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978-1-108-08301-0 - The Early History of Egypt: From the Old Testament, Herodotus, Manetho, and the Hieroglyphical Inscriptions

Samuel Sharpe

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The Early History of Egypt

This 1836 work by Samuel Sharpe (1799–1881) is the first of two volumes on the history of ancient Egypt: the second, dealing with the Ptolemaic period, is also reissued in this series. From a banking family, Sharpe was fascinated by Thomas Young's and Champollion's work in deciphering the hieroglyphs. He taught himself Coptic, and compiled his own hieroglyphic vocabulary lists. His facility for decipherment was assisted by a natural gift for solving cryptograms, but his inferences sometimes led him into error. His object in this book is 'to collect out of the writings of the ancients every particular relating to the History of Egypt', marshalling ancient authorities including the Old Testament, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus and the Ptolemaic priest Manetho, whose division of the rulers into dynasties is still relied on. The second part of the book uses this evidence to discuss Egyptian life, language, beliefs and customs.

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THE
EARLY HISTORY
OF
EGYPT,
FROM
THE OLD TESTAMENT,
HERODOTUS, MANETHO,
AND
THE HIEROGLYPHICAL INSCRIPTIONS.
BY SAMUEL SHARPE.

Τοις μὲν νῦν ὑπὸ Ἀιγυπτίων λεγομένοις χρᾶσθω ὅτι τα τοιαῦτα πιθανὰ ἔστι· ἐμοὶ δὲ παρα
παντα τοῦ λόγου ὑποκειται, ὅτι τα λεγόμενα ὑπὸ ἑκάστων ἀκοῆ γραφῶ.

Herod. *Euterpe*, 123.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
1836.

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P R E F A C E.



THE object of the Author in the following pages has been to collect out of the writings of the ancients every particular relating to the History of Egypt, before the conquest of that country by the Persians. The collection is no doubt far from complete, but probably contains all the most important passages now extant; and, however unsatisfactory these fragments may be thought, upon these, assisted by the remaining monuments of the country, the History of Egypt at that early period must rest.

The extracts from each historian are placed separately, so that, in the words of Herodotus quoted in the title page, “each person may use those which he thinks may be relied upon;” and the remarks which are added, with a view to explain the extracts, and to show how far the account of one historian is consistent with that of another, are also kept distinct, so that the value of the quotations may not be lessened by the errors of the criticisms.

The information derived from the hieroglyphical inscriptions, which have been unlocked to us by the ingenuity of Dr. Young, forms a very valuable addition and confirmation to the accounts of the Greek historians, and one which we may with confidence expect to see increased, now that the attention of travellers has been directed to it; and the

Author hopes that the present attempt may serve to point out to them what the doubtful points in Egyptian history are, which might possibly be illustrated by the discovery of other inscriptions.

The enumeration of the principal buildings erected in each reign is arranged chronologically, and is nearly the only evidence of the comparative wealth and power of the kings; in this list is included their statues in the British Museum, which to us are a more important testimony than many larger works, which we only know through the descriptions of travellers.

The conclusions arrived at will be found occasionally to differ from those of Champollion, Wilkinson, Heeren, and other eminent antiquarians who have written upon the same subject,—and always from the same cause, that the author has followed the Greek historians more closely than has been usually done.

A few particulars, with the dates and order of succession of the Ptolemies, have been added, though without any attempt at making a complete history of that interesting dynasty, for which the materials are more abundant than they are for the earlier races of kings, and whose series of coins reminds us of that desideratum in the early history of Egypt: no coin of the country is known before the time of Alexander the Great, nor have the Greek authors even given us any information respecting the payments, or measures of value.

A slight account of the Mythology naturally follows, because the same researches, both in the ancient authors and in the hieroglyphics, are required for the mythological as for the historical enquiry.

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Some notice of the Hieroglyphics, of the Enchorial writing, of the Coptic and Ethiopic languages, seemed to be required by the subject; not only because part of the historical information is obtained by means of the first of these, but because the languages throw considerable light on the various races of inhabitants of Egypt and its borders.

But the part which the author feels has most need of explanation, to save him from the charge of presumption, is the essays on the dates of the Trojan War and Jewish Exodus. There are two epochs in the history of the Jews, and two in the history of Greece, upon which the chronology of Egypt principally rests: these are the times of Moses, Solomon, Cambyses, and the Trojan War. The accession of Cambyses is as well known, by means of the eclipses of the moon observed at Babylon, as is the accession of George III.; the time of Solomon's reign is nearly as well known; but considerable doubt hangs over the other epochs, which the Author is not so presumptuous as to suppose that he has in any degree dispelled; but he thought it desirable to state the grounds upon which he had assigned dates to those events. The time of the Trojan War is perhaps the least uncertain of the two, but then it is the least important, because the enquiry in strictness ought to be, not when that war took place, but when did Manetho, who dates from it as an epoch, suppose that it took place. But however antiquarians may differ about a few minor points, the agreement between the various authorities will be seen to be in the highest degree satisfactory. The fragments of Manetho, which are quoted by Josephus as a valuable testimony to the truth of the Jewish history, are confirmed by the list of kings contained in the Tablet of Abydos in particular, and by every

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historical inscription which can be compared with them : Herodotus and the later books of the Old Testament strongly illustrate one another, and further light is thrown upon both of them by several passages in later historians : and though we have no contemporary authority early enough to be compared with the account of Egypt in the Old Testament before the Jewish Exodus, yet the splendid buildings which were erected in the centuries immediately following satisfactorily confirm the account of the high state of civilization observed there by Abraham and Joseph.

The modern authors whose works have been principally made use of, and require a particular acknowledgement, are Dr. Young, M. Champollion, and Mr. Wilkinson.

The Author has to apologize for the omission, in page 41, of the following lines of the fragments of Manetho :

19th *Dynasty*,—*Of Diospolis*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Sethos, 51 or 55 years,
called also Rameses from his
father or grandfather. | 4. Rameses, 60 years. |
| 2. Rapsaces, or Ramesses, 61
or 66 years ; he maintained an
army of cavalry, and a fleet. | 5. Ammenemes, 5 years. |
| 3. Ammenephthes, or Ame-
nophes, 8 or 20 years. | 6. Thuoris, who is called by
Homer Polybus, the husband of
Alcandra ; in whose time Troy
was taken ; reigned 7 years. |

Together, 209 years.

So far the second book of Manetho, containing 96 kings and 2121 years.

Canonbury, 8th March, 1836.

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ERRATUM.—Page 71, line 4, *for* which he, *read* which can be.