

Observations on the canon of Egyptian kings at Turin

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Abstract

Presentation of the canon held for the Royal Society on November 25, 1841. This is the first detailed description and analysis of the Royal Canon of Turin.

English as written in the article.

Source

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OBSERVATIONS UPON THE HIERATICAL CANON OF EGYPTIAN KINGS AT TURIN.

BY S. BIRCH, ESQ.

(Read Nov. 25, 1841.)

In laying before the Society my copy and analysis of the Hieratical Canon of Turin, I am well aware both of the defects of the document in its present state and the feeble light which I am enabled to throw upon it. At the same time, the cherished hope that the keepers of the Egyptian collection of that city would have published it in a correcter form has not been realized, and I therefore hasten to give a copy of this celebrated document, frequently alluded to, but, I may add, seldom seen by the investigators of archaeology.

The copy from which mine is facsimiled was one made by M. Edouard Dulaurier from another of M. Seyffarth, who was encharged with the restoration of this mutilated document; and the former gentleman with great liberality allowed me to make any use of it I thought fit, and on the occasion of his second visit to England communicated to me the variations collated by him in another copy among the papers of M. Champollion le jeune, now in the Bibliothèque du Roi. These are indicated upon my tracings in pencil. During the visit of Dr. Lepsius in the year 1839, I communicated the copy before the Society to him, and while it agreed in many respects with his, the first page did not exist in the Turin Museum at the time his facsimile was made. M. Rossellini, with a diffidence very natural on an inspection of this papyrus, has not made use of it in his *Monumenti Storici*; but, although there is not only evidence that the restoration may be, but actually is, erroneous in many places, yet as several royal names are found in it which are wanting elsewhere, and since enough remains to show its general purport and arrangement, the publication of this papyrus would perhaps allow at a future period of a restoration of it, more happy in many respects than that of M. Seyffarth. It was found, broken into very small pieces, among a box of the papyri of the Drovetti collection, and the extreme smallness of the fragments renders the mere mechanical adaptation of the pieces very problematical.¹

The copy contains 329 lines, subtracting from which the 13 leading introductory lines and the summations, lines 20, 21, 76, 91, 92, 94, 112, 120, 131, 228, 232, 260, 268, 279, 289, 296, there remain places for 300 kings, the majority of whose names are unfortunately wanting. This very nearly coincides with the 330 kings mentioned by Herodotus² as existing between

¹ Rosellini, *Hippol. Mon. Stor.* Part i. tom. i. I have since been informed Dr. Lepsius is on the eve of publishing one.

² Euterpe, s. 100. Cf. Origny, *Chron. des Rois des Egyptiens*, vol. ii. p. 42, Eratosthenes, and Africanus.

Menes and Sesostris, or still nearer to the 314 kings of Manetho, excepting the dynasty of Xoïs. But from the 300 kings of the Canon at Turin are to be subtracted several names of gods and demigods which appear, as well as others which do not, so that its identity in point of number with the earlier lists is not correct as it at present exists. The general manner in which the papyrus was arranged appears to be as follows: there was an introduction, containing a general chronological summary, calculated by years and generations, then the list of the mythic reign of the gods and demigods, followed by the different dynasties, each dynasty being closed by a summation of the number of kings of the line and the years they reigned. The earliest name found in the list is that of the deity Seb; the latest³ appears to be that of a monarch of the eighteenth line, apparently Rameses the Great.

It appears from the list of Manetho in the old Chronicle, that the reigns of mortals were supposed to be preceded by the mythic ones of certain deities, seventeen in number, viz.: 1, Hephaistos (Phtah); 2, the Sun (Phre or Ra); 3, the Agathodaemon (Har-Hat); 4, Saturn or Chronos (Seb); 5, 6, Osiris and Isis; 7, a blank; 8, Typhon. Of these are found in the list, Seb, line 13; Osiris or Isis, line 14; Horus, perhaps the Har of Hat, line 16; and Seth or Typhon, line 15. The eight gods were followed by nine demigods⁴: 1, Horus; 2, Mars (Onouris, or another form of Horus); 3, Anubis; 4, Hercules (Chons or Horus); 5, Apollo (Horus); 6, Ammon; 7, Tithoes; 8, Horus; 9, Jupiter (Noum). Of this rank are found in the Canon, two Horus', lines 19-22; Thoth, line 17; Thmei, or the two Truths, lines 18, 36, 37; the Totonen gods, line 43; and the deity Tot or Tattou (?); line 74.

This completes the list of that part of the Canon relative to the names of deities, attached to whom is the duration of their reign, but few or none have the ciphers perfect; the only one given as complete being the god Thoth, and the duration of his reign, placed at line 3, 126 years. Since the deities ought in some order to have followed immediately after the introduction, it will be seen from this portion alone that the restoration which has placed them after Menes must necessarily be wrong.

In the 10th and 11th lines⁵ of the introduction occurs the name of the founder of the Egyptian monarchy, Menes, written in the same manner as at the Ramesseium, and from the repetition of this name there is every reason to suppose that the introduction contained a summary of the chronology from Menes to the epoch at which the list ended. This name is followed, line 13, by that of the King Athoth,⁶ a restoration very problematical; and to pass from these two names to those already known, in line 118 occurs the praenomen of Amenophis III., or Memnon(?), of the eighteenth dynasty; in line 140, the praenomen of Amenemhe I.; line 200, that of the unplaced king, Re-stor-en or Storenre, represented on a pylon at Mount Birkel; line 133, that of a monarch new to the chronological series, but since found on a scarabaeus

3 Lines 304-308.

4 Cf. Champollion, Gram. Egyp. p. 141, who has given some of these names.

5 Cf. also line 93.

6 This name had 'Athoth' written against it in pencil in M. Dulaurier's copy from M. Champollion.

from the Anastasi collection, B. M. ; in line 75, a variation of the unplaced monarch Ouonas (Rosellini, Mon. Stor., tom. ii. tav. xv. App. No. 12), but communicated to me in the very form it occurs in the papyrus, from a vase in the possession of Dr. Abbot at Cairo, by Mr. G. R. Gliddon ; in line 129, the praenomen of the King Amenemhe III., last monarch but one of the seventeenth dynasty ; the kings Re mere ka (Mercheres) , line 174 ; Re mere Nofre, line 158 ; Re meri tor, line 173 ; Re sonkh heth, line 138 ; Re samen ka, line 139 ; Har men ka, line 73 ; Re shaa ophth, line 154 ; Re shaa taou, line 186 ; a cartouch containing the praenomen of a second Re shaa taouo or Shaa taou-re, with his name Thothophth (?) , line 153 ; the praenomen, Men ka re Mencheres, with the name Thothophth (?), line 152 ; Re shaa Nofre or Shaa-nofre re, with the name Thothophth (?), line 155 ; and another monarch, Re-shaa --- , with the name Nofrethph or Nephrophes, line 153 ; and, in line 86, is the name of the queen Neithakhor (?) or Nitocris (?) ; and a dynasty entirely new to hieroglyphical literature, bearing, as a prominent portion of their names, the word $\chi\omicron\upsilon\phi$, or Kufi. Of these are the kings

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|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Re skuf, line 146. | 3. Re mere kufi, line 189. |
| 2. Re neb kufi, line 191. | 4. Shie kufi, line 33. |

The last of these names is apparently erroneously restored, because it is probable that the expression 'Shie-altar,' which precedes, has formed the objective case of some function of the Sun. Thus we find on Stele Anastasi, $\text{no } \chi\alpha\gamma\upsilon\text{ } \psi\text{IH } \text{CN}$ 'thurify their altars' from which the ψIH of line 33 may have formed the complement of the mutilated name, line 146. Among the other names of this list which present an apparent degree of truth are the monarchs

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| Re nahsi, line 185. | Re mam ka, line 142. |
| Re s'hbai, line 188. | Re men siou, line 220. |
| Re - - - oubn, line 180. | Re - - n, line 192. |
| - - - sotep en re, lines 304-308. | |

Of these names, which complete the list of those the least mutilated, and wearing a certain air of probability, the most remarkable are the first two : the term $\text{N}\Delta\zeta\text{CI}$ meaning, in Coptic, 'insurgent or revolter,' is applied in the hieroglyphics more especially to the black or negro races, and the bird with which it commences is often depicted black;⁷ the word $\text{N}\Delta\zeta\text{CI}$ has been consequently conjectured to mean, in the more ancient language, negro; and the name, line 185, consequently implies the *Ethiopian*, or *Negro Sun*; the following name, line 188, Re s'hbai, means the *Sun making panegyrics*, and is, like the former, apparently an integral name: the succeeding name, line 180, implies the Sun - - - light ; that of line 220, Re men sou, the *Sun establishing the stars*; the name, line 192, Pe-ten, or $\text{t}\hat{\omicron}\text{n}$ (TN), the Sun Re m - - ka; line 142, and lines 304-308 contain the end of a cartouch apparently similar to the termination of the name

⁷ This name Nahsi is, I suspect, to be found in the *Nas-amones* of Herodotus. Cf. also Lenormant Ch. Cours d'Histoire ancienne, 8vo. p. 325. Par. 1838.

of the king Rameses III., or some monarch of that line. I had appended to the present Paper a list of the perfect kings, and the transcription of their hieratic names into hieroglyphic, and a translation, as far as practicable, of the whole document; but the indifference of the copy as to style, the mutilated state of it, and the faulty condition of the restoration, prohibit more than a bare description of the reading of the cartouches. I have also been unable to give the exact places where the minute fragments have been recomposed. However, while all these circumstances combine to render defective this papyrus an historical evidence *per se*, it is possible that it may be one of the books out of which the priests read their succession to Herodotus, and a list exactly similar in general purport to that of Manetho, viz., the succession, with the years, days, months of the individual reign, and of the whole dynasty. like the tablet of Abydos, it seems to have been chiefly composed of praenomens.

Editor's note (2017): Mr. Birch produced a facsimile not present in this article.⁸

⁸ Champollion, J. J. *Revue Archeologique* 7.2 (1851), p. 401, wrote: "Soon after, Mr. Birch published a short notice with the facsimile of the first page or first column of the papyrus thus restored." (Translated from French: "M. Birch en publia bientôt après une courte notice, avec le facsimile de la première page ou première colonne du papyrus ainsi restauré.")