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PIONEERS OF EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE STUDIES (1822 – 1880)

رؤاد دراسات اللغة المصرية (١٨٢٢ - ١٨٨٠)

Sami Uljas

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PIONEERS OF EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE STUDIES (1822 – 1880)

رؤاد دراسات اللغة المصرية (١٨٢٢ - ١٨٨٠)

Sami Uljas

Pioniere der altägyptischen Sprachwissenschaft (1822 – 1880)
Pionniers des études de langue égyptienne (1822 – 1880)

During the six decades between 1822 and 1880, Egyptology initially witnessed intense debate over Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphic script and an emerging consensus over its validity. This was followed by an era of growing lexicographic understanding and outstanding achievements in philology and translation. The time was not yet ripe, however, for a truly linguistic analysis of the Egyptian language. For this, the Egyptological community had to wait until the 1880s—for the discoveries of a circle of scholars headed by Adolf Erman, known as the "Berlin School."

خلال العقود الستة الممتدة بين عامي ١٨٢٢ و ١٨٨٠، شهد علم المصريات جدلاً حاداً حول فك رموز الكتابة الهيروغليفية الذي قام به جان-فرانسوا شامبوليون، ثم تبلور تدريجياً إجماع متزايد حول صحته. تلا ذلك عصر من التقدم الملحوظ في فهم اللغة المصرية، وتحقيق إنجازات بارزة في مجالي فقه اللغة والترجمة. ومع ذلك، لم يتمكن مجتمع علماء المصريات من الوصول إلى تحليل لغوي حقيقي للغة المصرية إلا في ثمانينيات القرن التاسع عشر، وذلك بفضل الاكتشافات التي قام بها مجموعة من العلماء بقيادة أدولف إيرمان، والمعروفة باسم "مدرسة برلين."

Historical overviews of Egyptological text and language studies often exhibit a peculiar gap between Jean-François Champollion's (1790 – 1832) 1822 decipherment of hieroglyphs and the so-called "Berlin School" circle of scholars, whose first major works appeared in and around 1880. There are rather good reasons for this omission. The story of the race to decipher the Egyptian scripts is exciting, and Champollion's breakthrough is naturally the single most important event in Egyptology. Later, 1880 may justly be seen as another watershed in the study of Egyptian. That year Adolf Erman (1854 – 1937) introduced the first diachronic division into

the pre-Demotic language in his *Neuägyptische Grammatik* (1880), and Ludwig Stern (1846 – 1911) gave all Coptologists a model to follow with his *Koptische Grammatik* (1880). Over the next twenty years, the Berlin scholars set up a systematization of Egyptian morphosyntax, brought the study of phonology into Egyptian linguistics, introduced comparative methods and typology through their focus on Semitic, and, in 1897, launched the *Wörterbuch*-project, which resulted in the still standard dictionary of Egyptian (Erman and Grapow 1926 – 1931). In short, where Champollion had opened the way into the language, the Berlin School showed how it could be analyzed scientifically.

Nevertheless, the six decades between 1822 and 1880 were by no means devoid of important advances in the study of Egyptian language and texts. On the contrary, the era saw heated debates, major discoveries, and remarkable work by scores of scholars, some of whom are now largely forgotten, whereas others are still household names in the annals of Egyptology. The period can be divided into two partly overlapping epochs of unequal length: 1) the years between 1822 and 1837, characterized by a debate over Champollion's decipherment; and 2) the period from 1837/early 1840s to 1880, of major philological and lexicographic advances and earnest attempts of grammatical analysis.

From 1822 to 1837: Conflict and Consolidation

Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphs came under a sustained attack almost immediately after its publication. The best-known figure in the story of resistance is the British polymath Thomas Young (1773 – 1829), who apparently found it hard to digest that a French junior scholar had bettered him in unlocking the secrets of the pharaohs. Young regarded himself as having made the decisive contribution to the decipherment (cf., e.g., Young 1823), but he never disputed the validity of Champollion's system *per se*. There were others, however, who did exactly that, and together they form a rather curious cavalcade of serious researchers, embittered naysayers, and intriguing eccentrics. Among the earliest was Domenico Valeriani (fl. 1823 – 1837), who in 1823 penned a violently worded refutation of Champollion's decipherment (Valeriani 1823). The latter's pithy response (Champollion 1824a) prompted Valeriani to make a public (but only half-sincere) apology (1826). Valeriani defended a traditional Horapollonian "symbolic" interpretation of hieroglyphs against Champollion's "new science," whereas, e.g., Francesco Ricardi's (fl. 1821 – 1843) often-made objections (e.g., 1826, 1833) were based on his sense of having devised an alternative and superior decipherment of the hieroglyphs.

The size and volume of the anti-Champollion choir grew steadily during the

1830s. John Williams (1797 – 1874), an astronomer and a pioneer of the technique of making epigraphic rubbings, found the Frenchman's method and writings inconsistent and thought, for example, that Coptic was too far removed from pharaonic Egyptian to be of help with the latter (Williams 1836). Julius Klaproth's (1783 – 1835) considerable expertise in Asiatic and Indo-Iranian languages may have motivated his negative assessment of the decipherment (Klaproth 1832). Like Williams, Klaproth focused on the changes that Champollion had made to successive editions of his work, and his objections were later widely cited by the latter's adversaries. These included Père Denis-Auguste Affre (1793 – 1848) (fig. 1), the archbishop of Paris, who in his 1834 critique lauded Klaproth for having proved Champollion wrong, problematized the observation that hieroglyphs could be both phonetic and ideographic, and argued, *pace* Williams, against the use of Coptic in analysis (Affre 1834). Monsignor Affre may eventually



Figure 1. Undated portrait painting of Denis-Auguste Affre (1793 – 1848) by Auguste-Hyacinthe Debay.

become the first Egyptologist ever to achieve sainthood. He was shot dead while preaching peace on a Parisian barricade in the “Mad Year” 1848, and the process of his beatification is still ongoing. Other contemporary adversaries of Champollion were less saintly. Camille Duteil (1808 – 1861) went so far as to accuse him of understanding nothing of the true nature of hieroglyphs, for which Duteil offered fantastic, mostly symbolic, and patently incorrect “alternative” interpretations (Duteil 1839).



Figure 2. Portrait painting of Gustave Seyffarth (1796 – 1885) by Gustav Adolph Hennig, 1837.

The most notable and certainly most tenacious of Champollion’s post-1822 adversaries was Gustav Seyffarth (1796 – 1885) (fig. 2). He began his campaign against the Frenchman as early as 1826, and after his appointment as a professor at Leipzig in 1830, spent the following 60 years preaching a radically different model of analyzing Egyptian from that founded by Champollion (e.g., Seyffarth 1826, 1827, 1840, 1855, 1860). For Seyffarth, each of the “630” hieroglyphs was phonological and syllabic. He largely ignored diachrony, treating verbal and clausal

grammar as “ancient Coptic,” and viewed Demotic as the oldest of Egyptian scripts, from which hieratic and finally (!) hieroglyphs had developed. He described, for example, a verb form that he called “Perfect” as built of a root + element *n* + suffix, which is an accurate description of the Earlier Egyptian *sdm-n-f*, and he had a good grasp of nominal and pronominal morphology. However, such valid observations appear among others that are utterly wrong, reflecting Seyffarth’s insistence on his fundamentally misguided views on what hieroglyphs actually stood for. Figure 3 (a and b) illustrates his attempt to translate a 22nd Dynasty text, with an explanation of what he was doing and why.

3		NHB	<i>the lord</i>
4		THNETO	<i>of both the countries,</i>
5		paN	<i>namely</i>
6		oypo	<i>the king</i>
7		BWS	<i>crushing,</i>
8		MAUJ	<i>justifying,</i>
9		COTT	<i>the selected</i>
10		N	<i>of</i>
11		AMOYN	<i>Amun,</i>
12		THK-EQ	<i>the strong one,</i>
13		BWS	<i>the crusher</i>
14		BOBE	<i>of the wicked,</i>
15		BOA	<i>illustrating</i>
16		COYTN-C	<i>the kingdom</i>
17		NIBEN	<i>the whole,</i>
18		BOTE	<i>the offspring</i>
19		gpa	<i>of the Lord,</i>

Figure 3a. Example of Seyffarth’s translation.

This example is from 1860, when scholars following Champollion’s method were already translating Middle Egyptian literature with a high degree of accuracy.

18. The goose *opt* does not at all, as Champollion imagined, signify the Coptic word *she* (son); it sounds syllabically *bote* (germen, offspring); as, e. g., the said judgment of the dead proves. For, we have seen, that, there, the righteousness (*mashi*) of the deceased was expressed by the ostrich feather (*mashi*), and his badness, on the other scale, by the goose (*opt*) representing syllabically the word *bote* (badness). Probably, however, according to Champollion, our good geese were once very bad.

24. The figure mount is not very clear in the copy sent me by Mr. Stone, and therefore my translation may not be reliable.

28. The eye expresses not only the *a*, and *e*, and *i*, and the word *iri* (to make), as Champollion discovered, but also, being its vulgar name, *bal* and *bar*, e. g., in *bar-alion*, oculus lyncis, syllabically *bl* and *br*; wherefore it expresses very often the words *bar* (the son), and *bara* (to make). For that reason I refer the group in question to the Coptic words *bar-ef* or *bol-ef* (fervid), and that eye No. 15 to the root *bol* (making illustrious), and the groups VI., 88, 161, to the word *bol-wi* (vicinities). This eye is an inexplicable mystery for Champollion and his partisans.

Figure 3b. Example of Seyffarth's commentary.

By 1854 Seyffarth's position at Leipzig had become untenable. He emigrated to the United States, where he continued his work until the 1880s in relative obscurity. Seyffarth has been described as a brilliant mind waylaid by an obsession with fantastic notions. However, his intemperate style of argument and stubborn refusal to accept Champollion's genius despite overwhelming contrary evidence speak of arrogance that is not particularly endearing. Seyffarth had few followers, but Maximilian Uhlemann (1829 – 1862) continued claiming the correctness of his ideas in the 1850s (e.g., Uhlemann 1852). By then, however, anti-Champollion views were already a complete anachronism.

After his 1822 breakthrough, Champollion set out to prepare a more extensive version of his decipherment. His *Précis du système hiéroglyphique* (1824b), of which a second edition was published in 1837, presented 450 readings of words, names, etc., and showed that the hieroglyphic script actually represented a mix of phonological signs and semograms (determinatives). However, Champollion's immediate concern was obtaining new and accurate copies of inscriptions, which he set out to collect on his 1828 – 1829 Egyptian expedition. While

processing the results of this undertaking, he suffered a stroke and died in Paris on 4 March 1832 at the age of 42, only ten years after his greatest breakthrough. Fortunately, Champollion's elder brother Jacques-Joseph prepared many of his unfinished works for posthumous publication, including the three-volume *Grammaire égyptienne* (1836 – 1841), the first ever linguistic description of pre-Coptic Egyptian. This work demonstrates Champollion's already good understanding of (pro)nominal morphosyntax and the tense system, and also provides often remarkably correct identifications of the imperative, optative, participial, and negative forms and/or categories. The trusty Jacques-Joseph published his late brother's sketch of a hieroglyphic dictionary, the *Dictionnaire égyptien en écriture hiéroglyphique* (Champollion 1841), organized according to the classification of the initial sign rather than phonological values. In the decades after 1835 he also edited Champollion's *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie* (Champollion 1835 – 1847, 1844 – 1889), comprising some of the texts Champollion had collected during his Egyptian expedition. This undertaking was completed in 1899 by Gaston Maspero (1846 – 1916), one of the foremost Egyptologists of

the late 1800s, who discovered, among other things, the first Pyramid Texts in 1880, thereby making this key textual corpus available to scholars.

Champollion's work received its first outside confirmation in 1825 from Ippolito Rosellini (1800 – 1843), who again explained the fundamentals of hieroglyphs as defined by his colleague and made the important observation that, “as in Semitic,” vowels were barely indicated in the script (Rosellini 1825). Rosellini was also the author of the first post-1822 grammar of Coptic (1837), which seems to have been almost forgotten amidst the hieroglyphic euphoria. Works like his surely helped in convincing skeptics: thus, Antoine Silvestre de Sacy (1758 – 1838), who had dubbed Champollion a fraud, performed a complete reversal upon seeing that his methods were, in fact, solid (Robinson 2023: 202). Likewise, the Englishman Henry Salt (1780 – 1827) wrote that a careful study of Champollion's work had led him “to a complete conviction of my error” (Salt 1825: 3). The decisive year in vindicating Champollion was 1837, when Richard Lepsius (1810 – 1884) (fig. 4), who was later to prove an impressive general linguist and Africanist, published his remarkable *Lettre à Monsieur le professeur H. Rosellini* (1837). In this pamphlet Lepsius conclusively showed that the hieroglyphic script was an *abjad* consisting of consonantal signs, reduced the inventory of monoradical “alphabetic” signs considerably, and took first steps in isolating multiradical signs, all of which is wholly correct. Lepsius's paper put—or should have put—an end to the debate over the fundamentals of how hieroglyphs were to be read. If further proof were needed, it was again supplied by Lepsius, who published the trilingual Canopus Decree (1866), which provided another test for reading between Egyptian and Greek. To (almost) no one's surprise, his method of translating, based on Champollion's original ideas, worked brilliantly.

Although understanding of the full complexity of hieroglyphs was finally achieved only in 1867, it can nevertheless be said that by 1837 the age of decipherment was over,

and the attention of scholars turned toward producing translations and philological commentaries of texts as well as, gradually, toward analyzing the language linguistically.

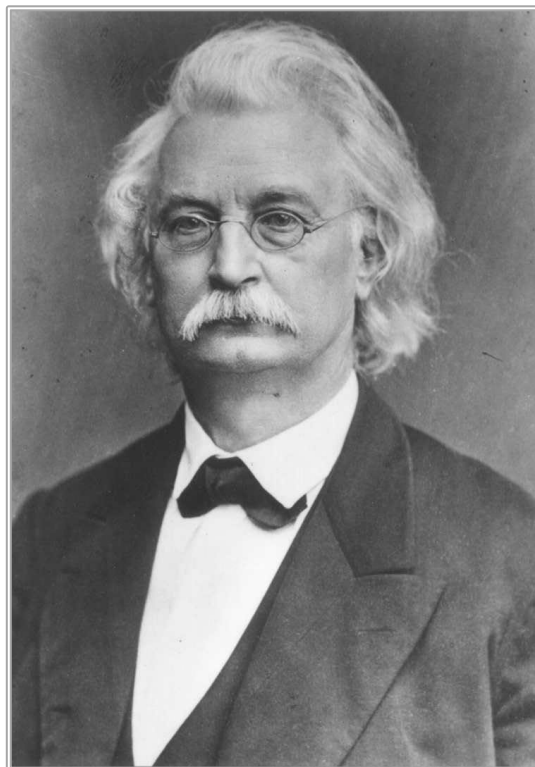


Figure 4. Karl Richard Lepsius (1810 – 1884).

From 1837 to 1880: Philological Breakthroughs and the Beginning of Egyptological Linguistics

Champollion's posthumous *Grammaire* had established the basics of the linguistic analysis of Egyptian, but for a time thereafter the primary concern of scholars was lexicography. Dictionaries were sorely needed so that texts could be translated and data gathered for grammatical and other research. Rosellini had begun preparing a dictionary but never finished it, and this time it was the British who got off to an early start. Samuel Sharpe (1799 – 1881), a banker interested in Egyptology, published his *Rudiments of a Vocabulary* (1837) after having read Champollion and Young. This was still a relatively modest work, as was the *Sketch of a Hieroglyphical Dictionary* by Samuel Birch (1813 – 1885), the later keeper of Oriental, British, and Medieval antiquities at the British

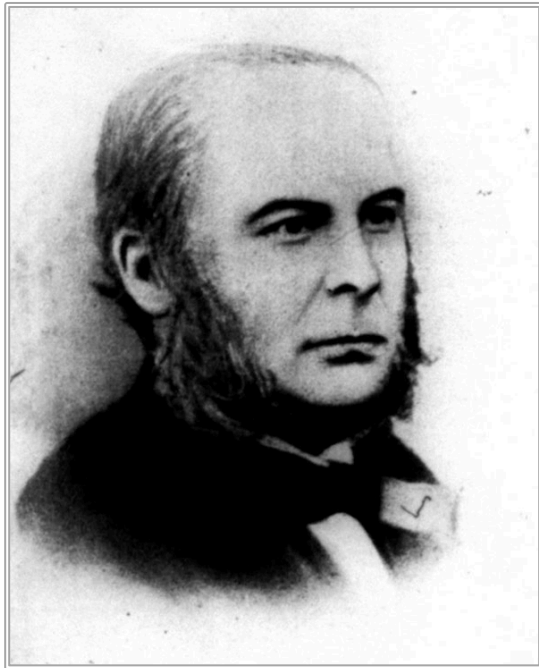


Figure 5. Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (1817 – 1878).

Museum (Birch 1838). Nevertheless, lexicographic understanding of Egyptian grew rapidly between the late 1830s and the 1850s, thanks to scholars such as, for example, the sadly short-lived Théodule Devéria (1831 – 1871), and soon began to manifest in the form of translations and editions of texts. Already

in 1851, Emmanuel de Rougé (1811 – 1872), a professor at the Collège de France as well as, later, at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, was translating complete monumental inscriptions (de Rougé 1851). He also finally established the character of the hieroglyphic script as consisting of uni-, bi-, and triconsonantal signs (1867). Charles Goodwin (1817 – 1878) (fig. 5), who was a lawyer and a Biblical scholar as much as he was an Egyptologist, wrote a paper (1858) in which he stressed the importance of hieratic papyri and demonstrated that he could read and translate New Kingdom literary texts from the d’Orbiney, Anastasi, Sallier, and Prisse papyri without much difficulty. In 1865 he demonstrated a similar mastery of Middle Kingdom literature (Goodwin 1865). Indeed, although Champollion had already made important headway with hieratic, Goodwin could almost be said to have “deciphered” this script. However, the same honor may equally be bestowed on François Chabas, who, already in 1858, had similarly translated Papyrus Prisse (1858). Two years later he produced an edition of the Harris Magical Papyrus, which with its facsimile of the hieratic text, translation, and a commentary, is already a perfectly modern study in Egyptological philology (1860) (fig. 6).

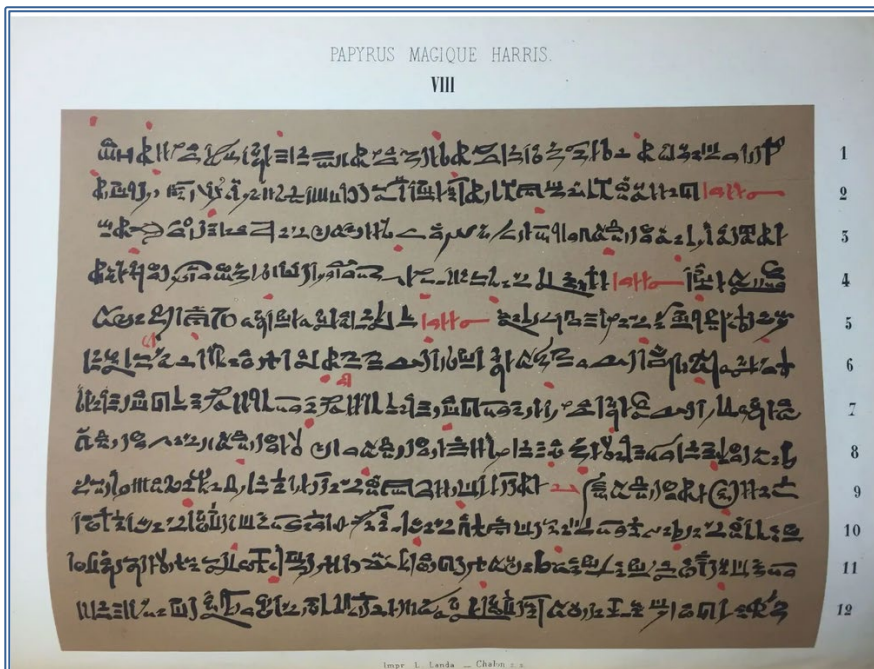


Figure 6. A page of hieratic text from François Chabas’s edition of the Harris Magical Papyrus.

The editions just mentioned still command admiration for their skill and execution, but much of the early translation work in particular was based on contextual deductions and lexical rather than linguistic understanding. Purely grammatical analysis of pre-Coptic Egyptian was as yet rather rudimentary. Sharpe's small dictionary (1837) had contained an introductory grammatical sketch that presented a description of noun and pronoun morphology but little else. Against this, Heinrich Brugsch's (1827 – 1894) (fig. 7) relatively early work on Demotic is all the more impressive. Brugsch hailed from a low-ranking Prussian military family without academic background, but he was an amazing autodidact. By the age of 16 he had more or less single-handedly deciphered the Demotic script, whose principles he presented in 1848 while still attending high school (Brugsch 1848). His full Demotic grammar appeared seven years later (Brugsch 1855), and it says something of the book's quality that it is probably the oldest linguistic work in Egyptology still occasionally used by scholars.

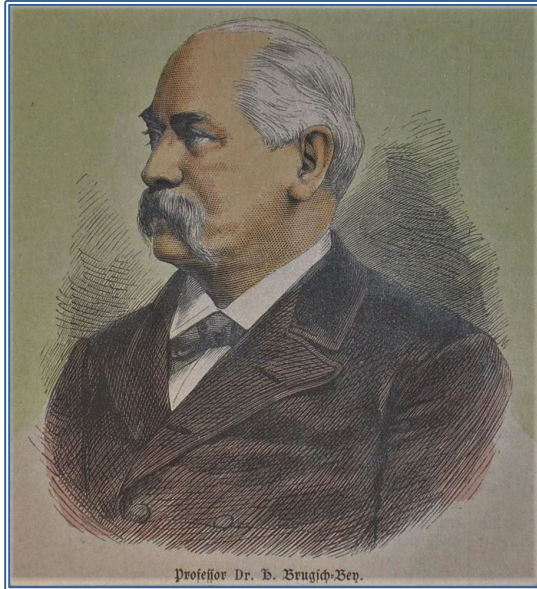


Figure 7. Woodcut portrait (1883?) of Heinrich Brugsch (1827 – 1894) by unknown artist.

Alongside Lepsius, Brugsch is the outstanding figure among the early pioneers of Egyptian language and philology. In addition to his pre-Coptic Egyptian grammar to be described below, of his other major contributions to the

field one should mention the seven-volume *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (1867 – 1882) and the equally massive but post-1880 *Thesaurus* of inscriptions (1883 – 1891). In 1863 Brugsch founded the *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, the oldest Egyptological journal, which from its beginning has focused equally on archaeology and on matters linguistic and philological.

Meanwhile, in Coptic studies a major grammar was being published nearly every decade in the first half of the nineteenth century. Henry Tattam's (1788 – 1868) contribution (1830) was followed by Amadeo Peyron's (1785 – 1870) work (1841), while Moritz Schwarze's (1802 – 1848) grammar (1850) was published posthumously. After 1850 one discerns a gradual shift in scholarly interests (back) toward linguistic research, and also toward the study of the pre-Coptic language, but progress was still slow. Samuel Birch published his *Introduction* (1857) as an appendix to John Gardner Wilkinson's companion to the Egyptian collection at London's Crystal Palace (Wilkinson 1857), which provides a thorough and entertaining history of Egyptian language studies. The book's actual grammar content still treats phonetic signs as syllabic, but with more types than Sharpe had offered earlier on (Sharpe 1837). After a brief description of nominal morphosyntax it is stated that in Egyptian the verbal root does not change in any way, that tenses are formed by means of auxiliaries, and that there is only one conjugation. However, the tabulation of tenses comprises twenty patterns, some correct, others not. Birch asserted the same things and more in his dictionary and grammar ten years later (Birch 1867), showing that he had not changed his views on any of the fundamentals. In all, most of what these works say of syntax in general and the verb in particular is confused at best and mostly plain wrong. And yet, like his contemporaries, Birch was a superbly able translator and commentator of texts, as the example in Figure 8 serves to show. Birch's grammatical sketch was followed by Sharpe's hieroglyphic vocabulary (1861), which expanded the number of words to 2035 from the 1050 of his earlier *Rudiments* (1837).

INSCRIPTION OF EILEITHYIA.

733

<i>gut</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>r-nti</i>	<i>ar-na</i>	<i>xpr</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>tama</i>
says	he	now	made I	existence	mine	in	the town
<i>Nshm</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>atf</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>uau</i>	<i>n</i>	
Eileithyia	was	father	my	as	a captain	of	
<i>su xh</i>	<i>Ra</i>	<i>Skann</i>	<i>maxru</i>	<i>Baba</i>	<i>su</i>		
the king	the Sun	victorious	the justified	Baba	son of		
<i>Ruan t</i>	<i>ran</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ha n a</i>	<i>hr</i>	<i>art</i>	<i>uau</i>	
Ruan	name	his	I was	in	making	a captain	
<i>r</i>	<i>tab</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>ua</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>mas</i>
in	place	his	in	the	boat	of	the calf
<i>hau</i>	<i>nb</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>Ra</i>	<i>nb</i>	<i>peh. peh</i>	<i>maxru</i>	
the days	of the lord	of the Earth	the Sun	the lord	glorious	justified.	

‘The commander of the transports, Amasis, son of Abana, he says : I tell you all persons, I let you know the favours accorded me. Seven times I was rewarded with gold before all the land ; male and female slaves likewise were given me, and I was endowed with numerous fields. Great is my name for the victories it made, it will never be obscured in this land. He says : Now I came to life in the city of Eileithyia. My father was captain of the King Ra-Skann, Justified ; Baba, son of Ruan, was his name. I was made captain in his place in the Boat of the Calf, in the days of Amasis I., the Justified.’

Figure 8. A page of text from Samuel Birch’s translation of the Inscription of Ahmose, son of Ibana.

Uebersicht
der 32 ägyptischen Tempora des Indicativs vom activen Verbum *dr* «machen».

Einfache Tempora:		Zusammengesetzte Tempora							
Form	Werth	mit		mit		mit		mit	
Form	Werth	Form	Werth	Form	Werth	Form	Werth	Form	Werth
1.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.	4.	Präsens	12.	Präs.-Prät.	20.	Präs.-Prät.	27.	Präs.-Prät.
		5.	Imperfectum	13.	Präs.-Prät.	21.	Präs.-Prät.	28.	Präs.-Prät.
				14.	Präs.-Prät.				
2.	Starkes Präs.-Prät.-Fut.					22.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.		
3.	Schwaches Präs.-Prät.-Fut.	6.	Präsens-Präteritum	15.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.	23.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.		
		7.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.	16.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.				
		8.	Präs.-Prät.-Fut.	17.	Präs.-Prät.	24.	Präs.-Prät.	29.	Präs.-Prät.
						25.	Präs.-Prät.		
		9.	Präs.-Prät.	18.	Präs.-Prät.	26.	Präs.-Prät.	30.	Präs.-Prät.
								31.	Präs.-Prät.
		10.	Starkes Futurum.	19.	Futurum.			32.	Futurum.
		11.	Periphrastisches Tempus						

Figure 9. A page from Heinrich Brugsch's catalog of Egyptian "tempora" in his *Hieroglyphische Grammatik*.

The first truly extensive grammar of pre-Demotic Egyptian since Champollion's *Grammaire* was published by Brugsch (1872). After a solid beginning, the book loses much of its grammatical footing following chapter eight on "Verbum." Brugsch maintains that Egyptian had six "moods," labeled indicative, subjunctive, optative, imperative, participle, and infinitive, as well as numerous "tempora" expressed by no less than 32 grammatical patterns (fig. 9), most of which are either wrongly interpreted (e.g., the *sdm-n-f*, labeled *Präsens-Preteritum-Futurum*) or non-existent (many combinations with *pw*). The problems stem partly from the continuing non-differentiation between Earlier and Later Egyptian, but one wonders where Brugsch could have encountered many of the entirely spurious patterns that he confidently presents as grammatical. In all, his work is an extensive piece of scholarship by one of the true masters of the trade, but it is still far from being an accurate description of more than the basic aspects of Egyptian grammar. The

same holds true of the short grammar of Sir Peter le Page Renouf (1822 – 1897), Birch's successor at the British Museum (Renouf 1875). Lack of diachrony still complicates matters, but otherwise things are again broadly in order before treatment of the verb is reached. According to Renouf, "The Egyptian verb expresses being or action without any reference to time or to the conception of the speaker. It has no tenses, moods, voices, or conjugations" (1875: 47). The author has similarly minimalist views of the relationship between the written and the (assumed) spoken form as well as of that between root, stem, and word, but he pays some attention to root-modifications such as reduplication. As in Brugsch's grammar (1872), the various patterns used to express "tenses" are often non-existent, as are formal differences between what Renouf calls the imperative, optative, and subjunctive moods; verbal and non-verbal sentences are mixed together; and so on. Renouf himself was painfully aware of how much was still

uncertain and stated: “It must not be forgotten that the whole theory of the verbs, like other portions of the Egyptian Grammar, is susceptible of considerable modification through the discovery of fresh evidence” (Renouf 1875: 57). Renouf’s book appeared in the same year as Erman’s first article in Brugsch’s *Zeitschrift* (Erman 1875). The discoveries he was anticipating were thus not far off.

By the start of the 1880s, Egyptological language studies and philology had progressed a long way along the road that Champollion had opened. Reading and translating Egyptian was no longer a problem. Scholars had established a good lexical understanding that enabled them to work their way through even complex Middle Kingdom literary texts, and the scripts used in the sources presented no difficulties either. Some steps had even been taken towards considering Egyptian from a comparative and typological perspective. Here the true pioneer was once again Lepsius, whose earliest studies involving Egyptian (1836) were already avowedly comparative. His adventures with African languages merit a discussion of their own, but part of Lepsius’s work with Nubian, Beja, Ethiopic, etc., was to clarify the relationship between these “Hamitic” languages and Egyptian (e.g., Lepsius 1880). In his three-volume work on Egyptian geography, Brugsch showed the correspondence between hieroglyphs and

Semitic consonants (Brugsch 1857 – 1860), which anticipated later work (not treated in this overview) by Erman and his colleague Kurt Sethe (1869 – 1934).

Nevertheless, it is not unfair to say that in spite of best efforts, by the end of the period considered here the theoretical and strictly linguistic foundations of the study of Egyptian written sources were still somewhat shaky. This is why the language, insofar as it was mentioned in general and comparative linguistics of the time, was then universally viewed as simple, primitive, and unchanging. To progress further, it would have been necessary to increase the number of diachronic divisions within Egyptian, to borrow analytic methods and principles from neighboring subjects, and to establish a standard method of transliteration—something that Lepsius had attempted from the 1860s onward. Most if not quite all of this would later be achieved by the Berlin scholars. Yet, although there is something of a quantum leap between the pre-1880s linguistic research and the works of Erman et al., the pioneers of 1822 – 1880 achieved astounding results in all areas of Egyptian textual study, and there would have been no Berlin School without Lepsius, de Rougé, Goodwin, and the others. Erman and his circle were exceptional scholars, but they were not giants standing on the shoulders of dwarves. The real image is one of a much more balanced sort.

Bibliographic Notes

Besides their original works, the most readily accessible general reference for the lives and achievements of the 1822 – 1880 pioneers of Egyptological linguistics and philology is the compendium *Who Was Who in Egyptology* that has currently reached its fifth edition (Bierbrier ed. 2019). Champollion’s views of his early and nowadays little-known adversaries are scattered amidst his journals and correspondence assembled in Hartleben (1909). His disputes with the more formidable Thomas Young are covered in Buchwald and Josefowicz (2020) and Robinson (2023: 201–214), whereas Ebers’s (1887) assessment of the work and character of Gustav Seyffarth is still valid. Polis (2022: 214–216) furnishes some remarks on the immediate reactions to Champollion’s work and Virenque (2022) outlines his Egyptian expedition. Richter (2016, 2017) provide excellent overviews of the reception of Egyptian in nineteenth-century comparative linguistics. On the ascent of the “Berlin School” and its leading figure, Adolf Erman, see Schenkel (2006) and Gertzen (2013). Otherwise, and as is usual in Egyptology, sources on even the most outstanding scholars noted above

tend to be (auto-)biographical. Besides the most recent full biography of Richard Lepsius by Mehlitz (2011), additional information on the work of this savant is provided by several papers in Freier and Reineke eds. (1988) and in Schenkel's (2012) discussion of Lepsius's contribution to the decipherment of hieroglyphs. Peter Clayden's study of Samuel Sharpe contains an overview of Sharpe's Egyptological career (Clayden 1883: 60–76). Budge's obituary of Samuel Birch (Budge 1893) is a comprehensive summary of his predecessor's achievements, and a similar but more extensive synopsis of Charles Goodwin's Egyptological studies is provided by Dawson (1934: 55–134). David (1999) provides a relatively recent biography of Gaston Maspero, who in turn summarized the life and works of Emmanuel de Rougé (Maspero 1908). Those of François Chabas were recorded by his brother Frédéric together with Philippe Virey ([Frédéric] Chabas and Virey 1898). Théodule Devéria's biography by his brother Gabriel (Devéria 1896) appeared in Maspero's compilation of that scholar's works and unpublished papers (Maspero ed. 1896 – 1897). In 1894 Heinrich Brugsch wrote his autobiography (1894). Peter le Page Renouf's collected works, edited by Maspero and Rylands (Maspero and Rylands eds. 1902 – 1907), include a biography by his daughter (IV: i–cxxxiii); his letters published by Cathcart ed. (2002 – 2004) cast further life on his Egyptological research.

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- Figure 2. Portrait painting of Gustave Seyffarth (1796 – 1885) by Gustav Adolph Hennig, 1837. (Photograph source: *Leipziger Blätter* [Fall 2014], Nr. 65, S. 6. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Gustav_seyffarth.jpg.)
- Figure 3. Example of Seyffarth's (a) translation and (b) commentary. (Seyffarth 1860: 533 and pls. 1-2.)
- Figure 4. Karl Richard Lepsius (1810 – 1884). (Photograph by Ernst Milster [1874?]. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Carl_Richard_Lepsius_%281810-1884%29.jpg.)
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- Figure 6. A page of hieratic text from François Chabas's edition of the Harris Magical Papyrus. (Chabas 1860: pl. VIII.)
- Figure 7. Woodcut portrait (1883?) of Heinrich Brugsch (1827 – 1894) by unknown artist. (Photograph source: ZVAB. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/67/Prof._Dr._Heinrich_Brugsch-Bey%2C_1883.jpg.)
- Figure 8. A page of text from Samuel Birch's translation of the Inscription of Ahmose, son of Ibana. (Birch 1867: 733.)
- Figure 9. A page from Heinrich Brugsch's catalog of Egyptian "tempora" in his *Hieroglyphische Grammatik*. (Brugsch 1872: 50.)