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## LANGUAGE CONTACT

الاتصال اللغوي

*Thomas Schneider*

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## LANGUAGE CONTACT

## الاتصال اللغوي

Thomas Schneider

Sprachkontakt  
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*Although language contact and multilingualism are universal phenomena, the topic has not been given due consideration in Egyptology. Language contact in ancient Egypt comprises a spectrum, in ascending order, of small-scale phenomena (loanwords, loan translations), through non-Egyptian texts in Egyptian script and the evidence for bilingualism and multilingualism, to the large-scale phenomena of new language forms resulting from language contact and phenomena of language convergence through a sprachbund situation.*

على الرغم من أن الاتصال اللغوي وتعدد اللغات يُعتبر حالة عالمية، إلا أنه لم يتم منحهم الاهتمام الكافي في علم المصريات. ان الاتصال اللغوي في مصر القديمة عبارة عن سلم، مُرتب تصاعدياً، من الظواهر الصغيرة (مثل الكلمات المستعارة، والترجمات المستعارة)، إلى النصوص الغير مصرية والمكتوبة بحروف مصرية ودليل ثنائية اللغة وتعدد اللغات، إلى الظواهر واسعة النطاق من أشكال اللغة الجديدة الناتجة عن الاتصال اللغوي، وتقارب اللغة من خلال موقف "sprachbund".

**L**anguage contact is a universal phenomenon of human interaction that has received significant attention in recent years (Grant 2020; Hickey 2010, 2020; Adamou and Matras 2020). Ancient Egypt was at all times in direct or mediated contact with neighboring and more distant linguistic areas, received significant numbers of immigrants, and during certain periods of its history, controlled regions outside its traditional borders or was itself subject to foreign rule. The migration of speakers of different languages to Egypt, the trade of objects, and exchange of ideas was accompanied by language contact and linguistic interference.

There is clear evidence of multilingualism in pre-Ptolemaic Egypt, a status often assumed to have existed only in Ptolemaic and Roman times and later (Papaconstantinou ed. 2010). Despite the pervasiveness of this

phenomenon, three factors have contributed to the fact that ancient Egypt has never been described as a multilingual society: Egypt's overwhelming self-presentation as culturally monolithic nurtured an Egyptological narrative claiming that "ancient Egypt was a geopolitical and cultural unity and is therefore to be regarded as an early, as well as a good, example of a nation-state" (Frandsen 2008: 47). Additionally, Egypt created a "monumental discourse" of an all-encompassing *hieroglyphic culture* (Assmann 1994), in which there was no place for other languages, writing systems, and linguistic communities. Thirdly, the academic training and institutional history of the field has for a long time not encouraged the pursuit of a linguistically more complex Egyptian culture.

Language contact and multilingualism in ancient Egypt do raise the question of where the communicative spaces of those languages

were besides the Egyptian space of languages and scripts. Egyptian linguistics has traditionally focused on the study of aspects of inner-Egyptian linguistic diversity (such as dialects, diglossia) but has not surveyed systematically, and analyzed the presence and use of, Egyptian vis-à-vis other languages. Given the pivotal significance of linguistic identity to human identity, and the fact that multilingualism is today seen as the norm among human societies and individuals (Zarate, Lévy, and Kramersch eds. 2011; Martin-Jones, Blackledge, and Creese 2012; Weber and Horner 2012; Maher 2017; Coulmas 2018), broadening the traditional approach to a full range of linguistic codes that would encompass different languages, language varieties, or language registers, would open a new avenue for the study of language in ancient Egypt (for case studies from antiquity, see Hasselbach-Andee 2020 and Mullen 2013). Within a multilingual Egypt, individuals would use and evaluate differently their access to linguistic codes and linguistic resources by which they would index their (social, ethnic, professional, etc.) identity. They would use different languages, in addition to dialects or registers (linguistic codes). They would also use *discursive* resources to determine their identity—e.g., (ethnic, social, etc.) references, forms of speech, presuppositions, and intertextuality—or *structural* resources (grammatical, lexical, phonetic), and combine them in phenomena such as *code-switching* and *code-choice* (for the terminology of linguistic indexicality and a case study from modern Egypt, see Bassiouney 2015).

Despite the likely omnipresence of language contact and linguistic interference, only a small fraction of it is actually visible to us and can be studied, as a consequence of the limitations of the preserved written evidence and our inability to study spoken languages and communication. Despite these limitations, the topic is of utmost significance for the linguistics of the ancient languages of Northeast Africa, the Near East, and the Mediterranean. It is also a field of interdisciplinary promise between Egyptian linguistics and general linguistics.

While there are substantive contemporaneous sources from the linguistic traditions of the Near East between the third and the first millennia BCE, the historical linguistic geography surrounding ancient Egypt on the African continent is very insufficiently known. The stereotypical categorization by the ancient Egyptians of their African neighbors as “Libyans” and “Nubians” conceals a more complex reality (Moreno García 2014: 2; 2018: 149; Michaux-Colombot 2014: 507). The Egyptological use of these terms has also been a reflection of the fact that contemporary North African sources for this issue do not exist. Only very few of the ancient languages in these regions (belonging to the larger language families of Cushitic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo, Ethiosemitic) are independently documented. Of these languages, only Meroitic (see Rilly 2007, 2016) dates back to the time periods directly relevant here and, moreover, developed its own writing system from the third century BCE to the fourth century CE. Old Nubian is attested from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries CE (in translations from the Bible, hagiographic literature, inscriptions, administrative documents; van Gerven Oei 2021; Breyer 2014: 186-191), and Old-Bedawiye (Blemmyan) is evidenced in personal names and a fragmentary text from the seventh century CE (Breyer 2014: 192-197).

Egypt’s statehood found itself in an inherent conflict with the pastoral or nomadic groups encroaching on its territory and competing for its resources (Moreno García 2014, 2018; Ritner 2009), and the Egyptian pictorial and textual evidence from state artifacts and monuments is characterized by this systemic opposition. Past scholarship attempted to associate specific populations with material evidence and to match those “cultures” with textual data, ethnonyms, and depictions from ancient Egypt. This culture-historical approach has become problematic in recent years, to the extent that the 2019 *Handbook of Ancient Nubia* no longer includes separate entries on what had become known as the “A Group,” “C Group,” “Pan Grave Culture,” or “Kerma Culture.” These

interpretive models seem no longer adequate for the archaeological data and a situation where population groups had shared forms of subsistence (Raue 2019: 293; also Liszka 2015: 43; Philipps, Holdaway, and Wendrich 2017: 10-16; Barnard 2005). In consequence, attributing specific languages to such illusionary groups is no longer feasible.

The use of foreign languages and mixed languages, and the selective use of loanwords and loan translations within Egyptian provided a means for past groups or individuals to “index” their (social, ethnic, professional, etc.) identity in specific contexts or “domains” (Adams 2003: 595). Egyptian linguistics has studied indexicality (for the concept, see Bassiouney 2015: 58-62) for the different written language varieties, including the diglossia situation between the Middle Kingdom and the Amarna Period (Jansen-Winkel 1995; Stauder 2013, 2020; Paksi 2020) but has not researched the presence and use of spoken Egyptian vis-à-vis other languages. In this respect, comparative case studies from later times (for example, Tonio Richter 2010, Boud’hors 2020, and Bassiouney 2015 for modern Egypt) are highly instructive.

### *Loanwords*

Most evidence about language contact in ancient Egypt occurs in the form of loanwords. Lexical borrowing has been studied extensively (see the handbook edited by Haspelmath and Tadmor eds. [2009]; the associated World Loanword Database is available at [WOLD] <https://wold.clld.org/>). Lexical transfer is most visible during the New Kingdom and in borrowings from Semitic languages (Hoch 1994), although our knowledge of borrowing is biased by the preserved evidence and our acquaintance with donor languages. Thousands of attestations of hundreds of loanwords from dozens of donor languages show up in specific socio-textual places—texts of different genres and registers, reflecting different users and varying motivations for the use of loanwords. Motivations include onomasiology (lexical gaps in the receiving language), linguistic

economy (more precise terminology), and reasons for communication (code switching, style and fashion, social and ideological identity, prestige or erudition) (Schneider 2004: 11-31; Haspelmath 2009).

### *Loanwords prior to the New Kingdom*

Attestations of loanwords prior to the New Kingdom are relatively rare. Similarly lacking is scholarship analyzing this situation of the evidence, which is owed to a dearth of certain categories of sources in comparison to those of the New Kingdom; the possibility of different sociolinguistic parameters facilitating the display of loanwords; and a highly controversial debate about the historical phonology of Egyptian in its earlier periods, which makes it more difficult to identify borrowings. An example of the latter dissent is a recent proposal by Kilani to see in Egyptian 𓆎 (type of conifer or conifer wood) a particularly ancient, fourth millennium BCE borrowing from Proto-Semitic 𐤍 [𐤍] (Kilani 2016: 51-52). Conventional historical phonology of Egyptian would allow for the first sound-correspondence but not the second; Otto Rössler’s “New Comparatism” (Rössler 1971; Schneider 1997; Peust 1999a) would disqualify both. In addition, early loans are difficult to recognize prior to the establishment, by the Middle Kingdom, of a coherent sub-system of the hieroglyphic script used to render foreign names and words, with *matres lectionis* (i.e., consonants used to indicate a certain vowel) after monoconsonantal signs for the rendering of the vowels /u/ and /i/ and the occasional use of CVC signs (signs representing a consonant-vowel-consonant sequence) (Hoch 1994: 488-504). The most detailed use of this system is visible in the Middle Kingdom *Execration Texts* from the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, which list the names of Levantine princes and their cities and territories (Wimmer 2010: 33-50). With these limitations in mind, a few proposed loanwords, from different semantic areas and of different linguistic origin, may serve as examples:

1) Early Dynastic Period and Old Kingdom: the Egyptian royal title *nsw* (New

Kingdom pronunciation *ins*) has been proposed to be a borrowing from Sumerian *ensi* “king” (Peust 2007). I propose to connect the term *stj* “(red) ochre” (also used in *t3-stj*, “Nubian land”; Michaux-Colombot 2014: 507-508; likely a loanword: el-Sayed 2011: 254) with the Beja/Tu-bedaue adjective *sōtay*, *sūtay* “dark-colored, dark green/brown/grey” (*stj* would be “dark [brown] ochre”; *t3-stj* the “ochre land”). *wnš* “wolf” has conventionally been seen as an Afroasiatic cognate of the Berber lexeme for “wolf,” *uššen* (for which, see Kossmann 1999: 223 {675}; with a metathesis II-III, Vycichl 1983: 20). On a cognate level, one would expect \**wnš* (the symbol \* indicates a reconstructed form); thus, *wnš* is likely a very early loan from Proto-Berber. For a Semitic borrowing, cf. the term *ʕmj* “Asiatic, Palestinian” = *drmj* “inhabitant of the south (of Palestine)” (Schneider 1997: 194-195; with the older equivalency Egyptian *ʕ* = Semitic *d*).

2) First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom: the loanword *jspt* “quiver” is already attested in the Middle Kingdom (Papyrus Kahun 19.16 and 20.47; also in the New Kingdom: Hoch 1994: 40-41). A number of loanwords may come from Ethio-Semitic, such as *ʕg* “hit, beat,” *wʕ* “to slander, defame” (with the newer equivalency Egyptian *ʕ* = Semitic *ʕ*), *st3* “weave, spin,” *db3* “to clog, bar” (Schneider 2003a: 194). Northwest Semitic may, in turn, have borrowed an earlier form of Hebrew *ḏəyō* “ink” from Egyptian *ry.t* (Rössler 1966: 227), as well as other terms of scribal and sealing practice, such as the precursors of Hebrew *ṭabbaʕat* (< *dbʕ.t*) and *ḥātôm* (< *ḥtm*), “seal” (Noonan 2019: 108-110).

#### *Loanwords in the New Kingdom*

In Egyptian New Kingdom texts, approximately 350 loanwords of presumed Semitic origin are attested (Hoch 1994; Sivan and Cochavi-Rainey 1992; Winand 2017; approximately 110 of those words are definitely of Semitic origin according to a reassessment by Schneider 2022), as well as at least 300 loanwords of likely non-Semitic provenance (Schneider 2004, 2022). The

notation of these words uses a specialized Egyptian transliteration system, the so-called “syllabic orthography” (after William F. Albright) or “group writing” (Hoch 1994: 498-502; for a recent assessment: Kilani 2019). As opposed to the older transliteration system that mainly used monoconsonant signs, most hieroglyphs employed in the new system are old biliteral signs that are now used for CV (i.e., consonant-vowel) sequences and, additionally, monosyllabic Egyptian words (such as *jw* “island”; *ʕ3* “great”) that could represent a foreign syllable (Hoch 1994: 498-502).

Winand (2017) has recently emphasized that, of the Semitic loans, two-thirds stem from texts of the elite culture (royal texts, autobiographies, wisdom texts, onomastica, religious texts) and just one-third from texts closer to the vernacular domain (letters and judicial, business, fiction, and lyric texts). Most of the Semitic borrowings have parallels in several branches of Northwest Semitic, some in individual Northwest Semitic languages only (e.g., Ugaritic or Aramaic). A small number were taken from East Semitic (Akkadian; e.g., *m-n-d3-tj*<sup>VESSEL</sup> = mandattu, “tribute” (Hoch no. 170); *m-s3-ḥ-j*<sup>VESSEL</sup> = mašḥu, mašihū, “large vessel” (Hoch nos. 198/199), or *n-k-p3-tj*<sup>PLANT</sup> = nikiptu, “an aromatic, gum-yielding plant” (Hoch no. 260). Some of these word transfers can be shown to have been complex, as in the case of the loan word *t3-ḥ-b(w)-s/s3-tj*<sup>BASKETRY</sup>. Ultimately a Hurrian term for “horse blanket,” also borrowed by Akkadian and Ugaritic, it underwent a semantic expansion in Egyptian: “Most likely, however, the word *thbs(t)* originally entered the Egyptian language as a term related to a covering for equids, perhaps as a term for—or at least encompassing the item—‘packsaddle’; if the Egyptians then substituted baskets for woolen bags attached to the horse (or other equid) covering called *thbs(t)*, then a term for a woolen object may have transformed into a term for basketry. Subsequently, the Egyptian lexicon employed *thbs(t)* to refer to any large basket, including transport containers slung over carrying poles rather than those loaded onto equids. This theory enables the word to keep its same



function—a covering of some sort—but would enable a change in material, from wool to basketry. The transformation of the term *thbs(t)* in ancient Egyptian, a word used in genres as diverse as administrative texts and works of literature, provides a single example of the complexities of language contact and the adoption of loan words” (Manassa 2012: 110; cf. Thomas Richter 2012: 425-426).

As to the non-Semitic languages, only a very small number of borrowings from Hurrian can be identified with certainty (Schneider 2004), impeded as we are by the still limited knowledge of the Hurrian vocabulary. This stands in striking contrast to the fact that the country name *Hurri* (Thomas Richter 2012: 171) was adopted in Egypt as a regular term for “Syria” in the New Kingdom (*h3-rw*; with the Egyptian article also as a frequent ethnonym: *p3 h3-rw* “the Syrian”) and that the most frequently attested loanwords in Late Egyptian might ultimately come from Hurrian: the title *kurzine* “charioteer” (*k3-d(3)-n*, also *k3-t(3)-n-3*; Hoch 1994: 341-345; *-ne* is likely the Hurrian “article”: Schneider 2008b: 194) and probably the adjective *tl* “valiant” (if < Hurrian *adal*: Schneider 1999), each with more than 125 attestations. A somewhat larger number of loanwords may be traced to Anatolian languages, although some may have reached Egyptian through intermediary languages. Examples include *p-d-j-r* “woven container” < Hittite *pattar*, cf. Lycian *πατάρα* “basket” (Schneider 2004: 16); *š3-k3-n-3* “watering place” < Hittite *šakuniya* “spring, pool” (correcting Breyer 2010a: 364-365); and *k3-r-s3* “sack” < Hittite *kurša* “(sack of) leather, skin” (Schneider 2004: 26-27; with ending *-n* also attested in Ugaritic and Akkadian).

In terms of semantic categories, the largest group of terms is that of military language (cf. the detailed analysis by Schneider 2008b, with the subcategories *technology of the chariot and its equipment* [30 terms], *military equipment, weaponry and infrastructure* [27 terms], *military titles and functions* [14 terms], *military behaviour and activities* [14 terms] and *violence, intimidation and flight* [26 terms]). Of these terms, only a very limited number are attested prior to the 18<sup>th</sup>

Dynasty (> 1550 BCE), ten percent are attested after the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and the majority in Ramesside times. In terms of the frequency of loanwords, *hapax legomena* account for more than forty percent of the attested lexemes, while words attested up to eight times account for ninety percent (Winand 2017). The number of attestations across different text-genres is at least partially a reflection of the genuine diffusion of these words, the 65 Semitic loanwords from New Kingdom texts that have survived into Coptic are in their majority ones frequently attested in the New Kingdom (Winand 2017). With regard to word classes, eighty-three percent of the attested Semitic loanwords are nouns, sixteen percent verbs, and just one percent other word-classes. One exceptional case from the last group is the Northwest Semitic interrogative particle *ē-da* “which” (*j-t3*; Hoch 1994: 43-44, written with the classifier of the speaking man), a term possibly used as a stylistic device to display erudition and give the text an exotic flavor (Winand 2017; perhaps also reflecting the idiolect of a scribe *Yns*, who may have been of Semitic provenance).

While contact with populations in North Africa and Northeast Africa to Egypt’s west, south, and southwest is amply attested, and language contact is thus obvious, only a limited number of loanwords from African languages can be easily identified in the evidence (see Cooper 2020b for an overview).

From among the Afroasiatic languages of Africa, borrowings from Proto-Berber are well attested from the New Kingdom onward—e.g., the term *h3-g3-j-w* in a spell to keep closed the mouth of predators (lions, jackals, or hyenas) from the Magical Papyrus Harris from the late thirteenth century BCE, clearly a rendering of a precursor of Tuareg *é-beggi*, *i-beggi*, “jackal” (Schneider 2004: 22). In turn, Old Beḡawiye (Blemmyan)—the precursor of modern-day Beja/Tu-beḡaue (North Cushitic)—shows an instance of borrowing from Egyptian: With the introduction of the horse to the south, the Egyptian word *htr* > *htj* “span of horses > horse” (> Coptic *ⲛⲧⲟ hto* “horse”) was

borrowed into (Proto-)Old Beḳawiye as *batāy* (pl. *hatay*) (Vycichl 1960: 260-261; Peust 1999a: 72, 255), a vocalization that may reveal a transfer of the term in the Egyptian New Kingdom.

The most famous presumable borrowing from an Afro-Asiatic language in Africa is the term for “dwarf, pygmy” (Old Kingdom *dng/dʒg/dʒng*, in New Kingdom syllabic orthography *d-n-r-g-ʒ*), which still defies identification (see also Cooper 2020a: 102-103). It is most often correlated with a Cushitic, Omotic, Ethio-Semitic, and Berber *Wandervort* for dwarf, *\*dink-* (Takács 1999: 277 with the older literature; Breyer 2012b; Takács 2013: 575-576; Breyer 2016: 246-250). This correlation presents the difficulty of the Egyptian emphatic onset /d/ (on which, however, there is no consensus: see the discussion in Satzinger 2015) and the consistent writing of a middle consonant /l/. By contrast, el-Sayed related it to Agaw *deren* “short” (el-Sayed 2011: 305-306; although Appleyard posits Proto-Agaw *\*dədəŋ/düdüŋ* with /r/ as a secondary development). Beyond Cushitic, there may be loanwords from further afar (maybe passed on through intermediary stages, alternatively as a *Wandervort*?), such as Demotic *tnbr*, Ptolemaic *dnbr*, “elephant” < Omotic *dongor* “elephant” (see Orel and Stolbova 1995: 652; East Chadic *dogol*: Zibeliuss-Chen 2011: 297; Takács 2013: 576; see the extensive study by Blažek 1994). The rediscovery of the Abu Ballas trail and also the Wadi Howar, place of the extinct Yellow Nile tributary (9500 – 4500 BCE), as east-west conduits from the Upper Egyptian Nile Valley and Northern Sudan, respectively, into the Chad basin may make interference with the Saharan subgroup of the Nilo-Saharan languages and the Chadic languages (among others) more likely (see Cooper 2017 for an example).

An interesting recent hypothesis relates to the possibility that the language of Punt was a Semitic language (Takács 2013: 573; Cooper 2020a: 98-104; differently Breyer 2016: 525-526). While traditional scholarship assumed that Ethio-Semitic was introduced to Northeast Africa from South Arabia (Kitchen,

Ehret, Assefa, and Mulligan 2009 argue for a single introduction around 800 BCE; for the hypothesis of an earlier transfer in the second millennium, see Marrassini 2011), the linguistic evidence could favor the fact that Ethiopia is actually the origin of the Semitic language phylum (Weninger 2011: 1115; similarly Hudson 2013: 38). This would mean that there may be loanwords in Egyptian from Ethio-Semitic rather than Semitic idioms in the Near East (for Middle Egyptian examples, see *Loanwords prior to the New Kingdom*, above).

Outside the Afro-Asiatic languages of Africa, other language families will have provided Egyptian with loans, in particular the Northern East Sudanic group of Nilo-Saharan languages, to which both Meroitic and Old Nubian (and related dialects) belong. For example, the initial element of the term *Kalasisiris* (most recently, Vittmann 2019: nn. 3622-7 with literature; first attested in Papyrus Lansing 2,3 as *kʒ-r-jʒ-šrj* “youngster” > Demotic *gšr* “soldier, warrior” [CDD G, 61-2], Coptic Ⲅⲗⲗⲁⲱⲓⲣⲉ “strong man, giant”) may derive from an earlier form of Old Nubian *ɾal* /ɾal/ “boy” (Schneider 2022). The (Proto-)Meroitic term for “king”, *qore* /qʷur/, is attested in Egyptian texts since the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (*k-ʒ-wʒ-rw/q-r*; Onomasticon of Amenemope, Gardiner 1947: no. 284, 285, 290); in the later historical inscription of Psammetichus II about his military campaign to the Sudan, it is used as the designation of the ruler of Napata (Zibeliuss-Chen 2011: 236-238). In turn, a number of Egyptian loanwords in Old Nubian show a Paleo-Coptic vocalization, such as *ɾab* /ɾab/ “gold” (> Nobiin *náb*) < Egyptian *\*nābə* (but > Coptic ⲢⲜⲮⲃ *nūβ*) or *orpi* /orpi/ “wine” < Egyptian *\*jūrəp* (but > Coptic ⲬⲢⲓ ⲉⲣⲓ) (Peust 1999a: 226; Breyer 2014: 199). This indicates that these words must have been borrowed into a local form of Nubian during the New Kingdom, at the latest, and thus preserved the archaic vocalization pattern (alternatively, they may reflect more recent borrowings from a dialect characterized by an archaizing vocalization or a transfer via early Meroitic or Napatan Egyptian). The same possibilities of transfer apply to divine names in Meroitic—such as Meroitic /ara/ “Horus” (< Egyptian



\*hārə < \*hāruw, but > Coptic ḥōr) or Meroitic /usa/ “Isis” (< Egyptian \*zūsə, but > Coptic ēsə) (Peust 1999a: 226; Breyer 2014: 125-126; Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 119, 124).

There can be no doubt that many other donor languages are the source of borrowings in the second millennium; however, our deficient evidence for the linguistic situation in the second millennium in areas such as the Mediterranean basin prevents us from grasping such transfer more fully. An example worth noting is a probable loanword from Mycenaean Greek in Late Egyptian: *j-r-rw-ḏz-w*<sup>UG</sup> “a vessel or cup at a banquet” = Mycenaean Greek *a-re-so/\*aleiso-* (> Greek ἄλεισον) “drinking vessel with two handles” (Schneider 2004: 17). A complex exchange-situation may be reflected in an Egyptian term for “trumpet,” attested between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> dynasties, *šz-n-b-j*<sup>INGOT</sup> (= /šanbi, šalbi/), which is likely related to the Greek term for “(war) trumpet” of pre-Greek origin, σάλπιγξ (for the Greek term: Beekes 2010: 1304; 2014: 136), whereas the term may ultimately derive from Akkadian *šulpu* “reed; flute”, Ugaritic *tlb* “flute” and Egyptian *šnb* = “reed” (Hoch 1994, no. 403).

#### *Loanwords between the New Kingdom and the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods*

In the first millennium before the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, lexical transfer into and from Egyptian is well attested, although the number of attested borrowings is generally limited. While hundreds of Egyptian etymologies have been proposed for Hebrew terms, only about 20 terms are undisputed: of commodities (such as *natar* “natron” < *ntrj* (*ntrj*) [Breyer 2019: 145-146; Noonan 2019: 156-157] or *qasat* “scribal equipment” < *gs.tj* [Breyer 2019: 162-163; Noonan 2019: 194]); units of measurement (e.g., the unit of volume *hīn* < *hn.w* [Breyer 2019: 127-128; Noonan 2019: 95]); plants (*ššān* “lotus” < *ššn*, later *ššn* [Breyer 2019: 167-169; Noonan 2019: 207-208]); elements of Egypt’s riverine environment (such as *y’ōr* “Nile” < *jtr.w*, Demotic *yṛ*, *yṛr* [Breyer 2019: 137-139; Noonan 2019: 112], *šj* “ship” < *ḏsy*, Demotic *dy* [Breyer 2019: 160; Noonan 2019: 189]);

and religious terms (like *ḥartōm* “magician, diviner” < (*hr.j-ḥb.t*)-*hr.j-tp* [cf. Breyer 2019: 130-132; Noonan 2019: 102-103]). In turn, Joachim Quack has pointed to potential loans from Hebrew into Egyptian from before the Persian Period that are not yet attested in pre-Coptic stages of the language, such as *ehyēn* “miserable, poor” < *ʾəbyōn*, or *lhōv* “smoke” < *labab* “flame” (Quack 2005). It is possible that some of these borrowings might be due to interference of Egyptian with Phoenician (rather than Hebrew); Phoenicians were certainly present in Egypt (Vittmann 2003: 44-83).

A semantic situation similar to that of Egyptian loans into Hebrew applies to Egyptian loans into Egyptian Aramaic (Muraoka and Porten 1997: 352-353; Folmer 2011: 595), the administrative language of Egypt under Persian rule. Less than 50 loanwords are attested; they comprise terms for (parts of) ships, terms for buildings and building materials, and religious terms (documented on funerary stelae), with the remaining terms comprising commodities, legal/economic expressions and titles, and designations of flora. Some terms such as the religious expression *nmṣty* = Egyptian *nz mṣṣ.ty* are attested only once and can be examples of code-switching. Aramaic loanwords in Egyptian before the Persian Period can only rarely be ascertained (e.g., *kelōl* “vessel”; *mankʿale* “hoe”; Quack 2005).

There are few Akkadian loanwords in Egyptian that may date to the Neo-Assyrian Period (such as *matekete* “army” < Akkadian *madaqtu* “army camp”: Quack 2005: 314). It is likely that language contact existed between Egyptian and both Ancient North Arabian and Old South Arabian dialects (for the rich attestation in Egypt of the first millennium BCE of people originating from Arabia, see Vittmann 2003: 180-193; Winnicki 2009: 294-362), although the most visible testimony for this is only the Minaean inscription on the merchant Zayd’il’s coffin, from Ptolemaic times (Quack 1993; Swiggers 1995; Robin 2015: 117).

Despite the two Persian periods of overlordship in Egypt (Vittmann 2003: 120-

154), Persian terms in ancient Egyptian documents are rare (see overview in Knigge 2004: 41-51). From the 14 attested words (five additional loans are attested in Demotic and Coptic, see Schweitzer 2005: 287), only a few occur before the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods (Vittmann 2004: 168): *wsjpwtr* = *vis(a)puθra* “king’s son” (Vittmann 2004: 131); *Mdj* = *māda*, “Mede, soldier” (Vittmann 2004: 141-143); the volume unit *kpḏ* (possibly a *Wandervort*: Vittmann 2004: 136-137); the title *qppš* (Vittmann 2004: 131-132); and additionally *wrt* “rose” (Knigge 2004: 47). The term *šbjkrm* “penalty” demonstrates the role that Aramaic played in linguistic transfer—attested in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, it seems a new adoption into Egyptian of Aramaic *b(y)grn*, the rendering of Old Persian *\*abigarana-*, ultimately harking back to the Persian codification of Egyptian law under Darius I (Vittmann 2004: 135-136; Knigge 2004: 47). A Median (rather than Old Persian) title, *\*vastra-bara* “chamberlain” (> Babylonian *ustbaru*), is attested in the early Demotic transcription *nšṭbr* (C. Martin 2019: 181 with n. 34).

Texts of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods also show definitive evidence for Egyptian-Proto-Berber language contact (Múrcia Sánchez 2010, I: 65-66; Breyer 2014: 200-201). The clearest example is (*tš-*)*mrt* “chin; beard,” Demotic *mrt*, Coptic ⲪⲙⲠⲤ, ⲢⲙⲁⲗⲤ < Berber (*ta-*)*mart* “beard.” The preserved ending *-t* in the Egyptian forms shows that this must be a late loan (Vycichl 1983: 120; Peust 1999a: 131; Takács 2008: 447-449; Knigge 2004: 55). The words for “date” and “date palm,” in turn, have been proposed to be Proto-Berber loans from Egyptian, pointing to the introduction of date-palm cultivation from Egypt: Berber *tjyni* (Ghadames: *aḫēna*, pl. *ḫēnawen*: Haddadou 2006 – 2007: 222; Lanfry 1973: 14) “date” < Egyptian *bny(.t)*, Coptic ⲪⲚⲏⲎⲈ (Vycichl 1983; Kossmann 2002).

There are a significant number of Egyptian loanwords in Greek, some of which likely derive from pre-Hellenistic times (for an overview, see Fournet 1989; cf. also Schenkel 2006).

### Calques

Calques (an important form of *structural borrowing*, Haspelmath 2009: 39) denote literal translations of specific phrases from a host language to a recipient language. I thus exclude cases where entire texts were translated (such as the Egyptian version of the Hittite-Egyptian peace treaty, which also includes a rendering of the Hittite witness deities; Singer 2013; Mouton and van den Hoven 2015). Also a sentence such as *jw-tw ḥr rdj.t n-s tšy-s jsb.t jw-s ḥr ḥms* = “her throne was brought to her and she sat down” in the Astarte Papyrus is an entire sentence translated from a Ugaritic original, *ḫdb ksū wyttb* (Gaster 1952), not an independently used translation of a phrase. Some examples of calques follow:

1) Northwest Semitic to Late Egyptian: An early example of a calque is *nb.t kbn* = *ḫ.t gbl*, “Lady of Byblos” (Zernecke 2013: 227-230). This author proposed the Ugaritic text KTU 1.12 as a source for the second part of the *Tale of the Two Brothers* (Papyrus BM 10183), with a possible calque in the expression *ḫšwtj nfr*, “(most) perfect fighter” < Ugaritic *aliy qrdm* “the superior of fighters” (Schneider 2008a). Another example of Ugaritic/Egyptian loan translation occurs in magical Papyrus Leiden 345+348 (Beck 2018: 41, 46), for the Ugaritic divine pair Šaḥar “Dawn (morning star)” and Šalim, literally “the healthy, intact one” (Dusk; evening star; cf. del Olmo-Lete and Sanmartín 2015: 809). The first divine name in the pair was rendered as *pš ntr dwš*, “the god (of) Dawn,” while the second is lexically explicated as *wdš snb*, “the intact and healthy one” (Quack 2019: 81-82).

2) Old Persian to Early Demotic: In Papyrus BM EA 76274, Old Persian *\*haxāya-šai*, “his colleagues,” is rendered by Demotic *nšy-f jry.w*, referring to the Persian governance practice whereby government officials had companions who assisted them in their decision-making (C. Martin 2019: 182). Compare also the rendering of “Persepolis” by Egyptian *prs-nw.t* “*Pārsa-(the)-city*” on Darius I’s Suez Canal stele from Tell el-Maskhuta (Klotz 2015: 272).

3) Carian and Egyptian: From the Carians attested in Egypt since the early 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (around 650 BCE), bilingual—or better, “digraphic”—stelae from Saqqara with Carian script and Egyptian iconography are preserved (see Adiego 2007; Popko 2008: 103-108). Lexical interference is likely; however, in only one inscription (E.Me.8; Adiego 2007: 40-41, 355) do we find an interesting equivalence of a title—of Carian *armon-ki* (with suffixed Carian article *-ki*) and Egyptian *pꜣ whm* “the interpreter, dragoman” (Yakubovich 2012: 133; accepted by Simon 2019; Herda 2013: 469-470; differently explained by Janko 2014 [both terms < Akkadian *targumānu*]).

4) Akkadian to Napatian Egyptian: On the Nastasen stela (327 BCE), we find an apparent Akkadianism in Napatian. The phrase *nsw n pꜣ 4 qꜥh* “king of the 4 corners = the world” is a calque from Akkadian *šar kiḫrāti erbeti* “king of the four corners.”

5) A partial graphemic and phonological calque between Proto-Meroitic and Egyptian can be posited for the interplay between the proper name of King Shabaqo and the Kushite king’s Horus, Nebti, and Gold name, *sbꜣq-tꜣwj*. While the meaning of the two names is different—*Šꜣ-bꜣ-kꜣ* is probably to be understood as *šb-qa* “the noble prince” (Zibelius-Chen 2011: 217)—*sbꜣq-tꜣwj* “the one who brightens the two lands” would have echoed the writing and sound of the proper name.

#### *Non-Egyptian Texts in Egyptian Script*

The Egyptian evidence comprises a rather small number of non-Egyptian text passages rendered in hieratic and, rarely, hieroglyphic script (Helck 1971: 528-530; Quack 2010b; Allon 2010) and, in the first millennium BCE, also in the Demotic script. They appear to represent different language families and are likely indicative of a larger, mostly undocumented phenomenon.

1) Semitic texts are preserved in several of the seven un-Egyptian incantations in the London Medical Papyrus (P. BM EA 10059; Steiner 1992), in the Magical Papyrus Harris (P. BM EA 10042; Schneider 1989), and on Ostrakon CG 25759 from Deir el-Medina

(Shisha-Halevy 1978). It has been suggested that a series of “serpent spells” in the Pyramid Texts (spells 232-238, 281-282, 286-287) are in fact Egyptian transcriptions of Northwest Semitic incantations, made accessible to Egyptian through Byblos (Steiner 2001, 2011; but see Breyer 2012).

2) One spell of the London Medical Papyrus (P. BM EA 10059; Leitz 1999: 61-63 and pl. 32) is explicitly labeled as an “incantation of the disease of the Asiatics in the language of Crete” (Haider 2004; Redford 2005 – 2006; Lange 2007). The language of the Minoan civilization on Crete, written in Linear A, is unidentified (perhaps Luwian: Mouton, Rutherford, and Yakubovich eds. 2013: 5-6).

3) An unpublished papyrus in the Egyptian Museum in Torino (CGT 54030; Cat. 2106/380) may contain a “Libyan” text, characterized by Ernesto Schiaparelli as “war hymns of the Qeheq tribe” (Bates 1914: 76, n. 2; studies on this text are in preparation by Lutz Popko and Jason P. Silvestri; kind communication of Susanne Töpfer, Torino).

4) The “supplementary chapters” (chapters 162-167) of the *Book of the Dead*, attested since the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, contain foreign passages and names (Zibelius-Chen 2005; Wüthrich 2009, 2010, 2015). Chapter 164 claims that the language is that of the *nḥsj.w jwn.tjw n.w tꜣ-stj*, “Nubians and Nomads of ‘Nubian Land’ [the 1<sup>st</sup> Upper Egyptian nome]” (Quack 2018: 481; Zibelius-Chen 2011: 201); chapter 163 mentions Napata as the location of the deity. It is not currently possible to determine the language(s) and the meaning of these phrases (according to Wüthrich, a kind of “abracadabra” merely feigning Nubian). Similar foreign terms are also used in the isolated *Book of the Dead* spells of Papyrus Berlin 3031 (e.g., Zibelius-Chen 2011: 77-78).

5) A late 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty papyrus in the British Museum (P. BM EA 75025 *recto*) contains a probably magical spell in a foreign language written down by a scribe on expedition in Nubia (Demarée, Leach, and Usick 2006: 27-28 with pl. 27; Zibelius-Chen 2011: 260). Due to the locale and the fact that “so far, no

certain connection with any Semitic language has been established” (Demarée, Leach, and Usick 2006: 27), it was presumed that the spell could be in a contemporaneous language of Nubia. Rilly has posited this to be (Proto-)Old Bedawiye (Rilly 2014: 1171; cf. 2019: 132), which, however, is far from certain (Schneider 2022).

6) In the texts of the Min festival at the Ramesseum and Medinet Habu, a caption above the depiction of a (priest impersonating a) Puntite reads “The spells of recitation: What the African (*nhsj*) from Punt says.” Within the otherwise Egyptian text, an obviously foreign sequence *b-3-wn-t-nw-y-3-wn-t-nw-y* (Gauthier 1931: 220-221; Epigraphic Survey: *Medinet Habu IV*: pl. 203, l. 20f., 28f.; pl. 213, l. 46-48) is included. If the recent hypothesis to see in Puntite an Ethio-Semitic language is correct, this may allow us to interpret this sequence (Schneider 2022).

7) Starting in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE (e.g., spell from the Wadi Hammamat: Vittmann 1984; Steiner 2001), numerous Aramaic texts are preserved in Demotic script, most famously Papyrus Amherst 63 from probably the fourth century BCE (Steiner 1997; Vittmann 2003: 84-119; Russell 2009: 44-45; Quack 2010a: 83-85; van der Toorn 2018).

### *Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Interpreting, Translation*

Information on the extent of bilingualism and multilingualism can be inferred from different types of evidence. From the third through the first millennia BCE, non-Egyptian speakers are attested on all socio-economic levels and foreign linguistic communities are equally well documented; thus, bilingualism and multilingualism must have been frequent phenomena (cf. Schneider 2020; for a case study of foreign language use in the military and contexts of state coercion, see Schneider 2022; for the scribes at Amarna, see discussion below). Proficiency in the Semitic languages of the Levant seems to have been a prerequisite for higher military posts in the New Kingdom (Schneider 2008b); in turn, Egyptian may have had the status of a *lingua*

*franca* in the Levant of the New Kingdom (Helck 1971: 436).

Interpreters of foreign languages are attested from the Old Kingdom onward, e.g., in the title (*mr*) *j3'w* “(Overseer of) Egyptianized Nubians/Nubian interpreters” (Bell 1976; for the epithet “who resolves the language of any foreign country” of a Nubian military officer at Gebelein in the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, see Morenz 2010: 530). Depictions of sea-going ships from the funerary temple of Sahura and the causeway of Unas depict translators that accompanied the Levantine and Egyptian crew (Bietak 1988; Ćwiek 2003: 254-255). A famous depiction of interpreting can also be found on reliefs from the Saqqara tomb of the later king Horemheb (G. Martin 1989). Under Merenptah, the high priest and former army-scribe of the chariotry Onurisemes states in his funerary biography: “I spoke in the [appropriate] foreign language for any foreign language in attendance before my lord” (Meyrat 2016: 332; Starke 1993: 38 n. 63). Interpreters proficient in Egyptian are also mentioned for foreign states (e.g., for Babylonia, in Amarna letter EA11; for Cyprus, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty *Tale of Wenamun*); an Egyptian interpreter Ramose served for 13 years in Hittite diplomatic service (Starke 1993: 37). Still, interpreters and translators are rarely mentioned explicitly in our texts, which suggests a case of *implicit communication*, similar to that of Mesopotamia (von Soden 1989; Starke 1993: 37-38; Tarawneh 2011), a token of the ubiquitous use of language specialists and also the presence of bilingualism. Royal envoys abroad (for a list of Egyptian envoys in Cuneiform sources, see Helck 1971: 437-442) were accompanied by interpreters, and specialized interpretation can be assumed for the Egyptian physicians at the Hittite court and other occasions of cultural and technological exchange (Breyer 2010a: 247-307), such as the Hittite specialists working in Piramesse (Herold 1998).

The full translation of entire texts into Egyptian is best known from the Egyptian version of the Hittite-Egyptian peace treaty between Hattusili III and Ramesses II, from 1269 BCE (the 21<sup>st</sup> regnal year of Ramesses



II). The translation used the text on the silver tablet brought to Egypt and was engraved on the walls of the Karnak Temple and the Ramesseum; it has been the focus of extensive scholarship (Edel 1997; Allam 2011; Davies 2018: 25-43). Near Eastern mythological texts were often adapted for Egyptian purposes rather than outright translated; examples are the *Myth of the Weather God's Battle with the Sea* (traditionally known as the “Astarte Papyrus”), for which the closest parallel is the Hurrian-Hittite text KBo XXVI 105 (Collombert and Coulon 2000; Schneider 2003b, 2011 – 2012; Pehal 2014). An Ugaritic text may have been the source of the second part of the *Tale of the Two Brothers* (Papyrus BM 10183), if it was indeed modeled on the plot of the Ugaritic myth and water ritual about Baal and his elder brother (KTU 1.12; see Schneider 2008a). These two texts are examples of a much richer tradition of Near Eastern religious texts adopted into Egyptian (e.g., Silverman and Houser Wegner 2007), of which only small portions are preserved.

#### *Language Education and Re-education*

There is significant evidence from the Amarna and Ramesside Periods for the training of specialists in languages of the Near East, particularly the diplomatic *lingua franca*, Akkadian. It appears that scribes in charge of international correspondence in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty were proficient in both Egyptian and Akkadian (Mynářová 2007: 43-44; 2014); initially, they may have been trained in the tradition of Babylonian Akkadian, which during the Amarna Period may have been replaced by a curriculum informed by a Hittite milieu (Mynářová 2015: 98-99). The epistolary traditions visible at Amarna and in the Ramesside correspondence are again different (Mynářová 2009: 116-117), pointing to continuous adaptation of literary education. The Amarna tablets comprised a “scholarly library,” with an Egyptian-Akkadian bilingual lexical list (EA 368) and literary texts of Mesopotamia (Izre'el 1997); texts of this kind were also part of the scribal training in cuneiform attested in Canaan (Cohen 2019: 247-251). Except for the correspondence

from Amarna and from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, the official correspondence of the Egyptian Bronze Age with the Near East is lost; however, a fragment of a letter from the end of the Old Babylonian Period sent to the Hyksos residence at Avaris (Mynářová 2015: 90) refers to a diplomatic exchange (for example, regarding the Kurustama treaty; Breyer 2010b), and the overall historical probability indicates that versatility in Akkadian-cuneiform diplomacy must be posited for this entire period. Both the development of the system of New Kingdom syllabic orthography or group-writing (Hoch 1994: 498-502; now Kilani 2019) and the discovery of an ostrakon of the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty containing one or two Semitic alphabet sequences (Haring 2015; Schneider 2018) point to a much more comprehensive ancient knowledge of and engagement with writing systems from the Near East than is currently attested.

It may be added here that there is evidence of the use of Egyptian language and writing abroad. At Egypt's trade emporium, Byblos, on the Lebanese coast, the local rulers adopted the hieroglyphic script for their official stelae and reliefs, where their names appear in Egyptian transcription. We also see Egyptian hieratic writing used at Byblos (the pseudo-hieroglyphic stela “L”), although “it is . . . not clear whether this is an Egyptian hieratic tradition, a local Byblian adaptation of Egyptian forms, or a reflection of less than total competence with the language and standard Egyptian usage” (Hoch 1994: 65). Egyptian inscriptions also appear as legends on some seals from the Middle Bronze Age Levant (Eder 1995: 51-57). The influence of Egyptian language and writing in the Sudan of the first millennium BCE is visible in the case of Napatan Egyptian and the two (monumental-hieroglyphic and cursive) script systems of Meroitic, the language of the kingdom of Meroe (third century BCE to fourth century CE), both derived from the Egyptian writing system (Rilly 2007: 71-229).

Conversely, in the case of prisoners of war, we also learn about state efforts to suppress the continued use of communication in



languages other than Egyptian. On a stela from chapel C at Deir el-Medina (KRI V 90-1; Zinn 1998: 80-81), the captive Libyans (Libu and Meshwesh) are said to have been placed “into strongholds of the victorious king, that they might hear the speech of the (Egyptian) people while serving the king. He makes their speech disappear; he overturns their tongues” (and see Sagrillo 2009: 344, who speaks about “military re-education centers”). The Libyan language is here flagged as a domain of identity and resistance that needs to be erased; thus, language conflict and conflict linguistics are an inherent topic of language contact and contact linguistics (Schneider-Mizony 2014: 83).

#### *Interlanguages, Mixed Languages, Pidgins*

Mixed languages (such as bilingual mixed languages or potentially, pidgin languages) are likely to have existed in Egypt’s large urban hubs, port cities, and garrison cities (for a useful discussion of the question of “mixed languages” in antiquity, see Mullen 2013 and Andrason and Vita 2016; for pidgins, Ansaldo and Meyerhoff eds. 2021). Torallas Tovar posited the existence of a pidgin language for the merchants of the Greek trade-emporium of Naukratis in sixth-century BCE Egypt (Torallas Tovar 2010: 255). On the basis of our knowledge of the hybrid populations of cities such as Avaris or Pi-Ramesse, which spoke vernaculars of Egyptian and Semitic (alongside other languages), we can not only presume that bi- and multilingualism existed there but quite possibly also a form of (bilingual) mixed language or pidgin (for a more detailed assessment, see Schneider 2022).

The existence of an interlanguage and a creole language, respectively, has been proposed for two cases of language use more peripheral to the Egyptian evidence:

1) “Akkadian from Egypt”: Matthias Müller defined the variety of the Akkadian language used by the Egyptian scribes of Amarna and the early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as an interlanguage (Müller 2010, 2015, 2021; also Mynářová 2007), displaying a number of linguistic

peculiarities, outlined below, that could be explained by interference from Egyptian.

- Graphemic—i.e., a tendency to use fewer cuneiform signs than in Mesopotamian texts and to mark the plural by the plural marker MEŠ after the noun, as in Egyptian.

- Phonological—e.g., no discrimination in the rendering of stops (<TA> for /ta/, /da/, and / ʔa/), as well as some other features.

- Morphological—i.e., the occasional disregard for case endings, the absence of causative and passive, as well as a number of features that seem to replicate Egyptian linguistic laws: the use of the particle *ana* to introduce a dative pronoun and the avoidance of direct suffigation of a pronoun to the stative; an indirect expression of possession after indefinite nouns; and the use of adverbs to grade adjectives and to express excessiveness by iteration.

- Syntactic—peculiarities of word order (at times, demonstrative pronouns before nouns) and particularly the replication of Egyptian sentence patterns: e.g., the future tense makes use of the preposition *ana* “to,” followed by an infinitive, as in the Egyptian Future III; the verb is placed in initial position as it is in Late Egyptian past and prospective sentences; the stative forms are used with verbs of motion in the past. Interference may also be detected in several types of nominal and adverbial sentences; in the use of predicative adjectives in initial positions; and in the Amarna Letters, in the use of relative clauses without the particle *ša*. Egyptian Akkadian also shows new syntactic developments, such as *subject-verb-object* as the unmarked word order, and idiomatic borrowings from Egyptian (“to give the face to” in the sense of “to give attention to something”).

2) Napatan Egyptian: a variety of the ancient Egyptian script and language attested in the Sudan, primarily in two royal inscriptions from the late fifth to the late fourth centuries BCE (stelae of Harsiyotef and Nastasen from the Kushite capital of Napata). Napatan Egyptian has received very different linguistic assessments. In his 1999 monographic study, Peust described Napatan as an ancient Sudanese dialect of Egyptian, based on Demotic: “The peculiarity of

Napatan arises less from direct linguistic transfer from contact languages but rather a reorganization and refunctionalizing of the existing Egyptian language material” (Peust 1999b: 73, 83). Quack sees the language as a “non-standard use” of the contemporaneous Demotic language on the basis of a substrate language (Quack 2002: 394), used at the periphery of the Egyptian zone of influence and thus comparable to the “peripheral Akkadian” attested in the Levant (Quack: 393-394; thus, an interlanguage). In turn, Francis Breyer’s view of Napatan as a creole language with a Meroitic substrate (Breyer 2008: 326) is hardly acceptable; key elements of a creole are not precisely visible in Napatan: While the higher norm (Egyptian) superstrate dominates the lexicon (= lexifier language), a far-reaching reorganization and simplification of the grammar caused by the lower norm (local) substrate language does not exist. Only three characteristics, outlined below, have been proposed in the literature as being owed to a substrate language.

- Phonological—i.e., the conflation of the sibilants /š/ and /s/ before palatal vowels, as in Meroitic and Nubian (Peust 1999b: 228). Also, the existence of a palatal nasal /ɲ/ (written ⟨nn⟩) and a labiovelar /kʷ/ may have been induced by a substrate (Breyer 2014: 184).

- The most distinctive feature of Napatan grammar is the loss of gender distinction for inanimate nouns. Animate nouns preserved a grammaticalized natural gender although, also in the latter case, attributes no longer showed gender agreement (e.g., *p3j-mw.t nfr*). This is likely another indicator of Meroitic as a substrate language where the category “gender” did not exist (Breyer 2014: 184-185).

- A distinctive feature of Napatan by comparison to Egyptian is a reorganization of the pronominal system used in verbal clauses (subject and object pronouns), whereas other areas comply with later Egyptian (Peust 1999b: 255-266). Quack (2002: 395 with n. 17) lists this feature as the most visible proof of non-Egyptian linguistic interference; Breyer points cursorily to the “agglutinative character of Meroitic” (2008: 326).

### *Language Convergence through a Sprachbund Situation*

It is *a priori* likely that the linguistic development of Egyptian also provides examples of linguistic features induced through areal proximity with other languages or even more far-reaching shared linguistic patterns owed to a *sprachbund* situation (for areal linguistics, see Matras, McMahon, and Vincent 2006; Muysken ed. 2008). Despite the fact that ancient Egyptian was embedded for millennia within other languages, particularly Afro-Asiatic languages and to its south, also Nilo-Saharan languages, linguistic convergence as a result of language contact—distinct from genetically shared features and also extending beyond cognate languages has never been studied in full depth. Of mention are three cases where some debate has occurred:

- 1) Scholars such as Helmut Satzinger and Carsten Peust have discussed dozens of typological similarities between Egyptian and other African languages (as opposed to Egyptian’s genetic relation with Semitic languages) and would point to “Egyptian as an African language” (Satzinger 2000; Peust 2004). These features include morphosyntactical characteristics comprising, for example: the existence of morphologically distinct “second tenses” to express theme / rheme (Peust 2004: 382-390); similarities in nonverbal predicates (Peust 2004: 359-365) and relative forms (Peust 2004: 372-376); the fact that the main clause (rather than the subordinate clause) is marked (Peust 2004: 333-336); the use of an imperative followed by subordinate verb forms to express a sequence of imperatives (Peust 2004: 338-340); the observation that interrogative pronouns cannot be used in a relative function (Peust 2004: 326-330); and the use of certain verbal constructions for subordinate clauses (such as nominal forms as subordinate verbal forms [Peust 2004: 365-367]; the use of the verb “to give” for periphrastic causatives [Peust 2004: 330-331]; the expression of “before” by means of subordinate temporal clauses signifying “when not, until not, while not yet” [Peust 2004: 324-326]; and the use of

auxiliary verbs instead of adverbs [Peust 2004: 336-337]).

The features also comprise many lexical and phraseological similarities such as, for example: the Egyptian particle of address  $m=k/t/tn$  (Peust 2004: 323-324); the lexical differentiation between “concrete thing” and “abstract thing” (Peust 2004: 326; Eg. *jh.t* vs. *md.t*); semantic and morphological parallels involving verbs of motion (e.g., “going to a person” expressed as “going to a person’s place”) (Peust 2004: 331-333); “to exit” and “to go up” expressed by the same verb; “to enter” and “to go down” expressed by two different verbs (Peust 2004: 337-338); suppletive imperative forms for the verb “to come” (Peust 2004: 341-343); the fact that negative pronouns and adverbs are expressed by the simple negation of the pronouns and adverbs (Peust 2004: 358); specifics regarding interrogative pronouns (no particle “when”) (Peust 2004: 390-391); the use of “who is your name” for “what is your name”; the prominence of body parts in certain expressions (“head” for “self”) (Peust 2004: 346-347); use of body parts for persons and as adpositions (Peust 2004: 347-350); the distinction between inalienable and alienable possession (Peust 2004: 340); as well as many lexical and phraseological parallels (e.g., identical terms in Egyptian and select African languages for: “mouth” / “door”; “mouth” / “language”; “sun” / “day”; “skin” / “color”; “tight” / “strength”; “to put down” / “to last”; “to hold” / “to begin” [Peust 2004: 350-353]); “to say” used as an auxiliary (Peust 2004: 376-378) and for “that” (Peust 2004: 378-379); and pluralia tantum (Peust 2004: 368-369).

It may also be mentioned here that Gábor Takács, on the assumption of a particular degree of lexical parallels shared between ancient Egyptian and Hausa (which he regards as an Afro-Asiatic language) and an additional postulate of cognates of Egyptian lexemes in non-Afroasiatic African languages, speculates on the homeland where areal interference could have taken place (Takács 1999: 38-48; in the opinion of this author, the evidence cannot carry the burden of proof).

2) Indo-European languages were adduced since the 1970s for presumed lexical and typological parallels. In the context of the debates about the expansion of Proto-Indo-European from the Near East, Frank Kammerzell has posited an influence of Proto-Indo-European on early Egyptian that could have occurred in a number of tentative scenarios (Kammerzell 1999: 261-262; 2005: 224-229; critical assessment by Zeidler 2004). He contrasts an Afroasiatic “Proto-Egyptian” in fourth-millennium Lower Egypt with a “Pre-Old Egyptian” displayed by the oldest hieroglyphic documents—a contact language that he posits came about through a language related to Indo-European. Ultimately, Pre-Old Egyptian and its speakers would have been absorbed into Proto-Egyptian, which then developed into Old Egyptian. Some of the proposed lexical isoglosses (Kammerzell 1999: 250-254; Peust 2001: 352-353; 2003: 347; Kammerzell 2005: 210-223; Peust 2008: 395) are striking and were adduced in support of the hypothesis of an Indo-European adstrate in early Egyptian (Müller 2020: 110). However, both the prehistorical situation and the fact that Afro-Asiatic alternatives are available for most of the proposed terms make this hypothesis rather unlikely (see in detail Schneider 2022).

3) An assessment of a *sprachbund* situation between Egyptian and Semitic languages (including Ethio-Semitic languages on the assumption that their historical home was Ethiopia) has never been conducted, although various hypotheses have been advanced, particularly regarding the position of Egyptian within Afroasiatic and its precise relationship to the Semitic languages (see Almansa-Villatoro and Štubňová 2022).

Recently, Alexander Borg posited a “close symbiotic relationship between Ancient Egyptian and a preclassical Old Arabic phenotype,” which would have yielded the modern Arabic vernaculars (Borg 2021: 4-5); shared linguistic and lexical features would be the “evolutionary outcome of ecological convergence between these two ancient Afroasiatic idioms, plausibly transpiring during the second millennium BC” (Borg

2021: 5). Unfortunately, the study does not account for the recent debates on Egyptian historical phonology and also disregards any lexical assessments of the discussed terms. A

comprehensive and interdisciplinary assessment of Egyptian/Semitic areal relations remains a desideratum of future research.

## Bibliographic Notes

For language contact in general, see Grant (2020), Hickey ed. (2010, 2020), and Adamou and Matras (2020). For language contact in Egypt, consult Schneider (2022). For loanwords, see Haspelmath and Tadmor eds. (2009). For Semitic loanwords of the New Kingdom, Hoch (1994) remains the basic treatment. The “African” lexical material attested in Egyptian sources from the third to the first millennia is gathered in el-Sayed (2011) and Zibelius-Chen (2011). The etymological dictionaries by Černý (1976), Vycichl (1983), and Takács (1999, 2003, 2008) comprise many relevant etymologies. Major online databases relating to loanwords are currently being established by Haleli Harel (*Classifying the Other: The Classification of Semitic Loanwords in the Egyptian Script*: <https://www.archaeomind.net/>) and Marwan Kilani (HathorBank database of loanwords: <https://hathorbank.herokuapp.com/HathorBank/>).

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