

## NOTE E DISCUSSIONI

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### *Minor Issues in Egyptian Language and Culture\**

1. The papyrus Gardiner 4 (= Ashmolean 1958–112; C.J. Eyre, «SÄK» 11, 1984, pp. 195–207 = Kitchen, *RI* 7, pp. 339–340) is an interesting document which gives a glimpse in the life of the Royal Tomb builders during the reign of Ramesses IV. The translation offered by C.J. Eyre needs only a minor improvement, which is, however, not without some consequences. The sender, the painter Horimin, and his father Hori, the Scribe of the Royal Tomb, are well known. The first points out the absolute necessity of enrolling another painter to speed up the decoration of the Tomb: he is alone in his difficult task as his brother (and we know that Horimin had at least two brothers who were painters) is ill. So, with an admirable sense of duty, he declares that he is ready to share his fee with his new colleague. For such an undertaking – he says – it is necessary to double the number of workers, and adds: *hr wn jw-j dd.tw-f <n> p3 hm-ntr tpy*, and goes on saying ‘but the (administrative) “captains” (*hntyw*) said to me: “We shall bring him up (to the Valley): this is absolutely not a competence of the Prophet!”’. Horimin was surely a resolute man, but he *did not* speak with the High Prophet of Amon, whose intervention was always possible but, as a matter of fact, rather uncorrect from an administrative point of view. The verbal form *wn jw-j dd.tw-f* does not mean ‘when I spoke’, as Eyre suggests, but ‘I would have spoken’, that is, Horimin had the intention, the will to speak with the powerful priest, but he had been stopped by the promise and by the worried consent of the captains<sup>1</sup>.

2. The ostr. Michaelides 15 r. is the report of a police operation.

‘List of the sailors and rowers who are in service of Amon in Thebes, under the responsibility of the royal scribe of the Lord of Two Lands, Amonemhat. List of all their regions where they (lit.: which he; *sic*) deserted since yesterday (*nty*

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\* For other notes, see *Aegyptus* 75, 1995, pp. 3–15.

<sup>1</sup> On the verbal form see P.J. Frandsen, *An Outline of the Late Egyptian Verbal System*, Copenhagen 1974, § 96 E.

*dr sf jw-f w(r)*'. The document as a rule registers name, patronymic, region of origin and where the fugitive had been caught. Obviously, it is not to be disrespectful to the Pharaonic police if one doubts that in a single day (and often within not so short distances) the fugitives could be found. *Sf* means here 'some time ago, in the recent past', as *dw3.t* 'tomorrow' can mean 'in a next future'<sup>2</sup>. This semantic trait is common in many languages.

3. The ostrakon DeM 692 has been recently translated by E.F. Wente<sup>3</sup> and by myself<sup>4</sup>; we substantially agree about the translation: 'The bad money crosses the sea and reverts to its owner: give back my loincloth'!

Strangely enough, Wente considers the quotation unclear: he does not recognize it as such, although it is clearly a proverb<sup>5</sup>, one of the not too many preserved in Egyptian documents<sup>6</sup>. By quoting the proverb, the witty sender of the letter meant: even bad money reverts to the man who first gave it away, so give me back *my* loincloth.

Proverbs and idioms are found in private letters<sup>7</sup>, like ostr. Leipzig 12 (KRI 3, 540)<sup>8</sup> 'What is the meaning of your having become toward me like the *3byt*-bird' among the birds?' and ostr. Mond 173 (KRI 7, 338), a letter with an obscure idiom related to the sexual behaviour of animals. Ostr. Glasgow D.1925.87 = Colin Campbell 21<sup>10</sup> is a letter of complaint about the malice of a woman toward the sender, who had been abused – it seems – in presence of his companions: 'Why the delivering<sup>11</sup> of this straw to me? Did I acquire [...] while I had no magazine?'. These sentences are taken literally and consequently judged most obscure by the editor, but they should be considered as idioms. Straw (*dh3*) is sometimes referred to as meaning something of no value (Qadesh battle, KRI 2, 72, 11–15), a metaphor that originated from a peasant perspective, and I guess that the meaning of the sentence may be 'Why this cheating me?' or 'Why this reviling me?'. The second sentence is in my opinion clearer: the sender means something like 'Am I one who bites off more than he can chew?'.

<sup>2</sup> R. Caminos, *A Tale of Woe*, Oxford 1977, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> E.F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, 1990, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> F. Crevatin, *Storie di tanto tempo fa*, Prolusione all'Apertura dell'Anno Accademico 1993–94, Trieste 1994, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> A very similar one is known in the Italian tradition, «La moneta cattiva ritorna al suo proprietario».

<sup>6</sup> W. Guglielmi, «LÄ» V, 1219–22.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. also Cairo 42254 (time of Harsiese), K. Jansen-Winkel, *Ägyptische Biographien der 22. und 23. Dynastie*, Wiesbaden 1985, I, p. 265.

<sup>8</sup> Wente, *cit.*, p. 148.



<sup>9</sup> Wente translates «a magpie among the doves», which seems to be a guess.

<sup>10</sup> A.G. McDowell, *Hieratic Ostraka in the Hunterian Museum Glasgow*, Oxford 1993, pp. 27–28, with transl. and bibl.

<sup>11</sup> Or simply 'giving' (*rdj*).




ideologically connected with the Nile and the Inundation. One may ask if 'h' 'Götterschrein' is not identical, or at least connected, with 'h' 'chapel' in CT 472 = VI, 2 k<sup>17</sup>.

What follows poses irritating problems of syntax: it is clear that we are referred to Khnum and to his hypostasis / *πάρεδρος* Shu son of Ra' as bounty-giver, but the text as it stands gives an unsatisfactory meaning<sup>18</sup>. If *nw* is to be read *jb* (see Barguet), it would be tempting to read *n jb-f* «of his heart», i.e. 'cherished', referred to the *naos*<sup>19</sup>, but its collocation would be quite unorthodox and we would have no acceptable means with which to connect the two parts of the sentence. So I propose that *n nw-f*  is an error, due to the hieratic original, for *ntw-f*, , which makes sense: «he (is) upon it / preposed to it (the *naos*) as He-who-is-upon-the-shore». The most simple solution of what follows is to take *m-r-* 'as the well-known «also, likewise», and not, with Barguet, *m rdj*. The translation I propose is the following: «There is a *naos* with its door of reeds: he (the god Khnum) is upon it as He-who-is-upon-the-shore and likewise Shu, the son of Ra', as bounty-giver».

5. Hippolytus (2nd–3rd century A.D.), *Commentarium in Daniele*, Book 3, chapter 2, section 6 says: «(...) οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι πάλαι ἰδόντες τὰ διὰ Μωϋσέως θαυμάσιαν ἔργα ἐπὶ τῶν δέκα πληγῶν γεγενημένα φοβηθέντες Μεννουθὶμ τοῦτον ὠνόμασαν, ὃ ἐστὶν αἰγυπτιστὶ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ· τὸ γὰρ μεννοῦ καλεῖται ἄνθρωπος, θίμ δὲ θεός. If I am not mistaken, this passage has not been noticed by modern scholars, or at least not by the compilers of Coptic etymological dictionaries. Clearly Hippolytus did not know Egyptian, as his analysis shows, but the word itself is surely based on Coptic **ⲡⲏⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ**, which really means 'man of God' and is translated by Greek εὐσεβής, θεοσεβής (Crum). Unfortunately it is impossible to point to the original source of this interpretation<sup>20</sup>.

6. What we know about Egyptian locks has been summarized by Kl. P. Kuhlmann<sup>21</sup>. I would like to add that the Egyptian 'Löwenriegel' had been quoted by the *Scholia Vetera in Aratum* 152, line 4: (...) παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις αἱ κληίδες τῶν ἱερῶν λεόντων φέρουσι πρόσωπα. Cf. also Horapollo 1, 19, where the symbolic value of vigilance, protection, guard of the lion is well expressed.

<sup>17</sup> The major difficulty of my suggestion is not the absence of a more specific determinative of the word (ex. gr. ) , but the probable mortuary semantic connection in the Coffin Texts, a connection totally lost here.

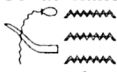
<sup>18</sup> «There is a *naos* with its door of reeds *n jb-f* (as) bounty-giver over it *m rdj* (? or *mr*') Shu, son of Ra', as bounty-giver».

<sup>19</sup> There are no reasons to think that the expression refers to the reeds.

<sup>20</sup> Menouthis was the name of the Egyptian wife of Canopus, a name which originally was a toponim; on the Egyptian side of Canopus' saga cf. A. Bernard, *Le Delta égyptien d'après les textes grecs*. Le Caire 1970.

<sup>21</sup> Kuhlmann, Kl. P., «LÄ» s.v. *Schloss* (5, 658–61).

7. Horapollo in his *Hieroglyphica* 2, 18 says that the hieroglyph of the horn of a cow means ποινή, that is «expiation», and I know no modern comment on this interesting information. I think that the solution be at hand: Horapollo (or his

source) alludes to the writing (and to the word)  'bw «purification». Probably we are faced also with a paretymology between the name of the horn, 'b Copte **ⲫⲱⲡ**, and the verb w'b «to be pure, to cleanse», Copte **ⲟⲩⲟⲡ**.