

## Kamose documents

### The War against the Hyksos

'...Year 3 of Horus [Kamose ]: Appearing upon his throne; the Two Goddesses: Repeating Monuments; Golden Horus: Making the Two Lands Content; King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Wadj-kheper-Re; the Son of Re: Kamose, given life, beloved of Amon-Re, Lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, like Re forever and ever.

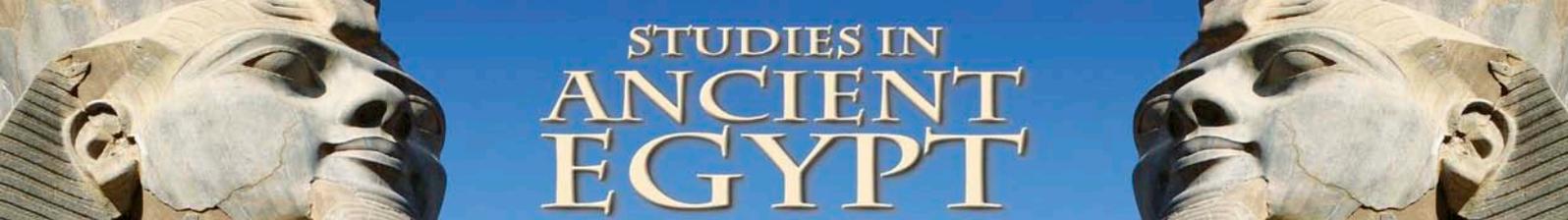
The mighty King in Thebes, Kamose, given life forever, was the beneficent King. It was Re himself who made him King and assigned him strength in truth.

His Majesty spoke in his palace to the council of nobles who were in his retinue: 'Let me understand what this strength of mine is for! There is one prince in Avaris, another in Nubia , and here I sit associated with an Asiatic and a Negro! Each man has his slice of Egypt, dividing up the land with me. He (the Hyksos) controls Memphis, the waters of Egypt, and he has Hermopolis. No man can settle down, being despoiled by the demands of the Asiatics. I will grapple with him, so that I may cut open his belly! My wish is to save Egypt and to smite the Asiatics!'

The great men of his council spoke: 'Look, it is Asiatic water as far as Cusae, ... but we are at ease in our part of Egypt. Elephantine is strong, and the middle of the land is with us as far as Cusae. The richest of their fields are ploughed for us, and our cattle are pastured in the Delta. Emmer [a type of wheat] is sent for our pigs. Our cattle have not been taken away ... He holds the land of the Asiatics; we hold Egypt. If someone should come and act against us, then we shall act against him!'

Then they were hurtful to the heart of his Majesty: 'As for this plan of yours ... He who divides the land with me will not respect me. Shall I respect these Asiatics who ... from him? I shall sail north to reach Lower Egypt. If I fight with the Asiatics, success will come ... Kamose, the protector of Egypt!'

'I went north because I was strong enough to attack the Asiatics through the command of Amen, the just of counsels. My valiant army was in front of me like a blast of fire. The troops of the Medjay were on the upper part of our cabins, to seek out the Asiatics and to push back their positions.



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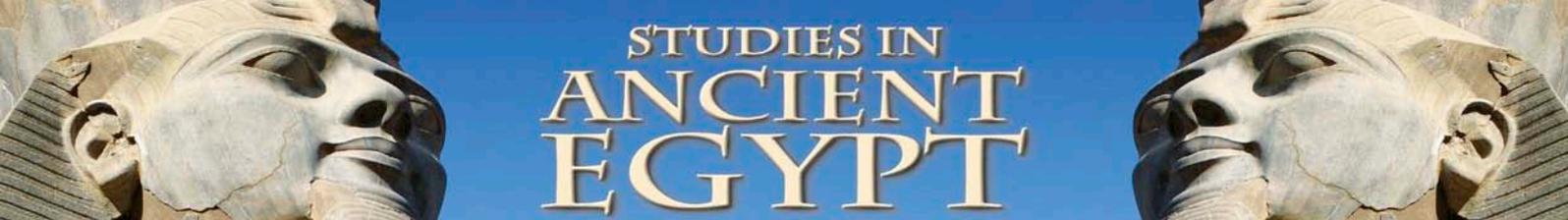
When day broke, I was on him like a falcon. When the time of breakfast had come, I attacked him. I broke down his walls, I killed his people, and I made his wife come down to the riverbank. My soldiers were as lions are, with their spoil, having serfs, cattle, milk, fat, and honey, dividing up their property, their hearts gay. The region of Nefrusi was fallen ...'

## **Kamose here speaks directly to Apophis:**

'... A miserable answer out of your town. Yet you have been forced away in the company of your army. Your speech is mean when you make me a mere 'prince' whereas you are a 'ruler', as if to beg for the execution-block to which you will fall. Your back has been seen, O wretch! My army is after you. The women of Avaris will not conceive; their hearts will not open within their bodies when my army's battle cry is heard.'

I moored at Per-djedqen, my heart glad, for I had made Apophis see a miserable time, the Prince of Retenu weak of arms, who planned many things in his heart, but they have not come to pass for him. I reached the depot of going south. I crossed over to them to address them. I formed the fleet, arrayed one after another. I put the prow of one at the rudder of another, with my bodyguard, flying up the river as if a falcon. My own ship of gold was at the head of it; it was like a divine falcon in front of them. I set the valiant *mek-ship* probing towards the desert edge, the *djat-ship* following it, as if it were a kite ravaging the djat-lands of Avaris. I saw his women upon the roof peering from their loop-holes towards the shore, without their bodies stirring when they heard me.

They peered out with their noses on the walls like the young of *inhet*-animals from inside their holes, while I was saying: 'This is the attack! Here am I. I shall succeed. What is left over is in my hand. My lot is fortunate. As the valiant Amen endures, I will not leave you, I will not let you set foot in the fields unless I am upon you! So your wish has failed, miserable Asiatic! See, I shall drink of the wine of your vineyard, which my own Asiatic captives will press out for me. I shall destroy your dwelling-place and cut down your trees, after I have confined your women to the holds of ships. I shall take over the chariotry'. I have not left a plank under the hundreds of ships of new cedar, filled with gold, lapis lazuli, silver, turquoise, and countless battle-axes of metal, apart from moringa-oil, incense, fat, honey, itren-



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wood, sesedjem-wood, wooden planks, all their valuable timber, and all the good produce of Retenu. I seized them all. I did not leave a thing of Avaris, because it is empty, with the Asiatic vanished.

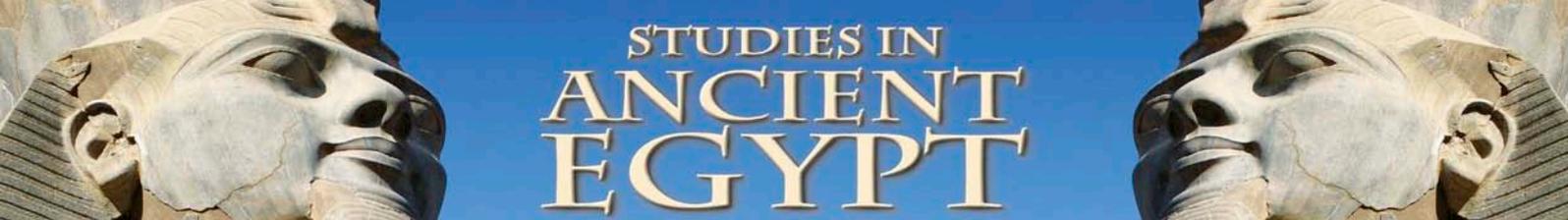
So your wishes have failed, miserable Asiatic, who had been saying: 'I am a Lord without peer. As far as Hermopolis and to the house of Hathor everyone is bringing tribute to Avaris in the two rivers'. I shall leave it in desolation, without people in it, after I have destroyed their towns. I shall burn up their places, make them into red mounds forever, because of the damage they did in this part of Egypt, they who gave themselves over to serving the Asiatics, after they had abandoned Egypt, their mistress.

I captured a message of his above the oasis, going south to Kush, upon a letter of papyrus. I found on it, in written words from the ruler of Avaris:

'Aa-user Re, the Son of Re: Apophis, sending greetings to my son, the ruler of Kush. Why do you arise as a ruler without letting me know? Do you see what the Egyptians have done to me; the ruler who is in it, Kamose the strong, given life, attacking me on my own soil, although I had not assailed him – just like everything he has done to you? He picks out these two lands to persecute them, my land and yours. He has destroyed them. Come north. Do not falter. See, he is here in my hand, and there is no one who is waiting for you in this part of Egypt. See, I will not give him leave until you have arrived. Then we shall divide the towns of Egypt between us, and our two lands will be happy in joy.'

Wadj-kheper-Re the Strong, given life, who controls situations: foreign lands have been given to me, the Two Lands are under me, and the rivers as well. No way can be found for trespass against me, and I have not neglected my army. The face of the northerner was not averted; he became afraid of me when I was sailing south, before we had fought, before I had reached him. He saw my fiery blaze, and he sent a dispatch as far as Kush to seek protection for himself. I captured it on the way and did not let it arrive. Then I had it taken back again to him, and left on the east side near Atfih. My strength entered into his heart, and his body was ravaged when his messenger told him what I had done to the Nome of Cynopolis, which had been his property. I despatched a strong brigade, which went overland to lay waste the Oasis of Bahariah, while I was in Sako, in order to permit no rebel to be in the rear of me.

I sailed south in strength of heart, joyful, destroying every rebel who was on the way. Oh what a happy journey south for the Ruler – life, prosperity, health! – having his army before him! There were no



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losses among them; no man missed his companion. Their hearts did not weep, as I bestirred myself to the district of Thebes at the season of the Inundation. Every face was bright; the land was in affluence; the river bank ran wild; Thebes was in festival. Women and men came to see me. Every woman embraced her companion. There was no face with tears. I burned incense to Amen at the inner sanctuary and at the place where it is said: 'Receive good things', just as he gives the sword to the Son of Amon – life, prosperity, health! – the enduring King, Wadj-kheper-Re, the Son of Re: Kamose the strong, given life, who has subdued the south and overthrown the north, who has taken over the land in strength, given life, stability and satisfaction, while his heart is glad with his Ka, like Re forever and ever.

His Majesty issued a command to the hereditary Prince and Count, the Privy Councillor of the palace, the Headman of the Entire Land, the Sealbearer of the King of Lower Egypt, the Helmsman of the Two Lands, the Leader, the Overseer of Courtiers, and Chief Treasurer, the strong of arm, Neshi: 'Have everything which my Majesty has done by strength put upon a stela which occupies its place in Karnak in the Theban Nome forever and ever.'

Then he said to his Majesty: 'I will do that which my Lord has commanded me'. Favours of the King's presence were decreed.

– Adapted from J.H Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, Vol I.*, pp. 6-9

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## Examine the source:

- What are the reasons given by Kamose for going to war?
- What is his Council's attitude to the prospect of fighting the Hyksos? Why?
- What was the first town captured? What was gained by this victory?
- Look carefully at the letter written by Apophis to the Prince of Kush:
  - What relationship between the two is implied?
  - What arguments does Apophis raise to encourage the Prince to join him against Kamose?
  - If you were the Prince of Kush, what questions would you ask Apophis before committing your support?
- What is the role of Amen in this campaign?
- In 10 points, summarise the campaign of Kamose.