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Ola El Aguizy et Fayza Haykal

- 1 During the four millennia of its history (3000 BC-1000 AD) the Ancient Egyptian language underwent important graphic, grammatical and lexical changes. These changes reflect the internal evolution of the language but also the impact of the socio-political environment on the language and its writing. During these four millennia, the function of literacy changed as well as the relation between speech and writing. Writing evolved from a formal language rendering religious and royal texts to a more informal language rendering profane and more administrative texts and getting sometimes closer to the spoken language. Contact with foreign cultures through geographical expansion or through integration of foreign communities and later under colonial rules favored the absorption of a number of foreign words and the development of new scripts. The two following parts are complementary. El Aguizy's part focuses on the evolution of the morphosyntactic system and Haikal's part on the evolution of the writing and the vocabulary.

Ancient Egyptian language (O. el-Aguizy)

- 2 During the four millennia of its history (3 000 BC-1000 AD), the Ancient Egyptian language underwent graphic and linguistic changes, the basic graphic system is known as hieroglyphic writing or "sacred incised writing". This term is the Greek counterpart of the Egyptian expression *mdww-ntr* or "God's words". Hieroglyphs were primarily used on stone for monumental purposes. From this writing developed a cursive handwriting known as *Hieratic* or "priestly writing" used mainly on papyrus (2600 BC to third century AD). From this cursive writing developed a more simplified writing known as *Demotic* or "popular writing" used from 7th century BC to 5th century AD for administrative purposes. From the 4th century BC, hieroglyphs and their manual varieties were gradually replaced by an alphabetic transcription or words and then texts using the Greek alphabet + 7 Demotic signs to render Egyptian sounds unknown in

Greek. This graphic system is what is known as *Coptic* which is the last stage of the Egyptian language¹. The typological changes took place concomitant with specific historical events which themselves represent major turning points in other aspects of Egypt's cultural life².

Historical development

- 3 The linguistic history of Egyptian can be divided into two main stages characterized by a major change from synthetic to analytic patterns in the nominal and verbal Systems. Each of these two stages can be further divided into three different phases affecting primarily the sphere of graphemics³ :
- 4 - *Formal Egyptian or Earlier Egyptian* : the language of all written texts (royal, literary and religious documents) from 3000 to 1300 BC, surviving in formal religious texts until the 3rd century AD. It is conventionally termed:
 - a) *old Egyptian* for the Old Kingdom phase (3000-2000 BC) characterized by the religious corpus of the "Pyramids texts" and a number of "Autobiographies";
 - b) *Middle Egyptian or Classical Egyptian* of the Middle Kingdom (2000-1300 BC) considered as the classical languages of Egyptian literature;
 - c) *Late middle Egyptian*, the language of religious texts only from the New Kingdom until the Roman Period (1300 BC-200 AD). For more than a millennium, Late Middle Egyptian coexisted with later Egyptian (see below) in a situation of diglossia. Late Middle Egyptian maintains the linguistic structures of the classical language but shows graphemic changes.
- 5 - The *nonFormal Egyptian or Later Egyptian* of the profane literature and administrative texts from 1300 BC to 1300 AD divided in:
 - a) *Late Egyptian* (1300-700 BC) which shows various degrees of interference between classical influences and more colloquial influences;
 - b) *Demotic* (700 BC-500 AD) grammatically close to Late Egyptian but with a different graphic system;
 - c) *Coptic* written in a variety of the Greek alphabet.

The grammatical system of Earlier Egyptian and its genetic affinities

- 6 The Ancient Egyptian language represents an autonomous branch of the Afro-Asiatic or Hamito-Semitic phylum, one of the most widespread language families in the world.
- 7 The individual branches of the Afro-Asiatic phylum are :
 - Ancient Egyptian ;
 - Semitic languages including Eastern Semitic (Akkadian), Northwest Semitic (Canaaite, Hebrew, Ugaritic, Aramaic. Phœnician} and Southwest Semitic (Arabic, South Arabian and Ethiopic) ;
 - Berber languages (or Libyco-Berber) ;
 - Cushitic languages (i.e. among others Beja, Agao, Somali, etc.) ;
 - Chadic languages (i.e. among others Hausa).
- 8 According to Loprieno⁴, Ancient Egyptian shows thē closest relationship to Semitic, Berber and Beja, and more distant relationship to the rest of Cushitic and Chadic. Egyptian shares a number of common Afro-Asiatic linguistic features⁵ and we will

mention some features common between Formal (Earlier) Egyptian and Arabic (i.e. Classical Arabic) :

- 9 1. A preference for an inflectional syntax.
- 10 2. Words are written with consonants only, the vocalic system being represented by three vowels: /[^] i\l w/ corresponding to /a/ i /u/ and to Arabic *fatha, damma, kasra* ;
- 11 3. A consonantal system displaying a series of emphatics.
- 12 4. The lexical roots of the words are usually formed of two or three consonants which are capable of being inflected to form derived nouns or verbs:
 ss = scribe, letter, to write (Arabic: كَتَبَ كَاتِبَ مَكْتُوبَ)
 dw = aggressor ,d = to aggress
 Pr = to provide, 'prw = equipment
- 13 5. The use of a nominal feminine suffix -at / "t", to form feminine nouns or adjectives:
 sn = brother, sn.t = sister.
- 14 6. An adjectival suffix -i (called *nisba* in Arabic) to express "relation to":
 rs= south, rsy= southern (Arabic: *masr*= Egypt, *masri* = Egyptian).
- 15 7. An opposition between prefixal conjugation and suffixal conjugation in the verbal system.
- 16 8. The most important feature is the sentence structure which can be verbal or non-verbal. The verbal sentence follows the usual VSO pattern (verb + subject + object). Non verbal sentences⁶ vary according to the type of predicate and usually follow the subject + predicate pattern.
- 17 Examples of Egyptian sentences and their Arabic equivalent:
 - - Adverbial predicate
 Egyptian: *sj m pr.f* = he is in his house
 Arabic: الرجل في بيته = the man is in his house
 - - Nominal predicate
 Egyptian: *uw st-mni* = old age is the state of death
 Arabic: العمر لحظة .
 - - Adjectival predicate
 Egyptian: *ink nfr* = am good
 Arabic: الورد جميل = the rose is beautiful
- 18 This pattern of non-verbal sentence can follow a different word order (also common in Arabic) in which the predicate precedes the subject.
- 19 This type of transposition is common with all types of predicates:
 - -Adverbial predicate
 Egyptian: *ntk pt* = to you belongs the sky
 Arabic: في بيتنا رجل = in our house, a man
 - -Pronominal predicate
 Egyptian: *ptr rf sw* = who is he ?
 Arabic: متى الامتحان = when are the exams ?
 - - Adjectival predicate
 Egyptian : *nfr sj sdm.fn it.f* = good is the son who hears his father
 Arabic : جميل صوت البلب الذي يغرد = beautiful the voice of the nightingale who twitters.

Evolution from Earlier to Later Egyptian

- 20 Having stated the main common features of Egyptian with the Afro-Asiatic phylum and more specifically with Arabic, we now follow the main linguistic evolution of the language. Formal or Earlier Egyptian is characterized by the use of synthetic grammatical structures (combination of parts or elements into a whole). It can be compared to Classical Literary Arabic (or *fusha*).
- 1. Gender and number are marked by the addition of suffixes at the end of the word: *sn*= brother, *sn.t*= sister, *sn.w*= brothers, *sn.wt*= sisters;
 - 2. Definite or indefinite articles are not used: *rmt* = a man or the man;
 - 3. Possession is expressed by the addition of suffix pronouns after the nouns: *pr.i*= my house, *pr.k*= your house, *pr.n* = our house;
 - 4. The structure of the verbal sentence follows the VSO pattern: *sdm.i hrw* = I hear the voices.
- 21 The development of Formal Egyptian into Informal or Later Egyptian is not an innovation. In fact, Later Egyptian was the spoken language used since the beginning but only put into writing in the later period. It appeared in quotations in the XVIII dynasty and it became an official language in the XIX dynasty. The difference between Formal and Informal Egyptian corresponds to the difference between Literary and Spoken Arabic. The main features of Later Egyptian are:
- 1. The suffixal markers for gender and number are dropped and replaced by prefixal indicators: *psn* *tsnj sn. w* These prefixal indicators are now used as definite articles which did not previously exist.
 - 2. The numeral "one" and the demonstrative adjective "this" have developed into an indefinite pronoun: *w n rmt* = a man, *py rmt* = this man or the man.
 - 3. Possession is now expressed by the use of a possessive adjective instead of suffix markers: *py i pr* = instead of *pr.i* = my house (like the Classical Arabic بيتي becoming البيت بتاعي).
 - 4. The verbal structure develops analytic features which instead of having the VSO pattern used a periphrastic conjugation composed of SVO preceded by prefixal indicator. If in the formal language "I come" would be expressed as *ii.i* = Verb + Subject, in the informal language it becomes *iw.i m ii* or *iw.i ii.kwi*
 - 5. Aspectual-tense distinctions in the Formal language was restricted to some synthetic patterns (perfect-imperfect-prospective). The verbal System is too complicated to be summed up here and we will just provide few examples:
sdm.f = he hears (present) or he heard (past) depending on the context;
sdm.n. f = he heard (past) or he has heard (present perfect);
iw.i sdm. kwi = I was heard (past perfect passive and resultative).
- 22 Periphrastic constructions for the expression of the imperfective and prospective aspect emerge in the late Old Kingdom: the prepositions *hr* "on" and *r* "toward" are followed by the infinitive :
- iw.f hr sdm.* = he is hearing, lit. he is on hearing (imperfective)
 Arabic: هو على سمع
- ow.frsdm.* = he will hear, lit. he is toward hearing (prospective)
 Arabic: هو في اتجاهه الى السمع
- 23 In the later stage tense distinction has become an important feature aiming at increased accuracy in the language. Some of the earlier forms, *wn* (to be), *iw* (while), are still used but new ones develop using new tense converters such as the verb *iri* (todo), *ny* (to go).

ir.f sdm = he did hearing, he heard {instead of *sdm .n.f*)
iw.f hr sdm = while he hears (circumstantial)
wn.f hr sdm = he was hearing
m-dr ir.f' sdm=when he heard
SJ'irt.f sdm = until he hears (and its negative counterpart *bw irt.f sdm* = he has not yet heard)
tw.i hr sdm = 1 hear (present)
hr.f or hr.ir.f sdm = he hears (present) or he habitually hears (Aorist).

- 24 The future tense which was earlier expressed as *iw .f r sdm* then became an optative "may he hear". the future being expressed by means of the verb *ir* + nominal subject + *r* + *sdm* or by the auxiliary verb *n'y*(to go) with the présent tense converter:

- *sw m n'y r sdm* = he is going to hear

Arabic: هو راح يسمع

- *tw.i m n'y rir.f*= 1 am going to do it

Arabic: انا راح اعمله

- 25 In fact, the temporal expressions in the later stage of the language are numerous and cannot all be summed up here. All these tenses remained in use in the Demotic and Coptic stages of the languages.

Political relations, cultural influences and languages changes in ancient Egyptian (F. Haikal)

Evolution of the writing

- 26 The earliest records we have of Ancient Egyptian writing date to around 3000 BC⁷. The graphemes are pictographic signs ail taken from the Egyptian environment and therefore closely linked with the culture. They represent living beings (human, animal, vegetal or even mineral), astronomical entities and objects of daily life. These graphemes can be used either as *pictograms*, thus conveying the sign they represent (as logograms or ideograms) or as *phonograms* having the phonetic value of the sign they represent, or other conventional values. These include uniliteral, i.e. alphabetic signs, and biliteral or trilateral signs.
- 27 In a word, the combination of phonograms is usually terminated by a semagram or a determinative which classifies the word according to its semantic sphere. For example, human beings are usually followed by a sign representing a seated man/woman while words expressing movement are determined by legs or by a boat, both signs expressively representing motion -when pictograms are used alone as logogram they are usually determined by a single stroke following the sign.
- 28 Because of the complexity of the System, Egyptians used over 1 000 graphemes while they developed their writing during the third millennium BC. Probably because they were not yet fully familiar with writing, substitute spelling for the same word were common⁸ and frequent use was made of phonetic complements preceding and following the main logogram. By the second millennium BC education of the bureaucratic elite had helped to fix Egyptian orthography and the number of graphemes in use dropped to around 750.
- 29 Nevertheless, beginning with the late Old Kingdom (c.2150 BC), Egyptian devised what we call "syllabic writing", i.e. a System of orthography where a simple sign could be used to express a sequence of a consonant and a vowel. For example *SJ* or *bw* for were

used to help with pronunciation as foreign words (mostly Northwest Semitic) began to enter the language with the more intensive contacts with the Levant and with the presence of larger semitic groups in Egypt, This System developed markedly in the New Kingdom (1500-1000 BC) to absorb the large number of loanwords being introduced in the language.

- 30 Another transformation affecting the writing due to contact with foreigners was a desire to conceal the meaning of written texts touching too closely on the local culture such as religious texts, for example, producing what is known as Cryptographic solutions⁹. This phenomenon consists in giving to signs phonological values different to traditionally established ones; or using the sign to indicate only the first consonantal phoneme of the corresponding word. Cryptographic writing developed tremendously in the late Graeco-Roman periods particularly on temple walls, while further simplification of the writing occurred in other spheres. In the Graeco-Roman period (300 BC-640 AD), the pictographic; values of signs was further developed and new signs were created by the thousands.
- 31 If the contact with foreigners induced Egyptians to develop their writing (to accommodate loan words or to conceal religious concepts from heretics), they also had to have bilingual texts, when their political supremacy declined and they were ruled by foreigners. The bulk of these bilingual inscriptions are Graeco-Egyptian, dating to the Graeco-Roman period. Finally, with the supremacy of Christianity around the fourth century, Ancient Egyptian was transcribed in Greek characters. The Coptic writing underlines the final divorce between traditional "pagan" culture and its writing System, and the new Christian ideology.

Evolution of the vocabulary: the loan words

- 32 If the writing developed according to cultural intercourse, so did the vocabulary. Ancient Egyptian, by its very position linking Asia and Africa, is a cross-road *par excellence*. But with time, Egypt became more and more north eastern oriented, and more semitic words were introduced into the language. The peak of the influx was reached in the New Kingdom and particularly in the Ramesside period with the extension of the Egyptian political and cultural supremacy to the Levant. Loan words appeared with new techniques, more extended geographical knowledge and new imports to the country. The presence of large Semitic communities in Egypt also led to the adoption and adaptation of new mores in the country and to the enrichment of Egyptian literature with a new genre and new words¹⁰. With the recession of Egyptian expansion in the Levant, after the fall of the New Kingdom, borrowing diminished and there is a clear decline in the usage of foreign vocabulary after the Ramesside period¹¹.
- 33 Later, from the 4th century BC onwards it is rather Greek words which penetrate the Egyptian language. This is particularly clear in texts written in Coptics. This fluctuation of foreign vocabulary entry into the language has a clear parallel with contemporary Egypt where American-English is penetrating spoken Arabic in an unprecedented manner. A kind of Anglo-Egyptian is now used in most technical disciplines, particularly in the most modern ones. In the sixties, when Egypt had stronger contacts with the Soviet Union, one would see Russian posters and publicity in the streets of Cairo. Had the relationship lasted longer Russian words would have probably penetrated the language as well.

Expression and metaphors. The concepts of the language

- 34 In spite of all these influences, developments, absorptions and sometimes total changes such as expressing oneself in Arabic instead of Ancient Egyptian, the local culture remains the same and this similarity manifests itself best through expressions and metaphors which are inspired by the natural environment in which they are created. With the knowledge of Arabic and of local culture, Egyptian concepts are easier to understand because of the common way of viewing the world. There are articles and a few books on the subject¹² but no comprehensive study has yet been published.

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NOTES

1. See the communication of G. GABRA in this volume.
2. See LOPRIENO Antonio, *Ancient Egyptian; a Linguistic Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 19. LOPRIENO distinguishes six typological phases: (a) Archaic period, (b) Old Kingdom, (c) Classical model, (d) The Ramesside orthography, (e) Demotic, (f) the Ptolemaic System.
3. LOPRIENO A., *ibid.*, p. 5.
4. For an up-dated and detailed account of the genetic frame of Ancient Egyptian, see LOPRIENO A., *Ancient Egyptian*, op. cit., especially p.1-8.
5. LOPRIENO, op. cit., p. 1.
6. Non-verbal sentences do not exist in Indo-European languages because when we say "the man is at home" or "l'homme est à la maison", these are considered as verbal sentences using the verb "to be" or "être" in the present tense. While in Ancient Egyptian, the corresponding example is non-verbal formed of subject + predicate, as in Arabic.

7. See the communication of Ola EL AGUIZY in the first part of the paper. See also LOPRIENO A., *Ancient Egyptian*, Cambridge University Press, 1995
 8. Substitute spelling occurs also in New Kingdom texts particularly in those written in Hieratic in the vernacular language of this period. Some scholars thought that this variety of spelling could reflect different dialects as in the case of Coptic, but no systematic research on the subject has been published, as far as I can tell now.
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Mots-clés : copte (langue), démotique, hiéroglyphes, langues, linguistique

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