



Demotic Dictionary Project

Janet H. Johnson

The Demotic Dictionary staff has now completed stage one of the current program to prepare a glossary containing all the new demotic words or usages which are attested in demotic texts published between 1955 and 1980, this glossary being a supplement to the *Demotisches Glossar* published by W. Erichsen in 1954. Stage one involved reading every demotic text published during that 25 year time span and then preparing a master transliteration and translation and a file card for every word in each of those texts. Although we haven't quite finished preparing all the file cards from the transliteration and translation masters, we already have a bank of filing cabinets full of cards.

Among the more interesting texts with which we dealt this year was what is probably the longest demotic contract which has been

preserved (13 lines which are 3.70 m. long). This document is a "cession," similar to a "quit claim deed" by a priest to his half sister concerning $\frac{1}{3}$ of the property which he had received from their mother (he was retaining the other $\frac{2}{3}$ of the property for himself). The amount of property was staggering, including not only the income from 100 family tomb chapels but in addition five separate parcels of land which their mother had inherited from various relatives, each of which included the fees paid by various professions and the income from tomb chapels for whole towns. To judge by the wealth transferred in this document, this family must have been one of the more important Egyptian families in the Memphite area at the time (under Ptolemy V, 197 B.C.).

From another important Memphite family we have a whole series of documents, both inscribed statuary and funerary stelae, dedicated by and on behalf of the High Priests of Ptah at Memphis. This position, the highest in the Egyptian sacerdotal bureaucracy, was held throughout the Ptolemaic period by ten generations of the same family. The majority of our documentation comes from the first century B.C., during which time the High Priest of Ptah was responsible for crowning the Ptolemaic rulers at their coronations in Memphis. He also held high positions in the administrative bureaucracy (including the department of finance), and other members of the family served in the private entourage of the king.

A very different kind of stela is S. Moschion, two fragments of which are preserved in Berlin and Cairo (almost a third of the original stela is still missing). This hymn of thanks to Osiris for curing a man's feet is set up as a cross-word puzzle with poetic descriptions telling the reader how to pick out the right words and assemble them into the appropriate hymn.

Once we finished preparing masters for all the primary publications of demotic materials which fell within our time frame, we began searching all the secondary literature for commentaries on demotic texts, discussions of individual words, etc., all of which are being incorporated into the files with the appropriate word. We have also begun to "read" the files, marking those "new" words which will appear in our supplementary glossary and on which we will therefore be concentrating over the next year. Once such words have been identified, we will begin the process of "nailing down" as precise a meaning as possible for each of the words, writing the necessary explanations, and actually preparing the pages of the supplement.

As we gradually turn from processing texts to working with the resultant files, we embark upon another transition typical of the '80's.

One of the staff has prepared a computer program from which we prepare running lists of the “new” words in our files, easily updated as more words are identified and marked. Thus, we now have a 190-page “Newword” file which indicates that our supplementary glossary will contain an impressive variety of vocabulary. The same staff member is now working on a program by which we may organize the layout of the actual pages of the supplement. This move into the computer age will allow us to work more quickly and efficiently, although the backbone of the project will remain the highly trained individuals who determine meaning, usage, and so on.

The very able, and hard-working, staff remains much the same as it has been for the last several years. Professor George R. Hughes, our invaluable consultant, provides the very solid underpinning of the project. Robert K. Ritner is the Senior Project Assistant and Associate Editor. The Assistant Editors are Eugene Cruz-Uribe and Richard L. Jasnow; Adrian Esselström, Kathy Fritz, and Lisa Moore are Research Assistants. Dr. Mark Smith worked with us for a month researching difficult words and passages which members of the staff had noted. Thanks for the excellent progress we are making are due to all of them and also to you who gave generously the matching money for the NEH grant which supports our work.