

Source Unit 1

Source Text: “The Kamose Texts”

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[page 345 Introduction by William Kelly Simpson] THE KAMOSE¹ TEXTS – The text of Kamose’s “wars of liberation” is divided between two stelae² set up at Karnak, the first extant in a few fragments and the second discovered in 1954 as the base for a statue of Ramses II. A larger section of the text of the first stela was first discovered on a writing board.... The narrative is frequently in the first person and exhibits marked literary aspects. There are several terms for Asiatics;³ the designation Aamu is translated as Asiatic and the term Setiu left untranslated. Several places are cited in the text and have been located, as far as possible, on the accompanying map.

[page 346] *Text of the Carnarvon Tablet*

Regnal Year 3 [of] the Horus: He who has appeared upon his throne; The Two Ladies: Repeating of Monuments; The Golden Falcon: He who contents the Two Lands; King of Upper and Lower Egypt [Wadj-kheper-Re Son of Re]⁴ Kamose the valiant, granted life, beloved of Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands like Re, forever and ever. The victorious King within Thebes, Kamose the valiant, given life forever, is the effective King. It is Re [who has placed him] as King, himself, to whom he has given victory in very truth.⁵

His Majesty spoke in his palace to the council of officials which was in his following: To what effect do I perceive it, my might, while a ruler is in Avaris⁶ and another in Kush,⁷ I sitting joined with an Asiatic and a Nubian, each man having his [own] portion of this Egypt, sharing the land with me. There is no passing him as far as Memphis, the water of Egypt. He has

¹ Kamose [ruled c. 1555–1550] was the last pharaoh of the 17th Dynasty, based in the city of Thebes.

² *Stelae* is the plural of *stela* or “stone.” A stela is a stone block or pillar on which text was inscribed.

³ “Asiatics” were peoples from Western Asia—often called the “Hyksos” or “foreign rulers”—who invaded and occupied parts of Egypt from around 1650 to around 1550.

⁴ The editor’s additions to the text are in square brackets; [...] indicates damaged and unreadable text.

⁵ Pharaohs had many names and titles that associated them with such figures as Horus, the god of kingship; Re, the sun god and creator god; the “Two Ladies” or goddesses Wadjet and Nekhbet who represented Upper and Lower Egypt; and Amun-Re, who represented the unification of Amun, the god of Thebes, with the sun god Re.

⁶ Avaris was the capital of the Hyksos in lower Egypt.

⁷ Kush was a region in Nubia [modern day Sudan] on the Upper Nile river.

possession of Hermopolis, and no man can rest, being deprived by the levies of the Setiu. I shall engage in battle with him and I shall slit his body, for my intention is to save Egypt, striking the Asiatics.

The officials of his council [then] spoke: Indeed, it is the water [the area of influence] of the Asiatics as far as Cusae. And [then] they drew in their tongues in unison: We are content with our [part of] Egypt. Elephantine is firmly in our control, and the middle section is with us as far as Cusae. The finest of the fields are ploughed for us, and our cattle graze in the Delta. Emmer is sent for our swine. Our cattle are not taken away, and [...] are not pillaged from the [encampments?]. He possesses the land of the Asiatics, [but] we possess Egypt. Should one who acts against us come, then we shall act against him.

[These words] were disturbing in the heart of His Majesty. [He said:] As for your counsels [...]. Dividing the land with me is not tolerable for me. [...] the Asiatics [allied?] with him ... I shall sail northwards to do battle with the Asiatics, and success will come to pass. If he intends to be at ease in ... , then his eyes will be about to weep, and the entire land [will say]: the ruler within Thebes, Kamose the valiant, is the protector of Egypt.

By the command of Amun, astute of counsel, I sailed north to my victory to drive back the Asiatics, my courageous army in front of me like a flame of fire, with the bowmen of the Medjai upland of our encampment [ready] to seek out the Setiu and to destroy their dwellings, the eastern



[page 347] Map 1.
Sites mentioned in
the Kamose texts

[page 348] desert lands and the western desert lands provided with their fat and my army being supplied with produce from their dwellings. While I was on watch near Wahyt[?], I sent a mighty patrol of Medjai to confront Teti son of Pep i within Neferusy without letting him flee, and I confined the Asiatics who were defying Egypt, for he had made Neferusy as a nest for the Asiatics. It was with my heart at ease that I spent the night in my boat. When dawn came, I was upon him as if I were a falcon, and when the time of midday meal had come, I had driven him back and had destroyed his walls and had slain his people. I had his wife [women] go down to the shore. As lions are with their prey, so was my army with their servants, cattle, milk[?], fat and honey, in dividing up their property, their hearts joyful. The region of Nefer[usy] was in retreat, and it was not an important matter for us to enclose Tibasepa. Per-Shaq was in flight when I reached it, their chariot teams fled inside, the patrols ... being remembered[?] at the valley[?] ... their property. He [*end of text of the Carnarvon Tablet*]

The Second Stela

... a miserable report within your town. You are driven back in the presence of your [own] army. Your speech is despicable in making me out to be [only] an official while you are a ruler, only to beg for yourself the chopping block by which you will fall. Your [own] miserable back is seen, while my army is at your [own] back. The women of Avaris will not conceive, for their hearts will not open within their bodies when the battle cry of my army is heard.

I moored at Per-djed-qen, my heart joyful. I made Apopi see a miserable moment, the prince of Retenu, weak in action, who planned brave deeds in his heart which did not come to pass for him.

I arrived at the southward-bound landing place, and I crossed over to them to address them. Having placed prow to stern, I set the fleet deployed one [ship] after another, with my forces flying over the river like a falcon, my [own] ship of gold at the front thereof like a falcon before them, setting the brave fleet to thrust as far as the desert edge, the remainder [of the fleet] behind it, as if a carrion bird were preying upon the region of Avaris.

I espied his women upon his palace looking out from their embrasures toward the shore, and their bodies did not move when they saw me. They looked out from their loopholes on their walls like young lizards within their burrows, saying: It is an attack.

[page 349] See, I have come for I am fortunate. The rest is in my hand, and my cause will be effective. As Amun the valiant endures, I will not let you alone, I will not let you tread the ground without my being upon you. May your heart quake thereat, O miserable Asiatic. See, I am drinking the wine of your [own] vineyard which the Asiatics whom I have captured [have been forced to] press for me. I have destroyed your dwelling place, I have cut down your orchards. I have carried off[?] your women to the holds [of the ships] and I have seized the chariot teams. I have not spared a plank of the three hundred ships of new cedar filled with gold, lapis lazuli, silver, turquoise, and copper axes without aside from moringa oil, incense, unguents, honey, willow, *sesnedjem*-wood, *sepnny*-wood, and all precious woods, and all fine products of Retenu. I took them away entirely. I did not leave anything of Avaris for it was emptied out, O unfortunate Asiatic. Let your heart quake thereat, O miserable Asiatic, who used to say: I am a

lord without equal as far as Hermopolis, and as far as the Temple of Hathor.

My intention[?] is to control Avaris between the two rivers. I will leave them laid waste without people there. I destroyed their towns, I burned their abodes, being made into desolate mounds forever because of the destruction which they made within [this part of] Egypt, for they set themselves to hearken to the summons of the Asiatics, having betrayed Egypt, their mistress.

For it was on the upland way of the oasis that I captured his messenger going south to Kush with a written letter. I found on it saying in writing: From the ruler of Avaris, Aa-user-re. Son of Re Apopi, greetings to the son of the ruler of Kush: Why have you arisen as ruler without letting me know? Do you see what Egypt has done against me? The ruler who is in it, Kamose the valiant, given life, attacks me on my soil, although I have not attacked him in the manner of all he has done against you, for he chooses the two lands to afflict them, my land and yours, and he has devastated them. Come northward, do not blench, for he is here with me, and there is no one who can stand up to you in [this part of] Egypt. See, I will not give him a way until you arrive. Then we shall divide the towns of Egypt, and both our fine lands[?] shall be in joy.

Wadj-kheper-Re [Kamose], given life, who controls occasions [says]: I have placed the deserts and the front of the land in my control, and the rivers likewise, and one cannot find any way of overthrowing me. I am not lazy with my army. The one north of me has not seized, for he was fearful of me while I fared north, before we had yet fought. Before I reached him, he saw

[350] my flame, and he had sent [a letter] as far as Kush to seek out his protection. But I captured it on the way. I did not let it arrive. Then I let it be taken back to him; it was placed upon the eastern desert at Tep-ihu [Aphroditopolis]. My victory entered his heart and his limbs were devastated when his messenger recounted to him what I had done against the district of Cynopolis, which had been his property. While I was in Saka, I sent a powerful troop of bowmen which had been traveling overland to destroy Bahria Oasis to prevent any enemy to my rear. With strong heart and rejoicing I sailed south and I destroyed every enemy along the way.

How splendid was the southward journey of the ruler, l.p.h.,⁸ with his army before him, for there were no losses, nor did any man have to inquire about his comrade, nor did their hearts weep. I moved into the district of No [Thebes] at the inundation season, every face shining, the land in abundance, the riverbank excited, and Thebes in festival! Wives and husbands came to see me, every woman embracing her companion, and there was no face in tears.

Incense for Amun in the sanctuary. Incense for Amun in the sanctuary at the place wherein it is said: Accept the offering, as he gives the scimitar to the Son of Amun, l.p.h., the enduring king, Wadj-kheper-Re, Son of Re Kamose the valiant, given life, who subdues the south and drives back the north, who takes possession of the land in victory, given life, stability, dominion, and joy together with his *ka*,⁹ like Re forever and ever.

The decree of His Majesty to the hereditary prince and count, confidant of the palace,

⁸ "l.p.h." is an abbreviation used by those who study ancient Egypt to stand for the frequently-used Egyptian phrase, written as "ankh wedja seneb" and meaning "be alive, strong, and healthy," that was written in texts after the name of the pharaoh.

⁹ In ancient Egyptian religious practices, the *ka* is a person's spirit, that which makes a person a living thing rather than a dead one.

overseer of the entire land, king's sealbearer, pupil of the two lands, commander, overseer of the magistrates, overseer of the treasury, strong of arm, Nesha [Neshi]: Let one set all that which My Majesty has accomplished in victory upon a stela, and let its place remain in Karnak in Thebes forever and ever.

Then [Neshi] said before His Majesty: It is [according to what] my father, my lord, has decreed that I am acting, that my praise may endure before the king.

The overseer of the treasury, Neshi.