Linguistic Symptoms of Shenoute’s Authorship

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Speaking metaphorically, the array of distinctive linguistic traits is a portrait or profile, not a check-list or catalogue. This means that we are considering, not a list but systemic co-occurrence and/or combination and/or hierarchy of features that is distinctive. This, however, is difficult or near-impossible to depict in a simple presentation, and in the following lines I will also particularize or list after all. Twenty-five years ago, in the *Coptic Grammatical Categories* (Rome, 1986), I attempted to present a system of systems, focusing on adverbials, that might serve as basis for identification. It goes without saying, that a precise, sensitive high-delicacy descriptive work is a *sine qua non* in authorship studies, with the central query being to what extent we can detect the typical, and to what extent can the typical be misleading. Authorship statements are not infallible,¹ and can only be as confident as the linguistic description is sensitive and broad-based. The difficulty of authorship proof in a dead language, and, besides, one which we are still trying to get the measure of, should not be underestimated. And yet, ideally and with careful and considered application, I would suggest linguistic attribution is even more conclusive than explicit “philological” one.

¹ The present writer’s own confidence in the *Coptic Grammatical Categories* has proved not entirely justified (cf. the “spurious” category in Stephen Emmel’s *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus* (2004, p. 457ff.). Still, none of the statements made for Shenoute seems to be invalidated by this error, and the danger of too sweeping authorship attribution is clearly illustrated.
Not unlike forensics in general, the logic of cumulativity is based on systemic configurativity. (This logic is exponential: the more numerous and high-ranking the symptoms, the exponentially higher the certainty of attribution.) Few of the features here presented by themselves are exclusively Shenoutean, but any of them in combination with others are conclusively so. The number of features “necessary” for establishing a Shenoutean “identikit” depends on their critical value, which is scalar (lexical features differ in indicativity from phraseology, from morphology, micro- and macro-syntax); on the other hand, the greater the number of traits, the more confident the attribution. An instance of a very high criterion is the rich syntactic range of quotation manipulations; low-value traits are morphological features, including morphophonological ones such as “Akhmimoid” (or Southern) ⲁ for “normal Sahidic” ⲉ, or unreduced prenominal infinitive allomorphs (e.g. ⲉⲟⲩⲧⲓ-), or unreduced thematic pronouns in the Interlocutive Nominal Sentence (e.g. ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲧⲓ-).

The theoretical aspects of authorship studies (familiar especially from study of Biblical corpuses), as against the practical aspect, on which I shall focus here, regards internal relations, such as those between Ⲩⲧⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲧⲫ and Ⲩⲧⲧⲧⲧ-ⲟⲩ ⲧⲧⲟⲩ, or between the jussives ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ- and Ⲩⲧⲧⲧⲧ, the positions of ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲟ and ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ, also such issues and calculi as the cumulative probability of a specific authorship, the absence of occurrence as an identifying factor, statistical features and scales of typicality. The practical angle concerns features occurring in the texts, and aims at assessing them cumulatively, with rising confidence of attribution. While less-than-typical characteristics are ubiquitous, they are usually interspersed with features of diacritical value. A practical principle, of the type of “the
dog that did not bark at night”, would conclude non-Shenoutean authorship from a consistent and total absence (in a text of considerable length) of Shenoutean traits, or absence in Shenoute of specific features (cf. Crum, Dictionary 544a, ϕα “festival” not found in Shenoute). Of course, this “identity kit” is as dynamic as it is systemic, in the sense that new texts introduced into the canon, texts removed from the canon, new forms and interpretations, all may modify the critical syndrome.

The stylistic tones of Shenoute’s work are familiar, mostly summed-up as passionate rhetoric, and have been pointed out in various, often (but not always) more or less derogatory descriptions, since Johannes Leipoldt, De Lacy O’Leary, K. H. Kuhn and Bell. This biased and impressionistic view of Shenoute at his most typical, which, however, is of limited use in less than typical, less rhetorical, texts or passages in texts, is simplistic; Shenoute, who can be quite pedestrian, occasionally surprises us with gentle, emotional, even poetic turns as well as register changes. But his consummate rhetorical craftsmanship is much more sophisticated than that, and his authorial fingerprint accordingly very complicated.

(a) The lexicon

Preliminary observations:

1. Crum’s exquisite Coptic Dictionary is now over seventy years old. It is inconceivable that texts, of all genres, idiolects and dialects, edited since 1939 would not yield new lexical items, derivations, forms and meanings; many of those are “new” fragments of Shenoute’s
works. Old texts also are being reedited, reworked and constantly reexamined, and new or modified meanings emerge. Amazingly, we have no supplement or revision of the Dictionary, other than Kasser's Compléments of 1964, which contains little of Shenoute (entries are ὑμοιον and ϕοι).

2. The still entirely uncharted Greek-origin subsystem of Shenoute's lexicon and its relationships, often dynamic, often caught in a mesh of tension with the (realized or potential) “Egyptian” lexemic subsystem, are important components of the idiosyncratic picture of Shenoute's lexicon (Note, for instance, that these Greco-Coptic lexical items tend to appear in clusters or chains, in a “greek environment”).

3. Exclusively or overwhelmingly Shenoutean meanings (as distinct from attestation) can be properly established only by monographic contrastive study. A Lexicon Sinuthianum, with finely nuanced resolution, is still a faraway goal. Meanwhile, generally and for the Greek sub-lexicon, Sprachgefühl is still a precious factor.

4. Striking among the exclusively Shenoutean lexemes are hapax instances, among which “meaning unknown” or “meaning uncertain” cases are (understandably) usual.

5. Colloquialisms and registerial distinctions in general, an important factor in Shenoute's rhetorical poetics, are a precious component of Shenoute's usage. But this too must be further studied, and includes statistical tendencies of lexical meaning (e.g. the meaning “matter’ affair” of ταυτ).
6. The following list, based on Crum’s attribution code (“Sh.”, “Sh. (Besa), Sh. – S”: see Preface, p. vii), presupposes a tightly-knit quantitative presentation. It is not affected by Crum’s very few wrong or uncertain/doubtful attributions. Obviously, the weight of attestation is important, even crucial: “Shenoute only” hapaxes, or “once in Shenoute” 50% of attestation (so for instance ϋⲟⲩⲗⲡ 477b) are less indicative than sizably attested lexemes, or even two occurrences in Shenoute. My own additional gradings, still based on Crum’s exemplification (and presupposing this represents his findings: see his Preface, p. vii), are: “mainly Sh.” and “fav[oured by] Shenoute”. “Not/never in Shenoute” listing, not presented here, is also significant, especially given the extent of the corpus.

7. The frequent coincidence, in lexicon and (?) phraseology, of Sh. and Lycopolitan and/or Akhmimic is striking, but probably cannot (yet) be used as isoglossic for dialectological definition.

8. Semantic ranging and structure of the lexicon is yet another relevant issue to be studied. For instance, the high incidence and variety of “violence”; “abusive names” (Crum) and pejorativity; agricultural and technical-professional terminology, and so on.

Abbreviations:

“Sh.”

“Sh. (Sah.)”

“fav. Sh.”

“mainly Sh.”
“meaning uncertain/unknown/doubtful”

“hapax”

(a) Lexeme repertory, lexemic meaning

ⲁⲗⲟⲙ “bosom” fav. Sh. (6a) (Crum’s Additions and Corrections xv adds another Sh. occurrence)

ⲃⲟⲗⲃⲗ “burrow, delve, wallow” Sh. (37b) (Crum Additions and Corrections xvi adds another Sh. occurrence)

ⲁⲗⲇ “idol” Sh. (hapax) (98b)

ⲁⲗⲇⲥⲓⲧ ⲃⲗⲃⲗ “meaning uncertain” (“return, collapse [of belly]”) Sh. (hapax) (102b)

ⲡⲟⲟⲙⲉ “weal” Sh. (105a)

ⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩ, ⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩ “kind of small dog” fav. Sh. (105b)

ⲫⲧⲧ “mock, sneer” fav. Sh. (110b)

ⲁⲧⲧ (nn.?) “meaning unknown” (among trades) Sh. Crum’s Additions and Corrections xviii adds another Sh. occurrence (140b)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “putrify” Sh. (141a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “fragment, small portion” fav. Sh. (144b)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “putrify” Sh. (hapax) (145b)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “be decadent” fav. Sh. (148b)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “crumb, fragment” Sh. (149a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧ “boiled food (?)” Sh. (150a)
ⲙⲧⲙⲡ “make, form” fav. Sh. (174-5)

ⲙⲟⲩⲡ “pay” fav. Sh. (208b)

ⲙⲟⲩⲣ “look” mainly Sh. (210b)

ⲙⲧⲁⲕⲓⲛ plur. “meaning unknown (named with embroiderers)” Sh. (hapax) (213b)

ⲣⲟⲟⲓⲧ “meaning unknown paral. to “stinking”, of disease” Sh. (236a)

ⲟⲛⲧⲉ plural “meaning unknown: brain (?)” Sh. (hapax) (256a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲉⲛ “meaning unknown”, = ⲧⲧⲧⲉ? Sh. (hapax) (257a)

ⲧⲣⲁⲓⲣυ “meaning unknown…relates to irrigation” “division, branch of canal (?) Sh. (hapax) (269a)

ⲣⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “meaning unknown, ethnic (?)” Sh. (Sah.) (276a)

ⲣⲟⲓⲧ “battlefield” (?) Sh. (hapax) (285b) (see Crum’s Additions and Corrections, xx b) (possibly р-ⲟⲓⲧ!)

ⲣⲟⲓⲧⲧ “nn as pl, meaning unknown, part or quantity of vegetable” Sh (286b) (Crum’s Additions and Corrections xx b adds Manichaean A²)

ⲣⲓⲧⲣⲓⲧⲧ v. “meaning unknown” Sh. (nn A²) (310a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “confirmation, agreement, putting together, (harmonious constrction), adornment” fav. Sh. (339a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “grasshopper” Sh. (hapax) (345a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “look” Sh.+A (346a-b)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “be dazed, stupefied” fav. Sh. (356a)

ⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ “fan” (vb) Sh. (hapax) (360a)
ⲧⲗⲟⲙ vb. intr. “meaning unknown” Sh. (hapax) (411a)

ⲧⲟⲧⲓⲧⲓ “be accustomed, familiar” fav. Sh. (422b)

ⲧⲤⲟⲱⲩⲥⲓⲟγ “chattering, gossip” (?) (hapax) Sh. (457b)

ⲧⲟⲟγ “buy” Sh.+A, A² (441a)

[ⲧⲇⲧⲣⲓⲥ] ṣⲧⲣⲓⲥ “sic l?” “meaning unknown” “Coptic?” Sh. (hapax) (447b)

ⲟγⲙⲧε “lightning (?), calamity” (with εⲧⲓⲣ-) mainly Sh. (495a)

ⲟγⲙⲧε “waste, dry up” tr., intr. mainly Sh.+A (495a)

ⲟⲧⲇⲁⲯⲡ eⲧⲟⲩ meaning “surpass” Sh. (496b-497a).

ⲟⲩⲧⲇ “fortune, fate (?)” Sh. (544a-b)

ⲟⲩⲟⲩ “be scorched” mainly Sh. (554b-555a)

ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲧⲩ “cushion (?)” mainly Sh. (573b)

ⲟⲩⲧⲣⲉ nn. “blow, stroke” mainly Sh. (583b)

ⲟⲩⲧⲉ “flour” fav. Sh. (595a)

ⲟⲩⲧⲉ “meaning doubtful” Sh. (hapax) (595a-b)

ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲟⲩ, ϩⲓⲟⲣⲟⲩ “barrenness” Sh.+A (incl.quot.) (610a)

ⲟⲩⲟⲣⲟⲩ “meaning uncertain…spread, burrow (?)” mainly Sh.+A² (612a)

ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲧⲉ “contend, wrestle” mainly Sh.+A² (615a)

ⲧⲉⲧⲉ, ⲝⲉⲧⲉ, st. ⲝⲧⲉⲥ, ⲝⲟⲩⲧⲉ “be low, short” Sh. (655b)

ⲟⲩⲧⲉ “cup” fav. Sh. (676a)

ⲟⲩⲧⲉ “go aground in shallows” Sh. (688a-b)
रोप नन “meaning unknown” Sh. (697a)
रोप रोप= रषप “guard oneself against” fav. Sh. (697b)
राय (एरपाय) (एबोल) इ-, नस-, रे- “drive” fav. Sh. (697b-698a)
रिटे “spend time, loiter” Sh. (720a)
(रॉरट) रेट- रोट= (+एबोल) “send forth, eject” Sh. (741b)
(ए)घोखिन “grop, feel” Sh. (+Besa), (ए2“tread”) (743a)
घोले “be hindered (?)” Sh.+ए2 (766b)
घोक (एघोन ए-) “sow” Sh.+Besa (767b)
घो “dish, bowl” fav. Sh. (+ए) (778a)
खत “ripen (of grain)” Sh. (hapax) (792a)
खो “meaning unknown” Sh. (hapax) (795a)
खाले “clap hands” Sh.+ए (799b)
सेरिब, सिबिब “fragments, shreds (?)” Sh. (hapax) (806a)
तो (सोबिब) सेवब= “tread to pieces or sim.” (hapax) (806a)
सले “meaning unknown” Sh.+ए (ऊर्मे Sah.) (818a)
सोने “small vessel, quantity” fav. Sh. (825b)
स्रु “dig” fav. Sh. (828a)
सवले “meaning unknown…bodily defect or despised trade” Sh. (hapax) (835b)
सोय्रे, सवरे “slave (as term of contempt” Sh. (836a)
(b) Word Formation, derivation, compounding

Shenoute’s originality and creativity in this area must be further examined. It’s difficult always to be sure about exclusive Shenoutean usage, meanings or specialty. Here are a few probable items:

\textit{ⲙⲧ-ⲣⲉϥ-ϭⲛ-ⲁⲣⲓⲉ} Sh. (15b)
\textit{ⲙⲧ-ⲣⲉϥ-ⲕⲱⲙϣ} Sh. (110b)
\textit{ⲙⲁⲥ-ⲛ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ} Sh. (295a)
\textit{ⲙⲧ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ} “male company” (295a)
\textit{ⲧⲓ-ⲧⲱϩ “take blood, bleed, be blooded”} Sh. (348b)
\textit{ⲧⲓⲧⲟⲟϩ} “last year” (adv.) mainly Sh. (348b)
\textit{ⲧⲓⲧ-ⲧⲏⲏⲃⲉ} “half a finger” Sh. (397b)
\textit{ⲧⲓⲧ-ⲧⲏⲏⲃⲉ} Sh. (422a)
\textit{ⲣ-ⲧⲣⲉ “stamp with feet”} Sh. (425a)
\textit{ⲣ-ⲧⲣⲉ “confusion, disturbance”} mainly Sh. (454b)
\textit{ⲧⲓⲧ-ⲧⲏⲏⲃⲉ} Sh. (495a)
\textit{ⲧ-ⲟⲧⲓ “article+ⲧⲟⲩⲓ+noun”} mainly Sh. (735b)
\textit{ⲧ-ⲧⲓⲧ-ⲧⲏⲏⲃⲉ} mainly Sh. (737a)
(c) Phraseology, collocations, clichés (token selection)

τα ἐτα ἡ... ...ἡ... ἄλλο... ἄλλο... ...εἰς... εἰς... (forms of distinctions)

ἐινε + σοουν

ῥαν + εχηνα

ζαπ + ἃα

ἐκνα ἐκνηγ

τηθεγ άω τηθωνη

νπηνα τενογ

χινταρχη ἡπωντ οδτεπτελεια ἡπωον

καν + imperative/jussive

ζαθην άω ζαθηθγηθη

(d) Verb valency. Phrasal verbs. Verb phraseology

A Shenoutean dictionary of valency and adverbial/prepositional government is an urgent desideratum. Meanwhile, here are some relevant example entries from Crum’s Dictionary:

ειω εβολ “wash out” intr. Sh. (75b)

λιβε, λοβε ηεα- Sh. (137a)

πωλο ητη- “satisfy” Sh. (262a)

πωνικ εχη- “pile upon” Sh. (266a)
.directive ερραί “be struck down, fall” mainly Sh. (311a-b)

σωτε ερραί “appeal to” mainly Sh. (336b)

cωτ e- “return, repeat” fav. Sh. (360a)

cωρε εργων e- “weave on to” Sh. (381a)

cωρη εργων/ερραί e- “sink in, be swallowed”, “suck in, drink”
(intr., tr.), mainly Sh. (386a)

tωκ e- “throw at” Sh.+A (404a)

†-τωκ ερραί “fight against” Sh. (649b)

tωνε υβολ γν- “taste of” mainly Sh. (423a)

ογάρη= e- reflexive “repeat doing” mainly Sh. (509b)

ογαρι ερραί εξν-. γλυν- Sh. (513a)

ξρε ι-/να= “require, be in need of”, mainly Sh. (538b)

ςοξηε ι-/να= Sh. (616a)

ςι ντϊγοτε fav. Sh. (Sah.) (621a)

ξπο εξα- “replace” Sh. (779b)

(e) Morphology, “form” (selection)

εξαλ=”without” Sh. (26a)

metros= full inflection, as opposed to invariable μεσκ “mainly Sh” (201b)

νοστε (=νοσ) Sh. (250-1)

cαντε “resin” Sh. “S” (346b)
Here even selection is difficult, as will agree any reader or student
of Shenoute: this is Shenoutean grammar, pure and (not) simple. Some
features: (see also further below)

(1) Syntax

ηιιιιιιε- Sh (172b)

ἀρα-ςε mainly Sh (802b)

εβολ- των χε-εφα-
Nominal Sentence patterning (Shisha-Halevy 1984), adverbial syntax and Focalizing Conversion patterning, direct-object syntax, Conjunctive syntax, juncture profiles, prosody contours, _augens_ syntax (Shisha-Halevy 1986).

The occurrence of -ⲧⲣⲉ- following Greek-origin prepositions (παρα-, ἀντι-, κατα-).

(g) Rhetorical poetics (selection)

Alliteration, punning and rhyming:

 kalday hipsi eipatere (Leipoldt III 87)

Distinctive constructions and configurations

“Disiunctio Sinuthiana” (several varieties) – “Ἄρχωνλε η ἀγωνία”, “Ἡττί η ἡμνησί” “Νίς περιταυρογρί η Νίς περιταυρογρί” and so on.

Hermeneia discourse signals: “εἰχω ηπαί θε-,” “[...] ηθ θε-,” “ετεπαί ηθ θε-“ etc.

Argumentative discourse signals (especially metaphrastic ones): distinctive εωθε- patterns, εωλαθος θε-, εωος θε-, θε-μαθος θε- etc.

Rhetorical narratives of different types.  

2 The ‘RHEME παί (+ rheme expansion)’ type (e.g. Chassinat 144 ηκε η παί εττομε ην… ) is typical of Shenoute, but seems to occur frequently in Manichaean Lycopolitan (“L4”) (W.-P. Funk).

Combinatory constructions (selected examples):

- Chass. 13 ητοκ ρδωκ τςομ ηπεκοωμα ρωον νηντκ ηννογονε νηντκας ηνηνπεραςμος …νγνθεωθ-ογβε- (extended repeated asyndesis of existentials [also of conjugation bases], sequelling conjunctive)

- Chass. 61 έξοος δε χε-αυ ιε ιη νη εροαι ιηνμα ιμοκ εροαι αυω χε-εικωτε ιηοο ναο ιρ ειε εροαι ιπνειετ αυα ενοοκ εροαι επενητ …ογαςοο πε ιεγε επαι (metaphrastic topicalization management, object-verb inversion, chiasm, generic non-actual present, anaphoric reference to textual stretch)

- Chass. 26 ειφαλιους χε-νταγις-τεβδελλη χε-ειγατιςωνγ ερος ται ετηνπογτςοο νη-νεσομε οιντςκ κοιντ ινος εβολ αυω κηρογο ερος αυω ιηναγιςροκ αι νηντιτατοι (metaphrastic topicalization management, object-verb inversion, rhematic relative clause (appositive to proper-name equivalent), triadic rhetorical coordination)

- Chass. 125 ηννοπετιςη ηννογελος ιρωβ ιναθων χε-ντωοο ιας αι (asyndesis; special double-negation and adnominal χε-totalization pattern: “there isn’t…that …not” = “absolutely all…”

- Leipoldt III 96 γνωφονε δε γας έωξε-νταγιςςος ιρητ-νταγιςςος γαρ (special clause patterns; repetitive nexus focusing)

Paris BN copte 131.6 f.44 ὑψηλὸν ἐρωτᾷ ἔρος ἢ ἀκριμων ἐρό
καὶ ἐρωτᾶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς (inclusive non-hortative interlocutive imperative)