

# A grammatical overview of Egyptian and Coptic\*

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This chapter presents a brief outline of the grammar of Earlier Egyptian (in the form of Middle Egyptian; Part A) and a brief outline of the grammar of Later Egyptian (in the form of Coptic, Sahidic dialect; Part B). This outline is intended for non-Egyptologist readers who are interested in the grammatical structure of Egyptian, so the description makes minimal use of idiosyncratic terminology. Occasionally peculiarities of Egyptian that are cross-linguistically uncommon are pointed out.

Middle Egyptian (the most-studied form of Earlier Egyptian) is written in hieroglyphic or heratic script, which is a complex mixture of ideographic, logographic and phonographic signs. Only consonants are represented by the phonographic signs, so the vowel sounds are largely unknown (though some of them can be inferred from the representation of Egyptian names in other languages, and most importantly, from Coptic forms). Transliteration of pre-Coptic Egyptian is not practical due to the very large number of signs, so Egyptologists use a system that transcribes only the consonants.<sup>1</sup>

Coptic is written with Greek letters, augmented by a few consonant letters deriving from the Demotic script. The transliteration that is used here is the Leipzig-Jerusalem transliteration (see Grossman & Haspelmath 2014, in this volume).

## Part A. Salient grammatical patterns of Middle Egyptian

### A1. Consonant inventory

This chapter focuses on morphosyntax, so very little is said about phonology here. Most importantly, Middle Egyptian has the consonants in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> For oral discussion of Egyptian expression, Egyptologists generally use an artificial pronunciation that syllabifies consonant sequences with an [e] sound (e.g. *nfr* is pronounced [nefer]), that treats *j* and *w* as [i] and [u], and that treats *ʒ* and *ʃ* as [a] (thus, *Nfrtjtj* is pronounced as [nefertiti], and the name is also rendered in English as *Nefertiti*).

**Table 1. Middle Egyptian consonants**

p	t	ṯ	k	q		
b	d	ḏ	g			
f	s	š	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	h
	z				ʕ	
m	n	r			ʕ	ʕ
w		j, jj				

The exact values of several of these consonants is not quite clear. For discussion of Egyptian phonology and the values of the letters used in transcription, see Schenkel (1990: ch. 2), Loprieno (1995), Kammerzell (1998), Peust (1999), Müller (2011), and Allen (2013). The special case of the consonant ʕ is discussed in detail by Gensler (2014) (in this volume).

The transcription conventions used here mostly follow Loprieno (1995) and Allen (2000). Other authors follow different conventions. In particular, *t* and *d* are sometimes transcribed as *č* and *č*, *j* is transcribed as *i*, *jj* is transcribed as *y*, and ʕ is transcribed as *c*.<sup>2</sup> Note that ʕ is a consonant (perhaps [l], [r] or later [ʔ]).

## A2. Word order

Egyptian is a consistently right-branching language in which word order is primarily determined grammatically, or in other words, word order is fairly rigid. Right-branching (Dryer 1992) means that in syntactic phrases consisting of a non-branching constituent and a branching constituent, the branching constituent follows. Thus, Egyptian has the word-order patterns in Table 2.

**Table 2. Some phrase types in Middle Egyptian**

phrase type	non-branching constituent	branching constituent	example
verb phrase	verb	object NP	(1)
noun phrase	noun	possessor NP	(2)
adpositional phrase	preposition	complement NP	(3)
auxiliary complex	auxiliary	verb phrase	(4)
subordinate clause	subordinator	clause	(5)

- (1) *jw m33-n-j [nḥt-w]*  
 PCL see-PRF-1SG victory-PL  
 ‘I saw the victories.’ (Englund 1988: 35)

- (2) *swḥ-t [n-t njw]*  
 egg-F of-F ostrich  
 ‘the egg of an ostrich’ (Allen 2000: 41)

<sup>2</sup> Reintges (2014, in this volume) uses an idiosyncratic transcription with IPA symbols: ʃ for š, x for ḥ, ḥ for ḥ, ʕ for ʕ, ʔ for ʕ, d<sup>3</sup> for ḏ, and t<sup>ʃ</sup> for ṯ. The problem with using IPA characters is that the actual pronunciation of these consonants is quite uncertain.

- (3) *ḥnt-f ntj m [ḥwt-nṯr]*  
 statue-3SGM which.M in house-god  
 ‘his statue, which is in the temple’
- (4) *wn-jn ḥm-f [ḥr pḡz zḥ3-w]*  
 be-JN majesty-3SGM on open writing-PL  
 ‘Then His Incarnation was spreading open the writings.’ (A178)
- (5) *m33-f [ntt št3w pw ʕ3]*  
 see-3SG that serpent COP big  
 ‘He saw that it was a great serpent.’ (A137)<sup>3</sup>

In this respect, Egyptian behaves like many other Afroasiatic languages, notably like Berber and Chadic languages, and like many Semitic languages such as Arabic and Hebrew (but note that Cushitic languages as well as Ethiopic Semitic and Akkadian have different word-order patterns).

The canonical position of the nominal subject is immediately following the verb, so Egyptian is a VSO language, like Berber, Classical Arabic and Biblical Hebrew:

- (6) *jst gm-n ḥm-f r-pr pn m dbt*  
 PCL find-PRF majesty-3SGM mouth-house this in brick  
 ‘His Incarnation found this sanctuary in brick.’ (Gardiner 1957: 330)

### A3. Gender and number

Egyptian nouns are either masculine or feminine, much like nouns in Semitic, Berber and other Afroasiatic languages. Gender is shown on agreeing personal pronouns as well as adjectives, demonstratives and other adnominal modifiers. Feminine nouns typically show the feminine gender suffix *-t*, while masculine nouns have no particular suffix.

The plural of masculine nouns generally ends in *-w*, while the plural of feminine nouns also ends in *-t* (though it is often distinguished in writing by ideographic signs).

- (8) *nṯr* ‘god’ *nṯr-w* ‘gods’
- (9) *sn-t* ‘sister’ *sn-t* ‘sisters’

There was also a dual number form, masculine *-wj* and feminine *-tj* (see 15b).

<sup>3</sup> “(A137)” is short for “(Allen 2000: 137)”. Most of the Middle Egyptian examples cited here are from Allen’s excellent grammar. Almost all the examples are attested in texts (see Allen 2000 for the sources), and only a few are constructed by the grammarian for pedagogical purposes.

#### A4. Reference, predication and attribution: nouns, verbs and adjectives

Most commonly, in all languages, thing-words (including words for people) are used for the function of reference, action-words are used for the function of predication, and property-words are used for the function of attribution (= nominal modification) (see Croft 1991, 2000, 2001: ch. 2). These combinations of semantic type (thing/action/property) and pragmatic function (reference/predication/attribution) tend to be expressed in the simplest way across languages, without additional coding. Consider example (9), with a predicating action-word ('arrive'), a referential thing-word ('cause'), and an attributive property-word ('unworthy').

- (9) *nj spr-n zp bz r dmj*  
 NEG arrive-PRF cause unworthy to harbour  
 'An unworthy cause cannot succeed (lit. arrive at the harbour).' (A236)

In Middle Egyptian, nouns, verbs and adjectives are clearly distinct in these three basic constructions. Special marking is required for less usual combinations of semantic type and pragmatic function. When used referentially, action-words use the special infinitive form, which has a *-t* suffix with many verbs, thus distinguishing verbs from nouns (e.g. *pr-t* 'to go out'):

- (10) *nn n-s pr-t m jmnt*  
 NEG for-3SGF exit-INF in west  
 'Emerging from the West is not for her.' (A167)

Property-words can be used referentially like thing-words, so in this respect adjectives are noun-like, e.g.

- (11) a. *nfr* 'a good one (masculine)'  
 b. *nfr-t* 'a good one (feminine)'

For this reason, Allen (2000: 61) claims that "all Egyptian adjectives are nouns", but this is not true, because in predicative function, property-words behave quite differently from thing-words. First of all, they do not show gender forms, so (12) has *nfr*, not *nfr-t*, even though the subject is a feminine noun. And second, clauses with a predicative noun usually require the copula *pw*, as in (13).

- (12) *nfr hm-t tn*  
 beautiful woman-F this.F  
 'This woman is beautiful.' (A68)

- (13) *sn-t-f*            *pw*            *tfnt*  
 sister-F-3SGM   COP            Tefnut  
 ‘His sister is Tefnut.’ (A72)

Thus, predicative adjectives are more verb-like than noun-like, but they are also distinct from verbs in that they lack the various tense and aspect forms that we find with verbs.. Thus (12) is not specified for tense and could also mean ‘The woman was beautiful.’

In attributive function, adjectives are postposed and agree in gender and number:

- (14) a. *z3*        *nfr*                    ‘good son’  
       b. *z3-t*    *nfr-t*                ‘good daughter’

When nouns are used attributively, there are two possibilities: either they are preceded by the possessive marker *n(j)*, as in (15a) or (2), or they follow the possessum directly, as in (15b).

- (15) a. *z3*        *n*        *zj*  
           son    of.M    man  
           ‘the son of a man’
- b. *nswt*    *t3-wj*  
           king    land-DU  
           ‘the king of Egypt’ (lit. ‘of the two lands’)

When verbs are used attributively, they are more like adjectives – see the discussion of participles and relative forms in A.11 below.

Thus, noun, verb and adjective are clearly distinguished in Egyptian, not unlike the situation in Semitic languages or in older Indo-European languages. Adjectives are similar to verbs in predicative function and to nouns in referential function, but overall, they are clearly distinct from both.

#### A5. Personal pronouns and full NPs

Earlier Egyptian does not have an agent-patient distinction in full noun phrases. There is neither accusative case nor an accusative preposition, and no ergative marking either. The verb does not agree with a full NP Subject or Object, so the alignment of full NPs is completely neutral.

- (16) *jm*    *sbpr*            [*jb-j*        *pn*]            [*dbʕw*    *pn*    *dw*]    *r-j*  
 NEG    create            heart-1SG    this.M        reproach    this.M    bad    to-1SG  
 ‘May my heart not create this bad reproach against me.’ (A256)

However, agent-patient clauses with two full NPs are very rare in actual discourse: Most of the time, the agent or the patient is a personal pronoun, and these do distinguish clearly between agents and patients (or Subjects and Objects).

Table 3 shows a simplified representation of the three series of personal pronouns in Middle Egyptian: person suffixes, dependent pronouns, and independent pronouns.

**Table 3. Three series of personal pronouns**

		person suffixes	dependent pronouns	independent pronouns
SG	1	-j	wj	jnk
	2M	-k	tw	ntk
	2F	-t	tn	ntt
	3M	-f	sw	ntf
	3F	-s	sj/st	nts
PL	1	-n	n	jnn
	2	-tn	tn	nttn
	3	-sn	sn/st	ntsn

With transitive verbs, the suffix pronouns are used as Subjects and the dependent pronouns are used as Objects, so they could be called “nominative“ and “accusative“ forms, respectively:

(17) *m3-n-j*      *ʕfd-t*   *n-t*      *sj3*  
 see-PRF-1SG   box-F   of-F      Sia  
 ‘I have seen the box of Sia.’ (A232)

(18) *sj3-n*              *wj*              *mjt n(w)*  
 recognize-PRF   1SG.DEP   scout  
 ‘The scout recognized me.’ (A226)

However, the suffix pronouns also have a variety of other functions, most notably as possessors and as complements of prepositions.

(19) *pr-f*                      ‘his house’  
 house-3SGM

(20) *n-j*                      ‘to me’  
 to-1SG

Thus, the term “nominative“ does not fit in general, and the leftmost series in Table 3 is generally called “suffix pronouns“. The dependent pronoun series is used not only in object function with transitive verbs, but also in subject function with predicative adjectives, e.g.

- (21) *nfr tw ʔnʕ-j*  
 good 2SG.DEP with-1SG  
 ‘You are good with me.’ (Schenkel 2012: 112)

Thus, the term “accusative“ would not fit well either. However, the use of the same pronoun forms for transitive objects and intransitive subjects is quite remarkable, and one could regard this as a kind of alignment partition: While the Subjects of (mostly dynamic) intransitive verbs are coded like transitive Subjects (thus showing nominative-accusative alignment), the Subjects of stative (intransitive) adjectives are coded like transitive Objects (thus showing ergative-absolutive alignment). This is certainly not a common situation cross-linguistically (though similar situations have been described as „agentive-inagentive“ in the typological literature, see Donohue & Wichmann 2008).

Dependent pronouns are generally regarded as enclitics, as opposed to the suffixal pronouns of the first series. They may occur directly after the verb, as in (18) above and in (22), but they may also occur as subject pronouns of adverbial-predicate clauses after certain initial particles (such as *nʔmn* in 23).

- (22) *d3-n-f sw*  
 ferry-PRF-3SGM 3SGM.DEP  
 ‘He ferried him.’ (Gardiner 1957: 45)

- (23) *nʔmn wj mj k3*  
 surely 1SG.DEP like bull  
 ‘I am really like a bull.’ (A111)

But the contrast between „enclitic“ dependent pronouns and „suffixal“ pronouns is not very clear-cut, because these can sometimes occur in second position as well, e.g. following the element *ju*:

- (24) *ju-f m ʕt*  
 PCL-3SGM in room  
 ‘It is in a room.’ (A110)

One could say that *ju* is really a copula verb, not a particle like *nʔmn*, so that *ju-f* shows the suffix pronoun in verbal subject function, as in (17). But *ju* does not behave like a verb in other respects (it does not have different tense-aspect forms, and is negated differently), so it is generally called a particle.

Independent pronouns are mostly used in nominal predication, as in (25).

- (25) *jnk jt(j)-k*  
 1SG.INDP father-2SGM  
 ‘I am your father.’

## A6. Verbal arguments

A verb has either a single unflagged argument (i.e. an argument without case or adposition) or two unflagged arguments: Intransitive verbs have just a subject, and transitive verbs have a subject and an object. All other arguments are prepositional phrases. With full NPs, the order is strictly „verb – Subject – Object – prepositional phrase“. Recipient arguments of ditransitive verbs are expressed by prepositional phrases with the dative preposition *n*:

- (26) *jmj mrwt-k n t3-tmw*  
 give.IMP love-2SGM to everyone  
 ‘Give your love to everyone.’ (A187)

However, when the object is a pronoun, it precedes the full-NP subject, as seen in (18). Likewise, prepositional pronominal objects with the preposition *n* precede full-NP Objects, as seen in (27):

- (27) *jmj n-n ḥn-t-n nfr-t*  
 give.IMP to-1PL outcome-F-1PL good-F  
 ‘Give us our good outcome.’ (A187)

In fact, the dative pronominal object even precedes the pronominal nonprepositional object:

- (28) *jr-t n-f st*  
 do-INF to-2SGM it  
 ‘to do it to you’ (A163)

The tendency for pronominal arguments to precede full NP arguments is very widespread in the world’s languages (e.g. Dik 1997: 411).

Adverbial phrases are usually expressed by prepositional phrases as well, following the verb and its arguments.

- (29) *dd-tw ḥtp-ntr pn m-b3ḥ twt pn*  
 place-PASS offering-god this in-front statue this  
 ‘This offering shall be placed before this statue.’ (Gardiner 1957: 353)

Topicalized phrases may occur before the verb, e.g.

- (30) *m-k ntr rdj-n-f ḥnb-k*  
 behold-2SG god cause-PRF-3SGM live-2SGM  
 ‘Behold, god has caused thee to live.’ (Gardiner 1957: 115)



## A7. Noun phrase structure

Noun phrases consist of nouns plus optional modifiers which generally follow the noun, such as adjectives, demonstratives, numerals and possessors:

- (31) a. *ḥm-wt*            *nfr-t*  
 woman-PL.F      good-F  
 ‘good women’ (A60)
- b. *nṯr*            *pn*  
 god              this.M  
 ‘this god’ (A52)
- c. *dmj*            *wḏ*  
 harbour      one.M  
 ‘one harbour’ (A100)
- d. *nswt*            *t3-wj*  
 king            land-DU  
 ‘the king of the two lands (= of Egypt)’ (A40)

The demonstratives *pn/tn* (‘this’, M/F) and *pw/tw* (‘this’, M/F) follow the noun, while the demonstrative *p3/t3* (‘this’, M/F) precedes the noun. Likewise, the determiners *kjj* ‘other’ and *tnw* ‘each’ precede the noun (*kjj sb3* ‘another gate, the other gate’; *tnw rnpt* ‘each year’, Allen 2000: 62).

When the possessor is a personal pronoun, it is expressed by the suffix series, e.g. *pr-f* ‘his house’, *sn-w-t* ‘your (F) brothers’.

In addition to the unmarked possessive construction, as in (31d, 34b) (and in *pr-f* ‘his house’), Middle Egyptian has an “indirect” possessive construction with the genitive preposition *n/n-t/n-w* (M/F/M.PL) that agrees with the possessum in gender and number:

- (32) a. *z3*            *n*            *zj*  
 son(M)      of.M          man  
 ‘the son of a man’ (A41)
- b. *ḥm-wt*      *n-t*            *wr-w*  
 wife-PL.F    of-F            chief-PL  
 ‘the wives of the chiefs’ (A41)

The contrast between the unmarked and the *n*-marked possessive constructions is discussed further in Haspelmath (2014) (in this volume).

### A8. Nonverbal predication

Egyptian clauses are typically divided into verbal-predicate clauses (§A9) and nonverbal-predicate clauses, and the latter are subdivided into adjectival-predicate, nominal-predicate and adverbial-predicate clauses.

We already saw that adjectival-predicate clauses are expressed by clause-initial non-agreeing adjectives followed by full NPs (cf. 12) or by dependent pronouns (cf. 21).

Nominal predicates are generally marked by the copula *pw*, as in (13) and in (33).

- (33) *phrt pw ʕnb*  
 cycle COP life  
 ‘Life is a cycle.’ (A72)

When the subject of a nominal-predicate clause is a third person pronoun, it is not expressed at all:

- (34) a. *z3-j pw*  
 son-1SG COP  
 ‘He is my son.’ (A72)
- b. *hm-t wʕb pw*  
 wife-F priest COP  
 ‘She is a priest’s wife.’ (A72)

The copula *pw* presumably derives from the demonstrative *pw* ‘this(M.SG)’, but it is used regardless of gender. When the predicate NP has an adjectival or indirect-possessor modifier, the copula follows the noun immediately, i.e. it is a kind of second-position enclitic that may occur inside a noun phrase:

- (35) a. *t3 pw nfr*  
 land COP good  
 ‘It is a good land.’ (A72)
- b. *mnw pw n zj nfrw-f*  
 monument COP of man goodness-2SGM  
 ‘The monument of a man is his goodness.’ (A73)

Nominal-predicate clauses may be copulaless when the subject is a first- or second-person pronoun (see (25) above), or when the predicate is an inalienable kinship term (e.g. *mwt-j nwt* [mother-1SG Nut] ‘Nut is my mother’, Allen 2000: 71).

While adjectival-predicate and nominal-predicate clauses are mostly predicate-initial, adverbial-predicate clauses have the adverbial predicate following the subject, e.g.



- b. *šm-k      ḥnʕ-sn    r    ḥnw*  
 go-2SGM with-3PL to home  
 ‘You will go home with them.’ (A248)
- c. *dd-n-f              ʕḥ3-f              ḥnʕ-j*  
 say-PRF-3SGM fight-3SG with-1SG  
 ‘He said he would fight with me.’ (A253)

Postverbal-subject clauses are further discussed in §A10.

Periphrastic clauses have verbal predicates that consist of a preposition and an infinitive: *ḥr* + infinitive (‘upon doing’) and *m* + infinitive (‘in doing’) are used in a progressive sense, while *r* + infinitive (‘to doing’) is used in a future sense. As in adverbial-predicate clauses, their subject precedes the predicate, though normally some kind of particle comes first.

- (40) a. *jw    srj-w              ḥr    rdj-t              n-k              jw-k              ḥr    jt-t*  
 PCL official-PL on give-INF to-2SGM PCL-2SGM on take-INF  
 ‘The officials are giving to you and you are taking.’ (A176)
- b. *m-t              wj              m    ḥ3-t              r    km-t*  
 lo-2SGF 1SG.DEP in go.down-INF to Egypt  
 ‘(Look) I am going down to Egypt.’ (A176)
- c. *nn    sw              r    ḥpr*  
 NEG 3SGM.DEP to become-INF  
 ‘He will not come into existence.’ (A178)

The infinitive is most typically identical to the verb stem, but with some verbs it has the suffix *-t*. Note that the pronominal object of the infinitive is often expressed as a suffix pronoun, as in (41).

- (41) *nn    jw-j              r    w3ḥ-t*  
 NEG PCL-1SG to stop.INF-2SG.F  
 ‘I am not going to stop you.’ (A178)

Stative clauses typically have the subject before the verb as well, as in (42).

- (42) a. *m-k              wj              3tp-kw              m    jʕnw*  
 lo-2SGM 1SG.DEP load.STAT-1SG in woe  
 ‘(Look) I am loaded with woe.’ (A204)
- b. *t3    3q-w              r    3w*  
 land ruin.STAT-3SG to entirety  
 ‘The land is ruined entirely.’ (A204)

The Stative verb forms have a special set of person-number forms, shown in simplified form in Table 4. These suffixes are very different from the ordinary suffixes shown in Table 3.

**Table 4. Stative suffixes**

SG	1	-kw
	2	-tj
	3M	-w
	3F	-tj
PL	1	-wjn
	2	-tjwnj
	3	-wj

The Stative is special in a number of respects: It seems to be the oldest finite verb form (with clear cognates in Semitic languages), but it is also the only one that has survived into Coptic – all the standard finite verb forms disappeared and were replaced by a variety of periphrastic forms using the Infinitive. Grammatically, the most striking peculiarity of the Stative is that the person-number suffixes act more like agreement markers than like pronouns. While the suffix pronouns are in complementary distribution with full-NP subjects in the postverbal-subject construction (*šm-f* ‘he will go’, *šm sn-j* ‘my brother will go’), in the Stative the person-number suffixes generally cooccur with an overt (full-NP or pronoun) subject (*wj* in 42a, *t3* in 42b). Orthographically, what is special about the Stative is that (some of) its suffixes are normally written before the determinative of the verb, unlike all the other postverbal grammatical markers. This suggests that they are felt to be closer to the verb stem than the other markers.

Semantically, the Stative is peculiar as well because it expresses a state or (completed) past event, but with a different effect for intransitive and transitive verbs. The Stative of an intransitive verb expresses an ordinary intransitive action or state:

- (43) a. *m-k*      *wj*      *jj-kw*  
 lo-2SGM    1SG.DEP    come.STAT-1SG  
 ‘(Look) I have come.’ (A205)
- b. *nḥman*    *z3-f*      *ʕq-w*                      *r*    *ʕḥ*  
 PCL        son-2SGM    enter.STAT-3SGM    to    palace  
 ‘His son has surely entered the palace.’ (A208)

But the Stative of transitive verbs expresses a passive state or completed event, as seen in (42). Such verb forms have been called „resultative“ (Nedjalkov 1988). A syntactic peculiarity is that it most often occurs in a circumstantial adverbial clause. The Stative is discussed in great detail by Reintges (2014, in this volume).

### A10. Postverbal-subject clauses

Verbal-predicate clauses with postverbal subjects contain standard finite verb forms, which come in a variety of subtypes. The most clearly distinguishable subtypes are the *V-∅* form, the *V-n* form, the *V-jn* form, and the *V-ḥr* form (as well as a few others where a consonant follows the verb stem). Only the *V-∅* form and the *V-n* form are common, but here are examples of the rarer forms:

- (44) a. *jw-jn-tw*            *r smj*            *n ḥm-f*  
 come-JN-GENER to report.INF to majesty-3SGM  
 ‘Then one came to report to His Incarnation (i.e. the king).’ (A302)
- b. *jr-ḥr-k*            *n-f*            *zp-w*            *n-w wšš*  
 make-HR-2SGM to-3SGM concoction-PL of-PL excretion  
 ‘You have to make for him concoctions for excretion.’

The *V-n* form (also called the Perfect) is used as a past tense or perfect aspect:

- (45) *rdj-n-j*            *ḥknw*            *n mntw*  
 give-PRF-1SG praise to Montu  
 ‘I gave praise to Montu.’ (A226)

But when negated, the Perfect refers to a potential event (see also (9) above):

- (46) *m-k*            *wj ḥr spr*            *n-k, nj sdm-n-k*            *st*  
 lo-2SGM 1SG.DEP on petition.INF to-2SGM NEG hear-PRF-2SGM 3SGF.DEP  
 ‘(Look) I am petitioning to you, but you cannot hear it.’ (A235)

The simple *V-∅* form has a variety of different uses: perfective (e.g. 47a), imperfective (e.g. 47b), and subjunctive or prospective (e.g. 47c), as well as a passive use (e.g. 47d). With some verbs, especially several frequent and irregular verbs, there are different forms for different uses, e.g. the verb *rdj/dj* has the stem *dj* with subjunctive uses (*dj-k* ‘you should give’) and the stem *rdj* with perfective uses (*rdj-k* ‘you gave’). Thus, Egyptologists generally assume that there were at least three different *V-∅* forms for most or all verbs, distinguished primarily by the (unwritten) vowels.

- (47) a. *nj k3-j spr*            *r ḥnw pn*  
 NEG plan-1SG arrive.INF to capital that  
 ‘I did not plan to arrive at that capital.’ (A265)
- b. *jw jr-j m mt-t*            *n-t jb*            *n nb rʕ nb*  
 PCL do-1SG in correctness-F of-F heart to lord day every  
 ‘I used to act with correctness of heart for the lord every day.’ (A267)

- c. *jr-n-f*                    *t3w n jb,*        *ʕnb* *fnḏ-w-sn*  
 make-PRF-3SGM    air to heart live nose-PL-3PL  
 ‘He has made air for the heart, so that their noses might live.’ (A251)
- d. *ʕb*                    *šnw-j*  
 comb hair-1SG  
 ‘My hair was combed.’ (A291)

The question of how many different verb forms there were in the postverbal-subject construction, and how they were used, has been a matter of considerable debate (see, e.g., Schenkel 1990: ch. 3).

### A11. Relative clauses

Relative clauses follow the head noun like other adnominal modifiers. When the predicate of a relative clause is a verb, Middle Egyptian uses a set of special verb forms that agree in gender and number with the head noun, as in (48).

- (48) a. *jt-w*            *mw-wt*            *wnnjj-w*            *ḥnʕ-j*  
 father-PL mother-PL.F [exist.REL-PL with-1SG]  
 ‘the fathers and mothers who existed with me’ (A327)
- b. *nfr-t*    *nb-t*    *jnn-t*            *n* *ḥm*    *n* *nb-j*  
 good-F every-F [bring.REL-F to majesty of lord-1SG]  
 ‘every good thing that was brought to the incarnation of my lord.’ (A328)
- c. *mdw-w*    *ḏd-w*            *n-sn*    *nʔr*    *pn*  
 word-PL [say.REL-PL to-3PL god this]  
 ‘the words that this god says to them’ (A349)

Egyptologists distinguish between various subtypes of “participles“ used in subject relative clauses like (48a) and “relative forms“ used in non-subject relative clauses like (48c). However, there are also “passive participles“ as in (48b) that are semantically non-subject relative clauses as well. Like adjectives, relative verb forms can be used on their own without a head noun (e.g. *mr* ‘one who loves’).

The relative pronoun *ntj/ntt* (M/F) is used almost exclusively in relative clauses with non-verbal predicates (e.g. (3) in §A2 above).

## Part B. Salient grammatical patterns of Coptic

### B1. Anasynthesis in Later Egyptian

Perhaps the most salient change between Earlier Egyptian (Old and Middle Egyptian) and Later Egyptian (represented here by Coptic) is the change from postposed (and probably suffixed) markers of person and tense-aspect to preposed markers, deriving from originally analytic, periphrastic expressions. Such a replacement of synthetic patterns by analytic patterns, which later become synthetic again, has long been discussed as “synthesis-analysis-synthesis” cycle (e.g. von der Gabelentz 1901, Schwegler 1990, van Gelderen 2011; for Egyptian-Coptic, see Ewald 1862, Hintze 1950, Hodge 1971, and Reintges 2012). I call this macro-process **anasynthesis** here. Since few languages are attested over a similarly long period, it is not quite clear whether anasynthesis is a truly universal diachronic trend, and in some language families such as Chinese and Germanic, there is not much evidence for secondary synthesis (though analysis, i.e. innovative periphrastic expression, is widely attested). However, for Egyptian-Coptic, the trend is hard to overlook. In particular, we observe the changes listed (and briefly illustrated) in (49). Here  $\gg$  means ‘is replaced by’, and  $>$  means ‘turns into’.

- (49) a. postposed demonstrative  $\gg$  preposed demonstrative *pei-/tei-*  
*rmṯ pn*  $\gg$  *pɜj rmt*  $>$  *pei-rōme* (πεῖρωμε)  
 man this this man this-man  
 ‘this man’
- b. preposed demonstrative  $>$  prefixed definite article *p-/t-*  
*pɜ rmṯ*  $>$  *pɜ rmt*  $>$  *p-rōme* (πρωμε)  
 ‘this man’ ‘the man’ ‘the man’
- c. numeral ‘one’  $>$  prefixed indefinite article *ou-*  
*ḥfɜw wɣ*  $\gg$  *wɣ (n) ḥfɜw*  $>$  *ou-hof* (ουχοφ)  
 snake one one (of) snake INDF-snake
- d. ordinal numeral suffix *-nw*  $\gg$  prefix *meh-*  
*ḥmt-nw*  $\gg$  *mḥ-ḥmt*  $>$  *meh-šomnt* (μερσομντ)  
 three-ORD fill-three ORD-three  
 ‘third’
- e. suffixed possessive pronoun  $\gg$  prefixed possessive pronoun (following the article)  
*rn-k*  $\gg$  *pɜj-k rn*  $>$  *p-ek-ran* (πεκραν)  
 name-2SGM DEF-2SGM name DEF-2SGM-name  
 ‘your name’



- f. postverbal-subject construction » pre-subject-TAM construction  
*sdm-n-f* » *jr-f sdm* > *a-f-sôtm* (ⲁϥϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ)  
 hear-PRF-3SGM do-3SGM hear PRET-3SGM-hear  
 ‘he heard’
- g. Stative construction with agreement > Stative without agreement  
*X st wd3-tj* > *st wd3* > *s-ouoj* (ϥⲟϥⲟⲩⲁ)  
 X she whole.STAT-3SGF she whole 3SGF-whole.STAT  
 ‘she is whole’
- h. synthetic suffixed passive » passive-like construction with 3PL person form  
*sdm-w-f* » *a-u-sotm-f* (ⲁϥϥⲟⲩⲧⲙϥ)  
 hear-PASS-3SGM PRET-3PL-hear-3SGM  
 ‘he was heard’ ‘he was heard’ (“they heard him“)
- i. periphrastic construction > subject-verb construction  
*X sw hr sdm* > *f-sôtm* (ϥϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ)  
 he on hear 3SGM-hear  
 ‘he is hearing’ ‘he is hearing, he hears’
- j. suffix object pronouns (on infinitives) » prepositional accusative<sup>4</sup>  
*sdm-n* » *sdm jm-n* > *sôtm mmo-n* (ϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ)  
 hear.INF-1PL hear.INF in-1PL hear ACC-1PL  
 ‘to hear us’

In some of these changes, the analytical construction is very old (e.g. the periphrastic construction with *hr* in 49i, which we saw in 40a above), while in others it is newer. Thus the changes did not take place simultaneously, and it is not clear how closely they are connected. It may only be in hindsight that they seem to form a coherent group of changes. The extent to which the Coptic constructions are synthetic is not always clear, as there are no criteria for distinguishing between prefixes and proclitics in Coptic. But it is striking to see the massive reorganization of Egyptian morphosyntax over the millennia.<sup>5</sup>

The anasynthesis changes observed in Egyptian are of course just a manifestation at the macro-level of what is generally called grammaticalization. Changes of this type are widespread in all languages, and we observe anasynthesis also elsewhere, but not in the same clear way. We always observe a change from synthesis being replaced by analysis which then turns into synthesis, and there has been a fair amount of discussion of the

<sup>4</sup> The new prepositional accusative with the preposition *n-/mmo-* coexists with the old suffixed person forms (*sotm-n* ‘to hear us’, cf. 49h above and B3 below).

<sup>5</sup> Grammaticalization is continuing in Coptic. As shown by Grossman (2009), some varieties of Coptic have a new perfect of the form: *a-f-ouô e-f-sôtm* ‘he finished hearing’ > ‘he has heard’.

unidirectional development that we see here (e.g. Haspelmath (1999), Börjars & Vincent (2009)), but even if it is not fully understood yet, it is clear that this is a widespread tendency of which Egyptian shows a particularly striking example.

## B2. Coptic sounds and stress groups

The Sahidic Coptic consonants and vowels are given in Table 5 (simplified, as everything in this chapter). (See Depuydt 1993, Peust 1999 and Funk 2009 for details on Coptic phonology.)

**Table 5. Coptic consonants and vowels**

p	t	c	k	kʲ	ʔ	i:	u:
b	(d)		(g)				ə
f	s	ʃ	(x)		h	e	e: o o:
m	n, r						a
w	l	j					

The sounds [p, t, k, d, g, s, m, n, r, l, e, o, a, e:, o:, i:] are written in the expected way, using the corresponding Greek letters (π, τ, κ, Δ, Γ, ϸ, Μ, Ν, Ρ, λ, Ϸ, Η, Ω, Ι). [u:] is written as <ou>, as in Greek, and [i:] is written as <i> or <ei>. [w] and [j] are written as <ou> (or as <u> in the diphthongs <au>, <êu> and <eu>) and <i, ei>.

For the sounds [f, ʃ, h, x, c, kʲ], Coptic uses a set of special letters not derived from Greek, but from the Demotic script: ϣ, Ϟ, ϟ, Ϡ, and ϡ. In the Leipzig-Jerusalem transliteration of Coptic, Ϡ and ϡ are transliterated as <c> and <č>, mostly for typographic convenience.<sup>6</sup>

Another special letter, †, is used for [ti] (transliterated as <τʰ>). The Greek letters Φ, Θ, Χ, Ψ and Ξ are also used for sequences of two segments in Sahidic Coptic: /ph/, /th/, /kh/, /p/ and /ks/, respectively.

The glottal stop was apparently written by doubling the letter of the preceding vowel, e.g. *toot* /toʔt/ ‘my hand’, *ouêêb* /we:ʔb/ ‘priest’. The schwa sound is written as <e> at the end of words (e.g. *mise* [mi:sə] ‘give birth’), and is unwritten between consonants (e.g. *tootf* ‘his hand’, probably pronounced [toʔtəf], and *ouêêb* was probably pronounced [we:ʔəb]).

There was a clear contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables in Coptic: Stressed syllables may have long vowels or the vowel [o], but unstressed syllables were apparently confined to the vowels [a] and [ə]. Where unstressed <e>, <i> and <ou> occur in writing, they were probably pronounced as [ə], [(ə)j], and [(ə)w] (Loprieno 1995: 50).

Stress is not marked in Coptic writing, but it can be inferred from a number of vowel alternations where a long vowel appears to alternate with schwa, e.g.

<sup>6</sup> It is not quite clear how Ϡ <ϸ> and ϡ <ϸ> were actually pronounced. The values [c] and [kʲ] are from Loprieno (1995: 40), but in view of the similarity between the two, this is not very likely. Layton (2004: 13) gives [kʲ] for Ϡ and [tʃ] for ϡ.

*eire* ['i:rə] 'do' (εἶρε) vs. *r-nobe* [ər-'nobə] '(do) sin' (ῥνοβε)  
*nouče* ['nu:kʲə] 'throw, put' (νουχε) vs. *neč-êrp* [nəkʲ-'e:rəp] 'put wine' (νεχηρη)

The stress pattern that can be inferred from vowel patterns allows us to identify a prosodic constituent “stress group“ (called “bound group“ in Layton 2004: 22). A stress group consists of a noun or a verb root (always stressed on the last non-schwa syllable) preceded by a series of unstressed, phonologically dependent (“clitic“) elements which are typically grammatical morphemes, e.g.

- (50) a. **πεκραν**  
*p-ek-ran* [pə-k-rán]  
 DEF.M-2SGM-name  
 ‘your name’
- b. **ζηπιμεζωμντ**  
*hm-p-meh-šomnt* [həm-p-məh-ʃómənt]  
 in-DEF.M-ORD-three  
 ‘in the third’
- c. **ουρεφρνοβε**  
*ou-ref-r-nobe* [w-rəf-ər-nóbə]  
 INDF-AGT-do-sin  
 ‘a sinner’
- d. **ευντσογυεερε**  
*e-unt-s-ou-šeere* [ə-wənt-əs-w-ʃéʔrə]  
 REL-have-3SGF-INDF-daughter  
 ‘who had a daughter’
- e. **μνητεντνναυ εροου**  
*mn-n-ete-n-tn-nau* *ero-ou* [mən-n-ətə-n-tən-náv ərów]  
 with-DEF.PL-REL-NEG-1PL-see to-3PL  
 ‘and those which we do not see’

Stress groups cannot be identified with “words“, however, because verb roots are sometimes unstressed and precede a stressed subject or object:

- (51) a. **πεχεινσους**  
*peče-iêsous* [pəkʲə-je:sú:s]  
 say-Jesus  
 ‘Jesus said.’

- b.  $\epsilon\eta\epsilon\chi\tau\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\iota\mu\epsilon\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$   
*e-neč-t-ef-shime ebol* [ə-nək<sup>i</sup>-t-əf-shí:mə əból]  
 to-throw-DEF.F-3SGM-wife out  
 ‘to throw out (=divorce) his wife’

Moreover, unstressed tense-aspect and relative markers can precede a full-NP subject:

- (52) a.  $\alpha\pi\alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\alpha\upsilon\ \epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon$   
*a-paulos nau ero-f* [a-páwlos náu əró-f]  
 pret-Paul see to-3SGM  
 ‘Paul saw him.’
- b.  $\pi\epsilon\eta\tau\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\eta\varsigma\ \sigma\zeta\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\tau\beta\eta\eta\tau\upsilon$   
*p-ent-a-môusês shai etbêêt-f* [p-ənt-a-mo:isé:s sháj ətbé:ʔt-əf]  
 DEF.M-REL-PRET-Moses write about-3SGM  
 ‘the one of whom Moses wrote’

One would of course not want to say that the stress group *p-ent-a-môusês* ‘the one who Moses (past tense)’ is a word. There does not seem to be any use for the term “word” in Coptic, and Layton’s (2004) thoughtful description of Coptic completely dispenses with the notion “word” (he confines himself to the two related notions of “morph” and “bound group”, i.e. stress group).

### B3. Personal pronouns and full NPs

Coptic has two basic series of person forms, independent personal pronouns (which have been preserved from Earlier Egyptian) and bound person forms. The prefixal and suffixal bound person forms differ somewhat in their shapes.

**Table 6. Three series of personal pronouns (simplified)**

		independent pronouns	prefixal forms (subject)	suffixal forms (subject, object)
SG	1	<i>anok</i>	<i>ti-</i>	<i>-i/-t</i>
	2M	<i>ntok</i>	<i>k-</i>	<i>-k</i>
	2F	<i>nto</i>	<i>te-</i>	<i>-Ø/-re</i>
	3M	<i>ntof</i>	<i>f-</i>	<i>-f</i>
	3F	<i>ntos</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>-s</i>
PL	1	<i>anon</i>	<i>tn-</i>	<i>-n</i>
	2	<i>ntôtn</i>	<i>tetn-</i>	<i>-(t)etn</i>
	3	<i>ntoou</i>	<i>se-</i>	<i>-ou</i>

The independent pronouns are mostly used in nonverbal predication and to express contrast, as in Earlier Egyptian. The prefixal forms are used as subject pronouns, while the suffixal forms can be used both as subject and as object pronouns.

There are two basic types of clause patterns: TAM-subject patterns and subject-predicate patterns. The former use the suffixal person forms, while the latter use the prefixal forms of the personal pronouns. In the subject-predicate pattern, the prefixal personal pronouns may combine directly with the verb stem, though the future tense marker *na-* comes between the subject and the verb.

## (53) TAM-subject patterns

a. ⲁϥϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ

*a-f-sôtm*

PRF-3SGM-hear

‘he heard’

b. ⲙⲡϥⲙⲟϥ

*mp-s-mou*

PRF.NEG-3SGF-die

‘she did not die’

c. Ⲡⲁϥⲕⲁⲁϥ

*ša-u-kaa-f*

HAB-3PL-put-3SGM

‘they put it (habitually)’

(54) subject-predicate patterns<sup>7</sup>

a. ϥϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ

*f-sôtm*

3SGM-hear

‘he is hearing’

b. ⲧⲈⲚⲁⲖⲞⲔ

*te-na-bôk*

2SGF-FUT-go

‘you will go’

c. ϥⲈⲕⲏⲧ

*se-kêt*

3PL-build.STAT

‘they are built’

As in Earlier Egyptian, a bound person form does not normally cooccur with a coreferential full NP, so when an NP is present, the bound person form is absent. In the TAM-subject patterns (cf. 53d), this means that the TAM marker is procliticized to the subject. This is a cross-linguistically very unusual situation, but it is explicable diachronically, as the markers derive from auxiliary verbs in a VSO pattern (cf. 49f).

## (53) d. ⲁⲡⲎⲟϥⲧⲈ ϥⲟⲩⲧⲙ

*a-p-noute sôtm*

PRF-DEF.M-god hear

‘God heard’

## (54) d. ⲡⲈⲦⲠⲟϥ ⲚⲁⲖⲞⲔ

*petros na-bôk*

Peter FUT-go

‘Peter will go’

<sup>7</sup> What is called „subject-predicate pattern“ here is often called „durative sentence pattern“ in Coptic linguistics.

While the subject precedes the verb, the object follows it. Thus, suffixal person forms can be identified as subject or object forms by position (TAM-*subj*-VERB-*obj*):

- (55) a.  $\lambda\varphi\sigma\omicron\tau\pi\tau$   
*a-f-sotp-t*  
 PRF-3SGM-choose-1SG  
 ‘he chose me’
- b.  $\omega\lambda\alpha\sigma\omicron\tau\mu\varphi$   
*ša-n-sotm-f*  
 HAB-1PL-hear-3SGM  
 ‘we hear him (habitually)’

Full-NP objects may likewise follow the verb, with no special marking:

- (56) a.  $\mu\pi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\tau\mu\lambda\alpha\alpha\upsilon$   
*mp-ou-setm-laau*  
 PRF.NEG-3PL-hear-anyone  
 ‘they did not hear anyone’
- b.  $\lambda\varphi\kappa\alpha\beta\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\varsigma\ \eta\alpha\upsilon\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$   
*a-f-ka-barabbas na-u ebol*  
 PRF-3SGM-put-Barabbas to-3PL out  
 ‘He released Barabbas for them.’ (L129; Mark 15:15)

Note that special verb forms are used when a direct object immediately follows the verb. In such cases, not only the pronominal suffix, but also the full-NP object is bound to the verb (in that it belongs to the same stress group). Since the stress moves to the full-NP object, the vowel of the verb is reduced, cf. the forms in (57).

(57) free form	bound before full NP	bound before suffixed pronoun	
<i>sôtm</i>	<i>setm-</i>	<i>sôtm-</i>	‘hear’
<i>kôt</i>	<i>ket-</i>	<i>kôt-</i>	‘build’
<i>tamó</i>	<i>tame-</i>	<i>tamó-</i>	‘inform’
<i>jíse</i>	<i>jest-</i>	<i>jást-</i>	‘raise’
<i>sólsl</i>	<i>słsl-</i>	<i>słsôl-</i>	‘console’
<i>éire</i>	<i>r-</i>	<i>áa-</i>	‘do’

Reduced bound forms of verbs in a verb-object combination are quite unusual typologically, and very tight verb-object combinations such as those in (56) tend to be found only in special “object incorporation” contexts, mostly when the object is generic (as in German

*Fabrrad fabren* [bicycle ride] ‘to cycle’). The construction in (56) has not been treated as “incorporation” by Coptic grammarians, because it is much less constrained than typical incorporation constructions.

However, the direct-object construction in (55-56) is not the only possibility. Direct objects may also be coded by the preposition *n-/m-* (before nouns) or *mmo-* (before suffix pronouns), which earlier meant ‘in’; in such cases, the free form of the verb is used. This preposition is glossed ACC (accusative) here.

- (58) a.  $\varnothing$ ΔΑΝCΩΤΗ ΜΜΟC  
*ša-n-sôt m mmo-s*  
 HAB-1PL-hear ACC-3SGF  
 ‘we do not hear her (habitually)’
- b. ΔΑΦΝΟΥΞΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΝΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΝΑΚΑΘΑΡΤΟΝ  
*a-f-nouçe ebol n-ne-pneuma n-akatharton*  
 PRF-3SGM-throw out ACC-DEF.PL-spirit ATTR-unclean  
 ‘He cast out the unclean spirits.’ (L132; Matthew 8:16)<sup>8</sup>

Such prepositional direct objects remind the typologists of differential object marking (cf. Lazard 2001, and for Coptic see Engsheden 2008), but the conditions for the use of *n-/mmo-* in Coptic are complex. In subject-verb patterns, prepositional direct objects seem to be virtually obligatory (Stern-Jernstedt Rule), while in TAM-subject patterns, there is variation: When the NP lacks an article, it cannot occur with a preposition (Layton 2004: 132). The latter restriction is similar to conditions on incorporation constructions, which typically exclude articles or other modifiers. See Winand (2014, in this volume) for the origins of these patterns in Middle and Late Egyptian.

#### B4. Noun phrase structure

Definite articles (*p-/t-/n-*), indefinite articles (*ou-/hen-*), demonstratives (*pei-/tei-*), and possessive pronouns precede the noun (cf. 59), while other modifiers follow it (cf. 60).

- (59) a. ΠΡΩΜΕ  
*p-rôme*  
 DEF.M-man ‘the man’
- b. ΤΕΙCΙΜΕ  
*tei-shime*  
 DEM.F-woman ‘this woman’

<sup>8</sup> “(L132)” is short for “(Layton 2004: 132)”. All of the Coptic examples cited here are from Layton’s excellent grammar. Most of the examples are attested in texts (often in the Bible, and see Layton for the sources of the other examples), but some are constructed by the grammarian for pedagogical purposes.

- c. ΠΕΣΡΑΝ  
*p-es-ran*  
 DEF.M-3SGF-name ‘her name’<sup>9</sup>
- d. ΟΥΣΗΜΕ  
*ou-shime*  
 INDF.SG-woman ‘a woman’
- e. ΖΕΝΖΕΒΡΑΙΟΣ  
*ben-hebraios*  
 INDF.PL-Hebrew ‘Hebrews’
- (60) a. ΖΡΑΔΥ ΝΙΜ  
*braau nim*  
 dish any ‘every dish’
- b. ΠΡΩΜΕ ΣΝΑΥ  
*p-rôme snau*  
 DEF.M-man two ‘the two men’
- c. ΤΓΑΛΙΛΑΙΑ ΤΗΡΣ  
*t-galilaia têt-s*  
 DEF.F-Galilee all-3SGF ‘all Galilee’
- d. ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΝΣΑΒΕ  
*ou-rôme n-sabe*  
 INDF-man ATTR-wise ‘a wise man’
- e. ΠΗΙ ΜΠΧΟΕΙΣ  
*p-êi m-p-čoeis*  
 DEF.M-house ATTR-DEF.M-lord ‘the house of the lord’

Most commonly, property-words such as *sabe* ‘wise’ (60d) follow a thing (or person) word that they modify, but the reverse is also possible (see Malchukov 2000 for some typological discussion):

- (61) ΟΥΣΑΒΕ ΝΡΩΜΕ  
*ou-sabe n-rôme*  
 INDF-wise ATTR-man ‘a wise man’

<sup>9</sup> A few nouns have postposed possessive pronouns, like *bêt-* ‘belly’ (cf. 63b below) (see Haspelmath 2014, in this volume for further discussion).



And thing-words may also modify other thing-words in the same attribution construction with the attributive marker *n-*:

- (62) ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΝΕΩΩΤ  
*ou-rōme n-ešōt*  
 INDF-man ATTR-merchant                    ‘a man who is a merchant’

Thus, there is no obvious grammatical distinction between property-words and thing-words, and consequently Layton (2004) calls them both nouns. The only difference between words like *shime* ‘woman’ and words like *sabe* ‘wise’ is that the former has a fixed gender (namely feminine: *te-shime* [DEF.F-woman] ‘the woman’), whereas *sabe* can occur with either gender: *p-sabe* ‘the wise one (M)’, *t-sabe* ‘the wise one (F)’.

### B5. Nonverbal predication

Nonverbal predications with nominal predicates use the copula *pe* (M) / *te* (F) / *ne* (PL) when the subject is 3rd person:

- (63) a. ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΑCΩΜΑ  
*pai pe p-a-sōma*  
 this.M COP.M DEF.M-1SG-body  
 ‘This is my body.’ (L217; 1 Cor 11:24)
- b. ΠΕΥΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΕ ΖΗΤΟΥ  
*p-eu-noute pe hêt-ou*  
 DEF.M-3PL-god COP.M belly-3PL  
 ‘Their god is their belly.’ (L217; Phil 3: 19)
- c. ΟΥΡΕΦΡΗΒΕ ΤΕ  
*ou-ref-r-nobe te*  
 INDF-AGT-do-sin COP.F  
 ‘She is a sinner.’ (L209; Luke 7:39)
- d. ΟΥΑΔΙΚΟΣ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ  
*ou-adikos pe p-noute*  
 INDF-unjust COP.M DEF.M-god  
 ‘God is unjust.’ (L340; Rom 3:5-6)

When the subject is first or second person, it is expressed by (a reduced form of) the independent pronoun and no copula is needed:

- (64) ἀνγ ἑμβαλ μπλοεῖς  
*ang t-<sup>h</sup>mbal m-p-joeis*  
 I DEF.F-servant ATTR-DEF.M-lord  
 ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord.’ (Luke 1:38)

When the nonverbal predicate is a prepositional phrase or an adverb, no copula is used, and the predicate simply follows the subject:

- (65) a. τῆε ζῆμπαῖ  
*t-me hm-pai*  
 DEF.F-truth in-that.M  
 ‘The truth is in that one.’ (L237)
- b. πετρος ἔμαυ  
*petros mmau*  
 Peter there  
 ‘Peter is there.’ (L237; Acts 9:38)

In such constructions, person forms are from the prefixal series:

- (66) a. σῆμαυ  
*s-mmau*  
 3SGF-there  
 ‘It is there.’ (L237)
- b. ἰ-νῆμαυ ζῆτεφῶλιψῖς  
*t<sup>i</sup>-nmma-f hn-t-ef-t<sup>h</sup>lip<sup>s</sup>is*  
 1SG-with-3SGF in-DEF.F-3SGM-affliction  
 ‘I am with him in his affliction.’ (L237; Ps 90:15)
- c. φῆνῆμπηγε  
*f-hn-m-pêue*  
 3SGM-in-DEF.PL-heaven.PL  
 ‘He is in the heavens.’ (L328)

The existential copula *oun-* (negative *mn-*) is used in existential clauses:

- (67) a. οὐναγγελος  
*oun-aggelos*  
 EXIST-angel  
 ‘Angels exist.’ (L381; Acts 23:8)

- b. ΜΝΙΟΥΔΑΙ ΞΙΕΛΛΗΝ  
*mn-ioudai hi-bellên*  
 NEG.EXIST-Jew on-Greek  
 ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek.’ (L384; Gal 3:28)

The possessive verb-like form *ounte-* (negative *mnte-*) is used to express ‘have’, in a special construction verb-possessor-possessum:

- (68) a. ΟΥΝΤΕΒΒΑΩΡ ΝΕΥΒΗΒ  
*ounte-b-başor n-eu-bêb*  
 have-DEF.PL-fox DEF.PL-3PL-hole  
 ΑΥΩ ΟΥΝΤΕΝΞΑΛΑΤΕ ΝΤΠΕ ΝΕΥΜΑΞ  
*auô ounte-n-balate n-t-pe n-eu-mab*  
 and have-DEF.PL-birds ATTR-DEF.F-sky DEF.PL-3PL-nest  
 ‘Foxes have their holes and birds of the sky have their nests.’ (L305; Luke 9:58)
- b. ΟΥΝΤΚΠΑΙ ΜΜΑΥ  
*ount-k-pai mmau*  
 have-2SGM-this.M there  
 ‘You have this.’ (Rev 2:6)
- c. ΑΥΩ ΜΗΛΑΑΥ ΕΜΝΤΦΣΜΗ  
*auô mn-laau e-mnt-f-smê*  
 and NEG.exist-anyone [CIRC-NEG.have-3SGM-voice]  
 ‘And there is none that has no voice.’ (1 Cor 14:10)

In this construction (and only here), there may be two person suffixes in a series:

- (69) ΜΝΤΑΥΦ  
*mnta-u-f*  
 NEG.have-3PL-3SGM  
 ‘they do not have it’

## B6. Relative clauses

Relative clauses are marked by the relativizer *ete(re)/et-/ent-* when the head noun is definite. In almost all cases, the relativized element is represented by a resumptive pronoun in the relative clause.

- (70) a. ΠΕΙΦΑΧΕ ΕΝΤΑΦΩΠΕ  
*pei-šaçe ent-a-f-šôpe*  
 this.M-saying [REL-PRF-3SGM-happen]  
 ‘this saying that has come to pass’ (L327; Luke 2:15)

- b. ΠΙΟΥ ΕΝΤΑΥΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΦ ΖΗΜΜΑ ΝΩΔΑ  
*p-siou ent-a-u-nau ero-f hn-mma n-ša*  
 DEF.M-star [REL-PRF-3PL-see to-3SGM in-place of-rise]  
 ‘the star that they had seen in the East’ (L326; Matt 2:9)
- c. ΠΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΕΡΕΤΕΦΟΙΧ ΜΟΟΥΤ  
*p-rôme etere-t-ef-cič moout*  
 DEF.M-man [REL-DEF.F-3SGM-hand withered]  
 ‘the man whose hand was withered’ (L326; Mark 3:3)

This relative marker presumably derives from the Earlier Egyptian relative pronoun *ntj/ntt* (§A11).

When the head noun is indefinite, the circumstantial marker *e-/ere-* (see §B7) is used (see also 68c above):

- (71) a. ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΕΑΦΧΟ ΝΟΥΣΡΟΘ  
*ou-rôme e-a-f-jo n-ou-croc*  
 INDF-man [CIRC-PRF-3SGM-sow ACC-INDF-seed]  
 ‘a man who sowed seed’ (L327; Matthew 13:24)
- b. ΟΥΣΗΜΕ ΕΥΝΤΟΟΥΨΕΡΕ ΜΜΑΥ  
*ou-shime e-unt-s-ou-šere mmau*  
 INDF-woman [CIRC-have-3SGF-INDF-daughter there]  
 ‘a woman who had a daughter’ (L327; Mark 7:25)

Relative clauses of the first type may be readily used independently with definite articles, often in a generalized sense (‘all those who...’, ‘whoever...’).

- (72) a. ΝΕΝΤΑΥΟΥΩΜ  
*n-ent-a-u-ouôm*  
 DEF.PL-[REL-PRF-3PL-eat]  
 ‘those who ate’ (L333; Mark 6:44)
- b. ΝΕΤΕΜΝΟΜ ΜΜΟΥ  
*n-ete-mn-com mmo-ou*  
 DEF.PL-[REL-NEG.exist-power in-3PL]  
 ‘those in whom there is no power’ (i.e. the weak) (L337; Rom 15:1)
- c. ΠΕΤΕΥΝΤΦΜΑΔΧΕ ΕΩΤΜ  
*p-ete-unt-f-maače e-sôtm*  
 DEF.M-[REL-have-3SGM-ear to-hear]  
 ‘whoever has ears to hear’ (L333; Mark 4:9)

(Relative clauses preceded by definite articles also occur in cleft constructions, cf. (75a) below.)

The relative-clause marker *ete(re)*-/*et*-/*ent*- is always clause-initial and is thus similar to relative particles in many other languages (e.g. English *that*, Spanish *que*, Indonesian *yang*). It is not pronoun-like at all, as it does not show any case or agreement. But it is different from the well-known relative particles, and typologically unusual, in that its shape varies depending on the tense-aspect form of the verb: *ent*- is used before the Affirmative Perfect tense *a*- (e.g. 70a-b), *ete*- is used before other tense-aspect forms (e.g. 72b), and *etere*-/*et*- is used in subject-verb constructions (e.g. 70c). Relative markers which are intimately bound up with tense-aspect markers are known from Indo-European languages and are called “participles”, but the Coptic forms are very different in that they show no signs of nonfiniteness – the subject is expressed in much the same way in relative clauses as in independent clauses.

However, in subject-predicate patterns, the pronominal subject is expressed as a suffix on the relative marker *et*-, rather than as a prefixal form. Table 7 shows that there are some differences between the two series, especially in the 3rd person plural, but also in the 2nd singular feminine and elsewhere.

**Table 7. Prefixal subject pronouns and subject forms after *et*-**

		prefixal forms (subject)	subject forms after <i>et</i> -
SG	1	<i>ti</i> -	<i>et-i</i>
	2M	<i>k</i> -	<i>et-k</i>
	2F	<i>te</i> -	<i>et-e(re)</i>
	3M	<i>f</i> -	<i>et-f</i>
	3F	<i>s</i> -	<i>et-s</i>
PL	1	<i>tn</i> -	<i>et-n</i>
	2	<i>tetn</i> -	<i>et-etn</i>
	3	<i>se</i> -	<i>et-ou</i>

An example of a subject suffix after *et*- in a subject-predicate construction is (73).

- (73) πμα ετιναβωκ εροφ  
*p-ma et-i-na-bôk ero-f*  
 DEF.M-place [REL-1SG-FUT-go to-3SGM]  
 ‘the place that I am going to’ (L326; John 8:21)

This is thus a peculiar combination of a relative marker and a subject pronoun. When a full NP is used in a subject-verb construction, the form *etere*- is used (e.g. 70c).

### B7. Circumstantial and focalizing constructions

The marker *e-* or *ere-* is used both as a general subordination marker (called Circumstantial) and as a marker of focalization. In TAM-subject constructions, *e-* precedes the TAM marker while in subject-predicate constructions, *ere-* precedes a full-NP subject and *e-* combines with the same suffixes that follow the relativizer *et-* (cf. Table 7), thus:

- (74) a. *ne-biome sôtp*                    ‘the women choose’    (subject-predicate pattern)  
           *se-sôtp*                                ‘they choose’
- b. *ere-ne-biome sôtp*                ‘as the women choose’ (circumstantial)  
           *e-u-sôtp*                             ‘as they choose’
- c. *a-ne-biome sôtp*                    ‘the women chose’    (TAM-subject pattern)  
           *a-u-sôtp*                             ‘they chose’
- d. *e-a-ne-biome sôtp*                ‘as the women chose’ (circumstantial)  
           *e-a-u sôtp*                           ‘as they chose’

Like the relative marker, the circumstantial marker is thus closely bound up with the tense-aspect structure of the clause, and is not simply a clause-initial complementizer. Again, this kind of complexity of subordinate forms is not common cross-linguistically.

The circumstantial marker is used in various kinds of adverbial clauses (75a-b) and in certain complement clauses (76a-b). It also occurs in relative clauses with an indefinite head noun, as seen above in (71a-b).

- (75) a.  $\epsilon\mu\eta\tau\alpha\upsilon\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \gamma\alpha\rho\ \eta\mu\alpha\upsilon\ \omicron\upsilon\ \pi\epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\tau\alpha\chi\rho\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$   
           *e-mnta-u-iêsous*                    *gar*    *mmau* *ou*    *p-et-na-tačro-ou?*  
           [CIRC-NEG.have-3PL-Jesus for there] what DEF.M-[REL-FUT-strengthen-3PL]  
           ‘For as they do not have Jesus, what (is that which) will strengthen them?’ (L338)
- b.  $\lambda\zeta\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\beta\rho\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\mu\eta\delta\omicron\upsilon\ \epsilon\alpha\pi\rho\eta\ \psi\alpha$   
           *a-u-ei*                    *ebrai*    *e-pe-mbaou*    *e-a-p-rê*                    *ša*  
           PRF-3PL-come up to-DEF.M-tomb [CIRC-PRF-DEF.M-sun rise]  
           ‘They arrived at the tomb when the sun had risen.’ (L338; Mark 16:2)
- (76) a.  $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\varphi\omega\tau\eta\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\pi\rho\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma\ \epsilon\varphi\chi\omega\ \eta\eta\alpha\iota$   
           *mare-f-sôtm*            *e-pe-prop<sup>h</sup>êtês*            *e-f-čô*                    *n-nai*  
           OPT-3SGM-hear to-DEF.M-prophet [CIRC-3SGM-say ACC-these]  
           ‘Let him listen to the prophet saying these (words).’ (L341)

- b. ἀγλο ἐγμοοῦε νημαφ  
*a-u-lo e-u-mooše nmma-f*  
 PRF-3PL-cease [CIRC-3PL-go.about with-3SGM]  
 ‘They ceased going about with him.’ (L342; John 6:66)

A formally similar construction with the prefix *e-/ere-* is also used in focalizing constructions, when the main focus is not on the verb but on some other constituent, cf. the contrast between (77a) and (77b):

- (77) a. κχιῖολ  
*k-čī-col* ‘You are lying (lit. saying falsehoods).’  
 2SGM-say-falsehood
- b. εκχιῖολ  
*e-k-čī-col* ‘You are LYING (lit. saying FALSEHOODS).’ (L354)  
 FOC-2SGM-say-falsehood

- (78) εκχῶ μπαί γαροκ μαγαακ  
*e-k-čō m-pai baro-k mauaa-k?*  
 FOC-2SGM-say ACC-this on.behalf-2SGM alone-2SGM  
 ‘Is it OF YOUR OWN ACCORD that you say this?’ (L354; John 18:34)

- (79) νεφιπτεγε εροει αν, αλλα επενταφταογοει  
*n-e-f-pisteue ero-ei an, alla e-p-ent-a-f-taouo-ei*  
 NEG-FOC-3SGM-believe to-1SG NEG but to-DEF.M-[REL-PRF-3SGM-send-1SG]  
 ‘He believes NOT IN ME, but in him who sent me.’ (L360)

When the tense-aspect form is the Perfect (*a-*), the focalizing marker is not *e-*, but *nt-*:

- (80) νταφχεπαι δε εφπιρανε μμοφ  
*nt-a-f-čē-pai de e-f-piraze mmo-f*  
 FOC-PRF-3SGM-say-this but [CIRC-3SGM-test ACC-3SGM]  
 ‘But he said this (by way of) TESTING HIM.’ (John 6:6)

So again, we have a marker that is tightly bound up with the tense-aspect structure of the clause, even though it expresses a pragmatic notion that has nothing to do with tense or aspect. However, such special focalizing verb forms are not uncommon in African languages.

## Abbreviations

AGT	agent noun
ATTR	attributive
COP	copula
DEF	definite article
DEP	dependent pronoun
DU	dual
EXIST	existential
F	feminine
FUT	future tense
GENER	generic person
IMP	imperative
INDP	independent pronoun
INF	infinitive
M	masculine
NEG	negation
ORD	ordinal numeral
PCL	particle
PL	plural
PRF	Perfect
REL	relative clause marker
SGF	singular feminine
SGM	singular masculine
STAT	Stative

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