

CHRONIQUE

On Typology, Syntax and Aspect in Egyptian: a Question of Method

“Nun gibt es Systeme die schon fertig in den Dingen liegen und von uns nur entdeckt werden, und Systeme die wir bilden um sie in die Dingen hineinzulegen... Systeme dieser Art haben nur zeitweilige und bedingte Geltung” (Hugo Schuchardt, *Brevier* 411f.)

This work of Jean Winand’s aims at providing an account of Tense and Aspect (or rather Aspect and Tense) systems in Egyptian⁽¹⁾: this (notwithstanding the focus on Old and Middle Egyptian, with Late Egyptian rather thinly treated, and Demotic and Coptic virtually absent) is a staggeringly ambitious undertaking. It implies a confidence in our comprehension of Egyptian, synchronic and diachronic, which this reviewer must admire, but cannot share. And yet, it is almost a blessing that the Later Egyptian systems are only lightly touched upon, for this renders the in-depth treatment of OE and ME virtually monographic, which would be hardly feasible for the whole of Egyptian history — all the more so, since the joints or seams between “successive” phases are fictive and indeed fallacious.⁽²⁾ On the other hand, one would wish for an extended application of the author’s hypotheses to LE (and Demotic), for the cryptic nature of the earlier phases of Egyptian renders any judgement made regarding their imponderables both subjective and irrefutable. It is easy to pass speculation on O/ME as descriptive statement, which would never do in the more “transparent” later phases. Be that as it may, the reader gets occasionally the eery, unsettling feeling that it is a transcendental, panchronic (or panoramic) Egyptian that is here under typological scrutiny. (I cannot see, for instance, the soundness of a combined statement [p. 197] on the Stative and *sdm.n.f* forms on the basis of *Sinuhe* and the *Late Ramesside Letters*).

(1) Review article of: Jean WINAND, *Temps et aspect en égyptien: une approche sémantique*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 2006. 1 vol. relié in-8°, XII-488 pp. (PROBLEME DER AEGYPTOLOGIE, 25). Prix: €175.

(2) Winand seems to regard Egyptian diachrony as very real and continuous, e.g. p. 280, or fig. 96 on p. 310, and switches, in the illustration, from OE and ME to LE, see exx. 364-5, 366-7 etc.

Given the present state of our knowledge of Old and Middle Egyptian, I find it hard to muster confidence in the feasibility and meaningfulness of an account of any category of the verb (indeed, of many clausal and some sub-clausal and ultra-clausal unities) in the whole complex of Egyptian diachrony or Egyptian languages; confidence in the perspicuity of countless subsystems and features of the Egyptian languages that are relevant for such categories, and for which such categories are relevant. And, above everything else, confidence that such “categories” as “Tense” and “Aspect” are epistemologically and ontologically clear, unambiguous and not blurred, whether in general linguistic theory or in any or all Egyptian languages. The assumption of an *a priori*, hyper- or praeter-analytically given and epistemologically determinate category that is semantically coherent as *signifié*, and formally signalled as *signifiant*, in any or several of the Egyptian languages, is, to say the least, contestable, for a structuralist, and especially for one whose idea of descriptive soundness is the corpus-based *Spezialgrammatik*.

This book, as forbidding in places as it is ambitious (the structure of the work is significant. Its first two chapters, “Introduction à la temporalité” supply the theoretical framework, comprising one-third of the whole book: this could almost be an independent work) is a sophisticated, comprehensive and erudite work: very few central issues are ignored in it. Its secondary-literature scope is impressive, and the Egyptian illustrative material delicious. The work is well founded in the current theoretical framework. (Incidentally, I heartily agree with the author’s words on dead-language linguistics, p. 21f.).⁽³⁾

Many of the issues raised in this work need fuller reaction and discussion than can be given in the small compass of this review: to spell out and then pursue the implications of statements made here. For this is no doubt an important work, posing interesting questions and making some good analytical points: it brings to the fore some problems and using them focusses upon deeper, underlying concerns; strands are brought together which are too often kept apart. And yet, I believe the work is faulted, in ways that compromise its findings.

The shortcomings I am disappointed by in the work are not minor: the axe I wish to grind is methodological, and extends to argumentation and management of the facts. My critique below — unabashedly *pro domo mea* — is a *cri du cœur*, a manifesto and a plea to halt the currently prevailing irresponsibly unempirical, a-syntactic, a-textual self-styled attempts at charting the grammatical system of Egyptian.

It is truly disturbing to reflect that today, seventy years after Polotsky’s hypothesis of the *sdm.f* arcana and the Egyptian verbal system, these forms are treated as if still only half-understood, with almost all previous empirical work dismissed as irrelevant, and an imposed idealistic structure that informs all is sought after.

In Egyptian linguistics, the word “tradition” must be used advisedly. Winand uses “*égyptologie traditionnelle*”, “*en égyptologie*”, “*la vulgate grammaticale*” (e.g. p. 1) as if these are consensual, with reference to Loprieno and Vernus (see for instance p. 268). H.J. Polotsky hardly features in the work; the idea that scientific tradition may extend back to A. Erman and K. Sethe, on whose work

(3) Cf., in a similar vein, also JAMIESON 1993.

(I nearly wrote “shoulders”) Polotsky’s was founded, is not even hinted at — all these scholars are evaporated, as if belonging to a prescientific age.

The canonical view (*Standardtheorie* was never condoned by Polotsky) has been called in question since the nineteen-nineties, not because of new contradictory evidence, or reinterpretation of extant material, but often on half-baked general-theoretical arguments. The spate of “revisionist” writing, in a sense led by A. Loprieno and M. Collier and joined by P. Vernus, a trend still going strong in the younger generation, is characterized by the narrowest morphologicistic conception of the grammatical category — indeed, the total rejection of the syntactically resolved and defined category, “function” being purely word-semantic; by implication, the studied neglect of syntax, denial of the overrule of morphology by syntax (which was consensual in structural descriptive linguistics of the last century) and macro-syntax (text linguistics, discourse analysis). In this context, the book under review and the methodological choices made by its author acquire a special significance.

And yet, as a matter of fact, H.J. Polotsky’s *Egyptian Tenses* system has never been systematically contested, let alone refuted in any serious *mise en question*, but has merely been sidestepped. Its details are corroborated both typologically (especially from African – East African languages, Ethiopian languages, Nubian and Berber)⁽⁴⁾ and diachronically: since no-one contests the validity of Polotsky’s statements for LE, Demotic and Coptic; rejecting — without serious argumentation — his *Egyptian Tenses* and *Transpositions du verbe* would be truly typologically implausible, an intellectual embarrassment indeed. Besides, more texts not used by Polotsky are made available, and more evidence unfolds, Polotsky’s system is again and again proven valid, is refined and gains in depth.

The book under review, too, never seems to take an explicit, reasoned, argued stand in this matter, never challenging the *Egyptian Tenses* system explicitly, but dismissing it offhand, while in the translation of examples it more often than not follows in Polotsky’s footsteps (see below). However, the author’s management of the facts places him squarely in the “revisionist” tradition. Winand sees fit to laconically dismiss a century’s empirical work, and the only empirically founded theory of ME grammar, laconically and sententiously reproaching Polotsky’s work of three evidently cited vices, which must be quoted here *verbatim* to be believed: “l’anachronisme, en rapportant au moyen égyptien une structure qui n’est pleinement opératoire qu’en copte, l’application mécanique du principe d’analogie, qui suppose une grammaire faite d’oppositions formelles symétriques, ce que démentent les faits égyptiens eux-mêmes et toutes les études typologiques menées sur les langues les plus diverses, l’application du principe d’isomorphisme, qui postule une adéquation entre formes et fonctions, alors que la langue fonctionne très souvent au moyen de relations inégalitaires”.

Now I hold that all three arguments are unfortunate, misguided beyond scholarly disagreement, and wholly warp the evidence, misrepresenting Polotsky’s method, work and conclusions. For Polotsky in no way imposes the Coptic system on Middle

(4) The alleged typological implausibility of Egyptian as emerging from the *Egyptian Tenses* models is entirely misguided: I shall point to relevant features below.

(or pre-Coptic) Egyptian: ⁽⁵⁾ contrast the *Coptic Conjugation System* (1960) with the *Egyptian Tenses* (1965) and *Les Transpositions du verbe en égyptien classique* (1976). (On the contrary, this reviewer believes that, as regards Polotsky's distributional and structural presentation of the Coptic Focalizing Conversion ["Second Tenses"], it is the other way round: pre-Coptic Egyptian has deeply biased [in the *Études de syntaxe copte*, *Coptic Conjugation System* and *Grundlagen*] the synchronic Coptic system). ⁽⁶⁾ Surely, there are categories and patterns that are clearly attested throughout Egyptian diachrony. ⁽⁷⁾ There are certain marked affinities between some Coptic dialects and the earliest phases of Egyptian; others between Bohairic Coptic and LE-Demotic. This is to be expected typologically, in view of the cyclical evolution of Egyptian. In fact, had it not been thus, it would have been typologically implausible: these affinities underpin Polotsky's hypothesis. Generally speaking, while Egyptian diachrony strikingly corroborates Polotsky's findings for ME — an incontestable fact not answered by dissenters — the amazing, constantly increasing complexity of Coptic dialectal and sociolectal varieties and grammatical diasystems warns us of the frailty and ephemerality of pre-Coptic Egyptian systemics.

Representing structural analytic procedure as "analogy" simply deserves no scholarly response; oppositions need not be "symmetrical", whatever that means; and how on earth does solid typological study contradict or conflict with the structuralist view of language?

Frankly, I do not understand the third argument. Form and function, as two facets of linguistic signification, enter into complex relationships: this is the meaning of language as a semiotic system. Whatever is meant by "relations inégali-taires", since it seems to be de Saussure and Hjelmslev that Winand wishes to take on by way of dismissing the "Polotsky paradigm", one can only rest one's case.

However, it seems to be the case that Winand, for doctrinaire reasons, simply denies — or refuses — the syntactical (micro- and macro-syntactical; indeed grammatical) dimension and definition of grammatical category and grammatical form, that underlies Polotsky's model. This seems to be his blind spot (notwithstanding his rhetorical appeal to "la connaissance des mécanismes formels de la langue", p. 20). Conjointly, he embraces an atomistic, word-semantic conception, leaving his semantic overstructure without its formal basis as empirical support (hence, no predictability or refutability); any semantic hypothesis thus conceived cannot but be lax to the point of meaninglessness. ⁽⁸⁾ The crucial role that syntax plays in appraising any grammatical category needs no elaborating: in the book under review, this essentiality emerges from the very illustration (to take just two examples: consider ex. 267 vs. ex. 269 on p. 229; also, the different roles and readings of the Stative and the *sdm.n.f* form). Consequently, the question of tense function is hardly cleared up in this work: the value of the author's finding is seriously impaired.

(5) Coptic opens the exposition in the second of the *Études de syntaxe copte* (1944) merely as presentative strategy.

(6) See SHISHA-HALEVY 1986, Chapter Two.

(7) See SHISHA-HALEVY 2000.

(8) It is ironic that Winand thus ignores the wise advice of a compatriot, Ch. De Boer, who famously warned in 1928 of "tyrannie de la morphologie" as a "troubling factor" in the description of modern French.

Without bickering about details — and the work abounds with information about features and phenomena of Egyptian grammar — I wish to address very briefly in a critical spirit some topics which, I believe, demand more sensitive handling, since fraught with special significance. Because of the cramped space, my observations are terse.

“Semantics” and Analytic Method

This work’s subtitle, “Une approche sémantique”, calls for an immediate clarification of descriptive method. This being a programmatic study of the *signifié* facet of the linguistic sign, where is the *signifiant* association? The reader wonders, is the sophisticated semantic systematizing advanced here general, perhaps universal, and given *a priori*, or does it ensue predictably out of any formal signalling in the text? How — if at all — does it tally with linguistic analysis? Indeed, this is in a basic sense an unsatisfying study: the impression the reader brings away is of top-heaviness, as of an upside-down pyramid, rather than of a balanced, integrated analysis. The sense of overall structure here does not inspire confidence, for the real challenge in such a study is not one of evolving a sophisticated semantic system for the very few formal entities, but of isolating the Saussurean linguistic signs, with a semantic-functional *signifié* facet being inseparably associated with a formal *signifiant* one — and I mean in particular *complex* syntactical signalling.

“La syntaxe” as one of the “indicateurs de la temporalité” (pp. 370, 387ff. — “syntax” here meaning the relationship of main and subordinate clause as marking temporal nuances) is symptomatic of the work’s estrangement from the complexities of syntactic structure, indeed the programmatic rejection mentioned above of syntax as informing factor. *All* is syntax, just as our object of analysis is the *text*, not linguistic elements, not semantic systems, not even “language”. Syntax is patterning of various degrees, the interaction of lexemics and grammemics, auxiliations, conversions, tensing, adjuncting, modification and expansion — and Aspect too, insofar as it is pertinent to the language in question and *reflected in its grammar*. Another of my reservations as to Winand’s analytic method regards his ubiquitous use of “opposition” for “semantic difference”. A true opposition obtains only in a given, specifiable syntagmatic slot and — this is crucial — *ceteris paribus*: this latter condition is not easily encountered. For instance (p. 3), the resultative Stative (“Parfait Ancien” is already semantically loaded, in a context such as the present one) does not stand throughout Egyptian in opposition to a non-resultative Stative: in the later phases of the language, these are not an oppositional minimal pair, but *readings* of the form, ideally conditioned by environment, hence alternants (these conditioning factors may be quite complex, and must be worked out), but often randomal, or reflect semantic components of the observer’s language that are non-pertinent in the observed one. (Often, the resultative reading may be contested: see exx. 259, 260, 261 etc.).⁽⁹⁾ Indeed, the “hesi-

(9) A phrasing such as (p. 3) “un temps de la conjugaison peut générer des sens différents en fonction du verbe sur lequel il opère” befuddles whatever it wants to say, and, modern jargon as it may sound, is nothing but an epistemic case of the Emperor’s New Clothes.

tation” (245) between a resultative and statal reading may mean that this distinction is external, imported into the language, hence illegitimate. ⁽¹⁰⁾ As for O/ME, we may indeed have the traces of components of an old verbal category, but I doubt again this is a true case of synchronic opposition. Winand give no information (p. 226ff.) on conditioning environmental factors and distribution; there is no predictability, nor a distributional picture, which is replaced by diachronic speculation. (A central methodological difficulty in cases like this is being guided in semantic mazes by *translation* which, taking over and posing as explanation and description, may prove to be a trap — and I mean not only the relativity of languages — English, French, German, Russian — but the dependence on the degree of delicacy, overtranslation and nuancing in paraphrase. A second example (p. 196ff.) is the “punctual” *sdm.n.f* and the perfectal Stative which, *pace* Winand, do not constitute an opposition.

Aspect

This reviewer is a fairly radical sceptic regarding Aspect as a universally handily, meaningful and ‘typologically’ generally valid concept. I fear I share Co Vet’s and G. Lazard’s view of Aspect (bravely quoted by Winand as motto on pp. 194 and 173) as a notion too elusive to be usefully applied, a “vaporous notion” offering the linguist its “vaporous charm”. It is indeed a fluid and hazy concept. Moreover, a complex system developed *a priori*, subsequently imposed on the language (or with the linguistic facts examined for matching this complex system) is, I hold, methodologically unacceptable. Which is not to say that the “*accompli*” vs. “*inaccompli*” semantic distinction cannot be of ad-hoc use in localized description.

I make no bones about my conviction, that the Slavonic Aspect category (*Vid*), as a morphemic grammaticalized system, cannot be *ohne weiteres* “copied” onto other languages, unless by way of approximation. (A definition of Aspect, like Borghouts’s [p. 15] “the explicit, grammaticalized ways of referring to the internal constituency of a situation” is surely too vague and broad — it easily exceeds the verb). Yet even Aspect proper, in those “original” Aspect languages, is an extremely complicated category, and one sensitive to or interfacing, macrosyntactic parameters, such as textemic alternation or actant specificity.

To what extent is Aspect, systematized externally, so to speak “philosophically”, as a superimposed scheme, as it is in this book, of relevance to linguistic structure? That is, is Aspect a grammatical category in Egyptian — or are aspectual distinctions part of a Tense-Aspect composite category? Here too, the author’s bounding lines between formal and functional are often blurred.

The author’s glee in the aspectual perspective is palpable. The quantitative proportions of Tense and Aspect in the book are telling: the latter is allotted nearly one-half of the book (much more, taking into consideration the theoretical introduction), the former one-eighth. But it may be the haziness and elusiveness of

(10) Is *Km.t nfr.tj* (ex. 312) “Egypt is happy” or “Thus, Egypt becomes happy”? Cf. perhaps the case in Coptic of *etref*, which, for us, merges a causative and non-causative reading: this is *overresolution*, induced by the parallax of our “translating description” and the incommensurability of languages.

Aspect that explains why “aspect n’a jamais soulevé les passions des spécialistes”, as Winand says, somewhat plaintively.

For ME, the author claims a “grammaticalized” aspectual opposition system (p. 187). However, his definition of such grammaticalization is both a *petitio principii* and an unknowable: “une structure qui s’impose de manière obligatoire au locuteur” (my italics).⁽¹¹⁾ This, indeed, is the central thesis of the book: “le système prédicatif verbal du moyen-égyptien est fondamentalement un système aspectuel” — this is not new: typologically, no one has ever claimed that ME (or other phases of Egyptian, like Demotic and Coptic) has a purely temporal system. But the possibility of an integrated aspecto-temporal categories is still as plausible as ever.

Typology

Typology seems to be the predominant consideration and informing force in this work, and the implicit major objection to the “syntactical category” approach to Egyptian grammar. I believe the typological perspective cannot ever replace detailed, internal corpus-based “bottom up” description of (sub)systems: linguistic typology must ensue from the details up to the overall schemes and not, *a priori*, the other way round: for Egyptian, this is as yet *Zukunftsmusik*.

The dangers and limitations of panoramic, bird’s (or satellite’s)-eye-view “blueprint” typology, which often trivializes linguistic structure, underplays or loses sight of features of consequence and is biased by ingrained ethnocentrism; and even more of isolated, unsystemic “feature typology”, ought to have been pointed out (one example for this is the matter-of-fact comparison of the narrative sequential narrative *sdm.n.f* with the Biblical Hebrew *wāyyiqtol* — all they have in common is that they are narrative concatenation forms, which is trivial). Inter-language comparison, even of specific features, must be systemic and systematic.

A cumulative “check-list characterology”, like Trubetzkoy’s characterization of Indo-European, or Ernst Levy’s *Bau der europäischen Sprachen*, is a different matter: for it obliges us to set up a hierarchy of importance or “typicality”, a difficult task which demands in-depth familiarity with the language concerned.). H.J. Polotsky’s only explicitly typological treatise, “Syntaxe amharique et syntaxe turque” (1965) is of this type.

Finally, *heuristic or diagnostic typology* — isolating and identifying features within subsystems, across languages — was an important factor of H.J. Polotsky’s work on Egyptian: this should be borne in mind when judging the “typological plausibility” of his system.⁽¹²⁾

(11) “Grammaticalization” — better grammemicization — is rather about formalization, regulation and distribution rather than about obligatoriness of linguistic elements.

(12) It was the Amharic (substantival-verb form) focalizing constructions that in 1936 inspired the idea of the function of the emphatic forms and Second Tenses (according to an interview with Polotsky of 1983, published in *Igeret* (organ of the Israel Academy of Sciences, 2001, 21:27-29). I owe this reference to Mr. Ya’ar Hever.

Coptic

As is too often the case in Egyptian-perspective (“Egyptological”) studies, Coptic (and Demotic) get here a curt and generally superficial treatment, indeed short shrift, and, one almost feels, make only token appearances. This deprives the argumentation (which relies as heavily on diachrony as it does on typology) of valuable data, which could have improved the treatment (some instances, in the context of narrative tenses and narrativity in general and particular aspects; ⁽¹³⁾ differences between dialects as regards tenses — and current Coptic dialectology is very different from the “Egyptological” impression of Coptic, with Bohairic, Oxyrhynchite, Theban, Southern dialects, non-literary Coptic, all of considerable historical significance; Bohairic certainly seems to recall earlier stages of Egyptian in many respects; the non-actual generic present (cf. p. 146 etc.) and *atemporality*, a major typological trait of Coptic and Demotic which is certainly germane to this work’s main tenor; features of durativity, in particular the Stern-Jernstedt Rule (note Winand’s excellent treatment of the *m*- object, p. 137ff.). Typologically prominent and diachronically instructive in Coptic as in pre-Coptic Egyptian is the opposition between inherent and incidental (or essential and contingent) noun predication (often mentioned by Winand, cf. pp. 100, 169ff., 266, 312), and so on. There are dozens of features of Coptic grammar which shed light on pre-Coptic Egyptian. Indeed, the institutional rifts between (Late) Egyptian, Demotic and Coptic are costing us dear.

The Durative Matrix. The Present Tense. *jw* (auxiliary)

This matrix, within which most verbal forms operate, from the converbs to *jw sdm.n.f* to the Emphatic, is pivotal in ME, according to the *Egyptian Tenses* system: but even for Winand, who does not explicitly recognize this matrix, its image hovers, so to speak, in the background. The author does not always watch for the significant presence or absence of the *hic-et-nunc* grounding auxiliary *jw*. This is indeed an “auxiliaire d’annoncé”, which ought, however, to be explicitly distinguished from a homonymous circumstantial converter *jw* (usual with pronominal subjects; exx. 167, 266 are instances in point).

Winand is a leading authority on the negation of the LE Present, see his studies of 1992 and 1996. On p. 313ff. he discusses the intriguing issue of the opposition between the negated Present and negative Aorist. (The negation prefix *bn-*, without post-negation, is opposed to *bn-...jwn3*. In Bohairic Coptic, both B5 and B4, “solitary” *n-* is by now well established (it also occurs rarely in other dialects), on the one hand; and, on the other hand, mostly in Nitrian Bohairic texts, — *an*, as post-negation and negation focuser, combines with various negative forms, such as the imperative *mper-* and the negative-existence element *mmon*.

(13) See the first chapter of the present reviewer’s *Topics in Coptic Syntax: Structural Studies in the Bohairic Dialect*, Leuven 2007. See also the Index for dozens of Egyptian reflexes of Coptic features. Incidentally, Coptic also shows us how brittle our diachronic constructs are.

However, the negative Aorist — which, in latest Egyptian, is very different in most formal and many functional aspects from the affirmative Aorist, and almost to be uncoupled from it — raises another question, that of the opposition of the durative Present to the *non-durative* or *generic Present*, which in LE constitutes the affirmative pole of *bw-jr.f sdm*. This form is well established in Demotic; in Coptic, it is almost extinct, ousted by the affirmative Aorist; a prevalent residue may be the instance of zero-article object of the type “*tn-ouem-af*” “we’re meat-eaters”, but there are also clear, if sporadic, cases of durativity formally suppressed, by the suppression of the formal durativity signals, which is the *signifiant* of genericity.

The nexal negating of the ME Present by means of the prefix *nm-* is very rare: in fact, *nm-* negates the *existence of nexus*. The embracing negativer *n...js* negatives in ME the Nominal Sentence, the Adjective-Rheme pattern, and of course the Cleft Sentences, including the Emphatic-Theme one. which, by this token, is distinct from the Present matrix. The latter is not negated by the embracing negativer, unlike its correspondents in all subsequent phases — which should raise the question of the reason for this, or, structurally, of the “normal” negation of the Present.

Observations on points of detail

It is misleading, as well as self-defeating, to present, for typological purpose, the Celtic Progressive as built on “être”, and then “preposition + infinitive” (Winand p. 311 n. 44). Modern Irish *tá-* (IE * *sta-*, cf. the patterning of *estar*, Winand p. 266) is synchronically an existence-stating element, not a copular “be”; what is predicated of it is a paradigm of converbs. ⁽¹⁴⁾ The same is true for Modern Welsh *mae-* and its verbal rhemes (constituting the Present tense).

The LE grammemicized infix *-dy-* is well discussed here (p. 313). I doubt, however, that it “stresses the progression”; it occurs in interlocutive environment, and seems to signal a “here and now” deictic sphere. Its advanced formalization may be a reason for the relative scarceness or inertness of its reflex (e.g. Coptic *tai*) as an “active” adverb, e.g. in rhematic status, in the latter phases of the language: Frequently, Coptic has *mpeima* as its active replacement.

Circumstantials and Converbs. *jw* (converter)

For forms virtually non-existent, ⁽¹⁵⁾ following the rejection of the *Egyptian Tenses* system, these are structurally (and typologically) paramount in ME and the latest Egyptian (Demotic and Coptic), but not in LE, where they lose ground to the infinitives as *outils grammaticaux*. ⁽¹⁶⁾ The *sdm.f* and *sdm.n.f* forms in

(14) SHISHA-HALEVY 1998:198ff., 2003:258ff.

(15) Denial of the converbal (adverbial) forms for ME, on alleged typological grounds, preceded that of the substantival ones, *en vogue* today (below): see SATZINGER 2006:123f. Both instance pseudo-typology, for there is nothing extraordinary about finite adverbial and substantival verb-forms playing a central role in various statuses (as in Amharic, Tigrinya or Gurage) — unless our typology be a “squinting” Eurocentric one.

(16) SHISHA-HALEVY (forthcoming) (a).

nexus with *jw* — formally, in the durative matrix — pose certain central questions. The verb forms in question are circumstantial, to most purposes adverbial: finite converbs. There are several issues involved. The circumstantial *sḏm.f* (for Winand, “en position circonstancielle”, p. 268), is not generic *per se*: it is its nexal pattern *jw(.f) sḏm.f* that is generic; and yet, I cannot see that it stands within the *accompli:inaccompli* opposition at all — it is indifferent to this notional opposition. Another issue concerns *jw sḏm.n.f*: the opposition (in the affirmative subsystem) of Perfect (tense, *perfectum praesens*) and Preterite. While clearly a Perfect in the Old Kingdom, at least in locutive environments (as in ex. 18), the Middle Kingdom texts, with the disappearing preterite *sḏm.f*, sees the weakening and finally neutralization of this opposition, formally in favour of *jw sḏm.n.f*. In fact, this opposition is continuously cancelled (always in favour of the [marked?] Perfect term) and simultaneously renewed throughout Egyptian diachrony, even well into Coptic (*af-* vs. *afouô ef-* in Sahidic and in some varieties of Bohairic).

As in the case of the emphatic forms (below), Winand never gives away his view of the nature of the circumstantial forms. He evades the issue by using (238f., 268 etc.) “en position circonstancielle” and “en fonction circonstancielle”, as if a “virtual circumstantial” were a real option. The converbs — *sḏm.f*, *sḏm.n.f*, Stative — are often translated in the book by *alors*, without grammatically accounting for this; occasionally, Winand ignores any adverbiality of the form (e.g. in ex. 185).

Observations on points of detail

The specific function of the difference (probably not opposition) between the two converbs, *m+ infinitive* and *hr + infinitive*, which requires systematic corpus-based study, is too lightly treated here (p. 310).

I confess I find the resultative *sḏm.n.f* very doubtful (p. 200, with fig. 69, consider also ex. 299); some instances are clearly emphatic (e.g. ex. 300). The sequential, concatenating *sḏm.n.f* in narrative, probably circumstantial-converbal is an entirely different phenomenon. Incidentally, the sequential narrative role of converbs (also on East African ground), as discussed in Haspelmath and König 1995 and Haspelmath 2004, is another strong typological corroboration of the *Egyptian Tenses* system. Practically speaking, it is certainly not difficult to distinguish between the sequential and the adjunctal circumstantial *sḏm.n.f*, any more than to differentiate the narrative and adjunctal *ef-* in Sahidic Coptic (the latter quite rare in narrative).

The complicated opposition/alternation Stative vs. *sḏm.n.f* (240ff.), a prominent trait of Egyptian (especially ME), one that survives into Coptic, is purely converbal, i.e. exists only for the circumstantial, not emphatic *sḏm.n.f*. This opposition is neutralized for a certain lexemic class, e.g. verbs of movement; it obtains for cognition-perception intransitives (e.g. “know” vs. “get to know”), and for a few others, carrying, as Winand notes, the opposition process-dynamicity vs. state.. Otherwise, for transitives — in fact, as a criterion of transitivity — it entails diathesis. It is surely exaggerated to claim the Stative “has sometimes active diathesis” in ME.

Note in exx. 308 and 313 nice instances of adverbial adjuncts with a *sdm.n.f* form, neatly opposed to the unadjuncted Stative (ex. 310): an illuminating instance of syntactical symptomaticity.

The circumstantial *sdm.n.f* is focalized by the emphatic *sdm.n.f* in narrative (ex. 197). The comparison to the Hebrew sequential *wāyyiqtol* is out of place (exx. 198, 199).

As almost usual in studies of ME, the circumstantial converter *jw* calls for attention, but gets none. It is unmistakably focalized by emphatic forms — the best test of adverbiality in ME; exx. 452, 489b. It is rhematic in a presentational pattern, following an indefinite noun (the famous example from *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, ex. 482). It is very often adjunctal (e.g. exx. 346-7; usually translated “virtually” as “alors que”, without explanation). Its existence in ME as a homonym of the *hic-et-nunc* autonomy grammaticized auxiliary *jw* seems beyond doubt.

The frequent circumstantial status of negative conjugation forms⁽¹⁷⁾ merits discussion, as does in general the negative system, which is in Egyptian famously asymmetrical to the affirmative system.

Focalizing (“emphatic”) verb forms: *mrr.f*, *sdm.n.f*. Focalization patterns

This is the second set of forms deprived in the work of any syntactical-functional formality. Winand never (so far as I see) addresses or takes an explicit stand on the syntax of this form, as if it is of no relevance for its aspectual nature. (The form *mrr.f* is — by slip of the pen? — “forme emphatique”, p. 188; ⁽¹⁸⁾ “l’imperfectif”, “l’inaccompli général”, p. 281ff.; “la forme dite substantive, dans le fonctionnement de laquelle il est inutile [!] d’entrer ici”). And yet, he renders such forms, again and again, by the French *phrase coupée*, without accounting for this grammatically — as if, *malgré soi*, he is guided by *la clarté française* — by the Cleft Sentence, unless we have cases of “that”-form role of *mrr.f* (see for instance ex. 260, pp. 283ff., 288, 426ff. Incidentally, these “that”-form instances are not at all in conflict with Borghouts’s “howness” thesis and with any “manner” modality). Winand appears to ignore the *Wechselsatz* syntax of *mrr.f*, as e.g. in ex. 418). ⁽¹⁹⁾ The same holds for *wnn-*, in ME not yet emphatic converter but auxiliary verb, alternating with the grounding *jw-*: ex. 382. All this can hardly be a case of “virtual focalization”: the author does not seem to recognize in ME any syntactical focalizing mechanism, nor indeed any formal Cleft Sentence constituency. In scholarly fairness, I would expect him to clarify his stand on this issue, and acknowledge his indebtedness to the *Egyptian Tenses*. (The same applies of course to the circumstantial forms [above], where “position” and “emploi” replace “forme”). The non-committal “emplois circonstanciels ou emphatiques” (209), “emploi emphatique”, “en fonction emphatique” (247) is an evasion rather than a descriptive statement, and, moreover, typologically meaningless.

(17) Cf. SHISHA-HALEVY 1994.

(18) In MALAISE-WINAND’S ME grammar (1999) it is still recognized as a distinct form, while the circumstantial is not (SATZINGER 2006:123f.), as if this makes systemic sense: the *Egyptian Tenses* structure cannot hold halfway.

(19) POLOTSKY 1969:470ff.; NICCACCI 1980,

It is only *en passant*, in a short dismissive footnote (n. 15, p. 281f.) that Winand refers to the syntactic character and construction of the Emphatic set, denying its relevance for the issue at hand on the ground that “le débat reste ouvert sur la place que [la forme] occupe dans l'économie syntaxique de l'égyptien”. He describes the “éventuel statut substantival” of the form as “tenu pour un dogme par l'école polotskyenne”. These *obiter dicta* remarks hardly inspire confidence in the soundness of the author's comments on ME syntax. The reader falls to wondering about the receptivity of current linguistic Egyptology to empirical facts: the substantival nature of *mrr.f* is not a matter of conjecture or dogma, but of recognizing distribution. The blame for dogmatism must lie elsewhere.

As an instance of nexus substantivation, the emphatic set (including the prospective emphatic *sdmw.f*) is surely pertinent for any tense-aspect consideration (as is the infinitive, practically left out of the discussion, which omission, for LE and Demotic especially, is surprising. On the other hand, relative forms and participles are well discussed (p. 281ff.), yet any modality readable in these forms in some contexts is, I believe, secondary and marginal.

Observations on points of detail

The negative *n sdm.n.f*, functioning as negative aorist “he doesn't/cannot hear”, “it is not in his nature to hear!”, is by no means “*accompli*”, and does not “contain” a past tense, the *sdm.n.f* notwithstanding (Winand p. 279 *n jr.n.f* “il n'acheva pas le fait de faire”, *n mdw.n.f* “il ne se mit pas à parler”). For the verb form in this syntagm is the emphatic *sdm.n.f*, as is made clear in the passive *n sdm.n.tw.f*, and as a morphological association with the Emphatic/Second Tense shows from LE to Coptic.

The familiar combination in-nexus of a focalizing (“emphatic”) form with a focalized circumstantial, conveying temporal immediacy (“no sooner... than...”), attested from the Old Kingdom to Coptic, is not discussed here at all. A very nice instance is CT VI 414k with two nexally conjoined *sdm.n.f* forms, mistranslated, I think, in ex. 322 on p. 247 “bien que tu sois allé [read: allée] te coucher tu t'es réveillé [read: réveillée]” — which I suggest should be “no sooner did you [f.] lie down to sleep than you [f.] woke up”.

The curious case of the “emphatic Stative” (p. 247, ex. 321) — “attested but not natural” (!) — is misinterpreted, for what we have is the emphatic auxiliary *wnn.j (jj.kj)*... focalizing the Stative *rnp.kj*, *qua* adverb.

An intriguing OE nexus-focalization pattern is documented in ex. 264 (Pyr. 945 M N): *mn.tj jw.k mn.tj*, recalling the focalizing Tautological Infinitive (attested from OE to Coptic). This seems to be a case of topical Stative converb, repeated in rhematic status: “you *are* stable/established”, lit. “(as for) being stable/established, you are stable/established”.⁽²⁰⁾

(20) See SHISHA-HALEVY 1990. It is of interest to note that the OI/ME “infinitive” topicalized in this construction (e.g. *msyt* from *msj*) is in fact a non-finite converb, as is probably the “Second” Infinitive in Semitic (and, for that matter, the Greek rendering in the Septuagint).

In the note to ex. 266 (*LES* 25,13), the particle *m-r3-*‘ does not say anything about “anterior action” but focusses the Stative: “I *am* alive (after all)”. It is a full-fledged focus particle in Coptic.

I must certainly take issue with Winand’s perfunctory treatment of the “nominal” Cleft Sentence, focalizing nouns and pronouns (pp. 79f., 426f.). This pattern set, and focalization constructions generally, have in Egyptian throughout its history an extremely striking typological significance (cf. East African languages, incl. Ethiopian languages, Nubian and Somali, as well as Berber), especially as regards the thematization mechanism of verbal nexus: once again, the *Egyptian Tenses* model is typologically vindicated.

Valency

Valency (p. 123ff.) is a highly important structural systemic issue that would require a separate volume for each phase of Egyptian, and cannot be lightly applied *ad hoc*: “valence originale d’un verb” (p. 124) is a chimera: a verb (lexeme) does not have a “home valency”, but a specific potentiality of contracting actantial and circumstantial relationships with nouns, pronouns and adverbs, which incidentally defines its identity.

In this context, a word on the Stern-Jernstedt Rule and the *m-* object, already mentioned above as often discussed in the work under review. The philosophy of this, one of the two or three typologically most immanent phenomena of Egyptian, is far from clear, but is evidently germane to the subject-matter of this work. Three considerations immediately come to mind: first, the adverbiality of the object as correlate of the adverbiality of the verbal rheme; second, its correlation with durativity and the correlation of its suppression with genericity and the suppression of durativity and actuality; third, the nature and meaning of “transitivity” in this context.

“Non-Verbal Predication”. Nominal Sentences

(p. 151ff.) The “découpages modernes entre les prédications verbale et non-verbale sont inopérants d’un point de vue sémantique” is certainly to be regretted, but seems to exist mainly in expositions not so much “modern” as ethnocentric. The very appellation “non-verbal” is based on a fallacy, since it Eurocentrically takes the verbal predication as default, as a *point de repère* — this dichotomy is not only inoperative in semantics, it is perniciously wrong in grammatical description.

(p. 153ff.) The Egyptian-Coptic NS shows a rich variety of patterning and functions, with extensive literature to match, from Kurt Sethe’s 1924 monograph on; compressing the information structure of this rich set, for the entire Egyptian diachrony (pp. 154-6), as “sujet + prédicat” and “prédicat + pronom démonstratif, indice du sujet”, and, generally, the reduction of NS semantics to “classification and identification”, to represent this complexity, hardly does it justice. ⁽²¹⁾

(21) SHISHA-HALEVY 2007, Chapter Two, for the Bohairic Coptic NS; 1998, Chapter Three and 1999, for the general *Problematik* of the Nominal Sentence. Cf. for ME SATZINGER 2006:120ff.

The NS changes, subtly but drastically, in later Egyptian, and this change is systematically associated with the decline of the adjective and the emergence of the articles — the changed face of later Egyptian. Winand's exx. are unfortunately only ME, and marked at that:; a *Wechselsatz* (ex. 147) and a naming pattern (ex. 149) are two of the "specialized" constructions that illustrate the variety mentioned above.

The adverbial-rheme patterns (p. 158f) could have been an excellent opportunity to broach the significance of *converbs* in ME (and Coptic!) verbal grammar: for it is not "preposition + infinitive" prepositional phrases we encounter, but a grammaticalized (grammemicized) verbal adverb. Incidentally, the "progressif" is not the *converb* alone, but the *converb* rhematic in the durative (adverbial-rheme) predication pattern. (It is regrettable that the author revives Gardiner's "pseudo-verbal": it is surely time to lay that old infelicitous ghost).

Narrative grammar

Narrative grammar rightly occupies center-stage in Winand's exposition (pp. 235, 371-3, 409-437 and *passim*). Naturally enough, the author's point of view, for all his sensitivity for the macrosyntax of the narrative texteme is aspectual, and to an extent temporal; and yet, narrative functions, layering, juncturing and texturing, pacing and blocking, are no less important than tensing, which is but one of numerous texturing devices. We are dealing here with a different grammatical system, not with narrative context (p. 209) or construction. Narrative focus, very different from dialogic focus, seems especially relevant to temporal-aspectual signalling; the use of emphatic forms, common in ME narrative and attested in all phases including Demotic, but virtually absent in Coptic, is also germane (see p. 426ff.). The author's analysis of ME and LE narratives is a substantial and welcome contribution — there has been no similar study since F. Hintze's *Untersuchungen* — and calls for numerous remarks. (Just one: since Winand does not seem to recognize a past emphatic, some of his "sequentials" are open to a focalizing interpretation, see p. 415 ex. 805, *Westcar* 9.27-10.2).⁽²²⁾

Observations on points of detail.

The Conjunctive in LE narrative (412 n. 35; here too Coptic would have proven instructive) serves, I believe, not for "un procès récurrent" but for "un procès caractérisant", for protagonist characterization.⁽²³⁾

"Discours narratif" (Winand 371-3, 404-9 — as opposed to "récit") in autobiographic narration is oversimplifying. Indeed, this is a distinct texteme, and not merely a case of 1st-person narration; it is locutive-present-referred, (Damourette-

(22) In Bohairic Coptic, a shift *af-* > *naf-* signals slowing down, zooming-in and enhancing of the narrative action — a type of narrative focussing arguably kindred to aspectual function; but a shift to *naf- pe* entails mode-shift, from Evolution to Comment (cf. SHISHA-HALEVY 2007, Chapter One).

(23) See SHISHA-HALEVY 1995. In Coptic, the Conjunctive also occurs in gnomic (paradigmatic) narrative.

Pichon's *nynéocentrique* describes well the perspective that is at least rhetorically emulated by this type). However, far from being a real report texteme, it is a rhetorical, self-promoting, motivated and manipulated history. (In this it is both chronicling and résumé-like, unlike (for instance) *Sinuhe*, another "literarized" piece of locutive rhetorical narrative). I cannot agree that *sdm.n.f* is in this texteme "normalement en charge du parfait" (p. 252), unless in a merely formal manner: this is the *zéro de narration* in these texts.

Why, and how, has *jw sdm.n.f* a "dramatic effect" (p. 287)? This instance shows the subjectivity of many a pronouncement in the work, and the need for more objective criteria when dealing with fine functional nuancing. *Unexpectedness* in plot development (p. 288 *m.k wj r-gs.k...*) would, for instance, be easier to substantiate.

Inchoativity (215ff. etc.) in narrative is another case of the reading / translation trap, and is anyway not so much a factor of the *sdm.n.f* forms as of their syntagmatic junctural environment. It is no more aspectually characterized than the Coptic Preterite (*af-*).

The "converter" ⁽²⁴⁾ *wn-* in narrative, rather than "renvoyer un procès dans le passé" (Winand 383ff. — another, this time properly recognized echo of Polotsky's system) narrativizes the "antinarrative" durative Present (rhematic-converb) pattern.

The LE Sequential as "one of the multiple avatars of the ME present *jw.f hr sdm*" (p. 212) is unlikely, to say the least: the suggested evolutive sequence Present > imperfective > narrative is improbable, even as pure speculation. And again, it must be borne in mind that LE did not "develop from ME": these are merely canonical linguistic episodes, subsequent written phases, which, in all probability, were *contemporaneous varieties* in a single *état de langue*, as was famously the case in Latin-Romance and Germanic-English diachrony.

The auxiliaries *wn.jn-* and *'h'.n-* (215ff.) are treated at length, but their delimitative role, their implication for narrative chunking and concatenation break, pacing and staging implications go almost unheeded in the discussion (occasionally, even in the translation, as in ex. 192 and exx. p. 413f.; usually rendered by "*alors*"). The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Greek Conjunct Participle in the author's quotations from Herodotus, exx. 194-195).

On pp. 250-3 Winand discusses the ME affirmative preterite ("perfective") *sdm. f*, which, though marginal ("récessif"), is still well established, mainly for transitives, in narrative and report. Its marginality is structurally correlated with *jw sdm.n.f* being a Preterite tense, possibly with some perfectal islands in certain environments. (The negative *n sdm.f* is of course the negative correspondent to *jw sdm.n.f*). As Winand notes, this form has specific narrative functions ("exploitée à des fins littéraires" is not a felicitous way of pointing to narrative-grammatical roles). Its opposition to *wn.in.f* and *sdm.n.f* seems to be mainly in their junctural hierarchy. However, the resultative role which Winand considers basic in this

(24) I put the term in quotes, since proper converter status for *wn-* is clear only from LE on. In O/ME is an auxiliary verb, commutable with *jw-*, which, by the same token, is (as Winand notes) an auxiliary. Incidentally, here it is Winand himself that projects from Coptic to ME.

form (and he seems to combine OK and MK sources) seems to me again elusive and doubtful, and, more often than not, subjective and contestable.

The forms *sḏmt.f* in narrative (with *r-sḏmt.f* and *n-sḏmt.f*) and *sḏm.tjff* are not on a par (256f.), for the last is participial — actually, all participles and relative forms ought to have been included in the discussion of tense/aspect in narrative (a brief mention p. 416).

In all its strengths and weaknesses, *Temps et aspect en égyptien* is a milestone in the history of grammatical study of Egyptian. Although none of its suggestions and findings is trivial, its prime interest, as far as this reviewer is concerned, is that it prompts the reappraisal of methodological and theoretical principles and shows how much still remains to be done in this fundamental area. Also, it brings home how sadly blurred still is the distinction between factual and conceptual issues in the Egyptian system of grammar.

Bibliographical References

- HASPELMATH, M., and E. KÖNIG (eds.). 1995. *Converbs in Cross-Linguistic Perspective: Structure and Meaning of Adverbial Verb-Forms — Adverbial Participles, Gerunds*. Berlin/NY: Mouton-de Gruyter.
- HASPELMATH, M. (ed.). 2004. *Coordinating Constructions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- JAMIESON, S.W. 1993. "Determining the Synchronic Syntax of a Dead Language", in: H. AERTSEN and R.J. JEFFERS (eds.) *Historical Linguistics 1989: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 211-220.
- NICCACCI, A., 1980. "Su una formula dei Testi dei Sarcofagi", *Liber Annuus* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum) 30:197-224.
- POLOTSKY, H.J., 1969. "Zur altägyptischen Grammatik" (review article of E. EDEL's *Altägyptische Grammatik*), *Orientalia* 38:465-481.
- SATZINGER, H., 2006. "Wege zum Mittelägyptischen. Eine repräsentative Darstellung in französischer Sprache" (review article, on M. MALAISE and J. WINAND, *Grammaire raisonnée de l'égyptien classique*, Liège, 1999), *Chronique d'Égypte* 81:116-127.
- SHISHA-HALEVY, A., 1986 *Coptic Grammatical Categories: Structural Studies in the Syntax of Shenoutean Coptic*, Rome: The Pontifical Institute (= *Analecta Orientalia* 53).
- 1990 "The Tautological Infinitive in Coptic", *Journal of Coptic Studies* 1 (*Elanskaja Festschrift*), 99-127.
- 1994 "Pluridimensional Oppositions: Case Studies from Scripture Bohairic", in: *Coptology: Past, Present and Future (Kasser Festschrift)* (= *OLA* 61) Leuven:Peeters 225-247.
- 1995 "Some Reflections on the Egyptian Conjunctive", in: *Divitiae Aegyptii (Krause Festschrift)* Wiesbaden: Reichert, 300-314.
- 1998 *Structural Studies in Modern Welsh Syntax: Aspects of the Grammar of Kate Roberts*, 1998 Münster: Nodus.

- 1999 “Structural Sketches of Middle Welsh Syntax (II): Noun Predication Patterns”, *Studia Celtica* 33:155-234.
- 2000 “Stability in Clausal/Phrasal Pattern Constituent Sequencing: 4000 Years of Egyptian (With Some Theoretical Reflections, also on Celtic)” in: *Word Order — Stability and Change over Time*, ed. R. SORNICOLA, E. Poppe, A. Shisha-Halevy, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 71-100.
- 2003 “Celtic Syntax, Egyptian-Coptic Syntax”, in: *Das Alte Ägypten und seine Nachbarn (Festschrift Helmut Satzinger)*, Krems: Österreichisches Literaturforum, 245-302.
- 2007 *Topics in Coptic Syntax: Structural Studies in the Bohairic Dialect*, Leuven: Peeters (= OLA 160).

A. SHISHA-HALEVY