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Syntactic and Lexico-Semantic Aspects of the Legal Register in Ramesside Royal Decrees

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The topic of Eugenio R. Luján's contribution is the gradual extension of the functional domains of Sanskrit in ancient and medieval India. The Buddha allegedly rebuked his Brahman disciples for promoting Sanskrit as the exclusive language of religious teaching and Aśoka did not feel any scruples about using the Prakrits as vehicles of state propaganda, but several centuries later Sanskrit became the expected language of both secular and Buddhist texts. Luján subscribes to the view that Sanskrit, originally a language of the Brahmanic tradition, was gradually accepted as a universal "link language" in the conditions when Prakrits were becoming ever less mutually intelligible. The evolution of Sanskrit from the language of a privileged caste to a commonly accepted lingua franca is akin to a similar development undergone by English in twentieth-century India.

As for Luján's claim that Sanskrit stopped being natively acquired by about 500 B.C.E. (p. 214), this appears to be an understatement. The development from Vedic to Classical Sanskrit shows much morphological restructuring and regularization, but no sound laws, contrary to what one would expect to find in a language that was natively transmitted for seven hundred or so years. One has no choice but to assume a diglossia among the Brahmans throughout the first millennium B.C.E. The evolving Sanskrit was cultivated as a language of worship and intellectual discourse, while the emerging Prakrits were used for more mundane purposes.

My personal favorite in the volume under review is the paper by Ignasi-Xavier Adiego, which discusses the evolution of Anatolian alphabets. The Phrygian, Lydian, Lycian, Carian, and Sidetic languages ultimately derive their alphabets from Phoenician, but the existence of separate signs for vowels shows the specific affinity of these systems with the Greek alphabet. Adiego shares the traditional assumption that all these alphabets evolved from Phoenician via Greek, although he has to recognize that the earliest Phrygian texts are at least as old as the earliest Greek alphabetic texts available to us (p. 301). If one wishes to follow Adiego and others on this account, one has to assume that the earliest Greek alphabetic inscriptions still await their discoverers, and that at least some of them are hidden in Asia Minor, where Greeks ought to have been in contact with Phrygians. The innovative aspect of the author's contribution is the meticulous discussion of similarities between individual Anatolian alphabets, some of which are not shared by Greek. Adiego, who has played a key role in the decipherment of Carian, concludes his contribution with the exposition of his views on the origin of this unusual set of alphabetic signs, which, according to him, constitutes the result of back-formation from a cursive script.

In this review I have concentrated on the discussion of the papers that primarily deal with issues related to the Asian continent and Muslim Spain. Among this group, I have tried to dwell on those articles that contain original contributions to the study of language contact. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about each and every essay collected in the volume under review. A number of authors (e.g., Francisco del Río, Benjamin Hay, Marcos Such Gutiérrez) have contented themselves with discussing the general importance of contact-related issues for their research projects, without specifying their contribution to the field. Nevertheless, the large number of papers that contain significant claims of a theoretical or descriptive nature fully vindicates the significance of the volume under discussion for the field of contact linguistics.

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Syntactic and Lexico-Semantic Aspects of the Legal Register in Ramesside Royal Decrees. By ARLETTE DAVID. Göttinger Orientforschungen, IV. Series—Egypt, vol. 38. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2006. Pp. vii + 313. €78 (paper).

This book is the fifth in the GOF IV series to examine how hieroglyphic "determinatives" (or "script classifiers") reflect the way the ancient Egyptians classified and categorized the elements of their world. The bulk of the book is a section-by-section transliteration, translation, and analysis of the Ramesside royal decrees, divided into four generic subsets: 1) specific protection/criminal law decrees

(e.g., the Nauri decree) issued to protect the personnel and property of a temple; 2) specific endowment decrees, very short texts in which the king decreed the establishment of a defined endowment; 3) specific commission decrees, even shorter texts stating something that the king commanded to be done; 4) epistolary warning and instruction decrees, personal letters addressed by the king to a royal officer (P. Anastasi IV 10.8–11.8), a priest (P. Cairo ESP [B]), or the viceroy of Nubia (P. Turin 1896 ro). Each text is divided into sections based on function (e.g., the “enacting clause,” which names the issuer of the decree, its object, its beneficiary, and its applicability), and the analysis of each section of text identifies a set list of features: Neo-Egyptian characteristics (Late Egyptian), “Classical” forms (Middle Egyptian), legal terms, and legal formulae. Ultimately, David concludes that the mixed language of the Ramesside decrees may reflect the character of the law in general, which, although theoretically accessible to everyone, has its own distinct culture.

As outlined in the introduction, David draws on a number of schools of thought to establish her methodology. Her syntactic analyses follow the Polotskian structuralist textual-analytic approach, some of the more distinctive terms of which are *theme* (the “given” or “presupposed” information), *rheme* (the message about that information), and *nexus* (the link between the two). When discussing the use of language, David uses terms first borrowed from socio-linguistics into Egyptology by Goldwasser. The key term “register” is defined as a “variety of language distinguished according to use,” of which the crucial criteria “are found in its grammar and lexis” (p. 10). She identifies the language phase of different grammatical constructions used in the legal register and discusses the effect they produce. In one particular context she proposes that the Middle Egyptian relative past *sdm.n=f* was modified to *sdm=f* to reflect the way a Nineteenth Dynasty king might be expected to speak (p. 117). In another case, she notes that a future *sdm.ty.fy* participle exhibits gemination as it would in an Old Kingdom decree, and she suggests that this archaism “probably adds the magical touch of an age-old formula pertaining to a mythical time” (p. 118).

To better understand the legal register, David looks to discourse analysis studies of modern legal texts, often noting parallels between the ancient and modern corpora. For example, the use of the passive voice, often without an expressed agent, is a common characteristic of legal texts both ancient and modern (p. 21). David’s focus on narratologic concerns, informed by the work of Mieke Bal and Gerald Prince, is evident throughout, as in her discussion of the passive. She notes that the use of the passive suppresses the narrative element of the text and is representative of the legal register’s tendency towards generalization (p. 65). When exploring the function of the texts in general, she draws on the work of J. L. Austin (*How to Do Things with Words* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970]), questioning whether a decree was viewed as equivalent with the acts it describes. David concludes that the decrees were reports of performative utterance, not “real” performative utterances themselves (pp. 39–40). That is, the king’s original speech act brought the content of his decree into being, but its written version did not.

For the analysis of the “script classifiers” (“determinatives”) of each legal term, David uses the methodology established by Goldwasser. She examines, for example, the significance of the “band of string or linen” classifier on the noun *wd.t* (“decree,” specifically the papyrus/leather document) versus the more general “book roll” classifier on the verb *wd* (“to decree, to command”). The band classifier belongs to the [BINDING] category; that is, it places emphasis on the act of binding a roll document to prepare it for filing in the royal or temple archives (p. 23). In contrast, the book roll determinative belongs to the superordinate [ABSTRACT] category, and for this reason is used for the verb, which represents “the verbal uttering of an order that may afterwards be translated into a document, but has at this stage nothing to do with the medium” (p. 40).

Because David approaches her corpus from many viewpoints, she draws conclusions on a number of levels, many of which have applications beyond the specific texts themselves. Her discussion of legal terms yields a better understanding of the nature of Egyptian law; for example, she discusses the way the literal movement of “transgression” expressed by the lexeme *thir* metaphorically comes to represent either incompetence or an abuse of authority (pp. 28–29). On the level of grammar, David provides detailed discussions of problematic constructions to justify her analyses (see, e.g., the section on *wmm=f* on pp. 53–55), although at times her own stance is not always obvious. And there are certain grammatical forms which warrant further explanation. In several cases, she analyzes *iw* + noun + prepositional phrase as a “classical” (i.e., Middle Egyptian) circumstantial, not a Middle Egyptian main clause

or Late Egyptian circumstantial clause as might be expected (pp. 74, 132). These cases would seem to be examples of a "Middle Egyptian circumstantial actual present" form mentioned on p. 83, but nowhere is this form explained.

The most severe criticism that can be made of the book lies in the realm of organization, for by presenting the analysis as a section-by-section close reading of each text, the most interesting points are sometimes lost in the face of such extensive detail. On the whole, however, the book should be of use to Egyptologists interested in the Ramesside royal decrees and in the methodology used to study register and the blending of language phases in the Ramesside Period. It should also prove valuable for those concerned with the more general topics of the semantic use of determinatives, the narrative structure of Egyptian texts, and the nature of Egyptian law.

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Pharao und Sport. By WOLFGANG DECKER. Zaberns Bilderbände zur Archäologie. Mainz: VERLAG PHILIPP VON ZABERN, 2006. Pp. 108, illus. €60.

Since the mid-1970s, Wolfgang Decker has contributed many articles and books on Egyptian sport, including parts of the *Bildatlas zum Sport* and *Lexikon*. This is an impressively illustrated volume analyzing "Pharaoh and Sport" in detail. The book has two parts. First, Pharaoh's own sporting activities are discussed, then sporting activities presented before, or ordered by, Pharaoh. Decker begins with a brief historical summary of the word "sport" and deals with the objections of those who see it as a necessarily Classical creation with later, post-industrial-revolution, developments. My view is that both Egyptian terminology, such as *šmḥ-ib* (L. H. Lesko, *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian III* [Berkeley: BC Scribe Publications, 1987], 87), and sporting practice seem more akin to the Greek/Roman activities than dissimilar.

Decker's work then delineates the ideological and religious filters that are always present in the portrayal of Pharaoh as the supreme victor who keeps the world from chaos and upholds order. This means that Pharaoh himself cannot be shown in any personal sporting contest with other humans, while any display he makes must be an expression of his divine power and shown in a suitably reserved religious area. Then follows a reconstruction, based on six reliefs and a replica course preserved in stone for Djoser in his funerary complex, of the ancient Jubilee *heb sed* ritual run which the King completed around a specified course to show his continuing fitness for office. The discussion of this ritual run is related back to an early hunter "coursing" culture and comparisons made to similar sporting qualities of Achilles in Homer and a Šulgi-Hymn of Ur-III Mesopotamia. Ritual archery and target shooting by Pharaoh are outlined, looking at both compound and single bows in detail and including excavated examples of actual copper archery targets. The chapter includes scenes of the Pharaoh using the relatively new compound bow and chariot to overawe and destroy his opponents.

Chapter four describes the elite status symbols of chariots and horse teams. The light construction of chariots and the provision for horses at royal residences are covered, followed by a discussion of royal pride in horse training and a comparable Hittite training regime. There follows a discussion of the athletic feats of Amenophis II in archery, horsetraining, chariotry, and helmsmanship, showing how his enthusiastic public presentation of his abilities almost breaks the "non-public" contest rule for kings. With a survey of the sporting contents of Tutankhamun's tomb, and a late period ritual "ball and bat" game, the coverage of strictly "royal" sport is completed.

The second part of this work, "Sport for Pharaoh," begins with activities staged during the dedication of Sahure's Pyramid. These were the warlike sports of archery, staff fighting, wrestling, and helmsmanship, very suited to Pharaoh as supreme war leader. Similar military activities, staff fighting and boxing, are seen in tomb pictures of the ceremonies before Amenophis III during his third Jubilee Festival. Looking at a regatta held under Tutankhamun, whose inscription stated that he had checked