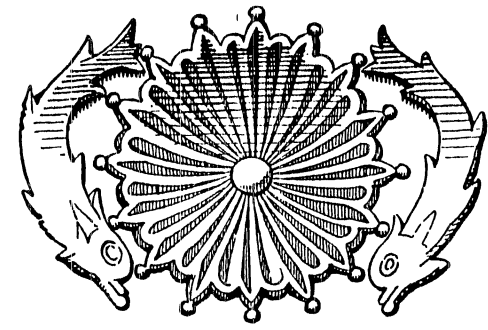


(C)
N
77
A1
57

BULLETIN
DE LA
SOCIÉTÉ D'ARCHÉOLOGIE COPTE

*Les auteurs sont instamment priés de bien vouloir nous envoyer
tous leurs articles, communications, contributions et études
par poste recommandée, et, en plus, d'en garder copie.*

TOME XVII
(1963-1964)



La Société n'assume nullement la responsabilité
des opinions exprimées par les auteurs des articles.

LE CAIRE
IMPRIMERIE DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

MCMLXIV

GREEK LOAN WORDS IN COPTIC⁽¹⁾

BY

W. A. GIRGIS

(IN RELIGION ABBA PACHOMIUS AL-MUHARRAKI)

What invariably attracts the attention of the reader of a Coptic text, especially if it is written in the Saïdic dialect, is the very liberal use which is made of Greek loan words, of which so few, indeed, are to be found in the Ancient Egyptian language. These Greek loan words occur everywhere in Coptic literature, be it Biblical, liturgical, theological, or non-literary, *i.e.* legal documents and personal letters. Though nouns and verbs naturally predominate, the Greek loan words may come from any other part of speech except pronouns.

So extensive is this use of Greek loan words in Coptic that, in the past, certain scholars have been inclined to express their doubts as to whether Coptic was ever really a colloquial language and not merely a literary dialect⁽²⁾. As a matter of fact, it is just the contrary, for it is now generally recognized that Coptic is the direct heir to the spoken form of the Ancient Egyptian Language. All living languages have a tendency to borrow convenient terms from other languages, some to

⁽¹⁾ This study forms part of a thesis which I presented to the University of Manchester for a Ph. D. Degree. I take this opportunity to express once again my great indebtedness to Prof. Dr. W. C. Till who undertook to supervise my work. His invaluable advice and constructive criticism were of very great assistance to me in my research work.

⁽²⁾ In his article 'Pistis Sophia and the Coptic Language', F. C. Burkitt remarked: «I am raising the question whether in the full sense of the word, it ever was alive I do think that it was artificial, that it was the language of the school and not of the people It seems to me a literary dialect elaborated by a society whose members learned to read and write after having more or less cut themselves off from the world», cf. *J.T.S.*, vol. xxvii, pp. 148, 153, 157. Also S. Gaselee in *B.Z.*, xxx, p. 224 ff.

a greater, others to a lesser extent. For example, in the colloquial Arabic of Egypt loan words from foreign languages are very numerous. This tendency to borrowing is likewise noticeable in European languages, one of the latest additions being the Russian word «Sputnik».

If the Greek loan words in Coptic retain more or less their original form, this is largely due to the fact that Coptic uses the Greek alphabet. In spite of this, however, there are numerous instances of vowel changes in these loan words which, where not due to mere carelessness on the part of the scribe, may be accounted for, if the word was taken over from speech rather than from writing.

With regard to the extent of this borrowing of Greek loan words in Coptic, Lefort estimated the number of such words at more than nine hundred in the Sa'ïdic *New Testament* ⁽¹⁾, and at more than fifty in the *Rule of St. Pachomius* ⁽²⁾. In the writings of St. Shenouti their number is estimated at more than five hundred, and in the *Instructions of St. Pachomius* ⁽³⁾ there are seven hundred and sixty-six Greek words in nine hundred and fifty lines, which makes one Greek word per line and a quarter. Gaselee gives the number of Greek words in the Sa'ïdic version of the *Nicene Creed* at not less than fifteen, excluding proper names ⁽⁴⁾. In the Sa'ïdic version of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* there are, according to Hopfner, four hundred and forty-four Greek loan words: two hundred and fifty-five nouns, thirty-seven adjectives, nineteen adverbs, ninety-five verbs, five prepositions and thirty-three particles and conjunctions ⁽⁵⁾. In the Sa'ïdic text of the *Questions of Theodore* Arn. van Lantschoot lists

⁽¹⁾ L. TH. LEFORT, 'Greco-Copto' in «Coptic Studies in honor of W. E. Crum», *Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute*, Boston, 1950, p. 66 ff., and *Concordance du Nouveau Testament sahidique, les mots d'origine grecque*, Louvain, 1950.

⁽²⁾ L. TH. LEFORT, 'La règle de S. Pachôme' in *Pachomiana Latina*, Louvain, 1932, pp. 155-162.

⁽³⁾ G. E. A. W. BUDGE, *Coptic Apocrypha*, 1913, pp. 146-176.

⁽⁴⁾ S. GASELEE, 'Greek words in Coptic' in *B.Z.*, xxx, p. 224 ff.

⁽⁵⁾ TH. HOPFNER, 'Über Form und Gebrauch der griechischen Lehnwörter in der koptisch-sa'idischen Apophthegmenversion' in *Denkschriften der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, LXII (Wien), p. 1.

two hundred and sixty-five Greek words ⁽¹⁾, and in the Bohairic text of the *Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch of Alexandria* O.H.E. KHS-Burmeister gives the number of Greek loan words at three hundred and twenty-five ⁽²⁾.

Several reasons may be advanced as to why so many Greek words passed into the spoken language of Egypt. In the first place, we must remember that Egypt was to a certain extent a bilingual country, where Greek and Egyptian were spoken side by side. Who can imagine the status of the Egyptian language without being influenced by Greek? ⁽³⁾ For a period of some eleven centuries, i.e. from the IVth century B.C. to the VIIth century A.D., Greek was the language of the rulers, government officials and magistrates. It was likewise the language of official decrees and legislations. It was used in the courts of justice and in administrative business and communications during the Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine periods. Even after the Arab Conquest of Egypt, Greek continued for a time to be the official language of the government in its administrative capacity. The Aphrodito Greek Papyri provide good evidence of the state of affairs of the city of Aphroditopolis in the VIIIth century A.D. It is only with the Abbassides in the Xth century A.D. that Arabic began to replace Greek and to become the predominating language in government administration ⁽⁴⁾.

In the second place, it should be recalled that Greek was the language of schools and of scholars in the various centres of higher culture, as, for example, Alexandria, Naucratis, Ptolemais, etc. As Greek was widely used in Egypt by the educated classes, scholars naturally wrote their works in this language. Even Manetho the priest, an Egyptian by birth, Chaermen and others used Greek so as to attract as large a circle of readers

⁽¹⁾ ARN. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Les « Questions de Théodore »*, (Studi e Testi 192), Città del Vaticano, 1957.

⁽²⁾ O. H. E. KHS-BURMEISTER, *The Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch of Alexandria*, (Textes et Documents), Le Caire, 1960.

⁽³⁾ For the influence of Coptic on Greek, cf. E. MAYSER, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit mit Einschluss der gleichzeitigen Ostraka und der in Ägypten verfassten Inschriften*, Leipzig, 1906-1935, I, § 9, p. 54, 58; L. TH. LEFORT, 'Pour une Grammaire des LXX' in *Le Muséon*, vol. XL1 (1928), pp. 152-160.

⁽⁴⁾ A. MALLON, 'Copte' in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne*, t. III (2), col. 2820.

as possible ⁽¹⁾. At this period, it must have been the ambition of the Egyptian student to learn Greek so as to share in Hellenistic culture.

In the third place, Greek was not restricted to the educated Egyptians only, since, for several centuries, Greeks and Egyptians had mixed together both in the towns and the country, had intermarried, and had shared together in the social life of the country.

In consequence of this, we find Greek words or Latin words in Greek dress borrowed from all spheres of life. Among official titles we have the following : ἀποπραιπόσιτος, ἄρχων, αὐγουστάλιος, διοικητής, δοῦξ, ἐκατόνταρχος, ἐπαρχος, ἐπίτροπος, ἡγεμών, καῖσαρ, κόμης, κυαισιανάριος, μειζότερος, πάγαρχος, πολιτευόμενος, πραιπόσιτος, πριμικήριος, προνοητής, σατράπης, σίρατηγός, σίρατηλάτης, σύμβουλος, τριβούνος. Among military terms we have such words as : λεγεών 'legion', πανοπλία 'panoply', πόλεμος 'war', πύλη 'gate' πύργος 'tower', σάλπιγξ 'trumpet', σπεῖρα 'band'. The law-courts and legal affairs are represented by such terms as : βῆμα 'tribunal', ἐγγύη 'surety', ἐξουσία 'authority', ἐρμητάριον 'whipping post', κριτής 'judge', λόγος 'surety letter', μάρτυρος 'witness', ὁμολογία 'declaration', πρᾶσις 'sale', ὑπογράφειν 'to sign'. Then we have the names of weights and measures, such as : ἄρουρα, διπλοῦν, κεντηνάριον, κνίδιον, κοῦρι, ξέσις, ὄργανον, ὄργον; of coins : κεράτιον, ὀλοκότινος, σιατήρ, τριμήσιον; of taxes : ἀνδρισμός, δημόσιον, ἐγγραφον, πρόσλιμον, τέλος; and, finally, words connected with the gymnasium : ἀγών 'strife' ἀθλητής 'athlete', βραβεῖον 'prize', δρόμος 'course', 'race', etc. Some words were adopted from the Greek because they referred to some natural phenomenon which was foreign to Egyptian life ⁽²⁾, such as : κρύσταλλος 'ice', χεῖμαρρος 'torrent', χιών 'snow', etc. Other Greek words referred to animals or objects which were known to the Egyptians only through the Greeks or their language, e.g. ἀλέκτωρ 'cock', ἄρξ 'bear', λυχνία 'lamp-stand'; μάρμαρον 'marble', πλάξ 'slab',

⁽¹⁾ K. SCHMIDT, 'Die Urschrift der Pistis Sophia' in *ZNTW*, xviv, p. 219 ff.

⁽²⁾ G. STEINDORFF, 'Bemerkungen über die Anfänge der koptischen Sprache und Literatur' in «Coptic Studies in honor of W. E. Crum» in *Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute*, p. 201.

'plate', τράπεζα 'table', Φανάριος 'torch', Φιάλη 'reservoir, bowl', χλαμύς 'mantle'.

Many religious terms in Greek entered the Egyptian language through the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt. It was precisely for the Jewish community in Egypt that the Septuagint or Greek Version of the Old Testament was made in the IIIrd century B.C. Such religious terms would certainly have been used in theological and philosophical discussions between Jews and Egyptians, and, in this way, they would have entered the spoken language of Egypt. Furthermore, when the Old Testament (Septuagint) came to be considered in Christian Egypt as an integral part of the Holy Scriptures, the borrowing of such religious terms would naturally have increased. Among such terms we have, for example : ἄγγελος 'angel', ἀμήν 'amen', ἀρχιερεὺς 'chief-priest', γραφή 'Scripture', ἐντολή 'commandment', Θυσία 'sacrifice', Θυσιαστήριον 'altar', καταπέτασμα 'veil', κιβωτός 'ark', κορβᾶν 'corban', 'gift', κορβανᾶς 'the sacred treasury', νόμος 'law', παράδοσις 'tradition', πρεσβύτερος 'elder', 'member of the Jewish Sanhedrin', Ράββι 'my master', Ράββονι 'our master', and others.

With the establishment of Christianity in Egypt, Greek loan words became very numerous, and this was natural seeing that the Holy Scriptures and the Church Services were, to commence with, in Greek only ⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, the doctrines and practices of the Christian Church were attacked by the pagan philosophers and thinkers, and, in their turn, the Christian theologians wrote to defend their tenets and to prove the superiority of Christianity over paganism, and their apologetics were written in Greek. In order to explain Christian doctrines concerning the Blessed Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the resurrection of the body and other problems which were raised later on respecting the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Non-beginning of the Son, the Nature of Christ, such terms as : τριάς, οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, ὁμοούσιος, λόγος,

⁽¹⁾ From the VIIth century onwards, however, 'Christianity helped, in Egypt as elsewhere, to reawaken the slumbering national consciousness, to revive the national tongue, and so to weaken Hellenism', H. I. BELL, 'Hellenic Culture in Egypt' in *J.E.A.*, vol. viii (1922), p. 153 ff. Also J. Grafton MILNE, 'Egyptian Nationalism under Greek and Roman rule' in *J.E.A.*, vol. xiv (1928), pp. 226-234.

> *σταγροῦ* (S), *ιωι* (B); *τροφή* 'food' > *τροφη* (S), *ἡρε* (B); *τροφή* 'luxury' > *τρῦφι* (S), *οὔνοα* (B), and many others.

On the other hand, there are certain Greek loan words in Bohairic which practically always appear in a Coptic dress in Sa'ïdic, for example: *ἅγιος* 'holy' > *αγιος* (B), *ετογγαλβ* (S), *ἐπαγγελία* 'annunciation', 'promise' > *επαγγελια* (B), *ερητ* (S); *εὐλογία* 'blessing' > *εγλογια* (B), *εμοῦ* (S); *θήκη* 'sheath' > *οηκη* (B); *κοεῖς* (S); *σανίς* 'board', 'plank' > *εανικ* (B); *πατσε* (S).

However, there are cases in both the Sa'ïdic and the Bohairic dialects, where a Greek loan word may be used sometimes in its Greek form and sometimes in a Coptic dress, e.g. *ἀπειλεῖν* 'to threaten' > *απειλει(ν)* SB, *νογες* (S). *κωντ*, *νογφι* (B); *βῆμα* 'tribunal' > *βημα* (SB), *ταδσε* (S), *φεντατци* (B); *ἐλάχιστος* 'the smallest' > *ελαχιστος* (SB), *κογχι* (B), *κογι* (S); *ἐνοχος* 'liable to' > *ενοχος* (SB), *μικφα*, *γιη* (S), *μικφα*, *ραογμογτ* (B); *ζῷον* 'animal' > *ζωον* (SB), *τβηη* (SB); *παράπτωμα* 'transgression' > *παρηπτωμα* (SB), *ποβε* (S), *ποβι* (B); *πολίτης* 'a citizen' > *πολιτης* (SB), *ρμη-με* (S), *ρμη-με*, *ρεμβακι*, *ρεμμβακι* (B); *σοφία* 'hoal', 'skill' > *εκαφη* (SB), *χοι* (S), *ελαμεзи* (B); *χολή* 'gall' > *χολη* (SB), *ειφε* (S), *φλωι* (B), and many others.

Then we have instances, where a Greek loan word is used in both Sa'ïdic and Bohairic, in spite of the fact that its exact equivalent exists in Coptic, e.g. *ἀγέλη* 'herd': *οζε*, *οзи*; *αἰτεῖν* 'to ask': *τωεζ*; *γραμματεὺς* (*γραμματεὺς*) 'scribe': *ελε*, *ελεφ*; *(ἐ)μιμητ(ε)ι* (*εἰμητι*) 'except': *εκηλ*, *ηεα*; *ἐξεστ(ε)ι* (*εξεστ(ε)ι*) 'it is lawful': *φωε*, *εφε*; *κελεύει(ν)* (*κελεύειν*) 'to order', 'command': *ογез* *εαηε*, *-и*; *λαός* (*λαός*) 'people': *μμηφε*, *φωλα*; *πίστις* 'faith': *ηαεε*, *-и*; *πονηρός* (*πονηρός*) 'bad', 'evil': *εεεεε*, *εεεεε*; *σπέρμα* (*σπέρμα*) seed: *ερε(ε)ε*, *ερεε*; *χάρις* (*χάρις*) 'grace': *εμοε*. Hence it is seen that, if Greek loan words were used in Coptic, this does not necessarily mean that a Coptic equivalent could not be found for them, but that it was rather because such Greek loan words had, in the course of time, become completely naturalized, and thus come to be considered as part of the Coptic language.

That many Greek words had thus become naturalized and assimilated to the body of the Coptic language is evident from the following examples:

1° In texts translated from Greek, some Greek words are replaced by other naturalized Greek words⁽¹⁾, e.g. *ἀγενεαλόγητος* > *εεεεε* (*Heb. VII, 3. S.*); *ἄθεσμος* > *εεεεε* (*II Pet. II, 7; III, 17. S.*); *ἀθῶος* > *εεεεε* (*Mt. XXVII, 4. S.*); *ἀτμῖς* > *εεεεε* (*IIos XIII, 3 A*) (B. *εεεεε*); *ἐπιτήδευμα* > *εεεεε* (*Ps. LXXX, 12. S.*); *καταδῶκειν* > *εεεεε* (*Ps. LXVIII, 26. S.*), *ολιβε* (*Ps. XXXIV, 3. S.*); *κηρυχθεῖς* > *εεεεε* (*Col. I, 33. S.*); *μόλις* > *εεεεε* (*Ac. XIV, 18; XXVII, 7.8.16. SB; Rom. V, 7 SB; I Pet. IV, 18. S.*); *νιπτήρ* > *εεεεε* (*Jh. XIII, 5. SB A₂*); *περιουσιασμός* > *εεεεε* (*Ps. CXXXIV, 4. B.*); *πλημμελία* > *εεεεε* (*Ps. LXVII, 22. B.*); *ὑπαρξίς* > *εεεεε* (*Ac. II, 45. SB*)⁽²⁾.

2° Sometimes, a Greek word was explained by another Greek word which was more familiar, e.g. *εεεεε* ἢ *εεεεε* *εεεεε* [*Judges XIV, 8. S.*] (= *τὸ πλῶμα τοῦ λέοντος*) 'the carcase or the body of the lion'.

3° The number of Greek words in a text translated from a Greek original is usually less than that in a text written originally in Coptic. The reason for this is that the translator from the Greek knew Greek and Coptic, and he had the tendency to purism⁽³⁾, while the Coptic writer who was ignorant of Greek, was unconscious of the foreign origin of the Greek words he used.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. J. ZIEGLER, 'Beiträge zur kopt. Dodekapropheten Übersetzung' in *Biblica* 25 (1944), pp. 105-142; L. TH. LEFORT, 'Le Copte source auxiliaire du Grec' in *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientale*, t. XI (1933-34), p. 574 ff.

⁽²⁾ Lists of such words are found in G. WESSELY, 'Die gr. Lehnwörter in der sah. u. boh. Psalmversion u.s.w.', p. 4; Th. HOFFNER, 'Über Form, u.s.w.', p. 11 ff.; H. THOMPSON, *The Gospel of St. John according to the earliest Coptic manuscript* (London 1924), p. xx b; W. C. TILL, 'Die koptischen Versionen der Sapientia Salomonis', in *Biblica* 36 (1955), pp. 59-64.

⁽³⁾ L. TH. LEFORT, 'Greco-Copto' in «Coptic Studies in honor of W. E. Crum», *Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute*, p. 66.

4° Greek words loaned in Coptic were treated on the same level as Coptic words. Hybrid formations were constructed from a Greek word together with a Coptic element. $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ and $\mu\alpha\rho\alpha$ were used in the pronominal form like Coptic prepositions. Some Greek substantives took a Coptic plural ending.

5° Such Coptic forms of Greek words as deviate from the standard Greek form and spelling, are an indication that such words had become thoroughly naturalized, and, consequently, their orthography was according to the current Coptic pronunciation. All this clearly goes to prove that the loaned Greek words in Coptic are not due merely to the whim of the translators of the Coptic Old and New Testaments, or an indication that these were too lazy to find the Coptic equivalent of the Greek word, or who doubted the sufficiency of the Coptic word to translate accurately the meaning implied in the Greek word in the Holy Scriptures.

Christian works, it should be noted, are not the only writings which adopted Greek loan words⁽¹⁾, for other schools and sects such as the Manichaeans and the Gnostics, used many Greek loan words in their literature. Indeed, the borrowing of Greek words had started centuries before the Holy Scriptures were translated into Coptic. This was the reason why the Coptic translators used such words as had already become part of the Coptic vocabulary. As we have pointed out already, the Coptic translators, especially those of the Bohairic Version of the Holy Scriptures, favoured rather a Coptic word than a Greek one, but, nevertheless, they did use the Greek loan word, when it was familiar. It is true that Greek loan words were very rare, if not almost non-existent, in the Demotic writings of the Ptolemaic period⁽²⁾, but this does not mean that Greek words were not in use in everyday conversation. It simply indicates that

⁽¹⁾ L. TH. LEFORT, 'La littérature égyptienne aux derniers siècles avant l'invasion arabe', in *Chronique d'Égypte* n° 2, Bruxelles 1931, p. 315-323, especially p. 321 ff.; L. TH. LEFORT, 'Le Copte source... etc.', p. 571 ff.; W. C. TILLY, 'Das Koptische. Heutiger Stand der Forschung', in *Orbis*, t. 3, N° 2, Louvain 1954, pp. 487-489.

⁽²⁾ P. E. KAHLE, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXIX, 1954, Nr. 7/8, col. 484.

they had not yet been allowed to appear in the written language, according to the old Egyptian tradition. Such an attitude has always been the same in every language towards foreign words used in the vulgar tongue before they were admitted to literature.

In conclusion, I should like to mention what may be called the psychological factor in the adoption of Greek loan words in Coptic. Thus, a number of Greek words were taken over into Coptic not because their native equivalents failed to convey the right meaning, but simply because the writer preferred a word which may have sounded nicer to his ear, or because he did not wish to use a common-place expression, or simply in order to avoid repeating a word, when he had to use the same expression in a subsequent passage. The Greek loan word would, in this case, have served as a synonym with the Coptic one⁽¹⁾. The following are examples of this type of Greek loan word: $\beta\omicron\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$ 'to help' = $\cdot\dot{\iota}$ $\eta\tau\omicron\omicron\tau\epsilon$ $\tau\lambda\epsilon\mu$ (F); $\epsilon\lambda\pi\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ 'to hope' = $\eta\lambda\alpha\tau\epsilon$ ϵ -, $\mu\epsilon\epsilon\gamma\epsilon$, $\sigma\omega\omega\tau$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ $\eta\eta\tau\epsilon$, $\kappa\omega$ ($\kappa\lambda$) $\eta\eta\eta\tau$; $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\nu$ 'to repent', 'regret' = $\bar{\rho}$ $\eta\eta\tau$, $\eta\eta\eta\tau$ $\lambda\epsilon\omicron\gamma\omega\mu$ $\mu\mu\omicron\tau$ $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\eta$, or 'to bow to': $\eta\omega\alpha\tau$ $\bar{\eta}$ -; $\omega\alpha\rho\beta\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ 'frankness', 'openness' = $\omicron\gamma\omega\eta\alpha$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$; $\omega\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ 'to try', 'test' = $\chi\omega\eta\eta\tau$ etc.

⁽¹⁾ W. E. CRUM, *A Coptic Dictionary*, s.v.