

Annotations on Sinuhe

by

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"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't."

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Just to avoid misunderstandings: I am not an academic; I am an amateur and my specific interest is the prosody of ancient Egyptian texts and their potential dramatic expressivity. In my approach to "The tale of Sinuhe" I make use of compositional and performative perspectives. In other words I try to reconstruct the rhythmic cadence and the coloraturas of its building blocks: a sort of narrative score.

Now, it's possible that what I say has already been treated at large and more deeply by scholars and qualified academics; or that in my notes I might just be reinventing the wheel. In that case, please, be indulgent with someone who is not a plagiarist, but an unschooled dilettante. At any rate, at the end of these annotations, I cite the few works I consulted.

I take for granted that the reader have a solid knowledge of the tale in order to evaluate the degrees of validity of my views.

One last consideration: this small essay has two sections. The first one deals directly with the stylistic and literary side of the text. The second part tries to reconstruct its inner psychological and "ante-Machiavellian" political structure.

PART I

This said, let me get directly to the point. First of all let us disassemble the text into its basic narrative sequences.

- 1) Sinuhe's introduction
- 2) Amenemhet's death
- 3) Senwosret's hasty return to the Palace
- 4) Sinhue's flight

- 5) Sinuhe's meeting with Amunanshi
- 6) Sinuhe's eulogy of Senwosret
- 7) Amunanshi's benevolence towards Sinuhe
- 8) Sinuhe's success in Retenu
- 9) Sinuhe's victorious fight against a challenging Asiatic

- 10) Sinuhe's existential reflections
- 11) Senwosret's message to Sinuhe
- 12) Sinuhe's reply to Senwosret

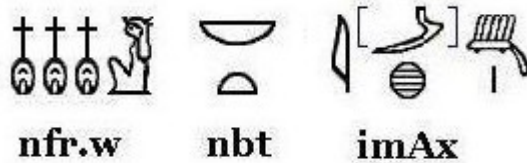
- 13) Sinuhe's return to Egypt
- 14) Sinue's meeting with Senwosret
- 15) Sinuhe's reintegration and advancement.

It goes without saying that each sequence is in its turn divided into smaller narrative blocks, each one with its own colour and inner rhythm; and that is exactly what I intend to underline in the first part of this analysis.

1] Sinuhe's introduction

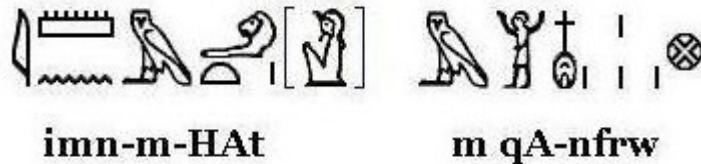
Sinuhe's presentation shows two aspects: **a)** his social state at the moment in which he begins telling his tale; that is: when he

is in attendance of Senwosret; **b)** his position at the moment the events of his story began their course; that is: when he was an Attendant of Amenemhet and a servant of the royal harem. The first part is an official and, in a certain sense, a self-satisfied presentation of Sinuhe's high social status. In the second part there's a more nostalgic aura, especially when touching the figure of the three times beautiful Nafiru, Senwosret's spouse and queen [R 5]



Nafiruw, mistress of veneration!

(There's also a not occasional, I think, anticipation of her name and of her beauties in the title of Amenemhet's pyramid "**qA nfrw**".) [R 5]



In my opinion it is not to be excluded that Sinuhe had a love affair with **Nafiru**, at least according to circumstantial evidences which, in the text, although obliquely, point to this direction. But I'll talk about this in the second part of this essay. At any rate, leaving that aside, one must note the double temporal and existential reference: the "old" Sinuhe remembering his own "young" self.

2] Amenemhet's death

The official and apparent neutral tone of the presentation does change into the sorrowful mood engulfing Amenemhet's death.

It's a solemn and large tempo. And I think one should note the use of words ending in **mw** (**gmw**, **xmw**, **imw**)



gmw

affliction



xmw

sealed



imw

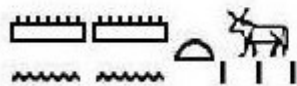
mourning

with an onomatopoeic hint at wailing [R 8-11]

But there is something more which must not be left unnoticed. The date of the king's demise is not just a neutral historical notation. It is a sudden blow that breaks apart the idyllic and suave last image of the previous sequence, the beauty of the adored lady; a metaphoric clash of cymbals that marks dramatically the change of Sinuhe's existence.

3] Senwosret's hasty return to the Palace

At this point there is another sudden change of tempo. The mourning tone shifts into a march, describing Senwosret's return from his successful campaign against the Libyans. The last image of the triumphing march describes "cattle of all kinds", [R 16]



mnmnt



nbt

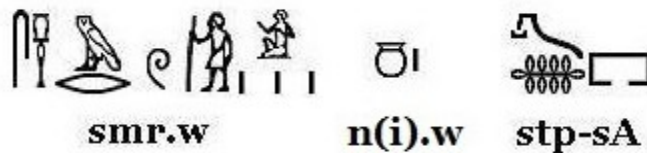


nn Dr.w = s

herds of all kind, without number.

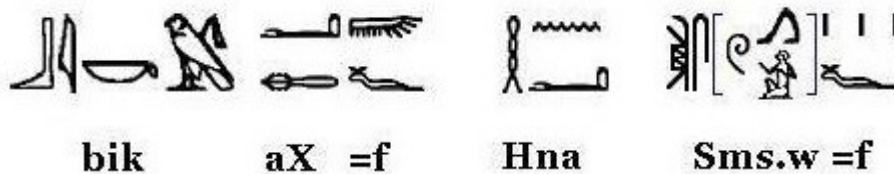
whose implicit "mooring" and bleating is, in a certain sense, the ghastly balance of the "**mw-ing**" of the courtiers of the previous

scene. That may sound disrespectful and I don't know whether the scribe was aware of that; but I wouldn't exclude a Freudian lapsus, for reasons that I'll explain in the second part of this analysis. In this sequence, though, there are two more changes of tempo and mood. The march of the cattle is necessarily a slow one; but the next image describes the excitement of Senwosret's friends at Court and the rapid run of the messengers sent to inform him of what had taken place [R 17-19]. One should note the sound morphing of the final "s" of "*nn Drw=s*" into the starting "s" of "*smrw*"



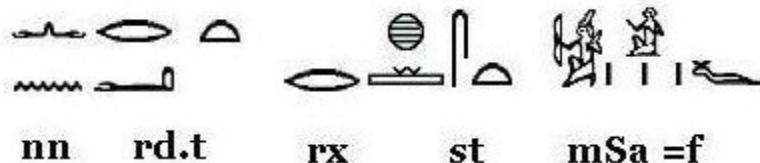
The Friends of the Court

which marks a change of atmosphere, volume and tempo. It's a presto that becomes the prestissimo of the "falcon" flying to the Palace, accompanied by his followers [R 21]



The falcon flew with his retinue

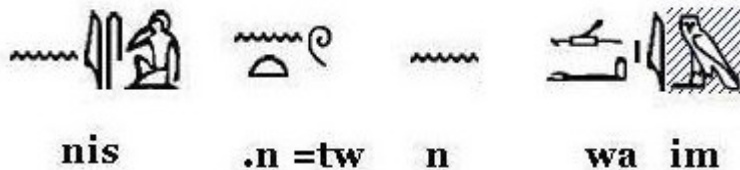
And the last verse [R 22] is a sort of long shot during which the "runners" are seen vanishing into the night from the camera-point-of-view of the unaware army:



not letting that his army know it

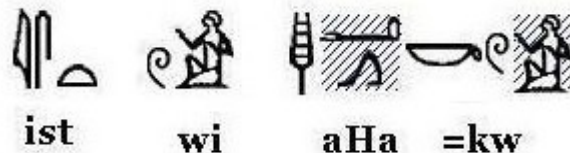
4] Sinhue's flight

That is an ingenious expedient in order to introduce the next image, namely that of the messenger sent by another faction of the Courtiers (probably against Senwosret's party) to inform the other sons (one in particular) [B 1]



One of them was called upon

of Amenemhet's. It's a dissolve: from the fade-out of Senwosret's group into the night, to the fade-in of the other messenger. It's still an agitated atmosphere of secrecy and conspiracy. Which marks the point of attack of Sinuhe's, his first entrance as protagonist (actant) of the tale [B 1]



Being yet up and awake

I deem this a stylistic nuance worthy of attention. Three very short words [*isT*, *wi*, *aHa=kw*] which, if vocally lengthened, create an atmosphere of suspense, complying with the above mentioned aura of secrecy. The verb "*aHa*" is not only positional, but points especially to the fact that Sinuhe is awake and on the alert, which shows a trait of his character. Later on we are told that he was known for his wisdom and cleverness; thus his being awake and standing in a place near the king's sons' tent or bivouac, where he

could listen without being noticed, does depict his cunning: he is not a snoop, but a man of "intelligence". Of course this is my interpretation: others suggest that he was there by chance, or because he was in attendance, although at some distance. But that would certainly abase the dramatic impact of our hero's entrance.

The visual angle now is centred around Sinuhe's emotional reaction: the narration shifts from an epic to a psychological level and we (readers or listeners) become emotionally involved with Sinuhe, in a sort of identification. It's a syncopated tempo that becomes a frantic one as he plunges into the vegetation to open a road for his flight [B 4-5]



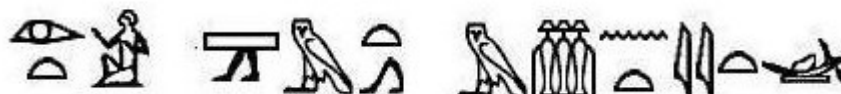
rdt (=i) wi im(i)tw bAtii



r ir.t wAt Smw s(i)

I put myself in the bushes
in order to make a road for the one who hit it

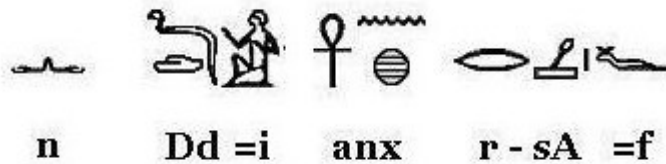
In "**Smw s(i)**" I see an alienated description of Sinuhe who looks at himself as if out of his body, impersonally: like one who has lost his identity, a human being who has become just "one who runs" (**Smw**). There's though another subtle nuance. He goes southwards [B 5-6]



irt =i Sm.t m xntiit

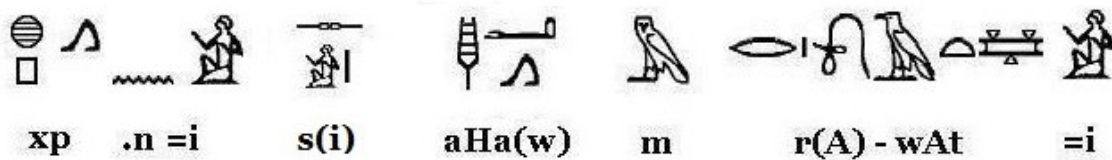
I took a southern direction

in fact in the direction to the Palace; so we might think that he wants to go there. But he is ready to explain that he does not intend to, since he fears a civil strife which might cause his doom
[B 7]



n Dd=i anx r-sA =f
 at the end of which I would not have said: "Alive!"

His southern direction is only temporary, out of necessity. So we have the detailed topographical description of Sinuhe's flight, marked by a definite stylistic change. There is in fact a long series of images, each one beginning with a verbal "*sDm.n=f*" form. Although some of them might be read "circumstantially" I am of the opinion that the repeated paradigm is used to mark the temporal scansion of the flight, like that of a metronome. The whole passage looks like a series of slides, with a sort of detached comment by Sinuhe, which underlines the impersonal automatism of his progress; interrupted by the sudden meeting with a man standing on Sinuhe's way **[B 10-11]**



xp .n=i s(i) aHa(w) m r(A)-wAt =i
 I came across a man who stood on my path.

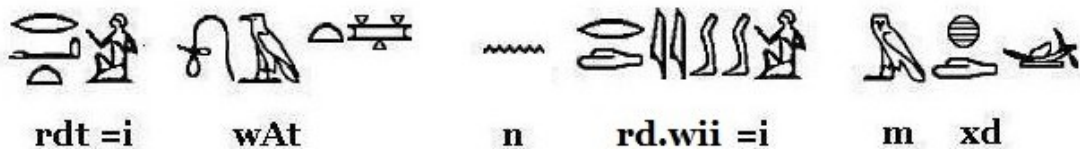
that gives to the scene a tone of suspense. I think the text is deliberately ambiguous in describing the sense of fear of both parties.



He saluted me, with respect. He was afraid.

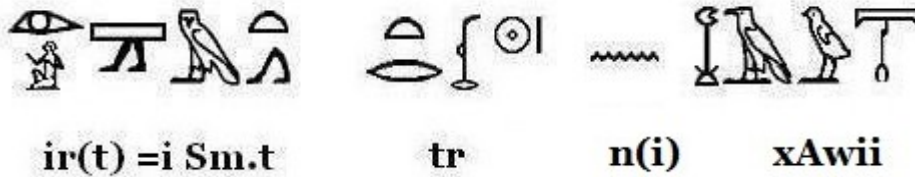
The two verbs are not necessarily linked. First the man greets Sinuhe respectfully, probably recognizing a nobleman by his attire and complexion. Then he stands aside, freeing the road, eyes down on earth, fearful. And the fearful Sinuhe, going on, looks at the fearful man, who is the mirror of his own fear. *Commoner vs Sinuhe <-> Sinuhe vs Senwosret.*

Then, at a very specific point, there is a significant variation. When Sinuhe changes his course northwards, the scribe makes use of what seems to be a narrative infinitive [B 15-16]



Then I gave way to my feet, directed northwards

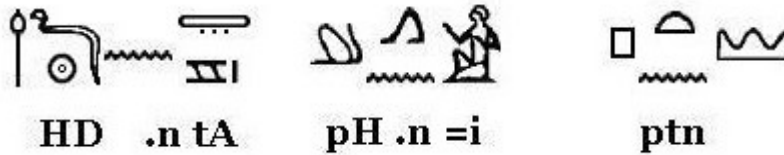
"***rdt =i wAt***" (my giving way) instead of "***rd.n =i wAt***" (I gave way). [There is only one version that uses "***rd.n =i***"]; which, we are told, mostly occur "*after major breaks in the narrative*" (Allen 3rd, 13.14.2). It's true that ***rdt =i*** may also be considered a substitute of ***rd.n =i***, but its use in specific points does certainly mark a change of mood; as, for example, when Sinuhe, eluding the sentinels on top the "Wall of the Prince", goes east towards the desert [B 19-20]



I moved when it was dusk

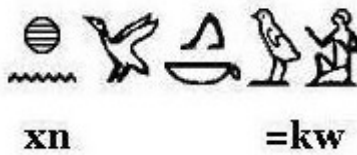
to the land of the Asiatics. That marks the cutting of his umbilical cord.

The final phases of the flight are also marked by a change of tempo, a gradual diminuendo which underlines Sinuhe's weariness. I think it's not a chance that, after the usual "*sDm.n =f*" form [B 20-21]



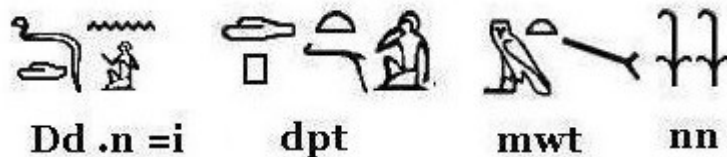
It was dawn when I reached Peten

the scribe opts for a stative "*xn =kw*"



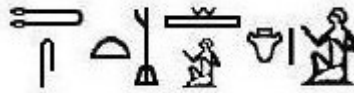
I made a halt

in order to describe the gloomy end of Sinuhe's getaway, with his resigned acceptance of the approaching death [B 23]



I said: "This is indeed the taste of death!"

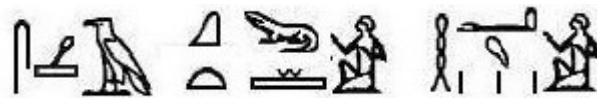
But then there is another scribal stylistic finesse. We can imagine the exhausted Sinuhe closing his eyes, feeling the taste of death, in a sort of fading out into darkness. But all of a sudden he opens his eyes, as in alert. He makes his heart start up [B 23-24]



Tst = i ib = i

But I comforted my heart

No introductory phrase: just a sudden flash. We understand that something must have happened, but we don't know what. Then the laying Sinuhe sits up, pulling himself together:

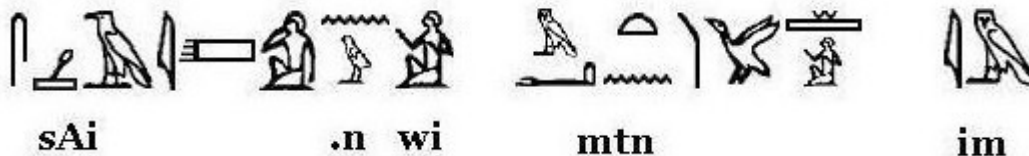


sAqt = i Haw = i

I put my limbs together

Only after that we are told that he heard the lowing of cattle, which of course meant that people were nearby. In this case, as before, the verbal form is a narrative infinitive, used twice and separately, probably with a pause of suspense, in order to express the abrupt change of circumstance.

The rest of the scene, in his brevity, shows nonetheless a skilled vividness, especially when the chief of the Asiatics looks at Sinuhe and recognizes him,

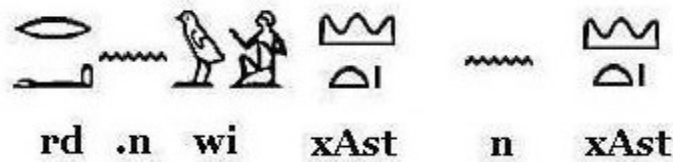


One, who was their chief, looked me through and recognized me:

stating that he had been in Egypt [B 25-26]. The verb "siA/sAi", with its connotations of "perception", does express the gradual process of scrutinizing and identification. It's doubtful whether the chief of the Asiatics recognizes just an ordinary Egyptian or Sinuhe, the courtier. The first case seems most probable; thus what follows would describe the hospitality and kindness of the barbarians. But it's not to be excluded that that chief, at the time he had been in Egypt, may be for commercial purposes, had the chance of meeting or, at least, of observing the noble Sinuhe; who, as we are told later, had a high reputation in his land. Were he a common Egyptian, would the Asiatics have made use of him as a sort of "testimonial", as narrated in the next block?

5] Sinuhe's meeting with Amunanshi

The tone shifts now from a plain narrative, describing Sinuhe's tour of Upper Retenu,



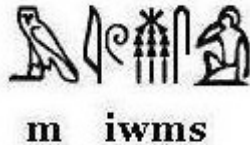
Land gave me to land

to a dramatic form in the dialogue between the Egyptian and Amunanshi, the Asiatic Prince [B 30]



when Amunanshi fetched me

The scene is indeed an artifice of subtle understatements. Amunanshi is not the naive barbarian that might seem; and Sinuhe gives a show of diplomatic ability in justifying his flight, which he recounts, as he himself confesses [B 37]

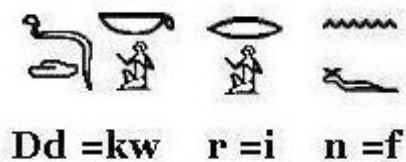


"masking the truth / in half-truth / ambiguously, obliquely".

6] Sinuhe's eulogy of Senwosret

This subtle play of saying and not saying keeps going on in the next sequence, although the general tone has an abrupt change when Sinuhe begins his eulogy of Senwosret. Replying to Amunanshi's remark that Egypt, after Amenemhet's death, must be in a difficult situation, Sinuhe makes a show of what looks like a *propaganda newsreel*. A triumphal tone that, at the end, morphs into a mild and paternalistic one, describing Senwosret's kindness towards countries loyal to him.

The eulogy is introduced by an uncommon grammatical choice of a verb form [B 45]



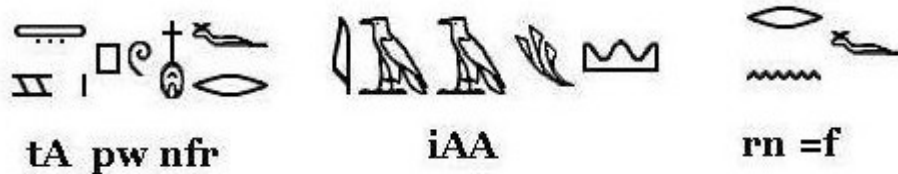
So I did speak to him

That is not just an archaic form of a plainer "***Dd.n =i n =f***". Having understood Amunanshi's understatement, a sort of hidden provocation, Sinuhe does respond in kind. If the Asiatic assumes Egypt is in an unsteady political condition he is totally out of track.

The stative "**Dd =kw**" underscores the firmness of Sinuhe's reply. As a matter of fact, in his eulogy of Senwosret, Sinuhe does tell Amunanshi how loyal he is to his king. Usually this section is considered out of its context, as a general loyalist homage to the king. But that would leave out Sinuhe's own understatements. I'll expound on this in due time.

7] Amunanshi's benevolence towards Sinuhe

The mild and paternalistic tone of the end of the previous section continues with Amunanshi's show of benevolence towards Sinuhe. There is an idyllic atmosphere, somewhat pastoral, especially when describing, as in a documentary, the richness of the land assigned to Sinuhe **[B 81]**

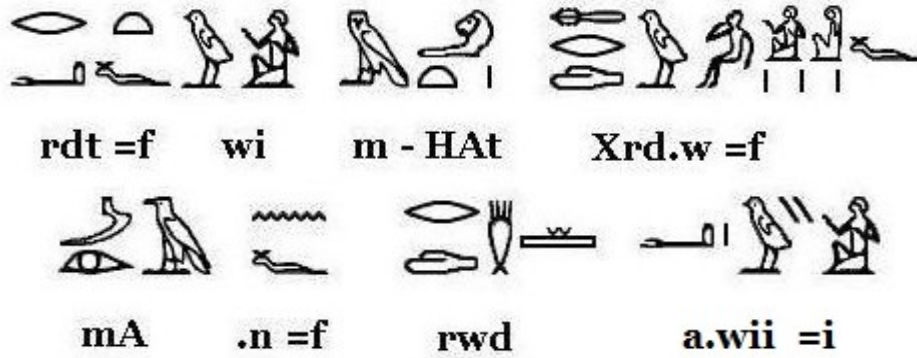


Beautiful land it was, Yaa its name.

and some traits of Asiatic life style.

8] Sinuhe's success in Retenu

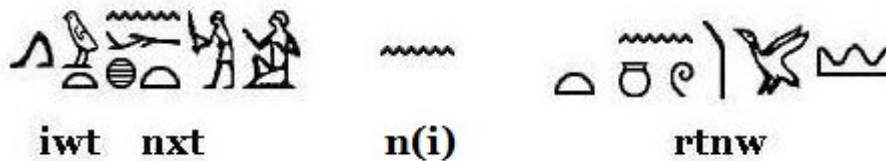
Then the tone becomes that of a chronicle. First a detached one, describing Sinuhe's personal and family life; which turns gradually into the self-complacent portrait of a successful man. In a certain sense it is the repetition, although in a minor scale, of Senwosret's eulogy; the end of it expressing his powerful political position **[B 107-109]**



He had placed me before his sons
because he had seen the vigour of my arms

9] Sinuhe's victorious fight against a challenging Asiatic

This sequence starts with the sudden appearance of a menacing warrior who challenges Sinuhe's power. A sort of lightning coming out of the blue **[B 109]**



Came a strong man from Retenu

A contrast cut. An abrupt change of tone. The historical narrative of the previous section turns into a dramatic one. It's theatre. The verbal confrontation of the first part of the passage is an indirect dialogue reported by Sinuhe, who re-enacts his challenger's boastfulness. Then comes the direct dialogue with Amunanshi **[B 113-127]**, which looks like the exposition of facts done by a lawyer in a courtroom. The aggressive stance of the challenging Barbarian, balanced by the proper, accurate and skilful rhetoric of the civilized Egyptian.

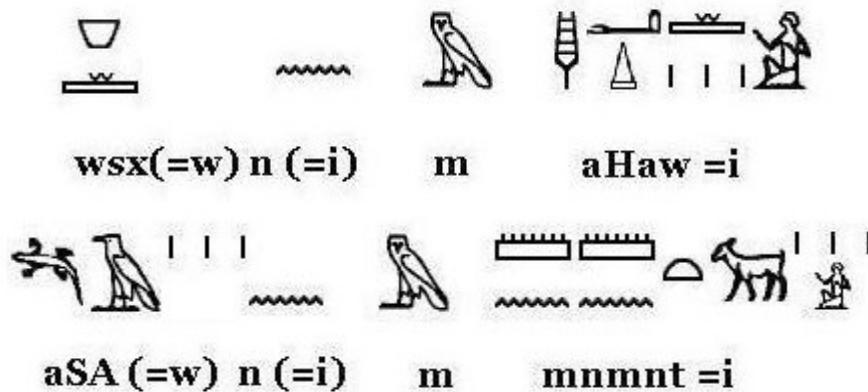
The second part of this block, the duel **[B 127-147]**, is an example of film editing, with its competent alternance of shots, angles, transitions and cuts. It's a technique aimed at stirring the emotional involvement of the audience towards Sinuhe.

The suspense of the duel reaches its climax when Sinuhe strikes the fatal blow with the battle-axe on his enemy's head [B 140]



I gave him a finishing blow with his own battle-axe

Then there is the ghastly silence of the followers of the dead warrior, their wailing and Sinuhe's excited reaction. The violent plundering of his enemy's encampment, of his goods and cattle [B 143-146], is not a manifestation of greed, but of a nervous discharge, followed by a wearied repose; which, in a certain sense, marks the conclusion of his Asiatic experience. The last words [B 146-47]



large in my riches
abundant in my cattle

might seem the satisfied statement of the successful self-made man; but, as a matter of fact, one might look at them as the melancholic contemplation of a detached existence. How meaningless riches are for the homesick exiled!

10] Sinuhe's existential reflections

I think this is one of the most pregnant, intriguing and moving passage of the whole text. There is no narrative here, but an interior monologue. These are the existential reflections of a man taking stock of his life. Self murmured words which turn into a prayer to the god who decided his destiny. What must be noted is the "temporality" of the passage, or, better, its quantistic time structure. This needs a more detailed analysis. Let's single out the various components:

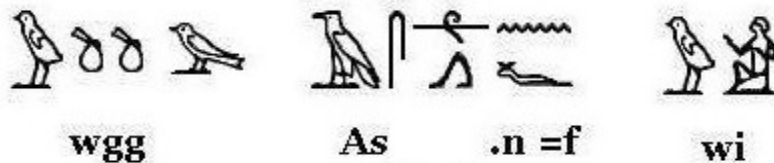
a) B 147-149: Sinuhe believes his victory is the sign of favour and appeasement of the god who forced him into exile.

b) B 149-156 : Sinuhe compares the predicament he was in at the time of his flight to his present successful position; which, nonetheless, does not heal the nostalgia for his native land.

c) B 156-164: Sinuhe begs the above mentioned god that he allow and favour his return to Egypt.

d) B 165-173: Sinuhe manifests the hope that, like that god, Senwosret himself be merciful to him, letting him see again the king's royal Spouse and children, before his incoming death.

Now **(a)** may be considered as a reflection of Sinuhe's, directly following his victorious fight; but not **(d)**, when Sinuhe says that he is old and tired **[B 168]**



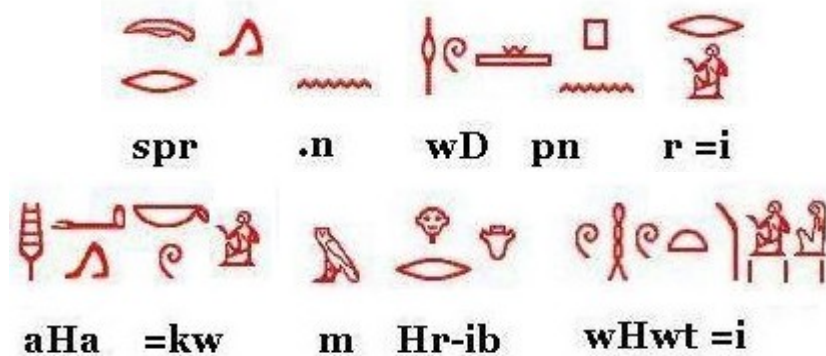
weakness has come over me

heavy eyes and feeble arms! That was not his physical condition at the time the duel took place. That means that there has been an unexpressed modification of a perspective that is not only

I think things are not so naive and we may in fact detect another more subtle morphing, namely that of the enigmatic god of **(c)** turning into Senwosret in **(d)**. As usual, I'll be more clear in the second part of this analysis.

11] Senwosret's message to Sinuhe

Sinuhe's melancholic and homesick reflections result in a sort of petition to Senwosret, who is ready to show his benevolence. The intimate tone of the interior monologue becomes now a solemn recitation of the king's message. In fact there is first Sinuhe's increasing joyful accent expressing Senwosret's kindness, abruptly checked by the utterance of the official decree, which, one must remark, is read aloud by the messenger. It's the king's voice, not Sinuhe's narration. And one must also not leave unnoticed the specific moment the decree arrives **[B 199-200]**,



This decree reached me
while I was standing in the midst of my tribe

namely when Sinuhe is in the midst of his tribe: the various Asiatic clans assembled with the Egyptian at their head. A sort of "chairman", although that might seem the contrary of "**aHa =kw**" describing his standing over his folk. And that, I am convinced, is not just a fortuitous accident, as we shall see in due time.

12] Sinuhe's reply to Senwosret

Sinuhe's reply is introduced by his enthusiastic reception of the king's message. The tone becomes that of wild excitement, which turns into the syncopated rhythm of his written answer, in fact a bundle of images which follow with a certain difficulty a coherent logic discourse. Sinuhe keeps deferring the moment of truth; or, to put it bluntly, the moment he will tell his pathetic excuse, filling the delay with praises and aiming at capturing the king's goodwill: a somewhat embarrassing show of *captatio benevolentiae*.

13] Sinuhe's return to Egypt

Then the tone assumes a melancholic touch, describing Sinuhe's farewell to his land and his power. His attitude is somewhat ambiguous. Personally I can't decide whether he is a little bit jealous, forced as he is to entrust to his eldest son his power and his goods;



sA =i

smsw

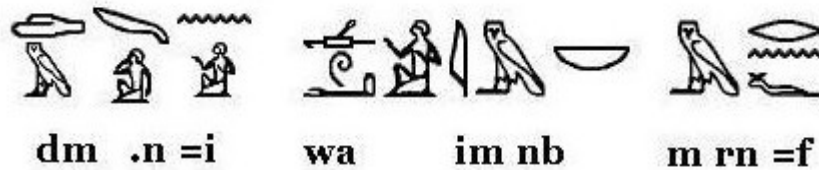
m - sA

wHiit =i

my eldest son in charge of my tribe

or whether he invites his son to take care of the goods and the tribes-folk he affectionately is giving him. It's interesting, though, that he does not spend a word on his wife. Very ungentlemanlike of him! Or perhaps a hidden invitation of the author-scribe to give it a due attention, for reasons that will become known at a closer look.

The rest of the sequence is told in a plain narrative mood, a sort of log of the journey to the kingly Residence; enlivened by the arrival of boats loaded with gifts from the king to the Asiatics who escorted Sinuhe. The naming of each of them may be seen as a diplomatic sign of respect, but also as Sinuhe's manly adieu to old friends whom he'll never meet again [B 246]



whom I introduced, each one of them by his name

The kneading and straining in the course of sailing home may be the festive greeting for the special guest and an anticipation of the culinary customs of the civilised Egypt. A joyful tone, though, which seems alien to Sinuhe's feeling. As a matter of fact all the sequence is under the shadow of Sinuhe's solitude. All the verb forms are 1st singular. At first it seems that he travelled the **Way-of-Horus** by himself:



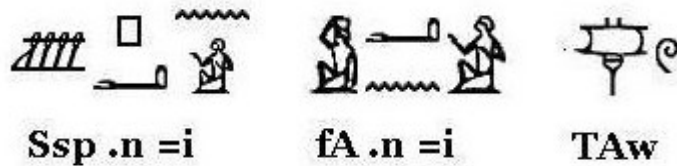
So, it was a journey, southwards, that this humble servant took

only later we know that Asiatics escorted him [B 245]



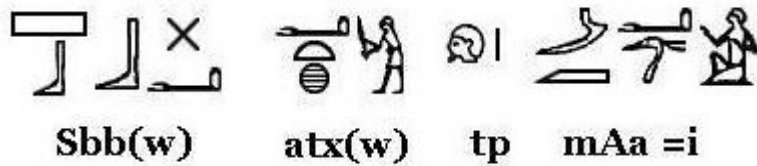
the Asiatics who had come in my following

The same happens with his sailing back home. It's him who sails
[B 246]



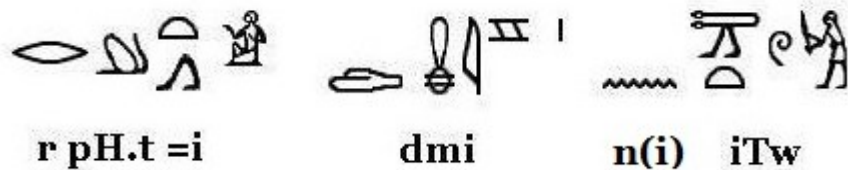
I did set sail

not the crew; there's kneading and straining



there was kneading and straining by me

(note the verb forms: either passives or impersonal infinitives) by
 or besides him, but he does not seem to participate; and it's him,
 not the crew, who reaches the moorings of Lisht **[B 247]**



till I reached the moorings of Yatchu [Lisht]

In other words, although in the midst of people, he is inside his
 own shell, living his anguish in total isolation. And the cheering of
 the feast gradually turns into the anxious stillness of the landing.

14] Sinue's meeting with Senwosret

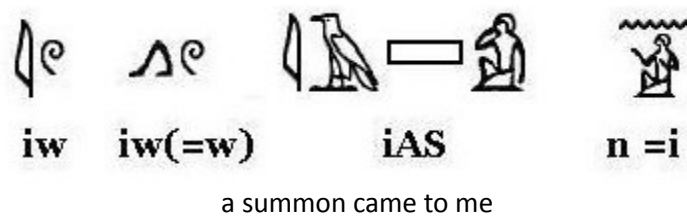
This sequence is in fact divided into three blocks:

- a) Sinuhe's entrance into the Palace;
- b) Sinuhe's meeting with Senwosret;
- c) Sinuhe's meeting with the Queen and the royal daughters; and their entreaty in favour of the returned fugitive.

The apex of this scene is of course the official meeting with Senwosret. It is introduced by a suspenseful atmosphere [B 248]

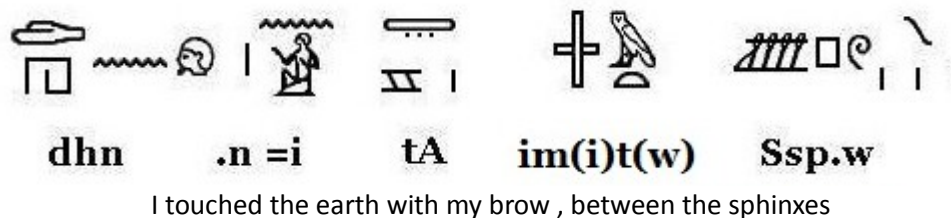


The dawning is not only realistic, but metaphorical as well; and filled with fraught premonitions: one cannot leave unnoticed the cacophony of

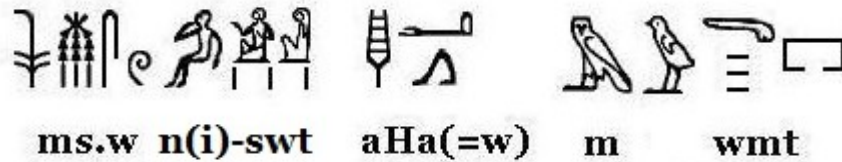


somewhat like stuttering.

The ten men, in their coming and going [B 248], more than guards look like impersonal metronomic beings. The same happens with Sinuhe's ritual kissing of the ground;



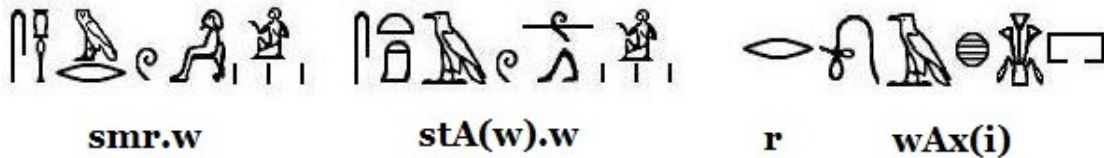
the formal encounter with the king's son at the entrance;



ms.w n(i)-swt aHa(=w) m wmt

The sons of the king were standing at the entrance

(I am of the opinion that the collective king's children [*msw-n(i)-swt*] are in fact divided into two groups: the sons at the door of the Palace, the daughters inside); his approach to the the Audience Hall escorted by the Companions who are appointed to that task [**B 250**] :



smp.w

stA(w).w

r

wAx(i)

the Companions, who usher to the Forecourt

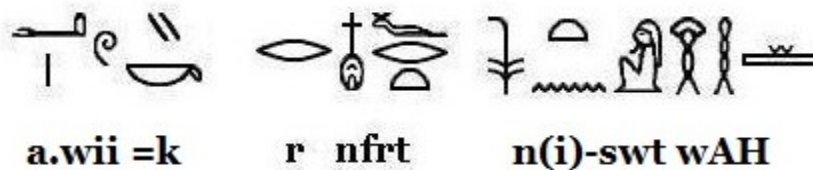
All formal steps of the expected ritual.

The meeting with the king is a little more complicated. At first glance one might take note only of the sacredness of a numinous aura overcoming the frailty of the humble man, himself overwhelmed by an impending sense of guilt. But I am inclined to look at the whole from a different perspective. Granting that tremor and awe engulf the scene, I'd place its sacredness on a level definitely more terrestrial, filled by oblique subtle understatements and a mutual and tacit complicity. Of course according to my interpretation of **B260-262**, which I'll elucidate later on.

The dramatic nuances of the third block shows a charming and

clever scribal palette. First there is a sort of domestic scene between the king and his family, a vivid contrast with the reverence of the previous one. Then comes the dance of the princesses [B 269-79]. In its essence it seems to be a ritual centred on the figure of Hathor, the goddess who bestows life, prosperity and health. The *menit* and the *sistrums* used in the course of the dance are in fact her symbols. But in our case we may see in it also a ritual of appeasement between the King and the Queen, which settles once and for all what I call, anticipating, the "Sinuhe affair".

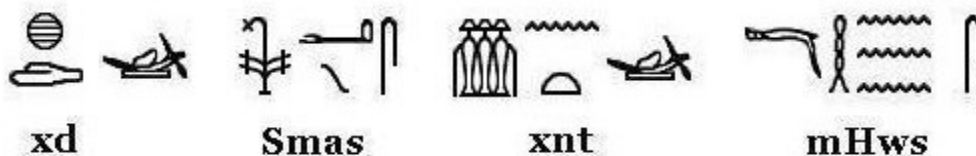
The text describing the dance of the princesses looks like a series of choreographic directions, each figure expressing a specific movement. This is not the place for showing a possible reconstruction, but I can't help thinking that in [B269-272] the princesses (I figure two of them) are bringing the queen (Hathor) towards the king's throne;



a.wii =k r nfrt n(i)-swt wAH

Your arms upon the beauty, O long living king,

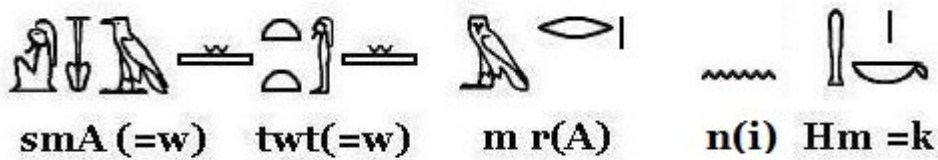
that the meeting of the southern and northern crowns



xd Smas xnt mHws

may go northwards the Crown of the South, may go southwards the Crown of the North

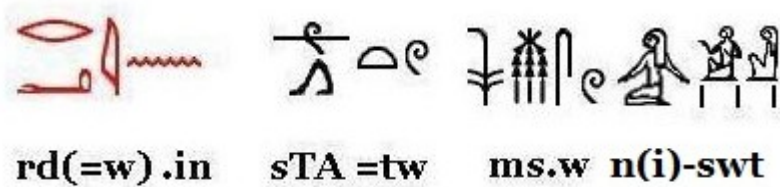
hint at the wish of the princesses that the royal pair be united in peace; that the enigmatic



joined and united on the mouth of Your Majesty

may in fact be the description of a symbolic reconciling kiss.

Of course the text does not mention the spatial positions of the participants, but we may have an idea of that. In the previous sequence Sinuhe begs Senwosret's mercy prostrating himself (or kneeling) before the king. We may legitimately suppose that when the queen and the princesses enter the Hall



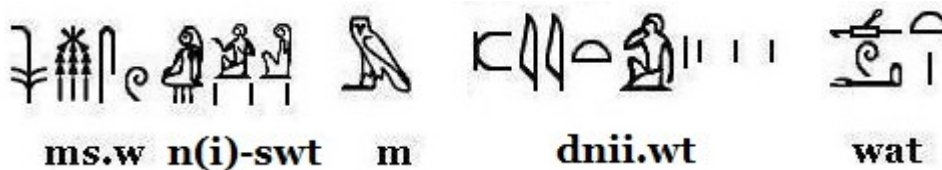
Then they let be brought in the daughters of the king

(the scribal choice "**rd.in =tw**") may hint at the fact that the queen and the princesses were so eager to meet Sinuhe, that they could hardly be restrained from entering without permission -- but finally they were let in) they place themselves between the king, seated high on his throne and Sinuhe on his knees, whom they have not yet recognized, since he probably keeps his head down. When the king says who that man is, they turn around; and when Sinuhe lifts his head there is an exchange of looks between him and the queen, followed by her shout of surprise



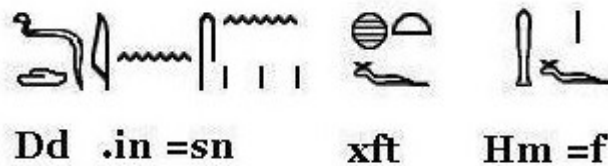
She uttered a huge cry

and by the same reaction from the princesses.



and the royal daughters screamed with one voice

And I am of the opinion that the "*sn*" of



And they said, addressing His Majesty

is referred to them. They ask if that man is really Sinuhe, whereas the queen has recognized - and keeps looking at - him.

At this point starts the symbolic dance. The princesses take their mother by the hand, have her turn around from Sinuhe and advance toward Senwosret. Thus the queen/Hathor stands between her husband and Sinuhe; she acts as Sinuhe's shelter, as the Lady of the Sycamore, namely Sinuhe's mother and protectress. In [B 274] the expression of joy is addressed to the reconciled royal pair:

hy n =k mi nbt r-Dr

Hail to you as to the Lady of All!

Obtained that, the princesses reclaim Sinuhe as their reward, looking straight and without fear in the eyes of their beloved father [278-9]

nn Aiiit Hr n(i) mA(w) Hr =k

but it does not pale the face of the one who looks at your face;

nn snD irt dg(w)t n =k

it does not fear the eye that is fixed on you!

begging for his mercy towards the lost sheep who returned to the fold.

The tone becomes then solemn and official when Senwosret grants his pardon and bestows honours on Sinuhe. Although this kindness may not be so sincere. Senwosret's pardon is in fact to be looked at with more attention, as I'll show in the second part.

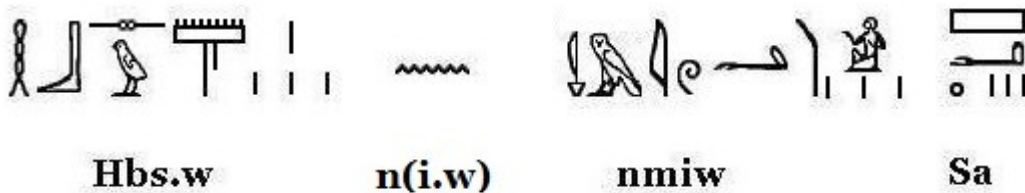
15] Sinuhe's reintegration and advancement

Now that things are settled the tone becomes quiet and placid, assuming a basic documentary style. We find the description of the refined luxury of the Egyptian way of life, so different from

that of the wild Asiatics. It seems in fact a comparative mirroring of the landscape shown in [B 79-87], the 7th block. There we were told the beauties of Yaa, the fruitful country; here we see a magnificent house engulfed by perfumes: nature against culture. There there was wild hunting in order to procure meals, men eating together with their precious hounds; here food comes from the royal kitchens. No encampments here, no sleeping on the ground, no rough stinking clothes; but fine linen, rich ointments and a bed. It's not only the cleansing of the body, but in a certain sense, of the soul. Sinuhe's past, his foreign and barbarian customs, put together in a filthy bundle and thrown to the desert.



A bundle was made of things nomadic



clothings of the sand-farers

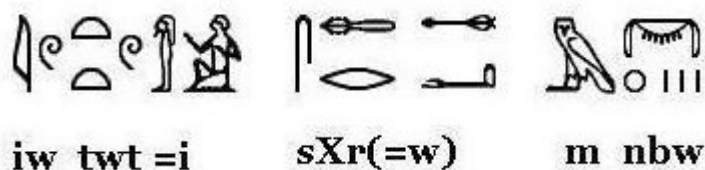
That may be a metaphorical reintegration, but I wonder whether Sinuhe didn't feel a sense of guilt in such a manifest show of ingratitude.

The documentary style keeps going with the vivid description of labourers at their work (an anticipation of Eisenstein's montage) that starts with an allegro, marking the various crafts; and then slows to an adagio when we go down the tomb and have a closer look at it and its environment [B 304] ;



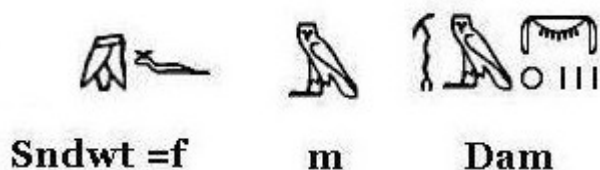
All the funerary equipment that should be placed in the shaft

and finally at his statue [B 307] ,



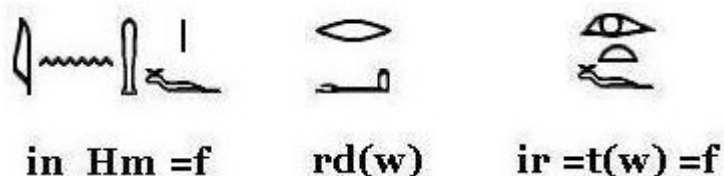
My statue adorned with gold

a lifeless (and perhaps meaningless) outer show of gold and electrum [B 308]



its kilt with electrum

Thus, if Sinuhe's mention of Senwosret in [B 308-9]



His Majesty it was who had it done

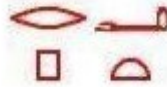
seems to be the open expression of thanks for the favour the king has shown to such an undeserving person as he feels he is -



SwAw

an unworthy man

in other words a praise for the king's generosity; nonetheless one might look at it from a reverse angle: the implicit disregard of the king towards a man who, although of noble origin,



(i)r(i)-pat

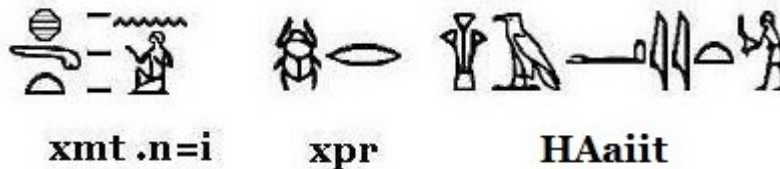
The Patrician

is in fact considered as a "lowly one", no matter how munificently he has been treated.

PART II

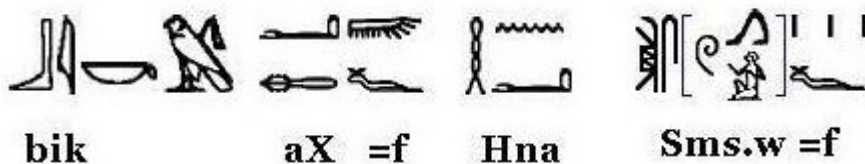
Now, since the performative approach, namely the choice of rhythms and vocal nuances, is founded on what Stanislavskij called the "super-objective", that is the basic idea that connects the logic and emotional objectives of the various scenes; I think it's time to get a clearer view of the themes that form the basic texture of the tale.

The most important is, of course, Sinuhe's flight; or better: the reason behind it. Sinuhe tells explicitly that, having forecast a civil strife following Amenemhet's death



foreseeing the emerging of a civil strife

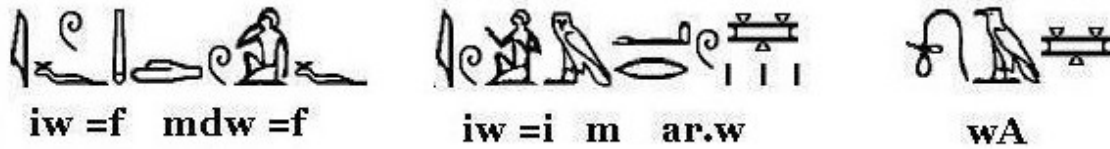
(the co-regent Senwosret possibly being challenged by another son of the king), he thought he might not survive it. One does ask: why? Is it cowardice? Is he afraid to side up with one or the other? What is exactly Sinuhe's relation with Senwosret? We know that he was not his follower, but Amenemhet's. In fact, when the "falcon" leaves in a hurry, not letting his army know **[R 21]**



The falcon flew with his retinue

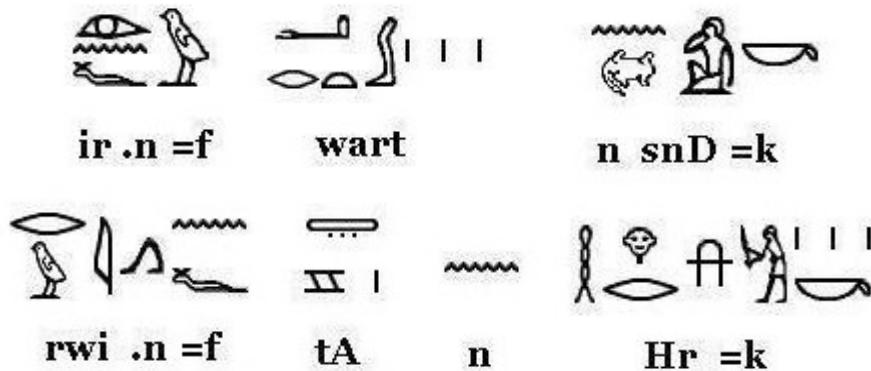
he does not call Sinuhe, who is not considered one of his retinue,

or someone whom he might trust. It's possible that Sinuhe either had noticed Senwosret's secret departure or had known it overheard the words in the tent of the other king's sons [B 1-2]



he spoke while I was nearby, at some distance

Sinuhe knows Senwosret's bravery and skill; and he is probably sure that the co-regent will soon have the situation under control and will proceed in a political purge. He does not take side with Senwosret's possible adversaries because he knows what the result shall be. However Sinuhe is afraid of Senwosret, as explicitly said in [B 277-278] by the king's daughters, who probably had first hand knowledge of the matter:



He has run away because of the fear of you
he has left the land because of the terror of you

Again: why? Now, although on the verge of speculation, I think that in the text there are vague hints at a possible love affair between Sinuhe and Senwosret's sister/wife Nafiru, whom, we know from the beginning, Sinuhe was an adoring servant of. In his message to Sinuhe, Senwosret makes explicit allusions to that [B 185-187], and Sinuhe himself expresses his devotion in

[B 166-167]. But in those two passages there is something more to be taken into account: the references to the queen's children (*m_{sw} =s / Xrdw =s*). Not the king's children (*m_{sw}-n(i)-swt*), whom Senwosret might have had from other women; but her specific ones. Nonetheless it's not to be excluded that it might be a hint suggesting that some of the Queen's children might be, in fact, of Sinuhe's begetting.

Now, let's not get it wrong. This is not a soap opera gossip, or, to put it more nobly, an Anna Karenina situation. We are not in a pseudo-Jacobean "*Revenge of the cuckold*". This is blunt, plain, cynic *reason of state*. Supposing that Senwosret might be reasonably annoyed, the most alarming fact is that a doubtful paternity might endanger the continuity of a dynasty (the XII) recently established in dubious circumstances. Amenemhet alive, his follower Sinuhe was under his protection; but, after his death the chance of being disposed of was to be taken into high account, even if he had nothing to do with a possible conspiracy. He was, no matter what, an undesired person. One might think that Sinuhe, egoistically, didn't worry about Nafiru and her (perhaps his own) children. But he probably knew that Senwosret would not have acted against his wife, namely the mother of his heirs, even though he was not sure of his paternity. That would have been contrary to political opportunity. He would not have harmed them, once Sinuhe were gone. That's why he can flee with a not too heavy sense of guilt, at least from that perspective.

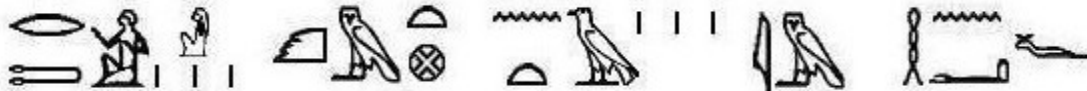
Let's deal now with Sinuhe's meeting with Amunanshi, the lord of Upper Retenu. The first thing one notes is the Prince's alleged ignorance. It seems he doesn't know anything about the death of Amenemhet, which is indeed highly improbable. He meets Sinuhe six months (some say a year and a half)



ir .n =i rnpt gs im

I had spent there half a year

after the event [B 29]. Is it possible that after such a long time he, a Prince of highest rank, didn't have any notice ? Especially since he has some Egyptians in his retinue (who, by the way, might even be members of his "intelligence" apparatus) [B 34]



rmT

kmt

ntiw

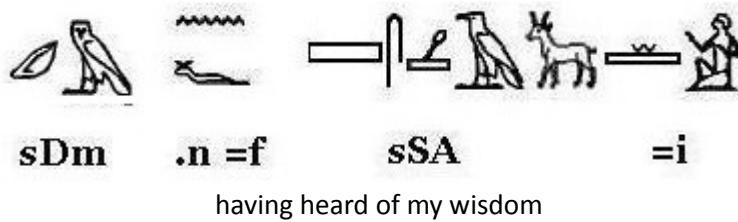
im

Hna =f

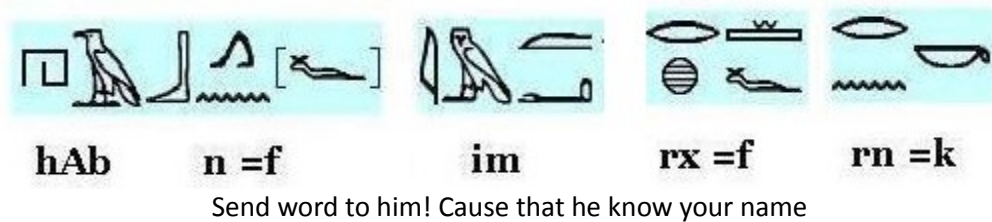
people from Egypt
who were there with him

In any case, he might have gathered news from Egypt due to the commercial exchanges between the two countries. No matter how slow the travels, six months would have been more than enough. Sinuhe knows better than that and acts accordingly (speaking in half-truths), inventing the excuse of his panic and of a supernatural force that compelled him, unaware, to flee through the desert plateaus. But what is more important is the second part of the interview, when Amunanshi seems to show concern about Egypt political stability [B 43-45]. That's an evident bait thrown in order to catch Sinuhe's patriotic attitude. He might show resentment towards Senwosret telling that Egypt is in a bad state and that the Asiatics might take advantage of the circumstance. But again Sinuhe knows better than that. How could he know what was Egypt's political situation since he fled as soon as Amenemhet had departed? He is sure Amunanshi knows what's all about, namely that Senwosret has ascended to the throne as

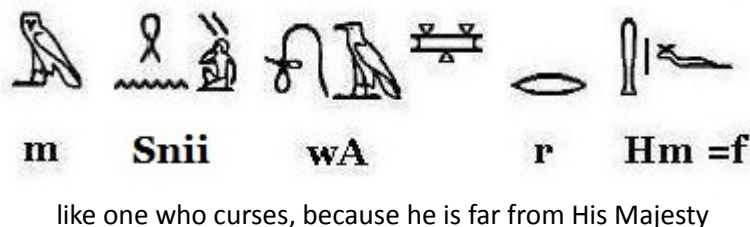
the appointed heir and has all under control. I wouldn't exclude the possibility that Sinuhe, in his wandering throughout Retenu, especially when in Byblos, did gather by himself the needed informations. (As the Egyptians at Amunanshi's court testified, he was a man of high renown and intelligence [B 32-34])



In fact he talks knowingly about Senwosret's ascension to the kingly state and starts a bombastic eulogy of Senwosret, portrayed as an invincible and mighty warrior and as a kind and fatherly figure for those lands that are loyal to him. I wouldn't exclude that the invitation he addresses to Amunanshi - that he let Senwosret know of his existence (his name) [B 73]



and how sorry Amunanshi is, being so far away from him [B 74]



is an ironic allusion to the fact that Sinuhe knows that Amunanshi knows. But it may be also an implicit prayer to the king that he let him (Sinuhe) come back home. In fact his eulogy has been an

open manifestation of faith and loyalty.

At this point, and one can hardly believe it!, after Sinuhe's declaration of faith, Amunanshi decides to make that Egyptian his vizier and administrator, putting him before his own sons [B 78]

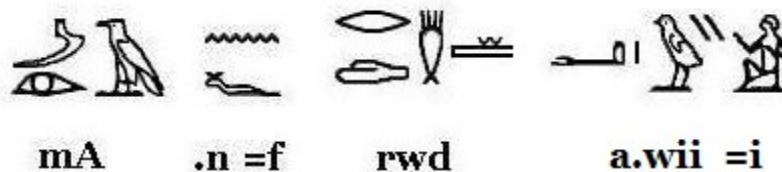


He placed me before his sons

Of course one might give to *m-HAt Xrd.w =f* a different meaning: Sinuhe appointed as tutor of Amunanshi's children (although *m-HAt = tutor* would be highly questionable). But in [B 107-109] the meaning is definitely clear: he was put in front of them (preferred to them) because of his strength and authority.



He had placed me before his sons



because he had seen the vigour of my arms

Thus, on what basis does Amunanshi appoint Sinuhe as administrator and chief of his army? Only because "his" Egyptians told him about his cleverness? I am more prone to think that he had first hand news of his ability.

[A PARANOIAC EXCURSUS]

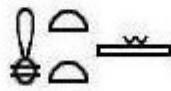
What if between Senwosret and Amunanshi had been arranged a secret agreement? That Senwosret had asked Amunanshi, once he had ascertained Sinuhe's fealty, to place him in a high position? With a reciprocal benefit. The clever and wise Sinuhe would give Upper Retenu an organized system, that would put order in the chaotic life style of the Bedouins, that would subjugate and control rebel tribes and give the land a profitable peace and advancement. As for Senwosret, the exiled Sinuhe would act as his indirect long hand, a sort of unappointed viceroy, engaged in a subterranean colonization of the Asiatic land. If unwanted in Egypt, he might prove useful in Retenu. A control through force or direct Egyptian intervention would not have the same outcome, triggering native revolts. The action of a man who was no more an Egyptian would certainly work out more positive results. Which is exactly what does happen.

[END OF THE PARANOIAC EXCURSUS]

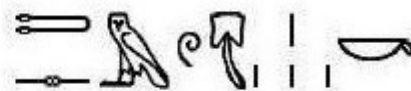
Now, leaving aside this paranoiac excursus, the fact remains that Amunanshi is quite firm. And it is clear that he wishes to have friendly relations with Egypt, otherwise he would not promote a fervent loyalist to such a high office. The excellent Sinuhe is now in Retenu: he shall stay there and become his son-in-law. In other words he has to establish roots in that foreign land and be quiet about it. Sinuhe has to accept, *obtorto collo*, his mission of civilising the barbarous land and repressing revolting tribes [B 92-109]. And his policy seems indeed Egypt oriented. It is not a coincidence that, in his reply to the king's decree, he states that Retenu belongs to Senwosret as his hunting hounds do [B 222-23]



n =k im(i) s(i)



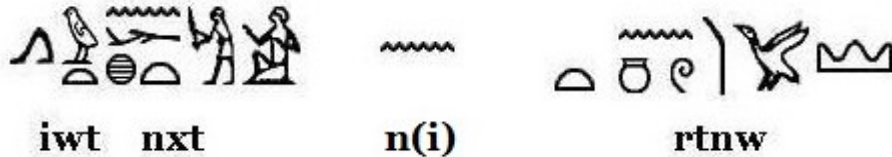
mitt



Tsm.w =k

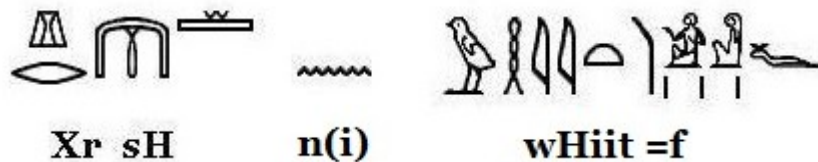
[Retenu] that belongs to you as your hounds do

But all of a sudden a native hero does appear with the manifest intent of challenging Sinuhe's authority [B 109-113].



Came a strong man from Retenu

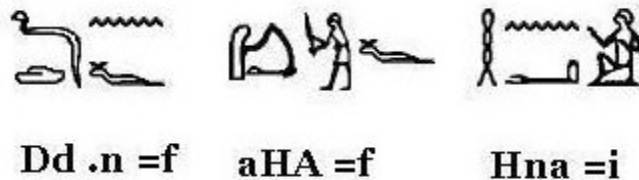
This is indeed a turning point of the story, hinting also at a possible change of mind from the part of Amunanshi. It should be noted that when he enters the scene in [B 113] he is referred to as "*HqA pn*", thus in his official state. And, from Sinuhe's answer (he uses again a "*Dd =kw*" form, as in [B 45]) we might sense a sort of piqued reply, as if the Prince was considering him guilty of the unpleasant situation. The native hero is not the expression of the will of power of a boastful warrior. He acts urged by his tribe:



following his tribe's counsel

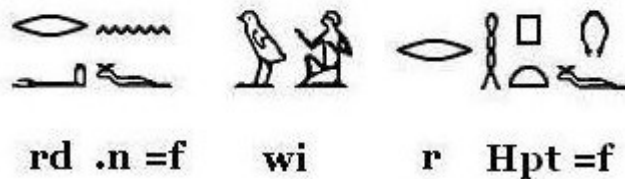
metaphorically, by the Asiatic land. It may be seen as a social revolt against Egyptian cultural colonization. In fact the hero appears just when Sinuhe has openly manifested his "superiority" before the Asiatic natives in [B 107-109] (see above) . Thus it is not to be excluded that Amunanshi himself gave his hidden consent to it, in order to test whether his champion was still in a position to face a powerful native warrior so that he could

possibly change his diplomatic approach to Egypt. There are in fact vague allusions to that in the words of Sinuhe. In [B 117-20] there's the image of the alien bull charged by the bull of the native herd, which is also called *ngAw*, long-horned bull. The two images may point to the challenger and to Amunanshi, the long-horned one (the crowned Prince). And in [B 120-122] there is also the proud attitude of the civilized man in front of barbarians. Sinuhe states clearly that, having been appointed to carry out a mission, he has no intention to draw back. I am of the opinion that [B 125 : *If his heart is prone to fighting, let him express his will!*] is referred to Sinuhe (under the image of the champion bull "*prii*"). The native hero has in fact expressed clearly his intention to fight in [B 111-12]



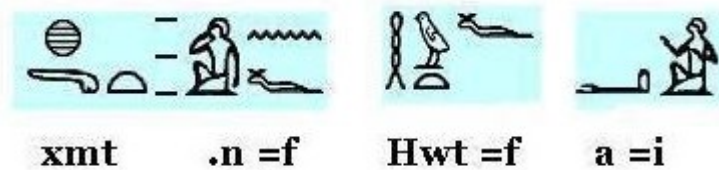
He said we should combat

so there would be no need of repeating what he has already unequivocally stated. Thus I think that it is Sinuhe who tells the Prince, polemically, something like this: "*I am willing to accept the challenge and you'll see by yourself the result. I am working on behalf of the god (Senwosret) who knows what's going on.*" In other words he lets Amunanshi know that he takes the side of his king and that he is still in a position to have the situation under control. The embrace of Amunanshi (now called by name, as if divested of his official charge) at the end of the duel in [B 142-3]



it was I whom he held in his embrace

is not simply a show of joy of the father-in-law. Once again Sinuhe makes clear that it was "him" (emphatic *sDm.n =f*) whom the Prince had to embrace, not the other one (as perhaps Amunanshi was hoping to do). The comparison between the barbarian Asiatic and the civilized Egyptian may also be seen in the modality of the fight. The barbarian tries to fight at close quarters in order to exploit his strength,



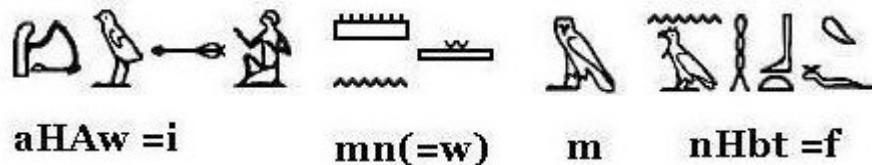
he intended to fight hand-to-hand

making use of a battle-axe (he didn't seem very skilled in throwing javelins);



vainly, one after the other

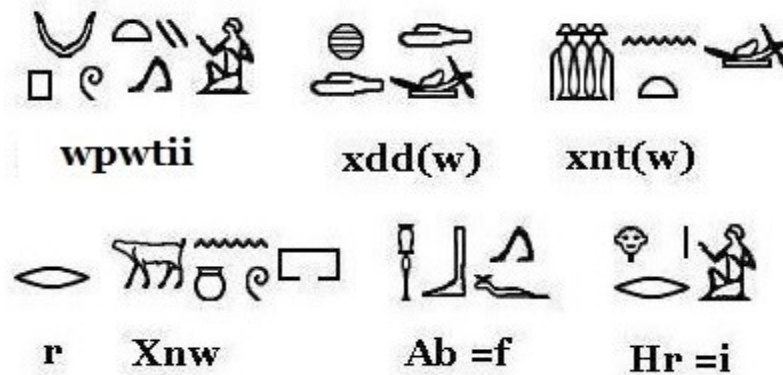
Sinuhe puts an end to the fight with just one arrow, as an expert archer.



my arrow stuck in his neck

Now, the combat marks the final phase of the Egyptian colonization of Retenu. Every dissent or protest is settled up. I can't help but thinking that Sinuhe has always sent news, directly or indirectly, through the couriers who went to or from the

Egyptian Residence and whom he made halt at "his" residence.
[B 94-95]



The courier who came North or who went South
to the Palace, he halted by me

Unfortunately for him, Senwosret didn't seem to give him officially any attention. But now what is apparently an interior monologue giving rise to a prayer **[B147-173]** may be looked at also as a sort of coded message Sinuhe sends to the king. A tentative interpretation:

B 147-49: You (Senwosret) should be now satisfied

B 149-50: There is ample witness of my loyalty

B 151-53: I have accomplished the expected political results

B 154-55: I have established an "intelligence net"

B 155-56: It's time for me to come back

B156-164: the explicit, unscrambled request of the king's (addressed as a god) permission to return (after having forced him to live in a foreign land)

B 165-167: Let me see again the Queen and her children

B167-170: I am old and I cannot control Retenu any more

B 170-173: Give me my due: let that I be buried in my native land

This time the king is ready to satisfy Sinuhe's requests. At face value Senwosret's message is an example of generous benignity, showing no bad feeling towards the fugitive, protesting his good intents (no way to confute that) and assuring him a honourable welcome and all equipment needed when the time of interment shall arrive. But if we look at it through an "adverbial" approach, things might show to be a little bit different. Let's see then the "*where, when and how*" of Senwosret's message. It reaches Sinuhe when he is "in the midst of his tribe" [B 200]



aHa =kw

m Hr-ib

wHwt =i

while I was standing in the midst of my tribe

namely during an official meeting. The verb "**aHA =kw**" is, perhaps by coincidence, the same which introduces Sinuhe's entrance in the tale: [B1]



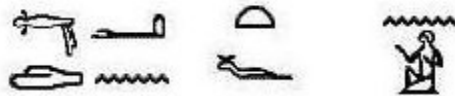
ist

wi

aHa =kw

Being yet up and awake

His "standing" probably hints at the fact that, being the chief of the tribe, he is presiding the meeting of the various clans. Thus the official decree of the Egyptian king superimposes itself over the official meeting of the barbarous tribe. And, what is more important, it is read aloud by the messenger [B 200]



Sd .n =t(w) =f n =i

Once it had been read to me

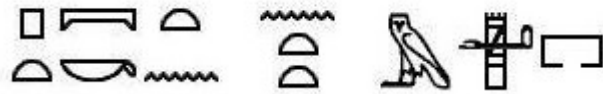
presumably in front of his tribes-folk.

It's not plausible that Sinuhe be illiterate or that he went into his private quarters to have the message read to him. Were it so, there would have been no need to specify the where, when and how. The fact is that Senwosret wanted to make sure that the Asiatics know who the big shot was and how he could give orders to their chief (**B188**: "Come back to Egypt!" - **B199**: "Come back!") Put more bluntly: he wanted Sinuhe humiliated in front of his tribe. A mortification!

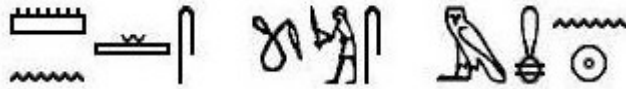
[Of course it has nothing to do with the "funereal" passage of the decree's last part - a funny semantic coincidence, though! And one must also note that the detailed description of the funeral rites of the Egyptians is, among other things, a means to make clear the triumphant superiority of Egyptian culture compared to the barbarous customs of the Asiatics].

A mortification which Sinuhe does submit to in [**B 199-204**], when he runs around his encampment shouting how magnanimous Senwosret is.

The outer and embarrassing show of submission must have cost Sinuhe a lot, but he had no choice if he wanted to go back and have a last look of his adored Nafiru! There is in fact a specific allusion to that in the king's message [**B 185-187**]



pt =k tn nt(i)t m aH



mn =s rwD =s m min

This sky of yours who is in the Palace,
to this day is still firm and prosperous

The king specifies, obliquely, that the "love affair" has been settled once and for all; that both Nafiru and her children are safe: the Queen a faithful wife; her children kingly offspring. But when he says that Sinuhe shall live on their (the queen's children) generosity he makes clear that they - not the king - shall be, basically, his means of subsistence. Although things won't be exactly like that, that allusion is, at that moment, another form of humiliation, as when in [B 189-90] he points out that Sinuhe has become old



iw min is SAa .n =k tni

For this is the very day when you have begun to age

and, most of all, has lost his "virility":



fx .n =k bAAwt

having lost the manly strength

Which is, all summed up, the reason why Senwosret decides to call him back. Sinuhe is no more useful. Of course the king could leave him there in his decrepitude, but that wouldn't be a shrewd political move. Senwosret must have a hold on Retenu and Sinuhe's power must be assigned to a younger and more effective figure: Sinuhe's son, who probably has been educated according to Egyptian customs.

sA =i smsw m - sA wHiit =i
 my eldest son in charge of my tribe

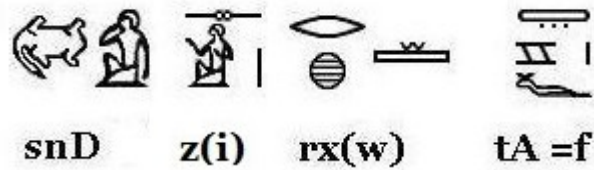
It's not a coincidence that Sinuhe is allowed just "a day" to settle his domestic and social affairs.

rd =t(w) irii =i hrw m iAA
 I was allowed to spend a day in Yaa

He must be an obedient and prompt servant. And Sinuhe's reply to the king's decree, written by his hand, is a signed and official act of submission. He is positive about it, in [B 230], when he states that he is not (and has never been) arrogant in front of him,

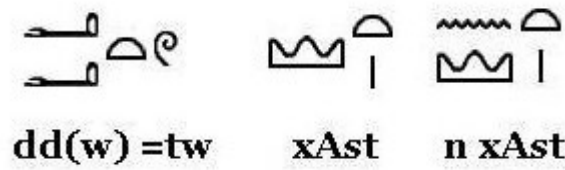
n ink is qA(=w) sA xnt (=k)
 I am not a haughty man in front of you!

since he knows his own "limits"



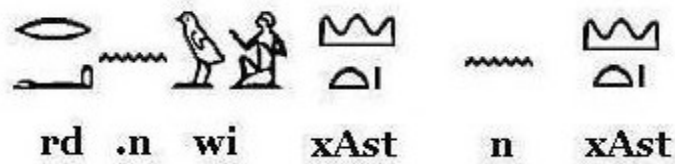
For a man who knows his limit manifests fear

and that he is going to obey on the spot to the commands he has been given, namely to resign his position (**B234-36**: in which we find "**bAk im**" [humble servant] repeated thrice). Nonetheless in **[B223-230]** he hints at the king's attitude which in fact determined his flight. **[B 226-28]** is the third repetition, basically with the same words, of the same concept: *there was no accuse against him*. The first time was used by Sinuhe **[B40-41]** in his first encounter with Amunanshi, which I called a sort of "debriefing". Then it was repeated in the kings decree **[B183-4]**, I think not by a coincidence. In fact **[B 182]**



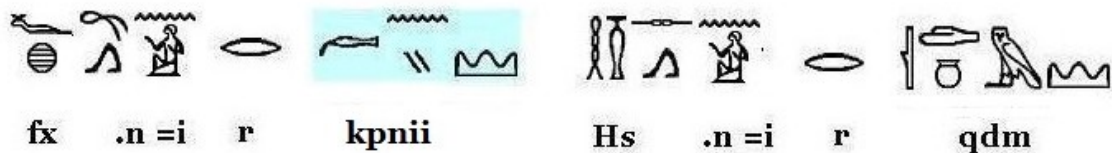
land giving you to land

is basically the same as **[B 28-9]**



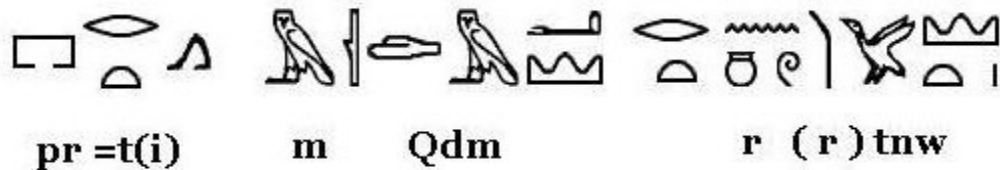
Land gave me to land

And a further similarity is seen in **[B28-29]**



Having left Byblos I returned to Qedem

and in the kingly **[B 182]**




left Qedem for Retenu

In other words the king tells Sinuhe that he himself has an "intelligence net" and that he knows what happens even inside the princes' private quarters. Things that Sinuhe of course does know, especially when hinting **[B 217]**



who took council about him

He knows that the king had been continually informed about his doings. Thus although the king had not been, materially, the reason of his flight (Senwosret denies his hostility **[B 186]**)

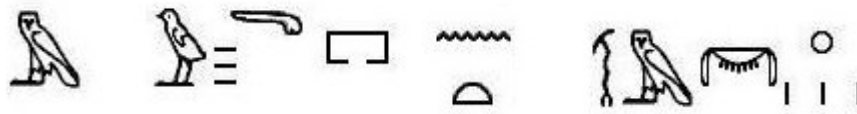


n ntf m ib(=i) r =k

it was not in my heart, to act against you

- but wouldn't Hamlet say "*Words, words, words!*"; he certainly was responsible for Sinuhe's long exile, having used him, cynically, as an indirect political instrument. He left him in Retenu as long as he judged it profitable.


The meeting with Senwosret [B 248-263], behind the apparent kindness, shows the same patronizing approach. Sinuhe is not even given time to make himself fit to be seen. He is escorted by anonymous guards to the palace, more like a prisoner than a honoured guest. Forced to appear in his dirty and bad smelling clothes in front of the triumphant king, attired in gold and electrum.



m wmt n(i)t Dam

in a gateway of electrum

The apparent friendliness of the king



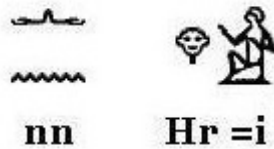
nTr pn Hr wSd =i xnmw

Although this god was addressing me friendly

does not reassure him; he is quite aware of his impotence. In fact Senwosret seems to reproach him, repeating once again that he

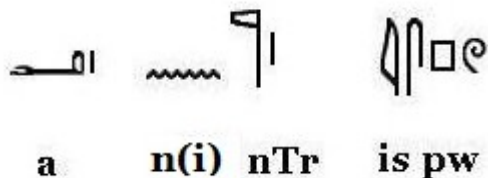
fled by his own decision, and that - having had a good and successful time in Retenu, but now having become old and weak - he has come back to take advantage of the Egyptian funerary rites which shall offer him enduring life, since those of the Bedouins won't obtain the same effect. In other words the king accuses Sinuhe of base opportunism. Sure, he may say that ironically, but the patronizing superiority is present and strong. The king waits for an answer: what can the fugitive say in his defence? Perhaps that's too much for Sinuhe, and in a bitter, though repressed, show of injured pride, he says clearly what he has already hinted at in more than one occasion, lastly in his reply to the king's decree.

For whoever has ears to hear : his flight did not depend on him
[B 261]



It was not my face (myself)
 [it did not depend on me]

but it was the more or less manifest decree of a god **[B 262]**



it was the arm of a god

(namely Senwosret). The political situation was such that he, Sinuhe, had no choice; thus his flight had been, in a certain sense, preordained



mi sxpr(w) wart SAAt

like a flight which was preordained

Sinuhe has finally relieved himself, although that might cost his life. And he is ready to accept the king's punishment



mk wi m-bAH =k ntk anx

Look, I am on my belly before you and life is yours

But Senwosret is not such a fool. Sinuhe is a precious political instrument in his hands whom he can use in order to have a better control of his diplomatic relations with the Asiatic lands and tribes, some of them administered in loco by Sinuhe's son. In fact the kings will appoint Sinuhe "*administrator of the king's possessions in the land of the Asiatics*"



sAb aD-mr spA.wt itii m tA.w sti.w

the Governor and Administrator of the lands of the king in the Asiatic regions

The father-son relation will certainly be used in the king's favour. Nonetheless he wants to take a last revenge on Sinuhe's pride and lets the Queen and her daughters be brought in. The text says "*king's children*" (this word is somewhat misleading: they must have surely grown up!), but since the ensuing dance was of a kind performed by females, I think we are allowed to evince that they were female offspring; thus: princesses. The king wishes that her perhaps adulterous wife give a look at her old and worn out

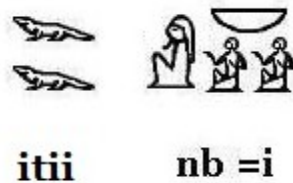
former lover.

Anyone can interpret as he likes the queen's shout [B 265]



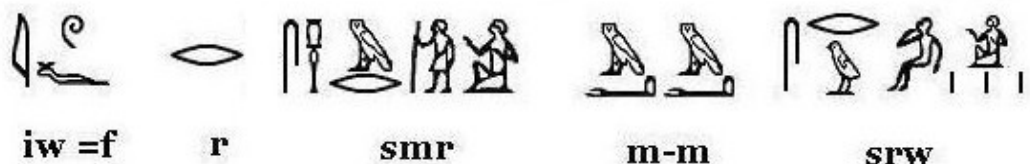
She uttered a huge cry

Getting old I am becoming sentimental, but I think this is one of the most moving episodes of the whole text. The exchange of looks between two aged lovers bringing back to memory the passionate days of their youth and, in this case, the nostalgia for what they might have missed. And it's possible that Senwosret himself, no matter how her daughters celebrate, in their dance, his might (note that the princesses call him "*itii*", which, true, is "soverain", but has assonances with "*iti*" = father



O Soverain, my Lord

They want to assure him that it was he who begot them: the crocodile is the image of Sobek, well known god of virility); Senwosret, I repeat, may nurture some feeling of bitter regret. At any rate, shrewd politician as he is, he makes a show of mercy and assures Sinuhe's reintegration in the Egyptian state.



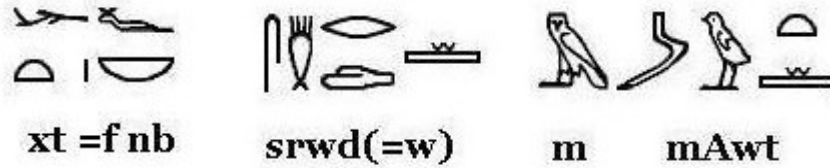
He shall be a Companion among the Nobles

But he does not address Sinuhe directly, he uses the 3rd person pronoun. So that one might see in it not only the apparent display of generosity or friendliness, but the devious reward of an implicit gentlemen's agreement. Not without a final gibe, though. Since one might detect a sarcastic tone when Senoswret invites her daughters to bring Sinuhe to the "**aXnwti dwAt**".



Now, it seems all agree that what is meant by that is the "**pr dwat**", the "*house of morning*", where the daily cleansing of the god's statue took place. But "**aXnwti**" (Audience Hall) is of course more important than "**pr**" (house). Thus Senwosret hints sarcastically that Sinuhe needs quite a formidable cleansing; and, perhaps even more acidly, that Sinuhe's "Audience Hall" is in fact a "bathroom", just to make clear who the boss is.

This attitude may in fact be remarked, although in very subterranean sub-textual hints, in the last passage, especially in the final sentences. The outer show of richness and luxury Sinuhe is made partner of, more than a due reward seems to be a king's handout. Rich as Sinuhe may appear he does remain a "beggar", given meals from the Palace [B 297]

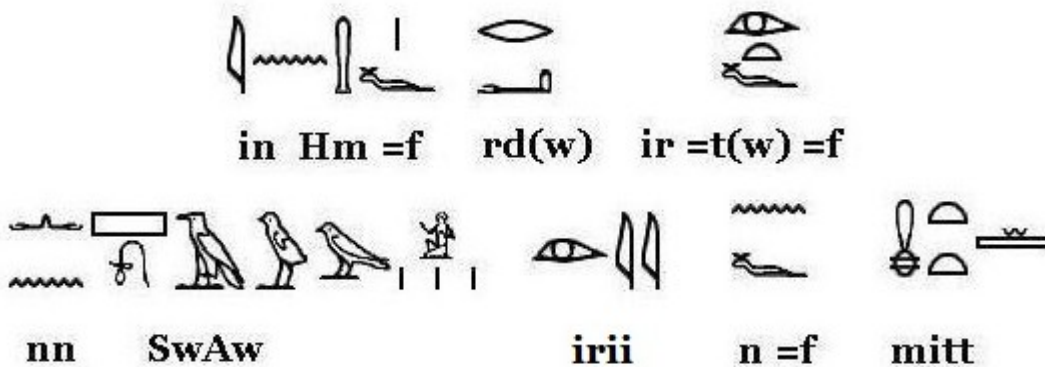


all its trees planted anew

Unless one interprets “xt” as “woodwork”: thus every piece of wood was new, not re-used from some other building.

But it may refer to a house that once had been in possession of a Companion. In a certain sense a "second hand house". And I wouldn't exclude that the house was that of Sinuhe's himself at the time he was still one of Amenemhet's followers. Abandoned, it became a ruin: thus its rebuilding.

At any rate I think, as I alluded at the end of the first part, that **[B 308-309]**



His Majesty it was who had it done.

There's never been an unworthy man for whom the like was done.

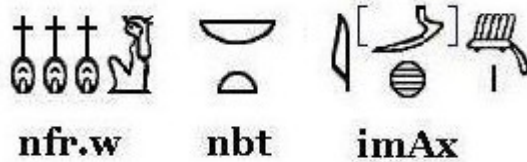
might hide a sense a little bit different from the most obvious one: a veiled, subtle reproach to the king, who, under the mask of benignity, is in fact a cynical statesman.

Now, as I have said in some occasions, this interpretation may be considered as a paranoiac over-reading (that may be due to the fact that I am a Finnegans Wake addict) of the tale, but what I ask

is this: the circumstantial evidences I extracted from the text are they mere speculations or is there some logic in them? Do they lack verisimilitude? Shall we look at the tale only as a triumphant peana to Senwosret's magnanimity, composed in a highly refined literary style for the delight and benefit of high-brow courtiers; and as political propaganda for naive menial people? Or are there other less obvious perspectives?

There's a point I'd like to remind, which I think has not been taken into due account, namely the "narrative isotopies", in their semiotics acceptation. There's not only the old Sinuhe (narrator) who tells the story of Sinuhe (the actant, he who lives the events). There's first of all the author of the tale, the one who devised it: the scribe. It goes without saying that I consider the text a work of fiction, not a real biography. There are, thus, three interfaced narrative levels. The presence of the author, although very discreet, is nonetheless evident. For example, when Sinuhe describes the sorrow of the Palace after Amenemhet's demise, that's a manifest impossibility, since at that precise moment he was with the Egyptian army in the Libyan land. Of course it might be considered an artistic licence, but I am more prone to think that the author wanted to give a knowing wink to the attentive reader/listener as an invitation to look at the text from a perspective different from the common one. One might also ask why the author didn't have Sinuhe reveal the true motive behind his flight. I have come to the conclusion that the author wanted to keep an ambiguous and mysterious atmosphere, filled with unanswered questions and improbable allusions, in order to expose, very tactfully, the hidden, disturbing sub-textual structure of the tale: the basic hypocrisy underlying human relationships especially when seen from a political point of vantage. **Reason of state** overcoming **humanity**. The "**SYSTEM**" against the "**single**".

As I said before the most impressive image of this concept is the melancholic look between the humbled Sinuhe and the Queen at the presence of the enthroned triumphant king. Thus, the author seems to say, if we don't know the motives of Sinuhe's flight we do certainly know the one of his return: the unexpired love he bore to the Queen, the thrice beautiful Nafiru:



Nafiruw, mistress of veneration!

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