

## The AGÉA database project: Anthroponymes et Généalogies de l'Égypte ancienne

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### Abstract

Since the 1930s, our understanding of ancient Egyptian personal names has been dependent on Ranke's *Personennamen*. But because the data and their philological and sociological analysis are based on the knowledge available in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *PN* requires a complete revision that takes into account recent developments in the subject. Launched in 2008 at the IFAO, the AGÉA database project aims eventually to create a systematic directory of personal names for every period of Pharaonic history, thus completing and modernizing Ranke's work. As a tool facilitating more efficient analysis and a better interpretation of data, AGÉA will focus in its first development on the Old Kingdom.

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### Introduction

Since the 1930s, our understanding of ancient Egyptian personal names has been dependent on a very valuable resource: Ranke's *Die ägyptischen Personennamen (PN)*. This dictionary includes about 14,200 names, which are mostly analyzed, translated and documented. However, because the data and its philological and sociological analysis are based on the knowledge available in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *PN* requires a complete revision that takes into account recent developments in the subject.

This was one of the aims of my Ph.D. dissertation on Egyptian personal names, which focused on the Old Kingdom,<sup>1</sup> a period which until now has not been dealt with in a global study.<sup>2</sup> But this work was not only a new version of the *PN* for the Old Kingdom, as it was also intended to produce a thorough study of the grammatical structures and the sociological phenomena related to personal names, such as the transmission of names within families, their political and religious content, and so on.

It was important to publish this work both within a reasonable time-frame and in an appropriate format that would at the same time be accessible to all and easy to update. For these reasons, I chose to publish the dictionary as an online database. The AGÉA database project<sup>3</sup> presented here comes directly from this idea.

Launched in 2008 at the IFAO, the AGÉA database project aims eventually to create a systematic directory of personal names for every period of Pharaonic history, thus completing and modernizing Ranke's work. This database is to be regarded as a tool facilitating more efficient analysis and a better interpretation of data.

<sup>1</sup> *Recherches sur l'anthroponymie dans l'Égypte du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire avant J.-C. : signification et portée sociale du nom égyptien avant le Moyen Empire* (defended on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007 at the University Lumière-Lyon 2, under the supervision of Prof. L. Pantalacci).

<sup>2</sup> The forthcoming publication of Katrin Scheele-Schweitzer's *Die Personennamen des Alten Reiches: altägyptische Onomastik unter Lexikographischen und Sozio-kulturellen Aspekten (PN-AR)* also goes in this direction.

<sup>3</sup> It is included in the anthroponomastic part of the onomastic research programme I lead with Å. Engsheden at the French Institute in Cairo.

To gain a better idea of the social practices connected with Egyptian personal names, genealogical and prosopographical data are indispensable, which explains their inclusion in *AGÉA*. Nevertheless, this database is not to be regarded as strictly prosopographical, and in particular as far as the inclusion of titles in transliteration only is concerned, it is just a tool intended to clear up onomastic issues.

Connected with my own researches, the first development of *AGÉA* concerns the Old Kingdom. Every single name and person will be recorded as far as they are known, including all kinds of published or unpublished sources (funerary material, rock inscriptions, hieratic archives, etc.).

## 1. Data and the FileMakerPro design of *AGÉA*

All the data are first collated in a FileMakerPro database before being transferred to a PostgreSQL software program designed for web access.

### 1.1. *The FileMakerPro design and tables*

The FileMakerPro structure is based on a pivot-tables system and allows the creation of several-to-several links and a tool for performing cross-references.

This FileMakerPro database uses 4 major tables, which are:

- hieroglyphic names writings, connected with the “names” table by a pivot-table;
- names, linked to the “individuals” table by a pivot-table; individuals, directly connected with the “other names” table (for other names borne by a single individual);
- and a cross-references table, which is a pivot-table between these three previous tables and a bibliographical table.

Beside these major tables there are others which include, for instance, secondary data for the study of names:

- titles, linked to the “individuals” table by a pivot-table;
- parents, which are actually defined through an internal link within the “individuals” table and via a pivot-table;
- and a bibliography.

In all these tables, each key item, such as names, name writings, individuals and titles, receives a set ID-number. This number is given simply to identify these items with no connection with anything else at all. The main table used to fill the database is the cross-reference table, linked to the essential bibliographical/writings and individual tables. From this table it is possible to fill in the most significant data in other tables.

### 1.2. *Data and sections*

In *AGÉA*, data are distributed over two sections: names and individuals.

#### 1.2.1. THE NAMES SECTION

The names section is divided into two parts. The first part contains basic data about names, showing every attested writing of a name and every person who bears it. The second part contains data concerning grammatical analysis of each name.

##### *First part (basic data)*

- *PN* number. If the name is registered in H. Ranke’s dictionary, its *PN* number is quoted.

- Hieroglyphic name writings. The hieroglyphic transcription is made with S. Rosmorduc's JSesh software, using MacScribe font. It also includes a hieroglyphic encoding field based on the 'Manuel de Codage'.
- Transliteration of the name, some kind of phonetic transcription of the Egyptian language.
- Translation of the name, when possible.
- Sex of the name bearer. This is indicated by "h." for "homme", "f." for "femme", as the database is originally in French. These two letters are followed by a question mark if a doubt remains. The question mark is used alone when the identity of the bearer of the name cannot be established.
- Bibliography. Bibliographical references are given for each hieroglyphic writing of a name related to a single individual.
- Dating of the name bearer.
- "Origin" of the name bearer. This field sums up all data related to the origin of the objects mentioning a single person.
- Comment. This is a general comment about the name, usually connected to its attestation in the *PN*.

### *Second part (grammatical data)*

The second part of the names section includes a complete description of each name from a linguistic and onomastic point of view. It also contains a grammatical comment field about the name, mostly dealing with the different readings proposed by other scholars. This part of the names section will be available only in the second phase of the launch of *AGÉA* on the internet.

#### 1.2.2. THE INDIVIDUALS SECTION

The individuals section contains all the data about each person registered in the database. Every individual receives a *personal numbered name* in transcription (such as 'Shepsespouptah 1') in order to distinguish homonymous names; the ID is random.

- Each name borne by one person is mentioned with its specification ("great name", "good name", etc.).
- Dating and origin of his/her monuments.
- Titles are given in transliteration only, with their corresponding index number when there is one.
- All parents are mentioned with an indication of their relationship with the individual. If the relationship formula ("eldest son", "her mother", "his sister", etc.) is known in the original documentation, it is quoted.
- Comment. This field includes a comment about the individual and his/her family.

## **2. Web access to *AGÉA***

The *AGÉA* database should be available for free public access on the IFAO website in December 2011.

For the web-accessible version, *AGÉA* follows a common format used for all IFAO databases: it is an open-source PostgreSQL database using a PHP language. The main language of *AGÉA* is French but I am presently developing an English version.

I am very grateful to Chr. Gaubert of the IFAO IT service, who designed the web-accessed version of *AGÉA*.

As *AGÉA* uses a number of conventions for the transliteration, transcription and presentation of the names, an introductory page presents these conventions with a short history of anthroponomastic studies in Egyptology.

### 2.1. *The PostgreSQL design*

Like all IFAO web-accessible databases, *AGÉA* follows a common presentation, and thus *AGÉA* opens on the list of names which presents:

1. The *name-ID*.
2. The most complete writing known (as an example).
3. Transliteration.
4. A French translation of the name.
5. The *PN* number.

Each name-ID and name writing has a hypertext link which opens the related name file. Its content is the following:

1. The 5 previous data (repeated).
2. The translation of the name, where possible.
3. Each reference is introduced by a name writing number with the connected name writing and its hieroglyphic encoding.
4. The *personal numbered name*.
5. The sex of the name bearer.
6. The origin and the dating of his/her monuments.
7. The relevant bibliographical references for the writing mentioned above.
8. A general comment field about the name and its attestation in the *PN*.

The *personal numbered name* itself has a hypertext link that opens the file of this person. Its content is the following:

1. The individual-ID, followed by some of the previous basic data (4, 5, and 6).
2. Titles he/she bears with their index numbers (Jones' for the Old Kingdom).
3. The list of all his/her relatives with indications of their relationship to the individual. Each relationship link written in the original documentation is quoted. Genealogical trees can be provided for the largest families.
4. A comment field about the individual and his/her family.

For each relative (individual-ID or *personal numbered name*) a hypertext link gives access to their file.

Like names, all individuals can be listed. This page sums up the essential data about each individual (ID, *personal numbered name*, sex, origin and dating).

### 2.2. *Queries on PostgreSQL*

The primary function of any database is to make queries. In the names section of *AGÉA*, one can search for a name in transliteration, transcription, by its *PN* number or its *AGÉA* ID. One can also search by dating. In this case, a list of all datings of monuments belonging to all individuals and filed in the database appears as a drop-down menu. The same principle is applied for the origin query. All these kinds of queries can be done for the individuals section of *AGÉA*. Furthermore, in this section one can also search by titles or index number.

Finally, one of the greatest benefits of the presence of a hieroglyphic encoding field in the *AGÉA* database is to enable searches to be conducted within strings of hieroglyphs. For example, if one wants to know which names contain the A4 sign of Gardiner's sign-list, one just has to write A4 in the search field and the relevant names will be displayed.

## Conclusion

At this point in time, the FileMakerPro version of the *AGÉA* database includes about 4,200 names and 11,500 persons. These data need to be treated so that they can be included in the online version, but I hope that within a year most of the entire Old Kingdom corpus will be registered. A first version of the *AGÉA* database should then be available on the IFAO website by the end of 2011.<sup>4</sup>

Collaborations with some French teams (the MafS at South-Saqqara, the IFAO at Tabet el-Guech and Balat) have already led to the incorporation of many unpublished data. Contacts have been made with Australian, Czech and Polish colleagues and I hope I can expand these contacts and collaborations to other teams, including Egyptian colleagues who dig in Abusir, Saqqara and Giza.

As mentioned in the introduction, the *AGÉA* database project will not end with the Old Kingdom. Contacts and collaborations have already been made to extend *AGÉA* to other Pharaonic periods.

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<sup>4</sup> See on the IFAO website <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/>, 'Accès direct', on the right-hand side.

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