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BIFAO 55 (1955), p. 111-121

Constant De Wit

Some Values of Ptolemaic Signs.

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SOME VALUES OF PTOLEMAIC SIGNS [1]

BY

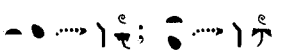
C. DE WIT

Having had the priviledge of reading Ptolemaic Texts with Prof. H. W. Fairman, I had the opportunity of assessing the values of certain signs, which are not generally known.

I wish in this connection to express my gratitude to Prof. Fairman for having placed his large collection of slips at my disposal and for the help he has given in bringing the demonstration to a conclusion.

= *m*

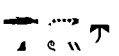
In the lion-gargoyle texts, at Edfu, the name of the lion *ṯm* is written thus :

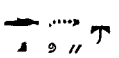
 E. IV, 117, 9

IV, 354, 4; IV, 342, 12

VII, 323, 5

VI, 305, 6

 IV, 274, 4

 IV, 274, 6

(?) VIII, 97, 16.

From these examples, it seems quite obvious that the value for the sign of the spitting mouth is *m*. I would at this stage already point out that the material shows the equivalence = *m*.

[1] Nous nous excusons auprès des lecteurs de *BIFAO* de n'avoir pu, faute de temps, traduire en français le texte de cette communication faite au XXIIIe Congrès international des Orientalistes, à Cambridge (août 1954).

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But it now remains to be seen how this value came to be accepted.

The vomiting mouth appears as a determinative in a number of verbs indicating the action « to spit, to vomit », etc. Here are a few examples :

	iššš	« to spit ». E. IV, 77, 7
	bš	« to spit ». IV, 28, 12
	bst	« to vomit, come forth ». IV, 339, 3
	ntt	« to spit out ». IV, 21, 14
	ḳ(ꜣ)ꜥ	« to vomit ». III, 2, 7
	ḳ(ꜣ)ꜥ	« to vomit ». III, 95, 13; 170, 4-5
	ḳ(ꜣ)ꜥ	« to vomit ». IV, 29,2
	ḳś	« to spit ». IV, 336, 8
	ḳꜣjś	« to vomit ». III, 95, 13
	ḳꜣ(j)ś	« to vomit ». III, 133, 2.
	tfn	« to spit ». IV, 143, 9.
	pꜥ	« to spit out ». II, 260, 12 = XII, pl. 414.
	pꜥy	« to spit out ». Mag. P. Lond. Leid. 20/12.

As Grdseloff has pointed out in *Archiv Orientalni,* XX (1952), nos 1-2, p. 482, this last example gives us the origin of the value *p* for this sign, with which we are not now concerned.

Hence, the vomiting mouth is used as a general determinative of verbs indicating « pouring, flowing, etc. » :

	wḏḥ	« to pour out ». E. IV, 363, 11.
	wḏḥ	« to flow ». IV, 35, 15.
	pr	« to come forth ». P. Mag. Harris 501, 6, 12; 8, 5.
	šti	« to pour out ». E. III, 90, 2.

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	šti	« to pour out ». IV, 48, 11.
	kš (?)	« to stream » (?) VI, 88, 7.
	ṯtf	« to pour out ». IV, 3, 4.
	tftf	« to drip ». III, 171, 17 (cf. *ḏfḏf*, IV, 386, 16-17).

The sign in question then serves as a determinative of nouns « spittle, vomit » :

	iśd	« spittle ». E. IV, 21, 14.
	iśd	« spittle ». III, 170, 3.
	"	« sweat, spittle ». IV, 32, 6.
	"	« sweat, spittle ». V, 13, 8.
	nḫnḫ	« spittle ». V, 21, 1.
	⟨*n?*⟩ *nt*	« spittle, sweat ». IV, 197, 7.

Because of these uses the vomiting mouth could act as a determinative of liquids in general, exudation, blood, and of verbs indicating « to drink » :

	idt	« odour, exudation ». D. IV, 70, 12.
		var. with → D. IV, 70, 10.
	inf	« fluid ». E. IV, 333, 12.
	inf	« fluid ». III, 154, 5.
	wtr (*twr*)	« blood ». IV, 59, 2.
	pḏ	« burn incense ». IV, 99, 6.
	fdt	« exudation ». D. IV, 30, 6.
	fdt	« exudation ». E. V, 326, 17.
	mꜣʿ	« Name of the *mr* (canal?) of the Theban nome ». E. IV, 175, 7.

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	m;ʿ	« *id.* ». IV, 175, 6.
	mỉnt	« a kind of field (cf. Gardiner, *Wilbour,* II, p. 165 f.) ». D. IV, 56, 9.
	nw	« water ». E. VIII, 35, 6.
	snf	« blood ». IV, 91, 16.
	snf or *wtr*	« blood ». VI, 73, 9; VI, 83, 7.
	bʿbʿ	« to drink ». VI, 77, 8.
	śḫb	« to drink » IV, 262, 15.
sic	*mt*	« seed ». V, 112, 5.
	mt (for *m;ʿt*)	IV, 102, 5.
	mj	« seed ». IV, 178, 12.
	mt	« seed ». VI, 16, 4-5.

This last group is particularly interesting because it gives us the origin of alphabetic *m*. It is one of such words as *my, mt, mw* which must be the origin of the value *m*. It is this same history that enables to replace , or and leads on to the final development that = *iw*.

We can now develop further consequences :

a) Because of the occurrence of the vomiting mouth as determinative of *śtỉ, mt,* etc. and can replace each other :

	mw nṯrỉ	« divine seed ». E. V, 304, 7.
	mw nṯrỉ	« divine seed ». IV, 217, 6.

b) In all this section is a) phon. *mw* or b) det. *mw*. Our examples show that and = *mw* :

	Ḥr ḥrj-ỉb mw·f	« Horus presiding over his water » E. V, 221, 1. (not *mr,* as *WB.* II, 97).

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nṯr pfj ḥrj-ib mw·f « This god presiding over his water ». D. III, 190, 13.

Idem. D. II, 177, 7.

Idem. Mam. 204, 18.

c) Eventually, this leads to = *mw* :

in-iw śḳd·n mw r-ꜣw·f « Have we not travelled over all the water? »[1]. E. VI, 128, 5.

mw n śḳd « waters of travel »[2]. VI, 128, 5-6.

mj (mw) n śḳd « waters of travel »[2]. VI, 9, 4.

d) Finally the vomiting mouth acquires the value *iw*, by simple replacement of with which it has come to be equated[3] :

iw nśrśr « the Isle of Flame ». E. VII, 162, 8.
var. (in parallel text). V, 84, 14.

pꜣ iw n tꜣ swḥt « the Isle of the Egg ». IV, 140, 2.

var. *Idem*, IV, 392, 16; VI, 339, 8-9.

Idem, Mam. 23, 6-7.

and have come to be equated, I suspect, because as det. « vomit » comes to replace all determinatives of verbs of spitting, pouring, ejaculation, etc., hence comes to act as determinative of liquids and exudations, and so inevitably can replace and and even as determinative and as phonogram. This is the secret of the whole use of the sign.

(1) Cf. *JEA* 21, 35.

(2) *JEA* 21, 35.

(3) The sign can also be used for *imn*. In this connection, I wish to thank J. Leclant for having drawn my attention to the relation existing between Amon (the ram, in general) and water. Cf. Wainwright, *JEA*, XX (1934), 141-146; Drioton, *ASAE*, XLIV (1944), 147-148; Fairman, *BIFAO*, 43, p. 119, n. 1; Leclant, *BIFAO*, XLIX (1950), 206; Leclant & Yoyotte, *BIFAO*, LI (1952), 23, n. 1 and also *Kêmi*, X (1949), 33; Leiden Papyrus, Gardiner, *ZAS*, XLII (1905), 38-39; Zandee, *De hymnen aan Amon*, I, 350 3, 1; *P. Anastasi*, IV, 10/6; Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies*, 45; Spiegelberg, *BIFAO*, XXX (1930), 104; Brugsch, *Reise nach der grossen Oase el Khargeh*, pl. 27, 40; N. de G. Davies, *The Temple of Hibis in el Khargeh Oasis*, Part III (1953), pl. 33; Sethe, *Amun*, § 202.

BIFAO 55 (1955), p. 111-121 Constant De Wit
Some Values of Ptolemaic Signs.
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As is well known, the vomiting mouth also represents the values *p* and *pw* [1]. It also has the values *tf* and *wtr* (*twr*) or *snf* [2].

Abusively, we find :

ink tꜣ rdwy « I am one hotfooted » [3]. E. IV, 274, 4.

The word which *WB*. III, 37, 4 lists as :

ḥjmj must be read : *ʿnḫ-imy ; ʿnḫ* having been taken for *ḥ*, owing to the similarity of these signs in hieratic.

(1) *irp* « wine ». E. VII, 8, 4.

irp « wine ». III, 195, 8.

Ḥʿp « inundation ». IV, 26, 3.

Ḥʿp « inundation ». IV, 3, 5.

Ḥʿp « inundation ». IV, 218, 16.

Ḥʿp « inundation ». IV, 218, 14-16.

Ḥʿp « inundation ». III, 2, 7.

śt nṯrwy pw nt Rʿ ḥnʿ Ḥr « It is the place-of-the two-gods, of Reʿ and Horus ». I, 23, 8.

ḥwt iśbt pw nt ʿḥʿ ḥr śrḫ « It is the *Ḥwt-ʾIśbt* of He-who-stands-on-the-serekh ». I, 23, 8-9.

ink pw ḥꜣd « I am he who masturbates ». P. Bremner-Rhind, 26-24.

nn nḏm n śꜣḥ śt·f wbꜣ-ḥr pw m śbyw n sꜣ·f « It is not pleasant for him who approaches his place, he is one well acquainted with the enemies of his stall ». E. IV, 112, 5-6. (CdE 57, 34).

diꜥf pʿ ꜣḫt ꜣḫw·ś « He causes the meadow (?) to spit out its glorious products (?) ». E. II, 260, 12 = XII, pl. 414.

(2) *tfn* E. V, 98, 16.

Tfnt VI, 290, 13.

Tfnt VII, 272, 1.

Tfrr IV, 359, 17.

Tfrr IV, 391, 13.

śʿm·tn m snf (*wtr*)·*f* « Drink ye of his gore ». E. VI, 73, 9 cf. 75, 8. (*JEA* 29, 15).

ir bʿbʿ·tn m wtr (*snf*) *n śbi·tn m kꜣt·sn* « Drink ye the blood of your foes and of their females » VI, 77, 8 (*JEA* 29, 18).

ir·f bʿbʿ m wtr (*snf*) *n śbi* « He walloweth in (drinketh?) the blood of the foe » (*JEA* 30, 10, note *a*) E. VI, 83, 7.

śtj·f wtr (*twr*) *m inm n wtr* « He pours out a river in the colour of blood ». E. VI, 83, 7-8 (*JEA* 30, 10, note *c*).

(3) *CdE* 57, 43.

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Philae Photograph 524 II (= E. VIII, 136, 8; cf. E. VI, 226, 15) shows the correct spelling :

mḥ wḏ̱ʾt m ʿnḫ-ỉmy « Who fills the Sound Eye with *ʿnḫ-ỉmy* plant ».

In *Edfu II,* we find :

ʿnḫ-ỉmy II, 210, 2-3 = XII, pl. 391.

ʿnḫ-ỉmy II, 210, 6 = XII, pl. 391, but that *ḫ* must be read *ʿnḫ* is borne out by the following example :

Fnd·f-ʿnḫ (Osiris). I, 196, 11 = XI, pl. 283.

var. *Idem.* E. I, 131, 14. (cf. *WB.* I, 578, 2).

The *ʿnḫ-ỉmy* plant is well known from the MK onwards (cf. *WB.* I, 203, 6-8) [1].

= *h(ʾ)yt*

The double heaven-sign is to be read *h(ʾ)yt* in the following :

h(ʾ)yt·śn nb ʿpr m ḫbśw (= *ḫʾbʾw·ś*). « All their ceilings [2] are equipped with the stars ». E. VII, 12, 3.

hy « ceiling ». IV, 19, 13.

hyt « heaven ». I, 543, 18.

The sign appears as a determinative either single or double in :

hyt « heaven » (in : *bʾ nb hyt; Bḥdty nb hyt*). VII, 147, 3; 162, 12.

hyt « heaven » (in : *h(ʾ)yt n bʾ·f*). VIII, 93, 9.

mnt « heaven ». IV, 3, 10; III, 238, 12.

[1] In the Rituel de l'Embaumement, recently edited anew by S. Sauneron, we find *ʿnḫ-ỉmy* (15,1, 19.8,11, 24,6 24,12 26, 11 30,5 32,1 35,11 43,5).

[2] As H. W. Fairman has shown (in Leclant, *Rev. Eg.* 8, p. 111, n. 2, the meaning of *h(ʾ)yt* is « ceiling » not « roof ». In *WB.* II, 476, « Dach » should be amended to « Decke ». Leclant has discussed the further meanings of this word (*Rev. Eg.* 8, 101-120) and also Sir Alan H. Gardiner (On. I, 60-1*, II, 210-1*; *JEA* 34, 21, n. 2).

BIFAO 55 (1955), p. 111-121 Constant De Wit
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	ỉmt	« heaven ». III, 238, 12.
	nww	« heaven, sky ». VIII, 93, 6.
	tw;yt	« the supported one = heaven ». VIII, 129, 16.
	śmnt	« the stable one = heaven ». VIII, 129, 17.
	wṯst	« the uplifted one = heaven ». VIII, 130, 5.
	wṯst	« the uplifted one = heaven ». VIII, 130, 9.
	(?)	VIII, 92, 4.

= *(ỉ)ḫr*

In the building text in *Edfu* IV, 11, 5-6, we read :

ỉỉ·n b;·f ḫnm·n·f ḥwt-nṯr·f ḫn·f ḥr (ỉ)ḫr(?)·f m Śt-Wrt·f

« His *ba* came, it united with his temple, it alighted on his image in his Great Place ».

Remembering the love of Ptolemaic scribes for alliteration, I thought that the unknown sign which obviously means image, must start with a *ḫ* sound. Leaving away the weak *ỉ*, such a word exists. It is *(ỉ)ḫr*, listed by *WB.* I, 126 (= *Theb. Tempel gr. Zeit* 55 *k;* 89 *c;* Philae Phot. 885; *Urk.* VI, 65).

I therefore suggest *(ỉ)ḫr* as a possible reading for this sign [1].

= *rś*

In E. IV, 131, 14, we read :

At first sight, one is enclined to think that a word has dropped out and to take the Nephthys sign as *ỉ* 1st. pers. sign. fem.

This is however excluded, as it is a lion-god, who is speaking.

[1] In the *Tomb of Rameses VI* (Piankoff, p. 365, pl. 131), the snake is used as a word-sign for « Horus » (*Ḥr*). A reading *ʿḫm* is, of course, not excluded, as P. Derchain points out to me.

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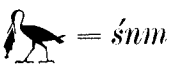
A parallel gargoyle-text, E. IV, 286, 15, gives us however the reading :

rś·i ḥr Wṯst-nt-Rʿ-ḏr-bꜣḥ « I watch over the *Wṯst-of-Reʿ-of-former-days* [1] ».

Seeing our two texts are absolutely parallel, and knowing that it is one of the duties of Nephthys to « watch over » Osiris, we cannot escape the conclusion that our sign must here be read : *rś*.


= *śnm*

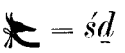
It is also the alliteration which makes us read *śnm* (and not the usual *ḥꜣm*) in the egret (?) catching fish.

E. IV, 130, 6 gives us :

ḫft śnm śḫr śnm nšnj nt hrw ḳrj

(I am the great guardian, who leads forth the rainwater and casts [it] upon earth), « when the storm (*śnm*) is dispelled, who swallows up (*śnm*) the tempest of the day of thunder » [2].

Already in the New Kingdom, the sign appears as a determinative to *śnm* (*WB*. IV, 164) and we know that it is quite a normal procedure for Ptolemaic scribes to take an old determinative for a word-sign.


= *śḏ*

Among other values (*śṯꜣ* being the commonest), the head of a jackal, with a loop, can read : *śḏ*.

So we have to read : E. I, 25, 10-12 :

śḏ·n·i tꜣ śfḫ·n·i dbʿt « I break the clay, I loosen the sceal » [3].

[1] *CdE* 57, 39, n. 122.
[2] *CdE* 57, 38.
[3] Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, 77, n. 6 : « J'ôte la terre sigillaire, je détache le cachet ».

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The sign is used also in writings of *ḥb-śd* :

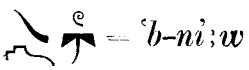
ḥwt ḥb-śd « The Heb-Sed Hall ». E. V, 39, 2.

= *mḏwt*

In the Myth of Horus at Edfu, appears a sign which resembles the abstract determinative, but seems to be crowned by a flower. Its meaning is certain : « at a distance of . . . . . » (E. VI, 114, 7; 119, 2; 123, 10; 124, 1).

I believe it has to be transliterated *mḏwt* (cf. *WB*. II, 184, 14), because = *mḏ;t* :

gmḥ·n·f śt ḥr rśj-i;bi n w;śt n mḏwt itrw 2 « Then he saw them to the south-east of Thebes at a distance of 2 schoinoi »[1]. E. VI, 114, 7.

 = *ʿb-ni;w*

ʿb-ni;w means « year » and in conjunction with *ḥḥ* is used in expressions indicating a million years.

L. Keimer, in *Cahier* n° 5, *Supplément aux A. S. A.* (1947), p. 11, has rightly put the word in relation with the *ni;w* animal (= bouquetin) and certain New Year vases. The horn of the animal is indeed covered with notches which resemble those of the sign for year.

ʿb-ni;w ḥḥ is not to be translated « a million times »[2].

Here are a few examples :

(i)ʿr ʿ;jt m hrw wpt-rnpt ʿb-ni;w ḥḥ n(n) ;b « Who ascends to the roof on New Year's Day, a million years without cease » E. I. 569, 10.

[1] Cf. *JEA* 21, 30, note 1 ; Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, II, 714, n. 6, discusses this and suggests transliteration of this passage *m dmḏ (?) itrw* 2.

[2] Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, I, 306, penultimate line.

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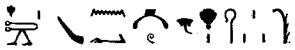
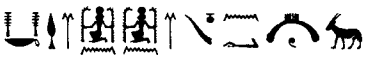


ḥr ỉṯt ʿb-niʾw ḥr ḥkʾ rnpwt(?) «Taking possession of year(s) and governing (regnal) years». E. IV, 93, 4.

ʿb-niʾw ỉr·n ḫnt ḥpt-rḫyt nrỉw·k ḫnt ʿnḫyw «The million years which we have spent in *Ḥpt-Rḫyt* are your periods at the head of the living». E. IV, 279, 9.



ḏd·k ỉm m ḥḥ n ḥḥ n ʿb-niʾw «You shall remain therein for millions and millions of years». E. VI, 18, 7-8.

ʿb-niʾw ḥḥ ḥr wbn ḥtp ḥr mʾʾ ỉtn m śt ḥb-tpj «millions of years, rising and setting, seeing the disk in the Place of the First Feast». E. I, 579, 11-12.

wnn ḥkʾt ḫʿ·tj ḫnt ỉwnt ḏd·tj m ḥḥ n ʿb-niʾw «The Princess has appeared gloriously in Dendera, being firmly established for millions of years»[1]. D. II, 114, 17.

[1] Prof. Fairman points out to me that he has patiently been accumulating material on *ʿb-niʾw* for over 10 years and is making a detailed survey of the writings and meanings of the different words for «year» e. g. *ʿb-niʾw, rnpt, ḥʾt-sp, nrỉt* and a word *ḥʾt*(?) that does not figure in any dictionary or list.

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