

## Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage

(papyrus Ipuwer<sup>1</sup>)

(1,1) ... The door[-keepers] say: 'Let us go plunder.'  
The pastry-makers ... . The washerman does not think  
of carrying his load ... . The bird[-catchers] are lined  
up for battle ... . The Delta[-dwellers] carry shields. (a)  
The brewers (5) ... sad. A man regards his son as his  
enemy. Hostility ... another. Come and conquer. ...  
what was ordained for you in the time of Horus, in the  
walks in mourning (b) on account of the state of the land.  
The ... walks ... . Foreigners have become people (c)  
Everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

(d) Lo, the face is pale (10) ...  
what the ancestors foretold has happened.

...

Lo, ...

(2,1) The land is full of gangs,  
A man goes to plow with his shield.  
Lo, the meek say ...  
... is a man of substance. [B150]  
Lo, the face is pale, the bowman ready,  
Crime is everywhere, there is no man of yesterday. (e)  
Lo, the robber ... everywhere.  
The servant takes what he finds.  
Lo, Hapy inundates and none plow for him.  
All say, 'We don't know what has happened in the land.'  
Lo, women are barren, none conceive,  
Khnum does not fashion because of the state of the land. (f)  
Lo, poor men have become men of wealth,  
He who could not afford (5) sandals owns riches.  
Lo, men's slaves, their hearts are greedy.  
The great do not mingle with their people [when they rejoice].  
Lo, hearts are violent, storm sweeps the land.  
There is blood everywhere, no shortage of dead,  
The shroud calls out before one comes near it.  
Lo, many dead are buried in the river,  
The stream is the grave, the tomb became stream.  
Lo, nobles lament, the poor rejoice.  
Every town says, 'Let us expel our rulers.'  
Lo, people are like ibises, there's dirt everywhere.  
None have white garments in this time.  
Lo, the land turns like a potter's wheel.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 92-108. J.A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 441-444. R.O. Falkner, *JEA*, 51 (1965) 53-62 and 'Notes', *JEA*, 50 (1964) 24-36.

<sup>2</sup> 1) 'People' = Egyptians.

The robber owns riches, [the noble] is a thief.  
Lo, the trusted are like ...  
The citizen [says], 'Woe, what shall I do!'

(2,10) Lo, the river is blood.  
As one drinks of it one shrinks from people  
And thirsts for water.  
Lo, doors, columns, coffers<sup>3</sup> are burning, (g)  
while the hall of the palace stands firm. (h)  
Lo, the ship of the South founders,  
Towns are ravaged, Upper Egypt became wasteland.  
Lo, crocodiles gorge on their catch,  
People go to them of their own will. (i)  
[The land is injured.]  
One says, 'Don't walk here, there's a net.'  
People flap like fish.  
The scared does not discern it in his fright.  
Lo, people are diminished. [B 151]  
He who puts his brother in the ground is everywhere.  
[The word of the wise has fled without delay.]  
Lo the son of man is denied recognition.  
The child of his lady became the son of his maid.

(3,1) Lo, the desert claims the land,  
The nomes are destroyed.  
Foreign bowmen have come into Egypt.  
Lo, ...  
There are no people anywhere, (j)  
Lo, gold, lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise,  
carnelian, amethyst, *ibht*-stone and ...  
are strung on the necks of female slaves.  
Noble women<sup>4</sup> roam the land,  
Ladies say, 'We want to eat!'  
Lo, ... noble women,  
Their bodies suffer in rags,  
Their hearts [shrink] from greeting [each other].  
Lo, (5) chests of ebony are smashed.  
Precious *ssndm*-wood is chopped ...  
Lo, [tomb]-builders have become field-laborers,  
Those who were in the god's bark are yoked [to it].<sup>5</sup>

None indeed sail north to Byblos today. What shall we do for  
pine trees for our mummies? Free men are buried with their produce, (k)

<sup>3</sup> 2) *Dr'wt*, 'coffers, chests,' in accordance with Vandier's discussion of *dr't* in *Mo'alla*, pp. 208-211.

<sup>4</sup> 3) *Špsswt*, 'noblewomen', rather than 'good things'.

<sup>5</sup> 4) Contrary to Goedicke's rendering in *JARCE* 6 (1973) 93, I take the two sentences, as those preceding it, to be descriptions of the reversal of fortune, i.e. variations on the theme 'the first will be the last'.

nobles are embalmed with their oil as far as Crete.<sup>6</sup> (l) They come no more. Gold is lacking; exhausted are [materials] for every kind of craft. What belongs to the palace has been stripped. What a great thing it is when the oasis-peasants come with their festival offerings, mats and [skins], fresh *rdmt*-plants, (10) the [fat] of birds ... (m)

Lo, Yebu, [this] ... are not taxed because of strife.

Lacking are [grain], charcoal, *irtyw*, *m3'w*-wood, *nwt*-wood, bush-wood. The output of craftsmen is lacking ... What good is a treasury without its revenues? Happy is the heart of the king when gifts<sup>7</sup> come to him. (n) And when every foreign land [comes], that is our success,<sup>8</sup> that is our fortune. What shall we do about it? All is ruin!

Lo, merriment has ceased, is made no more,

Groaning is throughout the land, mingled with laments.

Lo, every have-not<sup>9</sup> is one who has, [**B** 152]

Those who were (4,1) people are strangers whom one shows the way.

Lo, everyone's hair [has fallen out],

One can't distinguish the son of man from the pauper.

Lo, [one is numb] from noise.

No [voice is straight] in years of shouting,

No [end of shouting].

Lo, great and small <say>, 'I wish I were dead.'

Little children say, 'He should not have made me live!'

Infants are put out on high grounds.

Lo, those who were entombed are cast on high ground,

Embalmer's secrets are thrown away.

(5) Lo, gone is what yesterday was seen,

The land is left to its weakness like a cutting of flax.

Lo, the whole Delta cannot be seen.<sup>10</sup>

Lower Egypt puts trust in trodden roads. (o)

What can one do? One says, 'There are no ... anywhere.'

One says, 'Woe' to the place of secrets,

Those who ignore it own it as if they knew it,

Foreigners are skilled in the works of the Delta.

Lo, citizens are put to the grindstones,

Wearers of fine linen are beaten with [sticks].

Those who never saw daylight go out unhindered,

Those who were on their husbands' (10) beds,

---

<sup>6</sup> 5) I retain the traditional rendering of the passage. A different one was proposed by Goedicke, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> 6) I read *m3'w*, 'gifts, tribute,' rather than *m3'wt*, 'truth.' The text abounds in corruptions.

<sup>8</sup> 7) The meaning of the metaphor *mw-n pw*, 'this is our water,' is uncertain. Faulkner took it to mean 'bad luck' and the sentence to be ironic. I take it to be 'good luck,' 'success,' parallel to *w3d*, 'fortune'.

<sup>9</sup> 8) Reading *hwty*, as suggested by Posener, *RdE* 5 (1946) 254.

<sup>10</sup> 9) A rather obscure section which is thought to mean that the Delta is overrun by Asiatics. In the choice between *dqj*, 'hide,' and *dgl*, 'see,' I have preferred the latter.

'Let them lie on boards,'<sup>11</sup> [one repeats].  
 If one says, 'Those boards with myrrh are too heavy for me,'  
 She is loaded down with jars filled with ...  
 [No longer] does she know the palanquin,  
 And the butler is lacking.<sup>12</sup>  
 There is no remedy for it,  
 Ladies suffer like maidservants,  
 Singers are at the looms in the weaving-rooms,  
 What they sing to the goddess are dirges,  
 Those who told ... are at the grindstones.  
 Lo, all maidservants are rude in their speech, (p)  
 When the mistress speaks it irks the servants.  
 Lo, trees are felled, branches stripped,  
 And the servant abandons (5,1) his household. [B 153]  
 People say when they hear it:  
 Gone is the gain of abundance of children.  
 Food is lacking ...  
 What does it taste like today?  
 Lo, the great hunger and suffer,  
 Servants are served ...  
 ... lamentations.  
 Lo, the hot-tempered says"  
 'If I knew where god is I would serve him.'  
 Lo, [right] is in the land in name,  
 Standing on it one does wrong.  
 Lo, one runs and fights for the goods [of a man],  
 (5) He is robbed, all his things are taken.  
 Lo, all beasts, their hearts weep,  
 Cattle bemoan the state of the land.  
 Lo, children of nobles are dashed against walls;  
 Infants are put out on high ground,  
 Khnum groans in weariness.  
 Lo, terror kills; the frightened says ...  
 Lo, (10) ... throughout the land,  
 The strong man sends to everyone,  
 A man strikes his maternal brother.  
 What has been done? ...

Lo, the ways are [blocked], the roads watched. One sits in the  
 bushes till the night-traveler comes, in order to plunder his load.  
 What is upon him is seized; he is assaulted with blows of the stick;  
 he is criminally slain.

---

<sup>11</sup> 10) *šdw* is an object on which one can lie down and on which a load can be placed; hence 'board' seems to me more suitable than 'raft'.

<sup>12</sup> 11) Emending *dd·î* to *dd·s*; ladies are made to labor and no longer have the use of their palanquins, or the service of their butlers.

Lo, gone is what yesterday was seen,  
The land is left to its weakness like a cutting of flax.  
Citizens come and go in desolation.

...

If only this were the end of man,  
No more conceiving, no (6,1) births!  
Then the land would cease to shout,  
Tumult would be no more!

Lo, [one eats] herbs, washed down with water,  
Birds find neither fruits nor herbs,  
One takes ... from the mouth of pigs, [B 154]  
No face is bright ... hunger.

Lo, grain is lacking on all sides,  
One is stripped of clothes,  
Unanointed with oil,<sup>13</sup>  
Everyone says, 'There's nothing.'  
The storehouse is bare,  
Its keeper stretched on the ground.

... (5) ...

Had I raised my voice at that time,  
To save me from the pain I'm in!  
Lo, the private chamber, its books are stolen, (q)  
The secrets in it are laid bare.  
Lo, magic spells are divulged,  
Spells are made worthless through being repeated by people,.(r)  
Lo, offices are opened,  
The records stolen. (s)  
The serf becomes owner of serfs.  
Lo, [scribes] are slain,  
Their writings stolen,  
Woe is me for the grief of this time!  
Lo, the scribes are the land-register,  
Their books are destroyed, (t)  
The grain of Egypt is 'I go-get-it.' (u)  
Lo, the laws (10) of the chamber are thrown out,  
Men walk on them in the streets,  
Beggars tear them up in the alleys.  
Lo, the beggar comes to the place of the Nine Gods,  
The produce of the House of Thirty is laid bare.  
Lo, the great council chamber is invaded,  
Beggars come and go in the great mansions.  
Lo, there is much hatred in the streets,  
The wise says, 'Yes,' the fool says, 'No,'  
The ignorant is satisfied.<sup>14</sup> (v)  
Lo, those who were entombed are cast on high ground,

<sup>13</sup> 12) *Hs3*, 'unanointed' rather than Gardiner's restored *hs3t*, 'spices (?)'.

<sup>14</sup> 13) The passage recurs in the Instruction of Amenemhet; see there n. 12.

Embalmer's secrets are thrown away.

(7,1) (w) See now, fire has leaped high,  
Its flame will attack the land's foes!  
See now, things are done that never were before,  
The king has been robbed by beggars. (x) [B 155]  
See, one buried as hawk is ...  
What the pyramid hid is empty.  
See now, the land is deprived of kingship  
By a few people who ignore custom. (y)  
See now, men rebel against the Serpent, (z)  
[Stolen] is the crown of Re, who pacifies the Two Lands.  
See, the secret of the land, its limits are unknown, (27)  
If the residence is stripped, it will collapse in a moment.<sup>15</sup>  
See, Egypt has fallen to (5) pouring water.<sup>16</sup>  
He, who poured water on the ground, seizes the mighty in misery.  
See, the Serpent is taken from its hole.<sup>17</sup> (28)  
The secrets of Egypt's kings are bared.  
See, the residence is fearful from want,  
Men stir up strife unopposed.  
See, the land is tied up in gangs,  
The coward is emboldened to seize the goods.<sup>18</sup>  
See, the Serpent ... the dead,  
He who could not make a coffin owns a tomb.  
See, those who owned tombs are cast on high ground,  
He who could not make a grave owns a treasury.

See now, the transformations of people,<sup>19</sup>  
He who did not build a hut is an owner of coffers.  
See the judges of the land are driven from the land,  
<The nobles> are expelled from the royal (10) mansions.  
See, noble ladies are on boards,  
Princes in the workhouse,  
He who did not sleep in a box owns a bed.  
See, the man of wealth lies thirsting,  
He who begged dregs has overflowing bowls.  
See, who owned robes are in rags,  
He who did not weave for himself owns fine linen.  
See, he who lacked shelter has shelter,

<sup>15</sup> 14) this passage has always been rendered: 'The secret of the land whose limits were unknown is divulged, and the Residence is thrown down in a moment.' But the first sentence, besides being overlong, has an abnormal word order. Moreover, the sense is poor; for the text nowhere implies that the residence is threatened. I divide: *sšt3 n t3 hmm drw:f / sh3w hnw hn:f n wwt.*

<sup>16</sup> 15) On *stí mw* see Amenhet, n. 6.

<sup>17</sup> 16) The *krht*-serpent was a guardian spirit.

<sup>18</sup> 17) I.e. to acquire goods for himself by robbing.

<sup>19</sup> 18) there is no need to emend the text when *hprw* is understood as 'transformations, changes,' as in *Khakheperre-sonb*, recto 10.

Those who had shelter are in the dark of the storm.  
 See, he who did not know a lyre owns a harp,  
 He who did not sing extols the goddess.<sup>20</sup>  
 See, those who owned offering-tables of bronze,  
 Not one of their vessels is garlanded. [B 156]  
 See, he who slept (8,1) wifeless found a noblewoman,<sup>21</sup>  
 He who [was not seen] stands ...  
 See, he who had nothing is a man of wealth,  
 The nobleman sings his praise.  
 See, the poor of the land has become rich,  
 The man of property is a pauper.  
 See, cooks have become the masters of butlers,  
 He who was a messenger sends someone else.  
 See, he who had no loafs owns a barn,  
 His storeroom is filled with another's goods.  
 See, the baldhead who lacked oil  
 Has become owner of jars of sweet myrrh.  
 (5) See, she who lacked a box has furniture,  
 She who saw her face in the water owns a mirror.  
 See now ...

Lo, a man is happy eating his food. Consume your goods in gladness,  
 while there is none to hinder you. It is goog for a man to eat his food.  
 God ordains it for him whom he favors.

<See now>, he who ignored his god  
 Offers him another's incense.

...

See, great ladies who owned wealth give their children for beds.  
 See, a man who ...  
 ... a lady as wife

...

See, the children of magistrates are ... (10)  
 The calves of their herds ... to robbers.  
 See, the serfs eat beef,<sup>22</sup> (29)  
 The paupers ...  
 See, he who did not slaughter for himself slaughters bulls,  
 He who did not know carving sees [meat cuts] of all kinds.  
 See, the serfs eat geese,

<sup>20</sup> 19) Meret, the goddess of song, as in 4,13.

<sup>21</sup> 20) Again reading *špsst*, 'noblewoman,' rather than *špsswt*, 'riches,' see above n. 3.

<sup>22</sup> 21) this sentence has been misunderstood by all translators. Gardiner read it as: *Mtn n3wtyw* ..., and rendered, 'Behold, butchers transgress (?) with the cattle of the poor ... plunderers,' a rendering that all have retained with minor variations. It should be observed that, first, *m3rw* is the subject of the second sentence; second, that 'poor people' do not own cattle; third, that *n3wtyw*, which stands in parallelism with *m3rw*, means 'serfs' or the like (see S. Wenig, ZÄS 88, 1962, 67-69 and P. Kaplony, ZÄS 88, 1962, 73-74) and last, that *knkn* is in perfect order after *wmm*. In 8,12, the *nswtyw* eat geese, and in 9,1-2, they have appropriated the food destined for noblewomen.

Offered <to> the gods in place of cattle. (30)  
 See, maidservants ... offer ducks,  
 Noblewomen ...  
 See, noblewomen flee ...  
 ... cast down in fear of death.  
 <See>, the chiefs of the land flee,  
 They have no purpose because of want ... [B 157]  
 [See], (9,1) those who owned beds are on the ground,  
 He who lay in the dirt spreads a rug.  
 See, noblewomen go hungry,  
 And serfs are sated with what was made for them.  
 See all the ranks, they are not in their place,  
 Like a herd that roams without a herdsman.  
 See, cattle stray with none to bring them back,  
 Everyone fetches for himself and brands with his name.  
 See, a man is slain by the side of his brother,  
 Who abandons him to save himself.  
 See, he who lacked a team owns herds,  
 He who could not find plow-oxen owns cattle.  
 See, he who lacked grain owns granaries,  
 (5) He who fetched grain on loan issues it.  
 See, he who lacked dependents owns serfs,  
 He who was a <magnate> does his own errands.  
 See, the mighty of the land are not reported to,  
 The affairs of the people have gone to ruin.  
 See, all the craftsmen, they do not work,  
 The land's foes have despoiled its craftsmen.  
 [See, he who recorded] the harvest knows nothing about it.  
 He who did not plow [for himself] ...  
 ... it is not reported,  
 the scribe ... his hands [idle] in it.  
 (31) Destroyed is ... in their time,  
 A man sees ...  
 ... brings coolness ...  
 ... (10) ...

Destroyed is ... . Their food [is taken] from them. ...  
 fear of his terror. The citizen begs ... . messenger, but not ... time. He is seized loaded with  
 his goods, taken ... . pass by his door ... rooms filled with  
 falcons ... . As to the citizen, when he wakes, (10,1) day dawns  
 on him without his being ready. One runs ... [tents] are what  
 they make, like foreigners.  
 Destroyed is the doing of errands<sup>23</sup> by attendants in the service of  
 their masters. They are not ready. Though they are five of them,  
 they say, 'Go you on that road; we have just come.'

<sup>23</sup> 22) *Hab-tw hr-s* looks like an idiom for 'errand, commission.'

Lower Egypt weeps. The king's storehouse is 'I go-get-it', for everyone, (32) and the whole palace is without its revenues. It should have emmer, barley, fowl and fish; it should have white cloth, fine linen, copper, and oil. (5) It should have carpet and mat ..., all good woven products. ...

Destroy the foes of the noble residence, resplendent in courtiers, ... . The mayor of the city goes unescorted.

Destroy [the foes of the noble residence], resplendent ...

[Destroy the foes of] the noble residence, rich in laws, ...

[Destroy the foes of] (10) that noble [residence] ...

None can stand ...

[Destroy the foes of] that noble residence, rich in offices. Lo, ...

Remember the immersing ...<sup>24</sup>

... the sickness of the body. ...

(33) Remember (11,1) ..., fumigating with incense, libating from a jar at dawn

Remember <bringing> fat *ro-geese*, *terep-geese*, *set-geese* and making divine offerings to the gods.

Remember chewing natron, preparing white bread, [as done] by a man on the day of ... (34)

Remember the erecting of flagstaffs, the carving of offering stones; the priest cleansing the chapels, the temple whitewashed like milk; sweetening the fragrance of the sanctuary, (35) setting up the bread-offerings.

Remember the observing of rules, the adjusting of dates, removing

One who enters (5) the priestly service unclean; for to do this is wrong, ...

Remember the slaughtering of oxen ...

Remember going out ... . . . (10) ...

(36)

Lo, why does he seek to fashion <men>, when the timid is not distinguished from the violent?<sup>25</sup> If he would bring coolness upon the heat, (12,1) one would say, 'He is the herdsman of all; there is no evil in his heart. His herds are few, but he spends the day herding them.' There is fire in their hearts! If only he had perceived their nature in the first generation. (37) Then he would have smitten the evil, stretched out his arm against it, would have destroyed their seed and their heirs! But since giving birth is desired, grief has come and misery is everywhere. So it is and will not pass, while these gods [**B** 159] are in their midst. Seed comes forth from mortal women; it is not found on the road. Fighting has come, (5) and the punisher of crimes commits them! There is no pilot in their hour. Where is he today? Is he asleep? Lo, his power is not seen!

---

<sup>24</sup> 23) *Contra* Gardiner and Faulkner, Wilson was extremely right in taking this section not as 'exhortations to pious conduct,' but as a recalling of the past when the right order prevailed.

<sup>25</sup> 24) This section is interesting for being a criticism of the sun-god, the creator of gods and men, who is chided for passively permitting people to kill each other, instead of intervening. It also offers confirmation for the point of view expressed in CT 1130: the evil in men's natures is not the work of the creator.

If we had been [fed], I would not have found you, one would not have summoned me ... – ...<sup>26</sup> (10) ... (38)  
 Authority, Knowledge and Truth<sup>27</sup> are with you (39) – turmoil is what you let happen in the land, and the noise of strife.  
 Lo, one man assaults the other, and one transgresses<sup>28</sup> what you commanded. When three men travel on the road, only two are found.  
 For the greater number kills the lesser. Is there a herdsman who loves death? (40)  
 Then you could order it done<sup>29</sup> (13,1). It means the replacement of love:  
 One man hates another. It means reducing their numbers everywhere. (41)  
 Is it your doing that brought this about? Do you speak falsely? (42)  
 The land is a weed that kills people. One does not expect to live.  
 All these years there is strife. A man killed on his roof. He must keep watch in his gatehouse. If he is brave he may save himself. Such is his life!  
 When a [servant] is sent to citizens, he walks on the road until he sees the flood. If the road is washed out, (5) he halts distressed. Then he is robbed, attacked with blows of the stick, and criminally slain.  
 If only you would taste a little of these miseries! Then you would say ... (43)

[It is however] good when ships sail upstream,  
 ... . . . (10) ... . (44)  
 it is however good ...  
 It is however good when the net is drawn in,  
 And birds are tied up ...  
 It is however good ... . . . .,  
 And the roads are made for walking.  
 It is however good when men's hands build tombs,  
 when ponds are dug and orchards made for the gods.  
 It is however good when people get drunk,  
 When they drink *miyer* with happy hearts.  
 It is however good when mouths shout for joy,  
 when the nome-lords watch the shouting (14,1) from their houses,  
 when one is clothed in clean robes ...  
 It is however good when beds are readied.  
 The masters' headrests safely secured, [B160]  
 when every man's need is filled by a mat in the shade,  
 and a door shut on him who slept in the bushes.  
 It is however good when fine linen is spread on New Year's Day,  
 ... fine linen is spread, robes are laid out. ...  
 (5) ...

... (10) ... in their [midst] like Asiatics ... .<sup>30</sup> None  
 are found who would stand up to protect them ... . Every man

<sup>26</sup> 25) This section appears to be an address to the king, rather than to the sun-god.

<sup>27</sup> 26) Hu, Sia and Maat.

<sup>28</sup> 27) *Sní*, 'overstep,' rather than *sní*, 'imitate.' Ipuwer is not reproaching the king with committing crimes but with allowing them to happen.

<sup>29</sup> 28) I divide:

fighters for his sisters and protects himself. Is it Nubians? Then we will protect ourselves. There are plenty of fighters to repel the Bowmen. Is it Libyans? Then we will turn them back. The Medjai are content with Egypt. (45)

How then does every man kill his brother? The troops (15,1) we raised for ourselves have become Bowmen bent on destroying!

What has come from it is to let the Asiatics know the state of the land. (46)

Yet every foreigner fears it.<sup>31</sup> The experience of the people is that they say, 'Egypt will not be given over <to> sand!' ... (5) ...

What Ipuwer said when he answered the majesty of the All-Lord.

... It pleases the hearts to ignore it. You have done what pleases their hearts. You have sustained people among them. Yet they cover (16,1) their faces in fear of tomorrow.

There was an old man who was about to die (48), while his son was a child without knowledge. ... (49)

An introduction to the translation of The Admonitions of Ipuwer (papyrus Leiden 344, recto) From: *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Vol. I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms, by Miriam Lichtheim (University of California Press), 1973

Ever since Gardiner's pioneering edition of this difficult text, his view of the *Admonitions* as the work of a Twelfth Dynasty author who laments the alleged calamities of the First Intermediate Period has held sway. It is, however, contradictory and untenable. Gardiner maintained on the one hand that 'pessimism of Ipuwer was intended to be understood as the direct and natural response to a real national calamity' (*Admonitions*, p. 111) and on the other that 'historical romance was always popular in Ancient Egypt, and there is no inherent reason why the *Admonitions*, even if referring to the condition of the Tenth Dynasty, should not have been written under the Twelfth' (*ibid.*). I submit that there is strong inherent reason why this cannot be so. If the *Admonitions* is the 'direct response to a real calamity,' then it cannot also be a 'historical romance.' The two are mutually exclusive.

We have seen that *Neferti* has a political-propagandistic aim which it expresses through the poetic elaboration of the topos 'national distress'. In *Khakheperre-sonb* we have encountered the same topos in a work that seems to be largely rhetorical. Both works were written in times of peace and prosperity. When the *Admonitions* is placed alongside of these two works it reveals itself as a composition of the same genre and character which differs only in being longer, more ambitious, more repetitions, and more extreme in his use of hyperbole. Its very verbosity and repetitiveness mark it as a late comer in which the most comprehensive treatment of the theme 'national distress' is attempted, in short, as a work of the late Middle Kingdom and of purely literary inspiration.

---

<sup>30</sup> 29) The king is now speaking. What is left of his speech indicates that he places the blame for the disorders on the people themselves and maintains that Egypt has nothing to fear from foreigners.

<sup>31</sup> 30) The *f* of *sn̄d:f* can only refer to 'the land'. J. van Seters, *The Hyksos* (New Haven, 1966), p. 117, saw in the passage a reference to 'a new independent power in the Delta,' i.e. the Hyksos. [B 162] When the sentence is correctly translated, however, it contains nothing to promote that conclusion. Van Seter's attempt to date the *Admonitions* to the Hyksos-period is based on historical and archaeological considerations, which are, however, inconclusive.

The unhistorical character of the whole genre was recognized by S. Luria in an article that did not receive the attention it deserved. ('Die Ersten werden die Letzten sein', in: *Klio* 22, 1929, 405-431.) Adducing strikingly similar compositions from other cultures he pointed out the fictional, mythologic-messianic nature of these works and the fixed clichés through which the theme of 'social chaos' was expressed. From an Annamite song he quoted phrases that sound as if they came from the *Admonitions*:

'Ceux qui n'avaient pas de culotte ont aujourd'hui des souliers...

Les filles publiques sont devenu des grandes dames

Les vauriens sont tout puissant ...'

Luria made also the telling point that the descriptions of chaos in the *Admonitions* is inherently contradictory, hence historically impossible. On the one hand the land is said to suffer from total want; on the other hand the poor are described as having become rich, or wearing fine clothes, and generally of disposing of all that once belonged to their masters.

In sum, the *Admonitions of Ipuwer* has not only no bearing whatever on the long past First Intermediate Period, it also does not derive from any other historical situation. It is the last, fullest, most exaggerated and hence least successful, composition on the theme 'order versus chaos.'

The text is preserved in a single, much damaged copy, Papyrus Leiden 344, which dates from the Nineteenth Dynasty. In its preserved condition the papyrus measures 347 cm in length and consists of seventeen pages. The text occupies the recto, while the verso has hymns to a deity, written in a different hand. Each page has fourteen lines, except pages 10 and 11, which have only thirteen each. On the first page, less of one third of each line is preserved; and beginning with page 8, every page has large lacunae.

Related literature:

The prophecies of Neferti (Papyrus Leningrad 1116B)

The complaints of Khakhaperre-sonb (British Museum 5645, a writing board)

The dispute between a man and his Ba (Papyrus Berlin 3024)

John A. Wilson, in *ANET* (ed. J.B. Pritchard), pp. 441-444.

## The Admonitions of IPU-WER

The following text is 'prophetic' in a biblical sense. The 'prophet' is not foretelling the future but is standing before a pharaoh and condemning the past and present administration of Egypt. The manuscript is too fragmentary for a full, connected sense. It seems clear, however, that Egypt had suffered a breakdown of government, accompanied by social and economic chaos. These calamities met with indifference in the palace. A certain Ipuwer, about whom nothing is known apart from the surviving text, appeared at the palace and reported to the pharaoh the anarchy in the land. Ipuwer first was inclined to absolve the pharaoh of guilt for these woes, but grew more bold and ended with a denunciation of the king who evaded his responsibilities.

Although our manuscript was written in the 19th or 20th Dynasty (1350-1100 BC), the original belonged to an earlier time, perhaps to the period between the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2200-2050 BC). The language and orthography are 'Middle Egyptian'. The situation described conforms to that which followed the breakdown of the central government at the end of the Old Kingdom. The pharaoh who is denounced is not named, but may have been one of the last rulers of the 6th Dynasty or one of the kings of the weak dynasties following.

The beginning and end of the manuscript are missing and the body of the text is full of narrative setting of Ipuwer's arrival in court and the reasons for his speeches.

*Leyden Papyrus I 344*, recto, was facsimiled in C. Leemans, *Monuments égyptiens du Musée d'antiquités des Pays-Bas à Leide* (Leyden 1841-82), II, Pls. CV-CXIII. The significance of the text was presented by H.O. Lange, 'Prophezeiungen eines ägyptischen Weisen' (*SPAW*, 1903, 601-610). The definitive study of the text is still that of A.H. Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (Leipzig, 1909). The text is translated in Erman, *LAE*, 92-108. The significance of the text was studied by J.H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York 1933) 193-200.

(I,1): does not think of = refuses; are lined up for battle = have marshaled the battle array

note a: Men formerly in peaceful pursuits have become violent.

(5): on account of the state of the land = because of what has happened in the land

note b: 'In blue,' the color of mourning garments

note c: The term 'men, humans, people' was used by the Egyptians to designate themselves, in contrast to their foreign neighbors, who were not conceded to be real people.

note d: A number of parallel stanzas, in general poetic form, begin with words of surprise or protest rubricized in the text, and here translated: 'Why Really!' [Lichtheim: 'Lo,' CH]

(II,2): crime = robbery

note e: To the Egyptian the past was the good time given by the gods. Here the sudden breakdown of order gives specific point to this statement

Hapy inundates = the Nile is in flood

none plow for him = no one plows for himself (because) every man says, 'We do not know what may happen throughout the land!'

barren = dried up; none can conceive

note f: The potter god shaped infants on his wheel.

man of wealth = possessors of treasures

(could not) afford = (could not) make himself (5) owns = is the possessor of the grave = a tomb; tomb = embalming-place

expel our rulers = banish many from us

have white garments = there are, (whose) clothes are white  
 (2,10) shrinks from people = rejects (it) as human  
 coffers = *floor planks*; burning = burned up  
 note g: Probably those parts of private houses which were made of wood  
 hall = *flooring*; [na palace] life, prosperity, health! ; stands = (still) remains  
 note h: Either this is said out of respect for the king, or it sets an invidious contrast between the  
 fate of the people and the indifference of the pharaoh.  
 gorge on their catch = [*sink*] *down because of* what they have carried off, (*for*)  
 note i: suicide in the River  
 (III,1) foreign bowmen = Barbarians from outside have come *to* Egypt  
 note j: cf. n. 3 [= c] above. In a breakdown of government, restless foreigners infiltrated into the  
 fertile land of Egypt.  
 [tomb-] = [*pyramids*] ; yoked [to it] = *charged with forced [labor]*.  
 pine trees = cedar ; Free man = priests  
 note k: the produce of foreign trade. Byblos in Phoenicia was an Egyptian shipping point for  
 coniferous wood and resinous oil.  
 note l: Probably Crete (Keftiu)  
 what a great etc. = How important it (now) seems when the oasis-people come carrying [**B**  
 441] their festival provisions: reed-mats, ... fresh *redmet*-plants, (10) ... of birds and ...  
 (13)  
 note m (13): The paltry trade from the nearby oases is contrasted with the former foreign  
 commerce.  
 Yebu, etc.: Elephantine, the Thinite nome and the [*shrine*] of Upper Egypt do not pay taxes  
 because of [civil] war.  
 gifts = truth  
 note n (14): This may be ironical. Bbut it may also mean that Ipuwer was the first to tell the  
 pharaoh about the sad state of the land.  
 And when every foreign etc. = But really, every foreign country [comes]! Such is our  
 water! Such is our welfare! What can we do about it? Going to ruin!  
 groaning = wailing pervades ; mingled = mixed  
 (14,1) ...  
 Why Really, the children of nobles are dashed against the walls. The (once) prayed-for children  
 are (now) laid out on the high ground ... (5) ...  
 The whole Delta cannot be seen = The entire Delta marshland will no longer be hidden: the  
 confidence of the Northland is (now) a beaten path (15).  
 note o (15): With the frontier policing ineffective, the security of the Delta was broken by  
 invaders.  
 ... Behold, it is in the hands of those who did not know it, as well as those who knew it;  
 foreigners are (now) skilled [*in*] the work of the Delta ... (10) ...  
 are rude in their speech, = make free with their tongues (16)  
 note p (16): 'Have power-rights over their months.'  
 irks = is burdensome to

V, 10 are [blocked] = [*are not*] guarded roads.  
 One sits = Men sit  
 night-traveler = benighted (traveler)

in order to plunder his load etc. = to take away his burden and steal *what* is on him. He is presented with the blows of a stick and slain wrongfully

VI,1 Then the earth would cease from noise = without wrangling?

is lacking = has perished

(5) ... pain = suffering

the private chamber etc. = the writings of the august enclosure are read. (17) The place of secrets which was (so formerly) is (now) laid bare.

magic spells are divulged = magic is exposed.

*Go-spells* and *enfold spells* are made ineffectual because they are repeated by (ordinary) people. (18)

note q (17): Or 'are taken away.' The restricted area of the administration had civil and religious writings which were not open to the ordinary public. Cf. the following stanzas.

note r (18): Magic known to everybody was no longer magic. The tentative translation assumes that there were two kinds of magic charms, one beginning with the word 'go,' the other with the word 'enfold.'

offices are opened etc. = (public) offices are open, and their reports are read. (19)

note s (19): Or: 'are taken away.'

The serf becomes = Serfs have become

The scribes etc. = The writings of the scribes of the mat have been removed. (20)

note t (20): Scribes seated on mats kept the records of Egypt's grain produce.

The grain = The grain-sustenance

I go-get-it = come-and-get-it (21)

note u (21): A compound and perhaps colloquial phrase, 'when-I-go-down-it-is-brought-to-me'.

VI,10 chambers = enclosure

thrown out = put out of doors

Men walk on them = Poor men tear them up

There is much hatred in the streets = The children of nobles are abandoned in the streets.

He who knows says, 'Yes, (it is so)!' The fool says, 'No, (it is not)!' It is fair in the sight of him who knows it not. (22)

note v (22): Those who are blissfully unaware of the troubles are fools. The statement may have been intended to implicate the pharaoh indirectly. The passage is in place here. It is an inapt quotation in the Instruction of King Amen-em-het (p. 419 above).

VII,1 See = (23) Behold

note w (23): A section in which the stanzas are introduced by a different rubricized word, 'Behold'. In place of an attribute of surprised protest, Ipuwer now brings his charges closer home to the palace.

leaped high = mounted up on high

will attack the land's foes! = goes forth against the enemies of the land

things are done, etc. = something has been done which never happened for a long time: the king has been taken away by poor men. (24)

note x (24): The next stanza makes this explicit as the robbing of royal tombs. But there is an implicit attack here on the king, who heard the words for his failure to preserve former order.

one buried as hawk = he who was buried as a falcon (*now lies*) on a (*mere*) bier ; deprived = despoiled

a few people who ignore custom = a few irresponsible men. (25)

note y (25): 'Men who knows not plans'.

De hele stanza nogmaals: Behold now, **it has come to a point where** the land is despoiled of kingship etc. (dikgedrukt keert terug in de volgende stanza)

Behold now, it has come to a point, where (men) rebel against the ureaus, (26) the ... of Re, which makes the Two Lands peaceful.

note z (26): The serpent on the brow of the king, and thus the symbol of kingship.  
unknown = unknow(able), is laid bare (27)

If the residence = The residence (may) be razed within an hour.

VII,5 The serpent = The guardian serpent

note 27: The 'secret' was the awful mystery and inviolability of the god who was pharaoh of Egypt, cf. the following stanza.

note 28: The deified snake which was the guardian of a temple or a palace.

VII,10 on boards = (now) *gleaners* ; princes = nobles

in a box = on a *plank*

extols the goddess = praises the goddess of music

VIII,1 furniture = *trunk*

VIII,10 = Behold, the king's men *thrash around among* the cattle of the destitute. (29) ...

note 29: The sense seems to be that those directly responsible to the king are running wild in appropriating the property of ordinary citizens. Ipuwer is now directing his criticism to the person of the king. [B 442]

Behold, the king's men *thrash around among* geese, which are presented (to) the gods instead of oxen. (30)

note 30: Probably thereby making a profit on a contracted obligation.

IX,1 ...

Serfs = the king's men are sated with what they have done

Behold, not an office is in its (proper) place, like a stampeded herd, which has no herdsman

stray = are (left) free wandering, (for) there is no one to take care of them.

note 31: Another series of stanzas, each beginning with the word 'destroyed,' describes further chaos. This section is too damaged for connected translation.

note 32: cf. note 21 above

revenues = taxes ; copper = metal ; oil = ointment ; carpet = rug  
[flowers], palanquin, and every good revenue ... (33)

note 33: in the section which follows, each stanza begins with the word 'remember', recalling the pious observations of the past as the necessary norm for the future. (begint vlak voor XI,1)

XI... how fumigation is made with incense, how water is offered from a jar in the early morning  
*set = sat* ; and making = how to make

chewing = how is chewed ; preparing = how is prepared

on the day of ... = on the day of moistening the head (34)

note 34: moistening the head, like cleaning the mouth with natron-water, was probably some kind of purification rite.

how flagstaffs are set up and a stela is carved, while a priest purifies the temples and the house of god is whitewashed like milk; how the fragrance of the horizon (35) is made sweet, and how offering-bread is established

note 35: 'the horizon' was the temple.

Remember how (ritual) regulations are adhered to, how (religious) dates are distributed, how (5) one who has been induced into priestly service may be removed for *personal* weakness – that is, it was carried out wrongfully.

note 36: In context full of lacunae there is a transition to a new theme. Unfortunately we cannot be sure about the argument. Ipuwer is certainly describing the ideal ruler. The alternatives are (a) that this ruler is a pattern from the past, perhaps the sun-god Re, or (b) that the passage is truly messianic and that Ipuwer is looking forward to the god-king who will deliver Egypt from her woes. This translation takes the latter alternative.

... It shall come that he brings coolness upon the heart. (XII,1) Men shall say. 'He is the herdsman of all men.

If he only had perceived = Would that he might perceive their character from the (very) first (37) generation

note 37: the ideal king should know the perennial nature of man. Grammatically, the sentence is not an unreal condition, 'Would that he had perceived,' referring to Re's punishment of mankind (pp. 10-11 above), but a condition of wish, probably referring to the future.

XII,5 Lo, his power is not seen = Behold, the glory thereof cannot be seen

(10) ... (38)

note 38: In an unintelligible section, here omitted, Ipuwer uses the second person singular. As Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man,' so Ipuwer must finally be addressing the pharaoh, pinning the responsibility for Egypt's woes directly on the king, as indicated in the following context.

... Authority, Perception and Justice are with thee, (39) (but) it is confusion which thou wouldst set throughout the land, together with the noise of contention.

note 39: *Hu* 'authoritative utterance' or 'creative command', and *Sia* 'intellectual perception' or 'cognition', were a pair of related attributes, often deified. As attributes of kingship, they were sometimes linked to *ma'at* 'justice' or 'truth'. Kingship thus needed the ability to comprehend a situation by command, and the balance of equitable justice.

assaults = thrust against ; transgresses = conform to  
only two are found = they are found to be two men

note 40: The slain people belong to the herd of pharaoh, the herdsman

Then you could order it done, (13,1) It means the replacement of love: = so then thou wilt command that (XIII,1) a reply be made:

One man hates another = 'It is *because* one man loves and another hates.

It means replacing etc. = *That is, their forms are few everywhere.*' (41)

note 41: It is impossible to understand the statement which Ipuwer attributes to the pharaoh as an excuse for weakness. Perhaps he is saying that there is more than one side to a question.

Is it your doing, etc. = *This really means that thou hast acted to bring such (a situation) into being, and thou hast spoken lies.* (42)

note 42: In milder form, this might be translated, 'Lies are told thee.'

there is strife = are civil strife. A man may be slain on his (own) roof, while he is on the watch in his boundary house. Is he brave and saves himself? – that means he will live.

XIII,5 ... a little of these miseries = some of the oppressions

note 43: In combating the pharaoh's obscure argument, Ipuwer again recites some of the anarchy in Egypt. Seemingly he states that personal experience in such troubles would make a king talk differently.

,10 ...

note 44: A series of stanzas now begins with the formula, 'It is still, however, good', introducing a nostalgic recollection of former days, which would still be happy in the future.

But it is still good when the hands of men construct pyramids, when canals are dug, and when groves of trees are made for the gods.

But it is still good when men are drunken, when they drink *miyet* and their hearts are happy. But it is still good when rejoicing is in the mouths (of men), when the notables of the districts are standing and watching the rejoicing (XIV,1) from their *houses*, clothed in finest linen, and *already* purified ...

XIV,10 ...

None can be found who will stand *in their places*.

... Every man fights for his sister, and he protects his own person. Is (it) the Nubians?

Then we shall make our (own) *protection*. *Fighting police* will hold off the barbarians. Is it the Libyans? Then we shall *act again*. The Madjoi *fortunately* are with Egypt. (45)

note 45: The Madjoi, people from lands south of Egypt, were used as police in Egypt.

the troops = the military classes

XV,1 raised = marshal [B 443]

Bowmen bent on destroying etc. = *barbarians, beginning to destroy that from which they took their being* and to show the Asiatics the state of the land. (46)

note 46: It would seem that Egypt's own troops were disloyal.

Yet every foreigner fears it = And yet all the foreigners are afraid of them... (10) ... (47)

note 47: Since the following words contain an 'answer' of Ipuwer, this paragraph, much of which is omitted as unintelligible, contains the pharaoh's disturbed comment, trying to assay Egypt's strength.

'... To be ignorant of it is something pleasant to the heart

pleases = is good in ; sustained, etc. = kept alive *thereby*

'Once upon a time there was a man who was old and *in the presence of* his salvation (48), while his son was (still) a child, without understanding ...' (49)

note 48: 'His salvation' means death. The formula at the beginning of this paragraph is the storytelling formula, 'There was a man, who was,' and we certainly have the beginning of a narrative here. Either it is told by Ipuwer as a parable, or it does not belong to the Admonitions of Ipuwer, which would then end on the ominous note of 'fear of the morrow'.

note 49: The story defies consecutive translation. It apparently deals with violence to the tomb and to the corpses and funerary furniture. The last two columns of the papyrus are in lamentable destruction.

## The Prophecies of Neferti

(Leningrad 1116B)<sup>32</sup>

The sage Neferti is summoned to the court of king Snefru of the 4th 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 understanding 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, papyrus Leningrad 1116B, which dates from the 18th Dynasty. Small portions are preserved on two writing boards of the 18th 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, *Literature*, pp. 110-115. J.A. Wilson, *ANET*, pp. 444-446. Lefèbvre, *Romans*, pp. 95-105.

Study: Posener, *Littérature*, pp. 21-60 and 145-157. [B 139]

(1) There was a time when the majesty of King Snefru, the justified, was beneficent king in this whole land. On one of these days the magistrates of the residence entered the palace to offer greetings. (a) 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 Bastet (b), 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.

---

<sup>32</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms (Univ. of Cal. Press 1973), 139-145.

As soon as today is here, it is passed over.’ (c) He stretched out his hand to a box of writing equipment, took scroll and palette and began to put into writing (d) 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. (e) As he deplored what had happened<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>  
Tire not while this is before you, [B 140]  
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 mail is spared from its fate. (f)  
(Yet) while the land suffers, none care for it.  
None speak, none shed tears, ‘How fares this land!’  
The sun-disk, covered, (25) shines not for people to see.  
One cannot live when clouds conceal,  
All are numb<sup>35</sup> from lack of it. (g)

I shall describe what is before me,  
I do not foretell what does not come. (h)  
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. (i)  
Southwind will combat Northwind,  
Sky will lack the single wind. (j)

A strange bird will breed in the Delta marsh,<sup>36</sup>  
Having made its nest beside (30) the people,  
The people having let it approach by default. (k)

---

<sup>33</sup> 1) The text has *ḥprt*, not *ḥpr-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.

<sup>34</sup> 2) In JNES, 30 (1971), 69-72, I drew attention to the connective use of iterated *mk* which helps explain this passage.

<sup>35</sup> 3) Here and in line 38, *ldw* denotes the numbness of sight and hearing, rather than only deafness.

<sup>36</sup> 4) The ‘strange bird’ means the Asiatics who have been able to settle in the eastern Delta because they were not resisted.

The perish those delightful things,  
 The fishponds full of fish-eaters,<sup>37</sup>  
 Teeming with fish and fowl.  
 All happiness has vanished,  
 The land is bowed down in distress,  
 Owing to those feeders,<sup>38</sup> (l)  
 Asiatics who roam the land.  
 Foes have risen in the East,  
 Asiatics came down to Egypt.  
 If the fortress is [crowded] ...  
 ... (35) ...<sup>39</sup>  
 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 (m), knowing not what comes, [B 141]  
 What-will-be being hidden according as one says:<sup>40</sup>  
 ‘When sight and hearing fail the mute leads.’  
 I show you the land in turmoil, (n)  
 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, (o)  
 Will crave blood for bread,  
 Will laugh aloud at distress. (p)  
 None will wake fasting (q) 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.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> 5) *Wnyw hr wqsw* is parallel to *wbnw hr mw*, and the human determinative of *wnyw* is an error. *Wqsw* has been interpreted as fish-slitting people, but the context points to fish-catching birds. The *wqs*-bird appears in *Peasant*, R29; see also *Wb.*, I, 377: *wqs*, ‘Art Vögel’.

<sup>38</sup> 6) ‘Feeders’, not ‘food’. This meaning of *df3w* is attested by *Wb.*, V, 571.8-10.

<sup>39</sup> 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.

<sup>40</sup> 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 hw 9r hft hr* as ‘Siehe, der hören sollte, ist taub, und so ist der Sweigende 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.

<sup>41</sup> 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 *topoi*, 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.

Every mouth is full of ‘how I wish’,<sup>42</sup>  
 All happiness has vanished,  
 The land is ruined, its fate decreed,  
 Deprived of produce, lacking in crops,<sup>43</sup>  
 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 stated,  
 The lazy stuffs himself, the active is needy.<sup>44</sup>  
 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.  
 Re will withdraw from mankind:  
 Though he will rise at his hour,  
 One will not know when noon has come; [B 142]  
 No one will discern his shadow,  
 No face will be dazzled by seeing [him (CH i.e. Re = the sun)],  
 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.<sup>45</sup>

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 [on] the belly.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 10) In this context, *mr-wl* cannot mean ‘love me’; it is probably an idiom of the type ‘I wish I had’.

<sup>43</sup> 11) If *lryt* means ‘produce, crops’ (see *Amenemhet*, n. 10), *9myt* might be ‘things of use’, in accordance with the pregnant sense of *9mī* = ‘find useful’. [B 144]

<sup>44</sup> 12) *Tm lṛ mḥ n-f lṛ šw*. Since Gardiner, all translators have construed *tm lṛ mḥ n-f* 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 (Lefèbvre), or is so rich he does not insist on full measure (Wilson). The predicate *lṛ šw* then means either ‘he is empty (i.e. poor)’, so Gardiner and Lefèbvre, 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 lṛ mḥ n-f / lṛ šw*, he who did not make (i.e., acquire) fills for himself; he who made is needy.’ Or *tm lṛ* and *lṛ* might be taken to mean ‘lazy’ and ‘active’.

<sup>45</sup> 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 is angered 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.

<sup>46</sup> 14) (CH: [on] added.) This seems to me to be the meaning of *phr-tl m s3 phr ht*. He who was easily overthrown now overthrows others. The sentence is one of the several that treat of the theme ‘the undermost will be uppermost’.

Men 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,<sup>47</sup>  
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,<sup>48</sup>  
He will please the Two Lords with what they wish,  
With field-circler in his fist, oar in his grasp.<sup>49</sup>  
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,<sup>50</sup>  
To bar Asiatics from entering Egypt;  
The shall beg water as supplicants,  
So as to let their cattle drink.  
Then Order will return to its seat, [**B** 143]  
While Chaos is driven away.<sup>51</sup>  
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 ...

---

To be flung to the ground on one's back means being vanquished, as when 'falsehood is flung on its back' in *Peasants*, B182/3 and 197/8.

<sup>47</sup> 15) That 'Ameny' is Amenemhet I was incisively demonstrated by Posener, *op. cit.*, pp. 47ff.

<sup>48</sup> 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.

<sup>49</sup> 17) Objects carried by the king in the ritual dances he performed before the gods.

<sup>50</sup> 18) The great border fortress built by Amenemhet I in the eastern Delta.

<sup>51</sup> 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 Khakhaperre-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 18th Dynasty, while the work itself clearly belongs to the Middle Kingdom. In fact, it can be dated with some assurance to the reign of Sesostris 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 Khakhaperre-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 [B 145] generalized metaphors on the theme of anarchy and distress. The time was one of peace and prosperity. Hence the laments on the 'distress of the land' are metaphors. They are either purely literary, designed to enlarge the literary possibilities of the theme, or they may have conveyed a covert political criticism, of a kind that could not be made openly and hence was wrapped in metaphor. Dispensing with the fiction of a real audience, the author addresses his complaints to his heart, a device that further enhances the rhetorical character of the work. The text consists of 14 lines on the recto and six lines on the verso; and the lines are grouped into four sections by means of short dividers. As written on the board, the text is complete, for after the fourth section there are two lines in a larger handwriting which are not connected with it. The text, however, may be the first part of a lost longer work.

Publication: Gardiner, *Admonitions*, pp. 95-110 and pls. 17-18.

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 108-110.

(I,1) The gathering of words, the heaping of sayings, the seeking of phrases by a searching heart, made by the priest of On, Seni's [son] Khakhaperre-sonb, called Ankhu. He says:

Had I unknown phrases,  
Sayings that are strange,  
Novel, untried words,  
Free of repetition;  
Not transmitted sayings,  
Spoken by the ancestors!  
I wring out my body of what it holds,  
In releasing all my words;  
For what was said is repetition,  
When what was said is said.  
Ancestor's words are nothing to boast of,  
They are found<sup>52</sup> by those who come after.

(5) Not speaks one who spoke,  
There speaks one who will speak,  
Many another will find what he will speak!  
Not a teller of tales after they happen,  
This has been done before,  
Nor a teller of what might be said,

---

<sup>52</sup> 1) *Gmī*, 'find,' here and below in line 5, in the pregnant sense of 'find useful', 'make use of'.

This is vain endeavor, it is lies,  
 And none will recall his name to others.  
 I say this in accord with what I have seen:  
 From the first generation to those who come after,  
 They imitate that which is past.<sup>53</sup> [B 146]  
 Would that I knew what others ignore,  
 Such as has not been repeated,  
 To say it and have my heart answer me.  
 To inform<sup>54</sup> it of my distress,  
 Shift to it the load on my back,  
 The matters that afflict me,  
 Relate to it of what I suffer  
 And sigh 'Ah' with relief!

(10) I meditate on what has happened,  
 The events that occur throughout the land:  
 Changes take place, it is not like last year,  
 One year is more irksome than the other,  
 The land breaks up, is destroyed,  
 Becomes [a wasteland].  
 Order is cast out,  
 Chaos is in the council hall;<sup>55</sup>  
 The ways of the gods are violated,  
 Their provisions neglected.  
 The land is in turmoil,  
 There is mourning everywhere;  
 Towns, districts are grieving,  
 All alike are burdened by wrongs.  
 One turns one's back on dignity,  
 The lords of silence are disturbed;  
 As dawn comes every day,  
 The face recoils from events.  
 I cry out about it,  
 My limbs are weighted down,  
 I grieve in my heart.  
 It is hard<sup>56</sup> to keep silent about it,  
 Another heart would bend;  
 But a heart strong in distress:  
 It is a comrade to its lord.  
 Had I [a] heart skilled in hardship,  
 I would take my rest upon it.  
 Weigh it down with words of grief.  
 Lay on it my malady!

<sup>53</sup> 2) It is interesting that imitation of the past, which is usually recommended in the Instructions, is here rejected.

<sup>54</sup> 3) *Shd* is quite literally 'to enlighten'.

<sup>55</sup> 4) The pair is *maat* and *isfet*, as in *Neferti*, lines 68/9; see there, n. 19.

<sup>56</sup> 5) Or, 'painful'; *wḥd* occurs four times, varying from 'painful' to 'suffer', and 'endure' (I,13-4 and II,4-5).

(II,1) He said to his heart:  
 Come, my heart, I speak to you, [B 147]  
 Answer me my sayings!  
 Unravel for me what goes on in the land,  
 Why those who shone are overthrown.<sup>57</sup>  
 I meditate on what has happened:  
 While trouble entered in today,  
 And turmoil will not cease tomorrow.<sup>58</sup>  
 Everyone is mute about it.  
 The whole land is in great distress,  
 Nobody is free from crime;  
 Hearts are greedy.<sup>59</sup>  
 He who gave orders takes orders,  
 And the hearts of both submit.  
 One wakes to it every day,  
 And the hearts do not reject it.  
 Yesterday's condition is like today's  
 ...<sup>60</sup>  
 None is wise enough to know it,  
 None angry enough to cry out,  
 One wakes to suffer each day.

My malady is long and heavy,  
 The sufferer lacks strength to save himself  
 from that which overwhelms him.  
 It is pain to be silent to what one hears,  
 It is futile<sup>61</sup> to answer (5) the ignorant,  
 To reject a speech makes enmity;  
 The heart does not accept the truth,  
 Obe cannot bear a statement of fact,  
 A man loves only his own words.  
 Everyone build on crookedness,  
 Right-speaking is abandoned.  
 I spoke to you, my heart, answer you me,  
 A heart addressed must not be silent.  
 Lo, servant and master far alike,  
 There is much that weighs upon you!

<sup>57</sup> 6) *Ntḥw ḥd ptḥ* recalls *sr m ptḥ*, 'the great man is overthrown', in *Neferti*, line 21.

<sup>58</sup> 7) Note the chiasitic order of *ḥw bs m-mḥn / nḥpw n sw3 drdrw*, where *nḥpw* is surely the word for 'morning' in the sense of tomorrow, as suggested by Sethe *apud* Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 106. For the word *drdrw*, which elsewhere means 'stranger', a meaning parallel to *ḥw* is required, e.g., 'strange doings', 'hostilities'.

<sup>59</sup> 8) *Snm* here and in *Admonitions*, 2,5, is probably 'greedy' rather than 'sad'.

<sup>60</sup> 9) *Hr sn rs n 'š3w / ḥr drī* is obscure.

<sup>61</sup> 10) *Ihw* (= *3hw*) above in II,1, was the noun; here it is the adjective and recalls the *3hw m mw* of *Merikare*, lines 91/2, where the sense is 'lacking, deficient'; hence 'futile' seems appropriate here.

## **Dispute between a man and his ba**

(papyrus Berlin 3024: part II)

To whom shall I speak today?  
Brothers are mean,  
The friends of today do not love. [**B** 166]

To whom (105) shall I speak today?  
Hearts are greedy,  
Everyone robs his comrade's goods.

< To whom shall I speak today?>  
Kindness has perished,  
Insolence assaults everyone.

To whom shall I speak today?  
One is content with evil.  
Goodness is cast to the ground everywhere.

To whom shall I speak (110) today?  
He who should enrage men by his crimes,  
He makes everyone laugh <at> his evil doing.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The criminal is one's intimate,  
The brother with whom one dealt is (115) a foe.

To whom shall I speak today?  
The past is not remembered,  
Now one does not help him who helped.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Brothers are mean,  
One goes to strangers for affection.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Faces are blank,  
Everyone turns his face from (120) his brother.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Hearts are greedy,  
No man's heart can be relied on.

To whom shall I speak today?  
None are righteous,  
The land is left to evil doers. [**B** 168]

To whom shall I speak today?  
One lacks an intimate,  
One resorts to an unknown (125) to complain.

To whom shall I speak today?  
No one is cheerful,  
He with whom one walked is no more.

To whom shall I speak today?  
I am burdened with grief  
For lack of an intimate.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Wrong roams the earth  
(130) and ends not.

This famous text is preserved as a single manuscript which dates from the XIIth Dynasty. The first portion is missing. In its present form it consists of 155 vertical columns, broken by a number of lacunae. An exceedingly difficult and intriguing work, it has engendered a great deal of controversy. In translating it for this anthology I had two choices: to provide sentence by sentence summaries and discussions of the widely diverging translations and interpretations – this would have required many pages of annotations – or to dispense with notes altogether. I have chosen the latter course. Scholars familiar with the text know its problems. Those unfamiliar with it who wish to study it in detail are advised to consult all translations and commentaries especially on the rendering of the crucial word *ihm*, where I hold with those scholars who take it to mean ‘lead toward’, not ‘hold back from’.

Given the great variety of interpretations, I also refrain from a general discussion of the meaning of the work and content myself with a bald and brief sketch of what I believe to be its plot – The man’s final answer is delivered through four exquisite poems, in which he deplores the miseries of life and exalts death and resurrection.

Publication: A. Erman, *Gespräch eines Lebensmüden mit seine Seele*, APAW (Berlin 1896). R.O. Faulkner, *JEA*, 42 (1956), 21-40. W. Barta, *Das Gespräch eines Mannes mit seiner Ba*, Münchner ägyptische Studien, 18 (Berlin 1969). H. Goedicke, *The Report about the Dispute of a Man with his Ba* (Baltimore 1970).

Translation: Erman, *Literature*, pp. 86-92. J.A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 405-407. Bissing, *Lebensweisheit*, pp. 124-128.

Commentaries and comments: A. Scharff, *SBAW*, 1937, Phil.-hist. Abt., Heft 9 (Munich, 1937). A. Hermann, *OLZ*, 42 (1939) 141-153. A. de Buck, *Ex Oriente Lux*, 7 (1947), 19-32. R. Weill, *BIFAO*, 45 (1947) 89-154. H. Junker, *AOAW*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1948, No. 17 (Vienna 1949). H. Jacobsohn, in *Zeitlose Dokumente der Seele*, Studien aus den C.G. Jung Institut, Zürich, Vol. 3 (Zürich 1952), pp. 1-48. S. Herrmann, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 62-79. G. Thausing, *MDIK*, 15 (1957), 262-267. R. Williams, *JEA*, 48 (1962) 49-56. E. Brunner-Traut, *ZÄS*, 94 (1967) 6-15. Additional references will be found in the works cited.

## Abbreviations

JARCE: Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt

H. Goedicke: Königliche Dokumente aus dem alten Reich (Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 14, Wiesbaden 1967)

R.O. Faulkner: A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian. Oxford 1962.

RdE: Revue d'Égyptologie

ZÄS: Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde.

A. Erman, The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians, trans. into English by A.M. Blackman. London 1927. Reprint New York 1966 under title: The Ancient Egyptians; a sourcebook of their writings.

JEA: Journal of Egyptian Archeology

ANET: Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament. ed. J.B. Pritchard, Princeton 1950

G. Lefèbvre: Romans et contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique. Paris 1949.

G. Posener: Littérature et politique dans l'Égypte de la XII<sup>e</sup> dynastie. Bibl. de l'École des hautes études, 307. Paris 1956.

JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies

Wb: Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache. ed. A. Erman and H. Grapow. 7 vol. Leipzig 1936-63.

APAW: Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

SBAW: Sitzungsberichte der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

OLZ: Orientalische Literaturzeitung.

BIFAO: Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

AOAW: Anzeiger der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

MDIK: Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung KAIRO

Verklaring van de tekens:

[ ] bevatten restauraties

< > bevatten door de schrijver vergeten woorden

( ) bevatten toevoegingen in de Engelse vertalingen

... geven een lacune in de tekst aan

## The Prophecy of Nefer-Rohu

(J.A. Wilson, in Anet, pp. 444-446)

The Middle Kingdom delivered Egypt from the civil war and anarchy which had followed the Old Kingdom. These troubles and their ultimate resolution produced a sense of messianic salvation, a feeling which the early pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom probably fostered in their own interests. The following text was apparently composed at that time of happy deliverance, although the earliest extant copies happen to date from the 18th Dynasty, about five centuries later. The text purports to relate how king Snefru of the 4th Dynasty sought entertainment and how a prophet foretold the downfall of the Old Kingdom and the reestablishment of order by Amenemhet I, the first king of the XIIth Dynasty.

Papyrus Leningrad 1116B was published by W. Golénoscheff, *Les papyrus hiératiques no. 1115, 1116A, et 1116B de l'Ermitage Impérial à St. Pétersbourg* (St. Petersburg, 1913).

The text was studied and translated by A.H. Gardiner in *JEA*, 1 (1914), 100-106, and translated by Erman, *LAE*, 110-115. The text was used for school purposes in the 18th and 19th Dynasties and portions appear on two ostraca and two writing tablets.

(1) palace = the Great House – life, prosperity, health!

note a (1): 'To ask after the state', i.e. to offer respectful greetings, undoubtedly here a polite circumlocution for the daily report, first to the pharaoh and then to the other highest officials. 'The Great House' (*per-aa*) was at this time the palace and did not designate the king as 'pharaoh' until the 18th Dynasty.

note b (2): The lector-priest (literally, 'he who carries the ritual') was initiated into the sacred writings and thus was priest, seer, and magician. Bastet was the cat-goddess of Bubastis in the eastern half of the Delta.

(10)

note c (3): '*If it has taken place by today, pass it [by].*' This must be the general sense, although the wording is obscure. An Egyptian interest in the future, rather than the past, was not normal, but a prophecy which promised that the future would restore the past would be acceptable.

note d (4): The pharaoh himself wrote down the prophecy. The Egyptian texts treat Snefru as a friendly and approachable ruler; see B. Gunn in *JEA* 12 (1926) 250f. Here, instead of calling upon a scribe, he does his own writing; he addresses his courtiers as 'my people' and N. as 'my friend'.

Bastet in her East = Bastet at her appearances [CH: i.e. Venus]

note e (5): Although now serving in Bubastis, he had been born in the Heliopolitan nome.

deplored = brooded over what (was to) happen in the land

evoked = called to mind

roaming in their strength = move about with their strong arms

seizing cattle, etc. = would take away the spans of cattle at the plowing

(20)

Stir = Reconstruct

bewail = (how) thou bewailest ; from which etc. = in which thou didst begin

To be silent is *repression*.

Behold, there is something about which man speak as *terrifying*,

for, behold, the great man is a thing passed away (in the land) where thou didst begin. [B  
444]

BE NOT LAX; BEHOLD, it is before thy face!

Mayest thou rise up against what is before thee,

for, behold, although great men are concerned with the land,

what has been done is as what is not done.

*Re must begin the foundation (of the Earth over again).*

The land is completely perished, (so that) no remainder exist,

(so that) not (even) the black of the nail survives from what was fated.<sup>62</sup>

THIS LAND IS (SO) DAMAGED (that) there is no one who is concerned with it,

no one who speaks, no eye that weeps. How is this land?

The sunrise is covered over. (25) It will not shine (so that) people may see.

No one can live when clouds cover over (the sun).

Then everybody is deaf for lack of it.<sup>63</sup>

I do not foretell, etc. = I cannot foretell what has not (yet) come.<sup>64</sup>

The rivers of Egypt are empty, (so that) the water is crossed on foot.

Men seek for water for the ships to sail on it.

Its course is [become] a sandbank.

The sandbank *is against* the flood; the place of water *is against* the [flood] –

(*both*) the place of water *and* the sandbanks.<sup>65</sup>

The southwind will oppose the northwind;

the skies are no (longer) in a single wind.<sup>66</sup>

A foreign bird will be born in the marshes of the Northland.

It has made a nest beside (30) men, and people have let it approach through want of it.<sup>67</sup>

DAMAGED INDEED ARE THOSE good things, those fishponds

(where there were) those who clean fish, overflowing with fish and fowl.

Everything good has disappeared, and the land is prostrate

because of woes from that *food*,<sup>68</sup> the Asiatics who are throughout the land.

Foes have arisen in the east, and Asiatics have come down into Egypt ...

No protector will listen ...

Men will enter into the *fortresses*. Sleep will *be banished* from my eyes,

(35) as I spend the night wakeful.

THE WILD BEASTS OF THE DESERT WILL drink at the rivers of Egypt

and be at their ease on their banks for lack of *someone to scare them away*.

---

<sup>62</sup> 6. Not so much of the 'Black Land' of Egypt survives as might be under a fingernail.

<sup>63</sup> 7. 'Deaf' is unexpected where one awaits 'blinded' by the lack of sunlight. The sense may be stunned or inert.

<sup>64</sup> 8. A curious statement, since the point of the story is that he will prophesy the future. The psychology is apparently that he is projecting himself into a present which extends to the time of Amenemhet I – which is an exposure of the actual time of this 'prophecy'. Note also the significant fluctuation of tenses throughout the 'prophecy'.

<sup>65</sup> 9. Perhaps mistranslated, but attempting to hold the idea that neither the banks nor the bed of the stream would receive the live-giving inundation.

<sup>66</sup> 10. The pleasant north wind is the normal wind of Egypt.

<sup>67</sup> 11. A strange passage, which either emphasizes the unnaturalness of nature in the distressed times or else is an oblique reference to Asiatics infiltrating in the Delta.

<sup>68</sup> 12. The Asiatics are a bitter diet for the Egyptians?

This land is helter-skelter,<sup>69</sup> and no one knows the result which will come about, which is hidden from speech, sight, or hearing. The face is deaf, for silence *confronts*. I show thee the land topsy-turvy.<sup>70</sup> (14) That which never happened, has happened. Men will take up weapons of warfare, (so that) the land lives in (40) confusion. MEN WILL MAKE ARROWS of metal,<sup>71</sup> beg for the bread of blood and laugh with the laughter of sickness.<sup>72</sup>

There is no one who weeps because of death; there is no one who spends the night fasting<sup>73</sup> because of death (but) a man's heart pursues himself (alone). (Disheveled) mourning is no (longer) carried out today, (for) the heart is completely *separated from* it.

A man sits *in his corner*, (*turning*) his back while one man kills another. I show you the son as a foe, the brother as an enemy, and a man (45) killing his (own) father.

EVERY MOUTH IS FULL OF 'LOVE ME!', AND everything GOOD has disappeared. The land is perished, (as though) laws *were* destined *for it*: the damaging of what had been done, the emptiness of what had been found,<sup>74</sup> and the doing of what had not been done.

Men take a man's property away from him, and it is given to him who is from outside. I show thee the possessor in need and the outsider satisfied. He who never filled for himself (*now*) *empties*.<sup>75</sup>

Men will [*treat*] fellow citizens as hateful, in order to silence the mouth that speaks. If a statement is answered, an arm goes out with a stick, and men speak with: 'Kill him!'

THE UTTERANCE OF SPEECH IN THE HEART is like a fire. (50) Men cannot suffer what issues from a man's mouth. The land is diminished, (but) its administrators are many; bare, (but) its taxes are great; little in grain, (but) the measure is large, and it is measured to overflowing.<sup>76</sup>

Re separates himself (from) mankind. If he shines forth, it is (but) an hour. No one knows when midday falls for his shadow cannot be distinguished.<sup>77</sup>

There is no one bright of face when seeing [him]; the eyes are not moist with water, when he is in the sky like the moon.

<sup>69</sup> 13. A compound expression 'is brought-and-taken'.

<sup>70</sup> 14. A compound expression, *seni-meni* 'is passed-by-and-sick'.

<sup>71</sup> 15. W. Wolf, *Die Bewaffnung des altägyptischen Heeres* (Leipzig 1926), 50, notes that metal arrowpoints were first used in Egypt in the 11th Dynasty.

<sup>72</sup> Hysteria.

<sup>73</sup> 17. 'Hungry'.

<sup>74</sup> 18. A pious obligation resting upon the Egyptians was to restore the inscriptions of the ancestors which were 'found empty', i.e. damaged or containing lacunae. Under the present unsettled conditions what was found empty was left empty.

<sup>75</sup> 19. Perhaps: he who never had to insist on full measure for himself now scrapes the bottom.

<sup>76</sup> 20. A land smaller and poorer has more bureaucrats and higher and more exacting taxes.

<sup>77</sup> 21. The sun's shadow on the shadow-clock determined the hour of noon.

His prescribed time does not fail. His rays are indeed in (men's) faces in his former way.<sup>78</sup>  
I SHOW THEE THE LAND TOPSY-TURVY. The weak of arm is (now) the possessor  
of an arm.

Men (55) salute (respectfully) him who (formerly) saluted.

I show thee the undermost on top, turned about *in proportion* to the turning about of my  
*belly*.

Men live in the necropolis. The poor man will make wealth ...

It is the paupers who eat the offering-bread, while the servants *jubilate*.

The Heliopolitan nome, the birthplace of every god, will no *(longer) be on earth*.

(THEN) IT IS THAT A KING WILL COME, BELONGING TO THE SOUTH,  
Ameni, the triumphant, his name.<sup>79</sup> He is the son of a woman of the land of Nubia; [B  
445]

he is one born in Upper Egypt.<sup>80</sup> He will take the [White] Crown;

he will wear the Red Crown; (60) he will unite the Two Mighty Ones;<sup>81</sup>

he will satisfy the Two Lords<sup>82</sup> with what they desire.

The encircler-of-the-fields (will be) in his grasp, the oar ...<sup>83</sup>

REJOICE, ye people of his time! The son of a man<sup>84</sup> will make his name forever and ever.  
They who incline toward evil and who plot rebellion have subdued their speech for fear of  
him.

The Asiatics will fall to his sword, and the Libyans will fall to his flame.

The rebels belong to his wrath, and the treacherous of heart to (65) the awe of him.

The uraeus-serpent which is on his brow stills for him the treacherous of heart.

THERE WILL BE BUILT the Wall of the Ruler – life, prosperity, health!<sup>85</sup> –  
and the Asiatics will not be permitted to come down into Egypt, that they might beg  
for water the customary manner in order to let their beasts drink.

And justice will come into its place, while wrongdoing is *driven* out.<sup>86</sup>

Rejoice, he who may behold (this) (70) and who may be in the service of the king!

The learned man will pour out water for me,<sup>87</sup> when he sees what I have spoken come to  
pass.

IT HAS COME (TO ITS END) IN [SUCCESS], by the *Scribe* ...

---

<sup>78</sup> 22. The last sentence accords poorly with the idea that the sun is dimmer and is like the moon.

<sup>79</sup> See <http://th3ancient-egypt.blogspot.nl/2012/09/amenemhat-i.html>. [Strange English! The picture is modern.]

<sup>80</sup> 23. Ameny was an abbreviated name for Amen-em-het (I). Nothing is known of his mother's race.

<sup>81</sup> 24. The tutelary goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt, who united as the Double Crown.

<sup>82</sup> 25. Horus and Seth.

<sup>83</sup> 26. As one act of the coronation ceremonies, the pharaoh, grasping an oar and some other object, dedicated a field  
by running around it four times.

<sup>84</sup> 27. A man of birth and standing.

<sup>85</sup> 28. A series of fortresses along the eastern frontier, as in the story of Sinuhe, p. 19 above.

<sup>86</sup> 29. The coronation of each pharaoh re-instituted the old order of *ma'at* 'justice', and expelled 'deceit' and  
'wrongdoing'.

<sup>87</sup> 30. As a libation at the tomb.

## A Dispute over Suicide

88

The text dates from the Middle Kingdom, or, more probable, from the disturbed times between the Old and Middle Kingdoms (end of the third millennium BC) when the established order of life had broken down and men were groping for new values.

Studies: A. Scharff, *SBAW*, 1937, 9 (German); R. Weill, *BIFAO*, 45 (1946) 89-154 (French); A. de Buck, *Kernmomenten 'Ex Oriente Lux' – Mededeelingen en Verhandelingen*, No. 7 (Leiden, 1947, 19-32 (Nederlands).

Behold, my name will reek through thee<sup>89</sup>  
More than the stench of bird-droppings  
On summer days when the sky is hot.  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
(More than a fish-handler  
On the day of the catch, when the sky is hot. (90)  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
More than the stench of bird-droppings  
More than a *covert* of reeds with waterfowl  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
More than the stench of fishermen  
More than the stagnant pools which they have fished  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
More than the stench of crocodiles  
More than the sifting in the assembly among the crocodiles  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
More than a (married) woman  
Against whom a lie has been told because of a man.  
Behold my name will reek through thee (100)  
More than a sturdy boy of whom it is said:  
'He belongs to his rival!'<sup>90</sup>  
Behold my name will reek through thee  
(More than) a treacherous town, which plots rebellion  
Of which (only) the outside can be seen.<sup>91</sup>

To whom can I speak today?<sup>92</sup>  
(One's) fellows are evil;  
The friends of today do not love.  
To whom can I speak today?  
Hearts are rapacious:  
Every man seizes his fellow's goods.  
(To whom can I speak today?)

---

<sup>88</sup> John A. Wilson, *ANET* 405-407.

<sup>89</sup> 16. 'Behold, my name is overflowed (with bad odor) from thee' – followed by a series of comparisons, most of which have to do with fetid smells.

<sup>90</sup> 17. 'To his hated one.' It is whispered to the boy, that he is the child of his father's rival.

<sup>91</sup> 18. Uncertain. Perhaps the rebellious town shows a peaceful exterior while it is plotting within.

<sup>92</sup> 19. 'I speak to whom today?' – with whom can I have any friendly and satisfactory contact in times like these?

The gentleman has perished,  
 (But) the violent man has access to everybody.  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 (Even) the calm of face is wicked;  
 Goodness is rejected everywhere  
 To whom can I speak today? (110)  
 (Though) a man should arouse wrath by his evil character,  
 He (only) stirs everyone to laughter, (so) wicked is his sin.  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 Men are plundering;  
 Every man seizes his fellow's (goods)  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 The foul friend is an intimate  
 (But) a brother, with whom one worked, has become an enemy  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 No one thinks of yesterday;  
 No one at this time acts for him who has acted.<sup>93</sup>  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 (One's) fellows are evil;  
 One has recourse to strangers for uprightness of heart  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 Hearts are rapacious;  
 No man has a heart upon which one may rely.  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 There are no righteous;  
 The land is left to those who do wrong.  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 There is lack of an intimate (friend);  
 One has recourse to an unknown to complain to him  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 There is no one contended of heart [B 406]  
 That man with whom one went, he no (longer) exists.  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 I am laden with wretchedness  
 for lack of an intimate (friend)  
 To whom can I speak today?  
 The sin which treads the earth,  
 It has no end. (130)

---

<sup>93</sup> 20. There is disregard for the lessons of the past, including grateful response for good services.

## La Prophétie de Néfertī

L'édition de Golénischeff a vu le jour en 1913 (Papyrus hiéroglyphique 1116B de l'Ermitage Impérial à Saint-Petersbourg pl. 23-25 et pl. suppl. C-D (autres copies), et l'année suivante Gardiner a publié une traduction du texte complet (*JEA* 1, 100-106). Ces deux travaux serviront de base à toutes les études ultérieures de la Prophétie qui font quelques progrès grâce aux efforts des philologues (vu p. 147) et à l'apport de nouvelles copies.

Actuellement on connaît le texte par un papyrus, celui de l'Ermitage [désignée par le sigle E], qui date du règne d'Aménophis II, par deux tablettes de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie et par dix-huit ostraca ramessides (143-147) aucun manuscrit ne remonte au Moyen Empire.

Seul le papyrus donne la Prophétie du début jusqu'à la fin (71 lignes) ; la condition de cette copie n'est pas parfaite et sa qualité laisse à désirer. Malgré l'appoint des tablettes et des ostraca, quelques rares lacunes subsistent [E 11, 52, 61] et quelques lectures demeurent incertaines [E 34, 36, 56] ; faute de bon manuscrit, il reste aussi des passages de sens obscur [par exemple E 28, 33, 55] ; ailleurs c'est sans doute la connaissance insuffisante de la langue et de la pensée égyptiennes qui est responsable de l'embarras des traducteurs et de leurs désaccords [par exemple E 15, 46, 60].

E 1-19: inleiding: een vertelraam, dat als het voorwendsel tot de profetie dient

De actie heeft plaats aan het hof van koning Snéfroë, de stichter van de IV<sup>e</sup> dynastie. Ter verstrooiing laat de farao een ziener, genaamd Neferty, voor zich brengen, die hij beveelt de toekomst te onthullen. Het tweede en derde deel zijn de profetieën van Neferty.

E 20-57 beschrijven de rampspoeden, die zich over zijn land gaan voltrekken.

E 57-70 kondigen de komst aan van een vorst, die de orde zal herstellen evenals de welvaart.

Deze koning zal Ameny heten en van meridionale afkomst. Hij zal de Muur van de Prins bouwen.

Het introductieverhaal is een fictie, die geplaatst is in het verleden en het verslag van de rampspoeden, die zullen volgen, is voor een groot deel banaal of niet precies (imprécis), en bevat in geen geval elementen, waarmee men met zekerheid een datum kan vaststellen. Alleen het laatste deel noemt enige concrete feiten. Deze feiten zijn de meest recente van de hele tekst en hun beschrijving is het culmineerpunt van het boek (verhaal).

1<sup>e</sup> vraag: Wie is koning Ameny ('Imnj)?

Geen enkele farao draagt officieel deze naam; hij komt in geen enkel koninklijk protocol voor. Maar Griffith (*PSBA* 14, 39f) heeft voorbeelden verzameld om aan te tonen dat koning Ammenemes II enkele malen met deze koosnaam is aangeduid. [23 à ] Maar A II kan het niet geweest zijn, aangezien deze co-regent was met zijn vader S I, die hem een welvarende en goed georganiseerde staat naliet. De enige Ammenemes die zou kunnen overeenkomen met de beschrijving van de profetie is Ammenemes I, stichter van de XII<sup>e</sup> dynastie, die de macht greep na jaren van interregnum.

Ed. Meyer (*Gesch.d.Alt.* I 2 §280A, gemeld door Ranke 1909 in Gressmann, o.c. 205 n. 6) heeft als eerste deze opvatting geuit, die een vrijwel algehele steun heeft gekregen (bijv. Moret, *Le Nil et la civilisation ég.* 268f; Vandier, *L'Égypte*<sup>3</sup>, 265; Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, 171; E. Otto,

Ägypten, 96 & 118; Säve-Söderbergh, *Äg.u.Nubien*, 63f; Gardiner, JEA, 1, 105; Erman, *Literature*, III; Lefèbvre, *Romans et contes ég.*, 94.

Wanneer men de teksten van het Middenrijk bestudeert, constateert men dat de koosnaam (hypocoristique) Ameny ('*Imnj*) gebruikt is geweest om diverse personen genaamd Ammenemes ('*Imn-m-ḥ3.t*) mee aan te duiden.

Een ostracon die een tekenende vergissing in dit opzicht bevat. Dit ding dat dateert uit de regering van Tutmosis III geeft het begin van de Onderwijzing (Enseignement) van Ammenemes I; de naam van de koning is geschreven als '*Imnj* en gecorrigeerd tot '*Imn-m-ḥ3.t* (Hayes, *Ostraka and Name Stones from the Tomb of Sen-Mut (n° 71) at Thebes (MMA, EEP 15)*, n° 142, p. 28 en pl. 25.

Tegen het argument, dat de historische context niet past bij Amenemet I (eerder bij Mentuhotep van de 11<sup>e</sup> Dyn.: verenigde het rijk = rode + witte kroon), voert Posener aan, dat historici zo makkelijk in eeuwen denken (une erreur d'optique), maar dat niets in de profetie wijst op een lange duur van de ongeregelheden, waaraan Ameny een einde maakt. Het interregnum vóór Amenemet I duurde minimaal 5 jaar, waarin ongeregelheden van 'une réelle gravité' plaats hadden. [Hier moet dan nog bijgevoegd worden, dat de situatie van de profetie voor een deel overdrijving bevat.

Dan is er de kwestie van de 'Muur van de Prins' (Muren!) [**B**24; 25 à ] Ten aanzien van deze Muren geeft de papyrus het werkwoord ... «bâtir» (bouwen), wat echter door Struve wordt geïnterpreteerd als «restaurer» (herstellen) (ZKVI 216 & 129). Dit is een bekende, maar secundaire betekenis van het woord. [Volgens Struve zijn de fortificaties in de Oostelijke Delta veel vroeger gebouwd dan Amenemet I.]

Volgens E 33-34 zijn er nog andere verdedigingswerken tegen de invallen dan de Muren van de Prins. Deze zijn gelegen aan een 'petite étape des Lac Amers' [zie p. 56], waarvan de Egyptische naam, *Km-wr*, in de piramideteksten wordt weergegeven door het teken van de Muur (Pyr. 628b, 1630d), waaruit men heeft afgeleid dat reeds onder het Oude Rijk er fortificaties waren in deze streek. (Deze uitleg, van Erman, ZÄS 29,45 is algemeen aanvaard, cf. Ed. Meyer, *Gesch.d.Alt.* I 2 § 227A; Wb V, 126<sup>4</sup>; Sethe, *Übersetzung u. Komm. zu den altäg. Pyramidentexten*, III, 166). In dezelfde streek moet men de verdedigingswerken plaatsen, waarover gesproken wordt in de 'Enseignement pour Mérikare' [Cf. Scharff, *Hist. Abschnit. (Sitzungsb. München 1936, 8)*, 32-35] en daar ook zal Ptolemeüs Philadelphus bouwen « un grand mur ... pour repousser les ennemis ... quand ils descendent en Égypte » (Stele van Pithom I.16; *Urk.* II, 95<sup>8-11</sup>). Geen enkele van deze forten heet de Muren van de Prins (Op de stele van Pithom is de lezing *ḥnb wr* 'grote muur' zeker te prefereren boven *ḥnb ḥtj* 'muur van de soeverein' die gegeven wordt door Gauthier, *Dict. Géogr.* I, 82 en die synoniem zou zijn met '*ḥnb.w ḥk3* 'Muren van de Prins'. Deze naam komt alleen voor in de Profetie van Neferty en in de Avonturen van Sinouhé.

Ten aanzien van zijn vlucht uit Egypte noemt Sinouhé als een van de 8 plaatsen, waar hij langs kwam, De Muren, en als enige heeft hij hierbij een verklarende noot: « J'ai touché les Murs du Prince qui ont été faits pour repousser les Bédouins et pour écraser les coureurs des Sables » (Sin. B 16-17). Uit het verhaal van Sinouhé kunnen we opmaken dat de Muren van de Prins nog

[vanwege het voorafgaan in de tijd van de profetie van Neferty] dienst deden ten tijde van de dood van Ammenemes I.

De naam Muren van de Prins is niet gebruikelijk: de enige voorbeelden zijn: de Muren van Ammenemes ('*Inb.w 'Imn-m-ḥ3.t*), een constructie bij het derde cataract in Kerma, opgericht door A I of II (Reisner, *Kerma IV-V (Harvard African Studies 6)*, 509, n°30 & 511, 542-543; Säve-Söderbergh, *o.c.*, 65 en 115) en de Muren van Séshémoutaoui ('*Inb.w Ššm.w-t3.wj*), in El-Kab, genoemd naar Sesotris II (Legrain, *PSBA 27*, 106-111; PM V, 190. Deze inscriptie en die van Kerma praten over gelijksoortige werken uitgevoerd met 11 jaar tussentijd onder de regering van A III).

Deze twee voorbeelden zijn van het eerste deel van de 12<sup>e</sup> Dynastie en hun gelijkenis met de Muren van de Prins 'engage à dater' (verplicht tot dateren) deze laatste in hetzelfde tijdperk. De beste handschriften schrijven 'prins' in een cartouche en worden gevolgd door 'leven, gezondheid, kracht!' (aldus in E 66 en TC, b 9; OG 331, qui est ramesside de n'a ni cartouche, ni « vie, .santé, force! »), terwijl in de Avonturen van Sinouhé cartouche en kwalificatie afwezig zijn, en de versie van het Nieuwe Rijk vervangt 'Prins' door de curieuze lezing 'mijn vader' (*ḥt.ḥ*) [outre les copies publiées par Blackman, *M.-Eg. Stories (Bae2)*, II, voir Barns, *Ashmolean Ostr. of Sinuhe*, r°15)].<sup>94</sup>

Sinouhé, in ANET, p. 19:

When the time of the evening-meal came, I drew near to Oxtown. I crossed over in a barge without a rudder, by aid of the West Wind. I passed by the east of the quarry (B15) above Mistress-of-the-Red-Mountain (Gebel el-Ahmar, near Cairo). I gave (free) road to my feet going northward, and I came up to the Wall-of-the-Ruler, (the fortresses at the eastern frontier, along the general line of the present Suez Canal. See also p. 446 below), made to oppose the Asiatics and to crush the Sand-Crossers. I took a crouching position in a bush, for fear lest the watchmen upon the wall where their day's (duty) was might see me. I set out (20) at evening time, and when day broke I reached Peten. I halted at the Island of Kem-wer (the area of the Bitter Lakes), (etc.)

---

<sup>94</sup> Hier stoppen mijn aantekeningen met als laatste: 'Cholpo, voulant fair remontre Amény à la Première Période Intermédiaire,' met hierbij noot 3: 'L'argument de Cholpo repose, comme l'a montré Struve, sur une traduction incorrecte de la stèle 569 du Brit. Mus.'