The Historicity of Papyrus Westcar
Hays, H.M.

Citation

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License: Leiden University Non-exclusive license
Downloaded from: https://hdl.handle.net/1887/16163

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).
An approach first explicitly evident in Meyer's monumental 1909 Geschichte des Al­
terrum1, Papyrus Westcar has been persistently*

* A version of this article was presented on 28 April 2000 at the University of California, Berkeley, at the 51st Annual Meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. It has benefited from comments made by John Brinkmann, Peter F. Doerner, Janet Johnson, and David O'Conner, though responsibility for the work remains mine.

1 E. Meyer, Geschichte des Altenamtes, vol. 1/2, Stuttgart-Berlin 1909, 206: He feels that, even if Westcar represents the first three kings of Dyn 5 as ingesters of the van god, this must reflect a later view; "aber trotzdem enthält diese Sage schon 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, Mächen und Wundern vermischt, 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 "völkisch Leben," but "sie kau und muß auch kritisch als eine Quelle für die geschichtlichen Tatsachen genutzt werden," with the points following. There is no doubt 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.

Nevertheless the story evidently reflects elements of the "geschichtlichen Leben," but "sie kann und muß kritisch als eine Quelle für die geschichtlichen Tatsachen genutzt werden." 2

2 See H. Goedicke 1993, "Thoughts about the Westcar," in Ägyptologische Zeitschrift 79, 120, 32. 3

An approach first explicitly evident in Meyer's monumental 1909 Geschichte des Al·
terrum1, Papyrus Westcar has been persistently*

* A version of this article was presented on 28 April 2000 at the University of California, Berkeley, at the 51st Annual Meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. It has benefited from comments made by John Brinkmann, Peter F. Doerner, Janet Johnson, and David O'Conner, though responsibility for the work remains mine.

1 E. Meyer, Geschichte des Altenamtes, vol. 1/2, Stuttgart-Berlin 1909, 206: He feels that, even if Westcar represents the first three kings of Dyn 5 as ingesters of the van god, this must reflect a later view; "aber trotzdem enthält diese Sage schon 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, Mächen und Wundern vermischt, 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 "völkisch Leben," but "sie kau und muß auch kritisch als eine Quelle für die geschichtlichen Tatsachen genutzt wer·
den." A world turns on the word "kritisch": 2

2 See S. Schott, Mythe und Mythenbildung im Alten Ägypten (UGAA 15), Leipzig 1945, 15, citing Meyer. Others include but are not limited to: E. Otto, Ägypten. Der Weg des Pharaonenreiches, Stuttgart-Berlin 1923, esp. 70-77.

In these Erzählungen [der volkstümlichen Literatur] sind die geschichtlichen Tatsachen noch erkennbar; aber sie sind zu Volkssagen geworden und mit populären Stoffen, Mächen und Wundern vermischt, 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 "völkisch Leben," but "sie kau und muß auch kritisch als eine Quelle für die geschichtlichen Tatsachen genutzt werden," with the points following. There is no doubt 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.

Nevertheless the story evidently reflects elements of the "geschichtlichen Leben," but "sie kann und muß kritisch als eine Quelle für die geschichtlichen Tatsachen genutzt werden." 2
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 underestimated, 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" in Dynasty 5, and the advent of sun temples with Userkaf, first king of the same. These, then, are two phenomena worthy of inspection.

-- Apollon is the novel interpretation of H. J. H. 1998 "The Papyrus Westcar" in SAK 25, 113–141, who sees it directly reflecting historical circumstances of Dyn 12, specifically concerning the congency of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I on this, see n. 62 below.


-- The third king attested as bearing the title is Menkaure, with a cylinder seal reading: mn-krw-r<r zJ~rr {J~rr "Sahure, the Son of Re." After him, the next king of Dynasty 5 attested bearing the honorific is Niuserre, as when he is called ni-wsr-rr' zJ~rr {J~rr "Niuserre, son of Re, beloved of the gods every day".

With these two cases, one notes how zJ~rr does not appear before the king’s name, but is appended to it as an appositive. 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 sJ-w-r<zJ~rr "Sahure, the Son of Re." After him, the next king of Dynasty 5 attested bearing the honorific is Niuserre, as when he is called ni-wsr-rr' zJ~rr {J~rr "Niuserre, son of Re, beloved of

comparable data from Dyn 6, it is simply impossible for the Dyn 5 entries to show change.

-- See H. W. Müller 1964 "Der Gute Gott Rad ef, Sohn des Re" in ZAS 91, 134 and pl. 111, 3.

-- Reading transposition of the tall vertical sign s; see the NK writings shown at Wh 257.

-- CG 15 = LdR 89–90 (XVIII A/8). Although he dates this item to Dyn 4 for the Cairo catalog (see L. Borchart, Statuen und Statuetten von Konigen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo Ne 1-1294, I, Berlin 1911, 16), Borchart had earlier concluded that it was stylistically, and orthographically, a "Pseudo-a. Re. Namestitel '50hn des Re' verbindet die Konige in neuer Weise mit dem Schöpfer und Herrn der Welt."

-- Days 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 1906. The reconstruction was secured through comparison of the fragments is an inscription coming from one of a pair of diorite statues of Khafre, calling him hJ-w-r<zJ~rr nb-h<pt{J~rr "Horus Userkaf Khafre, the good Horus, the good god, the Son of Re, lord of appearances." The third king attested as bearing the title is Menkaure, with a cylinder seal reading: mn-krw-r< zJ~rr {J~rr "Menkaure, Son of Re, beloved of the gods every day".

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 1906. The reconstruction was secured through comparison of the fragments is an inscription coming from one of a pair of diorite statues of Khafre, calling him hJ-w-r<zJ~rr nb-h<pt{J~rr "Horus Userkaf Khafre, the good Horus, the good god, the Son of Re, lord of appearances." The third king attested as bearing the title is Menkaure, with a cylinder seal reading: mn-krw-r< zJ~rr {J~rr "Menkaure, Son of Re, beloved of

---
Wadjit\(^1\). After Sahure and Niuserre, to my knowledge the title does not appear again until Izezi\(^2\) and Wenis, the last two kings of the dynasty, and two who did not build sun temples.

The pattern of inscription is illuminating: of the six kings believed to have built sun temples\(^3\), only Sahure\(^4\) and Niuserre\(^5\) are attested as "sons of Re\(^6\)" which suggests that the phenomenon "Son of Re\(^7\)" was not directly connected to the sun temples. Moreover, the hono-

"Fortress of Re\(^8\)" are the names of structures 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\(^9\).

With the king designated as king through being called son of the sun god\(^10\), 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\(^11\), because the names of the structures in question are uniformly constructed with the element r'\(^12\); thus nbn-r'\(^13\) "Fortress of Re\(^14\)", z3-r'\(^15\) "Field of Re\(^16\)" and so on. The arrival of new monuments with an explicit solar connection\(^17\).

\(^2\) See A. H. Gardiner and T. Eric Peet, The Inscriptions of Sinait, London 1932\(^18\), pl. 6 (and review Urk 1,34, 2).

\(^3\) Although both H. Müller 1938, 70, and J. von Beckerath, Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen (MAS 49), Mauer 1999\(^19\), 26, with n. 2, question the certainty of dating of one attestation of Izezi with z3-r', perhaps stemming from the MK, there remains another one; see H. Müller 1938, 70 fig. 108.

\(^4\) Five of the six documented sun temples may be associated with specific kings, and the assignment of the sixth is debatable; see W. Kaiser 1971 "Zu den Sonnenheiligten der 5. Dynastie" in MDAIK 14, 105–106.

\(^5\) As at Uruk I 1,69, 8.

\(^6\) As at Uruk I 1,53, 18–54, 2.

\(^7\) 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 r' – a practice exclusive to members of the royal family before the transition to Dyn 5. For the social distribution of r'-names in Dyn 4, see B. Begelsbacher-Fischer, Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des Alten Reiches im Spiegel der Königsnamen, in 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 Beiträgerb 12, 56, also points to the compounding of royal names with r', especially r'just-r', 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 r'. Relevant also to the status of the sun god in Dyn 4 are the names of royal estates compounded with r', e.g. mr-r'-bw-fr-w (Urk 4,165, and 171–172).
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 Khafu or Khafre, is understood by many to itself be a sun temple. 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 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; and the sun temples are positioned on the western edge of the desert, like the pyramids in close proximity to them; and, while divine temples of the Old Kingdom were apparently built of mud-brick, the sun temples, like the pyramids, were built of stone. 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 — as mortuary monuments, or, better said, "Königskultstätte," the term applied them by Winter.

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 Nisutene's sun temple. Having to do with features of the royal cult extending back at least to predynastic times, these serve to bind monument and associated king to ancestral traditions of kingship. Thus linking a Dynasty 5 king to past kings, these relics serve in part as proclamation of legitimacy through...
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. 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.

To tie all of this together, the contemporary evidence does not paint a clear picture of Dynasty 5 kings being more solar in character than kings of Dynasty 4. Rather, the evidence permits one to frame more forcefully a viewpoint common to Kees, Andrews, and Ed wards: the sun god as father of the king. (As to the staking 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.)

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.

Adopting the view of G. Reisner, Mycenae: The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza, Cambridge 1931, 254, as to the comparative degree of wealth of the kings of Dynasty 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, Warnemünde 1977, who would like to see a general tendency toward economic decline through the course of the Old Kingdom. An alternative explanation for the inferior size (and quality) of post-Dynasty 4 pyramids might be sought after in changes of taste or in some other undocumented phenomenon.

To turn to pWestcar to see how well its little temple in Dynasty 4, and the appearance of the god Re-Harakhti in Dynasty 5, plus the appearance of a priesthood of Re in Dynasty 5. (Note that this priesthood is directly related to the sun temples; Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981, 152.)

As Edwards 1993, 153, by the compounding of royal names with Re and by the Dynasty 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.)

The usage of k3 s s5 implies "appellative; on A. Gardiner EG, p. 182 n. 4; L. Delpeut, Conjunction, Contiguity, Contingency, New York - Oxford 1993, 242 n. 50; O. El-Aguizy 1997 "The Particle k3 and Other Relative Pronominal Expressions in Papyrus Westcar" in BIFAO 97, 163. From context, it is evident that rule is at issue.

Wente, 9,14. H. Brunner, Die Geburt des Gerbildes. Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos (AA 10, Wiesbaden 1986), 204, states this as indicating that the author of pWestcar assumes as normal a throne-succession from father to father as the sun god. The one who caused that we come is Re: see Westc. 9, 23, where he commands his children to rule Egypt, he becomes sad. To lighten his mood, the chief lector priest Djedi informs him that k3 k s s5 k3 k "First your son (will rule)", then his son, then one of them." At face value, this means that two...
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 agrees with the New Kingdom Abydos kings in number, sequence, and name. These show four kings between Khufu and the first king of Dynasty 5; 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" is in parallel to the historical wsr-k3yf "Userkaf," and the same may be said for the third child of pWestcar, kw "Kekau," whose name much varies from the historical k3k:h. "Kakau." The alterations are easily understood as cases of artistic license: 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. 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, historical reliability, so long as one wishes to see a Khentkaus (II) 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 Khentkaus was the mother of no more than two kings, or, by the most recent interpretation of her titles, only one. See M. Verkerk 1980 "Die Königmutter Chentkaus von Abusir und einige Be merkungen zur Geschichte der 5. Dynastie" in SAK 8, 235, for the transliteration of a graffito from an Abusir tomb dated at count 14, thus pertaining to Dyn 5 Djedefra or Wen. But, in Dyn 6 Pepi I or Pepi II: shd hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf. The order of this document agrees with a similar document (Urk 1166, 6-9), except that this document's counting is, moreover, attested in other inscriptions, it is not possible to connect the name shd-k3yf back to their historical inspirations, it is not possible to connect the name shd-k3yf with the name k3k:h-w, except by assumption.

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

Details concerning Raddjedet, 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 Khentkaus (II) 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 Khentkaus was the mother of no more than two kings, or, by the most recent interpretation of her titles, only one. See M. Verkerk 1980 "Die Königmutter Chentkaus von Abusir und einige Be merkungen zur Geschichte der 5. Dynastie" in SAK 8, 235, for the transliteration of a graffito from an Abusir tomb dated at count 14, thus pertaining to Dyn 5 Djedefra or Wen. But, in Dyn 6 Pepi I or Pepi II: shd hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf hnw-k3yf. The order of this document agrees with a similar document (Urk 1166, 6-9), except that this document's counting is, moreover, attested in other inscriptions, it is not possible to connect the name shd-k3yf back to their historical inspirations, it is not possible to connect the name shd-k3yf with the name k3k:h-w, 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 memorial to the magician, saying, \( lv m.n.l \ apy n(r) \) r1 “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 one that a fourth son, Hardjedef, plays upon when it is his turn to tell a tale. Of this r1 \( m(r) \) ntw \[ w\] r2 \( r)n tw m[r]w3, r(3) c 4 geg \( [w\) lw \( w\) n(y)t \( b\)k m h.l-wk g\(\)k n4 “knowledge of those of the past”52, he says, “one can[n]o[!] learn of (their) truth as opposed to (their) false­hood. [But there is one und]er Your Majesty in your own time”52, 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”52, for, casting into doubt the

52 Westc; 6,23, by which 4,16-17, and 1,16, may be restored.


One noted by Posener is that, in "events, however. One noted by Posener is that, in pWestcar, the prophetic account occupies a small por­tion of the work, whereas in Neferti, the prophecy occupies a large portion of the text. This is because the new rulers of pWestcar are to be of humble origins52, puts in direct contact with the Prophecy of Neferti52, a work likewise locat­ed before the king to amuse him with trivial per­formances of wonder.

For the purposes of this study, the text is not presented as an authoritative account of the past, but exactly the reverse. 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 (nfrj) 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 origins52, puts in direct contact with the Prophecy of Neferti52, a work likewise locat­ed in relation of ancient Egyptian Prophecies 1940–1600 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 “having made their forms into (those of) female musicians”) but their business is serious; they are in the guise of humble entertainers, Westc. 9, 22–23: the gods go forth, r.i-n sm fpr-w-s n m [h.\( y\)w]l “[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 (Weste. 9, 22–23). In contrast, the two chief lector priests appear before the pre-Dynasty 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

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 a historically reliable document, but rather as a literary work.

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 memorial to the magician, saying, \( lv m.n.l \ apy n(r) \) r1 “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 one that a fourth son, Hardjedef, plays upon when it is his turn to tell a tale. Of this r1 \( m(r) \) ntw \[ w\] r2 \( r)n tw m[r]w3, r(3) c 4 geg \( [w\) lw \( w\) n(y)t \( b\)k m h.l-wk g\(\)k n4 “knowledge of those of the past”52, he says, “one can[n]o[!] learn of (their) truth as opposed to (their) false­hood. [But there is one und]er Your Majesty in your own time”52, 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”52, for, casting into doubt the
able in the Middle Kingdom milieu. Presumably\(^6\) composed in the same era, the common presence of this device suggests that it appears in pWestcar precisely because of its contemporaneity appeal — for a goal of fiction is not only to teach, but also to please\(^7\).

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\(^8\).


\(^2\) If akh et akh is accepted as a universal of literature, then how all\(^9\) of the old kings are char-

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 diverted from going to the temple of Ptah in the interests of being spectator to a secular wonder instead, or if Sheep is preoccupied with finding entertainment for himself\(^10\), 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, then how all\(^9\) of the old kings are char-

\(^3\) 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 decorative sense of the text ("die Szenehern") is to be poetically and allonymously (see ibid., 119) found in specific historical affairs of Dyn 12, as when it is suggested that Dedic'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 propaganda; roman à clef is 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 Re and Horemheb and 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 diverted from going to the temple of Ptah in the interests of being spectator to a secular wonder instead, 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, then how all\(^9\) of the old kings are char-

\(^4\) 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 decorative sense of the text ("die Szenehern") is to be poetically and allonymously (see ibid., 119) found in specific historical affairs of Dyn 12, as when it is suggested that Dedic'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 propaganda; roman à clef is 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 Re and Horemheb and 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 diverted from going to the temple of Ptah in the interests of being spectator to a secular wonder instead, 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, then how all\(^9\) of the old kings are char-

\(^5\) 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 decorative sense of the text ("die Szenehern") is to be poetically and allonymously (see ibid., 119) found in specific historical affairs of Dyn 12, as when it is suggested that Dedic'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 propaganda; roman à clef is 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 Re and Horemheb and 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 diverted from going to the temple of Ptah in the interests of being spectator to a secular wonder instead, 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, then how all\(^9\) of the old kings are char-

\(^6\) An approach also advocated by C. Barocas 1989, 125–128; Grolez 1993, 24; and Jenni 1998, 114 and 117.

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...
acertized has to be put in relation to the new line. The former are depicted as serving themselves through the pursuit of secular entertain-

1982, 50; Bruenner 1865, 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 Künste im Bewusstsein ihrer Nachwelt (MÄS 17), Berlin 1959, 116; and S. Morenz 1971 "Traditionen um: "Theseo" in ZÄS 97, 114, (with them being followed by M. Baud 1998 "Eine epiphaneit der Rechedef und die präzise tyranne de Chéops. Études sur la statuaire de Rechedef, II" in BIFAO 98, 25 with n. 65), the evidence for the contrast would seem to reside principally in Snefrus calling Dja'djaj "my servant" (Westc. 6, 1) and Khufus allegedly calling Dja'djaj "my servant" (Westc. 9, 16). But the latter passage is problematique. If bkt-l is taken as a noun, then the remainder of the statement requires amendment for it to be ineradicable: perhaps bkt-l n-ct st dtb "O my servant, myself I (would) have travelled (to) her." While the c. s. pronoun is elsewhere frequently sus-
cceptible to deletion, it is nowhere deleted in Wnetesc, except perhaps in this passage alone. Also, taking it in this manner requires one to attribute a subjective 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 sm.f.n.f is not known to me outside of this passage. If, on the other hand, bkt-l is taken as a verb, as by O. El-Aguisy 1967, 163, then the text need not be amended: (perhaps) bkt-l n- st dtb "I should carry out a trip to her myself . . ."

But then bkt takes an infinitive as object, which would be a combination unknown to me from other sources. Also, though the 3. f. s. darve may be written as nrn- in Rameside documents (cf. e.g. LES I p. 6, ll. 13–14: frw rd nt nfr-l and then be 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 Snefrus reference in Dja'djajam as prnt, and then, this, being a manifestation of the kings' "goodness," B. Goyon 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 egipitan rule. But some terms of seeming egalitarianism ought to be considered within the contexts in which they appear. For example, at Neferi (KAT 3) i- i-wn ntnk h3.m sn bx.t nwm.f nwm.w (If. 34 r iwmw def dtb fr-w nfr-n wfr). "Then they (the courtiers) were upon their bellies again before Hn Majesty, jph, and then Hn Majesty, jph, said to them, "O comrades . . ." Addressing prostrate courtiers as "comrades" - there is perhaps no innue more sedulously rendered in all Egyptian literature. To see how a wax crocodile swallowed up an adulterer67, to be rowed about upon a lake by beautiful women68, and to listen to tales about magicians. In contrast to these self-interested pursuits, the first of the new kings is to be High Priest in Heliopolis69, an indication that before becoming king he will be in divine service. This notion of service to deity receives full develop-

67 That the crocodile fills itself with the adulterous commoner seems to be the sense of Weste. 3, 14: thrown into the water after the commoner, a wax crocodile grows into a real one, and "if n. mh. nfr m pl njw "It was filled with the fellow." asked to come see a wonder, Nebka in present when the crocodile later comes forth from the water (5, 25–23) and Webainer turns it back into wax (4, 3–5).

68 See Weste. 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 "Snefru et les ramassees" in RdE 21, 22–23. Importantly, the latter draws a close parallel between Snefru and his.rowers and images of Be as a bark with Hathor, an image played upon in such a way so as to justify the outing of the old line. Derchain thus seems to indicate an inter-

prestation which anticipates my own position, and, to a certain degree, that of Goedicke 1993, 26, where it is held that Snefru is out "portrayed as the advocate of order and goodness," but that his deeds lack social consequence.

69 For the severed heads, see Weste. 8, 17–9. 1.
ment when Re told 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. Thus, while no statement in the text promises a golden age for the sun cult, these promises show that there is to be a special relationship between the new kings and cult 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, performed to rescue the bauble of a royal mistress, 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:

Isis said to these gods, 'Why have we returned without making a wonder for the children, so that we might inform their father of the one who caused that we come?'

They fashioned three crowns of the lord.

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. Thus, if there is

---

Westc. 9.24-26:

plied i sm n h b-f
any r i sm tw th m b-n r p-f
qnt n r-w-pr w-n
sfl-n b-w-n
zml-w m-w n
f'f-f wp-nrp-n

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.

Westc. 11.10-13:

m b-f 20
m b-f 20
m b-f 20

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 hbn2y [br rjr m w] "ebony [and electrum]" (Westc. 2,21-22) and Snefru's beauties are equipped with m b-f 20 "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 hbn2y nbj.w m ssnrjm "ebony, (its) carrying poles of sesnedjem-wood" (Westc. 7,12-13). With those 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, mh'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, selfish; 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 written83 than of the mythical days of the Old Kingdom.

83 Similar, Goedicke 1993, 35–6.

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 contemporaneous 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.