

REIGN OF MERNEPTAH

THE INVASION OF LIBYANS AND MEDITERRANEAN PEOPLES

569. For this, one of the most serious invasions which have ever threatened Egypt, we possess a series of four documents, which furnish a fairly full account of its course, the ensuing battle, and the resulting relief in Egypt. They are the following:

I. The Great Karnak Inscription (§§ 572-92).

II. The Cairo Column (§§ 593-95).

III. The Athribis Stela (§§ 596-601).

IV. The Hymn of Victory (§§ 602-17).

570. These sources enable us to see the already aged Merneptah facing the evil conditions on his Libyan frontier, inherited from the decades of neglect which concluded his great father's reign. The Libyans have for years past been pushing into and occupying the western Delta.^a They pressed in almost to the gates of Memphis, eastward to the district of Heliopolis, and southward to the two oases nearest the Fayûm. Worse than this, they had made a coalition

^aGolénischeff's interesting and suggestive letter (*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, 40, 101-6) draws geographical data from a new papyrus in his possession, on the basis of which he would place this immigration and invasion (as well as those under Ramses III) south of the Fayûm near Ehnas. His arguments are not without force, but the conclusion seems to me to be refuted by the statement that this invasion and the battle which repelled it occurred in the "western *rwd*" (Karnak Inscription, l. 30, where "western" is omitted, and Athribis stela, l. 7). *Rwd* is a term used only of the Delta, the two halves of which are called the eastern and western *rwd* (Spiegelberg, *Rechnungen*). The invasions under Ramses III were also in the "western *rwd*" (IV, 405). See also Harris, 10, 8 (IV, 224). Furthermore, the improbability that the Libyans would enter Egypt by way of the northern oases, going around the south side of the Fayûm, to reach the region of Memphis, is evident.

with the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean, who now poured into the Delta from Sardinia on the west to Asia Minor on the east. The mention of these peoples in these documents is the earliest appearance of Europeans in literature, and has always been the center of much study and interest.^a With the sympathy, if not the direct assistance of the Kheta, the Libyan king, Meryey, put himself at the head of these combined allies and invaded the Delta, bringing his wives and belongings, and apparently intending a permanent occupation. Some time during the first half of the tenth month (late in March), in Merneptah's fifth year, a messenger reached him with the news. Rallying his forces immediately, Merneptah met the enemy on the third of the eleventh month (about April 15) at Perire in the western Delta, and in six hours' fighting routed their combined forces with immense slaughter. He pursued them from Perire to the rise of the Libyan desert, called the "*Mount of the Horns of the Earth.*"

571. It is difficult to understand the exact interrelation of the numbers given in the Great Karnak Inscription and the Athribis Stela, but over 9,000 of the enemy were slain, possibly as many more taken prisoners, while many horses and cattle, and vast numbers of weapons were captured. The Libyan king was forced to ignominious flight, his camp, his wives, and his personal belongings falling into the hands

^aThe layman has long been misled regarding this event by such titles for it as "Invasion of the Greeks," although there is now no doubt that the early peoples of southern Europe participated in this invasion. Since the study of Sardinian art by Perrot and Chipiez, as Müller has shown, we must accept the Sherden as Sardinians; the Teresh may then equally well be the Etruscans (Tyrsenoi), and the Shekelesh might be the Sikeli (if *š* be an ethnic termination in these western names; but see IV, 59). Maspero has suggested Sagalassos in Asia Minor. The Ekweh are not impossibly the Achæans, and from Asia Minor are the Luka or Lycians. Compare Müller, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, X; and *Asien und Europa*, 335-59; 371-84; and Hall, *Annual of the British School at Athens*, VIII, 157.

of the Egyptians. After setting fire to the camp, the Egyptians carried the plunder in triumph to the king, who viewed the trophies of the dead, the prisoners, and the spoil. He then returned home, and in the royal palace, probably at Memphis, he delivered a triumphal address, to which the court responded with acclamation. The people of the Delta, on hearing the news, break out into rejoicing that peace and safety are restored to them.

I. GREAT KARNAK INSCRIPTION^a

572. This, one of the longest documents preserved on the temple walls of Egypt, gives the fullest account which has survived to us of the great victory of Merneptah over the Libyans. The prominence of Ptah in the narrative betrays the Memphite origin of the document, but the original which doubtless once existed in Memphis has now perished.

573. The document does not offer us any idea of the

^aA long inscription of originally eighty lines, engraved on the inside (west) of the eastern wall connecting the main Karnak temple with Pylon VII (Baedeker's plan), the northernmost of the southern pylons. The upper ends of the lines have lost the space of one course of masonry, equivalent to about four to five words. The text, noted first by Champollion, was partially published by Lepsius (*Denkmäler*, III, 199, a; only ll. 44-77 and list of names, Text, III, 43); Brugsch then purposed to publish the first half, omitted by Lepsius, and inserted ll. 8-43 in his *Geographische Inschriften*, II, Pl. 25 (not Pl. 85, as stated in *Records of the Past*, IV, 37, nor 35, as given in Maspero, *Struggle of the Nations*, 432). Brugsch numbered his lines 1 to 36, but he really omitted ll. 1-7. It was finally completely published by Dümichen (*Historische Inschriften*, I, 2-6), Mariette (who copies Dümichen's mistakes, *Karnak*, 52-55), and de Rougé (*Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques*, 179-98). None of these publications is very exact; both Lepsius and Brugsch omit the lower ends of the lines, doubtless still covered in their day, without any indication of the fact. Rougé found the upper ends of ll. 36-41 (on a block rediscovered by Legrain in 1901, see l. 36, p. 246, n. a), and properly placed them; I arranged all the publications in parallel columns, and the resulting text, while tolerably close to the original and preserving some signs now lost, was not sufficiently accurate. Later I secured good photographs of the inscription through the kindness of Borchardt, which added some readings of importance. The new fragments found by Legrain (*Annales*, IV, 2-4) contain nothing of importance except the reference to the "western rdw;" they arrived too late to be available in the following text.

course of the battle, beginning the account of the conflict itself almost immediately with the rout of the Libyans; but it is gratifyingly full regarding the conditions which led up to the battle and the immense plunder which resulted from it. In style it is often so highly colored, and effuse in poetic figures, that the translation is rendered difficult.

Title

574. ¹[Beginning of the victory which his majesty achieved in the land of Libya]^a ————— i, Ekwesh (ḫ - k ʷ - w ʷ - š ʷ), Teresh (T w - r w - š ʷ), Luka (R w - k w), Sherden (š ʷ - r ʷ - d - n), Shekelesh (š - k - r w - š ʷ), Northerners coming from all lands.

Valor of Merneptah

575. ² — — — — — ^b his valor in the might of his father, Amon; King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Binre-Meriamon; Son of Re: Merneptah-Hotephirma, given life. Lo, this Good God, flourishing — — — — ³ — — — — — his [fathers] all the gods, as his protection. Every country is in fear at the sight of him, King Merneptah. ^c 4 — — — — — desolated, made a waste, commanding that the invader of his every boundary of Egypt bow himself down in his time, ⁵ — — — — — all his [plans] (whose) verdict is the breath of life. He causes the people to be care-free, sleeping while the terror of his strength is in ⁶ — — —.

Preparation of Defenses

576. — — —, to protect Heliopolis, city of Atum, to defend the stronghold of Ptah-Tatenen, to save — from evil 7 — — — — — tents^d

^aThe presence of the list of hostile allies at the beginning of the inscription would indicate with great probability that the opening words were the same as in the Kadesh Poem, which likewise begins with a list of the allied foes.

^bThe loss is one course of masonry at the top—at most four or five words at the beginning of each line.

^cDouble name, as also in all other places in the inscription.

^dHebrew לַיָּם. This remark may possibly refer to the Libyans and indicate the distribution of their immigrants from Per-Berset on the west to the Heliopolitan canal on the east.

before Per-Berset (*Pr-b^o-r^o-ys-t*),^a reaching^b the Sheken (*Š^o-k^o-n^o*) canal on the [—]^c of the Eti (*ḫ^o-ty*)^d canal.

Libyan Aggression

577. ⁸— — — — not cared for, it was forsaken as pasturage for cattle because of the Nine Bows, it was left waste from the times of the ancestors. All the kings of Upper Egypt abode in their pyramids ⁹— — — —; the kings of Lower Egypt [rested]^e in the midst of their cities, inclosed in the state palace, for lack of troops; they had no bowmen to answer against them.

Accession of Merneptah, and His Preparations

578. It happened ¹⁰ḫ— — — — he [assumed^f] the throne of Horus, he was appointed to preserve the folk (*p^c-t*) alive, he hath arisen as king to protect the people (*rḫy-t*). There was might in him to do it, because of — — —^g in ¹¹— — — — — Meber (*M^o-b^o-r^o*),^h the choicest of his bowmen were mustered, his chariotry was brought up from every side, his scouts were in — — — his [—]ⁱ in ¹²— — — — — his —. He considered not hundreds of thousands in the day of the array. His infantry (*mnjy-t*) marched out, the heavy armedⁱ troops arrived, beautiful in appearance, leading the bowmen against every land.

^aThis town has nothing to do with modern Belbês on the eastern margin of the Delta (classic Byblos? See Brugsch, *Dictionnaire géographique*, 197); but was in the western Delta (see IV, 370).

^bRougé, *Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques*, has *yr* (the eye) = "do, make," perhaps used as in Uni (I, 322, ll. 41, 42, note) with the meaning "reach, visit."

^cText has not "north," but either *šd* or *nd* with the *d* written out alphabetically, and a long horizontal determinative lost in a joint of the masonry.

^dA canal leaving the Nile by Heliopolis; the Sheken canal is otherwise unknown (see Brugsch, *Dictionnaire géographique*, 77).

^eThe parallelism demands a verb similar in meaning to "abode."

^fThere is here a reference to the accession of Merneptah, as Brugsch has noticed (*Geschichte*, 569).

^gFragments of words; Brugsch's "weil er war das Ebenbild des [schön] gesichtigen" (= Ptah) is quite impossible.

^hA syllable or two may be lost at the beginning; it is the name of an unknown foreign country. The connection before it is not clear, but it is evident that the practical preparations for the campaign begin here.

ⁱLit., "those who bear the hand-to-hand fighting;" these are heavily armed foreign mercenaries.

News of Coalition of Libyans and Sea-Peoples against Egypt

579. ^a — — — — — the third season, saying: "The wretched, fallen chief of Libya, Meryey (*M-r²-y²-yw-y*), son of Ded (*Dy-d*), has fallen upon the country of Tehenu with his bowmen ¹⁴ — — — — — Sherden (*[š]²-r²-d-n*), Shekelesh (*š²-k-rw-š²*), Ekwesh (^b *-k²-w²-š²*), Luka (*Rw-kw*), Teresh (*Tw-ry-š²*), taking the best of every warrior and every man of war (*phrr*) of his country. He has brought his wife and his ^c children ¹⁵ — — — — — leaders of the camp, and he has reached the western boundary in the fields of Perire."^d

Merneptah's Speech

580. Lo, his majesty was enraged at their report, like a lion; ¹⁶ [The assembled his court], and said to th]em: "Hear ye the command of your lord; I give — — as ye shall do, saying: I am the ruler who shepherds^e you; I spend my time searching out ¹⁷ — — — — — you, as a father, who preserves alive his children; while ye fear like birds, and ye know not the goodness of that which he does. Is there none answering in ¹⁸ — — — — — [Shall the land be]wa]sted and forsaken at the invasion of every country, while the Nine Bows plunder its borders, and rebels invade it every day? Every — takes ¹⁹ — — — — — to plunder these fortresses. They have repeatedly penetrated the fields of Egypt [to] the [great]^f river. They have halted, they have spent whole days and

^aThis announcement was made in the tenth month, as is shown by the Cairo column (§ 595), which fills out the lacuna at the beginning of the above section. Allowing the fourteen days for the muster of the troops (l. 28), and remembering that the armies met in battle on the third of the eleventh month, it will be seen that the news must have reached the king during the first half of the tenth month.

^bThe first syllable is omitted by Dümichen, *Historische Inschriften*, Mariette, *Karnak*, and Brugsch, *Geographische Inschriften*; being given only by de Rougé, *Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques*, where it is probably a correction by de Rougé himself.

^cSo Rougé, *Inscriptions hiéroglyphiques*; Dümichen, *Historische Inschriften*, and Mariette, *Karnak*, have "their."

^d*Pr-yr* misread by Brugsch as *Pr-Yr-šps't*, and then identified with Prosopis. This is shown to be incorrect by the short version (§ 600, l. 9). See Müller (*Asien und Europa*, 357, n. 3), who would identify it as the *Y²rw* of the Pyramid Texts (Mernere, 182 = Pepi, 145; cf. also Teti, 351 = Pepi, II, 174), "a border town of the natron district."

^eLike Seti I in making the well on the Redesiyeh road (Third Inscription, § 195, l. 2).

^fThe restoration is certain, the determinative (papyrus roll) is clear, and there is just room for the "great"-sign (*c²*) above it. In exactly the same connection it is used in Ramses III's Libyan wars (IV, 405, see note).

months dwelling ²⁰— — — —. They have reached the hills of the oasis,^a and have cut off the district^b of Toyeh (*T^o-y^h*).^c 'So^d it has been since the kings of Upper Egypt, in the records of other times. It was not known ²¹— — — — as worms, not considering their bodies, (but) loving death and despising life. Their hearts are exalted against the people^e ²²— — — — their chief. They spend their time going about the land, fighting, to fill their bodies daily. They come to the land of Egypt, to seek the necessities of their mouths; their desire is ²³— — — — my bringing them like netted fish on their bellies. Their chief is like a dog, a man of 'boasting^l, without courage; he does not abide — ²⁴— — — — bringing to an end^f the Pedetishew (*Pd·ty·šw*),^g whom I caused to take grain in ships, to keep alive that land of Kheta.^h Lo, I am he whom the gods —, every ka ²⁵— — — — under me, King Merneptah, given life. By my ka, by the —, as I flourish as ruler of the Two Lands 'the land shall be madeⁱ ²⁶— — — — Egypt. Amon nods approval, whenⁱ one speaks in

^aThe usual designation of the oasis otherwise called by the Egyptians the "Northern Oasis," and by the Greeks "The Lesser." It lies exactly southwest of the Fayûm, in N. 28°, less than one hundred miles west of the Nile valley.

^bBrugsch (*Dictionnaire géographique*, 70) has *n hr n* (for *m hr n*) = "in front of," that is, "cut off in front of," which does not alter the meaning.

^cThis is the oasis now called "Farafrah," about seventy-five miles west of south of the "Northern Oasis." The Libyans had thus taken the two oases nearest them, south of the natron district.

^d*Mty*; it must in some way indicate the customary and habitual thing in former times. See § 377, n. b. *Hrtw* = "one says;" hence the whole, probably, literally is: "The customary thing," say they, "since, etc."

^eOf Egypt (*rḥy·t*). ^f*S·rk*.

^gAsiatics, or: "the Pedetishew bring to an end."

^hThe king evidently regards Kheta as included in the coalition of northern peoples against Egypt, and the logic of the reference seems to be Kheta's ingratitude in joining a combination against the Egyptians, who had sent grain for her maintenance, as if such grain had not been sent in a commercial way, but from philanthropic motives, which, of course, was probably not the case. In view of the mention of Kheta among the defeated peoples in the Hymn of Victory (§ 617, l. 26), the question arises whether Kheta already in the year 3 had not been in such close sympathy with the plans of these allies that Merneptah had extended against the Kheta also the campaign on which the Asiatic peoples and towns mentioned in the Hymn of Victory (§ 617, ll. 26-28) were pillaged. I can only answer this question in the affirmative. The plunder of a few towns on the Hittite border in Syria would be quite sufficient, in the eyes of an oriental, to justify the boast in l. 26.

ⁱOr: "say they in Thebes."

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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