

Graeco-Egyptian Toponymy in Herodotus: The Herodotean Reception of the Egyptian Names of Thebes*

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ABSTRACT: This article adds to the existing body of scholarship on Herodotus' engagement with the Egyptian language by conducting a historical-linguistic analysis of Herodotus' reception of the indigenous Egyptian toponyms for the city of Thebes. The first part of the article demonstrates that the Herodotean Νέη πόλις was a Greek rendering of *Niw.t* (one of the Egyptian endonyms for Thebes) with the addition of πόλις, the Greek word for 'city'. The second part of the article provides a solution to the longstanding textual conundrum of Herodotus' statement that, 'in the old days, Thebes used to be called "Egypt"' (2.15.3), by showing that Herodotus confused Tjamet (a common Egyptian endonym for Thebes) and Kemet (a common Egyptian endonym for Egypt), the pronunciations of which would have sounded extremely similar to a Greek native speaker.

KEYWORDS: Herodotus, Greek historiography, Egyptian Thebes, Neapolis, Tjamet, Egyptian toponyms, Graeco-Egyptian contact.



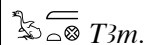
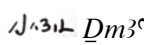
This article demonstrates that Herodotus was familiar with two of the most common Egyptian endonyms for the city of Thebes, and that this familiarity is discernible in two particular passages of Herodotus' ethnography of Egypt in Book 2. In so doing, the article clarifies two longstanding mistakes in the secondary literature relating to Herodotus' use of the toponyms 'Neapolis' and 'Thebes' in these passages. The article is divided into two successive sections, which present new insights on each of these two passages in turn. At 2.91.1, Herodotus mentions Neapolis, a settlement 'near' (ἐγγύς) Chemmis, which is now called Akhmim. Previous scholarship has suggested El-Mansha and Qena as two plausible identifications of Neapolis, but the absence of material evidence renders this problematic. Through a combination of historical-linguistic, philological, and archaeological evidence, the first part of this article demonstrates that Herodotus used the toponym 'Neapolis' ('the city of Nee') to denote Thebes, a city with which Greeks had once again become familiar by the middle Archaic period, after the decline in Graeco-Egyptian contact during the late Postpalatial Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. The second part of this article clarifies Herodotus' statement that, 'in the old days, Thebes used to be called "Egypt"' (2.15.3), which has caused much confusion in previous scholarship. The article demonstrates that this statement arose from a phonetic confusion between *Km.t* (the most

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common Egyptian endonym for Egypt) and *T3m.t* (the Egyptian endonym for the Theban west bank). The article explains the significance of these findings for our understandings of Herodotus' engagement with Egypt, and of Graeco-Egyptian cultural translation and exchange in the mid-first millennium BC.

PART I: NEAPOLIS, CHEMMIS AND THEBES

Along with Memphis, Thebes was a fundamentally important political and cultural centre in Egypt throughout the Dynastic Period, and particularly during the New Kingdom.¹ From at least as early as the Archaic period onwards, Greek writers including Herodotus referred to this city with the Greek exonym Θῆβαι ('Thebes'), the origin and etymology of which remain uncertain.² Thebes had a number of different endonyms over the course of the Dynastic Period. Herodotus' text reveals engagement with two of the most important of these endonyms, which are as follows:

	Hieroglyphic	Demotic	Coptic	
'The city'	 <i>Niw.t³</i>	 <i>Nw.t⁴</i>	NH/NE⁵	
			Sahidic Coptic	Bohairic Coptic
Tjemet ⁶	 <i>T3m.t⁷</i>	 <i>Dm3t⁸</i>	Ⲭⲏⲙⲉ	Ⲫⲏⲙⲓ⁹

At one point during his description of Egyptian society and culture, Herodotus states that the Egyptians, in general, practice no Greek customs but only their own indigenous customs, and he then cites as an exception to this rule those who live in the city of Chemmis, and what he describes as their local cult of Perseus. Chemmis was the capital of the ninth nome of Upper Egypt, and was the cult centre of the fertility god Min. The second sentence of 2.91.1 has generated some confusion in the secondary literature:

οἱ μὲν νυν ἄλλοι Αἰγύπτιοι οὕτω τοῦτο φυλάσσουσι, ἔστι δὲ Χέμμισ πόλις μεγάλη νομοῦ τοῦ Θηβαϊκοῦ ἐγγὺς Νέης πόλιος.

Now, the other Egyptians are wary of this following thing, but there is Chemmis, a big city of the Theban nome near Neapolis (2.91.1).

The diachronic development of the toponymy of Chemmis is as follows:¹⁰

¹ See Kees 1934, Stadelmann 1986.

² Hom. *Il.* 9.379–384, *Od.* 4.126–127. See Powell 1938: 167, Jurman 2016: 39–41.

³ See *Wb* 2, 211, n. 7.

⁴ See *EG* 210, n. 5.

⁵ See Černý 1976: 347, Vycichl 1983: 137.

⁶ For an overview of this toponym, see Peust 2010: 79–80.

⁷ See Gauthier 1975, vol. 6: 65–6.

⁸ See *EG* 678–679, n. 4.

⁹ See Černý 1976: 358, Vycichl 1983: 327.

¹⁰ On the identification of Chemmis, see Lloyd 1969: 79–80, Černý 1976: 356, Armayor 1978: 68,

one may suggest Νέης πόλει as *lectio difficilior*, or one may better expunge πόλει as an intrusive *glossa*. In either case, the toponym itself must be Νέη, probably a Greek phonetic rendering of the hieroglyphic *Niw.t* and the Demotic *Nw.t*, in view of the striking phonetic similarity between them. This Egyptian toponym, in addition to its basic meaning of ‘town/city’, was frequently used to denote Thebes during the first millennium BC.

Further evidence of the Greek derivation of Νέη from the Egyptian *Niw.t* can be obtained by reconstructing the pronunciation of *Niw.t* through a comparative linguistic analysis, by means of its surviving attestations in other ancient languages, which are as follows:

	Transcription	Vocalization
Neo-Assyrian ²²	<i>Ni-zi</i>	/ˈneze/
Imperial Aramaic ²³	𐤍𐤗	/ˈnV/ ²⁴ or /ˈnV₂V/
Classical Hebrew ²⁵	נִי	/ˈnoː/
Hellenistic Greek ²⁶	Νη, as in Ψουσέννης, the Greek rendering of the Egyptian personal name <i>P3-sb3-ḥꜥj-m-Niw.t</i>	
Coptic	Ⲣⲏ/ⲢⲎ	

The Neo-Assyrian transcription displays an inner *aleph* working as a glottal stop or *hamza*, a consonant interrupting a sequence of two distinct vowels/syllables.²⁷ The word was therefore pronounced identically to the Herodotean Νέη, as was the Imperial Aramaic equivalent, although 𐤍 might also stand for a *mater lectionis* in this case.²⁸ The Coptic and Hellenistic Greek forms display a predictable vocalic ‘contraction’ due to the dropping of the intervocalic glide previously transcribed as *w* in hieroglyphic and Demotic, *z* in cuneiform, and 𐤍 in Imperial Aramaic. In this context, the Classical Hebrew form נִי might sound unexpected. The Classical Hebrew sound *ḥólem*, a rounded long vowel (/oː/), arose from one of the following four linguistic processes, depending on the individual word which the sound featured in:²⁹

²² See Ranke 1910: 31, 52.

²³ See Cowley 1923: 83.

²⁴ /V/ stands for a generic vowel.

²⁵ See *HALOT*, n. 5901.

²⁶ See Edel 1980: 17.

²⁷ See Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 12–15.

²⁸ See Muraoka and Porten 1998: 30.

²⁹ See Blau 2010: 138.

1. it stems from /'a:/ in a phenomenon known as the Canaanite Shift;
2. it stems from /a:/ (unstressed) by analogy with the Canaanite Shift;
3. it stems from /'ü/ in closed syllables;
4. it stems from the monophthongization of the older diphthong /aw/.

Therefore, the Egyptian toponym was originally pronounced /'nuʔa/ or /'nuʔe/ in Classical Hebrew. The final unstressed vowel was then dropped at a certain stage (/nuʔ/), hence the development into *hōlem* of the short stressed /u/ in closed syllable, according to the third scenario above.³⁰ Moreover, /'nuʔ(a)/ or /'nuʔ(e)/ perfectly matches the later Neo-Assyrian form /'neʔe/, because stressed u-sounds in open syllables shifted to stressed e-sounds in Egyptian during the first millennium BC.³¹ The phonetic development of the Egyptian toponym *Niw.t* (*Nw.t* in Demotic) can therefore be summarized as follows:

Second millennium BC	First millennium BC	By the time of Coptic
/nuGa(t)/ or /nuGe(t)/ ³²	▶ /neGa/ or /neGe/	▶ /ne(G)a/ or /ne(G)e/, hence the Coptic NH/NE

In the second millennium BC, the toponym was pronounced /'nuGa(t)/ or /'nuGe(t)/, after which it was borrowed and phonetically reshaped by Hebrew.³³ From the first millennium BC onwards, Egyptian vocalic sounds changed substantially. Stressed u-sounds in open syllables shifted to stressed e-sounds, and so /'nuGa/ or /'nuGe/ shifted to /'neGa/ or /'neGe/, as indicated in Neo-Assyrian, Imperial Aramaic and the Herodotean Νέη. By the time of Coptic, Egyptian had lost some of its ancient intervocalic glides, and this triggered cases of vocalic 'contraction'.³⁴

The identification of the Herodotean Neapolis with Thebes is also tenable from a geographical perspective. Herodotus writes that both Chemmis and Neapolis lay within the Θηβαϊκὸς νομὸς (2.4.3), a phrase denoting a huge area stretching from the southern Faiyum southwards. Lloyd blamed this on Herodotus' misconception of Upper Egyptian geography,³⁵ but a more detailed analysis reveals a deep familiarity on Herodotus' part with contemporaneous Egyptians' conceptions of their own geography. Papyrus Rylands IX, a Demotic

³⁰ See Suchard 2020, ch. 8.

³¹ See Peust 1999: 222–8.

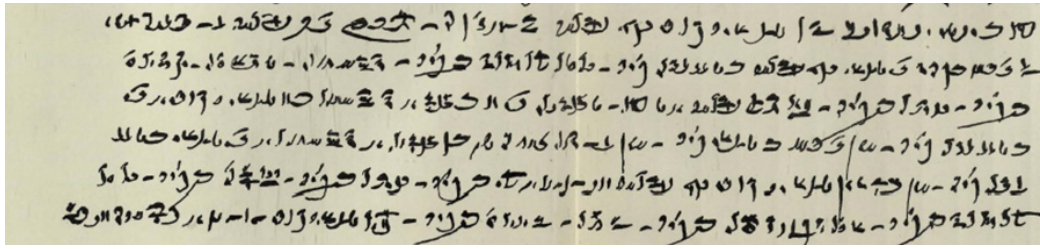
³² /G/ stands for a generic glide.

³³ The ending .t in hieroglyphic and Demotic is a morphological gender marker for feminine nouns. Though still transcribed, it had ceased to be articulated by the New Kingdom; see Peust 1999: 151–5.

³⁴ On the phonetic development of the Egyptian toponym *Niw.t* (*Nw.t* in Demotic), see Edel 1980: 15–20. Edel does not take into account the Imperial Aramaic 𐤍𐤏 and the Herodotean Νέη in his analysis.

³⁵ See Lloyd 1994: 33.

papyrus which was written around the time of Herodotus' visit to Egypt,³⁶ contains the following, relevant passage:³⁷



[...] $t\beta i=w$ $P3-di-3s.t$ $s3$ $Tr.t=w-r.r=w$ $m-b3h$ $Pr-^c3$ [...]
 dd $n=f$ $Pr-^c3$ in wn md $nfr.t$ $iw=k$ dd my $iri=w$ s $n=y$
 dd $P3-di-3s.t$ $m-b3h$ $Pr-^c3$ iri $p3y=y-it$ $w^c b$ [...] n $n3-rpy.w$ n $p3-t\delta$ n $Nw.t$ [...]
 $^c\delta$ $Pr-^c3$ r $p3-sh$ n $p3-wh3.w$ (?) dd $i:iri$ $wh3$ r $n3-rpy.w$ $nti.iw$ $P3-di-3s.t$
 $s3$ $Tr.t=w-r.r=w$ r dd iri $p3y=y-it$ $w^c b$ $n.im=w$ dd my iri $P3-di-3s.t$ $w^c b$
 $n.im=w$ [...]
 $wd=w$ $P3-di-3s.t$ $s3$ $Tr.t=w-r.r=w$ $m-b3h$ $Pr-^c3$ $iw=f$ iw r rsi
 $iri=f$ $w^c b$ n $Hr-^s=f$ $iri=f$ $w^c b$ n $Sbk-^sdd$ $iri=f$ $w^c b$ n $Imn-R^c$ $nsw-ntr.w$ $iri=f$
 $w^c b$ n $Wsir-nb-3bdw$ $iri=f$ $w^c b$ n $Ini-hr$ n Tne $iri=f$ $w^c b$ n Mnw

[...] Petese, son of Ithoros, was taken before Pharaoh [*scil.* Psammetichus I] [...]. Pharaoh said to him, ‘Is there a good thing of which you say, “Let it be done to me”?’ Petese said before Pharaoh, ‘My father [...] was a priest in the temples of the district of Thebes (Demotic $p3-t\delta$ n $Nw.t$) [...]’. And Pharaoh called for the scribe in charge of letters, saying, ‘Write a letter to the temples of which Petese, son of Ithoros, shall say “My father was priest in them”, saying “Let Petese be priest in them”’. [...] And Petese, son of Ithoros, was dismissed from before Pharaoh, and came south. He became priest of Harsaphes [*scil.* Herakleopolis Magna], priest of Suchos-of-Shedet [*scil.* Crocodilopolis], priest of Amun-Ra-King-of-the-Gods [*scil.* Thebes], Priest of Osiris-lord-of-Ebot [*scil.* Abydos], Priest of Onuris of This, and Priest of Min [*scil.* Χέμμικς?].

In Papyrus Rylands IX, the Demotic phrase $p3-t\delta$ n $Nw.t$ (‘the district of Thebes’) denotes Upper Egypt — the vast area stretching from the southern Faiyum southwards — as does its Herodotean equivalent, Θηβαϊκός νομός. In this context, the use of the preposition ἐγγύς (‘near’) to describe the 200-kilometre distance from Chemmis to Thebes/Neapolis appears less out of place in relative terms.³⁸ Herodotus indicates an awareness of this practice elsewhere in the *Histories*;

³⁶ See Vittmann 1998.

³⁷ Papyrus Rylands IX, 8, 15–20 (= Griffith 1909, vol. 2, plate 25).

³⁸ Lloyd questioned the identification of Νέη πόλις with Καινή because the latter was located too far from Chemmis; see Lloyd 1969: 80.


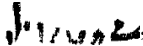
when Darius I asks the Paeonians the location of their homeland, they respond, ‘not far from the Hellespont’ (οὐ πρόσω τοῦ Ἑλλησπόντου), even though the Hellespont is 500 kilometres from the mouth of the river Strymon (5.13.2). The Chemmites themselves, whom Herodotus acknowledges as his source for the passage concerned with Chemmis and Neapolis (2.91.3), when asked by a foreigner about the relative location of their town, might plausibly have used the largest city of Upper Egypt (Thebes) as a point of reference. As indigenous Egyptians,³⁹ the Chemmites would have addressed the most famous and important city of Upper Egypt by its indigenous name, rather than with the Greek exonym Θῆβαι. In summary, then, the otherwise bizarre toponym ‘Neapolis’ (‘Néη city’) in Herodotus’ ethnography of Egypt is a Greek phonetic rendering of one of the contemporaneous Egyptian terms for the city of Thebes: *Niw.t*, which literally means ‘the city’.

PART 2: KEMET, TJAMET AND THEBES

The second part of this article demonstrates that Herodotus, during his time in Egypt, engaged not only with *Niw.t*, but also with another Egyptian endonym relating to the Theban area: Tjemet. At 2.15.3, during his description of Egyptian geography, Herodotus states the following:

τὸ δ’ὦν πάλαι αἱ Θῆβαι Αἴγυπτος ἐκαλέετο ...

And, in fact, in the old days, Thebes used to be called ‘Egypt’, ...

This sentence raises the crucial question of why Herodotus drew an equivalence between the name of the city of Thebes and the name of the whole country of Egypt. The sentence has caused confusion in the secondary literature, because the respective morphologies of the Greek exonyms Αἴγυπτος and Θῆβαι are completely different, and because Egypt and the city of Thebes were never referred to by the same name either in Egyptian or in any other ancient language. Neither of the two most prominent hypotheses in previous scholarship has explained this sentence adequately. Lloyd asserted, without argument, that Herodotus was simply mistaken.⁴⁰ By contrast, Jurman later argued that Herodotus’ statement arose from a geographical confusion on the part of Herodotus himself. As Jurman correctly acknowledges, the Greek toponym Αἴγυπτος was derived from the Late Egyptian  (*Hw.t-k3-Pth*),⁴¹ with the subsequent Demotic form  (*H.t-k3-Pth*),⁴² ‘the House of the Ka of Ptah’, which was an Egyptian endonym for Memphis. Jurman argues that, since Memphis itself was an intermittent seat of royal power in Egypt throughout the Dynastic Period, Herodotus confused Memphis with Thebes as the capital city of Egypt, and that Herodotus is therefore

³⁹ Herodotus suggests that the Chemmites were Egyptian (see Armayor 1978: 67), but it has also been argued that Chemmites were μιγέλληνες, people of mixed Greek and Egyptian ethnicity; see Lloyd 1969: 84–6; Lloyd 1994: 368.


⁴⁰ See Lloyd 1994: 81.

⁴¹ See *Wb* 3, 5, n. 20.

⁴² See *CDDH*, 37.

actually claiming that Memphis and Egypt shared their names.⁴³ This is not an entirely convincing proposal, since Herodotus was familiar with both Memphis and Thebes, and does not confuse them elsewhere in Book 2.



The sentence quoted above is, in fact, attributable not to a historical or geographical confusion, but to a linguistic and phonological confusion, on the part of Herodotus. The following analysis is concerned with three different phonological categories: velar sounds, palatal sounds and fricative/velar-fricative sounds. The most common Egyptian endonym for Egypt (Kemet) begins with a velar sound (/k/ or /k^h/), and one of the most common Egyptian endonyms for Thebes (Tjemet) begins with a palatal sound (/č/ or /č^h/); it is these terms for Egypt and Thebes that Herodotus most probably heard while he was in Egypt. In Egyptian, velar and palatal sounds were closely connected linguistically, and, in certain Egyptian dialects such as the Akhmimic dialect, they may have been almost identical. While Egyptian velar and palatal sounds were distinguishable to Egyptian native speakers, it is likely that Indo-European-speaking foreigners such as Herodotus would have been unable to distinguish properly Egyptian velar sounds from Egyptian palatal sounds. As the evidence discussed below indicates, Egyptian velar and palatal sounds sounded very similar to Greek native speakers, and both of these phonological categories were probably perceived by Greeks as fricative or velar-fricative sounds. Herodotus, a Greek native speaker, confused Kemet and Tjemet because Kemet begins with a velar sound (/k/ or /k^h/) and Tjemet begins with a palatal sound (/č/ or /č^h/), and because the second half of both words happens to be almost identical (-met); the two words would therefore have sounded very similar to Greek native speakers. This phonetic similarity between Kemet and Tjemet which Herodotus heard in spoken Egyptian led him to think – mistakenly – that the two terms were identical. He then rendered this false equivalence simplistically in Greek, using not the Egyptian terms (Kemet and Tjemet) but their Greek equivalents (Αἴγυπτος and αἱ Θῆβαι), which obviously sound utterly different from one another, obscuring the fact that Kemet and Tjemet *did* sound very similar to one another to a Greek native speaker. This is why Herodotus claims, in a sentence which seems bizarre at first glance, that Egypt and Thebes share their names. The remainder of this article details the historical-linguistic evidence from which this hypothesis arises.

The diachronic development of the Egyptian endonyms ‘Kemet’ and ‘Tjemet’ indicates that both of these words retained an initial velar sound and an initial palatal sound respectively throughout the first millennium BC. Kemet was the most popular and widespread of a number of different Egyptian endonyms for the country of Egypt which were in use over the course of the Dynastic Period, each of which had different cultural and political resonances. Kemet is the term for Egypt which Herodotus is most likely to have heard. *Km.t* has a fixed etymology, from the root  (*km[m]*, which developed into **KMOM** in Coptic), an adjectival verb which means ‘to be black’.⁴⁴ Herodotus displays a familiarity with this background in his account of the annual inundation of the Nile and its fertilization of the Egyptian Delta, describing the soil of the Delta as ‘the black


⁴³ See Jurman 2016: 41.

⁴⁴ See *Wb* 5, 122-124.

land' (2.12.2). The diachronic development of the term 'Kemet' through the successive stages of the language is as follows:

	Egyptian hieroglyphic	Demotic	Sahidic Coptic	Bohairic Coptic
Kemet			KHME	XHMI ⁴⁵
	<i>Km.t</i> ⁴⁶	<i>Kmy</i> ⁴⁷	/ˈke:me/	/ˈk ^h e:mi/
	<i>Kemet</i>	<i>Kemi</i>		

It is not possible to ascertain which of the above pronunciations of the word 'Kemet' Herodotus heard, but the important point is that the word continued to be pronounced with an initial velar sound (/k/ or /k^h/) throughout the development of the Egyptian language over the course of the first millennium BC. By reconstructing possible Greek pronunciations of the Egyptian toponym *Km.t* from the surviving linguistic evidence, we can ascertain that Greeks perceived the velar sound in Kemet (/k/ or /k^h/) as a fricative or velar-fricative sound. Hellenistic Greek velars (γ and χ) were already turning into fricative sounds, as is reflected fully in Medieval and Modern Greek.⁴⁸ Later *grammatici graeci* interpret the initial consonant of *Km.t* (*k*) as a velar-fricative sound; for example, the Egyptian expression in hieroglyphic and Demotic *rmt-n-Km.t* (*remetj-en-Kemet*, 'a man of Egypt') corresponds to the Coptic **PMNKHME** (*remenkeme*), and was rendered by Hesychius as Ἑρμοχύμιος (*Hermokhýmios*).⁴⁹ Moreover, Plutarch transcribes hieroglyphic *Km.t* as Χημία (*Khemía*), transcribing *k*, the initial velar sound in *Km.t*, as a velar-fricative sound in Greek (χ).⁵⁰ The fricative nature of this sound is indicated elsewhere in Plutarch, when he renders hieroglyphic *f* as a Greek χ, transcribing the name of Tefnakht (*T3y=f-nht.t*), the first king of the Twenty-Fourth Dynasty, as Τέχνακτις (*Tékhnaktis*).⁵¹ Therefore, the velar consonant in Kemet (/k/ or /k^h/) seems to have been perceived and pronounced as a fricative or velar-fricative sound in Greek during the Ptolemaic Dynasty, and probably also during the preceding Late Period.

The Egyptian toponym  (*T3m.t*) denoted the west bank at Thebes from the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards. As with Kemet, the diachronic linguistic development of this toponym demonstrates that, regardless of which version of the pronunciation of the toponym Herodotus heard, the word 'Tjmet' continued to be pronounced with an initial palatal sound (/č/ or /č^h/) throughout the development of the Egyptian language over the course of the first millennium BC.

⁴⁵ See Černý 1976: 56, Vycichl 1983: 81.

⁴⁶ See *Wb* 5, 126, n. 7.



⁴⁷ See *EG* 564, n. 1.

⁴⁸ See Debrunner and Scherer 1969: 102, n. 166.

⁴⁹ Hsch. s.v. Ἑρμοχύμιος γῆ.

⁵⁰ Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 364c.

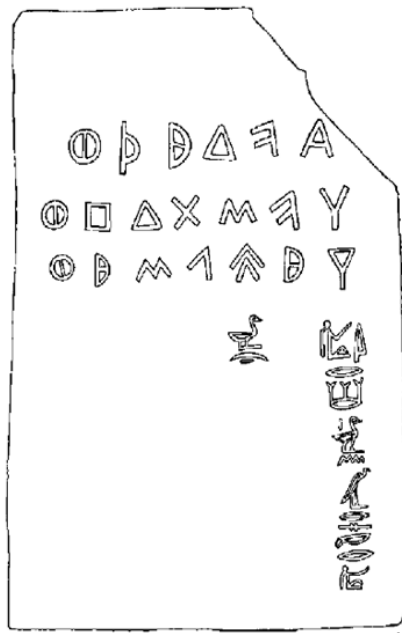
⁵¹ Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 354b.

	Egyptian hieroglyphic	Demotic	Sahidic Coptic	Bohairic Coptic	Greek
Tjemet			ⲬⲬⲙⲎ	ⲪⲬⲙⲎ	-σημι
	<i>Tjmet</i>	<i>Dmʿ</i>	/ʕe:me/	/ʕʰe:mi	/se:mi/
	<i>Tjemet</i>	<i>Djema</i>			

Tjemet appears as *Dmʿ* in Demotic, and different developments took place in the major Coptic dialects; the Sahidic form ⲬⲬⲙⲎ displays the palatal sound Ⲭ (/č/), but Bohairic has the form ⲪⲬⲙⲎ, with the aspirated palatal sound Ⲫ (/čʰ/).⁵² The Hellenistic Greek transcriptions of Tjemet (-σημι *et similia*)⁵³ display a pre-Coptic pronunciation, which is highly revealing. The Greek alphabet has no complete equivalent to the full Egyptian range of palatal sounds, and had no letter with which to convey this particular sound, and so they used an approximation.⁵⁴ Greeks perceived the initial, palatal consonant of hieroglyphic *Tjmet* and Demotic *Dmʿ* as a fricative sound, just as they perceived the initial, velar consonant of Kemet as a fricative or velar-fricative sound.

A similarity between Egyptian velar and palatal sounds was recognised not only by Greek native speakers, but also by native speakers of Carian, an Anatolian Indo-European language. This is illustrated in a Carian-Egyptian funerary stela from Saqqara, which dates to the late seventh or early sixth century BC, and which bears a bilingual inscription in which the upper part is Carian, and the lower part is Late Middle Egyptian (*Spätmittelägyptisch*).⁵⁵ The Carian text is a list of personal names: firstly the deceased, to whom the stela was dedicated, followed by his father and grandfather. The Egyptian text displays the same names transcribed into Egyptian.

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⁵² On ancient Egyptian and Coptic palatals, see Kilani 2021.

⁵³ See Jurman 2016: 40.

⁵⁴ See Quaegebeur 1973.

⁵⁵ See Adiego 2007: 47.

⁵⁶ Masson 1978: 25, pl. XXXV, 1. Reproduced courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

Carian text	<i>Arlišš Ursklēš Kiδbsiš.</i>	Arlis, son of Ursikle, from Kindue (?).
Egyptian text	<i>Trš(3) s3 n 3rskr s3 Tḥ</i>	Arlis, son of Ursikle, son of Iah.

The name Ursikle (*Urskīle*), with a heavily palatal stop in the final syllable (*kī*),⁵⁷ is transcribed into Egyptian as *3rskr* (Arsekr), indicating that the hieroglyphic and Demotic sign *k* was probably perceived as a palatal sound by non-Greek Indo-European speakers. The inscription also displays a peculiarity which is significant in terms of Graeco-Egyptian cultural history; the name of the grandfather is not merely transcribed phonetically, but is given a direct Egyptian equivalent in the Egyptian text: *Tḥ*, ‘the moon’. This case of Carian direct translation of an Egyptian noun is one example from a wider range of evidence that Carians started to integrate themselves into Egyptian culture at a comparatively early stage in the history of their presence in the country.⁵⁸

The close linguistic connection between Egyptian velar and palatal sounds is also demonstrated in diachronic trends within the Egyptian language itself. Egyptian palatals stemmed from Afro-Asiatic velars.⁵⁹ Almost all velar sounds in Semitic words borrowed by Late Egyptian during the New Kingdom subsequently appear as palatal sounds in Coptic.⁶⁰ In Papyrus Bodmer VI, an archaizing Coptic papyrus dating to the fourth or fifth century AD, the velar grapheme **κ** (/k/) occurs where a palatal **χ** (/ç/) in Sahidic or **ϣ** (/ç^h/) in Bohairic are expected.⁶¹ The Egyptian velar sign *k* in hieroglyphic and Demotic sometimes appears as a palatal sound in Coptic.⁶² Conversely, the initial palatal sound in Tjamet/Djema (tj- or dj-) was transcribed as a velar sound by Coptic-speaking Egyptians in the early first millennium AD, as demonstrated by a document on which the Demotic personal name *Dd-Mntw-iw=f-ḥ* (*Djed-Mentju-iuf-anch*, ‘Montu said, “He will live”’) is transcribed into Old Coptic as **ΚΑΜΕΝΤΕΒΩΝΧ** (*Kamentevonkh*).⁶³ The palatal sign *ḏ* (dj-) was transcribed as a **κ**, which corresponds to the velar sound /k/. Egyptian velar and palatal sounds were therefore closely connected to one another.

This association applied directly to the toponym Tjamet/Djema. In a Late-Period papyrus from around the time of Herodotus, the compound noun *ḏḏ* (Demotic *T3i-m3ḥ*, *Tjai-maa*) is written as a deliberately incorrect spelling and a phonetic transcription of Tjamet (hieroglyphic *T3m.t* and Demotic *Dm3ḥ*). It is a self-conscious attempt by the Egyptian scribe to write out and convey the contemporaneous pronunciation of this then-old Egyptian word.⁶⁴ Other scribes

⁵⁷ See Adiego 2007: 19–20.

⁵⁸ On the integration of Carians into Egyptian culture during the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, see Kammerzell 1993.

⁵⁹ See Peust 1999: 119–20; Takács 1999: 234–9, 249–55.

⁶⁰ See Peust 1999: 107–13, 121.

⁶¹ See Peust 1999: 120–1.

⁶² See Peust 1999: 121–2.

⁶³ *Tm* Nam 1322.

⁶⁴ See EG 679.

at the same time were writing the regular Demotic spelling of Djema (*Dm³c*). Demotic orthography is useful for historical linguistics, since some Middle and Late Egyptian words were transcribed unetymologically into the Demotic script in the mid-first millennium BC on the principle that Demotic scribes used more common, or more contemporaneously popular, sounds in order to convey properly the pronunciation of an older Egyptian word. This gives us an idea of how Late Egyptian words written in hieroglyphic were pronounced during the mid-first millennium BC, at the time of Herodotus. The first element of the scribe's phonetic transcription of Tjamet is the verb *𓂏* (Demotic *tʒi*, *tjai*, 'to take'), a verb which was sometimes confused by Egyptian native speakers with *𓂏* (Demotic *ḏd*, *djed*, 'to say').⁶⁵ Therefore, the toponym Tjamet/Djema began with an originally palatal sound which the Egyptians interpreted as a velar /k/ by the time of Old Coptic. Furthermore, in the Akhmimic dialect of Coptic, which was spoken in the region of Chemmis, Egyptian velar and palatal sounds were even more similar, and may even have been interchangeable, since the velar and palatal phonemes transcribed as *κ/ϣ/ϣ* were all articulated in the palatal region of the mouth.⁶⁶ This characteristic of the Akhmimic dialect is likely to have been present during the first millennium BC, prior to the development of the Coptic language.⁶⁷

The historical-linguistic findings above can be summarised as follows:

1. The initial velar sound in Kemet (k-) remained velar throughout the historical development of the Egyptian language (/k/ or /k^h/);
2. Greek native speakers probably perceived and pronounced the initial velar sound in Kemet (k-) as a fricative or velar-fricative sound;
3. The initial palatal sound in Tjamet (tj-) remained palatal throughout the historical development of the Egyptian language (/č/ or /č^h/);
4. Greek native speakers probably also perceived and pronounced the initial palatal sound in Tjamet (tj-) as a fricative or velar-fricative sound;
5. There was a close linguistic connection between Egyptian velar and palatal sounds, as is demonstrated in the Carian reception of Egyptian, and in diachronic linguistic trends within the Egyptian language itself;
6. And, at the time of Herodotus, the initial sound in Tjamet was pronounced like the initial sound in *ḏd* (*djed*), which Egyptian native speakers transcribed as k, corresponding to the velar /k/, by the time of Old Coptic.

⁶⁵ See *CDD I*, 1.

⁶⁶ See Nagel 1991, Tab. 1. See also Kilani 2021: 20–2.

⁶⁷ It is now widely accepted that the ancient Egyptian language already featured a multitude of dialects in the pre-Coptic age; see Satzinger 2017.

During the Late Period, Greek native speakers would have been unable to distinguish properly between an Egyptian velar sound (*k* in Kemet) and an Egyptian palatal sound (*t/d* in Tjemet/Djema), perceiving each of them as a fricative or velar-fricative sound. This historical-linguistic analysis has revealed that Herodotus erroneously confused the respective Egyptian pronunciations of Kemet and Tjemet, rendering this false equivalence simplistically in Greek, using not the Egyptian terms (*Km.t/Kmy* and *T3m.t/Dm3^c*) but their very different Greek equivalents (Αἴγυπτος and αἱ Θῆβαι), which, by contrast, sound utterly different from one another. Herodotus used Egyptian interpreters during his time in Egypt, as has been argued in previous scholarship, but was not himself familiar enough with the language to distinguish these two terms from one another. Herodotus, of course, used the pre-existing Greek exonym Θῆβαι to denote Egyptian Thebes elsewhere in Book 2, but it is not surprising that he also engaged with the Egyptian endonyms for Thebes within his text, since he engages on a variety of levels with non-Greek languages throughout the *Histories*, and engages closely with Demotic literature and with Egyptian language, history and culture throughout Book 2.⁶⁸ In particular, Herodotus was closely acquainted with the restricted knowledge of the Memphite priesthood.⁶⁹ The content of Herodotus' account of Thebes strongly suggests that he visited Thebes during his time in Egypt, spoke with members of the Theban priesthood, and saw the king-lists and the genealogies of priestly families in the temples and tombs at eastern and western Thebes; this is the most probable historical context in which Herodotus' engagement with the Egyptian endonym 'Tjemet' occurred.⁷⁰ This article therefore adds to the already-vast body of evidence from the *Histories* which suggests that Herodotus visited Egypt and travelled throughout the country during the 440s or 430s BC in the second half of the reign of Artaxerxes I, when Arsames was the satrap of Egypt.⁷¹

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⁶⁸ On Herodotus and non-Greek languages, see Harrison 1998, Munson 2005. On Herodotus' engagement with Demotic literature, see Quack 2013.

⁶⁹ See Obsomer 1998, Sousa 2020. See also Serrano Delgado 2011: 97, with secondary references.

⁷⁰ See Moyer 2002, Moyer 2021.

⁷¹ See Moyer 2011: 60, Sousa 2020: 216. See also Török 2014: 12, with secondary references on Herodotus' visit to Egypt. For the opposing view, see, for example, Armayor 1978, Armayor 1985. Intriguingly, a couple of Greek pottery shards dating to the fifth century BC and signed Ἡρόδοτος were unearthed in Naukratis; see Gill 1986.

Bibliographical Abbreviations

- AEO* = Gardiner, Alan H. (1947), *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, 3 vols. (Oxford).
CDD = Johnson, Janet H. (2001) (ed.), *The Demotic Dictionary of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago* (Chicago IL).
EG = Erichsen, Wolja (1954), *Demotisches Glossar* (Copenhagen).
HALOT = Koehler, Ludwig and Baumgartner, Walter (1994–2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 5 vols. (Leiden).
LS = Liddell, Henry G. and Scott, Robert (1996), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, tenth ed. (New York NY).
Tm = *Trismegistos* (www.trismegistos.org).
Wb = Erman, Adolf and Grapow, Hermann (1971), *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 7 vols. (Berlin).

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