Two Versions of the Coptic Psalter.

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In 1897, the text of a Psalter in the Upper Egyptian or Sahidic dialect was published by E. A. Wallis Budge without notes or comment other than a brief introduction. This is the only complete version of the Psalms in Sahidic. Previous to its publication, the Sahidic Psalter was known merely in a fragmentary form.\(^1\) Budge's work is the edition of an unilluminated papyrus manuscript of 156 leaves (Pap. Codex Orient. 5000, Brit. Museum) which was discovered by natives in 1895, together with a book of ten homilies, in the ruins of an ancient Coptic Church and Monastery in Upper Egypt. The books were found bound in leather within a buried stone coffer. The exact date of this Sahidic Psalter is indeterminable, but its general style, size, and shape lead the editor to place the most ancient parts of it not later than the end of the seventh Christian century and not earlier than the end of the sixth century A.D. The Ms. was evidently repaired at a date somewhat later than the time when the oldest portions of it were written. This text is evidently the second oldest known Coptic Psalter.\(^2\) Since its appearance, Alfred Rahlf\(s\) has edited in the Abhandlungen der kön. Ges. der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, New Series, IV. 4 (1901), fragments of still another version of the Psalter in Sahidic taken from a papyrus in the Berlin Museum.\(^3\) There is every reason to believe that this Berlin Ms. is older than Budge's text, although both versions are textually practically identical in all essential points. Rahlf\(s\) regards the Berlin Ms. as a production of the fifth century A.D., reasoning

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\(^2\) The title is: The Earliest Known Coptic Psalter, by E. A. Wallis Budge, London, 1898. For a review, see Luzac's Oriental List, ix., p. 904.

\(^3\) Die Berliner Handschrift des Sahidischen Psalters, Berlin (Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung), 1901.
chiefly from the very archaic form of the consonant Šima, which closely approaches the original Demotic sign, from which Šima was developed. The only other place where Šima appears in this form is in the ancient Akhmim papyrus “The Apocalypse of Elias,” published in Texte u. Untersuchungen, New Series, II. 3a. It is evident, therefore, if this conclusion be correct, that Rahlfs’ version represents fragments of the earliest known Coptic Psalter. Budge’s text, however, being complete, is of course of greater value for purposes of comparative criticism. Rahlfs’ work can therefore be used only to supplement and occasionally to correct Budge’s rather hastily edited material. It would perhaps not be too daring to suggest a connection between the Berlin fragments and the supposed version of the fourth century A.D. contemporaneous with St. Pachomius.4

The Sahidic dialect,6 in which Rahlfs’ and Budge’s versions of the Psalter are written, was probably in early times the language only of the region about Thebes. Later, this idiom undoubtedly spread all over Upper Egypt, from Minyeh to the Nubian border. Makrizi, the Arab historian who lived at the beginning of the fifteenth century A.D., alludes to Sahidic as the primitive source of the Coptic language,6 and that from which the northern Boheiric dialect was derived. While there can be no doubt that Boheiric is linguistically later than Sahidic, as will be evident from the following comparisons, it is not impossible that instead of being actually a derivative from an early Sahidic stock, it is rather the later development, tainted by Hellenic influence, of an older extinct northern dialect.

The “Orthodox Coptic Church of St. Mark” of Egypt (Arabic: elkentise elmarqustyey elqibisyey elortodokstyey) uses at the present day a version of the Psalter which, like all the biblical texts and services of this communion, is in the Boheiric or northern Egyptian dialect of Coptic. This idiom seems to have been originally the language of only the environs of Alexandria, but it soon became the tongue of all Lower Egypt, and eventually, as a literary vehicle, displaced even its powerful rival the Upper Egyptian Sahidic, although the latter lived on as a spoken language after the Boheiric had passed from

6 Arab. es-Sahid (also es Su’id) ‘Upper Egypt.’ There are a few apparent points of contact in both Rahlfs’ and Budge’s text with Akhmimic and occasionally even with Boheiric, but these must be studied with care, as they may really be Sahidic phenomena.
the mouths of the people. The Boheiric remains to-day, however, the official idiom of the Coptic Church all over Egypt, although its present pronunciation in Upper Egypt still retains much of the earlier Sahidic peculiarities. On the other hand, the pronunciation of the church language in the Delta has assumed a number of distinctively Neo-Hellenic characteristics. The official Boheiric version of the Psalter as now in current use in Coptic churches has been printed in an excellent edition under the auspices of the reigning Orthodox Patriarch, Cyril the Fifth, dated 1613 Anno Martyrum. This volume consists of two parts separately paged, i.e., the Psalms, pp. 1–318, and "the Canticles of the Prophets" (extracts from various Scriptural books), pp. 1–71. In both these sections the Coptic text and the literal Arabic translation appear in parallel columns.

The object of the present treatise is merely to illustrate, by means of a few excerpts from the first three psalms in both these Coptic translations, the amount of textual differentiation and dialectic variation between the ancient Sahidic version as published by Budge and supplemented by Rahlfs' older fragments, and the current Boheiric text of the Orthodox Coptic Church. The absolute dependence of both the Sahidic and the Boheiric translations on the LXX, characteristic of all Coptic versions of the O.T., will be apparent from the following few tabulations.

As there is unfortunately no font of Coptic type in this country, I have been compelled to use the Greek alphabet with certain modifications to represent the Coptic text in this article. The following changes in the Greek characters should be observed: Coptic Sima is represented by σ (final s), Fii by Φ, Kii by χ, Šai by ο (final ο), Fai by ϕ, Chai by χ, Hori by the rough breathing', Ganga by ζ, Šma by κ, and Di by υ. An accent over a consonant, as υ, indicates the presence of a short e-vowel.

1 The Coptic "Era of the Martyrs" (Arab. 8en 8i-Suha8a), used officially by the Church, begins with the accession of the persecuting Diocletian, 284 A.D.

2 The Coptic title of the Boh. version is Πψωμ υτε ρυφαλμοι τυε Δαυιδ σπροβη-τηο ωο' μν 8μ νι'ωθη, 'The Book of the Psalms of David the Prophet and King, and the Canticles.' The best European editions of the Psalms are those of Ideler, Psalterium Coptie, Berlin, 1837; Schwartze, Psalt. in Dialectum Memphiticum translatum, Leipzig, 1843; Lagarde, Psalterii Versio Memphitica, Göttingen, 1875, unfortunately in Roman characters.
Ancient Sahidic Version.

.TXT (1).

1. ete μικρως ιμε 
τοσιν ινασεβ. 
2. αυτ φιμελετα 
μικροσομι μετεου με 
τειν. 
3. ενποικουξε 
ρασομο 
αν. ιμς με 
φιμελαν 
ρασοντι. 
4. αλλα ίον 
οι 
εν θλο 
αβοι 
ιπο 
μεκα. 
5. η 
συναιγην 
ου 
καιοι.

Psi 11. Heading:

Τωδη ιδανειδ. 

1. ου 
τη 
φητη 
αθ 
και 
σα 
πω 
η.

Current Bohairic.

LXX.

ευκ 
το 
βουλ 
εσβ.* 
και 
εν 
τω 
ομω 
αυτου 
κο 
θ 
η 
σα 
κα 
ι

PRINCE: TWO VERSIONS OF THE COPTIC PSALTER.
Psalm i. has the heading in Cod. D, but in neither of our texts: επὶ οἴκον εβαλ τιφαλμος ἵνα Δαυιδ (also δαδ) πέντε στυχος τοι. The numeral fifteen τοι denotes the number of verses. It is spelled out in one Ms. This heading is not found even in Cod. C. Its Heb. rendering would be וַתִּפְּלִל לָהֶם דַּעֲלַיִם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ. The words επὶ οἴκον εβαλ 'to the going forth' are universally used in Coptic to translate LXX ἐς τὸ τίλος. The verse numbering of B differs entirely from that of S, which practically agrees with that of the ordinary LXX text. Thus, in ψ i. B gives seven and in ψ ii. nine verses, in contrast with S, which gives six (so LXX and M) in ψ i. and twelve (so LXX and M) in ψ ii. Cod. D divides ψ i. into fifteen and ψ ii. into twenty verses.

i. 1.
Both S βλωκ τοι and B ος ουν are more exact equivalents of Μ β τοι than LXX ἐπορεύθη ἐν. For B πυκνον, Cod. C has πεφοροκον, and for B ασεβης, C has ασεβης (elsewhere ασεβης). S μπεφογοσμος is clearly a scribal error for νομος.

i. 2.
Note that S and B prefer to use the Gk. μελετα 'consider' rather than the usual Sah. ἰδρους and B βιλανος respectively. Ideler's εφερμελεταν is not so good as in B.

i. 3.
Ideler omits ουν here. Note S Σιμα = B Ganga in κωβετζωβι. This is a common interchange. May one not be tempted to regard constructions like B ονταφιταφ 'the leaf belonging to him' for 'his leaf,' as having influenced the common modern Egyptian Arabic usage el beyt beta'o 'the house belonging to him' for simple beyto 'his house'? Rahlfs' reading ενεφσωβι here is inexplicable. He adds in a note that the Sima is clear, only the superior line being doubtful. The occurrence of Sima in this word must be regarded as a scribal error for ε. Note the Sah. metathesis ροφρεφ (so also Rahlfs) for B φορφερ καδερε, decidere (Μ ἐβα, 'wither'). S ετηναου 'those things which he doeth' is better than B εωφαιτου 'those things which he seeketh' (Gk.); cf. LXX ὁον ἐν ποιη. Β σαφητιμαντι 'he shall prosper in them' is also less accurate than S νανονυτι 'they (the things) shall stand upright,' i.e., 'prosper' (Μ ἐβα).

i. 4.
S εναρθε 'they shall be like' (π + θε = τε). S σοτις 'dust' and 'contagion.' B uses no verb, but leaves the copula understood with μφηντι (Cod. C has ροι). S θλοφ 'causes to fly, scatters by

9 The abbreviations S and B = Budge's text and the Boheiric, respectively. C and D are references to Boheiric codices.
blowing,' and B νε’φ εβολ 'scatters' have slightly more the sense of 
M νεδής than of LXX ἐκρίπτει 'casts forth.' Rahlf's text here is
identical with S.
i. 5. Note how S prefers the Greek words. Fragments in Rahlf's
text are also show the word [τα]σ[να]γ[μα]τ[η].

ii. It is highly interesting to observe that we find in B τω Δαυδ,
clearly a corrupt abbreviation of S Τωδη νΔαυδ 'the hymn of David.'
The Arabic translator of B evidently regarded τω here as a particle
of possession like φα 'of or belonging to,' as he renders simply
Ι'Δαυδ. The last part of B's heading of ψ ii., 'a prophecy concern­
ing the sorrows of the Messiah' (μικαν pl. of μικα'), is given also by
Ideler after the words πωλμος ἢτε Δαυδ 'a psalm of David.'
Cod. D has simply ἄναποθητια εθβε ΠΧΣ 'a prophecy concerning the
Messiah.'

ii. 1°. The Sah. version translates ἡφώξαν ( 'they snort, act
insolently') by the pregnant phrase they lift up the heart.' B is closer
to LXX, as ω εβολ means properly 'cry out.' M νεδής means rather
'they rush together excitedly.'

ii. 2°. S ανάρχων is an unusual writing for ναρχων 'the rulers' (cf.
ανλαος ii. 1°), but it is an exact translation of LXX. B has νικήρχων
'the other (-κέ-) rulers.' This rendering has the support of C
and D.

ii. 3°. Note that S ends with δωφαλμα, which is lacking else­
where.

ii. 6. Both versions render literally 'as for me they (indef. 'one')
have appointed me (B αφταο ερατ 'constituted me') for a king by
his hand,' i.e., 'through him.' This is the usual periphrasis of the
passive (καταστάθησ). Ideler gives νοουρ without the indefinite article
ον; cf. Boh. νοουρο and Sah. ιρπο 'for a king.' Cod. D renders here
ανπε δε ηι κοις τα'ε εφατ 'the Lord has appointed me,' contrary to the
Greek and Hebrew. The authorized Arabic version also has αχαμνι
er-Rabb. The Arabic translation of B, however, renders literally,
'I was appointed king.' Rahlf's version has μυος for μυοι. The
diphthong α appears practically throughout his text for ι.

ii. 7. S ειζο 'I saying' (casus pendens) is a better equivalent for
LXX δαγγέλλων than B ε'ιως 'in order to announce.'

ii. 8. In S, the reading ατι μυον αντινακ cannot be correct, owing
to the difference in person, ατι μυον 'seek them,' i.e., 'those things.'
The correct reading, as already indicated by the usual diaeresis
over the ου must be ατι μυοι 'seek from me.' The form μυοι probably
depends on a defective copying, influenced in some degree by
the preceding μπον 'to-day' in verse 7. The form αὐτῶνακ must be an error for ταυτῶνακ 'and I give thee' (so B with prefixed ν, ἵπτανακ, i.e., the conjunctive; see Steindorff, Gr. §§ 257 ff.). Rahlfs' text here reads [αὐτὰ μ]](μο)ει τ(α)ίτωνακ, which gives the key to correct Budge's version. Cf. LXX καὶ δῶσω, but M ἢτίμη 'that I may give thee'; so V ut dem. Both S, when amended as indicated, and B are exact renderings of LXX in this passage.

I give the entire text of ii. 11–12 as being of interest in connection with this difficult passage. These verses are lacking in Rahlfs' version.

ii. 11. S ἀπείτελη, B οὐον θελη are probably loan words from Heb. 7?7(?).

ii. 12. S καλε τηνυν ἰπεσβω, B αμον ιανοσβω, LXX δραξασθε παιδιας = Μ ἱδ νης. Note that in 11–12 in B there is no sign for the 2 p. pl. until 12, ἵπτανακ 'ye shall perish.' In S, however, the 2 p. is represented in each imperative except αριμαω. S καλε, B αμον = adprehendere. There is no help to be got from these texts towards the interpretation of the passage. They simply follow LXX, which simply represents an original ἁγεμον ἢρ (see Prince, JBL., 1899, pp. 1–3).

S again prefers the Gk. form μηςορε to Sah. μεσακ 'lest.' B uses its own form μπερθα 'lest.'

S ερον often means 'whenever,' as here, but usually 'if.' B εωω αρεσαν (Ideler better ερεσαν) 'if, perchance' is not so good an equivalent of όταν as is S.

Cod. D adds ουω wrongly here before ἵχωλεμ, and in Cod. C χη is lacking.

iii. 2. S φε is undoubtedly a clerical error for ζε 'that' (conj.). In μιτφωναι the negative should be μημφ; lit. 'not is salvation there' (μμαν). LXX αυτφ is apparently not represented; ἐν τφ θεφ αυτφ is rendered by S 'before (νυφμι) his God.' S δαφυλμα (also Rahlfs) is not found in the other Mss. B is a literal translation of LXX here.

iii. 8. S keeps the 2 p. correctly here, πεκονωι 'thy blessing,' πεκλαοι 'thy people'; but note B πεφσμον 'his blessing,' πεφλαος 'his people.'

A complete collation of Budge's Psalter with the other Coptic versions, both Sahidic and Boheiric, would be of considerable value from a text-critical point of view. As will be observed from the examples here given, the ancient Sahidic translation is evidently a rendering quite independent of the current Boheiric version. This
Sahidic Psalter, as represented by both Budge's and Rahlfs' Mss., contains a number of differences in the Psalm headings and frequent variations in the text itself, showing that it must have had for its basis a Ms. of the LXX differing in many important particulars from that followed by the current Boheiric rendering.