

End of Dynasty 6 to Beginning of the Middle Kingdom

Analyzing Egyptian Historical Texts

What is a Genre?

- a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content

Egyptian Literary Genres--State

- Religious texts—Pyramid Texts
- Royal Decrees— “The Decree of Neferirkare”
- Wisdom texts— “The Wisdom of Djedefhor”
- Administrative Texts— Pyramid Temple records
- Expedition Accounts

Egyptian Genres--Private

- Private letters
- Private Legal Texts– “The Will of Metjen”
- (Auto-)Biographical Texts– “The (Auto-) Biography of Harkhuf”

Royal Decrees

- Source for royal administration
- Copies of papyrus documents on stone
- Main system for giving instructions from royal court
- Types include appointment of officials, setting up royal foundations, exemptions

Decree of Neferirkare Comes from Abydos



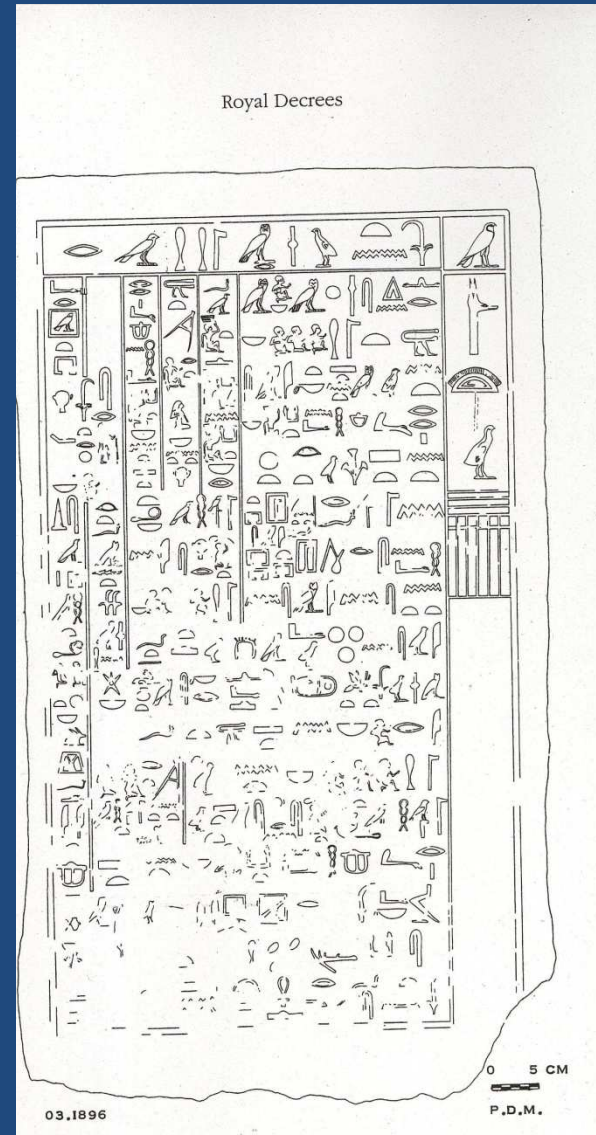
Decree of Neferirkare

2468-2449 BC

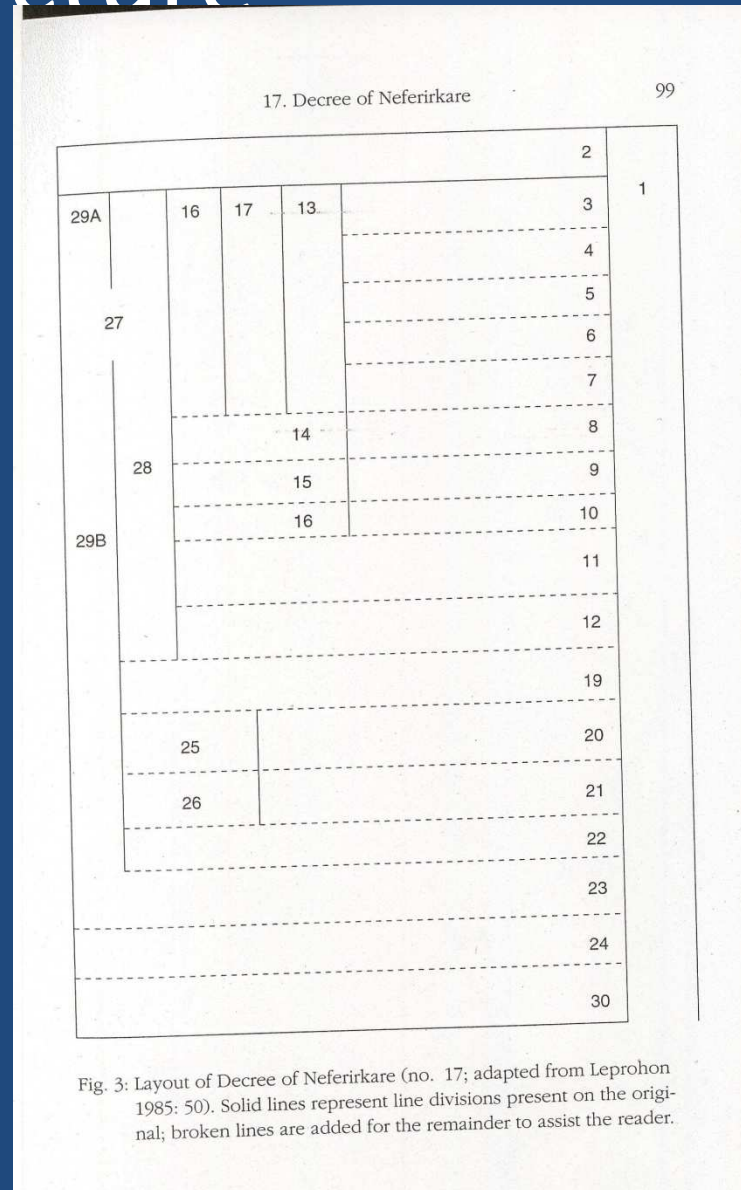
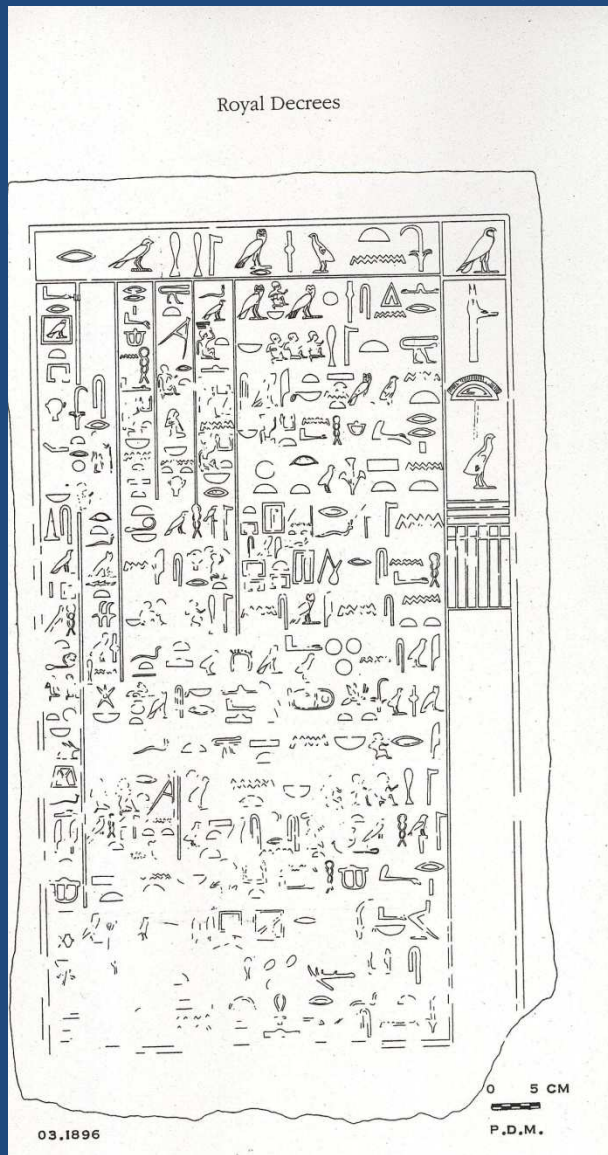


- Decree comes from Abydos
- Must refer to a temple in Abydos, though not mentioned in the text
- Complex line structure in the diagram

Structure of Decree



Decree Structure

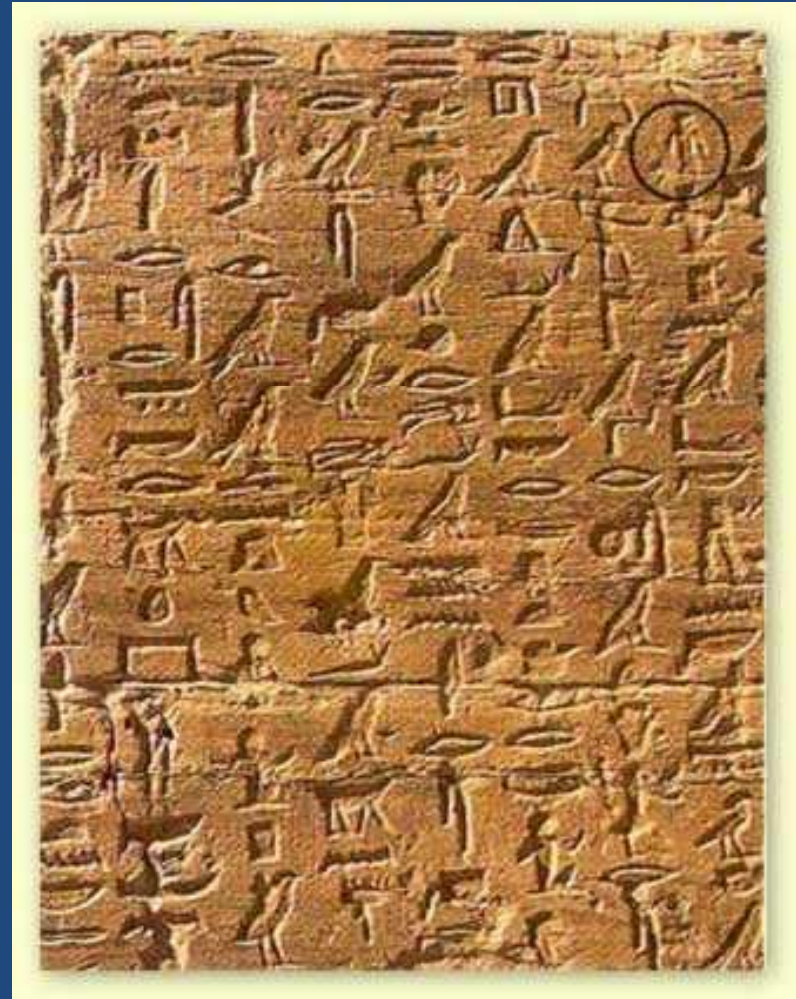


Decree of Neferirkare
from Abydos



- Who is the audience?
- Why was the papyrus copied in stone?
- What is the contents?
- Why was it necessary to write this decree?

Harkhuf (active in reign of Merenre and Pepi II (circa 2284-2205 BC)



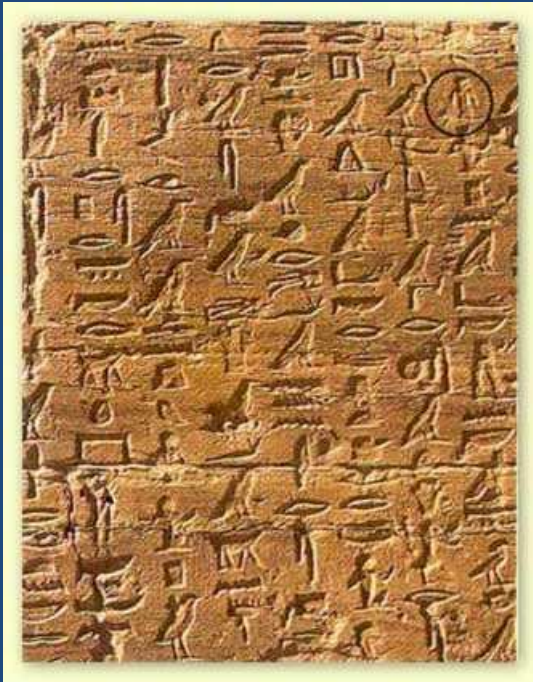
Tomb (Auto)Biographies

- Present aspects of tomb owner not in images,
- Commemorate, present, and promote the identity of the tomb owner,
- Several standard phrases repeated in all of them
- Harkhuf's biography presents many details of his personal accomplishments but also his relationship with the king.

Relation between Expedition Texts and Biographies with Expeditions

- Both narrated in first person
- Different locations for the texts, the end point of the expedition vs. the tomb
- Expedition texts stress the public contribution of a private person to a royal project
- Harkhuf 's biography shares with expeditions the formulae: sending, returning,
- Harkhuf's biography shares with military texts: bringing royal gifts, opening the road to a foreign land

(Auto) Biography of Harkhuf



- Who is the audience?
- Why was the papyrus copied in stone?
- What is the contents?
- What does the author accomplish by publishing this information?

Pepi II and Meresankh II

2270-2205 BC



Pepi II's Letter to Harkhuf



Pepi I

2316-2284 BC



- Kneeling before a god
- Married two daughters of the nomarch Khui of Abydos
- Their brother Djau became vizier
- Growth of freely held estates (allodium)

Pepi I-Merenre-Pepi II

- Career of Weni of Abydos
- Military expeditions in the Sinai, Southern Palestine, Nubia
- Career of Harkhuf
- Expeditions to Nubia

Reign of Pepi II

- Other expeditions include:
 - Pepinakht to Nubia and Palestine but emphasis is war
 - Sabni to Nubia to bring back deceased father
 - Khnumhotep to Byblos (Lebanon) and Punt (Ethiopia)
- Internal weakening
- Adult king portrayed as compromised
- Family-style structure of government not adequate to demands of complex government

Successors of Pepi II

- Antyemsaef rules 13 months
- Dynasty 7 (“70 kings in 70 days”)
- Dynasty 8 records 4 or 5 kings in 10 years
- End of Old Kingdom
- Circa 2160 BC nomarchs of Hierakonpolis conquer Memphis and found Dynasties 9 and 10
- At the same time, Dynasty 11 emerges in Thebes
- Also contemporary nomarchs who are independent

First Intermediate Period 2198-2008 BC



- Art lacks sophistication of court sponsorship
- New funeral texts called “Coffin Texts” depict a more dangerous world
- Local biographies detail raids for food on neighbors

Emergence of the Middle Kingdom

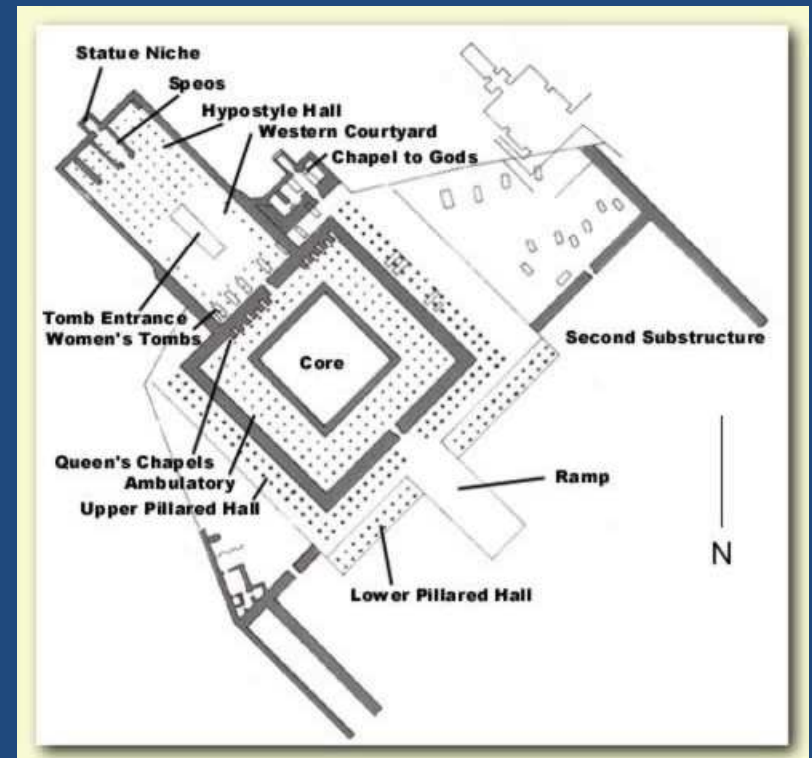


- Mentuhotep II confronts Dynasty 10 in Abydos and wins
- Proceeds to Hierakonpolis and conquers Dynasty 10
- By 1980 BC, Thebans take Memphis and land is reunited

Reconstruction and Ruins of Mentuhotep's Temple



Reconstruction and Plan



Old Kingdom Relief of Cattle Models from Tomb of Meketre



Models from Tomb of Meketre

