

FOREWORD

I think it is not necessary to emphasize the urgent need for an etymological dictionary of Egyptian. The compilation of the present work was provoked by the painful lack of an etymological *synthesis* comprising the entire Ancient Egyptian root material since F. von Calice's "Grundlagen" (1936). The start of my systematic work on the project for the present dictionary in 1994 was greatly motivated also by the unfortunate circumstance that—with the exception of three outstanding philologists and linguists (W. Vycichl, W. A. Ward, C. T. Hodge)—Egyptian philology and linguistics showed less interest than ever towards the problems of a linguistic comparison between Egyptian and its Afro-Asiatic relatives in the second half of the 20th century until the 1990s (the renaissance of the Rösslerian school in Egyptian linguistics). This lack of interest is doubly unfortunate because the last four or five decades of the 20th century witnessed extraordinary progress in Afro-Asiatic comparative and descriptive linguistics.

It is high time that Egyptian linguistics takes again its worthy role in the work of Afro-Asiatic linguistics (which has not hitherto been carried out by specialists in Egyptian linguistics). Nowadays we know much more about the phonological system and lexicon of the related modern African (Berber, Cushitic, Omotic, and Chadic) branches of Afro-Asiatic and their connection to the branches of ancient documentation: Semitic and Egyptian. These new results will also have a great impact on Egyptian etymological research.

The most fundamental aim pursued throughout my work was to present and analyze the *external* parallels of the Egyptian lexical material, using all the new results in Afro-Asiatic comparative studies. It is probable that my work will somewhat disappoint those philologically oriented scholars who might expect me to lay emphasis on the philological and textual background of the discussed Egyptian roots. I must stress right at the start that my work does not and was not intended to serve such purposes. A comprehensive survey of the Afro-Asiatic background of the well-described Egyptian roots is a huge task in itself. A synthesis of the *internal* Egyptian lexicographical literature is desirable but it can be accomplished only in the framework of another great project. I firmly believe that Egyptian philology

will be able to undertake this serious challenge in the next few decades.

I hope that the present dictionary will contribute to the Afro-Asiatic comparative lexicon and increase our knowledge about the Afro-Asiatic character of Egyptian. Throughout my work (esp. in the dictionary part beginning with vol. 2) I placed great emphasis on presenting all alternative views about Egyptian historical phonology and all alternative etymologies (both possible and unacceptable ones) of the discussed Egyptian roots, so that the interested reader may form his/her own opinion and decide which solution to accept—independently from my own suggestions and orientation. I believe this method is the correct approach which may lead us to finding definite solutions to the obscure and undecided questions of Egyptian historical phonology and etymology. I would like the “Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian” (EDE) to serve as a thesaurus, a standard collection of Egypto-Afro-Asiatic etymologies.

I dedicate my work to the memory of Igor’ M. D’jakonov.

G. T.
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