CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERISATION IN THE QUARREL OF APOPHIS AND SEQENENRE
AND THE TAKING OF JOPPA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the representation of the protagonists of two ‘historical’ narratives from the Late Egyptian Stories and suggests that a study of characterisation based on language helps us draw some better-founded conclusions about very fragmentary texts. The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre, written on Papyrus Sallier I, dates to the reign of Merenptah.1 Given that the scribe of the only surviving manuscript, Pentaweret, stopped the story mid-sentence to commence writing an “instruction in letter-writing”, we could presume that this text was copied out as part of a scribal exercise.2 The Taking of Joppa precedes The Doomed Prince on the verso of Papyrus Harris 500. Since the outermost part of the scroll is damaged, the beginning of the tale is lost.3 Nevertheless, by making reference to literary theory, particularly genre theory, and historical context, the following grammatical analysis increases our predictive power about the missing parts of the text by isolating patterns of representation for opposing character pairs, which supply us with clearer ideas about their role in the plot. For instance, the static portrayal of Seqenenre against the dynamic representation of Apophis in Apophis and Seqenenre suggests that the tale parodies the monumental historical texts of the day, since the foreign Opponent contends with an inactive Egyptian Anti-Hero. On the other hand, the superficial characterisation of both Djehuty and the Rebel in The Taking of Joppa suggests that this text lay closer to the topos encapsulated by the military report genre on which it was based, though it also seemed to contain humorous elements which distanced it from what we would expect in an official version.

1 Gardiner 1932: xiii.
2 Gardiner & Gunn 1918: 40. It is curious that the last part of the remaining text is repeated on the verso only to stop at the same place.
3 Gardiner 1932: ix.
Four main features characterise these texts as historical narratives: reference to recognisable historical content, displacement from this historical context, referencing of royal monumental texts, and lastly, comment on both the referenced style and perhaps also the historical (or contemporary political) context.

4.2.1 Historical Content

The historical narrative can be differentiated from other narratives because it “revisits, in a fictive way, past historical periods or figures”. The texts under analysis vividly recall the domination of Northern Egypt by the Asiatic ‘Hyksos’ during the Second Intermediate Period and the northern campaigns conducted during the reign of Menkeperre Thutmose III. Both texts also include features usually pertaining to distinct types of royal historical texts: *The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre* documents an interaction between a Hyksos ruler and his Egyptian counterpart, whereas *The Taking of Joppa* recounts a military expedition.

4.2.2 Historical Displacement

The surviving manuscripts of *The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre* and *The Taking of Joppa* belong to the Ramesside Period, long after the times in which they were set. Even if these single extant copies are not the earliest manuscripts, both are written in literary Late Egyptian, which is used in texts only from the end of the 18th Dynasty. This is significant indication that even if the content has been transmitted from the time of the historical events themselves, its synthesis as a tale in this form has occurred only in the recent past. Despite this, their clear historical setting

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5 Gardiner & Gunn 1918: 40 and Gardiner 1932: xiii.