Originalveröffentlichung in: John D. Ray (Hrsg), Lingua Sapientissima. A seminar in honour of H.J.Polotsky organised by the Fitzwillian Museum, Cambridge and the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1984, Cambridge 1987, S. 47-56; Online-Veröffentlichung auf Propylaeum-DOK (2023), DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeumdok.00005793

Morphology, Sentence Form and Language History

Friedrich Junge (University of Göttingen)

Up to the very beginning of the period of Egyptology which is our concern here, language history as reflected by Stricker's treatise¹⁾ has been a mere puzzle of morphophonemic pieces. The language of texts pregrouped by their time and script media found a superficially systemized description in grammars: since language stages thus shaped are characterized by a more or less different vocabulary and defined by sets of specific units of morphology, intermediating acts of speech were characterized by the amount of morphemes they shared with the one or the other stage. Stricker brought it to a point by stating that, for example, the language of the texts worded in the "vernacular" of the Second Intermediate Period and the early New Kingdom may be considered either "late Middle Egyptian" or "early Late Egyptian"²). To put this in general terms, when does the increasing quantity of morphophonemic changes turn into the new quality of a language stage described as such in the grammars? Thus posed, the question urges me to answer immediately: it never does. The basic idea was that, for example³⁾, a construction hn^{c} ntf sdm is less Late Egyptian than mtw = f sdm called 'conjunctive', not taking into account, however, its position in the system. Putting the point more forcibly, if we leave teleology aside - that is, assessing forms from the view point of whether or not they become part of Late Egyptian - there is nothing un-Middle Egyptian about them, notwithstanding that mtw = f sdm may have sounded a bit different; the preposition hn^{C} coordinates nouns, substantives and verbal nouns as infinitive alike, and it is just a matter of language use to have overt coordination combined with an economic shortening of expression preferred to covert coordination by, say, 'continuative' circumstantial sdm = f. This was perhaps thought of as bad style of usage at first, but nonetheless easily admitted by Middle Egyptian rules. In generalizing terms: taking the standpoint of a Middle Egyptian 'grammarian', Late Egyptian is but a subsystem of Middle Egyptian, a little differently pronounced, perhaps, but with no form, no construction, no usage that could not be used in Middle Egyptian or which would not find a counterpart different in form but closely akin in function; on the contrary, it is rather a large quantity of Middle Egyptian constructions that is excluded from use in a certain stratum of New Kingdom literature. It is not there that things happen, and even less in a ghostlike, since non-recorded, 'vernacular'⁴), it is in the other linguistic strata that the language gets enriched in forms and vocabulary, gets smoothed and refined according to the emotional and intellectual needs of the literate; all through the New Kingdom, Late Egyptian proper is but the dull daughter of a still glamorous mother. Of course, her triumph is to come - but that is the viewpoint of the scientific spectator and the outside view should not be confused with the inside one.

First of all then, Černý's and his follower's concept of 'Late Egyptian', which led to the typological purity of today's grammars, is to be seen in due position. It has been a quite successful heuristic principle, a principle to set off morphological and structural differences and to reveal that it was this language stage which by constant spread finally changed the linguistic picture; on the basis of this concept and Polotsky's 'Coptic Conjugation System⁽⁵⁾, Late Egyptian and Demotic as outlined by Paul Frandsen⁶⁾ and Janet Johnson⁷⁾ show the lines of development into Coptic quite clearly. It is unjustified, however, to base assumptions about speech reality on the authority of this concept. Throughout the New Kingdom and long afterwards, Late Egyptian has in fact no exclusive claim to be the 'real' language under layers of artificial or even faked Middle Egyptian; it is no more than a part of the linguistic continuum, that is, a subsystem of reduced usage or rules, the complementary parts of which are still in full flourish somewhere else in contemporary speech.

To see this clearly, one has to be aware of the irrelevance of changed vocabulary to the issue, and the deceiving effects of writing which, by the way, were already seen by Stricker⁸⁾, although he was not yet prepared to see the continuance of Demotic into Coptic, because of the superficial use of different writing systems. At any rate, things material change most quickly by constant use, and, given a basically phonematic origin of the writing system, it is only a matter of time for the historical pace of phonology to reduce the connection between referent and things referred to, to mere convention. In case of doubt, the relation of a script sign to the linguistic unit intended is utterly conventional and nobody really knows whether a written hn^c is still the preposition it seems to be or already a writing sign for later *jrm*. Vocabulary for its part gives only evidence for new facts of civilization, other expression needs or changed nuances of meaning, but it does not a say thing about the character of the language that makes use of them. Of course, there are plenty of interrelations between ways of writing, vocabulary, morphology and structural frame, but it is only by a good knowledge of the frame itself that their specific content of information can be assessed correctly.

Turning back to the question rhetorically posed on introducing my subject, I have to do justice to Stricker and those who looked for intermediate steps. Granted that 'structure' was a term and a subject quite unknown to Egyptology at that time - the

Etudes de suntaxe copte just having made its appearance, to open eyes to the persistence of function behind changing morphemes and to size up the criteria for 'sentences' in Egyptian; granted too that morphology offered the only means of pursuing history, there is nevertheless an answer to the issue Stricker had in mind. Focussed on morphology and morphophonemic changes, the language of the early New Kingdom texts in question is far less 'Late Egyptian' than, for example, the language of the prayer of Ramses III at Karnak⁹⁾; it is rather the prayer of Ramses which, compared with the earlier texts, abounds with 'Late Egyptianisms' of that kind. But if a style of language use is still to be marked 'Middle Egyptian' in the late New Kingdom, because it favours the polyfunctional morphemes of this language, its forms of covert subordination and a multitude of phrasal components in deep-set sentence structures, then the praver of Ramses is phrased in Middle Egyptian; and if a style is to be separated and characterized as 'Late Egyptian' when it makes use of restricted paradigmatic and syntagmatic classes of the same language, that is, of minimal sentence patterns of relative simplicity, and when it favours the singlefunctional morphemes of its language and its forms of overt subordination, the language of the early New Kingdom letters and ostraca is no intermediate stage, but already Late Egyptian.

Having closed the circle so far, I shall presently try to illustrate my statements by examples of a much later period which by the very self-evidence of language differences show the relations meant particularly clearly. What I have tried to stress here, I assume to have kept its validity throughout Egyptian history, in other words, that the language layer taken as Middle Egyptian never lost its contact to speech reality; it is in this layer that those rules and complementary parts of rules are kept ready for use which have been ruled out in the other layers which, as times go by, became the main stream of language.

As illustration I have chosen the Rosetta-stone (*Urk*. II) from the multilingual documents of Graeco-Roman times which provide the same speech content in different linguistic versions; translation and transliteration of the Demotic version is given in an appendix.

In the context given (*Urk.* II, 173ff), the priests assembled in Memphis start their fictitious speech. Its first main sentence is stated in lines *Urk.* II 174,3-174,5; lines 173,4-173,7 give the basic elements of the subordinate clause, with plenty of qualifications following in the next lines (Greek participles corresponding to Egyptian circumstantials of different types). The text can be summarised as follows: (173,4) *Since King Ptolemy V* (173,7) *does good to the country*, (174,3) *he gave riches to the temples* (174,5) to make the country satisfied.

The main sentence starts with rdi.n=f(174.3) which, taken as Middle Egyptian, should be a nominal sdm.n=f with a predicative adverbial adjunct consisting of preposition r plus sdm = f/infinitive (174,5). The main sentence is part of a period beginning with a causal/temporal clause (173,4), introduced by a conjunction usually taken as a Middle Egyptian preposition (here m/m-c) plus relative ntt^{10} . This is already rather peculiar: in Middle Egyptian, subordinate clauses follow their main sentences, those with the said conjunctions above all¹¹⁾. Looking closer, something else strikes us as awkward: in Middle Egyptian proper, there are no cases attested of sdm = f after *ntt* as here, with wn. There are a few after ntj - all of them 'emphatic'¹²) which, though possible, would not further the meaning very much here. Now the explanation is provided by the Demotic version; taking advantage of a phonological correspondence of kinds, m-ntj wn plus noun has been made a Middle-Egyptianizing counterpart of the Demotic temporal $n-drt hpr=f^{13}$. This normally precedes its main sentence - a transformation etymologizing, amusingly enough, somewhat along the same lines as modern scholars did for a time¹⁴⁾, both wrongly, to be sure, but conceivable under Middle Egyptian rules. There are further subtleties: in a good 'synthetic' Middle Egyptian manner, the noun *niswt*-*bit* is the actor form of the sdm=f of wn as well as that of the following hr plus infinitive; it thus reflects Middle Egyptian wnn = fhr sdm with its - as Gardiner puts it 15) - "implication of continuity"; 'analytic' Demotic dissolves it into two sentential components, that is, temporal n-drt h pr=f plus circumstantial aorist $(iw (>r) hr ir Pr - C_3 md - nfr.t).$

Continuing in this way, one finds the Demotic version of the main sentence (174,3) being constructed with the second perfect $(r.w_3h=f~dj.t)^{16}$, supporting the interpretation of hieroglyphic rdj.n=f as second tense, although the Greek version lacks its usually corresponding inversion of word order; further philological comparison, however, shows that hieroglyphic sdm.n=f as well as sdm=f are marked by their long history in carrying the function of both their Middle Egyptian counterparts in second tense and circumstantial use together with Late Egyptian and Demotic 'preterite' sdm=f; only prospective sdm=f remains its own self.

The next context considered is given in lines *Urk*. II 174,8-175,3. The text runs as follows: (174,8) *Taxes and dues*, (175,1) *he lowered some, remitted the rest of them* (175,2) *to keep troops and people happy* - or anything else translators may agree on.

The final clause of purpose (175,2) shows correspondences easily understood: although Middle Egyptian would probably have used either a bare prospective sdm=f of the adjective $verb^{17}$ - *b3q mnfy.t - or, if r plus infinitive, the sdm=f of the adjective verb following the infinitive, the hieroglyphic version here prefers to take up the Demotic causative infinitive, *wnn* replacing hpr as in the introductory passage (173,4) discussed above. This time old perfective replaces Demotic circumstantial - again a mode of construction on the whole unobjectionable under Middle Egyptian rules, but saturated with history.

The other parts of the passage, however, pose questions of another kind. The topicalized "taxes and dues" (174,8) correspond to Greek word order but are only correctly stated in Demotic, while the hieroglyphic version cries out for an introduction by jr - if it were Middle Egyptian proper; as it is, its mould is Demotic sentence form. But what kind of sentence is the wnn-wnn construction of the main sentence (175,1)? Hieroglyphic and Demotic show constructions rather similar; Spiegelberg¹⁸⁾ dissolves Demotic wn.n3.w as wn n3w "there are those" followed by relative $q\check{s}=f$ "which he lowered", and the same explanation may hold good for the hieroglyphic version. Parallel existential sentences such as "There were those he lowered and those he remitted" are possible in Demotic¹⁹⁾ - they are abundantly attested in P.Insinger - but not as easy as those in Middle Egyptian; if wn = f is meant, it should be a circumstantial of the type which follows jw or other elements of similar syntactical notions. As it is, it is rather a form influenced by Demotic. If wnn = f is meant, it should be a Middle Egyptian balanced sentence - Wechselsatz²⁰⁾ - which may run "As there are those which he lowered, there are those, too, which he remitted completely", thus nicely corresponding to greek $\partial \lambda \partial \zeta \delta \hat{\varepsilon}$ - $\tau_{L\zeta} \mu \hat{\varepsilon} \nu$ (maybe it is this which Daumas²¹⁾, to do him credit, had in mind when discussing this example); such a 'closed complex' of existential clauses without further syntactical markers such as second tenses or circumstantial converters²²⁾ is not very likely in Demotic, however - unless it follows the Middle Egyptian model in a somewhat 'archaizing' manner.

Last, there is the rather strained explanation to take the $\underline{sdm} = f / \underline{sdm} \cdot n = f$ forms, not as relative, but as 'preterite $\underline{sdm} = f$ ' preceded by the 'imperfect converter' wn/wn.n3.w in both the Demotic and the hieroglyphic version²³; a resulting pluperfect might carry the background information for the sentence which follows, and which is given a paragraph of its own by Sethe (6); the pluperfect is not reflected, however, in the Greek version.

Summing up, I think that these examples show what they were supposed to: it is the same linguistic system that determines the Demotic as well as the hieroglyphic version. Demotic is still sufficiently related to its mother language to have Demotic morphology and phrase structure properly re-transformed into Middle Egyptian and Middle-Egyptianizing forms, and late Middle Egyptian is still able to have systematic possibilities of Middle Egyptian proper expanded in order to be adapted to new

51

construction modes quite on its own terms. Although mother and daughter language have changed places by now in the linguistic consciousness, Middle Egyptian having lost its thought-guiding supremacy and much of its structural independence, late Middle Egyptian was never expelled from the speech continuum, not even close to its absolute end.

APPENDIX

Urk. II 173,4-175,3; translation and transliteration of the hieroglyphic version; transliteration of the Demotic version (Dem. or D).

A)

| 173,4: | Since the King of Egypt NN |
|--------|---|
| | m-ntj wn njswt-bjt (jw ^C (-n)-n <u>t</u> r.wj-mrj-jtj) |
| (Dem.) | $n-drt hpr=f jw (>r) hr jr Pr-C_3$ |
| | |
| 173,5: | son of Re Ptolemy (V) |
| | z3–R ^C w (Ptwlmys) |
| | (D) Ptwlmys |
| | |
| 173,7: | does good to the banks of Horus |
| | hr jr.t jht nb nfr.w wr.w n (>m) jdb.w-Hrw |
| | (D) md–nfr.t ^c š3j n n3 jrpj.w (n) Kmj |
| | |
| 173,8: | and everybody who is within (reach of) his beneficent office |
| | hn ^c z nb wn m-hntj j3w.t mnh.t r 3w=sn |
| | (D) jrm n3 nty hn $t_{3j}=f_{j_{3w}}(n) Pr^{-C_3} dr = w$ |

| 173,9: | being a god, son of god, whom a goddess has placed upon earth $wnn=f m n\underline{t}r z3 n\underline{t}r rdj.n n\underline{t}r.t r t3$ (D) $jw=f n ntr šrj (n) ntr ntr.t$ |
|--------|--|
| 174,1: | being like Horus, son of Isis, son of Osiris, who guarded his father Osiris jw=f m stwt r (>jw) Hrw z3 3s.t z3 Wsjr j.nd jtj=f Wsjr (D) jw=f mhj.w r Hrw s3 3s.t s3 Wsjr j.jr nht p3j=f jt Wsjr |
| 174,2: | his majesty being in the mood of a beneficent god towards the gods sw hm = f m jb n ntr mnh hr ntr.w (D) jw (>r) $h3tj = f mnh.w hr n3 ntr.w$ |
| 174,3: | he gave riches and cereals to the temples of Egypt rdj.n=f hd wr.w w3hy.t qn.w r gs.w-prw.w nw Km.t (D) r.w3h=f dj.t hd ^c š3j pr.t ^c š3j n n3 jrpj.w (n) Kmj |
| 174,5: | to have the country satisfied and Egypt given stability. r (>jw) grh t3-mrj r s. <u>d</u> d qbh.w. (D) r dj.t hpr sgrh <u>h</u> n Kmj r smn n3 jrpj.w. |
| в) | |
| 174,8 | Taxes and dues to the sovereign htr.w jr.w hn^c b3k n jty (D) p3 htj p3 škr |
| 175,1: | he had some of them lowered, and remitted the rest of them wnn jrf hb.n=f jm=sn wnn rdj.n=f r t3 r (>jw) jr.w=sn (D) wn.n3.w $q\check{s}=f hn=w$ wn.n3.w $wj=f$ r.r=w n $d3d3$ |
| 175,2: | to keep troops and people happy r (r)dj.t wnn mnfy.t hn ^c wnn.jw b3q.w (D) r dj.t hpr p3 mš ^c jrm n3 kj.w rmt dr=w jw=w nfr |

175.3: in his time of undivided sovereignty. $m \ rk = f \ n \ md - nb - w^{C}$. (D) (n) $p_{3y} = f h_3 ntj [Pr - C_3]$.

NOTES

- B.H. Stricker, 'De Indeeling der egyptische Taalgeschiedenis', OMRO 25 (1945), 12 ff.
- 2) ibid., p. 36.
- 3) cf. for more cases B. Kroeber, Die Neuägyptizismen vor der Amarnazeit, PhD Diss. Tübingen 1970; cf. my articles on the subject: SAK 9, 1981, 201 ff (with corrections in GM 60 (1982, 93 ff.); and Akten des 22. Deutschen Orientalistentages, Tübingen 1983, ZDMG Supplement (in press); LÄ s.v. "Sprache".
- Which is taken as the stratum where the development of language took place 'in reality', cf. Stricker, loc. cit.
- 5) Or 29, 1960, 392 ff.
- 6) An outline of the Late Egyptian Verbal System, Copenhagen 1974.
- 7) The Demotic Verbal System, SAOC 38, Chicago 1976.
- 8) op. cit. p. 44 f.
- 9) K.A. Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions V, 221 ff. (year 22).
- 10) cf. F. Daumas, Les moyens d'expression du grec et de l'égyptien, Supplément ASAE 16, Le Caire 1952, p. 95, referring to Lefèbvre, Grammaire, § 737.
- 11) A.H. Gardiner, Grammar, § 223.
- 12) cf. Gardiner, op. cit. §§ 237; 201; J.P. Allen, GM 32, 1979, 7 ff; F. Junge, GM 33, 1979, 79 f; Gardiner's explanation that participles/relative forms provide "the natural method" seems adequate.
- 13) cf. the writings *mtw* (W. Spiegelberg, *Demotische Grammatik*, Heidelberg 1925, § 510), late Ptolemaic *n-t3y* and Roman *ntj jw* (J.H. Johnson, op. cit. 230; 233 n. 17) for the Temporal.
- 14) cf. Spiegelberg, ibid.; Johnson, op. cit., 233 n. 17.
- 15) Gardiner, Grammar, § 326.
- 16) cf. R.J. Williams, JNES 7, 1948, 226 for the same form in the following sentence (Urk. II 174,6).
- 17) cf. e.g. Gardiner, op. cit. § 143.
- Der demotische Text der Priesterdekrete von Kanopus und Memphis (Rosettana), Heidelberg 1922, 117 (84).
- 19) cf. Spiegelberg, Demotische Grammatik, § 441 note; H.J. Polotsky, Or 29, 409 (33).
- 20) cf. Gardiner, ibid. § 107 n.1; another possibility is a Wechselsatz of two 'emphatic' wnn sdm.n=f clauses stressing the following clause of purpose (Urk. II 175,2); for the forms cf. T.G.H. James, The Hekanakhte Papers and other Early Middle King-dom Documents, New York 1962, 104 (5); Gardiner, op. cit. § 475, knows one example of the form (participle) from an early New Kingdom tomb; an example of the Wechselsatz in question occurs in Urk. IV 245, 2-6.
- 21) op. cit. 98f.
- 22) cf. Johnson, Demotic Verbal System, 114, and Junge, Das sog. "narrative" $jw=f\ hr\ (tm)\ sdm$, in: Acts of the Third International Congress of Egyptology, Toronto 1983 (in press).

23) Not abundantly attested in Demotic (cf. Spiegelberg, op. cit. § 173, with the special cases of *mrj* and an adjective verb; for a negatived example cf. Johnson, op. cit., table 36). It is well known, however, in Late Egyptian (cf. P.J. Frandsen, *An outline of the Late Egyptian verbal system*, Copenhagen, 1974, 178) and Coptic.

201 ef. Gardher, bid. § 107 n.1; enotiver possibility is a Wechselsatz of two "empirate war spin n = 1 chanses streasing the following clause of purpose (DNc 11 173,2); far the forms ef. T.O.H. James, The Jjejourathue Papers and other Early Midalle Kingdom Elacuments, New York 1982, 104 (5); Gardiner, op. eft. § 478, knows one example of the form (participle) from an writy New Zingdom famic; an example of the Wechselsatz in question occurs in Usit IV 245, 2-6.

- 21) op. cit. 98f.
- cf. Johnson, Demotic Verbal System. 114, and Junge, Das son. "narrative" fire-f. fir first size. In: Acts of the Third International Conference of Symptology. Toronto 1983 (in press).