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العودة إلى الطرازات القديمة من العهود السابقة

Jochem Kahl

Archaismus
Archaïsme

Certain features of ancient Egyptian culture display a conscious return to bygone times. Texts, architecture, and works of art often referred to elements of the remote past. This revival of the past is known as "archaism," provided that there was a substantial gap in time between the model and the copy, and that the elements referred to had fallen out of use. Archaism appears to have been an elite phenomenon and is found in the royal as well as the (elite) non-royal sphere. It occurred during the Pharaonic Period, from at least the Old Kingdom onward, and was most obvious during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods.

تُظهر بعض العناصر من مصر القديمة عودة متعمدة إلى العهود السابقة، فأحياناً إستلهمت بعض العناصر القديمة من الكتابات والفن والعمارة وهذا مايعرف بالـ «عودة إلى العهود السابقة»، وذلك بشرط مرور وقت كافي بين الأصل والتقليد وطالما هذه العناصر لم تعد مستخدمة بهذا العصر. ويبدو أن هذا الاستلهام كان ظاهرة بطبقات علية القوم، كما ظهرت في الفن الرسمي الملكي وكذلك في الإطار الغير الملكي ولكن لعلية القوم. بدأ هذا النوع من التقليد بالفن منذ الدولة القديمة وإستمر على مر التاريخ الفرعوني، ولكن زاد وإنتشر أثناء عصر الإنتقال الثالث والعصر المتأخر.

A rchaism denotes a conscious return to past styles and models that have long been out of use. Archaism presupposes a substantial lapse of time between the model and the copy. Forms, types, and styles from earlier periods were imitated or emulated, although it was usually not intended that the models be copied so slavishly that future generations would believe the copies actually dated to an earlier era. Moreover, the recurrence to earlier forms does not necessarily imply an identification with earlier time periods. Archaism is but one of several mechanisms by which the ancient Egyptians drew upon their past; others include tradition, renaissance, restoration, usurpation (of works of art), reuse of building materials, *damnatio memoriae*, ancestor cults,

king lists, and reconstruction of historical events.

It is important to make a distinction between "copying" and true archaism. In ancient Egypt certain models were particularly esteemed and copied. The Pyramid Texts provided such a model, as did the texts from the tomb of 12th Dynasty nomarch Djefai-Hapi I in Assiut (Siut I), which were copied on monuments throughout Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Roman Period, such as we see in the tombs of Senenmut (TT 353) and Ankh-Hor (TT 414), and on Roman papyri from Tebtunis. However, in both aforementioned examples there was no gap in time between the model and the copies; these texts were frequently copied and recopied,

and thus constitute a continuous tradition rather than archaism.

Because it can be difficult, furthermore, to identify tradition and transmission in libraries, so-called archaisms might often turn out to be traditions: one has to examine in each particular case whether the use of certain previously attested elements constitutes archaism or tradition.

The term "archaism" poses possible complications in instances of the recurrence of former, rather than original, elements. Therefore, more precise distinctions are helpful. The term "archaizing" could be used to describe, for example, the 25th and 26th Dynasties, which borrowed, among other things, titles and styles of sculpture and relief from the Old through the New Kingdoms, whereas the term "archaistic" would apply, for instance, to the 29th and 30th Dynasties, which themselves may have used the archaizing 25th and 26th Dynasties as their models (Bothmer 1960: XXXVII).

Sphere of Archaism

Archaism occurs in a wide range of manifestations, including art (sculpture and relief), architecture, names (royal and non-royal), titles, literature, and writing. It was employed in the royal sphere (kings, queens, and the royal household) and in the non-royal, as well, where it seems to have been mostly restricted to the upper classes (priests, officials), although it was also practiced by individuals who had good relations with elite members of society.

Art (sculpture and relief). After the reunification of Egypt that ushered in the Middle Kingdom, we see examples of archaism in art from the reign of King Mentuhotep II, which breaks with the Theban artistic tradition and copies the Memphite Old Kingdom canon, adapting stylistic elements of that period (Freed 1997). Similarly, a sphinx of King Amenemhat II (Louvre A 23) is sculptured on the model of the Great Sphinx of Giza (Fay 1996). Globular wigs reappear on most of the surviving statues of both

queens and non-royal women dating from the 21st to 26th Dynasties, though they had been out of fashion since the 11th Dynasty (Fischer 1996: 117). The stela of King Ahmose from Abydos (Cairo CG 34002) harks of 11th Dynasty works of art (Morkot 2003: 95). Reliefs from Temple T in Kawa show King Taharqo as a sphinx trampling a Libyan enemy (figs. 1 and 2) while his wife and children look on, in a scene known as "the Libyan family." We see a similar family scene already depicted in the Old Kingdom temples of Sahura (fig. 3) and Niuserra at Abusir, as well as in the temples of Pepy I (fig. 4) and Pepy II at Saqqara (Leclant 1980). The gate from the palace of Apries at Memphis (figs. 5 and 6) bears similarities in design and execution to Old Kingdom and 12th Dynasty works of art (Kaiser 1987; Morkot 2003: 85). Additionally, garments represented on statues of Theban priestesses of the second century BCE imitate the pleated garments of priestesses of the late 18th and early19th Dynasties (Albersmeier 2002: 275).

Architecture. An especially clear example of archaism in ancient Egyptian architecture is the temple of 18th Dynasty Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, modeled after the temple of the 11th Dynasty ruler Mentuhotep II located in its immediate vicinity.

Names. During the Old Kingdom, and only rarely in the Middle Kingdom, personal (non-royal) names were followed by the "good name" (*rn nfr*), which expressed the characteristics of the owner and which appears to have been acquired some time after birth. This practice, which went out of use after the Middle Kingdom, became an archaism when it was introduced again in the 22nd Dynasty. Archaisms occur frequently in royal names, as rulers often incorporated, in their own nomenclature, the names of glorified predecessors (Kahl 2002); the Persian king Cambyses, for example, bore the name "Unifier of the Two Lands," a name already borne by Mentuhotep II.

Titles. Ancient titles were often reused. We find titles from the Old and Middle Kingdoms recurring during the Late Period (De
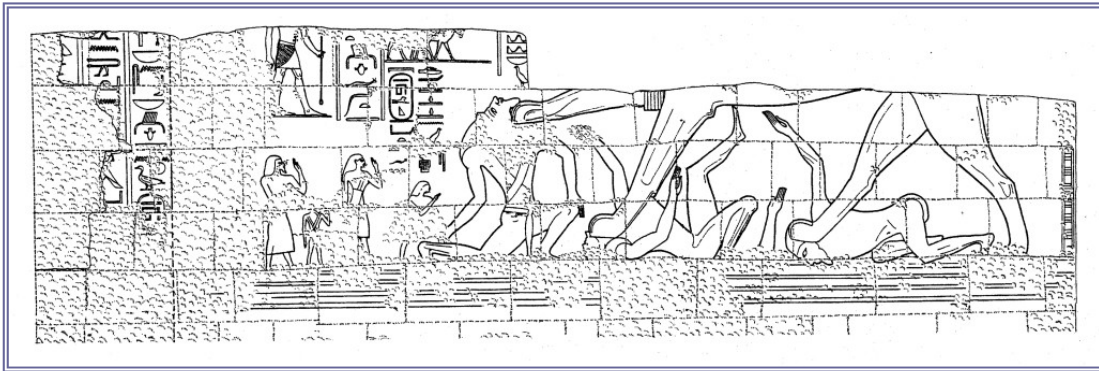
Figure 1. King Taharqo, represented as a sphinx, tramples a Libyan enemy while the Libyan's wife and children look on. Kawa, Temple T.
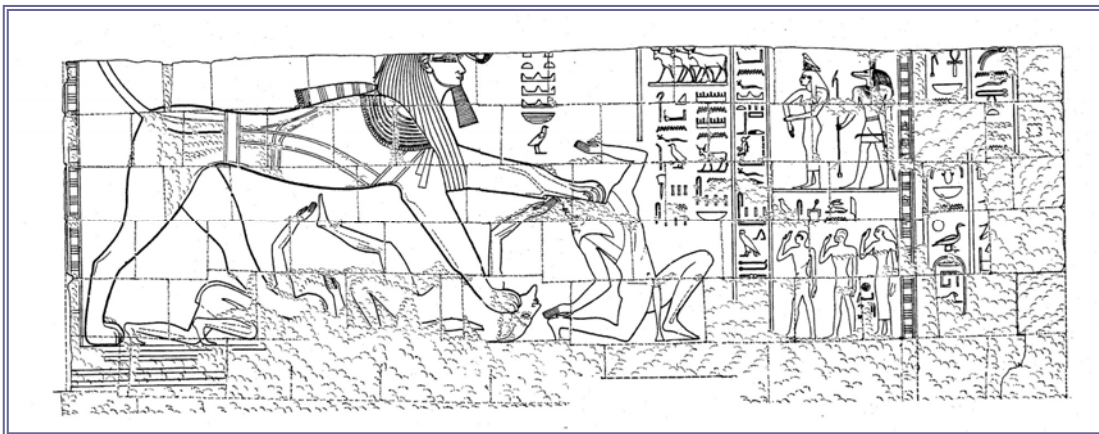

Figure 2. King Taharqo, represented as a sphinx, tramples a Libyan enemy while the Libyan's wife and children look on. Kawa, Temple T.

Meulenaere 1986: 601 - 602), and even Old Kingdom officials revived titles from the Early Dynastic Period (Helck 1954: 111 - 112).

Literature. Autobiographical formulae and epithets occurring in New Kingdom and Late Period tomb inscriptions are patterned after those from the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom—compare, for example, the autobiographical formulae in Siut III of the First Intermediate Period and in Theban Tombs 34 and 36 of the 26th Dynasty (see Kahl 1999: 241 - 246).

Writing. We find that hieratic characters of the 22nd Dynasty borrow forms that occurred in the 18th Dynasty, and hieratic characters of the Ptolemaic Period reflect those of the 21st Dynasty. Moreover, such recurrence implies

that older texts were studied and esteemed (Verhoeven 2001: 250 - 256).

Approaches to the Past

Libraries were presumably the principal means through which borrowings from earlier ages occurred. Libraries were affiliated with the "houses of life," where religious, magical, medical, and scientific writings were composed, copied, and stored. According to written sources, high officials and even kings consulted libraries in order to look through ancient writings kept there. It is worth noting that included in these writings were descriptions of works of art. The Abydos stela of King Neferhotep, for example, mentions that this ruler consulted ancient writings that contained illustrations and instructions for the
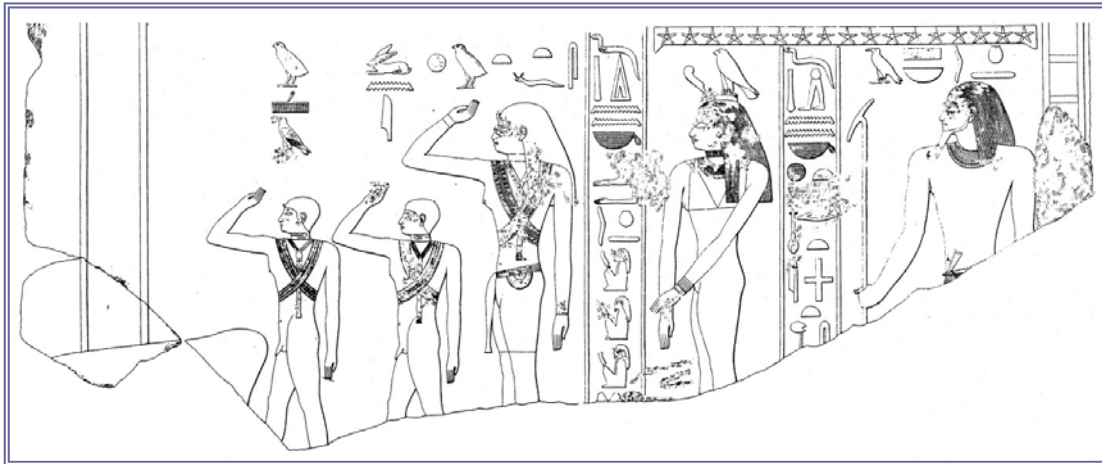
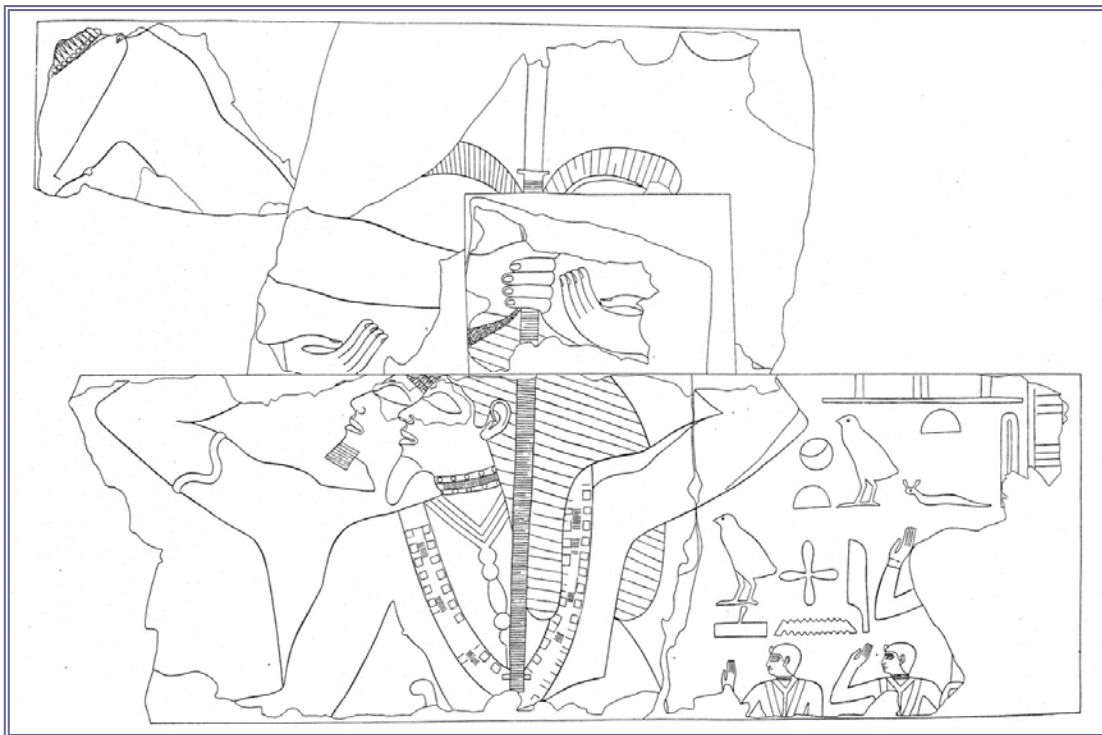Figure 3. "The Libyan Family," Temple of Sahura, Abusir.

Figure 4. "The Libyan Family" (bottom right corner), Temple of Pepy I, Saqqara.

fashioning of statues. Architectural plans and small three-dimensional models of buildings were also apparently stored in libraries.

A distinction must necessarily be made between what are referred to by Egyptologists as "patterns" and "Musterbücher" (pattern books). Patterns were designed for a specific purpose—such as a scene drawn on papyrus

to be copied upon a temple wall—regardless of whether they were actually used in the manner originally intended. "Musterbücher" were collections, or catalogs, of preexisting examples or templates available for multiple applications and intended for later excerpting, if necessary (Der Manuelian 1994: 55). We possess evidence for patterns (e.g., Roman copies of patterns for the First Intermediate

Figure 5. Gate from the Palace of Apries, Memphis, harking of the Old Kingdom and 12th Dynasty.
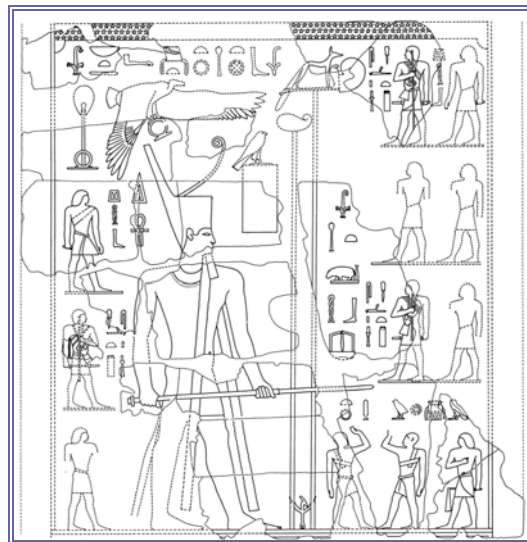

Figure 6. Gate from the Palace of Apries, Memphis, harking of the Old Kingdom and 12th Dynasty.

Period and Middle Kingdom tombs at Assiut were included in the library at Tebtunis; Osing 1998: 55 - 100). The existence of Musterbücher is, however, theoretical; no actual examples have as yet come to light.

The Egyptians also studied works of art and monuments. Written evidence attests that artisans traveled to study original works (e.g., Macadam 1949: 16, 21, and note 5). Physical evidence, in the form of late plaster casts of Old Kingdom reliefs from the Temple of Sahura in Abusir (fig. 7) and late square-grids drawn upon Old Kingdom reliefs from the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara (Firth and Quibell 1935: Vol. I: 5, 33 - 34; Vol. II: pls. 15 and 16), further confirms the study of original works from the past.

Motivations for Archaism

Archaism was employed by Egyptian rulers in order to legitimize their sovereignty. For example, rulers under political pressure could adopt the names of remote predecessors in order to emphasize their own legitimacy to reign. In their quest for prestige and social exclusivity (especially the demarcation against other social classes and foreigners) Theban officials copied texts from the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom,

harking back to a time period when officials were relatively independent and powerful. The desire to increase his authority and thus satisfy his striving for power was likely Middle Kingdom ruler Amenemhat II's motivation for the design of his sphinx, which refers—in a clear display of archaism—to the Great Sphinx of Giza. Political opposition provided yet another motivation. During the Ptolemaic Period, statues of Theban priestesses were rendered as an expression of the Egyptians' opposition to their Ptolemaic rulers.

Occurrence of Archaism

It is important to emphasize that in ancient Egypt the phenomenon known as "archaism" was a continuum—an inherent feature of the culture, detectable as early as the Old Kingdom. Although it reached its climax in the Late Period, specifically in the 26th Dynasty, already in the 18th Dynasty (under rulers Ahmose, Hatshepsut, and Thutmose III) and the 22nd Dynasty archaism had reached points of culmination. There currently exists no statistical analysis of the extent of archaism in ancient Egypt. However, in Bothmer's exhibition catalog (1960), only six out of 38 statues and reliefs of the 26th Dynasty are described as archaizing.

Figure 7. Late plaster casts of Old Kingdom reliefs from the Temple of Sahura, Abusir.

This corresponds to 15 percent. Less than five percent of the individuals known from the Theban area in the Late Period bore a "good name." Thus it would be incorrect to consider, as some scholars have (cf. the general overview given in Der Manuelian 1994), that archaism hallmarked a cultural revolution specific to the Late Period.

Patrons of Archaism

Archaism appears to have been employed by only a limited group of persons: kings and queens, the royal household, priests, and high officials, as well as individuals who had good relations with such elite members of society. The role of the librarians and scribes, and of the artisans who created the works in question, is unclear, as is the geographic expansion of the phenomenon of archaism. It can be supposed, however, that Thebes and perhaps Memphis were centers of archaism from the New Kingdom onward.

Favored Models

The Egyptians' own records—annals, king lists, literature, and Block Daressy, for example—attest to their awareness of the chronological sequence of their history. The particular elements of their past that they chose to archaize varied from dynasty to dynasty: the late 11th and early 12th Dynasties, for instance, favored features of the Old Kingdom; the 18th Dynasty preferred references to the Middle Kingdom, while the 22nd Dynasty harkened back to the 18th Dynasty (in particular, to the Thutmosids); the 25th and 26th Dynasties appear to have favored the Old Kingdom and the 12th and 18th Dynasties; Dynasty 30 tended to refer to the 26th Dynasty. Moreover, archaizing art did not necessarily reference a single period: archaizing reliefs and sculpture often have parallels in works of art from several earlier periods (see, for example, the tomb of Montuemhat: TT 34: Der Manuelian 1994: 7 - 10, 18, 28 - 51; Morkot 2003: 89 - 92). Certain geographical regions tended to emulate particular time periods. The Theban area, for example, focused on New Kingdom models, and the Memphite area on models from the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Bibliographic Notes

A comprehensive overview of previous research on archaism and on the question of "copying" can be found in the introduction and first chapter of Der Manuelian's work (1994), while his earlier article (1983) includes an index and annotated biography of Saite copies. Neureiter (1994) gives an instructive description of the various definitions of archaism and their origins, proposing—perhaps too one-sidedly—that the driving force behind archaism was the striving for social exclusivity. Russmann (2001) provides a short but representative overview of archaism in sculpture and relief. Morkot (2003) discusses archaizing features in sculpture and relief from the New Kingdom to the 26th Dynasty and examines the role of Thebes and Memphis in the referencing of elements from earlier periods. Kahl (1999) examines the textual transmission from Assiut to Thebes and gives a critical analysis of how to recognize archaism. The most recent overview is the catalog of a 2008 exhibition devoted specifically to the phenomenon of archaism (Tiradritti 2008). Discussions of the archaism of the 25th and 26th Dynasties can be found in Assmann (1996), Part 5, where the author discusses "Memory and Renewal: The Ethiopian and Saite Renaissance." Nagy (1973) focuses on the Saite Period. Articles on specific items include

Fay (1996), a case study of archaism featuring the Louvre Sphinx A 23 of King Amenemhat II, which refers to the Great Sphinx of Giza; Leclant's "La 'famille libyenne' au Temple Haut de Pépi Ier" (1980), which presents a perfect example of 25th Dynasty archaism; and Russmann (1973), which gives the author's observations on an early 26th Dynasty statue exemplifying archaizing features of Late Period statuary.

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Figure 1.   King Taharqo, represented as a sphinx, tramples a Libyan enemy while the Libyan's wife and children look on. Kawa, Temple T. (Macadam 1955: pl. IXa.)

Figure 2.   King Taharqo, represented as a sphinx, tramples a Libyan enemy while the Libyan's wife and children look on. Kawa, Temple T. (Macadam 1955: pl. IXa.)

Figure 3.   "The Libyan Family," Temple of Sahura, Abusir. (Borchardt 1913: pl. 1.)

Figure 4.   "The Libyan Family" (bottom right corner), Temple of Pepy I, Saqqara. (Leclant 1980: pl. 2.)

Figure 5.   Gate from the Palace of Apries, Memphis, harking of the Old Kingdom and 12th Dynasty. (Kaiser 1987: 152.)

Figure 6.   Gate from the Palace of Apries, Memphis, harking of the Old Kingdom and 12th Dynasty. (Kaiser 1987: 153.)

Figure 7.   Late plaster casts of Old Kingdom reliefs from the Temple of Sahura, Abusir. (Borchardt 1910: 105, fig. 130.)