How Coptic speakers learned Latin? A reconsideration of P. Berol. inv 10582


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ELEANOR DICKEY

HOW COPTIC SPEAKERS LEARNED LATIN?
A RECONSIDERATION OF P.BEROL. INV. 10582


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The trilingual colloquium preserved in P. Berol. inv. 10582 is a fascinating document, offering as it does a glimpse into a moment when some language learner(s) used Latin, Greek, and Coptic in the same text.¹

The text on the papyrus² is a cross between a dialogue and a phrasebook, evidently intended for early-stage language learning, with the Latin transliterated into Greek script. First published by W. Schubart in 1913,³ the text was largely neglected until Johannes Kramer re-published it in the context of more information about ancient language-learning materials (1983: no. 15, 2010).⁴ Despite the considerable advances made by Kramer, further improvement is possible both in the text and interpretation of the colloquium and in making it comprehensible to readers, so a revised edition and translation are offered here.

The papyrus has no archaeological context (it was purchased on the antiquities market in Egypt in 1904) but can be dated to the fifth or sixth century AD from the script, which has Coptic tendencies. Kramer expressed a preference for the fifth century and Schubart for the sixth, but both believed that it could come from either century.⁵ The papyrus has been badly damaged; not only are there numerous holes, particularly in the middle of the page, but a chemical solution used by Schubart (1913: 34) to make the ink more readable has caused it to run, so that many lines are now illegible. Fortunately not all parts of the papyrus were treated with the solution (some small fragments that had escaped Schubart’s attention and hence his chemicals emerged in the 1980s), and photographs of the text before the chemical damage also exist. Nevertheless I have not been able to read (or, in some cases, even find) some letters that appear to have been present when earlier editors saw the text. In those situations I have respected the earlier editors’ readings and merely added dots or brackets to indicate the current condition of the papyrus.

The papyrus is a single leaf from a codex 27 cm high and 19 cm wide, containing two columns on each side; each line in each of these columns contains a Latin word in Greek transliteration, a double point, a Greek word, another double point, and then a Coptic word.⁶ The columns are somewhat wider than could conveniently be fitted onto the page, so the second column on each page has an irregular left margin as it wraps around the line-ends of the first column. Occasionally a long phrase is continued on the following line, which therefore ends up unusually short; these continuations are usually marked with paragraphoi. This layout is a significant handicap for a reader (or editor), because the way the boundary between the two columns fluctuates means that it is not always certain which column a word was supposed to belong to. Because the Latin is in Greek script and the Greek and Coptic alphabets are effectively identical except in a few letters, it is not possible to distinguish the different languages by their alphabets: one has to decipher the words first and then decide which language they belong to, and this situation combined with the layout has naturally led to some disagreements about the interpretation of letters in the middle of the page. I attempt to reproduce the original layout here, but because modern readers are used to reading Greek and

¹ I am extremely grateful to Fabian Reiter and the staff of the Neues Museum in Berlin for allowing me to see the original document despite the considerable complications involved, for providing me with excellent photographs, and for help with some readings. I am also very grateful to Rachel Mairs and Daniela Colomo for help with the Coptic, and to Jürgen Hammerstaedt, Martin West, and Philomen Probert for reading this article and suggesting numerous corrections. All mistakes that remain are my own.


³ This edition was reprinted by Cavenaile (1958: no. 281).

⁴ Kramer’s 1983 edition was reprinted by Hasitzka (1990: no. 270).

⁵ See Schubart (1913: 28) and Kramer (1983: 97, 2010: 558); the fifth-sixth century date is also given by Cavenaile (1958: 394) and Hasitzka (1990: 210).

⁶ This layout is normally altered in modern editions of the papyrus, but see the comments by Ammirati and Fressura (forthcoming: §5).
Coptic in distinctly different fonts the Latin and Greek are here transcribed in a Greek font and the Coptic in a Coptic font.

The Coptic version of this text is highly problematic. It was evidently composed and/or copied by someone with a poor understanding of the language, and it has then been edited by a succession of scholars with little knowledge of Coptic. The only attention this text has received from a real Coptic scholar came in 1985 from Wolfgang Brunsch, who made some corrections to the Coptic on the basis of Kramer’s 1983 edition; Kramer later incorporated those corrections into his 2010 edition. But Brunsch must have worked from the edition rather than a photograph or the original, for the Coptic readings have in a number of places ended up incompatible with the preserved traces: they may be what the scribe should have written or even what he intended to write, but they cannot be what actually stood on this papyrus. I am not in a position to solve this problem fully, since I am not a Coptic expert either. I have therefore decided that the best solution now is to alert scholars to the problem, remove from the text the readings that cannot be reconciled with the traces on the papyrus, and include in the notes explanations of the difficulties; I hope that some day soon a real Coptic scholar will re-edit this text.

This edition is based on a personal examination of the papyrus as well as numerous photographs from different dates.

Diplomatic transcript:

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Kramer suggests that Schubart suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek.

To match the Latin and Greek the Coptic ought to have 'what you' on line 33 and 'you desire' on 34. Schubart left 33 blank and in 34 read ΤΕ[ΘΙΟΨΩΥΩ], with a note saying that Plaumann suggested ΤΘΘ[Θ]. Schubart’s reading of 34 fits the traces well and works linguistically if one assumes that the scribe was

Textual notes: Latin and Greek (NB ‘Kramer’ refers to his 2010 edition)

Kramer and Schubart, making sense in Coptic, but the last letter is certainly not Μ.

Thus Schubart, suggesting scribal error for ΕΩΨΟΙ ΕΒΟΑ; Kramer reads ΕΙΨΗΧ ΕΒΟΑ, which at Brunsch’s suggestion he takes to be scribal error for ΕΙΨΗΧ ΕΒΟΑ, but there is certainly no horizontal at the bottom of the fourth letter. The line drawn around the end of this line and the next seems to indicate that ΟΥΘΗΠΡΟΥ is to be taken at the end of line 4.

Kramer suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek.

Kramer suggests that ΠΗΡΑΙΤΗΨΑΙ is scribal error for ΠΗΡΑΙΤΗΨΑΙ.

Kramer suggests that ΧΡΑΧΡΟΥ is scribal error for ΧΡΑΙΨΟ and Kramer reads ΧΡΑΙΨΟ, which at Brunsch’s suggestion he takes to be scribal error for ΧΡΑΙΨΟ, but there is certainly no horizontal at the bottom of the fourth letter. The line drawn around the end of this line and the next seems to indicate that ΟΥΘΗΠΡΟΥ is to be taken at the end of line 4.

Kramer suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek.

Both Kramer and Schubart read the Coptic thus, but the second Τ does not have a crossbar; it looks exactly like Λ.

Thus Schubart; ΚΕΙΡΟΤΙΚ ΜΗΝΗΣ. Kramer, but there is no space for the Κ, and the Coptic is perfectly good without it.

Kramer, following Brunsch who thinks this would be scribal error for ΤΡΗΨΙΟΤΘΗΘΙΘΟΙΟΙΟΙ — but the lacuna is too big to have only one letter in it, and Rachel Mairs suggests the legitimate variant ΤΡΗΨΙΟΤΘΗΘΙΘΟΙΟΙΟΙ, which would fit better. Schubart read only ΩΙΘΙΘΟΙΟΙ, but since then an additional fragment has provided part of the rest of the words.

Traces after the Greek, left undeciphered by Schubart, are probably Coptic; Kramer reads them as ΨΗΘΙΟΙ, but that would be both redundant (since it already appeared on the previous line) and the wrong word to repeat if one were going to repeat something here (since it means ‘thanks’ rather than ‘have’ or ‘give’). The traces remaining indicate that the word here would have been at least five letters long and end in something like ΠΠΠ.

To match the Latin and Greek the Coptic ought to have ‘what you’ on line 33 and ‘you desire’ on 34.
There is no good explanation for the omission of the Coptic here; it would not have been the same as the
Kramer suggests that

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E. Dickey
Textual notes: Latin and Greek (NB ‘Kramer’ refers to his 2010 edition)

78 [ο]μινά Kramer
81 [βο]υλετάκεια κε [βου]λετακεία Schubart; there is definitely no ι on the papyrus

96 μικρούπνιον Kramer

101–2 There are traces of three letters towards the end of one of these lines; Kramer takes them as the ζυε of 
epoqasjimenh in 102, but this cannot be right because the first letter is not ε, they appear to come 
at the end of the line and certainly do not leave space for three more letters to the right, and they occur 
directly below line 100. I have therefore attached these traces to 101; if that placement is correct they 
are probably Coptic rather than Greek

105 ελυμηπηδραμφειον 

114 κλειυ ντα Σαχα; [μ]ηχουμ Kramer, but that is far too short for the surviving traces and does 
not make sense; the Coptic of this line translates 113 and therefore does not help here

115 ις Schubart
116 ις Schubart

132 ...κοθε ... Schubart, plausibly in view of the preserved traces but without making sense; κουρτι 
Kramer, fitting in with his reading of the next two lines to give ‘why have you been awake since dawn?’ 
but implausibly in view of the traces
This line ought to contain Latin and Greek terms for ‘from dawn’, as that is the meaning of the Coptic, but it is surprisingly difficult to restore. Schubart proposed οὐκεῖον ἐπιγράφουσα, which makes no sense, while Kramer made excellent sense with μανῆς, μετρικάς, which however cannot be reconciled with the preserved traces. Kramer suggests that [οὐκεῖον] is scribal error for εὑρός ἐπιγράφουσα. Kramer and Schubart, as required by the sense, but the last letter is indubitably η. Kramer suggests that ποιεῖται is scribal error for εὑρός ἐπιγράφουσα. Schubart suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek. Kramer suggests that Ἄνισθενέως is scribal error for Ἀνισθενέως; no Greek word can stand for this. Schubart, with a note suggesting scribal error for Ἄνισθενέως, but Νοήμωρ, Ἐρεινορ, and Schubart suggests scribal error for Νοήμωρ, though no error need have occurred as Rachel Mairs informs me that Νοήμωρ is also a valid beginning for this word. Kramer reads Μηνειότερος: and suggests that a second η should be supplied, but it is clearly present on the papyrus. Schubart suggests that Νοθούσας is scribal error for Νοθοῦσας, but this cannot be right as it conflates two verbs for ‘send’, Χοῖν and Χίν: the reading of the papyrus is fine as it stands. Schubart suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek. Other editors take this line as complete before the break, but that requires fitting the three traces at its end into the Greek of 102, which as noted above does not work. Kramer reads Νοθοῦσας Ἀνίσθενέως, which would be scribal error for Ἀνίσθενέως (thus Schubart) or for Ἀνίσθεσα, both of which mean ‘very’ and thus would fit the context well; but unfortunately the last letter is indubitably η rather than ι. The traces before the η are less clear, but there is enough to see that they too are a poor match for the rest of the restoration; in particular the traces that resemble ι occur at the beginning of the word. Moreover the word probably ended with the η, as although there is a break one can see the remains of a curved vertical line dividing the columns, and this occurs directly after η. Schubart, with a note suggesting scribal error for Τοῦκονομάχως, but Νοθοῦρκη, based on Brunsch’s point that the expected form here would be Νοθοῦρκη: in fact either Νοθοῦρκη or Νοθοῦρκη would be correct Coptic here, but neither is possible because there is not enough space. The traces look like Νοθοῦρκη. Schubart suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek. Kramer; none of the letters is really legible, but one can see where they are, and there is not enough space for the extra letter in Kramer’s version. Schubart suggests that this is what was intended by the scribe but that a letter was accidentally omitted. Kramer suggests that Τιθέμενος is scribal error for Τιθέμενος, and Schubart suggests scribal error for Τιθέμενος, but the singular (which is clearly needed here) should actually be Τιθέμενος, so Rachel Mairs suggests that the initial Τ is an error for Τ. Brunsch suggests that Τιθέμενος Κηροῦ is scribal error for Πετεινάμακτορού, but the traces look very much like Πετεινάμακτορού, which must be scribal error. The traces look very much like ἐμοτ: (or ἐμοτζ), but there is no such word; Schubart read Ποτ: meaning ‘grace, gift, give thanks’, which would have to go with the preceding lines (‘as the foreigners give thanks’?), while Kramer disregarded the preserved traces entirely to read Ποτ: ‘why you?’ This fits very nicely with Kramer’s interpretation of this and the following lines (‘why have you been awake

Textual notes: Coptic (NB ‘Kramer’ refers to his 2010 edition)

71 Ἄνισθενέως Kramer and Schubart, as required by the sense, but the last letter is indubitably η
73 Kramer suggests that ποιεῖται is scribal error for εὑρός ἐπιγράφουσα
74 Ἄνισθενέως Schubart
79–80 Schubart suggests that the Coptic was omitted here because it would be identical to the Greek
84 Kramer suggests that Ἄνισθενέως is scribal error for Ἀνισθενέως
87 Kramer suggests that Ποτ: is scribal error for Ποτ: Κηροῦ
88 Schubart suggests that Ποτ: is scribal error for Ποτ: Κηροῦ
91 Νοθοῦρκη Schubart; Ποτ: Kramer following Brunsh, who suggests that Ποτ: Κηροῦ is scribal error for Ποτ: Κηροῦ, though no error need have occurred as Rachel Mairs informs me that Ποτ: Κηροῦ is also a valid beginning for this word
94 Kramer reads Μηνειότερος: and suggests that a second η should be supplied, but it is clearly present on the papyrus
96 Schubart suggests that Νοθοῦσας is scribal error for Νοθοῦσας, but this cannot be right as it conflates two verbs for ‘send’, Χοῖν and Χίν: the reading of the papyrus is fine as it stands
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109Ποτ: Schubart, with a note suggesting scribal error for Ποτούκονομάχως, but Νοθοῦρκη Kramer, based on Brunsh’s point that the expected form here would be Νοθοῦρκη: in fact either Νοθοῦρκη or Νοθοῦρκη would be correct Coptic here, but neither is possible because there is not enough space. The traces look like Ποτούρκη
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114 Νοθοῦσας Κηροῦ Kramer; none of the letters is really legible, but one can see where they are, and there is not enough space for the extra letter in Kramer’s version. Schubart suggests that this is what was intended by the scribe but that a letter was accidentally omitted
121 Kramer suggests that Τιθέμενος is scribal error for Τιθέμενος, and Schubart suggests scribal error for Τιθέμενος, but the singular (which is clearly needed here) should actually be Τιθέμενος, so Rachel Mairs suggests that the initial Τ is an error for Τ
124 Brunsh suggests that Πετεινάμακτορού is scribal error for Πετεινάμακτορού
131 Ποτ: Kramer (with suggestion that this is scribal error for Ποτ: Κηροῦ) and Schubart, but the papyrus very clearly has Ποτ: Κηροῦ, which must be scribal error
132 The traces look very much like Ποτ: (or Ποτούρκη), but there is no such word; Schubart read Ποτ: meaning ‘grace, gift, give thanks’, which would have to go with the preceding lines (‘as the foreigners give thanks’?), while Kramer disregarded the preserved traces entirely to read Ποτ: ‘why you?’ This fits very nicely with Kramer’s interpretation of this and the following lines (‘why have you been awake
since dawn?’), but as noted above that interpretation is incompatible with the preserved traces in the
Latin and Greek as well

137 ⲧⲧⲕⲧⲕ ⲧⲣⲏⲥ Kramér; ⲧⲧⲟⲥⲧ ⲧⲣⲏⲥ Schubart; neither fits the traces well

141 Although both Kramer and Schubart read this line as Greek, it ought to be the Coptic equivalent of ‘to
the outside’, as that is the meaning of the Latin and Greek on the previous line and this must be the
Coptic version of that line. Either ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲣⲧⲧ ammon (suggested by Rachel Mairs) or ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲣⲧⲧ (suggested by Daniela
Colomo) would be possible, but the latter fits the preserved traces better. Neither restoration explains
the two traces to the left of the word, but these may not be part of letters at all

Clearly this text is very peculiar. How and why was it created? It bears a striking relationship to a set of
Latin-Greek bilingual dialogues known as the ‘colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana’; these
colloquia mostly survive via the medieval manuscript tradition, but fragments have also been found on
papyrus.7 The colloquia all share enough features in common to show that they go back to a (very distant)
common ancestor, and the text on this papyrus, because of its close relationship to the colloquia, must also
descend from that common ancestor. Originally, therefore, this text was bilingual in Latin and Greek, with
the Latin in the Roman alphabet.

The original version of this text would also have had a different layout. In antiquity, Latin-Greek
bilingual materials were normally arranged in very narrow columns, one column per language; this was
true both for glossaries and for continuous texts like colloquia. The format of this papyrus, with no space
between the different languages and a double point used instead to separate them, is characteristic of
Greek-Coptic glossaries.8 So three changes have been made to this text: the Coptic translation has been
added, the Latin has been transliterated, and the layout has been altered. Who made these changes and
why?

It is tempting to ascribe all three types of alteration to the same individual, a Coptic speaker who
adapted a bilingual colloquium for fellow Coptic speakers; the extant papyrus could then be that adaptor’s
autograph manuscript. But such a simple explanation is unlikely, for the text probably has a transmission
history in its trilingual form. The complex layout of the papyrus is most easily explained as being that of a
copy of a pre-existing document, probably a document in which each page contained only one of the two
triple columns now crowded onto each side of the surviving leaf.9

Moreover the combination of the typically Coptic layout with the poor linguistic quality of the Coptic
indicates a process of transmission. Unlike the Latin and Greek, which are in reasonable condition, the
Coptic is full of mistakes; it cannot be the autograph product of a native speaker but must have been either
composed or copied (or both) by someone with little knowledge of the language, probably a Greek speak-
er.10 Yet such a person would not have changed the text’s layout from a typically Graeco-Latin one to a typ-
ically Coptic one, so another person, a Coptic speaker, must also have been involved in the composition or
transmission of the trilingual version. The involvement of a minimum of two people indicates a transmitted
text rather than the adaptor’s autograph. Can we know anything more about the text’s history?

One possibility is that the original adaptor was a native Coptic speaker; this person would have been
responsible for both the translation and the layout, and the text would then have been copied by one or more
people with little or no knowledge of Coptic. Such a scenario is surprising on several grounds. Non-Coptic
copyists would have been unlikely to preserve the Coptic layout, particularly as it is very confusing, and
transmission by non-Coptic copyists seems incompatible with the usual theory that the purpose of this text

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7 For these colloquia see Dickey (2012–15), Dionisotti (1982), Goetz (1892), and further bibliography cited therein. This
fragment is most closely related to the Colloquium Montepessulanum but is clearly not identical to any of the colloquia known
from other sources. This papyrus’ relationship to the Hermeneumata colloquia was first observed by Schubart (1913: 27) and
has also been discussed by Kramer (1983: 97, 2010: 558–9).

8 See Dickey (forthcoming) and Ammirati and Fressura (forthcoming: §5).

9 See Ammirati and Fressura (forthcoming: §5.2 with n. 83).

10 Some mistakes could be due to poor literacy rather than to poor knowledge of Coptic, but others could not. For example,
in line 35 the nonsense word ⲧⲧⲟⲥⲧ ⲧⲧⲟⲥⲧ has been written where ⲧⲧⲟⲥⲧ ‘I’ was clearly intended; that is not a phonetic slip.
was to allow Coptic speakers to learn Latin. It is normally thought that language-learning texts were copied chiefly by language students as part of the language-learning process; rarely do such texts show signs of professional scribal work, and this papyrus certainly does not come from a professional hand. Therefore if the copyist did not already know Coptic, he was probably using the text to learn Coptic. Of course there is in principle no reason why Egyptian Greek speakers should not have learned Coptic, but Latin and Greek were higher-status languages and the existing evidence points more to learning of those languages on the part of Coptic speakers than to the reverse. Probably some native Greek speakers knew Coptic, but such knowledge is likely to have come about via close contact with Coptic speakers rather than via deliberate language learning.

The other possibility is that the original adaptor was a Greek speaker with imperfect knowledge of Coptic; on this theory the text would later have been copied by one or more Coptic speakers who changed the layout. This scenario is also surprising, for it requires Coptic-speaking copyists to have refrained from correcting the errors in Coptic introduced by the original adaptor. The easiest way to explain it is that a Greek speaker who happened to have acquired some knowledge of Coptic ended up teaching Greek and/or Latin to monolingual Coptic speakers; he adapted a colloquium for their use by adding the Coptic column, and they then copied the result faithfully because he was the teacher and they did not want to correct him. Although this scenario is less implausible than the previous one it can hardly be endorsed with great confidence.

There is one thing of which we can be reasonably certain, however: the adaptor who added the Coptic translation was not a native Latin speaker, for the Coptic is not a translation of the Latin but rather a translation of the Greek. Although in most places the two are of course the same, sometimes the meanings of the Latin and the Greek diverge. The clearest example is in line 54, where the Latin has ‘you’ (vos) and the Greek ‘us’ (ἡμᾶς, a common spelling error for ὑμᾶς ‘you’); ‘you’ makes more sense and is clearly original, but the Coptic follows the Greek and translates with ‘us’. The translator must therefore have been looking only at the Greek; it cannot be conclusively ascertained that he did not know Latin, but he clearly did not know enough Latin to pay attention to it when it would have helped him with a textual problem in the Greek.

The transliteration of the Latin was probably a separate process from the addition of the Coptic, given the lack of attention to the Latin showed by the Coptic translation. The bilingual version of this text could already have had the Latin in transliteration when the adaptor found it, for many bilingual Latin-Greek glossaries use transliterated Latin. The background of the transliterator is difficult to establish. He knew how Latin was pronounced, for he has not simply replaced Latin letters with their Greek equivalents using a formulaic system based on the Latin spellings, but reflected the words’ late antique pronunciation fairly accurately. Of course, we have no way of knowing how the Latin words were spelled before the transliteration: the original version might have contained non-standard spellings reflecting contemporary pronunciation more closely than the classical spellings would (though the fact that the Latin of the colloquia tends largely to use standard spellings, both in papyri and in medieval manuscript copies, suggests that the original spellings in this version are likely to have been fairly ‘correct’ as well). But the transliterator understood things that could not have been conveyed in any Roman-alphabet spelling, such as which u signs represented vowels and which consonants, and therefore he must have known how Latin was pronounced. That knowledge, however, does not necessarily make him a native speaker of Latin.

The presence of all three languages is difficult to justify on any theory of the adaptation of this text. If the adaptations were designed to make the colloquium usable by Coptic speakers who wanted to learn Latin, those Coptic speakers must not have known much Greek, since otherwise they would not have needed

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12 Cf. Schubart (1913: 35) and Kramer (1983: 97), also noting a similar mistake in line 105.
13 For example, nine of the fifteen other texts in Kramer (1983) have the Latin in transliteration; for a more extensive list see Dickey (2012–15: i.7–10).
14 For a detailed examination of the Latin spellings see Kramer (1983: 97–8, 103–8).
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a Coptic translation. But why would Coptic speakers who did not know Greek have wanted to learn Latin, and why did they copy the Greek if it was no use to them? Although Latin had attained fairly widespread currency in some parts of sixth-century Egypt, Greek was undoubtedly much more useful as a second language in the East. One can certainly concoct a setting in which Coptic speakers might have needed Latin more than Greek – for example if they wanted to sell their produce to a Roman army base whose major purchasers came from the West – but such concoctions are a bit forced, and the question of why the Greek was also copied remains. On the other hand, if the text was used by Coptic speakers to learn Greek, or by Greek speakers to learn Coptic, why did they copy the Latin? There are really only two possible explanations for the presence of all three languages: either users wanted to learn more than one language from this text, or one language was retained unnecessarily because it had originally been part of the text and subsequent copyists hesitated to remove it. Given the conservatism that is inherent in much textual transmission, I suspect the latter motivation: one of the languages was probably retained despite being irrelevant to the text’s last purpose. Whence it follows, unfortunately, that we cannot be certain that the final purpose of this text was to allow Coptic speakers to learn Latin; they might have been learning Greek.

The copyists’ reluctance to eliminate the redundant language may also have been prompted by an uncertainty about which words belonged to which language, since it is not at all easy to work out how the text should be divided when all three languages are in effectively the same alphabet, the three columns are squashed together, and there are occasional overruns and omissions. Modern readers, of course, share the ancients’ difficulties in deciphering the text in its current form. Editors have therefore usually provided some sort of restored version to make it clearer what the text says: Schubart and Cavenaile offered restored versions of the Latin, Brunsch offered a restored version of the Coptic, and Kramer in his 2010 edition provided separate restored versions of all three languages, plus a German translation. Such separate restorations are helpful for understanding how the text of each individual language works, but the original ancient writers never intended the versions in the different languages to be read separately. Like the other colloquia, for which no trace of a monolingual existence has ever been found, this text was created as a language-learning tool and never existed in a monolingual format: it is the interaction between the different languages that is the whole point of bilingual colloquia, and that point is lost when the languages are separated.15

A more accurate reflection of the text’s intended function would be provided by a restoration of the colloquium as it originally appeared, before the transliteration of the Latin, the addition of the Coptic, and the change in layout. Such a restoration is therefore presented below, together with an English translation that follows the line-by-line translation format of the original as much as possible.

Restored version of the colloquium:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>omnibus</td>
<td>πᾶσιν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>accumbentibus.</td>
<td>τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>si omnes</td>
<td>εὶ πάντες</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>biberint</td>
<td>ἔπιαν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terge</td>
<td>κατάμαξον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mensam.</td>
<td>τὴν τράπεζαν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adponite</td>
<td>θέτει16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in medium17</td>
<td>εἰς τὸ μέσον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>candelabras,</td>
<td>τὰ[ξ λυχνί]ας,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 For composition in this format and its implications for our understanding of this text see Dickey (forthcoming).
16 θέτει pap.
17 μενδιουμ pap.
et accendite\textsuperscript{18} καὶ ἀνάψατε\textsuperscript{19} and light
lucernas. λου [ . . . . . . ] the lamps.
diluce. φῶ[θ][ιον].\textsuperscript{20} Give us light!
date nobis δότε [ἡμῖν] Give us
bellaria, τρογήματα, sweets (and)
unguentum. μύρον. unguent.
dicite εἰπάτε Guests: Say,
omnes πάντες all of you,
‘feliciter!’ ‘εὐτυχῶς’ ‘Good luck!’.
20 bene nos καλῶς ἡμᾶς You have entertained us well
accepisti ἐδέξω et regaliter, καὶ βασ[ιλικῶ]ς, and royally,
un omnes ὡς σοὶ as be
‘feliciter!’ ‘εὐτυχῶς’
edecet. ἀρέσκει.
25 ne quid\textsuperscript{21} Host: Do you
vultis βούλεσθε\textsuperscript{22} want
hic dormire, ἐνταῦθα κοιμηθῆναι, to sleep here,
quod sero est? ὅτι ὧψε ἔστιν: because it is late?
et in hoc\textsuperscript{23} Guests: For this too
G r a t i a s we are grateful,
habemus, ἔχομεν. as you ordered,\textsuperscript{24}
ut iussisti. ὡς [ἐκέλευκας].
quod vos ὃ ὑμεῖς Host: Whatever you
vultis: βούλεσθε: want:
35 ego meum ἔγω τὸ ἐμὸν I have done my (duty).
fei. ἐποίησα.\textsuperscript{25} Host to
accendite ἀνάψατε\textsuperscript{26} servants: Light
lucerñ[has] τοὺς λύχνους[ς] the lamps
39–40 et prosequamini\textsuperscript{27} καὶ προπέμψατε\textsuperscript{28} and accompany them home, 41 omnes. πάντες. all of you!

\smallskip
\textbf{General conversational phrases}

\textbf{42} Sermo Ομιλία Daily conversation:
\textbf{43} co[tidiana]: καθημερινή
\textbf{45–6} quid facimus, τί ποιοῦμεν, A: What (shall) we do,
\textbf{47} frater? ἀδελφέ; brother?

\textsuperscript{18} ακκεντίδε pap.
\textsuperscript{19} ακκεντίδε pap.
\textsuperscript{20} φῶ[θ][ιον] pap.
\textsuperscript{21} νηκοιίδ pap.
\textsuperscript{22} βούλεσθε pap.
\textsuperscript{23} εστινοκ pap.
\textsuperscript{24} Schubart (1913: 33) and Kramer (2010: 565) both interpret this as meaning that the guests gratefully decline the offer. They are probably right, but another possibility is that line 32 provides an alternative to lines 30–31, as 53–4 provide an alternative to 51–2; in that case 32 may be an acceptance. The reference to an order is metaphorical; the closest English equivalent might be 'if you insist'.
\textsuperscript{25} εποίησας pap.
\textsuperscript{26} ἀνάψατε pap.
\textsuperscript{27} προσεκουαμινο pap.
\textsuperscript{28} προπέμψαται pap.
I am glad to see you.

B (if sing.): And I (to see) you, sir.

(if plural): And we (to see) you.

Someone is knocking at the door;

go 

out quick

who it is,

or who

he’s looking for.

He has come from Aurelius;

Call him here.

What is it, boy?

What do you have to say?

Is everything all right?

A visitor’s arrival
plays with words

E. Dickey

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Fragmentary scene

master: Where is he?

servant: He's standing outside.

Welcome!

Visitor: The children send you greetings, and so do their parents.

Letter: I have been greatly upset, brother, because for a long time

I have not received letters from you.

After [so] much time,

send me a letter, to make me happy!

Give my greetings to all your household.

Let him come in.
130 sicut [καθός
[π]eregrini. οἱ ξένοι.
? 
? 

vigilās?

ἀγρυπνεῖς; . . . are you awake?

135 necessitas ἡ ἀνάγκη Necessity
fecit me ἐποίησέν με forced me
vigilāre. ἀγρυπνήσατι. to be awake.

138 pro[dea]mus προέλθωμεν Let’s go out
140 [in lum]en; εἰς ὑπαιθρόν into the open;
142 curre δράμε run
143 in domum. εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. home.

Readers wanting a linguistic commentary on this text are referred to the excellent one by Kramer (1983: no. 15), which discusses all three languages and pays particular attention to the light shed on late Latin by this text; there are also briefer discussions of the text’s interesting linguistic features by Schubart (1913: 36) and Dickey (2012–15: vol. 2 section 4.1).

References


– (forthcoming) Columnar Translation: an Ancient Interpretive Tool that the Romans Gave the Greeks, Classical Quarterly.


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\footnote{βιγιλιας pap.}