

THE REPORT OF WENAMUN

P. Moscow 120

In its present state the papyrus consists of two pages with a total of 142 lines. The first page has numerous lacunae, and the end of the story is missing. The papyrus was written at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, that is to say, directly after the events which the report relates. Whether or not the report reflects an actual mission, it depicts a true historical situation and a precise moment. It is the third decade of the reign of Ramses XI, 1090-1080 B.C., during which the king yielded power to the two men who shared the effective rule of Egypt: Herihor in the south and Smendes in the north. The empire had been lost, and thus so simple an enterprise as the purchase of Lebanese timber could be depicted as a perilous adventure.

What makes the story so remarkable is the skill with which it is told. The Late-Egyptian vernacular is handled with great subtlety. The verbal duels between Wenamun and the prince of Byblos, with their changes of mood and shades of meaning that include irony, represent Egyptian thought and style at their most advanced. What *Simuhe* is for the Middle Kingdom, *Wenamun* is for the New Kingdom: a literary culmination. The differences between them are not only that the one reflects political power and the other political decline, but more importantly that almost a millennium of human history has gone by, a time during which the peoples of the ancient world lost much of their archaic simplicity. *Wenamun* stands on the threshold of the first millennium B.C., a millennium in which the modern world began, a world shaped by men and women who were the likes of ourselves.

Publication: V. S. Golenishchev, *RT*, 21 (1899), 74-102. Gardiner, *LES*; pp. 61-76. M. A. Korostovtsev, *Puteshestvie Un-amuna v Bibl.* (Moscow, 1960).

Translation: Erman, *ZAS*, 38 (1900), 1-14. Erman, *Literature*, pp. 174-185. Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 204-220. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 25-29. Gardiner, *Egypt*, pp. 306-313. E. Edel in *Galling, Textbuch*, pp. 41-48. E. F. Wente in Simpson, *Literature*, pp. 142-155.

Comments: C. F. Nims, *JEA*, 54 (1968), 161-164. Additional references will be found in the works cited.

(1,1) Year 5,¹ fourth month of summer, day 16, the day of departure of Wenamun, the Elder of the Portal of the Temple of Amun, Lord of Thrones-of-the-Two-Lands, to fetch timber for the great noble bark of Amen-Re, King of Gods, which is upon the river and [is called] Amen-user-he.²

On the day of my arrival at Tanis, the place where Smendes and Tentamun are,³ I gave them the dispatches of Amen-Re, King of Gods. They had them read out before them and they said: "I will do, I will do as Amen-Re, King of Gods, our lord has said."

I stayed until the fourth month of summer in Tanis. Then Smendes and Tentamun sent me off with the ship's captain Mengebet,⁴ and I went down upon the great sea of Syria in the first month of summer,⁵ day 1. I arrived at Dor,⁶ a Tjeker town; and Beder, its prince, had fifty

loaves, one jug of wine, (1,10) and one ox-haunch brought to me. Then a man of my ship fled after stealing one vessel of gold worth 5 *deben*, four jars of silver worth 20 *deben*, and a bag with 11 *deben* of silver; [total of what he stole]: gold 5 *deben*, silver 31 *deben*.

That morning, when I had risen, I went to where the prince was and said to him: "I have been robbed in your harbor. Now you are the prince of this land, you are the one who controls it. Search for my money! Indeed the money belongs to Amen-Re, King of Gods, the lord of the lands. It belongs to Smendes; it belongs to Herihor, my lord, and (to) the other magnates of Egypt. It belongs to you; it belongs to Weret; it belongs to Mekmer; it belongs to Tjekerbaal, the prince of Byblos!"⁷ He said to me: "Are you serious? Are you joking?"⁸ Indeed I do not understand the demand you make to me. If it had been a thief belonging to my land who had gone down to your ship and stolen your money, I would replace it for you from my storehouse, until (1,20) your thief, whatever his name, had been found. But the thief who robbed you, he is yours, he belongs to your ship. Spend a few days here with me; I will search for him."

I stayed nine days moored in his harbor. Then I went to him and said to him: "Look, you have not found my money. [Let me depart] with the ship captains, with those who go to sea."

[The next eight lines are broken. Apparently the prince advises Wenamun to wait some more, but Wenamun departs. He passes Tyre and approaches Byblos. Then he seizes thirty *deben* of silver from a ship he has encountered which belongs to the Tjeker. He tells the owners that he will keep the money until his money has been found. Through this action he incurs the enmity of the Tjeker].

They departed and I celebrated [in] a tent on the shore of the sea in the harbor of Byblos. And [I made a hiding place for] Amun-of-the-Road⁹ and placed his possessions in it. Then the prince of Byblos sent to me saying: "[Leave my] harbor!" I sent to him, saying: "Where shall [I go]? ———. If [you have a ship to carry me], let me be taken back to Egypt." I spent twenty-nine days in his harbor, and he spent time sending to me daily to say: "Leave my harbor!"

Now while he was offering to his gods, the god took hold of a young man [of] his young men and put him in a trance. He said to him:⁹ "Bring [the] god up! Bring the envoy who is carrying him! (1,40) It is Amun who sent him. It is he who made him come!" Now it was while the entranced one was entranced that night that I had found a ship headed for Egypt. I had loaded all my belongings into it and was watching for the darkness, saying: "When it descends I will load the god so that no other eye shall see him."

Then the harbor master came to me, saying: "Wait until morning, says the prince!" I said to him: "Was it not you who daily took time to

come to me, saying: 'Leave my harbor'? Do you now say: 'Wait this night,' in order to let the ship that I found depart, and then you will come to say: 'Go away?'" He went and told it to the prince. Then the prince sent to the captain of the ship, saying: "Wait until morning, says the prince."

When morning came, he sent and brought me up, while the god rested in the tent where he was on the shore of the sea. I found him seated in his upper chamber with his back against a window, and the waves of the great sea of Syria broke behind (1,50) his head. I said to him: "Blessings of Amun!" He said to me: "How long is it to this day since you came from the place where Amun is?" I said to him: "Five whole months till now." He said to me: "If you are right, where is the dispatch of Amun that was in your hand? Where is the letter of the High Priest of Amun that was in your hand?" I said to him: "I gave them to Smendes and Tentamun." Then he became very angry and said to me: "Now then, dispatches, letters you have none. Where is the ship of pinewood¹⁰ that Smendes gave you? Where is its Syrian crew? Did he not entrust you to this foreign ship's captain in order to have him kill you and have them throw you into the sea? From whom would one then seek the god? And you, from whom would one seek you?" So he said to me.

I said to him: "Is it not an Egyptian ship? Those who sail under Smendes are Egyptian crews. He has no Syrian crews."¹¹ He said to me: "Are there not twenty ships here in my harbor that do business with Smendes? As for Sidon, (2,1) that other (place) you passed, are there not another fifty ships there that do business with Werekter and haul to his house?"

I was silent in this great moment. Then he spoke to me, saying: "On what business have you come?" I said to him: "I have come in quest of timber for the great noble bark of Amen-Re, King of Gods. What your father did, what the father of your father did, you too will do it." So I said to him. He said to me: "True, they did it. If you pay me for doing it, I will do it. My relations carried out this business after Pharaoh had sent six ships laden with the goods of Egypt, and they had been unloaded into their storehouses. You, what have you brought for me?"

He had the daybook of his forefathers brought and had it read before me. They found entered in his book a thousand *deben* of silver and all sorts of things. (2,10) He said to me: "If the ruler of Egypt were the lord of what is mine and I were his servant, he would not have sent silver and gold to say: 'Carry out the business of Amun.' It was not a royal gift that they gave to my father! I too, I am not your servant, nor am I the servant of him who sent you! If I shout aloud to the Lebanon, the sky opens and the logs lie here on the shore of the

sea! Give me the sails you brought to move your ships, loaded with logs for (Egypt)! Give me the ropes you brought [to lash the pines] that I am to fell in order to make them for you ——— that I am to make for you for the sails of your ships; or the yards may be too heavy and may break, and you may die (in) the midst of the sea. For Amun makes thunder in the sky ever since he placed Seth beside him!¹² Indeed, Amun has (2,20) founded all the lands. He founded them after having first founded the land of Egypt from which you have come. Thus craftsmanship came from it in order to reach the place where I am! Thus learning came from it in order to reach the place where I am!¹³ What are these foolish travels they made you do?"

I said to him: "Wrong! These are not foolish travels that I am doing. There is no ship on the river that does not belong to Amun. His is the sea and his the Lebanon of which you say, 'It is mine.' It is a growing ground for Amen-user-he, the lord of every ship. Truly, it was Amen-Re, King of Gods, who said to Herihor, my master: 'Send me!' And he made me come with this great god. But look, you have let this great god spend these twenty-nine days moored in your harbor. Did you not know that he was here? Is he not he who he was? You are prepared to haggle over the Lebanon with Amun, its lord? As to your saying, the former kings sent silver and gold: If they had owned life and health, they would not have sent these things. (2,30) It was in place of life and health that they sent these things to your fathers! But Amen-Re, King of Gods, he is the lord of life and health, and he was the lord of your fathers! They passed their lifetimes offering to Amun. You too, you are the servant of Amun!"

If you will say 'I will do' to Amun, and will carry out his business, you will live, you will prosper, you will be healthy; you will be beneficent to your whole land and your people. Do not desire what belongs to Amen-Re, King of Gods! Indeed, a lion loves his possessions! Have your scribe brought to me that I may send him to Smendes and Tentamun, the pillars Amun has set up for the north of his land; and they will send all that is needed. I will send him to them, saying: 'Have it brought until I return to the south; then I shall refund you all your expenses.'¹⁴ So I said to him.

He placed my letter in the hand of his messenger; and he loaded the keel, the prow-piece, and the stern-piece, together with four other hewn logs, seven in all, and sent them to Egypt. His messenger who had gone to Egypt returned to me in Syria in the first month of winter, Smendes and Tentamun having sent: (2,40) four jars and one *kakmen*-vessel of gold; five jars of silver; ten garments of royal linen; ten *hrd*-garments¹⁵ of fine linen; five-hundred smooth linen mats; five-hundred ox-hides; five-hundred ropes; twenty sacks of lentils; and thirty baskets of fish. And she had sent to me:¹⁶ five garments of

fine linen; five *hryd*-garments of fine linen; one sack of lentils; and five baskets of fish.

The prince rejoiced. He assigned three hundred men and three hundred oxen, and he set supervisors over them to have them fell the timbers. They were felled and they lay there during the winter. In the third month of summer they dragged them to the shore of the sea. The prince came out and stood by them, and he sent to me, saying: "Come!" Now when I had been brought into his presence, the shadow of his sunshade fell on me. Then Penamun, a butler of his,¹⁷ intervened, saying: "The shadow of Pharaoh, your lord, has fallen upon you." And he was angry with him and said: "Leave him alone."

As I stood before him, he addressed me, saying: "Look, the business my fathers did in the past, I have done it, although you did not do for me what your fathers did for mine. Look, the last of your timber has arrived and is ready. Do as I wish, and come to load it. For has it not been given to you? (2,50) Do not come to look at the terror of the sea. For if you look at the terror of the sea, you will see my own! Indeed, I have not done to you what was done to the envoys of Khaemwese,¹⁸ after they had spent seventeen years in this land. They died on the spot." And he said to his butler: "Take him to see the tomb where they lie."

I said to him: "Do not make me see it. As for Khaemwese, the envoys he sent you were men and he himself was a man. You have not here one of his envoys, though you say: 'Go and see your companions.' Should you not rejoice and have a stela [made] for yourself, and say on it: 'Amen-Re, King of Gods, sent me Amun-of-the-Road, his envoy, together with Wenamun, his human envoy, in quest of timber for the great noble bark of Amen-Re, King of Gods. I felled it; I loaded it; I supplied my ships and my crews. I let them reach Egypt so as to beg for me from Amun fifty years of life over and above my allotted fate.' And if it comes to pass that in another day an envoy comes from the land of Egypt who knows writing and he reads out your name on the stela, you will receive water of the west like the gods who are (2,60) there."

He said to me: "A great speech of admonition is what you have said to me."¹⁹ I said to him: "As to the many (things) you have said to me: if I reach the place where the High Priest of Amun is and he sees your accomplishment, it is your accomplishment that will draw profit to you."

I went off to the shore of the sea, to where the logs were lying. And I saw eleven ships that had come in from the sea and belonged to the Tjekker (who were) saying: "Arrest him! Let no ship of his leave for the land of Egypt!" Then I sat down and wept. And the secretary of the prince came out to me and said to me: "What is it?" I said to him: "D

you not see the migrant birds going down to Egypt a second time? Look at them traveling to the cool water!²⁰ Until when shall I be left here? For do you not see those who have come to arrest me?"

He went and told it to the prince. And the prince began to weep on account of the words said to him, for they were painful. He sent his secretary out to me, bringing me two jugs of wine and a sheep. And he sent me Tentne, an Egyptian songstress who was with him, saying: "Sing for him! Do not let his heart be anxious." And he sent to me, (2,70) saying: "Eat, drink; do not let your heart be anxious. You shall hear what I will say tomorrow."

When morning came, he had his assembly summoned. He stood in their midst and said to the Tjekker: "What have you come for?" They said to him: "We have come after the blasted²¹ ships that you are sending to Egypt with our enemy." He said to them: "I cannot arrest the envoy of Amun in my country. Let me send him off, and you go after him to arrest him."

He had me board and sent me off from the harbor of the sea. And the wind drove me to the land of Alasiya.²² Then the town's people came out against me to kill me. But I forced my way through them to where Hatiba, the princess of the town was. I met her coming from one of her houses to enter another. I saluted her and said to the people who stood around her: "Is there not one among you who understands Egyptian?" And one among them said: "I understand it." I said to him: "Tell my lady that I have heard it said as far away as Thebes, the place where Amun is: 'If wrong is done in every town, in the land of Alasiya right is done.' Now is wrong done here too every day?"

She said: "What is it (2,80) you have said?" I said to her: "If the sea rages and the wind drives me to the land where you are, will you let me be received so as to kill me, though I am the envoy of Amun? Look, as for me, they would search for me till the end of time. As for this crew of the prince of Byblos, whom they seek to kill, will not their lord find ten crews of yours and kill them also?" She had the people summoned and they were reprimanded. She said to me: "Spend the night -----²³

NOTES

1. The year date is reckoned by the "Renaissance Era" introduced by Herihor in the nineteenth regnal year of Ramses XI. The month dates given for the beginning of Wenamun's journey are garbled and require emendation. This first date might be emended to "second month of summer."

2. The name of the great processional bark of Amun of Thebes.

3. Smendes, the ruler of Tanis, subsequently became the first king of the Twenty-First Dynasty. The fact that, in the tale, his wife Tentamun

is always mentioned together with him suggests that she was an important person, perhaps a Ramesside princess, who shared the rule with her husband.

4. The captain is a Syrian, and so apparently is the crew; but the ship is in the service of Egypt.

5. Emend to: "first month of the inundation."

6. A port town on the coast of northern Palestine, controlled by the Tjeker, a people belonging to the "sea peoples" who, having failed to invade Egypt, had settled on the Palestinian coast.

7. I.e., the stolen money was intended for the persons with whom Wenamun expected to do business.

8. The statuette which represented Amun in his aspect of protector of travelers.

9. I.e., the man in a trance says to the prince.

10. Or, "for (the transport of) the pinewood."

11. Wenamun claims that Syrian crews who sail for Egypt are Egyptian crews.

12. Seth was equated with the Syrian Baal and both were storm gods.

13. The gist of the prince's speech is that, though Egypt was created by Amun before all other lands and is thus the motherland of all the arts, the civilization of Syria is now fully grown and no longer dependent on Egypt.

14. I.e., after Wenamun has returned to Thebes, his master Herihor will reimburse Smendes and Tentamun.

15. The nature of *hrd* is not known. In *BIFAO*, 57 (1958), 208-209, J. Černý suggested the meanings "awning," and "veil." To my knowledge Egyptian art never depicts the wearing of veils.

16. Tentamun had sent a personal gift to Wenamun.

17. An Egyptian in the service of the prince of Byblos.

18. We do not know to whom the prince is referring. A vizier Khaemwese served under Ramses IX.

19. This reply of the prince seems to be ironic.

20. I.e., Wenamun has now been abroad for more than a year and is thus witnessing for the second time the annual flight to Egypt of migratory birds.

21. It looks as if the verb *knkn*, "to beat," is here used idiomatically as a curse word. Cf. the name *knkn-t3* given to a lonely foreign place in P. Anastasi IV.12,6 (Gardiner, *LEM*, p. 48.)

22. Alasiya is thought to be Cyprus, but the identification is not certain.

23. The remainder of the report is lost.

Indexes