

## THE ADVENTURES OF SINUHIT (OF THE TWELFTH DYNASTY)

TRANSLATED BY PROF. MASPERO

THE Berlin Papyrus No. 1, purchased by Lepsius in Egypt and published by him in the *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Ethiopien*, vi. pl. 104-107, is injured at the beginning. In its present condition it contains 312 lines of text. The first 179 lines are vertical; then come 96 lines (180-276) which are horizontal; but from line 277 to the end the scribe has returned to the system of vertical columns. The first 40 lines that are preserved have suffered more or less from wear and tear; five of them (1, 13-15, 38) present lacunæ which I could never have succeeded in filling up, had I not had the good fortune to discover at Thebes a new manuscript. The end is intact and concludes with the well-known formula: "It is completed from its commencement to its termination as has been found in the book." The writing, very clear and bold in the vertical portions, becomes clumsy and confused in the horizontal portions; it is full of ligatures and rapidly-written forms which at times render its decipherment difficult.

The Berlin Papyrus has been analysed and translated by Chabas: *Le Papyrus de Berlin, récits d'il y a quatre mille ans* and *Panthéon littéraire*, vol. i., in part only; by Goodwin in full in *Frazer's Magazine*, 1865, pp. 185-202, and in a separate form under the title of *The Story of Saneha* (Williams and Norgate, 1865); this translation was corrected by the author in Lepsius's *Zeitschrift* (1872, pp. 10-24), and reproduced in the former series of *Records of the Past*, vol. vi. pp. 131-150. Maspero transcribed it in hieroglyphics and translated it in French: *Le Papyrus de Berlin No. 1* (1874-76), in the *Mélanges d'Archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne*, vol. iii. pp. 68-82, 140 *sqq.*; partly reproduced with corrections in the *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient*, 4th edit., pp. 97, 98, 101-104, and in full in the *Contes Egyptiens*, 2d edit., pp. 87-130. Dr. H. D. Haigh has examined the historical and geographical data contained in the story in an article in Lepsius's *Zeitschrift*, 1875, pp. 78-107, and Prof. Erman has inserted a short analysis of it in his book: *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum* (1885-88), pp. 494-497.

We possess on an ostrakon in the British Museum (No. 5629) the duplicate of a part of the text. This ostrakon, first mentioned by Dr. Birch in his memoir on the Abbott Papyrus, has been published by him, in facsimile, in his *Inscriptions in the Hieratic and Demotic character, from the Collections of the British Museum* (1868), pl. xxiii. p. 8.

The identity of the text on the ostrakon with that of the last lines of the Berlin Papyrus was pointed out for the first time by Goodwin: *On a Hieratic Inscription upon a stone in the British Museum* (Lepsius's *Zeitschrift*, 1872, pp. 20-24), where the transcription and translation of the text are given at full length. The script belongs to the age of the twentieth dynasty, and this fact is important, as it proves that the story, composed at the latest in the epoch of the sixteenth or seventeenth dynasty, remained a classic for long afterwards.

As the version given on the ostrakon differs in certain details from that of the Papyrus, it will be useful to insert here a complete translation of it:—

“[I was allowed] to construct [a pyramid] of stone, in the circle of the pyramids.

The stone-cutters cut the tomb, and divided its walls; the architects designed them; the superintendent of the sculptors sculptured them; the superintendent of the works in the necropolis traversed the country (for) all the furniture with which I furnished this tomb. I allotted peasants to it, and there were lakes, fields (and) gardens in its domain, as in the case of Friends of the highest rank. [There was] a statue of gold with a silver-gilt hilt, which the sons of the king made for me, rejoicing to do so for me; for I was in favour with the king until the day arrived when one attains the other bank.

It is ended prosperously in peace.”

The portion wanting at the commencement has been found at Thebes on an ostrakon, picked up on the 6th of February 1886 in the tomb of Sonnozmu. It is a fragment of limestone, broken in half, more

than three feet in length and about seven inches in breadth, covered with hieratic characters of somewhat large size, punctuated with red ink and divided into paragraphs like most of the MSS. of the epoch of the Ramessids. On the back, two lines, unfortunately almost illegible, give us the name of a scribe which I cannot decipher, probably the name of the person who wrote the text. The fracture is not recent. The limestone has been broken at the very moment of its introduction into the tomb, and the act has not been accomplished without injury to the inscription; some splinters of the stone have disappeared and have carried portions of words away with them. Most of these lacunæ can be filled up without difficulty. The text is very incorrect, like that of all works intended for the use of the dead. Many of the variants presented by it result from faulty readings of the original manuscript; the scribe could not read with accuracy the archaic style of writing. The ostrakon has been published by Maspero: *Les premières lignes des Mémoires de Sinouhit, restituées d'après l'Ostrakon 27,419 du musée de Boulaq*, with two plates in facsimile in the *Mémoires de l'Institut égyptien*, ii. pp. 1-23.

The discovery of this new document allows us to reconstruct the route followed by Sinuhit in his flight. He left the camp on the Libyan frontier in the land of the Timihu, thus starting from the west and turning his back on the "Canton of the Sycomore." According to Brugsch (*Dictionnaire*

*géographique*, p. 53), Nuhit, "the Canton of the Sycomore," is the Panaho of the Copts, the Athribis of the Greeks, the modern Benha el-Assal. This identification, however, falls of itself, since Nuhit is mentioned at the very beginning of the journey, and consequently must have been on the western bank of the Nile, whereas Benha is on the eastern. I had at first considered the "Canton of the Sycomore" as a mode of designating the whole of Egypt. But we have long been acquainted with a Nuhit or Pa-nib-nuhit, which appears to have been in the first instance only a quarter of Memphis, and subsequently to have denoted the whole of Memphis (Brugsch, *Diction. Géog.*, pp. 330-332). The "Canton of the Sycomore" is probably this "Quarter of the Sycomore," and Sinuhit, the son of the Sycomore, the Memphite, in declaring that he turns his back on Nuhit, simply means to tell us that he departs from Memphis, his native place, to go to Shi-Snofrui. The "Wady of Snofrui" is not otherwise known. Brugsch, however, identifies it with the Myekphorite nome of Herodotos (iii. 166), thanks to a pronunciation Mui-hik-Snofru, borne according to him by the characters which compose the name (*Diction. Géog.*, p. 54). The position occupied by this town in the itinerary leads me to look for it between the Libyan desert, Memphis, and the city of Khri-Ahu or the Egyptian Babylon, about a day's journey from this latter and perhaps in the vicinity of the pyramids of Gizeh and Abu-Roâsh. When the evening arrived, Sinuhit

approached Khri-Ahu, crossed the Nile, and resumed his journey, passing eastward of the country of Iauku. This country was hitherto unknown; it is, I believe, the district of the stone-cutters, all the region of quarries which extends from Tourah to the desert along the Gebel Ahhmar or "Red Mountain." Thence Sinuhit marched on foot as far as one of the fortified posts which protected Egypt on this side, between Abu-Zabel and Belbeis. Beyond this, he mentions only Puteni and Qimoîri. Brugsch identifies Puteni with a country of Pât which he has met with on a monument of the Saitic period, and of which the modern city of Belbeis would represent the centre (*Diction. Géog.*, pp. 54, 55). The great Ptolemaic stele discovered by Mr. Naville at Tel el-Maskhuta furnishes some data for determining pretty exactly the position of Qimoîri. It contains a name Qimoîr, which Mr. Naville has identified, with good reason, with the Qimoîri of the story of Sinuhit (*The Store-city of Pithom and the route of the Exodus*, pp. 21, 22). Ptolemy Philadelphus built here the city which he called Arsinoe after his sister, which became one of the emporia of Egyptian trade with the Red Sea. Mr. Naville places Arsinoe, and consequently Qimoîri, near the modern el-Maghfâr in the heart of the ancient Gulf of Suez. This site would suit our narrative admirably; after having quitted Puteni, Sinuhit would have plunged into the desert, towards the north-east, and would have lost himself in the sands in his endeavour to reach Qimoîri.

Beyond this point he entered the country of Edimâ or Edumâ, in which Chabas has recognised the land of Edom (*Les Papyrus de Berlin*, pp. 39, 75, 76). The scribe states expressly that it was a canton of the Upper Tonu. Tonu accordingly must enclose at least the district between the Dead Sea and the Sinaitic Peninsula. The prince of Tonu gives the Egyptian hero a very rich district, Aâa, or better Aïa, the name of which denoted a species of plant, and recalls that of Aïan, Æan, given by the geographers of the classical epoch to the cantons bordering on the Gulf of Akabah. Sinuhit remained there some years in the company of the nomad archers or Sittiu; on his return to Egypt, he was received by the Egyptian garrison at the frontier station of Hriu-horu, "the roads of Horus," that is to say, of Pharaoh, who was identified with Horus: where this locality was I cannot say.

Five years of labour have allowed me to transcribe and translate this difficult text. I believe that the narrative portion of it may be considered as entirely explained in almost every word. The petitions, letters, and discourses with which the story is filled, still present considerable difficulties. Many details will doubtless have to be modified in the approaching future.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:  
**Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature**  
which can be purchased on our Website :  
[www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :  
**Brainfly Inc.**  
**5100 Garfield Ave. #46**  
**Sacramento CA 95841-3839**

## **TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:**

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website ([www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

[webcomments@brainfly.net](mailto:webcomments@brainfly.net)