Of spice and mine: *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* and Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions[1]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor remains one of the best known poems of the Middle Egyptian literary corpus, and its geographical, ideological, linguistic and stylistic content has been extensively discussed.[2] It is a multifaceted work, with diverse generic intertext: although in terms of its structure and spartan narrative style the poem is comparable to a folk tale, it also makes allusion to esoteric religious knowledge that would more probably have been the restricted preserve of a small literate élite (see e.g. Derchain-Urtel 1974; Baines 1990: 55–57, 65–67). The poem's relationship with broadly contemporary expedition inscriptions has been a less extensively researched element of the poem's co-textual background, despite the fact that the setting implied in the poem's opening verses is the return from an expedition to Nubia, and the sailor's tale within the tale also recounts the progress of an expedition.[3]

Defining expedition inscriptions

Expedition inscriptions are attested from at least the Early Dynastic to Late Periods, and were generally left by participants in state organised expeditions, on rock faces and stelae in a number of sites outside the Egyptian section of the Nile Valley, including Sinai, the Red Sea Coast, the Eastern desert and Nubia. Internal evidence reveals that the purposes of these expeditions tended to be either mineral extraction, trading with Punt, or military campaigns.[4] They can be divided into distinct chronological corpora, corresponding to periods of strong central authority necessary for their organisation. The Middle Kingdom sequence begins with the resumption of major state sponsored expeditions in the later 11th dynasty,[5] and thereafter a relatively continuous rate of expeditions is attested down to the end of the 12th dynasty, with particular peaks in the reigns of Mentuhotep IV and Amenemhats III and IV (see Shaw 1998: fig. 15.3).

These Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions exhibit considerable variety, both in terms of the social status of their creators and the formality of their execution. The range of text types found in them is broadly comparable to that found in private commemorative inscriptions throughout Egypt, of which expedition inscriptions may

[1] I am grateful to Richard Parkinson and Glenn Godenho, as well as to my anonymous referees, for their comments on a draft of this paper.

[2] In this article, the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (abbreviated *ShS*) is referred to by line numbers as found in the standard edition (Blackman 1932: 41–48). For a recent discussion of the poem with comprehensive bibliography, see Parkinson (2002: 187–192, 298–299). Subsequent work on the poem includes Bommas (2003); Burkard and Thissen (2003: 141–148); Ignatov (2005); Gee (2003); Loprieno (2003: 36–42); Luiselli (2005); Magdolen (2003); Roeder (2005: 223–233).

[3] For the setting of the poem, see e.g. (Meltzer 1976; Simpson 1984: 619). For the poem's probable relationship with expedition inscriptions in general, see Quirke (2004a: 39); Grajetzki (2005: 55); Roeder (2005: 232).

[4] Convenient treatments of expedition inscriptions from various periods: Old Kingdom (Eichler 1993); Middle Kingdom (Seyfried 1981); New Kingdom (Hikade 2001).

[5] The earliest extensive *in situ* Middle Kingdom examples date to Mentuhotep III Sankhkare (*CM* no. 114), but sources from the reign of his predecessor demonstrate earlier large scale military and mining activity (see Hayes 1949; Schenkel 1965: 222–225).

perhaps be considered a specialised variant:[6] the simplest expedition inscriptions consist of little more than a title, name and filiation (often scratched around or near more monumental commemorative inscriptions), often with a *ḥtp-dj-nsw* formula, while more elaborate texts often contain self-laudatory epithets comparable to biographies, appeals to the living, and even hymns (Blumenthal 1997: 87–94; see also Leprohon 2001). These text types are sometimes tailored to their expeditionary context, as in the case of the appeals to the living which refer to 'reaching (home) in peace' (see footnote 52). A more distinctive feature of some inscriptions is the inclusion of accounts, in the style of narrative biographies, making direct reference to the occasion of the expedition, and summarising its progress and provisioning. They share certain distinctive verbal, structural and thematic features between sites and over time, and Elke Blumenthal has identified these narrative sections as a distinct sub-genre: 'expedition reports' (*Expeditionsberichte*: Blumenthal 1977: 86–87; see also Gasse 1988: 83).[7] Blumenthal's work has focused mainly on expedition reports relating mining and trading expeditions, but there is no sharp formal distinction between these and inscriptions commemorating military activity: indeed, some military inscriptions from Lower Nubia contain close formal and phrasal parallels to parts of the mining expedition reports.[8] There is also a significant overlap with inscriptions from the Egyptian heartland, including for example biographical texts and the annals of Amenemhat II, which give accounts of military, trading and mining expeditions beyond the boundaries of Egypt.[9]

Given that a comparatively high degree of intertextual permeability existed between literary and monumental texts in the Middle Kingdom (see Parkinson 2002: 60–64), any attempt to model the impact of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* on its ancient audiences should take the distinctive language of expedition inscriptions into account. Not only is the poem's narrative setting the return from an expedition, but expeditions were also a major feature of state activity,[10] often involving thousands of participants (in one case under Senowsret I over 18 000: Goyon 1957: no. 61.8; see also Farout 1994: 149–151; Obsomer 1995: 693–696; Shaw 1998: 250). It is therefore reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of the country's administrative élite, not to mention a large number of peasants, would have had at least some experience of expeditionary life. It is also likely that at least some of the literate class would have been familiar with the distinctive titles, phrases and themes found in

[6] The most important distinguishing feature is the generally greater prominence of the king who sends out the expeditions. On the relationship between royal and non-royal elements in expedition inscriptions, see Galán (1994: 78–79; 1998).

[7] Seyfried (1981) analyses numerous phrasal and structural parallels in Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions from a number of mining sites. On the links between biographies and expedition reports, see also Gnirs (1996: 210–211).

[8] Formal analysis of the components of Nubian military inscriptions (Žába 1974: 253–256) reveals essentially the same range of text types as mining texts, including the frequent occurrence of lists of expedition members, and narrative accounts of the expedition's progress. It is also relevant that the Egyptian term *msˁ* (*Wb.* II, 155.12) encompassed both military and non-military expeditions.

[9] E.g. the biographies of Khety (Gardiner 1917; Schenkel 1965: 283–284); Khusobek (see Baines 1987); Sihathor (*ANOC* 9.1). See Blumenthal (1977: 116–117); Gundlach (1980: 90); Valbelle and Bonnet (1996: 118–119); Altenmüller and Moussa (1991).

[10] For the political and organisational implications of large mining expeditions to remote quarries, see Shaw (1998: 248–252; 2002).

Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions in general, and in narrative expedition reports in particular.[11]

One complicating factor in evaluating the poem's relationship with expedition inscriptions is the fact that 'high literature (*belles lettres*)' is itself another of the numerous different text types that can occur in expeditionary texts: one autobiographical expedition text from the reign of Senwosret I in the Wadi Hammamat contains several similarities to parts of the *Teaching of Ptahhotep* (so Vernus 1995; see also Gasse 1988; Farout 1994: 149–151), and a graffito in the Wadi el-Hol of the time of Amenemhat III contains a literarising letter with various points of contact with the *Tale of Sinuhe* (Darnell 2002: 97–101). The considerable uncertainty over the compositional dates of most Middle Egyptian poems (see discussion in Parkinson 2002: 45–50) precludes certainty that the inscriptions are making direct allusion to the literary works (as opposed to merely reflecting similar rhetorical and compositional tropes), and the same is true of some of the inscriptions which show similarities to the *Shipwrecked Sailor*. Nevertheless, these examples do suggest the possibility that the poem may have had a dynamic relationship with the expedition texts that it evokes.

The hierarchy and geography of the poem's expedition

The titles given to the protagonists in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, *šmsw* 'follower' (though he is usually referred to in Egyptological literature as the 'sailor') and *ḥ3tj-ʿ* 'count', are both very general and can denote individuals of considerably varying ranks, meaning that the relative status of the protagonists in the poem is not absolutely clear, and may well not have been to the ancient audience.[12] It has generally been assumed that the count of the poem is the leader of the returning expedition, and that the *šmsw* is his subordinate, whose (perhaps somewhat impertinent) speech is intended to rally his superior's spirits (see e.g. Galán 2005: 28, 36–37),[13] but this is not inevitable: Stephen Quirke has pointed out that high-ranking *šmsw* of the king play prominent roles in expedition inscriptions (see Quirke 2004a: 39; 2004b: 104). An alternative possible reading of the poem could therefore be as a frank exchange between equals, either jointly leading the expedition, or subordinates of approximately equal status within it.[14] In this case, the *šmsw*'s advice to the *ḥ3tj-ʿ*

[11] The possible audience of, or performative context for, *in situ* expedition inscriptions is unclear, though it is likely that accounts of past expeditions would have formed part of an oral storytelling tradition in Egypt proper (see below), which could in part account for the continuity demonstrated in the language of expedition reports over time and place.

[12] The title *ḥ3tj-ʿ* occurs both in the highest ranking title sequences used by senior members of the governing élite, and as the rather less exalted title of provincial city governors (Gasse 1988: 90–91; Quirke 2004b: 111–112; see Ward 1982: nos. 854–856, 864–889), though as an isolated title it is somewhat more likely to denote the provincial governor (Grajetzki 2005: 55).

šmsw are the retainers of many superior ranks (see Berlev 1978: 206–229; Ward 1982: nos. 1517–1530; Quirke 2004b: 105), including of the *ḥ3tj-ʿ* (Quirke 2004a: 39; see Ward 1982: no. 1525).

[13] Middle Egyptian literature affords parallels for a subordinate addressing a superior in the critical fashion adopted by the sailor, most obviously the Eloquent Peasant's denunciations of the High Steward Rensi (see Parkinson 2002: 175).

[14] As perhaps suggested by the count's use of the term *ḫnms* 'friend' (Quirke 2004a: 39) in his sceptical rejoinder to the follower's tale (*ShS* 184). However, this does not necessarily prove that the protagonists are of equal rank, since Snofru is portrayed addressing one of his subjects with this term in

on how to behave in the presence of the king would be an indication of how the *šmsw* intends to comport himself at the end of the expedition, and how he advises his colleague to act as well.

Such a reading is, however, not supported by the most direct inscriptional indication of the relative status of the two officials. This occurs in the 18 000 strong expedition to the Wadi Hammamat mentioned above, which lists 20 *ḥ3tjw-ʿ* and 30 *šmsw n-nb-ʿ.w.s* 'followers of the lord l.p.h.' among its participants (in that order). The implied ranking relationship of these numbers and orders of listing is reinforced by the details of their provisioning: each *šmsw* receives only 30 units of bread and one of beer, while each *ḥ3tj-ʿ* receives 100 of bread and 3 (or 4) of beer (see Simpson 1959: 29; Helck 1975: 189–190).[15] Nevertheless, the exceptional scale of this expedition argues against its interpretation as a simple prototype for all expedition hierarchies. In view of the geographical setting of the opening of the poem, it is perhaps more relevant that the titles *šmsw* and *ḥ3tj-ʿ* occur, sometimes in military contexts, in positions of somewhat greater prominence in military inscriptions from Nubia and in related mining areas like the First Cataract and Wadi el-Hudi,[16] where one expedition under Senwosret I is actually led by a *šmsw* (Wadi el-Hudi inscription no. 9: Fakhry 1952: 26; Sadek 1980: 25; Seyfried 1981: 25; see Quirke 2004b: 104).[17]

The uncertainty raised by this conflicting evidence as to the relative status of the poem's protagonists may also have existed for the ancient audience, and was perhaps deliberate: the use of titles of the sort known to have participated in expeditions gives the poem a situational context and helps to form the implied setting, but the absence of any augments clarifying their exact status may perhaps be interpreted, along with the abrupt beginning of the poem and the avoidance of any named protagonists, as intentionally ambiguous markers of its fictionality (see Loprieno 1991: 212–217; Parkinson 2002: 189).

The evocative, but ultimately non-specific, nature of the details of the tale can also be observed in the increasing indefiniteness of its geographical points of reference. The multi-tiered narrative structure of the poem begins with a relatively concrete geographical setting in Lower Nubia (see footnote 3). However, the sailor's tale within the tale departs from this exactness, instead using terms that evoke real expeditions without being absolutely geographically definite: the association of mining and seafaring (*ShS* 23–25)[18] occurs in a number of expedition inscriptions

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Neferti IIi (Helck 1992a: 7), and in *Neferti* Ij he addresses his courtiers in general with the similarly familiar *rḫw*, 'comrades'.

[15] It is likely that each *ḥ3tj-ʿ* was assigned a *šmsw* to guard their work contingent (see Farout 1994: 157).

[16] One Wadi el-Hudi expedition (inscription no. 29) is led by a 'count and overseer of prophets' (*ḥ3tj-ʿ jmj-r3 ḥm*(*w*)*-nṯr*; Fakhry 1952: 15; Sadek 1980: 55; Seyfried 1981: 77). For *šmsw* figuring prominently on military expeditions up the Nile into Nubia, see Žába (1974: 334); Hintze and Reineke (1989: 201); Grajetzki (2005: 55).

[17] It is possible that the relatively low rank of expedition leaders at Wadi el-Hudi reflects its comparative proximity to the Nile, and hence the comparatively smaller and less prestigious expeditions required to exploit its resources (see Seyfried 1981: 122).

[18] The argument that *w3ḏ-wr* never refers to the sea at all (e.g. Nibbi 1981; Vandersleyen 1999) is increasingly untenable in light of the mounting evidence from Mersa Gawasis on the Red Sea coast mentioning trips across the *w3ḏ-wr* (e.g. Sayed 1977: 139, 171; see also Meltzer 1976; Bradbury 1988; Obsomer 1995: 388–400).

mentioning Punt and Sinai,[19] and here imparts some verisimilitude to the sailor's account, but the generic nature of the terms he uses prevents the construction of a more precise itinerary: the term *bjȝ* fundamentally means 'mining district', and can refer to a number of other locations as well as Punt and Sinai (see Graefe 1971: 35–36; Ward 1978: 36–37).[20]

The sailor's account of his journey is given twice in the poem, worded slightly differently. To the Count he says *šm.kw r-bjȝ n-jtjj hȝ.kw r-wȝḏ-wr* '… (when) I went to the mines of/for the sovereign' (*ShS* 23–24), but when talking to the snake he tells how *jnk-pw hȝ.kw r-bjȝ m-wpwt-jtjj* 'It is the case that I went down to the mines on a mission of the sovereign' (*ShS* 89–91). Both these sentences are grammatically plausible, and are more likely to be meaningfully different than examples of textual corruption (see Rendsburg 2000: 15). While both expressions are also evocative of expeditionary language (cf. *jj.n:j r-bjȝ n-nb:j* 'I have come to the mines of/for my lord';[21] *šm.k*(*w*) *m-wpwt nt-nb*(*:j*)*-pn* 'I went on a mission of this (my) lord'[22]), the precise phrase *bjȝ n-jtjj* does not occur elsewhere, and so could possibly be another marker of literary fictionality.

After the shipwreck the tale becomes more manifestly allegorical. While the length of time the sailor remains on the mysterious *jw n-kȝ* 'island of *kȝ*', and the length of his return journey to Egypt, may evoke the realities of Red Sea navigation (so Bradbury 1988: 138–141), the island itself cannot be convincingly shown to equate to a specific Red Sea locality (see Loprieno 1991: 211; Galán 2005: 37). Indeed, since the island has features that evoke both the land of Punt and the Levant (Gnirs 1998; Loprieno 2003: 39), it departs entirely from concrete geographical reality, belonging instead to the fictional world of wondrous events and mythological allegory (see Derchain-Urtel 1974: 100–102).

There is thus a pattern discernable in the poem of a gradual move away from relatively concrete geographic referents at its beginning, evoking real expedition inscriptions, through the vaguer but still plausible geographical details of the sailor's journey down to the sea, to the fictive island of the snake. This development parallels the narrative's gradual movement away from Egypt itself, and the geography only begins to become a little more specific again toward the end of the tale, as the sailor returns to the *ḫnw n-jtjj* 'Residence of the sovereign', ideologically the centre of Egypt.[23]

Adversity overcome: an expedition inscription motif

The *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* centres on the theme of adversity: the speech of the sailor, with its advice on how to behave when answering the king (*ShS* 14–19),

[19] E.g. the Mersa Gawasis stela of Intefiqer (Sayed 1977: 171; Farout 1994: 144). 18th dynasty inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai also make reference to sailing to Punt (e.g. *Sinai* no. 181; see also Edel 1983: 175–185). For the question of the relative proximity of Sinai and Punt, see Meeks (2002: 321–7).

[20] For *bjȝ-pwnt*, see e.g. Bradbury (1988: 138 n. 49). For the mines of Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai called simply *bjȝ-*(*pn*), '(this) mining region', see e.g. Goedicke (1974: 16–17).

[21] *Sinai* no. 141.5 [W. face]. See Goedicke (1974: 17).

[22] Biography of Khety, line 6 (Gardiner 1917; Schenkel 1965: 283–284).

[23] Even here, however, the phrase *ḫnw n-jtjj* is a literary term that does not occur elsewhere. See also Parkinson (2002: 187).

implies that the count is fearful of an unsympathetic reception at court, presumably due to a perceived lack of success in his mission. This situational context doubtless draws upon the frequent reality of unsuccessful expeditions, and a number of expedition inscriptions dwell at some length on the initial difficulties encountered by expedition leaders, always followed by a triumphal account of how they were eventually overcome (cf. Leprohon 2001: 127). For example, one group of stelae of similar late 12th dynasty date from Serabit el-Khadim share in common a closely similar wording and phraseology called by Karl-Joachim Seyfried the '*tp-nfr* formula' (1981: 233–234): the formula recounts how the official undertaking the expedition was not daunted by the difficulties that he faced (*n-bdš-ḥr:j* 'my face was not downcast'), and eventually completed the mission successfully.

One such inscription, that of Harwerre,[24] is considerably more detailed than the other examples. The inscription begins with a statement that 'it was not the season for coming to this mining region', but then Harwerre addresses itself specifically to future expedition leaders and exhorts them:

jmj:ṯn bdš-ḥrw:ṯn-ḥr:s
mṯn-dd-st ḥwt-ḥr n- wꜣḏ(?)[25]
mꜣ.n:j-r:j jr.n:j-mnt-jm:j[26]

Do not be downcast of face because of it!
Look, Hathor can turn it to success –
I myself have seen and done the like!

Harwerre then goes on to tell his own narrative, describing his initial discouragement, and that of his workers, before telling of their eventual success in finding the mineral. There is then a renewed address to future readers, enjoining piety and describing the success of his expedition. This structure, with a narrative of overcome past difficulties framed by direct addresses enjoining optimism, is parallel to that of the *Shipwrecked Sailor* (see Kurth 1996: 62–63; Roeder 2005: 230–233, 238). Moreover, the above

[24] *Sinai* no. 90. Discussions: Gardiner *el al*. (1952–55: II, 97–99); Sethe (1927: 142–144); Blackman (1931); Goedicke (1962); Iversen (1984); Kurth (1996); Pantalacci (1996); Valbelle and Bonnet (1996: 119–120); Roeder (2005: 237–238).

[25] Reading the damaged last word as  (following Kurth 1996: 58 n.6). Numerous other readings have been suggested, including *nfr* 'the good, goodness' (Gardiner *el al*. 1952–1955: II, 97 n.d), *wbꜣ* 'dem, welcher (es scil. das Minengebiet) erkundet' or *ḫm* 'dem Kundigen' (Sethe 1927: 143), *wꜣs* 'luck' (Iversen 1984: 510 n. 12). Kurth's suggested translation 'Seht, Hathor gibt es (das Türkis) gewiß dem, der frisch (ans Werk geht)' seems forced, and if *wꜣḏ* is indeed the correct reading, the meaning is probably instead 'success, good fortune', as apparently also in *Ipuwer* 3.13 (Enmarch in preparation) and *Fishing and Fowling* B 2.10 (ed. Caminos 1956). *rdj n* may here be in an extended sense 'contribute to', as perhaps in *Merikare* E66 (ed. Quack 1992), with the nominal *sḏm:f* form being used to emphasise the adjunct.

[26] The juxtaposition of the verbs *mꜣꜣ* and *jrj* occurs elsewhere, for example in medical literature (*Wb.* II, 9.14; see also Iversen 1984: 510 n. 13) and in eulogies (Gardiner 1956: 20). The *jm:j* at the end of the clause is perhaps emphatic, 'from me' i.e. 'from my own abilities'.

r:j is probably an enclitic particle (for which, see Shisha-Halevy 1986: 645–647), contra Goedicke (1962: 17 n.g). The alternative conceivable reading would be to take *mꜣ* as an imperative followed by *n:j* and *r:j* as tautological adjuncts, 'Look at me, to me', perhaps for emphasis (so Gardiner *el al*. 1952–1955: II, 97 n.e), but this lacks parallels.

passage, with its emphasis on what the expedition leader saw and achieved, is comparable to the end of the sailor's speech (*ShS* 179–182):

mȝ-wj r-sȝ-sȝḥ:j-tȝ r-sȝ-mȝ:j-dpt.n:j
sḏm-rk [*n-rȝ*]*:j*
mk-nfr-sḏm n-rmṯw

Look at me, after I reached land, after I saw what I had experienced!
Listen [to] my [speech]:
Look, listening to people is good!

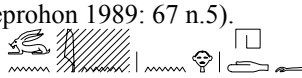
The relationship between these two texts is unclear. The greater elaboration of Harwerre's text, and its exhortatory tone, distinguishes it from the other examples of the *tp-nfr* formula, and could conceivably be an oblique reference to the *Shipwrecked Sailor* itself.[27] Whether or not this is the case, it is likely that the *Shipwrecked Sailor*'s thematisation of failure and success draws on a characteristic topos of expedition inscriptions that predates Harwerre and the *tp-nfr* formula, and can be traced back to at least the start of the 12th dynasty.[28] Another extensive example, from the Wadi Hammamat, is found in the inscription of the expedition leader Mery also from the reign of Amenemhat III (*CM* no. 19.2–19.12. Discussions: Goedicke 1964: 48–50; Seyfried 1981: 277–278; Leprohon 1989). Mery records:

wḏ-ḥm:f jn.t(*w*)*-n:f mnw*
m-ḏw-pn-šps jmnt(*j*)*-jnt*[29]
wn.jn:n(*?*)[30] *ḥr-hd*[31]*-jnrw ḥr-ḏw-pn-jmnt*(*j*)

[27] Despite uncertainty over the exact composition date of the *Shipwrecked Sailor*, it is probable that it was in existence by the reign of Amenemhat III when Harwerre had the stela inscribed (see dating discussion in Parkinson 2002: 298–299). Another, more fragmentary, inscription from Serabit el-Khadim (*Sinai* no. 137.6 [west face]) seems also to include an exhortation to future visitors, introduced by the literarising phrase *ḏd:j-wrt dj:j-sḏm:ṯn* 'I shall say a great thing, I shall cause you to listen', which also occurs in the *Loyalist Teaching* §1.3–1.4 and the stela of Sehotepibre (see Posener 1976: 55) amongst other places (*Wb.* I, 330.12).

[28] For a collection of such texts, see Seyfried (1981: 276–277) The earliest examples quoted there come from the reign of Amenemhat I, and the motif is attested from both Serabit el-Khadim and the Wadi Hammamat. The same motif is also explicitly negated in other inscriptions (see Seyfried 1981: 279), as when Ameny in the reign of Senwosret I records a successful return from the Wadi Hammamat 'without the loss of a man, with no thirst on the way, without having a moment of discouragement(?)' (*CM* no. 87.8–87.10; see Farout 1994: 148–149).

[29] So Goedicke (1964: 49 n.a); cf. *Wb.* I, 86.16. The writing  perhaps should be read *jnt-t*(*n*) 'this wadi' (Leprohon 1989: 67 n.5).

[30] The writing  is problematic; the photograph (*CM* pl. 5.19) does seem to confirm that the sign after  is a discrete vertical dash (Gardiner 1957: Sign list Z1) rather than part of an  (see Seyfried 1981: 277). The reading is probably *wn.jn:n ḥr-hd* (see Seyfried 1981: 278), ignoring the erroneous Gardiner sign Z1; this sign occurs superfluously in several other slightly unusual places in the text (e.g. in *šps* in line 3 and *ḏr-bȝḥ* in line 4). Another possibility would be to read as *wn.jn:j ḥr-hd*, deleting the extra as erroneous.

[31] *hd* literally 'attack' (*Wb*. II, 504.14) seems here to be used in an extended sense of 'to set about, to work, to quarry' the stone (see Goedicke 1964: 49; Leprohon 1989: 68 n.6).

mj-jrrt ḏr-bꜣḥ
wn.jn-nn-n-jnrw ḫr-wꜣst(?)[32] *r-sd(?)*[33]
n-sp-gm-šꜣ(?)[34] *ḫn(t)-jrt*[35]
ḏd.jn-ḫrp-kꜣt wḥmw n-ˁrrjjt mrjj
ḥwꜣ[36]*-jr:t(n)(?)* [37]*-smꜣ*[38] *sfn*[39]*-jnrw*
ˁḥˁ.n-jjr-pꜣ-smꜣ[40]

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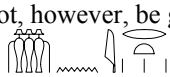
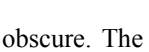
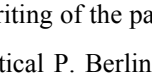
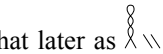
[32] The writing  could be a hapax legomenon, but is more probably to be understood as  . The translation follows Leprohon (1989: 68), who reads 'then these stones were destroyed to (the point of) breaking'; for *wꜣsj* 'be destroyed', see *Wb.* I, 260.9; cf. orthography  in Tomb 1 at el-Bersha (Griffith and Newberry 1895: 25). Goedicke (1964: 50 n.c) apparently reads the line instead as *wn.jn-nn-n-jnrw ḫr-wꜣ-st r-sd*, 'these blocks were threatening to crumble', interpreting it as an instance of the idiom *wꜣj r* (*Wb*. I, 246.5), but this construction is not attested transitively elsewhere (see examples in Quack 1993).

[33] *sḏ* 'to break' can be used transitively with the sense of 'opening up' mountains and wadis to exploration, both in mortuary and military contexts (*Wb.* IV, 375.1–375.2). I tentatively suggest that the sense may be that, when the time came to open up the quarrying site, it was found that the stone was for some reason unsuitable ('ruined').

[34] Leprohon (1989: 68–69) convincingly suggests that  here is an unusually determined derivative of *šꜣj* 'ordain', quoting several expedition texts where the expedition leader decides, fulfils, or exceeds 'what is ordained'; in at least one case (*Sinai* no. 141 W ll.6–9) this is explicitly related to a production quota; it is conceivable that this extended usage is related to the noun *šꜣw* 'weight, worth' (*Wb*. IV, 404.12). On this interpretation, the text is stating that, because of the unsuitable nature of the stone, production targets could not be met.

Nevertheless, Goedicke's earlier suggestion (1964: 50 n.c) that  here is in fact 'excrement' (*Wb*. IV, 401.11), thus making the sense hyperbolic ('Never was (such) rubbish found in the vicinity'), cannot be excluded, although it lacks parallels. The overall sense of the passage would not, however, be greatly altered.

[35]  is apparently an unusual writing of the preposition *ḫnt* followed by the rare feminine form of *jrj* 'thereof' (so Goedicke 1964: 50 n.c; for other examples, see Gardiner 1957: §113 n.1). The reference is presumably to *jnt*, the wadi from which insufficient stone could be extracted.

[36] The grammar of this passage is obscure. The date of the text makes reading  as the imperative of the Ramessid verb *ḥwꜣ* 'to throw', used of stones and bricks (*Wb.* III, 50.2), unlikely. The determinative instead suggests a writing of the particle group *ḥwˁ(j)-ꜣ* 'if only' (*Wb.* III, 12.7), which is written  in the mathematical P. Berlin 6619, vso 4 (von Schack-Schackenburg 1900: 140; see also Clagett 1999), and somewhat later as  in *Himmelskuh* verse 157 (ed. Hornung 1991).

[37]  is unlikely to be a nominalised infinitive, participle or relative form, as the sentence pattern '*ḥꜣ* / *ḥwj*(*-ꜣ*) + nominal expression' is not attested without a following adjunct (see Collier 1991: 14–15), nor is *ḥꜣ* ever followed by an imperative (contra Goedicke 1964: 48); it is therefore likely to require emendation, the most plausible being to read as *jr:t*(*n*) (cf. Gardiner 1957: §34 obs. 4).

[38]  is attested as a noun elsewhere in building contexts, making Goedicke's speculation (1964: 50 n.d) that it denotes an (adjoining?) ramp possible. It is, at any event, apparently a device for solving the problem posed by the unsuitable nature of the stone mentioned earlier in the text.

[39]  , which recurs two sentences later in this passage, is likely here to be a participle (or infinitive). The word is probably identical to the verb  found in another Wadi Hammamat expedition inscription (*CM* no. 199.8) as an action related to the successful extraction of stone; Goedicke (1964: 50 n.d) suggests that the sense in both cases is to gently 'lower' stones safely from their site of quarrying; however, if it really is derived from the verb to 'be mild' (*sfn Wb*. III, 484.3), another possible extended meaning might be to 'weaken' the stone i.e. ease it out of the bedrock.

wn.jn.tw ḫr-sfn-n3-n-mnw mj-ḏd(t).n:f-nbt
n-sp-jr.t(w) {n} ḏr-b3ḥ[41]

His Person commanded that a monument be brought to him
from this noble mountain, (on the) right of the wadi.
Then we(?) attacked the stones on this western mountain
as used to be done previously.
Then these stones were ruined(?) at the 'breaking'(?),
and never was the quota(?) found from out of it.
Then the controller of works, herald of the tribunal, Mery, said:
"If only you(?) would make a *sm3* which could *sfn* the stones!"
Then this *sm3* was made.
And then these monuments were *sfn*-ed in accordance with all he had said.
Never had (it) been done previously.

This short text extract contains several lexicographical and linguistic difficulties, such as the nature of the problem with the stones (*w3st*), the identity of the device Mery creates (*sm3*), and the effect this device has on the stones (*sfn*). Nevertheless, its overall structure is clear: the threatened failure of Mery's expedition, due to some adverse condition of the stone, is averted when he orders the production of a device which successfully enables the completion of his mission.

Expeditions and divine intervention

Mery presents the solution to his problem as entirely his own initiative, and in this respect differs from the more typical Harwerre, who urges reverence for the local deity (Hathor) as the surest guarantee of success. Expedition inscriptions often indicate a more direct relationship between non-royal individuals and the local deities than is generally found on monuments from Egypt proper (Blumenthal 1977: 93), perhaps reflecting the notion that contact between non-royal mortals and the gods was more likely and immediate beyond the boundaries of Egypt away from state and royal authority (see e.g. Assmann 2000: 57–64). The *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* also addresses the relationship between divine action and human response, and the snake's (possibly metaphorical) self-description as *ḥq3 pwnt* 'ruler of Punt', together with his claim to have its products under his control (*ShS* 151–153), may be compared to the local forms of deities mentioned in the expedition inscriptions, such as Hathor, Mistress of Turquoise, who were believed to preside over regions peripheral to Egypt, and their resources.[42]

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[40] See Gardiner (1957: §420) for this exceptional writing of the passive *sḏm:f* form.

[41] As written,  appears to be corrupt in some way. The smallest emendation is the deletion of the second , which would leave an impersonal passive *n-sp-sḏm:f* construction (see parallel phrases in Vernus 1995: 62–65, particularly 63 n.152).

[42] The notion is perhaps expressed most literally in the designation of several regions outside Egypt, principally Punt, as *t3 ntr* 'god's land' (see Meeks 2002: 272). Various deities are associated with Punt in later periods, including Hathor, Min and Thoth (Martinssen 2003: 265, 270; see also Shaheen 1998). Hathor is called variously mistress (*nbt*) of turquoise, amethyst and galena at various mining sites (see Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: 144–145; Sadek 1980: 42; Castel and Soukassian 1985: 291).

The relationship between the human and divine is also thematised in the *Shipwrecked Sailor*'s underlying allegorical references to the creator god (see e.g. Derchain-Urtel 1974; Baines 1990: 52–72). The snake's statement that 'it is god that has caused you to live' (*ShS* 113–114), and his prediction to the sailor that 'when you depart from this place, never again shall you see this island' (*ShS* 153–154) can be read in this context as references respectively to the creator god's care for humanity, and to the finite nature of the cosmos (see e.g. Derchain-Urtel 1974: 100–103; Baines 1990: 62; Morenz 1994: 78–79; Moers 2001: 249; Parkinson 2002: 188). However, these statements can also be read together more literally: the island has only been revealed through divine favour in order to preserve the sailor's life. This reading evokes an important topos in expedition inscriptions, where through divine favour things hidden to previous expeditions are revealed. It is implicit in Harwerre's inscription that his offering to Hathor enabled him to find turquoise at what was otherwise the wrong time of year to find it,[43] and the same theme is treated more extensively in a rather earlier inscription left in the Wadi Hammamat in the reign of Amenemhat I by the expedition leader, Intef,[44] who spends eight days searching for stone unsuccessfully. After entreating divine aid, he finds the sought for stone, gives thanks to 'Montu, lord of this quarry', and returns safely to Egypt, without loss.

The behaviour of both Harwerre and Intef is also comparable to the sailor's in another way: all three, after an initial setback (shipwreck, failure to find stone), offer to the local deities (cf. *ShS* 55–56), after which their lot improves. Intef and the sailor both respond by rendering thanks to the relevant gods in situ (cf. *ShS* 171–172), before safely returning to Egypt. Thus, while the sailor of the poem is most certainly not in an everyday situation, his conduct is similar to that attested for real expedition members, and may have been evaluated in this light by ancient audiences.

The wondrous events in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* can also be read in the context of the close connection between divine favour and royal power that is a more general feature of Middle Kingdom royal ideological discourse, but which features particularly prominently in expedition texts (see Roeder 2005: 206–211). The poem has been read both as a critique of the emergent 12th dynasty (Helck 1992b), and conversely as a positive representation of kingship, interpreting the snake as a cipher for the king (Bryan 1979; Altenmuller 1989: 17). While such politicised readings of the poem are perhaps overly reductive, the close association of royal prestige with successful expeditions and divine prodigies must, in the most general sense, underlie the *Shipwrecked Sailor*.[45]

An illuminating parallel is provided by two expedition inscriptions from the reign of Mentuhotep IV which record events described as 'wonders' (*bj3jjt*): in one a

[43] The motif of the gods' hiding and revealing of resources also occurs in expedition inscriptions containing the 'turquoise myth', attested at Wadi el-Hudi under Senwosret I and Serabit el-Khadim under Amenemhat III (see Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: 121–123; Seyfried 1981: 134). This is a form of royal eulogy in which, through the favour of the earth deities, 'this mountain uncovers what it has concealed, it brings to light what is hidden in it' (e.g. *Sinai* no. 53.10–53.11). A more fragmentary example adds that the expedition leader found 'what was throughout them, which they had hidden from (my) predecessors' (*Sinai* no. 136.2–136.3 [south edge]).

[44] *CM* no. 199.6–199.10. The text is very worn, with a number of dubious readings. See Goedicke (1964: 44–45).

[45] As has also been pointed out in the case of the wonders described in *P. Westcar* (see Shirun-Grumach 1993: 20–48; Parkinson 2002: 182–183).

gazelle gives birth on a stone destined to be the king's sarcophagus (*CM* no. 110: see Goedicke 1964: 45–48; Schenkel 1965: 263–4; Gundlach 1980: 95–97; Shirun-Grumach 1993: 3–8; Roeder 2005: 209–211), and in the other, a desert storm leads to the discovery of a previously undiscovered well (*CM* no. 191: see Schenkel 1965: 267–268; Lloyd 1975; Gundlach 1980: 99–103; Shirun-Grumach 1993: 8–12; Roeder 2005: 211–216). These texts stand somewhat apart from the main corpus of expedition inscriptions, in that they each focus exclusively on a wonder that occurred during the expedition, rather than commemorating the expedition itself (Blumenthal 1977: 105–107; Gundlach 1980: 91). They bear a number of similarities with later *Königsnovellen* (Shirun-Grumach 1993: 5, 18–19), and it is potentially significant that they are dated close to a possibly violent change of dynasty, and mention the probable main protagonists in that changeover (Shaw 1998: 251). Nevertheless both these inscriptions occur in a clearly expeditionary context in association with other, more conventional, memorials of the same expeditions (for a list of which, see Gundlach 1980: 91–92), and therefore represent an elaboration of the more general acknowledgement of divine intervention that occurs in other expedition inscriptions.[46]

In both texts, the wondrous event is presented as a sign of divine approval for the king (Gundlach 1980: 97; Roeder 2005: 209–211), worded in the well inscription thus:[47]

jsṯ-grt-sdḥ.n:f-s(j) rḫ.n:f-mt(r)t-hrw-pn ḫmt.n:f-ḥntj-sp-pn[48]
n-mrwt[49]*-mȝȝ-bȝw:f rḫ.t(w)-mnḫw-ḥm:f*
jr:f-mȝt ḥr-ḫȝswt:f
n-sȝ:f nb-tȝwj-rˁ ˁnḫ-ḏt
sḏm-st nt(j)w-m-tȝ-mrj
rḫjjt ntt-ḥr-kmt
šmˁw ḥnˁ-tȝ-mḥ(w)

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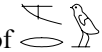
[46] In many respects these inscriptions, with their artful poetic composition, their focus on royal power through divine favour, and their consequent strongly ideologically programmatic potential, are paralleled by a number of other text types found in expeditionary contexts, such as the 'turquoise myth' (see footnote 43). One exemplar of this type, the stela of Hor from Wadi el-Hudi from the reign of Senwsoret I, in fact contains an extensive royal eulogy which actually dwarves the specific expedition report that follows (see Obsomer 1995: 303–306, 630–634 with references; see also Seyfried 1984; Galán 1994).

[47] This text is metrically problematic, and is not readily susceptible to any of the widely used prosodic analyses. As elsewhere in this paper, the analysis given follows the Middle Egyptian metrical principles of Gerhard Fecht (e.g. 1982), though this produces two rather ungainly lines at the start of the passage. Analysing the passage with his Old Egyptian metrical rules (e.g. Fecht 1972: 152) does not provide a more satisfactory division. Shirun-Grumach (1993: 9, 13–14) offers a slightly different metrical analysis of part of the above extract, dividing lines primarily on the basis of parallelismus membrorum, but once again this fails to account for the entirety of the passage.

[48]  is likely to be a noun derived from *mt(r)* 'correct, exact, upright' (cf. *Wb.* II, 168.2 and II, 173.19), here perhaps in the sense of 'the precise day', which might parallel the meaning of *ḥntj* (for which, see Shirun-Grumach 1993: 11 n.j). Reading  instead as *mtrt-pn* 'this midday' (*Wb.* II, 174.6) would disrupt the parallelism with *ḥntj-sp-pn* and so is unlikely.

[49] The unusual determinative of  is paralleled in a few other early Middle Kingdom sources (e.g. *CM* no. 110.8 and no. 192.8; Hatnub graffito 20.16, see Anthes 1928: 43). The parallelism in, and context of, this line suggests that the infinitive *mȝȝ* here is an activity not of the god, but of the king's subjects, hence the passive translation.

wꜣḥ:sn-tpw:sn m-tꜣ
dwꜣ:sn-nfrw-ḥm:f[50] *nḥḥ ḥnᶜ- ḏt*

Now, he (Min) had concealed it (the well), because he knew the exactness(?) of this day, because he had anticipated the point in time(?) of this occasion,
in order that his might should be seen, and that the effectiveness of His Person be known,
making something new in his desert land,
for his son Nebtawyre, living forever.
May those who are in Egypt hear it,
the common people who are in Egypt,
(both) Upper Egypt and the Delta,
and may they bow their heads on the ground,
praising the appearance of His Person for ever and ever.

Again, the basic structure and time framing of this text bear comparison with the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*: both begin with a past moment of danger (in both cases, coincidentally, a storm), and in both divine will reveals something previously hidden. The god acts in the well inscription to demonstrate 'might' (*bꜣw*), just as the sailor of the poem promises to tell of the snake's (or possibly god's) might (*sḏd-bꜣw*: *ShS* 139, cf. also 143; see Morenz 1994), and both texts also end with the reverent acknowledgement of divine power in a royal context back in Egypt (projected in *ShS* 139–148, and realised in *ShS* 176).[51]

'Let me relate to you the like thereof …'
Experience is a central theme of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, and the idea of 'relating' (*sḏd*) experience is built into the very narrative framework of the poem: the sailor 'relates' his tale to the count (*ShS* 21–22), and the snake 'relates' his tale to the sailor (*ShS* 125). On one level, the poem can be understood as a literary evocation of a traveller's, or sailor's yarn, an oral genre whose existence is suggested by one clause

[50] *ḥm:f* 'His Person' occurs twice in the passage translated here, and is in both instances grammatically ambiguous, potentially referring to either Min or Mentuhotep IV; the same is also true of the suffix pronoun *:f* 'his' after *bꜣw* (see Gundlach 1980: 101 n.53 with references). This ambiguity is also present in occurrences of *ḥm:f* elsewhere in this inscription (see Schenkel 1992 with references), and is possibly deliberate (as perhaps in some other Middle Egyptian texts, where *ḥm:f* can refer alternatively to the king and a god in quick succession: Schenkel 1992: 156), since the overall sense of the passage allies extremely closely the appearance of divine power with the recognition of the efficacy of the king. Min's wondrous intervention is thus presented, by ambiguous juxtaposition and by explicit statement, as both a demonstration of divine favour for the king, and is in itself also a confirmation of royal power. This effect is reinforced by the use of the term *nfrw*, which as well as being a term for the appearance of the divine can also be used of the manifestation of royal power (see Gundlach 1980: 102 n. 57; Shirun-Grumach 1993: 11 n.l, 46 n.199, 98–99).

[51] The intervention of royal and divine 'might' is a broader topos of expedition texts (see Roeder 2005: 206–211). For example, one text from Serabit el-Khadim records the pious official's offerings to Hathor, followed by the success of his expedition, and ends his inscription simply *wr-bꜣw-ḥwt-ḥr* 'great is the might of Hathor' (*Sinai* no. 141.28). Another traveller through the Wadi Hammamat in the reign of Amenemhat III records his safe return *m-bꜣw-mnw nb-ḫꜣswt* 'through the might of Min, lord of desert-lands' (*CM* no. 43.13).

in a rather elaborate Middle Kingdom appeal to the living (Sethe 1928: 88.21–88.23; see also Posener 1968: 70):

m-mrr:ṯn-ḥs-ṯn nṯrw:ṯn-njwtjw
mn:ṯn ḥr-nswt:ṯn
swḏ:ṯn-jȝwt:ṯn n-ḫrdw:ṯn
pḥ:ṯn m-ḫtp[52]
sḏdw:ṯn[53]*-mšʿw:ṯn n-ḥmwt:ṯn*
mj-ḏd:ṯn …[54]

inasmuch as you desire that your local gods will favour you,
and that you will remain in your positions,
hand over your offices to your children,
reach (home) in peace,
and relate your expeditions to your wives,
accordingly you should say … (the offering formula).

Within the framework of such a kind of traveller's tale, the poem incorporates several of the motifs of expedition inscriptions, and gains much of its impact from its imaginative development of them. The poem transforms the expeditionary motifs of threatened failure, divine aid, and revelation of the hidden by intensifying the sailor's misfortune and personifying divine intervention in the figure of the snake and his mysterious island. This imparts a mythical feel to the narrative, and invites allegorical interpretations relating to the creator god and the nature of the cosmos.[55]

The freer nature of literary versus monumental discourse also enables the poem to question a number of the assumptions inherent in expedition inscriptions. The figure of the sailor in many ways represents the attitudes of the typical expedition member: the parallels in expedition texts also show that, despite finding himself in very unusual circumstances, he acts as any good expedition member ought, making burnt offerings to the local gods, prostrating himself to the local divinity, offering thanks, and extolling his might on his return to Egypt. Furthermore, he presents his narrative as something that should console the count (*ShS* 1–2, 179–82), implying that the count should not despair over his gloomy prospects at court, since if met with fortitude his fortunes may eventually improve, just as the sailor's did.[56] This attitude is also

[52] This pregnant sense of *pḥ m-ḫtp* also occurs in several other Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions, e.g. *Sinai* nos. 28.6–28.7, 36.3, 40.4, 511.1 and 516.1: see Gardiner *el al*. (1952–1955: II, 69 n.h). Similar kinds of phrase occur at Hatnub (see Blumenthal 1977: 90), the Wadi el-Hol (Darnell and Darnell 2002: no. 6B) and in Nubia (see Dunham and Janssen 1960: 162–164). See Eichler (1994).
[53] For the prospective *sḏmw:f* form *sḏdw:tn*, see Depuydt (1993: 24–25) and Schenkel (2000: 98 n.512).
[54] For this use of *mj*, cf. Peust (2006: 513).
[55] This development from a familiar context into the realm of the imaginary is somewhat analogous to the *Tale of Sinuhe*, which is situated in the biographical genre, but transforms it by making virtuosic use of a wide range of other genres of text and addresses themes seldom found in real biographical inscriptions (Baines 1982: 33–35; Parkinson 2002: 150–151).
[56] For these reasons, a positive, didactic reading for the whole poem has been suggested (e.g. Otto 1966: 108–111), though it cannot account convincingly for the count's closing rejoinder (see e.g. Baines 1990: 61).

reinforced by the lesson the snake draws from his own tale: 'How joyful is one who relates what he has experienced, when something painful has passed!' (*ShS* 124), a statement that has significant parallels in descriptions of the safe return of mining expeditions.[57]

While this positive message is quite in keeping with the attitude of the real expedition inscriptions, it is undermined at several points within the sailor's own narrative. The sailor is introduced as *jqr* 'trustworthy, excellent', and declares himself 'free <from> exaggeration', but this overstatement may reflect a commonplace perception that travellers' tales are unreliable (Baines 1990: 59; see also Parkinson 2002: 191), and a number of things said by the sailor would support this view.[58] Moreover, when the sailor promises to make offerings to the snake, in keeping with the well attested practice of real expedition leaders, the snake explicitly highlights the 'foolishness' of this, since he owns everything that could possibly be offered to him (*ShS* 149–152; see Baines 1990: 62). This can be interpreted allegorically, but on a more literal level it undermines both the credibility of the sailor's viewpoint, and the culturally normative viewpoint of expedition inscriptions.[59]

Another aspect of the sailor's story that also runs contrary to the preoccupations of expedition inscriptions is the fact that he is the sole survivor of the mission. Real expedition inscriptions lay great stress on the safe return of the expedition, without loss, and ironically a number of these standard phrases and tropes are drawn on extensively in the opening lines of the *Shipwrecked Sailor* (*ShS* 2–11), as well as in the snake's description of the joy of being reunited with family (*ShS* 133–136).[60] The death of the sailor's companions potentially begs an unanswered theodic question (why did 'god' cause the sailor to survive, and not his comrades? See Baines 1990:

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[57] E.g. *jw:sn-(ḥr)-ḏd ḫft-spr:j rš.wj-jj-nb-ḥnᶜ:f* 'They say when I arrive: "How joyful is everyone who comes with him!' (*Sinai* no. 136.1 [west face]). See also *Sinai* no. 137.2 [north edge]; *CM* 199.8.

The snake's exclamation and its intertextual associations with expedition inscriptions are, however, subverted by the extremely bleak circumstances in which the snake makes it (Baines 1990: 66), foreshadowing the count's even bleaker response to the sailor at the end of the poem.

[58] Such as, possibly, when the sailor says his crew could 'foretell a storm before it came', and in the next sentence a storm comes along and takes them by surprise (*ShS* 30–33; Parkinson 2002: 190–191); the contrast is not so abrupt when the passage is repeated (*ShS* 97–102). Other interpretations of these passages are, however, possible: see Donadoni (1984–1985); Cannuyer (1990). For other aspects of the sailor's fallibility, see Bryan (1979). The thematisation of negligent boatsmanship is found elsewhere in Egyptian texts, both as a political and moral metaphor (cf. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 157–158, 252: ed. Parkinson 1991; *LEM* 36.10–37.6; Vittmann 1999: 139–140).

[59] Such as Hatnub graffito 17.3–17.6, where Djehutinakht describes his offerings to Thoth in terms reminiscent of the sailor's to the snake, presenting incense, *jbr*-oil and *ḥknw*-oil, wringing birds' necks, and making burnt offerings (Anthes 1928: 38–39).

[60] For the safe return without loss, cf. for example *CM* no. 113.14, left by the vizier Amenemhat under Mentuhotep IV: 'The expedition returned without loss, no man perished, no troops strayed, no ass(?) died, no workmen was lacking(?)' (translation after Schenkel 1965: 267). Other extensive descriptions of an expedition's safe (and successful) return include: *CM* no. 87.8–87.10 (see footnote 28); *CM* no. 114.15–114.16; *CM* no. 199.9–199.10; *Sinai* no. 140.5–140.9 [south edge]; Wadi Gawasis Stela of Khentekhtay-wer (Sayed 1977: 139; Obsomer 1995: 709–710).

For being reunited with family, the closest parallel to the *Shipwrecked Sailor* is found in appeals to passers by from Nubia, the closest of which begin 'As for anyone who passes by this stela, who would reach home safe, his wife being glad(?), and who would embrace his family, (he should) say (the offering formula) …' (Dunham and Janssen 1960: 162–164; Posener 1968: 70). Other examples include Hatnub graffiti 12.17 and 32.6–32.7 (Anthes 1928: 29, 68); Wadi el-Hudi no. 11.3 (Seyfried 1981: 27). For negative examples in curses (including the phrase *nn-ḫpt:f-ḫrdw:f* 'he will not embrace his children', cf. *ShS* 133) see Posener (1968: 70); Žába (1974: 85).

66; Parkinson 2002: 188), but again on a more literal level it rather nullifies the sailor's attempts to console the count by pointing to the safe return of his own expedition.

The sailor's survival is the result of divine, rather than his own, will, and it is this that enables him eventually to return to court laden with exotic goods, and thereby be restored to royal favour. There is no indication in the poem that the count can anticipate anything of this sort, and his brief reply to the sailor's tale seems to reassert the hopelessness of his situation, implying that the sailor has failed to offer any practical advice to deal with complete failure (Baines 1990: 68–69; Moers 1999: 52; Parkinson 2002: 190–191). While the protagonists' conflicting attitudes are juxtaposed in a way that is found elsewhere in Middle Egyptian literature,[61] there is no kind of resolution to the poem: while the sailor seems to advocate a kind of optimistic fatalism, the count remains an uncompromisingly pessimistic sceptic. The overwhelming majority of the text is occupied by the sailor's narrative, and it is difficult to see how the force of this speech can have been entirely negated by its own inconsistencies or by the count's brief rejoinder. Nevertheless, the text still ends on the count's pessimistic note, and it is tempting to speculate that this unresolved, downbeat tone of the ending would have remained most prominently in the minds of any potential expedition leaders in the ancient audience. For them, the poem's references to expedition inscriptions and their themes would not only have added a greater degree of verisimilitude to the narrative: they would also have made the count's unrelieved pessimism at the end even more unsettling.

[61] Such as in the *Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All* (Enmarch in preparation).

Abbreviations

ANOC	Simpson, W. K. 1974, *The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos: The Offering Chapels of Dynasties 12 and 13* (Publications of the Pennsylvania-Yale Expedition to Egypt 5). New Haven: Peabody Museum of Natural History of Yale University (cited by monument number).
CM	Couyat and Montet 1912 (cited by inscription number).
LEM	Gardiner, A. H. 1937. *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 7). Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique reine Elizabeth.
ShS	*The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*: Blackman 1932: 41–48.
Sinai	Gardiner *et al*. 1952–1955 (cited by inscription number).
Wb.	Erman, A. and Grapow, H. 1926–1963. *Wörterbuch der aegyptischen Sprache*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs.

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