

## VI. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AMENEMHET AND REMARKS ON STYLE

### 1. No. 60 : THE NOMARCH AMENEMHET

Leaving the cemeteries of Abydos and travelling north to the Oryx nome for a visit to the "Great Headman" Amenemhet is to reenter the land of the living, even though we call on him in his rock tomb, at Beni Hasan. There, the handsomely painted tombs of the nome chiefs held fast what Abydene memorials could not : the joys of life lived in action and in splendor.

Tomb No. 2, of the nomarch Amenemhet, shows not only the scenes traditional since the Old Kingdom — labors of farm and work shop, the homelife of the master and his wife, the master's favorite pastime of hunting in marshes and deserts — but also the siege of a fortified town, and those very curious sequences of men in wrestling matches. Furthermore, there is the scene that pays homage to the Osirian faith, and has recently entered the repertoire : the river journey to and from Abydos and Busiris by the deceased and mummified tomb owner. Altogether, the scenes furnish a rich background to Amenemhet's narrative autobiography.

In addition to its factual-historical value, the distinction of the autobiography lies in its skilful phrasing, its balanced shapeliness, and its even and pleasant tone. They are the qualities of harmony that characterize the best literary and pictorial works of the age, and made the language and art of the early 12th dynasty "classic" and paradigmatic.

### 60. Tomb Inscriptions of the Nomarch Amenemhet

Beni Hasan Tomb No. 2 (UE 16)  
Reign of Sesostri I

Newberry, Beni Hasan I, pp. 11-38, pls. vii-xxi; Urk. VII, 13-25.

Of this richly inscribed and decorated tomb the following texts are translated here : 1. The initial self-presentation, inscribed on the architrave and door-posts of the portico (A, B, C on Newberry's key-plan, p. 19). 2.

The autobiography, on the door-jambs leading to the main chamber (D, E on Newberry's key-plan, p. 19). 3. The legends above the ships voyaging to Abydos and Busiris, on the east wall of the main chamber (I, J, K on Newberry's key-plan, p. 19).

## 1. Initial Self-Presentation

Newberry, pl. vii; Urk. VII, 16-18

### A. Architrave, 5 lines

(1) The living Horus *Ankh-mesut*, the Two Ladies, *Ankh-mesut*, Gold-Horus *Ankh-mesut*, King of Upper and Lower Egypt *Kheperkare*, Son of Re *Senwosret*; the good god, lord of diadems, lord of ceremonial, given life-stability-dominion-and-joy like Re forever.

(2) The Honored one before Khnum, lord of Herwer, the Prince, Count, Gracious one,<sup>1</sup> Royal Seal-bearer, Sole Companion, the Great Headman of the Oryx nome, the Phyle Controller in the temple, Ameny, justified.

(3) The Honored one before Horus, smiter of people, the Prince Count, Gracious one, Overseer of all things sky-given and earth-grown, Overseer of horn, hoof, feather, and scale, the true King's Friend, Amenemhet, justified.

(4) The Honored one before Horus, foremost of Hebenu, the Prince, Count, King's Own Favorite, Overseer of the inventories of divine offerings, Ameny, justified.<sup>2</sup>

(5) The honored one before Khnum, lord of Irod,<sup>3</sup> the Prince, Count, Gracious one, a noble of long standing in the house of ...<sup>4</sup> the Overseer of the pleasure ponds, Amenemhet, justified.

### B. Right Door Post

#### 4 cols. & 1 line

(1) An offering-that-the-king-gives (to) Anubis upon his mountain, *imy-wt*, lord of the sacred land : a good burial in the western desert, in his tomb of the necropolis, for the *ka* of

(2) the Prince, Count, Royal Seal-bearer, Sole Companion, Gracious one, the Great Headman of the Oryx nome, one kind-hearted to all people,<sup>5</sup> who calms fear, gives welcome to all,

conducts rowers and sailors.<sup>6</sup>

(3) The Prince, Count, Chief Priest,  
merciful to one at fault,  
free of plotting evil,  
there is no greed in his body,  
what he speaks is truth.

(4) The Prince, Count, sole great hunter,<sup>7</sup>  
King's Favorite who controls the supply depots,  
Priest of Shu and Tefnut,  
the true King's Friend in the South,  
(5) the honored Amenemhet.

*C. Left Door Post*

*4 cols. & 1 line*

(1) An offering-that-the-king-gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, great god, lord of Abydos, that he may give a voice-offering of bread, beer, beef, fowl, alabaster, clothing, and food-offerings to the *ka* of

(2) the Prince, Count, Royal Seal-bearer,  
Sole Companion, Gracious one,  
the Great Headman of the Oryx nome,  
Councillor (*imy-is*), Keeper of Nekhen, Chief of Nekheb,  
Priest of Horus-of-the-two-scorpions,  
Companion in the temple of the Red Crown, *spr*.<sup>8</sup>

(3) The Prince and Count,  
Controller of the Two Thrones on the platform of the Shrine,<sup>9</sup>  
King's Nobleman in .....<sup>10</sup>

great-natured (*'3 n qdwy*) Noble on the day fear is given,  
who gives the King's fear <to> the Nine Bows,  
a Controller of hearts.

(4) The Prince, Count, Adorer of Horus-in-the-sky,  
Overseer of temples, keen-sighted, giver of voice to script,  
Chief Lector-priest, *Sem*-priest, Master of every apron,  
an open-handed one,<sup>11</sup>

(5) the honored Amenemhet, justified, born of Henu.

## 2. Autobiography

Newberry, pl. viii; Urk. VII, 14-16

*Door-Jambs, 5 lines & 16 cols.*

(1) Year 43 under the majesty of Horus *Ankh-mesut*, King of Upper and Lower Egypt *Kheperkare*, ever living;

(2) the Two Ladies *Ankh-mesut*, Gold-Horus *Ankh-mesut*, Son of Re

*Senwosret*, living forever and ever;

(3) equal to year 25 in the Oryx nome of the Prince, Count, Gracious one, Ameny, justified.<sup>12</sup>

(4) Year 43, second month of the inundation season, day 15,<sup>13</sup>

O lovers of life, haters of (5) death,

say : 1000 of bread and beer,

1000 of beef and fowl,

(6) for the *ka* of the Prince, Count, Gracious one,

Great Headman<sup>14</sup> of the Oryx nome,

Councillor, Keeper of Nekhen, Chief of Nekheb,

Overseer of priests, Ameny, justified.

#### *First Expedition*

I followed my lord when he sailed (7) south to overthrow his enemies among the foreign peoples. As a Count's son, Royal Sealbearer, and Chief Troop Commander of (8) the Oryx nome did I sail, as a man replaces his aged father through the favor of the king's house and his being beloved in the palace.<sup>15</sup>

I by-passed (9) Kush in sailing south,

I reached the ends of earth;

I brought back gifts (*inw*) of all kinds,

and praise of me reached the sky.<sup>16</sup>

Then (10) his majesty proceeded in safety, having overthrown his enemies in wretched Kush. I returned in his following in alertness (11) and no loss occurred in my troops.

#### *Second Expedition*

I sailed south to fetch gold ore to the majesty of King *Kheperkare*, living forever and ever. (12) I sailed south with the Prince, Count, Eldest King's Son of his body, Ameny, life-prosperity-health.<sup>17</sup> I sailed south with 400 conscripts<sup>18</sup>, the choicest of my troops, and returned in safety without loss to them. I brought the gold I had demanded, was rewarded for it in the king's house, (14) and the king's son thanked me.

#### *Third Expedition*

Then I sailed south to fetch gold ore, to the town of Coptos, with the Prince, Count, Governor of the City and Vizier, *Senwosret*, life-prosperity-health<sup>19</sup>. I sailed south with 600 conscripts, (15) the bravest of the Oryx nome. I returned in peace, my soldiers safe, and I had done all I had been ordered.

#### *Ameny's Governance*

I am a man of grace<sup>20</sup>, ever loved, a ruler beloved of his town. I spent the years (16) as ruler of the Oryx nome with all dues for the king's house

being in my charge. I gave gang-overseers to the domains of the herdsmen of the Oryx nome and 3000 oxen as their yoke-oxen. I was praised (17) for it in the king's house in every year of the cattle tax<sup>21</sup>. I delivered all their dues to the king's house, and there was no shortage against me in any bureau of his, for the entire Oryx nome labored for me (18) in steady stride.

There was no citizen's daughter whom I shamed,  
no widow whom I oppressed,  
no farmer whom I drove away,  
no herdsman whom I turned back.

(19) There was no overseer of laborers<sup>22</sup> whose people I seized for labor.

There was no pauper in my surroundings,  
no hungry man in my time.

There came years of hunger. (20) Then I plowed all the fields of the Oryx nome to its southern and northern border, so that I fed its inhabitants<sup>23</sup>, provided its supplies, and none hungered in it. I gave alike to widow and married (21) woman, and I did not prefer the great to the small in all that I gave.

Then came high Niles, rich in barley and emmer, rich in all things, and I did not exact the arrears of the field.

### 3. Voyages to Abydos and Busiris

Newberry, pls. xiv & xvi; Urk. VII, 23

#### *Main Chamber, East Wall*

Faring upstream to fetch the requirements of Abydos for the Prince, Count, Gracious one, Royal Seal-bearer, Sole Companion, Great Headman of the Oryx nome, true King's Friend, Amenemhet, justified and honored.

Faring downstream to fetch the requirements of Busiris for the Prince, Count, Gracious one, Royal Seal-bearer, Sole Companion, Chief Priest of Khnum, lord of Herwer, for the *ka* of the honored Amenemhet, justified<sup>24</sup>.

#### Notes

1) The title *im3-'* (or, *i3m-'*) - "gracious of hand", is so prominently used in the tomb inscriptions of Amenemhet as to constitute the nomarch's principal appellation, the title-and-epithet by which he wished to be known. His choice of this particular title also throws some light on the Old Kingdom occurrences of *im3-'* (for which see Helck, *Beamtentitel*, 118) namely, that it was a specifically courtly title which originated in an epithet denoting the quality of graciousness or benignity. The suggestion to read *b3q-'* rather than *im3-'* is to be rejected, for in Amenemhet's usage *im3-'* is also paired with epithets of similar sound and meaning: *imy-ib*, *ims-ib*, and *nb-im3t*. See the further discussion in note

20. — 2) The title sequences in lines 2-5 were composed with care so as to form symmetrical patterns. Each line begins with Ameny's honored state before the principal gods of the nome, Horus and Khnum, the gods being named in an a-b-b-a pattern : Khnum - Horus - Horus - Khnum. Next come the principal court titles, *rp't*, *ḥ3ty-*, followed by *im3-*, except in line 4 where it is replaced by *imy-ib ity*. — 3) On the towns of Herwer, Hebenu, and Irod see Gardiner, AEO II, pp. 84\*-92\*. — 4) *S'h '3 n rnpt m pr imwt*; the meaning of *pr imwt* escapes me. — 5) With *ims-ib n rmt nb* begins the outline of Ameny's moral profile. — 6) Compare the statement of the Manager Seneni (Source No. 12) who declared he was helpful to travellers. — 7) More literally, "Sole great one at fish-and-fowl catch". — 8) On this obscure title see Wb. IV, 101. — 9) Reading *ḥrp nsty ḥr m3' (pr)-nsr*, with Vandersleyen, CdE 43 (1968) 251. — 10) After *špsy nswt m* there is the sign of the harpoon-head (T. 19) and a thrice written sign that looks somewhat like a boat and may be the same sign that occurs three times in the hunting-in-the-marshes scenes of Khnumhotep

II (Urk. VII, 37) :  The reading of this group seems to be unknown. As a shot in the dark I propose that Ameny here calls himself "King's companion at the spear-hunt in the marshes". — 11) *Wr-drt* is probably synonymous with *3w-drt*, used twice in No. 47. — 12) A remarkable instance of eponymous dating by the nomarch, added to the regnal date. As Gardiner put it, "Evidently a balance had been established between royal power and princely pride" (Egypt of the Pharaohs, 129). — 13) The precise date may, but need not be, the date of Ameny's death or burial. Tombs were usually prepared during their owners' lives, and the autobiography was not a deathbed product. But the five horizontal lines with their dating could have been added to the main body of the autobiographical narration at the time of the nomarch's burial. — 14. The hieroglyph compounded of sun-disk and horns is not found in Gardiner's sign-list, and I had failed to recognize it as a playful writing of *ḥry-tp*, until E. Staehelin, whom I asked, guessed it. Once recognized it can be found in Wb. III, 140, and Ward, Index, nos. 1046 etc. — 15. Just as Amenemhet's eponymous dating was balanced by the regnal date, so here his claim to hereditary office is blended with his recognition of the king's authority in making appointments. — 16) The quatrain is an excellent example of what I take to be rhythmic Kunstprosa of the narrative kind. — 17) The future king Amenemhet II. — 18) The *ḥsbw* are thought to be "conscripts"; see Simpson, Papyrus Reisner I; Helck, Wirtschafts- geschichte, 148, and "Fronddienst" in LÄ II, 333f. — 19) The future king Sesostris II. — 20) *Ink nb im3t*; here the quality of "graciousness/kindliness" is stated emphatically, and shows that the nomarch wore the old court title *im3-* as a badge of moral worth. The terms were not uniquely his, other nomarchs used them, sparingly - exx. Urk. VII, 28, 30, 43, 54 - but for Amenemhet his benignity was his hall-mark. The literary treatment of the quality of benignity may have been especially popular at this time : on the stela of Mentuhotep son of Hapu (University College, London, No. 14333) there occurs the sentence *drt pw i3mt mrrt*, "the kindly hand is what is loved", in which Goedicke plausibly surmised "a well known saying" (JEA 48, 1962, 33, note *af*). The sentence has the form of a "saying", and the text as a whole is one long discourse on kindness. — 21. Basically, I follow Gardiner's rendering of the passage in Egypt of the Pharaohs, 129. — 22) The term *ḏrwt* is not in the Wörterbuch, *mr ḏrwt* is not in Ward, Index, and I do not know a discussion of it. — 23) On *ḥrw* see now Franke, Verwandtschaft, 231-235. — 24) The boat

Abydos and Busiris by the *corpse* of the tomb owner, often depicted in tombs since the Middle Kingdom, is yet another manifestation of Osirian worship as it now flourished. The "pilgrimage" of the dead served the same purpose as that of the living.

## A NOTE ON *INW*

Both Henu and Amenemhet (Nos. 21 & 60) spoke of the *inw* they had brought back from the lands south of Egypt's border. Tjetji (No. 19) referred to the *inw* given to the king by all of Egypt "through fear of him throughout this land". The nomarch Khety I of Siut (No. 8) told of the *inw* he had given his town in the shape of an irrigation system. The meanings of *inw* were debated with some heat in recent issues of GM, with one side denying that *inw* ever meant "tribute" and the other side defending the meaning "tribute". More light is obtained from Spalinger's discussion of *inw* in his study of foods in P. Bulaq 18 (SAK 13, 1986, 179-241) where he analyzed the *inw* accounts and the '*qw*' accounts, and suggested that the regular input was called '*qw*', while *inw* meant special or additional deliveries, which might be called "imposts".

A bright new light is shed on *inw* by Clère's study of the autobiography of a Saite general (BIFAO 84, 1984, 85-100) who brought *innw* to the town in the shape of waterworks, and described his deed in terms recalling those used by Khety I of Siut. Clère thinks it is a deliberate imitation of the Siut text. What is most interesting is his finding that *innw* here does not mean "gifts" but means "additions" ("additions, améliorations, ajouts"). In support he cites a passage from an inscription of Sarenput I in the Heqaib sanctuary on Elephantine island, where Sarenput recorded his rebuilding of the shrine of Heqaib and said: *in(.i) in(w) hr w3t.s nbt m h3 r snnt tpt*, which Clère renders as: "j'ai apporté un apport sur chacun de ses côtés en addition au plan primitif". The whole inscription can now be found in Habachi, The Sanctuary of Heqaib, pp. 28-29 & pl. 13. Here, the meaning "additions/improvements" is very clear. It is a meaning that should be added to the Wörterbuch definitions of *inw*, all of which, including "Tributabgaben", have stood up very well. That is to say, the basic range of *inw* is, in German, covered neatly by "Gabe - Abgabe - Zugabe". "Tribut" comes under the heading "Abgabe"; and let it be remembered that "tribute" is not only something paid in token of submission, but also something given or spoken as a sign of respect, without the connotation that the giver is of inferior status.

Now while the meaning "addition" is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the lexical range of *inw*, for the passage in the inscription of Khety I of Siut I still prefer the rendering, "I gave a gift to this town", even if the Saite general said, "I made additions to his (the god's) town."