

## On Some Examples for the Egyptian Apheresis of “i”

By Stefan Bojowald\*

*This contribution deals in detail with the Egyptian apheresis of “i”. The phonetic principle occupies a solid position in the current scientific literature. The number of examples is enlarged here considerably, viewing the phenomenon from as many vistas as possible. In each case, the phonetic circumstances are explained.*

**Keywords:** Egyptian philology, Egyptian phonology, apheresis of “i”

### Introduction

This article takes a closer look at the Egyptian apheresis of “i”. In general, apheresis is a rhetorical and phonological term for the omission of one or more sounds or syllables from the beginning of a word. A (weak) vowel or diphthong is usually left out. In English, the forms “round” for “around”, “specially” for “especially” and “spy” for “espy” can be given as examples.

Researchers were confronted with the Egyptian phenomenon early on. The following overview shows the course of development to date<sup>1</sup>.

The oldest work on this aspect was apparently presented by Erman (1967/Neudruck der Ausgabe 1910, pp. 96–104), who was able to prove the apheresis both compactly and in individual formations.

The phonetic rule was then touched upon by Westendorf (1962, pp. 12–13) under the amply flexible term “Defektive Schreibung”.

The aspect was last made clear by Kurth (2007, p. 463) in the spelling “h.t” for the “ih.t”-cow.

The scientific interest in this topic seems to have decreased noticeably afterwards. The existence of the phonetic law is not subject to any doubts.

In this contribution, the initiative is taken to deal with this phenomenon again. The amount of data that has been added in the meantime is presorted for this purpose and processed to such an extent that the phenomenon can be viewed in all its facets. In the total sum, ca. 50 examples have accumulated, on the basis of which first statements can be made. The apheresis of “i” follows certain rules, which differ from case to case, but are always binding. The list presented here uses the Egyptological transliteration alphabet to arrange the evidence. This was the best way to get a handle on the wealth of material. In principle, other tools have been available for the structuring, but after weighing up all the arguments, they turned out to be less useful. Otherwise, the scope of the article would have

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<sup>1</sup>The loss of initial “i” in the hieroglyphic reproduction of African country names mentioned by Edel (1990, p. 89) will be excluded, cause it may have other causes, which cannot be pursued further here.

exceeded an almost unacceptable level, since frequent back and cross references would become unavoidable. The age of the evidence is given in brackets for better orientation. The elision of “i” started cautiously in the Old Kingdom, only to experience its climax in the Graeco-Roman period.

The dominant theme of the investigation is the phonetically conditioned apheresis of “i”. In the further course, the question of the influence of phonetic laws is tried to be answered as often as possible. The discussion is mainly based on spellings of individual words, but then also includes puns in the consideration<sup>2</sup>. The environment of puns has crystallized several times as the gravitational centre of phonetic laws, so that the present cases are no exception. The puns come from literary texts, where they are known to be particularly common. The interpretation of the puns follows in the footsteps of Leitz (2014, p. 310 n. 44), who arrives at the conclusion that the mere consonance is sufficient as a constitutive feature.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “3”

The first group of examples is put under the motto of the apheresis of “i” before “3”. The most logical explanation is probably the assimilation of “i” to “3” in connection with the phonetic change between “I” and “3”<sup>3</sup>. The writing “3.t” (Sethe 1964, 25 k, Allen 1960, p. 46, Kucharek 2010, pp. 276/279/326f) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i3.t” “site” is pointed out first. The writing “3.t” (Allen 1960, p. 46, Quack 2014, p. 93, Widmaier 2008, p. 146) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i3.t” “back” should be highlighted as well. The writing “3.t” (Ockinga 2011, p. 353) (New Kingdom) for “i3.t” “standard” follows the same pattern. The theoretically conceivable connection between “3bw” “Elephantine” and “i3b.t” “Osten” (Beinlich 2017, p. 25) (Late Period) can be seen in the same context. The writing “3r” (Burkard 1995, 194 n. 132) (Graeco-Roman period) for “i3r” “mourning” fits into the same grid. The relatively rare spelling “3r” (Allen 1960, p. 46, Jansen-Winkel 2009, p. 453) (New Kingdom/Late Period) for the second halve of “šh.t-i3rw” “field of rushes” reflects the same phenomenon. The explanation of “3r.t” (Middle Kingdom) as a writing of “i3r.t” “outflow” suggested by Lesko (1972, p. 64c) would be on the same line, but was rejected by Sherbiny (2017, p. 231) because of the unusual flesh determinative. The writing “3d.t” (Jasnow 1992, p. 108) (Late Period) for “i3d.t” “deficiency” must also be considered here. The pun between “3d” “to rage” and “i3d.t” “deficiency” also goes back to the apheresis of “I”, which can be found in: “...kii r3 tp-‘.wy ir.t hr i3d.t=ś, iw 3d=k r=ś iw 3d=ś r=k” (O’ Rourke 2015, p. 130) (Late Period) ,... Another spell before the eye of Horus (and) its torment(er). You rage against it (and) it rages "against you". The puns between “3bw.t” “Abydos pillar” and “i3bii.t” “left” respectively “3b” “to stay” and “i3bt.t” “east” in: “tšī t̄w m 3bw.t ir.t i3bii.t n. t R‘, 3b ib=k m i3bt.t” (D X, 244,

<sup>2</sup>For Egyptian puns cf. Guglielmi (1984, pp. 491–506), Barbash (2011, p. 16ff), Hagen (2012, pp. 52–54), Richter (2016, pp. 13–38).

<sup>3</sup>For this phonetic change cf. Edel (1955/1964, p. 59f), Westendorf (1962, p. 10f), Jasnow and Zauzich (2005, p. 89), Sethe (1899, p. 48).

2–3) (Graeco-Roman Period) draw back on the apheresis of “i” as well. The line, which is almost saturated by with puns, can be translated “Raise in/as the Abydos pillar, left eye o Ra, your heart may stay in the east”.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “w”

The next subcategory of the apheresis of “i” can again be demonstrated with a larger number of examples. The examples connect the fact, that everywhere “i” before “w” was expelled. The assumption that here the assimilation of “T” to “w” in connection with the phonetic change between “T” and “w”<sup>4</sup> takes place should be correct. The writing “w” (Pries 2011, p. 110 n. 358) (Middle Kingdom) for “i w” “washman” is stressed first. The second example is built by the writing “b” (Burkard 1995, p. 193 n. 116, Goedicke 1984, p. 63, Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman Period) for “i b” “bowl”. The writing “b” (Old Kingdom/ Graeco-Roman Period) for “i b” “to join (Junge 2003, p. 228)/to supply (Pries 2011, pp. 228–229)” can be added to the series. In its case, according to Gundacker (2018, p. 158), it should be an aleph prostheticum or dialect doublets. The explanation with dialectal influence seems to be less probable. The writing “b.t” (Parkinson 2012, p. 190) (Middle Kingdom) for “i b.t” “unity” must also be taken into account in this context. The writing “f” (Sander-Hansen 1956, p. 51) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i f” “to torment” should receive the same appreciation. The writing “r” (Erichsen 1959, p. 61, Albert 2013, p. 20; see also Otto 1960, p. 75) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i r” “to arise” can be subsumed under the same keyword. The writing “r.t” (Töpfer 2015, p. 117) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i r.t” “urae” belongs to the same category. The same interpretation can be consulted in explaining the writing “h” (Sethe 1964, p. 174; Volten 1958, p. 351 n. 1; von Falck 2006, p. 15) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i h” “moon”. The same mention should get the pun between “i b” “to present” and “b.t” “vessel”, delivered in “i b.n=i n=k b.t” (Cauville 1997, p. 95) (Graeco-Roman period) “herewith I present you the vessel”. The pun between “i r” “to arise” and “r” “Ra” allows the same explanation, which can be observed in the line “i (r)=k n=s m m=k pw n r” (Sethe 1960, p. 233 (452b); see also Edel 1955/1964, § 428 bb) (Old Kingdom) “...you arises to him in this your name Ra”. In addition, a metathesis is to be assumed. The plausibility of the pun is increased by the writing “r” for “i r” discussed above.

### The Apheresis of “T” before “w”

The next examples join together again to form a group, in which the apheresis of “i” before “w” appears. The external prerequisite has certainly demanded the

<sup>4</sup>For this phonetic change cf. (Sethe 1899, pp. 88–90), Westendorf (1962, p. 19), Peust (1999, pp. 103–104).

assimilation of “I” to “w” as a result of the phonetic change between “i” and “w”<sup>5</sup>. The writing “w3” (Osing 1992, p. 62) (New Kingdom) for “iw3” “cow” is listed first. The same look is worth throwing at the writing “w” (WB I, 50, Belegschreibungen) (Old Kingdom) for “iw” “heir”. The writing “wr” (Kucharek 2010, p. 440, Barbash 2011, p. 118) (Graeco-Roman period) for “iwr” “pregnant” will next be noted. The hint at the pun between “iwr” “pregnant” and “wr” “large” should also be included in this context, which can be verified in the line “iwr.n t3 wr.t m ḥnt-t3” (Kockelmann and Winter 2016, p. 105) (Graeco-Roman period) “pregnant was the Large one in Philae”. The pun is supported by the writing “wr” for “iwr” discussed above.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “p”

The next statements will be entirely in the spirit of the apheresis of “i” before “p”. In this case, the assimilation of “i” to “p” seems to occur. In the present moment, only the writing “p.t” (KRI III, 305, 12/KRI III, 311, 9) (New Kingdom) for “ip.t” “harem” could be detected. The phonetic change between “i” and “p” has apparently not yet appeared. As a way out, analogy formation could be considered. However, the remarks of Kitchen are otherwise not without problems, so that it may be a modern misspelling. The example should therefore perhaps be deleted.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “m”

The next group consists of examples in which the apheresis of “i” before “m” has taken place. The assimilation of “i” to “m” is a possible cause for this. The process was most likely started by the phonetic change between “m” and “I”<sup>6</sup>. The phonetic change has entailed the corresponding assimilation. The writing “m3” (Barbash 2011, p. 166) (Late Period) for “im3” “gracious” has to be introduced first. The possibly existing connection between “m3ḥ” “grain sheaf” and “im3ḥ” “venerable” continues the series (Kaplony 1966, p. 88, cf. Hornung 1963, p. 53; for the word “m3ḥ” “grain sheaf” cf. Giza VI, 144; Giza XI, 191; Takács 2008, p. 315). The writing “mn” (Helck 1961, p. 187 n. 4, Jansen-Winkel 2007a, p. 188) (New Kingdom/Late Period) for “Imn” “Amon” follows next. The writing “mn.tiw” (Barbash 2011, p. 152) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “imn.tiw” “the Western ones” must also be included in the statistics. The number of examples can be further increased by the writing “mḥ.t” (Lüscher 2010, p. 93; for the connection between “mḥ” and “imḥ.t” cf. Leitz 2014, pp. 298–299) (New Kingdom) for “imḥ.t” “place name”. The assimilation of “i” to “m” is also documented by the pun between “Imn” “Amun” and “mn” “to be firm”, which is certified in at least three places. The first case occurs in “i3w.t rnpī śbb nḥḥ, Imn mn m (i)ḥw.t

<sup>5</sup>For this phonetic change cf. Sethe (1899, 87f/116f), Edel (1955/1964, p. 62), Westendorf (1962, p. 21), Osing (1976, p. 628).

<sup>6</sup>For this phonetic change cf. Bojowald (2011, pp. 293–295).

nb(.wt)” (Lange 1927, p. 34) (New Kingdom), which can be translated by “you old one, who rejuvenates, and lives through the eternity, Amon, who is firm in all”. The second example can be proven in “imn.ti m Imn m ḥ3.t ntr.w ... ḥr=k tw m imi p.t mn.ti m R” (Zandee 1947, pl. 3; see also Smith 2002, p. 103) (New Kingdom), for which the translation “(You are) hidden as Amon in the front of the gods ..., you removes yourself as the one, who is in heaven, firm as Ra” can be offered. The third example is in “nhb(.t)[=f] m ḏw.w r nwn [m] Imn mn m ḥ.t nb(.t)” (Klotz 2006, p. 74) (Graeco-Roman period), for which the translation “[his] names row reaches from the mountains to the sea [as] Amun, who is firm in all.”. The pun is made almost perfect by the writing “mn” für “imn” discussed above.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “n”

The next examples begin a new paragraph, in which the apheresis of “i” before “n” is analyzed. The assimilation of “i” to “n” forms the prerequisite that was brought about by the phonetic change between “n” and “i”. The last phenomenon has been treated e.g., by Westendorf (1962, p. 28). The writing “nb” (Brunner 1944, p. 32) (Middle Kingdom) for “inb” “wall” serves as first example. The writing “npii” (Leitz 2014, p. 142) (Graeco-Roman period) for “inpii” “the one belonging to Anubis” must also come up for discussion.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “h”

The next example again opens up a new paragraph in which the apheresis of “i” before “h” is portrayed. The search has so far resulted only in one example that hides in the writing “hb” (von Falck 2006, p. 28) (Graeco-Roman period) in one manuscript instead of “ihb” “?” in another manuscript. In the Egyptian language, the definitive proof of the phonetic change between “i” and “h” does not seem to have been successful so far, the phonetic change between “i” and “h” in Egyptian-Semitic direction will step in as a provisional replacement<sup>7</sup>. The late writing “hmś.t” (Widmer 2014, p. 138) for the Horus son “Im-śt” “Amset” may also indicate this phonetic change. The assimilation of “i” to “h” has been productive in the example of Kurth discussed above.

### The Apheresis of “i” before “ḥ”

The next examples constitute a new paragraph, in the centre of which is the apheresis of “i” before “ḥ”. The assimilation of “i” to “ḥ” as a result of the phonetic change between both consonants can be recognized as a cause. The phonetic change between “i” and “ḥ” is one of the rarer types, but it has been proven with certainty (Westendorf 1962, p. 36). The base can perhaps be

<sup>7</sup>For this phonetic change cf. Ember (1967/Neudruck der Ausgabe 1911, p. 89).

additionally expanded by the writing “śnwii” (WB IV, 157) for “śnwḥ” “to cook”. The writing “ḥ” (Grunert 2005, p. 122) (Old Kingdom) for the particle “iḥ” must be highlighted as the first example. The same process can also be illuminated from another perspective with the writing “ḥḥ” (Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom) for “iḥḥw”<sup>8</sup> “dusk”. The loss of “w” at the end of a word would also cause no difficulties as a second factor.

### The Apheresis of “i” before Gutturals

In the next section, the examples for the apheresis of “i” before gutturals will be examined more closely. The assimilation of “i” to the subsequent guttural offers itself as a cause. The phonetic change between “i” and gutturals has not yet found a consensus, but a separable study is to be published in the foreseeable future that will provide with better security. The writing “kr” (Gardiner 1932, 34 a) (New Kingdom) for “iḳr” “excellent” starts the series. The writing “gp” (WB I, 141, p. 1, Vandier 1950, pp. 223–234, Klotz 2006, p. 91, Jansen-Winkel 2007b, p. 341, Knigge 2006, p. 168) (Middle Kingdom/Late Period) for “igp” “cloud” must not be missing either.

### The Apheresis of “i” before Dentals

The next examples appear again as an organic unit whose common denominator consists of the apheresis of “i” before dentals. The assumption does not go too far that the assimilation of “i” to the dentals in connection with the corresponding phonetic change is responsible for this. The existence of the Egyptian phonetic change between “i” and dentals could be sufficiently cemented some time ago (Bojowald 2013b, 27–35). The writing “tn” (Allen 1960, p. 59, Grimal 1981, p. 45, Hoffmann 1996, p. 372) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “itn” “sun disc” should be illustrative of this. The writing “tm” (Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom) for “Itmw” “Atum” evokes the same interest. The writing “tr.w” (Gardiner 1948, 36 a/42 a) (New Kingdom) for “itr.w” “river” can also be classified in this category. The list is further completed by the writing “ti” for “iti” (Grunert 2005, p. 124) “to take”. The writing “dn” (WB V, 463, unter dn II) for “idn” “to represent” further rounds off the picture. The writing “db” (Backes 2016, p. 411) (Late Period) for “idb” “shore” should also be named in this context. The hint at the writing “dmi” (Brunner 1937, pp. 23, 59) (Middle Kingdom) for “idmi” “red garment” also seems appropriate. The pun between “dmi” “to snuggle up” and “idmi” “red garment” is to be evaluated in the same light, for which two examples can be given. The passage “ḥd=k m ḥd.t, w3d=k m w3d.t, sm<sup>i</sup>=k irti, dmi=k idmi” (Rickert 2011, pp. 230–233) (Graeco-Roman period) is of first importance, for which the translation “You are white in white clothes, you are green in green clothes, you unite with blue linen, you snuggle up

<sup>8</sup>For the word “iḥḥw” “dusk” cf. Lacau (1970, p. 40), Lacau (1972, pp. 57, 81).

to the red linen” can be chosen. The second example can be decrypted in the line “m n=k idmi dmi=ś r ‘wt=k nb.t” (D X, 222, 10–12; for this passage cf. Leitz 2011, p. 24) (Graeco-Roman period), for which the translation “Take the red garment, so it snuggles up to all your body” makes an adequate impression. The pun between “dr” “to subdue” and “idr” “herd” also belongs here, which is to be seen in the passage “rḥ ph.ti=f dr idr n sm3 mi ḥr n ḥr” (KRI V, 112, 16; for this passage cf. Hsu 2017, p. 245) (New Kingdom) “who knows his power and subdues the herd of wild bulls face to face”. The pun between “Itmw” “Atum” and “tm” “to be complete” goes back to the same principle, which shines up in the passage “...mśḥn.t tm.ti ḏr.t Itmw mśi.t šw ḥn‘ tfn.t” (Yamazaki 2003, p. 24) (New Kingdom) “...Mesechenet, while you are complete, hand of Atum, who bore Schu and Tefnut”. The probability of the pun is successively increased by the writing “tm” for “itmw” discussed above.

The core statement of the contribution remains to be briefly summarized at the end. The apheresis of “i” could be outlined clearer by the foregoing considerations. In the majority of cases, phonetic reasons for the apheresis could be identified. The tendency of the consonant to drop out is certainly related to its own weakness. The same behaviour is shown by the two other weak consonants “3” (Bojowald 2015, pp. 39–42) and “w” (Bojowald 2013a, pp. 197–205). The overall development is not isolated in the world of the oriental languages (Littmann 1910, pp. 62–63).

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