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Herausgegeben von
Jochem Kahl und
Nicole Kloth



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Discerning the origin of words is like the interpretation of
dreams; it is a matter of each man's ingenuity
Augustine, De dial. 6.9

An etymological safari to Aigyptos

Åke Engsheden

Abstract

This article presents an overview of various ideas since Antiquity surrounding the etymology of Αἴγυπτος. A citation graph illustrates how the bibliographical items that refer to the term relate to one another.

0 Introduction

Defining Egypt as a geographical and political entity is a relatively uncontroversial task: It has an impressive longevity that few other states can match. When it comes to the interpretation of the name 'Egypt', however, things are less clear, and views on its linguistic origin have differed greatly. This article is devoted to the *Nachleben* of the Greek Αἴγυπτος (henceforth Aigyptos), from which the name derives, particularly in the scholarly world from the Renaissance onward. It is true that much ink has already been spilled on Aigyptos, including an entire book, abundantly documented and full of detail, devoted exclusively to the name and its derivations in European languages.¹ Yet that book only briefly covered the various proposals made for the etymology of Aigyptos, because the author feared that its history would risk boring his readers.² Since my aim is not to entertain, I will incur the risk of tiring the readers of this article, since the subject provides a pretext for reflecting on the historical background of etymological research, and also calls attention to the ways that ideas are recycled. The article is intended as a contribution to linguistic historiography in Egyptology.

It seems natural to allow all the impossible, implausible, and downright mad ideas to drown in a sea of oblivion. This attitude is understandable, but in a discipline with a myth-ridden past like Egyptology, whose genesis is more complex than commonly assumed, I believe that the history of how Aigyptos has been interpreted is instructive and helps to broaden our understanding of the historical roots of Egyptology. As Thomas Gertzen has put it recently:

Denn nur durch die Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen (Fach-)Geschichte lassen sich die Ursprünge wissenschaftlichen Interesses, die Motivation einzelner Forscher, das Zustandekommen und die Hintergründe bestimmter Forschungstendenzen begreifen und dann auch vermitteln.³

We can be quite sure that much of what is written today, even when touted as cutting-edge research, will become obsolete and passed over without comment by our future colleagues.

* My thanks are extended to Christiane Schaefer (Uppsala), Andreas Winkler (Oxford/Stockholm), and Witold Witakowski (Uppsala) for their advice.

¹ S. H. Aufrère, *L'odyssée d'Aigyptos. Le sceptre et le spectre*, Jouy-sur-Morin 2007.

² Aufrère, *L'odyssée d'Aigyptos*, 226.

³ T. L. Gertzen, *Einführung in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Ägyptologie*, Münster 2017, vii.

Every researcher is necessarily bound to the research priorities and methods of their own time. Still, the various proposals that have been made for Aigyptos share many similarities. One of the surprises that a study of Aigyptos' modern fate yields is how frequently the same elements emerge time and again, often without the author knowing that the suggestion is not new, or at least without crediting earlier scholarship. The same elements recur, sometimes with centuries between them, using different terminology, depending on the style *en vogue* at the time of writing. This applies to the most popular theory, currently found in many modern handbooks and reference works, stating that Aigyptos has its origin in *Hw.t-k3-Pth* 'the temple of the *ka* of Ptah'. This is believed to have been a temple in Memphis, but its usage was extended first to refer to the whole city of 'Memphis', and subsequently to the entire country.⁴ Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1896) is cited as the author of the theory but, as will be seen below, its background is more complicated than commonly assumed, and Brugsch's own views on the matter were not entirely clear (see below: 2.3.1.7.1). The popularity of this explanation may give the impression that the question of the etymology of Aigyptos has been settled, although a few critical voices have recently been raised, mainly outside Egyptology proper (2.3.1.6 and 2.3.1.7.6).

I have tried to achieve completeness while extricating the bibliographical items used for this discussion, even though it is futile to believe that this is an attainable goal, particularly with regard to theories that are isolated, or that have never been cited in later research. With one notable exception (2.3.1.6), wild theories haunting the Internet have been omitted, since they are situated outside the academic debate.

1 Etymology

When judging older research, it is important to remember that the very concept of etymology is anything but straightforward.⁵ Its meaning has shifted considerably over time. In the ancient world, one searched for an inner true (ἔτυμος) meaning, which would reflect a natural characteristic of the thing spoken of.⁶ An example is the derivation of the name 'Orestes' from the Greek word for 'mountain' (ὄρος), to which is ascribed "the fierceness, rudeness, and mountain-wildness (τὸ ὀρεινόν) of his nature." This is one of many illustrative etymologies in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* (394e). The discussion in that work of whether a name is given by nature (φύσει) or by convention (θέσει) has played a dominant role in later Western thought. Ancient etymology worked mostly through intuitive one-to-one

⁴ For various quotes for its role as an accepted standard, see: D. Kurth, Zur Herkunft des Wortes Αἴγυπτος, in: Weitergabe. Festschrift für die Ägyptologin Ursula Rößler-Köhler zum 65. Geburtstag (eds. L. D. Morenz/A. El Hawary), GOF 53, Göttingen 2015, 209.

⁵ For the shifting meanings of etymology, see: C.-J. Herbermann, Moderne und antike Etymologie, in: Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung 95, 1981, 22–48; P. Swiggers, L'étymologie: Les transformations de l'étude historique du vocabulaire aux Temps Modernes, in: Geschichte der Sprachtheorie 5. Sprachtheorien der Neuzeit II (ed. P. Schmitter), Tübingen 1996, in particular 353–356.

⁶ E.g. J. Allen, The Stoics on the origin of language and the foundations of etymology, in: Language and Learning. Philosophy of language in the Hellenistic age (eds. D. Frede/B. Inwood), Cambridge 2005, 14–35; I. Sluiter, Ancient etymology: A tool for thinking, in: Brill's companion to ancient Greek scholarship (eds. F. Montanari, S. Matthaios/A. Rengakos), I, Leiden/Boston 2015, 896–922; C. Viti, On etymology and lexical categorization in the ancient Indo-European languages, in: International journal of diachronic linguistics and linguistic reconstruction 11:1, 2014, 1–32.

comparisons between the word being discussed and another existing item of vocabulary. Mass comparisons, often accomplished by lexicographical decomposition into syllables judged to be primary elements, do not seem to have been undertaken before the early modern period, in the wake of the quest for a universal language. It is as if “Ancient etymology ... is all about synchrony, even though it invokes a discourse that references the past.”⁷ A telling example for how one early scholar viewed etymology differently from those of today can be seen in how the Latin ‘etymologia’ corresponds to ‘Wortforschung’ in the German text of Justus Georg Schottel’s bilingual *Ausführliche Arbeit zur Teutschen Haubtsprache* from 1663.⁸ For Schottel, ‘etymologia’ also comprised the dissection of words, including word formation with the help of affixes and the division of words into parts of speech, something that would today be labelled as derivational morphology. In contrast, Schottel’s work is free from references to reconstructed historical forms, as would be expected from modern etymological research. Indeed, modern etymology has a clear diachronic aspect in which “one must backtrack to the chronological stage at which it [sc. the word] was transparently formed for the first time, and account for the changes it subsequently underwent.”⁹ It is ideally built on the analysis of many-to-one relationships between different existing items and a reconstructed form, whose hypothetical character is marked through an asterisk, sometimes in the shape of variants representing successive linguistic stages. In much early etymological work, the interpretation of a name did not have clarification of the early linguistic form as its primary goal. Instead, etymologies were often mentioned in passing to confirm a specific historical scenario, whereas today serious scholarship is extremely cautious about the possibility of extracting relevant extra-linguistic information, or building history from hypothetical linguistic reconstructions.¹⁰ Etymology in both the ancient and pre-scientific early modern periods is characterised by a lack of distinction between inherited vocabulary and loanwords, and by a weak understanding of language change and the regularity of phonetic change.

The discovery of genetic relationships between languages and of diachronic phonology changed the view on etymology radically. It strengthened the tendency to search for explanations that were applicable to groups of items, rather than to individual words. This has turned etymological inquiry into a historical detective work far removed from the imaginative associations and essentialist speculations of earlier centuries. Imagination is still required, but is now curbed by a recognition of the regular character of phonological development.¹¹ Indeed, attention to phonetic detail and the ability to cite close parallels for phonetic or semantic developments are crucial factors that influence whether an etymology will be judged convincing by the research community. It is not only important to find an ety-

⁷ Sluiter, in: Brill’s companion to ancient Greek scholarship, I, 898.

⁸ Cited by S. Willer, *Poetik der Etymologie. Texturen sprachlichen Wissens in der Romantik*, Berlin 2003, 53.

⁹ R. Mailhammer, *Etymology*, in: *The Routledge handbook of historical linguistics* (eds. C. Bowerman/B. Evans), New York 2015, 423.

¹⁰ An attitude, which G. Curtius characterised as follows: “Die Sprache soll bestätigen, was wir ausgeklügelt haben, wir wollen nicht von ihr, sie soll von uns lehren.” (*Grundzüge der griechischen Etymologie*, Leipzig 1879, 5).

¹¹ Y. Malkiel, *Etymology and general linguistics*, in: *Word* 18, 1962, 202–203, who justly stresses “the artistic element” in etymologising.

mology that respects known rules for phonetic development, but also to gather the conditions of the original motivation. These are the factors that will ultimately be used to decide on how to judge the etymology of Aigyptos.

2.1 *Aigyptos in Antiquity*

The name of a land called Aigyptos is first attested indirectly, in the personal name *ai-ku-pi-ti-jo* (> Αἰγύπτιος), in Linear B on tablet KN Db 1105 + 1446.¹² This confirms the existence in Greek of a head noun, to which the derivational suffix -ιος had been added, but probably one that held the meaning ‘Memphis’ rather than ‘Egypt’ in the second millennium BC.¹³ The meaning ‘Memphis’ also seems to be demonstrated in more-or-less contemporary attestations in the Akkadian *ḫikuṣtaḫ*,¹⁴ and in the Ugaritic *ḫkpt*.¹⁵ As the name of a country, Egypt first appears in the *Odyssey* (3.300; 17.427, etc.), but it is important to note that in the Homeric writings it can also refer to the river Nile.¹⁶ The belief that Aigyptos at this early point predominantly referred to the name of the river has had an important role in discussions of its etymology, strengthened by Hesychius’ remark that Aigyptos was originally the name of the river despite the obvious fact that this is essentially an interpretation of the state of affairs presented by Homer.¹⁷ Indeed, the use of Aigyptos as a river name is not attested outside Homer and grammarians’ notes. In my opinion, the development of the name for ‘Memphis’ to that of a country must be a Greek one, and we should not be surprised that we lack every step in a semantical development that must have occurred during the Dark Age.

In Antiquity, the country name was normally explained as being eponymous with King Aigyptos (Latin Aegyptus),¹⁸ who is said to have ruled Arabia while his twin brother Danaus reigned over Libya. Aigyptos himself is a shadowy figure in Greek myth. His main feat was to father fifty sons who had the task of marrying the fifty daughters of Danaus, the so-called Danaides, who had revolted by slaying their husbands on their wedding night. A single prince had his life spared, and according to legend he became the ancestor of the kings of Argos. It has sometimes been speculated that the story preserves the memory of

¹² The reading was first suggested by H. Mühlestein, *Zur mykenischen Schrift: die Zeichen za, ze, zo*, in: *Museum Helveticum* 12, 1955), 129, who based this on a join made by: E. L. Bennett, Jr., *Junctions of fragments of Minoan inscriptions in Iraklion Museum*, in: *Minos* 3, 1954, 123.

¹³ C. Dolzani, *Sull’etnico miceneo Ai-ku-pi-ti-jo e il suo prototipo egiziano*, in: *Studi triestini di antichità in onore di Luigia Achillea Stella* (eds. A. Balanza/P. Càssola Guida), Trieste 1975, 87–92. For the suffix, see e.g.: M. Meier-Brügge, *Griechische Sprachwissenschaft*, II, Berlin 1992, 20.

¹⁴ Amarna correspondence EA 84.37 and 139.8 (see: A. F. Rainey, *The El-Amarna correspondence*, 2 vols., *Handbuch der Orientalistik* 110, Leiden 2015).

¹⁵ J. Tropper, *Kleines Wörterbuch des Ugaritischen*, Wiesbaden 2008, 44; G. del Olmo Lete, *A dictionary of the Ugaritic language in alphabetic tradition*, I, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* 112, Leiden 2015, 358.

¹⁶ A convenient overview of the Homeric references is found in: C. Jurman, *Aigyptos – Pharos – Thebai. Nochmals zu drei homerischen Toponymen und ihrem Ägyptenbezug*, in: *Diomedes* 7, 2016, 32–33.

¹⁷ *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* (eds. K. Latte/I. C. Cunningham), I, Berlin 2018, 82 (1746).

¹⁸ The son of Belus and Achiroe according to Pseudo-Apollodorus 2.1.4. The same information is repeated by Isidore of Seville (14.3.27). For alternative genealogies, see: K. Wernicke, *Aigyptos* (3), in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (ed. G. Wissowa), I, Stuttgart 1893, 1005–1006.

Aegean-Egyptian relations in the second millennium BC.¹⁹ This is unlikely; it is more credible to argue that the insertion of Aigyptos and other oriental-sounding figures, such as Libye, Belus, and Adonis, into the Argive family-tree is a sixth-century addition at a time when the Greek world had extended to places such as Cyrene and Naukratis, and which served to make the newly-settled places mythically relevant.²⁰ The desire to place the mythic into real world chronology recurred when Manetho (third century BC) equated the same two antagonists with earlier Egyptian kings, namely Armais and Sethos from the beginning of his 19th Dynasty, easily recognisable as cover-forms for pharaohs Horemheb and Sety I. Manetho blended Classical and Jewish traditions by identifying Sethos with Aegyptus, whereas the Hebrew personification of the country, Mestriem, the son of Ham in the Old Testament, was believed to be identical to Menes.²¹

It was common in Antiquity to relegate the problem of semantically opaque place-names to the sphere of anthroponymy by saying that such-and-such a place was named after such-and-such a person. However, one may note that even if it was common in the Greek world to name a place after a hero or city-founder through derived forms,²² it was not until the Hellenistic period that place-names could have an identical form to anthroponyms (e.g. Arsinoe).²³ Thus, the person-based explanation of the country name Aigyptos does not conform to actual naming principles from the early Greek world.

Alternatives to the traditional person-based etymology are preserved in the Byzantine *Etymologicum magnum* (29.7ff).²⁴ Next to the explanation referred to above, the entry also mentions a derivation from αἰγίπτος, formed from αἶγας πίωνας ‘fat goats’. The name was also held to be a combination of the verbs αἶθω ‘to light up’ and κáίω ‘to kindle’, due to the sun-burned skin of the inhabitants. The latter is almost certainly an etymology that actually pertained to Ethiopia.

There is one purported ancient etymology that must be mentioned despite the unreliability of the documentary evidence. A story that is widely circulated on the Internet credits Strabo with the mention of a folk-etymology for Αἶγυπτος that evolved from a compound phrase Αἰγαίου ὑπτιῶς, a somewhat awkward Greek expression that translates as ‘below the Aegean (sea)’. I have been unable to locate where this idea stems from, but it is clearly untrue since neither a consultation of the printed text nor a combined search in the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* reveals anything of the sort. It does not need to be genuinely

¹⁹ E.g. A. Pictet, *Les origines indo-européennes ou les Aryas primitifs. Essai de paléontologie linguistique*, I, Paris 1859, 461; J. Bérard, *Les hyksos et la légende d’Io. Recherches sur la période prémycénienne*, in: *Syria* 29, 1952, 5–43; D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in ancient times*, Princeton 1993, 413.

²⁰ M. L. West, *The Hesiodic catalogue of women. Its nature, structure and origins*, Oxford 1985, 144–154; id., *The east face of Helicon. West Asiatic elements in Greek poetry and myth*, Oxford 1997, 446.

²¹ Iulius Africanus, *Chronographiae. The extant fragments* (ed. M. Wallraff), *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte N.F.* 15, Berlin 2007, 96–97. Mestriem is a personification of the Hebrew name for Egypt, *Misrayim*.

²² M. Fantuzzi, *Ktisis-Epos*, in: *Der Neue Pauly* (eds. H. Cancik/H. Schneider), VI, Stuttgart/Weimar 1999, 880–881.

²³ I. Malkin, *What’s in a name? The eponymous founders of Greek colonies*, in: *Athenaeum* 63, 1985, 115–130; J. H. W. Penney, *Cities and founders in Antiquity*, in: *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 19, 1988, 170–180.

²⁴ *Etymologicum magnum genuinum Symeonis etymologicum* (eds. F. Lasserre/N. Livadaras), Rome 1976, 120–121.

fraudulent, however, and one can imagine that it derived from some misunderstood scholarly interpretation. In fact, it bears some resemblance to a mid-nineteenth century derivation from Greek (see 2.3.1.6). Not every flimsy idea on the Internet deserves scholarly attention, but since this etymology is also found in some handbooks of wide circulation,²⁵ which lends it credibility, the issue needs to be addressed. This serves as a reminder of the importance of checking one's sources.

The person-based explanation lingered into the Middle Ages, such as on the Ebstorf map from mid-thirteenth century.²⁶ It seems that such etymologies were questioned only after the birth of humanistic scholarship. The person-based explanation would remain valid well into the chronological revolution and the rejection of mythology as a foundation for chronology in the early nineteenth century.

2.2 Citation graph

In order to visualize the relationships between the various authors who have written about the name Aigyptos (Fig. 1), I have created a citation graph using the program Gephi, which was developed from 2008 by a French research team. This free software allows network graphs to be drawn that show lines (in graph visualisation jargon these are called 'edges') connecting 'nodes'. In my citation graph the nodes represent various etymological proposals and the edges represent direct citations or references. Incoming edges of a node, which are those going from an older to a more recent publication, are called indegrees, whereas outgoing edges are called outdegrees. The graph takes its shape from the default layout algorithm of the program ForceAtlas2, which makes nodes repel and edges attract in a way that creates a balanced model.²⁷ I chose to use the built-in settings called 'dissuade hubs', which assigns a more central position to nodes with high indegrees, as well as the setting 'prevent overlaps' in order to give a more pleasing image and increase readability. The works are identified in the graph by the surname of the author and year of publication (see the appendix at the end of this article for a key). The graph shows all works on the etymology of Aigyptos that I have been able to retrieve on the condition that they are linked through citation to other works. Except for a few central reference works, I have concentrated on original research, and publications that merely repeat information have been omitted intentionally. Isolated biographical items are also absent from the graph.

²⁵ J. Everett-Heath, ²Oxford dictionary of world place-names, Oxford 2010 (online only). It is not found in the printed first edition from 2000. It has not been possible to retrieve the original source despite contact with the publisher.

²⁶ H. Kugler (ed.), *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, Berlin 2007, 96.

²⁷ For documentation on ForceAtlas2, see: M. Jacomy et al. (2014), ForceAtlas2, a continuous graph layout algorithm for handy network visualization designed for the Gephi software, in: *Plos One* 9(6): e98679. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0098679.

spread until the nineteenth.²⁸ This is reflected in the low representation of edges between authors of the early modern age who might refer to others' works simply by citing the name of the author, without indicating which particular work the citation comes from, let alone the exact page, and sometimes no more than an indefinite pronoun 'one' or 'many' is written in lieu of an author's name, to the consternation of later bibliographers.

2.3.1 *Aigyptos in the modern period*

Modern explanations of the etymology of *Aigyptos* can for practical purposes be examined under seven major headings, which are presented following the principles of chronological order and linguistic background.

2.3.1.1 *Goropius Becanus*

A place of honour in the history of the word *Aigyptos* is held, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, by Johannes Goropius Becanus (1519–1573), who was a physician by profession in the Spanish Netherlands. His fame rests on his voluminous *Origines Antwerpianae sive Cimmericorum becceselana novem libros complexa* [Origins of Antwerp or primordialities of Cimmericians comprised in nine books] from 1569, in which he set out to prove that it was Dutch, and in particular the Brabantian dialect of Antwerp, that had changed the least in comparison to the primeval language, and not Hebrew as was generally accepted.²⁹ He found the most decisive evidence for this view in the similarity between the Phrygian word βεκός, meaning 'bread', which had been the first word uttered by children that King Psammetichus had isolated in order to identify the oldest nation on earth (Herodotus 2.2–3), and the Dutch *bec* 'bread' and *becker* 'baker'.³⁰ For his explanation of *Aigyptos*, which he held was originally a designation for the Nile, he contrasted the specific nature of that river compared to others. He promoted the idea that it had taken its name from the fact that the Nile was at its lowest at the time of Capricorn, during the European winter, which is notable because prevailing conditions in Europe mean that water levels in rivers are normally high in that season. The country name would thus be an abbreviation for the phrase ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰγῶνος ὕπτιον κεῖθαι 'lies supine to (the sign of) Capricorn'.³¹ The relevant syllables derive from αἶξ 'goat', the stem of which is αἰγ-, and the word ὕπτιος 'stretched out on one's back', 'flat'. The goat, it should be noted, had already figured in one of the uncredited etymologies in the *Etymologicum magnum* (2.1). Becanus' explanation sounds far-fetched, but it would be unjust to judge him according to modern standards. Instead, his suggestion

²⁸ R. J. Connors, The rhetoric of citation systems, part I: The development of annotation structures from the Renaissance to 1900, in: *Rhetoric review* 17, 1998, 6–48.

²⁹ A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel*, III, 1, Stuttgart 1960, 1215–1219; H. A. Krop, The antiquity of the Dutch language: Renaissance theories on the language of Paradise, in: *Narratives of Low Countries history and culture. Reframing the past* (eds. J. Fenoulhet/L. Gilbert), London 1996, 108–114; K. Dekker, The origins of Old Germanic studies in the Low Countries, Leiden 1999, 47. On Hebrew vs. nationalistic agendas, see: U. Eco, *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea*, Rome 1993, 105–117.

³⁰ J. Goropius Becanus, *Origines Antwerpianae sive Cimmericorum becceselana novem libros complexa*, Antwerp 1569, preface. On his method, see: R. A. Naborn, Becanus' etymological methods, in: *Voortgang. Jaarboek voor de Neerlandistiek* 15, 1995, 79–86. On Becanus' interest for Egyptian hieroglyphs, see: J. Winand, *Décoder les hiéroglyphes de l'antiquité tardive à l'expédition d'Égypte*, L'académie en poche 29, Brussels 2014, 50–51.

³¹ Goropius Becanus, *Origines Antwerpianae*, 290. Referred to, and rejected, by A. Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, I, Rome 1652, 3.

is remarkable for the following features: It excludes an eponymous derivation from a mythical Aigyptos; it provides an explanation that is grounded in natural characteristics of what is described; and it derives the name from Greek. This last point is all the more surprising given Becanus' overall goal to prove the priority of Dutch over Hebrew as the primeval language.

A late observer might have expected Coptic to have played the role of source language, but the position of Greek is logical if one considers that the oldest attestations for the name Aigyptos are in Greek. Moreover, the relationship between older Egyptian and Coptic was unclear and knowledge of Coptic in Europe was limited in the late sixteenth century: Not only were there no dictionaries or grammars, but very few examples of Coptic texts had been published.³² The lack of familiarity with Coptic Egypt is seen in a number of sources, such as in Bernard of Luxemburg's catalogue of heretics from 1522, in which the Copts had been placed in India, and in the way that his contemporary Guillaume Postel mistook the Coptic script for Georgian.³³

2.3.1.2 Nationalist agendas

Goropius Becanus' inaugurated a period in which linguistic analysis was put to the service of promoting national pride, which took place concurrently with a growing scepticism towards the historical accuracy of ancient myths. Aigyptos appears in a few such nationalist projects, such when Adrian van Schrieck (1560–1621), also known as Scrieckius, claimed that the name was Scythian,³⁴ which at this time was a designation for an ancestor language from which both Germanic and Celtic were believed to derive. Van Scrieck assembled a list of mono- or bisyllabic roots, which provided him with elements that he could search for in his segmental analysis. He analysed Aigyptos as "*Haeg-up-t'hos* Scythis sonat *Silvæ-supra-altitudines*, Francis *Pays à Bois sur les hauteurs*," being formed on the elements *hag*, *ag* 'wood', *up* 'up', a truncated form of the Dutch definite article *te*, and *ho*, *o*, *og*, *hog*, etc. 'height'.³⁵ He does not seem to have reflected on the inadequacy of this hypothetical etymon for a barren country such as Egypt, where most vegetation only grows in the Nile Valley.

A similarly odd proposal was made in 1689 by Isaac Pölmann (1618–1693), a vicar in Schöneberg near Berlin,³⁶ who suggested in a pamphlet mentioning about fifty names of persons and places, as well as common nouns gathered from the Bible, Herodotus and the

³² The alphabet was first reproduced in 1486 (B. J. Irsay-Nagy, A journey to Egypt in 1483 and the beginnings of Coptic studies in Europe, in: *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 46, 2006, 129–149).

³³ A. Hamilton. *Copts and the West, 1439–1822. The European discovery of the Egyptian church*, Oxford 2006, 110, 113.

³⁴ Borst, *Turmbau von Babel*, III, 1, 1224–1225.

³⁵ Forms following A. van Scrieck, *Van t'beghin der eerster volcken van Europen in sonderheyt vanden oorspronck ende saecken der Neder-Landren XXIII Boecken = Adriani Scriecki Rodorni originum rerumque Celticarum et Belgicarum XXIII Libri*, Ypres 1614, unnumbered page in preface. For his theory of language see: P. Swiggers, *Adrianus Schrieckius: de la langue des Scythes à l'Europe*, in: *Histoire Épistomologie Langage* 6/2, 1984, 17–35. Cf. D. Droixhe, *La linguistique et l'appel de l'histoire (1600–1800). Rationalisme et révolutions positivistes*, Geneva 1978, 126–142.

³⁶ For the life of the author, see: E. C. Reichards, *Versuch einer Historie der deutschen Sprachkunst*, Hamburg 1747, 249–256; L. Noack/J. Splett, *Bio-Bibliographien. Brandenburgische Gelehrte der Frühen Neuzeit Mark Brandenburg 1640–1713*, Berlin 2001, 337–342.

epitome of Manetho, that Aigyptos was derived from Low German.³⁷ According to the author, the descendants of Japhet had gathered some time after the confusion of tongues in the land that was to become Egypt, where they formed an *aigen Hupe* ‘a group apart’ (*cohors peculiaris*), from whence the country gained its name. The *t* in Aigyptos was believed to have been added simply “in the manners of the Greek.” Pölmann’s intentions with his praise of Low German, which was by then rapidly receding before High German, seem to me somewhat unclear.³⁸ His German text is interspersed with Latin verse and one cannot help wondering if the author, born in the Vogtland outside the Low German area, ever intended that his work should be taken seriously.

A similar, but later, nationalistic proposal comes from the works of Jacques Le Brigant (1720–1804),³⁹ following whom the name would be Breton. Le Brigant was a native of Brittany who was employed as a lawyer at the Parliament in Rennes, and who nurtured the idea that all other languages on the globe could be explained through Breton. Le Brigant’s argument was steeped in his belief in the correctness of the Table of Nations (Genesis 10). According to him, the Cimmerians, descendants of Japhet’s son Gomer and identified as Celts, pushed west due to Scythian aggression. Although they conquered large parts of Europe, the Cimmerians’ language only remained unaltered in Brittany. Champollion attributed to him the idea that the country name came from *écou-é-vet* “ce qui est caché sous les eaux.”⁴⁰ I have been unable to find out where exactly in his many writings Le Brigant might have said this, and it seems possible that he was misquoted.⁴¹ The same etymology appears in Edme Mentelle’s *Encyclopédie méthodique* from 1787,⁴² and I suspect that Champollion took his information from that source, rather from any of Le Brigant’s published works. Le Brigant is known to have frequented Mentelle’s salon, so it may be that Mentelle wrote it down from memory.⁴³

2.3.1.3 Coptos track

A more durable suggestion than the above has been to connect Aigyptos with the name of the town of Coptos, in Upper Egypt. The name Coptos is undeniably reminiscent of both the adjective Coptic and of Aigyptos, but the resemblance is superficial. The town figured prominently in the scholarship of early modern Europe due to mentions in Classical litera-

³⁷ I. Pölmann, *Dissertatiuncula de vocabulo Ægyptus: Quænam sit illius (1) origo? (2) obfuscatio?*, Neukölln 1689, 3. Cf. A. Rettler, *Niederdeutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Barock*, Schriften der Volkskundlichen Kommission im Provinzialinstitut für westfälische Landes- und Volkeskunde 8, Münster 1949, 167.

³⁸ Pölmann was not alone in his excessive zeal for Low German, see: B. Arendt, *Niederdeutschkurse. Spracheinstellungen im Kontext von Laien, Printmedien und Politik*, Berlin 2010, 55–56, for Johann Micraelius, and Rettler, *Niederdeutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Barock*, 168–169, for Bernhard Raupach, author of “*De Linguae Saxonicae Inferioris Neglectu atque Contemptu Injusto*” (1704).

³⁹ P. Levot, *Biographie bretonne*, II, Vannes/Paris 1852, 203–207; M. Décimo, *La celtomanie au XIX^e siècle*, in: *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 93, 1998, 1–40; id., *Sciences et Pataphysique*, I, [Dijon] 2014, 5–40, 137–140.

⁴⁰ J.-F. Champollion, *Égypte sous les pharaons*, I, Paris 1814, 83–84.

⁴¹ That Le Brigant was misquoted on this particular point seems likely given the irregular spelling, cf. “*et couvê* (er été d’ev)” ‘couverte d’eau’ in J. Le Brigant, *Détachemens de la langue primitive*, Paris 1787, 23.

⁴² E. Mentelle, *Encyclopédie méthodique: Géographie ancienne*, Liège 1787, 69.

⁴³ J. P. Brissot, *Mémoires sur ses contemporains et la révolution française*, I, Paris 1830, 323–324.

ture (e.g. Plutarch, *De Iside* 14, 30; Strabo 17.44). It also played an important role throughout pharaonic Egypt, not least because of its key location at the entrance to Wadi Hammat, from which it controlled access to both the Eastern Desert and to the Red Sea,⁴⁴ a salient point for Roman-age authors.

The reference to Coptos was introduced by none other than Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), who is known today mostly for his fundamental elaboration of ancient chronology in *De emendatione temporum*.⁴⁵ He expressed the opinion in the first edition of this work, from 1583, that ‘Coptic’, ‘Copt’, etc. derive from the name of the town,⁴⁶ though he did not say anything about the etymology of Aigyptos. He retracted this view in a later edition (1598). The polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), while acknowledging Scaliger’s precedence, also argued in his first ‘Egyptological’ work that Copt(ic) derived from the name of the town Coptos.⁴⁷ In later works Kircher repeated this etymology, but added the significant remark that Aigyptos too derived from the name of that town.⁴⁸ Even though it is not easy to follow Kircher’s reasoning and intellectual progression, it seems possible that he associated Coptos with Aigyptos due to his knowledge of medieval Arabic sources.⁴⁹ Kircher knew the explanation found in medieval literature, among others that of al-Mas’udi (tenth century), of King Mesra, whose four sons all had names that were later given to towns (Sai, Atrib, Esmun and Coptus, in Arabic Šā, Atrīb, Ašmūn and Qubṭ (a variant of Qifṭ)).⁵⁰ The Arabic tradition of combining the name of the country and the names of towns, including that of Coptos, may therefore have inspired Kircher to search for an eponymous explanation. Indeed, al-Mas’udi stated explicitly that the Copts traced their origin from Qubṭ, who was the eldest of the four sons.⁵¹ The explanation that Aigyptos derives from Coptos is deficient because it does not attempt to explain the first part of the name, and relies on partial phonetic similarity. The explanation simply associates two vocabulary items.

⁴⁴ For its actual rediscovery and localisation in the early modern period, see: C. Traunecker, La redécouverte de Coptos, in: *Coptos. L’Égypte antique aux portes du désert*, Paris 2000, 26–33. For its etymology from *gbtyw*, see: C. Peust, Die Toponyme vorarabischen Ursprungs im modernen Ägypten, GM Beiheft 8, Göttingen 2010, 73.

⁴⁵ E.g. B. Kuhn-Chen, Scaliger, Joseph Justus, in: *Der Neue Pauly. Supplemente* (eds. P. Kuhlmann/H. Schneider), VI, Stuttgart/Weimar 2012, 1114–1117.

⁴⁶ J. Scaliger, *De emendatione temporum*, Paris 1583, 245. This passage is discussed by J. H. F. Dijkstra, *Mysteries of the Nile? Joseph Scaliger and Ancient Egypt*, in: *Aries* 9.1, 2009, 72–73.

⁴⁷ A. Kircher, *Prodromus Coptus sive Aegyptiacus*, Rome 1636, 7–15, 25.

⁴⁸ A. Kircher, *Lingua Aegyptia restituta*, Rome 1643, 614 (‘Urbs Thebaidis superioris prima et antiquissima a qua tota Aegyptus, uti et Coptitae nomen habent’); id., *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, I, 41, 75.

⁴⁹ It is perhaps also significant that Scaliger had been in contact with an exiled Syriac Orthodox Patriarch who was conversant with Arabic source material.

⁵⁰ O. El-Daly, *Egyptology: The missing millennium. Ancient Egypt in medieval Arabic writings*, London 2005, 22. The same tradition is found in Abu I-Makarim’s ‘Churches and monasteries’ from the turn of the thirteenth century (ed. B. T. A. Evetts, Oxford 1895, 220), in which Qifṭ is the son of king Mišrā’im.

⁵¹ Mas’ūdī, *Les prairies d’or* (trans. Barbier de Meynard & Pavet de Courteille), II, Paris 1965, 305. The Arabic text is found in Maçoudi, *Les prairies d’or* (eds. C. Barbier de Meynard/P. de Courteille), II, Paris 1863, 395–396.

A fuller analysis was attempted by the Dutch philologist Abraham van Berkel (1639–1686), rector at the Latin school in Delft,⁵² whose fame rests on his edition of Stephanus of Byzantium’s *Ethnika*. He may not have known Kircher’s work, because this author does not appear anywhere else in his commentary, though van Berkel may have chosen not to mention him. Van Berkel explained in a footnote to his text edition that the name was a compound consisting of αἴα ‘earth’ and the name of the town of Coptos, thus αἴα τῶν Κόπτων, perhaps in the sense of ‘the earth of the Coptites’.⁵³ He sought to make this reconstruction more plausible by adding that it is not unusual for names of towns to extend to an area or province. A variant of the etymology through Coptos comes from the theologian Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722) – another example of the humanism of the Low Countries – who identified the first part as αἴγες ‘waves’ and speculated that the meaning had originally been ‘river of Coptos’.⁵⁴ This could be seen as conforming to the idea that Aigyptos first designated the name of the river Nile.

The etymological link between the town of Coptos and the name Aigyptos has survived well into the twentieth century, often in surprising ways.⁵⁵ It surfaces again and again, although the authors normally seem unaware of their predecessors. One such attempt dates to 1893, by Onofrio Abbate Pacha (1824–1915),⁵⁶ who was a personal physician at the Egyptian khedive’s court. Abbate argued that the first element was the Doric Greek conditional particle αἰ (Attic Greek εἰ ‘if’), followed by the name of the town,⁵⁷ but it is unclear what relationship there might be between the two elements. Few years later (1901), Coptos was put forward in a suggestion by Paul Haupt (1858–1926), professor of Semitics in Baltimore.⁵⁸ He interpreted the first element as containing the stem that is also found in the plural noun αἴγες ‘stream’, and translated “Strom von Coptos” as if it were a Greek compound, faithful to the idea that the original reference had been to the river.⁵⁹ Haupt had obviously not realised that this explanation had already been suggested by Vitringa in the early eighteenth century. Ahmed Bey Kamal (1851–1923),⁶⁰ celebrated as the first native Egyptologist, also nurtured the idea of a link to Coptos, and even thought that the etymon could be

⁵² L.-G. Michaud (ed.), *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne, nouvelle édition*, IV, Paris 1843, 52–53; C. V. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind. Studies in Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Translation with a Checklist of Books Translated from English into Dutch, 1600–1700*, Leiden 1983, 130–131.

⁵³ A. van Berkel, *Stephani Byzantini Gentilia per epitomen, antehac de urbibus inscripta*, Leiden 1688, 153.

⁵⁴ C. Vitringa, *Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiæ*, I, Leeuwarden 1714, 535 (= *Herborn 1715*, 713).

⁵⁵ An echo of this theory is still found in modern handbooks, e.g. V. A. Nikonov, *Kratkij toponimičeskij slovar’*, Moscow 1966, 134; A. Room, *Place-Names of the world. A dictionary of their origins and backgrounds*, North Ryde/London 1987, 89, as well as A. Czapkiewicz, *Ancient Egyptian and Coptic elements in the toponymy of contemporary Egypt*, Cracow 1971, 66.


⁵⁶ F. Brancato, *sub voce*, in: *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, I, Rome 1960, 18–19.

⁵⁷ O. Abbate, *L’onomatopée de l’Égypte*, in: *BSGE 3* [III^e Série – No 11 – mai 1893], 769–771.

⁵⁸ C. Wade Meade, *Road to Babylon. Development of U.S. Assyriology*, Leiden 1974, 32–34.

⁵⁹ P. Haupt, *Elul und Adar*, in: *ZDMG 64*, 1901, 710.

⁶⁰ H. Sallam, *Ahmed Kamal Pasha (1851–1913): A Family of Egyptologists*, in: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995* (ed. C. J. Eyre), OLA 82, Leuven 1998, 1015–19; L. Maḥmūd Sa’īd, *Kamāl wa-Yūsuf. Aṭariyān min al-zaman al-ḡamīl*, Cairo 2002, 29–132.

found in late hieroglyphic texts containing , which he read as *Qbt*.⁶¹ Kamal's speculations resulted in an immediate and virulent attack by Georges Daressy, who pointed out that Kamal's readings of the hieroglyphic examples were wrong:⁶² What Kamal noted as a hieroglyphic antecedent is merely a simple aesthetic rearrangement of the signs for the late synonym *B3k.t* for Egypt.⁶³

As if this were not enough, William John Phythian-Adams (1888–1967), a Biblical archaeologist and first keeper of the Palestine Archaeological Museum,⁶⁴ presented in 1922 his own version of an etymology built, once again, on the name of the town of Coptos. Given his background, it is not surprising that he identified the first part of Aigyptos with the Hebrew word *'i* 'island' or 'coast', to which Coptos would have been added.⁶⁵ More surprising is his statement: "For some reason it does not appear to have been noticed that ... the name Aigyptos [is] preserved today in the abbreviated form of Kibt (Kopt)."⁶⁶ While he was apparently not aware that this very link had been suggested since the late sixteenth century, one interesting aspect of Phythian-Adams' theory that is worth mentioning is his attempt to provide a historical interpretation in the light of the recently discovered Naqada culture. Phythian-Adams imagined that the name had spread to the Delta through the successful invasion of northern Egypt by people from the south,⁶⁷ which anticipated more recent ideas of cultural dissemination.

2.3.1.4 *Vulture track*

Another suggestion that enjoyed popularity in early research was to explain Aigyptos through the Greek noun *αἰγυπιός* 'vulture', which undeniably bears a striking resemblance to the name of the country. The similarity is today usually understood as being coincidental.⁶⁸ The earliest reference to this explanation was by Scaliger, but was couched in such obscure terms that it is unclear whether he regarded the name of the country or the name of the bird as being the original.⁶⁹ One early scholar who was more explicit was Edward Sim-

⁶¹ A. Kamal, *Le procédé graphique chez les anciens Égyptiens, l'origine du mot Égypte, les noms géographiques désignant cette contrée et ses habitants primitifs*, in: BIE 10, 1916, 168–171.

⁶² G. Daressy, *Les noms de l'Égypte*, in: BIE 10, 1916, 359–368.

⁶³ H. Gauthier, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*, II, Cairo 1925, 6.

⁶⁴ Short biographical data in S. Gibson, *British archaeological institutions in Mandatory Palestine, 1917–1948*, in: PEQ 131, 1999, 138–139.

⁶⁵ The Hebrew word is now mostly recognised as a loan from Egyptian (Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian proper names and loanwords in North-West Semitic*, SBL Dissertation Series 173, Atlanta 1999, 239).

⁶⁶ W. J. Phythian-Adams, *Aigyptos: A derivation and some suggestions*, in: JPOS 2, 1922, 94–100.

⁶⁷ This sounds surprisingly modern for a time when many still assumed that there had been an Asiatic adstratum.

⁶⁸ E.g. R. S. P. Beekes, *Etymological dictionary of Ancient Greek*, I, Leiden 2010, 33. See especially for the bird-name M. Meier-Brügger, *Griechisch (αἰγυ)πιός, vedisch (rjī)pyá- und Verwandtes*, in: *Historische Sprachforschung* 108, 1995, 50–55.

⁶⁹ J. J. Scaliger, *In Sex. Pompei Festi libros de verborum significatione castigationes*, [Geneva] 1575, x. This seems to be what Pölmann, *Dissertatiuncula de vocabulo Ægyptus*, 1, referred to in his Latin verse: *Consultus tandem Scaliger ipse tacet / Josepho gnato nigra significatio curae est / omnes interea vocis origo latet* ("Even Scaliger whom I have consulted says nothing / Joseph, the son, is keen to demonstrate that it means black / Meanwhile the origin of the word is hidden"). The précis of Scaliger's views by Vitranga (*Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiæ*, I, 535) is incorrect, unless it refers to a passage in Scaliger's work I have not managed to find. Scaliger discusses the claimed synonymy between *Aegyptinos* and *Aethiopas*, as reported by

son (1578–1652), from Cambridge and later rector at Eastling in Kent.⁷⁰ Simson’s explanation is complicated. Referring to Classical authors who had made the connection between the colour ‘black’ and Egypt and the Nile (e.g. Eustathius, *ad Dion. Per.* 225, and Ps.-Plut., *Fluv.* 16.1), he alleged that the Nile had been named Αἴγυπτος by the Greeks because they associated the river Nile with the black-coloured vulture in imitation of Biblical Hebrew Sihor, another name for the Nile (e.g. Jos. 13:2–3).⁷¹ According to Simson, the same association had led to King Sesostri/Sethosis being renamed Aegyptus because of his dark skin.⁷² This is to say that the king was named after the river, and not the river after the king, as tradition had it. Simson does not appear in the citation graph above for the simple reason that he is not referred to by later authors, and instead the Dutchman Jacob Perizonius (1651–1715) is more often credited with the derivation of Aigyptos from the bird name γύψ/αἰγυπιός, ‘vulture’.⁷³ Perizonius noted that the *t* would have been added later, and brought forth some sound arguments against the derivation from Coptos (2.3.1.3). In particular, he pointed out that names of foreign regions were usually named by the Greeks after the towns or people living the closest to them,⁷⁴ whereas Coptos was situated in Upper Egypt, an area hardly known to the Greeks at the time when Homer, in whose works Aigyptos is first mentioned, apparently lived. A similar etymology, though without any reference to Perizonius, also figures in the work by Antoine Court de Gébelin (1725?–1784)⁷⁵ who derived the name from γύψ ‘vulture’, ultimately said to have come from the basic element *gop* or *gup*, which he claimed meant ‘black’ in an unidentified Oriental language. I posit that this is nothing more than a distortion of the Classical references.⁷⁶

Another late reference to the vulture stems from Alfred von Gutschmid (1831–1887). According to him, the name would originally have referred to the river, using the vulture as a metaphor in the belief that the river had been named thus because “der gewaltige, vielarmige Strom auf sie [sc. the first Hellenes] den Eindruck eines Raubvogels mit mächtigen Schwingen machte”.⁷⁷ The association with the vulture is not entirely defunct. It has been speculated in much more recent years that the word for ‘vulture’ influenced the name of the country (see 2.3.1.7.1, end).

the Latin philologist Festus in the second century AD, but he does not mention Aigyptos, either as the name of the river Nile or as the name of the country.

⁷⁰ J. Welch, *The list of the Queen’s Scholars of St. Peter’s College Westminster admitted on that foundation since 1663*, London 1852, 65 n. 5; J. Venn/J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigenses*, Cambridge 1927, 79.

⁷¹ Hebrew *šāhōr* (שָׁחֹר) means ‘black’ so the association was at hand. Cf. A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian onomastica*, I, Oxford 1947, 201*; Muchiki, *Egyptian proper names and loanwords*, 235.

⁷² E. Simson, *Chronicon Historiam Catholicam Complectens ab exordio mundi ad nativitatem D. N. Iesu Christi*, Oxford 1652, 50 (Mosaica, pars prima).

⁷³ J. Perizonius, *Ægyptiarum originum et temporum antiquissimorum investigatio*, Leiden 1711, 13.

⁷⁴ Perizonius, *Ægyptiarum originum et temporum antiquissimorum investigatio*, 11–12.

⁷⁵ R. d’Amat, sub voce, in: *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, IX, Paris 1961, 999–1000.

⁷⁶ A. Court de Gébelin, *Monde primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne, considéré dans les origines grecques; ou dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, IX, Paris 1782, 255–256. For his method, see: Droixhe, *La linguistique et l’appel de l’histoire*, 369–374.

⁷⁷ A. von Gutschmid, *Review of G. Ebers “Ägypten und die Bücher Mose’s, 1868*, in: *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* 5, 23. Januar 1869, 107 [reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, I, Leipzig 1889, 382].

2.3.1.5 Oriental languages

Another group of proposals for the etymology of Aigyptos reflect the growth of Oriental philology during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in particular Semitic philology, where Hebrew had a dominant role because it was considered to be the primeval language.

2.3.1.5.1 Hebrew

The etymology that refers to the vulture and its black colour (2.3.1.4) was explicitly rejected by Johann Philipp Hein (1688–1775), Professor for Ecclesiastical History and Jewish Antiquities at the University of Halle, in a chapter on Aigyptos and its etymology in his 1736 work *Dissertationum sacrarum libri duo*.⁷⁸ He rejected Perizonius' and Vitringa's ideas by adducing the argument that Coptos is not mentioned in historical sources pertaining to an earlier period than the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. He suggested instead a Hebrew etymology *Ai-Caphtor* (for *'î kaptôr*) 'the island of Caphtor', which he thought had originally been the name of one of the many islands forming the Egyptian delta.⁷⁹ He argued against Cappadocia as the location of Caphtor, which was then commonplace, by referring to a verse in the Book of Jeremiah that suggested it was the ancestral home of the Philistines: "for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor" (KJV; Jer. 47.4). An interesting feature of Hein's etymology is that he tried to reconstruct the successive stages that had led from Caphtor to Guptos by citing other alternations for /k/ and /g/. This shows an awareness of the importance of systematicity for phonological development that would not become the norm until the following century.

A little-known Swiss scholar, August Scheuchzer (1812–1876),⁸⁰ apparently in ignorance of Hein, reiterated the Hebrew etymology (again transliterating *'î* as *αι*) in 1858. His version still implied that the name was ultimately Egyptian in origin, since he provided Caphtor itself with a pseudo-Coptic etymology *kah pet aur* 'land of the river' and thereby revealed his limited knowledge of Coptic. A similar proposal was made few years later by the Semiticist Franz Dietrich (1810–1883) who reconstructed a pseudo-Coptic form *Kah-pet-Hôr* 'Landstrich, gehörig (dem Gotte) Hôr', which is equally impossible.⁸¹

Simon Leo Reinisch (1832–1919) published a study in 1859 in which he digested a lot of previous research, and which consequently has a prominent place on the graph in Figure 1, although it has few outdegrees.⁸² Caphtor was situated, he believed, along the Egyptian coast. He rejected Brugsch's then-recent theory of a derivation from *Hw.t-k3-Pth* (2.3.1.7.1) for phonetic reasons, but was surprisingly silent on the phonetic machinery of his own reconstruction *Ikaphtor* 'the island of Caphtor'. Significantly, Reinisch is not

⁷⁸ J. P. Heinius, *Dissertationum sacrarum libri duo*, II, Amsterdam 1736, 206–213.

⁷⁹ Caphtor is with good reason identified with the island of Crete (J. Vercoutter, *L'Égypte et le monde égéen préhellénique. Étude critique des sources égyptiennes (du début de la XVIII^e à la fin de la XIX^e dynastie)*, BdE 22, Cairo 1956, 36–37; W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens und Vorderasiens zur Ägäis bis ins 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Darmstadt 1979, 26–34. Cf. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian onomastica*, I, 202*–204*).

⁸⁰ Dates according to *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, VI, Neuchâtel 1931, 168.

⁸¹ F. Dietrich, *Beiträge zur biblischen Geographie*, in: *Archiv für wissenschaftliche Erforschung des Alten Testaments* 1, 1867–69, 315.

⁸² S. Reinisch, *Über die Namen Ägyptens bei den Semiten und Griechen. Eine historisch-etymologische Untersuchung*, in: *SAWW* 30, 1859, 400–401.

directly linked in the graph to any of the earlier proponents of the same origin, which makes his etymology appear more original than it actually was.

Another etymology relating to Hebrew was suggested by Friedrich Sickler (1773–1836), who derived Aigyptos from Hebrew *gūf* ‘cavity’,⁸³ which he thought was appropriate as an etymon for both river and land.⁸⁴

2.3.1.5.2 Arabic (and Coptic)

A further isolated case is the theologian Christian Müller (1723–?), from Leiden.⁸⁵ His explanation combined the Coptic word ⲙ ‘house’ (*domus*) with an Arabic word meaning ‘lake’, ‘marsh’, which he transcribed as *Elgubt* (properly *al-ġawba*).⁸⁶ His transcription with a final *t* reveals a deficient understanding of basic phonotactics in Arabic, since the letter he transcribed as *t* is always substituted by *h* or dropped entirely in speech when it appears in the final position. It may seem strange that Müller would not have realised the historical impossibility of such an etymology for chronological reasons given that Homer, who as noted was the first to mention Aigyptos, preceded the first mention of Arabs in ancient sources. The combination of two different languages is, to put it mildly, infelicitous. Nevertheless, Müller’s etymology seems to be the first that explicitly refers to Coptic and, in a modest way, signals the progress of Coptic studies in Europe.⁸⁷ Indeed, Müller probably made use of La Croze’s still unpublished dictionary for his research.⁸⁸

2.3.1.5.3 Ethiopian

The English traveller James Bruce (1730–1794) suggested an origin for Egypt in Ethiopian “*y Gipt, Agar* ‘country of ditches, or canals’.”⁸⁹ His succinct commentary does not allow one to fully appreciate his line of thought, or to recognise whether this etymology was of his own contribution or, perhaps, stemmed from his Ethiopian interpreter. To judge from the translation, one could expect a genitive construction, and this is indeed the case if one understands the first element as the South Ethiopic (e.g. Amharic) genitive marker *yä-* followed by a modifying noun. Whereas *agar* can easily be identified with Amharic *ägär* ‘town’, the element *Gipt* is elusive. One distant possibility is that the word is cognate to *g^wäbät* ‘depression in a valley’, which is attested in Gurage.⁹⁰ This is not semantically per-

⁸³ Not a common word, see: J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, I, Berlin/Wien 1929, 314.

⁸⁴ F. K. L. Sickler, *Handbuch der alten Geographie für Gymnasien und zum Selbstunterricht*, Kassel 1824, 776. On Sickler’s writings devoted to ancient Egypt, see: G. Steiner, *Die Sphinx zu Hildburghausen*. Friedrich Sickler, ein schöpferischer Geist der Goethezeit, Weinheim 1985, 252–261.

⁸⁵ I suspect that this is the Christianus Müllerus from Bremen, who matriculated in 1746 at the Faculty of Theology in Leiden at the age of 23 (*Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae*, The Hague 1875, 1012). Cf. T. O. Achelis/A. Börtzler (eds.), *Die Matrikel des Gymnasium illustre in Bremen*, Bremen 1968, 350 (1740).

⁸⁶ C. Müller, *Satura observationum philologicarum maximam partem sacrarum*, Leiden 1752, iii.

⁸⁷ For the study of Coptic in the eighteenth century, see: Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, 229–249.

⁸⁸ É. Quatremère, *Recherches critiques et historiques sur la langue et la littérature de l’Égypte*, Paris 1808, 93–94.

⁸⁹ J. Bruce, *Travels to discover the source of the Nile in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773*, III, London 1790, 657 (= IV, Dublin 1791, 348).

⁹⁰ W. Leslau, *Etymological dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*, III, Wiesbaden 1979, 258. There is also an alternation *b ~ p* within Gurage.

fect, but Bruce had limited knowledge of Ethiopic languages, and the lack of data concerning the lexicon of Ethiopian languages in the eighteenth century means one cannot exclude the possibility that Bruce's explanation stemmed from a genuine Ethiopian tradition (written or oral). The idea that Ethiopia was once regarded as an extremely ancient civilisation may surprise the modern reader, but it harks back to Diodorus Siculus (3.2.3), who had written that the Egyptians were "colonists sent out by the Ethiopians." In this context one might note the remarkable development in the neo-Ethiopian language Amharic, so that *gəbt* 'Egyptian', which ultimately derived from Aigyptos, has acquired a secondary meaning, 'white man', irrespective of country of origin.⁹¹

2.3.1.5.4 Sanskrit

Indo-Egyptian linguistic connections now seem extremely far-fetched, but can be understood in the context of the rediscovery of Sanskrit in the nineteenth century, and its effects on the birth of Indo-European linguistics. Francis Wilford (1761?–1822), in the belief that "free communication formerly subsisted between Egypt and India," derived Aigyptos from Sanskrit *agupta* 'on all sides guarded'.⁹² Unaware of this, Peter von Bohlen (1796–1840), professor for Sanskrit in Königsberg,⁹³ suggested that Aigyptos could be explained through the Sanskrit *a-gupta* 'unhidden', 'unconcealed' (cf. *gupta* 'protected', 'guarded').⁹⁴

The Swiss Indo-Iranist Adolphe Pictet (1799–1875) thought that Aigyptos was formed from **γύπτος*.⁹⁵ He believed that the name of the country could be explained as a translation of 'Hyksos', the famous 'shepherd kings' of Manetho. The fictional word was explained as cognate to Sanskrit *avi* 'sheep' and *gup* 'to guard'.

2.3.1.6 Greek revival

As an Egyptologist, it is easy to form the impression that Brugsch's etymology that was briefly alluded to in the introduction wholly precludes the idea of a Greek origin for Aigyptos, but that impression is illusory and is likely to stem from the fact that discordant views, in favour of a Greek origin, have typically been published in journals that are not widely circulated in specialised Egyptological libraries.

One Classical scholar whose ideas on Aigyptos seem to have reached a wide audience, though only circumstantially, is Ernst Curtius (1814–1896), an archaeologist and historian who held a professorship first in Berlin and later in Göttingen.⁹⁶ He explained Aigyptos as being a Greek compound from the stem *αιγ-*, typical for names of places connected to the sea, among which are Aiga, the island Aigina, and the Aegean itself. A flaw in his

⁹¹ A. Bausi, s.v. Egypt, in: *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (ed. S. Uhlig), II, Wiesbaden 2005, 240. This meaning now seems rather antiquated.

⁹² F. Wilford, On Egypt and other countries adjacent to the Cálí River, or Nile of Ethiopia from the ancient books of the Hinus, in: *Asiatic researches* 3, 1799, 304. For the author's fraudulent use of misinterpreted Sanskrit sources, see: N. Leake, Francis Wilford and the colonial construction of Hindu geography, 1799–1822, in: *Romantic geographies. Discourses of travel 1775–1844* (ed. A. Gilroy), Manchester 2000, 204–222.

⁹³ E. Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*, I, Strasbourg 1917, 86–89.

⁹⁴ His theory was dismissed, without mention of his name, by R. Lepsius, *Ägypten, das alte*, in: *Real-Encyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (eds. J. J. Herzog/G. L. Plitt), I, Leipzig 1877, 166.

⁹⁵ Pictet, *Les origines indo-européennes ou les Aryas primitifs*, 460–461.

⁹⁶ E. Baltrusch, in: *Der Neue Pauly. Supplemente*, VI, 262–264.

etymology is that he had nothing to say about the second element, except that it is not ὕπιος ‘flat’.⁹⁷

In Αἴγυπτος ist man versucht, als zweiten Bestandtheil YPT ὕπιος anzusehen, da ὑπιότης der griechische Ausdruck ist, um Flüsse von sehr geringem Gefälle zu bezeichnen (Strab. 346).⁹⁸

His account may be the source for the claim now common on the Internet that Strabo provided a folk-etymology (see 2.1). Curtius’ text refers to the Aegean, and mentions both the adjective ὕπιος and Strabo, so that it appears possible that this directly or indirectly inspired the story. Despite extensive research I have been unable to trace how a remark in little-read treatise found its way onto the Internet, and am unable to identify the name of author of the rejected theory to which Curtius referred. As noted above, this etymology, which is only a partial explanation, assumes that the name first referred to the river Nile, and later to the country.

The Classicist Karl Tümpel (1855–1940) also recognised the stem αἰγ- for the first syllable of Αἴγυπτος, and hesitatingly suggested that the second part might be related to the stem found in ποτ(-αμός) ‘river’.⁹⁹ Unaware of Tümpel’s speculation, Françoise Bader (Paris-Sorbonne) briefly touched upon the question in a footnote of an article from the 1990s, in which she analysed the name of the river as a compound with the meaning ‘qui vole (= court) par à-coups’.¹⁰⁰ This would again consist of the root αἰγ- having given rise to αἴγες, to which Vitringa before Tümpel had referred (2.3.1.3), but now preceding a derivation of the stem found in πέτομαι ‘to fly’. Ironically, some etymologists argue that the noun ποταμός, which Tümpel had mentioned, derives from the same Indo-European root *peth₂-, which occurs in πέτομαι.¹⁰¹ The Belgian linguist Louis Deroy (1921–2003) also thought that Αἴγυπτος was related to the word αἴγες ‘waves’, believing it to be a loanword from pre-Greek.¹⁰² Michael Janda, currently Professor of Indo-European Linguistics in Münster, has presented an etymology for Αἴγυπτος that builds on Indo-European roots, and fortunately he is generous with details.¹⁰³ He mentions in passing the possible derivation from αἰγυπίος ‘vulture’ (without reference to earlier scholars who favoured this etymology, see 2.3.1.4), but rejects a relationship between the two for semantic reasons. Through segmentation of the name of the country, and following a discussion of various alternatives, he finally opts for the much-referenced stem αἰγ-, referring to water, and

⁹⁷ E. Curtius, *Die Ionier vor der ionischen Wanderung*, Berlin 1855, 18, 50. Also more recently in G. R. Stewart, *Names on the globe*, New York 1975, 170: ‘laid flat’, ‘having low banks’.

⁹⁸ Curtius, *Die Ionier vor der ionischen Wanderung*, 50.

⁹⁹ K. Tümpel, *Die Aithiopenländer des Andromedamythos*. Studien zur rhodischen Kolonisation, in: *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* 16:1, 1887, 161.

¹⁰⁰ F. Bader, *Butin poétique: de δῦπετής à δια-, διο-πετής*, in: *Annali del Dipartimento di studi del mondo classico (sezione linguistica)* 14, 1992, 126 n.

¹⁰¹ Beekes, *Etymological dictionary of Ancient Greek*, II, 1181–1182, 1226.

¹⁰² L. Deroy, *L’origine préhellénique de quelques noms de peuples méditerranéens*, in: *Annuaire de l’Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves* 13 = *Mélanges Isidore Lévy*, Brussels 1955, 101.

¹⁰³ M. Janda, *Il nome miceneo *Aigypptos: linguistica e ricostruzione culturale*, in: *Colloquium Romanum. Atti del XII Colloquio Internazionale di Micenologia*, Roma, 20–25 febbraio 2006 (eds. A. Sacconi et al.), Pisa/Rome = Pasiphae. Rivista di filologia e antichità egea 1, 2008, 369–376.

reconstructs **Ajgu-pt_h2-o-* ‘which scatters water’, which he compares to the German expression ‘Nilschwelle’ for the inundation of the Nile. The first element in Janda’s etymology is thus identical to Curtius’ idea of a connection to the stem in αἴγες, and the second element can be found in the verb πῆνυμι, πετάννυμι ‘to stretch’, ‘spread’. It is interesting to note that both Bader and Janda saw the Nile inundation as the original motivation for the name, which is essentially the same idea that Goropius Becanus posited in the sixteenth century. Bader did not cite any Egyptological literature, and even Janda is poorly anchored in previous Egyptological research, with few indegrees; his only Egyptological reference is to Pierre Montet’s *Géographie*, which has something of a handbook character and does not contain much reasoning.¹⁰⁴ Janda also briefly addressed the Akkadian *hikuptah* and the Ugaritic *hkpt* (see 2.1), which are usually seen as cognate to Aigyptos, but concluded that no relationship can be demonstrated.

2.3.1.7 Intra-Egyptian explanations

2.3.1.7.1 Ptah

The dominant etymology today, which involves the god Ptah (*Hw.t-k3-Pth*), has precursors. Aigyptos had already been linked to the name of the god Ptah by Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–1798) in 1772. Forster was a vicar and naturalist, joined Captain James Cook on his second journey to the Pacific, and died as Professor in Natural History in Halle.¹⁰⁵ Forster took great interest in onomastics and even prepared a work containing more than five-hundred Egyptian place names, which is unpublished.¹⁰⁶ He put forward the idea that the name of Aigyptos derives from **ⲭⲱ-ⲫⲉⲗⲱ**, which he translated as ‘the earthly house of Vulcan’ (*domus mundana Vulcani*).¹⁰⁷ The idea combined information taken from Manetho that Vulcan/Ἡφαίστος was the first to rule Egypt in the first dynasty of gods and demigods, with Stephanus of Byzantium’s mention of Ἡφαίστῖα as one of the many synonym expressions for Egypt.¹⁰⁸ The identification between Hephaestus and Ptah has been clear since Antiquity.¹⁰⁹ Champollion seems to have known of Forster’s etymology only indirectly, and referred instead to the renowned Orientalist Paul Ernst Jablonski (1693–1757), in whose posthumously published *Opuscula* Forster’s etymology is quoted.¹¹⁰ Champollion rightly criticised the translation of **ⲭⲱ** as ‘mundanus’ as not being supported by the lexica. It

¹⁰⁴ P. Montet, *Géographie de l’Égypte ancienne*, 2 vols., Paris 1957–61.

¹⁰⁵ On Forster’s Coptic studies, see: M. E. Hoare, *The tactless philosopher. Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–98)*, Melbourne 1976, 16–17.

¹⁰⁶ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Ms. lat. qu. 138. The geographer J.-B. d’Anville had the manuscript on loan in 1770, see: J. J. Björnsthål, *Resa til Frankrike, Italien, Sweitz, Tyskland, Holland, England, Turkiet, och Grekland* (ed. C. C. Gjörwell), I, Stockholm 1780, 115 (= Jacob Jonas Björnsthål’s *Briefe aus seinen ausländischen Reisen an den Königlichen Bibliothekar C.C. Gjörwell, I, Durch Frankreich und Unter-Italien* 1780, Leipzig/Rostock 1783, 164).

¹⁰⁷ J. R. Forster, *Epistolae ad Ioannem Davidem Michaelis huius spicilegium geographiae Hebraeorum exterae*, Göttingen 1772, 8. H. Gauthier, *Bibliographie des études de géographie historique égyptienne*, in: BSGE 9, 1920, 226, who knew Forster only from Quatremère’s account, mistook him for “un savant anglais.” Cf. Aufrère, *L’odyssée d’Aigyptos*, 227, in which the work is unidentified.

¹⁰⁸ *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica* (eds. M. Billerbeck/C. Zuber), I, Berlin 2006, A 112.

¹⁰⁹ Classical references gathered in P. E. Jablonski, *Pantheon Aegyptiorum*, I, Frankfurt an der Oder 1750, 44–45.

¹¹⁰ Contrary to what is claimed, the letter referred to in Hoare, *The tactless philosopher*, 16 n. 20, does not bear out any direct contact between Forster and Jablonski.

should be noted that any confusion regarding the final consonant in Forster’s pseudo-Coptic writing of the name of the god Ptah, with **ϣ** /ʃ/ instead of expected **ϣ** /h/, is due to an interpretation of the deity’s name that had been made by an earlier scholar, Maturin Veysi ere La Croze, who derived it from the Coptic verb **ⲧⲣⲱϣ** ‘to order’; this would today be considered a gratuitous proposal.¹¹¹ The use of **ϣ** in Forster’s text instead of **ϣ** is almost certainly an error by the typographer.

A possible echo of Forster’s etymology can be found in one publication by Gustav Seyffarth (1796–1885), the ill-fated proponent of a competing and alternative decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs to that of Champollion, in which all signs were thought of as expressing sounds: it did not recognise ideograms or determinatives!¹¹² In reality, his system appears to have been a patchwork of basic elements taken taken from Champollion and bizarre inventions. For example, Seyffarth read the toponym **ⲡⲓⲃⲟ** on an altar inscribed with the name of King Nectanebo II as *kbt*, representing **ⲭⲏ ⲡⲉⲗ** ‘provincia Phtha’.¹¹³ The pseudo-Coptic transcription is undeniably reminiscent of Forster’s etymology (**ⲏⲓⲭⲱ-ⲡⲉⲗⲱ**), but whether there was any influence from the latter cannot be proven due to the lack of any precise references in Seyffarth’s text. There is also a notable difference: Seyffarth took this to be a designation for Memphis only, and does not mention Aigyptos at all. Incidentally, Seyffarth’s belief that the name of the god Ptah was written next to the toponym is due to a reading error that made him see **ⲡⲓⲃⲟ** (sic) ‘Ptah’ where **ⲡⲓⲃⲟ** ‘Hapi’ was written.¹¹⁴

Ptah also figures in a suggestion made by William Drummond (1770–1828), a Member of Parliament and poet, who was briefly the British envoy to the Kingdom of Naples.¹¹⁵ Apparently ignorant of Forster’s etymology, he declared the name Aigyptos to represent *ikh-Ptah* ‘daemon Ptah’.¹¹⁶ His interpretation was based on a real Coptic word, **ⲏⲡ** ‘demon’, used in the Bohairic dialect. It is an intriguing proposal, since ‘daimon’ happens to be quasi-synonymous to *k3*, which in early Egyptology was often translated as ‘genius’.¹¹⁷ Drummond’s argumentation is circumstantial: In Homer Aigyptos would indicate the river Nile, of which the Canopic branch was known as *Agathos daimon*,¹¹⁸ and thus the river would have been called *ikh-Ptah* in Egyptian. This would have been changed since “the Greeks would articulate this name with difficulty,” and then been “corrupted” into *Gups-*

¹¹¹ M. V. La Croze, *Thesaurus epistolici Lacroziani*, III, Leipzig 1746, 155. Cf. Jablonski, *Pantheon Aegyptiorum*, I, 50.

¹¹² W. Wolze, *Der falsche Weg zu den Hieroglyphen: Gustav Seyffarth, einer der ersten deutschen  gyptologen*, in: *Antike Welt* 42.3, 2011, 57–61.

¹¹³ G. Seyffarth, *Beitr ge zur Kenntniss der Literatur, Kunst, Mythologie und Geschichte des alten  gypten*, VII, *Alphabeta genuina Aegyptiorum*, Leipzig 1840, 114. The group should actually be read as *hwt-k3*.

¹¹⁴ Seyffarth, *Beitr ge zur Kenntniss der Literatur*, V, Leipzig 1833, pl. 2.2. Cf. P. Vernus, *Athribis*, BdE 74, Cairo 1978, 122.

¹¹⁵ R. G. Thorne, *The history of parliament. The House of Commons 1790–1820*, III (A-F), London 1986, 623–625.

¹¹⁶ W. Drummond, *Origines or remarks on the origin of several empires, states, and cities*, II, London 1825, 56.

¹¹⁷ For the earlier history of research into *k3*, see: A. O. Bolshakov, *Man and his double in Egyptian ideology of the Old Kingdom*,  UAT 37, Wiesbaden 1997, 123–125.

¹¹⁸ Ptol. 4.5. On its denominations in Greek, see: K. Blouin, *L’Agathos Daim n dans l’ gypte hell nistique et romaine*, in: * tudes d’onomastique  gyptienne. M thodologie et nouvelles approches* (eds. Y. Gourdon/  . Engsheden), RAPH 38, Cairo 2016, 76.

Pta or *Aigups-Ptas* for semantic reasons, possibly through association with the Greek γούψ ‘vulture’, symbolising Ptah. Drummond warned against an etymology that built on the name of Coptos (2.3.1.3), because the town did not gain importance before Ptolemy Philadelphus and therefore could hardly have been the origin for a name that appeared in the *Odyssey*.¹¹⁹ As noted above, this was one of the arguments Heinius had already brought forward in 1736 (2.3.1.5.1). Drummond was acquainted with Champollion’s *Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens*, which had appeared one year before his own work in 1824. He provided an unexpectedly positive appraisal of Champollion’s work, but seems not to have properly digested it.¹²⁰ As is clear from Fig. 1, Drummond’s etymology did not play any role in later research.

Max Uhlemann (1829–1862), one of Seyffarth’s students, also invented an etymology that involved Ptah. He believed that the toponym $\overset{\circ}{\text{Q}}\text{⊗}$ (to be read *bʒk.t*), found for example on the Rosetta Stone, represented $\kappa\alpha\zeta(\iota)\pi\tau\alpha\zeta$, which is easily recognisable as a compound of $\kappa\alpha\zeta\iota$ ‘earth’ and $\pi\tau\alpha\zeta$ ‘Ptah’, and which he took to be the ancestor of Aigyptos. Even within the framework of Seyffarth’s alternative system of decipherment, his explanation of how he arrived at this reading is baffling. Uhlemann actually thought that the god Ptah’s name was not spelled out, and that the tree-sign alone represented the two consonants *gp*, whereas the *h* in $\kappa\alpha\zeta\iota$ did not need to be written.¹²¹ Uhlemann’s explanation of the sign group as $\kappa\alpha\zeta(\iota)\pi\tau\alpha\zeta$ is therefore nothing more than a freely invented etymology, and one that represented only three out of five consonants. It has most aptly been described as “ein leeres Phantasiegebilde.”¹²²

In 1857, only few years after Uhlemann had presented his explanation, Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894) suggested the derivation from *Hw.t-k3-Pth* that is today the standard etymology. The history of its reception deserves a longer treatment than can be made here, but a few things may be noted. The name is typically translated ‘the temple of the *ka* of Ptah’, using Brugsch’s own wording, but the meaning was ‘die Kultstätte Ptah’s’.¹²³ In general, it is assumed that the name of the temple located in Memphis extended to the whole town,¹²⁴ something that was already known from the 18th Dynasty. It is worthwhile pointing out that Brugsch’s original identification was from a Nile personification depicted in the tomb of Ramesses III,¹²⁵ a fact that seems forgotten, and he may have been influenced by the Homeric reference to Aigyptos as the name of the Nile. Another aspect of the original theory that is now general-

¹¹⁹ Drummond, *Origines or remarks on the origin of several empires*, II, 48–56.

¹²⁰ Making the remarkable observation that ayin (the arm hieroglyph) was consonantal (Drummond, *Origines or remarks on the origin of several empires*, II, 302–303).

¹²¹ M. Uhlemann, *Inscriptionis Rosettanae hieroglyphicae decretum sacerdotale*, Leipzig 1853, 128–129; id., *Handbuch der gesammten ägyptischen Althertumskunde*, II, Leipzig 1857, 12.

¹²² R. Pietschmann, *Aigyptos*, in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (ed. G. Wissowa), I, Stuttgart 1893, 979.

¹²³ H. Brugsch, *Geographische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, I, *Die Geographie des alten Ägyptens nach den ägyptischen Denkmälern*, Leipzig 1857, 73.

¹²⁴ Late in the same work Brugsch recognised the same name as a reference to Memphis, which he translated “Das Haus der Verehrung des Ptah” (*Geographische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, I, 236). H. Brugsch, *Dictionnaire géographique de l’ancienne Égypte*, Leipzig 1879, 267.

¹²⁵ Brugsch, *Geographische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, I, 83. The scene is reproduced in J.-F. Champollion, *Monuments de l’Égypte et de la Nubie*, III, Paris 1845, pl. 253.

ly ignored is the possibility of an etymological connection between *ḥw.t-k3* and the Coptic word *καρι* ‘land’, an element found in Uhlemann’s etymology.¹²⁶ Brugsch’s proposal was not as straightforward as is now generally assumed, and took some time to become the standard origin of the name Aigyptos for Egyptologists. Among his contemporaries, both Simon Reinisch (see end of 2.3.1.5.1.) and Richard Lepsius were critical. The latter wrote about Brugsch’s etymology that it “kann als verfehlt betrachtet werden und ist in neuerer Zeit nicht mehr ernsthaft verfochten worden”.¹²⁷ As has been shown, the link to Ptah had already been made in three other etymologies, and it is hard to believe that Brugsch was unaware of at least Forster’s etymology through Champollion’s work. It is surprising to note how similar Brugsch’s etymology was to Seyffarth’s hieroglyphic example that referred to Memphis, and one may wonder whether Brugsch was influenced, perhaps unwittingly in this particular matter, by any of the other scholars.

More recent objections to Brugsch’s theory focus on phonological matters, especially the development of *ḥw.t-* to *αι-*, when in other place-names the result is simply *α-* (Athribis, etc.).¹²⁸ Franco Crevatin has interpreted *αι-* as the result of a dissimilation from */aw/*.¹²⁹ I find it potentially revealing to note that pre-Greek words preserved in Greek show an alternation of the initial *α ~ αι*, for example *Αισχλαβίος ~ Ασκληπιός*.¹³⁰ According to John Ray, the change to *αι* was due to an adaptation of the Greek word *αἰγυπιός* ‘vulture’,¹³¹ discussed above (2.3.1.4), which must be considered a type of folk-etymology. The classical scholar Drew Griffith (Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada) has suggested a folk-etymological influence from *αἴξ* ‘goat’ that led to the adjustment of the initial syllable. In his view, the goat was linked to rivers in Greek myth and cult, as seen in place-names such as *Tragus* in Arcadia. He has doubts whether *αἴγες* ‘waves’ could be “a metaphor of goats for waves.”¹³² He writes:

I suggest that the Greeks connected the Nile with goats, the more so since Ptah himself is horned, his incarnation being the Apis-bull and his function that of creation, like the ram-headed god, *Ḥmnw*.¹³³

This does not sound particularly convincing to an Egyptologist, since Ptah is normally not horned, and his role as creator is independent from any procreative activity of animal husbandry. Griffith seems to be thinking of a pre-Greek loan-word, since he explains the unex-

¹²⁶ Brugsch, *Geographische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, I, 122.

¹²⁷ Lepsius, in: *Real-Encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (ed. A. Hauck), I, Leipzig 1896, 203. This criticism is not found in the second edition, from 1877, but is presumably Lepsius’, even though he had died in 1884, perhaps motivated by the appearance of Brugsch’s geographical dictionary

¹²⁸ Cf. A. Egberts, *Consonants in collision. Neith and Athena reconsidered*, in: *Black Athena: ten years after* (ed. W. M. J. van Binsbergen) = *Talanta. Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society* 28–29, 1996–1997, 157–158.

¹²⁹ F. Crevatin, *Note di linguistica egiziana*, in: *Aegyptus* 55, 1975, 10–13. Considered a regular pre-Greek development in Jurman, in: *Diomedes* 7, 2016, 34–35.

¹³⁰ E. J. Furnée, *Die wichtigsten konsonantischen Erscheinungen des Vorgriechischen mit einem Appendix über den Vokalismus*, The Hague/Paris 1972, 335.

¹³¹ Suggestion cited in Meier-Brügger, in: *Historische Sprachforschung* 108, 1995, 55.

¹³² R. D. Griffith, *Criteria for evaluating hypothetical Egyptian loan-words in Greek: The case of Αἰγυπιος*, in: *Illinois classical studies* 22, 1997, 4.

¹³³ Griffith, in: *Illinois classical studies* 22, 1997, 5.