Some Problematic Bipartite Nominal Predicates in Demotic*
Robert K. Ritner
The Oriental Institute

For scholars at Chicago's Oriental Institute, a grammatical study of some sort is almost inevitable. Today it is my turn, and I hope to keep my remarks brief, linguistically significant, and no more boring than absolutely necessary. This study is in response to a provocative article by Leo Depuydt, "On a Late Egyptian and Demotic Idiom,"[1] regarding a supposed "obsolescence of the copula" in common nominal predicates. Following Sethe's study of the "Nominalsatz," Depuydt asserts that "whenever pꜣy is not necessary to denote one of the two entities being identified, nominal sentences will as a rule not have a copula."[2] "In short," Depuydt notes, "trimembral nominal sentences are not typical"[3] in Demotic. It is true that Spiegelberg's *Demotische Grammatik* lists a variety of nomimal predicate patterns that lack an obvious copula,[4] but the *Grammatik* also includes many examples of the trimembral or "ternary" pattern[5] (A pw B, A B pw) where

---

* This article was delivered at the Eighth International Congress for Demotic Studies, held in Würzburg, August 30, 2002, and will appear in a future volume of the proceedings of that congress.

[1] *RdÉ* 45 (1994): 49-73.

[2] Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 66, with reference to Sethe, *Nominalsatz*, p. 27 §29.

[3] Depuydt, ibid.

[4] *Demotische Grammatik*, Heidelberg: 1925, pp. 198-203, §§444-54.

[5] "Ternary patterns" are in all cases merely binary (A pw) patterns with extensions (A pw B "It, namely B, is A"; AB pw "As for A, it is B"), *contra* Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 53, and "The Emphatic Nominal Sentence in Egyptian and Coptic," *Orientalia* NS 56 (1987): 37-54, esp. pp. 39-40. His supposed "weak link" in Romans 13:10 reads literally "It, love, is the fulfillment of the law," with the word love in apposition to the subject/copula pe. Depuydt's insistence upon "contrastive emphasis" in this article and *RdÉ* 45, 50 ff. reflects his preferred English translation, not the underlying Egyptian grammar. On p. 53 on the latter article, the sentence *sn≠i pw Ppi can only mean "He, namely Pepi, is my brother." His alternative English interpretation, "It is my brother, Pepi," would be expressed in Egyptian as *sn≠i pw Ppi rn≠f "He is my brother, whose name is Pepi." For further discussion, see J. Johnson, "Demotic Nominal Sentences," in D. W. Young, ed., *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky*, Beacon Hill, MA: 1981, pp. 414-430.

the copula's presence is certain.[6] Sentences both with and without the copula seem equally "typical" of Demotic, though which is numerically more common I cannot say.

As an example in which by contrast "standard Middle Egyptian would have **pw**," Depuydt cites P. London and Leiden 20/12-13:

p₃y=k ls p₃ ls n p₃ šʿy "Your tongue is the tongue of the Agathodaemon."[7] In such religious contexts, however, Middle Egyptian (as in the Coffin Texts) follows traditional Old Egyptian practice and does <u>not</u> use a **pw**.[8] This archaic pattern survives into Late Egyptian and Demotic religious works, so that this passage from a magical papyrus cannot be generalized as "typical" Demotic. Other examples of Demotic nominal predicates without the copula are not so easily dismissed, but there are several patterns that deserve closer attention. It is the goal of this brief paper to reconsider some supposed nominal predicates that lack copulas and thereby redress -however slightly- any statistical imbalance proposed by Depuydt.

One pattern certainly to be excluded from the category of nominal predicate without copula is the "jingle," which combines two nouns with implicit comparison, but not in a formal sentence. Compare the English-language folk wisdom: "Red sky at night, sailor's delight." 'Onchsheshonqy includes several examples:

sḫ (n) wḫr.t ḥm (n) mre
"A scribe in a shipyard, a craftsman at the harbor" (10/3)

sḥm.t (n) grḥ ḥs.t (n) mtre
"A woman at night, a saint at midday" (22/9)

---

[6] Ibid., pp. 203-06, §§455-61.

[7] Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 66.

[8] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed., Oxford: 1957, p. 100 §125.

ẖ.t (n) sḥm.t ḥȝṱ (n) ḥtr
"Body of a woman, mind of a horse." (23/24)

The relationship between the associated nouns is not simply one of equation. The misplaced scribe and craftsman are linked in a manner reminiscent of the English cliché "He's like a bull in a china shop." In the last example, however, a woman's body and mind are not equated but contrasted.

Particularly instructive is the couplet in col. 22/12-13:
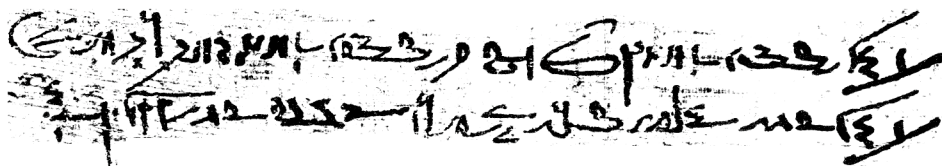
lḫ r mšꜥ ỉrm rmt rḫ ỉpt r mšꜥ ỉrm tȝy⸗f sfy
"A fool going about with a wise man, a goose going about with its butcher knife." (22/12)
lḫ ẖn ꜥ.wy m-qty mnḫ ẖn pr-ḥḏ (n) ỉrp
"A fool in a house is like clothing in a storehouse for wine." (22/13)

Here the implicit comparison of the initial jingle is paired with an explicit comparison in a formal sentence using the preposition "like"(m-qty). That sentence, it must be noted, employs an <u>adverbial</u> predicate. If the scribe wished to indicate direct equation, he used not a jingle, but the trimembral pattern with copula:
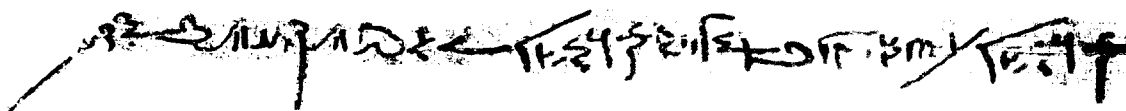
wꜥ sḫ ls n pr Pr-ꜥȝ wꜥ sḫ ḥny pȝ ym pȝy
"A slip of the tongue in the palace is a slip of the rudder at sea." (23/10)

None of the jingles employs the copula pȝy because they are not nominal sentences.

More problematic are several series of extended equations with rnn.t "fortune" (8/17-9/4), ȝmy.t "character" (11/11-12) and ꜥs.t "waste" (20/22-25). These sets of sentences have been taken as nominal expressions by all translators, and one (8/23) appears in Johnson's grammar of 'Onchsheshonqy

as an illustration that "Many Demotic texts regularly or occasionally omitted the copula pronoun entirely."[9]

Consider the set with rn̲n.t:
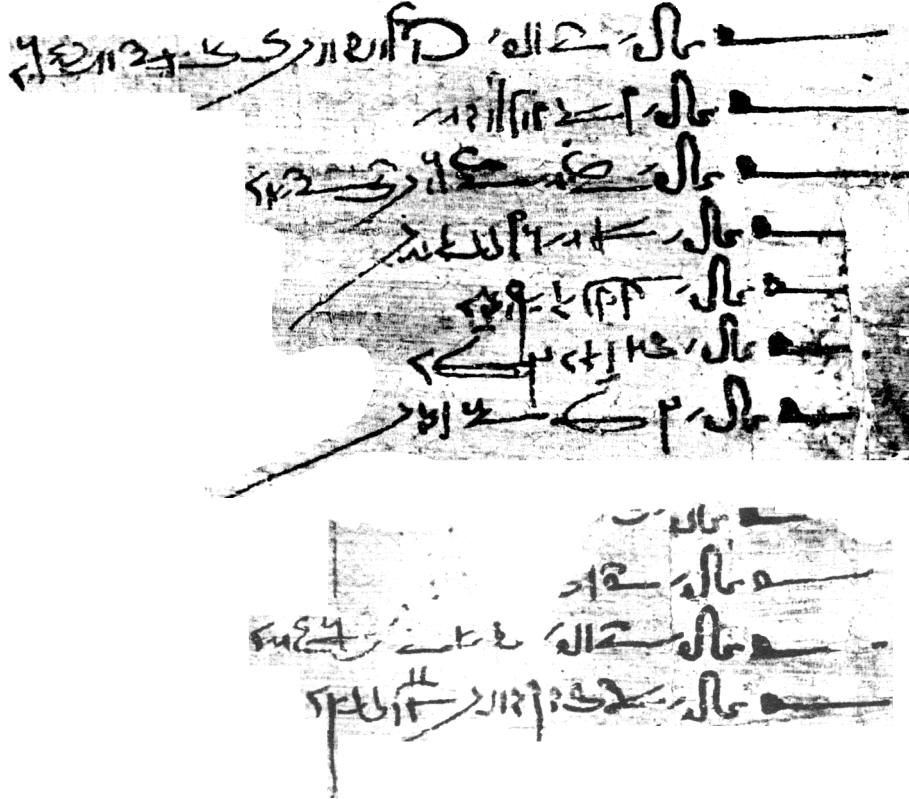
rn̲n.t n tmy ḥry ỉw≠f ỉr wp.t
rn̲n.t ḥw.t-nt̲r wꜥb
rn̲n.t ḫt ḫp≠f n ỉr wp.t
rn̲n.t wd̲ꜣ swt̲≠f
rn̲n.t pr-ḥd̲ wꜥ.t d̲r.t
rn̲n.t nkt sḥm.t rmt.(t) rḫ.t
rn̲n.t rmt rḫ rꜣ≠f
rn̲n.t [...]
rn̲n.t mšꜥ m[r-mšꜥ]
rn̲n.t n tmy tm t̲ rỉ.t
rn̲n.t ḥm tꜣy≠f sbt̲.t

Although there have been disagreements over whether the word wꜥb in 8/18 should be understood as "sanctuary" or as an abusive writing of "purity," there has otherwise been complete agreement on the interpretation of these

9 J. Johnson, *Thus Wrote 'Onchsheshonqy*, 2nd ed. 1991, p. 17, E32.

sentences, such as "The good fortune of a plot is its time of being worked" (8/19) and "The good fortune of a storehouse is stocking it" (8/20). I have now come to question, however, whether these are true nominal equations. Otherwise stated, does "stocking it" represent the culmination or the <u>source</u> of a storehouse's benefit? Is the act of "working it" truly the critical success of a land plot, or is it not rather the source of that blessing, which is more properly a good harvest?   I would suggest to you that these sentences indicate that good fortune "resides in" or "derives from" the following nouns, and that the preposition "n" (for old "m") should be restored between the two nominal expressions, eg. rnn.t n tmy (n) ḥry ỉw≠f ỉr wp.t
The difference in translation is slight, but significant:

"The blessing of a town is in a ruler who exercises judgment.
The blessing of a temple is in a sanctuary/purity.
The blessing of a plot is in its time of being worked.
(8/20) The blessing of a storehouse is in stocking it.
The blessing of a treasury is in a single hand.
The blessing of property is in a wise woman.
The blessing of a wise man is in his mouth.
(9/1) The blessing of [... is in ...].
The blessing of an army is in a [general.]
The blessing of a town is in not taking sides.
The blessing of a craftsman is in his equipment."

Should this suggestion be accepted, the string of sentences must be reinterpreted as having adverbial, and not nominal, predicates, so that the copula pꜣy is not missing because, in Depuydt's words, "it is not necessary," but rather because it should not appear. The loss of the critical preposition in Demotic adverbial predicates is common, and examples in 'Onchsheshonqy are easily found:

st (n) pꜣ ḥr
"They (are in) the street/public." (13/16)
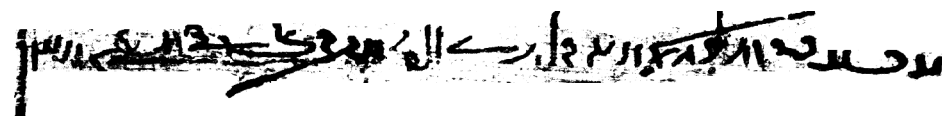
pꜣ nt (n) pꜣ ꜣyḥ ỉrm na-pꜣ≠f tmy ỉw≠f (n) tꜣ wpy.t ỉrm≠w

He who (is in) the battlefield together with those of his town (is in) the celebration with them. (18/10)

1,000 b3k (n) pr šwṯ p3 šwṯ (n) wˁ n-ỉm≠w

 A thousand servants (are in) the house of the merchant. The merchant (is as) one of them. (19/18)

My reinterpretation of the **rnn.t** passages is based not merely on my own assumptions of what the sentences should mean, but on the unambiguous evidence of the most similar example in classical Middle Egyptian. The autobiography of Ahmose son of Abana includes a proverbial statement that anticipates the pattern of 'Onchsheshonqy:

ỉw rn n qn m ỉr.t.n≠f

"The name of the valiant is **in** what he has done." (Urk. IV, 2/5).

An individual's good name is comparable to his character, and it is instructive to examine the shorter set of "nominal sentences" headed by the term **3my.t** (11/11-14):
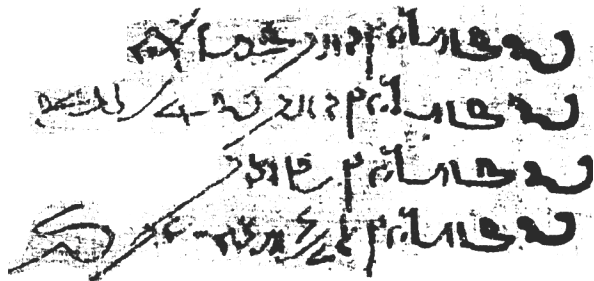
3my.t rmt t3y≠f mḥw.t
3my.t rmt t3y≠f 3brṯ
3my.t rmt r-ḥr≠f
3my.t rmt ˁy.t n-ỉm≠f t3y

Of these four lines, the third obviously displays an adverbial predicate ("The character of a man is in his face"), while the fourth contains a nominal "trimembral" predicate with the copula **t3y**: "The character of a man is one of his limbs," literally "As for the character of a man, it is a limb of his." The first two lines have invariably been considered sentences with nominal predicates. Structurally, the first and second lines differ from the last only by

the absence of the copula, so it is difficult to understand, again in Depuydt's terms, why the copula would be "necessary" in 11/14, but not in 11/11-12. Far more likely, it seems to me, is the explanation that the initial sentences lack t3y precisely because they do *not* have nominal predicates. If the sentences contrast sharply with 11/14, they are directly comparable with 11/13, differing only in the choice (and visibility) of the preposition. While the scribe of 'Onchsheshonqy would not drop the compound preposition r-ḥr⸗, he certainly could drop an "n" before a following noun, as we have seen. By restoring the predicative "n" in 11/11-12, this unit becomes a series of adverbial predicates, concluded, by way of contrast, with a nominal predicate:

"The character of a man is in his family.
The character of a man is in his association.
The character of a man is on his face.
The character of a man is one of his limbs."

Thissen's translation of 11/12 captures the true sense, if not the grammar, of the sentence: "Der Charakter eines Menschen ist (bestimmt durch) sein Bündnis (d.h. durch den, mit der er sich verbündet)." Once the "m of predication" is restored, the parentheses around "bestimmt durch" can be removed.[10]

Directly related to this series are the aphorisms in cols. 18/13 and 21/25:
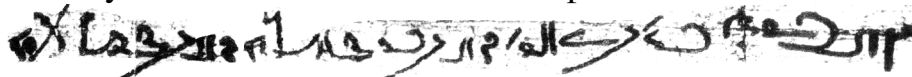
rmt ỉw mn mtw⸗f tmy t3y⸗f 3my.t (n) t3y⸗f mḥw.t
"A man who has no town, his character *serves as* his family."(18/13)[11]

_____

[10] H. J. Thissen, *Die Lehre des Anchscheschonqi (P. BM 10508), Einleitung, Übersetzung, Indices*, Bonn: 1984, p. 24. In contrast, Thissen translates 11/11 as a direct nominal expression: "Der Charakter eines Menschen ist seine Familie."
[11] This statement is part of a couplet with adverbial predicates: rmt ỉw mn mtw⸗f nkt t3y⸗f ḥm.t (n) t3y⸗f ỉry-pš "A man who has no property, his wife acts as his divisional partner." (18/14).
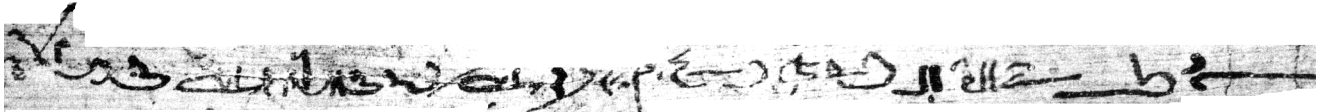
ỉw≠k ḫpr n tmy ỉw mn mtw≠k rmt n-ỉm≠f tȝy≠k ȝmy.t (n) tȝy≠k mḥw.t
"If you should be in a town in which you have no people, your character *serves as* your family." (21/25)

On the basis of 11/11, "family" and "character" are associated, but not identical notions, so that again a predicative "n" should separate ȝmy.t and mḥw.t.

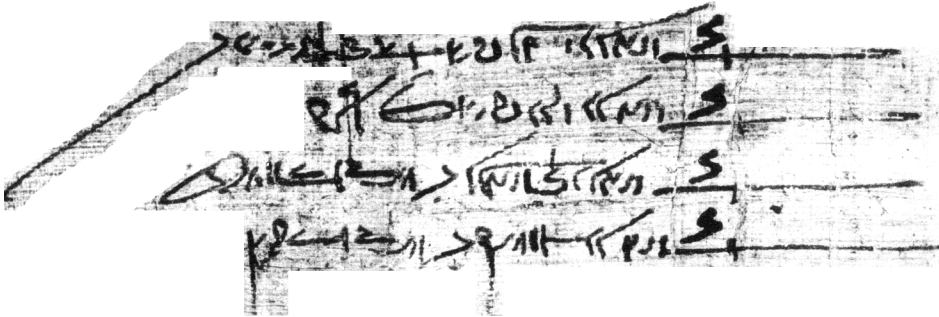Family and associations are the source of character, just as valiant actions are the source of a good name, and wise actions and stewards are the source of good fortune. The less favorable notion of "wastefulness" can also have a source, as in the short series headed by ꜥs.t "waste" (20/22-25):

ꜥs.t n pr (n) tm ḥms n-ỉm≠f
ꜥs.t sḥm.t (n) tm rḫ≠s
ꜥs.t ꜥȝ (n) fy tb
ꜥs.t ḏy (n) fy tḥ

While it would be quite reasonable to take these as nominal sentences, as has been customary, it can now be seen that an adverbial predicate is equally plausible, an interpretation that would bring this series in line with its parallels headed by rnn.t and ȝmy.t. "Waste" would be expressed as "deriving from" or "consisting in" the following infinitives:

"The waste of a house is in (n) not dwelling in it.
The waste of a woman is in (n) not knowing her carnally.
The waste of a donkey is in (n) carrying bricks.
The waste of a boat is in (n) carrying straw."

Again, interpretation as adverbial predicate removes "unnecessary" nominal predicates without copulas.

Other sentence strings also pair adverbial and nominal predicates or employ adverbial couplets:
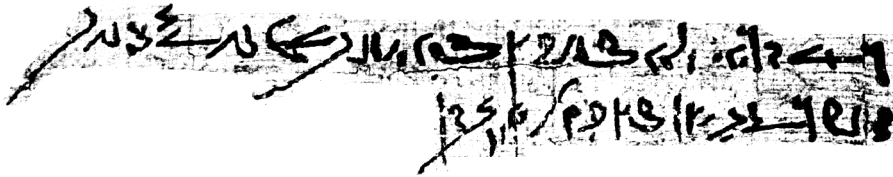
sbꜣ.t sḥm.t (n) myḫ (n) šꜥ ỉw⸗f šꜥ.ṱ (n) ꜥt.ṱ⸗f
nꜣy⸗s sq.w nkt ḥwrꜥ nꜣy
The teaching of a woman *is like* (literally, "as") a sack of sand with its side split open. (13/20)
Her savings *are* stolen property. (13/21)

The first, adverbial, sentence provides a comparison (teaching is not literally a container), while the second, trimembral nominal, sentence declares a true equation (her savings are literally stolen goods). Here the presence of the copula does not determine types of nominal predicates, but distinguishes nominal from adverbial predicates.
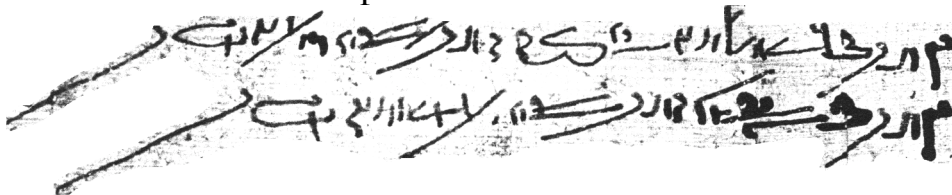
rmt ỉw⸗f m sty (n) ꜥnṱ tꜣy⸗f ḥm.t (n) kl m-bꜣḥ⸗f
rmt ỉw⸗f mr tꜣy⸗f ḥm.t n lby m-bꜣḥ⸗f
"A man who smells of myrrh, his wife is like a cat in his presence." (15/11)
"A man who is in distress, his wife is like a lioness in his presence." (15/12)

Within this couplet, the predicative "n" in 15/12 was recognized by Glanville, and as noted in Thissen's translation,[12] the wife's acquired characteristic is to be like ("wie") a playful or a wild animal.

---

[12] Thissen, *Die Lehre des Anchscheschonqi (P. BM 10508)*, p. 28.
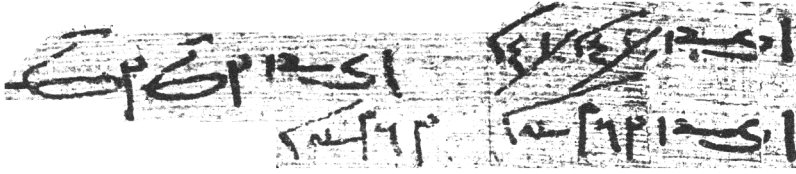
ỉry n lḫ n lḫ ỉry rmt rḫ (n) rmt rḫ
ỉry rmt swg (n) rmt swg

The companion of a fool is (as) a fool. The companion of a wise man is (as) a wise man. (13/6)
The companion of an incompetent is (as) an incompetent. (13/7)

The predicative "n" between the two writings of lḫ was not noted by Glanville (or others), but its presence seems clear. If so, then the more nuanced meaning of this series is that the companion of a fool, wise man or idiot <u>becomes</u> their equal, since the "m" of predication coveys the notion of an <u>acquired</u>, rather than a permanent quality.[13] That is, of course, the logical implication of 'Onchsheshonqy's advice: you acquire the characteristics of the people with whom you associate. Just such a notion was expressed in col. 11/12 ("The character of a man is in his association"), whose adverbial predicate has been discussed above. In 13/7, the scribe has left a large blank space between the two writings of rmt swg, as though to accommodate the unwritten preposition.

        Following this couplet is what has been described as a "pseudo cleft sentence,"[14] pairing nouns and defined relative clauses without an evident copula:
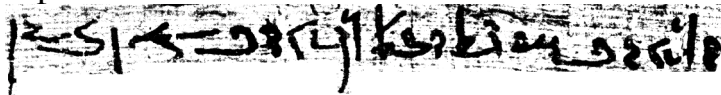
tꜣ mw.t tꜣ nt ms tꜣ mỉ.t tꜣ nt tỉ ỉry , traditionally translated as "The mother is the one who gives birth, the road is the one that gives a companion" (13/8).

---

[13] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 41, §38 obs.
[14] F. Junge, "Nominalsatz und Cleft Sentence im Ägyptischen," in D. W. Young, ed., *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky*, Beacon Hill, MA: 1981, p. 447; idem, *Neuägyptisch*, Wiesbaden: 1996, p. 188 = idem, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford: 2001, p. 176 §4.3.1.

Such sentences are common in both Late Egyptian and Demotic and comprise a significant portion of the "copula-less" nominal constructions gathered in Spiegelberg's *Grammatik*.[15] Cleft sentences have attracted serious attention of late, and examples headed by infinitives have been studied by A. Shisha-Halevy, [16] Joachim Quack[17] and by Leo Depuydt in the article that prompted this lecture.

These clefted infinitives have not always been translated in consistent ways. Consider the statement in P. Dodgson, ro. 6, [Demotic text] tḥꜣ r≠ḥr≠ỉ pꜣ ỉ-ỉr≠k, translated by Cary Martin as "Wronging me (is) what you have done," and by Françoise De Cenival as "C'est me léser que tu as fait."[18] While Martin follows the usual "pseudo cleft sentence" interpretation, De Cenival has tacitly reinterpreted the "definite article" as a writing of the copula splitting the nominal predicate from a following relative. In effect, De Cenival has analyzed the Demotic exactly as one would its generally accepted Middle Egyptian ancestor, sḏm pw ỉr.n≠f, meaning literally "It is a hearing that he did," a construction that probably originated as a means of specifying tense for the otherwise temporally vague narrative infinitive.[19] Such an interpretation is hardly unreasonable, for as Parker has demonstrated, writings of the definite article and copula can be interchanged in certain phonetic contexts: pꜣ followed by prothetic r- resembles the copula pꜣy, but remains unchanged when followed by

---

[15] Speigelberg, *Demotische Grammatik*, pp. 199-200, §§447-48.

[16] "Worknotes on Demotic Syntax," *Orientalia* NS 58 (1989): 33-35.

[17] "Die Konstruktion des Infinitivs in der Cleft Sentence," *RdÉ* 42 (1991): 189-207.

[18] See F. Ll. Griffith, "Papyrus Dodgson," *PSBA* 31 (1909): 107; J. Quack, *RdÉ* 42, p. 191; Françoise De Cenival, "Le papyrus Dodgson (P. Ashmolean Museum Oxford 1932-1159). Une interrogation aux portes des dieux?," *RdÉ* 38 (1987): 8; Cary J. Martin, "The Child Born in Elephantine: Papyrus Dodgson Revisited," *Acta Demotica* (*EVO* 17), 203; and idem, in *The Elephantine Papyri in English*, Leiden: 1996, p. 344.

[19] For the identification in Demotic, see W. Spiegelberg, *Demotische Grammatik*, Heidelberg: 1925, p. 84 §183. For sḏm pw ỉr.n≠f, and its passive sḏm pw ỉry, see Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed., p. 312 §392; J. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, §§136 and 163. The relative forms modify the infinitive, always treated as masculine.

prothetic ỉ- (pꜣ ỉ-ỉr) or the relative nt.[20] If the article can be orthographically disguised as the copula, why shouldn't the reverse be possible, especially since it is a common feature of Coptic?

Regarding cleft sentences in Coptic, grammarians have begun to insist upon the distinction between such sentences as:

* ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲕⲁⲁⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ "It is my father who left me there," and

*ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲕⲁⲁⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ "The one who left me there is my father."[21]

In the former sentence, ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥ is not the nominalized past relative "the one who did," but a common contraction of the copula ⲡⲉ with the following past relative ⲛⲧⲁϥ. The presence of both ⲡⲉ and ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥ in the second sentence indicates a standard nominal predicate with ⲡⲉ separating two noun equivalents. If there is only one ⲡ(ⲉ), it must be the copula.

In the Coptic examples, the cleft sentence may be headed by any type of noun, not only an infinitive, and the copula may split any attributive relative form, not only the relative past. Were such an analysis extended to Late Egyptian and Demotic, many more "copula-less" nominal predicates would disappear. Possible Late Egyptian candidates are numerous, but examples with infinitives, personal names and other nouns include:

pꜣy-ỉr (copula + past relative)

ꜣtp≠f m dḥꜣ ... pꜣy-ỉr≠k "It is loading it with straw ... that you have done." (P. Anastasi VIII, vo. 5)[22]

---

[20] Richard Parker, "The Orthography of Article Plus Prothetic *R* in Demotic," *JNES* 33 (1974): 371-76. The contrasting form followed by prothetic ỉ- is noted on pp. 361, n. 2 and 375.

[21] Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*, Macon GA: 1983, pp. 48-49, §13.2. Lambdin, however, reverses the true subject and predicate in the second sentence. For the contraction of the copula with a following relative, see E. Amélineau, "Un Evêque de Keft au VIIe Siècle," MIE II, 1889, p. 403 (= 1887, p. 143): ⲡⲉϫⲏⲓ ⲛⲁϥ ϫⲉ ⲫ̄ϯ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲱⲟⲩⲛ "I said to him: 'It is God who knows.'"

[22] A. Bakir, *Egyptian Epistolography*, Cairo: 1970, pl. 31; Quack, *RdÉ* 42, p. 202.

p3 + **ỉ-ỉr** (copula + past relative **ỉ-sḏm꞊f**)

[hieroglyphs]
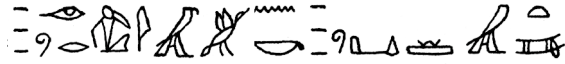
tm dỉ.t꞊w n꞊k p3 ỉ-ỉr꞊w "It is not giving them to you that they have done." (P. Bib Nat. 197, VI, vo. 4-5)[23]

p3 + **wn.w** (copula + relative imperfect)

[hieroglyphs]
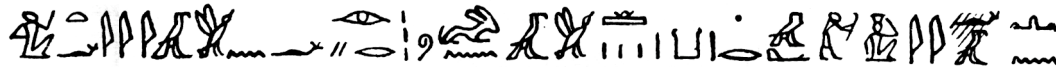
nn(= ỉn) f3y mrk.w p3 wn.w ỉr꞊f n p3y꞊ỉ ỉt "Wasn't it the delivery of royal gifts that he used to perform for my father?" (Wenamon, 2/11-12)

p3 + **nty** (copula + relative future)

[hieroglyphs]

ỉw bw rḫ꞊k r-ḏd h(3)y p3 nty-ỉr ḏr.t꞊k ỉr꞊f "without your knowing that it was falling that your hand would do," i.e. "that you would fail." (P. Mayer A, vo. 8/5)[24]

[hieroglyphs]

ỉw꞊ỉ dỉ.t ḫpr ỉw w3ḫ (< wḫ3) n꞊f ꜥḥꜥ(w) q3ỉ sp-2 … p3 nty-ỉw꞊s ỉr꞊f "I shall cause it to happen that it is (**p3**) seeking for him a very long lifetime … which (**nty**) she will do." (Neskhons Decree, ll. 69-71)

Personal name:

[hieroglyphs]

ꜣlhy-mḫ p3y꞊f sn p3 ỉy n꞊ỉ
"It was (**p3**) Ihimeh his brother who came to me." (P. BM 10052, 13/7-8)[25]

---

[23] LRL 64, 14-15. Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 52, transliterates **p3-ỉ.ỉr꞊w**.

[24] The form is taken as a nominalized past relative in A. Erman, *Neuägyptische Grammatik*, pp. 433-34.

[25] See F. Junge, "Nominalsatz und Cleft Sentence im Ägyptischen," p. 447. Junge's remarks on the ultimate similarity between cleft and "pseudo-cleft" sentences are significant: "allerdings ist hier die Beziehung von Artikel/Demonstrativum und foldendem Partizip eine andere geworden als die es war, die zwischen **pw** und folgendem Partizip bestand. Wichtig aber ist: Trotz dieser unterschiedlichen Beziehungen im Einzelnen sind grammatische Struktur und Mengenbeziehung der beiden Nomina prinzipiell die gleichen." The distinction is thus suspicious, and should it be accepted

Other nouns:

ḫr ỉs.wt n Km.t nꜣ nty ẖnw ḥr Nsy-sw-Bꜣ-nb-Ḏd

"Now they are (nꜣ) Egyptian crews that (nty) sail under Smendes."
(Wenamon, col. 1/57-58)

pꜣy≠ỉ nb nfr tꜣ md.(t) nꜣ bꜣk.w ṯt.w ỉ-qnd≠k r-r≠sn nty m Wḥꜣ.t tꜣ
nt.(t) smn.t≠w r≠s "My good lord, is it (tꜣ) the matter of the quarrelsome
servants at whom you were angered and who are in the Oasis in which (nt.t)
people are confined?" (Banishment Stela, l. 11)

ỉw btꜣ.w ꜥꜣy.(w) n mt nꜣ bw.t ꜥꜣy.w n pꜣ tꜣ nꜣ ỉ-ỉr≠f

"... and that they were (nꜣ) great crimes worthy of death, the great
abominations of the land, which (ỉ-ỉr) he had done." (P. Rollin, ll. 4-5)
This last example reverses my own published translation, which had
followed the traditional "pseudo cleft sentence" pattern.[26]

This reinterpretation is both orthographically and grammatically feasible,
and it has the further advantage of improving translation by placing the
stress precisely where context would seem to demand it. In the sentences
headed by infinitives, the stress is on the specific action, not a nominalized
relative "what he did." In the Tomb Robbery papyrus BM 10052, the
statement that "It was Ihimeh ... who came" is in direct response to the
question of "which messenger had come; the mere existence of "the one who
came" was not in doubt.[27] In Wenamon's rebuttal of Tchekerbaal, the priest

that the "article" is simply an unorthographic writing of the copula, the
reason for the structural similarity becomes self-evident.

[26] So also in P. Lee, col. 2/3-4: "... and that [they were] great crimes worthy
of death, the great abominations of [the land, which he had done.]"; cf. R.
K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, SAOC 54,
1993, pp. 194 and 198.

[27] Peet, *The Great Tomb Robberies*, 1930, pp. 154-55.

responds to the prince's question "Where is its Syrian crew?" by insisting that "they are Egyptian crews which sail under Smendes. He has no Syrian crews." Again, the stress is on the initial phrase "Egyptian crews," not a supposedly defined relative clause "those who sail under Smendes."

Possible Demotic examples include the "pseudo cleft sentence" of 'Onchsheshonqy, 13/8, and many others:
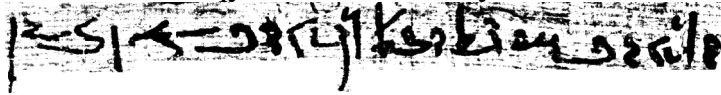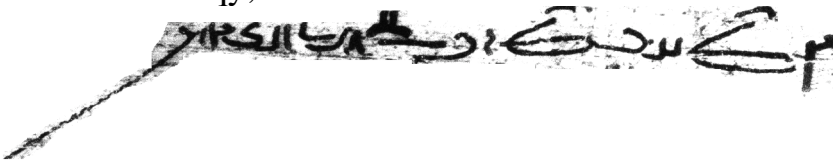

t3 mw.t t3 nt ms t3 mỉ.t t3 nt tỉ ỉry , retranslated as "It is (t3) the mother who gives birth; it is (t3) the road that gives a companion."

'Onchsheshonqy, 9/23:

p3 nb t3 ỉḥ.t p3 nt pḥ r sksṯ "It is (p3) the owner of the cow who ends up running."

'Onchsheshonqy, 19/20:

rmt rḫ p3 nt rḫ t3 nt sny ỉ-ỉr-ḥr≠f "It is (p3) the wise man who understands what passes before him."[28]

Setna I, 5/32:
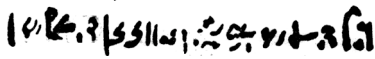
N3-nfr-k3-Ptḥ p3 ỉ-ỉr ỉr≠w n≠ỉ tr≠w "It is Naneferkaptah who has done them all to me."

Setna I, 5/39 and 6/1:

Ptḥ p3 ntr ꜥ3 p3 ỉ-ỉr ỉn.ṯ≠k ỉw≠k wḏ3
"It was Ptah, the great god, who brought you back safely."

---

[28] Cf. also 13/9: "All men acquire property; it is the wise man who knows how to secure it."

Setna I, 6/2:

𓅓 (Demotic text)

P3-Rꜥ p3y-wn-n3w ẖn t3 ḥw.t ḏr≠s
"It was Pre who was in the entire tomb."

As with the Late Egyptian examples, reanalysis of these passages as having a true, if disguised, copula produces a more logical trans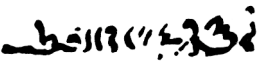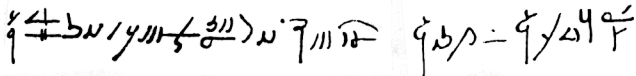lation. The advice of 'Onchsheshonqy, 19/20, concludes a couplet on acknowledging one's master as a wise man.: "If your master says to you something wise, it is respect for him that you should feel. It is a wise man who understands what passes before him." In the various Setna passages, there is no question that someone had injured and saved the hero, or that something unusual was in the tomb. The new information to be stressed in each sentence is the identity of the actor: "It was" Naneferkaptah, or Ptah or Pre.

While initially I found this pattern of analysis quite attractive, it must be admitted that there are serious problems. Parker had objected to similar interpretations on the grounds that it would require a linguistic evolution of the original sḏm pw ỉr.n≠f construction:

"But this was restricted in the main to verbs of motion in Middle Egyptian and the few examples in New Egyptian are all of such verbs. That such a construction could then survive into Demotic, expand its use from infinitives of verbs of motion to infinitives of other classes of verbs and then to ordinary nouns as well is a priori most unlikely."[29]

Parker's objection is partially met by stressing the facts that Middle Egyptian does not confine the form to verbs of motion,[30] and that, as previously noted, Late Egyptian arguably has examples with both general infinitives and nouns, while Coptic certainly employs a similar form with ordinary nouns. The linguistic evolution questioned by Parker is both possible and potentially earlier than he had envisioned.

---

[29] Parker, *JNES* 33, p. 374, n. 11.
[30] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 312, notes examples with ꜥḥꜥ "stand," ḥms.t "sit," gr "be silent" and ms.t "give birth," with f3ỉ "support" found on p. 286 at n. 8. See also the eponymous form with sḏm, in Moalla VI ß 1, noted in Quack, *RdÉ* 42, p. 204: [tm sḏ]m pw ỉry≠f.
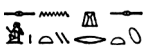
There is, however, a more serious complication that would necessitate yet further linguistic evolution. Consider what seem to be two parallels to the construction with "disguised" copula:

wꜥ.t wnw.t tꜣ ỉ-ỉr ḫpr (Setna I, 4/8, 5/21 and 5/31).

wꜥ sꜥl n ḥt n ḏy pꜣ nty ỉ-ỉr≠k tỉ≠f r pꜣ ḫbs (P. London and Leiden, col. 6/7-8)

 One would expect to translate these sentences as "One moment (is) what happened" and "A wick of sail cloth (is) what you should put into the lamp" because relative forms should only follow defined antecedents. Is this rule invariable so that the suggestion of an unorthographic copula must be rejected in these and all other contexts?
        Some exceptions to this rule do exist. Bare generic nouns, like the rmt rḫ of 'Onchsheshonqy, 19/20, can be treated as though defined.[31] This extends even to the use of the relative nty after non-specific antecedents:

s nty ḥr st "a/the man who has a lump(?)" (Ebers 93/1)[32]

In other instances, indefinite nouns are followed by forms that have been identified as active participles, passive participles and the past relative.

nḫt pw gr.t ỉr m ḫpš≠f "He is a mighty man, indeed, who acts with his strong arm" (Sinuhe B 52)[33]

Finding a well ... pr.t hꜣꜣ.t ḥr gs.(wy)≠sy "on whose two sides there had been going and coming" (Hammamat 191, 5)[34]

---

[31] J. Johnson, "The Use of the Articles and the Generic in Demotic," in *Aspects of Demotic Lexicography*, Leiden: 1987, pp. 41-55.
[32] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 150, §199; see Johnson, "The Use of the Articles and the Generic in Demotic," p. 48.
[33] See parallels, Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 284, n. 9, adding Urk. IV, 1091, 3, on p. 287.
[34] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 286, and cf. p. 284 at n. 10.

𓀭𓇋𓏏𓉐𓂋𓆑𓏤𓈖𓆑𓁷𓏤
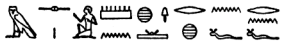
One whom the god distinguished out of millions m s mnḫ rḫ.n≠f rn≠f "as a capable man whose name he knew" (Cairo 20539, i.b. 9)[35]

 The most notable exception is the basic sḏm pw ỉr.n≠f construction itself: "It is a hearing that he did." One must dismiss a recent suggestion by J. Allen that the Middle Egyptian pattern reads "What he did was to hear" with an abstract nominalized relative after pw.[36] Such a nominalized relative ("what he did") would require the feminine gender *sḏm pw ỉr.t.n≠f, as found in "The Eloquent Peasant," B 46: mk ỉrr.t≠sn pw "Behold, it is what they do."[37]

It is just possible that this cleft sentence construction with undefined infinitive and following relative form generated a new pattern with indefinite noun and attributive relative form, but proof of such an assertion is beyond the scope of this paper. Perhaps more than one construction is present in the "pseudo cleft sentences," with De Cenival's interpretation correct in some contexts and Martin's in others.

Whatever might be the resolution of the problem, it is clear that it extends also into Coptic. The pattern is employed in a cleft sentence by the great stylist Shenute himself: ⲟⲩⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲟⲣⲅⲏ ⲙ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲛⲁ ⲛⲉⲧϩ̄ⲙⲡⲉⲥϩⲟ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ, somewhat oversimplified in Zoega's (Latin) translation as "Blessing and cursing, wrath and mercy are in her two faces" (Shenute, Borgia Sahidic Codex 191).[38] The forms ⲟⲩⲥⲙⲟⲩ and ⲟⲩⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ are taken as articular infinitives by A. Shisha-Halevy,[39] and since there is only one ⲛ(ⲉ), the sentence poses a dilemma. Either the

---

[35] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 307.

[36] Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, pp. 168-69 and 356, §§14.14.3 and 224.9. The interpretation is derived from our common professor Klaus Baer, based on Golénischeff and Sethe; for the last two authors, see Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 53, n. 11.

[37] For the standard use of the feminine gender to express "what is done,"see Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, pp. 271 §354 and 312 (this example). This is also noted in Depuydt, *RdÉ* 45, p. 53, n. 11.

[38] Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archamandritae Vita et Opera Omina* (Scriptores Coptici 5), 1913, p. 14/6-7; Zoega, pp. 445 and 449.

[39] A. Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Chrestomathy*, OLA 30, Leuven: 1988, p. 155 (13).

nominal predicate is written without a copula, contrary to usual Coptic practice ("Blessing and cursing, wrath and mercy (are) those things that are in her two faces"), or indefinite nouns are modified by the relative ⲉⲧ ("It is blessing and cursing, wrath and mercy, that are in her two faces").

While the latter interpretation violates our sense of what is to be expected, it must be realized that whatever solution is adopted entails the violation of some fundamental rule. The very existence of copula-less nominal predicates and "pseudo-cleft sentences" violates the scheme of Middle Egyptian, so that Depuydt has proposed an evolution in which the definite article replaces the copula.[40] Is it necessarily less plausible that such peculiar sentences actually contain copulas, but with an evolution weakening restrictions on antecedents? A tendency in that direction is at least already apparent in Middle Egyptian.

If the "pseudo-cleft sentence" remains unresolved, it seems nonetheless clear that many supposed nominal predicates without copula can be otherwise interpreted. Even Spiegelberg's first example of such a pattern[41] is questionable:

p3y⸗t šr ꜥ3 ... p3 nb n nt nb nkt nb nt mtw⸗i

Should one translate this common phrase from the *Eheverträge* as a nominal predicate, as is usually done ("Your eldest son ... is the owner of everything and all property that I have")? Variations on the formula are instructive. Of those examples gathered by Lüddeckens, the majority for Version 1 employ a timeless expression of possession (wn) mtw⸗, while one uses a future, verbal predicate with a conjunctive: mtw n3y⸗i ẖrd.w ... (r) ir nb "and my children shall act as possessor."[42] Spiegelberg's example corresponds to Version 2, which is reinterpreted in a few examples as a certain nominal predicate with the copula p3y:

p3y⸗t (var. p3y⸗i) šr ꜥ3 p3y⸗i (var. p3y⸗t) šr ꜥ3 p3y p3 nb n nt nb nkt nb nt mtw⸗i

---

[40] *RdÉ* 45 (1994): 66-71; see p. 68 "definite expressions came to be marked by the definite article."

[41] Spiegelberg, *Demotische Grammatik*, p. 198 §444.

[42] E. Lüddeckens, *Ägyptische Eheverträge*, AgAb 1, Wiesbaden: 1960, p. 279 and Blatt V.

"Your (var. My) eldest son is my (var. your) eldest son, the possessor of everything ... that I have."[43] These texts suggest strongly that the contrasting examples of Version 2 without **pꜣy** do not employ nominal predicates. Rather, these may be yet further instances of an adverbial predicate with unwritten "m" of predication. Certainly the (often unborn) eldest son's status as property owner is an acquired characteristic, dependent on the death of the speaker.

These reinterpreted examples by no means remove the category of nominal expressions without copula, but they do raise the issue of just how many more "nominal predicates" deserve reconsideration, and whether the Demotic copula was in fact less "necessary" than its Coptic descendent.

---

[43] Ibid., pp. 279-81. These examples, from P. Rylands X (Alexander) and P. Louvre 2433 (Ptolemy II), have been variously translated. Lüddeckens, p. 279, prefers "My eldest son, your eldest son, is the possessor ..."