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TRADITIONAL EGYPTIAN I (DYNAMICS)

ديناميكية التقليدية المصرية

Pascal Vernus

Neo-Mittelägyptisch I/Spätmittelägyptisch I (Dynamik)
Égyptien de tradition I (dynamiques)

The problem of the phenomenon referred to as égyptien de tradition *(Traditional Egyptian) derives from a basic and long-made observation: a great many texts from ancient Egypt implement an obviously anachronistic and partly artificial language, reflecting elements of earlier stages of Egyptian in varying proportions and degrees while also reflecting elements of the contemporary language. Texts continued to be written in* égyptien de tradition*, either on easy-to-handle supports such as papyri, tablets, and ostraca, or on durable objects and monuments, until the end of Pharaonic civilization.*

إن مشكلة الظاهرة التى يشار إليها بالتقليدية المصرية تنبع من ملاحظة أساسية وطويلة: عدد كبير من النصوص المصرية القديمة زودت بلغة إلى حد ما اصطناعية وعفا عليها الزمن ، مما يعكس عناصر من مراحل مصرية سابقة بنسب ودرجات متفاوتة ، كما يعكس ايضا عناصر من اللغة المعاصرة. استمر كتابة النصوص بالطريقة التقليدية المصرية، اما على أشياء السهل التعامل معها مثل أوراق البردي، والألواح والأوستراكا ، أو على الأشياء المتينة والآثار، حتى نهاية الحضارة الفرعونية.

A fine illustration of the phenomenon referred to as *égyptien de tradition* (roughly translated in English as "Traditional Egyptian") is afforded by the very inscription that enabled the deciphering of hieroglyphs, the so-called Rosetta Stone (e.g., Parkinson 1999; Valbelle and Leclant eds. 2000). Erected for monumental display, the Rosetta Stone encompasses three versions of a sacerdotal decree (often referred to as the "Memphis Decree") issued on behalf of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203 – 181 BCE). The Greek version, which is clearly the basic one, is inscribed on the lower part of the stela. Two other versions occupy the upper parts: both are in Egyptian, but in two different varieties of the language. The first occupies the topmost part of the stela, a position indicating this version as the most prestigious. This upper version is written in hieroglyphs, a script that also marks it as the most prestigious one, and is arguably a translation of the version in the middle part of the stela, written in the Demotic language and script. While the Demotic version reflects the standard written Egyptian of the time (Depauw 1997: 125-127; Simpson 1996), the hieroglyphic version is written in a language that broadly imitates Middle Egyptian. On the same monument and conveying the same contents, two varieties of Egyptian thus coexist, here associated with two different scripts: the contemporary Demotic and the

linguistically antiquated, high-status *égyptien de tradition*.

More generally, *égyptien de tradition* can be characterized as a linguistic practice aimed at mirroring an ideal language conceived of as associated with the language of creation and primeval times. Linguistically, *égyptien de tradition* can be described as the more or less comprehensive imitation of earlier forms of the language, mainly First Phase/Earlier Egyptian (Old and Middle Egyptian), but also elements of Second Phase/Later Egyptian (in particular, New Kingdom Late Egyptian; for the basic typological contrast between First Phase/Earlier Egyptian and Second Phase/Later Egyptian, see Vernus 1988). The cultural and linguistic dynamics and typology of *égyptien de tradition* across all periods are addressed here; for the period from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE specifically, see Engsheden (2016).

History of Research

Although illustrated by the very monument that prompted Champollion's successful decipherment, the problem raised by the imitation of earlier stages of Egyptian was not fully appreciated for a long time, let alone clearly thematized. Significantly enough, Daumas (1952) provided a detailed and worthy comparison between the Greek and Egyptian versions of the Rosetta Stone text and other Ptolemaic trilingual decrees, but did not attempt to further discuss the linguistic nature of the hieroglyphic Egyptian version. It was only during the second half of the twentieth century—long after the publication of Junker's (1906) pioneering grammar of the Dendera texts—that the problem began to be discussed as such, primarily as a consequence of improved knowledge of the enormous corpus of inscriptions from Ptolemaic and Roman temples. In an admirable article, but with a scope restricted to "Ptolemaic," Sauneron (1972: 152-153) reached the core of the problem, opening the way for further studies of the grammar of Ptolemaic and Roman temples, such as those of Žabkar (1980, 1981), Paulet (2006, 2014), Broze (2013), and chiefly the recent and thorough work by Kurth (2008).

Significantly enough, A.H. Gardiner, the best connoisseur of the Egyptian language, reduced the issue of the widespread use of obsolete forms of Egyptian to a mere archaistic fashion, chronologically limited to the Kushite and Saite dynasties (*GEG*: 1). At the most, his judgment implied that the inscriptions of these periods were worthy of grammatical studies; hence the contributions by Priese (1972), the less insightful one by Grimal (1981: Chapter II), and the studies by Logan and Westenholz (1972), Rainey (1976), Spalinger (1979), Der Manuelian (1994: 103-295), and Depuydt (1999). Texts from other periods have also been discussed in special grammars or grammatical studies, by Sherman (1981: 97-99), Jansen-Winkeln (1994, 1996), Lustman (1999), and chiefly Engsheden (2003) from a perceptive perspective.

Statements of a wider scope about the problem raised by the practice of using obsolete forms of language have been presented here and there, often relying on the somewhat undifferentiated notion of "conservatism" (e.g., Nordh 1966: 146). A tentative conceptualization of the phenomenon was presented by Vernus (1982a), who coined the French term *égyptien de tradition* (Vernus 1982b, 1985, 1996). This term was accepted throughout the French-speaking Egyptological community (Winand 1999: 224-230; Broze 2013; Paulet 2014) and at times also outside it (Engsheden 2003; Werning 2013 and fc.; Gillen 2014), largely through the rough English equivalent "Traditional Egyptian" (Engsheden 2016; Stauder fc.). (Note that the literal French translation of "Traditional Egyptian" would be "égyptien traditionnel," which does not convey precisely the same meaning as "égyptien de tradition": while the former emphasizes the status of the language, the latter emphasizes the past materials on which the language relies and which constitute the very core of the definition.) Among other terms that have been proposed, *égyptien de convention* (Kruchten 1988) is obviously a variant, perhaps with a more restricted relevance (due to its implications, the term "convention" may exclude the mass of ancient texts transmitted through reproductive processes). *Neo-Mittelägyptisch* (Junge 1985) and

Spätmittelägyptisch (Jansen-Winkeln 1996), with its English equivalent, "Late Middle Egyptian" (Loprieno 1995: 6), are less fortunate labels.

What the terms involve has also been the object of debate, the status of *égyptien de tradition* within the history of Egyptian being appreciated differently by Junge (1985, 1987) and by Jansen-Winkeln (1995). From a linguistic point of view, "Ptolemaic" clearly relates to the problem of *égyptien de tradition*, but the term extends far beyond a mere issue of language to include aspects such as the writing system and the *grammaire du temple* (Engsheden 2016; Quack 2013, *contra* Kurth 2011). Renewing the pioneering insight of Junker (1905), emphasis was rightly put on the strong influence of Second-Phase Egyptian in contexts with an otherwise basic linguistic orientation towards earlier stages of language (Quack 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2008, 2010). This indisputable fact has not always been correctly assessed in its implications, hence von Lieven's (2007, 2013) proposal that new texts would not be composed at all in earlier stages of language. If this were so, Sematauytefnakht's autobiographical inscription, which dates to the Persian domination in Egypt, should be dated back to the second millennium BCE (see also the refutations by Jansen-Winkeln 2011 and Moers 2013: 38-39).

The Cultural Status of Égyptien de Tradition: Positive Obsolescence and the Weight of Ancient Texts

Far from being irrelevant to their contemporary context, texts composed in earlier stages of Egyptian were deeply integrated into the regular operations of Pharaonic civilization as parts of practices in two major domains: 1) religion (encompassing three overlapping spheres: temple cults and rituals, mortuary religion, and everyday religious practices, including magic); and 2) monumental expression, including the commemoration of the king's ideological activity (building inscriptions, military records, annals, royal commands, etc.) and the self-presentations of non-royal individuals (tomb inscriptions, autobiographies, inscriptions on votive monuments). These two domains often overlapped. For instance, the self-presentations of individuals directly served their *post mortem* destiny, thereby sharing a common purpose with funerary and mortuary texts; not surprisingly then, the two types of texts could easily be interwoven on the same monument. Similarly, royal inscriptions were frequently inserted within temple decoration because the king's duties included the performance of specific rituals; conversely, the king could include funerary and mortuary texts in his tomb.

At a minimal level, *égyptien de tradition* can thus be defined as a linguistic practice of utilizing elements of previous historical stages of Egyptian, substantiating the socio-cultural relevance of past linguistic forms to the present in ways to be discussed below. Linguistically obsolete forms of the language were, in other words, deliberately implemented in religious and monumental expressions because they were deemed an efficient device for fulfilling the particular requirements of these domains.

This positive quality attached to linguistic obsolescence is best accounted for in relation to the cultural weight, or saliency, of the ancient texts themselves. The most ancient authoritative corpora, such as those to which the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts belong, were subjected to continuous transmission, exegesis, dis-membering, and re-membering (e.g., Altenmüller 1984; Gestermann 1994: 91-93; Mathieu 2004; Vernus 2004). Subsequent authoritative compositions often implement or adapt parts of these corpora, all of which remained available (as far as was possible) and open to potential reuse down to the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. The reason for this cultural weight, or saliency, of ancient texts lies more broadly, however, in the status of the past (e.g., Assmann 1985; Baines 1989; Wildung 1969; Redford 1986; Gozzoli 2006; Blumenthal 2013; Tait ed. 2003; Tiradritti ed. 2008; Fitzenreiter ed. 2009). The past basically functioned as a provider of prototypes: it offered for reproduction models that directly related to primordial times—that is, to times in which everything appeared in its fullness, not yet affected by the inescapable "depravation of history" (Vernus 1995a: 47-49). It was in no

small part via the texts that these models of the past were transmitted: ancient texts thereby inherently possessed permanent values. They were deemed relevant at any period, as one could always expect to find something useful in them in relation to the present. This conception of the past had consequences on the dynamics of written production until the end of Pharaonic civilization, particularly in the following two ways.

Firstly, a great deal of written production relating to the two domains of religion and monumental expression exhibits the direct reuse of ancient texts. "Authoritative texts," encompassing what are loosely called "religious texts"—that is, knowledge texts (*rḫ*), including magical texts, medical texts, astronomical texts, etc.—share the basic hallmark of being conceived of as originally produced by the gods and therefore ultimately by the solar creator (Vernus 2016: § 2.1, 2.2; texts attributed to prestigious humans could also be promoted to the status of authoritative texts and thus taken as models, since they were considered to have been directly inspired by the gods). Because these texts conveyed divine knowledge, they needed to be continuously transmitted and implemented anew, in various manners. The obsolescence of their language was not seen as an obstacle to their present use, but rather was deemed a positive feature because it reflected something of the language of primordial times. The continued reuse of ancient texts at a time when the language in which they were written had long become obsolete represents what is here defined as "reproductive *égyptien de tradition*."

Secondly, ancient texts were also reused indirectly, as models to be drawn upon in composing new texts that related to, or accounted for, contemporary situations, events, beliefs, or ideas. Since authoritative texts were allegedly rooted in the gods' and ultimately the creator's activity, the language in which these texts were written was seen as possessing the basic property of the gods' and ultimately the creator's language: its power to capture the essence of what it expressed and, therefore, the performative power of creating something by its mere utterance. Imitation of

this pristine language thus imparted these properties to a newly composed text. In particular, it allowed what was being said to be inserted within the layers of creation itself. Newly composed texts with a linguistic inspiration derived through the indirect and/or partial reuse of ancient texts represent what is here defined as "productive *égyptien de tradition*."

Since the transmission of authoritative texts extended continuously over centuries and even millennia, the linguistic status of such texts could change over time. For instance, the language of the *Guides of the Afterlife (Jenseitsführer)* originally constituted the loftiest register of the contemporary language, exhibiting the artifice of scholars who specialized in composing religious texts. By the Late Period, the status of these same texts had changed to that of *égyptien de tradition* (thus on Dynasty XXX sarcophagi: see Manassa 2007).

The distinction between "reproductive *égyptien de tradition*" and "productive *égyptien de tradition*" is itself somewhat relative, depending on how the textual units themselves are defined. It can, in particular, be sensitive to the degree to which textual analysis is conducted, as is illustrated in the Ptolemaic Period by the stela erected by the prophet of Min Onnophris, son of Tanetamun, to keep his house free from snakes and scorpions (BM 190 + Ny Carlsberg 974: Borghouts 1971: 82-83, n° 121; Osing 1992: 476). This monumental stela encompasses different textual units, including a set of spells that had once been considered valuable enough to be engraved on the eastern wall of the sarcophagus chamber of the Pyramid of Unas (Spells 225-234) more than two millennia earlier. Taken as a self-contained unit on the stela, these spells relate to reproductive *égyptien de tradition*. But the inscriptions of the stela include the following materials as well: two spells of a later date, the second one being partly referred to in a later treaty concerning snake bites (Sauneron 1989: 58 [4]), written in a language that basically reflects First-Phase Egyptian; and a formulation with an overt influence from later Late Egyptian (that is, post-New-Kingdom Late Egyptian), with *nty-jw* introducing a

relative First Present with a subject different from its antecedent:

ꜣḳ (variant: *n[n] ꜣḳ꞊sn*) *r pr pn nty-jw* (〰) *N jm꞊f* "who enter (variant: they will not enter) into this house where N is"

Considered as a whole, the stela constitutes a textual unity marshaling different subsets (both textual and linguistic) to serve a unique, overriding purpose. At this higher level of description, it relates to productive *égyptien de tradition.*

Reproductive "égyptien de tradition"

One is dealing with reproductive *égyptien de tradition* when facing a text that includes features that are linguistically obsolete with respect to the time of the text's writing and/or edition on the particular artifact being considered. The text is then a copy of an ancient text (or of various ancient texts) with more or less consequential editorial changes. Numerous examples are known of ancient compositions considered worthy of transmission centuries or even millennia after their first appearance, including those with ad hoc updates meriting Assmann's apt expression "*Repristination von Tradition*" (1997: 195). For instance, a number of spells inscribed in Old Kingdom pyramids were known until the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods continuously, as self-contained units or sequences of units, with changes in spelling, vocabulary, and grammar in editorial adaptations (e.g., P. Schmitt, fourth century BCE: Möller 1900; P. Sekowski: Szczudlowska 1972; P. Walters Art Museum 551: Barbash 2011). Archive versions are documented already in the Middle Kingdom (Berger-El Naggar 2004), displaying the use of both linear hieroglyphs (so-called "cursive hieroglyphs") and hieratic (Kahl 1996: 69-73), and much later, Demotic as well (Smith 1994). These spells are also found on private and royal funereal monuments, in various manners and in varying frequencies, depending on the styles of the time. In the productions of religious science, units of spells, or sequences of units, could be reused (e.g., Pyramid Text Spell 595, reused as the starting point of Chapter 36 of

the Ritual of Offering: Tacke 2013: 147-151). Excerpts could be limited to one or several sentences (e.g., various passages implemented in the Pyramid Texts are gathered to constitute a section within a chapter linked to the Festival of the Valley, a festival obviously created far later than the Pyramid Texts: P. BM 10209, 5, 1-8 = Haikal 1970: 41-44; Goyon, J.-C. 1978: 416-417; Assmann 1990: 26). Basic spell formulations could be used to develop new compositions, e.g., *mj-n꞊k ḳbḥ jpw* "accept this cool libation," with the sandhi (fused) writing of *mj-n꞊k* in a recitation invoking *nꜣ jry.w ꜥ nꜣ nb.w tꜣ-ḏsr nꜣ nb.w smꜣ-tꜣ* "the door-keepers, the lords of the silent land, the lords of burials" (P. BM 10209, 1, 20-22; Haikal 1970: 27 and 1972: 17, with a wrong translation) and adapted according to (*jn r*) "the Ritual of the Festival of the Valley." Spells were also implemented in Ptolemaic and Roman temple inscriptions (e.g., Gutbub 1961; Žabkar 1980; Graefe 1991), or adapted to late liturgical artifacts (Evrard-Derriks and Quaegebeur 1979: 52, n. 6), late magical artifacts, etc.

Other compositions not as old as the Pyramid Texts, but which are to be classified as ancient relative to the more recent stages of Pharaonic civilization, shared a similar fate (Quack 1995: 107-109). For example, passages from the Ritual of the Amun Cult are used in the Ptolemaic and Roman temples of Kom Ombo (Stadler 2012), Philae (Žabkar 1980), and Edfu (Goyon, J.-C. 1978); a part of Chapter 149 of the *Book of the Dead* is adapted in a Nile Chamber at Edfu (Bauman 2012; see more generally Kákosy 1982); and Chapter 15 of the *Book of the Dead*, sometimes reduced to a few excerpts, appears on very late private stelae from Akhmim (Derchain-Urtel 1989: 235-236).

Pharaonic civilization hardly gave sacrosanct status to sacred texts: texts were not intangible (Vernus 2016; fc.: §19) and underwent continuous editorial rearrangements and alterations. Identical reproduction, including that of spelling and layout, was rarely observed and, where present, can be claimed to represent a copyist's ethics. Most of the time, an interpreter's ethics prevailed, allowing modifications, including changes in spellings and layout. Such alterations were viewed not as

external threats to a text's original spirit, but rather as developments of the inner potential of the text.

With such general principles in mind, alterations appear fairly limited in most examples of the transmission of authoritative texts (such as the *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts*, *Book of the Dead*, *Hourwatches [Stundenwachen]*, *Ritual for Opening the Mouth [Mundöffnungsritual]*, and the bulk of the *Guides of the Afterlife [Jenseitsführer]* during the Late Period) and pertain mainly to spelling, lexicon and grammar, and editorial manipulations.

With regard to spelling changes, varyious trends can be observed in reproductive *égyptien de tradition*. One such trend is to respect original spellings (e.g., the written omission of the first-person singular suffix—a feature of Old Egyptian—in some Demotic texts; see Smith 1994: 494). An additional trend is to adapt spellings to phonetic evolution. For instance, the weakening and disappearance of the ending -*t* in most syntactic positions entailed the disappearance of the -*t* in writing, or, conversely, its free use without phonetic relevance. Needless to say, this heavily affects the morphological relevance of the spellings (for a typical example, see Jansen-Winkeln 1994). Observable, moreover, is a trend to adapt spellings to the evolution of the graphical system, including the new signs and values of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. This trend sometimes leads to sophisticated and even decorative graphical productions invested with theological or ideological significance (termed "philologie sacrée" by Sauneron).

Changes in lexicon and grammar are also observed but are rather limited. Some seem to be more or less unconscious slips, ranging from mistakes at copyists' hands to the reinterpretation of cursive signs (e.g., Gaber 2004). Others are intentional, relating to the broader practice of editorial variations in wording under the pressure of contemporary fashions or linguistic trends (e.g., Barbash 2011: 43). Such intentionality is illustrated by the demonstrative *pwy/twy* substituted for old *pw/tw*, a trend beginning as early as the Late Middle Kingdom and carried on until the Late Period, and by the spread of the composite

demonstratives *pw(y)-nn/tw(y)-nn*. Modernization is also effected through lexical substitution. Adverbs and prepositions are particularly prone to such substitution; for instance, *ḥnꜥ* substituted for *m-m* is overwhelmingly common in Late Period versions of Spell 625 of the Coffin Texts (Gestermann 2005).

Editorial manipulations cover a wide scale. At a basic level, editors work by segmenting, adding titles, making changes in the enunciative structure, and commonly by switching between first- and third-person (Doret 1989). Thus in the P. Schmitt (Möller 1900), written by a single hand probably during the second half of the fourth century BCE, some Pyramid Text spells are copied among other religious materials, closely reproducing the Middle Kingdom versions. Editorial changes are observed mainly in substitutions of the name "Pharao" for "Horus" and in rearrangements of self-contained spells or sequences of spells in compositions categorized as *sꜣḫw* "transfigurations."

At a higher level, editorial changes concern the implementation of self-contained textual units or sets of textual units as parts of a new composition, with materials drawn from different origins. More generally, while the reproduction of ancient authoritative texts relates to reproductive *égyptien de tradition,* the compositions in which these are rearranged may relate as a whole to productive *égyptien de tradition* when including heterogeneous textual and hence linguistic materials.

Productive "*égyptien de tradition*"

The notion of positive obsolescence was introduced above in relation to the continued high-cultural relevance of ancient texts across centuries and millennia. Against this background, the composition of new texts in a language mirroring ancient stages of Egyptian met a twofold requirement—that of reflecting aspects of a current situation while simultaneously relating these to the domains of religion and perennial monumental expression. Such new texts shared the common aim of inserting the records of human activity (in

terms of religious science, both the activities of mankind collectively represented by the king and the activities of individuals) into the layers of creation (Vernus fc.: §1-9). To do so, various often-combined devices were used, including the type of the script, the (material) writing support, and, in particular, the form of the language.

As far as possible, a new text would be formulated in a language that related it tightly to ancient texts, for two reasons:

Firstly, new texts were to be made only as extensions of ancient texts. New trends in, and the historical evolution of, religion and knowledge were not considered radical innovations (for "radical innovation" as a literary device exemplified in the *Words of Khakheperreseneb*, see Vernus 1995a: part 1; for claims of innovations, albeit not "radical," see Vernus fc.: §29). Rather, they were conceived of as the developments of things that had already been latent *in partibus* in the original state of Creation. This conception is clearly expressed, for example, in what may be termed "records of origins" (*notices d'origines*; *Fundtopoi*), which aim at guaranteeing the authoritative status and efficiency of a text as *zš nṯr ḏs=f* "writing of the god himself," thereby relating it to the most ancient times (Vernus 1995a: 112-114 and 2016: §6.1.). In a complementary fashion, human history, recorded on royal and non-royal commemorative monuments, represents the unfolding of yet-completed parts of Creation. It directly extends the time of the gods through millions of anticipated years until the ultimate return to nothingness (Vernus 1995a: 150-168; 2011: 193-196).

Secondly, the language of ancient texts was conceived of as reflecting the language of the gods, and ultimately of the creator, and thus as having the inherent virtue of wholly capturing the essence of what it stated. It therefore carried the performative power of manifesting a situation by its mere utterance. New texts would inherit some of this performative value inherent in the ideal, primeval language they aimed at mirroring.

Exceptions to the attraction exercised by ancient texts should be noted. Not all religious texts were written according to the requirement of a language mimetic of ancient stages of Egyptian (rightly emphasized by Quack 2013: 41-42). For instance, the intense cultural creativity during the New Kingdom can be reflected in innovative linguistic usages associated with elements of new mythological content, beginning in the time of Amenhotep II (e.g., *The Gods and the Sea*, also known as Papyrus Astarte: Collombert and Coulon 2000), and continuing in the Ramesside Period (e.g., the mytheme of the fight between the two hippopotami as included in the literary *Tale of Horus and Seth*, but also retaining its original function as an etiological myth accounting for the unlucky character of the day: Vernus 2010 – 2011: 106-111) and later. Many magical spells were continuously re-created or rearranged in a Second-Phase Egyptian type of language (Jansen-Winkeln 1995: 103; Quack 1998a: 80; see also Winand and Gohy 2011) and sometimes adapted from foreign languages (Fischer-Elfert 2011: 190). The new conceptions about death and the afterlife that developed during the Ramesside Period required the implementation of a stock of texts expressing these innovative ideas and also reflecting them linguistically, in a context—the tomb—in which an orientation towards First-Phase Egyptian would more generally be expected (Goldwasser 1999; for the *Reden und Rufe*, see Vernus 2009 – 2010: 78-79 and 2015: §9-11). Very symptomatic is the fact that the "ideological mutation" that would lead to theocracy (Vernus 1995b) entailed a rich production of original Late Egyptian compositions for funerary and/or magical purposes (Lucarelli 2009), including "oracular decrees" (Muhs 2009) and related texts (Jansen-Winkeln 2007a: 119-149) made authoritative by being presented as the oracular commands of Amun (Vernus 2013a: 337).

In the domain of commemoration, contemporary influences were triggered by new conceptions of the personal relationship between the individual and the gods. This is seen in non-royal monuments (for Turin 50058 and BM 589, see Luiselli 2011: 353-405, 358-363; for the particular thematic of forgiveness, not addressed by Luiselli, see Vernus 2003, with particular attention to phraseology). The

phenomenon is also manifest in royal monuments (Goldwasser [1991: 140] points out how the adaptation of the personal piety thematic entailed a switch from a First-Phase Egyptian oriented language to a Late Egyptian oriented language in a famous hymn to Amun reportedly inscribed on gold tablets). New situations, including a new geopolitical environment, had similar effects (for an analogous situation in the Second Intermediate Period, see Vernus 1998).

The diversity of linguistic models

The practice of writing in a language aimed at mirroring the "most ancient language" implies that the composer of a new text intends to use a language form distinct from his contemporary language, or at least, from its everyday register. It implies further that the composer intends to implement a linguistic form invested with a particular prestige placing it in the highest-ranking position in the social reception of linguistic productions. Both dimensions reflect a similar imperative of distinction in the sense defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1979). By its very definition, this "most ancient language" is thereby potentially broad and encompassing. The linguistic models—like the textual models—on which productive *égyptien de tradition* could draw are diverse, extending beyond Middle Egyptian to Old Egyptian and earlier Late Egyptian: because the notion of "most ancient language" is only relative to the present, it is also inherently heterogeneous. Assigning a text to productive *égyptien de tradition* may be difficult in some cases, but clear examples document that new texts were composed in *égyptien de tradition*, despite claims to the contrary.

Productive *égyptien de tradition* can display features of different stages of First-Phase Egyptian, including Old Egyptian (defined as the written language from the end of Dynasty II until the end of the First Intermediate Period, with specific features that differ from Middle Egyptian and its more restricted subset, Classical Egyptian; see Vernus 2015: §1-14). A good example is provided by the funerary monument—a "tomb-sarcophagus"—of a woman Sekhmetnefert, made by her son Henat

at the end of the Saite Period. Henat records his deed in an inscription (El-Aguizy 2010: 20, cols. 2-5) that employs the typically Old Kingdom thematic of rewarding the craftsmen who built the monument (Kloth 2002: 127-128) and includes typical Old Kingdom formulations such as:

• *ny mn.t=s jšs.t*
"without her suffering a pain"
(compare *Urk. I*, 183, 7, 17, and see Gunn 1948: 28 [3])
• *st sj* (written) *ʿnḫ.tj ḥr rd.wy=s*
"while she was living on her two feet"
(compare Goedicke 1970: 23, 196)

The composer of the above inscription consciously drew on Old Kingdom texts as models. The pastiche was limited to certain parts of the inscription, however, while in other parts the composer remained open to the fashion of his own time or was subject to the unconscious pressure of his contemporary language (thus the spelling *sw* for *sj*, reflecting the post-Middle Kingdom phonetic merger of third-person-singular dependent pronouns). As this inscription illustrates, the use of dated phraseology neither necessarily implies a lack of creativity nor the incapability of addressing current events or ideas.

A similar interest in Old Kingdom phraseology is manifest in royal ideological texts of the same period, exemplified, for instance, in the revival of the negative *nfr-n* in the monuments of Apries (Vernus 2012: 390; 2015: §19). In the very sophisticated inscriptions of the tomb of Petosiris, there is even a deliberate revival of the second-person masculine singular dependent pronoun *k(w)* in what is clearly a newly composed text (Vernus 2015: §26-27).

In texts in which later stages of Second-Phase Egyptian (notably Demotic) are prevalent, features of earlier stages of Second-Phase Egyptian (the proto-Late Egyptian of Dynasty XVIII and Ramesside Late Egyptian) could also be included as reflecting the "ancient language" as it was perceived by Ptolemaic scribes. This may be illustrated in the hieroglyphic version of the Canopus Decree, compared with the Demotic version:

• *mtw=tw jr ḫꜥ ꜥꜢ r tr=f n rnp.t*

"and a great procession should be held at the due time of the year" (Canopus Decree, hieroglyphic version, l. 17)

• *mtw=w jr wꜥ ḫꜥ ꜥꜢ ḥr rnp.t*

"and a great procession should be held each year" (Canopus Decree, Demotic version, l. 33)

Both versions have a conjunctive (*mtw=*), a feature of the Second-Phase Egyptian verbal system, but introducing different pronouns (*mtw=tw* and *mtw=w*, respectively). In Demotic, the contemporary language, the form *mtw=tw* (and more generally the pronoun *tw/twtw*, for the rise of which see Stauder 2014: 349-409; and Vernus 1997) had become obsolete. (A late instance of the colloquial Late Egyptian *mtw=tw* is in a Dynasty XXI monumental version of an oracular statement, the Banishment Stela, *mtw=tw jn.t=w r km.t* "and they will be brought back to Egypt": Jansen-Winkeln 2007a: 73. Contemporary manuscript versions of oracular decrees already have *mtw=w*: Vernus 1990: 180-181, ex. 109-111; Quack 1994: 190 speaks of the "*im Demotischen kaum belegten tw-Passiv*," noting one exception; see also Spiegelberg 1925: 68 §135; and Cruz-Uribe 1979: 15-16.) Accordingly, *mtw=tw* in the hieroglyphic version does not represent the influence of the current vernacular. Rather, the form was selected because it was different enough from the Demotic *mtw=w* as to possess the required archaistic flavor of the aimed for "ancient language." Here, *égyptien de tradition* does not have an Old or Middle Egyptian construction, but a Late Egyptian one, or, more accurately, at least a usage of the New Kingdom juridical idiom. In a similar manner though somewhat earlier than the Canopus Decree, the Nectanebo Tax Command (Von Bomhard 2010) also has *mtw=tw* (cols. 8-10).

Productive *égyptien de tradition* texts often seem to display grammatical structures roughly matching those of Middle Egyptian, yet, as shown by the preceding examples, earlier and later forms of the past language could also be included. From a Late Period or Ptolemaic and Roman perspective, the language forms and usages of the New Kingdom, as much as Old and Middle Kingdom ones, were naturally viewed as a valuable part of the cultural heritage and could accordingly be given a place in productive *égyptien de tradition*. By definition, therefore, productive *égyptien de tradition* is a broad and inclusive notion with respect to its models. In particular, labels such as "*Neo-Mittelägyptisch*" and "*Spätmittelägyptisch*," with its English equivalent, "Late Middle Egyptian," are too restrictive.

Rather than denoting a linguistically homogeneous system, productive *égyptien de tradition* thus covers various attempts to mirror a most ancient ideal language. Needless to say, those attempts happen to be more or less successful when measured against present-day Egyptological descriptions of the diachronic history of Egyptian. Such inherent variation reflects the variable competence of the composers, their grammatical and philological skills, and the available textual materials that could draw on as lexical, grammatical, and phraseological models. In assessing the accuracy of productive *égyptien de tradition*, a careful distinction must also be made between phenomena relating to graphical habits and phenomena relating to the linguistic structure itself, even though this distinction may not always be straightforward.

Many texts display a basic linguistic structure tightly mirroring an ancient stage of Egyptian, while their content is bound to times when this stage was obsolete. Some linguistic inconsistencies may appear sporadically due to the uncontrolled pressure exercised by the contemporary language, or as a result of the use of textual models that were themselves not wholly homogenous. These understandable minor slips notwithstanding, the mimetic intent can be deemed broadly successful in, for example, Late Period royal inscriptions (see Der Manuelian's [1994: 391] analysis of Saite inscriptions, the main conclusions of which remain sound) and autobiographies. A neat illustration of the latter is afforded by the inscription of Sematauytefnakht (Perdu 1985), from the Second Persian Rule and Macedonian conquest—a time when Demotic was well established as the vernacular language and clearly distinct not only from First-Phase Egyptian, but also from earlier stages of

Second-Phase Egyptian. The text illustrates themes of the time, the personal relationship to a deity, and the god as directing major historical events; it records an individual's experience related to a precise historical constellation and is thus clearly beyond the commonplace and *cliché*. Yet, the basic linguistic structure of Sematauytefnakh's autobiography displays a very correct First-Phase Egyptian, demonstrating how a set of contemporary events, situations, and ideas could be expressed in a language strongly mimetic of earlier stages of Egyptian.

Like autobiographies and texts expressing royal ideology, contemporary religious trends and conceptions of the world, as well as the products of sacerdotal science, could be expressed in productive *égyptien de tradition*. While it can hardly be doubted that many Late Period religious compositions rely heavily on ancient sources, many others also reflect contemporary creative work, even when they implement ancient formulae and phraseology, or even whole units from ancient texts. It seems plausible, for instance, that most monographs of sacerdotal knowledge were written in a language mirroring ancient stages of Egyptian (the earlier stages of Second-Phase Egyptian included) at a time when those stages were already obsolete. Thus, the syntax of Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.84, a collection of etiological myths relating to the cultural topography of Lower Egypt (Meeks 2006), closely matches First-Phase Egyptian standards. Yet, this is probably not a mere late copy of an ancient text but rather a more recent composition in view of its lexicon, which includes a thick layer of recent expressions (see the excellent commentaries of Meeks 2006: 106-109).

The role of phraseological stock

Of great practical help to the composers of productive *égyptien de tradition* was the phraseological stock transmitted through ancient texts. Copies of ancient texts (Osing and Rosati 1998: pls. 6-13) were available to the Late Period composers, to be drawn upon. Phraseological stock was used mainly in narratives, since a number of ready-to-use

narrative formulae were easily available to give the framework of a newly composed text the "color" of an ancient one, evidenced, for example, by a Dynasty XXX monument recording a myth pertaining to Per-Seped (present-day Saft el-Henna):

pr sw(t)wnn ḥm n Rˁ m t-nbs
"Now it happened that the Majesty of Ra was in Iat-nebes." (Naos of the Decades; von Bomhard 2008: 55, l. 12)

Introducing an episode, the *ḫpr* + infinitive formula, most often with the enclitic particle *swt* (Oréal 2011: 399-400), harkens back to Old Kingdom royal ceremonial and frequently occurs in this type of context down to the Third Intermediate Period (*Osorkon Chronicle*, col. 26 = Jansen-Winkeln 2007b: 164), with further uses in myth and literature (Stauder 2013: 406-409; Spalinger 2010: 12). Similar observations could be made about other narrative formulae, involving *ˁḥˁ-n, wn-jn=f*, or frozen expressions. One example may suffice: the late Ptolemaic autobiography of Taimhotep, which implements the Classical narrative construction *jy.t pw jr-n=f* (BM EA 147, l. 10; Panov 2010: 180). In writing a text aimed at a previous stage of the language, the composers were generally prone to make recourse to more or less standard phraseology whenever possible. This tendency, notably illustrated by Late Period self-presentations (e.g., Kahl 1999; Perdu 1985), should not be misinterpreted as implying the absence of creativity in such compositions, or even the non-existence of productive *égyptien de tradition*, as has sometimes been claimed.

Influences from the contemporary language

Compositions in productive *égyptien de tradition* can display influences of the contemporary language to various degrees and in various places in the text. Influence of the contemporary language most notably occurs in editorial notations, which are thereby overtly marked as such. These include:

1. titles and directions for use (Goyon, J.-C. 1974: 5; Quack 2010: 320; 2012: 201); for example, in a ritual basically composed in First-Phase Egyptian, with a title in Second-Phase

Egyptian (the article *nꜣ*, the first-person present with the impersonal subject *twtw;* the third-person plural pronoun *=w*):

*nꜣ smꜣꜥ.w nty **twtw** (ḥr) jr.t=w m-bꜣḥ [...] Jmn* "The prayers that are said before [...] Amun" (P. Berlin 3055, XXXVII, 6-7)

2. overt generalizations (Derchain 1976; Osing 1985: 183; 1998: 34 [20]; Colin 2004; Vernus 2016: §4.4.2.3.2); for example (the boldfaced expressions obviously pertaining to Second-Phase Egyptian):

*(...) jn-(n)=f n=k pḏ.t D ḥꜣw-nb.w **ḏd r nꜣ mꜣw.w** n pꜣ ym*
"(When Horus has come to you, it is) bringing to you the Hau-nebu among the Nine Bows. This is said concerning the Isles of the Sea." (Edfou 6: 199, 2-3)

3. self-contained textual intrusions denoting a Late Period truth; for example, in a colophon otherwise oriented towards ancient stages of Egyptian (*nty-jw mn*, a typical later Late Egyptian and Demotic expression):

*nꜣnṯr.w **nty-jw mn** m-dj=w ḥm-nṯr*
"the gods who have no prophets" (P. Bremner-Rhind, colophon 16; Faulkner 1933: 33)

There are also numerous cases in which the contemporary language exercises its influence on the very core of a composition. Minimally, this may be a matter of features of the contemporary language not having been fully "filtered out," or "expurgated" as it were, from the text. Filtering generally tends to be unsystematic, e.g., the contemporary *nty jw ꜥnḫ=sn* (Edfou 6: 196, 12) alongside the earlier and elsewhere regular *nty ꜥnḫ=sn* (Edfou 6: 197, 5, 10, etc.).

Examples of contemporary lexical features that can be left unfiltered include, among many others:
• spellings such as 𓎡𓏭𓀜 for *ḥms* (Meeks 2006: 107, n. 313) or 𓈖𓎡𓅓𓏤𓂝 for *psg* (Sauneron 1989: 100 [2]), reflecting phonetic changes also indicated in Coptic and Greek transcriptions

• recent adverbs (*r-bl, dy*) and prepositions (*r-jwd, n-jm, r-ḳr-n,* etc.) that are frequently

found in environments otherwise oriented toward a more ancient language

Examples of post-Middle Kingdom grammatical features (including both Late Egyptian and later Late Egyptian ones) that are commonly left unfiltered include, among others:

• the definite article *pꜣ/tꜣ/nꜣ* (a very complex issue)

• the possesive article *pꜣy=j/tꜣy=j/nꜣy=j* (an issue closely related to the previous one)

• the third-person plural pronoun *=w*

• the first- and second-person masculine singular object pronoun *twj* and *tek* (Vernus 2013b: 216-220)

• the object pronoun *se* with personal reference after the infinitive (Vernus 2013b: 216)

• the morphology of the pronominal first-person present

• the second-person plural imperative *mj-n* "come"

• the negative imperative auxiliary *m-jr* (Vernus 2010)

• *my* as auxiliary of the optative

• the infinitive used where First-Phase Egyptian employed the negative verbal complement

• prothetic *j* with imperative

• prothetic *j* with participles

• *jr* as an auxiliary with 4-lit.

• the sequential *jw=f ḥr sḏm*

• the factitive use of intransitive verbs (Vernus 2014: 207)

• the relativizer *nty-jw*, in specific environments (Vernus 1982b)

• circumstantial *jw*, particularly before *sḏm=f*

It commonly happens that a Second-Phase Egyptian clause or sentence is grafted onto a First-Phase Egyptian formulaic expression, as illustrated in the following examples, in which the Second-Phase Egyptian features are

boldfaced (in the first example, the conjunctive *mtw=tw*, the third-person plural pronoun *=w*, and the object pronoun *se* after the infinitive; in the second example, *r-nty* + perfective *sḏm=f*, and *jw=w*):

• *mk.t pw ꜥꜣ.t nt wnnfr jr.t sꜣ n nsw m ꜥḥ=f* **mtw=tw** *jn.t=w r dj.t* **se** *ḥr sẖm.t nbj.t r sẖtm sbj.w*

"It is a great protection of Onnophris, which makes the protection of the king in his palace, and one brings them (= the wax images) so as to put them under Sakhmis who makes flames for destroying the rebels." (P. Salt 825, V, 5-6)

• *ḏd mdw jn jwn-mw.t=f ḥr jt=f tm m-bꜣh psḏ.t ꜥꜣ.t jmy(.t) jp.t sw.t* **r-nty jry** *n=tn nsw bjty nb tꜣ.wy N mnw wr.w m pr jt=f jmn* **jw=w smnḫ** *m kꜣ.t ḏ.t*

"Words said by Iunmutef to his father, Tum, in front of the Great Ennead who is in Ipet-sut: The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands N has made for you great monuments in the domain of his father, Amun, which are made perfect in the work of eternity." (Temple of Khonsu 1979: pl. 71, cols. 8-15 ; a similar example in Vernus 1984: 165; for a parallel development in a caption in a Ptolemaic temple, see Quack 2005: 129)

More generally, the mixing of ancient and contemporary phraseology in the same text is frequently observed. A significant example is provided by a magic spell written on a Late Period amulet (BM 20775). On the whole, this spell shows basically First-Phase Egyptian features, including the very common negative pattern *nn sḏm=f*, and particularly the preposition *m-jmy.tw* (GEG §177: later tending to become *r-jmy.tw*). However, in the same spell, we also encounter indisputably Late Egyptian features. (In a shorter version [Schott 1931], Second-Phase Egyptian influence is limited to formulae identifying the beneficiary of the spell.) Thus, while *=w* (ro 9) or *n-jm=tn* (ro 1) may be instances of more or less unconscious modernization, the following is a fully-fledged Late Egyptian sentence (featuring the negative future pattern, the late preposition *r-jwd*, and the article *nꜣ*):

bn *ꜥḳ=tn* **r-jwd nꜣ**-*šmsw ḥr n pr-wsjr*

"You shall have no access between the Followers of Horus of Busiris." (BM 20775 ro 6)

Considering the spell as a whole, the striking interweaving of the future negative *nn sḏm=f* and *bn sḏm=f* (*nn hꜣj ḫꜣ.t=tn … bn ꜥḳ=tn … bn ꜥḳ=tn … nn pḫr=tn … bn šsp=tn*, ro 5-8) is illustrative of "linguistic dissimilation" (Vernus 1992: 164-168; 2015: §17, 19, 36). The artificial style involved in this mix probably reflects a search for efficiency through a variation of all expressive possibilities available.

At a higher level, a linguistic mix can also arise in the creation of a new composition as a result of the combination of self-contained textual elements that harken back to different dates. For instance, the *Book of Breathing* combines materials from the *Book of the Dead* with late Second-Phase Egyptian materials (Quack 2010: 316; Wüthrich 2010: 56-60). The same holds for the composition entitled "The Great Command Which is Made Concerning the Nome of Igeret" (Goyon, J.-C. 1999; Smith 2006: 17-26; Beinlich 2009: 121-149; Kucharek 2010: 48-49; Töpfer and Müller-Roth 2011: 64).

Passages in contemporary language within an environment broadly oriented toward First-Phase Egyptian can also be due to later additions made in the course of transmission (Quack 2008; Vernus 2016: §4.4.2.3.1). In the Myth of Horus at Edfu, one of the passages strongly influenced by Late Egyptian (*Edfou* 6: 214, 12 - 215, 2; Kurth 1992: 74 n. 12; Quack 1995: 109 n. 18) thus appears to be an allusion to the Medes (cf. the determinative, despite the hesitancy of Gwyn Griffiths 1958: 78) and therefore to the Persian conquests. This suggests that the passage in question could have been added as a reflection on the contemporary situation into a core composed previously, as its linguistic analysis suggests. The impact of contemporary religious trends in rituals may be exemplified by an allusion to the wars of Saite kings against the Ethiopian rulers in a passage from a temple inscription that clearly displays later Late Egyptian features (Vernus 1978b).

Thus productive *égyptien de tradition* can display a language oriented basically towards

ancient stages with Late Egyptian or later Late Egyptian insertions or extensions. Illustrating the opposite case, the predominance of more recent stages is obvious in the monumental versions of juridical documents, including oracular texts. A case in point is the complaint that the *wab*-priest Hori presented to the first prophet of Amun Osorkon (architrave of a window in the central Hall of the Akhmenu in Karnak, Louvre C 258; Jansen-Winkeln 2007b: 168; Kruchten 1989: 256-263), dating to the Third Intermediate Period. The core of the complaint keeps to its original structure in Second-Phase Egyptian, while more ancient language is restricted to a simple generalization, *ꜣḫ.t pw nt jmn-rn=f* "it is the horizon of the One whose name is hidden." A similar assemblage is found in the supplementary chapters of the *Book of the Dead* (Wüthrich 2007, 2010, and 2015). Some chapters (*BD* 162, 163, 166) remain written basically in Second-Phase Egyptian, while here and there they appear closer to older stages of the language via the addition of older phraseology (Vernus fc.: §48).

Idiosyncrasies of productive "égyptien de tradition"

A text composed to mirror earlier stage(s) of the language often presents itself as linguistically heterogeneous, because its models might be multiple ones, and because influences of the contemporary language are difficult to thwart, especially when current topics are being dealt with. This is reflected in what may be called "synchronic solecisms"— that is, the combining of features relating to different stages of the language in the same textual unit (Vernus fc.: §40). In addition, there are "structural solecisms"—namely, idiosyncrasies of *égyptien de tradition* involving constructions that do not belong to any particular stage. Illustrating the "structural solecisms," the sandhi (fused) spelling *nwj* for the first-person singular dependent pronoun *wj* after a word ending in -*n* (Roccati 1967: 173-180; Faulkner 1978: 129; 1982: 28-29; Nur-el-Din 1980) was reanalyzed in égyptien de tradition as a regular form of the first-person object dependent pronoun, whatever the preceding consonant. Furthermore, *nwj* was

extended syntactically from the status of object pronoun to that of subject pronoun, thus in the first-person present (e.g., *n(wj) ḥr ḳd* "I am building," Naos Ismailia JE 2248, back, l.32 = Goyon, G. 1936: 19). Similarly, in the prédication de classe in Ptolemaic private and temple inscriptions, e.g.:

nwj šms=k

"I am your follower."
(Cairo JE 67093, statue of Pikhaâs from Tanis = Montet 1946: pl. 25, col. 2; Zivie-Coche 2004: 270, figs. 63 and 271, col. 7 [wrong reading]; see also Cairo JE 37075; Cairo CG 680; Edfou 1: 42; Dendara 10 : 275, 2, and passim.)

This construction, which reflects neither a feature of an earlier stage of the language, nor one of the contemporary language, represents a reanalysis proper to égyptien de tradition.

Register switching, stage switching, and diglossia

Switching from the contemporary written language to one mirroring the language of (the most) ancient texts remained a matter of "register switching" so long as the overlap of the two linguistic repertoires was broad enough. With linguistic changes accumulating over time and the ensuing broader typological change from First-Phase to Second-Phase Egyptian, the overlap of the contemporary language and the language of ancient texts shrank until a situation was reached in which ancient texts had become barely understandable to native speakers/ writers. The craft of dealing with ancient levels of the language then involved "stage switching" and became restricted to a sacerdotal elite in the conduct of liturgical and cultural activities (Assmann 1995: 42-43), including funerals, magic, and self-presentations, and to the king's ideological expressions. This altered linguistic situation first became apparent during the Ramesside Period (e.g., in Samut son of Kiky's autobiography: Vernus 1978a), leading to a situation of diglossia from the beginning of the first millennium BCE on.

"Diglossia" here refers to the contemporary restricted use of earlier forms of language that were ancient enough so as to no longer be readily understood based on the standard contemporary language and that therefore required translation as a form of exegesis (Übersetzung als Deutung). The contemporary uses of this previous stage of language were socially restricted and functionally specific (pertaining to monumental, memorial, ritual, cultural, and theological practices, including those that involved knowledge texts and sacerdotal science). Under this definition, there is no reason to deny that Late Period Egypt knew a situation of scholarly diglossia (contra Jansen-Winkeln 1995), as can be seen directly in texts written in an idiom mirroring ancient stages of Egyptian, with translations, sometimes juxtalinear, into more recent stages (Vernus 1996: 564; 1990; von Lieven 2007; for the religious background of the diglossic Ritual of Overthrowing the Aggressive One, see Altman 2010; for rich late materials, see Dieleman 2005; for school exercises, Caminos 1968; and Quack 1999; and see, further, the onomasticon and glosses in Osing 1998).

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