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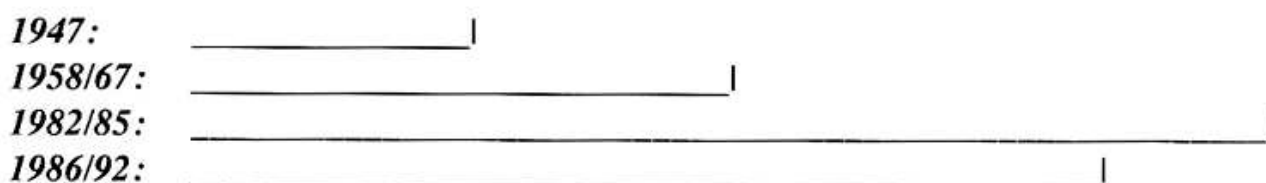


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THE CURSE OF PUBLICATION AND THE BLIGHT OF NOVELTY

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During the last 50 years, the sheer volume of publications in Egyptology has grown steadily, a fact that readily becomes apparent if one takes the trouble to work through that most enduring and useful monument to the International Association of Egyptologists, namely the *Annual Egyptological Bibliography*, so indefatigably and selflessly edited by our valiant Dutch colleagues, from both the Janssens (J. M. A. and J. J.) down to Dr. L. Zonhoven, the present editor. From a modest 337 items listed in the *AEB* for 1947, the general total crept up to the 600s and 700s by the 1950s and 1960s, passing the 1000 mark by the late 1970s, and reached an all-time peak during 1982-85, at over 1,460 items, returning to 1100+ items during 1986-92 (I have no figures for 1993-96). In other words, as fruitful scholars, our egyptological output of papers, books, etc., has increased **fourfold** in 50 years! One may diagram it as follows:



This is a lot of publications for any of us to cope with! In 1947, it would have taken 11 months to read everything, at one item per day (excluding all book-reviews). But in 1985, one would have had to read four items per day (be they books or papers), all 365 days of the year, to have read everything (again, excluding book-reviews). And it would be nearly the same today. Nobody, of course, can or does read absolutely everything — but we all need to keep up with *some* proportion of this ever-growing output, just to stay abreast of our particular fields of interest, in teaching and research alike. So, the problem of quantity remains. Potentially, every one of us has to cope with *four times* as much reading as our colleagues (and some of us!) did 50 years ago.

Therefore — and here is the burning point at issue — we all need to have this flood of literature produced in formats that are as ‘reader-friendly’ as possible, so that we can master it as quickly, efficiently and painlessly as possible for our own work.

But, *unbelievably*, in the publishing world *exactly the opposite is now happening*. And has already happened in some of our neighbouring disciplines in Near-Eastern

and related studies. Instead of seeking to save time and effort, some disciplines and publishers (particularly in North America) are foisting upon scholarship *alien systems of reference* which waste enormous amounts of a scholar's time when trying to check the references cited in a book or paper. These totally time-wasting systems bear the names Harvard (or 'social science') and Vancouver. For clarity, let us look briefly at current modes of reference overall.

First, the very simplest way of citing a reference to one's sources is just to include it (in recognisable form) *in the actual text* of the book or paper. This is not elegant, but it *is* the fastest and most direct and effective method if used sensibly. The late Sir Alan Gardiner used this method most effectively in his great *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, I-II (Oxford, 1947). And, in this mention of his book, I have used it here. It takes the eye only a split second to move from statement to cited source¹. No time or effort is wasted.

Secondly, at least since the last century, scholars have adopted a much more elegant mode for citing references, by relegating them to *footnotes*, at the foot of the page (hence the name) — leaving their main text running clean and continuous, without clutter. The needed references are still easily available for rapid consultation². In a well-set page, the reader's eye takes only a second or two to travel from index-number in the text down to the corresponding number and note at the page-foot. It is not quite so instantaneous as seeing a reference in the text — but is generally quick and convenient enough, unless the footnotes are excessive in number and/or density. I need sing the praises of the proper footnote no further — it serves us all well, every working day.

So far, so good. But, **thirdly**, in the post-war years, the manual setting of proper footnotes became ever more expensive, when money for learned publication was often in short supply. So, people felt obliged to resort to *end-notes*. Notes set at the end of a paper or book were cheaper, but far less convenient. They condemn the serious reader (concerned for the sources) to be forever going back-and-forth, back-and-forth, back-and-forth, between text and end-notes, gradually wasting more and more time. Even worse (in books) was the insertion of notes after each chapter in the body of the work, making them doubly difficult to find and gratuitously wasting *twice* the amount of time, on top of all the continual going back-and-forth, which was particularly bad when cross-references entailed using notes to more than one chapter at once. The introduction of the Personal Computer (with *proper* footnotes available at the flick of a button, at no cost whatever!) should have ended this end-note nonsense by the present time — and yet authors and publishers still persist with it. In a popular work, it may be desirable not to have notes of any kind cluttering the pages of

¹ The same mode of reference is used in Kitchen, *Ramesseid Inscriptions Translated & Annotated, Notes & Comments*, lff. (Oxford, 1993ff.).

² If the print in the notes is set clearly, and not over-densely.

main text. But the solution is to have a limited, strictly pertinent bibliography (arranged to match the text) at the end of the book, for ‘serious’ readers³.

But generally, end-reference systems should have died by now. But not so for another reason. Also since the war years, in North America, anthropologists and sociologists took over the *Harvard* type reference system already used in the natural sciences — and apparently for no better reason than to gain kudos by passing themselves off as ‘scientists’, or to make their writings appear ‘scientific’ — a piece of very silly snobbery in which they were duly followed by American archaeologists working in various prehistoric zones, again to persuade onlookers that archaeology is a ‘science’. It is **not**; it is a humanities subject (its subject is humanity...) that merely utilises a variety of sciences as and when appropriate. For all this folly, see already (and eloquently) Derchain 1993: 27-28.

If the Harvard system had been time-efficient (like text-references or proper footnotes), this pseudo-science silliness would have been harmless, and nobody’s work would have suffered. Unfortunately, it is extremely inefficient in terms of being time-consuming when checking-out references. By this method, the author, date-of-publication and page is cited in the text (‘Muggins 1999:12’), leaving the reader to chase off to the end of the paper or the back of the book to find the precise reference. So, we are once again reduced (as with end-notes) to having to flip-flap back-and-forth, back-and-forth, back-and-forth, back-and-forth, between text and references. Cumulatively, the wastage of time is very considerable, as one searches repeatedly through long bibliographies time and again. Two otherwise excellent recent books illustrate this to the *nth* degree. One (Levy 1995: 549-604) ends with not less than 136 closely-printed pages of chapter-by-chapter bibliography (73 lines deep on a full page, in 8-point type); the other (Shaw et al. 1993: 750-833) has a simple A-to-Z bibliography of 83 pages. The latter is bad enough to use — but the former involves not merely the usual back-and-forth, back-and-forth, back-and-forth nonsense, but also compels the reader to retrieve the right chapter-section (out of 136 pages) every time, plus other references under other chapters to which one is not infrequently cross-referenced — it is enough to make the user not merely referenced but thoroughly cross! Just above, I have used this utterly outdated, outmoded, ‘old crap’ Harvard system in this segment of my paper, so that my readers will be forced here to use it for themselves, and can observe the waste of time and effort that even a mere three references cost by this means, as opposed to references in the text or in proper footnotes. This system has other severe disadvantages, compared to the civilised use of footnotes. First, it is extremely tedious to compile reference-lists at the end of a paper; second, these long separate lists waste (literally) tons more paper

³ As an example see Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant* (Warminster, 1982), where each sub-section of text has its own corresponding sub-section of listed works, each clearly demarcated.

in an ecologically-conscious age; thirdly, it is far easier to omit a reference by sheer accident from an end-list, than to forget a footnote — and even worse accidents can happen (impossible with footnotes) — thus, with Zarins 1986: 36-57, those pages are filled completely by the main text of an invaluable report on West-Arabian archaeology (Red Sea littoral), but, alas, the publisher of the journal concerned accidentally left out the *entire body* of references in the printing!! As a result, we can but guess what treasure is hid behind exotic notations such as ‘Jado & Zötl 1984’! We’ll never know! This kind of monumental blunder is impossible with same-page footnotes (at least *en masse*, as here). Frankly, the Harvard system has had its day; it belongs on the scrap-heap along with end-notes from the era of immediate post-war poverty, in this age of the personal computer. If our witch-doctoral friends, the anthropologists and sociologists, want to lumber themselves with this silliness, they are welcome to it. We in Egyptology and Near-Eastern studies have such richly complex ancient societies and scholarly sources to handle, that end-note and Harvard inefficiencies have no place here where we have to carry four times as much literature as formerly. Goodbye and good riddance!

Fourthly, I have to say that there is far, far worse to come to impede the busy scholar. Very recently, there has emerged from North America the *Vancouver System* of referencing. In this system, in footnotes (or end-notes), articles in periodicals (or collective works) are cited *exclusively by their titles, and not by the journal (or collective work) reference*, after the first mention. Now, that first mention can be (literally) scores and scores of footnotes earlier in a work than in the note one first happens to consult — and if the work contains no bibliography, the only way to track down the reference is to sit down and wearily and doggedly plough backwards through page after page, until (if ever...) one finds the first citation. And it will NOT always be in the initial footnote, either. A more exasperating and time-wasting system than this one has yet to be invented. When we turn to the notes, *we expect to locate the reference precisely*, so that we may go to the bookshelf and find it — the title of an article *cannot* do this for us: it is 100% useless. For example, one of Gardiner’s abidingly-useful historical papers concerned the late Nineteenth Dynasty⁴. But citing it solely by title gets nobody anywhere. The vital cipher ‘*JEA 44 (1958)*’, however, takes one straight to the shelf. And this very datum is what Vancouver omits! Or a more frivolously-entitled philological note of my own, of more recent date⁵. Its title tells nobody *anything* — whereas the journal-reference would have located it immediately. We can thus find in works using this appalling system footnote after footnote after footnote citing over and over again the author and paper-title

⁴ Sir A.H. Gardiner, ‘Only one King Siptah and Twosre not his Wife’, 12-22.

⁵ K.A. Kitchen, ‘Lotuses, lotuses... Poor Susan’s older than we thought’, 29-31. If readers cannot remember this paper’s location (as Vancouver magically expects them to do!), they will find the answer at the end of this paper.

(with pagination), but **NOT** the vital information: in which periodical or book it is located. A good example is in an essay on the Philistines in a recent book on Near-Eastern peoples in antiquity⁶. In notes 68-73 on pp. 248-249, a paper by Trude Dothan has its title quoted in full, all six times over: 'What We Know about the Philistines' — with pagination but *no journal reference*. We can only know *that* about the Philistines by wading back page after page for six pages, to p. 244, n. 45, where we finally learn that her paper appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8/4 (1982). Far worse is the case in an excellent paper on food-plants used in the ancient E.-Arabian kingdom of Dilmun (3rd-2nd millennia BC), written by my redoubtable friend, Prof. D. T. Potts⁷. The equally excellent journal in which this paper appeared first of all commits the blunder of sticking to end-notes instead of footnotes, in an age when computers should have abolished the end-note. And then it compounds this blunder by using the Vancouver madness. If one happened to pick up (for example) the laconic reference to 'Mackie, Hasa, 205' in note 480 (in this 490-note article!), one has to plough wearily back through 10 whole pages of **420** previous end-notes, to locate the original reference (n. 60)! The time spent doing this takes several precious minutes, whereas a *footnote* that cited the reference as 'Mackie, *G[eographical] J[ournal]* 63 (1924), 205' would have met the eye instantly, and taken one directly to the bookshelf if need be. A dozen such check-ups, and a whole morning has gone. A dozen more, the afternoon has gone. To check even a fifth of Potts's references would cost an entire morning, afternoon and evening. Whereas *footnotes* at the text *containing the essential journal-reference each time* ('Mackie, *GJ* 63 (1924), 205...') would have reduced a full day's labour to 30 minutes. And if one is studying a subject intensely, checking data in half-a-dozen papers and books, 20 or 30 minutes filleting out data in each may be feasible — but a *whole day* spent on each will simply bring the research to grinding halt in no time at all (after the first week instead of 30/40 minutes...).

In short, this idiot Vancouver system is the biggest disaster to strike at scholarship since the burning-down of the library at Alexandria. If allowed to proliferate, it will simply bring all serious scholarship to a grinding halt. There is one, and only one, efficient way to deal with references: (i) use footnotes (possible without cost to all, with personal computers), and (ii) always to cite the key title or cipher of a journal or work in the notes, **NOT** the paper-title, which (like my 'Lotuses...') can be totally meaningless. We now have to digest four times as many publications as we did 50 years go — and this *could* get worse! The *last* thing any of us need is this moronic non-reference system. It must be strangled and abolished. So far, Egyptology has

⁶ By D.M. Howard in A.J. Hoerth et al. (eds), *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Grand Rapids, 1994), 231-50; a useful volume marred only by its use of this mad system.

⁷ D.T. Potts, 'Contributions to the agrarian history of Eastern Arabia II. The cultivars', *Arabian Archaeology & Epigraphy* 5 (1994), 236-75.

almost escaped it. It must be warded-off, and also expunged from those provinces of Near-Eastern studies to which it has already penetrated. Our American colleagues in particular need to realise the menace in our midst, and refuse to use it, and refuse to allow either publishers or librarians or anyone else to impose it. Only a Methuselah would live long enough to cope with it!

* * *

Therefore in Cambridge in September 1995, I proposed that (i) the IAE should condemn this unnecessary and time-wasting folly, (ii) it should recommend banning Vancouver (and discouraging Harvard) from Egyptological publications worldwide, (iii) this danger should be signalled to other such entities (e.g., BANEA) concerned with the Ancient Near Eastern world, to encourage them to do likewise; (iv) all relevant publishers (especially in North America) be firmly advised to abandon this anti-scholarly system of reference in publications forthwith. Scholars have better things to do with their time! My appeal met with widest approbation — publishers, take note!

Oh! our specimen Harvard references:

Derchain, P., 'Tartufe ou les plumes du paon?', in *Göttinger Miszellen* 136 (1993), 27-28.
Levy, T. (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995).

Shaw, T. et al. (eds), *The Archaeology of Africa, Food, Metals and Towns*, One World Archaeology 20 (London: Routledge, 1993).

Zarins, J, and Al-Badr, H., 'Archaeological Investigation in the Southern Tihama Plain II (including Sihi, 217-107 and Sharja, 217-172), 1405/1985', in *Atlat* 10 (1896), 36-57 (*sic*).

Answer to fn. 5 above: Varia Aegyptiaca 3/1 (1987).