ARTÍCULO-RECENSIÓN

The Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian Volume Three

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Volume Three of the monumental Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian by Gábor Takács (EDE III) is itself colossal as it runs to just over one thousand pages and deals with all the words beginning with m. One problem that had to be faced in this volume was how to distinguish between words or roots beginning with m- and other derivatives with an m- prefix. Another problem was how to differentiate the many homographs of which there are several sets, the highest number being 27 (mr), followed by 21 (mn) and then 14 (mḥ), 12 (m3), 10 (mj) and 9 (mm, mt), etc.

It is to the author’s credit that he has taken on board a number of criticisms raised in respect of the first two volumes. For example, he has included all the bibliography from those two volumes in the bibliography of vol. III, making it easier to use. In addition, he has consulted several more dictionaries of Egyptian than before and has used more up-to-date lexical tools for Ugaritic, notably DUL. As in EDE II, there is a short introduction, which is followed by a list of abbreviations, and corrections to EDE II and additional bibliography are also given (pp. xxxi-xxxii). Then come the entries for words beginning with m-.

As in the two previous volumes, the author is punctilious in acknowledging any help or suggestions provided by other scholars.

EDE is significant not only for Egyptian etymological problems but also for the wider field of comparative Semitics. For example, T. shows (p. 453) that Ug. ḫwrt and Akk. āwatu are not related to Eg.


2. The two previous volumes are EDE I: Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian Volume One: A Phonological Introduction (HdO I/48/1; Leiden 1999) and EDE II: Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian Volume Two: b-, p-, j- (HdO I/48/2; Leiden 2001).


hwt, as is generally accepted. In the course of the book, he also makes suggestions for cognates to Ugaritic, Akkadian and other languages.

Some comments follow on individual entries in sequence. *m...*, ‘owl’ (pp. 1-3): to the range of options given there can be added Akk. meʿu(m), ‘a bird’ (CDA, 241). m33, ‘a tree’ (p. 36): another possible cognate is Akk. merru, ‘a plant’ used medicinally (CAD M/2, 26b), but this is very uncertain. m3hl.t denotes some kind of wood (p. 92); see perhaps Akk. mulūḫum and mulūʿum, ‘a type of wood’ (CDA, 216a; cf. AHw, 671b). m3sl.j is a piece of furniture made from wood (p. 106): T. refers to Akk. muruš, ‘bed’ (CAD M/2, 230) adding: ‘which, however, lacks the Akk. ending -u and seems to be a foreign form’ (p. 106). Instead, see Akk. mar(a)šu, ‘bed’ (CAD M/1, 296b). mmt, ‘a plant’ (p. 217), possibly edible, is not unlike Akk. memē/ītu, ‘a plant’ (CAD M/2, 18b) found only in a lexical list'. mnn.t, ‘part of a burial chamber’ (pp. 296-297), is probably not related to Akk. manantu, ‘a type of storage building’ (CAD M/1, 208a) found only in one lexical text. mnq.t, ‘vessel’ (pp. 329-330) has no clear etymology; it may correspond to Akk. maqqū, “libation (vessel)” from the verb naqū (CDA, 196b). mnd, ‘a measure for grain’ (p. 341) may have an inner-Egyptian etymology, but see also Akk. mundu, ‘a type of flour’ (CDA, 217) and Ug. ndg, ‘a type of flour’5, neither mentioned by T. mrt, ‘snake’ (pp. 397-399): see also, perhaps, Ug. nr, ‘snake’ (KTU 1.19 i 7, 12). mrt, ‘river bank’ (pp. 410-414) has the derivative mrv, ‘shore, etc.’ (p. 412): besides Bedawje mar, ‘side’ (cited p. 413), see perhaps Akk. amaru, ‘side wall’ and Akk. amartu, ‘partition wall’ (CDA, 47b). nr š, ‘red’ (pp. 444-445): see Akk. ruššā (m), ‘red’ (CDA, 307b) and Akk. rāššu(m), ‘redness’ (CDA, 308), which seem to be derived from Akk. raššu, ‘to become red’ (CDA, 300a)10. mhr, ‘suckling’ (pp. 465-466); add Ug. nr, ‘cub’ (DUL, 570). mhr, ‘bride-price’ (p. 468): add also Ug. mhr, ‘dowry’ (DUL, 536-537). *mh, ‘whip’ (p. 471): see also Aram. mh, ‘to strike’ (cited in another connection on p. 518). mšj, ‘kind of rowing boat’ (p. 521): see perhaps Akk. mšštum (‘boat) moving upstream’ (CDA, 190), which would need to be rowed. mšš > mšš is a verb meaning to prepare a drug (pp. 541-543): here it could have been mentioned that Ug. msšs (cited p. 342 under NB1) is specifically a verb for the preparation of drugs, in this case, a medicine for horses (KTU 1.85:3) just as Eg. msšš also refers to veterinary preparations. mššt and mšš, ‘a container’ (pp. 572-574); see also Akk. mušštum, ‘a vessel’ (CDA, 222b, from šiābu). mšš > msq, ‘animal skin’ (pp. 584-586): besides Ug. mšk, ‘skin’ and Akk. maškaru, ‘waterskin’ cited by T., see Akk. maškaru (Bab maššaru) ‘(inflatable) animal skin’ (CDA, 202b). mšš, ‘leather coverings’ (p. 613) is one of the meanings of this difficult word, which seems to be connected with chariots or carts. I suggest that it may correspond to Ug. mššš, ‘horse-blanket’, which in turn has been compared with Akk. sallatum, ‘a heavy cloth (for chariots)’ (CDA, 351b) or ‘a cloth used in chariot equipment (CAD S/1, 125a)11. mšš, ‘itch, alopecia’ (p. 637): T. refers to Akk. maššu, ‘eine juckende Hautkrankheit’ (AHw, 630). In fact, this is derived from Akk. maššatu, ‘to itch’ (CDA, 201b, which is not mentioned by him. mrmq, ‘to sleep’ (pp. 645-646): the reference to Akk. mrmq seems apposite since it means ‘to weary, tire; wearied’ (CDA, 238a)12. *mrd or *mrq (p. 652) may mean ‘javelin’ or the like, in which case see Akk. makađdu, makkađdu, maqqaddu,

7. Ug. mm - cited by T. on p. 217 and elsewhere - is not a plant but may mean ‘winter’ or the like in the expression zt mm, ‘winter olive’, as opposed to zt īrmp, ‘autumnal olive’ (see DUL, 559).
10. However, for a derivation from Akk. raššu, ‘to glow’, see CAD R, 191.
12. Which is preferable to the meanings ‘to do slowly, delay’ (CAD M/2, 214a). Note that T. has ‘to be slowly’.
manqudu, ‘a wooden stick or spatula’ (CDA, 191). Otherwise, if it means ‘vessel, jar’, like Dem. mge.t (as mentioned by T.), then perhaps it may correspond to Akk. mak dú, ‘a wooden bucket’ (CDA, 191b). mkr, ‘kind of boat’ (p. 666): a closer equivalent than Akk. magil lu, magil u, ‘a type of boat’13 is Akk. mak ar-ru, ‘a type of boat’ (CDA, 191b), although it is a loanword from Sumerian. mgl, ‘to bake’ (pp. 678-680): to the cognates given there add, perhaps, Akk. kúru/m, ‘kiln, furnace’ (CDA, 169a). mgs, ‘crate, basket’ (pp. 682-683) is remarkably similar to Akk. gis ap-pu, ‘a basket with a wooden handle’ (CAD G, 98a), although it is a Sum. loanword. mtr ṭ/ mtr ṭh, perhaps denoting a sieve or a vessel of some kind (pp. 742-745), is possibly related to Akk. ter hu, tir hu, ‘a vessel’ (CAD T, 425a) or to Mari Akk. tar hu, ‘a container’ (CAD T, 230a). mbtr may be related to Late Eg. jpt, ‘war chariot’ and jpr, ‘chariot’ (p. 756) and if so, may correspond to Akk. šappartu, ‘part of the chariot’ (Mari: CDA, 358a; CAD Š/1, 477b) and/or Akk. šap ru, ‘wooden part of a wagon’ (CAD Š/1, 480), neither mentioned by T. md 3, ‘reins’ (pp. 770-772) is connected to Ug. m ḏl, ‘reins’, as recognised independently by both T. (p. 771) and myself.14 mdn, ‘to be at rest’ (pp. 784-785): to the Semitic cognates add Ug. mtn, ‘to wait’ (DUL, 599). md 3.t, ‘chisel’ (pp. 825-830): in spite of the difference in gender, see Akk. maq gārum, mag gārum, ‘chisel’ (CDA, 196b), probably from Akk. naq āru, ‘to carve, etc.’. ‘beer jug’ (pp. 834-835): probably the same as Akk. mugi (l) lu, ‘(a container)’ (CDA, 215a) or ‘a basket’ (CAD M/2, 170a). mdn ṭ, ‘a weapon’ (pp. 856-857)15. T. was correct to be cautious about comparing this word with Ug. mdr ġl, since it probably means ‘(military) assistant’ or the like, based on Hur. ma zeri, ‘assistance’, ‘help’.16

There are about 690 entries of which more than 50 are loanwords, mostly from Semitic, many previously identified.17 They are listed here with simplified meanings: mw’d, ‘council’ (p. 204); mn m’ina (p. 296); mnr ṭ, ‘nest’ (p. 299); mnh ṭ, ‘gift’ (p. 306); mnh ṭ, ‘exiled’ (p. 341); mnd ṭ, ‘tribute’ (p. 343); mnr, ‘earlier’ (p. 358); mwr, ‘timber’ (p. 359); mjr, ‘fear’ (p. 416); mrg, ‘groom’ (p. 416); mṛ ṭ, ‘vessel’ (p. 419); mmn, ‘heights’ (p. 423); mrr, ‘cake’ (p. 426); mṛ ṭ, ‘spear’ (p. 437); mṛ ḫ ṭ, ‘salt workers’ (p. 438); mḥnn, ‘wood’ (p. 439); mrs ṭ, ‘(wine-)must’ (p. 441); mṛ ṭ, ‘flight(?)’ (p. 445); mṛ ṭ, ‘gift’ (p. 446); mṛ ṭ, ‘chariot’ (p. 447)18; mṛ ṭ, ‘chin’ (p. 447); mhr ṭ, ‘officer’ (p. 466); mhr, ‘bride money’ (p. 468); mḥ ṭ, ‘praise’ (p. 468); mḥsb, ‘ornament’ (p. 492); mḥnm, ‘encampment’ (p. 494); mḥdr ṭ, ‘pond’ (p. 495); mhr, ‘price’ (p. 516); mḥrr ṭ, ‘bag’ (p. 516); mḥt, ‘whip(?)’ (p. 518); msktw, ‘bracelet(?)’ (p. 587); mš ṭ, ‘trap’ (p. 592); mš ṭ, ‘watering-place’ (p. 612); mšhr, ‘item of furniture’ (p. 633)19; mš ṭ, ‘officer’ (p. 635); mš ṭ, ‘dwelling-place’ (p. 637); mš ṭ, ‘shaft (of wagon)’ (p. 642); mš ṭ, ‘comb’ (p. 642); mṣ ṭ, ‘oven’ (p. 644); mṣ ṭ, ‘staff’ (p. 647); mṛ ṭ, ‘vessel’ (p. 648); mṛ ṭ, ‘hoe’ (p. 649); mqq, ‘moist soil’ (p. 651); mk ṭ, ‘fish-net’ (p. 665); mk ṭ, ‘merchant’ (p. 666); mkr, ‘tower’ (p. 673); mš ṭ, ‘garment’ (p. 674); mṛ ṭ, ‘cave’ (p. 680); mḥrr, ‘battlefield’ (p. 726); mṭ ṭ, ‘whip lash, bridle’ (p. 746); mṭk, ‘mixed drink’ (p. 767); mṭ ṭ, ‘part of wagon(?)’ (p. 770); mḍ ṭ, ‘wine measure’ (p. 790); mḍ ṭ, ‘bride money’ (p. 857) and mḍ ṭ, mnd ṭ, ‘vessel’ (p. 868).

17. See especially J. E. Hoch, Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Princeton 1994). Not all of Hoch’s loanwords have been accepted.
18. Note also the occurrence in Ugaritian Akkadian of mark ab tu, ‘chariot’ (CAD M/1, 282b), mentioned by Hoch, Semitic Words, §189.
19. The meaning and etymology of mšr (pp. 633-634) remain uncertain, but it seems to be a loanword.
20. Besides the Semitic cognates mentioned by Hoch, Semitic Words, 167 (cited by T. on p. 649), see perhaps Akk. nar ba qu, ‘hoe’ (CDA, 241b), although this would require metathesis.

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Words mentioned that do not exist in Ugaritic include the following: *amd* may mean ‘always’ but certainly not ‘vernichten’ (p. 710); *kikl* (p. 340) is not a noun but occurs as two separate words: *kl klhm*, ‘all their gear’ (KTU 2.38:21; similarly in KTU 5.3:10); *mnś*, ‘Melker’ (p. 793) does not occur: cf. perhaps *Ug. mss*, ‘suckling’. Note also that *Ug. mrt* does not mean ‘to wet’ (p. 106 under 4) but ‘(wine) must’ (as on p. 442); *Ug. mn* does not mean ‘string’ (p. 282); *Ug. mh* (p. 498) is not an interjection but means ‘brains’; *Ug. hw-t*, ‘animal’ (p. 656) means ‘land, country’ (DUL, 378). *Ug. jll* does not mean ‘to fall’ (p. 712) but is a denominative verb from *tl*, ‘dew’ meaning ‘to drop dew’. Akk. *murrû* does not mean ‘hineinstecken’ (p. 415) but either ‘to be silent’ (CDA, 219a) or ‘to prune’ (CDA, 25a)22. Also, the word *murguo* (p. 79) is Sumerian, not Akkadian and the form cited as *enṣēṣēru* should be *eṣenṣēru* (also *eṣemṣēru*), ‘backbone’. There are a few infelicities which occur quite frequently, such as ‘eventually’ for ‘possible/possibly’, ‘hypothetical’ for ‘hypothetical’, ‘irreal’ for ‘unreal’ or ‘unlikely’ and ‘semantic’ for ‘semantic’. Note also, henceforth for ‘consequently’ (p. 573), ‘pretending’ for ‘claiming’ (p. 429) and ‘received’ for ‘accepted’ (p. 457, etc.).


In addition, the comment *im*MER (misquoted as *im*MER)’ (p. 479) is clearly a slip as is the conclusion: ‘Most likely seems #3’ (p. 792), since there this solution is actually labelled ‘Absurd’. Another mistake is ‘L. Kogan 1995’ for ‘J. Tropper 1995’ (pp. 436, 474, etc.), which is correctly cited on p. 475, although it is not in the bibliography. The full reference is: J. Tropper, “Akkadisch *nuḫḫtu* und die Repräsentation des Phonems /h/ im Akkadischen”, ZA 85, 1995, 58-66. Note that in the bibliography, “An Egyptian Split Infinitive and the Origin of the Coptic Conjunctive Tense”, JEA 14, 1928, 89-96, is credited to me, even though I had not even been born then. On the other hand, while my third study of final -m in Ugaritic is listed, the two earlier studies are not23.

Finally, once the dictionary is complete, it would be interesting to see how much of the first volume on phonological rules would need to be changed in order to take into account all the exceptions encountered on the journey. Meanwhile, Volume Three provides more than enough material to keep us occupied until the next eagerly awaited instalment emerges from the workshop.