

**Åke Engsheden**

✉ [ake.engsheden@antiken.su.se](mailto:ake.engsheden@antiken.su.se)

🆔 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9101-0743>

🏠 Stockholm University

🌐 Stockholm, Sweden

🔗 <https://doi.org/10.4467/K7501.45/22.23.18054>

# **Towards a List of Place Names in Coptic**

## **Abstract**

This is a report on a project aiming to create a list of place names from Coptic textual sources. After an overview of the history of research concerning Coptic place names, I describe my method and the material on which the list is based. So far it consists mainly of attestations that have been extracted from the indexes of text editions of documentary texts. The relevant bibliography has been compiled by consulting the “Checklist of Editions” used in papyrological studies. Attestations from literary texts will hopefully be added later. I discuss also how best to alphabetize Coptic place names and argue for the use of an alphabetical order instead of the consonantal sorting order which is normally used in modern Coptic dictionaries. A sample page from the name list is provided. Finally, I suggest that a synchronic point of view should be taken in the subsequent onomastic analysis which is based on the list resulting from this project.

## **Keywords**

toponyms, Coptic, Egypt, alphabetization

## 1. Introduction

In contrast to the analysis of the onyms in modern living languages, work on the toponymy of ancient languages presents its own difficulties. In view of the lack of a speech community, the researcher must rely on the written record, notwithstanding the dangers of corrupted manuscript transmission. The sources are mostly less informative than might be wished, and they can be distributed unevenly, both geographically and chronologically. Furthermore, names extracted from ancient texts are often impossible to locate with precision on the ground (and on the map), and in many cases we know nothing more about a site than its name. Another major difference between working with data from an ancient language and those from a modern living language resides in the absence of a national regulatory body with responsibility for the collection of names and provision of guidance on proper usage. Therefore, researching names in ancient languages often encounters various obstacles and progress is slow.

The above problems are clearly present when one analyses Coptic which represents the last stage of the ancient Egyptian language, in use roughly between 200 and 1200 AD. Coptic was written using the Greek alphabet (with some additions).<sup>1</sup> The bulk of Coptic literary texts, to begin with the Bible, are translations from Greek, but there is also an original indigenous literature, religious in character. Throughout its history, the language has been strongly associated with Orthodox Christianity and is still used in the modern Coptic church service. There are also documentary texts on papyri and ostraca, chiefly correspondence between monks and clerics, in particular from the Theban region in Upper Egypt. Coptic is known in at least six major literary variants (traditionally called “dialects”). The dominant dialect in the older stages was Sahidic, which had its epicentre in the South, but it was later superseded by Bohairic, the dialect of the North.

<sup>1</sup> For easier reading I use throughout this paper a transliteration with morpheme divisions following the standard presented in Grossman and Haspelmath (2015). It should be noted that proper names are written in all lower-case letters. I use hyphens to indicate morpheme boundaries.

Although Coptic ceased to be spoken in the Middle Ages, its presence remains strong in modern Egyptian toponymy; out of the twenty-five largest cities in Egypt twelve have a name which is derived from ancient Egyptian/Coptic. The specificities of Coptic toponymy are, however, only rudimentarily understood due to a lack of research.

This article is the report on a short-term project (one year) aiming to produce a list of place names mentioned in Coptic papyrological sources (Engsheden, 2023). The list is not a goal in itself but is conceived as serving as a basis for an analysis of Coptic toponymy. The data which are gathered from various publications are stored for the present in a simple Microsoft Access database. Manual intervention has been necessary to produce the list, largely in order to arrange the subheadings with variant spellings, among other reasons. The list is not restricted geographically to Egypt. It also contains names pertaining to other geographical areas as well as a handful of mythological names mentioned in Coptic texts, although for natural reasons a majority of place names are located in Egypt. The inclusion of names referring to places outside Egypt is noteworthy, since they seem never to have been listed.<sup>2</sup> The short duration of the project explains its limited objectives and has been decisive for the design chosen. It is a list, not a dictionary, that is being developed.

In this article, after an overview of existing toponomastic tools for Coptic, I describe some problems encountered in alphabetizing geographical names in Coptic by giving examples from existing text editions. This provides the opportunity to explain why I have ordered the entries in a particular way.

## 2. A brief history of research

An interest in geographical names is observed in the late flourishing of Coptic scientific writing as can be seen from the inclusion of a section listing major towns in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean in the medieval bilingual

<sup>2</sup> The title of Munier (1943) sounds promising, but the article is in fact only an edition of a few pages from different *scalae*.

Copto-Arabic vocabulary lists, the so-called *scalae* (Sidarus, 1978; Bosson, 1999). In the oldest of these texts, authored by Bishop John of Samannud (d. 1257), the entries are ordered with those within Egypt at the beginning, comprising a few towns listed from south to north, and those outside Egypt at the end (Munier, 1930). By contrast, another list of slightly later date (its author died in 1324) begins with the Delta where more than two-thirds of the names included in the list are located (Macomber, 2020). Only major sites of administrative and ecclesiastical importance are mentioned. Further research on this text category is needed. For example, it is not known which sources have been used to compile the geographical lists.

Coptic has been studied continuously in Europe since the 16th century (Hamilton, 2006). It is noteworthy that Athanasius Kircher added a special chapter “De Urbibus Aegyptiis, caeterorumque vicinorum locorum appellationibus” to his edition of the medieval grammar books in which he tried to locate place names he had gathered from Coptic and Arabic sources (Kircher, 1643, pp. 604–615). Questions pertaining to geography continued to play a prominent part in early Coptic studies. On the eve of the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, two competing works were published within a few years summarizing the geographical knowledge on Egypt at the time (Quatremère, 1811; Champollion, 1814). This stage of research was crowned by the publication of the geographical dictionary by Émile Amélineau (1893, reprint 1973). One should note that the use of “Coptic” in its title, “La géographie de l’Égypte à l’époque copte”, corresponds to a cultural definition which is now obsolete. The term “Coptic” is best reserved for reference to a linguistic community and the use of expressions such as “Coptic period” or “Coptic Egypt” to refer to Late Antique Egypt is inappropriate, as they downplay the persistence of Coptic culture to the present day. Indeed, Amélineau draws to a large extent on medieval Arabic sources and many of the headings in his work reflect Arabic names even when a particular name is attested in Coptic or Greek. Another indispensable tool, similar to Amélineau’s dictionary in its general outline and arrangement of entries, is Stefan Timm’s (1984–1992) impressive multi-volume work on places mentioned in texts from the Islamic Middle Ages. Its usefulness has been enhanced through the later addition of an index (Brune, 2007). Various writings in the different languages are listed in the respective script, but, inconveniently for the onomastician, one has to browse the article itself and the endnotes in order to identify the sources for the spellings. One must bear in mind that Timm – to put it in a frequent

metonymical shorthand – is not a place name dictionary, but a dictionary of places which deals with neither phonological and lexical issues nor with etymologies. For etymological issues, one is fortunate to have a useful booklet by Peust (2010) with short entries for places in modern Egypt which have an origin in Ancient Egyptian/Coptic.

Among important research tools one should not fail to mention the database Trismegistos, administered from the Catholic University at Leuven, which started in 2005 as a papyrological endeavour, but gradually developed to cover an increasing number of sources pertaining to the ancient world (Depauw & Gheldof, 2014). Of particular interest for toponomastics is the search tab “places”. One finds there a wealth of information, for each record includes the attestation in context, the source document and its current location, as well as date, material, provenance and bibliography. Whenever possible, the toponym’s location is indicated on an interactive map. The records are tied to stable identifiers that assign a number to each place. Whereas Trismegistos claims near full coverage for ancient Greek documentation, Coptic toponyms are included to date only to a small extent. The name list I present does not allow complex searches in a way reminiscent of Trismegistos. The main aim of the list is to create a reliable basis for a grammatical and semantical analysis of place names as well as to evaluate the place names for their historical information. In addition to this, the list will be of benefit to scholars working in Coptic papyrology, and it might even be expected that papyrologists will be the principal users, but this will be more of a side effect than a deliberate aim.

Despite the inclusion of geography in the early days of Coptic studies, the study of place names today is limited to seldom more than isolated commentaries in text editions, above all for the sake of their historical or geographical value. The onomastic aspect passes largely unnoticed. To be fair, one must mention that the grammar of names has been treated in a thorough and inspiring study, indebted to structural grammar, but it is not comprehensive with respect to place names (Shisha-Halevy, 1989). As its author states:

[u]rgent *desiderata* (...) are studies of the internal structure of P[roper] N[ames], their chronological and geographic-dialectal distribution, their various sources, the manner of their incorporation in and significance for the web of Coptic *culture* – all following upon an accurate reasoned listing of P[roper] N[ames]. (Shisha-Halevy, 1989, p. 2)

The statement still holds true after thirty years. The lack of fundamental preparatory work is probably also behind the fact that there is only a single overview on Coptic toponymy, published as an encyclopedia article (Megally, 1991).

### 3. Material and method

Direct inspiration for the project has been drawn from Monika Hasitzka's list of anthroponyms which are mentioned in Coptic documentary texts (Hasitzka, 2007). I have adapted her way of referring, whenever suitable, to the index page in the relevant text edition instead of referring directly to the edited document. This methodology saves the time devoted to proofreading. Nonetheless, despite this seemingly expedient solution, for reasons that I detail below in the following section, one cannot simply import the headings from the indexes. All attestations must be checked against the edited text.

As a first step, which is completed, names have been gathered from editions of documentary texts. I have used the "Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets" as the bibliographical basis for this work, which is freely consultable online at <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>. In its latest version, it lists one hundred monographs and text collections, published between the years 1876 and 2022, which are mainly devoted to Coptic text editions. Many texts first published in journals have been reprinted with corrections in an authoritative collection (Hasitzka, 1993–2020). The texts in the "Checklist" represent primarily documentary texts, but some publications, mostly catalogues from different manuscript collections, also contain some literary texts. This gives a total of 1,585 lemmas in the database, including 1,432 for places in Egypt and 154 for places outside Egypt. As much as three quarters of the total are "hapaxes".<sup>3</sup> The total represents obviously only a small number of the named places in Late Antique Egypt. The find spots of documentary texts are geographically very

<sup>3</sup> Not always hapaxes in the strict meaning of the word. Even if a name occurs twice within the same text edition, it will be entered only once in my database.

unevenly distributed across the country, so that some areas barely show up in the onomastic record.

#### 4. Perspective on alphabetizing Coptic

Although I have adapted the practice of citing the index page number, it is not as simple a process as just copying the names from the existing indexes, since these have been elaborated following divergent principles. To my knowledge, there is no uniform standard for constructing an index for Coptic. In fact, even the entries are sorted differently, according to whether one adheres to a strict alphabetical order or one uses the peculiar consonantal sort order which is commonly used for Coptic.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in the latter order, words are sorted first according to the consonants (although an initial vowel always counts), and then according to the vowels.<sup>5</sup> This explains how it comes about that in a modern Coptic dictionary the words *matoi* ‘soldier’, *mereh* ‘spear’ and *mnout* ‘doorkeeper’ are arranged in the opposite order: *mnout*, *mereh*, *matoi*. It makes sense to use the consonantal order for alphabetization in Coptic as it brings together words from different literary varieties (“dialects”) under one entry, and these often differ only with respect to the vowels (e.g., *taho*, *teho* and *taha* ‘set up’, all of which are found under *t - h*). Furthermore, another peculiarity of Coptic dictionaries is that they list in principle only words of native origin or fully integrated loanwords, whereas the numerous Greek loanwords that season more or less any Coptic text are omitted. This means that one still needs to resort to a specialized or even Greek dictionary when reading Coptic.

Whereas older editions of Coptic texts sometimes lump toponyms and appellatives together in a single index (e.g., Hall, 1905), nowadays it is common

<sup>4</sup> On principles of alphabetization, see Korwin & Lund, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> This practice was introduced in the seminal Coptic-Latin dictionary by Amedeo Peyron (1835, p. xvi), as he admits, on the suggestion of Jean-François Champollion himself, the decipherer of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. It is interesting to note that Champollion already as early as 1809 grouped Coptic words according to roots (Champollion & Champollion, 2021, p. 67), inspired no doubt by the standard for several Semitic languages.

practice to have a separate index devoted to geographical names, sometimes refined into separate sections for field names, hagiotonyms and hodonyms (e.g., Hasitzka, 1993–2020). The separation between toponyms and appellatives is in accordance with normal lexicographic practice (Marconi, 1990). Some authors index a standard form, others the form as actually attested in the published text. Regarding the sorting of toponyms in indexes, the consonantal sort order is sometimes used (e.g., Westendorf, 1965–1977, pp. 476–482; Boud’hors & Heurtel, 2010). More frequently, though, toponyms are listed according to a strict alphabetical order, whereby they differ from the arrangement of appellatives. An example is the Coptic index in Amélineau’s (1893) geographical dictionary. More recently an alphabetical order has been used, for instance, in Hasitzka’s reference work (1993–2020). It should be noted that, in contrast to ordinary dictionaries of appellatives, there is no separation between toponyms of native stock and those of foreign-language origin in toponymical dictionaries or lists.

For multiple reasons, the alphabetical order is to be recommended when indexing place names. Indeed, the absolute majority of native toponyms are not formed from recognizable consonantal roots, but, in so far as their etymology is transparent, they consist mostly of more or less identifiable compound elements. Adapting the consonantal order for foreign toponyms makes a particularly awkward impression (e.g., *korinth<sup>h</sup>os* ‘Corinth’ sorted as if it derived from a root *k-r-n-t<sup>h</sup>-s*). If native Coptic and foreign toponyms are to be kept together, the only rational solution is to use alphabetical order. The adoption of the alphabetical order is practical as it also makes automatic sorting possible.

In the following I explain, using selected examples, why names in the indexes need to be checked against the edited text.

The easiest to spot are plain errors. Thus, in one place name index (Figure 1) two ordinary common nouns have been included: *šine* and *hmhal* (Melaerts, 2000, p. 664). It is easy for anyone who knows Coptic to see that these mean ‘to greet’ and ‘servant’. In addition, a few entries have been listed without any alphabetical or any other order.

One should also beware of names in *Greek passages* from Copto-Greek documents that have been reproduced in a Coptic font in the index. Greek phrases also appear readily for summaries, salutations and endorsements in Coptic documents (e.g., Fournet, 2011). To mention just one example of many, as seen in Figure 2, the name *ermoupoleôs* is mentioned in Coptic letters in the index (Gardner et al., 1999, p. 322). A check in the edited text reveals that it

## Noms de lieux

ΠΜΑΝ̄ΠΚΟΜΙC 150 4  
 ΠΙΝΑΒΟΥΒ̄ 150 2  
 ΤCΙΝΒΩΡ̄Β̄ 150 3  
 ΑΙΝΙΛΑ 150 6  
 ΠΩΡΑ 149 5  
 ΨΙΝΕ 149 1, 3  
 ΖΜΖΑΛ 149 3

## Figure 1.

Source: Melaerts, 2000, p. 664.

## Geographical and Ethnic Names

ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΥ 19.44; 21.9; 25.42,48  
 ΑΡΑΒΙΑ 35.11  
 ΒΑΙΤ 46.1 (cf. ? ΟΥΑΪΤ)  
 Ἐρμού πόλις ΕΡΜΟΥΠΟΛΕΩC 26.address  
 Κέλλις 26.address  
   ΒΛΛΕ 40.15  
   ΒΗΛΑ 50.40  
 ΚΗΜΕ *Egypt* 22.38,69; 35.6; 42.38; 47.22  
   ΚΗΜΑ 31.8  
   ΡΜΝΚΗΜΕ *Egyptian* 19.14  
 (λιβύς / λιβυστικός) ΛΥΒΙΚΟC 50.27  
 (Μῶθις) ΜΟΟΤ 50.18

## Figure 2.

Source: Gardner et al., 1999, p. 322.

is found in a Greek phrase ἀπὸ Ἡρμιοῦ πόλεως ‘from Hermopolis’, correctly reproducing the genitive following the preposition *apo* ‘from’. In my opinion, the name does not reflect Coptic naming practice. In fact, Hermopolis is well attested under its Coptic name *šmoun*, which is unrelated to its name in Greek. The index creates the impression that *ermoupoleôs* was used as an alternative form in Coptic.

One should note that sometimes indexes contain a standardized name form. For instance, Krueger (2020) notes only the standard writing *jême*, which is the name of an important Late Antique settlement near Thebes (p. 471). A check reveals that the place name is written in the actual documents *jema* or *jeme*.

I have also chosen to omit ethnics and derived forms, such as *hromaikos* ‘Roman’, *persos* ‘Persian’, etc. from the list. This omission relates mainly to borrowed adjectives, such as those quoted, since native Coptic equivalents are formed through compounds (e.g., *p-rm-antinoou* ‘the man from Antinoou’, lit. ‘the-man-Antinoou’) or the possessive prefix *pa-migdôl* ‘the one from Migdol’.

## 6. Where does a proper name begin?

I have given reasons above as to why the alphabetical sorting order is to be preferred to the consonantal sorting order for placenames. It is not altogether easy, however, to determine which is the initial consonant under which some names should be alphabetized. This is the case when the name includes the definite article. The question also arises with regard to names preceded by a descriptive term.

Coptic has a preposed definite article, which as an unstressed element becomes a prefix merged with the noun (e.g., the masculine *p* in *p-rôme* ‘the man’ or feminine *t* in *t-polis* ‘the town’). When it comes to alphabetizing, it is tempting to apply the rule found in modern European languages to disregard the definite article (*The Bronx* and *Le Havre* are entered under B and H in English and French respectively), all the more so as it may appear logical to place the word under the same letter irrespective of whether it is an appellative or a proper name. Nevertheless, there are divergent views among professional indexers regarding the best way in English to treat the definite article *the*,

some advocating its inclusion when alphabetizing place names (Wellisch, 1999, pp. 237–244; Browne, 2001). It might be asked, however, whether it is appropriate to use one single model for all languages and it seems better to determine what the most suitable alphabetization rules for each individual language are.

In fact, there seem to be various cases in which Coptic place names appear together with the definite article and different solutions are called for in each of them:

- (a) The definite article of any gender or number (gender distinction only in the singular) can be used with toponyms. The element following the article is often identifiable as an appellative. In accordance with well established English practice (Wellisch, 1999, p. 238), the article was previously often transposed in indexes to the end of the heading, preceded by a comma. Thus, a place name *tnouhe*, ‘the sycamore’, would be found under *nouhe, t-* (Crum, 1909). This could happen also where in synchrony no appellative can be identified (e.g., *pkront* which was rendered in the index as *kront, p-*, Bell & Crum, 1910). No word *kront* is found in the dictionaries. It would seem that the article in place names belonging to this category, typically pertaining to Egypt, cannot be dispensed with and should be regarded as an integral part of the place name. Therefore, it seems better to alphabetize this category of names under the article as is done in most indexes in modern Coptic text editions.
- (b) The feminine definite article is also used regularly together with the names of a number of foreign cities and significant towns as well as with the names of regions: *t-antiok<sup>h</sup>ia* ‘Antioch’ (Antakya), *t-kappadokia* ‘Cappadocia’. River names are masculine (e.g., *p-iordanês* ‘The Jordan River’). To what extent the presence of the definite article is required seems to differ from name to name, but it would seem that the article can be dispensed with at times (e.g., *pi-ark<sup>h</sup>iêpiskopos n-antiok<sup>h</sup>ia* ‘the archbishop of Antioch’). It is at present unclear to what extent the examples here noted as case (b) represent a single category, and Shisha-Halevy’s (1989) remark that place names may call for further subcategorization is still valid (p. 15). In this context, it is worth observing that the medieval Coptic *scalae* often list regions while including the definite article, but names of towns only occasionally (thus *t<sup>h</sup>-italia* ‘Italy’, but *antiok<sup>h</sup>ia* ‘Antioch’ in Munier, 1930). As far as I have been able to see, such items are never entered in the index under the article. An article is sometimes added, however, after the heading in the manner just described, but mostly that piece of information is

left out completely. One reason to disregard the article in alphabetization is the fact that the lemma constitutes by itself a proper name.

There is also some hesitation as to the exact delimitation of the proper name when preceded by a descriptive term with a classificatory function (e.g., Van Langendonck, 2007, pp. 75–76, 138–140). In Coptic, this problem arises mainly in relation to monasteries and churches. The understanding differs from language to language. A traditional analysis of English and French would consider the initial noun in ‘monastery of Saint Apollo’ or ‘monastère de Saint Apollon’ as a noun in close apposition, whereas in German ‘Apollo-kloster’ the noun ‘monastery’ is contained in the name itself and the whole is considered as making up the proper name.<sup>6</sup> Despite the outward similarity between English and Coptic (N1 particle N2), this pattern is not recognized as appositive in Coptic grammar (cf. Shisha-Halevy, 1989, pp. 67, 77).

The following list contains synonymous expressions for the monastery of Apa Apollo near Balaizah in Middle Egypt. Note that the words translated as ‘monastery’ (*monastêrion*), ‘rock’ (*petra*) or ‘place’ (*topos*) are different ways of referring, with slight semantic differences, to the same entity (Wipszycka, 2009, pp. 281–291).

- |     |  |                                     |
|-----|--|-------------------------------------|
| (a) | <i>p-topos n-apa apollô</i>                          | ‘the monastery of Apa Apollo’       |
| (b) | <i>t-pet(ra) apa apollô</i>                          | ‘the rock Apa Apollo’               |
| (c) | <i>p-monastêrion n-p<sup>h</sup>agios apa apollô</i> | ‘the monastery of Saint Apa Apollo’ |
| (d) | <i>p-monastêrion et-ouaab n-apa apollô</i>           | ‘the holy monastery of Apa Apollo’  |

In example (a) the descriptive element is used with the name of the titular saint in a possessive construction marked as such by *n*, whereas in (b) two elements are juxtaposed. The personal name is preceded in (c) by the adjective *hagios* ‘saint’; in (d) it is the descriptive element that is expanded through a qualifying expression.

It would seem that the distinction between proper noun and proper name, which has become established in English, comes in handy at this point. ‘The monastery of Apa Apollo’ can be regarded as a proper name, but only Apollo is a proper noun (cf. Schlücker & Ackermann, 2017, pp. 311–313). Indeed, the very

<sup>6</sup> Let it be said in passing that this analysis is nowadays rejected for French (Riegel et al., 2018, p. 348).

variation affecting the descriptive terms proves that they are not part of the name proper. The personal name is in fact the only indispensable element. The proper noun can act singly with reference to the place. This is shown by an example of *p-monok<sup>h</sup>os n-apa apoulô* ‘the monk of Apa Apollo’ where the latter certainly refers to the place and not the saint.

Some use the descriptive term as a lead term in alphabetization (e.g., Biedenkopf-Ziehner, 2000, p. 275). In a few publications, both the name itself and the descriptive term are found in the index for geographical names. Thus, *p-toš n-ermont* ‘the Hermonthite nome’ is divided between *ermont* (followed by the descriptive term) and *toš* (Crum & Steindorff, 1971, pp. 466–467). It seems best to me to alphabetize only the personal name, which serves as a heading, while the descriptive term and any eventual accompanying words are mentioned in the attestations found in the subheadings.

Figure 3 shows how issues discussed in the preceding sections will be presented in the published name list. Each entry contains a heading which is given in a standardized form. The headings are alphabetized according to the Coptic alphabetical order using letter-by-letter arrangement (Wellisch, 1995, pp. 13–19).<sup>7</sup> If other spellings are attested, they follow in indented subheadings in inverted order. Information regarding identification with modern sites or approximate geographical location according to the administrative subdivisions (pagarchies) of early Byzantine Egypt follows in brackets after the heading. If any stable identifier number has been attributed to the place in the Trismegistos database, this one is mentioned on the same line as the heading. Foreign places are marked as such by a square preceding the entry. Headings where the identity as a place name is not certain are preceded by an asterisk. As already said, in general the page number of the index serves as a locator, not the actual page where the attestation is to be found. If, however, the text edition does not have an index or if there is the need to distinguish between the attestations, the page of the edition is cited in parentheses. Any locator preceded by ‘no.’ (number) refers to the text edition number, which can be used if there is a need to differentiate between the attestations.

<sup>7</sup> This system which disregards spaces seems preferable to a word-by-word arrangement given that spaces are interpretations made by the editor and not original, since Coptic was written in *scriptio continua*.

- αβαω (near Alexandria?) **SB Kopt. III**, p. 241
- αβραζαμ (monastery, probably in Coptites)  
 αβραζαμ, θενεετε ἡ- **P.Mon.Epiph.**, p. 355  
 ἀπα αβραζαμ, περγοπος ετογααβ ἡπραγι **SB Kopt. III**, p. 242  
 ἀπα αβρ[αζαμ], πη[ονακτηρι]ον ἡ- **BKU II**, p. (219)
- \*αβρζαμ **O.BawitFribourg**, p. 82
- αβωτ (Abydos <sup>TM Geo 34</sup>)  
 αβωτ **O.Bawit**, pp. (6), 417  
 εβωτ **O.Bawit**, pp. (63), 417; **SB Kopt. IV**, p. 244
- αερμων, *see under* ρερμων
- \*αθαμ (monastery?)  
 ἀπα αθαμ, πηα η- **P.Bal.**, p. 827
- αθανασε (monastery in Hermopolites <sup>TM Geo 12956</sup>)  
 αθανασε **P.Bal.**, p. 827  
 ἀπα αθανασε, τπιετρα ἡη- **P.Sorb.Copt.**, p. 277
- αθηναϊς (Athens, Greece <sup>TM Geo 364</sup>)  
 [αθη]ναϊς **P.Ryl.Copt.**, p. 251
- αθριβε, *see under* ατριπε
- αιδεσσα, *see under* εδεσσα
- αιλαμ, *see under* ελαμ
- αιλων (Elath, Jordan <sup>TM Geo 8852</sup>) **P.Bodm. XVIII**, p. 221
- \*αιμοϋ **CPR IV**, p. 212 (perhaps for ωμοϋη)
- ακε, *see under* ρασε
- \*αкевек **O.Deir el-Bahari**, p. (141)
- αλαβωβατ **SB Kopt. III**, p. 241
- αλεξανδρεια (Alexandria <sup>TM Geo 100</sup>)  
 αλεκσαν[αρ]ια **SB Kopt. I**, p. 324  
 αλεξανδρεια **SB Kopt. II**, p. 280  
 [αλεξανδ]ρια **SB Kopt. I**, p. 324  
 αληκсаморια **SB Kopt. I**, p. 324
- αλικοςεετελι (in Herakleopolites) **P.Stras.Copt.**, p. 470
- αλκατραποϋλλι (quarter in Baghdad, Iraq) **P.Ryl.Copt.**, p. 252
- αλλαροϋ **O.Bawit**, p. 417
- αλλοϋ (in Hermopolites <sup>TM Geo 4386</sup>) **CPR XII**, p. 99
- αμα σο[φια] **P.Bal.**, p. 827
- αμητε (Hell)  
 αμηη† **P.Ryl.Copt.**, pp. (223), 251  
 αμηηε **P.Ryl.Copt.**, pp. (31), 251
- αν[ ] **O.Crum**, p. 108
- αν[ ] **P.Bal.**, p. 827
- ανανιας (monastery near Thebes?)  
 ἀπα ανανιας **O.Crum**, p. 108

### Figure 3.

Source: Engsheden, 2023, p. 7.

## 7. Final words

Once the list based on papyrological studies has been published, the next logical step would be to enlarge the database by adding information from literary texts, such as martyr legends and homilies as well as the Bible and the Apocrypha. This part of the work can profit from the “Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari” (CMCL) which was conceived by Tito Orlandi, Professor for Coptic Studies in Rome. This database, which is available on subscription, helps to keep track of the many text editions of literary texts and their manuscripts. After the incorporation of literary texts, it is hoped that it will be possible to complement Shisha-Halevy’s (1989) important study on the syntax of names in Coptic and thereby also to contribute to the booming research field of name grammar (e.g., Schlücker & Ackermann, 2017; Stolz et al., 2017). It is important to distinguish the different levels of analysis and not to mix synchrony and diachrony. As recently stated, “[o]ften, interesting insights and generalizations can be gained through recognizing the validity of a synchronic view” (Van Langendonck & Van de Velde, 2016, p. 33). Diachronic considerations may sometimes indeed obscure the facts such as when it is claimed in an overview of Coptic toponymy that *ermont* ‘Hermonthis’, modern Armant near Luxor, is “named after a divinity” (Megally, 1991, p. 2272). This is true, from a diachronic perspective (referring to the ancient god Montu), but the name origin was hardly evident in a monoreligious society keen on obliterating its pagan past. In synchrony *ermont* must be regarded as monomorphemic. A synchronic view may explain how it was possible that such theophoric names were preserved in a Christian environment (and later borrowed in Arabic) unlike the Greek names for Egyptian cities (*Herakleopolis*, *Hermopolis*, *Krokodilonpolis* which were possible to segmentalize).

Furthermore, the analysis of the names as shaped in relation to their physical and human environment has a potential to contribute to a better understanding of some aspects of settlement history. The floruit of Coptic written sources does not coincide, it would seem, with a growth of urban life or increase in the number of settlements. The major settlements trace their origins back to the pharaonic period. Basically, one expects names in a country settled long since – such as Egypt – also to have been in continuous use. In a preliminary fashion then, it seems as if one should count on the continuous

presence of age-old settlements with firmly established, inherited names, next to smaller units, hamlets or farmsteads often carrying the name of the owner, which could switch together with ownership. Churches and monasteries represent a new type of inhabited space and their names constitute presumably the really original and lasting contribution to Egyptian toponymy. To what extent this can be confirmed remains to be seen, but at any rate a well-structured name list is a necessary prerequisite for the further study of Coptic place names.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Olle Engkvists stiftelse for funding my research. My participation in ICOS XXVII was covered through a grant from Sven and Dagmar Saléns stiftelse and the proofreading by Birgitta Bergquists stiftelse at Stockholm University.

### References

- Amélineau, É. (1893). *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale.
- Bell, H. I., & Crum, W. E. (1910). *Greek Papyri in the British Museum: Vol. 4. The Aphrodito Papyri*. London: British Museum.
- Biedenkopf-Ziehner, A. (2000). *Koptische Ostraka II: Ostraka aus dem Ashmolean Museum in Oxford*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Bosson, N. (1999). « Scalae » coptes. Paradoxe d'une langue qui se fossilise. In N. Bosson & S. H. Aufrère (Eds.), *Égyptes... L'Égyptien et le copte* (pp. 109–119). Lattes: Musée archéologique Henri Prades.
- Boud'hors, A., & Heurtel, C. (2010). *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29 : autour du moine Frangé* (Vols. 1–2). Brussels: CREA-Patrimoine.
- Browne, G. (2001). The definite article: Acknowledging 'the' in index entries. *The Indexer*, 22(3), 119–122.
- Brune, K.-H. (2007). *Index zu Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit (Stefan Timm)*. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert.
- Champollion, J.-F. (1814). *L'Égypte sous les pharaons ou recherches sur la géographie, la religion, la langue, les écritures et l'histoire de l'Égypte avant l'invasion de Cambyse* (Vols. 1–2). Paris: De Bure frères.
- Champollion, J.-F., & Champollion, J.-J. (2021). *L'aventure du déchiffrement des hiéroglyphes: Correspondance*, Ed. K. Madrigal. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

- Crum, W. E. (1909). *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Collection of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*. Manchester: University Press.
- Crum, W. E., & Steindorff, G. (1971). *Koptische Rechtsurkunden des achten Jahrhunderts aus Djéme (Theben)*. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.
- Depauw, M., & Gheldof, T. (2014). Trismegistos. An interdisciplinary platform for ancient world texts and related information. In Ł. Bolikowski, V. Casarosa, P. Goodale, N. Houssos, P. Manghi, & J. Schirrwagen (Eds.), *Theory and Practice of Digital Libraries – TPDL 2013 Selected Workshops* (Communications in Computer and Information Science, 416) (pp. 40–52). Cham: Springer.
- Engsheden, Å. (2023). *An Index of Toponyms in Coptic Papyrological Texts* (Trismegistos Online Publications, 9). Leuven. <https://www.trismegistos.org/top/>
- Fournet, J.-L. (2011). The multilingual environment of Late Antique Egypt: Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Persian documentation. In R. S. Bagnall (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (pp. 418–451). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, I., Alcock, A., & Funk, W.-P. (1999). *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis* (Vol. 1) (Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph, 9). Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Grossman, E., & Haspelmath, M. (2015). The Leipzig-Jerusalem transliteration of Coptic. In E. Grossman, M. Haspelmath, & T. S. Richter (Eds.), *Egyptian-Coptic Linguistics in Typological Perspective* (Empirical Approaches to Language Typology, 55) (pp. 145–153). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Hall, H. R. (1905). *Coptic and Greek Texts of the Christian Period from Ostraka, Stelae, etc. in the British Museum*. London: Trustees of the British Museum.
- Hamilton, A. (2006). *Copts and the West, 1439–1822: The European Discovery of the Egyptian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hasitzka, M. (1993–2020). *Koptisches Sammelbuch* (Vols. 1–5). Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter.
- Hasitzka, M. (2007). *Namen in koptischen dokumentarischen Texten*. [https://www.onb.ac.at/files/kopt\\_namen.pdf](https://www.onb.ac.at/files/kopt_namen.pdf)
- Kircher, A. (1643). *Lingua Aegyptiaca restituta*. Rome: Hermann Scheuss.
- Korwin, W., & Lund, H. (2019). Alphabetization. *Knowledge Organization*, 46(3), 209–222.
- Krueger, F. (2020). *Andreas von Hermonthis und das Kloster des Apa Hesekiel (O.Lips.Copt. II)*. (Archiv für Papyrusforschung Beiheft, 43). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Macomber, W. F. (2020). *The Scala magna of Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt* (Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium, 684; Scriptores Arabici, 55). Leuven: Peeters.
- Marconi, D. (1990). Dictionaries and proper names. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 7(1), 77–92.
- Megally, M. (1991). Toponymy, Coptic. In A. S. Atiya (Ed.), *Coptic encyclopedia* (Vol. 7, pp. 2271–2274). New York–Toronto: Macmillan.
- Melaerts, H. (2000). *Papyri in honorem Johannis Bingen octogenarii* (Studia varia Bruxellensia ad orbem Graeco-Latinum pertinentia, 5). Leuven: Peeters.
- Munier, H. (1930). *La scala copte 44 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris* (Bibliothèque d'études coptes, 2). Cairo: IFAO.

- Munier, H. (1943). Les pays étrangers connus des Coptes. *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte*, 9, 141–157.
- Peust, C. (2010). *Die Toponyme vorarabischen Ursprungs im modernen Ägypten* (GM Beihefte, 8). Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie.
- Peyron, A. (1835). *Lexicon Linguae Copticae*. Turin: Regium Typographeum.
- Quatremère, E. (1811). *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte et sur quelques contrées voisines* (Vols. 1–2). Paris: F. Schoëll.
- Riegel, M., Pellat, J.-C., & Rioul, R. (2018). *Grammaire méthodique du français* (7th ed.). Paris: PUF.
- Schlücker, B., & Ackermann, T. (2017). The morphosyntax of proper names: An overview. *Folia Linguistica*, 51(2), 309–339.
- Shisha-Halevy, A. (1989). *The Proper Name: Structural Prolegomena to its Syntax – a Case Study in Coptic* (Beihefte zur Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 15). Vienna: VWGÖ.
- Sidarus, A. (1978). Coptic lexicography of the Middle Ages: The Coptic Arabic scolia. In R. McL. Wilson (Ed.), *The Future of Coptic Studies* (pp. 125–42). Leiden: Brill.
- Stolz, T., Levkovych, N., & Urdze, A. (2017). Die Grammatik der Toponyme als typologisches Forschungsfeld: Eine Pilotstudie. In J. Helmbrecht, D. Nübling, & B. Schlücker (Eds.), *Namengrammatik* (Linguistische Berichte Sonderheft, 23) (pp. 121–146). Hamburg: Helmut Buske.
- Timm, S. (1984–1992). *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit* (Vols. 1–6). Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert.
- Van Langendonck, W. (2007). *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin–New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Van Langendonck, W., & Van de Velde, M. (2016). Names and Grammar. In C. Hough (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (pp. 17–38). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wellisch, H. (1995). *Indexing from A to Z*. New York–Dublin: H. W. Wilson.
- Westendorf, W. (1965–1977). *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- Wipszycka, E. (2009). *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV<sup>e</sup>–VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement, 11). Warsaw: University of Warsaw–Fundacja im. Rafała Taubenschlaga.