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Two Remarkable Features of Coptic Syntax

(I) The Circumstantial Stative
(II) The Neutric Copular **ⲧⲉ** in Nominal Sentence Patterns

On the following pages, we propose to present and discuss our database for some features of Coptic, deviating from the "canonical" picture as seen in the grammars, from L. Stern's to B. Layton's, and in the grammatical literature generally. These are *Lesefrüchte*, and the treatise more of a work-note than a conclusive and systematic discussion; it is meant to attract attention, but also a description of environment and function. A historical dimension is of the essence in these cases, and will be addressed in some detail, for a diachronic cycle may here be in evidence, and an appeal to pre-Coptic Egyptian linguists is envisaged; also, a methodological perspective – pointing out the flimsiness of our comprehension of Coptic grammar, as well as its "canonical" nature, which is the main reason for the impulse for editorial condemnation and emendation. Finally, this essay is an homage to the syntactical sensitivity and analytic intelligence of W. E. Crum, not to be eclipsed by his lexicographical genius. In Ludwig Stern's words, Coptic cannot easily be "erlernt": of its *terra incognita* patches, our notes pick one verbal, one non-verbal feature.

(I) The Circumstantial Stative

The starting point of this study was the discovery of a series of three unexpected successive Statives in Shenoute's Canon 8[1] (see below, example 8). Trying to find corroboration and an

explanation (in the sense of syntactical basis), we present here some assorted instances of "Strange Statives". There can be no doubt that more examples can and probably will be found. The occurrences we list may be classified in two main categories, specified below. Some cases remain uncertain; however, we have listed them here, with the idea that they would be corroborated and clarified some day by other instances. Finally, two cases of apparent *variation* of Infinitive and Stative of the same verb, seemingly in similar function, may be related to the question of an "adjectival" Stative.

(a) Adnexal (approx. = adverbial and rhematic) Stative

(1) ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲕⲱ ⲡⲉⲕϩⲓⲥⲉ ϣⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲁⲛ, they will not let your trouble be in vain (O.Medin.HabuCopt. 141 verso, 4).
(2) ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁï ϩⲉⲛⲕⲁⲓⲣⲉⲁ ⲧⲁⲗⲏⲩ ⲉⲡⲛⲁⲧ, I have bandages mounted on the loom (P.Mon.Epiph. 10–12).
(3) ⲟⲩⲟⲛⲧⲏⲓ ⲟⲩⲁⲕⲁⲁⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲏϩ[, I have a waggon located… (O.Crum 316, 3).
(4) ⲙⲡⲣⲕⲟ ⲡⲉⲕϩⲏⲧ ϩⲟⲥⲉ, Do not let your heart be troubled (O.TT29 763, 9–10).
(5) ⲉⲑⲣⲟⲩⲭⲁⲛⲓⲣϣⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲓϣⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲟⲩⲏⲛ, … that they leave the doors of the prison open (Hyvernat, Les Actes des Martyrs I, p. 131.3/4). (Example supplied by E. Grossman).
(6 & 7) ⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲭⲁⲡⲉϥϩⲓⲥⲓ ϣⲟⲩⲓⲧ ⲁⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲩⲉⲣⲕⲟⲥⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲡⲓⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲟⲩⲭⲁⲧϥⲁⲙϥⲁⲛⲓ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ ⲁϣⲓ ⲁⲧϭⲛⲉ ⲛⲉϩ, We shall not let his trouble be in vain: let them decorate the sanctuary and have the whole chandelier hanging without oil (Vie de Jean Kolobos, ed. by Amélineau 1894, p. 386.2/3 et 3/4; reed. by M. S. A. Mikhail & T. Vivian 2010, p. 184).

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[1] The edition of this work is in preparation by Anne Boud'hors.

Examples 1 to 7 are instances of adnexal Stative, predicative complement of ⲕⲱ + definite or ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁ= + indefinite. Usually, one would expect the Stative to be the rheme of a circumstantial Present. The occurrence in (1) had embarrassed the editors, who give no translation. In his review of O.Medin.HabuCopt., W. Till proposed to reconstruct ⲉϥ- before ϣⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ, in order to reach the translation: "They will not let your trouble be in vain (and they will thank you)." Although the translation is apt, the reconstruction is unnecessary, as shown by the other examples from Thebes (2–4) and the exactly similar context in (6). Crum (example 2) was not at all troubled by the construction, and did not bother to comment on it.

This construction in Coptic raises interesting historical issues. As is well known, the Egyptian ancestor of the Coptic Stative was (at least in Old and Middle Egyptian) not restricted to the Present, but operated as a versatile finite converb. This versatility was drastically reduced by Late Egyptian, and even more so in Demotic. However, it was never absolutely cancelled, as has hitherto been the consensus about Coptic. The evidence presented here shows traces of this pre-Coptic feature; indeed, in Late Egyptian and Demotic the most prominent case of Stative outside the Present is the object-adnexal one, with auxiliary or thematic verbs (see Erman, Neuägyptische Grammatik, § 339 ff.; Černý-Groll, A Late Egyptian Grammar, p. 200 f.). Put differently, the analyticity of the Stative converb (as circumstantial converter + Present), hitherto deemed absolute, is revealed to have its exceptions. In still different terms, the Coptic Stative, whose morphological identity (as an entity opposed to the Infinitive) is almost the only grammatical information forthcoming, while the rhematic slot in the Present pattern has hitherto been its only recognized formal-distributional datum, now has a different look: the syntactical career of this verb-form is revealed to be manifold, and the morphology/syntax profile complex. This concerns primarily the adverbiality of the form; it is now no longer inertly paradigmatic, but fully, actively converbal.

Note that the cliché of (1) and (6) could be an echo of 1 Cor 15,58: ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ϫⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲓⲥⲉ ϣⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲁⲛ ϩⲙ̄ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ.

So far, occurrences of this construction are attested in Theban Sahidic and Nitrian Bohairic; however, no conclusion can be drawn from this, as attestation in other dialects could also be found in the future.

N. B. A morphologically different case, but one of definite relevance to the phenomenon of the "Circumstantial Stative", is the Bohairic John 19:6 (consensus) ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ϯϫⲉⲙ-ϩⲗⲓ ⲛⲉⲧⲓⲁ ϭⲓ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲁⲛ "For as for me, I do not find any guilt pertaining to him".

Here we have, not the Stative, but the Dynamic Converb (so-called infinitive; in fact, an adverbial homonym thereof) in a role that is usually played by the circumstantial conversion. That is, synchronically, the Dynamic Converb adnominally to ϩⲗⲓ (indefinite, thus nucleus to an adverbial form); diachronically, this converb emerged, and was grammaticalized, from a preposition + infinitive syntagm. The implication of this is striking (and further exx. may be expected), not least for the structural differentiation of this converb from the "true" (i.e. substantival) infinitive. Note that ϭⲓ has here arguably a stative value.

(b) 'Adjectival' Stative

The occurrences listed below raise in fact only one component of a much larger question, which is the want of a clear-cut category of "adjective" in Coptic, and the constructions and environments "reviving" it. Morphologically speaking, a possible correlation between the existence of a deverbal adjective (such as ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ) and "absence" (i.e. systemic non-attestation) of a Stative form, must be investigated. The cases reported here, which are most certainly token instances for a wide-spread phenomenon, are arguably *participial*; the important Egyptian participle, virtually extinct as such (i.e. as a morphological verbal category) in Coptic, is still traceable in these "adjectival" Statives. (Incidentally, they all seem to be intransitive).

(8) Shenoute, Canon 8, XO 179–180[2]:

ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲓ̈ϩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲧⲣ̄ϩ̄ⲏⲃⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧϫⲱ
ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲓ̈ⲧⲟⲉⲓⲧ ϫⲉϩⲉⲛⲡⲣⲁⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ ϩⲉⲛϩⲟⲓ̈ⲧⲉ ⲏ̄
ϩⲉⲛⲣ̄ⲱⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲱϣⲥ̄ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲟⲩⲱϣⲥ̄ ϩⲓⲱⲱϥ
ⲉⲩϭⲏⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲉϭⲏⲩ
ⲉⲩϩⲃⲱⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲉϩⲃⲱⲟⲩ
ⲉⲩⲡⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲡⲟⲕ
ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲟⲙⲧ̄ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲟⲩⲱⲙⲧ̄
ϫⲉⲉϥⲉⲧⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲉϫⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ̄
ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩϭⲱⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱϣⲥ̄
ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩϩⲃ̄ⲃⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩϣⲓⲁⲉⲓⲁⲓ̈
ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩⲡⲁⲕⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲙⲟⲧ

Parlez ainsi, vous qui êtes chagrinés et vous qui proférez cette plainte : "C'est éprouvant que des vêtements qui ne sont pas larges doivent devenir larges sur lui, <u>étroits</u> s'ils ne le sont pas, <u>courts</u> s'ils ne le sont pas, <u>fins</u> s'ils ne le sont pas, épais s'ils ne le sont pas, de sorte qu'il soit satisfait par un assemblage unique sur lui : celui de leur étroitesse et celui de leur largeur, celui de leur petitesse et celui de leur longueur, celui de leur finesse et celui de leur épaisseur" (transl. A.B.).

The surprise of this text lies in the three Statives, which 'ought not' to be governed by a preposition. In our opinion, this use is anything but erroneous or negligent, since the whole passage displays a sophisticated stylistic variation (there is a chiasm, but the mirror structure is not completely symmetrical):

circ. + Infinitive …	ⲉ- + Infinitive
circ. + Stative …	ⲉ- + Stative
circ. + Stative …	ⲉ- + Stative
circ. + Stative …	ⲉ- + Stative
circ. + Stative …	ⲉ- + Infinitive

The Statives here have an adjectival function, while replacing the infinitive. This is all the more perceptible, as the concerned verbs are stative ones, where the semantic difference between Infinitive and Stative is sometimes small in Coptic. One suspects that this could have to do with

the circumstantial constructions analysed by A. Shisha-Halevy in JEA 1976. Does the Stative share the "participial" nature of the circumstantial Present, in the sense of "one who…"?

(9 & 10) ⲟⲩϭⲓⲛⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲟⲩϣⲏⲙ ⲉⲛⲉⲙϫⲱⲗ ⲉϥϭⲉⲱϭⲱ ϣⲏⲩ ⲉⲡⲣⲱϣⲉ … ϭⲟⲡ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲕ ⲉⲡⲣⲱⲥⲫⲟⲣⲁ ⲗⲟⲕ, "A food". A few moistened onions, a sufficient measure … Take a light (?) sacramental loaf … (P.Ryl.Copt. 110, 1 & 3).

This text is a recipe for preparing a (medical?) dish. ϣⲏⲩ is the "established" Stative of ϣⲓ, "to measure".

According to Crum's translation, ⲗⲟⲕ must be the Stative of ⲗⲱⲕ, "to be soft, fresh", although the usual form is ⲗⲏⲕ (ⲗⲟⲕ is not attested in Crum's Dictionary). Crum comments briefly both on ϣⲏⲩ ("As in ⲗⲟⲕ, below, the prefix appears to be omitted") and on the translation "a sufficient measure" ("Cf. τὸ ἀρκοῦν, Parthey, Zwei Zauberpap., n° 2, 10")[3].

(11) + ⲡⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲕ^ⲧ ⲟⲩⲭⲏϭⲉ ⲉϥⲧⲁⲣϣ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ϫⲉⲭ ⲟⲩⲭⲏϭⲓ ⲉϥⲕⲏⲙ ⲡⲉ, Der Stein gemahlen (?) ist ein roter Purpur, der Stein gebrannt (?) ist ein schwarzer Purpur (Berlin P. 8316, 1–2 = BKU I 21, new edition in preparation by T. S. Richter, transl. T. S. Richter).

This is again a recipe, the instruction how to produce purple-like dye stuff.

Both texts (9–10) and (11) are late, and belong to the same category of magical or medical recipes (with many Arabic words in the first case). Syntactically, they are not exactly alike; in (11), the Stative has a clearly attributive function, marked by the construction with ⲛ-[4]. It is also remarkable that in both texts, "lonely" Statives occur side by side with Statives in the circumstantial Present, which indicates that the alternation is not random or meaningless.

(12) ϣⲟⲃⲓ, "changed, disguised person, hypocrite" (cf. Crum, CD 552a). This use of the Stative as a noun/adjective is exclusively Bohairic. Consider the use of ⲥⲱⲧⲡ, "chosen", as a noun/adjective, homonymous with the infinitive (cf. Crum, CD 365b).

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[2] XO is the siglum of the manuscript as given in the database "Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari". More context may be needed: in the foregoing passage, Shenoute has been announcing that he will abandon the spoiled and bloody garments (metaphorical for the bad and recidivist monks). Then he introduces the theme of the measures of the garments, a topic already mentioned and dealt with several times in other parts of Canon 8, and always difficult to understand, because one never knows whether he is speaking of real garments, woven for him by the nuns, or talking metaphorically, or both.

[3] This comment could apply only to ⲉⲡⲣⲱϣⲉ.

[4] As commented by Richter: "Verwendung des Stativs als Attribut".

(13) Perhaps ⲚϨⲞⲦ (cf. Crum, CD 246b, IIb). It is difficult to know whether this, in constructions like ⲠⲚϨⲞⲦ or ϨⲈⲚⲚϨⲞⲦ, means "trustworthy, faithful" or "trust" (noun).

(c) Miscellaneous

(14) ⲘⲚⲚⲈⲤⲀ ⲚⲀⲒ ⲆⲈ ⲦⲎⲢⲞⲨ ⲀⲨⲞϢⲤ ⲈⲢⲞⲒ ⲀⲤⲢⲀⲚⲀⲒ ⲀⲒⲬⲞⲞϤ <u>ⲬⲈⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ</u> ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ ⲀⲒⲦⲀⲬⲢⲞⲤ ⲘⲘⲚⲦⲢⲈ ϨⲒⲔⲞⲘⲠⲖⲈⲨⲤⲒⲤ (P.KRU 15.91–93).
(15) ⲘⲚⲚⲤⲀ ⲚⲀⲒ ⲀⲨⲞϢⲤ ⲈⲢⲞⲚ ⲀⲚⲤⲞⲦⲘⲈⲤ ⲀⲤⲢⲀⲚⲀⲚ ⲀⲚⲬⲞⲞϤ <u>ⲬⲈⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ</u> ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ ⲀⲚⲦⲀⲬⲢⲞⲤ ⲘⲘⲀⲢⲦⲨⲢⲞⲤ ϨⲒⲔⲞⲘⲠⲖⲈⲨⲤⲒⲤ (P.KRU 48.57–59).

Both documents are written by the same scribe. (14) is a contract of sale (ⲠⲢⲀⲤⲒⲤ), (15) the result of an arbitration (ⲆⲒⲀⲖⲨⲤⲒⲤ).

In Rechtssemantik, T. S. Richter quotes these two occurrences and translates: "ich sagte: 'So ist es in Ordnung!'"[5]. It is tempting to postulate an haplography for ⲬⲈ(Ⲥ)ⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ, especially in comparison with other texts concerning documents whose names are feminine:

P.KRU 66,64: ⲦⲒⲦⲒⲀⲐⲎⲔⲎ ⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ ⲤⲞⲢⲬ ⲤⲞⲘϬⲞⲘ ⲤⲞ ⲚⲬ(ⲞⲈⲒ)Ⲥ
P.Lond. IV 1566,11: ⲆⲒ]ⲔⲀⲒⲀ ϨⲞⲘⲞⲖⲞⲄⲈⲒⲀ ϢⲰⲠⲈ <u>ⲈⲤⲤⲘⲞⲞⲚⲦ</u>[… ϨⲚ]ⲂⲈⲂⲀⲒⲰⲤⲒⲤ ⲚⲒⲘ

However, the examples of ⲤⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ occur in other phrases, not exactly similar to this one. It may be a case of "fragmentary speech" (something like "OK")[6].

(16) ⲈⲒⲤ ϨⲎⲎⲦⲈ ⲀⲚⲞⲔ †† ⲞⲨⲂⲈⲚⲒⲢⲈϤⲢϨⲒⲔ ⲚⲢⲈϤⲢⲠⲀϨⲢⲈ ⲚⲢⲈϤⲔⲀⲞⲨⲚⲞϤ ⲚⲢⲈϤϢⲠ ⲈⲚⲚⲤⲒⲞⲨ ⲚⲦⲠⲈ ⲚⲢⲈϤϢⲘϢⲈⲒⲆⲰⲖⲞⲚ Ⲏ ⲈⲨϢⲀⲚⲬⲞⲤ ⲬⲈⲦⲚϮⲆⲎⲘⲞⲤⲒⲞⲚ ⲈⲨⲢⲈⲂⲞⲖ ⲘⲠⲢⲦⲢⲈⲨⲀⲚⲀⲔⲢⲒⲚⲈ ⲘⲘⲞⲞⲨ ⲚⲦⲰⲦⲚ <u>ⲬⲈⲞ ⲚⲀϢ ⲚϨⲈ</u> ⲀⲨⲰ ⲤⲈⲦⲞⲤⲈ ⲘⲘⲞⲞⲨ ⲘⲀⲨⲀⲀⲨ (Shenoute, ed. Leip. III 88.14f.[7]).

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[5] T. S. Richter, Rechtssemantik und forensische Rhetorik, Wiesbaden 2008[2], p. 262. This implies that ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ goes with ⲤⲘⲞⲚⲦ rather than be connected with what follows: this seems indeed satisfactory, given the frequency of ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ referring to what precedes, and considering that otherwise one would expect a particle after ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ. However, there can be no certainty in this matter.

[6] All this has already been pointed out by T. S. Richter in a personal communication to A. Shisha-Halevy. In this case, it may be better to take ⲚⲦⲈⲒϨⲈ as beginning a new sentence.

[7] The passage is contained in the manuscript "ZJ", which is a witness of the part of Shenoute's works

Editor's note: "Locus corruptus. Verba secundum interpunctionem codicis separata sunt. ⲬⲈⲤⲈⲞ suspicor". Given that the interrogative element follows the verb, ⲬⲈ(ⲈⲨ)Ⲟ (with a 2nd Present) might be more likely. In any case, since the meaning of the passage is not entirely clear, we cannot propose an interpretation that would account either for the text as it is or for the emended text.

(d) Some Remarkable Facts Involving the Stative

(d/1) Variation ⲞⲨⲰⲚ/ⲞⲨⲎⲚ in P.KRU

In the entire P.KRU corpus there is but a single instance of the Infinitive ⲞⲨⲰⲚ, used metaphorically: ⲀⲠⲚⲞⲨⲦⲈ ⲠⲀⲄⲀⲐⲞⲤ ⲚⲚⲀⲎⲦ ⲞⲨⲰⲚ ⲈⲠⲀϨⲎⲦ ⲈⲦⲢⲀⲚⲞⲨⲬⲠⲀⲔⲞⲨⲒ ⲚⲀⲨⲠⲦⲞⲚ (P.KRU 106.51).

In contrast, the Stative ⲞⲨⲎⲚ is very frequent, and occurs mostly in the following formula: ⲠⲘⲀ ⲈⲦⲈⲢⲈⲠⲢⲞ ⲚⲀⲨⲐⲈⲚⲦⲈⲤ ⲞⲨⲎⲚ ⲈⲢⲞϤ (P.KRU 1.64 & passim).

Therefore, it is tempting to explain the following unexpected forms of Stative as a kind of attraction or analogy:

(17a) ⲀⲨⲰ ⲠⲢⲞ ⲚⲀⲢⲬⲀⲒⲞⲚ ⲈϢⲀⲢⲈⲠⲢⲞ <u>ⲞⲨⲎⲚ</u> ⲈⲢⲟϤ (P.KRU 21.40 & 42.28).
(17b) ⲚⲦⲈⲠⲢⲞ ⲘⲠⲞⲨⲘⲈⲢⲞⲤ <u>ⲞⲨⲎⲚ</u> ⲈⲚϨⲎⲦ (P.KRU 45.31/32).

Such an explanation would however be unsatisfactory. In fact, the Stative in the non-durative environment occurs several times also in the circumstantial Absolute Future, in the Bohairic Pentateuch (BnF Copte 1)[8]. Thus, this may be a more widespread phenomenon.

One could suggest that in all these cases, the Stative has again an adjectival function.

Another explanation would be that ⲞⲨⲎⲚ is a (sporadic?) dialectal by-form of the Infinitive

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called "Varia" (more information about the manuscripts and works of Shenoute is to be found in S. Emmel, Shenoutes' Literary Corpus, Louvain 2004).

[8] Cf. Shisha-Halevy, Topics in Coptic Syntax: Structural Studies in the Bohairic Dialect (2007), p. 196.

ⲟⲩⲱⲛ[9]. This is corroborated by the occurrence of P.Mon.Epiph. 247.15: ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩ̄ⲏ̄ⲛ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡ̄ⲣⲟ.

(d/2) Variation ⲥϩⲁⲓ/ⲥ̄ϩ̄ in P.KRU

P.KRU 38, 48: ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲁ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲉⲓ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲱⲛ ⲡⲣⲟⲥ ⲧϭⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲧⲓⲁⲁⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲙⲛ ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉ̄ϥⲥ̄ϩⲁⲓ ⲉ̄ⲣⲟⲥ
Idem in P. KRU 21.77, 86; P.KRU 35.71, 76; P.KRU 42.41, 43, 45.

These documents were written by the same scribe, who also uses ⲟⲩ̄ⲏ̄ⲛ in the non-durative Conjugation (see d.1, ex. 17 above).

Contrast with the parallel formula in P.KRU 48.53, 63, written by another scribe:

ⲛ̄ϥϩⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ϥⲥⲱⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧ ⲙⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉ̄ⲩⲥ̄ϩ̄ ⲉ̄ⲣⲟⲥ (ⲉ̄ϥⲥ̄ϩ̄ line 63).

We may be reaching here the limit of our investigation and the beginning of another one, which would consist in examining the grammatical features of a given corpus with attention to possible individual scribal practices. Indeed, all the examples of sections b–d (except for Shenoute's text) have a non-standard character. They merit attention because they reveal possibilities of variations according to age, provenance and genre of the documents.

(II) Neutric ⲧⲉ in Nominal Sentence Patterns

The irregularity encountered in a case of apparent discord between masculine or plural nominal elements and a medial feminine ⲧⲉ was first reported by W. E. Crum, The monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes (1926), but noted by him decades earlier. In Epiphanius vol. I, p. 250, he says, somewhat opaquely: "An enclitic -ⲧⲉ has been commented upon in 338n. To which, if to any of those cited there – apparently explicative – is related in the glossary CO 434 (better republished by Pellegrini in Sphinx X 152) re-

mains to be decided. It is remarkable that, irrespective of gender, -ⲡⲉ varies (on verso) with -ⲧⲉ in this last text" (the *verso* was not edited in CO, but in Pellegrini's 1906 re-edition. See below. In Epiphanius vol. II, p. 243 (that note to No. 338), Crum says: "The enclitic -ⲧⲉ may be an error or it may be compared with its occurrence in [… (*giving numerous reff.*)]". In Coptic Ostraca (1902) No. 434, Crum comments briefly (p. 45) "the repeated -ⲧⲉ is obscure". See also Crum's comment in (c) below.

In fact, however, in these constructions (which ought to be known as "Crum's neuter") we have a striking attestation of the morphologically feminine, syntactically neutric element (not unlike "it", "es", "ce (ci/la)"), that is either *copular* (i.e. medial in the copular Nominal Sentence pattern, signifying nexus between theme and rheme: non-referential, and arguably non-pronominal)[10]; or else, presentative or thetic-situational. In his quiet sensitivity to syntax, Crum put his finger on the main formal factor: full or partial fluctuation of ⲡⲉ, ⲧⲉ and ⲛⲉ, which constitutes the very definition of neuter gender signification in Coptic: fluctuation being the signifier of "neuter" signified[11]. Thus, our ⲧⲉ creates no discord, and is certainly not erroneous or negligent – it is a delicious instance of non-pertinence, neutralization, the very core of structural linguistic analysis. Moreover, this feature sheds light on the difficult issue of referentiality and theticity of pronominals.

The evidence

(a) Non-referential, copular ⲧⲉ – in specification of property boundaries in sales, wills and so

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[9] This seems to be W.-P. Funk's view, expressed in a personal communication to A. S.-H.

[10] Unlike the homonymous thematic pronoun, the copula is prosodically not enclitic (pace Crum), but proclitic to the pattern-final rheme (Shisha-Halevy, Coptic Grammatical Categories: Structural Studies in the Syntax of Shenoutean Sahidic [1986], 34 f., 161 f., n. 36). In the much attested boundary-specifying construction in P.KRU, this is especially striking with the rheme ⲛⲁⲓ (usually cataphoric): ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ… ⲧⲉ/ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ is typical. Consider for instance 8.7 ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲛ̄ϩ ⲧⲏⲣϥ̄ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ.

[11] Shisha-Halevy, Categories, Chapter Five.

on[12]. Theban (the P.KRU corpus: Crum and Steindorff, Koptische Rechtsurkunden des achten Jahrhunderts aus Djême (Theben)). The copular Nominal Sentence pattern[13].

Note the contiguity of **ⲧⲉ** with the essential pattern-constituent rhematic demonstrative **ⲛⲁⲓ**, cataphoric or anaphoric, which mediates between the pattern and the often diffuse actual boundary definition. The theme is the plural **ⲧⲟϣ** "boundaries".

4/40 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲭⲱⲣⲩⲙⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲉϥ:** …
8/7 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲁⲛⲍ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ:** …
8/9 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲛⲍ ⲧⲏⲣϥ** (anaphoric)
10/37 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲧⲧⲟⲏⲙⲓⲥⲩⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲙⲡⲕⲁⲍ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ**
11/31 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲣⲓⲧⲟⲛ-ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲕⲁⲍ**
14/45 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ**
15/43f. **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ:** …
41/52 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲧⲉ**
43/49f. **ⲛⲉⲩⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ**
46/14 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲏⲓ**
47/34 **ⲛⲉⲩⲧⲟϣ ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲧⲉ**

All these fluctuate with the **ⲛⲉ** copula concording with the theme in:

7/25 **ⲛⲉϥⲧⲁϣ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ:** …
23/20 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ:** …
24/1 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ**
46/10 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ:**…

The copular pattern arguably alternates with the expanded delocutive Nominal Sentence pattern, where we encounter the *thematic pronoun* **ⲛⲉ**; the demonstrative **ⲛⲁⲓ** is in this case either postposed theme, and *anaphoric*:

12/27f. **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲛⲉⲛⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ**
18/23 **ⲛⲉϥⲧⲟϣ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲧⲉ**
23/23 **ⲛⲉϥⲧⲟϣ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ**
24/50,56,58 **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ** … **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ** … **ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲟⲛ ⲙⲡⲁⲛⲍ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ**

Or it may be rhematic, but a rheme very different macrosyntactically from the rheme of the copular pattern – a true alternant in this case, for this occurs in the relative conversion:

12/25f. … **ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲛⲉⲛⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ**
14/42 … **ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛϥⲧⲟϣ:**
15/40 **ⲡⲣⲟⲥ-ⲛⲉϥⲧⲟϣ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ:** …
23/21 … **ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲧⲟϣ:** …

Or (and the syntactical markedness must somehow be equivalent) following the presentative **ⲉⲓⲥ-**, **ⲛⲁⲓ** cataphoric:

2/26, 3/29f. **ⲉⲓⲥ-ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲁϣ ⲙⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲛⲕⲁⲍ ⲉⲓⲥ-ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲧⲟϣ** also 9/45[14], 16/31f., 35/41f., 74/63.67[15].

A *zero* copula (in various patterns) occurs in 6/41, 13/26, 43/42,46, 46/10.

(b) ⲧⲉ copular, between lemma and gloss, in a Greek-Coptic glossary; fluctuation with **ⲡⲉ** and probably **ⲛⲉ**.

Crum, CO No. 434, Pellegrini, Sphinx X (1906) pp. 152–153. Text not collated.
The lemma is always bare.
Lemma: adjective, gloss: generic **ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ-**, copula: **ⲧⲉ**
Lemma: **ⲫⲓⲗⲟ-** noun, gloss: generic **ⲡⲙⲁⲓ-**, copula: **ⲡⲉ**
Lemma: **-ⲓⲁ** abstract, gloss: **ⲧ-/ⲡ-** abstracts, copula: **ⲧⲉ** (**ⲧ-** gloss) and **ⲡⲉ** (**ⲡ-** gloss)

This is a special, formalized application of the copular Nominal Sentence; the lemma–gloss

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[12] Uncollated; none corrected by H. Förster, "Corrigenda to P.KRU", GM 179 (2000) 107–112.

[13] This pattern, with distinct prosodic contour, concord, macrosyntactic properties and theme/rheme constituency is often, perhaps mainly, hermeneutic; in the P.KRU corpus it occurs in naming or rather identification-by-name role, remarkably unconverted, "**ⲧⲉⲥ ⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲧⲉ** X" (e.g. P.KRU 15/5f., 50/4 etc.). Here the copula is almost always feminine, with no fluctuation; a rare exception, unequivocally neutric, is P.KRU 68/96 **ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ**. Some referentiality may be in evidence. Clearly, we are dealing with a copular set of subpatterns, rather than with a single pattern.

[14] The remarkable feminine singular **ⲧⲟϣ** in P.KRU 9/45: **ⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲧⲉϥⲧⲟϣ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲧⲉ** and 45/34: **ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲟⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲓⲛⲁⲟⲩⲱⲛⲍ ⲛⲧⲉϥⲧⲟϣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ** (both uncollated) may be explained by the interference of our formulaic copular **ⲧⲉ**. As Sebastian Richter notes in a personal communication, it is strange that Crum did not mark these instances by "sic" or any other way.

[15] In 31/2, the environment of **ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϣ ⲙⲡⲏⲓ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ** is uncertain.

dependence is nexal in a peculiar, textemically defined sense. The copula variation is at least partly an alternation.

recto

ⲭⲣⲏⲥⲓⲙⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϣⲁ[ⲩ
ⲁⲭⲣⲏⲥⲓⲙⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲁⲧϣⲁ[ⲩ
ⲙⲱⲣⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲥⲓⲅⲏ
ⲫⲣⲟⲛⲓⲙⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲥⲁⲃ[ⲉ
ⲉⲗⲉⲩⲑⲉⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲙ̄ϩⲏ
ⲇⲟ]ⲩⲗⲓⲁ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧϩⲙ̄ϩⲁⲗ
/////////////ⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲡⲉⲥ?ⲩ

verso

ⲫⲓ[ⲗⲟ]ⲑⲉⲟⲥ
ⲡⲉ ⲡⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ
ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲭⲣⲩⲥⲟⲥ
ⲡⲉ ⲡⲙⲁⲓⲭⲣⲏⲙⲁ
ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲇⲟⲝⲟⲥ
ⲡⲉ ⲡⲙⲁⲓⲧⲁⲓⲟϥ
ϩⲥⲩⲭⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲥϭⲣⲁϩⲧ

(c) Epistolary Self-Presentation (Fayyumic)

Crum, Coptic Manuscripts from the Fayyum (1892), No. XXXVI, recto line 1:
(1) ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲗⲱⲧⲓ ⲙ̄ ⲥⲓⲥⲓⲛⲛ[ⲁ

Crum's note (on ⲡⲓⲗⲱⲧⲓ) "The preceding ⲧⲉ is quite certain and is either an error, for ⲡⲉ, which the formula requires, or ⲡⲓⲗⲱⲧⲓ is fem. [skeptical reference]. Besides, I do not know that υἱός can, in such cases, be = 'daughter'".

We have here the typical Fayyumic epistolary opening. It is not easy to define the status of ⲧⲉ here, except that it is non-referential; this or a comparable element, in the kindred divine or royal proclamatory/acclamatory Nominal Sentence[16], seems again to be non-referential, a formal *appui* to the locutive signature name. So too:

(2) P.Lond.Copt. I 614 fgt F (Or. 4720 (55) BM Cat. p. 290 ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ⲧⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲕⲟⲩⲣⲓ

Crum does not comment on the construction.

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[16] Shisha-Halevy, Topics, p. 265 ff. The immutable theme ⲡⲉ in Nominal Sentence patterns (Topics, p. 262 ff.) may be seen as another case of "neuter", but one that is unmarked, rather than the fluctuation-signified one.

(d) Situational-anaphoric or thetic "it's"?

Zoega's No. 217: Shenoute quoted, in an encomium of Athanasius and Shenoute by Constantine of Siut (ed. and translated by T. Orlandi as CSCO 349–350; see Orlandi's introduction, p. xv, albeit with no comment on the Borgia reading). Zoega gives the following text:

ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲡⲁ ϣⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉ-ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲣⲧⲣⲉⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲁⲓⲟⲓ (lege ⲧⲁⲓⲟϥ?) ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲣⲁⲛ ϩⲓⲥⲭⲏⲙⲁ ⲟⲩⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲁϥ ⲧⲉ

The Morgan parallel (M 579) has ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲡⲉ. Zoega's note 3, p. 539: "neque ⲧⲉ hic loco suo stare videtur, sed irrepsisse pro ⲡⲉ vel ⲛⲉ". In fact, ⲡⲉ (which we actually have in the Morgan parallel) would not have specifically referred to any element in the text; ⲛⲉ, unattested, could refer to ⲣⲁⲛ and ⲥⲭⲏⲙⲁ; however, ⲣⲁⲛ ϩⲓⲥⲭⲏⲙⲁ is probably not the referate in our case, but a representant icon of or code word for any number of reasons for self-glorification.

(e) Difficult: ⲧⲉ anaphoric/cataphoric delocutive thematic pronoun? Endophoric "it's"?

(1) British Library Or. Ms. 3581B(69) verso (BM Cat. No. 489, p. 231 ff.) – Colophon. The copier thanks his master:
ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ (i.e. in the book) ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥⲥⲃⲱ ⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲩϫ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙⲡϥ̄ⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ ⲡⲉ

Is this a hybrid construction – ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ – combined with the endophoric *ⲧⲉϥⲥⲃⲱ ⲧⲉ?

(2) Monastery of Epiphanius (ed. Crum) No. 338
…ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲓ ϫⲉ-ⲡⲱⲛ ⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲏⲣⲡ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲓⲛⲧϥ

Crum translates "this wine is not ours which I brought…" The position of the negation is irregular, and may be associated with our ⲧⲉ.

(f) ⲇⲉ = copular ⲧⲉ?

In a passage of the Bohairic Gospel of Matthew (13:37 Horner, consensus) we may have two occurrences of our copular ⲧⲉ disguised, in a hermeneutic copular Nominal Sentence:

ⲛⲓϭⲁⲓⲟϣ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ
ⲛⲓⲉⲛⲧⲏϫ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲓⲡⲉⲧϩⲟⲟⲩ

One wonders, whether similar cases, lightly passed over as instances of the connector **ⲆⲈ**, are not hidden away in apparatuses.

(g) Diachronic notes (A. Shisha-Halevy, see also above, Ia)

(1) Coptic invariable **ⲡⲈ** following – but not constituent in – nexal patterns (clauses) is well known, but not really understood, and still largely unresearched. Most familiar as discontinuous morpheme is **ⲚⲈ**- … **ⲡⲈ**[17]; also the apodotic superordinative FUTURE + **ⲡⲈ**, observed by H. J. Polotsky in his review of Crum's Dictionary. Following converted forms, **ⲡⲈ** is still entirely enigmatic. The referentiality (and indeed pronominality) of these cases are high-level textual or text-situational, thus neutric. This recalls ME *sḏm.f pw*, with a *mrr.f* "that form" rheme and text-situational theme; differently, *pw* in a presentational 'Cleft Sentence', preceding a converb: *ink pw sdm.n.i* etc.

(2) So far as we know, similar instances of the non-referential or copular neutric feminine pronoun in the Nominal Sentence or Cleft Sentence are not forthcoming. However, we are confident they do exist, but are 'hidden' in the huge mass of evidence, still confused and largely unresolved, for the various patterns of Nominal Sentence/Cleft Sentence.

A possible Demotic instance of similar has been suggested by Robert Ritner of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (written communication of May 4, 2011): "a text written in hieratic, but in proto-Demotic grammar" – Urkunden VI (ed. Schott), 63 line 5 (line 10 of the text, ME and LE/proto-Demotic bilingual:

iw nꜣ-mswt Itm tꜣ m ri.ty n.i "while it is the children of Atum at the two sides of me" (transl. Ritner, who notes that "No one previously has tried to account for the *tꜣ*"). Here we have a formal, non-referential theme in the Cleft Sentence topic ("*glose*"). Normally in Coptic and Demotic, the core pattern of the Cleft Sentence is either the endophoric or the immutable-theme Nominal Sentence[18], both non-referential albeit in different ways; thus, a non-referential "feminine" in the Cleft Sentence topic is not surprising. The text-referential neutric feminine is of course familiar in all phases of Egyptian as it is in Coptic.

Summary

This study, more suggestive than conclusive, presents, illustrates and briefly discusses cases of "unorthodox" syntax in some dialects of Coptic, including Shenoutean Sahidic:

(Ia) The Stative form as adjunct and/or adnexal expansion, where we rather expect the circumstantial Present with Stative rheme. This recalls the "synthetic" Stative of Old and Middle Egyptian.

(Ib) The Stative in what seems deverbal adjective roles.

(II) The element **ⲦⲈ**, well-established as a non-referential copular constituent in certain Nominal Sentence patterns; also **ⲦⲈ** in situational-anaphoric or thetic roles. Some of these constructions were first observed by W. E. Crum in his early editions, especially of Theban and Fayyumic sources.

Keywords

adjective – adnexal – Coptic and Egyptian – neuter gender – nominal sentence – Stative form

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[17] Shisha-Halevy, Topics, Chapter One, §1.1.3 (c).

[18] Shisha-Halevy, "Grammatical Discovery Procedure and the Egyptian-Coptic Nominal Sentence", Orientalia 56 (1987) 166 f., id., Topics, 262 ff.