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Notes on the Coptic Substratum in Egyptian Arabic

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on the right track in reading the first two letters of the second word in nos. 1 and 2 as *th* and *m*; but the translation which he gives of the inscriptions: "The command is the value of . . .", and the idea that the two or three annulets on the coins denote the value for which the coin was "commanded" to be accepted and complete the preceding inscription, are very strange indeed; as is also the translation of no. 3 as: "prescribed value; the Commander of the Faithful." J. L. Fleischer (in footnotes to Stickel's text) and Soret (in a note printed on p. 471) immediately expressed their doubts.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this article, in the same volume of the *ZDMG*, pp. 735-8, Tornberg gave the correct explanation, which he, moreover, supported with the correct arguments in an exposé of admirable lucidity. He demolishes the fantastic explanation of Stickel, points out that the inscription must obviously contain the name of an amīr, and identifies the name as Thamal (which he reads, following Weil, as Thuml). He also argues that there is a strong presumption that a governor of the importance of Thamal should have struck coins, and that the coins, since they have been found by Langlois in Cilicia, probably originated in that district. The

only point in Tornberg's article which is open to criticism is his comment on the words *maulā amīr al-mu'minin* in no. 3: "The word [*maulā*], which has various meanings, can be translated in such a context, without doing violence to the language, as 'the governor appointed by al-Muqtadir.' This is approximately how people would understand it." In fact, the title is rather a personal one, namely "freedman of the Commander of the Faithful."

Tornberg's identification was accepted, as indeed it deserved to be, by Soret and Stickel themselves (see Soret in *ZDMG*, 1863, pp. 716-7, and Stickel, *ibid.*, 1858, pp. 175-6), as well as by O. Blau ("Nachlese orientalischer Münzen," *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, 1874-5, p. 19). It is, however, astonishing to see that it was rejected by F. Erdmann (*ZDMG*, 1863, p. 367) in favour of other, most adventurous, interpretations. On nos. 1 and 2 he reads "Timur," while on no. 3 he reads "Naṣr," whom he identifies with the Qarakhānid Naṣr b. 'Alī. There is no need to refute these views. We see that in the middle of the last century these coins attracted general attention; since then until recently there was no occasion to remember them, and so it happened that also the correct explanation which had been found for them has fallen into oblivion.

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## NOTES ON THE COPTIC SUBSTRATUM IN EGYPTIAN ARABIC

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IN 1881 ONE OF THE MOST remarkable archaeological finds in Egypt was made. A treasure of the royal mummies of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties was discovered in a deep shaft in a lonely hill near the Hatshepsut temple at Deir-al-Bahri. The mummies were transported by steamer to the Egyptian museum in Būlaq, and while the steamer was sailing northward, crowds of Egyptian peasants followed on both banks of the Nile all the way from Luxor to Quft. Men shouted and fired shots into the air, while women cried and wailed for the departure of the dead monarchs who had ruled their fathers more than three thousand

years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Such a phenomenon shows how close the tie is that links the modern Egyptian peasant to his ancient forefathers. Indeed, so far as many aspects of his material culture are concerned, the peasant of Upper Egypt may be said to be living still in the Old Kingdom.

The highly conservative nature of the Egyptian peasants, conditioned in part by the geographical isolation of the habitable land as well as by the cyclic rhythm imposed on their agricultural activi-

<sup>1</sup> James Baiki, *A Century of Excavations in the Land of the Pharaohs* (New York, 1934), p. 161.

ties by the Nile inundation, is reflected clearly in the history of their language and to less extent in their religion. In spite of successive occupations by the Hyksos, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and finally the Arabs, only the language of the latter succeeded in replacing completely the native Egyptian language, commonly known in the Christian Era as Coptic.

Many scholars hold the opinion that there exists a noticeable Coptic influence on the Arabic vernacular of modern Egypt. Some writers have expressed this belief with various degrees of enthusiasm; others, however, have found sufficient reason to oppose it.

G. Sobhy, for instance, says:

When a Copt turned into a Muslim he was bound to learn Arabic. That, he could not do in a day or two. It was only natural then, that he was obliged to speak and have relations with his co-religionists in a mixture of Coptic and Arabic. Thousands did that—and thus a new Arabic dialect was evolved for the inhabitants of Egypt—a mixture of Coptic and Arabic.<sup>2</sup>

D. Prince sounds the same belief and mentions at the close of his monograph on the modern pronunciation of Coptic that there is a considerable influence of Coptic on sentence construction and vocabulary of the present Egyptian Arabic vernacular.<sup>3</sup> He maintains, moreover, that the *g* sound in Egyptian Arabic is due to Coptic influence and is not of an Arabic origin.<sup>4</sup> F. Praetorius and E. Littmann support the same belief of Coptic influence on Egyptian Arabic, especially in grammar and syntax. They explain a number of Egyptian Arabic features as originating from Coptic.<sup>5</sup>

On the contrary, O'Leary, in his article "Notes on the Coptic Language," contradicts Praetorius and Littmann and explains as purely Arabic the examples which they considered Coptic in origin.<sup>6</sup>

Worrell, working from a different point of view, believes that it was Arabic rather which left its

traces on Coptic and not *vice versa*. He contends that the Coptic sounds must have become Arabicized during the time in which the two languages were in contact.<sup>7</sup> He divides this period into three stages: (1) Coptic in full vitality, but taking up Arabic words; (2) Coptic still a living language, but Arabic in Coptic letters also used; (3) Coptic a dead language, represented in Arabic letters.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, whatever trace Coptic might have left upon Egyptian Arabic when it held prestige during the first stage of contact must have been neutralized and completely disappeared when Coptic ceased to be spoken and Arabic gained a dominant position. Worrell also believes that the pronunciation of Egyptian Arabic today reflects a reliable tradition of that Arabic which was used in Egypt during the latest Coptic period; this follows from his using the testimony of modern Egyptian Arabic to verify Coptic sounds which were written in Arabic letters.<sup>9</sup>

E. Galtier strongly denies any grammatical Coptic influence on Egyptian Arabic by saying, ". . . après une étude approfondie de l'arabe égyptien, avoue n'avoir trouvé aucune trace de l'influence de la grammaire copte et considérer cette prétendu influence comme une hypothèse qui est encore loin d'être prouvée. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

The above is a sample of the diversity of opinion regarding the subject of Coptic substratum in Egyptian Arabic. This diversity is due, perhaps, to the fact that in the past those who dealt with the problem were either native Egyptian Arabicists who studied Coptic without further formal linguistic training, or non-Egyptians who were well trained in linguistics, Coptic and other pertinent languages, but did not master Egyptian Arabic. The writer, however, has the advantage of being a native Egyptian Arabicist plus the formal linguistic training which he received in the Oriental Seminary of The Johns Hopkins University where he made careful investigation of the problem in question for his doctoral dissertation.<sup>11</sup> A sketch

<sup>2</sup> G. Sobhy, *Common Words in the Spoken Arabic of Egypt* (Cairo, 1950), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> D. Prince, "The Modern Pronunciation of Coptic in the Mass," *JAOS*, XXIII (1902), 304-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>5</sup> F. Praetorius, "Koptische Spuren in der ägyptisch-arabischen Grammatik," *ZDMG*, LV (1901), 145-7. E. Littmann, "Koptischer Einfluss in Ägyptisch-Arabischen," *ibid.*, LVI (1902), 681-4.

<sup>6</sup> DeLacy O'Leary, "Notes on the Coptic Language," *Orientalia*, III (1934), 243-58.

<sup>7</sup> W. H. Worrell, *Coptic Sounds* (Ann Arbor), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> E. Galtier, "De l'influence du Copte sur l'arabe d'Égypte," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, II (1902), 212-16.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson B. Bishai, *The Coptic Influence on Egyptian Arabic*, a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Oriental Seminary of The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 1959. The writer is indebted to W. F.

of the results obtained from this study is given here in order to show as fairly as possible the extent of the Coptic substratum in Egyptian Arabic.

Egyptian Arabic exhibits certain distinctive features which are not present in other Arabic dialects. While a Coptic substratum may be the source of these features, many details must be examined in an orderly fashion before such a conclusion can be reached:

I. Since languages undergo certain internal evolutionary changes, each in its own way, these internal developments must first be taken into consideration in order to isolate those peculiarities which may be attributed to outside influence. In the case of Egypt there is a period of nearly twelve hundred years since Arabic became the vernacular of the native population; this period is long enough to account for a host of radical as well as trivial alterations in the development of any spoken language.

II. The Arabian tribes which immigrated to Egypt during and after the Islamic expansion spoke various dialects in which the characteristics of modern Egyptian Arabic might well have had their origin. It is of prime importance, therefore, to study the different features of the dialects of Arabic, concentrating on those which may have carried over into Egyptian Arabic. Only in this way can a clear picture of potential dialectal features be formed before the possibility of Coptic influence.

III. Since the introduction of Arabic into Egypt, the Egyptians have been exposed to various language contacts, the most important of which are Greek, Turkish, Persian, French, English and Italian. These languages have left their influence on Egyptian Arabic in various ways. Turkish in particular has greatly enriched the vocabulary of all the Arabic dialects of the Near East. Therefore, non-Arabic words used in Egyptian Arabic cannot be attributed to Coptic before the influence of the above-mentioned languages has been excluded.<sup>12</sup>

Albright and T. O. Lambdin for their guidance and contributions to this study.

<sup>12</sup> A word like *bōsh* "empty" in Egyptian Arabic may be attributed at first glance to Coptic ⲃⲟⲩⲩ. However, all indications show that its origin is Turkish *boş*.

Accordingly, the investigation of this problem must include these two major steps: (A) determining all instances of possible Coptic influence, (B) eliminating those features which are better attributed to other causes such as language development, influence of other Arabic dialects, and influence of foreign languages. All these considerations have been taken into account in the study referred to above<sup>13</sup> which treats the subject in detail. A summary of the results of this study is presented here.

Phonology: The instances of possible Coptic influence on the Egyptian Arabic phonology have been determined by a comparative study of the phonology of Coptic, Classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. Listed below are those features which exist in both Coptic and Egyptian Arabic but are lacking in classical Arabic:

1. The phonematization of *p*.
2. The phonematization of *g*.
3. The laxness of '.
4. The phonematization of *ō* and *ē*.
5. Lack of aspiration of voiceless stops.
6. Palatalization of velar sounds.<sup>14</sup>
7. Fronting certain points of articulation.<sup>15</sup>

The first four of these instances deal with phonemic changes, whereas the last three deal with allophonic changes. The study shows, however, that Coptic was not influential in any of the instances of possible phonemic influence.<sup>16</sup>

Sahidic did show its influence on the Upper Egyptian Arabic dialect in the three allophonic features.<sup>17</sup> Cairene does not seem to have been influenced by Bohairic in any way. It may be noted here that although Coptic has /p/ as a phoneme, it was not the source of that same element in the phonemic structure of Egyptian Arabic; European languages which came in con-

<sup>13</sup> Bishai, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> An example of a palatalized velar is *k > kʷ*.

<sup>15</sup> Examples of fronting points of articulation are *j > d̄* and *q > g*.

<sup>16</sup> The phonematization of *p* revealed a European influence, that of *g* and the laxness of ' revealed influence of other Arabic dialects, and the phonematization of *ō* and *ē* are due to internal language change.

<sup>17</sup> An example of non-aspiration and palatalizing velars in Sahidic Arabic is [kʰef] for [kʰef] "how?" an example of fronting points of articulation is [gāl] for [gāl] "he said."

tact with Egyptian Arabic only after the French Expedition in 1789 influenced Egyptian Arabic in this direction.<sup>18</sup>

Morphology and Syntax: There are five instances of Coptic influence on the Egyptian Arabic grammar, four are valid and one is doubtful. The four valid instances include two instances of morphological influence, i. e. the use of *mā* as imperative prefix,<sup>19</sup> and the use of 'a plus a personal pronoun as a type of a past tense prefix;<sup>20</sup> one syntactic influence, which is the special function of the demonstrative pronoun in non-verbal sentences;<sup>21</sup> and one instance of influence on word order, namely, the delay of the interrogative pronoun when it is a governed element.<sup>22</sup> The doubtful instance is that of using an adjective plus the preposition 'an in place of the regular Arabic elative form.<sup>23</sup>

It may be noted here that the three morphological and syntactic instances of Coptic influence on Egyptian Arabic are all subsidiary features, i. e. variants of the regular patterns. For example, the use of *mā* as an imperative prefix in Egyptian Arabic is a variant of the regular imperative pattern derived from classical Arabic, the use of 'a plus a pronoun is a variant of the regular past tense pattern, and the special function of the demonstrative pronoun is also a variant of the regular non-verbal sentence of classical Arabic. Only the one instance of delaying governed interrogative elements in word order is considered a main feature of Egyptian Arabic resulting from Coptic influence. This further indicates that the

scope of Coptic influence on the Egyptian Arabic grammar was surprisingly small.

Vocabulary: The writer collected two hundred and five lexical items all of which were suggested by writers to be Coptic loanwords in Egyptian Arabic.<sup>24</sup> Of these only one hundred and nine are valid loanwords. Fifty-eight are best explained as being of Arabic origin; eight, as originating from sources other than Coptic or Arabic; fourteen are of uncertain origins, but doubtfully from Coptic; sixteen have no reference to source in the standard Coptic dictionary by Crum.

The one hundred and nine valid loanwords were mostly taken into Egyptian Arabic according to standard Arabic patterns. In many cases Coptic supplied only the trilateral roots from which other Arabic words were derived. Coptic loanwords include items peculiar to Coptic worship such as 'anba "bishop" and 'ajbiya "book of prayer." They also include items that are used in remote villages not common to the main Egyptian population such as *hnayye* "a thing" and *raftāw* "a measure of grain." This leaves the number of Coptic loanwords used commonly in Egyptian Arabic smaller still; they mainly include names of various kinds of fish,<sup>25</sup> vulgarisms,<sup>26</sup> and names of cooking utensils<sup>27</sup> and foods not used in Arabic.<sup>28</sup>

It might be mentioned here that Turkish, which was never a vernacular of Egypt, left more lexical items in Egyptian Arabic than Coptic did. This is indicated by a partial survey of Turkish loanwords in Egyptian Arabic by E. Littmann<sup>29</sup> which includes two hundred and sixty-four words.

Perhaps it is of some interest to mention that a few Egyptian Arabic words of Coptic origin are used in Lebanon and Syria such as *fūṭa* "towel, galabiya "garment" and *ḥantūr* "carriage drawn by horses."<sup>30</sup> It is still of more interest to men-

<sup>18</sup> Egyptian Arabic words which have [p] contrasting with other sounds are usually European words such as [pyāno] "piano" which contrasts with [byano] "his declaration."

<sup>19</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *ma tekṭeb* "write (imperative)" as compared with Coptic *matamio* "make (imperative)."

<sup>20</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic 'a *hu seme* "he heard" as compared with Coptic *afsōtm* with the same meaning.

<sup>21</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *da (a)na l'malek* "I am the king" compared with Coptic *anok pe prro* with the same meaning.

<sup>22</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *roḥt fēn?* "Where did you go?" as compared with Coptic *akbōk etōn* with the same meaning.

<sup>23</sup> Egyptian Arabic *huwa kebīr 'anni* "He is bigger than I" may be compared with Hebrew *hu gadōl memenni* with the same meaning. The use of the Arabic comparative preposition 'an instead of *min* "from" may be due to the special comparative meaning of 'an.

<sup>24</sup> G. Sobhy, *op. cit.* W. H. Worrell, *Coptic Texts* (Ann Arbor), pp. 329-342. Worrell included material collected by W. Vycichl.

<sup>25</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *shilba* and S *čalbow* "a kind of fish."

<sup>26</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *jukš* and B *joksi* "crepitus ventris."

<sup>27</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *majūr* "a pot for kneading" and S *majōr*.

<sup>28</sup> Example: Egyptian Arabic *bisāra* and S *pesarō* "cooked beans."

<sup>29</sup> See E. Littmann, "Turkisches Sprachgut im Aegyptischen," *Westoestliche Abhandlungen*, 1954, pp. 107-127.

<sup>30</sup> See Anis Frayha, *A Dictionary of Non-Classical*

tion that Coptic *tōbe* became Egyptian Arabic *tūba* "brick," and was borrowed with the definite article into the Spanish language and then to English as *adobe* meaning "a brick house."

The limited influence of Coptic on Egyptian

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*Vocables in the Spoken Arabic of Lebanon* (Beirut, 1947).

Arabic can only be explained as lack of widespread bilingualism in Egypt during the transition from Coptic to Arabic. This leads to the conclusion that the Copts who were converted to Islam at any one time must have been a minor segment of the population. To judge from linguistic criteria alone, the muslim Egyptians of today are perhaps right in claiming predominantly Arab ancestry.

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## THE BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINT STONE POEMS

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AMONG THE ANCIENT TREASURES of the Yakushi-ji at Nara is a block of stone dating from the Nara period on which is carved a representation of the footprints of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The sides of this stone bear inscriptions, of which the main ones concern the religious significance of such representations and the circumstances in which this particular one was made. Behind this stone, which is approximately 1' 10" high, 2' 6" long and 3' 2" deep, stands another, a tablet about 6' 2" high and 1' 7" wide on which are inscribed in *man'yōgana* twenty-one Japanese poems, mostly extolling the virtues of such footprints. It is disputed whether or not the stones have always been at the Yakushi-ji, and indeed whether the poem tablet was originally intended to accompany this particular footprint stone. They are now kept in a building called "Hall of the Buddha's Footprint Stone," but it is clear that they have not always been so protected, since both have suffered from erosion, and parts of the inscriptions are illegible. Both stones were designated national treasures in 1897.

I propose in this article to present a translation, with notes, of the inscriptions on these stones. It should be said at the outset that the poems have no great literary merit; they were composed as a pious, not an artistic, exercise. This does not, however, make them any the less interesting from a human point of view. They are also of considerable interest to the student of the ancient Japanese language and script. Some linguistic points will be dealt with in my notes, but except in one or two isolated instances, it will not be possible for me here to attempt any discussion of the script.

Texts of this antiquity attracted special attention from Tokugawa commentators, and between 1750 and 1850 several commentaries on these poems were written, though not all dealt in any detail with the inscriptions on the footprint stone. I have also found two commentaries on the poems by modern scholars. The commentators, in chronological order, are:

1. Noro Saneo (or Genjō).<sup>a</sup> In 1752 he published *Bussokuseki-himei*, "The Buddha's Footprint Stone Inscriptions," containing the text, with some commentary, of the poem tablet and of most of the inscriptions on the other stone. It appears that the source of his text was not the original stones but a copy. I have unfortunately not had direct access to Noro's work, but a number of his notes on, e. g., Buddhist references are quoted in the commentaries of Yamakawa and Kamochi (Nos. 5 and 6 below). To judge from the comments of Kariya (No. 4 below), Noro's transcription of the text is far from reliable, and some at least of his notes, though not, I think, the notes on Buddhist points, contain inaccuracies.

2. A priest named Nissho.<sup>b</sup> His commentary, written in the Meiwa period (1764-1772), is briefly described by Yamakawa in the introductory remarks to his own work. But it seems to have existed in manuscript only, so that I have been unable to see it.

3. A priest named Chōon.<sup>c</sup> I have likewise been unable to see this commentary, which seems to have formed part of a work on Buddhist footprint relics. I can give no indication of its date beyond the fact that one very brief quotation from