INTRODUCTION

The Egyptian state is the living body of God, i.e. of the king. This is the presumption of this book.

The founder of Egyptology, Jean-Francois Champollion, once wrote: *"In such inquiries one can progress with the help of facts only, and monuments are the only reliable facts..."* This is perhaps the best definition of Egyptological studies: patient and conscientious study of the monuments of ancient Egypt. The monuments of ancient Egyptian culture are located primarily in the Nile valley. The evidence of Egyptian penetration far south into ancient Nubia, ancient Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine to the east, imported Egyptian artifacts in the eastern Mediterranean lands, are also of interest to Egyptology.

The wealth of sources has facilitated the development of the following main branches in the young science of Egyptology in a comparatively short period of time: ancient Egyptian linguistics (study of the script, vocalization, morphology and syntax, genetic relations of the Egyptian language), textology, history, archaeology, history of culture, etc. This classification is conventional. The main method of Egyptological studies is the complex approach to monuments.

In the tradition of Manetho's Aegyptiaca (4th-3rd century B.C.), the chronology of ancient Egypt is based on kingdoms and dynasties: Early Dynastic Period (Dynasties I-II), Old Kingdom (Dynasties III-VI), First

Intermediate Period (Dynasties VII-X), Middle Kingdom (Dynasties XI-XIII), Second Intermediate Period (Dynasties XIV-XVII), New Kingdom (Dynasties XVIII-XX), Late Period (Dynasties XXI-XXXI). The kings before Dynasty I are grouped in the so-called Dynasty Zero, while post-Dynasty XXXI Egypt was incorporated in the Graeco-Roman world. The different periods in the history of ancient Egypt have not been studied equally.

The terms "Egyptian" and "Coptic" come from one and the same ancient Egyptian place-name, Hw.t-k'-Pth, conventionally translated as "Home of the Double of Ptah," the name of the main temple at Memphis. As one of the names of the city, the term eventually came to designate Egypt itself. The Egyptian language forms a separate group in the Afro-Asiatic (Hamito-Semitic) language family. There are seven distinct stages in the development of the language: proto-Egyptian (pre-literate), from the separation of the Egyptian language from the Afro-Asiatic language community to the end of the fourth millennium B.C.; Old Egyptian, c. the 32nd-23rd/22nd century B.C.; Middle Egyptian, 23rd/22nd-15th/14th century B.C.; Late Egyptian, 17th/16th - 7th century B.C.; Demotic, 7th century B.C. - 5th century A.D.; Old Coptic, 3rd century B.C. -5th century A.D.; Coptic, second half of the 2nd century A.D. (?) - 17th/20th century A.D. (?). The earliest known Egyptian inscription is hieroglyphic and dates back to the mid-fourth millennium B.C. The cursive forms of script - hieratic and demotic - evolved from the hieroglyphs. Modern Egyptology defines Egyptian writing as consonantal morphemic-ideographic. After the 2nd-3rd century A.D., the old forms of writing were gradually replaced by a new script based on the Greek alphabet. This process probably goes back to the 3rd century B.C.

No philological treatise written by an ancient Egyptian is extant. Ancient secular and ecclesiastical sources offer sparse and controversial evidence about the Egyptian language and script. Herodotus, Diodorus and many others mention the hieratic and demotic scripts only, and the hieroglyphic is first documented by Clement of Alexandria. Porphyrus is believed to have distinguished four types of script. Scholars were baffled by this controversial evidence for centuries, their entire efforts to decipher the ancient inscriptions boiling down to attempts at interpretation.

There are two milestone events in the birth of Egyptology: the expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt (1798), which led to the many-

volume Description de T Egypte and the September 1822 letter by Jean-Francois Champollion, Lettre a M. Dacier, in which the French scholar announced that he had finally deciphered ancient Egyptian writing after many years of research. As a result of the efforts of his followers - R. Lep-sius, K. Brugsch, G. Maspero, A. Erman and others - an enormous amount of material was studied by the end of the 19th century: Egyptian inscriptions were no longer deciphered but read, and conditions were created for the study of the historical processes in the Nile valley.

As a result of the efforts of the German school of Egyptology headed by A. Erman, the first modern grammar of Late Egyptian appeared at the end of the 19th century, followed by Erman's classical study on Middle Egyptian (*Agyptische Grammatik*, Berlin, 1928). Meanwhile, Erman's student K. Sethe published his fundamental study on the Egyptian verb (*Das agyptische Verbum in Altagyptischen, Neuagyptischen und Koptischen*. Bd. I-III, Leipzig, 1899-1902). The study of Egyptian history scored its first major achievement in the late 19th and early 20th century. J.H. Breasted published his History of Egypt and the now classical corpus of translated historical records (*Ancient Records of Egypt*. Vols 1-5, Chicago, 1906). In 1927, the most prominent representative of the British school of Egyptology, A.H. Gardiner, published his *Egyptian Grammar* (London, 1927), the "holy bible" for contemporary Egyptologists.

On the proposal and under the guidance of A. Erman, after 1897 Egyptologists from all countries started compiling a dictionary of the Egyptian language, first published in five volumes in 1926-1931.

Monuments are the main source of information about the history of the Nile valley.

Archaeology and written records have an auxiliary role.

I am writing this Introduction with a sense of satisfaction. In the past 30 years, Sofia has become the first and only centre in Southeastern Europe to have passed the thorny path from Myth to Egyptology.

On the personal plane, this perspective of ancient Egypt is a sequel to the endless discussions which we had with my late teacher I.V. Vinogradov in the long St Petersburg nights.