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978-1-108-07820-7 - Essay on Dr Young's and M. Champollion's Phonetic System of Hieroglyphics: With Some Additional Discoveries, by which It May be Applied to Decipher the Names of the Ancient Kings of Egypt and Ethiopia

Henry Salt

Excerpt

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AN
 E S S A Y,
 &c. &c.

THE first idea of certain hieroglyphics being intended to represent sounds was suggested by Dr. Young,¹ who, from the names of Ptolemy and Berenice, had pointed out nine, which have since proved to be correct; the former taken from the Rosetta inscription, and the latter deduced with singular ingenuity from the enchorial of the same monument.² Working upon this basis,

¹ Mons. Champollion fils seems to be unwilling to allow this; but the fact is evident; and surely he has accomplished too much to stand in need of assuming to himself the merits of another.

² Dr. Young seems to me to stand alone with regard to the progress he has made in the enchorial, as well as for his having led the way to the true knowledge of hieroglyphics;

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Mons. Champollion, with happy success, made out four or five others, as also about thirty synonyms; and by the ingenious application of these, the merit of which is all his own, he has been able to turn to effect the discovery, and to decypher therewith a great number of the names of the Ptolemies and of the Roman emperors, together with their titles, which fortunately gives us the means of determining the date of most of the temples built within the period of their rule.

Mons. Champollion has not only accomplished this, but has suggested (though, as Dr. Young thinks, with little success) the application of these, or other congeneric characters, to reading the names of the old Egyptian sovereigns, which undoubtedly is a great desideratum, and might lead to some important consequences in the way of illustrating the ancient history of the country; at the same time that he himself states in his "Lettre à Mons. Dacier," which is the last work of his that I have seen on this subject,

of which, in fact, little more is yet known, than that contained in his "Vocabulary."

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that “les premiers, (les noms Pharaoniques,) caractérisés par le petit nombre de leurs signes, résistent constamment à toute tentative pour y appliquer avec succès l’alphabet que je viens de faire connaître.”

It may be right here to state, that I had conceived, from the cursory notice of this discovery in the “Journal des Savans,” and in the letters of my friends, a very decided prejudice against the phonetic system, as conceiving it to be founded on too conjectural a basis; but having lately received Mons. Champollion’s pamphlet, as well as that of Dr. Young on hieroglyphics, I set myself seriously to the examination of their contents, being unwilling to suppose that so much importance could be given, without reason, by many persons of acknowledged talents in Europe, to a discovery which appeared to me only a very vague and conjectural hypothesis. This led to a complete conviction of my error, and induced me not only to entertain a just appreciation of its value, from having been able to confirm almost every point laid down by Mons. Champollion from my own sketches, but,

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with the assistance of the latter, to add some important names, as well as other phonetic characters, that are likely to conduct to results of still higher value than those already attained by its authors, and to give a new lustre to this interesting discovery.

These I shall now proceed to lay before you, and must beg your patience as I advance, it being my desire to make every step as clear and intelligible to you as to myself, which can only be done by what may appear, at first sight, too prolix an attention to detail. I must, first of all, suppose you to be perfectly acquainted with the work of Mons. Champollion ; and not that you have cursorily run over it, but that you have attentively studied it, and with constant reference to the plates.

I shall now lay before you plate I, accompanying this, containing a number of rings copied entirely from my own sketches in Upper Egypt, in which you will observe that I have been able to add the names of Arsinoe and Philip the father of Alexander, and also to correct the name of Berenice. In the hierogly-

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phics allotted to the last, both Dr. Young and Mons. Champollion concur in giving a goose of Nile as the final character; but in all the rings that I have collected containing that name at Karnak, Edfou, little temple near Esné,¹ Dakké, &c., the bird is either an hawk or a crow, or eagle, as in the name of Cleopatra; nor do I as yet find any other bird to which the sound of *A* can be attributed. Mons. Champollion, besides the goose for *A*, has given the same hieroglyphic for Σ , and the chicken² for *A*, from his ring containing the name of Alexander; but for neither of these do I find in my sketches any certain authority.

The name of Arsinoe was found by me at Gau Kibeer, at Edfou, and at Dakké—the first³ is clearly with Mons. Champollion's characters *APΣINE* at full; the second⁴ *APΣI*, with a contraction; and the third⁵ *APΣN*, together with a figure of Isis, that seems to imply goddess; and

¹ Vide Plate I, No. 19 to 23.

² I have since met with this in Signore Anastasy's name of Necho.

³ Plate I, No. 12. ⁴ Plate I, No. 13. ⁵ Plate I, No. 14.

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in all three is adjoined the egg and half circle, denoting female. It is to be observed, that the one at Dakké is found in a dedication, in conjunction with the names of Ptolemy and Berenice. At Karnak, on the noble propylon there, the finest specimen of Egyptian sculpture remaining, the name of Arsinoe is found in conjunction with that of Ptolemy, who is designated as “father” of Ptolemy who had for his wife Berenice; and in the same monument is represented an image of the king Ptolemy, dressed after the Greek fashion, which is also to be observed on many other of the Ptolemaic temples.

The name of Philip¹ is still more satisfactory. It is found on the granite sanctuary at Karnak; and on the same building is repeated the name of Alexander,² who is termed Mi-Amun, beloved of Amun. The name is clearly expressed $\Phi\Lambda\epsilon\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\varsigma$ in Mons. Champollion's characters, which approaches as near to the sound of the Greek as any other name discovered, excepting that of $K\Lambda\epsilon\omicron\pi\iota\alpha\tau\pi\alpha$,³ which accords, as it

¹ Plate I, No. 1. ² Plate I, No. 2. ³ Plate I, No. 15.

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were, letter for letter, with the Greek.' The

' The development of an hieroglyphical alphabet is allowed by Mons. Champollion to have been mainly derived from a comparison of the several signs whose combinations were known to compose respectively the names of Ptolemy and of Cleopatra : he is, however, less precise in informing us from what sources this important previous knowledge was obtained. The name of Ptolemy had long since been published as such from the Rosetta stone, and had subsequently been confirmed by a collation with other Egyptian monuments. The first discovery of the name Cleopatra is due to Mr. W. J. Bankes, in 1818.

The several steps by which this name, the most perfect in orthography of any yet decyphered, and that which has, in a manner, furnished the key to all the rest, was first ascertained, deserve to be recorded, since, while they exhibit the process of the discovery, they furnish also a plain and popular proof of its authenticity.

All who are conversant with the sculptures on Egyptian monuments will have remarked on them the multiplied recurrence of a single figure, or of a pair of figures, offering to the gods, or receiving something from them, in almost every compartment, the more advanced figure, where there are two, being the male, and the female following: in other numerous instances the male is alone; the occurrence of the female singly is comparatively rare.

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characters representing the name of Philip are

In each of these cases, however, it is observable that where the pair appear once upon an edifice, they will, for the most part, be seen similarly associated throughout; and the same systematic repetition obtains with the figure, whether male or female, when represented singly, to a multiplication almost without limit, and with little other variation, excepting in the details of the dress, or nature of the offering.

This circumstance led Mr. Bankes to suspect such figures to have been intended rather for conventional portraits of the founder and foundress of the building, or occupant of the sepulchre, than for priests or priestesses, or mere mythological persons in the abstract, as more commonly supposed. In order to try the grounds of this conjecture farther, he caused a search to be made for the original sarcophagus in one of the very few tombs at Thebes, (for there seem to be only two there of any note so circumstanced,) where the female figure is seen represented singly throughout. The granite cover was accordingly found, and exhibits externally a female figure, habited as Isis, sculptured in high relief; whereas in the innumerable tombs, on whose walls the representation of the other sex predominates, this place is uniformly allotted to a male with the attributes of Osiris. Thus was a strong additional presumption obtained, that the female upon the walls was identified with a female whose remains had occupied this depository, and the deduction seemed to extend to other cases by analogy. Mr. Bankes next observed that, as

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contained, it is to be observed, in the second

the Greek inscription upon the propylæum at Diospolis Parva furnishes the only example extant in all Egypt of the name of a queen Cleopatra preceding (instead of following) that of a king Ptolemy, (which is to be accounted for by referring it to the regency or reign of that Cleopatra who was guardian to her son,) so does the sculpture on the same building furnish the only example, where the female figure, offering, takes a precedence over that of the man: these therefore, it seemed more than probable, must be intended for Cleopatra and Ptolemy. Accordingly, Mr. Bankes proceeded to confront the supposed name of Ptolemy, as furnished to him from the Rosetta stone by Dr. Young, with the hieroglyphical designation over the male figure, and found an exact agreement.

Here was a fresh testimony afforded to the soundness of that discovery, and the strongest presumption established, that the characters surmounting the female must be those which designated Cleopatra.

The next step was to examine, whether the same two names could be found on the shaft of the obelisk which Mr. Bankes was removing from Philæ, that being a known memorial of a Ptolemy and his two Cleopatras; and upon both being detected, not upon that only, but upon a little temple also at Philæ, where Mr. Bankes had discovered a dedicatory inscription in Greek of the same sovereigns, the matter was brought to complete proof, and the result was accordingly

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ring, preceded by the goose and globe; but in the preceding one,¹ instead of the name of Alex-

communicated by Mr. B. both to Mr. Salt and to Dr. Young, and noted by him also in pencil in the margin of many copies, which he afterwards distributed, of the lithographic print of his obelisk; it was so noted, amongst others, in the margin of that sent to Paris to be presented to the French Institute by Mons. Denon.

To the plate of that obelisk Mons. Champollion refers for the discovery and proof of this important name; but it will be obvious that, without other data, a mere collation of the Greek on the pedestal with the hieroglyphics on the shaft could not, in this instance, have led to such a result, the name of two distinct Cleopatras being recited in the Greek text, whilst the only name (besides that of Ptolemy) which occurs twice in the hieroglyphs, is not that of Cleopatra, but one which seems to contain the mystic title, whose precise interpretation is still unknown, as is that also of a fourth name, which, like Cleopatra, occurs once only, and is different from all.

These facts are stated, not so much with a view of detracting from any credit assumed, on whatever grounds, by Mons. Champollion, as of proving that the chain of evidence which establishes this important name is much more full and complete than Mons. Champollion has been able to make it appear to his readers.—LONDON, 1825.

¹ Plate I, No. 4, a.