

L'original : *Argistiš Menuahiniš ini ašiš zaduni* = « Argistis de Menuas a élevé cette maison ». Elle est tout à fait pareille à l'inscription de Ghazandji. Ces deux mots *zui arhuiani* qu'on lit sur la copie envoyée par M^{er} Sembatiantz n'existent pas sur l'original que j'ai consulté pendant ma mission scientifique. La pierre n'est plus à Chahriar; elle se trouve aujourd'hui à Etchmiadzine.

THE EGYPTIAN ORIGIN OF THE ALPHABET

AN HISTORICAL INSTANCE IN SUPPORT OF DE ROUGÉ'S ALPHABETIC PROTOTYPES

BY

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Ancient Greek and Latin authors recognized a mysterious haze of tradition concerning the Egyptian origin of the Phœnician alphabet. But, though they neither resolved its mystery nor penetrated very far into its haze, they seem to have had no doubt either of its existence or of its genuineness. To them it was as mysterious, but also as real, as the golden purple haze which ever hangs over their classic shores. While Eusebius rests the case with the authority of Sanchoniathon, he seems to rely upon that authority; and Tacitus shows no hesitation when he says: "Primi per figuras animalium Ægypti sensus mentis effingebant (ea antiquissima monumenta memoriæ humanæ inpressa saxis cernuntur) et literarum semet inventores perhibent; inde Phœnicas, quia mari præpollebant, intulisse Græciæ, gloriamque adeptos, tanquam repererint quæ acceperant. Quippe fama est Cadmum classe Phœnicum vectum rudibus adhuc Græcorum populis artis eius auctorem fuisse." Later writers have been less credulous and until the third quarter of the last century had about run its course modern investigation totally discredited the classical tradition. Gesenius, the Prince of Semitic scholars of that generation, held the opinion of the classic authors to be erroneous. The position taken by Renan in 1855 was still firmly held: "L'origine de l'écriture chez les Sémites, comme chez tous les peuples, se cache dans une profonde nuit. L'alphabet sémitique vient-il des hiéroglyphes de l'Égypte ou des caractères cunéiformes de l'Assyrie? Tient-il des uns et des autres? Sont-ce les Hyksos qui firent passer l'écriture égyptienne de l'état phonétique à l'état syllabique ou alphabétique?"

This settled condition of opinion up to the year 1874, when the researches of Emmanuel de Rougé were first published to the world by his son Jacques de Rougé, is of itself sufficient guarantee of the scientific value of a work which could at once dislodge that opinion and reinstate the discredited classical tradition. A value and importance still attested no less, indeed, by the opposition of its enemies than by the support of its friends. E. de Rougé turned Ewald's shrewd guess: "Sont-ce les Hyksos qui firent passer l'écriture égyptienne de l'état phonétique à l'état syllabique ou alphabétique?" as Renan puts it, into a potential prophecy of discovery. He cast the hieratic of the Old Empire, the inheritance of the Hyksos, into the alembic and by the