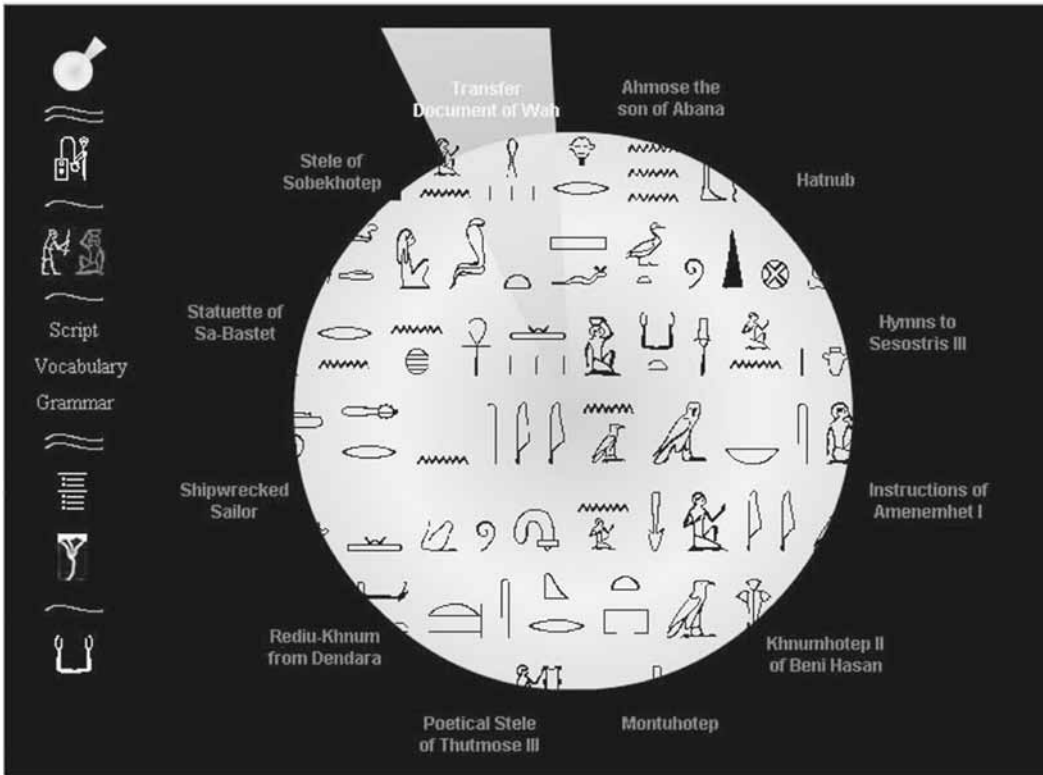


MIDDLE EGYPTIAN TEXT EDITIONS FOR ON-LINE RESEARCH

Janet H. Johnson

METEOR (Middle Egyptian Text Editions for On-line Research) is the acronym given to the annotated Middle Egyptian Readingbook project that is part of Casting a Wider Net: Multimedia Coursework for Teaching and Learning, a Consortium for Institutional Cooperation project funded by the Mellon Foundation. As noted last year, the Readingbook project aims to produce an annotated, interactive Readingbook for students of classical Middle Egyptian. A selection of texts representing many of the genres of preserved Middle Egyptian materials has been entered into the computer together with grammatical and lexical analyses. Students are able to select a text and work through the text, sentence by sentence, practicing reading the hieroglyphs and transliterating and translating the text. A click of a button brings help with reading signs, understanding grammar, or finding vocabulary. Extensive graphics illustrate Egypt, the areas where individual texts were discovered, items mentioned in the texts, and, to the extent possible, the actual individuals mentioned in the texts being read. The Readingbook is intended to serve as a classroom aid, but it should also be possible for individuals to use it as a stand-alone teaching aid in learning, or reviewing, Middle Egyptian. It may eventually be

MIDDLE EGYPTIAN TEXT EDITIONS FOR ON-LINE RESEARCH



Entry screen for Middle Egyptian Text Editions for On-line Research

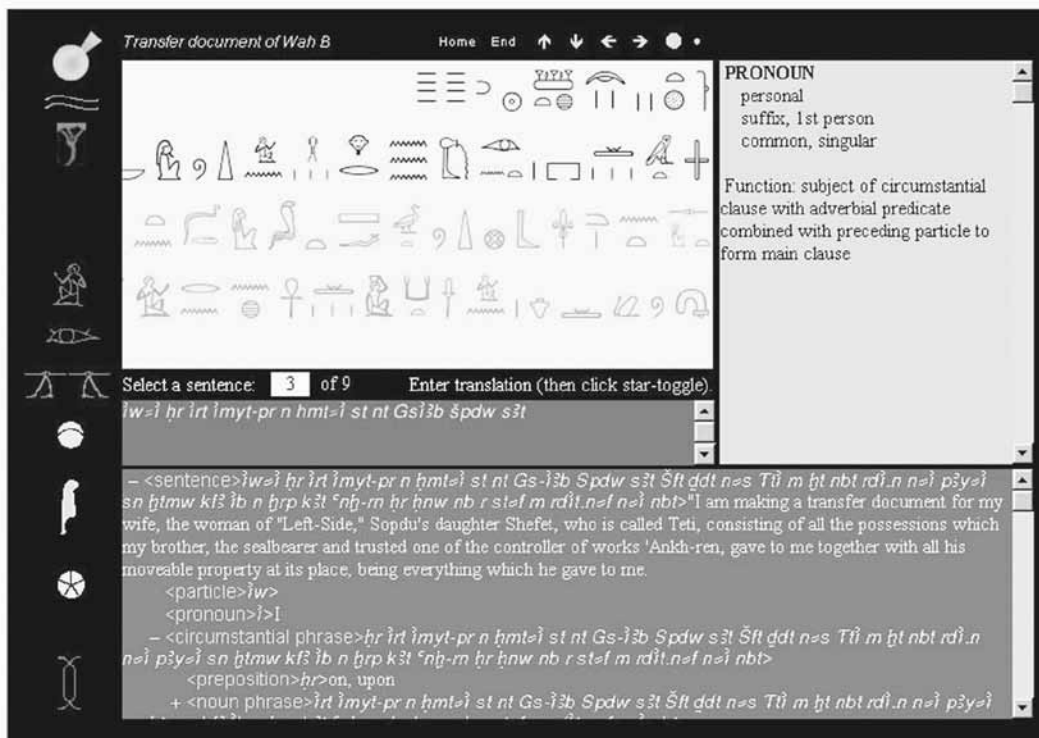
published as a CD-ROM or DVD, but it is currently being delivered over the Internet using the World Wide Web.

Several graduate students worked intensively during the summer of 2001 entering transliteration, translation, and hieroglyphs for a range of Middle Egyptian texts, including the narrative story of the “Shipwrecked Sailor,” the wisdom text known as the “Instructions of Amenemhet,” the royal victory hymn known as the “Poetical Stele of Thutmose III,” several hymns written in honor of Sesostris III, a set of legal texts known as the “transfer document of Wah,” a couple of graffiti inscribed in the alabaster quarries at Hatnub, in Middle Egypt, and a number of private monumental inscriptions, including inscriptions on private statues, stele, and in private tombs. Our University of Michigan collaborators, Janet Richards and Terry Wilfong (Ph.D., University of Chicago), began data entry on a set of private stele from the Upper Egyptian site of Abydos, where Richards has been excavating for several years. Nghiem Thai remained the main liaison between students doing data entry (Greg Davidson, Harold Hays, Jonathan Tenney, Josh Trampier, Jennifer Westerfeld, Malayna Williams) and Sandy Schloen, our computer programmer who has designed both the elegant



Screen showing hieroglyphs, transliteration, and translation

RESEARCH

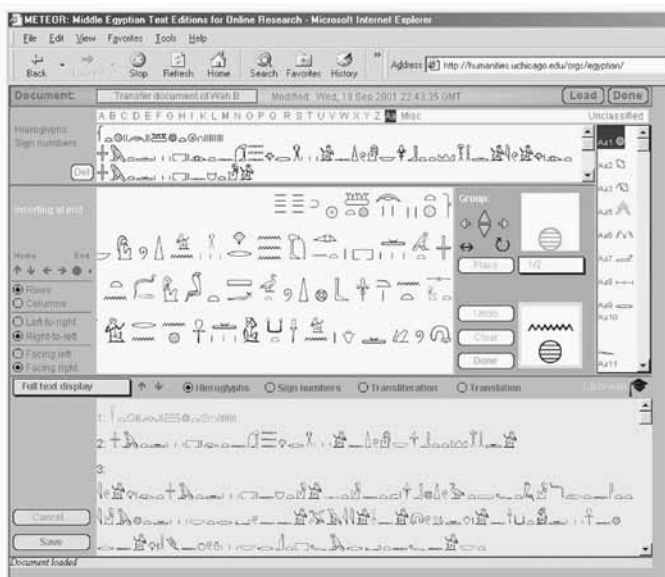


Screen showing grammatical analysis

“back end” for inputting data, including hieroglyphs properly oriented and spaced, and the user interface, the screens which the students will actually see and work from. Michael Berger, assisted by Hratch Papazian, began identifying and preparing the “cultural links” providing background and supplemental information for the users. These include illustrations of people, places, and things; brief explanations or descriptions of topics mentioned in the texts; and supplementary chronological, geographical, historical, and cultural information. One

very useful set of graphics that has emerged from this work is a set of maps, one overall map locating the place of origin for each of the texts and a series of individualized maps showing places mentioned in individual texts. This work was done by graduate student Katherine Strange Burke under the guidance of John Sanders.

An outside review committee consisting of three highly regarded scholars of Middle Egyptian (James P. Allen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, James Hoch from the University of Toronto, and Richard Parkinson from the British Museum in London) met at



Peek at the “back end” screen where hieroglyphs are entered

MIDDLE EGYPTIAN TEXT EDITIONS FOR ON-LINE RESEARCH

the Oriental Institute in October, were given an introduction to the project, left to try it “hands-on” for a couple of days, and then asked for their comments and suggestions. They were enthusiastic and provided extensive, very useful input on issues ranging from the explanation of icons to addition or reorganization of links; many of their suggestions have already been incorporated. Especially valuable was their participation in discussions of thorny questions of ways to provide sufficient identification of the provenience and current location of each document and image being cited.

Jan Johnson gave a demonstration of the project, as a work in progress, at the Open House sponsored by the Division of the Humanities at the end of October. Classroom testing of the Readingbook began in spring 2002, with students in the first year Middle Egyptian class reading through the beginning section of the “Shipwrecked Sailor” and accessing and evaluating the various kinds of support available. Their comments will be reviewed as work continues this summer.

— — — — —