

THE REPORT OF WENAMUN

The Story of Wenamun (alternately known as the Report of Wenamun, The Misadventures of Wenamun, or [informally] as just Wenamun) is a literary text written in hieratic in the Late Egyptian language. It is only known from one incomplete copy discovered in 1890 at al-Hibah, Egypt, and subsequently purchased in 1891 in Cairo by the Russian Egyptologist Vladimir Goleniščev (Camino 1977:1). The papyrus is now in the collection of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, and officially designated as *Papyrus Pushkin 120*.

The text is set in a "Year 5", generally taken to be Year 5 of the so-called Renaissance of Pharaoh Ramesses XI, the tenth and last ruler of the Twentieth dynasty of Ancient Egypt; this was equivalent to Ramesses XI's 19th regnal year. Egberts (1991) argues, however, that the story is set in the 5th regnal year of Smendes I, the Delta-based founder of the 21st Dynasty. As this latter view assumes the High Priest Herihor followed Piankh (their relative order is normally reversed), it has not found wide acceptance among Egyptologists.

In the first part of the narrative, **Wenamun** (also called **Wen-Amun** or **Wen-Amon**) dates his departure from Thebes as "Year 5, fourth month of the third season, day 16." Year 5 most likely refers to the fifth year of the Renaissance era, which began in the nineteenth year of the reign of Ramesses XI (1099-1069 B.C.E.). We are thus fairly certain that **Wenamun's** journey is set in the years 1075-1073 B.C.E., if we use the low chronology, or 1095-1093 if the high chronology is used. The middle of the fourth month in the third season corresponds to approximately 20 April, which is a reasonable time of year to begin an expedition.

As the story begins, the principle character, **Wenamun**, a priest of Amun at Karnak, is sent by the High Priest of Amun Herihor to the Phoenician city of Byblos to acquire lumber (probably cedar wood) to build a new ship to transport the cult image of Amun. After visiting Smendes (**Nesbanebded** in Egyptian) at Tanis, Wenamun stopped at the port of Dor ruled by the Tjekker prince Beder, where he was robbed. Upon reaching Byblos, he was shocked by the hostile reception he received there. When he finally gained an audience with Zakar-Baal, the local king, the latter refused to give the requested goods for free, as had been the traditional custom, instead demanding payment. Wenamun had to send to Smendes for payment, a humiliating move which demonstrates the waning of Egyptian power over the Eastern Mediterranean. After a wait of almost a year at Byblos, Wenamun attempted to leave for Egypt, only to be blown off course to Alashiya (Cyprus), where he was almost killed by an angry mob before placing himself under the protection of the local queen, who he called Hatbi. At this point the story breaks off, though presumably Wenamun did eventually return to Egypt after his various adventures.

I. Departure from Thebes and journey to Tanis

ll,1 "Year 5, fourth month of the Third Season, day 16: The day on which the Elder of the Portal Wenamun of the Temple of Amun, ll,2 [Lord of the Thrones] of the Two Lands, departed in order to obtain the lumber contract for the great and august [river]

bark of Amun King of Gods, |1,3 [whose name is] 'Amun, strong of leadership.' The day I arrived at Tanis |1,4 (at the place where Smen]des and Tanetamun were, I gave to |1,5 them the dispatches of Amun-Re, King of Gods, and they had them read before them. They said 'Yes!!' to the saying of Amun-Re, King of Gods, |1,6 our [Lord]."

II. Departure from Tanis

"I began the fourth month, while I was in the Residence of Tanis, when Smendes and |1,7 Tanetamun dispatched me with the ship's master Mengebet, and I embarked for |1,8 the Great Syrian Sea."

III. Arrival and larceny at Dor

"Within the month I reached Dor, a harbour of |1,9 Zeker. Beder, its chief, had brought to me 50 loaves (of bread), 1 flagon of wine, |1,10 1 hunch of beef. One man of my ship ran away stealing |1,11 . . . vessels of gold worth 5 deben, 4 jars of silver worth 20 deben, bagged silver 11 deben. |1,12 [Total of what he stole]: 5 deben gold, 31 deben silver."

IV. Wenamun's complaint to the ruler of Dor

"When I got up on that morning, I went |1,13 to the place where the chief was. I said to him: 'I was robbed in your harbour and since you are the ruler of this land and since |1,14 you are its (investigating) judge--retrieve my money! Indeed, as for the money, it belongs to Amun-Rec, |1,15 King of Gods, the Lord of those of the Two Lands; it belongs to Smendes, it belongs to Herihor, my lord and <to> other |1,16 great ones of Egypt. Yours it is. It is for *W-r-t*, it is for *M-k-m-r*. It is |1,17 <for> Zeker-bacl, the ruler of Byblos!'"

V. The reply of the ruler of Dor

"He said to me: 'To your importance! To your excellence! But look, I do not |1,18 understand that statement you said to me! If the thief belongs to my country, who boarded |1,19 your ship and stole your money--then I will replace it to you from my storeroom until one |1,20 has found your thief with his name. Alas--as for the thief who robbed you--yours is he, (as) he belongs |1,21 to your ship! Spend some days here and visit me! I will search for him!'"

VI. Wenamun's remonstrance

"I spent 9 days, while being moored |1,22 in his harbour. And then I went and visited him. And I said to him: 'Lo, you have not found my money! |1,23 [0, that I could contend] with the ship captains and with the seafarers!'"

VII. Beder's advice

"But he said to me: 'Calm down! |1,24 [If you wish to f]ind yo[ur money, hea]rken to my [words! Do what I tell] you and do not |1,25 [do When you are,] where you want to be, then take possession of their bundles and take possession of [their contents |1,26 . . .] and they will set out and search for their thief, who [stole your money]."

1,27 . . . [And after you leave] the harbour, lo, you should [sail into open water and avoid] 1,28 Tyre!"

VIII. Wenamun's journey to and arrival at Byblos

"And I went clear of Tyre by taking the light [of the stars as the 1,29 only guidance until reaching the realm of] Zeker-bacl, the ruler of Byblos. [And after we had moored, I searched] the ship, and I found 30 deben of silver in it. I took possession of it. [When I had disembarked from the boat, I said to its owners: 'Lo, as for] 1,31 your silver, it will remain with me until you have found [my silver and also 1,39 the thief], who stole it. Although you have not stolen, I shall confiscate it, except you (yourself compensate] me concerning the money!'

1,33 And when they had finally gone, I got myself shelter in a tavern at the shore of the harbour [of the Sea] of Byblos, and [I set up a shrine 1,34 for] Amun-of-the-road and placed his things inside it."

IX. The reception at Byblos

"The ruler of Byblos sent to me saying: 'Get [out of 1,31 my] harbour! And I sent to him saying: 'Where [shall I go?] . . . go 1,36 to If (you find a ship] to transport me, let me be taken 1,37 to Egypt again!' And I spent 29 days in his [harbour and he spent] the time to send to me daily saying: 'Get 1,38 out of my harbour!'"

X. The miracle in Wenamun's favor

"And while he offered to his gods, the god seized a page of 1,39 his pages and *he* put him in ecstasy. And he said to him: 'Bring [the] image up! Bring the envoy who is carrying it! 1,40 It is Amun who sent it! It is he who caused it to come!'"

XI. Wenamun gets ready for departure

"While the ecstatic carried on the ecstasy until that night, I had 1,41 found a ship which was bound for Egypt, and I readied all my belongings for it. And while I was looking 1,42 for complete darkness, so that when it descends, I shall transport the god in order not to allow that 1,43 another eye see him, the harbour master came to me and said: 'Stay until morning, says he, the ruler!' And I said to him: Aren't you the one 1,44 who always spent his time coming to me daily saying, 'Get out of my harbour!?' Aren't you saying, 'Stay the night!' 1,45 in order to let the ship, which I found, depart? And then you shall come and say 1,46 again, 'Move on!' And he went and told it to the ruler. And the ruler sent to the captain of the vessel, saying: 'Stay until morning, 1,47 says he, the ruler!'"

XII. Wenamun's audience with Zeker-bacl: The opening

"And when morning came about, he sent <for me> and had me taken up while the god rested in the tavern, 1,48 in which he had been (already) at the edge of the Sea.

And I found him squatting <in> his loft and when he turned his back |1,49 against a/the window, the waves of the great Sea of Syria were breaking against the rear |1,50 of his head. And I said to him: 'Amun will be merciful!' And he said to me: 'How long is it until today, since you came from where |1,51 Amun is?' And I said to him: '5 months exactly until now!'"

XIII. The request for Wenamun's credentials

"And he said to me: 'Granted that you are right, but where is the |1,52 edict of Amun, which should be in your hand? And where is the letter of the First High Priest of Amun, which should also be in your hand?' And I said |1,53 to him: 'I gave them to Smendes and Tanetamun!' He was really irate and said to me: 'Indeed, edict |1,54 or letter you have not! Where is the ship for the fir wood, which Smendes assigned to you? Where is |1,55 its Syrian crew? Did he assign you to that captain and the barbarians in order that he have you killed |1,56 and that they throw the you into the Sea? Because of whom has one desired the god or you? |1,57 Because of whom has one desired you?'--so he spoke to me."

XIV. Who has maritime power?

"And I said to him: 'Isn't an Egyptian ship and an Egyptian crew those who sail |1,58 under Smendes? So can he hire Syrian crews?' And he said to me: Aren't there 20 liners |1,59 there, belonging to this my harbour, which are in charter with Smendes? And for this, |2,1 Sidon is another, concerning which you are experienced, aren't there another 50 liners there, which are in charter |2,2 with *W-r-k-t-l*, which have hauled for his (i.e., Smendes') house!' And I was silent to this a long |2,3 time."

XV. Getting down to business

"And then he proceeded and said to me: 'For what commission did you come?' And I said to him: 'I have come |2,4 after the lumber contract for the great and august bark of Amun-Rec, King of Gods. As your father did |2,5 and as your father's father did (it), you should also do (it)!' --so I said to him. And he said to me: 'They did it in trade! |2,6 When you pay me for doing it, I shall do it! Yea, my forefathers performed this commission, when the |2,7 Pharaoh, l.p.h., had sent 6 ships and they were loaded with Egyptian goods and they emptied them into their |2,8 storehouses. But you, what is it that you have brought for me, myself?'"

XVI. Zeker-bacl's objections to the present deal

"He had brought records of the time of his ancestors |2,9 and had them read before me. And 1,000 deben of silver were tallied up for all in his records.

|2,10 And he said to me: 'As for the ruler of Egypt, the master of mine--for I am also his servant-- |2,11 is it possible that he actually did send silver and gold while saying "Do the commission for Amun!'"? Is it the delivery |2,12 of coronation gifts, as they used to exist, when he acted for my father? As for me--indeed--am I your |2,13 servant, am I the servant of the one who sent you? (Assumed) I will call loudly to the |2,14 'Lebanon, which makes the heaven open, and the wood is delivered there at the shore of the Sea--produce |2,15 for me the sails you have brought to tackle your ships,

which are carrying your wood to <Egypt> **l2,16** (or) produce for me the ropes you have brought [to tie the firwood,] which I shall cut, to supply it to you **l2,17** . . . (Assuming) I supply it to you and the sails <for> **l2,18** your ships--(and then) the main yards might be overloaded and might break--and you yourself might die at Sea-- **l2,19** lo, Amun could make a thunder in the heaven and appoint Seth for his time!"

XVII. Zeker-bacl praises the traditional order and decries the present

"Indeed, Amun takes **l2,20** care of all those belonging to the Two Countries; (but) he takes care of them, (after) having taken care of the land of Egypt, from which you come, **l2,21** previously! Indeed, reward came forth from it as far as the place where I am! And punishment came forth **l2,22** from it as far as the place where I am. What is this unsupported travel which you are caused to make?"

XVIII. Wenamun's reply and his praise of Amun

"And I said to him: **l2,23** 'Wrong! It is not an unsupported journey that I am on. There is not any ship on the river which **l2,24** does not belong to Amun! His is (also) the Sea! And his is the Lebanon which you think "It is mine!" He makes **l2,25** the growth (there) for (the ship) Amun-woser-hat, the queen of all ships. Aye! he said, namely Amun-Rec, King of Gods, in speaking to **l2,26** Herihor, my lord, who dispatched me. And he sent me bearing this mighty god. Now look, you caused that **l2,27** this mighty god spent 29 days moored <in> your harbour, while you did not find out whether he is there and whether he is the one **l2,28** he used a to be. You dally to empty the Lebanon on behalf of its lord!

As for your saying, that **l2,29** former kings used to send silver and gold--if they could have given life and health, they would not have sent those things! **l2,30** They had to send those (material) things instead of life and health <to> your ancestors. Now as for Amun-Rec, King of Gods, he is the **l2,31** lord of *the* life and health! And he was the lord of your ancestors. They spent their time of life offering **l2,32** to Amun. You as well, you are a servant of Amun! If you say 'Yes!' to Amun and carry out his **l2,33** commission--while you live you shall be well and prosperous and successful for your entire country and your people. Do not desire **l2,34** for yourself anything else from Amun-Rec, <King> of Gods!"

XIX. Wenamun requests funds from Smendes

"Truly a lion loves his things! Let your scribe be brought to me, that **l2,35** I may send him to Smendes and Tanetamun, those organizers of the land, whom Amun appointed for the North of his country, **l2,36** and they will have brought the wherewithall. And I will send him to them, saying: "Let it be brought before I can actually go back South!" And I shall **l2,37** bring to you any shortcomings as well!"--so I said to him."

XX. The arrival of funds sent by Smendes

"And he put my letter in the hand of his messenger. And he readied the mud-guard, **l2,38** the top of the bow, and the top of the stern together with 4 hewn timbers--total 7. And he sent them to Egypt.

l2,39 And his messenger went to Egypt and came back to me to Syria within the first month of the *prt*-season. And Smendes and Tanetamun sent: l2,40 of gold: 4 jars, 1 *k3.k-mn* vessel; of silver: 5 jars; clothing of byssus: 10 pieces; Upper Egyptian linen: 10 veils; smooth material: 500 doublets; l2,41 500 ox-hides; 500 ropes; lentils: 20 sacks; fish: 30 baskets. And she sent to me clothing l2,42 of upper Egyptian linen: 5 pieces; Upper Egyptian linen: 5 veils; 1 sack of lentils; 5 baskets of fish."

XXI. Zeker-bacl procures the lumber

"And the ruler was pleased and he supplied l2,43 300 men and 300 oxen, and he appointed supervisors in charge of them, to have them fell the lumber.

And they felled it. And they spent the winter at it l2,44 isolated until the third month of the *smw*-season, when they hauled them to the shore of the Sea."

XXII. Another audience with Zeker-bacl: An incident

And when(ever) the ruler came out, he stopped at them. And then he sent to me, l2,45 saying: 'Come!' And then when I approached him, the shadow of his lotus-fan fell on me. And Penamun, l2,46 a cupbearer who was with him, intercepted me, saying: 'The shadow of Pharaoh, l.p.h., your lord, has fallen on you!' And he became angry l2,47 at him, saying: 'Leave him alone!'"

XXIII. Zeker-bacl's request

"And I approached him (again). And he was responding and said to me: "Look! The commission which l2,48 my ancestors used to do previously, I have done it (too). But you, namely yourself, have not done for me that which your forebears would have done for me. Look! l2,49 The end of your wood donation has arrived and it is stacked up. Do me a favor when you intend to transport it--then could it be denied to you? l2,50 Do not intend to see the terror of the Sea! In case you want l2,51 to see the terror of the Sea, you shall also see my own!"

"Truly, I have not done to you what was done <to> the messengers of Khacemwese, because they spent 17 years l2,52 in this country and they (actually) died in their positions!" And he said to his servant: "Take him! Let him see their tomb l2,53 in which they lie!"

XXV. Wenamun's claim of special status

"And I said to him: 'Do not let me see it! As for Khacemwese, humans were those whom he sent to you as messengers. While human l2,54 of body, you don't have one of his envoys here that you could say: "You go and look at your colleagues!"'

XXVI. Wenamun proposes the wording for a commemorative inscription

"Do you not enjoy l2,55 when you cause that one makes for you a stela and that you (can) say on it: "Amun-Rec, King of Gods, sent to me Amun-of-the-road (as) his envoy, l2,56 l.p.h., together with Wenamun, his human envoy, in quest of the lumber-donation for the great and august bark of Amun-Rec King of Gods. I cut it, l2,57 I

transported it, and I paid for it and my ships and my crews. I let them reach Egypt to request for me 12,58 50 years of life from Amun in addition to my fate. And it happened!" And when afterward in another time an envoy comes.12,59 from the land of Egypt and he knows writing; and when he reads your name on the stela, you will receive water <in> the West in the way of the gods who are 12,60 there."

XXVII. Zeker-bacl accepts and Wenamun promises further spiritual benefits

"And he said to me: 'An important instruction for the wording is this, you said to me!' And I said to him: 'As for those many things which you have said to me--if I reach 12,61 the place where the First High Priest of Amun is and when he sees your commission--it is your commission which will draw 12,62 profit for you!'"

XXVIII. Wenamun attempts to find transportation

"And I went by myself to the shore of the Sea to the place where the 12,61 lumber was stacked up. And I looked at 11 vessels; 12,63 they had come in from the Sea and they belonged to the Zeker (ports?) . . . saying: 'Restrain him! Do not send ships 12,64 with him to the land of Egypt!'"

XXIX. Wenamun's despair

"And I was ready to sit down and cry. And the letter writer of the ruler came out to me 12,65 and he said to me: 'What is the matter with you?' And I said to him: 'Have you not seen those migratory birds which are going down to Egypt for the second time? 12,66 Look at them, they are able to move to the northern Delta! Until what has to arrive that I, who have been abandoned, am there? Have you not seen those who came 12,67 to restrain me anew?'"

XXX. Zeker-bacl sends consolation to Wenamun

"And he went and he told it to the ruler. And the ruler was ready 12,68 to cry because of the words which were quoted to him and which were sickening. And he let come out to me his letter-scribe bringing to me 2 flagons of wine and a sheep. And he sent 12,69 to me Tanetne, a songstress from Egypt who was with him, saying: 'Sing for him! Don't let him be desperate!' And he sent to me, 12,70 saying: 'Eat and drink! Do not despair! You shall hear what is to be said during the morning!'"

XXXI. Wenamun's case is settled and he departs

"And when morning 12,71 came, he had his assembly called together. And when he stood in their midst, he said to the Zeker: 'How about your journey?' 12,72 And they said to him: 'Assign to us who comes for those ships, (but) beat the one whom you are sending to Egypt as our enemy!' 12,73 And he said to them: 'I would not know (how) to restrain the envoy of Amun within my country! Let me dispatch him and you pursue him 12,74 to restrain him!' And he loaded me and came with me as far as the harbour of the Sea."

XXXII. The adventure at Cyprus

"And the winds threw me to the land of 12,75 Alasiya. And the inhabitants of the landing place charged against me to kill me. And I forced my way through them to the place where *H3-ti-b3*, 12,76 the princess of the town, was. And I met her, because she was going forth from her one house and was entering into another (house). And I 12,77 greeted her and I said to the people who were standing around her: 'Isn't there one among you who can understand Egyptian words?' And one 12,71 of them said: 'I understand!' And I said to him: 'Say to my lady that I have heard as far away as Thebes, the place where Amun is, the following: "Even so 12,79 evil is done in all towns, but right is done in the land of Alasiya!" Or is evil committed there, too, every day?' And she said: 'Truly, what is it 12,80 that you talk (about)' And I said to her: "As the sea raged and the winds blew me to the land in which you are-- 12,81 are you allowing that they accept my bow line in order to kill me? As I am an envoy of Amun, look, one should welcome me 12,82 at any time! As for the crew of the ruler of Byblos, whom they wish to kill--couldn't their lord find 12,83 10 crews of yours and kill them, namely he?' And she let call to the people and one arranged them. And she said to me: 'Be at rest! . . . '"