
Coptic Lesson 5: The Rule of the JINKIM

Find previous lessons at: http://www.suscopts.org/deacons/coptic/coptic_lessons.html

In addition to the Coptic letters, the Coptic language also makes use of a dot-like phonetic symbol or accent mark, called the Jinkim. The Jinkim was not part of the original language, but was added to help readers pronounce the words. There are various forms of the Jinkim (` ´) and though some argue that the shape affects the pronunciation via the different opening of the mouth, it is generally accepted that they are all pronounced alike.

The Rule:

I. When the Jinkim is over a vowel, that letter must be pronounced by itself, thereby splitting the word into various syllables.

First, we need to learn the Coptic vowels:

An easy way to learn them is to first write the English vowels and then match them to their Coptic counterparts:

(English) A E I O U
(Coptic) Ⲁ Ⲏ Ⲟ Ⲡ ⲡ ⲣ Ⲥ

Note: ⲣ is considered a vowel because when it follows an ⲟ, it is pronounced an oo; some authors consider ⲟⲣ to be a vowel rather than just ⲣ.

Now let's read some words using Jinkims on vowels:

Word	Pronunciation	Word Meaning
Ⲁⲁⲣⲟⲛ	a-a-ron	Aaron
Ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ	ma-ri-a	Maria (Mary)
Ⲏⲃⲟⲗ	e-vol	Of
ⲡⲎⲕⲞⲢⲟⲥ	pek-ee-pos	Your garden

II. When the Jinkim is over a consonant, a short "e" sound proceeds that letter.

For Example:

ⲕ = ek Ⲙ = em Ⲟ = en Ⲁ = ed

Now let's read some words using Jinkims on consonants:

Word	Pronunciation	Word Meaning
ἑκ-εσ-μα-ροα-οοτ	<i>ek-es-ma-roa-oot</i>	(You are) blessed
εν-νοοβ	<i>en-noob</i>	The gold
εμ-μα-ρι-αμ	<i>em-ma-ri-am</i>	Of Mary
εν-νοοτ	<i>en-noo-tee</i>	Of God

Try to read these words on your own:

αχι	He came
θεοτοκος	Mother of God
ερον	(unto) us
πιεζοοτ	The day
ειει	I shall go
ασιος	Holy (<i>Greek</i>)
χοταβ	Holy (<i>Coptic</i>)
ντε	Of
πρεσβυτερος	Presbyters (priests)
φραν	The name
ωεπιζωοτ	Thank you
αποστολος	Apostle
αληθως	Truly
πιωοτ	The glory
αωην	Amen