CHAPTER 3

The Continuing Saga of Monmouth College's Storied Stone, OR That's How the Canopus Crumbles

J. Richard Sayre

How many small colleges have items in their collections that connect them to the 19th century Presbyterian missions in Egypt, decipherment of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egypt's Ptolemaic Dynasties, the Rosetta Stone, and the first written record of what we know as the leap year two centuries before its introduction and adoption in the Julian Calendar of the Roman Empire, not to mention its early connections with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.? In this article I chronicle the discovery and fascinating saga of Monmouth College's Canopus (or Tanis) Stone, which links the college with all the events listed in the previous sentence.[1]

On April 15, 1866, a German archaeologist, Professor Karl Richard Lepsius, was leading a Prussian expedition in Tanis (San) of lower Egypt, where they found a large stone protruding from the sand near a number of fallen obelisks. It had been noticed earlier, but ignored, by an engineer working on the excavation of the historic hydrologic engineering feat, the Suez Canal. The canal was to become a new passageway from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea via the Nile River allowing ships to avoid the long and treacherous voyages around the African continent. The discovered stone, or stele (fig. 3.1), was quite impressive in its size: 7-4" (h), 28" (w), and 13-½" (d). It was inscribed with a decree containing hieroglyphics followed by the Greek script of the same text. It was identified as the Decree of Canopus attributed to Ptolemy III, ruler of Egypt, from 238 BC.

Figure: 3.1: Front View of the Canopus Stone. From facsimile foldout in Budge (1904): opp35. Fine Limestone slab, 7'4" (h), 2'8" (w), 13.5" (d). Decorative Lunette at top followed by 37 lines of Hieroglyphics, and 76 lines of Greek.

Two years later, while working on the Canopus Stone in Cairo's Museum of Egyptian Antiquity, German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch discovered scratches on the side of the stone that followed line for line with the Greek inscriptions on the front face of the stone. Brugsch was also a scholar of the

[1] The official name is the "Tanis Stone" or "Tanis Stele". However, it was referred to as the "Canopus Stone" during much of its early history. The author of this article has elected to refer to the stele as the "Canopus Stone" in deference to the name used throughout most of Monmouth College's history.

Figure 3.2: Left view of Canopus Stone (13-1/2" d) with the Egyptian Demotic script. From Facsimile foldout in Budge (1904): opp115.

Egyptian demotic script and recognized the scratches to be to be demotic script (fig. 3.2). The significance of this discovery was that the Canopus Stone was now clearly a "trilingual"[2] artifact with three scripts, Hieroglyphics, Greek and Egyptian Demotic, like the Rosetta Stone, discovered by Napoleon's army and accompanying scholars in their brief conquest of Egypt in 1799.[3]

It was the discovery of the trilingual Rosetta Stone (fig. 3.3) that set off a century of Egyptomania worldwide and a race for scholars to crack the code behind the translation of hieroglyphics. The ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics had not been used by Egyptians since 400 AD and scholars ever since had struggled with the translation of this long-forgotten script. Was it a pictographic script similar to Chinese, or were there elements of phonetics within it?

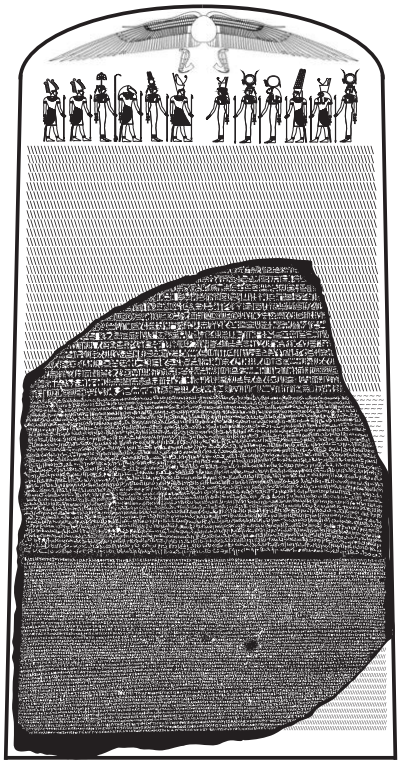

Figure 3.3: Reconstruction of the stele of which the Rosetta Stone was originally a part. Size: 45" (h) x 28.5" (w). British-Museum. https://commonswikimedia.org/wiki/File:RosettaStoneAsPartOfOriginalStele_revised.svg
[A. Parrot, Wikimedia Commons].

The most significant challenge for translating hieroglyphics of the Rosetta Stone was that it was not complete. The hieroglyphic portion of the stone was the most damaged, only revealing about one-third of the hieroglyphics section. Much smaller portions of the demotic and the Greek scripts were missing.

Yet the Rosetta Stone still provided a source of comparison for the three scripts and aided young scholars in the early nineteenth-century like the English polymath, Thomas Young (1773–1849), as well as the talented French linguist, Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) who is ultimately credited with deciphering hieroglyphics in 1822.[4]

The Canopus Stone, discovered some 67 years after the Rosetta Stone, was virtually complete and would enable Professor Karl Lepsius to corroborate and to improve upon the

[2] "Trilingual" is used loosely here as the Ptolemaic decrees consist of only two "languages" (Egyptian and Greek), but three scripts: Hieroglyphics and Demotic are both Egyptian language scripts.

[3] "The Tanis Stele." (Inset photo & description), Dodson 2001: 127.

[4] There are many books on both Young and Champollion and the race to decipher hieroglyphics, but two very enjoyable accounts are Robinson 2006 and Robinson 2012.

translations from Champollion's work on hieroglyphics. Thus, the Canopus Stone was considered second in importance to the Rosetta Stone in deciphering hieroglyphics.

Because the Canopus Stone was a significant discovery and could be of service to other scholars, the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo initially decided it would be appropriate to make two copies that could be shared with other important museums in the world. The enormous stele was divided into three plaster casts for shipping purposes, the face of the stele into two equal slabs and the third slab including the demotic script from the left side of the stele. The top slab included the decorative lunette and all but the two final lines of the hieroglyphics. The bottom slab included the last two lines of the hieroglyphics followed by the complete Greek inscription.

Three copies of the stone were eventually cast and prepared for shipping to the following institutions:

1) The British Museum (London),
2) The Royal History Museum (Berlin), and
3) Monmouth College, Monmouth, Illinois!

Figure 3.4: Rev. Gulian Lansing with his wife, Maria. Photo courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

The two eminent European museums were natural homes for these important copies; however, Monmouth College, a fledgling co-educational college on the prairies of western Illinois, was a bit confounding. The College had been founded just a few years earlier by the Presbyterian church in 1853, and in 1871 had an enrollment of 124 students and 14 faculty, including its president.

As it happens, there was a Presbyterian mission in Cairo that was headed by Reverend Gulian Lansing (fig. 3.4). Lansing was originally from New York and spent much of his missionary career in Syria and Egypt. In 1865 Lansing authored a book on his experiences entitled *Egypt's Princes: A Narrative of Missionary Labor in the Valley of the Nile* that was published by New York's Robert Carter and Bros. It was a chronicle of the joys and heartbreaks of working with the local Egyptian community. Over the years Lansing's work educating the *fellahin* or peasants had come to the attention of the Khedive or Viceroy of Egypt, Isma'il Pasha. Egypt was then a part of the Ottoman Empire. At the time most Egyptians believed the *fellahin* to be uneducable, yet Lansing's missionary school in Assiut had become well-known for its success in doing so, and Lansing became a consultant to the Egypt's new ministry of public education and a good friend of the Viceroy.

Sadly, in 1865 a deadly cholera epidemic in Egypt killed many, including Lansing's wife, Maria. Lansing suffered seriously from cholera as well but survived. A year later, in 1866, Lansing remarried one of his associate missionaries, Sarah Dales. The Canopus Stone was discovered that same year. A few years later, as copies of the Canopus Stone were beginning to be made, Lansing,

through an intermediary, prevailed upon the Khedive to make a third copy for Monmouth College in western Illinois, which the Khedive agreed to do.

But why Monmouth College? Lansing was from New York and had likely never been to Illinois. What connection with Monmouth College, other than its Presbyterian affiliation could have precipitated this request? A lengthy biography of Lansing in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (1928–1936) revealed no connection with Monmouth.

In 2010 Hewes Library had copies of the college catalogs digitized. A keyword search of these catalogs revealed that Monmouth College had awarded Rev. Gulian Lansing an honorary degree in 1865, most likely for his significant work with the Presbyterian missions in Egypt as chronicled in his book, *Egypt's Princes*, published that same year. A search of the minutes of the Monmouth College Board of Trustees from June 27, 1865, found in the Monmouth College Archives, revealed that Lansing was nominated for the "honorary degree of D.D." by Reverend Dales of Philadelphia (fig. 3.5 and 3.6). Dales was the brother of Sarah Dales, who in 1866 became Lansing's second wife. [5]

Lansing nominated for Honorary Degree by MC Faculty
MC Board of Trustees Minutes, June 27, 1865

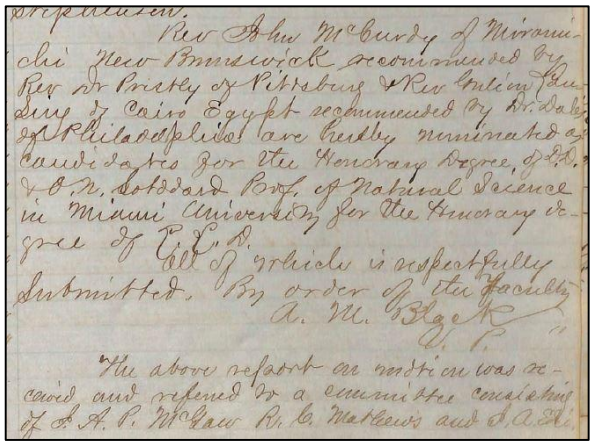

Figure 3.5: Nomination by the Monmouth College Faculty of Rev. Giulian Lansing for an Honorary Degree. Scanned from the Minutes of the Monmouth College Board of Trustees, June 27, 1865.

Rev John McCurdy of Miramichi, New Brunswick recommended by Rev Dr Priestly of Pittsburg & ***Rev Gulian Lansing of Cairo Egypt recommended by Dr. Dales of Philadelphia are hereby nominated as candidates for the Honorary Degree of D.D.*** *& O.N. Goddard, Prof. of Natural Science in Miami University for the Honorary degree of P.C.D.(?)*

All of which is respectfully Submitted, By order of the Faculty.

A.M. Black
U.P.??

Figure 3.6: Transcription of the excerpt scanned in Figure 3.5 from the Minutes of the Monmouth College Board of Trustees, June 27, 1865.

While no documentation has been found to corroborate this, it is the contention of the author that Rev. Lansing was incredibly grateful for the honorary degree that had been bestowed upon him. In 1865 he was unable to make the arduous journey to Illinois to accept the honorary degree. Lansing was grieving the loss of his wife and was still recovering from the effects of cholera on his own health. When Lansing learned that plaster copies were to be made of the newly discovered Canopus Stone, he saw his opportunity to repay the kindness afforded by Monmouth College and used his influence with the Khedive, Isma'il Pasha, to have a third copy made for the College.

[5] Rankin 2019: 7.

Smithsonian Institution Interest

By the early 1870s reports that a copy of the Canopus Stone was headed to Monmouth College made it across the Atlantic. The Smithsonian Institution, founded in 1846, with the goal of becoming the center of scientific research in the United States, was following this with particular interest. Monmouth College's President David Wallace received a letter of congratulations and an unusual request from the Smithsonian. They were seeking permission from the college to have the copy of the Canopus Stone shipped first to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where their archaeological staff would make their own "matrix" of Monmouth's plaster copy of the Canopus Stone. The Smithsonian's matrix copy would be used to make copies for other institutions. Monmouth's copy would then be re-crated and shipped directly to the college. President Wallace graciously agreed, and arrangements were made.

A report of the arrival of the Canopus Stone at the Smithsonian is found on p.34 of the *1871 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees of the Smithsonian Institution*:

> One of the most interesting additions to the department of ethnology is the cast of the Tanis stone, on which is a trilingual inscription recently obtained from some excavations near Tanis. . . . This stone occupies a position in Egyptology similar to that of the "Rosetta Stone," except that it is much more perfect, and will probably aid much in deciphering the hieroglyphic. The cast was taken by the instrumentality of Dr. Lansing for presentation to Monmouth College, Illinois, at his request and that of Mr. S. H. Scudder and by permission of the authorities of the college, it was sent to the institution to be copied. Unfortunately, it was very much broken in transit and required patient labor on the part of a skillful modeler to restore it to anything like its original condition. When this is accomplished, a mold and casts will be taken and the original sent to the college.

Very much broken"!! Surely the news that the Canopus Stone was broken in transit was disappointing. But Monmouth College certainly benefitted from the Smithsonian Institution's receiving the shipment first and were able to have the restoration handled by one of the Smithsonian's skilled modelers.

By the time the Canopus Stone arrived at the Smithsonian, the discovery of the stone had begun to appear in newspapers and magazines across the Atlantic. There were articles in the *Scientific American*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and in other major newspapers and magazines. Edwin John Davis authored a particularly detailed article simply entitled, "The Canopus Stone" in the August 1873 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, one of the most popular magazines of this period. A footnote on pg. 415 mentioned Monmouth College as one of the recipients of a cast (fig. 3.7). The College certainly must have appreciated the nationwide publicity.

The Canopus Stone Arrives at Monmouth College

By 1872 the Canopus Stone arrived on campus.[6] According to the 1872 *Monmouth College Catalog*, the stone was added to the college's growing College Cabinet of various artifacts stored on the third floor of the college's only building, Old Main. The Rev. Dr. Lansing, of Cairo, Egypt is credited with the contribution "of the famous Tanis Stone."[7]

There are no existing campus newspapers from the time of the Canopus Stone's arrival, but there are lengthy articles found in a September 1876 *College Courier* and in the 1882 edition of *The Monmouth Collegian*. The author reprinted most of Edwin John Davis's 1873 article from *Scribner's Magazine* (fig. 3.7). The student body was clearly just as proud of their unique artifact.

* Through the kindness of the Viceroy, Ismail Pasha, three casts of the stone have been taken: one for the Royal Museum of Berlin, one for the British Museum, and one for Monmouth College, Illinois. The College has arranged to permit a model to be taken and kept by the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.

Figure 3.7: Footnote on page 415 of an article entitled "The Canopus Stone" by Edwin John Davis in the August 1873 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*.

For the next 35 years the third floor of Old Main became the Canopus Stone's home. Unfortunately, however, on the morning of November 14, 1907, tragedy struck the campus when a defective chimney in the attic of Old Main started a fire in the rafters that first broke through the ceiling of the third-floor biology lecture room.[8] When the timbers supporting the third floor finally gave way, the roof, the walls and the floors crashed through to the basement along with the famous Canopus Stone . . . and once again "was very much broken."

Time passed and thoughts of the famous Canopus Stone soon faded from the memories of students, faculty and administrators. There was no mention of the fate of the Canopus Stone in any of the college publications. Then in 1954, 47 years after the devastating loss of Old Main, a custodian working in East Hall[9] was working around several boxes stored under the basement stairway. His curiosity was piqued. After removing some of the brooms and mops stored atop the boxes, he decided to take a closer look. Upon opening the boxes, he found shards of broken plaster with inscriptions that he did not recognize. He decided that Dr. Charles Speel, Monmouth College's professor of religion, might find it interesting. Dr. Speel recognized the inscriptions in Greek and recruited students to move the boxes of these shards to Room 108 of Wallace Hall.

Here they pieced the remains together as best they could, thus forming a fairly complete block of at least two lines of hieroglyphics at the top followed by 79 lines of Greek. Speel translated the Greek and conferred with Professor of Classics Harold Ralston on the two remaining lines of Egyptian hieroglyphics. Their research carried them to the library where they eventually found an article written by Professor John Calvin Hutchison in the February 11, 1882 edition of the *Monmouth Collegian*. Hutchison's article led them to Edwin John Davis's extensive

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[6] The "Tanis Stone" is first mentioned as part of the College Cabinet in the *Monmouth College Catalog* 20 June 1872: 34. https://newspaperarchive.com/monmouth-college-catalog-jun-20-1872-p-34/ accessed 8/19/2024.

[7] *Monmouth College Catalog* 20 June 1872: 34.

[8] Davenport 1953: 73–74.

[9] East Hall was the former Sunnyside dormitory for women erected shortly after World War I on North 9th Street. It was renamed Austin Hall and currently houses the Music faculty offices and classrooms.

account of the Canopus Stone in his 1873 article from *Scribner's Magazine* in the library's collection.[10]

Where the remains of the lower slab of the Canopus Stone resided over the years, finally ending up in East Hall, is still something of a mystery. When the remains were "discovered" under the staircase, the superintendent of campus buildings, Mr. Kenn Craig, a 32-year employee of the college gave this account to the Monmouth College Oracle reporter, Jerry Allin:

> [Craig] believes that the stone arrived between 1920 and 1930. He tells us that for many years the stone was stored in the library in its original case before being taken over to the basement of Sunnyside where it is now kept. Mr. Craig tells us that the plaster-of-paris cast of the stone was broken in moving.[11]

Obviously, Craig's speculation on the arrival date of the stone was corrected by Professors Speel's and Ralston's research. Also, Craig was clearly not aware of the stone's connection with the fire in Old Main where the breakage more likely occurred. However, it is interesting to note that the recovered portions of the Canopus Stone were first stored in the basement of the new Carnegie library building that was in its final phase of construction when Old Main burned, before eventually being moved to the basement of Sunnyside women's dormitory (AKA East Hall, now Austin Hall).

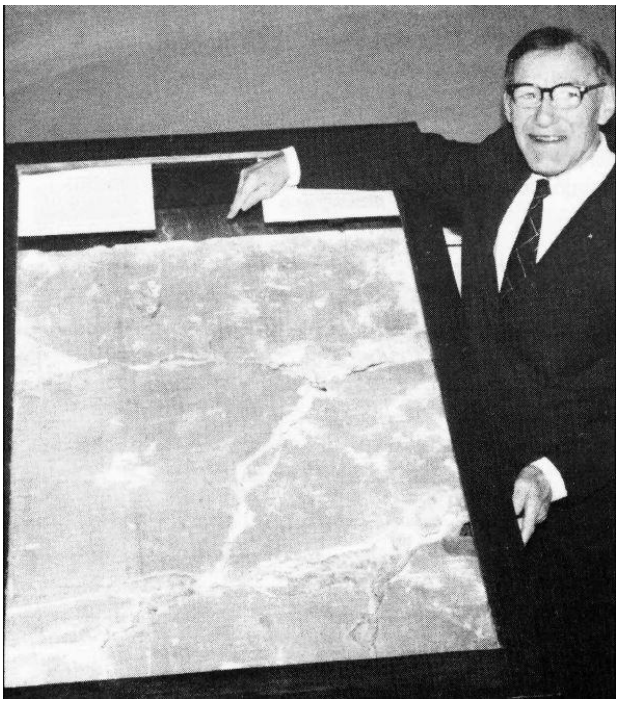

Figure 3.8: Dr. Charles Speel stands proudly with the recovered portion of Monmouth College's Canopus Stone in its protective display case in 1995. Photo courtesy Jeff Rankin.

The newly recovered lower slab of the college's Canopus Stone, as reconstructed by Professors Speel and Ralston, was occasionally put on display in Room 108 of Wallace Hall. It would also be stored in various closets between those displays. Nevertheless, it was unprotected from the elements, the books, the coats, cups and other items that often rested on it. Frustrated by his fruitless attempts to protect and preserve the cast, Dr. Speel approached Dean St. Ledger, then managing the campus buildings and grounds, about building a case with a protective glass to preserve the rescued artifact (fig. 3.8).

In November 1970, a student group known as "The Non-Current Events Club" sent a letter to the editor of the *Monmouth College Courier in* which they expressed their concern for the stone's preservation (fig. 3.9).

[10] Speel 1995: 18–19.
[11] Allin 1954: 8

Monmouth College Courier Nov. 12, 1970 page 6

Non-Current Events Intelligence

The Greek portion of the Canopus Stone, which was found in Egypt in the early 1800s, is now under the protection of the Non-Current Events Club. Currently this stone is resting uncomfortably in room 108 of Wallace Hall, where it could easily be totally destroyed.

We believe that this rare stone should be guarded and yet made available for public viewing. We are proposing that it be placed in a glass case and displayed in our new library. Under Dr. Speel's guidance we have procured Mr. Hauge's permission to use the library for this purpose.

The Non-Current Events Club is presently soliciting funds to cover the cost of a glass case, for the Canopus Stone, through the local historical society, school and the campus at large. This weekend we shall be selling hot coffee at the St. Olaf football game to help realize this goal.

Next week more about the Canopus stone itself.

Paul Titus
Beth Tanner
Melinda Triner

Figure 3.9: Transcript of a letter to the editor of the *Monmouth College Courier* by a student group known as "The Non-Current Events Club."

There are no updates to this letter to the editor, but perhaps it had its intended effect. The library had a descriptive statement provided with the Canopus Stone display case written by Professor William Urban. It states that Professors Speel and his young colleague, William Urban, approached President DeBow Freed and persuaded him that the Canopus Stone was too important to the College's history and traditions to be lost. Despite the financial troubles of his administration, President Freed authorized building a proper display case for the stone and placing it in the classroom traditionally associated with Religious Studies.[12]

It was another 27 years, until 1997, before the display case was moved to Hewes Library as requested by the Non-Current Events Club in their November 1970 letter to the editor published in the *Monmouth College Courier*. The case was moved from Wallace Hall and was initially displayed on the main level of the library near the Pi Phi Lounge. Following the renovation of Hewes Library in 2001–2002, the Canopus Stone made a permanent move to the library's upper level.

I was appointed Library Director in 1998. We were in the midst of planning for an extensive renovation of Hewes Library. For the first few years, I relied solely on the description provided by Professor Urban when asked about the Canopus Stone. I was curious but was fully consumed with library renovation plans and facing the challenges of my new position.

It wasn't until 2001 that I began searching for more information on the Canopus Stone and ordered a used out-of-print reprint edition of E. A. Wallis Budge's three-volume set entitled *The Decrees of Memphis and Canopus* (1904, reprint 1976). Upon receiving the copy, I opened volume 3 which revealed a very thorough account of the discovery of the Canopus or Tanis Stone and a full description and three line-for-line translations of the Decree of Canopus from the Hieroglyphics, the Demotic and Greek. And then facing p.35 I discovered a wonderful foldout facsimile image of the face of the Canopus Stone. It was the first time I had any idea of what it looked like when it was first discovered. It was stunning. When I first viewed the facsimile, it still

[12] Urban, William. "The Canopus Stone" (unpublished descriptive statement on the current display case).

struck me that I was only seeing two "languages" and I wondered why it was considered to be such an important "trilingual" find.[13] All three scripts were present on the face of the Rosetta Stone. Where was the third script on the Canopus Stone?

As I continued to page through volume 3, I discovered a second foldout facsimile image (opp.114) showing the elusive third demotic script that was discovered on the side of the original Canopus Stone. It was a much darker quality image, as well. I was elated to finally see the third script of the decree. As I began studying the image, there were markings that looked familiar to me in the upper right portion. At the time I did not know that demotic was read right to left, so I didn't realize this was the first few characters of the first line of the demotic. Nevertheless, the characters looked familiar.

In March 2021 Monmouth College hosted the annual conference of Eta Sigma Phi, the National Classics Honorary Society for students of Latin and/or Greek. Our major library renovation was to start at the end of the spring Semester. The College Art collections was also housed in the library and the library itself had a number of artifacts in various places. There were also artifacts stashed away on our upper level which, over the decades, had become something of the campus's attic space. There was also the library's significant collection of government publications and topographic maps. Professors Sienkewicz and Urban wanted to have out on display for the Classics conference as many of items of interest as possible. As we began gathering these artifacts, we realized that, while most included attached descriptions, there were a few that did not. In particular, there was one piece that was in our "attic" space that would have made for a nice display, but we had no information on it. Professors Sienkewicz and Urban were both uncertain as to its origin. I went ahead and displayed it, though, along with a sign asking for any budding archaeologists to help us identify it! There were no offers of help. After the conference concluded we placed the artifact in the College Art Collections storage.

I soon realized that the portion of the facsimile foldout of the demotic script from the Canopus Stone looked much like what I was remembering from the unidentified artifact that we had displayed a few months earlier in 2021. I contacted Professor Mary Phillips, the curator of our College Art Collections and headed upstairs to compare. To my delight, it was a perfect match. The third slab of our Canopus Stone had somehow survived the 1907 fire in Old Main, with cracks but still within its original wooden 2"x3" casing.

A suitable display case was identified among donations from the estate of Gracie Peterson, our recently deceased former music faculty member, and the stone was placed on display next to the case containing the bottom slab.

The Decree of Canopus

Ptolemy III was the third of the fifteen Ptolemaic leaders that ruled Egypt from 305 BC until 30 BC. Of the fifteen Ptolemies, Ptolemy III in 238 BC was the first of three rulers to bring his priests together and issue a decree that would be inscribed in three scripts on stelae and placed in temples throughout Egypt. Ptolemy IV and Ptolemy V also issued such decrees during their reigns. In 217 BC Ptolemy IV issued his Decree of Memphis. In 196 BC Ptolemy V issued a decree, also known as the Decree of Memphis. However, Ptolemy V's decree was the first decree to be

discovered in 1799 by Napoleon's army and team of scientists and artists who joined him as he conquered Egypt. We know Ptolemy V's Decree of Memphis as the Rosetta Stone

By 238 BC, there were likely very few Egyptians who could read the hieroglyphics used on these decrees. Hieroglyphics were first used around 3300 BCE. Other simplified scripts were developed, first hieratic and later demotic, for documents more commonly written on papyrus. Few Egyptians were likely to have been familiar with Greek either, but Greek would have been the script used by the ruling Ptolemies from Macedonia. Even by 238 BC the only script that was more likely to be read by Egyptian administrators and priests would have been the demotic. Scholars of demotic would also note that the demotic script was a line-for-line translation of the Greek, not a translation of the hieroglyphics.[14]

In the ninth year of Ptolemy III's reign (238 BC), the priests of Egypt were summoned to gather in the city of Canopus for an opportunity to discuss and record a number of events and pronouncements for posterity. It would be a time to celebrate and honor some of the gods and ancestors, and especially his and his wife Berenice's daughter, also named Berenice, who had died suddenly just a few months prior. It would be an opportunity to honor and deify her as well. Ptolemy III and his wife were considered gods by virtue of being the current rulers of Egypt and were often referred to as the "Good-doing Gods" in the decree.[15]

There were other accomplishments from Ptolemy III's reign that would be recorded for the historical record. There were six "good deeds" identified that Ptolemy III and his wife, Berenice, had conferred upon Egypt, and they were followed by twenty-four decrees to be completed in appreciation of their acts of goodness. Many of these dealt with a new order of priests to be created and festivals to be observed on specified dates. And most importantly, an adjustment to Egypt's 3,000-year-old calendar was to be implemented. Three millennia ago, the ancient Egyptians had created a remarkable 365-day calendar, divided into twelve months of thirty days each, along with an additional five intercalary days. Over the millennia, though, most Egyptians more closely followed the rising and flooding of the Nile which was essential to the planting seasons. And this annual event more closely aligned with the annual appearance of the star known as "Sopdet," found low on the Eastern horizon in the early morning hours. We know this star as "Sirius" the "Dog-Star" whose heliacal rising on the eastern horizon generally occurs in late July and early August. For the Egyptians their annual sighting of "Sopdet" was much more reliable for their day-to-day existence than the official calendar.

However, Ptolemy III was ready to implement something quite unique to calendar history. In the eleventh item of the Decree of Canopus it is stipulated that "The year shall no longer consist of 360 days and five epagomenal days only, but every fourth year one day shall be added. . . ." This appears to be the first written record of a "Leap Day" to be added every four years. The Egyptian priests were to return to their homes throughout Egypt and implement this new calendar. For a variety of reasons, it was not universally implemented and fell completely out of use shortly after Ptolemy III's death.[16] Some say it was the Macedonians who first recognized the need for a leap day every four years in their calendars. And the Ptolemies still considered themselves Macedonians. Perhaps there was a bit of rebellious nationalism on the part of the

[14] Budge 1904: 35–6.
[15] Budge 1904: 9–13.
[16] Budge 1904: 13.

priests being asked to implement a "Macedonian" calendar. It is hard to know. It was almost 200 years later in 46 BC that Julius Caesar introduced the Leap Year into the new Julian Calendar.

For the record, the Julian Calendar remained in use throughout the Western world until 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII reset the calendar and introduced our present Gregorian calendar.

Addenda

More on the Smithsonian Institution and Monmouth's Canopus Stone

It is often asked why Monmouth College did not just contact the Smithsonian Institution and request a new copy of the copy made by the Smithsonian in 1871 for Monmouth College. As it happens, Dr. Speel did just that, and he had some surprisingly significant connections with the Smithsonian! The following is from Speel's article published in *ScotsNewse (Winter 1995).*

> Several months after the recovered pieces of Monmouth's cast had been fitted together on the table, I wrote to my undergraduate psychology professor, Dr. Leonard Carmichael of Brown University, who had become Secretary of the Smithsonian. I told him about the fate of Monmouth's cast and asked if the Smithsonian could return the favor, initiated by Julian *(sic)* Lansing, by sending a copy of the Smithsonian's cast to Monmouth. He replied that he would be glad to do so, but could not, because the Smithsonian had a fire about 1922 in which its cast had been destroyed. Photographic plates were available.
>
> Sometime later I learned from Dr. Gus Van Beek, the Egyptologist at the Smithsonian, that Carmichael had been misinformed. The Smithsonian's cast had not been destroyed by fire. It was stored in a warehouse of the museum. It would take time and considerable effort to retrieve it, make a cast and crate it for shipping to Monmouth. Moreover, it might have entailed some expense. Gus said he could try to fulfill the request.
>
> Alas, the project has been forgotten. Both Carmichael and Van Beek are deceased. It may be that a replacement cast for Monmouth College can be obtained, along with copies of the photographic plates, providing the cost and efforts for so doing can be met by interested persons. If so, the academic influence and legacy of Monmouth College can be further enriched.[17]

[17] Speel 1995:19.

And more of the Smithsonian story . . .

When I searched subsequent annual reports of the Smithsonian for mention of the Canopus Stone, I found the following enlightening reference on page 29 of their 1874 *Annual Report* (fig. 3.10):

> Not the least interesting and important of the collections of the year are "squeezes" from Egyptian antiquities, and a perfect copy of the Tanis or Canopus stone, from the museum at Boulak, of which a much inferior copy was already in possession of the Institution.

Figure 3.10: Reference to the Canopus Stone in the 1874 *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution*, pg. 29.

One might conclude from this brief account that the original broken and reconstructed Canopus Stone could have easily been discarded after receiving a more perfect copy. It was clearly another stele that was found in the early 1870s and offered to the Smithsonian by the Khedive, Isma'il Pasha, perhaps with an assurance of more meticulous packing. Further search of the Smithsonian Institution's collection online reveals one photographic plate of the Tanis Stone, depicting only the portion of the stone with demotic script.[18]

Curiously, the anonymous author of the "The Tanis or Canopus Stone" article from the *Monmouth College Courier* (September 1876) was also aware of the Smithsonian's replacement of Monmouth's casts:

> The college permitted a copy to be taken from theirs for the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., but another and better cast has been more recently received by the institution from the Egyptian viceroy.[19]

Lansing Visit to Western Illinois 1873

In November 1873 Lansing and his second wife, Sarah Dales, did finally make it to the prairies of western Illinois for a visit. He visited and spoke to several Presbyterian congregations in the area seeking support for their important work at Assiut College.[20] It is assumed he found time to visit the Canopus Stone on display in Old Main during this visit. He also donated a beautiful copy of the Koran to the Monmouth College Library.[21]

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[18] *Smithsonian Institution Archives, Acc. 11-007, Box 004, Image No. MNH-1073* https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_387765. Accessed February 26, 2026.

[19] Anon 1876: 1

[20] Rankin 2019: 9

[21] Strang 1885:5.

The Close Relationship between Assiut College and Monmouth College

The following is a short description of Monmouth's close connection with the Presbyterian Mission in Egypt, written by Professor William Urban. Assiut College was established by Reverend Dr. Gulian Lansing who was responsible for Monmouth College receiving a copy of the Canopus Stone.[22]

Monmouth's Mission in Egypt

by William Urban

> In 1865 Presbyterian missionaries established a college in Assiut. In the decades which followed this institution became the major educational center for the Christian community of Upper Egypt; Assiut College possessed one of the best hospitals, best libraries, and best faculties of the country, and its girls' school was almost unique. Through the years Monmouth College sent more teachers to Assiut than any other college; in 1952 six members of the faculty, including President James H. Grier, had begun their teaching careers at Assiut.
>
> When the Nasser government nationalized the private universities in Egypt [in 1954], it expelled the foreign teachers and converted the college into a male university run by Islamic fundamentalists. The last president of Assiut College, Egyptian-born Paul McClanahan, came to Monmouth College as chaplain and professor of religion.

A Recent Revelation from Down Under!

In late December 2024 Jeff Rankin passed along an email inquiry he had received from Steve Martin, Art Collections Manager, of the University of Melbourne, Australia. Martin was interested in locating the image of the full front face of the Canopus/Tanis Stone that Rankin had included in a 2019 article that he had posted on the Monmouth College website on our twice-broken artifact. Rankin forwarded the email to me to respond. I replied with references to the foldout facsimiles found in v.3 of Wallis Budge's *The Decrees of Memphis and Canopus* (1904, reprinted 1976). I also provided him with copies of our images and other articles. He replied with a photograph of their display of the two plaster casts that they received from the British Museum in the late 1920s, or possibly as late as the 1950s or 1960s. It was a beautiful copy of the two front slabs impressively displayed in a lighted case. I was quite envious. Yet until our exchange of emails Martin was unaware of the third (side) slab with the demotic text. Martin has since reviewed their inventory records and has yet to find any reference to the receipt of a third slab. Perhaps, one

[22] Professor Urban's account of Monmouth College's ties with the Presbyterian Missions in Egypt was from a two-sided informative handout placed on display with the Canopus Stone cabinet. The handout was drafted prior to my appointment as librarian in 1998. The handout was revised after the discovery of the slab with the demotic script, and, later, whenever my research showed a need for corrections or additional information.

day, he, too, will delight in the discovery of the missing third slab in some dark corner of the University of Melbourne's art collections.

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NOTE: Most Monmouth College catalogs, *Ravelings* yearbooks & student newspapers published through 2010 are available through NewspaperArchive.com.