

**ON THE HISTORICAL ANTIQUITY
OF THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT: THEIR
VULGAR KALENDAR, AND THE
EPOCH OF ITS INTRODUCTION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649395101

On the historical antiquity of the people of Egypt: their vulgar kalendar, and the epoch of its introduction by Johannes von Gumpach

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHANNES VON GUMPACH

**ON THE HISTORICAL ANTIQUITY
OF THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT: THEIR
VULGAR KALENDAR, AND THE
EPOCH OF ITS INTRODUCTION**

ON
THE HISTORICAL ANTIQUITY
OF
THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT,
THEIR VULGAR KALENDAR,
AND
THE EPOCH OF ITS INTRODUCTION.




BY
JOHANNES VON GUMPACH.

LONDON:
DULAU & Co., 37, SOHO SQUARE.
1863.

PREFACE.

IN submitting the following *Essay* to the critical judgment of the learned, I have no occasion to enter at any length into the various causes which, notwithstanding the gradual accumulation of historical materials, both monumental and traditional, have combined in throwing the chronology of Egypt into a state of unparalleled confusion. The fact admits of no denial, and has been placed in a striking light by Sir George C. Lewis, in the sixth chapter of his recently published, most valuable work on the *Astronomy of the Ancients*.

Among the general reasons, however, I may name our still very imperfect knowledge of the language of the monumental inscriptions; the fragmentary and disconnected form, in which the remains of the historical tradition of Egypt have come down to us; and the premature attempts to restore the Egyptian chronology in its details, on the part of men who, however distinguished in other branches of learning, were, from their unacquaintance with the very principles of astronomy and scientific chronology, unqualified for such a task.

The special causes include the erroneous interpretation of the Egyptian seasons of the year by Champollion, whose brilliant genius was misled by the hieroglyphic element  (taken for the determinative of *water*) in the tetrameny , to identify the latter with "the season of inundation"—really  "the season of the Nile;"—and the fundamental dates, resting on that interpretation, introduced into Egyptian chronology by the illustrious Biot.

In the first place, therefore, the chronologer, with a view to the final restoration of consecutive order in the history of Egypt, has to direct his attention to three primary objects, namely: to place the kalendarian system of the ancient Egyptians on a firm basis; to establish the earliest epoch of their accredited history on secure grounds; and to determine, within the limits of that history, the greatest practical number of chronological dates, connected either with computable astronomical phenomena, or with indubitable historical contemporanities.

On the present occasion, I have confined myself almost exclusively to the two former objects, as, in regard to the latter, I have reason to anticipate that important additions to the scanty materials, thus far available to us, will ere long be placed at the service of science by two of the most eminent Egyptologists of our day, Samuel Birch, Esq., of the British Museum, and Dr. Henry Brugsch, of the University of Berlin.

In the mean time, it is hoped that the little Essay, now submitted to the public, will not only be welcomed by the chronologer and the student of ancient history, but prove acceptable also to that more numerous class of readers, who consider the interesting question of the historical antiquity of the people of Egypt in its philosophical and religious aspect, rather than in its technical bearing.

JOHANNES VON GUMPACH.

GUERNSEY,

March, 1863.

ON THE HISTORICAL ANTIQUITY OF THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT.

I.

ON THE EGYPTIAN KALENDAR.

WHILE Sir George C. Lewis "fears, that the future discoveries of the Egyptologists will be attended with results as worthless and as uncertain as those, which have hitherto attended their ill-requited and barren labours,"* and Mr. Birch anticipates that, "although far from perfectly understood, ere long it will be as easy to read a page of hieroglyphs as of Greek or Latin:"† I neither share in the fears of the former, nor in the somewhat sanguine expectations of the latter, of these two equally distinguished savants. It is, certainly, undeniable that Champollion's system of interpretation continues to be beset with formidable difficulties, and that the poor and dubious results, to which it has thus far led, are well calculated to cast a certain amount of doubt upon it;‡ but that those difficulties should

* "A Historical Survey of the Astronomy of the Ancients," London, 1862, 8vo, p. 396.

† "An Introduction to the Study of the Egyptian Hieroglyphs," London, 1857, 12mo, p. 282.

‡ Professor Lepsius ("Ueber eine Hieroglyphische Inschrift am Tempel von Edfu," Berlin, 1855, p. 70) admits that, "indeed, not even the inscription of the Rosetta stone has thus far been made the subject of a philological explanation. A bare translation, adapted to the Greek text, is all that has been offered. The attempt of Salvolini to analyse the hieroglyphic text, went to the third line only; that of De Saulcy's of the demotic text, not beyond the fifth line: both attempts were unsuccessful: and none have been undertaken since."—So long as the hieroglyphic and demotic texts of a trilingual inscription, one of the languages of which is perfectly understood, defy all attempts at grammatical analysis, to main-

not be overcome, and that, sooner or later, a language, for the acquirement of which means so extensive are at our command, should not be mastered, it would be unreasonable to assume.

Under present circumstances, however, the determination of a few hieroglyphic or demotic groups, admitting of positive proof, is still a greater gain to our knowledge, than the translation of an entire inscription, yielding words without any logical sense, and taxing our credulity rather than satisfying our understanding. Thus, a few years ago, Dr. Brugsch established linguistically, from four astrological tablets brought to Europe by the Rev. Henry Stobart, the demotic names of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the five planets, as compared with ours; leaving it to astronomical computation to verify his philological conclusions.* This was done; and the latter were fully borne out by the results of Mr. Ellis's calculations,† showing that,

tain, as the disciples of Champollion do, that the true key to the ancient language of Egypt has been *unquestionably* found, appears to me a very questionable assertion.

* "Nouvelles Recherches sur la Division de l'Année des Anciens Egyptiens, suivies d'un Mémoire sur des Observations Planétaires, consignées dans quatre Tablettes Egyptiennes en Ecriture Démotique," Berlin, 1856, 8vo.

† "Results derived from an Examination of certain places of the five principal Planets, as interpreted from Inscriptions on four old Tablets, discovered in Egypt, made principally for determination of the Epoch of the Tablets," in the "Memoirs of the Royal Astronomical Society," vol. xxv. London, 1857, 4to, pp. 39 sqq.—I may here be allowed to remark, that Dr. Brugsch submitted his yet unpublished translation of the tablets, not only to Mr. Airy, but also to the late M. Biot and myself. In the first instance, he communicated to me only a portion of the planetary places, which I at once pronounced to rest on an astronomical basis, but to have been compiled for astrological purposes only. Hereupon Dr. Brugsch sent me the complete set of what he had assumed to be actual astronomical observations. For the purpose of examining their accuracy, I proceeded in a somewhat different way from Mr. Ellis. After determining, by a general method, the epoch of the first tablet—assuming, as a matter of course, the Egyptian dates to denote the entry of the planets into the corresponding signs—I constructed, on principles of my own, abbreviated tables for each planet, and by their means