

TEXTBOOKS OF  
WORLD AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

# Sahidic Coptic

An introductory textbook

**Bill Manley**

**UCLPRESS**

# Sahidic Coptic

## **Textbooks of World and Minority Languages**

SERIES EDITORS

Lily Kahn and Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi

This series consists of contemporary, communicative, accessible and pedagogical beginners' language textbooks of the world's less commonly taught languages with an emphasis on indigenous, regional, minority and endangered languages.

There is a focus on languages which presently lack easy-to-use English-medium textbooks. The textbooks equip both classroom and independent learners with the knowledge of the language's basic grammatical structures, everyday communicative situations, high-frequency vocabulary and salient cultural topics.

The series aims to promote and support the study, teaching and in some cases revitalization of less commonly taught languages by providing a prominent and user-friendly way for students to study them whether in a classroom context or independently. Publishing these texts in open access makes these languages accessible for an international audience irrespective of their financial circumstances and promotes the study of regional, minority and endangered languages.

Lily Kahn is Reader in Hebrew and Jewish Languages at UCL.

Riitta-Liisa Valijärvi is Principal Teaching Fellow in Finnish and Minority Languages at UCL and Senior Lecturer in Finno-Ugric Languages at Uppsala University, Sweden.

# Sahidic Coptic

An introductory  
textbook

Bill Manley

 **UCLPRESS**

First published in 2026 by  
UCL Press  
University College London  
Gower Street  
London WC1E 6BT

Available to download free: [www.uclpress.co.uk](http://www.uclpress.co.uk)

Text © Author, 2026

The author has asserted his rights under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library.



Any third-party material in this book is not covered by the book's Creative Commons licence. Details of the copyright ownership and permitted use of third-party material is given in the image (or extract) credit lines. If you would like to reuse any third-party material not covered by the book's Creative Commons licence, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright owner.

This book is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International licence (CC BY-NC 4.0), <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>. This licence allows you to share and adapt the work for non-commercial use providing attribution is made to the author and publisher (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work) and any changes are indicated. Attribution should include the following information:

Manley, B. 2026. *Sahidic Coptic: An introductory textbook*. London: UCL Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800086463>

Further details about Creative Commons licences are available at  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

ISBN: 978-1-80008-648-7 (Hbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-80008-647-0 (Pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-80008-646-3 (PDF)

ISBN: 978-180008-649-4 (epub)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800086463>

UCL Press, the UK's first fully open access university press, has established a new open access textbook programme. Publishing for courses and modules both at UCL and for use at universities globally, it reflects our commitment to widening the use of open educational resources. The rising cost of textbooks, combined with issues of availability, particularly digitally, are a challenge for universities and a potential barrier to student learning. The textbooks in this programme provide benefits to students by removing those barriers and have been commissioned and developed with student use in mind. Open access publishing provides a means to make textbooks accessible to a wider audience, while also reducing the burden on library budgets.

If you are using this textbook to teach a course at your institution, please notify us at [uclpresspublishing@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:uclpresspublishing@ucl.ac.uk) so that we can track adoptions and build metrics that evidence how open access textbooks are used and the value they deliver. We welcome your feedback on this book and the programme. Do get in touch to tell us your thoughts.



# Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Basic grammar</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Why Coptic?	2
Copts and the Coptic language	2
Sahidic Coptic	5
Sahidic Coptic manuscripts	7
<b>Lesson 1 – The alphabet</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 The Coptic alphabet	14
1.2 Strokes above the letters	15
1.3 $\bar{n}$ frequently shifts to $\bar{m}$	16
1.4 Time to read something: Names of people at Thebes	17
1.5 Time to read something: Ostraca from Medinat Habu	19
1.6 Time to read something: $\Delta\Delta\Upsilon\text{E}\Lambda \bar{m} \text{M}\Delta\Theta\Delta\text{I}\text{O}\text{C}$ ‘David son of Matthew’	21
1.7 Time to read something: $\Delta\text{NOK } \text{P}\Lambda\Delta$ ‘I am Pia’	22
<b>Lesson 2 – Simple descriptions</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 Articles: ‘The’ definite articles and gender	24
2.2 Articles: ‘The’ plurals	25
2.3 Articles: $\text{OY}$ ‘a’ and $\text{ZE}\text{N}$ ‘some’ are indefinite articles	26
2.4 Articles: $\text{KE}$ is ‘another’ article ‘too’	27
2.5 Adjectives which follow their word	27
2.6 Adjectives: The number $\text{CN}\Delta\Upsilon$ ‘two’	28
2.7 Adjectives which go in front of their word	28
2.8 Time to read something: Simple testimonies	28
<b>Lesson 3 – Coptic and Greek</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Greek words	32
3.2 Roles within the Church	32
3.3 $\text{ZE}\Gamma\text{I}\text{O}\text{C}$ ‘Saint’ and other titles from Greek	33

3.4	Adjectives: A strategy using nouns	34
3.5	Adjectives used as nouns	34
3.6	Time to read something: Inscriptions from Deyr al-Medina	35
<b>Lesson 4 – Three Coptic fundamentals</b>		<b>39</b>
4.1	Suffix pronouns	40
4.2	Changing prepositions	41
4.3	Commands, requests and the imperative	42
4.4	‘Please’ recognise ⲁⲢⲓ ⲧⲁⲒⲁⲒⲡⲏ	43
4.5	Time to read something: More inscriptions from Deyr al-Medina	44
Chart I – Shifting prepositions		48
Chart II – Prepositions and pronouns		49
<b>Lesson 5 – Word-building basics</b>		<b>51</b>
5.1	Word-building with prefixes	52
5.2	‘My’ body parts and ‘your’ body parts	54
5.3	‘Your’ possessive articles	55
5.4	Time to read something: More texts from Thebes	56
<b>Lesson 6 – Basics about verbs</b>		<b>59</b>
6.1	Infinitives	60
6.2	When something happens (tenses)	60
6.3	‘When I am writing’ in the circumstantial tense	62
6.4	An address formula for letters	63
6.5	Time to read something: Letters from Thebes	64
<b>Lesson 7 – Engaged statements</b>		<b>69</b>
7.1	Engaged present	70
7.2	Initial pronouns	71
7.3	Organising particles	71
7.4	‘There is’ (ⲐⲮⲏ) or ‘there isn’t’ (ⲏⲙⲏ) an indefinite subject	72
7.5	‘Who, which’ is Ⲉⲧ	73
7.6	Time to read something: More letters from Thebes	74
<b>Lesson 8 – Identities and requests</b>		<b>79</b>
8.1	Independent pronouns and identity	80
8.2	Independent pronouns and emphasis	81
8.3	Another kind of emphasis	81

8.4	‘And then use’ the conjunctive tense	82
8.5	Time to read something: Letters and legal documents	83
<b>Lesson 9 – Past narrative</b>		<b>89</b>
9.1	Past tenses together	90
9.2	Past circumstances	91
9.3	Anticipating the subject	92
9.4	Marking the subject with $\bar{\nu}\sigma\iota$	94
9.5	Marking the object with $\bar{\nu}$	95
9.6	Compound verbs	96
9.7	Time to read something: Meet the desert fathers and mothers	97
<b>Lesson 10 – Speaking and thinking</b>		<b>101</b>
10.1	I think that ( $\chi\epsilon$ ) I said	102
10.2	I said $\pi\epsilon\chi\alpha\dot{\iota}$	103
10.3	To have ( $\omicron\gamma\eta\tau\epsilon$ ) and have not ( $\mu\eta\tau\epsilon$ )	104
10.4	Some verbs are good ( $\eta\lambda\eta\omicron\gamma$ ) and blessed ( $\eta\lambda\dot{\iota}\alpha\tau$ )	104
10.5	Able ( $\omicron\gamma\bar{\nu}\sigma\omicron\mu$ ) and not able ( $\mu\bar{\nu}\sigma\omicron\mu$ )	105
10.6	Time to read something: Some distinguished men and women	106
<b>Lesson 11 – How objects affect verbs</b>		<b>109</b>
11.1	Basic word order	110
11.2	Adverbs affecting word order	110
11.3	Indirect objects affecting word order	111
11.4	Infinitives shifting with objects	112
11.5	What if the object is a pronoun?	113
11.6	A note about dictionaries	114
11.7	A note about $\chi\omega$ $\chi\epsilon$ - $\chi\omicron\omicron\epsilon$ ‘say’	116
11.8	Reflexive statements (subject and object are the same)	116
11.9	Time to read something: Talking with monks	117
<b>Lesson 12 – Numbers and dates</b>		<b>121</b>
12.1	Simple numbers to ten	122
12.2	Simple numbers from ten	123
12.3	Simple numbers from a hundred	123
12.4	Numbers in order	124
12.5	Time and dates	124
12.6	Time to read some dates	126

<b>Lesson 13 – Indicative and demonstrative</b>	<b>131</b>
13.1 ‘I teach’ in the indicative present	132
13.2 Articles: ‘This’ demonstrative is πϵι-	132
13.3 Articles: ‘The one of’ possessive π∆-	133
13.4 πϵ and τε and νε ‘are’ pronouns	134
13.5 ‘He is’ also the pronoun πϵ	136
13.6 ‘This one’ is the pronoun π∆ι	136
13.7 The pronoun πϠι is ‘mine’	137
13.8 ‘Who, which’ is also ϵτε	137
13.9 Time to read something: Life is like this	138
<b>Lesson 14 – Negative statements and second tenses</b>	<b>141</b>
14.1 ‘Do not!’	142
14.2 ‘I do not’ and ‘I did not’	142
14.3 The second tenses	144
14.4 Emphasis and questions	147
14.5 Time to read something: A question of attitude	148
<b>Lesson 15 – Complex descriptions</b>	<b>153</b>
15.1 ‘Who, which’ is ν̄τ in the past	154
15.2 Getting the pronouns in order	155
15.3 The circumstantial tense in descriptions	157
15.4 ‘While’ the circumstantial converter is ϵρε or ϵ-	158
15.5 Time to read something: Models of good conduct	160
<b>Lesson 16 – Looking to the future</b>	<b>165</b>
16.1 να is an engaged way of talking about the future	166
16.2 ∆ν means ‘not’ with the engaged tenses (and statements without verbs)	167
16.3 ‘There isn’t’ (ν̄νν̄) a definite subject	169
16.4 ϵρε and ν̄νε make a commitment to the future	169
16.5 We should be optative	171
16.6 Time to read something: More or less certain futures	172
Chart III – A basic scheme for Coptic verbs	177
<b>Lesson 17 – Complex sentences</b>	<b>181</b>
17.1 ‘Using’ verbs as nouns	182
17.2 Remembering and visiting	183

17.3	The conjunctive tense again	184
17.4	The future conjunctive <b>ⲧⲁⲣⲉ</b> is hopeful	186
17.5	<b>ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲉ</b> ‘before’, <b>ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉ</b> ‘after’ and <b>ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲧⲉ</b> ‘until’	187
17.6	Time to read something: Outcomes and endings	188
<b>Lesson 18 – Establishing certain conditions</b>		<b>193</b>
18.1	Dividing words	194
18.2	If there are conditions, use <b>ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲁⲛ</b>	195
18.3	<b>ⲧⲙ̄</b> is simply ‘not’	197
18.4	‘Supposing’ we use <b>ⲉⲟⲩⲁⲥⲉ</b> and <b>ⲉⲟⲩⲟⲩⲧⲉ</b>	197
18.5	Time to read something: Speculations and considerations	198
Chart IV – A summary of incomplete tenses		203
<b>Lesson 19 – Statives and passives</b>		<b>205</b>
19.1	Passive statements	206
19.2	The stative form of intransitive verbs	206
19.3	The stative form of transitive verbs	208
19.4	The stative form of <b>ⲉⲓⲣⲉ</b> is o ‘made’	210
19.5	The stative form of verbs of motion	211
19.6	Another note about dictionaries	211
19.7	Third-person passive statements	212
19.8	Marking an agent ‘by’ <b>ⲉⲓⲧⲧ̄ⲛ̄</b> or <b>ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲓⲧⲧ̄ⲛ̄</b> or <b>ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲓ̄ⲛ̄</b>	214
19.9	Time to read something: Politeness and suffering	216
<b>Lesson 20 – Writing with a purpose</b>		<b>221</b>
20.1	Back in the past with <b>ⲛⲉⲣⲉ</b> or <b>ⲛⲉ-</b>	222
20.2	Writing with a purpose	225
20.3	<b>ⲧⲣⲉ</b> makes it happen	227
20.4	<b>ⲧⲙ̄</b> is ‘not’ making it happen	229
20.5	<b>ⲙⲡⲣ̄-ⲧⲣⲉ-</b> ‘do not let’	230
20.6	The auxiliary <b>ⲟⲩ</b> can help	230
20.7	Time to read something: Reasons and outcomes	231
Chart V – A summary of Coptic tenses and negations		234
<b>Sahidic Coptic sample reading</b>		<b>237</b>
Chapter 1	The desert fathers and mothers	239
Chapter 2	Foundational figures	251

Chapter 3	Shenoute's life and works	260
Chapter 4	Notable figures at Jeme	274
Chapter 5	Apocrypha and apocryphal gospels	283
Chapter 6	Scenes from a narrative tale	298
Chapter 7	Texts from the fringes of Coptic culture	303
<b>Some Coptic words that can confuse</b>		<b>317</b>
<b>Sahidic Coptic–English word list</b>		<b>321</b>
<b>Further reading</b>		<b>353</b>

# List of figures

<b>0.1</b> A map of Egypt showing the sites mentioned in the book.	xx
<b>1</b> The modern cathedral at Karm Abu Mina, near Alexandria, stands next to the foundational Coptic martyr's burial church.	3
<b>2</b> A funerary stela for two brothers bears hallmarks of the Roman-era ruling group in Egypt. Abydos, near Sohag, first or second century.	4
<b>3</b> A potsherd (ostrakon) with a tax return written in Greek, the language of government in Late Antique Egypt. Thebes, second century.	5
<b>4</b> 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.	6
<b>5</b> Archive photograph of books (codices) from the early Coptic library discovered at Nag Hammadi. Late fourth century.	8
<b>6</b> 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.	9
<b>7</b> 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.	10
<b>8</b> A timeline showing key events mentioned in the book.	11
<b>9</b> 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.	17
<b>10</b> The temple of the goddess Hathor at Deyr al-Medina, which later became the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, second century bc.	36
<b>11</b> A funerary inscription for Paul, son of Theophilus, in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.	37
<b>12</b> The first funerary inscription for Paul in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.	45
<b>13</b> The second funerary inscription for Paul in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.	46
<b>14</b> A funerary inscription for Abraham in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.	57

15	Archive photograph of Coptic houses in Jeme Castle. Thebes, eighth century.	66
16	Frangé's letter to Ezekiel and his fellow monks. Thebes, eighth century.	86
17	A funerary inscription for Isaac in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century.	127
18	The grand funerary inscription for priests of the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh century.	128
19	The gravestone of Paul. Aswan, probably seventh century.	162
20	The gravestone of Jordan. Aswan, seventh to eighth century.	163
21	Fra Angelico's imagining of an Egyptian landscape based on stories about the desert fathers and mothers. Italy, c. 1420. Uffizi Gallery.	240
22	The old church in the Monastery of Pishoi (Anba Bishoi) survives from the earliest era of monasticism. Wadi Natroun, fourth century.	241
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.	246
24	Icon showing Antony (left) with Paul of Thebes. Cairo, eighteenth century.	248
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.	261
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.	263
27	The tomb of Amenemopet, vizir and governor of Thebes, where Frange lived and worked during his adult life. Thebes, late fifteenth century BC.	275
28	Archive photograph of Coptic houses in the upmarket suburb of Jeme Castle, where the family of Coloje were prominent residents. Thebes, eighth century.	281
29	A potsherd (ostrakon) with extracts from the Old Testament, written in Sahidic Coptic. Thebes, sixth to seventh century.	284
30	At top, the final words and the title of the Gospel of Mary in the Berlin Codex. Akhmim, possibly fourth or fifth century.	295
31	The first magical spell. Thebes, probably eighth century.	305
32	The second magical spell. Thebes, probably eighth century.	307
33	A view of Dakhla oasis in the Sahara Desert, west of the Nile Valley.	310
34	Kellis letter 71. Dakhla Oasis, fourth century.	312
35	Kellis letter 75.	315

# Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks are due to Professor Lily Kahn and Dr Riitta Valijärvi of University College London for suggesting that my teaching notes could be the basis for an addition to the Textbooks of World and Minority Languages; to Dhara Snowden of UCL Press for managing that process smoothly, and Alice Stoakley for the magic of editing in a foreign language; and to Lucia Gahlin and Dr Angela McDonald for supporting the teaching of Sahidic Coptic where it had not been taught previously.

Dedicated to Father Athanasius for his commitment to allowing the White Monastery a future worthy of its past.

مكرس لأبأ أثناسيوس لالتزامه بإعطاء الدير الأبيض مستقبلا 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).

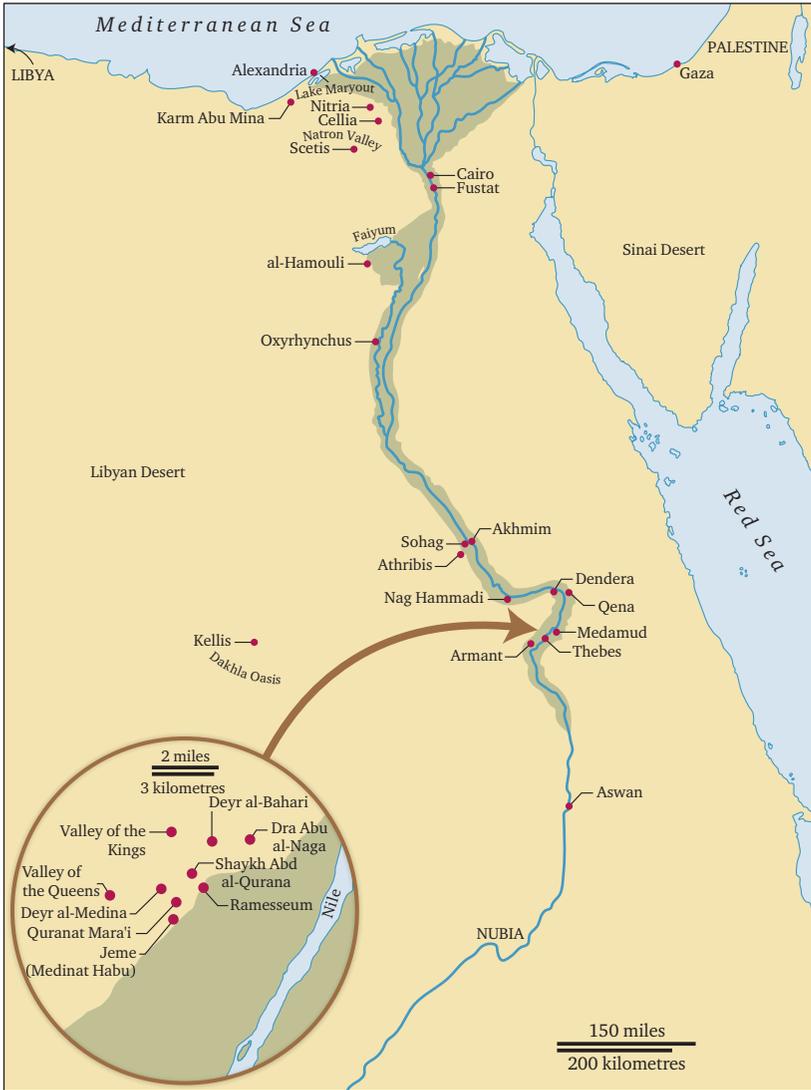
**IMPERATIVE** – a subjective statement which requests or demands that matters conform to the speaker/writer's wishes or expectations without regard for the present state of affairs (e.g. get up, pray for me).

**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) benefiting 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.

---

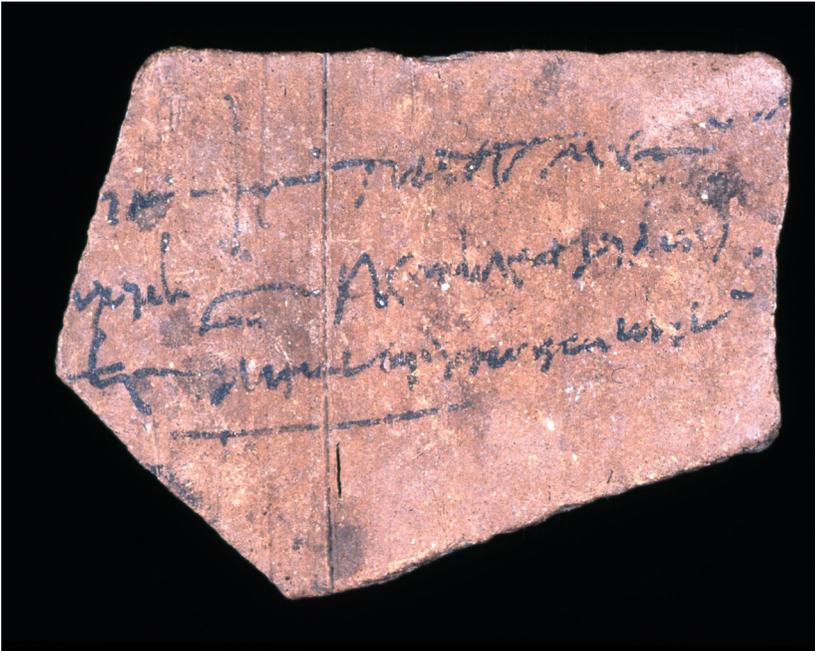
and the spread of monasteries would be the most dynamic, transformative socio-economic phenomenon of the new era (9.7).

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 (ostrakon) 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://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.<sup>2</sup>

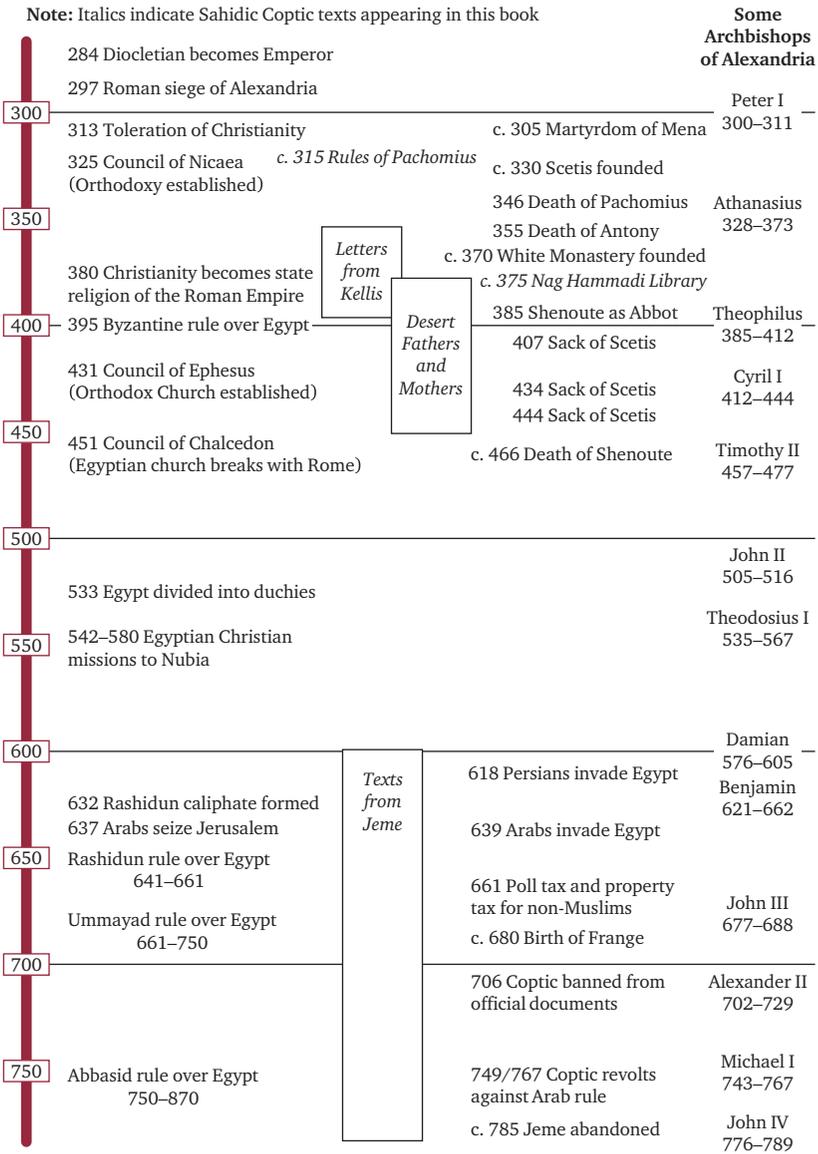
<sup>2</sup> See W. E. Crum: *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*. London, British Museum (1905), pages x–xiii.



**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](http://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

# 1

## The alphabet

## 1.1 THE COPTIC ALPHABET

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

ⲁ	Ⲃ	Ⲅ	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲑ	Ⲓ	Ⲕ	Ⲗ	Ⲙ	Ⲛ	Ⲝ
Ⲟ	Ⲡ	Ⲣ	Ⲥ	ⲧ	ⲩ	ⲫ	ⲭ	ⲯ	ⲱ	ⲳ	ⲵ
ⲷ	ⲹ	ⲻ	ⲽ	ⲿ	ⲱ						

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	Ⲏ	Ⲓ	Ⲗ	Ⲕ	Ⲗ or ⲐⲖ	ⲱ
as in	<i>b<u>at</u></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	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲓ	Ⲙ	Ⲟ	Ⲕ	Ⲗ
<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>

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

Ⲅ	Ⲣ	Ⲥ	ⲧ	ⲩ	ⲫ	ⲭ	ⲯ
<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>que<u>u</u>e</i>

Notice the scope for confusing Ⲍ and ⲽ 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*:

Ⲕ = *t + h*    ⲫ = *p + h*    ⲭ = *k + h*    Ⲏ = *ks (= x)*    ⲳ = *ps*    ⲱ = *ti*

If you know some Greek, note that  $\theta$  and  $\phi$  and  $\chi$  rarely have the standard pronunciations of  $\theta$  and  $\phi$  and  $\chi$  in Classical Greek.

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

$\text{ⲓ}$  or  $\text{Ⲉ}$  may write  $y$ , as in  $\text{ⲓⲬⲮ}$  or  $\text{ⲈⲓⲬⲮ}$  ‘father’ ( $y\acute{o}t$  rhymes with ‘boat’)

$\text{Ⲙ}$  or  $\text{Ⲑ}$  may write  $w$ , as in  $\text{ⲗⲘⲬ}$  ‘and’ ( $aw\acute{o}$  rhymes with ‘ago’)

Experience teaches you whether a specific  $\text{ⲓ}$  or  $\text{Ⲙ}$  is writing a vowel or a consonant, but the difference is rarely critical in your reading as a learner. Occasionally  $\ddot{i}$  with diaeresis (two dots) is used to write  $y$ , as in  $\text{ⲓ̇ⲬⲮ}$  ‘father’ or the names  $\text{ⲓ̇ⲗⲕⲬⲬ}$  (Yakōb) ‘Jacob’ and  $\text{ⲘⲗⲈⲗⲓⲐⲔ}$  (Mathayos) ‘Matthew’. On the other hand,  $\ddot{i}$  may also be used to write the vowel  $i$  as a distinct sound beside another vowel, as in  $\text{ⲈⲗⲬⲬⲓ̇}$  (ejō-ee) ‘over me’ or the name  $\text{Ⲙⲗⲓ̇ⲓⲗⲔ}$  (Ēl-i-as) ‘Elijah’. That said, the use of  $\ddot{i}$  often seems far from consistent and, to emphasise, it rarely affects your comprehension to know whether  $\text{ⲓ}$  or  $\text{Ⲙ}$  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,  $\bar{n}$  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,  $\bar{m}$  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):

$\bar{n}$  ‘of’     $\bar{m}$  ‘and, with’     $\bar{z}$  ‘in, from’

Of course, writing is not an exact science so you may find  $\text{ⲘⲈⲚ}$  written when you expect  $\text{Ⲙ̄Ⲛ}$ , or  $\text{ⲗ̄Ⲛ}$  for  $\text{ⲗⲈⲚ}$ , or  $\text{Ⲛ̄ⲧⲐⲗⲘ}$  for  $\text{ⲈⲚⲧⲐⲗⲘ}$  ‘instruction’, or  $\text{Ⲙ̄ⲘⲗⲧⲈ}$  for  $\text{ⲈⲘⲗⲧⲈ}$  ‘very’. Indeed, a word such as  $\text{ⲗⲈⲗⲗⲘⲚ}$  ‘pagan’ may

be written as ϩ̄λληη or even ϩ̄λλ̄, 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  $\bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}$  or  $\bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}$  for  $\iota\eta\varsigma\omicron\upsilon\gamma\varsigma$  ‘Jesus’ and  $\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma}$  or  $\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma}$  for  $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  ‘Christ’; but we find others too, including  $\bar{\alpha}\bar{\varsigma}$  for  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  ‘Lord’,  $\bar{\varsigma}\bar{\omega}\bar{\rho}$  for  $\varsigma\omega\tau\eta\rho$  ‘saviour’, and especially  $\bar{\pi}\bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}$  for  $\pi\nu\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$  ‘spirit’ with derivatives such as  $\bar{\pi}\bar{\nu}\bar{\iota}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\omicron}\bar{\nu}$  for  $\pi\nu\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$  ‘spirituality’.
- (c) Letters may also be marked as numerals using a stroke, so that  $\bar{\alpha}$ ,  $\bar{\beta}$ ,  $\bar{\gamma}$  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 $\bar{\nu}$ FREQUENTLY SHIFTS TO $\bar{\mu}$

Here is a very important fact to remember – in speech, and therefore in writing, the syllable  $\bar{\nu}$  typically (not always) shifts to  $\bar{\mu}$  when it has to be pronounced immediately in front of the sounds  $\mu$  or  $\pi$ , so we find  $\bar{\nu}$   $\bar{\iota}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\omega}\bar{\beta}$  ‘of Jacob’ but  $\bar{\mu}$   $\bar{\pi}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\tau}\bar{\rho}\bar{\omicron}\bar{\varsigma}$  ‘of Peter’ or  $\bar{\mu}$   $\bar{\mu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\theta}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\iota}\bar{\omicron}\bar{\varsigma}$  ‘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  $\bar{\nu}$  shifts to  $\bar{\mu}$  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  $\beta$  or  $\varphi$  in certain common words, such as  $\rho\omega\beta$  or  $\rho\omega\varphi$  ‘matter, thing’,  $\omicron\gamma\omega\omega\bar{\beta}$  or  $\omicron\gamma\omega\omega\bar{\varphi}$  ‘answer, respond’, and  $\varsigma\eta\varphi\epsilon$  or  $\varsigma\eta\beta\epsilon$  ‘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	ⲓⲉⲣⲏⲙⲓⲁϥ	ⲡⲈⲤⲮⲞϥ
ⲁⲒⲎⲁⲔⲓⲞϥ	ⲓⲱⲗⲁⲛⲛⲏϥ	ⲡⲈⲖⲮⲞⲎ
ⲂⲒⲔⲱⲠⲤ	ⲓϥⲁⲁⲕ	ⲡⲓⲱⲁⲤⲈ
Ⲓⲁⲃⲣⲓⲏⲗ	ⲓⲱϥⲏⲫ	ϥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲏⲗ
Ⲕⲁⲛⲓⲏⲗ	ⲕⲈⲣⲁⲕⲞϥ	ϥⲁⲎⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ
ⲔⲁⲩⲈⲓⲔ	ⲕⲱϥⲤⲁⲎⲤⲓⲎ	ϥⲈⲩⲏⲮⲞϥ
ⲈⲘⲈϥⲁⲓⲁϥ	ⲙⲁⲑⲑⲁⲓⲞϥ	ϥⲤⲈⲤⲉⲤⲁⲎⲞϥ
ⲈⲎⲱϫ	ⲙⲁⲠⲕⲞϥ	ⲤⲱⲠⲱϫ



**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](http://mikeshepherdimages.co.uk)).

---

ⲙⲗⲓⲁϢ	ⲙⲓϭⲁⲛⲗ	ϫⲉϮ
ⲑⲉⲱϫⲓⲗⲟϢ	ⲛⲟⲛ	Ϯⲁⲧⲉ
ⲓⲁϭⲱⲃ	ⲡⲁϮⲗⲟϢ	ϫⲓⲛⲟϮⲧⲉ

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 ⲓⲉⲣⲙⲓⲁϢ (*Yerēmias*) for ‘Jeremy’ and ⲓⲱⲗⲁⲛⲛⲏϢ (*Yōhannēs*) for ‘John’; and instead of ‘V’ we see ⲃⲓϭⲧⲱⲣ (*Biktōr*) for ‘Victor’ and ⲁⲁϮⲉⲓⲁ (*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 (Ϯⲁⲧⲉ, ⲡⲓⲱⲁⲧⲉ, ϫⲓⲛⲟϮⲧⲉ), Biblical names (ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲗⲁⲙ, ⲁⲁϮⲉⲓⲁ, ⲓⲱϭⲏϫ), Greek names (ⲑⲉⲱϫⲓⲗⲟϢ, ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟϢ, ϭⲁⲛⲁϭⲁⲡⲏ) and Roman names (ⲃⲓϭⲧⲱⲣ, ⲕⲱϭⲧⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛ, ϭⲉϮⲏⲣⲟϢ). 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.<sup>1</sup> 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:

Ⲣ ⲘⲔⲚⲒⲛⲘ  
ⲙⲀⲢⲔⲐⲐⲐ ⲉ  
ⲢⲔⲀⲦⲉ ⲓⲱⲐⲚⲒⲫ  
ⲔⲐⲐⲐⲐⲀⲚⲦⲒⲚ  
ⲫⲉⲢ ⲓⲐⲀⲔ  
ⲉⲘⲉⲐⲀⲒ  
ⲓⲀⲐ

Here is the text of the second ostrakon:

Ⲣ ⲦⲀⲘⲢⲉⲒⲦ ⲐⲉⲢⲢⲒⲐⲐⲐ  
ⲓⲱⲐⲚⲒⲫ ⲒⲉⲢⲢⲒⲙⲓⲀⲐ

---

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  
 ΠΙΩΔΑΤΕ ΙΩΧΗΦ  
 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 Ꝁ (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 ΕΛΕΣΑΪΔΣ 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 ΤΑΥΕΙΤ/ΔΑΥΕΙΔ ‘David’ and ΜΑΘΕΟΣ/ΜΑΘΘΑΪΟΣ ‘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 ΜΑΡΞΕ ‘flax’:

Ꝁ ΠΙΩΔΑΤΕ ΜΑΡΞΕ  
 ΣΑΜΟΥΗΛ ΜΑΡΞΕ  
 ΠΑΛΗΥ ΜΑΡΞΕ

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:

ΘΟΥΤ	<i>Thouth</i>	(September)
ΠΑΔΠΕ	<i>Paopi</i>	(October)
ΖΘΩΡ	<i>Hathur</i>	(November)
ΚΙΟΥΚ	<i>Khoiak</i>	(December)
ΤΩΒΕ	<i>Tubi</i>	(January)

ΕΜΧΙΡ	<i>Mekhir</i>	(February)
ΠΑΡΜΕΖΟΤΠ	<i>Pamenoth</i>	(March)
ΠΑΡΜΟΥΤΕ	<i>Parmouthi</i>	(April)
ΠΑΧΟΝC	<i>Pakhons</i>	(May)
Ⲡ ΠΑΩΝΕ	<i>Pauni</i>	(June)
ΕΠΕΠ	<i>Epiḗ</i>	(July)
ΜΗΣΟΥΡΕ	<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 ΚΟΙΑΞΚ for ΚΙΟΞΚ ‘Khoiak’, ΜΩΥΠ for ΕΜΧΙΡ ‘Mekhir’, ΠΑΩΟΝC for ΠΑΧΟΝC ‘Pakhons’ or ΜΕCΟΥΡΕ for ΜΗΣΟΥΡΕ ‘Mesore’.

## 1.6 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: ΔΑΥΕΙΔ Μ ΜΑΘΑΙΟΣ ‘DAVID SON OF MATTHEW’

When used between two names, the word  $\bar{\eta}$  ‘of’ is frequently the equivalent of the phrase ‘son of’, as in  $\text{CANA}\kappa\alpha\pi\eta \bar{\eta} \eta\lambda\iota\alpha\varsigma$  ‘Sanagape (son) of Elias’. In letters and legal documents, this is one obvious means of establishing your specific identity. At this point, remember that  $\bar{\eta}$  typically shifts to  $\bar{\mu}$  in front of  $\mu$  or  $\pi$ , as in  $\Delta\alpha\upsilon\epsilon\iota\delta \bar{\mu} \mu\alpha\theta\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$  ‘David (son) of Matthew’. The text of the next ostrakon exemplifies this usage:

Ⲡ CANAΚΑΠΗ $\bar{\eta}$ ΗΛΙΑC	Sanagape (son) of Elias
ἸΩΡΑΝΝΗC $\bar{\mu}$ ΜΑΘΑΙΟC	John (son) of Matthew
ΔΑΥΕΙΔ $\bar{\mu}$ ΜΑΘΑΙΟC	David (son) of Matthew
ΑΓΝΑΔΙΟC $\bar{\mu}$ ΜΑΘΑΙΟC	Agnadios (son) of Matthew

Another ostrakon begins with these names:

ⲣ ΙΩCΕΦ $\bar{\eta}$ CΑΧΑΡΙΑC	Joseph (son) of Zachary
CΤΕΦΑΝΟC $\bar{\eta}$ ΙΕΡΕΜΙΑC	Stephen (son) of Jeremy
ΠΑΝΑΧΟΡΕ $\bar{\mu}$ ΠΕΤΡΟC	Panachore (son) of Peter
ΠΙCΡΑΗΛ $\bar{\eta}$ ΚΑΡΑΒΑΝΑ	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 ΔΝΔΡΕΔΣ	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 ΚΡΣΥΝΕ	I am Tadore (daughter) of Krsune.
-----------------------	-----------------------------------

# 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 ⲁⲗⲁⲛⲏⲗ 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-ⲥⲟⲙⲁ 'the body' and ⲡ-ⲗⲏⲧ 'the mind' are masculine, whereas ⲧ-ⲗⲏ 'the belly' and ⲧ-ⲗⲉ 'the way' are feminine. A handful of words have specifically feminine forms, including ⲩⲏⲣⲉ 'child, son' but ⲩⲉⲣⲉ 'daughter' or ⲥⲟⲛ 'sibling, brother' but ⲥⲟⲛⲉ '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 ⲗⲗⲟ	Coloje, the daughter of Hello.
ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲗⲁⲙ ⲧⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲉⲃⲱ	I am Mary, the daughter of Pebo.

By the way, remember Ⲑ writes ⲧⲗ, so watch out for writings such as Ⲑⲏ 'the belly' and Ⲑⲉ 'the way', not to mention Ⲑⲁⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ for ⲧⲗⲁⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ 'the sea', Ⲑⲉⲛⲉⲉⲧⲉ for ⲧⲗⲉⲛⲉⲉⲧⲉ '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 τϵϛⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘the woman, the wife’, τϵϥⲅⲁⲭⲏ ‘the soul’ (remember ϥ writes two consonants) and τϵβⲗⲁⲛⲉ ‘the ostrakon’. You will get used to words such as ρⲓⲏ ‘road’, which takes the full form of the article (τϵⲁⲓⲏ ‘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 ϣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ‘year’, ⲟⲅⲟⲉⲓⲱ ‘moment’, ⲟⲅⲛⲟⲅ ‘hour’, ρⲟⲟⲅ ‘day’ and ⲟⲅⲱⲏ ‘night’. This raises an important point about the language more generally: words written with ⲟⲅ as the first sound typically contract in writing when a prefix gets attached and the prefix ends in ⲁ- or ⲉ-. Accordingly, we see τϵⲅⲛⲟⲅ ‘the hour’ (for τϵ-ⲟⲅⲛⲟⲅ) and τϵⲅⲱⲏ ‘the night’ (for τϵ-ⲟⲅⲱⲏ). These important time words also give rise to useful time phrases, such as ⲛ̄τϵⲅⲛⲟⲅ ‘immediately, suddenly’ and ⲛ̄ⲟⲅⲟⲉⲓⲱ ‘once’, along with τϵⲛⲟⲅ ‘now’ (from ⲟⲅⲛⲟⲅ) and ⲡⲟⲟⲅ or ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲟⲅ ‘today’ (from ρⲟⲟⲅ).

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 τϥⲅⲣⲓⲁ ‘Syria’ or to specify a unique instance of a word, as in ⲛⲟⲅⲧⲉ ‘god’ but ⲡⲛⲟⲅⲧⲉ ‘God’ – as you see, such uses often correspond to where English uses capital letters. Likewise, in the familiar phrase ⲓⲏϥⲟⲅⲥ ⲡⲉϥⲣⲓϥⲧⲟϥ or ⲓⲥⲡⲉϥϥⲥ, the element ⲡⲉϥⲣⲓϥⲧⲟϥ corresponds to English ‘Christ’ (1.2).

## 2.2 ARTICLES: ‘THE’ PLURALS

With plurals, ‘the’ definite article is ⲛ̄- or ⲛⲉ- for both masculine and feminine words. Most words do not change to show they are plural, so you find ⲡⲱⲏⲣⲉ ‘the son’ and ⲛ̄ⲱⲏⲣⲉ ‘the sons’. However, there are a

few distinct plurals, including **ΕΙΟΤΕ** ‘parents, ancestors’ (from **ΕΙΩΤ**), **ΖΙΟΜΕ** ‘women’ (from **ΣΖΙΜΕ**), **ΣΝΗΓ** ‘brothers’ (from **ΣΟΝ**), **Ρ̄ΡΩΟΥ** ‘kings’ (from **Ρ̄ΡΟ**), **Τ̄Β̄ΝΟΟΥΓΕ** ‘animals’ (from **Τ̄Β̄ΝΗ**), **ΖΙΟΥΓΕ** ‘roads, paths’ (from **ΖΙΗ**), **ΖΒΗΓΕ** ‘matters, acts, things’ (from **ΖΩΒ**), **ΠΗΓΕ** ‘heavens’ (from **ΠΕ**), **ΥΓΧΟΟΥΓΕ** ‘souls’ (from **ΥΓΧΗ**), **Β̄Λ̄ΕΕΓΕ** ‘blind’ (from **Β̄Λ̄Ε**), and **Ρ̄ΜΕΙΟΟΥΓΕ** ‘tears’ (from **Ρ̄ΜΕΙΗ**). However, since the articles indicate the number, even these plural forms are not essential so, for instance, you may find **ΝΕΣΖΙΜΕ** or **ΝΕΖΙΟΜΕ** for ‘the women’.

Again, words that begin with two consonants or refer to certain time periods take the fuller form **ΝΕ-**, as in **ΝΕΣΝΗΓ** ‘the brothers’ and **ΝΕΖΟΥ** ‘the days’, as well as **ΝΕΖΙΟΜΕ** ‘the women’ and **ΝΕΖΙΟΥΓΕ** ‘the roads’ which begin with *the sounds hy*. That said, the syllables **ḿ**- and **ΝΕ-** were obviously pronounced similarly (1.2), so you may find both **ḿΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC** and **ΝΕΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC** ‘the barbarians’ or **ḿΡ̄ΡΩΟΥ** and **ΝΕΡ̄ΡΩΟΥ** ‘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 **ΟΥΩΗΡΕ** ‘a son’ or **ΟΥΚΑΛCΙΔ** ‘a wheel’, but the same form is used whether the noun is masculine or feminine. With plural words, the indefinite article is **ΖΕΝ-** for masculine and feminine, as in **ΖΕΝΡΩΜΕ** ‘men, some men’, **ΖΕΝΖΟΥ** ‘some days’ and **ΖΕΝΩΖΕ** ‘fishermen’. Closely related to these indefinite articles are the nouns **ΟΥΔ** (feminine **ΟΥΕΙ**) ‘one, someone’ and **ΖΟΕΙΝΕ** ‘some, some people’.

Whereas definite articles specify which person or thing we are talking about (**ΤΕΣΖΙΜΕ** ‘the woman’, **ḿΠΟΥ** ‘today’), indefinite articles refer broadly to a group (**ΖΕΝΖΟΥ** ‘some days’) or introduce someone or something we did not yet know about (**ΟΥΣΖΙΜΕ** ‘a woman’) (7.4). A noun with no article at all simply presents the word as a category, such as **ΡΩΜΕ** ‘man, men’ and **ΣΖΙΜΕ** ‘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 **ḿ** ‘of’ is usually replaced by **ḿΤΕ**, as in **ΟΥΖΟΤΕ ḿΤΕ ΠΜΟΥ** ‘a fear of Death’ or **Ζḿ ΗΡΗΝΗ ḿΤΕ ΠΜΟΥΤΕ** ‘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’, **κεζλλο** ‘another elder’, **ζενκεκοπ** (**ζεν-κε-κοπ**) ‘some other occasions’, **ζενκεμεεγε** ‘some other thoughts’ and **ζενκεακκιτης** ‘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 **ζενκοογε** ‘some others’.

## 2.5 ADJECTIVES WHICH FOLLOW THEIR WORD

---

A small number of describing words (adjectives) simply follow the word they describe, including **ωημ** ‘ordinary, lowly’ (**πιπictoc ωημ** ‘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 **ζενωζε νε** means ‘are fishermen’):

<b>π πετροс μη ανδρεαс</b>	Peter and Andrew
<b>μη ιαковос μη</b>	and James and
<b>ιωδαννηс ζενωζε νε</b>	John are fishermen.

On the reverse the text simply adds:

<b>π ανοκ πετροс ωημ</b>	I am lowly Peter.
--------------------------	-------------------

Another such adjective is **ним**, which means ‘each, every, all’ and is used without articles, as in **πιπictoc ним** ‘each believer’. There are not many of these adjectives but they are commonly used and produce useful phrases such as **ογον ним** ‘everyone’, **ζωв ним** or **νηκα ним** ‘everything’ and **νη ογοειω ним** ‘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 CΕΠ CNAȲ ‘two times’ from CΟΠ ‘occasion’. Unlike most describing words, numbers often have specific forms for describing feminine nouns, as in ΠΡΩΜΕ CNAȲ ‘the two men’ but ΤΕCϢΙΜΕ CḆΤΕ ‘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’, ΝΟC ‘big, great’, ΜΗΗΩΕ ‘many’, ȒȲȲ ‘many’, ΜΕΡΙΤ ‘beloved’ (with the plural ΜΕΡΑΤΕ) and ΝΑΗΤ ‘compassionate’. These adjectives link to the word they describe with the mediating sound Ḇ, as in λAȲȲ ḆȒḆḆO ‘any elder’, ΜΕΡΙΤ ḆȲOΕΙC ‘beloved lord’, ΜΕΡΑΤΕ ḆCΟΝ ‘beloved brothers’ and ȒȲȲ ḆΒΙΡ ‘many baskets’. The simple (cardinal) numbers from ȲΟΜḆḆΤ ‘three’ upwards behave this way too, as in ȲΟΜḆḆΤ ḆȲΩ ‘three cups’ or CΕ ḆΡΟΜΠΕ ‘sixty (CΕ) years’.

Any article there may be goes at the start of the whole phrase, as in ΟȲ-ΝΟC ḆCΟΝȲOȲ ‘a big jar’, ΟȲ-ΝΟC ḆΡΑΩΕ ‘a great joy’ and Π-ΝΑΗΤ ḆḆOȲΤΕ ‘compassionate God’, as well as ΚΕ-ΜΗΗΩΕ ḆḆΑΡΤȲΡΟC ‘many other martyrs’ and ΚΕ-ȲΟΜḆḆΤ ḆȒOȲȲ ‘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 ΔΝΑΓΝΩCΤΗC ‘Reader’ and CΑΧΟ ‘Eminence’. Going forward, take care not to confuse the useful words ȲḆΡΕ ‘son’ and ȲḆḆ ‘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 ἦ ΠΙΣΡΑ	I am Paul, the son of Pisra.

Finally, an ostracon which is a brief inventory of items such as χΩ ‘cup’, ΚΑΤΗΣ ‘jug’, ΣΟΝΧΟΥ or ΣἦΧΟΥ ‘jar’, ΛΑΚΑΝΤ ‘cauldron’, ρῶβῶς ‘cover’ and ΚΑΛΣΙΛ ‘wheel’:

ΟΥΚΑΤΗΣ ΩΗΗ	An ordinary jug
ΟΥΝΟΣ ἦΣΟΝΧΟΥ	A big jar
ΟΥρῶβῶς ΛΑΜΠΑ	A cover, lamp
ΟΥΛΑΚΑΝΤ	A cauldron
ΟΥΝΟΣ ἦΚΑΛΣΙΛ	A big wheel
ΟΥΚΑΛΣΙΛ ΩΗΗ	An ordinary wheel
ΟΥΣἦΧΟΥ ΚΟΥἶ ἦ ρΟΜἦΤ	A small jar of copper (ρΟΜἦΤ)
ΩΟΜἦΤ ἦΧΩ ἦ ρΟΜἦΤ	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	ZE	way, manner
ΩΟΜΝ̄Τ	three	ZĪH	road, path
KOOYE	others	ZOOY	day
CEEΠE	rest, remainder	OYΩH	night
ZWB	matter, act, thing	POMΠE	year
CZIME	woman, wife	CON	occasion
MAAY	mother	OYNOY	hour
EIOT	father	OYOEIΩ	moment
ΩEEPE	daughter	EMATE	very, especially
ΩHPE	son	KOYI	small, little
CON	brother	ΛAAY	any
CNHY	brothers	MEPI T	beloved
CONE	sister	NIM	each, all
HPHHH	peace	NOG	big, great
MOY	die, death	ΩHM	ordinary, lowly
ZHT	heart, mind	ZAZ	many
YXHX	soul		
CΩMA	body	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
NOYTE	god	ḢOYOEIΩ	once
XOEIC	lord	ḢΠOOY	today
PPO	king	TENOY	now
PPOOY	kings	ḢTEYNOY	immediately, suddenly
ZΛLO	elder	ḢKA NIM	everything
ZENEETE	monastery	OYON NIM	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,  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon$  'hello' or  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon\iota\mu$  (or  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon$  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  $\text{c}\rho\alpha\iota$  'writing' we also come across the Coptic word  $\tau\epsilon\text{-}\rho\rho\alpha\phi\eta$  '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:

$\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$  'witness, martyr'  
 $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\varsigma$  'bishop'

$\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma$  'solitary, monk'  
 $\pi\rho\epsilon\varsigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$  'elder, priest,  
presbyter'

ΑΡΧΗΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ‘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’	ΖΛΛΟ ‘elder’
ΟΥΑΑΒ ‘holy’	ΖΕΝΕΕΤΕ ‘monastery’
ΩΛΗΛ ‘pray’	ΧΟΕΙΣ ‘lord’

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

### 3.3 ΖΑΓΙΟΣ ‘SAINT’ AND OTHER TITLES FROM GREEK

---

Some commonly used words adopted from Greek, such as the adjectives ΖΑΓΙΟΣ ‘holy’ and ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ‘blessed’, typically have specific uses. For example, ΖΑΓΙΟΣ 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 ̄ ΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ̄ΙΣΑΚ ‘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 ΤΖΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ ‘Saint Mary’ alongside ΠΖΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ ‘Saint Apa Isidore’. As expected, in describing ‘Mary’ the definite article is τ- (feminine form) but also ΖΑΓΙΟΣ has changed to ΖΑΓΙΑ as it would in Greek – doubtless, of course, because ΖΑΓΙΑ 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 ΠΖΑΓΙΟΣ 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):

ΠΖΑΓΙΟC or ΦΑΓΙΟC ΔΠΑ ΙCΙΔΩΡΟC	St Isidore
ΤΖΑΓΙΑ or ΘΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ	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  $\chi\omega \bar{n} \rho\omicron\mu\bar{n}\tau$  ‘cup of copper’ indicates how a noun may describe another word by following it and linking via  $\bar{n}$  to mean ‘of that type’. In other words,  $\chi\omega \bar{n} \rho\omicron\mu\bar{n}\tau$  ‘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  $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma \bar{n} \omega\epsilon$  ‘a wooden cross’ (literally ‘a cross of wood’) or  $\tau\zeta\epsilon \bar{n} \rho\omega\mu\epsilon$  ‘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  $\chi\omicron\epsilon\iota\varsigma \bar{n} \text{CON}$  ‘brotherly lord’ (but hardly ‘lord of brotherly type’). So, here we treat the  $\bar{n}$  not as a distinct word but as the mediating sound marking a description (2.7), as in  $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma \bar{n}\omega\epsilon$  ‘a wooden cross’ and  $\chi\omicron\epsilon\iota\varsigma \bar{n}\text{CON}$  ‘brotherly lord’. Some adjectives can follow this pattern too, as in  $\omicron\upsilon\gamma\omega\eta\rho\epsilon \bar{n}\omicron\gamma\omega\tau$  ‘an only son’ ( $\omicron\gamma\omega\tau$  ‘single, alone’),  $\pi\iota\mu\omicron\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma \bar{n}\zeta\alpha\kappa$  ‘the prudent monk’ ( $\zeta\alpha\kappa$  ‘prudent’),  $\tau\epsilon\omega\eta\epsilon \bar{n}\mu\alpha\iota\bar{n}\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon$  ‘the pious sister’ ( $\mu\alpha\iota\bar{n}\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon$  ‘pious’) and  $\bar{n}\rho\bar{\rho}\omega\omicron\gamma \bar{n}\delta\alpha\eta\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  ‘the lawless kings’ ( $\delta\alpha\eta\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  ‘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  $\omicron\gamma\kappa\omicron\gamma\iota$  ‘a little bit’,  $\pi\omega\eta\eta\mu$  ‘the lowly one’,  $\pi\lambda\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$  ‘the righteous one’,  $\zeta\epsilon\eta\eta\eta\eta\omega\epsilon$  ‘many people’ and even  $\kappa\epsilon\kappa\omicron\gamma\iota$  ‘a little more’ (2.4). For example, in the next section you will read  $\pi\omega\eta\eta\mu$  ‘the lowly one’ as well as  $\pi\pi\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma \omega\eta\eta\mu$  ‘the lowly believer’. A useful word to learn in this context is  $\lambda\delta\delta\gamma$  ‘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.<sup>1</sup> 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 ΠΩΗΜ	I am Matthew, the monk, 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,

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://mikeshepherdimages.co.uk)).

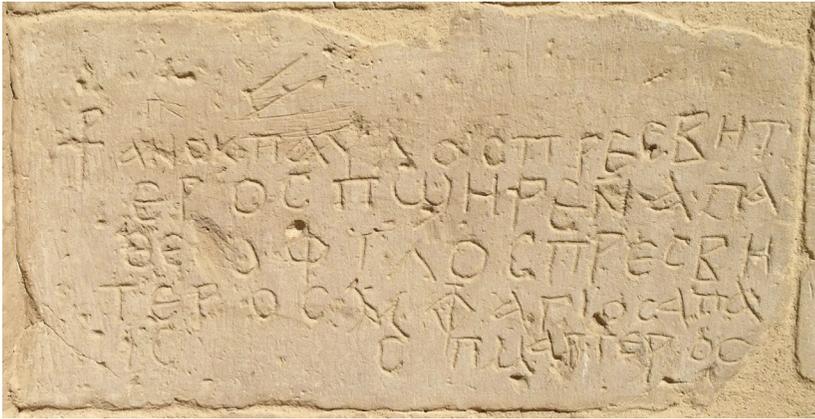
ΠΡΕΣΒΗΤΕΡΟΣ Μ̄	priest of
ΦΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ	St Isidore the Martyr.
ΠΜΑΡΤΕΡΟΣ	

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:

Ρ̄ ΑΝΟΚ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΠΙΠΣΤΟΣ ΩΝΗΜ	I am Mark, the lowly believer,
ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν̄ ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ	the son of Apa Peter,
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ̄ ΠΡΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ	priest of Saint Mark’s.
ΜΑΡΚΟΣ †	

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:

Ρ̄ ΑΝΟΚ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ  
 ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕ// ΠΩΗΡΕ  
 Ν̄ ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ  
 ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ̄ 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 Ν̄ ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ	the son of Apa Paul,
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ̄	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 ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ ‘you’
	Ⲏ or ⲧⲎ ‘you’ (fem.)	or ⲧⲎⲧⲛ̄
Third	ϣ ‘he, him’	ϣ or Ⲑϣ ‘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 Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲧ̄ ‘because of him (Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ-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 Ⲏⲭⲱⲓ ‘over me (Ⲏⲭⲱ-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 Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ ‘because of me’ (Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ ‘because of’ + ⲧ ‘me’ > Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ not Ⲏⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲧ).

The second-person singular pronoun ('you') when addressing a woman is simply **ϵ** attached to consonants, as in **ϵΤΒΗΗΤϵ** 'because of you (**ϵΤΒΗΗΤ-ϵ**)'. 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 **Τϵ**, as in **ϷΙΩΩΤϵ** 'on you (**ϷΙΩΩ-Τϵ**)'. 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 **ϵΡΟΚ** 'to you' (addressing a man) but **ϵΡΟ** 'to you' (addressing a woman); sometimes because its presence affects the pronunciation of the vowel, as in **ΝΔΚ** 'for you' (to a man) but **ΝΗ** 'for you' (to a woman).

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

## 4.2 SHIFTING PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions such as **ḿ** 'for' (usually little words stating locations and relations) have a standard form used in front of most words, as in **ϵ ΠΧΘϵΙϷ** 'to the lord' and **ϵΤΒϵ ΠϷΜΟΜ** '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 **ḿ** 'for' shifts to **ΝΔ** with a suffix pronoun, as in **ΝΔἰ** 'for me' and **ΝΔΥ** 'for them'. More dramatically, notice how **ϵ** 'to' forms **ϵΡΟΚ** 'to you' and **ϵΡΟΥ** 'to them (**ϵΡΟ-Υ**)'; how **ϵΤΒϵ** shifts in **ϵΤΒΗΗΤϵ** 'because of you' and **ϵΤΒΗΗΤḿ** 'because of him (**ϵΤΒΗΗΤ-Ϸ**)'; and how **ḿḿ** forms **ḿḿΔϷ** 'with him' and **ḿḿΔϷ** 'with her (**ḿḿΔ-Ϸ**)'.

In dictionaries, the shifted forms are marked with **Ϸ** (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: **ḿ**, **ΝΔϷ** 'for' and **ḿḿ**, **ḿḿΔϷ** 'with'. Here are some common prepositions for starters:

ḿ, ḿΔ= to, for	ε, εΡΟ= to, towards
ḿḿ, ḿḿΔ= with, and	εΧḿ, εΧΩ= over, onto, ahead
ḿḿ, ḿḿḤḤ= in, with, from	ḿḤḤ, ḿḤḤḤ= by, through, from
εḤḤε, εḤḤḤḤ= because of, about	ḿ, ḿΩ= on, at
ḿḤΔ, ḿḤΩ= behind, after, apart from	ḿΔΡΔ, ḿΔΡΔΡΟ= 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 εḤḤḤḤḤ ‘because of me’ and ḿḤḤḤḤ ‘through me’. However, what you do notice is that the preposition has shifted as if to take a suffix pronoun (εḤḤε > εḤḤḤḤḤ and ḿḤḤḤ > ḿḤḤḤḤ). 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 ḤḤḤ ‘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, ḤΩ ‘stay!’ is a command from ḤΩ ‘stay’ and ḤΩḤ ‘go!’ is a command from ḤΩḤ ‘go’. Accordingly, we may read ḤḤḤ 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 ḤḤḤ 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, ḤḤḤΔḤ ḿḤ ḤḤḤḤḤ – 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  $\epsilon\text{IPE}$  ‘do, make’ we find the command  $\alpha\text{PI}$  ‘do!’, with  $\epsilon\text{I}$  ‘come’ we find the command  $\alpha\text{MOY}$  ‘come!’ (or  $\alpha\text{MH}$  to a woman) and we find comments such as  $\alpha\text{XE OY}\omega\alpha\text{XE EP}\omega\text{I}$  ‘tell a saying ( $\omega\alpha\text{XE}$ ) to me’. From these examples you will notice that most imperatives begin with an  $\alpha$ -sound but they are sometimes very different from the basic verb ( $\epsilon\text{I} > \alpha\text{MOY}$ ). 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>
$\epsilon\text{I}$ ‘come’	$\alpha\text{MOY}$ ‘come!’ $\alpha\text{MH}$ (to a woman) $\alpha\text{MHIT}\bar{\text{N}}$ (to several)
$\epsilon\text{INE}$ ‘bring’	$\alpha\text{NI}$ or $\alpha\text{NINE}$ ‘bring!’
$\epsilon\text{IPE}$ or $\bar{\text{P}}$ ‘do, make’	$\alpha\text{PI}$ or $\alpha\text{PIPE}$ ‘do! make!’
$\text{NAY}$ ‘see’	$\alpha\text{NAY}$ ‘look!’
$\dagger$ ‘give, put’	$\text{MA}$ ‘give!’ (but $\dagger$ is also common as a command)
$\text{X}\omega$ ‘say’	$\alpha\text{XE}$ or $\alpha\text{XI}$ or $\alpha\text{XIC}$ ‘say!’ (but $\text{X}\omega$ is also common as a command)

There are other forms to take into account, such as  $\alpha\text{NIT}\bar{\text{Q}}$  ‘bring him ( $\text{Q}$ )’ – but none so common that they need concern you as a learner.

#### 4.4 ‘PLEASE’ RECOGNISE $\alpha\text{PI T}\alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$

Of course, in relation to commands and requests, there are specific idioms to consider, such as  $\alpha\text{MH EZOY}\text{N}$  ‘come in’. Idioms based on  $\alpha\text{PI}$  ‘do, make’ are especially useful to learn, including  $\alpha\text{PI PMEEY}\epsilon$  ‘remember’ (literally ‘do the thinking’ of someone) and  $\alpha\text{PI T}\alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  ‘be kind’ (literally ‘make compassion’ for someone). By the way, the word  $\alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  ‘love, compassion, charity’ is common in letters and inscriptions, whether in  $\alpha\text{PI T}\alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  itself or in phrases such as  $\bar{\text{N}} \alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  ‘for compassion’; so much so, in fact, that you will often find it straightforward to translate  $\alpha\text{PI T}\alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  or  $\bar{\text{N}} \alpha\text{G}\alpha\text{PIH}$  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’).
$\text{P} \alpha\text{NOK} \text{P}\lambda\eta\epsilon\dot{\iota}\nu\epsilon \omega\eta\text{M} \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\iota$	I am lowly Pleyne, pray for me.
$\text{†} \text{P}\lambda\eta\epsilon\dot{\iota}\nu \omega\eta\text{M} \omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\dot{\iota}$	Lowly Pleyne, pray for me.

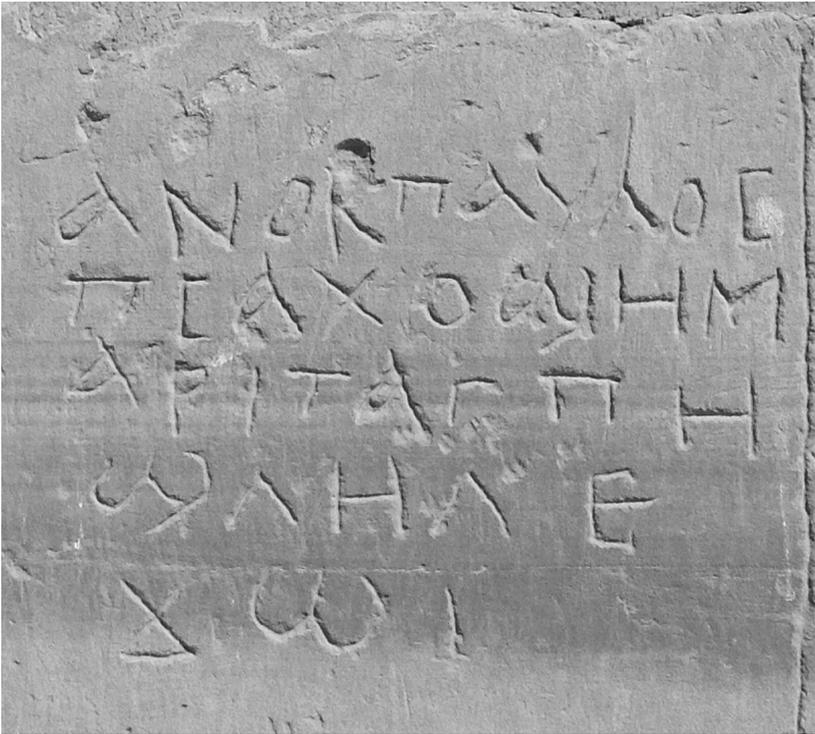
Now see what happens when more than one person is named in the inscription:

$\sigma\omicron\lambda\omicron\text{M}\omega\text{N} \omega\eta\text{M}$	Lowly Solomon,
$\text{M}\eta\text{N}\alpha \omega\eta\text{M}$	Lowly Mena.
$\omega\lambda\eta\lambda \epsilon\chi\omega\text{N} \bar{\eta} \alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$	Pray for us, please.

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

$\alpha\text{NOK} \text{P}\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\text{C}$	I am Paul,
$\text{P}\sigma\alpha\chi\omicron \omega\eta\text{M}$	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.
$\alpha\text{NOK} \text{P}\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\text{C}$	I am Paul,
$\text{P}\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\text{C} \omega\eta\text{M}$	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:



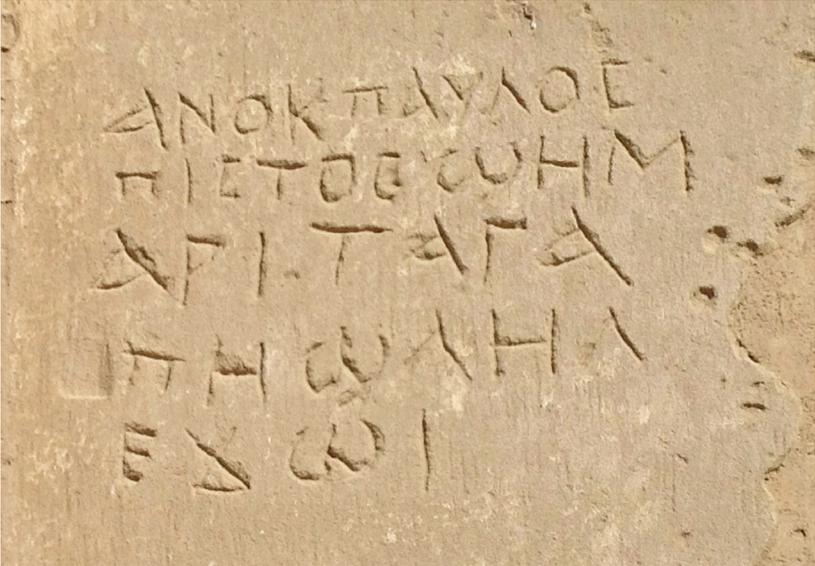
**Figure 12** The first funerary inscription for Paul in the Church of Saint Isidore the Martyr. Thebes, seventh to eighth century. *Source:* author.

ΠΑΝΟΚ ΠΛ  
 ΛΗΝΕ ΩΛΗΛ  
 ΕΧΩΪ ΠΩΗ  
 ΡΕ Ν ΑΠΑ  
 ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Μ  
 ΦΑΓΙΟΣ Α  
 ΑΠΑ ΙΣΙΔ  
 ΩΡΟΣ

Here is a normalised copy of the same inscription:

ΠΑΝΟΚ ΠΛΗΝΕ ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΪ ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Μ 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.

ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ	solitary, monk	<i>Some verbs</i> ΕΙΡΕ	or $\bar{p}$ do, make
ΟΥΩΤ	single, alone	ΑΡΙ	do! make!
ΜΑΙΝΟΥΤΕ	pious	†	give, put
ΖΑΓΙΟΣ	holy, saint	ΜΑ	give!
ΟΥΑΑΒ	pure, holy	ΣΖΑΪ	write, writing
ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ	blessed, deceased	ΩΛΗΛ ΕΙ	pray, praying come
ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ	priest	ΒΩΚ	go
ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ	bishop	ΣΩ	stay, continue
ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ	archbishop	ΕΙΝΕ	bring
ΘΒΒΙΟ	humility	ΝΑΥ	see
ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ	cross	ΧΩ	say
ΩΕ	wood		

### *Some useful phrases*

#### *Some prepositions*

Ḡ, NA=	to, for	ΑΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ	be kind, please
ḠḠ, ḠḠMA=	with, and	Ḡ ἈΓΑΠΗ	please
ΖḠ, ḠΖΗΤ=	in, from	ΧΑΙΡΕ or ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ	hello
Ε, ΕΡΟ=	to	ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖḠ	
ΕΧḠ, ΕΧΩ=	over, ahead of	ΠΧΘΕΙC	hello, farewell

## CHART I SHIFTING PREPOSITIONS

Get to know	Vowel stretch	Add πο≠	Lost ῆ	τῆ to τοοτ≠	Add ητ
μη̄, μη̄μα≠ with	ῆσα, ῆσω≠ after, apart from	ε, ερω≠ to, towards	εῖ, ερω≠ up to	ετῆ, ετοοτ≠ to (someone)	ετβε, ετβηητ≠ because of, about
ῆ, να≠ to, for	οὔβε, οὔβη≠ against, toward	κατα, καταπο≠ according to, as	εχῆ, εχω≠ over, ahead	ῆτῆ, ῆτοοτ≠ with, from	ἐν, ἐρητ≠ in, within, from
ἐι, ἐιωω≠ on, at	οὔτε, οὔτω≠ between	παρα, παραπο≠ more than, beyond	ναρη̄, ναρη̄ρα≠ in front of, before	ἐατῆ, ἐατοοτ≠ near, beside, with	
		ωα, ωαπο≠ to, up to, towards	ἐιτωγῆ, ἐιτωγω≠ beside	ἐιτῆ, ἐιτοοτ≠ by, through, from	
		ἐα, ἐαπο≠ under, in, on behalf of	ἐαρη̄, ἐαρη̄τη≠ near, beside		
			ἐαχῆ, ἐαχω≠ over, at		

## CHART II PREPOSITIONS AND PRONOUNS

	Get to know	Vowel stretch	Add πο=	Lost ῆ	τῆ to τοοτ=	Add ητ
First person		<i>Preposition ends with vowel</i>			<i>Preposition ends with τ</i>	
	ΝΔΙ 'for me'	ῆCΔΙ 'after me'	ΕΡΟΙ 'to me'	ΕΧΩΙ 'over me'	ΞΙΤΟΟΤ 'through me'	ῆΞΗΤ 'in me'
Second person		<i>Preposition ends with vowel</i>			<i>Preposition ends with τ</i>	
masculine	ΝΔΚ 'for you'	ῆCΔΚ 'after you'	ΕΡΟΚ 'to you'	ΕΧΩΚ 'over you'	ΞΙΤΟΟΤῆ 'through you'	ῆΞΗΤῆ 'in you'
feminine	ΝΕ or ΝΗ 'for you'	ῆCΔ 'after you'	ΕΡΟ 'to you'	ΕΧΩ 'over you'	ΞΙΤΟΟΤΕ 'through you'	ῆΞΗΤΕ 'in you'
plural	ΝΗΤῆ 'for you'	ῆCΔΤῆ 'after you'	ΕΡΩΤῆ 'to you'	ΕΧΩΤῆ 'over you'	ΞΙΤΟΟΤΤΗΥΤῆ 'through you'	ῆΞΗΤΤΗΥΤῆ '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 ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄ (ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄-ⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄) or ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄ (ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ-ⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄) ‘through you’. In such cases, the form of the preposition may in turn affect the form of the suffix pronoun, as in ϩⲁϩⲧⲬⲧⲛ̄ (with ⲧⲛ̄ after a vowel) or ϩⲁϩⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄ ‘beside you’ (with ⲧⲬⲮⲧⲛ̄ 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



(ⲉⲗⲁⲣⲟⲩⲏⲧ ‘composed, calm’); ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲃⲏⲏⲛ ‘wretchedness’ (ⲉⲃⲏⲏⲛ ‘wretch’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁ ‘mercy’ (ⲛⲁ ‘pity’); ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲥ ‘stupidity’ (ⲥⲟⲥ ‘fool’) and ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲃⲏⲏ ‘wisdom, knowledge’ (ⲥⲁⲃⲏⲏ ‘wise’). An interesting word to note here is ⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲉⲓⲛⲏⲏ, which means the Greek language, understood as the defining characteristic of a ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲉⲓⲛⲏⲏ – anyone who belonged to the non-Coptic elites.

Ⲅⲏⲏ prefixes nouns for the act of something, as in Ⲅⲏⲏⲱⲱ ‘conception’ (ⲱⲱ ‘conceive’) and Ⲅⲏⲏⲙⲏⲥⲉ ‘childbirth’ (ⲙⲏⲥⲉ ‘give birth’); or Ⲅⲏⲏⲕⲏⲙ ‘reaction, movement’ (ⲕⲏⲙ ‘move, disturb’) and Ⲅⲏⲏⲃⲟⲥⲉ ‘impulse’ (ⲃⲟⲥⲉ ‘jump’).

Some prefixes form adjectives instead, including:

ⲁⲧ which indicates that something is lacking, as in ⲁⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘godless’ (ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘god’), ⲁⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ‘heedless’ (ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ‘listen’), ⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ ‘uneducated’ (ⲥⲃⲱ ‘teach’), ⲁⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘naive, insensible’ (ⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘realise’), ⲁⲧⲉⲏⲧ ‘ignorant, fatuous’ (ⲉⲏⲧ ‘mind’) and ⲁⲧⲥⲟⲙ ‘impossible’ (ⲥⲟⲙ ‘ability’).

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

These adjectives often follow the pattern described in [Section 3.4](#), for example in ⲛⲧⲃ̄ⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲧⲉⲓⲙⲉ ‘the dumb animals’ and ⲧⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ‘the pious sister’. That said, we also find ⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲛ ‘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:

ⲣⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲉⲟⲧⲉ ‘devout person’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲉⲟⲧⲉ ‘(religious) devotion’

ⲣ̄ⲏⲛ̄ⲉⲏⲧ ‘thinker, thoughtful person’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣ̄ⲏⲛ̄ⲉⲏⲧ ‘thoughtfulness, consideration’

ⲡⲓⲠⲣⲁⲱ ‘gentleman’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲡⲓⲠⲣⲁⲱ ‘courtesy’

ⲡⲓⲙⲙⲁⲟ ‘rich man’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲡⲓⲙⲙⲁⲟ ‘wealth’

ⲙⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘friendly’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲁⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘amiability’

ⲙⲁⲓⲗⲏⲕⲉ ‘philanthropic’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲙⲁⲓⲗⲏⲕⲉ ‘philanthropy’

ϫⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘know’ > ⲁⲧϫⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘ignorant’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲁⲧϫⲟⲟϥⲏ ‘ignorance’

ϫⲣⲃⲉ ‘idle’ > ⲁⲧϫⲣⲃⲉ ‘diligent’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲁⲧϫⲣⲃⲉ ‘diligence, toil’

ⲧⲗⲏϥ ‘improve’ > ⲣⲉϫⲧⲗⲏϥ ‘benefactor’ > ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉϫⲧⲗⲏϥ ‘benefit’

ϱⲏⲙⲉ ⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘worship God’ > ⲣⲉϫϱⲏⲙⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘worshipper’ >  
ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉϫϱⲏⲙⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ‘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), ⲣⲱϫ ‘his mouth’ (from ⲣⲟ), ⲗⲏⲧⲓ ‘his front’ (from ⲗⲏ), ⲗⲏⲧⲓ ‘her womb’ (from a different ⲗⲏ), or ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓ ‘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 ⲗⲏ, ⲗⲏⲧⲓ ‘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,  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{HT}\bar{\text{C}}$  'in her' originally derives from the phrase 'in her belly', while  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{OOT}\bar{\text{Q}}$  '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  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{OOT}\bar{\text{Q}} \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'from Pane' (literally 'from him as Pane'),  $\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{I}}\text{OOT}\bar{\text{Q}} \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}$  'through the father' (literally 'through him as the father') and  $\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{Q}} \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{C}}$  '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  $\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{L}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{HT}\bar{\text{C}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Y}}$  '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  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{L}}$  'your servants' ( $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{K}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{L}}$ ) and  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'your daughter' ( $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{K}}\text{-}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$ ):

$\bar{\text{N}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{L}}$  'the servants' >  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{K}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{L}}$  'your servants'  
 $\bar{\text{T}}\text{-}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'the daughter' >  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{K}}\text{-}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'your daughter'  
 $\bar{\text{P}}\text{-}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{N}}$  'the brother' >  $\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{N}}\text{-}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{N}}$  'our brother'

As you see, for the sake of pronunciation, the fuller form of the definite article  $\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}$  or  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}$  or  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}$  is nearly always used with the suffix pronoun, though you will occasionally find writings such as  $\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}$  for  $\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}$  'his face'. On the other hand, the first-person singular 'my' forms shift slightly in pronunciation to become  $\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{A}}$  (or  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}$  or  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}}$ ):

$\bar{\text{T}}\text{-}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'the daughter' >  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$  'my daughter'  
 $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\text{-}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{Y}}$  'the brothers' >  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{Y}}$  'my brothers'

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

Person	Singular				Plural			
	m.	fem.	plural		m.	fem.	plural	
First	πα	τα	να	‘my’	πεν	τεν	nen	‘our’
Second	πεκ	τεκ	νεκ	‘your’ (masc.)	πετ̄ν	τετ̄ν	νετ̄ν	‘your’
	ποϥ	τοϥ	νοϥ	‘your’ (fem.)				
Third	πεϥ	τεϥ	νεϥ	‘his’	πεϥ	τεϥ	νεϥ	‘their’
	πες	τες	νες	‘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 ποϥωηρε ‘your son’ (talking to a woman) (4.1).

Some illustrative phrases include ρ̄μ̄ πεφραν ‘in his name’, ταμ̄ν̄τωηρεϥημ̄ ‘my childhood, my infancy’ (notice the use of ωημ̄ in this phrase), ταμ̄ν̄τεβιηη ‘my wretchedness’ but τεϥμ̄ν̄τ̄χωϥρε ‘his strength’ and finally παρα πᾱμ̄ποϥα ‘more than my worth’ (from μ̄ποϥα ‘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 πεκϥο ‘your face’ but πετ̄ν̄ϥο ‘your faces’, and even ποϥραν ‘their names’ or φητ̄ ν̄νερρ̄ωϥϥ ‘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 πενμ̄αινοϥτε̄ ν̄σον ‘our (πεν) pious brother’ and νεϥμερατε̄ ν̄σον ‘his (νεϥ) 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:

αναστασιος πρ̄μ̄χ̄ημ̄ε	Anastasios, the one from Jeme (or ‘the Jemean’).
αβραζαμ̄ μ̄ν̄ τεϥϥριμ̄ε	Abraham and his wife.
παειωτ̄ απα αβραζαμ̄ μ̄ν̄ πεϥσον	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.

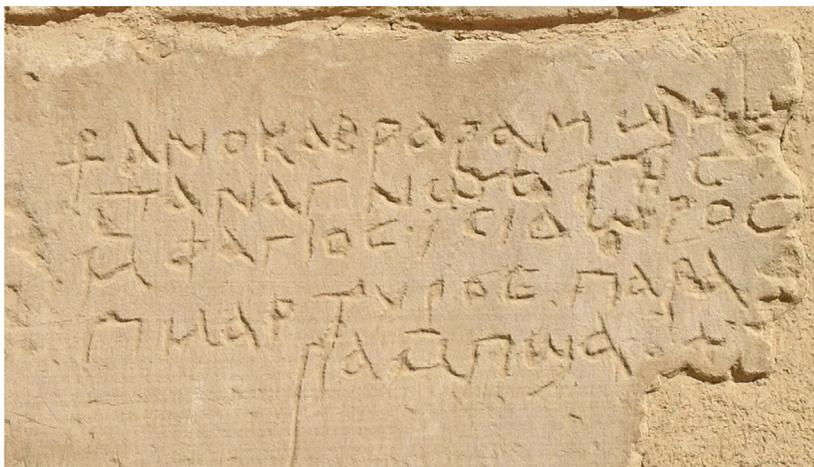
The next couple of addresses identify women, so pay careful attention to the use of feminine forms:

ΚΟΛΟΧΗ ΤΩΞΕΡΕ Ἰ ΠΖΛΛΟ	Coloje, the daughter of Phello,
ΤΡῪΧΕΜΕ	the one from Jeme.

Notice that Coloje, the daughter, is the one identified as ΤΡῪΧΕΜΕ (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 ΜΑΡΙΣΑΜ ΤΩΗΡΕ Ἰ ΠΕΒΩ	I am Mariam, the daughter
ΤΡῪΠΕΤΕΜΟΥΤ	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 ΠΡΕΦ̄Ρ̄ΝΟΒΕ ΔΡΙ      I am Simion, the sinner. Be kind.  
ΤΑΓΑΠΕ

ⲫ ΠΛΗΕΙΝ ΨΥΡΟΣ                      Pleyne the Syrian (ΣΥΡΟΣ).  
ΙΩΧΑΝΝΗΣ ΠΕΥΣΟΝ                    John, his brother.  
ΦΙΛΟΘΙΟΣ ΠΕΥΣΟΝ                    Philothios, his brother.

Ⲣ ΔΝΟΚ ΑΒΡΑΧΑΜ ΩΝΗ ΠΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ Μ̄ΦΑΓΙΟΣ ῙΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ  
ΠΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΠΑΡΑ ΠΑΜ̄ΠΩΑ +

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 ⲩⲗⲏⲗ ‘pray’ only ever appears as ⲩⲗⲏⲗ, though it translates into English as ‘pray’, ‘prays’, ‘prayed’ or ‘praying’ as required. On the other hand, verbs such as Ⲙⲉⲗⲓ ‘write’ and Ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ‘do, make’ show changes (for example, Ⲙⲉⲗⲓ may become Ⲙⲉⲗ) 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, Ⲙⲉⲗⲓ 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:

ⲁϥⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ      He came out.  
ⲁϥⲉⲓ 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 ⲁϥⲉⲓ 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:

ⲁϥⲟϥⲱⲩ ⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲱⲁ ⲧϥϣⲣⲓⲁ      He wanted to (ⲉ) go to Syria.

Here we have two verbs, ⲟϥⲱⲩ ‘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 ϥ ‘he’, hence ⲁ-ϥ-ⲟϥⲱⲩ ‘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	ⲗ-Ⲑ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	she wrote	completed action
Past negative	ⲙⲓⲡⲉ-Ⲑ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	she did not write	unfulfilled action
Indicative present	Ⲡⲗⲁ-Ⲑ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	she writes	customary action
Circumstantial	ⲉ-Ⲑ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	while she is writing	contemporaneous action
Optative	ⲙⲁⲣⲉ-Ⲑ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	she should write	desired action
‘Until’	Ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲧ-Ⲉ-Ⲉⲗⲁⲓ	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 ⲙⲟⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉⲱ	While Apa Macarius was walking once (2.1)
ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲐⲛⲏⲩⲩⲩ ⲗⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲗⲁⲗⲧⲏⲩⲩ	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



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 εϥϥϩαι ‘while he is writing’ instead:

ΔΝΟΚ ΔΑΝΙΗΛ Εϥϥϩαι ἡ̅ ΚΟΛΟΧΗ	I am Daniel, and he is writing to Coloje.
ΠΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ Εϥϥϩαι Ε ΠΕϩΜΕΡΙΤ ἡ̅ΝϫΟΝ ΕΝΩΧ ΧΕ	Papnoute, and he is writing to his beloved brother Enoch.

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

ϫ ΔΝΟΚ ἰΩΔΑΝΗΣ Μἡ̅ ΜΑΡΙΑ̅ ΕΝϥϩαι ἡ̅ ἰΩΧΗΦ ἡ̅ ΣΑΜΟΥΛ ΧΕ	I am John with Mary, and we are writing to Samuel.
--	--

Another typical address used as a complement with εϥϥϩαι or even instead of it – and well worth learning as a consequence – is εϥΩΙΝΕ Ε ‘and he is asking for’ or ‘and he is greeting’:

ϫ ΔΝΟΚ ϥΡΑΝΓΕ Εϥϥϩαι ΕϥΩΙΝΕ Ε ΠΕϥϫΟΝ ΔΑΥΕΙΔ	I am Frange, and he is writing and greeting his brother David.
---	--

## 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:

ΔΝΟΚ ϥΡΑΝΓΕ ΠΕΡΕϥῤ̅ΝΟΒΕ Εϥϥϩαι ΕϥΩΙΝΕ Ε ΠΕϥΜΕΡΙΤ ἡ̅ΧΟΕΙϫ ἡ̅ΝϫΟΝ	I am Frange, the sinner, and he is writing and
---	--

ΤΣΙΕ ΕΙΣΧΑΙ ΕΙΩΙΝΕ Ε ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ  
Ν̄ΣΟΝ ΦΡΑΓΓΕ

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

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

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ Μ̄Ν ΤΕΥΣΖΙΜΕ  
ΕΝΣΧΑΪ 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 ΦΑΥΣΤΟΣ  
Μ̄Ν ΠΑΠΑ ΕΥΩΙΝΕ 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 (ΠΚΑΣΤΡΟΝ Ν̄ ΧΗΜΕ), which was a well-to-do neighbourhood of Jeme, actually inside the ancient temple walls:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΚΟΣΜΑ ΠΩΗΡΕ Μ̄  
ΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΙΣΑΚ Ζ̄Ν ΘΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ  
ΕΙΣΧΑΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν̄  
ΑΝΑΝΙΑΣ Ζ̄Μ ΠΚΑΣΤΡΟΝ 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 (ΝΟΜΟΣ) Thebes belonged to:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΛΕΩΝΔΙΟΣ ΠΩΗΡΕ Ν̄  
ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΟΣ ΠΡ̄Μ̄ΧΗΜΕ  
ΕΥΣΧΑΙ Ν̄ ΚΟΛΟΧΗ ΤΩΒΕΡΕ  
Μ̄ ΠΡ̄ΛΛΟ ΤΡ̄Μ̄ΧΕΜΕ Ζ̄Μ  
ΠΝΟΜΟΣ 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):

Ⲣ ⲁⲛⲠⲔ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲗⲁⲙ ⲧⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲙ̅  
 ⲡⲉⲃⲱ ⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙⲠⲟⲩⲧ  
 ⲈⲤⲤⲗⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ ⲕⲠⲗⲟⲥⲬⲏ ⲧⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲙ̅  
 ⲡⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲕⲏⲙⲉ ⲕⲈ

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

ΕΞΟΥΝ	in	ΠΑΤ, ΠΑΤ≠	foot
ΕΒΟΛ	out	ΖΗ, ΖΗΤ≠	front,
ΝΑ	pity		beginning
ΒΟΜ	ability	ΖΗ, ΖΗΤ≠	belly, womb
ΜΠΩΔ	worth		
ΝΟΒΕ	sin	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ΖΟΤΕ	fear	ΩΔ, ΩΔΡΟ≠	to
†ΖΗΥ	improve, benefit	ΖΑΖΤῆ, ΖΑΖΤΗ≠	near, beside
ΗΙ	house		
ΤΟΟΥ	hill	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΡΑΝ	name	ΜΟΟΩΕ	walk, travel
ΡῆῆΧΗΜΕ	Jemean, person from Jeme	ΖΜΟΟC	sit
		ΩΙΝΕ	ask (for), greet, visit
ΡῆῆΜΔΟ	rich person		
ΖΟ	face	CΩΤῆ	hear, listen
ΡΟ, ΡΩ≠	mouth	ΟΥΩΩ	want
ΧΩ, ΧΩ≠	head	CΟΟΥῆ	know
ΤΩΡΕ, ΤΟΟΤ≠	hand	ΕΙΜΕ	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:

$\bar{\text{N}}\Delta\text{EMON } \text{MIO}\epsilon \text{ N}\bar{\text{M}}\Delta\text{N}$       The demons are fighting ( $\text{MIO}\epsilon$ )  
with us.

$\bar{\text{N}}\Delta\text{AIMON } \text{COW}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\text{COT}\bar{\text{N}}$       The demons are laughing ( $\text{COW}\epsilon$ )  
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:

$\text{OYCTAYPOC } \bar{\text{N}}\text{O}\epsilon \text{ Z}\bar{\text{N}} \text{ NEQBI}\chi$       A wooden cross is in his hands  
 $\chi\text{OY } \text{Z}\Delta \text{ PINON}$       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  $\text{PAEIOY } \bar{\text{M}}\text{MAY}$  ‘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	τῆ̄	we
Second	κ̄	you (masc.)	τῆ̄τῆ̄	you
	τῆ̄	you (fem.)		
Third	ῆ̄	he	ῆ̄	they
	ῆ̄	she		

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

†Ϟῖνε ε τὰϞῶνε     I am greeting my sister.  
 τῆ̄ Ϸῆ̄ πῆ̄αιῶ     We are in disgrace.

Only the form ῆ̄ ‘they’ bears no relation to the corresponding suffix pronoun. Although there is obvious potential for confusing the initial pronoun τῆ̄ ‘we’ and the suffix pronoun τῆ̄ ‘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’,  $\omega\omicron\rho\pi$   $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$  or  $\bar{\nu}\omega\omicron\rho\pi$   $\mu\epsilon\bar{\nu}$  ‘firstly’ and  $\mu\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}$  ‘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’,  $\sigma\epsilon$  ‘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:

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

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, ΟΥ̅Ν̅ ΟΥ̅ΡΩ̅ΜΕ̅ Μ̅Μ̅ΔΥ̅ takes the same form as English ‘*there is a person there*’:

ΟΥ̅Ν̅ ΟΥ̅Δ̅Δ̅ΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ̅ Ζ̅ΙΩΩ̅ϸ	There is a demon on him.
Μ̅Ν̅ Λ̅Δ̅Δ̅Υ̅ Ζ̅Ν̅ ΤΩΩ̅Τ̅Ε̅	There isn’t anything in the cistern (ΩΩ̅Τ̅Ε̅) (3.5).
ΟΥ̅Ν̅ ΟΥ̅Α̅ Ζ̅Ν̅ ΤΠΟΛΙ̅ϸ	There is someone in the city (2.3).

Essentially, ΟΥ̅Ν̅ and Μ̅Μ̅Ν̅ are verbs but they are only used in this specific way. By the way, obviously related to Μ̅Μ̅Ν̅ is the exclamation Μ̅ΜΟΝ̅ ‘no’ – not to be confused with the particle Μ̅ΜΟΝ̅ ‘truly’ in the previous section.

## 7.5 ‘WHO, WHICH’ IS ΕΤ

The prefix ΕΤ ‘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 ΠΝΟΥ̅Τ̅Ε̅ Ε̅ΤΟΝ̅ϸ ‘the living god’ (‘the god *who* is living’), Π̅Ν̅Ε̅ΙΩ̅Τ̅ Ε̅ΤΟΥ̅Α̅Δ̅Β̅ ‘our holy father’ (‘our father *who* is holy’) or ΚΥΡΟΣ̅ Ε̅Τ̅ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ Ν̅ Δ̅Ν̅Δ̅Ρ̅Ε̅Δ̅ϸ ‘Cyrus, *who* is writing to Andrew’. Notice how ΕΤ effectively stands as the subject of the engaged present description, as in Ε̅Τ̅-ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ ‘who is writing’ or Ε̅Τ̅-ϸ̅Ν̅̅ Χ̅Η̅Μ̅Ε̅ ‘who is in Jeme’.

A very important Coptic idiom involves adding the definite articles to the converter ΕΤ (as Π̅Ε̅Τ̅ or Τ̅Ε̅Τ̅ or Ν̅Ε̅Τ̅) to create ‘the one who’ (or ‘those who’ in the plural), so we find Π̅Ε̅ΤΟΥ̅Α̅Δ̅Β̅ ‘the one who is holy’, Τ̅Ε̅Τ̅ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ ‘the one who is writing’, Π̅Ε̅ΤΟΥ̅Ω̅ϸ ‘the one who wants’, Ν̅Ε̅Τ̅Ε̅Ι̅Ρ̅Ε̅ ‘those who do’, Ν̅Ε̅Τ̅Μ̅Ο̅ΟΥ̅Τ̅ ‘those who are dead’ and Ν̅Ε̅ΤΟΥ̅Α̅Δ̅Β̅ ‘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](#)):

ΚΥΡΟΣ̅ Ε̅ϸ̅ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ Ν̅ Δ̅Ν̅Δ̅Ρ̅Ε̅Δ̅ϸ	Cyrus, and he is writing to Andrew
ΚΥΡΟΣ̅ Ε̅Τ̅ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ Ν̅ Δ̅Ν̅Δ̅Ρ̅Ε̅Δ̅ϸ	Cyrus, who is writing to Andrew
ΚΥΡΟΣ̅ Π̅Ε̅Τ̅ϸ̅Ζ̅Α̅Ι̅ Ν̅ Δ̅Ν̅Δ̅Ρ̅Ε̅Δ̅ϸ	Cyrus, the one who is writing to Andrew

A very useful word to recognise and learn in this regard is Ε̅Τ̅Μ̅Δ̅Υ̅ ‘that’ (literally Ε̅Τ̅-Μ̅Δ̅Υ̅ ‘which is there’), as in Π̅Ε̅Ζ̅Ο̅ΟΥ̅ Ε̅Τ̅Μ̅Δ̅Υ̅

‘that day’, ΠΜΑ ΕΤῪΜΑΥ ‘that place’, ΤΣΩΝΕ ΕΤῪΜΑΥ ‘that sister’ and even ΠΕΤῪΜΑΥ ‘that one’ (literally Π-ΕΤ-ῪΜΑΥ ‘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:

ḳ̄ ḳ̄ῃ ΠΜΟΝΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ῃ ἈΠΑ ΖΡΩΜΑΝΟΣ ΝΕΦΟΙΧ ΖΙΧῃ ΝΕΦΒΑΛ	He is in the Monastery of Apa Romanos. His hands are over his eyes (βαλλ).
ΩΡΡΠ ΜΕΝ ΤῃΩΙΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ ΕΙΣ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ῃ ΠΝΟΥΓΤΕ ῃΤΟΟΤῃ	Firstly, we are greeting you. The word of God is with you (7.3).
ΣΕῃΠΩΔ ῃ ΤΑΕΙΟ ΝΙΜ	They are worthy of every honour (ΤΑΕΙΟ) (2.7).
ḳ̄ῃΠΩΔ ῃ ΠΕΣΜΟΥ ῃ ΠΑΧΘΕΙΣ	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:

Ρ ἈΝΟΚ ΚΥΡΟΣ ῃ ΠΑΧΜΗΝΤ ΕΤΣΖΑΙ ῃ ἈΝΔΡΕΑΣ ΠΕΤΖῃ ΧΗΜΕ	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 ΠΕΝῆΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ‘our holy father’ (literally ‘our father who is holy’):

Ρ ἈΝΟΚ ΠΑΠΑΣ ΠΩΗΡΕ ῃ ἈΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΕΦΣΖΑΙ ῃ ΠΕΝῆΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ἈΠΑ ἈΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ	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 **ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ** ‘bishop’:

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

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

Ρ ΔΝΟΚ ΣΑΜΟΥΛ Μ̄ ΙΑΚΩΒ Μ̄ ΑΡΩΝ ΕΝΣΖΑΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΑΠΑ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΕΠΙΣΚ/	I am Samuel with Jacob and Aaron, and we are writing to our 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 ΕΤΣΖΑΙ Μ̄ ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ Ν̄ΙΩΤ ΑΠΑ ΑΒΡΕΖΑΜ ΠΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ	I am Pesunte, son of Comes, who is writing to the 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 ΕΤΣΖΑΙ Ν̄ ΚΟΛΟΧΕ ΤΩΕΕΡΕ Ν̄ ΖΛΛΟ Ν̄ ΚΑΘΑΡΟΝ ΤΡ̄Μ̄ΧΕΜΕ	I am Tadore, daughter of Krsune, who is writing to Coloje, the daughter of Phello, son of Katharon, the one from Jeme.
ΔΝΟΚ ΤΑΔΩΡΕ †ΣΤΟΙΧΕ Ε ΤΕΒΛ̄ΧΕ	I am Tadore. I do assent to 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 ϩ̅λλο as well as πϩ̅λλο.

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 ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ ΕΣΩΙΝΕ	I am Mary, the one who is
Ε ΤΕΣΜΑΔΥ Μ̅Ν ΤΑΩΕΡΕ	writing, and she is greeting
Χ̅Ν̅ΠΝΟΥΤΕ	her mother and my daughter
	Jenpnoute.

ΔΝΟΚ ΣΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ	Also (ΣΕ) I am Mary, the one
ΕΣΩΙΝΕ Ε ΤΑΣΩΝΕ	who is writing, and she is
ΤΑΧΟΪΣ 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

ΟΕ	they	ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ	barbarian
ΤΩΝ	where?	ΠΟΛΙΣ	city
ἸΠΕΙΜΑ	here		
ἸΜΑΥ	there	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ΔΕ	but, therefore, however	ΕΙ, ΕΙΩΩ	on, at
ΓΑΡ	because	ἸΝΑ, ἸΝΩΩ	after
ΣΕ	in addition, moreover	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΑΛΛΑ	rather	ΝΗΥ	come
ΩΡΠ ΜΕΝ	firstly	ΜΙΩΕ	fight
ΜἸἸΩΩ	next, afterwards	ΣΜΟΥ	bless, blessing
ΜΟΥΤ	dead	ΩΩΕ	laugh
ΒΑΛ	eye	ΣΤΟΙΧΕ	assent
ΣΙΧ	hand	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
ΒΛΧΕ	ostrakon	ΕΤἸΜΑΥ	that
ΤΑΕΙΟ	honour	ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΕΤΟΝἸ	the living god
ΣΑἸΟ	disgrace	ΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ	our holy
		ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ	father



# LESSON 8

## Identities and requests

## 8.1 INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS AND IDENTITY

As you know,  $\Delta\text{NOK}$  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	$\Delta\text{NOK}$ or $\Delta\text{N}\bar{\Gamma}$	I		$\Delta\text{NON}$ or $\Delta\text{N}\bar{\text{N}}$ we
Second	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TK}$ or $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\text{K}}$ or $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\Gamma}$	you (masc.)		$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\omega}\text{T}\bar{\text{N}}$ or $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\epsilon}\text{T}\bar{\text{N}}$ you
	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}$ or $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\epsilon}$	you (fem.)		
Third	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}\bar{\text{Q}}$	he		$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TOO}\bar{\text{Y}}$ they
	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{TOC}$	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  $\Delta\text{NOK}$  itself, you may notice that each of them ends with the corresponding suffix pronoun, as in  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}-\bar{\text{Q}}$  ‘he’ and  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}-\text{C}$  ‘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  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TK}$   $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}\text{TPOC}$  ‘you are Peter’,  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}$   $\text{T}\bar{\epsilon}\text{C}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{I}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\epsilon}$   $\bar{\text{N}}$   $\Delta\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{O}}\text{C}\text{KOPOC}$  ‘you are the wife of Dioscoros’ and  $\Delta\text{NON}$   $\text{Z}\bar{\epsilon}\text{NCOONE}$  ‘we are robbers (COONE)’. Used in this way, independent pronouns may appear in the abbreviated forms shown above, so we may find  $\Delta\text{N}\bar{\Gamma}$   $\text{OY}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{P}\bar{\omega}\text{M}\bar{\text{H}}$  ‘I am a Roman’ (5.1) or  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\bar{\text{K}}$   $\text{NIM}$  ‘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  $\epsilon\text{T}$  ‘who, which’ along the lines of  $\Delta\text{NOK}$   $\text{T}\bar{\epsilon}\text{T}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\text{I}}$  ‘I am the one who is writing’ (7.5). However, this is incidental for our immediate purposes. More to the point, the little word  $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}$  often appears in support of independent pronouns without altering the meaning, as in  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TO}\bar{\text{Q}}$   $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}$   $\text{P}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\epsilon}\text{I}\bar{\omega}\text{T}$  ‘he is my father’,  $\Delta\text{NOK}$   $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}$   $\bar{\omega}\text{C}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\Phi}$  ‘I am Joseph’ and  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{TK}$   $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}$   $\text{P}\bar{\text{N}}\text{OY}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\epsilon}$  ‘you are God’ (we will return to this word  $\text{P}\bar{\epsilon}$  in [Lesson 13](#)). This is another of those variables

you simply respond to as a learner, without needing to learn how to predict when  $\pi\epsilon$  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  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\zeta\alpha\iota\ \delta\alpha\upsilon\kappa$  ‘while I myself am writing’ or as illustrated here:

$\delta\alpha\upsilon\kappa\ \delta\iota\upsilon\alpha\gamma\ \overline{\epsilon\pi\lambda\zeta\epsilon}\ \zeta\eta\bar{\nu}\ \omicron\gamma\zeta\omicron\rho\omicron\mu\alpha$     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  $\pi\lambda\zeta\omicron\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  ‘the Lord’ as  $\overline{\pi\lambda\zeta\epsilon}$ , take a look back at [Section 1.2](#); then, notice with  $\delta\iota\upsilon\alpha\gamma$  ‘see’ that the object (what gets seen) is marked with  $\epsilon$  ‘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  $\zeta\omega\omega\zeta$  ‘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  $\delta\alpha\upsilon\kappa\ \zeta\omega\omega\zeta$  ‘we *ourselves*’,  $\pi\mu\omicron\gamma\ \zeta\omega\omega\zeta$  ‘death *itself*’ and  $\kappa\omega\tau\bar{\tau}\bar{\iota}\ \epsilon\rho\omicron\iota\ \zeta\omega\omega\tau$  ‘listen only to me’ (literally ‘listen to me *myself*’). Incidentally,  $\zeta\omega$  is an abbreviation of  $\zeta\omega\omega\tau$  often used to mean ‘me too’ or ‘as well’.

Other important emphasising words formed in the same manner include  $\tau\eta\rho\zeta$  ‘all’, so compare  $\pi\kappa\alpha\zeta\ \tau\eta\rho\bar{\eta}$  ‘all the earth’ but  $\tau\epsilon\gamma\omega\eta\ \tau\eta\rho\bar{\zeta}$  ‘the whole night’ ( $\tau\eta\rho\bar{\zeta}$  because  $\omicron\gamma\omega\eta$  is feminine) and, in the plural,  $\nu\epsilon\zeta\alpha\rho\eta\gamma\ \tau\eta\rho\omicron\gamma$  ‘all his friends’ and  $\nu\alpha\bar{\iota}\ \tau\eta\rho\omicron\gamma$  ‘all these things’ ( $\nu\alpha\bar{\iota}$  simply means ‘these things’). Both  $\mu\alpha\gamma\alpha\alpha\zeta$  and  $\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\zeta$  mean ‘only, alone’, as in  $\pi\alpha\rho\chi\eta\epsilon\pi\iota\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\alpha\gamma\alpha\alpha\zeta$  ‘only the Archbishop’ or ‘the

Archbishop alone'. A less common but useful word is  $\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Z}}$  'own', as in  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{X}} \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Q}}$  '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  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}$ :

$\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{L}} \bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{X}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{I}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{P}} \bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}} \quad \text{Pray for me that God makes}$   
 $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{I}} \quad \text{mercy (NΔ) with me.}$

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  $\bar{\text{N}}$  when followed by a pronoun:

$\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{G}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{K}} \bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{L}} \quad \text{Get up and go (N-Γ-BΔK) out.}$

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  $\bar{\text{N}}$  may affect the pronunciation of an adjacent sound:

Instead of  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}$  we find  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}$  'and I', often simply pronounced  $\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}$ .

As you see above,  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{K}}$  'and you' tends to be pronounced  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{Γ}}$  (try saying  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{K}}$  to yourself and you will see how naturally  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{Γ}}$  comes out instead).

Person	Singular		Plural	
First	ἄταφληλ	and I pray	ἄτῆφληλ	and we pray
Second	ἄγφληλ	and you (masc.) pray	ἄτετῆφληλ	and you pray
	ἄτεφληλ	and you (fem.) pray		
Third	ἄφφληλ	and he prays	ἄσεφληλ	and they pray
	ἄσφληλ	and she prays		

Of course, the tense marker is the more robust ἄτε in front of nouns.

For our present purposes, we only need note that the conjunctive naturally follows the request ἀρι ταγαπη to state what *you* should do next:

ἀρι ταγαπη ἄγφληλ εχωι	Be kind and pray for me (ἄ-γ-φληλ <i>to one person</i> ).
ἀρι ταγαπη ἄτετῆφληλ εχωι	Be kind and pray for me (ἄ-τετῆ-φληλ <i>to more than one</i> ).

## 8.5 TIME TO READ SOMETHING: LETTERS AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS

We can begin with a simple address:

<p>ϱ ἀνοκ ἰωζαηνης ετσεαῖ ετωινε ε νεφμερατε ἄσον μαθηαιος μη ενωχ μη νεφαρηγ τηρουγ</p>	<p>I am John, who is writing and who is greeting his beloved brothers, Matthew and Enoch, and all his friends.</p>
--	--

Here is simple request to assist a man from Qena (κενε), just north of Thebes:

<p>ϱ ἀρι ταγαπη ἄγ† πσλομ ἄ καλιπησε πρῆκενε ἀνοκ ἰωσηφ</p>	<p>Be kind and give (ἄ-γ-†) the plough to Kalipese, the one from Qena. I am Joseph.</p>
---	---

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

$\lambda\text{N}\text{O}\text{K}$	$\text{T}\text{O}\gamma\lambda\iota\tau$	$\text{T}\omega\epsilon\epsilon\rho\epsilon$	$\bar{\text{N}}$	I am Toulit, the daughter of
	$\bar{\text{I}}\omega\lambda\alpha\text{N}\text{N}\text{H}\text{C}$	$\gamma\bar{\text{N}}$	$\text{T}\text{B}\text{O}$	John, in Edfu, and I am
	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}$	$\text{M}\alpha\rho\iota\alpha$	$\text{T}\epsilon\sigma\text{z}\text{I}\text{M}\epsilon$	writing to you. You are
	$\bar{\text{N}}$	$\Delta\iota\text{O}\text{C}\text{K}\text{O}\text{P}\text{O}\text{C}$		Mary, the wife of Dioscoros.

In the previous lesson you read the statement  $\epsilon\text{I}\text{C}$   $\text{P}\lambda\text{O}\gamma\text{O}\text{C}$   $\bar{\text{M}}$   $\text{P}\text{N}\text{O}\gamma\text{T}\epsilon$   $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{O}\text{T}\bar{\text{K}}$  ‘the word of God is with you’, which at first sight seems unambiguously religious. In fact, the phrase  $\text{P}\lambda\text{O}\gamma\text{O}\text{C}$   $\bar{\text{M}}$   $\text{P}\text{N}\text{O}\gamma\text{T}\epsilon$  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:

$\text{P}$	$\epsilon\text{I}\text{C}$	$\text{P}\lambda\text{O}\gamma\text{O}\text{C}$	$\bar{\text{M}}$	$\text{P}\text{N}\text{O}\gamma\text{T}\epsilon$	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{O}\text{T}\bar{\text{K}}$	The Word of God is with
		$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{K}$	$\text{P}\epsilon\text{T}\text{R}\text{O}\text{C}$			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  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{K}$  + name + conjunctive, and in effect means ‘you are so-and-so and you may now (*conjunctive*) do such-and-such’:

$\text{P}$	$\epsilon\text{I}\text{C}$	$\text{P}\lambda\text{O}\gamma\text{O}\text{C}$	$\bar{\text{M}}$	$\text{P}\text{N}\text{O}\gamma\text{T}\epsilon$	$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{O}\text{T}\bar{\text{K}}$	The Word of God is with you.
		$\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{K}$	$\text{P}\epsilon\text{T}\text{R}\text{O}\text{C}$	$\bar{\text{N}}\gamma\epsilon\text{I}$	$\epsilon\text{z}\text{O}\gamma\text{N}$	You are Peter, and you
		$\bar{\text{N}}\gamma\text{†}\alpha\text{K}\text{O}\text{N}\epsilon\text{I}$				may come ( $\bar{\text{N}}\text{-}\gamma\text{-}\epsilon\text{I}$ ) into
						your house and act
						properly ( $\bar{\text{N}}\text{-}\gamma\text{-}\text{†}\alpha\text{K}\text{O}\text{N}\epsilon\text{I}$ ).

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

+ ΕΙΣ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ Μ̄ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ Ν̄ΤΟΟΤΚ	The Word of God is with you.
Ν̄ΤΟΚ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ Μ̄Ν ΤΕΚΕΖΙΜΕ	You are Mark with your wife
Μ̄Ν ΝΕΚΩΗΡΕ Ν̄ΓΕΙ ΕΞΟΥΝ Ε	and your children, and
ΠΕΚΗΝΙ Ν̄ΓΒΩΚ ΕΜΖΗΤ Ν̄ΓΒΩΚ	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
Ν̄ ΑΓΑΠΗ Ν̄ΤΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ Ρ̄ ΟΥΝΑ	me, please, that God
Ν̄Μ̄ΜΑΙ Ν̄ ΑΓΑΠΗ	makes mercy with me,
	please.

Another man is mentioned beside Peter:

ΑΝΟΚ ΔΑΥΕΙΔ ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΙ	I am David. Pray for me
Ν̄ 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 Μ̄Ν̄Ν̄CΩC ‘next, afterwards’ (7.3):

Ρ̄ ΑΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ · Ν̄ΓΩΙΝΕ	Be kind and greet (Ν̄-Γ-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΠΑΕΙΩΤ̄ ῙΕΖΕΚΙΗΛ	my father Ezekiel,
ΠΡΕCΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ Μ̄ ΠΑΡΑΝ ·	the priest, for my name,
Μ̄Ν̄Ν̄CΩC Ν̄ΓΩΙΝΕ	and, next, greet (Ν̄-Γ-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΠΑΕΙΩΤ̄ · ΑΠΑ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ	my father Apa Abraham
Μ̄Ν̄ ΠΕΥCΩΝ	and his brother
ΖΑΜΗΡ Μ̄Ν̄	Hamir. Next,
Ν̄CΩC †ΩΙΝΕ	I am greeting (†-ΩΙΝΕ)
Ε ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ	all the brothers
Ζ̄Μ̄ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΠΚΕ	in the Lord.
ΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ ΔΕ Ν̄ ΝΑΪ	The crux (ΚΕΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ),
	however, of

ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ Ν̄ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄  
ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΪ ΟΥΧΑΪ  
Ζ̄Ν̄ ΠΧΟΕΙC

all these things, be kind  
and pray (N̄-TEṬN̄-ΩΛΗΛ) for me.  
Farewell. (4.3)

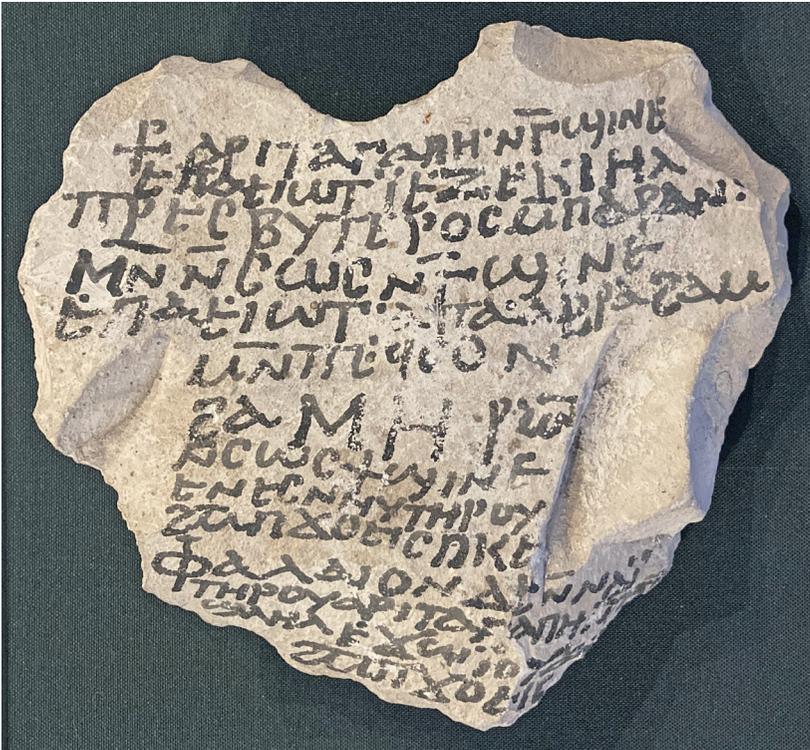


Figure 16 Frange's letter to Ezekiel and his fellow monks. Thebes, eighth century. *Source:* author.

## WORKING VOCABULARY

---

ἄντι, ἄντοις

with

ἄγω

get up, rise

ἅ

these things

τίς

who?

ἑαυτοῦ

self

πάντες

all

μόνος

only, alone

καί

too, as well

ὄρα

vision

ἔρα

(plural of ἔρη)

ἔδα

earth, ground

ἔβη

northwards

ἔνα

south



# LESSON 9

## Past narrative

## 9.1 PAST TENSES TOGETHER

As you know (6.2), the tense marker  $\lambda$ - 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,  $\lambda\iota\zeta\lambda\iota$  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).
$\lambda\varphi\omicron\gamma\omega\omega\ \epsilon\ \beta\omega\kappa\ \omega\lambda\ \tau\zeta\gamma\rho\iota\alpha$	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 ( $\lambda$  or  $\lambda\rho\epsilon$ ) is not predictable:

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

ⲁϥⲓϥⲉ ⲁϥⲓⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲁΥΩ ⲁϥⲱⲗⲏⲗ      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 (ⲁΥΩ) 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 ⲛⲉϥⲛⲏⲏⲏⲏ ⲓⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲓⲁⲓⲧⲏⲏⲏ      When the brothers were  
ⲛ̅ ⲟⲩϥⲏⲏⲏ ⲁϥⲓϫⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲩ      sitting beside him one time,  
he said (ⲓϫⲟⲟϥ) 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:

ⲉϥⲱⲓϥ ⲁϥⲓⲣⲉ ⲉⲡⲉϥⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏ ⲉⲓⲛ̅ ⲡⲓⲓⲓⲟ (5.3)      While he was reaping  
(ⲉ-ϥ-ⲱⲓϥ), he fell  
down on his face.

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

ἀφει εβολ εφμοοωε εχῆ     He came out walking ahead  
νεστρατεγμα                     of the armies (νε-στρατεγμα).

We are told that Alexander came out (past tense) and in that moment ε-φ-μοοωε ‘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:

ἀγμουν εβολ εγωαδε     They continued talking.

Here we recognise that the circumstantial qualification is integral to the statement: we are not simply being told that they continued (ἀ-γ-μουν εβολ) because what matters is that they continued *doing something* (ε-γ-ωαδε ‘they are talking’). Likewise, when a different group of monks realises that their beloved abbot is dying, we learn the following:

ἀγσω εγριμε     They carried on weeping (ε-γ-ριμε).

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

αφογω εφμογ     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:

<p>ΟΥΒΑΙΩΙΝΕ ΔΦΕΙ ΕΦΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΦΡΙΜΕ</p>	<p>A messenger came crying (ε-φ-ωω) out and weeping (ε-φ-ριμε).</p>
--	---

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:

<p>ΔΤΝΟΣ ΜΗΝΤΡΜΜΔΟ ΔΣΟΥΩΞ ΞΝ ΤΜΝΤΞΗΚΕ (5.1)</p>	<p>Great wealth, it settled in the poverty.</p>
---	---

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):

<p>Ν̄ΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ̄</p>	<p>As for him (Ν̄ΤΟΥ), however, he answered.</p>
<p>Ν̄ΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΥΜΟΥΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΥΩΔ.ΔΕ</p>	<p>As for them (Ν̄ΤΟΥ), however, they carried on talking.</p>

In each instance, ΔΕ has the helpful effect of forming an initial 'breathing space' in which we recognise the new subject (Ν̄ΤΟΥ ΔΕ > ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ̄). 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, Ν̄ΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΦΟΥΩΩΒ̄ is often simply still 'he answered'.

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

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  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$ , as in  $\Delta\text{C}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$   $\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}}$  ‘the elder heard’. Here we have the statement  $\Delta\text{-C}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$  ‘he heard’ but then we learn who ‘he’ is because  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$  *always* marks the subject ( $\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}}$  ‘the elder’). Again, this form of words is typical in past narrative and there is no shift in meaning caused by employing  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$ . For example, these are simply alternative versions of the same brief statement from the Gospel of John:

$\Delta\text{IHCOCYC PIME}$	Jesus wept.
$\Delta\text{CPIME } \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$ $\text{IHCOCYC}$	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:

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

This could simply have been expressed  $\Delta\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}} \Delta\text{E}$   $\text{C}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$  but using  $\Delta\text{-C}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$  allows the writer to establish the scene concisely – time and action neatly stated, and given breathing space, as it were, by  $\Delta\text{E}$  – 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](#) ( $\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{O}} \Delta\text{E}$   $\Delta\text{C}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{M}}$ ). 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  $\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{I}}$ :

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

Here there are a couple of relevant style points. First, the subject (ΠΕΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ  $\bar{\eta}$  ΩΙΗΤ) is not one word but a whole phrase, and certain writers prefer to avoid something like ΔΠΕΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ  $\bar{\eta}$  ΩΙΗΤ 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,  $\bar{\eta}$ 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  $\bar{\eta}$  ΩΙΗΤ 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  $\bar{\eta}$ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΩ ‘he once went’); then (c) specify the subject using  $\bar{\eta}$ ΣΙ 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  $\bar{\eta}$ ΣΙ when it is used – and marking the subject is the *only* job  $\bar{\eta}$ ΣΙ has.

## 9.5 MARKING THE OBJECT WITH $\bar{\eta}$

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 ΠΧΘΕΙΣ ‘love the Lord’. On the other hand, take a look at this comment from a story:

ΔΦΚΩ  $\bar{\eta}$ ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΖΔΤ $\bar{\eta}$       He left his son beside the feet  
 ΝΕΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ  $\bar{\eta}$  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  $\bar{\eta}$  (written  $\bar{\eta}$  here for the usual reason (1.3)). The same thing happens in another comment about Macarius:

ΔΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ $\bar{\eta}$  ΩΙΗΤ ΕΦΤΩΟΥΝ      He came out from Scetis  
 $\bar{\eta}$ ΖΔΖ  $\bar{\eta}$ ΒΙΡ      carrying lots of baskets (ΒΙΡ).

Here, we have the simple past tense statement (ⲁ-ϣ-ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲏⲧ), then a circumstantial qualification (ⲉ-ϣ-ⲧⲱⲟϥⲛ ⲛ̄-ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̄ⲃⲓⲣ) in which the phrase ⲛ̄-ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̄ⲃⲓⲣ ‘lots of baskets’ is marked as the object of ⲧⲱⲟϥⲛ ‘carry’. It turns out that marking objects with ⲛ̄ 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 Ⲙⲟⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲡⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ‘listen to the Lord’ (or ‘hear the Lord’), ⲉϥⲱⲁⲗⲉ ⲉⲡⲣⲏϥ ‘when they were speaking about (ⲉ) gain’ (or ‘discussing gain’) and, as you already know, ⲧⲱⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲁϩⲘⲛⲉ ‘I am greeting my sister’ (literally ‘asking for my sister’). Occasionally, Coptic does this differently than English so, for example, we find Ⲅⲛ̄ ⲁⲣⲓⲕⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ‘find fault with yourself’ (‘find fault toward you’), and ⲁϣⲧⲓⲛ̄ ⲉⲛⲉⲓⲗ ⲛ̄ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲛⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ‘he kissed (ⲧⲓⲛ̄) the hands of Apa Macarius’ (‘kissed to the hands’). In particular, you should recognise that Ⲙⲟϥ ‘bless’, ϩⲁⲣⲉϩ ‘keep, protect’ and ⲛⲁϥ ‘see’ usually mark their objects with ⲉ, as in Ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ‘bless me’ (‘bless to me’), ϩⲁⲣⲉϩ ⲉⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ‘protect the men’, ⲁϣⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲛⲉⲗⲟⲥ ‘he saw the angels’, ⲧⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲛⲟϥ ‘I see you now’ (2.1), and ⲁⲓⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲡⲓⲭⲟⲥ ‘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  $\bar{p}$  (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,  $\bar{p}$  can also mean ‘spend time’, as in  $\bar{p}$  ⲟϥⲟⲩ ‘spend a night’ or ⲁϩ $\bar{p}$  Ⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ‘she spent sixty (Ⲙⲉ) years’. In addition,  $\bar{p}$  can mean ‘act in a certain way’, so you have already met  $\bar{p}$  ⲟϥⲛⲁ ‘make mercy, be merciful’ and  $\bar{p}$  ⲡⲓⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ ‘remember’, while another useful idiom to recognise is  $\bar{p}$  ⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ ‘act like, seem like’ (literally  $\bar{p}$  ⲧ-ϩⲉ ⲛ̄ ‘act the way of’) or  $\bar{p}$  ⲟⲩ ϩⲱϥ ‘act as though’. Generally,  $\bar{p}$  compounds with many words to create useful verbs, as in  $\bar{p}$ ⲃⲟⲗ ‘escape’,  $\bar{p}$ ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sin’,  $\bar{p}$ ⲣⲟϥⲟⲉⲓⲛ̄ ‘shine’,  $\bar{p}$ ⲭⲣⲓⲁ ‘need’,  $\bar{p}$ ⲟϥⲡⲏⲣⲉ ‘marvel’,  $\bar{p}$ ϩⲱⲃ ‘work, behave’,  $\bar{p}$ ⲟϥⲣⲓⲡ̄ ‘lead’,  $\bar{p}$ ϩⲁⲕ ‘be decent’,  $\bar{p}$ ϩⲗⲟ ‘grow old’,  $\bar{p}$ ϩⲟⲧⲉ ‘fear’ and  $\bar{p}$ ⲓⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ‘lord it, control’. To be clear, ⲃⲟⲗ ‘outside’, ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ‘sin’, ϩⲟⲧⲉ ‘fear’, ⲟϥⲡⲏⲣⲉ ‘marvel’ etcetera are all nouns,

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

Though idioms with  $\bar{p}$  are seemingly ubiquitous, some other verbs form useful compounds too, including  $\dagger$  ‘give’ and  $\chi$  ‘get’ in such verbs as  $\dagger\text{CB}\omega$  ‘teach’ and  $\chi\text{ICB}\omega$  ‘learn’ (‘give/get  $\text{CB}\omega$  teaching’),  $\dagger\text{K}\omega\text{T}$  ‘enhance, instruct’ and  $\chi\text{IK}\omega\text{T}$  ‘learn, benefit’ (‘give/get  $\text{K}\omega\text{T}$  building’),  $\chi\text{IMO}\epsilon\text{IT}$  ‘guide’ ( $\text{MO}\epsilon\text{IT}$  ‘path’),  $\chi\text{ICH}\beta\epsilon$  ‘take arms’ ( $\text{CH}\beta\epsilon$  ‘sword’),  $\chi\text{ICZIME}$  ‘get married’ ( $\text{CZIME}$  ‘wife’),  $\chi\text{IOY}\alpha$  ‘blaspheme’ ( $\text{OY}\alpha$  ‘blasphemy’),  $\chi\text{ISO}\lambda$  ‘lie’ ( $\text{SO}\lambda$  ‘lie’),  $\dagger\epsilon\text{OOY}$  ‘praise, glorify’ ( $\epsilon\text{OOY}$  ‘glory’),  $\dagger\text{ZH}\Upsilon$  ‘improve, benefit’ ( $\text{ZH}\Upsilon$  ‘gain’),  $\dagger\text{PI}$  or  $\dagger\text{PI}\epsilon$  ‘kiss’ ( $\text{PI}\epsilon$  ‘kiss’),  $\dagger\text{K}\lambda\text{OM}$  ‘crown’ ( $\text{K}\lambda\text{OM}$  ‘crown’),  $\dagger\text{ZTOP}$  ‘compel’ ( $\text{ZTOP}$  ‘constraint’),  $\dagger\text{OY}\beta\epsilon$  ‘resist’ ( $\text{OY}\beta\epsilon$  ‘against’) and  $\dagger\text{EBOL}$  ‘distribute, sell’ ( $\text{EBOL}$  ‘out’). Another useful idiom involving  $\chi$  is  $\chi\text{IN}\beta\text{ONC}$  ‘harm, get harmed, abuse’, where  $\beta\text{ONC}$  ‘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  $\omega\text{IHT}$  (Scetis),  $\text{ΠΕΡΝΟΥΧ}$  (Nitria) and  $\bar{\eta}\rho\text{I}$  (‘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 ( $\text{CON}$ ), a disciple ( $\text{MATHHTHC}$ ) or a visitor. Accordingly, this is the sort of start to a story we meet:

$\lambda\text{OY}\alpha \bar{\eta} \bar{\eta}\text{Z}\bar{\lambda}\lambda\text{O } \beta\text{OK } \omega\alpha \text{ KεZ}\bar{\lambda}\lambda\text{O}$       One of the elders went to another elder.

Here is another start to another such story:

$\lambda\text{C}\beta\text{OK } \bar{\eta}\text{OY}\text{O}\epsilon\text{I}\omega \epsilon \omega\text{IHT } \bar{\eta}\text{C}\text{I}$       The blessed Apa Theophilus,  
 $\text{ΠM}\alpha\text{K}\alpha\rho\text{I}\text{OC } \lambda\text{Π}\alpha \text{Θ}\epsilon\omega\phi\text{I}\lambda\text{OC}$       the Archbishop, once went  
 $\text{Π}\alpha\rho\chi\eta\epsilon\text{Π}\text{I}\text{C}\text{K}\text{OC}\text{Π}\text{OC}$       to Scetis.  
 $\lambda\text{Y}\text{C}\omega\text{OY}\text{Z } \Delta\epsilon \bar{\eta}\text{C}\text{I } \bar{\eta}\text{C}\text{C}\bar{\eta}\text{N}\Upsilon$       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 ΜΟΥ Ν̄ΤΟΟΤ̄Ḡ ΖΙ ΤΕΖΙΗ      His son died (ΜΟΥ) 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):

ΑΦΤΩΟΥΝ Ν̄ΒΙ ΠΕΙΩΤ ΑΦΚΩ      His father got up, left his son  
Μ̄ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΖΑΤ̄Ν̄ ΝΕΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ      beside the feet of the elder,  
Μ̄ ΠΖΛΛΟ ΑΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Ν̄ ΤΡΙ      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:

ΑΦΝΑΥ ΕΠΑΩΔΙ Ν̄ ΤΝΗΒΤΕ Ν̄      He saw the length (ΑΩΔΙ) of  
ΑΠΑ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΑΦ̄Ρ̄ΩΠΗΡΕ      the cord of Apa Macarius, he  
ΑΥΩ ΑΦ̄Τ̄ΠΙ ΕΝΣΙΧ̄ 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](#)):

Ν̄ΤΟΟΥ ΔΕ ΑΥΜΟΥΝ ΕΒΟΛ      Therefore, as for them, they  
ΕΥΩΔΑΧΕ ΕΝΕΠ̄ΝΙΚΟΝ Μ̄      remained talking about spiritual  
ΠΕΖΟΥ ΤΗΡ̄Ḡ Μ̄Ν̄ ΤΕΥΩΗ      matters for the whole day  
ΤΗΡ̄Ḡ      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

ΕΠΕΣΗΤ	down	ΟΥΩΩΒ̄	answer, respond
ΕΒΩ	teach, teaching	ΩΩ	call (out), read (out)
ΕΗΒΕ	sword, weapon	ΖΕ	fall, find
ΕΗΥ	time, period	Ε̄Ν	find, find out
ΧΡΙΑ	need	ΜΟΥΝ ΕΒΟΛ	continue, carry on
ΖΗΚΕ	poor	ΟΥΩ	finish, stop
ΖΗΥ	gain, increase	ΚΩ	leave, put
ΑΡΙΚΕ	fault	ΕΩΟΥΖ	assemble, meet
ΕΟΥ	glory	ΟΥΩΖ	settle
ΩΠΗΡΕ	marvel, wonder	ΡΙΜΕ	weep
ΒΙΡ	basket	†Π	kiss
ΡΙ	cell, room	ΖΙΕ	struggle
ΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ	foot	ΖΑΡΕΖ	keep, protect
ΡΑΚΟΤΕ	Alexandria	ΧΙΜΟΕΙΤ	guide
ΩΙΗΤ	Scetis		

### *Some verbs*

ΧΟΟ	said (from ΧΩ)
ΩΑΧΕ	speak, talk

### *Some useful phrases*

Π̄ ΘΕ Ν̄	act like, seem like
Π̄ ΟΥΝΑ	be merciful
ΧΙ Ν̄ ΣΟΝ	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 ⲬⲐⲐⲐ, as in ⲁⲓⲬⲐⲐⲐ 'I said'. Of course, the subject will vary and a definite subject, especially a name, may well be expressed using ⲛⲉⲓ (9.4):

ⲁⲐⲮⲐⲐⲐ ⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲁⲛⲉⲈ	A brother said to Apa Paese . . .
ⲁⲢⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲡⲐⲐⲙⲙⲛ	Apa Poimen said . . .
ⲁⲮⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲛⲉⲗⲗⲐⲟ	The elders said . . .

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

ⲁⲐⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲧⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲁ Ⲑⲛⲉⲗⲙⲉⲧⲓⲕⲏⲕⲏ ⲬⲈ	The blessed Syncretike said . . .
ⲁⲢⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲟⲮⲮⲏⲥ ⲉⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲏⲧ ⲬⲈ	In Scetis, Apa Moses said . . .

A convenient introduction to stories is the anonymous formulation ⲁⲮⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲈⲧⲨⲈ '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':

ⲁⲮⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲈⲧⲨⲈ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲉⲟⲣ ⲬⲈ	They said about Apa Hor that . . .
ⲁⲮⲬⲐⲐⲐ ⲈⲧⲨⲈ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲐⲐⲐ ⲡⲛⲟⲥ 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 ⲈⲢⲬⲱ ⲙⲓⲙⲐⲐ '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:

ⲁⲢⲟⲗⲏⲗ ⲈⲢⲬⲱ ⲙⲓⲙⲐⲐ ⲬⲈ ⲡⲛⲟⲮⲧⲈ	He prayed, saying 'God!'
-----------------------------	-----------------------------

ἀπαρκαλεῖ ἐρχῶ Ἰησοῦς	He insisted (παρκαλεῖ),
καὶ πρὸς	saying 'Lord!'

καὶ may also introduce thoughts, following verbs such as οὐκ ἀποκρίθην 'answer', εἶπα 'realise', οὐκ ᾔδειν 'know, recognise', ἠέμεινον 'think', πιστεύετε 'believe', ἠρώ 'ask' and εὗρον 'find out'. With such reported words, again καὶ naturally translates as 'that':

ἠέμεινον καὶ ἦτοκ μαρκὸς	I think that you are Mark.
οὐκ ᾔδειν καὶ ἀποκρίθην	He knows that he died.
ᾔδειν καὶ ἀποκρίθην	She realised that he had already died (9.2).

## 10.2 I SAID ΠΕΧΕ

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-ἰησοῦς 'Jesus said' or πεχε-μαθητων 'the disciples said' (actually forming one word, as in πεχεῖ etc.). As usual, a suffix pronoun affects the form of the verb, so it becomes πεχεσ in πεχεσ ἡ ἀβρααμ 'they said to Abraham' or πεχεσ ἡ μαθητων '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:

ἀποκρίθην πεχεσ αὐτοῖς	He answered, and said to them
ἀποκρίθην ἡσὶ λέγει πεχεσ ἡ πετρος	Levi answered, and said to Peter

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

πεχεσ ἡ δικαιοσ καὶ σμοῦ εροῖ πατωτ ετοῦααβ

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 Ν̄ ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ‘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-ΤΝ̄ ‘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 ΕΦΖΩΠ Ν̄ΤΕΦΜΝ̄ΤΣΟΣ	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 Ν̄ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ	All the acts of the Lord (they) are good.
---------------------------------	--

From  $\text{ΝΑΝΟΥ}$  we also get the polite description  $\text{ΕΤ-ΝΑΝΟΥϚ}$  ‘who/which is good’:

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

As it happens,  $\text{ΝΑΪΑΤ}$  has a further peculiarity. As we would expect, it may have a pronoun subject, so we find  $\text{ΝΑΪΑΤΕ}$  ‘you are blessed’ ( $\text{ΝΑΪΑΤ-Ε}$  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  $\bar{\text{Ν}}$ :

$\text{ΝΑΪΑΤ῀ ᾗ ΠΡΩΜΕ}$	The person is blessed.
-------------------------	------------------------

This, not especially common, expression arises out of the etymology of  $\text{ΝΑΪΑΤ}$ , 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 ( $\text{ΟΥᾺΝΟΜ}$ ) AND NOT ABLE ( $\text{ΜᾺΝΟΜ}$ )

You might have noticed that  $\text{ΟΥΝΤΕ}$  ‘have’ and  $\text{ΜᾺΝΤΕ}$  ‘have not’ are formally related to  $\text{ΟΥᾺ}$  ‘there is’ and  $\text{ΜᾺΜᾺ}$  ‘there is not’ (7.3). Another idiom related to these words is  $\text{ΟΥᾺΝΟΜ ᾗΜΟΚ}$  ‘you are able’ and its opposite  $\text{ΜᾺΝΟΜ ᾗΜΟΚ}$  ‘you are not able’. Literally, this means  $\text{ΟΥᾺ-ΝΟΜ}$  ‘there is ability ( $\text{ΝΟΜ}$ )’ followed by a pronoun subject. However, the pronoun does not attach to  $\text{ΝΟΜ}$  itself but to a specific preposition  $\bar{\text{Ν}}$ ,  $\text{ᾗΜΟϚ}$  ‘from, in, as’, as though saying ‘there is ability in me, in you, etc.’:

$\text{ΚΟΟΥΝ ΧΕ ΜᾺΝΟΜ ᾗΜΟΙ}$	You know that I am not able.
------------------------------	------------------------------

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  $\bar{\text{Ν}}$ ,  $\text{ᾗΜΟϚ}$  ‘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:

ΕΡΕ ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΔΕ ΖΜΟΟC ΖΔΖΤΗΥ ΝΟΥCΗΥ ΔΥΧΟΟC ΝΔΥ ΔΕ

ΕΙC ΝΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC ΝΗΥ Ε ΩΙΗΤ ΜΠΟΟΥ

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:

ΔΥΧΟΟC ΕΤΒΕ ΑΠΑ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC  
ΠΝΟC ΔΕ ΔΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ  
ΖΝ ΩΙΗΤ ΕΦΤΩΟΥΝ  
ΝΖΔΖ Ν ΒΙΡ  
ΔΦΖΙCΕ ΔΦΖΜΟΟC  
ΑΥΩ ΔΦΩΛΗΛ  
ΕΦΧΩ ΜΜΟC ΔΕ  
ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΚCΟΟΥΝ ΔΕ ΜΝΒΟΜ  
ΜΜΟΙ

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:

ΑΣΕΙΜΕ ΧΕ ΑΦΟΥΩ ΕΦΜΟΥ

She realised that he had  
already died, (9.2)

ΑΣΖΕ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΜ̄ ΠΚΑΖ

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

ΑΣΡ̄ ΘΕ Ν̄ ΝΕΤΜΟΥΤ

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 (ΠΧC) Jesus:

ΑΝΟΚ ΑΙΝΑΥ ΕΠΧC ΖΝ̄ ΟΥΖΟΡΟΜΑ

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

ΑΥΩ ΔΙΧΟΟC ΝΑΦ ΧΕ

and I said to him,

ΠΧC ΑΙΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΚ Μ̄ΠΟΥ

‘Lord! I saw you today

ΖΝ̄ ΟΥΖΟΡΟΜΑ

in a vision.’

ΑΦΟΥΩΩΒ̄ ΠΕΧΑΦ ΝΑΙ ΧΕ ΝΑΙΑΤΕ

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:

Ρ ΑΝΟΚ ΦΡΑΝΓΕ Μ̄Ν

I am Frange with

ΜΩΥΧΗC ΕΥCΖΑΙ ΕΥΩΙΝΕ

Moses, and they are

ΕΠΕΥΜΕΡΙΤ

writing and greeting

Ν̄ΧΟΕΙC Ν̄CΟΝ

their beloved, brotherly

ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΦ ΠΕCΥΝΤΕ Μ̄Ν

lord (3.4), who is good,

ΤΕΦCΡΙΜΕ

Pesunte, and his wife.

ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΜ̄ ΠΧΟΕΙC

Hello.

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

## WORKING VOCABULARY

ⲪⲃⲏⲄⲈ	(plural of Ⲫⲓⲃⲃ)
ⲡⲓⲤⲓⲤ	faith
ⲙⲁⲔⲏⲧⲏⲤ	disciple
ⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲤ	righteous
ⲤⲟⲤ	fool

### *Some prepositions*

ⲈⲧⲃⲈ, Ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲉ	because of, about
Ⲏ̄, Ⲏ̄ⲙⲟⲉ	from, in, as

### *Some verbs*

ⲡⲈⲭⲈ, ⲡⲈⲭⲁⲉ	said
ⲭⲎⲟⲄ	ask
ⲙⲈⲈⲄⲈ	think
ⲡⲓⲤⲈⲄⲈ	believe
ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲈⲓ or ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲒⲒⲗⲁⲗⲈⲓ	insist, declare
ⲒⲚⲡ	hide
ⲒⲎⲈ, ⲒⲎⲁⲉ	wish
ⲎⲁⲟⲄⲈ, Ⲏⲁⲟⲩⲟⲉ	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 Ν̄ΤΕΚΡΙΚΩΝ

We kissed your image.

ΔΥΕΙΝΕ Ν̄ΔΛΕΞΑΝΤΡΟΣ Ε ΠΗΪ Ν̄ 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 Ν̄ (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 Ν̄ΝΕΝΖΟΠΛΟΝ

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 Ν̄.

### 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:

ϩⲉⲣⲏ ϩⲉⲛⲟⲓⲕ ⲛⲁⲛ                      Soak some bread for us.

However, as in English, the indirect object (ⲛⲁ-ⲛ ‘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:

ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲟϥⲕⲟϥⲓ ⲛ̄ ⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛ              Cook us a bit of lentils.

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

ⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲁⲛⲏ ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲓⲥ ⲓⲥⲛⲉϭⲥ              Give us compassion, O Lord  
Jesus Christ.

The words are clear enough and, again, the crucial indirect object (ⲛⲁ-ⲛ) follows the verb immediately, so the object has been marked (ⲛ̄-ⲁⲓⲁⲛⲏ)

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:

ⲉⲉⲣⲓ ⲉⲎⲟⲩⲉⲓⲕ ⲛⲁⲛ	Soak some bread for us.
ⲁ-ⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲱⲡⲓ̄ ⲛⲁⲩ	Apa Antony soaked himself
ⲛ̄ⲉⲛⲕⲟⲩⲓ̄ ⲛ̄ ⲃⲏⲧ	(ⲛⲁ-ⲩ) some bits of palm-leaf.

In the first statement, the object is not marked and the verb is pronounced ⲉⲉⲣⲓ. However, in the second, the object is marked and the verb is pronounced ⲉⲱⲡⲓ̄. These observations are directly related: a verb may well be pronounced differently when the object is not marked (ⲉⲉⲣⲓ) – in truth, because verb and object get conflated in speech as ⲉⲉⲣⲓⲉⲎⲟⲩⲉⲓⲕ. Typically, the principal vowel in the verb gets reduced by this conflation – as here, from the stout ⲱ in ⲉⲱⲡⲓ̄ to the measly ⲉ in ⲉⲉⲣⲓ. This reduction does not happen when there is no object (of course) or *when the object is marked* with ⲛ̄, 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  $\bar{m}$  in  $\lambda\gamma\epsilon\iota\bar{n}\epsilon\ \bar{m}\bar{m}\bar{o}\bar{q}$  'they brought him ( $\bar{m}\bar{m}\bar{o}$ - $\bar{q}$ )' and  $\lambda\bar{n}\bar{o}\gamma\omega\omega\bar{t}\ \bar{m}\bar{m}\bar{o}\bar{c}$  'we kissed it ( $\bar{m}\bar{m}\bar{o}$ - $\bar{c}$ )'. As you know (9.5), certain verbs mark the object with a different preposition, as illustrated by  $\bar{c}\omega\tau\bar{m}$  'hear' in this comment on the influence of Abbot Shenoute's writing (see [page 260](#)):

$\lambda\gamma\bar{c}\omega\tau\bar{m}\ \bar{\epsilon}\rho\bar{o}\bar{q}\ \bar{z}\bar{n}\ \tau\bar{p}\bar{o}\lambda\bar{i}\bar{c}\ \bar{z}\bar{p}\bar{o}\bar{m}\bar{\alpha}$       They heard it ( $\bar{\epsilon}\rho\bar{o}$ - $\bar{q}$ ) 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:

$\bar{p}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\chi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{q}\ \bar{\chi}\bar{\epsilon}\ \bar{z}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{r}\bar{p}\bar{i}\ \bar{z}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{n}\bar{o}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{i}\bar{k}\ \bar{n}\bar{\alpha}\bar{n}$       He said, 'Soak some (bits of)  
 $\bar{\lambda}\bar{\gamma}\omega\ \bar{\alpha}\bar{q}\bar{z}\bar{o}\bar{r}\bar{p}\bar{o}\bar{y}$       bread for us' and he soaked  
them.

In the phrase  $\bar{\alpha}$ - $\bar{q}$ - $\bar{z}\bar{o}\bar{r}\bar{p}$ - $\bar{o}\bar{y}$  'he soaked them' the object is attached to the verb, which has shifted from  $\bar{z}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{r}\bar{p}$  to  $\bar{z}\bar{o}\bar{r}\bar{p}$  as a consequence. Likewise, we find both  $\bar{\lambda}\bar{n}\bar{o}\gamma\omega\omega\bar{t}\ \bar{m}\bar{m}\bar{o}\bar{c}$  'we kissed it' and  $\bar{\lambda}\bar{n}\bar{o}\gamma\bar{\alpha}\omega\bar{t}\bar{c}$  'we kissed it' ( $\bar{\alpha}$ - $\bar{n}$ - $\bar{o}\gamma\bar{\alpha}\omega\bar{t}$ - $\bar{c}$ ) because the infinitive is pronounced  $\bar{o}\gamma\omega\omega\bar{t}$  with a marked object but  $\bar{o}\gamma\bar{\alpha}\omega\bar{t}$  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  $\bar{\dagger}$  'give' in this comment about a letter:

$\tau\bar{\alpha}\bar{\alpha}\bar{c}\ \bar{m}\ \bar{\phi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{g}\bar{i}\bar{o}\bar{c}\ \bar{n}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{i}\omega\bar{t}\ \bar{\epsilon}\bar{t}\bar{n}\bar{\lambda}\bar{n}\bar{o}\gamma\bar{q}\ \bar{\alpha}\bar{p}\bar{\alpha}\ \bar{p}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\tau}\bar{r}\bar{o}\bar{c}$

Give it ( $\tau\bar{\alpha}\bar{\alpha}$ - $\bar{c}$ ) 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 ⲪⲠⲣⲓ, the example above, as our illustration:

- (a) ⲪⲠⲣⲓ is the standard ('absolute') pronunciation, used if there is no object or the object is marked;
- (b) Ⲫⲉⲣⲡⲓ- 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) ⲪⲠⲣⲓⲉ is the ('pronominal') pronunciation used if the object is a suffix pronoun (compare [Section 4.2](#) for the double bond ⲉ sign).

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

ⲙⲠⲮⲚ	remain, continue
ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ- ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲉ	prepare, cook
ⲪⲠⲣⲓ Ⲫⲉⲣⲡⲓ- ⲪⲠⲣⲓⲉ	soak

Notice that verbs like ⲙⲠⲮⲚ or Ⲡⲗⲏⲗ '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- ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲉ. However, even the sly, shifting forms of verbs such as ⲪⲠⲣⲓ are recognisably similar because there is a stable root made up of the consonants Ⲫ-ⲣ-ⲡⲓ. Likewise, you met two forms of ⲠⲮⲠⲠⲧ 'kiss (in greeting)' and ⲠⲮⲁⲠⲧⲉ and they also have the stable consonants ⲠⲮ-Ⲡ-ⲧ, in which only the vowels are

shifting (ΟΥΩΟΥΤ > ΟΥΔΟΥΤ). 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 ΖΔΡΕΖ ‘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 ϣΙ ϣΙ- ϣΙΤϑ ‘carry’ and ϣΙ ϣΙ- ϣΙΤϑ ‘get’, or by studying the following lists:

ΩΒΩ ΕΒΩ- ΟΒΩϑ	forget	ΚΩΤ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤϑ	build
ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΟΠϑ	count, value	ϞΩΤḿ ϞΕΤḿ- ϞΟΤḿϑ	hear, listen
ΩΥ ΕΥ- ΟΥϑ	read, read out	ΖΩΡḿ ΖΕΡḿ- ΖΟΡḿϑ	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 ḿ- ḿḿΤϑ	bring
ΕΙΡΕ ḿ- ΔΔϑ	do, make
ΚΩ ΚΔ- ΚΔΔϑ	put down, leave
ϞΖΔΙ ϞΕΖ- ϞΔΖϑ	write
† †- ΤΔΔϑ	give
ϣΩ ϣΕ- ϣΟΟϑ	say
ϞΙΝΕ ḿḿ- ḿḿḿΤϑ	find

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

## 11.7 A NOTE ABOUT ⲬⲐ Ⲭⲉ- ⲬⲐⲐⲉ ‘SAY’

The verb ⲬⲐ Ⲭⲉ- ⲬⲐⲐⲉ ‘say’ must have an object, so ⲁ-Ⲯ-ⲬⲐⲐⲉ-Ⲑ 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 ⲁⲮⲬⲐⲐⲉ ‘they said’ (ⲬⲐⲐⲉ with pronoun object) and ⲉⲢⲬⲐⲐ ⲙ̄ⲙⲐⲐ ‘while he is saying’ (ⲬⲐⲐ 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 ⲁⲢⲐⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲧ̄ ‘he found himself’ (literally ⲁ-Ⲣ-Ⲑⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲧ̄ ‘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 ⲁⲐⲛⲁⲗⲧ̄ ‘she bowed’ (which is literally ⲁ-Ⲑ-ⲛⲁⲗⲧ̄-Ⲑ ‘she bowed her’) or ⲁⲢⲕⲧⲐⲐⲉ ‘he turned, he returned’ (which is literally ⲁ-Ⲣ-ⲕⲧⲐⲐⲉ ‘he turned him’):

ⲁⲐⲛⲁⲗⲧ̄ ⲛⲁⲢⲉⲐⲬⲐⲐ ⲙ̄ⲙⲐⲐ Ⲭⲉ ⲛⲁⲬⲐⲐⲉⲓⲐ

She bowed to him, saying ‘My Lord!’

ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲐⲐⲉⲐ ⲁⲢⲕⲧⲐⲐⲉ ⲉⲑⲉⲱⲁⲱⲛⲐⲐⲉ ⲁⲢⲱⲁⲬⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲢⲉ

Afterwards, he turned to Theodore and spoke with him.

Other useful reflexive verbs include ἀρῆρατῶ ‘stand’, κῆρατῶ ‘step’, κάρω ‘shut up’, ῥῆνα ‘consent, agree’, ἀίρρα or ἀιῖῥρα ‘turn away, divert, amuse’ and ῥορῶ ‘take heed’, as well as κάρω ‘leave, depart’ along with κτορῶ ‘return’, κωκῆρῶ ‘lead’ and κωκῆρα ‘follow’, as in ἀκαρῆρατῶ ‘he stood’ and ἀκῆρατῶ ἐβωλ ‘she stepped out’:

πεχε ἰϭ οὔῆ ῥαῖ ἀρῆρατοῦ ῥιρῆ προ

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

Likewise, you are soon going to come across a euphemism for dying, ἀκῆρτον ῆμοῦ ‘he rested’. Here ῆρτον is followed by the reflexive object ῆμοῦ (‘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 (οὔα ῆ ῆῖλλο) has gone to visit another elder (κῆῖλλο), who has a disciple (μαῖητης) living with him in order to learn from his example:

αοὔα ῆ ῆῖλλο βωκ ωα	One of the elders went to
κῆῖλλο ἀὔω πεχεαῦ ῆ	another elder, and he said
πεφμαῖητης χε	to his disciple,
ταμιο ναῆ ῆοὔκοὔι ῆ ἀρῶιν	‘Cook us a bit of lentils’ and
ἀὔω ἀφταμιοῦ	he cooked it
πεχεαῦ χε ῥερῆ ῥενοεικ	He said, ‘Soak some bread
ναῆ ἀὔω ἀῦρορποὔ	for us’ and he soaked them.
ῆτοοὔ δε ἀὔμοὔη ἐβωλ	Therefore, as for them, they
εὔωαχε ἐνεῖπῆικον	remained talking about
	spiritual matters
ῆ περοοὔ τηρῶ ῆῆ τεὔωη	for the whole day and all
τηρῶ	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 ἀπαρκακαλει  
εφχῶ ἡμοσ χε  
πχῶεϊσ ογῆσῶμ ἡμοκ ε  
σκεπαζε ἡμοϊ ρῆ τεκχαρις

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](#):

αχχοοσ ετβε ἀπα μακαριος  
πνοσ χε  
αφει εβολ ρῆ ωιητ εφτωογῆ  
ῆραρ ῆβιρ  
αφριε αφρμοοσ αγω  
αφωληλ εφχῶ ἡμοσ χε  
πνογτε κσοογῆ χε ἡῆσῶμ  
ἡμοϊ  
αγω ῆτεγῆνογ αφσῆτῆ  
ριχῆ 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	ϞΙ ϞΙ- ϞΙΤϞ	lift, carry
ΑΡΩΙΝ	lentil	ΞΙ ΞΙ- ΞΙΤϞ	get,
ΒΗΤ	palm-leaf		receive
ΧΑΡΙC	grace	ΚΩ ΚΑ- ΚΑΑϞ	put,
ΖΟΠΛΟΝ	armour, guards		leave, let
		ΞΩ ΞΕ- ΞΟΟϞ	say
<i>Some verbs</i>		ΩΩ ΕΩ- ΟΩϞ	call, read
ΕΙΡΕ Π̄- ΔΑϞ	do, make	CΖΔΙ CΕΖ- CΑΖϞ	write
CΚΕΠΑΖΕ	shelter	CΩΤḡ CΕΤḡ- CΟΤḡϞ	hear,
ΑΖΕΡΑΤϞ	stand		listen
ΚΤΟϞ	turn, return	ΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΕΧ- ΝΟΧϞ	throw,
ΚΑΡΩϞ	shut up,		fling
	silence	ΕΙΝΕ ḡ- ḡΤϞ	bring
ΠΑΖΤϞ	bow	CΙΝΕ Cḡḡ- CḡḡΤϞ	find, find
† †- ΤΑΑϞ	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  $\overline{\theta}$  (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 $\overline{\alpha}$	ⲟϣⲁ	ⲟϣⲉⲓ	-ⲟϣⲉ	-ⲟϣⲉⲓ or -ⲟϣⲉⲓⲉ
2 $\overline{\beta}$	ϸⲛⲁϣ	ϸⲛⲧⲉ	-ϸⲛⲟⲟϣϸ	-ϸⲛⲟⲟϣϸⲉ
3 $\overline{\gamma}$	ϩⲟⲙⲛⲧ or ϩⲟⲙⲧ	ϩⲟⲙⲧⲉ	-ϩⲟⲙⲧⲉ	
4 $\overline{\delta}$	ϥⲧⲟⲟϣ	ϥⲧⲟ	-ⲁϥⲧⲉ	
5 $\overline{\epsilon}$	ⲧⲟϣ	ⲧⲉ	-ⲧⲏ or -ⲧⲉ	
6 $\overline{\varsigma}$	ϸⲟⲟϣ	ϸⲟⲉ	-ⲁϸⲉ	
7 $\overline{\zeta}$	ϸⲁϩⲟ	ϸⲁϩⲟⲉ	-ϸⲁϩⲟⲉ	
8 $\overline{\eta}$	ϩⲙⲟϣⲛ	ϩⲙⲟϣⲛⲉ	-ϩⲙⲏⲏ	-ϩⲙⲏⲏⲉ
9 $\overline{\theta}$	ϥⲓϸ	ϥⲓⲧⲉ	-ϥⲓϸ	-ϥⲓⲧⲉ

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  $\tau\epsilon\alpha\omega\upsilon\epsilon \bar{\eta}\epsilon\zeta\omicron\gamma\iota\alpha$  ‘the seven authorities’ ( $\epsilon\zeta\omicron\gamma\iota\alpha$  ‘authority’ is feminine). The exception is  $\rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  ‘two’, which follows the singular noun, as in  $\rho\omega\mu\epsilon \rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  ‘the two men’ and  $\tau\epsilon\varsigma\upsilon\mu\epsilon \rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  ‘the two women’ (2.6). That said, the alternative word order is entailed when  $\rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  (or  $\rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ ) appears as a noun with the meaning ‘pair, couple’:

ⲁⲧⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲁϣ ⲣ̄ ⲕⲉϸⲛⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ϩ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲏⲓ

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 $\bar{\xi}$	ΣΕ	
70 $\bar{\omicron}$	ΩΨΕ	
80 $\bar{\pi}$	ΖΜΕΝΕ	
90 $\bar{\rho}$	ΠΕΤΑΙΟΥ	

Of course, they also stand in front of the word they describe, as in ΣΕ  $\bar{\nu}$ ΡΟΜΠΕ ‘sixty years’. Units may be added using  $\bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$ , as in ΜΑΔΒΕ  $\bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$  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 ΣΕΤΕ (ΣΕ-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 ΧΟΥΤΟΥΕΪΕ (ΧΟΥΤ-ΟΥΕΪΕ) ‘twenty-one’ and ΧΟΥΤΑΣΕ ‘twenty-six’. Similarly, units in the teens always attach directly to ΜΗΤ- (adapted from ΜΗΤ ‘ten’ like English ‘-teen’ is adapted from ‘ten’), as in ΜΗΤΣΑΩΨΕ (ΜΗΤ-ΣΑΩΨΕ) ‘seventeen’. That said, ‘fifteen’ (ΜΗΤ-ΤΗ) is simply  $\bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$ ΤΗ or  $\bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$ ΤΕ, with a single -Τ, so be careful to distinguish  $\bar{\mu}\bar{\nu}$ ΤΕ 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 $\bar{\rho}$	ΩΣ
200 $\bar{\sigma}$	ΩΗΤ

1,000	$\overline{\alpha}$	ϣο
10,000	$\overline{\overline{\alpha}}$	τβα

Numerals from ‘300’ upwards follow the same alphabetic pattern, as  $\overline{\tau}$  (300),  $\overline{\gamma}$  (400),  $\overline{\phi}$  (500),  $\overline{\chi}$  (600),  $\overline{\psi}$  (700),  $\overline{\omega}$  (800) plus  $\overline{\rho}$  (900). The actual numbers are formed on either of the patterns ϣομῆτϣε ‘three hundreds’ or simply ϣομῆτϣε ‘three hundred’. Numerals for thousands are double marked, as  $\overline{\overline{\alpha}}$  and so on.

The numbers themselves (again, as in English) may be formed on the pattern †ογ ἡϣο ‘five thousand’ or the pattern μῆτσαϣε ἡϣε ‘seventeen hundred’. Again, smaller numbers may be added to hundreds and thousands with or without μῆ, so we find both ϣεταῖογ ‘one hundred fifty’ ( $\overline{\rho\eta}$ ) and ϣομῆτϣε μῆ σετε ‘three hundred and sixty-five’ ( $\overline{\tau\zeta\epsilon}$ ).

## 12.4 NUMBERS IN ORDER

The first ordinal number is ϣορπ ‘first’, as in τϣορπ ἡμορφη ‘the first form’ – you may recognise this word from the initial particle ϣορπ μεν ‘firstly’ (7.3). The other ordinals are formed by attaching the prefix μερ- to the cardinal number, as in πμερϣομῆτ ἡροογ ‘the third day’, πμερ†ογ ἡλογοc ἡ πενειωτ ‘the fifth lesson of our father’, and μερμῆτσαϣε ‘seventeenth’. Of course, the number cναγ follows the word it describes but μερ- still heads the phrase, as in ἡ πμερσεπ cναγ ‘for the second time’ (2.6).

## 12.5 TIME AND DATES

Day and night were each divided into twelve hours numbered with the prefix χῑ-, as in ἡ χῑμῆτε ἡ περοογ ‘at hour ten (χῑμῆτε) of the day’. Alongside ἡποογ ‘today’, there are also words for cαγ or ἡcαγ ‘yesterday’ and ραcτε ‘next day, tomorrow’.

Whereas ροογ means ‘day’ as contrasted to ογϣη ‘night’ (2.1), calendar dates are listed as a number following the feminine noun cογ ‘day’, as in cογ χογταce ἡ πεβοτ επηη ‘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 MHTACTE  $\bar{m}$  PEBOY PAWONS ‘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  $\lambda\alpha\omega\alpha\bar{n}\epsilon$  ‘magistrate’ or an  $\alpha\bar{p}\alpha$  ‘elder’, using the preposition  $\bar{n}\bar{n}\alpha\bar{z}\bar{p}\bar{n}$  or  $\bar{n}\alpha\bar{z}\bar{p}\bar{n}$  ‘before’:<sup>1</sup>

$\bar{p}\alpha\omega\bar{n}\epsilon$   $\bar{n}\bar{n}\alpha\bar{z}\bar{p}\bar{n}$   $\bar{p}\alpha\gamma\lambda\omicron\varsigma$   $\bar{n}$   $\bar{p}\alpha\bar{p}\bar{n}\omicron\upsilon\gamma\tau\epsilon$   $\bar{p}\lambda\alpha\omega\alpha\bar{n}\epsilon$

Rauni before Paul, (son) of Parnoute, the magistrate.

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

Day twenty-six of Eriphi 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  $\bar{p}\epsilon\bar{n}\tau\epsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\tau\eta$  ( $\bar{p}\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\epsilon$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\tau\eta$  literally ‘five and tenth’):

$\bar{z}\bar{n}$   $\theta\omega\theta$   $\bar{n}$   $\bar{p}\epsilon\bar{n}\tau\epsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\tau\eta$                       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  $\bar{\chi}$  ( $\chi + \rho$  for  $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ) or  $\bar{\rho}$

---

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

(M + P for ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ). 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 (ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ) is given as follows:

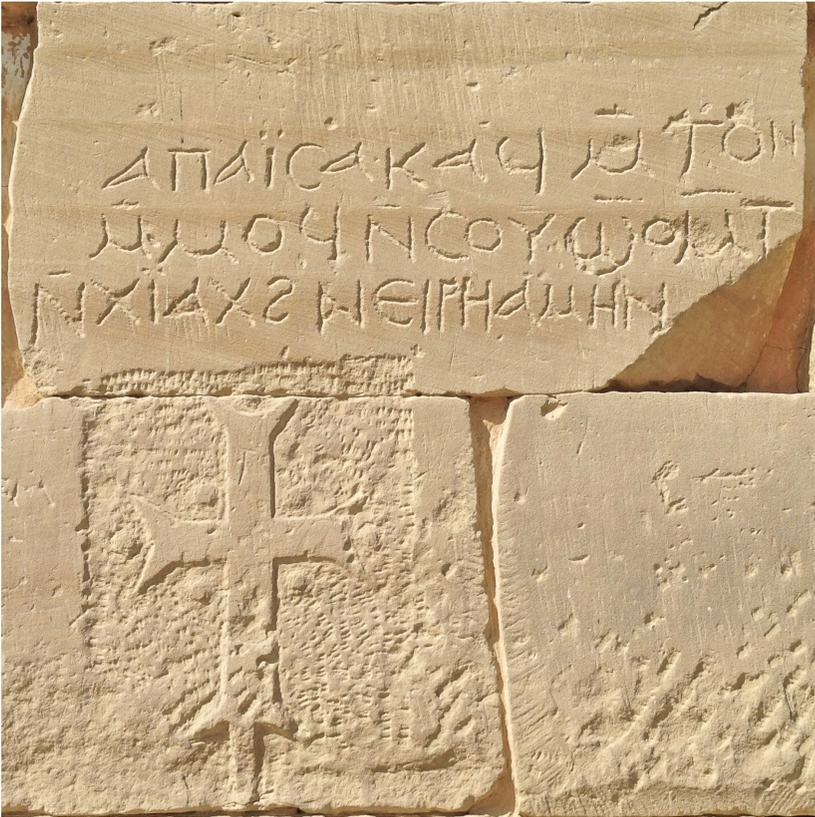
ΔΦΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΤΕΦΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ Ν ΣΟΥ ΜΗΤΗ Μ ΠΕΒΟΤ ΖΑΘΩΡ  
 ΖΝ ΤΜΗΤΡΡΟ Ν ΔΙΟΚΛΗΔΙΑΝΟΣ ΜΝ ΜΑΖΙΜΙΑΝΟΣ  
 ΝΡΡΩΟΥ ΝΑΝΟΜΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΜΠΑΡΑΒΑΤΗΣ

He fulfilled (ΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ) his martyrdom (ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ) on day fifteen of the month Hathur in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian (5.1), the lawless (ΑΝΟΜΟΣ) and reckless (ΠΑΡΑΒΑΤΗΣ) 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 ΔΦΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟΦ 'he rested' see [Section 11.8](#). Also, note here some unexpected writings by the mason, including the abbreviation of the word ΕΙΡΗΝΗ 'peace' as well as awkward spellings of the number ΦΟΜΗΤ and the month of Khoiak (1.5):

ΑΠΑ ΙΣΑΚ ΔΦΜΤΟΝ	Apa Isaac. He rested
ΜΜΟΦ Ν ΣΟΥ ΦΟΜΗΤ	on day three
Ν ΧΙΑΧ ΖΝ ΕΙΡΗ ΔΜΗΝ	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 ΑΝΑΧΟΡΙΤΗΣ '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 ΔΑΦΗΤΟΝ ΜΜΟΥ Ν ΣΟΥ ΨΙΣ Ν ΜΩΡ

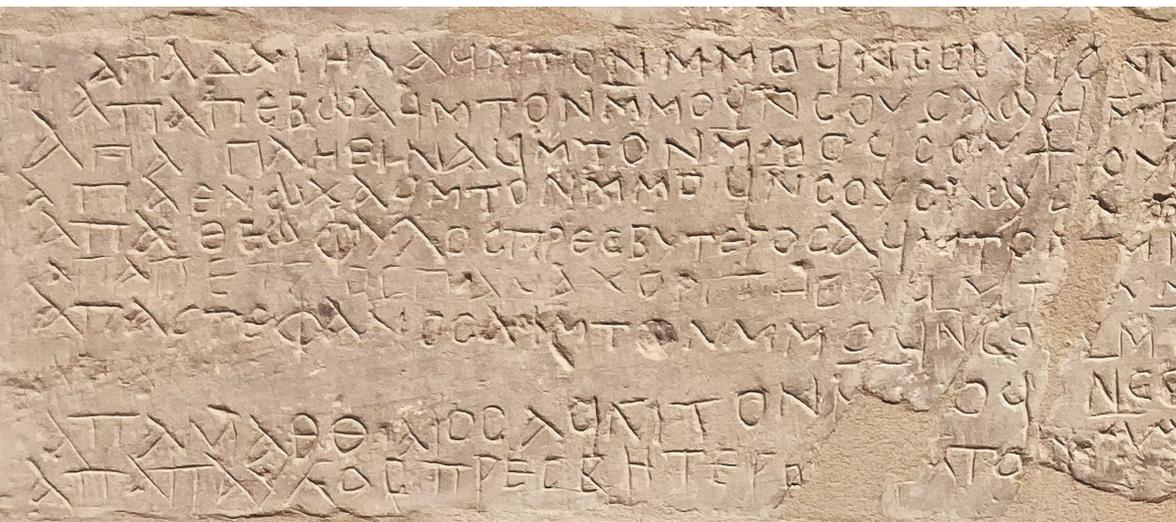
Apa Daniel. He rested on day nine of Mekhir.

ΑΠΑ ΠΕΒΩ ΔΑΦΗΤΟΝ ΜΜΟΥ Ν ΣΟΥ ΣΑΩΩ Μ ΠΑΡΕΜΖΑΤΤ

Apa Pebo. He rested on day seven of Pamenoth.

ΑΠΑ ΠΛΗΕΙΝ ΔΑΦΗΤΟΝ ΜΜΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΤΟΥ Μ 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 ΑΦΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟϢ Ν ΣΟΥ ΣΑΩϢ Μ ΠΑΑΠΕΪ

Apa Enoch. He rested on day seven of Paopi.

ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΦΥΛΟΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ ΑΦΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟϢ Ν ΣΟΥ  
ΧΟΥΤΟΥΕΪΕ Μ ΠΑΩΝΗ

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

ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΑΧΟΡΙΤΗΣ ΑΦΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟϢ Ν ΣΟΥ Ν ΣΟΥ\*  
ΧΟΥΤΑΣΕ ΚΑΧ

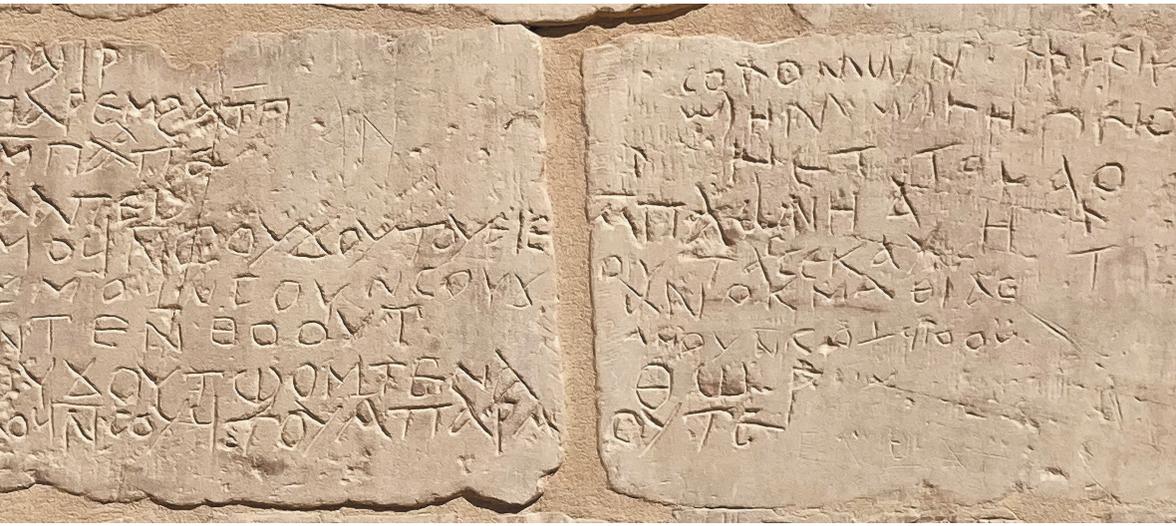
Apa Peter, the anchorite. He rested on day twenty-six of Khoiak.

ΑΠΑ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΑΦΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟϢ Ν ΣΟΥ ΜΝΤΕ Ν ΘΟΟΥΤ

Apa Stephen. He rested on day fifteen of Thouth.

ΑΠΑ Μ

Apa [lost]



απα μαθημας αθητων ημοσ η σογ χογτωομτε η αεωρ

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

\*The phrase η σογ is mistakenly repeated here.

απα παγλος πρεσβητερος αθητων ημοσ η σογ ητογ η  
παρμουγε

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  $\bar{n}\Delta\Delta\text{IM}\bar{O}\bar{N}\ \bar{C}\bar{O}\bar{B}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\bar{C}\bar{O}\bar{T}\bar{N}$  'the demons are laughing at you' (7.1). By contrast, the tense marker  $\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}$  prefixes a statement which is true in the present but *indicative* – that is, talks about what generally happens, as in  $\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}\ \bar{C}\bar{Z}\text{IM}\bar{E}\ \bar{O}\bar{O}$  '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:

$\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{Y}\bar{E}\text{I}\bar{O}\bar{T}\bar{E}\ \bar{T}\bar{I}\bar{C}\bar{B}\bar{O}\ \bar{n}\bar{\Delta}\bar{Y}$

Their fathers teach them (literally 'teach to them').

$\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\bar{Z}\bar{\Delta}\bar{I}\bar{P}\bar{E}\bar{T}\bar{I}\bar{K}\bar{O}\bar{C}\ \bar{M}\bar{N}\ \bar{n}\bar{Z}\bar{\Lambda}\bar{\Lambda}\bar{N}\ \bar{n}\bar{O}\bar{P}\bar{O}\ \bar{E}\bar{B}\bar{O}\bar{\Lambda}\ \bar{n}\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{Y}\bar{E}\bar{I}\bar{\Lambda}$

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

$\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\bar{K}\bar{\Lambda}\ \bar{n}\text{IM}\ \bar{Z}\bar{Y}\bar{P}\bar{I}\bar{O}\bar{T}\bar{\Delta}\bar{C}\bar{C}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\bar{\Delta}\bar{Y}\ \bar{n}\ \bar{\theta}\bar{E}\ \bar{n}\ \bar{\Delta}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\Lambda}\bar{M}$

Everything submits ( $\bar{Z}\bar{Y}\bar{P}\bar{I}\bar{O}\bar{T}\bar{\Delta}\bar{C}\bar{C}\bar{E}$ ) to him like Adam. (2.5)

The tense marker reduces to  $\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}$ - when a suffix pronoun is attached:

$\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{Y}\bar{Z}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{E}\bar{Z}\ \bar{E}\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{Y}\bar{Z}\bar{I}\bar{O}\bar{O}\bar{Y}\bar{E}$       They protect his paths. (9.5)

$\bar{O}\bar{\Delta}\bar{Y}\bar{\dagger}\bar{K}\bar{\Lambda}\bar{O}\bar{M}\ \bar{E}\bar{\chi}\bar{O}\bar{Y}$       They crown him (literally 'they crown on him'). (9.6)

### 13.2 ARTICLES: 'THIS' DEMONSTRATIVE IS $\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{I}$ -

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  $\bar{n}$ - indicates the masculine form,  $\bar{T}$ - the feminine form and  $\bar{n}$ - the plural. For instance,  $\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{I}$ - is an article – and, therefore, a prefix – with the demonstrative force 'this', as in  $\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{I}\bar{\chi}\bar{O}\bar{O}\bar{M}\bar{E}$  'this book',  $\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{I}\bar{B}\bar{I}\bar{P}$  'these baskets',  $\bar{T}\bar{E}\bar{I}\bar{M}\bar{N}\bar{T}\bar{Z}\bar{H}\bar{K}\bar{E}$  'this scarcity' (feminine) (5.1) and  $\bar{n}\bar{E}\bar{I}\bar{E}\bar{B}\bar{O}\bar{T}\ \bar{n}\bar{O}\bar{Y}\bar{O}\bar{T}$

‘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  $\epsilon$  is dropped in pronunciation, as in  $\pi\upsilon\beta\iota\omicron\varsigma$  ‘this lifetime’,  $\tau\omicron\mu\omicron\upsilon\gamma$  ‘this death’,  $\tau\omicron\varsigma\omicron\tau$  ‘this status’ or  $\eta\iota\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$  ‘these men’:

$\tau\omicron\tau\gamma\chi\epsilon\bar{\iota}$   $\epsilon$   $\tau\bar{\beta}\lambda\chi\epsilon$  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’ ( $\eta\alpha$ - $\bar{\mu}\pi\eta\gamma\epsilon$ ),  $\eta\alpha\pi\epsilon\upsilon\eta\bar{\iota}$  ‘those of his house’ ( $\eta\alpha$ - $\pi\epsilon\upsilon\eta$ - $\bar{\iota}$ ) and  $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron$   $\epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\eta\omicron\gamma\varsigma$  ‘he of the ripe old age’ (10.4). Who or what this article refers to is apparent in context:

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

The nature ( $\phi\gamma\varsigma\iota\varsigma$ ) of the water is soft ( $\sigma\eta\eta$ ), *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  $\tau\alpha$ - $\pi$ - $\omega\eta\epsilon$  ‘that of *the* stone’: the word  $\omega\eta\epsilon$  is masculine, whereas  $\tau\alpha$ - $\pi$ - $\omega\eta\epsilon$  refers to something feminine – in this case the stone’s  $\phi\gamma\varsigma\iota\varsigma$  ‘nature’. Likewise, compare  $\pi\alpha$ - $\tau$ - $\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron$   $\epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\eta\omicron\gamma\varsigma$  ‘he of the ripe old age’ with  $\tau\alpha$ - $\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron$  ‘my old age’: the word  $\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron$  is feminine but  $\pi\alpha$ - $\tau$ - $\eta\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron$  refers to someone or something masculine (5.1).

As a final note here, in a phrase such as  $\pi\alpha\zeta\alpha\iota\pi\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$   $\eta\iota\mu$  ‘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  $\pi\alpha\zeta\alpha\iota\pi\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ , so this phrase cannot mean ‘all that belongs to the heretic’. Rather, it must mean ‘what belongs to + each heretic’ ( $\pi\alpha$  +  $\zeta\alpha\iota\pi\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$   $\eta\iota\mu$ ).



ΤΗΗΣΤΙΑ ΠΕ ΠΕΧΑΛΙΝΟΣ Μ̄ ΠΙΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ

The bridle of the monk is the fast.

In this instance, the form ΠΕ agrees in gender with the (masculine) subject ΧΑΛΙΝΟΣ ‘bridle’ rather than (feminine) ΝΗΣΤΙΑ ‘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:

ΠΙΣΟΝ Ν̄ ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ Η ΤΦΕΛΕΕΤ Η ΤΣΩΝΕ ΕΤ̄Μ̄ΜΑΥ ΠΕ ΠΕΧ̄Σ

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:

Μ̄ΠΙΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΝΕΤΒΩΚ ΕΞΟΥΝ      Those who go (Ν-ΕΤ-ΒΩΚ) in are  
the monks.

ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ      The one who is writing  
(Τ-ΕΤ-ΣΖΑΪ) is me (8.1).

ΟΥΖΡ̄ΦΙΡΕ ΠΕΤΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄Γ̄ ΖΙΡ̄Μ-ΠΡΟ

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

ΣΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΣΖΑΪ Μ̄ΠΕΦΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΙΩΤ

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 ΣΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ ΠΕ ΠΕΤΣΖΑΪ ‘the one who is writing is Sinouthios’ (linked by ΠΕ) but we end up with just ΣΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΣΖΑΪ.

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 ΙΩΣΗΦ ‘I am Joseph’ and ΔΝΟΚ πϵ ΙΩΣΗΦ ‘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’, Μ̄ΩΙΡ πϵ ‘it is (the month of) Mekhir’, ΟΥΩΠΗΡϵ τϵ ‘it is a miracle’, and ρΕΝΔΙΚΑΙΟϢ Νϵ ‘they are righteous people’. Again, such a statement does not require a verb and is not marked for tense, so Μ̄ΩΙΡ 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 Ν̄ΧΩΩΡϵ      He is a strong soldier.  
 ΤΩϵϵΡϵ Τϵ Ν̄ ΤΕΚΩΩΝϵ      She is the daughter of your sister.

ΠΩΗΡϵ Πϵ Ν̄ ΙΩΡΑΝΝΗϢ ΠΕΠΑΡΧΟϢ Ν̄ ΤΠΟΛΙϢ

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 Ν̄ΧΩΩΡϵ ‘a strong soldier’, and even the whole phrases ΤΩϵϵΡϵ Ν̄ ΤΕΚΩΩΝϵ ‘the daughter of your sister’ and ΠΩΗΡϵ Ν̄ ΙΩΡΑΝΝΗϢ ‘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 ΝΑΙ 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 ΠΕΟΥΟΕΙΩ Πϵ ΠΑΙ ‘this is the time’, ΝΑΙ Νϵ ΤΣΑΩϢϵ Ν̄ΕΖΟΥϢΙΑ ‘these are the seven authorities’ and ΤΑΙ Τϵ Θϵ Ν̄ΡΩΜϵ ‘this is the mortal way’ (3.4):

ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΤΑΝΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ Μ̄ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΙΩΤ ΙΩΗΦ

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

ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΧΩΩΜΕ ΑΥΩ ΠΝΟΣ Ν̄ΚΑΙΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ

This is the book and the great compendium.

A useful idiom to note here is ε ΠΕΙΣΑ Μ̄Ν ΠΑΙ ‘here and there, this way and that’, literally ‘to this side (CΔ) 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 Μ̄ΠΕΥΩΔΞΕ 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 ΤΜ̄ΝΤ̄ΡΟ Ν̄ Μ̄ΠΗΥΕ      The kingdom of the heavens  
is yours.

In this instance, the feminine stem ΤΩϝ agrees with the feminine noun Μ̄ΝΤ̄ΡΟ ‘kingdom’ (5.1), while the suffix pronoun (ΤΩ-Τ̄Ν) 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 ετ ‘who, which’ is replaced by the distinct word ετε (7.5):

ΦΕΒΡΩΑΡΙΟΣ ΕΤΕ Μ̄ΩΥΡ ΠΕ      February, which is Mekhir.  
ΝΕΝΖΟΠΛΟΝ ΕΤΕ ΝΑΙ ΝΕ      Our guards, which are these.

ΠΕΙΝΟΣ Μ̄ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΕΤΕ ΠΕΚΧΠΟ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΠΕ

This great mystery, which is your holy birth.

ΠΙΝΟΣ Ν̄ΔΩΡΟΝ ΕΤΕ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ ΤΕ Ν̄ ΤΕΚΡΑΓΙΩΣΥΝΗ

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

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

ΤΖΕ ΕΤΕ ΖΝΑΚ      The way that *you* wish.  
ΠΕΤΕ ΖΝΑϸ      What *he* 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:

ΝΕϸΖ̄Μ̄ΖΑΛ ΔΕ ΑΥΣΧ̄ΩΛḠ      Therefore, his servants  
ΕΥΧΩ Μ̄ΜΟΣ ΧΕ      consoled him, saying,  
ΠΕΝΧΟΕΙΣ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ Ν̄ΡΩΜΕ      ‘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:

ΩΑϸΑΜΑΖΤΕ Ν̄ ΤΕΙΖΕ Ζ̄Ν̄      He grabs in this manner, in his  
ΝΕϸϸΙΧ Ν̄Ν̄ΖΟΥ Μ̄Ν̄      hands, the snakes, vipers

ἡ̄κεραστῆς ἡ̄ ἡ̄οῦοῦε	(κεραστῆς) and scorpions (οῦοῦε).
ἀϋ̄ ἡ̄ τειρε φαϋπαροῦ εβολ ε̄ ἡ̄ τεγμητε	Then in this manner he bursts them (φα-ϋ-παρ-οῦ) 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:

φαϋρ̄ περοῦ τῆρ̄ εϋαϋ ἡ̄πρωμη̄τ̄ ἡ̄ραγιος ἡ̄ ἡ̄αγγελος

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

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

ἀϋ̄αοος ον̄ ᾱε	He also said,
πμοναχος ἡ̄ρακ φαϋ†κλωμ	‘The prudent monk, they
εααϋ ε̄ ἡ̄ πκαε	crown him on the earth,
ἀϋ̄ ον̄ ε̄ ἡ̄ ππηγε φαϋ†κλωμ	and also (ον̄) in the heavens
εααϋ ἡ̄ πᾶτο εβολ	they crown him in the
ἡ̄ πνοῦτε	presence of God.’

Notice here the idiomatic phrase ᾶτο εβολ ‘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):

πεαε ἡ̄ ᾱε ε̄νημακαριος νε ἡ̄ρηκε ᾱε τωτῆ̄ τε τῆ̄τ̄ερο  
ἡ̄ ἡ̄ ππηγε

Jesus said, ‘The poor are blessed people that (ᾱε) yours is the kingdom of the heavens.’

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

## WORKING VOCABULARY

ΕΙΟΤΕ	(plural of ΕΙΩΤ)	<i>Some prepositions</i>	
ΠΗΥΕ	(plural of ΠΕ)	ΠΑΡΑ, ΠΑΡΑΡΟϝ	more than,
ΖΙΟΥϞΕ	(plural of ΖΪΗ)		beyond
ΟΝ	also, too		
ΜΕ	truth	ΖΙΡḆ, ΖΙΡΩϝ	at, outside
ΜΟΥΥ	water		
ΖḆΖΑΛ	servant		
ΖḆΛḆ	pagan	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΜΗΤΕ	middle	ΑΜΑΖΤΕ	grab, hold
ΔΩΡΟΝ	gift		
ΚΛΟΜ	crown	ΠΩϞ ΠΑϞ- ΠΑϞϝ	burst
ΖΟϞ	snake	ΠΩΡΩ ΠḆΩ- ΠΟΡΩϝ	stretch
ΧΩΩΜΕ	book	СОΛСḆ СḆСḆ- СḆСΩΛϝ	console
ΕΒΟΤ	month	ΩΩ	conceive, get pregnant
ΟΥΧΑΙ	wellbeing		
ΧΑΛΙΝΟС	bridle		
ΝΗСΤΙΑ	fasting	ΧΠΟ ΧΠΕ- ΧΠΟϝ	give birth, create
ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟС	maiden		
ΦΕΛΕΕΤ	bride		
ΖḆΩΙΡΕ	youth		
ΜΑΤΟΙ	soldier	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
ΖΑΚ	prudent, sober	ḆḆΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ	presence
		Ε ΠΕΙСΑ ΜḆ ΠΑΙ	here and there
ΧΩΩΡΕ	strong		
ΕΖΟΥСΙΑ	authority		
ΚΑΙΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ	compendium		

# LESSON 14

## Negative statements and second tenses

## 14.1 ‘DO NOT!’

Telling somebody ‘do not do’ something usually entails no more than placing  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}$  or  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{r}}$  in front of the infinitive:

$\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{n}} \text{o}\bar{\text{y}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}}$	Do not fight with a strong man.
$\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{n}} \bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{k}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{i}}$	Do not find fault with me (literally ‘toward me’ (9.5)).
$\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}} \bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{l}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{y}}$	Do not say this to anyone (3.5).

The verb following  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}$  is the infinitive even in the case of those verbs that have a specific imperative; hence  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{r}}\text{-}\bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}}$  ‘do not say this’ incorporates the infinitive of  $\bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{w}} \bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{e}}\text{-} \bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{e}}$  ‘say’, not the imperative  $\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{x}}\bar{\text{w}}$  ‘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  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{e}}\text{-}$  negates the simple past (9.1) just as the tense marker  $\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{e}}\text{-}$  negates the indicative present (13.1):

	Positive		Negative	
Past	$\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{z}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}}$	we wrote	$\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{z}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}}$	we did not write
Present	$\bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{z}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}}$	we write	$\bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{z}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{i}}$	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	ἦπεισζαι	I did not write	ἦπενσζαι	we did not write
Second	ἦπεκσζαι	you (masc.) did not write	ἦπετῆσζαι	you did not write
	ἦπεσζαι	you (fem.) did not write		
Third	ἦπεφσζαι	he did not write	ἦποσζαι	they did not write
	ἦπεσσζαι	she did not write		

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

ἦπιναδ ε̄ πζο ἦ λαδ ἦρωμε̄ ἦσα παρχηεπισκοπος  
μαγαδ (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:

απεφωρηε̄ μογ̄ ἦτοοτῆ̄ ρῑ τεζη̄ν δαγ̄ω̄ ἦτοσ̄ ἦπεφωτορτῆ̄  
αλλᾱ δαφιτῆ̄ ωᾱ πζλλο̄

His son died with him on the road, and, for his part, he did not panic (ωτορτῆ̄). Instead, he carried him (δ-α-φιτῆ̄) to the elder.

By the way, looking at ἦτοσ̄ 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 μερε̄ but, as you saw above, this reduces to με- when a suffix pronoun is attached:

ΜΕΙΝ̄ΚΟΤ̄Κ̄ ΕΝΕΞ

I do not sleep (̄ΝΚΟΤ̄Κ̄) ever.

ΜΕΣΤΑΟΥΕ ΟΥΟΝΤΕ ΕΒΟΛ

It does not grow (ΤΑΟΥΕ) thorns out.

ΜΕῩΡ̄ ΑΤΣΩΤ̄Μ̄ Ε ΝΕΦΩΔΧΕ

They do not act (ΜΕ-Ῡ-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:

	<b>Singular</b>		<b>Plural</b>	
First	̄ΝΤΑΙCΞΑΙ	I wrote	̄ΝΤΑΝCΞΑΙ	we wrote
Second	̄ΝΤΑΚCΞΑΙ	you (masc.) wrote	̄ΝΤΑΤ̄̄ΝΞΑΙ	you wrote
	̄ΝΤΑΡΕCΞΑΙ	you (fem.) wrote		
Third	̄ΝΤΑΥCΞΑΙ	he wrote	̄ΝΤΑΥCΞΑΙ	they wrote
	̄ΝΤΑCΞΑΙ	she wrote		

The tense marker is also ̄ΝΤΑ- in front of nouns and, as usual, note the less predictable second-person form ̄ΝΤΑΡΕ-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:

Ἰ̅ΤΑϢΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖἸ̅ ΖΕΝΝΟϢ Ἰ̅ΖΙϢΕ     He has come out of (ΕΒΟΛ  
 ΖἸ̅) 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 (Ἰ̅ΤΑ-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:

Ἰ̅ΤΑϢΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤἸ̅ ΠΙΝΟΥΤΕ     It happened through (ΕΒΟΛ  
 ΖΙΤἸ̅) 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) Ἰ̅ΤΑϢΩΠΕ '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 Ἰ̅ΠΙΝΟϢ Ἰ̅ΔΩΡΟΝ ΕΤΕ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ ΤΕ Ἰ̅  
 ΤΕΚΖΑΓΙΩϢΥΝΗ

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):

ⲉⲡⲓⲁⲗⲉⲧ̅ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲛⲓ ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ	He is bowing to him to get confession.
ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉ ⲃⲱⲕ ⲉ ⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧ̅ⲓⲙⲁⲩ	I want to go to that place. (7.5)

Here the verbs ⲉ-ⲡ-ⲡⲁⲗⲉⲧ̅ (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, ⲉⲡ̅ⲓⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̅ⲃⲓ 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 ⲉⲓⲛ̅ⲙ̅ ⲡⲉⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲕⲟⲧ̅ⲕ̅ ⲕⲉⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲱⲁⲓⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲓ̅  
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 ⲁⲮ ‘who, which’, ⲐⲮ ‘what, how’, ⲈⲎⲈ ‘whether (or not)’, ⲎⲎⲎ ‘who’, ⲐⲬⲎ ‘where’, ⲐⲎⲁⲮ ‘when’, ⲐⲮⲎⲐ ‘how many’, ⲈⲐⲈ ⲐⲮ ‘why’ (literally ‘because of what?’) and both ⲐⲬⲈ and Ⲏ ⲁⲮ Ⲏ ⲉ ‘how’ (literally ‘in what way?’):

ⲈⲐⲈ ⲐⲮ ⲎⲁⲈⲎⲬⲎ ⲎⲐⲈ ⲎⲎⲎⲁⲎ	Why are the demons fighting with us?
ⲐⲮ ⲎⲈ ⲎⲈⲬⲈⲎⲐⲐⲐ	What is humility?
ⲎⲐⲐⲐ ⲎⲎⲎ	Who are you? (8.1)
ⲎⲎⲎ ⲎⲈⲐⲐⲐⲎⲐⲮ ⲎⲎⲎⲈⲐⲐⲐⲮ	Who is the one who asks the frogs (ⲐⲐⲐⲮ) about the water? (13.4)
ⲈⲐⲈ ⲎⲎⲐⲐⲐⲮ	

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:

ⲎⲐⲐⲁⲐⲈⲐ ⲈⲎⲈⲎⲎⲁ ⲈⲐⲈ ⲐⲮ	Why have you come here? [past]
ⲎⲐⲐⲁⲐⲈⲐⲬⲎⲎ Ⲉ ⲎⲎⲎ	Who has it appeared (ⲈⲬⲎⲎ) to? [past]
ⲈⲐⲁⲐⲐⲬⲎⲎⲎ ⲈⲐⲈ ⲐⲮ	Why do you pray? [indicative present]
ⲈⲎⲈ ⲐⲐⲐⲐⲐⲐ Ⲏ ⲐⲮ	How is the city doing? [engaged present]
ⲈⲐⲈⲐⲎⲎⲎ ⲐⲮ Ⲏ ⲎⲈⲎⲎⲎⲎ	What are you doing to these baskets? [engaged present]

At this point we can also note the marker ⲈⲎⲈ, 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 ΤΜΑΚΑΡΙΑ ΣΑΡΑ ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΔΕ  
ΔΣΕΡ ΣΕ ΝΡΟΜΠΕ ΕΣΟΥΗΖ ΖΜ ΠΕΤΠΕ Μ ΠΙΕΡΟ  
ΜΠΕΣΚΕΡΑΤΣ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΝΕΖ Ε ΝΑΥ 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 ΜΠΕΥΧΙΣΟΛ ΕΝΕΖ  
ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΥΩΡΚ̄ ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΥΣΑΖΟΥ ΝΡΩΜΕ  
ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΥΘΑΔΕ 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.

Now see what you make of this anonymous teaching, which uses both positive and negative commands, as well as the second present marked with ΕΡΕ (for the phrase ἴμο-ι ‘with me’, see [Section 10.5](#)):

αἰχουοοο ἴσι οὐρῶλο δε  
ρῆ πιραομοο νιμ ἱπῖρῶῆ ἀρικε ε ρωμε  
αλλα σῆ ἀρικε εροκ μαγααακ εκχω ἴμοοο δε  
ερε ναι φροοπ ἴμοι ετβε νανοβε

An elder said,  
‘In each temptation do not find fault toward people.  
Instead, find fault in you alone (8.3), saying (ε-κ-χω ἴμοοο),  
“These things stay with me because of my sins.”’

The next teaching illustrates a typical pattern among the sayings, which begins with a question to the elder. By the way, notice how his response begins with the useful phrase εβολχε ‘because’, literally εβολ-χε ‘out of (the fact) that’:

αχχνε οὐρῶλο δε ετβε οὐ ἴδεμων μιωε νῆμαν ἠ τειρε τηρῶ  
πεχε ρῶλο δε εβολχε ἀννουχχε εβολ ἠνενηροπλον ετε  
ναι νε  
πσωω μῆ πεῶββιο μῆ πτῆκα λααγ ναν μῆ οὔπιομονη

They asked an elder, ‘Why are the demons fighting with us in all this way?’ (8.3)  
The elder said, ‘Because we have thrown away our guards, which are these (13.8):  
contempt and humility and self-denial and restraint.’

The phrase πτῆκα λααγ να-η literally means ‘not leaving anything for us’, and we shall look into this further in [Lesson 20](#).

Finally, on a different tack, we return to a familiar passage from The Tragedy of Archellites (13.9), in which the young man has been upset by the sight of a drowned body on a beach:

νεφῆραλ δε αχλῶωλῶ εχχω ἴμοοο δε  
πενχοειοο ται τε θε ἠρωμε

ΟΥΑ ΜΕΝ ΕΩΔΑΦΜΟΥ ΖΙΧΜ̄ ΠΕΦΜΑ Ν̄ Ν̄ΚΟΤ̄Κ̄  
ΚΕΟΥΑ ΕΩΔΑΦΜΟΥ Ζ̄Ν̄ 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

ΖΙΤῆ̄, ΖΙΤΟΟΤ̄	through, from	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ΕΝΕΞ	ever, forever	ῶΟΟΠ	stay, live, exist
ΕΒΟΛΧΕ	because	ΒΗΚ	going (from ΒΩΚ)
ΟΥΔΕ	and not, nor		
ΧΩΡΙC	without	ΟΥΗΞ	settled (from ΟΥΩΞ)
ΑΩ	who, which	ΚΕΡΑΤ̄	step
ΕΝΕ	whether	ἸΚΟΤ̄Κ̄	sleep
ΟΥ	what, how	ΩΤΟΡΤ̄Ρ̄ ΩΤ̄Ρ̄Τ̄Ρ̄-	
ΤΠΕ	top, upper part	ΩΤ̄Ρ̄ΤΩΡ̄	upset, panic
ΖΑΛΑCΑ	sea	ΤΑΟΥΩ ΤΑΥΕ-	
ἱΕΡΟ	river	ΤΑΥΟ	produce, grow
ΩΟΝΤΕ	thorn	CΩΛῆ̄ CἸΠ-	
ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ	repentance, confession	CΟΛΠ̄	reveal, appear, unwrap
ΠΙΡΑCΜΟC	temptation	ΧΝΟΥ ΧΝΕ-	
CΟΛ	lie	ΧΝΟΥ	ask
ΖΑΓΙΩCΥΝΗ	holiness (title)	ΩΡ̄Κ̄ ΟΡ̄Κ̄	swear
ΖΥΠΟΜΟΝΗ	endurance, restraint	<i>Some useful phrases</i>	
CΩΩ	contempt	ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ	why
		Ἰ ΑΩ Ἰ ΖΕ	how



# LESSON 15

## Complex descriptions

## 15.1 ‘WHO, WHICH’ IS $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}$ IN THE PAST

The converters  $\epsilon\text{T}$  or  $\epsilon\text{T}\epsilon$  ‘who, which’ may be used to create simple descriptions, even those for which English uses only an adjective, as in  $\text{P}\epsilon\text{Q}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{L}} \text{E}\text{T}\text{O}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{B}}$  ‘his holy servant’; or they may be used to form a longer description, as in  $\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{N}}\text{O}\bar{\text{K}} \bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{A}} \text{E}\text{T}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{I}}$  ‘I am David, who is writing’ and  $\bar{\text{F}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{S}} \text{E}\text{T}\epsilon \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{R}} \text{P}\bar{\text{E}}$  ‘February, which is Mekhir’. If such a description is in the simple past tense, this converter is pronounced  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}$ , as in  $\text{P}\text{O}\bar{\text{Y}}\text{O}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}} \epsilon \text{P}\bar{\text{K}}\text{O}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{M}}\text{O}\bar{\text{C}}$  ‘the light which came to the world’, or  $\text{O}\bar{\text{Y}}\text{O}\bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{M}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{X}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{E}}$  ‘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 ( $\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Q}}\text{-}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}$  and  $\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Y}}\text{-}\bar{\text{X}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{E}}$ ), is required after  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}$  in a past tense description. Consequently, statements using  $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}$  ‘who, which’ may look the same as those of the second past but, of course, descriptions tend to appear alongside whichever word they describe:

$\text{P}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{I}} \text{P}\bar{\text{E}} \text{P}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{T}} \bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Y}}$

This is the sickness which happened ( $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{-}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Q}}\text{-}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$ ) to my beloved mother.

$\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{I}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{L}}$

These things which have become ( $\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}\text{-}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Y}}\text{-}\bar{\text{W}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}$ ) 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  $\text{P}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{Q}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{N}}$  ‘the one who *commanded*’ ( $\text{P}\bar{\text{I}}\text{-}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{-}\bar{\text{A}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Q}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{N}}$ ) alongside  $\text{P}\bar{\text{I}}\text{-}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{-}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{N}}$  ‘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  $\epsilon\text{T}$  ( $\bar{\text{K}}\bar{\text{Y}}\bar{\text{P}}\text{O}\bar{\text{C}} \text{E}\text{T}\bar{\text{C}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{I}} \bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{C}}$  ‘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’:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 ( $\bar{\eta}\tau$ - $\alpha$ - $\kappa$ - $\alpha\alpha$ - $\varsigma$ ) = which craft did you do?



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

πμα ετερε πωηρεωημ ἵζητῆ

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 ωαχξε-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 ἵτ) 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 ογρεφῆνοβε εφμοοωε ‘a sinner who walks’ (that is, any ‘sinner who happens to be walking’), ογναζῆβ εφζορω ‘a yoke which is heavy’, and λααγ ἵωα.ξε εφζοογ ‘any speaking which is evil’. The distinction can be illustrated by comparing the phrases πειπνα ετ-ογααβ ‘the holy spirit’ and ογπνα ε-φ-ογααβ ‘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-φ-ζορω ‘heavy’) or something more complex:

εισορμε ἵθε ἵογεσοογ εσορμε

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

ⲪⲈⲚⲢⲠⲘⲈ ⲚⲈ ⲈⲮⲙⲢⲠⲠⲁ ⲙ̄ ⲢⲘⲠⲮ

They are some men deserving of death (Ⲉ-Ⲯ-ⲙ̄ⲢⲠⲠⲁ ‘when they are deserving’).

ⲖⲠⲘ Ⲛ̄ⲒⲦⲠⲠⲠⲉ Ⲉ ⲠⲮⲘⲠⲚ ⲈⲢⲢⲪⲠⲠⲉ Ⲛ̄ⲪⲘⲦⲒ̄ ⲙ̄ⲢⲢⲠⲠⲮⲦⲉ (8.4)

Go and attach yourself (Ⲛ̄-Ⲓ-ⲦⲠⲠⲠ-Ⲙ) to a brother who fears (Ⲉ-Ⲯ-ⲢⲪⲠⲠⲉ) God in himself.

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

ⲢⲁⲪⲘⲦ ⲈⲢⲚⲁⲠⲦ	my heart which is hard
ⲢⲘⲠⲠⲠⲁⲘⲠⲠⲉ ⲈⲢⲦⲠⲮⲖⲈ ⲢⲚⲠⲠⲈ	the monk who resists sin

Ⲛⲁⲓ̄ ⲚⲈ ⲦⲘⲁⲠⲮⲈ Ⲛ̄ ⲈⲪⲠⲮⲒⲁ ⲈⲮⲠⲚⲚⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈⲮⲮⲘⲪⲪⲪⲪⲪⲪ

These are the seven authorities which are asking (Ⲉ-Ⲯ-ⲠⲚⲚⲈ) the soul.

How so? Remember the addresses for letters (6.4)? Among them you read ⲁⲚⲠⲠ ⲢⲁⲗⲠⲮ ⲈⲒⲪⲁⲓ ‘I am Palou and I am writing’ and later you read ⲁⲚⲠⲠ ⲦⲁⲗⲁⲠⲢⲈ ⲈⲦⲪⲁⲓ ‘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 ἡ̄ ἰωσχηφ

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:

ἡ̄πρ̄χε̄ πᾱῑ ε̄ λααγ̄ ερε̄ πρ̄λλο̄ ζ̄μ̄ π̄σωμᾱ

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):

ογωμη̄ πε̄ επ̄εφραν̄ πε̄ πετρο̄ς

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 ζ̄ν̄ ογ̄ραω̄ε̄ εαγ̄χῑκω̄τ̄ ζ̄μ̄ πεφ̄θ̄β̄β̄ιο̄ (past)

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

αῑχῑςβω̄ ἡ̄το̄οτ̄ḡ̄ ἡ̄ ἠε̄ ἡ̄ ἡ̄ω̄ηρε̄ τη̄ρογ̄ εω̄αρε̄ νε̄γεῑοτε̄  
τῑςβω̄ ναγ̄ (indicative present)

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

ογ̄ν̄-ογ̄μη̄τρ̄μη̄νη̄η̄τ̄ εω̄ᾱσταω̄ε̄ πικριᾱ (indicative present)

There is thoughtfulness which increases (ⲉ-ⲟⲗ-ⲥ-ⲧⲁⲟⲉ) bitterness.

Likewise, the circumstantial converter may prefix the small group of verbs that are followed by their subject (10.4), as in ⲒⲬⲬ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲎⲚⲀⲛⲟⲩϥ ‘everything good’ (Ⲏ-ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩ-ϥ ‘which it is good’ (2.5)), ⲛ̄ ⲥⲧⲓⲕⲁ ⲎⲚⲀⲛⲟⲩϥ ‘for a nice strip (of cloth)’ and ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲓⲣⲟⲥ ⲎⲚⲀⲟⲩϥ ‘many seasons’ (‘a season which it is numerous’):

ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲒⲗⲗⲏⲛ ⲏ Ⲓⲁⲓⲣⲉⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ Ⲓⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲕⲓⲁ Ⲏⲏⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲛⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ  
ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ (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 Ⲓⲛⲉ, Ⲓⲛⲁⲥ ‘wish’, including ⲉⲒⲛⲁⲕ ‘willingly, as you wish’ alongside ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧⲒⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲒⲛⲁⲕ ‘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:

ⲁⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲟⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲙⲓⲣⲟⲓⲕ̄ ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲁⲕ  
ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲧⲟⲥ̄ ⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲁⲩⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲣⲉⲑⲉⲓ ⲕⲁⲗⲟⲥ

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 ⲥⲁⲅⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ-ϥ ‘away from him’ (10.5):

ⲁⲩⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲟⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲧⲏⲏⲕⲧⲓⲁ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲕⲁⲗⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ ⲛⲓⲙⲟⲛⲁⲕⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲧⲟⲩⲅⲉ  
ⲛⲓⲛⲟⲅⲉ  
ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩϥⲕⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲓ ⲥⲁⲅⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲟⲩⲒⲧⲟ ⲛ̄ⲗⲁⲅⲥⲒⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲉ





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 (ⲧⲥⲧⲁⲗⲉ) over her conception (5.1) because she has conceived out of a holy spirit.’ (14.3)

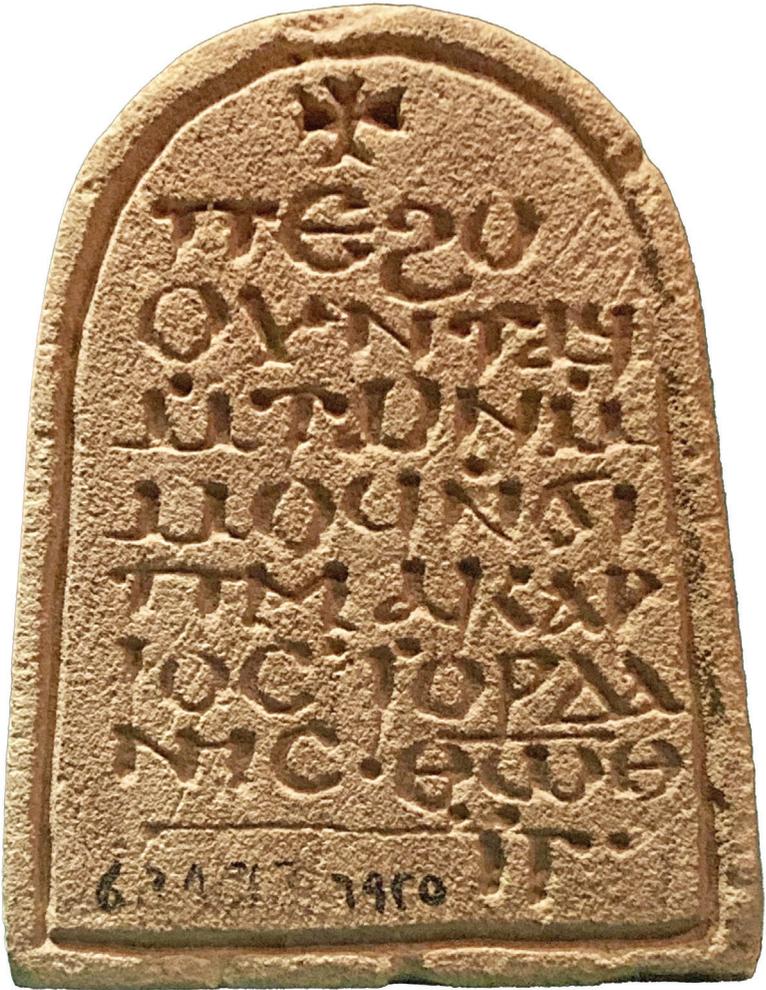


Figure 20 The gravestone of Jordan. Aswan, seventh to eighth century (see [page 161](#)). *Source:* author

---

## WORKING VOCABULARY

καλωϑ	properly	<i>Some verbs</i>	
ϑουϑ	evil	ϑωπε	happen
ναϑτ	hard	ϑικωτ	learn,
ταπρο	mouth		improve
βω	tree,	†ουβε	resist
	vine	ερητ	promise
ελοολε	grape	ϑων ϑονϑ	command,
ραϑε	joy,		task
	rejoice	ωπ επ- οπϑ	count,
πικρια	bitterness		value
ϑωνε	sickness	ϑωπ ϑεπ- ϑοπ-	get,
ρασοϑ	dream		receive
εσοοϑ	sheep	ταϑο ταϑε- ταϑοϑ	increase
σαρτ	wool	τωωδε τεϑ- τοϑϑ	attach
ϑτο	stallion	οϑωνϑ̄ οϑενϑ- οϑονϑϑ	reveal
ναϑβ̄	yoke,	(+ εβολ)	appear
	shoulder	τ̄νηνοοϑ τ̄νηνεϑ-τ̄νηνοοϑϑ	send
λογοϑ	word, lesson	κολελ̄ ελελ̄- ελεωλεϑ	comfort

# LESSON 16

## Looking to the future



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 ν̄μαν τηρ̄ν ρι ογσοπ

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 ον εβολ ρ̄ν-τχηβε

They are also going to fall by the sword.

εκνασμογ ετεζενετε ρ̄ν σμογ νιμ

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 τετ̄ν̄σοογν̄ ‘you know’ but ν̄τετ̄ν̄σοογν̄ ΔΝ ‘you do not know’:

ν̄ϕπιστεγε ΔΝ

He does not believe.

ν̄τ̄ρ̄σοτε ΔΝ μ̄πινογτε

I do not fear God.



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

ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΔΝ

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

Notice how the flow of ΕΤΕ with the negative Ν̄ (in the phrases Ν̄-ΣΕ-ΩΟΟΠ ΔΝ ‘they do not exist’ and Ν̄-Φ-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 ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ.

### 16.3 ‘THERE ISN’T’ (Μ̄Μ̄) A DEFINITE SUBJECT

---

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

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

ΟῩΝ̄ ΟῩΜΟΥΙ ΝΑΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΔῩΩ ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑΡ̄ΞΟΤΕ ΔΝ

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

Of course, Μ̄Μ̄ 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



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-ΒΑCΑΝΟC ΔΩΞ ΕΡΟQ 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 ΤΕΖ̄C ΡΩΜΕ ΕΦΩΩΝΕ

No person shall wash someone when he is sick.

Ν̄ΝΕ-ΛΑΔΥ ΦΑΔΞΕ Μ̄Ν ΝΕΦΕΡΗΥ Ζ̄Μ̄ 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 ΜΑΡ̄ΝΩΠΤΕ ‘we should be ashamed’ or even ‘let us be ashamed’:

ΜΑΡΕΝΩΩΠΕ Ν̄ΣΑΒΗ Ν̄ ΘΕ Ν̄ Ν̄ΖΟΥ

We should become (ΜΑΡΕ-Ν-ΩΩΠΕ) wise like snakes.

ΜΑΡΝ̄Ρ̄ΖΩΒ ΩΗΜΩΗΜ Ζ̄Ν̄ ΟΥΣΠΟΥΔΗ

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

ΜΑΡΕΦΧΝΕ ΠΕΙΖΩΟΝ Ν̄ΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΟΝ ΕΤ̄ΜΑΥ

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

ΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ ΜΑΡΕΦΩΩΤ̄ ΧΕ ΕΦΖΜΟΟΣ Ν̄ ΑΩ Ν̄ΖΕ

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

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

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

ΑΦΧΟΟΣ Ν̄ ΤΕΦΜΑΔΥ ΧΕ ΤΩΟΥΝ ΜΑΡΟΝ Ζ̄Μ̄ ΠΕΙΜΑ

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:

ϲ̄ ερε †ρηνη Ν̄ ΠΠΟΥΤΕ Μ̄Ν̄ ΠΕΦΣΜΟΥ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ Ζ̄Μ̄ ΠΕΙΜΑ ΩΑ  
ΕΝΕΖ Ν̄ΕΝΕΖ

ΔΜΟΥ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ

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 ⲒⲬⲚⲀϢ ⲠⲒⲘⲘ ⲈϢⲬⲒ ⲛ̅ ⲁⲒⲒⲠⲘ ⲒⲐⲐⲚ ⲛⲒⲘ ⲈⲐⲚⲁⲬⲠ ⲛ̅ⲚⲒⲈϢⲁⲒ

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 ϣⲠⲧ, a ‘trough’ used here to define a ration or dole:

ⲡⲈϣⲁϢ ⲛ̅ⲒⲒ ⲡϣⲒⲐⲒϢ ⲒⲐⲛ̅ ⲒⲁⲒ ⲛ̅ ⲡⲕⲠⲧⲈ ⲛ̅ ⲧϣⲠⲧ ⲈⲘⲛ̅Ⲓⲁⲁϣ ⲁⲈ  
Ⲓⲛ̅ ⲧⲠⲠⲧⲈ

The Lord said, ‘There are many for the queue for the dole (7.4), but only (ⲁⲈ) when there isn’t anything (Ⲉ-Ⲙⲛ̅-Ⲓⲁⲁϣ) in the cistern (15.4).’

ⲡⲈϣⲈ-ⲒϢ ⲒⲐⲛ̅-ⲒⲁⲒ ⲁⲒⲈⲠⲁⲐⲒⲐⲐ ⲒⲒⲠⲛ̅ ⲡⲠⲒ ⲁⲒⲒⲁ ⲛ̅ⲘⲒⲒⲒⲐⲕⲒⲐ  
ⲚⲈⲐⲚⲁⲠⲠⲕ ⲈⲒⲐⲐⲚ Ⲉ ⲡⲘⲁ ⲛ̅ⲠⲈⲒⲈⲈⲧ

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:



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 ΔΕ ΑΦΟΥΩΩ Ν̄ΟΥΘΕΙΩ Ε ΒΩΚ  
ΩΔ ΤΣΥΡΙΑ

ΑΥΩ ΠΕΧΔΑΦ ΝΑΦ Ν̄ΣΙ ΠΕΦΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΔΕ  
ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΦΟΥΩΩ ΔΝ Ε ΛΟ Μ̄ΠΕΙΜΑ ΟΥΔΕ Ν̄ΤΟΚ ΖΩΩΚ ΔΝ ΑΠΑ  
Ν̄†ΝΑΚΑΔΑΚ ΔΝ Ε ΒΩΚ ΑΛΛΑ ΣΩ Μ̄ΠΕΙΜΑ Ν̄ ΚΕΩΩΜΗ̄Τ Ν̄ ΖΟΥΥ  
ΑΥΩ Ζ̄Μ ΠΜΕΖΩΩΜΗ̄Τ Ν̄ΖΟΥΥ ΑῩΜ̄ΤΟΝ Μ̄ΜΟΥΥ

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

ḲṲṲ, ḲṲṲṲ	with, from	ⲥⲱϣ̄	look,
ⲁⲃḲ	except	ⲗⲟ	watch
ⲡⲟϩⲁⲡⲟϩⲁ	each one		stop,
ϣḲḲḲḲ	little by little		leave
ⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥṲⲟⲥ or		ⲡⲱṲ	run, flee
ⲉⲗⲁⲭⲓⲥṲⲐ	insignificant	ⲥⲟⲟϩḲ	know
ⲉⲓⲗⲟⲥ	item	ⲡⲓⲥṲⲉϩⲉ	believe
ⲕⲁⲕⲉ	darkness	ⲡⲣⲟϥḲṲⲉϩⲉ	understand
ⲕⲱṲⲉ	queue	ϣ̄ⲡ̄Ṳⲱⲣⲓ	assure
Ḳⲁ	place	ⲥⲱ ⲥⲉ- ⲥⲟⲟ	drink
Ḳⲟϩⲓ	lion	ṲⲱḲⲥ ṲḲⲥ- ṲⲟḲⲥ	bury
ⲃḲḲⲉ	blind	ⲟϩⲱḲ ᲟϩḲ- ⲟϩⲟḲ	eat
ⲃⲁⲥⲁḲⲎⲟⲥ	torture	Ṳⲱϩⲥ Ṳⲉϩⲥ- Ṳⲁϩⲥ	wash,
Ḳⲟⲉⲓϩⲉ	surprise		cleanse
Ḳⲟϩⲃ	liar, lying	ⲃⲱϩ ⲃⲉϩ- ⲃⲁϩ	touch,
			caress

### *Some verbs*

ⲁḲⲟϩ	come! (from ⲉⲓ)
ⲁⲃⲉ	say! tell! (from ⲃⲱ)
ⲟϩⲃⲁḲ	get well, be well

### *Useful phrase*

ḲⲁⲣⲟḲ	let's go
-------	----------

## 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	ⲙ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we did not write
Present	ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we write	ⲙⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we do not write
Future	ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we will write	ⲙ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	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 ⲙ̄):

	Positive		Negative	
Present	ⲧ̄ⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we are writing	ⲧ̄ⲛⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ ⲁⲛ	we are not writing
Future	ⲧ̄ⲛⲛⲁⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ	we are going to write	ⲧ̄ⲛⲛⲁⲥⲉⲗⲁⲓ 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 $\Rightarrow$				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		ⲁⲢⲚⲁⲓ ⲙ̀ⲛⲉⲢⲚⲁⲓ			infinitive or imperative
present	ⲓⲚⲚⲁⲓ	ⲉⲃⲁⲢⲚⲁⲓ ⲙⲉⲢⲚⲁⲓ			
future	ⲓⲛⲁⲚⲚⲁⲓ		ⲉⲢⲉⲚⲚⲁⲓ ⲙ̀ⲛⲉⲢⲚⲁⲓ	ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲢⲚⲁⲓ	
negation	( $\bar{\text{N}}$ 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  $\Delta N$  (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’,  $\pi\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \bar{n} \Delta\lambda\gamma\epsilon\iota\lambda$  ‘the saying of David’,  $\bar{n}\epsilon\iota\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon$  ‘these sayings’,  $\sigma\mu\omicron\gamma \bar{n}\iota\mu$  ‘every blessing’,  $\pi\epsilon\gamma\sigma\omicron\omicron\gamma\bar{n} \bar{n}\bar{n}\omicron\gamma\chi$  ‘their false thinking’,  $\pi\chi\omicron\omicron\chi\bar{q} \bar{n} \pi\theta\bar{\beta}\beta\iota\omicron$  ‘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’),  $\pi\omicron\gamma\omega\mu \bar{n}\bar{m}\epsilon\epsilon\rho\epsilon$  ‘the midday meal’ (literally ‘eating’) or simply  $\pi\bar{m}\omicron\gamma$  ‘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:

$\alpha\upsilon\alpha\rho\chi\epsilon\iota \bar{n}\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \epsilon\upsilon\chi\omega \bar{m}\bar{m}\omicron\sigma \bar{n} \tau\epsilon\iota\bar{\rho}\epsilon$

He began *talking*, speaking like this.

$\bar{n}\bar{\Gamma}\bar{\rho}\chi\rho\iota\alpha \Delta\bar{n} \bar{n}\bar{n}\Delta\gamma \epsilon\rho\omicron\omicron\gamma$

You do not need ( $\bar{n}\bar{\Gamma}\bar{\rho}\chi\rho\iota\alpha$ ) *to see* them.

$\bar{m}\bar{\pi}\epsilon \tau\bar{\rho}\omicron\tau\epsilon \kappa\alpha\alpha\upsilon \bar{n}\epsilon\iota \epsilon\bar{\rho}\omicron\gamma\bar{n}$

The fear did not let him ( $\kappa\alpha\alpha\upsilon$ ) *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  $\bar{\rho}\bar{n} \omicron\gamma\omega\bar{n}\bar{\rho} \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda \Delta\bar{n}$  ‘not openly’ (literally ‘not in appearing’):

ΑΦΕΛΘΗ ΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΣ Ε ΠΩΛΩΣ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΙΒΙΟΣ

He has come close *to concluding* (ΠΩΛΩΣ ΕΒΟΛ) this lifetime.

ΕΥΕΞΑΡΕΞ ΕΡΘΟΥΣ ΖΑΒΟΛ ΖΑ ΠΛΙΣΡΑΦ Ν ΝΒΑΛ

They shall protect themselves *by means of* (ΖΑΒΟΛ ΖΑ) *the diverting* of the eyes.

ΕΥΝΑΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ ΝΑΦ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΜΠΩΑ Μ ΠΕΦΖΩΒ

They are going to punish him *in proportion to the deserving* of his deed.

ΖΝ ΟΥΩΦΕ ΜΑΡΕΟΥΑΩΤ ΖΝ ΟΥΜΕ ΜΑΡΕΜΕΡΙΤ

*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 ΠΕΖΟΥ Μ ΠΤΟΜΟΥ ‘the day of burying them (ΤΟΜΟ-ΟΥ)’ or the following:

ΑΚΑΡΧΕΙ ΝΧΩ ΝΑΥ ΝΝΕΙΩΑΧΕ

She began *telling* them *these sayings*.

Infinitives may even turn up as the subject of another verb:

ΜΑΡΕ ΠΑΟΥΩΦΕ ΜΝ ΠΑΜΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΝΖΗΤΩ

*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  $\text{PAM}^{\text{EE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}$  – 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  $\bar{\text{P}}^{\text{P}}\text{PEK}^{\text{MEE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}$  ‘remember you’,  $\bar{\text{P}}^{\text{P}}\text{PEY}^{\text{MEE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}$  ‘remember them’ and  $\Delta\text{P}^{\text{I}}\text{PAM}^{\text{EE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}\text{Z}^{\text{O}}$  ‘remember me too’ (8.3):

$\text{P}^{\text{P}}\text{P}^{\text{MEE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}\bar{\text{M}}^{\text{I}}\text{PEY}^{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{M}}^{\text{I}}\text{ZAL}\text{ETOGALAB}\Delta\text{PA}\Phi\text{ENOYTE}$

The remembering of his holy servant, Apa Shenoute.

$\text{PEK}^{\text{P}}\text{P}^{\text{MEE}}\text{Y}^{\text{E}}\text{NADWPE}\chi\text{IN}\text{OYXOM}\Phi\Delta\text{OYXOM}$

Remembering you is going to happen from generation until generation.

Another useful idiom along the same lines is  $\text{S}^{\text{M}}\text{PWINE}$  ‘visit’ (literally ‘find the greeting’ of someone), as in  $\text{PEY}^{\text{S}}\text{S}^{\text{M}}\text{PWINE}$  ‘visiting him’ and  $\text{S}^{\text{M}}\text{PET}^{\text{N}}\text{PWINE}$  ‘visiting you’. Actually, this phrase often turns up as a euphemism for death, derived from Christian scripture:

$\text{EPE}\text{PXOEIC}\text{NAP}^{\text{OY}}\text{NAN}\text{NMMAQ}\bar{\text{M}}^{\text{I}}\text{PEZOY}\bar{\text{M}}^{\text{I}}\text{PEY}^{\text{S}}\text{S}^{\text{M}}\text{PWINE}$

The Lord is going to be merciful with him on the day of visiting him.

$\Delta\text{PEZOY}\bar{\text{M}}^{\text{I}}\text{PEY}^{\text{S}}\text{S}^{\text{M}}\text{PWINE}\text{EI}\text{NAC}$

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):

ΤΩΟΥΝ̄ Ν̄ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΦΑΧΕ Μ̄Ν ΠΕΤ̄Ν̄ΕΙΩΤ ΕΤΣΑΜΑΔΑΤ ΧΕ  
ΠΕΟΥΟΙΩ Ν̄ ΦΑΧΕ ΠΕ ΠΑΙ (13.6)

Get up *and* talk (Ν̄-ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄-ΦΑΧΕ) with your blessed father because this is the time for speaking.

ΦΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΙ Ν̄ΤΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ Ρ̄ ΟΥΝΑ Ν̄ΜΑΙ

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:

ΕΡΕ ΠΕΦΡ̄Ν̄ΗΝΙ ΒΩΚ Ε ΠΜΑ Ν̄ Ν̄ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ Ν̄ΦΧΙΤΟΥ ΝΑΦ (16.4)

His warden shall go to the place of the storekeepers (ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ) *and* get them (Ν̄-Φ-ΧΙΤ-ΟΥ) for him.

ΕΚΕΖΑΡΕΖ ΕΝΡΩΜΕ Ν̄ ΤΕΖΥΝΕΤΕ Μ̄Ν Ν̄ΤΒ̄ΝΟΟΥΕ Ν̄Γ̄ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ

You shall protect the men of the monastery and the animals *and* bless them.

ΦΑΡΕ ΠΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟΣ Μ̄Ν ΠΖΛΛ̄Ν ΠΩΡΦ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΝΕΥΣΙΧ Η  
Ν̄ΣΕΦΙΤΟΥ ΕΖΡΑΙ (13.1)

The heretic and the pagan spread out their hands *and* even (Η) lift them up (Ν̄-ΣΕ-ΦΙΤ-ΟΥ).

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 ΜΗΠΟΤΕ or ΜΗΠΟΣ ‘in case’ or ΖΩΣΤΕ ‘so that’:

Ν̄ΠΡ̄ΜΙΦΕ Μ̄Ν ΟΥΡΩΜΕ Ν̄ΧΩΩΡΕ ΜΗΠΟΤΕ Ν̄ΓΕΙ Ε ΤΟΟΤ̄

Do not fight with a powerful person *in case you fall* into his hands (literally ‘come to his possession’ (5.2)).

ΑΦΠΑΤΑΣΣΕ Ν̄ΝΕΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ ΕΤ-Μ̄ΜΑΥ Ζ̄Ν̄ ΟΥΝΟΣ Ν̄ΛΥΠΕΙ ΖΩΣΤΕ  
Ν̄ΣΕΦΑΧΕ ΕΠΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ ΕΤ-Μ̄ΜΑΥ ΦΑ ΕΖΡΑΙ Ε ΠΟΥ Ν̄ΖΟΥ

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 (Ḳ̄ΤΑ) is often abbreviated in pronunciation to ΤΑ only (8.4), though it remains a distinctive prefix for a verb:

ΕΙΟΥΩΩ Ε ΒΩΚ Ε ΠΜΑ ΕΤ̄̄ΜΔΥ ΤΑΝΔΥ ΕΡΟΥ

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 Ḳ̄ΤΕ, which is not irregular but potentially confusing (because Ḳ̄ΤΕ is also the form used in front of noun subjects):

ΟΥΟΧ̄ Ḳ̄ ΣΤΙΧΑ ΕΝΑΝΟΥϸ Ḳ̄ΤΕΤ̄̄ΝΟΥϸ̄ ΝΑΪ (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 ΟΥΘΑΧΕ Ḳ̄ΟΥΩΤ Ε ΠΠΑΠΑΣ ΤΑΡΕϸ†ΖΗΥ

Produce a single saying for the cleric (ΠΑΠΑC) *and he may benefit* (ΤΑΡΕ-Ϟ-†ΖΗΥ).

†ΝΑ† ΝΝΑΖΥΠΑΡΧΟΝΤΑ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΤΑΡΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΒΩΩΥΤ̄ ΕΧΩΝ

I am going to give all my goods (ΖΥΠΑΡΧΟΝΤΑ) to you *and perhaps God will look on us.*

## 17.5 ΜΠΑΤΕ ‘BEFORE’, ΝΤΕΡΕ ‘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 ΝΤΕΡΕϞΝΑΥ ΔΡ̄ΩΠΗΡΕ ‘after he saw, he wondered’ (that is, he saw first and afterwards wondered):

ΝΤΕΡΕCΔΕ ΠΑΙ ΔC̄ΝΚΟΤ̄Κ̄

*After she said this, she slept.*

ΝΤΕΡΟΥΡ̄ ΤCΥΝΑΖΙC̄ Μ̄ ΠΝΑΥ ΝΩΩΡ̄Π̄ ΔΥΚΩΩC̄ Μ̄ΠΕϞCΩΜΑ  
ΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ

*After they made the assembly of the morning time, they embalmed his holy body.*

ΔΙΡΑΩΕ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΝΤΕΡΙΧΙ ΝΝΕCΖΑÏ

I rejoiced greatly *after I got* the writings.

The point is that this tense marked with ΝΤΕΡ or ΝΤΕΡΕ cannot make a complete statement on its own – if we read ΝΤΕΡΕ-Ϟ-ΝΑΥ ‘after he saw’, we naturally ask ‘then what?’

In effect, the tense marker ΩΑΝΤ or ΩΑΝΤΕ ‘until’ sets the opposite time limit:

ΔΥΜΟΟΩΕ Ν̄ΜΑϞ ΩΑΝΤΟῩΝΤ̄Ω̄ ΕΖΟΥΝ Ε ΘΕΝΕΕΤΕ

They walked with him *until they brought him* (ΩΑΝΤ-ΟΥ-ΝΤ-Ω̄)  
into the monastery.

αι̅ρ̅ ρ̅εν̅νο̅ς̅ ν̅ο̅υ̅ω̅η̅ ν̅ρ̅ο̅ε̅ι̅ς̅ ω̅αν̅τ̅τ̅ μ̅π̅ι̅χ̅ω̅ω̅μ̅ε̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ

I spent many nights of vigil *until I put* (ω̅αν̅τ̅-τ̅) the book out.

α̅ω̅ τ̅ε̅ τ̅ε̅ρ̅γ̅α̅ς̅ι̅α̅ ν̅τ̅α̅κ̅α̅α̅ς̅ ω̅αν̅τ̅ε̅κ̅χ̅ι̅ ν̅τ̅ε̅ι̅χ̅α̅ρ̅ι̅ς̅ (15.2)

Which craft (ε̅ρ̅γ̅α̅ς̅ι̅α̅) did you do *until you received* this grace?

ν̅η̅νε̅-ρ̅ω̅μ̅ε̅ κ̅α̅ π̅ε̅φ̅π̅ρ̅η̅ω̅ ν̅ η̅ π̅ρ̅η̅ ω̅αν̅τ̅ο̅γ̅κ̅ω̅λ̅ξ̅ ε̅ π̅ο̅γ̅ω̅μ̅  
μ̅η̅ε̅ε̅ρ̅ε̅

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 *μ̅π̅α̅τ̅ε̅ τ̅ε̅ς̅ζ̅ι̅μ̅ε̅ ς̅ρ̅α̅ι̅* means ‘the woman has not yet written’ or ‘before the woman wrote’:

ε̅ι̅ο̅υ̅ω̅ω̅ ε̅ β̅ω̅κ̅ ε̅ π̅η̅α̅ ε̅τ̅μ̅η̅α̅γ̅ τ̅α̅η̅α̅γ̅ ε̅ρ̅ο̅υ̅ μ̅π̅α̅τ̅μ̅ο̅υ̅

I want to go to that place and see him *before I die*.

π̅ε̅ο̅υ̅ο̅ε̅ι̅ω̅ ν̅ ω̅α̅χ̅ε̅ π̅ε̅ π̅α̅ι̅ μ̅π̅α̅τ̅ε̅ τ̅τ̅α̅π̅ρ̅ο̅ τ̅ω̅μ̅

This is the time for speaking, *before the mouth shuts*.

ν̅ θ̅ε̅ ν̅ α̅α̅α̅μ̅ μ̅ π̅η̅α̅γ̅ ε̅φ̅-ρ̅μ̅ π̅π̅α̅ρ̅α̅δ̅ι̅ς̅ο̅ς̅ μ̅π̅α̅τ̅ε̅φ̅π̅α̅ρ̅α̅β̅α̅  
ν̅τ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅λ̅η̅

In the way of Adam at the time when he was in Paradise *and had not yet transgressed* (π̅α̅ρ̅α̅β̅α̅) 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 Ν̄ΣΙ Ν̄ΩΗΡΕ Μ̄Ν̄ Ν̄ΩΕΕΡΕ Μ̄ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΙΩΤ  
ΕΙΩΣΗΦ ΔΥΕΙ ΩΔ ΠΕΥΕΙΩΤ  
ΔΥΖΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΦΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΕ Ε ΠΜΟΥ ΕΔΟΥΩΝ ΕΖΟΥΝ Ε ΠΩΛΩ  
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 ΠΩΔΧΕ Ν̄ ΔΔΥΕΙΔ ΧΕ ΠΔΙΚΑΙΟC ΝΑΩΩΠΕ Ν̄ Ρ̄ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ  
ΩΔ ΕΝΕΖ  
ΔΥΩ ΠΕΚΡ̄ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΧΙΝ ΟΥΧΩΜ ΩΔ 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 Ν̄ΩΩΡΠ̄ ΔΥΚΩΩC Μ̄ΠΕΥCΩΜΑ  
ΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ Ν̄ ΘΕ Ν̄ ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΔΥΤΑΛΟ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΩΩ  
Ν̄ΤΕΥΠΡΟCΦΩΡΑ Μ̄Ν̄ΝCΩC ΔΥΓ̄ΑΛΛΕΙ ΖΑ ΤΕΥΖΗ ΩΔΑΝΤΟΥΧΙΤ̄  
Ε ΠΤΟΥΥ Ν̄CΕΤΟΜC̄ Ν̄ CΟΥ Μ̄Ν̄ΤΗ Μ̄ ΠΕΙΕΒΟΤ Ν̄ΟΥΩΤ 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-Ω) 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 ιϛ δε λινουχε νουκωρτ εχνη πκοσμοϛ  
αγω ειςζηητε †εραρεζ εροϛ ωαντεϿχερο

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':

αϿωκ νουοειω ν̄βι πεπρεϿβυτεροϛ ν̄ ωηητ ωα  
παρχηεπισκοποϛ ν̄ Ͽακοτε αγω ν̄τερεϿκτοϿ ε ωηητ  
αχνοϿϿ ν̄βι νεϿσνηϿ δε ερε τπολιϿ Ͽ ου ν̄τοϿ δε πεχαϿ  
ναϿ δε φυϿι ναϿσνηϿ ανοκ μ̄πιναϿ επρο ν̄ λααϿ ν̄ρωμε ν̄σα  
παρχηεπισκοποϛ μαγααϿ ν̄τοϿ δε ν̄τεροϿωτ̄η αϿτααϿρο  
ετβε ποαχε δε εϿεραρεζ εροϿϿ Ͽαβολ Ͽα πχιϿραϿ ν̄νβαλ

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 (φυϿι), 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 †Ͽτοιχε 'I do assent' (7.6). Notice that the negative prospective tense marker is spelled ε̄νε here (16.4):

+ ειϿ πλογοϿ μ̄ πινοϿτε ν̄τοϿτκ ν̄τοκ μαθιοϿ ν̄ροϿωνϿ  
εβολ ν̄γκωτε ν̄γχι εκμεροϿ ν̄ νοϿβ δε ε̄νεεπαραγε μ̄μοκ  
+ κολλοϿθοϿ πματοι †Ͽτ.

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

ΖΑ, ΖΑΡΟϝ	under, in, on behalf of	ΨΑΛΛΕΙ	sing, chant (psalms)
ΧΙΝ	from, since	ΡΟΕΙC	keep watch, stay awake
ΜΗΠΟΤΕ	in case	ΧΙΞΡΑϝ	divert, amuse
ΖΩCΤΕ	so that	ΟΥΩΩ or ΟΥΩΩΕ	want, desire
ΕΜΑΤΕ	very, greatly, especially	ΟΥΕΩ- ΟΥΑΩϝ	
ΚΟCΜΟC	world, creation	ΟΥΩΩΧΕ ΟΥΕΧ-	
Ν̄ΤΟΛΗ or		ΟΥΟΧϝ	cut
ΕΝΤΟΛΗ	instruction, law	ΤΩΜ Τ̄Μ- ΤΟΜϝ	shut
ΕΥΝΑΞΙC	assembly, (church) service	ΚΩΤΕ ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤϝ	circulate, go round
ΩΩΡΠ	morning	ΤΑΧΡΟ ΤΑΧΡΕ-	
CΟΥ	day	ΤΑΧΡΟϝ	strengthen
ΝΑΥ	hour, time	ΤΑΛΟ ΤΑΛΕ- ΤΑΛΟϝ	lift, raise
ΧΩΜ	generation	ΜΕ ΜΕΡΕ- ΜΕΡΙΤϝ	love
ΒΙΟC	lifetime	ΚΩΛḂ ΚΕΛḂ- ΚΟΛḂϝ	knock, ring (bell)
ΚΩΞΤ	fire		
ΡΗ	sun		
ΠΡΗΩ	cloak		
ΝΟΥΒ	gold, money		
ΠΟΛΕΜΟC	battle, war		
<i>Some verbs</i>			
ΑΡΧΕΙ	begin		
ΖΩΝ ΕΞΟΥΝ	close in, reach		
ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ	punish, chastise	<i>Useful phrase</i>	
ΠΑΡΑΓΕ	confront	ΠΟΥ ḂΞΟΥ	this very day
ΚΕΛΕΥΕ	allow, grant		
ΛΥΠΕΙ	grieve, grief		



# 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  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  or  $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha$  (at the beginning of a statement) and conjunctions such as  $\Delta\epsilon$  or  $\Gamma\alpha\rho$  (generally in second place) help us recognise divisions between sentences, phrases and, indeed, individual words. Sometimes, word breaks fall where we expect, as in  $\bar{\eta}\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \Delta\epsilon\ \bar{\pi}\epsilon\chi\alpha\upsilon\ \bar{\eta}\alpha\gamma$  ‘so, he said to them’ – the position of  $\Delta\epsilon$  shows that the independent pronoun  $\bar{\eta}\tau\omicron\upsilon$  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  $\epsilon\rho\epsilon\bar{\nu}\epsilon\bar{\kappa}\bar{\nu}\eta\gamma\ \Delta\epsilon\ \zeta\bar{\mu}\omicron\omicron\varsigma\ \zeta\alpha\zeta\tau\eta\gamma$  ‘so, when the brothers were sitting beside him’ – the position of  $\Delta\epsilon$  suggests that the prefix  $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$  as well as the article  $\bar{\nu}\epsilon$ - and the noun  $\bar{\kappa}\bar{\nu}\eta\gamma$  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:

$\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\bar{\kappa}\omega\omega\ \Gamma\alpha\rho\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda\ \zeta\bar{\eta}\ \overline{\omicron\gamma\tau\eta\bar{\nu}\alpha}\ \epsilon\varphi\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\beta$  (14.3)

Because she has conceived ( $\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha$ - $\bar{\kappa}\omega\omega$ ) from a holy spirit.

In fact, simple prepositions such as  $\zeta\bar{\eta}$  ‘in, from’,  $\epsilon$  ‘to’ and  $\bar{\eta}$  ‘for’, as well as  $\bar{\eta}$  ‘of’ and the subject marker  $\bar{\eta}\sigma\iota$  (9.4), were typically pronounced along with their nouns too, so you will find fixture pile-ups of the kind  $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\bar{\rho}\omega\bar{\mu}\epsilon$  ‘of the men’, while the above should more properly read:

$\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\bar{\kappa}\omega\omega\ \Gamma\alpha\rho\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda\zeta\bar{\eta}\overline{\omicron\gamma\tau\eta\bar{\nu}\alpha}\ \epsilon\varphi\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\beta$

Likewise, unmarked objects of verbs are also pronounced with the verb itself, as in  $\zeta\epsilon\rho\tau\iota\zeta\epsilon\bar{\nu}\omicron\epsilon\iota\kappa\ \bar{\eta}\alpha\bar{\nu}$  ‘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  $\alpha$ - and the subject  $\omicron\gamma$ - $\omega\alpha$  ‘a festival’ have merged in pronunciation to form not only one word but an abbreviation at that:

$\alpha\gamma\omega\alpha\ \Delta\epsilon\ \omega\omega\pi\epsilon$     A festival took place ( $\alpha$ - $\omicron\gamma$ - $\omega\alpha$   $\omega\omega\pi\epsilon$ ).

This arises partly because of grammar – neither the tense marker ⲁ- nor the article ⲐΥ can stand on its own – and partly because of pronunciation – the vowels ⲁ- and ⲐΥ naturally form ⲁΥ, 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:

ⲁϥⲛⲁΥ ⲉΥϣⲟⲙⲉ      He saw a person (ⲉ-ⲐΥ-ϣⲟⲙⲉ).

ⲐΥⲛⲟⲩⲁ ⲉϣⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲕ ϩⲛⲧⲓⲓⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲉΥϥⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲛⲉ ϩⲛⲧⲉϣⲧⲉϭⲉ

There is someone who resembles you in the city (7.4), who is a physician (ⲉ-ⲐΥ-ϥⲁⲉⲓⲛ 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 ⲉϣⲟⲩⲁⲛ**

The conditional tense marker ⲉϣⲟⲩⲁⲛ 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):

ερετῖναῖροϥ ερωαν-πχοεις σῖ-πετῖνωινε (14.4)

What are you going to do, *if the Lord visits you?*

ερωαν-πχοεις σῖ-παωινε ἡπῖκα-πασωμα ρῖπμα  
ετογνατομςῖ ἡρητῖ

*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-ογ-να-τομς-ῖ ἡρητῖ-ῖ ‘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 ωαν- element:

ετετῖνωανωληλ σεναῖκατακρινε ἡμωτῖ (7.2)

If you pray (ε-τετῖ-ωαν-ωληλ), they are going to condemn (ῖ-κατακρινε) you.

If some nuance is required, the initial condition may be qualified by a particle such as ροταν ‘ever, whenever’:

ροταν ερωανσινε ῖναωτῖρῖρῖ λγω ερωανωτορῖρῖ  
ῖναῖωπιρε (9.6)

If he ever finds out, he is going to tremble; and if he trembles, he is going to marvel.

τωτῖ ρενμακαριος ροταν εγωανμεστε-τηγῖ

You are blessed people, if ever they hate you.

### 18.3 Τῆ̄ 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 τῆ̄ (less often τέμ) in front of the verb, as in ἢ-Γ-ΧΙ ‘then get’ but ἢ-Γ-τῆ̄-ΧΙ ‘then don’t get’:

ἘΡΩΔΑΝ-ΟΥΔΑ ἘΤΙ ἡ̄ΜΟΚ ἢ-ΟΥΖΩΒ ΔΥΩ ἡ̄ΓΤῆ̄ΧΙΤῆ̄ ἡ̄ΒΟΝC  
ἡ̄ΓΤΑΔC ΝΑC (9.6)

If someone asks you for something *and you won’t get yourself* (ἢ-Γ-τῆ̄-ΧΙΤῆ̄-κ̄) hurt, then give it (ἢ-Γ-ΤΑΔ-C) to him.

ἘΝΩΔΑΝΤῆ̄ΖΑΡΕΖ ΠΤΟΠΟC ΝΑΩΩC

*If we do not take care* (Ἐ-Ν-ΩΔΑΝ-τῆ̄-ΖΑΡΕΖ), the church is going to collapse (ΩΩC).

ΟΥΟΙΝΗΤῆ̄ΕΤΕΤῆ̄ΩΔΑΝΤῆ̄ΒΩΚ ΕΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ ΗΕΤΕΤῆ̄ΩΔΑΝΤῆ̄ΧΙ  
ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ̄ΠCΩΜΑ Μῆ̄ ΠΕCΝΟC Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙC

Woe to you, *if you do not go* (Ἐ-ΤΕΤῆ̄-ΩΔΑΝ-τῆ̄-ΒΩΚ) to the church or *if you do not partake* (Ἐ-ΤΕΤῆ̄-ΩΔΑΝ-τῆ̄-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 ΕΩΔΕ AND ΕΩΠΕ

Whereas the tense marker ἘΡΩΔΑΝ 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 ΕΩΔΕ 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?’):

εωδε πεφειωτ πε Supposing it was his father.

εωδε ν̄τατσαρζ ωωπε ετβε π̄νᾱ ογωπηρε τε (14.3)

Supposing the flesh happened because of spirit, it is a miracle.

εωδε ογ̄ν̄-ροεινε εγμοκ̄-ν̄ζητ̄ οντωσ̄ σε-̄πιωᾱ ν̄ταειο  
νιμ (7.4)

Supposing there are some who grieve, actually they are worthy of every honour.

εωωπε μεφ̄τ̄ζηγ̄ επενκαρω̄ ειε ενωανωαδε ον  
ν̄νᾱτ̄ζηγ̄ αν̄ (14.2)

Supposing he does not profit for our silence, then if we speak as well, he is not going to profit.

εωωπε ετετ̄νασ̄ν̄ πετνατααγ̄ νητ̄ν̄ ρα-ρβασ̄ ειτε καλωσ̄

Supposing you are going to find the one who will pay you for cloth, then good (καλωσ̄).

## 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 δε and the verb break up the long phrase π-κε-σεεπε ετ-ογωμ ν̄μα-γ̄ ‘the rest who were eating with him’ (2.4):

αγωα δε ωωπε ν̄ογοειω ρ̄νωιητ̄ αγ̄τ̄ ν̄ογαποτ̄ ν̄ηρ̄π̄  
ν̄ογρ̄λλο πεχαγ̄ δε ρι εβολ̄ ν̄μοῑ ν̄πιμογ̄ ν̄τερε-πκεσεεπε  
δε ναγ̄ ετογωμ ν̄μαγ̄ ν̄πογ̄χι

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:

ΑΥΧΟΟΣ ἡ̅σι-ἀπα ΜΩΥΣΗΣ Ζῆ̅Ω̅ΙΗΤ ΔΕ · ΕΝΩΔΝΖΑΡΕΖ  
ΕΝΕΝΤΟΛΗ ἡ̅νε̅νε̅ιο̅τε ἀνοκ ἡ̅να̅ω̅π̅τω̅ρι ἡ̅μ̅ω̅τῆ̅ν ζα̅ρ̅τῆ̅-  
π̅νο̅υ̅τε ΔΕ ἡ̅μ̅-βα̅ρ̅βα̅ρο̅ς να̅ει̅ ἐ̅πει̅μα̅ ἐ̅νω̅δ̅αν̅τῆ̅ζ̅α̅ρ̅ε̅ζ ΔΕ  
π̅το̅πο̅ς να̅ω̅ω̅ϗ

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 ππαπας ‘the Cleric’ is an informal reference to Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria from 385 to 412:

ΑΥΒΩΚ ἡ̅ο̅γο̅ει̅ω̅ ε̅ω̅ι̅η̅τ ἡ̅σι-π̅μα̅κα̅ρι̅ο̅ς ἀπα ἡ̅ε̅ω̅φι̅λο̅ς  
πα̅ρ̅χη̅ε̅π̅ι̅σκο̅πο̅ς α̅υ̅κ̅ω̅ο̅υ̅ζ ΔΕ ἡ̅σι-νε̅ς̅νη̅ϗ α̅υ̅χ̅ο̅ο̅ς ἡ̅α̅πα  
πα̅μ̅β̅ω̅ ΔΕ τα̅ο̅υ̅ε̅-ο̅υ̅ω̅α̅ΔΕ ἡ̅ο̅γ̅ω̅τ̅ ἐ̅π̅πα̅π̅α̅ς τα̅ρε̅ϗ̅τ̅η̅ϗ  
πε̅χα̅ϗ̅ να̅ϗ ἡ̅σι-π̅ρ̅ῶ̅λο̅ ΔΕ ε̅ω̅ω̅πε̅ με̅ϗ̅τ̅η̅ϗ̅ ἐ̅π̅ε̅ν̅κα̅ρ̅ω̅ϗ̅ ε̅ι̅ε̅  
ἐ̅νω̅δ̅αν̅ω̅α̅ΔΕ ο̅ν ἡ̅ῶ̅να̅τ̅η̅ϗ̅ ἀ̅ν

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 (ε̅ι̅ε̅) 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:

αϕχοοϑ ἄσι οὐζῶλο δε · ερωαν-ογα ετι ἡμοκ ἡοζωβ  
αγω ἡγτῆχιτῆ ἡβονϑ · ἡγτααϕ ἡαϕ ερἡακ ερε-πεκμεεγε  
πῶε εϑ ἡπετεκνατααϕ κατα-θε ετχηρ δε

ερωαν-ογα κοοβεκ ἡ-ογκοτ βοκ ἡἡμαϕ ἡσναγ ετε παι πε  
δε · ερωαν-ογα ετι ἡμοκ ἡοζωβ τααϑ ρἡ-πεκρητ τηρῆ  
ἡἡ-πεκἡἡα

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 (π-ετ-ῆ-να-ταα-ϕ) (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):

πεξε-ἰϑ δε · οὐβῶλε εϕωανϑοκρητῆ ἡοὐβῶλε ωαγρε  
ἡπεσναγ επεχτ εγρηετ

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-ογ-ρηετ).’

πεξε-ἰϑ δε · ἡτωτῆ ρεἡακαριοϑ ροταν εγωανμεστε-  
τηγτῆ ἡσερῆ-δλωκε ἡμωτῆ · αγω σεναρε αν επτοποϑ  
ρἡπἡα ἡταγῆ-δλωκε ἡμωτῆ ρραἰ-ἡρητῆ

Jesus said, ‘You are blessed people, if ever they hate you and then persecute (ἡ-σε-ῆ-δλωκε) you. Moreover, they are not going to find the church (16.2) in the place within which they persecuted (ἡτ-α-γ-δλωκε) you (15.1).’

πεξε-ἰϑ · εωξε ἡτατσαρρῆ ωωπε ετβε ἡἡα ογωπἡρε τε ·  
εωξε ἡἡα δε ετβε πωωα ογωπἡρε ἡωπἡρε πε αλλα

ΔΙΟΚ ΤΡΩΠΗΡΕ ΜΠΑΙ ΔΕ ΠΩΣ ΔΤΕΙΝΟΣ ΜΗΝΤΡΗΜΔΟ ΔΣΟΥΩΣ  
ΖΗ-ΤΕΙΜΝΤΖΗΚΕ

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	ΟΥΩΞ	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	ερωσαν	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  $\Delta\Upsilon\Omega\Delta \Upsilon\Omega\text{Π}\text{Ε}$  ‘a festival happened’ or  $\Delta\Upsilon\text{Π}\text{Ω}\text{Τ} \text{Ε}\text{Β}\text{Ο}\Lambda$  ‘he ran off’ (11.6). On the other hand, a transitive verb does presuppose an object, as in  $\Delta\Upsilon\text{Μ}\text{Ε}\text{Ζ} \text{Π}\text{Κ}\Delta\text{Ζ} \text{Τ}\text{Η}\text{Ρ}\bar{\text{Q}}$  ‘they filled (what?) . . . the whole earth’ or  $\text{Ε}\Upsilon\text{Ε}\text{Τ}\Lambda\text{Λ}\text{Ο}-\text{Q}$  ‘they will lift (what?) . . . him’.

To qualify the above, note that some verbs have both transitive and intransitive meanings – for example,  $\text{Ε}\text{Ι}\text{Τ}\Lambda\text{Χ}\text{Ρ}\text{Ο} \bar{\text{M}}\text{Ω}\text{Τ}\bar{\text{N}}$  ‘while I strengthen you’ (transitive) and  $\Delta\Upsilon\text{Τ}\Lambda\text{Χ}\text{Ρ}\text{Ο} \text{Ε}\text{Τ}\text{Β}\text{Ε} \text{Π}\text{Ω}\Delta\text{Χ}\text{Ε}$  ‘they got strong because of the saying’ (intransitive) (17.6), while  $\text{Ο}\Upsilon\text{Ω}\text{Ζ}$  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  $\Delta\text{Q}\text{K}\text{T}\text{O}\text{Q}$  ‘he returned’ or  $\Delta\text{C}\bar{\text{M}}\text{T}\text{O}\text{N} \bar{\text{M}}\text{M}\text{O}\text{C}$  ‘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 ΜΟΥ ‘die’ > ΜΟΥΤ ‘dead’ and ϸϩαῖ ‘write’ > ϸΗϩ ‘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 ΕΤ/ΕΤΕ ‘who, which’ or circumstantial ΕΡΕ/Ε- (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 ΜΟΥ ‘die’ we get ΜΟΥΤ ‘dead’, from ΟΥΩϩ ‘settle’ we get ΟΥΗϩ ‘settled’ and from ΣΩ ‘persist’ we get ΣΕΕΤ ‘persisting, remaining’:

αϸναϩ εϸρωμε εϸμουτ

He saw a person *who was dead*.

αϸεϸ-ϸε ἡρωμε εϸουηϩ ϩἡπεττε ἡπερο

She spent sixty years *settled* in the upper part of the river.

ἡτερεϸμου αϸῖ-κερωμε εϸσεετ μαϩααϸ

After she died (ἡτερε-ϸ-μου), 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 αϸαῖ ‘lighten, relax’ we get αϸωουϩ ‘light, nimble’, from ΣΝΟΝ ‘soften’ we get ΣΗΝ ‘soft’ and from ϩαϩε ‘harden’ we get ϩαϩω ‘hard’:

αϸει εϩουη εϸωουε εϸαϸωου ἡε ἡουτρωμεϸ

She came in walking, *nimble* as a runner (ΤΡΟΜΕΥC).

ΤΕΦΥCΙC Μ̄ΠΜΟΥ 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 Μ̄ΚΑΖ ‘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 ΖḒ-ḒCΑ Μ̄ΠΕCΗΤ ḒΚΗΜΕ ΕΦΟΥΗΖ ΔΕ ΖḒ-ΘΗΒΑΙC

He *is living* in the lower parts of Egypt, in fact *is settled* in the Thebaid.

ΕΡΕΝΔΙ ΩΟΟΠ Μ̄ΜΟΙ ΕΤΒΕ ΝΑΝΟΒΕ

These things *stay* with me because of my sins. (14.5)

ΔΝΟΚ †ΩΟΟΠ ΝḒΜΑΚ ΖḒ ΜΔ 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 ḒΝΔΖΡḒ-ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ‘accepted before God’ (12.5). Likewise, from CΖΔḒ ‘write’ we get ḐCΗΖ ‘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

ὄρωτ ‘deprive’ we get νετ-ὤρατ ‘those who are deprived’ and from  
ζωπ ‘hide’ we get πετζηπ ἐρω-τῆ ‘that which is hidden from you’:

сμοу ним εϑснз з̄н̄тегραφн

Every blessing *which is written* in Scripture. (3.2)

αϑηαϑ εϑρωμε εϑνηχ εβολ εϑμοοϑτ

He saw a person *who was slumped out*, dead.

н̄н̄-профнтнс ѡнп з̄м̄-πεϑτμε

No prophet *is accepted* in his town. (7.4)

н̄н̄-ὤραξε смонт εтβε πноϑβ

No saying *is agreed* about the money.

οϑσοφια εζηπ м̄н̄ οϑαρο εν̄ϑοϑον̄ε̄ εβολ αν

A wisdom *which is hidden* and a treasure *which is not revealed* (ε-  
н̄-ϑ̄-οϑον̄ε̄). (16.2)

πεκραн ναϑωπε εϑсмаμαατ

Your name is going to become *blessed*.

Notice how translating statives often straddles the line between present and past, as in ḥμοοϑτ ‘she has died/she is dead’, νετὤρατ ‘those who have been deprived/are deprived’, and εζηπ ‘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:

н̄ϑ̄овѡ ан н̄гн̄ πноϑτε ενек̄ρμειοοϑε м̄н̄-неκωληл  
м̄н̄-неκοϑωн̄ н̄роεис

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 ⲬⲙⲠⲟⲩⲧ ‘she is dead’ and the stark implication of the past in ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱ ⲉϥⲙⲟⲩ ‘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:

ⲧⲥⲱⲩⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲉⲛⲧⲩ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ    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- ⲁⲁⲉ ‘do, make’, which is simply O ‘made’ (11.6), appears in many quirky but useful idioms:

ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉϥⲟ ⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲓⲙⲱⲛⲓⲟⲛ

A man possessed by a demon (literally ‘a man who is made demonic’).

ⲉϥⲟ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲱⲩⲱⲥ

When you act for us as a shepherd (literally ‘when you are made shepherdly’).

ⲉⲛⲟ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲭⲓⲟⲩⲁ

We are made like the one who blasphemes (ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲭⲓⲟⲩⲁ) = we are like blasphemers.

## 19.5 THE STATIVE FORM OF VERBS OF MOTION

On the other hand, the *verbs of motion* ει ‘come’, ΒΩΚ ‘go’, ΠΩΤ ‘run, flee’, ΖΩΛ ‘fly’ and ΖΕ ‘fall’ naturally shift to their stative forms (ΝΗΥ, ΒΗΚ, ΠΗΤ, ΖΗΛ and ΖΗΥ respectively) in the engaged present tense, with no implication that this action might have already finished:

ΕΙC ΝΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC ΝΗΥ ΕΩΙΗΤ ΜΠΟΟΥ

The barbarians are coming to Scetis today.

ΕΡΕΝΗΥ ΧΙΝΤΩΝ Η ΕΡΕΒΗΚ ΕΤΩΝ

From where are you coming and to where are you going? (14.4)

ΑΦΩΠ̄ΡΙCΕ Ν̄ΜΑΙ Ζ̄Ν-ΝΕΖΟΥΥ Ν̄ΤΑΜ̄Ν̄ΤΩΗΡΕΩΗΗ ΕΦΠΗΤ  
Ν̄ΜΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄ΝΟΥΜΑ ΕΥΜΑ

He took care of me in the days of my childhood (5.3), *while fleeing* with me from place to place.

ΑΠΕΤΖΗΛ Θ̄Μ̄ΘΟΜ ΕΧ̄Μ̄-ΠΕΤΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΙΧ̄Μ̄-ΠΚΑΖ

The one *which is flying* overcame (Θ̄Μ̄ΘΟΜ) the one which is walking on the ground.

By the way, notice from the last example that ΜΟΟΥΕ ‘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:

ΕΙΡΕ Π̄- ΑΑϑ Ο†	do, make
ΡΩΖ̄Τ̄ ΡΕΖ̄Τ- ΡΑΖ̄Τϑ ΡΑΖ̄Τ̄†	strike, hit
CΜΙΝΕ CΜ̄- CΜ̄ΝΤϑ CΜΟΝΤ†	agree, establish

There are many unexpected forms of the stative, as you will have realised, including εἰ ‘come’ with the stative ΝΗΥ ‘coming’, ΜΟΥ ‘die’ with the stative ΜΟΥΥΤ ‘dead’ and СМОУ ‘bless’ with the stative СΜΑΜΑΔΑΤ ‘blessed’. However, as you can see from the verbs of motion above (ΒΩΚ, ΠΩΤ, ΞΩΛ with ΒΗΚ, ΠΗΤ, ΞΗΛ), 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, ΔΥΣΩΛΠ̄ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΑΠΑ ΔΑΝΤΩΝΙΟС (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 ΔΥΣΩΛΠ̄ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΑΠΑ ΔΑΝΤΩΝΙΟС 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 ΔΥΜΟΥΥΤḲ̄ 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:

СΕΩΩΥ Ν̄ΝΕΦΛΟГОС  
 ΞḲ̄-ḲḲ̄Α ΕΤḲḲ̄ΑΥ

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.
--	---	--

πεταμαρτε ἡμοῖ αγκονῆ	What holds me, they have slain (κονῆ) it.	What holds me has been slain.
--------------------------	---	-------------------------------------

ἡνερωμε φβ-ρωμε εμπογτοω	No person shall dress a person when they have not agreed it (ε-ἡπ-ογ-τοω-φ).	No person shall dress a person when it has not been agreed.
-----------------------------	--	---

†κελεγε ἡσεφῖ ἡτεφαπε ἡτσηφε ἡσερωκῆ ἡπεφωμα  
ζῆογκωζῆ

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 ριχῆ-ογτοω

A city built on a hill (not ‘a city which they build on a hill’).

πρωμε εφζῆογταιο ἡπεφειμε ερω αγκοχῆ ἡἡ-ἡτβῆοογε  
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 ἡταγταγο αγκωτῆ ερω εφω ἡμοφ ζῆτπολις  
ρωμα

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:

ⲁϥⲣ-Ⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲛⲡⲁⲧⲟϥⲭⲓ-ⲒⲒⲙⲉ ⲛⲁϥ

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’ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄ OR ⲉⲖⲐⲗ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄ OR ⲉⲖⲐⲗ Ⲓ̄ⲛ̄

---

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 ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄ or ⲉⲖⲐⲗ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄ or ⲉⲖⲐⲗ Ⲓ̄ⲛ̄, each of which means ‘from, through, by’:

ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲖⲐⲗ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄-ⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ      It happened *through* (ⲉⲖⲐⲗ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄) God.

ⲟϥⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥⲭⲓⲈⲛⲉ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲒⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲉⲖⲐⲗ Ⲓ̄ⲛ̄-ⲧⲈⲛⲉ

Everyone who has taken arms (ⲛ̄ⲧ-ⲁ-ϥ-ⲭⲓⲈⲛⲉ), they are going to fall also *by* the sword.

In both statements, a preposition (ⲉⲖⲐⲗ ⲒⲐⲧ̄ⲛ̄ or ⲉⲖⲐⲗ Ⲓ̄ⲛ̄) 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 ΕΤΟΟΤῪ ΖΙΤῪ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ

He was tasked *by* the priests.

This example could have been presented as an active statement, perhaps ΔΥΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤῪ ΝΟΙ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ ‘the priests tasked him’ (9.4). Instead, the subject of the verb (the active agent) has been relegated to the supplementary phrase ΖΙΤῪ-ΝΟΥΗΗΒ ‘by the priests’, whereas the stated subject of the verb is actually our vague, indeterminate ‘they’ (Δ-Υ-ΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤ-Ὺ). 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 ΗΜΟϚ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤῪ-ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟϚ

He was tempted by the Devil.

This seems to begin ‘they tempted him’ (Δ-Υ-ΠΡΑΖΕ ΗΜΟϚ) but such a reading is nonsense because ‘they’ is plural, whereas the person actually doing the tempting (ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟϚ ‘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:

ῪΠΟΥΧΠΟϚ ΕΒΟΛ ΖῪ-ΤΣΖΙΜΕ

He was not born *by* the woman.

ῪΤΑΥΒΟΛῪ ΕΒΟΛ ΖῪ-ΟΥΚΟϚΜΟϚ

I was freed *by* some creation.

Again, in the first example the verb seems to state, ‘they have not born him’ (ῪΠ-ΟΥ-ΧΠΟ-Ϛ) but immediately we learn (ΕΒΟΛ ΖῪ-ΤΣΖΙΜΕ ‘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’ (ῪΤΑ-Υ-ΒΟΛ-Ὺ) but, again, the active agent is singular (ΕΒΟΛ ΖῪ-ΟΥΚΟϚΜΟϚ ‘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 **ϸΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ**, the formal ‘Greek’ form Shenoute adopts for his own name along with an abundance of fancy ecclesiastical words (for instance, **ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΣΤΑΤΟΣ** ‘best beloved of God’) when writing to an Archbishop:

ϸΙΝΟΥΘΙΟΣ ΠΙΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΟΣ ΠΕΤΣΖΑΙ ΜΠΕΦΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΙΩΤ  
ΝΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΣΤΑΤΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΜΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΔΙΜΟΘΕΟΣ  
ΠΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΖΜΠΧΘΕΙΣ

ΧΑΙΡΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΦΧΣ ΙΣ ΠΕΝΩΤΗΡ ΞΣΜΑΜΑΑΤ  
ΞΣΜΑΜΑΑΤ ΟΝ ΝΒΙ-ΠΧΘΕΙΣ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ

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):

ΠΕΙΜΝΗΘΕ ΝΤΣΟΤ ΕΤΣΟΟΥΖ ΕΠΕΙΤΟΠΟΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΜΠΟΟΥ  
ΖΜΠΕΦΡΑΝ ΜΝΠΡ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΜΠΕΦΖΜΖΑΛ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΑΠΑ  
ΩΕΝΟΥΤΕ · ΚΤΑΙΝΗ ΖΜΠΕΚΩΝΞ ΚΤΑΙΝΗ ΖΜΠΕΚΜΟΥ ΔΥΩ  
ΠΕΚΡΑΝ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΕΦΣΜΑΜΑΑΤ ΖΑΖΤΗΝ ΔΥΩ ΖΑΖΤΝ-ΠΝΟΥΤΕ

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.

ΟΥΜΕ ΠΕ ΠΩΔΧΕ ΝΔΑΥΕΙΔ ΧΕ ΠΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΝΡ̄  
 ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΩΔΕΝΕΖ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΚΡ̄ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΧΙΝ-ΟΥΧΩΜ  
 ΩΔΟΥΧΩΜ ΤΝ̄ΣΟΟΥΝ Ν̄ΝΖΙΣΕ Ν̄ΤΑΚΩΠΟΥ ΖΙΧ̄Μ-ΠΕΙΤΟΥ  
 ΤΝ̄ΣΟΟΥΝ Ν̄ΤΕΚΜ̄ΝΤΜΑΙΖΗΚΕ ΔΥΩ Ν̄ΦΩΩ ΔΝ̄ Ν̄ΣΙ ΠΠΟΥΤΕ  
 ΕΝΕΚΡ̄ΜΕΙΟΥΕ Μ̄ΝΕΚΩΛΗΛ Μ̄ΝΕΚΟΥΩΗ Ν̄ ΡΟΕΙΣ

A truth is the saying of David, ‘The righteous one is going to 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 ὀββίω ‘humility’, following the example of Jesus, as exemplified in the following story. By the way, in the second line εβολ εἰν̄ is used in the sense of ‘from’:

ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΕΦΟ ΝΔΔΑΙΜΩΝΙΟΝ ΔΥΩ ΕΦΜΟΚ̄ Μ̄ΜΑΤΕ ΕΦΤΑΥΕ  
 ΣΒΗΤΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΔΑΡΩΖ̄Τ̄ Ν̄ΟΥΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΕΒΟΛ Εἰν̄ Ν̄Ζ̄ΛΛΟ ΕΤΕΦΟΥΟΣΕ  
 · ΠΖ̄ΛΛΟ ΔΕ Εἰν̄-ΟΥΣΕΠΗ ΔΑΚΤΟ ΕΡΟΥ Ν̄ΤΚΕΟΥΕΙ · ΠΔΔΑΙΜΩΝ ΔΕ  
 Ν̄ΠΕΦΤΩΟΥΝ ΖΔ-ΠΧΟΥΧ̄ ἰΠΘ̄ΒΒΙΟ ΔΦΕΙ 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):

αῤῥωλῖβωλ ἵαπα ἀντωνιος ρι-πχαιε χε · οὔἡ-οὔα εῤεине  
 ἡμοκ ρἡτπολις εῤαειν πε ρἡτεῤτεχνε εῤτ ἡπεῤρογο  
 ἡνετωαατ · αῤω ωαϥῖ περοοῤ τηρῖ εῤχω ἡπωομἡτ  
 ἡραγιος ἡἡαγγελος ·

It was revealed to Apa Antony in the desert (χαίε) 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:<sup>1</sup>

ϣ ἡωορπ μεν τωινε εροκ πρωμε ἡρεῤῖροτε αῤω  
 ἡρεῤωἡενοῤτε πχοεις εῤεμοῤ εροκ ἡἡ πετωοοπ νακ  
 τηρῖ ἡρωμε ἡἡ ἡτῖνοοῤε · αρε ταγαπη ἡῖροῤνα ἡἡ  
 περἡκε τααδ ἡαπα βικτωρ ριτἡ-ιωραηης

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:

πεχε ιῤ χε · ροταν ετετἡωανναῤ επετε ἡποῤχοῤ εβολ  
 ρἡτςριμε · περτ-τηγτἡ εχἡ πετἡρο ἡτετἡοῤωῤτ ναῤ ·  
 πετἡμαῤ πε πετἡειωτ

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

ΜΗΝΩΕ	many	ΤΩΟΥΝ ΤΟΥΝ̄-	
σοφία	wisdom	ΤΩΟΥΝ= ΤΩΝ†	raise, get up
ἀπε	head	ΤΑΕΙΟ ΤΑΕΙΕ-	
ὄγος	cheek	ΤΑΕΙΟ= ΤΑΙΗΥ†	honour, esteem
ἀρσ	treasure	ϸΖΑἰ ϸΕΖ- ϸΑΖ=	
ζούω	excess, wealth	or ϸΖΑἰΤ= ϸΗΖ†	write
ἄνω	especially, above	ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΟΠ=	
	all	ΗΠ†	count, reckon
σβητε	foam	ΩΠ ΩΠ-	
ἄσ	shepherd	ΩΠ- ΩΗΠ†	get, receive
κἠμε	Egypt	ΚΩΤ ΚΕΤ-	
		ΚΟΤ= ΚΗΤ†	build
		ΤΩΩ ΤΕΩ-	
		ΤΩΩ= ΤΗΩ†	determine, limit, agree
<i>Some verbs</i>			
εἶρε ῑ- ἀα= ο†	do, make		
ὄγω			
(+ ἦ, ΝΑ=)	praise, kiss (in greeting)	ΒΩΛ Βἶ- ΒΟΛ=	
ὄπιζε	take care, look after	ΒΗΛ†	free, untie
πράζε	tempt	ΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΕΧ-	
σῆπῆ	hurry, rush	ΝΟΥΧ= ΝΗΧ†	throw, fling
ὄπιε ὄοπι†	happen, become, exist	ΜΟΥΖ ΜΕΖ-	
		ΜΑΖ= ΜΗΖ†	fill, complete
ὄω ὄεε†	stay, continue, persist	ḶΟΥΖ ḶΕΟΥΖ-	
		ḶΟΥΖ= ḶΟΥΖ†	assemble, meet, collect
εἰ νῆυ†	come	ΠΩΖΤ ΠΕΖΤ-	
βωκ βῆκ†	go	ΠΑΖΤ= ΠΑΖΤ†	bend, bow
πωτ πῆτ†	run, flee	ΡΩΖῑ ΡΕΖΤ-	
ζωλ ζῆλ†	fly	ΡΑΖΤ= ΡΑΖῑ†	strike, hit
ζε ζῆυ†	fall, find	ΡΩΚῑ ΡΕΚΖ-	
ἦκαζ μοκῑ†	suffer, grieve	ΡΟΚΖ= ΡΟΚῑ†	burn
σμοῦ		ΩΩΩΤ ΩΕΤ-	
σμάμαα†	bless	ΩΑΑΤ= ΩΑΑΤ†	cut off, deprive
μοῦ μοού†	die	ΩΩΒ Ωῑ- or	
μοού† μεῦτ-		ΩΕϸ ΩΗΒ†	dress, shave
μοού†	kill		

Notice the idiom ⲥⲱⲱⲧ̅ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲉⲛⲧⲉⲣ̅ ‘look forward to, anticipate’, which is based on the verb ⲥⲱⲱⲧ̅ ‘look, watch’ and incorporates the ‘body part’ word ⲉⲛⲧⲉⲣ̅ ‘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 ΝΕΡΕ OR ΝΕ-

The past converter ΝΕΡΕ 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):

ΝΕΡΕ Ν̄ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Μ̄ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ ΝΑΥ

The angels of God were chastising them.

Whereas the simple past typically reports *an event* that happened, ΝΕΡΕ with the engaged present is better suited to talking about *ongoing behaviour*, albeit behaviour which is over now:

ΝΕΡΕ Π̄ΩΡ ΟΥΑΩΕ Ν̄ΖΟΥ ΠΑΡΑ ΠΚΕΣΕΠΕ Ν̄ΣΤΙΜΕ (2.4)

The Saviour desired you (ΟΥΑΩ-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 ΝΕ- as a consequence:

ΝΕΥΧΩ Μ̄ΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΚΩ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ	He was saying, ‘Forgive me!’
ΝΕΥΖΜΟΟΣ ΕΥΣΟΒ̄Ν ΕΡΟΥ Ν̄ΣΙ	One was sitting, fanning
ΟΥΑ Ζ̄Ν ΤΕΥΚΛΑΒΤ	(Ε-Υ-ΣΟΒ̄Ν) him with his
	hood.

By the way, notice the distinctive idiom for ‘forgive’ (ΚΩ ‘leave, put down’ > ΚΩ ΕΒΟΛ ‘let go, dismiss’ > ΚΩ ΕΒΟΛ with an indirect object ‘forgive someone’).

Oddly, any verb in a statement marked by ΝΕΡΕ (or ΝΕ-) may be followed by ΠΕ, 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):

ΝΕΥΜΟΟΥΕ ΠΕ ΕΥΤΕΛΗΛ ΕΥΡΟΥΤ ΕΥΨΑΛΛΕΙ ΕΥΩΑΧΕ  
Μ̄Ν-ΠΜΗΗΩΕ

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 νῆϋνῆχ πῆ ριχῆ-πκαρ

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 νῆϋαϋ-ϋ-ῆοοϋ ἦπεϋαδ.χῆ ἦπαρᾱ-πωϋ

He used to praise (**νῆ-ϋα-ϋ-ῆοοϋ**) their speaking more than his own. (13.7)

ρωμῆ νῆμ ἔνῆϋαϋ.χ.πῆ πωτ ρῆ-τῆρῆ

Every person *who was ever born* (**ῆ-νῆ-ϋα-ϋ-χ.πῆ**) runs in this direction. (15.4)

Notice the use of **πωτ** rather than the stative **πῆτ** 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 **νῆ-** forms a more distant past – one that had already happened before the narrative even began – often moving the English translation to ‘had’:

αϋβωκ ἔβωλ ἦῆμαϋ ἔπωρϋ *He went* out with them to the reaping (**ωρϋ**).

νῆαϋβωκ ἔβωλ ἦῆμαϋ ἔπωρϋ *He had gone* out with them to the reaping.

NEΔYBOK THTPOY ZIOYCOH EZOYN ETCTYNAZIC

They had all gone together into the assembly.

The past converter can also mark statements with no verb, such as a location statement:

NEPE NEYBIX ZIXN NEYBAL EYOTAM MNHOY

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):

NEZENΔIKAIOS NE EYEPRE MPETPANAQ MPINOYTE

They were righteous people, doing what is pleasing to God.

Notice, here, the odd but useful idiom PET-PANAQ MPINOYTE ‘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 OHPRE MNAQ      They did not have (NE-MNT-OY)  
a son. (10.3)

NEYNOYA NZHTOY EQNAQ EBOL

There was one (NE-OYN-OYA) 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 MNAQ 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  $\text{NE-Q-COOY}\bar{\text{N}} \text{AN}$  ‘he did not know’ in the following (16.2):

$\text{PZ}\bar{\text{L}}\text{O NEQCOOYN AN PE HM}\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{OYEEIENIN}$  (5.1)

The elder did not know Greek.

$\text{PE}\bar{\text{X}}\bar{\text{A}}\text{Q NAQ XE T}\bar{\text{O}}\text{OY}\bar{\text{N}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{G}}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{K}} \text{EBOL ENEQCOOYN AN GAP XE AQMOY}$

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’*):

$\text{NEQNA}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{OTE AN}$  He was not going to fear ( $\text{NE-Q-NA-}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{Z}}\text{OTE}$ ).

## 20.2 WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

Ways of stating a purpose or intention entail different idioms, such as  $\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}$  ‘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  $\epsilon$  ‘to’, as in ‘I came to hear the music’:

$\text{EQPA}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{T}} \text{NAQ EXI-METANOIA}$

He is bowing to him *to get* confession.

Notice that the verb  $\text{EQPA}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{T}}$  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:

$\text{NEQOY}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{O}} \text{AN PE N}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{B}} \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{Z}}\bar{\text{E}}$

He did not wish to behave like this.

Here, the infinitive ⲡⲉⲛⲃⲁⲃⲉ ‘behave’ is the marked object of ⲟⲩⲱⲩⲱ and the sense of intention simply arises out of the meaning of ⲟⲩⲱⲩⲱ ‘wish (to do something)’ (17.1). A similar sense may arise out of using ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ‘you are able (to do something)’ (10.5):

ⲡⲬⲟⲈⲒⲘ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲙ-ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲈⲘⲘⲈⲡⲁⲗⲈ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲧⲈⲘⲘⲁⲣⲒⲘ

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 ⲬⲈⲘⲘⲁⲘ ‘so that’ or simply ⲬⲈ ‘that’ followed by a future tense (usually the *prospective* future (16.4)), along the lines of ‘she decided that she would leave’:

ⲁⲩⲘⲟⲡⲓⲘ ⲬⲈ ⲈⲩⲈⲛⲁⲩ ⲈⲛⲁⲈⲙⲟⲛ

He requested that he could see the demons.

ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲈ ⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲈⲩ-ⲧⲛ̄ⲩⲧ̄ⲛ̄ ⲬⲈ ⲈⲧⲈⲧ̄ⲛ̄Ⲉⲧⲟⲙⲓ ⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲘⲟⲙⲁ

God sent you so you would bury my body.

ⲧ̄ⲃⲱⲩⲱⲧ̄ ⲈⲐⲟⲕ-ⲉⲛⲧ̄ⲩⲧ̄ⲩⲧ̄ ⲛ̄ⲡⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲬⲈⲘⲘⲁⲘ ⲈⲩⲈⲘⲘⲁⲘ ⲈⲐⲟⲕ  
ⲛ̄ⲃⲓ-ⲡⲱⲁⲬⲈ ⲛ̄ⲡⲈⲘⲘ

I have been looking forward to this very day so that the saying of Christ will be fulfilled.

The particle ⲉⲱⲘ ‘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:

ⲁⲩⲡⲁⲉⲧ̄ⲩⲧ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲈⲩⲱⲛⲛⲈ ⲉⲱⲘ Ⲉⲩⲧ̄ⲙⲈⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲗⲗⲟ ⲬⲈ  
ⲈⲩⲈⲘⲟⲟⲩ ⲈⲐⲟⲟⲩ

He bowed with his son *as though* they were giving confession to the elder so that he would bless them.

## 20.3 ΤΡΕ MAKES IT HAPPEN

A specifically Coptic way of stating intention involves the marker ΤΡΕ followed by a subject and a verb. At its heart, this phrase means ΤΡΕ-κ-ϸϩἰ ‘make you write’, ΤΡΕ-ϸ-ϸϩἰ ‘make her write’ and so on (that said, the first-person singular form is ΤΡἈ not ΤΡΕ-Ι). Because ΤΡΕ has a subject attached, in grammatical terms it is said to be inflected, hence the uninspiring common name for this idiom – the inflected infinitive. Like any infinitive, the inflected infinitive may simply be used as a noun (17.1), in which case it has the advantage of stating unambiguously who the subject of the verb is:

ϩἡΠΤΡΕϸϸΩΟΥϩ ϩΩΩϸ ἡἸΠΡἈΓΙΟϸ ΚΥΡΙΛΛΟϸ

In his own meeting (Π-ΤΡΕ-ϸ-ϸΩΟΥϩ) with Saint Cyril.

The point being that Π-ΤΡΕ-ϸ-ϸΩΟΥϩ specifically indicates that ‘he’ is the subject meeting someone, whereas Πϸϸ-ϸΩΟΥϩ ‘his meeting’ potentially could suggest he met someone or someone else met him (17.2).

That said, the essential meaning of ΤΡΕ is to state clearly that someone acts to facilitate something (‘I came here so I could speak to you’) or coerce someone (‘they convinced Harry that he should take a holiday’):

ἈΙΤΡΕ-ΠἈϸΟΝ ΤΩΤ                    *I have made my brother approve.*  
ἈϸΤΡΕϸϸΕΙΝΕ ἸΟΥΒἈΩΩΡ        *He made them bring a saw.*

ΕΡΕ ΠΡΩΜΕ ϸΩΤἸ ΕΠΩἈḲΕ ἸΠΠΟΥΤΕ ἸḲἈḲ ἸϸΟΠ ΩἈϸΤΡΕ-ΠḲΗΤ ΟΥΩΝ

When mankind listens to the speaking of God many times, *he makes the heart open.*

ΓἈΒΡΗΛ ἸΤ-ἈϸΒΩΚ ΩἈΕΙΩϸΗϸ ἈϸΤΡΕϸḲΙ ἸἸΜΑΡΙΑ ΝἈϸ ἸϸϸΙΜΕ

Gabriel, who went to Joseph and *made him take Mary* to himself as wife.

Consequently, a crucial use of *ⲧⲣⲉ* is to follow intentional words, especially *ⲉ* ‘to’:

ⲁⲒⲈⲚⲘⲠⲠⲟⲩⲉ ⲃⲠⲘ ⲩⲁⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲘⲟⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲕⲩⲟⲩⲁⲭⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ-ⲒⲒⲐⲟⲟⲧⲩ̄

Some others went to him so they could listen (*ⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲕ-Ⲙⲟⲧⲙ̄*) to a saying by him (literally ‘they went to him *to let them listen*’).

ⲁⲒⲧⲉⲧⲡⲣⲉⲛⲧ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲒⲗⲗⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁⲩⲱⲡⲉ

An elder was once convinced he could see (*ⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲕ-ⲛⲁⲕ*) 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:

ⲁⲕⲧⲣⲉⲩⲧⲟⲕⲩ̄ ⲉⲕⲕⲟⲛⲧⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲱⲉ      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 *ⲧⲠⲕ* ‘stiffen, fix’ appears as *ⲧⲟⲕ-ⲩ̄* 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):

ⲧ̄ⲛⲁⲧⲣⲉⲕⲛ̄-ⲧⲗⲉⲡⲓⲥⲉ ⲛⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲣⲧ

I am going to *make them bring* (*ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲕ-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 ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲡ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲣⲃⲁⲣⲟⲥ ⲃⲠⲘ ⲉⲒⲛⲧ

Once (*ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲡ*), 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:

μη̄-τρεφλο εφω̄ινε φαντεφ̄ινε

There is no *making him stop* seeking, until he finds. (9.2)

## 20.4 Τ̄Μ̄ 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 τ̄μ̄ as a prefix (18.3):

παι πετναφ̄ε̄νε-πενειωτ̄ ερον̄ ετ̄μ̄ναγ̄ εροφ̄ φ̄ᾱνε̄ξ  
(13.4)

This is the one which is going to remove (φ̄ε̄νε̄) our father from us *to not see* (ε-τ̄μ̄-ναγ̄) him again forever (φ̄ᾱ-ε̄νε̄ξ).

φω̄πε̄ ἡ̄ θε̄ ἡ̄ προφ̄ ετ̄μ̄τρενοβ̄ω̄-νε̄ν̄σινβω̄δε̄ μη̄ τ̄τεχνη  
ἡ̄ π̄δ̄ιαβ̄ολο̄ς

Become like the snake *to not let us forget* (ε-τ̄μ̄-τρε-ν-οβ̄ω̄) our impulses and the skill of the Devil

Negation with τ̄μ̄ is what lies behind the intimidating phrase for ‘self-denial’ you met previously (14.5):

π̄σω̄ω̄ μη̄ πεθ̄ῶ̄β̄ιο̄ μη̄ π̄τ̄μ̄καλααγ̄ νᾱν̄ μη̄ θ̄γ̄πομο̄νη

Contempt and humility and self-denial and restraint.

Here, the relevant phrase is the negated infinitive, that is π-τ̄μ̄-κα ‘not leaving’ in π̄τ̄μ̄κα-λααγ̄ νᾱν̄ ‘not leaving anything for us’.

## 20.5 ḲΠṖ-ṬṚḘ- ‘DO NOT LET’

There is another important behaviour ṬṚḘ shares with ordinary infinitives – it can be used as to form a negative command with ḲΠṖ, as in ḲΠṖ-ṬṚḘ-ϸϮᲁᲓ ‘do not let her write’ (14.1). In turn, this is effectively the negative counterpart for the optative ḲᲘṚḘϮᲁᲓ ‘you should write’ (16.5).

## 20.6 THE AUXILIARY Ḳ CAN HELP

Ḳ or ḘᲘ ‘can’ is an auxiliary (or ‘helper’), a small word which may prefix a verb to qualify the meaning, as in ḲᲘḘḘᲘᲘᲘ ‘you say’ but ḲᲘḘ-ḘᲘ-ᲘᲘᲘᲘ ‘you can say’:

ḲḘḘḘᲘᲘᲘ ᲘḘ ᲘᲁᲓ ᲘᲘᲘᲘ ḘᲘᲁᲓ

You *cannot* say that this one is evil more than (Ḙ) this one.

ḲᲓḲ ᲘḘṬᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ (13.4)

Who is the one *who is going to be able to count* (ᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ) the sand of the sea.

Consequently, the meaning of Ḳ is basically the same as that of ᲘᲘᲓᲘᲘᲘ ‘be able’ (10.5). Indeed, they may even be used together:

ᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲘḘ ᲘḘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲘḘ ḲᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘ ḘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ

As for her, however, she said, ‘I am not able (ḲᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ) to walk.’

Likewise, Ḳ can be used with the related verb ᲘᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘ ‘be able, get control, overcome’ (19.5):

ᲘᲁᲓ ḘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲚᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ḘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ ᲚḘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘᲘ

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 ΕΖΟΥΝ ΖἸΠΕΦΖΘ  
ΕΤΣΜΑΜΑΔΑΤ

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):

ΝΕΦΑΧΕ ΔΕ ΖΩΟΥ ἸΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΑΠΑ ΦΕΝΟΥΤΕ ΑΥΜΕΖ-  
ΠΚΑΖ ΤΗΡῆ ΧΙΝ ΕΣΟΟΥ ΦΑ-ΤΗΝΟΣ ἸΠΟΛΙΣ ΡΑΚΟΤΕ  
ΜἸΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΙΣ ΜἸΠΠΑΛΑΣΤΙΝΗ ΑΥΩ ΟΝ ΕΦΕΣΟΣ  
ΖἸ-ΠΤΡΕΦΩΟΥΖ ΖΩΩΦ ΜἸΠΡΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΛΛΟΣ ΕΑΥΚΑΘΑΙΡΟΥ  
ἸΝΕΣΤΩΡΙΟΣ ΠΡΑΙΡΕΔΙΚΟΣ ΑΥΩ ΦΑ-ΕΖΡΑἸ ΕΖΡΩΜΗ · ΣΕΩΦ  
ἸΝΕΦΛΟΓΟΣ ΖἸ-ἸΜΑ ΕΤἸΜΑΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΘΕ ἸΤΑΥῤ-ΤΜἸΤΡΕ ΝΑΝ  
ἸΣΙ-ΖΕΝΡΩΜΕ ἸΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ἸΤΑΥΤΑΥΟΥ ΑΥΣΩΤἸ  
ΕΡΟΥ ΕΥΩΦ ἸΜΟΥ ΖἸΤΠΟΛΙΣ 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):

ΑΥΧΟΟΣ ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥΖῪΛΛΟ ΧΕ ΑΥΣΟΠῆ ΧΕ ΕΦΕΝΑΥ ΕΝΔΕΜΩΝ ·  
ΑΥΩ ΑΥΣΩΛἸ ΝΑΦ ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ ἸΓῤΧΡΙΑ ΑΝ ἸΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΥ · ΠῤῪΛΛΟ  
ΔΕ ΑΥΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ ΕΦΧΩ ἸΜΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΟΥἸΘΟΜ ἸΜΜΟΚ  
ΕΣΚΕΠΑΖΕ ἸΜΟΙ ΖἸΤΕΚΧΑΡΙΣ · ΑΥΩ ΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΣΕΛΠ-ΝΕΦΒΑΛ

ΕΒΟΛ ΔΑΦΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΟΥ Ν ΘΕ ΝΝΑΒ ΝΕΒΙΩ ΕΥΚΩΤΕ ΕΠΡΩΜΕ  
 ΕΥΡΟΧΡΞ̄ ΝΝΕΥΟΒΖΕ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΩΦ · ΑΥΩ ΝΕΡΕ ΝΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ  
 ΜΠΠΟΥΤΕ 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 ΩΔΡΟΦ ΕΤΡΕΥCΩΤΜ̄ ΕΥΩΔΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤḠ ·  
 ΑΥΩ ΜΠḠΧΕ ΛΑΔΥ ΝΑΥ ΑΛΛΑ ΝΕΦΧΩ ΜΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΚΩ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ  
 · ΝΤΕΡΟΥΝΑΥ ΔΕ ΕΝΕΦΒΙΡ ΠΕΧΔΑΥ ΝΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΕΦΜΑΘΗΤΗC  
 ΧΕ ΕΤΕΤḠΡ-ΟΥ ΝΝΕΙΒΙΡ · ΠΕΧΔΑΥ ΧΕ ΩΔΑΝΧΟΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΙCΑ  
 ΜḠΠΑΙ · ΑΦCΩΤḠ ΔΕ ΝḠΙ-ΠḠΛΛΟ ΠΕΧΔΑΥ ΧΕ ΠΚΕΧΙΧΩΙ  
 ΕΦΟΥΩΜ ΕΠΕΙCΑ ΜḠΠΑΙ · ΝΤΟΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΥCΩΤḠ ΔΥ†ΖΗΥ ΜΜΑΤΕ  
 ΑΥΩ ΔΥΒΩΚ ΖḠ-ΟΥΡΑΩΕ ΕΔΥΧΙΚΩΤ ΖḠ-ΠΕΦΘḠΒΙΟ

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:

ΟΥΚΟCΜΙΚΟC ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΜḠ-ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΔΥΒΩΚ ΩΔΑΠΑ ΧΙΧΩΙ  
 ΕΦΩΟΠ ΖḠΠΤΟΟΥ ΝΑΠΑ ΔΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC · ΑΥΩ ΑΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ ΜΟΥ

ἡτοοτῆ ρι-τεριη ἀγῶ ἡπερωτορτῆ · ἀλλὰ ἀφριτῆ ῥαπρῆλλο  
 ρῆ-ογπιςτις · ἀγῶ ἀφπαρτῆ ἡἡπερωηρε ρῶς εϋτ-μετανοια  
 ἡἡρῆλλο δε εφεςμογ ερωογ · ἀγῶ ἀφτωογν ἡἡσι-πειωτ  
 ἀκω ἡἡπερωηρε ρατῆ νεογερητε ἡἡρῆλλο ἀφει εβολ ρῆτρι  
 πρῆλλο δε εφμεεγε δε εφπαρτῆ ναφ εχι-μετανοια · πεχαφ  
 ναφ δε τωογν ἡἡγβωκ εβολ ενεφσοογν γαρ ἀν δε ἀφμογ  
 ἀγῶ ἡἡτεγνογ ἀφτωογν ἀφει εβολ · πεφειωτ δε ἡἡτερεφναγ  
 ἀφῶπῆρε ἀγῶ ἀφβωκ ερωγν ἀφπαρτῆ ἡἡρῆλλο ἀγῶ ἀφχω  
 ερωφ ἡἡπρωβ · ἀφσωτῆ δε ἡἡσι-πρῆλλο ἀφλγπει ενεφογωφ  
 γαρ ἀν πε ἡἡρῶβ ἡἡτειρε · πεφμαθῆτης δε ἀφπαραγτιε ναγ  
 δε ἡἡπῆξε-παι ελααγ ερε πρῆλλο ρῆἡπσωμα

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:

πεχε ἰς δε ἡἡ-τρεφλο ἡἡσι-πετωινε εφωινε ῥαντεφσινε  
 · ἀγῶ ροταν εφωανσινε ῆἡναωτῆρτῆ ἀγῶ εφωανωτορτῆ  
 ῆἡναῶπῆρε ἀγῶ ῆἡναῶ-ῆρο εχι-πτηρῆ

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-τηρ-ῆ ‘the all of it’).

## CHART V A SUMMARY OF COPTIC TENSES AND NEGATIONS

### Complete Forms

MOOD	Objective	⇒	⇒	⇒	⇒	⇒	Subjective
ASPECT	Engaged	⇒	Indicative	⇒	Prospective	⇒	Optative ⇒ Imperative
<i>usual sense</i>	is writing, is bound to write	⇒	wrote, writes, does write	⇒	will write, may write	⇒	should write write!
PAST	second tense	⇒	negative equivalent	⇒		⇒	
PRESENT	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ ⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	infinitive or imperative
FUTURE	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ ⲉϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	
negation	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ ⲉϥḿⲁϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯⲁϥϩⲁⲓ	⇒	ḿṯḿ (do not)

### Incomplete Forms, typically negated by ṯḿ

TIME	Prior	⇒	Contemporary	⇒	Eventual
PREFIX	ḿṯⲁⲛ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ
<i>usual sense</i>	if	⇒	before	⇒	next
The Action (infinitive), negated by ṯḿ	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ
PREFIX	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ
<i>usual sense</i>	(none)	⇒	while	⇒	after
	writing	⇒	until	⇒	maybe
	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ
	making someone write	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ
	(inflected infinitive)	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ	⇒	ḿṯⲁṯḗ

**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 ἄβαραροι '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

αχχοοο ετβε-απα ποιμνη δε ἡπερογωω ενεε εκα-περωαχε  
 εχἡ-πωαχε ἡλααγ ἡελλο· αλλα ἡτοϋ ἡροϋο νεωαϣτεοοϋ  
 ἡπερωαχε ἡπαρα πωϣ

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).<sup>1</sup>

### Episode 111

*Another saying from Apa Poimen raises the familiar monastic theme of humility in terms of humanity as a whole:*

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΟΝ Ν̄ΒΙ-ΠΕΛΛΟ ΧΕ ΕΡΩΔΑΝ-ΠΡΩΜΕ ΖΑΡΕΖ ΕΤΕΦΔΑΖΙΣ  
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).*

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΟΝ ΧΕ ΠΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΕΤΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΔΝ Μ̄ΠΕΦΛΑΣ ΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ Μ̄ΠΝΑΥ  
Μ̄ΠΣΩΝΤ̄ ΜΕΡΕ ΠΑΙ Ν̄ΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ΕΡ-ΧΟΕΙΣ ΕΛΑΔΥ Μ̄ΠΑΘΟΣ 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

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΟΝ ΧΕ ΝΑΝΟΥ-ΟΥΕΜ-ΔΒ ΔΥΩ ΕΣΕ-ΗΡΠ̄ Ν̄ΓΤ̄ΜΟΥΩΜ ΔΕ  
Ν̄Ν̄ΣΑΡΞ Ν̄ΝΕΚΣΝΗΥ 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

ΔΣΧΟΟΣ Ν̄ΒΙ-ΤΜΑΚΑΡΙΑ ΣΥΓΛΗΤΙΚΗ ΧΕ Ν̄ΘΕ ΕΤΕ Μ̄Ν̄ΣΟΜ Ν̄ΧΟΙ ΕΤΑΖΟ  
ΕΡΑΤ̄ ΔΧ̄Ν-ΕΙΦ̄ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΟΥΑΤΣΟΜ ΠΕ ΟΥΧΑΙ ΧΩΡΙΣ 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 'Apophtegmata patrum'*. Bibliothèque d'études Coptes VI. Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale (1960).

### Episode 35

ΛΟΥΓΑ Ν̄ΝΕCННҪ Δ̄ΝΟΥϢ Ν̄ΟΥΖΟΥ ΔΕ ΑΠΑ ΕΡΩΑΝ-ΟΥΖΟΤΕ ΩΩΠΕ Ζ̄Ν-  
 ΟΥΩΠ̄Ν̄ΩΩΠ ΩΑΚ̄Ρ̄ΖΟΤΕ ΖΩΩΚ · ΠΕΔΕ Π̄ΖΛΛΟ ΝΑϢ ΔΕ ΕΡΩΑΝ-ΤΠΕ  
 ΤΩCΕ ΕΠΚΑΖ Ν̄ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟC ΝᾹΡ̄ΖΟΤΕ ΑΝ · ΝΕΑϢΤΩΒΑΖ ΓΑΡ Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙC  
 ΕΤΡΕϢϢΙ ΕΒΟΛ Μ̄ΜΟΥ Ν̄ΤΜ̄Ν̄ΤCΑΒΖΗΤ

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

ΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΜΑΘΗΤΗC Ν̄ΑΠΑ ΧΙΧΩΙ ΑΥΠΡΑΖΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ Ν̄ΟΥΟΕΙΩ  
 ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤ̄Μ̄-ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟC · ΑΥΩ ΑϢΤΩΟΥΝ Ν̄CΙ-Π̄ΖΛΛΟ ΑϢΠΩΡ̄Ω  
 Ν̄ΝΕϢCΙΧ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΤΠΕ ΕϢΧΩ Μ̄ΜΟC ΔΕ ΠΝΟΥΓΤΕ ΚΟΥΩΩ Ν̄ΓΟΥΩΩ  
 ΑΝ Ν̄Τ̄ΝΑΚΑΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΝ Μ̄ΠΕΚΤΑΛCΟΥ · ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΤΕΥΝΟΥ ΑϢΤΑΛCΟΥ

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

ΛΟΥCΟΝ ΚΙΜ Ζ̄Μ̄-ΠΕϢΩΝΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΟΥΑ · ΑϢΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄Ḃ ΕΠΕϢΩΛΗΛ  
 ΑϢΑΙΤΕΙ ΕΧΙ Ν̄ΟΥΜ̄Ν̄ΤΖΑΡ̄ΩΖΗΤ ΕΧ̄Μ̄-ΠΕϢCΟΝ ΑΥΩ ΕΠΑΡΑΓΕ  
 Μ̄ΠΠΡΑCΜΟC ΑΧ̄Μ̄-ΠΩΛΑΖ · ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΤΕΥΝΟΥ ΑϢΝΑϢ ΕΥΚΑΠΝΟC ΕϢΗΝΗ  
 ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Ν̄-ΤΕϢΤΑΠΡΟ Ν̄ΤΕΡΕ-ΠΑΙ ΔΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΑϢΛΟ ΕϢCΟΝΤ̄

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

ΑΥΤΕΤ-ΠΖΗΤ Ν̄ΟΥΖ̄ΛΛΟ Ν̄ΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΕΤΡΕϢΝΑϢ ΕΝΕΤΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΑΥΩ  
 ΠΕΧΑϢ ΔΕ ΑΙΝΑϢ ΕΥCΟΝ Ζ̄Ν̄-ΟΥΖΕΝΕΕΤΕ ΕϢΕΝΖΟΥΝ ΕΥΡΙ ΕϢΜΕΛΕΤΑ ·  
 ΑΥΩ ΕΙC ΟΥΔΑΙΜΩΝ ΑϢΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄Ḃ Μ̄ΠΒΟΛ Μ̄ΡΟ Ν̄ΤΡΙ ΕΡΕ-ΠCΟΝ ΜΕΛΕΤΑ  
 Μ̄ΠḂC̄Μ̄CΟΜ ΕΒΩΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΡΙ Ν̄ΤΕΡΕϢΟΥΩ ΔΕ ΕϢΜΕΛΕΤΑ ΑϢΒΩΚ  
 ΕΖΟΥΝ Ν̄CΙ-ΠΔΑΙΜΩΝ

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 (ε-ϣ-ⲛⲉⲟϥⲛ (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 (ϥⲓⲧϥⲗϥⲓⲟⲛ), on her own (ⲙⲁⲃⲁⲥ), lying sick (ⲉⲥⲛⲏⲗ ⲉⲥⲱⲱⲛⲉ):*

ⲁⲮⲱ ⲡⲉⲗⲁⲥ ⲗⲉ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲙⲁⲃⲁⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ̄-ϣⲙⲟϥⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ †ϣⲟⲟⲡ ϣ̄ⲙ-  
ⲡⲓⲥⲓⲧϥⲗϥⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲓⲟⲛⲉ̄ ϣ̄ⲛ̄-ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲥ ⲉⲓⲟ ⲛ̄ⲉ̄ⲙ̄ⲉⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲗⲥ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲮ ⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ  
ⲛ̄ⲥⲁ-ⲡⲟⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ-ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥ-ⲧⲏⲮⲧ̄ⲛ̄ ⲗⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲙⲥ̄  
ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲉⲥⲗⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲁⲥ̄ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲧ̄ⲕ̄ · ⲛ̄ⲉ̄ⲗⲗⲟ ⲗⲉ ⲁⲮⲧⲉⲟⲟϥ  
ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲁⲮⲧⲟⲙⲥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲥⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲁⲮⲁⲛⲁⲗⲱⲣⲉⲓ

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

ⲁⲟϥⲁ ⲗⲟⲟⲥ ⲗⲉ ⲉϥϣⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟϥⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ-ⲛ̄ⲉ̄ⲗⲗⲟ ⲉϥϣⲁⲗⲉ ⲉⲡⲣⲏⲮ  
ⲛⲉϥ̄ⲛ̄ⲟϥⲁ ⲗⲉ ⲛ̄ⲉ̄ⲣⲏⲧⲟϥ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲮ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁϥⲛⲁⲮ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉϥⲧⲉⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲮ  
ⲁⲮⲱ ⲉϥϣⲱⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲟϥ · ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ϣ̄ⲛ̄ⲕⲉϣⲁⲗⲉ ⲗⲉ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲁϥⲥⲁⲣⲱⲟϥ  
ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ-ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ · ⲁⲮⲱ ⲁⲣ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲓⲡ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲉϥⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲉϥⲙⲉⲣ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥ-†ⲃⲱⲱⲛ  
ⲁⲮⲧⲟⲗⲙⲟϥ · ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟϥⲕⲧⲟⲟϥ ⲗⲉ ⲁϥϣⲁⲗⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ-ⲡⲣⲏⲮ ⲁϥⲉⲓ ⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ-  
ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲧⲉⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲮ

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-νεσνηγ δε ρμοος ραρτηγ ν̄ογχιγ αφχοος ναγ δε εις  
ν̄βαρβαρος νηγ εωιητ̄ μ̄ποογ τ̄ωογν̄ ν̄τετ̄ν̄πωτ̄ · ν̄τοογ δε  
πεχαγ ναγ δε ν̄τοκ̄ κ̄ναπωτ̄ αν̄ πεχαγ ναγ δε εις νειρομπε  
τηρογ †σωωτ̄ εβολ-ρητ̄γ̄ μ̄ποογ ν̄ροογ δεκακ̄ εφεχωκ̄ εβολ  
ν̄σι-πωαδε̄ μ̄πεχ̄τ̄ εφχω̄ μ̄μοκ̄ δε ογον̄ nim̄ ν̄ταγχιχβε̄ εγναρε̄  
ον̄ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-τ̄χηβε̄ · πεχαγ ναγ δε ογδε̄ αν̄ον̄ ρ̄ωων̄ ν̄τ̄ν̄απωτ̄  
αν̄ αλλᾱ τ̄ν̄ναμογ̄ ν̄μ̄μακ̄ ν̄τογ̄ δε πεχαγ ναγ δε αν̄οκ̄ μ̄ν̄ται  
ρ̄ωβ̄ πογαπογᾱ μαρεφσωωτ̄ δε εφρμοος̄ ν̄αω̄ ν̄ρε̄ · νεγειρε̄ δε  
ν̄σαωγ̄ ν̄σον̄ αγω̄ πεχαγ ναγ δε εις ν̄βαρβαρος̄ αγρ̄ων̄ ερογν̄  
επρο̄ αγβωκ̄ δε ερογν̄ αγμοογτογ̄ · ογᾱ δε ν̄ρητογ̄ αφωλαρ̄  
αφβωκ̄ ερογν̄ ρ̄α-ρ̄εννηβτε̄ αγω̄ αφναγ̄ εσαωγ̄ ν̄κ̄λομ̄ εγνηγ̄  
επεσ̄ητ̄ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-τ̄π̄ε̄ αγστεφανογ̄ μ̄μοογ̄ μ̄π̄σαωγ̄

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

αχχοος̄ ν̄σι-τετογ̄ααβ̄ σ̄ν̄κ̄λητικη̄ δε μαρενωωπε̄ ν̄σαβη̄ ν̄θε̄  
ν̄ν̄ρογ̄αγω̄ ν̄ακεραοικ̄ ν̄θε̄ ν̄ν̄ισροομπε̄ μαρενωωπε̄ μ̄πανογρ̄γοκ̄  
εν̄σορ̄σ̄ μ̄ν̄-ν̄σ̄ινκ̄ιμ̄ ν̄μ̄μεεγε̄ · ν̄ταγχοος̄ γαρ̄ δε ωωπε̄ ν̄θε̄  
μ̄π̄ρογ̄ ετ̄μ̄τρ̄ενωβ̄-ν̄εν̄σ̄ινβωδ̄ε̄ μ̄ν̄-τ̄τεχνη̄ μ̄π̄διαβολοκ̄  
πετεινε̄ γαρ̄ μ̄πετεφεινε̄ μ̄μογ̄ φ̄αφ̄σ̄επ̄η̄ εσογ̄ων̄γ̄ · πακεραιοκ̄  
δε̄ ν̄θε̄ ν̄ν̄ισροομπε̄ εφογ̄ων̄ε̄ εβολ̄ μ̄π̄τ̄β̄βο̄ ν̄τεπ̄ραζ̄ικ̄



**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 ΜΜΟ-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:*

ΔΥΧΟΟΣ ΝΙΣΙ-ΟΥΑ ΝΝΕΙΟΤΕ ΕΤΒΕ-ΟΥΑ ΧΕ\* ΑΠΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΧΕ\* ΨΩΟΠ  
 ΖΝ-ΝΣΑ ΜΠΕΧΤ ΝΚΗΜΕ ΕΦΟΥΗΖ ΔΕ ΖΝΘΗΒΑΙΣ ΧΕ\* ΨΑΦΑΜΑΖΤΕ





**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 (ⲉ-ⲛⲉ-ⲛ-ⲠⲮⲱⲩ) 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):*

αϕβωκ ν̄σι-απα μακαριος πινος ψα-απα αντωνιος αγω ν̄τερεϕκωλ̄  
 επρο αϕει εβολ ψαροϕ πεχαϕ ναϕ χε ν̄τκ̄ nim ν̄τοϕ δε αϕοϕωϕβ̄  
 εϕχω ν̄μοϕ χε ανοκ πε μακαριος αγω αϕωταμ̄ μ̄προ αϕβωκ  
 εϕοϕν̄ αϕκααϕ · ν̄τερεϕναϕ ετεϕϕϕπομονη αϕοϕων̄ ναϕ αγω  
 αϕοϕροτ̄ ν̄μαϕ εϕχω ν̄μοϕ χε ειϕ οϕνοϕ ν̄οϕοειω̄ ειϕοϕω̄ εναϕ  
 εροκ̄ ριϕωτ̄μ̄ γαρ ετβηητ̄κ̄ αγω αϕωποϕ̄ εροϕ ρ̄ν̄-οϕμ̄ν̄τ̄μαρωμε  
 αϕτ̄-μ̄τον̄ ναϕ ν̄ταϕει γαρ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-ϕεννοϕ ν̄ϕιϕε · ν̄τερε-ροϕϕε  
 δε ωϕπε̄ ααπα αντωνιος ϕωρπ̄ ναϕ ν̄ϕ̄ν̄κοϕῑ ν̄βητ̄ πεχε-απα  
 μακαριος ναϕ χε κελεϕε̄ ναι ταϕωρπ̄ ναι μαγαατ̄ ν̄τοϕ δε πεχαϕ  
 χε ϕωρπ̄ αγω αϕταμιο ν̄οϕνοϕ ν̄ωϕλ̄ ν̄βητ̄ αϕϕορπ̄ϕ̄ αϕναϕ̄ επαϕαι  
 ν̄τ̄νηβτε̄ ν̄απα μακαριος αϕ̄ρ̄-ωπ̄ηρε̄ αγω αϕτ̄π̄ῑ εν̄σιϕ̄ ν̄απα  
 μακαριος εϕχω ν̄μοϕ χε αϕαϕ̄ ν̄ϕομ̄ εῑ εβολ ρ̄ν̄-ν̄ειϕιϕ̄ · αϕϕμοϕ  
 αϕωαχε̄ ετ̄μ̄ν̄τ̄ρεϕτ̄ϕηϕ̄ ν̄τεϕϕϕχη̄ ϕ̄ιν̄ μ̄π̄ναϕ̄ ν̄ροϕϕε̄ αϕνοβτοϕ  
 αγω τ̄νηβτε̄ ρ̄ϕβωκ̄ επεϕητ̄ επεϕητ̄ϕληον̄ εβολ ϕ̄ιτ̄μ̄-π̄ωϕοϕωτ̄

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, εϕοϕ ‘to, toward’ to mean ‘more than’ when comparing the qualities of one person to those of another (20.6):*

ερε-απα μακαριος μοοωε ν̄ογοειω̄ μ̄πκωτε̄ μ̄πρελος̄ εφτωογ̄ν  
 ν̄ρ̄ν̄βητ̄ αγω̄ εις̄ π̄διαβολος̄ αφτωμ̄ν̄τ̄ εροφ̄ ρ̄ν̄-τεφρ̄ν̄ ερε-  
 ογορ̄ς̄ ν̄τοοτ̄q̄ αγω̄ ενεφωγω̄ πε̄ ερᾱξ̄τ̄q̄ μ̄πεφωσ̄μ̄βομ̄ · αγω̄  
 πεχαφ̄ ναφ̄ χε̄ ογ̄νοσ̄ πε̄ πᾱχῑν̄βον̄c̄ εβολ̄ μ̄μοκ̄ χε̄ μ̄ν̄βομ̄  
 μ̄μοῑ εροκ̄ εις̄ρ̄η̄ν̄τε̄ γαρ̄ ρ̄ωβ̄ ν̄ιμ̄ ετεκειρε̄ μ̄μοογ̄ †ειρε̄ μ̄μοογ̄  
 ρ̄ω̄ ν̄τοκ̄ φ̄ακ̄νη̄στεγε̄ ν̄ρ̄ν̄ρ̄οογ̄ ανοκ̄ δε̄ μειογ̄ωμ̄ επ̄τηρ̄q̄  
 φ̄ακ̄p̄-ογ̄ω̄ν̄ ν̄ροεις̄ ν̄ρ̄ν̄σοπ̄ ανοκ̄ δε̄ μεῑν̄κοτ̄k̄ ενερ̄ · ογ̄ρ̄ωβ̄  
 ν̄ογ̄ωτ̄ πε̄τεκ̄χ̄ρᾱειτ̄ εροῑ ν̄ρ̄η̄τ̄q̄ πε̄χε̄ απᾱ μακαριος̄ χε̄ ογ̄  
 πε̄ ν̄τοφ̄ δε̄ πεχαφ̄ χε̄ πεκ̄θ̄β̄β̄ιο̄ πε̄ ανοκ̄ δε̄ μεισ̄μ̄βομ̄ εθ̄β̄β̄ιο̄  
 ενερ̄ ετ̄βε̄ παῑ μ̄πισ̄μ̄βομ̄ εροκ̄

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 (ετ-κ̄-ειρε̄ μ̄μογ̄ (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-π̄τηρ-q̄ ‘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

αγ̄χοοσ̄ ετ̄β̄η̄η̄τ̄q̄ απᾱ μακαριος̄ χε̄ εφωγω̄ω̄ ες̄λ̄ς̄λ̄-νεσ̄νη̄γ̄  
 πεχαφ̄ χε̄ αφ̄εῑ επ̄ειμᾱ ν̄ογοειω̄ ν̄β̄ι-ογ̄κογῑ εφ̄ο̄ ν̄λᾱιμ̄ων̄ μ̄ν̄-  
 τεφ̄μᾱαγ̄ αγω̄ αγ̄χοοσ̄ ν̄τεφ̄μᾱαγ̄ χε̄ τ̄ωογ̄ν̄ μαρ̄ον̄ ρ̄μ̄πειμᾱ  
 ν̄τοσ̄ δε̄ πεχαφ̄ χε̄ μ̄ν̄ω̄β̄ομ̄ μ̄μοῑ εμοοωε̄ πεχαφ̄ ναφ̄ ν̄β̄ι-  
 π̄ω̄η̄ρεκογῑ χε̄ ανοκ̄ †ναφ̄ιτε̄ · αγω̄ αῑρ̄ω̄π̄η̄ρε̄ ν̄τ̄π̄ῑανογ̄ρ̄γιᾱ  
 μ̄π̄λᾱιμ̄ων̄ χε̄ ν̄αω̄ ν̄ρ̄ε̄ αφωγω̄ω̄ επ̄ωτ̄ ν̄σ̄ωογ̄ εβολ̄ ρ̄μ̄πειμᾱ

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 ΔΥCΖΑΙ ΖΑΡΟΥ ΕΡΑΤῸ̄ Μ̄ΠΚΟΜΙC ΕΥΤΑΜΟ Μ̄ΜΟΥ  
 ΕΤΕΥΔ̄ΑΙΤΙΑ ΤΗΡῸ̄ ΔΥΩ ΧΕ ΟΥΜΑΤΟΙ ΠΕ Ν̄ΧΩΩΡΕ ΔΙ† ΔΕ ΝΑΥ  
 Ν̄ΖΕΝΝΟC Ν̄ΒΑCΑΝΟC ΔΥΩ Μ̄ΠΕΥCΩΤῸ̄Μ̄ Ν̄CΩἸ Ν̄ΦΟΥCΙΑΖΕ

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).'<sup>2</sup>

ΑΥΤΑΛΟ Μ̄ΠΡΑΓΙΟC ΑΠΑ ΜΗΝΑ ΕΥCΙΝΟΥΗΛ Ζ̄Ν-ΘΑΛΑCΣΑ ΔΥΧΙΤῸ̄  
 ΕΡΑΤῸ̄ Μ̄ΠΚΟΜΙC · ΔΥCΜΗ ΔΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΩΑΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΑΠΑ ΜΗΝΑ ΕΤΙ  
 ΕΥΤΑΛΗΥ ΕΠCΙΝΟΥΗΛ ΧΕ Μ̄ΠΕΡΡῸ̄ΖΟΤΕ ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ ΜΗΝΑ ΧΕ ΔΝΟΚ  
 †ΩΟΟΠ Ν̄ΜΜΑΚ Ζ̄Μ̄ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΧΙΤῸ̄Κ̄ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΔΥΩ †ΝΑΕΡΩΟΡΠ̄  
 ΕΡΟΚ ΕΠΚΩΜΙΤΑΤΩΝ ΩΑΝΤΕΚΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ Μ̄ΠΕΚΑΓΩΝ · ΑΠCΩΤΗΡ  
 ΜΕΖ-ΠΖΟ Μ̄ΠΕΥΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC Ν̄ΕΟΟΥ ΖΙ-ΧΑΡΙC ΖΩCΤΕ Ν̄ΤΕ-Ν̄ΚΕΜΑΤΟΙ  
 ΕΤΤΟ ΕΡΟΥ ΤΕΜΕΩCἸCἸCἸC ΕCΩΩΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΕΥΖΟ ΕΤCΜΑΜΑΔΤ  
 Ν̄ΤΕΡΟΥΠΑΡΑΔΙΔΟΥ ΔΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ Μ̄ΠΚΟΜΙC ΔΥΤΡΕΥΝΟΥΧΕ Μ̄ΠΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC  
 ΕΠΕΩΤΕΚΟ Μ̄ΝΚΕΜΗΩΕ Μ̄ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC

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-Ὸ̄Κ̄ 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 ΝΕΦΤ-ΜΕΤΧΑΡΖΗΤ ΝΑΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΥΖΥΠΟΜΙΝΕ Μ̄ΠΕΣΜΟΤ  
ΝΟΥΠΟΛΥΜΑΡΧΗΣ Ν̄ΧΩΩΠΡΕ ΕΦΤ-ΤΩΚ̄Ν̄ΖΗΤ Ν̄ΝΕΦΜΑΤΟΙ ΕΜΙΩΕ  
Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΠΟΛΥΜΟΣ ΕΧ̄Μ̄-ΠΕῩΡ̄ΡΟ ΝΕΦ̄ΡΟΥΟΕῙΝ̄ Ζ̄Ν̄ΤΗΝΤΕ Ν̄ΝΕΤΟΥΓΑΑΒ  
Ν̄ΘΕ Μ̄ΠΡΗ ΕΡΕ-ΝΕΤΟΥΓΑΑΒ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΧΙ-ΣΟΛΣΕΛ Ν̄ΖΗΤ̄ · ΤΟΤΕ ΑΠ̄ΣΩΡ̄  
ΟΥΩΝ̄ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΦΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΕΤΟΥΓΑΑΒ Ζ̄Μ̄-ΠΕΩΥΤΕΚΟ ΑΦΤΑΜΟΥ  
ΕΝΕΤΝΑΩΩΠΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ Μ̄Ν̄ΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ Ν̄ΤΑΦΕΡΗΤ Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΝΙΜ Μ̄Ν̄Ν̄ΣΑ-ΝΑΙ  
ΑΦΧΩΖ ΕΠΕΦΣΩΜΑ ΧΕ Ν̄ΝΕ-ΒΑΣΑΝΟΣ ΧΩΖ ΕΡΟΥ ΑΦΤ ΝΑΦ Ν̄ΤΡΗΝΗ  
ΑΦΒΩΚ ΕΖΡΑΙ Ν̄ΕΜΠΗΥΕ

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).

ΑΣΩΩΠΕ ΔΕ Μ̄ΠΕΦΡΑСТΕ ΑΠΚΟΜΙΣ Ζ̄ΜΟΟΣ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΠΒΗΜΑ ΑΦΖΙΣΕ  
ΕΦΚΟΛΑΚΕΥΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ Ν̄ΦΟΡ̄Π̄ ΕΠΖᾹΝ̄ ΑΦΑΠΛΗ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΠΜΟΥ ΑΥΩ  
Μ̄ΠΕΦΕΩΣ̄Μ̄ΣΟΜ ΕΡΟΥ Ν̄ΦΟΥΣΙΑΖΕ ΤΟΤΕ ΑΦΤΡΕΥΤ̄ ΝΑΦ Ν̄ΩΕ Ν̄ΝΕΥΡΟΝ  
Ν̄ΩΑΡΟΥΩΤ ΕΧ̄ΕΝ-ΖΗΤ̄ · Μ̄Ν̄Ν̄ΣΩΣ ΑΦΤΡΕΥΕΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΒΑΩΟΥΡ  
ΧΕ ΕΦΝΑΟΥΑΣΤ̄ ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΤΕΡΟΥΚΩ Ν̄ΤΒΑΩΟΥΡ ΕΧ̄ΕΜ-ΠΣΩΜΑ  
Μ̄ΠΕΤΟΥΓΑΑΒ ΑΠΠΕΝΙΠΕ ΕΡ Ν̄ΘΕ ΝΟΥΜΟΥΛ̄Ζ ΕΦΑΦΩΩΛ̄Μ̄ Μ̄ΠΕΣΤΟΙ  
ΝΟΥΚΩΖΤ ΕΤΒΕ-ΤΣΙΧ ΕΤΟΥΓΑΑΒ Μ̄Π̄ΣΩΡ̄ Ν̄ΤΑΣΧΩΖ ΕΠΕΦΣΩΜΑ ΧΕ  
Ν̄ΝΕ-Ν̄ΒΑΣΑΝΟΣ Σ̄Μ̄ΣΟΜ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΕΦΤ̄ΒΒΟ

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 ΠΚΟΜΙΣ ΑΦΤ-ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΥΦΙ Ν̄ΤΕΦΑΠΕ ΑΦΣΖΑΙ  
ΔΕ Ν̄ΤΕΦΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ Ν̄ΤΕΙΖΕ ΧΕ ΜΗΝΑ ΠΜΑΤΟΪ Ν̄ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ

επιδη ἡπεφογωω εσωτη̄ ἡσα-πειπροσταγμα ἡπ̄ρρο ἡφουσιαζε  
 ἡνenoγτε ετβε-παι †κελεγε ἡσεφι ἡτεφαπε ἡτσηφε ἡσερωκ̄ε  
 ἡπεφσωμα ρ̄ἡογκωρ̄τ̄ ἡτερε-ἡρ̄γπερετης εντ̄ῶ επιμα  
 ἡτεφδιωρια νεφμοοφε πε εφτεληλ εφροογτ εφψαλλει εφωαδε  
 ἡἡ-πμηηφε ετογνη ρ̄σωφ ἡἡ-ρ̄ενκεακ̄ιτης ἡμοναχος εφμογ  
 εροογ τηρογ δε ταχρε-τηγ̄τη ρ̄ἡτ̄π̄ιςτις ἡπεχ̄ς ις̄ · αφκωλ̄ε δε  
 ἡνεφπατ αφωληλ ἡἡἡσα-πεωληλ δε αφσοογ̄τη̄ εβολ ἡπεφμακ̄ε  
 αγφι ἡτεφαπε · αφχωκ εβολ ἡτεφμαρ̄τ̄γ̄ρια ἡσογ ἡἡτη ἡπεβοτ  
 ρ̄αωφ ρ̄ἡτ̄μη̄τ̄ρ̄ρο ἡδιοκ̄ληδιανος ἡἡμαξιμιανος ἡρ̄ρωογ  
 ἡανομος αγω ἡπαρ̄αβατης

Then, the Deputy gave judgment about him that his head be removed (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 communal living in monasteries. He was openly baptised as Christian upon his honourable discharge from the army around 315, at a time when Diocletian’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 monasteries which conformed to the rules sampled in the first reading below. In keeping with the meandering valley of the Nile, an Upper Egyptian monastery 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 (ⲡⲓⲛⲏⲏⲓ (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

ⲛⲏⲛⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲧⲉⲗⲥ̄-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉϥⲱⲟⲛⲉ ⲛ ⲉⲗⲟⲕⲙⲉϥ ⲉⲙⲡⲟϥⲧⲟⲱϥ̄

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).<sup>3</sup>

ⲛⲏⲛⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲱⲃ̄-ⲧⲉϥⲁⲛⲛⲉ ⲁⲗⲏ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲡⲓⲛⲏⲏⲓ ⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲏⲛⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲱⲃ̄-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉⲙⲡⲟϥⲧⲟⲱϥ̄ ⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲛⲏⲛⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲱⲃ̄-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉϥⲗⲓⲙⲟⲟⲥ

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.

ⲛⲏⲛⲉ-ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲃⲟⲕ ⲉⲡⲥⲱⲟϥ̄ ⲛ ⲉⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲛⲟϥⲱⲙ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉϥⲧⲟⲟϥⲉ ⲛⲓⲣⲁⲧⲓ̄ ⲛ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉϥⲡⲓⲛⲏⲏⲓ ⲃⲱⲱⲗⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲗⲓⲙⲓⲧⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲗⲓⲛⲧⲥⲱⲱⲉ

3. Text adapted from W. C. Till: *Koptische Grammatik (Säidischer Dialekt)*. Leipzig, Verlag Enzyklopädie (1986), pages 288–290.

No person shall go to the gathering nor to the dining place while his sandals of his foot (5.2) or even while his cloak is covering him (6.3), whether from the town or from the field.

ἄνε-ρωμε κα-πεφπρηω ἄπρη φαντογκωλῆ επογωμ ἄμεερε  
No person shall take off (literally ‘drop’) his sun cloak until they ring for the midday eating (17.5).

ἄνε-ρωμε αμαρτε ἄτβιχ ἄπεφωβηρ ογτε κελααγ ἄειδος  
ἄταφ αλλα εκνακα-ογμαρε ερραι ογτωκ ἄμμαφ ειτε εκρμοος  
ειτε εκαρερατῆ ειτε εκμοοωε

No person shall hold the hand of his friend nor any part of his (ἄτα-φ). 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.

ερωαν-ογσον δε φροοσεφ νῆτῆἄκοτῆ αλλα εφμοοωε ερογν  
εβολ νῆρχρια ἄογωτην η ογκογι ἄνεε ερε-πεφρῆἄνι βωκ  
επμα ἄἄοικονομος ἄφχιτογ ναφ φαντῆλο αγω νῆχιτογ ον  
επεγμα

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 (ἄ-φ-χιτ-ογ) for him (16.4), until he heals (17.5) and then he takes them back (literally ‘again’) to their place.

ερωαν-ογα φι-ογειδος εμπωφ αν πε εγεταλοφ ετεφναρῆ  
εἄτγναζις ἄογσον ἄωλλ ἄφμετανοει ἄφαρερατῆ εἄπμα  
ἄογωμ

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).

εφωανσῆ ογα εφττων η ἄφογωρῆ παρα-πωι εφναεπιτιμα  
ναφ κατα πεμπωα ἄπεφρωβ

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 · ΝΕCΝΗΥ ΔΕ ΔΥΚΤΟΟΥ  
 ΕΠΜΑ ΕΤḲ̄ΝΚΟΤḲ̄ ΝḲ̄ΗΤḲ̄ ΔΥCΩ ΕΥΡΕΙΜΕ ΕΞΟΥΝ ΕΡΟΥ ΖḲ̄ΟΥΝΟC  
 ΝΟΥΩΩḲ̄ΝḲ̄ΗΤ

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).

ΜḲ̄ΝḲ̄ΩC ΔΥΚΤΟΥ ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC ΔΥΦΑΔΕ ΝḲ̄ΜΑΥ ΔΕ ΕΡΩΔΑΝ  
 ΠΧΟΕΙC CḲ̄ΠΑΩΙΝΕ ΜΠḲ̄ΚΑ-ΠΑCΩΜΑ ΖḲ̄-ΠΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCḲ̄ ΝḲ̄ΗΤḲ̄  
 · ΔΟΥΩΩḲ̄ ΝΑΥ ΖḲ̄-ΟΥḲ̄ΚΑΖḲ̄ΗΤ ΔΕ Ḳ̄ΝΑΕΙΡΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΩΔΕ  
 · ΜḲ̄ΝḲ̄ΩC ΔΥΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΝḲ̄Ḳ̄ΜΟΡΤ ΔΥΖΙΟΥΕ ΕΧḲ̄-ΤḲ̄ΜΕCΤḲ̄ΗΤ  
 ΜΠΜΕΖCΕΠCΝΑΥ ΔΕ ΘΕΩΔΩΡΕ ΖΑΡΕΖ ΜΠḲ̄ΚΑ-ΠΑCΩΜΑ ΖḲ̄ΠΜΑ  
 ΕΤΟΥΝΑΤΟΜCḲ̄ ΝḲ̄ΗΤḲ̄ · ΔΟΥΩΩḲ̄ ΝΑΥ ΟΝ ΔΕ Ω ΠΑΧΟΕΙC ΝΕΙΩΤ  
 Ḳ̄ΝΑΕΙΡΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΖΩΥ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΕΚΝΑΖΩΝ ΜΜΟΥ ΕΤΟΟΤ ΖḲ̄-ΟΥḲ̄Ḳ̄ΗΜΟΤ  
 · ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC ΔΕ ΔΥΜΕΕΥΕ ΖΡΑΙ-ΝḲ̄ΗΤḲ̄ ΔΕ ΠΩΛΛΑΚΙC ΕΥΧΩ ΜΠΑΙ  
 ΖḲ̄ΟΥΝΟC ΜΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΛΙΑ ΔΕ ΜΗΠΟC ΝḲ̄ΤΕΖΟΙΝΕ ΒΙ-ΠΕΥCΩΜΑ ΝΧΙΟΥΕ  
 ΝCΕΚΩΤΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΝΟΥΜΑΡΤΗΡΙΟΝ

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 (ΤΕΥ-ΜΟΡΤ), 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-Ḳ̄-ΝΑ-ΖΩΝ ΜΜΟ-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.

\*ΘΕΩΔΩΡΕ is the form used in Greek when speaking to someone named ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC.

ΔΥΩ ΝḲ̄ΤΕΡΕΥΔΕ ΝΑΙ ΔΥΩΝΩḲ̄ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΟΥΔΑΠΡΗΤΕ ΜΠΕΥΦΑΔΕ  
 ΜΝΟΥΟΝ ΝḲ̄ΗΤΟΥ · ΜḲ̄ΝḲ̄ΩC ΔΥCΦΡΑΓΙΖΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΖḲ̄Ḳ̄ΕΥCΙΧ ΝΩΟΜḲ̄Τ



### 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](http://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

αγρωμε ον ει ψα-παιωτ μ̄προφητης ογρ̄μ̄ιτωα ογωημ πε  
 επεφραν πε πετρος ογρ̄μ̄ιμο πε εφογωα εχι σμογ εβολ ριτοοτ̄γ̄  
 μ̄παιωτ πεχαα μ̄πδικαιος χε σμογ εροϊ παιωτ ετογααβ

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.’<sup>5</sup>

παιωτ δε πεχαα ναα χε ν̄-γ̄μ̄πωα αν μ̄πεςμογ μ̄παχοεις  
 χε ακρ̄-ογνος μ̄νοβε ετβε-τεςριμε ν̄τακχιτ̄ε επειδη τωερε  
 τε ν̄τεκωνε αληωσ ακειρε μ̄ογνος μ̄παρνομια μ̄π̄ιτω εβολ  
 μ̄πχοεις

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 ΝΑΦ ΧΕ ΠΑΧΟΕΙΣ Ν̄ΙΩΤ Μ̄Μ̄-ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ ΩΟΟΠ ΝΑΪ  
 ΖΟΛΩΣ ΠΕΧΕ-ΠΑΙΩΤ ΝΑΦ ΧΕ ΣΕ ΑΠΡΩΜΕ ΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤ̄ ΑΦΕΙΝΕ  
 Ν̄ΩΕΤΑΙΟΥ Ν̄ΖΟΛΟΚΟΤΤΙΝΟΣ ΑΦΤΑΑΥ Μ̄ΠΑΙΩΤ ΧΕ †ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ  
 Μ̄ΜΟΚ ΕΤΡΕΚΤΑΑΥ Ν̄ΑΓΑΠΗ ΖΑΡΟΙ

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 Ν̄ΟΥΣΟΠ ΕΤΡΕ-Ν̄ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ ΝΑΝΟΥΒΑ Μ̄Ν-ΒΑΛΕΖΜΟΥ ΒΩΚ  
 ΕΖΗΤ ΑΥΧΙ Ν̄ΟΥΠΟΛΙΣ ΕΥΟΥΩΩ Ε-ΕΡ-ΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ Μ̄Ν-ΝΕΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ ·  
 ΕΦΒΗΚ ΔΕ ΕΠΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ Ν̄ΣΙ-ΠΛΔΟΥΖ ΖΗΡΑΚΛΙΟΣ ΑΦΕΙ ΩΑ-ΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ  
 ΕΤΟΥΓΑΒ ΑΠΑ ΩΕΝΟΥΓΤΕ ΑΦΣΕΠΩΠ̄ ΕΤΡΕΦΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΦ ΑΥΩ  
 ΑΦΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΕΤΡΕΦΤΑΜΙΟ ΝΑΦ Ν̄ΟΥΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ Ν̄ΩΕ Ζ̄Ν-  
 ΝΕΦΣΙΧ Μ̄ΜΙΝ̄Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΑΦΤΡΕΥΤΟΚ̄ ΕΥΚΟΝΤΟΣ Ν̄ΩΕ · ΑΦΚΑΑΥ  
 ΕΦΖΙ-ΘΗ ΕΦΒΗΚ ΕΠΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ ΑΥΩ ΑΦΠΑΤΑΣΣΕ Ν̄ΝΕΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ ΕΤ̄ΜΑΥ  
 Ζ̄Ν-ΟΥΝΟΣ Ν̄ΛΥΠΕΙ ΖΩΣΤΕ Ν̄ΣΕΩΑΧΕ ΕΠΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ ΕΤ̄ΜΑΥ ΩΑ-ΕΖΡΑΙ  
 ΕΠΟΥ Ν̄ΖΟΥ ΕΒΟΛΧΕ Μ̄ΠΕΣΟΤ̄Π̄ Ν̄ΤΕΙΖΕ ΤΑΖΟΥ Χ̄ΙΝ̄ΤΑΠΔΟΥΖ  
 ΑΡΧΕΙ 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 (ΣΟΤ̄Π̄Σ̄) of this fashion had not affected them since the Duke ruled the Thebaid (Χ̄ΙΝ̄ΤΑ for Χ̄ΙΝ-Ν̄Τ-Α (14.3)).<sup>6</sup>

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](http://mikeshepherdimages.co.uk)).

αϕερ-μεντρε δε ον ν̄σι-π̄δογζ ρηρακλιος δε ν̄τερειβωκ  
 ερουν ρεν-τμητε ν̄νεβαρβαρος διναγ ερωμε νογοειν εφεινε  
 μ̄πενειωτ απα φ̄ενογτε αγω αϕρωβ̄ε εβολ εχωι ν̄τεϕστολη  
 νογοειν αϕρωβ̄ε μ̄πασωμα μ̄πελααγ μ̄πεθοογ ωωπε μ̄μοι · αγω  
 ν̄τερεϕχι ν̄τεβικτωρια ρ̄νογεοογ αφεινε ν̄νεδωρον ν̄ταπαρχη  
 ν̄νεωωλ ερατ̄μ̄ μ̄πχωεις αγω αϕρομολογει ν̄τσωτηρια μ̄πεδρο  
 δε ν̄τασωωπε εβολ ρ̄ιτεμ-π̄νογτε μεν-νεωληλ μ̄πενειωτ  
 ετογααβ απα φ̄ενογτε

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  $\text{CINOYΘIOC}$ , the fancy form of his name you saw in his first letter to the archbishop (19.9), along with the royal 'we':

$\text{CINOYΘIOC ΠΕΛΑΧΙCΤOC ΠΕΤCΖΑΙ ΜΠΕΦΜΕΡΙΤ ΝΙΩΤ}$   
 $\text{ΝΘΕΟΦΙΛΕCΤΑΤOC ΑΠΑ ΤΙΜΟΘΕOC ΠΑΡΧΙΕΠΙCΚΟΠOC ΖΜΠΧΟΙC}$

Shenoute, this least, is the one who is writing to his beloved father, best beloved of God ( $\text{ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕCΤΑΤOC}$ ), Apa Timothy, the Archbishop, in the Lord (13.4).<sup>7</sup>

$\text{ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ ΑΙΡΑΦΕ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΝΤΕΡΙΧΙ ΝΝΕCΖΑΪ ΝΤΕΚΜΗΤΕΙΩΤ}$   
 $\text{ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΖΙΤΜ-ΠΡΕΦΩΜΩΕΝΟΥΤΕ ΝCΟΝ ΝΑΪ ΝΤΑΥΩΠΕ ΝΑΝ}$   
 $\text{ΝCΟΛCΛ ΖΙ-ΠΑΡΑΜΥΘΙΑ ΑΝΡ-ΘΕ ΖΩC ΕΑΝΟΥΩΩΤ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤΟΥ}$   
 $\text{ΝΤΕΚΖΙΚΩΝ ΕΤΦΟΡΙ ΜΠΕΧC}$

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).

$\text{ΑΥΩ ΑΝΤΩΚΝΗΖΗΤ ΝΤΕΡΝCΩΤΜ ΕΝΩΑΧΕ ΝΤCΟΦΙΑ ΜΠΠΝΟΥΤΕ}$   
 $\text{ΕΤ-ΝΡΗΤΚ ΤΑΙ ΕΤΕΡΕ-ΤΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ ΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΡΗΤC ΑΥΩ ΟΥΕΟΟΥ}$   
 $\text{ΜΗ-ΟΥΜΗΤΡΜΑΟ ΝΕΤΖΙ-ΟΥΝΑΜ ΑΥΩ ΖΙ-ΖΒΟΥΡ ΜΜΟC ΕCΦΟΡΙ}$   
 $\text{ΔΕ ΟΝ ΜΠΠΝΟΜΟC ΜΗ-ΠΝΑ ΖΙ-ΠΕCΛΑC ΕΤΡΕΝΧΟΟC ΖΩΩΝ ΝΘΕ}$   
 $\text{ΝΤΑΠΠΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΧΟΟC ΧΕ ΑΝΓ ΝΙΜ ΑΝΟΚ ΠΧΟΕΙC ΠΑΧΟΕΙC ΧΕ}$   
 $\text{ΑΚΜΕΡΙΤ ΩΑ-ΖΡΑΪ ΕΝΕΙΩΙ}$

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: Scriptorum Coptici. Paris, Otto Harrassowitz (1908), pages 13–15.

one said (ⲛⲧ-ⲁ-ⲡ-ⲡⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ϫⲟⲟⲥ) – ‘Who am I (8.1) even, O Lord my Lord, that you have loved me up to these lengths?’\*

ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ϫⲁⲣⲓⲰⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲙⲓⲡⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲁⲗⲟⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲒⲁⲡⲏ ⲧⲉ  
ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲒⲁⲒⲓⲟⲩⲥⲮⲏⲏ ⲉⲕⲟ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ⲱⲟⲥ ⲉⲕⲙⲟⲟⲛⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁϥⲱ ⲉⲕⲕⲮⲱⲃⲉⲣⲛⲁ  
ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲛ ϩ̅ⲛ̅-ϩⲟⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲕⲡⲣⲉⲥⲃⲉϥⲉ ϩⲁⲣⲟⲛ ϩ̅ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲕⲱⲗⲗ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ ⲁϥⲱ  
ⲉⲧⲱⲏⲡ ⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲒⲣ̅ⲛ̅-ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲟϥϫⲁⲓ ϩ̅ⲛ̅-ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲡⲉⲛⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ⲉⲓⲱⲧ  
ⲛ̅ⲒⲁⲒⲓⲟⲩⲧⲁⲧⲟⲥ

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 (ϩⲁⲒⲓⲟⲩⲧⲁⲧⲟⲥ) 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, ⲡⲉⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲒⲓⲟⲥ ⲛ̅Ⲛⲟⲛ ‘our blessed brother’):*

ⲁⲓⲣⲁⲱⲉ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲓⲭⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲥⲒⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ  
ϩⲓⲧ̅ⲙ̅-ⲡⲣⲉϥⲱⲙ̅ⲱⲉⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛ̅Ⲛⲟⲛ ⲁϥⲱ ⲛ̅ⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲁⲒⲓⲙⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲓ  
ⲛ̅ⲧⲁϩⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̅Ⲛⲟⲗⲥⲗ ϩⲓ-ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲙⲓⲱⲓⲁ ⲁⲛ̅ⲣ̅-ⲑⲉ ϩⲱⲥ ⲉⲁⲛⲟϥⲱⲱⲧ̅  
ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟϥ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲒⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲑⲟⲣⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉϫ̅ϥ

[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 ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲕⲛ̅Ⲓⲏⲧ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣ̅ⲛ̅Ⲛⲟⲩⲧ̅ⲙ̅ ⲉⲛⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲛ̅Ⲛⲟⲑⲓⲁ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ  
ⲉⲧ̅ⲛ̅Ⲓⲏⲧ̅ⲕ̅ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲧⲁⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲩⲥⲮⲏⲏ ⲛⲏϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ̅ⲛ̅ⲣ̅ⲱⲥ ⲁϥⲱ ⲟϥⲉⲟⲟϥ  
ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲟϥⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲟ ⲛⲉⲧⲒⲓⲟϥⲛⲁⲙ ⲁϥⲱ ϩⲓⲣⲃⲟϥⲣ̅ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲥⲑⲟⲣⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲛ  
ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ϩⲓⲡⲉⲥⲗⲁⲥ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲛⲭⲟⲟⲥ ϩⲱⲱⲛ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲡⲓⲡⲉⲧⲟϥⲁⲁⲃ  
ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲛ̅ⲧ̅ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲡⲁⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲕⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲱⲁⲒⲣⲁⲓ  
ⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲓ

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-πχοεις ναχαριζε ναν φαβολ ἡπινοσ ἡδωρον ετε  
 ταγαπη τε ἡτεκραγιωσϥνη εκο ναν ἡωωσ εκμοονε ἡμον  
 αγω εκκϥβερνα ἡμον ρἡρωβ νιμ εκπρεσβεγε ραρων ρἡνεκωλλ  
 ετογααβ αγω ετωηπ ἡναρῃῃνοϥτε τἡπαρακαλει σε  
 ἡτεκἡῃττελειοσ ετρεκωηλ εχων ἡτἡἡπωα ρωων ἡχωκ  
 εβολ ἡπενδρωμοσ ρἡοϥειρἡνη ἡθε ἡπενμακαριοσ ἡσον

*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**

ενωδανχσοοσ ερραι εροκ πνοϥτε ππαντοκρατωρ δε ἡπῃρτααν  
 ετοοτοϥ ἡνειρεθνοσ ετπερτ-σνοφεβολ ενο ἡθε ἡπετχιοϥα δων  
 ἡρωμε ἡταϥτααϥ ἡμινἡμοϥ ἡπχωρἡ επῃρωβ εακαθαρϥια νιμ  
 ανμερ-ἡτωϥ ανμερ-ἡπολισ αγω ἡτμε ἡἡνερισοϥε εναωκακ  
 εβολ ετβε-θεοτε ἡρενβαρβαροσ ενωϥ εβολ δε οϥοι οϥοι ροεινε  
 δε ετβε-ναωηρε ρενκοοϥε δε ετβε-ναειοτε αγω νασἡηϥ ·  
 εϥτων σε ρωωϥ πειωτ η εστων τμααϥ εϥτων πσον εϥτων  
 πρωμε ετριμε αγω ετνερπε δε ατεϥωεερε πορνεϥε αγω  
 απεϥωηρε ρασειβἡσ αγω πεϥσον · εϥδε οϥἡροεινε εϥμοκῃῃητ  
 δε ανεϥωηρε η νεϥσἡηϥ ρἡοβε οντωσ σεἡπωα ἡταειο νιμ

If we say up to you (18.2), O God, ruler of all (παντοκρατωρ, 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).<sup>8</sup>

### Extracts from a response to a pagan philosopher

ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ Ν̄ΤΑ-ΠΕΝΙΩΤ̄ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ̄ Μ̄ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ̄ ΑΠᾹ Ω̄ΝΟΥΤΕ̄  
 ΧΟΟΓ̄ Ν̄ΤΕΡΕ-ΟΥΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ̄ Ν̄Ζ̄ΛΛΗΝ̄ ΕΙΩΑΡΟῩ ΕΑΦΕῙ ΝΑΦ̄ Ν̄ΖΕΝΚΕΟΠ̄  
 ΕΦΣΟΟΥΝ̄ ΔΕ̄ Μ̄ΜΟῩ ΧΕ̄ Μ̄-ΠΕΦΜΕΕΥΕ̄ ΣΟΥΤΩΝ̄ ΑΝ̄ ΕΖΟΥΝ̄ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ̄  
 ΖΑΖ̄ ΔΕ̄ Ζ̄Ν̄-Ν̄ΑΡΧΩΝ̄ ΕΤΖΜΟΟΣ̄ ΖΑΖ̄ΤΗΓ̄ Μ̄Ν̄-Ν̄Ρ̄Μ̄ΑΟ̄ ΕΥΣΟΟΥΝ̄ Μ̄ΜΟῩ  
 ΕΑΥΚΩΜΩ̄ Ν̄ΣΑ-ΠΑῙ Ν̄ΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ̄ · Ν̄ΤΕΡΕΦΕῙ ΕΣΩΤ̄Μ̄ ΕΠΛΟΓΟΣ̄ ΑΦΑΡΧΕῙ  
 Ν̄ΩΑ.ΧΕ̄ ΕΦΧΩ̄ Μ̄ΜΟΣ̄ Ν̄ΤΕΙΖΕ̄ ΧΕ̄

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:

ΠΕΧΑΦ̄ Ν̄ΒΙ-ΠΕΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ̄ ΧΕ̄ ΟῩΝ̄-ΟΥΜΟῩῙ ΝΑΩΩ̄ ΕΒΟΛ̄ ΑΥΩ̄  
 ΝΙΜ̄ ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑῤ̄ΖΟΤΕ̄ ΑΝ̄ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ̄ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ̄ ΑΦΩΑ.ΧΕ̄ ΑΥΩ̄ ΝΙΜ̄  
 ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ̄ ΑΝ̄ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ̄ ΠΕΝΤΑΦΖΩΝ̄ ΑΥΩ̄ ΠΕΦΠ̄ΝᾹ ΝΙΜ̄  
 ΠΕΤΕΝΦΝΑ.ΧΩ̄ ΑΝ̄ Ν̄ΝΕΤΦΟΟΠ̄ Η̄ ΝΙΜ̄ ΠΕΤΝΑΖΩΠ̄ Ν̄ΝΕΤῤ̄ΝΟΒΡΕ̄

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?’<sup>9</sup>

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 ΔΑΝΟΚ ΖΙΧΝ̄-ΟΥΤΟΟΥ ΠΕΧΕ ΠΕΤΧΩ ΝΝΑΙ ΔΙΝΑΥ ΕΥΖΩΝ  
 ΕΦΡΑ-ΠΑΗΡ ΕΦΜΙΩΕ ΜΗΚΕΖΩΝ ΕΦΡΙΧΜ̄-ΠΚΑΖ ΔΙΡ̄-ΟΥΝΟΣ ΝΡΑΩΕ  
 ΧΕ ΑΠΕΤΡΗΛ Θ̄Μ̄ΒΟΜ ΕΧΜ̄-ΠΕΤΜΟΟΩΕ ΖΙΧΜ̄ΠΚΑΖ ΜΝ̄Ν̄ΣΑ-ΟΥΑΠΡΗΤΕ  
 ΔΕ ΔΠΖΩΝ ΕΤΡΙΧΜ̄ΠΚΑΖ ΚΤΟΥ ΕΧΜ̄ΠΕΤΡΗΛ ΔΦΑΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ  
 ΔΦΡ̄ΧΟΕΙΣ ΕΡΟΥ

‘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-ΖΩΝ) 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).

Ν̄ΣΟΦΟΣΝΑΕΙΜΕΧΕΠΕΙΩΑΧΕΠΑΡΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟΣΝΙΜΠΕΕΤΟΝ̄ΖΗΤΣΝΑΥ  
 ΟΥΜΟΙΡΕ ΓΑΡ ΔΝ ΤΕ ΧΕ ΟΥΝ̄-ΟΥΓ̄ΛΛΗΝ Η ΖΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟΣ Ζ̄Ν̄ΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ  
 ΕΜ̄Ν̄Τ̄ ΠΙΣΤΙΣ Μ̄ΜΑΥ · Ν̄ΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΘΕ ΖΩΟΥ Ζ̄Ν̄ΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ Ν̄ΖΑΖ Ν̄ΣΟΠ  
 ΕΙΣ ΠΤΑΟΣ Μ̄ΜΑΥ Μ̄Ν̄ΤΕΣΜΟΥΝΕ · ΕΩΧΕ ΩΑΡΕΠΡΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟΣ ΘΕ  
 Μ̄Ν̄ΠΡ̄ΛΛΗΝ ΠΩΡΩ̄ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΝΕΥΣΙΧ Η Ν̄ΣΕΦΙΤΟΥ ΕΡΡΑΙ Ζ̄Ν̄ΘΥΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ  
 ΧΕ ΕΥΦΛΗΛ ΕΙΣ Ν̄ΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΖΩΟΥ ΕΙΡΕ Μ̄ΠΑΙ Ν̄ΖΑΖ Ν̄ΣΟΠ 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-ΖΥΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ) that they are praying: the birds themselves do this often, when they are spreading out their wings.

Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΑΜΙΩΕ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΣΑΤΑΝΑΣ Ω Ν̄ΑΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΜ̄Ν̄ΤΗΤ̄Ν̄ Μ̄ΜΑΥ  
 Μ̄ΠΕΘΥΡΩΝ Ν̄ΤΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΠΑΙ ΕΤΕΤ̄ΝΑΩΘ̄Μ̄ΒΟΜ Ν̄ΖΗΤ̄ ΕΕΩΜ̄ ΝΕΦΣΟΤΕ  
 ΟΥΟΙ ΝΗΤ̄Ν̄ ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΤ̄Μ̄ΒΩΚ ΕΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΤ̄Μ̄ΧΙ ΕΒΟΛ  
 Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΣΩΜΑ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΕΣΝΟΥ Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΟΥΟΙ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΝΗΤ̄Ν̄ ΕΤΕΤ̄ΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΒΩΚ  
 Η ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΑΝΧΙ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ ΕΤΕΤ̄Ν̄Ο Ν̄ΖΗΤΣΝΑΥ

‘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 ΠΕΙΖΩΩΝ ΕΝΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΟΝ ΕΤΉΜΑΥ ΕΤΕ ΤΕΦΥΓΙΣ  
 ΠΕ ΚΙΜ ΝΤΕΦΑΠΕ ΕΠΕCΗΤ ΔΥΩ Ν̄CΑ-ΤΠΕ ΕΤΕ ΩΔΡΕΝΩΗΡΕΩΗΜ  
 ΧΝΟΥΦ ΕΥCΩΒΕ Η ΕΥΧΙΝ̄ΡΡΑΥ ΕΥΧΩ Μ̄ΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΕΝΕ ΠΜΟΟΥ ΝΗΥ ·  
 ΖΕΝ-ΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ΟΝ ΝΕ ΝΕΤΝΗΥ ΕΜΜΑ Ν̄ΩΠΙΝΕ Μ̄Ν-ΝΕΤΕΙΝΕ Μ̄ΜΟΟΥ  
 ΠΕΤΟΥΩΩ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΕΠΕΤΕΙΜΑ ΝΑΥ ΕΤΒΕ-ΤΕΥΜ̄ΝΤΖΑΖ Ν̄ΩΔΧΕ ΧΕ  
 CΕΧΩ Ν̄ΝΕΤΕΝCΕΩΟΠ ΔΝ Ζ̄Μ-ΠΕΥCΟΟΥΝ Ν̄ΝΟΥΧ ΜΑΡΕΦΧΟΟΣ ΝΑΥ  
 Ν̄ΤΕΙΖΕ 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 Ν̄ΝΕΚΡΟΥΡ ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΜΟΟΥ ΧΕ ΕΝΕ ΦΝΗΥ Ν̄ΘΕ ΕΤΕ  
 ΩΔΑΧΕ-ΠΑΙ Ν̄CΙ-ΝΕΤΧΙΝ̄ΡΡΑΥ ΕΒΟΛΧΕ CΕΩΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΝΕΚΡΩΟΥ  
 Ν̄Μ̄ΜΑ Ν̄ΖΑΔΤΕ Ν̄Μ̄ΜΟΟΥ · ΕΡΕ-ΤΕΙΖΕ Ρ̄-ΟΥ ΕΤΡΕ-Ν̄ΖΗΠΕΡΗΤΗΣ  
 Μ̄ΠΛΟΓΟΣ Ν̄Ρ̄Μ̄ΜΑΟ ΕΠΕΤΕΙΜΑ ΝΗΤ̄Ν̄ Ν̄CΕΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΕΙΕ ΝΕΤΝΑΥ ΕΒΟΛ  
 ΝΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-Ν̄Β̄ΛΛΕΕΥΕ ΕΝΕΖΙΟΟΥΕ Η ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΠΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-ΠΚΑΚΕ  
 ΕΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ Η Ν̄ΡΩΜΕ ΝΕΤΝΑΧΝΕ-ΖΕΝΤ̄Β̄ΝΟΟΥΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΖΕΝΜΗCΤΥΡΙΟΝ  
 Μ̄Ν-ΖΕΝΠΕΘΗΠ Ν̄ΤΕ-ΠΠΟΥΤΕ

‘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 ΔΤΕΙΣΜΗ ΜΜΕ ΤΝΤΝΤΗΥΤΝ ΕΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ ΝΔΤΕΙΜΕ  
 ΔΤΕΤΝΩΩΠΕ ΕΤΕΤΝΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤΟΥΧΩ ΜΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΡΩΜΕ  
 ΕΦΖΝΟΥΤΑΙΟ ΜΠΕΦΕΙΜΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΔΥΝΟΧΩ ΜΝΝΤΒΝΟΟΥΕ ΝΔΤΕΙΜΕ  
 ΔΦΕΙΝΕ ΜΜΟΥ · Η ΟΥΜΟΙΖΕ ΝΝΔΡΗΤΝ ΠΕ ΧΕ ΝΕΤΦΟΡΕΙ ΜΠΣΟΟΥΝ  
 ΜΜΕ ΖΝ-ΝΕΥΣΠΟΤΟΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤΣΗΖ ΣΩΒΕ ΝΣΩΤΝ ΝΘΕ ΟΝ ΕΤΟΥΜΟΚΖ  
 ΝΖΗΤ ΕΧΩΤΝ ΧΕ ΝΔΔΑΙΜΩΝ ΣΩΒΕ ΝΣΩΤΝ ΝΤΕΤΝΣΟΟΥΝ ΔΝ ΕΒΟΛΧΕ  
 ΔΤΕΤΝΡΑΘΗΤ

‘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 ΕΣΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΙΟΥΖΙΗ ΕΒΟΛΧΕ ΟΥΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΕ  
 ΕΣΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΙΤΕΖΙΗ ΜΜΕ ΜΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΔΥΩ ΕΟΥΝ-ΖΕΝΜΗΗΩΕ ΝΑΒΩΚ  
 ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΩΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤΣ · ΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΕΣΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ  
 ΝΤΑΦΕΙ ΕΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΙΣ ΕΟΥΝ-ΖΑΖ ΔΕ ΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΕΣΟΥΟΕΙΝ  
 ΚΑΤΑ-ΘΕ ΕΤΣΗΖ ΧΕ ΝΤΩΤΝ ΠΕ ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΜΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ · ΟΥΡΕΥΤΕΖΜ-  
 ΡΩΜΕ ΤΕ ΕΤΡΕΥΜΟΟΥΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΠΜΠΩΑ ΜΠΧΟΕΙΣ

‘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).

ΝΤΟΣ ΖΩΩΣ ΟΝ ΝΤΑΥΤΑΖΜΕΣ ΕΠΑΙ ΕΤΡΕΣΜΟΟΥΕ ΖΜΠΜΠΩΑ  
 ΜΠΤΩΖΜ ΝΤΑΥΤΑΖΜΕΣ ΝΖΗΤΩ ΖΝΘΒΒΙΟ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΜΝΤΡΜΡΑΩ

Μ̄ΝΟΜ̄Ν̄ΤΖΑΡΩΖΗΤ · ΟΥΘΥΣΙΑ ΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΠΕΝΤΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΙΛΕ  
 Μ̄ΜΟϞ Ν̄ΟϞΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΟΥΣΟΠ ΕΤΡΕΥΠΑΡΖΙΣΤΑ Ν̄ΝΕΥΣΩΜΑ Ν̄ΟϞΥΣΙΑ  
 ΕΣΟΝΖ ΕΣΟΥΑΑΒ ΕΣΡΑΝΑϞ Μ̄ΠΝΟΥΤΕ · ΟΥΜ̄Ν̄ΤΕΡΟ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΤΕ  
 Μ̄ΝΟΜ̄Ν̄ΤΟΥΗΝΒ ΟΥΖΕΘΝΟΣ ΕΣΟΥΑΑΒ ΤΕ ΟΥΛΑΟΣ ΕΠΩΝΖ ΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-  
 ΠΕΤΣΗΖ ΟΥΩΔΕΝΕΖ ΤΕ ΕΣΩΟΟΠ Μ̄ΠΠΕΙΩΤ Μ̄ΠΩΗΡΕ Μ̄ΠΠΕΠ̄ΝΑ  
 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 ΠΕΣΟΝ ΕϞΩΟΟΠ ΝΑΣ Ν̄ΟϞΟΕΙϞ ΝΙΜ ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΤΟΣ ΕΣΩΟΟΠ  
 ΝΑϞ ΩΔΕΝΕΖ Ν̄ΝΕΖ · ΖΙΤ̄Ν-ΖΕΝΠΑΡΑΒΟΛΗ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ-ΝΕΓΡΑΦΗ  
 ΠΣΟΝ Ν̄ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ Η ΤΩΕΛΕΕΤ Η ΤΣΩΝΕ ΕΤ̄ΜΑϞ ΠΕ ΠΕΧ̄Σ ΟΥΣΟΝ  
 ΠΕ ΟΥΝΥΜΦΙΟΣ ΠΕ ΟΥΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΠΕ ΟΥΩΒΗΡ ΠΕ ΟΥΩΗΡΕΩΗΜ ΠΕ  
 ΑΥΩ ΟΥΧΟΕΙΣ ΠΕ ΟΥΕΣΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΩΩΣ ΠΕ ΟΥΘΥΣΙΑ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ  
 ΟΥΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ ΠΕ ΟΥΒΩ Ν̄ΕΛΟΟΛΕ ΠΕ ΟΥΤΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΟΥΖΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ  
 ΟΥΡΗ ΠΕ ΟΥ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΖΙΕΙΒ ΠΕ ΟΥΖΑΕ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΩΟΡ̄Π ΠΕ ΟΥΛΟΓΟΣ  
 ΠΕ ΑΥΩ Ω̄Ρ̄Π̄ΜΙΣΕ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΕ ΕΤΝΑΚΡΙΝΕ Μ̄ΤΗΡ̄  
 Ν̄ϞΚΡΙΝΕ Μ̄ΠΟΓΑΠΟΥΑ ΚΑΤΑ-ΝΕϞΖΒΗΥΕ · ΠΚΕΣΕΠΕ ΔΕ Μ̄Μ̄Ν̄ΤΜ̄Ν̄ΤΡΕ  
 Ν̄ΝΕΙΩΔΑΧΕ ΕΙΣΖΗΗΤΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΣΕΣΗΖ Ζ̄Ν̄ΝΕΓΡΑΦΗ ΑΥΩ ΠΕΤΩΩ  
 ΕΤΝΟΕΙ Ḅ̄ΝΑΣΟΥΩΝΟΥ 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 (Ḅ̄-ΝΑ-ΣΟΥΩΝ-ΟΥ).’



Μ̄Ν̄ΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΖΙΟΥΣΟΠ ΕΥΖΗΥ Μ̄Ν̄ΟΥΣΟΛΣ̄ Ν̄ΝΕΤΩΩ ΔΥΩ ΕΤΣΩΤ̄Μ̄  
Μ̄Ν̄ΟΥΟΥΧΑΙ Ν̄ΤΕΥΥΧΗ ΔΕΚΑΣ ΕΡΕ-ΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΡΟΥΝΑ Ν̄Μ̄ΑΥ  
Μ̄ΠΕΞΟΥ Μ̄ΠΕΦΘ̄ΠΩΙΝΕ ΖΑΜΗΝ ΕΦΕΩΩΠΕ

ΑΡΙΠΑΜΕΕΥΕ ΖΩ Ν̄ΑΓΑΠΗ Ν̄ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΛΗΛ ΖΑΡΟΙ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕΙΡΕΦ̄Ρ̄ΝΟΒΕ  
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  $\overline{\text{ICPEXC}}$  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:

$\overline{\text{ICPEXC}}$     ΠΩΗΡΕ    ἸΠΠΟΥΤΕ    ΕΤΟΝ̄Ξ̄    ΕΚΕΖΑΡΕΞ̄    ΕΝΡΩΜΕ  
ἸΝΤΕΖΥΝΕΤΕ    ΜἸ-ἸΤΒ̄ΝΟΟΥΕ    ἸΓ̄CΜΟΥ    ΕΡΟΥΥ    ΖἸΠ̄ΕCΜΟΥ  
ἸΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ    ἸἸCΑΑΚ    ἸἸ:ΚΩ:Β:    ΥΡΑΝΓΕ    ΕΥCΖΑἸ    ἸΤΕΥCΙΧ



**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 ⲓⲮⲡⲉⲭⲥ ⲡⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲛⲉ̅̅̅ ⲉⲕⲛⲁⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲗⲉⲛⲉⲧⲉ  
 ⲗⲛⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲗ ⲗⲛⲧⲉⲗⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲙⲁ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲁⲗⲁⲡⲏ  
 ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ:ⲓⲮⲓⲉⲭⲥ: ⲭⲙⲓⲧⲓⲞⲉ

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.<sup>10</sup>

At the end the group ⲭⲙⲓⲧⲓⲞⲉ is a cryptic Christian reference. The letters ⲭ ⲙ ⲓ ⲧ are the initials of the Greek phrase *χριστὸν μαρία γεννα* ‘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 ϫ is ‘90’ and ⲉ is ‘9’. Then, we equate the number to an actual word whose letters also ‘total’ 99, such as *ΔΗΗΝ* (Δ + Η + Η + Η = 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 *κατα-νευραν* ‘according to their names’, which means ‘each one individually’ (compare the form of this idiom to that on [page 313](#)).

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϣⲣⲁⲛⲗⲉ ⲉⲓⲥⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲥⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲉⲓⲁ ⲙⲏⲛⲁⲡⲉⲓⲏⲓ  
 ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲛⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ ⲗⲓⲙⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ

ⲡ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲗⲁⲡⲏ ⲛⲓⲧⲓ ⲡⲣⲟⲟⲩⲱ ⲛⲥⲛⲁⲗ ⲛⲧⲱⲧ̅ ⲛⲓⲗⲁⲃⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲧⲓⲧⲟⲩ  
 ⲛⲓⲧⲉⲓ ⲛⲓⲗⲉⲛ̅ ⲙⲱϣ̅ⲥⲏⲥ ⲭⲉ ϣⲱⲱⲛⲉ ⲟⲩϣ̅

I am Frange, writing and greeting his brother David and all those of his house (*να-πεϣ-ηῖ*) (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-  
CACC-OY), take them, and come and visit Moses because (XE)  
he is sick (7.1).

The final group ΘΥ 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):

Ϡ ρΑΘΗ ΜΕΝ ΜΠΑΦΑΧΕ ΝΕΛΑΧ/ †CΖΑΙ ΕΙΠΡΟCΚΥΝΕΙ  
Ν̄ΤΕΚΜ̄Ν̄ΤΡΕΦΩ̄Μ̄ΩΝΟΥΤΕ ΕΤΓΑΕΙΝΥ ΚΑΤΑ-CΜΟΤ ΝΙΜ  
ΕΝΑΝΟΥϢ ρ̄Μ-ΠΕΧ̄C ΙC ΠΕΝΧΟΕΙC

ΧΑΙΡΕ ΑΡΙΤΑΓΑΠΗ Ν̄ΓCΖΑΙ ΠΕΚΟΥΧΑΙ ΝΑΙ ΧΕΚΑC  
ΕΙΩΔΑΝΡ̄ΠΕΚΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΙΕΜΩΖ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΡΑΩΕ

ΤΑΑC Μ̄ΦΑΓΙΟC Ν̄ΕΙΩΤ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥϢ ΑΠΑ ΠΕΤΡΟC ΠΡΕCΒ/ ρΙΤ̄Ν  
ΠΕΦΩΗΡΕ Ν̄ΕΛΑΧ/ ΦΡΑΝΓΑC

Before even my least (ΕΛΑΧΙCΤΟC) 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 ostracon was found in the ancient temple  
of king Ramesses II (c. 1279–1212 BC) – a magnificent ruin today, gen-  
erally known as the Ramesseum:

Ϡ ΠΑCΟΝ ΠΕC̄ΝΤΕ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ † ΟΥΦ̄Ρ̄ΖΟΥΤ ΝΑΚ ΜΟΥΤΕ  
ΕΠΕΦΡΑΝ ΧΕ ΛΩΝCΙΝΕ · ΝΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΩΛΗΛ ΕΧΩΝ

ⲛⲁⲓⲁⲓⲛⲏ ⲛⲧⲉ-ⲛⲓⲁⲏⲧ ⲛⲏⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲓⲛⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲥ  
ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲓⲁⲓⲛⲏ

My brother, Pesunte, as God is giving a boy to you (ⲉ-ⲛⲏⲟⲩⲧⲉ for ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲛⲏⲟⲩⲧⲉ (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 ⲓⲗⲗⲟ ‘Phello’, see 7.6:

ⲟⲩⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲗⲟⲉⲓ ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲕⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲗⲁⲕⲓ ⲉⲕⲉⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲕⲟⲩⲛⲉ  
ⲉⲛⲉⲕⲏⲉⲣⲁⲧⲉ ⲛⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲛⲓⲙⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲉⲓⲛⲩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-ⲥⲓⲟⲧ ⲛⲓⲙ  
ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲓⲛⲓⲡⲗⲟⲉⲓⲥ

ⲕⲁⲓⲣⲉⲧⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲓⲁⲓⲛⲏ ⲉⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲓⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲟⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲕⲏⲓⲡ ⲉⲗⲏⲙⲉ  
ⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ ⲓⲧⲓⲟⲟⲧⲓ̄ ⲗⲉ ⲉⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲓ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ ⲓⲛ̄ⲗⲏⲙⲉ  
ⲛⲧⲁⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲁⲟⲉⲡ ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲛ̄ⲧⲓ̄ ⲓⲛⲓⲡⲟⲗⲁ

ⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲓⲟⲧ ⲓⲗⲗⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲕⲣⲁⲛⲓⲉ  
ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲗⲁⲕⲓ ⲟⲩⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲗⲟⲉⲓ

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 Phran-gas, 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 ⲕⲣⲁⲓⲉ:

ⲡ ⲁⲛⲠⲕ ⲧⲉⲓⲁⲧⲱⲗⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓϥⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ  
ⲛ̄ⲐⲐⲠⲛ ⲣⲣⲁⲓⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲕⲁⲡⲓⲛ ⲱⲗⲛⲗ ⲉϫⲱⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲣⲓ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ  
ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲟⲓϫ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲟⲩϫⲁⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ

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 ⲁⲛⲠⲕ ⲧⲉⲓⲁⲧⲱⲗⲁⲓ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓϥⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̄ⲐⲐⲠⲛ  
ⲣⲣⲁⲓⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲓⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲠⲕ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲣⲉⲛⲧ ⲧⲓⲣⲉ̄  
ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲕⲁⲡⲓⲛ ⲱⲗⲛⲗ ⲉϫⲱⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲣⲓ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲟⲓϫ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ  
ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ-ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲟⲩⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲛⲠⲕ ⲣⲱ ⲉⲓⲐⲣⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲉ  
ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲐⲟⲩⲱ ⲉⲐⲐⲣⲙⲉ

ⲉⲓⲕ ⲙⲓⲧ ⲛ̄ⲟⲱⲗⲗⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄Ⲑⲛⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲗⲗⲱⲙ ⲕ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲟⲩϫⲁⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ

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 ⲁⲛⲠⲕ ⲧⲥⲓⲉ ⲉⲓⲐⲟⲓⲕ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛ̄ⲐⲐⲠⲛ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲕⲉⲕⲁⲥ  
ⲉⲕⲉⲣⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ⲣⲓ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲟⲓϫ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲛⲠⲕ ⲣⲱ ⲁⲓⲧⲣⲉ  
ⲡⲁⲐⲠⲛ ⲧⲱⲧ ⲓⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲱⲗⲁϫⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲟⲩⲱ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥⲱⲛ  
ⲟⲩϫⲁⲓ ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲬⲟⲉⲓⲥ

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 ΦΡΑΝΓΕ ΠΕΡΕΦΡ̄ΝΟΒΕ ΕΦΣΖΔΪ ΕΦΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΕΦΜΕΡΙΤ  
 Ν̄ΧΟΕΙΣ Ν̄ΣΟΝ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΦ ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟΣ Μ̄Ν̄ΝΣΩΣ  
 †ΑΣΠΑΖΕ Μ̄ΜΟΚ Ν̄ΤΑΠΡΟ ΖΙΤΑΠΡΟ Ζ̄ΝΟΥΠΙ ΕΣΟΥΑΑΒ ΠΧΟΕΙΣ  
 Μ̄Ν̄ΠΕΚΠ̄ΝΑ Μ̄Ν̄ΝΣΩΣ ΟΝ †ΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑΣΩΝΕ Μ̄ΜΑΪΝΟΥΓΕ  
 ΚΩΛΩΧΕ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΕΣΩΩ Μ̄Ν̄ΠΑΣΟΝ ΩΗΜ ΜΩΨ̄ΧΗΣ ΠΑΧΟΕΙΣ  
 ῙΣΠΕΧ̄Σ ΕΦΕΧΟΟΥ ΠΤΑΛΛΩ ΝΑΦ Ν̄Μ̄ΤΟΝ Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΕΦΩΩΝΕ ΟΥΧΑΙ  
 Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙΣ

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 (Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙΣ for Ζ̄Μ̄-ΠΧΟΕΙΣ).<sup>11</sup>

\*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 ΣΤΥΧΕΪ 'assent', ΧΡΥΩΣΤΙ 'owe (money)' and ΕΤΙΜΟΣ '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 ΔΑΝΙΗΛ ΕΦΣΖΑΪ Ν̄ΚΟΛΩΧΕ ΕΦΧΡΥΩΣΤΙ ΝΑC Ν̄ΟΥΑΡΤΟΒ  
 Ν̄Β̄Ν̄ΝΕ Η ΟΥΖΟ Ν̄CΟΥΟ ΕΤΡΑΤΙΥ ΝΗ Ζ̄Ν̄ΘΩΘ Ν̄ΠΕΝΤΕΚΑΙΔΕΚΑΤΗ

ΔΝΟΚ ΔΑΝΙΗΛ †CΤΥΧΕΪ Ε†ΒΛ̄ΧΕ ΕΝΤΑΪCΖΑΪΤ̄C̄ Ζ̄Ν̄CΟΥ ΧΟΥΤΑCΕ  
 Ν̄ΕΠΕΠ ΝΑΖΡΝ-ΜΑΝΑCΗ

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 (Ν̄Τ-Α-Ι-CΖΑΪΤ̄-Ā (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



## 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.

ⲉⲓⲡⲟⲩ ⲙⲓⲡⲁⲉⲓⲟⲩ ⲓⲛⲥⲟⲩϥ ⲁⲓⲧⲁⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲉⲗⲟⲩⲟ ⲙⲓⲡⲓⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ  
ⲙⲓⲛⲉⲡⲣⲟⲑⲏⲧⲏϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲡⲓⲕⲉⲱⲟⲩⲛ̅ⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲱⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲩⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ







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 ⲙⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲛⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲩⲱⲁⲭⲉ  
 ⲉⲛⲧⲉⲥⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲡⲉⲧⲣ̄-ⲙⲙⲉⲉⲮⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲙⲡⲉⲩⲛⲧ ⲁⲮⲱ  
 ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲕⲙⲉⲕ ⲉⲛⲛⲉⲥⲡⲉⲐⲛⲡ ⋅ ⲟⲩⲁⲉⲕ ⲛⲥⲱⲥ ⲛⲐⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲣⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱⲣⲟ̄ ⲛⲓⲉⲣⲟⲕ  
 ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲓⲟⲟⲩⲉ

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).

ⲡⲉⲧⲣ̄ⲉⲱⲱ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲕⲁⲉ ⲩⲛⲁⲭⲓⲥⲉ ⲙⲡⲉⲩⲭⲁⲧⲙⲉ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲣⲉⲥⲕⲉ  
 ⲛⲉⲛⲛⲟⲥ ⲩⲛⲁⲣⲃⲟⲕ ⲉⲭⲓⲛⲟⲛⲥ̄ ⋅ ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲟ ⲙⲛⲏⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲩⲱⲩⲧⲱⲙ  
 ⲛⲏⲃⲁⲕ ⲛⲏⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲩⲱⲕⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ ⲛⲏⲭⲡⲓⲟ ⲛⲐⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧⲟⲱ  
 ⲉⲩⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⋅ ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲉⲥⲉⲛⲡ ⲙⲏⲟⲩⲁⲉⲟ ⲉⲛⲩⲟⲩⲟⲛⲉ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲟⲩ  
 ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲮⲉⲛⲩⲱ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲱⲡ ⲛⲧⲉⲩⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲥ ⲉⲉⲟⲩⲟ  
 ⲉⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲱⲡ ⲛⲧⲉⲩⲙⲏⲧⲥⲁⲃⲉ

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-ⲉⲛ-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 ⲭⲓⲥⲱⲱ ⲟⲩⲛ-ⲟⲩⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲱⲁⲥⲧⲁⲩⲉ-ⲡⲓⲕⲣⲓⲁ  
 ⋅ ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲁⲩⲱⲓ ⲛⲐⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁⲧⲁⲕⲕⲩⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲉⲣⲉ-  
 ⲡⲉⲩⲱⲟⲭⲛⲉ ⲟ ⲛⲐⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲡⲓⲛⲓⲛ ⲛⲱⲛⲉ̄ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲛⲥⲁ ⲛⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲟⲥ ⲟ ⲛⲐⲉ  
 ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲛⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲟⲩⲱ̄ ⲉⲛⲛⲉⲩⲉⲩⲱⲁⲙⲁⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⋅ ⲉⲣⲩⲱⲛ-  
 ⲟⲩⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲥⲉⲧⲙ-ⲟⲩⲩⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲙⲙⲏⲧⲣⲏⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲩⲱⲩⲧⲁⲓⲟⲩ ⲛⲩⲟⲩⲱⲉ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ  
 ⲩⲱⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲡⲁⲧⲁⲕⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲥⲟⲧⲙⲉⲩ ⲛⲩⲧⲏⲟⲩⲱⲉ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲮⲱ ⲩⲱⲩⲛⲟⲭⲩ̄  
 ⲉⲡⲁⲉⲟⲩ ⲛⲙⲟⲩ ⋅ ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲟⲥ ⲟ ⲛⲐⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲧⲡⲱ ⲉⲓⲟⲩⲉⲛ  
 ⲩⲱⲉ̄ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲮⲱⲣⲓⲥ ⲉⲛⲉⲥⲡⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲓⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲩⲱⲉ̄ⲛⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲥⲁ-ⲧⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ

ἸΟΥΣΑΒΕ ἸἸΟΥΜΗΗΩΕ ΔΥΩ ΩΔΥΜΕΚΜΟΥΚΟΥ ΕΝΕΦΩΔΧΕ ἸἸΠΕΥΖΗΤ  
· ἸἸΕ ἸἸΟΥΗΙ ΕΦΤΑΚΗΥ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ἸἸΤΣΟΦΙΑ ἸἸἸΣΟΣ

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 ἸἸΣΑ-ΤΜἸἸΤΜΕ ΚΝΑΤΑΖΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΚΝΑΤΑΑΣ ἸἸΩΩΚ ἸἸΕ  
ἸἸΤΩἸἸΤΩ ἸἸΕΟΟΥ · ἸἸΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ἸἸΖΑΛΑΤΕ ΟΥΩΖ ἸἸΑΤἸ-ΝΕἸἸΝΕ ἸἸΜΟΟΥ  
ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ΤΜΕ ΚΟΤḶ ΕΝΕΤΕΙΡΕ ἸἸΜΟΣ · ἸἸΕ ΕΩΔΡΕ ΟΥΜΟΥἸ  
ḶΩΡḶ ΕΥΠΑΖḶ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΤΕΡΕ ΠΝΟΒΕ ḶΟΡḶ ΕΝΕΤΕΙΡΕ ἸἸΠΧΙἸḶḶΟΝḶ

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 ἸἸΜΟ-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 ΠΑἸ ΔἸΓΑΧΡΟ ΧΙΝ-ἸἸΩΟΡἸ ΕΔἸΜΕΚΜΟΥΚḶ ΔἸΚΑΔΥ ἸἸΟΥΣΖΑἸ  
ΧΕ ΝΕΖΒΗΥΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ ἸἸΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΚΝΑἸ-ΧΡΙΑ ΝΙΜ  
ἸἸἸΤΕΣΟΥΝΟΥ ΜΕΚΕΩΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΑἸ ΖΟΥ ΕΠΑἸ ΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ ΓΑΡ  
ἸἸΠΕΥΟΥΟΕΙΩ · ΤΕΝΟΥ ḶΕ ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ἸἸΠΕΤἸἸΖΗΤ ΤΗΡḶ  
ἸἸἸΤΕἸἸΤΑΠΡΟ ἸἸΤΕἸἸΣΜΟΥ ΕΠΡΑΝ ἸἸΠΧΟΕΙΣ

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).

ΔΥΣἸἸΤ ΟΥΝΟΣ ἸἸΜἸἸΤΑΤΣḶΒΕ ἸἸΡΩΜΕ ΝΙΜ ΔΥΩ ΟΥΝΑΖḶ ΕΦΖΟΡḶ  
ΕΧἸἸἸḶḶḶΡΕ ἸἸΑΔΑΜ ΧΙΝ ΠΕΖΟΥ ἸἸΤΑΥΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ἸἸΖΗΤḶ ἸἸΤΕΥΜΑΔΥ  
ΩΑΠΕΖΟΥ ἸἸΠΤΟΜΣΟΥ ΕΠΜΑ ἸἸΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΕ ΝΕΥΜΟΚΜΕΚ ΝΕ ΜἸἸΘΟΤΕ  
ἸἸΠΕΥΖΗΤ ἸἸΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΤΟΥḶḶΩḶḶḶ ΕΒΟΛ-ΖΗΤΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΖΟΥ ἸἸΠΕΦΜΟΥ ·

ΔΙΝ-ΠΕΤΖΜΟΟΣ ΖΙΟΥΘΡΟΝΟΣ ΕΦΖΔΕΟΟΥ ΨΑΠΕΤΘΒΒΙΝΥ ΜΠΚΔΖ  
 ΜΝΠΚΡΜΕΣ ΔΙΝ-ΠΕΤΨΟΡΙ ΝΟΥΖΥΔΑΚΙΝΘΙΝΟΝ ΜΝΟΥΚΛΟΜ ΨΑΠΕΤΕΡΕ  
 ΟΥΒΔΑΒΙΤΩΝ ΖΙΩΩΨ ΠΩΩΝΤ ΜΝΠΚΩΖ ΜΝΠΕΨΤΟΡΤΡ ΜΝΠΚΙΜ ΔΥΩ  
 ΘΟΤΕ ΜΠΜΟΥ ΜΝΠΝΟΥΒ̄ ΜΝΠΤ̄ΤΩΝ · ΔΥΩ ΖΝΤΕΥΝΟΥ ΜΠΕΜΤΟΝ  
 ΖΙΠΕΥΜΑ ΝΝ̄ΚΟΤ̄ ΨΑΡΕ ΦΙΝΗΒ ΜΝΤΕΥΩΗ ΨΙΒΕ ΜΠΕΨΟΟΥΝ̄

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 ιωσχηφ αϥῤ-ϣμε ἡρομπε  
 ἡπατοϥχι-ϣριμε ναϥ αϥω κεϥιτε ἡρομπε αϥααϥ ϣἡπκοσμοϥ  
 μητεϥϣριμε αϥω ἡτερεσμοϥ αϥῤ-κερομπε εϥβεετ μαϥααϥ ·  
 αταμεριτ ἡμααϥ ῤ-κεσῆτε ἡρομπε ϣἡπεϥηι χιν-ἡταϥωῖπτοοτῆ  
 ναϥ ἡϣριμε εαϥϣων ετοοτῆ ϣιτῆ-ἡοϥηηβ χε ϣαρεϥ εροϥ ωα-  
 ποϥοειω ἡτϥελεετ · ἡνεϣοοϥ δε τηροϥ ἡπαειωτ ιωσχηφ  
 πατηῆτῤλλο ετсмамаат сееире ἡωεῆῆτοϥει ἡρομπε κατα-  
 ποϥεϣαϣνε ἡπαειωτ · απεϣοοϥ ἡπεϥῆ-πωινε ει ναϥ ετε соϥ  
 ϣοϥтасе пе ἡπεβοτ епнп

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 (ϣε-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 Epiῖ (12.5).<sup>13</sup>

*As Jesus's testimony moves to the end of Joseph's life, their whole family has gathered at the deathbed:*

αιμοϥτε ενεϥωηρε ειχω ἡμοϥ ναϥ χε τωοϥῆ ἡτετῆωαχε  
 μη-πετῆειωτ εтсмамаат χε πεοϥοειω ἡωαχε пе παι ἡπατε-  
 ттапро εтωαχε εβολ ϣῆ-тсарз ἡεβιηη τωμ · τοτε αϥτωοϥῆ  
 ἡσιῆωηρε μηῆωεερε ἡπαμεριτ ἡιωτ ειωσχηφ αϥει ωαπεϥειωτ  
 αϥϣε εροϥ εϥκινδϥνεϥε епμοϥ εαϥϣων εϣοϥη επωλῆ εβολ  
 ἡπιβιοϥ · αсоϥωωῖ ἡσι-λϥсia τεϥηνοϥ ἡωεερε ετε тсаῆχηсе те  
 пεχас ἡνεсснηϥ χε οϥοι ναи наснηϥ παι пе πωωне ἡтаϥωπε  
 ἡтаμεριτ ἡμααϥ αϥω ωα-τενοϥ ἡпенκοτῆ εναϥ εροϥ · παι он  
 теноϥ петнаωεene пенειωτ ерон етῆнаϥ εροϥ ωαεнеϣ · τοτε  
 αϥϥи-ϣραϥ εβολ αϥριμε ϣιοϥсоп ἡσιῆωηρε μηῆωεερε ἡπαειωτ  
 ειωσχηφ αϥω ανοκ ϣωωτ он мῆμαria тамааϥ ἡπαρϥεноϥ  
 ненριμε нῆμαϥ пе енсоοϥῆ χε ατεϥноϥ ἡπμοϥ 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 ΔΙΣΩΨΤ ΜΠΣΑ ΜΠΡΗΣ ΜΠΡΟ ΔΙΝΑΥ ΕΠΜΟΥ ΕΡΕ-ΔΜΝΤΕ ΟΥΗΖ  
 ΝΣΩΨ ΕΤΕ ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΕΤΟ-ΝΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΠΠΑΝΟΥΡΓΟΣ ΠΔΙΑΒΟΛΟΣ  
 ΧΙΝ-ΤΕΡΟΥΕΙΤΕ ΕΡΕ-ΟΥΜΗΗΨΕ ΝΨΑΒΝΨΟ ΝΤΕΚΑΝΟΣ ΟΥΗΖ ΝΣΩΨ  
 ΕΥΧΙ-ΖΩΚ ΝΚΩΨΤ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΜΝ-ΗΠΕ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΕΡΕ-ΟΥΘΗΝ ΜΝ-ΟΥΚΑΠΝΟΣ  
 ΝΚΩΨΤ ΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ-ΤΕΥΤΑΠΡΟ · ΑΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩΧΗΦ ΣΩΨΤ ΔΦΝΑΥ  
 ΕΝΕΝΤΑΥΕΙ ΝΣΩΨ ΕΥΟ-ΝΘΥΜΟΣ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΚΑΤΑ-ΘΕ ΕΨΑΥΜΟΥΖ ΝΟΡΓΗ  
 ΖΙ-ΣΩΝΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΥΥΧΗ ΝΙΜ ΝΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ-ΣΩΜΑ ΝΖΟΥΟ  
 ΔΕ ΝΡΕΨΡΝΟΒΕ ΕΨΩΠΕ ΕΨΩΔΑΝΣΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΜΑΕΙΝ ΕΠΩΟΥ ΠΕ ΝΖΗΤΨ

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 ΝΣΩΨ), raging greatly (19.4), as though they were packing wrath and anger (literally



ΠΕΙΒΟΥΛΗ Ν̄ΖΥΡΩΔΗΣ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΔΙΣΒΩ Ν̄ΤΟΟΤḲ̄ Ν̄ΘΕ Ν̄ΝΩΗΡΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ  
ΕΩΔΡΕ-ΝΕΥΕΙΟΤΕ ΤΙΣΒΩ 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-Ν̄Τ-Δ-ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΟΥΕΖΣΑΖΝΕ Μ̄ΜΟϸ 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 Ν̄ΤΕΥΥΧΗ Μ̄ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩΣΗΦ  
ΔΥΕΙΝΕ Μ̄ΜΟϸ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Ν-ΣΩΜΑ Μ̄ΠΝΔΥ Μ̄ΠΡΗ ΕΥΝΑΩΔΑ Ζ̄Ν̄ΤΕΥΒΑΣΙϸ  
Ν̄ΣΟΥ ΧΟΥΤΑΣΕ Μ̄ΠΕΒΟΤ ΕΠΗΠ Ζ̄Ν̄ΟΥΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΝΕΖΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ Μ̄ΠΩΝḲ̄  
Μ̄ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΕΙΩΤ ΙΩΣΗΦ ΣΕΕΙΡΕ Ν̄ΩΕΜ̄Ν̄ΤΟΥΕΙ Ν̄ 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 ΔΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΠΤΟΠ ΣΝΔΥ Ν̄ΟΥΜΑΠΠΑ Ν̄ΖΟΛΟϸΙΛΙΚΟΝ  
ΕΣΤΑΕΙΝΥ ΑΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΔΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΠΚΕΤΟΠ ΣΝΔΥ ΔΥΑΣΠΑΖΕ Ν̄ΤΕΥΥΧΗ  
Μ̄ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ Ν̄ΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΩΣΗΦ ΑΥΤΑΔΣ ΕΠΕΣΗΤ ΕΤΜΑΠΠΑ Μ̄ΠΕΛΑΔΥ  
ΔΕ Ζ̄Ν̄ΝΕΤΖΜΟΟϸ ΖΑΖΤΗϸ ΕΙΜΕ ΧΕ ΔΥΜΟΥ ΟΥΔΕ ΤΚΕΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΑΜΑΔΥ  
Μ̄ΠΕΣΕΙΜΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΤΡΕΜΙΧΑΗΛ Μ̄Ν̄ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΡΟΕΙϸ ΕΤΕΥΥΧΗ Μ̄ΠΑΜΕΡΙΤ  
Ν̄ΕΙΩΤ ΙΩΣΗΦ ΕΤΒΕ Ν̄ΡΕΥΤΩΡΠ̄ ΕΤΖΙΝΕΖΙΟΥϸΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΙΤΡΕΝ̄ΑΓΓΕΛΟϸ  
Ν̄ΔΣΩΜΑΤΟϸ ΣΩ ΕΥΖΥΜΝΕΥΕ ΖΑΤΕΥΖΗ ΩΑΝΤΟΥΧΙΤḲ̄ Ν̄Μ̄ΠΗΥΕ  
ΩΑΠΑΕΙΩΤ Ν̄ΔΓΑΘΟϸ

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

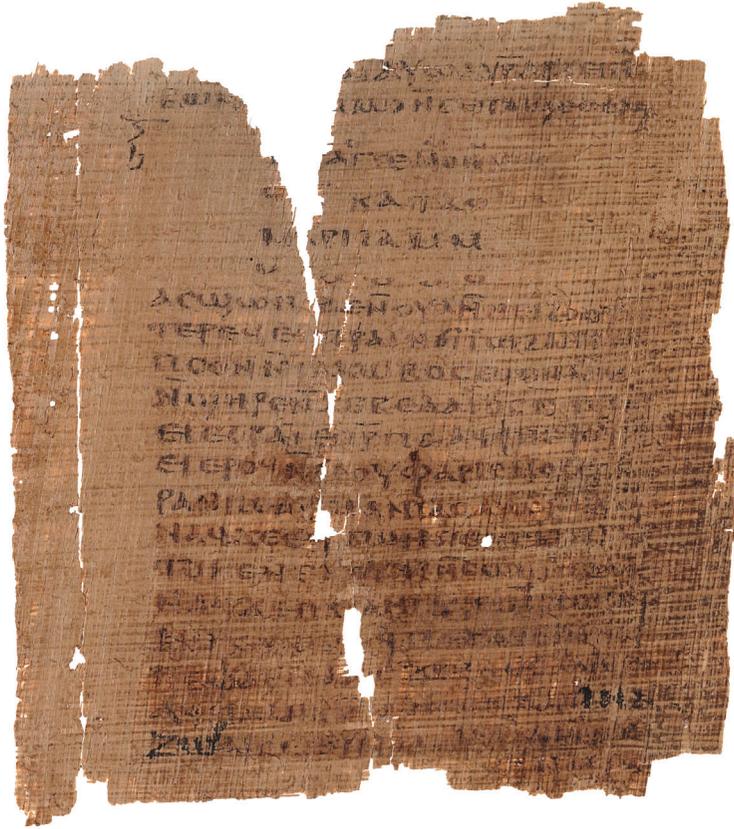
The notion of ‘obscure’ within the word apocryphal may also be interpreted in terms of gnosticism, which is the tendency in academic or religious teaching that postulates secret knowledge of a given subject reserved for a social elite. As such, the thirteen gnostic anthologies found in a jar at Nag Hammadi 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:*

πεξε πετρος μημαριζαμχε τσωνε τνησοογν χε νερε-πισωρ ογαδε  
νηρογο παρα-πκεσεεπε ν̄ςριμε χω ναν ν̄νωαχε μηπισωρ ετεειρε  
μηπμεεγε ναϊ ετεσοογν μημοου ν̄ανον αν ουδε μηπισοτμογ

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-ⲥⲞⲞⲩⲛ ⲛⲙⲞⲞⲩ), not us (16.2), and we have not heard them (14.5).<sup>14</sup>

ⲁⲥⲞⲩⲱⲃ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲓ-ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲃⲁⲙ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲉⲐⲛⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧ̅ⲛ̅  
 †ⲛⲁⲧⲁⲙⲁⲧⲏⲧ̅ⲛ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲥⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲭⲱ ⲛⲁⲩ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲭⲉ  
 ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ\* ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲩ̅ ⲉⲡ̅ⲭ̅ⲥ̅ ⲓⲛⲟⲩⲃⲟⲣⲟⲙⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲓⲭⲟⲥ 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.

ἀἴναυ̅ ε̅ροκ̅ ᾠ̅προο̅υ̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅ρ̅ο̅ρο̅μα̅ ἀ̅φο̅υ̅ω̅ω̅β̅ π̅ε̅χ̅α̅ϥ̅ ναῖ̅ ἄ̅ε̅ ναῖ̅α̅τε̅  
 ἄ̅ε̅ ἡ̅τε̅κ̅ι̅μ̅ ἀ̅ν̅ ε̅ρε̅να̅υ̅ ε̅ροῖ̅ π̅μα̅ γ̅α̅ρ̅ ε̅τε̅ρε̅ π̅νο̅υ̅ς̅ ᾠ̅μα̅υ̅ ε̅ϥ̅ᾠ̅μα̅υ̅  
 ἡ̅σι̅-π̅ε̅ρ̅ο̅

\*Understand π̅ε̅χ̅α̅ς̅ 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:*

ναῖ̅ ἡ̅ε̅ τ̅α̅ω̅ϥ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ε̅ζ̅ο̅υ̅ς̅ια̅ ἡ̅τε̅ τ̅ο̅ρ̅γ̅η̅ ε̅ϥ̅ω̅ι̅νε̅ ἡ̅τε̅ψ̅υ̅χη̅ ἄ̅ε̅ ε̅ρε̅-  
 ν̅η̅ϥ̅ ἄ̅ι̅ν̅τ̅ω̅ν̅ τ̅ρ̅α̅τ̅β̅ρ̅ω̅με̅ ἡ̅ ε̅ρε̅-β̅η̅κ̅ ε̅τ̅ω̅ν̅ τ̅ο̅υ̅ἄ̅ς̅ῥ̅ῃ̅μα̅ ἄ̅σο̅υ̅ω̅ω̅β̅  
 ἡ̅σι̅-τ̅ε̅ψ̅υ̅χη̅ π̅ε̅χ̅α̅ς̅ ἄ̅ε̅ π̅ε̅τ̅α̅μ̅α̅ρ̅τε̅ ᾠ̅μοῖ̅ ἀ̅γκ̅ον̅ς̅ῥ̅ ἄ̅ϥ̅ω̅ π̅ε̅τ̅κ̅το̅  
 ᾠ̅μοῖ̅ ἀ̅γο̅υ̅ο̅ς̅ῥ̅ ἄ̅ϥ̅ω̅ τ̅α̅ε̅π̅θ̅ῃ̅μ̅ια̅ ἀ̅ς̅χ̅ω̅κ̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ ἄ̅ϥ̅ω̅ τ̅η̅ῆ̅τ̅α̅τ̅σο̅ο̅υ̅ν̅  
 ἀ̅ς̅μ̅ο̅υ̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅κ̅ο̅ς̅μ̅ο̅ς̅ ἡ̅τ̅α̅γ̅β̅ο̅λ̅τ̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅κ̅ο̅ς̅μ̅ο̅ς̅ ἄ̅ϥ̅ω̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅τ̅υ̅π̅ο̅ς̅  
 ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅τ̅υ̅π̅ο̅ς̅ ε̅τ̅ᾠ̅π̅ι̅ς̅α̅ ἡ̅τ̅π̅ε̅ ἄ̅ϥ̅ω̅ τ̅ᾠ̅ρ̅ρ̅ε̅ ἡ̅τ̅β̅ω̅ε̅ ε̅τ̅ω̅ο̅ο̅π̅ π̅ρο̅ς̅-  
 ο̅υ̅οῖ̅ω̅ ἄ̅ε̅ ἄ̅ι̅ν̅-ᾠ̅π̅ι̅να̅υ̅ εἰ̅ἡ̅α̅.ἄ̅ι̅ ἡ̅τ̅α̅να̅πα̅γ̅ς̅ι̅ς̅ ἡ̅π̅ε̅χ̅ρο̅ν̅ο̅ς̅ ᾠ̅π̅κ̅αι̅ρο̅ς̅  
 ᾠ̅π̅αι̅ω̅ν̅ ρ̅ῆ̅νο̅υ̅κ̅α̅ρ̅ω̅ϥ̅ ἡ̅τε̅ρε̅ μα̅ρι̅ῥ̅α̅μ̅ ἄ̅ε̅ ναῖ̅ ἀ̅ς̅κα̅ρ̅ω̅ς̅ ρ̅ω̅ς̅τε̅  
 ἡ̅τ̅α̅-π̅ῥ̅ω̅ρ̅ ω̅α̅.ἄ̅ε̅ ἡ̅ᾠ̅μα̅ς̅ ω̅α̅-π̅ει̅μα̅

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 (ἀ̅-γ̅-ο̅υ̅ο̅ς̅ῥ̅ for ἀ̅-γ̅-ο̅υ̅ο̅ς̅ῥ̅-ῥ̅). 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 (ε̅τ̅-ᾠ̅-π̅ι̅ς̅α̅ ἡ̅τ̅π̅ε̅ ‘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).

ἀ̅φο̅υ̅ω̅ω̅β̅ Δ̅ε̅ ἡ̅σι̅-ἀ̅ν̅δ̅ρ̅ε̅α̅ς̅ π̅ε̅χ̅α̅ϥ̅ ἡ̅ν̅ε̅ς̅ν̅η̅ϥ̅ ἄ̅ε̅ ἀ̅.ἄ̅ι̅  
 π̅ε̅τ̅ε̅τ̅ᾠ̅χ̅ω̅ ᾠ̅μο̅ϥ̅ ρ̅α̅-π̅ρα̅ ἡ̅ν̅ε̅ν̅τ̅α̅ς̅χ̅ο̅ο̅υ̅ ἀ̅νο̅κ̅ μ̅ε̅ν̅ †̅ρ̅ᾠ̅ς̅τ̅ε̅υ̅ε̅ ἀ̅ν̅



## 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’ (ΕΥΣΕΒΙΟΣ ΠΡΙΣΤΟΛΙΟΓΡΑΦΟΣ ΝΤΠΟΛΙΣ ΖΡΩΜΗ), 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) ΠΕΙΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΒΕ ΟΥΝ ΑΡΧΕΛΛΙΤΗΣ ΟΥΕΒΟΛ ΠΕ ΖΝ̄-ΟΥΝΟΥΝΕ  
ΕΝΑΝΟΥΣ ΔΥΩ ΔΥΤ-ΣΟΕΙΤ ΖΜ̄ΠΕΦΓΕΝΟΣ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΠΕ Ν̄ΩΖΑΝΝΗΣ  
ΠΕΠΑΡΧΟΣ ΝΤΠΟΛΙΣ ΔΥΩ ΠΡΑΝ Ν̄ΤΕΦΜΑΔΥ ΠΕ ΣΥΝΚΛΗΤΙΚΗ ΝΑΙ  
ΔΕ ΝΕΖΕΝΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΝΕ ΕΥΕΙΡΕ Μ̄ΠΕΤΕΡΑΝΑΥ Μ̄ΠΠΟΥΤΕ ΖΩΣΤΕ ΖΟΙΝΕ  
ΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΡΟΥΥ ΔΕ ΖΕΝΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΝΕ ΕΤΒΕ-ΝΕΥΖΒΗΥΕ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ Μ̄-  
ΠΕΥΒΙΟΣ Ν̄ΣΕΜΝΟΝ Μ̄-Μ̄Μ̄Ν̄ΤΝΑ ΕΤΟΥΕΙΡΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥΥ Μ̄-ΝΕΤΩΔΑΤ ·  
ΔΥΩ Ν̄ΤΟΥΥ ΝΕΜ̄Ν̄ΤΟΥ ΩΗΡΕ Μ̄ΜΑΥ Ν̄ΤΕΡΟΥΡ̄-ΟΥΝΟΣ Ν̄ΟΥΟΙΩ  
ΕΥΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ Μ̄ΠΠΟΥΤΕ ΔΕ ΕΦΕΡ̄-ΠΕΥΜΕΕΥΕ Ν̄ΥΤ ΝΑΥ Ν̄ΟΥΩΗΡΕ  
ΔΕ ΕΦΕΩΠΕ ΝΑΥ Ν̄ΣΟΛΣ̄ Ν̄ΘΕ Μ̄ΠΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ ΕΙΣΑΚ Η Ν̄ΘΕ  
Ν̄ΣΑΜΟΥΛ Μ̄ΠΠΕΙΟΥΟΙΩ ΔΠΠΟΥΤΕ ΣΩΤ̄Μ̄ ΕΠΕΥΩΛΗΛ ΔΥΡ̄-ΠΜΕΕΥΕ  
Ν̄ΝΕΥΡ̄ΜΕΙΟΥΕ

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 Synclitice. 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).<sup>15</sup>

*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 Η ΝΤΟΥ ‘or even, perhaps’, in which ΝΤΟΥ acts as a particle not a pronoun:*

(Page 3) ΤΕΦΜΑΔΥ ΔΕ ΔΑΤ ΝΑΥ ΝΩΗΤ ΝΖΟΛΟΚΟΤΤΙΝΟΣ ΔΥΩ  
 ΖΜ̄ΖΑΛ-ΑΝΑΥ ΕΤΡΕΥΖΥΠΕΡΗΤ ΝΑΥ ΝΣΕΕΙΡΕ ΝΤΕΥΧΡΙΑ ΤΗΡΣ ΔΥΩ  
 ΔΑΔΑΠΑΖΕ Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΔΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΥΤΣ ΖΝΟΥΕΙΡΗΝΗ · ΝΤΕΡΟΥΣΩΗΡ  
 ΔΕ ΖΝΘΑΛΑΑΑ ΝΣΕΡ-ΟΥΖΟΥ ΝΜΟΥΕ ΑΥΜΟΥΕ ΕΠΕΚΡΟ ΔΦΩΩΤ  
 ΝΣΙ-ΑΡΧΕΛΛΙΤΗΣ ΔΦΝΑΥ ΕΥΡΩΜΕ ΕΦΝΗΧ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΦΜΟΥΤ ΔΦΩΠΗΡΕ  
 ΕΜΑΤΕ ΔΦΜΟΥΕ ΔΕ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΡΟΥ Μ̄Ν-ΝΕΦΖΜ̄ΖΑΛ ΔΦΡΙΜΕ ΕΖΡΑΙ  
 ΕΧΩΦ ΖΩΣ ΕΦΧΕ ΠΕΦΕΙΩΤ ΠΕ · ΝΕΦΖΜ̄ΖΑΛ ΔΕ ΑΥΣΛΩΛΩ ΕΥΧΩ  
 Μ̄ΜΟΣ ΧΕ ΠΕΝΧΟΕΙΣ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΝΡΩΜΕ ΟΥΑ ΜΕΝ ΕΦΑΦΜΟΥ ΖΙΧΜ̄-  
 ΠΕΦΜΑ Ν̄ΝΚΟΤΚ ΚΕΟΥΑ ΕΦΑΦΜΟΥ ΖΝΘΑΛΑΑΑ Η ΖΝ̄ΝΕΙΕΡΩΟΥ ΚΕΟΥΑ  
 ΕΦΑΥΠΑΡΑΔΙΤΟΥ Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΖΝΟΥΔΙΩΓΜΟΣ ΖΑΠΑΖΖΑΠΛΩΣ ΡΩΜΕ ΝΙΜ  
 ΕΝΕΦΑΦΧΠΗ ΠΩΤ ΖΝ-ΤΕΙΡΗ ΤΑΙ · ΠΠΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΣΕ ΑΡΧΕΛΛΙΤΗΣ  
 ΠΕΧΑΥ ΧΕ ΕΦΧΕ ΤΑΙ ΟΥΝ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΝΑΝΟΥΣ ΝΑΙ ΕΤΡΑΦΙ ΠΡΟΥΩ  
 ΝΤΑΥΥΧΗ ΕΖΟΥΟ ΕΡΟΣ ΕΤΡΑΒΩΚ ΖΜ̄ΠΒΙΟΣ Μ̄ΠΕΙΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΝΤΑΧΙΣΙΜΕ  
 ΔΥΩ ΝΤΑΧΩΖΜ̄ ΝΤΑΑΑΡΖ Η ΝΤΟΥ ΝΤΑΧΙ-ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΝΣΟΝΣ Η ΝΤΟΥ  
 ΝΤΑΡ-ΟΥΖΩΒ ΕΝΕΦΡΑΝΑΥ ΔΝ Μ̄ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΤΑΒΩΚ ΚΑΚΩΣ Η ΝΤΟΥ  
 ΤΑΜΟΥ ΤΑΤΜ̄ΝΑΥ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ

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 (ⲉⲗⲁⲡⲁⲗⲗⲁⲡⲓⲬⲟⲥ), 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 (ⲛ ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲩ) abuse a person (10.4), perhaps do something which is not pleasing to God (ⲉ-ⲛ̅-ⲩ̅-ⲣ̅ⲁⲛⲁⲩ 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’ (Ⲭⲁⲛⲧⲉ-ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲩⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲩ̅ ⲉⲗⲙ̅-ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛ̅ⲁⲡⲁ ⲗⲣⲟⲙⲁⲛⲟⲥ), where he knocks on the door and pleads with the doorkeeper (ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ) for admittance:*

(Page 5) ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲗⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲑⲓ-ⲡⲉⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ ⲁⲩⲩⲛⲉ-ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ  
 ⲕⲉ ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲑ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲧⲉⲕⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲩⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ ⲟⲩⲗⲣ̅ⲱⲓⲣⲉ  
 ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲗⲉⲣⲁⲧⲩ̅ ⲗⲓⲣ̅ⲙ̅-ⲡⲓⲣⲟ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲕⲱⲣⲱ̅ ⲉⲩⲕⲱ̅ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲕⲉ  
 ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲣ̅-ⲡⲛⲁ ⲛ̅ⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲱⲡⲓⲧ̅ ⲉⲣⲱⲧ̅ⲛ̅ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲱⲁⲣⲉ-  
 ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲁⲧ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲡⲱⲁ ⲧⲁⲣ̅-ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲟⲥ ⲧⲁⲥⲱ ⲗⲁⲧⲗⲁⲓⲑⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲗⲛⲗ  
 ⲱⲁⲡⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲩⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲁⲥ̅ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̅ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱⲱⲑⲑ ⲛ̅ⲑⲓ-  
 ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲩ ⲕⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲣⲟ ⲁⲛⲓⲧⲩ̅ ⲉⲗⲟⲩⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ  
 ⲕⲉ ⲟⲩⲉⲑⲑⲟⲗ ⲧⲱⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲙ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲙⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲣⲟ ⲁⲩⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ  
 ⲁⲩⲣ̅ⲱⲡⲓⲛⲣⲉ ⲉⲗⲛ̅-ⲧⲉⲩⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲥⲁⲓⲉ ⲙ̅ ⲁⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲗⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲑⲓ-ⲡⲓⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲉ-  
 ⲡⲉⲩⲣⲟ ⲕⲛ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲛⲧ ⲱⲁⲛⲧⲉⲩⲑⲑⲑⲕ ⲉⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲗⲏⲧⲩ̅  
 ⲁⲩⲡⲁⲣⲧⲩ̅ ⲉⲗⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲩⲣⲟ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱⲱⲧ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲩⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲧⲡⲉⲓ ⲉⲗⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲩⲑⲓⲕⲙ̅  
 ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̅ⲑⲓ-ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲉⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲕⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲓ̅ ⲟⲩⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲱⲛ ⲡⲁⲱⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲕⲉⲓ  
 ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲑⲉ-ⲟⲩ ⲙ̅ ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲩ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲕⲉ ⲁⲛ̅ⲧ̅ ⲟⲩⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲗⲣⲱⲙⲏ ⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲉⲁⲓⲉⲓ  
 ⲉⲥⲱ ⲗⲁⲧⲗⲁⲓⲑⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲗⲛⲗ ⲧⲁⲧⲱⲑⲗ̅ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲕⲱ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ  
 ⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲑⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲧ̅ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲗⲁⲓⲟⲩⲥⲩⲛⲏ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲕⲱⲉⲩ ⲕⲱⲓ̅  
 ⲛ̅ⲗⲧ̅ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲥⲕⲏⲙⲁ

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) ΤΕΣΣΙΜΕ ΔΕ Μῆ-ΝΕΣΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟΣ Μῆ-ΝΕΤΖΙΧῆ-ΝΕΣῆ-ΚΑ  
 ΔΣΧΙΤΟΥ ΕΡΑΤῆ ΜΠΕΠΙΣΚΩΠΟΣ ΔΣΠΑΖΤῆ ΝΑΦ ΕΣΧΩ ΜῆΜΟΣ ΧΕ  
 ΠΑΧΟΕΙΣ ἸΩΤ ΒΩΩΤ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧῆ-ΤΑΜῆ-ΤΕΒΙΗΝ ΔΙΩΤῆ ΧΕ  
 ΠΑΩΗΡΕ ΟΝῆ ΕΤΕ ΠΕΚΖῆΖΑΛ ΠΕ ΑΥΤΑΜΟΙ ΧΕ ῬῆΠΜΟΝΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ  
 ἸΑΠΑ ΖΡΩΜΑΝΟΣ ΖῆῆΝΤΩΥ ἸΤΠΑΛΑΣΤΙΝΗ ΕΦΣῆΦΕ ΕΠΕΦΟΥΧΑΙ ·  
 ΛΟΙΠΟΝ Ω ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΒΩΚ ΕΠΜΑ ΕΤῆΜΑΥ ΤΑΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΦ  
 ἸΠΑΤΜΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΕΡΩΔΑΝ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΧΙΜΟΕΙΤ ΖΗΤ ΤΑΒΩΚ ΩΔΑΡΟΦ ἸΤΕ-  
 ΠΟΥΕΖΣΑΖΝΕ ἸΠΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΩΩΠΕ ΕΤΡΑΒΩ ἸΠΜΑ ΕΤῆΜΑΥ · ΕΙΣΖΗΗΤΕ  
 †ΝΑ† ἸΝΑΖΥΠΑΡΧΟΝΤΑ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΕΤΡΕΚΔΙΗΚΕΙ ἸΜΟΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ-ΘΕ  
 ΕΤΕΖΝΑΚ ἸΤΕ-ΝΑΟΥΣΙΑ ΩΩΠΕ ΕΥ† ἸΜῆῆΤΝΑ ἸῆῆΖΗΚΕ ἸῆῆΝΕΤΩΔΑΤ  
 ΤΑΡΕ-ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΒΩΩΤῆ ΕΧΩΝ ἸΦῆ-ΟΥΝΑ ἸῆῆΜΑΙ ἸῆῆΠΑΩΗΡΕ  
 ἸῆῆΠΕΦΕΙΩΤ ΖῆῆΠΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΒΩΚ ΕΡΟΦ

So, the woman and her stewards and those who were in charge of her affairs (ΝΕΤ-ΖΙΧῆ-ΝΕΣ-ῆ-ΚΑ), 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) αϕει εβολ ν̄βι-πεμνοϿτ πεχαϑ ν̄τεσριμε δε αμη εροϿν εις ποϿωηρε αϑπιθε ν̄ναϿ ερο ν̄τοσ δε ϑωωσ ασει εροϿν εσμοοϿε εσασωοϿ ν̄θε ν̄οϿτρομεϿσ Ͽαντεσει εροϿν επιμα ετρε-πωηρεωηη ν̄ρητ̄ ν̄τερεσναϿ δε εροϿ ασσοϿων̄Ͽ αϿω ασειμε δε αϿοϿω εϿμοϿ ασρε ερραι εχ̄ν̄πκαρ ασρ̄θε ν̄νετμοοϿτ · ν̄τερε-πεσρητ δε ει εροσ αστωοϿν ασπαρτ̄ εχ̄ν̄πεσωηρε ασριμε εσϿιωκακ εβολ εσϿω ν̄μοσ δε οϿοι ναι ανοκ οϿνοσ πε παϿιν̄βον̄σ παρα-νεριομε τηροϿ ετ̄ριϿν̄-πκαρ δε ν̄πελααϿ ωωπε ναι ειεμητει οϿωηρε ν̄οϿωτ ν̄τασειπ̄σ πνοϿτε αϿβωωτ εχ̄ν̄παϿββιο αϿτααϿ ναι αϿμοϿ ν̄βι-πεϿειωτ αϿκαατ ν̄νμαϿ ϑ̄νοϿν̄τορφανοσ ν̄τερεϿρ̄-οϿνοσ δε αιϿθονει επαωηρε ν̄μιν̄μοι · ατμητρα ν̄ταϿει εβολ ν̄ρητ̄ ωωπε ναϿ ν̄ταφοσ ναεκιβε ν̄ταϿϿι ν̄μοοϿ αϿωωπε εϿσηϿε ετρεσϿει ν̄τεϿαπε ν̄οϿερητε ν̄ταϿτωοϿν̄ ϑ̄αροκ αϿμοοϿε ϿαντοϿϿεινε ν̄ακ ν̄πεκμοϿ

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.<sup>16</sup> 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  $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha$  και  $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha$  ‘such-and-such’) and  $\text{ΚΟΧ}$  or  $\text{ΚΟΚ}$  (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.

---

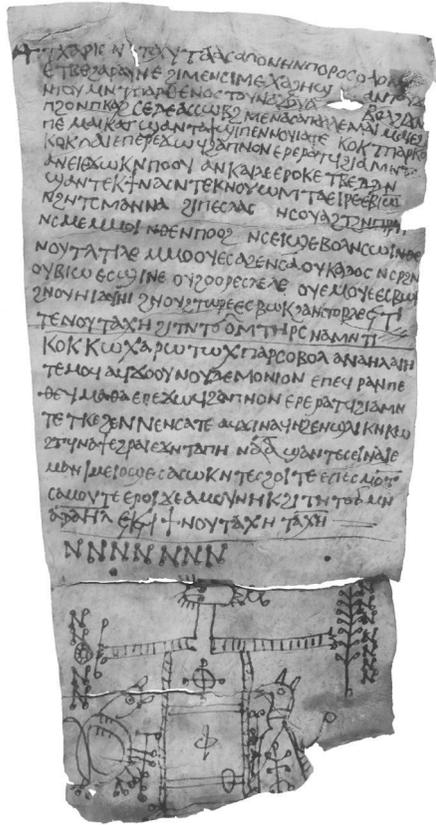
16. See The Coptic Magical Papyri Project <https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/>.

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  $\mu\omicron\upsilon\varrho$  for  $\bar{\mu}\omicron\mu\omicron\varrho$  ‘him’, and how the prospective future prefix ‘she will’ is written  $\epsilon\varsigma\alpha$  instead of  $\epsilon\varsigma\epsilon$  (16.4):

ΚΟΚ ΚΩΧΑΡΩΤΩΧ ΠΑΡΣΟΒΟΛ ΑΝΑΗΛ ΔΙΗΤΕ  
ΜΟϞ ΔϞΧΟΟϞ ΝΟΥΔΕΜΟΝΙΟΝ ΕΠΕϞΡΑΝ ΠΕ  
ΘΕΥΜΑΘΑ ΕΡΕ-ΧΩϞ ΖΑΠΝΟΝ ΕΡΕ-ΡΑΤϞ ΖΙΑΜΝ̄ΤΕ  
ΤΚΕΖΕΝΝΕ Ν̄ΣΑΤΕ ΔϞΧΙ ΝΑϞ Ν̄ΖΕΝΩΛΙΚ Ν̄ΚΩΖΤ  
ϞΝΑ† ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧ̄Ν̄ΤΑΠΗ ΝΔΔ ΔΑΝΤΕΣΕΙ ΝΑΙ Ε  
ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΣΑΣΩΚ Ν̄ΤΕΣΖΟΙΤΕ ΕΠΕΣΜΟ̄Τ  
ΕΣΑΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΙ ΧΕ ΔΜΟΥ ΝΗΚ ΖΙΤ̄Ν-ΤΣΟΜ Ν̄  
ΔΔΔΗΛ ΕΤΙ †ΝΟΥ 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  $\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon$ ). She will call to me, ‘Come, for you (read  $\nu\alpha\text{-}\kappa$ )’, 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!<sup>17</sup>

\*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)

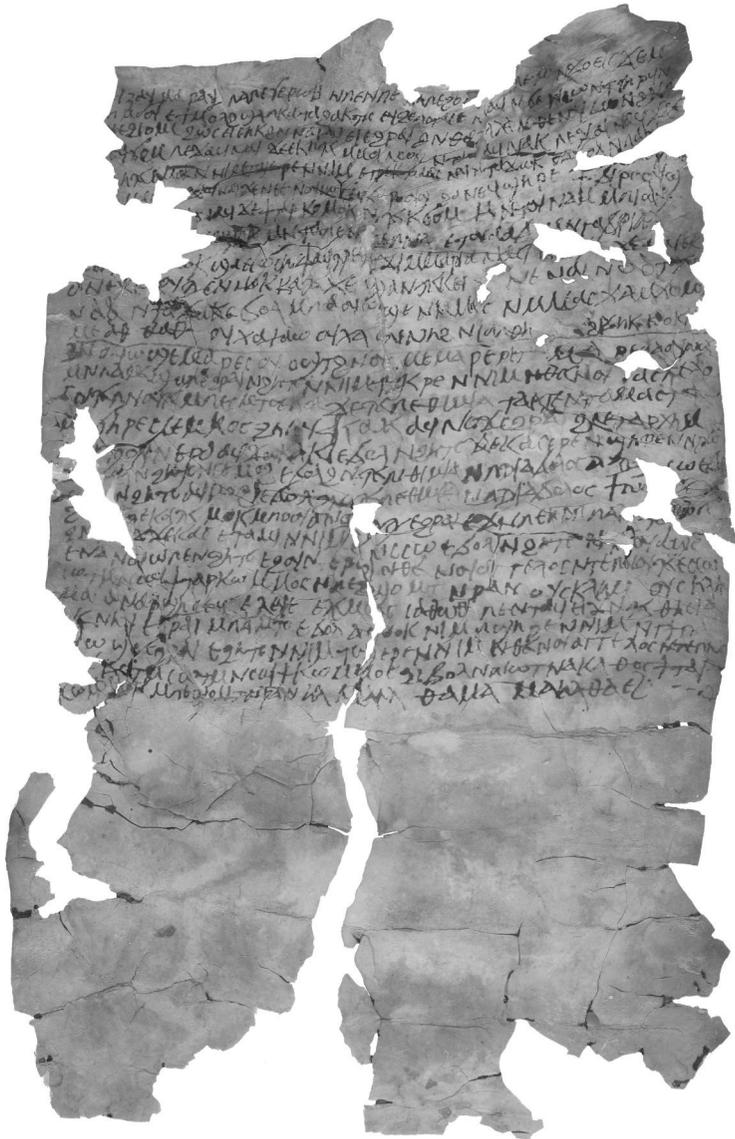
The start of this second spell is lost along both edges of the scroll, so what remains of the first four lines has not been transcribed here. Apparently, in the lost start a demon named  $\epsilon\iota\zeta\gamma\mu\alpha\rho\alpha\zeta$  ‘he of the iron rod . . . to whom the whole creation of women 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  $\overline{\Delta\Delta}$  ‘such-and-such’, note the use of a Coptic equivalent  $\text{NIM}$  ‘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  $\text{MOK}$  for  $\overline{\text{M}}\text{MOK}$  ‘you’,  $\text{WEPPE}$  for  $\text{W}\overline{\text{E}}\text{PPE}$  ‘daughter’,  $\text{BI}$  for  $\text{QI}$  ‘take’, and usually writing  $\overline{\text{N}}$  where the shift to  $\overline{\text{M}}$  might have been expected (1.3):

#### Part one

$\epsilon\iota\eta\tau\epsilon \overline{\text{M}}\text{MOK} \overline{\text{N}}\text{NIM} \text{T}\overline{\text{W}}\text{EPPE} \overline{\text{N}}\text{NIM} \text{E}\overline{\text{T}}\text{PEKTA}\overline{\Delta\Delta} \text{NAI} \overline{\text{N}}\text{T}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{XOK}$   
 $\text{E}\overline{\text{B}}\text{OL} \overline{\text{M}}\text{PAOY}\overline{\text{W}}\overline{\text{W}}$   
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{C} \text{PE}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{Q} \text{NAI} \text{X}\overline{\text{E}} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{E}} \overline{\text{N}}\text{OYI}\overline{\text{W}}\text{T} \text{E}\overline{\text{Q}}\text{BI-POOY}\overline{\text{W}} \text{Z}\overline{\Delta\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{W}}\text{HPPE}$   
 $\text{†}\overline{\text{B}}\text{I-POOY}\overline{\text{W}}$   
 $\text{Z}\overline{\Delta\text{P}}\text{OK} \text{PE}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{AI} \text{NAQ} \text{X}\overline{\text{E}} \text{†}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\Delta\text{P}}\text{KO} \text{MOK} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{O}}\text{M} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}$   
 $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{W}}\text{T}$   
 $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{W}}\text{HPPE} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\Delta\text{P}}\text{E} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\Delta\Delta} \text{E}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{AB} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{G}}\overline{\Delta\text{B}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}$   
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\Delta\text{Q}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{K}}^* \text{W}\overline{\Delta\text{E}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{W}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\Phi} \text{A}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\Delta\text{I}} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\Delta} \text{NAQ} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{C}}\overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{E}} \text{X}\overline{\text{E}}$   
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\Delta\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{E}} \text{OY}\overline{\Delta\text{E}} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\Delta\text{T}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{E}} \text{W}\overline{\Delta\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{E}} \text{NAI} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\Delta\Delta} \text{T}\overline{\text{W}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}$   
 $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\Delta\Delta} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{XOK} \text{E}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{L}} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{W}}\overline{\text{W}} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{C} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\Delta\Delta}\text{C} \text{X}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{M}}$   
 $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\Delta\text{H}} \overline{\text{H}}\overline{\Delta\text{H}} \text{OY}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\Delta\text{X}} \overline{\Delta\text{W}} \text{OY}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\Delta} \overline{\Delta}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{Z}} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\Delta}\overline{\text{H}} \overline{\text{Z}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{K}} \text{KOK} \overline{\text{H}}$

\*The manuscript gives only  $\text{BOK}$  but this makes no sense here, hence the suggested emendation to  $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\Delta}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{K}}$  ‘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).<sup>18</sup>

*Part two*

ḡṅoywɛ      μαρεσογωϣῑ̅      ḡṅoyme      μαρεσμεριτ  
 μαρε-παογωϣε  
 mṅpame wɔpe eṛpai ṅḡht̄ ṅnim tɔere ṅnim ṅθe  
 ṅoyaggełoc  
 ṅte pnoyte ṁpescmto eboł ɣe tēpeθimia tai ete  
 nta-mactema  
 sḡresce ṁmoc ḡṅoykak aqnoɣ̄ eṛpai-ḡṅtarxi ṁ  
 pēqtooy ṅiero aqɣoy-kaak eboł ṅḡht̄ ɣekac epe-ṅwḡpe  
 ṅṅprome  
 cɔ eboł ṅḡht̄ ṅcemoyḡ eboł ḡṅtepeθimia ṅπιαβολoc  
 ɣ.ɣ.ɣ cɔ  
 eboł ṅḡht̄ aqmoḡḡ eboł ḡṅtepeθimia ṅπιαβολoc †noy  
 ɣe  
 ḡw †epekałe mok ṁpooḡ anoḡ ɣ.ɣ eṛpai eɣṅ-pēhri pai  
 eṛwɔpe  
 ḡṅtaɣɣ ɣekac etaaq ṅnim eṅccɔ eboł ṅḡht̄ ṅte-oywɛ  
 enanoḡq wɔpe ṅḡht̄ eḡoyṅ epoi ṅθe ṅoyaggełoc  
 ṅte-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.)

ⲉⲥⲥⲟⲩⲙ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲣⲕⲟ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲕ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉϣⲟⲙⲧ ⲛ̅ⲣⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲥⲕⲗⲏⲙ  
 ⲟⲩⲥⲕⲗⲏⲙⲁ  
 ⲁⲛⲁⲣⲱⲛⲉⲥⲉϥ ⲉⲗⲱⲉ ⲉⲗⲉⲙⲁⲥ ⲓⲁⲑⲱⲑ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲉⲓ ⲭ̅ⲛ̅-ⲧⲉⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ  
 ⲕ̅ⲛⲏⲱ ⲉϥⲣⲁⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲙⲧⲟ ⲉⲑⲟⲗ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛ̅ⲓⲙ ⲡⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̅Ⲓⲧ-  
 ⲡⲁⲟⲩⲱⲱⲉϥ ⲉϥⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϥⲏⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲙ ⲧⲱⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲁⲓⲉⲗⲟⲥ  
 ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ  
 ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̅ϥⲧ̅ⲙ̅ⲥⲟⲩⲙ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲕⲱ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ϩⲓⲑⲟⲗ ⲛ̅ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲧ ⲛ̅ⲁⲕⲁⲑⲟⲥ  
 ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲣⲕⲱ  
 ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉϣⲟⲙⲧ ⲛ̅ⲣⲁⲛ ⲓⲁⲙⲁⲗⲗⲏⲗ ⲑⲁⲙⲁⲙⲁⲛⲗ ⲑⲁⲉ

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 ⲕⲁⲕⲉ) (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 ⲛ̅ϥⲥⲱ (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 ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧ-ϥ̅), *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](http://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 – ΠΕΘΟΥ whose wife is named ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ, and ΠΑΜΟΥΡ whose wife is named ΜΑΡΙΑ. 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 Δ as a

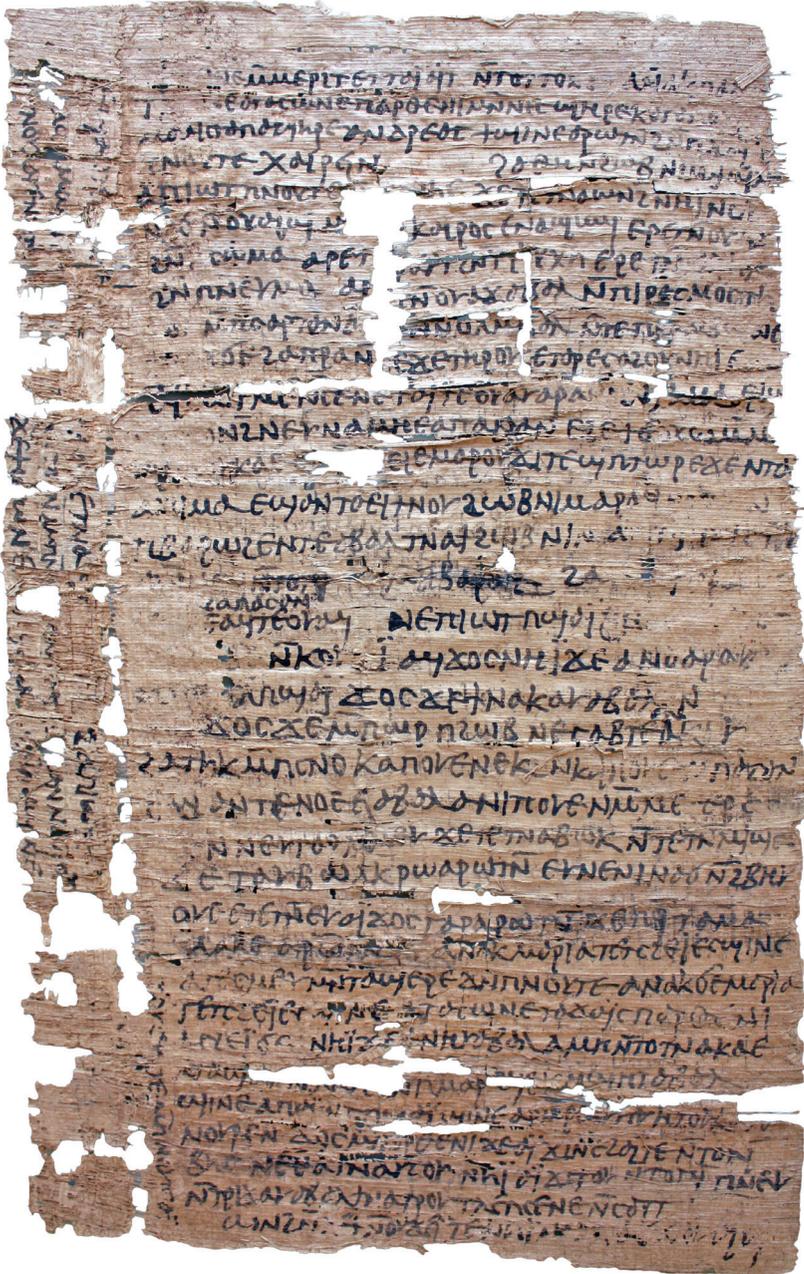


Figure 34 Kellis letter 71. Dakhla Oasis, fourth century. Source: Courtesy of C. A. Hope and the Dakhleh Oasis Project.

default short vowel where standard texts write other short vowels, as in  $\alpha\beta\alpha\lambda$  for  $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$  ‘out’, or  $\alpha\eta\alpha\kappa$   $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\rho$   $\uparrow\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   $\alpha\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\eta\epsilon$   $\tau\alpha\chi\alpha\iota\kappa$  rather than  $\alpha\eta\omicron\kappa$   $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\rho$   $\uparrow\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   $\epsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\eta\epsilon$   $\tau\alpha\chi\omicron\iota\kappa$  ‘I am Pamour, greeting my sister, my lady’. Other notable distinctions include forms like  $\pi\alpha\chi\epsilon\upsilon$  for  $\pi\epsilon\chi\alpha\upsilon$  ‘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,  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\omega\tau\epsilon$   $\bar{\mu}\pi\eta\eta\omicron\upsilon\gamma\tau\epsilon$   $\alpha\iota\omicron$  ‘praise God indeed’. Note, also, the idiom used to address people  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$   $\pi\omicron\upsilon\gamma\rho\alpha\eta$  ‘according to their names’ (5.3), which means ‘each one individually’ (see [page 276](#)).

$\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\varsigma$   $\tau\eta$   $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha$   $\mu\omicron\upsilon$   $\alpha\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\eta$   $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\eta\eta$   
(Greek) Deliver to my lady and sister Partheni.<sup>19</sup>

$\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\eta\epsilon$   $\bar{\eta}\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\tau$   $\epsilon\tau\tau\alpha\iota\delta\iota\alpha\iota\tau$   $\bar{\eta}\tau\omicron\omicron\tau$   $\tau\omicron\eta\omicron\upsilon$   $\alpha\eta\omicron\kappa$   $\pi\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\rho$   $\uparrow\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   
 $\epsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\omega\eta\epsilon$   $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\eta\eta$   $\bar{\mu}\bar{\eta}\eta\epsilon\varsigma\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$   $\pi\omicron\upsilon\gamma\rho\alpha\eta$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\iota\varsigma\tau\alpha$   $\pi\alpha\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   
 $\alpha\eta\alpha\delta\rho\epsilon\alpha\varsigma$   $\uparrow\omega\eta\eta\epsilon$   $\epsilon\rho\omega\tau\bar{\eta}$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\pi\chi\omicron\iota\kappa$   $\pi\eta\eta\gamma\tau\epsilon$

$\chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon\iota\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\alpha\theta\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\omega\beta$   $\eta\eta\mu$   $\uparrow\omega\lambda\eta\lambda$   $\epsilon\pi\omega\tau$   $\pi\eta\eta\gamma\tau\epsilon$   $\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\eta}\eta\eta\epsilon$   $\chi\epsilon$   
 $\tau\epsilon\tau\bar{\eta}\eta\alpha\omega\eta\bar{\eta}$   $\eta\alpha\iota$   $\bar{\eta}\omega\gamma\eta\omicron\varsigma$   $\bar{\eta}\omega\gamma\omicron\iota\omega$   $\bar{\mu}\bar{\eta}\omega\gamma\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$   $\epsilon\eta\alpha\omega\omega\upsilon$   $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$   
 $\tau\bar{\eta}\omega\gamma\omega\chi$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\pi\iota\varsigma\omega\mu\alpha$   $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ - $\tau\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\rho\omega\tau$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\eta}\gamma\chi\eta$   $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ - $\tau\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\lambda\eta\lambda$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\pi\eta\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$   
 $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ - $\tau\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\omega\gamma\omega\chi$   $\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\pi\eta\alpha\varsigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$   $\tau\eta\eta\omega\gamma$   $\bar{\eta}\pi\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\eta\alpha\varsigma$   $\bar{\mu}\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\beta\lambda\mu\beta\alpha\lambda$   
 $\bar{\eta}\tau\epsilon$ - $\pi\eta\alpha$   $\bar{\eta}\beta\omega\eta\epsilon$

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 ΜῆΤΑΩΕΡΕ ΧῆΠΠΝΟΥΤΕ  
 ΑΝΟΚ ΘΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΤΕΤΣΖΑΪ ΕΣΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑΣΩΝΕ ΤΑΧΟΪΣ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ ΔΣΖΑΪ  
 ΘΕ ΝΑΪ ΧΕ †ΝΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΜΗ . . . sentence lost . . . ΠΜΑ ΡΩΕΥ ΞΩΗΤ  
 ΕΒΟΛ

ΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΑΪΩΤ ΠΩΔΑΪ ΩΙΝΕ ΕΝΡῆΡΕΟΥΗΤΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΟΥΡΑΝ ΧΟΟΣ  
 ῆΠΑΡΘΕΝΙ ΧΕ ΔΪΧΙ ΝΕΖΟΪΤΕ ῆΤΟΟΤῆ ῆΒΗC ΝΕΤΑΤῆΝΝΟΟΥCΟΥ ΝΑΪ  
 ΔΪΧΙΤΟΥ ῆΤΟΟΤῆ ΠΝΑΥ ῆΤΡΑΧΟΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ †ΝΑΤΡΕΥῆ-ΤΛΕΠCΕ  
 ΝΗ ῆCΑΡΤ ΩΝΖ ῆΤΕΤῆΟΥΧΔΑΪΤΕ ΝΑΪ ῆΟΥῆΟC ῆΟΥΟΪΩ ΤΟΥΕΩΤΕ  
 ῆΠΠΝΟΥΤΕ 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 . . .

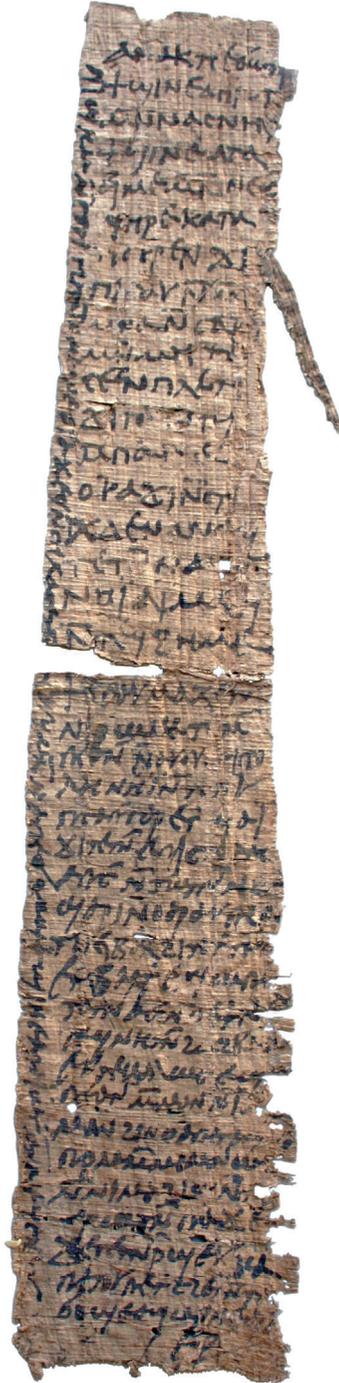
\* ΝΕΤ-Δ-ΤῆΝΝΟΟΥ-CΟΥ ‘the things which you (fem.) sent’ (15.2). Note that CΟΥ is an alternative to the suffix pronoun CΟΥ ‘they, them’ used after a small number of specific verbs.

*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 †ΩΙΝΕ ΕΠΪΩΤ ΜῆΝΑCΝΗΥ †ΩΙΝΕ ΕΤΑCΡΙΜΕ ΜῆΝΕCΩΗΡΕ  
 ΚΑΤΑ ΠΟΥΡΑΝ ΧΙ-ΠCΟΥ ῆΜῆΜῆΑ ῆCΑΡΤ Μῆ-ΜῆΤΑCΕ ῆΠΛΕΤΙ ΧΙΤΟΥ  
 ῆΤΟΟΤῆ ῆΠΑῆΕ ΟΥΟΧῆ ῆCΤΙΧΑ ΕΝΑΝΟΥC ῆΤΕΤῆΝΟΥῆ ΝΑΪ ΔΪΜΑΖῆ  
 ῆΤΕCΖΗΜΕ

*At this point, the handwriting becomes more cursive.*



**Figure 35** Kellis letter 75. *Source:* Courtesy of C. A. Hope and the Dakhleh Oasis Project.

---

†ꝫⲉⲗⲙⲁⲗⲉ ⲛⲏⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲓⲡⲉⲧⲏⲛⲛⲉϥ-ⲟϥⲉⲓⲡⲥⲟⲗⲏ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟϥ  
ⲡⲥⲟⲓ ⲓⲁⲣ ⲉϥⲁⲓϭⲓ-ⲧⲉⲧⲏⲉⲓⲡⲥⲟⲗⲏ ⲁⲡⲥ̅ ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲏ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲧⲉ ϩⲁⲓⲛⲁϥ  
ⲉⲣⲟⲟϥ ⲡⲓⲣⲟⲟϥ †ϩⲓⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ\*

ⲉϩⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲏⲛⲁⲟⲛ-ⲡⲉⲧⲏⲁⲧⲁⲁϥ ⲛⲏⲧⲏ ϩⲁ-ϩⲃⲁϥ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲕⲁⲗⲱϥ  
ⲉϩⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲉⲓⲉ ⲛⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲓⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲡⲉⲧⲫⲱⲉϥ ⲡⲣⲏⲙⲓⲙⲱⲛⲱ ⲁⲉ  
ϩⲏⲛⲓⲙⲁ ⲁⲓϩⲏⲧⲓⲣⲱⲧⲏ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲏ ⲡⲉϭⲁϥ ⲁⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲏⲣⲱⲉϥ

ⲕⲁⲡⲓⲧⲟϥ ⲡⲉⲧϥϩⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲁⲟⲟϩⲉ ⲉϥϩⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲡⲱⲛⲏ ⲛⲥⲁⲣⲧ  
ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲧⲏⲛⲟⲟϥ̅ ⲛⲏ ⲟϥⲟϭⲉϥ ⲛⲥⲓⲧⲓϭⲁ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲏⲛⲟϥ̅ ⲙⲏⲛⲁⲡⲉⲟⲟϩ  
†ϩⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲙⲏⲛⲉϥϥⲛⲏϥ ⲉϩⲱⲡⲉ ⲁϭⲓ ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧⲓⲣⲱⲧ  
ⲕⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉϩⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲙⲓⲡⲉϥϩⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲓⲛⲏ ⲥⲉϭⲉ ⲥⲙⲟⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲏⲟϥⲃ

\*The text is not clear but perhaps understand †-ϩⲓⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧ-  
ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ‘I am apart (ϩⲓ-ⲃⲟⲗ) from you (plural)’. Here ⲧⲏⲛⲉ is a dialect  
variant of the pronoun ⲧⲏϥⲧⲏ. 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 (ⲡⲓⲗⲉⲧⲓ). 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 ⲥⲉϭⲉ read ϩⲁϭⲉ) is agreed about  
the money (19.3).

ⲉⲣⲣⲱϥⲟⲁⲓ ⲥⲉ ⲉϥϭⲟⲙⲁⲓ ⲡⲟⲗⲗⲟⲓϥ ϭⲣⲟⲛⲟⲓϥ ⲕϭⲣⲓⲁ ⲙⲟϥ 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, **ΚΟΤ**≠ ‘surround’ and **ΚΤΟ**≠ ‘return’ look similar because they have a common origin (the sense of ‘turning’), but **ΚΟΤ**≠ ‘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](#)).

**ΔΝΑΙ**, **ΔΝΑ**≠ pleasure, **ΔΝΙ** bring!  
**ΑΡΧΕΙ** begin, **ΑΡΧΕΙ** rule  
**ΑΩΔΑΙ** multiply, **ΕΙΩΕ** **ΑΩΕ†** hang, suspend  
**ΒΑΛ** eye, **ΒΟΛ** outside, **ΒΩΛ** **ΒΛ̄- ΒΟΛ**≠ **ΒΗΛ†** release  
**ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟC** or **ΔΙΑΚΩΝ** deacon, **ΔΙΚΑΙΟC** righteous person  
**ΑΙΤΕΙ** or **ΕΤΙ** request, **ΕΤΙ** or **ΑΙΤΕΙ** still, **ΕΙΤΕ** whether, **ΕΙΤΕ . . . ΕΙΤΕ**  
 whether . . . or  
**ΔΕ** however, **ΓΕ** moreover  
**Ε**, **ΕΡΟ**≠ to, **ΕΡ̄Ν**, **ΕΡΩ**≠ up to  
**ΕΙΝΕ** bring, **ΕΙΝΕ** resemble  
**ΕΖΡΑΙ** up, **ΕΖΡΑΙ** down (= **ΕΠΕCΗΤ**)  
**ΚΤΟ** **ΚΤΕ- ΚΤΟ**≠ return, **ΚΩΤ** **ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤ**≠ **ΚΗΤ†** build, **ΚΩΤΕ** **ΚΕΤ- ΚΟΤ**≠ **ΚΗΤ†** go round, **ΚΟΤ** circuit  
**ΚΟΥΙ** little, **ΚΟΟΥΕ** others  
**ΜΑ** place, **ΜΑ** give!  
**ΜΕ** truth, **ΜΕ** **ΜΕΡΕ**- love, **ΜΕΡΕ** midday  
**Μ̄ΜΟ**≠ as, **Μ̄ΜΟ**≠ (marks the object)  
**Μ̄Ν** with, **Μ̄Ν** or **Μ̄Μ̄Ν** there is not, **Μ̄ΜΟΝ** no, **Μ̄ΜΟΝ** truly, **Μ̄ΜΙΝ̄ΜΟ**≠  
 own  
**ΜΕΝ** of course, **ΜΕΝ** even  
**ΜΗCΕ** interest, **ΜΙCΕ** give birth  
**ΜΗΤ** or **ΜΗΤΕ** ten, **ΜΗΤΕ** middle, **Μ̄ΝΤΕ** fifteen, **ΜΗΤΙ** really?  
**ΜΟΥΤ†** dead, **ΜΟΥΤ**≠ kill  
**ΜΑΔΥ** mother, **ΜΑΥΔΑ**≠ alone  
**ΜΗΝΩΕ** many, **ΜΙΩΕ** fight, **ΜΟΩΕ** travel  
**Ν̄**, **ΝΑ**≠ for, **Ν̄**, **Μ̄ΜΟ**≠ as, **Ν̄**, **Μ̄ΜΟ**≠ (marks the object), **Ν̄** (marks the  
 negative with **ΔΝ**)  
**ΝΑ** mercy, **ΝΑ**≠ for, **ΝΑΙ** for me, **ΝΑΙ** these ones  
**ΝΑΥ** see, **ΝΑΥ** hour, **ΝΑΥ** for them

**ΝΙΜ** every, **ΝΙΜ** who?

**ΝΙΤ** who, which, **ΝΙΤ**≠ bring, **ΝΙΤΕ** of, **ΝΙΤΕ** (marks the conjunctive tense)

**ΝΟΥΧ** false, **ΝΟΥΧΕ** throw

**ΠΕ** is, **ΠΕ** sky, **ΠΙ** or **ΠΕΙ** kiss

**ΠΩΡΩ** **ΠΟΡΩ**† **ΕΒΟΛ** spread out, **ΠΩΡΧ** **ΠΟΡΧ**† **ΕΒΟΛ** separate  
**ΡΙ** cell, **ΡΟ** door

**ΠΩΞΤ** bow, **ΡΩΞΤ** hit, **ΡΩΚΞ** burn

**ΣΕ** yes, **ΣΕ** sixty, **ΣΩ ΣΕ**- drink

**ΣΑΒΕ** wise, **ΧΗΒΕ** sword, **ΣΩΒΕ** laugh

**ΣΩΝΕ** sister, **ΣΟΟΝΕ** robber

**ΣΝΤΕ** together, **ΣΝΤΕ** two, couple (feminine)

**ΣΝΗΥ** brothers, **ΣΝΑΥ** two, couple

**ΣΗΥ** time, **ΣΟΥ** date, **ΣΟΟΥ** six

**ΣΩΟΥΞ** **ΣΟΟΥΞ**≠ assemble, **ΟΥΩΞ** settle down

**ΤΑΕΙΟ** **ΤΑΕΙΗΥ**† esteem, **ΤΑΕΙΟΥ** fifty

**ΤΩΚ** strengthen, **ΤΑΚΟ** destroy

**ΤΑΜΟ** inform, **ΤΑΜΙΟ** create

**ΤΕΝΟΥ** now, **ΤΩΝΟΥ** greatly, **ΤΝΝΟΟΥ** send

**ΤΟΟΥ** hill, **ΤΟΟΥΕ** sandal, **ΤΑΟΥΩ** **ΤΑΥΕ**- produce

**ΤΩΩ** determine, **ΤΩΩ** boundary, **ΤΑΩΟ** increase

**ΟΥΑ** one, **ΟΥΑΔ**≠ only, alone

**ΟΥΔΕ** nor, **ΟΥΤΕ** between

**ΟΥΝ** there is, **ΟΥΝ** actually, **ΟΥΝΟΥ** hour, **ΟΥΟΝ** someone, **ΟΥΩΝ**  
open

**ΟΥΩΩ**† or **ΟΥΩΩ**† respond, **ΟΥΩΩ**† break

**ΟΥΑ** festival, **ΟΥΑ** appear, **ΟΥΑ** up to

**ΟΥΟ** thousand, **ΟΥΕ** hundred, **ΟΥΕ** wood, **ΟΥΙ** measure, **ΟΥΩ** sand

**ΟΥΩΒ** **ΟΥΒ**- shave, **ΟΥΒΕ** **ΟΥΒ**- change

**ΟΥΗΗ** ordinary, **ΟΥΗΡΕ** child

**ΟΥΜΟΥΕ** worship, **ΟΥΗΗΟΥΗΗ** little by little

**ΟΥΩΝΕ** **ΟΥΟΟΝΕ**† sicken, **ΟΥΩΩΝΕ** **ΟΥΟΟΝΕ**† deprive

**ΟΥΟΡΠ** first, **ΟΥΟΡΠ** morning

**ΖΝ**, **ΝΖΗΤ**≠ in, **ΖΗΤ** **ΖΤΗ**≠ mind, **ΖΗ**, **ΖΗΤ**≠ belly, **ΖΗ**, **ΖΗΤ**≠ front, **ΖΔΗ**  
end

**ΖΗΤ** downstream (on the Nile), **ΕΜΖΗΤ** northwards

**ΖΕ** manner, **ΖΕ** fall, **ΖΙ** at, **ΖΙΗ** road

**ΖΟ** face, **ΖΟ** sack, **ΖΩ** suffice, **ΖΩ** me too

**ΖΔΚ** prudent, **ΖΗΚΕ** poor, hungry



**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, Ⲑ, 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 ⲟϮ as a vowel or as a consonant. Likewise, words whose *initial* letter writes two sounds (Ⲑ, Ⲫ, Ⲭ, Ⲯ, Ⲳ, ⲳ) are listed together, but otherwise those letters are treated simply as two sounds (1.1). In other words, Ⲑ is treated as ⲲⲪ 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 ⲈⲓⲤ

ⲁⲒⲬⲚ trial

ⲁⲒⲁⲐⲐⲐ good

ⲁⲒⲁⲐⲐⲐ *good thing*

ⲁⲒⲁⲡⲎ love, compassion, charity

ⲁⲒⲓ ⲲⲁⲒⲁⲡⲎ *be kind, please*

ⲎⲁⲒⲁⲡⲎ *please*

ⲁⲓⲟ truly, indeed

ⲁⲕⲈⲢⲁⲓⲐⲐ pure, simple

ⲁⲒⲓⲟϮ advise

ⲁⲕⲁⲐⲁⲢⲐⲐⲁ dirt, impurity

ⲁⲕⲁⲐⲐⲐ for ⲁⲒⲁⲐⲐⲐ

ⲁⲒⲒⲁ instead, rather, nonetheless

ⲁⲒⲎⲐⲐⲐ truthfully

ⲁⲓⲟϮ come! (ⲁⲓⲎⲎ feminine)

ⲁⲓⲎⲎⲲⲤⲈ west, afterlife

ⲁⲓⲎⲁⲒⲲⲤⲈ grab, hold

ⲁⲓⲎⲁⲓ, ⲁⲓⲎⲁⲥ charm, pleasure

ῥ̄ΑΝΔ= please  
 ΔΝΙ or ΔΝΙΤ= bring!  
 ΔΙΩΝ era, age  
 ΔΝĪ see ΔΝΟΚ  
 ΔΝΑΓΚΗ necessity, constraint  
 ΔΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ lector, reader  
 ΔΝΟΚ or ΔΝĪ I, me  
 ΔΝΕΧΕ delay, wait  
 ΔΝΑΧΩΡΕΙ withdraw  
     ΔΝΑΧΟΡΙΤΗΣ *anchorite, hermit*  
 ΔΝΟΜΟΣ lawless  
 ΔΝΟΝ or ΔΝŪ we, us  
 ΔΝΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ rest, relief  
 ΔΝΑΣΤΡΕΦΕΙ behave  
     ΔΝΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ *life-story*  
 ΔΝΙΤ= bring! (see also ΔΝΙ)  
 ΔΠΑ father (title)  
 ΔΠΕ or ΔΠΗ head  
 ΔΠΙΛΗ threaten  
 ΔΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ sentence  
 ΔΠΑΡΧΗ first-fruits  
 ΔΠΡΗΤΕ moment, while  
 ΔΠΙΣΤΟΣ faithless (see also ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕ)  
 ΔΠΟΤ cup  
 ΔΡΑ elder, local official  
 ΔΡΙ do! make!  
     ΔΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ *be kind, please*  
 ΔΗΡ air  
 ΔΡΙΚΕ fault  
 ΔΡΧΕΙ begin (doing something)  
 ΔΡΧΕΙ rule (+ Ε) over  
     ΔΡΧΩΝ *magistrate*  
     ΔΡΧΗΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ *see ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ*  
 ΔΡΕСКЕ please, appease  
 ΔΡΤОВ or ῚΤОВ artab (measure), bushel  
 ΔΡΩΙΝ lentil  
 ΔСАĪ ΔСΩΟΥ† lighten, relax  
 ΔСЕВНC irreligious  
 ΔСΚΙТНC ascetic, hermit

ΔΣΩΜΑΤΟΣ ethereal (see also ΣΩΜΑ)  
 ΔΣΠΕ speech  
 ΔΣΠΑΖΕ kiss  
 ΔΙΤΙΑ charge, accusation  
 ΔΙΤΕΙ or ΕΤΙ or ΗΤΙ ask, request  
 ΔΙΤΕΙ for ΕΙΤΕ  
 ΔΤΕΙΜΕ witless, insensible (see also ΕΙΜΕ)  
 ΔΤΣΒΩ uneducated, ignorant (see also ΣΒΩ)  
 ΔΤΣΡΒΕ hard-working, diligent (see also ΣΡΒΕ)  
 ΔΤΣΩΤᾹ heedless (see also ΣΩΤᾹ)  
 ΔΤΩΔΥ worthless (see also ΩΔΥ)  
 ΔΤΖΗΤ ignorant, fatuous (see also ΖΗΤ)  
 ΔΤΣΟΜ impossible (see also ΣΟΜ)  
 ΔΩ who? which? what?  
   ἡδω ἡζε *how?*  
 ΔΩΔᾹ increase, lengthen  
 ΔΩΚΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ cry out, scream (see also ΧΩΚΑΚ)  
 ΔΞΟ or ΕΞΟ treasure, treasury  
 ΔΞΕΡΑΤ= stand (reflexive)  
 ΔΧΕ or ΔΧΙC say! tell! speak!  
 ΔΧᾹ, ΔΧᾺΤ= except, without  
 ΔΧΙC see ΔΧΕ

## B

ΒΙ for ΦΙ  
 ΒΩ tree, vine  
 ΒΩΚ ΒΗΚ† go, depart  
 ΒΑΛ eye  
 ΒΟΛ outside  
   ῤΒΟΛ *escape*  
   ΣΑΒΟΛ *away, off*  
   ΩΑΒΟΛ *forever, eternal*  
 ΒΩΛ ΒᾹ- ΒΟΛ= ΒΗΛ† untie, loosen (+ ΕΒΟΛ) release  
 ΒᾺΛε blind (ΒᾺΛεεγε plural)  
 ΒᾺΧε ostrakon, potsherd  
 ΒΗΜΑ (judge's) bench  
 ΒΩΩΝ or ΒΩΝΕ bad, evil (see also ΣΤΟΙ)  
 ΒᾺΝΕ date (fruit)  
 ΒΙΡ basket

ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟC barbarian  
ΒΙΟC lifetime  
ΒΑCΑΝΟC torture  
ΒΗΤ palm leaf  
ΒΩϞE forgetfulness  
ΒΑΙΩΙΝE messenger  
ΒΑΩΟΥΡ saw  
ΒΩCΕ for ϞΩCΕ

### Γ

ΓΑΡ because, after all  
ΓΕΝΟC lineage, family  
ΓΡΑΦΗ scripture

### Δ

ΔΔ written for ΔΕΙΝΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΝΑ (Greek) such-and-such  
ΔE so, but, therefore, however  
ΔΙΑΒΟΛΟC devil  
ΔΙΩΓΜΟC persecution  
ΔΙΗΚΕΙ distribute (property), bequeath  
ΔΙΩΚE 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

### Ϟ or ϞΙ (vowel)

Ϟ, ϞΡΟ= to, toward, at, in relation to, more than  
ϞΙ ΝΗΥ† come  
ϞΒΟΛ out  
    ϞΒΟΛ ΖΙΤḲ through, by, by means of  
    ϞΒΟΛΧE because  
    †ϞΒΟΛ sell

**ΕΒΙΗΝ** 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  
     **ΔΤΕΙΜΕ** *witless, insensible*  
**ΕΜΧΙΡ** for **ΜΩΙΡ**  
**ΕΜΑΤΕ** very, greatly, especially  
**ΕΜΖΗΤ** northwards (see also **ΖΗΤ**)  
**ΕΝΕ** whether  
**ΕΙΝΕ** resemble  
**ΕΙΝΕ** **Ḳ**- **ḲΤ** bring  
**ΕΝΤΟΛΗ** or **ḲΤΟΛΗ** instruction, law  
**ΕΝΕΖ** ever, forever  
**ΕΠΙΔΗ** or **ΕΠΕΙΔΗ** since, because  
**ΕΠΕΚΑΛΕ** invoke  
**ΕΠΕΠ** or **ΕΠΗΠ** Eripi (month)  
**ΕΠΑΡΧΟC** governor, prefect  
**ΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC** bishop  
     **ΑΡΧΗΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC** *archbishop*  
**ΕΠΕCΗΤ** down (see also **ΕCΗΤ**)  
**ΕΠΙΤΙΜΑ** or **ΕΠΕΙΤΙΜΑ** punish, chastise  
**ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟC** steward  
**ΕΙΡΕ** **Ḳ**- **ΑΑ** **ΟḲ** do, make  
**ΕΡΟ** see **Ε**  
**ΕΡΓΑCΙΑ** trade, craft, job  
**ΕΡΜΟΝΤ** Armant (place)  
**ΕΡḲ**, **ΕΡΩ** up to  
**ΕΙΡΗΝΗ** or **ΗΡΗΝΗ** peace  
**ΕΡΑΤ** to  
**ΕΡΗΤ** promise

**EPHY** friend, companion  
**EPWAN** if  
**EIC** (initial particle)  
**ECHT** bottom, ground (see also **EPECTHT**)  
**ESCOOY** sheep  
**EICZHHTE** (initial particle)  
**ET** or **ETE** who, which  
**ETI** or **AITEI** still, now  
**ETI** for **AITEI**  
**EITE** then, whether  
     **EITE . . . EITE** *whether . . . or*  
**ETBE, ETBHHT** because of, about  
     **ETBE OY** *why? (see also OY)*  
**ETIMOC** freely  
**ETN̄, ETOOT** to (someone)  
**EOOY** glory  
     **†EOOY** *glorify*  
**EY** for **Ȳ**  
**EWE EWT- AYT** **AWE†** hang, depend  
**EYWP** supposing  
**EYWE** or **ȲWE** be appropriate  
**EYXE** supposing  
**EYṬ** nail  
**EZO** for **AZO**  
**EZOYN** in, into  
**EZPAI** down, up  
**EXN̄, EXW** over, onto, ahead of

## Z

**ZWON** creature

## H

**H** or, and  
**HI** house  
     **PHNH** *warden, houseman*  
**HP** number  
**HPHH** for **EIPHH**  
**HP** wine  
**HTE** for **AITEI**

**Θ**

ΘḂΒΙΟ ΘḂΒΙΕ- ΘḂΒΙΟϝ ΘḂΒΙΗ† be humble  
 ΘΛΙΒΕ upset, be upset  
 ΘΑΛΑССΑ see ϠΑΛΑССΑ  
 ΘΑΥΜΑΖΕ wonder about  
 ΘΥΜΟС rage  
 ΘΗН sulphur, brimstone  
 ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕСТАТОС best beloved of God (title)  
 ΘΥΡΟΝ gate  
 ΘΥСΙΑΖΕ sacrifice  
     ΘΗСΙΑСΤΗΡΙΟΝ *altar*  
 ΘΟΟΥТ or ΘΩΘ Thouth (month)

**ĭ or Ⲉ**

ĭερο or ⲈΙερο river  
 ĭ̄ for ĭ̄НСОУС Jesus (name)  
 ĭ̄ΩТ or ⲈΩТ father (ⲈΙΟΥϞ plural)

**κ**

κΩ κΑ- κΑΑϝ κΗ† put, leave, drop, let (+ ΕΒΟΛ) forgive  
 ΚΟΥĭ or ΚΟΥĭ small, little  
 ΚΩΩΒΕ ΚΕΕΒΕ- ΚΟΟΒΕϝ compel, force  
 ΚΥΒΕΡΝΑ steer  
 ΚΟΚ for ΚΟΧ  
 ΚΑΚΕ darkness  
 ΚΑΚΩС badly  
 ΚΟΧ standard, usual  
 ΚΛΑВТ hood  
 ΚΟΛΑΚΕΥΕ flatter, persuade  
 ΚΕΛΩΛ bucket  
 ΚΛΟМ crown  
     †κЛОМ *crown*  
 ΚΑΛΩС properly, well  
 ΚΕΛΕΥΕ allow, grant  
 ΚΩΛĒ ΚΕΛĒ- ΚΟΛĒϝ ΚΟΛĒ† strike, knock, ring (bell)  
 ΚΑΛСИΛ wheel  
 ΚΙМ ΚΕМТ- ΚΕМТϝ move, affect, react  
 ΚΗМЕ Egypt (place)  
 ΚΟМΙС (imperial) deputy

ΚΩΜΙΤΑΤΩΝ *court, assembly*  
 ΚΩΜΩ Κῆω- ΚΟΜΩ= mock  
 ΚΕΝΕ Qena (place)  
 ΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΕ approach, risk  
 ΚΩΝĀ ΚΕΝC- ΚΟΝC= ΚΟΝĀ† stab, slay  
 ΚΟΝΤΟC pole  
 ΚΑΠΝΟC smoke  
 ΚΑΙΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ or ΚΕΦΑΛΛΙΟΝ main point, crux, heading,  
 compendium  
 ΚΡΟ riverbank, seashore (ΚΡΩΟΥ plural)  
 ΚΑΡΩ= shut up (reflexive)  
 ΚΑΡΩϠ *silence*  
 ΚῤῢΜΕC dust  
 ΚΡΙΝΕ judge  
 ΚΑΡΠΟC fruit  
 ΚΡΟΥΡ frog  
 ΚΑΙΡΟC period, season  
 ΚΕΡΑCΤΗC viper  
 ΚΕΡΑΤ= step (reflexive)  
 ΚΩΡῶ ΚΕΡΩ- ΚΟΡΩ= beg, plead  
 ΚΑΡΩϠ 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  
 (+ Ⲉ) go round  
 ΚΟΤ *circuit, trip, visit*  
 ΚΑΤΕΧΕ hold back, restrain  
 ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΝΕ condemn  
 ΚΑΤΗC jug  
 ΚΑΘΑΙΡΟΥ downgrade, expel  
 ΚΟΟΥΕ others  
 ΚΑḲ earth  
 ΚΩḲ ΚΗḲ† envy

ΚΟΙΑΖΚ or ΚΙΟΖΚ Khoiak (month)  
ΚΩΞΤ fire

## Λ

ΛΟ ΛΟΤϯ stop, quit, leave  
ΛΑΒΞΙΜΕ amorous, randy  
ΛΟΓΟΣ word, lesson, message  
    ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ἸΠΠΟΥΤΕ (*legal document*)  
ΛΑΚΑΝΤ cauldron  
ΛΑΜΠΑ lamp  
ΛΥΠΕΙ grieve, grief  
ΛΟΙΠΟΝ already  
ΛΕΠΣΕ fragment, bit  
ΛΑΣ tongue  
ΛΑΟΣ people, community  
ΛΑΔΥ any, anyone, no-one  
ΛΑΩΔΑΝΕ magistrate

## Μ

ΜΑ place  
    ἸΠΠΕΙΜΑ *here*  
ΜΑ give!  
ΜΕ or ΜΗΕ truth  
ΜΕ ΜΕΡΕ- ΜΕΡΙΤϯ love  
    ΜΕΡΙΤ *beloved (ΜΕΡΑΤΕ plural)*  
ΜΟΥ ΜΟΟΥΤ† die  
ΜΟΥΙ lion  
ΜΑΔΒ thirty (ΜΑΔΒΕ feminine)  
ΜΑΕΙΝ sign, mark  
ΜΟΕΙΞΕ surprise, shock  
ΜΟΚΜΕΚ ΜΕΚΜΟΥΚϯ ponder, ruminate  
ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ blessed, deceased  
ἸΚΑΖ ΜΟΚΞ† suffer, grieve  
    ΜΟΚΞἸΖΗΤ *grieve*  
ΜΑΚΞ neck  
ΜΟΚΞἸΖΗΤ see ἸΚΑΖ  
ΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ especially  
ΜΟΥΛΞ wax

**ḿ̄MO**≠ see **ḿ̄**  
**ḿ̄Mḿ̄** or **Mḿ̄** there is not  
**ḿ̄MON** *no*  
**ḿ̄MON** truly  
**ḿ̄MINḿ̄MO**≠ own  
**ḿ̄MAṬE** for **EMATE**  
**ḿ̄MAḶ** there  
**ETḿ̄MAḶ** *that*  
**Mḿ̄**, **Nḿ̄MA**≠ with, and  
**Mḿ̄** see **ḿ̄Mḿ̄**  
**MEḿ̄** of course, accordingly (see also **ṬOPṬ**)  
**MEḿ̄** surely, indeed, even  
**MINE** sort, manner, fashion  
**ḿ̄TEIMINE** *this way, like this*  
**MOONE** feed, nurse  
**MOḶN Mḿ̄NṬ** **EBOL** remain, continue, carry on  
**MONAXOC** solitary, monk  
**Mḿ̄ḿ̄CA**, **Mḿ̄ḿ̄CO**≠ after  
**Mḿ̄ḿ̄COC** *next, afterwards*  
**MONACTHPION** monastery  
**ḿ̄NOḶṬ** doorkeeper  
**Mḿ̄ṬE**, **Mḿ̄ṬA**≠ have not  
**MAḶNOḶṬE** pious, devout  
**Mḿ̄ṬPE** or **MENTPE** witness  
**Mḿ̄COM** see **COM**  
**MAPPA** sheet  
**MHPOC** or **MHPOTE** in case  
**ḿ̄PṬA** deserve, be worth  
**MEPE** see **ME**  
**MEPE** midday  
**MOḶP MOPE**≠ **MHPṬ** bind  
**MAPON** let's go  
**Mḿ̄PE** bond, fetter  
**MEPOC** share, part  
**MEPT** (**MEPAṬE** plural) beloved (see also **ME**)  
**MOPṬ** beard  
**MARTYPOC** witness, martyr  
**MARTYPIA** *martyrdom*

**ΜΑΡΤΗΡΙΟΝ** *shrine (for martyr)*  
**ΜΗCE** interest  
**ΜΙCE** **ΜΕC-** **ΜΑCT**≠ **ΜΟCE**† give birth **ϣῤῖΠῖΜΙCE** first born  
**ΜΑΪCΒΩ** wisdom loving (see also **CBΩ**)  
**ΜΕCΟΡΕ** or **ΜΗCΟΥΡΕ** Mesore (month)  
**ΜΟCTΕ** **ΜΕCTΕ-** **ΜΕCTΩ**≠ hate  
**ΜΕCTḆḐHT** chest  
**ΜΥCTΗΡΙΟΝ** mystery  
**ḆṪO** **ΕΒΟΛ** presence  
**ΜΑΤΟΙ** soldier  
**ΜΗΤ** ten (**ΜΗTE** feminine)  
**ΜΗTE** middle, midst  
**ΜΗΤΙ** really?  
**ΜΟTE** shoulders  
**ΜΟΥTE** (+ **Ε**) call, summon  
**ḆṪON** **ΜΟṪḆ**† rest, pass away (reflexive)  
**ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ** repent, confess  
**ΜΗΤΡΑ** cervix  
**ΜΑΘΗΤΗC** disciple  
**ΜΑΑΥ** mother  
**ΜΑΥΑΑ**≠ only, alone  
**ΜΕΕΥΕ** think  
**ῤῖΠΜΕΕΥΕ** *remember*  
**ΜΟΟΥ** water  
**ΜΟΥΟΥΤ** **ΜΕΥΤ-** **ΜΟΟΥΤ**≠ kill  
**ΜΗΗΩΕ** many, host  
**ΜΙΩΕ** **ΜΕΩ-** **ΜΑΩ**≠ fight, struggle (+ **ΕΧḆ**) fight for  
**ΜΟΟΩΕ** walk, travel  
**ḆṪIP** or **ΕΜΧIP** Mekhir (month)  
**ΜΑZE** cubit  
**ΜΑZE** flax  
**ΜΟΥZE** **ΜEZ-** **ΜAZ**≠ **ΜHZE**† fill, complete, redeem  
**ΜΑΑXE** or **ΜΑXE** maaje (measure, about 1/2 of **ΑΡΤΟΒ**)  
**ΜΟΧḐ** belt

## N

**Ḇ** written for **ΝΟΥΒ**  
**Ḇ**, **ḆMO**≠ from, in, as  
**Ḇ**, **NA**≠ to, for

**NA** pity, mercy  
     **ῤΟΥΝΑ** *be merciful*  
     **ΝΑΗΤ** *compassionate*  
**ΝΑΙ** these ones  
**ΝΕ** (they) are  
**ΝΟΕΙ** consider, reflect  
**ΝΟΥΒ** or **Ν** gold, money  
**ΝΟΒΕ** sin  
**ΝΟΒΡΕ** good, positive  
**ΝΑΙΑΤ** *be blessed*  
**Ν̄ΚΑ** thing, belonging  
**Ν̄ΚΟΤ̄Κ̄** or **Ν̄ΚΟΤΕ** lie down, sleep  
**ΝΙΜ** each, every  
**ΝΙΜ** who?  
**Ν̄ΜΑ** *see Μ̄*  
**ΝΥΜΦΙΟΣ** bridegroom  
**ΝΟΜΟC** law, authority, (administrative) district  
**ΝΟΥΝ** or **ΝΟΝ** depth, groundwater, abyss, underworld  
**ΝΟΥΝΕ** root, stock  
**ΝΑΝΟΥ**, **ΝΑΝΟΥ** *be good*  
**Ν̄ΝΑΞΡ̄Ν̄**, **Ν̄ΝΑΞΡΑ** *see ΝΑΞΡ̄Ν̄*  
**ΝΕΥΡΟΝ** strap, lash  
**Ν̄CΑ**, **Ν̄CΩ** *after, behind, apart from*  
**ΝΟΥC** perception  
**ΝΗCΤΙΑ** fasting  
     **ΝΗCΤΕΥΕ** *fast*  
**Ν̄Τ** who, which  
**Ν̄Τ** *see ΕΙΝΕ*  
**Ν̄ΤΟ** or **Ν̄ΤΕ** you (feminine)  
**ΝΑΗΤ** compassionate (see also **ΝΑ**)  
**ΝΟΥΤΕ** god  
**Ν̄ΤΟΚ** or **Ν̄Τ̄Κ̄** you (masculine)  
**Ν̄ΤΟΛΗ** for **ΕΝΤΟΛΗ**  
**Ν̄Τ̄Ν̄**, **Ν̄ΤΟΟΤ** *with, from*  
**Ν̄ΤΟC** she, her  
**Ν̄ΤΩΤ̄Ν̄** or **Ν̄ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄** you (plural)  
**Ν̄ΤΟΟΥ** they, them  
**Ν̄ΤΟϩ** he, him  
     **Η Ν̄ΤΟϩ** *even, perhaps*

N̄THC weed  
 NAY look (+ E) see  
 NAY hour, time  
 NHY see EI  
 NAWE, NAWD= be numerous  
 NAWT hard  
     NAWTZHT *stubborn*  
 NEZ oil  
 NAZB yoke, shoulders  
 NEZPE mourn  
 NAZPN, NAZPA= or N̄NAZPN, N̄NAZPA= before, in front of  
 N̄ZHT see ZN̄, N̄ZHT=

NOYX false, lying, liar  
 NOYXE NEX- NOX= NHX† EBOL throw away  
 NOS big, great  
 NOSNES NESNOYS= insult, abuse  
 NOYSC̄ NOSC̄† get angry, anger

## O

O see EPE  
 OBZE tooth  
 OEIK bread  
 OIKONOMOC storekeeper  
 ON also, too  
 ONTWC actually, truly  
 OPGH wrath, temper, temperament  
 OZC̄ sickle (see also WZC̄)

## Π

PAI this one  
 PE (he) is, (it) is  
 PE sky, heaven (PIHE plural)  
 PI or PEI kiss  
     †PI or †PEI *kiss*  
 PIHGH fount  
 PIKPIA bitterness  
 POUAKIC probably  
 POLEMOC battle, war  
     POLYMAPXHC *general*

ΠΟΛΙΣ city  
 ΠΩΛΩ̅ ΠΛΩ- ΠΟΛΩ̅ 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*  
 ΠΑΑΠΕ or ΠΑΑΠΕΪ 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  
 ΠΑΡΑΔΙΣΟΣ paradise  
 ΠΙΡΑΖΕ tempt  
     ΠΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ *temptation*  
 ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ for ΠΑΡΑΓΓΑΛΕΙ  
 ΠΙΡΑΞΙΣ activity, business  
 ΠΑΡΜΟΥΤΕ Parmouthi (month)  
 ΠΑΡΑΜΥΘΙΑ encouragement  
 ΠΑΡΜῆΖΟΤῆ̅ or ΠΑΡΕΜΖΑΤῆ̅ Pamenoth (month)  
 ΠΑΡΑΝΟΜΙΑ crime  
 ΠΟΡΝΕΥΕ (act like a) prostitute  
 ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ understand  
     ΠΡΟΦΗΤΙΑ *prophecy*  
     ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ *prophet*  
 ΠΡΟΣ at, in  
 ΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΕ intercede (+ ΖΑ) for  
     ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΣ *priest*  
 ΠΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ temptation (see also ΠΙΡΑΖΕ)  
 ΠΡΟΣΦΩΡΑ wreath  
 ΠΡΟΣΤΑΓΜΑ (imperial) decree  
 ΠΡΟΕΣΤΟΣ superior (of a monastery)  
 ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ 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)  
 ΠΑΤΑΣΣΕ strike, attack  
 ΠΘΕ resolve, agree (+ Ν) to  
 ΠΕΘΗΠ secret (see also ϚΩΠ)  
 ΠΟΥ today  
     ΠΟΥ ΝῚΡΟΥ *this very day*  
 ΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ each one (see also ΟΥΑ)  
 ΠΑΦΩΝC Pakhons (month)  
 ΠΩΡ ΠΑΡ- ΠΑΡϝ ΠΗΡ† break (+ ΕΒΟΛ) burst  
 ΠΑΡΩΝC for ΠΑΦΩΝC  
 ΠΩϚῚ ΠΕϚC- ΠΟϚῚ† bite  
 ΠΩΡΤ ΠΕΡΤ- ΠΑΡΤϝ ΠΑΡΤ† bend, bow (+ ΕΒΟΛ) pour out, spill  
 ΠΕΧΕ, ΠΕΧΑϝ said  
 ΠΩΧῚ breadth, plane

## P

ῤ- see ΕΙΡΕ  
 ΡΗ sun  
 ΡΙ cell, room  
 ΡΟ, ΡΩϝ mouth, door  
 ΡΩ indeed, truly, even  
 ῤΒΟΛ escape (see also ΒΟΛ)  
 ΡΙΚΕ ΡΕΚΤ- ΡΕΚΤϝ ΡΑΚΕ† turn, incline  
 ΡΑΚΟΤΕ Alexandria (place)  
 ΡΩΚῚ ΡΕΚῚ- ΡΟΚῚϝ ΡΟΚῚ† burn  
 ΡΙΜΕ weep  
     ῤΜΕΙΗ *tear, weeping* (ῤΜΕΙΟΥΕ *plural*)  
 ΡΩΜΕ person, man  
 ΡῚΜΑΟ rich person

PḲ̄N̄TΩN see TΩN  
 PḲ̄N̄ZHT thinker, thoughtful person (see also ZHT)  
 POMPЕ year  
 PḲ̄PΔΩ gentleman  
 PḲ̄M̄IOYЄ see PIME  
 PΔN name, identity  
 PIP pig  
 P̄PO king (P̄PΩOY plural)  
   P̄P̄PO *rule*  
 PΔCOY dream  
 PHC south  
 POCIC PHC† keep watch, stay awake  
 PACTE next day, tomorrow  
 PAT, PAT≠ foot  
 P̄TOB see ΔPTOB  
 PΔOYH neighbourhood  
 POOYT see OYROT  
 POOYΩ purpose, responsibility, concern (+ ZΔ) take responsibility  
   for, take care of  
 PΔOЄ rejoice  
 PΩZT̄ PЄZT- PΔZT≠ PΔZT̄† strike, hit

## C

CA side, part, direction  
   EPEICA MḲ̄PAI *here and there*  
 CE yes  
 CE sixty  
 CHY time, period  
 CI CHY† satisfy  
 COY day, date  
 COOY six (COЄ feminine)  
 CΩ CE- COO≠ drink  
 CBΩ teach, teaching (CBOOYЄ plural)  
   ΔTCBΩ *uneducated, ignorant*  
   MΔICBΩ *wisdom loving*  
   XICBΩ *learn*  
   †CBΩ *teach*  
 CΔBE wise (CΔBH feminine)  
 CHBE or CHQE sword, weapon

**ⲬⲒⲘⲐⲈ** *take arms*  
**ⲘⲟⲃⲈ** laugh (+ **ⲛⲓⲘⲁ**) at, mock  
**Ⲙⲁⲃⲟⲗ** away, off (see also **ⲃⲟⲗ**)  
**Ⲙⲟⲃⲛ̄** fan, cool  
**ⲘⲃⲏⲧⲈ** foam, spit  
**ⲘⲟⲃⲧⲈ Ⲙ̄ⲃⲧⲈ- Ⲙ̄ⲃⲧⲟⲩⲧⲉ Ⲙ̄ⲃⲧⲟⲩⲧⲓ†** prepare, make ready  
**ⲘⲟⲃⲟⲩⲈ** see **Ⲙⲟⲃ**  
**ⲘⲁⲓⲈ** or **ⲘⲁⲈⲓⲈ** nice-looking, beautiful  
**ⲘⲁⲈⲓⲛ** physician  
**ⲘⲟⲈⲓⲧ** fame, distinction  
**Ⲙⲟⲕ ⲘⲈⲕ- Ⲙⲟⲕⲉ Ⲙⲏⲕ†** pull, gather  
**ⲘⲕⲈⲡⲁⲗⲈ** shelter  
**Ⲙⲁⲗⲟ** eminent, distinguished  
**Ⲙⲟⲕⲗⲁⲉ** follow (reflexive)  
**Ⲙⲏⲏⲏⲁ** robe, habit  
**Ⲙⲟⲕⲗⲏⲧⲉ** lead (reflexive)  
**ⲘⲟⲕⲈⲗ̄ Ⲙ̄ⲗⲈⲗ̄- Ⲙ̄ⲗⲈⲟⲗⲉ Ⲙ̄ⲗⲈⲟⲗⲓ†** comfort, encourage  
**ⲘⲟⲩⲈ Ⲙⲁⲏⲏⲁⲁⲧⲓ†** bless  
**Ⲙⲏⲏ** voice, report (see also **ⲬⲒⲘⲈ**)  
**Ⲙⲟⲏⲁ** body  
**ⲁⲘⲟⲏⲁⲧⲟⲘ** *insubstantial, ethereal*  
**ⲘⲩⲏⲃⲟⲩⲗⲟⲘ** advisor  
**Ⲙⲁⲏⲏⲁⲁⲧ** see **ⲘⲟⲩⲈ**  
**ⲘⲏⲓⲛⲈ Ⲙⲏ̄- Ⲙⲏ̄ⲛⲧⲉ Ⲙⲟⲏⲧⲓ†** agree, establish  
**ⲘⲟⲩⲏⲛⲈ** goose  
**ⲘⲈⲏⲏⲟⲛ** noble  
**Ⲙⲟⲏⲧ** see **ⲘⲏⲓⲛⲈ**  
**Ⲙⲟⲧ** likeness, pattern  
**Ⲙⲏⲁⲩ** temples (of the head)  
**Ⲙⲟⲛ** sibling, brother (**Ⲙⲏⲏⲩ** plural)  
**ⲘⲟⲛⲈ** *sister*  
**ⲘⲟⲛⲈ** robber  
**ⲘⲩⲏⲁⲗⲓⲘ** assembly, (church) service  
**Ⲙⲟⲛⲧ Ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ- Ⲙⲟⲛⲧⲉ Ⲙⲟⲛⲧⲓ†** create  
**Ⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲈ** together (see also **Ⲙⲏⲁⲩ**)  
**Ⲙⲏⲏⲏⲟⲓⲁ** habit, custom  
**Ⲙⲏⲁⲩ** two, pair, couple (**Ⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲈ** feminine)  
**Ⲙⲏⲏⲩ** see **Ⲙⲟⲛ**  
**Ⲙⲏⲟⲩ** blood

**ϸⲉⲣⲧⲉ** rest, remainder  
**ϸⲟⲡ** occasion, moment  
**ϸⲓⲟϥϸⲟⲡ** *at once, together*  
**ϸⲡⲟϥⲁⲛ** effort, zeal  
**ϸⲡϥⲗⲓⲟⲛ** cave  
**ϸⲟⲡϸⲓ ⲧⲓⲛⲧⲓ- ϸⲉⲡϸⲱⲡⲓ ϸⲉⲡϸⲱⲡⲓ†** request, beg  
**ϸⲟⲡϸⲓ ϸⲉⲡϸ-** *request, beg*  
**ϸⲡⲟⲧⲟϥ** lips  
**ϸⲟⲑⲓⲁ** wisdom  
**ϸⲟⲑⲟϸ** *wise*  
**ϸⲑⲣⲁⲗⲓⲗⲉ** cross (oneself)  
**ϸⲱⲡ** for **ϸⲱⲧⲛⲣ**  
**ϸⲣ̄ⲃⲉ** or **ϸⲣ̄ⲑⲉ ϸⲣⲟϥⲧ†** be idle (+ ⲉ) take time for  
**ⲁⲧϸⲣ̄ⲃⲉ** *hard-working, diligent*  
**ϸⲱⲣ̄ⲙ̄ ϸⲉⲣ̄ⲙ- ϸⲟⲣ̄ⲙ ϸⲟⲣ̄ⲙ̄†** stray, err  
**ϸϥⲣⲓⲁ** Syria  
**ϸϥⲣⲟϸ** *Syrian*  
**ϸⲁⲣ̄ϫ** flesh  
**ϸⲁⲣⲧ** or **ϸⲟⲣⲧ** wool  
**ϸⲣ̄ⲑⲉ** for **ϸⲣ̄ⲃⲉ**  
**ϸⲧⲟⲓ** scent  
**ϸ†ⲃⲱⲱⲛ** *stench, stink (see also ⲃⲱⲛⲉ)*  
**ϸⲓⲟϥⲧ** Asyut (place)  
**ϸⲁⲧⲉ** flame  
**ϸⲟⲧⲉ** arrow, barb  
**ϸⲧⲓⲕⲁ** strip  
**ϸⲧⲟⲓⲕⲉ** or **ϸⲧϥϫⲉⲓ** assent  
**ϸⲱⲧ̄ⲙ̄ ϸⲉⲧ̄ⲙ- ϸⲟⲧ̄ⲙ ϸⲉ** hear, listen (+ ⲉ) listen to, obey (+ ⲛ̄ϸⲁ) obey  
**ⲁⲧϸⲱⲧ̄ⲙ̄** *heedless*  
**ϸⲱⲧⲛⲣ** or **ϸⲱⲡ** saviour  
**ϸⲱⲧⲛⲣⲓⲁ** *deliverance, salvation*  
**ϸⲧⲁϥⲣⲟϸ** cross  
**ϸⲧⲣⲁⲧⲉϥⲙⲁ** army  
**ϸⲟϥⲟ** wheat  
**ϸⲟⲟϥ̄ⲛ̄ ϸⲟϥ̄ⲛ- ϸⲟϥ̄ⲱⲛ ϸⲉ** know, recognise  
**ϸⲟⲟϥ̄ⲧ̄ⲛ̄ ϸⲟϥ̄ⲧⲛ- ϸⲟϥ̄ⲧⲱⲛ ϸⲉ ϸⲟϥ̄ⲧⲱⲛ†** stretch, straighten (+ ⲉϫⲟϥ̄ⲛ̄)  
incline toward  
**ϸⲱⲟϥ̄ϫ ϸⲉϥ̄ϫ- ϸⲟⲟϥ̄ϫ ϸⲟⲟϥ̄ϫ†** assemble, meet, gather  
**ϸⲱⲁϥ ϸⲉⲁϥ-** despise, hurt

CΩΩϵ field  
 CΑΩḳ seven (CΑΩϥϥ feminine)  
 CΑϥ yesterday  
 CHϥϥ see CHBE  
 CΑΖΟΥ CΖΟΥP- CΖΟΥΩPϥ CΖΟΥOPT† curse  
 COOZE CΑZE- CΑZΩϥ CΑZHḲ† remove, separate (+ EBOΛ) separate  
 from, leave (reflexive)  
 CΖΔĪ CΕZ- CΑZϥ or CΖΔĪTϥ CΗZ† write  
 CΖIME woman, wife (CΖIME plural)  
 ΧICZIME marry  
 COC fool, stupid  
 CSHP sail

## T

TΑΔϥ see †  
 TΑĪ this one (feminine)  
 TΕ (she) is, (it) is  
 TΟ see †  
 TΒΔ ten thousand  
 TΒO Edfu (place)  
 TΩBE Tubi (month)  
 TḂBO TḂBE- TḂBOϥ TḂBHḲ† purify, cleanse  
 TḂNH (wild) animal (TḂNOOϥ plural)  
 TḂT fish  
 TΩBZ TḂZ- TOBZϥ ask, pray  
 TΑEIO TΑEIE- TΑEIOϥ TΑEIHḲ† or TΑĪΔĪT† honour, esteem  
 TΑEIOḲ or TΑIOḲ fifty  
 TΑKO TΑKE- TΑKOϥ TΑKHḲT† destroy  
 TΩK TΕK- TOKϥ TΗK† strengthen, be strong  
 TΩKḲZHḲT *be resolute, stand firm*  
 TΑΖIC for ΔΑΖIC  
 TΑXH quickly  
 TΕXNE or TΕXNH trade, craft  
 TΑLO TΑLE- TΑLOϥ TΑLHḲ† lift, raise, pile up, offer up, board (a  
 ship)  
 TΕΛHΛ cheer, rejoice  
 TΩΛĪ TΟΛMϥ TΟΛM† pollute, defile  
 TΕΛEIOC whole, perfect  
 TḲTḲ drip

ΤΧΤΙΛΕ *drip, drop*  
 ΤΑΛΘΟ ΤΑΛΘΕ- ΤΑΛΘΟϞ ΤΑΛΘΗΓ† heal  
 ΤḲ̅ not  
 ΤΟΜ (sleeping) mat  
   ΤΜΗ *mat*  
 ΤΩΜ ΤḲ̅- ΤΟΜϞ ΤΗΜ† shut, close  
 ΤΑΜΙΟ ΤΑΜΙΕ- ΤΑΜΙΟϞ ΤΑΜΙΗΓ† create, make  
 ΤΑΜΟ ΤΑΜΕ- ΤΑΜΟϞ or ΤΑΜΑϞ ΤΑΜΑΕΙΤ† tell, inform  
 ΤΩΜḲ̅Τ ΤΟΜḲ̅Τ† meet (+ Ε) with  
 ΤΩΜϞ ΤḲ̅Ϟ- ΤΟΜϞϞ ΤΟΜϞ† bury  
 ΤΩΝ where?  
   ΡḲ̅Ḳ̅ΤΩΝ *someone from where?*  
 ΤΩΝ see †ΤΩΝ  
 ΤΕΝΟΥ or †ΝΟΥ now  
   ΤΕΥΝΟΥ *see ΟΥΝΟΥ*  
 ΤΩΝΟΥ greatly  
 ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΝΟΥ ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΝΕΥ- ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΝΟΥϞ send  
 ΤΟΥΝΟϞ ΤΟΥΝΕϞ- ΤΟΥΝΟϞϞ wake, raise  
 ΤΟΝΤḲ̅ ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΤḲ̅- ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΤΩΝϞ ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ΤΩΝ† resemble, compare, liken  
 ΤḲ̅Ḳ̅ wing  
 ΤΑΝΞΟΥΤ ΤΑΝΞΟΥΤϞ ΤΑΝΞΗΥΤ† believe (+ ΜḲ̅) believe in, trust  
 ΤΠΕ top, upper part  
 ΤΟΠ edge  
 ΤΑΠΡΟ mouth  
 ΤΟΠΟϞ church, shrine  
 ΤΥΠΟϞ image, form  
 ΤΑΦΟϞ grave  
 ΤΗΡϞ all  
   ΠΤΗΡḲ̅ *everything*  
 ΤΩΡΕ, ΤΟΥΤϞ hand  
   ΩΠḲ̅ΤΩΡΙ, ΩΠḲ̅ΤΟΥΤϞ *promise, assure*  
 ΤΑΡΚΟ summon  
 ΤΡΟΜΕΥϞ runner  
 ΤΡΕΜΗϞΙΟΝ *tremissis (coin)*  
 ΤΩΡḲ̅ ΤΟΡḲ̅- rob, plunder  
 ΤΑΟϞ peacock  
 ΤΩΤ ΤΕΤ- ΤΟΥΤϞ ΤΗΤ† agree, approve  
 ΤΟΤΕ then, accordingly  
 ΤΟΥḲ̅ hill

ΤΟΟΥΕ sandal  
 ΤΑΟΥΩ ΤΑΥΕ- ΤΑΥΟϝ produce, grow, proclaim  
 ΤΩΟΥΝ ΤΟΥΝ̄- ΤΩΟΥΝϝ ΤΩΝ† raise, get up (+ ΖΔ) carry  
 ΤΟΥΕΩΤΕ praise (compare ΟΥΩΩΤ)  
 ΤΩΩ ΤΕΩ- ΤΩϝ ΤΗΩ† determine, limit, agree  
     ΤΩΩ district, area, boundary  
 ΤΑΩΟ ΤΑΩΕ- ΤΑΩΟϝ increase, keep (doing something)  
 ΤΑΖΟ ΤΑΖΕ- ΤΑΖΟϝ ΤΑΖΗΥ set up, reach (+ ΕΡΑΤϝ) stand up, hold  
     up  
 ΤΩΖΜ̄ ΤΕΖΜ- ΤΑΖΜϝ ΤΑΖΜ̄† call, summon  
 ΤΩΖС ΤΕΖС- ΤΑΖСϝ ΤΑΖС† wash, cleanse  
 ΤΑΧΡΟ ΤΑΧΡΕ- ΤΑΧΡΟϝ ΤΑΧΡΗΥ† strengthen, establish, edify, be  
     firm  
 ΤΩΩΘΕ ΤΕΘ- ΤΟΘϝ ΤΗΘ† attach, cling

### ΟΥ (vowel)

ΟΥ what? how?  
     ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ why? (see also ΕΤΒΕ)  
 ΟΥΒΕ, ΟΥΒΗϝ against, toward  
     †ΟΥΒΕ resist  
 ΟΥΔΕ and not, nor  
 ΟΥΝ actually, for sure  
 ΟΥΝΟΥ hour  
     Ν̄ΤΕΥΝΟΥ immediately, suddenly  
 ΟΥΝΑΜ right, right hand  
 ΟΥСΙΑ property  
 ΟΥΤΕ, ΟΥΤΩϝ between, among  
 ΟΥΤΕ for ΟΥΔΕ  
     ΟΥΤΕ . . . ΟΥΤΕ neither . . . nor  
 ΟΥΩΗ night

### ΟΥ (consonant)

ΟΥΑ one, someone (ΟΥΕΙ feminine)  
     ΠΟΥΑΠΟΥΑ each one  
 ΟΥΑΑϝ only, alone  
 ΟΥΟΙ woe!  
 ΟΥΩ finish, stop  
 ΟΥΑΑΒ or ΟΥΗΗΒ see ΟΥΟΠ  
 ΟΥΟΕΙΝ light

ῥΟΥΘΕΙΝ *shine*  
 ΟΥΘΕΙΝΙΝ Greek-speaker  
 ΟΥΩΜ ΟΥᾶ- or ΟΥΕΜ- ΟΥΟΜ= eat  
 ΟΥᾶ there is  
   ΟΥᾶΣΟΜ *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 ΡΟΥΤ† be glad, smile (+ Μᾶ) be pleased to meet, greet  
 ΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ foot  
 ΟΥΕΙΣΕ ΟΥΑΚΤ= saw  
 ΟΥΩΤ single, sole, alone  
 ΟΥΟΕΙΩ moment  
   ᾶΟΥΟΕΙΩ *once*  
 ΟΥΩΥΕ or ΟΥΩΥ ΟΥΕΥ- ΟΥΑΥ= or ΟΥΟΥ= want, desire, wish  
 ΟΥΩΥᾖ or ΟΥΩΥᾗ ΟΥΕΥΒ- ΟΥΟΥΒ= answer, respond  
 ΟΥΩΥΤ (+ ᾶ, ΝΑ=) praise, kiss (in greeting)  
 ΟΥΩΥᾗ for ΟΥΩΥᾖ  
 ΟΥΩΥᾗ ΟΥΕΥΥ- ΟΥΟΥΥ= ΟΥΟΥᾗ† wear down, break  
   ΟΥΩΥᾗῆΗΤ *heartbreak*  
 ΟΥΩῆ ΟΥΕῆ- ΟΥΑῆ= ΟΥΗῆ† place, put down, stay, settle down  
 ΟΥΟΟῆ scorpion  
 ΟΥΩῆᾶ ΟΥΕῆΜ- ΟΥΑῆΜ= ΟΥΟῆᾶ† respond, repeat  
 ΟΥΕῆΑῆΝΕ command  
 ΟΥΩΑΧΕ ΟΥΕΧ- ΟΥΟΧ= cut  
 ΟΥΧΑᾶ ΟΥΟΧ† get well (+ ΕΒΟΛ) be safe from  
   ΟΥΧΑᾶ ῆᾶΠΧΟΕΙC *hello, farewell*  
 ΟΥΟΣΕ 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**

**ϣ**

**ΨΥΧΗ** soul (**ΨΥΧΟΟΥC** plural)  
**ΨΑΛΛΕΙ** sing, chant psalms  
**ΨΙC** nine (**ΨΙΤΕ** feminine)

**ω**

**ΩΩ** conceive, get pregnant  
**ΩΒΩ̄ ΕΒΩ-** **ΩΒΩC** **ΩΒΩ†** forget, neglect  
**ΩΝΕ** stone  
**ΩΝΩ ΟΝΩ† ΕΒΟΛ** get lost for words, be struck dumb  
**ΩΝΞ ΟΝΞ†** live (+ **ΞΝ̄**) live off, feed on  
**ΩΠ ΕΠ- ΟΠC** **ΗΠ†** count, reckon, evaluate  
**ΩΦΕΛΙΑ** benefit  
**ΩΡK̄ ΟΡK=C** swear  
**ΩC̄ ΟCκ†** delay, take time  
**ΩΩ ΕΩ-** or **ΛΩ- ΟΩC** call, read (+ **ΕΒΟΛ**) call out, read out, announce  
**ΩΩM̄ ΕΩM- ΟΩM=C** **ΩΩM̄†** extinguish  
**ΩΞΕ** for **ΟΥΩΞΕ** fisherman  
**ΩΞC ΕΞC- ΟΞC=C** reap, harvest  
     **ΩΞC̄** or **ΟΞC̄** *sickle*  
**ΩΧN̄ ΕΧN- ΟΧN=C** perish, destroy

ϣ

- ⲁ̅ or ⲉϣ can  
 ϣⲁ festival  
 ϣⲁ appear, rise (of the sun)  
 ϣⲁ, ϣⲁⲣⲟ= to, up to, towards  
 ϣⲉ wood  
 ϣⲉ hundred  
 ϣⲓ measure  
 ϣⲟ thousand  
 ϣⲱ sand  
 ϣⲱⲃ ϣ̅- or ϣⲉϥ ϣⲏⲃ† dress, shave  
 ϣⲓⲃⲉ ϣ̅- ϣ̅ⲃⲧ= ϣⲟⲃⲉ† transform, change, muddle  
     ϣⲁⲃⲏⲗⲟ grotesque (see also ϗⲟ)  
 ϣⲁⲃⲟⲗ forever, eternal (see also ⲃⲟⲗ)  
 ϣⲁⲃⲏⲗⲟ see ϣⲓⲃⲉ  
 ϣⲃⲏⲣ friend  
 ϣⲓⲕⲉ ϣⲉⲕⲧ- ϣⲁⲕⲧ= ϣⲟⲕⲉ† dig, fathom  
 ϣⲱⲗ plunder  
 ϣⲗⲓⲕ fork, prong  
 ϣⲗⲏⲗ pray  
 ϣⲱⲗⲏ̅ smell  
 ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ bride, wedding  
 ϣⲗⲁⲗ ϣⲟⲗⲗ† fear  
 ϣⲏⲏ ordinary, lowly, humble  
     ϣⲏⲏⲱⲏⲏ little by little  
     ϣⲏⲣⲉϣⲏⲏ child, infant  
 ϣⲏⲟϥⲏ eight (ϣⲏⲟϥⲏⲉ feminine)  
 ϣⲟⲏⲏ̅ⲧ or ϣⲟⲏⲏ̅ three (ϣⲟⲏⲏⲉ feminine)  
 ϣⲏ̅ⲱⲉ ϣⲏ̅ⲱⲉ- ϣⲏ̅ⲱⲏⲧ= serve, worship  
     ⲣⲉϥϣⲏ̅ⲱⲉⲏⲟϥⲧⲉ worshipper  
 ϣⲏⲏⲱⲏⲏ little by little (see also ϣⲏⲏ)  
 ϣⲓⲏⲉ ϣⲉⲏ- ϣⲏ̅ⲧ= ask (+ ⲉ) greet, visit (+ ⲏ̅ⲕⲁ) look for, seek  
     ⲥ̅ⲏ̅ⲣⲱⲓⲏⲉ visit (see also ⲥ̅ⲓⲏⲉ)  
 ϣⲱⲏⲉ ϣⲟⲟⲏⲉ† sicken  
 ϣⲱⲱⲏⲉ ϣⲉⲉⲏⲉ- ϣⲟⲟⲏ= ϣⲟⲟⲏⲉ† (+ ⲉ) exclude, deprive, remove  
 ϣⲏ̅ⲧⲱ (linen) robe  
 ϣⲟⲏⲧⲉ thorn  
 ϣⲱⲡ ϣⲉⲡ- ϣⲟⲡ- ϣⲏⲡ† get, receive, accept  
 ϣⲓⲡⲉ be ashamed

ⲱⲠⲠⲉ ⲱⲟⲟⲡⲓ† happen, become, exist, live  
 ⲱⲠⲠⲣⲉ marvel, wonder  
 ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲱⲠⲓ or ⲱⲡⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲣⲉ promise, assure (see also ⲧⲱⲠⲉ)  
 ⲱⲡⲓⲒⲙⲟⲧ give thanks  
 ⲱⲡⲓⲒⲓⲈ take care, look after (see also ⲒⲓⲈ)  
 ⲱⲠⲣⲉ child, son, daughter  
     ⲱⲉⲉⲣⲉ daughter  
     ⲱⲠⲣⲉⲱⲠⲙ child, infant (see also ⲱⲠⲙ)  
     ⲱⲠⲒⲑⲟⲟⲩⲧ male child  
 ⲱⲟⲠⲡ first  
     ⲠⲱⲟⲠⲡ lead, precede  
     ⲱⲟⲠⲡ ⲙⲎ or ⲠⲱⲟⲠⲡ ⲙⲎ firstly  
     ⲱⲠⲡⲓⲙⲓⲈ first born (see also ⲙⲓⲈ)  
 ⲱⲱⲠⲓ morning  
 ⲱⲠⲡⲓⲙⲓⲈ see ⲱⲟⲠⲡ  
 ⲱⲁⲣⲟⲩⲱⲧ new leather  
 ⲱⲠⲒⲑⲟⲟⲩⲧ see ⲱⲠⲣⲉ  
 ⲱⲱⲈ shepherd  
 ⲱⲠⲧ two hundred  
 ⲱⲠⲧⲧ Scetis (place)  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲧ ⲱⲉⲧ- ⲱⲁⲁⲧⲣⲉ ⲱⲁⲁⲧⲓ† deprive, sacrifice (+ ⲉⲅⲟⲕ) cut off,  
     slice  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲉ cistern  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲟⲅ muzzle  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲁⲙ shut, close  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲠⲎ garment, cloth  
 ⲱⲱⲧⲟⲠⲧⲠⲣⲉ ⲱⲱⲧⲠⲧⲠⲣⲉ- ⲱⲱⲧⲠⲧⲱⲠⲣⲉ ⲱⲱⲧⲠⲧⲱⲠⲣⲉ† disturb, be disturbed,  
     upset, panic  
 ⲱⲱⲒ or ⲱⲉⲩ value, worth, use  
     ⲁⲧⲱⲱⲒ worthless  
 ⲱⲱⲒⲉ seventy  
 ⲱⲉⲩ see ⲱⲱⲅ  
 ⲱⲁⲕⲉ speak, talk (+ ⲉ) about (+ ⲙⲠ) with  
 ⲱⲱⲕⲓⲡⲓ ⲱⲉⲕⲓⲡ- ⲱⲟⲕⲓⲡⲣⲉ ⲱⲟⲕⲓⲡⲓ† remain, leave behind  
 ⲱⲱⲱⲑⲉ ⲱⲉⲑⲉ- ⲱⲟⲟⲑⲉⲣⲉ ⲱⲟⲑⲉⲣⲉ† wound

#### ϣ

ϣⲓ ϣⲓ- ϣⲓⲧⲣⲉ ϣⲠⲩⲓ† lift, carry, take  
 ϣⲧⲟⲟⲩ four (ϣⲧⲟ feminine)

ϥⲟⲩⲉ ϥⲉⲥ- ϥⲟⲥ= jump, rush, rob  
ϥⲓⲛϥⲟⲩⲉ or ϥⲓⲛⲃⲟⲩⲉ *impulse*

## ⲉ

ⲉⲁ, ⲉⲁⲣⲟ= under, in, on behalf of, supporting

ⲉⲁⲉ or ⲉⲁⲏ end, finish

ⲉⲉ way, manner

ⲉ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ *act like, seem like*

ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲉⲉ *how?*

ⲉⲉ ⲉⲏⲏⲥ fall (+ ⲉ) come upon, find

ⲉⲏ, ⲉⲏⲥ= front, beginning

ⲉⲏ, ⲉⲏⲥ= belly, womb

ⲉⲏⲏ gain, increase

ⲥⲉⲏⲏ *improve, benefit*

ⲉⲓ, ⲉⲓⲟⲩ= on, at

ⲉⲟ face (see also ⲓⲃⲉ)

ⲉⲟ sack

ⲉⲟ suffice (+ ⲉ) for

ⲉⲟ me too, as well

ⲉⲟⲩ= self

ⲉⲟⲃ matter, act, business (ⲉⲃⲏⲏⲉ plural)

ⲉ̄ⲉⲟⲃ *work*

ⲉ̄ⲃⲃⲥ see ⲉⲟⲃⲥ

ⲉⲁⲓⲃⲥ shadow

ⲉⲟⲃⲥ ⲉ̄ⲃⲥ- ⲉⲟⲃⲥ= ⲉⲟⲃⲥⲥ clothe (+ ⲉⲃⲟⲕ) cover

ⲉⲃⲁⲥ *clothing*

ⲉ̄ⲃⲃⲥ *cover*

ⲉⲃⲏⲏⲉ see ⲉⲟⲃ

ⲉⲏⲉⲙⲟⲛ governor

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥ holy, saint

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥⲏⲏ or ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥⲏⲏ *holiness*

ⲉⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥⲁⲥⲟⲥ *most holy*

ⲉ̄ⲓⲏ or ⲉ̄ⲓⲏ road, path (ⲉ̄ⲓⲟⲓⲏⲉ plural)

ⲉⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ some

ⲉ̄ⲓⲉⲥ ditch

ⲉⲟⲓⲥⲉ dress

ⲉⲁⲕ prudent, sober, decent

ⲉⲏⲕⲉ poor, hungry

ⲉⲟⲕ arms, armour

ρΙΚΩΝ image  
 ρΥΑΚΙΝΘΙΝΟΝ purple robe  
 ρΕΞΙC awareness  
 ρΩΛ ρΗΛ† fly  
 ρΟΛΟΚΟΤΤΙΝΟC solidus (coin)  
 ρΛΛΟ old, elder  
 ρΕΛΛΗΝ or ρΛΛΗΝ or ρΛΛḲ̅ pagan, Roman  
 ρΕΛΟC marsh  
 ρΟΛΩC at all  
 ρΑΛΑCϐΑ sea  
 ρΑΛΗΤ bird (ρΑΛΑΤΕ plural)  
 ρΜΕ forty  
 ρΗΜΕ freight  
 ρΙΟΜΕ see CΡΙΜΕ  
 ρΟΜΟΛΟΓΕΙ admit, confess  
 ρΙΟΜ ρΗΜ† heat, get hot  
 ρΜΕΝΕ eighty  
 ρΟΜḲ̅Τ copper  
 ρΥΜΝΕΥΕ sing hymns  
 ρΜΟΟC sit  
 ρḲ̅ρΑΛ servant  
 ρḲ̅, Ḳ̅ρΗΤ= in, with, from  
     ρΡΑΙ-ρḲ̅ *within*  
 ρΝΑ for ρΝΑΥ  
 ρΝΕ, ρΝΑ= wish  
     Ḳ̅ρΝΑ= *wish*  
 ρΩΝ ρΟΝ= command (+ ΕΤḲ̅) task someone  
 ρΩΝ ρḲ̅- 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

ἘΠΑΡΧΟΝΤΑ goods  
 ἘΠΕΡΗ† attend  
     ἘΠΕΡΕΤΗΣ or ἘΠΕΡΗΤΗΣ *attendant*  
 ἘΠΟΤΑCCE submit (+ Ḳ) to  
 ἘΡΔΙ see ḲḲ, ḲḲHT≠  
 ἘΩΡ ḲΡ- ḲΟΡ≠ ḲΗΡ† take care, be careful (reflexive)  
 ἘΩΡḲ ḲΟΡḲ≠ break  
 ἘΔΙΡΕΔΙΚΟC for ḲΔΙΡΕΤΙΚΟC  
 ἘΡΩΜΗ Rome (place)  
 ḲΟΡΟΜΑ vision  
 ḲΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΕ interpret, translate  
     ḲΕΡΜΕΝΕΥΤΗΣ *interpreter*  
 ḲΙΡḲ, ḲΙΡΩ≠ at, outside  
 ḲΔΙΡΕΤΙΚΟC or ḲΔΙΡΕΔΙΚΟC heretic  
 ḲΡΑΥ noise, sound  
 ḲΡΟΥ ḲΟΡḲ† burden, weigh down  
 ḲḲΩΙΡΕ youth  
 ḲΑΡΩḲHT or ḲΑΡḲḲḲHT tolerant, patient **ḲḲḲḲḲḲḲḲHT** tolerance  
 ḲΑΡΕḲ keep, guard, protect  
 ḲΡΟΧΡḲ grind  
 ḲΙC ḲΑCΤ- ḲΑCΤ≠ ḲΟCΕ† struggle, toil  
     ḲḲḲḲḲḲ take care, look after  
 ḲΩC sing  
 ḲΩC as though, like  
 ḲΩCΤΕ so that  
 ḲΙCΤΟΛΙΟΓΡΑΦΟC historian  
 ḲΤΟ horse  
 ḲΔΔΤΕ flow  
 ḲHT ḲΤΗ≠ heart, mind, affection  
     ΔΤḲHT *ignorant, fatuous*  
     ΡḲḲḲḲHT *thinker, thoughtful person*  
 ḲHT downstream, north (see also **ḲḲḲḲHT**)  
 ḲḲHTḲ see **ḲΙC**  
 ḲΟΤΕ fear  
     ΡΕḲḲḲḲḲḲ *devout person*  
 ḲΔΤḲ, ḲΔΤΟΟΤ≠ near, beside, with  
 ḲΙΤḲ, ḲΙΤΟΟΤ≠ by, through, from  
 ḲΙΤΟΥΝ, ḲΙΤΟΥḲ≠ beside  
 ḲΟΤΔΝ if ever

ϣTOP constraint, compulsion  
 †ϣTOP *compel*  
 ϣΑΘΗ before  
 ϣΕΘΝΟC people, race  
 ϣΑΘΩΡ or ϣΘΩΡ Hathur (month)  
 ϣΟΤϣΤ̄ ϣΕΤϣΤ̄- ϣΕΤϣΩΤϣ ϣΕΤϣΩΤ† inquire, question  
 ϣΟΥΟ majority, excess, wealth  
 ḿϣΟΥΟ *especially, above all*  
 ϣΙΟΥΕ ϣΙ- ϣΙΤϣ hit, beat  
 ϣΙΟΥΕ see ϣἰΗ  
 ϣΟΥ day  
 ϣΟΥ be evil, be wicked, be harmful  
 ϣΩΟΥ rain  
 ϣΟΥΕΙΤ or ϣΟΥΕΙΤΕ beginning  
 ϣΟΥ snake  
 ϣΩϣ for ϣΩΒ  
 ϣΔ many  
 ϣΔϣΤḿ, ϣΔϣΤΗϣ near, beside  
 ϣΙΧḿ, ϣΙΧΩϣ over, at

## X

X ḿ for τΩεερε ḿ  
 XΕ that (speech marker)  
 ΧΙ ΧΙ- ΧΙΤϣ ΧΗΥ† get, receive  
 ΧΟΙ ship  
 ΧΩ cup  
 ΧΩ, ΧΩϣ head  
 ΧΩ ΧΕ- ΧΟΟϣ say, tell  
 ΧΔΕΙΕ desert  
 ΧΩΚ ΧΕΚ- ΧΟΚϣ ΧΗΚ† ΕΒΟΛ complete, fulfil  
 ΧΩΚḿ ΧΕΚḿ- ΧΟΚḿϣ ΧΟΚḿ† wash  
 ΧΕΚΑC so that  
 ΧΙΚΩΤ learn, improve (see also ΚΩΤ)  
 ΧΩΜ generation  
 ΧΗΜΕ Jeme (place)  
 ΧΩΩΜΕ book  
 ΧΙΜΟΕΙΤ guide (+ ϣΗΤϣ) someone  
 ΧΙΝ or Χḿ from, since (see also X)  
 ΧΝΟΥ ΧΝΕ- ΧΝΟΥϣ ask

χἰῆρρα= see χἰρρα=  
 χἰῆϑονϥ see ϑονϥ  
 χπἰ must (do something)  
 χπἰο blame  
 χπο χπε- χπο= χπἠ† produce, create, give birth  
 χερο χερε- χερο= ignite  
 χρο χραειτ† be strong (+ ε) stronger than  
     χωωρε *strong*  
 χοειϥ or χ̄ϥ lord  
     ῥ̄χοειϥ *control, govern*  
 χἰϥε χεϥτ- χαϥτ= χοϥε elevate, exalt  
     χαϥτ̄ϥμἠ *loudmouth (see also ϥμἠ)*  
 χογωτ twenty (χογωτε feminine)  
 χωτ trough, dole  
 χατμε pile, heap  
 χοογ χεγ- χοογ= send (+ εβολ) despatch, trade  
 χιογα blaspheme  
 χιογε steal (+ ε) from  
 χἰωκακ εβολ call out, cry out (see also αωκακ)  
 χοϥχ̄ χεϥχωϥ= burn  
 χἰρρα= or χἰῆρρα= divert, amuse, joke (reflexive)  
 χωρ χερ- χαρ= χἠρ† touch, caress, anoint  
 χωρ̄ἠ χερ̄ἠ- χαρ̄ἠ= χαρ̄ἠ† pollute, defile  
 χαχε χαχω† harden  
 χἰϑολ (tell a) lie

## ϥ

ϥε so, therefore, moreover, in addition  
 ϥω ϥεετ† stay, continue, persist  
 ϥωβ weak  
     ϥαβρητ timid  
 ϥαἰο disgrace  
 ϥωλε flat bread  
 ϥωωλε ϥεελε- ϥοολε= ϥοολε† wrap, clothe  
 ϥλομ plough  
 ϥωλῖ ὄλῖπ- ϥολῖ= ϥολῖ† εβολ reveal, appear, unwrap  
 ϥλοϑ bed  
 ϥομ power, ability  
     ατϥομ *impossible*

ΟΥΝ̄ΣΟΜ *be able*  
 ΜΝ̄ΣΟΜ *be unable*  
 ΣΜ̄ΣΟΜ *be able (+ Ε) overcome*  
 ΣΗΝ see ΣΝΟΝ  
 ΣΙΝΕ ΣΝ̄- ΣΝ̄ΤΣ find, find out  
   ΣΜ̄ΠΩΙΝΕ *visit (see also ΩΙΝΕ)*  
 ΣΙΝΒΩΣΕ see ϘΩΣΕ  
 ΣΝΟΝ ΣΗΝ† soften  
 ΣΟΝC violence, damage  
   ΧΙΝ̄ΣΟΝC *harm, get harmed, abuse*  
 ΣΩΝ̄Τ ΣΟΝΤ† anger, get angry (+ ΕΞΟΥΝ) at  
 ΣΙΝΟΥΗΛ ship  
 ΣΟΝΧΟΥ or ΣΝ̄ΧΟΥ jar  
 ΣΕΠΗ hurry, rush  
 ΣΡΟΟΜΠΕ dove  
 ΣΩΡḪ ΣΟΡΣ† trap, hunt  
   ΣΟΡΣḪ *trap, snare*  
 ΣΟΤ size, status  
 ΣΩΤΠ̄ ΣΕΤΠ- ΣΟΤΠΣ ΣΟΤΠ̄† defeat  
   ΣΩΤΠ̄C *defeat*  
 ΣΩΩΤ̄ ΣΩΩΤ† look, watch  
   ΣΩΩΤ̄ ΕΒΟΛ-ΖΗΤΣ *look forward, anticipate*  
 ΣΙΧ hand  
 ΣΩΣ ΣΕΣ- ΣΑΣΣ ΣΗΣ† bake  
 ΣΑΣΙΤΩΝ rough linen

### †

† †- ΤΑΔΣ ΤΟ† give (+ Ν̄) pay someone (+ ΖΑ) for something  
   †ΕΒΟΛ *sell (see also ΕΒΟΛ)*  
 †ΟΥ five (†Ε feminine)  
 †ΑΚΟΝΕΙ for ΔΙΑΚΟΝΕΙ  
 †ΚΩΤ learn, improve (see also ΚΩΤ)  
 †ΜΕ town  
 †Π kiss (see also Π)  
 †ΣΤΑΖΕ hesitate  
 †ΤΩΝ argue, quarrel  
 †ΟΥΒΕ resist (see also ΟΥΒΕ)  
 †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.

**Bill Manley** is Co-Director of Complutense Egyptology in Madrid, Honorary President of the educational charity Egyptology Scotland and the author of several best-selling books on Ancient Egypt. He previously taught Egyptology and Coptic at the Universities of London, Glasgow and Liverpool, and was Senior Curator for Ancient Egypt at National Museums Scotland.



Free open access  
version available from  
[www.uclpress.co.uk](http://www.uclpress.co.uk)

Cover design:  
[www.hayesdesign.co.uk](http://www.hayesdesign.co.uk)