

Keywords: Historical linguistics - semantics - emotions - Egyptian - socio-linguistics

## **What a Feeling – a Linguistic Diachronic Glance at Egyptian Emotions**

With more than 4 millennia of recorded history, ancient Egyptian provides a unique opportunity to explore how language evolved over long period of times. Moreover, the abundance of historical and material evidence, combined with the long Egyptological tradition provides a solid understanding of the Egyptian society and of the major factors and historical phenomena that shaped it, thus providing a coherent socio-cultural frame within which various socio-linguistic phenomena can be studied through time. Moreover, the use of semantic classifiers in hieroglyphs offers a rather unique glimpse at the perception Egyptians had of their words, and the world around them.

Our paper is built on these premises, and provides a case study in which the historical attestations of the language are used to explore the Egyptian conceptualization of emotions, and its diachronic evolution. Emotions are fascinating topic because they are one of the most basic and intimate human experiences, but at the same time the evidence to study them from a diachronic, evolutionary perspective is extremely limited, especially in ancient societies. Egyptian thus constitutes a precious and so far unexploited source.

Our presentation is divided into two sections. In the first one, we focus on the evolution within Egyptian of words referring to emotions. The attested words in various periods will be presented and their origins discussed, with particular attention on how loanwords and neologisms reflect modifications in the psycho-linguistic “emotional landscape” of the Egyptians. The second part will instead focus on terms related with “fear” and “love”, and will study how their semantics, and by reflection their perception and conceptualization, have evolved over time. In this regard, classifiers used in hieroglyphic and hieratic will also be considered.

Conclusions and contextualization of the results within broader research perspectives will follow.