

# Herodotus, Ancient Egypt and the West: The Use of Herodotus' Histories to Construct Ancient Egypt in the *Edinburgh Review* throughout the Nineteenth Century

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to identify how and why early antiquarians used Herodotus' *Histories*, specifically Book II, to interpret ancient Egyptian material and to construct a vision of ancient Egypt. The paper locates these motivations in articles from *Edinburgh Review*, a popular British periodical, that include both the terms "Egypt" and "Herodotus". What emerges in the *Review*, especially in the later part of the century, are treatments of Herodotus' texts that align with authors' disciplinary leanings. For classicists, Herodotus' Egypt was fundamentally intertwined with his account of the Persian Wars, and by extension, the broader imagined and Orientalizing opposition between the West and East. While treatment of Herodotus' Egypt was by no means monolithic through the entirety of the nineteenth century, this meaning projected onto his text was a key motivation for its continued use for some scholars, even as emerging archaeological evidence made sole reliance on his text less necessary.

## Keywords

Herodotus *Histories*; Herodotus Book II; *Edinburgh Review*; historiography; Orientalism; Egyptology; Philhellenism.

## Herodotus, Ancient Egypt and the West

In recent Egyptological scholarship, there has been a notable turn towards self-criticism, and more and more scholars are investigating why we have the Egyptology we do today. A key part of this self-examination involves returning to the beginnings of canonical, European Egyptology in the nineteenth century. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much early scholarship was situated in the biases and beliefs that scholars held during this period—often these beliefs remain implicitly in today's scholarship.<sup>1</sup> While this paper will not address these remnants directly, it is motivated by the need for a major reconsideration of Egyptological ideas. The first step in this is refamiliarising ourselves with the driving motivations and methods of early Egyptologists, one example being their reliance on classical authors to interpret archaeological evidence. In this paper, I seek to identify how

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<sup>1</sup> For more in-depth discussion of this, see Riggs, *Unwrapping*.



and why early antiquarians used Herodotus' *Histories*, specifically Book II, to interpret ancient Egyptian material and to construct a vision of ancient Egypt throughout the nineteenth century. To early Egyptologists, Herodotus' Egypt was meaningful beyond its familiarity and availability—Herodotus' account of Egypt was fundamentally intertwined with his account of the Persian Wars, and by extension, the broader imagined opposition between the European West and East.<sup>2</sup> While treatment of Herodotus' Egypt was by no means monolithic through the entirety of the nineteenth century, this meaning projected onto his text was certainly a key part of its use in early understandings of ancient Egypt.

## Methodology

The periodicals of the nineteenth century represent an important arena for the discussion of classical literature and the beginnings of Egyptology. This article analyses these discussions in the *Edinburgh Review*, both because of the journal's digital availability and because of its wide circulation and popularity in British society during its run. Certainly, the *Edinburgh Review* is not representative of all veins of discourse surrounding Egyptological material in the nineteenth century. It was founded by Scottish scholars and was generally committed to liberal philosophy. By 1826, the *Review* began to be published by Longmans, based in London.<sup>3</sup> As Andrew Bednarski emphasises, however, the reviewers featured in the *Edinburgh* were by no means a unified group and the primary purpose of the journal was not to promote a specific and united ideology. In fact, as Bednarski draws out, while a general progressive philosophy was emphasised, the *Edinburgh* did not, on the whole, promote any sort of radical action.<sup>4</sup> Fontana, in her volume, also makes this point—that the *Edinburgh Review* was liberal in an intellectual sense rather than being explicitly political.<sup>5</sup> While reviews of the text were necessarily inflected by the reviewers' political positions, there was a wide variety of opinion among authors. Most importantly for our purposes, the *Edinburgh's* large circulation suggests that the publication represents a relatively influential

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2 Marchand, "Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox", 71.

3 Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 4.

4 Bednarski, *Holding Egypt*, 42.

5 Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 7. As Bednarski also suggests, see Fontana's examination of the *Review's* relationship to the Scottish Enlightenment and understanding of the political economy.

approach to the ideas discussed within.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the *Edinburgh Review* did not exclusively review English publications.<sup>7</sup> Thus, discussions of ancient Egypt in the *Edinburgh* certainly engage with international discourse.

To conduct an analysis of the use of Herodotus' *Histories* in this early Egyptological discourse, I used ProQuest's database of British Periodicals to search the entirety of the *Edinburgh Review* from 1802–1900 for the terms “Herodotus” and “Egypt”. This produced 146 articles in the Review that include both terms, out of a total of 6,058 published during the entire period. Of course, this approach has its limitations—authors can reference or discuss Herodotus while not mentioning him by name. It is likely, however, that any author who includes lengthy and therefore especially relevant discussion of Herodotus' Egypt is likely to include Herodotus' name at some place during the article, compared to an author who might exclude a direct mention of his name in a brief and less relevant reference. The same goes for “Egypt”. While it might be possible for an author to discuss an aspect of Herodotus' Book II without mentioning the word “Egypt”, long and detailed discussions likely would.

### 1802–1830

Articles published in the *Edinburgh Review* in first third of the nineteenth century came on the heels of the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt and France's subsequent surrender at Cairo and Alexandria in 1801. This made Egypt especially present in the minds of many Europeans, especially the British, since they seized a large number of the antiquities the French collected during invasion, including the Rosetta Stone. These objects were then given to the recently established British Museum by King George III.<sup>8</sup> As these events unfolded, interest in ancient and modern Egypt was stimulated and this is reflected in the articles of the *Edinburgh Review*. British scholars were eager to learn more about ancient Egypt—limited archaeological evidence and the undeciphered and later untranslated state of hieroglyphs meant they necessarily turned to much more familiar classical sources including Herodotus' *Histories*, specifically Book II. At this point, due to the remnants of the Enlightenment-era emphasis on classical literature, art, and architecture as important areas of education, Herodotus was a common cultural

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<sup>6</sup> Bednarski, *Holding Egypt*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Bednarski, *Holding Egypt*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, 104; Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*, 66.

reference point for the learned. Further, he also was situated within an imaged lineage of European scholars.<sup>9</sup> As such, in early discussions of Egypt through travelogues he appears as a foil for the modern European explorer, but also as a reference to understand newly uncovered archaeological evidence. Early critiques of Herodotus do appear during this period, but they are not strictly critiques of his account of Egypt. Rather, scholars dismiss him as gullible, naïve, or underdeveloped compared to other classical historians like Thucydides, pointing to the fabulous myths present throughout his history. However, as is demonstrated by the *Review's* articles published during this era, scholars of ancient Egypt are virtually unable to take this stance because of the limited available evidence.<sup>10</sup>

The travelogue was a popular method to report tales of international travel. The Napoleonic Expedition and the resultant *Description de l'Égypte* inspired others to journey to Egypt to view the sites themselves—therefore, the genre of the travelogue remained popular throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> In the *Edinburgh Review*, several early publications including the terms “Herodotus” and “Egypt” are discussions of these travelogues, and while they do not attempt to directly investigate ancient Egyptian culture, they represent an implicit projection of European values and understandings onto Herodotus’ *Histories*. Examples of these reviews include those that discuss *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, pendant les Campagnes du General Bonaparte*, *Voyage aux Indes Orientales*, and *Journal of a Visit to some parts of Ethiopia*, published in the *Review* in 1803, 1810, and 1824, respectively. Francis Jeffrey, the author of the review of *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, pendant les Campagnes du General Bonaparte* quotes the text it reviews, writing, “From the time of Herodotus to the present, every traveller, following the steps of his predecessor [...]”<sup>12</sup> While this constitutes a relatively superficial reference to Herodotus’ text, this quote reflects both Herodotus’ status as a cultural reference point for the British audience of the *Review* and Herodotus’ comparison with the modern European traveller—the motivations of the modern traveller are therefore projected back onto Herodotus.

Other mentions of “Herodotus” and “Egypt” from this period appear in reviews of early Egyptological publications. Again, interest in ancient Egypt was energised by the acquisition of Egyptian artefacts by the British Museum—a

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9 Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 79.

10 Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 85.

11 Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, 240.

12 Jeffrey, “Denon’s Travels in Egypt”, 331; For an in-depth discussion of the use of Herodotus in *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Égypte*, see Schwab, “The ‘Rediscovery’ of Egypt”.

review published in 1806 discusses Edward Daniel Clarke's dissertation *The Tomb of Alexander* about one of these acquisitions; a large stone sarcophagus now identified as belonging to Nectanebo II that was initially thought to belong to Alexander the Great.<sup>13</sup> The article heavily relies on Herodotus, the Bible, and other ancient authors to situate the sarcophagus in history while also lamenting the "inability to explain hieroglyphics".<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the article reveals that Herodotus' text was not universally accepted as an accurate or authoritative source, admitting that some scholars dismiss him as "an old woman and his history as a romance".<sup>15</sup> The reviewer also admits that Herodotus' text was written much before the sarcophagus was made. He justifies the use of the history to understand the sarcophagus, however, relying on the Orientalist idea that eastern cultures remain unchanging over time.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, the author also mentions Joseph's coffin as a contrast to the one discussed in the article, referring to language used in the Bible—he easily switches between the classical and biblical textual tradition to bolster his argument. Altogether, this author's analysis demonstrates the necessity of using outside texts, like Herodotus' *Histories*, to interpret newly discovered archaeological material, especially material including untranslatable inscriptions, such as this sarcophagus. It also reveals how a scholar might justify Herodotus' use even when vulnerable to criticism.

In addition to these, a review published in 1828 by T.B. Macaulay discussing Henry Neele's *The Romance of History* presents a critique of Herodotus based on his naïveté and superstition, while also upholding him as the greatest early historian.<sup>17</sup> While *The Romance of History* itself is a reflection on the development of the historical genre rather than a text using Herodotus to interpret Egyptological material, its review is informative as to what assumptions and hesitations a British scholar might have in employing Herodotus' text. When describing the genre of history overall, Macaulay compares it to a painting—there is one true likeness to capture, but the artist or author can choose which details to emphasise and which to exclude.<sup>18</sup> So, while he acknowledges that histories may vary based on the author's choices, he insists that good historians stick to an undisputed truth of events—he assumes one correct subject position. This explains why Macaulay

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13 Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*, plates 2 and 3; BM EA 10.

14 Gordon or Drummond? "Clark on the Alexandrian Sarcophagus", 494.

15 Gordon or Drummond? "Clark on the Alexandrian Sarcophagus", 486.

16 Gordon or Drummond? "Clark on the Alexandrian Sarcophagus", 494.

17 Macaulay, "History", 332.

18 Macaulay, "History", 338.

warns of fiction in Herodotus' text and emphasises that the so-called fact and fiction are hard to draw out:

Herodotus tells his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed to as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he imagines with what he has seen and heard, and brings out the facts, reports, conjectures, and fancies in one mass.<sup>19</sup>

Like sources later in the period, this discussion employs legalistic language such as “witness”, and “rules of evidence”, suggesting a belief that if one follows the correct procedure, a true, impartial history can be written. The early appearance of this point of view can be attributed to the aim of this review—rather than exclusively focused on ancient Egypt, this source is focused on history more broadly, with a particular focus on classical history. Unlike scholars of Egypt and the Near East, classicists had moved away from their earlier attempts to see historical truth in sources appearing mythic or fantastical, like Herodotus during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Macaulay's, and—more broadly—classicists' problem with Herodotus' *Histories* is made especially clear in the comparison of Herodotus to the so-called superior Athenian historian Thucydides, who is said to be more developed because he does discuss events that are obviously mythic.<sup>21</sup> Even in this critique, however, Herodotus is not completely discarded as uninformative. Surprisingly, Herodotus maintains his position as a European subject and as part of the lineage of the historical genre, when Macaulay writes, “Of the romantic historians, Herodotus is the earliest and best” and uses his title “the father of history”.<sup>22</sup> Thus, while speaking from philhellenic perspective, Macaulay's arguments about Herodotus certainly had relevance for scholars of Egypt using his texts.

Ancient Egypt was ever present in the British mind during the beginnings of the nineteenth century, especially as imperial activity increased in Egypt. During this time, the British museum acquired two significant collections of objects: the artefacts seized at the conclusion of the Napoleonic invasion in 1802 as mentioned above, and later the purchase of Henry Salt's personal collection in

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19 Macaulay, “History”, 359.

20 For more detailed discussion of this, see Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 86–91.

21 Macaulay, “History”, 337.

22 Macaulay, “History”, 332–333.

1823.<sup>23</sup> Despite the increasing amount of uncovered archaeological material and Champollion's initial progress in translating hieroglyphs, scholars continued to rely on classical texts, including Herodotus, as a starting point for their inquiries. Thus, it was impossible for those interested in ancient Egypt to untangle their understandings from classical scholarship. In 1826, a review by James Browne of several Egyptological publications including Thomas Young's article "EGYPT" in the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. IV credits Herodotus with recording the "laws, usages, manners, and topography of Egypt," assigning his history a result that a British academic might also aim for.<sup>24</sup> Surrounded by debates between classicists and historians of the ancient East, earliest scholars of Egypt in the nineteenth century turned to Herodotus because of his place as the father of history. They continued to employ him alongside the Bible in the face of criticism primarily because of the limited available evidence during this early period of study. For critics and proponents alike, Herodotus remains situated as one of the earliest European historians, sharing the sensibilities and motivations of modern academics, only falling short because of his underdeveloped mind and culture.

### 1831–1850

In 1822, Jean-François Champollion announced that he had made a breakthrough in the translation of hieroglyphs via his *Letter to M. Dacier*.<sup>25</sup> One might expect there to be a major shift in Egyptological activity—a turn from classical to indigenous sources. Progress in translation was slow, however, as was the dissemination of the methods of translation. James C. Prichard remarks on this in *An Analysis of the Egyptian Mythology* (1838) – the second edition, appearing nearly 20 years after the first, was virtually unchanged. He writes, justifying the continued relevance of his work:

It was at one time very generally expected that the clue afforded by the Rosetta inscription towards the decyphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics and enchorial writings would have led to very important discoveries with respect to the religious notions and practices and

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<sup>23</sup> Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Browne, "Hieroglyphics", 97.

<sup>25</sup> Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 53.

the philosophical dogmas of the Egyptian priests. Hitherto little or nothing has been obtained to verify this sanguine hope.<sup>26</sup>

So, during this period, scholars were compelled to use Herodotus and the Bible to fill in missing information about ancient Egypt.<sup>27</sup> For Herodotus and other classical sources, their method is articulated clearly: the primary methodology by which to approach ancient Egyptian history as reported by scholars was to begin with classical sources as a main point of reference, and to discard the text when they were expressly proven wrong by the monuments. To substantiate Herodotus' legitimacy and truthfulness in the face of skeptics, scholars continue to assume that Herodotus' motivations align with their own and now insist that the truths of Herodotus' history can be separated from the obvious fables via this method, among others.

Early and notable employment of these techniques comes from a review of two works by A.H.L. Heeren: *Historical Research into the Politics, Intercourse, and Trade of the Carthaginians, Ethiopians, and Egyptians* and *Historical Research into the Politics, Intercourse, and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity* (translated into English from the original German in 1832 and 1833, respectively, the English edition reviewed in 1834). Heeren was a German scholar and a member of the Göttingen school, and his *Historical Research* was among the few French and German works to be translated and published in Britain in the 1830s.<sup>28</sup> The reviewer, overall, approves of Heeren's work, but cautions against some of his assertions that build "upon his authorities more than the foundations may bear".<sup>29</sup> This criticism results from disagreements over particular points instead of Heeren's reliance on Herodotus overall, as the reviewer later refers to Herodotus' "full and honest testimony".<sup>30</sup> The reviewer also suggests that Herodotus' text can be relied on even in periods not contemporary to his work, due to the "unchanging character of Eastern Manners and Habits", the same Orientalist argument used in the earlier analysis of the sarcophagus of Nectanebo II. Thus, Heeren and the author of the review clearly rely heavily on Herodotus' texts to consider these ancient societies as do earlier scholars. The review does not go into significant detail when discussing Heeren's use of Herodotean evidence related to Egypt, because of the length of Heeren's work, however. Thus, to understand the use of

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26 Prichard, *An Analysis of the Egyptian Mythology*, xii–xiii.

27 Gange, "Two Victorian Egypts of Herodotus", 159.

28 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 80.

29 Murry? "Heeren's Researches", 88.

30 Murry? "Heeren's Researches", 93.



Herodotus the review approves of as good practice, it is necessary to examine the original text.

When discussing aspects of ancient Egypt where direct evidence is limited, such as mortuary religion, Heeren explicitly references Herodotus' description of tiered coffin pricing and the ancient Egyptian belief in reincarnation, accepting his observations without much question.<sup>31</sup> Without archaeological evidence to disprove (i.e. contradict) the passages in Herodotus, the British scholar would have no reason to question his account because of Herodotus' presumed legitimacy. What is especially interesting is how Heeren treats Herodotus when various ancient scholars contradict him. For example, when Herodotus and Diodorus describe different versions of the Egyptian mortuary religion, Heeren goes to great lengths to piece them together, ascribing Herodotus' account to the philosophies of the priests and Diodorus to the common people.<sup>32</sup> From this, it is obvious that Heeren was familiar with these sources' problems, but out of primarily practical, but also ideological necessity, he was forced to reconcile them. Heeren also treats the Bible in a similar way, piecing it together with Herodotus' text—an example of this appears when he discusses the internal organisation of the ancient Egyptian military, citing Herodotus in reference to one chronological period, and the Bible in reference to another.<sup>33</sup> Again, the necessity of using these texts due to the limited availability of other evidence required some method of reconciliation.

Shortly after, Sir John Gardner Wilkinson published his widely acclaimed *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* in 1837, which was reviewed by James Browne in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1839. Browne and Wilkinson's work explicitly lay out the method that Heeren's work appears to follow. Browne begins by describing Wilkinson's method of approach:

[...] in [Manners and Customs] the light of ancient learning and modern discovery have been happily blended together; and the manners and customs of early inhabitants of Egypt described and delineated from the accounts of the ancient authors, compared with, and corrected by the paintings, sculptures, and monuments still extant.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Heeren, *Historical Researches*, 191, 194.

32 Heeren, *Historical Researches*, 192.

33 Heeren, *Historical Researches*, 136.

34 Browne, "Wilkinson—On the Ancient Egyptians", 317.

This quote implies a hierarchy of authority—if the monuments contradict something in Herodotus, they take priority. The reality of reconstructing ancient Egypt was never this straightforward, however—due to the classical starting point, archaeological evidence was interpreted through its lens and not considered on its own terms. Further, because Wilkinson’s work no doubt heavily relies on Herodotus, his aim is not to discredit the *Histories* as a source, by emphasising where Herodotus is incorrect. Instead, including moments where Herodotus and the monuments appear to support each other, Wilkinson functionally bolsters Herodotus’ credibility. In other words, while the words in the review suggest a more neutral stance towards Herodotus, he remains unequivocally employed as an authority due to practical necessity. Herodotus is certainly not the only text employed. Wilkinson takes a similar neutral stance towards the text of the Bible. In fact, Gange argues for Wilkinson’s popularity because of his hesitancy to engage in theological interpretation, which meant his volume had wide appeal for many different groups.<sup>35</sup> In other words, in both cases, Wilkinson takes no radical, critical stance towards the treatment of these texts.

Browne continues his argument for Herodotus’ legitimacy, employing comparison from outside of ancient Egypt all together. In moments of the review, he makes a comparison between the ancient Egyptian “castes” or classes described by Herodotus and the caste system present in India at the time.<sup>36</sup> In this way, Browne provides a completely different source altogether to bolster Herodotus’ accuracy. Beyond revealing his colonial concerns, this cross-cultural comparison also reveals an implicit alignment between Herodotus and the British academic, as well as an Orientalising alignment of Herodotus with the West and Egypt with the East. Like the reviewer of Heeren’s work, Browne would have been aware of the critiques of Herodotus’ *Histories* as superstitious and underdeveloped. Still, the state of the translation of hieroglyphs and the limited available evidence necessitated the use of classical texts for scholars of ancient Egypt, especially concerning matters of mortuary religion and social structure, which would have been least obviously evidenced in monumental artwork. Thus, the continued use of Herodotus required reconciliation of the problems with his history. Scholars such as Heeren and Wilkinson did this through a variety of methods, such as proclaiming a methodology where Herodotus was checked by the monuments, and by suggesting cross-cultural comparisons inspired by colonial concerns.

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<sup>35</sup> Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 88.

<sup>36</sup> Browne, “Wilkinson—On the Ancient Egyptians”, 327.

Baron Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen published *Ægyptens Stelle in der Weltgeschichte* or *Egypt's Place in Universal History* in 1845, which was reviewed by William Mure in 1846 and translated into English in 1848. In the review of the work, Mure discusses Herodotus in similar ways. Herodotus' goal in writing about the Egyptians, as described by Mure, was to pursue "Egyptian research", placing him on par with a British scholar.<sup>37</sup> Also, like the authors above, Bunsen and Mure do not accept the entirety of Herodotus as true yet preserved his authority overall by explaining the problems with his work, in one case, blaming them on the nationalistic deceit of the Egyptian priests.<sup>38</sup>

Besides his treatment of Herodotus being typical for the time, Bunsen proposed a radical new chronological system for ancient Egyptian history, a topic much debated among scholars throughout the nineteenth century because of the connection between ancient Egypt and biblical chronology in the book of Exodus.<sup>39</sup> While the *Edinburgh Review* credits Bunsen's work as having a "substantially correct" chronological system, *Egypt's Place in Universal History* sparked intense debate among British scholars over how to interpret ancient texts, including Herodotus' and the Bible.<sup>40</sup> Gange discusses a scathing critique of Bunsen's work by William Smith in the more conservative *Quarterly Review*. Smith wrote that Bunsen had discarded biblical evidence while believing ancient authors without question, characterising Bunsen's chronology as a prime example of the untrustworthiness of Egyptologists.<sup>41</sup> While Smith's comments might suggest a blatant disregard of the Bible by Bunsen, in truth, Bunsen's scheme was deeply invested in Biblical events. Rather than being anti-biblical, Bunsen's chronology was irreconcilable with those put forth by other scholars.<sup>42</sup> This is especially true for some conservative theologians, who preferred shorter chronologies—Bunsen's approach to ancient texts threatened the foundation of their ideas.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Bunsen's work does not represent a rejection of the Bible in favour of ancient sources, but rather represents the intervention of German textual criticism into

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37 Mure, "The Chevalier Bunsen's Ancient Egypt", 396.

38 Mure, "The Chevalier Bunsen's Ancient Egypt", 395.

39 Besides these concerns, while it is outside the scope of this project, David Gange discusses competing British and German schools of thought that surrounded the translation of Bunsen's work in his recent article "Two Victorian Egypts of Herodotus", 154–178.

40 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 99.

41 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 99.

42 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 100.

43 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 39.

British scholarship.<sup>44</sup> As Gange points out, at this moment understandings of ancient Egypt were particularly unstable and flexible—and as opposing ideological forces relied on particular narratives about ancient Egypt, naturally, scholars responded out of anxiety when these narratives were destabilised by more critical approaches.<sup>45</sup> This moment in Egyptological debate marks a shift—in the second half of the nineteenth century, as there was a wider variety in interpretation in Egyptological material, there was an increased focus on discussions of textual criticism with special concern for how to treat Herodotus' *Histories*, the Bible, and other ancient texts.

### 1851–1870

In the aftermath of Bunsen's disruptive work, scholars emphasised their study of ancient history as a search for the truth, more specifically, and a truth in support of their own ideological leanings. While Herodotus' text is increasingly scrutinised as a record of unreliable oral tradition, he maintains his place in the collective British mind as a European author and academic peer.<sup>46</sup> In previous periods, Herodotus is frequently referred to as a witness, in reference to the notion that he was believed to have travelled to the places he discusses. In this period, the same legalistic language is used, but is pointedly directed towards separating Herodotus' so-called eye-witness testimony from his reports of others' speeches, treating texts as testimony and archaeological material as evidence, in an attempt to draw out where Herodotus' text can be relied upon. Some authors continue to insist that the accurate parts of Herodotus can be separated out via this method, preserving his legitimacy, while others argue for the primacy of other texts, but overall there is disagreement among scholars concerning how to treat his text in chronological and textually critical debates.

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44 Mure's article expressly mentions the German school; Mure, "The Chevalier Bunsen's Ancient Egypt", 399.

45 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 119; Gange also undertakes a more in-depth discussion of Bunsen and Herodotus in "Two Victorian Egypts of Herodotus", writing about Bunsen's dual position as a conservative Orientalist for Germans and as a radical theologian for the British. In German scholarship, Bunsen's work was seen as an argument for the continued use of the Bible in scholarship. In British scholarship, his long chronology was seen as radical—as such, many unorthodox scholars, primarily Unitarians, were followers of his work, contributing to his perception as radical among British scholars. See in particular, Gange, "Two Victorian Egypts of Herodotus", 165.

46 Marchand, "Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox", 95.

The treatment of Herodotus during this period is additionally framed by the discovery of Naucratis by Flinders Petrie in 1854–1855. The city appears in a story found in Herodotus’ *Histories*, along with several other ancient sources. For some scholars, the archaeological discovery represented a victory for Herodotus’ accuracy—Herodotus appeared to be proven correct against the remarks of critics.<sup>47</sup> Because of the overwhelming interest in archaeological sites with Biblical emphases, such as Pithom, the discovery of the Naucratis was limited in its publication and press.<sup>48</sup> Along these lines, Naucratis, and its relationship to Herodotus’ Egypt is not discussed in detail in the *Review*. In addition, when Naucratis is discussed in other sources, its discovery is mentioned more often as having relevance for classical rather than for Egyptological scholars.<sup>49</sup> While representing an instance where Herodotus’ credibility is bolstered, the site of Naucratis does not appear as major point of discussion in the following material.

While it is a slight digression, the treatment of Homer’s texts during this period also provides a revealing illustration of how scholars might have approached Herodotus’ *Histories*. It might be tempting to discard classical reception of Herodotus in an analysis focused on ancient Egypt, but as reviews and volumes were often penned by authors interested in both cultures, the classical and Egyptological approaches are both necessary to understand and often inseparable. In 1858, the *Edinburgh Review* published an article discussing William Gladstone’s *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*, written by Herman Merivale. Gladstone’s work was written in response to increased scrutiny of ancient texts, but also specifically invested in the preservation of the truth of the Bible. To Gladstone, the investigation, deconstruction, and skepticism towards ancient texts suggested that the same could be done to the Bible, so that to uphold the accuracy of texts like the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* was to uphold biblical texts against critical consideration.<sup>50</sup> For other scholars, dissecting classical or pagan texts was not antithetical to devout belief in the Bible, and it was acceptable to treat each differently. The treatment of these texts was primarily determined by the meaning vested in them by the scholar or his affiliations—for example, some scholars might place value Herodotus’ projected place in the lineage of European scholarship and as representative of the West in the East and continue to employ his text as a result. Others might value his place in Orientalist ideology, but only place it in Book III, being able to discard Book II. Others still might only place such

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47 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 193.

48 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 193.

49 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 195.

50 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 149.

a priority on the Bible, and therefore consider Herodotus' text more critically without reservation.

George Rawlinson published a new translation of Herodotus' *Histories*, including notes on Book II written by Wilkinson, in 1858–1860, reviewed by E.H. Bunbury shortly after in 1860. Before commencing the discussion of the contents of the work, Bunbury praises the translation, describing it as “long expected”.<sup>51</sup> Rawlinson's text and its reception is particularly interesting at this moment, as he was a proponent of the shorter chronology Bunsen argued against.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps even more telling about this historical moment is that Rawlinson and Bunsen both necessarily rely on Herodotus, and thus, Rawlinson's and Bunbury's response to Bunsen appears in their treatment of Herodotus' text.

As a reviewer obviously invested in the value of Herodotus, Bunbury dismisses ancient and modern attacks on his accuracy, crediting his work with an unbiased account of the Persian Wars, while allowing the superiority of the Greeks over the Persians to “appear distinctly in his narrative”.<sup>53</sup> It is in this remark that the importance of Herodotus in the British cultural imagination clearly appears—the main body of Herodotus' work is not on Egypt, but on the Persian Wars, a conflict that readily lent itself to an Orientalising framework. Not only is the truthfulness of Book II about Egypt attached to this framework, but this is also no doubt the primary reason as to why European scholars ascribe to Herodotus a British, and more broadly, European subject position, and assume that his motivations in recording ancient Egyptian civilisation align with theirs. This general idea was expressed by Voltaire as early as the eighteenth century, which points to its origins in Enlightenment era thinking.<sup>54</sup> While this assumption was certainly on the minds of early European antiquarians, perhaps in earlier discussions of Herodotus and ancient Egypt where it is stated less clearly, it was not so necessary to assert this primary significance of his work because of the necessity of relying on his text. When more evidence from ancient Egypt became available, even if it resisted interpretation, more and more scholars turned to critique the legitimacy of continuing to use Herodotus' text. In response, authors like Bunbury felt it imperative to remind readers of Herodotus' importance in terms of British identity and the identity of the West to justify his continued use. This ideological investment in Herodotus' work is only one aspect of Bunbury's treatment of the text, however.

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51 Bunbury, “Rawlinson's Herodotus”, 32.

52 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 24.

53 Bunbury, “Rawlinson's Herodotus”, 36.

54 Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 71.

Despite his overall investment in upholding the accuracy and value of Herodotus' text, Bunbury acknowledges that it has its limitations.<sup>55</sup> For example, Bunbury distinguishes as more accurate Herodotus' eye-witness accounts of the monuments from his accounts of ancient Egyptian history,<sup>56</sup> which Herodotus reports to have received from the priests following a critical approach suggested as early as the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> Surprisingly, he also does not completely discard all the information Herodotus learned from the priests, concluding that recently discovered monuments and papyrus fragments confirm parts of the chronology constructed by Herodotus (such as Manetho's chronology and the Turin Papyrus).<sup>58</sup> Bunbury also points out some specific problems, however, discussing the absence of the rule of the Hyksos from Herodotus' history and ascribing it to the priests deliberately hiding a period of subjugation.<sup>59</sup> Bunbury carefully picks out which parts of Herodotus' *Histories* still stand as true, and apologetically explains away large problems via the presumed bias of the priests. Overall, Bunbury's argument for the legitimacy of Herodotus' Book II is twofold: he not only emphasises Herodotus' impartiality in his account of the Persian Wars, asserting the value of Book II by proxy, but also employs his own form of literary criticism, claiming to draw out the true from the false. Bunbury employs a variety of different strategies when approaching Herodotus' text—he argues in favour of the author overall via his ideological associations, but also designates which parts of Book II are trustworthy sources for ancient Egypt. This is where Bunsen's influence appears—in that Bunbury employs methods similar to Bunsen but does so in support of Rawlinson's shorter chronology. These authors use comparable techniques on the same text for different ends.

On the other hand, some authors, in a search for absolute and certain truth in ancient history, attempted to preserve Herodotus' role in British culture while setting aside Book II as less useful in scholarship altogether. This position was often more tenable for scholars interested in classical history, rather than those interested in ancient Egypt. For example, a review by G.W. Cox of Sir George Cornwall Lewis' *An Historical Survey of the Astronomy of the Ancients* (1862) and a translation of the third and fourth volumes of *Bunsen's Egypt's Place in Universal History* (1859) attempts this in 1862. Sir Cornwall Lewis was notoriously outspoken against popular Egyptological publications, critiquing them for their sloppy

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55 Bunbury, "Rawlinson's Herodotus", 49.

56 Bunbury, "Rawlinson's Herodotus", 50.

57 Marchand, "Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox", 81.

58 Bunbury, "Rawlinson's Herodotus", 51.

59 Bunbury, "Rawlinson's Herodotus", 54.

work and reliance on unproven sources, driven by his search for certainty in ancient history.<sup>60</sup> Cornwall Lewis' opposition to Egyptologists was generally also driven by his explicit effort to prove the general superiority of the Greeks—he was not much interested in ancient Egyptian history in its own right.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the review, Cox compares Cornwall Lewis' work to Bunsen's to undermine his disruptive new chronology. Like Bunbury, Lewis also clearly differentiates between Herodotus' eye-witness accounts and those he received from oral tradition, the latter being described as a less reliable source of historical information.<sup>62</sup> Cox also upholds the overall virtue of Herodotus, writing about his and other classical writers' characters, "[...] we can as little doubt as we doubt our own".<sup>63</sup> In the same paragraph, he writes about the problem with evidence from ancient Egypt itself: "From these we have to turn to a people who at no time exhibited any critical faculty; a people filled with a strong sense of their own importance, which had been grievously mortified by some incidence in their history".<sup>64</sup> Finally, Cox addresses Herodotus' motivations specifically, assigning his work as the "object to relate the struggle of European freedom with Eastern despotism", but lamenting that it "has been buried beneath an obscure mass of Persian and Assyrian lore [...]".<sup>65</sup>

Thus, G.W. Cox takes an approach to Herodotus that is surprisingly similar to Bunbury's, but employed for different ends. He is significantly more critical when it comes to Book II, seemingly dismissing outright the potential for an accurate history of Egypt. He still maintains Herodotus' place in the construction of British identity, however, by upholding Herodotus' Western subject position. He explicitly states that Herodotus' character is that of the modern scholar, ascribing the faults in his work to his imperfect methods instead. Interestingly, he similarly critiques the accuracy of archaeological evidence, casting doubts on the intentions of the ancient people whom Cox characterizes as despotic.<sup>66</sup> Like Cornwall Lewis himself, this review takes a sharply critical approach to most of the evidence Egyptologists relied on to reconstruct ancient Egyptian history, due to the instability of narratives surrounding ancient Egypt. As Gange discusses, ancient Egyptian history was elusive,<sup>67</sup> and therefore had disruptive potential for

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60 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 199.

61 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 87.

62 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 84.

63 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 84.

64 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 84.

65 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 85.

66 Cox, "Sir G.C. Lewis's *Astronomy of the Ancients*", 84.

67 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 119.



classical historians who were avoidant of speculative history and radical religious interpretation.<sup>68</sup> These classical scholars still, however, allowed for Herodotus to keep his position as a herald of Western superiority on the basis of his imagined character. Thus, while Herodotus as the first historian of the West also appears in Egyptological publications, this identification does not justify his use in histories of ancient Egypt for all authors, especially for authors not interested in making productive contributions to Egyptological scholarship. Curiously, these authors operate upon similar assumptions, such as the ability to parse the reliable parts of Herodotus' text from the unreliable, yet they did not necessarily come to the same critical conclusions about the texts.

In 1870, the *Edinburgh Review* published a review, also by G.W. Cox, primarily of Rawlinson's *A Manual of Ancient History, from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Western Empire* (1869). The opening of this review explicitly reflects the increasingly anxious search for a stable history of Egypt which was present throughout this period and a motivating force of Cornwall Lewis' criticism:

Whatever be the subject which [the historian] chooses to treat, he must be able to bring his facts before us with the clearness which would be needed to establish a fact in a modern court of justice, or he must confess his inability to do so. His assertions must rest on the evidence of eye-witnesses or of contemporaries to whom those eye-witnesses must have related their share in the several incidents narrated, or he must admit candidly that he can appeal to no such testimony.<sup>69</sup>

History writing, to Cox and others, should be legalistic and precise. During the first half of the nineteenth century and up until this point, Egyptologists struggled to produce certain answers about pressing concerns, such as competing chronologies and their relevance to Exodus, primarily due to limited material evidence and the slow progression of hieroglyphic decipherment. Even as these developed, ancient Egyptian history remained murky, and the classical sources Egyptologists relied on were increasingly scrutinised by textual critics, looking to distinguish between the accurate and inaccurate parts of historical accounts. This is especially true for academics like G. W. Cox and Cornwall Lewis who were more interested in classical scholarship, and at times hostile to Egyptological scholarship. It might

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68 Marchand, "Herodotus as Anti-Classical Toolbox", 86.

69 Cox, "Manuals of Ancient History", 154.

be tempting to dismiss the remarks of the classicists from the Egyptological discussion of Herodotus outright, on the basis of their significantly different aims. Classicists had the ability to reject Herodotus as a historian of Egypt, because of their disinterest and even disdain for earnest scholarship on Egypt. It would simply be untenable for those more interested in Egypt specifically to take this same stance. Thus, scholars of Egypt responded to this increased scrutiny by carrying out a variety of defences of Herodotus' text. Surprisingly, classicists and Orientalists are united in their techniques, even if they reached different conclusions about the value of Herodotus' text. This emerges most pointedly in the examples explored here; authors broadly maintained Herodotus' place in British culture because of the importance of his account of the Persian Wars in Orientalising narratives, even if they did not believe this legitimated Book II as a source. This impulse was present in discussions of Herodotus in the first part of the century, but less obviously stated because considerations of his texts were less critical prior to the influence of German textual criticism.

### 1871–1900

The final part of the century maintained its interest in ancient Egypt, faced with and encouraged by new political and cultural concerns. Due the construction of a railway in Egypt (1856) and the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), modern Egypt became a popular travel destination for European travellers interested in ancient Egyptian or biblical history.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, due to the occupation of Egypt by the British in 1882, military infrastructure made excavation and transporting artefacts easier.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, back in Britain, several prominent Egyptologists founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (later renamed the Egypt Exploration Society) in 1882, which sold subscriptions to those interested in supporting excavations in pursuit of biblically relevant artefacts.<sup>72</sup> Thus, during the final part of the nineteenth century, more and more scholars of ancient Egypt turned away from Herodotus in favour of archaeological evidence and hieroglyphic translations, because of increased access provided to Egypt. As Gange draws out, towards the later part of the century, this is especially true for scholars like Flinder's Petrie, who was interested in an Egyptian chronology not centred around classical

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<sup>70</sup> Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 167.

<sup>71</sup> Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 174.

<sup>72</sup> Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 179.

or biblical material, and who was able to accept flexibility over specific dates to achieve this.<sup>73</sup> Simultaneously, Herodotus remained in conversations about chronology and ancient Egyptian history when archaeological sources still failed to provide answers, and especially for scholars who maintained a primary interest in an Egypt related to the classical and biblical world. These scholars continue to insist on the legitimacy of Herodotus, asserting, as in the previous period, that his value as a historical figure stems from his place in the imagined historical contest between the East and West—specifically from Herodotus’ account of the Persian Wars. While they accept that parts of Herodotus’ accounts are no longer relevant because of the authority of the archaeological evidence, they also argue that certain parts of Herodotus’ *Histories* have been confirmed by this evidence, and the argument the true parts of Herodotus can be drawn out from the false continues through this period.

While it is not an article concerned with Herodotus’ Egypt specifically, a review by John Eaton of George W. Cox’s *A History of Greece* published in 1875 provides an interesting starting point for analysis. Before embarking on a consideration of this article, it is important to note that the author of *A History of Greece*, G.W. Cox, penned the previous two reviews considered above. In both articles, Cox upheld the value of Herodotus as a key figure in the construction of British identity, but also generally expressed disdain for the work of Egyptologists in agreement with Cornwall Lewis. When his reviews are situated alongside his published work *A History of Greece*, this is unsurprising—Cox clearly was not invested in ancient Egyptian history in its own right, and his remarks reflect this dissonance between the aims of classicists and scholars of the ancient East.<sup>74</sup> In his review of *A History of Greece*, Eaton reports that Cox insists on relying exclusively on the contemporary testimony of historians, to avoid conflation of myth with actual events. In fact, as an example of the confusion that might result from this “weakness on the side of minute detail”, Eaton points to the work of Egyptologists, probably Bunsen’s chronology specifically, and its tendency to “reduplicate personages and events”.<sup>75</sup> Evident in these points of the review is the dialogue that remains between classicists and Egyptologists—specifically, a continuation of an anxious rebuke of the unstable chronologies present in ancient Egyptian history, but also an explicit investment in advocating for the superiority of Greece as a champion of the West. Therefore, this review by Eaton reveals not

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73 Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 238.

74 Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 86–87.

75 Eaton, “Cox’s History of Greece”, 248.

an Egyptological approach to Herodotus' Book II, but rather reflects an approach to Herodotus in classical history—an arena where his legitimacy is more evident. It also seeks to be a salve for the anxiety surrounding the continuing debates that are present within Egyptology, which other authors respond to in the following reviews.

Returning to Egyptological publications, in 1879 the *Edinburgh Review* published a discussion by Francis R. Conder primarily focused on Heinrich Brugsch's *A History of Egypt under the Pharaohs, derived entirely from the Monuments*, published the same year. Brugsch was a German Egyptologist, and thus interested in Egypt specifically, and less interested in its situation in the classical and biblical world. Conder and Brugsch himself in his book claim that Egyptology has moved away from classical sources that are unreliable and fabulous. Instead, they insist that the discipline turns to inscriptions on the monuments and in tombs and texts preserved on papyrus to reconstruct ancient history.<sup>76</sup> Compared to other publications, Herodotus is only referenced a handful of times throughout, and only when there are no other places certain information could be ascertained, such as the geographical layout of the Nile at the time when Herodotus visited Egypt.<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, the inscriptions and texts Brugsch turns to and Conder references still invite dispute in their interpretation, and at several points, Conder critiques Brugsch's translations of hieroglyphs, writing, "We must confess that the singularity in command of the language of the hieroglyphics on which Herr Brugsch so evidently prides himself does not carry absolute conviction to our minds".<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the reviewer also critiques Brugsch's analysis of the ancient landscape, specifically the location and flow of the Nile during the proposed date of the Bible's Exodus—he rebukes Brugsch for not looking closely enough at the "precise language of the Book of Exodus [...]".<sup>79</sup>

In other words, *A History of Egypt under the Pharaohs, derived entirely from the Monuments* is not completely reliant on archaeological evidence as the title might suggest. Instead, the work does not and cannot move away from classical textual evidence altogether—as evidenced by the continued confusion over hieroglyphic translations and geography. Rather, Conder and Brugsch turn briefly to Herodotus and also to the Bible. For the author of the review, Francis R. Conder, also the co-author of *A Handbook to the Bible: Being a Guide to the Study of*

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76 Conder, "Brugsch's Egypt under the Pharaohs", 84; Brugsch, *A History of Egypt Under the Pharaohs*, xiii.

77 Conder, "Brugsch's Egypt under the Pharaohs", 103.

78 Conder, "Brugsch's Egypt under the Pharaohs", 92.

79 Conder, "Brugsch's Egypt under the Pharaohs", 105.

*the Holy Scriptures; derived from Ancient Monuments and Modern Exploration*, the continued reliance on the Bible especially is unsurprising—as an author interested in scripture, Conder’s foremost concern was Egypt’s connection to Biblical text. Thus, this article is representative of how an author’s position certainly informed the approaches taken towards text. While, as a late-century Egyptologist, Brugsch was motivated to focus on archaeological material, and was willing to allow for a more flexible approach to the text (for example, assigning longer geographical distances between sites associated with Exodus than as suggested by the Bible).<sup>80</sup> Conder, on the other hand, clearly privileges the biblical text itself, suggesting that while an author can accept or reject the story of Exodus, if he accepts it, he must remain true to the original text.<sup>81</sup> While one might expect archaeological evidence to allow for more agreement over Egypt in a turn away from textual sources, rather, it meant that scholars had a wider range of evidence to choose from in their arguments.

In other cases, such as in *A History of Greece*, Herodotus maintains his position as relevant in the British cultural imagination even as his texts become less and less relevant. A review by R.C. Jebb of Archibald Henry Sayce’s *The Ancient Empires of the East: Herodotos I.–III.* (1883) published in 1884 holds this stance. Sayce, in his analysis of Herodotus’ text, is incredibly critical and hostile, going so far as to call Herodotus dishonest and suggesting that he plagiarised parts of *Histories*. It might seem surprising for a historian of the East to discard Herodotus completely, but Sayce was invested in separating Eastern histories from the perspectives of the Greeks altogether—Marchand calls him an “ardent Oriëntophile”.<sup>82</sup> R.C. Jebb, a classicist and Greek professor at Glasgow and Cambridge, on the other hand, attacks Sayce’s stance in a staunch defence of Herodotus, calling the historian “judicious”, employing the typical legalistic language and scientific analysis present in these discussions in the previous period. He blames most of the problems with Herodotus’ work on his sources (specifically the Egyptian priests) and the mistakes of “dragoman” or guide.<sup>83</sup> He also states specifically that “the correctness of his facts is a distinct question from that of his honesty”.<sup>84</sup> In other words, this defence of Herodotus is primarily based on Herodotus’ academic character. While Sayce discards Herodotus’ texts as an Orientalist, Jebb defends him from a philhellenic perspective.

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80 Conder, “Brugsch’s Egypt under the Pharaohs”, 106.

81 Conder, “Brugsch’s Egypt under the Pharaohs”, 105.

82 Marchand, “Herodotus as Anti-classical Toolbox”, 96.

83 Jebb, “Sayce’s Herodotus”, 534.

84 Jebb, “Sayce’s Herodotus”, 558.

Jebb analyses the portion of Sayce's work on Egypt specifically, because "While Assyriology is approaching a critical stage, there are parts of Egyptology in which it may be properly said that a critical stage has been reached, and the works of the best authorities are not of difficult access for students".<sup>85</sup> This is curious as debates surrounding chronology continued to ensue during this decade and as other classicists admonish Egyptologists for their inability to pin down exact dates. Perhaps, Jebb suggests this to remark on the increasing amount of material available related to ancient Egypt. Jebb's commentary also reflects a shift in Herodotus' place in Egyptology. In earlier periods, Herodotus was used as the starting point for research for scholars with an interest in the classical world—his text was assumed to be true until proven false by archaeological evidence. Here, Jebb's approach is slightly different. Even though Egyptological scholarship contemporary with this review was most certainly had its origins in Herodotus' text because of his prevalence throughout the decade, Jebb seems to suggest that Egyptology has reached a point where it can prove correct Herodotus' text. The reasoning seems circular—a discipline initially reliant on his text is now able to prove it correct. At the same time, the points of Sayce's book that Jebb challenges are still not certainly determined by other evidence. For example, Jebb mentions Herodotus' belief that Egypt was the original source of the Greek gods and refutes Sayce's argument that Herodotus lied about how he determined this information.<sup>86</sup> Undoubtedly, this could not yet be proven or disproven with certainty by reference to archaeological evidence or biblical evidence—Jebb therefore upholds Herodotus here as an authority, while Sayce, due to his general hostility to the *Histories* rejects it. Their decisions are ideologically motivated rather than based on archaeological evidence.

Finally, in the last few pages of the review, Jebb explains why a defence of Herodotus is important, writing:

But in the field that Mr. Sayce has tried Herodotus, while exceptionally favourable for the purposes of the arraignment, is only a part, and not the most important part of the History [...]. They might have been omitted without detracting a jot of value from the essential part of his History, the great narrative of the conflict between Asia and Greece.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Jebb, "Sayce's Herodotus", 554.

<sup>86</sup> Jebb, "Sayce's Herodotus", 536–537.

<sup>87</sup> Jebb, "Sayce's Herodotus", 558.

Like other passages have suggested, the main value placed in Herodotus' text by Jebb is not due to the passages about Egypt, but rather due to its sections on the Persian Wars, because they play such a large role in imagining the West.

As some scholars moved away from outside textual evidence altogether, others began to prefer the bible to Herodotus' *Histories* within an Egyptology primarily concerned with Egypt's role in Exodus. This trend was magnified when the so-called Amarna letters were discovered, tablets that recorded correspondence between Egypt and other nations. In an article entitled "The Tell Amarna Tablets" by C.R. Conder (1893) reviewing several publications documenting the find, these tablets are discussed with scant mention of Herodotus and rather are explicitly connected with biblical texts. The turn away from Herodotus here is not so much because of explicit criticism of his text, but rather represents this magnified focus explicitly on the Bible for Egyptologists at the end of the century. This is further emphasised in "The Plain of Thebes", a review by Margaret Benson of several works by major figures such as Gaston Maspero, Flinders Petrie, Edouard Naville, and Amelia Edwards published in 1897. Herodotus and his text are not mentioned in the publication at all, even in passing. Rather, Benson refers to moments in biblical history (such as Exodus) and it heavily relies on translated inscriptions from temple sites or tombs. In fact, the publication includes extended quotes of translated inscriptions, such as a passage from Hatshepsut's obelisk at Karnak.<sup>88</sup> What emerges clearly in the final moments of the review is a discussion of Egypt that is self-focused, but still clearly inflected by devout belief in the Bible. At the end of the review, Benson writes:

Thus, with all its careless cruelty, its hard bondage, its severe discipline, we have still to remember that we are dealing with a nation which upholds a standard of equal justice, and a standard of mercy, which believes the duty of the rich towards the poor, the helpless, the slave; whose religion teaches that each man must appear before the judgement-seat of a righteous God, and plead not alone that he has performed his duties of divine worship [...].<sup>89</sup>

Benson, in her comment, reveals an Egyptology with an ability to turn away from an Egypt heavily moderated by classical authors, due to a greater access to material culture. Simultaneously, however, this Egypt is still inflected by an

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<sup>88</sup> Benson, "The Plain of Thebes", 462.

<sup>89</sup> Benson, "The Plain of Thebes", 482.

interest in the Bible. Alongside this shift, Herodotus and Egypt do continue to appear together in discussions held by classicists or by scholars interested in both areas. In these discussions, typical arguments in favour of Herodotus are rehashed, including Herodotus' place as the storyteller of the imagined triumph of the West over the East.

## Conclusion

Herodotus' role in the construction of British and European identity through his account of the Persian Wars appeared in arguments for his continued use in Egyptology throughout the nineteenth century, even as more archaeological material became available. In the earliest parts of the century, this motivation was less obviously stated, as limited evidence also necessitated using his text. Later, however, as competing chronological schemes spurred on the search for absolute truth in ancient history, Herodotus' *Histories* was faced with textual criticism. Proponents of the use of his text, who were looking to make productive contributions to Egyptological scholarship, insisted that Herodotus' truths could be drawn out using critical techniques, and more heavily emphasised Herodotus' role in understandings of the East and West. This discussion is complicated by those who were hostile to histories of ancient Egypt altogether (primarily classicists), who penned critical reviews of Egyptological publications during this period. While skeptical that a certain chronology for Egypt could ever be achieved, they continued to hold up the authority of Herodotus similarly to their intellectual opponents. Towards the end of the century, with increasing availability of archaeological and textual evidence, Egyptologists and Orientalists moved away from Herodotus' text in search of an Egypt separate from classical scholarship. Classicists, however, continue to appear in editorial responses to scholars hostile to Herodotus, like Sayce, promoting their defence of Herodotus because of his ideological importance. While this examination of the *Edinburgh Review* reveals a move away from Egypt as mediated by Herodotus in favour of monuments and archaeological evidence, it also demonstrates Herodotus' continued presence in discussions. Even if Herodotus was mostly discarded in Egyptological writings by the end of the century, there is little doubt that he maintained his situation in British identity as a marker from the Orientalizing superiority of the West over the East, as frequently evidenced by contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*. Whether or not he was employed in Egyptological arguments depended on the disciplinary leaning and broader intellectual orientation of the author.



## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge Rune Nyord, whose encouragement and advice was indispensable to the completion of this project. I would also like to thank the reviewers for their helpful criticisms of the original version of this paper.

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