

**STABILITY IN CLAUSAL/PHRASAL PATTERN CONSTITUENT  
SEQUENCING: 4000 YEARS OF EGYPTIAN**  
(WITH SOME THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS, ALSO ON CELTIC)

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1. *Egyptian*

The linguistic study of Egyptian, fully deciphered only about 150 years ago, is a young discipline: modern Egyptian linguistics, dating more or less from the work of Hans-Jakob Polotsky, is much younger still: no more than about half a century old. Coptic, the final stage of Egyptian, dead as a spoken language at some point after the XIIIth century AD, had been scientifically known in the West from around the XVIIth century. It is a curious and somehow sobering thought that Champollion le Jeune probably got the brainwave and forward push to the final decipherment of the hieroglyphic script by a wholly and deeply erroneous idea about diachronic word order correspondence. He believed (or took for granted) that Coptic *f-sôtm* “he is hearing” (roughly, “he + hear”) was the inversion of a ‘pan-Egyptian’ *sdm.f* (“hear-he”),<sup>1</sup> which, he thought, had the same tense form, but which – we now know – is in fact a cluster of homographs, drastically differing, formally and functionally, in tense form and syntactical status from one phase of Egyptian to another *and* within one and the same phase.<sup>2</sup> The idea was wholly misguided,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> By Egyptological convention an *e* vowel is inserted between consonants in Egyptian words, to make pronunciation possible: [sedjemef] (in the present text, I transliterate as a simple voiced dental, *d*, the transliteration of a hieroglyph probably representing a voiced and emphatic dental-alveolar affricate). For a recent overview of the grammatical systems of Egyptian as a whole, bridging between different theoretical approaches, see Loprieno 1995.

<sup>2</sup> In Middle Egyptian, for instance, we have the so-called prospective *sdm.f* (“that he [should] hear”, “may he hear”), the substantival misleadingly named ‘emphatic’ *sdm.f* (“that he hears”, as in: *I know that he hears* and especially in the Cleft Sentence type *It’s because of me that he hears*), and the syntactically adverbial converbal so-called circumstantial *sdm.f* “...he hearing”. All are distinct, and distinguished, *formally*, by syntactic-slot occupancy privileges resolved in close textual analysis, correlated, conjoint and coupled with such consonantal morphological features as can be observed. In Demotic we find only the fossilized remnants of the prospective *sdm.f* and a single case of the ‘perfectal’ *sdm.f*. In Coptic, only a lexically closed-list class of

yet the confidence it gave him, and his conviction that Coptic and Egyptian were two phases of the same language were not unjustified, and led him to eventual success. Today we have a reasonably good synchronic resolution – and, paradoxically, a sometimes seemingly sharper diachronic resolution – of nearly four millennia of uninterrupted evolution of a language (or rather an ensemble of dialects and language varieties), made visible to us in the written documentation of five or six distinct broad linguistic systems (in the sense of *la langue* as well as *norme* and *usage*). Roughly, with some arbitrariness and considerable overlapping, Old Egyptian (“OE”, 2800–2200 BC), Middle Egyptian (“ME”, 2200–1500 BC), Late Egyptian (or Neo-Egyptian) (“LE”, 1500–700 BC); Demotic, from the VIIth–VIIIth century BC to the Vth century AD, and finally Coptic, ‘Christian Egyptian’, written in customized graphemic systems based on the Greek graphemes and several Egyptian ones, from the IVth century AD on, until its death as a spoken language: Arabic entered Egypt in the VIIth century AD, but Coptic probably lingered on until the XVIIth century. (Incidentally, Coptic is formally differentiated as ‘Egypto-Coptic’ in the current *International Linguistic Bibliography*. Roughly since the Fifties, Coptic Studies have moved away from Egyptology, a separation unfortunate for both Egyptology and Coptic studies, which has all but wiped out Coptic linguistics as a discipline). Most phases, as we conveniently and simplistically delimit them (ignoring here the relationships, complicated in Egyptian, between language phase and script phase, as well as the religious-political implications of traditional archaizing use of earlier phases) have considerable overlapping or ‘mutual leaking’ with preceding ones, as well as transitory stages, and of course numerous diasystems of registers and other linguistic varieties which become clearer as detailed description progresses. Some phases extend up to a thousand years, which makes the need for a finer sub-periodization obvious (Junge 1985). Generally speaking, we witness the uninterrupted evolution of a language on one and the same terrain, in its first attestation cradled in a Neolithic culture, before the end of its life-span a para-classical language, part of a pious and totally Christian civilization: very little secular literature is attested in Coptic.

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quality-expressing lexemes (e.g. *nanou-f*, *nane-prôme* “good [nexus] he”, “good [nexus] the-man” = “he is good”, “the man is good”) maintains what is comparable to the old *sdm.f* pattern. In earlier Egyptian, there were other #VERB STEM + THEME (PRO)NOUN# cases, with the stem marked by distinctive affixes: *-n-*, *-in-*, *-k3-* etc. – these disappeared earlier.

<sup>3</sup> We find it expressed as late as Steinthal and Misteli (1893:283-284) in a still valuable typological sketch of Egyptian: *stm paï-k sn* “(es) hört dein Bruder” with *paï-k sn stm* “dein Bruder hört”.

The full informed story of first the decipherment of the script, then the century-long, slowly improving resolution of the individual grammatical systems and subsystems of the respective phases of Egyptian, is truly breathtaking and still remains to be told in full. Beside clashes, often vigorous, between schools of thought and grammatical method (most notably, at the beginning of the century, the Paris and the Berlin ones, of which the latter finally prevailed, leading to the Polotskian *Jerusalem School* and currently to descriptive, 'functionalist' and evolved generative approaches), it is also the story of a Hugo-Schuchardt-style scholarly dissent and creative individualism, as well of a progressive detachment from the Eurocentric-Semitic methodological and theoretical bias and an unfolding realization of the special intricacy of Egyptian as formulated *in its own internal, not genealogically biased terms*. As some of its historical landmarks may be considered Adolf Erman's *Ägyptische Grammatik* of 1901, Kurt Sethe's *Der Nominalsatz im Ägyptischen und Koptischen* (1916); Battiscombe Gunn's *Studies in Egyptian Syntax* (1924), Alan Henderson Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* (1957<sup>3</sup>); A. Erman's *Neuägyptische Grammatik* (1933); Frank Lloyd Griffith's *Stories of the High Priests of Memphis* (1900) and *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (1909), and Wilhelm Spiegelberg's *Demotische Grammatik* (1925); for Coptic, Ludwig Stern's *Koptische Grammatik* (1880), Hans-Jakob Polotsky's *Études de syntaxe copte* (1944), his "Coptic Conjugation System" (1960) and his *Grundlagen des koptischen Satzbaus* (1987–1990) and most recently Layton (2000) (see Loprieno 1995 for a detailed bibliographical inventory).

## 2. *Some idiosyncrasies*

Several properties and aspects of Egyptian and Egyptian linguistics must be pointed out here, as being of the highest theoretical relevance to the issue in point. I am hardly going to mention the genealogical assignment of Egyptian, still controversial and mysterious: is Egyptian part – a crucial, if not defining part – of a hypothetical Hamito-Semitic language family (the implicitly or explicitly consensual view at present), or is it a substrate - (or otherwise) formed *Mischsprache*, almost an analogue (*mutatis* time-depth and other *mutandis*) of Amharic as Semitic *Stoff* and African *Form*?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This has an immediate bearing on such a far-removed issue as the structural typological non-Indo-European affinities of Insular Celtic, a question recently redeemed after a long period of near-disrepute. Formulating the query in terms of a non-geographical (or hyper-geographical) *Sprachbund* (cf. Shisha-Halevy 1995:§ 7), I find Egyptian the most striking term of comparison, far more significant than the currently used Arabic (cf. Vennemann 1995, 1997; Borsley

• First, no vowels are allowed for in any of the graphemic systems up to (and not including) Coptic.<sup>5</sup> Since consonantal formal (morphology *signifiant*) distinctions are rare, we have little inflectional morphology in the Indo-European sense (consonantal affixal formation should really be considered syntagmatics or syntax). Analytic Grammar in Egyptian thus means ‘syntax *netto*’. We are, in the study of Egyptian, largely spared what De Boer felicitously called “*la tyrannie de la morphologie*” and “*la superstition de la forme*”; the theoretical higher rank of syntax (a realization agreed in structuralist general linguistic discussion since the first decades of this century, but never really implemented in actual descriptive work) is in Egyptian linguistics *de rigueur*. What we have to deal with are subtextual slots only, and applying ‘structural ID’ procedure is inevitable and crucial: the decoded-analytic *identity-definition* of an element and entity of language is effected only by the conjoint coordinates of positional (syntagmatic) and commutational localization; its ‘role-name’, its analytic identity or individual essential profile consists of its simultaneous syntagmatic and paradigmatic coordinates. This is, I believe, of the highest relevance to the issue in point here, namely “word order through time”: for it indicates that we must resort to *patterning*, with sequencing but one of its constituent distinctive features (and probably hyper-pattern, *placement* of certain discourse-referred elements, such as discourse signals). The specific individual grammatical category is the *signifié* of a substitution class in a given syntactical slot, without any ‘morphological background noise’, and ideally without the biasing by a pre-eminent conceptual-terminological tradition based on the morphological form-entity (consider, for a striking instance, the category of tense). The grammatical form is consequently a precise formal-relational feature or signal, in a sense the ideal grammeme, and the subtextual unit the ‘pattern’, defined as “a bounded (i.e.

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1995). But the ambition to rephrase the ‘contact’ in an historical scenario (e.g. as a substrate phenomenon) must come to terms with the fact that Egyptian, while affording a very considerable time depth – greater than that of ‘Semitic’ alone – is hardly a straightforward ‘language on a family tree’. I personally, following thirty years’ descriptive work on Egyptian grammar, favour the *Mischsprache* hypothesis, for numerous reasons outside the scope of the present article. Incidentally, and in the context of the present issue, the alleged ‘VSO’ property of ‘Semitic’ (as exemplified by Arabic) or of Egyptian (so Hawkins 1983:320) is *ohne weiteres* conventionally associated with the Celtic (e.g. Brythonic) VSO ‘basic word order’. But all these components of a schematic typological comparison are either simplistic, or inexact, or even a *petitio principii*, and there are in fact affinities more unambiguous, sharp and valid.

<sup>5</sup> Coptic does have seven graphemes for approximately represented vowel phonemes, yet it is significant that efforts to reconstruct the pre-Coptic Egyptian vowel systems have so far shed little additional light on the respective grammatical systems (cf. Polotsky 1964).

delimited) sequence of categories”, which in their turn may themselves be patterns, reducible to constituent categories, and so on and so forth. Heuristically and technically speaking, the first and most important single analytic step is the isolation of *delimitations* (boundary signals); the analytical procedure is necessarily *descending*, from text-scope downwards.

- The remarkable time depth, which affords a unique opportunity and special laboratory conditions for observing features and factors of diachrony at work; so, for instance, the periodic-cyclical nature of many changes in features and subsystems. However, the danger of the ‘optical illusion of historical continuity’ is in the case of Egyptian very strong and ever present: on this further below.

We thus witness for instance the familiar synthesis – analysis (e.g. periphrasis) – agglutination-resynthesis evolution of junctural structure typology. From this point of view, Coptic resembles in many respects the oldest Egyptian and completes a millennia-long cycle, with LE an analytical peak (the phase prior to OE not documented, that posterior to Coptic sadly non-existent). Another specific and, for me, especially fascinating case is the history, familiar from a European isogloss in a Romance-Germanic West European *Sprachbund* or at least isogloss, of the recurring neutralization of the opposition perfect (the *nunegocentric*, i.e. speaker’s *hic-et-nun*, past/present statal complex tense) vs. preterite, neutralizing always in favour of the marked term, the perfect, which is de-pertinented, representing the category as a whole while the preterite disappears and a new periphrastic perfect enters the picture. The full cycle is observable not less than three times in the course of the history of Egyptian.<sup>6</sup>

- For Egyptian, text-linguistics is the only feasible linguistics, and text-scope grammar is perforce the only grammar. The descending analysis from full text-level down is unavoidable; no textual subdivision is usually given (the *a priori* or intuitive ‘sentence’ and ‘word’ units are far more dubious and

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<sup>6</sup> The evolution of future tenses in Egyptian is another instance of analysis-to-synthesis cyclicity. It is instructive to compare its stages to the familiar Romance ones (Fleischman 1982); in Egyptian, so far as we can see, the ‘spatial’ future (“I am to go”) is earliest, whereas the modality factor starts to play a role in the same formation only very late, from Coptic on, and then only in certain dialects (temporal-to-modal, never the other way round). The analytic “go” futures appear around LE, and end up by being the only tense-form in Sahidic Coptic, one of two (a *tempus instans*, intentional, typically interlocutive-sphere, opposed to an ‘absolute’, uncircumstantial, unconditional, non-subjective one) in the Bohairic dialect. In any case, in Egyptian there is no direct association between the evolving forms and change in word order (cf. Fleischman 1982:50).

obfuscating than in the European linguistic systems).<sup>7</sup> 'Narrative tenses' (to take one instance) and narrative building-blocks and texture units in general must be carefully isolated, as the only *Tempuslehre* possible; needless to say, this is immediately instructive and eye-opening for the well-trodden 'nostratic' systems. Another example, perhaps less banal and directly relevant to the word order issue, is the concept of *syntactic* (or rather *syntactic*) *autonomy*: the notion and feature-complex of 'ordination' (as so strikingly epitomized in the Eurocentric logic/rhetoric-based dichotomy, still going strong, of 'main' vs. 'subordinate', with 'superordinate' a real improvement, albeit still rarely applied)<sup>8</sup> cannot be simply applied to Egyptian, where, for example, 'non-initial' may be the distinctive feature of a clause (as for example in a special *apodotic clause-form*, attested in some form throughout the history of the language).

• An invaluable metalinguistic or 'technical' feature of Egyptian linguistics, due to the special circumstances, constraints and slowness of its evolution, is its relative resistance to Eurocentric terminology and careless taxonomic compartmentalization: there has been so far little uncritical *en masse* and *en bloc* application of Western terminology (probably with the exception of Greco-Latin terminology applied to Coptic in the XIXth century). This happy state is rapidly, and alarmingly, changing at present, in the pretext of 'modernizing' Egyptian linguistics, as if forcing the models, buzz-words and general terminology that are *en vogue* onto a non-European system still only partly understood can replace patient text-based categorial analysis. Consequently, there still exists the opportunity for a leisurely and careful consideration of applicability and suitability of concepts and names for concepts, and for evolving internally rational, not imported conceptual and terminological systems. Clearly, this too is potentially beneficial for a re-examination of well-studied languages and the general-linguistic models based on them.

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<sup>7</sup> Note a recent general discussion of 'sentence' in Kindt 1994. Somehow, *Satzbegriff* sounds better (since probably less committed) than 'notion of sentence' and 'clause' in the English abstract (for one thing, there's no need to distinguish the grammatically and logically based terminology). Then, *grammatikunabhängig* is not at all the same as 'syntax-independent'. Occasionally, moreover, Kindt does not seem to distinguish *Satzdefinition* from *Satzsegmentierung*. Unfortunately, the discussion, very interesting and lucid *per se*, of *Satz* in spoken German, cannot be immediately applied in the case of a language such as Egyptian, written, dead, so very different culturally; and here, once again, Kindt's approach is incorrigibly Eurocentric and verb-clause-oriented: consider for instance the *Vollständigkeit* test by the presence or absence of the verb "be" (cf. Kindt 1994:37ff.).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Shisha-Halevy 1995.

### 3. *Word order: stability and variation over time*

At this point, I must confess to several doubts and even misgivings about the terms in which our workshop theme has been phrased.

“Variation”. In the structuralist semiotic methodological framework within which I operate, every formal feature – every *signifiant* (and sequencing, when pertinent and not conditioned, is certainly a constituent or constituent-part tagmemic *signifiant*) has its *signifié*, until the relatively rare case of *free* variation has been proven. We have thus only three conceivable synchronic situations obtaining between two or more elements: (a) opposition and full or partial pertinence; (b) environmental neutralization alternation (as typically encountered in a complementary distribution situation); or (c) the always provisionally (and, for a structuralist, reluctantly) stated case of ‘free variation’, that is, formal differentiation not correlatable in some way with a functional one. Still, this last state of things is, more often than not, a pre-analytical *petitio principii*.

“Over time”; *diachrony*. It is crucial to bear in mind what is so obvious, has repeatedly been pointed out, yet is as a rule ignored in the actual practice of our thriving Historical Linguistics, that one written phase of the language does not necessarily or usually evolve out of a chronologically preceding one: Literary Modern Welsh (in itself consisting of several sub-phases) did certainly not evolve out of Mabinogion Middle Welsh, any more than Vulgar Latin or Romance texts evolved (as representative of *états de langue* with distinct grammatical and lexical systems) out of the Classical Latin literary corpus. The realization that the ‘single line of development’ is a convenient fiction – this self-evident, seemingly trivial truth, but too often unheeded – is no less than crucial when we study diachronic syntax, for evolutively juxtaposing and comparing grammatical patterning in an historical sequence of attestation is an easy trap (as is, to take a rather worn-out instance, the case of *quod* and the *accusativus cum infinitivo* as exponents of clause substantivation in Latin and Romance). In Egyptian, major successive phases match more or less known periods of extralinguistic (social and political) turbulence, and did not evolve successively, certainly not in a straight route and at a constant rate. Extensive systemic areas and many features in all phases are not documented in preceding ones; we know little of the systemic context and pragmatic or textual context of evolution. Of course, this ‘optical illusion’ of evolutive continuity may ideally, almost metaphorically, be taken as valid, yet only panoramically, for blueprint resolution and therefore, in my opinion, to little use prior to synchronic system delineation: so many details are lost, systemic factors are inevitably taken as negligible, underplayed or downright ignored that one finds

oneself in a practically model-reshaped or meta-linguistic world. (In parentheses, let me point out that the historical perspective, as truly envisaged by Saussure – this is now being made more and more manifest by the new Saussurean philology – focusses on viewing a *synchronic systemic fact*, a feature in a *système des valeurs*, in diachronic light, with a holographic effect, rather than a cinematographic ‘animation’ by the rapid shifting of juxtaposed ‘stills’. And, of course, the full systemic feature must be fully formulated first. Moreover, linguistic change concerns most intimately, stems from and is effected in microstructures and subsystems).

Lastly, and most importantly, “Word Order”. Linguistic *sequencing* is a complex issue, not exhaustible in schematic generalizing, often sweeping statements of ‘word order’ as used in current linguistic inquiry, let alone in terms of the arguments of an Eurocentric (deductive, logic-based, not empirically founded) verbal-predication ‘sentence’, viz. S[ubject], V[erb], O[bject]. Indeed, I see this as a deplorable obfuscation, almost a vulgarization of an intricate vital issue. First of all, this assumes – and unqualifiedly builds on – the universality of a *prime, hierarchically dominant verbal predication*: this is a deeply rooted Eurocentric verb-centered grammatical thought, almost equating ‘clause’ with ‘verb clause’, and a ‘no-verb’ construction with ‘verb-absence’ or worse.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, a basic distinction of actual syntagmatic sequencing and structural (not necessarily of adjoining elements: ‘discontinuous’) sequencing is essential;<sup>10</sup> elements representative of categories often ‘reside’ in actual locations that are structurally, albeit not typologically, a matter of coincidence.<sup>11</sup> And then, sequencing or placement may be pertinent (pattern-distinctive) or, like almost any linguistic *signifiant* element, conditioned: such distributional statement can only be formulated on the basis of precise oppositional and environmental study.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The dominance of the verb and the ‘verb clause’ is nowadays more a presupposition of current General (often in the sense of universalist-typological) Linguistics, stemming from the blend of Neo-Grammarians Indo-European-oriented *Sprachwissenschaft* with the logic-based normative tradition, still associated with various current schools transformed from the original generative models of the Sixties and Seventies, than of the individual branches of modern descriptive Indo-European linguistics, especially of Greek, Latin and Indo-Aryan.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, the valential structure of verb lexemes; or many cases of mutation in Celtic.

<sup>11</sup> So for instance the location of some Indo-European case-endings, structurally a discontinuous constituent of the verb, in the noun phrase.

<sup>12</sup> It is frankly difficult for me to understand word order (‘SV/VS’) functional opposition outside the synchronic ‘transsection’ or ‘still shot’ of an individual linguistic system, as a grammemic linguistic sign which may subsequently be compared or contrasted (typologically) with correspondent signs in other languages or (diachronically) with other phases of the same



My contention is, in brief, that (a) constituent ordering is not a prime, independent, overruling, governing or motivating feature of syntax. It is one of several cumulatively and conjointly definitive features of any pattern, already defined here as a delimited sequence of categories. Constituent ordering does not 'exist' absolutely, on its own, in a given language, as one of its typological traits. Sequencing is a grammeme (a tagmeme), a *signifiant* which, as I see it, rules out the validity or feasibility of isolating SVO/VSO word order schemes independently of precise patterning; (b) the universal applicability of the 'SV' model is unwarranted or else trivial;<sup>13</sup> (c) the universal existence and then typological predominance in a given language of a verbal-predication 'sentence' which can be stated in the same terms as traditionally used for Indo-European is questionable and cannot be taken for granted. Frankly, I find it difficult to see how current word order typologies, synchronic or diachronic, can be maintained in the face of these objections. (Needless to say, a specific word-order or sequencing may constitute part or the whole of a descriptive statement, always resulting from a process of *analysis*).

A final word on 'subject'. It will be noted that I refrain from using this term, even for verb clauses, just as I reject the *a priori* distinction of 'syntactic' and 'pragmatic' word order, as if the syntactic features of *la parole*, of a text and of its texture were in some way transcendental, abstracted or independent of its contextual or situational functions. 'Subject' (like 'Predicate'), originally a functionally conceived term, has been irretrievably impaired by its rigid association with the European-brand verbal nexus, in what is probably the most striking case of terminological distortion in syntax. ('Theme' is the non-rhematic constituent in any nexal interdependency, including verbal nexus, and 'agent' the 'first actant' in the valency matrix of the verbal and associated lexemes). As usually applied, 'subject' – or the flaringly ethnocentric and internally

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language. In the synchronic system, sequence would thus be *pertinent*, not conditioned. Consequently, I cannot accept the thesis in Hopper 1986, which, as it were, puts the typological and diachronic carts, in tandem, before the synchronic-internal horses.

<sup>13</sup> Even supposing that 'universal basic word order' is at all a scientifically viable concept, a presupposition cogently questioned in Mithun 1987. The inbuilt (Indo-) European ethnocentric squint in Western linguistics and ever present in Western linguistic discussion, is now a very real danger of forcing an alien model on language in general. Consider the new term 'Euroversals' (see Kortmann 1997:33ff.), which might at first be conceived of as a welcome qualified restriction, yet still has potentially comprehensive *universalistic* associations and evocations in an 'imperialistic' epistemology. Observe that it is not *systematization* as such that I am advocating here against, its inevitable abstractive and idealizing components notwithstanding; what I would point out, following Hugo Schuchardt, is the absolutely crucial need to distinguish between internal and external systems, and let the former – especially the easily obliterated micro-systems – take priority, as data for the latter.

contradictory ‘grammatical subject’ – is spurious, and constitutes a prime instance of advanced terminological conditioning. Incidentally, the exiling from syntax to pragmatics of the issues of information structure and the high-level signification of macrosyntactic grammar such as narrative grounding and perspective is a lamentable sign of the times, associated with the *per se* welcome surge in sociolinguistic awareness, discourse analysis and the study of spoken language. But – if I may be excused some slight exasperated irony – written language – and *dead* written language, too – has been known to present grammatical systems worthy of study, and by no means second-hand or reflected or deficient.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. *Excuse: word order in Celtic*

At this point and by way of an excursion, I wish to make three brief observations on Brythonic Celtic, *à propos* of Graham R. Isaac’s recent syntax of Old Welsh Poetry (Isaac1996); they concern slips of method which I believe are instructive for the issue at point here. First, the periphrastic analytic verbal constructions of Welsh (as important as and strikingly similar to their Egyptian correspondents from OE on), which turn out to be a trap for the word order typologist. For on p. 21 Isaac states, off-handedly, that *Mae Siôn wedi darllen* “John (has) read”, (approx. “John-exists/is after-reading”) is a case of SV sequencing, as if the existential/statal nexus exponent auxiliary *mae* did not exist. In fact, this is either a case of discontinuous ‘*mae*...+ converb’ rheme, or of a ‘there exists’ statement (*mae*) preceding its existant theme. Second, the Cleft Sentences *Siôn sy wedi darllen*, *wedi darllen e mae Siôn* focalizing respectively the theme and converb (approx. “[It is ] John who-is after-reading” and “[It is] after-reading that-is John”): Isaac sees these as straightforward cases of SV and VS respectively, again as if the relative and substantive conversion forms of “be” did not exist or structurally matter. Last, the Middle Welsh unmarked narrative verbal clause-form, the so-called ‘Abnormal Sentence’, ‘(pro)noun + *a*-verb’, the *vexata quaestio* of MW syntax, which is generally presented as the main argument and show-piece for the SV order of MW in contrast to VS in the modern language. Yet again, this involves totally ignoring the relative-converter element *a*- (apparently just because it is not simply and transparently reflected in translation).

<sup>14</sup> See Jamieson 1993 for a welcome manifesto-like call on behalf of dead-language syntax, pre-eminently applicable to Egyptian linguistics. My own personal research experience fully corroborates Visser’s caveat (*apud* Jamieson, 219 n 1), *viz.* that hastily pronounced ‘errors’ constitute the data for most insights into a dead language’s syntax: in Coptic, it is a teaching and research commonplace that the apparatus of critical editions by insensitive editors is the place to look for the most significant forms and constructions. On non-attestation in a dead language, see also Shisha-Halevy 1986, Introduction.

## 5. *Egyptian patterning*

In the main part of my exposition, I will now present and illustrate several striking patterning features of Egyptian throughout its history,<sup>15</sup> with a focus on the evolution of sequencing. I would here draw attention to the remarkable stability of sequencing within the enveloping diachronic systems, in the framework of which the pattern in point is ‘held’ as evolution takes place: this is the dynamic, pluridimensional Structural (or Systemic) Diachronic Frame (“SDF”), which (as it were) contains the static synchronic *systèmes des valeurs*, layered in chronological sequence. What is being followed over time is always *the individual pattern*, the key analytic unit isolated in a descending analysis from text-level; ‘Word Order’ is (as has been stressed) in-pattern *category sequencing*, a distinctive constituent feature of the pattern, and not a ‘floating’ placement property of individual elements: it is no more, no less ‘important’ (in the sense of ‘essential’ or ‘basic’) than other, categorial distinctive constituents of the pattern. Needless to say, ‘stability’ in this context has a relative applicability, but is no less remarkable for that. I must stress once again that in the following presentation there is considerable schematization and thus simplification, this being the main shortcoming of the typological format of grammatical presentation.

### 5.1 *Nexus types: no specific SDF*

The trait that I would choose as typologically most basic throughout the history of Egyptian is the predicative theme+rheme (i.e. predicative nexus) patterning. Three main predicative-nexus patterns are always in evidence, remaining practically unchanged in categorial constituency and in sequencing, from Old Egyptian through Coptic. (A fourth pattern eventually merges with the nominal-rheme one: see § 5.6 below). Note that patterns (I) and (II) below are not ‘verb-less’, but rather devoid of any formal association with the verbal nexus. From the earliest Egyptian onwards, pattern I supplies considerable parts of the verbal system by predicating converbs – subnexal finite or non-finite adverbial verb-forms.

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<sup>15</sup> For Coptic, the only phase of Egyptian for which dialects are fully resolvable, I give Sahidic examples unless otherwise specified. Of all Coptic dialects, Bohairic (a northern dialect originally, by the Xth century extended all over Egypt) has most ‘diaglosses’ with Late Egyptian: cf. Shisha-Halevy 1981.

(I) *adverb-rheme nexus*, adverbial and converbal rhemes, supplying the Present and (before Coptic and in Bohairic Coptic) non-modal Future tenses, from Late Egyptian/Demotic on a tense strikingly similar to the Greco-Romance Imperfect.<sup>16</sup> In ME, and especially for substantival lexical themes, a prefixed formal thematic element *jw* characterizes an *hic-et-nunc* ('present-situation'), discourse-syntactically unmarked status of the nexus, with a zero + nominal signalling its inclusion or otherwise discourse-syntactically marking.

(ME) *jw mtr.j m-hnw*

PRESENT-SITUATION- DEICTIC + *testimony*-1st sgl. [poss.] pron.+ *in*- + *residence*  
 "My testimony is in the Residence".

*jw hnw m sgr*

PRESENT-SITUATION-DEICTIC- *residence* + converb-marking preposition – *being silent*  
 "The Residence is being silent."<sup>17</sup>

*jw mš<sup>c</sup> pn n nsw hr m33*

PRESENT-SITUATION- DEICTIC – *army* + demonstrative adj. + of (sgl.m.) – *king* + converb-marking preposition – *watching*  
 "This army of the king is looking on."

(LE) *twj m-dj.k*

1st sgl. – with – 2nd sgl. m. [poss.] pron.  
 "I am with you."

*n3y.s g3b m mfkt*

plur. +3rd sgl. f. poss. article – *leaf* + predicate-marking preposition – *malachite*  
 "Her leaves are of malachite."; incidental (i.e. non-essential circumstance-referred) nominal predication.

(Dem.) *p-t3 jr-hr-j m-qd w<sup>c</sup>.t fjt*

def. art. sgl. f. – *earth* + *before* – 1st sgl. [poss.] pron. + *in-manner* – zero-article – *chest*  
 "The earth is before me like a chest."

*n3-hrd.w n-p3-lh mš n-p3-hyr*

def. art. pl. – *child* + 'a-walking' (CONVERB) *in* – def. art. sgl. m. – *street*  
 "The fool's children walk the street."

(Copt.) *f-mmau*

3 sgl. m. them. pron.– *there*  
 "he is there"

<sup>16</sup> In the component notation of Egyptian examples on the following pages, "+" indicates combination in general, while "-" marks *close-juncture* combination.

<sup>17</sup> Verbs of movement/posture and other intransitives have the "in" (*m*) converbs in the present tense; cf. the Modern Irish *tá sé in-a-* + verbal noun statal present conjugation. This is a typological trait of a considerably higher order than the alleged 'subject/verb' sequencing.

*f-sôtm*

3 sgl. m. them. pron. – ‘a-hearing’ (CONVERB)

*p-rôme sôtm*

def. sgl. m. art. – *man* + ‘a-hearing’ (CONVERB)<sup>18</sup>

‘he /the man hears/is hearing’.

(II) *noun/pronoun-rheme nexus (Nominalsatz)* – see the special discussion below :

(ME) *jnk nb.tn*

1st sgl. them. pron. – *lord* – 2nd pl. [poss.] pron.

‘I am your lord’.

(Copt.) *ang-petn-jôt*

1st sgl. them. pron. – sgl. m. poss. art., 2nd pl. – *father*

‘I am your father’.

(III) *Verbal nexus* is effected in a complex set of subpatterns. In ME, and to a large extent already in OE, the non-modal verbal system (as it is conveniently referred to) is almost entirely cast in the non-verbal adverbial nexus matrix (I): see Polotsky 1965, 1976: certain various *sdm.f* and *sdm.n.f* stem + pron./subst. theme subnexal constituents occupy the thematic (substantial, initial) and rhematic (adverbial, second) slots, preceded by deictic markers (of which the most striking is the formal-thematic here-and-now *jw*).<sup>19</sup>

(1) In rhematic status, the converbal (finite adverbial) *sdm.f* and *sdm.n.f* forms are (for transitives) opposed to, or (for intransitives, especially verbs of movement) neutralized with a peculiar statal finite converb (currently known as ‘Stative’, *alias* ‘old Perfective’ or *Pseudopartizip*), with personal thematic suffixes not occurring anywhere in the Egyptian system, but with clear formal correspondents in Accadian.<sup>20</sup> The main forms of the ME verb clause may be presented as follows:<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The converb preposition is orthographically zeroed from Demotic (partly LE) onwards, and the converb is thus fully grammaticalized.

<sup>19</sup> *Sdm* ‘hear’ set of stems or bases (rhematic);-f ‘he’ suffixed pronoun category (thematic).

<sup>20</sup> Another case where it is pointless to refer to a ‘VS’ typology. The Stative expresses perfect state in the present, with an added passive diathesis for transitive lexemes.

<sup>21</sup> This is definitely not a full or even a summary account of the Egyptian verbal system, but a drastically abridged scheme, to give an idea of the verbal-nexus mechanism.

(a) <i>jw – f/sn.j</i> (b) <i>m.k –sw/sn.j</i>	<i>hr sdm</i>	“he/my brother hears/ is hearing” (actual present)
	<i>sdm.f</i>	“he/my brother hears” (generic/atemporal ‘present’ or aorist) <sup>22</sup>
	<i>sdm.n.f</i>	“he/my brother (has) heard” (main narrative foreground carrier)
	<i>sdm.w</i>	“he/my brother has been heard” (3rd sgl. m. Stative: 1st sgl. <i>jw.j sd2m.kwj</i> )
	<i>jw.w</i>	“he/my brother is/has come” (Stative: 1st sgl. <i>mk wj / jw.j jw.kwj</i> )
	<i>sdmw.f</i>	“he/my brother was heard”
(c) <i>h<sup>c</sup>.n.f</i>	<i>sdm.n.f</i>	“that he arose is...” [+ CONVERB “having heard”] = “then he heard...” (foreground delimitation)
(d) <i>prf.f</i>	ADVERBIAL	“[it is] ADVERBIAL/CONVERB FOCUS + that he comes/will come out”
<i>jj.n.f</i>	ADVERBIAL	“[it is] ADVERBIAL/CONVERB FOCUS + that he came/has come”
<i>gm.n.tw.f</i>	ADVERBIAL	“[it is] ADVERBIAL/CONVERB FOCUS+ that he was found”

Table 1: *The main forms of the ME verb clause*

Note: (a) and (b) are mutually opposed as predications in (respectively) unmarked and allocutive/interlocutively marked deictic perspectives; (c) the verb *h<sup>c</sup>* “stand, get up” is used as a periphrastic strongly delimitative narrative turn-of-event or foreground-spurt tense; this is a formalized Cleft Sentence, with the converbal (‘circumstantial’) clause in focus, and the verbal nexus predicating “stand” as grammaticalized topic: “It was having heard that he got up” = “He up and heard” = “...and then he (suddenly) heard”; (d) Cleft Sentences, with the adverbial or converb in focus, and a verbal nexus as topic. I hope to have made evident the insignificance, descriptively speaking, of the ‘SV’ typology in the face of pattern complexities.

(2) Illustrating here only some of the tenses carrying the affirmative *narrative* basic (non-focussed) foreground, in opposition to report (*Bericht*, *Mitteilung*), with transitive-valency verb lexemes:

<sup>22</sup> ‘Aorist’ as used in Turkish or Coptic *Tempuslehre*. See also Shisha-Halevy 1995 (Middle Welsh).

(OE) *sdm.f* vs. *jw(f) sdm.n.f* ‘hear-pret. – 3rd sgl. m.’ = “he heard” vs. ‘PRESENT-SITUATION-DEICTIC (+ 3 sgl. m.) + POSSESSED {hear} of- 3rd sgl. m.’ = “he has heard”.

(LE) *sdm.f* “He has heard” vs. the so-called Sequential *jw.f) hr sdm* “...and (then) he heard”: *ph w<sup>c</sup> n-rmt p3-šd t3y.k-šrt* “A man has reached your daughter’s window”, reported event following the narrative event information *wn-jn p3-hrd hr jjt jw.f hr pwjt jw.f hr ph p3-sšd n-t3-šrjt...* “...then the youth came and he jumped and he reached the window of the daughter...”.

(Dem.) *sdm.f / jr.f sdm* “he heard” vs. *w3h.f sdm* “he has heard” (auxiliary *w3h* “lay, rest”).

(Copt.) *a-f-sôtm*, dial. *ha-f-sôtm* “he heard” vs. *a-f-ouô e-f-sôtm* “he has (already) heard” (lit. he-rested/finished + CONVERB “he-hearing”).

(3) In view of all this, I believe that it is less than useful to focus on the sequence diachrony of verb-nexus constituents alone. While ‘VS’ is the unanimous verdict of word order typologists regarding Egyptian, this can refer only to the synthetic, non-periphrastic verb form which, as we have seen, is in ME very different from a verb clause, and even then needs to be qualified: for these verbal formations are all cast in a rhematic matrix of a STEM + possessive-like PERSONAL SUFFIX, with the delocutive pronoun commutable with a noun. From ME on, and with a marked acceleration in LE, auxiliaries take on the verbal-categories load, in an analysis – agglutination – re-synthesis process that is all but complete in Coptic (“he [has] heard”: *a-f-sôtm*, neg. *mp-f-sôtm*, with the prefixal so-called conjugation bases only in part evolved out of auxiliaries, and certainly not a ‘VS’ case), and makes a ‘VS’ schematic view synchronically meaningless: in this sense, a synthetic form like Greek *ἀκούω* “I hear” would be equally ‘VS’.

(4) The nominal-theme placement paradigm is in OE/ME a binary one (always taken schematically, with considerable simplification; *sn* “brother”, *-j* “I”, *-f* “he”, *jw-* “here-and-now” deictic thematic exponent):

(a<sup>1</sup>) *jw sn.j sdm.f* “my brother hears” (usually, habitually, by nature, generically).

(a<sup>2</sup>) *sdm sn.j* “may my brother hear” (*sdm.f<sub>1</sub>*, the so-called ‘prospective’ formal/functional category), “...my brother hearing” (*sdm.f<sub>2</sub>*, ‘circumstantial’ or converbal), “my brother (has) heard” (*sd2m.f<sub>3</sub>*, affirmatively only in OE, ‘perfectal’).

(b) (*jw*) *sn.j sdm.f* “my brother, he hears” / *jr-hm nb r pn, n<sup>c</sup>q.n.f* “as-for anyone who-does-not-know this spell, he cannot enter”.

While (a<sup>1</sup>) and (a<sup>2</sup>) seem to be unmarked terms, with a formal complementary distribution, (b) is an important topicalization construction, the discourse-

functional details for which have not yet been conclusively studied: it is, however, suggested that the *sdm.f* nexus form itself is rhematic to the thematic topic, as a high-level case of the basic # NOMINAL + ADVERBIAL# adverb-rheme nexus pattern.

By Demotic and Coptic, however, the nominal-theme placement category becomes extremely complex. Affirmatively predicating a preterite (*a-*) auxiliary, expanded with the lexeme “hear” (*sôtm*), of “the man” (*p-rôme*, pronominally referred to by “he” [-*f*-]), we encounter the following quaternary paradigm:<sup>23</sup>

- (a) *p-rôme a-f-sôtm*
- (b) *a-prôme sôtm*
- (c) *a-prôme a-f-sôtm*
- (d) *a-f-sôtm nci-prôme* (*nci* is an obligatory element introducing the postposed theme-actor)

As a matter of fact, what we know at present about the functional assignment of this paradigm (always allowing for dialectal and textemic, sometimes considerable differences) is very little. In some text-grammatical (‘discourse’) configurations, (a) is a topicalization construction; in others, it is a (mostly narrative) theme-switching delimitation; (b) is a somewhat rarer, perhaps theme-maintaining construction; (c) is a common placement, sometimes theme-switching (but differently – especially as regards the theme repertoires – from [a]). Typically, it appears to be superordinating and nexus-highlighting; (d), restricted to certain corpuses but in them fairly frequent, is still not well understood, but probably signals theme retrieval from an accumulated inventory, and thus some intermediate degree of theme continuity. While the category as a whole appears to be a gradient one of textual cohesion – linkage and delimitation, with reference to degrees of depth of theme ‘storage’ – it is still almost entirely uncharted. However, it is obvious that neither is (a) a case of ‘SV’, nor (c) a case of ‘VS’. Their precise functional evaluation (currently undertaken by the present writer for a given corpus) must take into account at least the following: (1) the internal analytic interpretation of the individual constructions; (2) their possible correlation with formal (a) clause-internal and/or (b) text-grammatical (combinatory, narratological and narrative-grammar) parameters. Among the former, agents/theme extent, agents/theme specificity, internal *Flexionsisolierung* (grammeme/lexeme-

<sup>23</sup> Typically contrasted with a binary paradigm: finite verb (verbal rheme-suffixed theme)+ nom. theme vs. nom. theme + finite verb (verbal rheme-suffixed theme) in the Greek *Vorlage*.



separating structure, tense and negation of verb component etc.); among the latter, opposition or gradience of switching vs. persistence of the theme, thematicity of the verb clause, cohesiveness or linkage, disruptivity or delimitation, concatenability, narrative status, compatibility or incompatibility with discourse signalling etc.; (3) their possible correlation with narrative-grammar and narratological functions, such as information chunking, pacing; dramatic highlighting; narrative focussing, mode and so on; (4) scanning of markedness/un-markedness gradience or opposition; (5) examining the difference between theme-switching vs. theme (re)introduction; or between various hierarchical theme classes or ‘folders’ (narratologically more or less prominent or significant); or the possibility that the themes of all four constructions are drawn from different cumulative ‘theme folders’ (differing for instance in narrative depth or *immediacy of presence*), or from a single ‘folder’ but four different ‘recall triggers’ signalling the extent of rewinding required for decoding the reference.

5.2 *The nucleus/expansion (determinatum/determinans) Grundrichtung in noun phrases. SDF: evolution of the nuclear determinators; loss of the syntactic category ‘adjective’*

(a) Possessive-associative expansion of nominals:  
(Phase I)

- SUBSTANTIVE + SUBSTANTIVE, NOUN + NOUN (‘loose composition’?)

(OE, ME) *X s3-Y* “X son of Y”, *hm-ntr* “servant-of-God” = “priest”, *imy-r pr* “overseer of- house” = “steward”.

(LE) restricted to fossilized phrases:

*hr-<sup>c</sup>.wy p3-ntr*

*on – hands-dual + def. art. sgl. m. – god*

“in God’s hands”.

- SUBSTANTIVE + *nj*- SUBSTANTIVE (*nj*- in partial concord with the nucleus: linking-relating adjective: [“the one] related to”)

(OE, ME) *<sup>c</sup>3.w nj.w shty pn* “the donkeys of this peasant”, *Nsw nj Kmt* “the King of Egypt”.

(Phase II)

- SUBSTANTIVE<sup>spec</sup> + *n* – non-zero article – NOUN (*n*- ‘nota relationis’ )

(LE) *jb n nb.f*

*heart + of – lord-poss. 3rd sgl. m.*

“his lord’s heart”

*sb3yt n š<sup>c</sup>t*  
*teaching +of-letter*  
 “epistolary teaching”.

(Phase III)

- SUBSTANTIVE<sup>non-spec.</sup> + *n-te-* *non-zero* specifying article – NOUN/PRONOUN (*n-te-* relating/associating preposition): general/unmarked association or appurtenance;
- ARTICLE<sup>non-phor</sup> – SUBSTANTIVE<sup>inalien</sup> + *n-* *non-zero* article – SUBSTANTIVE: inalienable personalized association (possession);
- ARTICLE<sup>phor</sup> – SUBSTANTIVE<sup>alien</sup> + *n-te-* *non-zero* article – SUBSTANTIVE / PRONOUN: depersonalized association, expanded class name.

(Copt.) *p-sôma m-pa-šêre*  
 def. art. sgl. m. – *body* + *of* – poss. art. m. 1st sgl. – *son*  
 “my son’s body”.

*šêre nta-k*  
 zero art. – *son* + *of* – 2nd sgl. m. [poss.] pron.  
 “a son of yours”.

(Boh. Copt.) *t-jij m-pi-rômi*  
 non-phoric def. art. sgl. f. – *hand* + *of* – phoric def. art. sgl. m. – *man*  
 “the man’s hand”

but

*ni-êi nte-ti-baki*  
 phoric def. art. pl. – *house* + *of* – phoric def. art. sgl. f. – *town*  
 “the houses of the town”.<sup>24</sup>

(b) Attributive expansion:

Phase (I)

- SUBSTANTIVE + ADJECTIVE

(‘lexical adjective’ – participle: *nfr-Ø* “lovely-one<sup>masc</sup>”, *nfr-t* “lovely-one<sup>fem</sup>”, ‘pronominal’ adjective’: quantifiers, demonstratives, *nb* “all, every”, syntagmatic -j - nucleus derived adjectives [*nisbe* “the one referring to/ associated with”]):

(OE, ME, LE [Dem.]) *sh<sup>tj</sup> pn*  
 peasant + this adj.  
 “this peasant, the above-mentioned peasant”

*hm.w.t nfr(w).t*  
 woman [PL.+FEM]. + lovely [PL.+FEM]  
 “lovely women/the lovely women”.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Shisha-Halevy 1994a.

## Phase (II)

- SUBSTANTIVE + *n-* zero article – NOUN attribute

([Dem.] Copt.) *snof nim n-dikaïos*  
 blood + every + of – Ø-righteous  
 “every righteous blood”

*ou-angelos n-ouoein*  
 an-angel+ of- Ø-light  
 “a shining angel”

*ou-sophos n-rôme*  
 a-wise-one+ of-man  
 “a wise man”.

## (c) Determinated noun phrase:

- DETERMINATOR + NOUN

(OE, ME) *pr* “house”, *p3-pr* ‘prox.dem.sgl.m. – house’ = “this house”, *pr.j* ‘house – 1st sgl. [poss.] pron’ = “la/una mia casa” (not specific?)

(LE) *p3-pr* ‘def. art. sgl. m. – house’ = “the house”, *p3y.j pr* ‘sgl. m. poss. art. sgl. m. 1st sgl. [“the-of-me”] – house’ = “my house” (specific)

(Sahidic Copt.) *p-êi* ‘def. art. sgl. m. – house’ = “the house”, *pa-êi* ‘poss. art. sgl. m. 1st sgl. [“the-of-me”] – house’ = “my house”; *ou-êi* “a house”, *hen-êi* “(some) houses”;

(Boh.Copt.) *t-phe*, *ph-nobe* “the sky”, “Sin” (uniques and genus notion names); *pi-rômi* “the man”, “man” (phoric specifier and discriminative intensive generic).

Note that Coptic (and later Egyptian generally) provides conclusive evidence for the *nuclearity of the determinators* (noted in the Sixties for European languages by H. Frei and H.-J. Seiler).<sup>25</sup> The non-adjectival demonstratives were always nuclear, and their evolution to articlehood involved no major syntagmatic change.

While much is known of the evolution of the definite articles in Romance and Germanic (albeit the precise scenario is still controversial), only a few details of the phenomenon are as yet clear for Egyptian. LE ‘emerges’ with a fully operational definite article, and an incipient “one”-type indefinite article (we catch occasional glimpses of the former in colloquial language as early as the Old Kingdom), with marked differences in the different varieties or registers. The final phase of Egyptian teaches us caution: almost every dialect has its idiosyncratic determinator system, and some have more than one specifying articles (Bohairic Coptic, for instance has a phoric/generic, and a

<sup>25</sup> See Shisha-Halevy 1986: Chapter 4.

non-phoric/generic./inalienable-possession 'definite' articles). It is evident that sophisticated discourse-level analysis and pragmatics of referentiality are essential for understanding and charting the phenomena involved; for instance, genericity/indefiniteness oppositions involve a complicated resolution depending on slots and the reduced paradigms therein. It seems still early days for this in Egyptian linguistics.<sup>26</sup>

### 5.3 Negators

In Egyptian the resolution of negative forms and patterns is much higher than of affirmative ones: this typologically interesting lack of affirmative / negative symmetry is instructive in itself. Some highlights of negation are:

#### (a) Preverbal nuclear negation:

(OE/ME)

*n sdm.f* "he did not hear/has not heard" (preterite/perfect);

*nn sdm.f* "may he not hear" (prospective; existential negation, negative existence of "that"-form?).

*n sdm.n.f* "he cannot hear" "it is not in his nature to hear" (generic; affirmative counterpart *jw.f sdm.f*).

(LE)

*bw-pwy.f sdm* "he did not hear/has not heard" (*n-> bw-*, aux. *pwy.f* "he has done in the past");

*bw-jr.f sdm* "he cannot hear" "it is not in his nature to hear" (generic; *n->*

*bw-*, "that"-form *sdm.n.f* > *j.jr.f sdm*, with auxiliary *jrj* "do");

*bn-jw.f r sdm* "he won't hear" (future: affirmative *jw.f r sdm*, future – no longer present-based directional adverbial).

(Copt.)

*mp-f-sôtm* "he did not hear/has not heard" (*bw-pwy.f-> mp-f-*);

*nne-f-sôtm* "he won't hear" (future: affirm *e-f-e-sôtm*; *bn-jw-f* > *nne-f-*);

*me-f-sôtm* "he cannot hear" "it is not in his nature to hear" (generic; affirm: aorist *Æa-f-sôtm*, appearing in Demotic; *bw-jr.f* > *me-f-*).

<sup>26</sup> There are many scenarios for the evolution of indefinite articles: the *Problematik* and definitions involved are very different from those of the definite article. If anything, the borderline between the pre-article and articular phases is more fuzzy, and the issues more complicated for the indefinite, with presentative, quantifying, specifying and generic, negative referentiality roles all involved in the transition, while non-referentiality is a key factor (see for instance Hopper & Martin 1987). However, the usual relative chronology of the indefinite evolving later than the definite agrees with the Egyptian facts. For some interesting theoretical considerations concerning the early stages of an evolving definite article, see Epstein 1993: 115, 126ff.).

We see here the same (structurally and in part 'etymologically') negative prefixes, for verbal nexus negating auxiliaries evolved from synthetic 'lexemic stem' forms, fused into nuclear negative bases, carrying, *pro-verb* like, all grammatical categories for the verb clause.

(b) Nexal discontinuous ('embracing') negation:

(OE, ME) *n.....(js)* negating nominal and adverb-rheme nexus

(LE) *bn.....(jwn3)* negating nominal and adverb-rheme nexus

(Dem., Sah. Copt.) *(n).....an*, (Boh. Copt.) *(n)...(an)* negating nominal and adverb-rheme nexus – *not* verbal nexus proper; local (nexus and clause-constituent) negation (with focussing associations).

(ME) *n hs js rn.k* "your name is not 'excrement'".

(LE) *bn-rmt jwn3* "it isn't a human-being" ('not-human-post-neg.', situational zero theme); *bn sw m-sš* "it is not in order" ('not-he-in order').

(Copt.) *m-p-rôme mmau / sôtm an* "the man is not there/does not hear"; *m-pa-son an pe* "he is not my brother" (*pe* delocutive pron. theme).

Two etymologically unrelated postposed negation elements occur in the course of Egyptian diachrony. The first, *js*, is an enclitic, also occurring in focalizing and clause-including roles. The second, LE *jwn3* to Coptic *an*, has no other functions than post-negation, but may also have been a focalizing exponent (cf. Winand 1997).

Now it is evident that the so-called postverbal negation in Egyptian is unrelated to any word order change, or "shift from pragmatic to grammatical word order" (cf. Burbridge 1993:212ff.), nor is it associated with the verb clause as such (but rather with the converbal, i.e. adverbial verb in rheme status)<sup>27</sup> – on the contrary, it is 'customized' for essentially non-verbal (adverb-rheme and noun-rheme) nexus, or for negating nexus constituents 'locally'. "Jespersen's Cycle" is only valid in Egyptian from Coptic onwards.<sup>28</sup> in pre-Coptic Egyptian, from the earliest documentation on, the negation is 'embracing', i.e. discontinuous, with both constituents fully functional, and the negation not in effect post-verbal.

#### 5.4 The causative conjugation

Various syntagms containing forms of the auxiliary (*r*)*dj*, *ti*, *t-*, imperative *jm(j)*, *ma-* "give, cause" as their grammatical nucleus evolve into what seem 'morphological complexes':

<sup>27</sup> The association with the verbal predication and the 'SV' order is suggested also in Bernini 1984:31-32, 1986.

<sup>28</sup> Probably not fully in Bohairic Coptic: cf. Shisha-Halevy 1981.

(ME) (infinitive) *djt wnm.f*  
 to-cause-that-he-eat  
 “to-make him /let him eat”;

(1st sgl. post-imperative sequelling) ... *dj.j. wnm.f*  
*that-I-cause+ that-he-eat*  
 “...and I will make/let him eat”;

(imperative) *jm wnm.f*  
 cause-that-he-eat  
 “make him eat!”;

(imperative) *jm dd.f hrt-jb.f*  
 cause- that-he-say + that-with-heart-his  
 “let him tell what is in his heart”.

(Dem.) *t-jr.f wm* “make/let-him eat”;  
 (1st sgl. post-imperative sequelling) ... *t.j jr.f wm* “...and I will make him eat”;

(imperative) *mj jr.f wm* “make/let-him eat!”.

(Copt.) (infinitive) *t-re-f-ouôm*  
 cause-*that*-he-do-eating  
 “to-make him eat”, “that he eat”, “for him to eat”, *tmmo-f* lexicalized “to-feed him”  
 (metanalytical from *t-mmo-f* ‘cause that-he-eat’);

(‘personally guaranteed’ post-imperative sequelling) ... *ta-re-f- ouôm* “...and he shall eat”; *šine ta-re-tn-cine* “seek and ye shall find”;

(imperative) *ma-re-f-ouôm* “make him eat” (causative imperative); “let him eat” (jussive).

This evolution – with a total stability of sequencing – is a striking instance of the ‘syntax-to-morphology’ agglutination process (cf. Fleischman 1982:126-127). However, the underlying issue of juncture (Fleischman 1982:151ff.) is here crucial, since the evolutionary presupposes a precise definition of such concepts as ‘separate (words)’ and ‘fusion’, that is, a precise and sophisticated synchronic account of junctural gradience. The main operative differences between the earlier and later Egyptian forms are:

- (1) the analysis by means of the auxiliary *jr* “do” as carrier of grammatical categories in later Egyptian (from LE on);
- (2) the differentiation of a (closed list) ‘lexical’ and ‘grammatical’ causative forms in Coptic;
- (3) the use of the causative imperative *also* as *jussive* (i.e. 3rd-person-imperative), and the causative infinitive *also* as a *personal infinitive* and *that*-form in Coptic, roles attested from ME on.

In any case, while a metanalytical process is in evidence, constituent ordering shift is not.

### 5.5 *The cleft sentence and other focussing constructions*

The Egyptian Cleft Sentence pattern set is very complex, both formally and functionally, and is of the highest typological importance (as has been often noted, it is strikingly similar to its Celtic correspondents, formally to a degree, functionally, to an extent distributionally and in its ‘devaluation’ grading). It is hardly possible to report in this limited context even on the most essential features of the formal repertory, role relationship and distribution of *mise en relief* constructions in the respective phases (see Polotsky 1944, 1965, 1976, 1990; Shisha-Halevy 1986: Chapter 2, 1987). Observe, however, that it is only at the last phase – in Coptic – that *focus-initial adverbial-focus* patterns, Cleft and non-Cleft, interrogative and declarative, make their appearance, a placement shift that is arguably *also* due to contact with Greek. Egyptian has always had two Cleft Sentence types, focus-initial and topic initial; nominal and pronominal foci have been invariably initial in Egyptian Cleft Sentence patterns, but in Coptic we encounter (pro)nominal foci also in the topic-initial set.<sup>29</sup>

Up to Coptic, we find:

- # *that*-VERB-FORM + ADVERBIAL FOCUS #, in complementary focus-constituence distribution with
  - # (PRO)NOMINAL FOCUS + [FORMAL THEME] + RELATIVE/PARTICIPIAL FORMS<sup>30</sup> #
- Coptic [especially Sahidic, the most innovative dialect] also:
- # ADVERBIAL/(PRO)NOMINAL FOCUS + BASIC VERB / *that*/-ing converb #
  - # *that*-VERB + (pro)nominal focus # (‘autofocal’, foc. a lexemic/adverbial rheme):

(ME) *jj.n.k hr sjj jsšt?*

*that*-you-have-come + because-of-what

“What is it you have come for?” = “Why have you come?”.

(LE) *j.jri.k itt 3ht.j hr-ih*

*that*-you-have-stolen/are stealing my-things + because-of-what

“Why is it that you have stolen/are stealing my things?”

*ntk p3-jr-shr*

you (sgl.m.) + the (sgl. m.)-who-do-counsel

“It’s you who are counselling”.

<sup>29</sup> Note that in Egyptian (as in Celtic) many interrogative pronominals and adverbials *condition* the Cleft Sentence construction, that is, are always marked for focality.

<sup>30</sup> Note that from OE through LE, *that* forms and relative forms are structurally identical, with the latter gender/number-commutable (and concording) allo-forms of the former (or of course the other way round).

(Dem.) *j.jr.i jyr jr n.k t3y.s šbt*  
*that-I-have-come to-make for-you (sgl. m). + its-repayment*  
 “It is to repay you for it that I have come”;

*w<sup>c</sup>-w<sup>c</sup>b n Jmn p3-jjr-t3t.s*  
*a- (masc.)-priest of-Amun it is-who-did-stealing-it*  
 “It’s a priest of Amun who stole it”.

(Copt.) *etbe-ou a-k-ei*  
*because-of-what + you-did come*  
 “Why did you/have you come?”;

*n-aš n-he e-ou-nobe na-n an pe*  
*in-what of-manner + that-a-sin + for-us neg. it-is*  
 “How is it that it isn’t a sin for us?”;

*etbe-pai e-a-i-joos nê-tn*  
*because-this + that-did-I-say-it + to-you (pl.)*  
 “That’s why I told you this”;

*p-noute p(e)-ent-a-f-aa-s*  
*the (sgl. m.)-god + it-is-who-did-he-do-it*  
 “It’s God who did it”;

*e-i-na-r-ou*  
*that-I-shall-do + what*  
 “What is it that I shall do?” “What shall I do?”.

### 5.6 *The rhematic (predicative) adjective*

*SDF*: the disappearance of ‘adjective’ as a form-class and the emergence and evolution of the articles:

- # ADJECTIVE + (PRO)NOMINAL THEME #  
 (OE, ME, [LE]) *nfr tw hn<sup>c</sup>.j*  
*good – 2nd sgl. m. dependent pron. – with-1st sgl. [poss.] pron.*  
 “You are well-off with me”.
- # *article* – NOUN + (PRO)NOMINAL THEME #  
 (Copt.) *oume pe* “He is true” (*ou-* indef. article, *me* “truth” [ἀλήθεια], *-pe* delocutive thematic pronoun) “ἀληθινός ἐστίν” (Joh.5:32).

### 5.7 *Nominal-Sentence Patterning*

*SDF*: emergence and evolution of the determinators; disappearance of the adjective morpho-syntactic class (see § 5.2).

This is probably the most widely discussed feature of Egyptian throughout its diachrony, and in fact, one of its main typological showpieces.<sup>31</sup> The most striking diachronic processes encountered in this context (in particularly broad outlines and high simplification) are:

<sup>31</sup> See Sethe 1916, Shisha-Halevy 1987.



(a) *pronominal theme-to-copula* grammaticalization (evident also in most Semitic languages);

(b) *topic-to-theme* grammaticalization in Bohairic Coptic;

(c) the virtual disappearance of the binominal predication pattern (replaced by pronominal-theme patterns, see below) and conjointly

(d) the replacement of the noun-predication patterns by *determinator-pronoun* and *personal-pronoun* predication. The basic formal dichotomy is between delocutive (3rd-person) and interlocutive (1st-2nd-person) pronominal themes:

(I) Delocutive themes:

•# [TOPIC+] RHEME + PRONOMINAL DELOCUTIVE THEME (+THEME EXPANSION = 'THEME') #,

(ME) *sh.tj pw n Sh.t Hm3*

(a) *peasant-neutric/m. deloc. them. pron. + of-Field-of-Natron*  
 "He was a peasant of the Wādī Natrūn";

*phr.t pw n.t h°w.s mrh.t*

*remedy (-fem.)-neutric/m. deloc. them. pron. + for- body-3rd sgl.fem.poss.pron-ointment*  
 "Ointment is the/a remedy for her body";

*Hknw pf dd.n.k jnt.fbw pw wr n jw pn*

*Hknw-oil + distal demonstrative + past relative stem-2nd sgl. m. pron. + infinitive*  
 "bring"-deloc. m. pron. + abstract-marking lexeme-neutric/m. deloc. them. pron. + *big* +  
 of *island* + proximal demonstr. adjective  
 "That Hknw-oil you spoke of sending, it is a staple of this island".

(LE) *p3y.k jt p3y*

*sgl. m. poss. art. 2nd sgl. m.- father + neutric/m. them. pron.*  
 "It's/he's your father";

*jr nbw h° ntrw*

*topic-marker-gold + body-[of] god-pl.*  
 "Gold, [it's] the gods' body" (zeroed theme).

(Dem.) *p3-sp n3j.j m3° n3j*

*sgl. m. def. art.- rest + pl. poss. art. 1st sgl. neutric/m.- justification + plur. them. pron.*  
 "The rest, these are my justifications";

*bn-jw 3hy jn p3j p3-rmt*

*PRENEGATOR - (a) reed + POSTNEGATOR + sgl. m. them. pron. + sgl. m. def. art. -(a) man*  
 "Man is not a reed".

(Copt.) *ou pe pek-hôb*

*inanimate interr. pronoun- m. sgl. them. pron. + sgl. m. poss. art. 2nd sgl. m-work*  
 "What is your work?".

(Boh. Copt.) Gen. 29:15 *pek-bekhe ou pe*

*sgl.m. poss. art. 2nd sgl. m. -wages + interr.pron.- m. them. pron.*  
 "What are your wages?";

*pa-nobi ou-ništi pe*

sgl. m. poss. art. 1st sgl.- *sin* + indef.art. -*great*- m. them. pron.  
 “My sin is great” (Gen. 4:13).

## (II) Copular:

- #THEME – COPULA – RHEME #

(OE) *hnm.t.f pj J3t*

*wet-nurse*- deloc. m. poss. pron + copula + *J3t*  
 “His wet-nurse is *Iat*”.

(ME) *srwh.f pw hms.t*

*treatment*- 3rd. sgl. m. poss. pron + copula + *sit* (inf.)  
 “His treatment is sitting”.

(Copt.) *p-jôk ebol m-p-nomos pe t-agapê*

sgl. m. def. art. -*fulfilment* + of- sgl. m. def. art -*law* + copula + sgl. f. def. art. -*caritas*  
 “The fulfilment of the Law is *caritas*”.

## (III) Interlocutive:

- # PRON. THEME – RHEME #

(ME) *jnk s3.f*

1st sgl.thematic pron- *son*- deloc.m. poss. pron.  
 “I’m his son” ( vs. *jnk pw, I* + deloc. them. pron. = “It’s me”).

(LE) *ntk shj*

2nd sgl. m. them. pron. -(a) dumb person  
 “You’re dumb”.

(Dem.) *jnk -w<sup>c</sup>b*

1st sgl. them. pron -(a) priest  
 “I’m a priest”.

(Copt.) *ang-ou-fnt*

1st sgl. them. pron.) -sgl. indef. art. -*worm*  
 “I’m a worm”.

## (IV) *Wechselsatz* (‘balanced nexus’)

(OE) *jnk pw sy*

*I* + copula + *she*  
 “I am she”.

*phty [PN] phty Sth*

*strength* [of-] [PN] + *strength* [of-] Sth  
 “The strength of X is the strength of Seth”.

(Dem.) *p3j.j šr <sup>c</sup>3 p3j.t šr <sup>c</sup>3*

sgl. m. poss. art. 1st sgl.- *son* + sgl. m. poss. art. 1st sgl.- *son*  
 “My eldest son is your eldest son”;

*n3j.j mdt.w n3j.j mdt.w <sup>c</sup>n*

pl. poss. art. 1st sgl.- *word* + pl. poss. art. 1st sgl.- *word* + again (grammeme)  
 “My words are my words”, “my case rests”.

(Copt.) *anon pe ntof*  
 we + copula + he  
 “We are he”, “We and he are one and the same”.

Observe that there are considerable formal differences, largely maintained in the various phases of the language, between the patterns above as regards theme/rheme constituencies, constituent sequencing and prosodic/junctural contours; differences which correlate with type of predication as well as macro-syntactic integration. Perhaps the most striking change observable is from a predication of substantive lexeme to predication of pronominals – the determinators, evolving from LE on. Constituent ordering alone is not informative of pattern identity; theme-to-rheme sequencing is basic for an *interlocutive pronominal* rheme but marks cotextual boundness and/or thematic progression for nominal or demonstrative themes, whereas rheme-to-theme sequencing is unmarked for delocutive pronominals.

#### 5.8 Sentence prosody – enclitic placement: cyclic shift of low-stress slotting.

(I) Clause-initial sentence-initial focal tone in later Egyptian:

The trigger to change from clause- or colon-final (phase II, LE to Demotic) to colon-second placement of enclitics (phase III, Demotic [?]) and some Coptic dialects) might be attributed to Coptic/Greek adstratic contact<sup>32</sup>: ‘Wackernagel’s Law’ (with E. Fraenkel’s modifications) as applied to Coptic (the ‘floating’ elements, or enclitics: sentence particles; some pronominal forms of prepositions; *augmentia*; some adverbials – see Shisha-Halevy 1981, 1986: Chapter 6). However, the earliest *état de langue* (phase I) seem to reveal the same colon-second placement (in the examples below; the boldface pronominals are coreferent; the translation aims at reflecting this coreference and the pronominal placement, and is thus ungrammatical as English):

(II) Clause/colon-final:

(LE) *jw.j hr djt n.f p3y.f nty m-dj.j gr ntf*  
 “...and I gave him **his**, which was in my possession, **he too**”;

*m-jr dd n.j “wn.k jm” jnk*  
 “Don’t tell **me** ‘you were there’, **I**”.

(I, III) Clause/colon-second:

(OE, ME) *wnn jrf t3 pf mj-m m hmt.f*  
 “**But** what will this poor land be like without him?”.

<sup>32</sup> On the complicated associations of linguistic contact and evolution, see Goebel, Nelde *et al.* 1996:534ff.

(Copt.) *n-aš n-he anok e-i-na-eire n-ou-hôb ejô-k?*  
 “How, I, (is it) that I will do anything without you?”;

*n-t-he hôôn on tenou et-n-r-nobe, ...*  
 “As we too now, we sin...”.

To conclude, with a single sentence: pattern-related sequencing in Egyptian is remarkably stable throughout the long history of the language, since the patterning itself is largely maintained unchanged (despite some basic systemic developments mainly associated with the noun phrase), and sequencing is a pattern constituent.

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