

Ahmed Kamal Pasha's Approach to Transliterate Egyptian Hieroglyphs in Arabic

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Abstract

Ahmed Kamal was a pioneer native Egyptologist who made significant contributions to the study of the ancient Egyptian language, particularly through his comparative analysis of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Arabic. Kamal's efforts were groundbreaking, especially his assertion of linguistic connections between ancient Egyptian and Semitic languages. His methodology involved transliterating hieroglyphs into Arabic letters, making the study of ancient texts accessible to Egyptians. This approach was reflected in his twenty-two-volume dictionary, which provided explanations in both Arabic and French, and listed Arabic words corresponding in meaning and pronunciation to hieroglyphs.

Kamal's objective was to raise public awareness among ordinary Egyptians, enabling them to read and study their history and heritage in Arabic. Despite facing resistance from non-Egyptian archaeologists who lacked knowledge of Arabic, Kamal's work had a lasting impact on subsequent scholars such as Antoine Zekry and Ahmed Naguib. Zekry, for instance, followed Kamal's transliteration methodology in his own works, further promoting the use of Arabic in Egyptology.

Kamal also highlighted the cognitive linguistic links between ancient Egyptian and Arabic, albeit unintentionally, demonstrating the survival of ancient Egyptian loanwords in modern Egyptian Arabic. His efforts to establish Egyptology for Egyptians were met with significant challenges due to the colonial environment dominated by British and French control. Nonetheless, Kamal's legacy remains influential, marking a crucial step in the recognition and appreciation of Egypt's ancient linguistic heritage by its own people.