The Coptic Language

Aspects of its (Pre-)History and its Structure
### Coptic—the “daughter language” of Egyptian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Old Egyptian</th>
<th>Middle Egyptian</th>
<th>New Kingdom</th>
<th>Late Period</th>
<th>Ptolemaic Period</th>
<th>Roman Imperial Per.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Kingdom</td>
<td>Classical Egyptian</td>
<td>Late Classical</td>
<td>2700—</td>
<td>1550—</td>
<td>323—</td>
<td>30— B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Kingdom</td>
<td>&quot;Late&quot; Egn. [neuägyptisch, néo-égyptien]</td>
<td>Neo-Classical</td>
<td>2050—</td>
<td>750—</td>
<td>Late Neo-Classical</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late Period</td>
<td>Early Demotic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ptolemaic Period</td>
<td>Middle Demotic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Imperial Per.</td>
<td>Late Demotic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Scripts:** hieroglyphic and hieratic — hieratic — demotic
Egyptian – its Genetic Relationship
Afroasiatic or Hamitosemitic/Semitohamitic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Libyco-Berber</th>
<th>Chadic</th>
<th>Egyptian</th>
<th>Cuschtic (+ Omotic)</th>
<th>Semitic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A †Guanche</td>
<td>A Masa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedauye</td>
<td>Akkadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B †Old Libyan</td>
<td>B East Chadic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agau</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Berber:</td>
<td>C Biu-Mandara</td>
<td></td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 East Berber</td>
<td>D West Chadic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oromo (Galla)</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tuareg</td>
<td>— Hausa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>South Arabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 West Berber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Ethiopian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 North Berber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
In the vast South (Akhmîm to Aswân), a rather conservative dialect prevails, viz. Akhmîmic (originally thought to be centered at Akhmîm).

To the North of it, around Asyûṭ, 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 Subakhmîmic (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 commmunity at Dakhla oasis: an astonishing discovery of the past years.
The youngest Coptic dialect, in respect to its recognition by philology, is the **Middle Egyptian** (Mesokemic) or **Oxyrhynchite** dialect.

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.

**Bohairic** (Arabic Buḥayri, vernacular Beḥêri, “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.
By the 5th century, one idiom has gained overall importance, *viz.* Sahidic (Arabic Ṣaḥīḥī “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 \textit{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 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 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 $P = \text{“Palaeo-Theban”}$, 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:  \( B \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stops/affricates</th>
<th>Fricatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labials</td>
<td>( \pi ) ( \phi ) ([p^h])</td>
<td>( \sigma ) ([\varphi])? ( b ) ([\beta])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentals</td>
<td>( t ) ( \theta ) ([t^h]) ((\Delta ) ([d])</td>
<td>( c ) ((z))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postalveolars</td>
<td>( \alpha ) ([c]) ( \varkappa ) ([\epsilon^h])</td>
<td>( \psi ) ([\jmath])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velars</td>
<td>( \kappa ) ( \chi ) ([k^h]) ((r ) ([g])</td>
<td>( \beta ) ([\chi])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glottals</td>
<td>( ? )</td>
<td>( 2 ) ([h])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Valley Dialects:  \textbf{FMSLA} etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labials</td>
<td>( \pi )</td>
<td>( \sigma ) ([\varphi])?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postalveolars</td>
<td>( \alpha ) ([c])</td>
<td>( \psi ) ([\jmath])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laterals</td>
<td>( \alpha ) ([k] )</td>
<td>((\ddot{\omega} ) ([\varsigma]) ( I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatal</td>
<td>( \kappa ) ((r ) ([g])</td>
<td>( \epsilon ) ([\chi]) ( A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velars</td>
<td>( \kappa ) ((r ) ([g])</td>
<td>( \beta ) ([\chi])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glottals</td>
<td>( ? )</td>
<td>( 2 ) ([h])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NB:
In $F$, $\lambda$ for $p$ in most lexemes.
$F$ λειν : $S$ παν “name”; $F$ λωμι : $S$ ρωμε “man”; $F$ τάλκα : $S$ τάρκο “conjure”; but $F$ Βερι : $S$ βρε “new”

In $A$, often $κ$ for $s$ of $FMSL$.
$A$ Νάκ : $S$ νακ “big”; $A$ Εκοού : $S$ εκοου “Nubian”

In $A$, regularly $ς$ [x] for the $ς$ of $FMSL$ and the $ς$ of $B$ where it continues Egyptian $h$ and non-palatalized $h$.
$A$ Ζίςε : $S$ χίζε, $B$ Ζίζε “be troubled” < $*h\acute{i}sVt$ ; $A$ Ζωντ : $S$ ζωντ, $B$ ζωντ “approach” < $*h\acute{a}nVt$

In $A$, regularly $ς$ [x] for the $ω$ of $BFMSL$ where it continues Egyptian palatalized $h$.
$A$ Ζωπε : $S$ ωπε “become” < $*h\acute{a}pVr$; $A$ Σάλμες : $S$ σάλμη “make live” < $*s\acute{a}\acute{n}ah$. 
Typical features of Valley & Fayyumic Coptic (*FMSLA*)

Coptic has no voiced stops.
Its unvoiced stops, *viz.* ι, τ, χ, δ, κ, obviously have lenis articulation [ʰ], [θ], etc.
Cf. Arabic place names like *Dandara*, from τǐτωρε; *Idfu*, from τῳ; 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CON</td>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>CON</td>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>CAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>PEN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>PO</td>
<td>PO</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT=</td>
<td>TAT=</td>
<td>TAT=</td>
<td>TOT=</td>
<td>TOT=</td>
<td>TOT=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The stressed zero vowel of SLA: in B, in F, zero or in M:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qēnt</td>
<td>qēnt</td>
<td>qēnt</td>
<td>qēnt</td>
<td>qēnt</td>
<td>“worm”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cēri</td>
<td>cēri</td>
<td>cēri</td>
<td>cēri</td>
<td>cēri</td>
<td>“circumcise”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

unstressed zero vowel of SLA: in BFM:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peh2e</td>
<td>peh2e</td>
<td>peh2e</td>
<td>peh2e</td>
<td>*peh2e</td>
<td>“free”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r3mhé’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>χw</td>
<td>kw</td>
<td>kw</td>
<td>kw</td>
<td>koy</td>
<td>koy</td>
<td>“put” (h3c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kw</td>
<td>kwy</td>
<td>kwy</td>
<td>kwy</td>
<td>kwy</td>
<td>“build” (kd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial Egyptian *?a- (unstressed):

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
B & F & M & S & L & A \\
\varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon
\end{array}
\]

Hence:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
B & F & M & S & L & A \\
\varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon & \varepsilon
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{epoq} \quad \text{epaq} \quad \text{epoq} \quad \text{apaq} \quad \text{apaq} \quad \text{“to him”}\]

*\(p\)-?açáf:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{peèaw} & \text{peè} & \text{peè} & \text{peèaw} & \text{peè} & \text{peè}
\end{array}
\]

“he said”

Unstressed auslaut vowel: -ι versus -ε

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
B & F & M & S & L & A \\
-\iota & -\iota & -\epsilon & -\epsilon & -\epsilon & -\epsilon
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{ωσπι} \quad \text{ωσπι} \quad \text{ωσπε} \quad \text{ωσπε} \quad \text{ωσπε} \quad \text{“happen”}\]

Stressed fronted auslaut vowel: -\(h\) versus -ε

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
B & F & M & S & L & A \\
-\epsilon & -\h & -\h & -\epsilon & -\epsilon & -\epsilon
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{βελλε} \quad \text{βελλα} \quad *\text{βελλαβαλε} \quad \text{βαλε} \quad \text{βαλε} \quad \text{“blind”}\]

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 $F$
$\lambda$ for $p$: passim $b$ for $q$, $q$ for $v$

C  Oxyrhynchus to Bawît, in particular Ashmunên
area of $M/L$ (?)
$\eta$ for $\varepsilon$, $h$ for $[\varrho]$ $\gamma$ for $\vartheta$
$\lambda$ for $\sigma$: not many $b$ for $q$, $q$ for $v$
$\varepsilon$ for $\lambda$: rare
-tn$\varepsilon$ for -t$\tilde{n}i$: very important feature, also frequent at The
found elsewhere too.
D  Asyût to Abydos, in particular el-Balâyza, Wâdi Sarga and Aphroditó

area of \( L \)

\( \lambda \) for \( o \): not rare  \( \omega \) for \( o \)

\( \varepsilon \) for \( \lambda \): rare  \( o \) for \( o\gamma \)

\( h \) for \( \varepsilon \)  \( k \) for \( q \)  \( o \) for \( \omega \)

\( \gamma \) for \( h \)  \( \lambda^{-} \) for preposition \( \varepsilon^{-} \): common

E  Coptos to Armant, in particular the Theban area

area of \( A \)

\( \varepsilon \) for \( \lambda \): very common

\( \omega \) for \( \omega \) where \( A \) has \( \varepsilon \) (Egyptian \( h \) and not-palatalized \( h \)); rarely for \( \omega \) where \( A \) has \( \omega \) (Egyptian \( \check{s} \)): hyper-akhmimism!

\( o \) for \( \lambda \lambda \gamma \), \( \lambda \gamma \) (where \( A \) has \( o \))

\( \lambda^{-} \) for preposition \( \varepsilon^{-} \): very common

\( \kappa \) for \( \varepsilon \): numerous examples – a typical \( A \) feature

\( \varepsilon \) for \( \kappa \): very common (hyper-Akhmimism!)
Esna to Aswán
very similar to A

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

α for ο: ΝΑΤΞΙ for ΝΑΤΟΙ “soldier”; ΚΞΣ for ΣΟΣ “half”; ΚΡΡΩΝΠΕ “pigeon”
ε for ξ: ΠΕΨΕ for ΠΧΨΕ “half”; η for ξ: ΨΗΧΕ for ΨΑΧΕ “speak”
α for η: ΣΟΥΑΗ for ΣΟΥΗ “Aswân”
α for initial unstressed ε: ΑΚΩΤ for ΕΚΩΤ “builder”
κ for δ: ΚΞΣ for ΣΟΣ “half”; ΚΡΡΩΝΠΕ for ΚΡΡΩΝΠΕ “pigeon”; ΚΙ for
κιξ “hand”; ΕΚΨΨ for ΕΣΨΨ “Nubian”
ζοιτ for ζοιίτ “copper”
Typically A: Π-ΨΡΗ, plural of Π-ΨΡΕ “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 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.
ective τα καλογά τετσμαμε (ε) μη τα τανεσθνού αι παλας
ους ραςαρω τιςμαμε νακ
αρι παςατ νμ μη τανεσ
θνο γνεραϊ νμ νμ νεραυ
αν ιε υναγ αν εμματιν
αν εμματι να ντε νηρε
μντι / ερ δοειμ ανεκ αλρην
μν πετεσμαμε (ε) νυν 
ζημερ ε εμπαρτερ τιςμαμε
νιαντι αι ουςρες οτη ναμη / εη
εει.[.]. η ε νεραυ ναι μα εοι
ενεκ['εω ουςρες ναβητ
ουςρες -------------
ΗΣΕ ΟΥ [. . ] ΟΥΠΟΥ[ο] [%][%][%][%][%][%][%]
ΤΜΟΝΕΡ ΝΙΑΝΟΥΠ ΕΙ ΟΥΣΡΕ ΠΕΛΟΙΖ
ΝΘΝ[. . ] ΡΕΡ ΝΑΜΟΥΡΚΗΡ'
ΝΑΖΡ[. . ] ΦΟΥ ΑΡΙ ΠΑΣΑΤ
It is Esrəmpe, the (daughter) of Kəllaouç, who is complaining about Ḥôr, the (son) of Tanesneou. My lord Osiris, (Lord) of Ḥasrō! I complain to you, do justice to me and Ḥôr, 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 Ḥôr. . . . I complain to [you,] ... Osiris, listen to my calls! ...
It is Esrémpe, the (daughter) of Kallaouč, who is complaining about Ḥôr, the (son) of Tanesneou.

My lord Osiris, (Lord) of Ḥasrô! I complain to you, do justice to me and Ḥôr, 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 Ḥôr.

……., 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 $\xi$
2. / for $\varphi$: $\sim >$ Demotic $\varphi >$ Coptic $\varphi$
3. $\circ$ for $\eta$: $\eta >$ Demotic $\eta$
4. $\nearrow$ for $\epsilon$: $\nearrow >$ Demotic $\epsilon >$ Coptic $\epsilon$
5. $\land$ for $\lambda$ and $\varphi$ (when they are $\chi$, not $\tau$, in Valley and Fayyumic Coptic): $\land \varphi >$ Demotic $\land >$ Coptic $\chi$
6. $\bigtriangleup$ for $\gamma$ (when it is $\sigma$, not $\kappa$, in Valley and Fayyumic Coptic): maybe from $\eta >$ Demotic $\eta >$ Coptic $\chi$
7. $\wedge$ for $\delta$ (for which $\Omega$ is also used): $\wedge$ (determinative of $\iota$ 'back') $> \text{ Demotic } \wedge$
8. $\check{\lambda}$ for final $\lambda$ (?): $\lambda$ with diacritic marks?
9. $\overline{\alpha}$

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 blank\(^1\), 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 half\(^2\).

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: A\(^3\), ll. 1-4 (= fol. 1\(^v\) ll. 1-4): magical names\(^4\); 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 Osiris\(^5\); 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 general\(^6\) (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 father\(^7\). Three more texts follow, \textit{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)

§ hσεντνήου ῆνπτουου ῆμερεν

ετῆογ ἄ (95) δοῖος εἰατεν· χά εμρήν
εἐτῆς χά ἐόμ

απεσίωτ (96) θοου[τ] ὡ εἰ εδύν

ἐριέες

ἀβδεένς· ὡε ἄρος ταβέρν (97) ἴσ[ε]

[ἐ]τῆογ ἄ χά δοῖος ἰάτι· ἄ εμρήν χεέθη

ἀ ἐόμ

(98) πμ. ντεβεντω ὁρπ. νερμοου

νιέτεν

πεδες (99) [νεν] ὡ ε ναροι έν

παϊόυτ· παναθόουτ· παναθο(100)

[ουτ] παϊόυτ

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 m cloth 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.
aībolīten ταρεῖ ἐνείμε

ἀϊκ[ι]μέ (101) [...]

φ ce nebo̱w ecenkatke men ογ[ci]pi

(102) [.... p]αcon πεί ιταμέου

nemáï

πεβαὐ ηνα (103) [be o]γμεντβαϊρε

nare̱n te taberí ū[ci]

(104) [pet]βας naq be oγμεντβαϊρε

nara̱k τ[e]

παίοντ (105) [pan]αγούτ·

παλαιούτ· παίοντ·

ογμεντω̱ ανοκ (106) [ω]φτ te

πεβαυ ηνα be τώνι taberí ης

I have been weakened by my female companion."

I have found 'a secret' (?)."

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

'he being' my brother, the child of my mother, as I am (too) (?)"!

He said to her: “It is adultery against you, my daughter Isis!”

She said to him: “It is adultery against you,

my father, Baboon Thoth, Baboon Thoth, my father!

It is a pregnancy of my own!”

He said to her, “Arise, my daughter Isis,
The Paris Magical Papyrus (4)

and go\textsuperscript{w} to the south of Thebes, to the north\textsuperscript{x} of Abydus.
There is\textsuperscript{y} a coppersmith\textsuperscript{z} there who is called
\textsuperscript{(?)}\textsuperscript{aa} Belf, he of Belf,\textsuperscript{bb}
the one with the bronze feet,\textsuperscript{cc} the one with
the iron heels,
to make him produce\textsuperscript{dd} for you a double
iron nail
with a thick head and a subtle\textsuperscript{ee} leg, with a
firm tip and of light iron.

Bring it before me.\textsuperscript{ff}
Dip it in the blood of Osiris.
Hand it over, and we will appeal
(magically):\textsuperscript{gg}
Praise a … that is spinning,
The Paris Magical Papyrus (5)

O flame that does not sleep above me (?)ii!
As toij every flame, every cooking,
every sigh, every steaming, every sweatingkk
which you will perform insideühl this flaming stove,
you will perform it (also) insideamm the heart,
the liver,
the vagina (??),nn the navel, the bellyoo of NN.
So bringpp her to the houseqq 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) πετενεχοῦ τὸν ἡμέραν θανάτου
ἐξήν (122) τίῳ τίατε ἐξεν
τιούνου τιούνου
(123) § δοινάς νερῴος οὐκάλλα ἐν
μὴ νοὺπωκε.
(124) Νέκι ἐνούτι νῦμ εμεκε ἐν

ταταγωύος (125) εμοῖ νῦμ νῦμ
εμεκε ἐν


(126) σι κνί ανκ πόγρ κα
νπόγρ

(127) πάκ/λομ.

(128) ἐκολοφω ἐμοὶ ἐπὶ ἐντὸς ὁγκίρι
περὶ ὁγκερ ὄγενάβερ


(129) ἐντὸς ὁγκίρι

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 in Ou-poke!
Arouse any god (after NN) whom NN has
born,
and I shall recite it (?) 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 (?) arousing to the whole
earth.
How is late Coptic?

A very characteristic feature: syllabic ٍ and َِِِ lose their nasal articulation and become vowels, of central articulation, usually spelled ⪞, or are dropped altogether.

\(\text{م}ٍ\) ***\(\rightarrow\) ⪞, ِّ\)

\(\text{م}ٍ\) ***\(\rightarrow\) ِّ, etc.

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