

DEMOTIC DICTIONARY PROJECT

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The staff of the Demotic Dictionary Project this year (Thomas Dousa, François Gaudard, and Janet H. Johnson) spent time checking content of entries for the last letters still waiting to be checked, preparing facsimiles of the thousands of words being cited in the dictionary, and preparing the bibliographic indexes that will accompany it. We have missed our colleague of recent years, Steve Vinson, who took a job in the History Department at the University of Oregon and will soon be moving to the State University of New York. We have benefited immensely from the work of Alejandro Botta, who has checked our suggested parallels and borrowings from the various Northwest Semitic languages and has also contributed to several entries with his knowledge of developing legal terminology. As we have discussed in previous *Annual Reports*, the dictionary is intended to treat all the vocabulary that appears in texts published between 1955 and 1979, a period of very active publication of Demotic texts. We tie in “our” materials with all the information collected by Wolja Erichsen in his immensely useful *Demotisches Glossar*, published in 1954. In addition, we include a fair amount of material published since 1980, especially materials that connect directly with the texts published between 1955 and 1979. In addition to the standard information provided in a dictionary or glossary (transliteration, translation, range of orthographies, and connection with earlier and later stages of Egyptian or with contemporary foreign languages, especially Greek and various Semitic languages), we are including extensive examples of the words used in compounds, phrases, titles, divine epithets, and so on. In this way, people who are not themselves specialists in Demotic will be able to use the dictionary as a resource and entry point for accessing the wealth of social, cultural, historical, and religious information preserved in Demotic texts. A brief resumé of the dictionary, its aims and methods, appeared this year as “The Chicago Demotic Dictionary Project” in *Textcorpus und Wörterbuch, Aspekte zur ägyptischen Lexikographie*, edited by Stefan Grunert and Ingeleore Hafemann.

Because we hope that the dictionary will be a resource for a wide range of scholars, it seemed interesting to see how many terms for foreigners or names of foreign places are being included in the dictionary (studies of foreign vocabulary attested in Demotic have already been done). Demotic was used for over a thousand years, under native Egyptian rulers as well as rulers from Ethiopia (Kushites), Persia (Achaemenids), Macedonia/Greece (Ptolemies), and Rome, and the

geographic awareness of the Egyptians must have changed with time. With this in mind, here are a few of the items that appeared in a quick survey of the dictionary files.

Throughout their history, the Egyptians were keenly aware of other countries and maintained contacts, both friendly and hostile, with their neighbors; thus, from very early on, they developed a traditional set of designations for these countries and their inhabitants. Many of these older designations continued to be used in the later periods of Egyptian history, and so in Demotic texts we find thoroughly traditional names, already attested in Old Kingdom sources, such as *Hnty-š* for the land of Lebanon, *Gpn* for the city of Byblos, or *Nhs* for Nubia and the Nubians. One late literary text, the Myth of the Solar Eye, even mentions the African land of Punt, so vividly depicted in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple reliefs of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. Alongside these older names, there occur some that reflect more recent Egyptian interactions with foreign peoples. For instance, the consequences of the movement of Libyan peoples into Egypt in the late New Kingdom and their rise to political dominance during the Third Intermediate Period (early first millennium BC) are reflected in the Demotic usage of Libyan ethnonyms such as *Pyt*, which can be found in Demotic religious texts of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, for example, in an epithet belauding the goddess Hathor as “ruler of Libya, mistress of the West,” apparently a reference to her role as a patroness of the deceased. The term *M*ꜥ, the short form of *Meshwesh*, the name of another of these Libyan peoples who settled in Egypt in the Third Intermediate Period, is attested in a fifth-century BC document from el-Hibeh, in Middle Egypt, where a man called “chief of the Ma” seems to serve as leader of a troop of regional security guards.

Most references to foreign countries and foreigners in Demotic texts, however, are interesting because they provide information about Egyptian experience and perceptions of foreigners and foreign lands during the Persian, Ptolemaic, and Roman periods, a time when Egypt was enmeshed within a nexus of commercial, military, and cultural ties to both the Mediterranean world and Africa, and when the Nile Valley became in many ways a multi-cultural “melting pot” with a large population of resident foreigners. The Demotic materials incorporated in our entries provide striking testimony of this complex cultural interconnectedness.

During the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the lands to the south of Egypt saw the emergence of an empire whose capital was the city of Meroe (located in the Upper Sudan). The Meroitic Empire was both a trading partner of Egypt and a rival to the latter’s Ptolemaic and Roman rulers, vying with them at various times for control of the region of Lower Nubia stretching from Philae in the north to Maharraqa in the south. Our Demotic sources call this “the foreign land of *Ta-km-sw*,” a stretch of land more commonly known by its Greek designation, Dodekaschoinos. As had been the case with the Kushite dynasty (eighth–seventh century BC), the political and religious culture of the Meroites was influenced by Egyptian models. This influence is especially discernible in Demotic graffiti carved by visitors upon the walls of temples at Philae, Dakka (*Pꜣ-nbs* “Pnubs” in Demotic) and Kalabsha (*ꜥlms* “Talmis” in Demotic). These graffiti include inscriptions written in the name of high-ranking Meroitic officials with Meroitic names; the most natural assumption is that these men wrote these texts themselves and thus were bilingual, an assumption that is strengthened by the presence of Meroitic loanwords, primarily administrative titles, rendered in Demotic. On the other hand, Egyptian titles attested in Demotic texts also appear in Meroitic inscriptions (e.g., “the general” [Demotic *pꜣ mr-mš*ꜥ = Meroitic *pelmoš*] and priest [Demotic *hm-ntr* = Meroitic *ant*]). Of especial interest is the designation *wpt ꜣ n Hrme* “grand ambassador to (lit. “of”) Rome,” borne by a much betitled Meroitic official of the early fourth century AD, a time when Meroe appears to have been reasserting control in Lower Nubia. Not only does it offer us a glimpse at the structure of Meroitic diplomatic service, but it interest-

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ingly enough also occurs in such Meroitic inscriptions as *apote lh Hrmy-li-s*, where the term *apote*, messenger, is certainly a loanword from Egyptian, a telling indication of Egyptian influence on the Meroitic conception of a “foreign service” office.

Although some Egyptians and Egyptian authors might have looked down on Nubians as backward, the Egyptian physician of the Late Period continued to value products imported from the South, as is evidenced by the mention of “Nubian ochre (*st Nhs*)” — long one of the staple ingredients in Egyptian medicine — in the Crocodilopolis medical papyrus, while the magician — who in certain instances was probably identical with the physician — might recite a spell using the Nubian language (*mt ʾkš*) to enhance its magical power. These few examples may suffice to show that if Egyptian culture exerted an influence on the Nubians and Meroites, the traffic of cultural interchange could and did flow in the other direction as well.

When we turn from Africa to Asia we once again find interesting new terminology, presumably reflecting political developments during the first millennium BC. The new term *ʾš(w)r* for Syria is frequently taken to reflect Egyptian contact with the Assyrians, who came to control all of Syria-Palestine and with whom the Egyptians fought a number of wars. Indeed, the Assyrians, under King Ashurbanipal, captured Memphis, taking control of the Delta, and later returned and attacked and sacked even Thebes in southern Egypt. In a Demotic list of mercenaries serving in the army of the Saite ruler Amasis (529 BC) in his campaign against Nubia, the “men of Khor” (the old term for Syria) are distinguished from what is generally translated the “men of Assyria.” This distinction has been suggested to reflect the geographic distinction between Syria and Palestine. Indeed in the Canopus Decree a distinction is made between Syria and Phoenicia using the terms *Hʾr(.w)* and *ʾImr*, a distinction and terminology found also in New Kingdom texts. But the term *sh ʾš(w)r* “writing or script of *ʾš(w)r*” was used to refer specifically to Aramaic. Aramaic was a Northwest Semitic language, spoken in much of Syria-Palestine at this time, which became the lingua franca of the Persian Empire. A Demotic document states that the Persian King Darius had the laws of Egypt collected and recorded in *sh ʾš(w)r* and in *sh šʿt*, “letter writing or document writing,” the Demotic term for Demotic script. In other words, the laws were written down so that both Egyptian and Persian officials could read and consult them: the Egyptians in Demotic, the Persians in Aramaic. Many Aramaic speakers had begun settling in Egypt even before the advent of the Persians. There is a famous community of Aramaic speaking Jews who lived at Elephantine before and during the Persian occupation of Egypt, and numbers of non-Jewish Aramaic-speaking immigrants in communities from Elephantine at the southern border to Saqqara and at various fortresses in the Delta. Many of the members of these communities were serving as mercenaries. It seems to me most likely that the term *ʾš(w)r* referred not to the dreaded Assyrians but rather to speakers of Aramaic, which fits very well with the fact that one of the major criteria Egyptians used in determining ethnicity was language. That these communities remained in Egypt for generations or centuries is suggested by such Ptolemaic place names as “The Place of the *ʾš(w)r.w*” and “The Wall of the *ʾš(w)r.w*,” both in the Fayum; “The Island of the *ʾš(w)r.w*,” near Coptos, just north of Thebes, and “The Resting Place(?) of the *ʾš(w)r.w*,” a village in the Theban area.

One result of the incorporation of Egypt into the Persian Empire and, later, its position as the heart of the Ptolemaic kingdom, was a greater degree of openness than ever before to the Mediterranean world and susceptibility to its geopolitical vicissitudes, and this too is reflected in Demotic texts. Some texts allow us to see how Egypt and its rulers were involved in diplomatic or military ventures overseas. The famous Canopus Decree records how King Ptolemy III shipped grain to Cyprus (*tš mʾy.t n Ššlmynš* “the island of Salamis” in Demotic), then part of his realm, when it was suffering from a famine. Another intriguing text from a later phase of Ptole-

maic history is a letter sent by a man stationed at the Phoenician port city of Ptolemais (Akko) to some military men in the Upper Egyptian town of Pathyris in 103 BC, during the military conflict between the Ptolemies and Hasmoneans known as the “War of Scepters.” This letter speaks of a journey by Ptolemy X from Ptolemais/Akko to Damascus (*Tmysqʿ* in Demotic), though the precise reason for the visit is not stated in the letter and cannot be gleaned from collateral historical sources. In the mid-second century BC, another important Mediterranean power enters the Demotic record, Rome. Among the ostraca written by the fascinating, if somewhat troubling, religious enthusiast Ḥor, who frequented the temples at Saqqara, we find the draft of a petition to King Ptolemy VI recounting the aftermath of one of Ḥor’s prophetic dreams. In the letter it is stated, somewhat cryptically, that “*Nwmnys* (Noumenios) went to Rome (*Hrmʿ*).” When one recalls that Ḥor was writing in the troubled period of the early 160s BC when the Seleucid King Antiochus IV had invaded Egypt, claiming the crown for himself, it is tempting to interpret this as an allusion to a Ptolemaic diplomatic mission to Rome, presumably to seek aid from that burgeoning geopolitical force. However this may be, it is known from the Greek historians that Roman intervention did bring an end to Antiochus’ pharaonic ambitions.

From the later Roman period comes the Vienna Omen Papyrus, which is based upon earlier texts dating to the Persian period. This text mentions Crete (*Grty*) and the Cretans (*nʿ Grty*), as well as the ruler of Crete (*wr Grty*), in its calculations concerning the future course of events, though none of the allusions seems to have any bearing on concrete historical occurrences. Roman period literary texts also mention distant locales such as Babylon, Nineveh, and India, references that reflect another result of the incorporation of Egypt into the empires of the Persians and Alexander: the widening of Egyptian geographical horizons in the literary imagination. For example, a narrative known from a Roman period manuscript, Papyrus Serpot, recounts the conflict between the Egyptian ruler Petekhons and Serpot (lit. “Lotus”), the queen of “the land of women” (*pʿ tʿ (n) nʿ šhm.wt*), a mythical country located to the east of Egypt whose female inhabitants exhibit an Amazon-like taste for warfare. Inevitably, love triumphs over any hostile intentions so that Petekhons and Serpot make peace and join forces. Not only does this story mention the old Assyrian capital of Nineveh, but even more interestingly, India plays a major role in the proceedings, because after Petekhons and Serpot have contracted their romantic and military alliance, her realm is threatened by an invasion from India (*Hntw*), and together they must fight long and difficult battles before the ruler of India (*wr Hntw*) admits defeat and sues for peace. The mention of India in a late Egyptian text is intriguing but should not occasion surprise because Egyptian knowledge of the existence of India can be attested as early as the reign of Darius I in the Persian period and was doubtless reinforced by the burgeoning trade via the Red Sea with India of the late Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Nevertheless, certain elements also point here to the strong possibility of Greek literary influence on the Egyptian image of India. At one point in the text the god Osiris appears as “the great agathodaimon (i.e., tutelary god) of India.” We know from Greek sources that Osiris could be assimilated to the Greek god Dionysus who, in Hellenistic mythography, was celebrated as a culture hero who had traveled the world as far as India and had civilized its inhabitants. However, according to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (writing in the first century BC), it was Osiris who engaged in these world travels and visited India. It is thus quite reasonable to suggest that the association of Osiris with India in Papyrus Serpot is a reflection of this Hellenistic motif of Osiris/Dionysus in India. If this suggestion is accurate, it would show how the Egyptian literary imagination, aware of the existence of India yet lacking firsthand experience of the country, seized upon the “information” offered by other cultural traditions about that exotic land to formulate its own image of the sub-continent.

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Another dimension of Egyptian contacts with foreign countries was that of trade, and sundry imports find their place in Demotic texts as well. We have already seen that Nubian ochre was imported, at least in part for medicinal purposes. Syria (*Hr* “Khor”) is particularly well represented by trade products, a function of its proximity to Egypt as well as the close political links and secular trade connections between the two lands. These products include comestible items, such as “Syrian wheat” (*sw n Hr*) and “Syrian herbs” (*sym n Hll*), ingredients for medicines, such as “Syrian ointment” (*mrhy Hr*) and “Syrian fig(s)” (*qnt Hr*), and household devices such as the “Syrian lock (*qr^c Hr*) with its key(?),” mentioned in tandem with a “Greek lock” (*qr^c Wynn*) in a list of materials used to build a tomb in second-century BC Thebes. Other types of goods appear to have come from more distant locales. The Ionian city of Miletus, well known for the quality of the wool of the flocks in its district, is represented by *mylt*, a term for “Milesian wool,” while a Roman period ostrakon not only mentions a Maltese dog (*mlytyn*), but even gives a picture of the shaggy little pooch. Furthest afield appears to be the product mentioned in a passage from a literary narrative known from the Roman period, Papyrus Spiegelberg, which describes how, in the course of an internecine conflict between Egyptian princes, an aristocratic prisoner-of-war is tied up with “cable(?) of *Gtētn*.” It has been plausibly suggested that the latter word perhaps derives from the Greek ethnonymic adjective *Gadeitana*, “from Cadiz.” If this interpretation is correct, then the Egyptian prince will have been tied up with cables ultimately derived from (or, perhaps, simply made in the style of those derived from) a city on the other end of the Mediterranean, beyond the pillars of Hercules at the outer reaches of the Iberian peninsula!

This possible interpretation of *Gtētn* as the transcription of a Greek ethnic term brings us to a large category of references to foreign people or places: the use of ethnics. It was normal in Greek documents from Ptolemaic Egypt to refer to mercenaries by the name of the city or area from which they, or their ancestors, had emigrated, and such descriptions occur occasionally in Demotic. The extent to which these people had become integrated into Egyptian society is indicated by examples such as the Memphite document which refers to priestly responsibility for the offerings at a list of tombs, including the “(tombs) of the Carians.” Similarly, people identified as Blemmyes, from the Nubian tribe recorded in classical authors, are found in Middle and Upper Egypt from Saite or Persian times at least through the Ptolemaic period, when they are found as landowners near Edfu, in the south. A literary text from Elephantine from the Roman period refers to “drinking with the Blemmyes.” But the most common ethnic term found in Demotic is *Wynn* “Greek” (lit. “Ionian”). Occasionally this term refers to objects typical of Greek culture (e.g., “Greek stater (a kind of coin)”). But, as noted above, the Greek documents from early Ptolemaic Egypt make it clear that the immigrants thought of themselves not as generic “Greeks” but in terms of the specific part of the Greek-speaking world from which they came. What they did share was a common language and it is clear that in the vast majority of examples, the description “Greek” refers to use of the Greek language: *mt.t Wynn* “Greek language”; *sh Wynn* “Greek writing” or “document written in Greek”; “Greek woman”; “Greek cavalryman”; or, from very early in Ptolemaic history, “Greek born in Egypt.” This use of the general term “Greek” fits very well with the standard Egyptian practice, noted above, of using language as one of the major determinants in ethnic identifications.

One other common tendency in ancient Egypt was for terms which started out as ethnic identifiers to turn into descriptions of occupations, in most cases apparently because a large percentage of the members of the ethnic group who lived in Egypt served in that particular occupation. An early example is the term *Md>y*, originally referring to a Nubian tribe but by the New Kingdom already used as the term for “police.” Similarly, *ʕm* “Asiatic,” attested already in the Old

Kingdom, soon came to mean “herdsman” or “shepherd.” An apparent example of the same type of development is found in Demotic texts involving the more recent ethnic term *Hgr*. This term seems to have been the name of a north Arabian tribe whose name also provided the Achaemenid Persians with the name for their Arabian satrapy. But the term also came to be used to refer to a “mounted courier” and editors of Egyptian literary texts most frequently use the occupational translation, not the ethnic one.

The latest of these ethnic-to-occupation switches that we note here occurred in the early Ptolemaic period and brings us full circle to the “*Mḏȝy*-to-policeman” transformation found in earlier pharaonic times. Census lists and other administrative documents from the early Ptolemaic period note special dispensations (especially tax breaks) given to people described as “Greeks,” “Jews,” and “Persians.” Modern scholars used to assume that this reflected discrimination against native Egyptians. However, careful study of the documents involved indicates that Egyptians with clearly military titles (e.g., man or soldier who is inscribed at or assigned to a specific geographic location, often a fortress) are given the same dispensations. Since it is known that both Greeks and Jews served as soldiers, it seems likely that these originally ethnic terms are being used as indicators of occupation. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the Ptolemies singled out another occupation for similar special treatment: Greek schoolteachers, needed to train enough people to read and write in Greek so that the state administration, at least on the national and regional level, could be switched to Greek from Egyptian. The case of the so-called “Persians,” who are given some, but not all, of the dispensations given to the “Greeks,” is less clear. They could be understood to be actual “Persians” who had abandoned their loyalty to the Achaemenid Empire and settled down as loyal mercenary employees of the Greeks. But the fact that they had Greek names, never Persian, makes it possible that they were actually Greek-speaking mercenaries who had fought on the side of the Persian king during the wars with Alexander. In later generations, when this distinction between “mercenary who fought on the right side” and “mercenary who fought on the wrong side” had lost any value (all such individuals and their immediate kin having long since died), the apparent ethnic term “Persian” was applied to a very different category of individuals — debtors.

Whether inhabitants of Egypt during the second and first centuries BC were aware of the ethnic background of the term, and if so how they would have explained its contemporary use, is uncertain. Certainly such examples illustrate the complexity of ancient cultures and of modern attempts to understand them. It is hoped that the Demotic Dictionary will soon be serving as a fundamental resource as scholars publish and republish basic source materials and address such questions of social, political, and religious history throughout the millennium of the existence of Demotic.
