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MEMPHIS AND MYCENAE

BY CECIL TORR

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Section II

The Torr v. Myres Debate

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MEMPHIS AND MYCENAE

By Cecil Torr.

A Review by John L. Myres.

[**All page references in this section refer to the original 1896 publication]

III. In speaking of the Sothic cycle of 1461 years, I pointed out that the dog-star did not really rise at intervals of exactly 365.25 days; and consequently the cycle did not really amount to four times 365.25 years, or 1461. And I added that a period, which ended at Alexandria in 139 A.D., would really have begun there in 1318, not in 1322 B.C.; and further south, at Thebes and Elephantine, the beginning and the ending would both have been considerably later, as the date of rising varies with the latitude.

Commenting on this, Mr. Myres says: 'Mr. Torr may set his mind at rest; for if he will consult any of the principal contributions to Egyptian chronology from Biot downwards - of whom he quotes not one throughout the chapter - he will see that these elementary astronomical facts have not been ignored in the calculation of the current chronology.'

The facts being elementary, there was surely no necessity for referring to any works in proof of them. As a matter of fact, however, one of Biot's works is cited in that chapter, p. 56, though not upon this point. In that work Biot [5] makes the Sothic period reach back from 139 to 1322: so Biot ignored the 'elementary astronomical fact' that this period began in 1318. Of the authorities 'from Biot downwards' only two are specified by Mr. Myres; and these are Mr. Petrie and Herr Mahler. But in the very passages that Mr. Myres cites, Herr Mahler ignores that other 'elementary astronomical fact' by omitting to allow for difference of latitude, while Mr. Petrie not only adopts the dating thus obtained, but also makes the Sothic period reach back from 139 to 1322.

Here is Mr. Myres' statement: 'Theon of Alexandria puts an "era of Menophres" in 1322 B.C. Menophres, of whom Mr. Torr knows nothing, may well be Men-peh-Ra (Ramesses I.) whose reign is dated 1328-1326 by downward reckoning from Mahler's date for Thothmes III. (cf. Petrie, *Hist. Eg.* ii. 33).'

Herr Mahler gets his fundamental date [6] for Thothmes III. from an inscription in the Louvre [7]; and if that date is wrong, his reckoning collapses altogether. Now, this inscription was taken from a wall at Elephantine; but he makes no allowance for the latitude. He treats it as a record of the time of Thothmes III.: yet this is simply an assumption [8]. And in his calculations he assumes that it refers to the year of 365 days, though it may just as well refer to the year of 360. In short, his date for Thothmes III. depends on two

assumptions and a blunder.

Mr. Petrie [9] writes as follows:

A tablet of El Bersheh (now destroyed) was dated in the 33rd year of Tahutmes III. - the year of the feast, according to Mahler; and - more precisely - on the 2nd day of Mesore, which is only three days after the feast day on the 28th of Epiphi. And in this tablet the beginning of a million of Sirius cycles is wished for the king. Such an allusion to the great feast in that year, which took place only three days before this, is a brilliant confirmation of Mahler's astronomical reckoning; for, were that erroneous in any point, it would be entirely wrong, and hopelessly unlikely to agree with such a record.

The inscription in the Louvre is a fragment of a calendar; and this marks the 28th of Epiphi as the festival of the rising of Sirius. Of course, Sirius had to rise (heliocally) every year; but the great event was when this rising fell on New Year's Day, the 1st of Thoth. That marked the beginning of a Sothic cycle; and, by Herr Mahler's reckoning, no such rising could occur within 152 years of the date of this inscription. In the inscription from El Bersheh, which Mr. Petrie cites, the text [10] starts with the date, the 2nd of Mesore in the 33rd year; and immediately after the date, comes the phrase which he translates as 'the beginning of a million of Sirius cycles.' This is not a statement of what was wished for the king: it is simply an addition to the date. And the date is the 2nd of Mesore, *not* the 28th of Epiphi.

Starting with Herr Mahler's date for Thothmes III., Mr. Petrie takes the lengths of the succeeding reigns from Manetho, and thus gets 1328-1326 for Rameses I. And then, although this date for Thothmes III. is calculated on the supposition that the Sothic period began in 1318, he puts the beginning of that period in 1322.

As for the identification of Menophres with Rameses I., that is based by Mr. Petrie on the likeness of the names Menophres and Men-peh-Ra. But the Greeks always spoke of the Egyptian kings by the *nomen*; and Men-peh-Ra is only a *praenomen*, the *nomen* being Rameses. With regard to Mr. Myres' allusion to Menophres 'of whom Mr. Torr knows nothing,' I need only say that I have duly mentioned this king on p. 56, and given in a footnote the passage in Theon, which is the only evidence of his existence.

Pursuing the subject, Mr. Myres says that 'Mr. Torr may be right or wrong in saying that the cycle of 1461 years was not calculated or applied to historical purposes till the Ptolemaic age: but that does not affect the question whether either Censorinus or Mahler is justified in reckoning dates by the aid of it.'

Censorinus only reckons that the hundredth year of one of these periods was current at the date at which he wrote, namely, 238 A.D. And this has nothing to do with the case. But neither Herr Mahler nor anybody else is justified in applying this method to dates as far back as the XVIIIth or XIXth Dynasties, for the requisite material does not exist.

Supposing that Sirius rose at Alexandria on the 1st of Thoth in 139 A.D., it rose there on the 1st of Thoth in 1318 and 2776 and 4236 B.C. So, if

an inscription or papyrus notes the rising of Sirius on a certain day of a certain month, that inscription or papyrus can be placed so many years before or after one or other of these fixed dates, provided that (1) due allowance is made for difference of latitude, and (2) proof is given that the day and month are taken from the calendar of 365 days to the year.

Mr. Myres cites Herodotus, ii.4, to prove the existence of a year of 365 days in the fifth century. That is rather a waste of time; as the point is that the year of 365 days was not the *only* kind of year in use some centuries before. But afterwards he says: 'A series of XVIIIth Dynasty documents shows that the date of the Sothic festival was systematically altered by seven days every thirty years and that this change was celebrated by a greater feast, the *Sed*-festival. In a series of twelve consecutive *Sed*-festivals, only three are unrepresented by extant inscriptions, and one of these falls in the 'heretic' reign of Akhenaten: and of the remainder five expressly note the month and day of the festival. Now these regularly recurring dates will not work out on any hypothesis but that of a year of 365 days.'

In reality Sothic cycles and *Sed*-festivals stand quite apart; and manifestly, if the date was altered by 7 days in every 30 years, the cycle would exceed the Sothic cycle by an entire century. As for the 'series of twelve consecutive *Sed*-festivals,' Mr. Myres has got the notion from Mr. Petrie [11], who makes out the list as follows: 1, under Amenhotep I, year 9, Epiphi 9. 2, under Tahutmes I. 3, under Hatshepsut, year 16, Epiphi 21. 4, under Tahutmes III, year 33, Epiphi 28. 5, under Amenhotep II. 6, under Amenhotep II. 7, unrecorded. 8, under Tutankhamen. 9, unrecorded. 10, unrecorded. 11, under Ramessu II, year 41, Thoth 22. 12, under Merenptah, year 2, Thoth 29.

Supposing that the date was altered by 7 days on each occasion, it is clear that the third of these festivals would come 14 days later than the first, and that the eleventh would come 49 days later than the fourth. But here the first and third are placed on the 9th and 21st of Epiphi - an interval of only 12 days, or 2 days too little; while the fourth and eleventh are placed on the 28th of Epiphi and the 22nd of Thoth - an interval of 59 days, or 10 days too much. Moreover, with 365 days to the year, a period of 48 years would be required for the change of 12 days from the 9th to the 21st of Epiphi; and that gives an average of 24 years each for the intervals between these festivals. But a period of 236 years would be required for the change of 59 days from the 28th of Epiphi to the 22nd of Thoth; and that gives an average of 34 years each for the seven intervals between. And yet these festivals came regularly every 30 years.

The first date in the list - the 9th of Epiphi in the 9th year of Amenhotep I - is taken from a papyrus at Leipzig [12]. In a calendar in that papyrus the rising of Sirius is noted on this day. But the calendar proceeds from day 9 of Mesore (the 12th month) to day 9 of Thoth (the 1st month) just as it proceeds from day 9 of any other month to day 9 of the next; so that it clearly is intended for the year of 360 days with twelve months of 30 days apiece and nothing added at the end. And this year of 360 days has no connexion with the Sothic cycle. With regard to the fourth date in the list - the 28th of Epiphi in the 33rd year of Tahutmes III - I have already pointed

out that there is nothing to connect this 28th of Epiphi with the year of 365 days, or even with the reign of Tahutmes III. It is needless to discuss the other dates.

Mr. Myres then refers to a calendar, of 365 days to the year, in an inscription of the IVth Dynasty; and says that this 'justifies the calculation of dates by astronomical methods under the Old Kingdom: where an inscription, which dates the Nile flood, and corresponds to 3350 B.C., gives a date of 3410 B.C. for the beginning of Dynasty VI., as against 3503 by dead-reckoning from the lists. (Petrie, *Hist Eg.* i. 253).'

Of course, the question is not, whether the year of 365 days was in use in the time of the Old Kingdom, but whether it was the *only* kind of year that was in use then. As for those dates of 3350 and 3410 B.C., Mr. Petrie gets them in this way:

We know that when Una quarried alabaster at Hat-nub he did it in 17 days of the month Epiphi; and that yet he could not get it down to the pyramid before the Nile began to subside. There are some rather vague points about this, as the part of the month of 30 days in which the 17 fell, the time required to get down, which would perhaps be only 6 or 8 days, and the time of the Nile falling. Putting the fall at about November 5, the boat would have left Hat-nub about October 28; and the 17 days would be October 11. Hence Epiphi would fall within 6 days to of October 5 to November 5. This date would be that of Epiphi at about 3350 B.C., if we reckon the 1460 year periods back from 139 A.D. ... Having, then, 3350 B.C. for the reign of Merenra, and adding about 60 years, we reach about 3410 B.C. for the beginning of the VIth Dynasty.

This curious argument all depends upon the statement that Una could not get the alabaster down to the pyramid before the Nile began to subside. But that is not what the inscription says. Its statement is that Una accomplished his task in spite of the deficiency of water [13]. There is nothing there to show whether the Nile was then beginning to subside, or had subsided several months before.

As for the 'dead-reckoning from the lists,' it seems to come to this: The 'lists' are Manetho's lists of Dynasties and kings. It can be proved from the inscriptions that some of the Dynasties overlapped, and that the length of many of the reigns is given incorrectly. But it is assumed that none of the other Dynasties overlapped, and that the length of all the other reigns is given quite correctly. So the Dynasties are strung together, and the reigns are added up; and this is called 'dead-reckoning'.