

PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE SOCIETY
OF
BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY.

NOVEMBER, 1888,

TO

JUNE, 1889.

VOL. XI. NINETEENTH SESSION.

PUBLISHED AT
THE OFFICES OF THE SOCIETY,
11, HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY, W.C.

1889.

A COPTIC TRANSCRIPTION OF AN ARABIC TEXT.

BY P. LE PAGE RENOUF.

Some years ago, when I was living at Cambridge, Mr. Bradshaw, the late excellent Librarian of the University, showed me a quantity of fragments of Coptic manuscripts, which, if I rightly understood him, had formerly belonged to Tischendorf. My duties in connection with the Education Department prevented me from giving them all the attention they deserved, but I have no doubt that they would repay a careful examination.

One set of these fragments specially attracted my attention. The writing was Coptic, but not so the language. The words $\chi\omicron\lambda$ $\text{I}\text{Z}\text{Z}\text{Z}$, "every day," at once showed the language to be Semitic, and all the neighbouring words were evidently Arabic. Arabic letters in small character were written over a certain number of the Coptic letters by which they were transcribed.

The fragments evidently belong to some monastic biography, but though many of the sentences are perfectly intelligible, the want of context arising from the torn condition of the manuscript renders a complete translation impossible. The pronoun $\lambda\epsilon\zeta\epsilon$ in the third fragment implies a female no where else mentioned. Nor is it always possible to make out who is the person spoken of in the sentence. There are also impossible words or groups on my copy, some of which may be owing to the writer of the manuscript, whilst others are no doubt to be ascribed to blunders of my own.

I quoted this text in the last number of our *Proceedings* as a warning against incautious inferences from the transcription of one language in the alphabet of another, and in so doing I myself committed an oversight which I shall presently mention, and which may add force to the warning. The short extract which I gave has excited some curiosity, and I have been asked to publish the fragments. I do so now as far as my notes permit. They give all the lines which are complete or nearly so. In the torn passages isolated words occur, but the only one which is not found in the rest of the

text is the important word $\delta\epsilon\zeta\iota\alpha$ *. It comes in the line which followed at the end of the fourth fragment.

The Arabic letter ζ is written several times over the Coptic χ . The $qâf$ ζ is written over the Coptic κ and β over the second θ in $\theta\epsilon\theta\lambda\kappa\pi\iota$. The Coptic ρ does duty for the ϵ and for Hamza at the beginning of words, but also for τ and ν .

It was through an oversight that I said, that the Arabic particle ζ was represented by $\delta\epsilon$ and $\psi\epsilon$. The Coptic δ here regularly stands for ω . $\delta\epsilon\zeta\iota\alpha$ is واحد , *wâhid*, 'one'; $\delta\epsilon\kappa\theta\ \rho\alpha\zeta\iota\epsilon$ is وقت عظيم , *waqt 'azîm*, 'a considerable time,' and $\delta\epsilon\chi\epsilon\alpha\omega\omega$ is وجد , *wagid-oh*, 'he found him.' We should therefore read $\delta\epsilon\chi\epsilon\pi$, $\delta\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon$, $\delta\epsilon\iota\epsilon\theta\lambda\kappa\omega\omega$, as *we-kân*, *we-lemmâ*, *we-yethlaq-oh* respectively. Both particles ω and ζ occur constantly throughout these texts as they do in all Arabic narratives.

The chief phonetic peculiarities of these fragments besides the use of δ for ω , and that in a way not recognised by the Coptic grammarians, are the use of π for the Arabic *b* and of ϵ for *a* as in $\iota\epsilon\ \epsilon\pi\iota = yâ\ \text{ab-i}$, 'oh my father'! $\rho\iota\pi\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\lambda\omega\tau\ \epsilon\chi\lambda\epsilon\omega\omega$ $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\lambda\iota\lambda = hyn\ \text{akalû aklehum el qalil}$ 'whilst they ate their small meal.' It is impossible to fix the dates implied in these transcriptions.

The various sounds of *a* (\check{a} , *a*, \bar{a}) for ϵ are generally considered modern, but I am not aware that any proof of this supposition has been given, or is attainable from existing evidence.

That the present Copts pronounce π as *b* simply arises from the fact that for centuries they have spoken no other language than the Arabic, in which the *b* sound exists but not the ϕ .

These observations are made for their own sake, and not for the purpose of upholding the antiquity of my texts. The fact of their being transcribed from the vulgar dialect of Arabic proves them not to be *ancient*. But there is no knowing what exact date is necessarily implied by the pronunciation which they betoken. It is certainly some hundred years old; perhaps a thousand.

I translated $\epsilon\psi\psi\epsilon\iota\delta$ by 'the Saint,' because the story is evidently that of some holy personage, and because in other monastic

* Perhaps $\psi\iota\omega$ occurs at the very end, but of this I cannot be sure. Almost the entire line has been destroyed.

biographies of the Copts the Saint is called $\mu\iota\delta\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ in his own language and الشيخ in Arabic. But the word might equally apply to an aged person whose history occurs in that of a saint.

I now give the four fragments, with a few notes identifying a sufficient number of words, so as to furnish a clue to the general meaning.

Βεχπεθ ραδεθ¹ εψψειθ πελραψε² χολ
ιατεε ιεραλλιεορ εε ιεπφρα³ πεφφορ βεεεειπ
παρρ εθθαρλιε⁴ χεπ ιαρρεελ σαλερ⁵ βειεθ-
λακορ⁶ λειερκορ⁷ βεφι αρρα ελειεεε ριπ
εχελοτ εχλεροεε ελκαλιλ⁸ πελριψε⁹ κελ¹⁰
εψψειθ παρρ εσσαλεθ ελχεεεερα χελαδερ
λιεραλλεεε ελαθ

εππατεε φερακαρ εψψειθ βεχεπ ελαθ¹¹
σαπερ¹² ραττε ιεκοτεε εψψειθ ιεπερεκ ραλιρι
χεραδεθορ¹³ φελεεεεε πεκι εψψειθ πειεεε
βακο ραριε¹⁴ ραιεκοτ¹⁵ ελεφχαρ ελαθ καιελε¹⁶
λορ κοτεε επτ ειρα¹⁷ ερκορ βεχεπ ροτ ιεκαθελ
φεχρορ¹⁸ καιελε εε ιεεχεππι¹⁹ εεε

ελεφχαρ ειρα βελεεε ιεερι²⁰ ρεκιτε καθε-
λοτρ σεπαρραφορ²¹ βεχεπ σαπερ εεκαθελ
λερε βεεεπ παρρ ρερε λεεεεε θεκαρδεε
ελλιλι²² χεραε φελεεεεε εσθικατ²³ εψψειθ
φεβεχερορ κελεσ ραππορ φεκαλ λορ ιλε ελεπ
λεεε θεεερι²⁰ καλ λορ ιε επι εππακ λεεε θεθ-
λακπι φεκα

λορ εεχεσαρτ²¹ εικ ρακ λιελλε²⁴ εθρε-
πακ φεπερικ ραλιρ εψψειθ βελεεεεε κειεοτ
ραεεελοτ εσσαλερ ελχεεεερα εθλακ ελαθ λε-
ιεσθεριρ²⁵ βειεπεεε καλιλ βεχεπ ειρα εψψειθ
κελεσ φι εεσπερορ ιεθρεπ πεφφορ ιλε ποκρα²⁶
βεφιμεροτ κελεσ σαρ φιρεροτ

¹ عادة wont. ² عشا supper. ³ نفع profit. ⁴ تعليم instruction.
⁵ he said the prayer. ⁶ and he dismissed him, اطلق.
⁷ رقد rested. ⁸ قليل little. ⁹ العشا the evening. ¹⁰ جال went
round. ¹¹ the brother. ¹² صبر waited. ¹³ till the old man should
get up and bless him according to his wont. ¹⁴ and when the old
man remained sleeping a considerable time. ¹⁵ زيق cried out.
¹⁶ قائلا saying. ¹⁷ ايضا still. ¹⁸ فكر thought, reflection, memory.
I do not remember any meaning of the verb قتل in this connexion.
¹⁹ has overcome me, مكن. ²⁰ from مضى go away. ²¹ a corrupt
passage. ²² when night approached. ²³ استيقظ awoke. ²⁴ ليلا
that not. ²⁵ to rest from ربح. ²⁶ "and he slept a little: and the
old man was still sitting on his cushion (مسند), wearying (تعب)
his soul until the morrow."

