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Quaegebeur [Book review]

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Willy Clarysse and Ana I. Blasco Torres, *Egyptian Language in Greek Sources*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 280, Leuven-Paris-Bristol, CT: Peeters 2019 (ISBN 978-90-429-3775-8, 1-XII + 1-372 pages, reviewed by Sonja Dahlgren.

This volume constitutes a collection of Jan Quaegebeur's (henceforth Q) altogether 31 articles that focus on what phonetic and phonological information may be gained of Egyptian-Coptic from Greek transcriptions, using especially names as evidence. He was right in exploring the data, of course, as to write about a person means mentioning his/her name. Therefore, throughout the centuries of Greek presence in Egypt, and throughout the dialectal areas, Egyptian names would have been transcribed in the Greek texts in Greek alphabet. The articles range from 1969 to 1995, with many of the articles belonging to The Coptic Encyclopaedia, which is nowadays online. However, the value of this edition is clear especially regarding the oldest articles, published in various journals, the oldest volumes of which may be hard to access for many readers (the present author included).

I will start with a couple of comments on the organisation of the volume. First, the editors have numbered the articles in Latin numbers (I-XXXI) and use these numbers, instead of the common practice of name and year, when referring to other articles by the same author; the code for the articles' details are given on a separate page. Personally, I fail to see the benefit of this practice as an individual scholar whose brain is hardwired for coding precisely the omitted information, i.e. name and year, as the 'name' of the article, and have had to cross-check the Latin numbers given for the articles with the original titles several times on reading the individual articles. But, these are individual preferences and for the sake of convenience for the readers of the volume, the numbering system of the edition is also used in this review when referring to individual articles. Page numbers refer to the page numbers of this volume. Of course, the shorthand of Latin numbers makes making notes much quicker, which is no small benefit regarding this volume. Another detail related to the editorial process, and of special advantage for the contemporary reader, is that the editors have updated the research literature Q refers to in the articles, with publications touching upon the same issues but published after the original articles written of the subjects by Q. These have been provided in square brackets with a smaller font, thus distinguishing them from the original sources Q used. A very useful feature, indeed, for the readers that want to pursue the ideas further.

The first part of the book consists of 'general methodological articles' (I-VI) that are of special interest regarding the reconstruction of the Egyptian phonological system, and for that reason the focus of this review. As more specific evidence, often with quite detailed etymological research that has required good skills in Egyptian, the edition includes

studies related to theonymy (VII-XIV), anthroponymy (XV-XXI), toponymy (XXII-XXVIII) and common words (XXIX-XXXI). The articles are written in English, French, German and Dutch. Helpfully, the first editor, Willy Clarysse, has translated the Dutch articles into English, wisely recognising that this is not one of the major languages of the field.

Overall, the edition is a valuable contribution to those interested in Egyptian phonology, a topic much understudied, as also pointed out by the editors. According to the editors (Clarysse & Blasco Torres 2019: VII), the study of Egyptian phonology has lost its appeal compared to the previous generation of scholars, including e.g. Kahle (1954), Vergote (1960), Greenberg (1962), Girgis (1966), Gignac (1976) and last, but not least, the articles by Q himself. The majority of the work related to phonology within Egyptology has, since 90's, focused on providing evidence for problems to do with cultural history. This is reflected in some of Q's articles as well, and consequently, three articles of this nature have only been included in part (XXV, XXVIII and XXX). The same general development is paralleled in linguistics, with the keen interest of the Neogrammarians and structuralists for phonological studies having been abandoned for a surge of study of syntax in the last decades. Luckily, slowly but surely, phonological studies are on the rise again, so perhaps the new enthusiasm will stretch itself into Egyptology and Coptology as well. Gignac made a comeback in (1991), and shortly thereafter there were major studies of Egyptian-Coptic phonology by e.g. Depuydt (1993) and Peust (1999), and lately by Haspelmath (2015) and Grossman & Richter (2017); the last in connection with the dialectal forms of Coptic light verb constructions.

The key manifestation of Q is that Greek transcriptions of Egyptian names offer more reliable evidence of Egyptian dialectal phonology than Coptic. This would be because Coptic dialectal information mostly comes from literary texts, making the geographical areas in which the dialects were spoken difficult to trace (this, of course, has changed in the modern era, with more and more documentary text editions being published all the time). The Greek transcriptions give information of Egyptian dialects, the delineation of which can be taken back 'for over half a millenium'. This is based on the presupposition that place names and personal names mentioned in the Greek papyri can be reliably localised, and therefore form a better base for the reconstruction of Coptic isophones, as long as the names can be identified with the Demotic equivalents. This involves the usual considerations of the different phonemic qualities of Greek and Egyptian, disentangling the Greek endings placed on Egyptian names etc. Finally, the variant forms of names should be localised and dated, and with enough examples and cross-referencing them with the Coptic data, a map could be formed of the dialects of Egypt, giving information on the

prehistory of Coptic and the coverage of Coptic dialects in the Graeco-Roman era. This would greatly add to the knowledge of Demotic phonology (V: 26-27). It is indeed true that since second language (L2) Greek does not include dialectal differences to the extent of Coptic dialectal texts, and it is often written phonetically when standards are not known or cared about, this contact variety can give valuable information of Coptic phonological features, stress system and even coarticulatory phonetics.¹ Often this is simpler than analysing the Coptic dialectal variants which have standardised orthographic practices for e.g. the marking of schwa (I: 4, XIX: 210).

However, as Q himself points out, especially the dialect-specific vocalisation patterns of Egyptian can also be of use to Greek papyrologists, who often have a lesser command of Egyptian and can therefore interpret e.g. the localisation or the (Greek) case of a dialectal name variant wrong (V: 27; VI: 40). The dialectal vocalisation of a personal name can also be a valuable source of information toward the origin of a text or a person (see also XV on this). For instance, if it is known that the Egyptian word *ḥsy* ‘praised, blessed’ is preserved as *ecie* in Bohairic, and as *zacie* in Sahidic and Subakhmimic, then we have good reason to place Greek documents with the forms *-εσης* and *-ασιης* in the respective areas in Egypt. This is based on the assumption of Greek copying the vowel qualities of the Egyptian original word according to the local dialectal forms. Likewise, *con* - *can* ‘brother’ and *cnay* - *cney/cno* ‘two’ are realised in Greek transcriptions as *-σνας* and *-σνωζ/-σνευς* in the relevant dialect areas. The same pattern is repeated in *πυοι* - *πυαι*, with the Greek geographic-specific forms being *Ψοις* and *Ψαις*, respectively (with some graphemic variants). However, this particular example also reveals one of the obstacles of using loan phonology for reconstructing a language’s phonological system, as there are always phonemes that do not exist in the borrowing language and therefore, there are no graphemes to depict these. They are frequently then replaced with the nearest equivalent, as in this case. Greek did not have the voiceless postalveolar sibilant /ʃ/ that Egyptian-Coptic did, and therefore *shai* (following the masculine article) is replaced with the alveolar sibilant /s/ Greek did have (examples are found in V: 27-31; see also VI: 46-47 and XVII: 185-186 on this compatibility of the phonemic inventories, especially difficult for Greek scribes in the time of Demotic, thus producing more phonetic spellings for vowels). Based on this rendering of the Egyptian name, then, not all of it would have been recoded in a correct manner, were there no other evidence of the Coptic consonantal

¹ Sonja Dahlgren, The system of Coptic vowel reduction: Evidence from L2 Greek usage, in Kuznetsova, Natalia & Cormac Anderson (eds.), *The dynamics of vowel reduction and loss: phonetic mechanisms and outcomes for phonology and morphology*, Italian Journal of Linguistics (forthcoming 2020).

inventory. Nevertheless it cannot be argued that these types of features of the written language can give information on the provenance of the texts, and of dating in some instances. One of the appealing features of the Greek material is the fact that some name-forms were only used within a limited period, and could also be geographically bound to one region; for example names that compounded with Θῖν- coming from Elephantine/Syene (VI: 39). It is also worth noting, for the benefit of Egyptologists, that some Egyptian names have only been found in Greek texts (VI: 42). Furthermore it seems that the possibility of transcribing Egyptian names in Greek made way for the development of the Coptic alphabet (III: 11), from Pre-Old Coptic to Coptic in stages, although e.g. the script and spoken language forms for 'Old Coptic' are not always a match, the language form mainly still representing Demotic (IV: 16-21; also VI: 39).

The reconstructions of the phonological systems of text languages are always partially based on evidence coming from contact linguistic sources, i.e. how other languages in contact with the language under study transcribe loanwords, place names, names of the rulers etc. in their own languages, often written with another type of writing system. Therefore, in addition to the diachronic reconstruction of the Egyptian language based on comparative data from other Afroasiatic languages², the languages that were in contact with Egyptian offer evidence of the phonology of Egyptian that, for a large part, was written in a consonantal script. Greek was one of these, and coincided with the emergence of Coptic that also used the Greek alphabet, so e.g. vowel variation of Egyptian names as deployed in the Greek script can be considered a fairly reliable repetition of the original due to the close enough qualities of the vowel phonemes of Coptic written with the Greek graphemes. In a way then, it can be said Q to have been a forerunner of research on how L2 usage of names benefit the study of phonology of the first/native language (L1). On the other hand, Q deals with subjects that have become common knowledge for contact linguistics through the works of e.g. Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1950), and later, building on these, e.g. Thomason & Kaufman (1992), Thomason (2001), Matras (2009) etc. It is slightly disturbing that he clearly has not made a dent in any of this research literature as he makes no references to any of even the earliest linguistic research. Many of the things he mentions, related to the subject, are of course intuitive and need no reference as such, and in any case, the lack of references of linguistic material is not uncommon in the study of the ancient languages. This being said, a small detail, but important none the less, is the rather frequent confusion between phonetics and phonology. Q labels both phenomena under 'phonetics', even when discussing e.g. stress patterns of Coptic causing the vowels to be reduced to schwa (I & VI). Moreover, the generally good

² See e.g. Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian. A linguistic introduction*, Cambridge 1995, 31-32.

idea behind the onomastic research by Q is somewhat diminished by the fact that many of the examples that give dialectal forms of names, helping with localisation patterns of documents, are repeated in several articles.

On the whole, the volume offers a valuable read for Egyptologists interested in the diachronic development of Egyptian, to Greek papyrologists, and scholars interested in the phonology and phonetics of the two languages (Egyptian Greek being affected by Egyptian phonology as well).³ The detailed etymological analysis of some of the name forms, especially the part dealing with theonymy (VII-XIV), will not be of use to anyone without knowledge of Egyptian, but most of the methodological material would benefit many papyrologists regardless of their background. One thing is of special interest with regard to contact linguistics, a topic immensely relevant to especially Coptologists and papyrologists dealing with linguistic material. This is the fact that Q believes Greek transcriptions of Egyptian names to offer more reliable evidence of Egyptian phonology than other words due to the unified system of transliteration of them by the Greeks from quite early on in their dealings with the Egyptians (I: 4; V: 26. In Dahlgren (2017)⁴, I stated that because of their irregularity, they offer more faithful productions of the phonetic level than e.g. loanwords that became part of the Coptic lexicon, thus receiving standard orthographic forms already in the early stages of Coptic. Greek loanwords could have developed further phonologically with Coptic internal phonological developments, leaving fossilised orthographic forms far behind the spoken language, whereas the variation in names could have presented the (contemporary) phonetic reality more accurately. This view is also repeated regarding name orthographic variation in modern linguistic research.

Following the modern approach, there is variation in the names because they are less standardised than common nouns.⁵ Perhaps what Q meant was that there was initially more standardisation regarding Egyptian place and personal names than other vocabulary, at a

³ See e.g. Francis T. Gignac, *A grammar of the Greek papyri of the Roman and Byzantine periods*, Vol. I Phonology, Milano 1976; Francis T. Gignac, Phonology of the Greek of Egypt, influence of Coptic on the, In Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic encyclopedia*, Volume 8 of 8, New York 1991, 71-96; Geoffrey Horrocks, *Greek: A history of the language and its speakers*, Oxford 2010; Sonja Dahlgren, Outcome of long-term language contact: Transfer of Egyptian phonological features onto Greek in Graeco-Roman Egypt, University of Helsinki, doctoral dissertation, 2017.

⁴ Dahlgren, Outcome of long-term language contact, 56-58.

⁵ John Anderson, *The Grammar of names*, Oxford 2007, 3-6.

time when that other vocabulary was still largely omitted from the official register⁶, unlike it was at the stage of Coptic? Coming to Coptic, it is hard to draw a line between more frequent loanwords and names; as we know, there was much variation in especially the most frequent loanwords as well, such as *holokottinos*.⁷ Coptic by and large had standard orthographic forms for most Greek loanwords, so if there was variation, it could be for two things: 1) the standard was not remembered or 2) the standard was ignored, or not even known, if the word was frequent enough to be considered a native word.⁸ Regardless, at the stage of Coptic, it might have been more frequent to phonetically spell names than loanwords due to them showing up less frequently. The outcome of loanwords in general tends to be phonetic if they are acquired via spoken language, and phonological (i.e. more faithful to their original orthographic forms) if acquired via written language, or generally when used by more competent L2 speakers.⁹

This fundamental difference in the approach for using names for evidence by Q on the one hand and the present author on the other, points out an interesting topic for further study for those interested in loan phonology. It all comes down to the individual – who was educated or interested enough to know the standards. Furthermore, integration to L1 phonology is phonological if you have experience of the L2 mainly through written level, and phonetic if you mainly have experience of it through spoken language. Furthermore, societal bilingualism was probably more limited in the Ptolemaic era, coinciding with Demotic, than it was in the Roman era, coinciding with Coptic. Once again, Egyptology could offer some worthwhile results for the field of contact linguistics as it is plainly clear that the different layers of the language contact realised the same phenomenon contrarily for various sociolinguistic reasons.

⁶ John Ray, Literacy and language in Egypt in the Late and Persian Periods, In Alan K. Bowman & Greg Woolf G. (eds.), *Literacy and power in the ancient world*, Cambridge 1994, 60 -62.

⁷ Hans Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Archiv für die Ausgabe der Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Band 148, Berlin 2002, 569-574.

⁸ Dahlgren, Outcome of long-term language contact, 155-158.

⁹ Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in contact. Findings and problems*, The Hague 1968 [1953], 28; Katrin Dohlus, in: *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 42 (2005), 117-118, Phonetics or phonology: Asymmetries in loanword adaptations–French and German mid front rounded vowels in Japanese. See also Einar Haugen, in: *Language* 26 (2) (1950), 215-217, The Analysis of linguistic borrowing.

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