Etymological Studies in the Semantic Field
"Work" in Egyptian*

Von Helmut Satzinger (Wien) und Gábor Takács (Székesfehérvár)

In a recently published article, written by several scholars (including the present authors) who work in various fields,1 attention has been drawn to the fact that the word for "work" of many African languages is related to, or even identical with, a word for "to send." This is insofar surprising as this is hardly ever the case in European languages. In the following, Egyptian words for "work" and their semantic development shall be considered beyond the article mentioned, as compared with other languages (Satzinger). On the other hand, the internal (Egyptian) and external (Semito-Hamitic/Afroasiatic) etymological background of the various pertinent lexical items is discussed (Takács). The two sections have been independently elaborated and express the opinions of the respective author.

1 The authors presented this paper to the Third Aegyptus et Pannonia Symposium, held at Buda Castle from 17th to 19th November, 2004. Having been dedicated to the memory of Professor Liszt Kókossy, "Diversity and Similarity in Egyptian Religions" was chosen as its motto. The organiser and convenor, Dr. Hedvig György, was generous enough to agree that we demonstrate our respective reverence for the venerated friend and revered teacher by participating in it, though with a joint paper of linguistic content. We are, however, grateful to her for conceiving that an inclusion of the paper in the acts of the conference would have been slightly incongruous. Our gratitude also goes to the Editors of this Journal for accepting our paper here for print.

Being Sent to Work: Some More Remarks on an African Etymological Pattern

Von Helmut Satzinger (Wien)

In the better-known European languages the lexemes of the meaning "work," or "to work" are usually derived from one of the following semantic fields.
1. Activity, especially a creative or productive act; performance
2. Drudgery, vexation, and

Case no. 1 has a positive implication. It means a creative activity which is assumed, not because of the constraint or pressure of another person, but rather by one's own insight and decision, and it is motivated by the urge to produce or create. This is the case of the IE root *ūerg-, "to do; work," reconstructed from words like Greek τὸ ἀγών (τὸ ἀγών), German das Werk "deed, opus, work", English work. Greek τὸ πρᾶγμα is a comparable case; it means "civil business, deed, act", from πρᾶσσειν "to do, act, perform". Latin operā, opus "deed, work" is also pertinent.

Case no. 2 speaks of suffering from compulsion or obligation to do hard, painful, consuming work, like tilting the field in order to have sufficient supplies for oneself and the family. Cf. Greek ἀπόνοια "hard work," and pronoun "to do tedious work," and Latin labor "tireful activity." An especially drastic case is German Arbeiten, from Late Latin tripallium "to torture with a tripalium." It is attested from the Middle Ages in reflexive use: "I am torturing myself for this or that", which eventually led to the somewhat weaker meaning of "I am working."1

German Arbeit is originally the hard work which orphan (IE *arkh-, Old Indian ṛdhbh, Greek ἀρχὴς, Germanic *arbh-) had to do; Gothic arbaðs "affliction, distress", Old High German arbeit(ä)h. A nice case that is pertinent is Coptic hisb "labour, product of labour, weariness, suffering," verbal noun of hisb "to toil, to be

1 Old French travailler "to work hard," from Vulgar Latin *tripāliāre "to torture with a tripalium," from Late Latin tripallium, an instrument of torture, probably from Latin *tripalium "having three stakes": tri, tri- + pālus "stake."
troubled; to be wearied, suffering; to trouble, to weary", from Old and Middle Egyptian kḥ “to be weak, feeble, humble, mean, vile”.

Case no. 3: Cf. Modern Greek ἥ δουλεία “work, occupation, business; matter”; to douleuma “work, treatment”; ἥ δουλεία “service”; all from Ancient Greek ἥ δοῦλος “slave”; cf. ἥ δουλεία “servitude, slavery”; to douleuma “service, attendance”.

Slavic: robä “menial, slave” > Polish, Czech robota “compulsory labour,” Russian рабota “work, labour”.

“To be sent” = “to work”

Derivation of the word for “work” from a lexeme “to send” can be explained as a concept of a vertically structured society where work is done on command or commission. “Having been sent” may be then a near-equivalent to “working”. Traces of such an etymology have been mainly ascertained in Niger-Congo languages of Africa. These Chadic languages which also attest to it are said to be found in vicinity of Niger-Congo languages. In addition, the phenomenon in question has been detected in ancient Semitic languages, and in Egyptian.

Semitic:

Akkadian .bd-r (infinitive bârá) “to send”; from this, the noun bârû (1) “mission, message; (2) “work,opus” is derived.3

Hebrew: both melakî “messenger, angel” as also melakû/jû “work” (Yiddish melakû) are derived from a Semitic verbal root bâ-k “to send”, although this is lacking in Hebrew; cf. Arabic alâka (IV.) “send out as messenger”, Geez lâ-kâ, Amharic bâ-k “to send”.

On Egyptian and Coptic lexemes for “work”:

1) kât “work” is attested since the Old Kingdom. kât “work” has no verbal counterpart, such as “to work”. No plausible derivation in Egyptian: it is hardly derived from the verb kâ “to think, to plan”, cf. kâ-t “thought, plan, device”.

2) bâk “servant” is first attested in Old Kingdom texts; so is also the rare verb, bâk “to employ as servant, to enslave”, obviously derived from the noun. The following are attested from the Middle Kingdom onwards: bâk “maid servant”; bâk “to work”; bâk-t and bâk-t “work”.

Probably, the verb bâk “to work” is the origin of all other words mentioned: active participles, or actor nouns, masc. bâk “servant” (Coptic bîk, from *bâk; plur. Bohairic bîkû; bîk “food” or similar); fem. bâk-t “female servant” (perhaps *bâk-t, cf. nû “hut”, from *nût “god”); plur. ântû, ântûr from *nût “god”; fem. ântûr “godess”; erû from *ântû “donkey”, fem. erû from *ântû “godess”; verbals bâk and bâk-t “service” (Coptic bekâ, from *bâk “food”)

In Coptic, there are two verbs bâk: (1) “to go” (stative: bâk; used for the present tense system), attested in the Valley dialects, i.e. in all except Bohairic; (2) “to send, to put into, to add to”, a rare use, mainly found in documents of Thebes. For the first verb, bâk “to go”, a somewhat higher age may be deduced from the existence of a causative verb, ( bâk “to send”, from an earlier dâk bâk “to cause him to go”. It seems difficult to derive the intransitive verb, bâk “to go”, from bâk “to serve”:

J. Cerny, Coptic Etymological Dictionary, 359, lists it among the Coptic words for which no etymologies are given. Neither does W. Westendorf, Koptisches Handwörterbuch, give any etymological data (but cf. p. 493). However, W. Vyeichil, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte, 27 summaries, “Peut-être y a un rapport [of bîk “to go; to send”] avec bîk “employer quelqu’un comme serviteur”, and concludes somewhat reluctantly that the transitive use of bîk is the primitive one, the intransitive use being derived from it. For corroboration he refers to the composite lexemes bîk-mât (from *bîk-mîh-tuwat “sending, casting poison” and bîk-ðne (from *bîk-tû-nû “stone thrower” which obviously attest to a transitive meaning comparable to “to send”.

In the light of the etymological relations of sending and working, both in Egyptian and in other languages, we may assume that “to go” has developed from “to send”, or “to be have sent”. Just as Vyeichil has suggested, we have to proceed from the transitive (facitive) verb,

3 See op. cit.

4 See op. cit.
Marginal Notes on “Working” in Egyptian

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For Miss Erzsébet Tóth remembering 1991-92 in the Hungarian Oriental Library.

Introduction

The only aim of this minor contribution to Egyptian and Afro-Asiatic (Semito-Hamitic) etymology is to shed new light on some lesser-examined aspects of three Eg. terms in the semantic domain “work” (bık, kát, wjpw). Hopefully, the ideas put forward by H. Satzinger, complemented by the present ones, will give a more precise picture on the question on a few points.

I. The etymology Eg. bık “to serve” (or “to work”?)

The standard sources equivocally render the primary (Old Kingdom) meaning of the Eg. verbal root bık as (intr.) “Diener sein, dienstbar sein” (first in Dyn. V) and as (tr.) “dienstbar machen, versklaven” (first in Dyn. VI), which may have apparently been of a denotative sense, whence “arbeiten” (first attested in the First Intermediate Period) developed only secondarily.¹ The noun bık “servant” has been simultaneously envisaged in the light of the Coptic reflexes as...

¹ I express my true thanks to the OTKA (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, project no. D 45976) for supporting my research in 2003-4. This paper was presented at the 3rd Pannonia Symposium (Buda Castle, November 2004).
² Wb I 426-7: “1. (OK) dienstbar machen, versklaven, 2. (MK) arbeiten, zinsen”; AWH 1 411: (OK-1° IMP) “1. (1X 1° IMP) arbeiten (bes. körperlich schwere Arbeit), 2. (1X Dyn. V) dienstbar sein, Diener sein, 3. (1X Dyn. VI) dienstbar machen, versklaven.”
a deverbal participle both by J. Osing (NBA 213) and by W. Vyvich (1955, 267; DELC 27). These two assumptions are naturally in mutual contradiction. It is clear that either the verb bık was denominal from bık “servant” or vice versa.

Which scenario was the correct one cannot be decided in the light of the external etymologies either due to the far too wide range of solutions (fitting either of the mentioned scenarios). At the moment, we cannot do anything but list these alternatives for further analysis:

(1) Eg. bık “slave” (original nominal stem) as Wanderwort? A number of authors suggested its relationship to the designation of “slave” in the Chadic languages, cf. WCh.: South Bauchi “bikô [Stl.]” [CCh.: PMatakam *beke [GT]” Mandara baka [Rn. 1873, #8, fn. 2] PMusgu bege (m), bagay (f) [GT]” PMasu *bê’ek [GT]”. The problem is, however, that the Chadic term itself is also considered to be a foreign loanword from a non-Afro-Asiatic source (cf. Rgg. 1978, 328, #654; Btr. 1988, 32).

(2) A. Ember (1930, #3.b.49) surmised Eg. bık “to work” to have primarily denoted “to kneel down to work”, being related to Bfr. brk “to kneel down”, Ar. bâraka “to kneel, sit down, apply oneself”, Hi & VIII “to apply oneself diligently to some work”. The denominative origin of the Sem. verbs (o common Sem. “birkat-’kneek”, cf. SED I, 36-7, #39), however, makes this far-fetched equation improbable, let alone that the same denominative derivation process cannot be “exported” also into Eg., since its word for “kneel” was mîsî, while no trace of “bık” “kneel” can be pointed out.

(3) The Russian linguists (SISAJa I, #128) explained Eg. bık “slave” from an original sense ""digger, navy (trencher)", which they identified with Sem. “birkat-’lake, cistern” [Btr. “b’r-k” “to dig”]. Semantically possible, since there are a number of typological parallels for “to work” — “to dig” in Afro-Asiatic9. There was, however, no Eg. *bık “to dig”.

(4) In my opinion, a cognatehip between Eg. bık [< *bîka] vs. CCh.: Glavda boga “arbeiten” & Glavda-Cena bîga ["baka < *b’k-] “arbeiten” [Wolff 1974-75, 205] should be also accounted for. Note that, according to the traditional conception of Eg. historical consonantism, Eg. 3 < AA "t was plausible (Edel 1955, 58, §131; Osing 1955, 78, §128.6)

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11 Voicing of intervocalic "‘k-" It remains subject to further research whether there can be any connection to Ar. (Yemeni) bîk II “to engage a workman”, bîyik “engaged as workman” [Piantoni 1990, 47].
II. Coptic (S) "go" to go"

Aside from two problematic late lexical survivals of Eg. bīk, which we cannot discuss here in detail, there is a supposed third one already mentioned by H. Sattin in the preceding section: this is Cpt. (S) "go", whose origin is equally enigmatic, since it has no hieroglyphic attestation.

What we can draw from the vocalization of its Cpt. infinitive in the first step as to the consonantal sequence of its interpretive Oeg. eymon is also not too much and helpful, since Cpt. C₂ can reflect four diverse types of Oeg. root patterns: (1) C₂C₃ < bīrād. Oeg. C₂C₃ [1]; (2) C₂C₃C₄; (3) C₂C₃C₄ < Oeg. C₂C₃ [2]; (4) C₂C₃C₄ < Oeg. C₂C₃ [3]. It means that—in principle—Cpt. (S) "go" can derive either from Oeg. *bīk, *bīk, *bīk or *bīk.

W. Vycichl (DELC 27), followed recently by C. Peust (2003, 349), considered the Coptic verb as a special "sammelort-Behandlung" of Eg. bīk "arbeitet", for which Peust believes to have found even an older trace in P. Westcar 12:14, cf. jīj jīj r (now jīj jīj r) jījīj "wobei 'macht': (d. h. gelost) du, kleines Mädchen", which then is compared to the German dialectal idiom "(nach einem Ort) machen" = "gehauten". There are, however, two fundamental problems with this reasoning. First, the idiom of the Eg. passage in question may well be explained by an elliptic *wēl (i.e., *jīj jīj r (now jīj r) wēl "where do you make your way"?), which, moreover, works out well with jīj (cf. jīj r "one Weg gehen nach...", Wb 1 247, 10), but cannot be the case with bīk, which is not at all a plausible equivalent to jīj. Secondly, the basic sense of bīk had nothing to do with "to make" in general, therefore the reference to the German idiom and the like is simply irrelevant.

12 (1) According to the Belegstellen to Wb 1 416, 1, GR bīk "Abgaben" occurs 4 times (!) without the final -k (Edfr. 1 232, 288, 488, Mariette: Dendera I 61a; it is not listed either in PL 304 or in Cauville 1997, 149). It is henceforth rather enigmatic how it relates to old bīk *bīrād. "Abgabe" (Wb 1 428) and whether it has eventually anything to do with P. Ch. *bīrī "to give" [JE 1991 76, cf. Nwm. 1977, 17, #57] or we are dealing with a chance similarity (as it now seems to be the case in all likelihood). (2) The other derivative of our root is Eg. bīkīt "Steuer der Ägypter, Abgaben, Tribut der fremden Völker" (MK, Wb 1 428-9), which—in L. Reinisch's view—was borrowed Nub. bīkt "Lieferung von Sklaven, wozu die Nubiern vom Jahre 20 der Habschat an gewöhnlich wurden" (Reinisch 1873, 8, fn. 2; 1879, 17). Recently, A. Zaborski (1986, 403, #11) extended this cultural loan also to Ar. bābīt "mutual obligation of the exchange of goods by two states" (Zaborski the term used for the Arabic-Nubian treaty of 652 AD, not in Chs. Ar., Zaborski, p.c. on 15 Nov. 2004, cf. also Türk 1977, 165-6) with an *etymologien pre-Arabic* meaning "tribute", rejecting the view of modern historiography explaining it from O. C. bābīt & L. pactum (perhaps Eg. bīkīt > Nub. bākt > Ar. bābīt). The older view on a Greco-Latin origin, however, still holds its positions.

13 E.g. (SABF) "eun bānūm, töpfern" < Oeg. kī (KHW 71); (SABF) "eun lauten, gehen, fliehen, verlassen" < pd, hardly "pd as in KHW 154; (SABF) "eun "gelangen, erreichen, vollenden" < Oeg. ph (KHW 157); (SABF) "eun "wachsen, sprießen" < Oeg. rd (KHW 168); (SABF) "eun "schären, scharf sein" < C₂C₄C₃ < IIa IIa inf. Oeg. C₂C₃ [1]; (3) C₂C₃C₄ < Oeg. C₂C₃ [2]; (4) C₂C₃C₄ < Oeg. C₂C₃ [3]. It means that—in principle—Cpt. (S) "go" can derive either from Oeg. *bīk, *bīk, *bīk or *bīk.
For me, however, most tempting appears the etymology proposed by W. Vycichl (1964, 228) in an earlier period of his research. This is Ar. (Yemeni dial. at Tihama) bāk (pf.), yibāk (impf.) “andäre” [Rossi 1939, 192] = bāk (pf.), yibāk (impf.) “to go” [Pimenta 1990, 44] = (Yemeni Ar.) bākā; abūk “ich geh’”, būkā = būk “lauf’l” [Behnstedt 1993, 35], which has no Sem. background (cf. DRS 51). Strangely, I have so far failed to find any further semantically fitting cognate within the whole Afro-Asiatic phylum, which indicates a probable secondary meaning of the Yemeni Ar. vs. Coptic isogloss. Vycichl explained the meaning “to go” from the basic sense “to want”, cf. AA *b-(w)-k “to want” [G Tup] [attested in Bquer and Chadik], although he emphasized his strong reservations (Vycichl: “… doch scheint mir diese Ableitung für das nicht-arabische Gebiet etwas an den Haaren herbeigezogen”). Nevertheless, this tempting idea can be accepted in principle, since there are convincing parallels for the semantic shift “to want” → “to go”.

If this hypothesis proves correct, we would have to assume an

OEg. binodal root *bk (with an original medial *-w-) which usually disappeared in hieroglyphic Eg.25, which, coming from the deep layers of the Volksprache, first manifested itself only in Coptic. Thus, it may well turn out that Cpt. (S) has was unrelated to OEg. bāk “diensbar sein/machen”.

III. Eg. kāt “Arbeit, Werk” (OK, Wb V 98-101)

It seems to be an ancient nominal root in Egyptian. The underlying verbal root (if any) cannot be pointed out on Eg. grounds. In this respect, W. Westendorf’s (1980, 99-101) attempt at has failed, I am afraid. He suggested an inner Egyptian derivation from *k(i) “heben, tragen”, which he surmises to be attested in Ptol. kāw (sot) “tragen, hochheben” (Wb V 103) = kāw (sot) “1. (tr.) to carry, support, raise (the sky), hold up (offering gifts), wear (a crown), 2. (intr.) to be laden” (Edfu, PL 1080-1), which was, however, clearly a product of a reverse process, namely a late denominative verb derived from OEg. kāt “work” (as rightly assumed already by P. Wilson too in PL Lc.: “The verb derives from the noun kāt…”), which is testified to also by the strange Asaitant -i inherited from the fem. ending of the noun kāt fossilized as part of the verbal root. Searching for further possible cognates of Eg. kāt, Westendorf did not hesitate to find links to a number of semantically most diverse Eg. lexemes, which seem to me, however, etymologically unrelated, namely (1) kāt “denken, beabsichtigen” (OK, Wb V 81), actually “geistige Arbeit” (1) according to Westendorf,26 (2) kā “Geist als Teil der menschlichen Persönlichkeit:

[The entry for … 4. alt. 5. être sur le point de, être décidé à, assuré de, devoir” [Latv 1973, 245, #96]. Or cf. the reverse semantic process in Eng. to be going to.

26 Cf., e.g., Eg. māt “to die” < AAs “matt, Eg. nk “to copulate” < *njk, cf. (S) Hū(e)u(h) vs. Sem. *njk.

Hardly so. Note that this verb was usually written alphabetically, not with a k-s
sign (D 28). Cf. instead MSA: jibbal kāw, impf. yikāw “to think” [Jns 1981, 138], cognate probably with Ar. kāw: pf. kāla “measurer” [BK II 949]. For the semantic connection see eg. (1) ECu: Burji mākkā: “to measure” [Sasse 1962, 139] vs. Afar mākkīt (med.) “to figure out, reason” [Hayward] | NOM: Beneatho māk: “to say, mean, think” [Wd 1990, 107], (2) or the well-known match of Eg. lāh (be)rechnen” (PT, Wb III 166) | Hlr. lāh qāl “...
sogenannter Ka, auch: Kraft, Eigenschaft” (PT, Wb V 86-89), whose 
Grundbedeutung was “Hebekraft” in Westendorf’s opinion, (3) *k* 
(attested only as hieroglyph) “Art Korh” (Wb V 83, 1) = “wickenwork 
basket with handle” (EG 1927, 510, no. V 35) = “Arbeitskorb 
(syntaktisches Ideogramm von k‘at ’Arbeit’) (Kaplyny in CDE 41, 1966, 
66, 87, n. 30) = “Trage(korb) (Westendorf: < *k* ‘jw-t’). Etc.

This question can be decided, in my view, only in the light of 
external etymologies of which most attractive seems (1) the relationship

assume. plan, devise, invent”, nd, “to be reckoned, be regarded as, count”, pl. 
“1. to compute, 2. think of, 3. plan, devise” [KJ 369] || Ar. hasaba means “compute”, busaha “to create, imagine” [BK I 1423].

Debatable. There have been proposed a few other convincing etymologies 
which vary according to the different aspects of the Eg. term k‘at. Thus, (1) if we 
take into account that “*der Ka ist Träger der Göttung, des Willens u. dgl*” (Wb 
V 87, 9), we may surmise an etymological connection with Eg. k‘at “denken, 
beabsichtigen” (OK, Wb). (2) A. Ember (1917, 90, #146) and J. Vergote (1945, 
#1.d.26) emphasized its protective nature (Ember: “protective genius, 
double”, Vergote: “Schutzgott”) and combined it with Ar. khišša “to keep any 
one safe, guard, protect (of God)”, khiššat: “safe-keeping, protection” 
[Ember] = khišša “to join, unite, unite the preserver of the god (so dit, p. ex., de 
Dios)” [BK II 919]. Note that Eg. 3 < AA *r* “to wash” is plausible. (3) C. T. 
Hodge (1966, 47) and N. Skinner (1992, 354, 1995, 24), in turn, suggested 
WCh: Hausa kärwaa “the soul or personality which is supposed to leave 
a sleeper, returning when he awakes” [BG 1934: 656] = “soul” [ABR 1961: 59] 
as a plausible cognate, whose native Chadic background has, however, still 
been proven (note that a foreign origin from Kanuri is possible). (4) Or perhaps 
related to LECu: Renéhá “self, human ego”, used only in phrases with darin “weak, lazy”, e.g. kal kärwaa “he is weak in his human ego”, i.e. “he is selfish” [PG 1999, 177].

Debatable. C. T. Hodge (1966, 52, #99, 1971, 42) associated the value k‘a 
of the sign with the Sura (WCh) prefix ka-” refers to wounding a reed or 
the like, such as baskets” and (on the basis of etymology) the initial k- of Ug. 
kqrst = kpr “a basket woven of palm-fiber covered with bitumen or pitch” 
[Millers, BASOR 173, 1964, 48; existence highly doubtful: not found in WUS; 
significantly reinterpreted in DUL 452-31, Syr. kipar “a pitched basket” 
[Hodge] = kipar “container for measuring, basket” (cf. Tn. kipar “big basket”) [Lsl. 1987, 276-7].

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... to Common Berber “a-kli, pl. *i-kli-an (indicating an ult. inf. etymology, perhaps *k*-lay “slow” [Zih. 1931-2, 3] || CCh: Ketaa *k* “duty, service” [GT contra Fhr. 1972, 19, #5.1], which may perhaps ultimately derive from a common AA *k*-ly “to serve, have duty” (or simil.) [GT]. Other solutions are either less convincing (2-4) or false 
(5). Thus, cf. (2) Ar. kll II 2. faire des efforts, agir avec zèle et 
emprisonnement dans qqqh.” [BK II 918] or (3) perhaps Ar. kala II 1 “être fatigué, las, et n’en pouvoir plus à force de ...” [BK II 918] in the 
preceding article, H. Satzinger has demonstrated the semantic shift “to 
get tired, exhaust oneself” → “to work”). (4) C. T. Hodge (1978 MS, 2, 
#24; 1981, 234; 1984, 371), in turn, put apparently the emphasis on the 
determinative of Eg. k‘at depicting a “man standing a basket” (EG 
1927, 436, A 9) when he assumed a connection to Akk. karu “sætzen, 
stellen, legen” [AIW 447] || LECu: Somai kàr-aya = karayayaa “is able to do” [ABR 1904, 148] || Ch. kàr- “to carry” [NOM 1977, 
24, #24] = “k-<“-to load” [NM 1966, 237], cf. perhaps also Ib. skor “to do” [Mbh. 1987, 104, 88]. Finally, (5) F. Behnkh (1928, 140, #58) 
identified Eg. k‘at with WCh: Hausa aki “ Arbeit” [Behnkh] = “deed, 
act” [ABR 1962-11], which is phonologically false.

IV. Cpt. (S) “work” “work

The etymology of the synonymous Cpt. (S) kwi, kwi, kwi, (AA) 
wi, (B) wi, wi, wi, (OF) wi, (OB) wi, etc. (f.) “Arbeit, 
Handwerk, Bert, Beschäftigung, Kunst(fertigkeit)” (KHW 50) = 
“craft, art, occupation” (CD 81) is also not void of dubiousness. It is well 
known that it derives via Dem. wpt “die Arbeit, Werk” (DG 88) = ipt (Vyelely) (mostly only “horn” brgl.) from OEg. wpw.t (or wpwt) “Botschaft, Meldung, Auftrag” (PT, Wb V 303-4) = “message, mission, 
task” (TD 60).

The correct reading, the underlying Eg. verbal root (if any), and the 
ultimate Afro-Asiatic etymology of Eg. wpw.t or wpwt are, however all 
doubtful. The most serious difficulty is represented by the contrast of the 
Coptic cpw- < *k*- vs. the supposed initial OEG. w-. Similarly, its nishe, Eg. 
wpwt (or wpwt.) “messenger, envoy”, as it is reflected in the 
cuneiform Amarna letters (14th cent. BC), seems to display the trace of 
- provided we assume a weakening process wpw- > w- “(which, however, 
would have still to be proven), cf. EA 151:20 wpw-ti (gen. sg.
In order to resolve this controversy, the authors elaborated diverse hypothetical shifts of phonetic phenomena. Thus, W. F. Albright (1946, 24, cf. also JEA 23, 1937, 196, n. 5) proposed OEg. *wāpiwāt → *wāpi(u)we → *jājape → Cpt. *jāpe, while OEg. *wāpūwātēy → *wāpūwātey → *jāpūwātey → *jāpūwātēy → NK *quipitā. J. Oving (NBA 70, 318, 532-533, n. 342), in turn, assumed OK *wāpūwātēy. "Botschaft" vs. *w(u)jāpūwātēy “Bote” → early (OK) dissim. of w...w into j...j, whereby the sg. of nomen agentis *jāpūwātēy < *wāpūwātēy, while its pl.: *jāpūwātēy Vw < *jāpūwātēy Vw (via metathesis). Note that Oving (NBA Ic.) mistakenly took EA 151:20 u-π-π-πi for pl. because of the -i, which is in fact the Akk. gen. ending in st. cntx. attached to the Eg. stem (ataddu pānīna ans munitu u-π-π-πi sarri). There is, however, also a third view on this question, which seems to be somewhat more convincing than the hazardous game with nowhere attested vowelized forms, in which one either believes or not, since they do not harmonize too well with the attested linguistic facts. It was W. Vyeichl (cf. DELC 65) who called the attention to the OK forms jwptj in which j- was written phonetically, while "en revanche, aucune graphie à w initial ne figure dans le Wörterbuch". Therefore, Vyeichl firmly sided with an OEg. eonym containing an initial j- (j): *jāyātā.

As noted by Vyeichl (above), the supposed initial w- of the supposed OEg. *wāpūwātēy does never appear alphabetically as complement in the Anlaut – contrary to Eg. wātj “to open”, in which the w- is well-attested, and whence the value w of the “horn” sign (F 13) has been derived. At the same time, in the Pyramid Texts, an Anlaut j- was sometimes phonetically complemented in the occurrences of jwptj “message” (N 709 + 33) and jwptj “messenger” (PT 920a:N & 1440c:M). This j- appears rarely also in Late Eg., cf. jwptj (lRL 10, 6)24. In addition, the

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24 I thank to H. Satzinger for drawing my attention to this place. Note the rare Dem. wptj occurs only once (according to DG 85) with alphabetic w-, which

Ptolemaic word jwptj “envoyos” (pl.) systematically appears with a complement j- in the Edfu texts (PL 225-6). Given this ambiguity, many standard lexicographical works side with (or, at least, refer to) the actual reading jwptj even if some of them list it under wp- due to some sort of convention26. In the light of these facts, it can be understood why we accept the bivalent value (wp or jwptj vs. wp- the “horns” sign, which was suggested already by Edel (AAG §144), W. Vyeichl (DELC 65), and C. Peust (1990, 139, §3.13.4). The same problem is present also in the double phonetic value of the N 11 sign depicting a crescent moon (wβ → jβ).

Now, when it comes to searching for the underlying OEg. verb, we find that we are facing similar ambiguities as with Eg. kl.t. Following his Wurzelzusammengesetzung (a far-fetched adherence to an inner Eg. deverbal origin of Eg. noma), J. Oising (NBA Ie., cf. esp. p. 532) tried to explain OEg. jwptj ultimately from OEg. wp- “to open” (!), which is both phonologically and semantically problematic. The fact that wp- “to open” is the only verbal root with this consonantal skeleton in OEg., does not make it obligatory to see an etymological connection between the two. First, if we assume the reading jwptj, there remains little basis for deriving it from wpj. Secondly, the basic sense of OEg. wp- was “trennen, öffnen” (OK, Wb 1 298), while the “mediatory” meaning “bestimmen, feststellen” of wpj, which is not even once attested in the OK (AWb I 332-3; cf. UKAPT VI 110-1) or the CT (DCT 91), occurs according to the Wb Belastetwörter in fact only four times (!) in texts later than the Second Intermediate Period28. Thirdly, it should be also pointed out that in the Old Kingdom and the Coffin Texts, the words jwptj and jwptj have no Z 9 determinative (“two sticks crossed”), which is so typical of Eg. wpj “to open” and its derivatives in all periods. This is also quite revealing. All these facts seem to indicate the unrelatedness of OEg. jwptj vs. wpj and the absence of the underlying verbal root in Eg.

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26 Thus, EG 1927, 454, F13: “perhaps rather iptj”; AAG §144: jwptj “Botschaft”; FD 66: wpj < older lwpj; KHW 50: jwptj; DELC 66: jwptj; GHBb 192; AWb I 334-5: jwptj (sol.) listed after wpj. (1)

28 Pap. Berl. 6619, rot 4; Urt IV 339; Edfu (Pehi Inschr. II 89); Kanopus 35, 22.
Marginal Notes on "Working" in Egyptian

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It seems that the inner Egy. evidence cannot yield us the clue to revealing the origin of our Eg. Cpt. synonym for "work" in this case either. Given this circumstance, the importance of external etymology again increases. Thus, (1) W. L. v. Leslau (1962, 45, §7) proposed to identify Egy. *jpm.w* with Ar. *wfy: waf III "to. remplir, accomplir" [BK II 1578].

Gezw wfy: *hawaffya* "to receive, grant, transmit, consign, hand over, deliver, transfer" [Lsl. 1965, 607] = fwy: *hawaya* [Lsl. 1962]. But the basic sense of the Sem. root (*s*) might have been different, cf. Syr. *spar* "to bring to an end, achieve" [Lsl.]. Ar. wfy 1. *s* "être abondant, complet et plus que suffisant" [BK]. (2) In my view (EDIE I 88), the inner Egy. circumstances considered above can only lead to the assumption that the correct etymology of *Oeg. jpm.w* must have been *jpm* "to send on an errand (or sim.). We know from a number of instances that Oeg. *jpm* was a palatalization of *l > j* (as e.g. in Eg. jpf < AA *l-h* "heart"). This is how also our root can be explained from the common Afro-Asiatic heritage, cf. WCh. *Angan-Sura leq = *láp ~ *láp "to send"* [GT 2004, 225]: esp. Angan go-lap "messenger" (go "person") [Orasdy 1914, 212] = *láp "message"*; ngr lap "messenger" [ALC 1978, 32-33, 44], Mapun lep "message" [Fj. 1991, 33], Muntere [láp "to send, 2. message", plhop "to give message", ngr lap "messenger" (ngu: "person")] [DKL 1997 MS, 145]. There are no convincing Semitic parallels as yet. It is to be answered by a competent Semitist whether Ar. *lafza* I. 4. éloigner, écart, repousser qm." [BK II 1009] = "to turn some back, away (from his purpose)" [Lane 2665] = "verteilen, hinweggehen, to drive away, sweep a thing away" [WKAS II 959-960] might be taken from a basic sense "to send away".

Abbreviations of languages


Abbreviations of author names


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BASOR = *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*.


CD = Chône d'Egypte.


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