

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07471-1 - A Brief Account of the Researches and Discoveries in Upper Egypt, Made under the Direction of Henry Salt, Esq.: To which is Added a Detailed Catalogue of Mr Salt's Collection of Egyptian Antiquities

Giovanni D'Athanasì

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### **A Brief Account of the Researches and Discoveries in Upper Egypt, Made under the Direction of Henry Salt, Esq.**

Originally named Demetrio Papandriopulo and of Greek parentage, Giovanni D'Athanasì (1798–1854) became in 1815 the servant of Henry Salt (1780–1827), the traveller and antiquary who became British Consul in Egypt and a pioneer Egyptologist. (An account by J.J. Halls of Salt's life and career is also reissued in this series.) Between 1817 and 1827, D'Athanasì excavated on Salt's behalf at Thebes. Published in 1836, this book was intended to accompany the sale of the collection of antiquities amassed by Salt, in which D'Athanasì had a financial interest, but various delays meant that it came out after the main sale had taken place. As well as an often diverting account (in which many axes are ground) of Salt's activities at Giza, Thebes, Memphis and Abu Simbel, the book contains a complete catalogue of the collection, indicating which items were later acquired by the British Museum.

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SPHINX found at THEBES

*Dr. Schoenrock, from M. Tischbein's drawing.*

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A  
BRIEF ACCOUNT  
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IN  
UPPER EGYPT,  
MADE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF  
HENRY SALT, ESQ.  
BY  
GIOVANNI D'ATHANASI.  
TO WHICH IS ADDED  
A DETAILED CATALOGUE OF  
MR. SALT'S COLLECTION OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES;  
ILLUSTRATED WITH TWELVE ENGRAVINGS OF SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING  
OBJECTS, AND AN ENUMERATION OF THOSE ARTICLES PURCHASED  
FOR THE  
BRITISH MUSEUM.

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LONDON:  
JOHN HEARNE, 81, STRAND.

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One of the two Sphinxes, in red granite, discovered by Giovanni D'Athanasì in the Temple of Amunoph at Thebes. They were situated about six hundred feet behind the vocal Statue of Memnon, but much below the level of that Statue, evidently forming the entrance to another temple of an earlier date. These two Sphinxes now form the principal objects of Egyptian Antiquity at St. Petersburg.

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## P R E F A C E.

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AFTER a residence of eighteen years at Thebes, entirely devoted to its objects of antiquity, I arrived in this country for the purpose of giving my assistance in the disposal of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities, formed by me, under the direction of the late HENRY SALT, Esq. and in which I had with his executors an equal interest.

In the advertisement of the sale catalogue of that collection it was stated, that previous to the sale by public auction, I would publish a brief account of some few of the most interesting researches that I had made during my long sojourn in Egypt. It may be, therefore, necessary for me to explain the cause of this work not having previously made its appearance. I would in the

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first place mention, that my Journal was originally written by me in the Greek language, and that ere I left Leghorn for this country, I entrusted it to a friend, who undertook to translate it into the French language; doubting not, that shortly after my arrival here I should receive it. In this I was sadly disappointed: much delay from various circumstances took place in its transmission to this country, and much more in its translation into English, owing to my friend at Leghorn not entirely understanding the modern Greek; a circumstance which will fully account for the errors occasionally occurring in the names of places and persons, such as *Calliot* for *Calliaud*. Misfortunes shortly after occurring to the bookseller who had purchased my manuscript, caused a still further delay, and has thus obliged me to publish it on my own account.

Reverting to the subject of the Antiquities, I would observe, that in the collection I brought over to this country, there was the mummy of a priest, contained in a case, for an account of



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which the reader is referred to the annexed catalogue, No. 986. After the discovery that had then been made by the Rev. Mr. George Tomlinson and others, of the case having belonged to the mummy of a king, I promised that I would obtain, from those employed in my service in Upper Egypt, every information possible on the subject.

I have now much pleasure in being able to state in confirmation of this discovery, that during the researches made by the Arabs in the year 1827, at Gourná, they discovered in the mountain, now called by the Arabs, *Il-Dra-Abool-Naggia*, a small and separate tomb, containing only one chamber, in the centre of which was placed a sarcophagus, hewn out of the same rock, and formed evidently at the same time as the chamber itself; its base not having been detached. In this sarcophagus was found the above-mentioned case, with the body as originally deposited. The moment the Arabs saw that the case was highly ornamented and gilt, they immediately, from their experience

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in such matters, knew that it belonged to a person of rank. They forthwith proceeded to satisfy their curiosity by opening it, when they discovered, placed around the head of the mummy, but over the linen, a diadem, composed of silver and beautiful mosaic work, its centre being formed of gold, representing an asp, the emblem of royalty. Inside the case, alongside the body, were deposited two bows, with six arrows, the heads of which were tipped with flint.

The Arabs on discovering their rich prize, immediately proceeded to break up the mummy, as was their usual custom, for the treasures it might contain, but all the information I have been able to obtain as to the various objects they found, is, that the Scarabæus, which was purchased by the British Museum, from Mr. Salt's collection, (see catalogue, No. 209), was placed on the breast, without having, as is usual, any other ornament attached to it.

The custom which prevails among the Arabs, of their selling separately, and to different persons,

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objects of antiquity found together, is really to be lamented. It arises from their wish to conceal from the chief of their village the riches they possess, which they effectually do, by selling these objects at long intervals.

I hope, however, ere long to be able to discover where this above-mentioned precious diadem is to be found, and also many other objects of interest that doubtless the mummy of this king must have contained.

Again reverting to subjects of Egyptian Antiquity, I trust I shall be pardoned for here giving the substance of a proposition made by me in the year 1833, to the Trustees of the British Museum for the removal of the Obelisk of Karnac, presented by the Viceroy of Egypt to this Government.

The Obelisk is situated in front of the portico of the Temple of Karnac, at Thebes, and could be transported with the same facility as that formerly at Luxor. It would appear, and with reason, that from the Obelisk at Karnac being

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one-third larger and heavier; at least ten times the distance from the Nile, and surrounded by obstacles which the other had not, the difficulties and expenses to be incurred would be much greater in proportion. Notwithstanding, however, all these difficulties its removal could be accomplished with the same facility, with greater security, and certainly at one-third the expense incurred in the removal of that at Luxor. The French government granted the sum of eight hundred thousand francs for the removal of this object, independent of the use of instruments and other necessary material from the Arsenal at Toulon; the consequence of which was, that with the exception of sixty or seventy thousand francs for the hiring of vessels, the remainder of the eight hundred thousand francs was appropriated to the expenses attendant upon the workmen, an expense not only unnecessary but perfectly superfluous.

For example, the French government uniformly employed European workmen, one hundred

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of whom came over from France, accompanied by an architect and an engineer. They remained at Thebes fourteen months, much time of which was lost in consequence of the bad arrangement that was made with the vessel built expressly for the purpose of conveying the obelisk; and from their inexperience in the navigation of the Nile, they were unable to get down to the mouth of the river in time for the overflowing of the water, thereby incurring the risk of not being able to get out of the river that year without considerable expence and fatigue. All this expence and hazard might have been avoided had they employed the Arabs, who are fully capable with one to direct them, of undertaking such a task.

From the experience I have obtained in the removal of objects of Antiquity, during my residence in Egypt, I have no hesitation in stating, that I could undertake the enterprise of lowering and conveying the Obelisk of Karnac to the mouth of the Nile, for the sum of £10,000, being

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£40,000 less than that expended by the French government ere they received their Obelisk at Paris.

GIOVANNI D'ATHANASI.

JULY 14th.