of Sinai, London 1952(2), pl. 6 (and revise Urk I 54, 2).

[18] Although both H. Müller 1938, 70, and J. von Beckerath, Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen (MÄS 49), Mainz 1999(2), 26, with n. 2, question the certainty of dating of one attestation of *izzi* with *zꜣ-rᶜ*, perhaps stemming from the MK, there remains another of his; see H. Müller 1938, 70 fig. 108.

[19] Five of the six documented sun temples may be associated with specific kings, and the assignment of the sixth is debatable; see W. Kaiser 1956 "Zu den Sonnenheiligtümern der 5. Dynastie" in MDAIK 14, 105–106.

[20] As at Urk I 169, 8.

[21] As at Urk I 53, 18–54, 2.

[22] This conclusion finds further support in the royal naming practices of Dyn 4. Beginning with the children of Snefru, it was a common practice to compound personal names with the element *rᶜ* – a practice exclusive to members of the royal family before the transition to Dyn 5. For the social distribution of *rᶜ*-names in Dyn 4, see B. Begelsbacher-Fischer, Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des Alten Reiches im Spiegel der Privatgräber der IV. und V. Dynastie (OBO 37), Freiburg 1981, 162–163. In connection with the preceding, note that R. Anthes 1971 "Was veranlasste Chefren zum Bau des Tempels vor der Sphinx?" in BeiträgeBf 12, 56, also points to the compounding of royal names with *rᶜ*, especially *ḫᶜ-f-rᶜ*, as evidence of the prominence of the sun god – specifically the association of the sun god with kingship, because of the combination of the god's name with the notion of *ḫᶜ.w*. Relevant also to the status of the sun god in Dyn 4 are the names of royal estates compounded with *rᶜ*, e.g. *mr-rᶜ-ḫw-f-w(i)*. References to them at Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981, 165, and 171–172.

[23] Other dimensions of the term's significance – such as cultic – are not meant to be excluded by highlighting *zꜣ-rᶜ* as a mark of the king's legitimacy, but that it did indeed have the effect of identifying its bearer as king may be inferred through its use in parallel to and in context with other legitimizing terms. For example, the seal of Menkaure cited above has *mn-kꜣ.w-rᶜ nỉ-sw.t bỉ.tỉ* .... *mn-kꜣ.w-rᶜ zꜣ-rᶜ*, i.e. with "Son of Re" in precisely the same position as "King of UE and LE." In the inscription of Niuserre cited above, as I read its order, the king's Horus name is followed by *ḏỉ ᶜnḫ ḏ.t nṯr ᶜꜣ nb tꜣ.wỉ nỉ-sw.t bỉ.tỉ*, the last two of the epithets explicitly identifying the king as such; in parallel to this, the inscription goes on to give the king's throne name and then *zꜣ-rᶜ* [*mrii*] *wꜣḏ.t*, followed by Two Ladies and Name of Gold, throne name again, and *ḏỉ ᶜnḫ*. The statues of Khafre cited above name the king as *ḥr-nfr nṯr-nfr zꜣ-rᶜ nb-ḫᶜ*.[*w*]. The first epithet, through evoking Horus, and the last, through evoking appearance (as king), serve to identify Khafre as ruler. Because of the nature of the first and last epithets, and because of the use in the first two instances just now mentioned, one may conclude that the intervening epithets also serve as marks of kingship, though certainly through the evocation of different dimensions of the same. Finally, one may mention that the inscription of Sahure cited above calls him only *sꜣḥ.w-rᶜ zꜣ-rᶜ*, the title *zꜣ-rᶜ* being the only term present serving to identify the king as such.

[24] Similar, E. Winter 1957 "Zur Deutung der Sonnenheiligtümer der 5. Dynastie" in WZKM 54, 222.

[25] For citations, see K. Sethe 1889 "Die Heiligthümer des Reᶜ im alten Reich" in ZÄS 27, 111, and Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981, 168–169.

[26] Despite the powerful solar connection, it is important to recognize that these were not simply temples devoted exclusively to the sun god, as Winter 1957, 228 observes. In the Annals Stone mention is made of *nṯr.w nḫn-rᶜ*, "the gods of the Fortress of Re" (Urk I 241,6), and so there can be no surprise that *ḥw.t-ḥr sḫ.t-rᶜ* "Hathor of the Field of Re" (Urk I 244,5) is mentioned a breath before mentioning *rᶜ sḫ.t-rᶜ* "Re of the Field of Re" (Urk I 244,7) in the Annals, and even a *ḥm-nṯr-ḥr nḫn-rᶜ* "god-servant of Horus of the Fortress of Re" (A. Mariette, Les Mastabas de l'ancien empire. Frag-

in Dynasty 5 serves to suggest that the significance of the sun god was indeed reaching into new dimensions.

But to precisely fix this significance within the context of history is difficult, because the so-called "Harmakhis temple," built at the feet of the Giza sphinx during the reign of Khufu or Khafre, is understood by many to itself be a sun temple[27]. If this surmise is correct, then the sun cult was already intimately bound up with the king and his mortuary monuments well before Dynasty 5. But this is only a variation of the conclusion drawn above.

To turn to the Dynasty 5 sun temples themselves, the connections between them and the pyramids are so strong so as to suggest that the two were akin in function: officials and priests in the sun temples tended also to be priests in the pyramids of their associated kings[28]; and the sun temples are positioned on the western edge of the desert, like the pyramids and in close proximity to them[29]; and, while divine temples of the Old Kingdom were apparently built of mud-brick, the sun temples, like the pyramids, were built of stone[30]. Since the sun temples were tightly linked to the pyramids in situation and in practical affairs, it is no big step to go on to regard them as monuments of significance to the next life[31] – as mortuary monuments, or, better said, "Königsdenkmäler," the term applied them by Winter[32].

As fully justifiable as the term "sun temple" is, this other term "royal monument" is also much justified, not only for the connections mentioned just now, but also because of the inscriptional evidence, especially the Sed festival fragments from Niuserre's sun temple[33]. Having to do with features of the royal cult extending back at least to predynastic times[34], these serve to bind monument and associated king to ancestral traditions of kingship. Thus linking a Dynasty 5 king to past kings, these reliefs serve in part as proclamation of legitimacy[35] through

ment du dernier ouvrage, Paris 1889, 200) is documented. Strictly speaking, then, it was not just the sun god who was worshipped in these temples.

[27] For example, R. Stadelmann 1984 "Sonnenheiligtum" in LÄ V, 1096; D. Arnold, Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst, Zürich 1994, 241 (in more detail, but without explicitly identifying the remains as such, D. Arnold, Die Tempel Ägyptens. Götterwohnungen. Baudenkmäler. Kultstätten, Zürich 1992, 201); and already Anthes 1971. Naturally, the direct identification of the nature of the temple's service is impossible, owing to its being plundered during the MK and to work done at the Sphinx in the NK, resulting in no finds from either the OK or MK; see H. Ricke 1970 "Der Harmachistempel des Chefren in Giseh" in BeiträgeBf 10, 32, who also makes note of the multiplicity of interpretations possible from this lack.

[28] Winter 1957, 227. Kaiser 1956, 105, estimates that over 3/4s of the 50 sun temple officials studied by him also served in royal mortuary cult. Administrative points of contact are indicated also by the Abusir papyri, as they record deliveries of provisions of the pyramid of Neferirkare from his sun temple, made twice daily by boat on a canal, as reported by I. E. S. Edwards, The Pyramids of Egypt, London 1993, 156.

[29] Kaiser 1956, 113, and Winter 1957, 222.

[30] Stadelmann, Die ägyptischen Pyramiden. Vom Ziegelbau zum Weltwunder, Mainz 1997(3), 163; Kaiser 1956, 114, with the same observation.

[31] The position expressed by Kaiser 1956, 113–116 (cited and accepted by W. Helck 1991 "Überlegungen zum Ausgang der 5. Dynastie" in MDAIK 47, 163).

[32] Winter 1957, 232, adopted by Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981, 154. Winter, in turn, took the term from H. Junker, Gîza III, Wien – Leipzig 1938, 66. Note, though, that Junker's discussion has different aims than those of Winter and Begelsbacher-Fischer.

[33] Which fragments provide a further connection between the sun temples and the pyramids, since Sed festival representations appear also in the decorative program of pyramids, as noted by M. Rochholz 1994 "Sedfest, Sonnenheiligtum und Pyramidenbezirk. Zur Deutung der Grabanlagen der Könige der 5. und 6. Dynastie" in R. Gundlach and M. Rochholz, eds., Ägyptische Tempel – Struktur, Funktion und Programm (HÄB 37), 255 and 259 n. 20 for some citations.

[34] As a scene from it is depicted on the Narmer mace-head; see J. E. Quibell, Hierakonpolis Part I (ERA 4), London 1989, pl. 26B.

[35] In this regard, note that the determinative shown for the earliest sun temples is identical to one of the most common determinatives for *iz* "tomb" (Sethe 1889, 112), illustrating that the original architectural form of the sun temple was in direct contact with the form of the tomb. Therefore one may see why Helck 1991, 163, proposes that the sun temple was the tomb of the solar ancestor. One may add that here also was a clear statement in stone concerning the reigning king's legitimacy, but such a statement could only have had significance within a culture which already accepted the

continuity with the past. This is not a clean break with tradition, but a re-invigoration of it.

All of these reasons combine to point to the correctness of perceiving these temples as "royal monuments," and in this their practical, political function may be seen in part to be an expression of legitimacy[36]. As such, a sun temple's practical purpose matched that of the pyramids, making up in innovative form for what the Dynasty 5 kings were perhaps economically incapable of accomplishing in size[37].

To tie all of this together, the contemporary evidence does not paint a clear picture of Dynasty 5 kings are being more solar in character than kings of Dynasty 4. Rather, the evidence permits one to frame more forcefully a viewpoint common to Kees[38], Anthes[39], and Edwards[40]: the sun god was already well established and of prime importance to the ideology of kingship in Dynasty 4. Thus, if pWestcar were to depict a rise to pre-eminence of this god in Dynasty 5, then we should have to reply that its depiction is not historically accurate.

To turn to pWestcar to see how well its little details match up to those in Old Kingdom documents, one finds it deviating from historical fact in at least two ways. First, it does not give a historically accurate account of when the first three kings of Dynasty 5 will appear. When Khufu in the story is told that three common children will rule Egypt, he becomes sad. To lighten his mood, the chief lector priest Djedi informs him that *kꜣ sꜣ-k kꜣ sꜣ-f kꜣ wʿ im-s* "First your son (will rule[41]), then his son, then one of them"[42]. At face value[43], this means that two

sun god as father of the king. (As to the striking architectural feature of the obelisk, it seems to have appeared as an original component only with the third sun temple, Neferirkare's, the earlier sun temples being modified thereafter; see Kaiser 1956, 109–111.)

[36] Here, the monuments are interpreted from the point of view of their place in respect to maintenance of social hierarchy, i.e. power and ideology, but this is not to say that they cannot also be understood as symbolic expressions pertinent to other dimensions of human experience, as they also can and should be.

[37] Adopting the view of G. Reisner, Mycerinus: The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza, Cambridge 1931, 254, as to the comparative degree of wealth of the kings of Dyn 5; from a different point of view, his assertion may be seen as complementary to the conclusions of N. Kanawati, The Egyptian Administration in the Old Kingdom, Warminster 1977, who would like to see a general tendency toward economic decline through the course of the OK. An alternative explanation for the inferior size (and quality) of post-Dyn 4 pyramids might be sought after in changes of taste or in some other undocumented phenomenon.

[38] See H. Kees, Der Götterglaube im alten Ägypten, Berlin 1983(5), 250. The evidence indicating a rise of the sun cult to him includes the compounding of royal names with Re beginning with Djedefre and Khafre, the advent of the title "Son of Re" with Khafre, the pWestcar birth-legend's characterization of the king as the bodily son of Re, the erection of sun temples near the Residence, as well as Snefru's Horus name of "Lord of Maat," elsewhere borne by Re and Ptah.

[39] See Anthes 1971, 56–57. With him, indications of a rise to prominence of the sun god are manifest both in Dyn 4 and 5: the title "Son of Re" in Dyn 4, the explicit connection between the sun god and kingship evident in the name *ḫʿ-f-rʿ* in Dyn 4, the creation of what Anthes takes to be a sun temple (the Harmakhis temple) in Dyn 4, and the appearance of the god Re-Harakhti in Dyn 5, plus the appearance of a priesthood of Re in Dyn 5. (Note that this priesthood is directly related to the sun temples; Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981, 152.)

[40] See Edwards 1993, 153. By the compounding of royal names with *rʿ* and by the Dyn 4 usage of the title "Son of Re," he infers that the cult of Re was already replacing "the more primitive cult of Atum in Heliopolis." (The latter point would be difficult to illustrate with contemporary evidence.)

[41] The usage of *kꜣ* seems elliptical; on it, Gardiner EG, p. 182 n. 4; L. Depuydt, Conjunction, Contiguity, Contingency, New York – Oxford 1993, 242 n. 50; O. El-Aguizy 1997 "The Particle *kꜣ* and Other Related Problematic Passages in Papyrus Westcar" in BIFAO 97, 163. From context, it is evident that rule is at issue.

[42] Westc. 9,14. H. Brunner, Die Geburt des Gottkönigs. Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos (ÄA 10), Wiesbaden 1986(2), 204, sees this statement as indicating that the author of pWestcar assumes as normal a throne-succession from father to bodily son, the ramification of Brunner's view being that the sons of Khufu are not sons of Re (according to the story), whereas the new kings will be. But this interpretation is not tenable by a close reading of the text, because later in it Isis suggests that a wonder be made for the children of Re *smi-n n [p]ꜣy-sn it rdi iw.t-n* "so that we might inform their father of the one who caused that we come" (Westc. 11,12). The one informed, the father, is the human priest *rʿ-wsr*: see Westc. 12,7–8, where he is told of the wonder which the gods ended up making. The one who caused that the gods come is Re: see Westc. 9,23, where he orders the gods to depart. In sum, Westc. 11,12, attributes the children to an earthly parent, whereas earlier (Westc.

kings will intervene between Khufu's reign and the first king of Dynasty 5. Meanwhile, however, an Old Kingdom inscription listing kings from Djedefre through Sahure[44] agrees with the New Kingdom Abydos kinglist[45] in number, sequence, and name. These show four kings between Khufu and the first king of Dynasty 5[46]; pWestcar shows two.

The second but most obvious deviation from historical fact involves the spellings of the names of two of the first three kings of Dynasty 5. There are enough points of contact to be sure that pWestcar's *wsr-r-f* "Usereref"[47] is in parallel to the historical *wsr-kꜣ-f* "Userkaf," and the same may be said for the third child of pWestcar, *kkw* "Keku"[48], whose name much varies from the historical *kꜣ-kꜣ-i* "Kakai"[49]. The alterations are easily understood as cases of artistic license[50]: then historical accuracy has been set aside for the sake of literary meaning, and, in so doing, the author sets his tale outside of historical time into a time out of time.

So one has deviation from historical facts in sequence of kings and in alteration of names[51]. One suspects by such significant variations that faithfulness to historical detail was not one of the author's aims. And this is of utmost importance from our perspective: from the particulars,

9,10), they are said to have the sun god as parent. Therefore Westc. 11,12, and 9,10, together show that, within the text, a king may at turns be regarded as having an earthly and then as having a divine father.

[43] A possibility is that the author intends the statement to be understood as a kind of synecdoche, with the two mentioned blood-successors standing for more than one each. In such a case, the historical consciousness of the work is yet sacrificed for the eloquent statement, strict accuracy set aside for beauty.

[44] Urk I 166,14–16: *nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-ḏd-f-rᶜ nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-ḫᶜ-f-rᶜ nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-mn-kꜣ.w-rᶜ nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-špss-kꜣ-f nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-wsr-kꜣ-f nb-imꜣḫ-ḫr-sꜣḥ.w-rᶜ* "Possessor of veneration with Djedefre; possessor of veneration with Khafre; possessor of veneration with Menkaure; possessor of veneration with Shepseskaf; possessor of veneration with Userkaf; possessor of veneration with Sahure." The order of this document agrees with a similar document (Urk I 166,6–9), except that this other names kings only from Khafre through Sahure.

[45] See J. von Beckerath, Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten (MÄS 46), Mainz 1997, 156.

[46] Manetho, so far as he may be untangled, has five kings between them.

[47] Westc. 10,9.

[48] Westc. 10,24.

[49] Besides these two royal names, the name of Hardjedef is altered from its OK writing of *ḥr-ḏd-f* to *ḥr-dd-f*, but the latter writing is a closely matching phonetic rendering which is, moreover, attested in other post-OK documents; see the citations at E. Brunner-Traut 1940 "Die Weisheitslehre des Djedef-Hor" in ZÄS 76,7. The names of the kings, on the other hand, especially *wsr-r-f*, cannot be taken as phonetic writings.

[50] As suggested to me in a personal communication by Janet Johnson.

[51] Details concerning Ruddjedet, the story's mother of the three new kings, do not add to the document's historical reliability, so long as one wishes to see a Khentikaus (I) as a maternal link between the dynasties (e.g. Altenmüller 1970). For, as has been confirmed by inscriptional finds of the Czech expedition to Abusir, the historical Khentikaus was the mother of no more than two kings, or, by the most recent interpretation of her titles, only one. See M. Verner 1980 "Die Königsmutter Chentkaus von Abusir und einige Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der 5. Dynastie" in SAK 8,259, for the transliteration of a graffito from an Abusir tomb dated at count 14, thus pertaining to Dyn 5 Djedkare or Wenis, or Dyn 6 Pepi I or Pepi II: *sḥḏ ḥm.w-kꜣ mw.t ni-sw.t bi.ti ni-sw.t bi.ti ḫnti-kꜣ.w-s idw.* Before the discovery of such dated evidence, it was conceivable that previously known examples of her singular title(s) reflected circumstances at the time of her death, before a third son of hers came to the throne (so Altenmüller 1970, 230). But, dated to a time decades after Khentikaus lived, the example cited shows Khentikaus yet represented as the mother of at most two kings. Note in this regard that the series *mw.t-ni-sw.t-bi.ti-ni-sw.t-bi.ti* (e.g. S. Hassan 1943 Excavations at Gîza, vol. iv, 16 fig. 2) is now again interpreted as "Mother of the King of UE and LE (holding office as) King of UE and LE" by M. Verner, Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids. Abusir, Praha 1994, 129, based especially upon new iconographic evidence from Abusir clearly showing Khentikaus with uraeus. To be precise, Verner's interpretation is based on new evidence, although it itself is not new, as his interpretation matches that of H. Junker 1932 "Die Grabungen der Universität Kairo auf dem Pyramidenfeld von Gîza" in MDAIK 3, 130–136. Until the finds and research of the Czech expedition, the preferred interpretation was Vikentiev's (recorded only at Junker 1932, 131): "Mother of Two Kings of UE and LE." Besides the number of kings born to Ruddjedet and Khentikaus respectively, there is a second, even more basic point of dissimilarity. Whereas it is possible to trace even names such as *wsr-r-f* and *kkw* back to their historical inspirations, it is not possible to connect the name *rwd-ḏd.t* with the name *ḫnti-kꜣ.w-s*, except by assumption.

one may induce that the work as a whole was not intended to be a historically reliable document.

As the historical reliability of pWestcar has just now been called into question, one may wonder whether the text itself has anything to give by way of answer. It does. In part of whole, the tale contains within itself three stories about magicians told to Khufu by his sons. At the end of each, the king provides a memoriam to the magician, saying, *iw mꜣ.n-i sp-f n(y) rḫ* "I have seen his deed of knowledge"[52]. But of course he has not actually seen any deeds; he has only been told about them. This distinction between actually witnessing an event and only hearing a report of an event is what a fourth son, Hardjedef, plays upon when it is his turn to tell a tale. Of this *rḫ.t n(yt) ntiw swꜣ [n] rḫ.n tw mꜣʿ.[wt] r grg.[w iw wn ḥr] ḥm-k m hꜣ.w-k ḏs-k* "knowledge of those of the past"[53], he says, "one can[not] learn of (their) truth as opposed to (their) falsehood. [But there is one under] Your Majesty in your own time"[54], someone who can perform wonders for Khufu right now. The sense of the passage is clear: the preceding brothers told stories about past magicians allegedly performing wonders, whereas Hardjedef will summon a magician to actually perform a wonder right before Khufu's eyes. Here and elsewhere the tale indeed shows itself to be "a narrative about true and false things"[55], for, casting into doubt the veracity of recounted events, pWestcar enters into self-reflexive questioning of its own veracity: how can we see that recounted events actually happened? By putting this conundrum on our plate, the text is not presenting itself as an authoritative account of the past, but exactly the reverse[56].

With this in mind, and recalling its artful alteration of the names of historical figures, there is good reason to approach it as a literary rather than a historical work.

Then one may consider its position within Egyptian literature. The device of having a wise commoner (*nḏs*[57]) making a prophecy before a Dynasty 4 king, and the content of the prophecy, that the new rulers of pWestcar are to be of humble origins[58], puts it in direct contact with the Prophecy of Neferti[59], a work likewise locat-

[52] Westc. 6,21, by which 4,16–17, and 1,16, may be restored.

[53] Lit. "those who have passed (on)."

[54] Westc. 6,23–24.

[55] R. B. Parkinson, The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940–1640 BC, Oxford 1997, 104. Beyond the present case, this tension between truth and falsehood receives further development in ironic imagery and action. The gods visiting Ruddjedet are in the guise of humble entertainers, (Westc. 9, 27–28: the gods go forth, *ir.n-sn ḫpr.w-sn m ḫ[n.ywt]* "having made their forms into (those of) [female musicians]") but their business is serious; they are to deliver babies from a woman in the pains of labor (Westc. 9,23–24). In contrast, the two chief lector priests appear before the pre-Dyn 5 kings in their professional offices, but their business is to entertain the kings. Gods doing serious business are cloaked in the office of frivolity. Priests in their official capacities appear before the king to amuse him with trivial performances of wonder.

[56] Similarly, R. B. Parkinson, "Teachings, Discourses and Tales" in S. Quirke, ed., Middle Kingdom Studies, New Malden 1991, 98.

[57] See Westc. 6,26: *iw wn nḏ[s]* ... "There is a commoner ...." and Neferti (KÄT 3) IIc: *nḏs pw* ... "He is a commoner ...."

[58] Another point of contact is in the characterization of Snefru, who in both cases is explicitly described as being in the pursuit of entertainment: Westc. 4,25–5,1 (cf. 4,22–23): [*iw dbn.n-i ʿ.t nb.t n(y)t pr-ni-sw.t*] *r* [*ḥḥy n-i s.t*] *qb.t* "[I have gone around every room of the palace, lph, seeking] recreation." In the Prophecy of Neferti, Snefru informs his courtiers that he has summoned them in order that they seek out someone *ḏd.ty-f(y) n-i nhy.w n(y) mdw.t nfr.t ṯs.w stp.w ḏꜣy ḥr n(y)* [*ḥm*]*-i n sḏm st* "who will tell me a few beautiful words, some choice sentences, so that My [Majesty] may be entertained through hearing it" (Neferti [KÄT 3] I 1–m). Yet another point of contact is one observed by G. Posener, Littérature et politique dans l'Égypte en la XIIe dynastie, Paris 1956, 29: within the fabric of each narrative is a prediction of an event to come, while within the fabric of real time this is a prediction anterior to the period in which the narrator lived. There are significant structural differences between the two works, however. One noted by Posener is that, in pWestcar, the prophetic account occupies a small portion of the work, whereas in Neferti, the prophecy dominates the text. A further significant difference is in the total content of the prohecies: in pWestcar, the prophecy deals only with the arrival of new kings, while Neferti prophecies extensively about the circumstances immediately prior to a new king's arrival.

[59] Already observed by J. Spiegel, "Göttergeschichten, Erzählungen, Märchen, Fabeln" in HdO

able in the Middle Kingdom milieu. Presumably[60] composed in the same era, the common presence of this device suggests that it appears in pWestcar precisely because of its contemporary appeal – for a goal of fiction is not only to teach, but also to please[61].

But fiction does teach, and so one would like to hunt down the text's message. It will be tied to the very device mentioned just now, for the crux of the text is in the birth and world-to-come of divine kings stemming from a common family[62].

Now, the significance of this crux cannot be found by interpreting pWestcar as showing the advent of a sun cult through the elevation of a new line of sun kings, for then the first three stories embedded in pWestcar might as well have been left out: what difference would it make to supposed sun kings if Nebka is perhaps[63] diverted from going to the temple of Ptah in the interests of being spectator to a secular wonder instead, or if Snefru is preoccupied with finding entertainment for himself[64], or if Khufu is portrayed as spending his time listening to idle tales?

Rather, if the story is to be read as a coherent whole[65], then how all[66] of the old kings are char-

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I/2[1], Leiden – Köln 1952[(1)], 131 with n. 1, with correspondences of content and style more fully detailed by E. Blumenthal 1982 "Die Prophezeiung des Neferti" in ZÄS 109, 19–21.

[60] The date of composition is usually situated in the MK, as by Jenni 1998, 115–117, and W. K. Simpson "King Cheops and the Magicians" in W. K. Simpson et al., The Literature of Ancient Egypt, New Haven – London 1977[(3)], 15, although G. Lefebvre, Romans et contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique, Paris 1949, 70, thinks an earlier date is possible, while S. Quirke, "Narrative Literature" in A. Loprieno, ed., Ancient Egyptian Literature (PdÄ 10), Leiden 1996, 271, thinks the Second Intermediate Period possible. In contrast, C. Barocas 1989 "Les contes du Papyrus Westcar" in BSAK 3, vol. 3, 129, on textual grounds sees its composition as not being before the NK.

[61] If *dulce et utile* is accepted as a universal of literature.

[62] As Assmann 1982, 29, has noted. In respect to the text's central event, it may be observed that H. Jenni 1998, 113–141, interprets the text by the assumption that the denotative sense of the text ("die Sinnebene") is to be pseudonymously and allonymously (see ibid., 119) found in specific historical affairs of Dyn 12, as when it is suggested that Djedi's re-attachment of the heads of three animals may represent Senwosret I's reconciliation with a hostile but "nicht genauer bestimmte Gruppe von Personen" (see ibid., 122–123): the text is interpreted wholesale as a kind of propagandistic roman à clef in what is ultimately another attempt to read history from fiction. But the sought-after explanatory effect of the assumption disintegrates, at least for me, when a connection is forced between the divine filiation of the common children of Ruddjedet and the coregency of the blood royal Senwosret I and his father (see ibid., 139, where the "Geburtsmythos" is described as serving "der Rechtfertigung der Einführung der Mitregentschaft"), for I see no similarity between the two states of affairs, but rather a sharp contrast: the point of the divine filiation in pWestcar is to explain the source of the legitimacy of those who did not have it by birth. Besides this, there are fundamental methodological considerations of the sort mentioned by S. Quirke 1990 (Review of A. Loprieno, Topos und Mimesis: zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur, Wiesbaden 1988) in DE 16,92, in regards to approaching Egyptian literature as works of propaganda. For example, the text of pWestcar is not securely dated to the reign of Senwosret I (see n. 60 above), thus rendering its particular political significance to that king problematic.

[63] So far as I can see from the very sparse remains, he is diverted. The second tale opens with a narrative description of the contents of the story: [*di-i sḏm ḥm*]-*k* [*b*]*i3.t ḫpr.t m rk it-k* [*nb*]-*k3 m3ʿ ḫrw w*[*ḏ*]*3-f r ḥw.t-nṯr* [*n*(*y*)*t pṯḥ*] [*nb*] *ʿnḫ t3.wy* "[Let me cause that] Your [Majesty hear] of a wonder which happened in the time of your father [Neb]ka, true of voice, when he set out to the temple [of Ptah, lord] of Life-of-the-Two-Lands" (Westc. 1,18–20). The Wonder (*bi3.t*) mentioned here as topic of the tale at last appears while the king is indeed setting out: after [*wḏ*]*3 pw* [*ir.*]*n ni-sw.t bi.ti* [*nb*]-*k3 m3ʿ ḫrw s* ///////// "the king of UE and LE [Neb]ka, true of voice, [set out] ////// " (3,17–18), Webainer comes before him (3,18–19) and says, *wḏ3 ḥm*[-*k*] *m3n-k t3* [*bi3.*]*t ḫpr*[*.t m*] *r*[*k*] *ḥm-k* "May [Your] Majesty set out so that you may see the [wonder] which has taken place [in] the time of Your Majesty" (Westc. 3,19–20). So, as I gather uncertainly from this heavily damaged story, it is about the wonder which happened as Nebka set out for the temple of Ptah. And when the wonder is mentioned, Nebka is in fact setting out (as I would believe, to the aforementioned temple), but he is asked to set out to see this wonder instead, which evidently he does (see Westc. 3,21–4,2).

[64] See above, n. 58.

[65] An approach also advocated by C. Barocas 1989, 125–128; Goedicke 1993, 24; and Jenni 1998, 114 and 117.

[66] By the same token, the significance of the new kings cannot be found only in contrasting them to Khufu, as this would still leave the previous tales without connection to the crux of the whole narrative. Compare this perspective to the view of Assmann

acterized has to be put in relation to the new line. The former are depicted as serving themselves through the pursuit of secular entertainment: to see how a wax crocodile swallowed up an adulterer[67], to be rowed about upon a lake by beautiful women[68], and to listen to tales about magicians[69]. In contrast to these self-interested pursuits, the first of the new kings is to be High Priest in Heliopolis[70], an indication that before becoming king he will be in divine service. This notion of service to deity receives full develop-

1982, 30; Brunner 1986, 205; Parkinson 1997, 104; and Gundlach 1998, 248. On a related matter, it is not clear to me that Snefru is being portrayed as a "good king" put in contrast to Khufu as one less so. To judge from Posener 1956, 12; D. Wildung, Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewußtsein ihrer Nachwelt (MÄS 17), Berlin 1969, 116; and S. Morenz 1971 "Traditionen um Cheops" in ZÄS 97, 114, (with them being followed by M. Baud 1998 "Une épithète de Rêdjedef et la prétendue tyrannie de Chéops. Études sur la statuaire de Rêdjedef, II" in BIFAO 98, 25 with n. 65), the evidence for the contrast would seem to reside principally in Snefru's calling Djadjaemankh *sn-i* "my brother" (Westc. 6,1) and Khufu's allegedly calling Djedi *bꜣk-i* "my servant" (Westc. 9,16). But the latter passage is problematic. If *bꜣk-i* is taken as a noun, then the remainder of the statement requires amendation for it to be intelligible: (perhaps) *bꜣk-i ꜣ.n(-i) st ḏs-i* "O my servant, myself I (would?) have travelled (to?) her." While the l. c. s. pronoun is elsewhere frequently susceptible to deletion, it is nowhere deleted in pWestcar, except perhaps in this passage alone. Also, taking it in this manner requires one to attribute a subjunctive rather than indicative value to the action indicated by the verb (because of the context in which the statement appears), but such a value for the *sḏm.n-f* is not known to me outside of this passage. If, on the other hand, *bꜣk-i* is taken as a verb, as by O. El-Aguizy 1997, 163, then the text need not be amended: (perhaps) *bꜣk-i ꜣ n-st ḏs-i* "I should carry out a *trip to her myself ...." But then *bꜣk* takes an infinitive as object, which would be a combination unknown to me from other sources. Also, though the 3. f. s. dative may be written as *n-st* in Ramesside documents (e.g. LES I p. 6, ll. 13–14: *i[w]-f ḥr ḏd n-s[t]* "and then he said to her ...."), such an instance is not known to me from before. In sum, there would appear to be no solution to the passage devoid of problems, yielding a situation in which its interpretation is ultimately uncertain, which entails that the basis for the supposed contrast is likewise uncertain. As for Snefru's referring to Djadjaemankh as *sn-i*, and this, then, being a manifestation of the king's "goodness," B. Gunn 1926 "Notes on Two Egyptian Kings" in JEA 12, 251, a long time ago adduced individual terms such as this one to paint a picture of the MK perception of Snefru as being an egalitarian ruler. But such terms of seeming egalitarianism ought to be considered within the contexts in which they appear. For example, at Neferti (KÄT 3) I i–j: *wn.in-sn ḥr ḫ.t-sn m-bꜣḥ ꜥ ḥm-f m wḥm-ꜥ ḏd[.in] ḥm-f n-sn rḥ.w* "Then they (the courtiers) were upon their bellies again before His Majesty, lph, and then His Majesty, lph, said to them, 'O comrades, ....'" Addressing prostrate courtiers as "comrades" – there is perhaps no irony more superbly rendered in all Egyptian literature.

[67] That the crocodile fills itself with the adulterous commoner seems to be the sense of Westc. 3,14: thrown into the water after the commoner, a wax crocodile grows into a real one, and *ꜥḥꜥ.n mḥ.n-f m pꜣ nḏs* "It was filled with the fellow." Asked to come see a wonder, Nebka is present when the crocodile later comes forth from the water (3,22–23) and Webainer turns it back into wax (4,2–3).

[68] See Westc. 5,13–14. One could go more deeply into this scene to see that serious ritual for Hathor is being parodied, as suggested in passing by Parkinson 1997, 103–104, and by P. Derchain 1969 "Snéfrou et les rameuses" in RdE 21, 22–23. Importantly, the latter draws a close parallel between Snefru and his rowers and images of Re in a bark with Hathor, an image played upon in such a way so as to justify the ousting of the old line. Derchain thus seems to induce an interpretation which anticipates my own position, and, to a certain degree, that of Goedicke 1993, 26, where it is held that Snefru is not "portrayed as the advocate of order and goodness," but that his deeds lack social consequence.

[69] For the severed heads, see Westc. 8,17–9,1.

[70] Westc. 9,11–12: *iw wr n-sn-imy r ir.t wr-mꜣ.w m iwnw* "The eldest of them will perform (the office of) High Priest in Heliopolis." As noted by Erman 1890, 55, informing Khufu that the eldest will be High Priest in Heliopolis serves to establish how the eldest will be in a position to bring to him *tn.w nꜣ n(y) [i]p.w[t] n(yw)t [wn].t n(y)t [ḏhwti]* "the number of the secret chambers of the sanctuary of Thoth" (Westc. 9,2), since that number is in a chest of flint *m ꜥ.t sip.ty rn-s m iwnw* "in a room in Heliopolis whose name is 'Reckoning'" (Westc. 9,5). (See E. Hornung 1973 "Die 'Kammern' des Thot-Heiligtumes" in ZÄS 100, 34–35, for his discussion of the sanctuary, flint, and the term *sip.ty*.) Note that, in pWestcar, Re is not connected with Heliopolis, but is instead explicitly connected to Sachbu (*sꜣ-ḫbw*); on this locality, see S. Sauneron 1950 "La Ville de *Sꜣḫbw*" in Kêmi 11, 63–72; J. Monnet 1954 "Nouveaux documents reliefs à l'Horus-Rê de Sakhebou" in Kêmi 13, 28–32; and G. Goyon 1979 "Est-ce enfin Sakhebou?" in BdE 81 (Fs Sauneron) 43–50. And note that, according to the line of development traced by Moursi 1972, 154, the title *mꜣ-wr* (its ancient order, by him) originally referred to seeing the king ("who sees the great one"), but by Dyn 3 referred to seeing "eine heliopolitanische Lokalgottheit (Atum, Iwnw-Pfeiler, Bnbn-Stein oder Rê)."

ment when Re tells Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, Heqat, and Chnum that for them the new kings will build temples, and that their altars will be endowed, their offering tables abundantly provided for, and their divine offerings multiplied – all by the new kings[71]. Thus, while no statement in the text promises a golden age for the sun cult[72], these promises show that there is to be a special relationship between the new kings and cult[73] in general, for proper service is promised to a multiplicity of gods, not just to one.

There is more. The contrast just mentioned is in parallel to the difference between the kinds of wonders performed by the priests as opposed to the one performed by the gods. With Nebka, Snefru, and Khufu, the wonders prepared by the priests are frivolous, unrelated to the business of the state – performed to vengefully settle a domestic dispute[74], performed to rescue the bauble of a royal mistress[75], and performed for the amusement of the king. In contrast, the single wonder for the new kings is of utmost seriousness: as the source of the new line's legitimacy is its filial relationship to the sun god, the wonder the gods prepare for the new kings is something which will demonstrate this relationship[76]:

Isis said to these gods,
"Why have we returned[77]
without making a wonder for the children,
so that we might inform their father[78] of the one who caused that we come[79]?"
They fashioned[80] three crowns of the lord, lph.[81]

With them, a wonder is not made for entertainment, but rather concerns the direction of the state: it is a divine proof of their legitimacy.

In sum, as literary meaning is created through difference, the point of the text emerges from the contrast drawn between the old line, frivolous and self-serving, and a new line, serious and properly in service to the gods[82]. Thus, if there is

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[71] Westc. 9,24–26:
*pꜣ ḫrd ꜣ nty m ḥ.t-s*
*nty r ir.t iꜣ.wt twy mnḫ.wt m tꜣ pn r ḏr-f*
*qd-sn rꜣ.w-pr.w-tn*
*sḏfꜣ-sn ḫꜣ.wt-tn*
*swꜣḏ.w-sn wḏḥ.w-tn*
*sꜥꜣy-sn ḥtp.w-nṯr-tn*
these three children who are in her womb
who will exercise this worthy office in this whole land,
that they may build your temples,
endow your altars,
abundantly provide your offering-tables,
and multiply your divine offerings.

[72] Contra Schott 1945, 17.

[73] So already A. Erman, Die Märchen des Papyrus Westcar, Berlin 1890, 20. (He continues, "die Königsfamilie vergass eben auch auf dem Throne nicht die Verehrung des Sonnengottes, die in ihrem Hause von Alters her erblich war. Es war ein frommes priesterliches Geschlecht und auch die Grossen ihres Hofes rühmen sich ja Priester an diesen königlichen Sonnentempeln gewesen zu sein.")

[74] The wife of the priest Webainer apparently has an affair with the commoner (Westc. 2,5–9), and apparently it is for the purposes of revenge for this that the priest seems to fashion a wax crocodile (2,22–24), which the priest's flunky then throws into the water after the commoner (3,12–13), whereupon the wax crocodile becomes a real one and apparently swallows the commoner (3,13–14).

[75] Westc. 6,7–10.

[76] Note well that neither their birth nor their filiation is described in the text as a *biꜣ.t* "wonder." Indeed, the gods must return after their conception and after their birth to make a *biꜣ.t*.

[77] Lit. "What are these things for which we are come."

[78] I.e. the priest *wsr-rꜥ*.

[79] I.e. Re.

[80] Lit. "bore" (*msi*), as is common with the production of cult images (e.g. already in the OK, Urk I 239,13), a choice of word denoting the production of an item, but here also connoting the real birthing recently done.

[81] Westc. 11,10–13:
*ꜥḥꜥ.n ḏd.n ꜣs.t n nn nṯr.w*
*pty nꜣ nt(y)t n iy.wyn r-s*
*nn ir.t biꜣ.t n nꜣ n(y) ḫrd.w*
*smi-n n [p]ꜣy-sn it rdi iw.t-n*
*ꜥḥꜥ.n ms.n-sn ḫꜥ ꜣ n(y) nb*

[82] Other contrasts may be drawn out, e.g. the contrastive associations of images of splendor. In the story of Nebka, the priest Webainer is in the possession of an object of *hbny* [*ḥr ḏꜥm.w*] "ebony [and electrum]" (Westc. 2,21–22) and Snefru's beauties are equipped with *wsr 20 n*(y) *hbn*[y] *bꜣk m nbw ḫmꜥ.wt iry m sqb bꜣk m ḏꜥm* "twenty ebony oars worked in gold, the grips thereof of seqeb-wood worked in electrum" (Westc. 5,7–9) and Khufu's son Hardjedef has a carrying chair of *hbny nbꜣ.w m ssnḏm* "ebony, (its) carrying poles of sesnedjem-wood" (Westc. 7,12–13). With each of the pre-Dyn 5 kings, precious substances are always the constituent elements of objects remote from the king – particularly modes of conveyance. In stark contrast, the imagery of finery associated with the Dyn 5 kings is entirely confined to their persons. With each, *nḫb.t*

to be a reason for the introduction of a new line of kings, then it may be found right in this opposition. The problem, a religious one, self-interest; its solution, piety.

In conclusion, so long as the text is approached as a coherent whole, its underlying point is not to give a historical account of the rise of a line of sun kings in Dynasty 5, which in any event took place already in Dynasty 4. Nor, for that matter, can it be reasonably said that the work was written conscientiously as a history, but the artistic play and themes of the work can indeed be appreciated when the text is approached for what it is – a literary work. And as such, its point matches what may be found in the Prophecy of Neferti: there is trouble in the state; change in rule resolves it. Possessing this theme, the tale would have appealed to an audience which was eager for such a change, and the theme's presence in the text may be understood in precisely this light – as a work more reflective of concerns of the time in which it was written[83] than of the mythical days of the Old Kingdom.

SUMMARY

As it has been claimed that pWestcar reflects the rise of a sun cult to prominence in Dynasty 5, this article begins by examining the evidence contemporary to Dynasty 4 and 5, and by this it is shown that the sun cult was already prominent in Dynasty 4, and that, therefore, if pWestcar depicted such a rise, then its depiction would be an ahistorical one. Next, evidence within pWestcar is compared to evidence from Dynasty 4 and 5 to show that, in at least two places, the author sacrificed historical accuracy for literary beauty, with the ramification that the work was not written as a conscientious history. Finally, the work is examined as a literary piece to see whether its meaning involved the presentation of an account of the rise of a sun cult in Dynasty 5, and it is found that, from a literary point of view, this is not the case. Rather, the work was intended to describe a situation where there is trouble in the state in respect to the attitude of its kings, but that piety – manifest in the devotion of a new royal line to cult in general – will resolve it. It is suggested that these points, which are painted through literary oppositions, had indirect inspiration in the social and cultural context of the time in which the work was written.

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*ꜥ.wt-f m nbw ꜥfn.t-f m ḫsbd mꜣꜥ* "the substance of his limbs was gold, his hair (lit. royal headdress) of true lapis lazuli" (Westc. 10,10–11); cf. 10,18–19; and 10,25–26). What comes out of this is the divine nature of the new kings: their brilliance is inherent to them; its glitter internal to them. On the precious materials of which a god's body consists, see E. Hornung, Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt. The One and the Many, Ithaca 1982, 134, with n. 83 for references. Note, however, that Brunner 1986, 200, interprets the precious substances as "exakte Beschreibung von kleinen goldenen Königsstatuen," which, by such an interpretation, may entail that the new kings were not precisely divine.

[83] Similar, Goedicke 1993, 35–6.