

# **LINGUISTIC BORROWING INTO COPTIC**

**Inaugural conference of the *DDGLC* project,  
Leipzig, 26-28 April 2010**

**ABSTRACTS**

**Heike Behlmer:**

**Delimiting Greek loanwords in Coptic according to semantic fields and different text sorts**

April 28, 02:00 – 02:45 pm

At the risk of (re)stating the obvious, this paper will concern itself with questions of lexical borrowings in Coptic across different text types and genres. The main focus will be on literary texts, and in particular on homiletic and hagiographical texts. As case study, the paper will look more closely at lexical borrowings in one original Coptic author: the 5<sup>th</sup> century monastic writer Besa. It will discuss the frequency, distribution and semantic fields of these borrowings as well as touch upon insertion patterns and rhetorical functions. The paper will also examine the similarities (and possible differences) in Besa's use of loanwords in comparison with the writings of his famous predecessor, Shenoute, and the Coptic biblical texts.

**Nathalie Bosson:**

**Loanwords in Early Bohairic (B4-B74): Problematics and main features**

April 27, 04:15 – 05:00 pm

What is at stake when dealing with the dialectal variety *B74-B4*? On the one hand there is the problematics of the translation strategy (or translation technique), since it is represented by the Biblical texts of the Twelve Minor Prophets (Pap. Vat. Copt. 9; hereafter XII) and of the Gospel of John (Bodmer III)-as the main witnesses of it. Yet, a two-pronged approach is undisputable, namely the Coptic Biblical text as a translation *and* as a literary work with its own merits and history. On the other hand, insofar as the genre of a given text or corpus is fundamental, as is its dating, my paper will only be concerned with the text of the XII, for the linguistic *paysage* between the Bohairic New Testament (said to be more "Greek") and the Bohairic Old Testament (showing "Septuagintalsms" and being in itself the translation of a translation) would *a priori* not be exactly the same. Nonetheless, I won't focus on textual criticism, nor on orthography or function words for they are related to syntactic linking and have no referential meaning-not to mention that they usually provide a high percentage of variant readings-but on the full words.

At the synchronic level, the first issue is how can we understand the loaned lexical *nuage* carried out in the XII. Is there any organization (distribution, associations, distortions because of misreadings or conjectures for example) being a prelude to the result of this complex series of competing choices a Coptic translator had to make, leading to specific lexical and contextual semantic domains (given that such specific semantic domains in the text can be defined) ?

At the diachronic level, the second issue is how can we understand the nature and motivation of some adjustments involved in the Bohairic text of the XII, of some lexical shifts between the *B74* and *B* versions of the XII. A question leading to the following correlate: can the puzzling statement "Bohairic prefers Egyptian lexemes, Sahidic Greek ones" (SHISHA-HALEVY, *Topics*, 26) be moderated or specified regarding the sole Old Testament book in question?

**Anne Boud'hors:**  
**Greek loanwords in Fayyumic non-literary texts**

April 27, 04:15 – 05:00 pm

1. Definition of the corpus

This matter implies several questions: how to determine whether or not a text is "Fayyumic"? Which sorts of texts are included in the corpus? In what extent is this corpus related to others (documentary texts in general, Fayyumic literary texts) and is it justified to study it separately? I will try to answer these questions and to explain the linguistic and historical contexts of the ca. 300 documents (private letters, lists and legal texts from the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> cent.) I have been reading in order to index the loanwords they contain.

2. Classification of the loanwords according the following categories:

- \* Words belonging to epistolary formulas and clichés.
- \* Words from the administrative vocabulary.
- \* Technical words used in private law and accounting.
- \* Technical words related to economy and society.
- \* Grammatical words (particles, adverbs, prepositions).
- \* Occasional words, *hapax legomena* and unidentified words.

3. Main features of Greek loanwords in Fayyumic non literary texts vs Sahidic non literary and vs. Fayyumic literary texts.

- \* Phonology and orthography.
- \* Syntax and semantic (especially forms of Greek verbs, change of category, Greek-Coptic composition).
- \* Borrowing Greek forms vs integrating Greek words.

4. Expected results and consequences

- \* Practical and immediate result: improving the editions and translations of Fayyumic non literary texts.
- \* Significance for the study of the Fayyumic dialect and of the linguistic situation in the Fayyum at late periods.
- \* Significance of this particular "thesaurus" in the general problem of Greek loanwords in Coptic.

**Jean-Louis Fort:**

**Are there discernible factors governing choices in cases of pairs like  $\theta\upsilon\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\tau\eta$  :  $\kappa\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon$ ?**

April 28, 02:45 - 03.30 pm

In cases of pairs like  $\theta\upsilon\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\tau\eta$ :  $\kappa\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon$ , three different situations should be considered: the translations, the authentic literary texts written by Coptic authors (particularly Shenoute), and the special case of documentary texts.

As for the translations, some witnesses show us that there is more or less regularity in translating Greek texts into Coptic. It seems it could depend on the tradition of its transmission or its provenance. But there could be another possibility, a conscious shift in order to eliminate repetitions.

The case of literary texts will be illustrated with some examples taken from the very large corpus of Shenoute's works. It will be argued that this original Coptic author gives a highest rhetorical function to the "Greek loan words" which are not so obvious. I will focus on several kinds of systemic oppositions between Greek and Coptic parts of the "pairs" and show the importance of the Scriptural context. But I will also claim for the integration of another kind of parameter, the specific meaning provided by documentary material.

Finally, the status of Coptic documentary texts will be evoked, not only with the corpus of a bilingual community, the Manicheans located at Kellis, but also with funeral or legal documents. In these texts, we have to pay attention to some semantic specification of "Greek words", which form a real corpus.

**Wolf-Peter Funk:**

***Differential borrowing across the Coptic literary dialects***

April 27, 05:45 – 06:45

It has been noted for a long time that there are certain differences among the literary dialects of Coptic, notably between Sahidic and Bohairic, in the usage of Greek loans. Some lexical items are present in one or several of these dialects and absent in others; and even when two or more dialects have them, the loan word may be the preferred lexeme to cover a certain meaning in one dialect while another prefers a native lexeme to cover the same meaning. These issues of presence or absence, or that of preference, however, are not the only distinctions to be observed from a cross-dialect point-of-view, and possibly not even the most interesting ones. Some other aspects include:

- \* borrowing the same lexical items in different forms, or applying different phonological modifications to them;
- \* usage of the same loan item in different syntactic conditions;
- \* usage of the same loan item with different syntactic and/or semantic implications;
- \* different distributions of loan and native items in the coverage of a given semantic field;
- \* different types of word-formation patterns (for the production of "hybrid" compounds or derivatives), etc.

While there is hardly space here for a thorough analysis, I shall try in this paper to exemplify and briefly discuss such differential categories.

**Eitan Grossman:**

***Greek-origin Prepositions in Coptic***

**Adpositions** are borrowed less frequently than nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, discourse particles, coordinators, or conjunctions. Adposition borrowing is nevertheless well-attested cross-linguistically. All Coptic dialects attest between one and six Greek-origin prepositions, which show varying degrees of integration and frequency. In the first part of this talk, I will present an overview of preposition borrowing in the Coptic dialects, focusing on the perhaps-trivial and yet necessary matter of attestation or non-attestation. Some large-scale patterns emerge, such as the fact that the preposition *kata* is the most frequently borrowed and has the highest token-frequency in Coptic texts, followed by *para* and *pros*. Some interesting features of preposition borrowing, such as double-encoding constructions and morphosyntactic integration, will be highlighted.

In the second part of the talk, I will present some preliminary steps towards a typology of adposition borrowing, dwelling on four topics:

- Problems in the description and evaluation of adposition borrowing; distinguishing adposition borrowing in a strict sense from other, related phenomena (e.g., the borrowing of spatial nouns that develop into adpositions in the target language, contact-induced innovation of an adposition category).
- Borrowing hierarchies
- Frequently-borrowed meanings
- The usefulness - and perhaps necessity - of making a distinction between language-specific **descriptive categories** and cross-linguistic **comparative concepts** (Haspelmath, 2010) in the study of language contact, which by definition involves the comparison of languages.

**Martin Haspelmath:**

***What kinds of words get borrowed? Loanwords in cross-linguistic comparison***

*April 26, 03:00 – 04:00 pm*

In this talk I report on a collaborative quantitative study of loanwords in 41 languages, aimed at identifying meanings and groups of meanings that are borrowing-resistant (Haspelmath & Tadmor (eds.) 2009). We found that nouns are more borrowable than adjectives or verbs, that content words are more borrowable than function words, and that different semantic fields also show different proportions of loanwords. Several issues arise when one tries to establish a list of the most borrowing-resistant meanings: Our data include degrees of likelihood of borrowing, not all meanings have counterparts in all languages, many words are compounds or derivatives and hence almost by definition non-loanwords, and we also have data on the age of words. There are thus multiple factors that play a role, and we propose a way of combining the factors to yield a new 100-item list of basic vocabulary, called the Leipzig-Jakarta list.

**Andrea Hasznos:**

***Greek loan-verbs in Coptic***

*April 27, 2:45 – 3:30 pm*

The presence of Greek loanwords in Coptic raises several questions, and the phenomenon has been studied for a long time, but the overall picture as to their semantics, valency, or 'social status' among others, is still unclear. The present paper addresses the issue of loan-verbs, more precisely, the group of the so-called verbs of exhorting. In a text corpus comprising original and translated (from Greek), literary and non-literary Coptic texts, it will be examined which Greek verbs of exhorting are taken over, which are translated with the Coptic equivalent, how much the different text types and Coptic texts as a whole apply the Greek or the Coptic verb. Next, the question of their integration into the Coptic sentence will be examined: what syntactic patterns are used after them and does that depend on whether a Greek or a Coptic verb of exhorting is at play; can one detect Greek syntactical/stylistic influence in the pattern(s) applied after these verbs, and do the different text types exhibit differences in this respect?

**Mark Janse:**

**Theoretical issues in the interpretation of Cappadocian, a not-so-dead Greek contact language**

April 26, 04:45 – 5:45 pm

Cappadocian is a mixed Greek-Turkish dialect continuum spoken in the Turkish Central Anatolia Region until the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s. Only a few Cappadocian dialects are still spoken in present-day Greece. Since the publication of Thomason and Kaufman's *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* in 1988, Cappadocian has attracted the attention of historical and contact linguists, because of its unique mixed character. In this paper, I will discuss a number of theoretical issues in the interpretation of the linguistic structure of Cappadocian, focusing on the following topics: (1) the status of loan phonemes and loan morphemes in contact languages, (2) the distinction between code switching and code mixing in relation to Poplack's Free Morpheme Constraint, (3) the schizoid typology of contact languages.

**Matthias Müller:**

**Greek Conjunctions in Coptic. An overview**

April 27, 9:45 - 10:30 am

Among the vocabulary transferred from one language to another, conjunctions are usually less common than members of other morphological categories. At first glance Coptic appears to have borrowed a rather high number of conjunctions from Greek (Anba Gregorius 1991; Richter 2003; 2008). Yet, a closer inspection will show that the employment of the majority of them resembles rather that of signals or labels added to a clause for reasons of disambiguation than that of specific conjunctive morphemes. However, this should not lead one to conclude, *pace* earlier studies (Steindorff 1950), that they serve no purpose and could be dispensed with (this view has been correctly objected to by Reintges 2001). This paper will focus mainly on providing a typological overview whilst highlighting only a couple of specific cases. Further details will be discussed in the respondent's reaction. The first part of the paper will treat coordinating, the second subordinating connectors. However, as this distinction is not always possible along clear-cut syntactic/morphological categories in Coptic, the initial approach will follow semantic-functional patterns of the connectors in Greek. In each of them the connectors of Greek etymology will be contrasted by Coptic expressions used for similar functions.

Anba Gregorius 1991. Greek Loan Words in Coptic: Greek Conjunctions in Coptic, in: *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 30, 77-92.

Reintges, Chris 2001. Code-Mixing Strategies in Coptic Egyptian, in: *Lingua Aegyptia* 9, 193-237.

Richter, Tonio Sebastian 2003. Review of Hans Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter ...*, in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96, 730-736.

---- 2008. Lexical borrowing into Coptic. A case study in loanword typology. Handout for a paper presented at the conference *Language Typology and Egyptian-Coptic Linguistics*, Leipzig October 5th, 2008.

Steindorff, Georg 1950. Bemerkungen über die Anfänge der koptischen Sprache und Literatur, in: *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum* (= *The Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute* 2), 189-214.

**Elsa Oreál:**

**Greek particles in Coptic: What are they used for (and why)**

April 27, 9:00 – 9:45 am

The presence of Greek particles in Coptic texts has often been noticed and commented upon as if borrowing this part of speech was an exceptional fact. As such, it has been taken as a phenomenon illustrating structural influence from Greek unto Coptic. This needs further qualification. I will first try to sum up some results of contact linguistics concerning code-switching and borrowing of discourse markers and conjunctions in modern bilingual settings, that may help us to look at the Coptic facts in a different way. It has been showed in particular that a 'filling-the-gap' explanation could not account for this kind of core-borrowing in a satisfactory way. Some studies suggest that the relatively easy borrowing of particles and discourse markers is related to their essential function as markers of universal discourse roles. Thus, the pragmatic parameter plays an important role in their use, a property which they precisely appear to share with code-switching itself. Leaving aside any ambition of giving a general overview of relevant facts in Coptic literature, I will then try to assess the relevance of a pragmatically oriented explanation for some uses of Greek particles in a restricted corpus : the Kellis letters. This very small-scale study will focus on causal/explanative markers such as *gar* and *ep(e)idê* as opposed to Coptic forms *je* and *etbe je*. Finally, I will draw some tentative conclusions and ask some questions, aiming mainly at assessing what the use of Greek particles in Coptic texts may or may not tell us about the nature of Greek-Coptic interference, in particular about which variety of the donor language is concerned, and which criteria may be used to decide whether the use of a given particle belongs to a more or less widely « spoken » sociolect or remains an essentially « literary » fact, with all usual cautions about the problematic categorizing of such gradual phenomenon.

**St. Polis:**

**Coptic  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  vs Greek  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$ . A Case-Study in Contrastive Semantics**

April 27, 11:45 – 12:30

The aim of this paper is to investigate the various aspects of the borrowing of the Greek preposition  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  in the Sahidic and Bohairic versions of the New Testament (NT). The following issues will be addressed:

- [1] What kind of Greek is borrowed into Egyptian: (a) characteristics of Greek prepositions, (b) the evolution of the meaning of the preposition  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  from Homer down to Koinê Greek, (c) meanings and functions of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  in the NT (including a frequency-analysis of each meaning according to NT books).
- [2] What is borrowed into Coptic: (a) distinction “vocabulary” vs “lexemes”; (b) meanings borrowed or not in Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic, a differential approach; (c) conditions and constraints on the Borrowing (e.g. why some instances of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$  in Greek NP are never translated with  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  in Coptic); (d) when does Coptic use  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  where Greek does not.
- [3] Grammatical integration of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  in the Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic of the NT: (a) productivity of the pre-pronominal state ( $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ - vs  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\text{p}\acute{o}\text{t}\epsilon\text{r}\acute{o}$ ); (b) occurrences of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  in different syntactic environments; (3)  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  and compound prepositions.

[4] Further illustration of the differential borrowing in the Coptic dialects (and across time): the uses of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  in Early Bohairic, Lycopolitan and Fayyumic Matthew's Gospel.

All the generalizations in this paper will refer only to Greek and Coptic of the NT. It is seen as a necessary preliminary step, meant to isolate well-established usages against which it will be possible to describe the grammar and semantics of the preposition in other corpora.

**Chris H. Reintges:**

**Contact-induced change: The “Hellenization” of Egyptian syntax**

April 28, 11:00 – 11:45 am

Elaborating on earlier work (Reintges 2001, 2004) I propose to trace the non-Egyptian features of Coptic syntax to language change through intensive language contact. I will argue that Coptic is not so much the most recent phase of Ancient Egyptian but rather a *bilingual language variety* with two parent languages—Egyptian and (Koine) Greek. The focus of my talk will be on contact-induced syntax change. Language contact at the syntactic level is particularly transparent in the structural integration of borrowed lexical and functional items, which I propose to analyze as syntactized code-switches (Muysken 2000, 2008). Greek superstratum influence manifests itself not only in massive lexical borrowing of the native word stock, but also in restructuring of Egyptian syntax according to a Greek model. I will show that Coptic can be described as discourse-configurational language (É. Kiss 2001), in which topic and focus prominence entails a departure from the canonical SVO word order. In other words, the distribution of the subject and—to a lesser extent—the direct object and adverbial modifiers is not free, but determined by the need of marking them with respect to their discourse information content. Just as in Koine Greek, discourse configurability involves an articulated topic-focus field in the left periphery of the Coptic clause (see Rizzi 1997 and much subsequent cartographic research). The newly activated configurational space hosts not only a broad range of Greek-based function words, but also the newly developed evidential and modal categories such as the conditional mood (*e-f-šan-sōtām*), the inferred evidential (*tare-f-sōtām*), and the fully paradigmaticized relative tense/aspects (so-called “second tenses”) (Reintges 2009). Thus, contact-induced syntax change from rigid word order to discourse configurability is present in activation of peripheral clausal domain and provides the relevant functional superstructure for massive borrowing as well as language-internal morphological innovations.

É Kiss, Katalin (2001). Discourse configurability. In Martin Haspelmath et al. (eds.) *Language typology and language universals*. vol. II, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1442-1455.

Muysken, Pieter. (2000). *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muysken, Pieter. (2008). *Functional Categories*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 117. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reintges, Chris H. (2001). Code-mixing strategies in Coptic Egyptian. *Lingua Aegyptia* 9: 193-237.

Reintges, Chris H. (2004). Coptic Egyptian as a bilingual language variety. In *Lenguas en contacto: El testimonio escrito*. Manuales y Anejos de «Emerita» XLVI. Edited by Pedro Bádenas de la Peña, Sofía Torallas Tovar, Eugenio R. Luján, and María Ángeles Gallego. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 69-86.

Reintges, Chris H. (2009). From morphology to syntax or the other way around: Re-thinking the directionality of change in historical syntax. Paper presented at the 19th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, Radboud University Nijmegen. August 10-14 2009.

Rizzi, Luigi. (1997). ‘The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery’, in Liliane Haegeman (ed.) *Elements of Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 281-337.



**Tonio Sebastian Richter:**  
**Lexical borrowing into Coptic: The other Story**

April 28, 9.00-9.45 am

The topic of this conference, although mainly, and rightly understood to concern borrowing from Greek, has still a second chapter, as it were, dealing with another significant language contact situation in 1st-millennium CE Egypt: After the Arab conquest in 641 CE, native speakers of Coptic, at first only a few ones on a rather professional base, but from the later 8th century onwards increasingly more of them in more regular contact situations of daily life might have encountered, and gradually become competent with Arabic. It comes as no surprise that this contact to a socially superior contact language left traces in the Coptic lexicon.

While Greek-Egyptian language contact is very obvious on different cultural and linguistic levels, and has been studied from several perspectives by Egyptologists, Copticists, historians and papyrologists since long (even though not long enough), Arabic-Coptic language contact has received much less attention. The existence and extension of the Coptic lexical substratum underlying the colloquial Egyptian Arabic vocabulary has been dealt with by the occasional Arabist over the last century, but the issue of Arabic influence on Coptic has hardly been raised up to now (the meager bibliography on the topic is referred to by RICHTER 2006).

The *amount* of lexical items borrowed from Arabic is rather low as compared to that of Greek words. We speak about hardly more than 500 lexical items, as opposed to estimated 4000 words borrowed from Greek, and this proportion would tremendously increase if not types but tokens were counted. Also the *distribution* of Greek and Arabic words across Coptic written texts is very different. While Greek words are spread over Coptic texts of virtually every kind and age (although there is a clear decline in late Coptic non-standard Coptic), evidence for linguistic interference with Arabic is limited to a narrow, and rather special segment of the Coptic written corpus: 10th/11th-century scientific (medical, alchemical, magical, astrological and mathematical) texts, and Coptic documentary texts mainly of the 9th to 11th centuries.

Being the most substantial outcome of Coptic in contact with other languages next to that with Greek, and providing comparative data for the Egyptian-Coptic way of integrating foreign lexical material, the Arabic evidence may justly be presented to a conference devoted to the study of lexical borrowing into Coptic

Tonio Sebastian RICHTER, Entry "Coptic[, Arabic loanwords in]", in: K. VERSTEEGH (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill 2006, 595-601.

**Ariel Shisha-Halevy:**  
**A Structural-Intereferential View of Greek Elements in Shenoute: Problematik and Implication**

(1) - (2) Greek-origin elements in Shenoute's opus. The rhetorical angle. Critique of "borrowing", "loans" and similarly metaphorical dynamic concept/terms. Synchrony and diachrony: *structural value - Greek-origin elements as linguistic signs*. "Etymology" in the Coptic dictionary. Lexical system "C" - subsystems "Cc" and "Gc" in synchrony and tension.

(3) Greek interference in Coptic?

- (4) Hugo Schuchardt's "Erb- vs. Lehnwörter". Coptic as Mischsprache. Scalarity of "borrowedness".
- (5) Motivation for using lexemes of non-Egyptian stock. Rhetorical effectiveness.
- (6) Subsystems in C: CC and CG. CG terms are Coptic, not Greek: Graecitas Coptica: CG an integrated accessible system (rather than dynamic borrowing). No longer Greek; subject to the consequences of the existence of the CC subsystem; the respective grids or gridding are different and stand in mutual tension.
- (7) Distinctive Coptic-Greek forms: the divergence (often in *variance*) from normative Greek orthographic forms.
- (8) Morphemic, morpho-phonemic, prosodic and phonematic distinctness of the CG subsystem.
- (9) The listener-audience angle. Putative Greek source systems. Differences in CG status in Shenoute's text..
- (10) The relationship of Greek and "native" lexical items is *not suppletive, but pertinent*. Opposite CC and CG pairs in various environments, various motivations, various rhetorical effects. Closed sets. Scriptural ambience.
- (11) Real code-switching in Shenoute's works.
- (12) CG lexemes typology. Terminology/denotation vs. Grid Precision Signification.
- (13) Morphology: transparency and motivation inside the CG system
- (14) Paradigmatics: New systematization of CG in Coptic morphology.
- (15) Paradigmatics: the intriguing status of verbs.
- (16) Syntagmatics: clustering: collocations, combinations. "Grecizing environment".
- (17) Syntagmatics, Paradigmatics: the nature and significance of grammatical integration of CG.
- (18) Categorization: a red herring. The semantic categories fuzzy, ad-hoc and not mutually exclusive.
- (19) Grammemes: sentence particles.

**Jean Winand:**  
**Identifying Semitic loanwords in Late Egyptian**

April 26, 5:45 – 6:45 pm

During the New Kingdom, according to the *communis opinio*, words borrowed from Semitic languages entered the Egyptian lexicon *en masse*. After giving some background information on the lexical borrowing in the NK, from a linguistic and a socio-linguistic point of view, I focus on what still remains the most basic question: how to recognize a loanword? This question is particularly relevant for languages like Egyptian and the different Semitic idioms that are supposed to be somehow genetically connected (Afro-asiatic hypothesis), and that have been in close contact for many centuries.

I chose to closely examine five words that have been to a varying degree said to be loanwords: *k3mn* « (be) blind », *bnr* « outside », *ym* « sea », *it* « which ? », *gwš* « to squint, divert, lead astray ».

The main conclusions are :

- \* the role of the syllabic writing (particularly as a criterion for recognizing loanwords) should be reconsidered,
- \* a great part of the words borrowed from Semitic in the NK are no loanwords *stricto sensu*; they are probably no more than manifestations of a code-switching, parts of a sophisticated rhetorics enjoyed by the elite scribes; they belong to texts of the high culture and they did not survive the downfall of the NK,
- \* if not a xenism, a word that is part of the core meaning vocabulary (that is to say loanwords for which there are some more or less close equivalent(s) in the target language) usually first appears in texts that show some connections with the Semitic world before being eventually accepted in every kind of text,
- \* the history of the Egyptian lexicon gives some interesting perspectives on the broader history of the Egyptian language. It among others reinforces the claim that the traditional stages of Egyptian (Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic, Coptic) did not succeed in a straight line, but that they, up to a certain point, represent regional varieties that succeeded in having a written representation due to historical or cultural circumstances.

**E.D. Zakrzewska:**

**"A bilingual language variety" or "the language of the pharaohs"? Coptic from the perspective of contact linguistics**

April 28, 11:45 – 12:30 am

This paper is intended as a critical re-assessment of our knowledge of the subject of linguistic borrowings into Coptic, both lexical and grammatical. I will start with a brief review of the numerous Coptological studies on this subject with their sometimes conflicting conclusions. Then, on the basis of recent linguistic literature, I will try to reconstruct possible contact scenarios that resulted in the linguistic outcomes we can observe in Coptic. Next I will discuss language attitudes of the users of Coptic and the way in which these attitudes can be assessed. This will bring me to a broader sociolinguistic reflection on possible interdependencies between the linguistic outcomes of the contact processes in Coptic, grammatical constraints and the changing social and cultural situation of the language users. I will conclude by returning to the linguistics studies on Coptic and suggest how our descriptions of this language can profit from taking into account the perspective of contact linguistics.