[new: PDF] Egyptian Language History

Paper Summary

SUMMARY PASSAGE 1

Section 1

From the late New Kingdom to Roman times, the monumental, ritual, and funerary spheres witnessed a continued cultivation or even revival of (elements of) older linguistic varieties (mostly from Middle Egyptian, but also from Old and even Late Egyptian). This phenomenon-described as 'Ã©gyptien de tradition' (or, roughly, 'Traditional Egyptian')-is embedded in textual practice, presents inherent features of hybridity, and is therefore not a historical stage of the language (see further below).13 The coexistence of 'Ã©gyptien de tradition' with contemporary written varieties (later Late Egyptian, Demotic) resulted in a situation of increasing written diglossia from the late New Kingdom and early Third Intermediate Period on.14 Based on typological criteria, finally, a higher-order grouping contrasts 'Earlier Egyptian' , comprising Old and Middle Egyptian, with 'Later Egyptian' , comprising Late Egyptian, Demotic and Coptic (see below).

SUMMARY PASSAGE 2

Elements Of A Cultural And Social History

By definition, written standards imply a distance from spoken language. The latter is elusive throughout Egyptian history. Reported discourse of people of lowly condition are voiced by the elite that had them inscribed; they purport to evoke, rather than transcribe, whatever spoken language may have been like.21 Epistolary genres have their own standards, displaying only occasional lapses into what may be actual vernacular forms of the language.22 At a much later time, the generally low number of Greek loanwords in most Roman Demotic is revealing, particularly when contrasted with their significantly higher number in the less 19 Winand 2016;Gundacker 2017Gundacker , 2010Allen 2004;and Peust 1999a: 34 (with references to previous observations beginning with Edgerton 1951).

Linguistic History: A Selective Presentation The Afroasiatic Background

On the last account, Egyptian could reflect an earlier, or, conversely, a more innovative, stage within Afroasiatic. Alternatively, Egyptian could also represent a separate development, in which case neither the Egyptian suffix conjugation nor the Afroasiatic prefix conjugation would project back to the proto-language, assuming there even ever was one. While the verbal isoglosses mentioned above make for a shared morphological inventory, the forms in individual branches of Afroasiatic can have a partly different functional profile or morphological status.

Nominal Morphology And Syntax

Ï©â²›‹ nhy n 'some'), as well as the fact that the definite article should be innovated first, similarly find abundant cross-linguistic parallels. Related to this development is also the rise of a possessive article, superseding the earlier suffixed expressions of possession, for example MEg pr=f 'his house' â†' LEg pÈy=f pr. In Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic, the earlier suffixed construction became increasingly restricted to the expression of inalienable possession (such as body parts), in another development that finds good cross-linguistic parallels.

Verbal Morphology

Earlier Egyptian Coptic 'he did' */Ëˆjarnˬf/ (?) (á»‰ₒr.n=f) â²=Ï¥-â²‰â²“â²£â²‰ inf (‹ á»‰ₒr=f sdÌ± m inf) 'he does' */. .

Functional Domains

During the course of Old and Middle Egyptian already, the inherently perfective sdÌ± m(w)-passive increasingly gave way to passives marked by .t(w), an aspectually neutral marker.73 Beginning in the later Middle Kingdom, np hÌ£ r sdÌ± m, initially restricted to progressive semantics, was gradually generalized to the whole domain of the relative present (see above). In Old and Middle Egyptian, the á»‰ₒrr=f presented a complex functional profile associating imperfective aspect with a lower assertive modality.74 In Late Egyptian, the form, now as á»‰.á»‰ₒr=f sdÌ± m, has specialized in the expression of adverbial focus and become unmarked for tense and aspect.75 With participles, the Old and Middle Egyptian aspect-based contrast between unmarked (/' perfective') á»‰ₒr(.t) and marked ('distributive' or 'imperfective') á»‰ₒrr(.t) gave way to an increasingly tense-based contrast between anterior and simultaneous relativizing constructions in Late Egyptian. The pseudoparticiple, which in earlier times could express a stative and also a perfect with some types of events, was restricted to the former value after the New Kingdom.

Some Further Changes

In situational predicate constructions as well as the verbal np hÌ£ r sdÌ± m that had developed from these, wn grammaticalized as a mandatory introduction of indefinite subjects in later Late Egyptian.86 With noun-phrase focusing constructions, the á»‰n/m-marked cleft constructions were lost after Late Egyptian; so-called 'pseudo-cleft' patterns were extended to wider functions, and eventually reanalysed structurally in Demotic and Coptic.87 While Earlier Egyptian had a rich variety of zero-subject constructions used with referents of low individuation,88 Later Egyptian lost these (compare, for example, earlier hÌ® pr.n Ã¸ 'it happened' with â²=â²¥-Ï£â²±â²¡â²‰, with an overt 3fsg subject). The verb-object (VO) order remained stable throughout history, as did, more generally, the head-dependent order (for example nouns before qualifying expressions). Overall, Coptic tended to display more flexible word order than earlier written forms of the language; one noticeable development was the increased use of right-dislocation.

Earlier And Later Egyptian

Based on broad typological criteria, Earlier Egyptian (Old and Middle Egyptian combined) is classically contrasted with Later Egyptian (Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic).91 The former is characterized by a preference for fusional morphology, verb-subject order, and asyndetic embedding of dependent clauses. The latter, by contrast, is characterized by a preference for more agglutinative morphology, subject-verb order, and morphologically overt subordination. Evidently, neither Earlier nor Later Egyptian are pure types.

Mechanisms And Factors Of Change

Illustrated, e.g., by the semantic evolution of the pseudoparticiple beginning in later Late Egyptian, by which the form retains its original stative/resultative functions (also found in Akkadian and Berber) while loosing its dynamic uses as a perfect (which had been an Egyptian innovation).