

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ARABIC IN EGYPT

Ahmed Mokhtar Omer

Cairo University

The contact between Arabic and the Egyptian language does not go back only to the Islamic era, but to centuries before the Islamic conquest, or even before Christianity, when Arabs used to go to Egypt either as merchants or emigrants. Historians show that there were sea and land trading routes between Egypt and Arabia, and that Gaza, for instance, was a very important centre for businessmen, and a port to which Arab traders used to go to conclude bargains (‘Alī 1969-1976: VIII, 67, 132). From a document which goes back to a year around 263 B.C., we know that there were commercial relations between the Egyptians and Arabs in that remote period (*ibid.* VIII, 67). It is also said that in pre-Islamic days, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ paid a visit to Egypt as a trader, and went across the Delta to Alexandria (al-Kindī, *Wulāt* 6-7).

Turning to the second category, it is certain that a series of emigrations took place in the pre-Islamic period, among which were:

1. The emigration of some tribes of Kaḥtanite origin, which encroached on the north-eastern part of Egypt as early as the dawn of the Christian era (‘Ammār 1944: I, 21).
2. The emigration of some tribes of Ṭayyi’ (another Kaḥtanite branch) among whom the most famous were: Ġudām and Lahm which settled in aš-Šarqiyya (*ibid.* I, 23).
3. In ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb’s reign, after the conquest of aš-Šām and before the conquest of Egypt, some tribes of Ġassān, Ġudām, and ‘Āmila, who were Christians, emigrated to Egypt, and settled in the north-west of Sinai, and the Roman Emperor granted them the sovereignty of Tennīs (al-Maqrīzī, *Bayān* 90, 91).

The Greek historians including Strabo (66 B.C.) informed us that the number of Arabs had increased in their time, so that they had occupied the area between the western shore of the Red Sea, and the River Nile, an area which was parallel to the southern part of Upper Egypt (*ibid.* 89). Strabo besides describes Koptos as a town under the Arabs (Weil 1913-36: 991), and states that half of its population was made up of these Arabs.

In addition to that, the same above-mentioned document dated 263 B.C. informs us that there was a colony of southern Arab emigrants which settled in Egypt in that remote period (‘Alī 1969-1976: VIII, 67).

It is of great importance to mention here the fact that the language of this document seems closely related to Arabic, a fact which means that those people formed an isolated linguistic area. Of words which are still used in Arabic, or can be

easily traced back to Arabic or perhaps Semitic origin, we refer to the proper name "Zayd", the word *dayn* which means "loan", the word *nafaqa* which means "his fortune" from the stem "nfq", the word *mahramibi* which means "sanctuary" and finally the word "Miṣr" (*ibid.* VIII, 67, 68).

However, it is natural that there should have been a sort of struggle for dominance between the Egyptian language and Arabic, and an exchange must have occurred between them. It seems that the influence of each language over the other was remarkable, so that there was created a high degree of resemblance which astonished modern linguists and made some bound to think of attributing them both to one origin (*ibid.* VII, 25; Sorabji 1932)¹.

The influence of the Egyptian language (or languages, if we include Greek which was influential in Egypt as well) on Arabic during this period, seems remarkable as far as the vocabulary is concerned. There are many Egyptian words which entered Arabic and were entirely accepted as standard Arabic. From these words we refer to the word *qabas*, which occurred in the Qur'ān, the word *ṣudā'* (Sobhy 1950: 186; Zaydān, *Luḡa* 11), the word *miṣṭ* (Labīb 1901: 20), which occurred in the *ḥadīṭ* "*an-Nās sarwāsiyya ka-asnān al-miṣṭ.*", the word *bardī* (al-ʿUnaysī 1932: 9), which occurred in al-Aʿšā's poetry (Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān "barad"*), and others.

as-Suyūṭī, moreover, mentions a list of words of Coptic origin used in the Qur'ān (*Mutawakkilī* 12), but we cannot take his list seriously, as we know that he was not an authority on this question.

There is, besides, a long list of words of Greek origin (al-ʿUnaysī 1932: 1-55; Warrell 1942: 330-40), but no one can tell whether the transfer of these words to Arabic took place in Egypt or in Syria.

Generally speaking, we can say that in the pre-Islamic period, Arabic was spoken in Egypt in the Arab colonies and by the Arab traders, and that the conflict between Arabic and Egyptian languages left some traces from one side on the other, but neither of the two sides lost ground.

The real confrontation between Arabic and the Egyptian language, which we shall term the Coptic language, occurred after the conquest of Egypt by Muslims. There was a great battle between the two languages which ended with a complete defeat of Coptic, and victory of Arabic. This did not, of course, happen at once, but step by step, and it took a comparatively long time. The defeat of Coptic was due to different factors which served in favour of Arabic, and the delay of that defeat can be attributed to certain obstacles which hindered the quick progress of Arabic.

¹ O'Leary also wrote a paper attempting to place in brief outline the points of resemblance between the Semitic languages and those which are commonly classed as Hamitic (O'Leary 1915: Preface).

To provide a basis, we should at first refer to the general factors mentioned by modern linguists and which apply to any two languages which come into contact with each other. They are:

1. the political situation
2. the economic condition
3. the religious aspect
4. the prestige of a language (Vandryes 1925: 281-82).

These factors all served in favour of Arabic, and collaborated to bring Coptic to an end.

Regarding the political and economic situation, it is obvious that the power was in the hands of the Arabs who did their utmost for the arabicization of the country and the spread of Islam, which in turn had an effect on the economic conditions. Their major steps can be summed up under the following headings:

1. The replacement of Greek and Coptic as official languages by Arabic.
2. The transfer of several Arab tribes to Egypt for permanent settlement.
3. The replacement of Copts² by Muslims in general posts.
4. Imposing different kinds of taxation on Copts.

Regarding the religious factor, although there was no direct pressure on Copts to become Muslims, the privileges which were granted to Muslims and the prestige attached to them as rulers stimulated many Copts to enter Islam in order to achieve equality. Some Copts in fact were convinced by the instruction and character of the new religion, and made their decision of their own free will. Once anybody became Muslim, he had to behave as Muslims behave, i.e. go to the mosque, read the Qur'ān, pray in Arabic, and, in general, live a full Muslim life.

From the linguistic point of view, this factor is of great value and we completely agree when De Lacy O'Leary attributes considerable importance to the spread of Islam, saying, "Undoubtedly, the spread of Islam was a very potent factor in replacing Coptic by Arabic" (O'Leary 1934: 244).

Some scholars writing about Egypt tried to draw a conclusion that Islam was imposed there by force. They relied almost entirely on a book entitled "History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Churches of Alexandria", written by Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c, the bishop of Ašmūnayn about the year 375/985. This book is, in fact, full of fabricated lies and was therefore distrusted by many scholars both in the East and the West (Abbot 1938: 57, 64; Bell 1928: 284.). It is, however, beyond our purpose

² Although scholars do not agree on the origin of the word Copt, the most acceptable view is that it is a corruption of the Greek name for Egyptians. It seems, however, that it was used at first as a title for any non-Muslim Egyptian, regardless of his religion, and when we use it here we mean this concept. By the passage of time it became a title for the Christian Egyptians and did not include any other religion.

to discuss this claim, which needs a whole paper dealing with the process of the spread of Islam in Egypt.

We do not deny that there were some clashes between Muslims and Copts in this early period of Arab rule, but one can easily attribute them to the extremists from both sides, or to the ignorant people who are mostly sentimental. Even in these clashes between governors and Copts, one can easily find the excuse; for they were entirely a reaction to a provocative step taken by Copts, or a temporary action committed by unjust rulers, or a result of the dispute between the main Christian parties, the Ya^cqūbites, and Malakites who caused the government much trouble (Ibn Sa^cid 1924: 715-716). We do not want to go further into details, but we find this explanation applying to all cases of persecution which touched churches or churchmen.

Before leaving this factor, a quick glance should be made at the lack of accuracy of writers who misread Arabic texts and draw conclusions which are undoubtedly wrong. I refer in particular to the scholar B. Evetts, the editor of the above-mentioned book, "History of the Patriarchs", who read Ibn al-Muqaffa^c's statement, "فأحصى جميع الرهبان... وجعل عليهم جزية", read it "فأخصى" and translated it to "mutilated" (Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, *Siyar* I, 51).

Regarding the last factor, the prestige of a language is usually justified by its value. In the case of Arabic, the value is considerable and greatly transcends the intrinsic value of Coptic. It is the language of rulers, the language of the Qur'^an and Prophet, and above all it represents a culture more venerable than Coptic. We can estimate the gap between the two languages if we take into account the two following facts:

1. That Arabic became widespread in many countries, and absorbed different cultures, which, in fact, gave it superiority. By the lapse of time, this factor made progress, and served in favour of Arabic which became a highly cultivated language.
2. That Coptic at the time of its first contact with Arabic was in a very weak position. A long time before, Coptic had been encroached upon and supplanted by Greek as a written language. This means that the serious books were written in Greek, not Coptic, and this weakened Coptic to a great extent. It is said besides, that Coptic was not the only spoken language in some parts of Egypt (including Alexandria), and was rivalled by Greek.

Moreover, it seems that Copts were not zealous enough about their language so that they gave up their alphabet in the fourth or fifth century A.D. and adopted a new one taken from Greek with the addition of six or seven Demotic symbols (*ibid.* 5-9; Moorhouse 1953: 76; Diringer 1949: 470). So, when the movement of translation from different languages reached its peak, scholars did not find anything worth translating from Coptic. Up to the fourth century A.H. or so, the only translations from Coptic we find were connected with religion, and were mainly made by Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c and his colleagues at the end of the fourth century.

If we want to analyse these factors, and arrange these events chronologically, adding to them the special cases which applied to Egypt in particular, and try, besides, to stress the turning points throughout this series, we would suggest a process of three stages. By the end of every stage, some progress had been made, and after the last one, there was a complete triumph. These stages can be summarised as follows:

1. The stage of skirmish.
2. The stage of priority.
3. The stage of victory.

The first stage can be said to have lasted until the end of the first century A.H. (718 A.D.). In this stage, there was a natural exchange between Arabic and Coptic, and the interaction of one upon the other. Despite the support of Arabic by the conquerors, the balance was for the most part maintained, and neither had the advantage. This conclusion is the result of the following factors:

1. The continuing use of Greek and Coptic as the official languages until the year 87/706 when the ruler, who was then ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbdalmalik ordered them to be replaced by Arabic (al-Maqrīzī, *Hiṭat* I, 98; al-Kindī *Wulāt* 58-59). The Arabic sources refer only to Coptic as the official language of Egypt before Arabic (*ibid.*), but many modern scholars say it was only Greek (Ḥusayn n.d.: 29-30). It seems that both languages were used. From ancient documents, written between 56/675 and 159/775 it appears that both languages were used side by side, sometimes with Arabic. The greatest portion in one of these documents was of Coptic (85% Coptic, 9% Greek and 6% Arabic) (Kahle 1945: 8) but some of the documents that have been discovered were completely written in Greek, and the last of these is dated 164/780.

It was impossible, of course, that such a change should have been accomplished thoroughly in a short time, so it is suggested that the first ten years of the second century or so were the time of the use of Arabic in offices, either completely, or as a first language in bilingual documents (Abbot 1938: 12).

From an ancient Greek-Arabic papyrus dated 22 A.H., about 65 years before the attempted general official change, we can say that the use of Arabic in documents (but as a second language) had started, if not with the conquest, then soon after (*ibid.*). The first papyrus composed wholly in Arabic is dated 90/709 (Weil 1913-36: 1000).

2. The second factor of equalization between Arabic and Coptic during the first century is found in the fact that the Copts remained in their former positions, either as governors and high-ranking employees, or as clerks in offices, up to the last year of that century, when the ruler who was then Ayyūb b. Šuraḥbīl (99/717-101/719) began to replace them by Arabs or Muslims (Becker 1913-36: 7; Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* I, 238), in obedience to the order of ʿUmar b. ʿAbdalʿazīz (al-Kindī, *Wulāt* 68-69; Tritton 1949: 21-23).

It seems, however, that this movement was not all-inclusive at any time, as we find among the tax-collectors up to the third and fourth centuries names such as: Mīnā b. Šannūda, Sawīras b. Zakariyyā and Yūḥanna b. Mīnā (Grohmann 1934: III, 158, 162, 163).

3. According to Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c, al-Aṣḅaḅ b. ʿAbdalʿazīz b. Marwān (d. 86/705), who was regent of Egypt in his father's reign imposed heavy taxation on the monks, and their lands. Before him there was no taxation taken from them at all. He also ordered governors and employees in some towns of Upper and Lower Egypt either to leave their posts or to accept Islam. Owing to this twofold policy, many people became Muslims, among them Peter, the governor of Upper Egypt, his brother Theodore, the governor of Maryūṭ and innumerable priests and laymen (Grohmann 1934: II, 52).

This action did not of course take effect immediately, and its results did not appear until the following stage.

With this single exception, there was no pressure on Copts to become Muslims (Guest 1912: 2), but they had to pay a special tax or taxes.

4. ʿUmar b. ʿAbdalʿazīz must be mentioned again in this stage as he was the first to abolish the poll-tax on Copts if they become Muslims, an action which induced some Copts to accept Islam, but again its result did not appear during this stage.
5. The majority of the Arabs had, so far, been performing military service³, and we cannot expect to find friendly relations, for a while between them and the conquered. In addition to this, there were the orders to the army not to leave its camps for the country districts, or to hold any civilian posts (as-Suyūṭī, *Husn* I, 75, 76).
6. The process of islamization progressed very slowly, throughout this century, and there were no significant conversions except those mentioned above, and also the islamization of the pre-Islamic Arab settlers in Egypt. Historians inform us that a good number of those Arabs did not hesitate to follow their brethren, and to compensate for ʿAmr's losses in the first stage of his struggle (Weil 1913-36: 991; ʿAmmār 1944: I, 26).

Almost certainly, the result of these incompatible factors was, that Arabic made a little progress over Coptic which in turn lost some ground in its fight for survival. The existence of the two languages side by side, and the failure of each to overcome the other, do not mean that they were static. There would have been a sort of mutual influence, and each language must have affected the other.

The second stage can be said to end in the year 215/830. In this stage the scales were turned in favour of Arabic which made remarkable progress. This result was brought about by the following factors:

³ There was some limited emigration of tribes for non-military business (al-Maqrīzī, *Bayān* 23).

1. The increased arabicizing of the state, and the replacement of Copts by Arabs or Muslims. This fact did not only cause Copts to be Muslims, but also to claim kinship to an Arab tribe. There is no better proof of the increased preference for Arabs rather than Copts; even if the latter became Muslims — than the famous case of the judge al-^cUmarī. He took a bribe said to be six thousand dinars from some Coptic guards to give them a decision which granted them kinship to the Arab tribe Ḥawtaka (al-Kindī, *Qudāt* 397, 412-14). This occurred in the last ten years of the second century (805-815), and was mentioned by some Arab poets among whom was Yaḥyā al-Ḥawlānī who said:

ومن أعجب الأشياء أن عصابة من القبط فينا أصبحوا قد تعربوا
وقالوا أبونا حوتك وأبوهمو من القبط عالج صبله متذبذب
وجاءوا بأجلاف من الحوف فادعوا بأنهمو منهم سفها وأجلبوا

2. The tightening of restrictions on Copts to prevent them from freeing themselves of taxation by any means apart from accepting Islam. After the increase in the number of people who claimed exemption on the basis of their affiliation to the church, the governor imposed poll-taxes on all churchmen as we have already mentioned. And after the frequent abandoning by Copts of their villages where they were registered, and settling in other districts where they were not so well known, in order to have a chance of escaping the tax, every effort was made by the governor to thwart it. No one was allowed to go out of his native district without being furnished with a passport, and any caravan seen travelling without a permit was liable to confiscation (Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, *Siyar* 68-70; Weil 1913-36: 994).
3. The consequent emigrations to Egypt by the Arab tribes who were attracted by its fertility. This occurred frequently during this period, and is best represented by the case of the tribe Qays. They were transported in the year 109/727 in large numbers said to be three thousand. They settled there, and spread in the eastern Ḥawf, occupying farms and rearing animals. Their number increased every year because of the richness of that region, and many other tribesmen were drawn by its reputation (al-Maqrizī, *Bayān* 65-68; *Ḥitat* I, 80). The importance of this tribe did not only come from its great number, but also from its location. It occupied fertile land in the eastern part of Lower Egypt heavily populated by Copts. The result of this, whether it was intentional or not, is that these Arabs, contrary to most who had previously settled in remote areas, created relations between them and Copts and intermarried with them, a fact which greatly helped the spread of Islam (al-Maqrizī, *Bayān* 101).
4. Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c, besides, speaks of several waves of conversions that took place in this period. As far as linguistics is concerned, these conversions, regardless of their causes, helped arabicization to a great extent. We refer here to the following two cases mentioned by Ibn al-Muqaffa^c:

- a) In Ḥafṣ's governorship (some time between 124/741 and 128/745), a number of Copts amounting to 24 thousand became Muslims (Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, *Siyar* I, Part 2. 117).
- b) In Abū 'Awn's governorship (133/750-136/753 and 137/754-141/758), heavy taxation was imposed on Copts, so that "many of the rich and poor denied the faith of Christ and followed 'Abdallāh"⁴ (*ibid.* 189; al-Kindī, *Wulāt* 101-106).

The third stage was the final one. It saw the end of the intensity of the struggle; and was followed by a period of relaxation. We might suggest the end of the third century as the end of this intensity, and the fourth century as the period of relaxation. One can trace this consequence back to the following causes:

1. The increase of the Arab emigrants during this stage. From the chain of tribal emigrations we refer to the tribe of al-Kanz which spread in various districts especially in Upper Egypt, in the middle of the third century A.H. They intermarried with the people and became an important political factor in later days (Lane-Pool 1925: 29; al-Maqrīzī, *Bayān* 44).
2. In the year 216/831, there was a great rising caused by some Copts. It was ruthlessly put down by al-Ma'mūn and his generals (al-Kindī, *Wulāt* 190). After defeating them, al-Ma'mūn gave his sentence killing the men, and selling the women and children as slaves (*ibid.* 192; al-Maqrīzī, *Hitat* I, 79). From that moment, there was no national revolution by Copts, and many of them embraced Islam (Lane-Pool 1925: 38).

From the third century A.H. (9th A.D.) the number of Christians notably decreased, and they no longer had a majority in Egypt (Weil 1913-36: 997). The process of islamization went on further and further and it can be estimated that by the 8th century A.H. (14th A.D.) the Christians were barely a tenth of the total population of Egypt as in our time (*ibid.* 998).

3. In the year 218/833 orders were given by the Caliph himself disbanding the Arabs from service and crossing their names out from the military *dīwān* (al-Maqrīzī, *Hitat* I, 94; Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* II, 223). This event decreased the official influence of the Arabs on the one hand, and on the other was a new weapon in the hand of the Arabic language.

The result was that the Arabs began to look for civil occupations and spread to the country districts, thus creating good relations with the Coptic people and intermarrying for the first time with the others. The process of assimilation went on. The Copts became accustomed to hearing Arabic all the time, and the state was completely arabicized. A knowledge of Arabic became a condition for appointment to office, and Arabic was the language of the ruling class. It became impossible for

⁴ He means the caliph Abū Ġa'far 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad.

any one to oppose this trend or ignore the Arabic language, and if he did, he would still be forced to hear it and it would become his mother tongue with the passage of time. This progress continued through the third century A.H. and by the fourth century, we find that the Coptic ecclesiastic had to write in Arabic if he wished to be understood (Becker 1913-36: 6). Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c, writing in the fourth century says in his preface of the "History of the Patriarchs...": "I requested the help of those Christian brethren, with whose fitness I was acquainted, and begged them to assist me in translating the histories that we found written in the Coptic and Greek languages into the Arabic tongue, current among the people of the present day in the region of Egypt, most of whom are ignorant of Coptic and Greek" (Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, *Siyar* 115).

This does not necessarily mean that the Coptic language had entirely lost its function and disappeared. It survived as a spoken language among Copts for a long time, probably right down to the end of the fourth century. Al-Maqdisī, writing in the second half of the fourth century A.H., declared that he had found Egyptian Christians speaking their Coptic language (al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan* 203). They must have been bilingual. Moreover, it survived longer in Upper Egypt, especially in monasteries, or remote areas (Husayn n.d.: 33).

The questions to be raised now are: what sort of Arabic was established in Egypt? And to what extent was Egyptian Arabic influenced by Coptic? And could Egyptian Arabic be distinguished from the Arabic of the other Arab countries?

To answer these questions we must acknowledge from the beginning that Arabic lay under the influence of Coptic perhaps for about three centuries when the two languages were alive and spoken. But Coptic was not alone on the stage, since there were besides two other factors which coloured Egyptian Arabic, and gave it its special characteristics. They were:

- the various Arabic dialects which were spoken by the Arab tribes which came to Egypt, and
- the ordinary process of simplification of any language, especially if it is spoken by foreigners.

These three factors existed side by side, and left their traces on Egyptian Arabic. The degree of its alteration varied from writer to writer, and from speaker to speaker, but one may notice, in general, three main levels:

1. The standard Classical Arabic.
2. The semi-classical Arabic.
3. The colloquial Arabic.

The first level was kept by the chiefs of *Dīwān al-Inšā'* who served immediately under the rulers or Caliphs, the specialists in the Arabic language, the classical poets and the men of letters.

There is no noticeable difference between this level and the corresponding ones in other Arab countries. The reason may be found in the theory which was accepted by all scholars that standard Arabic is only found in the Qur'ān, Ḥadīṭ, ancient prose and poetry. This fact made it the ambition of every writer to try to imitate these old texts, without any alteration⁵.

It may be said that despite the fact that these writers were very eager to follow the elegant style and keep the high standard, the investigation reveals some differences, but they, as a matter of fact, were few, and the effect of the factors mentioned above was limited.

Among the Coptic words used were proper names, in addition to a very few Coptic words such as the word "قسطلال" which means "mayor" and the word "تليس" (big sack) which had Coptic origins (Sobhy 1950: 6). But the latter may be considered as an Arabicized word; so we do not find any reference to this foreign origin in the Arabic dictionaries (Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān*; al-Firūzābādī, *Qāmūs*).

Surviving from the ancient Arabic dialects we find some examples such as: "العشرين دينار" instead of "العشرين ديناراً" (Ibn ad-Dāya, *Mukāfa'a* 21; Ibn al-Anbārī, *Inṣāf* 140), "اشتهوا صبياني" instead of "اشتهوا صبياناً" (Ibn ad-Dāya, *Mukāfa'a* 116; Ālūsī, *Kaṣf* 320-21), "تُفِظِينِي" instead of "تُفِظِينِي" and "بِقَالِكَ" instead of "بِقِي". In addition, we find a very few errors which cannot be traced back to any Arabic dialect such as: "لم يبق لي إلا جارية ... ومنزلاً" (Ibn ad-Dāya, *Mukāfa'a* 33) and the correct version is "ومنزلاً".

The second level was represented by the writings of lower officials and clerks, and authors who were not interested in the Arabic language. The texts of this level survived in documents written in the early period and are preserved in different libraries in many countries, in addition to some books written by Coptic authors such as Severus b. al-Muqaffa^c and Sa'īd b. al-Biṭriq (Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, *Siyar* 385-6, 493-4; al-Biṭriq, *Tārīḥ* II, 2, 6, 74; Grohmann 1952: 130, 164).

In this level, the development was more noticeable, and the gap between it and the standard Arabic was very wide.

Concerning the first factor, we refer, in particular, to the fact that many of these lower officials, during this period, bore Coptic names (Grohmann 1934: III, 156, 162)⁶, a fact which means that they were non-Muslims, and their Arabic must have been affected by their native languages.

The influence of the Coptic language had appeared in the retention of the names of Coptic months, even if the date of the year was written according to the Ḥiğrī calendar, such as: "هاتور من عدد القبط سنة ٢٦٣ هجرية" and "توت من سنة ٢٣٣".

⁵ For specimens representing this level, see: Abbot 1938: 47, 48; Grohmann 1952: 131; Qalqaṣandī, *Subḥ* VII, 5, 6; Mubārak 1934: I, 302.

⁶ Such as: Mīnā b. Ṣannūda, Sawīras b. Zakariyyā and Yūḥannā b. Mīnā.

هجرية" (*ibid.* II, 116; III, 142). It is significant that some people used to bear two names, one Arabic, and another Coptic: "صفراه" بالعربية واسمها "أنا أعتقت" بالقبطية دجاشة ابنة أريئة" (*ibid.* I, 61).

We also refer to some foreign words which occur in these documents such as: "زنجار، سفتجه، جسطل" and "إسبازاج" (*ibid.* III, 17, 183; Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *Burbān* I, 30) in addition to the names of places, persons and months.

The traces of the second factor were also significant and it is sufficient to refer to some of them:

1. The addition of suffixes for the dual and plural to verbs which precede their subjects such as: "ملكوا المسلمون مدينة الإسكندرية" instead of "ملك المسلمون".
2. Omitting the "فاء" from the main clause of "أما" such as: "أما بنوكم قد سقطوا" (al-Biṭrīq, *Tārīḥ* I, 10).
3. The usage of the predicate of "anna" in the accusative case such as "أن كسرى" رجلا" (*ibid.* II, 4).

With regard to the third factor the change was enormous and could not be checked, so we shall merely give a few examples: - "في يومين الأربعاء والجمعة،" "فهذا قياسا، فلم يزداد الماء، لا يعلم بك أحدا،

With respect to the third level, the characteristics are unfortunately obscure because the material was not recorded, and the earliest linguists took no trouble to study it. Therefore our observations will be purely hypothetical.

With regard to the first factor, the traces which we find in the written language must have existed in the spoken language. We also prove the power of this factor by the various traces which are still apparent in contemporary spoken Arabic. These traces are believed to go back to the first centuries when Coptic was still a living and flourishing language, and had a strong effect on Arabic.

However, scholars differ widely about the estimation of the degree of Coptic influence on spoken Arabic, particularly from the phonetical and syntactical points of view. We do not want to go into details and perhaps it is sufficient therefore to summarise our view in the fact that the Coptic influence on Arabic pronunciation was absent, and on syntax was insignificant, whereas its influence on vocabulary was remarkable. The borrowing was notable in medical terms, some names of plants and fish, kinds of food not known to the Arabs; words connected with Christianity, such as: "جينة حالوم، مدة، بيع، شونة، شبورة، برش، بصارة، أنبا، هجاص".

The Arabic dialects must be considered as the parents of colloquial Egyptian Arabic, and the bulk of its characteristics may be traced back to this source. For instance the word *imbāriḥ* (yesterday) is taken from the Ḥimyarī dialect, the pronunciation "*fibum*" instead of "*fibim*" is found also in some Arabic dialects. The dialect of Upper Egypt renders "q" as "g" a modification which is due to the settlement of some Arab tribes there in mediaeval times (O'Leary 1934: 255).

With regard to the third factor, we refer to the fact that when a language is used by those whose mother tongue it is not, there is a natural tendency to discard more difficult forms, and thus to simplify the language (*ibid.* 251). The first difficulty faced by foreigners is the pronunciation of sounds which are not familiar to their language, and the result would be an alteration of the sound. Sibawayh noticed this phenomenon and explained it by saying that they had learned Arabic in adult life, and their vocal organs were not able to pronounce those sounds because they did not occur in their native language (*ibid.* 254). There are some other sounds which needed more effort or collaboration of several organs of speech, and the tendency was to simplify them by replacing them by more convenient sounds. We should like to refer in particular to the sound "ṭ" which was replaced by "t" such as "talāta" instead of "ṭalāta", the sound "z" which was replaced by "d" such as "ihfad" instead of "ihfaz", the sound "ḏ" which was replaced by "d" such as "ahdaq" instead of "ahḏaq". The simplification was achieved as well by the omission of the glottal stop such as: "gāni" instead of "gāʿani", "ar-radi" instead of "ar-radiʿ"; etc.

The tendency towards simplification occurred also in syntax such as the abolition of inflection, and keeping the dual, the sound masculine plural and the five names in one form.

Summing up the process of the establishment of Arabic in Egypt in a few lines, we may say that it took about three centuries, and moved through three stages before it became the national language. Local characteristics are absent on the whole in standard Arabic but are well represented in both the semi-classical and colloquial languages.

Finally we would like to make our last point which is very striking. This is the fact that Egypt was occupied successively by the Hyksos, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, but none of them succeeded in completely replacing the native Egyptian language, until the Arabs came and imposed their language. After Arabic became well established in Egypt no foreign language, including Turkish, French and English was capable of uprooting it or taking its place (Bishai 1960: 226).

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