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How Egyptian is the Greek of Septuagint?: Some Lexical Notes

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Abstract

This article explores the linguistic background of the Septuagint translation into Greek of the Old Testament, produced in Alexandria in the third century BCE, and thus likely to present some Egyptian traits. The main purpose is to examine the vocabulary of Egyptian origin, i.e., terms adopted by the Greek language. Since this is not an easy task, a number of methodologies of analysis and comparison with other text corpora are also discussed.

Keywords

Septuagint – papyri – Egyptian loanwords – language interference – calques

The Greek Old Testament versions, especially the Septuagint (Old Greek), provide an invaluable corpus for linguistic analysis.¹ On the one hand this corpus represents the largest example of “translation Greek,”² presenting evidence

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- 1 I am very grateful to James Aitken for offering me the opportunity to participate in the present volume. His comments, as well as Marieke Dhont’s, David Nirenberg’s, and the anonymous readers’, have contributed many corrections and suggestions which have improved my first draft greatly. The remaining mistakes and shortcomings are my own.
 - 2 Another example of translation Greek is provided by the Greek versions of Egyptian texts, like the Prophecy of the Potter, or the myth of the Eye of the Sun, etc. In general, see Tait, “Egyptian Fiction”; Depauw (*Companion*, 98–99) provides references to specific texts, such as the Prophecy of the Potter or Nectanebo’s Dream.

of interference from the Hebrew language.³ But it is also an illuminating witness of the vernacular language or koine of Ptolemaic Alexandria,⁴ the place where the Pentateuch was translated, featuring examples of the interference of languages in contact with Greek in the East of the Mediterranean.⁵ Thus, it embodies an interesting example of double interference, from the Hebrew and Aramaic of the *Vorlage*, and from the Egyptian language, influencing the Greek of the Alexandrian translators.

Since the Septuagint was initially translated in Alexandria, it makes sense to explore its “Egyptian Greek” traits.⁶ In this paper I will discuss the lexicon of Septuagint that can be considered Egyptian or Greek-Egyptian, including terms that can be etymologically traced back to the Egyptian language, and terms that are etymologically Greek but that are mainly attested in sources connected to Egypt and can be assumed to belong to the variety of Greek spoken and written in Egypt in the Greco-Roman period. But first, I think it necessary to provide some background on the sources, the comparative methodology used to classify the lexicon, and a definition of “Egyptian Greek” within which the lexicon can be framed.

1 Egyptian Greek and the Greek of Alexandria

Egyptian Greek is,⁷ in principle, the geographical variety of the language spoken and written in Egypt between the Hellenistic period and the Arab conquest.

3 Although I do not want to discuss this question further in this paper, many of the alleged Semitisms of the language of Septuagint can also be explained with Egyptian in mind, since Hebrew and Egyptian share many linguistic traits. From those traits discussed by Harl (“Langue de Septante”) and Aitken (“Language of Septuagint”) the use of prepositions, the prepositional expressions using body parts, the use of the resumptive pronoun, etc. can be explained with Egyptian as a parallel. This would perhaps make these features more natural to a speaker of Greek in contact with Egyptian. See also Evans, “Nature of Septuagint Greek,” esp. 95–97.

4 Already widely discussed in Harl, “Langue de Septante”; Vattioni, “Storia del testo”; Fernández Marcos, *Introducción a versiones*, 17–30; Lee, *Greek of Pentateuch*; survey of research in Evans, “Nature of Septuagint Greek,” 97–99.

5 Overview in Aitken, “Septuagint and Egyptian”; See Carleton Paget, “Origins of Septuagint”; Aitken, “Language of Septuagint.”

6 On a survey of aspects see Pfeiffer, “Ägyptische Elemente.” He discusses personal and place names and an interesting selection of examples that are complementary to those I present here. Evans, “Nature of Septuagint Greek,” gives a thorough survey of research on the language and lexicography of Septuagint.

7 Bentein and Janse’s *Varieties of Post-Classical* is the latest volume with essays on different aspects of the Egyptian variety of Greek. I would like to highlight, from this volume, as

This description is itself complicated. It is impossible to give a uniform definition of Egyptian Greek, across the variational space, and across time. It is a multiform reality, including registers and dialectal levels, to which we have access only through incomplete and imperfect evidence across centuries.

The specific characteristics of the Greek of Egypt include some influence of the Egyptian language with which it was in contact. This influence can be traced in syntactic constructions which mirror Egyptian expressions, in some special use of prepositions, in calques and semantic shifts, and in direct lexical loans.⁸ Other characteristics of the Greek language attested in Egypt can be interpreted as internal evolutions of the Greek language (that is, as the product of a dialectalizing process). Often, linguistic variants found in the papyri are attested much later in vernacular Greek outside of Egypt. In these cases, we may choose to exclude them from our classification as typically Egyptian, since it may be that they are not attested elsewhere due to lack of documentation, or we may assume, as some do, that they are evidence of innovations in Egyptian Greek spreading to other areas.⁹

The first and natural source for Egyptian Greek is of course the immense wealth of documents preserved on papyrus,¹⁰ from the Hellenistic period to the last Greek documents produced in the first centuries of Arab occupation. These documents are a direct attestation of the language spoken and written by the inhabitants of the land of the Nile. These “linguistic resources of extraordinary richness”¹¹ come, however, with a few strings attached.¹² The administrative language is often very formulaic and thus is not a representation of the natural language. Moreover, some of these formulas of administrative Greek can reflect uses that originated outside of Egypt, and may be shared by all Greek speaking areas of the Eastern Roman Empire. Nevertheless, an attentive inspection of this large corpus in recent years has produced a good number of extremely interesting approaches to the phonetics,¹³ morphology,

relevant for the topic covered in this paper: Fendel, “Greek in Egypt”; Bentein and Janse, “Novel Questions”; Stolk, “Orthographic Variation”; Vierros, “Idiolect in Focus.”

8 See Torallas Tovar, “Greek in Egypt”; “Linguistic Identity.” Some of these coincide with the Semitic traits found in Septuagint.

9 See below the example of κῶλφος.

10 For the linguistic approach to the papyri and technical development, see Vierros and Henriksson, “Preprocessing Greek Papyri.”

11 Evans and Obbink, *Language of Papyri*, 2.

12 Some of the problems in dealing with the papyri have already been expressed by Bentein, “Greek Documentary Papyri.”

13 First approach in Mayser, *Grammatik*; first in depth, Gignac, “Pronunciation”; “Language”; *Grammar*. More recently, Horrocks, *Greek: History*; Dahlgren, “Towards a Definition.”

and syntax¹⁴ of the language of the papyri, as well as to the lexicon, which is perhaps the most “visible” face (after pronunciation) of interference, suggesting an Egyptian-Greek speaker and writer.

If we consider separately Alexandrian Greek, there is an additional challenge. Firstly, while for the Greek of Egypt we count on the abundant papyri found all along the river Nile in the desert flanks beyond the cultivated area, where organic material was protected from humidity, this is not the case for Alexandria. Unfortunately, Alexandria and the whole Delta do not present the necessary conditions for the papyri to survive, and the scarce material we have from there was issued in Alexandria but sent elsewhere, and exceptionally preserved from decay.

Secondly, there is some difficulty in defining what “Alexandrian Greek” means in the ancient authors: does it designate the language of the speakers of the city of Alexandria, or the Greek of the “Alexandrian authors”? This point is important when dealing with the evidence we have that refers to the “Alexandrians,” especially that of grammarians and lexicographers who described their language or refer to specific expressions used by them.

The earliest description of “Alexandrian Greek” is that of Demetrius Ixion from Adramyttium, a Homeric scholar from the school of Aristarchus of Samothrace. He produced a work entitled *περὶ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων διαλέκτου* (“On the language of the Alexandrians”) in the second century BCE. He is only mentioned by Athenaeus,¹⁵ and his work is unfortunately completely lost. Irenaeus Pacatus in the first century BCE wrote seven books on the dialect of Alexandria, arranged alphabetically. He characterized the language as originating in Attic, which suggests that he referred to the literary authors, rather than the spoken language.¹⁶ These two works would be enormously enlightening, if anything but their title survived. We hardly get any indirect reference or quotation from them, though there is also later material of the same kind, both grammatical and lexicographical.

14 The most in detail studies on syntax mainly focusing on the impact of Egyptian on Greek have been performed in the school of Helsinki: Vierros, *Bilingual Notaries*; Leiwo, “Substandard Greek”; “Imperatives.” See also Stolk, “Orthographic variation”; Fendel, “Greek in Egypt.” Di Bartolo’s *Studien zur griechischen Syntax* (non vidi) seems to be the most recent approach to the syntax of the papyri.

15 Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 9.393b. He is also attested in Suda, Δ 430; see Staesche, *De Demetrio Ixione*.

16 See Suda, EI 190, Π 29. See Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 470–71.

Jean-Luc Fournet¹⁷ has devoted a fascinating monograph to the Greek of Alexandria, with special attention to the lexicon. He collects a list of more than sixty “topolects” (pp. 19–63) considered typically Alexandrian by the sources. Some examples are *παγκαρπία* (20–21), literally “all-fruits,” a kind of pastry; *μενδήσιος* (21), a fish from the Delta, bearing a name connected to the Egyptian toponym Mendes; vessels like *βατάνιον* (24) “flat dish” (cf. *πατάνη*), *βαύκαλις* (25–26) “bottle,” and *καννιον* (28–29) “cup”; specimens of local flora, such as *κιβώριον* (33–34) “kind of Nymphaea, Egyptian bean,” *δαφνίτις* (32) “kind of bay”; and a musical instrument, the *φώτιγξ* (30–31) “Alexandrian flute.” In line with what I stated above, Fournet also remains skeptical about the value of this data, since it is not clear what is meant by “Alexandrian,” in sources that moreover cover a very long span of time.

Greek authors from Alexandria are not a reliable source for the Greek spoken in this city. As sources, they raise two fundamental questions: one about the utility or authenticity of literary sources for our inquiry,¹⁸ and the other about the need for comparison to obtain and confirm some reliable results in establishing which terms belong to the Egyptian variety of Greek. I have argued elsewhere that when the evidence is so scarce, we should not rush to reject potentially useful information.¹⁹ However, literary sources do present problems. Even texts produced in Egypt by Egyptian Greek speaking authors offer complexities that must be taken into consideration before proceeding to use them as sources. Let us take Philo of Alexandria as an example. He wrote in a very formal and erudite prose,²⁰ and avoided (at least in writing) variants typical of the (popular) Greek that he presumably heard on the streets of Alexandria.²¹ Philo was a monolingual speaker of Greek,²² a learned member of an upper class, who seems to have deliberately eschewed any interference

17 Fournet, *Alexandrie: communauté*. The first attempt was made already in 1808 by Sturz (*De dialecto*). See also the first modern approach by Fernández Marcos (“¿Rasgos dialectales?”).

18 For textual authenticity of literary texts, see Joseph, “Textual Authenticity.”

19 Example of the term *κάκις* in Strabo and the papyri in Torallas Tovar, “Reverse Case,” 106–7.

20 Theodoros Metochites (*Miscellanea* 17) dedicates a few lines to describe the language of the “Egyptians” as “rough” (*τραχύτερον*). He highlights characteristics of Alexandrian writers, among which he includes Philo, who use “obscure and difficult terms.” On Philo, moreover, he would say that his language is not agreeable to the ears. For the text and translation, and commentary, see Fournet, *Alexandrie: communauté*, 68–71.

21 Torallas Tovar, “Orfebre del insulto”

22 On the debate of Philo’s knowledge of Hebrew, see Sandmel, *Philo’s Place*, 13; “Philo’s Knowledge”; Rajak, “Philo’s Knowledge of Hebrew”; Weitzman (“Why Did Qumran,” 39) states that Hebrew was not known in general by Hellenistic Jews in Egypt.

from the Egyptian language or the popular register current in Alexandria in his times. As a commentator of the text of the Septuagint, he does reflect some influence of this text in his lexical use,²³ although he also is deeply influenced by philosophical terminology.²⁴

Septuagint Greek is an important part of the larger corpus of Egyptian Greek. As part of this corpus. It shares some features and traits with the Greek of the papyri, but it presents also its own idiosyncrasies as text. In the next section, I will deal with the specifics of Septuagint Greek and the problems and challenges it offers.

2 The Corpus

The corpus of translations into Greek (or books produced in Greek) of the Old Testament is not homogeneous. We have historical evidence for the production of some parts of the Septuagint; for others we have none. Perhaps the most famous is the translation of the Pentateuch produced in Alexandria in the third century BCE,²⁵ under the auspices of king Ptolemy II, if we can trust the Letter of Aristeas.²⁶ This historical context allows the assumption that the translation should reflect the koine of Alexandria at that time and with this knowledge in hand we may also assume that the papyri provide suitable *comparanda*.²⁷ We may try to define the characteristics of the language of Septuagint, with the caveat that for many of the linguistic phenomena, this text contains the only

23 Hanson (*Allegory and Event*, 94) compares the lexicon in Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews to propose a common lexical source for both in the Jews of Alexandria.

24 Philo's debt to Plato is undoubtedly the source for much of his philosophical vocabulary, but he exceeded him in creativity. Terms like ἀκαλλώπιστος "unadorned," κοσμοπολίτης "citizen of the world," ἀγαλματοφορέω "to carry an image," and the terminology of creation of the cosmos: θεοπλάστης "maker of gods," κοσμοπλάστης "creator of the cosmos," κοσμοποιός "maker of the cosmos," are entirely his creation. Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria*, 31–137; Leopold, "Philo's Vocabulary"; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 399–402; "Verba Philonica."

25 Rajak, *Translation and Survival*.

26 A linguistic assessment also points to a date earlier than the mid-second century BCE (Lee, *Lexical Study*, 3).

27 Only if we believe that the translators did not in fact come from Jerusalem, but were Greek speaking Jews from Alexandria, as their language use seems to prove. I will add myself to the claim that there needs to be an exhaustive lexical comparison of the papyri with LXX. There is already much work performed on this: Montevicchi, "Quaedam"; "Dal paganesimo"; "Continuità"; "Lingua dei papyri"; Lee, *Lexical Study*; Passoni Dell'Acqua, "I LXX: punto d'arrivo"; "Notazioni cromatiche"; "I Pentateuco dei LXX." and more bibliography referred to below. Lee ("Vocabulary of Septuagint") surveys the efforts and gives further bibliography.

example we have in Greek texts.²⁸ We find ourselves at a crossroad of language contact, vernacular language and literary heritage, in a language that has been also described as “eclectic” because of the variety of registers it contains.²⁹

Further, in the analysis of the text we have to consider that it was not an original production, but a translation, and as such, it was subjected to adaptations throughout its textual history. There is a balance in the practice of translation, no matter the language or the historical period, between the faithfulness to the language translated and respect for the target language. In the complexly multilingual space of the Mediterranean there was a debate already from antiquity about the two types of approach to the act of translation:³⁰ the “word by word” or the “meaning by meaning.” Between these two extremes, the first one being respect—sometimes reverential—for the *Vorlage*, and the second one the wish to produce a natural text in the target language, the modulation can be large.

Other books of the Greek Old Testament were translated in the time frame second—first BCE, some even later. Some were even produced originally in Greek and most probably in Alexandria,³¹ as unanimously assumed in scholarship. This is the case of the Wisdom of Solomon,³² or that of 3 Maccabees,³³ “le plus alexandrin de tous les livres dont se compose la Bible d’Alexandrie,” as Modrzejewski states.³⁴ The character of the language of these books is quite different from that of the LXX translation of the Pentateuch. The language has

28 Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon* marks with an asterisk those terms not attested previously to LXX, but warns (xiii) that the lack of documentation does not mean that these are neologisms in this text, these are just first attestations.

29 Aitken, “Language of Septuagint.”

30 On translation techniques in antiquity, see Brock, “Aspects of Translation,” among other authors in a large bibliography.

31 At least Wisdom and 3 Maccabees, but other are unlikely, and there is a large debate on their origin, e.g., Judith (written ca. 100 BC, preserved in Greek and Latin, although it was probably composed in Hebrew), or the Psalms of Solomon (probably produced in Hebrew, though the text is only preserved in Greek and Syriac, in Jerusalem in the 1st c. CE).

32 Grabbe, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 90; Hübner, *Weisheit Salomons*, 16; Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 25; Reese, *Hellenistic Influence*, 146–62; Blischke, *Eschatologie*, 46, 203–23; Larcher, *Études sur Livre*, 132–78.

33 Emmet (“Third Book,” 156–57) collected a list of terms with the purpose of placing the composition in Alexandria. See Modrzejewski, *Troisième livre*; Hadas, *Third and Fourth*; Johnson, *Historical Fictions*, 129–69, for a discussion on date and authorship. The bibliography is enormous. I refer to these publications for more details. On 2 Maccabees see most recently Domazakis, *Neologisms*.

34 Modrzejewski (“troisième livre”) claims the importance of knowing and using the papyrological documents in order to understand this text.

been described by Croy³⁵ as presenting lavish vocabulary and bombastic style, with neologisms, rare compound words (especially with alpha privative), and florid phrases.³⁶

Fortunately, we do have some autochthonous views on translation, albeit some two centuries later than the Alexandrian translation of the Pentateuch. Seeking to grant legitimacy to the translation of a text that he considered as sacred as the original, Philo of Alexandria offered his view of translation techniques:³⁷

καίτοι τίς οὐκ οἶδεν, ὅτι πάσα μὲν διάλεκτος, ἢ δ' Ἑλληνικὴ διαφερόντως, ὀνομάτων πλουτεῖ, καὶ ταῦτὸν ἐνθύμημα οἶόν τε μεταφράζοντα καὶ παραφράζοντα σχηματῖσαι πολλαχῶς, ἄλλοτε ἄλλας ἐφαρμόζοντα λέξεις; ὅπερ ἐπὶ ταύτης τῆς νομοθεσίας οὐ φασι συμβῆναι, συνενεχθῆναι δ' εἰς ταῦτὸν κύρια κυρίοις ὀνόμασι, τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ τοῖς Χαλδαϊκοῖς, ἑναρμοσθέντα εὖ μάλα τοῖς δηλουμένοις (39) πράγμασιν. ὃν γὰρ τρόπον, οἶμαι, ἐν γεωμετρίας καὶ διαλεκτικῆς τὰ σημαινόμενα ποικιλίαν ἐρμηνείας οὐκ ἀνέχεται, μένει δ' ἀμετάβλητος ἡ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τεθεῖσα, τὸν αὐτὸν ὡς ἔοικε τρόπον καὶ οὗτοι συντρέχοντα τοῖς πράγμασιν ὀνόματα ἐξεύρον, ἅπερ δὴ μόνα ἢ μάλιστα τρανώσειν (40) ἔμελλεν ἐμφαντικῶς τὰ δηλούμενα.

And yet, who does not know that all languages, especially Greek, are rich in words, and capable of shaping, by translating and paraphrasing, the same argument, adapting phrases at different moments? It is said that this did not happen with that (sc. translation) of the Law, but instead, that each Greek word was connected in each case to the adequate Chaldaic word, and adjusted very suitably to the topics explained. In the same way, I believe, as the statements in geometry and the philosophical method do not admit a variety of interpretations, but what has been established from the beginning remains unchanged, in such way as it seemed, these (sc. translators) found for each thing matching words, which would alone or most certainly explain distinctively the things revealed.

PHILO, *Mos.* 2, 38–40

One should notice that Philo is dealing here with the problem by denying it, claiming that the relationship of words between languages is not contingent or arbitrary, but rather as stable and universal as mathematical objects. Divine inspiration explains the deviations that did not satisfy some of Philo's

35 Croy, 3 *Maccabees*, xiii–xiv.

36 Which, by the way, remind much of word formation in Philo of Alexandria.

37 See Janowitz, "Rhetoric of Translation," 138–39; Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, 199–200.

contemporaries.³⁸ The dynamic of agreement and disagreement on the quality or fidelity of the translation brought about revisions and adjustments of the translations and eventually produced entirely new translations too. One of the most remarkably literal translations, a *verbum e verbo*, is that of Aquilas,³⁹ which reaches extremes of obscurity, forcing the syntax, using unusual terms, insisting in translating each and every word strictly respecting the word order, and often becoming unintelligible.

Probably due to the unsatisfactory result of enterprises like Aquilas' translation, which presumably generated some criticism, another pupil of Rabbi Akiva (Aquilas' teacher as well) would say: "He who translates literally is a falsifier, while he who adds anything (by way of paraphrase) is a blasphemer" (b. Qidd. 49a, t. Meg. 4.41). In 132 BCE the author of the Greek version of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) regrets in the preface that he has not been able to produce a perfectly literal translation (Sir, prol. 21–22):⁴⁰

οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑβραϊστί λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῆ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν. οὐ μόνον δὲ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ νόμος καὶ αἱ προφητεῖαι καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων οὐ μικρὰν ἔχει τὴν διαφορὰν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λεγόμενα.

For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have the same force when it is translated into another language; and not only these things, but also the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are expressed in their own language.

It is important to characterize the text of Septuagint, and the later perception of its translation as satisfactorily close to the Hebrew or not, to establish the level of artifice of the language, if understood as a strict translation. The dynamics that followed the production of the first translations, swinging between extreme literality and intelligible text, caused continuous modifications in their textual history. Part of these modifications may have been the

38 Overview in Fernández Marcos, *Introducción a versiones*, 119–79.

39 Aquilas wrote a Greek translation of the Old Testament at the beginning of the second century CE.

40 Where in contrast to Philo's idea, the author of the prologue claims that the translators cannot produce an accurate "isodynamic," with the meaning of synonymic, translation of the original. See Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, 196–99. On the prologue of Ben Sira there is plenty of published work. I refer to some recent works for more complete bibliographies: Aitken, "Literary Attainment"; Wright, "Translation Greek" (and the whole volume in which these two chapters are included); Wright, "Ἰσοδυναμέω"; Rochette, "Prologue du livre."

elimination of typically Egyptian Greek traits.⁴¹ We can expect that many linguistic variants that could be perceived as Egyptian Greek were curated and removed in the course of the scribal tradition. I will provide a few examples, but we must bear in mind that very little survives of the earliest translations.⁴² The earliest preserved remains are in the papyri, but very few of them date back to a period close to the supposed first translation attested by the Letter of Aristeas. Their fragmentary state, moreover, does not allow a deeper analysis.⁴³ For example, P.Ryl. III 458, from the second century BCE, has a variant for Deut 23:24, already noted as interesting by the editor:⁴⁴ ἐπέλθης, a reading unique to this papyrus, for εἰσέλθης in all remaining manuscripts. The first verb is attested in the Ptolemaic papyri⁴⁵ with the meaning “trespassing, making an illegal entrance.” One may wonder whether this was the original use, which was then “corrected” with a verb more widely used with this meaning in Koine Greek. The opposite can also be the case, i.e., that the scribe who copied the text inserted a verb from the administrative Greek familiar to him, instead of the verb used in the translated text.

One more example of the same phenomenon: some variant pronunciations in the Greek of Egypt resulting from language interference caused variant spellings.⁴⁶ Some of these variant spellings were strong and widespread enough in written sources to become standard. An example of this is the Greek term κόλπος “gulf or bosom,”⁴⁷ which in some papyri appears as κόλφος (P.Cair.Isid. 63.l.20, 297 CE; P.Mich. VIII 514.l.30, 3rd c.—note that in both cases the editor has offered a correction to the form with π).⁴⁸ The Kahanes⁴⁹ consider this form with φ typically Egyptian, with a change that “reflects the vagueness of boundaries between stops and aspirates, which is a typical feature of

41 See below on the elimination of Egyptian loanwords in the earliest commentaries. On this, see Torallas Tovar, “Escenas egipcias.”

42 Question already posed by Lee, *Lexical Study*, 3–4.

43 Apart from the Qumran fragments, we have P.Fouad 266; Aly, *Three Rolls*, and the Rylands papyrus mentioned here, both from the Ptolemaic period.

44 Roberts, *Catalogue*, 6.

45 For example, P.Fay. 12.12.

46 On phonetic interference, see Clarysse, “Egyptian Scribes”; Vierros, *Bilingual Notaries*; Dahlgren, “Towards Definition.” On variant spellings, see Torallas Tovar, “In Search,” 143–44.

47 Muraoka 405, s.v. κόλπος.

48 Interchange of voiceless and aspirated stops, Gignac, *Grammar*, 86–95. For a recent extremely useful tool to detect these kinds of phenomena, see Depauw and Stolk, “Linguistic Variation.” As a follow up to our example, search in trismegistos.org, under “Text Irregularities,” for “φ instead of π” to see the frequency of this exchange.

49 Kahane and Kahane, “Role of Papyri,” 208–9.

the Egyptian dialect within the Greek koine.” The variant κόλφος would later be exported from Egypt, perhaps as part of the Christian heritage that expanded throughout the Mediterranean in the first centuries.⁵⁰ The term appears in the Septuagint, several times in the Pentateuch (see Muraoka 405), but we do not have papyri earlier than the fourth century that could have attested the “Egyptian” spelling. A similar case is that of the Egyptian spelling for the word for “beer”: ζύτος instead of the general spelling ζύθος (Muraoka 315). The text of Isa 19:10, as has been transmitted, presents the general spelling ζύθος. However, as Walters⁵¹ points out, the corruption ζύγος in a manuscript, in which the *gamma* appears for a *tau*, a very common scribal mistake, may go back to an original spelling ζύτος, common in the Ptolemaic and Roman papyri.⁵²

The above description gives a clear picture of the heterogeneity of the language of the Septuagint and the unreliability of our sources. In what follows, and based on the above discussion, I will examine how the lexicon of the Septuagint can sometimes be Egyptian or Egyptianizing, both as a result of the production of the translation in Alexandria, and the influence of the language of the Pentateuchal translation on later translations.⁵³ The caveats expressed above about the reliability of the sources and the textual transmission stand always as a reminder of the fallibility of some of the identifications.

One of the avenues for the identification of Egyptianizing expressions is the search for calques or literal translations of constructions. Another is the identification of lexicon that can be connected or compared to other sources that can be traced back to Egypt.⁵⁴ It is important to note too that the constraints of the translation and the ideology about literalism and respect to the original text can have forced the use of certain terms instead of more common ones in the

50 See the characteristically Egyptian sepulchral formula εἰς κόρφον τοῦ Ἀβρααμ, “in Abraham’s bosom,” in 6th c. P.Oxy. xv1 1874.16. This spelling is only attested in Greek literature in *Historia Alexandri Magni* (recensio R, 1160). It is remarkable that the interchange of *lambda* and *rho* is typical of the Fayumic dialect.

51 Walters, *Text of Septuagint*, 113.

52 Mayser, *Grammatik*, 36 and 179. See also Gignac, *Grammar*, 87.

53 Lexicographical work has received much attention lately. See Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon*. A recent enterprise, the *Historical and Theological Lexicon of the Septuagint* will be groundbreaking in the assessment of the particular use of terminology in the Greek considered “biblical.” This project will also be impactful for the study of Egyptian Greek, since its purpose is to explore the connection of the Septuagint with, among other sources, the papyri, in the belief that the language of the translators was very close to the popular Koine Greek of Alexandria. For a comparison of LXX with epigraphy, see Aitken, *No Stone Unturned*, where the author contends that while the papyri have been widely exploited in biblical Greek studies, the Greek inscriptions have been neglected.

54 Torallas Tovar, “In Search.”

Greek language. The huge impact of the text of the Septuagint on later literature may also have produced lexical uses and semantic shifts⁵⁵ that are crucial for understanding the lexicon of LXX. I will present direct loans from Egyptian, etymologically Greek lexicon used specifically in Egypt, and the further use of Septuagintal terminology in Greek literature.

3 Direct Loans from Egyptian

One might expect that the Egyptian variant of Greek would present a large number of loan words from the Egyptian language as a result of contact throughout centuries. In fact, very few Egyptian terms have reached the Greek language,⁵⁶ although we may imagine that the interference was an important phenomenon in the spoken Greek in Egypt and generated many more Egyptian lexical uses which never crystallized into the written language. Over the course of several centuries, terms representing typically Egyptian products and experiences that had no terms or equivalents in Greek trickled into the Greek language. Some of them were used as literary ornament, to convey an Egyptianizing atmosphere to a text, while others were used practically, as terms completely integrated into the Greek language and adopted by the speakers and writers of the language.⁵⁷

Of the loanwords that did make it into some Greek surviving texts, most are Egyptian realities and products, which makes us think of trade as the stage for the first exchanges. I will provide some examples in the semantic field of measures, weights, and containers, which are typically connected to their use in the local markets. It is however not clear whether the translators used the measures they knew from their everyday life or made an effort to convey faithfully the terms provided in the Hebrew text with a similarly sounding term.⁵⁸ Perhaps we should imagine a combination of both.

55 Luján, "Semantic Change." See e.g., Maravela and Torallas Tovar, "ἑγγαστρίμυθος."

56 Most recent and systematic studies are Fournet, "Emprunts"; Torallas Tovar, "Egyptian Lexical Interference"; "Egyptian Loan words"; "Reverse Case." The use of etymologically Egyptian terms, however, is not exclusive of the language written and spoken in Egypt, but often and for a number of reasons was an attribute of Greek varieties in other parts of the Mediterranean, for example in terms used for typically Egyptian products, which were exported together with their names. As an example, see Torallas Tovar, "Reverse Case," 107–8, on the term *λίχι* in a variety of contexts.

57 For a discussion on the context of loan words, see Torallas Tovar, "Context of Loanwords"; and "Reverse Case."

58 Perhaps, as Rajak (*Translation and Survival*, 134), to keep the language "foreignizing," out of reluctance towards a complete hellenization. Carleton Paget, "Origins of Septuagint," 114.

The dry measure, *κόρος*, appears in Num 11:32, translating the Hebrew term *hr*. It seems to be an adaptation into Greek of the Hebrew term with an ending which incorporates it into the second declension. However, as Lee⁵⁹ already pointed out, the term appears also in the papyri, and not necessarily in papyri connected to Jewish communities.⁶⁰ This word can be compared to Coptic *κωρ*, which Černý⁶¹ considers that it derives from Aramaic.⁶¹

The word *κάβος* is a measure for volume, a hapax in the Septuagint: 4 Kgdms 6:25. The papyri confirm this use in the Greek language.⁶² It has been compared to Hebrew *qab*, which is in fact in the *Vorlage*.⁶³ But there is an Ancient Egyptian word *kap*, in Coptic *καπ*, for a receptacle or measure for corn, used in Coptic in documents.⁶⁴

The *hin*, in Greek ἴν (*ἴνιον*⁶⁵) is an Egyptian measure of capacity, known from ancient times,⁶⁶ which appears in the Greek papyri from the third century BCE.⁶⁷ In Coptic the term is *ζη*, probably to be put in connection with *hnw*,⁶⁸ a kind of vessel, although there is also a Hebrew term, *hin*. In the Septuagint, the term appears as εἴν.⁶⁹ 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.

Whatever the etymological origin of these measures, it seems that the translators of Septuagint used terms that were available to them in the Greek of their everyday life, and at the same time faithfully rendered the Hebrew terms with a similarly sounding word. We have to assume too that there was some

59 Lee, *Lexical Study*, 116.

60 PSI VI 554.14, from the Zenon archive, is the earliest attestation. Other are SB X 10301, 10302, 10303 (2nd c. CE). However, Alcock ("Coptic Terms," 2) considers it stems from a Semitic origin.

61 This word can be compared to Coptic *κωρ*. A late variant of this word in Greek is *κοῦρι*. P.Lond. I 113, 11 (a), p. 223; BGU XII 2177, 2179, all examples come from the sixth and seventh centuries.

62 SB X 10301b 3, 10302 1 and 10303, 3 (2nd c. CE). Hemmerdinger, "Noms communs," 247.

63 Chantraine 478 considers the Greek word, with Lewy (*Semitischen Fremdwörter*, 115), a Semitic loan.

64 P.Ryl. II 267, P.Ryl. II 355, BM, Coptic Mss. n. 1135.

65 Generally considered to be a diminutive (LSJ), but *-ιον* must be taken as a suffix to hellenize the Egyptian term; see Hemmerdinger, "Noms communs," 246; Fournet, "Emprunts," 69; Torallas Tovar, "Egyptian Lexical Interference."

66 Sobhy, "Eighteenth Dynasty."

67 PSI IV 333, 6; P.Lond. II 402, II 14, P.Eleph. 5, P.Dryton 38.14

68 Černý, 285; Wb II 493, 6–13; Alcock, "Coptic Terms," 5.

69 Muraoka 341 considers it Hebrew rendered undeclined in Greek. It appears in Exod 29:40; Lev 23:13; Num 15:4

kind of continuum in the vocabulary of trade in the Mediterranean,⁷⁰ and that we assign the origin of a specific measure or weight to the language that has attested the term for us earliest. Our interest here, however, is the translation strategies for Septuagint and the linguistic use at the time. They used terms that they had at hand and, fortunately for us, some of them are attested in the papyri.

I will continue with a special case. There is a term for a drinking vessel or measure, *κόνδου*, which appears in Gen 44:2⁷¹ (Muraoka 406), to refer to the silver cup that Joseph had his steward put in the sack of his youngest brother Benjamin as part of his plan to reveal his identity and teach his brothers a lesson:

44:2 καὶ τὸ κόνδου μου τὸ ἀργυροῦν ἐμβάλατε εἰς τὸν μάρσιππον τοῦ νεωτέρου.

And place my silver cup in the pouch of the youngest one.

It is the cup from which he drank and practiced divination:

44:5 ἐν ᾧ πίνει ὁ κύριός μου; αὐτὸς δὲ οἰωνισμῶ οἰωνίζεται ἐν αὐτῷ.

From which my master drinks. He also uses it for divination.

The term, also spelled *κόντσου* in the papyri (*SB I 1160.4–5*), stems from Egyptian *knḏw*,⁷² Coptic ΚΟΥΝΧΟΥ (*Crum 113a*).⁷³ This term was quite frequent in documents in the Ptolemaic period,⁷⁴ but then disappeared from the record. One may wonder whether the use of the term in the Septuagint is giving the text an Egyptianizing atmosphere. After all, Joseph, the diviner, works in the court of Pharaoh.

⁷⁰ See Walters, *Text of Septuagint*, 183.

⁷¹ And further in the same episode in Gen 44:5, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17. cf. Isa 51:17.

⁷² Černý 60, Vycichl 84. Chantraine 561–62 considers it a loan from an Eastern language. See also Lee, *Lexical Study*, 116.

⁷³ Mayer, *Grammatik*, 1:30; Vergote wonders if the word's ultimate origin is Persian (*Joseph en Égypte*, 175–76), based on Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 11.55. See also Torallas Tovar, "Reverse Case," 103.

⁷⁴ All Ptolemaic: κόνδου in P.Petr. II 32.23 (κύαθον κόνδου), P.Tebt. III.1 793, fr. 5 κόνδου χα(λκού), P.Dryton 38.13, P.Tebt III.1 797.22 sb 18 13160.13; with the form κόνδου in P.Worp 13 (3rd c. BCE) in ll. 4 and 37; the plural κόνδουα in P.Coll. Youtie I 7.8–9 (κόνδουα χαλκᾶ), P.Tebt. III.1 794.12, P.Worp 13.26–27.

A further example of Egyptian flavor conveyed by the use of an Egyptian word is the term ἄχρει or ἄχλι,⁷⁵ “reed-grass” in Gen 41:2.⁷⁶ The narrative context is the dream of the seven cows, grazing among the reeds by the Nile, an Egyptian setting without doubt. The situation in this case is more complicated. The original Hebrew text already contained the same Egyptian term, *ahu*, as a loanword (אָהוּ). The original was already conferring an Egyptian flavor to the text, which would be later picked up by the translators into Greek.⁷⁷

This literary device of using loanwords to confer a foreign ambiance appears in earlier Greek literature.⁷⁸ Egyptian loans are used to confer an Egyptianizing staging already in texts from the fifth century BCE, as can be seen in the example of the use of βάρις “Egyptian boat,” from Egyptian *byr*.⁷⁹ This usage is attested in Greek as early as Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 874: Αἰγυπτίαν γὰρ βάριν οὐχ ὑπερθορήϊ “you shall not escape the Egyptian barque”) and Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.41), both with a clear intention of lending their texts an Egyptian ambiance. Attestations of βάρις in some papyri confirm its use in Greek in the Ptolemaic period.⁸⁰ There are two unrelated meanings of the term βάρις in Greek, each of them with a different etymology (Chantraine 165), “barque” or “boat,” on the one hand,

75 Muraoka 109. The term seems to go back to Egyptian *zly*, plant, vegetation (Wb 1.18.8; Fournet, “Emprunts,” 69). See also Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte*, 59–66. Crum 25a has אָרַר, Černy 17 has אָרַר אָרַר, and claims it renders the original אָהוּ, which in fact also goes back to Egyptian (see Lambdin, “Egyptian Loan Words,” 146), so perhaps we already have the Egyptianizing atmosphere in the Hebrew text? The term is used for lamp-wick made of reed in a fourth century magical formulary (GEMF 57/PGM IV 1092). In this case, and at this late period, it is difficult to say whether this is influence of Septuagint or a term that is otherwise not attested in the Egyptian language at that point, since the instances in Coptic are all translations of the passages in which it appears in the Bible.

76 See also Sir 40:16 and Isa 19:7. Example also discussed by Pfeiffer, “Ägyptische Elemente,” 241–42.

77 Jerome, *Qu. hebr. Gen.*, on 41:2 considers it a corruption, since it is neither Greek nor Latin: “Bis in Genesi scriptum est *achi*, et neque Graecus sermo est neque Latinus. Sed et Hebraicus ipse corruptus est.” Later on, he finds out it is in fact Egyptian: *Ad Jes XIX 7* “Quum ab eruditibus quaerem, quid ἄχρει significaret, audivi ab Aegyptiis hoc nomine lingua eorum omne quod in pallide virens nascitur appellari.”

78 Torallas Tovar, “Reverse Case,” 100–101.

79 Hemmerdinger, “Noms communs,” 241; Vergote, “Bilinguisme et calques,” 1387; Fournet, “Emprunts,” 57; Nencioni, “Innovazioni africane,” 16–17; Rodríguez Adrados, “Ambiente y léxico,” 50; Merzagora, “Navigazione,” 127–28; Mayser, *Grammatik*, 1:27; Frisk 220; MacGready, “Egyptian Words,” 249; Conomis, “Concerning New Photius,” 177; Díez de Velasco and Molinero Polo, “Hellenoegyptiaca,” 82–83. Wb 1 465, 8–9; Coptic βααρρ (Crum 42a, Černy 25).

80 PHib. 1 100.13, P.Coll. Youtie 1 7.6 (mentioned above, since it also contains κόνδου). P.Iand. Zen. 36. i 4 presents the compound with the privative prefix in Greek ἄβαρις, for someone who does not have a boat, boatless. These are all Ptolemaic period.

stemming from Egyptian, and “tower” or “fortress,” apparently from Illyrian. For the Greek text of the Septuagint, Muraoka (113) does not have the meaning “boat,” but the second meaning “tower or fortress.” Looking at the instances in Septuagint, the situation is curious. In Lam 2:5 κατεπόντισεν πάσας τὰς βάρεις αὐτῆς, we can interpret the text as “he sank her boats (i.e., Israel’s),”⁸¹ based on the use of the verb καταποντίζω, as sinking a boat or a ship, in Ptolemaic papyri (e.g., P.Petr. II 40a.26–27). The NETS translation instead translates “he drowned her bastions,” in accordance with the meaning in the *Vorlage*. The Greek translator used the term βάρεις for גְּבֻרִים, “buildings,” “bastions,” and then used a verb that connects the term to the sinking of ships in the sea.

Another Egyptian term which made it into the Greek language is βάϊς “branch, palm leaf” (Muraoka 11),⁸² from Egyptian *bʿi*, palm fiber, in Coptic βαί.⁸³ The term is a hapax in 1 Macc 13:37 appearing in a cultic context.⁸⁴ In the papyri it also appears in a cultic context in P.Oxy. IX 1211.8, a list of articles for a sacrifice, and in BGU II 362 vii 13 (both second and early third centuries CE).⁸⁵

Finally, I would like to discuss the term λῶμα (Muraoka 437 marked with an asterisk), “hem,” “fringe,” “border of a robe,” which appears in Exodus (28:29, 30; 36:32, 33, 34, 40). It is attested only in the Septuagint, and widely in Greek lexicographers, possibly as an explanation to these passages in Exodus.⁸⁶ There is no satisfactory explanation for its etymology: in relation to the verb λέπω “to cover,” stemming from the Indoeuropean **wel* “to turn,” and thus “to cover,”⁸⁷ or in connection with Greek εὐληρα, ἀὐληρα.⁸⁸ All proposals are unconvincing (see Beekes s.v.). The Coptic term λουγ, stemming from Egyptian *rwḏ*, means exactly the same as λῶμα, both “edge” and “band or string.” I suggest that we can explain the Greek term as a derived noun in –μα from the Egyptian term.

81 The plural form βάρεις appears in 2 Chr 36:19. Both this and the passage from Lamentations refer to the destruction of Israel and may have mutual influence. The genitive βαρέων appears in Ps 44(45):8.

82 Walters, *Text of Septuagint*, 102.

83 Chantraine 158; Hemmerdinger, “Noms communs,” 245; Nencioni, “Innovazioni africane,” 22; Vergote, “Bilinguisme et calques,” 1387; Fournet, “Emprunts,” 69; Mayser, *Grammatik*, 1:28; MacGready, “Egyptian Words,” 250.

84 The New Testament has the term βαῖον (βαῖα τῶν φοινίκων) in John 12:13, but has instead κλάδος for the palm leaves in Matt 21:8; Lev 23:40 has κάλλυνθρον.

85 A list of items, SB XXVIII 17241, has less context. SB I 5637, 5 (215 CE); P.Lond. IV 1362 and 1378 (both 8th c. CE).

86 Photius, *Amphilochia* 165.31: τὸ κράσπεδον τοῦ ἱερέως τὸ λεγόμενον λῶμα, Hesychius, E 1394 ἔκθιβος· τὸ λῶμα τοῦ χιτῶνος, etc. Cf. one case of the diminutive in the *Anth. Pal.* II, 210.

87 Frisk, *Kleine Schriften*, 341.

88 Chantraine 654.

The presence of the word in the works of numerous lexicographers⁸⁹ indicates that it was not a known or familiar term and needed an explanation. The Greek translator of Exodus perhaps has borrowed this term from Egyptian for a specialized use in the description of the priestly garments.

From the examples of Egyptian loanwords in the Septuagint we can conclude that some are used as a match to the sound of the Hebrew term in the *Vorlage*. This applies mainly in the case of the words for measures and weights, which also belonged to the language of trade in the Mediterranean and could be shared terminology. The terms βαῖτον and λῶμα may have belonged to cultic terminology in Egyptian Greek, and thus appear in both the Septuagint and the New Testament. Other terms were perceived as foreign and Egyptian and used for conveying an Egyptianizing flavor to the text, like κόνδου and ἄχει. Perhaps the fact that these terms were avoided in parallel versions of the Pentateuch indicates that they were perceived as foreign: Aquila and Symmachus have ἐν τῷ ἔλει for ἐν τῷ ἄχει in LXX (Gen 41:2), Aquila has σκύφος and Symmachus has φιάλην for κόνδου in LXX (Gen 44:2). Even etymologically Greek terms are substituted by a non-Egyptianizing variant, like ἐνταφιασθήσ “embalmer” (Gen 50:2) by ἰατρός in Aquila, who also uses the verb ἀρωματίζω instead of LXX ἐνταφιάζω. It is only because the Septuagint gained prevalence over the other versions that Egyptianizing terms came to seem the standard, thereby requiring the lexicographers to provide explanations.⁹⁰

89 The work of the Greek lexicographers can be traced through the remains of a number of lexica, some rightly attributed to specific authors and periods, some just preserved as *adespota*. These types of texts suffered a very turbulent textual history, being subject to change and adaptation as they were copied and belabored. One of the earliest fully preserved is that of Hesychius of Alexandria (5th–6th c.): see Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 88–90. He composed a lexicon of obscure words based on the previous work by Diogenianus (2nd c. work, now lost). Hesychius’ *Lexicon* consists of poetic and dialectal words and some short sayings. It is also an extremely useful source for less attested languages, though with great problems of interpretation. While the most important lexicographer for this inquiry is Hesychius, ninth–tenth-century Suda, or the *Etymologica*, ninth-century compilations of much earlier materials, Stephen of Byzantium in the sixth century or Photius’ *Bibliotheca* and *Lexicon* in the ninth century, and Zonaras in the thirteenth century, offer equally interesting material, as well as the lexicographical sources included in the *Banquet of the Philosophers* by Athenaeus in the third century CE.

90 Philo and later commentaries also avoid Egyptianizing terms, on which see Torallas Tovar, “Escenas egipcias.” On lexicographers, see Torallas Tovar, “In search.”

4 Etymologically Greek Lexicon

While Egyptian loanwords are somehow easy to spot, identifying etymologically Greek words specifically used in Egypt, in comparison with other Greek speaking areas, is a greater challenge. These terms can be neologisms and they can be common Greek words, which however present a special and different semantic use. I have recently examined the lexicon of the Egyptian variety of Greek, in which I discussed the difficulties of an accurate identification.⁹¹ I argued that even when a Greek term is not attested elsewhere than in the papyri it remains risky to assume that it was not used outside of Egypt.

The use of specific terms related to the administration of Egypt, for example, has to be considered with great prudence. Some of these legal and administrative terms or semantic uses are only attested in the papyri, and it is therefore tempting to consider them typically Egyptian. But the lack of documents of the types we find in the papyri in other parts of the Roman Empire due to matters of material conservation needs to be kept in mind.

One of the semantic fields already explored within the study of the language of Septuagint is that of court and administrative terminology.⁹² Some examples of the usage of common terminology for administration in Ptolemaic and Roman times in the Septuagint are the expressions used to refer to responsible staff with the construction ἐπὶ + genitive.⁹³ This expression can be found in the Septuagint, in Gen 43:16 τῷ ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας “the overseer of the house, the butler,” comparable, for example, to the terms for the hierarchy of the police forces in the papyri: ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρήνης “the overseer of peace” (P.Cair.Isid. 130; P.Cair.Zen. I 59073 (3rd c. BCE), P.Rev. 2, 41, 24, (259 BCE)).⁹⁴

Three more terms connected to administration, ἐπιστράτηγος, ἐνεχούρασμα, and ἐντυχία, are transparent Greek terms, attested in the papyri and, interestingly, in the Septuagint and other sources connected to Egypt. An

91 Torallas Tovar, “In Search.”

92 Different contributions collected in Montevecchi, *Bibbia e papiri*; Lee, *Lexical Study*; Passoni dell’Acqua, “I LXX: punto d’arrivo”; “Notazioni cromatiche”; “I Pentateuco dei LXX”; Cadell, “Vocabulaire de l’irrigation”; Fernández Marcos, *Introducción a las versiones*, 17–42.

93 This can also be compared to an Egyptian similar construction, e.g., *hry-pr* “overseer of the house” (DG 324).

94 See Emmet, *Third Book*, 158: similar expressions are used to confirm this connection: P.Tebt. I 5 οἱ ἐπὶ τῶν προσόδων “the overseer of public revenue,” as in 3 Macc 6:30 (see also BGV XVIII.1 2746, among many examples), or οἱ ἐπὶ πραγμάτων τεταγμένοι “those appointed for official positions,” also in P.Tebt. I 5.248, and for example PSI XIV 1401, which is also attested in 3 Macc 7:1. The use in later Greek may prove that this was a more generalized use than limited to Egypt.

administrative term such as ἐπιστρατηγία, with the meaning “district under an ἐπιστράτηγος” is only attested in papyri and inscriptions (e.g., in BGU I 8.26, or P.Bingen 107.6), while ἐπιστράτηγος, the title for the rank in the administration, is also attested in LXX 1 Macc 15:38 (Muraoka 282), in Strabo 17.1.13.4 (his book on Egypt), in a description of the local Egyptian authorities, in Pseudo-Demetrius, *Formae epistolicae* 1.5, a work probably originating in Egypt,⁹⁵ and in a magical papyrus (PGM LXXVI.4).

The second term, ἐνεχύρασμα (Muraoka 237–38 with an asterisk) “pledge,” “thing pawned,” seems to be a synonym of the more frequently or more widely used ἐνεχυρασία. The term appears in LXX Exod 22:25 and Ezek 33:15 and also P.Med. I 27.ii 8 and P.Hamb. I 10.42 (both 2nd c. CE). It is no wonder that Philo of Alexandria would also reflect this use, perhaps Egyptian, in his works when commenting on the passage of the cloak as a pledge from Exodus (*Somn.* 1.92).⁹⁶

The third term, ἐντυχία, generally means “meeting,” “conversation,” or “intercourse” (LSJ and DGE, s.v., even in later Greek, see Sophocles, s.v. Trapp, s.v.). In the papyri it seems to have a specific meaning, that of “official petition or complaint” (e.g., BGU VIII 1767.3, 1st c. CE, or P.Köln V 234v, 5th c. CE, etc.). Again, the term appears in the Septuagint (Muraoka 242), 3 Macc 6:40: τὴν ἐντυχίαν ἐποίησαντο περὶ τῆς ἀπολύσεως αὐτῶν, “they made the petition concerning their release.”

Modrzejewski extensively discussed the term ἀποτυμπανισμός in 3 Macc 3:27, “crucifixion”(?),⁹⁷ a term to refer to one of the instruments of torture or execution. Through a detailed scrutiny of the Ptolemaic legal system he proves that this term is not the product of the literary or lexical creativity of the author of 3 Maccabees, but it conforms to the Ptolemaic legal system, and is probably a real local term.⁹⁸

Emmet had collected a number of words and expressions in 3 Maccabees comparable to those found in the papyri:⁹⁹ for example, γραφικοί κάλαμοι (3 Macc 4:20, Muraoka 136) “writing reed-pen,” appears in a first-century BCE

95 Klauck and Bailey, *Ancient Letters*, 194–95.

96 See also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.22.135 or Cyril of Alexandria, *De ador.* 68.564.39, on the same passage. This opens the question of the spread of biblical linguistic use through the expansion in Christian literature.

97 Muraoka 87 s.v. ἀποτυμπανίζω.

98 P.Entreux 86.6 and 8; UPZ I 119.37 (both Ptolemaic). For a full discussion, see Modrzejewski, “troisième livre”; *Troisième livre*, 64–67.

99 See also Lee, *Lexical Study*, 152–54, who collects a list of terms appearing in the papyri.

letter about the purchase of scribal materials (P.Grenf. II 38),¹⁰⁰ or the verb καταχωρίζω¹⁰¹ (3 Macc 2:29, also Let. Aris. 36) bearing the meaning of “enrolling or entering in a register or record.” A metaphorical use of σκυλμός, literally “mangling” or “irritation,” is found as “vexation” or “annoyance” in 3 Macc 3:25; 4:6,¹⁰² and in the papyri, like P.Tebt. I 16, P.Fay. III.5. Finally, I offer an example of a semantic shift in an already known Greek verb, παραναγιγνώσκω “compare, collate one document with another” (LSJ), with the meaning “read publicly” in the papyri (P.Baden II 43, P.Ryl. II 234, P.Tor. Amenotnes 6 = P.Tor. 9 = UPZ II 194) and both 2 Macc 8:23 and 3 Macc 1:12 (Muraoka 530).

In sum, the Old Testament books produced in Greek or translated in Alexandria, together with the writings of some Hellenistic Jewish authors, who also lived in the same city, such as Philo or Pseudo-Phocylides, provide a complex wealth of material, which can contribute to understanding the Egyptian and Alexandrian variety of Greek. Careful comparison with evidence from papyri and inscriptions provides a firmer basis for the consideration of specifically Egyptian traits of the language. These terms, however, since they belong to the sphere of administration, have to be used with caution, since our knowledge of “administrative Greek” comes almost entirely from the Egyptian papyri, with administrative documents from other areas almost completely lost.

5 Further Life of the Septuagint Lexicon

The language of the Septuagint had such great influence that it rewrote the history of later Greek. This impact in turn affects and alters the evidence contained in the corpus of Greek lexicographers. The linguistic use in the Septuagint had an initial impact on later authors, like for example Philo of Alexandria, and also on the language of the New Testament.¹⁰³ In the sphere of lexicon, this means that innovations and semantic shifts that took place in the translation of the Old Testament would have a further life in later texts. The bilingual translators of the Septuagint made the effort to translate the text of Old Testament into understandable Greek, and even the words concerning Jewish realities were more or less literally rendered into Greek. As is often the

100 Found later in John Chrysostom, *In Joh. Theol.* 59, 611, 50; Cyril Hierosolymitanus, *Catech.* 1.3.14.

101 Καταχωρισμός “registration, deposit in a registry” is a technical administrative term, found widely in the papyri, for example BGU I 2, or P.Fay. 108.

102 And in fact an Alexandrian author, Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 4.206, μερίμνας τε και σκυλμούς ἐμποιεῖ τῇ ψυχῇ και τῷ σώματι. “It (sc. Mars) induces worries and anxiety to the soul and the body.” On the term in the Septuagint see Passoni Dell’Acqua, “σκυλμός.”

103 Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 94.

case with translations, some things were difficult to translate, or some realities required the creation of neologisms, semantic extensions or shifts in meaning, and the diffusion of the text of the Septuagint established these new coined words or new uses in the Greek language. In most cases, this does not mean that these terms are typically Alexandrian or Egyptian. They are instead a product of the process of translation that became popular through the spread of the Bible. As an example, the rendering of the Hebrew term *ephod*, a priestly garment, is translated into Greek as *ἔπωμις*. This Greek term was probably chosen both because of the phonetic similarity with the Hebrew *ephod* and because it was already used in classical times to refer to a garment, namely the women's tunic, as an analogous to the *ephod*.¹⁰⁴ The use of the Greek term *ἔπωμις* for translating the biblical text definitely had an impact on the future life of the word, which would be used in later Jewish and Christian texts specifically to refer to the priestly garment.¹⁰⁵

A similar case is that of the term *ἑγγαστρίμυθος*, literally “ventriloquist” in 2 Sam 28. Its extended meaning “medium” or “necromancer,” which appears in later Greek literature is another example of the impact and the spread of the Septuagint.¹⁰⁶

The grammarians and lexicographers of antiquity were mainly interested in recording difficult or obscure vocabulary in classical and biblical literature. They also include other lexical uses that can be assigned to colloquial registers of the language, but the context from which they culled the words they include is not always clear. For this reason, although they offer in general a wealth of information, they must be handled with care: they are poorly transmitted and often also poorly edited, and they themselves were often not very careful.

When the lexicographers indicate that a term belongs to the Egyptian language, it is not clear whether the term belongs to the specific Greek-speaking population of Egypt or rather to the Egyptian language itself, real or imagined by the authors in question.¹⁰⁷ The wealth of information they provide must be approached with prudence, careful analysis, and comparison with other sources. Some of the terms found in the lexicographers may be of Egyptian

104 Le Boulluec and Sandevour, *Bible d'Alexandrie*, 251–52. In the papyri CPR XII 15 (a Coptic list) and the diminutive in P.Oxy. LIX 3998 margin: *ἔπωμιδία*.

105 See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 3.162, who uses *ἑφώδη*, and clarifies Ἑλληνοκλή δ' ἔπωμιδι προσεοικότα. See also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.6.38 and Athanasius, *C. Ar.* II 7.5.4, *exempli gratia*.

106 See Maravela and Torallas Tovar, “ἑγγαστρίμυθος”; and Torallas Tovar, “Translation and Beliefs.”

107 By imagined I refer to the representation of Egyptians in literature, often following stereotypes recognizable by an Athenian audience. For example, Aeschylus in *Suppliques*. See Torallas Tovar, “Context of Loanwords.” See also Vasunia, *Gift of Nile*.

origin used in Greek, some may be Greek terms specially used in Egypt, some may be just Egyptian terms not used in Greek, but appearing as foreign words in a piece of literature,¹⁰⁸ as an exotic piece of information, or remain in the original rendering in a translation.¹⁰⁹ Among the terms we find in the lexicographers' works described as "Egyptian," many are found in the Septuagint. The comparison of two terms of Egyptian origin, μάτιον and οἶφι, two terms for measures, prove my point about the nature of the evidence we obtain from the lexicographers and the impact of the Septuagint on later literary production and the intellectual activity of grammarians. I present here a comparison with the use in the papyri, as a proxy for the use of the term in spoken language.

The term μάτιον appears only in Suda: (M 285) μάτιον: εἶδος μέτρον. "mation: type of measure," but hardly in any other lexicographical source. The *scholia* to Aristophanes (*Clouds* 451b) include the same explanation as Suda for the term ματιολογός "devourer of meal," and Hesychius refers to a homonymous word without referring to this meaning. The term is indeed of Egyptian origin from Dem. *md3t*, a measure for dates, and is widely attested in the Greek papyri in more than 250 hits in papyri.info from the third century BCE to the seventh CE.

The οἶφι,¹¹⁰ on the other hand, is much more extensively attested in the lexicographers than μάτιον: Hesychius O 435 (190) οἶφι: χοῖνιξ, "oiphi: a choinix" / (433) οἶφι: μέτρον τι τετραχοῖνικον Αἰγύπτιον, "oiphi: Egyptian measure corresponding to four choinices," Photius O 166, Suda OI 190 and Ps.-Zonaras O 1435, together with *Anon. Lex.* O 84, *Lex. Segueriana*, Epiphanius, *De mensuris* 131.23. When looking at the Greek papyri, we surprisingly find that the term is scarcely attested, and then only in much later documents than μάτιον.¹¹¹

To understand this apparent contradiction, one just needs to turn to the life of these terms in the literary sphere. The interest in the lexicographers is immediately explained when searching for the term in the Bible: οἶφι appears more than ten times in the Septuagint (Leviticus, Numbers, Ruth, Judges, Kings, Ezekiel),¹¹² and later in Philo and Clemens of Alexandria, and other subsequent Christian authors,¹¹³ while μάτιον never does.

108 Like μοῦ, "water" in Egyptian, for the etymology of the name Moses. See Torallas Tovar, "In Search."

109 On the latter, see Torallas Tovar, "Reverse Case."

110 Muraoka 491, from Hebrew *ephah*. Also with an Egyptian etymology, *ip.t*, Achmimic Coptic, οπη. Alcock, "Coptic Terms," 4. Torallas Tovar, "Egyptian Lexical Interference," 191.

111 P.Cair. Masp. II 67308, 4; 67325, I 10, 14, 23; P.Lond. V 1687, 11 (Aphrodito 523 CE); PSI IV 284. SB XX 14625, 31 presents an abbreviation, which in my opinion is not completely sure.

112 It renders Hebrew *ephah*, Lev 5:11 and Num 15:4.

113 E.g. Philo, *Mos.* 1.17; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.287; Josephus, *A.J.*, 2.228.2: (228); Eustathius, *Commentarius in hexaemeron* 780.54; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.23.152.3.

The interest in the Bible explains the afterlife of some of the terms that we find in the Septuagint. The fact that they appear in these lexica does not mean that they were widely used. The common use of the terms was not the main purpose of the lexicographers. A small example of a Septuagint neologism being adopted into the language is given by Aitken:¹¹⁴ the verb βουνίζω ('to pile up,' in LXX Ruth 2:14), appears in Epiphanius (*De mensuris* 131.17) and Hesychius (Σ 3082), and finally in P.Koeln x 420 l. 4 (a 5th c. church letter).

6 Conclusions

I have presented here some of the issues in the definition of what is Egyptian lexicon in the corpus of the Greek Old Testament. Terms with an Egyptian etymology should be the easiest to identify, though these are often connected to trade (such as weights and measures) and can have contested etymologies, as travelling words. In a few examples, one could argue that the etymologically Egyptian terms were used in passages that present an "Egyptianizing" staging, and thus added some Egyptian flavor to the scene. Some Greek terminology in the Septuagint can be traced back to the administrative papyri of the Ptolemaic period. The coincidence invites the conclusion that both sources are fed from the same source, Egyptian Greek terminology, typical of the dialectal variety of Greek in Egypt. The attestation in the papyri, however, is problematic as a foundation for an argument about "Egyptianness," since it is our only source for "administrative" and "legal Greek." The loss of documents from other areas of the Mediterranean does not allow the necessary contrast to confirm that some specific terms were typical of Egypt or Alexandria. The risk of interpreting a term as typically Egyptian can often be based on lack of information from other areas, which is equivalent to an *argumentum ex silentio*. The fact that some of the deviations found in Egypt have parallels in later Greek is a proof of this "silence" of the sources. One could argue that Greek as used in Egypt was particularly influential upon later Greek, but the most likely explanation is that the abundance of documents from Egypt provides evidence for features not attested elsewhere due to the lack of positive evidence. For this reason, the coincidence with Byzantine and Modern Greek provides an excellent source for phenomena already present in late antiquity but absent from the sources. Some terms could originally have been typically Egyptian, but the later circulation of very popular texts, like the Bible, with a large impact in biblical commentaries and other Christian literature, spread such uses, making them difficult to trace back to a specific geographical area.

¹¹⁴ Aitken, "Style," 15–16.

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