

REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN OF COPTIC *t*
SUFFIX-PRONOUN 1st pers. sing. c.

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Ancient Egyptian lamentations, lyric songs sung by women during religious ceremonies, and copied on Schmitt papyrus kept in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, were composed in the Middle Egyptian, the language that was used in religious literature down to the Roman times. In spite of this fact, however, elements of a spoken tongue exercised some influence on it. Perhaps it was due to the fact that those songs were in constant use in the Egyptian temples and persons who used to copy them and to sing them knew better a spoken tongue than the dead one. So the automatically imputed new elements caused those songs to be better understood to those who sung them and to those who heard them. It seems penetrations of a spoken tongue may be seen in the following sentences:

23,29 (1)

*mh/.i/*¹ *k/w/ hntš/.i/ n iw.k n.t*

"/I/ grieve over you. /I/ shall be glad because
you are coming to me"

23,40 (2)

*šm.i w3wt w^ct*² *hnw ib.t*

"I wandered /over/ the roads - loneliness in my heart"...

24,8 (3)

mi n.i h3w hr.t

"Come to me, in front of me"...

1) Reading uncertain, cf. *Wb.* II, 120.

2) Perhaps it should be corrected into *w^c/w/ m*,
cf. *NY* 12; 6,2 and this correction suits the context.

24,35 (4)

n i.n iḃ.t drw mr.k

"My heart has not come. Your love is far away".

24,36 (5)

mī mr.t m33 k/w/

"How I wish to see you".

25,25 (6)

šm.t hr t3 m w^cw hr ḥḥ nb

"I have wandered through the earth
lonely to seek the lord".

25.41 (7)

hm sn.t n mwt.k

"Come back, my brother to your mother".

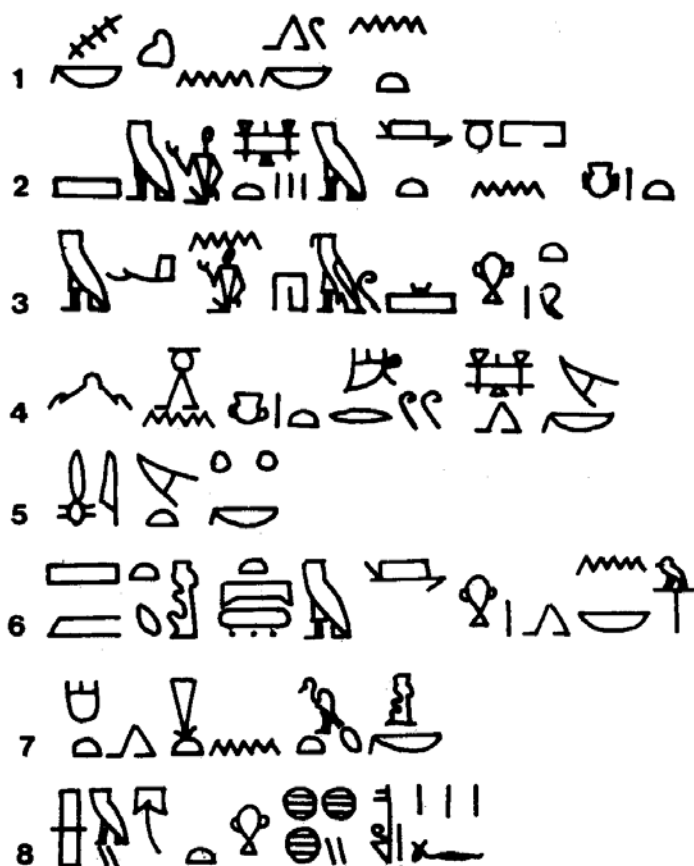
27,14 (8)

wnš.t³⁾ hr ḥwī ksw.f

"My jakal /?/ will protect his bones".

Looking at the orthography of the above cited sentences, one may see that from time to time phonetic writing prevails for the old historic one. This method of writing, frequently used in Late Egyptian language, enables us to recognize some grammatical forms that were absent in the Middle Egyptian. There is a consonant *t* in those sentences. It is placed after nouns /*iḃ* - "heart", *sn* - "brother", *wnš* /?/ - "jackal" /?/, prepositions /*h3w hr* - "in front of", *n* - "to"/ and verbs /*mrī* - "love", *šm* - "wander"/ and it seems - according to the context - it is employed either as a variant writing or instead of suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. This form appears here

3) Reading doubtful as well as the meaning of this word.



to be used in the same case as in the last stage of the development of Egyptian language, in Coptic.

According to grammars of Coptic language, suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. has two forms: -i and -t. The first form appearing not only in the earlier stages of Egyptian language but also in the Semitic languages in general it is used after vowels, and the second one is used after consonants and double vowels⁴⁾. A. Mallon as well as W. Till, eminent scholars of Coptic language, point out a connection of -t with words which have the final consonant t and appear in earlier stages of Egyptian⁵⁾. Sometimes in Demotic, when suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. disappears after feminine nouns and weak verbs as well as prepositions and other words which were originally of mascu-

4) W. Till, *Koptische Grammatik*, Leipzig 1966, 92 f., § 189.

5) A. Mallon, *Grammaire Copte*, Beyrouth 1956, 32; W. Till, *op.cit.*, 93.

line gender, morpheme *t* is written by means of (9)-sign /*t*¹ or *t*/ ⁶⁾. A. Erman who employed himself to Late Egyptian also draws the attention to a connection of Coptic -*t* with feminine morpheme *t* of nouns and verbs ⁷⁾. M. Korostovtsev who is interested in Late Egyptian too has maintained that between a suffix-pronoun and between feminine nouns ended in *t* as well as feminine infinitives intervenes a morpheme .*tw.* /10/, sometimes written .*ti* /11/ ⁸⁾. In the case when suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. had been omitted, this morpheme took its function, and in this morpheme Coptic suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. -*t* has its origin ⁹⁾. J. Černý in turn states that .*tw.* /12 / intervening between the infinitive of weak verbs and a suffix-pronoun is the feminine morpheme *t* which was preserved before suffixes ¹⁰⁾.

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In Egyptian language there are words ending in -*t*, which is both an original end consonant of a root or the morpheme of feminine ending. This very morpheme, a suffix from the grammatical point of view, attached to a root of noun and to weak verbs, when a word was pronounced in isolation /status absolutus/, was lost as early as Old Kingdom /about 2850-2350 B.C./ ¹¹⁾. This results from the fact that consonant *t* at the end of word ceased to be pronounced ¹²⁾. Sometimes, however, when a feminine

6) G. Ort-Geuthner, *Grammaire Démotique*, Paris 1936, 2-3.

7) A. Erman, *Neuägyptische Grammatik*, 2. Auflage, Leipzig 1933, § 63, 403-408.

8) M. Korostovtsev, *Grammaire du Néo-Egyptien*, Moscou 1973, § 38.

9) M. Korostovtsev, *op. cit.*, 86, 204-206.

10) J. Černý, *A Late Egyptian Grammar*, Rome 1975, 183-184.

11) Dates after A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford 1961, 445-449.

12) K. Sethe, *Das ägyptische Verbum*, Leipzig 1899, II, 260, § 594; P. Lacau, *R.d'Eg.* 9, 1952. 86. Id., *Etudes d'Égyptologie*, I. Phonétique (*B. d'Et.* XLI), Le Caire 1970, 58; A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed., London 1957, 34 and note 1a; W.F. Edgerton, *JNES* VI, 1947, 5, 1(a), 7.

word was followed by genitive of a word /status constructus/, the last *t* may well have been sounded¹³⁾. But whereas a suffix-pronoun was attached to a word /status pronominalis/, certainly to its protection and under the influence of the accent, morpheme *t* had not disappeared but retained. In this situation the syncope of vowels before and after the accented vowel had brought such a theme of a word that feminine morpheme followed after a syllable with final consonant without intervening vowel¹⁴⁾. The retained morpheme *t* in status pronominalis was marked by scribes in many texts through the whole history of Egyptian language. This phenomenon occurs not only in regard to the feminine nouns but also to weak verbs having their feminine infinitives.

In Late Egyptian, the vernacular of New Kingdom /about 1570-1180 B.C./, known from texts composed at the time of XIX-XXIV Dyn. /about 1308-715 B.C./ morpheme *t* at the end of words /status absolutus/, although was not pronounced at all, was sometimes written due - perhaps - to historic orthography¹⁵⁾. It may be observed in regard to the feminine nouns¹⁶⁾ and weak verbs¹⁷⁾. But when, however, morpheme *t* attached to those feminine words was followed by a suffix-pronoun, sometimes scribes used to copy it twice: once before a determinative and the second time after it but always before a suffix-pronoun¹⁸⁾. They thus continued the practice that goes back to Old

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- 13) K. Sethe, *op. cit.*, II, 262 § 600; P. Lacau, *R. d'Eg.* 9, 1952, 83; J. Cerny, *op. cit.*, 51 a/; G. Fecht, *Wortakzent und Silbenstruktur* (Ägyptologische Forschungen 21), Glückstadt ..., 1960, 65 ff.
- 14) Cf. P. Lacau, *op. cit.*, 82; G. Fecht, *op. cit.*, 172, 178-179, 200-201 and also W.F. Edgerton, *op. cit.*, 5.
- 15) A. Erman, *op. cit.*, 61 § 140; M. Korostvotsev, *op. cit.*, 53-54; J. Cerny, *ibid.*, 6 and cf. also 51.
- 16) A. Erman, *ibid.*, 58 § 130, 60-63.
- 17) A. Erman, *ibid.*, 192 ff; J. Cerny, *ibid.*, 183-184.
- 18) Cf. B. Gunn, *JEA* XLI, 1955, 90; A. Erman, *ibid.*, 28, 61-62, 193-198; M. Korostvotsev, *ibid.*, § 38 and 81; P. Lacau, *Etudes...*, 59; G. Fecht, *op. cit.*, 140 F.

Egyptian texts¹⁹⁾. Perhaps in such a way, as their predecessors had done, the scribes tried to emphasize the retention of *t* not only in orthography of particular words but the pronunciation of this consonant that in other combinations had fallen away. And then the feminine morpheme was often written (13) or (14) in the position before a suffix-pronoun²⁰⁾.

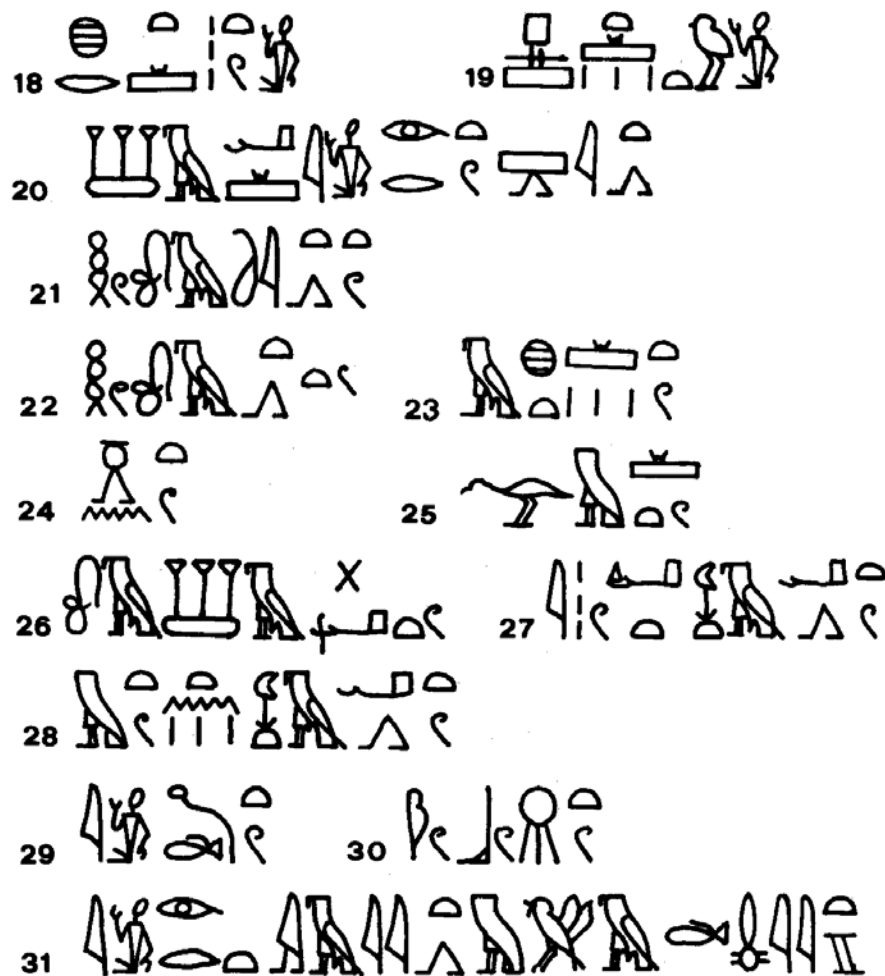


The suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. combined with feminine morpheme written after a determinative, if any, of a work is commonly written (15), (16), (17). For example:

- (18) *hrt.i* (An I 8,3) "my property",
- (19) *psst.i* (Mes. S. 6) "my share",
- (20) *š3^c iirt.i šmt* (Wen. 2,36) "until I have done going",
- (21) *hw3.t/hwī.t* (Wen. 2,80) "throwing me",
- (22) *hw3.t/hwī.t* (Wen. 2,74) "/wind/ throwing me",
- (23) *3h.t* (Inscr. Hier. Char. pl. 18) "my thing(s)",
- (24) *īn.t* (Lov. Beatty 17,3) "bringing me",
- (25) *gm.t* (Lov. Tur. 1,14) "finding me",
- (26) *w3š3.t/wš.t* (Wen. 2,75) "struggling me 'through'",

19) P. Lacau, *R. d'Eg.* 9, 1952, 85. Not only the Late Egyptian texts point out this phenomenon but it also occurs in the later stage of Egyptian, e.g. Demotic, cf. F. Lexa, *Grammaire Démotique*, Praha 1949, I, 120; K. Sethe, *ibid.*, II, 263 § 601.

20) K. Sethe, *ibid.*, II, 261 § 596 and cf. also I, 87, 17,1. Cf. A. Erman, *ibid.*, § 403; M. Korostovtsev, *ibid.*, 31, and note 72; J. Černý, *ibid.*, 6, 51, 183.



(27) $\dot{i}w.w \dot{d}i\dot{t} h3^c.t$ (Inscr. Hier. Char. pl. 18)
"they throwing me out",

(28) $mtwt\dot{n} h3^c.t$ (Inscr. Hier. Char. pl. 18)
"you throwing me out",

(29) $3dd.t$ (Amonemope 3,9) "my saying",

(30) $\check{s}w/yt/.t$ (Lov. Tur. 2,12) "my shade",

(31) $\dot{i}\dot{i}r.t \dot{i}\dot{i}t m p3 dmi\dot{t}$ (B. of Truth 7,6)
"as I came to the town",



(32) *mrt.i* (Harris 500,4.2) "loving me",

(33) *f3t.i* (Harris 500,6.4) "carrying me".

This adopted new device for writing the suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. is perhaps due to the intention of scribes to substitute in Late Egyptian phonetic writing for the old historic one. With this in mind, one is to notice some change which occurred within the period when the Late Egyptian was the spoken tongue; the changes were connected not only with writing, with the orthography of status pronominalis of feminine words and this suffix-pronoun attached to it, but also with the spelling of those words, mainly - what is interesting here - with the spelling of the final syllable.

So, it seems the group writing (34) and (35) which in the course of time became a historic one²¹⁾ shows one of the spelling phases. It is the case when feminine morpheme and the suffix-pronoun *.i* attached to it by means of connecting short vowels formed the last closed syllable of a word (for example nos 1, 2, 3, 15, 16), and the last weak consonant was pronounced. And this last syllable followed feminine nouns and verbs ending in a consonant²²⁾.

Another group writing (36) exhibits such a phase of historical development when the *.i* at the end was omitted as it had ceased to be spelled (for example nos 4-8). They spelled only the

21) Cf. BR 7,9; 11,27.

22) Cf. W. Edgerton, *ibid.*, 3, V and 4 note 8.

morpheme *t* supplied with a short vowel, which soon was reduced in open unstressed syllable to (37) and fell away too²³).

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Thus at last, the final syllable was reduced to mono-consonantal *t*. This third and the last phase of the last syllable development goes back as far as the XIXth dyn. (about 1290-1194 (?) B.C.) which seems to be proved by the 14th example. To this example can be linked together a few examples taken from the lamentations copied on the Schmitt papyrus.

The constant position of the consonant *t* which continues as a final consonant of a closed syllable enables to attach it, due to the working of analogy, to other words with final consonants. This phenomenon occurred even in the Late Egyptian writing as shown by other examples (nos 9-13).

The account here given indicates means by which the pronunciation led to the appearance of two forms of suffix-pronoun 1st pers. sing. c. The morpheme *t* indicating the feminine ending that goes back to the parent Egyptian-Semitic-Hamitic speech, came into favour of suffix-pronoun after consonants, and this principle was continued up to Coptic.

Since the morpheme *t* ceased to display feminine words in Late Egyptian, its function in turn took the definite article, the possessive article, the determinative adjective or the pronominal suffix.

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23) Cf. S. Moscati, A. Spitaler, B. Ullendorf, W. v. Soden, *Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, Wiesbaden 1964, 67 a/, g/, 138, 16, 39, b; G. Fecht, *ibid.*, 194 note 546.