

DEGREE OF CANOPUS.

TRANSLATED BY
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THIS inscription was found by Professor Lepsius at San, the ancient Tanis, in 1866, and an account of it given to the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, 1866, p. 49. It was written on a tablet of calcareous stone with a rounded top, having above the winged disk with pendent uræi, wearing the upper and lower part of the crown *pshent* and holding feather flabella. The tablet was about seven feet high, had on its face 37 lines of hieroglyphs, 76 lines of Greek, and 74 lines of demotic or enchorial at the right edge. It was completely without injury, and was subsequently removed to the Museum of Boulaq, where it now is preserved. It is dated on the 17th the month Tybi, of the 9th year of Ptolemy III., or Ptolemy Euergetes I., B.C. 238, and is

nearly a century older than the Rosetta Stone. Invaluable for the demonstration of the truth of the mode of interpreting the hieroglyphs the greater part of the words had their meaning already discovered. It has been published by Professor Lepsius, *Das bilingue Dekret von Kanopus*, fo., Berlin, 1866; by Professors Reinisch and Rössler, *Die zweisprachige Inschrift von San*, 8vo., Wien, 1866; and Mr. S. Sharpe, *The Decree of Canopus*, 8vo., London, 1870. The present inscription is taken from the hieroglyphic text, but as the original language in which the decree was drawn up was in the Greek language, of which the hieroglyphic and demotic versions were paraphrastic translations, it may be necessary hereafter to give a translation of the Greek text. As a Greek inscription alone it is one of the longest and most important hitherto discovered, and its contents are new and important for the history, calendar, internal condition of the priesthood of Egypt upon which the text throws great light. Amongst other new historical information it gives that of the association of the Princess Berenike into the government by her parents, and her death on the 20th February, B.C. 239-8.

DECREE OF CANOPUS.

- 1 In year IX 7 the month Apellaios¹ the 17 Tybi according to the Egyptians under the King of Upper and Lower Egypt PTOLEMAIOS, the Everliving, Beloved of PTAH, son of PTOLEMAIOS and ARSINOE, the Brother-gods, when the Priest of King ALEXANDER the justified, of the Brother-Gods and of the Benevolent² Gods was APOLLONIDES, the son of MOSCHION, and MENEKRATEIA, the daughter of PHILAMMON, was Basket-bearer³ before Queen ARSINOE, the Brother-loving. On this day followed the Decree.

The Temple-wardens, the Prophets, the Hierodoules Priests, all who enter

- 3 in the sanctuary of the gods to clothe them, the Sacred Scribes, knowing things, the Divine Fathers, and the (other) Priests in their rank assembled from Upper and Lower Egypt on 5 of the month Dios,⁴ when was celebrated the birthday fete of His Majesty, and to the 25 day of that month, when His Majesty assumed
- 4 the dignity from his father: they assembled in the temple of the Benevolent Gods, which is in Petkutha⁵ and declared. Since King PTOLEMAIOS, the Everliving, the Beloved of PTAH, son of PTOLEMAIOS and ARSINOE, the Sister-gods, and the Ruler BERENIKE his sister and wife, the Benevolent Gods, have made benefits
- 5 many and great to the temples of Egypt for all time: since they have ordered very greatly to the gods: since they have taken perpetual care of the things of the glorious

¹ Apellaios, a month of the lunar Macedonian year, corresponding to the Athenian Maimacterion; here the 17th March.

² Or "beneficent." Euergetes, Euergetai in the plural.

³ The names of these eponymi controlled the date of the vague year.

⁴ Another Macedonian month corresponding to the Athenian Pyanepsion, 3rd or 4th February.

⁵ Kanopos.

APIS, MNEVIS, and all animals of the temple which are protected in Egypt, for whom they assigned great things supplying numerous things.

- 6 They took care of the statues of the gods, which had been robbed by the barbarians of the land Persia¹ from temples of Egypt, since His Majesty had won them back in his campaign against the two lands of Asia,² he brought them to Egypt, and placed them on their places in the temples, where they had previously stood. He has kept up peace in Egypt advantageously
- 7 by warring for its weal in vallies and plain foreign parts, and marched against many peoples and their Chiefs who commanded them, they were rendering fortunate those who live as his subjects, not only inhabitants of Egypt, but also of all lands subject to their Majesties. When moreover there happened a year of a deficient water of Nile during
- 8 their reign, and all the inhabitants of Egypt became faint-hearted at this event, for fear, memory made them think of the dearth which once did occur in the time of the former Kings, in consequence of the deficiency of the Nile to the inhabitants of Egypt in their time. His Majesty and his sister
- 9 and wife had cared in their hearts, which glowed for the inhabitants of the temples and the natives of Egypt in its entire extent, who were very much distressed and bent down. They remitted considerable taxes, in order to save men's lives, and took care for importations of corn into Egypt from the Eastern Rutennu³ from the land Kafatha,⁴ from the island Nabinaitt,⁵ which lies in the midst of the Great Sea,⁶
- 10 and from many other lands, since they expended much white gold⁷ for the purchase thereof. They transported

¹ By Cambyses.

² The *Sat*.

³ Syria.

⁴ Phœnicia.

⁵ Cyprus.

⁶ Mediterranean.

⁷ Or "silver."

the importation of provisions, to save those living in the land of Egypt, that these might know their goodness for ever, and their many virtuous turns whereby both those who are living, and their posterity and for which the gods grant them maintenance of their dignities and rule over Upper and Lower Egypt in reward

11 thereof and their reward of goods of all kinds for ever : with blessing and weal. It came in the heart of the Priests of Egypt, they increased the numerous things of the King PTOLEMAIOS, the Everliving, the Beloved of PTAH, and the Ruler BERENIKE, the Benevolent Gods in the temples, and what (things) were for the parents, the Sister-Gods, their progenitors, and what was for

12 the Saviour Gods, and have ordered an increase of the Priests thereof in all the temples of Egypt in its full extent, and that they should be called Priests of the Benevolent Gods in their name, that they should occupy a higher rank through the name of their office : and of their place as Prophet thereof¹ writing their name in all documents, and there shall be incised the title of the Prophet of the Benevolent Gods in the ring which they wear in their hand, and that they shall form another

13 caste of the existing Priests, who are in all the temples and besides the four castes which exist to this day ; and it shall be called the fifth caste of the Benevolent Gods. Inasmuch as it occurred fortunately with weal and blessing that King PTOLEMAIOS, the Everliving, Beloved of PTAH, son of the Sister-Gods was born on the 5th of the month Dios,² so from this day, as it was

14 already a source of much weal to all living it is granted that the Priests who had been placed by the

¹ Or "to the Prophet."

² Another Macedonian month corresponding to the Athenian Pyanepsion, 3rd or 4th February.

King in the temples from this first year of His Majesty, and those who had been appointed also up to the month Mesore¹ of the 9th year, should be counted as of this caste, and so their children for ever: but the Priests, who had been appointed before the first year should be in the castes

- 15 they were before, as also to their children from this day for ever, are to be inserted in the registers in the castes of their fathers. And instead of the twenty Priest Counsellors, who are yearly elected for one year from the four castes being five men from each caste, there shall be nominated twenty-five Priests
- 16 for Counsellors, as five men are to be added out of the fifth caste of the Benevolent Gods, is to be given a proportion to the number of the fifth caste of the Benevolent Gods of all dues that arise from the offerings in the temples and of all things under their charge in the temples, and their President shall be of the caste a Chief Prophet, as is now the case with the four other castes. Inasmuch as was celebrated the festival
- 17 of the Benevolent Gods in all temples in each month on the 5, 9, and 25th days in consequence of a decree established before, and similarly as is celebrated a panegyry of the Great Gods, and a general feast in Egypt is celebrated yearly in its time so shall similarly be prepared a great festival in its time to King PTOLEMAOIS the everliving, the beloved of PTAH,
- 18 and to Queen BERENIKE, the Benevolent Gods, in the Upper and Lower country and throughout Egypt in its entire extent, on the day of the rising of the Divine Sothis² which is called the New Year in his name in the writings of house of life. At present it occurs in this 9th year on 1st day of Payni, in which month is celebrated the festival of

¹ Last month of the Egyptian year. ² Sirius, or the "dogstar."

New Year, of the goddess BAST¹ and the great festival of the goddess BAST in this month, and also it is the time for the
 19 collection of all fruits and rise of the Nile. But as the case will occur, that the rise of Sothis advances to another day in every 4 years, the day of the celebration of this feast, shall not pass along but it shall be celebrated on first day of Payni and the feast shall be celebrated as in the ninth year.

20 This festival is to be celebrated for 5 days: placing wreaths of flowers on their head, and placing things on the altar, and executing the sacrifices and all ceremonies ordered to be done. But that these feast days shall be celebrated in definite seasons for them to keep for ever, and after the plan of the heaven established on this day

21 and that the case shall not occur, that all the Egyptian festivals, now celebrated in winter, shall not be celebrated some time or other in summer, on account of the procession of the rising of the Divine Sothis² by one day in the course of 4 years, and other festivals celebrated in the summer, in this country, shall not be celebrated in winter, as has occasionally occurred

22 in past times, therefore it shall be, that the year of 360 days and the 5 days added to their end, so one day as feast of Benevolent Gods be from this day after every 4 years added to the 5 epagomenæ³ before the new year, whereby all men shall learn, that what was a little defective in the order as regards the sea-

23 sons and the year, as also the opinions which are contained in the rules of the learned on the heavenly orbits, are now corrected and improved by the Benevolent Gods. And since a daughter has been born to King PTOLEMAIOS the everliving beloved of PTAH and to the Mistress of

¹ Called the "Bubasteia."

² Sirius, or the "dogstar."

³ Additional or intercalary days.

- both lands BERENIKE, the Benevolent Gods, who was likewise called BERENIKE and proclaimed as Ruler,
- 24 as it has happened that this goddess had already returned unexpectedly to heaven in her virgin state suddenly, so have the Priests who came from the country to the King, stopping a year in the house of His Majesty, ordained a great mourning directly at this event and came praying to the King and Queen, to lay it to their heart and to permit them
- 25 to place this goddess with the god OSIRIS in the temple of Phaqotha¹ which is a sanctuary amongst the temples of the first rank, inasmuch as it is the most important and is equally honoured by King and inhabitants of Egypt in its full extent. The entry of OSIRIS in the holy barque takes place here yearly at the defined time, at the temple at Akar-
- 26 bamara² in the month Choiak 29th day, and the inhabitants of temples of first rank throughout make burnt offerings on the altars of the temples of the first rank, right and left, in dromos of this sanctuary. And after all ceremonies are usually performed, which they had performed to her as the goddess, they purified themselves from mourning for her, which they had prepared
- 27 and hallowed their hearts by flaming fire, as the custom is for the burial of APIS and MNEVIS, and they decree causing that there should be uttered an adoration for ever to the glory of Queen BERENIKE, daughter of the Benevolent Gods, to be proclaimed in the temples of Egypt in its entire length. As her re-union with the gods occurred in the month Tybi, in the same month
- 28 and same day wherein entered the daughter of RA into heaven, when he³ called her "the eye of the sun and the *wæus* serpent on its front"⁴ by name, and out of love
- ¹ Kanopos. ² Heraklcion. ³ The god Ra. ⁴ *Aren Ra Mahen em ha.t f.*

to her ordered her feasts and a procession to her celebrated in the chief temples and in the sanctuaries of the first rank in the month, wherein the apotheosis of the goddess originally occurred. So shall be ordered a feast and procession for the Queen BERENIKE, the daughter

29 of the Benevolent Gods, in the temples of both lands in their extent on month Tybi, from the 17th day, when happened the procession for her, and purification on account of her mourning for four days.¹ There shall also be erected a statue of the goddess in gold, studded with all precious stones in the temples of the first rank and sanctuaries of the second rank throughout and the

30 site thereof shall be the sanctuary of the temple. A Prophet or one of the Priests is selected to perform the great lustrations, and the Priests who enter the sanctuary of the gods to clothe them, may carry it in (his) hands on the day of the crowning and feasts of the gods throughout, so that all men adoring it prostrate on the earth may see it prostrate in its honour, and it shall be called the statue of BERENIKE

31 the Queen of Virgins. And the crown to be placed on the head of this statue is not to be like the crown of the statue of her mother Queen BERENIKE, but is to be made of two ears of corn, and the *uræus* serpent between them, and a papyrus sceptre of their height is behind this *uræus* serpent, just as the sceptres in the hands of goddesses, and the tail of the *uræus* serpent be entwined round

32 this sceptre, to announce by this combination the renown of the name BERENIKE from its profound meaning in hieroglyphics. And when are solemnized the days of KAAUBEK² back in the month Choiak before the procession of OSIRIS, that the virgin daughters and wives of the Priests shall get ready another statue of BERENIKE,

¹ Literally from first day to days four. ² The Kikellia of the Greek version.

- of the Queen of Virgins, and there shall be made to her a burnt offering and things
- 33 as is proper to be done on the days of this feast : and other virgins are allowed to show the proper respect to this goddess as they choose. And female singers shall chant the praise of this goddess, who are selected for divine service, and wear the crowns of the gods, being their Priestesses. And if an early harvest occurs then shall the Priestesses bring ears of corn in the sanctuaries
- 34 and place them at the divine statue of this goddess, and chant to her divine figure by a chorus of singing men and women, as happens at the feasts and panegyries of the gods, in a hymn which the Sacred Scribes shall have written and given over to the precentor, and the same shall be inscribed in the sacred writings. Also shall be given provisions to the Priests in the temple after they have been installed by
- 35 the King in the temple : henceforward there may be provisions for Priestess's daughters from their birthdays, from the divine supplies for support, accords by the Priests, Counsellors in the temples throughout in proportion of the divine supplies. And the bread shall be given
- 36 to the Priests' wives, its preparation shall be stamped as a loaf and be called "The bread of BERENIKE" by name. This decree written by the Priests Counsellors in the temple, and by the Presidents of the temple and the Scribes of the temple and shall be incised in a stele
- 37 of stone or bronze in hieroglyphics in writings of the books,¹ and writings of the Greeks, and the stele shall be erected in the great assembly hall, open to all men in the temples, first second and third rank, so that all men may know the honour given Priests of the temples of Egypt to the benevolent gods and their children, as it is appointed to be done.

¹ Also called epistolary, enchorial or demotic.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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