

“Speaking the Words”: Linguistic Variation in the Pyramid Texts

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“Speaking the Words”: Linguistic Variation in the Pyramid Texts

By

Brendan Hainline



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Cover illustration: Detail of the antechamber (north wall) in the pyramid of *Wnis*; photo by Brendan Hainline

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Notes on Transliteration, Abbreviations and Conventions

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

The following is adapted from the International Phonetic Alphabet chart (revised to 2018). Only symbols appearing in this study are presented below.

Consonants (Pulmonic)

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Dental	Alveolar		Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal		
Plosive	p	b				t	d		c	j	k	g	q		ʔ
Nasal		m					n				ŋ				
Trill							r					ʀ			
Tap/Flap															
Fricative	ɸ	β	f	v	θ	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	ç	x	χ	ħ	ʕ	h
Lateral fricative							ɬ								
Approximant									j						
Lateral approximant							l								

Symbols to the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless.

Diacritics

	Meaning	Example
‘	Ejective	p’
h	Aspirated	t ^h
j	Palatalized	k ^j

Other Symbols

w Voiced labial-velar approximant

Suprasegmentals

- ' Primary stress

Egyptian Transliteration and IPA Equivalences

Values are for the Old Kingdom.

	;	/R/, sometimes /l/
	i	/j/, possibly also /ʔ/ or marking a vowel, but only in initial position
	y	/j/, the difference in usage relative single ʃ is not always consistent
	ʿ	/ʔ/
	w	/w/
	b	/b/
	p	/p/
	f	/f/
	m	/m/
	n	/n/, sometimes /l/
	r	/r/, sometimes /l/
	h	/h/
	ḥ	/ḥ/
	ḫ	/x/
	ḥ	/ç/
	z	/z/, rarely /s/
	s	/s/
	š	/ʃ/
	q	/q/
	g	/g/
	k	/k/
	t	/t/
	ṯ	/c/
	d	/d/
	ḏ	/ʒ/

Bracket Meanings and Uses

- [x] Hieroglyph(s) damaged or missing
 (x) Hieroglyph(s) not written, usually conventional omissions
 <x> Hieroglyph missing due to scribal error

- {x} Hieroglyph mistakenly written due to scribal error
 <x> Transliteration value of a sign
 /x/ Phonological value

Linguistic Glossing Abbreviations

These glosses are largely taken from di Biase-Dyson et al. 2009 and Loprieno et al. 2017, with some supplementary abbreviations when necessary.

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ADJZ	adjectivized (nisbe)
ADV.INF	adverbial infinitive (complementary infinitive)
ADVZ	adverbialization (negatival complement)
AGT	agent marking particle
ANT	anterior (<i>s_{dm}.n≠f</i> , <i>s_{dm}(w)</i> -passive)
ATTN	attention marker, presentative particle
C	common (gender)
CN	cosmological topographical name
COP	copula
COMP	complementizer
CORD	coordinating particle
DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distal deixis
DL	dual
DN	divine name
EXLM	exclamation
F	feminine
FOCZ	focalizer
GN	geographic name
IMP	imperative
IMPF	imperfect
M	masculine
N	neuter
NEG	negation
NEUT	distance-neutral deixis
NOM?	nominalizer(?)
PASS	passive
PERF	perfect

PL	plural
PN	personal name
PRO	pronoun
PROS	prospective
PROX	proximal deixis
PTCP	participle
REL	relative
STAT	stative
SUBJ	subject element
TITLE	title
VOC	vocative
VRTREL	virtual relative

Abbreviations of Mortuary Texts

PT	Pyramid Texts
PT ^A	Pyramid Texts (numbers from Allen 2013b)
CT	Coffin Texts
BD	Book of the Dead

Abbreviations of Pyramid Text Attestations

W	<i>Wnis</i>
T	<i>Tti</i>
P	<i>Ppy</i> I
ˆN	<i>ˆnh-n-s-Ppy</i> II (queen)
M	<i>Mr.n-Rˆ</i>
N	<i>Ppy</i> II <i>Nfr-k3-Rˆ</i>
ˆIP	<i>ˆIpwt</i> II (queen)
NT	<i>Nt</i> (queen)
WD	<i>Wd̄bt-n(ˆi)</i> (queen)

Abbreviations of Coptic Dialects

A	Akhmemic
S	Sahidic
B	Bohairic

- F Fayyumic
- L Lycopolitan
- O Old Coptic

Notes on Conventions

Despite the best efforts and intentions of modern Egyptology, the conventions of transliterating Egyptian hieroglyphs into Roman characters remain a source a contentious debate. The following conventions are those which will be used in this study.

Representations of Proper Names and Egyptian Terms

Names in this study will be left un-romanized. Thus, I will write *Wn̄is* and not *Unas*, *Unis*, or *Wenis*, and I will write *Ppy* II *Nfr-k̄3-R̄r* and not *Pepi* II *Neferkara*, *Pepy* II *Neferkare*, or some other permutation thereof.

The benefit of this convention is that it reduces needless confusion—as shown in the preceding two examples, modern scholars cannot agree on standard normalizations. Also, since this study was dependent on a (searchable) database, it prevents confusion in normalization from hindering queries and searches.

Furthermore, the common methods of romanization of Egyptian names is not based on Old Egyptian phonology. For example, the name *Nfr-k̄3-R̄r* more accurately would be romanized as something like *Nāfirka'ri'* (← **/na:fiṛka(?)ri/*), which obviously differs from *Neferkara* (*/nefərkara/*). Given the choice between imperfect systems, I opt to choose the one that indicates every Egyptian consonant.

Likewise, Egyptian words that have no clear parallel in English such as *ḥ*, *b̄3*, and *k̄3*, will be left untranslated and in transliteration, as opposed to the romanized *akh*, *ba*, and *ka*.

As a final note, I will transliterate the name of the goddess 𓆎 as *ʾst* and not *ʒst*. The first consonant is never explicitly written in the Pyramid Texts, but it was almost certainly a */ʔ/* introducing an initial vowel; on the other hand, $\langle 3 \rangle$ seems to predominately express */R/* or */l/* in the Old Kingdom. Therefore, the use of $\langle 3 \rangle$ in transliterating 𓆎 is not appropriate in this period.

Normalization of Transcriptions

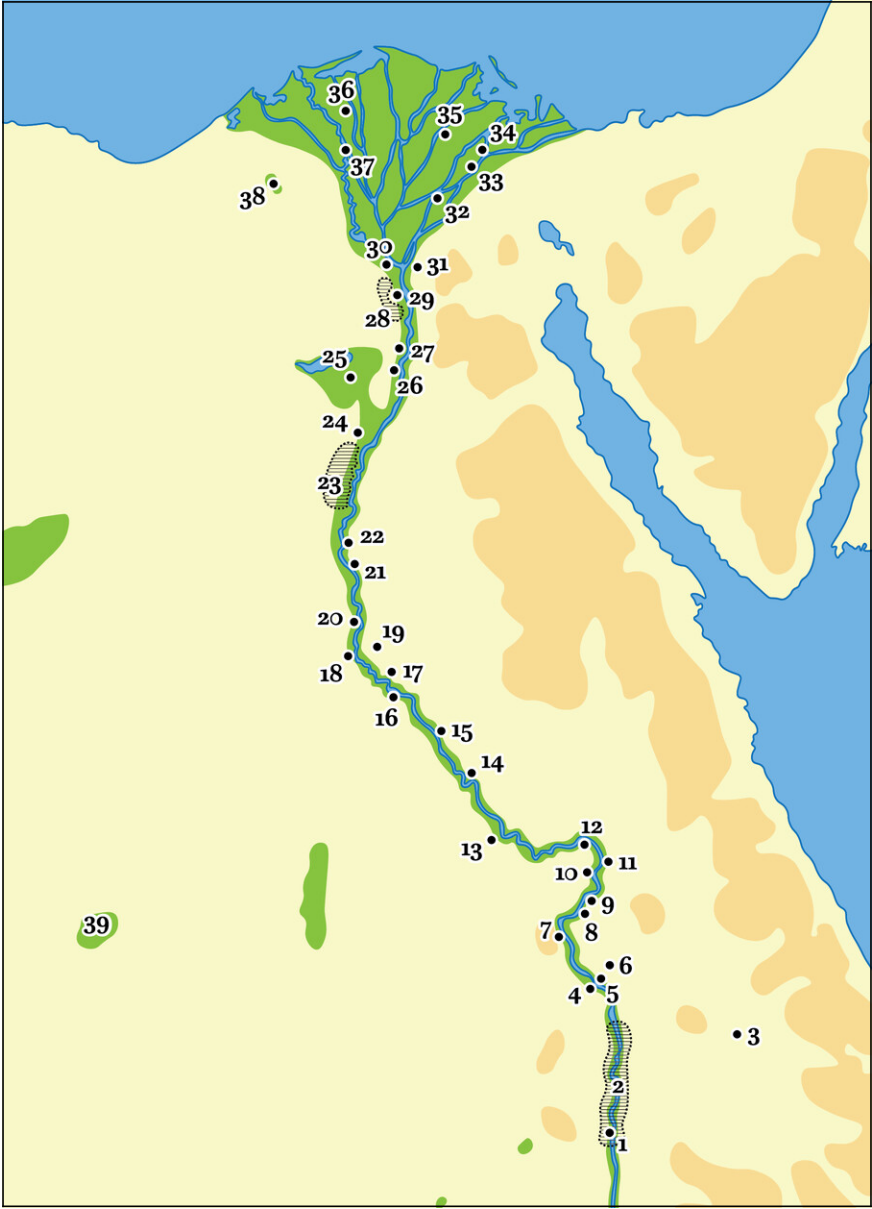
Scholars writing on Egyptian and Afro-Asiatic phonology employ a number of different transcription systems to represent the phonemes underlying Egyptian writing and the

Proto-Afro-Asiatic phonemes from which the phonemes of Egyptian have developed. Conflicts between these disparate systems complicate our ability to compare the ideas of these different scholars.

Thus, when possible, the different phonological transcription systems presented in this study will be translated into the International Phonetic Alphabet. This will allow for more direct comparisons between the competing theories. The so-called emphatic consonants, traditionally transcribed with a dot underneath (*ḳ, *x̣, etc.), will be transcribed as ejectives (*k', *x', etc.).¹

1 See Diakonoff 1988, pp. 35–36; Takács 1999, pp. xviii–xix.

Map of Egyptian Sites and Settlements Referenced



Map Key

Ancient Egyptian names are included when known. A \triangle indicates the necropolis associated with a settlement.

☩ UPPER EGYPT ☩		21	Zawiet el-Mayetin (زاوية الميتين)
1	<i>3bw</i> Elephantine + \triangle Qubbet el-Hawa (قبة الهوا)	22	Ṭihnā el-Gebel (طهنا الجبل), Tehna
2	<i>T3-Zti</i> 1st Upper Egyptian nome (Oxyrhynchite)	23	<i>W3bwi</i> 19th Upper Egyptian nome (Deshasha)
3	Wadi Umm Ḥoḏe (وادي أم حوض)	24	Deshasha (دشاشة)
4	<i>Nhn</i> el-Köm el-'Aḥmar (الكوم الأحمر), Hierakonpolis	25	<i>Sdt</i> el-Fayyum (الفيوم), Crocodiopolis
5	<i>Nhb</i> el-Kab (الكاب)	26	Meidum (ميدوم)
6	Wadi Hilāl (وادي هلال)	☩ LOWER EGYPT ☩	
7	<i>Inrwti(?)</i> el-Gebelein (الجبليين)	27	el-Lisht (الليشت)
8	<i>W3st</i> Thebes	28	Old Kingdom Royal Necropolises
9	el-Medamud (المدامود)	<i>R-stꜥw</i> el-Giza (الجيزة), Giza	
10	<i>Nbwṭ</i> Naqada (ناقدا)	Saqqara (سقارة)	
11	<i>Gbtiv</i> Qift (قفط), Coptos	Abuṣir (ابوصير)	
12	<i>Twnt</i> Dendera (دندرة)	Abu Ghurab (ابوغراب)	
13	<i>3bꜥw</i> Afūd (افود), Abydos	Dahshur (دهشور)	
14	<i>Ipw</i> 'Akhmim (أخميم) + \triangle el-Ḥawawish (الحاواويش)	29	<i>Mn-nfr</i> Mit Rahina (ميت رهينة), Memphis
15	Qāw el-Kebir (قاو الكبير)	30	<i>Hm</i> Ausim (اوسيم), Letopolis
16	<i>Z3wt</i> 'Asyut (اسيوط), Siut	31	<i>Twmw</i> el-Matariya (المطرية), Heliopolis
17	Deir el-Gebrawi (دير الجبراوي)	32	<i>B3st</i> Tell Baṣṭa (تل بسطة), Bubastis
18	<i>Qis</i> el-Quṣeyya (القوصية), Cusae + \triangle Meir (مير)	33	Tell 'Ibrahim 'Awad (تل ابراهيم عواد)
19	<i>Hwt-nbw</i> Hatnub	34	<i>Im(m)t</i> Tell Nebesha (تل نيشة)
20	<i>Hmnw</i> <i>Wnw</i> el-Ashmunein (الأشمونين), Hermopolis	35	<i>Ddt</i> Tell el-Rub'a (تل الربيع), Mendes
		36	<i>P + Dp</i> Tell el-Fara'in (تل الفراعين), Buto
		37	<i>Z3w</i> Ṣa el-Ḥagar (صا الحاجر), Sais
		38	<i>Stpt</i> Wadi el-Naṭrun (وادي النطرون)
		☩ OASES ☩	
		39	el-Dakhla Oasis (الداخلة)