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THE SCORPION SPELL FROM WADI ḤAMMAMAT: ANOTHER ARAMAIC TEXT IN DEMOTIC SCRIPT*

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I. INTRODUCTION

IN 1984, G. Vittmann published a Demotic incantation against scorpion sting from the cliffs of Wadi Ḥammamat in Upper Egypt.¹ He dated it on paleographic grounds to the second half of the sixth century (or possibly early fifth century) B.C.E.

Although the *script* of the entire inscription was Demotic Egyptian, as was the *language* of the title and the instructions, the incantation itself was largely unintelligible to Vittmann. After an unsuccessful search for Semitic words in the text, possibly inspired by the orthographic parallels that he noted between this text and P. Amherst 63 (the Aramaic text in Demotic script),² he concluded that the incantation proper was simply magical gibberish:

Der Großteil des Spruches besteht aus Wörtern, die offensichtlich nicht ägyptisch sind. In Anlehnung am PREISENDANZ, *PGM*, bezeichne ich sie einfach als "Zauberworte". . . .

Außer dem Namen des Baal und einem äußerlichen Anklang von ^c-w-n-j an arab. عوني ^cauni "meine Hilfe, mein Beistand" kann ich in dem Zauberspruch übrigens nichts Semitisches finden.³

A year later, K.-Th. Zauzich, published a new study of this text.⁴ Like Vittmann, Zauzich concluded that the orthographic parallels with P. Amherst 63 were not a clue to the language of the incantation; indeed, he categorically rejected the possibility that it was in Aramaic: "Der Zauberspruch ist jedoch mit Sicherheit nicht in aramäischer Sprache abgefaßt."⁵ Unlike Vittmann, he attempted to show that the spell could be read as Egyptian. He was led in this direction by his understanding of the words ³-t-w s-t-w m-s-w (line 4) as Egyptian imperatives with pronominal objects: *it³=w st³=w ms=w* "nimm sie, zieh sie, bring sie herbei!"

Zauzich's decipherment does not appear to have convinced other Demotists. A few years after its appearance, Vittmann published a list of seven objections to it.⁶ His first objection concerns ³-t-w s-t-w m-s-w: if these words are Egyptian imperatives, they must be plural imperatives—not infinitives used as imperatives with pronominal objects. More

* As always, I am greatly indebted to R. K. Ritner for his expert guidance in Egyptological matters.

¹ G. Vittmann, "Ein Zauberspruch gegen Skorpion in Wadi Hammamat," in H.-J. Thissen and K.-Th. Zauzich, eds., *Grammata Demotika: Festschrift für*

Erich Lüdeckens zum 15. Juni 1983 (Würzburg, 1984), pp. 245–56 and pl. 35.

² See further below.

³ Vittmann, "Zauberspruch," p. 248.

⁴ K.-Th. Zauzich, "Abrakadabra oder Ägyptisch? Versuch über einen Zauberspruch," *Enchoria* 13 (1985): 119–32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶ Vittmann, "Zum Verständnis des demotischen Zauberspruchs im Wadi Hammamat," *Discussions in Egyptology* 13 (1989): 73–78.

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recently, R. K. Ritner has ignored Zauzich's interpretation of *k-p-b-w k-p-b^c-r k-p^c-t-r-m* in his own translation of line 2 and left these words in transliteration: "*kepbu kepbar kepatrem.*"⁷

In this article, I shall argue that the forms *ḥ-t-w s-t-w m-s-w* are indeed plural imperatives, but not Egyptian ones, for the spell is in Aramaic. I shall discuss the links of the text to other Semitic texts in Egyptian script, especially the Semitic incantations in the London Medical Papyrus and the Aramaic text in Demotic script.⁸

Vittmann's transcription of the Demotic is as follows:

- 1) *rḥ n šdj n drj*
- 2) *k-p-b-w k-p-b^c-r k-p^c-t-r-m^c-w-n-j m-šm ḥm ms ḥm*
- 3) *in-pḥj-b^c-r g-s² š^c-ḥr-tḥ.wj⁹ in-pḥj-tḥj.t in-pḥj-b^c-r*
- 4) *ḥ-t-w s-t-w m-s-w ḥ-in^c sn-ḥ-in ib-rḥ s-w-h-w*
- 5) *n-kḥ-w p-s-r pḥj-in tḥ-r-j (space) mtw=k^cš=w r tḥj=k^c n iw=s*
- 6) *spj.t n mw-rḥ mtw=k db^c rḥ n pḥ sjj n.im=f*

The following is my transcription and translation of the text. The reading and translation of the Egyptian portions of the text, printed in bold letters, follow Ritner (see sec. III, pp. 261–66 below). The Aramaic portions, printed in italics, have been retransliterated to reflect my interpretation.

II. TEXT

Transliteration

- 1) *rḥ n šdj n drj*
- 2) *kp-(²)bw(y) kp-b^cl kp^c-tr-(²)m(y) ^cwny(²) **m-šm ḥm.t-Ḥr ms ḥm.t-Ḥr***
- 3) *²npy-b^cl ks(y) š^c-ḥrtw/ḥrtw(y) ²npy-sydt(²) ²npy-b^cl*
- 4) *²tw stw / (²)stw (²)msw ²n^c(y) sn²n ²br (²)swhw*
- 5) *nḥw p-zr(w) ²npy (²)dry **mtw=k^cš=w r tḥj=k^c n iw=s***
- 6) ***spj.t** n mw-rḥ mtw=k db^c rḥ n pḥ sjj n.im=f*

Translation

- 1) **Spell for Enchanting a Scorpion**
- 2) Hand of my father, hand of Baal, hand of Attar my mother! Refrain: **Go away, wife of Horus, born of a wife of Horus!**
- 3) Face of Baal! Cover, coat his wounds (with spittle)! Face of the Huntress (and) face of Baal!
- 4) Come, turn aside / remove, wash away! If our enemy afflicts a limb, heal it!
- 5) Cleanse and press out, faces of my mighty ones! **You should recite them to your finger while it**

⁷ See R. K. Ritner, "The Wives of Horus and the Philinna Papyrus (PGM XX)," in W. Clarysse, A. Schoors, and H. Willems, eds., *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 1998), vol. 2, p. 1034.

⁸ For the former, see my "Northwest Semitic Incantations in an Egyptian Medical Papyrus of the Fourteenth Century B.C.E.," *JNES* 51 (1992): 191–

200, and my "The London Medical Papyrus," in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr., eds., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1997), pp. 328–29. For the latter, see my "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," in Hallo and Younger, Jr., eds., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, pp. 309–27 and the references cited there.

⁹ I have chosen the alternate reading given in the commentary; Vittmann, "Zauberspruch," p. 252. The reading preferred by Vittmann is *š^c-m-bḥ-tḥ.wy*.

- 6) is moistened with spittle. Then you should seal the opening of the wound with it (the spittle).

III. COMMENTARY

k-p-b-w = *kp-(²)bw(y)* “hand of my father”; cf. [*r*]-*k bu-n* (deity) “[spit]tle of our father” in the London Medical Papyrus,¹⁰ where the initial glottal stop of the word for “father” is likewise unrepresented. At first glance, this would seem to reflect apheresis, as in *bā* < ²*abbā* “father” in Targum Onkelos and the Galilean Aramaic name *Būn*, derived from the word for “our father.”¹¹ The failure to represent an initial glottal stop, however, can reflect something more modest than apheresis when the preceding word-divider is also omitted, as it is here: elision of the initial glottal stop but not its vowel. In other words, the orthography of our form may well reflect [kap:abu:] and be comparable to forms such as *mikdy* = [ma:tak:adi:] “the land of Akkad” (alongside *mt ²kdh*) in Old Aramaic, *mrlh²* = [ma:rila:ha:] “lord god” or [ma:rila:he:] “lord of gods” (alongside *mr²lh²*) in Hatran and Old Syriac, and *rbsy* = [ravasi:i] “Rav Asi” (alongside *rb ²sy*) in the Palestinian Talmud. According to Kraeling, Egyptian Aramaic also exhibits this phenomenon.¹² In all of the above cases, the vowel following the deleted glottal stop is apparently reassigned to the preceding consonant. Such resyllabification is attested as a sandhi phenomenon in many languages, including classical Arabic (for example, *mi-nal-* for *min-²al-* “from the”) and English (British *not-a-tall* and *thi-safternoon*).

The end of the word is more difficult to explain. If our interpretation is correct, it may indicate that the word ²*by* “my father” was pronounced [²abu:y] in Egyptian Aramaic of the sixth century. This could be either the original pronunciation or an analogy with [²abu:ka] “your father” and [²abu:na:] “our father,” etc. So too in Middle and Late Akkadian we find *abū-(y)a* alongside *abī*. The scribe’s failure to write the final *y* could be attributed to mishearing or apocope.

^c*t-r-m* = ^c*tr-(²)m(y)* “Attar my mother” or ^c*tr-(²)m* “Attar mother”; cf. the syllabic Egyptian personal name (hereafter PN) ²*s-t-r-²u-m* (a Hyksos captive at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty), the Akk. PN *Ištar-ummī*, the Ug. PN ^c*ttrum*, and ²*s-t-²u-m* (deity) in the London Medical Papyrus.¹³ *Attar* < ^c*Attar* is the Aramaic (and Arabian) equivalent of Ugaritic ^c*Attart* and Akkadian *Ištar*. Naturally, this phrase sheds light on the controversial question of the sex of Attar.¹⁴

k-p-b-w k-p-b-^cr k-p-^ct-r-m “hand of my father, hand of Baal, hand of Attar my mother!” Cf. *k³py^m n³n^m*¹⁵ = *kpy nn(²)* “Nana’s hands” in P. Amherst 63, XIII/9.

¹⁰ See my “Northwest Semitic Incantations,” p. 193. See also R. Stadelmann, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten* (Leiden, 1967), pp. 34–36.

¹¹ G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 97.

¹² E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven, Conn., 1953), p. 172.

¹³ See my “Northwest Semitic Incantations,” p. 193, and J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the*

New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Princeton, 1994), p. 23.

¹⁴ See B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley, 1968), p. 166, n. 55.

¹⁵ For an explanation of the conventions used in my transliteration, see R. C. Steiner and C. F. Nims, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Revue biblique* 92 (1985): 66.

That *kp* lacks a word-divider in these three genitive constructions will hardly come as a surprise to anyone who is even slightly familiar with P. Amherst 63. Even in inscriptions written in the Aramaic alphabet, it is not uncommon for short nouns in the construct state (and other proclitic words) to be written together with the genitive noun. Examples include *rb*, *br*, and, significantly, *kp* in the phrases *kpyd* and *kprgl*.¹⁶

The writing of *kp* with *p* rather than *f* could point to the absence of spirantization at this place and time, but it is also possible that the spirantized allophone of *p* was a bilabial (rather than a labiodental) and sounded more like a *p* than an *f* to the scribe's ear. Nor can we exclude the possibility that word-final geminates in words such as *kapp* had not yet been simplified and hence were not yet susceptible to spirantization.

Why does the incantation open by invoking the hands of Baal and Attar?¹⁷ One answer comes from the Egyptian instructions.¹⁸ Another answer, not incompatible with the first, comes from spell 6 in the Metternich stele.¹⁹ According to that spell, Isis healed the victim of a scorpion sting by laying hands on him and ordering the venom to come out.²⁰

^c-*w-n-j* = ^c*wny*(?) "refrain"; cf. Syriac ^c*wny* (^c*ūnāyā*) "refrain, antiphon," derived from Northwest Semitic ^c*ny* "answer." For the pharyngeal ^c, cf. Ug. ^c*ny* and P. Amherst 63 ^c*n*. If this interpretation is correct, the implication may be that the Egyptian words that follow were to be chanted by the Egyptian patient.

Vittmann too took this word to be non-Egyptian, identifying it with Arabic ^c*awnī* "my help." This fits the context very well, according to my interpretation of the preceding words, but it is out of place in an Aramaic text.

Zauzich, on the other hand, interpreted ^c-*w-n-j*, together with the final *m* of the preceding word, on the basis of Egyptian *wnj* "to hurry."²¹ Ritner's 1998 translation ("back!")²² was based on Zauzich's interpretation, but he has subsequently had second thoughts.²³ The problem with taking this word to be Egyptian is that it has a space following it, and, as Ritner notes, that space appears to function as punctuation, separating Semitic from Egyptian.²⁴

m-šm hm.t-Hr ms hm.t-Hr "Go away, O wife of Horus, born of a wife of Horus." This is the reading and translation of Ritner, who notes that the phrase "wife of Horus" is a standard epithet of the scorpion.²⁵ In Vittmann's view, "dieser Vorschlag scheint in der Tat recht ansprechend, wenngleich die Lesung paläographisch schwierig ist."²⁶

Ritner argues that these words must be Egyptian, since they are written with logograms and ligatures rather than phonetically.²⁷ Moreover, they are "written after a gap (though the stone is undamaged and there would be no reason to leave such a space except as "punctuation" as is typical in Demotic)."²⁸

¹⁶ T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (Leiden, 1998), p. 41.

¹⁷ For other texts in which these two deities occur together in Egypt, see Stadelmann, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten*, p. 34 and R. Stiehl, "Baal," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1985), cols. 590–91.

¹⁸ See below.

¹⁹ C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Die Texte der Metternich-stele* (Copenhagen, 1956), pp. 38–43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41, lines 58–62.

²¹ Zauzich, "Abrakadabra," p. 121.

²² See Ritner, "Wives of Horus," p. 1034.

²³ E-mail communications from R. K. Ritner, 18 June 1999.

²⁴ See below.

²⁵ Ritner, "Gleanings from Magical Texts," *Enchoria* 14 (1986): 105–6; *idem*, "The Wives of Horus," p. 1034.

²⁶ Vittmann, "Zum Verständnis," p. 77, n. 17.

²⁷ E-mail communication from R. K. Ritner, 1 July 1999.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

If so, it is probably just a coincidence that, in Aramaic, *ḥmh* (determined *ḥmt*²⁹) means “venom” (including scorpion venom) and *mšy* means “wash.”²⁹ It is also possible, however, that we have here a bilingual play on words. In that case, the Aramaic reading of the refrain would be addressed to the hand of Baal and/or Attar (represented by the finger moistened with spittle; see below), as expected following vocatives addressed to it/them (cf. lines 3–5). Its meaning would be, “Wash away the venom of Horus, wash away the venom of Horus.”³⁰ The term “venom of Horus” might refer to the venom that afflicted Horus when he was stung by a scorpion in his childhood, an event recalled in many scorpion spells.³¹

in-p²j-b^{-c}-r = ²npy-b^cl “face of Baal”; cf. Punic *pn b^cl*, Φενη Βαλ “face of Baal,” a common epithet of Tanit in votive texts.³² The first syllable of ²*anpay* “face of” is written with Demotic *in* “bring.”³³ The scribe of P. Amherst 63 uses a different Demotic *in*, the sign for the postnegation,³⁴ to write that Aramaic word, for example, XX/12 *inpyh^{2m}* = ²*npyh* (see further below).

g-s² = *ks(h)* “cover.” The other five IIIy imperatives in this text are written with a final *w*, representing the second segment of a diphthong.³⁵ It therefore appears that this verb is singular, despite the fact that ²*npyn* is grammatically dual.

š^{-c} = *š^c* “coat, daub”—presumably with spittle, as in the Egyptian instructions. The verb *š^{cc}* (like its byforms *š^cy* and *šw^c*) is used in Targumic Aramaic and Syriac of smearing plaster, bitumen, clay, wax, or ointment to fill in breaks and cracks. This Aramaic verb corresponds to the Demotic verb *tb^c* “seal”³⁶ in the instructions, which seems to belong to the same semantic field, judging from its Coptic reflex *tōōbe*. Crum lists three passages in which the verb *tōōbe* “seal” is collocated with a verb meaning “smear (clay, ointment), plaster.”³⁷

ḥr-t².wj = *ḥrṭw/ḥrṭw(y)* “his wounds”; cf. Syr. *ḥrṭ* “laceration.” If correctly interpreted, this is the Aramaic counterpart of Demotic *shj* “wound” in the instructions. The sign *t².wj* used to write the second syllable is the word for “two lands”³⁸ with the archaic dual ending. That word “appears in Greek as part of various names, including *Sematawy* (Uniter of the Two Lands), which is variously written (with the Greek nominal ending *-s*) as *Semtheus*,

²⁹ The former appears three times in P. Amherst 63 as *ḥšm^{2m}* and the like, written with monoconsonantal signs; the latter appears in line 4 of our text.

³⁰ Coptic *maše* shows that *m-šm* (W. Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar* [Copenhagen, 1954], p. 506) was pronounced with just two consonants. The rendering of Semitic *š* fluctuating between Demotic *š* and *s* in neighboring occurrences of the same word has parallels in P. Amherst 63, for example, in the phrase *byṭ mšhyt^(?)* “bathhouse” (col. XVIII, lines 10, 13, and 14); see again Steiner and Nims, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin,” p. 72.

³¹ J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden, 1978), pp. 61–72. See also S. Sauneron, “Le monde du magicien égyptien,” *Le monde du sorcier*

(Paris, 1966), p. 38, and J. F. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1996), pp. 108–10.

³² See J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions (DNSI)* (Leiden, 1995), p. 919 and J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizische-punische Grammatik*, 3d ed. (new ed. by M. G. Amadasi Guzzo) (Rome, 1999), p. 45 for references.

³³ Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, p. 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁵ See sec. IV, p. 267 below.

³⁶ The relationship of this word and its synonym *ḥtm* to Hebrew *tb^ct* and *ḥwtm* is well known.

³⁷ W. E. Crum, *Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939), p. 398a (cf. p. 333b).

³⁸ Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, p. 599 bottom.

Sentous, *Sentōus*, and *Somtous*. Thus a final *eu/ou/ōu* is possible. . . .³⁹ The Coptic reflex of the archaic dual ending also points to a final *w*, for example, *sn.wj* > *snau* “two.”⁴⁰

Does this final *w* somehow represent the plural ending of the noun together with the 3ms. suffixed pronoun? The standard ancient Aramaic form of those suffixes in combination is *-aw+hī*, written *-wh* in the Assyrian period (Tell Fekheriya, Nerab, Sefire), and *-wh* or *-why* in the Persian period.⁴¹ It has long been suspected, however, that this form replaced an earlier (Hebrew-like portmanteau) **-aw*, itself a contraction of **-ay+hū*.⁴² Is it possible that our text provides the first attestation of this conjectured earlier form? The interpretation of *s-w-h-w* presented below suggests that the author of our text did not use the suffix *-hī* with plural *verbs* and makes it possible to conjecture that he did not use it with plural *nouns* either.

It is also conceivable that *hr-tš.wj* represents the contracted (*h*-less) reflex of *-(a)whī* known from P. Amherst 63, Galilean Aramaic, etc. This would be possible if the archaic Egyptian dual ending was realized as *-(a)wī* at the time of our text or if the final *y* of *hrṯwy* was dropped or not heard by the scribe, as suggested for **ḳbwy*, above. We would then be dealing with a form later, instead of earlier, than Official Aramaic *-why*.

*in-pšj-tšj.t = ṽnpy-sydt*² “face of the Huntress,” i.e., Attar. At Ugarit, ṽAttart was known as a huntress (ṽ*trt šwd[t]*).⁴³ In Egypt, “[‘hurritische ṽattar’] ist . . . eindeutig als Heilgöttin aufgefasst worden; ihr kriegerisches Wesen wendet sich gegen die Krankheitsdämonen.”⁴⁴ The sign used to represent *sydt*² is Demotic *tšy.t* “take me,” whose Sahidic Coptic reflex is *dit*.⁴⁵ For the use of *t* to render *š*, sec. IV, p. 267 below.

š-t-w = ṽtw “come!” This verb is regularly written with initial *e* in P. Amherst 63. It and all the following verbs are plural, not because Aramaic *ṽnpyn* is dual (see commentary to *gs*, above) but because two faces are invoked here. (See further sec. IV, p. 267 below.)

³⁹ E-mail communication from R. K. Ritner, 6 October 2000.

⁴⁰ A. Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 60.

⁴¹ R. Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Wiesbaden, 1969), p. 58; Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, p. 50; M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period* (Leuven, 1995), pp. 169–72.

⁴² See, for example, H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Tübingen, 1927), pp. 60–61; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen, 1984), p. 83, n. 2; 150–51; S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1986), p. 172. For a different view, see W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 107.

⁴³ J. Day, “Ashtoreth,” in D. N. Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York, 1992), pp. 492–93. I initially thought that *ṽnpy b^cl* “face of Baal” was in opposition to *ṽnpy sydt*², with the latter meaning “face of the Hunter,” but I found no firm evidence for Baal as a hunter. To keep *ṽnpy b^cl* as an appositive (rather than a conjunctive) phrase, one could

identify *tšj.t* with the deity *Šid*. In that case, *Šid* would be equated here with Baal, as in the personal name *B^clšd* known from Carthage, Nebi Yunis (near modern Ashdod), and possibly Abydos in Egypt; see E. Acquaro et al., *Ricerche puniche ad Antas* (Rome, 1969), p. 97. (Altogether, there are four to six names with the theophoric element *Šid* known from Egypt; *ibid.*, pp. 96–98.) This is a Phoenician (Sidonian?) deity, however, found only in Phoenician-Punic names and texts; *ibid.*, pp. 51–52, 95–104. Thus, in the present state of our knowledge, this interpretation seems less likely. There is also an intermediate possibility. If *Šid* was a hunter, as some have suggested based on the root of the name (*ibid.*, p. 99; H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. 2 [Wiesbaden, 1973], p. 67), then his identification with Baal in the personal name *B^clšd* could be viewed as evidence that Baal was also a hunter.

⁴⁴ W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 2d ed. (Wiesbaden, 1971), p. 459.

⁴⁵ E-mail communication from R. K. Ritner, 15 May 2000.

$s\text{-}t\text{-}w = stw / (^\circ)stw$ “turn aside!/remove!”; cf. sty “turn aside” in the Late Aramaic dialects and sty in Hebrew. In Samaritan Aramaic, the same verb appears in the $^\circ afel$ (and once in the $kal?$) with the meaning “remove.”⁴⁶ In this verb, $*\dot{s}$ is rendered by s , as is usual in P. Amherst 63.

$m\text{-}s\text{-}w = (^\circ)msw$ “wash away!” i.e., wash away the venom with spittle; cf. Syriac $^\circ msy$ “wash away.” This is presumably another reference to the use of spittle prescribed in the Egyptian instructions at the end.

$\beta\text{-}in = ^\circ n$ “if.” The word is usually written hn in this period, but the Aramaic letters from Hermopolis and now our text show that this is a historical spelling.⁴⁷

$^c n = ^c n(y)$ “afflicts.” This verb has hitherto been unknown in Aramaic outside of Jewish texts, but an arguably related noun ($^c nwh$) and adjective/passive participle ($^c nh$) are attested quite early. For the pharyngeal c , cf. ESA $^c nw$ “be distressed, troubled.”⁴⁸

$sn\text{-}\beta\text{-}in = sn^\circ n$ “our enemy,” presumably referring to the scorpion. This form proves that the scorpion spell, unlike P. Amherst 63, uses Demotic *aleph* to render the Aramaic glottal stop; see sec. IV, p. 267 below. The same word is written $\dot{s}n\beta n\beta m$ in P. Amherst 63 (X/18), with the *alephs* apparently representing vowels and with \dot{s} as a spelling pronunciation. The first sign in this word, Demotic sn “brother,”⁴⁹ is used in P. Amherst 63 to render Aramaic sn in a number of words, for example, $sngl$ “Esangila” (VII/5), $snwry^\circ$ “blinding light” (XIII/6), and $\dot{t}sn$ “metal plates” (XIII/16).

$ib\text{-}r^\circ = ^\circ br$ “a limb.” The gender of this noun, in the western Aramaic dialects and elsewhere, is masculine, agreeing with the suffixed pronoun in $(^\circ)swhw$ that refers to it.

$s\text{-}w\text{-}h\text{-}w = (^\circ)swhw$ “heal it!”; cf. $^\circ s\text{-}y\text{-}m = ^\circ sym$ “physician” and $^\circ s\text{-}t\text{-}m = ^\circ stm$ “healing” in the London Medical Papyrus.⁵⁰ For the 3ms. suffixed pronoun, one would normally expect $-hy$, as in Egyptian Aramaic $hhwwhy$ “notify him!”; $hw\dot{s}rwhy$ “dispatch it!”; $ygrwhy$ “let them institute (suit) against him”;⁵¹ and Biblical Aramaic $hblwhy$, $hkrbwhy$. However, $-hy$ is generally admitted to have developed out of $-hw$,⁵² and our text is early enough to have preserved an archaic form.

$n\text{-}k\beta\text{-}w = nk\dot{w}$ “cleanse,” with spittle.

$p\text{-}s\text{-}r = p\text{-}zr(w)$ “and press out,” with the moistened finger; cf. zwr “press out” in Syriac and Hebrew and $zyyr$ ($zey\bar{a}r$) “press tub (for olives)” in Galilean Aramaic.⁵³ This root—or a byform of it—is used of pressing out pus from a wound in Isa. 1:6. The conjunction $p\text{-}$ is also used in P. Amherst 63.

⁴⁶ A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (Leiden, 2000), p. 580.

⁴⁷ For historical spelling in Aramaic, see my “Papyrus Amherst 63: A New Source for the Language, Literature, Religion, and History of the Arameans,” in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, eds., *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 200–203.

⁴⁸ A. F. L. Beeston, M. A. Ghul, W. W. Müller, and J. Ryckmans, *Sabaic Dictionary* (Louvain and Beirut, 1982), p. 17.

⁴⁹ Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, pp. 435–36.

⁵⁰ See my “Northwest Semitic Incantations,” p. 195.

⁵¹ Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, pp. 146–48.

⁵² See, for example, Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, p. 79.

⁵³ M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan, 1990), p. 175.

$p^{\beta}j$ -in, apparently a mistake for in - $p^{\beta}j = \text{ }^{\beta}npy$, as twice above. Here, however, the sense is “faces of.”

t^{β} - r - $j = \text{ }^{\beta}dry$ “my mighty ones,” a reference to Baal and Attar. The epithet is applied to these deities in Punic texts as well.⁵⁴ The word is attested for Aramaic in P. Amherst 63.

$mtw=k \text{ }^{\beta}š=w r t^{\beta}j=k \text{ }^{\beta}n iw=s spj.t n mw-r^{\beta} mtw=k db^{\beta} r^{\beta} n p^{\beta} šhj n.im=f$ “You should recite them to your finger while it is moistened with spittle. Then you should seal the opening of the wound with it (the spittle).” The magician’s finger and spittle were apparently supposed to be converted into the finger and spittle of Baal and Attar through the chanting of “hand of Baal,” “face of Baal,” etc. A similar conception appears to underlie the words “spittle of our lord, spittle . . . spittle of our father” in one of the Semitic incantations of the London Medical Papyrus.⁵⁵ A scorpion spell translated by Borghouts also mentions spittle: “Horus has been stung in the evening, in the night, . . . while there was no conjuration [to be brought (?)] to Horus, while there was not spittle [with him] <to> spit.”⁵⁶

IV. DISCUSSION

As noted by Vittmann and Jasnow, this text shares an important orthographic convention with P. Amherst 63: both of them make very frequent use of the “man-with-his-hand-to-his mouth” determinative.⁵⁷ The reason would appear to be that their scribes, unlike the scribe of the Semitic incantations in the London Medical Papyrus, did not understand what they were writing. Only occasionally, when they thought they recognized a word, did they use other determinatives.⁵⁸ It would seem, then, that the “man-with-his-hand-to-his mouth” determinative served as a kind of default determinative for words whose meaning was not known.

This is not to say that the two scribes use this determinative in exactly the same way. The scribe of P. Amherst 63 normally avoids using this (or any other) determinative after a word ending with the sign $=w$.⁵⁹ Our scribe, on the other hand, adds the “man-with-his-hand-to-his mouth” determinative to many such words: k - p - b - w , β - t - w , s - t - w , m - s - w , s - w - h - w , n - k^{β} - w . Nevertheless, it is clear that we are dealing with a single tradition.

Another orthographic convention shared with P. Amherst 63 is the use of the r (“*ru*-lion”) sign for either [r] or [l] but r^{β} “mouth,”⁶⁰ for [r] alone. Also worthy of mention is the use of *in* to represent Aramaic $\text{ }^{\beta}n$ in the word $\text{ }^{\beta}npy$ “face,” although, as noted above, the *in* signs used are not the same.

⁵⁴ Hoftijzer and Jongeling, *DNSI*, pp. 18–19.

⁵⁵ See my “Northwest Semitic Incantations,” pp. 193–94, corrected in my “London Medical Papyrus,” p. 328.

⁵⁶ Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, p. 72 (no. 96). For further discussion of the curative power of spittle here and elsewhere, see Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 78–82.

⁵⁷ Vittmann, “Zauberspruch,” p. 248, n. 14; R. Jasnow, “Egyptological Remarks on P. Amherst 63,” lecture at American Oriental Society Meeting, Baltimore, 23 March 1999. I am indebted to J. Huehner-

gard for calling this lecture to my attention and to Jasnow for sending me a copy of it.

⁵⁸ I discussed this at length in my unpublished paper, “Was the Scribe of Papyrus Amherst 63 a Bilingual?” Oriental Institute Symposium (“Life in a Multicultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine”), 5 September 1990. A revised version of this paper will appear in my edition of P. Amherst 63.

⁵⁹ Is this convention related to the scribe’s failure to distinguish this sign from the god determinative?

⁶⁰ Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, p. 239.

The use of the Demotic *aleph* in the two texts appears similar at first glance, but *aleph* appears far less frequently in the scorpion spell than in P. Amherst 63. This difference in frequency stems from a difference in function. In P. Amherst 63, *aleph* seems to render vowels, while in the Wadi Ḥammamat text, all three occurrences represent the glottal stop, a function taken over by *e* in P. Amherst 63.

A major difference is in the rendering of Aramaic affricated *ṣ*. In the New Kingdom, Egyptian *ḏ* was used regularly to transcribe Canaanite *ṣ*.⁶¹ The Wadi Ḥammamat text seems to use a different phoneme, *t*, for this purpose. Wadi Ḥammamat is in the south, however, where the Coptic reflex of *tṣy.t* “take me” is Sahidic *ḏit*.⁶² It appears, therefore, that the scribe of our text continued the New Kingdom practice of using *ḏ* to render *ṣ*. The scribe of P. Amherst 63, by contrast, broke with this tradition. After using *s* in a few examples early in the papyrus, his hearing becomes more accurate and he switches to a sequence of two signs: *t* plus *s*.⁶³

The language of the spell is Aramaic. A number of other Aramaic inscriptions, in Aramaic script, have been found in Wadi Ḥammamat, and at least some of them are roughly contemporaneous with the scorpion inscription. One Aramaic graffito by a man blessed by the Egyptian god Min is from the 18th year of Darius I (503 B.C.E.); another has been dated to ca. 500 B.C.E. on paleographic grounds.⁶⁴ An Aramaic abecedary has been dated to the sixth century B.C.E.⁶⁵ Aramaic in Egyptian script is found in Wadi Ḥammamat in the inscriptions of Atiyawahy from the reigns of Darius I and Xerxes I. In them, Atiyawahy, the Persian governor of Coptos, is accorded the Aramaic title *srs* “official, eunuch.”⁶⁶

Among the Aramaic lexical items in our text are: *ṣtr* “Attar” (rather than *ṣtr*), *ṣny* “face of” (rather than *ṣny*), *ṣtw* “come!” (rather than *ḃwṣw*), *ṣn* “if” (rather than *ṣm*), *(ṣ)sw* “heal!” (rather than *rpṣw*), *ṣc* “coat!” (rather than *ṣwhw*).⁶⁷

Another Aramaic feature is found in lines 4–5, if we have interpreted them correctly. We have suggested that these lines contain six mpl. imperatives, all of them written with a final *w* except for the last. The exception is easily explained on the assumption that the forms are Aramaic. The first five imperatives are written with a *w* because they are from IIIy roots and thus end in a diphthong in Aramaic: *ṣataw*, *ṣaṣaw*, *(ṣ)amsaw*, *(ṣ)asaw*, *naḳkaw*. The sixth imperative is *zūrū*; it is not written with a *w* because it is not from a IIIy root and thus does not end in a diphthong in Aramaic.

⁶¹ See my *Affricated Ṣade in the Semitic Languages* (New York, 1982), p. 68.

⁶² E-mail communication from R. K. Ritner, 15 May 2000.

⁶³ See again my *Affricated Ṣade*, pp. 57–59, and R. C. Steiner and A. Mosak Moshavi, “A Selective Glossary of Northwest Semitic Texts in Egyptian Script,” in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, eds., *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 1249–66, passim.

⁶⁴ L. Bongrani Fanfoni and F. Israel, “Documenti achemenidi nel deserto orientale egiziano (Gebel Abu Queh–Wadi Hammamat),” *Transeuphratène* 8 (1994): 82–87.

⁶⁵ A. Lemaire and H. Lozachmeur, “Deux inscriptions araméennes du V^e siècle avant J.-C.,” *Semitica* 27 (1977): 100–101.

⁶⁶ G. Posener, *La première domination perse en Égypte* (Cairo, 1936), p. 118.

⁶⁷ It is true that Isaiah (in 6:10 and possibly elsewhere) uses a root *ṣc* in the figurative sense of sealing eyes and obscuring vision, but there is no evidence that it was a normal word for “coat,” alongside *ṣwh*. A byform of the latter, *ṣhh*, has a similar figurative use in Isa. 44:18.

It is true that each of these features can be found individually in a Semitic language other than Aramaic (especially Arabic), but taken together they point to Aramaic. This is not the case, however, with the morphology of the suffixed pronouns in $(^2)bw(y)$ “**my** father” (instead of 2by), $hrtw$ “**his** wounds” (instead of $hrtwhy$), and $(^2)swhw$ “heal **it**” (instead of 2swhy). If these interpretations are correct, our text has much to teach us about the morphology of the Aramaic suffixed pronoun.