

# The Drovetti Collection in the Egyptian Museum

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Abstract

*About the Drovetti Collection.*

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## The Drovetti collection and the Royal papyrus of the Egyptian Museum in Turin.

That numerous and select group of scholars, archaeologists, orientalists, astronomers, geologists, architects, painters, sculptors, engineers, whomt Napoleon, with brilliant intent, had called to be part of his expedition to Egypt, could finally take advantage of the victory, and study in every way with confidence the country that had for many centuries, due to its political and religious events, been almost completely kept away from any scientific investigation. The results of the many investigations were later made known with the precious *Description de l'Égypte ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, published between 1809-1813 and in its second edition between 1817-1830 which is, as far as antiquities are concerned, the principal work by E. Jomard, who after the death of Lancret took over the direction and coordinated the work.

But the first discoveries made during the expedition, especially that of the Rosetta stone and the zodiac of Bendera which had offered the scholars abundant material for study and animated discussion, had already aroused a more lively love for historical studies based on monuments and consequently increased the desire for new and greater research. These, in fact, were not lacking.

Among the first, the consular agents of the various European nations began to dig, to collect monuments and written texts, which were then transported to Europe where they laid, so to speak, the foundations of the Egyptian Museums that are still famous today. The excavations that provided the Turin Museum with the most valuable collection of Egyptian monuments known at the time also date back to this period.

The Canavesan Bernardino Drovetti, who had been in the armies of the Republic and knew the most distinguished generals, including G. Murat and the highly esteemed Piedmontese general Colli, was sent to Egypt in 1803 as Consul General of France. With the support of viceroy Mohammed-Ali, whose favour he soon gained, making use of the authority that his office gave him, knowing well that at the time every product of the Pharaonic civilization was appreciated, he also excavated and collected monuments. He managed to put together a very large collection of monuments of various kinds, but unfortunately he did not take care to indicate when he carried out the excavations and where he obtained the material. Even his biographers, from whom I learned the previous news about him, only claim that he



During the interruption, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had already purchased the Nizzoli collection also began negotiations with Drovetti's procurator to purchase the collection, but due to the significant sum requested, the Grand Duke declined. Instead he resumed, and finally concluded those with the Government of Piedmont, with the sanction of King Charles Felix in October 1822, cavalier Cordero di San Quintino, commissioned by the sovereign, checked the various objects in the collection, gave them a brief mention of them in *Giornale Arcadico* (XIX. pp. 180-208), prepared a summary catalogue and on 30 October 1823 he took them in consignment. On January 23, the regular purchase contract was stipulated for the sum of four hundred thousand lire, of which one hundred thousand lire payable in cash, and three hundred thousand lire with an annuity of fifteen thousand lire on the redeemable public debt of the Regi Stati.

In this way, due to the generosity of its King, the city of Turin, which already owned Dr. Vitaliano Donati's respectable collection of Egyptian antiquities,<sup>7</sup> acquired a new luster that will always be envied by foreigners.<sup>8</sup> The news was greeted by scholars with great satisfaction, and soon attracted Champollion to Turin, to whom the collection came to provide the best means to give substance and development to his doctrines. When he arrived on June 7, he was received with the most cordial welcome and with the best hope he could help augment new studies, from that chosen group of scholars who then formed the decorum of the Piedmontese capital, such as Count Prospero Balbo, president of the R. Academy of Sciences, Count Federico Sclopis, the abbots Costanzo Cazzera and Amedeo Peyron, the astronomer Giovanni Plana and many others, who, as admirers, later became dear companions of the great scientist during his stay.

He soon began to study, and after having carefully examining the various typed of stone monuments, he turned his attention particularly to the collection of papyri and manuscripts, of which, until then, only about twenty had been studied. When shown the numerous fragments of other papyri, piled together on a long table in a room of the Accademia delle Scienze building, his soul was pervaded by a new enthusiasm and he seemed to have entered the columbarium of Egyptian history. He then began, with religious care, as he himself says, to order the fragments, to separate those of greater size, to study their content, to transcribe the names of the pharaohs, especially focusing his attention on fifty fragments of a papyrus that he had managed to put together and in which he recognized an ancient list of the royal dynasties of Egypt.

Of this papyrus and of the numerous others he examined with the primary intention of searching for royal names, he gave ample news in the second letter to the Duke of Blacas,

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<sup>7</sup> See P. Barocelli, *Il viaggio del dott. Vitaliano Donati in Oriente (1759-62) in relazione colle prime origini del Museo egiziano di Torino*, in *Atti della R. Acc. delle Scienze di Torino*. XLVII, meeting of February 18, 1912.

<sup>8</sup> At the end of October 1827, the French government bought from Drovetti, for the sum of 150,000 francs, his second collection, now in the Louvre. See H. Hartleben, *Champollion, Sein Leben und sein Werk*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1906, II, pp. 115-116.

as he had done in the first for the main monuments in stone bearing royal names.<sup>9</sup> A brief description of the entire collection was then included in *Calendari generali degli Stati Sardi* for the year 1827, which was also reported in subsequent years (1828-1829-1832).<sup>10</sup>

Two years later, Gustav Seyffarth came to Turin, and turned his attention once again to the fragments already examined. Comparing them with scrupulous diligence with each other, carefully studying the fibres, the colour, the way of writing, with the fortunate discovery of other fragments bearing the royal names in hieratic character, he managed, after several months of very patient work, to put together all those pieces in the manner which is now on display in the Museum, known by the name royal or chronological. The front side of this priceless treasure was published by R. Lepsius in *Auswahl der wichtigsten Urkunden des Aegyptischen Alterthums* (Leipzig, Wigand, 1842) and republished with the reverse side in 1851 by Gardner Wilkinson under the title *The fragments of the hieratic papyrus at Turin*.

Other important documents then came to light from the *columbarium* of Egyptian history. In the same *Auswahl* Lepsius published part of the satirical papyrus, that of the gold mines and the first and second pages<sup>11</sup> of a papyrus on which Champollion had already placed his attention (Op. cit., II, page 44).

In the same year (Leipzig, Wigand) he also published the large hieroglyphic funerary papyrus with a length of 19 metres, composed of 165 chapters with the title *Das Todtenbuch der Aegypter* and later, in 1867, (Abhandl. der Berliner Akad.) he published the front of another papyrus which he called *Grundplan des Grabes König Ramses IV*. Also in this year, T. Deveria published the hieratic Judicial papyrus,<sup>12</sup> 0.42 m high, 5.24 m long, containing an indictment against several senior officers of the reign of Ramesses III and which is a very interesting essay of criminal procedure of those ancient times.

In the following year, Chabas in collaboration with Lieblein published fragments of a second map of a gold mine<sup>13</sup> together with a hieratic accounting papyrus (Champollion, op. cit. II, page 80) which it also translated.<sup>14</sup> Between 1869-1876, Pleyte and Rossi published other non funerary hieratic papyri in *Papyrus de Turin*, containing mostly fragments, from family letters to hymns embracing the various kinds of literature of ancient Egypt. In the work printed in Leiden (E. I. Brill), which turned out to be composed of two volumes in folio, one with the

9 *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas d'Aulps relatives au Musée royal égyptien de Turin*; First letter - *Monuments historiques* (Paris, Didot, 1824); Second letter - *Suite des monuments historiques* (Paris, Didot, 1826).

10 For the work and stay of Champollion in Italy, see H. Hartleben, op. cit., I, pp. 501-593; II, pp. 1-66.

11 This was also reproduced in *Königsbuch* (plate XXII).

12 *Le papyrus judiciaire de Turin publié et traduit pour la première fois* by M. T. Deveria. *Journal Asiatique*, 1865, 1866-67.

13 In 1862 he had published the one already published by Lepsius in *Auswahl. Les Inscriptions des Mines d'or*, Chalon-sur-Saône, Dejussieu. - The two maps were also published by Lauth; the first in *Sitzungsberichte* of the Acc. of Monaco, 1870, vol. II pp. 337-372; the second, in Resoconti, 1871, vol. I. pp. 190-238.

14 J. Lieblein. *Deux Papyrus hiératiques du Musée de Turin, etc.* Christiania, 1868. See also Chabas, la *Lettre à M. I. Lieblein à propos de sa publication d'un papyrus de comptabilité conserve au Musée de Turin*, in *Bibl. Égypt.*, XI, pp. 439-476.

text, the other with plates (158) revealed some papyri already described by Champollion (see op. cit, II, especially pp. 44, 46, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 90, 98), the reverse of the papyrus of the plan of the tomb of Ramesses IV was also published (pp. 100-103 text, pi. LXXI-LXXII) and the page already reproduced by Lepsius in *Auswahl und Königsbuch* was republished (pp. 22-25 text, pl. XI-XV).

The catalogue of the various kinds of papyri of the whole collection, with mythological representations, of the book of the world below, of the book of the dead, of the hieratic papyri of civic or administrative character, and of the most important fragments of illustrated papyri, some with traces of topographical plans, of the demotic,<sup>15</sup> Coptic and Greek papyri,<sup>16</sup> was compiled by Prof. Rossi.<sup>17</sup>

The total number of papyri in this catalogue far surpasses that of 169 given by the Drovetti catalogue, combined with the deed of purchase, and among all, the largest number is that of the civic administrative papyri. Of these, it is now impossible to know exactly how many arrived in rolls or in sizes that they could be classified by themselves, but, examining their measurements, considering moreover that the largest number of the best preserved papyri are funerary, I do not seem to go far from the truth in assuming that the administrative ones were not more than fifty. The others were certainly put together with the fragments from Champollion and Seyffarth; many of these have been published by Pleyte and Rossi, but a large part remain unpublished.

Prof. Schiaparelli turned his attention to the fragments that remained after the various selections, when he took over the direction of the Museum. Unfortunately, he found them in a very bad state. Piled up in various drawers with the generic label "*Fragmenta papyrorum funeralium*" they seemed to be glued together, and the woodworms had not been idle, accomplishing a disaster. However, they were separated with the utmost diligence, comforted by the same hopes of Champollion and Seyffarth, but his long search was in vain.

Among the various papyri he was able to partially reassemble some, by bringing together sufficient fragments to determine at least the content, from the several thousand unpublished fragments, but no more were found that belonged to the royal papyrus. In October 1899, on the XII Congress of the Orientalists held in Rome, he communicated the discovery of nine

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<sup>15</sup> For the bibliography concerning them, see Rossi e Lanzone, *Museo di Torino, Antichità egizie*, I, pp. 281-284.

<sup>16</sup> Abbot Amedeo Peyron was the first to give them attention, with results that are well known to all. Plentiful news about the studies of Peyron and others, about Greek and Coptic papyri is given by Rossi in the individual introductions to the publication of the various Coptic manuscripts of the Egyptian Museum of Turin, published at intervals in *Memorie della R. Acc. delle Scienze di Torino* between 1883-1892 (series II, XXXII-XLII) and completed with the Note, *Un nuovo codice copto del Museo Egizio di Torino* etc., appeared in *Memorie della R. Acc. dei Lincei*, series V, vol. I, part I, sitting of March 19, 1893.

<sup>17</sup> Rossi and Lanzone, *Museo di Torino, Antichità egizie*, I, pp. 207-286. Torino, Paravia, 1892.

hymns in honour of different pharaohs. Also a book of moral maxims, a literary anthology containing stories and poems, twenty magical or religious papyri, a calendar of glorious or ominous days, different historical papyri, a papyrus containing war songs of the Kahaka, transcribed in hieratic, but, perhaps, in the Libyan language.

He also pointed out some fragments of a judicial papyri, two geological and geographical maps, plans of different tombs and especially fragments of a very important and numerous series of papyri related to the necropolis of Thebes. It tells of its administration, inhabitants, the suffering, and the continuous turmoil reporting on the ceremonies that took place in honor of some deceased and divinized pharaohs.

Educated at his school, with his advice, his support, I too have approached the many remaining fragments and reviewed them. For the time being, I shall limit myself to indicating their general character, reserving for subsequent notes the exposition of the results of further investigations and the publication of the most important ones. Despite the large number, they can serve nothing, and unfortunately must be considered part of others that have been irreparably lost.