

THE  
INSCRIPTION OF KHAMMURABI.

TRANSLATED BY  
H. F. TALBOT, F.R.S.

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THIS inscription is valuable from its extreme antiquity. Khammurabi lived before the time of Moses, but how many centuries earlier has not yet been ascertained. His inscriptions are, with one exception, written in the Accadian language which as yet is very imperfectly understood.

Very fortunately the Museum at Paris possesses one inscription written in the Babylonian language, and this is the one of which I have here given the translation. It was first translated by Oppert and Ménant, and afterwards M. Ménant wrote a special work on the subject, entitled *Inscriptions de Hammourabi roi de Babylone, traduites et publiées avec un commentaire à l'appui par M. Joachim Ménant* (Paris 1863). This work is accompanied by facsimiles of the inscriptions. I published a version of the inscription in 1863 in the *Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. 20 p. 445 and a somewhat better one in

1865, aided by the facsimile, in the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of Literature, vol. VIII., p. 234.

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The great importance of this inscription resides, not in the events treated of, but in the language itself: for, we have here the proof that the Babylonian language was the same in the days of Khammurabi as it was a thousand years later in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. There are a few archaisms but they are very trifling. The amount of difference is perhaps as much as exists between the English of Queen Elizabeth's time and that of the present day. How far then must we recede into antiquity, if we wish to find the *beginnings* of the Semitic tongue! In all the inscriptions which have come down to us we find substantially the same language.

Other languages, and totally different ones, existed at the same time, of which the most important was the *Accadian*, in which the greater number of Khammurabi's inscriptions are written. That monarch evidently ruled over two races, which lived side by side, or perhaps intermixed, in ancient Babylonia.

TRANSLATION OF  
THE INSCRIPTION.

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COLUMN I.

KHAMMURABI the exalted King, the King of Babylon, the King renowned throughout the world: conqueror of the enemies of MARDUK: the King beloved by his heart, am I.

The favour of god and BEL the people of Sumir and Accad gave unto my government. Their celestial weapons unto my hand they gave.

The canal Khammurabi, the joy of men, a stream of abundant waters, for the people of Sumir and Accad I excavated. Its banks, all of them, I restored to newness: new supporting walls I heaped up: perennial waters for the people of Sumir and Accad I provided.

## C O L U M N   I I.

The people of Sumir and Accad, all of them, in general assemblies I assembled. A review and inspection of them I ordained every year. In joy and abundance I watched over them, and in peaceful dwellings I caused them to dwell.

By the divine favour I am KHAMMURABI the exalted King, the worshipper of the supreme deity.

With the prosperous power which MARDUK gave me, I built a lofty Citadel, on a high mound of earth, whose summits rose up like mountains, on the bank of Khammurabi river, the joy of men.

To that Citadel I gave the name of the mother who bore me<sup>1</sup> and the father who begat me.

In the holy name of RI the mother who bore me, and of the father who begat me, during long ages may it last !

<sup>1</sup> He named it the fortress of Ri-Marduk, the god and goddess whom he called his father and mother, according to a fantastic custom of which the inscriptions offer many examples.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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