

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

Volume II: The New Kingdom



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PART ONE

Monumental Inscriptions

I. *Inscriptions from Private Tombs*

The three tomb inscriptions in this section are major representatives of their kind. The *Autobiography of Ahmose son of Abana* continues the traditional genre of tomb autobiography. Its special interest is historical, for it furnishes the principal account of the expulsion of the Hyksos. It is a wholly martial autobiography that describes the actions and career of a soldier. As such it is a rarity among Egyptian autobiographies, for most of them came from members of the civilian bureaucracy.

Ahmose began his career as a soldier on board a ship, stepping into the position that his father had held. Having come to the attention of King Ahmose, he was transferred to the north, where he saw action in the decisive battles against the Hyksos, first at Avaris and subsequently at Sharuhén in Palestine. Then he participated in the Nubian campaigns of Kings Amenhotep I and Thutmose I, where he so distinguished himself that he was promoted to the rank of commander of a crew and given substantial landholdings in his home town Nekheb, modern El-Kab. Finally he took part in the Syrian campaign of Thutmose I in which the king reached the Euphrates. Thus risen from the ranks, he was able to bequeath wealth to his descendants and to found a family which reached the upper echelons of the civil service. His son Iturri and his grandson Paheri became tutors of the king's sons, and Paheri attained the post of mayor of Nekheb and Iunyt. The style of the autobiography is simple, straightforward, and unadorned.

The grandson *Paheri*, whose career probably began under Thutmose I, built for himself the handsomest of the known tombs of El-Kab. In addition to being mayor of two towns, he was "scribe of the grain accounts" for an area extending north as far as Dendera. The fine reliefs in his tomb show him overseeing the various agricultural activities that were in his charge. His tomb does not contain an autobiographical prose narration. Instead he had the rear wall of the main hall inscribed with elaborate prayers and a recital of his virtues, the whole composition designed to help attain a blessed afterlife envisaged in considerable detail. This vision contains many of the features that were incorporated in the spells of the Book of the Dead.

The highest official of the state was the vizier. His duties were so important and so numerous that he was installed by the king in person, in a public ceremony in which the king gave him a formal charge. The text of this charge was inscribed on a wall of the sumptuous tomb of the *Vizier Rekhmire*, who served King Thutmose III. The same text with variants appears in two other Theban tombs of viziers of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The king's speech is composed in the orational style.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AHMOSE SON OF ABANA

In his Tomb at El-Kab

The inscription is carved in two parts: lines 1-31 on the right-hand wall of the hall of the rock-tomb (east wall), and lines 32-40 on the left side of the door wall (south wall). Also on the right-hand wall is the standing relief figure of Ahmose accompanied by the small figure of his grandson Paheri.

A list of Ahmose's landholdings and slaves, not translated here, is inscribed on the right side of the door wall.

Publication: LD III, 12, b-d. V. Loret, *L'inscription d'Ahmès fils d'Abana*, Bibliothèque d'étude, 3 (Cairo, 1910). *Urk. IV*, 1-11.

Translation: BAR, II, §§ 1-16, 38-39, 78-82. *Urk. deutsch*, pp. 1-6. B. Gunn and A. H. Gardiner, *JEA*, 5 (1918), 48-54. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 233-234 (excerpts).

Historical study: C. Vandersleyen, *Les Guerres d'Amosis, fondateur de la XVIIIe dynastie*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth, 1 (Brussels, 1971), pp. 17-87. For additional references see PM V, 182 and Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.

(1) The Crew Commander Ahmose son of Abana,¹ the justified; he says. I speak to you, all people. I let you know what favors came to me. I have been rewarded with gold seven times in the sight of the whole land, with male and female slaves as well. I have been endowed with very many fields. The name of the brave man is in that which he has done; it will not perish in the land forever.²

He speaks as follows. I grew up in the town of Nekheb,³ my father being a soldier of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seqenenre,⁴ the justified. Baba (5) son of Reonet was his name. I became a soldier in his stead on the ship "The Wild Bull" in the time of the Lord of the Two Lands, Nebpehtire,⁵ the justified. I was a youth who had not married; I slept in . . .⁶

Expulsion of the Hyksos

Now when I had established a household,⁷ I was taken to the ship "Northern," because I was brave. I followed the sovereign on foot when he rode about on his chariot. When the town of Avaris was besieged, I fought bravely on foot in his majesty's presence.⁸ Thereupon I was appointed to the ship "Rising in Memphis." Then there was fighting on the water in "Pjedku" of Avaris. I made a seizure (10) and carried off a hand.⁹ When it was reported to the royal herald the gold of valor was given to me.

Then they fought again in this place; I again made a seizure there and carried off a hand. Then I was given the gold of valor once again.

Then there was fighting in Egypt to the south of this town, and I carried off a man as a living captive. I went down into the water—for he was captured on the city side—and crossed the water carrying him.

When it was reported to the royal herald I was rewarded with gold once more. Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there: one man, three women; total, four persons.¹⁰ His majesty gave them to me as slaves.

(15) Then Sharuhén was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it: two women and a hand. Then the gold of valor was given me, and my captives were given to me as slaves.

Nubian campaign of King Ahmose

Now when his majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer,¹¹ to destroy the Nubian Bowmen. His majesty made a great slaughter among them, and I brought spoil from there: two living men and three hands. Then I was rewarded with gold once again, and two female slaves were given to me.¹² His majesty journeyed north, his heart rejoicing in valor and victory. He had conquered southerners, northerners.

Destruction of the rebels Aata and Tetian

Then Aata came to the South.¹³ (20) His fate brought on his doom. The gods of Upper Egypt grasped him. He was found by his majesty at Tent-taa.¹⁴ His majesty carried him off as a living captive, and all his people as booty. I brought two young warriors¹⁵ as captives from the ship of Aata. Then I was given five persons and portions of land amounting to five arurae in my town. The same was done for the whole crew.

Then came that foe named Tetian.¹⁶ He had gathered the malcontents to himself. His majesty slew him; his troop was wiped out. Then I was given three persons and five arurae of land in my town.

Nubian campaign of King Amenhotep I

Then I conveyed King Djeserkare,¹⁷ the justified, when he sailed south to Kush, to enlarge (25) the borders of Egypt. His majesty wrote that Nubian Bowman in the midst of his army. They were carried off in fetters, none missing, the fleeing destroyed as if they had never been. Now I was in the van of our troops and I fought really well. His majesty saw my valor. I carried off two hands and presented them to his majesty. Then his people and his cattle were pursued, and I carried off a living captive and presented him to his majesty.

I brought his majesty back to Egypt in two days from "Upper Well," and was rewarded with gold. I brought back two female slaves as

booty, apart from those that I had presented to his majesty. Then they made me a "Warrior of the Ruler."

Nubian campaign of King Thutmose I

Then I conveyed King Aakheperkare,¹⁸ the justified, when he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer, (30) to crush rebellion throughout the lands, to repel the intruders from the desert region. I was brave in his presence in the bad water, in the towing of the ship over the cataract. Thereupon I was made crew commander.

Then his majesty [I was informed that the Nubian]----- At this his majesty became enraged like a leopard. His majesty shot, and his first arrow pierced the chest of that foe. Then those [enemies turned to flee], helpless before his Uraeus. A slaughter was made among them; their dependents were carried off as living captives. (35) His majesty journeyed north, all foreign lands in his grasp, and that wretched Nubian Bowman head downward at the bow of his majesty's ship "Falcon." They landed at Ipet-sut.¹⁹

Syrian campaign of King Thutmose I

After this (his majesty) proceeded to Retjenu, to vent his wrath²⁰ throughout the lands. When his majesty reached Nahrin, his majesty found that foe marshalling troops. Then his majesty made a great slaughter of them. Countless were the living captives which his majesty brought back from his victories. Now I was in the van of our troops, and his majesty saw my valor. I brought a chariot, its horse, and him who was on it as a living captive. When they were presented to his majesty, I was rewarded with gold once again.

(40) I have grown old; I have reached old age. Favored as before, and loved [by my lord], I [rest] in the tomb that I myself made.

NOTES

1. The name of his mother, variously transcribed by scholars as Eben, Ibana, Abana, or Abina.

2. A proverb which occurs twice more in inscriptions of Thutmose III (*Urk. IV*, 684 and 780); see B. Gunn, *JEA*, 12 (1926), 283.

3. The metropolis of the third nome of Upper Egypt, modern El-Kab.

4. Throne name of King Tao II of the Seventeenth Dynasty.

5. Throne name of King Ahmose, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

6. The meaning of *smt šnw* is unknown. The rendering "hammock of net" of Gunn and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 49, lacks probability.

7. I.e., had married.

8. Ahmose is a marine rather than a sailor. Whether actual naval engagements took place at that time is doubtful. The ships served primarily to transport troops.

9. The seizure is a slaying, after which a hand of the dead enemy was cut off and brought back as proof of the killing. For bringing back live prisoners other terms are used.

10. Literally, "heads."

11. A name for a portion of Nubia south of the second cataract. See Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-68.

12. All captives were presented to the king and he distributed some of them to his soldiers. In this incident Ahmose presents two men and receives two women as reward.

13. This enemy seems to have been a Nubian. The name Aata, which could be a title rather than a personal name, is discussed by Gunn and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 50 n. 3, and Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff., who makes it plausible that the attack by this "rebel" takes place during or after the king's return journey, and to the north of the second cataract, i.e. in Egypt proper. The region of Lower Nubia between the first and second cataracts was considered to be Egypt by the Egyptians ever since it had been conquered by the kings of the Twelfth Dynasty, even though it had been lost during the Hyksos period and had only recently been reconquered.

14. Or Tjenti-aa; the locality has not been identified, see H. Goedicke, *Kush*, 13 (1965), 104-105, and Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

15. On *mg3* "young warrior," see Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

16. This rebel was an Egyptian.

17. Throne name of King Amenhotep I.

18. Throne name of King Thutmose I.

19. The northern part of Thebes, modern Karnak.

20. Literally, "to wash his heart."

THE PRAYERS OF PAHERI

In his Tomb at El-Kab

Paheri's career probably began under Thutmose I and may have lasted through the reign of Queen Hatshepsut. He became a scribe of the treasury and also mayor of the towns of Nekheb and Iunyt (El-Kab and Esna).

The back wall of the main hall of his tomb was given the shape of a round-topped stela with a niche in its center. The niche was filled by three seated statues, and the surface of the stela was inscribed in horizontal lines with a text that begins in the rounded top and continues on the right and left sides of the niche. This is a mortuary text consisting of four parts: (1) the traditional prayer for offerings in a much enlarged version; (2) an elaborate vision of life in the beyond; (3) a recital of Paheri's virtuous conduct as an official; (4) an appeal to the living to recite the prayer for offerings, again much more elaborate than such appeals had been in the past.

Publication: J. J. Tylor and F. L. Griffith, *The Tomb of Paheri at El Kab*; bound with E. Naville, *Ahnas el Medineh*, Egypt Exploration Fund, 11th memoir (London, 1894), the text: pp. 27-31 and pl. 9. J. J. Tylor, *Wall Drawings and Monuments of El Kab: the Tomb of Paheri* (London, 1895), the text: pl. 16. *Urk. IV*, 111-123.

Translation: *Urk. deutsch*, pp. 55-61. G. Fecht, *ZÄS*, 92 (1965), 15-23 (lines 5-21). For additional references see also PM V, 177-181.