

Ancient Egyptian – Arabic contacts in lexicon: clue to Arabic Urheimat?

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Abstract: the present paper aims at demonstrating possibilities of the comparative and historical method in linguistics in reconstructing ethno-cultural prehistory of ancient peoples. Methodologically, it is based upon the analysis of 46 Ancient Egyptian-Arabic lexical parallels most of which are unattested in other Semitic and Afrasian languages, collected by the Hungarian specialist in Egyptian and Afrasian languages G. Takacs and his predecessors. The author was the first to notice that some of 46 lexical parallels for semantic or phonetic reasons can hardly be considered to be randomly surviving cognates; neither can they be discarded as lookalikes. He suggests that they are direct lexical borrowings. This suggestion implies undiscovered contacts between Egypt and proto-Arabic speakers. According to the author's glottochronological dating, proto-Arabic separated from Central Semitic in early 3rd mill. BCE. These contacts started as early as the Old Kingdom and lasted through Middle to New Kingdoms. He concludes that the striking feature in this discovery is not only presumed Egyptian loans in Arabic but a small minority of very likely Arabisms in Egyptian language of all these periods. He argues that the most "robust" cases may testify to the Urheimat of proto-Arabic speakers located within reach of Egypt. The author is also inclined to identify the people of Midianites mentioned in both Hebrew and Arabic sources as Proto-Arabic speakers. However, as his competence is limited to comparative Afrasian linguistics and Semitic etymology, he leaves this arguable question to discuss archaeologists and historians.

Keywords: comparative and historical linguistics; ancient Egyptian; Arabic; lexical borrowing; Afrasian

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Древнеегипетско-арабские контакты в лексике: ключ к прародине арабов?

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Резюме: цель настоящей статьи – продемонстрировать возможности сравнительно-исторического метода в лингвистике в реконструкции дописьменной этнокультурной истории. В статье дается анализ 46 древнеегипетско-арабских лексических сходжений, большинство из которых не засвидетельствовано в других семитских и афразийских языках, собранных венгерским лингвистом Г. Такачем и его предшественниками. Автор первым обратил внимание на тот факт, что некоторые из этих сходжений – по семантическим или фонетическим причинам – трудно объяснить случайно уцелевшими только в этих двух языках родственными словами или случайными совпадениями. Он предложил видеть в них прямые заимствования, так как никаких языков-посредников между египетским и арабским не обнаруживается. Результатом такого подхода могут оказаться следы не выявленных до сих пор контактов между носителями египетского начиная с Древнего и вплоть до Нового Царства и протоарабского языков. По глоттохронологическим подсчетам автора, протоарабский выделился из працентральноегипетского в начале III тыс. до н. э. Другой неожиданностью является то, что направление этих предполагаемых заимствований – не только из египетского в арабский, но и – в небольшом количестве весьма вероятных случаев – и из арабского в египетский всех упомянутых периодов. Признание хотя бы наиболее показательных из этих примеров подразумевает прародину носителей протоарабского языка в непосредственной близости от Египта. Автор склонен отождествлять протоарабов с мидианитами, фигурирующими и в древнееврейских, и в арабских источниках, но, поскольку его компетенция не выходит за рамки сравнительной афразистики и семитской этимологии, он оставляет эту сторону вопроса археологам и историкам для дальнейшего рассмотрения.

Ключевые слова: сравнительно-историческое языкознание; древний египетский язык; арабский; заимствование; афразийские языки

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In the Etymological Database of Afroasian (Afroasiatic, Semito-Hamitic) languages (AADB) [1] containing several thousand entries which was compiled for over ten years by the present author and O. V. Stolbova and for another ten by me alone, there are dozens of words with the same or close meaning and



matching root consonants attested in Ancient Egyptian and Arabic only; a smaller part of these Arabic words have cognates in other Semitic languages.

At first glance, there is nothing to be surprised of considering a pure statistic angle: while the Egyptian dictionaries are huge, a mammoth Arabic lexicon collected by the great medieval Arabic philologists and regularized by the European Arabic scholars is well known to comparative linguists as the one providing more semblable terms and true cognates with both closely and distantly related idioms than any other Semitic or Afrasian language. In the broad-scale lexical comparison, especially that involving distantly related languages with no contact record, cases of pair matching do occur throwing the etymologist into a dilemma: discard them as lookalikes or reserve them as randomly survived proto-language lexemes (proto-language reconstructions based on such cases are not convincing) counting on new comparative data to make them one day workable. The problem of similar cases is much clearer with the languages whose past contacts are well known or at least reasonably assumed, borrowing being a third and often most trustworthy interpretation.

The most thrilling and at the same time challenging scenario is when you come across similar cases in the languages whose contacts are not recorded but not impossible in principle. They are fraught with interesting and quite unexpected discoveries. Sometimes, a limited number of convincing examples of borrowing may highlight a so far unestablished (pre-)historic contact¹ or an unrevealed migration².

The present paper aims at presenting evidence for a few (in fact, 46) mostly isolated Eg.-Arab. lexical matches addressing that very scenario. Some of them, in my opinion, have no other explanation than borrowing from Egyptian into Arabic, a few others, on the contrary, from Arabic into Egyptian. There are still more similar cases which I would have never suspected of borrowing if not for the few unequivocal examples opening up the possibility of the formers' interpretation as borrowing, too, though the odds of common origin with random survival or looking alike unrelated lexemes, of course, remain – for such cases only.

Almost all Eg.-Arab. matches in question are quoted after the Hungarian linguist Gábor Takács, one of today's top specialists in ancient Egyptian and Afrasian comparative linguistics, who quotes them in the three published volumes of his Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian [4; 5; 6] and a study in comparative Afrasian phonology [7], all containing rich comparative material. Amid multiple trustworthy Egyptian-Semitic parallels (with an inevitable

¹ See Militarev [2] on the Akkadian-Egyptian matches in lexicon.

² See Militarev [3] on a reconstruction of a Tuareg migration to the Canary archipelago triggered by one highly peculiar word matching accountable for only by a Tuareg (proto-Ahaggar) borrowing into Canarian.



share of weak or erroneous ones) proposed by Takács himself³ and his honored predecessors such as F. von Calice, A. Ember, K. Sethe, W. F. Albright, K. Brockelmann, W. Vycichl, J. Vergote, C. T. Hodge and others, the isolated Arabic parallels to the Egyptian words do not strike as something extraordinary. A few dozens of them seem lost among thousands of cognates in other Semitic languages established by Takács and other authors and hundreds of “Canaanisms” in Egyptian (collected and analyzed by J. E. Hoch [9])⁴. I am unaware of any scholarly effort, including by Takács, to sort out the said parallels distinguishing between the inherited Afrasian lexemes randomly survived in Egyptian and Arabic and possible loanwords⁵.

A more thorough analysis of the Egyptian-Arabic parallels shows several doubtless cases of borrowing (both ways at that) and a still greater number of plausible cases which should have never be regarded as such if not for the very *possibility* of contact Egyptian-Arabic lexica confirmed by the hardly deniable instances. The latter ones point clearly to ethnic and cultural contacts of one and the same proto- and early Arabic speaking population directly ancestral, at least linguistically (and, presumably, biologically and culturally) to the speakers of Arabic known to us from the classical Arabic texts and lexicographic sources. Even more unexpected is the time span of these contacts: from the Old through Middle to New Kingdoms. In other words, acceptance of the above interpretation of the suggested comparisons amounts to two assertions: first, that the Urheimat of proto-Arabic speakers was within reach of Egypt; and, second, that the proto-Arabs were in close enough contact with Egypt throughout the course of its history. At this point, it is worth noting that according to my glottochronological calculations based on Sergei Starostin’s method in glottochronology [11; 12], proto-Arabic branched off what in my genealogical classification of Semitic is labeled Central Semitic in early 3rd millennium BCE. when its speakers presumably moved a few hundred km southward from the southern Levant which I regard as the most probable original homeland of proto-Central Semitic speakers.

The first assertion is not contrary to the biblical location of “the sons of Ishmael”, the ancestor of Arabs, whose “descendants settled...near the border of Egypt” (Gen. 25:18)⁶. According to Arab genealogical accounts, the first two of Ishmael’s twelve sons mentioned in Gen. 25:13 likely lived with their tribes in northwest Arabia [14, p. 344]. Another biblical mention is of “a caravan of

³ See my review [8] of *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian*. Vol. III.

⁴ On the author’s attempt at their interpretation in connection with a Biblical narrative see [10].

⁵ That Takács himself did not admit direct borrowings between Egyptian and Arabic follows from his comparison made in [5, p. 269]: “NEG. *brg* “be rich” should be equated with Sem. **brg*: Arab. *barīḡa* ‘avoir des provisions abondantes’... isolated in Sem.” provided with NB: “Borrowing apparently excluded, unless we assume the existence of an unattested NWSem. cognate”.

⁶ All biblical quotations in this paper are from Zondervan NIV Study Bible [13].



Ishmaelites” (also called Midianites) “...on their way...down to Egypt” (Gen. 37: 25, 28) in the story of Joseph sold by his brothers. Still another reference which may be relevant to our subject is to narration of Moses who “fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian” (Ex. 2:15).

According to the Hebrew Bible, Midian, the ancestor of the Midianites, was a son of Abraham from Keturah (Qəṭūrā). There are several hypotheses about the location and ethno-linguistic affiliation of the Midianites. According to W. G. Dever, biblical Midian was in the “northwest Arabian Peninsula, on the east shore of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea” [15, p. 34]. There have been suggestions that ‘Midian’ was neither a toponym nor a tribe name, but referred to a confederation of tribes united by a common worship [16, p. 56; 17, p. 32] and that Midianites were a non-Semitic confederate group, one of Sea Peoples originally from the Aegean region [18].

According to another suggestion, in terminal Late Bronze and Early Iron Age the Midianites made offerings to Hathor, a major Egyptian goddess, in an Egyptian mining temple at Timna, which they transformed into a desert tent-shrine⁷ where a large number of Midianite votive vessels were discovered [20]. Anyway, while the cultural influence of Egypt seems quite plausible, the question of the origin of the Midianites still remains open.

I see a feasible opportunity of identifying the Midianites as Proto-Arabic speakers. However, as my competence is limited to comparative Afrasian linguistics and Semitic etymology, I leave this arguable question to archaeologists and historians and pass to the data which I’ve tried to arrange according to a degree of probability of borrowing – higher than chance coincidence or common origin – first from Eg. into Arab., then from Arab. into Eg., next when the direction is not clear. These cases are followed by those whose similarity can be interpreted either way as borrowing, lookalikes or common origin. Last come obscure or less probable cases still worth mentioning to make the picture complete.

The data:

I. Presumed Egyptian loanwords in Arabic

Eg. (PT) *ʔk* (< **ʔrk* or **yrk* <**rky*) ‘emporsteigen’ [21, II, p. 33], *mʔk.t* (<**m-rk-t*) ‘die Leiter’ [21, II, p. 33] – Arab. *rky* ‘to ascend (a stair or a ladder)’, *mark-at-* ‘a series of steps or stairs, a ladder’ [6, p. 108] • Lookalike and common origin unlikely⁸, rather an Egyptism in Arabic than vice versa, the striking part of it being the borrowing of both verb and deverbal noun in *m*-⁹.

⁷ There is even an opinion that this tent-shrine is a close parallel to the biblical Tabernacle [19, p. 118].

⁸ There is also E. Cush.: Oromo *rika* ‘to climb (a ladder)’, *rikaa* ‘ladder’ [22]. The meaning is not likely for a PAA level, and the Oromo term may well be an Arabism, cf. Gragg’s admission of Oromo borrowing from Arabic [22, p. XXII].

⁹ Cf. a partly similar phenomenon in #21: Eg. *nfr.w* and *mnf.t* vs. Arab. *nafar-* and *munaffir-* and #27: Eg. *nph.(w)* and *mnph.t* vs. Arab. *ʔinfah-at-* and *minfah-at-*.



(2) Eg. (PT) *ʕnwd.t* (possibly < **ʕlwd-t* < **ʕdwl-t*¹⁰) ‘Barke (des Salbengottes)’ [21, II, p. 25] – Arab. *ʕadawliyy-at-* ‘certain ships or boats’ (*ʕadawl*^{an} ‘seaman’, *ʕadawl-* ‘a man who used to construct ships or boats’ [23, p. 1075], *ʕadawliyy-* ‘marin, navigateur’, *ʕadawliyy-at-* ‘embarcations, vaisseaux particuliers au pays de Bahrein’ [24, 2, p. 192]) • The Arab. noun is isolated in Sem. and not derived from the verb *ʕadala* whose main meaning is ‘to be just, to give an equal share’, etc. A very likely candidate for a metathetic loan from Egyptian.

(3) Eg. (OK) *ghs* ‘gazelle’ – Arab. *ʒahš-* (< **gaḥš-*) rarely ‘gazelle’ (in some lexicographical works), usually ‘Wildesel- Füllen’ [4, p. 202] • The Eg. word is feasibly derived, with the *-ḥ-* extension (likely originally prefixed, then, for some reason, underwent metathesis), from another OK zoonym *gsʕ* (< **gsʕ*, with *ʕ* probably rendering *-a-* of the first syllable, i.e. [gas]) ‘k. of antelope’ from AA **ga(w)s-* id. (Chad. W.: Ngizim *gas-ka*, E.: Somrai *gawsa*, Ndam *gōs*; Cush. S.: Iraqw *gagəs*). The lack of Sem. etymology for Arab. *ʒahš-* suggests its borrowing from Eg. rather than vice versa.

(4) Eg. (OK) *bḥz* ‘calf’ – Arab. *baḥzaḥ-* (< **baḥzaq-*) ‘calf, veau, petit d’oryx’ [4, p. 148–149] • This is a most weird case, the “odd” Arab. *-g* labeled by Takács a complement, though there is no such “complement” or, rather, root extension either in Sem. or other AA branches¹¹. Anyway, the Arab. zoonym is very likely an Eg. loanword with an enigmatic *-g*, perhaps of some expressive character, attached to the triconsonantal root.

(5) Eg. (NK) *brg* ‘to be rich’ – Arab. *bariḏa* ‘avoir des provisions abondantes’ [5, p. 269]; the Arab. verb is isolated in Sem. [26, p. 81] • In spite of Takács’ rejection of this comparison (see footnote 5 above), a very likely borrowing from Eg. into Arab.

(6) Eg. (OK) *ʕwʕy* ‘stehlen’ [21, 1, p. 171] – Arab. *ʕyr* ‘commettre des ravages, enlever, emporter, faire main basse sur le bien des autres (se dit d’un homme)’ [24, 2, p. 418] • The Arabic verb, isolated in Semitic, may have been borrowed from the Eg. verb which has an alternative regular correspondence, a bit less convincing semantically, in Semitic [7, fn. 246]: Arab. *ʕwr* ‘to raid’, Hrs. *šewyor*, Jib. *eybér* ‘to raid’ (the MSA verbs can be Arabisms as well).

(7) Eg. (PT) *šzp* ‘to receive, take, accept’ – Arab. *šadafa* ‘to obtain, get’ [4, p. 185] • The Arab. verb isolated in Sem. and having not a single derivative at that [24, I, p. 1208] is a tenable candidate for a borrowed Egyptism.

(8) Eg. (OK) *nḏ* ‘to confer (office), appoint (so. as)’ – Arab. *nšš* ‘to appoint’ [4, p. 128] • Several opportunities of the Eg. verb’s reading¹² notwithstanding, the highly distinctive meaning of both verbs makes it possible to read the Eg.

¹⁰ The metathesis might be due to nearly complete incompatibility of *f* and *d* in Eg. roots in R₁ and R₂ position.

¹¹ See: [25].

¹² Besides Eg. *n* (that can correspond to AA **n* or **l*), *d* can render palatalized **g* (> *ʒ*) or can continue three AA “emphatic” sibilant affricates (**ç*, **č*, **ĉ*).



nd with the help of Arab. *nṣṣ*, i.e. as **nṣṣ*. The highly specific meaning of both verbs anachronous for Proto-AA level plus lack of Semitic cognates of the Arabic verb suggest the Eg. loan in Arabic.

(9) Eg. (old) *ḥfn* ‘100,000’ – Arab. *ḥafala* ‘reichlich vorhanden sein, reichlich fließen’, *ḥafl-* ‘crowd, multitude’, *ḥafil-* ‘zahlreich’ [4, p. 152] • The old Eg. term for one hundred thousand may read *ḥfl*; this reading seems to be confirmed by the Arab. match to be logically considered a well-adapted (several derivatives, a denominal verb) loan from Eg. **ḥfl*.

(10) Eg. (old, MK, NK) *mny* ‘landen’ [21, II, p. 73], (NK) *mny.w.t* ‘Hafen’ [21, II, p. 74], (late) *mnw* ‘Schiff’ [21, II, p. 72] – Arab. *mīn-at-*, *mīnāḏ-* ‘rade, port’ [24] (quoted with no comments in [6, p. 249] in the same entry as Eg. (PT) *mny* ‘sterben’)¹³. The similarity to the Arab. parallel is called “misleading” and “due to pure chance” ... because “the Ar. term is traditionally (BK) derived from Arab. *wny* ‘abandonner’” while M. Lubetsky’s explanation of Arab. *ḏal-mīnāḏ-*... “ultimately from Eg. *mnj* (!)” is called baseless [6, p. 252] • This reasoning inexplicable on part of such a professional as Takács (with all these epithets like “misleading” and “baseless” and appealing to “tradition” deriving ‘port, harbor’ from ‘abandon’ – what I call “mythetymology”) does not hold water. This is a complicated case, in fact, probably somehow (noun of place with *m*-prefixed?)¹⁴ related to another Eg.-Sem. term, either inherited from PAA (see [1, #3808] or borrowed, rather from Eg. into Sem. than vice versa: Eg. (PT) *inw.t* ‘Fähre’ [21, I, p. 92] (cf. also OK *in* ‘cordage of ship’ [34, p. 23]) vs. Sem.: Ugr. *any(t)* ‘ship’, Hbr. *ḏānī* ‘ships, fleet’. In any case, in view of all Eg.-Arab. parallels quoted above a chance coincidence of Eg. *mny* ‘to moor, land’ and Arab. *mīn-at-*, *mīnāḏ-* ‘landing-place’ seems extremely unlikely, Egyptism in Arab. more feasible than vice versa.

(11) Eg. (OK) *šdy* ‘to read (aloud), recite’ – Arab. *šdw* ‘to recite’ [4, p. 242] • Acc. to [24, 1, p. 1206], ‘chanter, fredonner une chanson en vers’ while another meaning of *šadā* (*šdw*) is ‘mener, faire marcher devant soi (les chameaux, etc.)’, the two possibly related. The specific meanings of the Eg. and Arab. verbs are against chance coincidence. From the general cultural perspective, and considering isolation of the Arab. verb in Sem., Egyptism in Arabic appears more probable than vice versa.

(12) Eg. (OK) *p3k.t* ‘fine linen’ – Arab. *farḳ-* ‘flax, linen’ [5, p. 401] • Although Takács notes that A. Ember and W. Vycichl are probably wrong in equating these two nouns, the comparison, if *ḥ* renders *r*, is impeccable, the Eg. noun likely borrowed into Arab.

¹³ If ‘to die’ is actually a euphemism from ‘to moor, land’, its similarity with Arab. *maniyy-at-* and *man^{an}* ‘mort, trépas’ (isolated in the entry for *mny* in [24]) is best explained as another Eg. borrowing in Arab.

¹⁴ Cf. also Eg. (hapax) *mn.t* ‘das West-Schiff’, ‘barque’, ‘k. of boat’, *mn.w* ‘Art Schiff’ and ‘une type d’embarcation’ (!) [6, p. 233] vs. Sem.: Syr. *māḏenā* ‘navis’ [27].



(13) Eg. (OK) *w'hy* (< **wrhy*) 'überschwemmt sein, überfluss haben' – Arab. *wariha* 'wässerig sein', *wariḥ-at-* 'feuchter Boden', *wariḥ-at-* 'upper grünendes Land' [4, p. 158] • An isolated triconsonantal Arabic root is more likely an Egyptism (in which the final *-y* may convey *-i-* before the previous consonant allowing for the reading [*wVriḥ*]) than vice versa.

(14) Eg. (NK) *kfʿ* (likely < **kfl*) 'hinder-parts, bottom', (Med.) 'hinder-parts (of bird), bottom (of jar), base (of abscess)' – Arab. *kafal-* 'hind parts, posteriors'¹⁵ [4, p. 66, 118–119] • In view of neither Sem. nor AA cognates available, very likely a contact Eg.-Arab. anatomic term with a triconsonantal root; the direction of borrowing is hard to determine, but a wider scope of meanings rather suggests the Eg. noun's priority over the Arab. one.

(15) Eg. (Med.) *kʿs*, *kys* (possibly < **kls*) 'to vomit, sich erbrechen' – Arab. *kalasa* 'to vomit, spit' [4, p. 212–213] • If the Eg. graphic variants stand for **kls*, the Arab. triconsonantal verb with no Sem. cognates at hand is a tenable candidate for an Eg. loanword, though the reason why a verb with such a meaning should be borrowed remains unclear.

(16) Eg. (CT) *mʿr* 'anointed one (of wig)' – Arab. *marafa* 'oindre abondamment d'huile (la tête, les cheveux)' [6, p. 184] • In spite of a metathesis, obviously a contact rather than inherited term or a lookalike in view of a highly specific common meaning; the direction of borrowing is not clear but, by general considerations of "cultural influence", is rather from Eg. into Arab. than vice versa.

(17) Eg. (PT) *hzʿ* 'grimmig, wild (vom Auge i. a.)', (late) *hʿzr-hʿr* 'fierce of face' – Arab. *hʿzr* 'avoir un air sévère, austère', *hāzīr-* 'sévère, austère (air, visage)' [7, p. 69] • A striking formal and semantic affinity of the two triconsonantal roots is hardly accidental; the direction of borrowing is not clear but, by general considerations of "cultural influence", is rather from Eg. into Arab. than vice versa.

(18) Eg. (OK) *hzʿ* (possibly < **hʿzr*) 'Schleim; Teig', 'viscous fluid', (MK) 'milk; mucus; dough' – Arab. *hʿzr* 'to become sour, bitter', *hāzīr-* 'sour, tart, bitter (gen. milk or wine); (sour smelling) barley flour' [7, fn. 328] • Looks like a broader meaning 'viscous fluid' is primary having evolved in Eg. into 'dough' and '(sour?) milk', in which meanings borrowed into Arab.

(19) Eg. (MK) *šnʿ* 'to turn back, repulse, repel' [34, p. 269] – Arab. *šnʿ* 'trouver villain, hideux, mépriser qqn'. Comp. in [7, fn. 275] also to arguable W. Chad. forms • In view of possible semantic connection between the two verbs, either a common AA verb **ʿšnʿ* or **ʿšnʿ* randomly preserved in both Eg. and Arab.¹⁶ or a contact term – the Eg. verb with its more general meaning rather borrowed into Arabic than vice versa.

¹⁵ Acc. to [26, p. 1262], 'derrière, fesse; croupe d'une monture'.

¹⁶ Cf. what can be a variant Sem. root: **ʿšnʿ* (< AA **ʿšnʿ*) 'to hate'.



(20) Eg. (NK) *km*³ ‘Wurfholz’ ‘throw-stick’, deverbal noun from (OK) *km*³ ‘werfen’, ‘to throw’ – Arab. *kmr* ‘mit einem Würfel spielen’ (‘jouer à un jeu de hasard’ [24, 2, p. 811]). Comp. in [7, fn. 374] adding W. Chad.: Bökkos *kamloŋ* ‘Jagdwurfstock’ • If the Eg. root conveys **kmr*¹⁷ while the Arab. term actually implies casting lots or a similar game¹⁸, it looks like an attractive case of borrowing from Eg.

II. Presumed Arabic loanwords in Egyptian

(21) Eg. (MK) *mnf.t* ‘trained soldiers, assault troops, infantry, etc.’ with the noun forming prefix *m-* related to MK pl. *nfr.w* ‘young men of army, recruits, elite troops’ – Arab. *nafar-* ‘homme, individu; simple soldat’ [6, p. 288–289] • Full coincidence of words with identical triconsonantal roots and meaning can hardly be haphazard. The meaning ‘soldier’ (in Eg. and Arab. only) precludes its common AA origin as anachronous while the meaning ‘man, person’ in Arab. *nafar-*, *nafr-* is a common semantic shift from ‘soldier’. As for its origin, see in [23, p. 2824–2825]: *nafir* ‘a people hastening to war’ from the verb *nafera* ‘go to war, to fight’, *munaffir-* ‘one who encounters people with roughness and violence’; and in [24, p. 1309]: *nafr-* ‘petite troupe d’hommes’ and ‘victoire, action de mettre en déroute’, *nafera* ‘mettre quelqu’un en fuite, en déroute; fuir et se dispenser (se dit d’une troupe d’hommes); s’enfuir, se sauver (se dit d’une gazelle); ê. peureux au point de s’enfuir au moindre bruit (se dit des bestiaux)’. Unless these two meanings of *nafera*, one referring to people and military action, the other to animals, are brought together by folk etymology – what seems unlikely – the Arab. verb has a robust Sem. etymology (in [6, p. 288] only cases of the Arab. term for ‘person’ borrowed into Tgr. and Modern Aram. are mentioned): Ugr. *npr* ‘to fly, start to fly; to escape, leave’ [29, p. 635]; Syr. *nəpar* ‘consternatus fugit (equus); abhorruit’ [27, p. 441a]; Tgr. *nāfārä* ‘fly, run away’ [30, p. 389] – all from Common Sem. **npr* ‘to run, fly away’¹⁹. The semantic evolution from common Sem. and within Arab. appears quite smooth and coherent: to fly/run away > turn to flight > those who turn to flight, outfight, go to fight/war (and win a victory) > warriors (soldiers). Will it be then far-fetched to assume that Eg. *nfr.w* having no “inner” etymology was borrowed from the Arab. deverbal noun with the meaning ‘those who turn the enemy to flight, win a victory’? Was the form *mnf.t* also borrowed from an Arab. participial form in *m-* or derived from *nfr* by means of the Eg. denominal noun forming *m-* ‘prefix’?

¹⁷ In which case the Bökkos parallel is questionable (-l is not <*-r).

¹⁸ I could not find in any Arab. dictionary a mention of ‘chuck luck’ which would justify the comparison with ‘throwing’ and ‘throw-stick’ in Eg.: all the descriptions address any hazard game.

¹⁹ The Sem. verb is eventually a derived form with the n- prefix from AA **pir-* ‘to fly’ [1, #692].



This challenging assumption made (with no other thinkable explanation within sight, though), it may have unexpected implications for the Middle Kingdom military history posing a question to the Egyptologists: are there any hints in the Egyptian sources of some non-Egyptian fighting force in the MK Egyptian army potentially identifiable with the early/proto-Arabic (Midianite?) warriors (cf. the meaning 'elite, assault troops')?

(22) Eg. (OK) *mḥ.w* 'Unterägypten', *mḥ.wt* > (MK) *mḥ.yt* 'norther accompanied by much cloud and heavy rain' > (Dem.) *mḥ.t.t* 'Nordwind' – Arab. *maḥw-at-* 'vent du nord; pluit' [6, p. 476–478] with the comment "may, of course, be due to pure chance as well as due to cognancy" [6, p. 478]; there is also a reference to [31, #1714] affiliating the Arab. word [24, 2, p. 1071] with Akk. *meḥû* 'storm', which is quite a probable etymology. Anyway, the Akk.-Arab. **maḥw-* 'storm, rainy wind' vs. Eg. *mḥ.wt* id. without available cognates in other AA branches may be an inherited AA term or another Arabism in Eg. – if the Akk.-Arab. term is derived from Sem. **mḥw* 'effacer, anéantir' [30, p. 337], which is well possible • Of course, the latter suggestion would be worthless if not for the whole series of presumed Eg.-Arab. contact terms.

(23) Eg. (MK) *ʕh.w* (likely < **ʕh-w*) 'misery, trouble, pain, suffering, sorrow' – Arab. *ʔahh-at-* 'Traurigkeit, Schmerz' [4, p. 68] • In [26, p. 10] Arab. *ʔahh-at-* 'tristesse, affliction' is derived from *ʔah*, *ʔahā* 'alas!' of common Sem. origin; there seems to be no other Sem. language in which a noun would have derived from this obviously descriptive interjection. Unless the Eg. noun was derived from a similar unrecorded Eg. interjection, the noun *ʕh.w* is a nice candidate for borrowing from Arab.

(24) Eg. (CT) *iny* 'to delay, hold oneself aloof (from)' – Arab. *ʔaniya* 'to hesitate, come late', II 'procrastinate, delay' [4, p. 82] • Acc. to [24, 1, p. 64], Arab. *ʔanā* 'retarder quelqu'un', *ʔaniya* 'tarder, ê. en retard' is related to *ʔan^{um}* 'temps'²⁰ which is quite reasonable. Unless a lookalike (one "hard" radical only), a good candidate for borrowing from Arab.

(25) Eg. (MK) *nḡ* (possibly < **nḡr*) 'to parch with thirst, ersticken, verdursten' – Arab. *nažara* (var. *mažara*) 'to be thirsty' [4, p. 56]. • The two variants in Arab.: 1) *nažara* (< **nḡr*) 'être très chaud, brûlant de chaleur (se dit d'un jour d'été); ê. pris d'un violent accès de soif (se dit des hommes et des animaux)', *nāžir-* 'chaude, brûlant, d'été' [24, 2, p. 1202–1203] and 2) *mažara* (< **mḡr*) 'avoir soif (se dit d'un homme)' [24, 2, p. 1064] are likely "triconsonantized" derivatives with two different fossilized prefixes **n-* and **m-* (cf. also Arab. *ʔžr* < **ʔgr* 'make/burn bricks' and Gurage **mag'ara* 'burn') from Sem. and AA **gir-* 'fire, burn': Sem.: Akk. *giru*, *girru* 'fire, deity of fire', Arab. *žayir-* 'feu, grand chaleur dans le corps'; Eg. (Gr.) *ḡr* (< **gr*) 'fire'; Chad. **ḡVr-* 'to flame' [32, #222]; Cush. N.: Beja *gur* 'kochen, braten, rösten', E. **gir-*

²⁰ of common AA origin: E. Cush.: Oromo *yoowana* '(this) time', Sidamo, Darasa *yanna*, Burji *awun-čo* 'time', etc. (AADB, #1554)



'fire' [1, #1201]. Anyway, the affinity of Eg. *nd'* 'to parch with thirst' and Arab. *nažara* 'to be thirsty' is noteworthy.

III. Presumed loanword with an unclear direction of borrowing

(26) Eg. (late) *hm'g* (< **hmlg*) 'umschliessen, einwickeln, unwickeln' – Arab. *hamlaža* 'drehen (einen Strick)'²¹ [4, p. 65] • A complete coincidence of the quadriconsonantal (!) roots with identical meanings leaves no doubt we are dealing with borrowing; the direction is not clear.

(27) Eg. (Med.) *nph.(w)* 'Leistengegend, Euter der Kuh', 'rear parts, udder', (late NK) *mnpḥ.t* 'Brust', (GR) 'Euter der Kuh' – Arab. *ʔinfah-at-*, *ʔinfihḥ-at-* 'ventricule d'un agneau ou d'un chevreau' [24, II, p. 1306], *ʔinfah-at-*, *ʔinfihḥ-at-*, *minfaḥ-at-* (and *binfaḥ-at-*) 'the rennet or rennet-bag of a kid or lamb' [23, p. 2821; 6, p. 287] • In spite of a meaning difference, the compared pastoralist terms, especially Eg. *mnpḥ.t* vs. Arab. *minfaḥ-at-* do not look haphazard; direction of the presumed borrowing is not clear.

(28) Eg. (MK) *hdb* 'to kill' – Arab. *hadaba* 'to strike, wound (with sword), slay, bite (snake)' [4, p. 175] • In view of neither Sem. nor AA cognates available, very likely a contact triconsonantal Eg.-Arab. verb; the direction of borrowing is not clear.

(29) Eg. (MK) *štm* 'verleumden', 'to be quarrelsome' – Arab. *šatama* '(be) schimpfen' [4, p. 208] • In [24, 1, p. 1190] Arab *šatama* is translated as 'insulter, injurier'; in the absence of Sem. cognates, very likely a contact triconsonantal Eg.-Arab. verb; the direction of borrowing is not clear.

(30) Eg. (PT) *h'ʔ* (likely < **hlʔ*) 'to throw, strike down, cast off, abandon' – Arab. *haluʕa* 'to cast off' [4, p. 65] • Here is a more detailed array of meanings quoted for Arab. *hlʔ* in [26, p. 991]: 'ôter; ôter ses habits; répudier une épouse avec déshonement; laisser tout honte, vivre à sa fantaisie', supplied with a cognate (or borrowing into or from?) in ESA: Qatabanian *š-hlʔ* 'renoncer à'. Because of an infrequent combination of *h* and *ʔ* in both roots and rather special array of meanings, a very likely contact term; the direction of borrowing is not clear.

IV. Cases of similarity to be interpreted either way as borrowing, lookalikes or common origin

(31) Eg. (OK) *tz* (< **kz*) 'sandbank, trockene Stelle' – Arab. *kazz-* 'trocken, vertrocken, zähe' [4, p. 186] • The two roots' similarity may be due to either chance coincidence (note their biconsonantism and very common little-specified meaning 'dry') or to a non-detected common AA root, or present another case of contact lexicon.

²¹ In: [26, p. 881], *hamlaža* 'tresser fortement (une corde)'.



(32) Eg. (PT) *tz* (<*kz) ‘to tie (knot), (re)join, knit together’ – Arab. *kwz* ‘to unite, gather, join’, *kzz* ‘zusammenziehen’ [4, p. 186] • Either a common AA verb randomly preserved in both Eg. and Arab. (not yet fished out in other AA branches) or a contact term with an unclear direction of borrowing.

(33) Eg. (PT) *dp.w* ‘rudder’, *dp.t* ‘ship’ – Arab. *daff-at-* ‘side, board, rudder, oar’ (and pB. Hbr. *dap* ‘board’) [4, p. 243] • An extremely interesting case. The Arab. noun has a solid Sem. etymology: Akk. (SB, NB) *dappu* (*dabbu*, *adappu*) ‘(wooden) board, (metal) plate’ [33, d, p. 106]²²; Aram.: JP, Syr. *dappā*, Mand. *dupa* [26, p. 300], Gz. *dafdafa* ‘cover with boards’ [30, p. 124]. Comparing Eg. *dp.w* and Arab. *daff-at-*, the options are: a) both Eg. and Sem. roots continue AA **dap-* ‘board’ the meaning shift to ‘rudder’ occurred in Eg. and Arab. independently, b) the Eg. ‘rudder’ was borrowed from Proto-Sem. ‘board’ undergoing a meaning shift to ‘rudder’ then borrowed into Arab. with the same meaning, c) the Eg. ‘rudder’ was borrowed from Arab. in which the meaning had “seamlessly” evolved from common Sem. ‘board’.

(34) Eg. (MK) *hzy* ‘(to be) weak, feeble, humble, mean (of conduct), vile’ – Arab. *haziya* ‘to fall into disgrace’, etc., *hazy-at-* ‘disgrace, misfortune’, *hazin-* ‘abased, contemptible’ [4, p. 177] • This is a case of incompleteness of data (fortunately, rare with Takács). The Arab. verb has a reliable Sem. etymology²³, which rules out a possibility of the Eg. loanword in Arab.; in this particular case, a common inherited Eg.-Sem. verb appears most likely, but an Arabism in Eg. is not to rule out.

(35) Eg. (OK) *m’f* (if < *mr’f*) ‘a duck’ – Arab. *murfat-* ‘sorte d’oiseau de la famille des gallinacés’ [6, p. 53] • An Arabism in Eg. if Arab. ‘k. of bird’ is a transfer of meaning from *murfat-* ‘graisse’ [24, p. 1093] < Sem. **mirfay-* ‘pasture’ < **r’f* ‘to herd, feed (flock)’ [1, #671].

(36) Eg. (19th Dyn.) *d’f* (possibly < **č’f*) ‘wüst liegen’ – Arab. *dyf* ‘to perish, come to naught, pass away, become lost’ [23, p. 1812], Mhr. *zawya* ‘to get lost’, Hrs. *zāye’f* ‘something thrown away’, Jib. *zēf* ‘to become thin, go to waste, get lost (all < **čy’f*). Comp. in [7, fn. 288] • Low frequency of the combination *š/č* (if rendered by *d* in the Eg. word) and *f* speaks against a lookalike; if a borrowing, rather an Arabism in Eg. than vice versa. Otherwise, if the arguable S. Cush. parallels referred to [7, fn. 288] are valid, a common AA root.

(37) Eg. (MK) *fd* (possibly < **fč*) ‘(Fleisch) zerhacken, (Feinde) zerstückeln’ – Arab. *fdw* ‘dépécer (un mouton égorgé, etc.), séparer par membres’ [7, p. 63] • Low frequency of the combination *f* and *š/č* (if so in the Eg. word) plus a rather focused meaning speak against both a lookalike and a common AA verb; if a contact term, direction of borrowing is unclear.

²² A loan from Sum. DIB ‘board of a door’ or DUB ‘tablet’ is considered possible which is less likely than an Akkadism in Sum. in view of Sem. cognates.

²³ Akk. *ħazū* ‘s’opposer’, Syr. *ħazā* ‘faire honte à quelqu’un en le contredisant’, Jib. *ħaze* ‘abaisser, humilier’, Soq. *ħozi* ‘refuser’, etc. [26, p. 974]. All < Sem. **ħzy*.



(38) Eg. (18th Dyn.) *ʔfd* ‘to flee’ – Arab. *ʔfd* ‘se dépêcher’ (cf. *ʔdd* ‘courir (un homme)’ [7, p. 65] • The Arab. verb fits both *ʔfd* and Eg. (18 Dyn.) *ʔpd* ‘herbeieilen’ (‘to hurry up’). The correlation if any between the three verbs is unclear.

(39) Eg. (MK) *wzf* ‘to be slack, sluggish’ – Arab. *zwf* ‘se traîner, marcher comme un malade’ [7, p. 65]: *wzf* < **zwf* (acc. to law of Belova)²⁴ • With not a full coincidence in meaning and no other Sem. or AA cognates at hand, the comparison may be either a lookalike or, less likely, a borrowing in either direction.

(40) Eg. (OK) *wdf* ‘zögern’, ‘delay’, ‘tardily’ (looks like a variant root of *wzf* in #39) – Arab. *dff* ‘marcher lentement’, ‘langsam gehen’ [7, p. 65] • The comparison may be either a lookalike or, less likely, a borrowing in either direction.

(41) Eg. (OK) *ḥr* ‘fallen’ – Arab. *ḥrr* ‘tomber en bas’ [7, p. 68]. • The comparison may be a lookalike or a borrowing in either direction.

(42) Eg. (MK) *zhm* ‘to be hasty, impetuous’ – Arab. *zhm* ‘repousser qqn. par un coup violent’, ‘heftig sein’ [7, p. 71]. • The comparison with a full coincidence in the triconsonantal roots including *z* and *ḥ*, both of rather low frequency, on the one hand, and not exactly similar meanings, on the other, may be either a lookalike or a borrowing in either direction.

V. Obscure or less feasible cases

(43) Eg. (old) *kʔkʔ* (<**krkr*) ‘Flüssschiff (Art)’ [21, V, p. 14], (NK) *ḳrr* ‘Art Schiff’ [21, V, p. 61] – Arab *ḳurḳūr*- ‘vaisseau long et grand’ [24, 2, p. 523] • Hardly a lookalike, but in view of Syr. *ḳarḳūrā* ‘navicula’ [27, p. 701b] (‘a light boat, ship’s boat’) and Greek *kérkouros*, a ship of Cypriotes quoted by Herodotus [28, p. 89] the succession of presumed borrowing of the Eg. term is obscure.

(44) Eg. (PT) *sšd* (caus. of *šd*) ‘to put a fillet on’, (NK) *šd* ‘Kopfbinde’ – Arab. *šdd* ‘to bind’ [4, p. 242] • The more specialized meaning of Arab. *šdd* is ‘serrer, lier fortement (p. ex. un paquet, les bagages, la charge sur une bête de somme’ [24, 1, p. 1203]; it has a parallel in Mhr. and Hrs. *šādēd* ‘camel girth’ [35, p. 392]: an Arabism? The connection between the Eg. and Arab. verbs is plausible but not clear.

(45) Eg. (PT) *zmʔ* ‘vereinigen’ – Arab. *zml* ‘sich anschliessen an jemanden, vereinigen, etc.’, *zamīl*- ‘Kamerade’ [4, p. 377–378] • Since the primary meaning of the Arab. root with its many derivatives and cognates (or loans from Arab. – see: [26, p. 747–748]) can be surmised as ‘to fit out a mount or pack animal for a (joint) trip’ (cf., for example, *ziml*- ‘qui est en croup, qui monte une monture derrière un autre’ [24, 1, p. 1013]), one of the derived

²⁴ On this rule by the remarkable Moscow linguist Anna G. Belova explaining many cases of metathetic correlation of radicals see [4, p. 394].



meanings being ‘to tie, connect, collect’, borrowing from Eg. looks unlikely. A broad meaning ‘to unite’ and the Auslaut β in the Eg. word capable of rendering any of the three different phonemes (β , r and l) make the comparison not quite reliable.

Abbreviations

AA – Afrasian	Med. – medical texts
AADB – Afrasian etymological database	Mhr. – Mehri
Akk. – Akkadian	MK – Middle Kingdom
Arab. – Arabic	MSA – Modern South Arabian
Aram. – Aramaic	N. – North
Chad. – Chadic	NB – Neo-Babylonian
CT – Coffin Texts	NK – New Kingdom
Cush. – Cushitic	OK – Old Kingdom
Dem. – Demotic	pB. – post-Biblical
Dyn. – Dynasty	PT – Pyramid Texts
E. – East	S. – South
Eg. – Egyptian	SB – Standard Babylonian
ESA – Epigraphic South Arabian	Sem. – Semitic
Gr. – Greek	Soq. – Soqotri
Gz. – Geez	Sum. – Sumerian
Hbr. – Hebrew	Syr. – Syrian Aramaic
Hrs. – Harsusi	Tgr. – Tigre
Jib. – Jibbali	Ugr. – Ugaritic
Mand. – Mandaic Aramaic	W. – West.

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