

Ancient Egyptian Literature A Book of Readings

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AHMOSE SON OF ABANA

In his Tomb at El-Kab

The inscription is carved in two parts: lines 1-31 on the right-hand wall of the hall of the rock-tomb (east wall), and lines 32-40 on the left side of the door wall (south wall). Also on the right-hand wall is the standing relief figure of Ahmose accompanied by the small figure of his grandson Paheri.

A list of Ahmose's landholdings and slaves, not translated here, is inscribed on the right side of the door wall.

Publication: LD III, 12, b-d. V. Loret, *L'inscription d'Ahmès fils d'Abana*, Bibliothèque d'étude, 3 (Cairo, 1910). *Urk. IV*, 1-11.

Translation: BAR, II, §§ 1-16, 38-39, 78-82. *Urk. deutsch*, pp. 1-6. B. Gunn and A. H. Gardiner, *JEA*, 5 (1918), 48-54. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 233-234 (excerpts).

Historical study: C. Vandersleyen, *Les Guerres d'Amosis, fondateur de la XVIIIe dynastie*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth, 1 (Brussels, 1971), pp. 17-87. For additional references see PM V, 182 and Vandersleyen, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.

(1) The Crew Commander Ahmose son of Abana,¹ the justified; he says. I speak to you, all people. I let you know what favors came to me. I have been rewarded with gold seven times in the sight of the whole land, with male and female slaves as well. I have been endowed with very many fields. The name of the brave man is in that which he has done; it will not perish in the land forever.²

He speaks as follows. I grew up in the town of Nekheb,³ my father being a soldier of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seqenenre,⁴ the justified. Baba (5) son of Reonet was his name. I became a soldier in his stead on the ship "The Wild Bull" in the time of the Lord of the Two Lands, Nebpehtire,⁵ the justified. I was a youth who had not married; I slept in . . .⁶

Expulsion of the Hyksos

Now when I had established a household,⁷ I was taken to the ship "Northern," because I was brave. I followed the sovereign on foot when he rode about on his chariot. When the town of Avaris was besieged, I fought bravely on foot in his majesty's presence.⁸ Thereupon I was appointed to the ship "Rising in Memphis." Then there was fighting on the water in "Pjedku" of Avaris. I made a seizure (10) and carried off a hand.⁹ When it was reported to the royal herald the gold of valor was given to me.

Then they fought again in this place; I again made a seizure there and carried off a hand. Then I was given the gold of valor once again.

Then there was fighting in Egypt to the south of this town, and I carried off a man as a living captive. I went down into the water—for he was captured on the city side—and crossed the water carrying him.

When it was reported to the royal herald I was rewarded with gold once more. Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there: one man, three women; total, four persons.¹⁰ His majesty gave them to me as slaves.

(15) Then Sharuhén was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it: two women and a hand. Then the gold of valor was given me, and my captives were given to me as slaves.

Nubian campaign of King Ahmose

Now when his majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer,¹¹ to destroy the Nubian Bowmen. His majesty made a great slaughter among them, and I brought spoil from there: two living men and three hands. Then I was rewarded with gold once again, and two female slaves were given to me.¹² His majesty journeyed north, his heart rejoicing in valor and victory. He had conquered southerners, northerners.

Destruction of the rebels Aata and Tetian

Then Aata came to the South.¹³ (20) His fate brought on his doom. The gods of Upper Egypt grasped him. He was found by his majesty at Tent-taa.¹⁴ His majesty carried him off as a living captive, and all his people as booty. I brought two young warriors¹⁵ as captives from the ship of Aata. Then I was given five persons and portions of land amounting to five arurae in my town. The same was done for the whole crew.

Then came that foe named Tetian.¹⁶ He had gathered the malcontents to himself. His majesty slew him; his troop was wiped out. Then I was given three persons and five arurae of land in my town.

Nubian campaign of King Amenhotep I

Then I conveyed King Djeserkare,¹⁷ the justified, when he sailed south to Kush, to enlarge (25) the borders of Egypt. His majesty smote that Nubian Bowman in the midst of his army. They were carried off in fetters, none missing, the fleeing destroyed as if they had never been. Now I was in the van of our troops and I fought really well. His majesty saw my valor. I carried off two hands and presented them to his majesty. Then his people and his cattle were pursued, and I carried off a living captive and presented him to his majesty.

I brought his majesty back to Egypt in two days from "Upper Well," and was rewarded with gold. I brought back two female slaves as

booty, apart from those that I had presented to his majesty. Then they made me a "Warrior of the Ruler."

Nubian campaign of King Thutmose I

Then I conveyed King Aakheperkare,¹⁸ the justified, when he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer, (30) to crush rebellion throughout the lands, to repel the intruders from the desert region. I was brave in his presence in the bad water, in the towing of the ship over the cataract. Thereupon I was made crew commander.

Then his majesty [I was informed that the Nubian¹⁹]-----. At this his majesty became enraged like a leopard. His majesty shot, and his first arrow pierced the chest of that foe. Then those [enemies turned to flee], helpless before his Uraeus. A slaughter was made among them; their dependents were carried off as living captives. (35) His majesty journeyed north, all foreign lands in his grasp, and that wretched Nubian Bowman head downward at the bow of his majesty's ship "Falcon." They landed at Ipet-sut.¹⁹

Syrian campaign of King Thutmose I

After this (his majesty) proceeded to Retjenu, to vent his wrath²⁰ throughout the lands. When his majesty reached Nahrin, his majesty found that foe marshalling troops. Then his majesty made a great slaughter of them. Countless were the living captives which his majesty brought back from his victories. Now I was in the van of our troops, and his majesty saw my valor. I brought a chariot, its horse, and him who was on it as a living captive. When they were presented to his majesty, I was rewarded with gold once again.

(40) I have grown old; I have reached old age. Favored as before, and loved [by my lord], I [rest] in the tomb that I myself made.

NOTES

1. The name of his mother, variously transcribed by scholars as Eben, Ibana, Abana, or Abina.

2. A proverb which occurs twice more in inscriptions of Thutmose III (*Urk. IV*, 684 and 780); see B. Gunn, *JEA*, 12 (1926), 283.

3. The metropolis of the third nome of Upper Egypt, modern El-Kab.

4. Throne name of King Tao II of the Seventeenth Dynasty.

5. Throne name of King Ahmose, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

6. The meaning of *smt šnw* is unknown. The rendering "hammock of net" of Gunn and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 49, lacks probability.

7. I.e., had married.

8. Ahmose is a marine rather than a sailor. Whether actual naval engagements took place at that time is doubtful. The ships served primarily to transport troops.