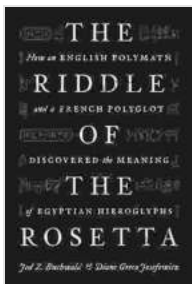


How an English Polymath and French Polyglot Discovered the Meaning of Egyptian

The Rosetta Stone is one of the most famous and important artifacts in the world. It is a large slab of black basalt that was discovered in 1799 by French soldiers in the town of Rosetta, Egypt. The stone contains three different inscriptions of the same text: one in hieroglyphics, one in demotic script, and one in Greek. The Greek text was quickly translated, and it revealed that the stone was a decree issued by a council of priests in Memphis in 196 BC. The decree honored Ptolemy V Epiphanes, the young king of Egypt, and it contained a number of provisions that were designed to ensure his safety and well-being.



The Riddle of the Rosetta: How an English Polymath and a French Polyglot Discovered the Meaning of Egyptian Hieroglyphs by Jed Z. Buchwald

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 55014 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 560 pages



The hieroglyphic and demotic inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone were much more difficult to translate. For centuries, scholars had been trying to decipher them, but without success. Then, in 1822, a breakthrough came.

Thomas Young, an English polymath, and Jean-François Champollion, a French polyglot, independently realized that the hieroglyphs were not simply pictures, but that they also represented sounds. This discovery was a major breakthrough, and it paved the way for the eventual decipherment of the Egyptian language.

Young was born in 1773 in Milverton, Somerset, England. He was a precocious child, and he showed an early interest in language. He learned Greek and Latin at a young age, and he went on to study a wide range of other languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. Young was also a talented mathematician and physicist, and he made important contributions to both fields. In 1814, he was appointed superintendent of the British Museum, and he began to study the Rosetta Stone in earnest.

Champollion was born in 1790 in Figeac, France. He was also a precocious child, and he showed an early interest in ancient Egypt. He learned hieroglyphics at a young age, and he went on to study a wide range of other ancient languages. Champollion was also a talented linguist, and he was fluent in several modern languages. In 1821, he was appointed professor of Egyptology at the University of Grenoble.

Young and Champollion worked independently on the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone. Young focused on the demotic script, while Champollion focused on the hieroglyphs. Both men made significant progress, and they eventually realized that the two scripts were closely related. In 1822, Young published a paper in which he proposed that the hieroglyphs were a combination of phonetic and ideographic signs. Champollion published a similar paper in 1824. These two papers marked a major breakthrough in the decipherment of the Egyptian language.

Young and Champollion continued to work on the decipherment of the Egyptian language for the rest of their lives. Young died in 1829, but Champollion lived to see his work completed. In 1828, he published his magnum opus, "Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens" (Precis of the hieroglyphic system of the ancient Egyptians). This work was the culmination of his many years of research, and it established the foundation for the modern study of Egyptology.

The decipherment of the Egyptian language was a major breakthrough in the study of ancient Egypt. It opened up a new world of knowledge to scholars, and it has allowed us to learn more about the history, culture, and religion of this ancient civilization.

The Rosetta Stone is a truly remarkable artifact. It is a testament to the ingenuity of the ancient Egyptians, and it has played a key role in our understanding of their world. The story of how Thomas Young and Jean-François Champollion deciphered the stone is a fascinating tale of scholarship and discovery. It is a story that reminds us that anything is possible with hard work and dedication.

Image of the Rosetta Stone

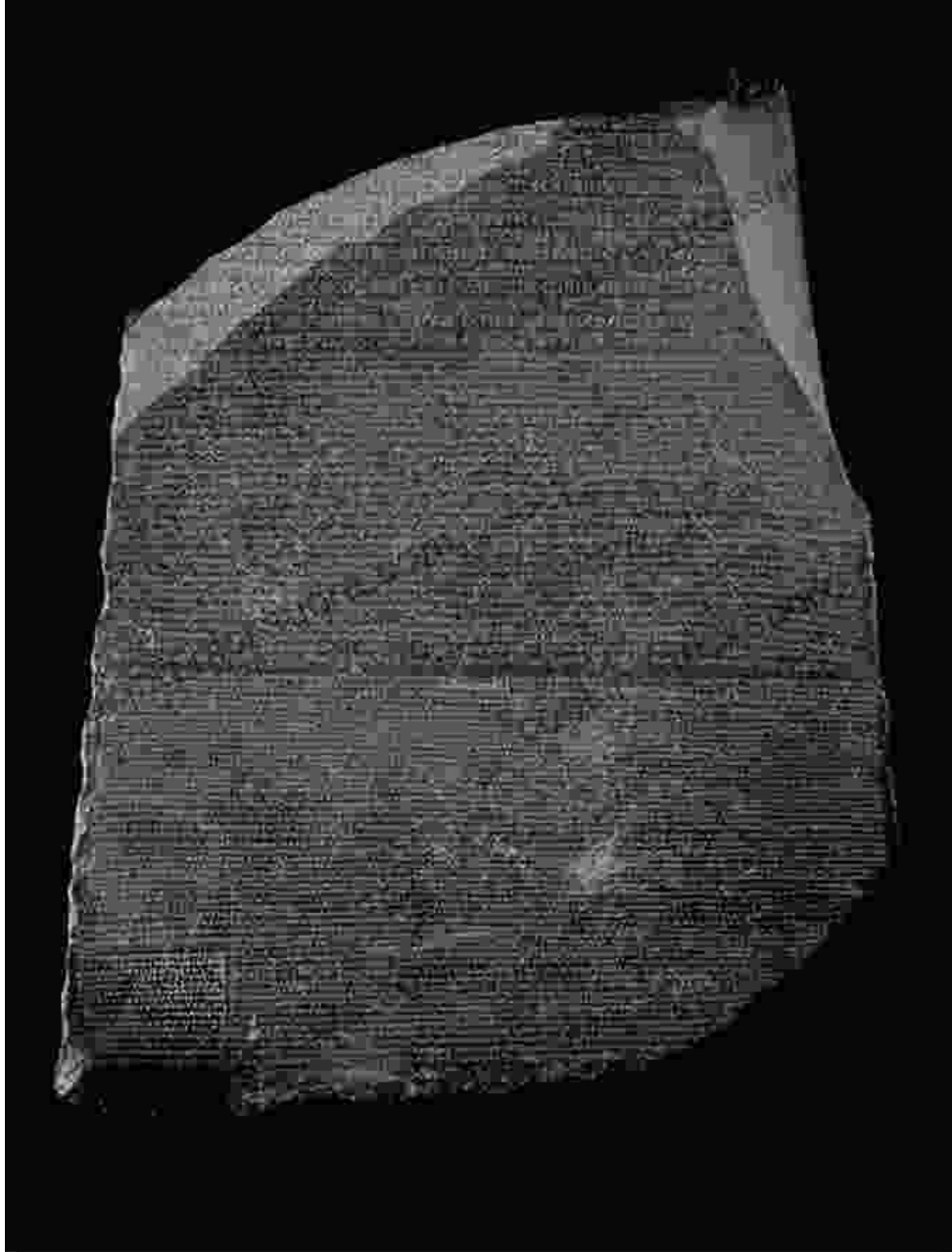


Image of Thomas Young

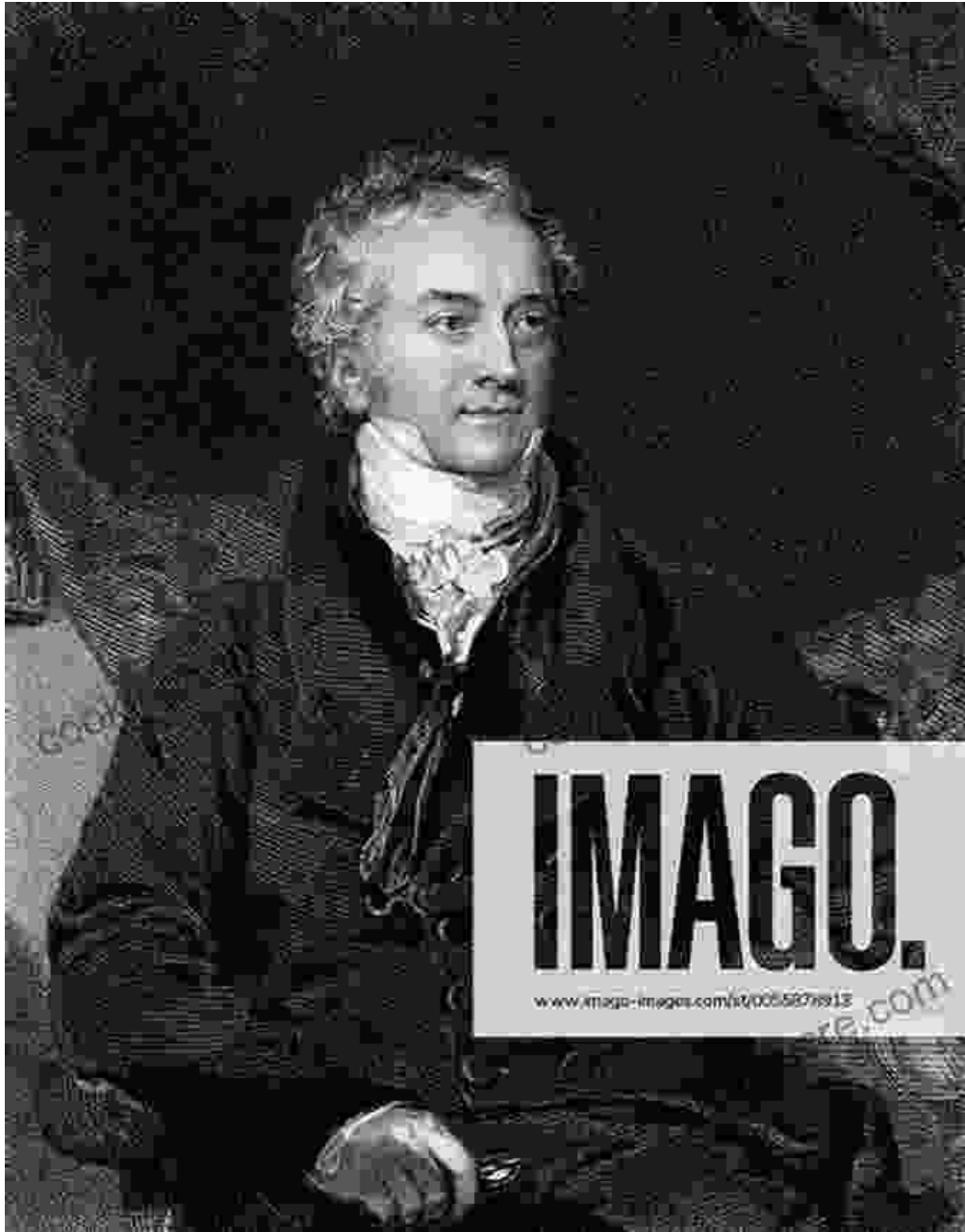
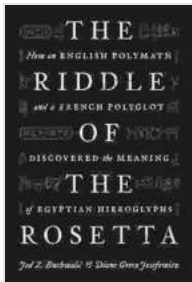
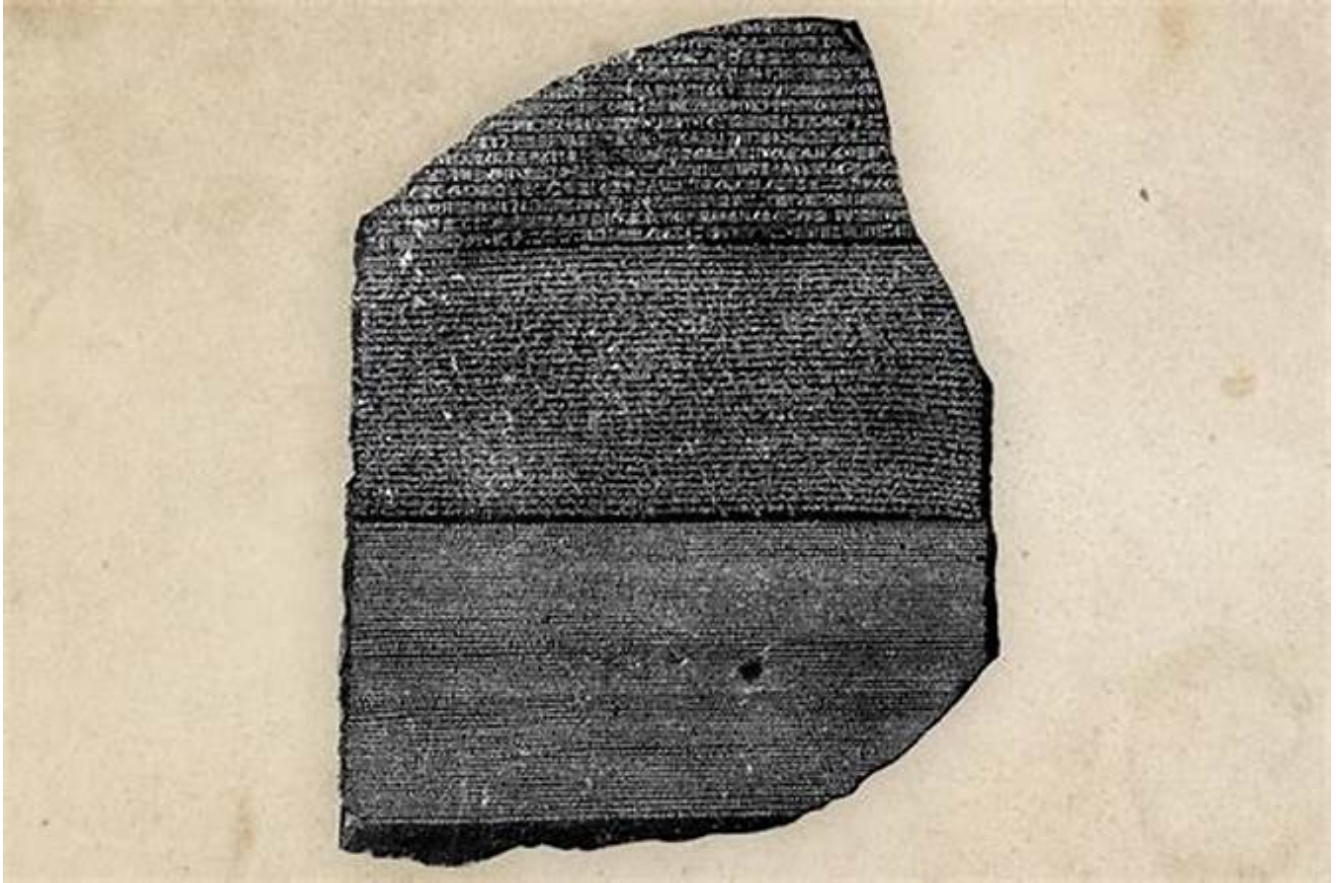


Image of Jean-François Champollion



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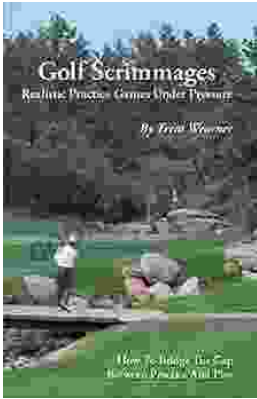
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