


# The Egyptian-Coptic language: its setting in space, time and culture

[The original paper](#)  contains 23 sections, with 10 passages identified by our machine learning algorithms as central to this paper.

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## Paper Summary

### SUMMARY PASSAGE 1

#### Diachrony

Earlier Egyptian" refers to Old and Middle Egyptian, including varieties of the latter that continued to be used until the end of Pharaonic civilization. "Later Egyptian" comprises Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic. However, the non-Egyptological reader should be aware that the linguistic and sociohistorical nature of Egyptian diachrony are a matter of considerable debate.

### SUMMARY PASSAGE 2

#### Old Egyptian (Including Archaic Egyptian Or " Pre-Old Egyptian")

Old Egyptian is the language of texts of the Old Kingdom of Egypt (Dynasties 4-8, corresponding to the mid-until late 3rd millennium BCE). Old Egyptian is the first phase of the Egyptian language phase that provides us with a significant quantity of texts. However, the textual repertoire is still very limited in terms of genre and accordingly, in terms of of linguistic registers represented in the written record.

### SUMMARY PASSAGE 3

#### Middle Egyptian

Approximations to this norm continued to serve, in a number of varieties, as the basis of prestigious registers for purposes such as religious and funerary writing over the following two millennia up until Roman times. Middle Egyptian first emerges in texts of the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2200-1950 BCE) and the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1950-1750).

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 4

## Late Egyptian

Late Egyptian differs structurally from Middle Egyptian more strikingly than any other Egyptian language phase from its predecessor. This has often been interpreted as indicating a long-term gap between the norms of written and spoken Egyptian. The relationship between Late Egyptian and various forms of Earlier Egyptian has been conceptualized as a kind of covert diglossic situation ( Jansen-Winkel 1995; Vernus 1996b), which became overt when typical Late Egyptian features began to penetrate written registers, and, eventually, became consolidated as a relatively coherent system, albeit one with much internal variation.

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 5

## Demotic

below §§ 5.2 and 5.3). While the other designations have been invented for (such as Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian), or applied to (such as Coptic), Egyptian language phases only in recent times, the name Demotic is an antique designation for an Egyptian writing style. It was chosen by the Greek geographer Herodotus (ca.

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 6

## Coptic

4th century CE -ca. 14th century CE) of the Egyptian-Coptic language, starting with the alphabetization of written Egyptian on the basis of the Greek script, and ending with the language shift of Egyptian native speakers to Arabic in the Middle Ages. The process of Neuverschriftung of Egyptian during the first centuries CE, resulting in the more or less complete standardization of several Coptic dialects around 300 CE, accompanied (or partially resulted from) a major change in the domain of religion, namely, the rise and spread of Christianity in Egypt.

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 7

## Dialects And Intradialectal Variation

There is little hard evidence for the written representation of distinct geographical dialects before Coptic, although it has been proposed that Earlier Egyptian reflects a northern dialect, Late Egyptian a southern one (Peust 1999: 33; Feder 2005). However, it is only in Coptic that we observe significant differences between dialects. Coptic can be divided into a dozen or so highly standardized written dialects ( Funk 1988( Funk & 1991Kasser 1991c).

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 8

## Language Contact

Kammerzell (2001aKammerzell ( , 2001bKammerzell ( & 2001c has suggested that Egyptian influenced West Semitic languages, and perhaps, indirectly, Indo-European languages. : Hoch 1994;Quack 2005;Vittmann 1996. Non-Semitic loanwords in Egyptian: Knigge 2004Schneider 2004aSchneider & 2004b Greek-Egyptian language contact : Feder 2004;Fewster 2002;Fournet 2009;Hasznos 2012;Papaconstantinou 2010;Peremans 1964Peremans & 1983Rutherford 2010;Satzinger 1984;Torallas Tovar 2010;Vierros 2012. Greek Loanwords in Egyptian: Almond 2010Clarysse 1987;Dils et al. (fc.); Kasser 1966OrÃ©al 1999;Reintges 2001. Egyptian Loanwords in Greek: Fournet 1989Torallas Tovar 2004. Arabic loanwords in Coptic: Richter 2006a. Coptic substrate of Egyptian Arabic : Behnstedt 1981;Bishai 1960Bishai , 1961Bishai , 1962Bishai & 1964Ishaq 1991;Lucas & Lash 2010;Vittmann 1991.

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 9

## Hieroglyphs

Phonograms could encode one consonantal phoneme ( uniliteral signs) or a sequence of two consonants ( biliteral signs) or even three ( trilateral signs, although many trilateral phonograms can also be interpreted as logograms). Phonograms had two main functions: to represent the elements of a consonantal skeleton of lexical and grammatical items, on the one hand (the "autonomous" function, in Kammerzell and Lincke's terms), and, as "interpretants" (traditionally called "phonetic complements"), to redundantly represent elements of sound structure already present in writing. The following figure is a schematic representation of sign functions of Egyptian graphemes: An alphabetic set of uniliteral signs covering the complete (consonantal) phoneme inventory of Egyptian was available, but was never used exclusively.

#### SUMMARY PASSAGE 10

## Concluding Remarks

Furthermore, there is considerable internal variation and evidence for ongoing language change, both at the seams of the successive stages and within each of the stages. For example, studies have demonstrated that Coptic, which is generally considered to be more or less stable over its thousand-year history as a written language, clearly shows significant diachronic changes ( Grossman 2007( Grossman , 2010; it has also been proposed that language change is visible within Old Egyptian ( Kammerzell 2005), Middle Egyptian ( Doret 1986), Late Egyptian ( Groll 1982;Win and 1995), and Demotic ( Quack fc. [a]). In general, recent scholarship has tended to move away from a broad holistic diachronic conception based on discrete stages, and towards a more fine-grained construction-or feature-oriented approach, combined with a heightened awareness of the importance of sociohistorical parameters for the study of variation.

