A Few Notes Concerning
Mr. Joseph Warren Wells' Edition of the
Sahidic and Bohairic Texts of the New Testament

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New Testament scholars and students are indebted to Mr. Wells for his work on the text of the Coptic New Testament. His algorithmic skills and his long interest in the Sahidic text are beginning to bear fruit. Such fruit enables enhanced abilities for those who work with the Coptic texts. Mr. Wells is probably the first person to actually present a work which is a nucleus for a true *standardized* text of both the Sahidic and Bohairic texts. At this point in time, the texts (as standardized texts) are still being perfected, yet even at this stage we can observe the obvious benefits.

Once a finalized standard text results, we can then use it as a collation base, and begin to add tons and tons (hopefully) of weighty evidence and manuscript readings. Without going into great detail, the benefits of Mr. Wells' work are:

- Coptic abbreviations are written out in full
- Minimal use of accents, tremas and supralinear strokes.
- Separation of single word "phrases" into their individual parts of speech (prepositions written as separate words et al).
- Standardization of punctuation
- The digital database is easy to work with, no Unicode needed.

Mr. Wells admits his indebtedness to the labors of the folks involved with the PHI CD, as well as to the labors of Mr. Hany Takla, and the editions of numerous published texts of the Coptic New Testament(s).
As concerns Mr. Wells' Sahidic text:

It is almost identical with that of the work of Mr. Hany Takla of the St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society, especially in the Pauline Corpus. However, Wells has improved Takla's work by presenting more consistent data as regards the separations of pronouns and prepositions from their objects and or nouns, this improvement was accomplished via database comparisons via computer.

Despite the improved word divisions, both Takla and Wells rely heavily upon Horner's work on the Sahidic text, however Takla better reflects the earlier Sahidic text of the Beatty papyri, as stated in his "introduction" to the Coptic CD, which introduction is here reproduced:

The Gospels

Source:

Bohairic Text: Oxford Bodleian Library, Ms Huntington 17, 1174 AD, paper, 20 lines. Exceptions from the margin readings of the manuscript:

Mt 10:42
Mt 13:43
Mt 17:21
Mk 6:37
Mk 7:16
Mk 11:26
Mk 15:28
Lk 4:17
Lk 14:27
Lk 22:43
Lk 22:44
Lk 23:17
Lk 23:34
Lk 23:38
Jn 14:19

English Text: King James Version, 1611 AD

Greek Text: Nestle-Aland 26th edition
Lycopolitan Text: Cambridge University Library, British Foreign Bible Society Ms. ???, 4th century AD, papyrus, 2 columns

Middle Egyptian Text: New Jersey, Princeton University, Codex Scheide, 4-5th Century AD, parchment. (St. Matthew only)

Old Bohairic Text: Geneva Bodmer Library Ms. III, 4th century AD, papyrus

Sahidic Text:

Edition:


Middle Egyptian Text: Schenke, *Das Matthaus-Evangelium im Mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Scheide)*, Berlin, 1981. (St. Matthew only)


Sahidic Text:

Method of editing:

Bohairic Text: Same text as the printed edition with italicized additions from other manuscripts. The pointing system was revised to make the text more understandable grammatically
English Text: Same as the electronic edition

Greek Text: Same as the electronic edition, except for changing the notation of the verse numbers to match the parallel text.

Middle Egyptian Text: Same as the printed edition

Lycopolitan Text: Same as the printed edition.

Old Bohairic Text: Same as the printed edition.

Sahidic Text: Same text as the printed edition with the pointing system was revised to make the text more uniform

The Pauline Epistles

Source:

Bohairic Text: London British Library, OR.424, 1307 AD, paper
Exception from Paris National Library Copte 65, 1609 AD, paper:
Rm 16:24, 2Tes 1:2

English Text: King James Version, 1611 AD

Greek Text: Nestle-Aland 26th edition

Sahidic Text: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library Ms A., 600 AD, parchment

Edition:


Method of editing:

Bohairic Text: Same text as the printed edition with italicized edition from other manuscripts.
The pointing system was revised to make the text more understandable grammatically

**English Text:** Same as the electronic edition

**Greek Text:** Same as the electronic edition, except for changing the notation of the verse numbers to match the parallel text.

**Sahidic Text:** Same text as the printed edition with the pointing system was revised to make the text more uniform

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**The Catholic Epistles**

**Source:**

**Bohairic Text:** London British Library, OR.424, 1307 AD, paper

**English Text:** King James Version, 1611 AD

**Greek Text:** Nestle-Aland 26th edition

**Sahidic Text:** New York Pierpont Morgan Library, M572, 9th Century AD, parchment

**Edition:**


**English Text:** Online Bible version 6.0 KJV-module, electronic version.

**Greek Text:** CCAT Greek New Testament electronic version.

**Sahidic Text:** Schussler, *Die Katholischen Briefe in der Koptischen (Sahidischen) Version*, CSCO T.528, Script. Copt. T.45, Louvain 1991

**Method of editing:**

**Bohairic Text:** Same text as the printed edition with italicized edition from other manuscripts.

The pointing system was revised to make the text more understandable grammatically

**English Text:** Same as the electronic edition

**Greek Text:** Same as the electronic edition, except for changing the notation of the verse numbers to match the parallel text.
Sahidic Text: This is a hybrid text incorporating the different manuscripts used in the edition with the pointing system revised to make the text more uniform

The Acts of the Apostles

Source:

Bohairic Text: London British Library, OR.424, 1307 AD, paper
Exception from the manuscript margin readings(?): 1:11, 15:34

Sahidic Text: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library Ms B., 600 AD, parchment


Edition:


Method of editing:

Bohairic Text: Same text as the printed edition with italicized edition from other manuscripts.
The pointing system was revised to make the text more understandable grammatically

English Text: Same as the electronic edition

Greek Text: Same as the electronic edition, except for changing the notation of the verse numbers to match the parallel text.

Sahidic Text: Same text as the printed edition with the pointing system was revised to make the text more uniform
Revelation

Source:

**Bohairic Text:** London British Library, OR.8773 (Curzon 128), 1320 AD, paper.
Exception: 9:15

**English Text:** King James Version, 1611 AD

**Greek Text:** Nestle-Aland 26th edition

**Sahidic Text:** London, British Library, OR.6803, 12th century AD, paper
Exception: 1:1-8a missing, 22:15-21 (a Berlin MS)

Edition:


**English Text:** Online Bible version 6.0 KJV-module, electronic version.

**Greek Text:** CCAT Greek New Testament electronic version.


Method of editing:

**Bohairic Text:** Same text as the printed edition with italicized edition from other manuscripts.
The pointing system was revised to make the text more understandable grammatically

**English Text:** Same as the electronic edition

**Greek Text:** Same as the electronic edition, except for changing the notation of the verse numbers to match the parallel text.

**Sahidic Text:** Same text as the printed edition with the pointing system revised to make the text more uniform

It is to be noted that Mr. Takla used Thompson's work for the text of the Pauline epistles. Hence Takla's text is much more ancient than that proposed by Wells. This was a sound move as Horner, in the Sahidic, is known to be lacking. But there are numerous textual differences between Thompson's work and Horner's. So a standardized text needs to be produced which Mr. Wells has apparently done.

However, earlier, the folks at the University of Pennsylvania produced a text of the Sahidic which was eclectic. Dr. Bentley Layton later oversaw its proofreading and production resulting in the PHI CD text (the Packard Humanities Institute).

The problem with the PHI text was/is there is no documentation existing which explains why they chose such-and-such a reading. As one reads the Sahidic, it usually follows Thompson's text, then suddenly it switches to a reading via Horner. In 1997 or 1998, I pointed out a now famous change in the text of the PHI Coptic CD at Romans 16:26, [on the TC-List web site] where suddenly a reading from Horner is injected. This occurred as such changes were deemed appropriate by Dr. Layton and Brakke. Note the copy below, of a 1997 letter from Dr. Brakke:
9 June 1997

Mr. Gary S. Dykes
P.O. Box 4337
Visalia, CA 93278

Dear Mr. Dykes:

Bentley Layton forwarded to me your letter of 7 May, which I enclose, since I was the last Yale person to work on the PHI Coptic New Testament. That was in the summer of 1990, so please forgive me if my memory is hazy.

That summer I agreed to proofread a text of the Sahidic NT that had been typed in at the Univ. of Pennsylvania. What text they used I do not know. What I did was proofread and change the text using what Prof. Layton and I believed to be the best available text for each book. For example, in the case of Mark, that was the Quecke edition. I cannot say from memory—and I have gone through my files—what that would be for Romans. I doubt that I would have added conjectures unless they were presented in a printed edition as virtually certain.

I left with the PHI people a list of the editions I used for each book so that they could answer inquiries such as yours. If they have told you that the text for Romans is Thompson, and the CD reading does not match that, then I assume that it is an error on my part. (It probably would have been in the Penn text, and I would have failed to remove it.) It would be wonderful if you would report such errors to PHI so that they can be fixed in the future.

The bottom line is that the Sahidic NT on the PHI CD accurately represents the current state of scholarly work on the text of the Sahidic NT; there is no standard edition, and persons such as yourself must decide for what text, precisely, you are creating a concordance.

I hope that this helps you to evaluate your use of the PHI CD in your project.

With best wishes, I am

Very truly yours,

David Brakke
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

cc: Bentley Layton
The folks at PHI state that Thompson was the base text(s) for the Pauline epistles, via Brakke's own admission, below:

The above FAX copy was received from Brigitte Comparini, of PHI. It shows the list of sources sent to them by Brakke of his work on the PHI/University of Pennsylvania Coptic text. Clearly we can see that Brakke and Layton utilized a single source for the Pauline epistles, but they moved from Thompson to Horner without warning or notice!
Thus the resulting PHI text as produced by Brakke and Layton, will not be considered as any sort of a standardized edition. Nor is it being updated or revised, so it lies dormant.

However, it is useful for those who need to examine the supralinear strokes and tremas, et al. Below is a sample of the PHI text of I Corinthians 1:1,2, using the font as supplied by Mr. Gary S. Dykes:

1.1 τεπροσκοπηθηκας: παυλος παποστολος εττηθη μηπεκες τη γητηπουσα μηποουτε μηςασεθενες πον
1.2 ευγεγινη ιτεκελεσι μηποουτε ται ετσουοπ ζηκορινος. μετεθενυ γρεπεκες ετηνε ιτουηης ητους. μηποουν αι ετεπεικαλει αιπραν απευνοεις ετηνει πεξες γημα αι νητας απεμα.

Now compare the above PHI text with Wells, Sahidic below:

IC-01-01= παυλος παποστολος εττηθη μηπεριοτος ινους γητη μηπουσα μηποουτε μηςασεθενες πον
IC-01-02 ευγεγι ντεκελεσι μηπουους ται ετσουοπ ρη κορινθος. μετεθενυ γμεριοτος ινος γητη μηπουους μετεθενυ ετους. μη νηφον αι ετεπεικαλει αιπραν απευνοεις ινος μγεριοτος γμερι παρ νητας αμα.

Here is the Sahidic and Bohairic from Takla:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bohairic</th>
<th>Sahidic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1 Α προς κορινθοους ὡς και λέγων:</td>
<td>1:1 παυλος παποστολος εττηθη μηπεκες τη γητη πουσα μηποουτε μηςασεθενες πον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1 παυλος παποστολος εντεμεθη ᾿πε πεξες γητη μηπουσα μηποουτε μηςασεθενες πον</td>
<td>1:2 ευγεγι ντεκελεσι μηποουους ται ετσουοπ γη κορινθος. μετεθενυ γρεπεκες ετηνει πουσα. μη αι ετεπεικαλει αιπραν απευνοεις ετηνει πον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2 ιτεκελεσι μηποουους ται ετσουοπ γη κορινθος μη ενταγουκουους ενε πεξες μην</td>
<td>1:2 ευγεγι ντεκελεσι μηποουους ται ετσουοπ γη κορινθος. μετεθενυ γρεπεκες ετηνει πουσα. μη αι ετεπεικαλει αιπραν απευνοεις ετηνει πον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μην ενει πουσα μην σταθαι.</td>
<td>μη αι ετεπεικαλει αιπραν απευνοεις ετηνει πον</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Below is a copy of Horner's Bohairic text. It is from I Corinthians 6:13 - 9, on its facing page Horner provides an English translation with more apparatus! (Pauline Epistles freely available from Google!).
Finally, it behooves me to show a sample from the 1904 work of Balestri, below a copy of a page his Sahidic text:

Note, he provides a fine apparatus of the variants seen in the numerous Coptic manuscripts he used (noted in his introduction).
It is hoped that Mr. Wells' text will not meet the same fate as that which befell the haphazard PHI Coptic text. To avoid such a fate, he needs to clearly justify why such and such a reading occurs. Or he needs to precisely follow a single printed edition (as Takla did of Thompson's text of the Beatty papyrus of the Pauline Epistles and Acts).

Mr. Wells notes that the PHI text has its flaws. Consequently, he moves to produce his new edition, named SAHIDICA. He states:

"A new text of the Sahidic New Testament has been developed. It is called the Sahidica text and is based on the Coptic New Testament developed by the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI). In turn, the PHI version was based on the edition by George Horner."

Here, below is a reproduction of Wells' sources: Borrowed from J.W. Wells' site: www.sahidica.warpco.com [also - www.sahidica.com]

The development of the Sahidica text has, from its inception, been based on automated systems. More specifically, it has been developed using proprietary analysis, formatting, and pattern-recognition software created by the editor. The Sahidica text was based on The Coptic New Testament, an electronic publication, which was edited by David Brakke (Cop0001.Txt on PHI-CD 5.3 dated 7/2/91. Los Altos. Packard Humanities Institute. 1991).

However, the Sahidica text is very different from the PHI version. Literally thousands of changes have been made to the text. These changes involve primarily specific standardization and a partial level of clitic disintegration (i.e. the separation of certain proclitic words). Such changes were made to enhance readability and simplify statistical analysis of the text. Changes to the actual content of the text are fewer in number and have been made only where the PHI version has errors or idiosyncratic readings that fail to represent the overall Sahidic textual tradition.

Most of these changes have been made by pattern-recognition and analysis software, developed for this purpose by the editor. In turn, the resultant text has been further analyzed, validated, and formatted using automated systems.

At this juncture, it is important to make a clarification. As in the case of the master text for first Peter (mentioned above), the resultant Sahidica text was not produced by the automated systems. Rather, it was produced by hand using the information supplied by the automated systems. Therefore, while automation does much of the collation and analysis, editorial decisions are still left to the editor.
Sahidica Version Basis

Except for the general epistles, the primary basis of the Sahidica text is the same as the basis of the PHI text. In addition to comparing PHI with its source documents, additional documents have been collated with a view to giving a better representation of the overall tradition of the Sahidic version. The basis of the Sahidica text is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Primary Basis</th>
<th>Collated Primarily Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-569</td>
<td>Bodmer XIX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>PPalau Rib. Inv.Nr.182</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>PPalau Rib. Inv.Nr.183</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts</td>
<td>Chester Beatty B (Copt.Ms.814)</td>
<td>Berlin P.15926 + British Museum MS Or.7594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>Chester Beatty A (Copt.Ms.813)</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-570 + M-571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James-</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-572</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library M-573 + M-601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Berlin MS Or.408 = British Museum Ms Or.3518</td>
<td>British Museum MS Or.6803</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: First Peter was collated primarily against the Crosby-Schøyen Ms.193.

An impressive list of sources, but his resulting text is mixed, and we students can only wonder as to which resource generated such-and-such a reading. I find that Wells followed the Thompson text rarely when it differed from Horner's text. Where did he accept a reading which differs from say, Horner? He needs to show/mark these differences.

I tested some of the new Wells Sahidic text in Romans and I Corinthians. (NOTE: I refer to this work of Wells not as the SAHIDICA text, but rather abbreviated as WS, the Bohairic being WB). I discovered
that he followed the edition of Horner almost exclusively. He did not apparently incorporate any readings from the Morgan Pierpont MSS, nor from Thompson, even when both agreed against Horner.

It has also been observed that none of the keyboards (font mappings) of the True Type fonts are equivalent, all three (PHI, Takla, Wells) differ. Of the three I prefer the PHI mapping as it includes paratextual (trema and supralinear marks, and "slings") which are easy to input.

Below is a copy, again via Brigitte Comparini of PHI of their font mapping scheme, with some additional data I requested. With this data I was able to map one of my fonts to produce an easier to read PHI output (at least easier to read in my experience). My font for rendering the PHI Coptic CD, is freely available upon request.
Coptic Beta Code

Greek Letters:
A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T U W X Y Z
Δ Β Ζ Α Ε Φ Γ Η Κ Λ Μ Ν Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Ψ Ω

Egyptian Letters:
ḥ s t û f g j
τ ψ τ û ṭ û x

A discrete superlinear stroke over a letter is indicated by back-slash preceding the letter:
\n = ⁿ

A continuous superlinear stroke is indicated by pointed brackets around the affected letters:
< PNA > = ⁿⁿⁿ

A sling over several letters is indicated by pointed bracket and 3:
<3EI>3 = ë³

A hook is represented by a slash after the letter:
K/ = κ

A type of single quotes is represented by square brackets and 12:
[12D]12 = 'Δ'

Letters with subscript dots, diaereses, and circumflexes are indicated as in Greek Beta Code with "?", "+", and "=", respectively.
It is further to be noted, that none of the three digital Coptic producers, utilized Balestri’s work of 1904. Though fragmentary, it is an accurate work and presents texts from the seventh through 10th centuries. Certainly a third witness would have been useful when Brakke and Layton needed to make an editorial decision. (Though Layton states [in a personal letter to me], that he was not responsible for the proof-reading, yet he was the senior editor!).

Mr. Wells plans [or, he hopes to] to add variant readings to his work, which will clarify the textual sources for each variation from Horner or Takla. Once his "standardized" text is clearly validated, then we can fully rely upon it. Perhaps we can assist with the validation process. Until then [when all variations betwixt Thompson and others are noted in an apparatus] much testing of Wells' Sahidic text remains. Good free PDF versions of Wells' texts are offered on the site:

www.biblical-data.org (navigate to the versions/Coptic pages)

As concerns Wells' Bohairic text:

His Bohairic text rarely deviates from Horner in the Pauline epistles (and herein Horner's text is quite good). However, as opposed to Takla, Wells actually joins word units which traditionally were not united. Below is a sample from I Corinthians 1: 2:

IC-01-02 Ντεκκλάχσνυ Ντεφίνούτ οη έτσών Βενκόρινθος Νθ ητατούσνουβ Βενπρίστος Ισογος Νθ ινδαν γιαναβ Ναον Νιθιν θεμούτ θερίν ιντεθοις ινγούς Ισογος Περίστος Βενμι Νεζν Ντωου Νεω Ντέν.
This is just the opposite of his methodology seen in the Sahidic version! One may especially note the union of the preposition \(\beta\epsilon\eta\) (\(\beta\epsilon\eta\)) with its following object or noun. Wells has yet to explain such behaviors! His Bohairic text, even as published, needs to be corrected, as I found some minor errors.

**IN CONCLUSION**

Wells' Sahidic text, should become our standard text. Separating the word units is a great advancement over previous timid attempts. The text is better understood when word divisions reflect modern linguistics, and the database is much easier to work with. The resulting text is also much easier to read and compare to other languages as well. Perhaps Mr. Wells can provide for the supralinear strokes and the trema as well in a future version, though they are not really necessary and perhaps just are an added font formatting burden. Personally, I think I prefer the clean text without the tremas and connective/supralinear strokes!

As for his Bohairic text, it is a nice database to work with, but the word divisions need more standardization, and the text needs proofreading, errors are seen.

Mr. Wells! may your labors continue to bear fruit, and for what has already been produced, I for one, am grateful!