

Made for eternity, prepared for all time,
 I know because I am its lord.
 Behold, much hatred is in the streets,
 The wise says "yes," the fool says "no,"
 For no one knows it [without your presence],¹²
 Sesostris my son!
 As my feet depart, you are in my heart,
 My eyes behold you, child of a happy hour
 [Before the people as they hail you].
 I have made the past and arranged the future,
 I gave you the contents of my heart.
 You (10) wear the white crown of a god's son,
 The seal is in its place, assigned you by me,
 Jubilation is in the bark of Re,
 Kingship is again what it was in the past!
¹³
 Raise your monuments, establish your strongholds,
 Fight¹⁴

NOTES

1. In Papyrus Chester Beatty IV, a New Kingdom scribe drew up a list of famous authors of the past and assigned the composition of the *Instruction of Amenemhet* to a scribe by the name of Khety. Whether or not his attribution was correct, it reveals that the New Kingdom scribe understood the pseudepigraphic nature of the work (see Posener, *Littérature*, p. 67). But as regards the audience of the Middle Kingdom, it seems to me probable that it took the work to be the genuine testament of King Amenemhet; for pseudepigrapha would lose much of their effectiveness if they were not, at least initially, believed to be the works of the men whose name they bore.

2. The much debated introductory passage was reexamined by Goedicke, *loc. cit.*, who made a case for taking *dd f h' m ntr* as a single sentence, in accordance with the verse-points, and having it refer to the dead king who is "risen as god," rather than to the accession of Sesostris I. If so taken, however, the address to Sesostris becomes very abrupt, consisting only of "listen to me," and the sentence lacks balance. Helck has summarized the previous renderings and has preferred to take *h'* as imperative, "rise," rather than the participle, "risen."

3. As Helck and Goedicke observed, the two *tmmt* refer back to *smllt*. I take the passage to mean that subjects who are unknown are dangerous because they can plot in secrecy. *Hrw* in the sense of "plot" is well attested (see Volten, *op. cit.*, p. 108).

4. Literally, "he whom I gave my hands."

5. Following Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 483, I read *šwytw*, rather than *šw*, "grass."

6. *Sti mw* has generally been interpreted as an act of disrespect or defiance, e.g., Helck: "spuckten vor mir aus." The inner logic of the

composition requires, however, that the king, looking back on the treacherous behavior of the plotters, should describe it in terms of *covert* acts, since any open defiance would have drawn immediate punishment. The "pouring water" in *Admonitions*, 7, 5, suggests a menial task.

7. I take *sphr* in the literal sense of "turn around."
 8. The meaning of *iw-i n h'w-l*, "I being to my body" is uncertain. Gardiner's "by myself" was disputed by Anthes and Helck; the latter suggested "kam zu mir," i.e., "became alert."

9. I.e., the old king was prevented from "sitting together" with his son in a formal ceremony of abdication.

10. The context here, and in *Neferti*, line 46, suggests that *iry*t means "produce" and "crops."

11. For *hpšwt* Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 493, proposed "frontier-strongholds," while Helck assumes a corrupted writing of *hpš*, the constellation "great bear."

12. The three sentences recur in *Admonitions*, 6, 13. Helck has pointed out that *msyt* is a corruption of *msd*, "hatred." The third sentence is obscure.

13. A garbled sentence, not preserved in P. Millingen.

14. The two concluding sentences are corrupt.

THE PROPHECIES OF NEFERTI

The sage Neferti is summoned to the court of King Snefru of the Fourth Dynasty, in order to entertain the king with fine speeches. Asked to speak of the future rather than the past, he prophesies the destruction of the nation by civil war and its eventual redemption through the rise of a great king. He calls the redeemer "Ameny"—the short form of Amenemhet—and thereby provides the clue to the understanding of the work. The readers, ancient and modern, are to understand that the "prophecy" is a literary disguise, veiling the contemporary character of a work composed in the reign of Amenemhet I, and designed as a glorification of that king. The work is a historical romance in pseudo-prophetic form.

Reflecting the successful early years of the reign, it is free of the gloom that pervades the *Instruction of Amenemhet I*, written about two decades later. Except, of course, for the artificial gloom of the prophecies of disasters that would precede the redemption. We have already said that the theme "national distress" was an intellectual problem that became a literary topos. It required no specific factual basis but merely the general phenomenon of civil disorders that could, and did, break out periodically. But no major calamities had preceded the accession of Amenemhet I.

The work is preserved in a single manuscript, P. Leningrad 1116B, which dates from the Eighteenth Dynasty. Small portions are preserved on two writing boards of the Eighteenth Dynasty and on numerous Ramesside ostraca.

Publication: Golenischeff, *Papyrus hiératiques*, pls. 23-25. W. Helck,

Die Prophezeiung des Nfr-tj (Wiesbaden, 1970).

Translation: A. H. Gardiner, *JEA*, I (1914), 100-106. Erman,

Littérature, pp. 110-115. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 444-446. Le-

fèvre, *Romans*, pp. 95-105.

Study: Posener, *Littérature*, pp. 21-60 and 145-157.

(1) There was a time when the majesty of King Snefru, the justified, was beneficent king in this whole land. On one of those days the magistrates of the residence entered the palace to offer greetings. And they went out having offered greetings in accordance with their daily custom. Then his majesty said to the seal-bearer at his side: "Go, bring me the magistrates of the residence who have gone from here after today's greetings."

They were ushered in to him (5) straightway and were on their bellies before his majesty a second time. His majesty said to them: "Comrades, I have had you summoned in order that you seek out for me a son of yours who is wise, or a brother of yours who excels, or a friend of yours who has done a noble deed, so that he may speak to me some fine words, choice phrases at the hearing of which my majesty may be entertained."

They were on their bellies before his majesty once more. Then they spoke before his majesty: "There is a great lector-priest of Hater, O king, our lord, Neferti (10) by name. He is a citizen with valiant arm, a scribe excellent with his fingers, a gentleman of greater wealth than any peer of his. May he be brought for your majesty to see!" Said his majesty: "Go, bring him to me!" He was ushered in to him straightway, and he was on his belly before his majesty.

His majesty said: "Come, Neferti, my friend, speak to me some fine words, choice phrases at the hearing of which my majesty may be entertained!" Said the lector-priest Neferti: "Of what has happened or of what will happen, O king, my lord?" (15) Said his majesty: "Of what will happen. As soon as today is here, it is passed over." He stretched out his hand to a box of writing equipment, took scroll and palette and began to put into writing the words of the lector-priest Neferti, that wise man of the East, servant of Bastet in her East, and native of the nome of On.

As he deplored what had happened¹ in the land, evoked the state of the East, with Asiatics roaming in their strength, frightening those about to harvest and seizing cattle from the plough, (20) he said:

Stir, my heart,
Bewail this land, from which you have sprung!
When there is silence before evil,
And when what should be chided is feared,
Then the great man is overthrown in the land of your birth.²
Tire not while this is before you,

Rise against what is before you!
Lo, the great no longer rule the land,
What was made has been unmade,
Re should begin to recreate!
The land is quite perished, no remnant is left,
Not the black of a nail is spared from its fate.
(Yet) while the land suffers, none care for it,
None speak, none shed tears: "How fares this land!"
The sundisk, covered, (25) shines not for people to see,
One cannot live when clouds conceal,
All are numb³ from lack of it.

I shall describe what is before me,
I do not foretell what does not come:
Dry is the river of Egypt,
One crosses the water on foot;
One seeks water for ships to sail on,
Its course having turned into shoreland.
Shoreland will turn into water,
Watercourse back into shoreland.
Southwind will combat northwind,
Sky will lack the single wind.

A strange bird will breed in the Delta marsh,⁴
Having made its nest beside (30) the people,
The people having let it approach by default.
Then perish those delightful things,
The fishponds full of fish-eaters,⁵
Teeming with fish and fowl.
All happiness has vanished,
The land is bowed down in distress,
Owing to those feeders,⁶
Asiatics who roam the land.
Foes have risen in the East,
Asiatics have come down to Egypt.
If the fortress is 'crowded' . . .
..... (35)⁷
Desert flocks will drink at the river of Egypt,
Take their ease on the shores for lack of one to fear;
For this land is to-and-fro, knowing not what comes,

What-will-be being hidden according as one says:⁸
 "When sight and hearing fail the mute leads."
 I show you the land in turmoil,
 What should not be has come to pass.
 Men will seize weapons of warfare,
 The land will live in (40) uproar.
 Men will make arrows of copper,
 Will crave blood for bread,
 Will laugh aloud at distress.
 None will weep over death,
 None will wake fasting for death,
 Each man's heart is for himself.
 Mourning is not done today,
 Hearts have quite abandoned it.
 A man sits with his back turned,
 While one slays another.
 I show you the son as enemy, the brother as foe,
 A man (45) slaying his father.⁹

Every mouth is full of "how I wish"¹⁰
 All happiness has vanished;
 The land is ruined, its fate decreed,
 Deprived of produce, lacking in crops,¹¹
 What was made has been unmade.
 One seizes a man's goods, gives them to an outsider,
 I show you the master in need, the outsider sated,
 The lazy stuffs himself, the active is needy.¹²
 One gives only with hatred,
 To silence the mouth that speaks;
 To answer a speech the arm thrusts a stick,
 One speaks by killing him.
 Speech falls on the heart like fire,
 (50) One cannot endure the word of mouth.

The land is shrunk—its rulers are many,
 It is bare—its taxes are great;
 The grain is low—the measure is large,
 It is measured to overflowing.
 He will withdraw from mankind:
 Though he will rise at his hour,
 One will not know when noon has come;

No one will discern his shadow,
 No face will be dazzled by seeing [him],
 No eyes will moisten with water.
 He will be in the sky like the moon,
 His nightly course unchanged,
 His rays on the face as before.¹³

I show you the land in turmoil:
 The weak-armed is strong-armed,
 (55) One salutes him who saluted.
 I show you the undermost uppermost,
 What was turned on the back turns the belly.¹⁴
 Men will live in the graveyard,
 The beggar will gain riches,
 The great [will rob] to live.
 The poor will eat bread,
 The slaves will be exalted.
 Gone from the earth is the nome of On,
 The birthplace of every god.

Then a king will come from the South,
 Ameny, the justified, by name,¹⁵
 Son of a woman of Ta-Seti, child of Upper Egypt.
 He will take the white crown,
 He will wear the red crown;
 (60) He will join the Two Mighty Ones,¹⁶
 He will please the Two Lords with what they wish,
 With field-circler in his fist, oar in his grasp.¹⁷
 Rejoice, O people of his time,
 The son of man will make his name for all eternity!
 The evil-minded, the treason-plotters,
 They suppress their speech in fear of him;
 Asiatics will fall to his sword,
 Libyans will fall to his flame,
 Rebels to his wrath, traitors to (65) his might,
 As the serpent on his brow subdues the rebels for him.
 One will build the Walls-of-the-Ruler,¹⁸
 To bar Asiatics from entering Egypt;
 They shall beg water as supplicants,
 So as to let their cattle drink.
 Then Order will return to its seat,

While Chaos is driven away.¹⁹
 Rejoice he who may behold, he who may attend the king!
 And he who is wise will libate for me,
 When he sees fulfilled what I have spoken!

Colophon: It has come to its end successfully by the scribe ---.

NOTES

1. The text has *hprt*, not *hpr·ty·sy*. Throughout the work, the tenses vary from past to present and future, as a result of the underlying double standpoint: the actual time of the writer who is hailing the present beneficent reign of Amenemhet I, and the fictitious time of the speaker who addresses King Snefru and foretells the distant future.
2. In *JNES*, 30 (1971), 69-72, I drew attention to the connective use of iterated *mk* which helps to explain this passage.
3. Here and in line 38, *idw* denotes the numbness of sight and hearing, rather than only deafness.
4. The "strange bird" means the Asiatics who have been able to settle in the eastern Delta because they were not resisted.
5. *Wnyw hr wgsu* is parallel to *wbnw hr rmtw*, and the human determinative of *wnyw* is an error. *Wgsu* has been interpreted as fish-slitting people, but the context points to fish-eating birds. The *wgs*-bird appears in *Peasant*, R 29; see also *Wb.*, I, 377: *wgs*, "Art Vögel."
6. "Feeders," not "food." This meaning of *dfsw* is attested by *Wb.*, V, 571.8-10.
7. Several very obscure sentences. Posener, *op. cit.*, p. 151, suggested as the general meaning that the Egyptians fleeing from the Asiatics have crowded into the fortresses and the latecomers are kept waiting outside. Helck, *op. cit.*, p. 30, thinks of Asiatics breaking through the Egyptian border fortifications.
8. In agreement with Helck, I take *m dd* to denote that a proverb is being quoted; but his rendering of *ptr sdm hr idw tw gr hft hr* as "Siehe, der hören sollte, ist taub, und so ist der Schweigende vorn," does not seem to me to hit the mark. The essence of a proverbial phrase is the compact terseness of its formulation, which makes every word carry maximum weight. Hence *ptr* can hardly be the near-meaningless "behold," and is more likely to be the infinitive of "to see." Hence: "when sight and hearing are numb the mute is out in front," a proverb similar to our "among the blind the one-eyed is king." On *idw* = "numb" see n. 3, above.
9. Two major topics make up the theme of "national distress." The first is the infiltration of the Delta by Asiatics; the second is civil war among Egyptians. This second topic is described by means of three topics, all of which recur in the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*, and all of which are loaded with hyperbole: indiscriminate bloodshed, indifference to suffering, and the reversal of the social order, by which the rich become poor and the have-nots become the masters.
10. In this context, *mr-wi* cannot mean "love me"; it is probably an idiom of the type "I wish I had."
11. If *iry* means "produce, crops" (see *Amenemhet*, n. 10), *gmyt* might

be "things of use," in accordance with the pregnant sense of *gmi* = "find useful."

12. *Tm ir mh nf ir šw*. Since Gardiner, all translators have construed *tm ir mh nf* as the subject, "he who never was one who filled for himself," and explained it as meaning the rich man who has servants who fill his granaries (Lefébvre), or is so rich he does not insist on full measure (Wilson). The predicate *ir šw* then means either "he is empty (i.e., poor)", so Gardiner and Lefébvre, or "he empties" (Wilson, Helck). It seems to me that a more satisfactory sense is obtained if the passage is treated as two sentences: *tm ir mh nf/ ir šw*, "he who did not make (i.e., acquire) fills for himself; he who made is needy." Or *tm ir* and *ir* might be taken to mean "lazy" and "active."

13. The description of the sun's withdrawal contains some difficulties; see Posener's discussion, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-156. I take the passage to mean that the sun-god in anger over men's evil deeds will veil his light so as to be as pale as the moon, without however altering his regular course. Thus the sage is not foretelling the total cosmic catastrophe which would result from the sun's failure to rise, but only a limited punitive action.

14. This seems to me to be the meaning of *phr·ti m s3 phr ht*. He who was easily overthrown now overthrows others. The sentence is one of several that treat of the theme "the undermost will be uppermost." To be flung to the ground on one's back meant being vanquished, as when "falsehood is flung on its back" in *Peasant*, B 182/3 and 197/8.

15. That "Ameny" is Amenemhet I was incisively demonstrated by Posener, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 ff.

16. The "Two Mighty Ones" are the vulture goddess Nekhbet and the cobra goddess Wadjet whose union, like that of the "Two Lords" (Horus and Seth), represented the unified kingdom.

17. Objects carried by the king in the ritual dances he performed before the gods.

18. The great border fortress built by Amenemhet I in the eastern Delta.

19. The contrasted pair is *maat* and *isfet*, which is of course basically "right" and "wrong," but sometimes conveys the enlarged sense of "order" and "chaos."

THE COMPLAINTS OF KHAKHEPERRE-SONB

British Museum 5645, a Writing Board

In content and style this work is closely related to the *Prophecies of Neferti* and to the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*. The single preserved copy was dated by Gardiner to the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty, while the work itself clearly belongs to the Middle Kingdom. In fact, it can be dated with some assurance to the reign of Sesostri II or shortly after, for, as Gardiner pointed out, the name of the sage is compounded with the prenomen of that king.

Unlike *Neferti*, the *Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb* reveal no political purpose. They appear to be a purely literary working of the theme "national distress." If a political criticism was intended, it is concealed behind the