

REIGN OF RAMSES II

GREAT ABYDOS INSCRIPTION^a

251. This is the longest inscription of Ramses II's reign. Together with the Kubbân Stela, it has been regarded as the most important source for his youth and early regency. It shows us the young king in his first year journeying to Thebes,^b and in mentioning a statue of his father erected by Ramses on that occasion at Thebes, the narrator takes occasion to summarize the king's works in provision for his father (ll. 22-26).^c

252. Ramses now sails to Abydos (ll. 26-32), where he finds Seti I's beautiful temple (Baedeker, 218-23) unfinished, and its endowments violated (ll. 32, 33). He immediately summons his court and officials (ll. 33, 34), who come in with the usual fulsome adulation demanded by court etiquette (ll. 34-40), after which Ramses announces to them his intention to complete his father's buildings (ll. 40-43), and takes

^aCut on the wall of the portico behind the colonnade at the rear of the first court in the famous temple of Seti I at Abydos. The inscription is in 116 vertical lines, the first 21 of which accompany a relief and are shorter. Numerous lacunæ break the text. Published by Maspero (from a copy by Devéria): *Essai sur l'inscription dédicatoire du temple d'Abydos*, par G. Maspero (Paris, 1867); again by Mariette in 1880 (*Abydos*, I, 5-9). I also had a collation of Mariette with the original for the Berlin dictionary by Borchardt.

^bWhence he came is quite uncertain. Maspero (*Struggle of the Nations*, 387) states that he came from Ethiopia, but for this I find no evidence. On the contrary, the mention of the statue erected in Memphis (l. 22) may indicate that he came from the north.

^cLl. 1-21 contain only the dialogue between the divinities (ll. 1-17) in the relief and Ramses (ll. 18-21). The translation begins with the words of Ramses (ll. 18-21). The works summarized in ll. 22-26 are (except the statues) not yet undertaken at the time of the visit to Thebes; but, being complete at the time of the composition of this inscription, the narrator inserts the summary here, forgetting that they were not complete at the time of which he is writing.

occasion to recall to his courtiers how his father had him publicly crowned coregent while a mere child, giving him extensive authority and a harem (ll. 43-48). He proceeds to describe his administration as coregent (ll. 48-50), and reiterates in conclusion his determination to complete his father's buildings (ll. 51-55). Hereupon the courtiers fairly outdo themselves in a long-winded eulogy of the dutiful son (ll. 55-69). The narrator now recounts the summons to the architects, artists, and workmen, who are commissioned to complete Seti I's temple. At the same time the king re-enacts and reorganizes his father's endowments for the maintenance of the temple and its mortuary service (ll. 69-75).

253. When all is done, Ramses addresses his deceased father, calling attention to all these pious works for his father's welfare in the hereafter (ll. 75-93), and showing how it will be to his father's interest to ensure unbroken continuance of these favors, by inducing the gods, among whom he now is, to grant Ramses a long reign. Ramses assures his father that his (Seti's) mortuary offerings shall be maintained as long as he (Ramses) continues on the throne (ll. 93-98). To this remarkable compact Seti, in reply, agrees, intercedes with the gods, and assures Ramses that the gods have decreed^a him an eternal reign, and that he himself enjoys the greatest felicity because of his son's provision for him (ll. 98-116).

254. The inscription, it will be observed, is historically very important, as well as interesting in several respects. The statements regarding Ramses' coregency in youth are detailed and circumstantial. His appearance in public for coronation, in the presence of his father, reminds us of the

^aSee similar prayer of Seti, quoted with l. 103, p. 115, n. b.

similar account of Hatshepsut's coronation (II, 215 ff.). But the evidence of the Karnak reliefs (§§ 123 ff.) is so conclusively against his ever having been so chosen by Seti that, like the said story of Hatshepsut's coronation, we must regard it as a fabrication.^a Such a fiction could hardly have been published immediately on Seti's death, and when we remember Ramses' extraordinary compact with his deceased father, the question arises whether the inscription is a later product of Ramses' reign, and his long life is the source which suggested the fiction of the compact, to which the narrator now attributes Ramses' remarkable longevity.^b In any case, the inscription was written after the completion of his works for his father, and after some of his foreign campaigns (l. 93).

255. The king's visit to Thebes in his first year is corroborated by an independent document in the Theban tomb of the High Priest of Amon, Nebunef (*Nb-wm-nf*).^c A relief in this tomb shows Ramses II, accompanied by his queen, Mutnofret, and the court, addressing Osiris. Before the god is the following inscription:

256. Year 1, third month of the first season, —^d when his majesty went north from the Southern City, ¶having¹ celebrated the pleasing ceremonies of his father, Amon-Re, lord of Thebes,^e [Mut],^e Khonsu in Thebes, Beautiful Rest, and the Divine Ennead

^aSee also introduction to Kubbân inscription (§ 283), and my "Ramses II and the Princes in the Karnak Reliefs of Seti I" (*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, 37, 138 f.).

^bAgainst this is the motive for the account of his appointment as coregent—a motive which would have been influential only immediately after his accession, when he desired to support the legitimacy of his reign.

^cChampollion, *Notices descriptives*, I, 535, 851, 852; and Lepsius, *Denkmäler*; Text, III, 239.

^dThe space for the day is left vacant in the original.

^eFurther titles of Amon and Mut, omitted by Champollion.

dwelling in Thebes; at his beautiful feast of Opet (named): "Returning-Thence-with-Praise."

257. As Nebunef was High Priest, this great feast of Amon is naturally recorded in his tomb. It is the same feast, celebrated in the month Hathor, by Thutmose III^a on his return from his first campaign (II, 541, 550), and, this being the first celebration of it in Ramses' reign, it naturally called him to Thebes, whose powerful priesthood he could not fail to conciliate by appearing at their temple in person on such an important occasion.

258. Returning now to our great document, we find in the relief scene preceding the long inscription that the young King Ramses II appears offering an image of the goddess Mat (Truth) to Osiris, Isis, and his deified father, Seti I. The speeches of the divinities are of solely religious interest. The speech of Ramses, which merges into the long inscription itself, is of historical importance, and begins the following translation:

Speech of Ramses

259. ¹⁸Utterance of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Usermare-Setepnere (Ramses II) in the presence of his father, Osiris: "I champion thee, ¹⁹like thy son, Horus; I have done according to [his]^b doing. I repeat for thee monuments in the necropolis, ²⁰I double offerings for thy ka. I answer on behalf of my father, he being in the Nether World (*Dw³ · t*), in the place [— —], ²¹for the son becomes the champion of his father, like Horus, when he championed his father, forming him that formed him, fashioning him that fashioned him, making to live the name of him that begat him, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ramses (II), given life, like Re, forever, beloved of Osiris, lord of Abydos."

Voyage to Thebes, Summary of Ramses' Works for His Father

260. ²²When the Lord of the Two Lands arose as king, to act as champion of his father, in the year 1, on his first voyage to Thebes, he fashioned

^aAlso by Piankhi (IV, 836).

^bCf. l. 43.

statues of his father; King Menmare (Seti I) was he; one in Thebes, another in Memphis, in the temple which he built for them, ²³an addition to the beauty of that which was in Abydos of Towêr, which he loved, which his heart has desired since he was on earth, the soil of Wennofer (Osiris). He repeated the restoration of the monuments of his father, which are in the cemetery, making his name live, fashioning his statues, giving offerings abiding ²⁴for his august ka — his house, supplying his altars, upbuilding that which was fallen in the house which he loved, erecting the seats in his temple, laying its walls, setting up its doorways, erecting the ruins in the seat of^a his father, in the district of Osiris ——— ²⁵the double façade made therein, in everything which the Great in Victory, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ramses (II), given life, made for his father, Osiris, the King Menmare (Seti I), triumphant. He established for him possessions, supplied with food of the [— —] his heart ²⁶being kindly disposed toward him that begat him, his feelings inclining toward him that brought him up.

Ramses Sails from Thebes to Abydos

261. On one of these days it happened in the year 1, the third^b month of the first season, the twenty-third day, at the [‘feast’]^c ——— after the return of Amon to Karnak, that he (the king) came forth, favored with might and victory from Amon-Atum in Thebes, and he rewarded him with myriads of years, even to the duration of Re in heaven. Hear ——— [‘exalted’] forever and ever. He raised his hand, bearing the censer, to the horizon of him who abides in the West, his offering being excellent and acceptable to his [‘father’], the lord of love. His majesty departed from the Southern City ——— Re.

(He) began the way,^d to make the voyage, while the royal barges illuminated the flood, turning down-stream to the seat of might, “House^e-

^aThere is a superfluous *n* here which suggests “*seat of truth, for his father,*” etc.

^bBorchardt has only one month-sign.

^cEven in Ramses III’s day the Feast of Opet closed at least eight days before this; this must have been the Feast of Hathor, at which Amon also celebrated; but the king must have been at Thebes during the great Feast of Opet, which just preceded.

^dFor the usual form of this phrase, see Amarna Landmarks (II, 960, l. 6), or Scarab of Wild Cattle Hunt (II, 864).

^eThis is the earliest occurrence of the city of “Ramses.” It is not clear why it should be mentioned, unless the king was going farther north to the Delta.

of-Ramses-Meriamon-Great-in-Victory." His majesty entered, to see his father, the voyage of the waters of the canal of Abydos^a (*Nj-wr*), in order to found offerings for Wennofer, consisting of every good thing, that which his ka loves, in order to praise³⁰ — — — for his brother, Onouris, son of Re in truth, like himself.

Ramses Finds Cemetery Buildings in Ruins

262. He found the buildings of the cemetery belonging to former kings, their tombs^b in Abydos, beginning to be in ruin. The half of them were in process of construction³¹ — — — in the ground, their walls [lying] incomplete, not one brick touching^c another. That which was only begun^d had become mere rubbish. There was no one building — — — who was carrying out according to his plans, since their lord had flown to heaven. There was no³² other son, who renewed the monuments of his father, which were in the cemetery.

Seti I's Temple Unfinished, Its Endowments Violated

263. Lo, the house of Menmare (Seti I), its front and its rear were in process of construction, when he entered into heaven. Its monuments were not finished, its columns were not set up on its [platform], its statue was upon the ground, it was not³³ fashioned after the regulation for it, of the gold-house. Its divine offerings had ceased, the lay priesthood likewise. That which was brought [from] its fields was taken away, their boundaries were not fixed in the land.^e

Ramses Summons His Court and Officials

264. Said his majesty to the wearer of the royal seal who was at his side: "Speak thou, call³⁴ the court, the king's-grandeens, all the commanders of the army, all the chiefs of works, and the keepers of the

^aAbydos lies seven miles from the river, and is evidently connected with it by a canal which the king here enters. Compare the same voyage of King Neferhotep (I, 763, ll. 16, 17).

^bThese can hardly be anything else than the tombs of the First Dynasty kings. That some of them should be in course of construction may mean that chapels were being erected for these kings (their halls in Seti's temple) or that repairs were going on.

^cLit., "embracing."

^d*Mshn* means "birth- or nursing-chamber," which may be figurative for "beginning," that which was incipient. Suggested by Erman.

^eSee Seti I's solemn adjuration to respect his endowment of this very temple (§ 180, ll. 11-13, 15-19).

house of rolls (books).” They were brought before his majesty, their noses were bowed in the dust, their knees were on the earth ³⁵in adoration, smelling the earth; their hands were uplifted to his majesty, they praised this Good God, magnifying his beauty in the presence. They told the story according to that which he had done, they likened his brave deeds, as they were; every word which came out of their mouths, was that which the Lord of the Two Lands had actually done. ³⁶They were upon their bellies, ¹wallowing upon the earth before his majesty, saying:

The Court Eulogizes the King

265. “We come to thee, lord of heaven, lord of earth, Re, life of the whole earth, lord of duration, of fruitful revolution,^a Atum for the people, lord of destiny, creator of Renenet,^b Khnum ³⁷who fashioned the people (*ṛhy' t*), giver of breath into the nostrils of all, making all the gods live, pillar of heaven, support of earth, [—] adjusting the Two Lands, lord of food, plentiful in grain, in whose footsteps is the harvest goddess, ³⁸maker of the great, fashioner of the lowly, whose word produces food, the lord vigilant when all men sleep, whose might defends Egypt, valiant in foreign lands, who returns when he has triumphed, whose sword protects the Egyptians, beloved of truth, in which he lives ³⁹by his laws, defender of the Two Lands, rich in years, great in victory, the fear of whom expels foreign lands, our king, our lord, our Sun, by the words of whose mouth Atum lives. Lo, we are now before thy majesty, that thou mayest decree to us the life that thou givest, ⁴⁰Pharaoh, L. P. H., breath of life, who makes all men live when he has shone on them.”

Ramses Announces His Intention to Complete His Father's Buildings

266. Said his majesty to them: “Behold, I have caused that they call you, because of a plan that is before me. I have seen that the buildings of the cemetery, the tombs that are in Abydos, ⁴¹and the works therein, are in an unfinished state, since the time of their lord until this day. When a son arose in the place of his father, the monuments of him that begat him were not restored. Then I conversed with my own heart: ‘It is a happy example, to provide for ⁴²them that have

^aThe king is often called the source of the land's fruitfulness; hence the same here, where he is called Re, the sun.

^bGoddess of birth, destiny, and good fortune.

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