UCLA
UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology

Title
Egyptian Among Neighboring African Languages

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2fb8t2pz

Journal
UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, 1(1)

Author
Cooper, Julien

Publication Date
2020-12-19

Peer reviewed

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اللغة المصرية القديمة واللغات الافريقية المجاورة

Julien Cooper

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EGYPTIAN AMONG NEIGHBORING AFRICAN LANGUAGES

اللغة المصرية القديمة واللغات الافريقية المجاورة

Julien Cooper

Ägyptisch unter den benachbarten afrikanischen Sprachen
L'égyptien parmi les langues africaines avoisinantes

Northeast Africa is dominated by two linguistic macrofamilies, Afroasiatic, with its constituent branches of Egyptian, Semitic, Berber, Cushitic, Chadic, and Omotic, and the Nilo-Saharan languages, with the most relevant phylum being the Eastern Sudanic branch spread across the Sahel and East Africa. On present research, there is evidence for contact between ancient Egyptian and ancient Berber, Cushitic, and Eastern Sudanic languages, with possibilities of contact with Ethiosemitic languages (the Semitic languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea). Evidence of Egypt's contact with neighboring peoples in Northeast Africa is well established from the archaeological record and historical texts, especially along the Middle Nile (Nubia). The use of linguistic material, including loanwords and foreign names, for reconstructing ancient phases of contact between Egyptians and neighboring peoples is a relatively "untapped" source. The lexical data demonstrates a great familiarity and exchange between Egyptian and neighboring languages, which, in many cases, can be attributed to specific historical phases of contact through trade, expeditionary ventures, or conflict. Impediments remain in reconstructing the ancient "linguistic map" of neighboring Africa and our reliance on modern dictionaries of African languages for identifying ancient loanwords. Despite this, the stock of foreign words in the Egyptian lexicon is incredibly important for piecing together this "map." In many cases, the ancient Egyptian lexicon contains the earliest data for foreign languages like Meroitic, Beja, or Berber.

يسيطر على شمال شرق إفريقيا عائلتان لغويتان كبيرتان، هما: عائلة اللغات الأفروآسيوية ، بفروعها المصرية، والإثيوسامية ، والبربرية ، والكوشية ، والتشادية ، والأوموتية ، واللغات النيلية الصحراوية حيث الأكثر صلة بها هو الفرع السوداني الشرقي المنتشر عبر منطقة الساحل وشرق إفريقيا. إن البحث الحالي يُظهر دليلاً على وجود اتصال بين اللغة المصرية القديمة واللغات القديمة البربرية والكوشية واللغات السودانية الشرقية ، مع إمكانية الاتصال باللغات الإثيوسامية في كلاً من إثيوبيا وإريتريا. إن الدليل على اتصال مصر بالشعوب المجاورة لها في شمال شرق إفريقيا مثبت جيدًا من خلال الآثار والنصوص التاريخية، خاصة على طول النيل الأوسط (النوبة). إن استخدام المواد اللغوية ، بما في ذلك الكلمات المستعارة والأسماء الأجنبية يعطي إحتمالاً كبيراً لإعادة بناء المراحل القديمة من الإتصال بين المصريين والشعوب المجاورة. توضح البيانات المعجمية واللغوية مدى التبادل الثري بين اللغة المصرية واللغات المجاورة. يمكن أن يُعزى هذا التبادل ، في كثير من الحالات ، إلى مراحل تاريخية محددة من الإتصال من خلال التجارة أو الحروب. ولا تزال هناك عقبات في إعادة بناء "الخريطة اللغوية" القديمة لإفريقيا وفي اعتمادنا على القواميس الحديثة للغات الأفريقية لتحديد الكلمات القديمة المستعارة. ومع ذلك ، فإن الكلمات الأجنبية في المعجم المصري مهمة جدًا لتجميع هذه

M irroring the deep historical and cultural connections between Egypt and its neighbors in Nubia and the Sahara, there is strong evidence for ongoing language contact in the Egyptian lexicon from the beginning of written texts. From as early as the Naqada Period (c. 4000 – 2670 BCE), Egyptians traveled regularly into Lower Nubia and the nearby deserts, while peoples of the Middle Nile—the archaeological A-Group, C-Group, and Pan-Grave cultures— are well attested both in Upper Egyptian cemeteries and in the ceramic repertoires in towns like Elephantine and Edfu. The presumption must be then that Upper Egyptian frontier towns experienced continuous language contact, bilingualism, and exchange that may not be perfectly represented in our available lexicon, which largely encodes formal registers of the Egyptian language and the concerns of officialdom.

Despite such shared geography and cultural exchange, the identification in Egyptian of loanwords from Nubia and the Sahara remains relatively understudied compared to that from Egypt's Semitic-speaking neighbors in the Levant. This is largely attributable to the great diversity of African languages on Egypt's immediate periphery in historical Sudan and Libya, and to the difficulties of establishing what precise African languages were present on its neighboring horizon in the third, second, and first millennia BCE. Furthermore, in this period relatively few African languages produced written records and, as such, our sources of comparison are modern lexicons resplendent with recent episodes of language contact and changes in morphology and phonology. Only Meroitic, Old Nubian, Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic), and arguably the Libyco-Berber script preserve lexical material for comparison in ancient traditions.

Such contact between Egyptian and the languages of Egypt's African neighbors began well before the advent of writing and extended as far back as the Neolithic Period, although it is almost impossible to reconstruct the linguistic map with any degree of accuracy in this period and, as such, there are a great number of possibilities for language contact. Based on a set of lexical cognates in basic vocabulary, linguists have hypothesized a degree of contact between Egyptian and Semitic languages on the one hand, and Egyptian and Chadic languages on the other (Takács 1999: 35-38, 47-48). Among the phyla of Afroasiatic languages—Egyptian, Semitic, Berber, Cushitic, Chadic, and Omotic—the "Egyptian family" is unique in generally being classed as having only one constituent language, Egyptian (with its various chronological phases of Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic). Chadic, for example, has branched into well over 100 languages, while Cushitic now has over 40 languages. This raises some pertinent questions as to whether other members of the "Egyptian" branch were spoken in the African continent, and whether the unification of Egypt in the Early Dynastic Period subsumed a number of allied branches or dialects of "Egyptian." There is also some onomastic data indicating that a branch of Semitic was spoken in the Delta region in periods preceding the Old Kingdom (Redford 1994), meaning that at one stage of history a Semitic tongue was well and truly an "African language." Outside Afroasiatic, Egyptian language was in contact with several Nilo-Saharan languages, the most well known being the now extinct Meroitic and the so-called "Nile Nubian" languages of Old Nubian, with a modern descendant in Nobiin (alternatively *Mahas*).

Loanwords and Cognates

All branches of Afroasiatic tend to have a common core lexicon, dubbed "Proto-Afroasiatic," "Proto-Afrasian," or "Hamito-Semitic" in linguistic works (Orel and Stolbova 1995; Takács 1999 – 2008). A difficulty in identifying loanwords from African languages in the early stages of the Egyptian lexicon lies in disambiguating whether a word is indeed a recent loan into Egyptian, or whether it resembles an inherited word from the common

Afroasiatic lexicon (i.e., a cognate). A case in point is the Egyptian word *hbny* (ebony), which on pragmatics might be considered to originate from an African language where various blackwood species originate. The only lexeme of comparison is an isolated word from a distant Chadic language, *ábana* (*Diospyros mespiliformis*) (Takács 2014: 268). Given the extreme distance of Chadic languages from Egyptian, it seems unlikely that *ábana* could be the origin of the Egyptian trade-word. Rather, the two words might be cognates descended from a common ancestor in the Afroasiatic lexicon, or even chance resemblances. Further examples are demonstrated in attempts to identify Egyptian loans in African lexicons. The prolific Austrian linguist Leo Reinisch identified many such "Egyptian" lexical items in modern Beja (Reinisch 1895; Vycichl 1960), i.e., *hasib* (to think, to count) (Eg. *ḥsb* "to count"), or *san* (brother) (Eg. *sn* "brother"). These phonetic resemblances, however, are unlikely for semantic reasons to be attributed to loaning and are rather "cognates" descended from the Proto-Afroasiatic roots **ḥsb* (to count) and **sn* (brother), roots that are present in many Afroasiatic languages (Orel and Stolbova 1995: 286, 462). The practical outcome of this process is that many words have strong phonetic and semantic resemblances across neighboring Afroasiatic languages but are not necessarily historic loanwords.

These difficulties have meant that the majority of identifiable African lexical items in the Old Egyptian and later lexicons are either onomastic in nature (place names, personal names, and rarely theonyms) or are pragmatically identified trade-based words known from a point of origin in Nubia or Sudanic Africa. A great deal of other vocabulary in the Egyptian lexicon may originate in African languages but there is as yet no objective method of identifying such words as specifically "non-Egyptian." This is especially the case when we consider that foreign words may have arrived in the lexicon before the Old Egyptian phase of the language.

Other difficulties in identifying African lexical material are the phonetic correspondences between the Egyptian script and phonemes in African languages, many of which contained sounds alien to Egyptian, such as the voiced retroflex stop [ɖ], the voiced velar nasal [ŋ], or a complex series of labialized velars such as [kʷ]. Despite these manifest problems, a great many African loanwords have been identified in the Egyptian lexicons on the basis of onomastics or the pragmatic likelihood of the word arriving from a non-Egyptian lexicon (Zibelius-Chen 2011; El-Sayed 2011). Other methods of identifying plausible African loans include the lack of resemblance to any Egyptian lexical root or the breaking of Egyptian phonetic compatibility laws in a word (Peust 1999b: 194-198). In later periods, the presence of so-called "group-writing," a distinct orthography commonly used in foreign words, might mark a word as "foreign." This is almost the rule for loanwords in the New Kingdom and later but is in itself not a definitive feature, since group-writing was sometimes employed in indigenous Egyptian words (Winand 2017). On rare occasions, foreign words are marked textually as being foreign, especially in medico-magical texts, where they may be marked as being "from the language of Kush" (Thissen 1991). In these texts a word is sometimes also designated as foreign (Demarée 2006: 27) by the presence of the throw-stick classifier ⟩ (Demarée 2006: 27), a sign normally employed for classifying foreign ethnonyms, personal names, or place names.

Identifying African Loanwords in the Egyptian Lexicon

In comparison to Egypt's Levantine contacts, which can mainly be subsumed under various members of Northwest Semitic and more distantly Sumerian, Hurrian, or Hittite, its contacts with African languages are considerably more complex. In the region of Sudan, a dizzying array of languages is spoken along the Nile and in the nearby deserts, the *Ethnologue* listing 78 languages in the modern Republic of Sudan alone (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig, eds.). In many cases, these languages lack comprehensive lexicons and in almost all we are uncertain of their precise

ancient distribution, although our knowledge of the general linguistic migratory patterns and movements in ancient Sudan is becoming increasingly sophisticated (Dimmendaal 2007; Rilly 2016) (fig. 1). The most far-reaching of these linguistic movements has been labeled the "Wadi Howar Diaspora," the prehistoric movement of Northern Eastern Sudanic speakers out of the drying Neolithic deserts west of the Sudanese Nile, a movement that would eventually propel Meroitic and Nara speakers to the Nile and several languages south towards the Nuba Mountains. Various movements and language shifts must have shaped the present distribution of Cushitic groups, now spoken on the eastern seaboard of Africa from Egypt to Kenya, as well as in the Ethiopian Highlands, but we are largely ignorant of how this came about during the period contemporary with pharaonic Egyptian records. There are known episodes of linguicide (language death) in the case of Meroitic, and possibly more enigmatic cases such as the extinction of the language of the C-Group culture of Lower Nubia, the *Wꜣwꜣt* of Egyptian records. This presents a great challenge in attempting to establish ancient language contact in the region.

Phono-Graphemic Correspondences and Group-Writing

The Egyptian script was uniquely created to communicate the consonants and glides (semi-vowels) of the Egyptian language, and when used to communicate foreign words required some adaption. In earlier periods this system was rather simple, each Egyptian consonantal uniliteral corresponding to a single consonant in a foreign language, with the addition of *w* as a vocalic marker /u/—that is, foreign words were spelled as simply as they could be with the Egyptian script. The system became progressively more complex with the use of established polygraphs to convey specific consonants and possibly syllables, a system that would eventually lead to a new orthography called "group-writing." In regards to African languages, several Egyptian graphemes have ambiguous values, making it very difficult to ascertain the correct phonetic realization of a
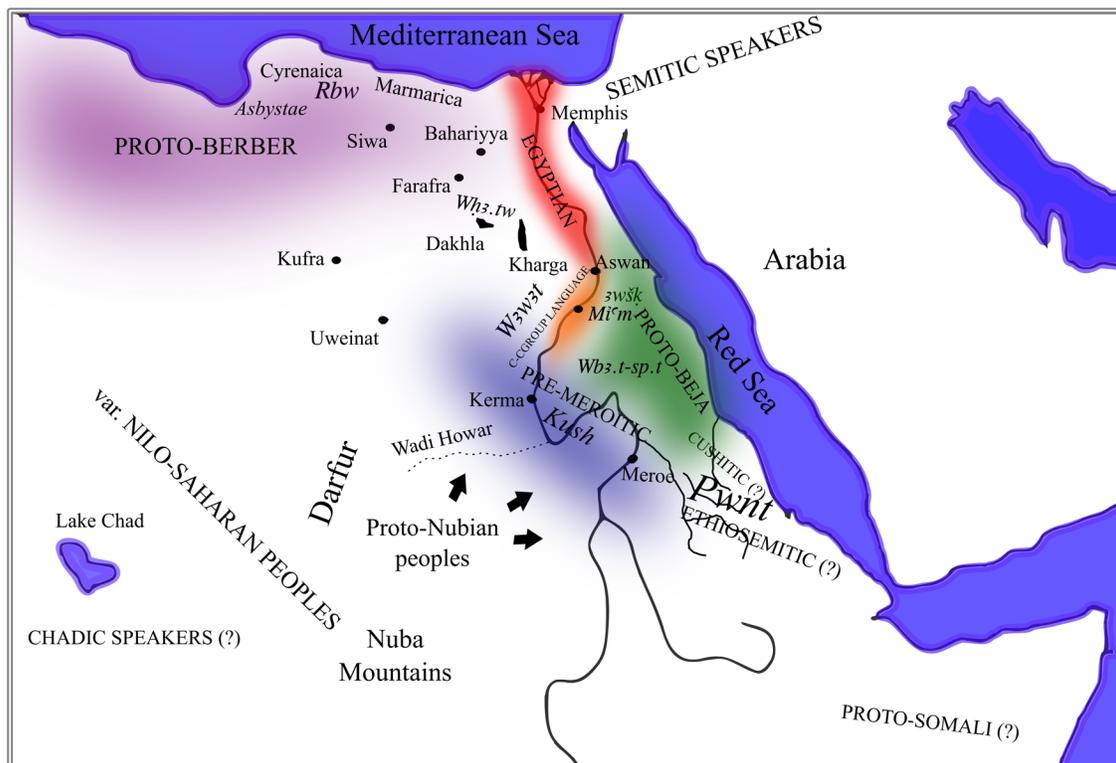
foreign word. For example, Egyptian 𓄿 *ꜣ* was generally accorded the phonetic value /r/ or /l/ in foreign words, but in later periods seemed to be an ambiguous vowel-marker or even a zero-value, especially when used in group-writing (Satzinger 1994). The Egyptian consonant 𓂋 *r* is attested for foreign /r/, /l/, and even /d/, due to its trilled nature and might also represent a relatively common sound in Sudanic Africa in the retroflex /ɖ/.

Egyptian scribes evidently created ad hoc groupings as well, for example 𓎡𓅱 kw for the foreign sound [*kʷ*]. Some norms of transcription are specific to different corpora or linguistic situations (Cooper 2018a), so a foreign word could be written in two different ways—for example, the Kushite ruler-name /trh/ was expressed as *Tr(r)h* in a rock inscription and as *Trjꜣhꜣ* in the magical spells of the Execration Texts (Davies 2014: 35; Cooper 2018b: 144). This establishes the importance of identifying specific transcription methods in different genres of documents and chronological periods. Nevertheless, the presence or absence of certain sounds in sets of loanwords provides important criteria for identifying specific foreign-language groupings. The presence of the sounds *ḥ* or *ꜥ* in foreign words, for example, is almost certainly confined to Afroasiatic languages, these sounds being absent from the Nilo-Saharan languages, like Meroitic, or any of the Nile Nubian languages, like Nobiin, Kenzi, or Dongolawi.

The "African" Lexicon in Old Egyptian

Due to the aforementioned difficulties, the majority of African lexical material in Old Egyptian is onomastic in nature and relates to Egyptian expeditionary activity within neighboring regions of Africa. In the famous Harkhuf biography of the late Old Kingdom is the loanword *ṯnjꜣ* (throwstick), along with several place-names such as *Jꜣm*, *Jrṯt*, *Wꜣwꜣt*, and *Zꜣṯw*. Also in Harkhuf's biography are the words *sꜣt* and *mswq*, which have been argued to originate from Proto-Cushitic roots referring to grains (Breyer 2012: 107; Bechhaus-Gerst 1989: 97). Some trade-based words likely originate from a foreign language. The Puntite product *ꜥntw*/*ꜥndw* (myrrh), for example, possibly stems from Lowland East Cushitic (Somali) *'anad* (finest grade of frankincense) (Banti & Contini 1997: 184), a word whose lexical root originates in the idea of "milk" as a descriptor for the sappy exudate of incense-bearing trees. The theonym Dedwen (*Ddwn*), a god whose domain included Nubia, likely also originates in a local language of Nubia—although what language, exactly, remains uncertain. The difficulties of identifying Old Kingdom African lexical material might stem from the fact that it is unclear what language(s) Egypt's proximal Lower Nubian neighbors, the archaeological A- and C-Group (c. 3800 – 1550 BCE), spoke.

A particularly rich source of evidence for African language onomastics are the so-called Execration Texts, a series of clay figurines and bowls on which were inscribed the names of enemies, often foreign. The purpose of these clay texts was that they be ritually smashed in a voodoo-like ceremony, thereby warding off, or eradicating, any harm foes (criminals, and often foreigners) could inflict—personally, or to the Egyptian state (Muhlestein 2008). In the Old Kingdom, these texts record a great number of Nubian names from unspecified locales (Abu Bakr and Osing 1973; Osing 1976) while those of the Middle Kingdom include the rulers of various Nubian polities of Sai, Kush, the Eastern Desert Medjay polities of *ꜣwšq* and *Wbꜣt-spt*, as well as Libyan peoples (Sethe 1926; Posener 1940; Koenig 1990).

Eastern Sudanic Languages (Meroitic, Old Nubian)

Eastern Sudanic languages are spread in a wide arc across neighboring Africa from Darfur to the Eritrean borderlands and south towards Kenya. The Meroitic language, a member of the "northern" grouping of Eastern Sudanic,

was written in a modified Egyptian script from the second century BCE until possibly the early fifth century CE (Rilly 2014: 1177). There is reason to suspect that this language or a highly related one was spoken along the Nile in Upper Nubia from the second millennium BCE. Some "Meroitic" personal names are known from the 17th-Dynasty papyrus Moscow 314 (Rilly 2007). Indeed, the onomastic material from the Middle Kingdom Execration Texts relating to Kush and Sai Island resembles the phonological repertoire of an Eastern Sudanic language like Meroitic (Rilly 2006 – 2007), making it likely that the people of Kerma spoke a form of this language from at least c. 1800 BCE. It would be impossible to accurately define the extension of this language-group without more evidence, but it is likely that this language did not dominate Lower Nubia, a region defined by a very different linguistic group and archaeological culture in the C-Group (Cooper 2017a: 205-206). The current migratory model has Meroitic displacing a number of other Eastern Sudanic or Cushitic languages along the Nile, and it is tempting to link the arrival of Meroitic with a change in the repertoire of Egyptian place-names for Upper Nubia. In the Old Kingdom, the Upper Nubian region was defined by the place-names *Zꜣṯw*, *Jrṯt*, and possibly *Jꜣm* (for debates see Cooper 2012; O'Connor 1986). In later periods these place-names are sparingly used in stereotyped contexts and largely replaced by the word "Kush" (Egyptian *Kš*, Meroitic *qes*), a seemingly indigenous word for the polity and peoples of Upper Nubia (Kerma being its first capital), later extending towards Napata and Meroe.

The Old Nubian language, the literary tongue of the Christianized Nubian kingdoms, has a debated history in this scheme. Like Meroitic, it is a Northern Eastern Sudanic language, and its nearest relatives in the Nuba mountains of Kordofan suggest it arrived at the Nile from the west and south. Texts in Old Nubian are largely known from the ninth century CE; the earliest, from Wadi el-Sebua, dates to 795 CE (Griffith 1913: 61). If this is the language of the earlier *Nobades* who were warring with the *Blemmyes* in Lower Nubia, then Old Nubian languages were spoken in the region at a date much earlier than the fourth and fifth centuries CE. Earlier Meroitic sources also mention a people call the *Nob* ("Noba") on the western frontier of the Meroitic empire, suggesting a series of movements of this people to the Nile Valley (Rilly 2008: 216-217). Some earlier assessments cited the arrival of Old Nubian at some point in the second millennium BCE and there remain a few possible Old Nubian onomastics in New Kingdom texts that could support this earlier date (Zibelius-Chen 2014: 294-295).

Old Beja (Tu Bedawiye)

Another African language for which there is plentiful lexical evidence is the Cushitic language of Beja (var. Tu-Bedawiye), spoken in the deserts east of the Nile from Upper Egypt as far south as Eritrea. The earliest safe lexical evidence for Beja derives from the sarcophagus of Queen Ashayt, dating to the 11th Dynasty reign of Mentuhotep II (2061-2010 BCE), (fig. 2). The sarcophagus depicts the queen and
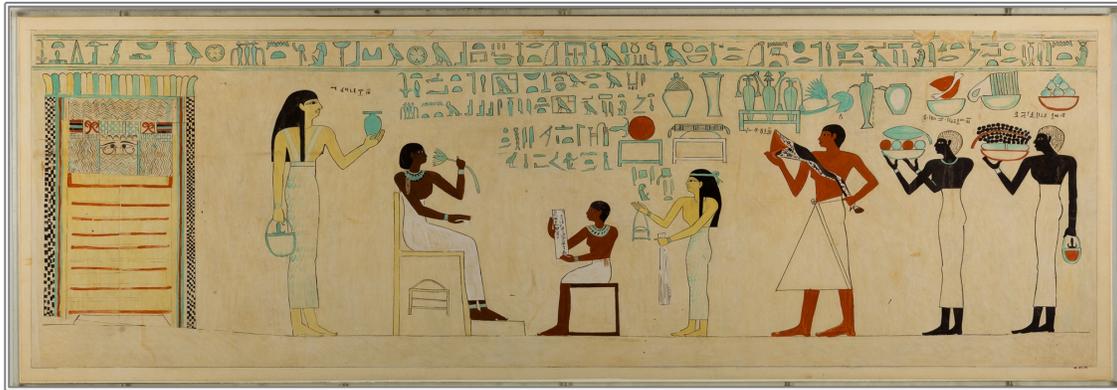
Figure 2. Watercolor facsimile (Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 48.105.32) of painting on Queen Ashayt's sarcophagus. The Medjay lady *Mkḥnt* is depicted at far right. The sarcophagus, from the mortuary complex of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri, is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 47267).

Medjay retainers, one of whom is named as *Mkḥnt* (El-Sayed 2011: 211-212). The Medjay retainers are portrayed with a darker skin-tone than that of other figures shown on the sarcophagus, possibly suggesting a foreign ancestry. The name *Mkḥnt* perfectly matches the Cushitic lexical root *kḥn* (to love), known in Beja, Saho-Afar, and Somali, with a common Afroasiatic nominalizing *m*-prefix appended to the root. Other Beja lexical items include the personal name *Jhtk* from Beja *tak* (man) (Coptic ⲉⲓⲁⲅⲁⲧⲉⲕ) and *Khꜣb*, possibly Beja *kurib* (elephant). Beja place-names, like *Jdꜣht* from Beja *adar* (red), are attested as far north as the Coptos deserts, while the place-names *Rwš* and *Jwšj* might originate in the Beja terms *ruša* (rain after bad flood) and *yuwaś* (dirty), respectively (Cooper 2020: 356, 362). It seems likely that Beja was spoken by at least some of the archaeological Pan-Grave culture and the Eastern Desert nomadic Medjay of Middle Kingdom texts. The name of a Medjay chief called *Kwj* has a perfect origin in modern Beja *kwaaya* (friend) (Zibelius-Chen 2007: 396). A painted hieroglyphic text on a Pan-Grave cattle-skull from Mostagedda likely transcribes a Beja word (Cooper and Barnard 2017).

A hieratic papyrus of the Ramesside Period, now in the Bankes collection (EA 75025), has been claimed to preserve a text largely in the Beja language, possibly a magical text (Demarée 2006: 27). Two points favor this identification, namely the termination of several words in -*t*, which is a marked feature of the feminine in Beja, and also the repetition of a foreign word *tꜣ*, which likely represents the Beja feminine definite article *to-*/*tu-* (Rilly 2014: 1171). Napatan texts relating to campaigning in the Eastern Desert record several names with Beja cognates, making it likely that the ancient Beja occupied the same expanse of territory that they do in the present day. An ostracon found in the monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara preserves several lines of text in the Coptic script that transcribe a connected text in the Beja language (Browne 2003). Analysis of the text identifies it as a possible translation of a section of the Book of Psalms. The text thus provides unique documentation of an African language other than Old Nubian recorded in the Coptic script, and further suggests a degree of bilingualism in Beja-diaspora communities in Egypt.

Berber

The Berber languages, situated across the Sahara from Senegal in the west to Siwa Oasis in the east, are frequently mentioned in the literature as the linguistic corollary of "Libyans." While Egyptian contact with Libyan cs has been ever-present since the Early Dynastic Period, it is uncertain whether these peoples, the *Ṯḥnw* and *Tmḥw* of earlier Egyptian records, spoke a Berber tongue. More certain are the later Ramesside phases of contact with Libyan peoples designated the "Libu." The names of dogs on a stela of Intef II of the First Intermediate Period were considered to originate in the Berber language, but recent analyses have shown that these

reconstructions are unlikely for a variety of phonetic, lexical, and semantic reasons (Kossmann 2011). Indeed, one of the dog's names, *Bḥkꝫj*, given an "Egyptian" translation of *mꝫ-ḥḏ* (gazelle), has a much better cognate in Beja *bōk* (he-goat) or Ge'ez *baḥakʷ* (male goat, sheep, or antelope) (Takács 2013: 572).

An older hypothesis suggested episodes of Berber contact with Old Nubian and languages of the Middle Nile. This model cited the C-Group culture as speakers of a Berber language (Behrens 1981) but the precise lexical evidence is hardly conclusive in this respect. The salient Berber lexical item in Old Nubian that suggested this connection, *aman* (water), has been seriously questioned linguistically (Kossmann 2013: 57), and there are considerable geographic reasons to doubt this connection given the place of Nilo-Saharan languages like Teda (Nilo-Saharan) in the intervening deserts between the Libyan Fezzan and Sudan, including the regions of the Ennedi, Tibesti, and Gebel Uweinat (Sterry and Mattingly 2020: 298).

Identifiable Berber words in Egyptian are relatively rare outside onomastics. Almost all confirmed loans are a result of the well-known historical influence of Libyan groups in the Ramesside and later periods. The Late Egyptian word 𓀭𓀀 *ms* (chief, ruler), found in Egyptian texts of the Libyan period (22nd – 23rd Dynasties), is a demonstrable loan from Berber *məss* (lord) (Takács 2008: 549-550; Breyer 2014a: 200). A rare Berber lexical loan in Egyptian is *swn* (to know, recognize), likely originating from the Berber root *ssn* (Peust 2013). Libyan onomastics of the Ramesside and Third Intermediate periods can be compared to Libyan names found in Libyco-Berber and Punic traditions, signifying a longevity of Berber languages in the regions

west of Egypt (Colin 1996). The famous *Rbw* (*Libu*) is certainly the origin of the ethnonym and place-name "Libya(n)." The ethnonyms *Jsbt/Spd* of Ramesside records are likely identifiable with Herodotus's *Asbystae* (Bates 1914: 47-51), a Libyan ethnonym for inhabitants of the hinterland of Cyrenaica. In Egyptian texts the initial *w-* before many Libyan names, like *Wsrkn* (Osorkon), has been explained as a Berber prefix *w-* (Payraudeau 2020). The old name for Siwa Oasis, Santariya, likely stems from an Egypto-Libyan expression *Tꝫ-n-ḏrww* (Far-away-*Tꝫ*). Further afield, it is also possible that the name of the distant Kufra Oasis in Libya derives from an Aramaic word in the Coptic lexicon: *kʲupro* (ϭⲱⲡⲣⲟ) (field, village) (Kuhlmann 2002: 158-159).

Ethiosemitic Languages

The Ethiosemitic languages comprise an extended branch of Semitic languages in the Horn of Africa. Ge'ez is the only member of this group known from ancient records, while the present-day Ethiopian and Eritrean Highlands are dominated by languages such as Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, and a set of languages known as Gurage. Any contact between Egyptian and languages of the Ethiopian area is largely hypothetical in the third and second millennia BCE, but might be entertained due to Egyptian voyages to historical Punt (*Pwnt*), located somewhere in the coastal regions of Sudan, Eritrea, and possibly also South Arabia (Breyer 2016; Diego Espinel 2011). The name of the Puntite king *Prhw* has an appropriate comparison in the Ethiosemitic root *frh* (to fear) (Ge'ez, Tigre, Tigrinya, Amharic, Gurage)—thus it is a logical name for a chief or ruler encountered on an expedition (Takács 2013: 574; Breyer 2014b; Breyer 2016: 335-336) (fig. 3). Some Puntite place-names in the
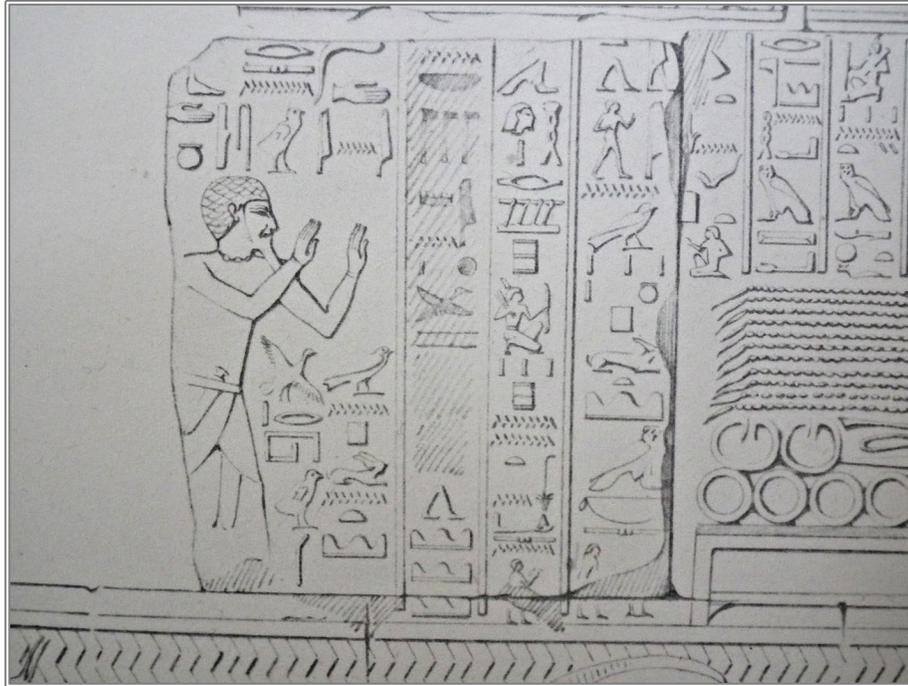
Figure 3. The Puntite king *Prhw* depicted in Hatshepshut's mortuary temple, Deir el-Bahri.

Egyptian Topographical Lists (see Cooper 2018a and 2020: 331-359) might also be compared to Ethiosemitic lexical roots. Vycichl once connected the word *dзng* (pygmy) to the Amharic word *denk* (pygmy, dwarf), but the term is present in so many different languages in ancient Ethiopia and Sudan that it is difficult to establish the origin of this "wandering-word" (Breyer 2012), found as far away as Berber languages of the Sahara.

Other Languages

Cushitic languages other than Beja, such as Saho-Afar, Agaw, and Somali, are now spoken in the Horn of Africa. Several authorities have argued that Cushitic languages were present on the Nile before they were then displaced by Eastern Sudanic speakers (Bechhaus-Gerst 1989; Breyer 2012). The so-called "supplementary spells" of the *Book of the Dead* contain many African loanwords (Zibelius-Chen 2005). Most of these seem to be Meroitic or Eastern Sudanic in origin, but there is a good comparison for the proper name *Jrhb* 𓄿𓂋𓉔𓃀𓈖𓏏𓏤 in an East Cushitic root for "rain": *roob* (Bender 2019: 196; Takács 2013: 572).

A related problem is the languages of the A-Group or C-Group cultures of Lower Nubia. Previous hypotheses connected the language of the C-Group culture to either a branch of Nilo-Saharan or alternatively Berber. Toponyms in Lower Nubia, according roughly to C-Group chronology, would identify the C-Group as an Afroasiatic-speaking people. Place-names like *Mjˁm* (Aniba) or *Tḥḥt* (Debeira) contain consonants that are unlikely in a Nilo-Saharan tongue. These languages could well be another branch of Cushitic (Cooper 2017a), or else perhaps an extremely distant relative of Egyptian, or even a branch of Berber.

One must also postulate the existence of other languages neighboring Egypt even without explicit evidence. The identity of an indigenous "Oasis-language" might be reconstructed as the linguistic corollary of the Bashendi and Sheikh Muftah archaeological cultures; indeed the Egyptians themselves seem to have considered the oasis populations as culturally distinct *Wḥзtw* (oasis-dwellers) (Giddy 1987: 81). While the majority of onomastic items pertaining to the oases west of the Nile (Kharga, Dakhla, Farafra, Bahariya) are demonstrably Egyptian in origin, a small

number of lexical items—among them the toponyms *Dmj-jw* and *Qdst*, and the theonym *Jgꜣj* (Lord of the Oasis)—may have foreign origins (Pantalacci 2013: 288-289; El-Sayed 2011: 166). Other possible "oasis" lexemes include the mineral substance *sꜣhrt* and the plant material *zš*, known as a product of the oasis in a Middle Kingdom stela (Fischer 1957: 229), but these lexemes could well be rare Egyptian words rather than foreign terms from an "oasis-language." The non-Egyptian place-name *Bhks*, known from Middle Kingdom texts (El-Sayed 2011: 191-192, 255), also likely designates a region in the oases. These words would predate the well-known Libyan influence in the oases of the Ramesside and Third Intermediate Periods. Our data is not sufficient to positively identify an "oasis-language" with any linguistic grouping. The most probable candidate would be some branch of Berber, based on the presence of this language in nearby medieval Siwa (Kuhlmann 2002: 129), but extinct branches of Egyptian or a Nilo-Saharan language are equally plausible.

Ancient Egyptian Loans in African Languages

The reverse method, identifying ancient Egyptian loans in African lexicons, demonstrates relics of Egyptian contact with peoples of the Sudanese Nile. Egyptian lexical material is especially rich in the lexicons of Meroitic and Old Nubian, which include some borrowed Egyptian technical vocabulary and trade-based words. Much of this lexical material may be the product of Egyptian imperialism and "colonial" administration in Nubia during the New Kingdom. The use of the Egyptian language in Napatan royal and religious texts provides a further vehicle for the entry of Egyptian words into languages of Nubia (Doyen and Gabolde 2017). Several orthographic and phonetic idiosyncrasies in these Napatan hieroglyphic texts, as well as evidence of mixing with indigenous vocabularies, justify labeling the Napatan use of Egyptian hieroglyphs as a specific "dialect" or a "creole language" (Peust 1999a; Breyer 2014a: 381). Isolated earlier examples of Nubians using the Egyptian script occur in the cartouches and titulary of a Lower Nubian dynasty in the Middle Kingdom (Williams

2013), an inscription from the Eastern Desert mentioning a king of Kerma (Davies 2014: 35), the aforementioned Pan-Grave skull text from Mostagedda, as well as a seal impression recording the "King of Kush" (Fitzenreiter 2012) in the Second Intermediate Period. While these examples are isolated chronologically and spatially, together they illustrate that Egypt's foreign neighbors were at least partially aware of the Egyptian script and language as early as the second millennium BCE.

The Nile: Meroitic and Old Nubia

The Meroitic lexicon contains a great number of Egyptian loans, but these are sometimes difficult to identify precisely, owing to the great phonetic differences between Meroitic and Egyptian and our imperfect understanding of the Meroitic lexicon. Meroitic words such as *ant* (priest) (< *ḥm-nṯr*), *apote* (ambassador) (< *wpwtj*), and *pelmos* (general) (< *pꜣ mr mšꜥ*) demonstrate the impact of Egyptian administrative apparatus in ancient Nubia. Several gods' names such as *Amni* (Amun) and *Wos* (Osiris) point to the transplantation of Egyptian cults in Meroitic forms (Rilly and de Voogt 2012: 183-186). In the Old Nubian lexicon of Late Antiquity are also commonly found Egyptian loan words, some of which may have arrived in this language through the intermediary of Meroitic. Examples include words like ⲁⲣⲡⲁⲉ̄ (temple) (< *rꜣ-pr*), ⲙⲁⲧⲁⲣ (witness) (< *mtr*), ⲧⲟⲅⲟⲛⲁⲉ (altar) (< *tꜣ-ḥwt-nṯr*), and ⲟⲣⲡ (wine) (< *jrp*) (Browne 1996). Some Egyptian loans seem to have spread throughout the Sudanic region: the Egyptian word *nbd* (basketwork) is found in all the contemporary Nile Nubian languages (Kenzi, Dongolawi, Nobiin) as *nébid* (matting) and also passed into the Eastern Desert Beja language as *émbaḍ* (Blažek 2014: 319-320).

Libya and the Sahara

Egyptian loanwords in languages of the central Sahara are infrequent and, in many cases, might be attributable to the presence of the same Egyptian words in the medieval lingua franca

of Arabic. An incontestable and widespread Egyptian word is the Late Egyptian rendering for "date-palm" with the attached feminine definite article, *tꜣ-bnj*. This is found in Berber languages as *ti-bäyne*, in Tubu of northern Chad as *timbi*, in Maba of Darfur as *timbi*, in Kanuri of southern Chad as *dibino*, and even as far afield as Hausa (Nigeria, Niger) *dàbiinòò* (Kossmann 2002), arguing for the spread of date-palm domestication trending west from Egypt along Saharan trade routes. An Egyptian metallurgical item, *ḏḥtj* (tin, lead) (Coptic ⲧⲁϩⲧ), has also been identified in Maba (Darfur) and Tubu (northern Chad and southern Libya) as *tuuta* (Cooper 2017b), but these items could conceivably have arrived through an unknown intermediary in Meroitic or another Nile Nubian language. So too the month name of "Thoth" (Demotic *Tḥwty*, Coptic ⲑⲟⲟⲩⲧ) is found in languages as far southwest as the Nuba mountains in the form of Nyimang *t̪ɔt̪ɔ* (July) (Rilly 2010: 189). Further studies of languages in the region of western Sudan and perhaps Chad may yet reveal additional isolated Egyptian loans.

The Red Sea and Punt

There remains a limited vocabulary of Egyptian loanwords in the Beja language, and most of this stock was likely borrowed through the intermediary of Arabic, like *tub* (brick) from Arabic *ṭūb*, originally Egyptian *ḏbt* (Vycichl 1960: 260). There is a small group of words that are likely direct loans, like *hatay* (horse) (< *ḥtj)*, or perhaps *kunte* (sycamore) (< Demotic *kwnt)*. An intriguing loan is the Beja word *kankar* (stool) (< *t̪nt̪ꜣt* "throne"), which presumes an early borrowing from the Middle Egyptian stage of the language, when Egyptian *ꜣ* still had a value as /r/. Egyptian loans in languages of the Horn of Africa are not common, although a set of Coptic ecclesiastical terminology arrived in the Geʿez lexicon along with the conversion of the Aksumite Empire to Christianity in the fourth century CE, although almost all of these words bear signs of having been carried into Geʿez through the medium of Greek or Arabic (Leslau 1987).

Social Dynamics of Language Contact

Language contact is an ever-present and ongoing phenomenon, not restricted to singular historical episodes. The main vector for foreign words coming into the Egyptian language would have been the frontier and borderland communities, particular those in Upper Egypt adjoining Nubia. Since the Old Kingdom, there is ongoing documentation for Nubian and Medjay communities living within Egypt in the regions between Aswan and Gebelein, while Libyan groups routinely visited the Western Delta and the oases.

Some texts and lexical material suggest rather more deliberate and intimate contacts between Egyptian scribes and foreigners. For instance, an ostracon found at Deir el-Medina (oDem 1072) describes the cult geography of Upper Nubia along with the name of a local goddess who is the watery manifestation of Amun (Gabolde 2018: 94): "As for *Degal*, it is the name of a town. *Ta-Wauu*, it is the name of a mountain. As for *Nakhysmekas*, it is the name of the goddess, (she is) the water from which Amun went out in the land of Kush." So, too, the foreign African lexical material in the "Supplementary Spells" of the *Book of the Dead* presupposes some detailed religious exchange between Egyptian and Nubian theologians. Such intimate exchanges are also observed in the "Kushite spells" of Egyptian magical papyri. These passages contain a small number of non-Egyptian words, suggesting the incorporation of foreign phrases and words in the performance of these rituals. Egyptian corpora of magical texts include a number of foreign languages, from Minoan to Aramaic, and also languages self-described as being "of Kush" in the case of demotic magical papyri (Thissen 1991). It is not always clear if some of these words are incomprehensible *vocae magicae* (magical utterances like "abracadabra") rather than actual Kushite words (Wüthrich 2009). The efficacy of Kushite magic was well known in Egyptian circles—in a letter to his viceroy, Amenhotep II remarked on the great power of Nubian magicians (Helck 1955: 1344.11-12). Some of this theological exchange might be attributed to New Kingdom Nubian temples like Soleb or Kawa and the dialogue between Egyptian priesthoods and local counterparts. Elsewhere, a liturgical text honoring the god

Min inscribed on the walls of the Ramesseum and Medinet Habu also includes a small section of non-Egyptian language reproduced in hieroglyphs—possibly read *bꜣ/jm wnt nwjyꜣ*—that was said to be uttered by the Puntites (Quack 2010: 318).

Foreign onomastics likely arrived in the Egyptian lexicon through the expeditionary activity of Egyptian officials. Well-known Aswan nobles like the Sixth Dynasty officials Harkhuf and Sabni are exemplars in such activity, and it is likely that their expeditions, as trading and diplomatic ventures, were responsible for the introduction of new foreign toponyms, and perhaps even words, into the Egyptian lexicon. Throughout Egyptian history, the trailblazers of Egyptian expeditions were the *smntjw* (prospectors) and *jꜥꜣw* (interpreters) (Diego Espinel 2014), classes of expeditionary specialists well known from contexts in Nubia and the Eastern Desert. This class of official, too, must have introduced foreign words and names to Egyptian communities.

But most foreign words would have come into the lexicon through a much more passive, subtle, and ongoing process. Given the great degree of contact witnessed between Egyptians and Nubians in the archaeological record of the "Head of the South" (*Tp-rsj*) and the Aswan area (Raue 2018: I, 24-29), it would be reasonable to assume that there was a degree of bilingualism on the frontier even if this is difficult to accurately observe from extant texts. Such bilingual communities, highly involved in trade and exchange, would have been the perfect setting for linguistic exchange. Foreign diasporas, such as characterized by the Pan-Grave culture of the Middle Kingdom, were widespread throughout the Egyptian provinces (de Souza 2019). The Egyptian "colonial" administrations of Lower Nubia in the Middle Kingdom would have increased the pace of this language contact, with Egyptian and Nubian officials working side by side in fortress communities and exhibiting a high degree of "cultural entanglement" in domestic and funerary spheres. Constant frontier trade, as mentioned on Senusret III's boundary stele at Semna and in administrative texts from the fortresses themselves, demonstrate the regular dialogue between Nubian and Egyptian communities (Kraemer and Liszka 2016: 20).

The new and energetic Egyptian administration of the New Kingdom propelled Egyptians along the Nubian Nile as far as Kurgus, deep into Upper Nubia beyond the Fourth Cataract. This imperialistic and colonial venture would have accelerated any linguistic exchanges between Egyptians and Nubians. Egyptian colonists now settled beyond the Lower Nubian border fortresses of the Second Cataract and inhabited such towns as Amara West, Gebel Barkal, Kawa, Pnubs, Sai, and Soleb. In this period, Nubians, in parallel, are attested in sites throughout Egypt, from small farming villages to the tomb builders' village of Deir el-Medina (Ward 1994). This population exchange and imperial administration no doubt formed the conduit through which many loanwords arrived in Egyptian and through which Egyptian words arrived in Meroitic. It is less clear how pervasive such exchanges were on Egypt's western frontiers, but the chain of border fortresses stretching from the Delta to the Marmarica (e.g., El Alamein, Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham) presents a context identical to that of Nubia for local exchanges between Libyans and Egyptians. Libyans, too, are well attested as a diaspora in Egypt well before their ascendency in the Third Intermediate Period. We can thus assume that many other African languages were not only spoken beyond Egypt's borders, but were actively spoken in various communities within the Egyptian state throughout history.

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Figure 1.   Approximate boundaries of linguistic groups in Northeast Africa c. second millennium BCE, with ancient toponyms in italics. (Map by the author.)

Figure 2.   Watercolor facsimile (Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 48.105.32) of painting on Queen Ashayt's sarcophagus. The Medjay lady *Mkḥnt* is depicted at far right. The sarcophagus, from the mortuary complex of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri, is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 47267). (Photographer not listed; Photograph under Creative Commons license CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Facsimile_of_the_painting_on_the_inner_front_side_of_the_sarcophagus_of_Aashyt_MET_48.105.32_EGDP013012.jpg)

Figure 3.   The Puntite king *Prhw* depicted in Hatshepshut's mortuary temple, Deir el-Bahri. (From Naville 1898: pl. 69.)