

L. S. B. MACCOULL

A BILINGUAL SCRIBE'S COMPLAINT?

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 96 (1993) 233–234

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

A Bilingual Scribe's Complaint?

As no. 178 of her interesting compilation of school- and practice-texts, *Neue Texte und Dokumentation zum Koptisch-Unterricht* (= MPER n.s. 18; Vienna 1990; sep. vol. of plates), Dr. M. Hasitzka gives the Coptic text that is written in sixfold repetition at the bottom of the recto of *P. Rain. Unterricht* 107 (= P. Vindob. G 42380).¹ Under the title "Brief?" she prints the text ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲉⲧⲃⲉⲟⲩⲛⲁⲩⲁⲱⲉⲓⲥⲧⲃⲉⲛⲉⲛⲧⲓⲓ, translating it as "Der Herr, weshalb war er zahlreich (?) ? Wegen der – – –" (p. 116). In fact this is the opening verse of Psalm 3 (1a), *Domine, quid multiplicati*, "O Lord, how are they increased that trouble me". On plate 42 of *P. Rain. Unterricht* the second and third lines of the repetition can be most clearly seen and are most complete: one can read ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲉⲧⲃⲉⲟⲩⲛⲁⲩⲁⲱⲉⲓⲥⲧⲃⲉⲛⲉⲧⲧⲃⲁⲓⲃⲉⲛⲛⲙⲟⲓ.² The first word is not a nominative with definite article but rather a vocative, written in the Fayumic

¹ Harrauer's and Sijpesteijn's note *ad loc.* gives a reference to Hasitzka's forthcoming work (p. 94).

² The text given in *P. Rain. Unterricht* 107 reads ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲉⲧⲃⲉⲟⲩⲛⲁⲩⲁⲱⲉⲓⲥⲧⲃⲉⲛⲉⲧⲃⲁⲓⲃⲉⲛⲛⲙⲟⲓ. [, closer to the real thing; the dots under the *nomen sacrum* are not necessary.

form of the *nomen sacrum*. The normal Sahidic text of this verse would be ΠΧΘΕΙC ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ
ΑΥΑΦΑΙ ΝΙCΙ ΝΕΤΘΛΙΒΕ ΜΜΟΙ.³

Three variants are of interest here. First, the form αφει for the verb αφαί, "to be many", was not attested for Fayumic at the time of the compilation of Crum's *Coptic Dictionary* (1939; p. 22b).⁴ The Vienna papyrus is certainly from the Arsinoite (*P. Rain. Unterricht* 107, p. 93), so Fayumic dialect forms are what one would expect. The form αφει is now abundantly attested for biblical Fayumic (corresponding to πληθύνειν etc.)⁵ in the Hamburg MS: B.J. Diebner, R. Kasser, *Hamburger Papyrus Bil. 1* (Geneva 1989) p. 323.⁶ We now have another Fayumic attestation of this spelling. Second, the Fayumic imperfect verbal prefix ΗΑΥ- (third person plural)⁷ instead of the first perfect tense found in the Sahidic (ΑΥ-). Perhaps the Fayumic Psalter was made from a slightly different Greek *Vorlage*,⁸ which this nuance reflects. Third, and most opaque, the replacement of the proleptic or nominal-subject-introducing particle ΝΙCΙ,⁹ usually lit. "namely" (and usually written in Fayumic ΝΙCΕ¹⁰), by a repeated ΕΤΒΕ, normally a preposition "because of, on account of". The Vienna text could be translated literally as "O Lord, why (because of what) have they increased, because of those who trouble me?". However, it seems the less complicated view to see the second ΕΤΒΕ as a scribe's mistaken repetition, rather than to hypothesize yet another difference in the *Vorlage* that this might be an attempt at rendering. Perhaps the apprentice scribe, who had been working hard on fiscal texts, was copying this Psalm phrase as a covert way of grumbling at his taskmasters: "O Lord, how many people troubling me I do have!". At any rate, *P. Rain. Kopt. Unterricht* 178 is not a letter and can be transposed into Hasitzka's Category VI, "Religiöse Texte".

Society for Coptic Archaeology
(North America)

L.S.B. MacCoull

³ Cited from E. Wallis Budge, *The earliest known Coptic Psalter* (London 1898) p. 2 (from a papyrus codex dated ca. A.D. 600).

⁴ Nor does it appear in W. Vycichl, R. Kasser, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Leuven 1983) s.v.

⁵ The Göttingen LXX text of *Ps.* 3.1a (3rd ed., ed. A. Rahlfs, 1979) is Κύριε, τί ἐπληθύνθησαν οἱ θλίβοντές με.

⁶ Kasser's massively learned dialectological chapter in this edition (pp. 51-140) can now supersede W.C. Till's "Die Vokalisation des Fayyumischen," *BIFAO* 30 (1931) 361-368.

⁷ W.C. Till, *Koptische Dialektgrammatik*¹ (Munich 1931), § 49, p. 62, where the forms are more clearly set out than in the second edition of 1961 (below n. 10).

⁸ We have in fact very little of the Psalter in Fayumic: W.C. Till published a single leaf containing *Ps.* 34, Vienna K 2605, in "Wiener Faijumica," *Le Muséon* 49 (1936) 179-180. Unfortunately the Freer Psalter, which though in Sahidic may have come from the Fayum (ed. W.H. Worrell, New York-London 1923), lacks its beginning and as we now have it starts with *Ps.* 6.

⁹ Cf. S. Morenz, "Die ΝΙCΙ-Konstruktion als sprachliche und stilistische Erscheinung des Koptischen," *ASAE* 52 (1952) 1-15; H.J. Polotsky, *Grundlagen des koptischen Satzbaus* 1 (Decatur, Ga., 1987) 148-150.

¹⁰ Till, *Dialektgrammatik*² (Munich 1961) § 312, p. 71 (in 1st ed. § 59c2, p. 74).