

THE STELE OF IRITISEN.


(XITH DYNASTY.)

TRANSLATED BY

PROF. G. MASPERO.

THIS fine stele, which is marked C 14, has been published by Lepsius (*Auswahl*, Taf. ix.) and Prisse d'Avennes (*Mon. Egyptiens*, pl. vii.); it has been often alluded to, but never translated. It was found in Abydos by Thédénat du Vent, who sold it to M. Cousinéry; it then passed to the Musée du Louvre. Champollion, struck by the conformity of style which it offers to stele 45 in Turin, ascribed it to the period of the XXIst Dynasty, and tried to discover on it the names of king Smendes and Psousennes (*Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas, deuxième Lettre*, pp. 114-118). De Rougé thought "it might be considered on the whole as being one of the master-pieces of Egyptian sculpture" (*Catalogue des Monuments Egyptiens de la Salle du Rez-de-chaussée*, 1849, p. 47; and *Rapport adresse à M. le Directeur-Général des Musées Nationaux*, 1851, p. 17), and his opinion was fully re-echoed by the Italian Egyptologist Camillo Orcurti. The fact is, the first draught of the hieroglyphics, which was done in red ink and remains to this day visible, is exceedingly fine, but the subsequent carving of the inscription, although very elaborate, is by no means as excellent.

The stele was erected for a certain artist named Iritisen, in the reign of Mentuhotep, *Rā-neb-kheru* (XIth Dynasty). Iritisen and his wife Hapu, are figured twice on it. First, in the lower part, sitting together upon one seat, the lady with one arm lovingly put around the neck of her lord, while the man is smelling an *alabastron* full of perfumed oil. Before them is represented a low table, piled with every description of victuals, while above them runs the legend :

“Funereal meal of bread and liquor, thousands of loaves, liquors, oxen, geese, all good and pure things, to the pious IRITISEN, his pious wife who loves him, HAPU.” In the middle register Iritisen and his wife are represented standing. Iritisen holds in the left hand the long baton used by elders and nobleman, and in the right the *Pat*  sceptre. In front of them is a procession of their own family, headed by

“His son, his eldest, who loves him, USERTESEN ;”
then follow : “His son, who loves him, MENTUHOTEP,”
and “His son, who loves him, SI-MENTU ;”
immediately after whom we find a lady,

“His daughter, who loves him, QIM,”
and “Her son, who loves her, TEMNEN.”

There is every reason to think that Si-Mentu had married his sister, and that Temnen was his as well as Qim's child. Usertesen is about to sacrifice a goose to his father, according to rite, and Mentuhotep carries an ox-thigh for the same purpose.

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The inscription begins with:

THE living HORUS, who unites both lands, the Lord of diadems, who unites both lands, King of Upper and Lower Egypt (son of RA, MENTUHOTEP), everliving; his true servant, who is in the inmost recess of his heart, and makes his pleasure all the day long, the devout unto the great god, IRITISEN.

Proscynem to OSIRIS, Lord of Mendes, Khent Ament, Lord of Abydos, in all his places, that he may give a funereal meal of bread and drink, thousands of loaves, liquors, oxen, geese, linen, clothes, all good and pure things, loaves without number,¹ beer, spirits,² cakes of the Lord of Abydos, white cream of the sacred cow on which the manes like to feed, for the devout unto OSIRIS and ANUBIS, Lord of the burying grounds, the Chief of the artists, IRITISEN.

I know the mystery of the divine Word, the ordinances of the religious feasts, every rite of which they are fraught, I never strayed from them; I, indeed, am an artist wise in his art, a man standing above (all men) by his learning.

I know what belongs to sinking waters, the weighings done for the reckoning of accounts, how to produce the form of issuing forth and coming in, so that a member may go to its place.

I know the walking of an image of man, the carriage of a woman,³ the two arms of HORUS, the twelve circles

¹ Without reckoning.

² Sense doubtful; possibly *incalescere, fervere*.

³ Allusions to his skill as an artist in statuary.

of the blasphemers, the contemplating the eye without a second that affrights the wicked, the poisoning of arm to bring the hippopotamus low,¹ the coming of the runner.

I know the making of amulets, that we go without any fire giving its flame, or without our being washed away by water!

Lo! there is no man excels by it but I alone and my eldest legitimate son: god has decreed him to be excellent in it; and I have seen the perfections of his hands in his work of chief-artist in every kind of precious stones, from gold and silver even to ivory and ebony!

Funereal meal of bread and liquors! Thousands of wine, loaves, oxen, geese, linen, clothes, all good and pure things, to the devout IRITISEN-the-wise, son of the lady AD.

¹ A mystical allusion to a passage in the *Book of the Underworld*.



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