

(1) Horus: Mighty bull, beautiful of crowns; Two Ladies: Abiding in kingship like Atum; Gold-Horus: Strong-armed smiter of the Nine Bows; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands; *Usermare-soteprene*; the Son of Re, of his body: *Ramesse beloved of Amun*,¹ beloved of Amen-Re, lord of Thrones-of-the-Two-Lands, and of the Ennead, mistress of Thebes.

Good god, Amun's son,
 Offspring of Harakhiti,
 Glorious seed of the All-Lord,
 Begotten by Kamutef,
 King of Egypt, ruler of Red Lands,
 Sovereign who seized the Nine Bows;
 Whom victory was foretold as he came from the womb,
 Whom valor was given while in the egg,
 Bull firm of heart as he treads the arena,
 Godly king going forth like Mont on victory day,
 Great of strength like the Son of Nut!

When his majesty was in Nahrin according to his annual custom,² the princes of every foreign land came bowing in peace to the might of his majesty from as far as the farthest marshlands. Their gifts of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, (5) turquoise, and every kind of plant of god's land³ were on their backs, and each was outdoing his fellow. The prince of Bakhtan⁴ had also sent his gifts and had placed his eldest daughter in front of them, worshipping his majesty and begging life from him. The woman pleased the heart of his majesty greatly and beyond anything. So her titulary was established as Great Royal Wife *Nefrure*.⁵ When his majesty returned to Egypt, she did all that a queen does.

It happened in year 23,⁶ second month of summer, day 22, while his majesty was in Thebes-the-victorious, the mistress of cities, performing the rites for his father Amen-Re, lord of Thrones-of-the-Two-Lands, at his beautiful feast of Southern Ipet, his favorite place since the beginning, that one came to say to his majesty: "A messenger of the prince of Bakhtan has come with many gifts for the queen." He was brought before his majesty with his gifts and said, saluting his majesty: "Hail to you, Sun of the Nine Bows! Truly, we live through you!" And kissing the ground before his majesty he spoke again before his majesty, saying: "I have come to you, O King, my lord, on account of Bentresh,⁷ the younger sister of Queen *Nefrure*. A malady has seized her body. May your majesty send a learned man to see her!"

III. Two *Pseudepigrapha*

The two monumental inscriptions known as the *Bentresh Stela* and the *Famine Stela* are examples of a genre that appears to have been favored in the Late Period. They are propagandistic works composed by priests that are disguised as royal inscriptions of much earlier times, the purpose of the disguise being to enhance their authority.

THE BENTRESH STELA

From Karnak

Louvre C 284

A stela of black sandstone, 2.22 × 1.09 m, found in 1829 in a small, no longer extant, Ptolemaic sanctuary near the temple of Khons erected at Karnak by Ramses III. The stela was brought to Paris in 1844. The scene in the lunette shows King Ramses II offering incense before the bark of Khons-in-Thebes-Nefrhotep. Behind the king, a priest offers incense before the smaller bark of Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes. Below the scene is the text in twenty-eight horizontal lines.

Though made to appear as a monument of Ramses II, the stela is in fact a work of either the Persian or the Ptolemaic period. It tells a wondrous tale of healing performed by the Theban god Khons-the-Provider. If the tale had been written on papyrus it would rank with other stories told about the gods. But in the guise of a monument of Ramses II it possessed a propagandistic purpose, just what the purpose was does not emerge very clearly. Was it meant to glorify the two principal manifestations of the Theban god Khons: Khons-the-Merciful (*nfr-hp*) and Khons-the-Provider (*p3 ir shn*)? Or did it project a rivalry between the two priesthoods? Was it also designed to recall the glory of Egypt's native kings at a time of foreign—Persian or Ptolemaic—domination?

Publication: P. Tresson, *RB*, 42 (1933), 57–78 and pl. I. A. de Buck, *Egyptian Readingbook* (Leiden, 1948), pp. 106–109. Kitchen, *Inscriptions*, II, 284–287.

Translation: BAR III, §§ 429–447. Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 221–232. J. A. Wilson in *ANET*, pp. 29–31. Brunner-Traut, *Märchen*, pp. 163–167. Bresciani, *Letteratura*, pp. 533–536. W. Spiegelberg, Comments: A. Erman, *ZAS*, 21 (1883), 54–60. RT, 28 (1906), 181. G. Posener, *BIFAO*, 34 (1934), 75–81. G. Lefebvre, *CdE*, 19 (1944), 214–218. S. Donadoni, *MDIK*, 15 (1957) 47–50.

For additional references see Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 224–225.

His majesty said: "Bring me the personnel of the House of Life⁸ and the council (10) of the residence." They were ushered in to him immediately. His majesty said: "You have been summoned in order to hear this matter: bring me one wise of heart with fingers skilled in writing from among you." Then the royal scribe Thothemheb came before his majesty, and his majesty ordered him to proceed to Bakhtan with the messenger.

The learned man reached Bakhtan. He found Bentresh to be possessed by a spirit; he found him to be an enemy whom one could fight.⁹ Then the prince of Bakhtan sent again to his majesty, saying: "O King, my lord, may your majesty command to send a god [to fight against this spirit]!" The message reached his majesty in year 26, first month of summer, during the feast of Amun while his majesty was in Thebes. His majesty reported to Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep, saying: "My good lord, I report to you about the daughter of the prince of Bakhtan." Then Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep proceeded to Khons-the-Provider, the great god who expels disease demons.¹⁰ His majesty spoke to Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep: "My good lord, if you turn your face to (15) Khons-the-Provider, the great god who expels disease demons, he shall be dispatched to Bakhtan." Strong approval twice.¹¹ His majesty said: "Give your magical protection to him, and I shall dispatch his majesty to Bakhtan to save the daughter of the prince of Bakhtan." Very strong approval by Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep. He made magical protection for Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes four times. His majesty commanded to let Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes proceed to the great bark with five boats and a chariot, and many horses from east and west.¹²

This god arrived in Bakhtan at the end of one year and five months.¹³ The prince of Bakhtan came with his soldiers and officials before Khons-the-Provider. He placed himself on his belly, saying: "You have come to us to be gracious to us, as commanded by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, *Usenmare-sapenne*!" Then the god proceeded to the place where Bentresh was. He made magical protection for the daughter of the prince of Bakhtan, and she became well instantly.

Then spoke the spirit who was with her¹⁴ to Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes: "Welcome in peace, great god who expels disease demons! Bakhtan is your home, its people are your servants, I am your servant! (20) I shall go to the place from which I came, so as to set your heart at rest about that which you came for. May your majesty command to make a feast day with me and the prince of Bakhtan!" Then the god motioned approval to his priest, saying: "Let the prince of Bakhtan make a great offering before this spirit."

Now while this took place between Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes and the spirit, the prince of Bakhtan stood by with his soldiers and was very frightened. Then he made a great offering to Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes and the spirit; and the prince of Bakhtan made a feast day for them. Then the spirit went in peace to where he wished, as commanded by Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes. The prince of Bakhtan rejoiced very greatly together with everyone in Bakhtan.

Then he schemed with his heart, saying: "I will make the god stay here in Bakhtan. I will not let him go to Egypt." So the god spent three years and nine months in Bakhtan. Then, as the prince of Bakhtan slept on his bed, he saw the god come out of his shrine as a falcon of gold and fly up to the sky toward Egypt. (25) He awoke in terror and said to the priest of Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes: "The god is still here with us! He shall go to Thebes! His chariot shall go to Egypt!" Then the prince of Bakhtan let the god proceed to Egypt, having given him many gifts of every good thing and very many soldiers and horses.

They arrived in peace in Thebes. Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes went to the house of Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep. He placed the gifts of every good thing which the prince of Bakhtan had given him before Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep, without giving anything to his (own) house.¹⁵ Khons-the-Provider-in-Thebes arrived in his house in peace in year 33, second month of winter, day 19, of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, *Usenmare-sapenne*, given eternal life like Re.

NOTES

1. The two principal royal names are those of Ramses II, but the Horus, Two-Ladies, and Gold-Horus names are mistakenly composed, being derived from the titulary of Thutmosis IV.
2. The land of Mianhi on the Upper Euphrates had been reached by Thutmosis I and III, but Ramses II had never been there.
3. On "god's land" meaning wooded regions see pp. 84, n. 105 and 86, n. 2.
4. It has been surmised that the name "Bakhtan" is a corrupted Egyptian version of the name of Bactria; see Lefebvre, *Romans*, p. 222.
5. The historical marriage of Ramses II with a Hittite princess who was given the Egyptian name Maatnefrure is the basis for this fictional marriage.
6. The scribe wrote "year 15," but the easy emendation to "year 25," first proposed by Erman, is very probable in view of the dates given later.
7. This may be a Canaanite name (see Lefebvre, *Romans*, p. 222, n. 7).
8. On the "House of Life" see p. 36, n. 10.
9. The learned scribe Thothemheb diagnosed the malady as one that might be cured, but he himself could not effect the cure, i.e., expel the demon.

10. The Theban god Khons was worshiped under several distinct manifestations, with Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep occupying the leading position, while the most outstanding trait of Khons-*p3-r-spr* was that of a healer. The epithet *p3-r-spr* has been translated in various ways, including "he who determines fate." Bearing in mind that we do not know the exact shade of meaning, I have preferred "the Provider." See also p. 33, n. 4.

11. A movement on the part of the god's statue signifying approval.

12. The chariot and horses were needed for the overland part of the journey.

13. The remoteness of the land of Bakhtan is indicated in fairy-tale manner by the extreme length of the journey.

14. I.e., "who had been in her."

15. I.e., Khons-the-Provider delivered all the presents to his superior, Khons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep, without keeping anything for his own temple.

THE FAMINE STELA

On Sehel Island

The inscription is carved in thirty-two columns on the face of a granite rock where it was given the shape of a rectangular stela. The rock face is split by a broad horizontal fissure, which already existed when the inscription was carved. After the carving, further ruptures occurred in the rock, and they have caused a number of textual lacunae. Above the text is a relief scene showing King Djoser offering to Khnum-Re, Satis, and Anukis, the gods of the cataract region.

The stela purports to be a decree by King Djoser of the Third Dynasty addressed to a "Governor of the South" stationed at Elephantine. In it the king informs the governor that, distressed over the country's seven-year famine, he had consulted a priest of Imhotep. After a study of the sacred books, the priest had informed him in detail about the temple of Khnum at Elephantine, and how Khnum controlled the flow of the inundation. The priest had also named to him all the minerals, precious stones, and building stones found in the border region. In the following night the king had seen Khnum in his dream, and the god had promised him an end to the famine. In gratitude to the god, the king now issues a decree granting to the temple of Khnum of Elephantine a share of all the revenue derived from the region extending from Elephantine south to Takompo, a distance of "twelve *iter*." In addition, a share of all Nubian imports was to be given to the temple. The governor was charged with carrying out the decree.

In its present form, the text is undoubtedly a work of the Ptolemaic period. Some scholars have surmised that it was based on a genuine Old Kingdom decree from the time of Djoser. Others take it to be a complete fiction. In any case, the text puts forth a claim to revenue on behalf of the Khnum temple of Elephantine.

Who stood behind this claim? According to P. Barguet, it was Ptolemy V who issued the decree as a means of proclaiming Ptolemaic control of this Nubian region. H. de Meulenaere countered this suggestion by asking whether the "governor of the south," who bore the non-Egyptian

name Mesir, may not have been a Nubian chief ruling the area in defiance of the Ptolemaic king. The most plausible hypothesis, it seems to me, is the one that sees the inscription as the work of the priesthood of the Khnum temple, who were anxious to strengthen their privileges in the face of the encroaching claims made by the clergy of Isis of Philae.

The extent of the "12-*iter* land" or, Dodekaskoinos, has also been much discussed, for the location of Takompo, mentioned as its southern limit, is not known, and the length of the *iter* appears to have varied. The problem now seems to have been settled in favor of an *iter* usually averaging 10.5 km, except for a much shorter *iter* indicated by the boundary stelae of Akhenaten at El-Amarna (see the new studies of A. Schwab-Schlott). Thus, the "12-*iter* land" would designate the northern half of Lower Nubia, extending south from Elephantine for a length of about eighty miles.

Barguet's good edition has greatly advanced the understanding of this difficult text. There remain a number of problems and uncertainties.

Publication: H. K. Brugsch, *Die biblischen sieben Jahre der Hungersnot* (Leipzig, 1891). P. Barguet, *Le stèle de la famine à Séhel*. Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Bibliothèque d'étude, 34 (Cairo, 1953).

Translation: G. Roeder, *Untersuchen zur Religion des alten Ägypten* (Jena, 1915), pp. 177–184.

Translation of excerpts: J. Vandier, *La famine dans l'Égypte ancienne*, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Recherches, 7 (Cairo, 1936), pp. 38–44 and 132–139. J. A. Wilson in ANET, pp. 31–32.

Studies and comments: K. Sethe, *Dodekaskoinos das Zwölfmeilenland an der Grenze von Ägypten und Nubien*, Untersuchungen, 11/3 (Leipzig, 1901; reprint Hildesheim, 1964). K. Sethe, ZAS, 41 (1904), 58–62. W. Schubart, ZAS, 47 (1910), 154–157. H. de Meulenaere, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 14 (1957), 33–34, review of Barguet's publication. H. Brunner, "Die Hungersnotstele" in *Kindler's Literatur Lexikon*, 111 (Zürich, 1967), cols. 2255–2256. D. Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Braustein ihrer Nachwelt*, Vol. 1, Münchner ägyptologische Studien, 17 (Berlin, 1969), pp. 85–91.

A. Schwab-Schlott, *Die Ausmasse Ägyptens nach altägyptischen Texten*, Dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1969; *idem*, MDJK, 28 (1972), 109–113; *idem*, "Dodekaskoinos" in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1975), cols. 1112–1113. M. Lichtheim in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 39 (Chicago, 1977), pp. 142–144.

On the stones and metals consult: Harris, *Minerals*.

(1) Year 18 of Horus: *Neterkhet*; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt: *Neterkhet*; Two Ladies: *Neterkhet*; Gold-Horus: *Djoser*; under the Count, Prince, Governor of the domains of the South, Chief of the Nubians in Yebu, Mesir. There was brought to him this royal decree. To let you know:

I was in mourning on my throne,
Those of the palace were in grief,
My heart was in great affliction,
Because Hapy had failed to come in time