

## Self-presentation in the Eleventh Dynasty

### Historical setting

The Eleventh Egyptian dynasty saw the “return of the king” after the First Intermediate Period, which was characterized by a disintegration of the centralized state into smaller (city-based) units led by troop commanders and local governors. The southern kingdom was centered around Thebes and involved in prolonged periodical military conflicts with the Heracleopolitan rulers of the Ninth/Tenth dynasty, who succeeded the Memphite Eighth Dynasty in the north. The origins of the Theban family that rose to power as the Eleventh dynasty is rather difficult to reconstruct with precision. All that is known for certain is that the lineage of the Theban kings stemmed from a non-royal ancestor named Antef, who was in later inscriptions called *jnj-jtj=f*<sup>c3</sup>, Antef the Great. Altogether eight inscriptions<sup>1</sup> are currently ascribed to this ancestral figure, who seems to have served as a nomarch of the 4<sup>th</sup> (Theban) nome of Upper Egypt and may have attained the title *hr.j-tp*<sup>c3</sup> *nj šm*<sup>c.w</sup>, great chief of the South.<sup>2</sup> The first Eleventh dynasty king who appears in the Karnak king list is Mentuhotep I, whose name *tp.j-*<sup>c.w</sup> “The Ancestor”, alongside his complete absence from contemporary sources, suggests that he may have been added to the lineage later,<sup>3</sup> for the purposes of legitimization. The first of the Thebans to have been king was thus Antef I (*shrw-t3.wj*), but the first self-presentations dated to this dynasty come from the reign of his successor, Antef II (*w3h-*<sup>c.nh</sup>). The pre-unification auto/biographies thus date to the reigns of three kings, Antef II, Antef III and the first part of the reign of Mentuhotep II. Some of the testimonies of the officials contain important historical information on the fighting<sup>4</sup> and negotiations<sup>5</sup> that led to the gradual extension of the Theban realm and finally to the rise of Mentuhotep II as king of re-unified Egypt. It comes as no wonder that both fighting and

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<sup>1</sup> Gestermann, Louise, *Kontinuität und Wandel in der Politik des frühen Mittleren Reiches in Ägypten* (GOF IV/18), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1987, 24; Postel, Lilian, *Protocole des souverains égyptiens et dogme monarchique au début du Moyen Empire*, Turnhout: Brepols 2004, 7-26.

<sup>2</sup> Stela Cairo 11/5/18/7, found in Dendera; Schenkel, Wolfgang, *Memphis – Herakleopolis – Theben: die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7. – 11. Dynastie* (ÄA 12), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1965, 65-66. This seems to have been the motivation of the Thebans for having selected this one of their ancestors as the one to whom they would explicitly trace their origins.

<sup>3</sup> Gestermann, *Kontinuität und Wandel*, 26; for arecent appraisal see Postel, *Protocole*, 27-53.

<sup>4</sup> Stela of Djari, Cairo JE 41437; Landgráfová, Renata, *It is My Good Name that you Should Remember: Biographical Texts on Middle Kingdom Stelae*, Prague: Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague 2011, 8-9. See also the translation of the narrative segment below.

<sup>5</sup> Antef, stela Strassburg 345; Fischer, Henry George, *Egyptian Studies III: Varia Nova*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art 1996, 83-90. Antef states that he sailed “with a mission” of the “great chief of Upper Egypt Antef to the place where the rulers of Upper and Lower Egypt were headed,” and that he made the assembled rulers happy with his speech (i.e., that he succeeded in presenting his lord’s message well). This early text appears to bear witness to early negotiations between various local rulers that eventually led to the rise of the Theban realm.

negotiating skills play a major role in the self-presentations of these men, alongside loyalty and access to their kings, which return to the fore after the “feudal”<sup>6</sup> time of the earlier First Intermediate Period. Some other topics were born in the times when city governors had no king to rely on and answer to. They stress the independence, self-reliance<sup>7</sup> and provider/guardian (or “good shepherd”)<sup>8</sup> role of the auto/biographers. At the same time, the renewed presence of the king and especially the time after the unification of the Egypt by Mentuhotep II, which was marked by a consolidation of royal power and attempts at integration of the former Heracleopolitan realm into the Theban structures, caused the rise in importance of court culture and court roles, and the officials found it more important to present themselves as *true and trusted servants* of their kings.

The image of the ideal official of the first half of the Eleventh Dynasty is thus a complex one: a powerful self-made man whom the king (or even a royal lady<sup>9</sup>) selected from among others for his excellent qualities (usually at an exceptionally young age<sup>10</sup>), who gained an exclusive close access to the ruler and continued to excel in whatever task was entrusted to him, towering over his peers yet continuing to care for his city or district, especially in the role of a provider in need. Any potential doubts and mistrust are addressed with veracity statements and a sort of “negative confession” in the form of a short list of transgressions that he had not done (despite having had ample opportunity).<sup>11</sup>

## Media of self-presentation

Unlike in the Old Kingdom, when the typical carrier of an official’s auto/biography was one or more wall(s) of his tomb,<sup>12</sup> the Eleventh Dynasty auto/biographies appear mostly on

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<sup>6</sup> I.e., patronage-based. See Franke, Detlef, “Erste und Zweite Zwischenzeit. Ein Vergleich”, *ZÄS* 117, 1990, 120-121.

<sup>7</sup> Lichtheim, Miriam, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom. A Study and an Anthology* (OBO 84), Freiburg: Universität Freiburg 1988, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Franke, Detlef, “Fürsorge und Patronat in der Ersten Zwischenzeit und im Mittleren Reich”, *SAK* 34, 2006, 159-185; id., “The good shepherd Antef. Stela BM EA 1628”, *JEA* 93 (2007), 149-174.

<sup>9</sup> Stela of Rediukhnum, CG 20543; Landgráfová, *It is My Name that You should Remember*, 74-79.

<sup>10</sup> Landgráfová, Renata, “In the Realm of Reputation. Private Life in Middle Kingdom Auto/Biographies”, in: Wolfram Grajetzki and Gianluca Miniaci, *The World of Middle Kingdom Egypt I* (MKS I), London 2015, xx.

<sup>11</sup> These phrases occur predominantly in the first half of the Eleventh Dynasty, and include statements such as: *I was not drunken, I was not forgetful, I was not feeble in my performance* (Cairo CG 20543, 16); *I never did that which anyone hated* (Cairo CG 20499, 7); *I did not let any strife arise against me. I did not seize a thing of a man* (BM EA 1203, 12-13); *I was not rebellious, I did not damage the land, (for which) people are hated* (Cairo E 36346, 2); *I did not accept things of the evil man* (London UC 14430, x+9 – x+10); *I did not seize a man’s daughter, I did not seize his field* (Cairo CG 20001, 4-5).

<sup>12</sup> Kloth, Nicole, *Die (auto-)biographischen Inschriften des ägyptischen Alten Reiches. Untersuchungen zur Phraseologie und Entwicklung* (SAK Beihefte 8), Hamburg: Buske 2002, 3-44.

commemorative stelae set up in tomb chapels. As the stela (which became an important medium for auto/biography in the course of the First Intermediate Period) offers a much more limited space than the whole tomb, the texts were condensed and only the essential parts were left – even if, at times, two<sup>13</sup> or even three<sup>14</sup> stelae with biographical information are associated with a single tomb.<sup>15</sup> The stela had, however, also offered advantages – such as a transferability to other contexts, for example the commemorative *mḥ.t*-chapels at Abydos,<sup>16</sup> or, usually in the form of graffiti or rock-cut stelae, to expedition sites such as Wadi Hammamat or the alabaster quarries at Hatnub, where the self-presentations take the form of (more or less) extensively commented achievement reports. Tomb walls, too, continue to be used as carriers of auto/biographies,<sup>17</sup> but the number of known Eleventh Dynasty tombs with auto/biographies inscribed on walls is currently rather limited.

The preferred media – the stone and rock-cut stelae – and their placement clearly show that the self-presentations were meant to be accessed and read (or heard)<sup>18</sup> by the widest possible audiences. The necropoleis were lively spots of the ancient Egyptian cultural landscape, and stelae with auto/biographies were placed in the accessible chapels (or even in the facades), where visitors would regularly come to present offerings – and probably also to just stroll around, as visitor graffiti (of a later date) inform us.<sup>19</sup> The texts at expedition sites tend to appear in clusters and are located at well-visible places, accessible and readable for any future expedition leader, to whom they promise a safe journey home and a successful life for the favour of reading the text without damaging it, thus preserving it for the future generations to see. Finally, Abydos was a site of periodical major gathering of people during the annual festivities of Osiris, and to set up a stela there meant securing for oneself an additional

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<sup>13</sup> Djari, stela Cairo JE 41437 and Brussels E.4985.

<sup>14</sup> Antef, son of Myt, stela Berlin 13272, BM EA 1164 and Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek 1241.

<sup>15</sup> See also Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies*, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Simpson, William Kelly, *The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos: The offering chapels of dynasties 12 and 13* (Publications of the Pennsylvania-Yale Expedition to Egypt 5), New Haven: Peabody Museum of Natural History of Yale University 1974.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Deir el-Bersha; Willems, Harco, *Dayr al-Barsha Vol. I. The Rock Tombs of Djehutinakht (No. 17K74/1), Khnumnakht (No. 17K74/2), and Iha (No. 17K74/) With an Essay on the History and Nature of Nomarchal Rule in the early Middle Kingdom* (OLA 155), Leuven: Peeters 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Given the low levels of literacy in Egypt in general (current estimates are around 1 – 2% of the population, see Baines, John, “Literacy and ancient Egyptian society”, in John Baines (ed.), *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, 49-50), it should not surprise us that the auto/biographers expected their texts to be read aloud to assembled audiences by the literate passers-by. This is mentioned explicitly by the steward Montuwasre of the Twelfth Dynasty, whose call to the living is addressed to “all people who shall hear this stela” and “any scribe who shall read” it (MMA 12.184, 16-17).

<sup>19</sup> Navrátilová, Hana, *Visitors' Graffiti of Dynasties 18 and 19 in Abusir and Northern Saqqara. With a Survey of the Graffiti at Giza, Southern Saqqara, Dahshur and Maidum*, Oxford: Abercomby Press 2015; see also Peden, J. Alexander, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt: scope and roles of informal writings* (PdÄ 17), Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill 2001.

audience that would otherwise surely remain out of reach. The practice of visiting the chapels and reading the texts is well documented in the Middle Kingdom, both in the Calls to the Living and in the practice of copying (from) earlier texts.<sup>20</sup>

### **Motivation for self-presentation**

The motivation for the setting up of commemorative stelae and inscribing large areas of one's tomb with auto/biographies containing elaborate self-presentations of the owners is often explicitly expressed in the texts themselves: *I did all of this so that my name might be good upon earth, and so that the memory of me might be good in the necropolis* (Berlin 13272, 11),<sup>21</sup> or (the words of the same man, Antef son of Myt, on hiring priests and ensuring proper inflow of offerings) *so that my name would be good and the memory of me would last today, ... so that my name would live forever* (BM EA 1164, 14). It is clear from these and similar texts that the main motivation for self-presentation of these officials was to create and/or promote their name – i.e. their good reputation<sup>22</sup> among their contemporaries and, even more importantly, in the minds of future generations. Being remembered as a man of *ma'at*, as one whose actions were righteous and charitable, guaranteed not only a potential influx of offerings or at least numerous recitations of the offering formula,<sup>23</sup> but also a form of social immortality,<sup>24</sup> which appears to have been the main motivation not only for the composing and setting up of self-laudatory texts, but also for righteous conduct of the Egyptians of this time (contemporary wisdom texts emphasize conduct that lead to generating a good name for oneself though controlled and self-restricted behaviour).<sup>25</sup> The awareness of the link between (good) reputation and a testimony of one's life in written form has even been stated explicitly

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<sup>20</sup> Leprohon, Ronald J., "The Cairo Stela of Sehetepibre (CG 20538): Borrowings and Innovation", in: D.P. Silverman, J. Wegner, eds., *Archaism and Innovation: Recent Perspectives on Middle Kingdom Egypt*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, 277-292.

<sup>21</sup> For the sake of space, auto/biographical stelae are quoted by inventory number and line. The entire texts can be found in Landgráfová, *It is My Good Name that You Should Remember*.

<sup>22</sup> For the connection between name and reputation, and the way from one to the other, see Wells, Jonathan and Simon Strickland, "Biological Ends and Human Social Information Transmission", in: Wells, Jonathan, Simon Strickland and Kevin Laland, *Social Information Transmission and Human Biology*, Boca Raton, London and New York: Taylor & Francis 2006, 111.

<sup>23</sup> As the treasurer Meru puts it in his call to the living: *If there is nothing in your hand, say it with your mouth* (Turin 1447, 14); for similar statements see **Error! Main Document Only.** Vernus, Pascal "La formule "Le Souffle de la Bouche" au Moyen Empire," *RdE* 28 (1976), 139-145.

<sup>24</sup> For construing one's reputation as a means of transcending death, see Wells and Strickland, *Biological Ends*, 111-113.

<sup>25</sup> Junge, Friedrich, *Die Lehre Ptahhoteps und die Tugenden der ägyptischen Welt* (OBO 193), Freiburg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2003, 140-147; Lichtheim, Miriam, "Didactic Literature", in Antonio Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature. History and Forms* (PdÄ 10), Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill 1996, 243-262.

by the chamberlain of three successive Eleventh dynasty kings, Henwen, who proudly states in his auto/biography that *[his] son, [his] heir ... shall let the memory of [him] live, for he is a scribe* (Cairo E. 36346, 10).

### Means and methods of self-presentation

The aim of the self-presentation of Egyptian officials, fashioning for oneself a good reputation, remained unchanged throughout most of Egyptian history (exceptions can perhaps be found in some Ramesside texts<sup>26</sup> and a few Greco-Roman<sup>27</sup> ones), the means and methods of achieving this, and thus the character traits and actions most valued in an Egyptian official, changed through time. How then did an Eleventh Dynasty official ensure *that [his] name would live for ever* (BM EA 1164, 14)?

To be a good man meant first and foremost to follow the principles of *ma'at*, the universal order of things given to Egypt by the gods. The opposite of *ma'at* was chaos, *isfet* – and thus, to be a *ma'aty*, a “righteous” one, one had to know and occupy one’s proper role in the Egyptian society, to adhere to the principles of order.<sup>28</sup> The officials thus present themselves as *one who knows his position* (Cairo CG 20543, 3), *one who knows his rank in the palace* (MMA 57.95, 8) or *one who knows his rank among officials* (BM EA 159, 10).

An important aspect of the social self of a high official was his relationship to authority and the way he was perceived by this authority. Often, officials aim at creating for themselves a kind of secondary reputation through the close connection to a reputable authority. In the Eleventh Dynasty auto/biographies, four distinct sources of authority can be identified: first and foremost comes the king, who is mentioned most frequently, but the officials also refer to their district, their (city-) god, as well as to their immediate superiors, such as the queen (Cairo CG 20543; Cairo CG 20001), a priestess of Hathor<sup>29</sup>, and the overseer of the treasury

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<sup>26</sup> See the texts translated in Froom, Elisabeth, *Biographical texts from Ramessid Egypt* (Writings from the Ancient World 26), Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Especially those that speak about death, e.g. Taimhotep, see Panov, Maxim, “Die Stele der Taimhotep”, *LingAeg* 18, 2010, 169-191.

<sup>28</sup> This is best reflected in contemporary wisdom texts, see Junge, *Ptahhotep*, 150-159; Lichtheim, *Didactic Literature*, 244-247, as well as in the lamentations, which portray the world devoid of order and in a state of ruin and desolation (for a contextualized appraisal of these texts see Parkinson, Richard, *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt. A Dark Side to Perfection*, London and New York: Continuum 2002, 193-234): such descriptions of disaster lend even more prominence to good character traits.

<sup>29</sup> Stela of Nynebshemau; Clère, J. J., “Une stèle de la **Error! Main Document Only.** 1ère période intermédiaire comportant un hiéroglyphe nouveau”, in: *Miscellanea Gregoriana. Raccolta di Scritti pubblicati nel i centenario dalla fondazione del museo egizio* 1838-1939, Roma 1941, 455-466.

Bebi<sup>30</sup>. The latter text is as much a self-presentation as an exhortation of the superior and can be understood only through the concept of “secondary reputation” as introduced in this paragraph.

As far as the authority of the king is concerned, officials throughout the Eleventh dynasty describe themselves as loyal and beloved followers, who had more personal access to the king than others. They are *beloved, praised and foremost of place in the house of [their] lord* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum I.i.a 1137a,b, 4-5). Loyalty to the king is a very praised and frequently mentioned trait – the officials are *loyal in the house of [their] lord* (Cairo 3/6/25/2, 3-4), they *follow* the king *to all his good places* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum I.i.a 1137a,b, 2). In the second half of the Eleventh dynasty, the relationship of the official to the king is perhaps best characterized by the recurring phrase *his true and trusted servant* (MMA 5795, 1; Cairo 3/6/25/2, 2-3; Louvre C 14, 2). It is interesting to note that, while in the first part of the Eleventh Dynasty, the officials who mention being *beloved of [their] city* (Cairo JE 41437, 9; Cairo CG 20500, 5-6) or non-royal superior(s) (Cairo E 36346, 2-3), are about equally frequent as those concentrating solely on the king. After the re-unification of the country, it is almost exclusively the king who is mentioned in these contexts. Perhaps the most interesting of the pre-unification examples is that of the seal-bearer Ity, who states that he *followed a great lord as ... a small lord, and there never came a (bad) thing in it* (Cairo 20001, 8-9). The rather frequent occurrence of the theme of loyalty, which culminates in the interesting auto/biography of Hetepi (Cairo CG 20506) from the late Eleventh Dynasty, who presents himself as the loyal dog at the feet (actually, in the tent and in the bed) of his mistress, is a direct consequence of the patronage-based social organization of the earlier First Intermediate Period, when loyalty of the subjects was no longer granted, but had to be earned, and being a truly loyal follower of one’s lord was, if not exceptional, then at least a commendable trait. Despite the renewed presence of the king in the Eleventh Dynasty, the topic of loyalty continued to be used and expanded upon, and it remained in use well into the Middle Kingdom.

Closely related to being trusted by the king is the concept of having unique and special access to him. An overseer of the work-camp<sup>31</sup> who served under Mentuhotep II states that he was a

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<sup>30</sup> In the stela of Maati, whose auto/biographical part reads: *I was one beloved of his overseer, the royal chamberlain and treasurer Bebi. He, moreover, is the one who causes air to be breathed in all houses* (MMA 14.2.7, 3-5).

<sup>31</sup> *jm.j-r3 hnr.t*; for the title see Grajetzki, Wolfram, *Die höchsten Beamten der ägyptischen Zentralverwaltung zur Zeit des Mittleren Reiches: Prosopographie, Titel und Titelreihen* (Achet 2), Berlin: Achet-Verlag 2000,

king's favourite in the palace in keeping the commoners away from him (MMA 5795, 6). The chamberlain Heny describes himself as a *servant of trust in the secret hall of solitude* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum I.i.a 1137a,b, 6), and a certain Khety was *one who entered to his lord without (the need of) being announced* (London UC 14430, x+4).

The authority of the city god appears much less frequently in the texts, and the format is usually a simple phrase stating that the official was *praised by his god* (Cairo JE 41437, 9). The city itself is used metonymically to refer to the city's inhabitants, as in the statement on the fragment Cairo 20503 [*I nourished*] *my city in the year of hunger so that my name would be good* (line 3). This use of the word "city" takes us, however, from relationship to authority to relationship in the other direction, to the lower-ranking and the common people in general. As the above-quoted sentence indicates, the auto/biographers present themselves above all as caretakers and benefactors of the common folk, in keeping with one of the main principles of *ma'at, vertical solidarity*<sup>32</sup>. Especially the role of provider in need<sup>33</sup> is most prominent in the first half of the Eleventh dynasty, when officials call themselves *great provider of the home in the year of hunger* (Brussels E 4985, 3-4), and say that they *measured out barley for the nourishment of this entire city ... in the miserable years of famine* (Cairo CG 20500, 2-5), or *nourished Gebelein in hard years* (Cairo CG 20001, 3-4). In the second half of the dynasty, the topic of providing nourishment to the needy disappears and it is only expressed by the stock phrase *I gave bread to the hungry* (MMA 5795, 3; Cairo CG 20506, 4; Turin Suppl. 1447, 6).

Besides the frequent and long-lived motif of nourishment of the needy, the auto/biographers' role of a good guardian is reflected in statements such as *I was a protector of his subjects* (Cairo CG 20503, 4)<sup>34</sup> or, referring to the petitioner made famous by the Instructions of

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158-162; Quirke, Steven, "State and Labour in the Middle Kingdom. A Reconsideration of the Term *hnr.t*", in *RdE* 39, 1988, 83-105.

<sup>32</sup> Assmann, Jan, *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im alten Ägypten*, München: Beck 1990, 92-121.

<sup>33</sup> The role of guardian and provider in need appears prominently in the First Intermediate Period, after the disintegration of the central authority and as a reaction to it. The local land owners were facing new problems and new responsibilities, with the well-being of their spheres of influence being now exclusively in their hands. The fact that they present themselves as providers, caretakers and guardians of those who depended on them thus largely corresponds to reality. For an in-depth analysis of this situation, see Franke, "Fürsorge und Patronat".

<sup>34</sup> The role of protector is most strongly reflected in the auto/biographies on the rock inscriptions at Hatnub, the precise date of which is still a matter of debate (Anthes, R., *Die Felseninschriften von Hatnub: nach den Aufnahmen Georg Möllers*, Leipzig, 1928; Brovarski, E., "The Hare and Oryx nomes in the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom", in A. Woods, A. McFarlane, S. Binder (eds.), *Egyptian culture and society: studies in honour of Naguib Kanawati* 1, Cairo 2010, 31-85; Gestermann, L. "Die Datierung der Nomarchen von Hermopolis aus dem frühen Mittleren Reich - eine Phantomdebatte?", *ZÄS* 135, 2008, 1-15; Brovarski, E., "A phantom debate?", in E. Bechtold, A. Gulyás, A. Hasznos (eds.), *From Illahun to Djeme: papers presented in honour of Ulrich Luft*, Oxford 2011, 25-30).

Ptahhotep<sup>35</sup>, *I received the one who made petition to me* (London UC 14430, x+10) and *friendly to the one who comes so that he might say what is in his heart* (Cairo 20543, 5). As caretakers and guardians, the auto/biographers also stress that they were impartial: *I helped the one I did not know like the one I knew, so that my name would be good in the mouth of those who are on earth* (Cairo 20543,15-16).<sup>36</sup>

A theme that is loosely connected to the provider-and-caretaker role described above and can be found only in texts from the First Intermediate Period to the Early Middle Kingdom is the (rightful) acquisition of property.<sup>37</sup> The auto/biographers describe having acquired various items of (movable) property, thus extending the possessions they inherited from their parents. The property that is acquired through the effort of the auto/biographer often comes from the patron (or, later, king): *I equipped myself with my own things which the Majesty of my lord gave to me because he loved me* (BM EA 614, 12).

The complex network of relationships in which the auto/biographers were involved included also other similarly ranked officials. Especially in the second half of the Eleventh Dynasty, the auto/biographers stress their exceptional abilities and position that brought them to stand out from among their peers. The overseer of the work-camp Antef states that he was *one to whom the great ones come bowing and a leader of officials, whom the great ones greet* (MMA 5795, 6-7). The overseer Abkau was *one noble and unique at the fore of officials* (Louvre C15, x+5) and the priest Antef, son of Myt *one about whose condition the great ones ... ask, touching the ground with their foreheads for him* (Ny Carlsberg 1241, 6).

The parts of the self-presentations that speak about the auto/biographers' social ties to other officials and to his inferiors reflect his unique qualities (for which he was chosen by the highest authority mentioned in the text, usually the king) and his readiness to use his good fortune to help the less fortunate ones, thus maintaining the stability of the Egyptian social order. Phrases such as *one with whom no man stayed angry overnight* (BM EA 159, 11-12), or *I have done what the great ones love and what the small ones praise so that my life might endure on earth and <in> the necropolis* (Brussels E 4985, 4-6) and *I did what the great ones*

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<sup>35</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> maxim; Junge, *Ptahhotep*, 195.

<sup>36</sup> At times, this motif is taken to an almost absurd extreme, such as in the claim of Shensetji to have given to "the one I loved as to the one I hated", see Franke, "Fürsorge und Patronat", 161.

<sup>37</sup> Franke, "Fürsorge und Patronat", 162-165.



*love and what the small ones praise* (Cairo CG 20503, 1) show the high value that Egyptian placed on general consensus.<sup>38</sup>

Being known as a man of *ma'at*, one who knows his position within the Egyptian society and acts according to it was a goal shared by all auto/biographers of this time. Most added to this was the secondary reputation through access and close relationship with a personage of reputable authority, usually the king. The third constituent part of an official's reputation, his career (or, in the case of ancient Egypt, its bright moments), is where his individual achievements, talents and character traits could be and were brought to the fore. Here a mere listing of epithets gives way to a (semi-)narrative account, and the officials lay claim to achievements unique in their time, or even in recorded history, to having [*surpassed*] *the sum of that which was made* (Louvre C15, x+2).<sup>39</sup>

The beginning of the official's career is one of the rare moments when the self-presentation appears to give us a glimpse of his private life – namely, his childhood and youth. A careful analysis of these instances shows, however, that mentions of childhood and/or youth only appear to emphasize the official's unique abilities and special status with the king.<sup>40</sup> One example may suffice to illustrate this point. The steward Rediukhnum sums up his childhood as follows: *I grew up under the feet of Her Majesty since (my) earliest youth, because she knew that my actions were excellent and that I followed the path of officials* (Cairo CG 20543, 10-11). The point that Rediukhnum thematizes here has little to do with his childhood: the queen selected him due to his inherent qualities and excellent performance. This statement appears to connect the earlier First Intermediate period *self-made-man* accounts with the return of the king's authority into official auto/biographies. In the Twelfth Dynasty, this is reflected in the frequently occurring ambivalent phrase *It was my own heart that advanced my position ... It was, however, the king ... who placed me in the midst of his officials* (Leiden V4, 6-7). Throughout the Middle Kingdom, however, auto/biographers continue to thematize the importance of their own character and effort in their success in statements such as the following: *It was his character that produced love of him (and) that advanced his place in the royal palace* (Cairo E. 36436, 9), or, to return to Rediukhnum again, *It was my heart that*

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<sup>38</sup> This preference of consensus seems to have been important even in court proceedings, which is reflected in the (stock) phrase "I judged the two brothers to (mutual) satisfaction" (Kloth, *Die (auto-)biographischen Inschriften*, 80).

<sup>39</sup> On surpassing the deeds of one's predecessors, see P. Vernus, *Essai sur la conscience de l'histoire dans l'Égypte pharaonique*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Landgráfová, *In the Realm of Reputation*, xx-xx.

*promoted my place, it was my character that caused my top (position) to last* (Cairo CG 20543, 17).

Before we take a closer look at the parts of the self-presentations that are dedicated to the text owners' careers, it should be noted that none of these texts actually contain anything like a career description. Firstly, the texts only select the pinnacles of their owners' official, military, priestly or artistic achievement – the aim of the entire auto/biography is to create and for ever preserve a good reputation of their owners, and thus only the positive and outstanding moments are selected for self-presentation. Secondly, as there was no real specialization in Middle Kingdom Egypt,<sup>41</sup> the officials also chose that aspect of their professional life which they considered constitutive for their identity. All of them were first and foremost officials of the state administration, but some identified more as priests, others as warriors, and yet others as artists. The accounts are highly variable, but all aim at portraying the text owners as reputable members of the ancient Egyptian society. The (semi-) narrative accounts are not numerous, but they add significantly to our knowledge of possible sources of good reputation in ancient Egypt.

An interesting testimony comes from the chief treasurer Tjetji: *The treasury was in my hand and under my seal, consisting of the choicest of all good things which were being brought to the Majesty of my lord from Upper and Lower Egypt, as every thing pleasing the heart, as a tribute of this entire land for the fear of him throughout this land, (and) which were being brought to the majesty of my lord from the rulers and chieftains of the desert for the fear of him throughout the foreign countries* (BM EA 614, 5-6). In his text, Tjetji shows great pride in his function of chief treasurer, and his career description thus shifts the focus from Tjetji's activities to the character of the treasury that was in his charge. In other words, Tjetji is attempting to derive his reputation from the responsibility over the highly prestigious collection of royal tribute and its management. This complements the secondary reputation through proximity to the king, which forms the main part of the rest of Tjetji's text.

Rediukhnum, from whose text we have already quoted extensively, reports on his role as a manager of an estate in Dendera: *I reorganised it, improving its administration to be better than before. I restored what I had found broken, I set up that which I had found fallen. I took (back) that which I had found stolen. ... I managed the estate well, I enlarged all its portals* (Cairo CG 20543, 12-15). Like that of Tjetji, Rediukhnum's text is mostly concerned with

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<sup>41</sup> Franke, Detlef, "Erste und Zweite Zwischenzeit - ein Vergleich", *ZÄS* 117, 1990, 124.

secondary reputation through proximity to his mistress, whose praise even takes up lines 7 to 10 of his auto/biography. In this short narrative part, Rediukhnum emphasizes his own achievement in the management of the estate that was entrusted to him in exceedingly deteriorated state.

The overseer of foreign mercenaries Djari describes an incident in which he served as a messenger for his king. He mentions his own role in the fights<sup>42</sup> against the Heracleopolitan forces in passing, and concentrates on the royal missive: *Horus Wahankh ... sent to me, after I had fought with the house of Khety to the west of Thinis: he made his assignments come. The ruler caused me to sail downstream to acquire food of weak<sup>43</sup> barley for this entire land, southward to Elephantine and northward to the Aphroditopole nome, because I knew my word(s) and my speaking was good. I was one weighty among the officials, one with an avid heart at the moment of striking, saying: "Approach me, Khety, who made storm-clouds over the district, one strong of rule! I made (my) boundary at the valley of Hezi!"* (Cairo JE 41437, 2-6). Djari's Brussels stela (E 4985) presents him mainly as a provider in need, which is repeated here, but alongside two other moments that build Djari's excellent reputation: firstly, he is the one selected by the king to pass his all-important message to the Heracleopolitan opponents, a fact that emphasizes that the Theban ruled held Djari in great esteem, secondly, Djari himself shows courage and determination in delivering the threat/challenge to the enemy forces.<sup>44</sup>

The hunter Antef, son of Ka, limits his career description to a mere listing of (highly prestigious) people and institutions that employed him: *I was a hunter for my lord, Horus Wahankh, son of Re Antef the Great, for my lord Horus Nakht-neb-tep-nefer son of Re Antef, (and) for my lord, Horus Sankh-ib-tawy, son of Re Mentuhotep. I was a hunter for the West, for the East, and for the temples. I was a hunter for the administration of provisions. I was a hunter for the Qenbet-council* (BM EA 1203, 2-5). Among the owners of auto/biographies, Antef's functions appear to be quite modest, and it is thus not surprising that he chose to

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<sup>42</sup> Expedition reports are the most frequent narrative auto/biographies from the Eleventh Dynasty. They have been recorded either on tomb stelae, like that of Djari or of the overseer of the workplace Khety, who dedicated one of his two Theban stelae to his mining expedition (Cairo JE 45058, 2-9). Other accounts are found in the destinations of expeditions, such as the Wadi Hammamat inscription of Henu (M114, Schenkel, *Memphis – Herakleopolis – Theben*, 253-258), the stela of Djemi from Gebelein (Schenkel, *Memphis – Herakleopolis – Theben*, 116-117), or the aforementioned texts in Hatnub.

<sup>43</sup> Müller – Wollermann, Renate, "Die Sogenannte Ober- und Unterägyptische Gerste", in: *VA* 3, 1987, 39-4.

<sup>44</sup> Darnell, John C, "The Message of King Wahankh Antef II to Khety, Ruler of Heracleopolis, *ZÄS* 124, 1997, 101-108.

derive his reputation mainly through the personages and institutions in whose employ he was. Antef is thus a prime example of secondary reputation in the Eleventh Dynasty.

The priest Antef, son of Myt, set up three stelae, two of which contain a nearly identical text dedicated to his sacred knowledge: *Governor in the estate of Montu, noble of the first primeval time, who knows the offerings of the temples, experienced in the time of carrying (offerings) to them, who detests their abomination for them, who knows what their heart receives, each god according to his need, who knows his offering bread of primeval times, who knows the demons of the highland and the lowland as well as all their affairs, one for whom is opened the content of the spell-book, who knows the Morning house, one apt in its doors* (Berlin 13272, 2-6). Antef's three stelae touch upon many of the topics that were used for reputation-building at this time (restoring deteriorated properties, the provider/guardian role, acquisition of property), but in this part he adds his access to sacred knowledge derived from his role as a priest.

Irtisen describes his artistic abilities: *I know the secret of hieroglyphs, (and) the performance of offering-lists. Every magical spell, I employed it, there being nothing therein that escaped me - for I was an artisan excellent in his art, who advanced to the top by means of what he had learned. I know the rules of proportion (?): the determination of the correct method of carving and incising as it goes out and in until the body comes to its (proper) place. I know the going of a male statue, the coming of a female statue, and the standing of a bound (?)bird, the defiance(?) of a single captive, while one eye looks to the other, and the terror of the face of the captive is frightened, the raising of the arm of the one who spears a hippopotamus, the gait of a runner. I know how to make inlays and the things that go in them, not allowing fire to burn them, and without them being washed away by water either* (Louvre C 14, 6-12). His text is in many ways parallel to that of the priest Antef. Just like him, Irtisen describes his exclusive knowledge which no one else could access in order to create a long-lasting reputation for himself. Unlike Antef, though, Irtisen appears to rely exclusively on this knowledge and adds none of the other possible sources of reputation found in contemporary texts.

These (semi-) narrative accounts usually describe unusual, unique achievements in military and pseudo-military expeditions, performance in an exceptional office,<sup>45</sup> or access to sacred,

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<sup>45</sup> Tjetji seems to have been one of the first holders of the title *jmj-r3 htm.t* (Desplancques, Sophie, *L'institution du Trésor en Égypte des origines à la fin du Moyen Empire*, Paris: PUPS 2006, 158-161), and repeats it several times on his stela.

exclusive knowledge. The Eleventh dynasty officials whose narrative testimonies have come down to us are few, but their achievements and abilities clearly stand out from the accounts of their contemporaries. It is interesting to note one phenomenon in this connection, namely the veracity statements that have appeared at the end of the Old Kingdom and were most numerous in First Intermediate Period texts, asserting the truthfulness of the accounts in which they appear and dismissing all others as “lies” and “offices of the necropolis”.<sup>46</sup> They are rather rare in the Eleventh Dynasty, but reappear again in the Twelfth, where they are closely tied to narrative accounts of military and pseudo-military character.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps these veracity statements are a direct consequence of these rare Eleventh Dynasty narrative accounts that stood out so clearly from the rest of similar texts that they needed a special means of legitimization beyond the mere *pacte autobiographique*.<sup>48</sup>

Those officials that could not rightfully claim to have achieved the levels of mastery of Irtisen or to have possessed the knowledge of Antef, son of Myt, usually concentrate the description of their abilities especially on rhetorical prowess and cleverness. In the early Eleventh Dynasty, the statements contain more concrete information on the employment of the auto/biographer’s rhetorical prowess: *I am one open of mouth, beneficent of counsel and strong of utterance on the day of assembly, one who gives a statement, [self-controlled on the day of] council* (Strassbourg 345, 6-8), *or one control[led of speech in] the council of the offic[ials], one sel[f-controlled on the day] of trou[b]le* (Cairo CG 20502, x+1). After the reunification of the land, the motif appears mostly in phrases that become part of the stock phrases used throughout the rest of the Middle Kingdom in the “encomiastic”<sup>49</sup> style: *one knowledgeable, wise and [clever?]* (MMA 5795, 2), *wise and clever* (Cairo 3/6/25/2, frg. x+3)<sup>50</sup>, *one knowledgeable, who has no equal* (Louvre C 15, x+5), *who knew things, one wise, acute of mind* (BM EA 1164, 1).

## Conclusions

<sup>46</sup> Coulon, Laurent, “Véracité et rhétorique dans les autobiographies égyptiennes de la Première Période Intermédiaire”, *BIFAO* 97 (1997), 109-138.

<sup>47</sup> Landgráfová, Renata, “No imagined worlds, no imagined achievements. Veracity Statements in Twelfth Dynasty auto/biographies”, in: Grajetzki, Wolfram and Gianluca Miniaci, *Company of Images. Modelling the ancient Egyptian imaginary World of the Middle Bronze Age (2000 – 1500 BC)*, London: *in press*.

<sup>48</sup> Gnirs, Andrea M., “Die ägyptische Autobiographie”, in A. Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian literature: history and forms*, Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill 1996, 191-241.

<sup>49</sup> Gnirs, “Die Ägyptische Autobiographie”, 205.

<sup>50</sup> Daressy, Georges, “Fragments de stèles de la XI<sup>e</sup> dynastie”, *ASAE* VIII, 1907, 243-244.

In the Eleventh Dynasty, the main goal of self-presentation was to create for oneself a good reputation which was the source of social immortality. There were three sources of reputation: the primary source, i.e. the inherent qualities and achievements of the text owner; the secondary source, i.e. the proximity to and favoured status by a highly prestigious individual (usually, but at this time not exclusively, the king); and the “negative” source, the self-restraint, i.e. the despicable deeds that the text owner may have had an opportunity to do, but refrained from. While narrative segments are rare, the use of stock phrases that flourished fully in the later Middle Kingdom is only just beginning in the second half of the Eleventh Dynasty.