

The Coptic Language

Aspects of its
(Pre-)History and its
Structure

Coptic—the “daughter language” of Egyptian

Old Kingdom 2700—	Middle Kingdom 2050—	New Kingdom 1550—	Late Period 750—	Ptolemaic Period 323—	Roman Imperial Per. 30— B.C.
	Classical Egyptian	Late Classical	Neo-Classical	Late Neo-Classical	
Old Egyptian	Middle Egyptian	“Late” Egn. (neuägyptisch, néo-égyptien)	Early Demotic	Middle Demotic	Late Demotic

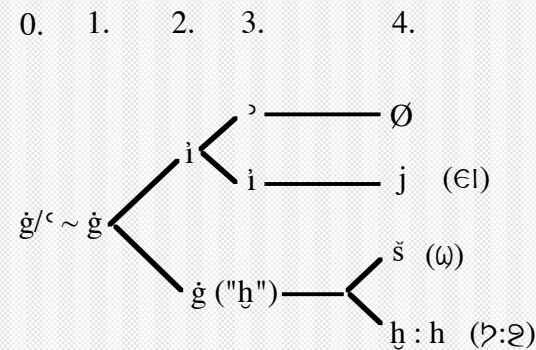
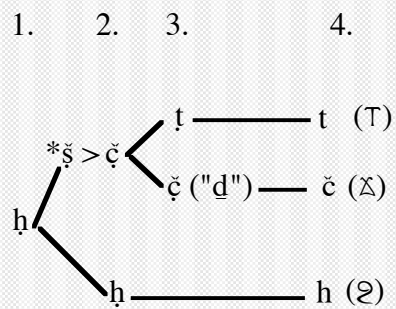
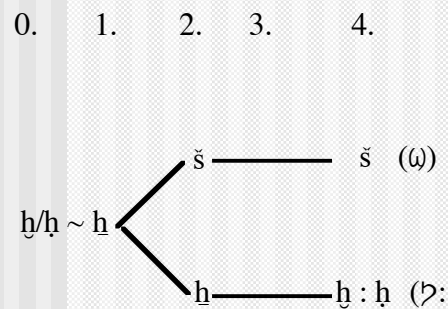
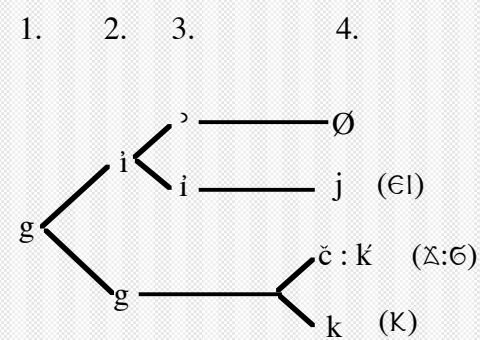
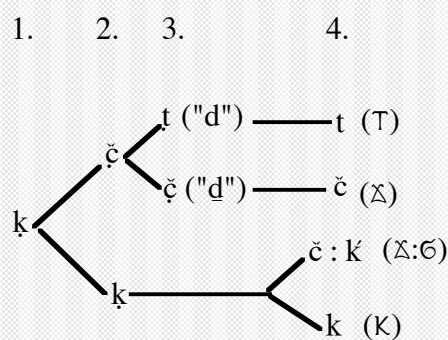
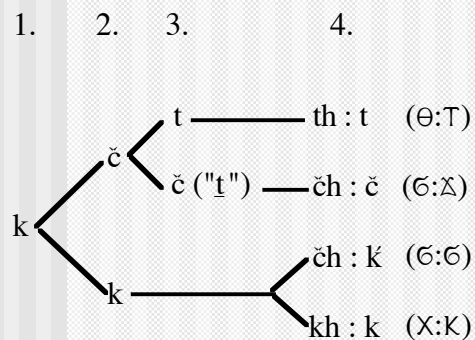
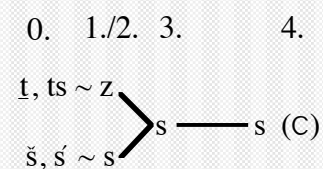
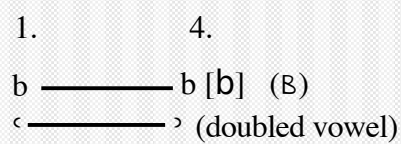
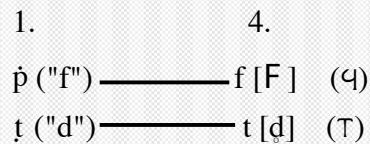
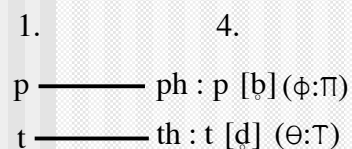
Scripts: hieroglyphic and hieratic — hieratic — demotic

Egyptian – its Genetic Relationship

Afroasiatic or Hamitosemitic / Semito-hamitic:

Libyco-Berber	Chadic	Egyptian	Cuschitic (+ Omotic)	Semitic
A †Guanche	A Masa		Bedauye	Akkadian
B †Old Libyan	B East Chadic		Agau	Hebrew
C Berber:	C Biu-Mandara		...	Aramaic
1 East Berber	D West Chadic		Oromo (Galla)	Arabic
2 Tuâreg	— Hausa		Somali	South Arabian
3 West Berber			...	Ethiopian
4 North Berber				...

From Proto-Egyptian to Coptic: The Consonants



0. Proto-Semitic 1. Proto-Egyptian 2. Earliest Egyptian (mid-3rd mill. BC) (after 1st palatalization)
3. Middle Egyptian (from late 3rd mill. BC) (after depalatalization) 4. Coptic (North : South) (after 2nd palatalization)

Coptic Dialects

In the 3rd and 4th centuries Coptic appears in a considerable number of local varieties. As the country is more or less one-dimensional the conditions for the development of a dialect continuum are ideal. This is, however, disrupted by the standard dialect Sahidic which probably goes back to the import into Upper Egypt of a Delta idiom in pre-Coptic times. Furthermore it must be stated that the northernmost dialect, Bohairic, differs in structure from the valley dialects in more than one basic respect; there are linguists who regard it as a language of its own, rather than a dialect.

A In the vast South (Akhmîm to Aswân), a rather conservative dialect prevails, viz.

Akhmîmic (originally thought to be centered at Akhmîm)

L To the North of it, around Asyût, is the realm of a dialect cluster that shares features with Akhmimic, yet has many characteristics of its own; it is today called **Lycopolitan**

(= Asyûtic), though it emerged in Coptic linguistics as **Subakhmimic** (abbreviated as **A2**), a term that can be met with even today.

Not only Christian orthodox literature is written in it, but also Manichaean and Gnostic works. It is also the idiom of the Manichaean community at Dakhla oasis: an astonishing discovery of the past years.



M The youngest Coptic dialect, in respect to its recognition by philology, is the **Middle Egyptian (Mesokemic)** or **Oxyrhynchite** dialect.

F The **Fayyûmic** dialect, however, is known since many years. A very conspicuous feature is its lambdacism: it has *lambda* in most words that have *rho* elsewhere.

B Bohairic (Arabic *Buḥayri*, vernacular *Behêri*, “of the Beheyra province [lit. “the lake”]”, Western Delta) is known still longer; it is, however, a late-comer historically: earliest texts are from the 5th/6th century; however, the great mass of them is from the 10th century onward, after it had succeeded Sahidic as the standard language.



S By the 5th century, one idiom has gained overall importance, *viz.* **Sahidic** (Arabic *Ṣaʿīdi* “of the Upper Land”, “Upper Egyptian”), at the expense of most others. When the Copts started to use their own language for letters, business and legal documents, in the 6th century, Sahidic was the idiom to be used. In the Fayyûm area, however, a form of the local dialect **F** was in use.



The original geographical realm of Sahidic ...

... has long been disputed. A structural analysis of phonetics and morphology shows that it is very close to Lycopolitan, except for the quality of the stressed vowels, which are similar to those of Bohairic (“á/ó vocalism”, as against the “é/á vocalism” of *FMLA*). A hypothesis that is now widely accepted suggests that the “á/ó vocalism” is a Lower Egyptian innovation of the mid-first millennium BC that was imported into Upper Egypt as a prestige idiom. In the Lycopolitan area this developed to what we know as Sahidic.



Sahidic ...

Sahidic was used as the standard idiom until 10th century. By then it was on the one hand severely threatened by the Arabization of the Egyptian townspeople, and on the other hand, the predominance of Sketian monasticism caused the Delta dialect Bohairic to become the new standard.

Sahidic ...

Sahidic texts are extant from the 3rd to the 10th century. It is understandable that this idiom is not thoroughly uniform. Whereas this is true of literary texts, the documentary texts may show much more deviation from the standard language. Very often, this can be explained as an influence of the local dialect substratum.

Many more local dialects ...

The dialects mentioned here are the major idioms. Besides, linguists have discerned several others, often attested in one text only, like *P* = “Palaeo-Theban”, idiom of Pap. Bodmer VI, or *I*, idiom of the “Ascension of Isaiah”, or *K*, idiom of a text fragment from Karanis. For linguistic research these “small” dialects are extremely important.



Consonants in Dialect Variation

The Delta Dialect: *B*

	Stops/affricates		Fricatives	
Labials	π	ϕ [p ^h]	ɸ [ɸ] ?	β [β]
Dentals	τ	θ [t ^h] (Δ [d])	ç	(z)
Postalveolars	ʃ [ç]	ʂ [ç ^h]	ʃ [ʃ]	
Velars	κ	χ [k ^h] (γ [g])	ɣ [x]	
Glottals	—		ʔ [h]	

The Valley Dialects: *FMSLA* etc.

	Stops/affricates		Fricatives	
Labials	π		ɸ [ɸ] ?	
Dentals	τ	(Δ [d])	ç	
Postalveolars	ʃ [ç]		ʃ [ʃ]	
Laterals				
Palatals	ʂ [kʲ]		(ç̥ [ç] <i>I</i>)	
Velars	κ	(γ [g])	(ɣ [x] <i>A</i>)	
Glottals	[ʔ]		ʔ [h]	

NB:

In *F*, λ for ρ in most lexemes.

F λΕΝ : *S* ρΑΝ “name”; *F* λΩΜΙ : *S* ρΩΜΕ “man”; *F* ΤΑΛΚΑ : *S* ΤΑΡΚΟ
“conjure”; **but** *F* ΒΕΡΙ : *S* Β̄ΡΡΕ “new”

In *A*, often κ for δ of *FMSL*.

A ΝΑΚ : *S* ΝΟΔ “big”; *A* ΕΚΟΩ : *S* ΕΔΟΩ “Nubian”

In *A*, regularly ζ [x] for the ζ of *FMSL* and the ϝ of *B* where it continues Egyptian *ḥ* and non-palatalized *h*.

A ΖΙCΕ : *S* ΖΙCΕ, *B* ϝΙCΙ “be troubled” < **ḥísVt*; *A* ΖΩΝΤ : *S* ΖΩΝΤ ,
B ϝΩΝΤ “approach” < **ḥánVt*

In *A*, regularly ζ [x] for the ω of *BFMSL* where it continues Egyptian palatalized *h*.

A ΖΩΠΕ : *S* ΩΩΠΕ “become” < **ḥápVr*; *A* CΑΔΝΕΖ : *S* CΑΔΝΩ
“make live” < **sáʿnah*.

Typical features of Valley & Fayyumic Coptic (*FMSLA*)

Coptic has no voiced stops.

Its unvoiced stops, viz. π, τ, ϣ, ϛ, κ, obviously have lenis articulation [b̥], [d̥], etc.

Cf. Arabic place names like *Dandara*, from τῆ̄τωρε; *Idfu*, from τβω; etc.

For native speakers of Coptic, it was hard if not impossible to distinguish between voiced and unvoiced stops of, say, Greek.

Therefore frequent interchange of β and π, δ and τ, etc.

B has no voiced stops either. It has two unvoiced series: aspirated and unaspirated.

Vowels in Dialect Variation

á/ó dialects (*SB*) versus é/á dialects (*FMLA*)

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
CON	CAN	CAN	CON	CAN	CAN “brother”
λAC	λEC	λEC	λAC	λEC	λEC “tongue”
PAH	λEH	PEH	PAH	PEH	PEH “name”

An additional shift (Southern Egypt only): *LA*: ó’ for *á?

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
PO	λα	PA	PO	PO	PO “mouth”
TOT≠	TAAH≠	TAAH≠	TOOT≠	TOOT≠	TOOT≠ “hand”

The stressed *zero* vowel of *SLA*: ε in *B*, η/ε in *F*, zero or ε in *M*:

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
ϰεNT	BHNT/BεNT	ϰ̄NT	ϰ̄NT	ϰ̄NT	ϰ̄NT “worm”
CεBI	CHBBI	CεBBε	C̄BBε	C̄BBε	C̄BBε “circumcise”

unstressed *zero* vowel of *SLA*: ε in *BFM*:

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
ρεM̄ε	λεM̄η	ρεM̄η	ρ̄M̄ε	ρ̄M̄ε	*ρ̄M̄ε “free” <i>r^omhé^o</i>

LA: οΥ [u:] for *BFS* ω when < *ō? < *ā?, but otherwise ω [o:]

M: ω [o:] for *BFS* ω when < *ō? < *ā?, but otherwise ο [ɔ:]

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
χω	κω	κω	κω	<u>κο</u> Υ	<u>κο</u> Υ “put” (<i>h^{3c}</i>)
κωT	κωT	<u>κο</u> T	κωT	κωT	κωT “build” (<i>k^d</i>)

Initial Egyptian *ʔa- (unstressed):

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
ε-	ε-	ε-	ε-	α-	α-

Hence:

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
εροϩ	ελαϩ	εραϩ	εροϩ	αραϩ	αραϩ

“to him”

*p-ʔačáf:

πεχαϩ	πεχεϩ	παχεϩ
πεχεϩ	πεχαϩ	παχεϩ

“he said”

Unstressed *auslaut* vowel: -ι versus -ε

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
-ι	-ι	-ε	-ε	-ε	-ε

ωωπι ωωπι ωοπε ωωπε ωωπε ζωπε “happen”

Stressed fronted *auslaut* vowel: -η versus -ε

<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>A</i>
-ε	-η	-η	-ε	-ε	-ε

βελλε βελλη *βελληβ̄λλε β̄λλε β̄λλε “blind”

Typical local features of the Sahidic of documentary texts

(after P. E. Kahle *Bala'izah*)

A Cairo to Fayyûm, in particular Saqqâra

not the area of a great standard dialect; cf. dialects K and K7, between B and FM – Hardly any documentary texts attested.

B Sahidic texts from Fayyûm & neighbourhood of Heracleopolis

area of F

λ for ρ: passim B for ɥ, ɥ for B

C Oxyrhynchus to Bawîṭ, in particular Ashmunên

area of M/L (?)

h for ɛ, h for [ə] γ for ə

λ for o: not many B for ɥ, ɥ for B

ɛ for λ: rare

-TNE for -TÑ: very important feature, also frequent at Thebes
found elsewhere too.



D Asyût to Abydos, in particular el-Balâyza, Wâdi Sarga and Aphrodito

area of L

λ for ο: not rare ω for ο

ε for λ: rare ο for ογ

η for ə κ for κ ο for ω

γ for η λ- for preposition ε-: common

E Coptos to Armant, in particular the Theban area

area of A

ε for λ: very common

Ϸ for ω where **A** has Ϸ (Egyptian *h* and not-palatalized *h*); rarely for

ω where **A** has ω (Egyptian *š*): hyper-akhmimism !

ο for λ: very common (by hypercorrection !)

ω for λλγ, λγ (where **A** has ο)

λ- for preposition ε-: very common

κ for Ϸ: numerous examples – a typical **A** feature

Ϸ for κ: very common (hyper-Akhmimism !)

F Esna to Aswân

very similar to A

Kahle has hardly any data from this area; the following is from texts that were published later:

λ for ο: ΜΑΤΛΙ for ΜΑΤΟΙ “soldier”; ΚΑC for ΔΟC “half”; ΚΡΑΜΠΕ for ΔΡΟΜΠΕ “pigeon”

ε for α: ΠΕΨΕ for ΠΑΨΕ “half”; Η for α: ΨΗΧΕ for ΨΑΧΕ “speak”

λ for η: CΟΥΑΝ for CΟΥΗΝ “Aswân”

λ for initial unstressed ε: ΛΚΩΤ for ΕΚΩΤ “builder”

κ for δ: ΚΑC for ΔΟC “half”; ΚΡΑΜΠΕ for ΔΡΟΜΠΕ “pigeon”; ΚΙΨ for ΔΙΧ “hand” ; ΕΚΩΨ for ΕΔΩΨ “Nubian”

ΖΟΜ̄Τ for ΖΟΜ̄Η̄Τ “copper”

Typically **A:** ḡ-ΨΡΗΥ, plural of Π-ΨΗΡΕ “the son”

What is “Old Coptic” ?

Although dictionaries of Coptic use the abbreviation *O* (or, in German, *Ak*, or *Altkoptisch*) in the same manner as the initials of the Coptic dialects (*A*, *L*, *S*, *M*, *F*, *B*, etc.), **Old Coptic** is not the name of a specific dialect. The term is used for the language and script of a number of pagan texts that are earlier than, or contemporary with, early texts of Coptic proper—that is, the early texts of Christian or Gnostic or Manichaean contents. “Old Coptic” may be primarily regarded as a term for the writing systems or alphabets of the respective texts, rather than for their language. The Old Coptic texts are attempts to canonize the use of additional signs taken from contemporary Demotic together with the Greek alphabet, for writing varieties of the Egyptian language in a phonetic way.

The more important OC texts may be grouped, according to their character, into **pagan magical** texts and **pagan astrological** texts. In addition to texts entirely written in OC, some OC passages or shorter texts are embedded in **Greek contexts**. Furthermore, there are OC **glosses** in several **demotic magical papyri**.

The time range of all these testimonies is from ca. 100 A.D. to the 5th century.

List of Old Coptic Texts

Prayer, or plea, to Osiris:

1. The **OC Schmidt Papyrus** (present location unknown); first to second century A.D. Perhaps from the Hermopolitan area.

Horoscopes

2. The **London Horoscope Papyrus** (P. London 98); first to second century A.D.
3. The **Michigan Horoscope Papyrus** (P. Michigan 6131); second century A.D. From Soknopaiou Nesos.

Magical spells and prescriptions:

4. The OC passages in the **Mimaut Papyrus** (P. Louvre 2391); late third century A.D.
5. The OC passages in the **Paris Magical Papyrus** (P. Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574); fourth century A.D. Acquired at Thebes.
6. The OC insertion in the **Berlin Magical Papyrus** (P. Berlin P 5025); fourth to fifth century A.D. Perhaps from Thebes.

Old Coptic words and glosses in —

- the **demotic Magical Papyrus**, or “(Bilingual) Gnostic Papyrus,” of **London and Leiden** (P. Brit. Mus. 10070, formerly P. Anastasi 1072, and P. Leiden I 383, formerly P. Anastasi 65), third century A.D. Acquired at Thebes.
- the **demotic papyrus of Leiden** (P. Leiden I 384); third century A.D. or slightly later; written by the same scribe as the fore-going.
- the **demotic Papyrus of the Louvre** Museum (P. Louvre E. 3229, formerly P. Anastasi 1061); third or fourth century A.D.
- the **hieratic Tebtunis Onomasticon**, preserved in fragments in Copenhagen, Florence and Berlin, ca. 100 A.D., with Demotic interlinear translation.

Also compare the Egyptian Oxyrhynchus Papyrus, written in late Classical Egyptian language and OC script.

In the following:

The **OC Schmidt** ; first to second century A.D.

5
 10
 15

ΕΣΡΜΠΕ ΤΑ ΚΛΛΑΟΥΑ ΤΕΤΣΜΜΕ
 ΖΗΡ ΠΑ ΤΑΝΕΣΝΗΟΥ ΔΕ ΠΑΔΟΙΣ
 ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΝΖΑΣΡΩ ΤΙΣΜΜΕ ΝΑΚ
 ΑΡΙ ΠΑΣΑΠ ΝΜ ΖΗΡ ΠΑ ΤΑΝΕΣ-
 ΝΗΟΥ ΝΝΕΡΔΕΙ ΝΑΥ ΝΜ ΝΕΡΑΥ
 ΝΑΪ ΔΕ ΥΝΑΓΓ ΑΝ ΕΜΜΝΤΙ
 ΔΟΜ ΕΜΜΝΤΙ ΝΑ/ΤΕ Ν/ΗΡΕ
 ΜΝΤΙ / ΕΡ ΔΟΕΙΜ ΔΝΕΚ ΔΒΡΗΝ
 ΜΝ ΠΕΤΥΕΣΜΜΕ <Ε>Δ#ΕΙ <Ε3>ΡΑΥ Ν-
 ΖΗΡ Ε.ΜΠΑΤΙΡΤΕΡ' ΤΙΣΜΜΕ
 Ν[ΑΚ .]ΟΪ ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΣΤΜ ΝΑ# / ΔΪ
 /Ε. [Ν]Α/Ε ΝΕΡΑΥ ΝΑΪ ΜΑ ΟΥΟΪ
 ΕΝΕΚ[^{ca. 7. 8mm} — — — — —] ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΝΑΒΗΤ
 ΟΥΣΙΡ[ε — — — — —]
 ΗΣΕ ΟΥ[...] ΟΥΠΟΥ[Ο]Ϊ[Ε 3]ΑΤΖ#Ρ[']
 ΤΜΟΝ[ε Ν]ΑΝΟΥΠ ΕΙ ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΠΕΛΟΙΣ
 ΝΝΕΝ[.:]ΡΤΕΡ' ΝΑΜΟΥΖΡΚΗΡ'
 ΝΑΖΡ.[.] ΦΟΥ ΑΡΙ ΠΑΣΑΠ

C. Schmidt

ΕΣΡΜΠΕ ΤΑ ΚΛΛΑΟΥΑ ΤΕΤΣΜΜΕ <Ε>
 ΖΗΡ ΠΑ ΤΑΝΕΣΝΗΟΥ ΔΕ ΠΑΔΟΙΣ
 ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΝΖΑΣΡΩ ΤΙΣΜΜΕ ΝΑΚ
 ΑΡΙ ΠΑΣΑΠ ΝΜ ΖΗΡ ΠΑ ΤΑΝΕΣ-
 ΝΗΟΥ ΝΝΕΡΔΕΙ ΝΑΥ ΝΜ ΝΕΡΑΥ
 ΝΑΪ ΔΕ ΥΝΑΓΓ ΑΝ ΕΜΜΝΤΙ
 ΔΟΜ ΕΜΜΝΤΙ ΝΑ/ΤΕ Ν/ΗΡΕ
 ΜΝΤΙ / ΕΡ ΔΟΕΙΜ ΔΝΕΚ ΔΒΡΗΝ
 ΜΝ ΠΕΤΥΕΣΜΜΕ <Ε>Δ#ΕΙ <Ε3>ΡΑΥ Ν-
 ΖΗΡ Ε.ΜΠΑΤΙΡΤΕΡ' ΤΙΣΜΜΕ
 Ν[ΑΚ .]ΟΪ ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΣΤΜ ΝΑ# / ΔΪ
 /Ε. [Ν]Α/Ε ΝΕΡΑΥ ΝΑΪ ΜΑ ΟΥΟΪ
 ΕΝΕΚ[^{ca. 7. 8mm} — — — — —] ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΝΑΒΗΤ
 ΟΥΣΙΡ[ε — — — — —]
 ΗΣΕ ΟΥ[...] ΟΥΠΟΥ[Ο]Ϊ[Ε 3]ΑΤΖ#Ρ[']
 ΤΜΟΝ[ε Ν]ΑΝΟΥΠ ΕΙ ΟΥΣΙΡΕ ΠΕΛΟΙΣ
 ΝΝΕΝ[.:]ΡΤΕΡ' ΝΑΜΟΥΖΡΚΗΡ'
 ΝΑΖΡ.[.] ΦΟΥ ΑΡΙ ΠΑΣΑΠ

The Old Coptic Schmidt Papyrus. (Courtesy: The Griffiths Institute).

εσρμπτε τὰ κλλαουὰ τέτςμμε <ε>
 ζ#ρ πα τανεςνηου δε παδοίς
 ουσιρε ηζασρω τίςμμε νακ
 αρι πα/σαπ ημ ζ#ρ πα τανες-
 ηνου ηνεραει ναυ ημ νεραυ
 ναϊ δε γναγγ αν εμμντι
 Δομ εμμντι να/τε η/ηρε
 μντι / ερ Δοειμ ανεκ αδρην
 ημ πετυεσμμε <ε>α#ει <ε3>ραυ η-
 ζ#ρ ε.μπατιρτερ' τίςμμε
 η[ακ .]οϊ ουσιρε στμ να# / Δζ
 /ε.[η]α/ε νεραυ ναϊ μα ουοϊ
 ενεκ[^{εα.7 Δημ} — ο]υσιρε ναβητ
 ουσιρε[ε —————]
 ησε ου[...] ουπ ου[³ο]ι[³ε³ ζ]α.τ.ζ#ρ[¹]
 τμον[ε η]ανουπ σι ουσιρε πελοιζ
 ηνεη[.:]ρτερ' ναμουζρκηρ'
 ναζρ.[.]φου αρι πα/σαπ

It is Esr^αmpe, the (daughter) of K^αllaouč, who
 is complaining about
 H^αôr, the (son) of Tanesneou. My lord Osiris,
 (Lord) of H^αsrô ! I complain to you,
 do justice to me and H^αôr, the (son) of Tanes-
 neou, concerning what I have done to him and
 what he has done
 to me. Namely, he does not cohabit with me
 (?), I having no
 power, I having no protector-son. I am unable
 to help (myself). I am childless (?).
 There is no one who could complain
 concerning me before you (lit. him) because of
 H^αôr. . . . I complain
 to [you,] ... Osiris, listen to my calls! ...

It is Esr^ampe, the (daughter) of K^allaouč, who is complaining about H^or, the (son) of Tanesneou.

My lord Osiris, (Lord) of Hasrô ! I complain to you, do justice to me and H^or, the (son) of Tanesneou, concerning what I have done to him and what he has done to me. Namely, he does not cohabit with me (?), I having no power, I having no protector-son. I am unable to help (myself). I am childless (?). There is no one who could complain concerning me before you (lit. him) because of H^or.

....., I complain to [you,] ... Osiris, listen to my calls!what he has done to me. Open the way for (lit. Give way to) your [messengers (?)].....] Osiris, (lord) of Abydos, Osiris [. . . .] Isis, ; Ophois (?), Hathor (?), nurse [of] Anubis the Osiride, the eowherd of, do justice to me !

The additional signs of the Schmidt Papyrus:

1. / for ξ
2. \int for f : \curvearrowright > Demotic \int > Coptic φ
3. \mathcal{B} for h : \square > Demotic \mathcal{B}
4. \mathcal{Z} for h : \equiv > Demotic \mathcal{Z} > Coptic \mathcal{Z}
5. \mathcal{L} for f and g (when they are χ , not τ , in Valley and Fayyūmic Coptic): $\downarrow \mathcal{B}$ > Demotic $\downarrow \mathcal{L}$ > Coptic χ
6. Δ for g (when it is \mathcal{G} , not κ , in Valley and Fayyūmic Coptic): maybe from \square > Demotic \mathcal{Z} , \mathcal{Z} , \mathcal{Z}
7. \mathcal{H} for δ (for which \mathcal{O} is also used): \mathcal{H} (determinative of \mathcal{H} 'back') > Demotic \mathcal{H}
8. \mathcal{P}' for final r (?): \mathcal{P} with diacritic marks?
9. \mathcal{F}
10. \mathcal{K}

Fig. 1. Additional signs

The Paris Magical Papyrus

The Paris Magical Papyrus (pBibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574; translations: Preisendanz 1933: 64ff.; Betz 1986: 36ff.) is an impressive collection of prescriptions for various kinds of magical practice, including divination, black magic, and love spells. It is a book of 72 pages made up of 18 sheets. The first two and the last two pages are left blank¹, and the same is true of p. 6 and fol. 16 (pp. 31-32). Commentators agree in general that the text was compiled in the fourth century AD, and probably in its first half².

In general, the language of the texts is Greek. In the beginning, however, there are a number of Old Coptic texts (cf. Haardt 1949: 3; Satzinger 1984: 139 no. 11; Satzinger 1991: 170 no. 1.5), often interspersed with Greek passages: A³, ll. 1-4 (= fol. 1^v ll. 1-4): magical names⁴; B, ll. 5-10 (= fol. 2^r ll. 1-7): magical names, with Greek remark; C, ll. 11-25 (= fol. 2^r ll. 7-21): Old Coptic incantation of Osiris⁵; D, ll. 25-51 (= fol. 2^r ll. 22-47), and E, ll. 52-72 (= fol. 2^r ll. 48-57 and 2^v ll. 1-11): Greek prescriptions; F, ll. 73-77 (= fol. 2^v ll. 12-16), G, ll. 78-82 (= fol. 2^r ll. 17-21), H, ll. 83-85 (= fol. 2^r ll. 22-24), I, ll. 86-87 (= fol. 2^r ll. 25-26), and K, ll. 88-93 (= fol. 2^r ll. 27-32): short Old Coptic spells, introduced by

The Paris Magical Papyrus (2)

Greek texts. In line 94 is the beginning of what is by far the most important of the Old Coptic texts of this papyrus, and the most attractive of the Old Coptic texts in general⁶ (L, ll. 94-122 = fol. 2^r ll. 33-54 and 2^r ll. 1-7). The contents of the text are a rather lengthy love spell embedded in a mythological frame. The topic of the latter is Osiris' adultery with Nephthys, and the other deities immediately involved are Isis and Thoth who is here regarded as her father⁷. Three more texts follow, *viz.* two Old Coptic love spells that are each concluded by a Greek remark: M, ll. 123-137 (= fol. 2^v ll. 8-22), and N + P, ll. 138-146 (= fol. 2^v ll. 23-31); and another Old Coptic love spell: Q, ll. 147-153 (= fol. 2^v ll. 32-38). The

.....

The Paris Magical Papyrus (3)

§ ΗΣΕ ΠΕΤΝΗΟΥ ΝΠΤΟΥ ΝΜΕΡΕ
ΝΒΩΜ

ΕΤΒΟΥ Α (95) ΒΟΪΒ ΕΪΑΤΣ· ΧΑ ΕΜΡΗ
ΕΕΤΗΣ ΧΑ ΕΟΜ

ΑΠΕΣΙΩΤ (96) ΘΟΥ[Τ] Ο ΕΪ ΕΟΥΝ
ΕΡΙΕΣ

ΑΒΒΕΝΣ· ΒΕ ΑΡΘ ΤΑΒΕΡΙ (97) ΗΣ[Ε]

[Ε]ΤΒΟΥ ΧΑ ΒΟΪΒ ΙΑΤΙ· Α ΕΜΡΗ ΧΕΕΤΗ
Α ΕΟΜ

(98) ΠΜ· ΝΤΕΒΕΝΤΩ ΟΡΠ· ΝΕΡΜΟΥ
ΝΙΕΤΕ

ΠΕΒΕΣ (99) [ΝΕΦ] ΒΕ ΝΑΡΟΪ ΕΝ
ΠΑΪΟΥΤ ΠΑΝΑΘΟΥΤ· ΠΑΝΑΘΟ(100)
[ΟΥΤ] ΠΑΪΟΥΤ

Once^a Isis came from the desert at noon in summer,

being^b dried up^c by dust, her eyes being full of tears,^d her heart being full of sighs.^e

Her father, the Great Thoth, came in^f unto her.^g

He asked^h her, “What is the matter with you,ⁱ my daughter Isis,

(that) you are dried up^j by dust, (that) your eyes are full of tears, (that) your heart^k is full of^l sighs;

(that) the ‘cloth’^m of your garment is smudged by the tears of your eyes!”

She said to him, “(It is) not my fault,ⁿ my father, Baboon^o Thoth, Baboon Thoth, my father.

The Paris Magical Papyrus (4)

αἰβολίτεν τάρει ἐνσίμε

I have been weakened^p by my female companion.^q

αἰκ[ι]μέ (101) [. . .]λω . βε
σε νεβ^φω εσενκατκε μεν^{ΝΕΜ} οὔ[σι]ρι

I have found 'a secret' (?).^r

(102) [. . . . π]ασον πβε νταμέου
νεμάι

Verily, (the fact is) Nephthys sleeps^s with Osiris,

πεβάϗ ηας (103) [βε ο]γμεντβάϊρε
ναρ^εη τε ταβέρι ή[σι]

'he being'^t my brother, the child of my mother, as I am (too) (?)^u!"

(104) [πετ]βας ναϗ βε ουμεντβάϊρι
ναρ^ακ τ[ε]

He said to her: "It is adultery against you,^v my daughter Isis!"

παϊόγτ (105) [παν]αθοόγτ·
παναθοόγτ· παϊόγτ·

She said to him: "It is adultery against you,
my father, Baboon Thoth, Baboon Thoth,
my father!

ουμεντ^{ογ}ω ανοκ (106) [ω]ω^οτ τε
πετβαϗ ηας βε τώγνι ταβερι ησι

It is a pregnancy of my own!"

He said to her, "Arise, my daughter Isis,

The Paris Magical Papyrus (4)

(107) [TEBOK]. EPHC NNE EPEMIT.
NNAVOT

OYON (108) [OYB]ECHNEO OM(T) NMEOU
OEBI NAG VELQ PA VELQ

(109) P[α] TIBALAOGB' NOMT. PA
NITIVC. NVENIPE

(110) [ETP]EBMOYΓ' NE NOYIVT
NVENIPE NATRE

(111) EQ[THK] NBWA EQBOOME NRETB
EQORB NPEVLA[C] (112) [E]QACIWOY
NPEQVENIPI

ENAI NMOQ EHT

CWP (113) NMOQ EN PECNOB NOYCIPE
MEIQ TENCEME'

(114) CMOY OYAK ECER IOPI

and go^w to the south of Thebes, to the north^x
of Abydos.

There is^y a coppersmith^z there who is called
(?)^{aa} Belf, he of Belf,^{bb}

the one with the bronze feet,^{cc} the one with
the iron heels,

to make him produce^{dd} for you a double
iron nail

with a thick head and a subtle^{ee} leg, with a
firm tip and of light iron.

Bring it before me.^{ff}

Dip it in the blood of Osiris.

Hand it over, and we will appeal

(magically):^{gg}

Praise a ... that is spinning,

The Paris Magical Papyrus (5)

ΤΙΣΕΤΕ
ΤΙΣΑΤΙ ΕΤΕ ΜΕΣΚΑΤΕ ΑΧΩΙ^{ΟΙ}
(115) ΕΞΑΤΙ^{ΣΕΤΕ} ΝΙΒΕ ΠΙΣΙ ΝΙΒΕ
Ε^ΑΟΜ ΝΙΒΙ ΕΛΩΒ ΝΙΒΙ (116) ΒΟΙΟΙΘ^{ΩΩ} ΝΙΒΙ
ΕΤΚΝΑΑΪΤΟΥ ΡΗΪ ΕΝΠΑΙΑΒ Ν̄ΣΑΤΙ

(117) ΕΚΕΑΪΤΟΥ ΡΗΪ Ν̄ΦΗΤ' Ν̄ΠΜΑΟΥΣΕ

ΠΚΑΤΑΚΟΪΤΙ (118) Ν̄ΘΕΛΠΙ^{ΩΤΕ} Ν̄ΘΗ^Ε Ν̄ΝΙΜ^{ΤΧ}
Ν̄ΜΕΣΙΕ ΝΙΜ·

ΤΒΑΝΙΝΙ (119) Ν̄ΜΟΣ Ν̄ΝΗΪ Ν̄ΝΙΜ
ΕΜΕΣΙΕ ΝΙΜ

Ν̄ΣΤΙ Ν̄ΠΕΤΕΝ(120) ΤΟΟΤΣ· ΕΤΟΟΤ·

ΠΕΤΝ̄ΡΩ̄Σ Ε̄ΡΩ̄Ϊ ΠΕΤΕΝΧΗΣ ΕΧΗΤ

O flame^{hh} that does not sleep above me (?)ⁱⁱ!

As to^{jj} every flame, every cooking,
every sigh, every steaming, every sweating^{kk}
which you will perform inside^{ll} this flaming
stove,

you will perform it (also) inside^{mm} the heart,
the liver,

the vagina (?),ⁿⁿ the navel, the belly^{oo} of NN.

So bring^{pp} her to the house^{qq} of NN,

and she will give what is in her hand to my
hand,

what is in her mouth into my mouth, what
is in her belly into my belly,

The Paris Magical Papyrus (6)

(121) ΠΕΤΕΝΕΣΧΟΥ Ν̄ΣΙΜΕ̄ ΕΝΑΗΟΥ
Ν̄ΟΟΥΝΤ·

ΕΧ̄ΕΝ (122) ΤΙΟΤΙ ΤΙΑΤΕ ΕΧΕΝ

ΤΙΟΥΝΟΥ ΤΙΟΥΝΟΥ

(123) § βοῖβα νερωου ναλλᾱ βε
μη̄ι νουπωκε.

(124) Ν̄Ε̄ΣΙ ΕΝΟΥΤΙ ΝΙΜ ΕΜΕΣΙΕ ΝΙΜ·

ΤΑΤΑΥΩΓΟΣ (125) ΕΒΟΙΪ ^{ΜΕΝ} ΝΕΜ ΝΙΜ
ΕΜΕΣΙΕ ΝΙΜ·

ΒΕ ΑΝΚ ΤΟ (126) ΣΙ ΝΤΟ ΑΝΚ ΠΟΥΡ ΣΙ
ΝΠΟΥΡ

ΑΝΚ· ΑΝΟΥΠ ΕΦΒΙ (127) Π\κ/ΛΟΜ·

Ν̄ΩΟΥ Ν̄ΠΡΗ

ΕΦΤΙ Ν̄ΜΟΦ ΕΒΕΝ ΠΕΡΟ (128) ΟΥΣΙΡΙ

ΠΕΡΟ ΟΥΣΕΡ ΟΥΕΝΑΒΡΕ

Ᾱ ΤΑ ΠΝΕΣΞΙ (129) Ν̄ΠΤΟ ΤΗΡΦ

what is in her female parts onto my male
parts –

quickly, quickly, at once, at once!

Rise up to the kings of Alk-hah who tell
the future^{tr} in Ou-poke!

Arouse any god ⟨after NN⟩ whom NN has
born,

and I shall recite it (?)^{ss} upon myself and
NN whom NN has born.

For I am To (‘Earth’?) son of To. I am
Pour (‘the Great’) son of Pour.

I am Anubis who bears the glorious crown
of Re

(and) puts it upon King Osiris,

King Osiris Onnophris,

who has given (?)^{tt} arousing^{uu} to the whole
earth,

How is late Coptic ?

A very characteristic feature: syllabic \bar{n} and \bar{m} lose their nasal articulation and become vowels, of central articulation, usually spelled ϵ , or are dropped altogether.

$\bar{m}MOK > \epsilon MOK, MOK$

$m\bar{n} > m\epsilon, \text{ etc.}$

Also, the use of β for q is very typical of late S texts.

Fragment of a papyrus scroll with Coptic text in a single column, written in a cursive hand. The text is partially obscured by a white rectangular box on the right side of the image.

وكفا بالله شق [يد]

* * K̄ [--- ± 9 ---] Λ ΔΝΟΚ
 ΠΕΚΣΟΝ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΚΥΒΗΡ
 ΔΥΩ [?]ΕΙΤΟΥΣΕ ΚΙΟΥΑ ΕΒΟΥΩΥ
 ΕΡ ΠΕΤΘΟΥ ΕΡΟϞ ΕΡΕΠΩΚ ΠΕ
 ΨΑΡΗΝ ΠΕΒΒΟΛ ΕΒΟΛ
 * * * ΝΤΟΚ ΟΥΔΕ ΟΥΡΩΜΕ
 ΠΩΚ ΠΕ ΔΥΩ ΕΤΑΟΙΧ
ΕΣΑϞ ΔΙΧΟΥΤΣ ΝΑΚ ΧΕ ΛΑΥ
 ΝΙΜ ΕΨΑΒΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΧΩΚ
 ΟΥΔΕ ΝΕΚΥΗΡΕ ΟΥΔΕ
 ΔΗΛΗΠΗΜΕΡΟΣ* / (?) ρι ΤΙΡΟ^{̅̅}
 ΤΑΙ ΕΤ [?]ΣΝΘ ΟΥΔΕ ΣΝΗ
ΤΕΒ ρΙΧΩΙ ΔΝΟΚ ΔΠΛΩ
 ΕΙΣΤΗΧΕ ΕΡΕΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΕΝΜΗΤΡΕ