

THE OFFICIAL LIFE OF AN EGYPTIAN
OFFICER, FROM THE TOMB OF AMEN-
EM-HEB AT THEBES

TRANSLATED BY PHILIPPE VIREY

IT is to Prof. Ebers that the honour belongs of having discovered and published this celebrated inscription, although Champollion before him had penetrated into the tomb of Amen-em-heb, of which he gives a short description in his *Notices*,¹ under No. 12. But the description is so summary that no inscription is noticed as existing in the tomb; nothing but the indication of the names of the defunct and his wife, and the mention of the cartouches of Thothmes III and Amenophis II allows us to affirm that it is really the tomb of Amen-em-heb. The monument, moreover, was buried in the sand, and had been completely forgotten when Prof. Ebers, during his stay at Thebes in 1872-73, had the good fortune to rediscover it. The great historical inscription contained in it attracted his attention, and he made a copy of the text, which he published in

¹ Page 505.

1873,¹ with a translation and interesting notes. My predecessors have already acknowledged the merits of this translation,² which can be appreciated by every Egyptologist. In my turn, I shall insist on the excellence of the copy, and I believe that I possess special qualifications for delivering such a judgment. Having myself had to transcribe all the texts in the tomb of Amen-em-heb,³ I know well what difficulties Prof. Ebers has victoriously surmounted, and can recognise with what patience and sagacity he has made out the most obscure passages in a way that admits of no doubt, saving me from painful efforts and perhaps from unsuccessful conjectures.

If I now attempt to publish a new rendering of an inscription already translated by the masters of Egyptological science, it is that I wish to add a little sheaf of my own to the abundant harvest of facts collected at once by Prof. Ebers, and to put forward some new ideas derived from the study of other parts of the tomb of Amen-em-heb as well as of a neighbouring tomb belonging to an official of the same rank⁴ as himself, entitled *tennu n suten tennu n menfeu* ("vicar of the king in the army," or substantially a minister of war). The great inscrip-

¹ *Zeit und Thaten Tothmes III*, in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptischer Sprache* (1873).

² Chabas, *Mélanges égyptologiques*, 3me série.

³ They will appear in the *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*.

⁴ The tomb of Pehsukher. The contents of the tomb will be published along with those of the tomb of Amen-em-heb.

tion tells us in the first place what were the glorious services by which Amen-em-heb rose to so high a dignity.

What was the exact signification of his title? The word *tennu*, which Dr. Brugsch has carefully examined in the *Revue égyptologique*,¹ does not always signify a minister in the sense in which we ordinarily understand the word; but I hope to show that it certainly has this meaning in our inscription. It properly signifies, as Dr. Brugsch has pointed out, "a deputy," "a delegate," "a vicar." Prof. Maspero, in his *Manuel de Hiérarchie égyptienne*,² explains that the military chief of a nome had at his side a *tennu* of the troops, a lieutenant of the forces, who could act in his place, more particularly, as his title indicates, at the head of the troops who were in service, but probably also in the offices of the administration. The *tennu* or vicar of a military officer will therefore be his lieutenant; the *tennu* or vicar of the governor of a city will be an assistant governor; the *tennu* or vicar of the Chancellor³ will perhaps be an under-secretary of state; but the vicar of the king will be a minister. I have elsewhere⁴ come to the conclusion that the *tennu* of the troops, who in the provinces was only a sort of administrative officer or military intendant, was at Thebes, under the title of *tennu n*

¹ I. pp. 22 sq.

² Page 37.

³ Examples are cited by Dr. Brugsch.

⁴ In my work on the tomb of Rekhmara, Governor of Thebes under the eighteenth dynasty, p. 8, in the *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*, v. (1889).

suten,¹ the deputy of the king, an actual minister of war. We see from the paintings which represent the conscription that he received recruits from all countries; in the tomb of Pehsukher many of them are Nubians and negroes. It was then the royal army which was administered by this functionary, but the royal army with the auxiliaries as distinct from the provincial contingents. In the different inscriptions of the tomb Amen-em-heb is further distinguished by a series of titles, all of which are thoroughly applicable to a minister of the king. But the most conclusive example is found in line 46 of our inscription, where the king says to Amen-em-heb: "Advance in dignity; be *tennu* of the army; and from the moment that this is said, watch over the royal forces." These words can have been addressed only to a minister; the meaning of "military intendant" is impossible here, for Amen-em-heb was already in command of the royal guard² when the king appointed him *tennu*, saying to him, "Advance in dignity." It would not have been an advancement for the commander of the guard to be appointed military intendant. I should add that Dr. Brugsch sees in the *tennu* or *aten* "of the world" and "of the two worlds" a sort of viceroy of Egypt or prime minister of the Pharaoh, and that Chabas remarks that there were *atenu* of foreign countries, of the treasury, and of the private house of the

¹ The example is taken from the tomb of Pehsukher.

² End of line 33 of the great inscription.

Pharaoh: "We recognise among them ministers of protected states, of finance, etc." The *tennu Mahu*, who was charged with the installation of Amen-em-heb,¹ was perhaps one of these ministers, but the text does not state what was the department which he administered. Sometimes, moreover, we find the terms *tennu n suten*, *tennu n hon-f* ("minister of the king," "minister of his majesty;"), without any further explanation.

In his new office Amen-em-heb superintended the recruiting of the army as well as its discipline and instruction. Several of the scenes depicted on the walls of his tomb represent him in the exercise of these functions. We notice among them a document which gives us a high idea of the organisation of the Egyptian troops, and enables us to understand their superiority to the hordes of Asia. "Behold the arm of Egypt,"² says Amen-em-heb to the king, pointing out to him at the same time the officers who defiled before him: "behold the numerous force which is under thy hand. We form a complete whole, having but one mouth, one arm, one hand, all of us, the soldiers [keeping their ranks (?)],³ and none quitting them."

The maintenance of the troops, accordingly, depended on the superior direction of the *tennu*. We see him presenting the officers of the commissariat to the king. "He causes the officers of the adminis-

¹ Line 46.

² Literally "the smiter of the double earth."

³ Illegible.

tration of the army, the officers of the commissariat, to march past before the Pharaoh, in order that the sacks may be filled with provisions, bread, beef, wine, biscuits, all sorts of vegetables, and all good things."

The tomb of Pehsukher shows us even the operations of harvest, in districts doubtless appropriated to the maintenance of the army, and sets before us a scene representing the inspection of the magazines of food. A clerk sums up the amount, and certain officers taste the quality of the provisions. The *tennu* thus has at his disposal a numerous administrative staff, and is at the same time at the head of the army. The officers who presented themselves before him were first of all received by the "scribe of the writings or the secretary of the *tennu*." And in a transport of pride the latter exclaimed: "There is none greater than myself! There is none greater than myself!"¹ thus asserting that he held the first rank among men, and next to the monarch who represented the divinity, and whose minister he consequently was.

¹ Stèle of Pehsukher, line 23.

THE GREAT INSCRIPTION OF AMEN-EM-HEB.¹

1. As for me, I was the very faithful² [instrument] of the sovereign ; the half of the heart of the king of the south, the light of the heart of the king of the north, while I followed
2. my master in his expeditions to the regions of the north or of the south, [those which] he desired ; for I was as the companion of his feet, and that
3. in the midst of his valour and his power, in order to give testimony. Now I captured in the country of
4. NEKEB,³ and brought back (certain) Asiatics, three

¹ The text of this great inscription has been published by Ebers in the *Z. D. M. G.*, 1873, and in the *Mélanges* of Chabas (3d series). Stern (in the *Z. D. M. G.*) has proposed some corrections. A new edition of the text will appear in the *Mémoires* of the French mission at Cairo.

² *Mâ ur n ati ânkh uza senb* ("the true great one of the sovereign, who is life, power, and health," that is, "one who does things truly great," "who accomplishes the designs of his master.") The idea of confidence contained in that of truth may also indicate that the king had confidence in the fidelity of his servant.

³ Here begin the campaigns of Amen-em-heb. It was in the 29th year of Thothmes III, since line 4 informs us that it happened when the king reached Nabarain, and the following campaign (line 13) was directed against Kadesh, which was captured for the first time in the thirtieth year of Thothmes. Amen-em-heb therefore took no part in the battle of Megiddo in the twenty-third year, at which time he was doubtless still very young. Moreover, he did not enter the royal guard at once ; he had first to traverse a considerable distance before he could present to the king, who was in Naharain, the prisoners he had taken in Nekeb. Nekeb is the Negeb or "southern country" of Palestine, frequently mentioned in the Old Testament (see Gen. xiii. 1, xx. 1 ; Josh. x. 40, etc.). The course of events would have been :—The federated Asiatics under the prince of Kadesh, taught by their recent defeats, seem to have avoided a battle, and fortified themselves in their cities, which had to be besieged one after the other. Hence Thothmes, with the main part of his army, occupied himself with this work, while flying columns compelled the chiefs who would

- men as prisoners, alive. When his majesty reached NAHARAIN¹
5. I brought thither the three men as booty, whom I placed before thy² majesty, as living prisoners.
 6. Another time³ I captured (it was in the expedition⁴ to the country of mount UAN, to the west of ALEPPO⁵), and I brought back
 7. (certain) captured Asiatics, as living prisoners 13 men, 70 asses alive,⁶ 13 basons of iron, . . . basons of worked gold. . . .
 8. . . . Another time I captured (it was in an expedition to the country of CARCHEMISH⁷) and brought away . . .
 9. as living prisoners. I traversed the water of NAHARAIN⁸ without letting them escape,⁹
10. [and] I [set] them before my master. Behold, there-

have interfered with his operations to look to their own defence, and prevented others from joining in the revolt. Amen-em-heb was in one of these columns, and consequently his first exploits in the countries of Nekeb, Uan, and Carchemish took place at a distance from the king.

¹ The Aram-Naharaim, or Aram of the two rivers, of the Old Testament (Judges iii. 8), placed by Prof. Maspero between the Euphrates and the Orontes. [The tablets of Tel el-Amarna, however, show that the chief seat of the king of Naharain was on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, opposite Carchemish, as they identify the Naharain of the Egyptian monuments with the country of Mitanni, whose position is known from the Assyrian inscriptions.—ED.]

² Amen-em-heb addresses his inscription to the deified Thothmes III.

³ Literally "anew."

⁴ Literally "this expedition to the land of Mount Uan."

⁵ Kharbu or Khalep. The expedition probably took place while Thothmes was besieging Aleppo. Help might have been sent to Aleppo from the land of the Hittites on the north-west, which would explain the despatch of an Egyptian force in this direction.

⁶ Or perhaps "heads" or "beings," equivalent to *sa* ("human being").

⁷ Doubtless during the siege of Aleppo, to which Carchemish was near. [Carchemish, the Hittite capital, was situated on the western bank of the Euphrates, a little to the north of its junction with the Sajur, and is now represented by the mounds of Jerablús, from which Hittite sculptures and inscriptions have been brought to the British Museum. Its fortifications on the river-side are depicted on the bronze gates of Balawât. It commanded the great ford over the Euphrates, and the defeat of the Egyptian Pharaoh under its walls established the empire of Nebuchadnezzar in Western Asia (Jer. xlv. 2).—ED.]

⁸ Probably the Euphrates.

⁹ Literally "they being in my hand."

fore, he rewarded me with a great reward, namely

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11. I saw the victory of the king, the king of the south and of the north, even Ra-men-kheper,¹ the life-giver, in the country of SENZAR.² He made
12. them. There I captured before the king and I brought back a hand.³ He gave me the gold of guerdon, namely
13. 2 rings [of gold] and silver. When I began again to behold his valour, I was among his bodyguard,⁴ at the capture of
14. KADESH,⁵ without quitting the place which was under him. I brought back of the Marinas⁶ 2 personages as [living prisoners].
15. before the king, the lord of the two worlds,⁷ Thothmes . . . who gives life eternally. He gave me gold for my valour in the presence of the master,
16. namely the collar of the lion of gold, 2 *shebi* collars, 2 helmets and 4 bracelets. And I saw my master . .
17.
18. HA;⁸ then afresh [it was] overthrown.⁹ As for me, I ascended towards
19. I began again to see his valour in the country of TAKHIS;¹⁰

¹ That is to say, Thothmes III.

² According to Chabas the district on the left bank of the Euphrates, adjoining that of Aleppo and Carchemish. Henceforth Amen-em-heb remained in the corps commanded by the king; after the first siege of Kadesh he was among the body-guard. His admission into them was the reward of his first exploits.

³ Perhaps the hand of an enemy slain in single combat.

⁴ Literally "his followers."

⁵ [Subsequently the southern capital of the Hittites, on the Orontes close to the modern Bahr el-Qadis, or Lake of Qadis, westward of Homs.—ED.] ⁶ Or "chiefs."

⁷ Or "the double earth," that is Egypt.

⁸ Some country is doubtless referred to which was protected by its distance from Egypt, and after the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces was therefore able to recover its independence. Thothmes spread terror by the suddenness of his appearance in the most distant quarters.

⁹ I imagine that the country whose name is lost is here meant.

¹⁰ Amenophis II subsequently punished a revolt of this country [which lay near the Orontes].

20. I captured there before the king and brought away
 (certain) Asiatics 3 men¹ alive as prisoners. Then
21. my lord gave me the gold of guerdon, namely, 2 collars,
 4 bracelets [with] 2 helmets [and] a tame² lion.
22. I began again to see another perfect action performed
 by the master of the two worlds in the country of
 NII.³ He took in hunting 120 elephants for their
 tusks. . . .
23. The largest among them attempted to fight face to
 face⁴ with his majesty. As for me, I cut off his
 foot,⁵ although he was alive
24. I entered for thee⁶ into the water which is
 between the two stones⁷; then my master rewarded
 me with gold.
25. Behold, the prince of KADESH drove⁸ a
 mare
26. straight against . . . as it charged among the soldiers
 I hurried to meet it⁹
27. on foot, with my dagger, [and] I opened its stomach.
 I cut off its tail [and] made of it a trophy¹⁰
28. in the royal work of giving thanks to God because
 thereof.¹¹ That caused joy to take possession of
 my heart [and] cheerfulness to alight upon my
 limbs.¹²

¹ Prof. Ebers's copy has "women."

² Literally "slave."

³ Not Nineveh, but, as Prof. Maspero has pointed out, a locality in northern Syria.

⁴ Literally "facing." The elephant turned against the king and charged upon him.

⁵ Literally "hand"; either the front foot or the trunk.

⁶ That is, the king.

⁷ Perhaps a dangerous passage where Amen-em-heb showed his courage, or, as Chabas suggested, the two stelæ erected by Thothmes III on the two sides of the Euphrates to mark the western limit of his empire.

⁸ Literally "caused a mare to go out against."

⁹ Literally "I was hurrying myself against it."

¹⁰ Literally "I arranged it."

¹¹ Probably the mare had caused confusion in the Egyptian ranks, so that the king gave thanks to God for deliverance from peril.

¹² These events occurred in the forty-second year of the reign of Thothmes III. The prince of Kadesh, whose capital had already been captured (lines 13-14) in the thirtieth year of his reign, and its walls razed, had revolted after having rebuilt his fortifications. Hence Amen-em-heb

29. His majesty despatched the most valiant of his soldiers to force the newly-constructed rampart of KADESH. It was I who
30. forced it, for I was in advance of the most valiant; no other [was] before me. When I left (it) I brought back (with me) of the Marinas¹
31. 2 personages as living prisoners. My master began again to reward me because of this with every sort
32. of good thing,² for it was pleasing to the king that I had made this capture.³ Being an officer
33. it was I who directed the manœuvre in as captain of his body-guard.
34. in his fair festival of Apet, when men [were] full of joy
35. Behold for the king, the age he passed⁴ of years abundant and happy, as a strong man, as a
36. as a truth-speaker,⁵ from his happy first year until his 54th year, the last day of the month Phamenoth.⁶ Then the king of the south and of the north,
37. Ra-men-kheper, the truth-speaker, ascended to heaven, to unite himself with the solar disk, and to follow God, who penetrates when he makes himself luminous
38. under the form of the solar disk which illuminates the sky at the same time that it shines. The king of

speaks of "the newly-constructed rampart of Kadesh." But before shutting himself up in the city the prince offered battle, and employed the stratagem which was baffled by Amen-em-heb.

¹ Or "chiefs."

² No doubt there were no more decorations for Amen-em-heb to desire.

³ After the second capture of Kadesh Syria submitted, and the campaigns of Amen-em-heb under Thothmes came to an end. Henceforth he commanded the royal bodyguard in Egypt, where the king resided after the conclusion of his wars.

⁴ Literally "behold the king as to the duration of his time in years." The campaigns of Thothmes ended, Amen-em-heb has nothing more to record.

⁵ *Mâ-kheru* ("whose voice makes true," or "realises," the privilege, in the first place, of the deity and then of the deified dead). The king is also *mâ-kheru*, because he realises the designs of the deity whose incarnation he is upon the earth.

⁶ The third month of winter.

- the south and of the north, Ra-ââ-khepru, the son of the Sun, Amen-hotep,¹ the giver of life,
39. establishing himself on the throne of his father, reduced under the royal banner all that made opposition to him. He pierced the wretches²
40. and of the desert; he immolated their chiefs, rising like HORUS³ the son of ISIS, taking possession of
41. *the extremity* (?) of all those who exist and breathe, all the mountain and plain, bowed as it were before his wishes, their tributes on their backs.⁴
42. [He] granted unto them the breath of life. Behold his majesty saw me sailing with him in his bark
43. named Khâ-m-suten-uaa, while I was at of the fair festival of Apet-rest, conformably to custom.⁵
44. when I re-ascended, even I, into the interior of the palace, an order [was given] to stand in the presence [of the king] Ra-ââ-khepru; it was
45. a great honour. I flew, even I, on the spot, into the presence of his majesty. He said to me: "I know thy conduct"

¹ Amenophis II.

² The new king is compared with the rising sun, which pierced with its rays the shadows where the evil principles hide themselves. A revolt seems to have broken out at the time among the desert tribes, who are likened to the race of Set or Typhon, the god of aridity.

³ The result of the comparison between the new king and the rising sun.

⁴ This is represented in three pictures below the inscription. The upper picture shows us, according to the epigraph, "all the princes of Upper RUTENNU, who proclaim: Great are thy desires; thou puttest fear in all the double land (of EGYPT), and all [foreign lands are] under thy sandals." One prince is prostrate; two others, on their knees, extend their arms in supplication; a fourth, standing, presents a vase; a fifth, also standing, offers suppliantly a small child whom he holds in his arms; another child is in front of him. A sixth chief also brings a child. Other persons follow of different physiognomies and head-dresses; but owing to the mutilation of the wall the end of the scene is indistinct. In the second picture are "all the chiefs of Lower RUTENNU;" but the scene represented in it does not differ from that of the first picture. The legend attached to the third picture is almost entirely effaced. A person is represented in it prostrate and accompanied by three others who are kneeling, and two more who carry vases of various forms. *Beyond this the wall is mutilated.*

⁵ As had been the case under Thothmes. Amen-em-heb means that he preserved his old functions.

46. serving my father. Advance in dignity; be *tennu* of the army; and from the moment that this is said watch over the royal forces." The *tennu* Mahu¹ executed all his words.²

¹ For the meaning of this title see the Introduction.

² *Zettu nebu-f*. I think the form *zettu-f nebu* or *nebt* would be more regular. Perhaps we should read *zettu neb-f* ("the words of his master"), and suppose that the Egyptian artist has committed an error in copying the inscription from a hieratic original, by confusing the determinative of *neb* ("master") with the sign of the plural.

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