

Abstract:

Introduction:

The Claudian dialect is a term that refers generally to the artificial outcome of the approach of Mr. Claudius Labib (Iqladyus Youhanna Labib) and his followers in their attempt to revive Coptic language.

It is not a natural dialect as Bohairic, Sahidic, Fayummic, Akhmimmic, sub-Akhmimmic or Bashmuric dialects. It refers to the outcome of treating Coptic language as an unfinished programmed language or a semi-artificial language.



Clarification:

It is beyond doubt that both Arian G. Moftah and Claudius Labib, introduced changes to the pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary with the best intentions towards the benefit of the Coptic language according to their viewpoints, which reflected the essence of their era and cultural background. Both are worthy of respect for their person and for the enormous contribution to the Coptic Orthodox Church. However, this article focuses on examining the validity of the methodology of their approaches and hence examining the outcome in this field rather than a personal critique of their person.

Roots of the Claudian dialect:

The roots of the Claudian dialect rests in the hands of Labib's teacher Arian G. Moftah, who out of zeal and love to Coptic language, an urge to make it more understandable together with a project of union with the Greek Church, pioneered the project of switching from the authentic traditional old Bohairic pronunciation to the Greco-Bohairic pronunciation. The change in itself is considered by Dr Georgy Sobhy in some articles as a mutilation to the pronunciation.

Furthermore, this change had a devastating effect on the essence of the language. Coptic language became no more a natural language. According to AbdelMeesih Al-Massoudi in his book Al-Assass Al-Matin Fi Dabt Notq Loghat Al-Masreyeen, the change was meant to be for the sake of clarifying the pronunciation to make the language more understandable. Moreover, according to Yassa AbdelMessih, the change represented a need during an unfinished project of union between the Greek and Coptic Church. Despite these good intentions and hard work. violating the language rights to respect and studying it as is, gave rise to the Claudian dialect with all its malformed words, syntax errors, orthographic mutilation and complete shift at times. A chain reaction was created, the change opened the gates to a flood of mediocracy; each pioneer changing in the language according to his/her personal preferences.

Manifestations:

- Formation of new words of (unknown etymology, malformed composition,)
 ΒΗΛΛΑ, ΜΑΝΒΗΛΛΑ, ΜΑΝΧΑ, ΑΠΛΗΧΙ, ΙΝΟΥΤΙ, ΨΑΙΝΟΥΤΙ,
 ΨΕΡΜΟΤ, ΘΑΠΙΤΟΟΥΙ, ΨΕΠΟΥΜ, ΜΟΥΝΟΥΜ, ΧΕΚΟΥΜ, ΘΡΙΜ,
 ΡΕΜΑΝΖΗΒ, ΣΙΘΒΕΛΖΩΒ, ΣΙΘΒΑΙ, ΡΕΜΜΑΝΜΟΝ, ΡΕΜΒΕΡΤ, ΡΕΣΙΩΙ,
 ΡΕΣΖΑΛΑΙ.

- Bias towards words, that are thought to be of Coptic origin, specifically an anti-hellenization process.

ϠΕΝ ΦΡΑΝ ΜΦΙΩΤ ΝΕΜ ΠΥΗΡΙ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΝΙΤΙ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΟΥΝΟΥΤ
ΝΟΥΩΤ ΕΣΕΨΑΠΙ

together. He invented a new pronunciation system of Coptic which is based on Modern Greek pronunciation. This mutilation that took place about 1858, with the aid of a Greek teacher at Al-abidyya School. The pronunciation was marketed as a reform in the Coptic language. The apparent aim was affectation or Modernization of Coptic language. The result was a mutant artificial pronunciation, and dispersing the concept that one can add his own touch to a language.

Claudius Labib (1873-1918) (Iqladyus Labib): was a pupil of Arian G. Mofteh, he was considered as the champion of Coptic language by the laity for the use of Coptic as a spoken language. He is credited for printing Coptic liturgical texts, publishing books on Coptic grammar and writing the first Copto-Arabic modern lexicon. His approach to Coptic was guided by the following, an immense enthusiasm to Coptic language, an urge to revive Coptic language as a spoken language.

The major conceptual errors which Claudius Labib learned from Arian Mofteh are:

- Unjust liberty in dealing with Coptic language
- 'Deductive reasoning' as an approach to understanding Coptic language pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax e.g. deducing that Greco-Bohairic pronunciation is a reform as Coptic borrowed the Greek letters, or deducing that the etymology of a certain word is Coptic as it may sound like so. The only accepted method in dealing with Coptic language is an evidence-based approach, where solid evidence has to derive conclusion not the other way round.

The major drawbacks are:

- A belief that Coptic is so influential that it affected many languages, hence when one is searching for a word he may search for it in other languages and if a word looks like Coptic therefore 'IT IS'.e.g. usage of the Amhari word MaNeKeeYa, and forming it as MANXA, **ⲙⲁⲛⲭⲁ** where apparently he thought this is the Coptic origin
- An urge to purify Coptic from Greek influence where he searched for any Coptic alternatives, regardless of its accuracy or usability to Greek loan words, which is paradoxical to adopting the Greco-Bohairic pronunciation!
- A lax attitude in dealing with grammar where many grammatical mistakes appear systematically, and not as a typing mistake OYWSH OYAI, REMANZHB **ⲟⲩⲱⲨⲱ ⲁ, ⲣⲉⲙⲁⲛⲫⲏⲃ**
- An evident influence of Arabic language in syntax and grammar
- Query invention of new words, or constructs which sometimes are meaningless in Coptic
- Lack of any reference or distinction between invented/constructed vocabulary and traditional vocabulary.
- Indifference about the change in orthography of coptic language

The Post-Claudian developments:

The Claudian attitude was adopted by his disciples and followers till the time being. As a result, the following is currently present.

- Instability of vocabulary where there are inventions of many poorly formed words, expressions, terms and Coptic mal-equivalents to Greek terminology
- Instability of grammar where there is laxity about grammatical mistakes in many grammar books that teach Greco-Bohairic Claudian dialect.
- Instability of Greco-Bohairic pronunciation, where many scholars re-edited the pronunciation to meet with their deductions about pronunciation
- Instability of orthography where sans-serif Coptic font emerged, Coptic cursive letters were advocated, and lately, Coptic in Latin letters instead of the distinct Demotic/Greek combination

Teaching a chaotic make-it-yourself language:

The end result of the above mentioned problems are a Greco-Bohairic Claudian dialect, with many variants which is a malformed open to addition, subtraction, changes with the excessive liberty in

doing this on all domains, pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, and syntax. Students aiming at learning Coptic soon realise that they are not learning the ancient traditional Coptic language which is the descendant of Egyptian language, they learn a Claudian dialect which form a barrier between their learning and manuscripts, or any non-Claudian texts.

The Greco-Bohairic pronunciation:

In the 1858-1860, there was a trial to merge the Coptic Church with the Greek Church so that one Patriarch be the head of both Churches in Egypt, but the trial did not succeed till now. The union of pronunciation of Coptic & Greek was one of the demanded requests as was witnessed.

The teacher of Coptic in the Patriarchal Church at that time was Arian effendi G. Mofteh, he was very enthusiastic to the change of Coptic sounds, he made a project & applied it to do so.

Mr. Mofteh, with the aid of a Greek teacher in Al-Abidyia school, assumed that since Copts used Greek alphabet, therefore, they "should" have used an identical phonetic values to Greek language. He thus applied the phonetic values of the Modern Greek (not even Koine Greek) to the Coptic language and named it the new pronunciation. This grave mistake is the most wide spread pronunciation in the church this is the Greco-Bohairic pronunciation.

1. He thought that as long as Coptic & Greek have almost the same alphabet so they share the same pronunciation, thus any change of Coptic pronunciation towards Greek is a reform. This was his hypothesis.
2. Also, the expected union between the 2 churches was a co-factor, to proceed.
3. The Egyptians were at that time suffering stresses, & inferiority complex, due to the appearance of the French expedition (1798-1801) & the scientists of the expedition who stayed many years after the expedition left Egypt. Many people turned out thinking that whatever European is correct, due to the vast difference that was between Egyptians & French people.

The fact is that many languages share same alphabet, e.g. Latin alphabet is used in English, French, Spanish, Italian, German etc. but the phonetic value of sounds vary much from one language to another, imagine pronouncing *parlez vous francais* in English pronunciation, or a name like *Southampton*, in a french style. That is the difference in addition, Coptic borrowed Greek letters in approximate values to what they had at that time, Greek language itself was changed much overtime. Bohairic pronunciation (B) is a natural one, while the GB came as a synthetic man made one.

The pronunciation of *Arian effendi G. Mofteh* was spread by the central power of the Klirikia (Theological Seminary), Patriarchal School and it took about 50 years to be generalized all over Egypt & used till now by almost all Churches except for a very few minority in upper Egypt that refuses any priest from outside their village.

Along course of spread, the Old Bohairic (B) pronunciation was mistakenly named by Arian's scholars as Sahidic, or that the change would help an expected merge. It was generalized after that.

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