QUESTIONS OF EGYPTIAN HISTORICAL PHONOLOGY AND AFRO-ASIATIC

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Abstract

The new monograph on Egyptian historical grammar by J. P. Allen appeared merely some two decades after A. Loprieno's (1995) book with similar scope and aims. In this review article, the reviewer is investigating whether the author has managed to yield a new synthesis in the swampy domain of historical phonology, by determining to what extent his material reflects and matches our knowledge on the subject hitherto accumulated on the one hand and how convincing the new solutions are on the other hand.

Another new attempt at summing up our knowledge on the Egyptian language from a diachronic standpoint is now presented by J. P. Allen, the celebrated and multi-talented Egyptologist. He set up the daring task of covering all major aspects of Egyptian grammar, i.e. phonology, morphology and syntax. The latter two areas being beyond my primary interests, this review focuses on the first domain, where this book is, of course, not at all "the first of its kind" as one can read in the promotion text on the covering page. On the contrary, the basic question pursued throughout my review has been how this new work corresponds to the expectations in the light of many preceding syntheses on Egyptian historical phonology.

The technical chapter „Conventions“ (pp. xi-xiv) gives lists of phonological symbols and abbreviations of technical terms. The first list – in spite of the author’s statement (p. xi) that „this book follows the conventions standard in linguistic discussions of phonology“ – contains some surprising definitions: ʕ is listed as a „vuvarial glide (or stop), like Arabic ʕ“, which proves that the author is unfamiliar with the fundamental literature of Semitics, where ʕ (ʕ, ʻ) is defined as a „voiced pharyngal fricative“ or an „epiglottal (pharyngeal) central approximant“4, i.e. one entire articulation place further. When he writes of the phone behind Eg. ɗ as a „palatalized unaspirated (or voiced) apical stop“, I am disturbed by the lack of any hint of its treatment as an „affricated palatalale faible et sourde” (Vycichl 1990, 45) or a „voiced palatal affricate“ (EDE I 273). Another error is Allen’s label for ɗ (marked in Semitic studies traditionally as ɗ) as a „voiced dental fricative“, although in fact it is an interdental, as is well known in Semitic studies.5

Chapter 1, entitled „Ancient Egyptian“ (pp. 1-8), is intended to lay out some general facts and principles of diachronic analysis. Allen’s short introduction on the extraordinary continuity of Egyptian ends with note 2 (p. 201), where the author lists as „major diachronic studies“ on the development of Egyptian only B. H. Stricker’s 1945 monograph in Dutch, F. Junge’s entry on „Sprache“ in LÄ V 1176-1211, A. Loprieno’s 1995 book on Egyptian, J.-M. Kruchten’s paper on Middle vs. Late Egyptian (1999), and J. Winand’s 2006 book on time and aspect in Egyptian. Bizarrely, the author failed to mention here J. Vergote’s (1973, 1983) multi-volume work with its diachronic studies in all aspects of Egyptian grammar, and also the fundamental historical phonologies by J. Vergote (1945), P. Lacau (1970), W. Vycichl (1990) and C. Peust (1999). Why did he not study them? How can one think at all to attempt at achieving a new synthesis without re-discussing the materials of these works? A first and foremost question I kept asking, while I was reading Allen's chapters on phonology.

In subsection 1.1, very superficially and in an old-fashioned way, Allen examines the „affinities“ of Egyptian, which the author acknowledges as belonging to the „Hamito-Semitic“ family of languages, which, as he mentions (p. 201, n. 3), has been „also called, less accurately, Afro-Asiatic“. Why „less accurately“? He is not arguing but simply stating that „Arabic is both an African and Asian Semitic language“. Apparently, he is unfamiliar with the reasons why this new label „Afro-Asiatic“ was introduced in the 1950s to replace the older term “Semito-Hamitic”. For an overview of the family, to my great surprise, the author relies solely on Petráček’s 1988 Introduction (Úvod) in Czech completely ignoring the epoch-making fundamental comparative works on Afro-Asiatic as a whole by I. M. Diakonoff (1965, 1988) and by J. H. Greenberg (1955, 1963). From these he could have learnt some basic results of our domain and so easily have avoided the following terrible sentence on Egyptian, another surprising statement illustrating to what extent this author is neglecting the facts


1 My sincere thanks go to Prof. W. G. E. Watson (Morphet, UK) for correcting the English of this text.

2 These aspects of J. P. Allen’s book were reviewed by W. Schenkel in Lingua Aegyptia 21 (2013), 321-328.

3 See E. Lipiński (1997, 107) and also L. Kogan (2009, 28; 2011, 54).

4 As formulated by A. Dolgopolsky (1999, 28).

5 Cf., e.g. Lipiński 1997, 117-122, §4; Kogan 2009, 26; 2011, 54.
of Afro-Asiatic linguistics: "It has affinities with Hamitic languages such as Beja, Berber, and Oromo, and with all the Semitic languages ...", which makes in the reader a misleading impression as if the macrofamily had to be divided into Semitic and "Hamitic", and as if not all of the latter languages were related to Egyptian. Since Greenberg we know that there was no Hamitic unit at all, the African branches of the macrofamily being separate, equipotential, and solely ultimately related entities (Berber, Cushito-Omotic, Chadic). To be frank, an overview of the history of Egyptian in 2013 can hardly stand the test of time with such an inadequate preparatory research.

Allen’s totally out-dated label "Non-Hamitic features" (p. 1) sounds equally awkward. Among these, he lists "preponderance of triconsonantal roots" in Egyptian (almost 2/3 of the PT verbal roots were triradical), which is again an old "prejudice" about the root inventory of the African branches of our macrofamily. Suffice it to mention the triconsonalisms of the reconstructed Proto-Chadic root stock (Jungraithmayr & Shimizu 1981; Jungraithmayr & Ibrisizimov 1994) or of any Berber lexicon, which the author should have consulted at first before a hasty "conclusion". Then, Allen goes on with "some lexical cognates" shared only by Egyptian and Semitic as a further "Non-Hamitic feature", but the only instance he quotes in fact is Eg. sp.1 vs. Sem. *sap-at-*lip*, which is, however, a great blunder as this root is also attested in South Cushitic,6 as I pointed out some time ago (Takács 1999, 401-402; 2000, 85, #15.1). Among "Hamitic features" we find the "vocalization pattern of some verbal derivatives" (p. 1), for which the author (in fn. 5, p. 201) provides no example, i.e. which patterns are in fact common to Egyptian-Semitic, but not to the other branches – except for a general hint on the vocalization patterns summarized in NBA and Schenkel 1983, which were, by the way, elaborated by G. Fecht (1960), a fact the author is silent about. We learn here equally nothing about the other conceptions of Egyptian vowel reconstruction by W. Vycichl (DELC) and C. Peust (1999) – one wonders why. Among "non-Semitic features" Allen referred to "a dearth of lexical verb stems other than the root and causative" (sic), for which he – incomprehensibly to me – quoted (n. 6 on p. 201) the Egyptian Iae n-roots reflecting medio-passive Semitic n-stems and a supposed Egyptian factitive stem (pi<sup>→</sup>ēl of Hebrew) corresponding to the Akkadian D and Arabic stem II (unfortunately, he failed to mention that the idea comes from W. Vycichl 1957 on the basis of the Coptic evidence). But how these Egyptian-Semitic isoglosses represent a "non-Semitic feature", is a puzzle. On top that, Allen ex cathedra labelled the existence of the Egyptian pi<sup>→</sup>ēl as "questionable" (here again, no arguments were used). Moreover, it is here that the author seems to have difficulties regarding the use of the notions "root" vs. "stem": when speculating on whether behind the meanings "to perish" vs. "to destroy" of Eg. ht we have in fact *ḥt*m vs. *ḥʾt*m, respectively, or not, he surprises us by writing: "But it is also possible that Egyptian used a single root (sic) for both meanings". The Afro-Asiatic consonantal root always carries lexical information only (e.g. Akkadian *pars "to cut"), and can thus by no means have any association with such a grammatical category as factitivity, causative etc., which was signified by the vocalized verbal stems (e.g. Akkadian purrus)!

Awkward blunders in a small note – they are sadly revealing. After all this alarmingly poor presentation, the author mentions three Proto-Semitic words (*yād- "hand", *āyn- "eye", *ūdh- "ear") reflected by the phonetic values of the Egyptian hieroglyphs (d. *tn, jdn, respectively), from which he hastily concludes (p. 2) "that Egyptian may be closer in origin to Proto-Semitic than to the Hamitic branch (sic) of Hamito-Semitic". Where are the thorough analyses of the grammatical and lexical isoglosses shared by Egyptian and the other branches? The author is evidently unfamiliar with the lexicostatistic research by A. Ju. Militarev and V. Blažek.

Then follows a brief "Historical overview" (§1.2) of the phases of Egyptian language history (pp. 2-4). Here too, hardly anything new or original emerges. On the contrary, the author is silently skipping to discuss the most fundamental change, namely the transition between Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian. Here too, hardly anything new or original emerges. On the contrary, the author is silently skipping to discuss the most fundamental change, namely the transition between Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian.

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In §1.4 (pp. 5-8), Allen lays out some facts of diachronic analysis in the domains of the Egyptian lexical stock and grammar with emphasis on the latter. Among Late Egyptian lexical neologisms, he mentions "Semitic (sic) tampūḥa (sic)" (p. 5) – two awkward elementary blunders at a time in a Cambridge University Press publication. First, the Hebrew word (he was evidently referring to) is in fact tappūḥ "apple" [KB] with a <i>pattah furtivum</i>, which he failed to read correctly from the Hebrew script. Secondly, the word is not reconstructed for Proto-Semitic at all (Kogan 2011, 204, #4.4.3) as it is not common Semitic.

The next chapter (§2, pp. 11-22) is on Coptic phonology and it surveys the alphabet, syllable structure and stress, vowels and consonants. Discussing syllabic consonants (p. 13), the author uses a misleading dot beneath the consonant as a diacritic sign, e.g. (A) KÁ [kl] "doorbolt" or (ALMS) BPPPE [brequ] "new", although this has been commonly applied to denote the emphatic (glottal) consonants, whereas the correct diacritic for the

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6 Cf. Proto-Rift *ŠVē "lip" [Ehret 1980, 212].
sonants, adopted from Indo-European, is a subscript circle, thus [k] and [b̥re], respectively. Similarly disturbing is Allen’s misleading adherence to some long out-dated and ambiguous transliteration signs retained in Egyptian merely by tradition, which now he re-uses even for Coptic consonants, e.g. ð and ɾ, standing in Egyptian for a voiceless (aspirated) and voiced (unaspirated) palatal affricates (Allen: palatalized apicals) e.g. in the synopsis of the "Common Coptic" system of consonantal phonemes (p. 20), although in Semitics it is voiceless interdental spirant (being a commonly accepted diacritic of spirantization and not of palatales), which the author now projects in the next row of the table even to Coptic palatalized velars signified in the work under review as ƙ and ƙ, (!) implying for a professional Semitic or Indo-European linguist spirantized (begadkefat) velars and not palatalized ones (instead of k’ and g’ or ƙ and ƙ̥, resp.).

Speaking of the Coptic vowels (§2.3, pp. 13-17), the author presents a system (p. 15 and cf. p. 203, n. 24) based arbitrarily on Hintze 1980 and Peust 1999. Why all other approaches (by G. Fecht 1960, J. Vergote 1973, J. Osing in NBÀ, W. Vycichl in DELC etc.) were simply left out of the consideration and not even referred to in this context, we do not learn from Allen, who confessed of his model that "such a description, of course, can only be theoretical, since the actual phonetic quality of the vowels is unknown". For me, to be frank, any system, whose elaboration is not accompanied by surveying the relevant literature and discussing the underlying arguments, is to be used with the greatest caution.

In the next chapter, „Coptic and Egyptian” (§3, pp. 23-30), the same basic problems may be addressed. Seeing Allen’s Eg. *ḥām-naṯḥ (p. 24), for instance, one might ask: where is the evidence for *-u-., why did he not present it? So far, the Egyptian word for „god” has been vocalized as *nāṯḥ partly in the light of the cuneiform word. Where is Allen’s reference to all this literature and where is the discussion of the alternative hypotheses as it is supposed to be, e.g. the one proposed by W. Vycichl, who reconstructed the word as *nāṯḥ? Why did Allen consider an ex cathedra reconstruction as sufficient, without any references, arguments and critical discussion as sufficient? If one is not aware of these facts, can one hope to carry out a well-founded research on this issue? The author’s (p. 33) reconstruction of LEg. ḫbr „partner” (borrowed from Semitic) as *ḥābira (sic, long -ā- and short -i-, for which no arguments were adduced) is equally astonishing in the light of the Coptic reflexes, cf. (SLM) ḫbhp, (A) ḫhp, which evidently indicate either *ḥābīr or *ḥābūr pace Hoch, with a short or reduced unaccented vowel in the first syllable.

Unfortunately, the case is no better regarding Allen’s synopsis of Egypto-Coptic consonantal correspondences (pp. 26-27), which is already prima vista incomparably far below the level of, e.g. C. Peust’s (1999) masterful treatment of Egyptian Lautgeschichte. First of all, what we miss here is its thorough elaboration including the conditional shifts in the context of their instances. The author presents Common Coptic *b (sic) as a reflex of both Egyptian b and p – in the latter case „occasionally”. Firstly, as is well-known, Coptic B had the value [v] or less probably [B]. Secondly, the label „occasionally” is misleading as if claiming that the shift took place ad hoc and not in the cluster -pt- or -pd- > -B̥T¬ and only a few pages later does Allen (p. 28) briefly touch upon -pt- < -B̥T-. Similarly nichtssagend is Allen’s label on Coptic M < Egyptian b as „occasionally”, e.g. (ALMS) NIM < nb „all”, since the change was evoked by the proximity of another nasal in the root. The author mentions only en passant 2 pages later (p. 28) that Eg. b became p/m/w also Coptic – but where and why, remains unexplained. The same is the case with Allen’s (p. 27) description of Coptic P < Egyptian n as happening „occasionally”, e.g. (BS) āPMont < jwn-ṃnt.w „Armant”: this change was not ad hoc either, but here was due to the stimulating factor of the environment of n and also b. This could be completed by other similar instances, which testify to a superficial treatment of consonantal history, which adds nothing new to our common knowledge. Instead, the author has accumulated something from some selected works intended to be a small and brief illustration of a research domain, whose state-of-the-art in its complexity does not appear here.

The following sketchy chapter „Correspondents and cognates” (§4, pp. 31-36) deals in fact with rendering of Semitic words (loans, names) in Egyptian (§4.1) and genetic parallels in Afro-Asiatic (§4.2), respectively. What we can find here can hardly be regarded as analyses based on the profound knowledge of

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7 Cf., e.g. Brugmann 1897, 392-393, §429, 451, §497.
12 Cf. Peust 1999, 134, §3.12.3 and fn. 135 with old literature.
13 There are two instances apud Peust 1999, 167, §3.16.4.7.
14 Cf. Peust 1999, 165, §3.16.4.2.
the relevant linguistic evidence. Nevertheless, the scanty illustrative data were apparently sufficient for Allen to draw a number of hasty and sometimes too daring conclusions.

Discussing the "correspondents", the author claims (p. 32) that there were "rare examples of /p/", act. (in his terminology) cases of rendering Semitic *p with f in the Egyptian script, which "probably involve secondary spirantization, usually before *i". However, as usual, not a single instance is cited except that "a similar phenomenon is attested in Egyptian fst/pfst/pst *fisit/θfisit/pisit > AS THIECE, F FIÇI 'cook'.". I confess that I fail to understand how the latter case with only the reverse shift (old f > younger p), could somehow be relevant as its Anlaut had undergone no spirantization at all, but rather the contrary. The two certain instances of Sem. *p borrowed as Eg. f adduced by J. Hoch (1994, 401 and #301 + #398) and referred to by Allen (ibid.) indicate either a Semitic source where *p > f or a positional spirantization in Egyptian. In either case, this is absolutely to be kept distinct from OK fsj > MK písj > NK psj.

The hastily and carelessly composed subsection on Semito-Egyptian cognates (pp. 34-36) is full of awkward surprises and I am afraid I must say, unfortunately, that the level of this eclectic presentation hardly exceeds the output of the old works of Egypto-Semitic comparison from the 1930s (e.g., ESS or GÄSW). What the author has accomplished here, I can only conceive it as a Muß-Work in a domain, where, thanks to J. H. Greenberg, I. M. D'jakonov and his outstanding Moscovite comparative dictionary team, and several further productive authors from recent decades, evidently much more can be known on the history of this segment of the Egyptian language.

For instance, to my great astonishment, Allen defines Proto-Semitic *q (more correctly glottal *k) as a voiceless pharyngeal (!) stop (p. 34). In doing so, he even specially marked the place for the emphatic counterpart in the velar row as void in the chart composed by him "on the basis of most recent studies". I wonder what kind of most recent studies he used, when the whole Fachgebiet of comparative Semitics knows it as a velar plosive (including those works he refers to on p. 206, n. 24: did he really read them)? This kind of "method" is truly regrettable. Pronouncements ex cathedra ignoring the sources and the evidence are hardly the ways of achieving solid results.

The extremely short discussion of Egypto-Semitic consonantal correspondences based on some selected lexical parallels is an arena of serious controversies, which Allen was, of course, unable to resolve. Instead, he assumed an eclectic set of consonantal correspondences in the same manner as A. Loprieno did in his 1995 book. This is a very poor elaboration of a magnificent field of research, which only uses some superficially selected examples SED I-II and EDE I and treats exceptions as equivalent to regular correspondences.

Thus, while admitting Eg. *c = Sem. *c and *γ (p. 35), nothing prevented Allen from stating that "Egyptian *c also seems to have been related to Semitic *l in" using the disputable parallel of Eg. ḫq "to shave" vs. Sem. *ḥlk "shave, smooth".17 Is it sufficient to have only one parallel to admit a regular (!) correspondence? At the same time, he (p. 35) also adopts the Rösslerian view on Eg. *c that "it was originally an apical stop" and as

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16 Where, e.g., Loprieno (1995, 31, §3.3.a) was able to accept both dental and pharyngeal values for Eg. *c at the same time in the very same root (!) when he equated Eg. 3*c* to speak a foreign language" (DLE) with Sem. *vīly > Hebrew vlvz qal "unverständlich, barbarisch reden" [GB] and Ar. ḥl'z IV "enveloppe le verbe vérité d'une pensée dans des paroles obscures" [BK] instead of assuming a cognacy directly with the biconsonantal Sem. *vīly as correctly demonstrated by F. von Calice (1931, 36; GÄSW #1), J. Vergote (1945, 130, 133, §3.a.1), and C. T. Hodge (1981, 374, §3.a.2). Loprieno's (1995, 32, §3.3.d) impossible AA *vīpy (sic) "seven" (in fact, his AA root never had either *p or *y) based on the well-known correspondence of Eg. sḥ and Sem. *vāh testifies to that he was unaware of the fact that h appeared in this Eg. root due to the incomparability law of AA *v* > Eg. sḥ (cf. EDE I 326), which, in turn, then affected the shift of *b- > -f via metathesis. The same incomparability shift occurred in Eg. wsh, "wide" akin to Sem. *wšw, which Loprieno (1995, 35, §3.4.1) failed to realize and, instead, he assumed a baseless AA *wšw, whose *γ never existed lacking, in fact, any real evidence. Equally puzzling is Loprieno's (1995, 32, §3.3.d) arbitrary reconstruction of AA *x* (in fact, a nowhere attested glottalized velar fricative!) on the basis of two contradictory instances, namely Eg. hr, "to", vs. Sem. *šl and Eg. ngm, "sweet" vs. Sem. *šnm. Neither of these roots had ever that exotic phoneme, which he failed to quote one single occurrence.

17 Cf. Hebrew ḥlq "glatt, unbehaart sein" [GB] | Arabic ḥalaqa I 1."raser (la tête), 2. tondre (les chèvres)" [BK]. There are three further supposed instances, which Allen missed to mention, cf. Eg. ḥlq "(eine Frau) schänden" (Wb) = "to violate (a woman)" (DLE) ||| Sem.: Hebrew ḥlql nipal "sich entweihen, entweihen, entheilt werden", piel "entweihen, profanieren" [GB] = piel "to profane", nipal "to be defiled" [BK] suggested by W. Alblright (1918, 241, #82) and A: Ember (ESS §5.g.3); Eg. shh't s- sḥ’t "Hase" (Wb) ||| Sem.: Arabic sḥl-at- "petite/jeune lièvre qui ne suit plus sa mère" [BK] suggested by W. Vycichl (1958, 398; 1963, 150; 1990, 42). O. Rössler (1971, 313), and Ch. Reintges (1994, 218). A possible external origin (Indo-Iranian *sasa- "hare") has also been proposed by V. Blazek (1990, 42).
"evidence for these values" he quoted merely Eg. *c3 vs. Sem *⟩dl (sic) "door" and Eg. *ff vs. Sem *⟩ḥbb "fly", which I had discarded some time ago (EDE I 347 and 362, resp.).

The whole treatment of Eg. ḡf (p. 35) is also unacceptably distorted. In the first line of its entry, the author simply states: 'The labial fricative ḡ is related to Semitic *ḥ/ḥ in the SMG suffix pronoun ḡ' – that is all (!) he has to say about Eg. ḡf. To present Sem. *ḥ as a regular match of Eg. ḡf is astonishing. Naturally, the shift of Eg. ḡf < *⟩σu ~ Sem. *⟩ṣu in the 3rd person masc. sg. suffix, the only instance of its kind was unique and irregular in Egyptian. Both cases represent marginal, presumably conditioned irregular cases, whereas the regular match of Eg. ḡf = Sem. *p < AA ḡ has been established and abundantly demonstrated, although it is not even mentioned by Allen. He was also silent about the considerable significance of Eg. ḡf as an Afro-Absitic archaism shared with Chadic, which was first realised by J. H. Greenberg (1958). The author has equally ignored the demonstration of the validity for Egyptian ḡ in South Cushitic an Angas-Sura, where ḡ has been preserved distinct from *p. All these results are strangely left out in the new book.

Another surprise is represented by Allen’s all too daring statement (p. 35) that Eg. ḏ "is primarily cognate with Semitic *ḥ ... It is also related to Semitic ḏ in ṣrsw ≈ ḏḥ 'six' ...", while he acknowledges only "one possible cognate with Semitic *ḥ/ḥ in the MSG suffix pronoun ḡ' (namely Eg. rd "foot" vs. Sem. *⟩vṛ, "to tread"). That is, in his opinion the regular matches of Eg. ḡf would be Sem. *ḥ and *d, which is far from current opinion. Firstly, Sem. *d is no more than a sporadic irregular match of Eg. ḡf, distinctly attested merely in the word for "six", while the remaining of its suggested instances cannot be accepted (cf. EDE I 292-294). Secondly, Sem. *ḥ is a regular match of Eg. ḡf, just as *ḥ is, and, strangely, Allen overlayed almost all the Egyptian words whose Afro-Absitic cognates have *r-, i.e. Eg. rjw ḡ "fortgehen, verlassen" (Wb) = "to go/pass away, depart, leave" (FD), ḡw ḡ "to dance, clap hands" (FD) and rw.t ḡ "Tanz" (Wb), ḡw ḡ "Bogensehne (vom Bogen abgespannt)" (Wb), ḡw ḡ "Fürst" (Wb) = "hereditary noble" (FD). ḡw ḡ "sich freuen, froh sein" (Wb), ḡw ḡ "wachsen" (Wb), ḡw ḡ "Schafock, Weib" (PT), ḡw ḡ "(to be), better, younger" (FD), hence ḡw ḡ "lad, younger son" (FD).

Allen’s (p. 35) statement that "good cognates for Egyptians ḡ are lacking" implies that he probably a priori disregarded those listed in Rössler 1971, 308 and EDE I 143-148 (referred to in his n. 31 on p. 207). It is a pity that the author also overlooked a number of very recent etymologies reaffirming that Egyptian ḡ reflects Afro-Absitic *ḥ, cf. Eg. jwh "beladen mit etwas" (Wb), bht "Widersacher o.ä." (Wb) = "enemies (in texts for..."
the destruction of foes") (PL), 30 h3 "rösten (in den Bez. für Brotsorten)" (Wb) = "Glut" (cf. *q n h3 "Röstbrot") (GHWb), 31 h3.j.1 "Halle, Vorhalle" (Wb) = "portal" (FD), 32 h3j "(den Gegner) annehmen" (Wb), 33 hhwh "davonlaufen (von den Füßen)" (Wb), 34 hj "einen Ort betreten" (Wb) > hh.w "Zerstörung (?)" (Wb), 35 ln "aufhören mit (lr) etwas" (Wb) = "to halt, cease" (FD), 36 ihnt "zu jemandem eilen" (Wb), 37 ln „(die Kühle zum Futter) treiben" (Wb).

Admitting the well-known match of Eg. *h = Sem. *ḥ, Allen (p. 35) writes that "like Egyptian <, it also seems to be associated with Semitic 1", and for both cases he provided one instance for each case once again misleading readers inexperienced in Egyptian etymology by giving the illusion that these are equally regular correspondences. This far from the case: the first is regular, while the second one is only sporadically attested, namely in three Eg. roots of puzzling etymology: h*v ("ein Spiel" spielen) (Wb), 39 ḫbš "bekleiden, verhüllen" (Wb), 40 smḥ,j „links (Adj.), die Linke (Subst.)" (Wb). 41

30 P. Wilson’s Volkskeltymologie ("those who flee") may be left out of consideration. Cf. rather Arabic bahata I "aussässillar à l’improviste et avoir le dessus sur qqn., 2. calomnier qqn., lui imputer à tort et sciemment qqch." (BK) || WCh.: Hausa báábstáá < partial redupl. < *ba(h)t-ba(h)- < quarrelsems talking [Abraham].


32 Cf. Arabic hurūb- "générer public, magasin aux grains" [BK] || CCh.: Musgu-Masa *hēr- "(to) enclos(ure)" [GT]; Musgu-Puss hari (hara) "clôture, enclore" [Tourneux], Muwli (Vulum) hari "enclercler" [Tourneux], cf. also Musgu-Puss hari (hara) "faire une pépinière" [Tourneux], Muwli (Vulum) hari "faire une pépinière" [Tourneux], Mbara hari "faire une pépinière" [Tourneux]) || Misse hār "clôture" [Kieschke] || WCh.: Pala hār (m), pl. hari "compound, house, home" [M. Skinner] < AA *vhr [GT].

33 Akin to LECu.: Sam *hēl- "to get" [Heine, Sassey, Suss], Sam *hēl- "faire griller, (catch) hold (of)" [Ehret] || WCh.: Angas eel = el (harr) [Tourneux] || Foulkes = "el, ergreifen, schnappen" [Jungraithmayr] || CCh.: Gisiga hal "nehmen (Hirse, Ernahrung)" [Lukas] < AA *vhr, to seize [GT].

34 Cf. SCu.: WRift ḫawv-ut (med.) "to go away" [Kieffling & Mous] || LECu.: Saho haw-erē "to go away", haw-īše "to take away" [Vergari].

35 Sem.: Tigrinya habayi hāfrar à coupz répétés, battre fort (pluie), hobay bāli "frapper à coups répétés, battre fort (pluie)" (BEDA) || Bedawye ḫāb "den Fußboden im Hause stampfen, ebawa" [Vergari].

36 Related to Sem.: Tigre ḫaw "devenir désert", Tigrinyahāna ḫara "déserté, désolé (lieu), ruines", cf. Tigre ḫān "raster müet, être stupéfait" (ES: DRS 427-8, 433) || CCh.: Musgu-Masa *hān-1 "to tread upon, 2. crush" [GT]; Musgu habutā "schlagen" [Lukas], Muskūm ḫān- "battre" [Tourneux], Musey ḫēr "erascer" [Ajello], Lame ḫān-1 "crever, briser, 2. piétiner" [Sachnina], Zime-Dari ḫān-1 "piéter, 2. briser, crever" [Cooper], Peve ḫān "to break in pieces" [Kraft], Misse ḫān- vs. ḫān "casser" [Kieschke] = ḫān "broke/breaks (e.g. calabash)" [Jungraithmayr]. The Bedawye-Egyptian etymology was first suggested by E. Zylarz 1932-3, 169).


38 Identical with Arabic hathata "être prompt, expéditif, rapide en parlant" [BK] || Tigré ḫawvätätä "se hâter en chemin" [Drs] || CCh.: Musgu *hwvt or *hwvt (? "quick" [GT]; Musgu huvtānūn "schnell" [Lukas], Mogrum hūwāt "vite" [Tourneux].

39 Related to Sem. *vyb̪: Hebrew ḫib "hitpael „verspotten" [GB], Syriac ḫib "seine Lust haben an etwas" [GB], Arabic la'āba "2. jouer, badiner, solâtrer, 3. jouer à un jeu de hasard" [BK], proposed in GB 388 and by J. Greenberg (1950, 42, fn. 6) is indeed impressive.

40 It was combined by C. T. Hodge (1976, 14, #118, 22, fn. 118; 1981, 234; 1983, 38, #13; 1985, 17) with Sem. *ḥbš = Eg. ḥbš "Kopftuch" (WB) as suggested by W. Yveichl (1958, 376; 1990, 55) and C. T. Hodge (1983, 38, #13); (2) Eg. ḫbš = Sem. *ḥbš: Hebrew ḫbš "(um-, ver)binden (eine Wunde)", Aramaic ḫbš "fesseln" | Arabic habasa I "to bind, capture, binden, gefangennehmen", II "bekleiden, verhüllen as proposed by F. Hommel (1883, 440, fn. 30; 1894, 343, fn. 3), A.
Another careless assertion is that "Egyptian ḫ is also cognate with Semitic *ṭṭ" (p. 35), which was the first one made by Allen (with a hint regarding Eg. ᶪḥ vs. Sem. *ṭḥ, "seven", where, however, the shift of Eg. ḫ < *ṭṭ was conditional). Only then he continued with what he regarded as its second Semitic match: "as well as with ḫ", for which he quoted only Eg. ḥṭm and Sem. ḥṭḥm "to seal" which I also carefully avoided mentioning among the genetically inherited cognates with Eg. ḫ = Sem. ḫ in EDE I 157-171. There, by the way, I listed 14 Egyptian-Semitic and altogether 55 Afro-Asian parallels for Eg. ḫ < *ṭṭ. All this is symptomatic and revealing. Allen considers Sem. ḫ – in fact, the only regular correspondence of Eg. ḫ as secondary and illustrates it, as a Masterbeispiel, with a probably old cultural Wanderwort, the least suitable for this purpose. On the other hand, he considers the irregular Eg. ḫ = Sem. *ṭṭ as regular and quotes only that case where the shift of Eg. ḫ < *ṭṭ was certainly due to combinatory circumstances he evidently failed to understand, having failed to consult EDE I 326-327. There, I examined the instances of Eg. ḫ resulting from a secondary combinatory shift in the proximity of incompatible dental consonants in the same root, both sibilants (s, z) and stops (t, d), namely Eg. ṣḥḥ “(rāumlich) weit (ausholden), geräumig, breit” (Wb) < *স’ḥḥ, ṣḥḥ “genügen, hinlänglich, genug sein” (Reinisch) = meh "Irrsal, Verwirrung" [GB], Hebrew ᵒṣḥḥ “(räumlich) weit (ausholend), geräumig, breit” (Wb) < *ṭṭḥḥ, ᵒṣḥḥ “to suffice, be enough” [Roper] ||| Dullay: ᵒṣḥḥ “beenden”, ᵒṣḥḥ “end (f) "Ende" [Amborn, Minker, Sasse] ||| NOm.: Yahum ᵒṣḥḥ “full, levelled” [Wedekind] = ᵒṣḥḥ “to fill” (expressed e.g. in GM 114, 1990, 92). But the former is most probably cognate with Punic ṣḥḥy "2. to (make) overflow", hence "to pay or weigh to the full weight" [DNWSI] ||| Bedawy muḥ "genügen, folgen, als Täschner" [Reinisch] = meh "to suffice, be enough" [Roper] ||| Dullay: Doṣḥḥ muḥ “beenden”, muḥ (t) “Ende” [Amborn, Minker, Sasse] ||| Nom.: Yemsu mūḥ “full, levelled” [Wedekind] = mūḥā “full” [Aklilu] ||| CCh.: Lamma mūḥā “full, levelled, with abundance” [Sachnine] ||| ECh.: Kera meḥā (adv.) “genug” [Ebert] ||| Toubaga māw “plein, rempli, bourré à ras bord” [Caprile]. For this Egyptian-Semitic comparison see Zyhlzar 1932-33, 168; Behrens MS; Takács 1943, 40.


43 Related to Arabic Ṣḥḥa I "être effrayé, saisi de frayeur à la vue de/par qch." [BK].

44 Akin to Sem. ṣḥḥḥ “to move with heavy steps, with difficulty” [GT]; Arabic ṣḥḥḥ “to curi d'(un) p.,” [Amharic da (da) "alāi "marcher lentement, avec difficulté, parler différemment" (Sem. : DRS 289-290) ||| SCu. *ṭṭḥḥ “to be fat” [Ehetre]: WRitt *ṭṭḥḥ “fatt, oil”, pl. ḥṭḥḥ "pieces of fat" [Kiebling & Mous] > ṣḥḥḥ "fat, lard" [Ehetre] = ṣḥḥḥ "fat, lard", cf. ḥṭḥḥ "oil" [Whiteley] = ḥṭḥḥ "oil, fat" [Maghay], Burunge ḥṭḥḥ ḥṭḥḥ "Fett" [Meinhof] > ṣḥḥḥ "fett, gemãstet (von Ochsen)" [Johnstone], Mehri ṣḥḥḥ/ḥṭḥḥ "left (hand)" [Johnstone], Soqotri ṣḥḥḥ ~ ṣḥḥḥ "sâmel "gauche" [Leslau] etc. This equation is, however, surrounded by puzzles. Except for the -n-, neither of the radicals in fact displays any of the regular correspondences. The connection (if any) of Eg. ḫḥ < ṣḥḥḥ, ṣḥḥḥ < *ṭṭḥḥ has never been elucidated satisfactorily. In W. A. Ward’s (1961, 38, #21) opinion, the Semitic word "doesn't appear in Eg. or Dem." at all (implying that Eg. ṣḥḥḥ is not only of a Coptic ostracon as QMoyya "left (east) (?)" (CD), which, being an evident a Semitic loan, is out of the consideration here. A. Ember (l.c. supra) assumed an implausible chain of smḥḥ (sic, ḫḥ) < *ṣḥḥḥ < *ṣḥḥḥ without any comparative evidence. The only way to explain this anomalous match would be to assume an equally striking connection between Eg. ṣḥḥḥ and Sem. ṣḥḥḥ “to fill” (expressed e.g. in GM 114, 1990, 92). But the former is most probably cognate with Punic ṣḥḥḥ "2. to (make) overflow", hence "to pay or weigh to the full weight" [DNWSI] ||| Bedawy muḥ "genügen, folgen[,]" [Reinisch] = meh "to suffice, be enough" [Roper] ||| Dullay: Doṣḥḥ muḥ “beenden”, muḥ (t) “Ende” [Amborn, Minker, Sasse] ||| Nom.: Yemsu mūḥ “full, levelled” [Wedekind] = mūḥā “full” [Aklilu] ||| CCh.: Lamma mūḥā “full, levelled, with abundance” [Sachnine] ||| ECh.: Kera meḥā (adv.) “genug” [Ebert] ||| Toubaga māw “plein, rempli, bourré à ras bord” [Caprile]. For this Egyptian-Semitic comparison see Zyhlzar 1932-33, 168; Behrens MS; Takács 1943, 40.


46 Related to Arabic Ṣḥḥa I "être effrayé, saisi de frayeur à la vue de/par qch." [BK].

47 Akin to Sem. ṣḥḥḥ “to move with heavy steps, with difficulty” [GT]; Arabic ṣḥḥḥ “to curi d'(un) p.,” [Amharic da (da) "alāi "marcher lentement, avec difficulté, parler différemment" (Sem. : DRS 289-290) ||| SCu. *ṭṭḥḥ “to be fat” [Ehetre]: WRitt *ṭṭḥḥ "fatt, oil", pl. ḥṭḥḥ "pieces of fat" [Kiebling & Mous] > ṣḥḥḥ "fat, lard" [Ehetre] = ṣḥḥḥ "fat, lard", cf. ḥṭḥḥ "oil" [Whiteley] = ḥṭḥḥ "oil, fat" [Maghay], Burunge ḥṭḥḥ ḥṭḥḥ "Fett" [Meinhof] > ṣḥḥḥ "fett, gemãstet (von Ochsen)" [Johnstone], Mehri ṣḥḥḥ/ḥṭḥḥ "left (hand)" [Johnstone], Soqotri ṣḥḥḥ ~ ṣḥḥḥ "sâmel "gauche" [Leslau] etc. This equation is, however, surrounded by puzzles. Except for the -n-, neither of the radicals in fact displays any of the regular correspondences. The connection (if any) of Eg. ḫḥ < ṣḥḥḥ, ṣḥḥḥ < *ṭṭḥḥ has never been elucidated satisfactorily. In W. A. Ward’s (1961, 38, #21) opinion, the Semitic word "doesn't appear in Eg. or Dem." at all (implying that Eg. ṣḥḥḥ is not only of a Coptic ostracon as QMoyya "left (east) (?)" (CD), which, being an evident a Semitic loan, is out of the consideration here. A. Ember (l.c. supra) assumed an implausible chain of smḥḥ (sic, ḫḥ) < *ṣḥḥḥ < *ṣḥḥḥ without any comparative evidence. The only way to explain this anomalous match would be to assume an equally striking connection between Eg. ṣḥḥḥ and Sem. ṣḥḥḥ “to fill” (expressed e.g. in GM 114, 1990, 92). But the former is most probably cognate with Punic ṣḥḥḥ "2. to (make) overflow", hence "to pay or weigh to the full weight" [DNWSI] ||| Bedawy muḥ "genügen, folgen[,]" [Reinisch] = meh "to suffice, be enough" [Roper] ||| Dullay: Doṣḥḥ muḥ “beenden”, muḥ (t) “Ende” [Amborn, Minker, Sasse] ||| Nom.: Yemsu mūḥ “full, levelled” [Wedekind] = mūḥā “full” [Aklilu] ||| CCh.: Lamma mūḥā “full, levelled, with abundance” [Sachnine] ||| ECh.: Kera meḥā (adv.) “genug” [Ebert] ||| Toubaga māw “plein, rempli, bourré à ras bord” [Caprile]. For this Egyptian-Semitic comparison see Zyhlzar 1932-33, 168; Behrens MS; Takács 1943, 40.

When Allen (p. 36) speaks of "the false impression that both correspondences were equal. In fact, however, the shift of Eg. ð < AA *q is most frequent (29 instances in EDE I 249-255), while there are only 4 good cases (beside 7 unacceptable ones) for Eg. ð < AA *k in EDE I 319-322. The latter shift seems to be due to a secondary palatalization of the sporadic interchange of Eg. g ~ k. The same is the case with Allen's claim that "Egyptian ð is also cognate with Semitic *q and *g", for which he quotes only Eg. ðb = Sem. *ṣb̩ "fing er" and Eg. ndm = Sem. *nnm "pleasant". In fact, the correspondence of Eg. ð to the glottalized sibilant affricates (AA *ç, *ç, *ç) is regular (24 exx. in EDE I 256-261), whereas the relation of Eg. ð vs. Sem. ç is sporadic (8 exx. in EDE I 261-262),48 although the reasons for this remain to be clarified.

The chapter concludes with a sketch outlining the Semitic reflexes of Egyptian consonants, which, in Allen’s interpretation, ended up as a chaotic mess of the most diverse consonantal comparisons (e.g. Eg. ç = Sem. ç, ç, ð, ð, ð, ð or Eg.), whose alarming controversies were left simply unresolved.

The next chapter is "Egyptian phonology" (§5, pp. 37-56), where the author tries to sum up the scanty inner and external evidence collected (although hardly analysed) in the preceding parts. Allen addresses a number of exciting issues here, most importantly how to conceive the nature of Eg. ð ~ n ~ r. The problem, however, is that his speculations are derived from poorly demonstrated "analyses" in the first chapters.

The author’s bold declaration (p. 38) that "phonemic /û/ seems to be a secondary feature, deriving primarily from an original w ... This phoneme normally has no Coptic descendant" can by no means be approved in this exclusive form. What about the mass of Egyptian phonologies having j < AA *y? E.g. Eg. =j (i1 pers. sg. suffix pronoun).49 jj "to come" (FD),50 "jw "Vieh" (Wb) = "newly dropped foal" (EG),51 jw "Art Hund" (Wb) = "dog" (FD) and jyw "Art Hund" (Wb) = "dog" (FD),52 jb w "refuge, shelter" (FD) = "Zufluchtsstätte" (Wb),53 jnn adj. "right-hand", noun "right side, the West" (FD),54 nj3.w "Steinbock" (Wb) = "ibex" (FD),55 "den Beischlaf vollziehen" (Wb), act. * NYTJK, cf. Dem. (Ankhsheshonqi 13:12, 19:1) njk "fornicator" (CED) → (S) NOEIK "adulterer" (CED),56 hj "husband" (Wb), act. *ḤJḤ → (SB) 2A1 "husband" (CED),57 hj "(to be) high and hj „height” (DLE),58 snj "Ton" (Wb).59 Has the author considered this evidence?

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48 3 exx. are beyond any doubt: ndm, ndm, sgdm, 3 exx. are probably: problem: bdg, bdg, dbb.
53 Cognate with Scu. *yab- "to protect" [GT]: Kalbin yabal stem noch nicht besprungen " [Reinsch].
54 Cf. also PBantu *yuh- "shelter (from rain or sun)" [Guthrie]. Cf. EDE I 179.
56 Cf. Akkadian nayaliq "Reh" [AHW] || Tigre root yiñ > niñ- "sh-e-antelope" [Leslau]. For the Egyptian-Semitic etymology see Ember 1912, 87; ESS §11.a.18; GÄSW #54; Vergote 1945, 131, #2.a.4; Vycichl 1958, 376, 1990, 56.
59 Identical with NBrb. َنیک "big" [Appleyard].
How the author conceived the nature and origin of Eg. n (p. 39) is equally shocking: "Phonetically, the evidence for n indicates that it was primarily the nasal *[n]. Its relationship to /l/ in cognates, correspondents, and Common Coptic must therefore be allophonic, perhaps dialectal: this, ns 'tongue' may represent *nis as well as *lis. The alternative survival of n in the other dialectal form, but also the ultimate influence of semantic oppositions: thus, ns 'tongue' > AEC/NAE vs. n.s 'for it' > NGE/NAE." Does Allen seriously think the word for „tongue” to have ever had [n] instead of [l] in it? Where is this piece of evidence, when everything indicates the opposite, i.e. *[l]?

This kind of "method" of working without data resembles the way Allen arbitrarily vocalized L Eg. h(3)3b(3) r "partner" as *hābira (p. 33, cf. above). The presence of [l] in this pharaonic word is definitely to be assumed in the light of both the Afro-Asiatic (AA *lis-) and Coptic (pre-Cpt. *lis) evidence.

Since morphology and syntax lie beyond the scope of my primary interests and research field, I refrain from passing any judgement on Allen’s chapters on these areas of Egyptian historical grammar. My only general impression is that perhaps the author should have stuck merely to these domains, where he may have a more intimate and comfortable background knowledge. It is not the first occasion that I have to see a great authority of Egyptology erring in the rather uncertain domain of Egyptian comparative-historical phonology, 60

All in all, the phonological part of the book under review, whose presentation is, unfortunately, not always easily transparent, evokes in me little trust as a new and original synthesis or even as an overview of the state-of-the-art in our field. It should have been omitted from the present book and Allen should have focused on those domains he is indeed intimately familiar with and where he is apparently able to carry out thorough and original research (e.g. verbal system, syntax).

Imperfect understanding of Egyptian Lauggeschichte and the many of the underlying comparative data, the poor knowledge of the Fachliteratur, ignorance of the relevant data, problems and arguments instead of addressing and surveying them – all this makes the author's phonology for me unreliable. Some elementary blunders indicate that the author’s preparations were not sufficient in comparative Egyptian-Semitic studies. What we have here is not at all a comprehensive survey based on careful analyses of all relevant data and suggestions either in terms of quantity or quality. The new book's phonology can thus hardly be used as an up-to-date summary for academic purposes.

Abbreviations


Quoted sources


60 First of all, the proposals by J. Osing (NBA) in the swampy area of root etymologies (Wurzeletymologien) frequently turn out to be merely mechanically forged pseudo-etymologies as I had pointed out in several special papers (Takács 2005, 14ff., 2005, 623ff.; 2015a and 2015b). J. F. Quack's output in Egyptian etymology was even more disappointing (cf. Takács 2003). Eventually, the same is the case with O. Rößler, whom one may admire for his genuine insights into Berber and Semito-Hamitic verbal morphology, whereas his both methods and results in Egyptian-Semitic comparative phonology (esp. in his paper from 1971), which had already evoked severe criticism by W. Ward (1985), and also by W. Vycichl (1985), are most problematic (cf. Takács 2011, 34-82).


Rössler, O.: Der semitische Charakter der libyschen Sprache.= Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 50 (1952), 121-150.


Vercan, V.: A Rwandese Pidgin, its Relationship with Old Egyptian (= Kush 7 (1959), 27-44.


Yeivin, Sh.: Haufrōt haša’a ha bebalšanit šenît-misfr. 2 = Laššonı̂n 3 (1933), 105-111.

