LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
OR
GENTLEMEN AND LADIES?

ON THE ORDER OF CONJOINED GENDERED NOUNS IN EGYPTIAN

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In the famous story of Sinuhe, the beginning of Sinuhe's fight with the rivalling ruler of Retjenu is described as follows: "(The people of) Retjenu had come, they had assembled their tribes and gathered their neighbouring peoples, they were intent on this fight. All hearts were anxious about me." The text continues with *ḥm.wt ṯꜣy.w ḥr ꜥj*,[1] which in the most straightforward interpretation would mean "women and men were upset" and has often, in my view rightly, been translated this way.

Gardiner, who discussed the passage in his Notes on the Story of Sinuhe,[2] found the order "women and men" to be "most unnatural" and suggested that this pair of nouns was rather a genitive construction "women *of* men", possibly standing for something like "married women". Although Gardiner himself questioned his own suggestion later in the same book,[3] his interpretation has been adopted by numerous scholars.

While accepting Gardiner's genitive analysis, Goedicke analysed further the possible meaning of the expression "women of men" and suggested that it might indicate a social status between a concubine and a prostitute. In the passage cited, it would have been the concubines "of course, of Sinuhe himself" who attended the spectacle.[4]

Why did Gardiner and those who followed him consider the sequence "women and men" to be so awkward as to resort to an alternative construction which seems almost ridiculous in the given context? They were obviously guided here by their intuition about the usage in English and related European languages. In traditional English, the preferred order is generally male–female as can easily be illustrated by some examples from Shakespeare:

All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players.
As You Like It: act 2, scene 7

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote. *A Midsummer Night's Dream: act 2, scene 1*

Very many, men and women too. *Antony and Cleopatra: act 5, scene 2*

The time is yet to come that she was ever respected with man, woman, or child. *Measure for Measure: act 2, scene 1*

But, thou knowest, winter tames man, woman, and beast." *The Taming of the Shrew: act 4, scene 1*

There are no corresponding expressions with "woman" first in Shakespeare's works. English native speakers tend to give this circumstance, which is primarily a purely syntactic one, a functional interpretation: they feel that the word order reflects a social hierarchy assigning the "first" place to the man and relegating the woman to a secondary role. Consequently, social changes of the 20th century have brought about a higher incidence of the reverse order female–male. Just one example for that:

That is how the Goddess meant for Womyn and men to relate; man only exists to serve Womyn.
(http://www.gynarchy.org/texts/phil/correctness.rtf)

Note here also the capitalizing of "Womyn" as well as the specialized feminist writing with -y- that visually distinguishes the word from any association with "man" / "men".

While the political interpretation of word order may be valid for English, it is far from clear whether the same principles can be applied to Egyptian. Cooper and Ross, the authors of the classical linguistic paper on the order of conjoined elements,[5] show that the number of conjoined pairs with a fixed order is astonishingly large. Some examples for English are "here and there", "sooner or later", "father and grandfather", "father and son", "husband and wife", "one or two", "more or less", "Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones", "sun and moon", "flora and fauna", and many more, all of which sound uncommon or even bizarre when they are reversed. But they also observed that the preferred order varies greatly among the world's languages and that there is no universal, single principle for coordinate order. Despite the fact that fixed conjoined pairs play an important role in everyday discourse, the topic is still given little attention in general linguistics and has been ignored in practically all grammatical descriptions of individual languages.

Let us now consider how male–female pairs are ordered in Egyptian. At first glance, we find that in Egyptian, as in English, the order male–female is strongly preferred for most coordinate items, such as:

nt̠r.w nt̠r.wt	gods and goddesses[6]
ḥm.w ḥm.wt	servants and maids[7]
mwt mwt.t	a dead man or a dead woman[8]
z z.t r-pw	a man or a woman[9]
z z.t 35	35 men and women[10]
z 3 z.t 3	3 men and 3 women[11]
ꜥ3m.(w) ꜥ3m.(w)t	Asian men and Asian women[12]
ḥsj.w ḥsj.wt ḫnw.w ḫnw.wt	male singers and female singers, male musicians and female musicians[13]

Examples of this kind are very frequent. Here only a few attestations for each case have been given and additional examples can easily be compiled. Instances of the reverse order, however, are difficult to find. In all the examples cited above, one can observe that the feminine noun is derived from the corresponding masculine noun by means of the gender marker *-t*.

The evidence provided so far indeed appears to support the idea that a sequence "women and men" was next to impossible in Egyptian. When we proceed to additional examples of the noun sequence *ḥm.wt t̠3y.w*, of which quite a few do actually exist, there is at least one instance where Gardiner's genitive analysis does seem convincing: in Gardiner's *Ramesside Administrative Documents*, "3 *ḥm.wt t̠3y.w*" are mentioned and subsequently three female names are enumerated.[14] It is therefore clear that in this case the *ḥm.wt t̠3y.w* must all be women, possibly "women *of* men" (= married women).

In other examples, the interpretation either as a genitive group or as a coordinate group appears feasible. In Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead, the deceased asserts: *n nk=j ḥm.t t̠3y*,[15] traditionally translated as "I did not have intercourse with the woman of a man (? = a woman married to another man)". Alternatively, if one assumes that the verb *nk* can in itself have a negative connotation meaning "to perform adultery with", the interpretation as a coordinate pair would also make good sense: "I did not perform adultery with a woman or a man". It is curious to note that the papyrus of Lady *Ns-t̠3-nb.t-jšrw* reverses the order to say *n nk=j t̠3y ḥm.wt*, which can likewise be taken either as "I did not have intercourse with a man of (other?) women", or as "I did not perform adultery with men or women".

Another ambiguous case is *spr.n=j ḥm pr.w ḥm.wt ṯ3j* (Metternich's stela 53).[16] The goddess Isis is speaking here, saying: "I then reached the houses of women and men / of women of men".

Then, there are examples in which taking *ḥm.t ṯ3y* as a genitive group may still be grammatically acceptable, but is clearly inferior to a coordinate analysis with "and/or":

jw=f sbjn=<f> jtj.w mw.wt (...) jw=f nš=f ḥm.t ṯ3y [17]
it (greediness) alienates fathers and mothers ... it separates woman and man (rather than "the woman of a man")

jr grt wjn{t}.t(j)=f(j) nb p3 ꜥkw m ḥm.wt ṯ3j.w [18]
but whoever will reject this salary, be it women or men

Said of a drunken person: *nn s ṯni=f ḥm.t ṯ3y* [19]
He will not (be able to) distinguish between a woman and a man (somewhat uncertain due to broken context)

In the following example, with an explicitly added *r-pw* "or", a genitive interpretation is definitely out of place:

In a prescription: *wt ẖ.t ḥr=s n.t ḥm.t ṯ3y r-pw* [20]
the belly of the woman or man (i.e. the patient) is to be dressed with it

In several other examples, the occurrence of the word *šbn* "mixed" (or more freely: "together") inserted into the phrase proves that only coordinated nouns can be meant:

ḥm.wt šbn m ṯ3j.w j3w.w ḥr ẖrd.w [21]
women together with men (lit.: women mixed with men), elders as well as children

mrr.w n'.t=f dmḏ.t ḥm.wt šbn.w ḥr ṯ3y.w [22]
beloved of his whole town, the women together with the men

dj=j n=k T3-mrj m šms n jb=k ḥm.wt šbn m ṯ3j.w [23]
I give you Egypt as servants of your heart, the women together with the men

z nb ntj m-ẖnt=sn r nḏ.ty n k3=s ḥm.wt šbn ḥr ṯ3j.w [24]
everybody who lives within them shall be subjects to her *ka*, the women together with the men

In the light of these examples, it has probably become clear that the female–male sequence $hm.wt$ $\underline{B}y.w$ "women and men" cannot have been "unnatural" for the Egyptians. As for the male–female pairs cited above, I believe that they are not to be explained by a rule stating that coordinate pairs occur in the order male–female, or alternatively, "important – less important", "high–low in status", or the like. Rather, I suggest that conjoined nouns are arranged by a purely grammatical principle, namely in the order "morphologically basic – morphologically derived". In this view, the generally dominant order male–female is, in Egyptian, not a primary linguistic rule with a social or political background, but only a side effect of the fact that many feminine nouns grammatically derive from masculine nouns. The preference for the sequence "morphologically basic – morphologically derived" is again only one aspect of a very general rule in Egyptian stating that shorter items tend to be placed before longer items. This rule can be observed in several areas of Egyptian grammar and is also known as a stylistic device in Egyptian literature by the term "schwerer Schluss" ("weighty last element").[25]

Since $hm.t$ "woman" is not a morphological derivation from $\underline{B}y$ "man", the rule cannot apply and coordinate order is free for this pair. Alongside $hm.wt$ $\underline{B}y.w$, the alternative order $\underline{B}y.w$ $hm.wt$ "men and women", which Gardiner would have expected, is likewise possible and well attested.[26]

One example which demonstrates quite clearly that Egyptian coordinate nouns are not arranged in the order of descending social status is the expression which we would probably put as "gods and men", even if this may not be a very common phrase for us who live in a monotheistic culture. It turns out that in Egyptian the order is in fact very often $rm\underline{t}.w$ $n\underline{t}r.w$ "men and gods".[27] This order is at least as prominent as, and probably more frequent than the reverse $n\underline{t}r.w$ $rm\underline{t}.w$ "gods and men".[28] Both orders are found as textual variants in Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions* II, 270. Phrases such as jw $jrj.n=j$ $hzz.t$ $rm\underline{t}.w$ $hrr.t$ $n\underline{t}r.w$ $hr=s$ "I did what men praise and what the gods are content with",[29] in this order, are very common in Egyptian texts.

There is no doubt that the Egyptians did honour their gods. This fact even has an effect on writing, where the well-known rule of "honorific transposition" of hieroglyphs is regularly applied to terms for deities but not for men, unless they were pharaohs.[30] However, the social hierarchy god–man had no effect on how these terms are arranged in coordination. Since neither of the two terms is grammatically derived from the other by means of a suffix, the rule that I suggest as the actually valid one cannot be applied, which leaves both orders equally possible.

The principles for arranging coordinate nouns also seem to be valid for parallel clauses containing such nouns. Parallel clauses may include either *ṯȝy.w* "men" in the first clause and *ḥm.wt* "women" in the second, or vice versa. The following utterances from the Mammisi in Edfu may suggest that female speakers preferred to put the woman first and male speakers the man, but a more detailed examination would be needed to corroborate this idea. The goddess Hathor addresses the king as follows:

dj=j mrw.t=k m ẖ.t n ḥm.wt jmȝ n=k mḥ(?) ṯȝy.w [31]
I let love of you be in the bellies of the women, and respect for you fill(?) the men

Her son Ihy, however, decides to express a similar content in reversed order:

dj=j mrw.t=k ẖr ṯȝy.w šfj.t=k ẖr ḥm.wt [32]
I place love of you among the men, and awe of you among the women

Another pair of nouns where, like *ṯȝj* and *ḥm.t*, the words are specified for gender but not morphologically derived from one another is *jtj* "father" and *mw.t* "mother". Although it appears that here the male–female order is statistically more prevalent,[33] the reverse order is again rather common as shown by the following citations:

ntk mw.t jtj n jry=k nb [34]
you are mother and father for all those you created

j Rᶜ msj tm.w mw.t jtj n jr.t nb [35]
o Ra, who bore everyone, mother and father of all men!

pȝ ḥnw n ṯȝ=j mw.t pȝ=j jtj [36]
my mother's and father's tomb

sn.(wj) 2 n wᶜ mw.t n wᶜ jtj [37]
two brothers from one mother and one father

mw.t mw.t=j mw.t jtj=(j) [38]
my grandmother and my grandfather

mw.t rsj.w jtj [mḥ.t]j.w [39]
mother of the Southerners, father of the Northerners

Examples are particularly instructive which show the order female–male where the feminine noun is basic, and male–female where the feminine noun is derived, side by side:

mw.t=(j) jtj=(j) sn=(j) ḥnꜥ sn.t=(j) [40]
my mother, my father, my brother and my sister

The derived feminine noun *sn.t* "sister" must follow the base noun *sn* "brother", whereas the root word *mw.t* "mother" can precede *jtj* "father". Similarly:

šrj šrj.t sn sn.t n tꜣ=w mw.t pꜣ=w jtj [41]
a son, daughter, brother or sister of their mother or their father

Let us finally turn to the title of this article. English has a dominating male–female order, but a unique exception exists in the phrase "ladies and gentlemen", which is given preference over *"gentlemen and ladies" for specific reasons of politeness which are not to be discussed here. On the surface, Egyptian usage seems to be similar in that the order male–female is preferred in general, but there are exceptions for specific nouns, in particular the group *ḥm.t tꜣj*. I have tried to show that, while there is a superficial similarity in usage between both languages, the principles governing coordinate order are nevertheless quite different.

Abbreviations for text editions quoted in the notes below:

CT	de Buck, A., *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 7 vols (Chicago, 1935–61).
HTBM	Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, &c., in the British Museum, 12 vols (London, 1911ff).
KRI	Kitchen, K.A., *Ramesside Inscriptions*, 8 vols (Oxford, 1975–90).
LEM	Gardiner, A.H., *Late Egyptian Miscellanies*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 7 (Brussels, 1937).
LES	A.H. Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Stories*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 1 (Brussels, 1932).
pHarris I	W. Erichsen, *Papyrus Harris I*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 5 (Brussels, 1933).
PT	Sethe, K., *Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, 4 vols (Leipzig, 1908–22).
RAD	Gardiner, A.H., *Ramesside Administrative Documents* (London, 1948).
Urk IV	Helck, W. / Sethe, K., *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums 4 (Berlin/ Leipzig, 1927–58).
Urk VIII	Firchow, O., *Thebanische Tempelinschriften aus griechisch-römischer Zeit I, aus dem Nachlaß von Kurt Sethe*, Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums 8 (Berlin, 1957).

1   B 132 = R. Koch, *Die Erzählung des Sinuhe*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 17 (Brussels, 1990), 50.

2   A.H. Gardiner, *Notes on the Story of Sinuhe* (Paris, 1916), 50.

3   Gardiner, *Notes on Sinuhe*, 158–159.

4   H. Goedicke, "Unrecognized Sportings" in: *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 6 (1967), 98.

5   W. Cooper / J. Ross, "World Order" in: R. Grossmann / L. Sam / T. Vance, *Papers from the Parasession on Functionalism*, April 17, 1975 (Chicago, 1975), 63–111.

6   KRI I, 46.8; Urk IV, 2030.13; pHarris I, 1.1.

7   Urk IV, 11.4; pHarris I, 6.2; LEM 107.12.

8   pEbers 30.14 = H. Grapow, *Die medizinischen Texte in hieroglyphischer Umschreibung autographiert*, Grundriß der Medizin der alten Ägypter 5 (Berlin, 1958), 24; A. Massart, *The Leiden Magical Papyrus I 343 + I 345* (Leiden, 1954), 46.3; pBerlin 3027, 9.5 = N. Yamazaki, *Zaubersprüche für Mutter und Kind. Papyrus Berlin 3027* (Berlin, 2003), pl. 10.

9   pEbers 43,19 = Grapow, *Die medizinischen Texte*, 167; R.K. Ritner, "O. Gardiner 363: A Spell Against Night Terrors" in: *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1990), 27.11.

10   Stèle d'apanage 22 = B. Menu, B., *Recherches sur l'histoire juridique, économique et sociale de l'ancienne Égypte II*, BdÉ 122 (Cairo, 1998), 203.

11   A.H. Gardiner, "A Lawsuit arising from the Purchase of Two Slaves", in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 21 (1935) pl. 15.26.

12   Urk IV, 743.4.

13   P.A.A. Boeser, *Beschrijving van de Egyptische Verzameling in het Rijksmuseum van Outheden te Leiden*, II (Den Haag, 1909), pl. 6.8.

14   RAD 57.14.

15   Ch. Maystre, *Les déclarations d'innocence (Livre des morts, chapitre 125)* (Cairo, 1937), 81.

16   C.E. Sander-Hansen, *Die Texte der Metternichstele* (Copenhagen, 1956), 37.

17   Ptahhotep 303–308 = Z. Žába, *Les maximes de Ptaḥḥotep* (Prague, 1956), 40.

18   pHeqanakht II 37 = J. Allen, *The Heqanakht Papyri* (New York, 2002), pl. 30.

19   pChester Beatty III 11.13 = A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum III: Chester Beatty Gift* (London, 1935), pl. 8.

20   pEbers 21,6f. = Grapow, *Die medizinischen Texte*, 204.

21   Siut IV 16f. = P. Montet, "Les tombeaux de Siout et de Deir Rifeh II" in: *Kêmi* 3 (1930–35), 101.

22   Hatnub 17.10 and 20.14–15 = R. Anthes, *Die Felseninschriften von Hatnub nach den Aufnahmen Georg Möllers* (Leipzig, 1928), 39 and 43.

23   Urk VIII, 73.3.

24   Philae Dodekaschoinos Donation Stela 1.4 = H. Brugsch, *Sieben Jahre der Hungersnoth nach dem Wortlaut einer altägyptischen Felsen-Inschrift* (Leipzig, 1891), 75–76.

25   O. Firchow, *Die Grundzüge der Stilistik in den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (Berlin, 1953), 158–164.

26   Examples are CT II, 192a; KRI I, 52.6; pHarris I, 78.13; Osorkon B 12 = Epigraphic Survey, *The Bubastite Portal* (Chicago, 1954), pl. 21.

27   For example: PT 1101a; CT IV, 24 d,e; Urk IV, 1326.7; E. Hornung, *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 46 (Fribourg, 1982), 1 (beginning); P. Lacau / H. Chevrier, *Une chapelle d'Hatshepsout à Karnak*, I (Cairo, 1977), 137.4; Ch. Leitz, *Tagewählerei. Das Buch ḥȝt nḥḥ pḥ.wy dt und verwandte Texte*, I (Wiesbaden, 1994), 168; and many more.

28   "Gods and men" *nṯr.w rmṯ.w* is attested e.g. in Urk IV, 1945.12; M. Marciniak, *Deir el-Bahari I: Les inscriptions hiératiques du Temple de Thoutmosis III* (Warsaw, 1974), no. 2.3; H.M. Stewart, "A Crossword Hymn to Mut" in: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 57 (1971) pl. 26, vertical 22.

29   Urk IV, 1530.

30   A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*, 3rd edition (London, 1957), § 57.

31   E. Chassinat, *Le mammisi d'Edfu* (Cairo, 1939), 87.

32   Chassinat, *Mammisi*, 87.

33   For example in CT II, 181d; Urk IV, 445.10; KRI II, 238.14; M. Sandman, *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 8 (Brussels, 1938), 61.12; pChester Beatty I verso C2.3–4 = A.H. Gardiner, *The Library of Chester Beatty. Description of a Hieratic Papyrus with a Mythological Story, Love-Songs, and Other Miscellaneous Texts* (London, 1931), pl. 23; generally so in genealogies on which see D. Franke, *Altägyptische Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen im Mittleren Reich* (Hamburg, 1983), 329.

34   Sandman, *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*, 12 (middle).

35   HTBM VI, pl. 48.3.

36   pBM 10055 vs. 1.13 = KRI IV, 414.1.

37   LES 9.10.

38   Urk IV, 27.14.

39   Urk IV, 909.3–4

40   J. Černý / A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca I* (Oxford, 1957), pl. 80 recto 8.

41   A.H. Gardiner, "Adoption Extraordinary" in: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 26 (1940), pl. 7.3–4.