

Bulletin des sciences historiques, antiquités, philologie

Volume 2

Article no. 292

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« *Papyrus Égyptiens historiques du Musée Royal de Turin* »

pages 297–303

Paris 1824

Subject: The Turin king list



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HISTORICAL EGYPTIAN PAPYRUS

ROYAL MUSEUM OF TURIN.

EXTRACT OF THE LETTERS OF MR CHAMPOLLION THE YOUNGER

TURIN, October 30, 1824. — I have reserved for this season the examination of many Egyptian papyri that are part of the Royal Museum, from the Drovetti collection. There are many very beautiful and remarkable for their size, their purity and perfect state of preservation. Almost all of them are written in hieroglyphics, decorated with paintings and are extracts, more or less, of the extensive funerary ritual; they were all drawn from the mummies, which explains this uniformity.

One of them is, however, very large in its dimensions. The beautiful papyrus of the king's cabinet, so faithfully inscribed in *Description de l'Égypte*, which is 22 feet long, was the greatest of all known papyri, and could be regarded as the complete ritual of which other funeral hieroglyphic or hieratic manuscripts reproduced more or less large portions, depending on the size of the character for which they were made. But I had noticed that the paintings of beautiful boxes of mummies, offering scenes and texts so similar to those of the funeral ritual, also had some who were not in the great manuscript of the king's cabinet. so you could believe that there was, this ritual, a more extended type, and this is confirmed a papyrus of Turin, which is also the funeral ritual, and nearly 60 feet in length; it can be considered complete; I have found some very curious painted scenes, and the average rank strictly in their order, the various extracts of this ritual presented by other funerary papyrus; the writing cannot be more clear, each major division has a particular title. Moreover, multiple copies or extracts of the same text, also has a genuine interest, since their comparison made me recognize several new synonym signs, and my paintings have enriched all.

As for demotic writing on papyri, there is very little. However, I recognized some contracts from the time of the Ptolemies, another I think of Darius; Finally, another very long papyrus contains a series of receipts for a fee or annual pension, and they are dated from year 31 until year 38 in the reign of Psammetichus I. So we arrive to the Pharaohs by the papyrus, and a rare happiness comes to reward my long patience.

I first noted to the most beautiful manuscripts and which are the best preserved. I had put aside, as reformed books, twenty papyrus packets, blackened and corroded by time, square folded, of various sizes, without paintings, and each wrapped in a piece of canvas. Tired of the endless repetition of the funeral ritual texts that showed me the beautiful rolled manuscripts, I cast my eyes on one of these abandoned packages; I saw written in hieratic, and the first line first introduced me to the name and surname of the great Sesostris; these names were repeated eight or ten times in the manuscript. Excited by this remark, I spent four hours with the fifty pieces that make up this room, and I convinced myself that it contains either a piece of history, or a public act of the reign of Sesostris. All other packages, that I have not left for four days, gave me similar results. I have explored in a hurry, and only to recognize the names of the kings they talk about. All these manuscripts are in hieratic, written on both sides, folded like the pages of our books, not rolled; some have a length of 5 to 6 feet, and they abound in all names of kings, always preceded by dates taken of their reign. The Pharaohs of which I found the words and eras in these papyri are Amenhotep II, who also recalls a reign of Miphres or Moeris, his third predecessor; Armais, the sixth successor of Amenhotep II; Ramses-

Meiamoun, the second successor Armais. There are four parts of this king, and all the kings belonging to the eighteenth dynasty of Manetho. Five or six other pieces are the reign of Ramses the Great, or Sesostris, head of the nineteenth; two of Ramses and his son and successor; Finally, one of the best preserved in these manuscripts mention dates with almost all the princes of the nineteenth dynasty, Sesostris, his son Ramses, Ammenephtes, Amenemhet, and very likely Thouoris. One of these parchments has all the titles, names and qualities of Sesostris royal protocol; Most of these pieces are very elegantly written.

That, I hope, a great conquest for history, and fortunately of a time which we still have so few documents. With persistence and some encouragement for those who still have the zeal to go and exploit Egyptian ruins, perhaps we will one day have a collection of charters and parchments of Egyptian history: we will cease to repeat that Egyptian manuscripts contain only prayers, and have no interest in history and letters pile up in closets. I spend my winter exploring these valuable historical treasures, which are already saying so, although I have barely seen all.

Some of these royal papyrus, from the time of Sesostris showed me other peculiarities; for example, in the middle of a big page, there is painted a large ship with large sails, her rigging, and current foams on the masts. It gives us some ideas on naval practices of the Egyptians. I will send a tidy copy. Drawings, drawn by a traveler from various catacombs, also have very curious civil and industrial scenes; we see potters, musicians, dancers, a cook in her kitchen stocked with utensils, a market, hunters, boat manufacturers, seed companies, and a workshop that looks like a laboratory containing vases placed on the tripods or furnaces, and other covered vases in the shape of horns.

But another papyrus deserves somewhat more attention, laden with lines drawn in different directions, I did not see it at first. After seeing all the pieces that make a large sheet of more than two feet, I recognized without doubt the plan of a royal washed catacomb; the flip side is almost entirely written. The design is very neatly done, and we can distinguish some mistakes from a very pale color, as with a pencil. This catacomb is that of King Ramses-Meiamoun, already named above, the same who built the magnificent palace of Medinet Habu, and here is the evidence. The commission of Egypt raised the level of several tombs, and one of those published, refers exactly with what is given in this papyrus; this is the fifth of Biban-el-Moluk, west of Thebes, and the reliefs of the tomb offer many times the name of Ramses-Meiamoun; more is known in England as Greek inscriptions drawn on the walls of the catacombs, announce that various people came to visit the tomb of Ramses-Meiamoun. Finally, the great hall of the plan on papyrus shows the drawing, as the crow flies, from a very well-painted pink granite sarcophagus lid, decorated with three characters with different attributes, and this also is just the shape, pose, proportions and details, the pink granite lid also alleging even 5th western Tomb, reported by Belzoni, given at the University of Cambridge, who, from the drawings which he kindly sent me and I mentioned at p. 228 of my last book, indeed bears the full name of this Ramses-Meiamoun. The reconciliation plan on papyrus with that of the Commission in Egypt, will offer some observations that will not be without interest. It is remarkable that the contours of the mountain, shown on both planes, relate perfectly still, and what deserves more attention is that every corridor, every room of the plane on papyrus carries a hieratic inscription, followed figures giving very different numbers: these are probably the dimensions of each part of the Royal excavation, and the Commission has raised these same details in meters, thus a new element to the big question of the Egyptian measures. I carefully layer the plan, and I will send shortly.

As for the sculptures, there is almost nothing new, except a red sandstone colossus that is perfectly preserved, 16 feet in height, arriving from Genoa. I believe, from what has been told, that it is a statue

of Osymandias; the inscriptions it bears tell us the truth on this point; in this case it will be one of the oldest productions of Egyptian art.

Turin, November 6, 1824. — The eight days that have passed since my last letter were spent entirely on the ruins of the ancient Egyptian history. I will forever regret the loss, perhaps irreparable, of so many important documents that could have been preserved by care on the part of those who exhumed them. After the first summary and review of historical papyrus indicated in my previous letter, I learned by chance that other fragments exist in the attic where they were relegated as too poor to deserve a better house. However, I insisted on a visit; we pulled the boxes, and the next day I could see. On entering a room, I now call the columbarium of the story, I was moved by the sight of a table of ten feet in length, completely covered with papyrus fragments, at least half a foot thick.

To calm my grief, I first supposed that it was the remains of four to five hundred funeral rituals; but the first piece that I cast my eyes on, showed me a fragment of a deed dated in the year 24 of Pharaoh Amenhotep-Memnon. From that moment I resolved to examine piecemeal everything covering the table of devastation. Tracing became the main instrument of my operation and I thus judged the fragments one by one, the million leaves, the shapeless remains more than thirty centuries old.

It would be hard to describe the sensations I experienced dissecting the shreds of this great corpse of history. There was excessive philosophizing; I found myself with a history of which time has retained only the memory, with the gods who have had no altars for fifteen centuries, and I have saved such a small portion of papyrus which was the last and only refuge the memory of a king who, in his lifetime, may have been found close in the vast palace of Karnak in Thebes. I collected the fragments of a great number of transactions and other parts of the Pharaohs Amenoftep Ramses-Pheron and Ramses the Great or Sesostris of the Nineteenth Dynasty. Ramses-Meamoun, Akencherres-Ousirei, Akencherres-Mandouei and Amenhotep II of the Eighteenth. The dates abound in these fragments; one record begins: "*In the fifth year, and the fifth day of ...*, the obedient people of the king, the Sun, making the world stable (cartouche with prenomen), *God, son of the Sun*, Thutmose (cartouche with nomen)"; Thutmose II of the Eighteenth, the Moeris so famous in history, and this public document is probably the oldest existing in the world.

I also saw records for years 4 and 24 of Amenhotep II, 6, 10 and 24 of Ramses Miamun, 4 of Sesostris, etc. All these manuscripts, without exception, are in hieratic, and most are real calligraphy models by the elegance of the signs. Not one of the king names is subsequent to the Nineteenth Dynasty, and the mass of this collection of papyrus gathered together, proves to me that the one who discovered them in Egypt, found the entire archives of a temple or some other public filing.

But a unique papyrus outshines all others; the loss of the missing parts is regrettable; it is a historical treasure; I recognized a real timeline, a royal Canon, which recalls that of Manetho, and the fragments that I found gave me a list of over a hundred kings. This is an invaluable supplement to the famous genealogical table of Abydos, and the reason to redouble the zeal in searching for Egyptian papyri; and hopefully, if research is encouraged by the government and the public, and friends of letters.

In the midst of this interesting and painful exploration, I was sometimes enlivened by singular events; there are papyrus that contain only drawings, and these drawings are truly *grotesque caricatures*; a cat observe ducks led by hand, a baboon plays the double flute; nearby the name and surname of a warlike Moeris', an armed war rat let fly arrows against a champion of his race; a cat climbs a battle

chariot, etc. Other paintings still surprised me by their obscenity and shook my belief on the high Egyptian wisdom, unless we suppose these paintings were seized in time by the authority of law.

So a glossy supplement to my work this winter; I trace, I draw, I copy, from morning to night. The general indication of the results; this would make a great book, and I still have not seen everything. I want to thank The Duke of Montmorency-Laval, Ambassador of France in Rome; I also had the honor of accompanying LL. AA. Prince of Carignan and Prince Maximilien-Marie de Saxe, father of the Queen of Spain. Mr. Biot and the French, Austrian and Piedmont astronomers associated with its major operations, have kindly given me a few hours. Our learned academicians arrived from Paris, and brought me back for a moment in the middle of our knowledge: what he said the fair state of health of Nestor literature, our venerable friend Mr. Dacier, left me particularly satisfied; my new explorations rather delight; his taste, his knowledge, his zeal for all that is good and beautiful, have not been affected by age; his vote flatters me and touch me, and I cannot recognize that my tender and respectful attachment: it is to him, and the Duke of Blacas with whom I have so many obligations, belong to right the first communications letters.

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