

THE ELEPHANTINE STELA OF AMASIS: SOME PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF STUDY

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The so-called Elephantine Stela (a convenient denotation used, for instance, in [Leahy 1988: 189 ff.]) of Pharaoh Amasis has been signalled for the first time in its brief publication by G. Daressy ([1900]; Cairo Museum 849 – check *PM* IV 73, with reference to [Maspero 1914: 198]; *cf.* [Posener 1934: 143, n. 6]; now, according to Dr. Osama Abd el-Maguid, head of the Nubian Museum, Assuan, Egypt, whose information reached me with courtesy of Dr. Dan’el Kahn of the Haifa University, Izrael, the stela is the outdoor exhibit of the Museum). This publication gave a hieroglyphic transcription and a translation of the text, both of them, according to Daressy himself [1900: 1], preliminary and rather approximate. Since then the transcription and the translation of the source have become subjects to a number of emendations (*BAR*⁴ IV 509-512, §§ 996-1007, [Posener 1934: 148]; Posener 1947: 129; Edel 1978: 13-20; Spalinger 1982: 18, 59, 108-109 and n. 40, 111 – col. 2; 77, 82 – col. 11; 80 – col. 12; 18, 54, 69 – col. 14; 40 – col. 18], the most important of them touching the datings found in cols. 1 and 14 of the text (see in some more details below). The most far-fetching corrections were suggested by E. Edel: as he made it clear himself [Edel 1978: 13], he prepared a detailed collation of the Stela and, perhaps, contemplated a possibility of its overall publication. This intention has never been realised and the Elephantine

Stela has not yet been given a wholesome publication. I will try to show (in a deliberately brief and concentrated manner) that the text deserves a much better treatment, as the absence of its publication and complex monographical study brought to misunderstanding or underrating quite important issues reflected in it.

1. The Transition of Power from Apries to Amasis and the Babylonian Involvement

The Elephantine Stela is a description of two episodes (perhaps, they might be better called stages) in the struggle for power between Amasis and its predecessor Apries, the former of them (cols. 1-13; *cf.* col. 1: *šmw* II of Amasis' Year 1 = November-December 570 B.C.; [Spalinger 1979: 598; Edel 1979: 13]; see for the chronology of Amasis' reign [Parker 1957]) ending with a defeat of Apries in a decisive battle and the latter (cols. 14-18; *cf.* col. 14: 8 *šht* II of Amasis' Year 4 = mid-March 567 B.C.: [Edel 1979: 13]) with his death. The dating of the last episode coincides with that of the invasion into Egypt undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (his Year 37, *i.e.* 568/567 B.C.: this dating is known from the cuneiform fragment *Nbk* 329 = *BM* 33041; [Wiseman 1956: 94-95, pls. XX-XXI]; *et al.*). It would seem probable even *a priori* that this invasion was an attempt by the Babylonians (Egypt's major foreign foes during the late 7th and the early 6th centuries B.C.) to make use of the interregnum in Egypt. Symptomatically, E. Edel succeeded to prove that the appearance of the 'Asiatics' (*sttyw*) was mentioned in the Elephantine Stela among the other troubles of Egypt at the start of the second stage of Amasis' struggle with Apries (col. 14 according to Edel's emendation, [Edel 1979: 13-14]);

and he was surely right to assume that the ‘Asiatics’ of the Stela were Babylonians. Besides, the disastrous crushing of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, with his involvement in the struggle inside the country, is a *topos* of the Bible’s prophets of the 6th century B.C. and some later sources adjacent to the Bible (see in more details below; it is a special question, which I will also try to approach, why all the Classical accounts are silent about this event). The major question arising from this combination of sources is if the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar was aimed to support one of the sides in the Egyptian internal struggle (and if so, whom exactly the Babylonian king perceived as his ally - Apries or Amasis).

According to all more or less recent studies of the Stela Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in order to defeat Amasis and to support Apries. The most elaborate scheme of the developments connected with this invasion was proposed by A. Spalinger: the first encounter between Egypt and Babylon signalled in the Bible took place still under Apries, in late 570s B.C.; then followed the *coup d’état* of Amasis stimulated by the unsuccessful war against Cyrene (*HEROD.* II 162; *DIOD.* I. 68), and Apries was withdrawn but still kept alive in Amasis’ custody (the end of this stage was reflected in the first part of the Elephantine Stela); in 569 B.C. (the date accepted by Spalinger for the events of the second part of the Stela) Nebuchadnezzar II invaded Egypt and his expulsion coincided in time with the death of Apries (whatever its cause was); however, there was a third, still later Babylonian invasion of 568/567 B.C. (mentioned in *Nbk* 329), which was repulsed with the help of Egypt’s earlier foe Cyrene [Spalinger 1979: 594-597]. The scheme proposed by E. Edel (whose knowledge of the text seems to have been more sound than that of Spalinger) is more

passable due to its being simpler: the first part of the Stela really described the victory of Amasis over Apries; the latter fled to Babylonia and was brought back by the army of Nebuchadnezzar II who invaded Egypt only once; eventually the defeat of the Babylonian king brought death to Apries [Edel 1979: 17-18]; this scheme was accepted by A. Leahy with an important correction but without ruining its logic.

What are the reasons that induced the modern scholars to consider the Babylonian king to have been a friend of Apries and a foe of Amasis? The most important of them is the Babylonian fragment *Nbk 329*: it says that on his Year 37 Nebuchadnezzar and the Egyptians began a war and, after a lacuna, contains a combination of signs, which were emended and translated ...[Am]a-su šar Mi-šir (“Amasis the king of Egypt”) and explained as an indication of Nebuchadnezzar’s enemy. None of Egyptologists tried to question the plausibility of the emendation ...[Am]a-su, though it would have been highly appropriate: this emendation was motivated with nothing but a guess of those who proposed it first, and the combination of signs in it could easily correspond to the end of some word other than the name of Amasis. Besides, the context of the word-combination is so badly damaged that the role of this “king of Egypt” in the events described cannot be defined with any certainty (in the analysis of this cuneiform source, as well as the interpretation the Bible and related evidence I am much indebted to my friend and colleague Dr. Alexandre A. Nemirovsky of the Institute of General History, Russian Academy of Sciences). To the argument of *Nbk 329* E. Edel might have also added that the invasion of *sttyw* mentioned among the troubles, which Amasis was

going to overcome, could also hint at the cooperation of the Babylonians with his enemy Apries.

However, the prophets of the Bible say quite unambiguously that the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar was directed against Apries, and not Amasis (*JER.* 46:26, *cf.* 44:30: the downfall of Hophra, i.e. Apries, is connected with Nebuchadnezzar's invasion perfectly explicitly; *EZEK.* 29:1-17, 30:20-25, 32:1-16: the prophecies dated to 580s B.C., i.e. the reign of Apries, foretell the crushing of that contemporary Pharaoh by the Babylonians). *JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS* also says that Nebuchadnezzar II invaded Egypt to kill the reigning Pharaoh (undoubtedly Apries) and to put another (Amasis) at his place (*Ant. Iud.* X.9.7); the hostility of Nebuchadnezzar against Apries is equally stated in the *Chronicle* of *JOHN, BISHOP OF NIKIU* (ch. 51; *cf.* [Colin 1995: 50-52]: this author also speak about the murder of Apries by Nebuchadnezzar) and in the *Romance of Cambyses* [Jansen 1950]. The fact that the Bible tradition knows not a series of invasions but only *one* highly destructive attack of Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt which ended in the death of Apries is highly significant, as it deflates the scheme by A. Spalinger. Ironically, these statements of the Bible were taken into consideration by the earliest students of the feud between Apries and Amasis (*e.g.* [Wiedemann 1878], however untrue the conclusions of this scholar were); the ignorance of these statements in the 20th century is perhaps due to the disinclination of too many scholars of the epoch to read their Bible.

The trustworthiness of the Bible tradition is easily proved due to the tendency which brought it to life: Jeremiah and Ezekiel were the prophets of the orthodox Judaism whose sayings *could not* be false, so the compilers

of the Bible canon would have ascribed to them *ex post facto* only the foretelling which came true, as it was commonly known in their time. Hence the direction of the Babylonian attack *against* Apries can be taken for certain. Shall one postulate in this case that this attack was intended to support Amasis against Apries? The statement by Josephus speaks in favour of this supposition; besides, it explains perfectly well the silence of all the Classical accounts about the Babylonian invasion. These accounts largely depended on what was told to the authors of their prototypes (Greek writers of the 5th-4th centuries B.C.) by Egyptian informers, while the latter mostly sympathized with the royal house of Amasis (which is quite obvious in the case of Herodotus). The information about the Babylonian invasion, which helped to Amasis to seize power, was highly disparaging for his image; for this reason it must have been preferable to withhold it at all from Greek visitors taking interest in the Egyptian history. Things must have been more difficult with the Egyptians who knew better: as Edel has shown, the Elephantine Stela mentioned the invasion of *sttyw* among the other shortcomings Amasis had to deal with. However, no other mention of this menace is found throughout the rest of the text: in its second part the major enemy of Amasis is a shipped force supporting Apries which seems most probably to be Greek (Spalinger's idea that the term *ḥꜥw* in the second part of the Stela denotes the Asiatic ships in distinction of the Greek triremes-*kbnt* in its first part [Spalinger 1979: 596] seems a very unreliable point; see below). Besides, nothing is said in the Stela about any connection between Apries and *sttyw*; had there been such connection at all, the Stela's compiler would not have missed such a strong point of accusation against Amasis' concurrent. It seems that

the Babylonian invasion was mentioned in the Elephantine Stela just because it was impossible not to mention it at all; however, all its details disparaging for Amasis (actually, any information about it other than its simple assertion) was withheld.

2. The Correlation between the Classical Accounts and the Elephantine Stela

It has been already G. Daressy who noticed the parallels between the description of Apries-Amasis' confrontation by the Classical authors and in the Elephantine Stela [Daressy 1900: 8-9]. These parallels are really remarkable and important: the Stela seems to confirm that the military mutiny against Apries was somehow connected with the misfortune of the expedition he planned against Cyrene and his suspected intention to have perished the army he had sent there (cols. 5-6; *cf. HEROD. et. DIOD. loci. cit*); the Stela definitely confirms the use of mercenary naval support by Apries (cols. 2-3 et sq., *passim; cf. HEROD. II. 163, DIOD. loc. cit.* about his Greek and Carian soldiers) and the ultimate royal burial of Apries by his victorious concurrent in Sais (col. 18; *cf. HEROD. II. 169*). Nevertheless there are considerable discrepancies (which have still no valid explanation) both within the Classical tradition and between its statements and those of the Stela about the course of struggle between Amasis and Apries and its end, i.e. the death of the latter.

Before approaching these discrepancies I would like to postulate some guiding points, which seem to be if not out of question, then at least strongly motivated. (1) Both the *h3w-nbw* with *kbnt*-ships in the first part of the Stela (col. 3) and the unnamed enemies of Amasis with *ḥꜥw* (cols.

14, 17; but, perhaps, also *mhnwt*, if only this does not apply to the ships of Amasis; *cf.* col. 16)-ships in its second part are the Greek (and, maybe, Carian) naval mercenaries hired by Apries. Spalinger's alternative that those having *ḥꜥw*-ships are the Babylonians is vulnerable, as the Babylonian army in Egypt, like elsewhere, must have led combat on land (as it is highlighted, incidentally, in the narration of the *sttyw* invasion in col. 14 of the Stela according to [Edel 1978: 13-14]). The suggestion by Cl. Vandersleyen [1971: 145] to perceive *ḥ3w-nbw* in col. 3 as a denotation of some Eastern Mediterranean residents is speculative and depends in fact on his general reluctance to explain the use of this term, to whatever epoch it belongs, in any other way - a view far from being beyond hesitation (*cf.*: [Vercoutter 1949: 174-175]). (2) The Classical tradition knows only *one* decisive battle between Amasis and Apries, which resulted in the defeat of the latter: it is the battle of Momemphis (*HEROD.* II. 163, 169), or Maria (*DIOD.* I. 68). The battle of *Ḥmw* in the Elephantine Stela (col. 11-13) is pictured with greater pathos than any other episode of the text; significantly, it is the only passage giving the image of a fighting and triumphant king (the ultimate defeat of Apries, as far as its military scene as such is concerned, is described not so at length and with more reserve; *cf.* col. 17). This is the chief reason to equate the battle of Momemphis/Maria and that of *Ḥmw* with great certainty (for the geographical aspects of the problem *cf.* [Helck 1972: 155; Spalinger 1979: 594 and notes 15-16]; about the locality of Maria [Burton 1972: 208]; these geographical implications are worth being considered once again, but it should be done in more details than it is now appropriate). (3) As I meant to show it previously, the Bible tradition and the Elephantine Stela know

only *one* Babylonian invasion in Egypt, which coincided in time with the final stage of Apries-Amasis' confrontation. The Classical sources tell us nothing about the Cyrenean involvement in it, though no reasons to disguise it on either Egyptian, or Greek part can be postulated (the alliance with Cyrene mentioned in *HEROD.* II. 181 was concluded, as far as one can judge, *after* the end of internal conflict in Egypt). For this reason the interpretation of the designation ^{URU}*Puṭu-Yāman* in the Babylonian fragment *Nbk* 329 as "The Greek-Lybian city" meaning Cyrene (as an ally of Amasis against the Babylonian invasion: [Edel 178: 15-16; Spalinger 1979: 597]) seems to be as arbitrary as the emendation to the same fragment (...[*Am*]/*a-su*) discussed above. It is true that this designation can hardly mean anything but a Greek city supporting the Egyptian king who was the enemy of Nebuchadnezzar; however, provided this king was Apries, it is still more difficult to suspect the city thus designated to be Cyrene attacked by him before!

The Elephantine Stela and Herodotus' narrative, when compared, coincide in one important point: after the decisive battle between Amasis and Apries the latter remained alive. Probably this point is true, while the Classical statements of Apries' having been killed immediately after the battle by its winners (*DIOD.* loc. cit.; *ATHEN.* XIII. 560e, with reference to *CTESIUS*) merely simplify the real sequence of events. According to *HERODOTUS*, Amasis kept Apries in custody until he was forced by his supporters to give his former enemy up for reprisal (II. 169). The version of the Stela is different: after the defeat at *Ḳmw* Apries was dislodged to a region designated *iw* ("island"; cols. 3 and 13, as accepted at [Edel 1978: 19] and [Leahy 1988: 193]) and locked there for more than 2 years (period

between the first and the second stages of developments depicted in the Stela). After this he broke the blockade of the “island” with the help of his naval mercenaries but was eventually defeated, *sttyw*/the Babylonians being involved in this situation (that is what the second part of the Stela tells about). It is rather clear that the version of the Stela has to be preferred to that of Classical authors or, better to say, of their sources coming ultimately back to the Egyptian tradition: the latter version was surely intended to present Amasis’ victory at Memphis as total and at the same time, as it has been seen, to avoid mentioning the Babylonian attack.

The Problem of “Island” When postulating the reading *iw*, E. Edel explained the word as a designation for Cyprus as Apries’ important base outside Egypt ([1978: 19] coming back to his unpublished communication of 1952). A. Leahy gathered convincing argument against this interpretation and suggested a more enlightening idea that the “island” is a strictly bordered region inside Egypt (possibly Apries’ residence in Memphis) [Leahy 1988: 193-197]. Obviously enough, Apries could manage to hold a blocked outpost in Egypt, whatever its exact location was, for more than 2 years, let alone to break its blockade, only with permanent military and other support from outside. This gives additional ground for interpreting the word-combination ^{URU}*Pūṭu-Ȳaman* together with the following line of Nbk 329 “...far lands among the sea” (...*nagi nisutu ša kirib tamtim*): it is logical to assume that the former is a designation of Apries’ outpost in Egypt (due to the meaning of *Ȳaman*, probably a Greek settlement) while the latter are the regions outside Egypt providing for regular support to Apries. Due to Apries’ leaning upon Greek and Carian mercenaries and the national Egyptian character of rebellion

against him, his getting support from outside Egypt (*i.e.*, in the first place, from the Aegean region) rather than from inside it seems highly probable. This allows also a perfect explanation to the variability of the ships' terms *kbnt* and *ḥw(/mhnwt?)* in the first and the second parts of the Stela respectively (see above): while the former probably speaks about naval transports of men coming to Apries from abroad (which is appropriate for the meaning of the word *kbnt*, as seen at [Darnell 1992]), the latter means boats used in combat operation on the Nile and its mouths (as seen, *e.g.*, from l. 94-95 of the Pi('ankh)y Stela: [Grimal 1981: 102, 33*]). But it means as well that Apries' outpost must have had reliable connection to the Mediterranean, and this is a sound reason to hesitate Leahy's version about Memphis: the communication of this city to the sea, especially with Amasis controlling most part of the Delta (as indicates his evidence already in 570 B.C.: [Leahy 1988: 188]), would probably have been easily cut. A more precise identification of Apries' outpost seems to be given by the *Romance of Cambyses* and the *Chronicle of JOHN, THE BISHOP OF NIKIU* (*cf.* above): they tell that Apries was besieged, and in due course killed, by Nebuchadnezzar in the fortress of Daphnae. Significantly, *JEREMIAH* shows Daphnae/Tah'pahnes to be both a Pharaoh's residence and, together with Migdol, a refuge for Jews who escaped to Egypt from the Babylonians after the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (43:6-9, 44:1, 46:14), and *EZEKIEL* places in this fortress (Tehaph'nehes of his spelling) the most crucial events of Egypt's defeat by Nebuchadnezzar (30:18). These statements seem to reflect reality as no reason can be thought of for their authors to invent them deliberately. At the same time, Daphnae is proved archaeologically to have been the place of Greek military settlement from

Psammetichus I to Amasis: it is thought with rather good reason to be identical with one of Στρατόπεδα, *i.e.* “military camps”, of *HERODOTUS*: II.154, *cf.* comm. *ad. loc.* in [Lloyd 1988: 137], with further necessary references). I am, however, sceptical to accept the theory that “Migdol”/Tell el-Herr south of Pelusium is the other Στρατόπεδον [Oren 1984; Lloyd 1988: *loc. cit.*]: one has just to look at a map to get assured that it contradicts Herodotus information about the position of “military camps” on the Nile opposite one another. The old idea by W.M.F. Petrie [1932: 64] that the other Στρατόπεδον is Tell Nebeshe at the Pelusiac mouth opposite Daphnae, however undermined by the lack of Carian inscriptions there [Braun 1982: 44], seems to fit Herodotus’ account best of all. Taking into account that the position of Στρατόπεδα at the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile was especially advantageous for getting unrestrained military support from outside Egypt, it seems quite reasonable to identify this zone with ^{URU}*Pūtū-Yāman* of the Babylonian fragment *Nbk 329* and the “island” of the Elephantine Stela. Somewhat unexpectedly, the toponymy of Tell Nebeshe suggest a plausible interpretation of the notorious ^{URU}*Pūtū-Yāman* (rendered as “the Greek Buto”), which adds still more reason to what has been proposed: this site was the metropolis of the XIXth Lower Egyptian nome named *’Imt* in hieroglyphic sources but Buto (coming possibly back to *Pr-W3dyt*, after the goddess of the nome) at *HEROD.* II. 75 [Helck 1972: 196]. It is rather plausible to assume the toponyme of Buto, much more famous in Egypt than that of Daphnae, to have been associated by the Babylonians with the whole region of Στρατόπεδα; certainly, the specification “Greek” had to be added to the

name so as to distinguish this region from the most ancient Lower Egyptian temple centre *P-Dp*.

It seems there is more evidence suggesting there was a space of time after Amasis' pronouncement, during which Apries was still perceived a king of Egypt. According to *AFRICANUS'* version of *MANETHO* the reign of Apries lasted for 19 years (ed. Waddell, fr. 68), which is at a rather accurate keeping with figures established by R.A. Parker ([1957: 212]: 589-570 B.C.) and supported by other scholars [Spalinger 1979: 593ff.; Beckerath 1997: 87-88]. However, according to the versions of *EUSEBIUS* (frs. 69a-b) and to *HERODOTUS* (II. 161) its length was 25 years, and *DIODORUS* gave it as 22 years (I. 68). A. Wiedemann's theory of 6-years' coregency of Apries (deprived of real power) and Amasis [Wiedemann 1878 and 1884: 640 f.] is certainly badly out of date (check for its well-founded criticism soon after its appearance [Piehl 1890]). It is, however, only logical to assume that the discrepancy between the true data of Africanus and the figures of other authors comes back to the reminiscences of Apries' blockade at the "island". 25 years of his reign, *i.e.* about 6 years of his coexistence with Amasis, is an obvious mistake of Herodotus or his source repeated by Eusebius; however, 22 years of Apries giving about 4 years of his coexistence with Amasis fit perfectly well the real chronology of their struggle (early 570 to March 567 B.C.; see the studies referred to in connection with the datings found in the Stela). Naturally enough for a source apologetic towards Amasis, the Stela does not attract attention to Apries' royal status; though he is mentioned once in the Stela with his solar prenomen *H^c-ib-R^c* enclosed in cartouche (col. 2, bottom), he is not called *nsw/nsw-bity* or *hm*, and the text stresses that the true legitimate

ruler of the country is Amasis (symptomatically, both episodes of its narration are dated to the years of his reign).

The Fate of Apries As I suggested above, the Classical accounts about Apries' murder immediately after the victory at Momemphis or after his imprisonment were fictions necessary to present this victory of Amasis as total. Another motive to introduce these fictions was probably the reluctance of Amasis' partisans to mention Apries' control over a part of Egyptian territory, however small, after their patron had been declared a legitimate Pharaoh. It can be noticed that Herodotus' account of Apries' imprisonment and death occupies in his narration exactly the position where the true story about Amasis' blockade at the "island" had to be placed. Thus, these accounts are no use as far as the true circumstances of Apries' end are concerned; in order to find them out one must turn to the data of the Elephantine Stela together with the Bible tradition, which are at a considerable variance with the information of Classical writers.

The second part of the Stela does not identify precisely the shipped enemies of Amasis in his final battle (though, as I have shown before, they are probably the same as in its first part; *cf.* col. 16 ff.), and the death of Apries (*mḥ-ib.f*, according to the tantalizing euphemism or pejorative of the Stela) is only alluded to in the mention of his corpse' being found (on the battlefield or in one of the captured battleships?) and granted a royal funeral by victorious Amasis (col. 17-18). Neither the glory, nor the guilt of putting Apries to death is ascribed to any agent of the action, nor does Apries himself seem to be shown as its free agent, as he is not called directly Amasis' adversary. Moreover, the outcome of the whole story - his royal burial - indicates some deal of pity for him despite his former

wrongdoings (*bwt ntrw*), which are declared to be forgiven by Amasis. It is not unlikely (though, certainly, it is not said *expressis verbis*) that the Stela's compiler meant to show Apries after his retreat to the "island" as a hostage of an alien force (*i.e.* his naval supporters of the first part of the text), which continued in his name the struggle against Amasis. However untrue, this implication would have made undisputable Apries' losing any real influence after the battle of *'Bmw* as well as Amasis' becoming at the same time not only a legitimate Pharaoh but the sole effective ruler in Egypt.

Shall we suppose that the text of the Stela was also intended to disguise Amasis' being a culprit of Apries' death? Of all the extant sources on the events of our interest, the Bible prophets seem to be the least biased in respect of the Egyptian internal struggle. As it has been shown, the Bible connects the downfall of Apries with the Babylonian invasion. However, *JEREMIAH* says that God put "Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life" like he "gave Zedeki'ah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrez'zar king of Babylon, who was his enemy and sought his life" (44:30; *cf.* 46:26). There is little doubt that these internal "enemies" of Apries (equal to "those who seek his life" and undoubtedly responsible for his death) could be only the supporters of Amasis, and their reluctance to admit this in the Elephantine Stela hardly needs explanation. It is equally clear that had the death of Apries been the responsibility of his treacherous mercenaries or Babylonians, the compilers of the Stela would have put it quite explicitly; however, we find instead an obviously omissive story of Amasis' merely finding the corpse of his rival after the last encounter with his troops and

navy. Nevertheless the statements of *JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS* and *JOHN, BISHOP OF NIKIU* (perhaps, together with the *Romance of Cambyses* in its lost part) about Nebuchadnezzar's murdering Apries have to be explained. As for Josephus, his information on this neighbour with the assertion that the king of Babylon put Amasis on Apries' place as a figure of his own choice; clearly enough, both statements are just simplifying the real situation, which was of little importance for Josephus' work. Things are somewhat more difficult with the Egyptian Christian authors: one should bear in mind that the reminiscences of the Babylonian invasion, however important for these authors due to the Bible connotations, were strongly contaminated in their accounts with much more vivid memories of the Persian conquest (hence the synthetic figure of "Cambyses-Nebuchadnezzar"). These memories could not but be influenced by the Classical tradition, with Herodotus' account as its key element, which gave rather positive image of Amasis and his successor and spared no effort to depict the atrocities of Cambyses. Thus, it was as natural to ascribe the murder of Apries to the latter, as impossible to associate this deed with the former. Needless to say, the tradition coming from the partisans of Amasis and his family and registered by *HERODOTUS* (see the general tendency of his II. 172 ff. – III. 14-16) spared the guilt for its patron figure by inventing a story of Apries' murder being imposed on Amasis by his surrounding. At the same time, the *topos* of Amasis' care about Apries' corpse gave him an image of a very magnanimous ruler deploring his enemy who, however reproachable in his own actions, suffered the death unworthy of his former status: some more than two centuries later Alexander assigned to himself the same favourable image over the corpse of Darius. The fact that the guilt of

Apries' murder was not put in the Stela expressly on anyone at all might be explained by the reluctance to attract attention to its circumstances, which must have been anyway notoriously known after Amasis' final victory.

3. *Amasis, Naucratis and the Motives for the Babylonian Involvement in the Egyptian Feud.*

When the courtiers and generals of Amasis came to him to his Sais' residence to inform him about the *ḥ3w-nbw* pressure in support of Apries (the Elephantine Stela, cols. 2-3), they addressed to him, among other things, the following phrase: "There was [a] king (*wn nsw*) [who] granted in written order (*sh3.n.f; sh3* – Wb. IV. 234.18 – 235.1?) their (*i.e. ḥ3w-nbw*) place at the channel of *ʕn* [but despite it] they fill (? – *ft.sn*) Egypt in [all] its width" (cols. 3-4). The toponym *ʕn* or *ʕny* is known as a designation of the Delta channel where the colony of Naucratis was situated, due to its doubtless use in the so-called Naucratis Stela of the 4th century B.C. (l. 13; *cf.* [Gauthier 1925: 146; Montet 1958: 65]); however, its importance in the context of the Elephantine Stela seems to be much underrated. The Greek presence in the Naucratis region since at least late 7th century B.C. is a *locus communis* of archaeological studies [Lloyd 1988: 222 ff.]; but the written evidence did not register the foundation of the colony earlier than in Amasis' reign (*HEROD.* II. 178-179; *cf.* below). However, the context of the phrase in the Elephantine Stela, as well as its temporal aspect suggest quite definitely that the king mentioned in it is not Amasis but one of his predecessors; and, most probably, this is not Apries whom the Stela did not mention as a legitimate Pharaoh. Besides, the phrase obviously concerns the first appearance of the *ḥ3w-nbw* in the region of Naucratis; thus, the

Stela's compiler must have had in mind the Egyptian ruler of that time, *i.e.*, according to the archaeological material, one of the late 7th century Pharaohs. It might have been Necho II (610-595) or, with even greater probability, the initiator of the permanent Graeco-Egyptian contacts Psammetichus I (655-610; *cf.* with the information about the start of the Naucratis settlement under this king at Strabo XVII. 1.18, though the formalities of this event are unaccounted for in this statement). As we have seen, the Elephantine Stela seems to refer to the formal act (a sort of royal charter?) providing for the status of the settlement at the "channel 'n": hence there is a reason to approach the fragment of the Stela as *the earliest written evidence about the settlement of Naucratis*. It is the most amazing thing (and obviously the responsibility of Egyptologists) that this evidence, despite its crucial importance for the history of Greek North African settlements, is *unknown* to students of Classical antiquity: one might see it, *e.g.*, from the compendious historiographical summary by A.B. Lloyd [1988: *loc. cit.*] who seems to know nothing even about the mention of Naucratis in the Elephantine Stela, let alone its actual importance.

Let us, however, come back to the position of the phrase about Naucratis in the general context of the Stela. The words of the courtiers addressed to Amasis seem to imply that the "place at the channel of 'n'" was the only permitted residence of *ḥ3w-nbw* inside Egypt, where their presence aroused no problems for the country. Then Apries urged them to leave this residence so as to fight Amasis, and the result was the heavy detriment for Egypt. It can be suspected with good reason that the text prompts Amasis to restore *status quo ante* and to confine the presence of those aliens to the region of Naucratis again. However, the real situation

with the Greek (and Carian) presence in Egypt before the feud between Apries and Amasis was certainly different from the Stela's implications: both *HERODOTUS* (II. 154) and archaeological evidence register this presence outside Naucratis and independently of it since the late 7th century B.C. [Braun 1982: 35-37, 43-48; Lloyd 1988: 137-138], which would have been impossible without an express consent of Egyptian rulers. By presenting Naucratis as the major, if not the only, Greek settlement in Egypt the Elephantine Stela must have been creating a fictitious precedent for some eventual actions by Amasis. What sort of actions they were, can be seen rather definitely from *HERODOTUS'* account. According to it, Amasis resettled the Greek and Carian mercenaries from Στρατόπεδα (see above) to Memphis making of them his personal guards (II. 154); at the same time this king is said to have donated Naucratis to the Greek colonists as a settlement (II. 178). The latter statement was thought for a long time to be the most trustworthy information about the foundation of Naucratis, though such interpretation of it was at evident variance with archaeological data. It was A.B. Lloyd who tried to consider Amasis' measures in respect of Στρατόπεδα and Naucratis together and suggested that they were both intended to restrict and diminish the Greek commercial and other presence at Egypt: thus, the statement about Naucratis alluded not to the real foundation of the colony but to the act making of it the only Egyptian factory of Greek merchants [Lloyd 1975: 23, 26; 1988: 221]. As for the resettlement of the Mediterranean military colonists to metropolitan regions, it might have touched not only Στρατόπεδα but also other military posts with unrestricted access to the sea. It is easy to see that these measures are rather adequate to the idea of the Elephantine Stela that it is

necessary to have the *ḥ3w-nbw* presence in Egypt strictly limited and controlled.

It remains to see what the motives of Amasis were in undertaking these restrictive actions against the Greeks. According to A.B. Lloyd, the major reason for them came from the nationalistic, anti-Greek feelings of his partisans [Lloyd 1975 and 1988: *loci cit.*]; however, this idea is hardly tenable. It does not agree with Amasis' eventual philhellenic reputation (see once again *HEROD.* II. 178 ff.): symptomatically, the notorious Στρατόπεδα appear to have been re-garrisoned with Greeks and Carians again later in Amasis' reign [Lloyd 1988: 137]. As for the mood of the Amasis' party, it must have been highly hostile first of all towards Apries, and not his Greek mercenaries: whatever the Elephantine Stela said they were by no means free agents in Egypt and must have been rather easy to deal with, once Amasis became the master of situation. Besides, it would be strange to suppose that any nationalistic feeling might have made Amasis and his party so 'dogmatic' as to neglect the use of contacts with fine and skilled seamen, soldiers and merchants from the Mediterranean countries and to give them up, so to say, on the grounds of 'party ideology'. Hence the impetus, which made Amasis to restrain Graeco-Egyptian cooperation early in his reign, must have been more pragmatic.

It will be easier to understand the nature of this impetus taking into account the Babylonian support of Amasis. It is only logical to assume this support to have been not unselfish: it must have given to Nebuchadnezzar II some definite gain in the Middle Eastern balance of powers. Till the end of Apries' reign Egypt remained a stone in the shoe for Babylon in its Eastern Mediterranean politics: Apries was eager to acquire and support

there strategic outposts and allies (Judah before 587/586 B.C.; Phoenician city-states, first of all Tyre, before 573 B.C. when the local rebellion was suppressed by Babylon; perhaps, Cyprus, though there seem to be no decisive evidence about it: *cf.* [Spalinger 1977: 233 ff.]; as I made it clear, I oppose the idea of E. Edel on the identity of the “island” giving support to Apries with Cyprus). The greatest advantage of Egypt before Babylon was, naturally, its mercenary navy widely used by Apries in his Levantine enterprises [Spalinger 1977: 234]; as for the Egyptian land army, its mercenary units composed of non-Egyptians were certainly a much more serious force than the native troops similar to those sent against Cyrene with Amasis at their head. Thus, in order to guarantee himself from the Egyptian annoyance the Babylonian king had to deprive his major foe of his mercenary force. This could be achieved first of all by removing from the Egyptian throne Apries, who proved to be quite an aggressive ruler and certainly would have never given his mercenaries up; however, it would have been quite natural for Nebuchadnezzar to demand from his Egyptian *protégé* and Apries’ successor to diminish the employment of mercenaries and to limit strictly the contacts with lands where they were recruited. The fulfilment of these provisions by Amasis (no doubt, involuntary) can be seen in the measures of Amasis described by Herodotus; their denouncement and the launch of Amasis’ philhellenic policy (probably, with the restoration of Στρατόπεδα and, perhaps, the other mercenary stations; see about the Greek and Carian presence: [Braun 1982: 43 ff.]) must fall at the time after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (562) when the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom entered its hard times. Symptomatically, this must have been exactly the time when Amasis could afford to seize Cyprus,

which was the most decisive move to restore Egypt's favourable position at the Eastern Mediterranean (see for the issues concerning Cyprus: [Lloyd 1988: 240-241]).

4. *Final Remarks*

It would be certainly too ambitious to believe this small article to have solved the problems arising from the Elephantine Stela. In fact my intention was somewhat more modest: to show the magnitude and the diversity of those problems and some approaches towards them, which would characterize their expected solutions as original and innovative. My answers to the questions I thought appropriate to pose might be true or, on the contrary, want a deal of correction; but what I am certain about is that my competence to give these answers has its limits. I have some reason to hope that my judgements on the Egyptological issues can be trusted; but I would not be that optimistic as far as cuneiform sources, or the Bible tradition, or Greek archaeological evidence are concerned (though I had necessarily to touch all of them). Besides, any reader of this article will notice that I avoided by all means quoting the extent text of the Elephantine Stela and, wherever possible, preferred to retell its information in my own words. I had to do so because the Stela's hieroglyphic transcription by G. Daressy, even with numerous corrections suggested by its subsequent students, is by no means a reliable integral source, which can be quoted with certainty. Thus, I believe my minimal task accomplished, if I managed to prove that the Elephantine Stela is a worthy challenge for a cooperative work of Egyptologists, Classicists and students

of Ancient Middle East, with a new epigraphical study of the Stela's original as its necessary starting point.

Addendum: This article already completed, my colleague Dr. Dan'el Kahn of the Haifa University, Izrael, to whom I am indebted with more than one discussion of the Elephantine Stela, turned my attention to the work of the Münster University, Germany, under the auspices of the *Sonderforschungsbereich* 493 'Funktionen von Religion in antiken Gesellschaften des Vorderen Orients' (2000-2003), *Teilproject* C2 'Thronwechsel und Usurpationen in Kleinasien, Mesopotamien, Persien, Israel und Ägypten', *Themenschwerpunkt* 5: 'Thronwechsel und Usurpationen im spätzeitlichen Ägypten' (E. Graefe, J. Kahl, A. Blöbaum). According to the *Abschlussbericht* of this project (http://www.uni-muenster.de/CentrumGKM/SFB493/bericht_C2.pdf, pp. 146-147) a new collation of the Elephantine Stela has finally been prepared and now the publication of the text can be expected. I am glad to conclude with saying that the much-wanted job, of which I spoke, has started. Nevertheless, publishing this small article seems to me by no means useless, as I am sure that the points I featured in it cannot be avoided when studying the Stela.

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