

Hardship Teaches Storytelling: Two Great Societal Crises and New Narrative Styles on the Past in Pharaonic Egypt

A04 (Strand “Narrating Ideas”)

Summary

Creative play with lies began around 2000 BC, a surge in narrative during the Middle Bronze Age, alongside the birth of *belles lettres* and the beginnings of historiography in the ancient Nile Valley

- (1) Truth and exaggeration (Ankhtifi)
- (2) Fictionality as a space of possibility (*belles lettres*)
- (3) Source-reflective narrative

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1) Narrating the Messiah around 2100 BC

History writing in the narrower sense begins with a *myth transforming a real historical potentates into a messianic figures.

The narrative pattern is highly idiosyncratic; elevating the already traditional text type of self-presentation (‘autobiography’) to a unique narrative level.

2) The Beginning of a Novel Historiography in the 16th Century BC

King Kamose’s “historical” stelae offer royal ideological propaganda, but in the form of a novel type of historiography with narratological markers such as references to other sources or the embedding of oral speech. Furthermore, the role of chief propagandist Neshi and his pictorial staging deserve special attention.

