HOOFDARTIKLEN

The Usage of the Coptic Language as a Constituent Element of the Literary Form of Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa

Introduction

Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa, the Bishop of al-Âsâmânīn ¹, is well known among the Christian Arabic writers of the mid-tenth century. He was among the first of the Coptic Christians to compose a considerable number of original works in Arabic, which obtained him a position of preeminence in the literature of his nation, as well as among the Christian writers of the Orient in the tenth century. He helped to introduce the Arabic language into Coptic ecclesiastical literature ².

Both Louis Cheikho al-YasÎ† and Georg Graf gave a short synopsis of the life and works of Ibn al-Muqaffa, the former in his book: Kitâb al-Makhîihatât al-Ârabiyya li-Katabat al-Naṣrāniyya (Beirut 1924), and the latter in his Geschichte der christlichen Literatur (Vatican City, 1944-53) ³.

Of his personal life little is known. As a laymen he bore the name of AbÎ† (t)Bishr, and he was a clerk (kâtib). It is, however, known that he was appointed Bishop of Âsâmânîn and that he died during the patriarchate of Philotheus the 63rd Patriarch — ca A.D. 979-1003. In an 'Epistola Synodica' of the latter of the year 987 to Anastasius the 5th (987-1003), Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Ibn al-Muqaffa, Bishop of al-Âsâmânîn, affixed his signature in the first place with the bishops present at its drawing up ⁴.

Definite dates in Ibn al-Muqaffa's life are the year 955 in which he wrote his 'Second Book' about the Councils, and the year 987 in which he added his signature to the synodal epistle mentioned above ⁵.

Two lists of the writings of Ibn al-Muqaffa have been preserved, one in the biography of the Patriarch Philotheus, the second in the catalogue of authors of Abî† Barakât ibn Kabar ⁶. The first gives twenty and the second twenty six works. A comparison of these lists with the writings known from extant manuscripts shows that a large part of the works of Ibn al-Muqaffa must be regarded as lost ⁷.

Ibn al-Muqaffa's literary activities were concerned with the religious education of the people, the exposition of the Bible, of everyday morality and of the liturgy. He composed many theological and polemical works, most of which are still unedited ⁸. He was considered in the 10th century the principal champion of the Coptic Church which was then menaced by the activity and abilities of the Melkite Patriarch Eutychius (Sa'id ibn Batrîq, 933-940) who was supported by Muhammam ibn Tughj al-Ikhshid (323/935-334/946), the new Governor of Egypt ⁹. In addition to this, he is reported to have taken part in disputations with other religious denominations, whether they were Muslims or Jews ¹⁰.

Ibn al-Muqaffa is best known for his work, Târîkh Bâtîrika al-Kanîsah al-Qâfitiyah bi-l-Iskandariyya which he did not, however, complete, the editing and completion being due to others ¹¹.

This work is preserved in the following manuscripts:

(a) Two manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Nos. 301 and 302 (A) and a third manuscript of Paris 4773 (F).

(b) Two London manuscripts: add. 26.100 (B) and Or. 1338 (C).

(c) Two manuscripts at the Vatican 620 (D) and 686 (E).

(d) A manuscript in the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo, under the title: Târîkh al-Bâtîrika, which was copied by the Rev. Shenûdâ al-Baramûsî from a copy that exists in the Monastery of al-Baramûsî in the Western Desert.

The text of the work has been published in the following editions:


(3) The latter edition was continued by Yassa 'Abd al-Masîh, 'Âzîz Sûrîyâl 'Âtîya and O. H. E. Burmester (Cairo 1943-59).


Evetts, whose edition I am using in the present dis-

¹) Town in Upper Egypt on the west bank of the Nile between Minya and Assiut, near Tell El-Amarna, the old Hermopolis.


³) There are also brief entries about his life in a number of standard encyclopedias:


(b) The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1966), vol. XIII, p. 144, by Paulinus Bellet, and

(c) The Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche (Freiburg, 1964), vol. IX, p. 703, by J. Asafaile.

⁴) Josephus Simonius Assemanus, Bibliotheca Orientalis (Rome 1719), vol. IV. Evetts says that Ibn al-Muqaffa compiled the biographies of the Patriarchs in the 9th century, which is a mistake as attested by the above substantial proof. See The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries (attributed to Abî† Sâlih, the Armenian; ed. by B. T. A. Evetts), (Oxford 1835), introd., p. xv.


sertation, collated the first seven manuscripts in building up his text in the *Patrologia Orientalis* (volumes I, V and X) 12).

**Usage of Coptic Language**

Ibn al-Muqaffa was writing for a community which was gradually going over to Arabic and was substituting it for Coptic, and which needed to transfer from the Coptic linguistic mood to the Arabic one. If his subject-matter was to be understandable to his readers, it must achieve a sort of compromise between Coptic and Arabic; the text must be planned on syntactical lines suited to the mentality of a Coptic-speaking people. At the same time its grammar and semantics should follow the rules of the Arabic language, spoken and written by the Arabs who had settled down in Egypt — hence, the writer's usage of colloquial phrases and words and Coptic constructions occasionally, and his use of genuine literary and idiomatic Arabic as well. He was, in fact, under influence from both sides.

Obviously, Ibn al-Muqaffa was writing for the Coptic community which understood Arabic in its colloquial rather than in its literary form. After all, Coptic was a popular colloquial language whose grammar was based on the Demotic dialect of Ancient Egypt, the spoken dialect of the people. In spite of the fact that in the 3rd century A.H./10th A.D. Arabic must have had the predominance and Coptic must have been pushed back to the country districts 13), and in spite of the fact that historians of language admit that the Coptic element in Egyptian colloquial Arabic is extremely small 14), yet both writer and reader think in a language which had lasted for many centuries and which had dominated their speech habits and their modes of thinking. Thus the linguistic mode of thinking on the writer's part and the linguistic mode of understanding on the reader's part were both affected by Coptic. This is the linguistic 'norm' which they both had in common.

Cultural borrowing is applicable on a large scale in Ibn al-Muqaffa's case. Many of the names of persons, places, months were borrowed by him from Coptic. Even words referring to religious rites, intellectual or moral, psychological or social phenomena, fashions of individual conduct find no translation in Ibn al-Muqaffa's Arabic, because they express the peculiar mentality of the individual using them, that is to say the Copts. All these words, phrases and idioms belong to the Coptic culture and they were transferred by the historian from Coptic to Arabic without attempt at any translation.

Undoubtedly, the existence of such words, phrases or idioms for abstract concepts has a certain influence on the mentality of the writer: they direct his attention to certain objects or fields that he is aware of. The reason for Ibn al-Muqaffa's adoption of the Coptic word in Arabic may be purely linguistic; he either could not find the Arabic equivalent because the word is associated with a pure Coptic concept or rite or tradition which has no existence in Islam, or else he failed to adopt the right usage in Arabic because he was a novice in Arabic semantics.

Since Ibn al-Muqaffa was familiar with the contributing language, i.e. Coptic, and since the borrowed words are fairly numerous, the foreign sounds which are acoustically remote from any Arabic phoneme, may be preserved in a more or less accurate rendering that nevertheless violates the native system.

The following are examples of Ibn al-Muqaffa's transliterations of the Coptic idiom:

**Ecclesiastical Titles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coptic</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἀρχιεράρχων</td>
<td>الأرشمِنْدْرِئِسِ</td>
<td>archimandrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πρωτός</td>
<td>الإرب و طس</td>
<td>archbishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀποστόλος</td>
<td>الإرب و طس</td>
<td>archbisep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἄγιος</td>
<td>الإرب و طس</td>
<td>archdeacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἱερεις</td>
<td>الإرب و طس</td>
<td>subdeacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἱεραρχής</td>
<td>الإرب و طس</td>
<td>hegumen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀρχιεράρχων</td>
<td>الأرشمِنْدْرِئِسِ</td>
<td>archimandrite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15) History, I, p. 158.
18) Of Greek origin. See *Al-Qāmūs al-Qāhib wa-l-Arabi* (Coptic-Arabic Dictionary), (compiled by Igladīta Yuḥannā Labīb), (Cairo 1611 A.M.), (letter ﺪ ﺪﮐ ), *History*, I, p. 185. (The first Arabic term is singular and the second is plural).
20) Of Greek origin. See *Coptic-Arabic Dictionary* (letter ﺪ ﺪﮐ )
21) *History*, V, p. 85. Its modern Arabic usage is
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPTIC</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29) ἀρχάις</td>
<td>29) ارباية</td>
<td>duke or general in the Roman army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) οἰκονομὸς</td>
<td>30) أئقوم</td>
<td>one who manages a household: oeconomus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31) (n)ἀρχων</td>
<td>31) الأراخنة</td>
<td>officials, legislators, dignitaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Personal Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPTIC</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32) ἀρχαιτῆς</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heraclides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33) θεολωρος</td>
<td>33) ثيودرس</td>
<td>Theodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34) μακαριογ</td>
<td>34) ماريوس</td>
<td>Macarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35) ευσεβιος</td>
<td>35) أو ساسيوس</td>
<td>Eusebius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36) βασιλιτης</td>
<td>36) باسيليس</td>
<td>Basildes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37) θεκλα</td>
<td>37) ثكلا</td>
<td>Thecla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38) καλλιος — καλλιτος</td>
<td>38) كلاوديوس</td>
<td>Claudius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39) καλτικ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40) παντειονος</td>
<td>40) بونتوس</td>
<td>Pantaenius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41) καμος — καμεντος</td>
<td>41) كليموس</td>
<td>Clement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42) αργενης</td>
<td>42) أرجناس</td>
<td>Origen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43) ωυστος</td>
<td></td>
<td>Justus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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26) History, V, p. 43. Modern Arabic uses:
27) Of Greek origin. See Böhlig, Die griechischen Lehnmörter, p. 76.
28) History, V, p. 129. It is used in its singular form in History, I, p. 517, viz.,
29) Arxen, History, I, p. 163. The modern Arabic name أرباية is used today among the Copts, is derived from it.
31) History, I, p. 163. A very common name among the Copts today which means the ‘gift of God’. (The Coptic noun θεοπος means gift or blessing).
32) History, I, p. 163. The modern name is written: see Böhlig, Die griechischen Lehnmörter, p. 408.
33) History, I, p. 163.
34) History, I, p. 163. In modern usage it is written as: باسيل — باسيل.
### The Use of Coptic Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPTIC</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahidic Bohairic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θοογτ θοογτ</td>
<td>توت</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παπνε πανπι</td>
<td>يابا</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γατωρ αεωρ</td>
<td>هور</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κιακε κοιακ</td>
<td>كيامك</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τωβε τωβι</td>
<td>طوهية</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μωηρ μεηωρ</td>
<td>اسمير</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παρμγατ φαμενω</td>
<td>برنمات</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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42) Of Arabic origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ١.)

43) History, I, p. 164. This name is common among the Copts of to-day. It is written with an س اوبرس: س.

44) From Hebrew via the Greek; the modern usage يهوذا is a direct transliteration of the Greek according to Masoretic pronunciation.

45) History, I, p. 164.

46) History, V, p. 130. In modern usage it is دُهَوْدَاء; with a د.

47) Mentioned in a psalmody in praise of St. Mercury.


49) Name of two of the Coptic Patriarchs, the 19th (4th century) and the 43rd (9th century).

50) History, I, p. 181. This has been modified as إلكس and which are both in common use among the Copts to-day.

51) Of Greek origin. See Böhlig, Die griechischen Lehnaßter, p. 124. It means the "father of good". See also Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ١.). It is also written as أرثون.

52) History, V, p. 4. The fact that Ibn al-Muqaffa was well-acquainted with Coptic can be verified from his own comment concerning the name of Patriarch Agathon, see History, V, p. 4.

53) This is from Hebrew via Greek.

54) History, V, p. 197. The traditional usage in the Arab world from Qur'anic times is موسى.

55) Of Hebrew origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ١.)

56) History, X, p. 533. Some of the Coptic Patriarchs were called by that name: the 52nd (9th century) and the 115th (20th century). It has been modified to يوهن which is a common spelling among the present day Copts and among the Arabs since Qur'anic times.


59) This form belongs to both the Septuagint and the Copts. It is of Hebrew origin: it was the name by which the King of Salem was called. It means the "king of Justice" or "Prosperity". See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ١.).

60) The use of the letter ١. instead of ١. follows a rule in Greek and Coptic (Bohairic) phonetics, stipulating the pronunciation of X as ١. when followed by one of the following letters: ض — ض — ١ा — ١. It is possible that some of the Arabic spellings here do not come directly from Coptic, but Ibn al-Muqaffa may in fact have been using spellings derived directly from Greek or Latin which were in use in his day.


64) History, I, p. 177.

65) History, I, p. 152.


THE USAGE OF THE COPTIC LANGUAGE BY SEVERUS IBN AL-MUQAFFA

Names of Ecclesiastical Articles of Clothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPTIC</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(οΥ)ΑΡΙΩΝ &lt; OYNARIΩN</td>
<td>(οΥ)ΒΑΛΛΑΙΝ</td>
<td>(οΥ)ΒΑΛΛΑΙΝ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— (οΥ)ΒΑΛΛΑΙΝ</td>
<td>— (οΥ)ΒΑΛΛΑΙΝ</td>
<td>cloak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPTIC</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ζΑΝ)ΕΡΦΝΥΕ</td>
<td>(ζΑΝ)ΕΡΦΝΥΕ</td>
<td>heathen temples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

72) History, I, p. 150; History, V, p. 156.
73) History, V, p. 183.
74) History, V, p. 185.
75) Written in the 'Book of the Consecration of Bishops' (letter Α). It is translated as a big net or woven shawl worn by princesses.
76) History, I, p. 158.
77) Both nouns were mentioned in the 'Book of the Consecration of Bishops'; they are associated with the Coptic adjective ΟΥΩΒΩΥ (white): ΠΙΤΑΛΑΙΝ ΝΟΥΒΩΒΥ which means "the white pallium".
78) History, I, p. 158.
80) It is also written as ΣΚΗΜΑ. It is of Greek origin; it means a figure or shape since the weaver of this girdle assumes an angelic shape. The word ΜΟΡΘΝΩΥ is a Coptic synonym for the Greek word. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter Α). The Schema is a girdle of intertwined leather worn across the breast, passing over the shoulders and under the armpits on to the back and breast. It is intersected with crosses at equal distances. It is worn by a bishop or a patriarch one week before his consecration, if he has not received it before. It is offered to pious and virtuous monks.
81) History, I, p. 199.
82) Of Greek origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter Ο').
83) History, I, p. 199.
84) Bashmuric or Fayyumic Coptic dialect. The singular is ΟΥ, ΕΡΦΝΥΕ - ΕΡΦΝΥΕ. The Coptic plural is either ΕΡΦΝΟΥΙ (Bashmiric) or ΕΡΦΝΥΕ (Sahidic).
85) This word was used in the old sense to mean the temples of the ancient Egyptians and was substituted by the Greek word ΚΚΛΑΚΗΣΙΑ by the Anglican Copts. It does not give the definite meaning of the word ΕΡΦΕΙ, i.e., the house which represents the heavens. (ΕΡΦΕΙ is a verb meaning do or represent; ΦΕΙ heavens and ΗΙ: house). See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ΕΡΦ).
86) History, I, p. 416. The present synonyms for this word are: ΗΙΚΥ - ΜΕΙΔ - ΜΕΙΔ - ΚΑΙΜ - ΚΥΣΙΜ. The above terms, i.e., the singular (ΠΡΟ) and the plural (ΠΡΟ) were used by al-Maqra'ī in his Κηφιστ (El-Maqra'ī, Κηφιστος Αλήθιος). Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire. See vol. I (1911), pp. 131, 133; vol. II (1913), p. 136; vol. III-IV (1922), pp. 110, 112, 116, 125, 135, 138, 160.
The Use of Coptic Ecclesiastical Terms

Coptic  | Arabic  | English
---|---|---
(†)σταύρος  | سمبنا  | systatic epistle
(†)παρακλήσιον  | الاقليط  | Paraclete
(†)μυστηριον  | مسيتهم  | mystagogia
(†)συνόδος  | سنو ديتا  | synodical epistle
(†)εὐφορεία  | اللوغيس  | Logos
(†)καθήξεις  | الفاكسسات  | catechism
(†)διακονία  | الديكونية  | diaconate
(†)μετανοία  | الطانوة  | prostration

Both Alexander Böhlig [108] and H. P. Block [107] give lists of Greek loan words in Coptic, but Ibn al-Muqaffa’s list is wider in the sphere of ecclesiastical terms, especially those referring to titles, garments, ecclesiastical correspondence, etc. Ibn al-Muqaffa’s writing also covers all the Coptic months and many of the proper nouns and Christian names related to the Copts. On the other hand, it is narrower than Böhlig’s in the field of daily life, domestic affairs, material culture, general culture and public life. This is quite an expected result since Ibn al-Muqaffa is mainly interested in theology and ecclesiastical life of the Coptic Patriarchs.

Graf’s list, "Verzeichnis arabischer Kirchlicher Termini" [108], is a more comprehensive one than Ibn al-Muqaffa’s. It covers most of the latter’s Christian Arabic terms, as well as most of the terms relevant to the Arab Christians in general, but does not otherwise affect our conclusions.

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86) Of Greek origin, it means episcopal residence. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter غ ). It is likely that Ibn al-Muqaffa originated the Arabic or rather modified the Coptic to adapt it to the Arabic phonetics.

87) History, I, p. 488. The same word is repeated, with a slightly different lexicographical spelling in History, V, p. 24: سنو ديتا.

88) Of Greek origin. It is evident from the text that the two words refer to the same thing, namely the episcopal residence. The second one, however, i.e., الأسبئيين is nearer to Coptic.

89) Of Greek origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ع ).

90) History, I, p. 140. Note that the form in the Arabic lexicon is very close to the Coptic.


92) Of Greek origin. It means the mediator, المزأ.

93) Of Greek origin. It means the Holy Ghost, the defender or lawyer. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter نر ).

94) History, I, p. 196.


96) History, I, p. 483.

97) History, I, p. 483.


100) Of Greek origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter كت ).


103) Of Greek origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter λα ).


106) History, X, p. 484. In this text it means prostration; originally it means penitence.

107) A. Böhlig, Die griechischen Lohnwörter im sahidischen und bohairischen Neuen Testament (Munich 1958), [2nd ed.] (Studies zur Erforschung des christlichen Aegyptens).


The Use of Coptic Grammar in The Arabic Syntax

Benjamin Lee Whorf in a series of papers maintained that a language constitutes a sort of logic which moulds the thought of its habitual users. He claimed also that, where a culture and a language have developed together, there are significant relationships between the general aspects of the grammar and the characteristics of the culture taken as a whole.

Whorf’s remark is of first rate importance and it has practical application in our present discussion. With his Coptic culture as a background, Ibn al-Muqaffa inevitably found his thoughts moulded within a Coptic frame. Naturally he thought in terms of his Coptic idiomatic vernacular, in terms of the grammar of Coptic with which he was well-acquainted, and which had survived for at least ten centuries, and consequently he wrote with the Coptic construction and idioms vivid in his mind.

The Use of Coptic Expressions in Arabic

(1) ثم مضى الى الرب الطوالي التانسيوس

To an Arab reader the style of the above sentence seems rather awkward and misleading from the point of view of semantics, but to a stylistically-minded Copt such as Ibn al-Muqaffa, it would be quite understandable.

The subject of the Arabic sentence, namely 'التانسيوس' is supposed to follow the verb directly. The proper grammatical syntax would be:

«ثم مضى الطوالي التانسيوس الى الرب»

The relation of the subject of the sentence and the adjective qualifying it and their placing at the end of the sentence is typical of the Coptic grammatical construction, viz.:

αξενιαφ εφιοντ νξε πινακαριος αθανατιος

(2) ولمبا أخذوا من الجبل ديناسيوس الطرك

To cast the above clause in the correct Arabic syntax, the accusative, i.e. 'ديناسيوس' should follow the verb 'أخذوا'

The historian’s construction, however, is typically Coptic, viz.:

«ولما أخذوا ديناسيوس الطرك من الجبل»

Modern Arabic usage is:

«وأتل الإبل يفرح»

However, Coptic syntax agrees well with the historian’s Arabic:

αρσι επεαθμ ιεν ουραζι

(4) On many occasions Ibn al-Muqaffa applied Coptic semantics in his style. He wrote, for instance:

«ومن كل مكان على البحر من مصر الى الاسكندرية واسر السفينة»

Obviously, he meant that the governor built houses and market-places on the river from Mīṣr (Cairo) to Alexandria, and that he also ordered the canal of Alexandria to be dug in the north, near the pool of Nīcer-
tas. In both cases he used the word 'بحر' because it coincides with the Coptic word 'ιομ' which means either sea or river or canal.

Different Coptic constructions and idioms which are used in Coptic were applied.

(5) One of the most common features of the historian’s style is his use of the third person plural form of the verb 'سبت' in the past tense before the plural noun, such as:

'مضوا الجبل' instead of 'مضوا الجبل'. This usage is identical with the Coptic construction, viz.:

αξενιαφ νξε ιοματοι

(6) The historian applied the Coptic gender in his style:

The noun 'صلواته' is sound feminine plural, and


111 History, I, p. 179.


113 History, V, p. 42.

114 ιομ 'is Bahairic; ιομ 'is Bashmamic or Fasyumic and 'ιιομ 'is Sahidic. It means: see Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ιομ ).

115 History, V, p. 168.

116 History, I, p. 400.
the verb following it should be in the feminine form, namely, 'تکن'. Ibn al-Muqaffa, however, is thinking in terms of the Coptic noun 'σαλα' (prayer) which is masculine, and whose plural is not affected by gender, viz.: ερε περφωανεμαν

The same rule applies to the following example:

"لاً الامل الهيئة صغر.. فاما الامل الحديثة فهو صاغ" (114)

By 'العتيقة' he means the Old Testament, and by 'الحديثة' he means the New Testament. Both of them are treated as feminine in Coptic (119).

†αιαονκη ανατ 120: the Old Testament
†αιαονκη μβερι : the New Testament

(7) The use of the Genitive case of Coptic in Arabic:

"وهو الذي حمل الجرة الماء في وبسن من الاليان" (121)

The phrase 'الجرة الماء' here is equivalent to the jar of water, which is a literal translation of the Coptic expression: θισογοιον ημωιον (122)

(8) The use of the Coptic rule of adjectives in Arabic:

"استشهد شهداء كغير" (123)

According to Arabic grammar 'شهداء' is a broken plural and the adjective qualifying it should be masculine plural in this case, i.e., 'كغيرون'. The above construction is identical with Coptic where the adjective does not necessarily follow the noun in either gender or number, viz.:

αγδιπιξιανη ανεο λημιηον ημαρτυροσ

117) (μι) σαλα (Bohairic); σαλα (Sahidic). See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ө).
118) History, I, p. 198.
119) In Arabic the relevant terms are: 'العهد القديم' and 'العهد الجديد'.
120) †αιαονκη is of Greek origin. See Coptic-Arabic Dictionary (letter ϊ).
121) History, I, p. 139.
122) The similar construction in older Arabic is not of quite the same nature as the one used here. See Wright, A Grammar of the Arabic Language (Cambridge 1951), vol. II, pp. 229-230.

(9) The use of the Coptic preposition:

" وهو غير من البيعة" (124)

Ibn al-Muqaffa uses the preposition 'من' which is synonymous with the Coptic preposition 'ε' or επαρ Ψελ'. The Coptic script for the whole sentence would be:

Μυνοι ανα περφωανεμον ετεκκανεια

(10) The use of Coptic idiom:

(a) "ياسكروا البطريرك تلك الليلة" (125)

(b) "ثم ان عبد الملك جمع مجلس متاني جيشه واعتظهم سبعة ايام" (126)

From the text from which (a) is quoted we understand that the Pope Andronicus (127) kept both his visitors Theonas and Benjamin with him during the night (128). Also in the text from which (b) is quoted, we gather that Abd al-Mallik detained the officers of his army to send in their accounts and to pay what they owed. He also did the same with the secretaries of state, the chiefs of towns and superintendents of inherited property.

The problem in our Arabic quotations is one of vocabulary, since the words 'ةاسكرو' and 'اعتظ' are not used in the required sense (129).

The Coptic synonym for 'ةاسكرو' and 'اعتظ', is verb ιμονι, of Bohairic origin which also means:

"ذهب - حطت - حجز - ضيب" (128)

Thus the Coptic version for (a) would be:

ιμονι ημοιον μιχαυ ηνεοι πιπατιαρχον μπιεκσισρε υτε μμαυ

and for (b):

ιμονι ημοιον μιχαυ ηνεογ

(11) The use of a singular noun after the numeral 'ten' succeeded by the preposition 'من' :

"سلموه إلى عشرة من الأسد" (121)

125) History, I, p. 489.
127) The 37th Patriarch - 7th century.
129) This feature is also a characteristic of Middle Arabic, and such a usage as here may have been influenced by Coptic usage.
131) History, V, p. 182.
According to Arabic Grammatical rules the numeral 'ten' should be followed by the genitive plural, viz.:

سلموه إلى عشرة من الأسود »

whereas in Coptic it is singular. Thus the usage in Arabic here coincides with the Coptic:

αυθήια μμήτ ηνούι

(12) The use of Coptic idiom:

(a) مطالعى « خرب له الطلائع »

which is an Arabic derivative from the Greek word 'μετανοια', as already explained (133). The idiom taken as a whole is analogous to the Coptic:

(1) αψημετανοια πηψημοο εβολα

or

(2) αψημετανοια ιαο

which means that he prostrated himself before him, and which applies that his head hit the ground in the act of prostration, whence Ibn al-Muqaffa's use of the verb 'خرب' here.

(b) كان قوي القلب 

The expression "قَوَيَ الْقُلْب" involves a metonymy; it is in tantamount to bravery. It is identical with the Coptic idioms: Νε ουχαρομν ινε which means literally-speaking, that he had a strong heart, and this is very near to colloquial Arabic to-day, bearing the same meaning.

(c) لم يكن ذا قليبن

The above expression is a literal translation of the Coptic: Νε ινομν ʔινο ινψημικν or ινψημι κηνοψημοικ ινπι ινο (135)

which indicates that he had not two minds, i.e., that he did not doubt.

The two expressions:

« كان قوي القلب »

« لم يكن ذا قليبن »

are very similar to the Coptic expressions stated above, and would appear to be literal translations from Coptic phraseology (calques).

(d) قال له الاستنق كم عمرك سنة

This construction is parallel to the Coptic:

α πιηνικοποιεν ασε ιποκ ιε : εξην ονιρη

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Strukturpunkte der hethitischen Geographie
Vortrag beim XXII Rencontre Assyriologique in Göttlingen Juni 1975


133) See the list of Coptic ecclesiastical terms.
135) History, X, p. 442.
136) The word 'ʔινο ' in Coptic means either heart or mind. This is an allusion to the ancient Egyptian belief that the heart is the organ of thought. See R. T. Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt (London 1959), p. 161.