

AN EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY RAMESES

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For many years it has been the contention of the advocates of the "Late Date" Theory of the Exodus (ca. 1290 B. C.) that a Nineteenth Dynasty situation for the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt was demanded by the mention of the city of "Raamses" in Ex. 1:11. On the assumption that this reference was not an anachronism for the period of the oppression, but the name actually current for Tanis or Avaris (referred to in Dyn. XIX as Pi-Ramesse), it is urged that an early 13th century date for the Exodus is absolutely required. This deduction has long been open to question, however, in view of the apparent connection between the 19th Dynasty and the Hyksos royal line. As W. F. Albright asserted (*From Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed., 1957, p. 232). "The Ramesside house actually traced its ancestry back to a Hyksos king whose era was fixed 400 years before the date commemorated in the '400-year Stela' of Tanis. The great-grandfather of Rameses II evidently came from an old Tanite family, very possibly of Hyksos origin, since his name was Sethos (Suta) . . . Rameses II established his capital and residency at Tanis, which he named 'House of Rameses' and where he built a great temple of the old Tanite, later Hyksos, god Seth (pronounced at that time Sutekh)." This being the case, the proposition that the actual name "Rameses" itself was used no earlier than Dyn. XIX seemed more than doubtful, even though it might be true that Rameses I (1303-1302, according to IDB, iv, 10) was the first pharaoh to bear that name.

It was therefore of considerable interest to this writer to discover purely by chance, as he was looking through "Views of the Biblical World" (Jerusalem, 1960, vol. iii, p. 118), a wall painting of a prominent nobleman who served in the reign of Amenhotep III (1412-1376) and who was named Ramose, or Rameses. The accompanying inscription caught my eye, because it contained the characters so familiar in the cartouche of Rameses the Great. The scene depicts a procession of trusted servants who had devotedly followed "Ramose" during his lifetime, and who are now carrying to his tomb the choice objects which were to be interred with him: his sandals, his jars of ointment and beer, his chair and bed, and what seem to be four caskets containing smaller precious objects or mummified portions of his body. The first eleven

columns seem to read: "His people of his estate say: O guardians, the faithful attendant upon his call says, O'mountain of the west, open up (for) Ramose; mayest thou shelter him within thee. The attendant of the lauded vizier who served him; the attendant of Ramoses the justified, the good vizier."

The accompanying explanation supplied by the editors indicates that this nobleman was named "Ramose"; what they do not indicate is that this name is virtually identical with the royal name "Rameses" so frequent in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. In this inscription the name is spelled: mouth-r (D21 in Gardner's list), arm-'ayin (D36), sun-determinative (N5), single stroke (Zi), 3-foxes'-skins m-s (F31), chair-back-s (or folded-cloth-s - S29). The royal name is spelled the same except that a second S29 s is added (or possibly a swt-plant s-w, M23, followed by the w-chick, G43).

The two elements of this name mean: *Ra'* (the sun-god) *has given birth* (from the third-weak-radical verb m-s-i). It is well known that verbs of the *tertia infirmae* class (such as m-s-i) occur in geminating forms, both in the imperfective participle and the imperfective *sdm.f.* It is simply that the geminating form was employed with the royal name in Dyn. XIX; in the Eighteenth Dynasty, for some reasons, the royal names ending in -m-s ("mose") preferred the single s. Thus we have Ahmose spelled ih-ms, Thutmose is Dhty-ms, and Kamose (in Dyn. XVII) is written K-ms. But this constituted only a minor morphological variation, and the structure of the name "Ramose" (composed of R' - m-s, the name of the sun god, followed by the verb meaning to give birth) is unquestionably identical with that of Rameses. It is no longer possible for any scholar who has honestly examined this inscription to assert that this name was unknown before the Nineteenth Dynasty.

It would be interesting to speculate about the failure of this connection to be made in print—so far as this writer is aware, at least—until the present time. It is just possible that evidence unfavorable to the generally favored Late Date theory fails to excite sufficient interest in those who are acquainted with the data to move them to publish this discovery for the enlightenment of the world at large. But whatever the motives for ignoring this inscription up until now, at any rate the information is hereby made available to the public. The name Rameses, in its non-geminating form at least, was already known and used in noble circles during the reign of Amenhotep III, if not before. It would therefore have been no surprise for a fifteenth century Moses to have been well acquainted with it.

N. B.: This photograph is readily available in the 1964 2nd edition of "Views of the Biblical World," published as "The World of the Bible," Educational Heritage Press, N. Y., 1964, vol. iii, p. 118.