EGYPT'S CULTURAL RELATIONS AND EGYPTIAN PHONOLOGY IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE

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I am embarking on a project that tries to use evidence on Egyptian cultural relations in the 3rd millennium for an enhanced understanding of Egyptian phonology. The genetic and historical phonology of Ancient Egyptian has long been a topic of fierce dispute. Traditionally, the transliteration symbols adopted for the modern rendering of Ancient Egyptian in the late 19th century on the basis of the sound values that could be ascertained for the time of the later New Kingdom (13th c. BCE) were believed to also reliably reflect the phonological situation in earlier Egyptian and its genetic values. The climax of this strand of scholarship is G. Takács, *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian.* Vol. I-III, 1999-2008; and R.C. Steiner, *Early Northwest Semitic Serpent Spells in the Pyramid Texts*, 2011), which by other researchers of Egyptian phonology is regarded as an artifact of the history of scholarship (as formulated by R. el-Sayed, *Afrikanischstämmiger Lehnwortschatz im älteren Ägyptisch,* 2011, 97f.). Yet another divergent approach to Egyptian phonology will be proposed by J.P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Language. An Historical Study* (CUP, 2013). Of particular importance for the reconstruction of earlier phases of Egyptian phonology are Egyptian transcriptions of foreign terms, personal and place names, and, vice versa, Semitic renderings of Egyptian names. While there has been significant research on the situation of the later Middle Kingdom (with the Execration Texts, most recently reassessed by S. Wimmer, *Die Ächtungstexte der 12./13. Dynastie (19./18. Jahrhundert),* in: M. Weippert (ed.), *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, 2010, 33-50), the 3rd millennium has never been thoroughly examined. My project aims to provide a discussion of the material and to integrate it with a general reassessment of the genetic system of specific Egyptian consonants. As a sample of the methodology, cf. the following cases:

1. A new biographical inscription of the 6th dynasty contains the name *ꜥ–m–ꜣ* (< *ꜣ* > is a liquid /r/ or /l/ until 1700 BCE) of a place north of Byblos on the Levantine coast. An identification with the city of *Ṣumur* is likely on the assumption that the initial emphatic sibilant goes back to an emphatic voiced interdental ḍ.

2. Texts from the Syrian commercial city of Ebla mention envoys from the "King of Dugurasu," proposed by scholars to refer to Egypt. This is not possible; instead I interpret the Eblatic writing as the rendering of a toponym *Tukurs* and to equate it with Egyptian *tꜣ–kꜣ-ś* (later *kwš*) "the land of *Kꜣś* (later Kush)," etymologically *Kwuʕ* (with a Nubian retroflex sibilant), the designation of the Nubian empire of *Kerma Ancien* ca. 2400 BCE.

3. The structure of the Egyptian consonant system is not at present fully clarified. G. Brein, *Wurzelinkompatibilitäten im Wortschatz der Pyramidentexte* (Vienna 2008), has questioned some of the accepted correspondences, such as Eg. g : Sem. g and Eg. ḳ : Sem. q, and suggested they could be reversed. Such evidence may indeed exist: for <g> = /q/ cf. "to be silent," Eg. *gr* : Akk. *qālu*; "monkey," Eg. *gjf* : Hebr. etc. *qyp*; "to be weary," Eg. *bꜣgj*: Amhar. *bälaqälläqä*; Eg. *grḥ* "to end, cease; night (as the end of the day)": Arab. *ġaliqa* "to shut, close" (with metathesis I-III). For <q> = /g/ cf. "to curdle," Eg. *kfn* : Arab. *ğabuna*; Eg. *bꜣḳ* "to be bright, clear (sun, sky)": Arab. *balaġa* "to shine, to dawn;" Eg. *ḳjꜣ* "body": Hebr. *gw, gwy* "body," etc.). Unexplained features such as the incompatibility of Egyptian <r> and <b> or the existence of a velarized <l> (cf., to "fill," Eg. *mḥ*, Sem. *mlʔ*; "to dress," Eg. *ḥśb*, Sem. *lšb*) will also need closer scrutiny.

The proposed research project aims to demonstrate that Egyptian transcriptions of foreign terms and place names and, vice versa, Semitic renderings of Egyptian names from the 3rd millennium BCE, bridging the theoretical prehistoric situation and the well-known 2nd millennium BCE phonology. It will attempt a comprehensive discussion of the evidence and integrate it with a general reassessment of the system of Egyptian

phonology.

New articles on Egyptian relations with the Levant (published or forthcoming):

- "A Land Without Prophets? Examining the Presumed Lack of Prophecy in Ancient Egypt," in: C.A. Rollston (ed.), *Enemies and Friends of the State: Ancient Prophecy in Context*, Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- "The Philistine Language and the Name 'David,'" (*Ugarit Forschungen* 43, 2011).
- "Wie der Wettergott Ägypten aus der großen Flut errettete: Ein 'inkulturierter' ägyptischer Sintflut-Mythos und die Gründung der Ramsesstadt," in: *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 38(2011).
- "A Theophany of Seth–Baal in the Tempest Stele," in: *Egypt & the Levant* 20 (2010), 405-409.

As of January 1, 2012, I have assumed the editorship of *Near Eastern Archaeology*.