

## Egyptian Loan Words in Septuaginta and the Papyri\*

Following in the tracks of O. Montevecchi's<sup>1</sup>, J. A. L. Lee's<sup>2</sup> and A. Passoni Dell'Acqua's<sup>3</sup> studies on Septuagint lexical problems as compared to the evidence offered by the papyri, I should like to approach some aspects of this field, in order to make a modest contribution from the point of view of bilingualism and languages in contact.

The importance of the text of the Septuagint in the history of the Greek language is based on its constituting not only an extensive corpus of translation Greek, but also an illuminating witness of the spoken language or koiné of Ptolemaic Alexandria<sup>4</sup>. The comparison to the papyri can confirm, or alternatively, leave open the doubt about the use of constructions in Egyptian Greek.

One aspect which can thereby be opened up is the influence on Septuagint Greek of the aulic terminology, as also that of the institutions in Ptolemaic times. This field has been extensively studied, as previously mentioned, by Passoni Dell'Acqua<sup>5</sup> and Montevecchi<sup>6</sup>. Thereafter, the popular use of the political and administrative hierarchies appears to have had an impact on the usage we find among the translators of the Old Testament.

Some examples of this usage of common terminology for administration in Ptolemaic and Roman times in the Septuagint, a circumstance proven by the papyri, can be, for example, the terms for responsible staff with the construction ὁ ἐπί + genitive. This expression can be found in the LXX, in *Gen.* 43, 16 τῷ ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ, "the butler". We find it in the papyri also in the hierarchy of the police forces: ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρήνης<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dal paganesimo al cristianesimo: aspetti dell'evoluzione della lingua greca nei papiri dell'Egitto*, *Aegyptus* 37 (1957) 41–59 (also in *Bibbia e papiri. Luce dai papiri sulla Bibbia greca*, Barcelona 1999, 69–95); *Quaedam de graecitate Psalmorum cum papyris comparata*, Proceedings of the IX International Congress of Papyrology, Oslo 1951, 293–310 (also in *Bibbia e papiri*, 97–120; *Continuità ed evoluzione della lingua greca nella Settanta e nei papiri*, Actes du X<sup>e</sup> Congrès International de Papyrologues, Varsovie, Cracovie 1961, Varsovie 1964, 39–49 (also in *Bibbia e papiri*, 121–133; *La lingua dei papiri e quella della versione dei LXX: due realtà che si illuminano a vicenda*, *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 1 (1996) 71–80.

<sup>2</sup> *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint version of the Pentateuch*, Chico 1983.

<sup>3</sup> *I LXX: punto d'arrivo e di partenza per diversi ambiti di ricerca*, *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 1 (1996) 17–31; *I Pentateuco dei LXX testimone di istituzioni di età tolemaica*, *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 4 (1999) 171–200; *Notazioni cromatiche dall'Egitto greco-romano. La versione dei LXX e i papiri*, *Aegyptus* 78 (1998) 77–115.

<sup>4</sup> J. Vergote, *Grec biblique*, in: L. Pirot, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Suppl. III, Paris 1938, 1320–1369. N. Fernández Marcos, *Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia*, Madrid 1998, 17–42; — *A vueltas con el léxico del griego de traducción*, in: Τῆς φιλῆς τάδε δώρα. *Miscelánea léxica en memoria de Conchita Serrano*, Madrid 1999, 81–89. A. Deissmann, *Hellenistic Greek with a Special Consideration of the Greek of the Bible*, in: S. E. Porter (ed.), *The Language of the New Testament, Classic Essays*, Sheffield 1991, 39–59; J. H. Moulton, *New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery*, in: S. E. Porter (ed.), *idem*, 60–97; M. Silva, *Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek*, in: S. E. Porter (ed.), *idem*, 205–226; M. Cimosà, *Guida allo Studio della Bibbia Greca (LXX)*, Roma 1995, 72–132.

Other studies on lexical matters: S. Daniel, *Recherches sur le Vocabulaire du culte dans la Septante*, Paris 1966; T. Muraoka (ed.), *LXX: Melbourne Symposium on Septuagint Lexicography* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 28), Atlanta 1990; H. Cadell, *Vocabulaire de l'irrigation: la Septante et les papyrus*, in: *Les problèmes institutionnels de l'eau en Égypte ancienne et dans l'Antiquité méditerranéenne*. Colloque AIDEA Vogüé, 1992, Cairo 1994, 103–117; M. Cimosà, *La preghiera nella Bibbia greca* (Studi sul vocabolario dei LXX), Roma 1992.

<sup>5</sup> 1999, 171–200.

<sup>6</sup> 1996, 71–80.

<sup>7</sup> P.Cair. Isid. 130; P.Cair. Zen. I 59073 (third cent. B.C.), P.Rev. 2, 41, 24, (259 B.C.) (W.Chr. 299).

We also have as an example the use of the term ἐπιστάτης τῶν ἔργων, in *Ex.* 1, 11, an expression which is very frequent in the papyri for different functionaries, mainly again the ones in charge of security: ἐπιστάτης τῶν φυλακῶν<sup>8</sup>. These kinds of examples can show how this translation reflected the language in use and updated the text of the *Vorlage* via the selfsame vocabulary.

The study of the spoken language through the confrontation of these two testimonies can provide a useful survey not only of the local Greek variants, but also of the impact of language contact in Egypt<sup>9</sup>. The Septuagint and the Ptolemaic papyri can make a suitable first stepping-stone in this inquiry. This is so, on account of their reflecting two different aspects of the spoken and popular language in the first period of the Greek occupation, taking into the equation the fact that the language of the Septuagint had been produced by bilingual and cultured people. Later papyri and literature such as the monastic texts provide a further, more advanced, stage of interference. The fact that a term appears in the Septuagint helps in the dating of the use of terms, as sometimes and for some of them, the evidence is very scarce and scattered throughout documentation from different periods. The Septuagint brings the loan back to the third century B.C. and may attest for the use in the spoken language.

Very few Egyptian terms have reached us through literary Greek<sup>10</sup>, and for sure, more of them were certainly used and never crystallized into the written language. The earlier loan words bridge the vocabulary of the typically Egyptian products and realities, which of course had no terms or equivalents in Greek.

In spite of its literary tendency, the Septuagint, being the product of a bilingual society, can be a testimony of this interference, when compared to the papyri of the Ptolemaic period. Nevertheless, the Septuagint presents us other problems, as it is a translation, and thus the interference is double. The bilingual translators in fact made the effort to translate the Old Testament into understandable Greek, and even the words concerning Jewish realities were more or less exactly rendered into Greek. Some of these realities required the creation of neologisms, semantic extensions or shifts in meaning, and the diffusion of the text of the Septuagint confirmed these new words or new uses in the Greek language<sup>11</sup>. This is of course a phenomenon of language interference, but produced by the fact that the text of the Septuagint is a translation and not the contact of languages in the same geographical area.

Such is the case of the word ἐπώμις, which renders the Hebrew *ephod*. The *ephod*, as a special piece of the attire of the Great Priest, is worn on the tunic and the cloak and is described in *Exodus* (28, 6–14 and 39, 2–7). The text is full of additions, which reflect the evolution of this garment in the postexilic period. It seems to be at first a band of gold-woven stuff, made of wool and linen and held by a belt. The shoulder straps were introduced later<sup>12</sup>.

The rendering of *ephod* as ἐπώμις tries to keep the relationship of the word with ‘shoulder’. The Greek term was probably chosen because of the phonetic similarity with *ephod* and for being from Classical times a piece of the women’s tunic analogous to it<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> BGU III 1004 (228 B.C.); 1006; VI 1242; P.Cair. Zen. III 59350 (244 B.C.); 59366; P.Enteux. 4, 8, (244 B.C.); 14, 2; P.Heid. VI 362 (266 B.C.).

<sup>9</sup> On this see: L. Th. Lefort, *Gréco-Copte*, in: M. Malinine (ed.), *Coptic Studies in Honour of W. E. Crum*, Boston 1950, 65–71; E. Oréal, *Contact Linguistique. Le cas du rapport entre le grec et le copte*, *Lalies* 19 (1999) 289–306; F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. I, Milano 1976, 46–48; G. Horrocks, *Greek. A History of the Language and its Speakers*, London 1997, 107–127.

<sup>10</sup> J. Vergote, *Bilinguisme et calques (translation loan words) en Égypte*, *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*, Napoli 1984, vol. III, 1385–1389; B. Hemmerdinger, *Noms communs grecs d’origine égyptienne*, *Glotta* 46 (1968) 247–254; A. G. MacGready, *Egyptian Words in the Greek Vocabulary*, *Glotta* 46 (1968) 238–247; R. H. Pierce, *Egyptian Loan Words in Ancient Greek*, *Symbolae Osloenses* 46 (1971) 96–107; J.-L. Fournet, *Les emprunts du grec à l’égyptien*, *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 84 (1989) fasc. 1, 55–80. S. Torallas Tovar, *El contacto de lenguas en Egipto: préstamos léxicos egipcios en griego*. *Memoria del Instituto de Filología*, Madrid 2002, 115–122 and *Lexical Interference in Greek in Byzantine and Early Islamic Egypt*, in: *Documentary Evidence and the History of Early Islamic Egypt*, Leiden (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup> Fernández Marcos, *Introducción* (n. 4), 34–38; H. S. Gehman, *The Hebraic Character of Septuagint Greek*, *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1951) 81–90 (also in R. A. Kraft [ed.], *Septuagint Lexicography* [Septuagint and Cognate Studies 1], Missoula 1975, 92–109); E. Tov, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings*, in: T. Muraoka (ed.), *LXX: Melbourne Symposium on Septuagint Lexicography* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 28), Atlanta 1990, 83–126; G. Dorival, *Dire en grec les choses juives. Quelques choix lexicaux du Pentateuque de la Septante*, *Revue des Études Grecs* 109 (1996) 527–547.

<sup>12</sup> R. De Vaux, *Les institutions de l’Ancien Testament*, Paris 1960, vol. II, 201–202.

<sup>13</sup> A. Le Boulluec and P. Sandevor, *La Bible d’Alexandrie: L’Exode*, Paris 1989, 251–252.

The word has only one occurrence in the papyri (P.Oxy. LIX 3998, 38, fourth cent. A.D.), as part of a list, and thus gives no description or any detail about the kind of item that was meant. It only appears in the diminutive, which in Appian (*Mith.* 115) has the meaning of the straps of a horse's harness. But the meaning of the word in the Septuagint passed on to texts like that of Philo's *De vita Mosis*<sup>14</sup> and thereafter easily found its way into Greek Literature.

Regarding the problem of language contact, we have chosen the lexical interference, although there are other elements of interest to be taken into account. The syntactic constructions reflected in Egyptian Greek, in the case of the Septuagint can be confused with the interference coming from the translated Hebrew<sup>15</sup>, given the similarities between the Egyptian and Hebrew languages. It is thus difficult to say what specific interference caused an expression to come about, for instance, the case of ἐν ρομφαίᾳ, "with the sword" (*Num.* 31, 8), using a local preposition with an instrumental usage, which is a common construction both in Egyptian and in Hebrew. This interference can be due to both influences.

The semantic domains in question are now the most popular, being the ones that designate everyday objects, clothes and similar realities, all of them domains which are the most susceptible to local variation. Names of coins, measures and the like can also appear as an interesting field of study, since they are irreplaceable in societies which are used to them.

In the latter field, that of measures, some words which appear in the Septuagint and the papyri seem to be Egyptian loan-words. The point here is to find an Egyptian origin as early as possible, in order to prove a continuity. This should trace a line of interference, not only to the Egyptian-Greek contact, but also to the interference caused in the process of translation, wherein the bilingualism of the translator combines with the influence of the surrounding stage of language.

Let us look at some terms belonging to this domain, so as to analyze the linguistic interference in each case.

One of them is κόρος, a dry measure, which appears in *Num.* 11, 32, translating the Hebrew term *homer*, and has a correspondence in the papyri<sup>16</sup>. This word can be compared to Coptic κωρ, and as it only appears in Egyptian contexts, it can be assumed that it is a loan-word<sup>17</sup>. A late variant of this word in Greek is κοῦρι<sup>18</sup>.

There are other words, like κάβος<sup>19</sup>, a measure for volume, a hapax in the Septuagint: *IV Kings* 6, 25. The papyri confirm this use<sup>20</sup>. It has been compared to Hebrew *qab*, which is in fact in the *Vorlage*. But there is an Ancient Egyptian word *kap*, in Coptic κλπ<sup>21</sup>, for a receptacle or measure for corn, and the word has a use in Coptic in documents<sup>22</sup>.

Γόμος is a load measure<sup>23</sup>, and can be applied to a camel load. In the Septuagint we find it in *Ex.* 23, 5; and it is attested by the papyri<sup>24</sup>. There is a term in Coptic, ρΗΜΕ<sup>25</sup>, apparently from an Egyptian origin, *hm.t*, meaning "freight, cargo, load"<sup>26</sup>. The term is, however, attested outside of Egypt in Palmyra<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *De vita Mosis* 110, 122, etc. See G. Mayer, *Index Philoneus*, Berlin, New York 1974, s. v.

<sup>15</sup> R. A. Martin, *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 3), Missoula 1974.

<sup>16</sup> SB 10301, 10302, 10303 (second cent. A.D.), PSI X 554, 14.

<sup>17</sup> J. Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, Cambridge 1976, 61; A. Alcock, *Coptic Terms for Containers and Measures*, *Enchoria* 23 (1996) 1–7: 2, considers it stems from a Semitic origin.

<sup>18</sup> P.Lond. I 113, 11 (a), p. 223; BGU XII 2177, 2179, all examples come from the sixth-seventh centuries.

<sup>19</sup> Hemmerdinger, *Noms* (n. 10), 247.

<sup>20</sup> SB X 10301b 3, 10302 1 and 10303, 3 (second cent. A.D.).

<sup>21</sup> Alcock, *Terms* (n. 17) 1996: 2; A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, Berlin 1982 (hereafter *WB*): V 25, 2–6: *kb*.

<sup>22</sup> P.Ryl. II 267, P.Ryl. II 355, British Museum, Catalog of Coptic Mss. n. 1135.

<sup>23</sup> On this measure, N. Y. Clauson, *A Customs House Registry from Roman Egypt (P.Wisconsin 16)*, *Aegyptus* 9 (1928) 240–280: 270–272; M. Merzagora, *La navigazione in Egitto nell'età Greco-Romana*, *Aegyptus* 10 (1929) 105–148: 138–139.

<sup>24</sup> P.Amh. II 138, 11 (fourth cent.); P.Mich. X 581, 5, P.Flor. III 369, 18, both from the second cent. A.D. (also in P.Lips. I 76, 4; P.Lond. I 113, 3, 10, and an inscription from Nubia: CIG 4980).

<sup>25</sup> Alcock, *Terms* (n. 17), 5.

<sup>26</sup> *WB* II 490; Černý, *Dict.* (n. 17), 282; W. Vycichl, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Copte*, Leuven 1983, 300.

<sup>27</sup> OGI 629, 87.

More common terms, like ἀρτάβα, which appears regularly in the papyri, have an Egyptian origin too. The Coptic word ⲢⲦⲐⲐ, ⲁⲦⲦⲐ, stems from the Egyptian demotic *rtb*, and this ultimately stems from the Persian. It appears in the Septuagint in *Is.* 5, 10; and twice in Daniel<sup>28</sup>.

The *hin*, in Greek ἴν (ἴνιον<sup>29</sup>) is an Egyptian measure of capacity, known from ancient times<sup>30</sup>, which appears in the Greek papyri from the third century B.C.<sup>31</sup>. In Coptic the term is ⲒⲐⲚ, probably to be put in connection with *hnw*<sup>32</sup>, a kind of vessel, although there is also a Hebrew term, *hin*. In the Septuagint, the term appears as εἴν<sup>33</sup>. In spite of the fact that the term *hin* already exists in Hebrew for a measure and appears in the *Vorlage* for the Septuagint passages mentioned, the Greek term belongs to an Egyptian context and it does not seem strange to the translator, who was probably already familiar with it.

The term οἰφί, Coptic ⲐⲐⲓⲦⲉ<sup>34</sup>, renders the Hebrew *efah* in the Septuagint<sup>35</sup>, perhaps as an homophonic translation. In the papyri, we find ἴφι<sup>36</sup>. The term stems from the Egyptian *ip.t*, participle form of *ip*, ‘to count’<sup>37</sup>. This case shows an early attestation in Greek of a term which in the papyri only appears rather late.

The domain of measures is one to be handled with great care, as the terms in question might have passed easily from one language to another through the way of commercial contact. But the fact that the word is used in a translation addressed to the people, means that these terms are in common use. The point here is to see the possibility of a testimony for linguistic interference in one of the semantic domains where the popular local tendencies can be most evident.

The domain of clothing, which is a very popular one, has been studied by Arie van der Kooij, who recently presented in a Symposium on Lexicography of the LXX in Leiden a study of the vocabulary of *Isaiah* 3, 17–23 in the light of the papyri, where he proves that the translator was undoubtedly influenced by the common vocabulary in use in Egypt, as shown by the papyri.

From this semantic domain I want to extrapolate the case of a word, λῶμα, “fringe or border of a robe or cloak or string”. It is attested only in the Septuagint<sup>38</sup>, and literature dependent on these passages, apart from one case of the diminutive in the *Anthologia Palatina* 11, 210 (Lucill). There is no satisfactory explanation for its etymology: in relation with the verb λέπω, “to cover”? or ide. \*wel, “to turn”, and thus cover?<sup>39</sup> or in connection with Greek εὐληρα, ἀύληρα<sup>40</sup>.

The Coptic λⲐⲐⲚ, from Egyptian *rwḏ* means exactly the same as λῶμα, both “edge” and “band or string”. Can we explain λῶμα as a derived noun in -μα from the Egyptian term?

Finally I would like to come to two well known Egyptian loan words, attested both in the Greek papyri and in the Septuagint.

The first one, βάρις<sup>41</sup>, used in one of its meanings for a kind of boat, stems from the Egyptian *br* or *bryw*, Coptic ⲃⲁⲓⲦⲉ, ⲃⲁⲓⲦⲓ. This word is attested in Greek as far back as Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 839) and Herodotus (II 41), who uses it for an “Egyptian boat”. It appears in very few papyri<sup>42</sup>. The Septuagint has

<sup>28</sup> Dan LXX Bel. 2, Dan TH Bel 3.

<sup>29</sup> Generally considered to be a diminutive (LSJ), but -ιον must be taken as a suffix to hellenize the Egyptian term, see Hemmerdinger, *Noms* (n. 10), 246; Fournet, *Les emprunts* (n. 10), 69.

<sup>30</sup> G. P. G. Sobhy, *An Eighteenth Dynasty Measure of Capacity*, JEA 10 (1924) 283–284.

<sup>31</sup> PSI IV 333, 6; P.Lond. II 402, II 14, P.Eleph. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Černy, *Dict.* (n. 17), 285; WB II 493, 6–13; Alcock, *Terms* (n. 17), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ex. 29, 40; Lev. 23, 13; and Num. 15, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Alcock, *Terms* (n. 17), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Lev. 5, 11 and Num. 15, 4.

<sup>36</sup> P.Cair. Masp. II 67308, 4; 67325, I 10, 14, 23 and so on; P.Lond. V 1687, 11 (Aphrodito A.D. 523); PSI IV 284.

<sup>37</sup> Černy, *Dict.* (n. 17), 121; Vycichl, *Dict.* (n. 26), 155a. For the etymology of the Greek term: MacGready, *Egyptian Words* (n. 10), 251; Pierce, *Egyptian Loan Words* (n. 10), 103; Fournet, *Les emprunts* (n. 10), 71.

<sup>38</sup> Ex. 28, 29; 28, 30; 36, 32; 36, 33; 36, 34; 36, 40.

<sup>39</sup> H. Frisk, *Kleine Schriften zur Indogermanistik und zur griechischen Wortkunde*, Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis 1966, 341.

<sup>40</sup> P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grecque*, Paris 1999, 654.

<sup>41</sup> Hemmerdinger, *Noms* (n. 10), 241; MacGready, *Egyptian Words* (n. 10), 249; Fournet, *Les emprunts* (n. 10), 57; F. Rodríguez Adrados, *Ambiente y léxico egipcio en Esquilo, Las Suplicantes: βάρις* (839, etc.), σινδονία (121), χάμψα (878), Ἴσι (848), *Eikasmos* 10 (1999) 47–55: 50. On this boat, Merzagora, *La navigazione* (n. 23), 127–128.

<sup>42</sup> P.Coll. Youtie I 7 (224 B.C.); P.Hib. I 100 (267/266 B.C.).

occurrences of this word in some places, of which the clearest is *Lament 2, 5*: κατεπόντισε τὰς βάρεις αὐτῆς, “he drowned her boats”.

The other term is βάλιον<sup>43</sup>, “palm branch”, from Egypt. *bʿly*<sup>44</sup>, Coptic βα, βαε, βαει, attested in a number of papyri as βάλις<sup>45</sup>. The term is a hapax in I *Macc.* 13, 37 in a cultic context.

In synthesis, my contention is that the papyri are the most direct source to understand linguistic interference in Egypt. However, the Septuagint, being an extensive testimony of Egyptian koiné, can provide a good point of comparison and a wealth of loan-word usages at an early stage. The precautions that need to be taken stem from the fact that the Septuagint has other interferences, caused by its being a translation, and precisely the *Vorlage* is in a language, Hebrew, which enjoys certain common features with Egyptian.

In a wider context, I believe that further useful analysis can be achieved in the field of languages in contact<sup>46</sup>. In a contemporary ambit, this has concentrated mainly on modern languages and the field work has been done in direct interviews with the speakers of those languages. In the instance of ancient languages, however, we need a new methodology, whereby the sources should be analyzed and their testimony assessed, against the backdrop of the circumstances in which they were produced and the level of language they may have ended up reflecting. A successful pursuit of this goal will ultimately enrich our own and many other fields of study.

<sup>43</sup> Hemmerdinger, *Noms* (n. 10), 245–246; MacGready, *Egyptian Words* (n. 10), 250; Fournet, *Les emprunts* (n. 10), 69.

<sup>44</sup> *WB* I 446, 9–10; Vycichl, *Dict.* (n. 26), 24.

<sup>45</sup> P.Oxy. IX 1211 (second cent. A.D.); BGU II 362 (A.D. 215); SB I 5637, 5 (A.D. 215); P.Lond. IV 1362 and 1378 (both eighth cent. A.D.).

<sup>46</sup> About this matter, the classical handbook is U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems*, New York 1953. Modern studies are S. G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact. Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, Berkeley 1988; E. H. Jahr (ed.), *Language Contact. Theoretical and Empirical Studies, Trends in Linguistics* (Studies and Monographs 60), Berlin 1992; S. G. Thomason, *Contact Languages. A Wider Perspective*, Georgetown 1996; *Kontaklinguistik = Contact linguistics = Linguistique de contact: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung*, herausgegeben von Hans Goebel et al., Berlin 1996–1997.