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WORLD AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

Sahidic Coptic

An introductory textbook

Bill Manley

UCLPRESS

Sahidic Coptic

Textbooks of World and Minority Languages

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Lily Kahn and Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi

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 **UCL**PRESS

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مكرس لأبأ أثناسيوس لالتزامه بإعطاء الدير الأبيض مستقبلاً يليق بالماضي

Basic grammar

ADJECTIVE – a word for an attribute or a quality of a noun (e.g. happy, definite, Coptic).

ADVERB – a word or phrase which qualifies an adjective or verb (e.g. very, also, again, up).

ARTICLE – a word marking a noun as indefinite or definite (e.g. a, the, some, other, this, that).

ASPECT – indicates whether an objective statement is presented as engaged or indicative.

CONJUNCTION – a word used to connect or coordinate statements, or to coordinate words in the same statement (e.g. and, but, because, if).

CONSONANT – a basic speech sound in which the flow of breath is partly or wholly obstructed in the throat or mouth or nose, contrasted with vowels.

DEFINITE – a noun or phrase which has already been specified or is unique, contrasted with indefinite (e.g. today, that lady, Harry).

DEMONSTRATIVE – an article or pronoun used to specify or identify a specific noun or phrase (e.g. this, that, those, this one, that one).

ENGAGED – an objective statement about what a subject is doing right now or is bound to do in the future or where the subject is situated in this moment, contrasted with indicative and prospective (e.g. I am eating my breakfast, she is going to come back, there is someone here, I am in distress).

IDIOM – a statement whose meaning is well known and based on familiar usage and context but not obviously derived from the individual words used, often not directly translatable from one language to another as a consequence (e.g. spill the beans, pull my leg).

IMPERATIVE – a subjective statement which requests or demands that matters conform to the speaker/writer's wishes or expectations without regard for the present state of affairs (e.g. get up, pray for me).

INCOMPLETE – a statement which requires further information to complete or explain it (e.g. after you ate, if you leave, until you see).

INDEFINITE – a noun or phrase which is generic or non-specific or has not been mentioned previously, contrasted with definite (e.g. a man, some days, people, wishful thinking).

- INDICATIVE – an objective statement about what a subject typically does or has done but is not necessarily doing in this moment, contrasted with engaged (e.g. I love my vegetables, I ate my vegetables).
- INTRANSITIVE – a verb which does not require an object, contrasted with transitive (e.g. a festival *happened*, he *ran* away, *pray* every day).
- MOOD – indicates whether a statement is presented as objective or subjective.
- NOUN – a word used to indicate any one or more of a class of people or places or things, or to name one of them (e.g. demons, monastery, Andrew).
- NUMERAL – a figure or group of figures writing a number (e.g. 1, 2, 3).
- OBJECT – a noun or pronoun or phrase governed by a preposition, or (direct) governed by the action of a transitive verb or (indirect) benefitting from the action of any verb (e.g. beside *Harry*, love *Harry*, pray for *Harry*).
- OBJECTIVE – a statement presented as a fact independent of the speaker/writer's expectations or opinions or hopes, contrasted with subjective.
- OPTATIVE – a subjective statement which looks to the future in terms of what should happen based on the speaker/writer's hopes or opinions rather than expectations of what is liable to happen or bound to happen, contrasts with engaged and prospective (e.g. you should come home, Harry would like to see you).
- PARTICLE – a word used to add nuance or clarity or emphasis to a statement, typically distinct from the specific grammar of the rest of the statement (e.g. so, therefore, indeed).
- PASSIVE – a statement whose subject is also the object directly governed by the meaning of the verb (e.g. I was overwhelmed by joy, Harry got sent home).
- PHRASE – a group of words together forming a meaningful unit as a distinct element of a statement (e.g. she heard, the daughter of Bob, for Peter).
- POSSESSIVE – a pronoun or noun expressing possession or a phrase introduced by the word 'of' (e.g. my, mine, your, yours, her, hers, Mary's, of Mary, the priest's, of the priest).
- PREPOSITION – a word expressing a relation between other words or phrases in a statement, such as relative position or relative worth (e.g. at, above, beside, from, than).

- PRONOUN** – a word used as a common substitute referring to a noun specified elsewhere, often to avoid repetition or to engage with someone directly in conversation (e.g. I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, they, them, their, theirs).
- PROSPECTIVE** – a subjective statement which looks to the future in terms of what can or will happen based on the speaker/writer's expectations rather than what is bound to happen, contrasts with engaged and optative (e.g. I will see you later, I will make you listen).
- SUBJECT** – a noun or phrase naming the key element of a statement, whether as the actor of a verb (e.g. *Harry* went home), the element defined by an adjective or a location (e.g. *Harry* is pleased, *Harry* is at home), the element identified as a specific entity (e.g. *Harry* is the boss), or the object of a verb in a passive statement (e.g. *Harry* got sent home).
- SUBJECTIVE** – a statement presented as a potential fact based on the speaker/writer's expectations or hopes, or as an intention or a command, contrasted with objective.
- TENSE** – indicates how and when a statement is presented as occurring, in terms of its aspect, mood and time, and whether it is completed or incomplete.
- TIME** – indicates whether a statement is presented as happening in the past, present or future.
- TRANSITIVE** – a verb which ordinarily presupposes a direct object, contrasted with intransitive (e.g. I *saw* Harry, they *filled* the earth, they will *lift* him).
- VERB** – a word describing an action or occurrence, typically marked to indicate the tense of the whole statement (e.g. *run!* Harry *is running*, Harry *ran*, Harry *should run*).
- VOWEL** – a basic speech sound produced by keeping the vocal tract open for the flow of breath, contrasted with consonants (e.g. English a-e-i-o-u).

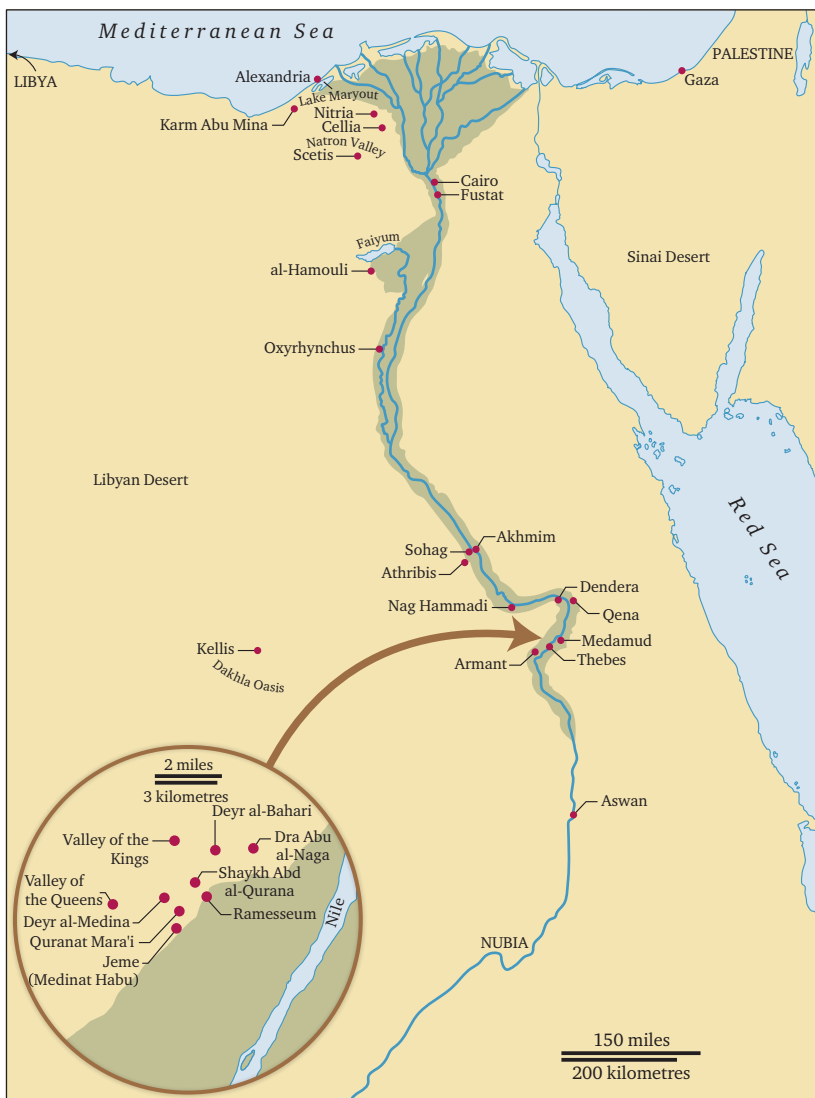


Figure 0.1 A map of Egypt showing the sites mentioned in the book.
Source: author.

Introduction

WHY COPTIC?

The end of ancient Egypt; the fall of the Roman Empire; religious persecution; the Bible; Christian orthodoxy; Christianity in Africa; the Byzantine Empire; Europe's mediaeval monasteries; the rise of Islam; Egyptian society today; even the decipherment of ancient hieroglyphs – these are just a handful of the 'big' stories that cannot be told properly without some awareness of the tens of thousands of Coptic texts from Egypt. Often, they are among our most detailed sources of information about these very subjects.

This book is intended for you to learn to read the Coptic language of Late Antique Egypt by engaging directly with texts of this period rather than relying on artificial exercises. Even the translations provided are literal, occasionally awkward, because they are intended only to guide your reading in Coptic itself. As such, this is not a comprehensive grammar, but it should help you gain a confident reading knowledge of these historically valuable sources, along with the awareness of what they are and why they matter.

COPTS AND THE COPTIC LANGUAGE

The word Copt comes to English via Arabic *al-Qibṭīy* (القبطي) from Greek *Aiguptioi* (αἰγύπτιοι) 'Egyptians' and evokes three centuries of Roman rule in Egypt when a Greek-speaking ruling class treated indigenous Egyptian-speakers as inferiors. Egypt had been brought under Roman rule in 30 BC, at the death of the notorious Queen Cleopatra VII, and subsequently the indigenous language, along with the native cursive scripts, became effectively excluded from public life. Meanwhile, Egypt's temples, which had been increasingly isolated institutions even before the Roman suppression, now came to be viewed with suspicion as dependents of the occupiers. Instead, by the third century AD Coptic resistance to Rome had become strongly identified with Christianity, and systematic executions of Egyptian Christians during the reign of Diocletian (284–305) turned out to be a cultural and political watershed. Following an imperial about-face, including edicts of religious toleration in 311 and 313, Egypt was revealed to be a majority Christian nation where many ancient temples were repurposed as churches (3.6)



Figure 1 The modern cathedral at Karm Abu Mina, near Alexandria, stands next to the foundational Coptic martyr's burial church (see [page 251](#)). *Source:* author.

and the spread of monasteries would be the most dynamic, transformative socio-economic phenomenon of the new era (9.7).

As the temples' authority dwindled among the people, so did that of the ancient hieroglyphic script, which had been identified since the dawn of history with the kingship and the priesthood. Accordingly, hand in hand with their rejection of traditional education and imperial governance, the Copts devised an alphabet as an alternative medium for writing their language, and churches acted as the agents for disseminating this new practice by promoting Christian scripture in translation. The earliest texts in this writing tradition are essentially Coptic glosses to Greek Bible texts, or Coptic translations of scripture anthologised



Figure 2 A funerary stela for two brothers bears hallmarks of the Roman-era ruling group in Egypt: traditional Egyptian images include the winged sun, the embalmed god Osiris, and the dog-headed god Anubis; but the inscription below is in Greek and other elements of the scene, including the torch in the centre, derive from Roman funerary beliefs. Abydos, near Sohag, first or second century. *Source:* Metropolitan Museum of Art 20.2.44 (Rogers Fund, 1920), shared under Creative Commons Licence CC0.

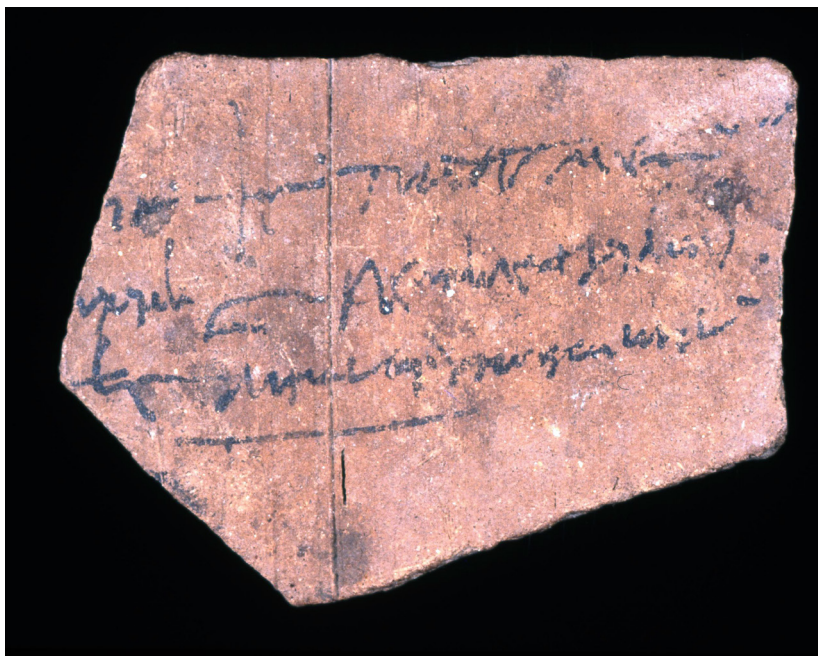


Figure 3 A potsherd (ostracon) with a tax return written in Greek, the language of government in Late Antique Egypt. Thebes, second century. *Source:* Trustees of the British Museum EA 1988,1005.3, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

alongside Greek copies.¹ Consequently, the principal definition of the word Copt today is ‘Egyptian Christian’, even though the indigenous Coptic language is no longer spoken anywhere, the majority of Copts are native Arabic-speakers, and the Coptic Orthodox churches have a global presence.

SAHIDIC COPTIC

Nonetheless, the subject of this book is the language that originally defined the Copts, which means the language used by most Egyptians during Late Antiquity – the half-millennium from the Coptic reassertion after 300 until roughly 800, by which time Abbasid rule in Egypt had instigated

1 See J.-L. Fournet: *The Rise of Coptic: Egyptian Versus Greek in Late Antiquity*. Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press (2020), pages 6–9.

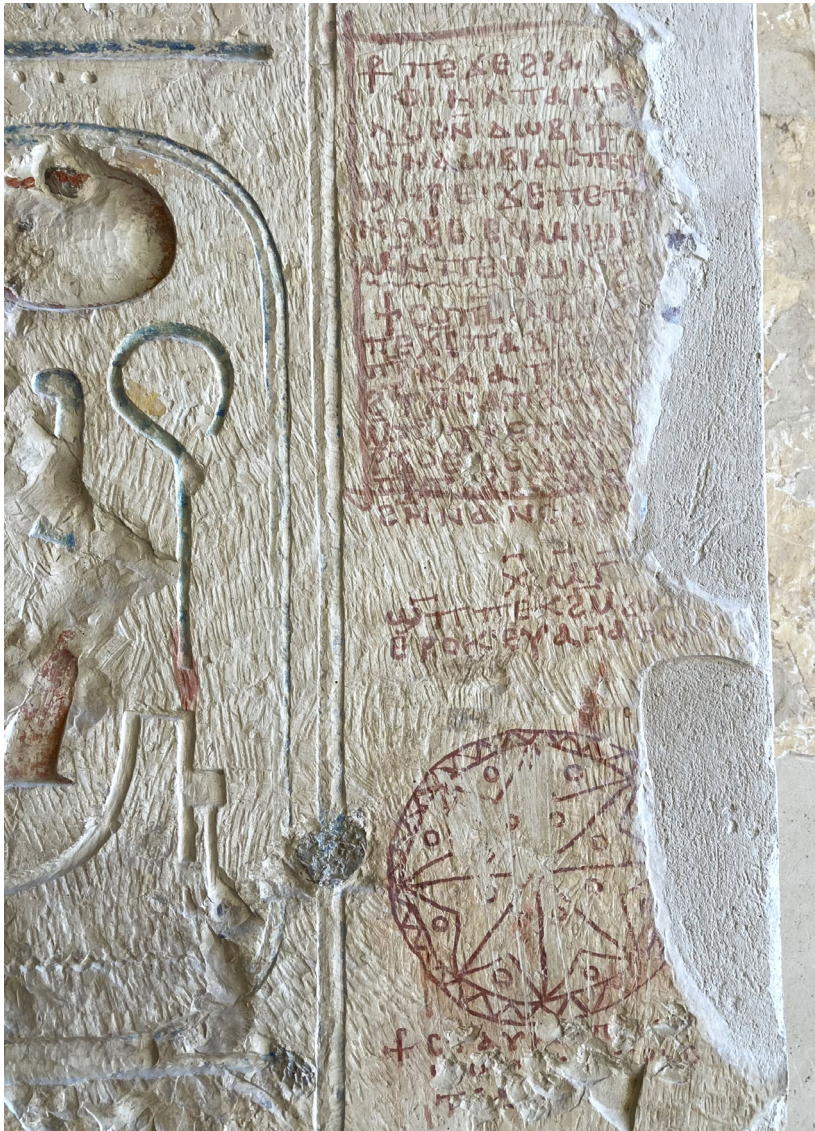


Figure 4 Sahidic Coptic texts painted on top of ancient hieroglyphic inscriptions in the tomb of king Ramesses IV (c. 1155–1150 BC) exemplify the long written history of the indigenous Egyptian language. Valley of the Kings, Thebes. *Source:* author.

social and political changes that would effectively eliminate spoken Coptic by the early second millennium (see [Figure 6](#)). In this sense, Coptic is simply the last phase of the Ancient Egyptian language (the only known indigenous language of Egypt), which had been written and recorded in the native cursive and hieroglyphic scripts since c. 3000 BC.

More precisely, however, the language discussed here is the normative literary dialect whose influence is apparent to a greater or lesser extent in almost all Coptic texts of this era. Now, our richest single provenance for Coptic documents from Late Antiquity is Thebes (modern Luxor) in the deep south of Egypt (1.5), and this in turn has led to the modern designation of this normative dialect as Sahidic Coptic, from the Egyptian Arabic word for ‘southern’ (صعيدى). In practical terms, however, Sahidic Coptic really has the temporal relevance noted above and is best understood in such terms – the normative dialect used in the writing culture of Late Antiquity. Arguably, in fact, its geographical origin may even be the far north – Alexandria, which was the political and episcopal heartland of Late Antique Egypt as well as a mixed language environment (see [page 53](#)), along with the far western Nile Delta, which was one of the principal nurseries of monasticism (see [page 239](#)).

Immediately following the time-period covered in this book, the normative dialect became Bohairic or ‘northern’ (بحري) Coptic as spoken in the general area of Egypt’s new capital, Cairo, and the populous towns of the adjoining Faiyum region and southern Nile Delta. Today, an ecclesiastical interpretation of Bohairic Coptic is still used sparingly in church services, and many examples of such usage are available via online viewing platforms. Be warned, however, that the artificial ecclesiastical pronunciation means it is not immediately recognisable as the same language described here – though a little orientation and familiarisation (and preferably Coptic subtitles) make all the difference. On the other hand, neither dialect of Coptic (Sahidic or Bohairic) is spoken today as a living language.

SAHIDIC COPTIC MANUSCRIPTS

The introduction of the Coptic alphabet did not necessarily spell an end to all of Egypt’s ancient writing practices. Writers continued, in the manner of native and Romano-Egyptian scribes, to use a reed pen with black and occasional red ink, and the commonest materials on which to write



Figure 5 Archive photograph of books (codices) from the early Coptic library discovered at Nag Hammadi. Late fourth century.

Source: Courtesy of the Nag Hammadi Archive at Claremont Colleges Digital Library, The Claremont Colleges Library.

continued to be limestone chunks or potsherds – both glossed together as ‘ostraca’ in Egyptology – because they were easily procured, durable, reusable and not at all prone to blowing away in the prevailing wind along the Nile Valley (see [Figure 3](#)). For formal texts and library copies – whether letters, documents or literary books – traditional papyrus sheets were still preferred, but the influence of the Greek Bible had led to the adoption of the codex (bound book) in place of the ancient scroll or book roll. Parchment was also used throughout Late Antiquity as an alternative to papyrus, increasingly so following the Arab takeover of Egypt in 642, despite the fact that parchment was less straightforward to prepare or reuse. Other writing materials include legal and religious documents written on leather strips, and wooden writing boards with plastered or waxed surfaces. Of course, stone inscriptions are a phenomenon more or less specific to churches and notably gravestones (12.6).



Figure 6 Parchment pages from a liturgy annotated in Arabic witness the moment when the indigenous Egyptian language was falling from use and being replaced by Arabic. Provenance unknown, eleventh century. Source: Dr José-Ramón Pérez-Accino (www.egiptologiacomplutense.es).

Documents and letters have been discovered at various sites along the Nile Valley and even in the western desert oases (see [page 311](#)), but Sahidic Coptic books have survived from just a handful of provenances, the majority from either the celebrated White Monastery at Sohag in Upper Egypt (see [page 260](#)) or the Monastery of the Archangel Michael, near al-Hamouli in the Faiyum region (see [page 251](#), [298](#)). Though they are mostly mediaeval copies, various comments and glosses within them indicate that the White Monastery already had a library by the time of Abbot Shenoute, no later than the early 400s (19.9), while a cache of anthologies discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945 constitutes a library of Coptic books undoubtedly from the late 300s (13.9). Surviving books vary considerably in size, from personal psalters barely 7.5 cm (3 in) square to (not uncommonly) hefty volumes about 30 cm (12 in) tall. At least one surviving volume originally ran to more than 900 pages.²

² See W. E. Crum: *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*. London, British Museum (1905), pages x–xiii.



Figure 7 The Hellenistic cultural district at Kum al-Dikka in Alexandria, dating from the Byzantine era. From its foundation by Alexander the Great, most Egyptian-speakers regarded Alexandria as a foreign city and a symbol of foreign domination. *Source:* Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk).

However, even the finest books from Late Antique Egypt were rarely illustrated with more than a cross on the leather binding and perhaps a simple icon in the endpapers.

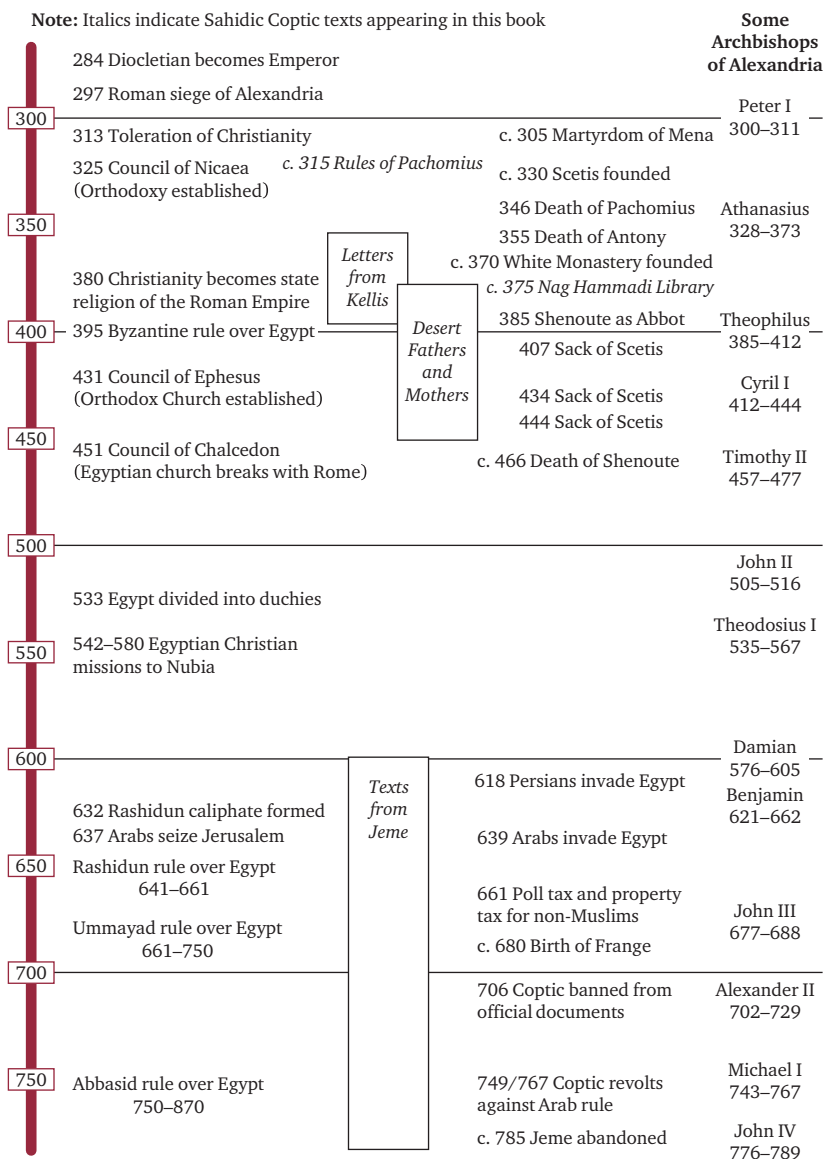


Figure 8 A timeline showing key events mentioned in the book. *Source:* author.

LESSON 1

The alphabet

1.1 THE COPTIC ALPHABET

The Sahidic Coptic alphabet consists of thirty letters, typically ordered as follows:

ⲁ	ⲃ	Ⲅ	Ⲇ	Ⲉ	Ⲋ	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲑ	Ⲓ	Ⲕ	Ⲗ
Ⲙ	Ⲛ	Ⲝ	Ⲟ	Ⲡ	Ⲣ	Ⲥ	ⲧ	ⲩ	ⲫ	ⲭ	ⲯ
ⲱ	ⲳ	ⲵ	ⲷ	ⲹ	ⲻ						

The first twenty-four letters were adapted from the Greek alphabet and the last six from Egyptian cursive script (Demotic). Coptic writing did not distinguish uppercase and lowercase letters and rarely used joined-up (minuscule) writing until after the period covered in this book. To help you learn the alphabet, we can analyse it this way:

(a) First, there are *seven vowels*:

	ⲁ	Ⲉ	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲑ	Ⲓ or Ⲓϣ	ⲯ
as in	<i>b<u>a</u>t</i>	<i>b<u>e</u>t</i>	<i>b<u>ea</u>r</i>	<i>b<u>ea</u>t</i>	<i>p<u>o</u>t</i>	<i>b<u>oo</u>t</i>	<i>b<u>o</u>ne</i>

(b) Then there are *seventeen consonants*, nine of which you can probably recognise or work out:

ⲃ	Ⲇ	Ⲋ	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲙ	Ⲛ	Ⲥ	ⲳ
<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>f</i>

(c) On the other hand, eight consonants are going to be unfamiliar or may even trick you:

Ⲅ	Ⲟ	Ⲡ	Ⲣ	Ⲥ	ⲷ	ⲹ	ⲻ
<i>g</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>sh</i> in <i>sh<u>i</u>p</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>j</i> or <i>ch</i>	<i>qu</i> in <i>qu<u>e</u>ue</i>

Notice the scope for confusing Ⲇ and ⲹ though they are frequently more clearly distinguished in written texts than in modern computer fonts.

(d) The remaining six letters are normally used to write *two sounds together*, in the same way that English *x* normally writes *ks* in *fox* or *gs* in *exit*:

Ⲏ = <i>t + h</i>	ⲫ = <i>p + h</i>	ⲭ = <i>k + h</i>	Ⲛ = <i>ks (= x)</i>	Ⲓ = <i>ps</i>	ⲻ = <i>ti</i>
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If you know some Greek, note that Θ and Φ and Χ rarely have the standard pronunciations of θ and φ and χ in Classical Greek.

- (e) Finally, y and w are common consonants in spoken Coptic but do not have their own letters:

ⲓ or Ⲉⲓ may write y, as in ⲓⲱⲧ 'father' (yōt rhymes with 'boat')

Ⲯ or ⲐⲮ may write w, as in ⲁⲮⲱ 'and' (awō rhymes with 'ago')

Experience teaches you whether a specific ⲓ or Ⲯ is writing a vowel or a consonant, but the difference is rarely critical in your reading as a learner. Occasionally ï with diaeresis (two dots) is used to write y, as in ⲓⲱⲧ 'father' or the names ⲓⲁⲕⲱⲃ (Yakōb) 'Jacob' and ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ (Mathayos) 'Matthew'. On the other hand, ï may also be used to write the vowel i as a distinct sound beside another vowel, as in Ⲉⲭⲱⲓ (ejō-ee) 'over me' or the name ⲙⲓⲗⲓⲁⲥ (Ēl-i-as) 'Elijah'. That said, the use of ï often seems far from consistent and, to emphasise, it rarely affects your comprehension to know whether ⲓ or Ⲯ is writing a vowel or a consonant.

1.2 STROKES ABOVE THE LETTERS

- (a) Probably the most distinctive feature of Coptic writing is a stroke written above individual consonants. This indicates that the apparent consonant is actually a syllable pronounced 'in the nose'. For example, Ⲛ̄ sounds like the -n of English *isn't* and *didn't*, or the final sound of *hidden* and *listen* – that is, in English we actually say *hidn̄* not *hid-den* and *lisn̄* not *lis-ten*. Likewise, ⲙ̄ sounds like the -m of English *I'm* or even the -ham when people in England say place names such as *Durham* and *Cheltenham* – that is, say *Durm̄* not *Dur-ham* and *Chelt-nm̄* not *Chel-ten-ham*. Try saying these useful words out loud to yourself (no one is listening):

Ⲛ̄ 'of' ⲙ̄ 'and, with' ⲭ̄ 'in, from'

Of course, writing is not an exact science so you may find ⲙ̄ⲈⲚ written when you expect ⲙ̄ⲓ, or ⲭ̄Ⲛ̄ for ⲭ̄ⲈⲚ, or Ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲗⲏ for ⲈⲚⲧⲟⲗⲏ 'instruction', or ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲧⲈ for ⲈⲙⲁⲧⲈ 'very'. Indeed, a word such as ⲭ̄Ⲉⲗⲗⲏⲏ 'pagan' may

be written as ⲉⲗⲗⲏⲏ or even ⲉⲗⲗⲏ̄, which simply indicates that these pronunciations were so similar they could be confused even by native Copts. In this book, any non-standard spellings which may cause confusion have been ‘corrected’ to what we would expect as learners, unless otherwise indicated.

(b) A small number of familiar names and phrases held to be sacred in a Christian context (*nomina sacra*) are typically abbreviated in writing, and such abbreviations are indicated by writing a *single stroke over a group of letters*. The most frequently used are $\overline{\text{IC}}$ or $\overline{\text{IC}}$ for IHCOYC ‘Jesus’ and $\overline{\text{XC}}$ or $\overline{\text{XC}}$ for XPICTOC ‘Christ’; but we find others too, including $\overline{\text{XC}}$ for XOEIC ‘Lord’, $\overline{\text{COP}}$ for COTHP ‘saviour’, and especially $\overline{\text{PNA}}$ for PNEYMA ‘spirit’ with derivatives such as $\overline{\text{PNIKON}}$ for PNEYMATIKON ‘spirituality’.

(c) Letters may also be marked as numerals using a stroke, so that $\overline{\text{A}}$, $\overline{\text{B}}$, $\overline{\text{F}}$ are used to write 1, 2, 3 and so on (we will look into this in [Lesson 12](#)). Wherever this practice is employed – for instance, to write page numbers in the top margins of a book – it is usually obvious what is going on and, as a learner, you are going to see it rarely, if ever.

1.3 $\overline{\text{N}}$ FREQUENTLY SHIFTS TO $\overline{\text{M}}$

Here is a very important fact to remember – in speech, and therefore in writing, the syllable $\overline{\text{N}}$ typically (not always) shifts to $\overline{\text{M}}$ when it has to be pronounced immediately in front of the sounds M or N , so we find $\overline{\text{N}}$ $\overline{\text{IAKWB}}$ ‘of Jacob’ but $\overline{\text{M}}$ $\overline{\text{PETPOC}}$ ‘of Peter’ or $\overline{\text{M}}$ $\overline{\text{MAΘAIOC}}$ ‘of Matthew’. This sound shift is common – in English too, we say ‘immigrant’ (not ‘in-migrant’) and we may well say ‘Grampa’ not ‘Grandpa’ – and there are even rules about when it happens, but why worry about them just now? Copts naturally heard when $\overline{\text{N}}$ shifts to $\overline{\text{M}}$ and you simply have to respond to what they wrote down, including their own occasional inconsistencies in writing. While we are here, a less intrusive sound change – but still worth remembering – is the simple option of B or Q in certain common words, such as ZWB or ZWQ ‘matter, thing’, OYWB or OYQ ‘answer, respond’, and CHQE or CHBE ‘sword, weapon’.

1.4 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: NAMES OF PEOPLE AT THEBES

A straightforward way to get used to the Coptic alphabet is to read a few Coptic names. The following list includes the names of various people who lived at Thebes during the seventh and eighth centuries. See whether you can identify each name in its English form with the Coptic originals in the corresponding list, following the pattern that ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲗⲁⲙ is evidently the same name as Abraham:

ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲗⲁⲙ	ⲓⲉⲣⲛⲙⲓⲁⲥ	ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ
ⲁⲒⲛⲁⲁⲓⲟⲥ	ⲓⲱⲗⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ	ⲡⲁⲣⲟⲛ
ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ	ⲓⲥⲁⲁⲕ	ⲡⲓⲱⲁⲧⲉ
Ⲓⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ	ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲫ	ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲛⲗ
ⲁⲁⲛⲓⲛⲗ	ⲕⲉⲣⲁⲕⲟⲥ	ⲥⲁⲛⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ
ⲁⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ	ⲕⲱⲥⲧⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛ	ⲥⲉⲩⲏⲣⲟⲥ
ⲉⲗⲉⲥⲁⲓⲁⲥ	ⲙⲁⲑⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ	ⲥⲧⲉⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ
ⲉⲛⲱⲭ	ⲙⲁⲣⲕⲟⲥ	ⲧⲱⲣⲱⲱ



Figure 9 Crosses along the enclosure wall of the spectacular temple of king Ramesses III (c. 1187–1155 BC) at Medinat Habu are reminders of the once bustling Christian town of Jeme in Thebes. *Source:* Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk).

ⲙⲗⲓⲁϥ	ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ	ϥⲉϥ
ⲑⲉⲱⲫⲓⲗⲟϥ	ⲛⲟⲛ	ϥⲁⲧⲉ
ⲓⲁⲕⲱⲃ	ⲡⲁⲅⲗⲟϥ	ϩⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ

Find the corresponding English forms in this list:

Abraham	Joseph	John/Johann
Michael	Jacob	Matthew/Mathaios
Daniel	Jeremy	David
Samuel	Theophilus	Severus
Gabriel	Elias/Elijah	Victor
Enoch	Elesias	Cerakos
Isaac	Constantine	Psate
Mark	Shinoute	Pishate
Paul	Agnadios	Pheu
Stephen	Noah	Torosh
Peter	Piaron	Sanagape

You will have noticed that Copts did not necessarily pronounce names as we anticipate from English: so, where we expect ‘J’ we find ⲓⲉⲣⲙⲓⲁϥ (*Yerēmias*) for ‘Jeremy’ and ⲓⲱⲃⲁⲛⲛⲏϥ (*Yōhannēs*) for ‘John’; and instead of ‘V’ we see ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ (*Biktōr*) for ‘Victor’ and ⲁⲃⲱⲉⲓⲁ (*Da-weid*) for ‘David’.

You might also have noticed that Theban names offer an insight into the mixed cultural heritage of Late Antique Egypt insofar as they include indigenous Egyptian names (ϥⲁⲧⲉ, ⲡⲓⲱⲁⲧⲉ, ϩⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ), Biblical names (ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲃⲁⲙ, ⲁⲃⲱⲉⲓⲁ, ⲓⲱⲕⲏⲫ), Greek names (ⲑⲉⲱⲫⲓⲗⲟϥ, ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟϥ, ⲕⲁⲛⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ) and Roman names (ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ, ⲕⲱϥⲧⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛ, ⲕⲉϥⲏⲣⲟϥ). Because of this mix, sometimes we can transcribe Coptic names into familiar forms (David, John, Matthew). However, more often than not we transcribe them letter by letter into what may seem odd, alien names at first, though you will soon get to know many of them through your reading.

1.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: OSTRACA FROM MEDINAT HABU

The single richest source of documents from Late Antique Egypt is the district of Medinat Habu ('City of the Fathers') on the West Bank of the River Nile at Thebes. In part, this is because it was the centre of the town of Jeme (Ⲫⲏⲙⲉ), which thrived until the late 700s as a well-to-do, exceptionally literate community within a larger urban landscape.¹ Indeed, the documented business activities of residents reached from the far south of the country up to Fustat, the Arab capital in the north. There were important (literate) monasteries and churches near Jeme too, including the monastery of Saint Phoibammon at Deyr al-Bahari ('Northern Monastery'). Crucially, however, Medinat Habu incorporates the towering temple of king Ramesses III (c. 1187–1156 BC) along with other pharaonic monuments and, consequently, the whole area has been extensively excavated by archaeologists. Naturally, of course, the archaeology of any ancient Egyptian site is liable to incorporate Coptic remains and, until the abandonment of Jeme, part of the temple of Ramesses III remained in use as a major church (see [Figure 9](#)).

Most documents from Jeme are ostraca written by the residents themselves and deal with social relations, particularly legal and financial dealings. Look at the following texts from two potsherds and see what you make of them:

ⲡ ⲁⲃⲛⲏⲗ
ⲙⲁⲣⲕⲟⲥ •
ϣⲁⲧⲉ ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲫ
ⲕⲱⲥⲧⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛ
ⲫⲉϥ ⲓⲥⲁⲕ
ⲉⲗⲉⲥⲁⲓ
ⲓⲁⲥ

Here is the text of the second ostrakon:

ⲡ ⲧⲁϥⲉⲓⲧ ⲥⲉϥⲏⲣⲟⲥ
ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲫ ⲓⲉⲣⲏⲙⲓⲁⲥ

1. See T. G. Wilfong: *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan (2002).

ΚΕΡΑΚΟΣ ΣΑΜΟΥΗΛ
 ΨΙΝΟΥΤΕ ΜΑΘΕΟΣ
 ΨΙΝΟΥΤΕ ΙΟΥΔΑΝΝ
 ΠΑΡΟΝ ΕΝΩΧ
 ΠΩΔΑΤΕ ΙΩΣΗΦ
 ΤΩΡΩΩ ΒΙΚΤΩΡ
 ΝΟΗ

As you can see, they are just lists of names, but such lists turn out to be common, often as records of witnesses to legal or financial transactions. So, notice the symbol ⲡ (a staurogram or sign of the cross) at the head of the list to indicate that the persons named are under oath in this context – though in other types of documents a plain cross + often simply marks the beginning of a text. Also notice how writings need not respect line breaks so, in the first text, the name ⲉⲗⲉϥⲁⲓⲁϥ is written across two lines. In fact, Coptic writing did not use spaces between words either, but we introduce spaces here while you are learning, in line with modern editorial practice for publishing Coptic texts. As a final point, notice the writings of ⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲧ/ⲁⲩⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ 'David' and ⲙⲁⲑⲉⲟϥ/ⲙⲁⲑⲉⲁⲓⲟϥ 'Matthew': of course, in English we enjoy similar variations in spelling names, as with Steven/Stephen or Susan/Suzanne. That said, in Late Antiquity *the same person* may well spell their own name differently even in the same text.

The next ostrakon, presumably a promissory note or record of a distribution, lists names along with the word ⲙⲁⲗⲉ 'flax':

ⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲙⲁⲗⲉ
 ΣΑΜΟΥΗΛ ⲙⲁⲗⲉ
 ΠΑΛΗΥ ⲙⲁⲗⲉ

Our final ostrakon lists different names. These are the names of the twelve calendar months used in documents at Thebes, and they are traditional Egyptian names:

ⲑⲟⲟⲩⲧ	<i>Thouth</i>	(September)
ⲡⲁⲁⲡⲉ	<i>Paopi</i>	(October)
ⲗⲑⲱⲡ	<i>Hathur</i>	(November)
ⲕⲓⲟⲗⲕ	<i>Khoiak</i>	(December)
ⲧⲱⲃⲉ	<i>Tubi</i>	(January)

ⲙⲁⲕⲓⲣ	<i>Mekhir</i>	(February)
ⲡⲁⲣⲙⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ	<i>Pamenoth</i>	(March)
ⲡⲁⲣⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ	<i>Parmouthi</i>	(April)
ⲡⲁⲕⲟⲛⲥ	<i>Pakhons</i>	(May)
ⲫⲁⲱⲛⲉ	<i>Pauni</i>	(June)
ⲉⲡⲉⲡ	<i>Epiṗi</i>	(July)
ⲙⲏⲥⲟⲩⲣⲉ	<i>Mesore</i>	(August)

The ‘translations’ in the second column are actually the standardised forms adapted from Roman-era Greek documents. Though the ancient Egyptian months do not conform exactly to our own calendar, the third column indicates which month has the greatest overlap across the two calendars so you can reckon roughly where each Coptic month falls in the course of a year. As with any names, we find variant writings of month names, along the lines of ⲕⲟⲓⲁⲗⲕ for ⲕⲓⲟⲗⲕ ‘Khoiak’, ⲙⲓⲱⲣⲓ for ⲙⲁⲕⲓⲣ ‘Mekhir’, ⲡⲁⲱⲛⲥ for ⲡⲁⲕⲟⲛⲥ ‘Pakhons’ or ⲙⲉⲥⲟⲩⲣⲉ for ⲙⲏⲥⲟⲩⲣⲉ ‘Mesore’.

1.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: ⲉⲗⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲓ ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ ‘DAVID SON OF MATTHEW’

When used between two names, the word ⲙⲓ ‘of’ is frequently the equivalent of the phrase ‘son of’, as in ⲥⲁⲛⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ ⲙⲓ ⲏⲗⲓⲁⲥ ‘Sanagape (son) of Elias’. In letters and legal documents, this is one obvious means of establishing your specific identity. At this point, remember that ⲙⲓ typically shifts to ⲙⲓ in front of ⲙ or ⲡ, as in ⲉⲗⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲓ ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ ‘David (son) of Matthew’. The text of the next ostrakon exemplifies this usage:

ⲫⲁ ⲥⲁⲛⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ ⲙⲓ ⲏⲗⲓⲁⲥ	Sanagape (son) of Elias
ⲓⲱⲗⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ ⲙⲓ ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ	John (son) of Matthew
ⲉⲗⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲓ ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ	David (son) of Matthew
ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲗⲓⲟⲥ ⲙⲓ ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ	Agnadios (son) of Matthew

Another ostrakon begins with these names:

ⲣⲓⲱⲥⲉⲫ ⲙⲓ ⲥⲁⲭⲁⲣⲓⲁⲥ	Joseph (son) of Zachary
ⲥⲧⲉⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲓ ⲓⲉⲣⲉⲙⲓⲁⲥ	Stephen (son) of Jeremy
ⲡⲁⲛⲁⲭⲟⲣⲉ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ	Panachore (son) of Peter
ⲡⲓⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲙⲓ ⲕⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ	Pisrael (son) of Karabana

1.7 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: ΔΝΟΚ ΠΙΑ ‘I AM PIA’

A useful word to learn straightaway is ΔΝΟΚ, which simply means ‘I’ but may be followed by a name to create the statement ‘I *am* so-and-so’, as in ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ‘I am Paul’. The following names are taken from standard introductions to letters and promissory notes written at Jeme:

ⲡ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΛΟΥ	I am Palou.
ⲡ ΔΝΟΚ ΦΡΑΝΓΕ	I am Frange.
ΔΝΟΚ ΤΣΙΕ	I am Tsie.
ΔΝΟΚ ΤΟΥΛΙΤ	I am Toulit.
ΔΝΟΚ ΠΙΑ	I am Pia.
ΔΝΟΚ ΦΕΒΑΜΩΝ	I am Phebamon.
ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ Ⲛ̅ ΔΝΔΡΕΔC	I am Papnoute (son) of Andrew.

As a final point, note that ΤΣΙΕ, ΤΟΥΛΙΤ and ΠΙΑ are the names of women, so you see that ΔΝΟΚ is used in the same way by men and women – and, indeed, that women at Jeme could participate in the Theban writing culture, even in financial proceedings, on the same basis as men. The last example is from an oath by a woman who also uses Ⲛ̅ ‘of’ to name her father:

ΔΝΟΚ ΤΑΔΩΡΕ Ⲛ̅ ΚΡCΥΝΕ	I am Tadore (daughter) of Krsune.
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LESSON 2

Simple descriptions

2.1 ARTICLES: 'THE' DEFINITE ARTICLES AND GENDER

A Coptic dictionary will give you the word ⲩⲏⲣⲉ 'son' but, for obvious reasons, in any given text you are more likely to read about ⲟⲩⲩⲏⲣⲉ 'a son' or ⲡⲩⲩⲏⲣⲉ 'the son'. In Coptic 'the' is expressed by ⲡ- (or ⲡⲉ-) attached as a prefix to masculine words, while ⲧ- (or ⲧⲉ-) is prefixed to feminine words. We call these prefixes definite articles, because they 'define' which specific person or thing we are talking about. For example, read the following introductions, which also include the important title ⲁⲡⲁ 'father' as the respectful standard address used with the name of a priest or other holy person:

ⲡⲩⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ	The son of Apa Peter (or 'Father Peter').
ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲃⲁⲛⲓⲛⲗ ⲡⲩⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲙⲟⲩⲥ	I am Daniel the son of Mous.

In language terms, each Coptic noun is masculine or feminine whether or not the word refers to something with a biological gender (because this categorisation is a matter of language not biology). Accordingly, unless the word entails an obvious biological gender there is no way to predict whether it is masculine or feminine except taking ⲡ- and ⲧ- as your guide. For example, you can anticipate ⲡ-ⲉⲓⲱⲧ 'the father' and ⲧ-ⲙⲁⲁⲩ 'the mother', but not that ⲡ-ⲥⲱⲙⲁ 'the body' and ⲡ-ⲉⲛⲧ 'the mind' are masculine, whereas ⲧ-ⲉⲛ 'the belly' and ⲧ-ⲉⲥ 'the way' are feminine. A handful of words have specifically feminine forms, including ⲩⲏⲣⲉ 'child, son' but ⲩⲉⲣⲉ 'daughter' or ⲥⲟⲛ 'sibling, brother' but ⲥⲱⲛⲉ 'sister'. However, since the articles can reveal the gender, even these distinct forms are not always used, so you may find both ⲧⲩⲉⲣⲉ and ⲧⲩⲏⲣⲉ for 'the daughter':

ⲕⲟⲗⲟⲭⲉ ⲧⲩⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲉⲗⲗⲟ	Coloje, the daughter of Hello.
ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲫⲁⲙ ⲧⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲉⲃⲱ	I am Mary, the daughter of Pebo.

By the way, remember Ⲑ writes ⲧⲉ, so watch out for writings such as Ⲑⲛ 'the belly' and Ⲑⲉ 'the way', not to mention Ⲑⲁⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ for ⲧⲉⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ 'the sea', Ⲑⲉⲛⲉⲩⲧⲉ for ⲧⲉⲛⲉⲩⲧⲉ 'the monastery' and so on.

The alternatives **πϵ-/τϵ-** are simply fuller forms of the definite articles used in two ways:

- (a) To help pronounce words that begin with two consonants or other awkward clusters of sounds, as in **τϵϷⲓⲙϵ** ‘the woman, the wife’, **τϵϣⲗⲭⲏ** ‘the soul’ (remember **ϣ** writes two consonants) and **τϵβⲗⲭϵ** ‘the ostrakon’. You will get used to words such as **ⲓⲏ** ‘road’, which takes the full form of the article (**τϵⲓⲏ** ‘the road’) because it begins with the sounds *hy* rather than *hi* (1.1).
- (b) With a small number of words that refer to time periods, principally **ⲣⲟⲙⲡϵ** ‘year’, **ⲟⲓⲟϵⲓⲱ** ‘moment’, **ⲟⲓⲛⲟⲩ** ‘hour’, **ⲓⲟⲟⲩ** ‘day’ and **ⲟⲩⲱⲏ** ‘night’. This raises an important point about the language more generally: words written with **ⲟⲩ** as the first sound typically contract in writing when a prefix gets attached and the prefix ends in **ⲗ-** or **ϵ-**. Accordingly, we see **τϵⲓⲛⲟⲩ** ‘the hour’ (for **τϵ-ⲟⲓⲛⲟⲩ**) and **τϵⲓⲱⲏ** ‘the night’ (for **τϵ-ⲟⲩⲱⲏ**). These important time words also give rise to useful time phrases, such as **ⲛ̅τϵⲓⲛⲟⲩ** ‘immediately, suddenly’ and **ⲛ̅ⲟⲓⲟϵⲓⲱ** ‘once’, along with **τϵⲛⲟⲩ** ‘now’ (from **ⲟⲓⲛⲟⲩ**) and **ⲡⲟⲟⲩ** or **ⲙ̅ⲡⲟⲟⲩ** ‘today’ (from **ⲓⲟⲟⲩ**).

At the end of the day, of course, you do not need to know when to use **π-** or **τ-** and when to use **πϵ-** or **τϵ-** because you only have to recognise what the Coptic texts give you.

As a final note, Coptic often uses definite articles where English would not, for instance with proper nouns such as **τϷⲩⲣⲓⲗ** ‘Syria’ or to specify a unique instance of a word, as in **ⲛⲟⲩⲧϵ** ‘god’ but **ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧϵ** ‘God’ – as you see, such uses often correspond to where English uses capital letters. Likewise, in the familiar phrase **ⲓⲏϷⲟⲩϷ ⲡϵⲭⲣⲓϷⲧⲟϷ** or **ⲓⲥⲡϵⲭⲥ**, the element **ⲡϵⲭⲣⲓϷⲧⲟϷ** corresponds to English ‘Christ’ (1.2).

2.2 ARTICLES: ‘THE’ PLURALS

With plurals, ‘the’ definite article is **ⲛ̅-** or **ⲛϵ-** for both masculine and feminine words. Most words do not change to show they are plural, so you find **ⲡⲱⲏⲣϵ** ‘the son’ and **ⲛ̅ⲱⲏⲣϵ** ‘the sons’. However, there are a

few distinct plurals, including *ειοτε* ‘parents, ancestors’ (from *ειωτ*), *ζηομε* ‘women’ (from *ζηιμε*), *εινηγ* ‘brothers’ (from *ειν*), *ειρωγ* ‘kings’ (from *ειρο*), *εινοογε* ‘animals’ (from *εινη*), *ειοογε* ‘roads, paths’ (from *ειη*), *ειηγ* ‘matters, acts, things’ (from *ειωβ*), *ειηγ* ‘heavens’ (from *ειε*), *ειχοογε* ‘souls’ (from *ειχη*), *ειλεεγε* ‘blind’ (from *ειλλε*), and *ειμιοογε* ‘tears’ (from *ειμειη*). However, since the articles indicate the number, even these plural forms are not essential so, for instance, you may find *ειζηιμε* or *ειζηομε* for ‘the women’.

Again, words that begin with two consonants or refer to certain time periods take the fuller form *ει-*, as in *ειεινηγ* ‘the brothers’ and *ειεζοογ* ‘the days’, as well as *ειεζηομε* ‘the women’ and *ειεζιοογε* ‘the roads’ which begin with *the sounds hy*. That said, the syllables *ει-* and *ει-* were obviously pronounced similarly (1.2), so you may find both *ειβαρβαρο* and *ειβαρβαρο* ‘the barbarians’ or *ειειρωγ* and *ειειρωγ* ‘the kings’, sometimes mistakenly and sometimes for specific reasons of pronunciation.

2.3 ARTICLES:

ΟΥ ‘A’ AND ΖΕΝ ‘SOME’ ARE INDEFINITE ARTICLES

The indefinite article *ου-* ‘a’ is also a prefix, as in *ουωμρε* ‘a son’ or *ουκαλσι* ‘a wheel’, but the same form is used whether the noun is masculine or feminine. With plural words, the indefinite article is *ζειν-* for masculine and feminine, as in *ζεινρωμε* ‘men, some men’, *ζεινζοογ* ‘some days’ and *ζεινωζε* ‘fishermen’. Closely related to these indefinite articles are the nouns *ουα* (feminine *ουει*) ‘one, someone’ and *ζοειμε* ‘some, some people’.

Whereas definite articles specify which person or thing we are talking about (*τειζηιμε* ‘the woman’, *ειποογ* ‘today’), indefinite articles refer broadly to a group (*ζεινζοογ* ‘some days’) or introduce someone or something we did not yet know about (*ουεζηιμε* ‘a woman’) (7.4). A noun with no article at all simply presents the word as a category, such as *ρωμε* ‘man, men’ and *ζηιμε* ‘woman, women’. As a general point, you will soon come to recognise that Coptic grammar makes some important distinctions between how it treats defined and undefined nouns. For instance, following undefined nouns the word *ει* ‘of’ is usually replaced by *ειτε*, as in *ουεζοτε ειτε πμογ* ‘a fear of Death’ or *ει ηρηνη ειτε πμογτε* ‘in God’s peace’.

2.4 ARTICLES:

ΚΕ IS ‘ANOTHER’ ARTICLE ‘TOO’

The final article for you to be aware of is **κε** which can be used as a prefix in either of two ways:

- (a) On its own or with an *indefinite* article, **κε** means ‘other, another’, as in **κεογα** (**κε-ογα**) ‘another one, one more’, **κεελλο** ‘another elder’, **εκεκεκοπ** (**εκεν-κε-κοπ**) ‘some other occasions’, **εκεκεμεεγε** ‘some other thoughts’ and **εκεκεδσκιτης** ‘some other ascetics’ (‘ascetics’ being people who pursue a lifestyle of self-discipline and abstention).
- (b) Used with a *definite* article, **κε** means ‘too, as well’ or suchlike, as in **πκεχιλωι** (**π-κε-χιλωι**) ‘Jijoi too’, **τκεογει** ‘the other one too’ and **πκεεεπε** ‘the rest as well’. Closely related to the article **κε** is the plural noun **κοογε** ‘others’, as in **εκεκοογε** ‘some others’.

2.5 ADJECTIVES WHICH FOLLOW THEIR WORD

A small number of describing words (adjectives) simply follow the word they describe, including **ωμη** ‘ordinary, lowly’ (**πιστος ωμη** ‘the lowly believer’) and **κογι** ‘small’ (**ογκαλσιλ κογι** ‘a small wheel’). For example, look at the next ostrakon, which contains a specific Christian reference to the disciples of Jesus using the word **μη** ‘and’ (note, the phrase **ενωδε νε** means ‘are fishermen’):

π πετρος μη ανδρεας	Peter and Andrew
μη ιακωβος μη	and James and
ιωδαννης ενωδε νε	John are fishermen.

On the reverse the text simply adds:

π ανοκ πετρος ωμη	I am lowly Peter.
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Another such adjective is **νιμ**, which means ‘each, every, all’ and is used without articles, as in **πιστος νιμ** ‘each believer’. There are not many of these adjectives but they are commonly used and produce useful phrases such as **ογον νιμ** ‘everyone’, **εωβ νιμ** or **νηκα νιμ** ‘everything’ and **νη ογοειω νιμ** ‘at any time’.

2.6 ADJECTIVES: THE NUMBER CNAȲ ‘TWO’

The number CNAȲ ‘two’ usually follows the word it describes, as in ȒHT CNAȲ ‘two minds’ and ΠΡΩΜΕ CNAȲ ‘the two men’. However, notice that the word described by CNAȲ is singular, which is why you see ΠΡΩΜΕ CNAȲ not ḆΡΩΜΕ CNAȲ. Occasionally, the noun also gets reduced in pronunciation, as in CЄΠ CNAȲ ‘two times’ from COT ‘occasion’. Unlike most describing words, numbers often have specific forms for describing feminine nouns, as in ΠΡΩΜΕ CNAȲ ‘the two men’ but ΤΕCȒΙΜΕ CṢΤΕ ‘the two women’.

2.7 ADJECTIVES WHICH GO IN FRONT OF THEIR WORD

A small number of common adjectives do not follow the word they describe but stand in front of it instead, including λAȲȲ ‘any’, NOṢ ‘big, great’, MHHȲЄ ‘many’, ȒȒ ‘many’, MЄPIT ‘beloved’ (with the plural MЄPAȲЄ) and NAHT ‘compassionate’. These adjectives link to the word they describe with the mediating sound Ṇ, as in λAȲȲ ṆȒλλO ‘any elder’, MЄPIT ṆȒOЄIC ‘beloved lord’, MЄPAȲЄ ṆCON ‘beloved brothers’ and ȒȒ ṆBIP ‘many baskets’. The simple (cardinal) numbers from ȲOMṢT ‘three’ upwards behave this way too, as in ȲOMṢT ṆȒȲ ‘three cups’ or CЄ ṆPOMΠЄ ‘sixty (CЄ) years’.

Any article there may be goes at the start of the whole phrase, as in OȲ-NOṢ ṆṢONȒOȲ ‘a big jar’, OȲ-NOṢ ṆPAȲЄ ‘a great joy’ and Π-NAHT ṆNOȲȲЄ ‘compassionate God’, as well as KЄ-MHHȲЄ ṆMAPTȲPOC ‘many other martyrs’ and KЄ-ȲOMṢT ṆȒOOȲ ‘three more days, another three days’.

2.8 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: SIMPLE TESTIMONIES

The following inscriptions appear in the Church of Saint Isidore at Deyr al-Medina (3.6), near Jeme, and among them you will find the titles AHAȒNȲCTHC ‘Reader’ and CAȒO ‘Eminence’. Going forward, take care not to confuse the useful words ȲHPЄ ‘son’ and ȲHM ‘ordinary, lowly’.

ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΩΗΗ	I am lowly Peter.
ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΠΣΑΧΟ ΩΗΗ	I am Paul, the lowly Eminence.
ΔΝΟΚ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΗ ΩΗΗ ΠΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ	I am lowly Abraham, the Reader.
ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΠΩΗΡΕ Ἡ ΠΙΣΡΑ	I am Paul, the son of Pisra.

Finally, an ostracon which is a brief inventory of items such as χΩ ‘cup’, κατης ‘jug’, σονχοῦ or σῆχοῦ ‘jar’, λακαντ ‘cauldron’, ρββς ‘cover’ and καλσιλ ‘wheel’:

ΟΥΚΑΤΗΣ ΩΗΗ	An ordinary jug
ΟΥΝΟΣ ἩΣΟΝΧΟΥ	A big jar
ΟΥΡΒΒς ΛΑΜΠΑ	A cover, lamp
ΟΥΛΑΚΑΝΤ	A cauldron
ΟΥΝΟΣ ἩΚΑΛΣΙΛ	A big wheel
ΟΥΚΑΛΣΙΛ ΩΗΗ	An ordinary wheel
ΟΥΣῆΧΟΥ ΚΟΥῖ Ἡ ΖΟΜῆΤ	A small jar of copper (ΖΟΜῆΤ)
ΩΟΜῆΤ ἩΧΩ Ἡ ΖΟΜῆΤ	Three cups of copper

WORKING VOCABULARY

Now is a good moment to check whether you remember some useful words. These are words you are liable to meet again moving forward, so knowing them will help your reading flow. An old trick is to cover the translations with your hand or a piece of paper, or enlarge the screen view until the translations disappear, and see whether you recall the meaning of each word.

ΟΥΑ	one	ΠΕ	sky
CNAΥ	two	ΖΕ	way, manner
ΩΟΜΝΤ	three	ΖΪΗ	road, path
ΚΟΟΥΕ	others	ΖΟΟΥ	day
CΕΕΠΕ	rest, remainder	ΟΥΩΗ	night
ΖΩΒ	matter, act,	ΡΟΜΠΕ	year
	thing	CΟΠ	occasion
CΖΙΜΕ	woman, wife	ΟΥΝΟΥ	hour
ΜΑΔΥ	mother	ΟΥΟΕΙΩ	moment
ΕΙΩΤ	father	ΕΜΑΤΕ	very, especially
ΩΕΕΡΕ	daughter	ΚΟΥΙ	small, little
ΩΗΡΕ	son	ΛΑΔΥ	any
CΟΝ	brother	ΜΕΡΙΤ	beloved
CΝΗΥ	brothers	ΝΙΜ	each, all
CΩΝΕ	sister	ΝΟC	big, great
ΗΡΗΝΗ	peace	ΩΗΜ	ordinary, lowly
ΜΟΥ	die, death	ΖΑΖ	many
ΖΗΤ	heart, mind		
ΥΥΧΗ	soul	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
CΩΜΑ	body	ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ	once
ΝΟΥΤΕ	god	ΜΠΟΟΥ	today
ΧΟΕΙC	lord	ΤΕΝΟΥ	now
ΡΡΟ	king	ΝΤΕΥΝΟΥ	immediately,
ΡΡΩΟΥ	kings		suddenly
ΖΛΛΟ	elder	ΝΚΑ ΝΙΜ	everything
ΖΕΝΕΕΤΕ	monastery	ΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ	everyone

LESSON 3

Coptic and Greek

3.1 GREEK WORDS

Though Coptic is a phase of the indigenous Egyptian language, words adopted from Greek are characteristic of any text. There is no single reason for this, and it is easy to overestimate Greek's presence, but many words came to Coptic naturally because Greek had been spoken by minorities in and around Egypt for many centuries, not least in discourse among educated and ruling elites. For example, **χαίρε** 'hello' or **χαίρειν** (or **χαίρετε** to more than one person) was heard every day around the Roman Empire, not only in Egypt. On the other hand, Greek-speakers had settled in significant numbers in exclusively Greek-speaking communities from the seventh century BC, long before Greek-speakers came to rule Egypt – though this in turn was the case for 1,000 years, from the late fourth century BC until the Arab conquest. Most importantly, perhaps, many Coptic texts are rooted in non-Egyptian text traditions – whether to do with Christianity or imperial law and government – and consequently are translations or adaptations of Greek originals that employed specialist vocabulary. In other words, we may compare Greek's impact on Coptic vocabulary to the cumulative impact on early English of not one but several languages, including: (a) the Scandinavian languages spoken by large numbers of settlers in the British Isles; (b) the Classical languages used specifically in religion, education, government and law; and (c) the Norman French used by a ruling elite during the Middle Ages.

3.2 ROLES WITHIN THE CHURCH

To take an obvious example, Christianity first reached Egypt through communities for whom Greek-speaking was not only influential but normal. Therefore, of course, the new religion also entailed new ideas, values and practices for which the relevant vocabulary already existed and could be transmitted directly to Coptic. For example, alongside the indigenous word **ⲉⲗⲁⲓ** 'writing' we also come across the Coptic word **ⲧⲉ-ⲓⲣⲁⲫⲏ** 'Scripture' derived from Greek. Likewise, Greek words include those for specific church roles, many of which have passed into English too on the same basis:

ⲙⲁⲣⲧϣⲣⲟⲥ 'witness, martyr'
ⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ 'bishop'

ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ 'solitary, monk'
ⲡⲣⲉⲥⲃϣⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ 'elder, priest,
presbyter'

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ‘archbishop’	ΑΡΧΗΜΑΝΔΡΙΤΗΣ ‘archimandrite (monastery leader)’
ΕΥΝΑΞΙΣ ‘assembly, (church) service’	ΔΙΑΚΩΝ or ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΣ ‘deacon’

On the other hand, the ordinary words of a Coptic Christian community are indigenous:

CON ‘brother’	ΩΗΗ ‘lowly’
ΘΒΒΙΟ ‘humility’	ΞΛΛΟ ‘elder’
ΟΥΑΑΒ ‘holy’	ΞΕΝΕΕΤΕ ‘monastery’
ΩΛΗΛ ‘pray’	ΧΟΕΙΣ ‘lord’

Of course, another indigenous word to note in this context is ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ‘God’.

3.3 ΞΑΓΙΟΣ ‘SAINT’ AND OTHER TITLES FROM GREEK

Some commonly used words adopted from Greek, such as the adjectives ΞΑΓΙΟΣ ‘holy’ and ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ‘blessed’, typically have specific uses. For example, ΞΑΓΙΟΣ usually appears with names as the equivalent of the title ‘Saint’ (English has adopted ‘Saint’ from Latin *sanctus* in exactly the same way), while ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ‘blessed’ is frequently used as a euphemism for deceased, as in ΑΝΟΚ ΚΟΣΜΑ ΠΩΗΡΕ Ἡ ΠΙΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ἱΣΑΚ ‘I am Cosma, the son of the blessed Isaac’. In Greek, adjectives regularly change to agree with the words they describe for gender and for number; and, although this agreement is not required in Coptic, the different Greek forms may well appear in such contexts. For example, you will see ΤΞΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ ‘Saint Mary’ alongside ΠΞΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ ‘Saint Apa Isidore’. As expected, in describing ‘Mary’ the definite article is Τ- (feminine form) but also ΞΑΓΙΟΣ has changed to ΞΑΓΙΑ as it would in Greek – doubtless, of course, because ΞΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ had been adopted as a whole phrase, along with other established phrases such as ΟΥΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ‘a catholic church’. By the way, in English we simply translate ΠΞΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ as ‘St Isidore’ because the use of ΑΠΑ is typical in Coptic but awkward in translation. Remember, too, how ϕ and θ are used in writing (1.1):

ⲡⲉⲁⲓⲛⲓⲟⲥ or ⲫⲁⲓⲛⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲓⲕⲓⲁⲱⲣⲟⲥ	St Isidore
ⲧⲉⲁⲓⲛⲓⲁ or ⲑⲁⲓⲛⲓⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ	St Mary

3.4 ADJECTIVES: A STRATEGY USING NOUNS

The descriptions noted in [Lesson 2](#) involve adjectives, which are words specifically intended to describe other words. However, the phrase Ⲭⲱ ⲛ̄ ⲉⲟⲙⲛ̄ⲧ ‘cup of copper’ indicates how a noun may describe another word by following it and linking via ⲛ̄ to mean ‘*of that type*’. In other words, Ⲭⲱ ⲛ̄ ⲉⲟⲙⲛ̄ⲧ ‘cup of copper’ effectively means ‘cup made of copper’ and may be straightforwardly translated as ‘copper cup’. Such descriptions often translate best using an English adjective, as in ⲟⲩⲥⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ ⲱⲉ ‘a wooden cross’ (literally ‘a cross of wood’) or ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘the mortal way’ (literally ‘the way of people’). Indeed, Coptic uses this strategy for descriptions even when the literal translation into English would be strained, as in Ⲭⲟⲉⲓⲕ ⲛ̄ ⲕⲟⲛ ‘brotherly lord’ (but hardly ‘lord of brotherly type’). So, here we treat the ⲛ̄ not as a distinct word but as the mediating sound marking a description (2.7), as in ⲟⲩⲥⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ ⲱⲉ ‘a wooden cross’ and Ⲭⲟⲉⲓⲕ ⲛ̄ ⲕⲟⲛ ‘brotherly lord’. Some adjectives can follow this pattern too, as in ⲟⲩⲱⲙⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ‘an only son’ (ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ‘single, alone’), ⲡⲓⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ ⲉⲁⲕ ‘the prudent monk’ (ⲉⲁⲕ ‘prudent’), ⲧⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘the pious sister’ (ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘pious’) and ⲛ̄ ⲣⲣⲱⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ‘the lawless kings’ (ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ‘lawless’) (2.2).

3.5 ADJECTIVES USED AS NOUNS

As in English (a little, an Egyptian, the best, some braves, etc.), an adjective may simply be used with an article to mean *someone or something with this quality*, as in ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ ‘a little bit’, ⲡⲱⲙⲙ ‘the lowly one’, ⲡⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ ‘the righteous one’, ⲉⲛⲙⲙⲙⲱⲉ ‘many people’ and even ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ‘a little more’ (2.4). For example, in the next section you will read ⲡⲱⲙⲙ ‘the lowly one’ as well as ⲡⲡⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲱⲙⲙ ‘the lowly believer’. A useful word to learn in this context is ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ‘any’, which can be used as a noun to mean ‘anyone, anything’ or even ‘no one’.

3.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: INSCRIPTIONS FROM DEYR AL-MEDINA

Now we can return to an early church rich with Coptic inscriptions. Deyr al-Medina is another well-known pharaonic site at Thebes and as such has been excavated by archaeologists since the nineteenth century. At some time, no later than the 500s, an ancient temple here for the goddess Hathor was repurposed as a church dedicated to Saint Isidore the Martyr (ΦΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ ΠΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ) and, at the gate, a pharaonic image of an enthroned deity was carefully adapted to create a new icon, presumably of Saint Isidore himself.¹ Clearly the Christian centuries breathed new life and service into sacred spaces at Thebes, and Saint Isidore's Church was part of a thriving network of traditional communities in ancient sites still familiar to modern tourists, including Medinat Habu, Deyr al-Bahari, Dra Abu al-Naga, Shaykh Abd al-Qurana, Quranat Mara'i and the Valley of the Queens. Apa Stephen, a priest of the church, was recorded on business in Jeme in the early 700s and some years later the church was in the care of a certain Apa Pleyne, but it was closed before the end of the century. What prompted this turn of events? We do not know.

There are more than seventy Coptic inscriptions on the temple walls and roof, only a handful longer than a couple of lines. The longest are funerary and nearly all are statements of identity of some kind so, while reading the following, anticipate the word ΔΝΟΚ along with names and titles. Some texts were painted as well as inscribed and the details in paint have often been lost, but here you have normalised copies:

ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΠΠΙΣΤΟΣ	Mark, the believer.
ΔΝΟΚ ΜΑΘΘΑΙΟΣ ΠΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ	I am Matthew, the monk,
ΠΩΗΜ	the lowly one.

Here is a longer statement from a priest of the church, which includes a non-standard spelling of the title ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ 'priest' (see [Figure 11](#)):

Ρ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΗΤΕΡΟΣ	I am Paul, priest,
ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΦΙΛΟΣ	the son of Apa Theophilus,

1 See C. Heurtel: *Les inscriptions coptes et grecques du temple d'Hathor à Deir el-Médina*. Bibliothèque d'études coptes 16. Cairo, IFAO (2004).



Figure 10 The temple of the goddess Hathor at Deyr al-Medina, which later became the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, second century BC. *Source:* Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk).

ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ
ΦΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ
ΠΜΑΡΤΕΡΟΣ

priest of
St Isidore the Martyr.

From the last line here, you will appreciate that the reference to Saint Isidore is to the church rather than the saint himself, so we could translate here ‘priest of Saint Isidore the Martyr’s’. The same is true of a similar inscription, which names another church:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΠΙΠΣΤΟΣ ΩΝΗ
ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ ΠΡΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ
ΜΑΡΚΟΣ Τ

I am Mark, the lowly believer,
the son of Apa Peter,
priest of Saint Mark’s.

St Mark’s Church was on Quranat Mara’i, a prominent hill right in front of the gate to Saint Isidore the Martyr’s. Finally, look at how the next inscription is actually written, with unexpected line breaks and abbreviations for standard titles:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕ// ΠΩΗΡΕ
Ν ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ ΦΑ

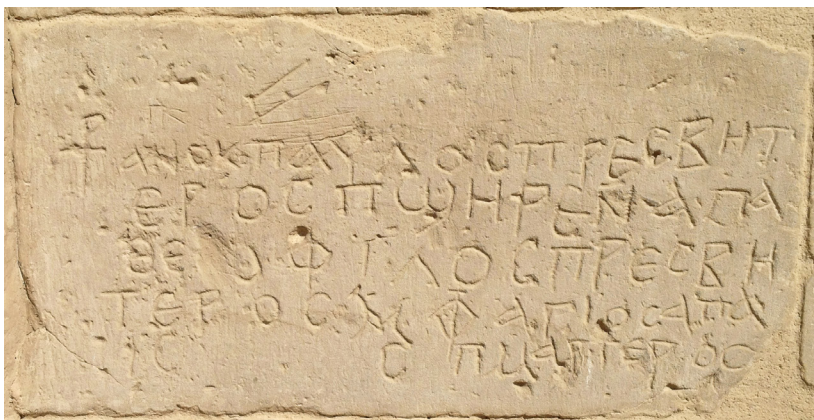


Figure 11 A funerary inscription for Paul, son of Theophilus, in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.
Source: author.

ΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩ
 ΡΟΣ ΠΜΑΡΤΕΡΟΣ +

Here is a normalised transcription of the same text:

ΑΝΟΚ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ	I am Stephen, priest,
ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ	the son of Apa Paul,
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Ν	priest of
ΦΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ ΠΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ	St Isidore the Martyr's.

LESSON 4

Three Coptic fundamentals

4.1 SUFFIX PRONOUNS

In order to recognise Coptic pronouns (I, me, my, you, your, she, her, etc.) you need to become familiar with a sequence of suffixes which correspond to the different persons. These ‘suffix pronouns’ are used in various ways (to express relations, possession, subjects, objects, etc.) but most often with prepositions, as we will discuss in a moment, or, as we shall see later, with nouns (5.2), definite articles (5.3) and verbs (6.2). You are going to need to commit them to memory but this will naturally happen through practice and familiarity because they are used frequently – think how frequently we (that is, you and I) use them as well.

Person	Singular		Plural	
First	ⲓ or ⲧ	‘I, me’	ⲛ	‘we, us’
Second	ⲕ	‘you’ (masc.)	ⲧⲛ̄ or ⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲛ̄	‘you’
	Ⲉ or ⲧⲈ	‘you’ (fem.)	or ⲧⲈⲧⲛ̄	
Third	ϣ	‘he, him’	ϣ or ⲟϣ	‘they, them’
	ϥ	‘she, her’		

Because they are suffixes, these pronouns cannot stand on their own as separate words – they must attach to another word. For example, a suffix pronoun may attach to ⲛ̄ ‘for’ to form ⲛⲁⲕ ‘for you’, ⲛⲁϥ ‘for her’ and so on. Therefore, notice a crucial point right at the start: whenever a suffix pronoun attaches to a word, it is bound to distort the pronunciation, which is why ⲛ̄ forms ⲛⲁⲕ, ⲛⲁϥ and ⲛⲁⲛ ‘for us (ⲛⲁ-ⲛ)’. Notice too that a pronoun may also have to be ‘nasalised’ to help with the pronunciation, as in Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲧ̄ ‘because of him (Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ-ϣ)’.

The rest of the comments in this section are specifics that you will be guided back to as you are learning, so read them through now but do not feel you need to commit them to memory straight away.

The first-person singular pronoun (‘I, me’) is ⲓ after vowels but ⲧ after consonants or double vowels, as in Ⲉⲭⲱⲓ ‘over me (Ⲉⲭⲱ-ⲓ)’ but ⲭⲓⲱⲱⲧ ‘on me (ⲭⲓⲱⲱ-ⲧ)’. As a result, words that ordinarily end with ⲧ usually exhibit no suffix when the pronoun is present because the added ⲧ gets lost in pronunciation, as in Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ ‘because of me’ (Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ ‘because of’ + ⲧ ‘me’ > Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ not Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲧ).

The second-person singular pronoun ('you') when addressing a woman is simply **ⲉ** attached to consonants, as in **ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲉ** 'because of you (**ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ-ⲉ**)'. However, the fact that the pronoun is a vowel causes pronunciation difficulties when it attaches to words that already end with a vowel, and these may be resolved in different ways. For example, following a word that ends with a double vowel, the pronoun becomes **ⲧⲉ**, as in **ⲉⲓⲱⲱⲧⲉ** 'on you (**ⲉⲓⲱⲱ-ⲧⲉ**)'. On the other hand, words with a single vowel at the end show nothing, so we must detect the feminine 'you': sometimes from its absence, as in **ⲉⲣⲟⲕ** 'to you' (addressing a man) but **ⲉⲣⲟ** 'to you' (addressing a woman); sometimes because its presence affects the pronunciation of the vowel, as in **ⲏⲁⲕ** 'for you' (to a man) but **ⲏⲏ** 'for you' (to a woman).

The second-person plural pronoun ('you' when addressing several people) is usually **ⲧⲏ** after a vowel and **ⲧⲏⲧⲏ** after a consonant. Again, however, a final vowel in the initial word may also be affected, as in **ⲉⲣⲟⲕ** 'to you' but **ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲏ** 'to you' (plural). The form **ⲧⲉⲧⲏ** only appears with certain tense markers (see 6.2).

4.2 SHIFTING PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions such as **ⲏ** 'for' (usually little words stating locations and relations) have a standard form used in front of most words, as in **ⲉⲡⲗⲟⲉⲓⲕ** 'to the lord' and **ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲉⲙⲟⲙ** 'because of the fever'. However, as you will have noticed above, their forms shift in pronunciation whenever a suffix pronoun is attached. So, you saw that **ⲏ** 'for' shifts to **ⲏⲁ** with a suffix pronoun, as in **ⲏⲁⲓ** 'for me' and **ⲏⲁⲩ** 'for them'. More dramatically, notice how **ⲉ** 'to' forms **ⲉⲣⲟⲕ** 'to you' and **ⲉⲣⲟⲩ** 'to them (**ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲩ**)'; how **ⲉⲧⲃⲉ** shifts in **ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲉ** 'because of you' and **ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲏ** 'because of him (**ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ-ⲏ**)'; and how **ⲏⲏ** forms **ⲏⲏⲏⲁⲩ** 'with him' and **ⲏⲏⲏⲁⲕ** 'with her (**ⲏⲏⲏⲁ-ⲕ**)'.

In dictionaries, the shifted forms are marked with **ⲉ** (double bond) to indicate that this form only occurs with a suffix pronoun attached. So, from now on, in the wordlists here you will find each preposition listed in its usual form and its shifted form as follows: **ⲏ**, **ⲏⲁⲉ** 'for' and **ⲏⲏ**, **ⲏⲏⲏⲁⲉ** 'with'. Here are some common prepositions for starters:

ḿ, ḿΔ= to, for	ε, εΡΟ= to, towards
ḿḿ, ḿḿḿΔ= with, and	εΧḿ, εΧΩ= over, onto, ahead
ḿḿ, ḿḿḤḤ= in, with, from	ḿḤḿ, ḿḤḤḤ= by, through, from
εḤβε, εḤḤḤḤ= because of, about	ḿ, ḿΩΩ= on, at
ḿḤΔ, ḿḤΩ= behind, after, apart from	ḿḤḤ, ḿḤḤḤ= more than, beyond

At first glance, the shifting prepositions seem random and unpredictable, but the chart following this lesson may help you recognise certain predictable patterns.

As a final note – and again not one to concern you at the outset – we noted in [Section 4.1](#) that prepositions ending with Ḥ usually show no suffix when the first-person pronoun Ḥ ‘me’ ought to be attached, as in εḤḤḤḤ ‘because of me’ and ḿḤḤḤ ‘through me’. However, what you do notice is that the preposition has shifted as if to take a suffix pronoun (εḤβε > εḤḤḤḤ and ḿḤḿ > ḿḤḤḤ). In other words, no pronoun seems to be written but you can see that there must be one.

4.3 COMMANDS, REQUESTS AND THE IMPERATIVE

Verbs are the crucial words like Ḥ ‘give’ or ΩḤḤ ‘pray’ – that is, words for actions and what we do. In English, verbs appear in predictably different forms (give, gives, gave, giving, given). In Coptic, verbs appear in predictably different forms too, but they do so in different ways and for different reasons than in English. That said, the first verb form you need to know is straightforward because, in Coptic as in English, most verbs give commands using the basic form you find in a dictionary (6.1). For example, ΩΩ ‘stay!’ is a command from ΩΩ ‘stay’ and ΒΩΚ ‘go!’ is a command from ΒΩΚ ‘go’. Accordingly, we may read ΩḤḤ εΧΩḿ ‘pray for me’ (literally ‘pray over me’) and, typically, you recognise the command from the context in which it is used (a direct address to you or to someone) plus the fact that the verb ΩḤḤ has no accompanying words to tell you who is doing the action – as in the English ‘shut up and listen’ or ‘please stay’. Of course, commands can be insistent demands but they may also be polite, measured requests, as in the case of the standard sign-off in a letter, ΟΥΧΔΙ ḿ ΠΧΘΕΙC – literally ‘be sound in the Lord’ but meaning simply ‘hello’ or ‘farewell’ depending on whether it is used in the address or at the end of the whole letter.

On the other hand, a few Coptic verbs do have a special command form, usually termed the imperative (which just means ‘commanding’ in Latin). So, with *ⲉⲓⲣⲉ* ‘do, make’ we find the command *ⲁⲣⲓ* ‘do!’, with *ⲉⲓ* ‘come’ we find the command *ⲁⲙⲟϥ* ‘come!’ (or *ⲁⲙⲙ* to a woman) and we find comments such as *ⲁⲭⲉ ⲟϥⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ* ‘tell a saying (*ⲱⲁⲭⲉ*) to me’. From these examples you will notice that most imperatives begin with an *ⲁ*-sound but they are sometimes very different from the basic verb (*ⲉⲓ* > *ⲁⲙⲟϥ*). You cannot easily predict which verbs have a specific imperative but they are common verbs, so you simply recognise them (and react accordingly) through practice and familiarity. In the meantime, here is an initial list of half a dozen:

<i>Basic verb</i>	<i>Imperative</i>
<i>ⲉⲓ</i> ‘come’	<i>ⲁⲙⲟϥ</i> ‘come!’ <i>ⲁⲙⲙ</i> (to a woman) <i>ⲁⲙⲙⲓⲧⲏ̄</i> (to several)
<i>ⲉⲓⲛⲉ</i> ‘bring’	<i>ⲁⲛⲓ</i> or <i>ⲁⲛⲓⲛⲉ</i> ‘bring!’
<i>ⲉⲓⲣⲉ</i> or <i>ⲡ</i> ‘do, make’	<i>ⲁⲣⲓ</i> or <i>ⲁⲣⲓⲣⲉ</i> ‘do! make!’
<i>ⲛⲁϥ</i> ‘see’	<i>ⲁⲛⲁϥ</i> ‘look!’
<i>ⲧ</i> ‘give, put’	<i>ⲙⲁ</i> ‘give!’ (but <i>ⲧ</i> is also common as a command)
<i>ⲭⲱ</i> ‘say’	<i>ⲁⲭⲉ</i> or <i>ⲁⲭⲓ</i> or <i>ⲁⲭⲓϥ</i> ‘say!’ (but <i>ⲭⲱ</i> is also common as a command)

There are other forms to take into account, such as *ⲁⲛⲓⲧⲓ̄* ‘bring him (*ⲓ̄*)’ – but none so common that they need concern you as a learner.

4.4 ‘PLEASE’ RECOGNISE *ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ*

Of course, in relation to commands and requests, there are specific idioms to consider, such as *ⲁⲙⲙ ⲉϣⲟϥⲛ* ‘come in’. Idioms based on *ⲁⲣⲓ* ‘do, make’ are especially useful to learn, including *ⲁⲣⲓ ⲛⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ* ‘remember’ (literally ‘do the thinking’ of someone) and *ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* ‘be kind’ (literally ‘make compassion’ for someone). By the way, the word *ⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* ‘love, compassion, charity’ is common in letters and inscriptions, whether in *ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* itself or in phrases such as *ⲛ̄ ⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* ‘for compassion’; so much so, in fact, that you will often find it straightforward to translate *ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* or *ⲛ̄ ⲁⲓⲁⲛⲙ* simply as ‘please’.

4.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MORE INSCRIPTIONS FROM DEYR AL-MEDINA

Among the inscriptions in the Church of Saint Isidore are statements we formally understand as commands, though they are obviously polite rather than insistent, including $\omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\iota$ ‘pray for me’. Here are some for you to translate:

$\kappa\alpha\lambda\alpha\omega\dot{\iota}\rho\epsilon \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\iota$	Kalashire, pray for me.
$\alpha\rho\iota \tau\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\iota$	Be kind, pray for me (in other words, ‘please pray for me’).
$\text{P} \alpha\nu\kappa \pi\lambda\eta\epsilon\dot{\iota}\nu\epsilon \omega\eta\mu \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\iota$	I am lowly Pleyne, pray for me.
$\text{†} \pi\lambda\eta\epsilon\dot{\iota}\nu \omega\eta\mu \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\dot{\iota}$	Lowly Pleyne, pray for me.

Now see what happens when more than one person is named in the inscription:

$\varsigma\omicron\lambda\omicron\mu\omega\eta \omega\eta\mu$	Lowly Solomon,
$\mu\eta\eta\alpha \omega\eta\mu$	Lowly Mena.
$\omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\eta \bar{\eta} \alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$	Pray for us, please.

The next two are slightly longer but you met this man previously (2.8):

$\alpha\nu\kappa \pi\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\varsigma$	I am Paul,
$\pi\varsigma\alpha\chi\omicron \omega\eta\mu$	the lowly Eminence.
$\alpha\rho\iota \tau\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$	Please
$\omega\lambda\eta\lambda$	pray
$\epsilon\chi\omega\dot{\iota}$	for me.
$\alpha\nu\kappa \pi\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\varsigma$	I am Paul,
$\pi\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma \omega\eta\mu$	lowly believer.
$\alpha\rho\iota \tau\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$	Please
$\omega\lambda\eta\lambda$	pray
$\epsilon\chi\omega\dot{\iota}$	for me.

A final inscription from the church here clearly exemplifies how the layout of the text need not respect modern writing conventions:

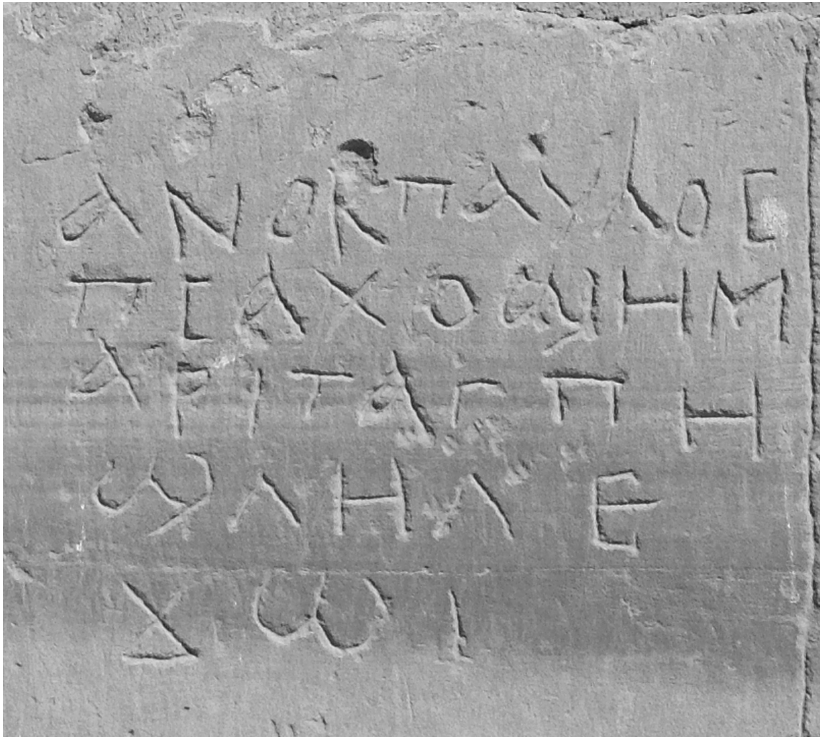


Figure 12 The first funerary inscription for Paul in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century. *Source:* author.

Ϡ ανοκ πα
 ληϊνε ωληλ
 εχωϊ πωη
 ρε ν̄ απα
 πετρος ν̄
 φαγιος α
 πα ιςιδ
 ωρος

Here is a normalised copy of the same inscription:

Ϡ ανοκ πληϊνε ωληλ εχωϊ πωηρε ν̄ απα πετρος ν̄ φαγιος
 απα ιςιδωρος

I am Pleyne, pray for me, the son of Apa Peter of Saint Isidore's.

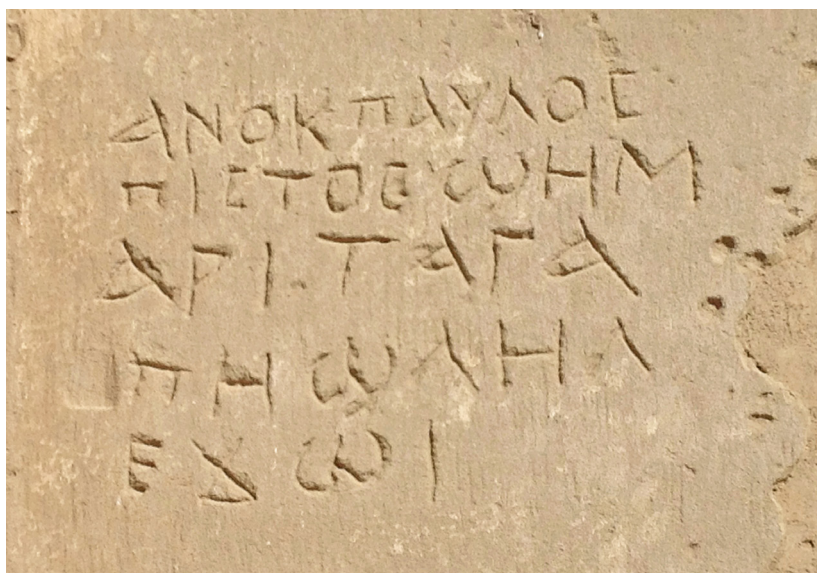


Figure 13 The second funerary inscription for Paul in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century (see [page 44](#)).

Source: author.

WORKING VOCABULARY

Time once again to check whether you remember some useful words.

ΜΟΝΑΧΟС	solitary, monk	<i>Some verbs</i> ΕΙΡΕ	or \bar{p} do, make
ΟΥΩΤ	single, alone	ΑΡΙ	do! make!
ΜΑΙΝΟΥΤΕ	pious	†	give, put
ΖΑΓΙΟС	holy, saint	ΜΑ	give!
ΟΥΑΑΒ	pure, holy	СΖΑӀ	write, writing
ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟС	blessed, deceased	ΩΛΗΛ	pray, praying
ΠΡΕСΒΥΤΕРОС	priest	ΕΙ	come
ΕΠΙСΚΟΠΟС	bishop	ΒΩΚ	go
ΑΡΧΗΕΠΙСΚΟΠΟС	archbishop	ΘΩ	stay, continue
ӨΒΒΙΟ	humility	ΕΙΝΕ	bring
СТАΥРОС	cross	ΝΑΥ	see
ΩΕ	wood	ΧΩ	say

Some prepositions

\bar{n} , ΝΑϝ	to, for	<i>Some useful phrases</i> ΑΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ	be kind, please
Μ \bar{n} , Ν \bar{n} ΜΑϝ	with, and	\bar{n} ΑΓΑΠΗ	please
Ζ \bar{n} , \bar{n} ΖΗΤϝ	in, from	ΧΑΙΡΕ or	
Ε, ΕΡΟϝ	to	ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ	hello
ΕΧ \bar{n} , ΕΧΩϝ	over, ahead of	ΟΥΧΑΙ Ζ \bar{n}	
		ΠΧΘΕΙС	hello, farewell

CHART I SHIFTING PREPOSITIONS

Get to know	Vowel stretch	Add πο≡	Lost ῥ	τῖ to τοοτ≡	Add ητ
μη, μημη≡ with	ῖα, ῖαω≡ after, apart from	ε, επο≡ to, towards	εῖ, ερω≡ up to	ετῖ, ετοοτ≡ to (someone)	ετβε, ετβηητ≡ because of, about
ῖ, ῖα≡ to, for	οῦβε, οῦβη≡ against, toward	κατα, καταπο≡ according to, as	εῖ, εχω≡ over, ahead	ῖτῖ, ῖτοοτ≡ with, from	εῖ, ῖηητ≡ in, within, from
εῖ, εῖαω≡ on, at	οῦτε, οῦτω≡ between	παρ, παρπο≡ more than, beyond	ναεῖ, ναεπο≡ in front of, before	εῖτῖ, εῖτοοτ≡ near, beside, with	
		ω, ωπο≡ to, up to, towards	εῖτοῦ, εῖτωω≡ beside	εῖτῖ, εῖτοοτ≡ by, through, from	
		ε, επο≡ under, in, on behalf of	εῖτῖ, εῖηητ≡ near, beside		
			εῖ, εῖαω≡ over, at		

CHART II PREPOSITIONS AND PRONOUNS

	Get to know	Vowel stretch	Add πο=	Lost ñ	τῆ to τοοτ=	Add ητ
First person		Preposition ends with vowel			Preposition ends with τ	
	ναί 'for me'	ἵνα 'after me'	ἐμοί 'to me'	ἐξω 'over me'	ἐντοοτ 'through me'	ἐνῆτ 'in me'
Second person		Preposition ends with vowel			Preposition ends with τ	
masculine	νακ 'for you'	ἵνακ 'after you'	ἐποκ 'to you'	ἐξωκ 'over you'	ἐντοοτῆ 'through you'	ἐνῆτῆ 'in you'
feminine	νε or ηη 'for you'	ἵνω 'after you'	ἐπο 'to you'	ἐξω 'over you'	ἐντοοτε 'through you'	ἐνῆτε 'in you'
plural	νητῆ 'for you'	ἵνωτῆ 'after you'	ἐποτῆ 'to you'	ἐξωτῆ 'over you'	ἐντοοττῆτῆ 'through you'	ἐνῆττῆτῆ 'in you'

The shifted forms attached to first-person and second-person pronouns seem most confusing because those are the very pronouns that are liable to vary as well (4.1). Moreover, the vowel in the preposition may well be affected by a second-person pronoun which also happens to be feminine or plural. [Chart II](#) above gives some typical examples.

Here is a final point: when the plural ‘you’ is attached, certain prepositions may appear in *either* the standard form *or* the shifting form, as in ⲉⲓⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ (ⲉⲓⲧⲛ̄-ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄) or ⲉⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ (ⲉⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ-ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄) ‘through you’. In such cases, the form of the preposition may in turn affect the form of the suffix pronoun, as in ⲉⲗⲉⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ (with ⲧⲛ̄ after a vowel) or ⲉⲗⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ ‘beside you’ (with ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ after a consonant). On the other hand, you are not going to come across the plural ‘you’ in this book often, and the notes will point you back here when you do.

LESSON 5

Word-building basics

5.1 WORD-BUILDING WITH PREFIXES

A useful skill to develop is that of recognising patterns or common features used to build words with comparable meanings. In turn, this awareness can help you work out the meaning (or the gist, at least) of words you have not seen before. For example, Coptic uses various common prefixes to create new words from a basic (stem) word in the manner of ⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘poor’, ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘poverty’, ⲙⲁⲓⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘philanthropic’ and so on. Such prefixes include the following:

ⲣⲉϥ prefixes nouns for people who do specific actions or functions, such as ⲣⲉϥⲟⲩⲣⲟ ‘hunter’ (from ⲟⲩⲣⲟ ‘hunt’), ⲣⲉϥⲧⲱⲣⲏ ‘robber’ (ⲧⲱⲣⲏ ‘steal’), ⲣⲉϥⲣⲟⲉⲓϥ ‘watchman’ (ⲣⲟⲉⲓϥ ‘keep watch’), ⲣⲉϥⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sinner’ (ⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sin’) and even ⲣⲉϥⲛⲟϥⲟⲩ ‘angry person’ (ⲛⲟϥⲟⲩ ‘anger’). Notice how English often builds words in similar fashion by using suffixes instead, as in $\text{hunt} > \text{hunt-er} = \text{ⲟⲩⲣⲟ} > \text{ⲣⲉϥ-ⲟⲩⲣⲟ}$. A word to note here, with a slightly expanded meaning, is ⲣⲉϥⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ , literally ‘someone who fears’ (ⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘fear’) but in the sense of someone with devout faith.

ⲣ̄ⲙ or ⲣ̄ⲙⲏ prefixes nouns for someone who belongs to a specific place and so may simply be added to a place name, as in ⲣ̄ⲙⲏⲕⲁⲙⲉ ‘person from Jeme, Jemean’ and ⲣ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲱⲙⲏ ‘person from Rome, Roman’ (from ⲉⲣⲱⲙⲏ ‘Rome’). That said, the place may be less specific or even figurative, as in ⲣ̄ⲙⲏⲏⲏ ‘warden’ (ⲏⲏ ‘house’), ⲣ̄ⲙⲏⲙⲁⲟ ‘rich man’ (ⲁⲓⲁⲓ ‘rich’), ⲣ̄ⲙⲏⲉⲛⲧ ‘thinker’ (someone who ‘dwells’ in the ⲉⲛⲧ ‘mind’) or even the inquisitive ⲣ̄ⲙⲏⲧⲱⲛ ‘person from where?’ (ⲧⲱⲛ ‘where?’).

ⲙⲏⲧ (less often ⲙⲉⲧ) prefixes nouns that express the defining quality of someone or something, such as the ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲗⲗⲟ ‘old age’ that defines every ⲉⲗⲗⲟ ‘elder’. There are many of these words and they are all feminine, including ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲛ ‘brotherhood’ (ⲥⲟⲛ ‘brother’); ⲙⲏⲧⲱⲙⲣⲉ ‘childhood’ (ⲱⲙⲣⲉ ‘child’); ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉ ‘evidence’ (ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉ ‘witness’); ⲙⲏⲧⲣ̄ⲣⲟ ‘reign’ (ⲣ̄ⲣⲟ ‘king’); ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲁⲉ ‘abundance’ (ⲉⲁⲉ ‘many’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘poverty’ (ⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘poor’); ⲙⲏⲧⲟⲁⲃⲉⲛⲧ ‘timidity’ (ⲟⲁⲃⲉⲛⲧ ‘timid’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲕⲱⲱⲣⲉ ‘strength’ (ⲕⲱⲱⲣⲉ ‘strong’); ⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁⲱⲧⲉⲛⲧ ‘wilfulness’ (ⲛⲁⲱⲧⲉⲛⲧ ‘stubborn’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲁⲣⲱⲉⲛⲧ ‘tolerance’

(ⲉⲗⲁⲣⲱⲭⲏⲧ ‘composed, calm’); ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲃⲏⲛ ‘wretchedness’ (ⲉⲃⲏⲛ ‘wretch’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁ ‘mercy’ (ⲛⲁ ‘pity’); ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲩ ‘stupidity’ (ⲥⲟⲩ ‘fool’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲃⲏ ‘wisdom, knowledge’ (ⲥⲁⲃⲏ ‘wise’). An interesting word to note here is ⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲛⲏⲛ, which means the Greek language, understood as the defining characteristic of a ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲛⲏⲛ – anyone who belonged to the non-Coptic elites.

Ⲅⲓⲛ prefixes nouns for the act of something, as in Ⲅⲓⲛⲱⲱ ‘conception’ (ⲱⲱ ‘conceive’) and Ⲅⲓⲛⲙⲓⲥⲉ ‘childbirth’ (ⲙⲓⲥⲉ ‘give birth’); or Ⲅⲓⲛⲕⲓⲙ ‘reaction, movement’ (ⲕⲓⲙ ‘move, disturb’) and Ⲅⲓⲛⲃⲱⲩⲉ ‘impulse’ (ⲃⲱⲩⲉ ‘jump’).

Some prefixes form adjectives instead, including:

ⲁⲧ which indicates that something is lacking, as in ⲁⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘godless’ (ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘god’), ⲁⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̅ ‘heedless’ (ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̅ ‘listen’), ⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ ‘uneducated’ (ⲥⲃⲱ ‘teach’), ⲁⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘naive, insensible’ (ⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘realise’), ⲁⲧⲭⲏⲧ ‘ignorant, fatuous’ (ⲭⲏⲧ ‘mind’) and ⲁⲧⲟⲩⲙ̅ ‘impossible’ (ⲟⲩⲙ̅ ‘ability’).

ⲙⲁⲓ which indicates the quality of loving something, as in ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘pious’ (ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘god’), ⲙⲁⲓⲥⲃⲱ ‘amenable’ (ⲥⲃⲱ ‘teach’), ⲙⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘friendly’ (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘man’), and ⲙⲁⲓⲭⲏⲕⲉ ‘philanthropic’ (ⲭⲏⲕⲉ ‘poor’).

These adjectives often follow the pattern described in [Section 3.4](#), for example in ⲛⲧⲃⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘the dumb animals’ and ⲧⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̅ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘the pious sister’. That said, we also find ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ ‘pious brother’, following the pattern described in [Section 2.7](#). Again, you do not have to predict how these adjectives will be used, simply respond to the words as they are given to you in the Coptic texts.

Finally, of course, multiple prefixes can be combined to create even more words:

ⲣⲉⲩⲣ̅ⲭⲟⲧⲉ ‘devout person’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉⲩⲣ̅ⲭⲟⲧⲉ ‘(religious) devotion’

ⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲭⲏⲧ ‘thinker, thoughtful person’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲭⲏⲧ ‘thoughtfulness, consideration’

ⲡⲓⲣⲁⲱ ‘gentleman’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲓⲣⲁⲱ ‘courtesy’

ⲡⲓⲙⲁⲟ ‘rich man’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲓⲙⲁⲟ ‘wealth’

ⲙⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘friendly’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘amiability’

ⲙⲁⲓⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘philanthropic’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲁⲓⲉⲛⲕⲉ ‘philanthropy’

ϥⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘know’ > ⲁⲧϥⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘ignorant’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲁⲧϥⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘ignorance’

ϥⲃⲣⲉ ‘idle’ > ⲁⲧϥⲃⲣⲉ ‘diligent’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲁⲧϥⲃⲣⲉ ‘diligence, toil’

ⲧⲉⲛϥ ‘improve’ > ⲣⲉϥⲧⲉⲛϥ ‘benefactor’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉϥⲧⲉⲛϥ ‘benefit’

ϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘worship God’ > ⲣⲉϥϩⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘worshipper’ >
ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉϥϩⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘worshipfulness, object of devotion’

5.2 ‘MY’ BODY PARTS AND ‘YOUR’ BODY PARTS

As you know, suffix pronouns may attach to prepositions to form ⲉⲗⲱⲓ ‘over me’, ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ‘to you’, and so on (4.2). They can also attach to the end of certain nouns, in which case they naturally translate not as ‘me/you’ but ‘my/your’ and so on, in the manner of ⲗⲱⲕ ‘your head’ (from ⲗⲱ), ⲣⲁⲧⲓ ‘his foot’ (from ⲣⲁⲧ), ⲣⲱⲥ ‘his mouth’ (from ⲣⲟ), ⲉⲛⲧⲓ ‘his front’ (from ⲉⲛ), ⲉⲛⲧⲓ ‘her womb’ (from a different ⲉⲛ), or ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲕ ‘your hand’ and ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓ ‘her hand’ (from ⲧⲱⲣⲉ). Most of these nouns are words for body parts, though that definition seems slightly extended by a word such as ⲁⲛⲁⲣ ‘pleasure’. As you can see, and perhaps by now would anticipate, suffix pronouns can affect the pronunciation of any noun they attach to – often dramatically, just as they do with prepositions (4.2). So, again, you find these words listed in dictionaries in the usual form and the shifted form, as in ⲉⲛ, ⲉⲛⲧⲓ ‘torso, belly, womb’ and ⲧⲱⲣⲉ, ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓ ‘hand’. At the end of the day, however, there are not so many of these words that they need cause you consternation as a learner.

Now, if you take a moment to look back at the shifting prepositions (4.2), you may notice that several of them incorporate these ‘body

part' words. They do so because of their etymology (that is, how the words first came about, long before the language had taken the form we know as Coptic). For instance, **ḲḲḲḲ** 'in her' originally derives from the phrase 'in her belly', while **ḲḲḲḲ** 'from him' originally derives from the phrase 'from his hand'. These etymologies lead to an idiom in which certain phrases seem to have an unnecessary pronoun involved – usually when referring to a particular person – as in **ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ** 'from Pane' (literally 'from him as Pane'), **ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ** 'through the father' (literally 'through him as the father') and **ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ** 'to the deputy' (literally 'to him as the deputy'). The same may happen not only with prepositions but even when referring to the actual body parts noted above, as in **ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ** 'out of the mother's womb' (literally 'out of her womb as the mother'). Again, neither idiom is so common it need concern you as a learner, and the notes will point you back here when the matter arises.

5.3 'YOUR' POSSESSIVE ARTICLES

In fact, the suffix pronouns only attach directly to a handful of nouns. More usually to say 'my, your, her' and so on, they combine with the definite articles instead, as in **ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'your servants' (**ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲḲḲ**) and **ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'your daughter' (**ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲḲḲ**):

ḲḲḲḲḲḲ 'the servants' > **ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'your servants'
ḲḲḲḲḲḲ 'the daughter' > **ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'your daughter'
ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲ 'the brother' > **ḲḲ-ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲ** 'our brother'

As you see, for the sake of pronunciation, the fuller form of the definite article **ḲḲ-** or **ḲḲ-** or **ḲḲ-** is nearly always used with the suffix pronoun, though you will occasionally find writings such as **ḲḲḲḲ** for **ḲḲḲḲ** 'his face'. On the other hand, the first-person singular 'my' forms shift slightly in pronunciation to become **ḲḲ** (or **ḲḲ** or **ḲḲ**):

ḲḲḲḲḲḲ 'the daughter' > **ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'my daughter'
ḲḲ-ḲḲḲḲ 'the brothers' > **ḲḲḲḲḲḲ** 'my brothers'

Accordingly, we end up with this table of possessive prefixes:

Person	Singular				Plural			
	m.	fem.	plural		m.	fem.	plural	
First	ⲡⲁ	ⲧⲁ	ⲛⲁ	‘my’	ⲡⲉⲛ	ⲧⲉⲛ	ⲛⲉⲛ	‘our’
Second	ⲡⲉⲕ	ⲧⲉⲕ	ⲛⲉⲕ	‘your’ (masc.)	ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄	ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄	ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄	‘your’
	ⲡⲟϥ	ⲧⲟϥ	ⲛⲟϥ	‘your’ (fem.)				
Third	ⲡⲉϥ	ⲧⲉϥ	ⲛⲉϥ	‘his’	ⲡⲉϥ	ⲧⲉϥ	ⲛⲉϥ	‘their’
	ⲡⲉⲥ	ⲧⲉⲥ	ⲛⲉⲥ	‘her’				

Once again, the second person (‘you’) singular feminine forms are a little different because there is no apparent pronoun – instead the vowel has shifted, as in ⲡⲟϥⲱⲛⲣⲉ ‘your son’ (talking to a woman) (4.1).

Some illustrative phrases include ⲉⲙ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ ‘in his name’, ⲧⲁⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲛⲣⲉⲱⲛⲙ̄ ‘my childhood, my infancy’ (notice the use of ⲱⲛⲙ̄ in this phrase), ⲧⲁⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲃⲓⲛⲙ̄ ‘my wretchedness’ but ⲧⲉϥⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲭⲱⲱⲣⲉ ‘his strength’ and finally ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲡⲁⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲁ ‘more than my worth’ (from ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲁ ‘worth’) – in other words, ‘more than I deserve’. By the way, whenever Coptic talks about body parts or personal attributes that each of us has one of, then that word is usually treated as singular even when the number of people is plural, as in ⲡⲉⲕⲉⲟ ‘your face’ but ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲉⲟ ‘your faces’, and even ⲡⲟϥⲣⲁⲛ ‘their names’ or ⲫⲏⲧ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲣⲣⲱⲱϥ ‘the minds of the kings’ (2.2). As a final point, notice what happens with those adjectives that go in front of their word, as in ⲡⲉⲛⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲛ ‘our (ⲡⲉⲛ) pious brother’ and ⲛⲉϥⲙⲉⲣⲁⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲛ ‘his (ⲛⲉϥ) beloved brothers’ (2.7).

5.4 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MORE TEXTS FROM THEBES

The following identities are taken from letters written at Thebes, and we are going to return to some of them in the next lesson:

ⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲣⲓⲭⲏⲙⲉ	Anastasios, the one from Jeme (or ‘the Jemean’).
ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲃⲁⲙ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲧⲉϥⲥⲓⲙⲉ	Abraham and his wife.
ⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲃⲁⲙ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲥⲟⲛ	My father, Apa Abraham, and his brother.

ΜΑΡΚΟΣ Μῆ ΤΕΚΣΖΙΜΕ Μῆ	Mark and your wife and your
ΝΕΚΩΗΡΕ	children.
ΠΕΥΜΕΡΙΤ ἸΧΘΕΙΣ ἸΣΟΝ	Their beloved, brotherly lord.

The next couple of addresses identify women, so pay careful attention to the use of feminine forms:

ΚΟΛΟΧΗ ΤΩΕΕΡΕ Ἰ ΠΕΛΛΟ	Coloje, the daughter of Phello,
ΤΡῬΙΧΕΜΕ	the one from Jeme.

Notice that Coloje, the daughter, is the one identified as ΤΡῬΙΧΕΜΕ (because her father would not be described using the feminine article). The next address mentions a woman from a different town, ΠΕΤΕΜΟΥΤ ‘Medamud’, very near Thebes:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΜΑΡΙΖΑΜ ΤΩΗΡΕ Ἰ ΠΕΒΩ	I am Mariam, the daughter
ΤΡῬΙΠΕΤΕΜΟΥΤ	of Pebo, the one from
	Medamud.

Finally, here are three more inscriptions from the church at Deyr al-Medina:

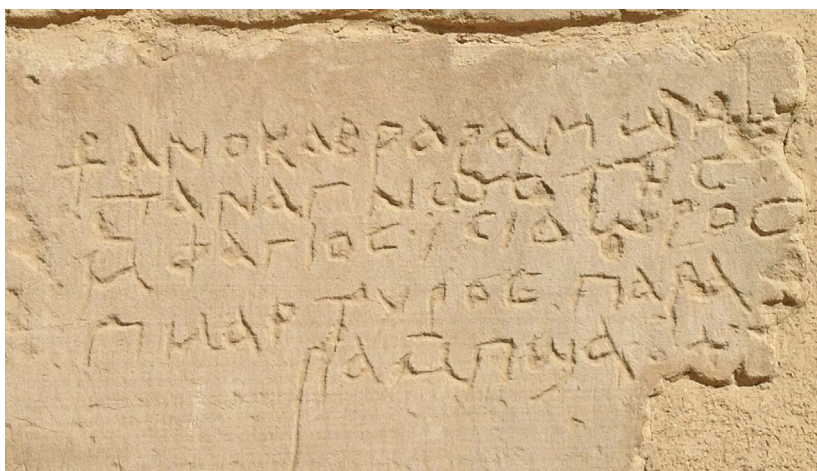


Figure 14 A funerary inscription for Abraham in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century. *Source:* author.

ΔΝΟΚ ΣΙΜΙΩΝ ΠΡΕΦ̄ΡΝΟΒΕ ΔΡΙ	I am Simion, the sinner. Be kind.
ΤΑΓΑΠΕ	

ⲧ̅ ΠΛΗΕΙΝ ΨΥΡΟС	Pleyne the Syrian (СΥΡΟС).
ΙΩΧΑΝΝΗС ΠΕϞСОН	John, his brother.
ΦΙΛΟΘΙΟС ΠΕϞСОН	Philothios, his brother.

ⲡ ΔΝΟΚ ΑΒΡΑΧΑΜ ΩΗМ ΠΑΝΑΓΝΩСТΗС ἸϤΑΓΙΟС ἸϤΙΔΩΡΟС
ΠΜΑΡΤΥРОС ΠΑΡΑ ΠΑḲΠΩΔ +

I am lowly Abraham, the Reader of Saint Isidore the Martyr's,
more than I deserve (see [Figure 14](#)).

LESSON 6

Basics about verbs

6.1 INFINITIVES

Whereas verbs (words for actions) in English appear in predictably different forms (give, gives, gave, giving, given), verbs in Coptic statements mostly appear in the single form that we usually call the infinitive – in other words, ‘infinite’ insofar as it simply talks about the action without reference to who is doing it, when it happens, and so on. For example, the verb ⲉⲙⲟⲟⲥ ‘sit’ only ever appears as ⲉⲙⲟⲟⲥ and the verb ⲟⲗⲏⲗ ‘pray’ only ever appears as ⲟⲗⲏⲗ, though it translates into English as ‘pray’, ‘prays’, ‘prayed’ or ‘praying’ as required. On the other hand, verbs such as ⲉⲙⲁⲓ ‘write’ and ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ‘do, make’ show changes (for example, ⲉⲙⲁⲓ may become ⲉⲙⲉ) but they do so for different reasons than verbs change in English, as we will discuss in [Lesson 11](#) and [Lesson 19](#). So, once again, ⲉⲙⲁⲓ may translate as ‘write’, ‘writes’, ‘wrote’, ‘writing’ or ‘written’. For now, we can simply recognise that the infinitive is the basic or core ‘dictionary’ form of a Coptic verb, and the form you are mostly going to encounter. The only other verb form you need to know in the meantime is the imperative – and there are only a handful to learn (4.3).

6.2 WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS (TENSES)

To put this another way, if a Coptic text tells us when an action happens (tense) and/or who does the action (subject), this specific information is going to have to be added separately because the verb is not going to change to show us. So, here is another distinctive aspect of Coptic for you to get used to through practice. Statements involving verbs tend to have two meaningful elements immediately in front of the verb:

First, the tense marker (a prefix which tells you how and when the statement fits into the narrative).

Second, the subject (the person or thing we are discussing, the one who does the action).

Then, the verb itself (as the infinitive).

Notice that the subject stands in front of the verb, which also happens to be the usual word order in English. So, take a look at this simple statement from a text you will read later:

ⲁⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ The man came out.

In this example, the verb has been marked for the past by the prefix ⲁ, which stands in front of the subject ⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ‘the man’, before we get to the verb itself – hence ⲁ-ⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉⲓ ‘the man came’. The verb ⲉⲓ has not changed at all from the form you will find in a dictionary (the infinitive) whereas English ‘come’ shifts to ‘came’ to indicate the past tense.

Of course, the subject (the person doing the action) may well be a pronoun (I, you, she, he, we, they), in which case it will naturally attach to the tense marker as a suffix pronoun:

ⲁⲓⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ He came out.

ⲁⲓⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ They came out.

Notice that the suffix pronoun not only attaches to the tense marker but the whole unit tends to bind to the verb (there is no space between the elements of ⲁⲓⲉⲓ in pronunciation). This makes no difference to the meaning of the phrase and is not a matter to concern you as a learner, not least because the spaces written between words in a Coptic text are a modern convention (1.5).

Next, look at this statement about a monk:

ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲱⲁ ⲧⲉⲓⲣⲓⲁ He wanted to (ⲉ) go to Syria.

Here we have two verbs, ⲟⲩⲱⲱ ‘want’ and ⲃⲟⲕ ‘go’. Both appear as infinitives but the first has been marked for the past by ⲁ- and has a subject expressed by the pronoun ⲓ ‘he’, hence ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲟⲩⲱⲱ ‘he wanted’. The second verb is not marked in any way because no further information is required – it naturally follows the meaning of ‘he wanted to (what?) go’ (ⲃⲟⲕ).

Tense markers allow Coptic to express a wider range of tenses than basic past/present/future, simply by changing the prefix. Here are a few examples to illustrate what this means – bearing in mind that you only have to commit them to memory step by step as you learn:

Tense	Marker	Meaning	
Past	ⲁ-C-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	she wrote	completed action
Past negative	ⲙⲡⲉ-C-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	she did not write	unfulfilled action
Indicative present	ⲙⲉⲁ-C-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	she writes	customary action
Circumstantial	ⲉ-C-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	while she is writing	contemporaneous action
Optative	ⲙⲁⲣⲉ-C-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	she should write	desired action
‘Until’	ⲙⲁⲛⲧ-Ⲛ-Ⲛⲉⲁⲓ	until she writes	concluding action

As you study, you will notice that English often uses a separate word (and, when, if, etc.) to translate the sense of a Coptic tense marker naturally. You will also get to notice that tense markers do not all behave the same, and may be grouped in various ways according to whether they are affected in pronunciation by a suffix pronoun, how they are negated and so on. However, we can address such matters as we go along.

6.3 ‘WHEN I AM WRITING’ IN THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL TENSE

To take a specific example, the tense marker ⲉⲣⲉ indicates an action happening at the same time as another statement or providing a context for that statement, as you see in the following comments that introduce stories about certain monks:

ⲉⲣⲉ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲙⲟⲟⲙⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉⲓⲱ	While Apa Macarius was walking once (2.1)
ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲕⲛⲏⲩⲩⲩ ⲉⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲁⲉⲧⲏⲩⲩ	While the brothers were sitting beside him.

We can call this the circumstantial tense because it reports the circumstance or situation *when* something happens or *when* someone is doing something. As such, the circumstantial tense does not make a statement on its own, it is only used to describe or provide context. Therefore, a useful initial translation is something along the lines of ‘while she was doing something (she heard a noise)’. In fact, you will find yourself translating

this tense in various ways as your understanding of Coptic becomes clearer and more sophisticated.

If the subject is a suffix pronoun, the tense marker reduces to a minimal **ⲉ**- but this is sufficient to carry a suffix pronoun, as in **ⲉϥⲥⲁⲓ** ‘while he is writing’ or **ⲉⲓⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲓⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲧⲟⲟⲩ** ‘when I am sitting on a hill’:

Person		Singular		Plural
First	ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲓ	while I am writing	ⲉⲓⲛⲥⲁⲓ	while we are writing
Second	ⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ	while you (masc.) are writing	ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲓ	while you are writing
	ⲉⲣⲉⲥⲁⲓ	while you (fem.) are writing		
Third	ⲉϥⲥⲁⲓ	while he is writing	ⲉϥⲥⲁⲓ	while they are writing
	ⲉⲥⲥⲁⲓ	while she is writing		

As ever, notice that the form used with ‘you’ addressing a woman is a little unexpected (it is the full form of the tense marker **ⲉⲣⲉ**, with no pronoun apparent).

6.4 AN ADDRESS FORMULA FOR LETTERS

The circumstantial tense is extremely useful in Coptic and we will return to it often as we learn. All that concerns us for now is how the circumstantial tense is used in the phrase **ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲓ** ‘while I am writing’ in the opening address of a letter, such as this:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲁⲗⲟⲩ ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ ⲁⲁⲛⲓⲙⲗ I am Palou, and I am writing to Daniel.

This address exemplifies a formula common in letters and some formal documents:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ + sender + **ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲓ ⲛ̄** + recipient

In effect this says, ‘I am X and I am writing to Y’ (or ‘I happen to be writing to Y’). Again, this is the job of the circumstantial tense, to explain the context I am presently in (‘it’s me while presently I am writing to you’). A writer may also switch person, from first to third, and use *ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ* ‘while he is writing’ instead:

<i>ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲃⲛⲓⲛⲗ ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲕⲟⲗⲟϭⲏ</i>	I am Daniel, and he is writing to Coloje.
<i>ⲡⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲡⲉϥⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ ⲉⲛⲟϭ ϭⲉ</i>	Papnoute, and he is writing to his beloved brother Enoch.

In the last example, *ϭⲉ* marks where the address ends and the actual substance of the letter is about to start, so *ϭⲉ* is a word but it need not be translated here. Next, look what happens when the letter is from a couple (again *ϭⲉ* is used):

<i>ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲓⲱⲁⲛⲏϥ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲉⲛϥⲥⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲓⲱϥⲏⲫ ⲛ̅ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲗ ϭⲉ</i>	I am John with Mary, and we are writing to Samuel.
--	--

Another typical address used as a complement with *ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ* or even instead of it – and well worth learning as a consequence – is *ⲉϥϩⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉ* ‘and he is asking for’ or ‘and he is greeting’:

<i>ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϣⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ ⲉϥϩⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉ ⲡⲉϥϥⲥⲟⲛ ⲁⲃⲁⲩⲉⲓⲁ</i>	I am Frange, and he is writing and greeting his brother David.
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6.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: LETTERS FROM THEBES

Here are some greetings which introduce letters from Jeme and the surrounding area. First, a prodigious writer from Thebes named Frange, who lived in an ancient tomb at Shaykh Abd al-Qurana (see [Figure 27](#)). Here we have greetings from a letter sent by him and from another sent to him by his sister, Tsie:

<i>ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϣⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲉϥⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲉϥϥⲥⲁⲓ ⲉϥϩⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉ ⲡⲉϥⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ϭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ</i>	I am Frange, the sinner, and he is writing and
--	--

ΤΣΙΕ ΕΙΣΧΑΙ ΕΙΩΠΙΝΕ Ε ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ
Ν̄CON QPAΓΓΕ

greeting his beloved
brotherly lord.
Tsie, and I am writing
and greeting my
beloved brother Frange.

Notice the variant spelling of his name, as QPAΓΓΕ as well as QPANΓΕ.
Next, here is the greeting from a couple writing to a friend:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ Μ̄Ν ΤΕΥCΖΙΜΕ
ΕΝCΖΑΪ Μ̄ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΧΕ

I am Abraham with his wife,
and we are writing to Mary.

The final example involves a group of people saying hello:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΜΑΘΑΙΟΣ Μ̄Ν ΦΑΥCΤΟC
Μ̄Ν ΠΑΠΑ ΕΥΩΠΙΝΕ Ε ΤΕΥΜΑΔΥ

I am Matthew with Faustus
and Papa, and they are
greeting their mother.

Now, try reading these fuller addresses. In the first example, Saint Mary's Church (ΘΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ) is mentioned along with Jeme Castle (ΠΚΑCΤΡΟΝ Ν̄ ΧΗΜΕ), which was a well-to-do neighbourhood of Jeme, actually inside the ancient temple walls:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΚΟCΜΑ ΠΩΗΡΕ Μ̄
ΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΙCΑΚ Ζ̄Ν ΘΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ
ΕΙCΧΑΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΤΡΟC ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν̄
ΑΝΑΝΙΑC Ζ̄Μ ΠΚΑCΤΡΟΝ Ν̄
ΧΗΜΕ ΧΕ

I am Cosma, the son of the
blessed Isaac, in Saint Mary's,
and I am writing to Peter,
the son of Ananias,
in Jeme Castle.

The next address mentions Armant, which was the district or county (ΝΟΜΟC) Thebes belonged to:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΛΕΩΝΔΙΟC ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν̄
ΑΝΑCΤΑCΙΟC ΠΡ̄ΜΧΗΜΕ
ΕΥCΧΑΙ Ν̄ ΚΟΛΟΧΗ ΤΩΕΕΡΕ
Μ̄ ΠΕΛΛΟ ΤΡ̄ΜΧΕΜΕ Ζ̄Μ
ΠΝΟΜΟC Ν̄ ΕΡΜΟΝΤ ΧΕ

I am Leondios, the son of
Anastasios, the one from Jeme,
and he is writing to Coloje,
the daughter of Phello, the
one from Jeme in the
county of Armant.



Figure 15 Archive photograph of Coptic houses in Jeme Castle. Thebes, eighth century. *Source:* Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY NC-ND 4.0.

Our final correspondents are women, whom you have already met in your reading (5.4):

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲛⲁⲙ ⲧⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲙ̅
 ⲡⲉⲃⲱ ⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙⲟⲩⲧ
 ⲉⲥⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲕⲟⲩⲗⲟⲭⲏ ⲧⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲙ̅
 ⲡⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲭⲏⲙⲉ ⲭⲉ

I am Mariam, the daughter
 of Pebo, the one from
 Medamud, and she is
 writing to Coloje, the
 daughter of Phello, the one
 from Jeme.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ἔξοϣν	in	ῑᾱτ, ῑᾱτῑ	foot
ἔβoλ	out	ῑἡ, ῑἡτῑ	front,
ἡᾱ	pity		beginning
ῑoἡ	ability	ῑἡ, ῑἡτῑ	belly, womb
ἡἡῑᾱ	worth		
ἡoἔ	sin	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ῑoτῑ	fear	ῑᾱ, ῑᾱῑoῑ	to
ῑῑἡϣ	improve, benefit	ῑᾱῑῑῑ, ῑᾱῑῑἡ	near, beside
ἡἡ	house		
ῑoῑϣ	hill	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ῑᾱἡ	name	ἡoῑῑῑ	walk, travel
ῑῑῑῑῑἡἡ	Jemean, person	ῑἡoῑo	sit
	from Jeme	ῑῑἡἡ	ask (for), greet,
ῑῑἡᾱo	rich person		visit
ῑo	face	ῑᾱῑῑ	hear, listen
ῑo, ῑᾱῑ	mouth	oῑᾱῑ	want
ῑᾱ, ῑᾱῑ	head	ῑoῑῑῑ	know
ῑᾱῑῑ, ῑoῑῑῑ	hand	ῑἡἡ	realise

LESSON 7

Engaged statements

7.1 ENGAGED PRESENT

Before we say any more about tenses, we must note that there are statements in Coptic which are not obviously marked for tense at all. For example, in [Lesson 8](#) we will look at identity statements, which talk about who I am, as in $\Delta\text{NOK } \text{TA}\Delta\text{WP}\epsilon$ ‘I am Tadore’ – and, in that sense, do not vary through time (you are always who you are). Meanwhile, in this lesson we look at statements at the other end of the time spectrum: statements that are true in the moment but always liable to change. Typically, they involve one of two facts: I am occupied doing something or I am in a particular location. Here we characterise such statements as *engaged* in the sense that they talk about this moment (‘I am eating my dinner’, ‘I am in the dining room’) as opposed to *indicative* statements, which talk about the way things generally are or have been (‘I eat fish’, ‘I am open minded’).

When talking in the moment, Coptic prefers to state a specific subject first, then talk about how this subject is engaged. Accordingly, a subject can simply stand in front of a verb to express what the subject is presently doing:

$\bar{\text{N}}\Delta\epsilon\text{M}\omega\text{N } \text{M}\omega\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{M}}\Delta\text{N}$	The demons are fighting ($\text{M}\omega\epsilon$) with us.
$\bar{\text{N}}\Delta\lambda\text{M}\omega\text{N } \text{C}\omega\text{B}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\text{C}\omega\text{T}\bar{\text{N}}$	The demons are laughing ($\text{C}\omega\text{B}\epsilon$) at you.

Statements about locations do not require a verb – though English requires you to supply one (is, am, etc.) in translation – because they simply state the subject first and where that subject happens to be in the moment:

$\text{OYCTAYPOC } \bar{\text{N}}\omega\epsilon \text{Z}\bar{\text{N}} \text{NEQCI}\chi$	A wooden cross is in his hands
$\chi\omega\text{q } \text{Z}\Delta \text{PNON}$	His head is under the groundwater. (5.2)

As you would expect, Coptic has a few words (adverbs) especially for specifying locations, notably $\bar{\text{M}}\text{MAY}$ ‘there’, $\bar{\text{M}}\text{PEIMA}$ ‘here’ and $\text{C}\bar{\text{N}}\text{TE}$ ‘together, alongside’, as in $\text{PAEIOT } \bar{\text{M}}\text{MAY}$ ‘my father is there’.

7.2 INITIAL PRONOUNS

Because engaged statements need not have a tense marker but the subject still stands at the beginning of the statement, the subject cannot be a suffix pronoun – by definition a suffix must attach to the end of another relevant word. Accordingly, engaged statements make use of an adapted group of pronouns marked to be spoken on their own:

Person	Singular		Plural	
First	†	I	ṭṇ	we
Second	ḱ	you (masc.)	ṭṭṭṇ	you
	ṭṭ	you (fem.)		
Third	ḡ	he	ḱṭ	they
	ḱ	she		

As you see, they are essentially the same as the suffix pronouns but have been ‘nasalised’ (ḱ, ḡ, ḱ) or combined with an initial ṭ- (†, ṭṭ, ṭṇ, ṭṭṭṇ) so as to become sufficiently robust to pronounce clearly in front of a verb or at the beginning of a location statement:

†ṭṭṇ ḱ ṭḱḱṇḱ I am greeting my sister.
ṭṇ ḡṇ ṭḱḱṇḱ We are in disgrace.

Only the form ḱṭ ‘they’ bears no relation to the corresponding suffix pronoun. Although there is obvious potential for confusing the initial pronoun ṭṇ ‘we’ and the suffix pronoun ṭṇ ‘you’ (plural), in reality they are used in different ways and not so easy to confuse as you may presume.

7.3 ORGANISING PARTICLES

Certain, mostly small, words, which we can simply call particles (‘small parts’), introduce statements to add nuance or organise the thread of sentences within an ongoing narrative. Particles can be added to almost any type of phrase or sentence and so stand slightly detached from the integral grammar of the statement – for example, a suffix pronoun

cannot attach to a particle. Some – including $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha$ ‘instead, rather, nonetheless’, $\tau\omicron\tau\epsilon$ ‘then, accordingly’, $\bar{\mu}\mu\omicron\bar{\nu}$ ‘truly’, $\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon$ ‘then’, $\omega\wp\omicron\pi$ $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$ or $\bar{\nu}\omega\wp\omicron\pi$ $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$ ‘firstly’ and $\mu\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}$ ‘next, afterwards’ – usually introduce statements and are known as initial particles as a consequence. They often have a rhetorical aspect, showing not just how the statement fits into the unfolding narrative but also how it should be understood by the reader – objectively, urgently, hypothetically and so on. Other particles – including $\Delta\epsilon$ ‘but, therefore’, $\omicron\epsilon$ ‘moreover, in addition’, $\rho\alpha\rho$ ‘because, after all’, $\rho\omega$ ‘indeed, truly’, $\omicron\gamma\bar{\nu}$ ‘actually, for sure’, $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$ ‘of course, accordingly’ and a different $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$ ‘surely, even’ – prefer to be the second word in the statement and are known as non-initial particles or, more formally, as enclitic particles (enclitic literally means they ‘lean on’ another word). Enclitic particles often translate as English connecting words or conjunctions, such as ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘however’, ‘indeed’ and ‘therefore’. As a rule, the nuanced meaning of each particle is best learned through reading in context.

For our immediate purposes, however, the most important particle is $\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon$ (or its variant $\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon\zeta\eta\eta\tau\epsilon$), which introduces pertinent background information or explanations and appears frequently with engaged statements, though typically it need not be translated:

$\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon$ $\rho\epsilon\chi\bar{\varsigma}$ $\bar{\mu}\rho\epsilon\mu\alpha$	Christ is here.
$\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon$ $\bar{\nu}\bar{\beta}\bar{\alpha}\rho\bar{\beta}\bar{\alpha}\rho\bar{\varsigma}$ $\bar{\nu}\eta\gamma$	The barbarians are coming ($\bar{\nu}\eta\gamma$).

In each case, the speaker is using $\epsilon\bar{\iota}\epsilon$ to introduce a consequential fact – before I say any more you should know this, as it were.

7.4 ‘THERE IS’ ($\omicron\gamma\bar{\nu}$) OR ‘THERE ISN’T’ ($\bar{\mu}\mu\bar{\nu}$) AN INDEFINITE SUBJECT

Coptic often deals with subjects that are known and defined (‘your voice’, ‘today’, ‘the sound of silence’) differently than subjects that are undefined (‘a noise’, ‘any time’, ‘something’) (2.3). The same can be true in English: for example, we tend to say, ‘Harry is laughing’ and ‘Harry isn’t here’ (defined subject) but ‘*there*’s someone laughing’ and ‘*there isn’t* anyone here’ (undefined subject). Likewise, in Coptic, an engaged statement with an undefined subject tends to be introduced by $\omicron\gamma\bar{\nu}$ ‘there is’ or its negative counterpart $\bar{\mu}\mu\bar{\nu}$ ‘there is not’, often abbreviated to $\mu\bar{\nu}$.

In other words, $\text{OY}\bar{\text{N}} \text{OY}\bar{\text{P}}\omega\text{M}\epsilon \bar{\text{M}}\mu\lambda\gamma$ takes the same form as English ‘*there is a person there*’:

$\text{OY}\bar{\text{N}} \text{OY}\bar{\Delta}\alpha\text{I}\mu\text{O}\text{N}\text{I}\text{O}\text{N} \chi\text{I}\omega\omega\chi$	There is a demon on him.
$\mu\bar{\text{N}} \lambda\alpha\lambda\gamma \chi\bar{\text{N}} \tau\omega\omega\tau\epsilon$	There isn’t anything in the cistern ($\omega\omega\tau\epsilon$) (3.5).
$\text{OY}\bar{\text{N}} \text{OY}\lambda \chi\bar{\text{N}} \tau\text{P}\text{O}\lambda\text{I}\text{C}$	There is someone in the city (2.3).

Essentially, $\text{OY}\bar{\text{N}}$ and $\bar{\text{M}}\mu\bar{\text{N}}$ are verbs but they are only used in this specific way. By the way, obviously related to $\bar{\text{M}}\mu\bar{\text{N}}$ is the exclamation $\bar{\text{M}}\mu\text{O}\text{N}$ ‘no’ – not to be confused with the particle $\bar{\text{M}}\mu\text{O}\text{N}$ ‘truly’ in the previous section.

7.5 ‘WHO, WHICH’ IS $\epsilon\tau$

The prefix $\epsilon\tau$ ‘who’ (with a person) or ‘which’ is used to convert an engaged present statement into the description of a particular person or thing, as in $\text{P}\text{I}\text{N}\text{OY}\tau\epsilon \epsilon\tau\text{O}\text{N}\bar{\chi}$ ‘the living god’ (‘the god *who* is living’), $\text{P}\epsilon\text{N}\epsilon\text{I}\omega\tau \epsilon\tau\text{OY}\lambda\alpha\text{B}$ ‘our holy father’ (‘our father *who* is holy’) or $\chi\text{Y}\text{P}\text{O}\text{C} \epsilon\tau\text{C}\chi\alpha\text{I} \bar{\text{N}} \Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{P}\epsilon\alpha\text{C}$ ‘Cyrus, *who* is writing to Andrew’. Notice how $\epsilon\tau$ effectively stands as the subject of the engaged present description, as in $\epsilon\tau\text{-C}\chi\alpha\text{I}$ ‘who is writing’ or $\epsilon\tau\text{-}\chi\bar{\text{N}} \chi\text{H}\mu\epsilon$ ‘who is in Jeme’.

A very important Coptic idiom involves adding the definite articles to the converter $\epsilon\tau$ (as $\text{P}\epsilon\tau$ or $\tau\epsilon\tau$ or $\text{N}\epsilon\tau$) to create ‘the one who’ (or ‘those who’ in the plural), so we find $\text{P}\epsilon\tau\text{OY}\lambda\alpha\text{B}$ ‘the one who is holy’, $\tau\epsilon\tau\text{C}\chi\alpha\text{I}$ ‘the one who is writing’, $\text{P}\epsilon\tau\text{OY}\omega$ ‘the one who wants’, $\text{N}\epsilon\tau\epsilon\text{I}\text{P}\epsilon$ ‘those who do’, $\text{N}\epsilon\tau\mu\text{O}\text{OY}\tau$ ‘those who are dead’ and $\text{N}\epsilon\tau\text{OY}\lambda\alpha\text{B}$ ‘those who are holy’. Accordingly, in the addresses of letters you may well see any of the following closely related phrases (this is an important point we will return to in [Section 15.3](#)):

$\chi\text{Y}\text{P}\text{O}\text{C} \epsilon\chi\text{C}\chi\alpha\text{I} \bar{\text{N}} \Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{P}\epsilon\alpha\text{C}$	Cyrus, and he is writing to Andrew
$\chi\text{Y}\text{P}\text{O}\text{C} \epsilon\tau\text{C}\chi\alpha\text{I} \bar{\text{N}} \Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{P}\epsilon\alpha\text{C}$	Cyrus, who is writing to Andrew
$\chi\text{Y}\text{P}\text{O}\text{C} \text{P}\epsilon\tau\text{C}\chi\alpha\text{I} \bar{\text{N}} \Delta\text{N}\Delta\text{P}\epsilon\alpha\text{C}$	Cyrus, the one who is writing to Andrew

A very useful word to recognise and learn in this regard is $\epsilon\tau\bar{\text{M}}\mu\lambda\gamma$ ‘that’ (literally $\epsilon\tau\text{-}\bar{\text{M}}\mu\lambda\gamma$ ‘which is there’), as in $\text{P}\epsilon\chi\text{O}\text{OY} \epsilon\tau\bar{\text{M}}\mu\lambda\gamma$

‘that day’, **ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ** ‘that place’, **ⲧϥⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ** ‘that sister’ and even **ⲡⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ** ‘that one’ (literally **ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲙⲙⲁϥ** ‘the one which is there’).

7.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MORE LETTERS FROM THEBES

Here are some statements you will come across later in your reading, each in the engaged present:

ⲓ ϣⲙ ⲡⲙⲟⲛⲁϥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛ ⲁⲡⲁ ϣⲣⲱⲙⲁⲛⲟϥ ⲛⲉϥⲟⲓϭ ϣⲓϭⲛ ⲛⲉϥⲃⲁⲗ	He is in the Monastery of Apa Romanos. His hands are over his eyes (ⲃⲁⲗ).
ϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲧⲛⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉⲓϥ ⲡⲓⲟⲓⲟϥ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲕ̅	Firstly, we are greeting you. The word of God is with you (7.3).
ϥⲉⲙⲡⲱⲁ ⲛ ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲟ ⲛⲓⲙ	They are worthy of every honour (ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲟ) (2.7).
ⲕⲙⲡⲱⲁ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉϥⲙⲟϥ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲁϭⲟⲉⲓϥ	You are deserving of the blessing of my lord.

Now we can return to the addresses of letters, with some examples of more ways of specifying who is writing and who to:

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲕϥⲣⲟϥ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲁϭⲙⲏⲛⲧ ⲉⲧϥϣⲁⲓ ⲛ ⲁⲛⲁⲣⲉⲁϥ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲛ ϭⲏⲙⲉ	I am Cyrus, son of Pajment, who is writing to Andrew, the one in Jeme.
--	--

The next four examples are addressed to an important figure in the local church at Jeme, and use the phrase **ⲡⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ** ‘our holy father’ (literally ‘our father who is holy’):

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲁⲡⲁϥ ⲡⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛ ⲁⲃⲣⲁϣⲁⲙ ⲉϥϣⲁⲓ ⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲃⲣⲁϣⲁⲙ ⲡⲉⲡⲓϥⲟⲕⲟⲡⲟϥ	I am Papas, the son of Abraham, and he is writing to our holy father, Apa Abraham, the bishop.
--	--

This address uses an abbreviation of his title **ἐπισκοπος** ‘bishop’:

+ ΔΝΟΚ ΔΔΥΕΙΔ ΕΤΣΖΔΙ Μ̄	I am David, who is writing to
ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ	our holy father, Abraham,
ΠΕΠΙΣΚ/	the bishop.

The next is taken from a letter sent by a group of people:

Ρ ΔΝΟΚ ΣΑΜΟΥΛ Μ̄ ΙΑΚΩΒ	I am Samuel with Jacob and
Μ̄Ν ΑΡΩΝ	Aaron,
ΕΝΣΖΔΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΑΠΑ	and we are writing to our
ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΕΠΙΣΚ/	holy father, Apa Abraham,
	the bishop.

The final example employs a variation on the phrase ‘our holy father’ and instead says **ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ Ν̄ΙΩΤ** which literally reads ‘the fatherly holy one’ (3.4):

+ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕΣΥΝΤΕ Ν̄ ΚΟΜΕΣ	I am Pesunte, son of Comes,
ΕΤΣΖΔΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ Ν̄ΙΩΤ	who is writing to the
ΑΠΑ ΑΒΡΕΖΑΜ ΠΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ	holy father, Apa Abraham,
	the bishop.

We can end with extracts from documents written by and for women. The first is edited from a legal agreement between two women you met previously, and which you are going to read in full later. Notice here how, in legal texts, the engaged present (7.1) may be used to express what someone is now committed to doing, as in **†ΣΤΟΙΧΕ Ε ΤΕΒΛ̄ΧΕ** ‘I do assent to the ostrakon’ (**ΒΛ̄ΧΕ** refers to the document being signed):

Ρ ΔΝΟΚ ΤΑΔΩΡΕ Ν̄ ΚΡΣΥΝΕ	I am Tadore, daughter of
ΕΤΣΖΔΙ Ν̄ ΚΟΛΟΧΕ	Krsune, who is writing to
ΤΩΕΕΡΕ Ν̄ ΖΛΛΟ Ν̄ ΚΑΘΑΡΟΝ	Coloje, the daughter of
ΤΡ̄ΜΧΕΜΕ	Phello, son of Katharon,
	the one from Jeme.
ΔΝΟΚ ΤΑΔΩΡΕ †ΣΤΟΙΧΕ Ε	I am Tadore. I do assent to
ΤΕΒΛ̄ΧΕ	the ostrakon.

You have met Coloje previously (5.4), so do not be confused by the fact that her father's name is regularly written ϣλλο as well as πϣλλο.

The final address here is slightly adapted from a very early letter, dating to the middle of the fourth century, written not in the Nile Valley but some 350 km (220 miles) west, in the Dakhla Oasis (see [Figure 33](#)):

ΔΝΟΚ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤCΖΑΪ ΕCΩΙΝΕ	I am Mary, the one who is
Ε ΤΕCΜΑΔΥ ΜΝ̄ ΤΑΩΕΕΡΕ	writing, and she is greeting
ΧΝ̄ΠΝΟΥΤΕ	her mother and my daughter
	Jenpnoute.
ΔΝΟΚ ΘΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤCΖΑΪ	Also (ΘΕ) I am Mary, the one
ΕCΩΙΝΕ Ε ΤΑCΩΝΕ	who is writing, and she is
ΤΑΧΟΪC ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ	greeting my sister, my lady,
	Partheni.

Of course, in English we would manage the pronouns differently, writing perhaps ‘I am Mary . . . and *I am* greeting *my* mother and my daughter, etc.’ These are the idiomatic variations between languages we have to get used to by reading and absorbing someone else’s writing culture.

WORKING VOCABULARY

αὐτοὶ	they	βάρβαρος	barbarian
ποῦ	where?	πόλις	city
ἔτι	here		
ἐκεῖ	there	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ἀλλὰ	but, therefore, however	ἐν, ἐν τῷ	on, at
ὅτι	because	ἔπειτα, ἔπειτα	after
καὶ	in addition, moreover	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ἀλλὰ	rather	ἔρχομαι	come
πρῶτον μὲν	firstly	μάχομαι	fight
ἑξῆς	next, afterwards	ἐμμενέω	bless, blessing
νεκρὸς	dead	ἐμμενέω	laugh
ὄφθαλμος	eye	ἐπιμένω	assent
χειρ	hand	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
ὀστρακὸν	ostrakon	ἐτιμένω	that
τιμή	honour	ἐπιμένω	the living god
αἰσχύνη	disgrace	ἐμμενέω	our holy
		ἐμμενέω	father

LESSON 8

Identities and requests

8.1 INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS AND IDENTITY

As you know, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ may state ‘I am so-and-so’ and, as you would expect, is only one of a group of pronouns referring to different persons:

Person		Singular		Plural
First	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ or ⲁⲛⲓ̄	I	ⲁⲛⲟⲛ or ⲁⲛⲛ̄	we
Second	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ or ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ or ⲛ̄ⲧⲓ̄	you (masc.)	ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲧⲛ̄ or ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄	you
	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ or ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ	you (fem.)		
Third	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲓ	he	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲩ	they
	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ	she		

These pronouns do not attach to another word and can appear anywhere in a sentence, so they are typically known as *independent* pronouns. That said, apart from ⲁⲛⲟⲕ itself, you may notice that each of them ends with the corresponding suffix pronoun, as in ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ-ⲓ ‘he’ and ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ-ⲕ ‘she’, and this will help you recognise and learn each one.

Obviously, a straightforward use of an independent pronoun is to state someone’s identity using a name or some other word, as in ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲕ ‘you are Peter’, ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲁⲓⲟⲥⲕⲟⲣⲟⲕ ‘you are the wife of Dioscoros’ and ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ϣⲉⲛⲕⲟⲟⲛⲉ ‘we are robbers (ⲕⲟⲟⲛⲉ)’. Used in this way, independent pronouns may appear in the abbreviated forms shown above, so we may find ⲁⲛⲓ̄ ⲟⲩⲣ̄ⲙ̄ϣⲣⲱⲙⲓ ‘I am a Roman’ (5.1) or ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲛⲓⲙ ‘who are you?’ (literally ‘you are who?’).

As we noted briefly in [Lesson 7](#), statements of identity are assumed not to vary through time (you are always who you are), which is why they do not normally include a verb – though you have to add one to your translation (am, is, was, etc.) for the sake of good English. That said, Coptic does use independent pronouns with verbs in statements that specify someone who does something, using ⲉⲧ ‘who, which’ along the lines of ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲧⲥⲓⲁⲓ ‘I am the one who is writing’ (7.5). However, this is incidental for our immediate purposes. More to the point, the little word ⲡⲉ often appears in support of independent pronouns without altering the meaning, as in ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ‘he is my father’, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲫ ‘I am Joseph’ and ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘you are God’ (we will return to this word ⲡⲉ in [Lesson 13](#)). This is another of those variables

you simply respond to as a learner, without needing to learn how to predict when πϵ will be used.

8.2 INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS AND EMPHASIS

The only other typical use of independent pronouns is to emphasise or specify an individual within a phrase, as in εἰςζαῖ δνοκ ‘while I myself am writing’ or as illustrated here:

δνοκ δἰναγ εἰςζαῖ δν̄ ογζοπομα For my part, I saw the Lord
in a vision.

There are a couple of notes arising from this example: first, if you are confused by writing πζοεῖς ‘the Lord’ as πζαῖ, take a look back at [Section 1.2](#); then, notice with ναγ ‘see’ that the object (what gets seen) is marked with ε ‘to’, akin to the English ‘look *at* something’ (we will return to this point in [Section 9.5](#)). Sometimes you cannot translate an independent pronoun used in this way without seeming awkward or verbose, but other times you may wish to think about how best to convey this emphasis in English.

8.3 ANOTHER KIND OF EMPHASIS

The word ζωωζ ‘self’ may also be used to emphasise a particular individual and, accordingly, must end with the suffix pronoun that agrees with the emphasised word, much as we find in English with ‘I prefer coffee *myself*’ and ‘the Queen *herself* stayed here’. Accordingly, in Coptic we find phrases such as δνον ζωων ‘we *ourselves*’, πμογ ζωωγ ‘death *itself*’ and ωτῃ εροι ζωωτ ‘listen only to me’ (literally ‘listen to me *myself*’). Incidentally, ζω is an abbreviation of ζωωτ often used to mean ‘me too’ or ‘as well’.

Other important emphasising words formed in the same manner include τηρζ ‘all’, so compare πκαζ τηρῃ ‘all the earth’ but τεγωη τηρῃ ‘the whole night’ (τηρῃ because ογωη is feminine) and, in the plural, νεφάρηγ τηρογ ‘all his friends’ and ναῖ τηρογ ‘all these things’ (ναῖ simply means ‘these things’). Both μαγααζ and ογααζ mean ‘only, alone’, as in παρχηνεπισκοπος μαγααγ ‘only the Archbishop’ or ‘the

Archbishop alone’. A less common but useful word is ⲙⲓⲛⲏⲙⲟⲥ ‘own’, as in ⲛⲉϥⲉⲓⲗ ⲙⲓⲛⲏⲙⲟⲩ ‘his own hands’.

8.4 ‘AND THEN USE’ THE CONJUNCTIVE TENSE

The conjunctive tense is used very specifically, to extend a sentence by stating the next event as the anticipated or even expected next step. As such, it is especially well suited to completing or finalising a request or demand, along the lines of ‘get up *and* go’ or ‘be so good *as to* leave’. In both examples, the second phrase in the sentence clearly develops or explains the initial phrase – they are not separate comments. We call the tense ‘conjunctive’ because it is used where English would use a separate conjunction, such as ‘and’, ‘so’ or ‘then’. However, Coptic prefers to use a distinct tense instead, and the distinctive tense marker of the conjunctive is ⲛⲧⲉ:

ⲡⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲗⲟⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡ̅ ⲟⲩⲛⲁ Pray for me *that* God makes
ⲛⲏⲙⲁⲓ mercy (ⲛⲁ) with me.

Again, you can see that the two elements of the sentence are not distinct – pray for me *so that* this happens next. The conjunctive tense marker reduces to a simple ⲛ when followed by a pronoun:

ⲧⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲧⲉⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ Get up *and* go (ⲛⲧ-ⲓ-ⲃⲱⲕ) out.

Of course, English does not use a pronoun after a command – that is, we do not say ‘get up *and you* go out’ – whereas the Coptic conjunctive requires the tense marker together with the initial pronouns. This is the only way the initial pronouns are used apart from engaged statements (7.4). As ever, the sound ⲛ may affect the pronunciation of an adjacent sound:

Instead of ⲛⲧⲓ we find ⲛⲧⲁ ‘and I’, often simply pronounced ⲧⲁ.

As you see above, ⲛⲧⲕ ‘and you’ tends to be pronounced ⲛⲧ (try saying ⲛⲧⲕ to yourself and you will see how naturally ⲛⲧ comes out instead).

Our next correspondents are women, so look out for the feminine forms $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}$ and NH (4.1). One woman lives in the city of Edfu (ΤΒΟ), even further south than Thebes:

$\Delta\text{ΝΟΚ ΤΟΥΛΙΤ ΤΩΕΕΡΕ } \bar{\text{N}}$	I am Toulit, the daughter of
$\bar{\text{I}}\omega\lambda\alpha\text{NNHC } \bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{N}} \text{ ΤΒΟ ΕΙC} \lambda\alpha \text{ NH}$	John, in Edfu, and I am
$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO } \mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha \text{ ΤΕC} \text{ZIMÉ}$	writing to you. You are
$\bar{\text{N}} \Delta\text{I} \sigma\kappa\omicron\text{COPOC}$	Mary, the wife of Dioscoros.

In the previous lesson you read the statement $\epsilon\text{IC } \mu\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\text{C } \bar{\text{M}} \mu\text{NOYTE } \bar{\text{N}}\text{TOOTK}$ ‘the word of God is with you’, which at first sight seems unambiguously religious. In fact, the phrase $\mu\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\text{C } \bar{\text{M}} \mu\text{NOYTE}$ was originally part of the wording of a legal oath which over time had come to refer to the obligation created by the oath. Accordingly, the phrase indicates that the bearer has paid a poll tax, a fine or some other such legal entanglement, and is now free to travel, do business, claim property or whatever else as a consequence. It is not uncommon among documents from Jeme, which so frequently refer to legal and property matters:

$\mu \epsilon\text{IC } \mu\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\text{C } \bar{\text{M}} \mu\text{NOYTE } \bar{\text{N}}\text{TOOTK}$	The Word of God is with
$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TOC } \mu\epsilon\text{TPOC}$	you. You are Peter.

In other words, Peter has been granted a legal release – in this case by a local magistrate who, as it happens, was the son of Coloje, the lady you already know. Therefore, another formula used both in letter writing and in these Word of God documents takes the form $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TOC} + \text{name} + \text{conjunctive}$, and in effect means ‘you are so-and-so and you may now (*conjunctive*) do such-and-such’:

$\mu \epsilon\text{IC } \mu\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\text{C } \bar{\text{M}} \mu\text{NOYTE } \bar{\text{N}}\text{TOOTK}$	The Word of God is with you.
$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TOC } \mu\epsilon\text{TPOC } \bar{\text{N}}\text{ΓΕΙ } \epsilon\text{ZOYN } \epsilon \mu\epsilon\text{KH} \bar{\text{N}}\text{Γ-} \lambda\alpha\text{KONEI}$	You are Peter, and you may come ($\bar{\text{N}}\text{-Γ-}\epsilon\text{I}$) into your house and act properly ($\bar{\text{N}}\text{-Γ-}\lambda\alpha\text{KONEI}$).

Here is another example addressed to a family but specifically through the father, so the conjunctive uses the singular pronoun:

+ ΕΙΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ Ν ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΤΟΟΤΚ	The Word of God is with you.
ΝΤΟΚ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΜΝ ΤΕΚΣΖΙΜΕ	You are Mark with your wife
ΜΝ ΝΕΚΩΗΡΕ ΝΓΕΙ ΕΞΟΥΝ Ε	and your children, and
ΠΕΚΗΙ ΝΓΒΩΚ ΕΜΖΗΤ ΝΓΒΩΚ	you may come into your
Ε ΡΗC	house, and go northwards
	(ΕΜΖΗΤ) and go south.

Now, we can finish this lesson by reading two texts from ostraca in their entirety, both making use of the conjunctive. The first is a prayer, addressed directly to you:

ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΩΗΜ ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΙ	I am lowly Peter. Pray for
Ν ΑΓΑΠΗ ΝΤΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ Ρ ΟΥΝΑ	me, please, that God
ΝΜΜΑΙ Ν ΑΓΑΠΗ	makes mercy with me,
	please.

Another man is mentioned beside Peter:

ΑΝΟΚ ΔΑΥΕΙΔ ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΙ	I am David. Pray for me
Ν ΑΓΑΠΗ	please.

Finally, here is an ostracon from Deyr al-Bahari written by the prolific Frange (6.5), divided into lines here as it is in the original. You are going to read the letter on the reverse later. While reading this, keep in mind that Frange lived in the vicinity of several monasteries (1.5), and remember the word ΜΝΝCΩC ‘next, afterwards’ (7.3):

Ρ ΑΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ · ΝΓΩΙΝΕ	Be kind and greet (Ν-Γ-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΪΕΖΕΚΙΗΛ	my father Ezekiel,
ΠΡΕCΒΥΤΕΡΟC Ν ΠΑΡΑΝ ·	the priest, for my name,
ΜΝΝCΩC ΝΓΩΙΝΕ	and, next, greet (Ν-Γ-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΠΑΕΙΩΤ · ΑΠΑ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ	my father Apa Abraham
ΜΝ ΠΕΥCΩΝ	and his brother
ΖΑΜΗΡ ΜΝ	Hamir. Next,
ΝCΩC †ΩΙΝΕ	I am greeting (†-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ	all the brothers
ΖΜ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΠΚΕ	in the Lord.
ΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ ΔΕ Ν ΝΑΪ	The crux (ΚΕΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ),
	however, of

τηρου αρι ταγαπη ν̄τετ̄ν	all these things, be kind
ωληλ εχωϊ ουχαϊ	and pray (ν̄-τετ̄ν-ωληλ) for me.
ζ̄ν̄ π̄χοεις	Farewell. (4.3)

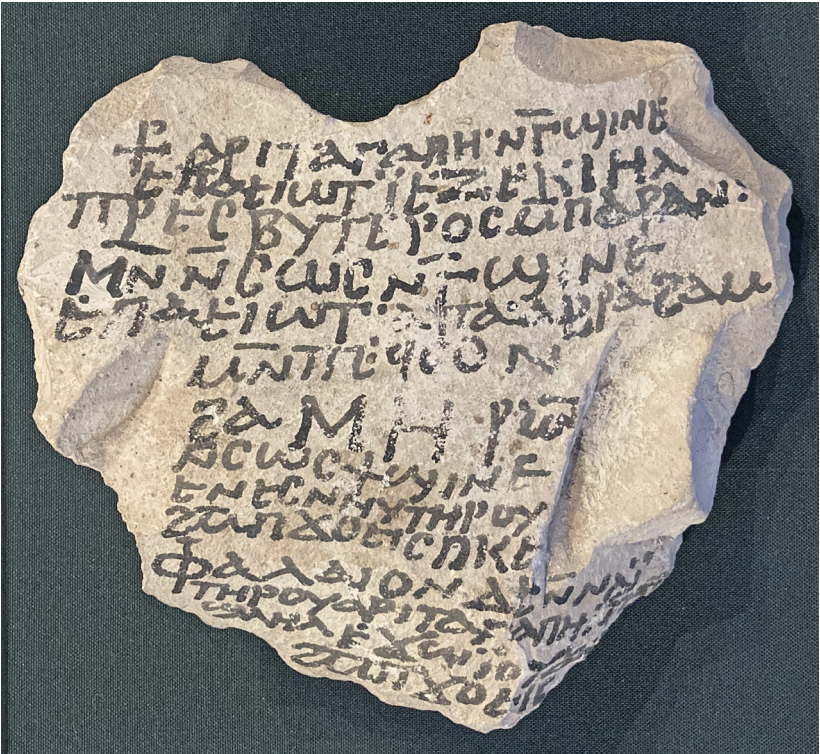


Figure 16 Frange’s letter to Ezekiel and his fellow monks. Thebes, eighth century. *Source:* author.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ἄτῃ, ἄτοοτ=

with

τῶογν

get up, rise

ναῖ

these things

νιμ

who?

ζῶω=

self

τηρ=

all

μαγδα=

only, alone

ζῶ

too, as well

ζορομα

vision

μερατε

(plural of μεριτ)

καζ

earth, ground

εμζητ

northwards

phc

south

LESSON 9

Past narrative

9.1 PAST TENSES TOGETHER

As you know (6.2), the tense marker λ - indicates that the statement is about an action that happened in the past and is now completed. This simple past tense is also indicative because it simply reports what happened as a fact (7.1). As such, $\lambda\iota\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$ will naturally translate as ‘I wrote’ or ‘I have written’ depending on the context:

$\lambda\pi\rho\omega\mu\epsilon\ \epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$	The man came out (<i>or</i> The man has come out).
$\lambda\varphi\omicron\gamma\omega\varpi\ \epsilon\ \beta\omega\kappa\ \varpi\alpha\ \tau\varsigma\gamma\rho\iota\alpha$	He wanted to go to Syria.

Notice that a suffix pronoun subject does not affect the form of this particular tense marker. Consequently, a chart showing the simple, indicative past tense is straightforward and, as usual, only the feminine singular form (λ or $\lambda\rho\epsilon$) is not predictable:

Person	Singular		Plural	
First	$\lambda\iota\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	I wrote	$\lambda\eta\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	we wrote
Second	$\lambda\kappa\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	you (masc.) wrote	$\lambda\tau\epsilon\tau\bar{\eta}\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	you wrote
	$\lambda\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$ or $\lambda\rho\epsilon\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	you (fem.) wrote		
Third	$\lambda\varphi\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	he wrote	$\lambda\gamma\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	they wrote
	$\lambda\varsigma\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$	she wrote		

Coptic style tends to treat the simple past tense as a straightforward building block for narrative – often just placing past statements ‘in a line’, for example in $\lambda\iota\tau\omega\omicron\gamma\bar{\eta}\ \lambda\iota\beta\omega\kappa$ ‘I got up and I went’ or $\lambda\varphi\tau\omega\omicron\gamma\eta\ \lambda\varphi\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ ‘he got up and he came out’. Of course, English translation prefers the connection to be spelled out, so you often have to supply a conjunction such as ‘and’ in translation. English can also cement the connection by omitting the pronouns in common, so we may prefer ‘I got up and went’ and ‘he got up and came out’. However, in past narrative specifically, Coptic tends to forego such strategies in favour of lining up statements in a coordinated manner, each with its own tense marker, each with its own subject, and a common narrative thread. To take an analogy, perhaps the only Latin

sentence everyone can quote uses the same economical strategy in *veni vidi vici* ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’ . . . or should that be ‘I came, saw and conquered’?

Of course, Coptic does have straightforward ways of connecting statements together when desired – think of the conjunctive tense from [Lesson 8](#). There are also specific conjunctions. However, the most important of these is ⲁⲩⲱ ‘and’, which is used less frequently than the English ‘and’ – often being omitted from simple lists and held in reserve to indicate when we reach the point of a sentence. For example, look at this statement about a famous monk named Macarius:

ⲁⲓⲉⲓⲉ ⲁⲓⲉⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲓⲱⲗⲏⲗ He struggled, he sat down,
and he prayed.

The point of this sentence is not really that he (a) struggled and (b) also sat down and (c) also prayed. Rather, that he struggled and accordingly (ⲁⲩⲱ) was reduced to praying. At the end of the day, however, the matters discussed here are matters of style – the sort of awareness you absorb through reading and familiarity rather than grammatical analysis.

9.2 PAST CIRCUMSTANCES

Another aspect of Coptic style is the way a narrative is typically assembled using the simple past tense together with phrases in the circumstantial tense which provide some context, qualification or description (6.3):

ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲒⲛⲏⲩⲩ ⲉⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲁⲉⲩⲏⲩⲓ When the brothers were
ⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲩⲏⲩ ⲁⲓⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ sitting beside him one time,
he said (ⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ) to them . . .

In this instance, the circumstantial tense literally states the circumstance in which an elder spoke to the brothers (‘while they are sitting beside him’). The next example follows the same pattern, to describe the awful moment when a monk fell ill:

ⲉⲓⲱⲉⲩⲥ ⲁⲓⲉⲣⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲏⲩⲧ ⲉⲭⲛ̅ ⲡⲓⲓⲉⲟ (5.3) While he was reaping
(ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲱⲉⲩⲥ), he fell
down on his face.

To take one more example, here is a dramatic moment from a story about Alexander the Great:

ⲁϣⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉϣⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉϣ̅ⲛ He came out walking ahead
 ⲛⲉϥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲉϣⲙⲁ of the armies (ⲛⲉ-ϥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲉϣⲙⲁ).

We are told that Alexander came out (past tense) and in that moment ⲉ-ϣ-ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ‘he is walking’ (circumstantial) in front of his soldiers. As you see, if the qualification describes something the subject happens to be doing at this point in the narrative, it may well translate as a single English word (‘walking’). In fact, the relationship between the principal action and the circumstantial qualification may be closely linked by meaning as well as by circumstance, as this comment about two monks illustrates:

ⲁϣⲙⲟϣⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉϣⲩⲁⲭⲉ They continued talking.

Here we recognise that the circumstantial qualification is integral to the statement: we are not simply being told that they continued (ⲁ-ϣ-ⲙⲟϣⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) because what matters is that they continued *doing something* (ⲉ-ϣ-ⲩⲁⲭⲉ ‘they are talking’). Likewise, when a different group of monks realises that their beloved abbot is dying, we learn the following:

ⲁϣⲟⲩⲱ ⲉϣⲣⲓⲙⲉ They carried on weeping (ⲉ-ϣ-ⲣⲓⲙⲉ).

Of course, if we can carry on doing something, we can stop too. Accordingly, the verb ⲟϣⲱ ‘finish, stop’ is used in a similar way, which leads to this interesting turn of phrase:

ⲁϣⲟϣⲱ ⲉϣⲙⲟϣ He has already died (literally ‘he has finished dying’).

9.3 ANTICIPATING THE SUBJECT

Any narrative is liable to require a change of subject (who is doing the action) from one sentence to the next – the ‘he said, she said’ dynamic of storytelling. Coptic style often prefers to flag up such changes by bringing the subject to the head of the sentence, as you can see in the

following emotional statement about how Alexander the Great's death was reported to his soldiers:

ΟΥΒΑΙΩΙΝΕ ΔΦΕΙ ΕΦΩΩ	A messenger came crying
ΕΒΟΛ ΕΦΡΙΜΕ	(Ε-Φ-ΩΩ) out and weeping
	(Ε-Φ-ΡΙΜΕ).

This word order allows the subject (ΟΥΒΑΙΩΙΝΕ 'a messenger') to shift to the head of the sentence, clarifying the new subject for us simply through its prominence. However, doing so then requires the appropriate pronoun to stand in at the grammatically 'correct' position for the subject, after the tense marker – as though ΟΥΒΑΙΩΙΝΕ Δ-Φ-ΕΙ were literally 'a messenger, he came'. On the other hand, this word order is typical in past narrative and, as such, requires no specific translation (certainly not an unusual translation) into English. Only rarely is the past tense marker Δ- added to both the highlighted subject at the beginning and the pronoun that subsequently follows:

ΔΤΝΟΒ ΜΗΝΤΡΙΜΜΑΔΟ ΔΦΟΥΩΞ ΖΝ	Great wealth, it settled in the
ΤΜΝΤΖΗΚΕ (5.1)	poverty.

In an exchange of words, in particular, the subject frequently moves back and forth between the same people. Accordingly, Coptic style will often flag the subjects up using independent pronouns at the head of the sentence, typically followed by the particle ΔΕ (7.3):

ΝΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ	As for him (ΝΤΟΥ), however, he
	answered.
ΝΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΥΜΟΥΝ ΕΒΟΛ	As for them (ΝΤΟΥ), however, they
ΕΥΩΔΔΕ	carried on talking.

In each instance, ΔΕ has the helpful effect of forming an initial 'breathing space' in which we recognise the new subject (ΝΤΟΥ ΔΕ > ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ). As such, the phrase is organisational rather than especially meaningful. Therefore, although ΔΕ itself can sometimes be translated in context (using 'so, however' or something along those lines), the whole phrase as such does not require a special translation. In other words, ΝΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ is often simply still 'he answered'.

9.4 MARKING THE SUBJECT WITH $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$

Another strategy for pointing out the changing subjects in a narrative shifts the subject in the opposite direction – delaying it slightly and specifically marking it with $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$, as in $\Delta\text{Q}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}} \text{P}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}}$ ‘the elder heard’. Here we have the statement $\Delta\text{-Q}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$ ‘he heard’ but then we learn who ‘he’ is because $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$ *always* marks the subject ($\text{P}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}}$ ‘the elder’). Again, this form of words is typical in past narrative and there is no shift in meaning caused by employing $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$. For example, these are simply alternative versions of the same brief statement from the Gospel of John:

$\Delta\text{IHCOC} \text{PIME}$	Jesus wept.
$\Delta\text{QPIME} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}} \text{IHCOC}$	He wept, namely Jesus = Jesus wept.

We never translate this type of statement word for word (‘he wept, namely Jesus’) precisely because it is ordinary Coptic and there is no reason to put ordinary Coptic into extraordinary English.

So, why would a Coptic writer do this? One reason, as we noted, is that it provides another strategy for flagging up a change of subject. For example, in one story people are talking about a monk behind his back:

$\Delta\text{Q}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}} \Delta\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}} \text{P}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}}$ However, the elder heard.

This could simply have been expressed $\Delta\text{P}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}} \Delta\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$ but using $\Delta\text{-Q}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$ allows the writer to establish the scene concisely – time and action neatly stated, and given breathing space, as it were, by $\Delta\bar{\text{E}}$ – then show us the change of subject with clarity (‘But he heard! Who did? The elder’). Of course, the writer could also have flagged up the new subject by moving it to the head of the sentence, as we discussed in [Section 9.3](#) ($\text{P}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}} \Delta\bar{\text{E}} \Delta\text{Q}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$). That said, perhaps we can agree that variety is the spice of life, and different strategies for clarifying the subject allow writers options with which to avoid being repetitive. However, here is a more elaborate example, taken from a story you are going to read later (17.6), further demonstrating the utility of $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$:

$\Delta\text{Q}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{K}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{Y}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{I}}$	The priest of Scetis once
$\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{V}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{S}} \bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}} \bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{A}}$	went to the Archbishop
$\text{P}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{X}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{S}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{S}} \bar{\text{N}} \text{P}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}$	of Alexandria ($\text{P}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}$).

Here there are a couple of relevant style points. First, the subject (ΠΕΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ ἦ ΟΥΗΤ) is not one word but a whole phrase, and certain writers prefer to avoid something like ΔΠΕΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ ἦ ΟΥΗΤ ΒΩΚ ‘the priest of Scetis went’, if only because of the physical distance created between the tense marker Δ- and the actual verb ΒΩΚ ‘go’. Second, ΝΟΥΘΕΙΩ ‘once’ is required near the beginning of the statement to set the scene – but where would it naturally appear among the long flow of words in ΔΠΕΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ ἦ ΟΥΗΤ ΒΩΚ? Accordingly, style considerations alone may determine that an efficient way to deal with any perceived awkwardness is to: (a) reduce the subject to a pronoun; (b) state the tense, action and setting concisely (ΔΦΒΩΚ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΩ ‘he once went’); then (c) specify the subject using ἦΙ precisely because doing so has no impact on the meaning. Again, the potential choices emphasise that these are matters of style. In any event, you will never be asked to write this way, only to respond to ἦΙ when it is used – and marking the subject is the *only* job ἦΙ has.

9.5 MARKING THE OBJECT WITH ἦ

In English, the order of words typically indicates which is the subject and which is the object (who or what is affected by the action) in a simple sentence such as ‘Harry wrote the book’. Putting them in the order ‘the book wrote Harry’ makes little sense. The subject usually stands in front of the verb and the affected object is stated after the verb. Coptic has the same basic word order, and often this word order alone is sufficient to identify the object, as in ΜΕΡΕ ΠΧΘΕΙC ‘love the Lord’. On the other hand, take a look at this comment from a story:

ΔΦΚΩ ἦΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΖΑΤἦ He left his son beside the feet
 ΝΕΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ ἦ ΠΖΛΛΟ (ΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ) of the elder.

The words here are clear enough: ΔΦΚΩ ‘he left’ gives the subject in front of the verb, and then we are told the affected object (what he left) ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ‘his son’. However, this time the object is also *marked* by ἦ (written ἦ here for the usual reason (1.3)). The same thing happens in another comment about Macarius:

ΔΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζἦ ΟΥΗΤ ΕΦΤΩΟΥΝ He came out from Scetis
 ἦΖΑΖ ἦΒΙΡ carrying lots of baskets (ΒΙΡ).

Here, we have the simple past tense statement (ⲁ-ϣ-ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϣ̅ⲛ ⲱⲙⲧ), then a circumstantial qualification (ⲉ-ϣ-ⲧⲱⲟϥⲛ ⲛ-ϣⲁϣ ⲛⲃⲓⲣ) in which the phrase ⲛ-ϣⲁϣ ⲛⲃⲓⲣ ‘lots of baskets’ is marked as the object of ⲧⲱⲟϥⲛ ‘carry’. It turns out that marking objects with ⲛ is a common occurrence and we will look at what is going on in [Lesson 11](#).

In the meantime, note that some verbs mark the object with a different preposition – as they do in English – because of their specific meaning, as in Ⲙⲱⲧⲛ ⲉⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ‘listen to the Lord’ (or ‘hear the Lord’), ⲉϣⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲉⲡⲣⲏϣ ‘when they were speaking *about* (ⲉ) gain’ (or ‘discussing gain’) and, as you already know, ⲧⲱⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲁⲥⲱⲛⲉ ‘I am greeting my sister’ (literally ‘asking *for* my sister’). Occasionally, Coptic does this differently than English so, for example, we find ⲟ̅ⲛ ⲁⲣⲓⲕⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ‘find fault with yourself’ (‘find fault *toward* you’), and ⲁϣⲧⲓⲛ ⲉⲛⲃⲓⲭ ⲛ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ‘he kissed (ⲧⲓⲛ) the hands of Apa Macarius’ (‘kissed *to* the hands’). In particular, you should recognise that Ⲙⲟϥ ‘bless’, ϣⲁⲣⲉϣ ‘keep, protect’ and ⲛⲁϣ ‘see’ usually mark their objects with ⲉ, as in Ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ‘bless me’ (‘bless *to* me’), ϣⲁⲣⲉϣ ⲉⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘protect the men’, ⲁϣⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ ‘he saw the angels’, ⲧⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲛⲟϥ ‘I see you now’ (2.1), and ⲁⲓⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲡⲭⲥ ‘I have seen the Lord’ (8.2).

9.6 COMPOUND VERBS

In English, the verbs ‘do’, ‘make’ and ‘act’ have a range of idiomatic meanings (do up, do away with, do without, make up, make sense, make hay, act up, act out, act like, etc.). Coptic typically expresses ‘do’, ‘make’ and ‘act’ all using the verb ⲡ (with its imperative ⲁⲣⲓ (4.3)), and it too forms a wide range of idioms, not all of which correspond to English usage. For example, ⲡ can also mean ‘spend time’, as in ⲡ ⲟϣⲱⲛ ‘spend a night’ or ⲁⲥⲡ Ⲙⲉ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ‘she spent sixty (Ⲙⲉ) years’. In addition, ⲡ can mean ‘act in a certain way’, so you have already met ⲡ ⲟϣⲛⲁ ‘make mercy, be merciful’ and ⲡ ⲡⲙⲉⲉϣⲉ ‘remember’, while another useful idiom to recognise is ⲡ ⲟⲉ ⲛ ‘act like, seem like’ (literally ⲡ ⲧ-ϣⲉ ⲛ ‘act the way of’) or ⲡ ⲟⲉ ϣⲱⲥ ‘act as though’. Generally, ⲡ compounds with many words to create useful verbs, as in ⲡⲃⲟⲗ ‘escape’, ⲡⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sin’, ⲡⲟϣⲟⲉⲓⲛ ‘shine’, ⲡⲭⲣⲓⲁ ‘need’, ⲡϣⲡⲏⲣⲉ ‘marvel’, ⲡϣⲱⲃ ‘work, behave’, ⲡϣⲟⲣⲡⲓ ‘lead’, ⲡϣⲁⲕ ‘be decent’, ⲡϣⲗⲗⲟ ‘grow old’, ⲡϣⲟⲧⲉ ‘fear’ and ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ‘lord it, control’. To be clear, ⲃⲟⲗ ‘outside’, ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sin’, ϣⲟⲧⲉ ‘fear’, ϣⲡⲏⲣⲉ ‘marvel’ etcetera are all nouns,

but the simple addition of \bar{p} creates a related verb in each case (\bar{p} + ογοειν = ‘make + light’ = ‘shine’).

Though idioms with \bar{p} are seemingly ubiquitous, some other verbs form useful compounds too, including \dagger ‘give’ and $\chi\iota$ ‘get’ in such verbs as $\dagger\text{CB}\omega$ ‘teach’ and $\chi\iota\text{CB}\omega$ ‘learn’ (‘give/get $\text{CB}\omega$ teaching’), $\dagger\text{K}\omega\tau$ ‘enhance, instruct’ and $\chi\iota\text{K}\omega\tau$ ‘learn, benefit’ (‘give/get $\text{K}\omega\tau$ building’), $\chi\iota\text{MOEIT}$ ‘guide’ (MOEIT ‘path’), $\chi\iota\text{CHBE}$ ‘take arms’ (CHBE ‘sword’), $\chi\iota\text{CZIME}$ ‘get married’ (CZIME ‘wife’), $\chi\iota\text{OY}\alpha$ ‘blaspheme’ ($\text{OY}\alpha$ ‘blasphemy’), $\chi\iota\text{IO}\lambda$ ‘lie’ ($\text{IO}\lambda$ ‘lie’), $\dagger\text{EOOY}$ ‘praise, glorify’ (EOOY ‘glory’), $\dagger\text{ZH}\gamma$ ‘improve, benefit’ ($\text{ZH}\gamma$ ‘gain’), $\dagger\text{PI}$ or $\dagger\text{PIE}$ ‘kiss’ (PIE ‘kiss’), $\dagger\text{K}\lambda\text{OM}$ ‘crown’ ($\text{K}\lambda\text{OM}$ ‘crown’), $\dagger\text{Z}\tau\text{OP}$ ‘compel’ ($\text{Z}\tau\text{OP}$ ‘constraint’), $\dagger\text{OYBE}$ ‘resist’ (OYBE ‘against’) and $\dagger\text{EBOL}$ ‘distribute, sell’ (EBOL ‘out’). Another useful idiom involving $\chi\iota$ is $\chi\iota\bar{\text{N}}\text{GONC}$ ‘harm, get harmed, abuse’, where GONC ‘violence’ is the marked object of the verb.

9.7 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MEET THE DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers is a collection of stories set in historical monastic communities on the western fringe of the Nile Delta, in ωIHT (Scetis), ΠEPHOYX (Nitria) and $\bar{\text{n}}\text{PI}$ (‘the cells’ or Cellia), during the fourth and fifth centuries. Intended to pass on insights forged by experience about the spiritual nature of the human condition, they often take the form of a perplexing, provocative or violent incident befalling an elder ($\text{Z}\bar{\lambda}\lambda\text{O}$) or simply an elder’s responses to questions from a brother (CON), a disciple ($\text{MA}\theta\text{HTHC}$) or a visitor. Accordingly, this is the sort of start to a story we meet:

$\lambda\text{OY}\alpha \bar{\text{n}} \bar{\text{n}}\text{Z}\bar{\lambda}\lambda\text{O} \text{BOK } \omega\alpha \text{KEZ}\bar{\lambda}\lambda\text{O}$	One of the elders went to another elder.
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Here is another start to another such story:

$\lambda\text{QBOK } \bar{\text{n}}\text{OYOEI}\omega \epsilon \omega\text{IHT } \bar{\text{n}}\text{BI}$	The blessed Apa Theophilus,
$\text{ΠMAKAPIOC } \lambda\text{PA } \theta\epsilon\omega\phi\text{ILOC}$	the Archbishop, once went
ΠAPXHEΠICKOC	to Scetis.
$\lambda\gamma\text{CWOYZ } \Delta\epsilon \bar{\text{n}}\text{BI } \text{NECNH}\gamma$	Therefore, the brothers
	assembled.

We will return to some of these stories episode by episode in order to explore how a narrative gets built up from basic elements. In one story a man from outside the monastic community resolves to take his son to meet the celebrated monk, Jijoi:

απεφωηρε μογ̃ ν̄τοοτ̄γ̃ ρ̄ι τερ̄ιη	His son died (μογ̃) beside him on the road.
------------------------------------	--

Undaunted, the man presses on and takes the boy's body the rest of the way to Jijoi's monastic cell (ρι):

αφτωογ̃ν̄ ν̄β̄ι π̄ειωτ̄ αφκω	His father got up, left his son
ν̄πεφωηρε ρ̄ατ̄ν̄ νεογ̄ερ̄ητε	beside the feet of the elder,
ν̄ π̄ρ̄λλο αφ̄ει εβολ̄ ρ̄ν̄ τ̄ρι	and came out from the cell.

Another story we will return to reports a fateful encounter between two foundational figures in the monastic movement, Antony and Macarius. They soon become embroiled in the principal contemplative activity for monks – plaiting reeds to make a cord (νηβτε). We learn that Antony is impressed by Macarius's prodigious ability:

αφναγ̄ επαω̄αι ν̄ τ̄νηβτε ν̄	He saw the length (αω̄αι) of
απα μακαριος αφ̄ρω̄πηρε	the cord of Apa Macarius, he
αγ̄ω αφ̄τ̄πι εν̄β̄ιχ̄ ν̄ απα	marvelled, and he kissed
μακαριος	the hands of Apa Macarius.

Finally, here is the conclusion of an encounter between two elders that you will soon read in full (for the writing of πνευματικον 'spirituality' as πνικον see [Section 1.2](#)):

ν̄τοογ̄ δε αγ̄μογ̃ν̄ εβολ̄	Therefore, as for them, they
εγ̄ωαχε εν̄επ̄νικον̄ ν̄	remained talking about spiritual
περ̄οογ̄ τηρ̄̄ μ̄ν̄ τεγ̄ωη	matters for the whole day
τηρ̄̄	and all of the night.

Now, here's the rub: these stories about the men and women of the early monastic movement are, at heart, stories about words and ideas; so, before we go any further, we need to look at how Coptic narrative deals with speaking and thinking.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ΕΠΕCΗΤ	down
CBΩ	teach, teaching
CHBE	sword, weapon
CHY	time, period
XPIA	need
ZHKE	poor
ZHY	gain, increase
APKE	fault
EOOY	glory
ΩΠHPE	marvel, wonder
BIP	basket
PI	cell, room
OYEPHTE	foot
PAKOTE	Alexandria
ΩINT	Scetis

Some verbs

ΧOOC	said (from ΧΩ)
ΩΔXE	speak, talk

OYΩΩB̄	answer, respond
ΩΩ	call (out), read (out)
ZE	fall, find
ON̄	find, find out
MOYH EBOL	continue, carry on
OYΩ	finish, stop
KΩ	leave, put
CΩOYZ	assemble, meet
OYΩZ	settle
PIME	weep
†TI	kiss
ZICE	struggle
ZAPEZ	keep, protect
ΧIMOET	guide

Some useful phrases

P̄ OE N̄	act like, seem like
P̄ OYNA	be merciful
ΧI N̄GONC	harm, get harmed

LESSON 10

Speaking and thinking

10.1 I THINK THAT (Ⲭⲉ) I SAID

When someone's words are included in past narrative, typically the verb Ⲭⲱ 'say' appears in the form Ⲭⲟⲟⲥ, as in ⲁⲓⲬⲟⲟⲥ 'I said'. Of course, the subject will vary and a definite subject, especially a name, may well be expressed using ⲡⲉⲓ (9.4):

ⲁⲟϥⲥⲟⲛ Ⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲁⲛⲥⲉ	A brother said to Apa Paese . . .
ⲁⲓⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲟⲓⲙⲙⲛ	Apa Poimen said . . .
ⲁϥⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲡⲉⲗⲗⲟ	The elders said . . .

The actual words spoken are normally introduced by Ⲭⲉ, which need not be translated ahead of a direct quotation (6.4):

ⲁⲥⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲧⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲥϥⲛⲉⲗⲙⲧⲓⲕⲏ Ⲭⲉ	The blessed Syncletike said . . .
ⲁⲓⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲱϥⲥⲏⲥ ϩⲡⲉ ⲱⲓⲛⲧ Ⲭⲉ	In Scetis, Apa Moses said . . .

A convenient introduction to stories is the anonymous formulation ⲁϥⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ 'they said about (so-and-so)'. Following this, this we are obviously presented with a report rather than a direct quotation per se, so Ⲭⲉ naturally translates as 'that':

ⲁϥⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲁⲡⲁ ϩⲱⲡ Ⲭⲉ	They said about Apa Hor that . . .
ⲁϥⲬⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ Ⲭⲉ	They said about Apa Macarius the Great that . . .

If the principal verb is not Ⲭⲱ, then a useful qualification to recognise is the circumstantial phrase ⲉⲓⲬⲱ ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ 'while he is saying' or simply (as we are bound to translate) the single word 'saying' (9.2). This may be used with Ⲭⲉ to introduce speech in the following manner:

ⲁⲓⲱⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲓⲬⲱ ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ Ⲭⲉ ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ	He prayed, saying 'God!'
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αἰπαρακαλεῖ ἐφ' ἑω ἡμος	He insisted (παρακαλεῖ),
ἄε πλῶεῖς	saying 'Lord!'

ἄε may also introduce thoughts, following verbs such as οὐκ ὁρᾷ 'answer', εἰμῇ 'realise', σοογῆ 'know, recognise', μεεγε 'think', πιστεγε 'believe', ἄνογ 'ask' and σῆ 'find out'. With such reported words, again ἄε naturally translates as 'that':

† μεεγε ἄε ἡτοκ μαρκος	I think that you are Mark.
ῥσοογῆ ἄε αἰμογ	He knows that he died.
ασειμε ἄε αφογῶ εἰμογ	She realised that he had already died (9.2).

10.2 I SAID ΠΕΧΔΙ

Another way to introduce speech into past narrative is the synonym ΠΕΧΕ 'said', which is past tense by meaning (so it requires no tense marker) and is *followed* directly by its subject, as in ΠΕΧΕ-ΙC 'Jesus said' or ΠΕΧΕ-ἡμαθῆς 'the disciples said' (actually forming one word, as in ΠΕΧΕΙC etc.). As usual, a suffix pronoun affects the form of the verb, so it becomes ΠΕΧΔ in ΠΕΧΔ ἡ ἀβραζαμ 'they said to Abraham' or ΠΕΧΔ ἡ περμαθῆς 'he said to his disciple'. Despite its distinctive form and word order, ΠΕΧΕ is treated as the simple, indicative past tense and used straightforwardly in past narratives. So, for example, ΠΕΧΕ can simply combine with other past tense statements in narrative:

αφογῶδῶ ΠΕΧΔ ναγ	He answered, and said to them
αφογῶδῶ ἡσι λεγει ΠΕΧΔ ἡ πετρος	Levi answered, and said to Peter

Likewise, the actual words spoken are typically introduced by ἄε:

ΠΕΧΔ ἡ πδικαῖος ἄε σμογ ερῶ παῖδῶτ ετογᾶδ

He said to the righteous one (3.5), 'Bless me, my holy father' (7.5).

10.3 TO HAVE (ΟΥΝΤΕ) AND HAVE NOT (ΜΝΤΕ)

Obviously, in the statements ΠΕΧΕ-ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ‘the disciples said’ and ΠΕΧΑΥ Ν ΑΒΡΑΧΑΜ ‘they said to Abraham’, the word order is not what we anticipate: the subject always stood in front of the verb until now in our experience of Coptic. This is simply a feature of ΠΕΧΕ and a handful of other verbs, and it has no meaningful significance. The other crucial verbs to know with this characteristic word order are ΟΥΝΤΕ, ΟΥΝΤΑΣ ‘have’ and its opposite ΜΝΤΕ, ΜΝΤΑΣ ‘have not’, as in ΜΝΤΑΙ ΖΩΒ ‘it is not my business’ (literally ‘I have not business’) or ΜΝΤΑΥ ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΜΑΥ ‘he has no faith’. The last example literally means ‘he has not got faith there’ and statements of possession often include the word ΜΑΥ ‘there’ – you may think of it as meaning ‘he has something *there with him*’. More importantly, however, notice that ΟΥΝΤΕ and ΜΝΤΕ are present tense *by meaning*, whereas ΠΕΧΕ is always past. As a final note, watch out for the usual pronunciation issues associated with second person pronouns, such as the vowel shift in ΜΝΤΗ-ΤΝ ‘you (plural) do not have’ (4.1).

10.4 SOME VERBS ARE GOOD (ΝΑΝΟΥ) AND BLESSED (ΝΑΙΑΤ)

The list of other verbs that behave in the same manner is very short, and all of them are present tense by meaning. In addition, most (but not all) of them express characteristics or qualities. The most relevant for you here are ΝΑΝΟΥ ‘be good’ and ΝΑΙΑΤ ‘be blessed’, along with ΝΑΥΕ, ΝΑΥΩ ‘be numerous’ and ΖΝΕ, ΖΝΑΣ ‘wish’ (which we will come back to later (15.4)):

ΝΑΝΟΥΣ ΝΑΐ	It is good for me.
ΝΑΝΟΥ-ΡΩΜΕ ΕΥΖΩΠ ΝΤΕΦΜΝΤΣΟΣ	A person is good when he hides his stupidity (5.1).

Notice with these verbs that an *indefinite* subject does not require the indefinite article (ΝΑΝΟΥ-ΡΩΜΕ ‘a person is good’). On the other hand, as a matter of style, a *definite* subject is often shifted to the head of the phrase, and the verb then followed by the corresponding pronoun (compare 9.3):

ΝΕΖΒΗΥΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ Ν ΠΛΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ	All the acts of the Lord (they) are good.
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From ΝΑΝΟΥ we also get the polite description ΕΤ-ΝΑΝΟΥϝ ‘who/which is good’:

$\text{ΝΕΥΖΒΗΥΕ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ}$	Their good acts (literally ‘which are good’).
$\text{ΤΕΦΗΝΤΖΛΛΟ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥC}$	His ripe old age (literally ‘old age which is good’).

As it happens, ΝΑΪΑΤ has a further peculiarity. As we would expect, it may have a pronoun subject, so we find ΝΑΪΑΤΕ ‘you are blessed’ (ΝΑΪΑΤ-Ε addressing a woman (4.1)). On the other hand, when the subject is a noun, it does not follow the verb immediately. Instead, the relevant pronoun attaches to the verb and the subject is then joined to the whole phrase by $\bar{\text{N}}$:

ΝΑΪΑΤῖ ᾱ ΠΡΩΜΕ	The person is blessed.
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This, not especially common, expression arises out of the etymology of ΝΑΪΑΤ , so do not presume its peculiar grammar is trying to say something special (compare 5.2). When you do come across it, the book will point you back here.

10.5 ABLE (ΟΥἺCΟΜ) AND NOT ABLE (ΜἺCΟΜ)

You might have noticed that ΟΥΝΤΕ ‘have’ and ΜἺΤΕ ‘have not’ are formally related to ΟΥἺ ‘there is’ and ἸΜἺ ‘there is not’ (7.3). Another idiom related to these words is ΟΥἺCΟΜ ἸΜΟΚ ‘you are able’ and its opposite ΜἺCΟΜ ἸΜΟΚ ‘you are not able’. Literally, this means ΟΥἺ-CΟΜ ‘there is ability (CΟΜ)’ followed by a pronoun subject. However, the pronoun does not attach to CΟΜ itself but to a specific preposition $\bar{\text{N}}$, ἸΜΟϝ ‘from, in, as’, as though saying ‘there is ability in me, in you, etc.’:

$\text{ΚCΟΟΥἺΝ ΧΕ ΜἺCΟΜ ἸΜΟΙ}$	You know that I am not able.
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This is a useful idiom to know but, again, it has a peculiar grammar of its own so, when you come across it, the book will point you back here. A quick note here – the preposition $\bar{\text{N}}$, ἸΜΟϝ ‘from, in, as’ is etymologically

related to the object marker \bar{n} (9.5). However, the preposition here is a distinct word with various idiomatic uses.

10.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: SOME DISTINGUISHED MEN AND WOMEN

From *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, here is the beginning of a story about Moses, a murderer and a ‘captain of robbers’ in his own words, before he turned to the monastic life at Scetis:

ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲓⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲓⲁⲓⲧⲏⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲏⲩ ⲁⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲉ

ⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲃⲁⲣⲃⲁⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲏⲩ ⲉⲩⲓⲛⲧ ⲙⲡⲟⲟⲩ

However, while the brothers were sitting beside him one time, he said to them,

‘The barbarians are coming to Scetis today’. (7.3)

Here is the beginning of another brief story about Macarius, who has more baskets than he can carry:

ⲁⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ
ⲡⲛⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
ⲓⲛⲧ ⲩⲓⲛⲧ ⲉⲩⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ
ⲛⲓⲓⲁⲓ ⲛⲃⲣ
ⲁⲩⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲩⲓⲙⲟⲟⲥ
ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲱⲗⲏⲗ
ⲉⲩⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ
ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲕⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲉ ⲙⲛⲃⲟⲙ
ⲙⲙⲟⲓ

They said about Apa
Macarius the Great that
he came out from Scetis
carrying lots of baskets. (9.5)
He struggled,
he sat down and he
prayed, saying, ‘God!
You know that I am
not able.’

The Tragedy of Archellites, about a high-born Roman, seems to have been among the last Sahidic Coptic books in circulation (see [page 298](#)). At the end of the tale, Archellites’ pious mother travels to Palestine to meet him and end years of separation but, when she reaches the place he has been living, makes a heartbreaking discovery:

ⲁⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲕⲉ ⲁⲓⲓⲱⲩ ⲉⲓⲙⲱⲩ

She realised that he had
already died, (9.2)

ⲁⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲕⲏ̅ ⲡⲕⲁⲓ

she fell down on the ground,
and she acted like (9.6)

ⲁⲥⲣ̅ ⲙⲉ ⲏ̅ ⲛⲉⲧⲙⲱⲱⲩⲧ

those who are dead (7.5).

Apocryphal gospels emulate or rewrite episodes from the Christian gospels but are not accepted by the churches – in most cases because they were evidently composed centuries after canonical scripture. Some survive, at least in a complete version, only in Sahidic Coptic copies. In the apocryphal Gospel of Mary (see [page 294](#)), the eponymous lady has a vision of the Lord (ⲡⲕⲥ) Jesus:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲡⲕⲥ ⲓⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲓⲟⲣⲟⲙⲁ

As for me, I saw the Lord
in a vision, (9.5)

ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲓⲕⲱⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲕⲉ

and I said to him,

ⲡⲕⲥ ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲏ̅ⲡⲱⲱⲩ

‘Lord! I saw you today
in a vision.’

ⲓⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲓⲟⲣⲟⲙⲁ

ⲁⲓⲓⲱⲩⲱⲩⲃ̅ ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲕⲉ ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲧⲉ

He answered and said to
me, ‘You are blessed.’

Finally, we return to Thebes, and a letter written by a man you know which has the following address, laid out here more or less as it appears on the ostrakon:

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲓⲣⲁⲛⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅

I am Frange with

ⲙⲱⲩⲕⲏⲥ ⲉⲩⲥⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲩⲱⲓⲛⲉ

Moses, and they are

ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ

writing and greeting

ⲏ̅ⲕⲱⲉⲓⲥ ⲏ̅ⲕⲟⲛ

their beloved, brotherly

ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲩⲛⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅

lord (3.4), who is good,

ⲧⲉⲩⲥⲓⲙⲉ

Pesunte, and his wife.

ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲓ ⲓⲛ̅ ⲡⲕⲱⲉⲓⲥ

Hello.

You are going to read the full text of this letter and more from the selections above later.

WORKING VOCABULARY

Ⲫⲃⲏⲭⲉ	(plural of Ⲫⲱⲃ)
ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ	faith
ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ	disciple
ⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲱⲥ	righteous
ⲥⲱⲥ	fool

Some prepositions

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ, ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲉ	because of,
	about
ⲡ̄, ⲡ̄ⲙⲱⲉ	from, in, as

Some verbs

ⲡⲉⲭⲉ, ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲉ	said
ⲭⲏⲱ	ask
ⲙⲉⲉⲭⲉ	think
ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲭⲉ	believe
ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ or	
ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ	insist, declare
Ⲫⲱⲡ	hide
Ⲫⲏⲉ, Ⲫⲏⲁⲉ	wish
ⲙⲁⲱⲉ, ⲙⲁⲱⲱⲉ	be numerous

LESSON 11

How objects
affect verbs

11.1 BASIC WORD ORDER

In a simple English sentence such as ‘Harry wrote the book’, the subject ordinarily stands in front of the verb and the object is stated after the verb. As you know, Coptic has the same basic word order:

ΔΝΟΥΩΥΤ ḲΤΕΚΡΙΚΩΝ

We kissed your image.

ΔΥΕΙΝΕ ḲΔΛΕΞΑΝΤΡΟΣ Ε ΠΗἲ Ḳ ΔΝΔΙΛΟΧΟΣ

They brought Alexander to the house of Antiochus.

In both statements the subject is in front of the verb and the object follows the verb. In addition, the object is marked with the object marker Ḳ (9.5). So, why does Coptic need an object marker at all, if the word order alone is sufficient explanation? Here we have to consider other aspects of a language, which may affect this basic word order.

11.2 ADVERBS AFFECTING WORD ORDER

The basic meaning of a verb may be, for instance, so modified by an adverb that it becomes an integral aspect of the meaning, as in ‘Harry wrote off the car’ – which clearly has nothing to do with the essential idea of ‘writing’. Such adverbs may come between the verb and its object or they may not (‘Harry wrote the car off’ is possible too). Coptic has the same issues of meaning and word order but it may resolve them differently. Specifically, if an adverb comes between the verb and its object, the separated object gets marked as the object:

ΔΝΝΟΥΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ ḲΝΕΝΖΟΠΛΟΝ

We have thrown away our guards.

The author of this example has decided that ΕΒΟΛ is an intrinsic aspect of the meaning of ΝΟΥΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ (‘throw away’) and perhaps should not be separated from the verb. Consequently, the object does not follow the verb *immediately* and gets marked by Ḳ.

11.3 INDIRECT OBJECTS AFFECTING WORD ORDER

To take another example, think about how English can naturally switch between ‘Harry wrote her a song’ and ‘Harry wrote a song for her’. The point is that some statements need to identify the indirect object (who benefited) just as much as the object, as in ‘I gave the book’ . . . yes, but who did you give it to? However, now that we have an object and an indirect object too, which of them ought to come straight after the verb? In English, it could be either – but notice how these statements are distinguished not only by word order but whether the indirect object is marked:

- if the indirect object follows the verb immediately, it is not marked (‘Harry wrote *her* a song’);
- if the indirect object does not follow the verb immediately, it gets marked with a preposition (‘Harry wrote a song *for* her’).

Coptic has the same issue but, as you may now realise, concentrates on marking the object rather than the indirect object. For instance, take a look at these two statements. In the first, the object follows the verb and is not marked:

ζεπει ζενοεικ ναν Soak some bread for us.

However, as in English, the indirect object (ναν-ν ‘for us’) has an especially close relationship to its verb and may well follow it immediately. So, in the second example, the object ends up separated from the verb:

ταμιο ναν νουκογι ν αρωιν Cook us a bit of lentils.

Once separated, the object gets marked (ν-ουκογι ‘a bit’) (3.5). Likewise, take a look at this prayer:

μα ναν ναραπη πχοεις ιςπεχς Give us compassion, O Lord
Jesus Christ.

The words are clear enough and, again, the crucial indirect object (ναν-ν) follows the verb immediately, so the object has been marked (ν-αραπη)

separately. In other words, whenever an object *does not* follow the verb immediately, it has to be marked.

Still, to return to our original question, if the object *does* follow the verb immediately, there is no apparent reason why it has to be marked. Which is true. However, the object marker exists – so it *could* be used. The writer or speaker has a (probably unthinking) choice to make, much as you have a (probably unthinking) choice to make between saying ‘get me some’ and ‘get some for me’. In fact, there are also rules that determine whether an object may be left unmarked in Coptic, but these are specifics that need not concern you as a learner – as ever, you simply respond to what has already been written down by people in the past.

11.4 INFINITIVES SHIFTING WITH OBJECTS

Here comes the tricky bit. Look at these two statements about monks soaking various items:

ⲉⲉⲣⲡ ⲉⲉⲛⲟⲩⲉⲓⲕ ⲛⲁⲛ	Soak some bread for us.
ⲁ-ⲡⲓⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲱⲡⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ	Apa Antony soaked himself
ⲛⲉⲛⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲃⲏⲧ	(ⲛⲁ-ⲓ) some bits of palm-leaf.

In the first statement, the object is not marked and the verb is pronounced ⲉⲉⲣⲡ. However, in the second, the object is marked and the verb is pronounced ⲉⲱⲡⲓ. These observations are directly related: a verb may well be pronounced differently when the object is not marked (ⲉⲉⲣⲡ) – in truth, because verb and object get conflated in speech as ⲉⲉⲣⲡⲉⲉⲛⲟⲩⲉⲓⲕ. Typically, the principal vowel in the verb gets reduced by this conflation – as here, from the stout ⲱ in ⲉⲱⲡⲓ to the measly ⲉ in ⲉⲉⲣⲡ. This reduction does not happen when there is no object (of course) or *when the object is marked* with ⲛⲓ, even if it follows immediately.

Many verbs shift like this, that is to say they have one form when the object is unmarked and another form when the object is marked or there is no object. However, the meaning remains the same because the different ‘forms’ are only shifting pronunciations of the infinitive (6.1). Analysing the difference in terms of meaning would be as pointless as analysing the difference in meaning between ‘she was not at home’ and ‘she wasn’t at home’.

11.5 WHAT IF THE OBJECT IS A PRONOUN?

Of course, an object may be a pronoun ('Harry wrote it') and English has some specific object pronouns (me, him, her, us, them), but Coptic relies on the word order and simply uses suffix pronouns for objects as well as subjects (4.1). That said, a suffix pronoun is liable to affect the pronunciation of the word it attaches to, and accordingly the object marker \bar{n} shifts markedly to $\bar{n}mo\text{=}$ in $\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\bar{n}\epsilon\ \bar{n}mo\varphi$ 'they brought him ($\bar{n}mo\text{-}\varphi$)' and $\lambda\bar{n}o\gamma\omega\omega\tau\ \bar{n}mo\varsigma$ 'we kissed it ($\bar{n}mo\text{-}\varsigma$)'. As you know (9.5), certain verbs mark the object with a different preposition, as illustrated by $\varsigma\omega\tau\bar{n}$ 'hear' in this comment on the influence of Abbot Shenoute's writing (see [page 260](#)):

$\alpha\gamma\varsigma\omega\tau\bar{n}\ \epsilon\bar{\rho}\omega\varphi\ \chi\bar{n}\ \tau\bar{\iota}\pi\omega\iota\varsigma\ \chi\bar{\rho}\omega\mu\alpha$ They heard it ($\epsilon\bar{\rho}\omega\text{-}\varphi$) in
the city of Rome.

On the other hand, the object may follow the verb unmarked, in which case the suffix pronoun attaches to the infinitive itself and, as you would expect, frequently affects its pronunciation too:

$\pi\epsilon\chi\alpha\varphi\ \chi\epsilon\ \chi\epsilon\bar{\rho}\pi\ \chi\epsilon\bar{n}o\epsilon\iota\kappa\ \bar{n}\alpha\bar{n}$ He said, 'Soak some (bits of)
 $\alpha\gamma\omega\ \alpha\varphi\chi\omega\bar{\rho}\pi\omega\gamma$ bread for us' and he soaked
them.

In the phrase $\alpha\text{-}\varphi\text{-}\chi\omega\bar{\rho}\pi\text{-}\omega\gamma$ 'he soaked them' the object is attached to the verb, which has shifted from $\chi\epsilon\bar{\rho}\pi$ to $\chi\omega\bar{\rho}\pi$ as a consequence. Likewise, we find both $\lambda\bar{n}o\gamma\omega\omega\tau\ \bar{n}mo\varsigma$ 'we kissed it' and $\lambda\bar{n}o\gamma\alpha\omega\tau\bar{\varsigma}$ 'we kissed it' ($\alpha\text{-}\bar{n}\text{-}\omega\gamma\alpha\omega\tau\text{-}\varsigma$) because the infinitive is pronounced $\omega\gamma\omega\omega\tau$ with a marked object but $\omega\gamma\alpha\omega\tau$ with a suffix pronoun attached. Once again, these observations are directly related – the infinitive may well be *pronounced* differently with a suffix pronoun attached, even though the meaning has not changed at all.

As a final note, remember that most verbs also give commands simply by using the infinitive (4.3). As such, commands may also be affected by these shifts in pronunciation, so watch what happens to the verb $\bar{\iota}$ 'give' in this comment about a letter:

$\tau\alpha\alpha\varsigma\ \bar{n}\ \phi\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\varsigma\ \bar{n}\epsilon\iota\omega\tau\ \epsilon\tau\bar{n}\lambda\bar{n}o\gamma\varphi\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \pi\epsilon\tau\bar{\rho}\omega\varsigma$

Give it ($\tau\alpha\alpha\text{-}\varsigma$) to the holy father who is good, Apa Peter.

11.6 A NOTE ABOUT DICTIONARIES

In English, verbs change their forms for various issues of meaning, including agreement (I run > she runs), time (I run > I ran) and aspect (I run > I am running). Coptic verbs also change but the typical reason for doing so is entirely different – as we have just discussed, the pronunciation (not the meaning) of an infinitive shifts depending on (a) whether an object follows the verb, (b) whether the object is marked and (c) whether the object is a noun or a pronoun. To take ⲭⲱⲣⲓ, the example above, as our illustration:

- (a) ⲭⲱⲣⲓ is the standard ('absolute') pronunciation, used if there is no object or the object is marked;
- (b) ⲭⲉⲣⲡⲓ- is the ('construct') pronunciation used if an unmarked object follows (the single bond - sign indicates that this pronunciation depends upon an object following immediately);
- (c) ⲭⲱⲣⲡⲓⲥ is the ('pronominal') pronunciation used if the object is a suffix pronoun (compare [Section 4.2](#) for the double bond ⲥ sign).

From now on your notes will list verbs in the manner of Coptic dictionaries, using the following standard pattern:

ⲙⲟϥⲛ	remain, continue
ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ- ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲥ	prepare, cook
ⲭⲱⲣⲓ ⲭⲉⲣⲡⲓ- ⲭⲱⲣⲡⲓⲥ	soak

Notice that verbs like ⲙⲟϥⲛ or ⲱⲗⲏⲗ 'pray' never have an object because of their meaning (they are intransitive), so their pronunciations do not shift in any event, and they are listed with a single form. On the other hand, the pronunciation of ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ and many other verbs shifts very little or not at all, irrespective of any object, which is reflected in the listing ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ- ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲥ. However, even the sly, shifting forms of verbs such as ⲭⲱⲣⲡ are recognisably similar because there is a stable root made up of the consonants ⲭ-ⲣ-ⲡ. Likewise, you met two forms of ⲟϥⲱⲩⲧ 'kiss (in greeting)' and ⲟϥⲁⲩⲧⲥ and they also have the stable consonants ⲟϥ-ⲱ-ⲧ, in which only the vowels are

shifting (ΟΥΩΟΥΤ > ΟΥΑΟΥΤ). Consequently, Coptic dictionaries tend to list words – all words, not only verbs – according to the order of the consonants, while ignoring vowels *apart from* any initial vowel (so ΔΝΟΚ ‘I’, ΔΠΑ ‘father’ and ΔΡΩΙΝ ‘lentil’ are all listed under Δ-). For example, ΖΩΡΠ (Ζ-Ρ-Π) is listed in dictionaries somewhere after ΖΩΡΒ ‘break’ (Ζ-Ρ-Β) but before ΖΑΡΕΖ ‘protect’ (Ζ-Ρ-Ζ), following the order of the alphabet given in [Section 1.1](#). Speaking of which, now is probably a good time to familiarise yourself with the Word List in this book (see [page 321](#)). In the first instance, spend a little time learning how to make your way round it by trying to locate words you already know.

There are a few points to make here before we finish. First, if this seems complicated, remember that most verbs do not change and you only have to respond to those that do change, not memorise how they change. More to the point, you will find that there are often recognisable patterns to these sound shifts, which will soon become familiar to you through your reading, as you can see by comparing قٲ قٲ- قٲٲ ‘carry’ and خٲ خٲ- خٲٲ ‘get’, or by studying the following lists:

ΩΒΩ ΕΒΩ- ΩΒΩ≠	forget	ΚΩΤ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤ≠	build
ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΩΠ≠	count, value	ΩΩΤ̄Ω̄ ΩΕΤ̄Ω̄- ΩΟΤ̄Ω̄	hear, listen
ΩΩ ΕΩ- ΩΩ≠	read, read out	ΖΩΡ̄Π ΖΕΡ̄Π- ΖΟΡ̄Π≠	soak

On the other hand, as in most languages, the commonest verbs are often most likely to show irregularities, with dramatic shifts in pronouncing the infinitive:

ΕΙΝΕ Ḣ- ḢΤ≠	bring
ΕΙΡΕ Ḣ- ΔΔ≠	do, make
ΚΩ ΚΑ- ΚΑΔ≠	put down, leave
ΩΖΑΙ ΩΕΖ- ΩΔΖ≠	write
† †- ΤΑΔ≠	give
ΧΩ ΧΕ- ΧΟΟ≠	say
ΩΙΝΕ ΩḢ- ΩḢΤ≠	find

At this point, you would do well to memorise the forms of ΕΙΡΕ Ḣ- ΔΔ≠ ‘do, make’, if not all of the above.

11.7 A NOTE ABOUT ⲭⲱ ⲭⲉ- ⲭⲟⲟⲣ ‘SAY’

The verb ⲭⲱ ⲭⲉ- ⲭⲟⲟⲣ ‘say’ must have an object, so ⲁ-Υ-ⲭⲟⲟ-ϥ literally means ‘they said it’, though we would never translate this phrase so literally. If you look back to [Section 10.1](#), this is why you find both ⲁΥⲭⲟⲟϥ ‘they said’ (ⲭⲟⲟⲣ with pronoun object) and ⲉϥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ‘while he is saying’ (ⲭⲱ with marked object). In a sense, however, these contrasting forms exemplify the fact that much of how we read a language is recognising familiar phrases rather than analysing the grammar of each new statement individually.

11.8 REFLEXIVE STATEMENTS (SUBJECT AND OBJECT ARE THE SAME)

Reflexive verbs are those whose meaning requires the subject of the action to be repeated as the object, as in ‘Harry found himself smiling’ or ‘Harry behaved himself’ – whereas in ‘Harry jabbed himself with a pen’ the object could have been anybody, it just happened to be the clumsy so-and-so messing about with a pen. Likewise, Coptic has ⲁϥⲉ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̅ⲩ̅ ‘he found himself’ (literally ⲁ-ϥ-ⲉ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̅ⲩ̅ ‘he found him’) with the same meaning as in English – that is, come to a sudden awareness. Notice the reflexive object is an ordinary suffix pronoun here, and no special reflexive form is required comparable to English ‘himself’. Standard English uses reflexive statements less often than many languages, though they are more common in idiomatic English (haste *ye* back, now I lay *me* down to sleep, etc.). Coptic also uses them more frequently than standard English, for example in ⲁϥⲡⲁⲗⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ‘she bowed’ (which is literally ⲁ-ϥ-ⲡⲁⲗⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ‘she bowed her’) or ⲁϥⲕⲧⲟϥ ‘he turned, he returned’ (which is literally ⲁ-ϥ-ⲕⲧⲟϥ ‘he turned him’):

ⲁϥⲡⲁⲗⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁϥ ⲉϥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ

She bowed to him, saying ‘My Lord!’

ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϥⲟϥ ⲁϥⲕⲧⲟϥ ⲉ̅ ⲑⲉⲱⲁⲱⲣⲟϥ ⲁϥⲩⲁⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲙⲁϥ

Afterwards, he turned to Theodore and spoke with him.

Other useful reflexive verbs include ἀρῆσθαι ‘stand’, κῆρσθαι ‘step’, κάρωσθαι ‘shut up’, ῥῆναισθαι ‘consent, agree’, ἀποστρέφωσθαι or ἀποτρέφωσθαι ‘turn away, divert, amuse’ and λαμβάνωσθαι ‘take heed’, as well as ἀφίστημι ‘leave, depart’ along with ἐπιστρέφω ‘return’, ἀγωρεύω ‘lead’ and ἀκολουθῶ ‘follow’, as in ἀναστῆναι ‘he stood’ and ἀπεβῆναι ‘she stepped out’:

πῆχε ἰς οὐρανὸν πολλοὶ ἀρῶντες τὴν θύραν

Jesus said, ‘There are many standing at (τὴν) the door’. (7.4)

Likewise, you are soon going to come across a euphemism for dying, ἀφῆκτον ἑαυτοῦ ‘he rested’. Here ἆκτον is followed by the reflexive object ἑαυτοῦ (‘he rested him’), which need not be translated.

11.9 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: TALKING WITH MONKS

See what you make of this story from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, which you first dipped into in [Section 9.7](#). One of the elders (οὗτος ὁ πῆχης) has gone to visit another elder (ἐκείνους), who has a disciple (μαθητής) living with him in order to learn from his example:

οὗτος ὁ πῆχης βῆκεν πρὸς	One of the elders went to
ἐκείνους λέγων πρὸς τὸν	another elder, and he said
μαθητήν	to his disciple,
ταμίον ὅτι ἔσθαι ἡμῶν	‘Cook us a bit of lentils’ and
λέγων ὁ ταμίον	he cooked it
πρὸς αὐτὸν ῥησάντες	He said, ‘Soak some bread
ἡμῶν ὅτι ἔσθαι ἡμῶν	for us’ and he soaked them.
ἡτοιμάσαντες αὐτοῖς ἐσθίαν	Therefore, as for them, they
ἐπὶ πνευματικῶν	remained talking about
ἡμετέρας	spiritual matters
ἡμετέρας	for the whole day and all
ἡμετέρας	of the night.

Here is an extract from a teaching you will read in full later, about a determined monk who prays to be allowed to see a dangerous vision of demons. He is refused but that does not deter him:

πρῆλλο δε ἀπαρᾱκαλει
 εἰχῳ ἡμοc δε
 πᾱοειc οὔἡḅομ ἡμοκ ε
 cκεπαζε ἡμοι Ϸἡ τεκχαριc

The elder, however, insisted,
 saying, (9.3)
 ‘Lord! You are able to shelter
 me in your grace.’

Finally, here is the whole story about Macarius that you first met in
 Section 10.6:

αὔχοοc εἰτβε ἀπα μακαριοc
 πνοc δε
 ἀει εβολ Ϸἡ ὡιητ εἰτωοὔη
 ἡϷαϷ ἡβιρ
 ἀϷιcε ἀϷμοοc αὔῳ
 ἀϷληη εἰχῳ ἡμοc δε
 πνοὔτε κcοοὔη δε ἡἡḅομ
 ἡμοι
 αὔῳ ἡτεὔνοὔ ἀϷḅἡτḅ
 Ϸιχḡ περο

They said about Apa Macarius
 the Great that
 he came out from Scetis
 carrying lots of baskets.
 He struggled, he sat down
 and he prayed, saying,
 ‘God! You know that I am
 not able.’
 And immediately (2.1) he found
 himself at the river.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ΟΕΙΚ	bread	ΦΙ ΦΙ- ΦΙΤ≡	lift, carry
ΑΡΩΙΝ	lentil	ΞΙ ΞΙ- ΞΙΤ≡	get,
ΒΗΤ	palm-leaf		receive
ΧΑΡΙC	grace	ΚΩ ΚΑ- ΚΑΑ≡	put,
ΖΟΠΛΟΝ	armour, guards		leave, let
		ΧΩ ΧΕ- ΧΟΟ≡	say
<i>Some verbs</i>		ΩΦ ΩΦ- ΟΦ≡	call, read
ΕΙΡΕ Π- ΔΑ≡	do, make	CΖΔΙ CΕΖ- CΔΖ≡	write
CΚΕΠΑΖΕ	shelter	CΩΤΗ CΕΤΗ- CΟΤΗ≡	hear,
ΑΖΕΡΑΤ≡	stand		listen
ΚΤΟ≡	turn, return	ΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΕΧ- ΝΟΧ≡	throw,
ΚΑΡΩ≡	shut up,		fling
	silence	ΕΙΝΕ Ν- ΝΤ≡	bring
ΠΑΖΤ≡	bow	CΙΝΕ CΝ- CΝΤ≡	find, find
† †- ΤΑΑ≡	give		out

LESSON 12

Numbers and dates

12.1 SIMPLE NUMBERS TO TEN

Coptic numerals were adapted from contemporary Greek writing practice and use the ordinary letters of the Greek alphabet marked with a stroke (1.2), plus three added signs, $\overline{\varsigma}$ (6), $\overline{\eta}$ (90) and $\overline{\rho}$ (900). In Sahidic Coptic, however, numbers are almost always written out in full, and numerals generally only used for numbering the pages of a book or occasionally in dates. The simple (cardinal) units with their numerals are as follows:

Numeral	Simple		Added	
	masc.	Fem.	masc.	Fem.
1 $\overline{\alpha}$	ⲟⲩⲁ	ⲟⲩⲉⲓ	-ⲟⲩⲉ	-ⲟⲩⲉⲓ or -ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲉ
2 $\overline{\beta}$	ⲉⲛⲁⲩ	ⲉⲛⲧⲉ	-ⲉⲛⲟⲟⲩⲥ	-ⲉⲛⲟⲟⲩⲥⲉ
3 $\overline{\gamma}$	ⲩⲟⲙⲛⲧ or ⲩⲟⲙⲧ	ⲩⲟⲙⲧⲉ	-ⲩⲟⲙⲧⲉ	
4 $\overline{\delta}$	ⲩⲧⲟⲟⲩ	ⲩⲧⲟ	-ⲁⲩⲧⲉ	
5 $\overline{\epsilon}$	ⲧⲟⲩ	ⲧⲉ	-ⲧⲛ or -ⲧⲉ	
6 $\overline{\varsigma}$	ⲉⲟⲟⲩ	ⲉⲟⲉ	-ⲁⲉ	
7 $\overline{\zeta}$	ⲉⲁⲩⲩ	ⲉⲁⲩⲩⲉ	-ⲉⲁⲩⲩⲉ	
8 $\overline{\eta}$	ⲩⲙⲟⲩⲛ	ⲩⲙⲟⲩⲛⲉ	-ⲩⲙⲛⲛ	-ⲩⲙⲛⲛⲉ
9 $\overline{\theta}$	ⲩⲓⲥ	ⲩⲧⲉ	-ⲩⲓⲥ	-ⲩⲧⲉ

Numbers stand in front of the word they describe and agree with its gender (2.7). If there is an article, it will be singular, as in $\overline{\eta}\epsilon\overline{\zeta}\overline{\rho}\overline{\sigma}\overline{\tau}\overline{\iota}\overline{\alpha}$ ‘the seven authorities’ ($\epsilon\overline{\zeta}\overline{\rho}\overline{\sigma}\overline{\tau}\overline{\iota}\overline{\alpha}$ ‘authority’ is feminine). The exception is $\epsilon\overline{\nu}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\iota}$ ‘two’, which follows the singular noun, as in $\overline{\rho}\overline{\rho}\overline{\omega}\overline{\mu}\overline{\epsilon}\epsilon\overline{\nu}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\iota}$ ‘the two men’ and $\overline{\tau}\overline{\epsilon}\overline{\varsigma}\overline{\eta}\overline{\iota}\overline{\mu}\overline{\epsilon}\epsilon\overline{\nu}\overline{\tau}\overline{\epsilon}$ ‘the two women’ (2.6). That said, the alternative word order is entailed when $\epsilon\overline{\nu}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\iota}$ (or $\epsilon\overline{\nu}\overline{\tau}\overline{\epsilon}$) appears as a noun with the meaning ‘pair, couple’:

$\alpha\overline{\tau}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\mu}\overline{\epsilon}\overline{\rho}\overline{\iota}\overline{\tau}\overline{\mu}\overline{\mu}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\alpha}\overline{\iota}\overline{\rho}\overline{\kappa}\overline{\epsilon}\overline{\varsigma}\overline{\eta}\overline{\tau}\overline{\epsilon}\overline{\eta}\overline{\rho}\overline{\omega}\overline{\mu}\overline{\mu}\overline{\epsilon}\overline{\eta}\overline{\rho}\overline{\omega}\overline{\mu}\overline{\iota}$

My beloved mother spent another couple of years in his house.

The added forms are used as the units in numbers above ten, to make ‘fifteen’, ‘thirty-seven’, etc. As such, they are analogous to the English forms ‘thirteen’ and ‘fifteen’ (rather than ‘three-teen’ and ‘five-teen’). In other words, now we should look at how numbers are formed from ten upwards.

12.2 SIMPLE NUMBERS FROM TEN

The simple (cardinal) numbers for tens with their numerals are as follows:

Numeral	Masc.	Fem.
10 $\bar{\iota}$	ΜΗΤ	ΜΗΤΕ
20 $\bar{\kappa}$	ΧΟΥΩΤ	ΧΟΥΩΤΕ
30 $\bar{\lambda}$	ΜΑΔΒ	ΜΑΔΒΕ
40 $\bar{\mu}$	ΖΜΕ	
50 $\bar{\nu}$	ΤΑΕΙΟΥ	
60 $\bar{\xi}$	CE	
70 $\bar{\omicron}$	ΩΪΕ	
80 $\bar{\pi}$	ΖΜΕΝΕ	
90 $\bar{\rho}$	Π̣ΤΑΙΟΥ	

Of course, they also stand in front of the word they describe, as in CE $\bar{\nu}$ ΡΟΜΠΕ ‘sixty years’. Units may be added using Μ̄Ν, as in ΜΑΔΒΕ Μ̄Ν ΩΜΟΥΝΕ $\bar{\nu}$ ΡΟΜΠΕ ‘thirty and eight years’ (notice the feminine forms of the numbers with the feminine noun ΡΟΜΠΕ). Alternatively, units can be attached directly in their added forms, as CEΤΕ (CE-ΤΕ) ‘sixty-five’ and so on. Notice, therefore, that ΧΟΥΤ- ‘twenty’ and ΜΑΒ- ‘thirty’ are themselves abbreviated in pronunciation when units are attached, as in ΧΟΥΤΟΥΕ̄ΙΕ (ΧΟΥΤ-ΟΥΕ̄ΙΕ) ‘twenty-one’ and ΧΟΥΤΑCE ‘twenty-six’. Similarly, units in the teens always attach directly to Μ̄ΝΤ- (adapted from ΜΗΤ ‘ten’ like English ‘-teen’ is adapted from ‘ten’), as in Μ̄ΝΤCΑΩΪΕ (Μ̄ΝΤ-CΑΩΪΕ) ‘seventeen’. That said, ‘fifteen’ (Μ̄ΝΤ-ΤΗ) is simply Μ̄ΝΤΗ or Μ̄ΝΤΕ, with a single -Τ-, so be careful to distinguish Μ̄ΝΤΕ from ΜΗΤΕ ‘ten’.

12.3 SIMPLE NUMBERS FROM A HUNDRED

As for the simple (cardinal) numbers for hundreds and thousands, we begin with these specific numbers and their numerals:

Numeral	Number
100 $\bar{\rho}$	ΩΕ
200 $\bar{\varsigma}$	ΩΗΤ

1,000	$\overline{\text{a}}$	ⲟⲟ
10,000		ⲧⲃⲁ

Numerals from ‘300’ upwards follow the same alphabetic pattern, as $\overline{\text{T}}$ (300), $\overline{\text{Y}}$ (400), $\overline{\text{F}}$ (500), $\overline{\text{X}}$ (600), $\overline{\text{V}}$ (700), $\overline{\text{D}}$ (800) plus $\overline{\text{P}}$ (900). The actual numbers are formed on either of the patterns ⲟⲙⲙⲏⲧ ⲛⲟⲩⲉ ‘three hundreds’ or simply ⲟⲙⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲉ ‘three hundred’. Numerals for thousands are double marked, as $\overline{\overline{\text{a}}}$ and so on.

The numbers themselves (again, as in English) may be formed on the pattern ⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲟ ‘five thousand’ or the pattern ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲉ ‘seventeen hundred’. Again, smaller numbers may be added to hundreds and thousands with or without ⲙⲏ, so we find both ⲟⲩⲉⲧⲁⲓⲟⲩ ‘one hundred fifty’ ($\overline{\text{PN}}$) and ⲟⲙⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲉ ⲙⲏ ⲥⲉⲧⲉ ‘three hundred and sixty-five’ ($\overline{\text{TZE}}$).

12.4 NUMBERS IN ORDER

The first ordinal number is ⲟⲩⲟⲣⲡ ‘first’, as in ⲧⲟⲩⲟⲣⲡ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ‘the first form’ – you may recognise this word from the initial particle ⲟⲩⲟⲣⲡ ⲙⲉⲛ ‘firstly’ (7.3). The other ordinals are formed by attaching the prefix ⲙⲉⲗ- to the cardinal number, as in ⲡⲙⲉⲗⲟⲙⲙⲏⲧ ⲛⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ‘the third day’, ⲡⲙⲉⲗⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲗⲟⲩⲟⲥ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲛⲉⲓⲟⲩⲧ ‘the fifth lesson of our father’, and ⲙⲉⲗⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲟⲩⲉ ‘seventeenth’. Of course, the number ⲥⲛⲁⲩ follows the word it describes but ⲙⲉⲗ- still heads the phrase, as in ⲙⲓ ⲡⲙⲉⲗⲥⲉⲡ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ‘for the second time’ (2.6).

12.5 TIME AND DATES

Day and night were each divided into twelve hours numbered with the prefix XPI- , as in ⲙⲓ XPI- ⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ‘at hour ten (XPI- ⲙⲏⲧⲉ) of the day’. Alongside ⲙⲓⲡⲟⲟⲩ ‘today’, there are also words for ⲥⲁⲩ or ⲛⲥⲁⲩ ‘yesterday’ and ⲣⲁⲥⲧⲉ ‘next day, tomorrow’.

Whereas ⲗⲟⲟⲩ means ‘day’ as contrasted to ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲏ ‘night’ (2.1), calendar dates are listed as a number following the feminine noun ⲥⲟⲩ ‘day’, as in ⲥⲟⲩ XOYTA ⲥⲉ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲃⲟⲩⲧ ⲉⲡⲏⲡ ‘day twenty-six of the month of Epiphi’ (for the names of the twelve months, see [Section 1.5](#)). Note

especially the phrase \bar{n} COY ‘on day such-and-such’ – for example, the celebrated Abbot Pachomius (see [page 254](#)) died \bar{n} COY $\bar{m}\bar{n}\tau\alpha\gamma\tau\epsilon$ \bar{m} $\pi\epsilon\beta\omicron\tau$ $\pi\alpha\omega\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ‘on day fourteen of the month Pakhons’.

Year dates in local documents, including loans and other fiscal exchanges, are often expressed by reference to the period in office of a named official, such as the $\lambda\alpha\omega\delta\alpha\bar{n}\epsilon$ ‘magistrate’ or an $\alpha\rho\alpha$ ‘elder’, using the preposition $\bar{n}\bar{n}\alpha\gamma\rho\bar{n}$ or $\bar{n}\alpha\gamma\rho\bar{n}$ ‘before’:¹

$\pi\alpha\omega\bar{n}\epsilon$ $\bar{n}\bar{n}\alpha\gamma\rho\bar{n}$ $\pi\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ \bar{n} $\pi\alpha\pi\bar{n}\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon$ $\pi\lambda\alpha\omega\delta\alpha\bar{n}\epsilon$

Pauni before Paul, (son) of Papnoute, the magistrate.

COY $\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\epsilon$ \bar{n} $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\bar{n}$ $\bar{n}\alpha\gamma\rho\bar{n}$ $\bar{m}\alpha\bar{n}\alpha\varsigma\chi\bar{n}$

Day twenty-six of Epiphi before Manasse.

Year dates in more formal documents are typically expressed by reference to a fifteen-year fiscal accounting cycle or indiction, applied across the whole of the Empire. Such datings tend to use Greek numbers and are often abbreviated in writing, so the results may seem impenetrable until you become familiar with them, as is often the case with business contracts, financial accounts, legal papers and so on in any culture. As learners, they need not concern us here, but a straightforward example appears later in this book using the Greek number $\pi\epsilon\bar{n}\tau\epsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\tau\eta$ (πέντε και δέκατη literally ‘five and tenth’):

$\gamma\bar{n}$ $\theta\omega\theta$ \bar{n} $\pi\epsilon\bar{n}\tau\epsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\tau\eta$ in Thouth of Fifteenth

(i.e. ‘in the month of Thouth during the fifteenth year of the present fiscal cycle’).

Less frequently, documents are dated by counting the years since the accession of Diocletian in 284 (see Preliminaries, ‘Copts and the Coptic language’), which heralded the ‘era of martyrs’, and such dates are often marked with the cross-shaped abbreviations Ⲭ ($\chi + \rho$ for $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$) or Ⲩ

1. See E. Stefanski and M. Lichtheim: *Coptic Ostraca From Medinet Habu*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press (1905), pages 2–3.

(ⲙ + ⲡ for ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲟⲥ). On the other hand, Coptic documents dated by reference to the Islamic Hijra calendar are only beginning to appear at the end of the period covered by this book.

12.6 TIME TO READ SOME DATES

The cult of the martyr Saint Mena is Egypt's foundational Christian tradition (see [page 251](#)). In the Coptic account of his life, the date of his martyrdom (ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ) is given as follows:

ⲁⲓⲭⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲧⲉⲓⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ ⲛ ⲥⲟⲩ ⲙⲏⲧⲏ ⲛ ⲡⲉⲃⲟⲧ ⲓⲁⲩⲱⲣ
 ⲓⲛ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣⲣⲟ ⲛ ⲁⲓⲟⲕⲗⲏⲁⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲏ ⲙⲁⲓⲙⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ
 ⲛⲣⲣⲱⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁⲧⲏⲥ

He fulfilled (ⲭⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) his martyrdom (ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ) on day fifteen of the month Hathur in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian (5.1), the lawless (ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ) and reckless (ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁⲧⲏⲥ) kings (2.2).

Here is a funerary inscription from the facade of the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr at Deyr al-Medina (see [Figure 17](#)). For the euphemism ⲁⲓⲙⲏⲧⲟⲛ ⲛⲙⲟⲩ ‘he rested’ see [Section 11.8](#). Also, note here some unexpected writings by the mason, including the abbreviation of the word ⲉⲓⲣⲏⲏⲏ ‘peace’ as well as awkward spellings of the number ⲩⲟⲙⲏⲧ and the month of Khoiak (1.5):

ⲁⲡⲁ ⲓⲥⲁⲕ ⲁⲓⲙⲏⲧⲟⲛ	Apa Isaac. He rested
ⲛⲙⲟⲩ ⲛ ⲥⲟⲩ ⲩⲟⲙⲏⲧ	on day three
ⲛ ⲕⲓⲁⲕ ⲓⲛ ⲉⲓⲣⲏ ⲁⲙⲏⲛ	of Khoiak in peace. Amen.

In the same vein, a carefully arranged funerary inscription, more than six feet (1.88 m) wide, is the most prominent feature of the present facade of the temple-turned-church (see [Figure 18](#)). Again, think carefully while reading the dates because the spellings of the month names are unusual. By the way, note that an ⲁⲛⲁⲭⲟⲣⲓⲧⲏⲥ ‘anchorite’ is a member of a desert-based monastic community:

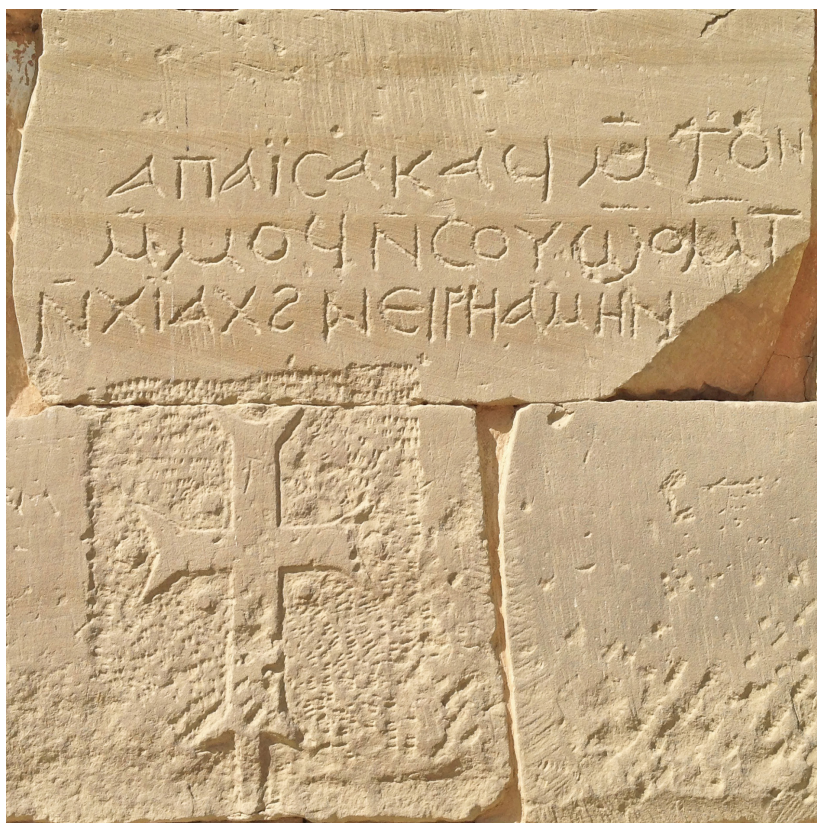


Figure 17 A funerary inscription for Isaac in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century. *Source:* author.

ΑΠΑ ΔΑΝΗΛ ΔΑΨΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟΨ Ν̄ ΣΟΥ ΨΙΣ Ν̄ ΜΩΡΙ

Apa Daniel. He rested on day nine of Mekhir.

ΑΠΑ ΠΕΒΩ ΔΑΨΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟΨ Ν̄ ΣΟΥ ΣΑΩΨ̄ Ν̄ ΠΑΡΕΜΖΑΤΨ̄

Apa Pebo. He rested on day seven of Pamenoth.

ΑΠΑ ΠΛΗΕΙΝ ΔΑΨΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟΨ ΣΟΥ ΨΟΥ Ν̄ ΠΑΑΠΕ

Apa Pleyne. He rested (on) day five of Paopi.

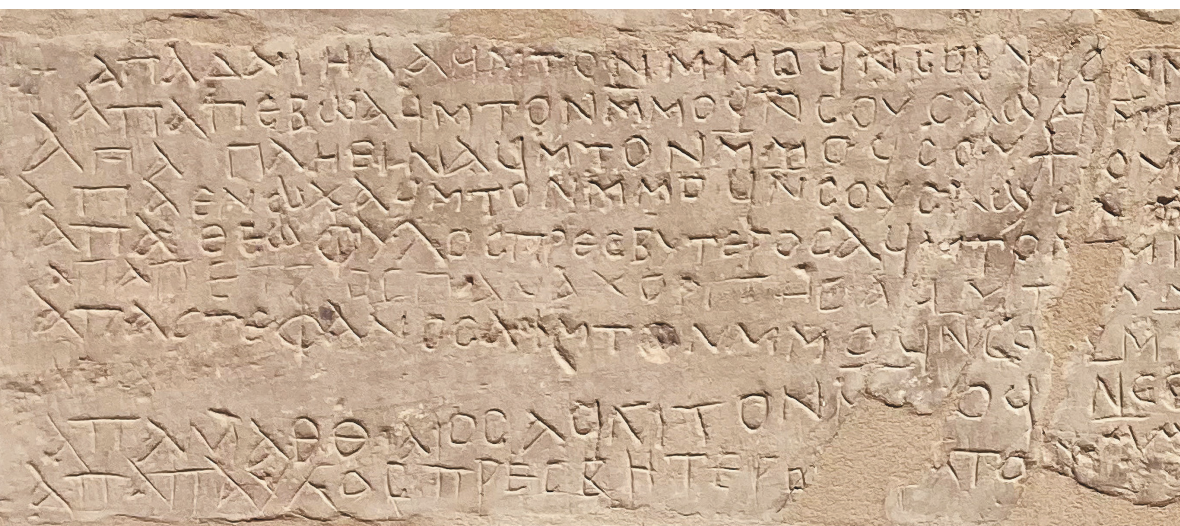


Figure 18 The grand funerary inscription for priests of the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh century. *Source:* author.

ΑΠΑ ΕΝΩΧ ΑΓΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟQ Ν ΣΟΥ ΣΑΩQ Μ ΠΑΑΠΕΪ

Apa Enoch. He rested on day seven of Paopi.

ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΦΥΛΟΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ ΑΓΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟQ Ν ΣΟΥ
ΧΟΥΤΟΥΕΪΕ Μ ΠΑΩΝΗ

Apa Theophilus, priest. He rested on day twenty-one of Pauni.

ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΑΧΟΡΙΤΗΣ ΑΓΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟQ Ν ΣΟΥ Ν ΣΟΥ*
ΧΟΥΤΑΣΕ ΚΑΧ

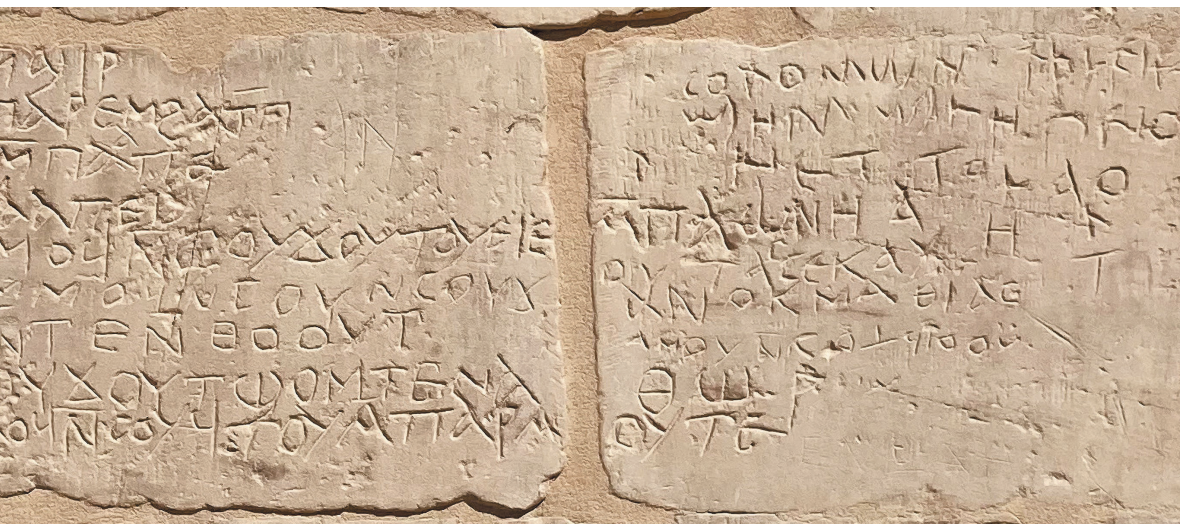
Apa Peter, the anchorite. He rested on day twenty-six of Khoiak.

ΑΠΑ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΑΓΗΤΟΝ ΜΗΟQ Ν ΣΟΥ ΜΗΤΕ Ν ΘΟΟΥΤ

Apa Stephen. He rested on day fifteen of Thouth.

ΑΠΑ Μ

Apa [lost]



απα μαθθαιος αφητον ημοι ν σου χουτωμτε η αθωρ

Apa Matthew. He rested on day twenty-three of Hathur.

*The phrase η σου is mistakenly repeated here.

απα παυλος πρεσβητερος αφητον ημοι ν σου πτου η
παρμουτε

Apa Paul, priest. He rested on day four of Parmouthi.

LESSON 13

Indicative and demonstrative

13.1 ‘I TEACH’ IN THE INDICATIVE PRESENT

The engaged present states that someone is actually doing something, as in $\bar{\text{N}}\Delta\Delta\text{IM}\omega\text{N } \text{C}\omega\text{B}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\text{C}\omega\text{T}\bar{\text{N}}$ ‘the demons are laughing at you’ (7.1). By contrast, the tense marker $\omega\alpha\text{P}\epsilon$ prefixes a statement which is true in the present but *indicative* – that is, talks about what generally happens, as in $\omega\alpha\text{P}\epsilon \text{CZIME } \omega\omega$ ‘women get pregnant’. In other words, the action does happen in the present but is not necessarily happening right now, at this point in the text:

$\omega\alpha\text{P}\epsilon \text{NE}\gamma\epsilon\text{IOTE } \text{TICB}\omega \text{N}\alpha\gamma$

Their fathers teach them (literally ‘teach to them’).

$\omega\alpha\text{P}\epsilon \text{PZAIPE}\text{TIKOC } \text{M}\bar{\text{N}} \text{PZ}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{N}} \text{P}\omega\text{P}\omega \text{EBOL } \bar{\text{N}}\text{NE}\gamma\text{CIX}$

The heretic and the pagan stretch out their hands. (1.1)

$\omega\alpha\text{P}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\text{K}\alpha \text{NIM } \text{Z}\gamma\text{PIOTACCE } \text{N}\alpha\gamma \bar{\text{N}} \text{Θ}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}} \Delta\Delta\alpha\text{M}$

Everything submits ($\text{Z}\gamma\text{PIOTACCE}$) to him like Adam. (2.5)

The tense marker reduces to $\omega\alpha$ - when a suffix pronoun is attached:

$\omega\alpha\gamma\text{ZAP}\epsilon\text{Z } \text{EN}\epsilon\gamma\text{ZIOOY}\epsilon$ They protect his paths. (9.5)

$\omega\alpha\gamma\text{†KLOM } \text{EX}\omega\gamma$ They crown him (literally ‘they crown on him’). (9.6)

13.2 ARTICLES: ‘THIS’ DEMONSTRATIVE IS $\text{P}\epsilon\text{I-}$

For the rest of this lesson, we will summarise some useful words that follow the formal pattern of the definite article – that is, an initial P- indicates the masculine form, T- the feminine form and N- the plural. For instance, $\text{P}\epsilon\text{I-}$ is an article – and, therefore, a prefix – with the demonstrative force ‘this’, as in $\text{P}\epsilon\text{IX}\omega\omega\text{ME}$ ‘this book’, $\text{N}\epsilon\text{IBIP}$ ‘these baskets’, $\text{T}\epsilon\text{IM}\bar{\text{N}}\text{TZHKE}$ ‘this scarcity’ (feminine) (5.1) and $\text{P}\epsilon\text{IEBOT } \bar{\text{N}}\text{OY}\omega\text{T}$

‘this same month’ (3.4). The demonstrative article also crops up in some useful idioms, such as $\bar{\eta}$ $\tau\epsilon\iota\zeta\epsilon$ ‘in this way, like this’ or $\bar{\mu}\pi\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha$ ‘here’ ($\bar{\mu}$ - $\pi\epsilon\iota$ - $\mu\alpha$ ‘of this place’) (7.1). Not infrequently, the ϵ is dropped in pronunciation, as in $\pi\upsilon\beta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ ‘this lifetime’, $\pi\iota\mu\omicron\upsilon\gamma$ ‘this death’, $\dagger\sigma\omicron\tau$ ‘this status’ or $\eta\iota\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$ ‘these men’:

$\dagger\sigma\tau\gamma\chi\epsilon\ddot{\iota}\ \epsilon\ \dagger\beta\lambda\chi\epsilon$ I do assent to this ostrakon. (7.6)

13.3 ARTICLES: ‘THE ONE OF’ POSSESSIVE $\pi\alpha$ -

The possessive article $\pi\alpha$ - (or $\tau\alpha$ - or $\eta\alpha$ -) characterises someone or something as belonging to someone or something else, as in $\eta\alpha\pi\epsilon\sigma\omega\omega$ ‘Pekosh’s things’ ($\eta\alpha$ - $\pi\epsilon\sigma\omega\omega$), $\eta\alpha\mu\pi\eta\gamma\epsilon$ ‘the things of the heavens’ ($\eta\alpha$ - $\mu\pi\eta\gamma\epsilon$), $\eta\alpha\pi\epsilon\upsilon\eta\ddot{\iota}$ ‘those of his house’ ($\eta\alpha$ - $\pi\epsilon\upsilon$ - $\eta\ddot{\iota}$) and $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\ \epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\eta\omicron\gamma\varsigma$ ‘he of the ripe old age’ (10.4). Who or what this article refers to is apparent in context:

$\tau\epsilon\phi\gamma\varsigma\iota\varsigma\ \bar{\eta}\ \pi\iota\mu\omicron\upsilon\gamma\ \sigma\eta\eta\tau\ \tau\alpha\pi\omega\eta\epsilon\ \gamma\omega\omega\gamma\ \chi\alpha\chi\omega$

The nature ($\phi\gamma\varsigma\iota\varsigma$) of the water is soft ($\sigma\eta\eta\tau$), *that of* the stone rather is hard ($\chi\alpha\chi\omega$). (8.3)

Now, this possessive article has the same form as the possessive article $\pi\alpha$ - ‘my’ (5.3) but confusing them is unlikely in practice. For example, contrast $\pi\alpha$ - $\omega\eta\epsilon$ ‘my stone’ with $\tau\alpha$ - π - $\omega\eta\epsilon$ ‘that of *the* stone’: the word $\omega\eta\epsilon$ is masculine, whereas $\tau\alpha$ - π - $\omega\eta\epsilon$ refers to something feminine – in this case the stone’s $\phi\gamma\varsigma\iota\varsigma$ ‘nature’. Likewise, compare $\pi\alpha$ - τ - $\eta\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\ \epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\eta\omicron\gamma\varsigma$ ‘he of the ripe old age’ with $\tau\alpha$ - $\eta\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ ‘my old age’: the word $\eta\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ is feminine but $\pi\alpha$ - τ - $\eta\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ refers to someone or something masculine (5.1).

As a final note here, in a phrase such as $\pi\alpha\gamma\alpha\iota\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\iota\mu$ ‘what belongs to each heretic’, remember that $\eta\iota\mu$ ‘each, every’ does not describe a noun with a definite article (2.5). In other words, $\eta\iota\mu$ cannot describe $\pi\alpha\gamma\alpha\iota\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$, so this phrase cannot mean ‘all that belongs to the heretic’. Rather, it must mean ‘what belongs to + each heretic’ ($\pi\alpha$ + $\gamma\alpha\iota\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\iota\mu$).

13.4 ΠΕ AND ΤΕ AND ΝΕ ‘ARE’ PRONOUNS

Whereas the words noted above are prefixes, the pronoun ΠΕ (or ΤΕ or ΝΕ) stands alone between words or phrases to state their equivalence or identity:

ῥΕΝΗΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΝΕ Ν̄ῤΗΚΕ The poor are blessed people.

Such statements do not require a verb – to be clear, ΝΕ here is a pronoun not a verb – so they ordinarily have no marked tense. Rather, the tense is established by the context and, in past narrative, this statement will naturally translate as ‘the poor were blessed people’.

Typically, the subject (the person or thing we are specifically discussing) is the word or phrase that follows the pronoun:

ῥΕΝΗΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΝΕ Ν̄ῤΗΚΕ	The poor are blessed people.
ΟΥΜΕ ΠΕ ΠΩΔΞΕ	The saying is a truth.
ΟΥΑΤ̄ΘΟΜ ΠΕ ΟΥΧΔΙ	Wellbeing (ΟΥΧΔΙ) is an impossibility. (5.1)

That said, narrative style may shift the subject to the head of the statement for emphasis, in which case the pronoun winds up at the end of the whole statement, rather than standing between the equivalent phrases:

ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Μ̄Ν ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ Μ̄Ν ΙΑΚΟΒΟΣ Μ̄Ν ΙΩΔΑΝΝΗΣ ῥΕΝΩΞΕ ΝΕ

Peter and Andrew and James and John are fishermen. (2.5)

On the other hand, the identification is often so close that it may make little sense to distinguish which is the subject (if A is B, then clearly B is A):

ΠΕΦΡΑΝ ΠΕ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ	His name is Peter <i>or</i> Peter is his name.
ΠΕΤ̄ΜΑΥ ΠΕ ΠΕΤ̄Ν̄ΙΩΤ	That one is your father <i>or</i> Your father is that one.

If there should be a gender discrepancy between the equivalent phrases, the pronoun theoretically agrees with the subject:

ΤΗΗCΤΙΑ ΠΕ ΠΕΧΑΛΙΝΟC Μ̄ ΠΜΟΝΑΧΟC

The bridle of the monk is the fast.

In this instance, the form ΠΕ agrees in gender with the (masculine) subject ΧΑΛΙΝΟC ‘bridle’ rather than (feminine) ΝΗCΤΙΑ ‘fasting’. Truthfully, however, there is considerable inconsistency about this because, as we have noted, the words are equivalent and accordingly the gender of the pronoun could reasonably be that of either. In other words, you will soon find yourself reading such statements without noticing the gender of the pronoun, not least because there may be a mix of masculine and feminine words in any case:

ΠCΟΝ Ν̄ ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC Η ΤΦΕΛΕΕΤ Η ΤCΩΝΕ ΕΤ̄ΜΜΑΥ ΠΕ ΠΕΧ̄C

Christ is the brother of the maiden or the bride or that sister.

By the way, when the subject happens to be a phrase using the common prefix ΠΕΤ- or ΤΕΤ- ‘the one who’ (or the plural ΝΕΤ- ‘those who’), which specifies ‘someone who does something’ (7.5), the similarity of sounds generally gets the pronoun omitted:

Μ̄ΜΟΝΑΧΟC ΝΕΤΒΩΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ Those who go (Ν-ΕΤ-ΒΩΚ) in are the monks.

ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕΤCΖΑΙ The one who is writing (Τ-ΕΤ-CΖΑΙ) is me (8.1).

ΟΥΖ̄Ρ̄ΦΙΡΕ ΠΕΤΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄̄ ΖΙΡ̄Μ-ΠΡΟ

The one who is standing at the door is a youth. (11.8)

CΙΝΟΥΘΙΟC ΠΕΤCΖΑΙ Μ̄ΠΕΦΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΩΤ

The one who is writing to his beloved father is Sinouthios.

Perhaps you can think of the matter like this – the pronouns ΠΕ/ΤΕ/ΝΕ and the *immediately following* subjects beginning ΠΕΤ-/ΤΕΤ-/ΝΕΤ- are obscured in pronunciation. So, we might have expected CΙΝΟΥΘΙΟC ΠΕ ΠΕΤCΖΑΙ ‘the one who is writing is Sinouthios’ (linked by ΠΕ) but we end up with just CΙΝΟΥΘΙΟC ΠΕΤCΖΑΙ.

Finally, remember that **πε** regularly may or may not appear along with the independent pronouns, though without affecting the meaning of the statement, so we find both **ΔΝΟΚ ΙΩΗΦ** ‘I am Joseph’ and **ΔΝΟΚ πε ΙΩΗΦ** ‘I am Joseph’ (8.1).

13.5 ‘HE IS’ ALSO THE PRONOUN πε

As well as linking words or phrases to state their equivalence or identity, the pronoun **πε** (or **τε** or **νε**) may stand alone as the subject of an identity statement, as in **ΠΑΩΗΡΕ πε** ‘he is my son’, **ΜΩΡΙ πε** ‘it is (the month of) Mekhir’, **ΟΥΩΠΗΡΕ τε** ‘it is a miracle’, and **ΞΕΝΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ νε** ‘they are righteous people’. Again, such a statement does not require a verb and is not marked for tense, so **ΜΩΡΙ πε** will often naturally translate in past narrative as ‘it was Mekhir’. Because the subject **πε** (or **τε** or **νε**) identifies as a particular word, it is keen to follow that word directly and may well interrupt a group of words which otherwise belong together:

ΟΥΜΑΤΟΙ πε ἸΧΩΩΡΕ	He is a strong soldier.
ΤΩΕΕΡΕ τε Ἰ ΤΕΚΩΝΕ	She is the daughter of your sister.

ΠΩΗΡΕ πε Ἰ ΙΩΔΑΝΝΗΣ ΠΕΠΑΡΧΟΣ Ἰ ΤΠΟΛΙΣ

He is the son of John, the governor (επαρχος) of the city.

In these examples, the pronouns effectively break up a noun and adjective in **ΟΥΜΑΤΟΙ ἸΧΩΩΡΕ** ‘a strong soldier’, and even the whole phrases **ΤΩΕΕΡΕ Ἰ ΤΕΚΩΝΕ** ‘the daughter of your sister’ and **ΠΩΗΡΕ Ἰ ΙΩΔΑΝΝΗΣ** ‘the son of John’.

13.6 ‘THIS ONE’ IS THE PRONOUN παι

Another pronoun is demonstrative **παι** (or **ται**) ‘this one’ or **ναι** ‘these ones’, as in **ΝΑΪ ΤΗΡΟΥ** ‘all these things’ (8.3). This pronoun is especially useful when used in conjunction with **πε** (or **τε** or **νε**) to form the phrases ‘this is’ or ‘these are’, as in **ΠΕΟΥΘΕΙΩ πε παι** ‘this is the time’, **ΝΑΪ νε ΤΣΑΩΡΕ ΝΕΖΟΥΣΙΑ** ‘these are the seven authorities’ and **ΤΑΙ τε ΘΕ ἸΡΩΜΕ** ‘this is the mortal way’ (3.4):

ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΤΑΝΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ Μ̄ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΙΩΤ ΙΩΣΗΦ

This is the life-story (ΑΝΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ) of my beloved father, Joseph.

ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΛΩΘΜΕ ΑΥΩ ΠΝΟΒ̄ Ν̄ΚΑΙΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ

This is the book and the great compendium.

A useful idiom to note here is Ε ΠΕΙCΑ Μ̄Ν ΠΑΙ ‘here and there, this way and that’, literally ‘to this side (CΑ) and this one’.

13.7 THE PRONOUN ΠΩΙ IS ‘MINE’

The pronoun ΠΩΙ means ‘his’, as in ΠΩΙ ΠΕ ‘it is his’. As such, the stem ΠΩϝ requires a suffix pronoun to indicate *whose* it is, so we just as easily find ΠΩΟΥ ΠΕ ‘it is theirs’:

ΩΑΥΤ̄ΕΟΥ Ν̄ΠΕΥΩΔΞΕ Μ̄ ΠΑΡΑ ΠΩΙ

He praises their speaking more than his own (literally ‘as more than his’).

Of course, the stem ΠΩϝ itself changes to agree with the gender or number of the word it refers to:

ΤΩΤ̄Ν ΤΕ ΤΗΝ̄Τ̄ΡΟ Ν̄ Μ̄ΠΗΥΕ The kingdom of the heavens
is yours.

In this instance, the feminine stem ΤΩϝ agrees with the feminine noun ΜΗΤ̄ΡΟ ‘kingdom’ (5.1), while the suffix pronoun (ΤΩ-Τ̄Ν̄) indicates that it is ‘yours’.

13.8 ‘WHO, WHICH’ IS ALSO ΕΤΕ

We have noted that statements based on the pronoun ΠΕ (or ΤΕ or ΝΕ) need not have a verb. When introducing a statement (other than

a location statement) which has no verb, the prefix ⲉⲧ ‘who, which’ is replaced by the distinct word ⲉⲧⲉ (7.5):

ⲫⲉⲃⲣⲟⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲁⲣ ⲡⲉ	February, which is Mekhir.
ⲛⲉⲛⲟⲡⲓⲗⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ	Our guards, which are these.

ⲡⲉⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲓⲙⲥⲧⲉⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲕⲭⲡⲟ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲉ

This great mystery, which is your holy birth.

ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲗⲟⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲃⲁⲡⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲕⲣⲁⲓⲱⲥⲩⲛⲓⲛⲓ

This great gift, which is the love of your Holiness (ⲣⲁⲓⲱⲥⲩⲛⲓⲛⲓ).

The same thing happens when introducing the small group of verbs that have to be followed by their subjects (10.4):

ⲧⲣⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲣⲛⲁⲕ	The way that <i>you</i> wish.
ⲡⲉⲧⲉ ⲣⲛⲁⲩ	What <i>he</i> wishes.

13.9 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: LIFE IS LIKE THIS

First, we return to The Tragedy of Archellites (10.6). The impressionable young man travels abroad for the first time and is deeply upset at seeing a drowned body washed up on a beach:

ⲛⲉⲩⲣⲓⲙⲉⲗ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲩⲥⲗⲥⲱⲗⲓ	Therefore, his servants
ⲉⲩⲭⲱ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ	consoled him, saying,
ⲡⲉⲛⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ	‘Our lord, this is the mortal way.’

Next, here are more teachings from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. The first is taken from a story with a folkloric aspect, drawing on an image familiar in late pharaonic art, which shows the god Horus ripping snakes and scorpions apart:

ⲱⲁⲩⲁⲙⲁⲣⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲣⲛ̄	He grabs in this manner, in his
ⲛⲉⲩⲟⲓⲭ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ̄	hands, the snakes, vipers

ἡ κεραστὴς μὴ νόοοι	(κεραστὴς) and scorpions
	(νόοοι).
ἀλλ' οὕτως ἐκείνη ἐβόη	Then in this manner he bursts
ἐκ τῶν μέσων	them (ἐκ-τῶν-μέσων) out
	from their middles.

The next is taken from the description of a devout man who chants a prayer called the Three Holies (or Trisagion) in Orthodox Christian tradition:

ⲱⲁⲕⲣ̅ ⲡⲉⲗⲟⲟϥ ⲧⲏⲣ̅ ⲉϥⲕⲱ ⲙ̅ⲡⲱⲟⲙⲏⲧ̅ ⲛ̅ⲁⲉⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲁⲉⲁⲓⲉⲗⲟⲥ

He spends the whole day (9.6) saying the Three Holies with the angels.

Finally, this is all of a brief, anonymous teaching:

ἀφ' οὗ οὐκ ὦν πρὸς τὸν ἀσκητὴν ἐκείνῳ ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανόις ἐκείνῳ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ·	He also said, 'The prudent monk, they crown him on the earth, and also (ON) in the heavens they crown him in the presence of God.'
--	---

Notice here the idiomatic phrase $\bar{\mu}\tau\omicron$ $\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\lambda$ ‘presence’, which is useful to learn and recognise.

To finish, we can dip into the most frequently discussed of the apocryphal gospels, the Gospel of Thomas – a collection of more than 100 sayings or dialogues ascribed to Jesus and his disciples (10.6). The only complete text we have is from the fourth century Nag Hammadi library (see Preliminaries, ‘Sahidic Coptic manuscripts’), but the following teaching may seem familiar to you from the Beatitudes in the New Testament (Luke 6:20):

πεχε ις δε ζενμακαριος νε ν̄ζηκε δε τωτῇ τε τμη̄ντερο
 ν̄ μπ̄νυε

Jesus said, 'The poor are blessed people that (X€) yours is the kingdom of the heavens.'

Notice here the unusual (but not unexpected) writing of ΜΝΤΕΡΟ instead of ΜΝΤΡΡΟ ‘kingdom’.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ΕΙΟΤΕ	(plural of ΕΙΩΤ)	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ΠΗΓΕ	(plural of ΠΕ)	ΠΑΡΑ, ΠΑΡΑΡΟϣ	more
ΞΙΟΥΓΕ	(plural of ΞΙΗ)		than,
ΟΝ	also, too		beyond
ΜΕ	truth	ΞΙΡḆ, ΞΙΡΩϣ	at,
ΜΟΥ	water		outside
ΞḲḂḌḌ	servant		
ΞḲḲḲ	pagan	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΜΗΤΕ	middle	ḌΜḌḂḂḂḂ	grab,
ḌΩΡΟΝ	gift		hold
ΚΛΟΝ	crown	ΠΩḂ ΠḌḂ- ΠḌḂϣ	burst
ΞΟϐ	snake	ΠΩΡΩ ΠḲḲḲ- ΠΟΡΩϣ	stretch
ḌΩΩΜΕ	book	СОΛСḲ СḲСḲ- СḲСΩḲϣ	console
ΕΒΟΤ	month	ΩΩ	conceive,
ΟΥΧḌḌ	wellbeing		get
ΧḌḲḲḲ	bridle		pregnant
ΜΗСТΙΑ	fasting	ḌΠΟ ḌΠΕ- ḌΠΟϣ	give
ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟС	maiden		birth,
ΩΕΛΕΕΤ	bride		create
ΞḲḲḲḲ	youth		
ΜḌΤΟΙ	soldier	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
ΞḌΚ	prudent,	ḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΕΒΟḲ	presence
	sober	Ε ΠΕΙСḌ ḲḲ ΠḌḌ	here and
ḌΩΩΡΕ	strong		there
ΕΞΟΥСΙΑ	authority		
ΚḌḲḌḌḌḌḲḲḲḲ	compendium		

LESSON 14

Negative statements and second tenses

14.1 ‘DO NOT!’

Telling somebody ‘do not do’ something usually entails no more than placing ⲙⲡⲣ̅ or ⲙⲡⲉⲣ in front of the infinitive:

ⲙⲡⲣ̅ⲙⲓⲟⲩⲉ ⲙⲏ ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲭⲱⲱⲣⲉ	Do not fight with a strong man.
ⲙⲡⲣ̅ⲟⲛ ⲁⲣⲓⲕⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ	Do not find fault with me (literally ‘toward me’ (9.5)).
ⲙⲡⲣ̅ⲭⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲗⲗⲁⲩ	Do not say this to anyone (3.5).

The verb following ⲙⲡⲣ̅ is the infinitive even in the case of those verbs that have a specific imperative; hence ⲙⲡⲣ̅-ⲭⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ‘do not say this’ incorporates the infinitive of ⲭⲱ ⲭⲉ- ⲭⲟⲟⲥ ‘say’, not the imperative ⲁⲭⲱ ‘say’ (4.3).

14.2 ‘I DO NOT’ AND ‘I DID NOT’

The simple, indicative tenses have a corresponding set of negative tense markers, so the tense marker ⲙⲡⲉ- negates the simple past (9.1) just as the tense marker ⲙⲉ- negates the indicative present (13.1):

	Positive		Negative	
Past	ⲁⲛⲥⲁⲓ	we wrote	ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲥⲁⲓ	we did not write
Present	ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲥⲁⲓ	we write	ⲙⲉⲛⲥⲁⲓ	we do not write

Compare the negative forms with the positive forms and you see that they are distinguished only by this tense marker. However, you also see that there is no recognisable link between the positive and negative tense marker in either tense, so we just have to learn and recognise the positive and negative tense markers individually. To take the example of the past, here is a full list of the negative forms:

	Singular			Plural	
First	ἡπείσῃ	I did not write		ἡπένσῃ	we did not write
Second	ἡπέκσῃ	you (masc.) did not write		ἡπέτῃσῃ	you did not write
	ἡπέσῃ	you (fem.) did not write			
Third	ἡπέφσῃ	he did not write		ἡπόγσῃ	they did not write
	ἡπέσσῃ	she did not write			

The tense marker is also ἡπέ- in front of nouns. Notice the less predictable forms ἡπέ-σῃ ‘you did not write’ (addressing a woman) and ἡπόγ-σῃ ‘they did not write’. Occasionally, the ε of ἡπέ- is lost in pronunciation from other forms too:

ἡπῖναγ ε πρὸ ἡ λααγ ἡρῶμε ἡσα παρχιεπισκοπος
μαγααγ (8.3)

I did not see the face of any person except the Archbishop alone.

As you know, Coptic style tends to treat the past tense as a building block for narrative and, in this regard, the negative is no different than the positive. For instance, here the negative past is used in a story about a man taking his son to see Apa Jijoi:

ἀπεφῶνρε μογ ἡτοοτῃ ρι τεζῖν ἀγῶ ἡτογ ἡπεφῶτορτῃ
ἀλλα ἀφῖτῃ ὡα πρῆλλο

His son died with him on the road, and, for his part, he did not panic (ῶτορτῃ). Instead, he carried him (ἀ-φ-ῖτ-ῃ) to the elder.

By the way, looking at ἡτογ specifically, you may wish to consider how best you can add this word into your translation (8.2).

The negative counterpart of the indicative present has the tense marker μερε but, as you saw above, this reduces to με- when a suffix pronoun is attached:

ΜΕΙΝΚΟΤΚ̄ ΕΝΕΞ

I do not sleep (ΝΚΟΤΚ̄) ever.

ΜΕΣΤΑΟΥΕ ΟΥΟΝΤΕ ΕΒΟΛ

It does not grow (ΤΑΟΥΕ) thorns out.

ΜΕΥΡ̄ ΔΤΣΩΤΜ̄ Ε ΝΕΦΩΔΧΕ

They do not act (ΜΕ-Υ-Ρ̄) heedless to his sayings. (5.1)

14.3 THE SECOND TENSES

English has various strategies for adding specific emphasis to a statement, including tone ('speak *quietly*'), word order ('quietly, speak quietly'), compound forms ('I did speak quietly') or phrasing ('I spoke quietly, you know?'). Coptic employs these strategies too but has its own ways of adding emphasis. For example, to indicate that the focus of the statement lies wider than the simple action because it includes some explanation or qualification too ('she fell' > 'she fell *badly*' or 'she fell *when she was coming down the stairs*'), Coptic may employ marked forms of verbs, which we simply call the second tenses. For example, here are the forms of the second past:

	Singular		Plural	
First	ḲΤΑΙCΞΑΙ	I wrote	ḲΤΑNCΞΑΙ	we wrote
Second	ḲΤΑKΞΑΙ	you (masc.) wrote	ḲΤΑΤḲΞΑΙ	you wrote
	ḲΤΑPECΞΑΙ	you (fem.) wrote		
Third	ḲΤΑQCΞΑΙ	he wrote	ḲΤΑYCΞΑΙ	they wrote
	ḲΤΑCCΞΑΙ	she wrote		

The tense marker is also ḲΤΑ- in front of nouns and, as usual, note the less predictable second-person form ḲΤΑPE-CΞΑΙ 'you wrote', when addressing a woman.

We call them second tenses because the second past, for instance, has exactly the same meaning as the simple past. In other words, a

Coptic speaker or writer had the (often unthinking) choice of using the (first choice) simple past or the (less common) second past to say the same thing. However, as we noted, using a second tense suggests that the crux of the statement is more than the simple action. For example, in one story, the celebrated hermit Antony offers Apa Macarius a place to stay for the night, but he does so for a reason:

ἸΤΑϢΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖἸ ΖΕΝΝΟϢ ἸΖΙϢΕ He has come out of (ΕΒΟΛ
ΖἸ) great struggles.

The sentence does not hinge simply on the fact that Macarius has come (we know he is here) but how or why he has come ('out of great struggles'), and the second past (ἸΤΑ-Ϣ-ΕΙ) naturally falls in with this wider emphasis. To take another example, from a story you will read later, here is the explanation for Thebes' deliverance from a barbarian assault:

ἸΤΑϢΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤἸ ΠΙΝΟΥΤΕ It happened through (ΕΒΟΛ
ΖΙΤἸ) God.

Again, the meaning of the simple past and the second past is identical, and it may be difficult or impossible to capture the second tense in translation because a rendering such as 'through God did it happen' generates awkward English, whereas the shift in Coptic from (simple) ἈϢΩΠΕ 'it happened' to (second) ἸΤΑϢΩΠΕ 'it happened' is subtle but also ordinary.

Likewise, the second present, marked with ΕΡΕ, accommodates such qualifications or explanations, although the meaning is identical to that of the engaged present (7.1):

ΕΡΕ ΠΧΟΕΙϢ ΧΑΡΙΖΕ ΝΑΝ ἸΠΙΝΟϢ ἸΔΩΡΟΝ ΕΤΕ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ ΤΕ Ἰ
ΤΕΚΖΑΓΙΩϢΥΗ

The Lord is granting to us this great gift that is the love of your Holiness. (13.8)

With a pronoun subject, the tense marker ΕΡΕ reduces to no more than a simple Ε- but this is a solid enough basis for the subject to be a suffix pronoun rather than an initial pronoun (7.2):

ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲗⲧ̅ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲛⲓ ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ	He is bowing to him to get confession.
ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉ ⲃⲱⲕ ⲉ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧ̅ⲙⲁⲩ	I want to go to that place.
	(7.5)

Here the verbs ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲡⲁⲗⲧ̅ (not used reflexively) and ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲟⲩⲱⲱ use the second present because what matters in each statement is the intention as much as the action – *why* he is bowing, *where* I wish to go.

Of course, location statements are also engaged and may also be marked as the second present, even though they do not normally include a verb. For example, in the Gospel of Mary we are told that intuition is crucial for understanding so, wherever there is intuition, ⲉⲓⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̅ⲟⲓ ⲡⲉⲗⲟ ‘the prize (ⲉⲗⲟ) is there’ – in other words, *that’s where* the prize is. In this instance, we could perhaps intentionally translate ‘*there* is the prize’, but the point remains that it is often difficult or impossible to render this subtle emphasis into a natural English translation.

Unfortunately, the forms of the second present are much the same as those of the circumstantial tense (6.3), including the form ⲉⲡⲉ ‘you’ for addressing a woman. Formally, therefore, the circumstantial tense and the second present can be confused, but one or the other will ordinarily suggest itself in context. More to the point, your rule of thumb is that the circumstantial tense is characteristic of Coptic narrative and ubiquitous (6.3, 9.2) – and, accordingly, crucial for your early learning – whereas the second present is used sparingly and specifically, and your notes will point it out.

As a final point here, the indicative present may also be marked with a simple ⲉ- to denote its second tense (13.1):

ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲱⲁⲓⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲓⲭ̅ⲙ̅ ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲕⲟⲧ̅ⲕ̅ ⲕⲉⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲱⲁⲓⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲛ̅
ⲑⲁⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ

One, he dies at his place of sleeping; another one, he dies in the sea. (2.1)

Again, there is no virtue in translating ‘in his place of sleeping does he die’. Second tenses are subtle, to guide your reading and interpretation rather than changing the meaning of a statement. You will get to grips with them in your ongoing reading, especially in one particular context – questions.

14.4 EMPHASIS AND QUESTIONS

The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* are a rich source of questions, asked to the elders. In any question, precisely what matters is not the simple statement but the question about it – not the fact that ‘you are coming’ but the question itself ‘*when* are you coming?’ Accordingly, English typically flags up a question by moving the question word to the head of the sentence, even if this entails reordering the remaining words. A question word can head a Coptic statement too, and Coptic has plenty of these words, including ⲁⲱ ‘who, which’, ⲟⲩ ‘what, how’, ⲉⲛⲉ ‘whether (or not)’, ⲛⲓⲙ ‘who’, ⲧⲱⲛ ‘where’, ⲧⲛⲁⲩ ‘when’, ⲟⲩⲛⲣ ‘how many’, ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ ‘why’ (literally ‘because of what?’) and both ⲡⲱⲥ and ⲛ ⲁⲱ ⲛ ⲉⲃ ‘how’ (literally ‘in what way?’):

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲉⲙⲱⲛ ⲙⲓⲱⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲁⲛ	Why are the demons fighting with us?
ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲱⲃⲃⲓⲟ	What is humility?
ⲛⲧⲕⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ	Who are you? (8.1)
ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲭⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲛⲉⲕⲣⲟⲩⲣ	Who is the one who asks
ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲟⲩ	the frogs (ⲕⲣⲟⲩⲣ) about the water? (13.4)

However, Coptic has another way of doing things: a question may retain the usual word order (‘you are coming *when*?’), entailing a second tense to alert us at the start that something significant is on the way:

ⲛⲧⲁⲕⲉⲓ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ	Why have you come here? [past]
ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲱⲗⲛ̅ ⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ	Who has it appeared (ⲥⲱⲗⲛ̅) to? [past]
ⲉⲱⲁⲕⲱⲗⲛⲗ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ	Why do you pray? [indicative present]
ⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲡ̅ ⲟⲩ	How is the city doing? [engaged present]
ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲣ ⲟⲩ ⲛ ⲛⲉⲓⲃⲓⲣ	What are you doing to these baskets? [engaged present]

At this point we can also note the marker ⲉⲣⲉ, used to address a woman:

ΕΡΕΝΗΥ ΔΙΝ ΤΩΝ Η ΕΡΕΒΗΚ Ε ΤΩΝ

From where are you coming or to where are you going?

Of course, the question could also be about a location, as in ΕΥΤΩΝ ΠΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΡΙΜΕ ‘where is he, the person who weeps?’

14.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: A QUESTION OF ATTITUDE

Now we have some more teachings from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, though we begin with a story about a woman celebrated within that community:

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΗΑΚΑΡΙΑ ΣΑΡΑ ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΔΕ
ΔΣΕΡ ΣΕ ΝΡΟΜΠΕ ΕΣΟΥΗΖ ΖΜ ΠΕΤΠΕ Μ ΠΙΕΡΟ
ΜΠΕΣΚΕΡΑΤΣ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΝΕΖ Ε ΝΔΥ ΕΠΙΕΡΟ

They said about the blessed Sarah, the maiden, that
she spent sixty years settled (Ε-Σ-ΟΥΗΖ) in the upper
part of the river,
and she did not step out ever to see the river.

The next saying describes a monk who has attained an ideal character, restrained and devoid of opinions. Notice here the useful conjunction ΟΥΔΕ, which has the negative connotation ‘and not, nor’ but accordingly translates simply as ‘and’ in a context which is already negative – in other words, do not suppose there are any double negatives in the following:

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΕΤΒΕ ΔΠΑ ΖΩΡ ΔΕ ΜΠΕΦΧΙΣΟΛ ΕΝΕΖ
ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΦΩΡΚ ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΦΣΑΖΟΥ ΝΡΩΜΕ
ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΦΘΑΔΕ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΑΝΑΓΚΗ

They said about Father Hor that he did not lie ever,
and he did not swear, and he did not curse (ΣΑΖΟΥ) people,
and he did not talk without cause.

ΟΥΑ ΜΕΝ ΕΨΑΦΜΟΥ ΖΙΧΜ ΠΕΦΜΑ Ν ΝΚΟΤΚ
ΚΕΟΥΑ ΕΨΑΦΜΟΥ ΖΝ ΘΑΛΑССΑ

Therefore, his servants consoled him, saying,
'Our lord, this is the mortal way.
Accordingly (7.3), one person dies at his place of sleeping,
another one dies in the sea.'

WORKING VOCABULARY

διτῆ, διτοοτῶ	through, from	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ἐνεῖ	ever, forever	ὑοοπ	stay, live, exist
ἐβολᾶε	because	βηκ	going
οὔδε	and not, nor		(from βωκ)
χωρίε	without	οὔηε	settled (from
αὖ	who, which		οὔωε)
ἐνε	whether	κερατῶ	step
οὔ	what, how	ἡκοτῆ	sleep
τιε	top, upper	ὑτορτῆ ὑτῆτῆ-	
	part	ὑτῆτῶε	upset, panic
γαλαττα	sea	ταοὔω ταγε-	
ἱερο	river	ταγῶε	produce, grow
ὑοντε	thorn	ὦωλῆ ὦλπ-	
μετάνοια	repentance,	ὦολπῶ	reveal, appear,
	confession		unwrap
πειρασμός	temptation	ᾶνοὔ ᾶνε-	
ὦολ	lie	ᾶνοὔῶ	ask
ῥαγιωσύνη	holiness (title)	ὠρῆ ὠρκῶ	swear
ῥυπομονή	endurance,		
	restraint	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
ὦωω	contempt	εἰτβε οὔ	why
		ἡ αὖ ἡ ῥε	how

LESSON 15

Complex descriptions

15.1 ‘WHO, WHICH’ IS ÑT IN THE PAST

The converters $\epsilon\tau$ or $\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ ‘who, which’ may be used to create simple descriptions, even those for which English uses only an adjective, as in $\pi\epsilon\varrho\zeta\bar{\mu}\zeta\alpha\lambda\ \epsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\beta$ ‘his holy servant’; or they may be used to form a longer description, as in $\alpha\lambda\omicron\kappa\ \Delta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\Delta\ \epsilon\tau\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota$ ‘I am David, who is writing’ and $\phi\epsilon\beta\rho\omicron\alpha\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \bar{\mu}\omega\rho\ \pi\epsilon$ ‘February, which is Mekhir’. If such a description is in the simple past tense, this converter is pronounced ÑT, as in $\pi\omicron\gamma\omicron\epsilon\iota\bar{n}\ \bar{n}\tau\alpha\varrho\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\ \pi\kappa\omicron\varsigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ‘the light which came to the world’, or $\omicron\gamma\omicron\bar{n}\ \bar{n}\bar{\mu}\ \bar{n}\tau\alpha\chi\chi\iota\chi\bar{\nu}\epsilon$ ‘everyone who has taken arms’ (2.5). However, notice that ‘came’ and ‘taken’ are clearly past tense in English, whereas a Coptic verb does not itself change for tense. Therefore, the whole phrase, including tense marker and subject (Δ - ϱ - $\epsilon\iota$ and Δ - χ - $\chi\iota\chi\bar{\nu}\epsilon$), is required after ÑT in a past tense description. Consequently, statements using ÑT ‘who, which’ may look the same as those of the second past but, of course, descriptions tend to appear alongside whichever word they describe:

$\pi\alpha\iota\ \pi\epsilon\ \pi\omega\omega\bar{n}\epsilon\ \bar{n}\tau\alpha\varrho\omega\pi\epsilon\ \bar{n}\ \tau\alpha\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\tau\ \bar{\mu}\bar{\mu}\alpha\Delta\gamma$

This is the sickness which happened (ÑT- Δ - ϱ - $\omega\pi\epsilon$) to my beloved mother.

$\bar{n}\alpha\bar{\iota}\ \bar{n}\tau\alpha\varrho\omega\pi\epsilon\ \bar{n}\alpha\bar{n}\ \bar{n}\varsigma\omicron\lambda\varsigma\bar{\chi}$

These things which have become (ÑT- Δ - χ - $\omega\pi\epsilon$) for us comforting.

Of course, when such past descriptions are employed on their own as nouns (to mean ‘someone who did this’) they take an article, as in $\pi\epsilon\bar{n}\tau\alpha\varrho\omega\bar{n}$ ‘the one who *commanded*’ (π -ÑT- Δ - ϱ - $\omega\bar{n}$) alongside π - $\epsilon\tau$ - $\omega\bar{n}$ ‘the one who *commands*’ (7.5). As ever, bear in mind the rule of thumb, that descriptions are used much more frequently than second tenses.

We can end here with another rule of thumb, according to which the converter for descriptions beginning ‘who, which’ appears as follows:

- (1) descriptions involving positive engaged statements have the prefix $\epsilon\tau$ ($\kappa\gamma\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\tau\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota\ \bar{n}\ \alpha\bar{n}\Delta\rho\epsilon\alpha\varsigma$ ‘Cyrus, who is writing to Andrew’) (7.5);

- (2) descriptions involving positive statements in the simple past have the prefix $\bar{\eta}\tau$ ($\pi\omega\omega\eta\epsilon \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\varphi\omega\pi\epsilon \bar{\eta} \tau\alpha\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\tau \bar{\eta}\mu\alpha\alpha\gamma$ ‘the sickness which happened to my beloved mother’);
- (3) descriptions involving other kinds of statements, including all the negative forms, are introduced by the word $\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ (13.8).

15.2 GETTING THE PRONOUNS IN ORDER

Of course, a description may be more complex than a simple attribute of a person or thing, or a simple statement of what they do. For example, the description may involve someone else. Therefore, pronouns are frequently employed after $\epsilon\tau$ (or $\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ or $\bar{\eta}\tau$) to clarify exactly how the word described fits into its description, and especially to specify subject and object, as though in English we were to write ‘the lady who I saw her’ or ‘the date which his birthday is on it’:

$\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\gamma\tau\alpha\gamma\omicron\varsigma$

The lesson they proclaimed ($\bar{\eta}\tau$ - α - γ - $\tau\alpha\gamma\omicron$ - ς ‘which they proclaimed it’).

$\pi\alpha\iota \pi\epsilon \pi\chi\omega\omega\eta\epsilon \alpha\gamma\omega \pi\iota\eta\omicron\varsigma \bar{\eta}\kappa\alpha\iota\phi\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\eta \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\varphi\varsigma\alpha\gamma\bar{\eta}$

This is the book and the great compendium he wrote ($\bar{\eta}\tau$ - α - φ - $\varsigma\alpha\gamma$ - ς ‘which he wrote it’). (13.6)

$\tau\bar{\eta}\varsigma\omicron\omicron\upsilon\gamma\eta \bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\gamma\iota\varsigma\epsilon \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\kappa\omega\pi\omicron\gamma$

We know the troubles you received ($\bar{\eta}\tau$ - α - κ - $\omega\pi$ - $\omicron\gamma$ ‘which you received them’).

$\pi\alpha\iota \pi\epsilon \pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha \pi\epsilon\eta\iota\omega\tau \epsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\upsilon \bar{\eta}\pi\rho\omicron\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma \chi\omicron\omicron\varphi$

This is the lesson which our prophetic holy father said. (11.7)

$\alpha\varphi \tau\epsilon \tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\iota\alpha \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\kappa\alpha\alpha\varsigma$

What is the craft ($\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\iota\alpha$) which you did it ($\bar{\eta}\tau$ - α - κ - $\alpha\alpha$ - ς) = which craft did you do?

ⲉⲱⲃⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲕⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ

Everything he promised. (2.5)

By the way, in the last example notice that the meaning of ⲛ̅ⲧⲁ-ⲕ-ⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ (literally ‘which he promised them’) cannot be ‘which he promised *to* them’ because ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ ‘them’ is clearly the marked object – any apparent ambiguity over the meaning of ‘them’ arises in the peculiarities of English grammar, not Coptic. That said, there is no reason why such a description could not add an indirect object or, indeed, some other form of qualification:

ⲡⲓⲱⲏⲙ ⲛ̅ⲥⲁⲣⲧ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲓⲧⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥⲥ ⲛⲏ

This bit of wool which I sent (ⲛ̅ⲧ-ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲧⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ-ⲕ ‘which I sent it’) to you. (4.1)

ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲓⲛⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ ⲟϥⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ

What the apostle declared (ⲡ-ⲛ̅ⲧⲁ-ⲡ-ⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲓⲛⲁⲗⲉⲓ) to everyone.

If a description is in the engaged present tense and its subject is not the person or thing being described, the presence of ⲉⲧ allows the subject of the description to appear as a suffix pronoun instead of an initial pronoun (7.2):

ⲛ̅ⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ

The mercies that they do (ⲉⲧ-ⲟϥ-ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲟϥ ‘which they do them’). (5.1)

If the subject of such a description is a noun, then the converter becomes ⲉⲧ-ⲉⲣⲉ, as in:

ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥϥⲛⲏ ⲛⲏϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̅ⲉⲛⲧⲥ̅

This thing which righteousness (ⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥϥⲛⲏ) comes out of.

ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥϥⲛⲏ ⲛⲏϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉ̅ⲛ̅-ⲣⲱⲥ

This thing out of whose mouth righteousness comes (literally ‘which righteousness comes out of its mouth’ (5.2)).

πμα ετερε πωηρεωνη νζητῳ

The place where the child is. (5.3)

Here the additional ερε is presumably the prefix from the *second present tense* (14.3) because we are not simply stating the boy’s location but specifying a particular location on the basis that it is ‘the place *where he is*’.

As we noted above, when a description involves tenses other than the engaged present or the simple past, then the converter is liable to be the stand-alone form ετε:

θε ετε ωαχε-παι The way that they say this. (13.1)

15.3 THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL TENSE IN DESCRIPTIONS

Here is a crucial point: statements headed by the converter ετ (or ετε or ντ) can typically only be used to describe someone or something definite (‘your voice’, ‘today’, ‘his servant’). If the word described is indefinite or general, the circumstantial tense is used to qualify it instead, as in ογρεϋρῃνοβε εϋμοοωε ‘a sinner who walks’ (that is, any ‘sinner who happens to be walking’), ογναζῃ εϋζορω ‘a yoke which is heavy’, and λααγ νωαχε εϋζοογ ‘any speaking which is evil’. The distinction can be illustrated by comparing the phrases πεπῃνα ετ-ογλααβ ‘the holy spirit’ and ογῃπῃνα ε-γ-ογλααβ ‘a holy spirit’.

Such circumstantial qualifications follow the pattern you are already familiar with in past narrative (9.2), but you now see that they can be used with any tense and may provide a description which is a simple attribute (ε-γ-ζορω ‘heavy’) or something more complex:

ειςορμε νθε νογεσοογ εςορμε

I am lost in the way a sheep is lost (ε-ς-ορμε ‘when it is lost’).
(14.3)

ⲉⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲉ ⲉϥⲙⲓⲡⲱⲁ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲙⲟϥ

They are some men deserving of death (ⲉ-ϥ-ⲙⲓⲡⲱⲁ ‘when they are deserving’).

ⲃⲱⲕ ⲛⲓⲣⲧⲟⲃⲕ ⲉ ⲟϥⲥⲟⲛ ⲉϥⲣ̄ⲭⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲭⲏⲧⲓ̄ ⲙⲓⲡⲡⲟϥⲧⲉ (8.4)

Go and attach yourself (ⲛⲓ-ⲣⲧⲟⲃⲕ) to a brother who fears (ⲉ-ϥ-ⲣ̄ⲭⲟⲩⲧⲉ) God in himself.

In fact, circumstantial descriptions can be applied to definite as well as indefinite words:

ⲡⲁⲫⲏⲧ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲱⲧ	my heart which is hard
ⲡⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲉϥⲧⲟϥⲃⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲃⲉ	the monk who resists sin

ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉ ⲧⲥⲁⲱⲥ ⲛ̄ ⲉⲭⲟϥⲥⲓⲁ ⲉϥⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥϭⲭⲏ

These are the seven authorities which are asking (ⲉ-ϥ-ⲱⲛⲉ) the soul.

How so? Remember the addresses for letters (6.4)? Among them you read ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲁⲗⲟϥ ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲓ ‘I am Palou and I am writing’ and later you read ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲁⲁⲱⲣⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲁⲓ ‘I am Tadore who is writing’ (7.6). Those simple alternatives emphasise how close in use and in meaning descriptions using ⲉⲧ and descriptions using the circumstantial tense may be. Although phrases headed by ⲉⲧ (or ⲉⲧⲉ or ⲛ̄ⲧ) are typically only used to describe definite nouns, the circumstantial tense is much more widely employed, as you presumably appreciate by now.

15.4 ‘WHILE’ THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL CONVERTER IS ⲉⲣⲉ OR ⲉ-

Speaking of which, quite obviously related to the circumstantial tense in both form and meaning is the small but effective converter ⲉ-, which can prefix most types of statement, again to create a description, qualification or a statement of context. For example, the circumstantial converter may be applied to a statement which has no verb:

αμαρια χποι εςζ̄μ̄ πιη̄ ἡ ἰωχηφ

Mary bore me *while she was in* (ε-ς-ζ̄μ̄) the house of Joseph.

As you may expect, in front of a noun subject the circumstantial converter normally takes the form ερε:

ἡπρ̄χε̄ παῑ ε̄ λααγ̄ ερε̄ πρ̄λλο̄ ζ̄μ̄ πωμᾱ

Do not say this to anyone *while* the elder is in the body (in other words ‘still alive’).

That said, the converter is simply ε- in front of descriptions based on πε (or τε or νε) because the subject is not actually the first word in the phrase (13.4):

ογ̄ωηη̄ πε̄ επ̄εφραν̄ πε̄ πετρος̄

He was an ordinary man *whose name was Peter* (‘while Peter is his name’).

The circumstantial converter may even be prefixed to tense markers to indicate a relative shift in time, as in ογᾱ εαφαναστρεφεῑ καλω̄ς ‘one who has behaved properly’ – literally ‘when he has behaved’, which is in the past already. In this way, whole phrases with a specific tense may be adapted simply to provide descriptions or context:

αγ̄βωκ̄ ζ̄μ̄ ογ̄ραω̄ε̄ εαγ̄χικω̄τ̄ ζ̄μ̄ πεφ̄θ̄β̄β̄ιο̄ (past)

They went in joy *when* they had learned (ε-α-γ̄-χικω̄τ̄) from his humility.

αῑχῑςβω̄ ἡ̄το̄οτ̄ḡ̄ ἡ̄ ὅε̄ ἡ̄ ἡ̄ω̄η̄ρε̄ τη̄ρογ̄ ε̄ω̄ᾱρε̄ νε̄γεῑο̄τε̄
τῑςβω̄ ναγ̄ (indicative present)

I learned from him in the way all children learn *when* (ε-ω̄ᾱρε̄) their parents teach them.

ογ̄η̄-ογ̄η̄τ̄ρ̄μ̄η̄ζ̄η̄τ̄ ε̄ω̄ᾱσταω̄ε̄ πικριᾱ (indicative present)

There is thoughtfulness which increases (ⲉ-ⲱⲁ-ⲥ-ⲧⲁⲱⲉ) bitterness.

Likewise, the circumstantial converter may prefix the small group of verbs that are followed by their subject (10.4), as in Ⲫⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟϥϣ ‘everything good’ (ⲉ-ⲛⲁⲛⲟϥ-ϣ ‘which it is good’ (2.5)), ⲛ ⲥⲧⲓⲕⲁ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟϥϣ ‘for a nice strip (of cloth)’ and ⲟϥⲕⲁⲓⲣⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲁⲱⲱϣ ‘many seasons’ (‘a season which it is numerous’):

ⲟϥⲛ ⲟϥⲪⲗⲗⲏⲛ ⲏ Ⲫⲁⲓⲣⲉⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ Ⲫⲛ ⲧⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲉⲙⲏⲧⲁϣ ⲛⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ
ⲙⲓⲙⲁϥ (10.3)

There is a pagan or a heretic in the church *who has no faith*.

In this regard, there are a number of useful idioms involving the verb Ⲫⲛⲉ, Ⲫⲛⲁⲥ ‘wish’, including ⲉⲪⲛⲁⲕ ‘willingly, as you wish’ alongside ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧⲪⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲪⲛⲁⲕ ‘as you prefer, in the way that you wish’ (13.8).

15.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MODELS OF GOOD CONDUCT

First, from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Apa Poimen maintains that you should assess your progress in life by comparison to someone else:

ⲁϣⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲟⲛ ⲭⲉ ⲙⲓⲣⲟⲡⲓⲕ̅ ⲙⲁⲅⲁⲁⲕ
ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲧⲟⲃⲕ̅ ⲉ ⲟⲅⲁ ⲉⲁϣⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲣⲉⲑⲉⲓ ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ

He also said, ‘Do not evaluate yourself alone (14.1).

Instead, attach yourself to one who has behaved properly.’

In another saying, Apa Hyperechius explains the value of fasting for quenching every appetite. Note the idiomatic phrase ⲥⲁⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲓⲙⲟ-ϣ ‘away from him’ (10.5):

ⲁϣⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲟⲛ ⲭⲉ ⲧⲏⲏⲥⲧⲓⲁ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲕⲁⲗⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲓⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲕⲟⲥ ⲉϣⲧⲟϥⲃⲉ
ⲛⲓⲛⲟⲃⲉ
ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲟϥⲭⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲓ ⲥⲁⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲓⲙⲟϣ ⲟϥⲪⲧⲟ ⲛⲗⲁⲃⲥⲪⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲉ

He also said, ‘The bridle of the monk who resists sin is the fast (13.4).

The one who throws this (ῥᾶι) away, he is a randy (λαβρὸς) stallion.’

A final saying here is a simple comment on how the character of words reflects the nature of the person:

αἰχμοὺς οὐκ ἐκ ἡπύρταοις λαβὴν ἡφραδε ἐφροοῦ ἐβολὴν
τεκταπρὸ
ῥῶν ἡελοοις γὰρ μεστὰοις φροντε ἐβολ

He also said, ‘Do not produce any wicked saying out from your mouth.

Because the grapevine, it does not grow thorns out (14.2).’

Now, here is a pair of gravestones from the monastery of Saint Hydra, near Aswan in the far south of Egypt, currently displayed there in the Nubia Museum (for the month names see [Section 1.5](#)):

περσοῦ ἡταφῆτον ἡμοῦ ἡβι πῆκαριος παῦλος ἐπὶ 14
περσοῦ ἡταφῆτον ἡμοῦ ἡβι πῆκαριος ἰορδανης 13

The day which the blessed Paul rested, Epipi 14.

The day which the blessed Jordan rested, Thouth 13.

Finally, the Biography of Joseph the Carpenter, about the father of Jesus, is an apocryphal gospel (see [page 107](#)). In this extract, Joseph is telling his son how he first learned about his coming birth. Think especially carefully about the structure of the first phrase, which sets the scene and therefore uses the circumstantial tense:

καὶ δὲ εἰμῆεγε ἐροοῦ
ἀπαγγελὸς οὕων καὶ ἐβολὴν οὐρασοῦ ἐφραδ ἡμοὺς καὶ
δε
ἰωσὴφ πωρρε ἡ δαγεία ἡπῆρῶτε καὶ ἡμαρὶα τεκνίμε
οὕδε ἡπῆρῆσταδε ἐκ τῆς τῆς ἰωσὴφ καὶ
ἡτασὼ γὰρ ἐβολὴν οὐπῆα ἐφραδ

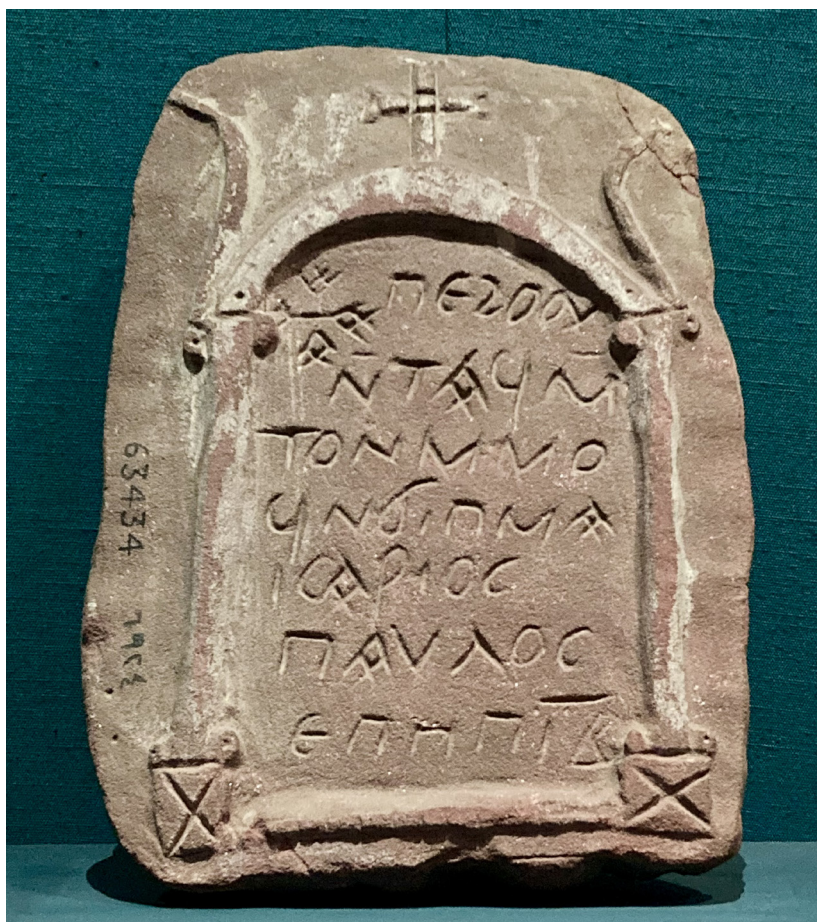


Figure 19 The gravestone of Paul. Aswan, probably seventh century (see [page 161](#)). Source: author

These things, therefore, while I was thinking them (10.1),
the angel appeared to me in a dream, saying to me (ⲛⲁ-ⲓ),
‘Joseph, the son of David, do not fear (9.6)! Take Mary, your wife,
and do not hesitate (ⲧⲥⲣⲁⲗⲉ) over her conception (5.1)
because she has conceived out of a holy spirit.’ (14.3)

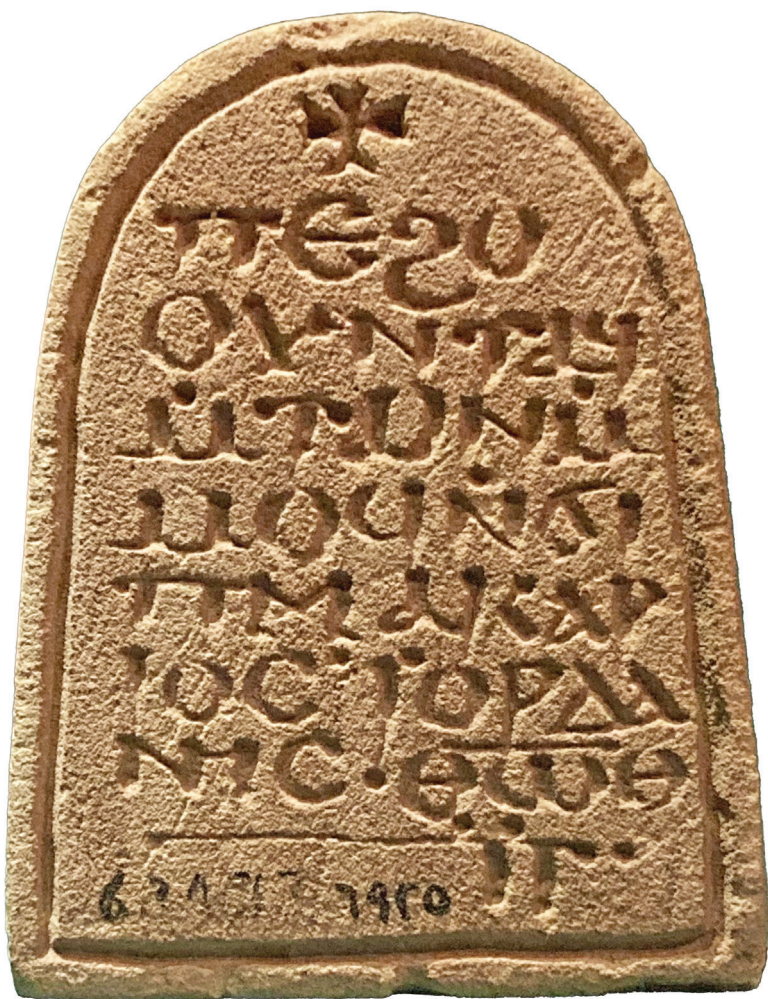


Figure 20 The gravestone of Jordan. Aswan, seventh to eighth century (see [page 161](#)). Source: author

WORKING VOCABULARY

καλωс	properly	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ξοογ	evil	φωπε	happen
ναφτ	hard	χικωт	learn,
таππο	mouth		improve
βω	tree,	†ογβε	resist
	vine	ερηт	promise
ελοολε	grape	ξων ξονε	command,
ραφε	joy,		task
	rejoice	ωп επ- опε	count,
πικρια	bitterness		value
φωνε	sickness	φωп φеп- φоп-	get,
расογ	dream		receive
εσοογ	sheep	таφo таφε- таφoε	increase
сарт	wool	τωωδε τεε- τοεε	attach
ξτο	stallion	ογωνε̄ ογενε- ογονεε	reveal
наξβ̄	yoke,	(+ εβολ)	appear
	shoulder	т̄н̄ноογ т̄н̄неγ-т̄н̄ноογε	send
λογос	word, lesson	солс̄л̄ с̄лс̄л̄- с̄лс̄ωλε	comfort

LESSON 16

Looking to the future

16.1 NA IS AN ENGAGED WAY OF TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

The engaged present tense talks about what the subject is doing right now (7.1). If the infinitive is then marked with **NA**, this creates the statement that ‘someone is *going to do* something’, as in **ἮΝΑΜΟΥ** ‘we are going to die (**ἮΝ-ΝΑ-ΜΟΥ**)’. This is an engaged tense in the sense that it presents the future in terms of what is bound to happen. As such, we can term it the engaged future, though it is often termed the first future for reasons that will become apparent below:

ΔΝΟΚ ἡΝΑΦῖΤΩΡΙ ἡΜΩΤῆ ΖΑΖΤῆ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ

I am going to assure you before God.

ἸΝΑΡΖΟΤΕ ΖΩΩΚ ἡΖΗΤῆ ἡΠΝΟΥΤΕ

You too are going to fear God in you.

ΠΕΧΔΑΥ ΝΑC ἡΒΙ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΚΟΥΙ ΧΕ ΔΝΟΚ ἡΝΑΦΙΤΕ

The little boy said to her, ‘I am going to carry you (**ἡ-ΝΑ-ΦΙΤ-Ε**) myself’.

Other than being marked for the future, this tense shares much in common with the engaged present (though, of course, location statements cannot be marked with **NA** because they have no verb). For example, it may simply follow **ΕΤ**, as in **Ν-ΕΤ-ΝΑ-ΩΩΠΕ** ‘the things which are going to happen’ and **Ν-ΕΤ-ΝΑ-ΒΩΚ** ‘those who are going to go’:

ΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΝΑΩΩ ἡΝΕΙCΖΔΙ	everyone (2.5) who is going to read these writings
ΝΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ ἡΒΛΛΕΕΥΕ	those who are going to ask the blind (2.2)
ΠΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCῆ ἡΖΗΤῆ	the place they are going to bury (ΤΟΜC) him in (15.2)
ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΧΙΤῆ ΕΡΟΟΥ	every place which they are going to take you to

Likewise, the tense marker **ερε** may form the second tense – in other words, the second future, naturally employed in questions or when there is some crucial qualification of the verb to consider (14.3):

ερε νεψμογ ετογααβ ναωωπε νημαν τηρ̄ν ρι ογconi

His holy blessings are going to happen with us all together (literally ‘at a moment’).

Of course, the second tense marker naturally reduces to **ε-** when a suffix pronoun is attached:

εγναζε on εβολ ρ̄ν-τχηε

They are also going to fall by the sword.

εκναμογ ετεζενετε ρ̄ν μογ nim

You are going to bless the monastery with every blessing.

ειναογχαλ̄ ν̄ αω ν̄ ρε

How am I going to get well?

ειναρ̄ ογ̄ ν̄ παρητ̄ εφναωτ̄

What am I going to do for my heart which is hard?

16.2 ΔΝ MEANS ‘NOT’ WITH THE ENGAGED TENSES (AND STATEMENTS WITHOUT VERBS)

Another similarity between the engaged present and engaged future is the fact that both may be negated by marking the subject with **ν̄** and putting **ΔΝ** *after* the verb, as in **τετ̄ν̄cooȳn** ‘you know’ but **ν̄τετ̄ν̄cooȳn ΔΝ** ‘you do not know’:

ν̄q̄micteȳe ΔΝ

He does not believe.

ν̄τ̄ρ̄zote ΔΝ μ̄pnoyte

I do not fear God.

They say things which do not exist (Ν-ΕΤΕ Ν̄-ΟΕ-ΩΟΟΠ ΔΝ) in their false knowledge.

ΠΕΤΕΝΩΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΔΝ

The one who is not going to understand (Π-ΕΤΕ Ν̄-Ω-ΝΑ-ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΔΝ).

Notice how the flow of ΕΤΕ with the negative Ν̄ (in the phrases Ν̄-ΟΕ-ΩΟΟΠ ΔΝ ‘they do not exist’ and Ν̄-Ω-ΝΑ-ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΔΝ ‘he is not going to explain’) almost inevitably causes them to be pronounced together as -ΕΤΕΝ- and thereby form the single words ΝΕΤΕΝΣΕΩΟΟΠ and ΠΕΤΕΝΩΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ.

16.3 ‘THERE ISN’T’ (Ν̄ΜΝ̄) A DEFINITE SUBJECT

When the subject of an engaged statement is indefinite, the statement will normally be introduced by either ΟΥΝ̄ ‘there is’ or negative Ν̄ΜΝ̄ or ΜΝ̄ ‘there is not’ (7.4). This is another behaviour the engaged future shares with the engaged present:

ΜΝ̄-ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ ΝΑΕΙ There are no barbarians going to come.

ΟΥΝ̄ ΟΥΜΟΥΙ ΝΑΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΥΩ ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΕΝΩΝΑΡ̄ΞΟΤΕ ΔΝ

A lion is going to roar and who is the one who is not going to be afraid. (14.4)

Of course, Ν̄ΜΝ̄ is intrinsically negative, so its use removes the need for ΔΝ. However, they may be used together, as you will see below (20.1).

16.4 ΕΡΕ AND Ν̄ΝΕ MAKE A COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE

Whereas the first future is an engaged tense, the prospective tense (or third future) states someone’s subjective expectation of what will

presumably or predictably happen in the future. The distinctive tense marker is a little different because ϵ - appears as a prefix for the suffix-pronoun subject but the verb is then also marked with ϵ -, as in ϵ - Υ - ϵ - $\mathfrak{Z}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{Z}$ ‘they shall protect’. In other ways, however, the following table should seem straightforward (even the irregular second person feminine form is not unexpected):

Person		Singular		Plural
First	ἔἵεCZΔΙ	I shall write	ἔνεCZΔΙ	we shall write
Second	ἔκεCZΔΙ	you (masc.) shall write	ἔτετενεCZΔΙ	you shall write
	ἔπεCZΔΙ	you (fem.) shall write		
Third	ἔφεCZΔΙ	he shall write	ἔφεCZΔΙ	they shall write
	ἔσεCZΔΙ	she shall write		

The prospective tense often translates simply into English as the future based on 'shall' or 'will', at least in the first instance:

ΕΥΕΞΑΡΕΞ ΕΡΟΟΥ They shall protect themselves.

ΕΚΕΖΑΡΕΖ ΕΝΡΩΜΕ Ν ΤΕΖΥΝΕΤΕ ΜΝ ΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ

You shall protect the men of the monastery and the animals.

Unfortunately, when the subject is a noun, the prospective tense marker appears as **ⲉⲡⲉ** and there is no **ⲉ-** to mark the verb – which has the effect of making it formally indistinguishable from the circumstantial tense or the second present. Therefore, the prospective tense with a noun subject must be recognised in context. For example, the rules of monastic life codified by Pachomius explain what happens whenever a monk needs medicines:

ερε περ ρ̄μ̄νι βοκ ε πμα ἡ ἡοικονομος

His warden shall go to the place of the storekeepers (οΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ).

In context, of course, this statement clearly refers to what will happen in a situation that is liable to arise, rather than anything that is happening at present. The same is true in the following comment about a magic potion:

ερε νωηρε ν̄ν̄ρωμε σω εβολ ν̄ζητ̄

The children of the men will drink out of it.

The prospective has a negative counterpart with the tense marker ν̄νε (and the verb is not marked), as in the commandment ν̄νεκζωτ̄β ‘you shall not murder’:

ν̄νε-βασανος ζωζ ερωι Torture shall not touch him.

Pachomius’s rules of monastic life also include prohibitions intended to limit the spread of such problems as infections and contraband, as exemplified by the following:

ν̄νε-ρωμε τεζ̄ ρωμε ερωωνε

No person shall wash someone when he is sick.

ν̄νε-λααγ φαδε μ̄ν νεφερηγ ζ̄ν̄ πκακε

Nobody shall speak with his friends in the dark.

As a final note, this negative tense marker is regularly pronounced (and spelled) εννε after certain conjunctions including δε, as in δε εννειπαραγε μ̄μοκ ‘because I shall not confront you’.

16.5 WE SHOULD BE OPTATIVE

Whereas the prospective tense makes a subjective statement about an anticipated or expected outcome, when the statement entails something more like a wish or an intention – something we may ‘opt’ for – then the optative tense (or fourth future) with the tense marker μαρ or μαρε is liable to be used, as in μαρ̄νωμε ‘we should be ashamed’ or even ‘let us be ashamed’:

ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲛⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲥⲁⲃⲏ ⲛ̅ ⲙ̅ ⲙ̅ ⲛ̅ⲓⲣⲟϥ

We should become (ⲙⲁⲣⲉ-ⲛ-ⲱⲱⲡⲉ) wise like snakes.

ⲙⲁⲣⲛ̅ⲣ̅ⲓⲱⲃ ⲱⲏⲙⲱⲏⲙ ⲓⲛ̅ ⲟϥⲥⲡⲟϥⲁⲏ

We should behave little by little (ⲱⲏⲙ ⲱⲏⲙ) with commitment.
(9.6)

ⲙⲁⲣⲉϥⲭⲏⲉ ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲱⲟⲛ ⲛ̅ⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲏⲙⲁϥ

He should ask this insignificant creature (ⲓⲱⲱⲟⲛ) over there.
(7.5)

ⲡⲟϥⲁⲡⲟϥⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲉϥⲃⲱⲱⲧ̅ ⲭⲉ ⲉϥⲓⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ ⲁⲱ ⲛ̅ⲓⲣⲉ

Each one (ⲡⲟϥⲁ ⲡⲟϥⲁ), he should watch how he is situated.

In the last example, notice the use of ⲭⲉ to introduce the reported thought (10.1).

As a final note here, ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲛ ‘let’s go’ is an interjection, presumably abbreviated from ⲙⲁⲣⲛ̅ⲃⲱⲕ or something similar:

ⲁϥⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ ⲧⲉϥⲙⲁⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲧⲱⲟϥⲛ ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲛ ⲓⲛ̅ ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ

He said to his mother, ‘Get up! Let’s go from here.’

16.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: MORE OR LESS CERTAIN FUTURES

We can begin with the texts on a couple of ostraca from the south of Egypt. First, see what you make of this prayer from Dendera:

ⲡ̅ ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲣⲏⲏⲏ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲏⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲡⲉϥⲥⲙⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲓⲛ̅ ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲱⲁ
ⲉⲛⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲉⲛⲉⲓ

ⲁⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲓⲟϥⲛ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

The peace of God and his blessing are going to happen in this place forever and ever (literally ‘to the eternal eternity’).

Come in, Lord.

Meanwhile, a prayer from Jeme echoes an ancient pharaonic appeal to future generations:

ⲡ ⲓⲱⲛⲁϥ ⲓⲣⲗⲗ ⲉϥⲱⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲁⲓⲁⲡⲓⲏ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲱ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓϥⲓⲁⲓ

Jonas. Pray for me please, everyone who is going to read these writings.

Next, here is a brace of sayings from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas (13.9). The text has been normalised from the manuscript, which has some distinct early spellings. Notice also ϫⲱⲧ, a ‘trough’ used here to define a ration or dole:

ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛ̅ⲓ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲟⲩ̅ⲛ̅ ⲓⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲕⲱⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲧϫⲱⲧ ⲉⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲗⲁⲁϥ ⲁⲉ
ⲓ̅ⲛ̅ ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ

The Lord said, ‘There are many for the queue for the dole (7.4), but only (ⲁⲉ) when there isn’t anything (ⲉ-ⲙ̅ⲛ̅-ⲗⲁⲁϥ) in the cistern (15.4).’

ⲡⲉϫⲉ-ⲓϥ̅ ⲟⲩ̅ⲛ̅-ⲓⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩϥ ⲓⲣⲓ̅ⲙ̅ ⲡⲣⲟ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲛⲁϫⲟϥ
ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲛ̅ ⲉ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ⲱⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ

Jesus said, ‘There are many standing at the door (11.8). Nonetheless, those who are going to go into the wedding place are the monks (13.5).’

Monasticism had not yet become a social phenomenon at the time the Gospel of Thomas was ostensibly written, so either this last reference is specifically to the hermits of the Bible, such as John the Baptist, or an anachronism betraying the fourth century Coptic copy. On that particular subject, however, here are some more fundamentals from Pachomius’ rules for the conduct of monastic life:

ⲛⲛⲉⲗⲁⲁϥ ϫⲓ ⲗⲁⲁϥ ⲛⲉⲓⲗⲟϥ ⲛⲧⲛⲓ ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲁϫⲛⲓ ⲡⲉϥⲣⲓⲛⲛⲓ

Anyone shall not take any item from a person except his warden.

ⲛⲛⲉⲗⲁⲁϥ ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲟϥⲱⲙ ⲛⲕⲁ ⲛⲉⲟϥⲛ ⲛⲧⲉϥⲣⲓ

Any person shall not eat a thing inside his cell.

ⲛⲛⲉⲗⲁⲁϥ ⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲙⲛⲓ ⲛⲉϥⲣⲉⲛⲃ ϫⲛⲓ ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲛⲉⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲉ
ⲧⲟⲙ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲓⲣⲓ ⲥⲛⲁϥ ⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲟϥⲧⲙⲓ

None shall speak with his friends in the dark. Neither shall you sit on a sleeping mat (ⲧⲟⲙ) while you make two, nor a mat (ⲧⲙⲓ).

Now, from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* here is another story about Apa Poimen, which takes up the theme of learning from the company of others:

ⲁϥϫⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲟⲓⲙⲙⲓ ⲭⲉ
ⲁⲟϥϥⲟⲛ ϫⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲁⲛⲥⲉ ⲭⲉ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲣⲓ ⲟϥ ⲛⲓ ⲡⲁⲉⲛⲧⲉ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲱⲧⲓ
ⲛⲧⲓⲣⲉⲟⲧⲉ ⲁⲛⲓ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲓⲣⲓ ⲙⲓⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ
ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲃⲕ ⲉ ⲟϥϥⲟⲛ ⲉϥⲣⲉⲟⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲓⲣⲓ
ⲙⲓⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ
ⲁϥⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲛⲓ ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲣⲉϥⲣⲉⲟⲧⲉ ⲛⲓ ⲡⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ ⲕⲛⲁⲣⲉⲟⲧⲉ ϫⲱⲕ
ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲓⲣⲓ ⲙⲓⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ

Apa Poimen said,

‘A brother said to Apa Paese, “What do I do for my heart which is hard? I do not fear God within it.”

‘He said to him, “Go and attach yourself (8.4) to a brother who fears God within himself.

“Then, from the devotion (5.1) of that one, you too are going to fear God within you.”

Next, an anonymous teaching about the value of slow but steady progress:

ⲁⲟϥϥⲟⲛ ϫⲛⲉ ⲟϥⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲭⲉ ⲁϫⲉ ⲟϥⲱⲁϫⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲭⲉ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲟϥϫⲁⲓ ⲛⲓ
ⲁϥ ⲛⲓ ϫⲉ
ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲁⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲛⲓⲣⲉⲟⲱⲃ ⲱⲛⲙⲱⲛⲙ ϫⲛⲓ ⲟϥϥⲟϥⲁⲛ
ⲧⲛⲛⲁⲟϥϫⲁⲓ

A brother asked an elder, ‘Tell a saying to me (4.3): how am I going to get healthy?’

So, he said, ‘We should behave little by little from a commitment.

We are going to get healthy.’

We can wrap up these sayings with a story credited to Macarius the Great, which turns out to be relevant to the grammar of this lesson as well as holding a life lesson. Talking about the future, he points out, typically depends on subjective matters, such as expectations or intentions – whereas, in fact, what the future may bring is intrinsically unknown to us:

ΑΥΧΟΟΣ ΕΤΒΕ ΑΠΑ ΣΙΛΟΥΑΝΟΣ ΧΕ ΑΦΟΥΩΩ ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ Ε ΒΩΚ
ΩΑ ΤΣΥΡΙΑ

ΑΥΩ ΠΕΧΑΩ ΝΑΩ ΝΒΙ ΠΕΦΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΧΕ
ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΤΟΥΩΩ ΑΝ Ε ΛΟ ΜΠΕΙΜΑ ΟΥΔΕ ΝΤΟΚ ΖΩΩΚ ΑΝ ΑΠΑ
ΝΤΝΑΚΑΑΚ ΑΝ Ε ΒΩΚ ΑΛΛΑ ΣΩ ΜΠΕΙΜΑ Ν ΚΕΩΩΜΗΤ Ν ΖΟΟΥ
ΑΥΩ ΖΗ ΠΜΕΖΩΩΜΗΤ ΝΖΟΟΥ ΑΥΗΤΟΝ ΗΜΟΟΥ

They said about Silvanus that he wanted once to go to Syria.

Accordingly, his disciple Mark said to him,

‘My father, I do not want to leave here – nor you too, Apa.

‘I am not going to allow you to go. Instead, stay here for another three days (2.7).’

And so, on the third day (12.4) they passed away.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ⲛⲧⲛ̅, ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ	with, from	ⲥⲱⲱⲧ̅	look,
ⲁⲃ̅ⲛ̅	except		watch
ⲡⲟⲩⲁⲡⲟⲩⲁ	each one	ⲗⲟ	stop,
ⲱⲛⲙⲱⲛⲙ	little by little		leave
ⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ or		ⲡⲱⲧ	run, flee
ⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥⲧⲟⲛ	insignificant	ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ	know
ⲉⲓⲗⲟⲥ	item	ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ	believe
ⲕⲁⲕⲉ	darkness	ⲡⲣⲟⲫⲛⲧⲉⲩⲉ	understand
ⲕⲱⲧⲉ	queue	ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲱⲣⲓ	assure
ⲙⲁ	place	ⲥⲱ ⲥⲉ- ⲥⲟⲟⲥ	drink
ⲙⲟⲩⲓ	lion	ⲧⲱⲙⲥ ⲧⲓⲙⲥ- ⲧⲟⲙⲥ	bury
ⲃⲗⲗⲉ	blind	ⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲟⲩⲙ̅- ⲟⲩⲟⲙⲥ	eat
ⲃⲁⲥⲁⲛⲟⲥ	torture	ⲧⲱⲗⲥ ⲧⲉⲗⲥ- ⲧⲁⲗⲥ	wash,
ⲙⲟⲉⲓⲗⲉ	surprise		cleanse
ⲛⲟⲩⲭ	liar, lying	ⲭⲱⲗ ⲭⲉⲗ- ⲭⲁⲗⲥ	touch,
			caress

Some verbs

ⲁⲙⲟⲩ	come! (from ⲉⲓ)
ⲁⲭⲉ	say! tell! (from ⲭⲱ)
ⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ	get well, be well

Useful phrase

ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲛ	let's go
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CHART III A BASIC SCHEME FOR COPTIC VERBS

If we review what we have learned about verbs so far, we recognise that there are three basic times: past, present and future. Corresponding to these are: two indicative tenses, which report the simple past and the known or familiar present; and a prospective tense, which talks about the future we anticipate or expect. Each of these tenses has its own distinct positive and negative tense markers:

	Positive		Negative	
Past	ⲁⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we wrote	ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we did not write
Present	ⲡⲁⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we write	ⲙⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we do not write
Future	ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we will write	ⲙⲛⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we will not write

In addition to these three tenses, we recognise the engaged aspect, according to which tenses may talk about what is actually happening or is bound to happen in the future (whereas the past cannot be engaged because it is over). The engaged tenses are negated by ⲁⲛ (with or without ⲛ̄):

	Positive		Negative	
Present	ⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we are writing	ⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ⲁⲛ	we are not writing
Future	ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we are going to write	ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ⲁⲛ	we are not going to write

On a separate tack, however, the distinction between indicative past and present on the one hand and prospective future on the other adds a further dimension to our understanding, which we can term the mood: statements are more or less objective and, consequently, more or less subjective. Moreover, we know that there are other, avowedly subjective tenses too, in the form of the optative future (ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ‘we should write’) and commands (ⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ‘write!’). These most subjective tenses are

negated using $\bar{\text{M}}\Pi\bar{\text{P}}$ (we have not yet discussed the negation of the optative future, but we will do so in 20.5).

As long as we always keep in mind the fact that languages are practical matters – and that in any given statement there may be significant variation between how we suppose words are used and how they are actually used – we can plot these general observations in a chart as follows:

MOOD	Objective ⇒				Subjective
ASPECT	engaged	indicative	prospective	optative	imperative
usual sense	<i>is writing / is bound to write</i>	<i>wrote / writes / does write</i>	<i>will write / may write</i>	<i>should write</i>	<i>write!</i>
past		ⲁⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ			infinitive or imperative
present	ⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ	ⲓⲥⲁⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ			
future	ⲓⲥⲙⲁⲥⲥⲁⲓ		ⲉⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ	ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲓⲥⲥⲁⲓ	
<i>negation</i>	($\bar{\text{N}}$ plus) ⲁⲚ	<i>individual forms</i>		$\bar{\text{M}}\Pi\bar{\text{P}}$ (<i>do not</i>)	

1. Simple times are given vertically (past > present > future).
2. Mood is expressed horizontally (purely objective > purely subjective).
3. The different modes of negation can be seen to correspond to distinct areas on the chart moving horizontally.

As we move from left to right, we are tending to consider: first, what is actually happening; then, what happened or usually happens; then, what we expect to happen; then, what we consider ought to happen; until, finally, we arrive at the position of making actual demands on the situation.

4. Engaged tenses sit on the far left because a statement about what is happening now (or is bound to happen) is presented as purely objective – this is what is going on.

5. Indicative tenses sit to the left because they are presented as what demonstrably happened or happens – albeit not necessarily happening now.
6. Statements about the future tend to appear on the right because they embody subjective considerations of what I expect, hope for, or even demand.

For our summary purposes, we can leave aside the second tenses because in these terms they simply correspond to their ‘first’ counterparts. That said, we can summarily note that second tenses all fall to the left of the chart – none of the subjective tenses has a second tense – and, as we would therefore anticipate, they are all negated by ΔN (with or without \bar{N}).

LESSON 17

Complex sentences

17.1 ‘USING’ VERBS AS NOUNS

Any verb, as the infinitive, may be used in many ways that nouns are used too. So, for example, any infinitive may take an adjective or an article (masculine, if singular). Used in this way, verbs often translate best (in the first instance at least) with the *-ing* ending, as in $\lambda\alpha\alpha\gamma \bar{n}\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon$ ‘any saying’, $\pi\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \bar{n} \Delta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\lambda$ ‘the saying of David’, $\bar{n}\epsilon\iota\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon$ ‘these sayings’, $\sigma\mu\omicron\gamma \bar{n}\iota\mu$ ‘every blessing’, $\pi\epsilon\gamma\sigma\omicron\omicron\gamma\bar{n} \bar{n}\nu\omicron\gamma\chi$ ‘their false thinking’, $\pi\chi\omicron\upsilon\chi\bar{q} \bar{n} \pi\theta\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\beta}\bar{\beta}\iota\omicron$ ‘the burning of humility’ and $\pi\chi\iota\bar{\rho}\rho\alpha\upsilon \bar{n} \bar{n}\beta\alpha\lambda$ ‘the diverting of the eyes’ (11.8). Sometimes, acceptable English requires a different translation – often a related English noun – though the grammar of the Coptic remains the same, as in $\bar{n}\epsilon\kappa\omega\lambda\eta\lambda$ ‘your prayers’ (literally ‘prayings’), $\pi\omicron\gamma\omega\mu \bar{n}\mu\epsilon\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ ‘the midday meal’ (literally ‘eating’) or simply $\pi\iota\mu\omicron\gamma$ ‘the dying, the death’.

You have met several instances of this phenomenon already, because your working vocabularies in this book so far have simply listed these infinitives as both nouns and verbs, so it ought not to cause you concern. However, the same phenomenon also allows that an infinitive may appear as the object of another verb and even get marked with \bar{n} ; in which case, again, the translation may vary according to the requirements of acceptable English:

$\alpha\upsilon\alpha\rho\chi\epsilon\iota \bar{n}\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \epsilon\upsilon\chi\omega \bar{n}\mu\omicron\sigma \bar{n} \tau\epsilon\iota\bar{\rho}\epsilon$

He began *talking*, speaking like this.

$\bar{n}\bar{\Gamma}\bar{\rho}\chi\rho\iota\alpha \Delta\bar{n} \bar{n}\bar{n}\alpha\gamma \epsilon\rho\omicron\omicron\gamma$

You do not need (\bar{n} - $\bar{\Gamma}$ - $\bar{\rho}\chi\rho\iota\alpha$) *to see* them.

$\bar{m}\pi\epsilon \tau\bar{\rho}\omicron\tau\epsilon \kappa\alpha\alpha\upsilon \bar{n}\epsilon\iota \epsilon\bar{\rho}\omicron\gamma\bar{n}$

The fear did not let him ($\kappa\alpha\alpha$ - υ) *come in*.

Just as an infinitive may appear as the object of a verb, it may also appear as the object of a preposition, as in $\bar{\rho}\bar{n} \omicron\gamma\omega\bar{n}\bar{\epsilon} \epsilon\bar{\beta}\omicron\lambda \Delta\bar{n}$ ‘not openly’ (literally ‘not in appearing’):

ΔΕΡΩΝ ΕΡΟΥΝ Ε ΠΩΛΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΙΒΙΟC

He has come close *to concluding* (ΠΩΛΩ ΕΒΟΛ) this lifetime.

ΕΥΕΞΑΡΕΞ ΕΡΟΥ ΓΑΒΟΛ ΖΑ ΠΔΙΖΡΑΥ Ν ΝΒΑΛ

They shall protect themselves *by means of* (ΓΑΒΟΛ ΖΑ) *the diverting* of the eyes.

ΕΥΝΑΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ ΝΑΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΜΠΩΑ Μ ΠΕΥΖΩΒ

They are going to punish him *in proportion to the deserving* of his deed.

ΖΝ ΟΥΩΦΕ ΜΑΡΕCΟΥΑΥΤ ΖΝ ΟΥΜΕ ΜΑΡΕCΜΕΡΙΤ

In wanting she should want me; *in loving* she should love me. (4.1)

Of course, even in the guise of a noun, an infinitive is still a verb and may take its own object, as in ΠΕΡΟΥ Μ ΠΤΟΜCΟΥ ‘the day of burying them (ΤΟΜC-ΟΥ)’ or the following:

ΔΑΡΡΧΕΙ ΝΧΩ ΝΑΥ ΝΝΕΙΩΔΧΕ

She began *telling* them *these sayings*.

Infinitives may even turn up as the subject of another verb:

ΜΑΡΕ ΠΑΟΥΩΦΕ ΜΝ ΠΑΜΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΕΡΡΑΙ ΝΖΗΤC

Wanting me and *loving me* should happen within her (literally ‘down in her’).

17.2 REMEMBERING AND VISITING

In the previous example, notice the meaning of ΠΑΟΥΩΦΕ ‘wanting me’ (literally ‘my wanting’ or ‘the wanting of me’) and ΠΑΜΕ ‘loving me’ (literally ‘the loving of me’). A useful idiom formed in analogous fashion

is **ⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ** – literally ‘my thinking’ in the sense of ‘thinking of me’ not ‘by me’ (4.4). From this we get the forms of ‘remember’ (9.6), such as **ⲡⲉⲕⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ** ‘remember you’, **ⲡⲉⲩⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ** ‘remember them’ and **ⲁⲣⲓ ⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ ⲉⲱ** ‘remember me too’ (8.3):

ⲡⲉⲣⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲩⲉⲗⲙⲉⲗⲁⲗ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲩⲉⲛⲟⲩⲩⲩⲉ

The remembering of his holy servant, Apa Shenoute.

ⲡⲉⲕⲡⲉⲣⲙⲉⲉⲩⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲩⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲭⲓⲛ ⲟⲩⲭⲱⲙ ⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲭⲱⲙ

Remembering you is going to happen from generation until generation.

Another useful idiom along the same lines is **ⲟⲩⲙⲓ ⲡⲱⲓⲛⲉ** ‘visit’ (literally ‘find the greeting’ of someone), as in **ⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲙⲓ ⲡⲱⲓⲛⲉ** ‘visiting him’ and **ⲟⲩⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲧⲙⲱⲓⲛⲉ** ‘visiting you’. Actually, this phrase often turns up as a euphemism for death, derived from Christian scripture:

ⲉⲣⲉ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛⲁ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲩⲩⲉ ⲙⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲙⲓ ⲡⲱⲓⲛⲉ

The Lord is going to be merciful with him on the day of visiting him.

ⲁⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲩⲩⲉ ⲙⲓ ⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲙⲓ ⲡⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲓ ⲛⲁⲩ

The day of visiting him came to him.

17.3 THE CONJUNCTIVE TENSE AGAIN

The remaining tense markers do not necessarily correspond to a simple English tense and may have no specific time reference of their own. Rather, they mark statements that complete or qualify an initial thought or request established elsewhere, and they tend to translate using conjunctions such as ‘and’, ‘then’, ‘after’, ‘until’ or ‘if’. Accordingly, we may call these tenses incomplete because they only give part of a sentence. For instance, the conjunctive tense, as you already know, often develops a command or request by stating the expected next step (8.4):

τῶοῦν̄ ἡ̄τῆτῆ̄ωαχε μῆ̄ πετῆ̄ειωτ̄ ε̄τςμαμααατ̄ χε
πεοῦοειω̄ ἡ̄ ωαχε πε πᾱι (13.6)

Get up *and* talk (ἡ̄-τῆτῆ̄-ωαχε) with your blessed father because this is the time for speaking.

ωληλ̄ ε̄χωῑ ἡ̄τε̄ πνοῦτε̄ ῑ̄ οὔνᾱ ἡ̄μαι

Pray for me *that* God makes mercy with me.

In fact, the conjunctive tense can be used to develop any initial comment (not just a command or request) in a relevant manner, likewise still expressing an anticipated or characteristic next step:

ε̄ρε̄ πεφρῆ̄ν̄ν̄ῑ βωκ̄ ε̄ πμᾱ ἡ̄ ἡ̄οικονομος̄ ἡ̄φχιτοῦ̄ ναφ̄ (16.4)

His warden shall go to the place of the storekeepers (οικονομος) *and* get them (ἡ̄-φ-χιτ-οῦ) for him.

ε̄κε̄ζαρε̄ζ̄ ε̄νρωμε̄ ἡ̄ τε̄ρ̄γνετε̄ μῆ̄ ἡ̄τῆ̄ν̄οογε̄ ἡ̄τ̄ςμοῦ̄ ε̄ροοῦ̄

You shall protect the men of the monastery and the animals *and* bless them.

ωαρε̄ π̄ραῑε̄τικος̄ μῆ̄ π̄ρ̄λλ̄ πωρω̄ ε̄βολ̄ ἡ̄νε̄γ̄σῑχ̄ ἡ̄
ἡ̄σε̄φιτοῦ̄ ε̄ρ̄ραῑ (13.1)

The heretic and the pagan spread out their hands *and even* (ἡ̄) lift them up (ἡ̄-σε-φιτ-οῦ).

If necessary, the relationship between the initial thought and the further comment developed by the conjunctive tense can be qualified or clarified by a conjunction, such as μ̄η̄ποτε̄ or μ̄η̄πος̄ ‘in case’ or ρ̄ωστε̄ ‘so that’:

ἡ̄π̄ρ̄μιωε̄ μῆ̄ οὔρωμε̄ ἡ̄χωωρε̄ μ̄η̄ποτε̄ ἡ̄γεῑ ε̄ τοοτ̄ῑ̄

Do not fight with a powerful person *in case* you fall into his hands (literally ‘come to his possession’ (5.2)).

ᾱφ̄πατᾱςσε̄ ἡ̄νε̄βαρ̄βαρος̄ ε̄τ̄-ἡ̄μᾱγ̄ ρ̄ἡ̄ οὔνο̄ς̄ ἡ̄λ̄γ̄πεῑ ρ̄ωστε̄
ἡ̄σε̄ωαχε̄ ε̄ππολεμος̄ ε̄τ̄-ἡ̄μᾱγ̄ ωᾱ ε̄ρ̄ραῑ ε̄ ποοῦ̄ ἡ̄ροοῦ̄

He struck (ΠΑΤΑCCE) those barbarians with great grief so that they speak about that battle down to this very day (notice this helpful idiom, literally ‘today of days’).

As you may perhaps anticipate, the essential link between any initial comment and a phrase in the conjunctive tense lends itself to various idioms, which may require some dexterity when translating. For example, here the great hermit Antony is soaking some palm leaves for his friend Macarius to plait, when the latter makes this comment:

ΚΕΛΕΥΕ ΝΑΙ ΤΑΞΩΡΠ̄ ΝΑΙ ΜΑΥΑΑΤ

Let me soak for myself (literally ‘allow for me *and I alone shall soak* for me’).

Notice also, from the last example, that the first-person singular form of the conjunctive marker (ΝΤΑ) is often abbreviated in pronunciation to ΤΑ only (8.4), though it remains a distinctive prefix for a verb:

ΕΙΟΥΩΩ Ε ΒΩΚ Ε ΠΜΑ ΕΤ̄ΜΜΑΥ ΤΑΝΑΥ ΕΡΟϣ

I want to go to that place *and see him*.

While we are at it, remember that the form of the tense marker when addressing a woman is ΝΤΕ, which is not irregular but potentially confusing (because ΝΤΕ is also the form used in front of noun subjects):

ΟΥΟΧ̄̄ Ν CΤΙΧΑ ΕΝΑΝΟΥϣ ΝΤΕΤ̄ΝΝΟῩ̄ ΝΑΐ (15.4)

Cut it for a nice strip (CΤΙΧΑ) *and send it* to me.

17.4 THE FUTURE CONJUNCTIVE ΤΑΡΕ IS HOPEFUL

Similar to the conjunctive tense both in meaning and use is the future conjunctive, with the tense marker ΤΑΡΕ. However, ΤΑΡΕ proposes a more hopeful or more speculative outcome:

ΤΑΟΥΕ ΟΥΩΑΧΕ ΝΟΥΩΤ Ε ΠΠΑΠΑΣ ΤΑΡΕϣ†ΖΗΥ

Produce a single saying for the cleric (παπας) *and he may benefit* (ταρε-q-†ζηγ).

†να† ἡναζγπαρχοντα τηρου νακ ταρε πνουτε σωωτ̄ εχων

I am going to give all my goods (ζηπαρχοντα) to you *and perhaps God will look on us.*

17.5 ἡπατε ‘BEFORE’, ἡτερε ‘AFTER’ AND ωαντε ‘UNTIL’

Another group of tense markers effectively sets a time limit on a statement or establishes a sequence of events, as in ἡτερεφναγ αqṛωπηρε ‘after he saw, he wondered’ (that is, he saw first and afterwards wondered):

ἡτερεσχε παι αcṛκοτ̄κ

After she said this, she slept.

ἡτερογṛ τcγναζic ἡ πναγ ἡωωρṽ αγκωωc ἡπεφσωμα
ετογδαβ

After they made the assembly of the morning time, they embalmed his holy body.

αἰραωε εματε ἡτεριχἰ ἡνεεζαἰ

I rejoiced greatly *after I got* the writings.

The point is that this tense marked with ἡτερ or ἡτερε cannot make a complete statement on its own – if we read ἡτερε-q-ναγ ‘after he saw’, we naturally ask ‘then what?’

In effect, the tense marker ωαντ or ωαντε ‘until’ sets the opposite time limit:

αγμοοωε ἡṽμαq ωαντογṽτ̄q εζογν ε θενεετε

They walked with him *until they brought him* (ωαντ-ογ-ἡτ-ṽ)
into the monastery.

ⲁⲓⲣ̅ ϣⲉⲛⲛⲟⲥ̅ ⲛⲟϥⲱⲛ ⲛⲣⲟⲓⲥ ⲱⲁⲛⲓⲧ̅ ⲙⲡⲓϭⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ

I spent many nights of vigil *until I put* (ⲱⲁⲛⲓⲧ̅-ⲓⲧ̅) the book out.

ⲁⲱ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲣⲉⲁⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲁⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲱⲁⲛⲧⲉⲕⲭⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲓⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥ (15.2)

Which craft (ⲉⲣⲉⲁⲥⲓⲁ) did you do *until you received* this grace?

ⲛⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲕⲁ ⲡⲉϥⲡⲣⲛⲱ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲣⲛ ⲱⲁⲛⲧⲟϥⲕⲱⲗⲉ̅ ⲉ ⲡⲟϥⲱⲙ
ⲙⲙⲉⲉⲣⲉ

No person shall drop his cloak for the sun *until they ring* for the midday eating.

We can also note here a tense marker which not only establishes a sequence but is negative by meaning, because ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲥⲓⲁⲓ means ‘the woman has not yet written’ or ‘before the woman wrote’:

ⲉⲓⲟϥⲱⲱ ⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲉ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧ̅ⲙⲁϥ̅ ⲧⲁⲛⲁϥ̅ ⲉⲣⲟϥ̅ ⲙⲡⲁⲓⲧ̅ⲙⲟϥ̅

I want to go to that place and see him *before I die*.

ⲡⲉⲟϥⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲛ̅ ⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲉ ⲧⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⲧⲱⲙ

This is the time for speaking, *before the mouth shuts*.

ⲛ̅ ⲙⲉ̅ ⲛ̅ ⲁⲁⲁⲙ̅ ⲙ̅ ⲡⲛⲁϥ̅ ⲉϥ̅ⲓⲙ̅ ⲡⲡⲁⲣⲁⲗⲓⲥⲟⲥ̅ ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲉϥ̅ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁ
ⲛ̅ⲧ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲗⲛ̅

In the way of Adam at the time when he was in Paradise *and had not yet transgressed* (ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁ) the law (or ‘before he had transgressed’).

17.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: OUTCOMES AND ENDINGS

First, here is a brief episode from the Biography of Joseph the Carpenter (15.5). Joseph is gravely ill and the seriousness of the situation is becoming apparent to his family:

ΤΟΤΕ ΔΥΤΩΟΥΝ̄ Ν̄ΟΙ ΝΩΗΡΕ Μ̄Ν ΝΩΕΕΡΕ Μ̄ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΙΩΤ
 ΕΙΩΣΗΦ ΔΥΕΙ ΩΑ ΠΕΥΕΙΩΤ
 ΔΥΖΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΥΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΕ Ε ΠΜΟΥ ΕΑΦΩΩΝ ΕΖΟΥΝ Ε ΠΩΛΩ̄
 ΕΒΟΛ Μ̄ΠΒΙΟC

Accordingly, the sons and daughters of my beloved father, Joseph, got up, came to their father, and found him liable (ΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΕ) to dying, having come close to concluding this lifetime.

Next, here are some words of praise from the funeral eulogy of Abbot Shenoute:

ΟΥΜΕ ΠΕ ΠΩΔΑΧΕ Ν̄ ΔΔΥΕΙΔ ΧΕ ΠΔΙΚΑΙΟC ΝΑΩΩΠΕ Ν̄ Ρ̄ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ
 ΩΑ ΕΝΕΖ
 ΔΥΩ ΠΕΚΡ̄ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΧΙΝ ΟΥΧΩΜ ΩΑ ΟΥΧΩΜ

A truth is the saying of David, ‘The righteous one is going be for remembering until eternity.’
 Likewise, your memory is going to exist from generation until generation.

While we are on the grim subject of the deaths of foundational figures, here is an account of the burial of Apa Pachomius (16.4):

Ν̄ΤΕΡΟΥΡ̄ ΤCΥΝΑΖΙC ΔΕ Μ̄ ΠΝΑΥ ΝΩΩΡΠ̄ ΔΥΚΩΩC Μ̄ΠΕΥCΩΜΑ
 ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ Ν̄ ΘΕ Ν̄ ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΔΥΤΑΛΟ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΩΩ
 Ν̄ΤΕΥΠΡΟCΦΩΡΑ Μ̄Ν̄CΩC ΔΥΓ̄ΑΛΛΕΙΖΑ ΤΕΥΖΗ ΩΑΝΤΟΥΧΙΤ̄
 Ε ΠΤΟΥ Ν̄CΕΤΟΜC̄ Ν̄ CΟΥ Μ̄ΝΤΗ Μ̄ ΠΕΙΕΒΟΤ ΝΟΥΩΤ ΠΑΩΟΝC

So, after they made the assembly of the morning time, they embalmed his holy body like all the brothers. Then they raised on him his wreath (ΠΡΟCΦΩΡΑ).
 Afterwards, they sang in front of him (ΖΑ ΤΕΥ-ΖΗ ‘by his front’) until they took him to the hill and buried him (Ν̄-CΕ-ΤΟΜC-̄) on day fifteen of this same month, Pashons.

Next, a dramatic statement from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas (13.9) recalls (or misquotes) a comment in the New Testament (Luke 12:49):

πεχε ιϥ δε αἰνοῦχε ἡοῦκωϣτ εχἡ πκοσμοϥ
 αῡω εἰςζηητε †ερερε εροϥ ωαντεϣερο

Jesus said, 'I have thrown a fire on the world,
 and I am guarding it (7.3) until it blazes (χερο).'

From *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, here is an edifying tale involving the priest of Scetis and a visit to the 'Big City':

αϣωκ ἡοῡοειω ἡβι πεπρεσβυτεροϥ ἡ ωηητ ωα
 παρξηεπισκοποϥ ἡ ρακοτε αῡω ἡτερεϣκτοϥ ε ωηητ
 αῡχνοῡϣ ἡβι νεσνηῡ δε ερε τπολιϥ ρ οῡ ἡτοϥ δε πεχαϣ
 ναῡ δε φυϥι νασνηῡ ἀνοκ ἡπιναῡ επρο ἡ λααῡ ἡρωμε ἡσα
 παρξηεπισκοποϥ μαγααϣ ἡτοοῡ δε ἡτεροϣωτἡ αῡτααχρο
 ετβε πωαχε δε εγεερερε εροοῡ εαβολ εα πχιεραϣ ἡἡβαλ

The priest of Scetis once went to the Archbishop of Alexandria. Accordingly, after he returned to Scetis (11.8), the brothers asked him, 'How is the City doing?' (14.4) He said to them, 'Naturally (φυϥι), brothers, I did not see the face of anyone (14.2) except the Archbishop only.' So, after they heard, they got strong because of the saying, 'They shall protect themselves by means of the diverting of the eyes.'

Finally, here we find extensive use of the conjunctive tense in another example of a 'word of God' legal release (8.5), which also includes an abbreviation of the standard legal phrase †στοιχε 'I do assent' (7.6). Notice that the negative prospective tense marker is spelled εἰνε here (16.4):

+ εἰς πλογοϥ ἡ πινοῡτε ἡτοοτκ ἡτοκ μαθιοϥ ἡγοῡωνε
 εβολ ἡγκωτε ἡγκι εκμεροϥ ἡ νοῡβ δε εἰνεπαραγε ἡμοκ
 + κολλοῡθοϥ πιματοι †στ.

The Word of God is with you. You are Matthew, so appear (publicly), go round and take your share of money, because I shall not confront you. Collouthos the soldier, I do assent.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ὑΑ, ὑΑΡΟϝ	under, in, on behalf of	ψΑλλει	sing, chant
ΑΙΝ	from, since		(psalms)
ΜΗΠΟΤΕ	in case	ΡΟΕΙC	keep
ῒΩCTΕ	so that		watch,
ΕΜΑΤΕ	very, greatly, especially		stay
ΚΟCΜΟC	world, creation		awake
ἡΤΟΛΗ or		ΑΙῒΡΑϝ	divert, amuse
ΕΝΤΟΛΗ	instruction, law		
ΕΥΝΑΖΙC	assembly, (church) service	ΟῒΩΩ or ΟῒΩΩΕ	
		ΟῒΕΩ- ΟῒΑΩϝ	want, desire
ΩΩΡΠ	morning		
CΟΥ	day	ΟῒΩΩΧΕ ΟῒΕΧ-	
ΝΑῒ	hour, time	ΟῒΟΑϝ	cut
ΑΩΜ	generation	ΤΩΜ Τῡ- ΤΟΜϝ	shut
ΒΙΟC	lifetime	ΚΩΤΕ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤϝ	circulate, go round
ΚΩῒΤ	fire		
ΡΗ	sun	ΤΑΑΡΟ ΤΑΑΡΕ-	
ΠΡΗΩ	cloak	ΤΑΑΡΟϝ	strengthen
ΝΟῒΒ	gold, money	ΤΑΛΟ ΤΑΛΕ- ΤΑΛΟϝ	lift, raise
ΠΟΛΕΜΟC	battle, war	ΜΕ ΜΕΡΕ- ΜΕΡΙΤϝ	love
		ΚΩΛῒ ΚΕΛῒ- ΚΟΛῒϝ	knock, ring (bell)
<i>Some verbs</i>			
ΑΡΧΕΙ	begin		
ῒΩΝ ΕῒΟῒΝ	close in, reach		
ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ	punish, chastise	<i>Useful phrase</i>	
ΠΑΡΑΓΕ	confront	ΠΟΟῒ ἡῒΟΟῒ	this very day
ΚΕΛΕῒΕ	allow, grant		
ΛῒΠΕΙ	grieve, grieve		

LESSON 18

Establishing certain conditions

18.1 DIVIDING WORDS

Sahidic Coptic manuscripts are written without word breaks and with little or no punctuation, but initial particles such as **ⲉⲓϥ** or **ⲁⲗⲗⲁ** (at the beginning of a statement) and conjunctions such as **ⲁⲉ** or **Ⲓⲁⲣ** (generally in second place) help us recognise divisions between sentences, phrases and, indeed, individual words. Sometimes, word breaks fall where we expect, as in **ⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ** ‘so, he said to them’ – the position of **ⲁⲉ** shows that the independent pronoun **ⲛⲧⲟⲩ** is pronounced as a word on its own (9.3). Sometimes, we are led to conclude that words combine with grammatical elements to form a single unit in pronunciation, as in **ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉϥⲛⲏⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲓⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲓⲁⲓⲧⲏⲩ** ‘so, when the brothers were sitting beside him’ – the position of **ⲁⲉ** suggests that the prefix **ⲉⲣⲉ** as well as the article **ⲛⲉ-** and the noun **ⲛⲏⲩ** are all pronounced as one word. In both of these examples, the particle appears between the subject and the verb. Typically, however, a particle cannot do so when the subject is a pronoun, because a pronoun subject and its verb are pronounced together:

ⲛⲧⲁϥⲱⲱ Ⲓⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲓⲛ ⲟⲩⲧⲏⲛⲁ ⲉϥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ (14.3)

Because she has conceived (**ⲛⲧⲁ-ϥⲱⲱ**) from a holy spirit.

In fact, simple prepositions such as **ⲓⲛ** ‘in, from’, **ⲉ** ‘to’ and **ⲛ** ‘for’, as well as **ⲛ** ‘of’ and the subject marker **ⲛⲓ** (9.4), were typically pronounced along with their nouns too, so you will find fixture pile-ups of the kind **ⲛⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ** ‘of the men’, while the above should more properly read:

ⲛⲧⲁϥⲱⲱ Ⲓⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲏⲛⲁ ⲉϥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ

Likewise, unmarked objects of verbs are also pronounced with the verb itself, as in **ⲓⲉⲣⲧⲓⲅⲉⲛⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲛⲁⲛ** ‘soak some bread for us’ (11.4). You are also aware that the effect of pronouncing certain sounds in combination inevitably affects how words are first spoken and then written (1.3); as such, we have to be aware of instances like the following, where the past tense marker **ⲁ-** and the subject **ⲟⲩ-ⲱⲁ** ‘a festival’ have merged in pronunciation to form not only one word but an abbreviation at that:

ⲁⲩⲱⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ A festival took place (**ⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲱⲁ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ**).

This arises partly because of grammar – neither the tense marker ⲁ- nor the article ⲟϣ can stand on its own – and partly because of pronunciation – the vowels ⲁ- and ⲟϣ naturally form ⲁϣ, a single sound (a diphthong), much as English ‘you’ and ‘are’ naturally get spoken as ‘you’re’ (2.1). Of course, certain English-users, in this instance, will write ‘you’re’ (as spoken) whereas others will write ‘you are’ (as grammatically correct), so there is a natural inconsistency inherent that affects Coptic writing too. Similar abbreviations may happen with other elements of a statement, including prepositions bound to their objects or the circumstantial converter (15.4) in the following examples:

ⲁϣⲛⲁϣ ⲉϣⲣⲟⲙⲉ He saw a person (ⲉ-ⲟϣ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ).

ⲟϣⲛⲟϣⲁ ⲉϣⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲕ ϩⲛⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲉϣⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲛⲉ ϩⲛⲧⲉϣⲧⲉϣⲛⲉ

There is someone who resembles you in the city (7.4), who is a physician (ⲉ-ⲟϣ-ⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲛⲉ) by his trade.

From this point on, the texts transcribed here will respect Sahidic Coptic word spacing (insofar as we understand it) more closely, and you will soon adjust to the way modern Coptic text editions are ordinarily presented. How this is done may not be thoroughly consistent because, first of all, there are natural inconsistencies in how words are written in any case; but, also, because some combinations may seem unnecessarily dense on the page and there is no virtue in making phrases seem impregnable at this stage of your learning. Indeed, occasional hyphens may still be introduced to guide you through more complicated combinations of words, and a stop (·) may be used to suggest the breaks between statements.

18.2 IF THERE ARE CONDITIONS, USE ⲉⲣⲱⲁⲛ

The conditional tense marker ⲉⲣⲱⲁⲛ raises a hypothetical situation in order to consider its implications – along the lines that ‘if’ this were to happen, then something may follow, as in these comments about dying (17.2):

ΕΡΕΤῒΝΑΡΟΥ ΕΡΩΔΑΝ-ΠΧΘΕΙC Cῒ-ΠΕΤῒΩΙΝΕ (14.4)

What are you going to do, *if the Lord visits you*?

ΕΡΩΔΑΝ-ΠΧΘΕΙC Cῒ-ΠΑΩΙΝΕ ἸΠῚΚΑ-ΠΑCΩΜΑ ΖῒΠΜΑ
ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCῒ ἸΖΗΤῒ

If the Lord visits me, do not leave my body in the place which they are going to bury it in.

In the last example, pay close attention to the combination of words in the phrase ΠΜΑ ΕΤ-ΟΥ-ΝΑ-ΤΟΜC-ῒ ἸΖΗΤ-ῒ ‘the place which they are going to bury it in’ (15.2).

As you see, the conditional tense is necessarily incomplete, and a final statement is needed to explain what *would* happen *if* the condition were actually to come about (17.3). This final statement can take many forms but will often be a future tense because we are liable to be speculating about potential outcomes. Like the prospective tense marker (16.4), the conditional tense marks a pronoun subject with a simple ε- but then the verb is subsequently marked too, in this case with the distinctive ΩΔΑΝ- element:

ΕΤΕΤῒΩΔΑΝΩΛΗΛ CΕΝΑΡΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΝΕ ἸΜΩΤῒ (7.2)

If you pray (ε-ΤΕΤῒ-ΩΔΑΝ-ΩΛΗΛ), they are going to condemn (Ὶ-ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΝΕ) you.

If some nuance is required, the initial condition may be qualified by a particle such as ΖΟΤΑΝ ‘ever, whenever’:

ΖΟΤΑΝ ΕΦΩΔΑΝCΙΝΕ ῒΝΑΩΤῚῚ ΔΥΩ ΕΦΩΔΑΝΩΤΟΡῚ
ῒΝΑΡῚΩΠΗΡΕ (9.6)

If he ever finds out, he is going to tremble; and if he trembles, he is going to marvel.

ΤΩΤῒ ΖΕΝΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΖΟΤΑΝ ΕΥΩΔΑΝΜΕCΤΕ-ΤΗΥΤῒ

You are blessed people, if ever they hate you.

18.3 TĪ IS SIMPLY ‘NOT’

Those tenses which are incomplete and cannot make a statement on their own – in other words, the conditional tense and all the tenses discussed in [Lesson 17](#) – are negated simply by putting TĪ (less often TĒM) in front of the verb, as in N̄-Γ-ΧΙ ‘then get’ but N̄-Γ-TĪ-ΧΙ ‘then don’t get’:

ΕΡΩΔΑΝ-ΟΥΔΑ ΕΤΙ ΜΗΟΚ Ν̄-ΟΥΖΩΒ ΔΥΩ Ν̄ΓΤĪΧΙΤΚ̄ Ν̄ΘΟΝC
N̄ΓΤΑΔQ ΝΔQ (9.6)

If someone asks you for something *and you won’t get yourself* (N̄-Γ-TĪ-ΧΙΤ-Κ̄) hurt, then give it (N̄-Γ-ΤΑΔ-Q) to him.

ΕΝΩΔΑΝΤĪΖΑΡΕΖ ΠΤΟΠΟC ΝΔΩΩQ

If we do not take care (Ε-Ν-ΩΔΑΝ-ΤĪ-ΖΑΡΕΖ), the church is going to collapse (ΩΩQ).

ΟΥΟΙΝΗΤĪΕΤΕΤĪΩΔΑΝΤĪΒΩΚ ΕΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ ΗΕΤΕΤĪΩΔΑΝΤĪΧΙ
ΕΒΟΛ ΖĪΠCΩΜΔ ΜĪ ΠΕCΝΟQ ΜΠΧΟΕΙC

Woe to you, *if you do not go* (Ε-ΤΕΤĪ-ΩΔΑΝ-ΤĪ-ΒΩΚ) to the church or *if you do not partake* (Ε-ΤΕΤĪ-ΩΔΑΝ-ΤĪ-ΧΙ) of the body and blood of the Lord.

By the way, in the examples above notice two contrasting words of Greek origin (3.3): ΤΟΠΟC means a shrine or a holy place generally, but often refers to a church as a place or a building, whereas ΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ refers to a church as a congregation or community of worshippers.

18.4 ‘SUPPOSING’ WE USE ΕΩΧΕ AND ΕΩΠΕ

Whereas the tense marker ΕΡΩΔΑΝ suggests a hypothetical situation for consideration, less speculative conditions may be introduced into statements by initial particles, which add their own specific nuance and may appear with any tense. For example, both ΕΩΧΕ and ΕΩΠΕ ‘supposing’ may be used to state conditions that are not so much hypothetical as in search of an explanation (‘supposing it is this, then what?’):

ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲡⲉⲩⲉⲱⲧ ⲡⲉ Supposing it was his father.

ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲧⲥⲁⲣⲫⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲛⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲡⲛⲣⲉ ⲧⲉ (14.3)

Supposing the flesh happened because of spirit, it is a miracle.

ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ-ⲫⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲕⲉ-ⲛⲉⲫⲏⲧ ⲟⲛⲧⲱⲥ ⲥⲉ-ⲙⲡⲱⲁ ⲛⲧⲁⲉⲓⲟ
ⲛⲓⲙ (7.4)

Supposing there are some who grieve, actually they are worthy
of every honour.

ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲙⲉⲩⲧⲫⲏⲩⲩ ⲉⲡⲉⲛⲕⲁⲣⲱⲩ ⲉⲓⲉ ⲉⲛⲱⲁⲛⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲟⲛ
ⲛⲩⲛⲁⲧⲫⲏⲩⲩ ⲁⲛ (14.2)

Supposing he does not profit for our silence, then if we speak as
well, he is not going to profit.

ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲛⲁⲥⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ ⲫⲁ-ⲫⲃⲁⲥ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ

Supposing you are going to find the one who will pay you for
cloth, then good (καλῶς).

18.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: SPECULATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Here are four more teachings from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, beginning with a story about a temperate elder. As you read the final sentence, notice how the particle ⲁⲉ and the verb break up the long phrase ⲡⲓ-ⲕⲉ-ⲥⲉⲡⲉ ⲉⲧ-ⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲛⲙⲁ-ⲩ ‘the rest who were eating with him’ (2.4):

ⲁⲩⲱⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲫⲛⲱⲓⲛⲧ ⲁⲩⲧ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲡⲟⲧ ⲛⲏⲣⲡ
ⲛⲟⲩⲫⲗⲗⲟ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲭⲉ ⲩⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲓⲟⲓ ⲙⲡⲓⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲓⲕⲉⲥⲉⲡⲉ
ⲁⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲛⲙⲁⲩ ⲙⲡⲟⲩⲭⲓ

Now, a feast once happened in Scetis and they gave a cup of wine
to an elder. He said, ‘Take away from me (10.5) this death.’ So,

after the others who were eating with him saw, they did not partake.

Next, Apa Moses (10.6) insists that the very instructions passed down by the desert fathers and mothers are critical because they in turn embody tried-and-trusted values:

ΔΥΧΟΟC ἡCΙ-ΑΠΑ ΜΩΥCΗC ἔΝΩΙΗΤ ΔΕ · ΕΝΩΔΑΝΖΑΡΕΖ
ΕΝΕΝΤΟΛΗ ἡΝΕΝΕΙΟΤΕ ΔΝΟΚ ἡΝΑΩΠΤΩΡΙ ἡΜΩΤῆ ἑΔΖΤῆ-
ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΔΕ Μῆ-ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC ΝΔΕΙ ΕΠΕΙΜΑ ΕΝΩΔΑΝΤῆΖΑΡΕΖ ΔΕ
ΠΤΟΠΟC ΝΑΩΩΥ

In Scetis Apa Moses said, ‘If we keep the instructions of our ancestors, I myself am going to assure you before God that no barbarians are going to come here (16.3). However, if we do not take care, the church is going to collapse.’

Thirdly, a story about Apa Pambo stresses the value of silence when it comes to teaching others. Note here that ΠΠΑΠΑC ‘the Cleric’ is an informal reference to Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria from 385 to 412:

ΔΥΒΩΚ ἡΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΕΩΙΗΤ ἡCΙ-ΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΦΙΛΟC
ΠΑΡΧΗΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC ΔΥCΩΟΥΖ ΔΕ ἡCΙ-ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΔΥΧΟΟC ἡΑΠΑ
ΠΑΜΒΩ ΔΕ ΤΑΟΥΕ-ΟΥΩΔΔΕ ἡΟΥΩΤ ΕΠΠΑΠΑC ΤΑΡΕΥΤῆΖΗΥ
ΠΕΧΔΥ ΝΔΥ ἡCΙ-ΠῆΛΛΟ ΔΕ ΕΩΩΠΕ ΜΕΥΤῆΖΗΥ ΕΠΕΝΚΑΡΩΥ ΕΙΕ
ΕΝΩΔΑΝΩΔΔΕ ΟΝ ἡῆΝΑΤῆΖΗΥ ΔΝ

The blessed Apa Theophilus (3.3), the Archbishop, once went to Scetis. So, the brothers gathered and said to Apa Pambo, ‘Produce a single saying for the Cleric and he may benefit.’ The elder said to them, ‘Supposing he does not profit for our silence, then (ΕΙΕ) if we speak as well, he is not going to profit.’

Finally, this anonymous teaching is the spiritual exposition of an adage about openness, which uses the conjunctive tense to develop the initial condition, and circumstantial qualifications on the final comment:

αϣϣοοϥ ἡ̅βι οϣϣλλο ϣε · ερωαν-οϣα ετι ἡ̅μοκ ἡ̅οϣϣωβ
 αϣω ἡ̅γτἡ̅χιτἡ̅ ἡ̅βονϥ · ἡ̅γτααϣ ἡ̅αϣ εϣἡακ ερε-πεκμεεϣε
 πιθε ετἡ̅ ἡ̅πετεκνατααϣ κατα-θε ετχηϣ ϣε

ερωαν-οϣα κοοβεκ ἡ̅-οϣκοτ βοκ ἡ̅ἡμαϣ ἡ̅ςἡαϣ ετε παι πε
 ϣε · ερωαν-οϣα ετι ἡ̅μοκ ἡ̅οϣϣωβ τααϥ ϣἡ̅-πεκϣητ τηρῶ
 ἡ̅ἡ-πεκἡ̅ἡα

An elder said, 'If someone asks you for something and you won't get yourself hurt, then give it to him willingly, while your thinking resolves (15.4) to give what you are going to give (ἡ̅-ετ-ἡ̅-ἡα-ταα-ϣ) (15.2) according to the way which is written,

"If someone compels you to a circuit, go with him for two." 'Which is this (13.6): if someone asks you for something, give it (11.5) from your whole heart and soul.'

To finish this reading practice, we have more sayings from the Gospel of Thomas, the first two of which recall comments from the New Testament (Matthew 5:11/10:23/15:14):

πεϣε-ἡ̅ϥ ϣε · οϣβλλε ερωανϥωκϣητῶ ἡ̅οϣβλλε ωαϣϣε
 ἡ̅ἡεςἡαϣ επεϣητ εϣῃετ

Jesus said, 'A blind person, if he leads a blind person (11.8), they fall together (literally 'as the pair') down into a ditch (ε-οϣ-ϣῃετ).'

πεϣε-ἡ̅ϥ ϣε · ἡ̅τωτἡ̅ ϣεἡἡακαριοϥ ϣοταν ερωανμεστε-
 τηῃτἡ̅ ἡ̅εεῤῥῥῥῥῥῥ ἡ̅ἡωτἡ̅ · αϣω σεἡαϣε αν επτοποϥ
 ϣἡ̅ἡἡα ἡ̅ταϣῥῥῥῥῥῥ ἡ̅ἡωτἡ̅ ϣῥαἰ-ἡ̅ϣητῶ

Jesus said, 'You are blessed people, if ever they hate you and then persecute (ἡ̅-σε-ῤῥῥῥῥῥῥ) you. Moreover, they are not going to find the church (16.2) in the place within which they persecuted (ἡ̅τ-α-ϣῥῥῥῥῥῥ) you (15.1).'

πεϣε-ἡ̅ϥ · εωϣε ἡ̅τατϣαρϣ ωωπε ετβε ἡ̅ἡα οϣωἡἡρε τε ·
 εωϣε ἡ̅ἡα δε ετβε πϣωἡα οϣωἡἡρε ἡ̅ωἡἡρε πε αλλα

ΔΝΟΚ †ῤῥῡῖῤῥῥῥῥῥῥ ῖῖῖῖῖ ῥῥῥῥ ῥῥῥῥ ῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥ ῖῖῖῖῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥ ῥῥῥῥῥῥ
ῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥῥ

Jesus said, ‘Supposing the flesh happened because of spirit (14.3), it is a wonder; but supposing spirit because of the body, it is a wondrous wonder. Nonetheless, I wonder this (7.2): how this great wealth settled in this poverty (9.3).’

WORKING VOCABULARY

ΕΙΤΕ	then, and	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΖΟΤΑΝ	if ever	ΕΙΝΕ	resemble
ΟΝΤΩC	actually	ΕΤΙ or ΗΤΙ	ask, request
ΖΡΑΙ-ΖḲ̄	within	ΠΘΕ	resolve,
ΖΘΕΙΝΕ	some		agree
ΤΕΧΝΕ or ΤΕΧΝΗ	trade, craft	ΟΥΩΖ	settle
ΩΔ	festival	ΜΟΚḲ̄Ḳ̄ΖΗΤ	grieve
ΤΟΠΟC	church, shrine	CΩΚΖΗΤ≠	lead
ΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ	church, congregation	ΜΟCΤΕ ΜΕCΤΕ- ΜΕCΤΩ≠	hate
CΑΡΞ	flesh	ΚΩΩΒΕ ΚΕΕΒΕ-	
CΝΟQ	blood	ΚΟΟΒΕ≠	compel, force
ΗΡΠ	wine	† †- ΤΔΔ≠	give
ΔΠΟΤ	cup	(+ Ḳ̄)	pay someone
		(+ ΖΔ)	for something

CHART IV A SUMMARY OF INCOMPLETE TENSES

TIME	Prior			Contemporary		Eventual	
prefix	ερωαν	ἤπατε	ᾤδαντε	ερε	ἤτε	ἤτερε	ταρε
usual sense	if	before	until	while	next	after	maybe
	(18.2)	(17.5)	(17.5)	(6.3)	(17.3)	(17.5)	(17.4)

These tenses are typically negated by τῆ (18.3) *

*The circumstantial converter (15.4) may be applied to statements that are already negative. In other words, various forms of negation may be associated with circumstantial statements.

LESSON 19

Statives and passives

19.1 PASSIVE STATEMENTS

The distinction between active and passive statements relates to the subject of the statement. The problem is that we tend to use the word ‘subject’ here in two different senses: (a) the subject *of the statement* (who or what we are talking about); and (b) the subject *of the verb* (the active agent which carries out the verb). So, for a working hypothesis, let us make the following distinction:

In active statements, the active subject of the verb is also the subject of the statement (‘Harry scored the winning runs’).

In passive statements, the passive object of the verb is the subject of the statement (‘the winning runs were scored’). The subject of the verb need not be mentioned at all, or it can be added in a supplementary phrase (‘the winning runs were scored . . . by Harry’).

An intransitive verb cannot appear in a passive statement because an intransitive verb does not entail an object, as you can see in $\Delta\Upsilon\Omega\Delta \Phi\Omega\text{Π}\epsilon$ ‘a festival happened’ or $\Delta\Upsilon\text{Π}\Omega\Upsilon \epsilon\text{Β}\Omega\lambda$ ‘he ran off’ (11.6). On the other hand, a transitive verb does presuppose an object, as in $\Delta\Upsilon\text{Μ}\epsilon\zeta \text{Π}\kappa\alpha\zeta \text{ΤΗΡ}\bar{\eta}$ ‘they filled (what?) . . . the whole earth’ or $\epsilon\Upsilon\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\omicron-\eta$ ‘they will lift (what?) . . . him’.

To qualify the above, note that some verbs have both transitive and intransitive meanings – for example, $\epsilon\text{Ι}\tau\alpha\chi\text{Ρ}\omicron \bar{\eta}\text{Μ}\omega\tau\bar{\eta}$ ‘while I strengthen you’ (transitive) and $\Delta\Upsilon\tau\alpha\chi\text{Ρ}\omicron \epsilon\tau\text{Β}\epsilon \text{Π}\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon$ ‘they got strong because of the saying’ (intransitive) (17.6), while $\omicron\Upsilon\omega\zeta$ means both ‘put down, leave’ (transitive) and ‘settle down’ (intransitive). We see the same phenomenon in English, for example in ‘she left a message’ (transitive) and ‘she left today’ (intransitive). In addition, as you know, some verbs that are intransitive in English are actually reflexive in Coptic, such as $\Delta\Upsilon\kappa\tau\omicron\eta$ ‘he returned’ or $\Delta\text{C}\bar{\eta}\text{Τ}\omicron\text{Ν} \bar{\eta}\text{Μ}\omicron\text{C}$ ‘she rested’ (11.8). (Remember, reflexive statements are those in which the subject of the verb and the object of the verb are the *same* person or thing.)

19.2 THE STATIVE FORM OF INTRANSITIVE VERBS

To recap, the typical form of a Coptic verb is the infinitive, which is: (a) the key form to recognise and understand (6.1); (b) the form that

follows tense markers (6.2); and (c) the form liable to change on the basis of a following object (11.4). In addition to the infinitive, a handful of verbs have an imperative form, which is only ever used to give commands (4.3). Now, we need to learn that many verbs appear in a third form – usually called the stative because ordinarily it talks about the state arising from the action of the verb, along the lines of **𐩇𐩣𐩪** ‘die’ > **𐩇𐩣𐩪𐩥** ‘dead’ and **𐩠𐩣𐩀** ‘write’ > **𐩠𐩣𐩪** ‘written’. A stative may only be used as part of a statement in the engaged present tense; in other words, a stative cannot follow a tense marker (7.1). However, do bear in mind that statements of any kind – including those in the engaged present tense – may be used after the converters **𐩈𐩢/𐩈𐩢𐩈** ‘who, which’ or circumstantial **𐩈𐩢𐩈/𐩈-** (15.4).

There is no single English equivalent to the stative so you will need different translation strategies depending on the meaning of the verb. For *intransitive* verbs, the stative simply expresses the state arising out of the action of the verb. In other words, from **𐩇𐩣𐩪** ‘die’ we get **𐩇𐩣𐩪𐩥** ‘dead’, from **𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣** ‘settle’ we get **𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪** ‘settled’ and from **𐩈𐩣** ‘persist’ we get **𐩈𐩣𐩪** ‘persisting, remaining’:

𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩢𐩈𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩥

He saw a person *who was dead*.

𐩠𐩣𐩢-𐩣𐩈 𐩠𐩢𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩢𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩢𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪

She spent sixty years *settled* in the upper part of the river.

𐩠𐩢𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪

After she died (𐩠𐩢𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪-𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪), he spent another year *remaining* alone.

Some Coptic verbs readily translate as English adjectives because they talk about a quality, and such verbs naturally favour the stative. For example, from **𐩠𐩣𐩀** ‘lighten, relax’ we get **𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪** ‘light, nimble’, from **𐩈𐩣𐩪** ‘soften’ we get **𐩈𐩣𐩪** ‘soft’ and from **𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪** ‘harden’ we get **𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪** ‘hard’:

𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩈𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪 𐩠𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪𐩣𐩪

She came in walking, *nimble* as a runner (ΤΡΟΜΕΥC).

ΤΕΦΥCΙC ΜΠΜΟΥ CΗΝ ΤΑΠΩΝΕ ΖΩΩΥ ΧΑΧΩ

The nature of the water is *soft*, that of the stone rather is *hard*.
(13.3)

This same is true of certain verbs of emotion or mental state, as in CΕ-ΜΟΚḐ ΕΜΑΤΕ ‘they are very upset’ from ΜΚΑḐ ‘suffer, grieve’.

An important distinction to note here is that between the infinitive ΩΩΠΕ ‘happen, become’ (an event) and its corresponding stative ΩΟΟΠ, which brings the sense ‘be, exist, live’ (a state). In particular, because location statements do not require a verb, the use of ΩΟΟΠ along with a location brings the sense of staying somewhere or living there:

ḐΩΟΟΠ ΖḐ-ḐCΑ ΜΠΕCΗΤ ḐΚΗΜΕ ΕΦΟΥΗḐ ΔΕ ΖḐ-ΘΗΒΑΙC

He is *living* in the lower parts of Egypt, in fact is settled in the Thebaid.

ΕΡΕΝΔΙ ΩΟΟΠ ΜΜΟΙ ΕΤΒΕ ΝΑΝΟΒΕ

These things *stay* with me because of my sins. (14.5)

ΔΝΟΚ †ΩΟΟΠ ΝḐΜΑΚ ΖḐ ΜΑ ΝΙΜ

I *am present* with you in every place.

19.3 THE STATIVE FORM OF TRANSITIVE VERBS

Likewise, for *transitive* verbs the stative also expresses the state arising out of the action of the verb. However, the resultant meaning is passive, in the way that ΩΩΠ ‘receive, accept’ gives us ΩΗΠ ḐΝΔḐΡḐ-ΠΙΝΟΥΤΕ ‘accepted before God’ (12.5). Likewise, from CḐΔḐ ‘write’ we get ḐCΗḐ ‘it is written’, from CΜΟΥ ‘bless’ we get ḐCΜΑΜΑΔΤ ‘he is blessed’, from ΩΠ ‘count, reckon’ we get ΕΦΗΠ ‘he is reckoned’, from ΤΑΕΙΟ ‘honour, esteem’ we get ḐΤΑΙΗΥ ‘you are esteemed’ and ΕΤ-ΤΑΕΙΗΥ ‘which is honoured’, from ΝΟΥΧΕ ‘throw’ we get ΕΦΝΗΧ ‘who is slumped’, from

ወወጥ 'deprive' we get **ኔፕ-ወላድ** 'those who are deprived' and from **ገወፕ** 'hide' we get **ኔፕጊክፕ ፍሬ-ፕን** 'that which is hidden from you':

ሙህ ከሙ ፍቅርጊ ጊንፔግራፊክ

Every blessing *which is written* in Scripture. (3.2)

ላባክላ ፍሃገወጤ ፍባክኢ ፍባ ፍባሙህፕ

He saw a person *who was slumped out*, dead.

ከን-ፕሮፑክፐክ ወክፕ ጊን-ፕፍፋፕጤ

No prophet *is accepted* in his town. (7.4)

ከከን-ወላጂ ሙንፕ ፎፕፍ ፕከህፕ

No saying *is agreed* about the money.

ሀፍሪካ ፍጊክፕ ከን ሀገሪ ፍንባሀንጊ ፍባ ልክ

A wisdom *which is hidden* and a treasure *which is not revealed* (**ፍ-ከ-ባ-ሀንጊ**). (16.2)

ኔጭላክ ከላወፕፍ ፍቅሙላድ

Your name is going to become *blessed*.

Notice how translating statives often straddles the line between present and past, as in **ሙህፕ** 'she has died/she is dead', **ኔፕወላድ** 'those who have been deprived/are deprived', and **ፍጊክፕ** 'which has been hidden/is hidden'. Occasionally, you may feel the past translation provides more natural English, even when the tense is clearly still the engaged present:

ከባወፕ ልክ ከፍፕ ፕከህፕፍ ፍኔጭሚሀንጊ ከን-ኔጭላክ ከን-ኔጭሀን ከሮፍ

God has not forgotten your tears (2.2) and your prayers and your nights of vigil.

In this example, ‘God is not forgetting your tears etc.’ is awkward English; but notice, too, that the comment ‘God *does not* forget your tears’ would be indicative, not engaged (14.2). You may also think about the contrast between the immediacy of ⲥⲙⲟⲟϥⲧ ‘she is dead’ and the stark implication of the past in ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲱ ⲉⲓⲙⲟϥ ‘he has already died’ (9.2). In truth, this observation about translation is a comment about the engaged present tense as much as it is about statives, so sometimes a past translation may seem appropriate even when the verb is in the infinitive:

ⲛⲉⲱⲩⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲉⲛⲧⲉ̅ ⲙⲡⲟⲩⲩ ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲩ I have been looking forward
to this very day.

The point being that English does not much like ‘I am looking forward to today’ once ‘today’ has arrived. The ‘looking forward’ should have ended ‘today’, so the translation is in the past. However, Coptic prefers the immediacy of stating that ‘I am looking forward’.

19.4 THE STATIVE FORM OF ⲉⲓⲣⲉ IS O ‘MADE’

The stative of the transitive verb ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲡ- ⲁⲁⲥ ‘do, make’, which is simply O ‘made’ (11.6), appears in many quirky but useful idioms:

ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲓⲟ ⲛⲁⲁⲙⲱⲛⲓⲟⲛ

A man possessed by a demon (literally ‘a man who is made demonic’).

ⲉⲓⲟ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲱⲱⲥ

When you act for us as a shepherd (literally ‘when you are made shepherdly’).

ⲉⲛⲟ ⲛⲧⲉ̅ ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲭⲓⲟϥⲁ

We are made like the one who blasphemes (ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲭⲓⲟϥⲁ) = we are like blasphemers.

19.5 THE STATIVE FORM OF VERBS OF MOTION

On the other hand, the *verbs of motion* εἰ ‘come’, ὠκ ‘go’, πῶτ ‘run, flee’, ῥῶλ ‘fly’ and ῥε ‘fall’ naturally shift to their stative forms (νήγ, βήκ, πήτ, ῥήλ and ῥήγ respectively) in the engaged present tense, with no implication that this action might have already finished:

εἰς ἡβάρβαρος νήγ ἐϋήτ ἡπόογ

The barbarians are coming to Scetis today.

ἐρενήγ χῖντων ἡ ἐρεβήκ ἐτων

From where are you coming and to where are you going? (14.4)

αἰϣῖρε νῆμαι ῥῆ-νεῖοογ ἡταῖντῶν ῥεϣῆν ἐϥήτ
νῆμαι ἐβὼλ ῥῆογμα ἐγμα

He took care of me in the days of my childhood (5.3), *while fleeing* with me from place to place.

ἀπετῥήλ ὁῖβὼμ ἐχῆ-πετμοοϣε ῥιχῆ-πκαῖ

The one *which is flying* overcame (ὁῖβὼμ) the one which is walking on the ground.

By the way, notice from the last example that μοοϣε ‘walk’ is also a verb of motion, but it does not belong to the small group we noted and does not shift to the stative form in the engaged present (7.5).

19.6 ANOTHER NOTE ABOUT DICTIONARIES

In Coptic dictionaries, the stative is listed after the forms of the infinitive, and marked with the dagger symbol †, along these lines:

εἶρε ῖ- ααῖ ο†	do, make
ρῳῇτ ρεῇτ- ραῇτῖ ραῇτ†	strike, hit
cmine cmῆ- cmῆτῖ cmont†	agree, establish

There are many unexpected forms of the stative, as you will have realised, including ⲉⲓ ‘come’ with the stative ⲛⲏⲩ ‘coming’, ⲙⲟⲩ ‘die’ with the stative ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ ‘dead’ and ⲉⲙⲟⲩ ‘bless’ with the stative ⲉⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ ‘blessed’. However, as you can see from the verbs of motion above (ⲃⲱⲕ, ⲡⲱⲧ, ⲉⲱⲗ with ⲃⲏⲕ, ⲡⲏⲧ, ⲉⲏⲗ), you will soon recognise predictable patterns (11.6). More to the point, there are no other Coptic verb forms you need to learn, so from now on you should simply refer to the Word List for new words (see [page 321](#)).

19.7 THIRD-PERSON PASSIVE STATEMENTS

The stative form has specific uses, but Coptic has a broader strategy for forming passive statements using infinitives – even though infinitives themselves do not have a passive meaning. Consider the comment that opens a story about Antony, ⲁⲩⲉⲱⲗⲡⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ (9.7). This seems to mean ‘they revealed to Apa Antony’ but we do not know who ‘they’ are – in fact, this is obviously the same indeterminate subject of the verb we find in English statements such as ‘they say it is going to rain today’. This is not a passive statement as such, but we can certainly raise the point that ‘they’ are the apparent subject of the verb but who cares who ‘they’ are? Consequently, you may conclude that ⲁⲩⲉⲱⲗⲡⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ translates better if we concentrate on the fact that the meaningful subject of the statement is Antony and use a different English form of words, such as ‘it was revealed to Apa Antony’. The point being that Coptic likes to employ this same generic third-person strategy to move from the vague, indeterminate ‘they’ to create actual passive statements. For example, when Alexander the Great’s senior officers are told the shocking news ⲁⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧⲧⲓ we may consider whether to translate ‘they have killed him’ (even though we do not know who ‘they’ are) or whether to concentrate on the real subject of the statement and translate in the passive ‘he has been killed’. Sometimes, there is a genuine choice for you to make as a translator, so compare the following pairs of translations:

ⲉⲩⲱⲩ ⲛⲏⲉⲩⲗⲟⲩⲟⲥ
ⲉⲡⲓ-ⲡⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲡⲓⲁⲩ

They read his
lessons in those
places.

His lessons are
read in those
places.

εαγκαθαίρου ἡνεστωριος πραιρεδικος	When they expelled (καθαίρου) Nestorius, the heretic. (15.4)	When Nestorius, the heretic, was expelled.
πεταμαζετῃ ἡμοῖ αγκονῆ	What holds me, they have slain (κονῆ) it.	What holds me has been slain.
ἡνερωμε φῶ-ρωμε εμπογτοω	No person shall dress a person when they have not agreed it (ε-ἡπ-ογ-τοω-η).	No person shall dress a person when it has not been agreed.

†κελεγε ἡσεφῖ ἡτεφαπε ἡτσηφε ἡσερωκῆ ἡπεφωμα
ζῆογκωζῖ

I order that they remove (ἡ-σε-φῖ) his head by the sword (1.3)
and burn his body in a fire. (17.3)

I order that his head be removed by the sword and his body
burned in a fire.

Typically, one or the other translation will suggest itself in context – for instance, we may learn from the text who ‘they’ really are. Sometimes, however, the passive translation clearly seems more natural:

ογπολις εγκωτ ἡμος ζιχῆ-ογτοογ

A city built on a hill (not ‘a city which they build on a hill’).

πρωμε εφζῆογταιο ἡπεφειμε ερω αγκοχῆ μῆ-ἡτῶνοογε
ἡατειμε

The man who is with honour (ε-φ-ζῆ ογταιο (15.4)) and does
not know himself, *he has been flung* with the dumb animals. (5.1)

πλογος ἡταγταγογ αγκωτῆ ερω εγω ἡμογ ζῆτπολις
ερωμα

The lesson that was proclaimed (15.2) was heard *when it was read* in the city of Rome.

The possibility of a passive translation may even extend to an indirect object, if that object is clearly the subject of the statement and ‘they’ are inconsequential, as in this comment from the Biography of Joseph the Carpenter:

ⲁⲓⲣⲓ-ⲅⲙⲉ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲛⲡⲁⲧⲟⲩⲭⲓ-ⲉⲅⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ

He spent forty years before they got a wife for him. (17.5)

He spent forty years before he got married.

19.8 MARKING AN AGENT ‘BY’ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅ OR ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅ OR ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̅

There are ways to identify the subject of the verb even when it is not the subject of the statement, such as the supplementary phrase in ‘the winning runs were scored *by* Harry’. In Coptic, the same can be done using one of the prepositions ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅ or ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅ or ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̅, each of which means ‘from, through, by’:

ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲥⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅-ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ It happened *through* (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅) God.

ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲩⲭⲓⲥⲓⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲉⲅⲛⲁⲅⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̅-ⲧⲥⲓⲥⲁⲃⲉ

Everyone who has taken arms (ⲛ̅ⲧ-ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲭⲓⲥⲓⲥⲁⲃⲉ), they are going to fall also *by* the sword.

In both statements, a preposition (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲓⲧⲛ̅ or ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̅) clearly indicates the active agent by which something comes about – in fact, knowing this agent is so important, the relevant verb in each case is a second tense (14.3, 16.1). Although neither example is actually passive, the next statement certainly is, and the same strategy – using a preposition to mark the active agent – has been employed to identify the subject of the verb:

ΔΥΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤῲ ΖΙΤῆ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ

He was tasked *by* the priests.

This example could have been presented as an active statement, perhaps ΔΥΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤῲ ΝΟΙ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ ‘the priests tasked him’ (9.4). Instead, the subject of the verb (the active agent) has been relegated to the supplementary phrase ΖΙΤῆ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ ‘by the priests’, whereas the stated subject of the verb is actually our vague, indeterminate ‘they’ (Δ-Υ-ΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤ-ῲ). As a consequence, the meaningful statement ends up focused on the object of the verb, and we have a passive statement (‘he was tasked by the priests’ *not* ‘they tasked him by the priests’).

Any doubt about the passive character of this idiom is completely removed when the same vague ‘they’ appears as the subject of the sentence but the marked active agent (the actual subject of the verb) turns out to be singular, as in the following:

ΔΥΠΡΑΖΕ ἦΜΟϚ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤῆ-ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟC

He was tempted by the Devil.

This seems to begin ‘they tempted him’ (Δ-Υ-ΠΡΑΖΕ ἦΜΟϚ) but such a reading is nonsense because ‘they’ is plural, whereas the person actually doing the tempting (ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟC ‘the Devil’) is singular. Therefore, the only sensible meaning is ‘he was tempted *by the Devil*’. In other words, this is a genuine passive: (a) ‘he’ was tempted, and ‘he’ is who we are talking about; (b) the Devil did the tempting; so (c) the vague, indeterminate subject ‘they’ is a grammatical conceit. The same is true of the following:

ἦΠΟΥΧΠΟϚ ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ-ΤCΖΙΜΕ

He was not born *by* the woman.

ἦΤΑΔΥΒΟΛῆ ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ-ΟΥΚΟCΜΟC

I was freed *by* some creation.

Again, in the first example the verb seems to state, ‘they have not born him’ (ἦΠ-ΟΥ-ΧΠΟ-Ϛ) but immediately we learn (ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ-ΤCΖΙΜΕ ‘by woman’) that the active agent in a birth is singular (of course!). In the second example the verb seems to say, ‘they freed me’ (ἦΤΑ-Υ-ΒΟΛ-ῆ) but, again, the active agent is singular (ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ-ΟΥΚΟCΜΟC ‘by some creation’).

19.9 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: POLITENESS AND SUFFERING

First, here is the introduction to a letter from Apa Shenoute to Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria (the remainder is now lost). Notice **ϥⲓⲛⲟⲩⲓⲟⲥ**, the formal ‘Greek’ form Shenoute adopts for his own name along with an abundance of fancy ecclesiastical words (for instance, **ⲑⲉⲟⲩⲗⲉⲥⲧⲁⲧⲟⲥ** ‘best beloved of God’) when writing to an Archbishop:

ϥⲓⲛⲟⲩⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲗⲁ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛⲓⲱⲧ
ⲛⲑⲉⲟⲩⲗⲉⲥⲧⲁⲧⲟⲥ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲙⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲓⲙⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ
ⲡⲁⲣⲭⲓⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲉⲙⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

ⲭⲁⲓⲣⲉ ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲡⲉϥⲭⲥ ⲓⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ ⲓⲥⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ
ⲓⲥⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ ⲟⲛ ⲛⲉⲓⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ

Sinouthios, this least, is the one who is writing (13.4) to his beloved father, best beloved of God and blessed, Apa Timothy, the Archbishop, in the Lord.

Hello (3.1). God and his Christ, Jesus, our saviour, he is blessed. The Lord God again is blessed.

Next, though, we move through the decades and hear more from the funeral eulogy of Shenoute. You have already read part of the second passage (17.6):

ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲛⲏⲩⲉ ⲛⲓⲧⲟⲧ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲙⲡⲟⲟⲩ
ⲉⲙⲡⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ ⲙⲛⲡⲣ ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲉⲙⲗⲁⲗ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲡⲁ
ⲱⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ · ⲕⲧⲁⲓⲛⲩ ⲉⲙⲡⲉⲕⲱⲛⲉ ⲕⲧⲁⲓⲛⲩ ⲉⲙⲡⲉⲕⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲗⲱ
ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲛⲁⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉϥⲥⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ ⲉⲁⲣⲧⲏⲛ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲉⲁⲣⲧⲏⲛⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ

This crowd of this status (13.2) which is gathered to this holy church today (18.3) in his name and the memory of his holy servant, Apa Shenoute (17.2): you are esteemed from your living and you are esteemed in your dying, and your name is going to become blessed with us and with God.

οὔμε πε πωραχε ἡδαιειδ χε πδικαιος ναωωπε ἡρ
 πμεεγε ωαενεζ αγω πεκρ πμεεγε ναωωπε χιν-ογχωμ
 ωαογχωμ τῆσοογν ἡῆζιζε ἡτακωπογ ζιχῆ-πειτοογ
 τῆσοογν ἡτεκμῆτμαιοηκε αγω ἡqοβω αν ἡσι ππογτε
 ενεκρῆμειοογε ἡῆνεκωληλ ἡῆνεκογωη ἡ ροεις

A truth is the saying of David, ‘The righteous one is going be for remembering until eternity.’ Likewise, your memory is going to exist from generation until generation. We know the troubles you received on this hill (15.2), we know your philanthropy (5.1). Likewise, God has not forgotten your tears and your prayers and your nights of vigil.

Now, it is time for you to read something from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* on the subject of demons. Whereas, nowadays, we talk about people struggling with ‘their’ demons – as though they were self-created – the desert fathers and mothers believed that demons are external agents, which attack people through human frailties, including sickness, memories and desires, to provoke despair out of resentments and fantasies of impossible achievements and unattainable pleasures. According to this belief, the principal defence against demonic attack is ὁῶβιο ‘humility’, following the example of Jesus, as exemplified in the following story. By the way, in the second line εβολ ζῆῆ is used in the sense of ‘from’:

ογρωμε εφο ἡδαιωωνιον αγω εφμοκζ ἡματε εφταγε
 σβητε εβολ αφρωζτῆ ἡογμοναχοε εβολ ζῆῆῆλλο ετεφογοσε
 · πζλλο δε ζῆῆ-ογβεπη αφκτο εροφ ἡτκεογει · πδαιωων δε
 ἡπεφτωογν ζα-πχοφχῆ ἡπὲῶβιο αφει εβολ ζιωωφ

A man possessed by a demon, and distressed greatly and producing foam, struck a monk from the elders on his cheek. So, the elder quickly (‘in a hurry’) turned to him the other one (12.1). Therefore, the demon did not stand up under the burning (17.1) of the humility and came out of him.

The next story is about Antony, champion of the solitary life in the desert, who is challenged by the claim that someone may live just like him in the city (9.7):

ⲁⲅⲟⲩⲱⲗⲓⲡⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ ⲅⲓⲡⲭⲁⲓⲉ ⲭⲉ · ⲟⲩⲛ̄-ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲓⲉⲓⲛⲉ
 ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲕ ⲅⲛⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲉⲅⲥⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲅⲛⲧⲉⲓⲧⲉⲕⲛⲉ ⲉⲓⲧ̄ ⲙⲡⲉⲓⲅⲟⲩⲟ
 ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲁⲁⲧ̄ · ⲁⲅⲱ ⲱⲁⲓⲡ̄ ⲡⲉⲅⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲙⲣ̄ ⲉⲓⲭⲱ ⲙⲡⲱⲙⲛⲧ̄
 ⲛ̄ⲅⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ·

It was revealed to Apa Antony in the desert (ⲭⲁⲓⲉ) that, ‘There is one who resembles you in the city, who is a physician by his trade (18.1), who gives his wealth to those who are deprived. Moreover, he spends the whole day saying the Three Holies with the angels (13.9).’

The following letter, on an ostracon from Thebes, is presumably a begging letter. The modern editor describes the writing as a ‘clumsy, unskilled hand’, so expect unexpected spellings:¹

ⲫ̄ ⲛ̄ⲱⲣⲡⲓ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲧ̄ⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉⲓⲡ̄ⲅⲟⲧⲉ ⲁⲅⲱ
 ⲛ̄ⲣⲉⲓⲱⲙ̄ⲱⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲓⲉⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲁⲕ
 ⲧⲙⲣ̄ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲃⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ · ⲁⲣⲉ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲛ ⲛ̄ⲅⲣⲟⲩⲛⲁ ⲙⲛ̄
 ⲡⲉⲅⲛⲕⲉ ⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲁ ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ ⲅⲓⲧ̄ⲛ̄-ⲓⲱⲅⲁⲛⲛⲥ

Firstly (7.3), I am greeting you, devout and worshipful person. (5.1) The Lord shall bless you and all that lives for you – men and animals. Please be charitable with the poor person. Give it to Victor from John. (11.5)

Finally, a verse from the Gospel of Thomas is one of the more cryptic among many cryptic teachings ascribed to Jesus in the Coptic text:

ⲡⲉⲭⲉ ⲓⲥ̄ ⲭⲉ · ⲅⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲱⲁⲛⲛⲁⲅ ⲉⲡⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲭⲡⲟⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
 ⲅⲛⲧⲥⲅⲓⲙⲉ · ⲡⲉⲅⲧ-ⲧⲙⲏⲧ̄ⲛ̄ ⲉⲭ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲅⲟ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲱⲧ ⲛⲁⲓ ·
 ⲡⲉⲧ̄ⲙⲙⲁⲅ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲉⲱⲧ

Jesus said, ‘If you see the one who was not born by woman (15.2), bow down on your faces and greet him (11.8). That one is your father.’ (13.4)

1. See W. E. Crum: *Coptic Ostraca*. London, Egypt Exploration Fund (1902), no. 75.

WORKING VOCABULARY

ΜΗΗΩΕ	many	ΤΩΟΥΝ ΤΟΥΝ̄-	
σοφία	wisdom	ΤΩΟΥΝ= ΤΩΝ†	raise, get up
ἀπε	head	ΤΑΕΙΟ ΤΑΕΙΕ-	
ογοςε	cheek	ΤΑΕΙΟ= ΤΑΙΗΥ†	honour, esteem
αζο	treasure	CZAI CEZ- CAZ=	
ζογο	excess, wealth	or CZAIT= CHZ†	write
ἄζογο	especially, above	ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΟΠ=	
	all	ΗΠ†	count, reckon
CBHTE	foam	ΩΩΠ ΩΕΠ-	
ΩΩC	shepherd	ΩΟΠ- ΩΗΠ†	get, receive
ΚΗΜΕ	Egypt	ΚΩΤ ΚΕΤ-	
		ΚΟΤ= ΚΗΤ†	build
<i>Some verbs</i>		ΤΩΩ ΤΕΩ-	
ειρε p̄- αα= ο†	do, make	ΤΟΩ= ΤΗΩ†	determine, limit, agree
ογωωτ			
(+ ἦ, ΝΑ=)	praise, kiss (in greeting)	ΒΩΛ ΒΛ̄- ΒΟΛ=	
ωπ̄ρισε	take care, look after	ΒΗΛ†	free, untie
ππαζε	tempt	ΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΕΧ-	
σέπη	hurry, rush	ΝΟΧ= ΝΗΧ†	throw, fling
ωωπε ωοοπ†	happen, become, exist	ΜΟΥΖ ΜΕΖ-	
σΩ σέετ†	stay, continue, persist	ΜΑΖ= ΜΗΖ†	fill, complete
ει ΝΗΥ†	come	CWOYZ CEOYZ-	
ΒΩΚ ΒΗΚ†	go	COOYZ= COOYZ†	assemble, meet, collect
ΠΩΤ ΠΗΤ†	run, flee	ΠΩΖΤ ΠΕΖΤ-	
ζΩΛ ΖΗΛ†	fly	ΠΑΖΤ= ΠΑΖΤ†	bend, bow
ζε ΖΗΥ†	fall, find	ΡΩΖΤ ΡΕΖΤ-	
ἦκαζ μοκζ†	suffer, grieve	ΡΑΖΤ= ΡΑΖΤ†	strike, hit
CMOY		ΡΩΚΖ ΡΕΚΖ-	
CMAMAAT†	bless	ΡΟΚΖ= ΡΟΚΖ†	burn
ΜΟΥ ΜΟΟΥΤ†	die	ΩΩΩΤ ΩΕΤ-	
ΜΟΥΟΥΤ ΜΕΥΤ-		ΩΑΑΤ= ΩΑΑΤ†	cut off, deprive
ΜΟΥΟΥΤ=	kill	ΩΩΒ ΩΒ̄- or	
		ΩΕΥ ΩΗΒ†	dress, shave

Notice the idiom ⲥⲱⲱⲧ̅ⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲉⲙⲧⲧⲉⲛ̅ ‘look forward to, anticipate’, which is based on the verb ⲥⲱⲱⲧ̅ⲓ ‘look, watch’ and incorporates the ‘body part’ word ⲉⲙⲧⲧⲉⲛ̅ ‘front’. As such, the phrase becomes one of those that seem to exhibit an unnecessary pronoun ahead of its object (5.2).

LESSON 20

Writing with a purpose

20.1 BACK IN THE PAST WITH NEPE OR NE-

The past converter **NEPE** in effect pushes a statement – basically, in any given tense – further back into the narrative past. For example, it may turn the engaged present into a statement about what was going on *then* (as opposed to what is going on now):

NEPE NAGΓEΛOC MΠNOYTE EΠITIMA NAΥ

The angels of God were chastising them.

Whereas the simple past typically reports *an event* that happened, **NEPE** with the engaged present is better suited to talking about *ongoing behaviour*, albeit behaviour which is over now:

NEPE PCΩP OYAWE NZOYO ΠAPA PKECETE NECIME (2.4)

The Saviour desired you (OYAW-ε) especially, more even than the rest of women.

Of course, the presence of a converter at the head of the statement allows suffix pronouns to be used as the subject, though the converter reduces to **NE-** as a consequence:

NEQXΩ MMOC XE KΩ NAΙ EBOL	He was saying, ‘Forgive me!’
NEQZMOOC EQCOBŪ EPQY NŪI	One was sitting, fanning
OYA ZŪ TEQKLABT	(ε-q-COBŪ) him with his
	hood.

By the way, notice the distinctive idiom for ‘forgive’ (KΩ ‘leave, put down’ > KΩ EBOL ‘let go, dismiss’ > KΩ EBOL with an indirect object ‘forgive someone’).

Oddly, any verb in a statement marked by **NEPE** (or **NE-**) may be followed by **PE**, though this has no meaning here, as you see in the following comment about Saint Mena, condemned and making his way to the scaffold (12.6):

NEQMOOYE PE EQTEΛHΛ EQPOOYT EQΦALLEI EQWAXE
MŪ-ΠMHNYE

He was walking, rejoicing, smiling, singing psalms and talking with the crowd.

The word **πῆ** appearing here and the pronoun **πῆ** are etymologically related but they are not the same – so, for example, this **πῆ** never becomes **τῆ** or **νῆ** (13.4). Of course, the verb in an engaged present statement may be stative, and accordingly a stative may straightforwardly follow the past converter:

ἀλλὰ νεῦνῃς πῆ ῥιχμ̄-πκαῖ

Instead, he was slumped on the ground.

The past converter may be used with tenses other than the engaged present (though not those which are incomplete). For example, with the indicative present it creates a statement about behaviour that used to happen or characteristically has happened:

ἦτοϋ νεῶαϣ-ῥῆοοϥ ἡπεϣῶα.χῆ ἡπαῤα-πῶϣ

He used to praise (**νε-ῶα-ϣ-ῥῆοοϥ**) their speaking more than his own. (13.7)

ρῶμε νῖμ ἐνεῶαϣ.πῇ πῶτ ῥῖ-τεῖρῖη

Every person *who was ever born* (**ε-νε-ῶα-ϣ-πῇ**) runs in this direction. (15.4)

Notice the use of **πῶτ** rather than the stative **πῇτ** in this comment, because it stands more by way of an adage than an engaged statement (19.5).

On the other hand, when used to mark the simple past, the converter **νε-** forms a more distant past – one that had already happened before the narrative even began – often moving the English translation to ‘had’:

αϣῶκ ἐβῶλ ἡμ̄μαϥ ἐπῶρῥ

He *went* out with them to the reaping (**ῶρῥ**).

νεαϣῶκ ἐβῶλ ἡμ̄μαϥ ἐπῶρῥ

He *had gone* out with them to the reaping.

NEΔYBΩK THPOY ZIOYCON EZOYN ETCYNΔZIC

They had all gone together into the assembly.

The past converter can also mark statements with no verb, such as a location statement:

NEPE NEQCIΔ ZIΔN NEQBΔΔ EQOTAM MHOY

His hands were upon his eyes as he was closing them.

Frequently, however, statements without a verb do not actually begin with the subject, so the abbreviated form of the converter is more frequently used (13.4):

NEZENΔIKAIOC NE EYEIPE MΠETPANAQ MΠINOYTE

They were righteous people, doing what is pleasing to God.

Notice, here, the odd but useful idiom ΠET-PANAQ MΠINOYTE ‘what is pleasing to God’ (literally ‘what makes his pleasure for God’ (5.2)).

The abbreviated form NE- also appears with the small number of verbs that stand in front of their subject:

NEMNTOY QHP E MΔY They did not have (NE-MNT-OY)
a son. (10.3)

NEYNOLA NZHTOY EQNAY EBOΔ

There was one (NE-ON-OLA) among them who saw visions (literally ‘who sees out’). (7.4)

The next example is a location statement negated by MN ‘there isn’t’, which even adds ΔN without creating a double negative (16.3):

NEMN ZEPMENEYTHC MΔY ΔN PE

There was no interpreter there.

The past converter may be used with other types of negative statements too, as you can see from $\text{NE-Q-COOY\bar{N} \Delta N}$ ‘he did not know’ in the following (16.2):

$\text{ΠΕΛΛΟ ΝΕΥCΟΟΥΝ ΔΝ ΠΕ ΗΜΗΤΟΥΕΕΙΕΜΙΝ}$ (5.1)

The elder did not know Greek.

$\text{ΠΕΧΔQ ΝΔQ ΧΕ ΤΩΟΥ\bar{N} \bar{N}ΓΒΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΝΕΥCΟΟΥΝ ΔΝ ΓΔΡ ΧΕ ΔQΜΟΥ}$

He said to him, ‘Get up and go out’, *as he did not know* that he had died.

A final example here exemplifies, not only the past converter prefixed to a negative statement, but prefixed to a statement in the engaged future (‘*back then* he was not going to do something’):

$\text{ΝΕQΝΔ\bar{P}ΖΟΤΕ ΔΝ}$ He was not going to fear ($\text{NE-Q-NA-\bar{P}ΖΟΤΕ}$).

20.2 WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

Ways of stating a purpose or intention entail different idioms, such as ΖΩCΤΕ ‘so that’ with the conjunctive tense (17.3). Some of these idioms seem straightforward because they follow patterns we use in English. For example, an action may simply be marked for intention by the preposition ϵ ‘to’, as in ‘I came to hear the music’:

$\text{ΕΥΠΔΖ\bar{T} ΝΔQ ΕΧΙ-ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ}$

He is bowing to him *to get* confession.

Notice that the verb $\text{ΕΥΠΔΖ\bar{T}}$ is second present here because the intention matters as much as the action – the fact that he bowed but also why he did so (14.3). Of course, the intention is often integral to the meaning of a phrase:

$\text{ΝΕQΟΥΩQ ΔΝ ΠΕ \bar{N}\bar{P}ΖΩΒ \bar{N}ΤΕΙΖΕ}$

He did not wish to behave like this.

Here, the infinitive $\bar{\rho}\bar{\alpha}\omega\beta$ ‘behave’ is the marked object of $\sigma\gamma\omega\omega$ and the sense of intention simply arises out of the meaning of $\sigma\gamma\omega\omega$ ‘wish (to do something)’ (17.1). A similar sense may arise out of using $\sigma\gamma\bar{\eta}\delta\omicron\mu$ $\bar{\mu}\mu\omicron\kappa$ ‘you are able (to do something)’ (10.5):

ΠΛΟΕΙΣ ΟΥΝΒΟΜ-ΜΜΟΚ ΕΣΚΕΠΑΖΕ ΜΜΟΙ ΖΗΤΕΚΧΑΡΙΣ

Lord! You are able to shelter me in your grace. (11.9)

On the other hand, a writer may choose a phrase that spells out an intention, such as the conjunctions $\chi\epsilon\kappa\alpha\varsigma$ ‘so that’ or simply $\chi\epsilon$ ‘that’ followed by a future tense (usually the *prospective* future (16.4)), along the lines of ‘she decided that she would leave’:

ΔΥΣΟΠΙᾚ ΧΕ ΕΥΕΝΔΥ ΕΝΔΕΜΩΝ

He requested that he could see the demons.

ΝΤΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΤΗΝ ΕΥ-ΤΗΤΗ ΔΕ ΕΤΕΤΝΕΤΩΜΣ ΜΠΑCΩΜΑ

God sent you so you would bury my body.

†Ϟωϣ̄† εβολ-ζητ̄ ḡ ḡποογ̄ ḡζοογ̄ χεκαϞ εφεχωκ εβολ
ḡḡι-πωλχε ḡπεχ̄

I have been looking forward to this very day so that the saying of Christ will be fulfilled.

The particle ㄅㄨˊ ‘as though, apparently’ together with the circumstantial tense may be used the other way round, as it were – to suggest that someone has noticed or recognised another’s intention:

ԳՐԱԶԻԴՆԻ ՄԻՍԵՎՈՒՐԵ ԶՈՏ ԵՎԻՄԵՏԱՆՈՒԱ ՄԻՋՂՆՈ ՔԵ
 ԵՎԵՏՄՈՍՅ ԵՐՈՍՅ

He bowed with his son *as though* they were giving confession to the elder so that he would bless them.

Consequently, a crucial use of *ⲧⲣⲉ* is to follow intentional words, especially *ⲉ* ‘to’:

ⲁⲗⲉⲛⲕⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲩⲁⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉϥⲩⲁⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲗⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓ̄

Some others went to him so they could listen (*ⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ϥ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄*) to a saying by him (literally ‘they went to him *to let them listen*’).

ⲁϥⲧⲉⲧⲡⲉⲓⲛⲧ ⲛⲟϥⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲛⲟϥⲟⲉⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁⲩⲱⲡⲉ

An elder was once convinced he could see (*ⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ϥ-ⲛⲁϥ*) things which are going to happen (literally ‘he was convinced *about making him see*’).

This form of words can also be used to create passive statements (19.7), for instance in the following comment about a cross commissioned by Duke Heraclius to lead an army into battle:

ⲁϥⲧⲣⲉϥⲧⲟⲕⲓ̄ ⲉϥⲕⲟⲛⲧⲟⲥ ⲛⲱⲉ He had it fixed to a wooden pole
(literally ‘*he made them fix it*
to a wooden pole’)

From this example you will notice that the following verb is an ordinary infinitive and behaves as such – so the verb *ⲧⲱⲕ* ‘stiffen, fix’ appears as *ⲧⲟⲕ-ⲓ̄* with a pronoun as its object (11.5). Likewise, in the next example the verb *ⲉⲓⲛⲉ* ‘bring’ appears as *ⲛ̄*- when followed directly by its object (11.6):

ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲧⲣⲉϥⲛ̄-ⲧⲗⲉⲡⲓⲥⲉ ⲛⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲣⲧ

I am going to *make them bring* (*ⲧⲣⲉ-ϥ-ⲛ̄*) the bit of wool to you.

On the other hand, an action may be explained specifically without reference to anybody’s intention by using *ⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ* after an impersonal phrase, such as *ⲁ-ⲥ-ⲩⲱⲡⲉ* ‘it happened’:

ⲁⲥⲩⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲟϥⲥⲟⲡ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲣⲃⲁⲣⲟⲥ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲉⲗⲛⲧ

Once (*ⲛⲟϥⲥⲟⲡ*), the barbarians happened to go north.

Literally, this example means ‘it happened *to make the barbarians go north*’, as though they were driven by circumstances rather than their own wishes.

As a noun, of course, the inflected infinitive can also act as the subject of a statement:

Μῆ-τρεῖνλο ἐφῴνῃε φαντεῖνῃε

There is no *making him stop* seeking, until he finds. (9.2)

20.4 Τῆ̄ IS ‘NOT’ MAKING IT HAPPEN

When used as a noun (17.1), any infinitive, including τρε in this idiom, can be negated simply by marking it with τῆ̄ as a prefix (18.3):

παῖ πετναφῆενε-πενειῶτ ἐρον ἐτῆ̄ναγ ἐροφ φᾶενεζ
(13.4)

This is the one which is going to remove (φῆενε) our father from us *to not see* (ε-τῆ̄-ναγ) him again forever (φᾶ-ενεζ).

φωπε ῆ̄ θε ῆ̄ πζοφ ἐτῆ̄τρενοβῶ-νενῖνβωῶε μῆ̄ ττεχνη
ῆ̄ πδιαβολος

Become like the snake *to not let us forget* (ε-τῆ̄-τρε-ν-οβῶ) our impulses and the skill of the Devil

Negation with τῆ̄ is what lies behind the intimidating phrase for ‘self-denial’ you met previously (14.5):

πσῶφ μῆ̄ πεῶββιο μῆ̄ πτῆ̄καλααγ νᾶν μῆ̄ ὅγπομονη

Contempt and humility and self-denial and restraint.

Here, the relevant phrase is the negated infinitive, that is π-τῆ̄-κα ‘not leaving’ in πτῆ̄κα-λααγ νᾶν ‘not leaving anything for us’.

20.5 ⲙⲡⲣ̄-ⲧⲣⲉ- ‘DO NOT LET’

There is another important behaviour ⲧⲣⲉ shares with ordinary infinitives – it can be used as to form a negative command with ⲙⲡⲣ̄, as in ⲙⲡⲣ̄-ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ‘do not let her write’ (14.1). In turn, this is effectively the negative counterpart for the optative ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲕⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ‘you should write’ (16.5).

20.6 THE AUXILIARY Ⲭ̄ CAN HELP

Ⲭ̄ or ⲉⲱ ‘can’ is an auxiliary (or ‘helper’), a small word which may prefix a verb to qualify the meaning, as in ⲱⲁⲕⲭⲟⲟⲥ ‘you say’ but ⲱⲁⲕ-ⲉⲱ-ⲭⲟⲟⲥ ‘you can say’:

ⲙⲉⲕⲉⲱⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲁⲓ

You *cannot* say that this one is evil more than (ⲉ) this one.

ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲱⲉⲡ-ⲡⲱⲱ ⲛⲟⲗⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ (13.4)

Who is the one *who is going to be able* to count (ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲛⲁ-ⲱ-ⲱⲉⲡ)
the sand of the sea.

Consequently, the meaning of Ⲭ̄ is basically the same as that of ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲙ ‘be able’ (10.5). Indeed, they may even be used together:

ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲥ ⲗⲉ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛⲱⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲓ ⲉⲙⲟⲟⲱⲉ

As for her, however, she said, ‘I am not able (ⲙ̄ⲛ-ⲱ-ⲟⲙ) to walk.’

Likewise, Ⲭ̄ can be used with the related verb ⲟ̄ⲛⲟⲙ ‘be able, get control, overcome’ (19.5):

ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲟ̄ⲛⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲧ̄ⲓ ⲉ-ⲉⲱ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲩⲟⲩⲟⲧⲉ

This, you are going to be able to extinguish his barbs with it (literally ‘from it’).

ΑΠΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΖ-ΠΖΘ ἸΠΕΦΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ἸΕΘΟΥ ΖΙ-ΧΑΡΙΣ ΖΩΣΤΕ
 ἸΤΕ-ἸΚΕΜΑΤΟΙ ΤΕΜΕΦΘἸΘΟΜ ΕΣΩΩΤ ΕΞΟΥΝ ΖἸΠΕΦΖΘ
 ΕΤΣΗΑΜΑΔΑΤ

The saviour filled the face of his martyr with glory and grace so that the soldiers too *were not able* (ΤΕΜ-ΕΦ-ΘἸΘΟΜ) to look into his blessed face (17.3).

20.7 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: REASONS AND OUTCOMES

First, let's return to the funeral eulogy for Abbot Shenoute (19.9):

ΝΕΩΔΑΧΕ ΔΕ ΖΩΟΥ ἸΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΑΠΑ ΦΕΝΟΥΤΕ ΔΥΜΕΖ-
 ΠΚΑΖ ΤΗΡῒ ΧΙΝ ΕΒΟΟΥ ΦΑ-ΤΗΘΘ ἸΠΟΛΙΣ ΡΑΚΟΤΕ
 ΜἸΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΙΣ ΜἸΠΠΑΛΑΣΤΙΝΗ ΑΥΩ ΟΝ ΕΦΕCOC
 ΖἸ-ΠΤΡΕΦCΩΟΥΖ ΖΩΩΦ ΜἸΠΡΑΓΙΟC ΚΥΡΙΛΛΟC ΕΑΥΚΑΘΑΙΡΟΥ
 ἸΝΕCΤΩΡΙΟC ΠΡΑΙΡΕΔΙΚΟC ΑΥΩ ΦΑ-ΕΖΡΑἸ ΕΖΡΩΜΗ · CΕΩΦ
 ἸΝΕΦΛΟΓΟC ΖἸ-ἸΜΑ ΕΤἸΜΑΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΘΕ ἸΤΑΥΤῚ-ΤΜἸΤΡΕ ΝΑΝ
 ἸCΙ-ΖΕΝΡΩΜΕ ἸΠΙCΤΟC ΧΕ ΠΛΟΓΟC ἸΤΑΥΤΑΥΟΥ ΔΥCΩΤἸ
 ΕΡΟΦ ΕΥΩΦ ἸΜΟΦ ΖἸΤΠΟΛΙC ΖΡΩΜΑ

However, the sayings themselves (8.3) of our father, Apa Shenoute, they filled the whole earth, from Ethiopia to the great city of Alexandria, and Constantinople and Palestine and also Ephesus – in his own meeting with Saint Cyril when they expelled Nestorius, the heretic (19.7). Indeed, up to Rome. His lessons were read in those places according to the way that the believers made witness to us – the lesson that was proclaimed was heard when it was read in the city of Rome.

Next, here is another story about demons from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (19.9). You have read an extract from this already (11.9):

ΔΥΧΟΟC ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥΖἸΛΛΟ ΧΕ ΔΥCΟΠῚ ΧΕ ΕΦΕΝΑΥ ΕΝΔΕΜΩΝ ·
 ΑΥΩ ΔΥCΩΛἸ ΝΑΦ ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ ἸΓῚΡΧΡΙΑ ΑΝ ἸΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΟΥ · ΠῚΛΛΟ
 ΔΕ ΔΥΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ ΕΦΧΩ ἸΜΟC ΧΕ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΟΥἸΘΟΜ ἸΜΟΚ
 ΕCΚΕΠΑΖΕ ἸΜΟΙ ΖἸΤΕΚΧΑΡΙC · ΑΥΩ ΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΘΕΛΠ-ΝΕΦΒΑΛ

ΕΒΟΛ ΔΑΦΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΟΥ Ν ΘΕ ΝΗΔΒ ΝΕΒΙΩ ΕΥΚΩΤΕ ΕΠΡΩΜΕ
ΕΥΞΡΟΧΡΞ ΝΝΕΥΟΒΖΕ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΩΥ · ΑΥΩ ΝΕΡΕ ΝΑΓΓΕΛΟC
ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ ΝΑΥ

It was said about an elder that he requested that he could see the demons. So, it was revealed to him (19.7), ‘You do not need to see them’ (17.1). However, the elder insisted, saying, ‘Lord, you are able to shelter me in your grace’ (11.9). Then God opened (literally ‘unwrapped’) his eyes, and he saw them like the bees (literally ‘honey flies’), going round Mankind, grinding their teeth down on him. However, the angels of God were chastising them.

Now, a story about Apa Jijoi illustrates another familiar subject in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, that of teaching by example instead of talking:

ΔΖΝΚΟΟΥΕ ΒΩΚ ΩΔΡΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΥCΩΤΗ ΕΥΩΔΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤΓ ·
ΑΥΩ ΜΠΩΧΕ ΛΑΔΥ ΝΑΥ ΑΛΛΑ ΝΕΥΧΩ ΜΜΟC ΧΕ ΚΩ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ
· ΝΤΕΡΟΥΝΑΥ ΔΕ ΕΝΕΦΒΙΡ ΠΕΧΑΥ ΝΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΕΦΜΑΘΗΤΗC
ΧΕ ΕΤΕΤΝΡ-ΟΥ ΝΝΕΙΒΙΡ · ΠΕΧΑΥ ΧΕ ΩΔΑΝΧΟΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΙCΑ
ΜΗΠΑΙ · ΑΥCΩΤΗ ΔΕ ΝΒΙ-ΠΕΛΛΟ ΠΕΧΑΥ ΧΕ ΠΚΕΧΙΧΩΙ
ΕΦΟΥΩΜ ΕΠΕΙCΑ ΜΗΠΑΙ · ΝΤΟΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΥCΩΤΗ ΔΥ†ΖΗΥ ΜΜΑΤΕ
ΑΥΩ ΑΥΒΩΚ ΖΝ-ΟΥΡΑΩΕ ΕΑΥΧΙΚΩΤ ΖΜ-ΠΕΦΘΒΒΙΟ

Some others (1.2a) went to him so that they could listen to a saying by him. Yet he did not say anything to them. Instead, he was saying, ‘Forgive me!’ So, after they saw his baskets, they said to Abraham, his disciple, ‘What do you do with these baskets?’ So, he said to them, ‘We trade them here and there’ (13.6). So, the elder heard and said, ‘Jijoi also eats here and there’ (2.4). So, they heard and they benefitted greatly (1.2a). Accordingly, they went in joy when they had learned from his humility.’ (15.4)

Again from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, here is the whole of a tale we have dipped into a few occasions already, concerning the man who takes his son to meet Jijoi:

ΟΥΚΟCΗΚΟC ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΜΗ-ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΔΥΒΩΚ ΩΔΑΠΑ ΧΙΧΩΙ
ΕΦΩΟΟΠ ΖΜΠΤΟΟΥ ΝΑΠΑ ΔΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC · ΑΥΩ ΑΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΜΟΥ

ἡτοοτῷ ρι-τεριη αἰω ἡπερωτορτῷ · ἀλλὰ ἀφριτῷ φαιρῶλο
 ρῆ-ογπιctic · αἰω ἀφπαρτῷ ἡἡπερωηρε ρωc εἴτ-μετανοια
 ἡἡρῶλο xε εφесмоγ ероог · αἰω ἀφτωοῖν ἡἡ-πειωτ
 ἀρκω ἡπερωηρε ρατῆ νεογερητε ἡἡρῶλο ἀφει εβολ ρῆτρι
 ρῶλο δε εφμεεγε xε εφπαρτῷ ναφ εχι-μετανοια · πεxαφ
 ναφ xε τωοῖν ἡἡβωκ εβολ εнеqcooῖν γαρ ἀν xε ἀφμογ
 αἰω ἡτεγνογ ἀφτωοῖν ἀφει εβολ · πεφειωτ δε ἡτερεφнаγ
 ἀφῶπῆρε αἰω ἀφβωк ερoῖν ἀφπαρτῷ ἡἡρῶλο αἰω ἀφxω
 ероφ ἡἡρωβ · ἀφcωтῆ δε ἡἡ-ρῶλο ἀφλγπει εнеqоγωφ
 γαρ ἀν πε ἡῖρωβ ἡἡειρε · πεφмаөтнc δε ἀφпараггиле наγ
 xε ἡἡῖρxε-пαι ελαаγ ере ρῶλο ρῆἡἡcωма

A layman once, with his son, went to Apa Jijoi when he was living at the hill of Apa Antony (19.2). His son died with him on the road but, for his part, he did not panic. Instead, he carried him to the elder in faith (14.3). Then he bowed with his son as though they were giving confession to the elder so he would bless them. Then the father got up and left his son beside the feet of the elder (9.5). He left the cell, but with the elder thinking that he was bowing to him to get confession (14.2). So, he said to him, ‘Get up and go out!’, as he did not know that he had died. So, immediately, he got up and went out. Therefore, his father, after he saw, he wondered. Accordingly, he went in, bowed to the elder, and told him the matter. However, the elder heard and grieved, because he did not wish to behave like this. So, his disciple urged them, ‘Do not say this to anyone while the elder is still alive’.

Finally, we have had a few glimpses of the enigmatic Gospel of Thomas, so now take a look at the very first teaching in the text from Nag Hammadi:

πεxε ιc xε ἡἡ-тρεqло ἡἡ-πετωῖνε εφωῖνε φαντεφcῖνε
 · αἰω ρотан εφφανcῖνε ῥῆαφτῷτῷ αἰω εφφανωτορτῷ
 ῥῆαῖφπῆρε αἰω ῥῆаῖ-ῖро εxῆ-πтнрῷ

Jesus said, ‘There is no making the one who seeks stop seeking until he finds (17.5). So, whenever he finds, he is going to tremble (18.2); and if he trembles, he is going to wonder; and he is going to rule over everything (π-тнр-ῷ ‘the all of it’).

CHART V A SUMMARY OF COPTIC TENSES AND NEGATIONS

Complete Forms

MOOD	⇒					Subjective				
ASPECT	Objective	Engaged	⇒	Indicative	⇒	Prospective	⇒	Optative	⇒	Imperative
usual sense		is writing, is bound to write	⇒	wrote, writes, does write		will write, may write		should write		write!
		second tense			negative equivalent					
PAST		ḡṯⲁⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ⲁⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ḡṯⲛⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ						infinitive or imperative
PRESENT	ḡⲥⲁⲓ	ⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ⲱⲁⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ḡⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ						
FUTURE	ḡṯⲁⲥⲁⲓ	ḡṯṯⲁⲥⲁⲓ				ḡṯṯⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ḡⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ	ḡⲁⲣⲉⲕⲥⲁⲓ		
negation	(ḡ plus) ⲁṯ				individual forms				ḡṯṯ (do not)	

Incomplete Forms, typically negated by ṯḡ

TIME	Prior	⇒	Contemporary	⇒	Eventual
PREFIX	ⲉⲣⲱⲁṯ	ḡṯⲁṯⲉ	ⲉ or ⲉⲣⲉ	ḡ or ḡṯⲉ	ṯⲁⲣⲉ
usual sense	if	before	while	next	after
					maybe
The Action (infinitive), negated by ṯḡ					
PREFIX	(none)	ṯⲣⲉⲁ			
usual sense	writing	making someone write (inflected infinitive)			

Chart V is a summary representation of how the Coptic tenses broadly relate to each other, based on Charts III and IV. Of course, the scheme is necessarily brief and could be usefully developed in various ways, but it may be helpful as a quick reference for now while you move on to the Reading Book below.

Sahidic Coptic sample reading

The following readings are simply samples from a diverse range of manuscripts, across the whole time period covered by this book. They are intended only to help you practice reading authentic Sahidic Coptic in various cultural contexts. The source for each edited text is indicated throughout, though a stop (·) has occasionally been added here to suggest breaks between statements, and the spellings of certain words have been ‘corrected’ to what we would anticipate as learners. The translations given with each text are literal – that is to say, they emulate the word order of the original Coptic as far as is practicable. This convention is intended to help you follow the original as you read rather than suggest the best possible translation, because ordinary Coptic is best rendered as ordinary English. Of course, what constitutes ordinary Sahidic Coptic in any given genre of text is a matter for you to discover for yourself through reading.

CHAPTER 1 THE DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

During the middle of the fourth century, the rapid growth of monasticism transformed the landscape of Egypt politically and economically, as much as culturally and religiously. By adopting Pachomius's foundational rules (see [page 254](#)), tens of thousands of Egyptians organised themselves into communities to live a 'life in common' (in Greek κοινόβιος, from which we get the term *coenobitic* monasticism). The first flowering of this movement coincided with the 'golden decade' of Athanasius (346–356) – the apogee of a long, politically troubled tenure as Archbishop of Alexandria – and *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* essentially relate to this moment and the decades immediately following. The narrative episodes are mostly set in communities in the Egyptian northwest, around the alkali marshes of the Natron Valley (الوادي النطرون), at Nitria, Cellia and especially Scetis (9.7). Only a handful take place elsewhere in Egypt or abroad, including Palestine, since monastic practice had been brought there from Egypt by Apa Hilarion of Gaza. By the end of the century, the monasteries of the Natron Valley housed more than 5,000 monks, many of whom were foreigners, including the influential writers Evagrius Ponticus, Palladius of Galatia and John Cassian (see [page 255](#)). In the Nile Valley, meanwhile, a single group of monasteries at Sohag and Athribis, including the White Monastery (see [page 260](#)), alone was home to some 4,000 monks, both men and women. Their communal principles contrasted with the solitary, anchorite practices of Antony and earlier Christian monks, though the lifestyles were not exclusive and many anchorites would spend part of their time at coenobitic monasteries and local churches (12.6).

This first monastic age ended in a series of violent raids on the most vulnerable communities by ἡβάρβαροι 'the barbarians' from the Libyan coast and the western desert, during the years 407 to 444. Indeed, an obvious suggestion is that *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* were first written down because so many monks fled or were murdered by raiders at that time, and some monasteries ceased to function. That said, the latest episodes actually date from the time of the grand ecumenical council at Chalcedon (now a suburb of Istanbul) in 451, and many monastic communities still flourished until the eighth and ninth centuries. Indeed, a handful managed to function right up to the modern revival of Egyptian monasticism during the pontificate of Shenouda III from 1971 to 2012.



Figure 21 Fra Angelico's imagining of an Egyptian landscape based on stories about the desert fathers and mothers. Italy, c. 1420. Uffizi Gallery. *Source:* Wikimedia.



Figure 22 The old church in the Monastery of Pishoi (Anba Bishoi) survives from the first age of monasticism. Natron Valley, fourth century.
Source: author.

The principal surviving manuscripts of *The Sayings* are mediaeval Greek and Latin copies, but there are mediaeval translations in many languages, including Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic and Syriac, as well as Bohairic Coptic. Nevertheless, nearly all of the communities in these tales were Coptic-speaking (see [page 248](#)), so it is unfortunate that only a single Sahidic Coptic copy has come down to us, almost certainly from the library of the White Monastery. To confound the problem, this priceless volume was cut apart in the eighteenth century and eventually made its way into various European collections, principally the National Library in Naples but also The British Library, the National Library in Paris, the National Library in Vienna, the Pushkin State Museum in Moscow and the Marciana Library in Venice. Some three dozen of the 272 sayings extant in Sahidic Coptic are not attested in the standard Greek and Latin editions.

Episode 113

αχχοος ετβε-απα ποιμνην δε ἡπεφουωφ ενεε εκα-πεφωαχε
 εχῆ-πωαχε ἡλααγ ἡελλο· αλλα ἡτοφ ἡρογο νεφωαφτεοογ
 ἡπεφωαχε ἡπαπα πωφ

It was said about Apa Poimen (19.7) that he did not ever wish to put (20.2) his speaking above the speaking of any elder (17.1). Rather, he used to praise their speaking more than his own (20.1).¹

Episode 111

Another saying from Apa Poimen raises the familiar monastic theme of humility in terms of humanity as a whole:

ΔΥΧΟΟC ΟΝ Ν̄CΙ-ΠΖΛΛΟ ΔΕ ΕΡΩΔΑΝ-ΠΡΩΜΕ ΖΑΡΕΖ ΕΤΕΦΔΑΖΙC
Ν̄ΦΝΑΦΤΟΡΤΡ̄ ΔΝ

The elder also said, 'If mankind keeps its place (18.2), it is not going to be troubled (16.2).'

Episode 12

The next two sayings are further thoughts from Apa Hyperechius about self-restraint (15.5).

ΔΥΧΟΟC ΟΝ ΔΕ ΠΜΟΝΑΧΟC ΕΤΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΔΝ Μ̄ΠΕΦΛΑC ΜΑΛΙCΤΑ Μ̄ΠΝΑΥ
Μ̄ΠCΩΝΤ̄ ΜΕΡΕ ΠΑΙ Ν̄ΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ΕΡ-ΧΟΕΙC ΕΛΑΔΥ Μ̄ΠΑΘΟC ΕΝΕΖ

He also said, 'The monk who does not hold his tongue (10.4), especially at the time of anger, this one likewise (Ν̄-ΤΕΙ-ΜΙΝΕ 'of this fashion') does not control (9.6) any emotion ever (14.2).'

Episode 14

ΔΥΧΟΟC ΟΝ ΔΕ ΝΑΝΟΥ-ΟΥΕΜ-ΔΒ ΔΥΩ ΕCΕ-ΗΡΠ̄ Ν̄ΓΤ̄ΜΟΥΩΜ ΔΕ
Ν̄ΝCΑΡΞ Ν̄ΝΕΚCΝΗΥ ΖΙΤ̄Ν-ΤΚΑΤΑΛΑΛΙΑ

He also said, 'Eating meat is good (10.4) and also to drink wine, but not then to eat (18.3) the flesh of your brothers through backbiting (19.8).'

Episode 121

ΔCΧΟΟC Ν̄CΙ-ΤΜΑΚΑΡΙΑ CΥΓΛΗΤΙΚΗ ΔΕ Ν̄ΘΕ ΕΤΕ Μ̄ΝCΟΜ Ν̄ΧΟΙ ΕΤΑΖΟ
ΕΡΑΤ̄ ΔΧ̄Ν-ΕΙΦ̄ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΟΥΑΤCΟΜ ΠΕ ΟΥΧΑΙ ΧΩΡΙC ΠΕΘ̄ΒΒΙΟ
Ν̄ΖΗΤ

The blessed Syncletice said, 'In the way that a ship is not able (10.5) to hold up (ΤΑΖΟ Ε-ΡΑΤ-Φ 'stand to its feet' (5.2)) without nails, this is the way (13.6) that wellbeing without mental humility is an impossibility (13.4).'

1. Text adapted from M. Chaîne: *Le manuscrit de la version Copte en dialecte Sahidique des 'Apophthegmata patrum'*. Bibliothèque d'études Coptes VI. Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale (1960).

Episode 35

αὐτὰ ἡνεσκηγ χνοϋγ ἡογρσοϋ .ε ἀπα ἐρωαν-ογροτε ωωπε ρῆ-
ογωπῆνωωπ φακρροτε ρωωκ · πε.ε πρῆλλο ναϋ .ε ἐρωαν-τιε
τωσε επικαρ ἡθεοδωρος ναρροτε αν · νεαϋτωβαρ γαρ ἡπχοειс
етρεϥи εβολ ἡμοϋ ἡτηῆтςавρηт

One of the brothers asked him one day, ‘Apa, if fear happens suddenly (18.2), do you fear (13.1) as well (8.2)?’ The elder said to him, ‘If the sky joins to the ground, Theodore is not going to be afraid (16.1).’ Because he had asked God (20.1) to take away (20.3) from him timidity (5.1).

Episode 233

ἀβραῶν ἀμαρτηρὸς ἡπαρ χιχῶι ἀγπιδεε ἡμοῦ ἡγορεῖω
 εβὼλ ριτῆ-πδιαβολος · ἄω ἀφτωογν ἡσι-πρῆλλο ἀφωρῶ
 ἡνεφειχ ερραι ετπε εφχῶ ἡμος χε πνογτε κογῶω ἡγογῶω
 ἀν ἡτ-νακαακ εβὼλ ἀν ἡπεκταλσοῦ · ἄω ἡτεγνογ ἀφταλσοῦ
 Abraham, the disciple of Apa Jijoi, once was tempted by the Devil (19.8).
 Accordingly, the elder rose and spread his hands up to the sky, saying
 (10.2), ‘God, you want to – you don’t want to (16.2). I am not going to
 leave you alone (20.1)! You have not healed him.’ Then, immediately,
 he healed him.

Episode 18

ἀόχσον κίμ ρῆ-πεφῶντ ἐροῖν εὐγα ῥ αῤαερατῖ ἐπεφῶληλ
 ἀφαίτει ἐχι ῆογῆντῥαρῶρητ ἐχῆ-πεφσον ἀγῶ ἐπαράγε
 ῆππρασμος ἀχῆ-πῶλαε ῥ ἀγῶ ῆτεγνοῦ ἀφναῦ ἐγκαπνος ἐφνηῦ
 ἐβολ ρῆ-τεφταπρο ῆτερε-παί δε ῶππε ἀφλο ἐφσοντ

A brother reacted in his anger toward someone. He stood (11.8) for his praying and asked to get tolerance (5.1) over his brother and, accordingly, to pass the temptation without fearing (20.2). Then, immediately, he saw some smoke (18.1) coming out from his mouth (9.2). However, after this happened (17.5), he stopped being angry (9.2).

Episode 203

ἀγτέτ-πρηт н̄ογρ̄λλο н̄ογοε̄ιω ετρεφнаγ̄ енетнаφωπε̄ аγω
 πεχαγ̄ δε̄ айнаγ̄ еγcon ρ̄н̄-ογzeneετε̄ еφензоγн̄ еγpī еφμελετᾱ ·
 аγω̄ ειc̄ ογ̄δαιμωн̄ аφαδpαт̄q̄ н̄п̄βολ̄ н̄ро̄ н̄тpī еpe-пcon̄ ме̄λετᾱ
 н̄п̄q̄δ̄н̄бom̄ еβωк̄ εзоγн̄ етpī н̄т̄ereφoγω̄ δε̄ еφμελετᾱ аφβωк̄
 εзоγн̄ н̄б̄ι-π̄δ̄αιμωн̄

An elder was once convinced (19.7) he could see things which are going to happen (20.3). Accordingly, he said, ‘I saw a brother (18.1) in a monastery, who was inside (ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲛ (15.4)) a cell and reciting (6.3). Moreover, a demon, he stood outside the door of the cell (7.3). While the brother was reciting (9.2), he did not know how to go into the cell (20.6). However, after he finished reciting (9.2), the demon went in.’

Episode 266

The beginning of this story is lost but, evidently, a group of monks has encountered a woman in a cave (ⲥⲓⲧⲩⲗⲓⲟⲛ), on her own (ⲙⲁⲅⲁⲁⲥ), lying sick (ⲉⲥⲛⲛⲁ ⲉⲥⲱⲱⲛⲉ):

ⲁⲅⲱ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲙⲁⲁⲃⲉ ⲙⲛ-ⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲛⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲙ-
ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲩⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲓⲟⲛⲉ ⲉⲛ-ⲛⲩⲩⲉ ⲉⲓⲟ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲗⲁⲗ ⲙⲡⲉⲭⲥ ⲁⲅⲱ ⲙⲡⲓⲛⲁⲅ ⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ
ⲛⲥⲁ-ⲡⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲩⲁ-ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲧⲛⲛⲉⲅ-ⲧⲩⲅⲧⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲉⲧⲱⲙⲥ
ⲙⲡⲁⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲁⲅⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉⲥⲕⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲁⲥⲛⲓⲟⲧⲕ̅ ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲗⲟ ⲕⲉ ⲁⲅⲧⲉⲟⲟⲩ
ⲙⲡⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲅⲱ ⲁⲅⲧⲟⲙⲥ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲁⲅⲁⲛⲁⲕⲱⲣⲉⲓ

Accordingly, she said, ‘Thirty-eight years I have spent in this cave (7.3), kept alive with weeds, as a servant of Christ (19.4), and I have not seen a person except today (2.1). Because God sent you so you would bury my body (20.2).’ However, after she said this (17.5), she fell asleep. Therefore, the elders gave glory to God, and accordingly buried her body and withdrew.

Episode 196

ⲁⲟⲅⲁ ⲕⲟⲟⲥ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲅⲩⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲟⲅⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲛⲥⲓ-ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲗⲟ ⲉⲅⲱⲁⲕⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲛⲩⲅ
ⲛⲉⲅⲛⲟⲅⲁ ⲕⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲩⲟⲅ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲅ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲅ ⲉⲛⲁⲅⲓⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲅⲧⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲅ
ⲁⲅⲱ ⲉⲅⲩⲱⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲉⲛⲓⲕⲉⲱⲁⲕⲉ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲛⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲅⲥⲁⲅⲱⲟⲩ
ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲥⲓ-ⲛⲁⲅⲓⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲁⲅⲱ ⲁⲅⲛⲓⲣ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲅⲙⲛⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲅⲙⲉⲅ ⲛⲥⲧⲃⲱⲱⲛ
ⲁⲅⲧⲟⲗⲙⲟⲅ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲟⲅⲕⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲕⲉ ⲁⲅⲱⲁⲕⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲡⲉⲛⲩⲅ ⲁⲅⲉⲓ ⲟⲛ ⲛⲥⲓ-
ⲛⲁⲅⲓⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲁⲅⲧⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲅ

Someone said that when the elders were sitting one time speaking about benefit (9.2), there was one among them who saw visions (20.1), and he saw the angels giving glory to them as well as singing to them. However, after some other conversations (2.4) came to the midst (17.5), the angels departed (11.8). Accordingly, some pigs (1.2) came to their midst (13.3), full of stink (19.3), and polluted them. However, after they went back (11.8) and spoke about benefit, the angels came again and gave glory to them.

Episode 186

This tale about Apa Moses, which references his own history as a bandit (10.6), is one we have dipped into several times already:

ερε-νεσνηΥ Δε ρμοος ραρτηΥ ν̄ογχιΥ αϥχοος ναΥ δε εις
ν̄βαρβαρος νηΥ εϣιητ̄ μ̄ποοΥ τ̄ωογ̄ν̄ ν̄τετ̄ν̄πωτ̄ · ν̄τοοΥ Δε
πεχαΥ ναϥ δε ν̄τοκ̄ κ̄ναπωτ̄ αν̄ πεχαϥ ναΥ δε εις νειρομπε
τηροΥ †σωωτ̄ εβολ-ρητ̄ μ̄ποοΥ ν̄ροοΥ δεκας εϥεχωκ̄ εβολ
ν̄σι-πωαδε̄ μ̄πεχ̄ εϥχω̄ μ̄μοc̄ δε ογον̄ nim̄ ν̄ταγχιc̄hβε̄ εγναρε̄
ον̄ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-τc̄hβε̄ · πεχαΥ ναϥ δε ογ̄δε̄ αν̄ον̄ ρ̄ωων̄ ν̄τ̄ν̄ναπωτ̄
αν̄ αλλᾱ τ̄ν̄ναμοΥ ν̄μ̄μακ̄ ν̄τοϥ Δε πεχαϥ ναΥ δε αν̄οκ̄ μ̄ν̄ται
ρ̄ωβ̄ πογαπογᾱ μαρεϥσωωτ̄ δε εϥρ̄μοος̄ ν̄αω̄ ν̄ρε̄ · νεγ̄ειρε̄ Δε
ν̄c̄αω̄ μ̄ν̄ον̄ αγ̄ω̄ πεχαϥ ναΥ δε εις ν̄βαρβαρος̄ αγ̄ρ̄ων̄ ερογ̄ν̄
επρο̄ αγ̄βωκ̄ Δε ερογ̄ν̄ αγ̄μοογ̄τοϥ · ογᾱ Δε ν̄ρητοϥ̄ αϥωλαρ̄
αϥβωκ̄ ερογ̄ν̄ ρ̄α-ρ̄εν̄νηβε̄ αγ̄ω̄ αϥναγ̄ εc̄αω̄ μ̄κ̄κ̄ομ̄ εγ̄νηΥ
επεc̄ητ̄ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-τ̄πε̄ αγ̄στεφανοϥ̄ μ̄μοοϥ̄ μ̄πc̄αω̄ μ̄

So, while the brothers were sitting beside him one time (6.3), he said to them, ‘The barbarians are coming to Scetis today (19.5). Get up and flee (17.3).’ However, they said to him, ‘You, you are not going to flee (16.2)?’ He said to them, ‘All these years I have been looking forward to this very day so that the saying of Christ will be fulfilled (20.2), when he says, “Everyone who has taken arms (15.1), they are also going to fall by the sword (19.8).”’ They said to him, ‘So, we too (19.5), we are not going to flee (14.5). Instead, we are going to die with you (16.1).’ So, he said to them, ‘It is not my business (10.3). Each one, he should consider how he is situated (16.5).’ Now, they still numbered (ε̄ιρε̄ ‘were making’) seven brothers (20.1), though he said to them, ‘The barbarians (7.3), they have reached the door.’ Of course, they came in and killed them. However, one among them, he feared and went under some cords (9.7). Then he saw seven crowns coming down from the sky and they crowned them, the seven.

Episode 194

αc̄χοος̄ ν̄σι-τετογ̄ααβ̄ c̄γκλ̄ητ̄ικ̄η̄ δε̄ μαρε̄νωωπε̄ ν̄c̄αβ̄η̄ ν̄θε̄
ν̄ν̄ροϥ̄αγ̄ω̄ ν̄ακε̄ραο̄ιc̄ ν̄θε̄ ν̄ν̄ιc̄ροομ̄πε̄ μαρε̄νωωπε̄ μ̄πανογ̄ρ̄οc̄
ε̄ν̄σορ̄οc̄̄ μ̄ν̄-ν̄c̄ιν̄κ̄ιμ̄ ν̄μ̄με̄εγ̄ε̄ · ν̄ταϥχοος̄ γαρ̄ δε̄ ωωπε̄ ν̄θε̄
μ̄π̄ροϥ̄ ε̄τ̄μ̄τρε̄νωω̄-νε̄ν̄c̄ιν̄βω̄c̄ε̄ μ̄ν̄-τ̄τεχ̄νη̄ μ̄π̄διαβολοc̄
πε̄τε̄ῑνε̄ γαρ̄ μ̄πε̄τε̄ε̄ῑνε̄ μ̄μοϥ̄ ωαϥ̄βε̄π̄η̄ ε̄σογ̄ων̄ μ̄ · πακε̄ραιοc̄
Δε̄ ν̄θε̄ ν̄ν̄ιc̄ροομ̄πε̄ ε̄φογ̄ων̄ ε̄βολ̄ μ̄π̄τ̄β̄βο̄ ν̄τε̄π̄ρᾱζ̄ιc̄



Figure 23 Detail from a stela or ‘cippus’ carved into a therapeutic image of the god Horus mastering snakes, scorpions and wild animals. Provenance unknown, fourth century BC. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art 50.85 (Fletcher Fund, 1950), shared under Creative Commons Licence CC0.

The holy Syncretice said, ‘We should become (16.5) wise like the snakes and pure like these doves (13.2). We should become conscious to the snares and the reactions (5.1) of thoughts. Because He said (14.3) become like the snake* to not let us forget (20.4) our impulses nor the skill of the Devil. Because one who resembles whoever he resembles (πΕΤ-ΕΥ-ΕΙΝΕ ἸΜΟ-Υ (15.2)) is quick (ΒΕΠΗ ‘rushes’) to recognise him (13.1). However, the one innocent like these doves, he exhibits the purity of the action (14.3).’

*A comment by Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 10:16).

Episode 230

The next story takes on a magical hue by reimagining an image well known in late pharaonic art, which showed the vengeful god Horus killing snakes and scorpions as an act of healing:

ΔΥΧΟΟC ἸΒΙ-ΟΥΑ ἸἸΕΙΟΤΕ ΕΤΒΕ-ΟΥΑ ΧΕ* ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟC ΧΕ* ὨΘΟΟΠ
 ΖἸ-ἸCΑ ἸΠΕCΗΤ ἸΚΗΜΕ ΕΦΟΥΗΖ ΔΕ ΖἸΘΗΒΑΙC ΧΕ* ὨΑΥΑΜΑΖΤΕ

ἡ̅τ̅ει̅ρε̅ Ϸ̅ἡ̅-νε̅φ̅σι̅χ̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ρ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅-ἡ̅κε̅ρα̅ς̅τ̅ἡ̅ς̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅-ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ο̅ο̅ρ̅ε̅ α̅Ϸ̅ω̅ ἡ̅τ̅ει̅ρε̅
 Ϸ̅α̅Ϸ̅πα̅ρ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ Ϸ̅ἡ̅-τε̅Ϸ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅τε̅ · νε̅ς̅ἡ̅ἡ̅Ϸ̅ Δ̅ε̅ α̅Ϸ̅τ̅-με̅τα̅νο̅ια̅ ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅
 ε̅Ϸ̅χ̅ω̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅ς̅ χ̅ε̅ α̅χ̅ι̅ς̅ ἡ̅α̅ἡ̅ χ̅ε̅ α̅Ϸ̅ τε̅ τε̅ρ̅γα̅ς̅ια̅ ἡ̅τα̅κα̅α̅ς̅ Ϸ̅α̅ἡ̅τε̅κ̅χ̅ι̅
 ἡ̅τ̅ει̅χα̅ρι̅ς̅ · ἡ̅το̅Ϸ̅ Δ̅ε̅ πε̅χ̅α̅Ϸ̅ χ̅ε̅ κ̅ω̅ ἡ̅αι̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ ἡ̅α̅ει̅ο̅τε̅ ε̅ρ̅ω̅α̅ἡ̅ ο̅Ϸ̅α̅
 χ̅πο̅ ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅τ̅ḃ̅β̅ο̅ Ϸ̅α̅ρε̅ ἡ̅κα̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ Ϸ̅ἡ̅πο̅τα̅ς̅σε̅ ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅ ἡ̅ḃ̅ε̅ ἡ̅α̅Δ̅α̅ἡ̅
 ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅ ε̅Ϸ̅ρ̅ḡ̅-ἡ̅πα̅ρα̅Δ̅ι̅ο̅ς̅ ἡ̅πα̅τε̅Ϸ̅πα̅ρα̅βα̅ ἡ̅τ̅ἡ̅το̅λ̅ἡ̅

*Understand that each χ̅ε̅ here marks a different aspect of the statement about Apa Paul.

One of the fathers said about (another) one, Apa Paul, that he lives in the lower parts of Egypt, in fact is settled in the Thebaid (19.2); that he grabs (13.1) like this in his hands the snakes, vipers and scorpions, and then like this he bursts them from their middles (5.3). Therefore, the brothers gave confession to him, saying, ‘Tell us (4.4), which craft did you do until you received this grace (17.5)?’ However, for his part he said, ‘Forgive me, my fathers (20.1). If someone creates for himself purity (18.2), everything (2.5) submits to him like Adam at the time when he was in Paradise (15.4) before he transgressed the law (17.5).’

Episode 188

There are more than a dozen stories about Apa Poimen in the Sahidic Coptic text of The Sayings and still more in other translations, suggesting that he was a crucial character in this tradition – unless, of course, they are stories about more than one person. Presumably, ἡ̅α̅ρ̅κ̅ια̅ἡ̅ο̅ς̅ in the tale below is a reference to the emperor Marcian (reigned 450–457), who convened the Council of Chalcedon (see [page 239](#)). However, the tale itself need not be dated so late because it probably belongs early in the career of Apa John, the storyteller. Of course, the brackets for parenthesis are not in the original text:

α̅Ϸ̅χ̅ο̅ο̅ς̅ ἡ̅ḡ̅ι̅-α̅πα̅ ι̅ω̅Ϸ̅α̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ς̅ (πε̅ν̅τα̅Ϸ̅ε̅ζ̅ω̅ρι̅ζε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ Ϸ̅ι̅τ̅ἡ̅-
 ἡ̅α̅ρ̅κ̅ια̅ἡ̅ο̅ς̅) χ̅ε̅ α̅ἡ̅ει̅ ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ο̅ει̅Ϸ̅ Ϸ̅α̅-α̅πα̅ πο̅ι̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ Ϸ̅ἡ̅τ̅ς̅Ϸ̅ρια̅ α̅Ϸ̅ω̅
 ε̅ἡ̅ε̅ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ω̅ ε̅χ̅ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅ ε̅τ̅βε̅-τ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅τ̅ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅τ̅ρ̅ἡ̅τ̅ · πε̅ρ̅ḗ̅λλ̅ο̅ Δ̅ε̅ νε̅Ϸ̅ο̅ο̅Ϸ̅ἡ̅
 α̅ἡ̅ πε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅το̅Ϸ̅ε̅ι̅ε̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ α̅Ϸ̅ω̅ νε̅ἡ̅ἡ̅-Ϸ̅ε̅ρ̅με̅νε̅Ϸ̅τ̅ἡ̅ς̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅ α̅ἡ̅ πε̅
 πε̅ρ̅ḗ̅λλ̅ο̅ Δ̅ε̅ α̅Ϸ̅ἡ̅α̅Ϸ̅ ε̅ρο̅ἡ̅ ε̅ἡ̅ḡ̅ι̅βε̅ α̅Ϸ̅α̅ρ̅χ̅ει̅ ἡ̅Ϸ̅α̅χ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅το̅Ϸ̅ε̅ι̅ε̅ἡ̅ἡ̅
 ε̅Ϸ̅χ̅ω̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅ς̅ χ̅ε̅ τε̅Ϸ̅Ϸ̅ς̅ι̅ς̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅ο̅Ϸ̅ ḡἡ̅ἡ̅ τα̅π̅ω̅ἡ̅ Ϸ̅ω̅ω̅ Ϸ̅α̅χ̅ω̅
 πε̅κε̅λω̅λ̅ Δ̅ε̅ α̅Ϸ̅ε̅ ε̅ρ̅ραι̅ ε̅χ̅ḡ̅-π̅ω̅ἡ̅ ε̅Ϸ̅τ̅ḗ̅τ̅ḗ̅ ε̅πε̅ς̅ḡ̅τ̅ ε̅χ̅ω̅Ϸ̅ τ̅αι̅ τε̅
 ḃ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅Ϸ̅α̅χ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅τε̅ ε̅τ̅ḡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ πε̅ἡ̅ρ̅ἡ̅τ̅ Ϸ̅ω̅ω̅ Ϸ̅α̅χ̅ω̅ ε̅ρε̅-ἡ̅ρ̅ω̅ἡ̅ Δ̅ε̅
 Ϸ̅ω̅τ̅ἡ̅ ε̅ἡ̅Ϸ̅α̅χ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅ο̅Ϸ̅τε̅ ἡ̅ρ̅α̅ρ̅ ἡ̅ς̅ο̅ἡ̅ Ϸ̅α̅Ϸ̅τ̅ρε̅-ἡ̅ρ̅ἡ̅τ̅ ο̅Ϸ̅ω̅ἡ̅ ἡ̅Ϸ̅ω̅ḗ̅α̅ρ̅
 Ϸ̅α̅-τε̅Ϸ̅ρ̅ἡ̅



Figure 24 Icon showing Antony (left) with Paul of Thebes (see [page 246](#)). Cairo, eighteenth century. *Source:* author.

Apa John (the one who was banished by Marcian (19.8)) said, ‘We once came to Apa Poimen from Syria, and we were wanting (ⲉⲛⲉⲛⲟⲩⲱⲩ) to ask him about wilfulness (5.1). However, the elder did not know Greek (5.1), and there was no interpreter there (20.1). However, the elder saw us being upset (9.2) and began speaking Greek, saying, “The nature of water is soft, that of the stone rather is hard (19.2). Still, the bucket is hung over the stone, dripping down onto it. This is the way of the speaking of God (13.6), which is soft, and our minds on the other hand are hard (8.4). However, when mankind listens to the speaking of God many times, he makes the mind open (20.3), and it fears in front of him (17.3).”’

Episode 38

Macarius ‘the Great’ (ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ) turned to the solitary, anchorite life after being widowed at a young age. He was soon recognized for exceptional wisdom and recruited as a village priest, apparently against his better judgement, and, having subsequently been implicated in a scandal, he retreated entirely to the desert.

The first tale here relates the crucial moment, early in his career, when Macarius determined to visit the seminal monastic figure, Antony.

Ultimately, Antony inspired Macarius to leave the solitary life and found the original coenobitic community in Scetis, where he mostly remained until his death around 380. The two tales afterwards exemplify several in which Macarius demonstrates acute awareness of the presence of the Devil and his demonic attacks (19.9):

αϥβωκ ἡ̅β̅ι-απα μακαριος π̅ι̅νοϥ ϥα-απα αν̅τω̅ν̅ιοϥ α̅γ̅ω̅ ἡ̅τε̅ρε̅ϥ κωλ̅
 ε̅π̅ρο α̅ϥ̅ει ε̅β̅ολ ϥα̅ροϥ πε̅χα̅ϥ να̅ϥ χ̅ε ἡ̅τ̅κ̅ ἡ̅ι̅μ ἡ̅το̅ϥ Δ̅ε α̅ϥ̅ο̅γ̅ω̅ϥ
 ε̅ϥ̅χ̅ω ἡ̅ι̅μοϥ χ̅ε δ̅νοκ πε̅ μακαριος α̅γ̅ω α̅ϥ̅ω̅τα̅μ ἡ̅π̅ρο α̅ϥβωκ
 ε̅ζ̅ο̅γ̅ν α̅ϥ̅κα̅α̅ϥ · ἡ̅τε̅ρε̅ϥ να̅ϥ ε̅τε̅ϥ ϥ̅γ̅ι̅πο̅μ̅ο̅ν̅η̅ α̅ϥ̅ο̅γ̅ω̅ν να̅ϥ α̅γ̅ω
 α̅ϥ̅ο̅γ̅ρο̅τ̅ ἡ̅ι̅μα̅ϥ ε̅ϥ̅χ̅ω ἡ̅ι̅μοϥ χ̅ε ε̅ι̅ς ο̅γ̅νοϥ ἡ̅ο̅γ̅ο̅ει̅ω̅ ε̅ι̅ο̅γ̅ω̅ ε̅να̅ϥ
 ε̅ροκ δ̅ι̅ς ω̅τ̅ἡ̅ γ̅αρ ε̅τ̅β̅η̅η̅τ̅κ̅ α̅γ̅ω α̅ϥ̅ω̅π̅ῆ̅ ε̅ροϥ ϥ̅ἡ̅-ο̅γ̅μ̅ἡ̅τ̅μ̅αι̅ρ̅ω̅μ̅ε
 α̅ϥ̅τ̅-ἡ̅τ̅ον̅ να̅ϥ ἡ̅τα̅ϥ̅ει γ̅αρ ε̅β̅ολ ϥ̅ἡ̅-ρ̅ε̅ν̅νοϥ ἡ̅ρ̅ι̅ςε̅ · ἡ̅τε̅ρε̅-ρ̅ο̅γ̅ζε̅
 Δ̅ε ϥ̅ω̅π̅ε δ̅α̅πα αν̅τω̅ν̅ιοϥ ϥ̅ω̅ρ̅π̅ να̅ϥ ἡ̅ρ̅ἡ̅κο̅γ̅ι̅ ἡ̅β̅η̅τ̅ πε̅χ̅ε-α̅πα
 μακαριος να̅ϥ χ̅ε κ̅ε̅λ̅ε̅γ̅ε̅ ν̅αι̅ τ̅α̅ρ̅ω̅ρ̅π̅ ν̅αι̅ μα̅γ̅α̅α̅τ̅ ἡ̅το̅ϥ Δ̅ε πε̅χ̅α̅ϥ
 χ̅ε ϥ̅ω̅ρ̅π̅ α̅γ̅ω α̅ϥ̅τα̅μ̅ιο ἡ̅ο̅γ̅νοϥ ἡ̅ϥ̅ο̅λ ἡ̅β̅η̅τ̅ α̅ϥ̅ρ̅ο̅π̅ῆ̅ α̅ϥ̅να̅ϥ ε̅πα̅ϥ̅αι̅
 ἡ̅τ̅η̅ν̅β̅ε̅ ἡ̅α̅πα μακαριος α̅ϥ̅ῤ̅-ϥ̅π̅η̅ρε̅ α̅γ̅ω α̅ϥ̅τ̅ἡ̅ ε̅ν̅ε̅ι̅χ̅ ἡ̅α̅πα
 μακαριος ε̅ϥ̅χ̅ω ἡ̅ι̅μοϥ χ̅ε δ̅ρ̅δ̅ρ̅ ἡ̅ς̅ο̅μ̅ ε̅ι̅ ε̅β̅ολ ϥ̅ἡ̅-ἡ̅ε̅ι̅ς̅ι̅χ̅ · α̅γ̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅ο̅ς
 α̅γ̅ω̅α̅χ̅ε ε̅τ̅ἡ̅ἡ̅τ̅ρε̅ϥ̅τ̅ρ̅η̅γ̅ ἡ̅τε̅ϥ̅γ̅χ̅η̅ χ̅ι̅ν ἡ̅π̅να̅ϥ ἡ̅ρ̅ο̅γ̅ζε̅ δ̅γ̅νο̅β̅το̅γ̅
 α̅γ̅ω̅ τ̅η̅ν̅β̅ε̅ δ̅ς̅β̅ω̅κ ε̅π̅ε̅ς̅η̅τ̅ ε̅π̅ε̅ς̅τ̅γ̅λ̅η̅ον̅ ε̅β̅ολ ϥ̅ι̅τ̅ἡ̅-π̅ω̅ο̅γ̅ω̅τ̅

Apa Macarius the Great went to Apa Antony. Accordingly, after he knocked at the door (17.5), he came out to him and said to him, ‘Who are you (8.1)?’ So, he answered, saying, ‘I am Macarius.’ Then he shut the door, went in and left him. After he saw his persistence, he opened to him and even made merry with him, saying, ‘A long time I have been wanting to see you (6.3), because I have heard about you.’ Then he received him with amiability (5.1) and gave rest to him because he had come out of great struggles (14.3). However, after the evening came, Apa Antony soaked for himself some bits of palm-leaf (1.2). Apa Macarius said to him, ‘Let me soak for myself’ (17.3). So, he said, ‘Soak!’ Accordingly, he prepared a big palm bundle and soaked it. He saw the length of the cord of Apa Macarius, marvelled and kissed (9.5) the hands of Apa Macarius (9.7), saying, ‘Many abilities have come from these hands.’ They sat and spoke about the benefit of the soul (5.1) from the time of evening. They wove them and so the cord, it went down through the cave and out from the window.

Episode 102

In this tale about an encounter with the Devil himself, notice a typical use of the preposition ε, ε̅ρ̅ο̅= ‘to, toward’ to mean ‘more than’ when comparing the qualities of one person to those of another (20.6):

ερε-απα μακαριος μοοωε νογοειω μπκωτε μπρελος εφτωογν
 νζνβηт δγω εις παδιδβολος αφτωμντ εροφ ζν-τεφζηн ερε-
 ογορζ нтоотқ δγω ενεφoγωω πε εραζтқ μπεφωδмбom · δγω
 πεχαφ наφ хе оγноб пе паχινбomнc εβολ мнок хе мнбom
 мmoi εрок ειςζηhte γар ζωв nim ετεкеиρε ммооу †ειρε ммооу
 ζω нток φакннстeye нζнзооу анок де мeиoγωм eπтнpқ
 φакр-oγωн нpoeиc нζнcoп анок де мeиnкoтк eneз · oγзωв
 нoγωт пeтeкxpaeit epoi нзнтқ пexε απα μακαριος хе oγ
 пе нтоφ де пexαφ хе пекөббвио пе анок де мeибмбom eөббвио
 eneз εтвe пaи мписмбom epok

While Apa Macarius once was walking the edge of the marsh carrying some palm-leaves (6.3), the Devil, he met him on his way with a sickle with him (15.4). Indeed, he was wanting (20.1) to strike him, and did not know how to (20.6). Accordingly, he said to him, 'My getting hurt from you (9.6) is a big thing (13.4), that I am not able more than you (10.5). Because all the actions which you do (εт-к-ειρε ммоу (15.2)), I do them as well (8.3). You, you fast for some days, but I do not eat (14.2) at all (ε-πтнp-қ 'to all of it' (20.7)). You spend a night of vigil at times, but I do not sleep ever. There is one thing which you are strong in more than me (19.2).' Apa Macarius said, 'What is it (13.5)?' So, he said, 'It is your humility. For me, I cannot overcome humility ever. Because of this I cannot overcome you.'

Episode 182

αγχοос εтвннтқ απα μακαριος хе εφoγωω ecлcл-нecннн
 пexαφ хе αφei επeиma нoγoeиω нби-oγкoγи εφo ндaиmωн мн-
 тeφмaαγ δγω αφxоoc нтeφмaαγ хе тωoγн μαpон змπεиma
 нтoc де пexαc хе мнωбom мmoi εmoоωe пexαφ наc нби-
 пωнpeкoγи хе анок †нaφитe · δγω αиpωпнpe нтпaнoγpγia
 мпдaиmωн хе нaω нze αφoγωω epωт нcωoγ εβολ змπεиma

It has been said about him, Apa Macarius (19.7), that, wanting to encourage the brothers (6.3), he said, 'Once a little boy possessed by a demon (19.4) came here (13.2) with his mother. Accordingly, he said to his mother, "Get up! Let's go from here (16.5)." However, she said, "I am not able to walk (20.6)." The little boy said to her, "I am going to carry you myself (16.1)." Accordingly, I marvel for the treachery of the demon, how he wanted to chase them out from here (14.4).'

CHAPTER 2 FOUNDATIONAL FIGURES

The Martyrdom of Saint Mena

The cult of Saint Mena (or Menas) is the foundational Christian tradition of Egypt, and his shrine was once the greatest pilgrimage site among the eastern churches, standing at the north coast of Egypt, near Lake Maryout on the road between Alexandria and the Natron Valley (12.6). The fourth-century burial church above Mena's tomb is ascribed to Constantine the Great (306–337), whose daughter Constantina was cured here according to one tradition about the saint. The church was enlarged with a baptistry by the patriarch Athanasius (346–373), before a great basilica was consecrated by the patriarch Theophilus I (385–412). Around this, a magnificent complex of marble baths, hospitals and churches was developed, especially by the emperor Zeno (474–491). The heyday of the shrine lasted until the basilica was damaged by fire in the mid-700s, then quarried as stone for use in Alexandria, despite Pope Joseph I (831–849) pleading with the Abbasid government that any church in Egypt except this one should be so spoiled. As a result, the complex was exposed to attacks from desert raiders, and effectively abandoned following another bout of official plundering during the pontificate of Shenouda I (859–880). Nowadays, the remains of the shrine at Karm Abu Mina, near Burg al-Arab, constitute the single largest Coptic archaeological site.

The canonical account of Mena's life and martyrdom is a Greek text probably from the sixth century, of which there are later interpretations in Arabic, Old Nubian and Ethiopic. However, the most detailed information comes from a library of about 60 Sahidic Coptic codices discovered by chance in 1910 at the Monastery of the Archangel Michael, near al-Hamouli (see [page 9](#)). The bulk of the library was purchased in Paris in 1911, and is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. The following excerpt has been sampled from a vellum codex (M. 590), which was copied out no later than 893 and is entirely about Saint Mena. His martyrdom story covers the first thirty-six pages.

Mena himself was the descendant of a line of governors, and had served as an officer in the army from the age of 15. However, when Diocletian's edict (ΠΡΟΣΤΑΓΜΑ) in 299 required his officers to make a sacrifice to the emperor and the ancient gods, he resigned his commission, turned his wealth over to the poor and initially withdrew to the desert

as a hermit. Then, in 303, another edict specifically targeted Christians and, at this moment, Mena reappeared in a city square (perhaps in Alexandria) during a festival, to proclaim Christian scripture publicly in the presence of the governor (ΖΗΓΕΜΟΝ). Having been identified by townsfolk as a recalcitrant army officer, Mena refused the governor's challenge to make the public sacrifice (ΘΥCΙΑΖΕ). Consequently, the governor had him imprisoned, scourged and tortured. As we pick up the narrative, the governor has ordered his men to punch out several of Mena's teeth but, faced with his evident intransigence, decides to turn the matter over to the imperial deputy (ΚΟΜΙC):

ΠΡΗΓΕΜΟΝ ΔΕ ΑΥCΖΑΙ ΖΑΡΟϞ ΕΡΑΤῚ ΜΠΚΟΜΙC ΕϞΤΑΜΟ ΜΜΟϞ
ΕΤΕϞΔᾶΤΙΑ ΤΗΡC ΑΥΩ ΧΕ ΟΥΜΑΤΟΙ ΠΕ ΝΧΩΩΡΕ ΔΙΤ ΔΕ ΝΑϞ
ΝΖΕΝΝΟC ΝΒΑCΑΝΟC ΑΥΩ ΜΠΕϞCΩΤᾤ ΝCΩᾤ ΝϞΘΥCΙΑΖΕ

So, the governor wrote about him to the deputy (5.2), informing him about all his consideration, indeed that 'He is a strong soldier (13.5). Therefore, I gave him many tortures yet he did not obey me and sacrifice (17.3).'²

ΑΥΤΑΛΟ ΜΠΡΑΓΙΟC ΑΠΑ ΜΗΝΑ ΕΥCΙΝΟΥΗΛ Ζᾤ-ΘΑΛΑCCA ΑΥΧΙΤῚ
ΕΡΑΤῚ ΜΠΚΟΜΙC · ΑΥCΜΗ ΔΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΩΑΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΑΠΑ ΜΗΝΑ ΕΤΙ
ΕϞΤΑΛΗΥ ΕΠCΙΝΟΥΗΛ ΧΕ ΜΠΕΡΡῚΟΤΕ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ ΜΗΝΑ ΧΕ ΔΝΟΚ
†ΩΟΟΠ ΝΜΜΑΚ ΖᾤΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΧΙΤῚ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΑΥΩ †ΝΑΕΡΩΟΡΙΠ
ΕΡΟΚ ΕΠΚΩΜΙΤΑΤΩΝ ΩΑΝΤΕΚΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΕΚΑΓΩΝ · ΑΠCΩΤΗΡ
ΜΕΖ-ΠΖΟ ΜΠΕϞΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC ΝΕΟΟΥ ΖΙ-ΧΑΡΙC ΖΩCΤΕ ΝΤΕ-ΝΚΕΜΑΤΟΙ
ΕΤΤΟ ΕΡΟϞ ΤΕΜΕΩΩCᾤCΟΜ ΕCΩΩΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΖᾤΠΕϞΖΟ ΕΤCΜΑΜΑΔΤ
ΝΤΕΡΟΥΠΑΡΑΔΙΔΟΥ ΔΕ ΜΜΟϞ ΜΠΚΟΜΙC ΑϞΤΡΕΥΝΟΥΧΕ ΜΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC
ΕΠΕΩΤΕΚΟ ΜᾤΚΕΜΗΗΩΕ ΜΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC

Saint Mena was loaded to a ship (Ε-ΟΥ-CΙΝΟΥΗΛ) from the sea (19.7), and taken before the deputy. However, a voice occurred to the blessed Apa Mena (3.3), when he was still loaded to the ship (19.3): 'Do not fear (14.1), my beloved Mena, because I myself am with you (19.2) in every place which they are going to take you to (ΕΤ-ΟΥ-ΝΑ-ΧΙΤ-Ὶ ΕΡΟ-ΟΥ). Indeed, I am going to lead you into the court (9.6), until you complete your trial (17.5).' The saviour filled the face of his martyr with glory and grace, so that the soldiers too who were allotted (ΕΤ-ΤΟ (19.3)) to him were not able to look into his blessed face (17.3).

2. Text adapted from J. Drescher: *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St Menas*. Cairo, Société d'archéologie Copte (1946).

However, after they transferred him to the Deputy, he made them throw the blessed one in the jail with many other martyrs (2.7).

ΑΥΩ ΝΕΥΤ-ΜΕΤΧΑΡΖΗΤ ΝΑΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΥΖΥΠΟΜΙΝΕ ΜΠΕΣΜΟΤ
ΝΟΥΠΟΛΥΜΑΡΧΗΣ ΝΧΩΩΠΡΕ ΕΥΤ-ΤΩΚΝΖΗΤ ΝΝΕΦΜΑΤΟΙ ΕΜΙΩΕ
ΖΜΠΠΟΛΥΜΟΣ ΕΧΜ-ΠΕΥΡΡΟ ΝΕΥΡΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΖΝΤΗΝΤΕ ΝΝΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ
ΝΘΕ ΜΠΡΗ ΕΡΕ-ΝΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΧΙ-ΣΟΛΣΕΛ ΝΖΗΤΩ · ΤΟΤΕ ΑΠΣΩΡ
ΟΥΩΝΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΦΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΖΜ-ΠΕΩΥΤΕΚΟ ΑΥΤΑΜΟΥ
ΕΝΕΤΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΜΝΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΝΤΑΦΕΡΗΤ ΜΜΟΥ ΝΙΜ ΜΝΝΣΑ-ΝΑΙ
ΑΥΧΩΩ ΕΠΕΦΣΩΜΑ ΧΕ ΝΝΕ-ΒΑCΑΝΟΣ ΧΩΩ ΕΡΟΥ ΑΥΤ ΝΑΥ ΝΤΡΗΝΗ
ΑΥΒΩΚ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΝΕΜΠΗΥΕ

Yet, he was giving resilience to them all (20.1) to make them endure (20.3) in the nature of a strong general who is giving courage to his soldiers (15.3) to march to the battle for their king (20.2). He was shining in the midst of the holy ones like the sun (9.6), while all the holy ones got comfort from him. Then the saviour appeared to his holy martyr in the jail, and told him about the things which were going to happen (16.1) and everything he promised (15.2). After these things, he touched his body so the tortures would not touch him (20.2). He said goodbye (literally ‘gave him the peace’) and went up to the heavens (2.2).

ΑCΩΩΠΕ ΔΕ ΜΠΕΦΡΑCΤΕ ΑΠΚΟΜΙC ΖΜΟΟC ΕΡΟΥ ΕΠΒΗΝΑ ΑΥΡΙCΕ
ΕΥΚΟΛΑΚΕΥΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΝΦΟΡΠ ΕΠΖΑΝ ΑΥΑΠΛΗ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΠΜΟΥ ΑΥΩ
ΜΠΕΦΕΩCΜΩΜ ΕΡΟΥ ΝΦΟΥCΙΑΖΕ ΤΟΤΕ ΑΥΤΡΕΥΤ ΝΑΥ ΝΩΕ ΝΝΕΥΡΟΝ
ΝΩΑΡΟΥΩΤ ΕΧΕΝ-ΖΗΤΩ · ΜΝΝCΩC ΑΥΤΡΕΥΕΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΒΑΩΟΥΡ
ΧΕ ΕΥΝΑΟΥΑCΤΩ ΑΥΩ ΝΤΕΡΟΥΚΩ ΝΤΒΑΩΟΥΡ ΕΧΕΜ-ΠCΩΜΑ
ΜΠΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΑΠΠΕΝΠΕ ΕΡ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΜΟΥΛΩ ΕΩΑΥΩΩΛΜ ΜΠΕCΤΟΙ
ΝΟΥΚΩΩΤ ΕΤΒΕ-ΤCΙΧ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΜΠCΩΡ ΝΤΑCΧΩΩ ΕΠΕΦCΩΜΑ ΧΕ
ΝΝΕ-ΝΒΑCΑΝΟΣ CΜΩΜ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΕΥΤΩΒΟ

However, it happened next day (literally ‘on its tomorrow’ (12.5)), the Deputy sat himself at the bench. He worked hard persuading him at first (9.2). In the end, he threatened him with death. Yet, he was not able to make him sacrifice (20.6). Then he made them give him a hundred leather lashes on his torso. Afterwards, he made them bring a saw (20.3) so that it would saw him (20.2). Yet, after the saw was put on the body of the holy one, the iron seemed like wax when it senses the heat (literally ‘emission’) of a fire (15.4) because of the holy hand of the Saviour which had touched his body so no tortures would overcome him because of his purification (20.6).

ΤΟΤΕ ΠΚΟΜΙC ΑΥΤ-ΑΠΟΦΑCΙC ΕΡΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΥΤΙ ΝΤΕΦΑΠΕ ΑΥCΖΑΙ
ΔΕ ΝΤΕΦΑΠΟΦΑCΙC ΝΤΕΙΖΕ ΧΕ ΜΗΝΑ ΠΜΑΤΟΪ ΝΧΡΗCΤΙΑΝΟC

επιδη ἡπεφοῦωω εσωτῆ ἡσα-πεπροσταγμα ἡπῆρο ἡφουσιαζε
 ἡνenoγτε ετβε-παι †κελεγε ἡσεφι ἡτεφαπε ἡτσηγε ἡσερωκῆ
 ἡπεφωμα ῆἡογκωῆτ· ἡτερε-ἡγυπερετης εντῷ επιμα
 ἡτεφδιωρια νεφμοοωε πε εφτεληλ εφροογτ εφῆλλει εφωαξε
 ἡἡ-πμνηωε ετογῆῆ ἡσωφ ἡἡ-ῆενκεαскитнс ἡμοναχος εφсмоу
 εрооу тнроу де тахре-тнγтῆ ῆἡтпистис ἡπεхс ιс · αφκωλῆ δε
 ἡνεφпат αφωληλ ἡἡἡса-πεωληλ δε αφсооγтῆ εβολ ἡπεφмакῆ
 αγφι ἡτεφαπε · αφχωк εβολ ἡτεφμαртγρια ἡсоу ἡἡтн ἡпевот
 ῆαωφ ῆἡтмἡтῆро ἡΔιοκλнΔιανос ἡἡмаximianос ἡῆрроу
 ἡаномос αγω ἡπαpαβαтнс

Then, the Deputy gave judgment about him that his head be re-
 moved (20.3). So, he wrote his judgment like this: ‘Mena, the Christian
 soldier. Since he did not wish to obey the king’s edict and sacrifice to the
 gods, because of this I grant that his head be removed by the sword and
 his body burned in a fire (19.7).’ After the wardens brought him to the
 place of his execution (17.5), he was walking, rejoicing, smiling, singing
 psalms, talking with the crowd which was assembled behind him along
 with some other monkish ascetics (2.4), and blessing them all (20.1):
 ‘Strengthen yourselves in the faith of Christ Jesus (4.3).’ So, he bent his
 knees and prayed. After the praying, then, he stretched out his neck and
 his head was removed. He fulfilled his martyrdom on day fifteen of the
 month Hathur in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, the lawless and
 reckless kings (12.6).

Apa Pachomius

Pachomius was born in the south of the country, probably near Qena
 in the Thebaid, and his first career was in the imperial army. There he
 gained the knowledge about organising large numbers of people safely
 and effectively that later would help him formulate principles for com-
 munal living in monasteries. He was openly baptised as Christian upon
 his honourable discharge from the army around 315, at a time when Dio-
 cletian’s brutal persecutions were still fresh in the memory of Egyptians.
 Having first explored the solitary life in the eastern desert, Pachomius
 felt called to pioneer the coenobitic lifestyle. Over the next two decades,
 at various sites between Esna and Sohag, he founded several monaster-
 ies which conformed to the rules sampled in the first reading below. In
 keeping with the meandering valley of the Nile, an Upper Egyptian mon-
 astery was essentially a self-sufficient agricultural community of men,
 women and children, who came together to pray, sing psalms and tend

the sick and the elderly. Their daily routines were organised according to traditional patterns of life as much as the new rules and, indeed, the monastery churches often stood on the sites of ancient pharaonic shrines. Each community also had dormitories headed by a warden or houseman (ⲡⲓⲛⲏⲛⲓ (5.1)) who provided pastoral care and spiritual guidance, as well as an assembly room for weaving and prayer.

Although Pachomius was an advocate of social distancing to prevent the spread of both contraband and infection, in 346 he died from a plague because he was neither the first nor the last in charge of such matters to ignore his own rules, as recounted in the second reading below. Despite a humbling demise, his legacy was greater than he could have envisioned: his life and works circulated across the Empire in Greek, and were translated into Latin by Jerome – also responsible for the Vulgate translation of the Bible. John Cassian, a wealthy Roman citizen, trained as a young monk at Scetis but, in the early fifth century, was despatched by the Church to Marseilles, where he founded the first monasteries that adapted coenobitic practices to European conditions. These communities, in turn, became the wellspring for the foundational contribution of monasteries to the educational, charitable and cultural development of mediaeval Europe. Accordingly, many of Pachomius' rules were incorporated more or less verbatim into the classic monastic code of Benedict (c. 480–550).

Excerpts from Pachomius's rules of monastic life

ⲡⲓⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲉⲗⲥ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲓⲩⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ ⲉⲗⲟⲕⲙⲉⲓ ⲉⲙⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩⲱⲧ̅

No person shall wash someone while he is sick (16.4), even to clean him (20.2), when it has not been agreed (19.7).³

ⲡⲓⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲩⲱⲃ-ⲧⲉⲓⲁⲛⲉ ⲁⲭⲏ ⲡⲉⲓⲣⲓⲛⲏⲛⲓ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲩⲱⲃ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲙⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩⲱⲧ̅ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲩⲱⲃ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲕⲅⲙⲟⲟⲥ

No person shall shave his head without his warden; neither shall anyone shave anyone when it has not been agreed; neither too shall anyone shave anyone when they are sitting.

ⲡⲓⲛⲉ-ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲉⲡⲥⲱⲟⲩⲗ̅ ⲛ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲓⲧⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲣⲁⲧⲓ̅
ⲛ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲓⲣⲛⲏⲩⲱ ⲃⲱⲱⲗⲉ ⲛⲙⲟⲓ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲗⲓⲡⲓⲧⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲗⲓⲧⲥⲱⲩⲉ

3. Text adapted from W. C. Till: *Koptische Grammatik (Säidischer Dialekt)*. Leipzig, Verlag Enzyklopädie (1986), pages 288–290.

ἄνθρωπος καὶ περὶ τὴν ἡμέραν ἀντοῦ καὶ ἐποῦται ἡμέερα
 No person shall take off (literally ‘drop’) his sun cloak until they ring
 for the midday eating (17.5).

No person shall hold the hand of his friend nor any part of his ($\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-Q}$). Instead, you are going to leave a cubit between you and him (4.2), whether you are sitting, whether you are standing (11.8) or whether you are walking.

Moreover, if a brother wounds himself (18.2) and does not sleep (18.3) – instead he walks about (literally ‘in and out’) – and he needs a cloth or a bit of oil, his warden shall go to the place of the storekeepers and get them (נֶ-q-חִיט-וֶי) for him (16.4), until he heals (17.5) and then he takes them back (literally ‘again’) to their place.

If someone takes an item which is not his (16.2), he shall be pulled up (19.7) (literally 'lifted at his shoulders') in the assembly for a time of praying, and repent and stand in the eating place (17.3).

If someone is found quarrelling (19.7), and even then responds more than is appropriate (literally ‘more than the measure’), he is going to be punished in proportion to the deserving of his deed (17.1).

ΕΤΒΗΗΤ ΕΤΡΑΒΩΚ ΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΝΗΔΕΙΟΤΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ · ΝΕCНΗΥ ΔΕ ΔΥΚΤΟΟΥ
ΕΠΜΑ ΕΤḲḲΟΤḲ ḲḲΗΤḲ ΔΥCΩ ΕΥΡΕΙΜΕ ΕΞΟΥΝ ΕΡΟΥ ḲḲΟΥΝΟC
ḲΟΥΩΩḲḲḲḲḲḲ

They had all gone together into the assembly. They spent three days praying (9.6), weeping, up to the Lord that he would leave him to them (20.2) for some more time on the earth (2.3). Then, after three days our father Pachomius sent Theodore to them, saying, ‘Enough of you weeping (4.3)! After all, the command has come about from the Lord about me (4.2) to make me go up to all my fathers (5.2).’ However, the brothers returned to the place which he sleeps in (15.2), and carried on weeping over him in great heartbreak (9.2).

ḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΥΚΤΟΥ ΕΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC ΔΥΩΔΑΧΕ ḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΕ ΕΡΩΔΗ
ΠΧΟΕΙC CḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲ-ΠΑCΩΜΑ ḲḲ-ΠΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCḲ ḲḲḲḲḲ
· ΔΟΥΩΩḲḲ ḲḲḲ ḲḲ-ΟΥḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΕ ḲḲḲḲḲ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΩΔΑΧΕ
· ḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΥΑΜΑḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΥḲḲḲḲḲ ΕΧḲḲ-ΤḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ
ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΕ ΕΘΕΩΔΩΡΕ ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲ-ΠΑCΩΜΑ ḲḲḲḲḲ
ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCḲ ḲḲḲḲḲ · ΔΟΥΩΩḲḲ ḲḲḲ ΟΝ ΔΕ Ω ΠΑΧΟΕΙC ḲḲḲḲ
ḲḲḲḲḲ ΚΑΤΑ ḲΩḲ ḲḲḲ ΕΤΕΚΝΑḲΩΝ ḲḲḲḲḲ ΕΤΟΟΤ ḲḲ-ΟΥḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ
· ΕΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC ΔΕ ΔΥḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΕ ΠΩΛΛΑΚΙC ΕΥΧΩ ḲḲḲ
ḲḲΟΥΝΟC ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΕ ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲ
ḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΕΡΟΥ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ

Afterwards, he turned to Theodore (11.8) and spoke with him: ‘If the Lord visits me (17.2), do not leave my body (14.1) in the place in which they are going to bury it (15.2).’ He answered him in grief (1.3), ‘I am going to act according to your speaking.’ Afterwards, he grabbed his beard (ΤΕḲ-ΜΟΥΤ), and poked on his chest for the second time (12.4): ‘Theodore,* take care (4.3) – do not leave my body in the place in which they are going to bury it.’ He answered him again, ‘O my fatherly lord, I am going to act according to everything (2.5) which you are going to command (ΕΤ-Ḳ-ΝΑ-ḲΩΝ ḲḲḲ-ΟΥ) to me in thanksgiving.’ So, Theodore thought to himself that probably he was saying this (13.6) as a great command in case some people took his body (17.3) by robbing (17.1) and build round him a martyr’s shrine.

*ΕΘΕΩΔΩΡΕ is the form used in Greek when speaking to someone named ΕΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC.

ΔΥΩ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲ ΔΥΩḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΕΒΟΛ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ
ḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ΔΥCΦΡḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲ

ḿꜥⲟⲡ ḿṯⲉϥⲛⲟϥ ḗⲓⲟϥⲱⲛ ḿⲣⲱϥ ḗⲓⲧ ḿⲡⲉⲓⲡⲛḗ ḿꜥⲟϥ ḿṯṯḗⲓⲧⲉ
ḿⲡⲉⲃⲟᲧ ⲡḗⲱⲟⲛḥ ḿḗḗⲡⲓⲛṯⲉ ḿⲡⲉϫⲟⲟϥ

Moreover, after he said these things (17.5), he was struck dumb for a while and did not speak with any of them (literally ‘someone from them’). Afterwards, he crossed himself with his hand three times. Immediately, he opened his mouth (5.2) and he gave his soul on day fourteen of the month Pakhons, at hour ten of the day (12.5).

ḿⲉꜥⲛⲛⲩ ḗⲉ ṯⲓⲣⲟϥ ḗⲓⲡⲱᲧ ⲉϫⲟϥⲛ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉϥⲣⲉⲓⲙⲉ ḗϫḗⲥⲡḗⲫⲉ
ḿṯⲉⲓⲧḗⲡⲣⲟ ḿṯ-ⲡⲉⲓⲥⲱⲙḗ ṯⲓⲣḗ ⲉᲧⲟϥḗḗⲃ ḗϥ ḗϫᲣ-ⲡⲱⲱḗḗ
ḿⲡⲉϫⲟⲟϥ ⲉᲧḗⲙḗϥ ḿṯṯⲉϥⲱⲛ ṯⲓⲣḥ ⲉϥⲱⲱ ḿⲡⲉⲓⲕⲱᲧⲉ ϫⲓ-ⲙ
ḿⲡⲉⲙⲥⲓḗⲥṯⲓⲣⲓⲟⲛ ḿṯⲉⲣⲟϥᲣ-ᲧᲥϥⲛḗⲫⲓḥ ḗⲉ ḿⲡⲛḗϥ ḿⲱⲱⲣᲡḗϫⲓⲕⲱⲱḥ
ḿⲡⲉⲓⲥⲱⲙḗ ⲉᲧⲟϥḗḗⲃ ḿⲙⲉ ḿṯⲉꜥⲛⲛⲩ Ყϥⲣⲟϥ ḗϥ ḗϫᲧḗⲗⲟ ⲉϫⲣḗ
ⲉḗⲱϥ ḿṯⲉⲓⲡⲣⲟḥⲓⲱⲣḗ ḿṯḿⲥⲱḥ ḗϫᲧḗⲗⲗⲉⲓ ϫḗ-Ყⲉⲓⲕⲓⲛ ⲱḗⲛᲧⲟϥḗᲓᲧḗ
ⲉⲡᲧⲟⲟϥ ḿꜥⲧⲟⲙḥḗ ḿꜥⲟϥ ḿṯṯḗ ḿⲡⲉⲓⲉⲃⲟᲧ ḿⲟϥᲧᲧ Სḗⲱⲟⲛḥ
ⲉḗḿⲉꜥⲛⲛⲩ ⲕᲧⲟⲟϥ ⲉϫⲣḗ ⲉⲙⲉⲛⲉᲧⲉ ϫᲓⲟϥⲛⲟḥ ḿⲟϥⲱⲱḗḗⲛⲓⲛṯ ḿṯ-
ⲙḗⲃⲃⲉⲓⲟ ḿⲉⲣⲉ-ϫḗϫ ḗⲉ ḿⲓⲛᲧⲟϥ ⲱḗḗⲉ ḿṯ-ḿⲉᲧϫⲓᲧⲟϥⲟⲟϥ ḗⲉ ⲟⲛᲧⲱḥ
ḗⲛⲱⲱⲡⲉ ϫᲓⲟϥḿṯᲧⲱⲣḗḗⲛⲟḥ ḿⲡⲟⲟϥ

So, all the brothers ran in to him, weeping. They kissed his mouth and all his holy body. Moreover, they spent the rest of that day and the whole night chanting round him (literally ‘in his surrounding’) in front of the altar (ⲙⲥⲓḗⲥṯⲓⲣⲓⲟⲛ). So, after they made the assembly of the morning time, they embalmed his holy body like all the brothers (17.6). Then they raised on him his wreath. Afterwards, they sang in front of him until they took him to the hill, and buried him on day fifteen of this same month, Pakhons. When the brothers had returned to the monastery in great heartbreak and humility, therefore, many from them were talking with those beside them (ḿⲉᲧ-ϫⲓᲧⲟϥⲱ-ⲟϥ) that, ‘Actually we have become orphaned (literally ‘in orphanhood’) today.’

CHAPTER 3 SHENOUTE'S LIFE AND WORKS

Shenoute was born to a farming family near Akhmim. His uncle Pgol had founded the White Monastery nearby, at Sohag, and young Shenoute became a monk there in due course, probably following his father's death. By 385 (according to the letters copied below) he succeeded as Abbot and remained in office until his death, following a brief illness, sometime after 451 and possibly as late as 466. At his death, Shenoute led a confederation of three monasteries comprising some 4,000 monks and nuns, and a still larger community of adherents. One of his successors, Besa, also became his principal biographer and Shenoute's legacy has been at the heart of Coptic culture ever since. Sadly, however, the White Monastery's splendid collection of books was haphazardly dispersed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see [page 9](#)), and during the Napoleonic Wars the principal sites at Sohag were effectively razed by a Mamlouk army. Though the monasteries have been revitalised more recently, the historic sites are still in desperate need of conservation.

As a community leader, Shenoute was renowned during his lifetime as an efficient administrator, a strict reformer and, above all, a fearsome preacher who championed care for the poor and for refugees. Two episodes, below, from his biography illustrate his reputation – one recounts his leadership through a miraculous intervention in battle, the other his impartial condemnation of a wealthy man who has a skeleton in the closet. Just as fiercely he denounced atheism and paganism, which he identified with an entitled ruling elite and, because of his popularity and unequivocal orthodoxy, Shenoute was chosen to accompany Archbishop Cyril to the Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431. (Tellingly, that Council not only denounced the Bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius, for heresy but eventually had him exiled to Shenoute's heartland.) The extant works comprise some 2,000 folios, organised after his death into *Canons* of monastic life and public *Discourses*. He not only read Greek, Shenoute's writings betray a meaningful knowledge of classical philosophy and mythology, certain apocryphal gospels, even Manichaeism (see [page 311](#)). His sermons and other discourses encapsulate debates with lawyers and philosophers about the nature of judgement and punishment, free will and determinism, along with the moral and social responsibilities of judges, bishops and the wealthy. Again, two sermons, below, illustrate his style as an orator and writer: one survives only in an



Figure 25 The massive enclosure of the White Monastery church takes the form of a pharaonic temple and incorporates stone blocks from ancient buildings on the site. Sohag, fifth century.

Source: Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk).

extract which condemns as hypocrites those who use public outcry about immigrants to mask the truth about a rotten society; while the other – only sampled here – mocks the emptiness of philosophy in the face of faith.

Shenoute and a rich sinner

ⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲉⲓ ⲩⲁ-ⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲙⲡⲣⲟⲩⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲩⲏⲙ ⲡⲉ
ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲁⲟ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱⲩ ⲉⲭⲓ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ ⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ̅
ⲙⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲙⲡⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲑ

A man also came to my prophetic father. A man of the district (5.1), he was a humble man, whose name was Peter (15.4). He was a rich man, wishing to get blessing (20.2) from my father (5.2). He said to the righteous one, ‘Bless me, my holy father.’⁵

ⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̅-ⲓ̅ⲡⲱⲁ ⲁⲛ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ
ⲭⲉ ⲁⲕⲣ̅-ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲑⲉ-ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲕⲭⲓⲧ̅ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲁⲛ ⲧⲱⲉⲣⲉ
ⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲱⲛⲉ ⲁⲗⲏⲱⲥ ⲁⲕⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲡⲁⲣⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ ⲙⲡ̅ⲙ̅ⲧⲟ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ
ⲙⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

5. Text adapted from W. E. Crum (ed): *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*. London, British Museum (1905), page 165.

However, my father said to him, ‘You are not deserving of the blessing of my Lord (16.2) because you have done a great sin because of the wife who you have taken (15.2). Since she is the daughter of your sister truthfully, you have done a great crime in the presence of the Lord (13.9).’

πεχε-πρωμε ναϥ χε παχοεις νειωτ ἡμῆ-μετανοια ωοοπ ναῖ
 ρολωσ πεχε-παειωτ ναϥ χε σε απρωμε ει εβολ ριτοοτῳ ἀρεινε
 ἡωεταιιοϥ ἡρολοκοττινος ἀϥτααϥ ἡπαειωτ χε †παρακαλει
 ἡμοκ ετρεκτααϥ ἡαγαπη ραροι

The man said to him, ‘No repentance exists for me at all (16.3)?’ My father said to him, ‘Yes.’ The man went out from him. He brought 150 coins* (12.3), and gave them to my father, saying, ‘I urge you to give them for charity on my behalf (20.2).’

*In other words, possibly as much as 0.675 kg or 1½ lb of pure gold (see [page 282](#)).

Shenoute and Duke Heraclius

ασωωπε δε νοϥσοπ ετρε-ἡβαρβαρος νανοϥβα ἡῆ-βαλερμοϥ βωκ
 ερητ αϥχι νοϥπολις εϥοϥωϥ ε-ερ-πολεμος ἡῆ-νεχρηστιανος ·
 εϥβηκ δε επιπολεμος ἡσι-πλωϥζ ρηρακλιος ἀρει ωα-πeneιωτ
 ετοϥααβ ἀπα ωenoϥτε ἀϥσεπσωπῳ ετρεϥωληλ εχωϥ αϥω
 ἀϥπαρακαλει ἡμοϥ ετρεϥταμιο ναϥ ἡοϥσταϥρος ἡωε ρῆ-
 νεϥσιϥ ἡμινἡμοϥ αϥω ἀϥτρεϥτοκῳ εϥκοντος ἡωε · ἀϥκααϥ
 εϥρι-θη εϥβηκ επιπολεμος αϥω ἀϥπατασσε ἡνεβαρβαρος ετῆμαϥ
 ρῆ-οϥνος ἡλϥπει ρωστε ἡσεωαχε επιπολεμος ετῆμαϥ ωα-εϥραι
 επιοοϥ ἡροοϥ εβολχε ἡπεσοτῆς ἡτειρε ταροοϥ χῆνταπλωϥζ
 ἀρχει εθηβαεις

Once, however, the barbarians – those of Nubia and the Blemmyes – happened to go north (20.3). They took a city, wishing to make war with the Christians (20.2). However, Duke Heraclius, while going to the war, came to our holy father, Apa Shenoute (15.4), and requested him to pray for him. Indeed, he urged him to make him make a wooden cross by his own hands (8.3). Then, he had it fixed to a wooden pole (19.7) and put it at the front when he was going to the war (19.5). Accordingly, he struck those barbarians with grief so great that they speak about that war up to this very day (17.3), because defeat (σοτῆς) of this fashion had not affected them since the Duke ruled the Thebaid (χῆντα for χῆν-ῆτ-α (14.3)).⁶

6. Text adapted from W. C. Till: *Koptische Grammatik (Sahidischer Dialekt)*. Leipzig, Verlag Enzyklopädie (1986), pages 292–293.



Figure 26 Dating from Shenoute's lifetime, an icon of Christ Pantocrator in the White Monastery church, 'the noblest church of which we have any remains in Egypt', according to the architect and Egyptologist George Somers Clarke (1841–1926). Sohag, fifth century. *Source:* Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk).

αϥερ-μεντρε δε ον ν̄σι-π̄δοϥζ ϣηρακλιος ϣε ν̄τερειβωκ
 εροϥν ϣεν-τμητε ν̄νεβαρβαρος διναϥ εϥρωμε ν̄οϥοειν εϥεινε
 ν̄πeneιωτ απα ϣενοϥτε αϥω αϥρωβ̄ς εβολ εϣωι ν̄τεϥστολη
 ν̄οϥοειν αϥρωβ̄ς ν̄παϣωμα ν̄πελααϥ ν̄πεθοοϥ ϣωπε ν̄μοι ' αϥω
 ν̄τερεϥϣι ν̄τεβικτωρια ϣ̄νοϥεοοϥ αϥεινε ν̄νεΔωρον ν̄ταπαρχη
 ν̄νεϣωλ ερατ̄ ν̄πϣοειϣ αϥω αϥρομολογει ν̄τϣωτηρια ν̄πεϣρο
 ϣε ν̄ταϣωπε εβολ ϣιτεμ-π̄νοϥτε μεν-νεϣληλ ν̄πeneιωτ
 ετοϥααβ απα ϣενοϥτε

However, Duke Heraclius has also made witness: 'After I came into the midst of the barbarians (17.5), I saw a bright person resembling our father, Apa Shenoute. Then, he covered over me his bright cloak. He covered my body, and nothing of the evil one happened with me (10.5).' Accordingly, after he got the victory in glory, he brought the gifts of the first-fruits of the spoils to the foot of the Lord (5.2). Then, he admitted the salvation of the victor, that it happened through God and the prayers of our holy father, Apa Shenoute (14.3).

Two more letters to the Archbishop of Alexandria

Among the books from the White Monastery are copies of letters written by Shenoute to Timothy, who was Archbishop of Alexandria from 380 to 385. In other words, they must date from early in Shenoute's long tenure in office; as such, not only are they witnesses to the career of the great foundational Abbot, but they are among the earliest surviving documents from the normative Sahidic Coptic writing culture. The formality of the correspondence is reflected in Shenoute adopting Ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲟⲥ, the fancy form of his name you saw in his first letter to the archbishop (19.9), along with the royal 'we':

ΚΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ ΠΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΩΔΙ ΜΠΕΡΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΙΩΤ
 ΝΗΕΟΦΙΛΕΣΤΑΤΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΤΙΜΟΘΕΟΣ ΠΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΖΗΠΛΩΙΣ

Shenoute, this least, is the one who is writing to his beloved father, best beloved of God (ἄεοφιλέστατος), Apa Timothy, the Archbishop, in the Lord (13.4).⁷

χαίρετε ἀγαπᾶτε ἑατέ ἡμετέρῃς ἡμετέροις
ἐτοίμασθε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν ὅπως ἂν
ἀκούετε καὶ ἡμετέρας ἐπαγγελίας ἵνα
οἰκοδομηθῆτε ὡς οἱ ἁγιοὶ καὶ ἡμετέροις
ἀγαπᾶτε ἑατέ ἡμετέροις

Hello. I rejoiced greatly after I got the writings (17.5) of your holy fatherliness from the worshipful brother (5.1) – these things which have become for us comforting as well as encouraging (15.1). We have acted as though (9.6) we have kissed through them your image that bears Christ (15.4).

ΑΥΩ ΑΝΤΩΚΗΖΗΤ ΝΤΕΡΝΣΩΤΜ̄ ΕΝΩΔΧΕ ΝΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ
 ΕΤ-ΝΖΗΤΚ̄ ΤΑΙ ΕΤΕΡΕ-ΤΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΖΗΤΣ̄ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΕΟΟΥ
 ΜΗ-ΟΥΜΝΤΡΜ̄ΜΑΟ ΝΕΤΖΙ-ΟΥΝΑΜ ΑΥΩ ΖΙ-ΖΒΟΥΡ ΜΜΟΣ ΕΣΦΟΡΙ
 ΔΕ ΟΝ ΜΠΝΟΜΟΣ ΜΗ-ΠΝΑ ΖΙ-ΠΕΣΛΑΣ ΕΤΡΕΝΧΟΟΣ ΖΩΩΝ ΝΘΕ
 ΝΤΑΠΠΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ ΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΑΝΓ̄ ΝΙΜ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΧΘΕΙΣ ΠΑΧΘΕΙΣ ΧΕ
 ΑΚΜΕΡΙΤ ΩΔ-ΖΡΑΪ ΕΝΕΙΩΙ

Likewise, we have been encouraged after we heard the sayings of God's wisdom that are from you – this thing which righteousness comes out of (15.2), and even glory and profit, the things which are right and left from it (10.5). However, it also bears the law and mercy on its tongue (14.3) to make us also say (20.3) – in the way that the holy

7. Text adapted from J. Leipoldt with W. E. Crum: *Sinuthii Archimandritae vita et opera omnia III*. Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium: Scriptores Coptici. Paris, Otto Harrassowitz (1908), pages 13–15.

one said (ⲛⲧ-ⲁ-ⲡ-ⲡⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ϫⲟⲟϥ) – ‘Who am I (8.1) even, O Lord my Lord, that you have loved me up to these lengths?’*

ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ϫⲁⲣⲓⲗⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲙⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ⲧⲉ
ⲛⲧⲉⲕⲣⲁⲅⲓⲱϥⲛⲏ ⲉⲕⲟ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲱⲟϥ ⲉⲕⲙⲟⲟⲛⲉ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲁϥⲱ ⲉⲕⲕϥⲃⲉⲣⲛⲁ
ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ϩⲛ-ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲕⲡⲣⲉϥⲃⲉϥⲉ ϩⲁⲣⲟⲛ ϩⲛⲛⲉⲕⲱⲗ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ⲁϥⲱ
ⲉⲧⲱⲛⲡ ⲛⲛⲁⲅⲣⲓ-ⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲟϥϫⲁⲓ ϩⲓ-ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲡⲉⲛⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛⲉⲱⲧ
ⲛⲅⲁⲅⲓⲱⲧⲁⲧⲟϥ

The Lord is granting us this great gift that is the love of your Holiness (13.8), acting as shepherd for us (15.3), nursing us, even steering us in every matter and interceding for us in your prayers, which are holy and accordingly accepted before God (19.3). Farewell, our beloved and most holy (ϩⲁⲅⲓⲱⲧⲁⲧⲟϥ) father.

*A reference from Paul’s letters in the New Testament (1 Chronicles 17:16).

The address of the final letter here is lost, but its contents bear close comparison to the previous, with significant variations indicated below in italics. Shenoute’s final remark – which appears only in this letter – may refer to his recent succession in the wake of the death of the previous Abbot (in other words, ⲡⲉⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟϥ ⲛⲥⲟⲛ ‘our blessed brother’):

ⲁⲓⲣⲁⲱⲉ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲓⲭⲓ ⲛⲛⲉϥⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲕⲙⲏⲧⲉⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ
ϩⲓⲧⲓ-ⲡⲣⲉϥⲱⲙⲱⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲛ ⲁϥⲱ ⲛⲉⲱⲧ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲙⲓⲛⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲓ
ⲛⲧⲁϥⲱⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲥⲟⲗϥ ϩⲓ-ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲙⲱⲉⲓⲁ ⲁⲛⲣ-ⲑⲉ ϩⲱϥ ⲉⲁⲛⲟϥⲱⲧ
ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟϥ ⲛⲧⲉⲕⲣⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲑⲟⲣⲉⲓ ⲙⲡⲉϫⲥ

[The missing address was here, presumably as above.]

I rejoiced greatly after I got the writings (17.5) of your holy fatherliness *from the brotherly and also fatherly servant of God, Apa Maximin* – these things which have become for us comforting as well as encouraging. We have acted as though we have kissed through them your image that bears Christ.

ⲁϥⲱ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲕⲛⲅⲏⲧ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲛⲥⲱⲧⲓ ⲉⲛⲱⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲑⲓⲁ ⲙⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ
ⲉⲧⲛⲅⲏⲧⲕⲧ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲧⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟϥⲛⲏ ⲛⲏϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛⲣⲱϥ ⲁϥⲱ ⲟϥⲉⲟⲟϥ
ⲙⲏⲟϥⲛⲧⲣⲓⲙⲁⲟ ⲛⲉⲧⲅⲓⲟϥⲛⲁⲙ ⲁϥⲱ ϩⲓⲣⲃⲟϥⲣ ⲙⲓⲙⲟϥ ⲉϥⲑⲟⲣⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲛ
ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲙⲟϥ ⲙⲏⲡⲓⲛⲁ ϩⲓⲡⲉϥⲗⲁϥ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲛϫⲟⲟϥ ϩⲱⲱⲛ ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲡⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ
ϫⲟⲟϥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲕⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲱⲁⲅⲣⲁⲓ
ⲉⲛⲉⲱⲓ

Likewise, we have been encouraged after we heard the wise sayings of God that are from you – *this thing out of whose mouth righteousness comes* (literally ‘which righteousness comes from its mouth’ (5.2)), and even glory and profit, the things which are right and left from it.

However, it also bears the law and mercy on its tongue to make us also say – in the way that the holy one said – ‘Who am I even, O Lord my Lord, that you have loved me up to these lengths?’

ερε-πχοεic ναχαριζε ναn τωβολ ἡπinoσ ἡλωρον ετε
ταγαπη τε ἡτεκταγωcῡνη εκo ναn ἡωωc εκμοone ἡμον
αγω εκκyβερνα ἡμον ρἡρωb nim εκπρεcβεγε ραρον ρἡνεκωλλ
ετογαab αγω ετωηп ἡναρῡἡπnoγτε τἡπαpακαλει σε
ἡτεκἡἡττελειoc ετρεκωληλ εχων ἡτἡἡπωa ρωων ἡχωκ
εβολ ἡπeνδpомoc ρἡoyειpηνη ἡε ἡπeнмаκαpиoc ἡcon

The Lord is going to grant us henceforward this great gift that is the love of your Holiness, acting as shepherd for us (15.3), nursing us, even steering us in every matter and interceding for us in your prayers, which are holy and accordingly accepted before God (19.3). In addition (7.3), we urge your perfection to pray for us (20.3) that we ourselves be worthy (17.3) of finishing our race peacefully like our blessed brother (3.3).*

*A reference from Paul’s letters in the New Testament (2 Timothy 4:7).

From a sermon about immigration

ενωανχοoc ερpai epok πnoγτε πпaнтoкpατωp xε ἡπῡтаaн
ετοotoγ ἡνειρεθnoc εтπeρτ̄-cнoεβολ εno ἡε ἡπeтxиoγa aнon
ἡpωme ἡтаγтааγ ἡμἡἡmoγ ἡпxωρἡ eπῡρωb εaкaθapcia nim
aнmeρ-ἡтoω aнmeρ-ἡпoлиc αγω ἡтme ἡἡнеpиooγe εnaωkaк
εβολ εтbe-θoтe ἡρεнbapбapoc ενωω εβολ xε oγoi oγoi ρoεine
xε εтbe-наωηpe ρeнkooye xε εтbe-наeиoтe αγω naсннγ ·
εγтoн σε ρωωq пeиoт н eтoн тмааγ εγтoн пcoн εγтoн
пpωme εтpime αγω εтneρпe xε aтeφωepe пopneye αγω
aпeφωηpe pαceβнc αγω пeφcon · eφxε oγἡρoεine eγmoкῡἡгнт
xε aнeγωηpe н neγcннγ pἡobe onтoс ceἡпωa ἡтаeиo nim

If we say up to you (18.2), O God, ruler of all (πaнтoкpατωp, see [Figure 26](#)), ‘Do not give us to these peoples who pour blood out’, we are like blasphemers (19.4). We are the people (8.1) who have given their own selves to the pollution for conducting every dirty business (17.1). We have filled the districts, filled the cities as well as the towns and the roads (2.2), screaming because of the fear of barbarians (15.2), crying out ‘Woe, woe’ – some ‘because of my children’, others ‘because of my parents and my siblings’. Yet, where is he, indeed, the father (14.4); or where is she, the mother; where is he, the brother; where is he, the person who weeps and indeed mourns that his daughter acted like a

prostitute (ΠΟΡΝΕΥΕ), and likewise his son and even his brother acted profanely (ῥ-ΑΣΕΒΗΣ)? Supposing there are some who grieve because their children or their siblings have sinned (2.3), actually they are worthy of every honour (18.4).⁸

Extracts from a response to a pagan philosopher

ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΝΤΑ-ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΜΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ΑΠΑ ΘΕΝΟΥΤΕ
 ΧΟΟQ ΝΤΕΡΕ-ΟΥΦΙΛΟCΟΦΟC ΝΖΛΛΗΝ ΕΙΩΑΡΟQ ΕΑQΕΙ ΝΑQ ΝΖΕΝΚΕCΟΠ
 ΕQCΟΟΥΝ ΔΕ ΜΜΟQ ΧΕ Μ-ΠΕQΜΕΕΥΕ CΟΥΤΩΝ ΑΝ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ
 ΖΑΖ ΔΕ ΖΝ-ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΕΤΖΜΟΟC ΖΑΖΤΗQ ΜΝ-ΝΡΗΜΑΟ ΕΥCΟΟΥΝ ΜΜΟQ
 ΕΑΥΚΩΜΩ ΝCΑ-ΠΑΙ ΝΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ · ΝΤΕΡΕQΕΙ ΕCΩΤΜ̄ ΕΠΛΟΓΟC ΑQΑΡΧΕΙ
 ΝΩΑΧΕ ΕQΧΩ ΜΜΟC ΝΤΕΙΖΕ ΧΕ

This is the lesson which our prophetic holy father, Apa Shenoute, said (15.2) after a pagan philosopher came to him (17.5), having come (15.4) to him on some other occasions (2.4); though (ΔΕ) knowing him because his thinking does not incline toward God (16.2); though many from the magistrates who were sitting beside him, and the rich who knew him, had mocked this (lesson) in the same fashion. After he (the philosopher) came to hear the lesson, he (Shenoute) began talking, speaking like this:

ΠΕΧΑQ ΝΒΙ-ΠΕΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ΧΕ ΟΥΝ-ΟΥΜΟΥΙ ΝΑΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΥΩ
 ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΕΝQΝΑΡ̄ΖΟΤΕ ΑΝ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΑQΩΑΧΕ ΑΥΩ ΝΙΜ
 ΠΕΤΕΝQΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΑΝ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΠΕΝΤΑQΖΩΝ ΑΥΩ ΠΕQΠΝΑ ΝΙΜ
 ΠΕΤΕΝQΝΑΧΩ ΑΝ ΝΝΕΤΩΟΟΠ Η ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΝΑΖΩΠ ΝΝΕΤΡ̄ΝΟΒΡΕ

The prophet said, ‘A lion is going to roar and who is the one who is not going to be afraid (16.3). The Lord God, he has spoken and who is the one who is not going to understand (16.2)? The Lord is the one who has commanded along with his spirit – who is the one who is not going to say the things that are (19.2), or who is the one who is going hide the things that do good?’⁹

8. Text adapted from J. Leipoldt with W. E. Crum: *Sinuthii Archimandritae vita et opera omnia III*. Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium: Scriptores Coptici. Paris, Otto Harrassowitz (1908), page 67.

9. Text adapted from J. Leipoldt with W. E. Crum: *Sinuthii Archimandritae vita et opera omnia III*. Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium: Scriptores Coptici. Paris, Otto Harrassowitz (1908), pages 44–62.

First, the Abbot has stern words for those who attend church but are not wholly committed to faith, employing the image of an earth-bound creature eventually dragging down a heavenly creature:

ΕΙΣΜΟΟΣ ΔΝΟΚ ΖΙΧΝ̄-ΟΥΤΟΟΥ ΠΕΧΕ ΠΕΤΧΩ ΝΝΑΙ ΔΙΝΑΥ ΕΥΖΩΟΝ
ΕΦΖΑ-ΠΑΗΡ ΕΦΜΙΩΕ ΜΝΚΕΖΩΟΝ ΕΦΖΙΧΜ̄-ΠΚΑΖ ΔΙΡ̄-ΟΥΝΟΘ̄ ΝΡΑΩΕ
ΧΕ ΑΠΕΤΖΗΛ Θ̄Μ̄ΘΟΜ ΕΧΜ̄-ΠΕΤΜΟΟΩΕ ΖΙΧΜ̄ΠΚΑΖ ΜΝ̄Ν̄ΣΑ-ΟΥΑΠΡΗΤΕ
ΔΕ ΔΠΖΩΟΝ ΕΤΖΙΧΜ̄ΠΚΑΖ ΚΤΟϢ ΕΧΜ̄ΠΕΤΖΗΛ ΔΦΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΜΟϢ
ΑΦ̄Ρ̄ΧΟΕΙΣ ΕΡΟϢ

‘When I myself was sitting on a hill (6.3)’, said the one who says these things (13.6), ‘I saw a creature (Ε-ΟΥ-ΖΩΟΝ) which was in the air fighting with another creature which was on the ground. I rejoiced (literally ‘made great joy’) that the one which was flying overcame over the one which was walking on the ground (19.5). After a while, however, the creature which was on the ground turned (11.8) on the one which was flying, seized it, and controlled it (9.6).

Ν̄ΣΟΦΟCΝΑΕΙΜΕΧΕΠΕΙΩΑΧΕΠΑΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟCΝΙΜΠΕΕΤΟΝ̄ΖΗΤCΝΑΥ
ΟΥΜΟΕΙΖΕ ΓΑΡ ΔΝ ΤΕ ΧΕ ΟῩΝ̄-ΟΥΖ̄ΛΛΗΝ Η ΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟCΖ̄ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ
ΕΜ̄Ν̄Τ̄ ΠΙCΤΙC Μ̄ΜΑΥ · Ν̄ΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΘΕ ΖΩΟΥ Ζ̄ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ Ν̄ΖΑΖ Ν̄CΟΠ
ΕΙC ΠΤΑΟC Μ̄ΜΑΥ Μ̄ΝΤΕCΜΟΥΝΕ · ΕΩΧΕ ΩΑΡΕΠΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟC ΘΕ
Μ̄ΝΠ̄Ζ̄ΛΛΗΝ ΠΩΡΩ̄ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΝΕΥCΙΧ Η Ν̄CΕΦΙΤΟΥ ΕΖΡΑΙ Ζ̄Ν̄ΘΥΠΟΚΡΙCΙC
ΧΕ ΕΥΩΛΗΛ ΕΙC Ν̄ΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΖΩΟΥ ΕΙΡΕ Μ̄ΠΑΙ Ν̄ΖΑΖ Ν̄CΟΠ ΕΥΠΩΡΩ̄
ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΝΕΥΤ̄Ν̄Ζ

‘The wise are going to realise that this saying is what applies to each heretic (13.3), who is uncommitted (literally ‘made of two minds’ (19.4)). It is no surprise (16.2), after all, that there is a pagan or a heretic in the church who has no faith (15.4). In addition, the birds themselves are in the church often (8.3). The peacock is there and the goose (7.6). Supposing, moreover, the heretic and the pagan spread out their hands and even lift them up (18.3) in the appearance (Ζ̄Ν̄-Τ-ΖΥΠΟΚΡΙCΙC) that they are praying: the birds themselves do this often, when they are spreading out their wings.

Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΑΜΙΩΕ Μ̄ΝΠCΑΤΑΝΑC Ω Ν̄ΑΠΙCΤΟC ΕΜ̄Ν̄ΤΗΤ̄Ν̄ Μ̄ΜΑΥ
Μ̄ΠΕΘΥΡΩΝ Ν̄ΤΠΙCΤΙC ΠΑΙ ΕΤΕΤΝΑΩΘ̄Μ̄ΘΟΜ Ν̄ΖΗΤ̄ ΕΕΩΜ̄ ΝΕΥCΟΤΕ
ΟΥΟΙ ΝΗΤ̄Ν̄ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΤ̄Μ̄ΒΩΚ ΕΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΤ̄Μ̄ΧΙ ΕΒΟΛ
Ζ̄Μ̄ΠCΩΜΑ Μ̄ΝΠΕCΝΟΥ Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙC ΟΥΟΙ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΝΗΤ̄Ν̄ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΒΩΚ
Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΧΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΜΥCΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄Ο Ν̄ΖΗΤCΝΑΥ

‘Or are you going to fight with Satan, O unbelievers, when you do not have the buckler of the faith (10.3)? This, you are going to be able to extinguish his barbs with (20.6)? Woe to you, if you do not go to the

church, or if you do not partake of the body and the blood of the Lord (18.3). However, woe to you also, if you go or if you partake of the holy mystery while you are uncommitted.’

Next, Shenoute compares the statements of philosophers about faith to the meaningless croaking of frogs, and those who listen to them he compares to children amused by the sounds frogs make:

ΕΩΧΕ ΟΥΝ-ΟΥΑ ΔΕ ΟΥΩΩ ΕΧΝΕ ΟΥΖΕΛΛΗΝ Η ΟΥΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟΣ
ΕΥΖΩΒ ΜΑΡΕΦΧΝΕ ΠΕΙΖΩΟΝ ΕΝΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΟΝ ΕΤΗΜΑΥ ΕΤΕ ΤΕΦΦΥCIC
ΠΕ ΚΙΜ ΝΤΕΦΑΠΕ ΕΠΕCΗΤ ΔΥΩ ΝCΑ-ΤΠΕ ΕΤΕ ΩΑΡΕΝΩΗΡΕΩΗΗ
ΧΝΟΥΦ ΕΥCΩΒΕ Η ΕΥΧΙΝΖΡΑΥ ΕΥΧΩ ΝΜΟC ΧΕ ΕΝΕ ΠΜΟΟΥ ΝΗΥ ·
ΖΕΝ-ΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ΟΝ ΝΕ ΝΕΤΝΗΥ ΕΜΜΑ ΝΩΠΝΕ ΜΝ-ΝΕΤΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟΟΥ
ΠΕΤΟΥΩΩ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΕΕΠΕΤΕΙΜΑ ΝΑΥ ΕΤΒΕ-ΤΕΥΜΝΤΖΑΖ ΝΩΑΧΕ ΧΕ
CΕΧΩ ΝΝΕΤΕΝCΕΩΟΟΠ ΔΝ ΖΜ-ΠΕΥCΟΟΥΝ ΝΝΟΥΧ ΜΑΡΕΦΧΟΟC ΝΑΥ
ΝΤΕΙΖΕ ΧΕ

‘Supposing there is someone wishing to ask a pagan or a heretic some matter (20.2), he should ask this insignificant creature over there (16.5), whose nature (literally ‘who his nature’) is moving his head down, indeed away from the sky (13.4) – who the children ask (15.2), laughing or joking (11.8), “Is the water coming (14.4)?” In this fashion, also, are the ones who go to oracles (literally ‘the places of asking’) and the ones who resemble them (7.5). Therefore, the one wishing also to chastise them (20.2) about their excess of speaking (5.1) because they are saying the things that are not true (16.2) in their false thinking (17.2), he should talk to them like this:

ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΧΝΟΥ ΝΝΕΚΡΟΥΡ ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΜΟΟΥ ΧΕ ΕΝΕ ΟΗΗΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤΕ
ΩΑΥΧΕ-ΠΑΙ ΝCΙ-ΝΕΤΧΙΝΖΡΑΥ ΕΒΟΛΧΕ CΕΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΝΕΚΡΩΟΥ
ΝΗΜΑ ΝΖΑΑΤΕ ΝΗΜΟΟΥ · ΕΡΕ-ΤΕΙΖΕ Ρ-ΟΥ ΕΤΡΕ-ΝΖΗΠΕΡΗΤΗC
ΗΠΛΟΓΟC ΝΡΗΜΑΟ ΕΠΕΤΕΙΜΑ ΝΗΤΗ ΝCΕΧΟΟC ΧΕ ΕΙΕ ΝΕΤΝΑΥ ΕΒΟΛ
ΝΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-ΝΒΛΛΕΕΥΕ ΕΝΕΖΙΟΟΥΕ Η ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΠΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-ΠΚΑΚΕ
ΕΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ Η ΝΡΩΜΕ ΝΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-ΖΕΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΖΕΝΜΗCΤΥΡΙΟΝ
ΜΝ-ΖΕΝΠΕΘΗΠ ΝΤΕ-ΠΝΟΥΤΕ

‘Who is the one who is going to ask the frogs about the water, whether it is coming, in the way that those who joke say this because they (frogs) are calling out on the banks of the flowing places of the waters? What does this way do (14.4)? To make the servants of the rich Word chastise you (20.3) and say (17.3), “Then, those who see clearly are the ones who are going to ask the blind for the paths? Or the light is what is going to ask the dark for the light? Or people are the

ones who are going to ask animals about mysteries (19.3) and secrets of God (2.3)?”

ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΑΙ ΔΤΕΙCΜΗ ΜΙΜΕ ΤΝΤΝΤΗΥΤΝ ΕΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ ΝΔΤΕΙΜΕ
ΔΤΕΤΝΩΩΠΕ ΕΤΕΤΝΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤΟΥΧΩ ΜΜΟC ΔΕ ΠΡΩΜΕ
ΕΦΖΝΟΥΤΑΙΟ ΜΠΕΦΕΙΜΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΔΥΝΟΧΩ ΜΝΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ ΝΔΤΕΙΜΕ
ΔΦΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟΟΥ · Η ΟΥΜΟΙΖΕ ΝΝΔΡΗΤΝ ΠΕ ΔΕ ΝΕΤΦΟΡΕΙ ΜΠCΟΟΥΝ
ΜΙΜΕ ΖΝ-ΝΕΥCΠΟΤΟΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤCΗΖ CΩΒΕ ΝCΩΤΝ ΝΘΕ ΟΝ ΕΤΟΥΜΟΚΖ
ΝΖΗΤ ΕΧΩΤΝ ΔΕ ΝΔΔΙΜΩΝ CΩΒΕ ΝCΩΤΝ ΝΤΕΤΝCΟΟΥΝ ΔΝ ΕΒΟΛΔΕ
ΔΤΕΤΝΡΔΘΗΤ

‘Because of this, this true voice likens you (ΤΝΤΝ-ΤΗΥΤΝ) to the witless animals. You have become the same as them (literally ‘when you resemble them’ (15.3)) in the way it is said (19.7), “The man who is with honour and does not know himself, he has been flung with the witless animals (19.7), and resembled them.”* Or it is a surprise before you (4.1) that those who bear the true knowledge on their lips, in the way that it is written (19.3), are laughing at you (7.1); and in the same way also that they are burning within over you, because the demons are laughing at you and you do not know (16.2), because you have acted in ignorance (9.6).’

*A reference from the Bible (Psalm 49).

To conclude his sermon, the Abbot argues that the church is the most effective road toward true faith for all people, and specifically for the monk:

ΟΥΖΙΗ ΤΕ ΕCΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΙΟΥΖΙΗ ΕΒΟΛΔΕ ΟΥΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗ ΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ ΤΕ
ΕCΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΙΤΕΖΙΗ ΜΙΜΕ ΜΠΧΟΕΙC ΔΥΩ ΕΟΥΝ-ΖΕΝΜΗΗΩΕ ΝΑΒΩΚ
ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΩΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤC · ΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΕCΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ
ΝΤΑΦΕΙ ΕΠΚΟCΜΟC ΠΧΟΕΙC ΙC ΕΟΥΝ-ΖΔΖ ΔΕ ΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΕCΟΥΟΕΙΝ
ΚΑΤΑ-ΘΕ ΕΤCΗΖ ΔΕ ΝΤΩΤΝ ΠΕ ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΜΠΚΟCΜΟC · ΟΥΡΕΥΤΕΖΜ-
ΡΩΜΕ ΤΕ ΕΤΡΕΥΜΟΟΥΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΠΜΠΩΔ ΜΠΧΟΕΙC

‘She is a road walking on a road (13.5) because she is a catholic church (3.3) walking on the true road of the Lord (15.2). Accordingly, many people (3.5) are going to go into life by it (19.8). She is a light walking in the light that has come to the world (15.1), the Lord Jesus, while many, therefore, are walking in her light just as it is written (15.4), “You are the light of the world.” She is a people-summoner (5.1) to make them walk according to the Lord’s value (20.3).

ΝΤΟC ΖΩΩC ΟΝ ΝΤΑΥΤΑΖΜΕC ΕΠΑΙ ΕΤΡΕCΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΜΠΩΔ
ΜΠΤΩΖΜ ΝΤΑΥΤΑΖΜΕC ΝΖΗΤΩ ΖΝΘΒΒΙΟ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΜΝΤΡΜΡΑΩ

ΜΝΟΥΜΝΤΖΑΡΩΖΗΤ · ΟΥΘΥΣΙΑ ΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΠΕΝΤΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΙΛΕ
 ΜΝΟϢ ΝΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΟΥCΟΠ ΕΤΡΕΥΠΑΡΖΙCΤΑ ΜΝΕΥCΩΜΑ ΝΟΥΘΥCΙΑ
 ΕCΟΝΖ ΕCΟΥΑΑΒ ΕCΡΑΝΑϢ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ · ΟΥΜΝΤΕΡΟ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΤΕ
 ΜΝΟΥΜΝΤΟΥΗΝΒ ΟΥΖΕΘΝΟC ΕCΟΥΑΑΒ ΤΕ ΟΥΛΑΟC ΕΠΩΝΖ ΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-
 ΠΕΤCΗΖ ΟΥΩΔΕΝΕΖ ΤΕ ΕCΩΟΟΠ ΜΝΠΕΙΩΤ ΜΝΠΩΗΡΕ ΜΝΠΕΠΝΑ
 ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ

‘Indeed, she also, she has been summoned (ΝΤ-Α-Υ-ΤΑΖΜ-Ĉ) to this (19.7), to make her walk in the value of the calling in which she has been summoned (15.2), in all humility and courtesy and tolerance (5.1). She is a sacrifice, according to what the apostle declared to everyone together, to make them offer their bodies for a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (15.3). Therefore, she is a kingdom and a priesthood (5.1). She is a holy nation. She is a people for living according to what is written (19.3). She is an eternity living with Father, Son and Holy Spirit (19.2).

ΑΥΩ ΠΕCΟΝ ΕϢΩΟΟΠ ΝΑC ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΝΙΜ ΑΥΩ ΝΤΟC ΕCΩΟΟΠ
 ΝΑϢ ΩΔΕΝΕΖ ΝΕΝΕΖ · ΖΙΤΝ-ΖΕΝΠΑΡΑΒΟΛΗ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ-ΝΕΓΡΑΦΗ
 ΠCΟΝ ΝΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC Η ΤΩΕΛΕΕΤ Η ΤCΩΝΕ ΕΤΝΜΑΥ ΠΕ ΠΕΧC ΟΥCΟΝ
 ΠΕ ΟΥΝΥΜΦΙΟC ΠΕ ΟΥΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΠΕ ΟΥΩΗΡ ΠΕ ΟΥΩΗΡΕΩΗΜ ΠΕ
 ΑΥΩ ΟΥΧΟΕΙC ΠΕ ΟΥΕCΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΩΩC ΠΕ ΟΥΘΥCΙΑ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ
 ΟΥΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥC ΠΕ ΟΥΒΩ ΝΕΛΟΟΛΕ ΠΕ ΟΥΤΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΟΥΖΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ
 ΟΥΡΗ ΠΕ ΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΖΙΕΙΒ ΠΕ ΟΥΖΑΕ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΩΟΡΠ ΠΕ ΟΥΛΟΓΟC
 ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΩΡΠΝΜΙCΕ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΕ ΕΤΝΑΚΡΙΝΕ ΜΤΗΡῘ
 ΝῘΚΡΙΝΕ ΜΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ ΚΑΤΑ-ΝΕϢΖΒΗΥΕ · ΠΚΕCΕΕΠΕ ΔΕ ΜΜΝΤΜΝΤΡΕ
 ΝΝΕΙΩΔΑΧΕ ΕΙCΖΗΗΤΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ CΕCΗΖ ΖΝΝΕΓΡΑΦΗ ΑΥΩ ΠΕΤΩΩ
 ΕΤΝΟΕΙ ῘΝΑCΟΥΩΝΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ

‘Moreover, the brother lives for her at every moment, and she too lives for him for ever and ever. Therefore, through parables also (19.8), according to the Scriptures, Christ is the brother of the maiden or the bride or that sister (13.4). He is brother, he is bridegroom, he is maiden, he is friend, he is infant, and he is lord. He is sheep and he is shepherd. He is sacrifice and he is high priest. He is vine, he is hill, he is daytime and he is sun. He is sword and he is lamb (1.3). He is end and he is first. He is word and he is first-born and he is God, who is going to judge all (16.1), and judge (17.3) each one (16.5) according to his acts (2.2). Therefore, the rest of the evidence of these sayings too (2.4), all, they are written in the Scriptures (7.3). Accordingly, the reader who reflects, he is going to know them all (Ῐ-ΝΑ-CΟΥΩΝ-ΟΥ).’

This conclusion to Shenoute's sermon is followed by a list of contents for the whole volume, in which each sermon or discourse is identified using a key phrase from the text. Of course, the present sermon was at the end of the volume, so it is the last one listed, under the title 'When I myself was sitting on a hill' (see [page 268](#)):

ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ Ε

†Ṗ-ΜΟΙΞΕ

ΠΕΠΝΑ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ

ḲNEQWḲḲ ḲOYOEIW NIM ḲSIOYHHB

EPΦAN-ΠΛΟΓOC ΔW ḲNETHP ETETPROΦHTIA

EIZMOOC ΔNOK ZIXḲOYTOOY

5 Letters (12.1)

I Am Surprised (9.6)

The Spirit of God

Priest Shall Not Perish at Any Time (16.4)

If the Word Speaks What is Reckoned to This Prophecy (18.2)

When I Myself Was Sitting on a Hill

After the list of contents, there is a colophon – in other words, a statement by the very person who copied the volume out for the White Monastery library:

Φ† ΔQXWK EBOL ḲSI-ΠMEZ†OY ḲLOGOC ḲΠENEIOWT EP-E-NEQCMOY
ETOYΔAB NAWOΠE NḲMAN THPḲ ZIOYCOΠ ZAMHN

ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΔWOME ΔYW ΠNOC ḲKAIΦAΛAION ḲTAQCZḲ
ḲSI-ΠENMAINOYTE ḲCON ΔYW ΠENEIOWT ΠΠAΠA KOΛΘE ΔYW
ΠAPXHMANΔPITHC ḲΠMONACTHPION ḲΠENEIOWT ḲΠPOΦHTHC
ΔΠA ΘENOYTE ḲΘENHTE ḲCIOYT ETPEQWY ḲZHNTḲ MḲNEQWHP

Μ̄ΝΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΟΥΣΟΠ ΕΥΖΗΥ Μ̄ΝΟΥΣΟΛΣ̄ Ν̄ΝΕΤΩΩ ΔΥΩ ΕΤΣΩΤ̄Μ̄
 Μ̄ΝΟΥΟΥΧΑΙ Ν̄ΤΕΥΥΧΗ ΧΕΚΑΣ ΕΡΕ-ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΡΟΥΝΑ Ν̄ΜΑΥ
 Μ̄ΠΕΖΟΥ Μ̄ΠΕΥΘ̄ΜΠΩΙΝΕ ΖΑΜΗΝ ΕΥΕΩΩΠΕ

ΔΡΙΠΑΜΕΕΥΕ ΖΩ Ν̄ΑΓΑΠΗ Ν̄ΤΕΤ̄ΝΩΛΗΛ ΖΑΡΟΙ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕΙΡΕῩΡ̄ΝΟΒΕ
 Ν̄ΒΙΗΝ

O God,* the fifth lesson of our father has finished – its holy blessings are going to happen with us all together. Amen (16.1).

This is the book and the great compendium our pious brother and our father, the cleric Kolthe – also the Archimandrite of the Monastery of Our Prophetic Father (3.2), Apa Shenoute of the Monastery of Asyut – wrote (15.2) in order to let him read from it (20.3) with his brothers and everyone together, for benefit (Ε-ΟΥ-ΖΗΥ) and consolation to those who read and who hear, and wellbeing for his soul, so that the Lord is going to be merciful with him on the day of visiting him (17.2). Amen, it shall happen (16.4).

Remember me too (17.2), please, and pray on my behalf (17.3). I am this wretched sinner.

* Φ̄Τ̄ is the standard abbreviation of ΠΝΟΥΤΕ according to the spelling conventions of the Bohairic dialect, doubtless because this book was copied – and the colophon written – later than the era when Sahidic was the pre-eminent Coptic dialect (see page 7).

CHAPTER 4 NOTABLE FIGURES AT JEME

Letters from Frange and Tsie

Though born in Medamud, Frange lived his adult life into the early 700s on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes (6.5). There, along with his disciple Moses, he wove linen, made ropes and shoes, and bound books. From the nineteenth century, various museums collected dozens of ostraca he wrote, until the great pioneering scholar of Coptic, Walter Ewing Crum (1865–1944), labelled him irrepressible – so often did he encounter Frange among his sources. More recently, a research group from the Free University of Brussels (ULB) discovered Frange’s workspace in the courtyard of an ancient tomb, originally built for a vizir of Thebes in the reign of Amenhotep II (c. 1426–1400 BC). This working area yielded more than 800 new documents – some 600 certainly written by Frange, while another 76 are addressed to him by his sister, Tsie. Accordingly, his personal archive has become an exceptional source of information about urban life in Late Antique Egypt, and the man himself may be seen not only as a prodigious Coptic writer but also one of obvious style and literacy. The mere existence of his archive suggests that our understanding of the culture of books and writing in Late Antique Egypt has been skewed somewhat by our initial reliance on monastic libraries for the survival of Sahidic Coptic at all.

Here are a couple of Frange’s prayers on the two sides of an ostrakon, purchased in the mid-nineteenth century at Thebes. They seem anodyne and unremarkable at first glance. However, the balanced layout includes, on each side: (a) an address to Christ written over three lines; with (b) complementary future tenses; invoking both (c) the monastery and (d) a blessing by reference to the Bible; and (e) a first-person conclusion. On one side, a graphic flourish decorates the Biblical name ‘Jacob’ and frames Frange’s signature. On the other side, Frange’s writing fills the flat surface of the stone but, at the conclusion, as the stone begins to fall away, he has added $\overline{\text{IC}}\overline{\text{PE}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{C}}$ within a dotted frame, and a final religious flourish. There are many such examples of his aptitude for laying out text with thoughtful word choices and attention to form, including both its graphic presentation and its relationship to the surface of the ostrakon:

$\overline{\text{IC}}\overline{\text{PE}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{C}}$ $\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}$ $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}$ $\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{Z}}$ $\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Z}}$ $\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{E}}$
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}$ $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\text{--}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{E}}$ $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}$ $\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}$ $\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}$
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}$ $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{K}}$ $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{:K}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{:B}}\overline{\text{:}}$ $\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{G}}\overline{\text{E}}$ $\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{I}}$ $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{S}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{X}}$



Figure 27 The tomb of Amenemopet, vizir of Egypt and governor of Thebes, where Frange lived and worked during his adult life. Thebes, late fifteenth century BC. *Source:* author.

Jesus Christ, the son of the living God, you shall protect the men of the monastery and the animals (16.4), and bless them in the blessing of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (17.3). Frange, writing his (own) hand.

ⲡ ⲓϥⲉⲭϥ ⲡⲱⲙⲣⲉ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲛⲓ ⲉⲕⲛⲁϥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲗⲉⲛⲉⲧⲉ
ⲗⲛⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲓⲕⲙⲉⲗ ⲗⲛⲧⲉⲓⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ
ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ:ⲓϥⲓⲉⲭϥ: ⲭⲙⲓⲧⲓⲕⲟ

Jesus Christ, the son of the living God, you are going to bless the monastery in every blessing written in Scripture (16.4). Give us charity, O Lord, Jesus Christ.¹⁰

At the end the group ⲭⲙⲓⲧⲓⲕⲟ is a cryptic Christian reference. The letters ⲭ ⲙ ⲓ are the initials of the Greek phrase *χριστὸν μαρία γεννᾷ* ‘Mary bore Christ’. The final two letters exemplify a word game known as isopsephy (‘equal counting’), relying on the use of letters as numerals (12.1). First, we treat the letters as numerals, so ⲕ is ‘90’ and ⲟ is ‘9’. Then, we equate the number to an actual word whose letters also ‘total’ 99, such as *ΔΗΗΝ* (Δ + Η + Η + Ν = 1 + 40 + 8 + 50 = 99). Finally, we arrive at the statement ‘Mary bore Christ + Amen’.

Now, a letter discovered at Deyr al-Bahari had originally been sent by Frange to his (actual?) brother David. Notice the idiom used to address people *κατὰ-νεῦραν* ‘according to their names’, which means ‘each one individually’ (compare the form of this idiom to that on [page 313](#)).

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϣⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲕⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲕⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲕⲥⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲱⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲏⲛⲁⲡⲉⲓⲕⲏ
ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲛⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ ⲗⲛⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

ⲡ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ ⲛⲓⲧⲓ ⲡⲣⲟⲟⲩⲱ ⲛⲥⲛⲁⲗ ⲛⲧⲃⲧ ⲛⲓⲧⲁⲃⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲧⲓⲧⲟⲩ
ⲛⲓⲉⲓ ⲛⲓⲧⲓ ⲙⲱⲩⲕⲏⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲓⲱⲱⲛⲉ ⲟⲩ

I am Frange, writing and greeting his brother David and all those of his house (ⲛⲁ-ⲡⲉⲓⲕ-ⲏⲓ) (13.3), each one individually. Hello (4.3).

10. Texts adapted from A. Boud’Hors and C. Heurtel: *Les ostraca Coptes de la TT 29 autour du moine Frangé. 1, Textes*. Brussels, CReA-Patrimoine (2010).

Please take the responsibility for two fishes, bake them (N-Γ-
 ΓΑΘ-ΟΥ), take them, and come and visit Moses because (ΧΕ)
 he is sick (7.1).

The final group $\overline{\Theta\Upsilon}$ is formed from the initials of the Greek phrase θεοῦ
 υἱός ‘son of God’.

From Deyr al-Bahari too, the next letter appears on the reverse of the
 address given in [Section 8.5](#). Notice, here, how Frange uses ΦΡΑΝΓΑΣ
 ‘Phrangas’ – a fancy ‘Greek’ form of his name to suit the formality of the
 subject matter (19.9):

ⲡ ρⲁⲑⲏ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲙⲡⲁⲩⲁⲭⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲭ/ ⲛⲥⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲡⲣⲟⲥⲕⲩⲛⲉⲓ
 ⲛⲧⲉⲕⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉⲩⲱⲙⲱⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲉⲓⲛⲩⲭ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲥⲙⲟⲧ ⲛⲓⲙ
 ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩ ρ̅ⲙ-ⲡⲉⲭ̅ⲥ ⲓⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

ⲭⲁⲓⲣⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲓⲁⲓⲡⲏ ⲛⲓⲥⲣⲁⲓ ⲡⲉⲕⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲥ
 ⲉⲓⲱⲁⲛⲣ̅ⲡⲉⲕⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲓⲉⲙⲱⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲣⲁⲩⲉ

ⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲙⲡⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩ ⲁⲓⲡⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲣⲉⲥⲃ/ ρⲓⲧ̅ⲛ
 ⲡⲉⲩⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲭ/ ΦΡΑΝΓΑΣ

Before even my least (ελαχιστος) speaking (7.3), I am writing
 and greeting your esteemed worshipfulness (5.1) according to
 every good example from Christ Jesus, our Lord (10.4).

Hello. Please write your health to me so that, if I remember you
 (17.2), I shall fill up out of joy (20.2).

Give it to the good holy father, Father Peter, the priest, from his
 least son, Phrangas.

Likewise, this is the letter that appears on the reverse of the address
 given at the end of 10.6. The ostrakon was found in the ancient temple
 of king Ramesses II (c. 1279–1212 BC) – a magnificent ruin today, gen-
 erally known as the Ramesseum:

ⲡ ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲡⲉⲥ̅ⲛⲧⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲣ̅ⲓⲣⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ
 ⲉⲓⲡⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ ⲭⲉ ⲗⲟⲛⲃⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲱⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲭⲟⲛ

ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲣⲁⲡⲏ ⲛⲧⲉ-ⲡⲓⲁⲛⲧ ⲛⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟϥⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟϥⲛⲓⲙ
ⲉⲣⲟϥⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲓⲁⲣⲁⲡⲏ

My brother, Pesunte, as God is giving a boy to you (ⲉ-ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ for ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ (15.4)), call his name Lonkine (4.3). O, all holy ones, pray for us, please, that the compassion of God allow the way to us in every good business towards charity (17.3).

The final letter here from Frange was found at his workspace in the ancient tomb. Notice, here, how he uses the standard Coptic form of his name in the welcome address but signs off using the fancy form. For the name of the recipient ⲉⲗⲗⲟ ‘Phello’, see 7.6:

ⲟⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲭⲟⲩⲉ ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲗⲁⲭ/ ⲉⲓⲥⲉⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲟⲓⲛⲉ
ⲉⲛⲉⲓⲙⲉⲣⲁⲧⲉ ⲛⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲛⲓⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲉⲓⲛⲩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲥⲓⲟⲧ ⲛⲓⲙ
ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟϥⲛ ⲉⲛⲓⲡⲭⲟⲩⲉ

ⲭⲁⲓⲣⲉⲧⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲓⲁⲣⲁⲡⲏ ⲉⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲓⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲟⲧⲛ̅ ⲉⲓⲛⲓⲡ ⲉⲭⲏⲙⲉ
ⲟⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲧ̅ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲛⲉ ⲟϥⲛⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲛⲉⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ̅ⲭⲏⲙⲉ
ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲭⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲟⲩⲡ ⲟϥⲕⲟϥⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲟⲛ̅ⲧ̅ ⲉⲛ̅ⲡⲟⲩⲁ

ⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛ̅ⲡⲁⲓⲟⲧ ⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲛ̅ⲛⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲉⲓⲧⲛ̅ ⲡⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ
ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲗⲁⲭ/ ⲟⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲭⲟⲩⲉ

Pray for me. I am Frange, this least, writing and greeting his beloved, pious brothers, who are esteemed according to every good example from the Lord.

Hello. Please, when someone passes by you (ⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ for ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ (15.4)) who seems to be from Jeme (literally ‘who is reckoned to Jeme’ (19.3)), ask from him whether there is someone selling oil in Jeme (14.4), that I may send and get a little and (or?) find it in the festival (17.3).

Give it to my father Phello (7.6) and my brother Peter from Phrangas, this least. Pray for me.

Among the hundreds of other letters discovered in Frange’s working area, here are three not written by him but sent to him by his sister. Notice how she regularly writes his name in the form ⲡⲣⲁⲓⲉ:

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲓⲁⲧⲱⲁϥ ⲛⲣⲉϥⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲥⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ
 ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ ϥⲣⲁⲓⲧⲉ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲕⲁⲡⲓⲏ ⲱⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲭⲱⲓ ⲗ̅ⲛⲥⲓ ⲉⲗⲣⲁⲓ
 ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲕⲥⲓⲭ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ⲟϥⲭⲁⲓ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

I am this worthless sinner Tsie, writing and greeting my beloved brother Frange in the Lord. Please, pray for me in lifting up your holy hands (17.1). Farewell.

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲓⲁⲧⲱⲁϥ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲥⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ
 ϥⲣⲁⲓⲧⲉ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲁⲗⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲣ̅
 ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲕⲁⲡⲓⲏ ⲱⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲭⲱⲓ ⲗ̅ⲛⲥⲓ ⲉⲗⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲕⲥⲓⲭ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ
 ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ-ⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲟϥⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲣⲱ ⲉⲓⲥⲟⲣⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲉ
 ⲛ̅ⲟϥⲉⲥⲟⲟϥ ⲉⲥⲥⲟⲣⲙⲉ

ⲉⲓⲥ ⲙⲏⲧ ⲛ̅ⲃⲱⲗⲗⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲥⲛⲁϥ ⲗ̅ⲁⲗⲱⲙ ⲥ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ ⲟϥⲭⲁⲓ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

I am this worthless Tsie, writing and greeting my beloved brother Frange in the Lord. I am greeting you greatly from my whole heart. Please, pray for me in lifting up your holy hands that the Lord make mercy for us (17.3). Truly, myself, indeed (7.3), I am lost in the way a sheep is lost (15.3).

Ten flat breads and two cheeses are attached (7.1). Farewell.

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲥⲟⲓⲥ̅ ⲙ̅ⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲥ
 ⲉⲕⲉⲣⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ ⲗ̅ⲛⲥⲓ ⲉⲗⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲕⲥⲓⲭ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲣⲱ ⲁⲓⲧⲣⲉ
 ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲧⲱⲧ ⲓⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̅ⲓⲡⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲕⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲡⲣⲟⲟϥ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉϥⲱⲏ
 ⲟϥⲭⲁⲓ ⲗ̅ⲛⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

I am Tsie, asking my beloved brother in the Lord so that you will remember me in lifting up your holy hands (20.2). Myself, indeed, I have made my brother approve (20.3). I remember your sayings day and night (17.2). Farewell.

Two legal statements in favour of the lady, Coloje

Coloje was a contemporary of Frange at Thebes, as you see from the address of the following letter, found in the precinct of the ancient temple at Medinat Habu (see [Figure 28](#)):

ΔΝΟΚ ϣΡΑΝΓΕ ΠΕΡΕϣ̄ΡΝΟΒΕ ΕϣΣΖΔΪ ΕϣΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΕϣΜΕΡΙΤ
 Ν̄ΧΟΕΙC Ν̄CΟΝ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥϣ ΔΠΑ ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC Μ̄Ν̄ΝCΩC
 †ΑΣΠΑΖΕ Μ̄ΜΟΚ Ν̄ΤΑΠΡΟ ΖΙΤΑΠΡΟ Ζ̄ΝΟΥΠΙ ΕCΟΥΑΔΒ Π̄ΧΟΕΙC
 Μ̄Ν̄ΠΕΚΠ̄ΝΑ Μ̄Ν̄ΝCΩC ΟΝ †ΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑCΩΝΕ Μ̄ΜΑΪΝΟΥΓΕ
 ΚΩΛΩΧΕ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΕCΩϣ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΑCΟΝ ΩΗΜ ΜΩΨ̄CΗC ΠΑΧΟΕΙC
 ΙCΠΕΧC ΕϣΕΧΟΟΥ ΠΤΑΛΛΩ ΝΑϣ Ν̄Μ̄ΤΟΝ Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΕϣΩΝΕ ΟΥΧΑΙ
 Μ̄Π̄ΧΟΕΙC

I am Frange, the sinner, writing and greeting his excellent beloved brotherly lord Apa Theodore. Next, I kiss you mouth on mouth in a holy kiss.* The Lord is with your spirit. Next, also I am greeting my pious sister Coloje, and Pegosh, and my humble brother Moses. My Lord Jesus Christ, he shall send healing to him that he may rest from his sickness (17.3). Farewell (Μ̄Π̄ΧΟΕΙC for Ζ̄Μ̄-Π̄ΧΟΕΙC).¹¹

*A phrase taken from the letters of Paul in the New Testament.

On the other hand, Coloje's circumstances were quite different to Frange's because she owned a large, multistorey house in a well-to-do neighbourhood. In 1929, an archive of 30 ostraca came to light in her cellar, which revealed that she had a career as a moneylender of consequence. Indeed, the same turns out to have been true of her paternal grandmother, Katharon, and subsequently her son, the very Pegosh named above. By contrast, her husband, Manasse, is essentially absent from the archive, though he is presumably named in the first document below as the relevant official.

Among the Byzantine legal terms used in these statements are such Greek words as CΤΥΧΕΪ 'assent', ΧΡΥΩCΤΙ 'owe (money)' and ΕΤΙΜΟC 'freely'. They appear in Coptic in the same way that modern English employs such Latin legal terms as habeas corpus and bona fide (3.1). Specialised indigenous words include crop measures, such as ΖΟ 'sack', ΔΡΤΟΒ or Ρ̄ΤΟΒ 'artab' (akin to a modern bushel) and the standard ΜΑΑΧΕ 'maaje' (about 1/12 of an artab). For the dates and dating formulas, see [Section 12.5](#):

11. Texts adapted from E. Stefanski and M. Lichtheim: *Coptic Ostraca from Medinet Habu*. Oriental Institute Publications LXXI. Chicago, University of Chicago (1952), nos 51 and 52.



Figure 28 Archive photograph of Coptic houses in the upmarket suburb of Jeme Castle, where the family of Coloje were prominent residents. Thebes, eighth century. *Source:* Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY NC-ND.

ΔΝΟΚ ΔΔΝΙΗΛ ΕΦCΖΑΪ ΝΚΟΛΩΧΕ ΕΦΧΡΥΩCΤΙ ΝΑC ΝΟΥΑΡΤΟΒ
ΝΒΝΙΝΕ Η ΟΥΖΟ ΝCΟΥΟ ΕΤΡΑΤΙΥ ΝΗ ΖΝΘΩΘ ΝΠΕΝΤΕΚΑΙΔΕΚΑΤΗ

ΔΝΟΚ ΔΔΝΙΗΛ †CΤΥΧΕΪ Ε†ΒΛΧΕ ΕΝΤΑΪCΖΑΪΤC̄ ΖΝCΟΥ ΧΟΥΤΑCΕ
ΝΕΠΕΠ ΝΑΖΡΝ-ΜΑΝΑCCH

I am Daniel, writing to Coloje owing to her (15.4) an artab of dates or a sack of wheat that I shall give it to you in Thouth of Fifteenth (20.3).

I am Daniel, I do assent to this ostracon (7.6) that I have written (ΝΤ-Α-Ι-CΖΑΪΤ-Ĉ (15.2)) on day twenty-six of Epipi before Manasse.

Not only was Coloje a moneylender, many of her clients were women too, as the next ostracon exemplifies (7.6). Here, too, we see

Coloje charging significant interest on a loan, which is quantified as a $\tau\rho\epsilon\mu\eta\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ ‘*tremissis*’ – a coin worth one third of the imperial standard $\rho\omicron\lambda\omicron\kappa\omicron\tau\tau\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma$ ‘*solidus*’ (4½ grams of twenty-four carat gold). Notice the non-standard spellings of a few common words and phrases, and also $\bar{\eta}$ written for $\nu\omicron\gamma\beta$ ‘gold, money’ in an itemised list:

ρ $\alpha\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\alpha\Delta\omega\rho\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\kappa\rho\gamma\varsigma\eta\epsilon$ $\epsilon\tau\varsigma\epsilon\alpha\bar{\imath}$ $\eta\alpha\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\chi\epsilon$ $\chi\bar{\imath}\bar{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ *
 $\bar{\eta}\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\omicron\nu$ $\tau\rho\bar{\imath}\chi\epsilon\mu\epsilon$ $\epsilon\iota\chi\rho\epsilon\omega\varsigma\tau\iota$ $\eta\alpha\varsigma$ $\bar{\eta}\nu\omicron\gamma\tau\rho\epsilon\mu\eta\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ $\bar{\eta}\nu\omicron\gamma\beta$
 $\bar{\eta}$ $\omicron\gamma\tau\rho\epsilon\mu\eta\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ $\alpha\gamma\omega$ $\pi\alpha\iota$ $\tau\epsilon\omega\eta\epsilon$ $\epsilon\tau\iota\mu\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\bar{\eta}\pi\omicron\gamma\omega\omega$ $\bar{\eta}\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon$
 $\epsilon\tau\rho\alpha\tau\alpha\alpha\upsilon$ $\eta\alpha\iota$ $\epsilon\bar{\eta}\pi\alpha\omega\eta\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\eta\alpha\epsilon\rho\bar{\eta}$ $\pi\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ $\bar{\eta}\pi\alpha\pi\eta\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon$
 $\pi\lambda\alpha\omega\alpha\eta\epsilon$ $\mu\bar{\eta}\omega\mu\omicron\gamma\eta\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\eta\alpha\chi\epsilon$ $\bar{\eta}\mu\eta\eta\epsilon$

$\alpha\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\alpha\Delta\omega\rho\epsilon$ $\dagger\varsigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon$ $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\beta\lambda\chi\epsilon$

*Understand χ , $\bar{\eta}$ as an abbreviation of $\tau\omega$ ($\epsilon\epsilon\rho\epsilon$) $\bar{\eta}$ ‘the d(aughter) of’, on the basis that χ , must have sounded much the same as $\tau\omega$.

I am Tadore, daughter of Krsune, who is writing to Coloje ($\eta\alpha$ for $\bar{\eta}$), the daughter of Phello, son of Katharon, the one from Jeme (5.1), as I owe to her a gold tremissis: Gold, a tremissis. Accordingly, this I swear ($\tau\epsilon$ - $\omega\eta\epsilon$ for \dagger - $\omega\eta\epsilon$) freely from the will of God that I will give it to you ($\eta\alpha\iota$ for $\eta\eta$) in Pauni before Paul, son of Papnoute, the magistrate, with eight *maaje* of interest.

I am Tadore, I do assent to the ostracon.

Three final lines on the ostracon listed witnesses to the oath, using the Byzantine legal phrase $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\gamma\rho\omega$ ‘I witness’. The actual names, however, are now too badly damaged to read.

CHAPTER 5 APOCRYPHA AND APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS

From The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach

The two words ‘apocrypha’ and ‘apocryphal’ obviously derive from a single Greek word, meaning ‘obscure matters’. In modern scholarship, however, they have come to denote two distinct categories of texts, both connected to the Bible but with different questions relating to their authenticity. In ordinary use, the title Apocrypha denotes a group of 15 religious books used by the Greek-speaking Jewish communities of Late Antique Egypt, though they were not subsequently adopted for the canonical Hebrew Masoretic text. They were accepted as authentic scripture by early Christian communities until they came into question in the late fourth century, when Jerome was translating the Bible into Latin using Greek and Hebrew manuscripts as his authorities. Subsequently, in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, the Apocrypha have been incorporated as a deuterocanonical (‘less reliable’) aspect of the Old Testament. In Protestant tradition, on the other hand, they are assembled together, rather than distributed through the Old Testament, and often omitted from the Bible altogether.

The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach, nicknamed Ecclesiasticus (the ‘church book’), is an illustrative example. It forms part of the Septuagint – the standard Greek translation of the Old Testament originally compiled in Egypt by order of Ptolemy II (284–246 BC). That said, Ben Sirach actually wrote his eponymous book (presumably in Hebrew) some decades later in Alexandria, and it was translated into Greek with a preface by his grandson, during the reign of Ptolemy VIII (nicknamed Euergetes) in the second century BC. A Hebrew version, dated no later than the first century AD, appears among the celebrated Dead Sea Scrolls from Israel. The Coptic text transcribed here is sampled from a magnificent but badly damaged papyrus codex, which probably dates to the late seventh century and came to the British Museum in the nineteenth century, via the Luxor-based collector, the Reverend Chauncey Murch. The chapter and verse numbers introducing each reading correspond to those of modern editions but, as with any book of the Bible, have no basis in the ancient manuscripts.

ⲉⲡⲱⲧ ⲙⲡⲁⲉⲱⲧ ⲓⲛⲥⲟⲩϥ ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲡⲱ ⲉⲡⲉⲣⲟⲩⲟ ⲙⲡⲓⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ
ⲙⲓⲛⲉⲡⲣⲟⲩⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲡⲕⲉⲱⲟⲭⲏ ⲉⲧⲉⲱⲱⲉ ⲛⲓⲗⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲉ

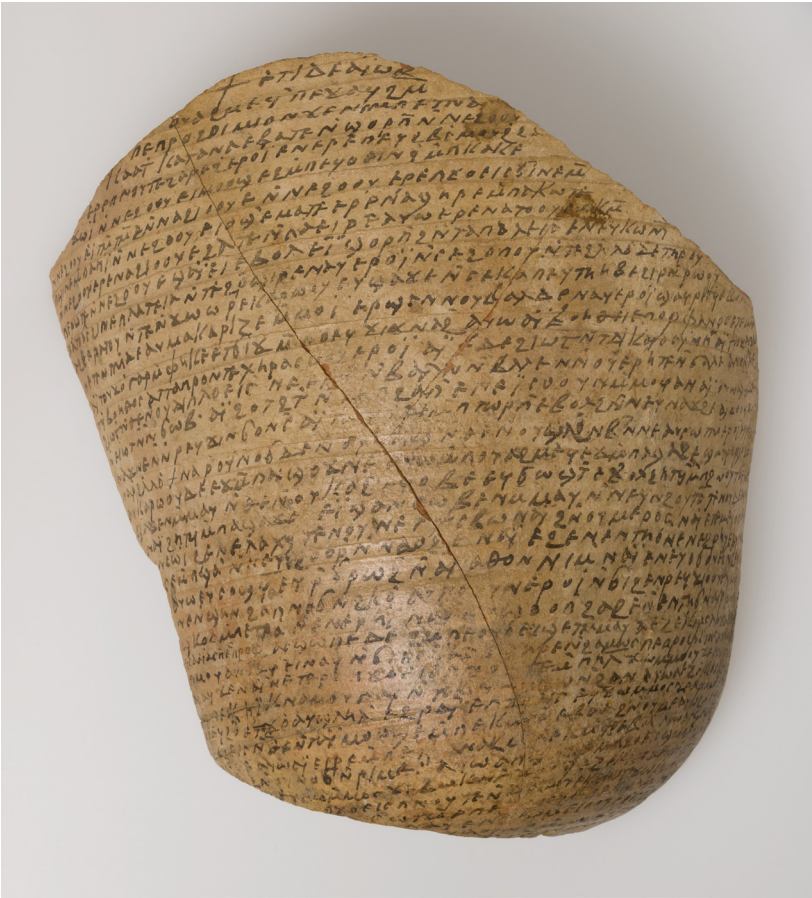


Figure 29 A potsherd (ostracon) with extracts from the Old Testament, written in Sahidic Coptic. Thebes, sixth to seventh century.

Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art 14.1.81 (Rogers Fund, 1914), shared under Creative Commons Licence CC0.

ⲁϣⲱ ⲁϣⲁⲡⲟ ⲛⲁϣ ⲛⲟϣⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲥ ⲉⲛ-ⲛⲁⲓ · ⲁⲥⲣ-ⲉⲧⲟⲣ ⲉⲱⲱϣ ⲉⲣⲟϥ
 ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲉⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲭⲓ ⲉⲣⲟϥⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲥⲃⲱ ⲙⲛⲧⲥⲟⲩⲁ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲥ ⲉⲣⲉ ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲥⲃⲱ
 ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲥⲉⲟϥⲱⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟϥ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲉⲓⲧⲛ̅-ⲛⲉⲣⲃⲛⲃⲉ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ·
 ⲉⲛ̅-ⲧⲙⲉⲣⲙⲁⲃⲱⲙⲛⲛⲉ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲛⲧⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲣⲣⲟ ⲛⲉϥⲉⲣⲉⲧⲛⲁⲓⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ
 ⲉⲕⲛⲙⲉ ⲁϣⲱ ⲉⲁⲓⲱⲥⲕ̅ ⲁⲓⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲥⲃⲱ ⲉϥⲧⲛ̅ⲧⲱⲛ ⲉⲛⲟϥⲛ̅· ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲧⲟⲣ
 ⲉⲱ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲓⲣⲉ ⲉⲱ ⲉⲛⲟϥⲥⲡⲟϥⲁⲛⲁ ⲙⲛⲟϥⲩⲟⲩⲟⲛⲓⲁ ⲉⲣⲉⲣⲙⲛⲉϥⲉ
 ⲙⲡⲉⲓⲱⲱⲙⲉ · ⲁⲓⲣ-ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲛⲟⲥ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲛⲟϥⲱⲛ ⲛⲣⲟⲓⲥ ⲉⲛⲟϥⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲣⲙ̅ⲛⲉⲛⲧ

ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲱⲁⲛⲓⲧⲧ-ⲙⲓⲡⲭⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲁⲁϥ ⲛⲛⲕⲟⲟⲩⲉ
 ⲉⲙⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉⲭⲓⲥⲃⲱ ⲉⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲉⲡⲉϥⲉⲛⲧ ⲉⲣⲉⲁⲕ
 ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲡⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ

To the father of my father, Jesus. He gave himself to reading (17.1) mostly the Law and the Prophets, and also to whatever else is appropriate (10.4) of the books of the ancestors (2.2). Moreover, he developed for himself great awareness in these things. For his part, it compelled him to write (20.3) things that take in teaching and wisdom, so that amenable people (5.1) will listen to them (20.2) and maintain them (17.3) especially through the acts of the Law. However, in the thirty-eighth year (12.4) of the reign of Euergetes (5.1), I came down to Egypt. Accordingly, when I had stayed (15.4), I found great teachings which seemed deep. I forced myself too (8.3) to make myself act (20.3) as well with diligence and effort to translate this book. Accordingly, I have spent many sleepless nights in consideration for a long time (5.1), until I put the book out (17.5) to give it to the others elsewhere (literally ‘in that place’) that wish to learn and who have put it in their hearts to be decent according to the Law (9.6).¹²

ⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲧⲙⲣⲥ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲓⲧⲙ-ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲙⲙⲁϥ ⲱⲁⲉⲛⲉⲣ ·
 ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲱⲉⲡ ⲡⲱⲱ ⲛⲟⲁⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ ⲙⲏⲧⲧⲗⲓⲧⲓⲉ ⲛⲫⲱⲟⲩ ⲙⲏⲛⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ·
 ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱⲉⲧⲉⲧⲧⲭⲓⲥ ⲛⲧⲡⲉ ⲙⲏⲡⲱⲱⲭⲥ ⲙⲡⲕⲁⲉ ⲙⲏⲱⲓⲕⲉ
 ⲙⲏⲡⲛⲟⲩⲛ ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ · ⲉⲁⲟⲛ ⲛⲏⲕⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲁⲩϥⲏⲧ ⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲃⲉ
 ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣⲙⲏⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲭⲓⲛ-ⲉⲛⲉⲣ · ⲧⲡⲛⲓⲛ ⲛⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲙⲏⲟⲩⲧⲉ
 ⲉⲛⲛⲉⲧⲭⲟⲥⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲩⲣⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲛ ⲛⲱⲁⲉⲛⲉⲣ · ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ
 ⲛⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲥⲱⲗⲡ ⲉⲛⲓⲙ

1.1 All wisdom is a thing from the Lord, and it stays with him forever (19.2). Who is the one who is going to be able to contain the sand of the sea (14.4), or the drop of the rain, or the days (20.6)? Who is the one who is going to be able to examine the height of the sky, or the breadth of the earth, or fathom the deep or wisdom? Before all things wisdom was created (19.7), and likewise knowledge and consideration are since eternity. God’s speaking in the heights (literally ‘the places which are high’) is the fount of wisdom, and likewise the eternal instructions are his paths (2.2). The root of wisdom, it has appeared to whom (14.4)?

ⲟⲩⲟⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲛⲧ ⲛⲥⲱⲃ ⲙⲏⲉⲛⲉⲓⲭ ⲉϥⲕⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩⲣⲉⲩⲣⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲉϥⲙⲟⲟⲱⲉ
 ⲉⲣⲓⲛ ⲥⲛⲁϥ · ⲟⲩⲟⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲛⲧ ⲛⲥⲱⲃ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲩⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉϥⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲛⲁⲓ

12. Text adapted from H. Thompson: *The Coptic (Sahidic) Version of Certain Books of the Old Testament from a Papyrus in the British Museum*. London, Oxford University Press (1908), pages 126–191.

ḿCENACKEPAZE ḿMOQ AN · OYOÏ NHTḿ NENTAYKA-TOOTOY EBOL
 Žḿ-TŽYPOMONH AȲW EPE-TḿNAṖ OȲ EPWAN-ΠXOEIC Θḿ-ΠETḿΩINE·
 NETṖZOTE ŽHTḿ ḿΠXOEIC MEȲṖ ATCWTḿ ENEQWAXE AȲW NETME
 ḿMOQ WAZAREŽ ENEQZIOOȲE · NETṖZOTE ŽHTḿ ḿΠXOEIC WAZΩINE
 ḿCA-ΠETEŽNAȲ AȲW NETME ḿMOQ WAZCI ḿΠEQNOMOC · NETṖZOTE
 ŽHTḿ ḿΠXOEIC WAZCOBTE ḿNEȲŽHT AȲW WAZΘḂBIO ḿNEȲȲXH
 ḿΠEQHTO EBOL

2.12 Woe to a timid heart and hands which are idle (literally ‘dropped’),
 and also to a sinner who walks two paths (2.6). Woe to a timid heart
 because it does not believe (16.2) – because of these things it is not
 going to be protected (19.7). Woe to you, the ones who have given up
 (literally ‘dropped their hands’) through desperation – and what are
 you going to do, if the Lord visits you (17.2)? Those who fear the Lord,
 they do not act heedless (5.1) to his words (14.2), and those who love
 him keep his paths. Those who fear the Lord, they seek what he wishes
 (13.8), and those who love him enjoy his law. Those who fear the Lord,
 they prepare their hearts and also humble their souls in his presence
 (13.9).

CWTḿ EPOÏ NAΩHPE EΠETḿIEWT ḿTETḿṖ-TEIŽE XE EPE-TḿΩNŽ
 ΠXOEIC AQTEOOȲ ḿOȲIEWT EXḿ-ḿΩHPE AȲW AQTAHXPE-ΦAΠ
 ḿTMAAY EXḿ-NECΩEERE PETTAÏO ḿΠEQIEWT QNAṖBOL ENEQNOBE
 AȲW PETTEOOȲ ḿTEQMAAY EQO ḿΘE

3.1 Listen to me, O children, to your father, and act this way so that you
 shall live (20.2). The Lord, he glorified a father above the sons, and also
 affirmed the mother’s right above her daughters. The one who honours
 his father, he is going to escape sin (9.6), and the one who glorifies his
 mother is made alike (19.4).

ḿṖṖḿΩE ḿḿOȲRWME ḿXΩWPE MHΠOTE ḿΓEI ETOOTḿ · ḿṖṖḿTΩN
 ḿḿOȲṖḿMAO MHΠOTE ḿQΩI-NOȲB EZPAÏ OȲBHK AΠNOȲB ΓAP
 TAKE-ZAŽ AȲW AQPIKE ḿΦHT ḿNEṖPWOȲ · ḿṖṖḿΩE ḿḿOȲRWME
 ḿXACTCMH AȲW ḿṖṖṖTAΛEΩE EZPAÏ EXḿ-ΠEQKWŽT · ḿṖṖCΩBE
 ḿḿOȲATCBW XE ḿNEȲCΩΩ ḿNEKEIOȲE · ḿṖṖḿOΘNEΘ ḿOȲRWME
 EAQCAŽWQ EBOL ḿṖḿNOBE APṖḿEEȲE XE Tḿ-ŽḿṖCAÏO THṖḿ ·
 ḿṖṖCEΩ-OȲRWME ŽḿTEQḿḿTŽXLO EȲṖŽXLO ΓAP ḿŽHTḿ · ḿṖṖṖAΩE
 EXḿOȲA EAQMOȲ APṖḿEEȲE XE TḿḿNA MOȲ THṖḿ · ḿṖṖOBΩK
 ḿWAXE ḿḿCOΦOC

8.1 Do not fight with a powerful person (14.1) in case you come into his
 hands (17.3). Do not quarrel with a rich person in case he weighs money
 toward you, because money has destroyed many and even twisted the

minds of the kings (5.3). Do not fight with a talkative person and so do not heap wood on his fire. Do not laugh at someone uneducated so that your parents do not get despised (20.2). Do not reproach a person who has (15.4) removed himself (11.8) from sin – remember that we are all in disgrace (7.2). Do not despise a person in his old age, after all they are growing old among us (14.3). Do not rejoice over someone who has died – remember that we are all going to die. Do not neglect (literally ‘forget you’) the sayings of the wise (17.1).

ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲧⲓ ⲙⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲓⲛⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲩⲱⲁⲭⲉ
ⲓⲛⲧⲉⲥⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲓⲛⲧ ⲡⲉⲧⲣ̄-ⲙⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲓⲙⲡⲉⲩⲛⲧ ⲁⲩⲱ
ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲕⲙⲉⲕ ⲓⲛⲛⲉⲥⲡⲉⲑⲛⲡ ⋅ ⲟⲩⲁⲓⲕ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲱⲥ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲣⲉⲩⲙⲱⲣⲟ̅ ⲛ̅ⲓⲛⲓⲣ̅ⲕ̅
ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲓⲛⲉⲥⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ

14.20 The person is blessed (10.4) who is going to die in wisdom, and also the one who is going to speak in consideration of it – the one who thinks about its ways in his heart and who also ponders from its secrets. Set yourself after it in the way of a hunter, and take heed of it on its paths (11.8).

ⲡⲉⲧⲣ̄ⲓⲱⲃ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲕⲁⲓ ⲕⲛⲁⲭⲓⲥⲉ ⲙⲡⲉⲩⲭⲁⲧⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲣⲉⲥⲕⲉ
ⲛ̅ⲓⲛⲛⲟⲥ ⲕⲛⲁⲣ̅ⲃⲟⲕ̅ ⲉⲭⲓⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲛ̅ⲥ̅ ⋅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲓⲟ ⲙⲏⲛ̅ⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲩⲁⲩⲧⲱⲙ
ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲃⲁⲕ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲩⲁⲩⲕⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲭⲡⲓⲟ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲩⲱⲧⲟⲃ
ⲉⲩⲓⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⋅ ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲉⲥⲓⲛⲡ ⲙⲏⲟⲩⲁⲓⲟ ⲉⲛ̅ⲩⲟⲩⲟⲛ̅ⲓ̅ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ̅ ⲁⲛ ⲟⲩ
ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲩⲛⲧ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲛⲡ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲥ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲟ
ⲉⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲛⲡ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲃⲉ

20.28 The one who works his land, he is going to raise his pile; and the one who appeases the great, he is going to escape harm (9.6). Honours and gifts, they close the eyes of the wise and, moreover, stave off the rebukes like a muzzle which is in a mouth (ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲓⲛ-ⲟⲩⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ). Wisdom which is hidden and treasure which is not apparent, what is their benefit – of either (literally ‘the two’)? A person is good who hides his stupidity rather than a person who hides his wisdom (9.6).

ⲙⲁⲣⲉ-ⲡⲁⲑⲛⲧ ⲭⲓⲥⲱ ⲟⲩⲛ-ⲟⲩⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲓⲛⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲩⲁⲥⲧⲁⲩⲉ-ⲡⲓⲕⲣⲓⲁ
⋅ ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲁⲩⲱⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲧⲁⲕⲕⲩⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲣⲉ-
ⲡⲉⲩⲩⲱⲭⲛⲉ ⲟ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲡⲓⲛⲓⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲱⲛ̅ⲓ̅ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲛ̅ⲥⲁ ⲛ̅ⲓⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲥ ⲟ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ
ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲓⲛⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱⲩ̅ ⲉⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲩⲱⲙⲁⲓⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⋅ ⲉⲣⲩⲱⲛ-
ⲟⲩⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲥⲉⲧⲙ̅-ⲟⲩⲩⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲓⲛⲧ ⲩⲁⲩⲧⲁⲓⲟⲩ ⲛ̅ⲩⲟⲩⲱⲓ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ
ⲩⲁⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲡⲁⲧⲁⲕⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲥⲟⲧⲙⲉⲩ ⲛ̅ⲩⲧⲙ̅ⲟⲩⲱⲓ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲩⲁⲩⲛⲟⲭ̅ⲩ̅
ⲓⲡⲁⲓⲟⲩ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲩ̅ ⋅ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲥ ⲟ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲉⲧⲡⲱ ⲓⲓⲟⲩⲓⲛ
ⲩⲁⲩⲓ̅ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲭⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥ ⲓⲛⲉⲥⲡⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲩⲁⲩⲩⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̅ⲥⲁ-ⲧⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ

ἡΟΥΣΑΒΕ ἡΝΟΥΜΗΝΩΕ ΔΥΩ ΠΑΥΜΕΚΜΟΥΚΟΥ ΕΝΕΦΩΔΧΕ ἡΠΠΕΥΖΗΤ
· ἡΘΕ ἡΟΥΗΙ ΕΥΤΑΚΗΥ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ἡΤΣΟΦΙΑ ἡἸΝΣΟΦ

21.12 The fatuous should learn (16.5), but there is a thoughtfulness which increases bitterness (15.4). The knowledge of a wise person is going to increase like a deluge, and indeed his counselling is like a life-giving spring (19.4), while the inside of a fool is like a jar which is broken and which will not be able to hold any knowledge (16.4). If a wise person hears a thoughtful saying (18.2), he praises it and adds to it. However, the one who squanders hears it and does not add to it (18.3), and even throws it behind him, while the speaking of a fool is like a burden on a road. However, grace is found on the lips of the wise person (19.7). The voice of a wise person is sought after in a crowd, and they ponder his words in their minds. Like a house which is ruined, this is the way of wisdom for the fools (13.6).

ΕΚΩΑΝΠΩΤ ἡΣΑ-ΤΜἡΤΜΕ ΚΝΑΤΑΖΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΚΝΑΤΑΑΣ ΖΙΩΩΚ ἡΘΕ
ἡΤΩἡΝΤΩ ἡΕΟΟΥ · ἡΘΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ἡΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΟΥΩΖ ΖΑΤἡ-ΝΕἡΝΕ ἡΜΟΟΥ
ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ΤΜΕ ΚΟΤḶ ΕΝΕΤΕΙΡΕ ἡΜΟΣ · ἡΘΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ΟΥΜΟΥἡ
ḶΩΡḶ ΕΥΠΑΖḶ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΤΕΡΕ ΠΝΟΒΕ ḶΟΡḶ ΕΝΕΤΕΙΡΕ ἡΠΧΙἡḶḶΟΝḶ

27.8 If you pursue righteousness, you are going to reach it and even going to put it on you like the glorious robe. Like when birds roost near the ones who resemble them (ΝΕΤ-ΕΙΝΕ ἡΜΟ-ΟΥ), this is the way when truth surrounds (11.8) those who do it. Like when a lion hunts for a bite (Ε-ΟΥ-ΠΑΖḶ), this is the way when sin hunts for the ones who do harm.

ΕΤΒΕ ΠΑἡ ΔἡΓΑΧΡΟ ΧΙΝ-ἡΩΟΡἡ ΕΔἡΜΕΚΜΟΥΚḶ ΔἡΚΑΔΥ ἡΝΟΥΣΖΑἡ
ΧΕ ΝΕΖΒΗΥΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ ἡΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΚΝΑἡ-ΧΡΙΑ ΝΙΜ
ἡἡΤΕΣΟΥΝΟΥ ΜΕΚΕΩΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΑἡ ΖΟΟΥ ΕΠΑἡ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ ΓΑΡ
ἡἡΠΕΥΟΥΟΕἡ · ΤΕΝΟΥ ḶΕ ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟἡ ἡἡΠΕΤἡΖΗΤ ΤΗΡḶ
ἡἡΤΕΤἡΤΑΠΡΟ ἡἡΤΕΤἡΣΜΟΥ ΕΠΡΑΝ ἡΠΧΟΕΙΣ

39.32 About this I have been firm from the first. When I had pondered myself (15.4), I left them (= the following words) in writing: All the acts of the Lord are good (10.4), and moreover he is going to supply every need in its hour. You cannot say that this one is evil more than this one (20.6) because they are good in their (own) time. Therefore, now bless him with all your hearts and your voices (5.3), and bless the name of the Lord (8.4).

ΔΥΣἡΤ ΟΥΝΟḶ ἡἡἡΤΑΤΣḶΒΕ ἡΡΩΜΕ ΝΙΜ ΔΥΩ ΟΥΝΑΖḶ ΕΥΖΟΡḶ
ΕΧἡἡἡΩΗΡΕ ἡΑΔΑΜ ΧΙΝ ΠΕΖΟΟΥ ἡΤΑΥΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ἡΖΗΤḶ ἡἡΤΕΥΜΑΔΥ
ΩΑΠΕΖΟΟΥ ἡἡΠΤΟΜΣΟΥ ΕΠΜΑ ἡΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΕ ΝΕΥΜΟΚΜΕΚ ΝΕ ἡἡΘΟΤΕ
ἡΠΕΥΖΗΤ ἡἡΕΕΥΕ ΕΤΟΥḶḶΩḶḶ ΕΒΟΛ-ΖΗΤΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΖΟΟΥ ἡΠΕΦΜΟΥ ·

ΔΙΝ-ΠΕΤΖΜΟΟC ΣΙΟΥΘΡΟΝΟC ΕΥΖΑΕΟΟΥ ΠΑΠΕΤΘΒΒΗΥ ΜΠΚΔΖ
 ΜΝΠΚΡΜΕC ΔΙΝ-ΠΕΤΧΟΡΙ ΝΟΥΖΥΑΚΙΝΘΙΝΟΝ ΜΝΟΥΚΛΟΜ ΠΑΠΕΤΕΡΕ
 ΟΥΒΑΒΙΤΩΝ ΣΙΩΩΥ ΠΩΩΝΤ ΜΝΠΚΩΖ ΜΝΠΕΩΤΟΡΤΡ ΜΝΠΚΙΜ ΔΥΩ
 ΘΟΤΕ ΜΠΜΟΥ ΜΝΠΝΟΥC̄ ΜΝΠΤ̄ΤΩΝ · ΔΥΩ ΖΝΤΕΥΝΟΥ ΜΠΕΜΤΟΝ
 ΖΠΕΥΜΑ ΝΝΚΟΤΚ ΠΑΡΕ ΦΙΝΗΒ ΜΝΤΕΥΩΗ ΠΙΒΕ ΜΠΕΥCΟΟΥΝ

40.1 Great toil (5.1) was created for every person (19.7). Indeed, a heavy yoke (15.3) is on the children of Adam (7.1) from the day which they came out of their mother's womb (5.2) to the day of burying them (17.1) in the place of everyone whose thoughts of the inevitable (literally 'thoughts which are anticipated') and whose days of death* are the considerations and the fears of their minds (13.4). From the one who sits on a throne which bears glory (literally 'which is beneath glory') to the one who is humbled in dust and ashes (19.3), from the one who wears purple and a crown to the one on whom there is a rough cloth (literally 'who a rough cloth is on him') (15.2) – anger and envy and trembling and disturbance and the fear of death and fury and quarrelling. Even in the hour of resting in their sleeping places, repose and the night muddle his awareness (13.1).

*Literally 'the day of his death' because the teaching refers to everyone but each day of death must be reckoned individually (5.3).

From The Biography of Joseph the Carpenter

In contrast to the Apocrypha as an established canon of books, the term apocryphal gospels covers various genres of books that have been excluded from canonical scripture because they evidently emulate or reimagine episodes from the Christian New Testament, and are not accepted by the churches as the authoritative witnesses to the life of Christ they purport to be (10.6). The Biography of Joseph the Carpenter (15.5), the father of Jesus, is an illustrative example: it begins with a typical apocryphal motif in which Jesus himself recounts his childhood, including the flight to Egypt, for the benefit of his disciples; this narrative then becomes entwined with an account of his father's death, during the course of which angels reveal profound truths to Joseph, while Jesus performs deeds that supposedly illustrate his divine nature. Complete texts of the pseudo-biography survive in Bohairic Coptic and Arabic, but for Sahidic Coptic there are only fragments from four manuscripts copied in the tenth and eleventh centuries, all of which were once in the library of the White Monastery. The extracts given here are mostly sampled from a fragmentary parchment codex in the Vatican Library.

ται τε ταναстроφн ἡπαμεριτ ἡειωτ ιωσнφ αqṗ-ζμε ἡρομπε
 ἡπατοϋχι-сζιμε ναq αϥω κεψιτε ἡρομπε αqααϥ ζἡпкoсmоc
 мн̄тєqсζиme αϥω ἡтєrєсmоϥ αqṗ-керомпе eqсєєт маγaaϥ ·
 αтаμεριτ ἡмаaϥ ṗ-кєсн̄тє ἡроμπε ζἡпєqнι χιν-ἡтаϥωἡттоот̄с
 ναq ἡсζиme εαϥζων ετοот̄q̄ ζит̄н̄-ἡоϥннв δε ζαρεζ ерoс ωα-
 ποϥοειω ἡтωεлєєт · ἡнеζооϥ δε тнροϥ ἡπαειωт ιωснφ
 παтн̄т̄ζλλо εтсмамаaт сєєиρε ἡωєм̄н̄тоϥει ἡроμπε ката-
 ποϥєζсаζне ἡπαειωт · απєζооϥ ἡпєqсḡ-пωиme ει ναq εтє соϥ
 зоϥтaсє пє ἡпєвoт єпнп

This is the life story (13.6) of my beloved father, Joseph. He spent forty
 years (9.6) before he got married (19.7). Then, another nine years (2.4)
 he spent in the world with his wife. Then, after she died (17.5), he spent
 another year remaining alone (19.2). My beloved mother spent another
 couple of years in his house (12.1), after she was promised to him as
 wife, when he was tasked by the priests (19.8), 'Look after her until the
 time of the wedding.' So, for all the days of my father, Joseph, he of the
 blessed old age (13.3), they make one (сє-ειρε) hundred and eleven
 years in accordance with the commanding of my father (17.1). The day
 of visiting him came to him (17.2), which is day twenty-six of the month
 of Epipi (12.5).¹³

*As Jesus's testimony moves to the end of Joseph's life, their whole family has
 gathered at the deathbed:*

αιμοϥтє єнєqωнре ειχω ἡмoс ναϥ δε тωоϥн̄ ἡтєт̄н̄ωaδε
 мн̄-пєт̄н̄ειωт εтсмамаaт δε пєоϥοειω ἡωaδε пє παι ἡπατε-
 ттапро εтωaδε εвол ζἡ-тсаṗз ἡєвиhн тωм · тoтє αϥтωоϥн̄
 ἡсӣн̄ωнре мн̄н̄ωєєре ἡπαμεριτ ἡиωт ειωснφ αϥει ωaпєϥειωт
 αϥζε ерoϥ eqкиnΔϥнєϥє єпмoϥ εαϥζων εζоϥн̄ єпωλḡ εвол
 ἡп̄виoс · αcoϥωωḡ ἡсӣ-λϥcia тєqнoс ἡωєєре єтє тcaḡχнсє тє
 пєχaс ἡнєсcннϥ δε oϥoi нaи нacннϥ παι пє пωωнє ἡтаqωωпє
 ἡтаμεριτ ἡмаaϥ αϥω ωa-тєнoϥ ἡпєнкoт̄н̄ єнаϥ ерoс · παι oн̄
 тєнoϥ пєт̄наωєєнє пєнєиωт єрoн єт̄н̄наϥ ерoϥ ωaєнєз · тoтє
 αϥϥи-зpaϥ εвол αϥριme ζиoϥcoп̄ ἡсӣн̄ωнре мн̄н̄ωєєре ἡπαειωт
 ειωснφ αϥω aнoк ζωωт oн̄ мн̄maṗia тамаaϥ ἡπαρθєнoс
 нєн̄ριme н̄н̄маϥ пє єнcoоϥн̄ δε αтєϥнoϥ ἡп̄мoϥ ει

13. Text adapted from G. Zoega: *Catalogus codicum Copticorum manu scriptorum qui in
 Museo Borgiano Velitris adservantur*. Rome, Typis Sacrae Congregationis de propaganda
 fide (1810), pages 225–227.

I called to his children, saying to them, ‘Get up and talk (17.3) with your blessed father because this is the time for speaking (13.6), before the mouth – which speaks from the wretched flesh – shuts (17.4). Accordingly, the sons and the daughters of my beloved father, Joseph, got up, came to their father, and found him liable to dying (15.4), having come close to concluding this lifetime (17.1). Lysia, his eldest daughter who is the dealer of purple-cloth (13.8),* spoke up and said, ‘Woe for me, my siblings. This is the sickness that happened to my beloved mother (15.1), and until now we have not seen her (literally ‘we have not returned to seeing her’) again (11.8). This is also now the one which is going to remove our father from us to not see him again forever (20.4).’ Accordingly, the sons and daughters of my beloved father Joseph cried out and wept together (literally ‘at one moment’). Then, as for me and also my virgin mother, we were weeping with them (20.1), when we recognised that the hour of dying had come (15.4).

*This is evidently a mistaken reference to a Christian convert mentioned in Acts of the Apostles 16:14/16:40.

The Sahidic Coptic text sometimes seems to be an awkward translation of the (presumably) Greek original. This is especially apparent in the following extract, in which Jesus recognises that the forces of darkness are also gathering around Joseph:

ΤΟΤΕ ΔΙΩΩΤΥ ΝΠСА ΝΠРНС ΝΠРО ΔΙΝΑΥ ΕΠΜΟΥ ΕΡΕ-ΔΗΝΤΕ ΟΥΗΖ
 ΝΣΩQ ΕΤΕ ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΕΤΟ-ΝΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΠΠΑΝΟΥΡΓΟΣ ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟΣ
 ΧΙΝ-ΤΕΖΟΥΕΙΤΕ ΕΡΕ-ΟΥΜΗΗΩΕ ΝΩΑΒΝΩΟ ΝΤΕΚΑΝΟΣ ΟΥΗΖ ΝΣΩQ
 ΕΥΧΙ-ΖΩΚ ΝΚΩΖΤ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΜΝ-ΗΠΕ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΕΡΕ-ΟΥΘΗΝ ΜΝ-ΟΥΚΑΠΝΟΣ
 ΝΚΩΖΤ ΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ-ΤΕΥΤΑΠΡΟ · ΑΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩΧΗΦ ΣΩΩΤ ΑΦΝΑΥ
 ΕΝΕΝΤΑΥΕΙ ΝΣΩQ ΕΥΟ-ΝΘΥΜΟΣ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΘΕ ΕΩΔΥΜΟΥΖ ΝΟΡΓΗ
 ΖΙ-ΣΩΝΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΥΥΧΗ ΝΙΜ ΝΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ-ΣΩΜΑ ΝΖΟΥΟ
 ΔΕ ΝΡΕQΡΝΟΒΕ ΕΩΩΠΕ ΕΥΩΑΝΘΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΜΑΕΙΝ ΕΠΩΟΥ ΠΕ ΝΖΗΤΩ

Then I looked to the south side of the door and saw Death; with West – who is his advisor (literally ‘who this is the one who is made advisor’ (19.4)) – set behind him (15.4); as well as the Trickster, the Devil since the beginning, with a host of demonic grotesques set behind him, bringing all fiery arms, with no number to them (16.3), and brimstone and fiery smoke coming from their mouths (19.5). My father, Joseph, looked and saw those who had come for him (ΝΕ-ΝΤ-Δ-Υ-ΕΙ ΝΣΩQ), raging greatly (19.4), as though they were packing wrath and anger (literally

‘the way when they pack wrath and anger’ (13.1)) toward every soul that is coming from the body, but especially the sinners, supposing they would find (18.2) an indication of where there is one of their own (literally ‘when there is theirs in it’ (13.7)).

ἡΤΕΡΕ-ΠΑΤΗἡΤΕῤῥΛΟ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥC ΝΑΥ ΕΝΕΝΤΑΥΕΙ ἡCΩQ
 ΑQΩΤΟΡΤῚ ἈΥΩ ΑΝΕQΒΑΛ ἡΡῖΕΙΗ ΕΡΕ-ΤΕΥΥΧΗ ἡΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΙΩCΗΦ
 ΟΥΩΩ ΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζἡ-ΟΥΝΟC ἡΖΒΑ ἈΥΩ ΕCΩΙΝΕ ἡCΑ-ΜΑ ἡΖΟΠῚ
 ἡΖΗΤῚ ἡΠΕCΖΕ-ΜΑ ἡCΩΩΠΕ ΔΕ ἡΤΕΡΕΙCΩ ἡΠΖΑΜΗΝ ΕΡΕ-ΜΑΡΙΑ
 ΤΑΜΕΡΙΤ ἡΜΑΔΥ ΟΥΩΩ ἡCΩΙ ἡΤΑCΠΕ ἡΝΑἡΠΗΥΕ ἈΥΩ ἡΤΕΥΝΟΥ
 ΕΙC ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΜἡΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΜἡΠΕΧΟΡΟC ἡἡΑΓΓΕΛΟC ΔΥΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖἡΤΠΕ
 ΔΥΕΙ ΔΥΑΖΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΕCἡ-ΠCΩΜΑ ἡΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΙΩCΗΦ ἡ

After he of the ripe old age (13.3) saw those who had come for him, he was afraid. Then his eyes gave tears, as my father, Joseph’s, soul wanted to come from such great distress (for ΟΥΩΩ Ε-ΕΙ (17.1)). Then, seeking a place to hide it in (his soul) (literally ‘place of hiding it in it’), it did not find a place (14.2). However, it happened, after I said the Amen, while Mary, my beloved mother, was responding after me in the tongue of those from the heavens (13.3), then suddenly Michael and Gabriel and the choir of angels came from the sky. They came and stood over the body of my father, Joseph.

In the next passage, Jesus commands Death, which is afraid of him, to fulfil his purpose but also to watch over the man who has acted as his earthly father:

ΠΜΟΥ ΔΕ ΖΩΩQ ἡΠΕ-ΘΟΤΕ ΚΑΔQ ἡΕΙ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕCἡ ΠCΩΜΑ ἡΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ
 ἡΙΩΤ ΙΩCΗΦ ἡQΠΟΡCῚ ΕΒΟΛCΕ ΕQCΩΩῤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕQΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΙ
 ΕΙΖΜΟΟC ΖΑΖῚ ΤΕQΑΠΕ ΕΙΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΕCἡ ΝΕQCΜΑΥ ἈΥΩ ἡΤΕΡΕΙΕΙΜΕ
 CΕ ΑQῚΖΟΤΕ ἡCΙΠΜΟΥ ἡΕΙ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΒΗΗΤ ΔΙΤΩΟΥἡ ΔΙΒΩΚ ΕΠCΑ
 ἡΒΟΛ ἡΠΜΑ ἡΠΡΟ ΔΙCἡῤῥ ΕQCΕΕΤ ΜΑΥΔΑQ ΖἡΟΥΝΟC ἡΖΟΤΕ

However, Death himself (8.3), fear did not let him come in at the body of my beloved father, Joseph, and he kept apart (11.8) because he was looking in and seeing me sitting beside his head, holding his temples (15.4). Accordingly, after I realised that Death was afraid of coming in because of me (4.2), I got up, went outside the doorway and found him remaining all alone in great fear (19.2).

ἈΥΩ ἡΤΕΥΝΟΥ ΠΕCΔΙ ΝΑQ CΕ Ω ΠΕΝΤΑQΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζἡ-ἡΤΟΠΟC
 ἡΠCΑ ἡΠΡΗC ΒΩΚ ΝΑΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΤΑΧΗ ἡΓCΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ἡΠΕΝΤΑΠΑΕΙΩΤ
 ΟΥΕΖCΑΖΝΕ ἡΜΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΑΛΛΑ ΡΟΕΙC ΕΡΟQ ἡΘΕ ἡΠΟYΟΕΙΝ ἡΝΕΚΒΑΛ CΕ
 ἡΤΟQ ΠΕ ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΚΑΤΑ-ΠCΑΡΖ ἈΥΩ ΔQΩῤῥΙCΕ ἡἡΜΑΙ ΖΕΝ-ΝΕΖΟΥY
 ἡΤΑἡῤῥΩΗΡΕΩΗΜ ΕQΠΗΤ ἡἡΜΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζἡ-ΟΥΜΑ ΕΥΜΑ ΕΤΒΕ

ΠΕΙΒΟΥΛΗ ΝΖΥΡΩΔΗΣ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΧΙΒΩ ΝΤΟΟΤῒ ΝΘΕ ΝΝΩΗΡΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ
ΕΩΔΡΕ-ΝΕΥΕΙΟΤΕ ΤΙΒΩ ΝΔΥ ΕΤΕΥΩΦΕΛΙΑ

So, immediately I said to him, ‘O, one who has come from the lands of the south side, go (ΒΩΚ ΝΔ-Κ) in quickly and carry out (17.3) what my father has commanded to you (ΠΕ-ΝΤ-Δ-ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΟΥΕΖCΑΖΝΕ ΜΜΟQ ΝΔ-Κ). Nevertheless, watch over him like the light of your eyes because he is my father according to the flesh (14.4), and he took care of me in the days of my infancy (5.3), when he was running with me from place to place because of Herod’s plot (19.5). Moreover, I learned from him in the way all children learn when their parents teach them for their benefit (13.1).’

Finally, the time arrives for Joseph’s soul to depart from this world:

ΤΟΤΕ ΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ ΔΥΒΩΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΔΥΧΙ ΝΤΕΥΥΧΗ ΜΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩCΗΦ
ΔΥΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟC ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ-CΩΜΑ ΜΠΝΔΥ ΜΠΡΗ ΕΥΝΑΩΔΑ ΖΝΤΕΥΒΑCΙC
ΝCΟΥ ΧΟΥΤΑCΕ ΜΠΕΒΟΤ ΕΠΗΠ ΖΝΟΥΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΝΕΖΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΜΠΩΝῒ
ΜΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΕΙΩΤ ΙΩCΗΦ CΕΕΙΡΕ ΝΩΕΜΝΤΟΥΕΙ Ν ΡΟΜΠΕ

Accordingly, Abbadon* came in and took the soul of my father, Joseph. He brought it out from the body at the hour of the sun when it is going to rise in the horizon on day twenty-six of the month of Epipi in peace. All the days of the life of my beloved father, Joseph, they made one hundred and eleven years.

*Abbadon is the angel of death, a reference to the New Testament (Revelation 9:11).

ΔΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΠΤΟΠ CΝΔΥ ΝΟΥΜΑΠΠΑ ΝΖΟΛΟCΙΛΙΚΟΝ
ΕCΤΑΕΙΝΥ ΑΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΠΚΕΤΟΠ CΝΔΥ ΔΥΑCΠΑΖΕ ΝΤΕΥΥΧΗ
ΜΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩCΗΦ ΑΥΤΑΔC ΕΠΕCΗΤ ΕΤΜΑΠΠΑ ΜΠΕΛΑΔΥ
ΔΕ ΖΝΝΕΤΖΜΟΟC ΖΑΖΤΗQ ΕΙΜΕ ΧΕ ΔΥΜΟΥ ΟΥΔΕ ΤΚΕΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΑΜΑΔΥ
ΜΠΕCΕΙΜΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΤΡΕΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΜΝΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΡΟΕΙC ΕΤΕΥΥΧΗ ΜΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ
ΝΕΙΩΤ ΙΩCΗΦ ΕΤΒΕ ΝΡΕΥΤΩΡΠῒ ΕΤΖΙΝΕΖΙΟΥΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΤΡΕΝΑΓΓΕΛΟC
ΝΑCΩΜΑΤΟC CΩ ΕΥΖΥΜΝΕΥΕ ΖΑΤΕΥΖΗ ΩΑΝΤΟΥΧΙΤῒ ΝΜΠΗΥΕ
ΩΑΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΝΑΓΑΘΟC

Michael took the two edges of a fine silk sheet (2.6), and Gabriel took the other two edges (2.4). They welcomed the soul of my beloved father, Joseph, and put it down in the sheet. However, none of those who were sitting beside him realised that he had died, and not even Mary, my mother, realised (14.5). Then, I made Michael and Gabriel keep watch over my beloved father Joseph’s soul (20.3) because of the robbers who were on the roads. Also, I made the ethereal angels keep singing (9.2) in front of him until he was taken to the heavens to my good father (19.7).

From the Gospel of Mary

The notion of ‘obscure’ within the word apocryphal may also be interpreted in terms of gnosticism, which is the tendency in academic or religious teaching that postulates secret knowledge of a given subject reserved for a social elite. As such, the thirteen gnostic anthologies found in a jar at Nag Hammadi in 1945 – belonging to an unknown person or community and unearthed in suitably obscure circumstances – sparked renewed interest in Coptic apocryphal gospels (see [Figure 5](#)). Another book of the same type, the Gospel of Mary, like the Biography of Joseph the Carpenter, adapts characters, episodes and even statements from the Christian Gospels – in this case to create arguments about the relative authorities of Jesus’s disciples and their awarenesses of mystical knowledge about the distinct worlds of corrupt matter and perfectible spirit (10.6).

Our principal manuscript for the Gospel of Mary is an early Sahidic Coptic codex – possibly as early as the late fourth century. The leather-bound book containing four gnostic texts in total was purchased in Cairo in 1896 and subsequently donated to the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. Nothing else is known about its provenance, though it was reputedly discovered near Akhmim; and, for various unfortunate reasons, it remained unpublished until 1955. In the meantime, archaeologists working at Oxyrhynchus had discovered a couple of older fragments (both probably dating to the third century) of the Gospel of Mary as written in Greek – a leaf from a papyrus codex, and a sheet from a papyrus scroll. Neither, however, adds to the Coptic version and, sadly, more than half of the Coptic text might have been lost from the badly damaged codex (probably ten of eighteen full pages).

At the broken beginning of the tale as it now stands, Jesus or a vision of Jesus is addressing his assembled disciples. Once he has left, the eponymous Mary (presumably either Mary Magdalene or Jesus’s mother, though she is nowhere identified) addresses the grieving assembly and the following exchange ensues:

ⲡⲉⲕⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁⲙ ⲕⲉ ⲧⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲧⲏⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲛⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲥⲱⲣ̅ ⲟⲩⲁⲱⲉ
ⲛ̅ⲉⲟⲩⲟ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲡⲕⲉⲥⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲕⲱ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ⲛⲱⲁⲕⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲥⲱⲣ̅ ⲉⲧⲉⲉⲓⲣⲉ
ⲙ̅ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲟⲩ̅ ⲛ̅ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲁⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲏⲥⲟⲧⲙⲟⲩ̅

Peter said to Mary, ‘Sister, we know that (10.2) the Saviour (1.2) used to desire you especially, more even than the rest of women (20.1). Tell us

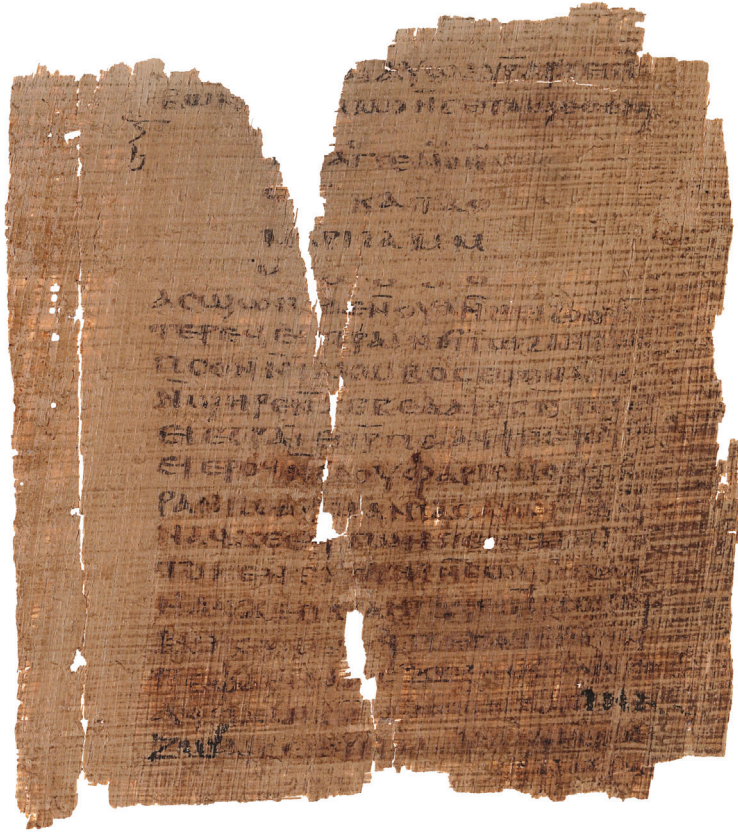


Figure 30 At top, the final words and the title of the Gospel of Mary in the Berlin Codex . Akhmim, possibly fourth or fifth century. *Source:* Staatliche Museen zu Berlin ÄM P8502, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-SA 4.0.

(4.3) the Saviour's sayings that you remember (ⲉⲧ-ⲧⲉ-ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ) – the ones which you know (ⲉⲧ-ⲧⲉ-ⲙⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲙⲟⲩⲩ), not us (16.2), and we have not heard them (14.5).¹⁴

ⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱⲩⲃ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲓ-ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲃⲁⲙ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲉⲑⲛⲡ ⲉⲣⲱⲧ̅ⲛ̅
ⲧ̅ⲛⲁⲧⲁⲙⲁⲧⲩⲧ̅ⲛ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲥⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲭⲱ ⲛⲁⲩ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲭⲉ
ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ* ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ̅ ⲉⲡ̅ⲭ̅ⲥ̅ ⲉ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲩⲟⲣⲟⲙⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁ̅ⲓⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ̅ ⲭⲉ ⲡ̅ⲭ̅ⲥ̅

14. Text adapted from B. D. Ehrman and Z. Pleše: *The Apocryphal Gospels*. New York, Oxford University Press (2011), pages 592–598.

ΔΙΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΚ ΜΠΟΟΥ ΖΝΟΥΖΟΡΟΜΑ ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ ΠΕΧΑΦ ΝΑΪ ΧΕ ΝΑΪΑΤΕ
 ΧΕ ΝΤΕΚΙΜ ΔΝ ΕΡΕΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΪ ΠΜΑ ΓΑΡ ΕΤΕΡΕ ΠΝΟΥΣ ΜΜΑΥ ΕΦΜΜΑΥ
 ΝΒΙ-ΠΕΖΟ

*Understand ΠΕΧΑC as a parenthesis.

Mary answered and said, ‘That which is hidden from you (19.3), I am going to inform you about it.’ Accordingly, she began telling them these sayings (17.1): ‘As for me’, she said, ‘I saw the Lord in a vision (8.2), and said to him (10.6), “Lord! I saw you today in a vision.” He answered and said to me, “You are blessed (10.4) because you are not disturbed when you see me (16.2). After all, the place where the mind is, there is the treasure (14.3).”’

Following a break in the narrative caused by the loss of four pages from the codex, Mary’s vision has expanded to encompass the staged ascent of her soul (ΨΥΧΗ) through higher levels of comprehension:

ΝΑΪ ΝΕ ΤCΑΩΦΕ ΝΕΖΟΥCΙΑ ΝΤΕ ΤΟΡΓΗ ΕΥΩΙΝΕ ΝΤΕΨΥΧΗ ΧΕ ΕΡΕ-
 ΝΗΥ ΧΙΝΤΩΝ ΤΖΑΤΒΡΩΜΕ Η ΕΡΕ-ΒΗΚ ΕΤΩΝ ΤΟΥΔCΩΜΑ · ΔCΟΥΩΩΒ
 ΝΒΙ-ΤΕΨΥΧΗ ΠΕΧΑC ΧΕ ΠΕΤΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΜΟΪ ΔΥΚΟΝCΩ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΤΚΤΟ
 ΜΜΟΪ ΔΥΟΥCΩ ΔΥΩ ΤΑΕΠΘΥΜΙΑ ΔCΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΔΥΩ ΤΗΝΤΑΤCΟΟΥΝ
 ΔCΜΟΥ ΖΝΟΥΚΟCΜΟC ΝΤΑΥΒΟΛΤ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝΟΥΚΟCΜΟC ΔΥΩ ΖΝΟΥΤΥΠΟC
 ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝΟΥΤΥΠΟC ΕΤΜΠCΑ ΝΤΠΕ ΔΥΩ ΤΜΡΡΕ ΝΤΒΩΕ ΕΤΩΟΟΠ ΠΡΟC-
 ΟΥΟΪΩ · ΧΙΝ-ΜΠΙΝΑΥ ΕΪΝΑΧΙ ΝΤΑΝΑΠΑΥCΙC ΜΠΕΧΡΟΝΟC ΜΠΚΑΙΡΟC
 ΜΠΑΙΩΝ ΖΝΟΥΚΑΡΩΦ ΝΤΕΡΕ ΜΑΡΙΖΑΜ ΧΕ ΝΑΪ ΔCΚΑΡΩC ΖΩCΤΕ
 ΝΤΑ-ΠCΩΡ ΩΑΧΕ ΝΜΜΑC ΩΑ-ΠΕΙΜΑ

These are the seven authorities of Rage (2.3), which are asking the soul (15.3), ‘Where are you coming from, O Murder (14.4), or where are you going to, O Destruction?’ The soul answered and said, ‘What holds me, it has been slain (19.7). Likewise, what surrounds me, it has been abandoned (Δ-Υ-ΟΥCΩ for Δ-Υ-ΟΥCΩ-Ω). Likewise, my lust, it has ended. Even ignorance, it has died (5.1). In creation I was set free by some creation (19.8), and in form by some heavenly form (ΕΤ-Μ-ΠCΑ ΝΤΠΕ ‘which is of the sky side’) and the chain of forgetfulness that exists in time (19.2). From this hour, I am going to get relief for the period of the duration of the age in silence (16.1).’ After Mary said these things (17.5), she shut up (11.8), as though the Saviour had spoken with her (only) to this point (14.3).

ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ ΔΕ ΝΒΙ-ΑΝΔΡΕΑC ΠΕΧΑΦ ΝΝΕCΝΗΥ ΧΕ ΔΧΙ
 ΠΕΤΕΤΝΩΩ ΜΜΟΦ ΖΑ-ΠΡΑ ΝΝΕΝΤΑCΧΟΟΥ ΔΝΟΚ ΜΕΝ ΤΡΠΙCΤΕΥΕ ΔΝ

ⲭⲉ ⲁⲡⲥⲱⲣ̅ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ̅ ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲛⲓⲥⲃⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲓⲁⲣ̅ ⲓⲛⲕⲉⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲉ ⋅ ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ̅
 ⲛ̅ⲟⲓ-ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ̅ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲓ ⲓⲁ-ⲡⲓⲁ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓⲓⲃⲏⲩⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲓⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⋅ ⲁⲓⲭⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ̅
 ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲡⲥⲱⲣ̅ ⲭⲉ ⲙⲏⲧⲓ* ⲁⲓⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲭⲓⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ⲓ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓ̅
 ⲉⲃⲟⲗ̅ ⲁⲛ̅

*ⲙⲏⲧⲓ marks a question that anticipates a negative answer ('did he really . . . surely not?')

So, Andrew responded and said to the brothers, 'Say (4.3) what you are saying about the worth of the things she has said (ⲛⲉ-ⲛ̅ⲧ-ⲁ-ⲥ-ⲭⲟⲟ-ⲩ̅). For me, of course (7.3), I do not believe that the Saviour said these things (16.2), supposing these teachings, after all, are some other ideas (2.4).'* Peter responded and spoke about the worth of these matters in this fashion: he asked them about the Saviour, 'Did he really speak with a woman, cheating us (literally 'as robbery to us'), not openly (17.1)?'

*The Greek text gives ἐδόκει γὰρ ἑτερογνωμονεῖν τῇ ἐκείνου διανοίᾳ 'because they seem different to what he actually taught'.

CHAPTER 6 SCENES FROM A NARRATIVE TALE

The Tragedy of Archellites

The sole intact copy of this tale about a privileged young Roman, who is led by tragedy to become a monk in Palestine, takes up the first twenty-four and a bit pages of another vellum codex (M. 579) from the Monastery of the Archangel Michael (see [page 251](#)). The book was gifted to the monastery library in 823. The tale itself is woven out of threads of other stories known elsewhere in the Roman Empire, but no Greek version exists and there is no unequivocal indication that the tale is not an original Sahidic Coptic composition. Indeed, the rest of the codex is made up of discourses about Antony, Athanasius and other exemplary Copts. Though the Archellites narrative is attributed to ‘Eusebius, the historian of the city of Rome’ (ⲉϥⲥⲉⲃⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟⲗⲓⲟⲓⲣⲁⲫⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲓⲟⲗⲓⲥ ϩⲣⲱⲙⲛⲛ), there is little reason to identify this putative author with the well-known church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (died c. 340), except perhaps as a conceit. A second Sahidic copy of the tale appears in a book from the White Monastery library, now dispersed in fragments, while briefer versions exist in Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic translations. A separate poetic interpretation of the final act of the story also circulated in Sahidic Coptic during the ninth century.

(Page 1) ⲡⲉⲓⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲃⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲗⲗⲓⲧⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲡⲉ ϩⲛ̄-ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲧ-ⲥⲟⲉⲓⲧ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲩⲣⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲡⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲱⲩⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ ⲡⲉⲡⲁⲣⲭⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲓⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲥⲩⲛⲕⲗⲏⲧⲓⲕⲏ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲛⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲣⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ ϩⲟⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ϫⲉ ϩⲉⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲛⲉⲩⲩⲃⲛⲏⲩⲉ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄-ⲡⲉⲩⲃⲓⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲙⲛⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄-ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄-ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲁⲁⲧ · ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟⲩⲣ̄-ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲉⲩⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲣ̄-ⲡⲉⲩⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲩⲧ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲣⲉ ϫⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲩⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲗⲥⲗ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲡⲁⲧⲣⲓⲁⲣⲭⲏⲥ ⲉⲓⲥⲁⲕ ⲏ ⲛ̄ⲟⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲗ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲓⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲥⲱⲧ̄ⲙ̄ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲱⲗⲏⲗ ⲁⲩⲣ̄-ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩ̄ⲣ̄ⲙⲉⲓⲟⲩⲉ

This holy one, Archellites, then, actually (7.3) he was one from a good stock (15.4), and distinguished (literally ‘he gave distinction’) in his line. He was the son of John, the governor of the city, and the name of his mother was Syncretice. These were righteous people, doing what is pleasing to God (20.1), so that some were thinking about them (2.3) that they were monks because of their good works (10.4), their noble lifestyle, and the mercies which they were doing with those who are

deprived (19.3). Yet, they did not have a child (20.1). After they spent a long-time entreating God (9.2) that he would remember them, and give them a child so he would become for them consolation (17.1), like the patriarch Isaac or like Samuel in the past (literally ‘at this time’), God heard their praying and remembered their tears (2.2).¹⁵

Archellites’ mother has raised him as a Christian, and now, at the age of twelve, she is sending him away to complete a classical education in Athens and Beirut. Her intention is that he should eventually become governor of Rome in turn, but this is not to be. Notice the idiom ⲙ ⲛⲧⲟⲩ ‘or even, perhaps’, in which ⲛⲧⲟⲩ acts as a particle not a pronoun:

(Page 3) ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲁⲁϣ ⲁⲉ ⲁϥⲧ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲧⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲉⲟⲗⲟⲕⲟⲧⲧⲓⲛⲟϥ ⲁϣⲱ
 ϩⲙⲉⲁⲗ-ϥⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϣⲉⲣⲛⲉⲧ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲥⲉⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲩⲭⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲙⲣⲥ ⲁϣⲱ
 ⲁϥⲁϥⲁⲣⲁⲣⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ ϩⲛⲟϣⲉⲓⲣⲛⲛⲛ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲟϥϥⲟⲛⲣ
 ⲁⲉ ϩⲛⲟⲁⲗⲁϥϥⲁ ⲛⲥⲉⲣ-ⲟϣⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲛⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲁϣⲙⲟⲟⲛⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲕⲣⲟ ⲁⲩⲉⲱⲱⲧ
 ⲛⲥⲓ-ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲗⲗⲓⲧⲙⲥ ⲁⲩⲛⲁϣ ⲉϣⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲛⲛⲭ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲟϣⲧ ⲁⲩⲣⲱⲛⲙⲣⲉ
 ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ-ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲣⲙⲉⲁⲗ ⲁⲩⲣⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ
 ⲉⲭⲱⲩ ϩⲱϥ ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲱⲧ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲣⲙⲉⲁⲗ ⲁⲉ ⲁϣⲥⲗⲥⲱⲗⲩ ⲉϣⲭⲱ
 ⲙⲙⲟϥ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲭⲟⲉⲓ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲟⲉ ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲟϣⲁ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲉⲱⲁⲩⲙⲟϣ ϩⲓⲭⲙ-
 ⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁ ⲛⲛⲕⲟⲧⲕ ⲕⲉⲟϣⲁ ⲉⲱⲁⲩⲙⲟϣ ϩⲛⲟⲁⲗⲁϥϥⲁ ⲙⲉⲛⲉⲓⲣⲱⲩⲱⲩ ⲕⲉⲟϣⲁ
 ⲉⲱⲁⲩⲣⲁⲣⲁⲗⲓⲧⲟϥ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ ϩⲛⲟϣⲁⲓⲱⲩⲙⲟϥ ϩⲁⲣⲁⲣⲁⲗⲁⲗⲱϥ ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ
 ⲉⲛⲉⲱⲁⲩⲭⲛⲛ ⲛⲱⲧ ϩⲛ-ⲧⲉⲓⲣⲛ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲟϣⲁⲁⲃ ⲟⲉ ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲗⲗⲓⲧⲙⲥ
 ⲛⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲭⲉ ⲉⲱⲭⲉ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲟϥⲛ ⲧⲉ ⲟⲉ ⲛⲁⲛⲟϥϥ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲩⲓ ⲣⲣⲟⲟϣⲱ
 ⲛⲧⲁϣⲭⲛⲛ ⲉⲣⲟϣⲟ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲃⲱⲕ ϩⲙⲛⲃⲓⲟϥ ⲙⲛⲉⲓⲕⲟϥⲙⲟϥ ⲛⲧⲁⲭⲓϥⲓⲙⲉ
 ⲁϣⲱ ⲛⲧⲁⲭⲱⲉⲙ ⲛⲧⲁϥⲁⲣⲣⲩ ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲁⲭⲓ-ⲟϣⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲛⲥ ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲟⲩ
 ⲛⲧⲁⲣ-ⲟϣⲉⲱⲃ ⲉⲛⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲙⲛⲛⲟϣⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲕⲁⲕⲱϥ ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲟⲩ
 ⲧⲁⲙⲟϣ ⲧⲁⲧⲙⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲛⲛⲟϣⲧⲉ

So, his mother gave to him two-hundred gold coins, as well as two servants to let them serve him (20.3) and meet his every need (17.3). Then, she kissed him, and he left her in peace. So, after they sailed on the sea and spent a day of travelling, they moored at the shore. Archellites looked and saw a man slumped out, dead (19.3), and was greatly astonished. So, he walked toward him with his servants, and he wept over him as though supposing it was his father (18.4). Therefore, his servants consoled him (13.4), saying, ‘Our lord, this is the mortal way. Accordingly, one dies in his place of sleeping, another dies at sea or even

15. Text adapted from J. Drescher: *Three Coptic Legends*. Cairo, Institut français d’archéologie orientale (1947), pages 14–28.

in the rivers (14.3), another is betrayed to persecution (19.7) In short (ⲉⲗⲁⲡⲁⲛⲁⲗⲁⲡⲗⲟⲥ), every person who was ever born runs in this direction, this one (20.1).’ Consequently, the holy one, Archellites, said, ‘Supposing this actually is the way, it is good for me (10.4) to take care of my soul more than (see [page 249](#)) to go in the lifestyle of this world (20.3), and get married (17.3), pollute my flesh, perhaps (ⲙ ⲛⲧⲟⲩ) abuse a person (10.4), perhaps do something which is not pleasing to God (ⲉⲛⲛⲓⲕⲣⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ (16.2)) and stumble (literally ‘go badly’), or perhaps die and not see God (18.3).’

Having freed his servants, Archellites wandered from land to land ‘until God brought him to the Monastery of Romanus’ (ⲩⲁⲛⲧⲉⲛⲛⲟⲩⲩⲉ ⲛⲧⲩⲩⲉⲗⲙⲓⲛⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲁⲡⲁ ⲉⲣⲟⲙⲁⲛⲟⲥ), where he knocks on the door and pleads with the doorkeeper (ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ) for admittance:

([Page 5](#)) ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲓⲃⲓⲛⲉⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ ⲁⲩⲁⲩⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ
 ⲁⲉ ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲧⲉⲕⲙⲛⲧⲁⲩⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲱⲓⲣⲉ
 ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲉⲣⲁⲧⲩⲩⲧ ⲉⲓⲣⲙⲓⲛⲣⲟ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲣⲱⲩ ⲉⲩⲁⲱ ⲛⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ
 ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛⲓⲣⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛⲱⲡⲧⲧⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲱⲁⲣⲉ
 ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲁⲧ ⲛⲛⲡⲱⲁ ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲛⲟⲛⲁⲩⲟⲥ ⲧⲁⲥⲱ ⲉⲁⲧⲉⲁⲓⲃⲥ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲱⲗⲛⲗ
 ⲱⲁⲡⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉⲛⲁⲩⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲁⲥⲙⲡⲁⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲃⲓ
 ⲛⲉⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲁⲩⲁⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲛⲡⲣⲟ ⲁⲛⲓⲧⲩⲩⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ
 ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲧⲱⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲛⲡⲣⲟ ⲁⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ
 ⲁⲩⲣⲱⲡⲛⲛⲉ ⲉⲗⲙⲓⲛⲉⲕⲙⲧⲥⲁⲓⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲃⲓⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲉ
 ⲡⲉⲩⲣⲟ ⲕⲛ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲛⲧ ⲩⲁⲛⲧⲉⲩⲱⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲩⲩⲉ
 ⲁⲩⲡⲁⲉⲧⲩⲩⲉⲗⲙⲓⲛⲉⲕⲙⲧⲥⲁⲓⲉ ⲁⲩⲱⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ ⲛⲛⲉⲩⲟⲩⲉⲣⲛⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲧⲡⲉⲓ ⲉⲗⲙⲓⲛⲉⲩⲟⲩⲉⲣⲛⲧⲉ
 ⲡⲉⲁⲩⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲓⲃⲓⲛⲉⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲧⲧⲉⲣⲛⲓⲛⲧⲱⲛ ⲡⲁⲱⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲕⲉⲓ
 ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲱⲉⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲱⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛⲧⲉⲣⲛⲓⲛⲧⲱⲛ ⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲉⲁⲓⲉⲓ
 ⲉⲥⲱ ⲉⲁⲧⲉⲁⲓⲃⲥ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲱⲗⲛⲗ ⲧⲁⲧⲱⲃⲩⲩⲉ ⲛⲡⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
 ⲛⲛⲁⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲕⲣⲁⲩⲓⲟⲥⲩⲛⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲕⲱⲉⲩ ⲁⲱⲓ
 ⲛⲉⲩⲧⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲡⲉⲥⲭⲛⲙⲁ

So, the doorkeeper came in and asked the Superior, ‘My holy father, supposing your lordliness allows, the one standing at the door is a youth (13.4), for a long time now begging and saying, “I want you to have mercy with me and accept me to you (20.2). Supposing God makes me of worth, then I become a monk (17.3) and remain in the shadow of those who pray until the day that the Lord is going to visit me.”’ The Superior answered and said, ‘Open the door. Bring him in (4.3), so we shall see where is he from (20.2). After the doorkeeper opened the door and saw him, he marvelled over his beauty. The blessed one came in with his

face cast down (19.3), until he got to the place where the Superior was (15.2), and prostrated himself (literally ‘bowed onto his face’), kissed his feet and kissed his hands. The Superior said to him, ‘You are one from where, my son (8.1)? Why have you come here (14.4)?’ He said to him, ‘I am a Roman – the City of Rome – who has come (15.4) to remain in the shadow of those who pray, and ask God to forgive my sins (20.1). Now, I am urging your Holiness (see [page 265](#)) to shave my head and give me the habit.’

Meanwhile, his mother has not been able to learn anything except that he did not arrive at Athens or Beirut, and blames her worldly ambition for causing his death. In her grief, she founded a hostel to look after any and all travellers. Here, a full twelve years later, she overhears some merchants discussing the fact that they were recently blessed by a saintly monk named Archellites, who has a distinctive birthmark on his face:

(Page 14) ⲧⲉⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲉ ⲙⲏ-ⲛⲉⲥⲉⲡⲓⲧⲣⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲙⲏ-ⲛⲉⲧⲓⲭⲏⲛⲉⲥⲏⲕⲁ
ⲁⲥⲭⲓⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲡⲓⲕⲱⲡⲟⲥ ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲗⲧⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ
ⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲏⲓⲱⲧ ⲃⲱⲩⲧ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲭⲏ-ⲧⲁⲙⲏⲧⲉⲃⲓⲛⲏ ⲁⲓⲱⲧⲙ ⲭⲉ
ⲡⲁⲩⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲟⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲏⲗⲁⲗ ⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲙⲟⲓ ⲭⲉ ⲓⲣⲏⲡⲙⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ
ⲛⲁⲡⲁ ⲗⲣⲱⲙⲁⲛⲟⲥ ⲗⲏⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲡⲁⲗⲁⲥⲧⲓⲛⲏ ⲉⲩⲥⲣⲓⲩⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ
ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲱⲩ ⲉⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ
ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲣⲱⲁⲛ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲭⲓⲙⲟⲉⲓⲧ ⲗⲏⲧ ⲧⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲱⲁⲣⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲉ
ⲡⲟⲩⲉⲣⲥⲁⲗⲛⲉ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲃⲱ ⲙⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ
ⲉⲓⲥⲣⲏⲛⲧⲉ ⲧⲏⲁⲧ ⲏⲛⲁⲗⲩⲡⲁⲣⲭⲟⲛⲧⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲕⲁⲓⲛⲕⲉⲓ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲟⲉ
ⲉⲧⲉⲗⲛⲁⲕ ⲏⲧⲉ-ⲛⲁⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲩⲧ ⲙⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁ ⲏⲏⲗⲏⲕⲉ ⲙⲏⲛⲉⲧⲱⲁⲁⲧ
ⲧⲁⲣⲉ-ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲃⲱⲩⲧ ⲉⲭⲱⲛ ⲏⲩⲣⲓ-ⲟⲩⲛⲁ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲓ ⲙⲏⲡⲁⲩⲱⲛⲣⲉ
ⲙⲏⲡⲉⲩⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲗⲏⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ

So, the woman and her stewards and those who were in charge of her affairs (ⲛⲉⲧ-ⲗⲓⲭⲏⲛ-ⲛⲉⲥ-ⲏⲕⲁ), she took them to the Bishop (5.2), and bowed to him, saying, ‘My fatherly lord look down on my wretchedness (5.3). I have heard that my son is alive (19.2), who is your servant (13.8). I was told that he is in the monastery of Apa Romanus in the districts of Palestine, taking time for his wellbeing. Already, O my father, I want to go to that place (14.3) and see him before I die (17.5). Indeed, if God guides my path (literally ‘my front’ (5.2)) and I get to him, then the command of God shall be to let me remain in that place (20.3). I am going to give all my goods to you (16.1) to let you distribute them however you wish (15.4), and then my properties shall be giving mercies to the hungry and the deprived, and perhaps God will look on us (17.4)

and be merciful with me and my son and his father in the place which they are going to go to (15.2).'

However, arriving at the monastery, she does not know that Archellites has long since refused to meet with any woman and, recently, dreamt that his mother is on her way to see him and her visit will result in his death:

(Page 21) ἀφει ἐβολ ἡβι-πεμνοῦτ πεχαϥ ἡτεσρime χε ἀμη
 εζοῦν εἰς ποῦωηρε ἀφπῶε ἡναγ ἐρο ἡτοσ δε ρωωσ ἀσει εζοῦν
 εσμοωδε εσασωοῦ ἡῶε ἡοῦτρωμεῦς φαντεςει εζοῦν ἐπμα
 ετρε-πωηρεωηη ἡρητῆ ἡτερεσναγ δε ἐροϥ ἀσσοῦωηῆ ἀγω
 ἀσειμε δε ἀφοῦω ἐφμοῦ ἀσρε εζραι ἐχῆπκαρ ἀσῖῶε ἡνετμοοῦτ
 · ἡτερε-πεσρητ δε εἰ ἐρος ἀστωοῦν ἀσπαρτῆ ἐχῆπесωηρε
 ἀсrime εсxῶκακ ἐβολ εсxῶ ἡмос δε οῦοι ναι ἀнок οῦнос
 πε παxῆῖῶονῆ παρα-νεριome τηροῦ ετρηxῆ-πκαρ δε ἡπελααγ
 ωωπε ναι εἰεμηтеἰ οῦωηρε ἡοῦωτ ἡταсепῆ πноῦτε ἀφῶωτ
 ἐχῆπαῶῖῖο ἀττααϥ ναι ἀφμοῦ ἡβι-πεφειωτ ἀφκαат ἡῖμαγ
 ρῖοῦηῖτορφанос ἡτερεφῖ-οῦнос δε ἀιῖῶoneἰ ἐπαωηρε
 ἡμῖνῖμοι · ατμηтра ἡταφει ἐβολ ἡρητῆ ωωπε ναγ ἡтафос
 наекῖве ἡтаφxῖ ἡмооῦ ἀγωωπε εῦснφε εтρεсφει ἡтеφape
 ἡοῦερηте ἡтаγτωоῦῖ ρарок ἀγмооωде φантоῦεἰне наκ
 ἡпекмоῦ

The doorkeeper came out and said to the woman, ‘Come in. Your son has agreed to see you.’ So, she came in walking, nimble as a runner (19.2), until she came in to the place where the child was (15.2). However, after she saw him, she recognised him and, moreover, realised that he had already died (19.3). She fell down on the ground and seemed like those who have died. However, after her mind returned to her, she got up, bowed over her son and wept, crying out, saying, ‘Woe is me, my own abuse is a thing beyond all the women who are on the earth, because no-one came (literally ‘happened’) to me except an only son (3.4). I begged God, and he looked on my humility and gave him to me (14.3). His father died and left me with him orphaned (see [page 259](#)). However, after he grew up, I murdered my own son (8.3). The cervix he came out of became for him a grave (15.2); my breasts which he took, they became a sword for removing his head (20.3); the feet which carried you, they walked until they brought you your death.’

CHAPTER 7 TEXTS FROM THE FRINGES OF COPTIC CULTURE

Two spells for seducing women

Magic spells promising to satisfy those very desires that still engender innumerable quick fixes on social media and the internet – wellbeing and quality sleep, reconciliation and justice, seduction and sexual prowess, wealth and business success – belong to a dark underbelly of ordinary Christian life in Late Antique Egypt, rather than otherwise hidden pagan communities.¹⁶ Hundreds of spells are known in Sahidic Coptic, albeit written in ways that often betray non-standard local writing practices; but essentially they derive from magic traditions known across the Roman Empire. As such, they tend to feature a relatively high proportion of specialist vocabulary and incorporate formulaic abbreviations of Greek phrases – including here $\overline{\Delta\Delta}$ (for $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha$ καὶ $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha$ ‘such-and-such’) and ΚΟΧ or ΚΟΚ (perhaps from $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{\alpha}$ ‘standard, usual things’) – at points in the text where the reader should add the name of the intended subject or other specific information. Again, this cut-and-paste template approach to quasi-formal documents is a commonplace of the modern online world.

Likewise, Coptic spells invoke deities and supernatural forces drawn from the beliefs of various cultures in and around the Roman Empire, including such characters as Satan, the demon Mastema from the apocryphal Book of Jubilees (who puts in an appearance below), and ostensibly indigenous Egyptian deities, such as Apis, Isis, Horus and Thoth – who, in reality, had long been since subsumed by the Hellenistic imperial culture. The spells also employ bizarre names for angels and demons alongside other incantations, all of which seem to be gobbledygook but are often plays on the names of Egyptian deities or chants developed from a harmonious assonance of the ‘mumbo jumbo’ and ‘abracadabra’ variety. Many manuscripts are also illustrated with engaging and often startling scenes of humans and animals, which evidently assimilate or even parody orthodox religious iconography, including pharaonic as well as Christian subjects.

16. See The Coptic Magical Papyri Project <https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/>.

Spell on a sheepskin scroll (British Museum EA 10414,a)

The two spells given here appear among a collection of five or six magic-themed scrolls, written on offcuts of animal skins. In Late Antique Egypt, of course, scrolls mostly belonged to non-Christian writing traditions (see [page 8](#)). This particular collection was acquired around 1830 by Robert Hay, a Scottish antiquarian, and subsequently purchased by the British Museum in 1868. The convergence of historical considerations, handwriting analysis and radiocarbon dating suggests that the scrolls were probably written at Thebes during the early eighth century. Neither spell here was written with over-lining for nasalised syllables (1.2), but a more conventional spelling has been adopted in the transcriptions below, which you can compare with the originals in the accompanying figures. The transcriptions maintain the original line divisions but avoid the wordbreaks at the ends of the lines. The first example here – isolated by lines drawn across the page above and below it – seeks to control the mind of the intended victim. Notice the writing of $\mu\omicron\upsilon$ for $\bar{\mu}\mu\omicron$ ‘him’, and how the prospective future prefix ‘she will’ is written $\epsilon\varsigma\alpha$ instead of $\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon$ (16.4):

ΚΟΚ ΚΩΧΑΡΩΤΩΧ ΠΑΡΣΟΒΟΛ ΑΝΑΗΛ ΔΙΗΤΕ
ΜΟΥ ΔΥΧΟΟΥ ΝΟΥΔΕΜΟΝΙΟΝ ΕΠΕΦΡΑΝ ΠΕ
ΘΕΥΜΑΘΑ ΕΡΕ-ΧΩΥ ΖΑΠΝΟΝ ΕΡΕ-ΡΑΤΥ ΖΙΑΜΗΤΕ
ΤΚΕΖΕΝΝΕ ΝΣΑΤΕ ΔΥΧΙ ΝΑΥ ΝΖΕΝΩΛΙΚ ΝΚΩΖΤ
ΥΝΑΤ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΝΤΑΠΗ ΝΔΔ ΩΑΝΤΕΣΕΙ ΝΑΙ Ε
ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΣΑΣΩΚ ΝΤΕΣΖΟΙΤΕ ΕΠΕΣΜΟΤ
ΕΣΑΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΙ ΧΕ ΔΜΟΥ ΝΗΚ ΖΙΤΝ-ΤΣΟΜ Ν
ΔΔΔΗΛ ΕΤΙ ΤΝΟΥ ΤΑΧΗ ΤΔΧΗ

The usual. Kōkharōtōkh Parsobol* Anaēl, I have asked
him and he has sent a demon, whose name is
Theumatha (13.4), whose head (5.2) is under the groundwater
(7.1), whose foot is out west,
the flaming Gehenna. He has taken for himself some burning
forks.
He is going to strike down on the head of *such-and-such* until she
comes to me (17.5) to
any place as I wish (15.3). She will lift her dress to her shoulders
(read ΜΟΤΕ).
She will call to me, ‘Come, for you (read ΝΔ-Κ)’, by the power of

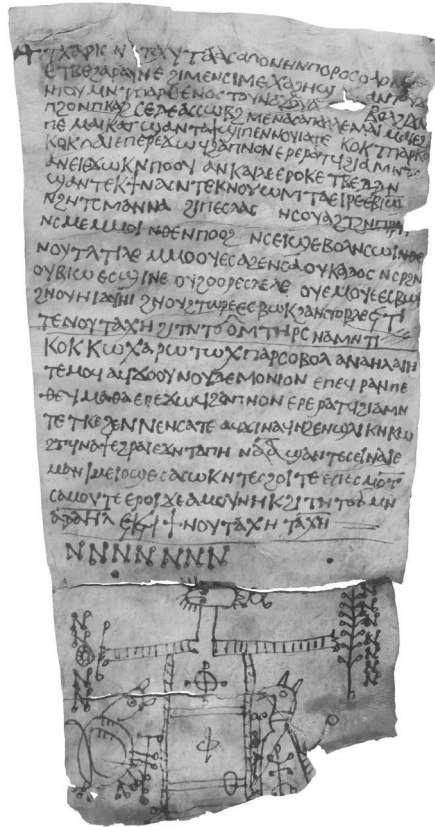


Figure 31 The first magical spell. Thebes, probably eighth century.
 Source: Trustees of the British Museum EA 10414, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Adaēl. Now, at once, quickly, quickly!¹⁷

*Baalzebul? If so, this would be a reference to the New Testament (Mark 3:22).

Spell on an animal skin scroll (British Museum EA 10376)

The start of this second spell is lost along both edges of the scroll, so what remains of the first four lines has not been transcribed here. Apparently, in the lost start a demon named ⲉⲓⲫⲏⲙⲁⲣⲁⲛ ‘he of the iron rod . . . to whom the whole creation of women is obedient’, has been summoned out of the Nile or the sea. A line across the page divides the spell into two parts: the initial summons; and an incantation to be spoken over a cup of wine before handing it to the intended victim. Alongside the use of ⲁⲗⲁ ‘such-and-such’, note the use of a Coptic equivalent ⲛⲓⲙ ‘who?’ to indicate where the practitioner should add the relevant name (14.4). The copyist has also added dots below various letters for reasons which are no longer obvious. In this transcription they have been retained for interest’s sake despite the otherwise conventionalised spelling. Other quirks of this text are not uncommon, and include writing ⲙⲟⲕ for ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲕ ‘you’, ⲱⲉⲣⲉ for ⲱⲉⲣⲉⲣⲉ ‘daughter’, ⲃⲓ for ⲕⲓ ‘take’, and usually writing ⲛ̄ where the shift to ⲙ̄ might have been expected (1.3):

Part one

ԵՆԻՏԵ ՄԻՄՈԿ ՆՆԻՄ ԴՊԵՐԵ ՆՆԻՄ ԷՏՐԵԿՏԱԸՆ ՆԱԻ ՆՏԱՃՈԿ
 ԵՅՈԼ ՄՔԱՐԳԾԾ
 ՆՆՄԱՅՆ ՔԵՃԱԳ ՆԱԻ ՃԵ ՆԹԵ ՆՕԿԻՄԻ ԵԳՎԻ-ՐՕՕԿԾ ՉԱՆԵԳԾՈՐԵ
 ԺՎԻ-ՐՕՕԿԾ
 ՉԱՐՈԿ ՔԵՃԱԻ ՆԱԳ ՃԵ ԺՏԱՐԿՕ ՄՕԿ ՄՆՏԵԿԵՐՕՄ ՄՆՏՕԿՆԱՄ
 ՄՔԻՄԻ
 ՄՆՔԾՈՐԵ ՄՆՏԱՔԵ ՆՔԵՔՆԱ ԵՏՕԿԱՅ ՄՆԳՎՐԻՆԼ
 ՆՏԱԳՎՈԿ* ԾԱԵԻՄՏՈՓ ՏԳՏՐԵԳՃԻ ՄՆԱՐԻԱ ՆԱԳ ՆՏՐԻՄԵ ՃԵ
 ՆՆԵԿԱՆԵՒԵ ՕԿԸ ՆՆԵԿԿԱՏԵՒԵ ԾԱՆՏՔԵԻՆԵ ՆԱԻ ՆՃԱ ԴՊԵՐԵ
 ՆՃԱ ՆՏԱՃՈԿ ԵՅՈԼ ՄՔԱՐԳԾԾ ՆՆՄԱՅՆ ՆՆՄԱՅՆ ՃԱՄՃՈՄ
 ՄԵԱԾ ԾԱԾ ՕԿՃԱՃ ՃԾ ՕԿՃԱ ՃՆՆՆԻՉ ՆԻԼԼԾՆ ՉԻՃՆԿ ԿՕԿ Ն

*The manuscript gives only **BOK** but this makes no sense here, hence the suggested emendation to **NT-λ-Q-BOK** ‘who went’ (15.1).

17. Text of a spell on the lower part of the recto (front) of the scroll, adapted from W. E. Crum: 'Magical Texts in Coptic, II,' *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934), pages 195–200. (Kyprianos Database of Ancient Ritual Texts KYP M287.)

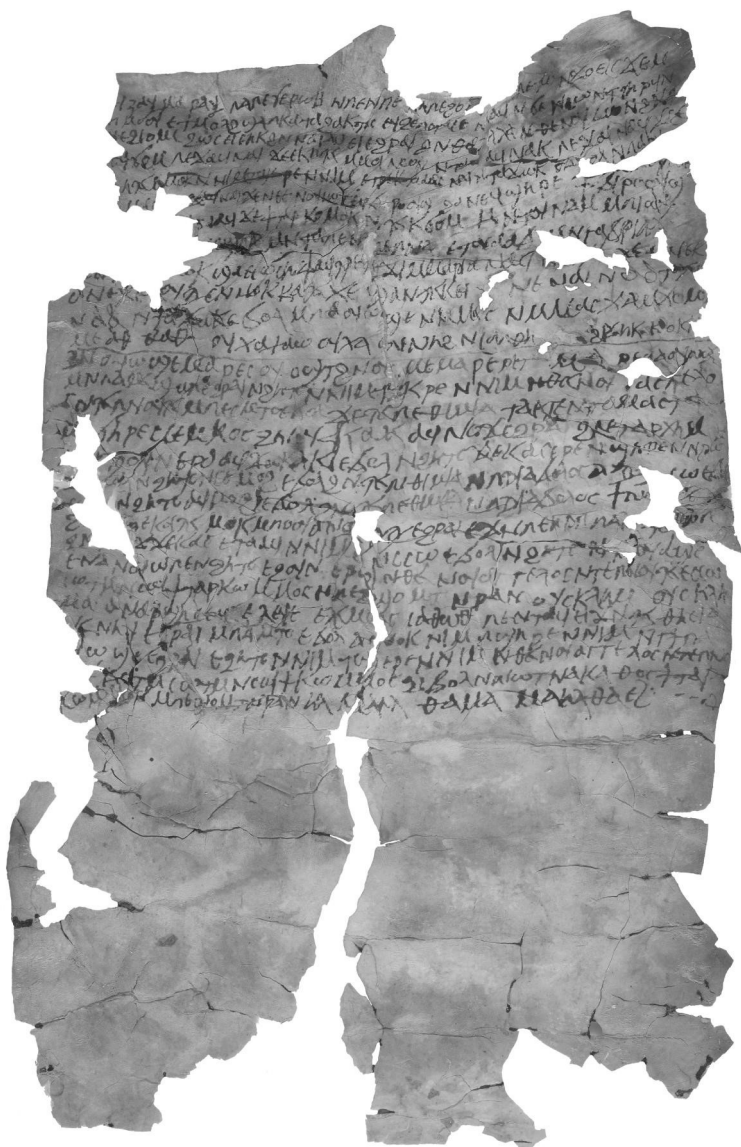


Figure 32 The second magical spell. Thebes, probably eighth century.
Source: Trustees of the British Museum EA 10376, shared under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

‘I am asking you (14.3) for *who?*, the daughter of *who?* so you give her to me (20.3) and I fulfil my desire (17.3) with her.’ He said to me, ‘In the way of a father when he takes care of his children (15.3), I am taking care of you.’ I said to him, ‘I do summon you (7.6) and your power, and the right hand of the Father and the Son, and the head of the Holy Spirit, and Gabriel, who went to Joseph and made him take Mary to himself as wife (20.3), that you will not delay (20.2) nor will you rest until you bring me *such-and-such*, the daughter of *such-and-such*, and I fulfil my desire with her – with her!’ Khamkhom
Meath Thath Oukhakh Aō Oukha Annēh Nialthē Hijēk. *Usual* 8 (12.1).¹⁸

Part two

ḡṇoywə məresoywəṭ ḡṇoymə məresmerit
 məre-payowə
 mṇpame wəpə ɛzrai ṇḡhtḥ ṇnim tɔwərə ṇnim ṇə
 ṇoyagɣelos
 ṇte pnoyte ṇpesmtə ewol ɬe tepəθimia tai ete
 nta-mastema
 θhresce ṇmos ḡṇoykak aqnoɬḥ ɛzrai-ḡṇtarxh ṇ
 pɛqtooy ṇiero aqɬoy-kak ewol ṇḡhtḥ ɬekak ɛre-ṇwḡpə
 ṇṇrowə
 cə ewol ṇḡhtḥ ṇse moyɛ ewol ḡṇtepiθimia ṇplabolos
 ɬɬɬ cə
 ewol ṇḡhtḥ aq moyɛ ewol ḡṇtepiθimia ṇplabolos ṭnoy
 ɬe
 ɛw ṭpekaɛe mok ṇpooy a noḥ ɬɬ ɛzrai ɛxṇ-pehnpai
 ɛtəwəpə
 ḡṇtaɛɬ ɬekak ɛtaaq ṇnim ɛnḥcə ewol ṇḡhtḥ ṇte-oywə
 ɛnənoyɥ wəpə ṇḡhtḥ ɛzoyn ɛroi ṇə ṇoyagɣelos
 ṇte-pnoyte

18. Text of a spell on the lower part of the scroll, which is only written on one side, adapted from W. E. Crum: ‘Magical Texts in Coptic, I.’ *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934), pages 51–53. (Kyprianos Database of Ancient Ritual Texts KYP M286.)

εσσωτῃ ἡσῶι †ταρκο ἡμοκ ἡπεωοντ ἡραν οὔσκλην
 οὔσκλην
 ἀναρσησεῖ ἐλφε ἐλεμας ιαθῶθ πενταφει χῆ-τεθηςια
 κῆνῃ ἐζραι ἡπαντο ἐβολ ἀνοκ ἡιμ πωρηε ἡνιμ ἡ†-
 παούωφε ἐζραι ἐζητῶ ἡνιμ τφερε ἡνιμ ἡθε ἡογαγγελος
 ἡτε
 πνοῦτε ἡ†τῃσῶτῃ ἡσῶι †κῶ ἡμοκ ριβολ ἡπιωτ ἡακαθοῶ
 †ταρκῶ
 ἡμοκ ἡπεωοντ ἡραν ιαμαλλῆλ θαμαμανῆλ θαε

In wanting, she should want me (17.1). In loving, she should love
 me. Wanting me
 and loving me should happen in her, *who?* (17.2), the daughter of
who?, as though for an angel
 of God in her presence (13.9), so that the lust is this one that
 Mastema
 pronounced in darkness (read κακε) (15.2), cast into the source of
 the four rivers, and conveyed darkness through it (19.8), so that
 the men's children
 will drink out of it (20.2) and be filled by the Devil's lust (17.3).
Such-and-such has drunk
 out of it and been filled by the Devil's lust. Now, however,
 I too do invoke you today (I am *such-and-such*) over the wine, this
 that happens to be (19.2)
 in my hand in order to give it to *who?*, and she drinks from it (read
 ἡῶσῶ (17.3)), and good desire (15.4)
 happens in her toward me as though for an angel of God
 as she obeys me. I do summon you by the three names: Ousklēm
 Ousklēma,
 Anarshēsef Eloī, Elemas Iathōth. O, you who has come out of the
 ritual (15.1),
 you do come into my presence (I am *who?*, son of *who?*), so put
 wanting me in her (read ἡζητ-ῶ), *who?*, daughter of *who?*, as
 though for an angel of
 God; and then she does not obey me (18.3), I do set her apart
 from the good father. I do summon
 her by the three names: Iamalēl, Thamamaēl, Thae.

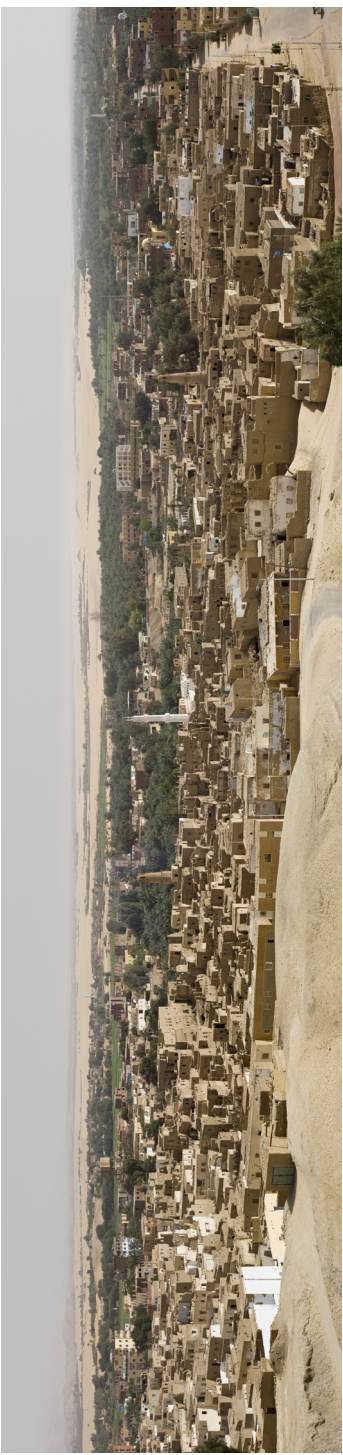


Figure 33 A view of Dakhla oasis in the Sahara Desert, west of the Nile Valley. *Source:* Mike Shepherd (mikeshepherdimages.co.uk)

Letters from a non-Christian community in the Sahara

Dakhla is an oasis of the Sahara Desert, some 350 kilometres (220 miles) west of the River Nile. Here, in recent decades, archaeologists have uncovered various documentary archives from the Roman-era town of Kellis, including a truly exceptional find of the largest collection of Coptic texts (more than 200) from the earliest period of Coptic writing, the late fourth century. Interestingly, they come to us from a community of Manichaeans – adherents to a gnostic religion, which originated in Persia in the third century and claimed to transcend both Buddhism and Christianity. The new religion reached Egypt before the end of the century and, albeit briefly, might have rivalled the influence of Christianity in certain areas. Nonetheless, despite standing apart from the principal development path among Christian communities along the Nile, the Kellis texts are remarkably straightforward to read as Sahidic Coptic. Like Frange's letters from three centuries later (see [page 274](#)), their mere existence suggests that our understanding of Sahidic Coptic books and writing was skewed somewhat by our initial reliance on monastic libraries.

For the most part, the Coptic texts from Kellis were found in houses and have been dated by their modern editors to the period roughly 355–380, which was certainly after the local temple of the pharaonic god Tutu was closed. They include Christian as well as Manichaean scripture, glossaries of Aramaic/Syriac words and a handful of magic texts, but the great majority are private letters. None of them are legal documents, whereas a high proportion of texts from Kellis written in Greek are precisely that. Moreover, almost half the letters (which are essentially private) are to and from women, whereas the same is true for barely one in ten Greek documents from the town (which are essentially official). The two examples given below were found in the same house and, indeed, belong to the same family, in a correspondence centred on two brothers – $\pi\epsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ whose wife is named $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\eta\iota$, and $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\rho$ whose wife is named $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha$. Their letters, plus a handful of accounts, bear witness to people who regularly travelled on business and were often far from home, relying on letters from their families as a consequence. Both examples here are principally addressed to women, so look out for the use of second person feminine pronouns or their equivalents (4.1).

Spelling has been normalised in these transcriptions, while you are learning, so the originals look significantly different at first glance. For example, the manuscript spellings are characterised by using α as a

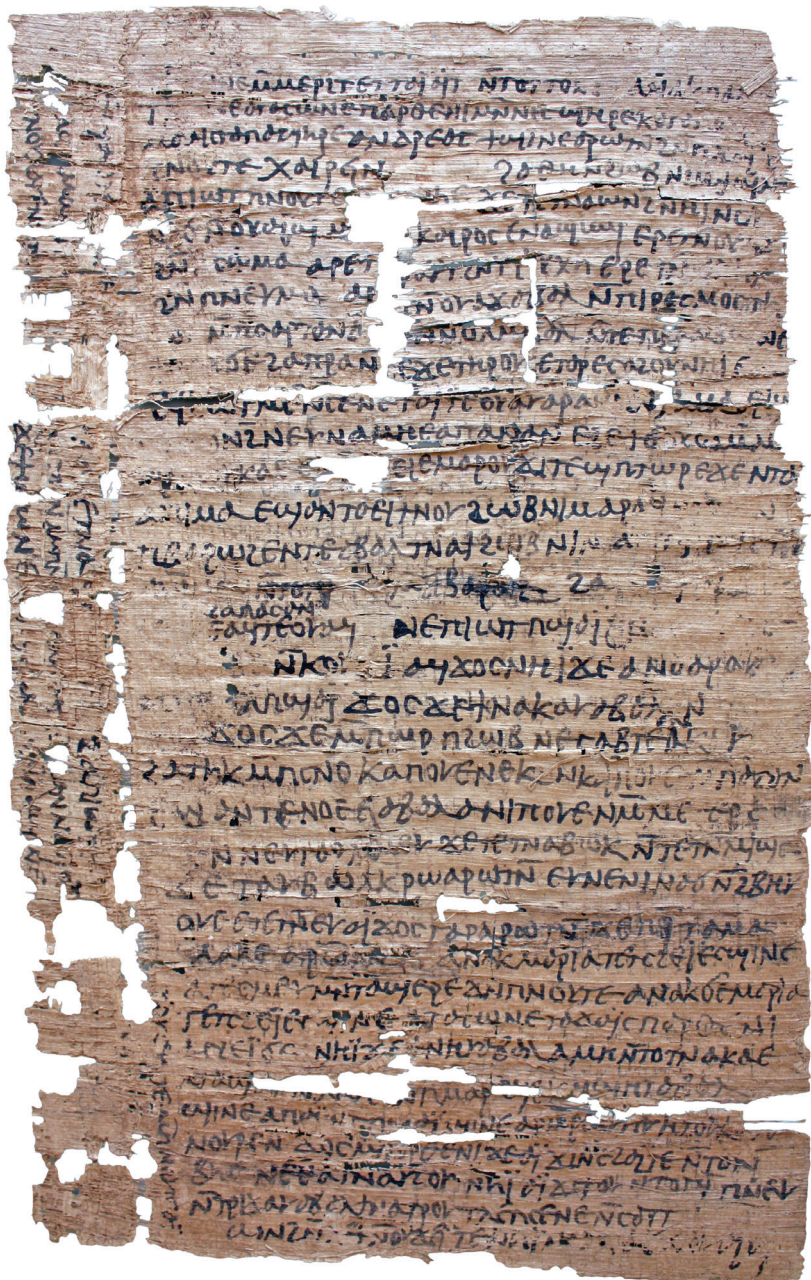


Figure 34 Kellis letter 71. Dakhla Oasis, fourth century. Source: Courtesy of C. A. Hope and the Dakhleh Oasis Project.

default short vowel where standard texts write other short vowels, as in $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$ for $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ ‘out’, or $\Delta\eta\alpha\kappa$ $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\Upsilon\mathfrak{P}$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\Delta\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\tau\alpha\chi\alpha\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{c}$ rather than $\Delta\eta\omicron\kappa$ $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\Upsilon\mathfrak{P}$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\epsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\tau\alpha\chi\omicron\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{c}$ ‘I am Pamour, greeting my sister, my lady’. Other notable distinctions include forms like $\pi\alpha\chi\epsilon\mathfrak{q}$ for $\pi\epsilon\chi\alpha\mathfrak{q}$ ‘he said’. This is not inconsistent, for example, with some of the (much later) letters from Jeme, but variations from the norm in this archive may reflect the nascent development of Coptic writing as much as a distinct spoken dialect. Nonetheless, texts from Kellis are frequently characterised in scholarship as exemplifying a distinct dialect of Middle Egypt.

Extracts from a letter on reused papyrus (P.Kellis Copt. 71)

The surface of this first letter is badly rubbed and so much writing lost that the central section, with the principal communication, has not been transcribed here. The first extract is a distinctively Manichaean greeting from Pamour to open the letter, while the second is a message from his wife, Mary, who ends with another distinctive address, $\tau\omicron\Upsilon\epsilon\omega\tau\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\tau\epsilon$ $\Delta\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{o}$ ‘praise God indeed’. Note, also, the idiom used to address people $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ $\pi\omicron\Upsilon\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{a}\mathfrak{n}$ ‘according to their names’ (5.3), which means ‘each one individually’ (see [page 276](#)).

$\Delta\pi\omicron\Delta\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\mathfrak{h}$ $\kappa\Upsilon\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{a}$ $\mu\omicron\Upsilon$ $\Delta\Delta\epsilon\lambda\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{h}$ $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}$

(Greek) Deliver to my lady and sister Partheni.¹⁹

$\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{e}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{t}$ $\epsilon\tau\tau\alpha\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{a}\mathfrak{t}$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{t}$ $\tau\omicron\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon$ $\Delta\eta\omicron\kappa$ $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\Upsilon\mathfrak{P}$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$
 $\epsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}$ $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}\varsigma\omega\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{r}\epsilon$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ $\pi\omicron\Upsilon\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{a}\mathfrak{n}$ $\mathfrak{m}\alpha\lambda\mathfrak{i}\varsigma\tau\alpha$ $\pi\alpha\omega\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{r}\epsilon$
 $\Delta\mathfrak{n}\Delta\mathfrak{r}\epsilon\alpha\varsigma$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\epsilon\rho\omega\tau\mathfrak{i}$ $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{c}$ $\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\tau\epsilon$

$\chi\alpha\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{r}\epsilon\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}$ $\mathfrak{z}\alpha\theta\mathfrak{h}$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{z}\omega\mathfrak{b}$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{m}$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{l}$ $\epsilon\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{i}\omega\tau$ $\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\tau\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$ $\chi\epsilon$
 $\tau\epsilon\tau\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{a}\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{z}$ $\mathfrak{n}\alpha\mathfrak{i}$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\varsigma$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{i}\omega$ $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\kappa\alpha\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{o}\varsigma$ $\epsilon\mathfrak{n}\alpha\omega\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{q}$ $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$
 $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\mathfrak{o}\chi$ $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{c}\omega\mathfrak{m}\alpha$ $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\mathfrak{t}$ $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{h}\chi\mathfrak{h}$ $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{t}\alpha\lambda\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{l}$ $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}\Upsilon\mathfrak{m}\alpha$
 $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon\mathfrak{o}\chi$ $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{r}\alpha\varsigma\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{o}\varsigma$ $\mathfrak{t}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{h}\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{o}\Upsilon$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{c}\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\mathfrak{n}\alpha\varsigma$ $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{b}\mathfrak{l}\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{b}\alpha\lambda$
 $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{t}\epsilon$ $\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{m}\alpha$ $\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{b}\omega\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{e}$

My beloved sister who is esteemed by me greatly (19.3). I am Pamour, greeting my sister Partheni and her children each one, especially my son Andrew. I am greeting you in the Lord God.

Hello (3.1). Before every matter, I do pray to the Father, God of Truth, that you are going to live for me for a long time and many seasons

19. Texts adapted from I. Gardner, A. Alcock and W-P. Funk: *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis 2*. Oxford and Philadelphia, Oxbow (2014), Letters 71 and 75.

(15.4), while we are well in the body, prospering in the soul, rejoicing in spirit, being safe from all the temptations of Satan and the storms of the bad place.

ΑΝΟΚ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ ΕΣΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΕΣΜΑΥ ΜΗΤΑΩΕΡΕ ΧΗΠΝΟΥΤΕ
ΑΝΟΚ ΘΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ ΕΣΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑΣΩΝΕ ΤΑΧΟΪΣ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ ΔΣΖΑΪ
ΘΕ ΝΑΪ ΧΕ ΨΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΔΜΗ . . . sentence lost . . . ΠΜΑ ΡΩΕΥ ΞΩΗΤ
ΕΒΟΛ

ΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΑΪΩΤ ΠΩΔΑΪ ΩΙΝΕ ΕΝΡΜΡΕΟΥΗΤΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΟΥΡΑΝ ΧΟΟΣ
ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ ΧΕ ΔΪΧΙ ΝΕΖΟΪΤΕ ΝΤΟΟΤΓΪ ΝΒΗC ΝΕΤΑΤΗΝΟΟΥCΟΥ ΝΑΪ
ΔΪΧΙΤΟΥ ΝΤΟΟΤΓΪ ΠΝΑΥ ΝΤΡΑΧΟΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΨΝΑΤΡΕΥΗ-ΤΛΕΠCΕ
ΝΗ ΝCΑΡΤ ΩΝΖ ΝΤΕΤΗΝΟΥΧΑΪΤΕ ΝΑΪ ΝΟΥΝΟC ΝΟΥΟΪΩ ΤΟΥΕΩΤΕ
ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΔΪΟ [A final sentence has been lost.]

I am Mary, the one who is writing, greeting her mother and my daughter Jinpnoute. Also, I am Mary (7.3), the one who is writing, greeting my sister, my lady Partheni. Moreover, you have written to me (9.1), ‘I am coming out there.’ Come! (4.3) The place has value. It is cut off (19.3).

Greet my father Pshai. Greet all the neighbours each one. Say to Partheni (11.7) that I got the clothes from Bes (5.2). The things which you sent to me, * I got them from him. At the time of my sending (i.e. this letter), I am going to make them bring the bit of wool to you (20.3). Live and be well for me for a long time (17.3). Praise God indeed . . .

* ΝΕΤ-Δ-ΤΗΝΟΟΥ-CΟΥ ‘the things which you (fem.) sent’ (15.2). Note that CΟΥ is an alternative to the suffix pronoun CΟΥ ‘they, them’ used after a small number of specific verbs.

A letter on reused papyrus (Letter P.Kellis Copt.75)

ΚΥΡΙΑ ΜΟΥ ΑΔΕΛΦΗ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΕ ΠΕΚΥCΙC ΨΑΪC ΠΑΜΟΥΡ

(Greek) To my lady and sister Partheni. Pekysis Psais Pamour.

Notice the Greek forms of the names ΠΕCΟΥ (Pekysis), who sent this letter, and ΠΩΔΑΪ (Psais), his father who was mentioned in the previous letter. The whole group amounts to a patronymic, ‘Pekysis, son of Psais, son of Pamour’.

ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕCΟΥ ΨΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΪΩΤ ΜΗΝΑCΝΗΥ ΨΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑCΡΙΜΕ ΜΗΝΕCΩΗΡΕ
ΚΑΤΑ ΠΟΥΡΑΝ ΧΙ-ΠCΟΥ ΝΜΜΗΔ ΝCΑΡΤ ΜΗ-ΜΗΤΑCΕ ΝΠΛΕΤΙ ΧΙΤΟΥ
ΝΤΟΟΤΓΪ ΜΠΑΝΕ ΟΥΟΧΪ ΝCΤΙΧΑ ΕΝΑΝΟΥC ΝΤΕΤΗΝΟΥΓΪ ΝΑΪ ΔΪΜΑΖΓΪ
ΝΤΕCΖΗΜΕ

At this point, the handwriting becomes more cursive.

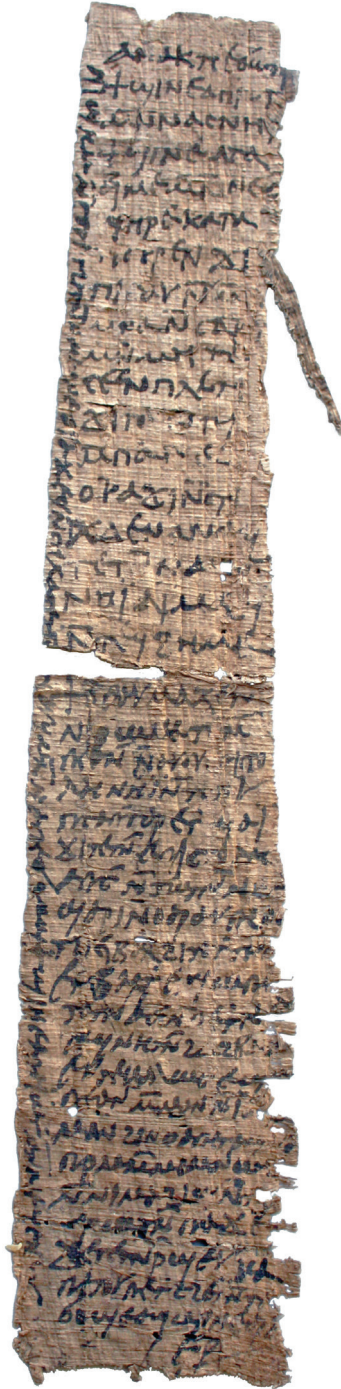


Figure 35 Kellis letter 75. *Source:* Courtesy of C. A. Hope and the Dakhleh Oasis Project.

†ꝥⲟⲁⲓⲙⲁⲗⲉ ⲛⲏⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲏⲛⲉⲩ-ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲡⲥⲟⲗⲏ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ
 ⲡⲥⲟⲓ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲉⲱⲁⲓⲭⲓ-ⲧⲉⲧⲏⲛⲉⲓⲡⲥⲟⲗⲏ ⲁⲡⲥ̣ ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲏ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲧⲉ ⲱⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ
 ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲡⲓⲣⲟⲩ †ⲓⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲗⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ*

ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲏⲛⲁⲃⲏ-ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲏⲧⲏ ⲓⲁ-ⲓⲃⲁⲥ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ
 ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲉⲓⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲡⲉⲧⲣⲱⲉⲩ ⲡⲣⲏⲙⲓⲙⲱⲛⲱ ⲁⲉ
 ⲓⲛⲏⲙⲁ ⲁⲓⲱⲛⲧⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲏ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲏⲣⲱⲉⲩ

ⲕⲁⲡⲓⲧⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲁⲃⲟⲱⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲡⲱⲛⲏ ⲛⲥⲁⲣⲧ
 ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲩⲓ ⲛⲏ ⲟⲩⲟⲭⲉⲩ ⲛⲥⲧⲓⲭⲁ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲩⲓ ⲙⲏⲛⲁⲡⲉⲃⲱⲱ
 †ⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲙⲏⲛⲉⲩⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲭⲓ ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓ ⲙⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ
 ⲥⲓⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲓⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲓⲛ̣ ⲥⲉⲭⲉ ⲥⲙⲟⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲃ

*The text is not clear but perhaps understand †-ⲓⲃⲟⲗ ⲗⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ-
 ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ‘I am apart (ⲓⲃ-ⲃⲟⲗ) from you (plural)’. Here ⲧⲏⲛⲉ is a dialect
 variant of the pronoun ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲏ. Presumably, the sense of ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ
 ‘because of me’ is that this situation is my own fault but I have no
 choice.

I am Pegosh. I am greeting my father and my brothers. I am greeting my
 wife and her children each one. Take the six bales (ⲙⲓⲙⲏⲁ) of wool and
 sixteen hanks (ⲡⲗⲉⲧⲓ). Get them from Pane (5.2). Cut it as a nice strip
 (15.4) and send it to me (8.4). I have paid him for his freight.

I am disappointed about these people through whom you did not
 send a letter to me (15.1). Because the moment when I get your letter
 – reckon it – you are the ones I see (13.4). Today I am apart from you
 because of myself (4.2).

Supposing you are going to find the one who will pay you for cloth,
 then good (18.4). And if not, then no (7.4). I have seen what has value.
 However, the man from Mono (5.1) is in these places. I asked him about
 you, and he said that you are being profitable.

Kapitou is the one who is writing to Tagoshe, greeting you. This bit of
 wool (2.5) which I sent to you, cut it as a strip and send it with Pegosh’s
 belongings (13.3). I am greeting my father and his brothers. Assuming
 you got the pot from the man, write to me. Assuming also you have not
 written to me (14.2), no saying (for ⲥⲉⲭⲉ read ⲱⲁⲭⲉ) is agreed about
 the money (19.3).

ⲉⲣⲣⲱⲥⲟⲁⲓ ⲥⲉ ⲉⲩⲭⲟⲙⲁⲓ ⲡⲟⲗⲗⲟⲓⲥ ⲭⲣⲟⲛⲟⲓⲥ ⲕⲩⲣⲓⲁ ⲙⲟⲩ ⲡⲁⲣ
 (Greek) I pray that you will be well for many seasons, my lady Par.

**Some
Coptic words
that can
confuse**

Coptic has its share of words which look like other words when written down – think of English ‘fair hair’, ‘fun fair’ and ‘fair enough’. Sometimes this arises because words have a common origin, and sometimes it is just coincidence. In Coptic, for instance, ⲕⲟⲧⲥ ‘surround’ and ⲕⲧⲟⲥ ‘return’ look similar because they have a common origin (the sense of ‘turning’), but ⲕⲟⲧⲥ ‘build’ simply happens to sound the same. So, here are some potentially confusing words you should be aware of in the book. Not every form is listed here, only those liable to cause confusion, but full entries may be found in the Word List that follows (see [page 321](#)).

ⲁⲛⲁⲓ, ⲁⲛⲁⲥ pleasure, ⲁⲛⲓ bring!
 ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ begin, ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ rule
 ⲁⲩⲱⲁⲓ multiply, ⲉⲓⲩⲉ ⲁⲩⲉⲧ hang, suspend
 ⲃⲁⲗ eye, ⲃⲟⲗ outside, ⲃⲟⲗ ⲃⲗ- ⲃⲟⲗⲥ ⲃⲙⲗⲧ release
 ⲁⲓⲁⲕⲟⲛⲟⲕ or ⲁⲓⲁⲕⲟⲛ ⲁⲓⲁⲕⲁⲓⲟⲕ righteous person
 ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ or ⲉⲧⲓ request, ⲉⲧⲓ or ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ still, ⲉⲓⲧⲉ whether, ⲉⲓⲧⲉ . . . ⲉⲓⲧⲉ
 whether . . . or
 ⲁⲉ however, ⲉⲉ moreover
 ⲉ, ⲉⲣⲟⲥ to, ⲉⲣⲛ̄, ⲉⲣⲱⲥ up to
 ⲉⲓⲛⲉ bring, ⲉⲓⲛⲉ resemble
 ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ up, ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ down (= ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲙⲧ)
 ⲕⲧⲟ ⲕⲧⲉ- ⲕⲧⲟⲥ return, ⲕⲟⲧ ⲕⲉⲧ- ⲕⲟⲧⲥ ⲕⲙⲧⲧ build, ⲕⲟⲧⲧⲉ ⲕⲉⲧ-
 ⲕⲟⲧⲥ ⲕⲙⲧⲧ go round, ⲕⲟⲧ circuit
 ⲕⲟⲩⲓ little, ⲕⲟⲟⲩⲉ others
 ⲙⲁ place, ⲙⲁ give!
 ⲙⲉ truth, ⲙⲉ ⲙⲉⲣⲉ- love, ⲙⲉⲣⲉ midday
 ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ as, ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ (marks the object)
 ⲙ̄ⲛ with, ⲙ̄ⲛ or ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ⲛ there is not, ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ no, ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ truly, ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ
 own
 ⲙⲉⲛ of course, ⲙⲉⲛ even
 ⲙⲙⲥⲉ interest, ⲙⲓⲥⲉ give birth
 ⲙⲙⲧ or ⲙⲙⲧⲉ ten, ⲙⲙⲧⲉ middle, ⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲉ fifteen, ⲙⲙⲧⲓ really?
 ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧⲧ dead, ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧⲥ kill
 ⲙⲁⲁⲩ mother, ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲁ alone
 ⲙⲙⲙⲩⲉ many, ⲙⲓⲩⲉ fight, ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ travel
 ⲛ̄, ⲛⲁⲥ for, ⲛ̄, ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ as, ⲛ̄, ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ (marks the object), ⲛ̄ (marks the
 negative with ⲁⲛ)
 ⲛⲁ mercy, ⲛⲁⲥ for, ⲛⲁⲓ for me, ⲛⲁⲓ these ones
 ⲛⲁⲩ see, ⲛⲁⲩ hour, ⲛⲁⲩ for them

ⲛⲓⲙ every, **ⲛⲓⲙ** who?
ⲛⲓⲧ who, which, **ⲛⲓⲧⲥ** bring, **ⲛⲓⲧⲉ** of, **ⲛⲓⲧⲉ** (marks the conjunctive tense)
ⲛⲟϥⲭ false, **ⲛⲟϥⲭⲉ** throw
ⲛⲉ is, **ⲛⲉ** sky, **ⲛⲓ** or **ⲛⲉⲓ** kiss
ⲛⲱⲣⲱ **ⲛⲱⲣⲱⲓ** **ⲉⲃⲟⲗ** spread out, **ⲛⲱⲣⲭ** **ⲛⲱⲣⲭⲓ** **ⲉⲃⲟⲗ** separate
ⲣⲓ cell, **ⲣⲟ** door
ⲛⲱϩⲧ bow, **ⲣⲱϩⲧ** hit, **ⲣⲱⲕϩ** burn
ⲙⲉ yes, **ⲙⲉ** sixty, **ⲙⲱ ⲙⲉ**- drink
ⲙⲁⲃⲉ wise, **ⲙⲁⲃⲉ** sword, **ⲙⲱⲃⲉ** laugh
ⲙⲱⲛⲉ sister, **ⲙⲱⲛⲉ** robber
ⲙⲓⲛⲧⲉ together, **ⲙⲓⲛⲧⲉ** two, couple (feminine)
ⲙⲓⲛⲏϥ brothers, **ⲙⲓⲁϥ** two, couple
ⲙⲏϥ time, **ⲙⲟϥ** date, **ⲙⲟⲟϥ** six
ⲙⲱⲟϥϩ **ⲙⲟⲟϥϩⲥ** assemble, **ⲟϥⲱϩ** settle down
ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲟ **ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲏϥⲓ** esteem, **ⲧⲁⲉⲓⲟϥ** fifty
ⲧⲱⲕ strengthen, **ⲧⲁⲕⲟ** destroy
ⲧⲁⲙⲟ inform, **ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ** create
ⲧⲉⲛⲟϥ now, **ⲧⲱⲛⲟϥ** greatly, **ⲧⲛⲓⲛⲟⲟϥ** send
ⲧⲟⲟϥ hill, **ⲧⲟⲟϥⲉ** sandal, **ⲧⲁⲟϥⲱ** **ⲧⲁϥⲉ**- produce
ⲧⲱⲱ determine, **ⲧⲱⲱ** boundary, **ⲧⲁⲱⲟ** increase
ⲟϥⲁ one, **ⲟϥⲁⲁⲥ** only, alone
ⲟϥⲁⲉ nor, **ⲟϥⲧⲉ** between
ⲟϥⲛ there is, **ⲟϥⲛ** actually, **ⲟϥⲛⲟϥ** hour, **ⲟϥⲟⲛ** someone, **ⲟϥⲱⲛ**
 open
ⲟϥⲱⲱⲓ or **ⲟϥⲱⲱⲃ** respond, **ⲟϥⲱⲱⲓ** break
ⲱⲁ festival, **ⲱⲁ** appear, **ⲱⲁ** up to
ⲱⲟ thousand, **ⲱⲉ** hundred, **ⲱⲉ** wood, **ⲱⲓ** measure, **ⲱⲱ** sand
ⲱⲱⲃ **ⲱⲃ**- shave, **ⲱⲓⲃⲉ** **ⲱⲃ**- change
ⲱⲏⲙ ordinary, **ⲱⲏⲣⲉ** child
ⲱⲙⲱⲉ worship, **ⲱⲏⲙⲱⲏⲙ** little by little
ⲱⲱⲛⲉ **ⲱⲟⲟⲛⲉⲓ** sicken, **ⲱⲱⲱⲛⲉ** **ⲱⲟⲟⲛⲉⲓ** deprive
ⲱⲟⲣⲛ first, **ⲱⲱⲣⲛ** morning
ϩⲓ, **ⲛⲓⲓⲛⲧⲥ** in, **ϩⲓⲧ** **ϩⲧⲏⲥ** mind, **ϩⲏ**, **ϩⲓⲛⲧⲥ** belly, **ϩⲏ**, **ϩⲓⲛⲧⲥ** front, **ϩⲁⲏ**
 end
ϩⲓⲛⲧ downstream (on the Nile), **ⲉⲙⲓⲓⲛⲧ** northwards
ϩⲉ manner, **ϩⲉ** fall, **ϩⲓ** at, **ϩⲓⲏ** road
ϩⲟ face, **ϩⲟ** sack, **ϩⲱ** suffice, **ϩⲱ** me too
ϩⲁⲕ prudent, **ϩⲏⲕⲉ** poor, hungry

ⲉⲗⲗⲟ elder, ⲉⲗⲗⲛ̅ pagan, Roman
 ⲉⲛ̅ or ⲉⲎ in, ⲉⲎ- or ⲉⲛ̅- some, ⲉⲎⲉ, ⲉⲎⲁⲥ wish
 ⲉⲱⲎ command, ⲉⲱⲎ approach
 ⲉⲁⲡ justice, ⲉⲱⲡ ⲉⲙⲡⲓ hide
 ⲉⲱⲥ sing, ⲉⲱⲥ as though, ⲉⲱⲥⲧⲉ so that
 ⲉⲧⲟ horse, ⲉⲧⲟⲡ constraint
 ⲉⲙⲮ gain, ⲉⲟⲮ excess, ⲉⲟⲟⲮ day, ⲉⲟⲟⲮ be harmful, ⲉⲱⲟⲮ rain
 ⲉⲓⲟⲮⲉ hit, ⲉⲓⲟⲟⲮⲉ roads
 ⲁⲉ that, ⲁⲱ cup, ⲁⲱ head, ⲁⲱ ⲁⲉ- say
 ⲁⲱⲥ head, ⲉⲁⲱⲥ onto, ⲁⲱⲕ your head, ⲁⲱⲕ complete
 ⲁⲡⲟ create, ⲁⲡⲓⲟ blame, ⲁⲡⲓ must (do something)
 ⲁⲉⲣⲟ ignite, ⲁⲣⲟ be strong
 ⲁⲟⲟⲮ send, ⲁⲓⲟⲮⲉ steal, ⲁⲓⲟⲮⲁ blaspheme
 ⲥⲟⲎⲥ hurt, ⲥⲱⲎⲧ̅ ⲥⲟⲎⲧ̅ⲓ anger
 ⲧ̅ I (am), ⲧ̅ give

Sahidic Coptic–English word list

This is a list of words you met in the book. Following standard practice in Coptic dictionaries, words are listed in alphabetical order on the basis of their consonants, whereas vowels are a secondary consideration (11.6). You may have to jump backwards and forwards between entries for a while, until you get used to this arrangement, but it soon becomes second nature.

That said, words whose *initial* letter is a vowel (ⲁ, ⲉ, ⲏ, ⲓ, ⲟ, ⲱ) are listed together for ease of recognition, so there are separate entries for words beginning with ⲉ or ⲉⲓ (vowel) and those beginning with ⲉⲓ or ⲓ (consonant), as well as for words beginning with ⲟϣ as a vowel or as a consonant. Likewise, words whose *initial* letter writes two sounds (Ⲑ, ⲑ, ⲕ, ⲙ, ⲛ, ⲝ) are listed together, but otherwise those letters are treated simply as two sounds (1.1). In other words, Ⲑ is treated as ⲧⲉ unless it is the first letter of a word.

Standard grammatical elements (such as articles, converters, suffix pronouns, tense markers) are not listed below because they can be found via the contents list or the index. The shifting forms of verbs and pronouns are not listed separately either, but some of the more confusing forms are cross-referenced, along with some common variant spellings.

ⲁ

ⲁⲁⲥ see ⲉⲓⲣⲉ

ⲁⲓⲱⲛ trial

ⲁⲓⲁⲑⲟⲥ good

ⲁⲓⲁⲑⲟⲛ *good thing*

ⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ love, compassion, charity

ⲁⲓⲧⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ *be kind, please*

ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ *please*

ⲁⲓⲟ truly, indeed

ⲁⲕⲉⲣⲁⲓⲟⲥ pure, simple

ⲁⲙⲓⲟϣ advise

ⲁⲕⲁⲑⲁⲣⲥⲓⲁ dirt, impurity

ⲁⲕⲁⲑⲟⲥ for ⲁⲓⲁⲑⲟⲥ

ⲁⲗⲗⲁ instead, rather, nonetheless

ⲁⲗⲏⲑⲱⲥ truthfully

ⲁⲙⲟϣ come! (ⲁⲙⲏ feminine)

ⲁⲙⲏⲧⲉ west, afterlife

ⲁⲙⲁⲅⲧⲉ grab, hold

ⲁⲛⲁⲓ, ⲁⲛⲁⲥ charm, pleasure

ⲡⲁⲛⲁ= please
 ⲁⲛⲓ or ⲁⲛⲓⲧ= bring!
 ⲁⲓⲱⲛ era, age
 ⲁⲛⲓ̄ see ⲁⲛⲟⲕ
 ⲁⲛⲁⲓⲕⲏ necessity, constraint
 ⲁⲛⲁⲓⲛⲱⲥⲧⲏⲕ lector, reader
 ⲁⲛⲟⲕ or ⲁⲛⲓ̄ I, me
 ⲁⲛⲉⲭⲉ delay, wait
 ⲁⲛⲁⲭⲱⲣⲉⲓ withdraw
 ⲁⲛⲁⲭⲟⲣⲓⲧⲏⲕ *anchorite, hermit*
 ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲕ lawless
 ⲁⲛⲟⲛ or ⲁⲛⲓ̄ we, us
 ⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲕ rest, relief
 ⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲣⲉⲫⲉⲓ behave
 ⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲣⲟⲫⲏ *life-story*
 ⲁⲛⲓⲧ= bring! (see also ⲁⲛⲓ)
 ⲁⲡⲁ father (title)
 ⲁⲡⲉ or ⲁⲡⲏ head
 ⲁⲡⲓⲕⲏ threaten
 ⲁⲡⲟⲫⲁⲥⲓⲕ sentence
 ⲁⲡⲁⲣⲭⲏ first-fruits
 ⲁⲡⲣⲏⲧⲉ moment, while
 ⲁⲡⲓⲥⲧⲟⲕ faithless (see also ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ)
 ⲁⲡⲟⲧ cup
 ⲁⲣⲁ elder, local official
 ⲁⲣⲓ do! make!
 ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲁⲓⲁⲡⲏ *be kind, please*
 ⲁⲏⲣ air
 ⲁⲣⲓⲕⲉ fault
 ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ begin (doing something)
 ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ rule (+ ⲉ) over
 ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ *magistrate*
 ⲁⲣⲭⲏⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ *see* ⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ
 ⲁⲣⲉⲥⲕⲉ please, appease
 ⲁⲣⲧⲟⲱ or ⲡⲧⲟⲱ artab (measure), bushel
 ⲁⲣⲱⲓⲛ lentil
 ⲁⲥⲁⲓ̄ ⲁⲥⲱⲟⲩⲧ̄ lighten, relax
 ⲁⲥⲉⲱⲏⲕ irreligious
 ⲁⲥⲕⲓⲧⲏⲕ ascetic, hermit

ⲁϢⲟⲙⲁⲧⲟϥ ethereal (see also ⲙⲟⲙⲁ)
 ⲁϢⲛⲉ speech
 ⲁϢⲛⲁⲗⲉ kiss
 ⲁⲓⲧⲓⲁ charge, accusation
 ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ or ⲉⲧⲓ or ⲛⲧⲓ ask, request
 ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ for ⲉⲓⲧⲉ
 ⲁⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉ witless, insensible (see also ⲉⲓⲙⲉ)
 ⲁⲧϥⲃⲱ uneducated, ignorant (see also ⲙⲃⲱ)
 ⲁⲧϥⲣ̅ⲃⲉ hard-working, diligent (see also ⲙⲣ̅ⲃⲉ)
 ⲁⲧϥⲱⲧ̅ heedless (see also ⲙⲱⲧ̅)
 ⲁⲧⲱⲁⲅ worthless (see also ⲱⲁⲅ)
 ⲁⲧⲅⲛⲧ ignorant, fatuous (see also ⲅⲛⲧ)
 ⲁⲧϩⲟⲙ impossible (see also ⲩⲟⲙ)
 ⲁⲱ who? which? what?
 ⲛ̅ⲁⲱ ⲛ̅ⲗⲉ *how?*
 ⲁⲱⲁⲓ increase, lengthen
 ⲁⲱⲕⲁⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ cry out, scream (see also ⲭⲓⲱⲕⲁⲕ)
 ⲁⲅⲟ or ⲉⲅⲟ treasure, treasury
 ⲁⲅⲉⲣⲁⲧⲥ stand (reflexive)
 ⲁⲭⲉ or ⲁⲭⲓⲕ say! tell! speak!
 ⲁⲭ̅ⲛ̅, ⲁⲭ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲥ except, without
 ⲁⲭⲓⲕ see ⲁⲭⲉ

B

ⲃⲓ for ⲙⲓ
 ⲃⲱ tree, vine
 ⲃⲱⲕ ⲃⲛⲕⲓⲧ go, depart
 ⲃⲁⲗ eye
 ⲃⲟⲗ outside
 ⲣ̅ⲃⲟⲗ *escape*
 ϥⲃⲟⲗ *away, off*
 ⲱⲁⲃⲟⲗ *forever, eternal*
 ⲃⲱⲗ ⲃ̅ⲗ- ⲃⲟⲗⲥ ⲃⲛⲕⲓⲧ untie, loosen (+ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) release
 ⲃ̅ⲗⲉ blind (ⲃ̅ⲗⲉⲉⲅⲉ plural)
 ⲃ̅ⲗⲭⲉ ostrakon, potsherd
 ⲃⲛⲙⲁ (judge's) bench
 ⲃⲱⲱⲛ or ⲃⲱⲛⲉ bad, evil (see also ⲙⲧⲟⲓ)
 ⲃ̅ⲛ̅ⲛⲉ date (fruit)
 ⲃⲓⲣ basket

ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC barbarian
 ΒΙΟC lifetime
 ΒΑCΑΝΟC torture
 ΒΗΤ palm leaf
 Β̄ΩΕ forgetfulness
 ΒΑΙΩΙΝΕ messenger
 ΒΑΩΟΥΡ saw
 ΒΩCΕ *for* ϣΩCΕ

Γ

ΓΑΡ because, after all
 ΓΕΝΟC lineage, family
 ΓΡΑΦΗ scripture

Δ

ΔΔ written for *δεῖνα καί δεῖνα* (Greek) such-and-such
 ΔΕ so, but, therefore, however
 ΔΙΑΒΟΛΟC devil
 ΔΙΩΓΜΟC persecution
 ΔΙΗΚΕΙ distribute (property), bequeath
 ΔΙΩΚΕ persecute
 ΔΙΑΚΟΝΕΙ or †ΔΚΟΝΕΙ act properly
 ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟC or ΔΙΑΚΩΝ *deacon, priest*
 ΔΟΥΞ ruler, duke
 ΔΙΚΑΙΟC righteous
 ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ *righteousness*
 ΔΔΙΜΩΝ or ΔΕΜΩΝ or ΔΔΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ demon
 ΔΙΜΩΡΙΑ punishment, execution
 ΔΑΞΙC or ΤΑΞΙC post, position
 ΔΡΟΜΟC race, course
 ΔΩΡΟΝ gift

Ε or ΕΙ (vowel)

Ε, ΕΡΟ= to, toward, at, in relation to, more than
 ΕΙ ΝΗΥ† come
 ΕΒΟΛ out
 ΕΒΟΛ ΧΙΤῆ through, by, by means of
 ΕΒΟΛΧΕ because
 †ΕΒΟΛ sell

ΕΒΗΝ wicked
 ΕΒΟΤ month
 ΕΙΔΟC item
 ΕΙΕ or ΕΙΕ then, so
 ΕΚΙΒΕ breast
 ΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ church, congregation
 ΕΞΩΡΙΖΕ exile, banish
 ΕΞΟΥCΙΑ authority
 ΕΛΑΧΙCΤΟC insignificant
 ΕΛΑΧΙCΤΟΝ *insignificant thing*
 ΕΛΟΟΛΕ grape
 ΕΙΜΗΤΕΙ or ΕΙΕΜΗΤΕΙ except
 ΕΙΜΕ realise
 ΑΤΕΙΜΕ *witless, insensible*
 ΕΜΧΙΡ for ΜΩΙΡ
 ΕΜΑΤΕ very, greatly, especially
 ΕΜΖΗΤ northwards (see also ΖΗΤ)
 ΕΝΕ whether
 ΕΙΝΕ resemble
 ΕΙΝΕ Ν- ΝΤ= bring
 ΕΝΤΟΛΗ or ΝΤΟΛΗ instruction, law
 ΕΝΕΖ ever, forever
 ΕΠΙΔΗ or ΕΠΕΙΔΗ since, because
 ΕΠΕΚΑΛΕ invoke
 ΕΠΕΠ or ΕΠΗΠ Epipi (month)
 ΕΠΑΡΧΟC governor, prefect
 ΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC bishop
 ΑΡΧΗΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC *archbishop*
 ΕΠΕCΗΤ down (see also ΕCΗΤ)
 ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ or ΕΠΕΙΤΙΜΑ punish, chastise
 ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟC steward
 ΕΙΡΕ Ṗ- ΛΑ= Ο† do, make
 ΕΡΟ= see Ε
 ΕΡΓΑCΙΑ trade, craft, job
 ΕΡΜΟΝΤ Armant (place)
 ΕΡṖ, ΕΡΩ= up to
 ΕΙΡΗΝΗ or ΗΡΗΝΗ peace
 ΕΡΑΤ= to
 ΕΡΗΤ promise

ⲉⲣⲏⲩ friend, companion
 ⲉⲣⲱⲁⲛ if
 ⲉⲓϥ (initial particle)
 ⲉϥⲏⲧ bottom, ground (see also ⲉⲡⲉϥⲏⲧ)
 ⲉϥⲟⲟⲩ sheep
 ⲉⲓϥⲙⲏⲧⲉ (initial particle)
 ⲉⲧ or ⲉⲧⲉ who, which
 ⲉⲧⲓ or ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ still, now
 ⲉⲧⲓ for ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ
 ⲉⲓⲧⲉ then, whether
 ⲉⲓⲧⲉ . . . ⲉⲓⲧⲉ *whether . . . or*
 ⲉⲧⲃⲉ, ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲉ because of, about
 ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ *why? (see also ⲟⲩ)*
 ⲉⲧⲓⲙⲟϥ freely
 ⲉⲧⲏ̅, ⲉⲧⲟⲟⲧⲉ to (someone)
 ⲉⲟⲟⲩ glory
 ⲧⲉⲟⲟⲩ *glorify*
 ⲉⲱ for ⲱ̅
 ⲉⲱⲉ ⲉⲱⲧ- ⲁⲱⲧⲉ ⲁⲱⲉⲧ hang, depend
 ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ supposing
 ⲉⲱⲱⲉ or ⲱ̅ⲱⲉ be appropriate
 ⲉⲱⲭⲉ supposing
 ⲉⲓⲡⲧ̅ nail
 ⲉⲗⲟ for ⲁⲗⲟ
 ⲉⲗⲟⲩⲛ in, into
 ⲉⲗⲣⲁⲓ down, up
 ⲉⲭⲏ̅, ⲉⲭⲱⲉ over, onto, ahead of

Ⲫ

Ⲫⲱⲟⲛ creature

ⲏ

ⲏ or, and
 ⲏⲓ house
 ⲣⲏ̅ⲏ̅ⲏⲓ *warden, houseman*
 ⲏⲡⲉ number
 ⲏⲣⲏⲏⲏ for ⲉⲓⲣⲏⲏⲏ
 ⲏⲣⲓ wine
 ⲏⲧⲉ for ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ

Θ

ΘḲΒΙΟ ΘḲΒΙԷ- ΘḲΒΙΟϝ ΘḲΒΙΗΥ† be humble
 ΘΛΙΒԷ upset, be upset
 ΘΑΛΑCϐΑ see 𐌊ΑΛΑCϐΑ
 ΘΑΥΜΑΖԷ wonder about
 ΘΥΜΟC rage
 ΘΗΝ sulphur, brimstone
 ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕCΤΑΤΟC best beloved of God (title)
 ΘΥΡΟΝ gate
 ΘΥCΙΑΖԷ sacrifice
 ΘΗCΙΑCΤΗΡΙΟΝ *altar*
 ΘΟΟΥΤ or ΘΩΘ Thouth (month)

ⲓ or ⲉⲓ

ⲓⲉΡΟ or ⲉⲓⲉΡΟ river
 ⲓϥ for ⲓⲏCΟΥC Jesus (name)
 ⲓΩΤ or ⲉⲓΩΤ father (ⲉⲓΟΥⲉ plural)

Κ

ΚΩ ΚΑ- ΚΑΔϝ ΚΗ† put, leave, drop, let (+ ΕΒΟΛ) forgive
 ΚΟΥⲓ or ΚΟΥⲓ small, little
 ΚΩΩΒԷ ΚԷԷΒԷ- ΚΟΟΒԷϝ compel, force
 ΚΥΒΕΡΝΑ steer
 ΚΟΚ for ΚΟΧ
 ΚΑΚԷ darkness
 ΚΑΚΩC badly
 ΚΟΧ standard, usual
 ΚΛΑΒΤ hood
 ΚΟΛΑΚΕΥԷ flatter, persuade
 ΚΕΛΩΛ bucket
 ΚΛΟΜ crown
 †ΚΛΟΜ *crown*
 ΚΑΛΩC properly, well
 ΚΕΛΕΥԷ allow, grant
 ΚΩΛḂ ΚΕΛḂ- ΚΟΛḂϝ ΚΟΛḂ† strike, knock, ring (bell)
 ΚΑΛCΙΛ wheel
 ΚΙΜ ΚΕΜΤ- ΚΕΜΤϝ move, affect, react
 ΚΗΜԷ Egypt (place)
 ΚΟΜΙC (imperial) deputy

ΚΩΜΙΤΑΤΩΝ *court, assembly*
 ΚΩΜΩ Κῶω- ΚΟΜΩ= mock
 ΚΕΝΕ Qena (place)
 ΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΕ approach, risk
 ΚΩΝĊ ΚΕΝC- ΚΟΝC= ΚΟΝĊ† stab, slay
 ΚΟΝΤΟC pole
 ΚΑΠΝΟC smoke
 ΚΑΙΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ or ΚΕΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ main point, crux, heading,
 compendium
 ΚΡΟ riverbank, seashore (ΚΡΩΟΥ plural)
 ΚΑΡΩ= shut up (reflexive)
 ΚΑΡΩϣ *silence*
 Κῤ̄ΜΕC dust
 ΚΡΙΝΕ judge
 ΚΑΡΠΟC fruit
 ΚΡΟΥΡ frog
 ΚΑΙΡΟC period, season
 ΚΕΡΑCΤΗC viper
 ΚΕΡΑΤ= step (reflexive)
 ΚΩΡῶ ΚΕΡω- ΚΟΡω= beg, plead
 ΚΑΡΩϣ see ΚΑΡΩ=
 ΚΩΩC ΚΟΟC= ΚΗC† embalm, prepare for burial
 ΚΟCΜΟC world, creation
 ΚΑCΤΡΟΝ castle
 ΚΤΟ ΚΤΕ- ΚΤΟ= ΚΤΗΥ† turn, return (reflexive)
 ΚΑΤΑ, ΚΑΤΑΡΟ= according to, just as
 ΚΩΤ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤ= ΚΗΤ† build
 ΧΙΚΩΤ *improve, learn*
 †ΚΩΤ *edify, instruct*
 ΚΩΤΕ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤ= ΚΗΤ† circulate, queue
 (+ Ε) go round
 ΚΟΤ *circuit, trip, visit*
 ΚΑΤΕΧΕ hold back, restrain
 ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΝΕ condemn
 ΚΑΤΗC jug
 ΚΑΘΑΙΡΟΥ downgrade, expel
 ΚΟΟΥΕ others
 ΚΑḪ earth
 ΚΩḪ ΚΗḪ† envy

ΚΟΙΑΞΚ or ΚΙΟΞΚ Khoiak (month)

ΚΩΞΤ fire

Λ

ΛΟ ΛΟΤΞ stop, quit, leave

ΛΑΒΞΙΜΕ amorous, randy

ΛΟΓΟC word, lesson, message

ΠΛΟΓΟC ἸΠΠΙΝΟΥΤΕ (*legal document*)

ΛΑΚΑΝΤ cauldron

ΛΑΜΠΑ lamp

ΛΥΠΕΙ grieve, grief

ΛΟΙΠΟΝ already

ΛΕΠΙCΕ fragment, bit

ΛΑC tongue

ΛΑΟC people, community

ΛΑΔΥ any, anyone, no-one

ΛΑΦΑΝΕ magistrate

Μ

ΜΑ place

ἸΠΠΕΙΜΑ *here*

ΜΑ give!

ΜΕ or ΜΗΕ truth

ΜΕ ΜΕΡΕ- ΜΕΡΙΤΞ love

ΜΕΡΙΤ *beloved* (ΜΕΡΑΤΕ *plural*)

ΜΟΥ ΜΟΟΥΤ† die

ΜΟΥΙ lion

ΜΑΔΒ thirty (ΜΑΔΒΕ *feminine*)

ΜΑΕΙΝ sign, mark

ΜΟΕΙΞΕ surprise, shock

ΜΟΚΜΕΚ ΜΕΚΜΟΥΚΞ ponder, ruminate

ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC blessed, deceased

ἸΚΑΞ ΜΟΚΞ† suffer, grieve

ΜΟΚΞἸΖΗΤ *grieve*

ΜΑΚΞ neck

ΜΟΚΞἸΖΗΤ see ἸΚΑΞ

ΜΑΛΙCΤΑ especially

ΜΟΥΛΞ wax

ⲙⲙⲟⲥ see ⲡ
 ⲙⲙⲛ or ⲙⲛ there is not
 ⲙⲙⲟⲛ *no*
 ⲙⲙⲟⲛ truly
 ⲙⲙⲓⲛⲙⲟⲥ own
 ⲙⲙⲁⲧⲉ for ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ
 ⲙⲙⲁϥ there
 ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁϥ *that*
 ⲙⲛ, ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲥ with, and
 ⲙⲛ see ⲙⲙⲛ
 ⲙⲉⲛ of course, accordingly (see also ⲩⲟⲣⲧ)
 ⲙⲉⲛ surely, indeed, even
 ⲙⲓⲛⲉ sort, manner, fashion
 ⲛⲧⲉⲙⲓⲛⲉ *this way, like this*
 ⲙⲟⲟⲛⲉ feed, nurse
 ⲙⲟϥⲛ ⲙⲙⲛⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ remain, continue, carry on
 ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ solitary, monk
 ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲁ, ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲱⲥ after
 ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲱⲥ *next, afterwards*
 ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲙⲣⲓⲟⲛ monastery
 ⲙⲓⲛⲟϥⲧ doorkeeper
 ⲙⲛⲧⲉ, ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲥ have not
 ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ pious, devout
 ⲙⲛⲧⲣⲉ or ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲣⲉ witness
 ⲙⲛⲃⲟⲙ see ⲃⲟⲙ
 ⲙⲁⲡⲡⲁ sheet
 ⲙⲙⲡⲟⲥ or ⲙⲙⲡⲟⲧⲉ in case
 ⲙⲡⲩⲁ deserve, be worth
 ⲙⲉⲣⲉ see ⲙⲉ
 ⲙⲉⲣⲉ midday
 ⲙⲟϥⲣ ⲙⲟⲣⲥ ⲙⲙⲣⲓ bind
 ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲛ let's go
 ⲙⲣⲣⲉ bond, fetter
 ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ share, part
 ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ (ⲙⲉⲣⲁⲧⲉ plural) beloved (see also ⲙⲉ)
 ⲙⲟⲣⲧ beard
 ⲙⲁⲣⲧϥⲣⲟⲥ witness, martyr
 ⲙⲁⲣⲧϥⲣⲓⲁ *martyrdom*

ΜΑΡΤΗΡΙΟΝ *shrine (for martyr)*
ΜΗCE interest
ΜΙCE **ΜΕC-** **ΜΑCΤϣ** **ΜΟCΕ†** give birth **ϣῤῖΠῖΜΙCΕ** first born
ΜΑΪCΒΩ wisdom loving (see also **CBΩ**)
ΜΕCΟΡΕ or **ΜΗCΟΥΡΕ** Mesore (month)
ΜΟCΤΕ **ΜΕCΤΕ-** **ΜΕCΤΩϣ** hate
ΜΕCΤῚΖΗΤ chest
ΜΥCΤΗΡΙΟΝ mystery
ᾹΤΟ **ΕΒΟΛ** presence
ΜΑΤΟΙ soldier
ΜΗΤ ten (**ΜΗΤΕ** feminine)
ΜΗΤΕ middle, midst
ΜΗΤΙ really?
ΜΟΤΕ shoulders
ΜΟΥΤΕ (+ Ε) call, summon
ᾹΤΟΝ **ΜΟΤῚ†** rest, pass away (reflexive)
ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ repent, confess
ΜΗΤΡΑ cervix
ΜΑΘΗΤΗC disciple
ΜΑΑΥ mother
ΜΑΥΑΑϣ only, alone
ΜΕΕΥΕ think
ῤῖΠΜΕΕΥΕ *remember*
ΜΟΟΥ water
ΜΟΥΟΥΤ **ΜΕΥΤ-** **ΜΟΟΥΤϣ** kill
ΜΗΗΩΕ many, host
ΜΙΩΕ **ΜΕΩ-** **ΜΑΩϣ** fight, struggle (+ **ΕΧᾹᾹ**) fight for
ΜΟΟΩΕ walk, travel
ᾹΩΡΙΡ or **ΕΜΧΙΡ** Mekhir (month)
ΜΑΖΕ cubit
ΜΑΖΕ flax
ΜΟΥΖ **ΜΕΖ-** **ΜΑΖϣ** **ΜΗΖ†** fill, complete, redeem
ΜΑΑΧΕ or **ΜΑΧΕ** maaje (measure, about 1/12 of **ΑΡΤΟΒ**)
ΜΟΧῚ belt

N

Ᾱ written for **ΝΟΥΒ**
ᾹᾹ, **ᾹΜΟϣ** from, in, as
ᾹᾹ, **ΝΑϣ** to, for

NA pity, mercy
 ṖOYNA *be merciful*
 NAHT *compassionate*
NAI these ones
NE (they) are
NOEI consider, reflect
NOYB or **N̄** gold, money
NOBE sin
NOBPE good, positive
NAĪAT̄ *be blessed*
N̄KA thing, belonging
N̄KOTĪ or **N̄KOTE** lie down, sleep
NIM each, every
NIM who?
NM̄MĀ *see NM̄*
NYMΦIOC bridegroom
NOMOC law, authority, (administrative) district
NOYN or **NON** depth, groundwater, abyss, underworld
NOYNE root, stock
NANOY, **NANOȲ** *be good*
N̄NAZPN̄, **N̄NAZPĀ** *see NAZPN̄*
NEYRON strap, lash
N̄CA, **N̄CW̄** *after, behind, apart from*
NOYC perception
NHCTIA fasting
 NHCTEȲE *fast*
N̄T who, which
N̄T̄ *see EINE*
N̄TO or **N̄TE** you (feminine)
NAHT compassionate (see also **NA**)
NOYTE god
N̄TOK or **N̄TK̄** you (masculine)
N̄TOLH for **ENTOLH**
N̄TN̄, **N̄TOOT̄** *with, from*
N̄TOC she, her
N̄TWT̄N̄ or **N̄TET̄N̄** you (plural)
N̄TOOY they, them
N̄TOQ he, him
 H N̄TOQ *even, perhaps*

Ⲛⲧⲏⲥ weed
 ⲛⲁϥ look (+ Ⲉ) see
 ⲛⲁϥ hour, time
 ⲛⲏⲩ see Ⲉⲓ
 ⲛⲁⲩⲉ, ⲛⲁⲩⲱⲩ be numerous
 ⲛⲁⲩⲱⲧ hard
 ⲛⲁⲩⲱⲧⲥⲏⲧ stubborn
 ⲛⲈⲗ oil
 ⲛⲁⲗⲃ yoke, shoulders
 ⲛⲈⲗⲡⲈ mourn
 ⲛⲁⲗⲡⲛ̄, ⲛⲁⲗⲡⲁⲥ or ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲗⲡⲛ̄, ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲗⲡⲁⲥ before, in front of
 ⲛ̄ⲗⲏⲧ see ⲗⲛ̄, ⲛ̄ⲗⲏⲧⲥ
 ⲛⲟϥ false, lying, liar
 ⲛⲟϥⲕⲈ ⲛⲈⲕ- ⲛⲟⲕⲥ ⲛⲏⲕⲥ† Ⲉⲃⲟⲗ throw away
 ⲛⲟⲥ big, great
 ⲛⲟⲥⲛⲈⲥ ⲛⲈⲥⲛⲟϥⲥ insult, abuse
 ⲛⲟϥⲥ̄ ⲛⲟⲥ̄ⲥ† get angry, anger

Ⲑ

Ⲑ see ⲈⲡⲈ
 ⲐⲃⲗⲈ tooth
 ⲐⲈⲓⲕ bread
 Ⲑⲓⲕⲟⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ storekeeper
 Ⲑⲛ also, too
 Ⲑⲛⲧⲱⲥ actually, truly
 Ⲑⲣⲓⲏ wrath, temper, temperament
 Ⲑⲗ̄ⲥ sickle (see also ⲱⲗ̄ⲥ)

ⲡ

ⲡⲁⲓ this one
 ⲡⲈ (he) is, (it) is
 ⲡⲈ sky, heaven (ⲡⲏⲩⲈ plural)
 ⲡⲓ or ⲡⲈⲓ kiss
 †ⲡⲓ or †ⲡⲈⲓ kiss
 ⲡⲏⲓⲏ fount
 ⲡⲓⲕⲣⲓⲁ bitterness
 ⲡⲱⲗⲗⲁⲕⲓⲥ probably
 ⲡⲟⲗⲈⲙⲟⲥ battle, war
 ⲡⲟⲗϥⲙⲁⲣⲏⲥ general

ΠΟΛΙC city
 ΠΩΛΩ̅ ΠΛ̅C- ΠΟΛC̅ agree (+ ΕΒΟΛ) settle, conclude
 ΠΝΑ̅ for ΠΝΕΥΜΑ
 ΠΑΩΝΕ or ΠΑΩΝΗ Pauni (month)
 ΠΝΕΥΜΑ or ΠΝΑ̅ spirit
 ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΝ *spirituality*
 ΠΕΝΙΠΕ iron
 ΠΑΝΟΥΡΓΙΑ cunning, trickery
 ΠΑΝΟΥΡΓΟΣ *cunning, tricky, aware*
 ΠΑΔΠΕ or ΠΑΔΠΕΪ Paopi (month)
 ΠΑΠΑΣ cleric (informal)
 ΠΑΡΑ, ΠΑΡΑΡΟ̅ more than, beyond
 ΠΑΡΑΒΑ transgress
 ΠΑΡΑΒΑΤΗΣ *reckless*
 ΠΑΡΑΓΕ pass by, confront
 ΠΑΡΑΓΓΑΛΕΙ or ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ insist, declare, demand
 ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΛΙΑ *command*
 ΠΑΡΑΔΙΔΟΥ or ΠΑΡΑΔΙΤΟΥ transfer, hand over, betray
 ΠΑΡΑΔΙCOC paradise
 ΠΙΡΑΖΕ tempt
 ΠΙΡΑCΜOC *temptation*
 ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ for ΠΑΡΑΓΓΑΛΕΙ
 ΠΡΑΞΙC activity, business
 ΠΑΡΜΟΥΤΕ Parmouthi (month)
 ΠΑΡΑΜΥΘΙΑ encouragement
 ΠΑΡ̅Μ̅ΖΟΤ̅Π̅ or ΠΑΡ̅Ε̅Μ̅ΖΑΤ̅Π̅ Pamenoth (month)
 ΠΑΡΑΝΟΜΙΑ crime
 ΠΟΡΝΕΥΕ (act like a) prostitute
 ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ understand
 ΠΡΟΦΗΤΙΑ *prophecy*
 ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ *prophet*
 ΠΡOC at, in
 ΠΡΕCΒΕΥΕ intercede (+ ΞΑ) for
 ΠΡΕCΒΥΤΕΡOC *priest*
 ΠΙΡΑCΜOC temptation (see also ΠΙΡΑΖΕ)
 ΠΡOCΦΩΡΑ wreath
 ΠΡΟCΤΑΓΜΑ (imperial) decree
 ΠΡΟΕCΤOC superior (of a monastery)
 ΠΑΡΘΕΝOC maiden

ΠΡΗΩ cloak, cover
 ΠΩΡΩ ΠῤΩ- ΠΟΡΩϝ ΠΟΡΩ† ΕΒΟΛ stretch out, spread out
 ΠΑΡΧΙΣΤΑ offer
 ΠΩΡΧ ΠῤΧ- ΠΟΡΧϝ ΠΟΡΧ† divide (+ ΕΒΟΛ) separate
 ΠῚΤΑΙΟΥ ninety
 ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕ believe
 ΠΙΣΤΙC *faith*
 ΠΙΣΤΟC *believer*
 ΑΠΙΣΤΟC *faithless*
 ΠΩΤ ΠΗΤ† run, flee (+ ΝῚΑ) chase
 ΠΕΤΕΜΟΥΤ Medamud (place)
 ΠΑΤΑCCE strike, attack
 ΠΘΕ resolve, agree (+ Ν) to
 ΠΕΘΗΠ secret (see also ϣΩΠ)
 ΠΟΟΥ today
 ΠΟΟΥ ΝῖΖΟΥ *this very day*
 ΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ each one (see also ΟΥΑ)
 ΠΑΦΩNC Pakhons (month)
 ΠΩϣ ΠΑϣ- ΠΑϣϝ ΠΗϣ† break (+ ΕΒΟΛ) burst
 ΠΑϣΩNC for ΠΑΦΩNC
 ΠΩϣῚ ΠΕϣC- ΠΟϣῚ† bite
 ΠΩϣΤ ΠΕϣΤ- ΠΑϣΤϝ ΠΑϣΤ† bend, bow (+ ΕΒΟΛ) pour out, spill
 ΠΕΧΕ, ΠΕΧΑϝ said
 ΠΩΧῚ breadth, plane

P

Ṗ- see ΕΙΡΕ
 ΡΗ sun
 ΡΙ cell, room
 ΡΟ, ΡΩϝ mouth, door
 ΡΩ indeed, truly, even
 ṖΒΟΛ escape (see also ΒΟΛ)
 ΡΙΚΕ ΡΕΚΤ- ΡΕΚΤϝ ΡΑΚΕ† turn, incline
 ΡΑΚΟΤΕ Alexandria (place)
 ΡΩΚῚ ΡΕΚϣ- ΡΟΚϣϝ ΡΟΚῚ† burn
 ΡΙΜΕ weep
 ṖΜΕΙΗ *tear, weeping* (ṖΜΕΙΟΟΥΕ *plural*)
 ΡΩΜΕ person, man
 ΡῖΜΑΟ rich person

ϣ̄ⲏⲛⲧⲱⲛ see ⲧⲱⲛ
 ϣ̄ⲏⲛⲉⲛⲧ thinker, thoughtful person (see also ⲉⲛⲧ)
 ϣⲟⲙⲡⲉ year
 ϣ̄ⲙⲣⲁⲱ gentleman
 ϣ̄ⲙⲉⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ see ϣ̄ⲙⲉ
 ϣⲁⲛ name, identity
 ϣⲓⲣ pig
 ϣ̄ⲣⲟ king (ϣ̄ⲣⲱⲟⲩ plural)
 ϣ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲟ *rule*
 ϣⲁⲥⲟⲩ dream
 ϣ̄ⲛⲥ south
 ϣⲟⲉⲓⲥ ϣ̄ⲛⲥ† keep watch, stay awake
 ϣⲁⲥⲧⲉ next day, tomorrow
 ϣⲁⲧ, ϣⲁⲧⲉ foot
 ϣ̄ⲧⲟⲃ see ⲁⲣⲧⲟⲃ
 ϣⲁⲟⲩⲛ neighbourhood
 ϣⲟⲟⲩⲧ see ⲟⲩⲣⲟⲧ
 ϣⲟⲟⲩⲱ purpose, responsibility, concern (+ ⲉⲁ) take responsibility
 for, take care of
 ϣⲁⲱⲉ rejoice
 ϣⲱⲉⲧ̄ ϣ̄ⲉⲉⲧ- ϣⲁⲉⲧⲉ ϣⲁⲉⲧ̄† strike, hit

C

ⲥⲁ side, part, direction
 ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲥⲁ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲓ *here and there*
 ⲥⲉ yes
 ⲥⲉ sixty
 ⲥⲛⲩ time, period
 ⲥⲓ ⲥⲛⲩ† satisfy
 ⲥⲟⲩ day, date
 ⲥⲟⲟⲩ six (ⲥⲟⲉ feminine)
 ⲥⲱ ⲥⲉ- ⲥⲟⲟⲉ drink
 ⲥⲃⲱ teach, teaching (ⲥⲃⲟⲟⲩⲉ plural)
 ⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ *uneducated, ignorant*
 ⲙⲁⲓⲥⲃⲱ *wisdom loving*
 ⲭⲓⲥⲃⲱ *learn*
 †ⲥⲃⲱ *teach*
 ⲥⲁⲃⲉ wise (ⲥⲁⲃⲛ feminine)
 ⲥⲛⲃⲉ or ⲥⲛⲙⲉ sword, weapon

ⲭⲓϫⲏⲃⲉ *take arms*
ϥⲱⲃⲉ laugh (+ **ⲡⲓϥⲁ**) at, mock
ϥⲁⲃⲟⲗ away, off (see also **ⲃⲟⲗ**)
ϥⲟⲃⲡ̄ fan, cool
ϥⲃⲏⲧⲉ foam, spit
ϥⲟⲃⲧⲉ ϥⲃⲧⲉ- ϥⲃⲧⲱⲧⲥ ϥⲃⲧⲱⲧⲥ† prepare, make ready
ϥⲃⲟⲟϥⲉ see **ϥⲃⲱ**
ϥⲁⲓⲉ or **ϥⲁⲉⲓⲉ** nice-looking, beautiful
ϥⲁⲉⲓⲛ physician
ϥⲟⲉⲓⲧ fame, distinction
ϥⲱⲕ ϥⲉⲕ- ϥⲟⲕⲥ ϥⲏⲕ† pull, gather
ϥⲕⲉⲡⲁⲗⲉ shelter
ϥⲁⲭⲟ eminent, distinguished
ϥⲱⲕⲗⲁⲥ follow (reflexive)
ϥⲭⲏⲙⲁ robe, habit
ϥⲱⲕⲗⲏⲧⲥ lead (reflexive)
ϥⲟⲕϥⲗ ϥⲗϥⲗ- ϥⲗϥⲱⲗⲥ ϥⲗϥⲟⲗ† comfort, encourage
ϥⲙⲟϥ ϥⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ† bless
ϥⲙⲏ voice, report (see also **ⲭⲓϥⲉ**)
ϥⲱⲙⲁ body
ⲁϥⲱⲙⲁⲧⲟϥ *insubstantial, ethereal*
ϥϥⲙⲃⲟϥⲗⲟϥ advisor
ϥⲙⲁⲙⲁⲁⲧ see **ϥⲙⲟϥ**
ϥⲙⲓⲛⲉ ϥⲙⲡ̄- ϥⲙⲡ̄ⲧⲥ ϥⲙⲟⲛⲧ† agree, establish
ϥⲙⲟϥⲛⲉ goose
ϥⲉⲙⲛⲟⲛ noble
ϥⲙⲟⲛⲧ see **ϥⲙⲓⲛⲉ**
ϥⲙⲟⲧ likeness, pattern
ϥⲙⲁϥ temples (of the head)
ϥⲟⲛ sibling, brother (**ϥⲛⲏϥ** plural)
ϥⲱⲛⲉ *sister*
ϥⲟⲟⲛⲉ robber
ϥϥⲛⲁⲗⲓϥ assembly, (church) service
ϥⲱⲛⲧ ϥⲛⲧ- ϥⲟⲛⲧⲥ ϥⲟⲛⲧ† create
ϥⲛⲧⲉ together (see also **ϥⲛⲁϥ**)
ϥⲏⲛⲏⲟⲓⲁ habit, custom
ϥⲛⲁϥ two, pair, couple (**ϥⲛⲧⲉ** feminine)
ϥⲛⲏϥ see **ϥⲟⲛ**
ϥⲛⲟϥ blood

ⲥⲉⲣⲡⲉ rest, remainder
ⲥⲟⲡ occasion, moment
ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲥⲟⲡ *at once, together*
ⲥⲡⲟⲩⲁⲛ effort, zeal
ⲥⲡⲓⲗⲓⲟⲛ cave
ⲥⲟⲡⲥⲓ ⲥⲓⲡⲥⲓ- ⲥⲉⲡⲥⲱⲡⲓ ⲥⲉⲡⲥⲱⲡⲓ† request, beg
ⲥⲟⲡⲥ ⲥⲉⲡⲥ- *request, beg*
ⲥⲡⲟⲩⲟⲩ lips
ⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ wisdom
ⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ *wise*
ⲥⲫⲣⲁⲓⲛⲉ cross (oneself)
ⲥⲱⲡ for **ⲥⲱⲩⲡ**
ⲥⲣ̄ⲃⲉ or **ⲥⲣ̄ⲙⲉ ⲥⲣⲟⲩⲧ†** be idle (+ **ⲉ**) take time for
ⲁⲧⲥⲣ̄ⲃⲉ *hard-working, diligent*
ⲥⲱⲡ̄ ⲥⲉⲣⲙ- ⲥⲟⲣⲙⲓ ⲥⲟⲣ̄ⲙ† stray, err
ⲥⲩⲣⲓⲁ Syria
ⲥⲩⲣⲟⲥ *Syrian*
ⲥⲁⲣ̄ⲭ flesh
ⲥⲁⲣⲧ or **ⲥⲟⲣⲧ** wool
ⲥⲣ̄ⲙⲉ for **ⲥⲣ̄ⲃⲉ**
ⲥⲧⲟⲓ scent
ⲥ†ⲃⲱⲱⲛ *stench, stink (see also ⲃⲱⲛⲉ)*
ⲥⲓⲟⲩⲧ Asyut (place)
ⲥⲁⲧⲉ flame
ⲥⲟⲧⲉ arrow, barb
ⲥⲧⲓⲭⲁ strip
ⲥⲧⲟⲓⲭⲉ or **ⲥⲧⲩⲭⲉⲓ** assent
ⲥⲱⲧ̄ⲙ ⲥⲉⲧⲙ- ⲥⲟⲧⲙⲓ hear, listen (+ **ⲉ**) listen to, obey (+ **ⲛⲥⲁ**) obey
ⲁⲧⲥⲱⲧ̄ⲙ *heedless*
ⲥⲱⲩⲡ or **ⲥⲱⲡ** saviour
ⲥⲱⲩⲡⲓⲁ *deliverance, salvation*
ⲥⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟⲥ cross
ⲥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲉⲩⲙⲁ army
ⲥⲟⲩⲟ wheat
ⲥⲟⲩⲩ̄ ⲥⲟⲩⲛ- ⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓ know, recognise
ⲥⲟⲩⲩ̄ⲧ̄ⲛ ⲥⲟⲩⲧⲛ- ⲥⲟⲩⲧⲱⲛⲓ ⲥⲟⲩⲧⲱⲛ† stretch, straighten (+ **ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ**)
incline toward
ⲥⲱⲟⲩⲉ ⲥⲉⲩⲉ- ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲉ† assemble, meet, gather
ⲥⲱⲁⲩ ⲥⲉⲁⲩ- despise, hurt

CΩƆ field
 CΑƆ̅ seven (CΑƆƆ feminine)
 CΑƆ yesterday
 CHƆ see CHBE
 CΑƆΟΥ CƆΟΥP- CƆΟΥP= CƆΟΥOPT† curse
 CΟΟƆ CΑƆE- CΑƆΩ= CΑƆHΥ† remove, separate (+ ΕΒΟΛ) separate
 from, leave (reflexive)
 CƆΔĭ CƆƆ- CΑƆ= or CƆΔĭT= CHƆ† write
 CƆIME woman, wife (ƆIME plural)
 ΧICƆIME marry
 CΟƆ fool, stupid
 CƆHP sail

T

TΑΔ= see †
 TΑĭ this one (feminine)
 TƆ (she) is, (it) is
 TΟ see †
 TΒΔ ten thousand
 TΒΟ Edfu (place)
 TΩΒE Tubi (month)
 T̅ΒΒΟ T̅ΒΒE- T̅ΒΒO= T̅ΒΒHΥ† purify, cleanse
 T̅ΒNH (wild) animal (T̅ΒNOOƆE plural)
 T̅ΒT fish
 TΩΒƆ T̅ΒƆ- TΩΒƆ= ask, pray
 TΑEIO TΑEIE- TΑEIO= TΑEIHΥ† or TΑĭΔĭΔT† honour, esteem
 TΑEIOΥ or TΑIOΥ fifty
 TΑKO TΑKE- TΑKO= TΑKHΥT† destroy
 TΩK TƆK- TOK= THK† strengthen, be strong
 TΩK̅HƆHT *be resolute, stand firm*
 TΑΖIC for ΔΔΖIC
 TΑXH quickly
 TƆXNE or TƆXNH trade, craft
 TΑΛΟ TΑΛE- TΑΛO= TΑΛHΥ† lift, raise, pile up, offer up, board (a
 ship)
 TƆΛHΛ cheer, rejoice
 TΩΛĭ TΟΛM= TΟΛM† pollute, defile
 TƆΛEIOC whole, perfect
 T̅ΛT̅Λ drip

ⲧⲭⲧⲓⲗⲉ drip, drop
 ⲧⲁⲗⲅⲟ ⲧⲁⲗⲅⲉ- ⲧⲁⲗⲅⲟⲥ ⲧⲁⲗⲅⲏⲕⲓⲧⲓ heal
 ⲧⲡ̄ not
 ⲧⲟⲙ (sleeping) mat
 ⲧⲙⲏ mat
 ⲧⲱⲙ ⲧⲡ̄- ⲧⲟⲙⲥ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲓ shut, close
 ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲉ- ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲥ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲏⲕⲓⲧⲓ create, make
 ⲧⲁⲙⲟ ⲧⲁⲙⲉ- ⲧⲁⲙⲟⲥ or ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲥ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲉⲓⲧⲓ tell, inform
 ⲧⲱⲙⲏⲧ ⲧⲟⲙⲏⲧⲓ meet (+ ⲉ) with
 ⲧⲱⲙⲥ ⲧⲡ̄ⲥ- ⲧⲟⲙⲥⲥ ⲧⲟⲙⲥⲧⲓ bury
 ⲧⲱⲛ where?
 ⲣⲏⲏⲧⲱⲛ someone from where?
 ⲧⲱⲛ see ⲧⲧⲱⲛ
 ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ or ⲧⲛⲟⲩ now
 ⲧⲉⲕⲛⲟⲩ see ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ
 ⲧⲱⲛⲟⲩ greatly
 ⲧⲏⲏⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲏⲏⲉⲕ- ⲧⲏⲏⲛⲟⲩⲥ send
 ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲉⲥ- ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥⲥ wake, raise
 ⲧⲟⲛⲧⲏ ⲧⲏⲧⲏ- ⲧⲏⲧⲱⲛⲥ ⲧⲏⲧⲱⲛⲧⲓ resemble, compare, liken
 ⲧⲏⲉ wing
 ⲧⲁⲛⲉⲟⲩⲧ ⲧⲁⲛⲉⲟⲩⲧⲥ ⲧⲁⲛⲉⲏⲕⲓⲧⲓ believe (+ ⲙⲏ) believe in, trust
 ⲧⲡⲉ top, upper part
 ⲧⲟⲡ edge
 ⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ mouth
 ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ church, shrine
 ⲧⲕⲡⲟⲥ image, form
 ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ grave
 ⲧⲏⲣⲥ all
 ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲓ everything
 ⲧⲱⲣⲉ, ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ hand
 ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲱⲣⲓ, ⲱⲡⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ promise, assure
 ⲧⲁⲣⲕⲟ summon
 ⲧⲣⲟⲙⲉⲕⲥ runner
 ⲧⲣⲉⲙⲏⲕⲓⲟⲛ tremissis (coin)
 ⲧⲱⲣⲓ ⲧⲟⲣⲡⲓ- rob, plunder
 ⲧⲁⲟⲥ peacock
 ⲧⲱⲧ ⲧⲉⲧ- ⲧⲟⲧⲥ ⲧⲏⲧⲓ agree, approve
 ⲧⲟⲧⲉ then, accordingly
 ⲧⲟⲟⲩ hill

ΤΟΟΥΕ sandal
 ΤΑΟΥΩ ΤΑΥΕ- ΤΑΥΟ= produce, grow, proclaim
 ΤΩΟΥΝ ΤΟΥΝ̄- ΤΩΟΥΝ= ΤΩΝ† raise, get up (+ ΖΑ) carry
 ΤΟΥΕΩΤΕ praise (compare ΟΥΩΩΤ)
 ΤΩΩ ΤΕΩ- ΤΩ= ΤΗΩ† determine, limit, agree
 ΤΩΩ district, area, boundary
 ΤΑΩΟ ΤΑΩΕ- ΤΑΩΟ= increase, keep (doing something)
 ΤΑΖΟ ΤΑΖΕ- ΤΑΖΟ= ΤΑΖΗΥ set up, reach (+ ΕΡΑΤ=) stand up, hold
 up
 ΤΩΖΜ̄ ΤΕΖΜ- ΤΑΖΜ= ΤΑΖΜ̄† call, summon
 ΤΩΖC ΤΕΖC- ΤΑΖC= ΤΑΖC† wash, cleanse
 ΤΑΧΡΟ ΤΑΧΡΕ- ΤΑΧΡΟ= ΤΑΧΡΗΥ† strengthen, establish, edify, be
 firm
 ΤΩΩΘΕ ΤΕΘ- ΤΟΘ= ΤΗΘ† attach, cling

ΟΥ (vowel)

ΟΥ what? how?
 ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ why? (see also ΕΤΒΕ)
 ΟΥΒΕ, ΟΥΒΗ= against, toward
 †ΟΥΒΕ resist
 ΟΥΔΕ and not, nor
 ΟΥΝ actually, for sure
 ΟΥΝΟΥ hour
 ΝΤΕΥΝΟΥ immediately, suddenly
 ΟΥΝΑΜ right, right hand
 ΟΥCΙΑ property
 ΟΥΤΕ, ΟΥΤΩ= between, among
 ΟΥΤΕ for ΟΥΔΕ
 ΟΥΤΕ . . . ΟΥΤΕ neither . . . nor
 ΟΥΩΗ night

ΟΥ (consonant)

ΟΥΑ one, someone (ΟΥΕΙ feminine)
 ΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ each one
 ΟΥΑΑ= only, alone
 ΟΥΟΙ woe!
 ΟΥΩ finish, stop
 ΟΥΑΑΒ or ΟΥΗΗΒ see ΟΥΟΠ
 ΟΥΟΕΙΝ light

ῥΟΥΘΕΙΝ *shine*
 ΟΥΘΕΙΕΝΙΝ *Greek-speaker*
 ΟΥΩΜ ΟΥᾱ- or ΟΥΕΜ- ΟΥΟΜ= *eat*
 ΟΥᾱ *there is*
 ΟΥᾱΣΟΜ *see* ΣΟΜ
 ΟΥΟΝ *someone*
 ΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ *everyone*
 ΟΥΩΝ ΟΥΗΝ† *open*
 ΟΥΝΤΕ, ΟΥΝΤΑ= *have*
 ΟΥΩΝῆ ΟΥΕΝῆ- ΟΥΟΝῆ= ΕΒΟΛ ΟΥΟΝῆ† *reveal, display, appear*
 ΟΥΟΠ ΟΥΑΑΒ† *be innocent, be pure*
 ΟΥΗΗΒ *priest*
 ΟΥΡΟΤ ΡΟΟΥΤ† *be glad, smile (+ Μᾱ) be pleased to meet, greet*
 ΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ *foot*
 ΟΥΕΙΣΕ ΟΥΑΚΤ= *saw*
 ΟΥΩΤ *single, sole, alone*
 ΟΥΘΕΙΩ *moment*
 ᾱΟΥΘΕΙΩ *once*
 ΟΥΩΘΕ or ΟΥΩΘ ΟΥΕΩ- ΟΥΑΩ= or ΟΥΟΩ= *want, desire, wish*
 ΟΥΩΩᾱ or ΟΥΩΩῃ ΟΥΕΩΒ- ΟΥΟΩΒ= *answer, respond*
 ΟΥΩΩΤ (+ ᾱ, ΝΑ=) *praise, kiss (in greeting)*
 ΟΥΩΩῃ for ΟΥΩΩᾱ
 ΟΥΩΩῃ ΟΥΕΩΥ- ΟΥΟΩΥ= ΟΥΟΩῃ† *wear down, break*
 ΟΥΩΩῃῆΗΤ *heartbreak*
 ΟΥΩῆ ΟΥΕῆ- ΟΥΑῆ= ΟΥΗῆ† *place, put down, stay, settle down*
 ΟΥΟΟῆ *scorpion*
 ΟΥΩῆᾱ ΟΥΕῆΜ- ΟΥΑῆΜ= ΟΥΟῆᾱ† *respond, repeat*
 ΟΥΕῆΑῆΝΕ *command*
 ΟΥΩΩΧΕ ΟΥΕΧ- ΟΥΟΧ= *cut*
 ΟΥΧΑῖ ΟΥΟΧ† *get well (+ ΕΒΟΛ) be safe from*
 ΟΥΧΑῖ ῆᾱΠΧΟΕΙC *hello, farewell*
 ΟΥΟΘΕ *cheek*

Φ

ΦΙΛΟΠΟΝΙΑ *effort*
 ΦΟΡΙ or ΦΟΡΕΙ *carry, bear, wear*
 ΦΥCIC *nature*
 ΦΥCΙ *naturally*
 ΦΘΟΝΕΙ *murder, abuse*

X

ΧΑΛΙΝΟC bridle
ΧΡΙΑ need
ΧΑΙΡΕ or **ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ** greetings, hello (**ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ** to more than one)
ΧΑΡΙΖΕ gift, oblige
 ΧΑΡΙC *grace*
ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ see **ΧΑΙΡΕ**
ΧΡΟΝΟC time
ΧΩΡΙC without, apart
ΧΡΥΩCΤΙ owe (money)
ΧΡΙCΤΟC or **ΧC** Christ
ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ see **ΧΑΙΡΕ**
ΧC for **ΧΡΙCΤΟC**

Υ

ΥΓΧΗ soul (**ΥΓΧΟΟΥΓΕ** plural)
ΥΑΛΛΕΙ sing, chant psalms
ΥΙC nine (**ΥΙΤΕ** feminine)

Ω

ΩΩ conceive, get pregnant
ΩΒΩ̄ ΕΒΩ- **ΩΒΩϝ** **ΩΒΩ†** forget, neglect
ΩΝΕ stone
ΩΝΩ ΩΝΩ† ΕΒΟΛ get lost for words, be struck dumb
ΩΝΞ̄ ΩΝΞ̄† live (+ **Ξ̄Ν̄**) live off, feed on
ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΩΠϝ **ΗΠ†** count, reckon, evaluate
ΩΦΕΛΙΑ benefit
ΩΡK̄ ΟΡKϝ swear
ΩC̄K̄ ΟC̄K̄† delay, take time
ΩΩ ΕΩ- or **ΔΩ- ΟΩϝ** call, read (+ **ΕΒΟΛ**) call out, read out, announce
ΩΩM̄ ΕΩM- ΟΩMϝ **ΟΩM̄†** extinguish
ΩΞΕ for **ΟΥΩΞΕ** fisherman
ΩΞC̄ ΕΞC- ΟΞCϝ reap, harvest
 ΩΞC̄ or **ΟΞC̄** *sickle*
ΩΧN̄ ΕΧN- ΟΧNϝ perish, destroy

ϣ

- ⲁⲓ or ⲉϣ can
 ϣⲁ festival
 ϣⲁ appear, rise (of the sun)
 ϣⲁ, ϣⲁⲣⲟⲥ to, up to, towards
 ϣⲉ wood
 ϣⲉ hundred
 ϣⲓ measure
 ϣⲟ thousand
 ϣⲱ sand
 ϣⲱⲃ ϣⲃ̄- or ϣⲉϥ ϣⲏⲃⲓⲥ dress, shave
 ϣⲓⲃⲉ ϣⲃ̄- ϣⲃⲓⲥ ϣⲟⲃⲉⲓ transform, change, muddle
 ϣⲁⲃⲏⲛⲟ grotesque (see also ⲛⲟ)
 ϣⲁⲃⲟⲗ forever, eternal (see also ⲃⲟⲗ)
 ϣⲁⲃⲏⲛⲟ see ϣⲓⲃⲉ
 ϣⲃⲏⲣ friend
 ϣⲓⲕⲉ ϣⲉⲕⲓⲥ- ϣⲁⲕⲓⲥ ϣⲟⲕⲉⲓ dig, fathom
 ϣⲱⲗ plunder
 ϣⲗⲓⲕ fork, prong
 ϣⲗⲏⲗ pray
 ϣⲱⲗⲏ smell
 ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲥ bride, wedding
 ϣⲗⲁⲛ ϣⲟⲗⲛⲓⲥ fear
 ϣⲏⲙ ordinary, lowly, humble
 ϣⲏⲙⲣⲏⲙ little by little
 ϣⲏⲣⲉⲣⲏⲙ child, infant
 ϣⲙⲟϥⲏ eight (ϣⲙⲟϥⲏⲉ feminine)
 ϣⲟⲙⲏⲓⲥ or ϣⲟⲙⲓⲥ three (ϣⲟⲙⲓⲥⲉ feminine)
 ϣⲏⲙⲉ ϣⲏⲙⲉ- ϣⲏⲙⲓⲥⲉ serve, worship
 ⲣⲉϥϣⲏⲙⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ worshipper
 ϣⲏⲙⲣⲏⲙ little by little (see also ϣⲏⲙ)
 ϣⲓⲛⲉ ϣⲉⲛ- ϣⲏⲓⲥⲉ ask (+ ⲉ) greet, visit (+ ⲏⲕⲁ) look for, seek
 ⲥⲏⲣⲓⲣⲓⲛⲉ visit (see also ⲥⲓⲛⲉ)
 ϣⲱⲛⲉ ϣⲟⲟⲛⲉⲓ sicken
 ϣⲱⲱⲛⲉ ϣⲉⲉⲛⲉ- ϣⲟⲟⲛⲉ ϣⲟⲟⲛⲉⲓ (+ ⲉ) exclude, deprive, remove
 ϣⲏⲓⲥⲱ (linen) robe
 ϣⲟⲛⲧⲉ thorn
 ϣⲱⲡ ϣⲉⲡ- ϣⲟⲡ- ϣⲏⲡⲓ get, receive, accept
 ϣⲓⲡⲉ be ashamed

ⲱⲡⲛⲉ ⲱⲟⲟⲡⲓ† happen, become, exist, live
 ⲱⲡⲛⲣⲉ marvel, wonder
 ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲱⲣⲓ or ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲣⲥ promise, assure (see also ⲧⲱⲣⲉ)
 ⲱⲡⲓⲁⲙⲟⲧ give thanks
 ⲱⲡⲓⲁⲓⲉ take care, look after (see also ⲁⲓⲉ)
 ⲱⲛⲣⲉ child, son, daughter
 ⲱⲉⲉⲣⲉ daughter
 ⲱⲛⲣⲉⲱⲛⲙ child, infant (see also ⲱⲛⲙ)
 ⲱⲣⲓⲁⲟⲟⲩⲧ male child
 ⲱⲟⲣⲡ first
 ⲣⲱⲟⲣⲡ lead, precede
 ⲱⲟⲣⲡ ⲙⲉⲛ or ⲛⲱⲟⲣⲡ ⲙⲉⲛ firstly
 ⲱⲣⲡⲛⲙⲓⲉ first born (see also ⲙⲓⲉ)
 ⲱⲱⲣⲓ morning
 ⲱⲣⲡⲛⲙⲓⲉ see ⲱⲟⲣⲡ
 ⲱⲁⲣⲟⲩⲱⲧ new leather
 ⲱⲣⲓⲁⲟⲟⲩⲧ see ⲱⲛⲣⲉ
 ⲱⲱⲥ shepherd
 ⲱⲛⲧ two hundred
 ⲱⲓⲛⲧ Scetis (place)
 ⲱⲱⲱⲧ ⲱⲉⲧ- ⲱⲁⲁⲧⲣⲥ ⲱⲁⲁⲧⲓ† deprive, sacrifice (+ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) cut off,
 slice
 ⲱⲱⲧⲉ cistern
 ⲱⲧⲟⲃ muzzle
 ⲱⲧⲁⲙ shut, close
 ⲱⲧⲛⲛ garment, cloth
 ⲱⲧⲟⲣⲧⲣ̅ ⲱⲧⲣ̅ⲧⲣ̅- ⲱⲧⲣ̅ⲧⲱⲣⲥ ⲱⲧⲣ̅ⲧⲱⲣⲓ† disturb, be disturbed,
 upset, panic
 ⲱⲁⲩ or ⲱⲉⲩ value, worth, use
 ⲁⲧⲱⲁⲩ worthless
 ⲱⲓⲉ seventy
 ⲱⲉⲩ see ⲱⲱⲃ
 ⲱⲁⲭⲉ speak, talk (+ ⲉ) about (+ ⲙⲛ) with
 ⲱⲱⲭⲓⲡ̅ ⲱⲉⲭⲓⲡ̅- ⲱⲟⲭⲓⲡ̅ ⲱⲟⲭⲓⲡ̅† remain, leave behind
 ⲱⲱⲱⲉⲉ ⲱⲉⲉⲉ- ⲱⲟⲟⲉⲥ ⲱⲟⲉⲉ† wound

4

41 41- 41ⲧⲣⲥ 41ⲛⲩ† lift, carry, take
 4ⲧⲟⲟⲩ four (4ⲧⲟ feminine)

ϣⲱⲉⲉ ϣⲉⲥ- ϣⲟⲥ= jump, rush, rob
ϥⲓⲛϣⲱⲉⲉ or ϥⲓⲛⲃⲱⲉⲉ *impulse*

ⲉ

ⲉⲁ, ⲉⲁⲣⲟ= under, in, on behalf of, supporting

ⲉⲁⲉ or ⲉⲁⲏ end, finish

ⲉⲉ way, manner

ⲡⲟⲉ ⲛ *act like, seem like*

ⲛⲁⲱ ⲛⲉⲉ *how?*

ⲉⲉ ⲉⲏⲱⲧ fall (+ ⲉ) come upon, find

ⲉⲏ, ⲉⲏⲧ= front, beginning

ⲉⲏ, ⲉⲏⲧ= belly, womb

ⲉⲏⲱ gain, increase

ⲧⲉⲏⲱ *improve, benefit*

ⲉⲓ, ⲉⲓⲱⲱ= on, at

ⲉⲟ face (see also ⲱⲓⲃⲉ)

ⲉⲟ sack

ⲉⲱ suffice (+ ⲉ) for

ⲉⲱ me too, as well

ⲉⲱⲱ= self

ⲉⲱⲃ matter, act, business (ⲉⲃⲏⲱⲉ plural)

ⲡⲉⲱⲃ *work*

ⲉⲃⲃⲥ see ⲉⲱⲃⲥ

ⲉⲁⲓⲃⲥ shadow

ⲉⲱⲃⲥ ⲉⲃⲥ- ⲉⲟⲃⲥ= ⲉⲟⲃⲥⲧ *clothe (+ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ) cover*

ⲉⲃⲁⲥ *clothing*

ⲉⲃⲃⲥ *cover*

ⲉⲃⲏⲱⲉ see ⲉⲱⲃ

ⲉⲏⲉⲙⲟⲛ governor

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥ holy, saint

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲱⲥⲏⲏ or ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥⲏⲏ *holiness*

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁⲧⲟⲥ *most holy*

ⲉⲓⲏ or ⲉⲓⲏ road, path (ⲉⲓⲟⲱⲉ plural)

ⲉⲟⲉⲓⲏⲉ some

ⲉⲓⲉⲧ ditch

ⲉⲟⲓⲧⲉ dress

ⲉⲁⲕ prudent, sober, decent

ⲉⲏⲕⲉ poor, hungry

ⲉⲱⲕ arms, armour

ρΙΚΩΝ image
 ρΥΑΚΙΝΘΙΝΟΝ purple robe
 ρΕΞΙC awareness
 ρΩΛ ρΗΛ† fly
 ρΟΛΟΚΟΤΤΙΝΟC solidus (coin)
 ρΧΛΟ old, elder
 ρΕΛΛΗΝ or ρΧΛΗΝ or ρΧΛΛ̄ pagan, Roman
 ρΕΛΟC marsh
 ρΟΛΩC at all
 ρΑΛΑCϸΑ sea
 ρΑΛΗΤ bird (ρΑΛΑΤΕ plural)
 ρΜΕ forty
 ρΗΜΕ freight
 ρΙΟΜΕ see CΡΙΜΕ
 ρΟΜΟΛΟΓΕΙ admit, confess
 ρΜΟΜ ρΗΜ† heat, get hot
 ρΜΕΝΕ eighty
 ρΟΜ̄ΝΤ copper
 ρΥΜΝΕΥΕ sing hymns
 ρΜΟΟC sit
 ρ̄Μ̄ρΑΛ servant
 ρ̄Ν, ṅρΗΤ= in, with, from
 ρΡΑΙ-ρ̄Ν *within*
 ρΝΑ for ρΝΑΥ
 ρΝΕ, ρΝΑ= wish
 ṗρΝΑ= *wish*
 ρΩΝ ρΟΝ= command (+ ΕΤ̄Ν) task someone
 ρΩΝ ρ̄Ν- ρΟΝ= ρΗΝ† approach (+ ΕΡΟΥΝ) close in, reach
 ρΟΙΝΕ or ρΟΕΙΝΕ some, some people
 ρΙΝΗΒ sleep
 ρΕΝΕΕΤΕ or ρΕΝΗΤΕ monastery
 ρΝΑΥ vessel, pot
 ρΑΠ justice, law
 ρΩΠ ρΕΠ- ρΟΠ= ρΗΠ† hide
 ΠΕΘΗΠ *secret*
 ρΥΠΟΚΡΙCΙC appearance, attitude
 ρΑΠΑΞ-ρΑΠΛΩC in short, briefly
 ρΟΠΛΟΝ armour, guards
 ρΥΠΟΜΟΝΗ endure, persist, desperation

ἑγπαρχοντα goods
 ἑγπερη† attend
 ἑγπερετης or ἑγπερητης attendant
 ἑγποτασσε submit (+ ḿ) to
 ἑραι see ḿ, ḿḡḥṯ
 ἑωρ ḡp- ḡopṣ ḡhp† take care, be careful (reflexive)
 ἑωpḅ ḡopḅ break
 ḡαιρεδικος for ḡαιρετικός
 ḡpωμη Rome (place)
 ḡopoma vision
 ḡερμηνεγε interpret, translate
 ḡερμενεγτης interpreter
 ḡipḿ, ḡipwṣ at, outside
 ḡαιρετικός or ḡαιρεδικος heretic
 ḡpαγ noise, sound
 ḡpoc ḡopw† burden, weigh down
 ḡp̄wipε youth
 ḡapwḡḥṯ or ḡapwḿḡḥṯ tolerant, patient ḿḥṯḡapwḡḥṯ tolerance
 ḡapeḡ keep, guard, protect
 ḡpoxp̄ grind
 ḡice ḡact- ḡactṣ ḡoce† struggle, toil
 wḡḡice take care, look after
 ḡoc sing
 ḡoc as though, like
 ḡoctε so that
 ḡictολιογραφος historian
 ḡto horse
 ḡaatε flow
 ḡḥṯ ḡṯḥṣ heart, mind, affection
 actḡḥṯ ignorant, fatuous
 pḿḿḡḥṯ thinker, thoughtful person
 ḡḥṯ downstream, north (see also emḡḥṯ)
 ḡḥṯε see εic
 ḡote fear
 pεq̄ḡote devout person
 ḡatḿ, ḡatootṣ near, beside, with
 ḡitḿ, ḡitootṣ by, through, from
 ḡitoyn, ḡitoywṣ beside
 ḡotan if ever

ⲭⲓⲛⲉⲣⲁⲥ see ⲭⲓⲣⲁⲥ
 ⲭⲓⲛⲓⲛⲟⲛⲥ see ⲓⲛⲛⲥ
 ⲭⲛⲓ must (do something)
 ⲭⲛⲓⲟ blame
 ⲭⲛⲟ ⲭⲛⲉ- ⲭⲛⲟⲥ ⲭⲛⲏⲓⲧ produce, create, give birth
 ⲭⲉⲣⲟ ⲭⲉⲣⲉ- ⲭⲉⲣⲟⲥ ignite
 ⲭⲣⲟ ⲭⲣⲁⲉⲓⲧⲓⲧ be strong (+ ⲉ) stronger than
 ⲭⲱⲱⲣⲉ *strong*
 ⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ or ⲭⲟⲥ lord
 ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ *control, govern*
 ⲭⲓⲥⲉ ⲭⲉⲥⲧ- ⲭⲁⲥⲧⲥ ⲭⲟⲥⲉ elevate, exalt
 ⲭⲁⲥⲧⲥⲙⲏ *loudmouth (see also ⲥⲙⲏ)*
 ⲭⲟϣⲱⲧ twenty (ⲭⲟϣⲱⲧⲉ feminine)
 ⲭⲱⲧ trough, dole
 ⲭⲁⲧⲙⲉ pile, heap
 ⲭⲟⲟϣ ⲭⲉϣ- ⲭⲟⲟϣⲥ send (+ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ) despatch, trade
 ⲭⲓⲟϣⲁ blaspheme
 ⲭⲓⲟϣⲉ steal (+ ⲉ) from
 ⲭⲓⲱⲕⲁⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ call out, cry out (see also ⲁⲱⲕⲁⲕ)
 ⲭⲟϣⲭⲓⲱ ⲭⲉϣⲭⲱϣ burn
 ⲭⲓⲣⲁⲥ or ⲭⲓⲛⲉⲣⲁⲥ divert, amuse, joke (reflexive)
 ⲭⲱⲉ ⲭⲉⲉ- ⲭⲁⲉⲥ ⲭⲏⲉⲓⲧ touch, caress, anoint
 ⲭⲱⲉⲙ̄ ⲭⲉⲉⲙ- ⲭⲁⲉⲙⲥ ⲭⲁⲉⲙ̄ⲓⲧ pollute, defile
 ⲭⲁⲁⲭⲉ ⲭⲁⲁⲱⲓⲧ harden
 ⲭⲓⲓⲟⲗ (tell a) lie

Ⲗ

ⲓⲉ so, therefore, moreover, in addition
 ⲓⲱ ⲓⲉⲉⲧⲓⲧ stay, continue, persist
 ⲓⲱⲃ weak
 ⲓⲁⲃⲉⲛⲧ timid
 ⲓⲁⲓⲟ disgrace
 ⲓⲱⲗⲉ flat bread
 ⲓⲱⲱⲗⲉ ⲓⲉⲉⲗⲉ- ⲓⲟⲟⲗⲥ ⲓⲟⲟⲗⲉⲓⲧ wrap, clothe
 ⲓⲗⲟⲙ plough
 ⲓⲱⲗⲓⲧ ⲓⲗⲓⲡ- ⲓⲟⲗⲓⲡⲥ ⲓⲟⲗⲓⲧⲓⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ reveal, appear, unwrap
 ⲓⲗⲟⲓ bed
 ⲓⲟⲙ power, ability
 ⲁⲧⲓⲟⲙ *impossible*

ΟΥΝ̄ϮΟΜ *be able*

ΗΝ̄ϮΟΜ *be unable*

ϮΗ̄ϮΟΜ *be able (+ Ϯ) overcome*

ϮΗΝ see ϮΝΟΝ

ϮΙΝϮ Ϯ̄Ν- Ϯ̄ΝΤϮ *find, find out*

Ϯ̄ΠΩΙΝϮ *visit (see also ΩΙΝϮ)*

ϮΙΝΒΩϮϮ see ϮΩϮϮ

ϮΝΟΝ ϮΗΝ† *soften*

ϮΟΝϮ *violence, damage*

ΧΙΝ̄ϮΟΝϮ *harm, get harmed, abuse*

ϮΩΝΤ̄ ϮΟΝΤ† *anger, get angry (+ ϮΖΟΥΝ) at*

ϮΙΝΟΥΗΛ *ship*

ϮΟΝΧΟΥ or Ϯ̄Ν̄ΧΟΥ *jar*

ϮΕΠΗ *hurry, rush*

ϮΡΟΟΜΠϮ *dove*

ϮΩΡϮ̄ ϮΟΡϮ† *trap, hunt*

ϮΟΡϮ̄ *trap, snare*

ϮΟΤ *size, status*

ϮΩΤΠ̄ ϮΕΤΠ- ϮΟΤΠϮ ϮΟΤΠ̄† *defeat*

ϮΩΤΠ̄̄̄ *defeat*

ϮΩΩΤ̄ ϮΟΩΤ† *look, watch*

ϮΩΩΤ̄ ϮΒΟΛ-ΖΗΤϮ *look forward, anticipate*

ϮΙΧ *hand*

ϮΩϮ ϮΕϮ- ϮΔϮ ϮΗϮ† *bake*

ϮΔϮΙΤΩΝ *rough linen*

†

† †- ΤΑΔϮ ΤΟ† *give (+ Ν̄) pay someone (+ ΖΔ) for something*

†ϮΒΟΛ *sell (see also ϮΒΟΛ)*

†ΟΥ *five (†Ϯ feminine)*

†ΔΚΟΝΕΙ for ΔΙΑΚΟΝΕΙ

†ΚΩΤ *learn, improve (see also ΚΩΤ)*

†ΜϮ *town*

†Π *kiss (see also Π)*

†ΤΑΖϮ *hesitate*

†ΤΩΝ *argue, quarrel*

†ΟΥΒϮ *resist (see also ΟΥΒϮ)*

†ΖΗΥ *improve, benefit (see also ΖΗΥ)*

FURTHER READING

Those in search of Sahidic Coptic texts, in the first instance, should look to the original sources referenced throughout the sample reading above. Of course, you will now need a dictionary, and a first-rate resource is being developed by KELLIA (Coptic/Koptische Electronic Language and Literature International Alliance):

Coptic Dictionary Online. <https://coptic-dictionary.org/>.

Sadly, this positive development for Coptic scholarship has finally limited the usefulness of a once invaluable, and still magisterial, publication:

Crum, Walter: *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1939).

On the other hand, the following remains an extremely useful, slim and portable reference:

Smith, Richard: *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon* (2nd ed.). Atlanta: Scholars Press (1983/1999).

The number of online sites with meaningful information about Late Antique Coptic language and culture is necessarily small, but increasing. For instance, an encyclopaedia of Coptic culture is being developed by Claremont Colleges Library:

Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia. <https://calisphere.org/collections/26581/>.

Likewise, useful resources relating to the Coptic language generally may be found via St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society (<http://www.stshenouda.org/>).

Those interested in a different introductory textbook, which has stood the test of time in print, may wish to obtain:

Lambdin, Thomas: *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Macon: Mercer University Press (1983).

By contrast, the following provides a detailed and exhaustive analysis of Sahidic Coptic:

Layton, Bentley: *A Coptic Grammar with Chrestomathy and Glossary: Sahidic Dialect*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag (2000).

Finally, those interested in understanding how Coptic fits within the remarkable 4,000-year written history of the indigenous Egyptian language will find the following to be an excellent account:

Loprieno, Antonio: *Ancient Egyptian. A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1995).

Sahidic Coptic was the literary language of Late Antique Egypt during the years 350–800 and the final phase of Ancient Egyptian as a living language, bringing an end to four millennia of written history. Sahidic Coptic texts are among our most detailed written sources regarding: the end of ancient Egypt; Byzantine imperial rule; the early Bible; the development of Christian orthodoxy; Christianity in Africa; religious assimilation and persecution; the origin of mediaeval monasticism; and the rise of Islam.

This concise textbook teaches beginner students the grammar of documents written in Sahidic Coptic, and provides the historical and cultural context required for reading primary sources through informal as well as more formal and religious texts.

There are 20 language lessons followed by 7 chapters of sample reading and a detailed vocabulary list.

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