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Aylward M. Blackman

A new translation of the inscription of Herwerre at Serâbit el-Khâdim [with one plate].

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A NEW TRANSLATION

OF THE INSCRIPTION OF ḤERWERRĒ‘

AT SERÂBÎṬ EL-KHÂDIM

(with one plate)

BY

AYLWARD M. BLACKMAN.

The most recent reproductions of this interesting but difficult inscription are to be found in Weill, *Recueil des inscriptions égyptiennes du Sinaï,* Paris, 1904, p. 174; Petrie, *Researches in Sinai,* London, 1906, fig. 114, op. p. 110; Gardiner, and Peet, *The Inscriptions of Sinai,* i., 1917, Pl. XXVI, no. 90; Sethe, *Aegyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht,* Leipzig, 1924, p. 86.

The only translations of importance that have hitherto appeared are those of Weill, *op. cit.,* pp. 173-175, and Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt,* i., Chicago, 1906, pp. 322 ff. Sethe has published some useful philological notes, but not a translation, in his *Erläuterungen zu den aegyptischen Lesestücken,* Leipzig, 1927, pp. 142 ff.

Thinking that I have made some advance on Weill and Breasted's interpretation of this inscription, and on Sethe's also, judging from his notes, I venture to offer the following translation to readers of the *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale* as a token—I fear it is a small and wholly inadequate one—of my respect for Monsieur Loret's great contributions to Egyptological studies.

The translation is the result of many discussions with pupils at Oxford who have attended the lectures in which I have dealt with this among other Middle Egyptian texts. I have also had the advantage of talking over various difficulties with Professor Peet, who made the suggestion, which I have adopted,

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about *'Irty-m-ḫb*, and who also pointed out to me the wrong reading in the *Lesestücke* text at the end of line 6.

I have thought it advisable to include in my article Gardiner and Peet's copy of the inscription, as it is the only really satisfactory one, and as, moreover, their massive publication is not easily accessible to all scholars.

It should be noted that the inscription is dated by two other monuments of Ḥerwerrē^{c} to the reign of Amenemmes III [1].

TRANSLATION.

[1] *The Majesty of this god dispatched the Treasurer of the God, Superintendent of the Inner Appartment, Director of Gangs* (1) *Ḥerwerrē^{c},* [2] *unto this Sinai. This land was reached* (2) *in the third month of Prōyet, albeit* (3) *it was indeed not the season for coming* [3] *to this Sinai.*

This Treasurer of the God saith unto the officers who shall come unto this Sinai at this season : [4] *Be not downcast on account of it. Behold, Ḥaṯor always giveth it* (4) [5] *out of kindness* (5). *I have seen (that) with regard to myself, I have experienced the like in mine own person. I came from Egypt* [6] *downcast. Difficult, so it seemed to me* (6), *was the acquiring of the (right) skin* (7) *for it, as the flat land was burning* (8) *hot,* [7] *the country being in summer, and the mountains branded (one), and skins were blistered* (9). *On the eve* [8] *of* (10) *my setting out from the* r;ḫt *I was addressing* (11) *the workmen about it* (*i.e.* Sinai, or the conditions prevailing there) : [9] *How fortunate* (12) *is he who is in this Sinai! Thereupon they said : There is* [10] *always turquoise in the mountain. It is the (right) skin that is wanted at this season.* [11] *We have been used to hear likewise* (13) *that ore is forth-coming at this season,* [12] *but it is the (right) skin that is lacking for it in this grievous time of summer.* [13] *I was directing my course to* (14) *this Sinai, the will of the King prompting me.* [14] *Then I reached this land,* [15] *and I began the work at a favourable moment* (15). *My force came back completely intact, no loss ever occurred in it. I was not downcast* [16] *at the prospect of work. I succeeded in seizing* (16) *a favourable moment* (17). *I departed* (18) *in the first month* [17] *of*

[1] Gardiner-Peet, *op. cit.*, i., p. 9.

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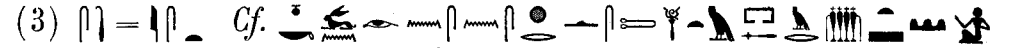
summer, having brought away this precious mineral. I exceeded [18] *any one who had come (before), all orders. There was no 'Oh for the (right) skin!'* [19] 'Irty-m-ḥb (19) *was kind, she was kinder than at her proper season. Offer* [20] *oblation to the Lady of Heaven, appease ye* (20) *Ḥaṯḥor. If ye do this it will be well* [21] *for you; ye shall exceed because of her; ye shall have good fortune* (21). [22] *I conducted* (22) *my expedition very successfully. There is no boasting* [23] *with regard to my work. What I did(?) was successful.* [24] *The whole troop of recruits . . . . . .*

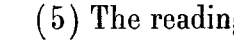
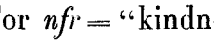
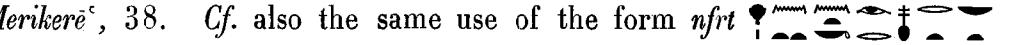
NOTES.

(1) must be the same word as *skw* in NEWBERRY, *Bersheh*, i., Pl. XIV, 8, meaning "companies", "squadrons". See also *Urkunden*, iv., 653,9; 659,3; GARDINER, *Admonitions*, p. 20; *Notes on the Story of Sinuhe*, p. 92. Unless *ḫrp skw* is here a military title, "Squadron-Leader", the *skw* must be the "gangs" of miners.

(2) Both *mꜣꜥ* at the beginning of line 1 and *spr* are infinitives; see GARDINER, *Grammar*, § 306,2, and also SETHE, *Erläuterungen*, p. 142.

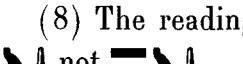
(3) = *Cf.*  "It was I who used to devise the plan for them, albeit mine office was (only that of) Superintendent of the tenants of the domains of the Great House", *Uni*, 19; see also GARDINER, *op. cit.*, §§ 119,2; 214.

(4) The produce of the mines; so too SETHE, *Erläuterungen*, p. 142.

(5) The reading is clearly  and not *n wbꜣ*, that of the *Lesestücke* text. For *nfr* = "kindness" see  "because of thy kindness", *Instruction for Merikerē*, 38. *Cf.* also the same use of the form *nfrt*  because it is thou that ever doest every kindness", GRIFFITH, *Kahun Papyri*, Pl. XXIX, 39.

(6) Lit. "in my face (*i.e.*, sight)"; *cf. Lebensmüde*, 132, 134, etc.

(7) Reading *šꜣ m ḥr·i gmt ỉnm·s*, the meaning being that a skin well seasoned by the right treatment was needed in a person who was to brave the intense heat of Sinai in summer time.

(8) The reading according Gardiner and Peet's facsimile is clearly  not .

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(9) Such I guess to be the meaning of *ḥn* in view of the sign , which is the usual determinative of words meaning "swelling" or the like, *e. g.*, , *Pap. Ebers*, 51, 19.

(10) I read here with Sethe : *ḥḏ-t; m;ᶜ·i m r;ḫt.* For this use of *ḥḏ-t; cf.* "As for that night of the Evening Meal, it is the eve of the burial of Osiris", *Urkunden*, v., 119; "Who will give water to a bird overnight when it is to be killed at dawn (lit. on the eve of killing it in the morning)?" *Shipwrecked Sailor*, 184-186; see also Sethe, *Untersuchungen*, iii., p. 136, n. 2.

The word *r;ḫt* occurs nowhere else and is, as Sethe points out, very problematical. Can it be a miswriting of *wḫrt* "wharf" "dock", *i. e.*, the port in the Sinaitic peninsular to which Ḥerwerrē had just come? We might also possibly compare the word in *Pyr.* § 451 *a*, "Behold Unis hath brought unto thee thy left eye from *Rwḫtt*", for it is to be noted that mention is made of Horus of Sinai (*Ḥr šsmty*) and Horus of the East (*Ḥr ỉ;bty*) in the immediately preceding passage § 450 *b, c.*

(11) Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 474, 2, regards the form *wn·f sḏm·f* as narrating a past continuous action, and cites both this instance and that in line 13 among his examples. But his rendering "I kept on" doing so and so seems to me unnecessary in the case of *wn·i wšḏ·i*, and is impossible in that of *wn·i m;ᶜ·i*, for Ḥerwerrē is describing *one* voyage only. I feel that my translation "I was addressing" represents better the force of the Egyptian idiom, — action extended over a period of time, but not necessarily repeated; see also note 14.

(12) Reading *sbḳ·wy*. The precedes the on calligraphical grounds.

(13) Either render with Sethe[1] : "We have been wont to hear the like, (namely that) ore is forthcoming", or read *m mỉtt* "likewise" which I personally prefer. The *m* would easily be omitted, coming as it does between the final *m* of *sḏm* and the initial *m* of *mỉtt*.

(14) By the use of the form *wn·f sḏm·f* the writer doubtless intended to lay stress on the duration of the voyage. A better rendering, perhaps, of the

[1] See also Gardiner, *op. cit.*, § 484.

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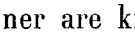
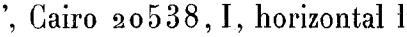
words *wn·i.....m-ḫr·i* would be : "The whole time that I was making for Sinai the will of the King was prompting (or counselling) me".

(15) "Favourable" or "right moment" seems clearly to be the meaning of *tp nfr* both here and in line 16. Two other instances of *tp nfr* employed in this manner are known to me :  "who doeth a thing at the right moment", Cairo 20538, I, horizontal line 11;  "When his Majesty gave the opportunity on the march back to the Residence (then Sekmem fell together with vile Rethenu)", *Stele of Sebekkhu*, 2.

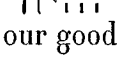
(16) Lit. "I arrived at seizing".

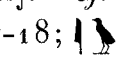
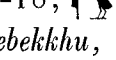
(17) See note 15.

(18) *Cf.* "I departed from Byblos", *Sinuhe*, R 53.

(19) Professor Peet has suggested with great probability that *'Irty-m-ḫb* is the name of a district, or perhaps rather a mine, in Sinai, and not a designation of Ḥaṯḥor, who is mentioned by name immediately after.

(20) I follow Sethe in regarding as a writing of the particle , following the optative *sḏm·tn*[1].

(21) Lit. "Good fortune", or "success, is with you". For *wꜣḏ* = "success", see  "success will come", *Carnarvon Tablet*, I, 9; "This is our good fortune", Gardiner, *Admonitions*, 3,13.

(22) Or perhaps "I marshalled (or "posted") my men (lit. "army") very successfully. *Cf.*  "I marshalled the Great Procession", *Ikhernofret*, 17-18;  "I marshalled the rear-guard of the host", *Stele of Sebekkhu*, 3.

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[1] See Gardiner, *op. cit.*, § 250.

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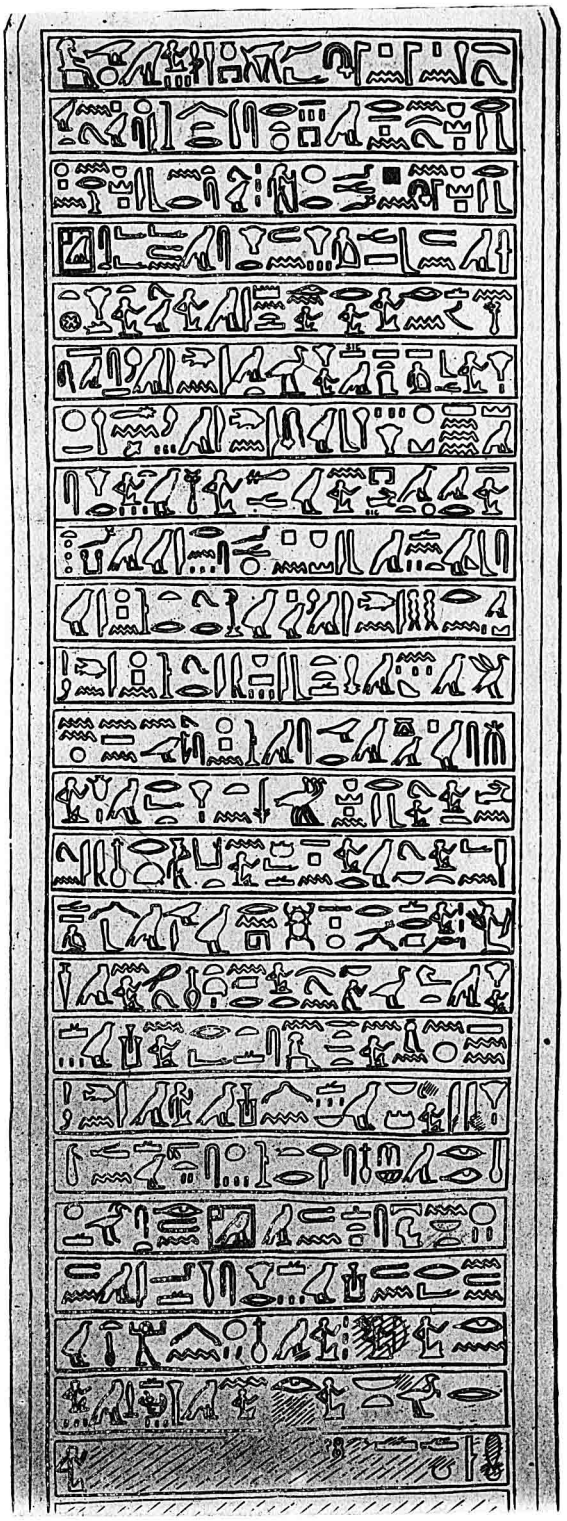

The Inscription of Ḥerwerrē‘.

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