It has become a typical pattern in recent years to organise a conference on a rather special topic, inter alia with several invited “names.” The contributions to the Acts will have strict requirements and be peer-reviewed; a renowned book maker will then consent to publish it: a new “handbook,” up-to-date and of high scholarly level, is born.

Die koptischen texte aller epochen sind sehr reich an griechischen wörtern, deren aufnahme in die sprache theils die annahme des christentums und seiner heiligen bücher, teils die byzantinische herrschaft verursachte. Diese fremdwörter, welche mitunter eine leicht veränderte form angenommen haben, sind nicht nur nomina und verba, sondern auch viele der gräzischsten partikeln, wie ᵃⲣ, ᶇⲉ, ᶇⲗⲁ, ᵃⲧⲁ, ϩⲱⲥ, ϩⲓⲛⲁ u. a. Die griechischen wörter nehmen im koptischen einen ähnlichen platz ein, wie die französischen im englischen, obwohl sie nicht so zahlreich sind … (LUDWIG STERN Koptische Grammatik 1880, p. 4)

Right from the earliest Coptic studies it could not be overlooked that the language contained many Greek words. With this feature it is in no way isolated: numerous loanwords or foreign words can be found in many languages. Modern linguistics aims at penetrating more deeply into the conditions, and defining the aspects and describing the modalities of the borrowing: social linguistics, contact linguistics. Huysken (pp. 6–7) lists eight “well-known scenarios from the language contact literature.”

The contributions of the book under review are organised like this.

Section 1: “Linguistic Introduction (pp. 3–16)

Section 2: “Views on Language Contact in Roman and Byzantine Egypt” (pp. 17–161)

Section 3: “Borrowing from Greek into Coptic: Issues and Findings” / Parts of Speech (pp. 163–367)
sections, / Borrowing & Dialectal Variety of Coptic (pp. 369-439)
sections, /Author and Genre (pp. 441–478)

Section 4: “Borrowing from Semitic Languages into Egyptian-Coptic” (pp. 481–533)

The book starts off with the contribution of Pieter Huysken, a linguist originally trained in Latin American Studies, Spanish, Quechua, and Parliamentu. He reviews the contributions from his viewpoint. He pays particular attention to E. Zakrzewska’s article (pp. 115–161).

The second section is opened by the renowned classical scholar Roger S. Bagnall who presents his ideas on “Zones of Interaction between Greek and Egyptian in Roman Egypt” (p. 19). He is followed by Joachim Friedrich Quack who, in no less than seventy pages (pp. 27–96), tells us “How the Coptic Script Came About” (p. 27). He gives an overview of foreign writing systems in the Egypt of the First Millennium BC, mentioning also (p. 30) the surprising appearance of the Halhama order of letters, alternative of the nearly ubiquitous Abjad order of the Alphabet, in Egypt of the fourth century. He does not mention that the Halhama order is not confined to the Yemen, Southern Arabia, and Ethiopia: several attestations have been found in the Levant, from Ugarit to Beth Shemesh — already from the second half of the second millennium (Krebernik 2007, 113–114; also cf. Satzinger 2002; first identified by Lundin 1987); it is used in Egypt for sorting Demotic vocabulary (Jochem Kahl 1991 has discovered this, and Quack 2003 has elaborated on it).
In an Egyptian tomb of the middle of the 2nd millennium BC has been found a fragment which obviously had the alphabet in the *Halhama* order on one side, and in the *Abgad* order on the other (Haring 2015; Schneider 2018).

At least from the early 3rd century BC, Egyptian is occasionally found written, either in bare Greek script or with several additional signs taken from Demotic, for phonemes which are alien to Greek. It goes unmentioned in the book that the script which is used for Coptic from the third cent. AD onward is based on a Greek pronunciation that dates back to the third century BC, at its latest (Satzinger 2003; not quoted by Quack). Characteristic features are the three lexemes for aspirates which are in Coptic articulated as such (ph, th, kh) and not as fricatives, as in later Greek (f, θ/ç, x); conversely Phi is not used for rendering [f], nor is Chi used for [x]. Another early phonetic feature is those diphthongs whose second element is υ, where υ is pronounced in Coptic as a vowel (u), and not as consonant v/f, as in Koine Greek (for more features see Satzinger 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3rd cent. AD</th>
<th>Greek: 3rd cent. BC</th>
<th>3rd cent. AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Φ</td>
<td>ph; p+h</td>
<td>ph</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θ</td>
<td>th; t+h</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>θ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Χ</td>
<td>kh; k+h</td>
<td>kh</td>
<td>x/ç</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΛΥ</td>
<td>ἀυ</td>
<td>ἀυ</td>
<td>av/af</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quaegebeur (1982, 129) says, "We may then say ... that the use of the Greek alphabet for writing Egyptian, in other words, the beginnings of the Coptic script, must be placed between 350 and 300 B.C.E. ... There is no difficulty in assuming a date even before Alexander’s conquest." The problem is that there are almost no texts from that interval of several hundred years that attest to such early general and matter-of-fact use of Greek script for writing Egyptian.

Egyptian diglossia, together with an almost purely consonantal script, created a need for occasionally indicating more exactly pronunciation of a word. Apart from text glosses in an Egyptian script, it was the Greek alphabet that served for this. Quack (p. 42) can give impressive examples. An account of the Late Demotic magical papyri (p. 49) which are rich in glosses, Greek, and “alphabetic Demotic,” and the Old Coptic texts proper (p. 55) follow, including extensive comments on some of these texts.

Quack (p. 58) does not agree to qualify the Old Coptic Schmidt papyrus as Old Coptic. We may still define “Old Coptic” the way it was done some thirty years ago (Satzinger 1984, 137; also cf. Quack p. 56): the language of Old Coptic texts is basically Coptic, though occasionally with pre-Coptic (demotic) features. Quack diagnoses that “there is no single linguistic trait which sets the [Old Coptic Schmidt papyrus] apart from Demotic,”” the relative forms *eraf*, ‘what he did,’ and *eraei* ‘what I did,’ being even exclusively demotic. But what is downright essential about Old Coptic is its medium, the “Old Coptic alphabet” varieties. It is a Greek alphabet with additional demotic letters, these latter, however, usually not conforming to the Coptic norm, but rather closer to their demotic source. For Old Coptic is primarily defined by the script, and only secondarily by lexicon, phonetics, or grammar. The prevailing Sahidic character of the text of the Old Coptic Schmidt papyrus (Satzinger 1975, 45) can become visible because the text is long enough to attest to its alphabet and its vocalism; a circumstance which would remain hidden if the text were written in demotic script. As for the ideosyncratic sign for <g> (p. 59 n.151), its probable origin in demotic <g> was first pointed out by Satzinger (1984, 38).
The mythological Old Coptic narration in the Greek Magical Papyrus of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (cf. p. 69ff.) is without doubt the most attractive Old Coptic piece of literature. Yet it has some strange features. Quack does not seem to be convinced by my argumentation (Satzeniger 1984, 145; 1991, 171; 1994, 22) that the writer of the text must be of Greek mother tongue, as he is obviously not perfect in Egyptian, in particular in respect to pronunciation, but also in other respects (e.g., a relative clause in l. 94, where a clause of circumstance is expected, according to an Egypto-Coptic idiosyncratic rule). One of the arguments is the rendering of those sounds that are alien to Greek. ʂ and ç are mostly rendered by the same sign, namely ɕ, that is Demotic ԡ either velar [x] or palatalized [ç, ʝ]. The sound [x] (a sound not unfamiliar to speakers of Koine Greek, though) is rendered by Greek Χ, rather than a sign of Demotic origin, and [h] even by the Greek spiritus asper (mute since several centuries), either as a supraposed accent or a full-fledged letter Χ. Κ alternates between the もらえる (line 96) of Northern and the Κ (line 100) of Southern Coptic. It is obvious that the writer is rather confused in respect to the specifically Coptic sounds. Furthermore: the idiom of the text is a bizarre amalgam of dialects, oscillating between some kind of Sahidic and a more Northern idiom (F, V, … ?) with traits of Bohairic (but no K features, a dialect which seems to be situated in the Memphis / Karanis area, between B and the Fayyum; Kasser & Satzeniger 1982). Numerous interlinear glosses switch between different dialects; when a word is repeated, it may have a different dialect colouring in each case. Among the vocalic graphemes there is one that is common in Greek, namely οι, originally pronounced the way it is written (diphthong οι), but later a monophthong [o] or [ɔ], ultimately [i]. In Coptic there is in many dialects οι as a variant spelling of οει, certainly rendering a diphthong at all times. In the Paris Magical Papyrus under consideration, however, οι is a variant of ω, in particular where it corresponds to M ο (Satzeniger 1994, 222), a feature that is otherwise unknown in Coptic. It is clearly a monophthong, perhaps rendering a central vowel [o] or the like.

There is general agreement about its date: early fourth century. This is a time when the main literary dialects are attested, each one well-normalized. Which Coptic writer would in this situation produce a dialect mixture of this extreme character? It looks rather as if the writer had based his work on a text in some kind of Sahidic, but tried to adapt it to the local idiom he was personally most familiar with (though only modestly). There is a great gap between the impressive new literary idioms of the Coptic texts of the period and this somewhat bizarre work.

The topic of Egyptian borrowing in Greek (Sofía Torallas Tovar, “The Reverse Case: Egyptian Borrowing in Greek,” pp. 97–113) is more modest. “While literary evidence … presents Egyptian words mainly as foreign words describing an alien reality, documentary evidence in Egypt often shows that these words were natural to the speaker of Greek (p. 108).”

It is generally assumed that Coptic originated in the Egyptian vernacular language of the pre-Coptic period. Ewa Zakrzewska, “‘A Bilingual Language Variety’ or ‘the Language of the Pharaohs’? Coptic from the Perspective of Contact Linguistics” (pp. 115–161) presents a completely new account of that process. Around AD 300, Egyptian was, accordingly, installed in ascetic communities as “an in-group mixed code” (p. 139). “It is within these [ascetic] communities that the locus of the sociolinguistic change which led to Coptic can be situated” (ib.). It owed its existence and its character to “a certain amount of ‘linguistic engineering’” rather than to an organic development. The language was enriched, inter alia, by Greek borrowings (pre-Coptic Egyptian texts contain only an absolute minimum of Greek vocabulary). Being thus incomprehensible — according to Zakrzewska — to speakers of Egyptian who lacked Hellenistic education, it was so also to all who lacked command of Egyptian: it was a “secrete language”; which confirmed the shared social identity of the group members. Zakrzewska sketches the development according to her concept, in three or four stages, as is summarized in the table p. 151.
Greek adjectives in Coptic are insofar peculiar as they possess a category otherwise unknown in Egyptian, namely animates (ΔΓΛΘΩC vs. ΔΓΛΘΩN). Matthew Almond, “An Introduction and Overview to Greek Adjectives in Coptic” (pp. 165–194) presents many more details; additionally, he gives a list of Coptic expressions that show that the Coptic author had in virtually all cases an enchoric alternative to borrowing a Greek adjective (like εΝΣΘΚΛΝ ‘it not being perfect’ instead of ἀθέλετος ‘imperfect’, p. 171).

Infinitive or imperative? Greek verbs appear in the Northern idioms B and F in the Greek form of the infinitive; however, they are not felt to be the equivalent of a Coptic infinitive. For being able to function as a verb, they are used as nominal complements of the verb ‘to do’ — just the way Persian kardan and Turkish etmek, both ‘to do,’ are employed for adopting Arabic verbs in the respective language. The centre idioms M and S, however, create a new form, essentially by omitting the Greek infinitive marker -v. This new form now is fully equivalent to the infinitive of Coptic verbs: it can be used in all functions of a proper Coptic infinitive. Where it expands an article (including a demonstrative or possessive article) it is an ordinary noun. Where it expands a conjugation prefix of the tripartite scheme (with a suffixpronoun or a nominal subject), it is the principal verb form, comparable to similar forms in languages of the agglutinative type, as are most African languages; cf. (one example from hundreds):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sahidic, preterite</th>
<th>Yoruba, present tense</th>
<th>Cf. Kreyol Louisienne, present tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-i- ouôm ‘I ate’</td>
<td>mo ścié ‘I work’</td>
<td>mo dormi ‘I sleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-k/-are- ouôm</td>
<td>o ścié</td>
<td>to dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-f/-a-s- ouôm</td>
<td>ó ścié</td>
<td>li dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-n- ouôm</td>
<td>a ścié</td>
<td>nous dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-tn- ouôm</td>
<td>ë ścié</td>
<td>vous dormi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-u- ouôm</td>
<td>nwón ścié</td>
<td>yè dormi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If, however, it plays its role in the bipartite scheme, the infinitive — or rather: a form homonymous with the infinitive — is in a paradigm with other elements, featuring as adverbial predicates, namely the “instans” (Polotsky) Νλ- plus infinitive, the stative (qualitative), prepositional phrases and adverbs.

The intriguing fact is that this new form resembles *grosso modo* the Greek imperative. Whoever judged the phenomena by their outer appearance regarded them as such: as imperatives. An unacceptable view for those who primarily take the function as criterion for the form: a πλακάκι is the same category as its synonym כָּנָב — a Coptic infinitive. It was only very rarely commented that in Coptic infinitive and imperative have identical forms with most verbs.

Two articles in the volume are dedicated to the borrowing of Greek verbs: Barbara Egedi, “Remarks on Loan Verb Integration into Coptic” (pp. 195–206), and Eitan Grossman & Tonio Sebastian Richter, “Dialectal Variation and Language Change: The Case of Greek Loan-Verb Integration Strategies in Coptic” (pp. 207–236).

What is the nature of this form without final -N, which is used without auxiliary Π- in M and Π? Barbara Egedi devotes her contribution inter alia to this old problem. There are in fact three options. The centre idioms M and S have a form that resembles the Greek imperative (ΠΙΕΠΕΥΕ). The Northern idioms B and F have the Greek infinitive, constrained with the auxiliary: ΕΡ-ΠΙΕΠΕΥΕ(IN) and ΕΛ-ΠΙΕΠΕΥΙΝ, respectively. A and L make use of the auxiliary, but with the main verb in that form that resembles the Greek imperative (Π-ΠΙΕΠΕΥΕ). Grossman & Richter: “…the Coptic
phenomena may be explained in a relatively simple way: a progressive acceptance of the ‘verbness’ of foreign verbs results in a progressive loss of the light verb [auxiliary verb] necessary in some dialects to ‘anchor the predication’ (in Coptic, to derive a verb that can occupy the verb lexeme slot in a verbal construction), followed by the progressive loss of the particular morphosyntactic characteristics of Greek-origin verbs, namely, the [Greek] infinitive marker [-n]” (p. 224). The topic is also resumed by Funk (p. 374f). What now is that form that looks like an imperative — is it an imperative or an infinitive? Its syntax is rather exactly that of a Coptic infinitive, whatever its appearance and origin may be: the forms without -N are normal infinitives in M and S. It is true, they have no expandable form (i.e., no status [pre]nominalis and [pre]pronominalis); but they share this negative feature with a number of autochthonous Coptic verbs, in particular, the verbs with vowel Η like CIKHÆ ‘preserve,’ ΛΦΕΤ, ΛΦΗ ‘to guard,’ ΟΥΗΤΕ ‘to remit.’ However, seen with Coptic eyes, the question whether infinitive or imperative is a futile one: most Coptic infinitives serve also as imperatives (for the diachronique aspect of this cf. p. 222). Arabic verbs (which do not have a form that is congruent with the Coptic infinitive: the masaḍar is a noun, with hardly any verbal traits) are partly used in Coptic in the form of the ?amr (imperative; cf. p.523)!

At least one infinitive of an autochthonous Coptic verb goes back to a Late Egyptian or demotic imperative. Ancient mb means ‘to fill,’ but also, inter alia, ‘to seize’; in Coptic distinguished as ΜΟΥΠ and ΛΜΑΩΤΕ, respectively, the latter going back to an imperative phrase i.mh-tw (< .tw), with the dependent pronoun tw as reinforcer. ΛΜΑΩΤΕ is in Coptic basically an infinitive, irrespective of its origin.

Eitan Grossman & Tonio Sebastian Richter, “Dialectal Variation and Language Change: The Case of Greek Loan-Verb Integration Strategies in Coptic” (pp. 207–236): so there are practically three “strategies” for using a Greek verb in Coptic attested, (1) with auxiliary ‘to do’ plus Gk. infinitive (Northern dialects), (2) with auxiliary ‘to do’ plus Gk. infinitive with a docked tail -n (which some prefer to call imperative; Southern dialects), and (3) just the docked infinitive without auxiliary ‘to do’ (Central dialects; detailed data on p. 214). It is incredible how elaborately you can systemize these three possibilities (pp. 208–214). Anyway, we read a number of good arguments for the assumption that the development was exactly like this: first with auxiliary verb, then docking the tail -n of the infinitive, and finally leaving out the auxiliary verb. “In other words, the light verb strategy [i.e., use of an auxiliary verb] of Bohairic … is both diachronically earlier (or in other words, more conservative) and reflects a lesser degree of integration than the direct insertion strategy characteristic of Sahidic, which is also a more innovative state of affairs” (p. 213). By the way: more than one strategy of deploying Greek verbs in Coptic can be found in one and the same dialect (pp. 219–221).

Excursus (pp. 215–217) on Greek verbs in the demotic ostraca from Narmouthis/Medînet Mâdi: Whereas Greek loans are extremely rare in demotic otherwise (as they are also, by the way, in Old Coptic), they are found frequently in these texts; with demotic auxiliary ‘to do,’ and the main verb in Greek script in the demotic context.

The contribution is concluded by a new overview on the Coptic literary dialects (229–232).

Andrea Hasznos, “Syntactic Patterns Used after Verbs of Exhorting” (pp. 237–264), wondered also whether the bulk of the Greek loan words was acquired a long time before, or just on the occasion of the genesis of Coptic, e.g., the translation of the Bible (cf. Zakrzewska’s contribution). Why does Demotic not have more Greek loans? It had become increasingly “a more and more rigid, almost artificial language register” (p. 238), a “linguistic register connected to Egyptian religion and magic” (ib.; quoting Richter 2008); in its purism it was not open any more to linguistic influence [this may be compared with the extreme scarcity of Greek loans in the Old Coptic texts]. As for
the Greek words in the Coptic Bible: “to use (them) in translations for non-speakers of Greek makes sense only if we assume that these words … were part of the commonly used … vocabulary; otherwise the translations would be of no great use” (p. 239).

Her strategy is to distinguish translated literatur from original texts, and here again literary and documentary texts.

Common sense tells us that the latter would be the best place to find the spoken language mirrored. On this sophisticated path she attains observations and conclusions that are truly remarkable. Why would a translator into \( S \) render κέλευσεν permanently with \( \text{ΟΥΕΡΑΡΝΕ} \), whereas in \( M \) it would consequently be \( \text{ΚΕΣ} \text{ΓΥ} \), except once where he uses \( \text{ΕΠΙΤΛ} \text{ΕΕ} \) (cf. p. 245)? One cannot think of another motive than that the potential readers were familiar with all respective lexemes, be they Coptic or Greek.

The main topic of Hasznos’s study is the rection of verbs of exhorting. What is to be expected is a complement clause, with a finite verb form, possibly of modal coloring. In Coptic, this may be the causative infinitive, like \( \text{ΤΑΞΙΩΝΕΝ} \text{ΜΑΤΕΟ} \) ‘I will ask them to forgive me’ (p. 255). In Greek that was originally the accusatius cum infinitivo, as in καὶ τοῦς φυλάδας ἐκλέξατε σὸν ἀντίθετα ἐπιστείλας ‘and he ordered the guards to serve with him in war’ (p. 246). However, already in the language of the Septuagint this is often replaced by a clause of purpose (with ἵνα or ὅπως; p. 246); a development that led ultimately to a general replacement of the infinitive by \( να \) plus subjunctive, in conformity with the whole Balkan language area. In Coptic, this Greek innovation was occasionally imitated in the translated literatur, either with \( \text{ΕΚ}(\text{ΚΑ}) \) plus Old Future (“Fut. III”), or with Greek ἵνα (\( M \) \( \text{ΨΙΝΚΑ} \)) plus Old Future, or conjunctive, or future conjunctive, etc. (pp. 248–252). Detailed analysis is found on pp. 256–261.

Among the numerous conclusions: „… Whereas I think that most of the Greek loan-verbs found in the texts were used and/or known by most of the Coptic speakers ..., I tend to think that it was the translation activity, and the chosen/obligatory translation technique, that played the main role in their appearance in the Coptic sentence” (p. 261).

Matthias Müller, “Greek Connectors in Coptic A Contrastive Overview I” (pp. 265–315): the author bridges with the term “connectors” the difficulty of defining the category conjunctions for Coptic. Subcategories additive/connective (like ‘and’), subtractive/exceptional (like ‘without’), adversative (like ‘but’), disjunctive (like ‘or’), causal (like ‘for’), comparative (like ‘like’), incrementive/decrementive (like ‘even’). Appendix: Explanatory clause (pp. 308–310). Author concludes that “only very few … functions show a single pattern. Instead it is common practice in Coptic texts to have a choice between several patterns” (p. 310). Greek elements may be limited to a peripheral appearance in some categories, but are central or even basic in others; or are precluded in some.

Elsa Oréal, “Greek Causal Discourse Markers in Coptic Letters: A Case Study in the Pragmatics of Code-Switching” (pp. 317–333): After an account of the “borrowability” of discourse markers and conjunctions, the author discloses her analysis of the use of \( \text{ΕΚ}- \) on the one hand, and \( \Gamma \text{ΑΡ} \) and \( \text{ΕΠ(Π)} \text{ΔΗ} \) on the other, in the Kellis letters as a corpus of early non-literary texts. Among the discourse markers with a clausal meaning, \( \text{ΕΚ}- \) turns out to be the unmarked option ("without any implicit reference to the argumentative or polemical role of what is being said," p. 319); \( \Gamma \text{ΑΡ} \) “indicates that the writer assumes that the content of the clause is contrary to some expectation” (p. 320), whereas \( \text{ΕΠ(Π)} \text{ΔΗ} \) introduces “an undeniable point in a more or less explicit argument” (ib.).

The study “may be credited with clarifying what this specific phenomenon really brings to the debate about bilingualism and interference in Egypt” (p. 329). Further issues: bilingualism or “biliteracy”? Loaning or code-switching (p. 330)? Greek particles: “their role is to make explicit a relationship between clauses … that most often can remain implicit without hindering understanding. … the emergence of a new written register within a historical
context when Greek forms and conventions dominated Egypt may explain this kind of borrowing. … In that sense one could even ask whether Greek particles are really a case of cultural borrowing rather than of core-borrowing” (p. 332).

Eitan Grossman & Stéphane Polis, “Polysemy Networks in Language Contact: The Borrowing of the Greek-Origin Preposition κατά/κατά in Coptic” (p. 335–367) — over 30 pages on one Greek preposition. Polysemy networks in language contact: pattern transfer (calquing, replication) vs. matter transfer; pattern transfer within matter transfer (p. 337). Before evaluating what κατά performed when having been loaned by Coptic, the authors minutely examined what it performed in the original language, Greek. “Taking the Greek-origin adposition κατά … in Coptic as a case study, we show that entire polysemy networks are borrowed …” (p. 335). The twelve basic semantic domains of κατά in Greek (p. 347). It is the Greek preposition found in all of the six more important Coptic dialects (p. 344). A structural comparison of genuine-Egyptian and Greek-loaned prepositions concludes this section (pp. 340–344).

Meanings of κατά in New Testament Coptic (p. 350); differential borrowing between Sahidic and Bohairic (p. 355): in Sahidic only ‘because of,’ in Bohairic only distributive (p. 355–357). κατά plus relative clause corresponds to Greek καθός, ὥς, etc. (p. 359). Not global copying of κατά: not all semantic possibilities of the Greek are borrowed. Is there a selective copying? “the occurrence of uses that are not known to the source language” (p. 361) show that also this is not appropriate: it is adaptative copying, so to speak (ib.). Final remarks sum up some cases of borrowing where the borrowed patterns are different from those of the source; having shown “that Greek-origin prepositions pattern like inherited Coptic prepositions … primarily with respect to the properties … [they] share anyway, and acquire only gradually and partially the particular properties that differentiate between the Greek and Coptic categories” (p. 362). P. 341: Among the Coptic prepositions with a specific pre-pronominal form (“status pronominalis,” in traditional terminology) there are also Greek loans, like κατά-, κατάPO; Πλά, ΠλάPO (cf. p. 360) — not without interest, in the present context.

Wolf-Peter Funk, “Differential Loan across the Coptic Literary Dialects” (pp. 369–397). “Compared with all other features in which Coptic dialects differ, Greek loans are a rather marginal phenomenon” (p. 369). Which Greek word was borrowed by which dialect, which was rendered by an autochthone word? ΠΟΛΙΣ ‘town’ vs. ΒΛΑΚΙ (Bohairic only), ΤΗΕ ‘village,’ but hardly a trace of κόμη (p. 370–371). The only dialects of which we have sufficient evidence for such research are Sahidic, Bohairic, and the Manichaean dialect (L4).w

Two case studies: the treatment of Greek verbs, and ἴα and its use (pp. 371 ff.; tables 1 and 2). Very cautious, wise words on the problem of infinitive versus imperative (p. 375). Further: is the Greek “voice” marker (medio-passive ending) borrowed with the infinitive, and under what conditions (pp. 378ff.)? A plethora of observations.

Another interesting field of research is those Greek words that receive Coptic formatives, like nouns with a Coptic-pattern plural form (e.g. ΦΨΥΧΟΟΥΕ p. 383). Or the other way round: morphemes like the Greek “profession suffix” -ίης being added to several Egyptian words (like ΚΕΝΕΦΙΤΗΣ ‘baker’; pp. 386–387).

“A peculiar case: the name of neighbouring … peoples” (p. 389): B has for the Nubians εθωά, whereas all others have εθωά (< ιξάυ) — Funk reminds us that B has no phoneme [k'], and no such grapheme, and therefore evades to [th]. The <ιου> at the beginning of the name of the Judeans is in early Bohairic and northern Fayyumic <ουί> instead: But the name of the Greeks = Ionians is generally with the same conversion, like ΟΥΕΙΝΙΝ (by the way, the same in demotic: Wynn).

Nathalie Bosson, “Loanwords in Early Bohairic (B4): Problematics and Main Features” (p. 399–421) is based on a comparably small corpus: the rare and therefore most precious texts in early Bohairic, namely the Minor Prophets of P.
Vatican Copto, and the Gospel of John of codex Bodmer III. A few details: there are puzzling facts about the borrowing. Four function words (ΔΕ, ΓΛΠ, ΟΥΝ, ΛΛΛΛΛ) of the Coptic texts that do not have straightforward equivalents in the Greek Vorlage, nor in the later B versions (p. 405). The two competing Greek words ὑπα τον and ὁποιος are rendered in the texts in question almost exclusively by the first, ΠΙΝΑ (p. 405). Greek compound verbs are rendered in B4 by their simplex forms (or equivalent), like κατάχρεσιν, ‘to rule,’ which is represented by εΠΛΠΟΝ or ΟΙΝΑΛΠΟΝ (p. 406). “… the translator of the B4 version is the only one to have understood ζυγός as meaning ‘yoke’ [alternative meaning, ‘balance’] …This example, still pertinent to the subject even though the Greek word ζυγός has not itself been borrowed, clearly demonstrates how constant negotiation can lead to adjustments in the way a text is approached and understood …” (p. 410). Documentation, in an appendix: (1) Lexical semantic domains of the B4 Minor Prophets (410), (2) Loanwords in B4 vs native words in B, (3) Ηαπαξ λεγομενα, in the LXX / in the XII (= Minor Prophets) (p. 416), … (5) Greek compound verbs rendered by a simple form (p. 418), … (8) B4 loanwords rendering another LXX word [e.g. ΠΕΥΚΟΣ πεύκη ‘white poplar’ — B λέυκη = LXX λευκη ‘pine’]. The annex is concluded by a comparative table of (10) Loanwords in Jonah, featuring LXX, S (Budge), S (Hedrick), A, B4, and B, with all autochthonous words highlighted, as against the Greek loans.

Anne Boud’hors, “Greek Loanwords in Fayyumic Documentary Texts” (p. 423–439): the thorny field of non-literary texts is among the strengths of the author. She justifies her good decision to deal with Fayyumic non-literary texts separately: in fact, they differ in many respects from the bulk of contemporary texts that are all in Sahidic, with more or less local colouring (p. 425). This is also true of the topic in question, the borrowing of Greek words. The exclusive Fayyumic use of the debt formula ληΧΠΑΛ ΜΗΤΙΑ ‘I needed from you’ (p. 428) had already been mentioned by Satzinger (1970: 419). Again, appendixes conclude the contribution, namely a list of indexed Fayyumic texts (p. 434), and a classification of the texts and words mentioned (p. 435): epistolary formulas, ecclesiastical and monastic vocabulary, administrative sphere, private law and accountin, society and daily life, grammatical words, and rare and occasional words. Appendix 3 (p. 437) unites features of Greek words in Fayyumic texts.

Ariel Shisha-Halevy, “A Structural-Interferential View of Greek Elements in Shenoute” (pp. 441–455): What happens when a language which does not have conjunctions in its system of syntax feels fit to take them over from another language that does have conjunctions? The newcomers will feature as something else; in our case — Greek and Coptic — as adverbs (cf. p. 454). Hardly any parts of speech are congruent between two languages: adjective, infinitive, preposition etc. — their status and significance are different in each language.

Heike Behlmer “Differentiating Lexical Borrowing according to Semantic Fields and Text Types – A Case Study” (pp. 457–478): linguistic borrowing in the works of the abbot Besa (p. 459), Loanwords in Besa, Shenoute and the Coptic Bible (p. 460); in this way the author succeeds in elucidating motives for borrowing Greek words that are otherwise not used, or rather not attested. Various tables (pp. 469–475) supplement the arguments, like: Loanwords in Besa not (or not in this form) attested in Shenoute or the Sahidic New Testament; selected loanwords in Besa and Shenoute but not in the Sahidic New Testament; etc.

Jean Winand, “Identifying Semitic Loanwords in Late Egyptian” (pp. 481–511). Criteria for Semitic loanwords are, according to Winand’s rating of the communis opinio, the following: [1] syllabic writing, [2] no attestation before New Kingdom, [3] no Egyptian etymology, and [4] a Semitic cognate. Yet there is certainly a small number of autochthonous words that appear in syllabic writing (cf. [1]); very few words that are regarded as loanwords are attested before the New Kingdom (like ρηδ.τ ‘cauldron’; cf. [2]); the most essential criterium is arguably a good
Semitic etymology. But Winand’s interest are word classes, frequency, demotic and Coptic history of the loans, text genres, and semantic classes.

Tonio Sebastian Richter “Borrowing into Coptic, the Other Story: Arabic Words in Coptic Texts” (pp. 513–533). Greek words in Coptic: the result of a cohabitation of two languages over many centuries, of two civilisations, of which one was politically and economically dominating, and was “global,” whereas the other one was not, though by virtue of several millennia of high culture it could probably not be called provincial. When Egypt came under Muslim Arab rule, the situation was not so different from the beginning. Though in the end, the language of the rulers prevailed in this case. The first Arabic words appear in Coptic texts late and seldom: in documentary texts, and more frequently in the small corpus of medical and alchemical recipes, among other scientific genres, mostly of the 9th to 11th centuries. Arabic phonetics are quite different from Coptic; but we are already familiar with the way Copts rendered Arabic sounds in their script from the few Arabic texts in Coptic script, as well as Coptic texts in Arabic script, that are known (Satzinger 1971).

Greek loans in Coptic: a topic generally known, but until now underresearched. The book under review endeavours to catch up here, in particular in a contact-linguistic perspective. The collaboration of a number of specialists has helped to achieve this, and they deserve warmest thanks. Nevertheless, the book does not definitely answer the basic questions, like: why does demotic hardly contain any Greek material, whereas Coptic is so rich in it? It seems conclusive that Coptic uses the Greek script in a way that conforms rather with Greek usage of the time of 300 BCE, and definitely not that of 300 AD. Also there seem to have existed two contrastive standards of pronouncing it. Whereas the Greek aspirate signs are evidently used in the autochthonous words as such (i.e., as aspirates), the Greek fricative pronunciation was obviously well-known, as some misspellings show.

Literature Quoted:


A. G. 1987, „L’abécédaire de Beth Shemesh”, Le Muséon 100, 243-250.


