

Copy for D. Katz

Institute of Semitic Studies

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USA 7/VI/'88 Ephraim Isaac, Director

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CANADA

Dear Prof. Birnbaum,

With great pleasure and profit I read your article "Two Methods" last year in the volume *Origins of the Yiddish Language*, but it was most especially the 2nd part "II. Etymology: davenen" that fascinated me. At that time (about 9 months ago) I sought from Dovid Katz your address so I could write you several comments. I have just now received the long (!)-expected address from Dovid Katz. So I have tried for a few days, with my files, to recall what I wanted to comment on.

The 6 offerings we are served on p. 11 truly constitute an embarrassment of riches! On many of these items, in their own languages and with the basic regular meanings, I have, in one way or another, had something to say. Here particularly of interest to me is the "Arabic *dîwân* 'collection of poems' ... It is rather surprising that, as far as I know, nobody has proposed the Arabic word [verb. YLA] from which *dîwân* is derived—*dawwana* 'recôrd, set, down, write'."

Now although, the following, does not change anything for the period with which you are dealing, it has recently been shown that the Arabic (Turkish, Persian), etc., later use, in a specialized series of senses, is the predominant one, but that the noun itself ETYMOLOGICALLY is derived from Middle Iranian origin, from an old Iranian compound **dipi-pāna* -> **dipiβān* > *dîvān*, lit. "Keeper, Protector-of-the-tablets" as shown by Asmussen 1982 (a summary of which and a fitting of it into the scheme of root-related words is given on the final p. of my article on the biblical city קריית ספר / קריית ספר, which I enclose). The Arabic verb therefore is unquestionably a DENOMINATIVE within Arabic based on the borrowed noun.

Just of some interest in the ever-on-going peregrinations of the Jews, in reference to your discussion of alleged Turkish and other Near Eastern Islamic world "input" to Yiddish, I thought the enclosed letter I had in the Jewish Week some time ago, although reflecting a movement of Jews from Anatolia and their descendants returning (so to speak) a millennium later, would be of interest to you.

One final question: What is "Arvic"?

Next week I will send you an article by my late Friend, Ben Schwartz, and his student Apostolos Athanassakis on Yevanic, as soon as I can run off a few more copies.

All my best wishes,

Yoël L. Arbeitman

Dear Dr. Katz, I
will send this to you also
YLA

C: Dovid Katz
encl: p. from my pre-print
Letter on Judéo-Sardic

AMSTERDAM STUDIES IN THE THEORY AND
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Volume 58

Yoël L. Arbeitman

FUCUS
A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman

FUCUS

A SEMITIC/AFRASIAN GATHERING
IN REMEMBRANCE OF ALBERT EHRMAN

Edited by

YOËL L. ARBEITMAN
Institute of Semitic Studies, Princeton, NJ

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FUCUS: A SEMITIC/AFRASIAN GATHERING IN REMEMBRANCE OF ALBERT EHRMAN

Edited by Yoël L. Arbeitman

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Albert Ehrman ל"ר/Yoël L. Arbeitman
Four Reprints on the Aramaic *ṣṣqr* "Fucus, Red Lichen".
519-531

(10)

daBīr/diBīr and dīwān

Whatever the details, Iranian *daBīr* is ultimately of Elamite (< Akkadian) < Sumerian origin.

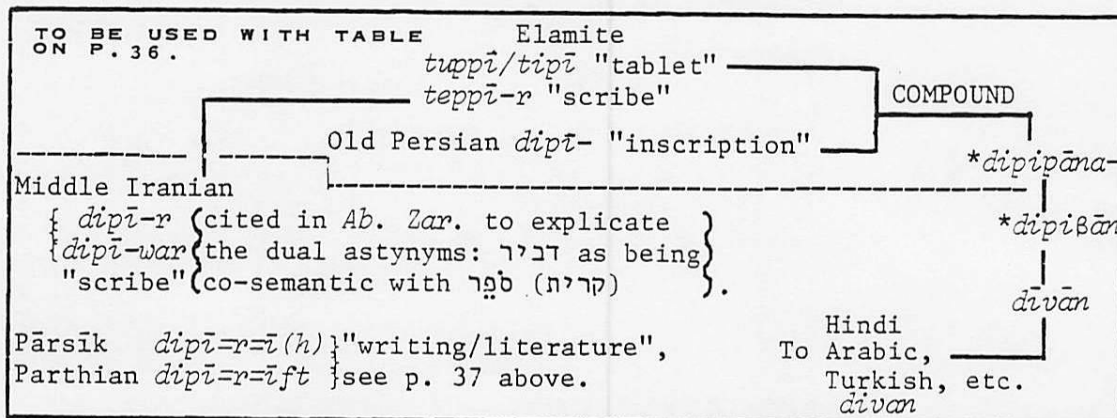
My dilittante's "intuition" for Iranian had long bidden me to want to connect the source of the English word *divan* with this same Iranian root *dip-* "to write". This is an English (and other European) item which most at-all literate persons know intuitively to be of "oriental" origin. The *Am. Her. Dict.* has two entries:

dewan, also **diwan**. "Any of certain governmental officials, esp. a prime minister, in India. [Hindī *dīwān*, from Persian *dīvān*+ {AHD in their etymologies, employs this "obit cross" to indicate the end of the etymological line}, register, account book, hence office of accounts, council of state. See also **divan**]." Obvious to all, this is a spec. Anglo-Indian term from the Raj.

divan. Also **diwan** (for senses 2, 4). "1. A long backless couch. 2. In Moslem countries: a. A counting room, tribunal... b. The seat used by an administrator when holding audience. c. A government bureau or council chamber. 3. A coffee house or smoking lounge with divans. 4. In the Middle East, a book of poems by one author. [French, from Turkish *dīvān*, from Persian *dīvān*+, register, account, hence office of accounts, council of state]."

It had seemed to me that any attempt to connect it radically with Iranian *da/iBī-r*, however intuitively "felt", would ultimately appear as a parody of IE *-r/-n(± -t/-k)* heteroclisis, a subject which colleagues familiar with my work know I have devoted two articles to.

Very recently, by happenstance, in a section of an article concerned with a different subject matter (of great interest itself, to be sure), I ran across the following by Asmussen 1982:115: "In the very old [Persian] loan-word *dīvān* in Arabic (from **dīpīβān* < **dīpīpāna-*, "keeper of documents [both person and thing])...." —in my own terminology "Guardian/Protector of the Documents" [± animate].



May 9-15, 1987.

טז באייר תשמ"ז