

## INSCRIPTION OF UNI (OF THE SIXTH DYNASTY)

TRANSLATED BY PROF. MASPERO

THIS inscription adorned one of the walls of the tomb which Uni had built for himself at Abydos in the central part of the necropolis (Mariette : *Abydos*, vol. ii. p. 41 ; *Catalogue Général*, p. 84, No. 522). It was discovered there by Mariette and transferred to the Museum of Boulaq (Mariette : *Notice des principaux Monuments*, 1864, pp. 286-287), where it now bears the number 886 (Maspero : *Guide du Visiteur*, pp. 209-211). E. de Rougé copied it there in 1865 and made an analysis of it, intermingled with translations, which he published in his *Recherches sur les Monuments* (pp. 117-128, 135-149, pl. vii., viii.) His work served as a starting-point for the complete translations of Birch ("Inscription of Una," in the *Records of the Past*, prior series, ii. pp. 1-8), and the partial translations of Maspero (*Histoire ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, 1875, pp. 88-92; 1886, pp. 81-85) and of Brugsch (*Geschichte Aegyptens*, pp. 95-102). The text has been published a second time, but some-

what incorrectly, by Mariette (*Abydos*, vol. ii. pp. 44-49); it has again been edited, with the corrections of Brugsch and Golenischeff, by Erman (*Commentar zur Inschrift des Una* in Lepsius's *Zeitschrift*, 1882, pp. 1-29), together with a translation and a grammatical commentary, some points in which have been slightly modified by Erman in his work on Egypt (*Aegypten*, pp. 688-690, *et passim*). Brugsch has devoted one of the most interesting of his memoirs to the study of the names of the Nubian populations contained in our inscription (*Die Negerstämme der Una-Inschrift* in the *Zeitschrift*, 1882, pp. 30-36).

The inscription consists of 52 lines, of which the first alone is horizontal and runs along the summit of the wall like a sort of general title. On the right side it has suffered a little, and the lines at the beginning have lost almost all the characters at the top and the bottom of them; but only two or three of these *lacunæ* are impossible to fill up, and interrupt the sense. Everywhere else, the expression is clear, easy to comprehend, and the difficulties which it offers to the interpreter result only from our present ignorance of the exact signification of certain terms peculiar to architecture, navigation, and the military art at the remote epoch to which the inscription belongs. The portions of the text which have been restored are enclosed between brackets.

The stele which was found with this inscription is in the Museum of Boulaq at Cairo, and has the form of a false door: it is evidently the same which

---

was given to Uni by king Meriri Pepi, as stated in the inscription. Mariette has given a description of the stele in his *Catalogue Général des Monuments d' Abydos* (p. 90, No. 529 ; cfer. J. and E. de Rougé : *Inscriptions*, vol. i. pl. II.). The tomb of Auu, the father of Uni, has been discovered at Abydos (E. de Rougé : *Recherches sur les Monuments*, p. 144, note 1). Uni died before Miriniri, who is the last king mentioned in his biography ; if, as I have conjectured, he was born in the reign of Unas, his age could not have exceeded sixty years.

## THE INSCRIPTION OF UNI

[ROYAL offering to OSIRIS the lord of BUSIRIS] in order that there may be given to him a revenue in bread and liquors, at every festival and each day, with an abundance [of everything, a thousand loaves], a thousand cups of beer, a thousand oxen, a thousand geese, a thousand ducks, a thousand fowls, a thousand birds, a thousand cloths, a thousand [pieces of linen, for] the prefect of the country of the south, the guardian of NEKHNI, the dictator of NEKHABIT,<sup>1</sup> sole friend, feudal vassal of OSIRIS KHONTAMENTIT, [Uni ;]

[He says :]

[I was born under the Majesty of Unas. I was still a youth] wearing the fillet under the Majesty of Teti,<sup>2</sup> and employed as superintendent of the treasury, when I was promoted<sup>3</sup> to the inspectorship of the irrigated lands of Pharaoh. When I was chief of the secret chamber under the Majesty of Pepi, his Majesty confers on me the dignity of Friend (and) controlling prophet of his pyramid ; then when [I held this office] his Majesty made me Sâbu, guardian of NEKHNI, [for his heart] was satisfied with me above any other of his servants. I heard then all that happened, I alone with a *Sâbu*, clerk to the Porte, in every secret affair, [and I executed all the writings]<sup>4</sup> which had

<sup>1</sup> Nekhni and Nekhabit are names applied to Eilithyia, to-day El-Kab, and to the surrounding country.

<sup>2</sup> The commencement is conjecturally restored from an inscription published by Champollion : *Notices*, vol. ii. p. 697. The name of King Unas is introduced only conjecturally.

<sup>3</sup> *Iri-ni Pirui-âa S. huzu [khonti]*, literally "I made an inspector," etc. *Iri* is used here in the same manner as in the phrase *iri himit*, "to take a wife," "to marry," literally "to make a wife."

<sup>4</sup> I complete the passage thus : *nuki iri m ân nib am sit*, "I execute

to be executed in the name of the king whether for the harem of the king or for the residence of the Six, so that I satisfied the heart of the king more than any other of his peers, (or) of his mamelouk nobles, more than any other of his servants. [An order was also issued] by the Majesty of my lord that a sarcophagus of white stone should be brought to me from Roïū.<sup>1</sup> His Majesty sent a temple-slave in a boat with the soldiers [the hewers of the stone and the artisans] with orders to convey this sarcophagus to me from Roïū; and this sarcophagus comes with a temple-slave in a large pontoon<sup>2</sup> from the royal administration, as well as its lid, a stele in the form of a gate, (to wit) the frame, the two middle blocks, and the threshold;<sup>3</sup> never had anything like it been made for any other servant whatever; but it happened that my wisdom pleased his Majesty and that also my zeal pleased his Majesty and that also the heart of his Majesty was satisfied with me. Also from my being *Sâbu*, guardian of NEKHNI, his Majesty made me sole Friend, superintendent of the irrigated lands of the Pharaoh<sup>4</sup> over the superintendents of the cultivated lands who are there, and I acted to the satisfaction of his Majesty, both when I had to keep guard behind the Pharaoh and (when I had) to settle the royal itinerary, or to arrange the peers, and I acted in all this to the satisfaction of his Majesty above everything. When moreover one went to the royal harem to inform against the great royal wife Amitsi, secretly, his Majesty made me alone descend into it in order to listen to business, no *Sâbu* clerk of the Porte being there, nor any peer except myself alone, because of (my) wisdom

every writing among them . . . for the royal dwelling and the dwelling of the Six," the pronoun *sit* referring to the feminine words *Suten-apit* and *Haït-sas* which are found at the end of the sentence.

<sup>1</sup> The quarries of Tourah, opposite the site of Memphis.

<sup>2</sup> For the exact sense of the Egyptian words see Maspero, "De quelques termes," in the *Proceedings*, May 1889.

<sup>3</sup> The class of vessel named *satu* is represented in Lepsius, ii, 76, where the *satu* Apahti of king Assi is seen transporting the sarcophagus of this prince along with its lid. It is a pontoon without a mast, whose bridge is so strengthened as not to yield under the weight of the blocks of stone with which it is loaded.

<sup>4</sup> [*Pirui-âa*, literally "the two great houses" or "palaces." Compare the designation of the Sublime-Porte.—*Ed.*]

and my zeal which pleased his Majesty, because the heart of his Majesty was satisfied with me ; it was I who wrote everything down, I alone with a *Sâbu* guardian of NEKHNI. Now my employment was that of superintendent of the irrigated lands of the Pharaoh, and there never had been any of this rank who had heard the secrets of the royal harem, in former days, excepting me, when his Majesty made me hear (them), because my wisdom pleased his Majesty more than any other of his peers, more than any other of his mamelouks, more than any other of his servants.

When his Majesty carried war to the district of the nomad HIRUSHÂU, and when his Majesty formed an army of several myriads, levied throughout the entire South, southward starting from ELEPHANTINÊ, northward starting from the LETOPOLITAN nome,<sup>1</sup> in the country of the north, in the two confines in their entirety, in each station between the fortified stations of the desert, in AROTIT a country of the NEGROES, in ZAMU a country of the NEGROES, in AMAMU a country of the NEGROES, in UUAUÏT a country of the NEGROES, in QAAU a country of the NEGROES, in TOTAM a country of the NEGROES<sup>2</sup>; his Majesty sent me at the head of this army. There were generals in it, there were mamelouks of the king of LOWER EGYPT in it, there were sole Friends of the Pharaoh in it, there were in it dictators and princes of the south and of the land of the north,<sup>3</sup> *Golden* Friends and superintendents of the prophets of the south and of the land of the north, prefects of the confines at the head of the militia of the south and of the land of the north, cities and boroughs

<sup>1</sup> Aait ; the symbol of the leg is badly drawn, but perfectly recognisable in the original, as Rougé saw from the beginning.

<sup>2</sup> On these populations of Nubia see the article of Brugsch, "Die Negerstämme der Una-Inschrift," in Lepsius's *Zeitschrift*, 1882, pp. 30-36.

<sup>3</sup> The term *hi-top* which I render by "dictator" or "podestà" is peculiar to the governors and feudal lords of the nomes of Upper Egypt, that of *Hîqa-hât* or "prince" being reserved for the governors and feudal lords of Lower Egypt. The titles which follow—"Friends," "superintendents of the prophets"—are usually attached to the preceding, and confer on those who bear them religious authority over the priests of the nome which they govern.

which they governed, as well as negroes from the regions mentioned (above), and nevertheless it was I who laid down the law for them—although my employment was that of superintendent of the irrigated lands of the Pharaoh with the title belonging to my office<sup>1</sup>—so that each of them obeyed like all the rest,<sup>2</sup> and each of them took with him what he needed as regards bread and sandals for the journey, and each of them took beer from every town, and each of them took every kind of small cattle from every individual. I led them to AMIHIT, SIBRINÎHOTPU, UÂRIT of HORU NIB-MÂÏT;<sup>3</sup> then being in this locality [I marshalled them, I regulated] everything and I counted the number of this army which no servant had ever counted (before). This army marched prosperously<sup>4</sup>; it shattered<sup>5</sup> the country of the HIRUSHÂU. This army marched prosperously; it destroyed the country of the HIRUSHÂU. This army marched prosperously; it conquered their fortresses.<sup>6</sup> This army marched prosperously; it cut down their fig-trees and their vines. This army marched prosperously; it set fire to the [houses of] the inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> This army marched prosperously; it slew their soldiers by myriads. This army marched in peace; it led away captive<sup>8</sup> a very great number of the inhabitants of the country, and his Majesty

<sup>1</sup> Literally "by the right (*ni muti*) of my place." The phrase following is not yet so clear as one could wish. It seems to enumerate what Uni did to "make the law" (*iri sokheru*) for those who were above himself in rank and whom nevertheless he commanded.

<sup>2</sup> Literally "to put the one of them like all his seconds."

<sup>3</sup> Three localities on the eastern frontier of the Delta, whose sites are unknown.

<sup>4</sup> Literally "in peace" (*m hotpu*), answering to the salutation of the modern Egyptian fellahin, *bi-ssalâmat*.

<sup>5</sup> *Bi* literally signifies "to break up with the pick."

<sup>6</sup> *Unit*, Coptic *uon*, "mound."

<sup>7</sup> I have restored the text from a passage in an inscription of Usirtasen III, where analogous raids are described (Lepsius: *Denkmäler*, ii. pl. 136, lines 14-16).

<sup>8</sup> The expression is *m-sokit-onkhu*, literally "among those who had been struck alive." It refers us to a barbarous mode of warfare in which no prisoners were taken except those who had been struck by the stone mace,—a weapon which serves as a determinative of the verb *soku*,—and whom their wound must have left half dead on the field of battle. They were called "the living-stricken" in opposition to those who had been killed by the mace.

praised me because of this above everything. His Majesty sent me to lead this army five times, in order to penetrate<sup>1</sup> into the country of the HIRU-SHÂU, as often as they revolted against this army, and I acted to the satisfaction of his Majesty in this above everything. Then as it was said that there were rebels among those barbarians who extended as far as towards TIBA,<sup>2</sup> I sailed in ships with this army, I attacked the coasts of this country to the north of the country of the HIRU-SHÂU; then this army being on the march, I went and overthrew them all, and I slew all the rebels among them.

When I was at the great House with the right of carrying the wand and the sandals, the Pharaoh Mirinrî made me governor-general of the South, southward starting from ELEPHANTINÊ (and) northward as far as the LETOPOLITAN nome, because my wisdom pleased his Majesty, because my zeal pleased his Majesty, because the heart of his Majesty was satisfied with me: when then I was invested with the right of carrying the wand and the sandals, his Majesty favoured me therefore (giving me part of) the cattle intended for the palace; when I was in my place I was above all his peers, and all his mamelouks and all his servants, and this dignity had never been conferred on any servant whatever before. I filled to the satisfaction of the king my part of superintendent of the South, so as to be allowed to stand at his side second (in rank) to him, accomplishing all the duties of an engineer, judging all causes that there were to judge

<sup>1</sup> *Teru-to* is in its origin a nautical term, literally "to strike," "dash against the ground," borrowed from the manœuvring of vessels on the Nile.

<sup>2</sup> On this name, see Maspero: *Notes* in Lepsius's *Zeitschrift*, 1883, p. 64; and Piehl: *Varia* in the *Zeitschrift*, 1888, p. III, who has not been able to read the characters composing the name. Perhaps we may identify it, as Krall does (*Studien zur Geschichte des Alten Ägyptens*, iii. p. 22), with the name of Tebui met with in a text at Edfu (Dümichen: *Tempelinschriften*, i. pl. lxxiii. l. 2, and *Die Oasen der libyschen Wüste*, pl. xvi. e), which Brugsch (*Reise nach der Grossen Oase*, p. 92) does not know where to locate. If the identification is correct, we can conclude that Tebui, associated as it is with Amit and the north-east of Egypt, was a canton situated beyond Lake Menzaleh; the expedition of Umi would have been made on the lake, not on the sea. Possibly there may also be a reference to the arm of the sea which extended to the Bitter Lakes.



for the royal administration in this south of Egypt, as second judge, at every hour appointed for judgment for the royal administration in this south of Egypt as second judge; regulating as governor all there was to do in this south of Egypt, and never had anything like (this) taken place in this south of Egypt before; and I did all this to the satisfaction of his Majesty accordingly. His Majesty sent me to ABHĀIT,<sup>1</sup> to bring back the sarcophagus (called) the Coffin of the Living, with its lid, as well as the true and precious pyramidion of the pyramid (called) "KHĀNOFIR mistress of Mirinrî." His Majesty sent me to ELEPHANTINĒ to bring a stele in the form of a false door, together with its base of granite, as well as the portcullis and the framework of granite [for the passage of the pyramid], (and) to bring back the gates and the thresholds of the exterior chapel of the pyramid "KHĀNOFIR mistress of Mirinrî." I returned with them to the pyramid KHĀNOFIR of Mirinrî in six galliots, three pontoons, three barges, (and) a man of war,—never had there been a man of war at ABHĀIT or at ELEPHANTINĒ; so all things that his Majesty had ordered me (to do) were accomplished fully as his Majesty had ordered them. His Majesty sent me to HATNUBU<sup>2</sup> to transport a large table of offerings of alabaster. I brought this table of offerings down [from the mountain]: as it was impossible in HATNUBU to despatch (it) along the course of the current in this galliot, I cut a galliot out of the wood of the acacia-sonot, 60 cubits long and 30 cubits broad; I embarked the 17th day of the third month of Shomu, and although there was no water over the sand-banks of the river I reached the pyramid KHĀNOFIR of Mirinrî prosperously; I was there with [the table of offerings] without fail according to the order which the majesty of my lord had deigned to command me. His Majesty sent me to excavate five docks (?) in the South and to construct three galliots and four pontoons of acacia-sonot of UAUIT; now the negro princes of the

<sup>1</sup> A locality in the vicinity of Assuân, where there were quarries of gray granite.

<sup>2</sup> The modern Banûb el-Hammâm, where there are quarries of marble on the right bank of the Nile in the neighbourhood of Siut (Brugsch: *History of Egypt*, 2d Edit., vol. i. p. 124).

---

countries of AROTIT, UAUAIT, AAMU, (and) MAZA felled the wood for that purpose, and I accomplished it all in only one year, the transportation to the water and the loading of large quantities of granite for the pyramid KHÂNOFIR of Mirin-rî ;<sup>1</sup> and moreover I caused a palace to be constructed for each of these five docks (?), because I venerate, because I exalt, because I adore above all the gods, the souls of the king Mirin-rî, living for ever, because I have been (raised) above everything according to the order of which his double has given unto me, even to me who am the beloved of his father, the lauded of his mother, the magnate in his city, the delighter of his brethren, the governor in actual command of the South, the vassal of OSIRIS, Uni.

<sup>1</sup> These blocks of granite are probably those which still obstruct the passage of the pyramid of Mirin-rî (Maspero : *La Pyramide de Mirin-rî* I in the *Recueil*, vol. ix. p. 179).

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:  
**Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature**  
which can be purchased on our Website :  
[www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :  
**Brainfly Inc.**  
**5100 Garfield Ave. #46**  
**Sacramento CA 95841-3839**

## **TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:**

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website ([www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

[webcomments@brainfly.net](mailto:webcomments@brainfly.net)